



The Greatest Introduction

Tim Childs

John, whom God sent to make final preparations for Christ's coming, did baptize in the wilderness, and "preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:3-4; Luke 3:3). It was God's plan for John to prepare the way for Christ so people's hearts would be turned God-ward and prepared to receive Jesus, and directed toward Christ's soon coming kingdom (Malachi 3:1).

Jesus was introduced to the people of Judea by John in the most declarative fashion: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). What a powerful and meaningful introduction. No one in all the history of the world had ever been introduced like that, or since.

John introduced Jesus to Andrew. Andrew, in turn, quickly introduced Jesus to his own brother, Simon Peter. The text of John 1:41-42a reads, "He (Andrew) first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. As Andrew had met and discovered the Messiah of Old Testament prophecy, he was so excited and thrilled that with a sense of great urgency he brought Simon as is indicated by the expression: "He first findeth his own brother..." It was so significant that it would not wait until some indefinite future time. The occasion was compelling upon him.

Then, the text records how Philip brought Nathanael to Jesus as Philip urged him to "Come and see" (whether any good thing could come out of Nazareth). Thankfully Nathaniel was willing at least to "check it out."

Jesus introduced himself to the woman at Jacob's well as the Messiah, or Christ, for whom she and so many others were waiting (John 4:25-26). Later when she departed, she was so excited that in her haste she left her waterpot behind as she hurried back to the city. Immediately upon her return she is heard speaking to her people: "Come see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" Upon the investigation of the local townspeople who met and talked with Christ the proof was convincing as they told her: "...for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (John 4:42).

These were men and women, like you and me, who were taught and thus were able to identify the Christ. Upon such recognition, they

were "bound and determined" to share their newfound knowledge so others could equally benefit in such a blessing as knowing the Saviour. You and I can follow their example in pointing men to Jesus...in introducing him to our family members, friends, neighbors and co-workers. You and I, too, can make the greatest introduction a person can make by bringing them to Jesus.

Jesus is the greatest personality to ever walk upon the earth (which he created himself, John 1:3; vs. 10). There was never a man so caring, compassionate, giving and forgiving. There was never one who lived in this world that ever had such an impact for good as well as the power to change men's lives. There was never one who lived in this flesh (as an adult) who was so pure and innocent, living a life in full harmony with that of the Father in heaven. Never was one's heart more fixed on fulfilling his Father's will. Never was one's heart more filled with love for God, the Father, and his fellowman as is exhibited in his substitutionary death upon the Roman cross outside the gate of the city of Jerusalem.

Jesus is the greatest friend you and I will ever know.

"Have you a heart that's weary,
Tending a load of care;
Are you a soul that's seeking
Rest from the burden you bear?"

Do you know my Jesus,
Do you know my friend,
Have you heard he loves you,
And that he will abide till the end?
—William F. Lakey

He is the greatest friend that your family, friends, neighbors and co-workers could ever have. So, why not take the initiative to introduce the two? In eternity they will thank you over and over! You can do it!

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“My life is a hell on earth?”

How many are the times that elders and preachers heard such a sad hearted and downcast wail from individuals whose hearts are failing them for fear? Sorrow, heartache, disappointment in others, worry over an uncertain future, financial woes, can all combine to cause our minds to be like stormy seas instead of peaceful harbors ruled by the sweetened peace that passes all understanding. Great multitudes are living lives likened to derelict ships upon a stormy sea.

Why?

Ninety-nine times out of one hundred the hell people say they are living in is a result of sin; either their own sin or the sin of someone near to them. Parents are tortured by misbehaving offspring. Friends are distressed by their wayward companions. Wives are unhappy because of unfaithful husbands or vice versa. The unhappy beat goes on and on and on.

What?

What do you do? If the misery of your existence is due to someone else's sins—you can but pray, trust God (Romans 8:28) and consistently live for Jesus by refusing to be conformed to this world ((Romans 12:1-2). You can get a grip on your own life and live it the way the Lord intended with the realization that “every tub must sit on its own bottom!” Each one of us shall give account of himself to God (Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

If the “hell” you are now suffering is a result of your own transgressions, then realize that only fools follow Satan, and resolve to change your life accordingly.

Who?

Jesus is the key. He never meant your life to be a “flowery bed of ease” but He did not intend it to be a horrendous unhappiness either (John 10:10; 14:27; 1 John 1:4). Someone correctly pointed out:

“To live without Christ is like trying to live without water, for He is the Water of Life.

To live without Christ is like trying to live without bread, for He is the Bread of Life.

To live without Christ is like trying to live without light, for He is the Light of the World.”

“Where is hell?” cried out the unbeliever. The old preacher wisely replied, “at the end of a Christless life!” So it is and ever shall be.

Friend, it is unrepented of sin that is making your existence the terrible ordeal that it is. “Repent and be baptized every one of you...” preached the courageous Pentecost preacher (Acts 2:38). That’s the message every alien sinner needs to hear and heed. “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee” (Acts 8:22) is the message every fallen child of God needs to apply to their souls.

Are you endeavoring your best to live the Christian life? Is prayer and Bible study normal parts of your daily routine? Is your Christianity a dull habit or burning fever?

Finally

Let every precious soul contemplate that no matter how “hell”-ish they think their lives are currently—in reality—those lives are nothing compared to the actual hell which is to come (Matthew 13:42; Mark 9:43-46). What you are going through is but a small taste of the real hell which shall be.

Consider the heaven awaiting all who will receive it. There is no greater joy on this mundane sphere, called earth, than to know Christ. Obeying Christ’s gospel takes the hell out of your heart and puts heaven into your soul. You have a new song to sing and a new story to tell of the place “whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10). Sorrow, pain, tears, separation and death will be no more (Revelation 21:1-4). Get rid of your old life and see what happens! Let the “beauty of Jesus be seen in you”.

HICKORY RIDGE CHURCH OF CHRIST

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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday Morning Bible Class	9:45
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

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Bill Dillon, Evangelist



Question: Is *The Da Vinci Code* true?

If it is, then do we have all the Bible in our books labeled "The Holy Bible?"

John T. Polk II

Just let someone read a book, learn a doctrine or think an idea is censored, and human desire eagerly craves it.

Question: Is *The Da Vinci Code* true? If it is, then do we have all the Bible in our books labeled "The Holy Bible?"

Answer: The popular book, *The Da Vinci Code* (to save space will be abbreviated *TDVC*, jtpII) written by **Dan Brown**, is purely fictional with its story-line documented and supported by fabricated sources. It relies on: (1) pseudo-documentary books like: *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, Henry Lincoln, 1981), *The Woman With The Alabaster Jar & The Goddess in the Gospels* (both by Margaret Starbird), and *The Templar Revelation: Secret Guardians of the True Identity of Christ* (by Lynn Picknett and Clive Prince, 1997); (2) the false practices of the apostate Roman Catholic Church; and (3) apocryphal (non-inspired & should not be included in Scripture) books: *The Gnostic Gospels (of Mary, of Thomas, of Phillip)*.

It appears that many people are more willing to believe books that misrepresent the Bible than they are willing to believe the Bible! The middle verse of the entire Bible says: "It is better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in man" (Psalm 118:8). Fake "factual" books like: Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, Tim LeHaye & Jerry B. Jenkins' *Left Behind* series, Lloyd C. Douglas's *The Robe* (1953), Thomas B. Costain's *The Silver Chalice* (1954), captivate the world's fancy, while the plain declarations of Scripture are ignored.

"Let God be true but every man a liar" Romans 3:4

Brown's book's popularity, however, seems to stem from the mistaken belief that it is true. Brown, himself, has been responsible for this lie. On NBC TV's *Today Show* June 9, 2003, in response to Matt Lauer's question: "How much of this is based on reality in terms of things that actually occurred?" Brown said: "Absolutely all of it. Obviously, Robert Langdon [a main character in the book, jtpII] is fictional, but all of the art, architecture, secret rituals, secret societies—all of that is

historical fact" [bold is mine, jtpII]. He may be referring to real items, but his book's interpretation of them is patently false. And, because he calls his fiction "reality," his false doctrine must be exposed and refuted!

Devil's Formula: Lies Suppressed = Truth!

The Devil is "a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44). "The serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness" (2 Corinthians 11:3) when he told her something he said God didn't want her to know (Genesis 3:4-5). Thinking this was a "suppressed truth" Eve sinned (1 Timothy 2:14). Nothing has changed since the Garden of Eden!

Just let someone read a book, learn a doctrine or think an idea is censored, and human desire eagerly craves it. That is the appeal of filthy language, sexual perversion, gambling, street drugs, pornography, and the like (Ephesians 4:17-5:7). *TDVC* states that the Roman Catholic Church (through Emperor Constantine) rejected a female concept of God (a.k.a. "sacred feminine," or "goddess") and therefore suppressed the idea of Mary Magdalene being married to Jesus Christ, which would have completed His "deity." The book traces through history attempts to conceal or reveal this "fact." Leonardo da Vinci supposedly "coded" this truth in his paintings, hence the name of the book. The Church of Christ, the complete New Testament, and the Deity of Jesus Christ were all established and finished by the end of the 1st century. The Roman Catholic Church developed after that time and has never been the repository of truth as it claims, nor is it ordained by God or founded purely upon Scripture. Therefore Bible doctrine has never depended upon the pronouncements of the Roman Church.

If the doctrine of a "sacred feminine" is false, and if the Bible does not suppress such a doctrine, and if the Bible does not teach a union between Jesus and Mary Magdalene, then there is absolutely no excuse for TDVC to claim otherwise and Brown to assert that it is true!

The Bible Has Always Condemned Female Gods

God “created” humans “male and female,” and “called them Mankind” (Genesis 5:2), but God never had a feminine side! Jesus Christ was God in the flesh (John 1:1, 14). When men invent “gods” they make them “like the figure of a man” (Isaiah 44:13, CF vss 9-20; Psalm 135:15-18). “For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the LORD made the heavens” (Psalm 96:4-5 NKJV). To speak of a “sacred feminine” is to use the language of pagan idolatry. In the Old Testament, Solomon was condemned for going after “Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians” (I Kings 11:4-10), and in the New Testament, Paul preached God in Ephesus, site of the pagan temple devoted to “the great goddess Diana” (Acts 19:23-29 CF 19:1-20:1). Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans all worshiped goddesses, and their kingdoms are now defunct! Idolatry is still forbidden (I John 5:21).

All the Bible says about Mary Magdalene

If Jesus and Mary Magdalene were not married, according to Scripture, then all interpretations of history contained in all books like this one are false to the core! Granted, many may have believed they were preserving Jesus’ physical lineage, but they were sadly misguided and mistaken. All Scripture teaches about Mary Magdalene is that:

1. *She was from the “region”/“coasts” of Magdala* (Matthew 15:39), and also *Dalmamutha* (Mark 8:10). If Magdala is possibly “Migdal El,” a fortified city (Joshua 19:35, 38), then Dalmanutha would be the area it is in.
 2. *Christ cast seven demons from her. She was part of a supporting group of women who provided their “substance” for Jesus, and the Twelve* (Luke 8:1-3).
 3. *She was at the crucifixion* (Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:40; Luke 23:49; John 19:25).
 4. *She witnessed Christ’s burial* (Matthew 27:59-61; Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55-56).
 5. *She was with the group of women who went on the first day of the week to Christ’s tomb after he was buried* (Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-10; John 20:1-2).
 6. *She was the first person to whom the risen Christ identified Himself* (Matthew 28:1, 8-10; Mark 16:1,7-11; Luke 24:9-11; John 20:11-18).
- NONE of these passages show (or even hint at) sexual intimacy or physical marriage between Jesus and this Mary. She is part of the group of supporters, men and women, who followed Jesus. She has no close moments with Jesus, as Peter, James and John, for instance (Mark 9:2-10; 14:32-33). Scripture never identifies her as the Samaritan of

multiple marriages (John 4), or the woman taken in the act of adultery (John 8), but this stigma is forced by pagan “feminists” in *TDVC*, false “gospels (*Thomas, Mary, Phillip*), plays like “Jesus Christ, Super Star,” and movies like “The Last Temptation of Christ,” to name but a few sources. *She was not:* an Apostle, The Apostle, author of the New Testament Gospel according to John, bride of Jesus, mother of Jesus’ baby, or goddess of the church.

If Jesus Christ was married to Mary Magdalene then:

1. *Jesus didn’t know it*, for He taught His family consisted of “whoever does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 12:47-50), and the church is His bride (2 Corinthians 11:2; Romans 7:1-4; Revelation 19:7-9; 21:2);
2. *The Apostles didn’t know it*, for Paul argued his right to have a wife using the examples of “the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas” (I Corinthians 9:5). If Jesus had had a wife, surely He would have headed that list;
3. *Mary Magdalene didn’t know it*, for she is never mentioned past the resurrection of Jesus Christ. She had ample opportunity to assert her “place” in the church of Christ and never did. The physical “genealogy of Jesus Christ” led to and ended with His birth (Matthew 1:1-25), and no Scripture even begins to trace a line this side of His life on earth.

“Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” (Job 38:2)

Scriptures were complete before any “council” agreed they were the Scriptures! The Old Testament was set and in use in Jesus’ day (Luke 24:27, 44), and the New Testament contained its own self-limiting canon (Colossians 4:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2, 15; 2 Peter 3:15-16), and the Holy Spirit’s miraculous gift of “discerning of spirits” (I Corinthians 12:10-11; I John 4:1), and Apostolic warnings (2 Corinthians 11:12-15). Therefore the following is fact for Old and New Testaments: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NKJV).

There is NO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION outside of Scripture that is necessary for understanding what is in Scripture, “since this thing was not done in a corner” (Acts 26:26). “The faith” has been “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

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ONCE A SON OF GOD, ALWAYS A SON?

T. PIERCE BROWN

When we reject God's will and stop trying to do that which he approves, we cease to partake of his nature, and cease to be sons of God as the Bible uses the term.

Most of my life I have heard the argument that if a person were ever a child of God, he is always one. Usually the one making the argument was advocating the doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy. Most of my brethren in answering that argument would admit that it was true that one who became a child of God could not cease to be a child, but that it did not matter because he could lose his inheritance even if a child. The conclusion is true, and the doctrine that when one is saved he cannot be lost is false in any case.

However, it is my judgment that we have missed a significant point in admitting that once a son of God one is always a son of God. We look quickly at the Prodigal Son and admit that he was a son, even in a far country, then assume that since the story illustrates an important spiritual truth, all aspects of it apply to us today as children of God.

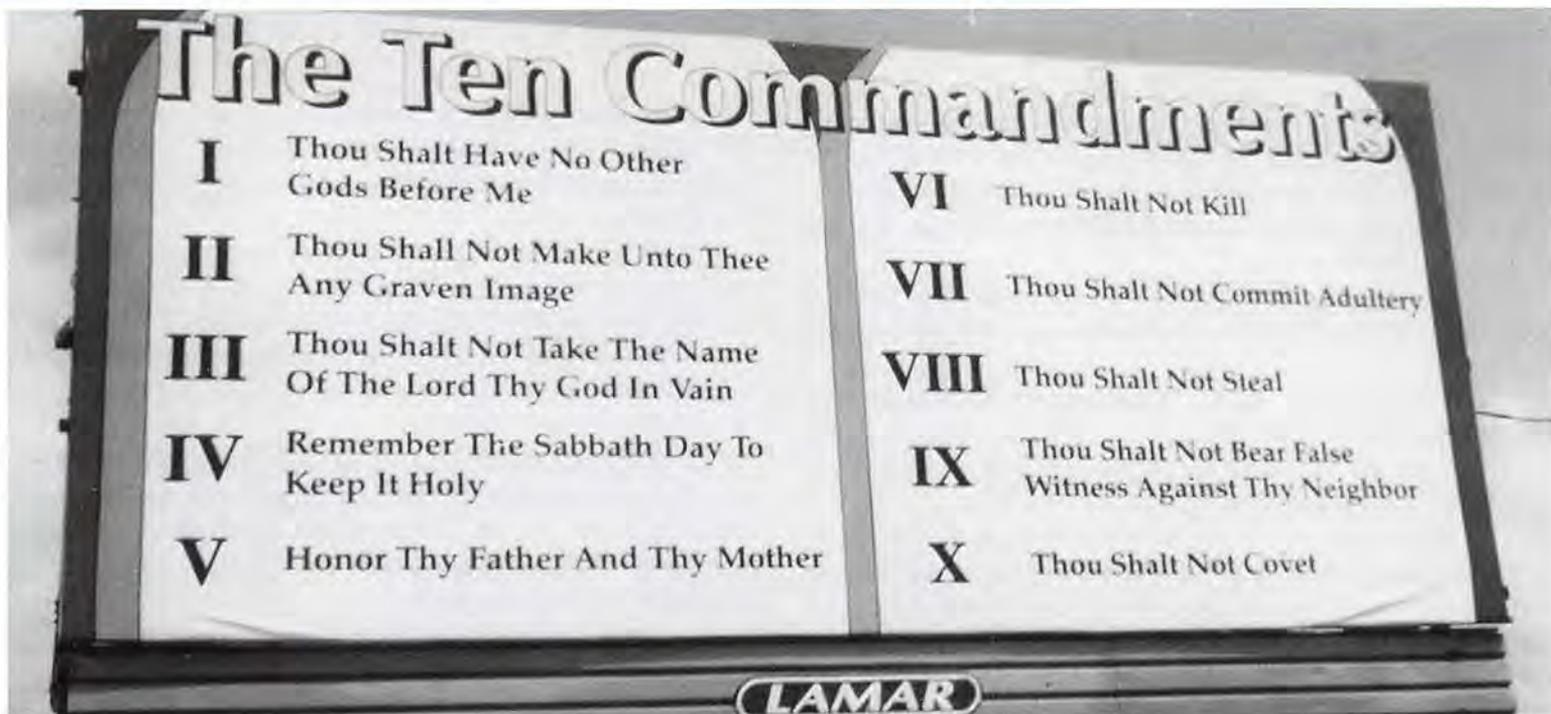
Let us make some points, raise some questions and come to some conclusions. When the father said, "This thy brother was dead, and is alive again" (Luke 15:32) he was speaking figuratively. We may be physically alive and spiritually dead at the same time (1 Timothy 5:6).

Every gospel preacher recognizes that coming into the family of God is a spiritual birth. A child of God is one who is born from above. What we have not so readily recognized is that the expression, "son of God" does not relate to a one-time past experience, but to a present relationship. That is, one is a "son of God" because he has the attributes of God, not merely because of a one-time act that was performed. This is why Jesus could say of those who thought that because they were Israelites, and therefore God was their father, that "Ye are of your father, the Devil" (John 8:44).

Why were James and John called "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17)? Why was Barnabas called a "son of consolation" (Acts 4:36)? Why was Elymas called a "son of the devil" (Acts 13:10)? It was because they evidenced the characteristics of the father. When Jesus said in Matthew 5:44-45, "I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven" He is talking about having a certain nature. If we do not love our enemies, then we are not "sons of our Father" in the Biblical sense. We have become

partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) by being generated from above (John 3:3). This does not mean that we always evidence that nature. When we reject God's will and stop striving to do that which He approves, we cease to partake of His nature, and cease to be sons of God as the Bible uses the term.

Our problem has then been, "If a man ceases to be a child of God, and he became a child by being born of water and the spirit then does he have to be baptized again in order to become a child of God again?" We have found it easier to answer, "No. For once he is a child, he is always a child. So he has to do what the Prodigal Son did. He has to repent and come home, but as the Prodigal did not have to be born again the second time, neither do we have to be born again the second time." It is true that the law of pardon for the alien sinner is to repent and be baptized (be born of water and the Spirit) and the law of pardon for an erring child of God is to repent and pray. What I am saying now is that an erring child is still a child. He did not cease to be a child of God just because he sins. That does not answer the question, "May a person so sin as to cease to be a son of God?" My present answer to the question is, "When a person sins deliberately, and persists in such, since he does not now have the qualities that would cause him to be classified by the Holy Spirit as "a son of God" he then would cease to be that in the Biblical sense. However, since this is merely a semantic or theological question, and has nothing whatever to do with practical matters such as whether he is saved or lost, or what will happen to him if he dies in that condition, the "bottom line" is that it does not make any difference how we classify him, for we can be striving about words to no profit and cause more damage than if we said nothing. But technically, in the Bible sense, he can still be a "child of God" because he is in the family, but not a "son of God" because he is not evidencing the nature of God. The term "child" is "*teknon*" and the term "son" is "*huios*." They do not refer to exactly the same relationship, for "child" has reference to one who has been born into a family, but "son" has reference to one who has the characteristics of his father.



The above Billboard is found on Hwy. 111 coming from Livingston, TN. To Cookeville, TN. It is encouraging to realize that others recognize the spiritual needs of our nation.

THE RIGHT ROAD

Mark Dillon

A man was driving down a road. He took a wrong turn. It was a long time before he realized it. He had to turn around and go back to get back on the right road. In a similar manner God gave us the Bible. The Bible should be valued more than all other possessions because it leads us to Jesus. You cannot get to heaven without Jesus and you cannot get to Jesus without the Bible. You could be a good person without the Bible but you face condemnation when you die (Hebrews 9:27; John 14:6). You will face dire judgment unless you are guided by the Bible everyday. The Bible is your only defense against the devil. The Bible is your only means of attack as well. Every time someone picks up a Bible to read, the devil is pushed back farther and further. In the story of Jesus and the apostles, we have everything we will ever need. John 6:45 says, *"It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."*

332 Stephanie Drive
Gassville, AR

EVOLUTIONISTS PRESSURE NATIONAL PARK TO DROP CREATIONIST BOOK FROM THE GRAND CANYON BOOKSTORE

Keith Hinson of the Baptist Press reports that evolutionists want copies of Tom Vail's book "Grand Canyon: A Different View" removed from the Grand Canyon bookstore. The book advocates creation science and is written by 23 contributors-14 of whom have Ph.D degrees in scientific areas from universities such as Harvard, Princeton and Penn State.

Elaine Sevy, a spokesperson with the National Park Service (NPS), stated that additional copies of Vail's fast-selling book had been reordered.

Vail's book has been targeted by evolutionists who are afraid of anyone and anything that might contradict their monkey-theory ideology.

Sevy pointed out that the park's bookstores have carried books "based on Native American (spiritual) beliefs for many years." Sevy stated her belief that "this country is based on freedom of religious and freedom of speech... We feel like a full spectrum is part of our culture... We want to offer all different kinds of beliefs, all different kinds of theories."

Vail's book is attacked because it dares question the evolutionary interpretation of the geologic history of the Grand Canyon. Evolutionists once again demonstrate they are open-minded only about evolution. We hope the NSP will continue its policy of fairness (Selected and adapted from Keith Hinson).

Note: The Grand Canyon bookstore website is www.grandcanyon.org/bookstore

Bill Dillon



THE MARRIAGE KING

Bill Dillon

Glynn "Scotty" Wolfe was the most married man in the world, holding the Guinness Book of World Records title as the most-married man. The acclaimed marriage king died on June 10, 1997 of heart disease at his Redlands, California, nursing home. He was 88.

Although the marriage king had made 29 trips down the aisle, not one of his 29 wives came forward to claim his body for burial.

A news release stated, "Wolfe's body lies unclaimed at the San Bernadino County Morgue.... If no one steps forward to claim him this week, Wolfe will be cremated by the county and dumped into a collection grave."

Wolfe's numerous marriage relationships were weak on commitment. For example, Wolfe left one of his wives because she ate sunflower seeds in bed, and divorced another because she used his toothbrush! The Bible teaches by contrast that matrimony is not only holy, but long-lasting. **One man for one woman for one lifetime is God's way!** (Matthew 19:9; Romans 7:1-3).

When the marriage tie is no stronger than sunflower seeds and toothbrushes, then you can't expect much at the hospital or funeral home! When will we learn?

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." Hugo 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, 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 and 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 endeavour 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?

NASA AND EVOLUTION

Bill Dillon

NASA's latest interplanetary probe was to Mars and a host of pictures showing us the red planet close up was the result. The name of the unmanned lander was Beagle II. For those who do not know, the original Beagle was the name of Charles Darwin's ship which carried him to the Galapagos Islands in search of a way to explain the origin of the world without using the Bible version of creation. After Darwin's journey he wrote Origin of the Species (1859), which suggested "natural selection" as the explanation for earth's life forms, instead of God.

The point is, modern day NASA is going to Mars with the same motive that Charles Darwin had in sailing to the Galapagos Islands. NASA is trying to confirm evolution! Why else call the Mars lander Beagle II? It is unfortunate that NASA is using multiplied millions of U.S. taxpayer dollars to try and prove the unprovable.

The dilemma for NASA evolutionists is obvious. If they accept the Bible account of creation, they must also accept the moral code found in the same Bible! It seems NASA evolutionists are willing to go to extreme limits to avoid accepting the truth of Holy Scripture; stated long ago:



"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made;
and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.
For he spake, and it was done; he commanded,
And it stood fast" (Psalm 33:6,9).

NASA's "Beagle" is a dog that just won't hunt!

WITNESS THIS

John T. Polk II

In the regular column "Periscope," *Newsweek* magazine, in its May 9, 2005 issue, reporters Michael Isikoff and John Barry gave this half-sentence concerning USA's "mis-treatment" of Iraqis "at the U.S. detention center at Guantanamo Bay" [in Cuba, jtpII]: "Among the previously unreported cases, sources tell NEWSWEEK: interrogators, in an attempt to rattle suspects, flushed a Qur'an down a toilet..." (p.10). As expected, reaction in the Muslim countries of Indonesia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, *et. al.*, produced anti-USA riots which resulted in 17+ deaths and many injuries. A week later, amidst tremendous criticism, *Newsweek* "expressed regret to the families of the victims," and finally "retracted the story." The real story was that one of the detainees, himself, had flushed pages of his own Qur'an down the toilet in an effort to cause drainage trouble.

All too clearly this incident brings home God's Word to our modern lives:

1. *Newsweek* in its reporting, obviously doesn't follow the Bible which says, "By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1). The reporters' "sources" amounted to ONE unsubstantiated statement, which they were eager to use as their ONLY source of information! No court in America would have "convicted" the Guantanamo guards of abuse with such flimsy "evidence!"

2. *Newsweek* also doesn't act wisely in its reporting, for Solomon said, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Proverbs 18:21). Words are powerful instruments, either for good or for evil. Solomon also said:

"A man shall eat well by the fruit of his mouth,
But the soul of the unfaithful feeds on violence.
He who guards his mouth preserves his life, But
he who opens wide his lips shall have
destruction" (Proverbs 13:2-3 NKJV).

It doesn't take a Solomon, however, to understand that those who feed on violence and recklessly report, especially in time of war, "shall have destruction." Maybe the reporters should be made to personally visit the countries where their words disturbed and destroyed people and make apologies. It's one thing to sit in their "ivory towers" wantonly writing, and quite another to face people with their words.

3. *Newsweek* continues its campaign of hatred against those who are not as "socialistic" as are they. We often hear that "love is blind," but not nearly so blind as "hatred." Solomon taught, "Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, And whoever spreads slander is a fool" (Proverbs 10:18). In recent years, *Time* magazine, Cable News Network (CNN), "The Washington Post," "USA Today," "The New York Times," CBS Television News, and *Newsweek* have all blindly printed lies and spread slander. Truly, the world lives in "malice and envy, hateful and hating one another" (Titus 3:3), and those who feed the fires are among the guilty. Only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can subdue hearts who love the truth, but "for those who perish," they do "not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thessalonians 2:10). God's Wisdom says, "Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins" (Proverbs 10:12). Since Jesus said, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34), *Newsweek* has clearly identified its real "source" of "news." Unless it repents, it should never be trusted as a source for anything but blindly prejudiced slander against those it deems enemies. For that matter, neither should Gospel Preachers, Elders, or other Christians who slander other preachers and churches of Christ on the basis of one person's "say so." Fellowship and soundness are never to be determined by fools and lying lips.

**125 The Trace
Dover, TN 37058**

GOING TO THE DOGS

John T. Polk II

In Nairobi, Kenya, a stray female dog found an abandoned human baby weighing 7 pounds, 4 ounces in a plastic bag, and carried the infant across a busy road and through barbed wire to a shed where she had her litter. The man who owned the shed found the baby, which was taken to the hospital and put on antibiotics.

Has "mothering" come to this? Surely in the USA, we seem to endlessly be exposed to stories of teens- to thirties-mothers who leave newborns on doorsteps, in trash cans, near



toilets, that is, when the babies are not killed outright! How damning is it to think that somewhere in God’s world, a lesser creature cares more for a human child than a human does?

1. Children should never be born except to a male & female who are bound together for life (Matthew 19:4-6). The term “bastard” aptly describes any child of a “single mother” (Hebrews 12:7-8). God legitimizes no unions between people of the same sex;

2. There is NO provision for sexual activity outside of the commitment of “marriage.” In the New Testament we read, “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4). Only a husband can have a wife, and a wife can have a husband, to whom to surrender sexual passions (I Corinthians 7:1-9). Since a child can only result from heterosexual union, the inescapable conclusion is: No child should be born without its parents being bound together in marriage! Sex should only be the expression of the deepest love and affection a “male and female” have for each other, and any other “coupling” violates this sacred honor! Abandoned babies are NOT the product of God’s way, but ALWAYS are the product of the world’s way in violation of God’s Word!

3. Raising a child is challenge enough for any mother & father, but to attempt it without a devoted spouse is foolish, indeed. In our “modern world” with its plethora of day cares, baby sitters, nannies, and grandparents to raise someone else’s child, isn’t the “parable” of this dog simplistic and powerful? This dog knew more than some human mothers: a baby needs the company of family. Perhaps if we brought that dog’s litter to the States they would help round up unwanted babies and the message would resound: America’s homes are going to the dogs!

Jeremiah’s lament is appropriate: “We have become orphans and waifs, Our mothers *are* like widows” (Lamentations 5:3).

**125 The Trace
Dover, TN 37058**

THE PLEA TO RETURN TO THE BIBLE

Alan E. Highers

The plea to return to the Bible - to speak where the Bible speaks and to be silent where the Bible is silent is a worthy, legitimate, and meritorious work.

The effort to restore the New Testament church, to practice those things which our Lord has authorized and to reject those things that are without scriptural support, is Christ-honoring and Bible-respecting.

These are the principles that our brethren proclaimed from the earliest days of the restoration plea. These are the precepts that motivated sincere individuals to abandon their denominational names and creeds and to become New Testament Christians. We must continually re-emphasize these same truths to every succeeding generation.

No one expressed this truth better than F. G. Allen when he said: “While we remain true to the principles on which we started out, there is no earthly power that can impede our progress. But the day we leave these walls and go out to take counsel with the world, will mark the day of our decline. We have nothing to fear from without. Our only danger lies in the direction of indifferences and compromise. While we are true to God in the maintenance of these principles, the divine blessing will be upon our work. But should they ever be surrendered, ruin will as certainly follow as that the Bible is true.”

Let us hold fast the faithful Word!

Henderson, TN

SALVATION BY GRACE

Albert Gardner

The very purpose for our being on this earth is to find and serve God. If we fail in this purpose it would be better had we never been born.

In 1829, George Wilson and James Porter were convicted of robbing the U.S. Mail, and were sentenced to death by hanging. Three weeks before the time set for Wilson's execution, he was pardoned by President Jackson.

Strangely enough, Wilson refused the pardon. The case went before the Supreme Court of the U.S. which handed down this decision: "A pardon is a deed, the validity of which delivery is not complete without acceptance. It may be rejected by the person to whom it is tendered; and if rejected, we have discovered no power in this court to force it upon him."

I once read about Eugene F. Suter who left an inheritance of \$400,000 to his twenty-two year old son who was a student at Yale University. The son refused his inheritance. The trustees of the estate insisted that the son must accept his inheritance. In an unprecedented case held in New York City, Judge William T. Collins reluctantly ruled that Eugene F. Suter, Jr. had a legal right to reject the \$400,000 left him by his father. The order legally cut off the twenty-two year old student from all future interest in the family fortune, leaving him without an income.

In an age of gross materialism, when almost everyone is trying to strike it rich, Suter's rejection of his inheritance from his father's estate is very unusual. Many people would question the sanity of the young man in turning down such a large sum of money.

Most people would agree that George Wilson acted foolishly in rejecting the pardon. Yet the sad truth is that multitudes are acting so very foolishly in rejecting the pardon for their sins and the inheritance which God has offered to all people.

The fact that all men are sinners does not need much proof. This truth is clearly stated in Romans 3:23. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." This is the real problem with the world. Many are concerned with the financial, political, social, educational, and psychological conditions of the world and think that if those things can be corrected that this would solve the world's problem. But it won't. There is a sin problem which education and money will not cure.

What is the solution to the sin problem? Only two things can be done for sin. Either it must be punished or pardoned. The justice of God demands that the unforgiven sinner...the unpardoned sinner...must be punished.

We understand this principle and enact it all the time in our civil courts. Often the Judge will issue a pardon. President Nixon received a pardon. In the absence of a pardon, there is punishment. Those people in our prisons over the nation are receiving punishment for their crimes because they have not been issued a pardon. Our courts did not think that idea up, but our judicial system borrowed it from the Bible even if they did not know where it came from. Many of our good laws have their basis in the Bible.

Though God is just, He is also merciful. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promises as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4). The holy purpose of God is for the salvation of the whole world. Some believe that God is against us and is just waiting to punish us. The purpose God has for us is stated in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the case that some will receive wrath and punishment but those who do have not lived up to their appointment which God has for them.

The mercy of God has provided for the way of pardon. Either one's sins will be pardoned or he will be punished. George Wilson did a very foolish thing in rejecting a complete pardon. Suter was unwise in refusing his inheritance. But what about all of those millions of people over the world today who are rejecting the pardon offered to them for their sins? The very purpose for our being on this earth is to find and serve God. If we fail in this purpose it would have been better had we never been born.

In Isaiah 53:6 the prophet tells of our condition which made it necessary for Jesus to come, though He was "despised and rejected of men." He says: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of

us all.” That sounds as fresh as the morning paper, doesn’t it? Men have turned to their own way. They have taken their life in hand and have decided to live it on their terms. All have gone astray.

At this point there is nothing to be done but punish sin. There is no pardon. But see what happened as Peter states it in I Peter 2. “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; yet are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”

That means a complete pardon is made available to every sinner in the world. Though it is possible to have that pardon, God will no more force that pardon on you than the Supreme Court would force a pardon on George Wilson for his crime of robbing the U.S. Mail. A pardon must be accepted. Though Eugene F. Suter, Jr. could have inherited \$400,000, he refused it. The court would not force it upon him. In the same way, sinners can be forgiven but pardon will not be forced on them. It must be by choice and acceptance.

It should be noted also that God does not give a parole. A parole is “a conditional release of a prisoner serving an unexpired sentence.” God pardons. A pardon releases one from the penalty that goes with the crime. God does not release us and watch us to see if we get into trouble again, and then bring the penalty back on us. He forgives. One great blessing of the New Testament is that it forgives sin. “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Hebrews 8:12). But this was not so under the Old Testament. “But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year (Hebrews 10:3). One can be sure that when he sins and receives forgiveness of that sin, God blots it out, and it will never be brought up against us again. I stress the fact that one must receive forgiveness. Just covering it up or waiting until people forget about it is not forgiveness.

Furthermore, the fact that God has offered the pardon is not enough. The Bible does not teach universal salvation. That means, then, that salvation is conditional. A pardon must be accepted. Please do not be lead astray at this point. Acceptance is not complete at faith only. If it were, even the demons would be saved. Notice James 2:19,

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.” Faith only won’t save them and it won’t save you either.

The great masses of people today are fed a steady diet of the doctrine of salvation by faith only but it is not Biblical. Both Old and New Testaments teach that only an obedient faith will save. There is no New Testament conversion that does not end with obedience in baptism. Is that works? Yes. It is works of obedience. It is not works one can boast about. When James discussed the works of Abraham, he said in James 2:24, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” What kind of works was that? It was the works of obedience. It was the kind Paul mentions in Galatians 5:6. “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.”

It is so very sad that many claim the pardon when in reality they do not have it for they have not been forgiven. They have not met the conditions set by our Lord in order to get the pardon. Acceptance is essential; therefore obedience to the conditions is necessary.

I would not for one second minimize the importance of faith in God, Christ, and the Bible. I teach it everywhere I go. It is necessary. The basic teaching of the first preachers in the church was the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. They wanted people to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. But they didn’t stop there. Never do you hear them say “believe only” for salvation. They always led them to repent of their sins and be baptized for the remission of sins. When they had done that, they had been forgiven and therefore had accepted pardon the Lord’s way.

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WORTH REPEATING

If you want to cast a big shadow stand in God’s light.

A Bible falling apart belongs to someone who isn’t.

God answers prayers – not advice.

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

Ronald D. Bryant

Spirituality is the result of knowing and embracing God and the things of God, of yielding to the will of God and of obeying and serving God wholeheartedly

What is “spirituality”? Who is “spiritual”? Before running off with a thread of thought, the whole cloth needs to be examined. How is the word used in the New Testament?

Twenty-six times, in the New Testament, the word *pneumatikos*, a Koine Greek adjective is translated by the English word “spiritual.” It is used in more than one sense. The word, as it is used in its various settings, provides the answer to the question: What is spirituality? These usages provide answer to the more personal question: Who is spiritual?

First, the word “spiritual” is used of that which is of a non-material nature. In Ephesians 6:12 Paul speaks of “*the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*” (NKJV). [“*The spiritual forces of wickedness*” (NASB).] In their essence, the beings referenced are spirit, or spiritual beings, not material beings. In this text they are evil, or wicked, in character.

Second, the word “spiritual” is used to describe the type of body the saved will be given in the resurrection. In I Corinthians 15:44, Paul contrasted the spiritual body to the physical body – a powerful significant distinction. The spiritual body is not a physical body.

Third, the word “spiritual” is used to refer to that which comes from God and is fully consistent with His nature. Paul wrote, “*the Law is spiritual*” (Romans 7:14). The Law of Moses was given by God – was His creation for the people of Israel, for a time and for a purpose (Cf. Galatians 3:19-25). It is accurate to state, “Laws originating from beings other than God (including man) are not spiritual, but the laws originating with God are spiritual.”

Fourth, the word “spiritual” is used to denote one who has a unique standing or connection with God, possessing knowledge of God and of His will. In I Corinthians 2:6ff, the wisdom of God is contrasted with the wisdom of men. The “*natural*” (*psychikos* – pertaining to the mind) is contrasted with the *spiritual*. The point made in this text: the natural man via his own intellect and intuition cannot know the things – the truths and the will of God, yet, the spiritual man does know the things – the truths and the will of God. “*The spiritual man*” in this text was one to whom the will of God was revealed by inspiration, i.e., an inspired man. Those men, inspired of God, were not taught by men, and when they spoke they spoke God’s truths using God’s words (vs. 11-13). Those inspired of God spoke and wrote that which God wanted spoken, and what God wanted written (Cf. Ephesians 3:3-5; II Peter 1:20-21).

Fifth, the word “spiritual” is used to denote a quality that is the opposite of “secular.” To be “secular” is to fail, or refuse, to take God into account. To be “spiritual” is to take God and the things of God into account. For example: In worship Christians sing “spiritual songs” (Ephesians 5:19), and offer up “*spiritual*

sacrifices, acceptable to God” (I Peter 2:5). Christians worship and sing songs that reflect reverence and adoration of the Lord God. They have to do with Divine and eternal verities as opposed to mere human and earthly considerations. The whole of the Christian life is “spiritual.” There is not an area, portion, or part of the Christian’s life that is “secular.” In all things the Christian takes God into account (Cf. Hebrews 4:13).

Sixth, the word “spiritual” is used to make a distinction between the “immature” and the “mature.” The “immature” are spoken of as being “babes” and “carnal.” The mature, those who are able to responsibly hear and heed the will of God, are referred to as “spiritual,” (Cf. I Corinthians 3:1ff). Further, Paul speaks categorically identifying the immaturity that led the Corinthian Christians to be divisive – as “carnal.” Carnality, not spirituality, was the source of division in the church at Corinth.

Seventh, the word “spiritual” is used to depict the person who readily and wholeheartedly seeks the will of God, as revealed by the Holy Spirit (in a miraculous way as in the first century), or, as it now is, in the Scriptures inspired of God (II Timothy 3:16ff). In Galatians 6:1, Paul charged a certain group of brethren (spiritual) to do the work of restoring those that had gone astray. In doing so he made a clear distinction between those that have been “overtaken in a fault” – non-spiritual, and those that are to restore them in the spirit of meekness – the spiritual. This is an important usage of the word “spiritual.” It is used to stress spirituality as a character trait.

In Galatians 5:16, those in Christ were told, “*Walk by the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.*” Then Paul expanded upon the necessity of their being “led by the spirit” and bearing “the fruit of the Spirit” (v. 18, 22-23). He emphasized the necessity of living by the Spirit, or under the direction of the Spirit. He presented the concept of living for God under the direction of the Spirit. The spiritual person, in this sense, is the person who seeks to live for God, in full surrender to His will, serving Him, loving Him with all of His heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). This usage sets forth spirituality as an essential character trait.

It is evident from the New Testament that spirituality, as a character trait, is not derived from experience, nor cultivated as a feeling. Spirituality is the result of knowing and embracing God and the things of God, of yielding to the will of God, and of obeying and serving God wholeheartedly. It is love for and genuine devotion to God manifested in life and in character. The fruit produced by true spirituality is Christ-likeness.

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The Christian Life A Journey

Numbers 10:29

M.W. Kiser

Introduction:

1. The song says, "This world is not my home, I'm just passing through." Another one reminds us that, "Here we are but straying pilgrims..yonder over the rolling river where that will be our home forever."

2. Two passages that contain this concept: Hebrews 11:13;
I Peter 2:11

3. The story of the text illustrates for us some things about the Christian life. Few passages illustrate so well the Christian's circumstances on this earth. Hebrews 10:1; I Corinthians 10:11; Romans 15:4

4. Let us notice the Christian as a pilgrim traveling:

I. The World Is Behind Him.

A. The world is the Christian's enemy.

1. Cannot have a love for the Father and it. James 4:4
2. Not to be conformed it. Romans 12:2
3. Definitely Satan's side. Ephesians 2:2

B. The world is nothing but a distraction to the Christian.

1. Colossians 3:2; I John 2:15, 16- hindering spirituality.
2. Matthew 13:33- destroying the influence of truth.
3. II Timothy 4:10- leading to apostasy.

C. The world is fleeting.

1. I John 2:17- it is to pass away.
2. Matthew 24:38, 39- offers only a false security.
3. Hebrews 11:25- it's pleasures are only for a season.

II. His Cross Is On His Back.

A. This is a condition of discipleship. Matthew 16:24
"if.let"

B. This calls for self denial. Matthew 16:24.

1. Self denial means saying "no" to what you want, and "yes" to what Jesus wants for you. Matthew 6:33; Titus 2:12; Galatians 5:24
2. We are less likely to wander out of the way with this burden upon our back. Hebrews 12:11; II Corinthians 4:7

C. This is a personal matter. Matthew 16:24. "his"

1. Paul knew this. Galatians 2:20
2. This is not a "burden" we share. Galatians 6:5
3. As personal as the judgment itself. II Corinthians 5:10

III. The Bible Is In His Hand.

A. Here are the instructions for the journey.

II Timothy 3:16, 17.

1. Good intentions never take you to a destination!
2. One in a strange place always welcomes directions.

B. Here is the weapon with which to face the enemy.

Ephesians 6:17.

1. It was used by Jesus for that purpose. Matthew 4:4, 7
2. We will encounter the enemy along the way. I Peter 5:8
3. There is power in the word. Acts 2:37; Romans 1:16; Hebrews 4:12

C. Here is the light for the pathway. Psalms 119:104, 105;
II Peter 1:19

1. For the cross roads of sin. Psalms 119:11

2. For the bypaths of false doctrine. II Timothy 3:15

3. For the pits and snares of the devil. II Corinthians 4:3, 4

IV. Jesus Christ Is By His Side.

A. We have the promise of His spiritual presence.
Matthew 28:20

1. In all circumstances, all the time. Hebrews 13:5;
Psalms 139:7-12

2. "Hand in hand we walk each day; hand in hand along the way. Walking thus I will not stray, hand in hand with Jesus."

B. We have the fellowship of His spiritual body.
Ephesians 5:30

1. His body is the church. Ephesians 1:21, 22.

2. He is the head, giving direction.

3. "Each step I take, I know that he will guide me to higher ground, He ever leads me on. And then some day the last step shall be taken. Each step I take just leads me closer home."

C. We have assurance of His spiritual help.

1. As He continues to cleanse us. I John 1:7

2. As He continues to represent us. I John 2:1,2

3. As he continues to watch over his own.

V. Heaven Is In His View.

A. By never looking back. Luke 9:62; Philippians 3:14

1. That would make you "unfit". Revelations 21:27

2. Remember one thing about the past. II Peter 1:8

B. By adding to our faith. II Peter 1:5-11

C. By pressing toward the mark. Philistines 3:15;

Hebrews4:12

Conclusion:

1. Those of you traveling another way-what do you expect at the end?

A man going to the North Pole might expect it to be warm, but why?

Will it be so because he hoped it would be?

2. There are only two ways- Matthew 7:13, 14. Which one are you on?

3. I invite you now to begin the journey. I like what Moses said to Hobab- "Come thou with us, we will do thee good."

4. I encourage you that are on the road to be faithful.

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NEW GOSPEL GLEANER WEBSITE

Many readers have inquired about the *Gospel Gleaner* having a website and we are pleased to announce the Gleaner can be visited at greenplain.org. Thanks to brother Andy Erwin and the Green Plain church of Christ in Hazel, KY for making it possible to read the *Gleaner* electronically.

GOSPEL GLEANER DISPLAY

The *Gospel Gleaner* was prominently displayed at the Freed-Hardeman University Lectureship, February, 2005. Several individuals came by and took free back issues along with several hundred free tracts written by Gleaner staff writers.

The Gleaner display was also present at the Crowley's Ridge College Lectureship in April. These brotherhood gatherings are an excellent way of obtaining new names for the paper's mailing list.



We express appreciation to all brethren who came by our displays and gave us words of encouragement.

MARK'S REMARKS TO STRENGTHEN EACH OTHER

Job 16:1-5 says, *Then Job answered and said, I have heard many such things; Miserable comforters are ye all. Shall vain words have an end? Or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest? I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you. But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.*" This should be a message to us today. We should be encouragers instead of discouragers. When bad times happen to someone, all too often they are left on their own or other people feel the need to make things worse. There are verses that speak against this.

I John 2:11 says, *"But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."* Revelation 3:16 says, *So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*" Let there be no miserable comforters. Let there be no vain words. Let us use words to strengthen each other.

-Mark Dillon
Gassville, AR



SOME OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTICS OF A LOST MAN

Guy F. Hester

If few had more praying fathers, we would have more pious children.

In Acts chapter ten we have the record of the conversion of Cornelius and his household. As we read this account and the events leading up to his conversion, we note that Cornelius was an outstanding man prior to his becoming a Christian. He was a military commander, "a centurion of the band called the Italian band" (Acts 10:1). It is rare indeed to find one of such importance interested in spiritual things. Yet the record shows in verse two that he was "a devout man." He was devoted to God and things of a spiritual nature although he was not yet a Christian. How we need more people today who are devoted to God. So many in our time are devoted to worldliness (1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4).

Cornelius "feared God with all his house" (Acts 10:2). Not only was he concerned about himself but his family as well. He was the head of his household and recognized his responsibility to lead them in the paths of righteousness. The husband is to be the head of the wife (Ephesians 5:22-24). He is to have his children in subjection to him (Ephesians 6:1-4). We do not have enough fathers who bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

He was benevolent. He "gave **much** alms to the people" (Acts 10:2). He was not stingy or covetous but gave "much alms." God demands liberal and cheerful givers (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5).

Cornelius was a man of prayer. He "prayed to God always" (Acts 10:2). He understood that prayer is man's only means of talking to God. A great deal is being said about prayer in school, but I am much more concerned about prayer in homes than I am prayer in school. If we had more praying fathers, we would have more pious children. We are told to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). However, God will not hear a sinner's prayer who regards iniquity in his heart and turns away his ear from hearing the law (John 9:31; Psalm 66:18; Proverbs 28:9).

Another outstanding characteristic of this man was that he was interested in the spiritual welfare of others. He "called together his kinsmen and near friends" (Acts 10:24). How we need to show more interest in others in spiritual matters, especially relatives and friends.

When he learned that we was not right religiously, he acted immediately to learn the truth. He said to Peter, "Immediately therefore I sent for thee" (Acts 10:33). When we

learn that we are in error religiously we need to act **now** to make the necessary corrections in our lives. "Behold now ...is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

No one could question the fact that Cornelius was a good man (Acts 10:1-2), but he was not saved by his goodness. He was not saved by prayer although his prayers came "up for a memorial before God" (Acts 10:4). He was not saved by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This was to convince Peter and his Jewish brethren that the gospel and salvation are for the Gentile as well as the Jew (Acts 10:44-48). He, and those of his household were saved when they obeyed the command to "be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48).

Those who are unsaved today can be saved just like Cornelius and his household were saved. Upon hearing "all things that are commanded thee of God" (Acts 10:33), believe and "be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48).

(Editor's Note: This article is a repeat from Gospel Gleaner Vol. 2, No 2 by request.)

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BIBLE QUIZ

1. What woman wore the first bridal veil mentioned in the Bible?
2. Where is the longest recorded prayer of Jesus?
3. How many books of the Bible did John write?
4. What famous rabbi was once Paul's teacher?
5. What was the penalty for kidnapping in the Old Testament?
6. Who in John's gospel is called "the son of perdition"?

Answers: 1. Rebekah (Gen. 24:65) 2. John 17 3. five (The Gospel of John, I, II, III John, Revelation) 4. Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) 5. death (Exodus 21:16) 6. Judas Iscariot (John 17:12)



IN THE NAME OF FREEDOM

David Dawson

Probably the worst behavior that has been allowed by society in the recent years in the name of personal freedom is the murder of unborn children

Freedom is a wonderful thing, and I'm very thankful to live in the land of the free. It is a great privilege to have the freedom to speak our mind as long as we don't slander another. It is wonderful to be able to live where we want and to be able to pursue whatever kind of work that appeals to us. It is truly a privilege to be able to worship God in the way we understand to be his will without fear of persecution. Freedom is indeed a wonderful thing.

Absolute freedom, that is, freedom without restrictions is another matter altogether. That is called anarchy. There is no question about the matter: man needs rules and restrictions to govern his actions. Well is it written, "*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of destruction*" (Proverbs 14:12). We, in pursuit of our own "rights" sometimes forget where our rights end and those of our neighbor begin, and so we need laws to define those things. Even when our Lord Jesus said that the truth would make us free (John 8:32) he didn't mean freedom to do whatever came into our minds. Christians live under certain restrictions, too.

The danger comes in stretching the limits of our freedoms and entertaining the notion that we are above governing and are found to be in a constant state of rebellion against all authority and rules imposed thereby. For instance: freedom of speech has been extended to the point that the speaker has all the rights and the hearer has none. As a result, we hear all sorts of filth on our television sets and in our movies, and our children have learned these words so that we now hear them in "normal" conversation. Marriage, the binding force of the family, which is the cornerstone of civilization, has given way to people living in sinful relationships; either by never bothering to marry, or by divorce for just any reason and remarriage, which the Lord calls adultery, and look at what we have for civilization today.

The disgusting sin of homosexuality has been "legitimized" by acceptance of this ungodly practice, and those who practice this perverted form of sin have been promoted by men of no principle, and our little ones are being taught that this form of the devil's delight is "just an alternate lifestyle."

Probably the worst behavior that has been allowed by society in recent years in the name of personal freedom is the murder of unborn children. This has been explained to be a

matter of choice with the mother, and that no one else has any rights in the matter; least of all the precious baby whose life is ended simply because the mother didn't "choose" to raise it.

In reality, the mother exercised her choice when she decided to expose herself to the chance of becoming pregnant. Birth control is much better, and infinitely safer, when "just saying no" is practiced instead of surgical infanticide. The problem is that many members of "the fair sex" as they were once known, have become wanton and find themselves in need of a way to escape the earthly wages of their sinful behavior. There is really no difference between killing an unwanted baby in the name of "women's choice" and the murder of their husbands, should they decide they no longer "choose" to live with them, except that the husband is able to fight back.

Freedom is a wonderful thing, but to violate the laws of Almighty God in the name of personal freedom is to take a blessing and turn it into a curse. "*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach unto any people*" (Proverbs 14:34). I pray that we will come to our senses soon and put an end to wholesale sin in the name of personal freedom. May God be merciful and grant us time to do this.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

The Lord willing, there will be a debate November, 15, 17, 2005 between John T. Polk II (Christian) and Bill Rutland (Roman Catholic) on the following propositions:

Proposition #1:

"The New Testament Scriptures are the sole authority for Christian faith and practice."

Affirm: John T. Polk II Deny: Bill Rutland

Proposition #2:

"The Scriptures and Apostolic Tradition as handed down by the Roman Catholic Church are our sole authority for Christian faith and practice."

Affirm: Bill Rutland Deny: John T. Polk II

*The College Church of Christ in DeFuniak Springs, Florida, may be contacted for further information. The telephone number is:
850-892-5384.*

"Messrs. Polk and Rutland have sought to establish a cordial relation in their pre-debate arrangements, and will maintain their mutual respect for the other's sincerity. This discussion will deal with doctrine, and not personalities, and should be conducted on a high plane."

WHY PREACH?

Andrew Erwin

Exactly who do such preachers seek to glorify when they exalt their “testimonies” above the oracles of God?
Tell me the story of Jesus, not your wives day at the hair salon!

It is not uncommon in our day to go to worship only to hear a preacher rattling on about his life, wife, and children. Have we run out of gospel gems? Are we to believe the rich resources of God’s word have been utterly exhausted to the point that there is nothing left to say on things pertaining to life and godliness and preachers must, therefore, resort to telling the assembly about personal triumph and tragedy? Granted, certain life experiences may help a preacher to have a keen insight in regard to a particular lesson. God may have very well provided a preacher with an opportunity to use this insight to His glory. But never should a preacher’s personal experiences overshadow the gospel plan of salvation. It is nothing less than tragic for a preacher to be sure to include his family in his lesson while excluding the plan by which man is eternally saved. Yet, this occurs more than members of the body of Christ probably care to admit. More and more are we hearing invitations of, “Come to Jesus” and, “Accept Jesus in your heart.” Less and less do we hear, “Hear. Believe. Repent. Confess. Be baptized.” It is shameful to think a man would preach an outline highlighting his personal experiences over and over and not one word describing how a person could be saved.

Why are preachers preaching about themselves rather than about God? Is not the purpose of preaching to bring the hearer closer to God? Perhaps some preachers wish to bring the hearers closer to themselves than to God. Why preach? You can preach for fame. You can preach for contention and strife. Or, you can preach for the salvation and edification of souls. What was the purpose of the preaching of the apostle Paul and the early evangelists? From a brief survey of a few select verses we can learn Paul’s concern was to preach Jesus and bring people closer to salvation. Notice, “*For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake*” (2 Corinthians 4:5). Again Paul wrote, “*To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily*” (Colossians 1:27-29). Paul’s agenda was simply put when he wrote, “*We preach Christ crucified...*” (1 Corinthians 1:23).

Preachers must preach Christ in order to glorify God. Peter wrote, “*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen*” (1 Peter 4:11). Exactly who do such preachers seek to glorify when they exalt their “testimonies” above the oracles of God? Tell me the story of Jesus, not of your wife’s day at the hair salon!

Preachers must preach the cross in order to save men from their sins. “*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God*” (1 Corinthians 1:18). Paul continued, “*For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*” (1 Corinthians 1:21).

Preachers must preach the word in order to do the work of an evangelist. “*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine... But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry*” (2 Timothy 4:2,5).

As preachers of the gospel of the Son of the living God, let us preach Christ and Him crucified. May we humble ourselves and exalt our God. Let us draw people nearer, yet nearer, to the Lord of Lords by preaching the truth as it is in Jesus. We can do this by preaching to our hearers the message by which man is saved, letting them know what they must do to be eternally blessed. Warning, rebuking when necessary, always speaking the truth in love, let us speak the oracles of almighty God. May a sermon never leave our hearts without including the plan which was purposed in heaven, made effectual at the cross, inspired by the Spirit, confirmed by God through diverse miracles and gifts, preached by the apostles, and received by sinners! Only when this is done is the gospel preached. Only those willing to do so should be considered gospel preachers.

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THE CHURCH

Ernest S. Underwood

In the New Testament the word “church” never refers to any kind of physical building, but to those who have been called out of their sin by their obedience to the gospel.

That the Holy Scriptures plainly teach that there is one, and only one church, cannot be successfully denied. Paul, in Ephesians 4:4 wrote: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling.” In this same epistle he wrote: “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:22-23). By reading the writings of any standard church historian one can follow the fortunes of this one church. Soon after the close of the first century the apostasy began, culminating some five hundred years later in an organization with one man claiming to be the head of the church. Many centuries later men arose with the idea of reforming that apostate organization. These actions resulted in the Reformation Movement. Conceived and born in this movement was the concept of denominationalism.

In our nation today there are more than four hundred denominational organizations or churches. Since the admonition of the inspired apostle is to “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith,” it seems reasonable that each one should, yea, must question himself about the church of which he is a member. In other words, can I prove by the Scriptures that the church of which I am a member is that one body spoken of by Paul? Is the church of which I am a member the one which Jesus said He would build, and the one He purchased with His blood? (cf. Acts 20:28). Would your preacher be willing to make the statement: “The church of which I am a member is the one church of the New Testament, and I can prove it by the Scriptures?” Do you as a member of that church have a right to ask him that question? If not, why not? The New Testament describes the church in such a fashion that one can certainly take that body of Scriptures and identify that one body.

Let’s look at the church of the New Testament. In the New Testament the word “church” never refers to any kind of physical building, but to those who have been called out of sin by their obedience to the gospel. Thus, the church consists of the saved (cf. Acts 2:47; Colossians 1:13-14).

Jesus said, “Upon this rock I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18). Any student of the language recognizes that the “will build” of that statement is future tense. In Acts 2:47, according to the King James Version, we find the saved being added to the church. Some time between Jesus’ statement and the last verse of Acts chapter two the church had its beginning. In Mark 9:1, Jesus told His disciples that the kingdom would come with power in their lifetime. In Acts chapter one He identified that power as the Holy Spirit coming upon the apostles. This event occurred on the Day of Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, as recorded in the second chapter of Acts. On that day those who obeyed the commands of the Holy Spirit, as spoken by Peter, were added to the church. Is this the church of which you are a member? Can you take the Scriptures and prove it? Does God approve of the way that you use His word to prove it? In other words, am I wresting the Scriptures, or am I taking them in their context to prove by them that the church of which I am a member is that one church?

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HELENA, MOTHER OF CONSTANTINE

(248–330 A.D.)

Grady Miller

One of the most important women in early church history is today only vaguely remembered by those who reject the authority and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church.

Helena was born c. 248 A.D. in what is today northwestern Turkey. Her background is as obscure as it was humble. Ambrose of Milan (339–397), born shortly after her death, described her as a *stabularia* or inn-keeper. She became either the legal wife or the concubine of an up-and-coming politician and soldier named Constantius. She bore him a son in c. 274 and named him Constantine.

By the year 292 Constantius had risen to the important position of Caesar and co-Regent of the West. In a political move designed to enhance his station, he forsook Helena and married Theodora, the stepdaughter of Emperor Maximianus Herculius. Her son, however, remained loyal to Helena. Upon the death of his father in 308, Constantine assumed his power and, summoning his mother to the official court, conferred upon her the title of *Augusta* and commissioned coins to be struck bearing her likeness. Upon his consolidation of power as Emperor, Helena was afforded the respect and honor due to the queen-mother of the Roman Empire.

It is not at all certain when Helena became a “Christian.” Eusebius (260–340), the bishop of Caesarea and “father of church history,” was a friend to Helena and praised her piety and devotion: “She became under his [Constantine’s] influence such a devout servant of God, that one might believe her to have been from her very childhood a disciple of the Redeemer of mankind” (*Vita Constantini*, III, xlvi).

In her last years Helena was involved in family crisis and political scandal. In 326 Constantine ordered the execution of his son Crispus and then put to death his wife Fausta. It is not certain what role Helena played in these matters. There are reports she denounced Fausta, and there are reports that Crispus and Fausta were lovers. At this date and distance, it is impossible to separate fact from gossip.

At any rate, we do know that shortly following this affair Helena, approaching her eightieth birthday, made a pilgrimage to the “Holy Land.” There, according to Eusebius, she “explored it with remarkable discernment.” She had a particular interest in identifying the exact sites associated with the ministry of Jesus — where He was born, transfigured, crucified, buried, resurrected and ascended to the Father. As the mother of the Emperor and

his official representative, she commissioned cathedrals to be built on these “holy places.”

Any Bible student who tours the land of Israel today, of course, acknowledges the detective work carried out by Helena, even while he or she disagrees with some of her conclusions and laments the destruction of important sites caused by the erection of Catholic chapels and cathedrals.

The grotto at Bethlehem that lies beneath the Church of the Nativity — where our Savior *may* have been born — has been floored with marble, covered by tapestries, and overlaid with gold. It is all but impossible for one’s imagination to see a stable where Mary “brought for her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger” (Luke 2:7).

The rocky brow of a hill and the nearby rock-cut tomb at Jerusalem — identified as Golgotha and the burial place of Jesus since the 3rd century, and now within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre — bears no resemblance whatever to the scenes recorded in the New Testament.

Still, Helena is important in the story of the early church’s transformation from persecution to privilege. By all accounts she had a tremendous influence on her son, Constantine, and his decision to make Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. As the queen-mother and *Augusta*, she traveled widely, secured donations for churches and charitable works, and helped popularize the emerging Roman Catholic Church.



The coin bearing the image of Helena Augusta was minted during her lifetime and circulated throughout the Roman Empire. It went out of production in 329 A.D. shortly after her death.

STARVING AS THE RESULT OF NOT GLEANING

Robert McDoniel

Are you hungering for truth? God has provided us with all truth through His Word.

God has always cared for the poor, the hungry, and the sojourners. In fact, one of the first and best welfare programs we can read of anywhere is seen in the laws which God gave to Israel's family as he sought to transform them into a mighty nation of people. We find these rules for the care of the poor and hungry in the Old Testament books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Listen to God's plan.

“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner; I am the Lord your God”
(Leviticus 19:9,10)

“And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner; I am the Lord your God”
(Leviticus 23:22).

“When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over them again. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not strip it afterward. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow...”
(Deuteronomy 24:19-21)

It should be obvious that this was a fair and equitable plan for meeting the needs of those who could not otherwise provide for themselves. This plan does not promote laziness. The sojourners and others who were thus provided for had to go into the field and gather what was left behind for themselves. They still had to work in order to eat. The fact that this plan of

welfare worked is seen in the example of Naomi and Ruth. Here were two widows who were able to provide for their needs by gleaning. The second chapter of the book of Ruth gives the account of Ruth's labor in the fields of Boaz to provide for herself and her mother-in-law.

In more recent times I have known brethren to plant what they called gleaner's rows in their gardens. These rows of vegetables were planted and left for the purpose of helping any who were poor and hungry that were passing through that area. If someone came up to them asking for help they would simply point them to the garden and say, “Help yourself. Take as much as you can use.”

Unfortunately, not everyone who came by appreciated that brother's generosity. They wanted the food. They just did not want to work to get it. And so they would go away as hungry as they were when they arrived. They starved because of their unwillingness to glean.

Just as God has always cared for the poor of this world, He has also made provision for the spiritually hungry as well. In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount we find the blessing, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matthew 5:6). That satisfaction is to be found in a thorough study of the scriptures. We know this because Paul wrote, “All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16,17). It is as if God is saying to us, “Here it is. Help yourself. Take as much as you can use.” God has provided all we need, but we must desire it. Peter urged, “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation...” (1 Peter 2:2). Paul seemed to be encouraging the same longing when he wrote, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Are you hungering for truth? God has provided us with all truth through His word. Please do not go hungry because of an unwillingness to glean. Dig into the word. Crave its teachings. Build yourself up in the most holy faith.

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IS HOMOSEXUALITY JUST ANOTHER WAY OF LIFE?

Guyton E. Montgomery

The advocates of homosexuality want us to believe that it is normal and there is nothing wrong with it, but God says it is not natural and it is wrong

Homosexuality is a problem that is plaguing the nation. Television, movies, magazines, and music are bringing this abomination into our homes. Children are being taught that this is just another choice and that there is nothing wrong with it. Something must be done!

The problem is, if a person even suggests they disagree or disapprove of homosexuality they are labeled as a bigot. It is a sad thing when one standing for righteousness is condemned and ridiculed for their actions.

What is most of all troublesome is that Christians have played into the Devil's hand and have remained silent on this issue. They might from time to time condemn it behind closed doors, but will not publicly take a stand. It is essential for one to remember the words of Edmond Burke when he said, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." Good men have been doing nothing far too long and evil has been triumphing when it comes to homosexuality. It is time that Christians speak up and let the truth be known regarding homosexuality.

God has always condemned the practice of homosexuality. Leviticus 18:22 says, "*Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind: it is abomination.*" How much clearer can God make the command? He is saying that men are not to lie with men. An abomination is anything that is disgusting, hated or loathed. This is how God views homosexuality. If this was the only place in the Bible condemning homosexuality, it would be enough for us to know that it is wrong!

Paul also wrote, through the inspiration of God, to the church at Rome regarding this great sin. Notice what he wrote,

"And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly..." (Romans 1:27). The men were leaving the women and using each other in a way that was not natural! The advocates for homosexuality want us to believe that it is normal and there is nothing wrong with it, but God says it is not natural and it is wrong.

Don't forget human reasoning. Where would we be if God made us homosexuals? The answer is simple. We wouldn't be here, for man with man or woman with woman cannot reproduce. Only man and woman when joined together can produce after their kind. Remember in the Garden of Eden when God saw Adam and said that it was not good for man to be alone. God did not create another man, but instead he created woman. The reason for this is that God's will is for man to be with woman (Genesis 2:18-25).

In the Old Testament one can read that God disapproved of homosexuality so much that he destroyed two cities, Sodom and Gomorrah. It was not part of the city that he destroyed, but the whole city (Genesis 19:23-29). He destroyed them so completely that it is still not known for sure where they were located.

The Devil would love for Christian to remain quiet and accept homosexuality as just "another lifestyle." However, God has condemned homosexuality and Christians are not to tolerate it. They are to take the all powerful word of God and teach the truth (Romans 1:16; Hebrews 4:12).

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ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND?

Dave Smith

Have you ever found yourself in a situation where someone has questioned your judgment and said, “Are you out of your mind?” I would assume most of us have at some point in time. Yet I would like us to consider “being out of one’s mind” is not necessarily a bad thing. As a matter of fact, it is a necessity to be “out of one’s mind” to be a child of God. Let me explain.

As Jesus spoke to His disciples of His impending death in Matthew 16, He made the following comment concerning discipleship: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” Self-denial is an essential part of being a child of God. When we de-emphasize the things of this world and “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33), we, in essence, are out of our mind and have replaced our thoughts with things of a heavenly, a spiritual nature. As we read in Colossians 3:2, “Set your affections (or your mind) on things above, not on things of the earth.”

How do we go about this? We must respect the authority of the scriptures and let them lead us, not the wisdom of men. And, contrary to man’s wisdom, it is possible to possess the mind Christ would have us to possess. Note the following words of the apostle Paul: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together **in the same mind** (my emphasis –DS) and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10; see also 2 Corinthians 13:11).

The mind which the Christian should now possess should be in tune with the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5). No better verse of scripture bears this out than that found in Galatians 2:20 – “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Our lives (including our

minds) are no longer ours. They have been given over to the one who died on the cross on our behalves.

The work that must be done to achieve success is a constant battle, for “our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Therefore, we must be on constant guard to maintain a mind that is in keeping with the teachings of the Lord. From the letter to the Philippians we receive guidance when we read, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

Are you out of your mind? We can see from the scriptures it is important to be out of one’s own mind and have it replaced with a mind that is centered on doing the will of God. Let us ever keep in mind Paul’s words found in Romans 8:6, “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”

1665 Jamestown Road
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WORTH REPEATING

A lot of kneeling will keep you in good standing.

Jesus died on the cross – that you might get a life.

We don’t change the message. The message changes us.

AM I YOUR ENEMY?

Timothy L. Dooley

We are all familiar with the phrase, "The truth hurts". No, this is not always the case. But, when truth is in direct opposition to what we want to believe, this statement can contain a brutal honesty. We are also well acquainted with the declaration, "What we don't know won't hurt us". This could not be further from the truth when applied to religious matters.

Christ said that God's word is truth (John 17:17).

Christ is truth (John 14:6).

Therefore, we must obey truth in order to be purified (1 Peter 1:22).

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

God's word has set forth a plan of action for us. We must follow this plan and be obedient to Him in order to obtain eternal life. First, we must hear God's word (Romans 10:17).

We cannot believe or be obedient to something we have not heard (Romans 10:14).

Secondly, we must believe that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God. That He died for your sins and arose again the third day. And that in doing so He established His church, the kingdom (John 3:16; Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:24,32; 1 Corinthians 10:4).

Then we must repent and leave the ways of this world, the doctrines of men, and follow after Christ (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 17:30).

We must also be willing to confess Him before men (Matthew 10:32-33).

To this point I will find few that disagree, but there is more. (Romans 10:10) says that confession is *unto* salvation. Many have done these things which are commanded by God, yet they refuse to submit to Him in obedience in baptism.

It is for the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38).

It is how we are saved (1 Peter 3:21).

Few would argue that in order to be saved we must "have Christ". Baptism is the only way to put Him on (Galatians 3:27).

It will put you into His body (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Now, all these things I have said with all the love I have for the souls of every man. I didn't say these things to be harsh or unloving. I say this only because God has told us all to preach and teach the truth. In telling you the truth, am I become your enemy? (Galatians 4:16).

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KEEP SMILING

Carroll Sites

"A merry heart does good like, a medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones."

Proverbs 17:22

Have you smiled today? Does your life and face radiate the happiness and countenance of a heart that is full of peace and joy?

Little Johnny came downstairs crying loudly. His mother asked, "What's the matter?" "Dad was hanging pictures and just hit his thumb with a hammer," little Johnny said through his tears. "That's not so serious," said his mother. "I know you're upset, but a big boy like you shouldn't cry at something like that. Why didn't you just laugh?" "I did," sobbed Johnny.

We need to *"Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep"* (Romans 12:15). There is a time for weeping, but the Christian countenance should be one of happiness and joy. The following has been making its way around the internet:

Smiling is infectious,
You catch it like the flu.
When someone smiled at me today,
I started smiling, too.

I passed around the corner,
And someone saw my grin.
When he smiled, I realized
I'd passed it on to him.

I thought about that smile,
Then I realized its worth.
A single smile, just like mine
Could travel round the earth.

So, if you feel a smile begin,
Don't leave it undetected.
Let's start an epidemic quick,
And get the world infected!

"A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance...he who is of a merry heart has a continual feast." Proverbs 15:13,15

Keep smiling! Pass it on! It's catching!

Higden, AR



NEW READER IN MICHIGAN

“My prayer is that God will continue to bless your work. Your work of faith and love is being spread abroad. It has reached Pontiac, Michigan where I am privileged to preach the gospel of Christ. I would love to be placed on your mailing list for your free publication. . . . Thanks in advance for the knowledge and encouragement that I will receive from your printed page.”
Darrell Holt, Pontiac, MI

GLEANER WORK IS APPRECIATED

“Dear Brother Dillon: I have enclosed a check for \$200.00 to help with the publishing of *The Gospel Gleaner*. The work that you are doing is important and much appreciated by many.” V. Glenn McCoy, Yorba Linda, CA (Editor’s Note: Brother McCoy has written an excellent and effective book entitled RETURN TO THE OLD PATHS. He also is the author of numerous tracts. These materials can be ordered by contacting brother Glenn at: 22470 Mission Hills Ln, Yorba Linda, CA 92887, vglmccoy@aol.com The book can be purchased for \$16 – postage paid.)

NEW READER

“Please place my name on your mailing list.” Mr. Bobby Stewart, Troy, TN

LONG TIME READER

“Dear Bro. Dillon, I have been receiving your paper, *Gospel Gleaner*, for several years and I am really enjoying all of them. I pass them along to the minister at the church where I attend each and every service. I don’t go sometimes but most of the time I do. . . .” Nannie Philpot, Wartrace, TN

LOVES THE GLEANER

“I want to be put on your mailing list to receive the *Gospel Gleaner*. I have read one and I loved it. Thanks.”
Benny Burns, Petersburg, TN

A GOOD RECOMMENDATION

“You put out a good paper.” Perry Cotham (EDITOR’S NOTE: Brother Cotham has written a tract entitled “The Home and God’s Law Concerning Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage”. Copies of this well written and needed booklet can be ordered by writing to Perry Cotham, 1814 Santa Cruz, Grand Prairie, TX 75051)

KEEP GLEANER COMING

“Thank you for sending *Gospel Gleaner*. Please keep it coming.” Ralph Thompson, White House, TN

BUNDLES DISTRIBUTED

“Dear Brother Dillon: I sent you an email last week thanking you for sending a bundle of *Gospel Gleaner* to me. I distributed these at church this past Sunday. . . . I am enclosing a check for \$100.00, which, I hope, will help with the printing/publishing/ mailing of this fine publication.” Charles R. Gunter, Jr., Johnson City, TN

IMPRESSED WITH THE GLEANER

“Brother Dillon, My family and I worship with the congregation in Jerome, Idaho. At a recent worship service, I found a copy of the *Gospel Gleaner* on one of the tables (Vol. 20, No. 2). After taking it home and reading through it, I was very impressed with the articles and would surely love to be added to your mailing list. In fact, if I could get copies of the 3rd & 4th Q 2004 pubs sent to me I would greatly appreciate it. God Bless and thanks for all you do!! Respectfully, WD Rasmussen & Family” Hailey, ID



GLENER IS A MUST READ

I enjoy the *Gospel Gleaner* so very much. I have to read it thru when I start. Thank you for sending it to me. I pass it on. Looking forward to the next edition. My prayers are with all of you and your good works. In Christian Love, Betty Johnson” Lauderdale, MS

EIGHTY-THREE AND GOING STRONG

“Please put me on your mailing list for the *Gospel Gleaner*. I have enclosed a small amount to help defer the costs of publication. I am an 83 year old Christian lady who likes to read good publications that are true to the word. I do attend worship services when I am able. God’s blessings be on you all. With Christian love, Joan A. Graham” Ogden, UT

EX-PRISONER WANTS THE GLENER

“Dear friends, I was baptized into Christ on August 18, 1999 while incarcerated in Piggott Arkansas. I was recently released from prison here in the state of Missouri. I am a serious student of the Bible diligently seeking the truth. Most members of my family are members of the church of Christ. After serving over six years in prison, I have been tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. I have returned to my first love, and to the church. I was able to obtain a copy of *Gospel Gleaner* from an elder of the Arnold church of Christ. I want to say it was a blessing, and that it helped me grow stronger in my faith. Could I please be added to your mailing list and to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord? Respectfully submitted, Darren Dorris” Cuba, MO

WANTS SON TO RECEIVE PAPER

“Dear Brethren: Please add my son....to your mailing list. I love the information that the *Gospel Gleaner* brings to its readers. May God continue to bless you to publish such a good source of information. I will in the future, if it be the Lord’s will, send you a contribution. I’m not able at this time and I do so want my son to start receiving *Gospel Gleaner*. Please if you will send him the Volume 20 No. 3 & 4 if you have a copy. Thank you very much. Yours in Christ, Ossie Stanfield” Rockford, IL

OBTAINED GLENER AT FHU LECTURESHIP

“Greetings brothers and sisters in Christ, I wish to subscribe to the *Gospel Gleaner*; as well, I would like to subscribe for my father-in-law who is visiting with us. This past February I attended the Freed-Hardeman lectureships and somehow ended up with a copy of the *Gospel Gleaner*. I very much like the articles, as does my father-in-law. The following is our information for quarterly copies of the *Gospel Gleaner*: ...I pray for this outreach and educating role you have taken on providing the *Gospel Gleaner* to interested persons. God bless you. In Him, Ed Van Alstine” Hamilton, ON, Canada

A LONG TIME SATISFIED READER

“I have been the happy recipient of the *Gospel Gleaner* for a few years, and have never expressed my appreciation for the fine articles that are printed in it. Please never delete my name from your mailing list. It is truly a source of encouragement and enlightenment.

I have wondered if you have or had articles on mission work. If that is within a possibility, I would greatly appreciate anything you could send.

Thank you again for your wonderful work in His name. Mary Stilson” Ft. Collins, CO



BEGGED, BORROWED AND BEGOTTEN

Mark Dillon

TGIF – Thank God I’m Forgiven.

God is everywhere so pray anywhere.

Don’t have anything to be thankful for?
Check your pulse.

When it comes to giving, some people stop at nothing.

God formed us, sin deformed us, Christ transformed us.

Peace begins not at Mideast table but at a Mideast stable.

“If we ask why God allows such a mixture of the false and the true to exist together – even perhaps in the same person – we can only answer that He does this to test us. This you might recall, is the reason God gave the Israelites as to why He might allow a false prophet to mouth an accurate prophecy. ‘The Lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all soul’ (Deuteronomy 15:3, emphasis added.)”

Erwin W. Lutzer

“Some churches have attracted large memberships by stressing ‘felt needs.’ Their leaders are committed to showing the relevance of Christianity to raising a good family, getting along with coworkers, and being successful in business. And since people have no felt need to listen to the gospel, its message often takes second place and is carefully slipped into discussions on relevant topics. What these well-intentioned ministers forget is that when we stand as sinners in the presence of God, our greatest felt need of the moment will be for the righteousness of Christ to shield us from God’s holiness. Yes, of course, we should cater to felt needs, but we have to help people grasp what their felt needs should be.”

Erwin W. Lutzer

“So, although we cannot judge the motives of others, let us ask God to judge our own inner motives. Let us make sure that we always judge with grace and mercy; let us not delight to find others in error.”

W. Lutzer

Erwin

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QUOTES WORTH REMEMBER'ING

“Thirteen percent of the 1850 verses in the New Testament that record the words of Jesus deal with the subject of eternal judgment and hell. In fact, Jesus had more to say about hell than he did about heaven.”

—Robert Jeffress

“But God’s Word has not changed. The Bible describes homosexuality as a perversion of God’s design for human sexuality that has devastating physical, emotional, and spiritual consequences. Christians should not fall into the trap of cutting our consciences to fit this year’s fashion, to paraphrase American playwright Lillian Hellman. Homosexuality is a distortion of God’s plan for human sexuality.”

—Robert Jeffress

“The fear of hell is the thing most like worldly people thinking of the Kingdom. No rational human being can be convinced that he is in imminent danger of eternal torment if he does nothing about it.”

—John Calvin

“Husbands, although you cannot force her to submit to your leadership, you can encourage her submission... by example and sacrifice. Has it ever occurred to you that one reason your wife may have difficulty placing herself under your authority is because she has never seen you submit to God’s authority?”

—Robert Jeffress

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Working for Unity of the Spirit

The Psalmist penned, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (133:1). As there are rewards and blessings to be experienced when brethren are together on a united front against Satan, we are reminded that Christian unity is worth the time and energy exerted to experience and maintain it. We note that Christian unity is certainly possible as Jesus prayed that his followers would be united in him and the Father (John 17: 21-23). Jesus never expected or hoped for "the impossible."

Our spiritual vision must remain healthy so we may always be able to identify who our common enemy is. On one occasion Paul wrote: "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Galatians 4:16). Certainly Paul was not their enemy. He cared about them as he did other brethren. However, if their spiritual vision was distorted, being unduly influenced by false teachers, they might mistakenly perceive Paul as an enemy. The devil smiles when he can get brethren to be "out of sorts" with each other.

May we be always mindful there is great strength in unity; and so we lose our effectiveness to overcome Satan when we come to be at conflict with one another.

You and I can promote unity within Christ's body (in the context of our local congregation) by expressing our care for one another. The text in 1 Corinthians 12:25 reads in

"...the members should have the same care one for another." When we truly love Jesus Christ, our Lord, and care about his church, we will evenly distribute our efforts to serve and bless the lives of our brethren ~ especially those with "the greatest needs" (sick, elderly, shut-in, bereaved, etc.).

Christian unity may often times be hindered when people feel neglected, over-looked or unneeded. May you and I be committed to doing our part in supplying within the body that which is needed in an equitable way. Every member of Christ's spiritual body is vitally important to its life and function. That is why God's Word teaches: "And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26). No one of us is "an island to himself." What affects one of us, affects all of us.

You and I are not greater than our Lord who came to minister. He calls upon you and me to minister, too. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matthew 25:40)

You make a difference in the body of Christ. Let's all put forth the effort to make the difference day by day.

~Tim Childs
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GOSPEL GLEANER

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The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is dedicated to restoring New Testament Christianity. We welcome *your* comments and questions regarding any article found herein.

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A Debate with Catholics

It was my privilege to attend the Polk-Sungenis Debate conducted at DeFuniak Springs Community Center in DeFuniak Springs, FL, the evenings of November 15, 17, 2005. The first night's proposition was: "The New Testament scriptures are the sole authority for Christian faith and practice." Affirm: John T. Polk (Christian). Deny: Robert Sungenis (Catholic). The last evening's topic was: "The Scriptures and Apostolic tradition handed down by the Roman Catholic Church are our sole authority for Christian faith and practice." Affirm: Robert Sungenis (Catholic). Deny: John T. Polk (Christian).

The College Avenue Church of Christ, with Ernest Underwood as preacher, arranged the discussion in response to an article about Catholicism mailed out to the community in a religious publication published by the College Avenue brethren.

The discussion was handled on a high place of courtesy and fairness as each man sought to press his case by honest and fair means. Neither disputant used any foul play to gain an advantage.

Mr. Sungenis opened his cause with a challenge for his opponent to show anywhere in the Bible that scripture itself claimed to be the only source of authority. Brother Polk eagerly responded by saying that those exact words were not in the Bible ~ nor need to be.

Although the scriptures did not use the exact wording suggested by Mr. Sungenis, yet, the sum of biblical teaching is that the scriptures are the sole authority. Brother Polk cemented his argument by pointing out the words "Roman Catholic Church" are not found in the scriptures either.

Mr. Sungenis surprised everyone by announcing he had been a member of the church of Christ, at one time and he would gladly become a member again if his opponent would produce the verse that says the scriptures alone are our sole authority.

Brother Polk replied that the offer could not be accepted inasmuch as anyone becoming a member of the Lord's church must do so on the basis of heartfelt conviction not because he lost a wager.

As the discussion continued, Mr. Sungenis used Acts 15 as an example to show how the early church used oral tradition to supplement scriptural authority. Brother Polk easily pointed out that the brethren at Jerusalem in Acts 15 did not come together to vote and chose what was truth, but, to the contrary, the purpose of the Jerusalem meeting was to learn what God had already decreed to be truth.

Brother Polk is to be commended for his excellent spirit throughout the debate as he presented the truth in love. Mr. Sungenis is also to be complemented for his willingness to defend his convictions. Mr. Sungenis' unsuccessful effort to uphold his proposition is in no way a reflection on his ability. The simple problem was that of a lack of scriptural support for his views.

The debate was videoed by Freed-Hardeman University and DVD's are available by calling 731-989-6751 or www.fhu.edu/recording.

~Bill Dillon

*Hickory Ridge Church of Christ
Hickory Ridge, Arkansas 72347*

To Our Readers

All connected with *Gospel Gleaner* are thankful for the splendid readership of our publication. We have had numerous adjustments to make in the printing of the *Gleaner* that have resulted in a sporadic publishing schedule. We are stabilizing our efforts and trying to mail out on a more regular basis. In our constant quest to have the best publication for the greatest number of readers, we are switching printers and going to an easier to read quality paper. We express gratitude to our readers for their loyalty and humbly ask their indulgence as we improve the publishing of the *Gospel Gleaner*.

An indebtedness is owed to many brethren for their true-hearted devotion in support of the *Gleaner*. Every week brings an increase in the number of readers and financial support as well. It is an encouragement to know that so many are responsive to the paper's needs.

~Editor

New Gospel Gleaner Web Site
www.gospelgleaner.net

Aim Higher Up

One preacher, noted for his harsh and brash sermons, boasted that he "shot from the hip" and, he added, he always "shot straight from the shoulder". A friend of his replied, "Yes, but I wish your message originated from a little higher on your body than your shoulder!"

At another place a church member said to the preacher, "You sure got on my toes this morning". The preacher replied, "Then, I must apologize for having a bad aim. I was aiming at your heart, not your toes."

There is no substitute for heart-to-heart preaching. Why not attend the worship services of the Hickory Ridge Church of Christ on Sundays and Wednesdays where we try to preach only the truth; but preach it in love. The need for preaching the truth in love is greater now than every before. Visit with us real soon.

~Bill Dillon

Prescription For Peace

In 1946 there appeared in the New York Times a letter from a young veteran in Halloran Hospital Staten Island. The letter was due to the anguish and bewilderment over conditions in the world. The writer, a paralytic by the name of John Crown, gave his prescription for peace among men; his words have added meaning as John Crown died just a few months before the book went to press.

Crown wrote, "...I, who have been engaged in the great struggle to save the world from tyranny ... can now find no peace in the world or in the country..."

...All the world's troubles originate in the common man. The selfish greedy ways of nations are just the ways of each individual multiplied a hundredfold. When the morals of the common man drop, so do the morals of the nation and the world...if man wishes peace again, he must return to the great commandment, "*love thy neighbor as thyself; for the love of God.*"

However insignificant or unimportant we may consider ourselves to be, we still have an individual responsibility before God to work for the good of all. How well we fulfill that responsibility will be the test of our love for God and our fellow men.

"Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Matthew 22:37-40

~Bill Dillon

July ~ December 2005



Interesting Inquiries

Question: What does the Bible say about "depression?" It seems to be affecting everyone, even in church.

Answer: Though "depression" is clinically diagnosed as a "disease," its roots are deeper than doctors think. It can be as much of a spiritual problem than medical.

Solomon said in Proverbs 12:25:

"Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad." This shows that "depression" is caused by "anxiety," a.k.a. "continual worry," and that it can be remedied by a "good word."

What Causes "Anxiety?"

"Anxiety" is the constant state of mind in one who doesn't trust God, for Jesus said,

"If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more *will he clothe* you, O you of little faith? And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you" (Luke 12:28-31).

Jesus' reassurances are for those who: [1] believe in God and His rewards (Hebrews 11:6; [2] obey His gospel ((Mark 16:15-16); [3] cast all their cares upon Him (I Peter 5:6-7); and [4] refuse to be overwhelmed by the "cares of this life" (Luke 21:34), which choke out obedience to God's Word (Luke 8:14). Children of God should be "anxious for nothing, "but rather take all requests to God, and have their hearts and minds guarded with God's peace (Philippians 4:6). Anxiety is focusing on the problems rather than the solutions. God is the solution, for He is "God Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:18), i.e. He who has all blessings. James (3:17) said, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

What Hinders the "Good Word?"

Listening to, and heeding, the good words from God will prevent the doubt and distrust which cause depression. Listening, to, and focusing on, misrepresentations of life, or only the bad things which happen in life, are major causes of depression. In computer terms, "garbage in, garbage out." Many "false witnesses" are at work today to give a one-sided view of life. Those who view only the garbage dump fail to see the city. When our sources of information are the headlines, TV news and programs, "Harlotwood" productions, or gossip-filled "friends," it is little wonder we are depressed. If everyone who sees us comments on how sick we look, we'll go home sick before the day is through! Hurricane Katrina blew the roof off of TV reporters, for they gave as facts unverified rumors, none of which were true: 10,000 dead; many murders, rapes, and riots in the Superdome; sharks in the flood waters in the streets, *ad nauseam*. When people are continually fed false or distorted information full of class envy, hatefulness, fears, and distrust, they will retreat from that perverted picture of their world, and ignore all the good in it.

God is hard against "false witness" for: [1] God hates it (Proverbs 6:16-19); [2] they "utter lies" (Proverbs 14:5); and [3] none shall escape without repentance (Proverbs 19:5; Acts 17:30-31). They were false witnesses who gave the Jews their "self-justification" to crucify Jesus Christ (Mark 14:55-59)! People who act upon false witness reports will also be punished, for Jesus said, "if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch" (Matthew 15:14). God's Law through Moses stipulated that whatever punishment was meted out unjustly because of the testimony of false witnesses was to be done to the false witnesses themselves, without mercy (Deuteronomy 19:15-21)!

Depression is what one finds who tries to run away from God. Since "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours" (James 5:17), please read I Kings 19 and note the following steps Elijah took into the cave of depression, and know we are like him:



Elijah's Prayer Out of Fear

Verses 1-4. After the stunning and complete victory of God over Baal on Mount Carmel (I Kings 18), Elijah's life was threatened by wicked Queen Jezebel, and he "ran for his life" (verse 3). He even prayed for God to take his life! His prayer request was ignored by God, but answered, nonetheless in verses 5-8. Later, Jesus taught we should not fear physical death, but rather spiritual death (Matthew 10:28).

God's Startling Answer

Verses 5-8. Contrary to Elijah's prayer, God provided him nourishment to go further than he had thought he should. Elijah went to "Horeb, the mountain of God" where Moses' law had been given to Israel (Malachi 4:4), probably to remind him that no matter how corrupt God's people became, God's Law still prevailed. As humans, we look at our wrecked lives and draw conclusions that should not be drawn. Some either wish for, or plan, their own deaths following disasters; after becoming innocent victims of others' actions; the deaths of spouses, children, relatives; maybe even losing all they have worked for and have. But God may not be through with them.

Elijah's Cave of Depression

Verses 9-10. Elijah entered his cave because he believed he was the only "sound" believer left. Depression may have deep roots in arrogance, not humility! If a soul thinks that he, or she, must take over for God's failure, and realizes the magnitude and hopelessness of that situation, that "cave man" solution may appear to be the only one. If Elijah had been "the only one left," why would he end God's plan by wishing to die? Did Elijah think that God would let His promise of a Savior end just because there were no other "sound" brethren? God told Elijah to "Go out" of the cave and remember God's power over life (Verses 11-14). God then told Elijah to "Go" back and prepare the next generation (represented to Elisha's works) to do His work (Verses 15-17). Some who think they are the only "sound" brethren today are hearing echoes in their caves. They are ignorant of the "seven thousand" reserves God yet has among His people (I Kings 19:18).

"A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is *like* a club, a sword, and a sharp arrow". (Proverbs 25:14).

Bridges wrote: "Would you shrink with horror at the thought of beating our your neighbor's brains with a hammer, or of piercing his bowels with *a sword, or a sharp arrow*? Why then do you indulge in the like barbarity; destroying as far as you can that reputation which is dear to men as their life, and wounding all their best interests, but mangling their character.

"Truly affecting is it to think of the multitude of these *mauls, swords, and sharp arrows* even in the Church of God. It is not 'setting the battle in array against the Philistines, army against army' (I Samuel 1:21), but brother against brother. The Shibboleth of a party, not the standard of the cross, is the watchword for the destructive conflict. 'How long, Lord, How long!' (pages 211-212, An Exposition of the Book of Proverbs, Volume II, Seeley, Burnside and Seeley, Fleet Street, London, 1846).

Take 3 of These Before Going to Bed

The message for depressed people today is that: (1) you chose to be in your cave by misinterpreting your world and misunderstanding God and His Word; (2) you can chose to leave that cave and get on with your life serving God; and (3) God commands it to be so! Look up to God, look back upon your life, and see what you can do to benefit others. Don't believe for a minute that God is not willing to help you, but you must look for His help. He always provides "the way of escape" and we must use it (I Corinthians 10:13). God has said in Jeremiah 29:11-12:

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."

Deciding to leave the Devil's caves of despair and go out to serve God make for a new life altogether. Try it!

~John T. Polk, II
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Dover, Tennessee 37058



When Life's Tsunamis Come

Last December, the world was “glued” to their televisions watching the devastating effects of the Asian Tsunami. It is difficult to imagine 160,000 perishing so quickly. We are reminded of Proverbs 27:1, “*Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*” Rewind in your mind’s eye the events that took place before the Tsunami struck. People were swimming in the ocean, walking on the beach, strolling leisurely down the streets, eating breakfast, going to work and sleeping. Many perhaps were studying the Bible, praying, doing good work; some may have been committing various sins and without warning death came to thousands upon thousands!

Friends, death is no respecter of persons! (Hebrews 9:27) As one reflects over the Asian Tsunami he is reminded of I Samuel 20:3, “...there is but a step between me and death!” On that one day death came to babies, teenagers, older people, those who were educated as well as the illiterate, the wealthy and the poor, the famous and the unknown all met death. Many lives were spared while losing every material possession and tens of thousands were injured.

It is difficult not to be fixated by the millions that have been affected by the Asian Tsunami, but when life’s tsunamis occur they are just as devastating to the individual. One moment the sea of life is calm, and out of no where a “tidal wave” overwhelms us. The sudden death of a loved one, financial ruin, divorce, drugs, alcohol, cancer, heart surgery, suicide, betrayal, no money to purchase food much less pay bills, robbery, a school or work place shooting, the events of 9/11, tornados, hurricanes all of these are as a tsunami to the individual and their family! The same can be said of a congregation. One week everything is smooth, no major problems exist in the congregation. Love flows from heart-to-heart, attendance, contribution, programs and involvement of the members is at an all time high. Then out of no where the devil finds a receptive heart that produces a great sea wave that travels as rapidly as a 500 mile an hour tsunami throughout the congregation!

Is there anything that individuals and congregations of the Lord’s church can do to prevent or prepare for life’s tsunamis? First, one needs to realize it is not a matter if, but when many of these things will occur! As for prevention, God knew what man would face, and so He has given us the inspired scriptures to prepare and strengthen us through life’s tsunamis (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3-4)! A few passages that have continued to strengthen God’s people under the most trying of circumstances are:

“Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, and lean not upon thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear Jehovah, and depart from evil.” (Proverbs 3:5-7).

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.” (Psalms 46:1-2).

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.” (Matthew 10:28-31).

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28).

“For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (Hebrew 13:5b).

“Casting all your care upon him; for he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7).

“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he hearth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” (1 John 5:14-15).

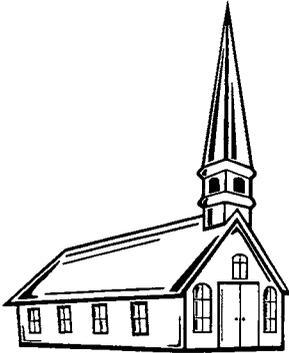
So, when "life's tsunamis" come upon you sing:

Jesus, Savior, pilot me Over life's tempestuous sea:
Unknown waves before roll, Hiding rocks and treach'rous shoal;
Chart and compass came from Thee, Jesus, Savior, pilot me.

As a mother stills her child, Thou canst hush the ocean wild;
Boist'rous waves obey Thy will When Thou say'st to them, "Be still!"
Wondrous Sov-'reign of the sea, Jesus, Savior, pilot me.

When at last I hear the shore, And the fearful breakers roar
'Twixt me and the peaceful rest, Then wile leaning on Thy breast,
May I hear Thee say to me, "Fear not, I will pilot Thee."

Proverbs 27:1 should daily remind one of the brevity of life and how unimportant material possessions are. The passage should also remind one of the value of family, friends, and the urgency of being prepared to meet God! Are you prepared for life's tsunamis?



~ Ivie Powell
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Where the Credit Belongs

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena. Whose face is marred by dust, sweat, and blood. Who strives valiantly. Who errs, and comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

~Theodore Roosevelt

Where Did It Come From?

Many things have been said about the dispute between creationism and evolution. I have a simple question. The ground that you are standing on, where did it come from? It has been said, the Big Bang created the universe. Well, where did the Big Bang come from? The theory of evolution is just that ~ a theory. It cannot be proven or duplicated in a laboratory. It has been said, "life came from lifelessness." Well, prove it. "Biogenesis" is a term in biology which says that living things descend only from living things. The French scientist, Louis Pasteur, by actual experimentation, disproved the theory of evolution. The theory that life comes from lifelessness has no foundation in fact. However, the concept of "biogenesis" is a fact. Life cannot come from lifelessness. The Bible account of creation is in harmony with the facts of science. Evolution is not. For those who reject the existence of God, just ask them to look at the ground they are standing on. Where did it come from? *Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."*

~Mark Dillon



July ~ December 2005



Restoring the Wayward

God loved lost humanity so much that "that he gave his only begotten Son" for us (John 3:16). Christ loved hateful, sinful man so much that he died for us (Romans 5:8). "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14). If we love our brethren we will do all that we can to restore one if he is "overtaken in a fault" (Galatians 6:1).

God's Love for His Children

Nowhere is God's great love and concern for His children more clearly pictured than in Luke chapter fifteen.

In this chapter God, our Heavenly Father, is pictured as a shepherd who would leave ninety-nine sheep in the wilderness and go in search of one who had strayed from the flock. He is like the woman who had ten silver coins and when one coin was lost she swept her house and sought diligently until the lost coin was found. He is like the father whose son left him to go into a far country, and when he came back rushed with outstretched loving arms to welcome him home.

Since we are imitators or "followers of God, as dear children" (Ephesians 5:1), should we not have the same love and concern for our brethren who err?

Our article concerns the work of "Restoring the Wayward". Our aim is to awaken Christians to our duty and give us God's plan for accomplishing this serious and important task.

I fear that the COMMAND in Galatians 6:1 to restore the wayward child of God is treated by too many as a SUGGESTION. However we are given no choice in the matter *if we "are spiritual!"*

Brethren Have an Obligation

Faithful brethren have an obligation to brethren that sin. In all ages certain obligations have rested upon man's shoulders as a result of being brother. When Cain killed Abel, God said unto Cain. "Where is Abel thy brother?"

(Genesis 4:9). Abraham suggested to Lot that there be no strife among, for, he said, "We be brethren" (Genesis 13:8). Joseph, in Genesis chapter forty-five, felt a special obligation to his brethren to rescue them from famine. The same is true of the church, we "are brethren" (Matthew 23:8). Because we are brethren, certain obligations rest upon us of a general nature.

Love the Brethren

We are to love the brethren "with a pure heart fervently" (1 Peter 1:22). We are to "consider one another to provide unto love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24). We are to "have the same care one for another" (1 Corinthians 12:25).

Many are the general obligations such as these. Yet, God has placed upon the shoulders of faithful brethren a *special duty* toward brethren that sin.

The Process of Getting Lost Ones to Return

Just how do we go about the process of getting the lost ones to return? What can we do as brethren?

We are to convert them from the error of their way (James 5:19-20). It seems that many think that "convert" only applies to alien sinners, but when brethren forsake the right ways of the Lord, they need to be concerted (Luke 22:32). To convert means "to turn around," to get men to come back to the way of righteousness and holiness again.

We are to restore them to their first state (Galatians 6:1). "Restore" means to correct or mend. When brethren sin we are to correct them and get them to make amend for their faults.

We are to save brethren from the fire (Jude 23). Brethren who sin are lost! They are headed full speed down the road to eternal destruction in hell. We are to save them by "snatching them" (ASV) from their sin and destruction. Their condition is so serious that there is no time to waste. They are so near the fire of hell that there is only time to "snatch" them from the flames. They are

“lingering on the brink of woe” and as Lot and his family lingered that the angels had to “snatch” them by the hand and get them out of the city (Genesis 19:16), so we must snatch brethren who sin out of the fire.

This is indeed a most serious responsibility with very grave consequences if we fail to discharge it. Our failure will result in the sinner losing his soul and may result in our losing our own souls. It will likewise result in the church being polluted and corrupted and its influence greatly damaged.

Paul commanded the Corinthians to “*Purge our therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump*” (1 Corinthians 5:7). Then he said to them, “*For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ*” (2 Corinthians 11:2-3). *Of Christ and the church, Paul said, “That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”* (Ephesians 5:27).

God knew that it would be impossible for His children to live perfect lives in a world where they are surrounded daily with sin and temptations of every sort. The newborn Christian is spotless, cleansed of every sin by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Yet, temptations are so many, and the weaknesses of the flesh so universal, that those who live will make mistakes. This means that God’s plan for saving man must, of necessity, include not only a way of securing the forgiveness of those sins one has committed before becoming a Christian, but also a means of securing forgiveness of those sins that will be committed after one becomes a Christian. God did not prove this “second law of pardon” to encourage us to sin, Paul asked. “*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*” (Romans 6:1-2). Our loving Heavenly Father knew that we would sin and therefore by His loving grace provided a means of cleansing or purification.

Continuous Faith Necessary

When one becomes a Christian he or she is a babe in Christ and must continue to grow in faith and in the knowledge of the Lord (1 Peter 2:1-2). Christians must “*continue in the faith grounded and settled*” (Colossians 1:23). Christians should take the shield of faith wherewith they are able to “*Quench the fiery darts of the wicked*” (Ephesians 6:16). Christians are urged: “*let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*” (Hebrews 10:23). All this is commanded because “without faith it is impossible to please” God. So if the Christian should lose faith, it would not be possible for him to receive the forgiveness of sins committed after he became a Christian. However, just as faith alone is not sufficient for the alien sinner to receive the forgiveness of sins, it is not sufficient for the erring child of God to receive the forgiveness of his sins.

Repentance is Necessary

God requires men to repent as often as they commit sin. Remission of sins never comes without repentance. Simon the Sorcerer was commanded to “*Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee*” (Acts 8:22). It is not hard to see that repentance was a definite condition of his forgiveness. Jesus declared in reproving the church at Ephesus, “*Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent*” (Revelation 2:5). God’s mercy delays or destruction that we may have time to repent (2 Peter 3:9). The sinner, and that means every sinner, must be moved by faith to repent before forgiveness is possible.

Confession Necessary

The alien sinner in becoming a Christian must confess faith in Jesus Christ. The erring child of God is required to confess the sin or sins he has committed in order to receive forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Forgiveness of sins is conditional upon a confession of sins. So often we say, “If I have done anything wrong I want to be forgiven,” instead of, “I have sinned, Father, forgive me.”

Sometimes it is necessary that confession also be made to man (James 5:16). This clarifies the matter for us. Confession must always be made to God and must also be made to men when men have been wronged. Sins of a public nature require a public confession but private sins require only a private confession. In very case the confession should be as public as the sin, no more so.

Some "big meeting" preachers urge every person who has committed any sin of any kind to come forward at the invitation and make a public confession. This helps them be in grater demand for meetings. But if this is necessary to forgiveness of any and all sins, then everyone, including the preacher, would have to go forward at every church service.

The principle is clear, if you have wronged one person, go to that person. If you have offended a group, go to them. If you have wronged the church, go before the church. If you have wronged a person at a distant place, go to that person. Correction is the purpose behind the confession. This procedure is the only way to make thing right. There is a practice that is becoming all to common among us, a person commits a sin while at congregation A and then he goes over to congregation B and makes his confession. This is totally out of order. To go before a congregation who are not even aware of the sin of which individual is guilty and make confession is without reason or purpose. The whole purpose of the confession is to make right the wrong with those who have been wronged.

What Are We to Confess?

There are some who contend that before one can be forgiven and restored to the Lord and His church that he must publicly name every sin of which he is guilty. Is that necessary or is it enough to say, "I have sinned and ask the forgiveness of God and the church?" David was guilty of a multitude of sins including adultery and murder. Notice what David said when he was confronted by Nathan: "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die" (2 Samuel 12:13).

When one goes before the church with a broken and contrite heart and confesses, "I have sinned;" God knows

what he is guilty of an so do all others who are aware of his sin. There is no need to publicize the sin any farther than it is already known. When one thus confesses, there should be prayer for his forgiveness (Acts 8:22). John said, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2).

Half Brothers!

When is the sinner restored? The answer is obvious, the moment God forgives him of his sins! There are brethren who are advocating the idea that those who have repented are to be put on probation. That they are just "half brothers" and full fellowship cannot be extended. When God forgives He likewise forgets, an so must we, or else we cannot be forgiven. The Lord has taught us to pray: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). We must have the attitude of the father whose son left him to go into a far country, and when he came back rushed with outstretched loving arms to welcome him home.

One final question, how long should we work to bring back the one who is lost? There are three reasons why Christians become lost. Some just wander off unintentionally as did the lost sheep and are lost by their own carelessness. some are become lost due to our carelessness. Then other deliberately go away as did the lost boy. It is relatively easy to restore those who have just carelessly lost their way, they just need guidance and encouragement to come back and the same is true of those who through their own carelessness become lost. But we must make sure that we searched diligently as did the shepherd and the woman of the parables. We must search until they are found and brought back. With those who have deliberately gone back into sin they first have to come themselves as the boy in the hog pen did. But we should be watching, praying and anxiously waiting for them to come home. In my opinion this should be for as long as we live or until they have returned.

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I Want to Be a Worker

Numerous times congregations have sung the words, "I want to be a worker for the Lord." As individuals utter the words "I will work, I will pray, I will labor everyday in the vineyard of the Lord" one cannot help, but wonder how many are singing these words in vain. If one sings the words that say they want to be a worker for the Lord, but they don't strive to labor in the Lord's vineyard would they not then be hypocritical? Certainly there is a need for laborers in the vineyard for Christ says, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the Harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:37, 38).

The Lord certainly expects each individual to be a worker. His children are described as servants (Acts 4:29; 16:17; Romans 6:18-22; Ephesians 6:6), laborers (Matthew 9:38; 1 Corinthians 3:9), and workers (2 Corinthians 6:1), all of which denote the fact that we are to be workers for the Lord. However, if one was to poll congregations of the Lord's church he would find out that the majority of the work done by each congregation was done by a handful of individuals.

This certainly is not what the Lord intended. The Lord expects each individual Christian to use his or her talents in service to the Lord (Matthew 25). In fact, it says the one who neglects to make use of his talent(s) is viewed as a "wicked and lazy servant...and will be cast into the outer darkness" (Matthew 25:26, 30 NKJV).

While many answers could be given as to, why the lack of involvement from so many members, one possible explanation is that there are many who do not know what they can do. Many give the excuse, "no one told me what to do or asked me to." Each Christian should continually strive to find ways in which they can continually be "workers for the Lord." Here are some suggestions for how you can be a laborer everyday.

The men can lead in worship. There is a need for song leaders, those to lead prayer, make announcements, and those to serve communion. All of these play important roles in the public assembly. Each one of these roles is

vital in order for us to fulfill the command that "all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40). Many may argue that they are not able to lead in these capacities. However, no one has ever learned how to lead in these ways without first trying.

One can send cards or make phone calls to others. To whom, shall one send a card or make a phone call? The list could go on and on, but here are a few suggestions: the sick, shut-in, widows, orphans, a brother or sister in Christ going through hard times, one that has moved into the area, or one that has visited worship services. It is amazing how such a small gesture can go such a long ways.

One can help provide the widows (Acts 6; James 1:27). This offers endless opportunities to do good (James 4:17). While the list could go on and on here are some suggestions, visit them, cook for them, do housework, do yard work, wash their car, drive them to do errands and so forth.

One can help teach the Gospel. Once again there are so many different ways this can be done. Here is a list of suggestions: teach a Bible class, prepare a sermon so you can fill in while the preacher is away, conduct personal bible classes with friends and family, pass out tracks, knock doors, hand out meeting announcements, grade correspondence courses, and so forth.

One can help with the "honey-do's." Just as all of us have our "honey-do jars" for this and that which needs to be done around the house there are those "honey-do's" which need to be completed around the building for the local congregation. Many times these are overlooked and people just assume someone will get them done. However, much more can be accomplished if everyone pitched in to keep any one or two from doing the majority of the "honey-do's" and getting "burned out".

Some examples of "honey-do's" that need to be done around the local congregation are: fixing communion, organizing classroom supplies, help with the recording

and copying of audio or video tapes, locking and unlocking the building, changing light bulbs, cleaning the church van (when applicable), changing the church sign message (when applicable), preparing bulletin, straightening the pew Bibles and song books, painting, yard work, flower bed work, cleaning the parking lot, maintenance work, keep visitor cards filled and pencils trimmed, changing bulletin boards, help organize pantry or benevolence room. clean baptistery and keep baptismal garments prepared. The list could go on and on.

The point to be made is that each individual Christian

should be laboring each and every day in service to the Lord. There are many different ways in which we can accomplish this, but must diligently search out ways that he can help the work of the local congregation. Let each one have the attitude of Isaiah when he said, "*Here am I, send me*" (Isaiah 6:8). Then the next he sings "I want to be a worker for the Lord" he can sing with all sincerity and understanding.

~ *Guyton E. Montgomery*
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Whose Job Is It to Prevent Divorce?

"An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure." Preventing a tragedy is better than picking up the pieces after one. Preventing a divorce is possible, and it is reasonable. Whose responsibility is it to prevent divorce? You guessed it ~ The responsibility of preventing divorce is delegated to each married person ~ they signed on the day they got married. The following is a list of responsibilities to be recognized and honored by each marriage partner, in the maintenance of their marriage.

1. If you do not want a divorce, put your mate first. Priority is to be given to your mate. Be a blessing to your children ~ love your mate! The greatest gift you can give your son or daughter is the security they will experience in a home where mom and dad love each other, and dwell together in love and peace.

2. If you do not want a divorce, learn to express love and devotion to your mate. You have the right to shower your mate with love. You have the right to be devoted to your mate, in the fulfillment of his or her needs. Thoughtfulness and tenderness, mutual care and respect, are as appropriate after several years of marriage as they were during the first year of marriage. Learn from your mate what love and devotion is to them.

3. If you do not want a divorce, learn to value and esteem your mate. Anyone can wreck a house, but it takes skill to build a home. It takes integrity and honor to build up one's mate. Communication acceptance and respect is communicate rejection ~ the rejection syndrome

must be broken and abandoned. The art of the put-down is not something anyone should cultivate.

4. If you do not want a divorce, learn the joy of togetherness. Working together is your privilege. Playing together can be your delight. Being together can be a joy ~ if you will cultivate the spirit of adventure and sharing life. Mutual respect, care, interest, and devotion can be cultivate the spirit of adventure and sharing life. Mutual respect, care, interest, and devotion can be cultivated. Both you and your mate have the need for these and on a daily basis. Make known your need for and delight in being together.

5. If you do not want a divorce, learn to focus upon common goals. If a couple has a worthy goal and are working together to reach it ~ they will be together in thought and action. Daily responsibilities and schedules take you into different realms ~ therefore look for common ground in common goals.

6. If you do not want a divorce, learn to listen to your mate. Listening, paying attention, endeavoring to understand your mate is your privilege. Engaging in respectful conversation requires both talking and listening. No one likes to be ignored. No one likes to be "steam-rolled" in a conversation. Your mate will not be compelled to engage in verbal assault if you learn to listen. Put out a sign that says, "small talk is appreciated." If you have the small talks the more significant conversation will come easier. Tell your mate, "I love the sound of your voice" ~ then prove it by listening.



7. If you do not want a divorce, learn to communicate with your mate from the heart. Speak from the heart, revealing the things that are on your heart. No one can read your mind, and your mate wants to know what is on your heart. Do not brood, do not stonewall. The silent treatment comes across as a punishment technique. It is not masculine, nor is it feminine. To speak from the heart and reveal your inner thoughts to your mate is vital in building intimacy.

8. If you do not want a divorce, reject the temptation to run away from problems. You have made a covenant to “keep yourself” ~ to be faithful to one another until death. Reject the interference of in-laws, relatives, and friends. “Cleave” to one another. You cannot do that if you run away. Determine to be “solution oriented.”

9. If you do not want a divorce, learn to apologize. Unless you are the rarest of persons who will make mistakes. Rule of thumb: When wrong admit it. When you have offended apologize! Remember: Next to “I love you,” the sweetest words are “I was wrong ~ I am sorry ~ please forgive me.” Sincere apology is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of maturity, love, and integrity.

Forgiveness covers a multitude of sins.

10. If you do not want a divorce, daily accept your marriage as a gift from God, and as a post of duty to which He has called you. God gave you your marriage. Honoring Him in your marriage includes honoring your mate. Your first priority - share your life with God. Your second priority - share your life with your mate. Your third priority - share your life with your children. Your fourth priority - make a living. Your fifth priority - share your life with those about you.

From the Christian perspective, a husband and wife are to live together, before God, according to knowledge, in devotion to God and in devotion to one another. They are to remember and cherish the fact that their marriage is God’s arrangement. They have entered into covenant before Him. They are privileged to know the joys of marriage and are expected to fulfill the vows of marriage, in obedience and honor of God.

Marriages are made in heaven! The maintenance work takes place on earth!

~ **Ronald D. Bryant**
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The Support of Gospel Preachers

Christian Courier: Archives

Some preachers are pampered and unquestionably not worth what they make. On the other hand, there are others who simply are not treated fairly ~ consistent with the principle of the Golden Rule.

The Jewish rabbis had a saying “Whoever does not teach his son a trade is as if he brought him up to be a robber.”

Though Paul was educated as a scholar of Hebrew law under the celebrated Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), nevertheless, as a lad he had learned the trade of tentmaker. Accordingly, when Paul, on his second missionary journey, came to Corinth, the first thing he did was seek work to sustain his needs. he was able to connect with Aquila and Priscilla, who, having recently arrived from Rome, were of the same trade.

While Paul may have made tents during the week, or perhaps at night (ef. 1 Thes. 2:9), on the Sabbath day he went to the Jewish synagogue, there reasoning and attempting to persuade both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles who were attracted to the Hebrew religion) of the validity of Christianity.

In verse 5 of Acts 18, Luke records these interesting words:

“But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ” (ASV).

The KJV suggests that Paul was “pressed in the Spirit” but the better manuscript evidence has the term : “word,” rather than “Spirit.” The question then is this: What is the meaning of the expression, “constrained by the word”?



The grammatical form of the verb “constrained” is an imperfect tense, middle voice. Thus, literally translated, the phrase suggests that Paul “started holding himself to the word” (cf. A.T. Robertson, Greek Grammar, p. 808). Some have suggested the meaning: “[Paul] was wholly absorbed in preaching” (Arndt & Gingrich, Greek Lexicon, p 797). The common view is that the sense is: The apostle “restricted himself” to preaching, as opposed to continuing his involvement in the tent business. But how was he able to do this since other passages make it clear that he was not financially supported by the church at Corinth? In fact, he refused such (2 Corinthians 12:13).

The best answer is this: When Silas and Timothy joined Paul, they brought support from other congregations, so that the apostle would later say to the Corinthians:

“I robbed other churches, taking wages of them that I might minister unto you; and when I was present with you and was in want, I was not a burden on any man; for the brethren, when they came from Macedonia, supplied the measure of my want...” (2 Corinthians 11:8-9).

“Robbed” is hyperbole (an idiomatic exaggeration for emphasis), suggesting that whereas the Corinthians should have been sustaining the missionary, others had to take up the slack. The apostle refused Corinthian support as a matter of expediency because of an anti-Paul element in that church.

And so, though the apostle supported himself for a while in Corinth, the time came when he had sufficient funds, and so could forego physical labor, and devote himself completely to preaching the gospel.

The Necessary Versus the Ideal

Over the centuries, there have been countless godly men who tirelessly have labored with their hands in order to support themselves so that they could proclaim the Word. Frequently, such has been absolutely necessary. Where would the church be today without such dedicated men? We all owe them a vast debt of gratitude. Having said that, it must be conceded that this is not the divine ideal. The ideal is that God’s people should support financially those who utilize their time and energies in preaching the Holy Scriptures. Consider the following:

Jesus Sends Out the Seventy

When Jesus sent out the seventy disciples to proclaim the gospel, he admonished them to take no provisions; rather, they were to enjoy the hospitality of their students, the reason being, “the laborer is worthy of his hire” (Luke 10:7).

Paul Instructs the Corinthians

In 1 Corinthians, chapter 9, Paul argues at length that gospel preachers should be supported by those whom they teach.

1. Preachers have the “right” (exousia - “authority”) to be sustained in their work (verse 4);
2. The minister’s family has the “right” of support (verse 5);
3. The preacher has a “right” to forebear secular work (verse 6);
4. The minister should not be required to labor at his “Own charges” (verse 7);
5. The Old Testament foreshadowed God’s “care” for his preachers (verses 8b, 10, 13);
6. Those who “sow” in the spiritual realm should be able to “reap” physical benefits (verses 11-12);
7. The support of faithful gospel preachers is “ordained” of the Lord himself (verse 14).

“Communicate” with the Teacher All Good Things

Paul states that those who are “taught in the word” are required to “communicate” (koinonia-share) with their teacher all good thing, i.e., they return material support for the spiritual support received (Galatians 6:6)

Producing “Fruit in Their Account” the Philippian church was told that their support of Paul was not merely for his benefit; rather, his labor produced “fruit” that was deposited in their account (Philippians 4:17). The implication is clear - those who refuse to help sustain godly preachers are depriving themselves of spiritual resources.

Abuses

It certainly is not wrong, on occasion, to refuse “pay” for preaching. Virtually every minister has done it from time to time. And any preacher who will preach only when he is paid is a hireling unworthy of the name. The truth is, though, churches can become spoiled and abusive.

Because he was wealthy, the great restoration leader, Alexander Campbell, would never take financial assistance for his preaching. While his intentions doubtless were noble, he did a disservice to poorer brethren who were not supported properly by churches that were swayed by the influence of Campbell's example.

I have never understood the mentality of certain brethren who think that preachers ought to be treated like the proverbial redheaded step child. God's ministers have as much right to wages commensurate with their abilities as anyone else. Do they have a right to insurance programs, and retirement? Why not? If the members are treated well by their employers, should we treat the Lord's messengers less responsibly?

Some preachers are pampered and unquestionably not worth what they make. On the other hand, there are others who simply are not treated fairly - consistent with

the principle of the Golden Rule.

It is my judgement that when a congregation loves its preacher, and treats him with dignity and honor, he will repay them tenfold in dedication. On the other hand, a preacher should work so steadfastly that no one can call his dedication into question. His efforts should be such that the brethren could not afford to pay him by the hour!

I have labored with some of the finest on God's earth for almost thirty-eight years. I never have to wonder about their love. And so, honor your minister. Support him generously. Don't gripe when the elders give him a raise. And don't vow to keep him at the lowest level of congregational prosperity!

~Wayne Jackson
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Ancient Jamnia

A few miles south of Joppa, not far from the Mediterranean seacoast, are the ruins of biblical *Jabneel* ("God builds"). This site is identified in Joshua 15:11 as a border town belonging to the tribe of Judah. There was another village by the same name belonging to Naphtali a few miles southwest of the Sea of Galilee (Joshua 19:33).

Although Jabneel did not play an important role in the Old Testament narrative, its location suggests it was more than just another little village on the *Via Maris*. That major highway connected Egypt to the Hittites and the Mesopotamian empires of Assyria and Babylon. Second, Jabneel was in the heart of Philistine country. We learn from 2 Chronicles 26:6, where the town is called *Jabneh*, that Uzziah of Judah breached the fortified city wall in the 8th century B.C. and conquered the city along with Gath and Ashdod. A walled city on an important highway must have boasted a sizeable population and importance not to be calculated by the scant mention it receives in the Old Testament.

It is in later Jewish history that Jabneh becomes more prominent. In 332 B.C. Alexander the Great conquered Israel on his drive into Egypt. Jabneel is afterward known by its Greek name, *Jamnia*. In the centuries before the

birth of Jesus it was a military post for the Selucid armies of Syria and was finally conquered by the Macabees when Israel won a brief independence from foreign domination.

With the coming of Pompey and the Romans, Jamnia became even more important. Herod the Great built a great harbor at Caesarea Maritima and Joppa went into decline. Jamnia, still on a great trade route and surrounded by fertile fields, grew in population and became an important center for religious studies and Jewish culture. When the Jewish rebellion broke out and Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70 the town of Jamnia survived and took a leading role in the political, cultural and religious affairs of the Jewish people.

In those decades between the first Jewish rebellion and the later uprising under Simon bar Kokhba (132-135 A.D.) Jamnia served as the *de facto* capital of orthodox Israel. Remember, there was no longer a Jewish state or nation. There was no longer a Temple. There was no more Jerusalem! Traditional Jewish authority had been all but destroyed - Pharisees, Sadducees, the high priesthood. An emerging Christianity was thriving and spreading while Judaism was dealt a blow many did not feel it could survive.

Under the leadership of Yohanan ben Zakkai and Gamaliel II, the religion of the Jews experienced a major transformation. The Sanhedrin was reestablished at Jamnia and took on the function and role of the old Jerusalem Sanhedrin. The *shofar* was not blown at Jamnia on the New Year, which previously could only take place in the Temple at Jerusalem. The rabbis at Jamnia assumed leadership over the Diaspora and Jewish settlements throughout the Roman world.

Indeed, it was in Jamnia that the authority of the rabbinate was firmly established. Rabbinic writings and the interpretation of the Law found in the Talmud form the basis for modern Jewish faith even more than Scripture. The rabbis have evolved into a dominant legislative and executive body. That would not have been possible while Jerusalem and the Temple yet stood. The seeds of a new Judaism were sown at Jamnia. It was also at Jamnia the surviving Jewish authorities voiced a bitterness and hatred against Christianity that captures the rebellion of a nation that rejected her own Messiah. Enraged by the loss of their country and incensed by the "betrayal" of Jewish converts to Christianity, the sages of Jamnia issued the "Eighteen Benedictions" featuring this curse: "To apostates let there be no hope if they return not to Thy Torah, and may the Nazarenes and the sectarians perish as in a moment."

Prayer In the Book of James

Two kinds of prayers are before us in the book of James: (1) miraculous, coupled with ceremonial oil application, by some elder (James 5:14-15); and (2) non-miraculous, without the oil, by all righteous Christians (James 5:16-18).

Miraculously endowed elders could anoint a sick person with oil and "pray over him," with the result that the "prayer of faith" cured "the one who" was "sick" (James 5:14-15). The gift "of healing by the one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:9), by the laying on of an apostle's hands (Acts 18:8; Romans 1:11), was conferred on some elders and also on other Christians, but not on "all" (1 Corinthians 12:30). Consequently, miraculously

Jamnia is little thought of today. A modern city named Yavne stands on that site. When Jamnia is mentioned at all it is usually in connection with the so-called Council of Jamnia (A.D. 90), at which rabbis pondered the importance and canonicity of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. Not a "council" in the full sense of the word, the action at Jamnia is sometimes exaggerated and misrepresented as an official and decisive action in the establishment of the Old Testament canon.

~ Grady Miller
745 Riverview Lane
Colorado Springs, Co 80916



endowed elders could anoint a sick person with oil and "pray over him," with certain assurance ("the Lord will raise him up") that the "prayer of faith" would cure the sick person (James 5:14-15).

Today, in the 20th century, no apostle is available for hand-laying, and consequently all miraculous healing by prayer ended when the last person dies on whom an apostle had laid his hands (Acts 8:18). Sadly, some good people in our time do not realize that miraculous praying and healing ceased after the first century.

One dedicated elder in Dallas, who always carried a vial of oil for anointing, rubbed oil on a sick child in a hospital room and prayed over her just before she was

taken to the operating room for surgery. That elder did not realize that, according to James, the oil and the prayer would have healed the child, and no surgery would have been needed.

Two elders of a small, loving congregation in Indiana, concerned about a house-bound wheelchair aged lady afflicted with arthritis, took the entire congregation after a Sunday night worship service to the lady's house. They put oil on her, and began praying as they walked round and round her wheelchair. Nothing developed but tiredness for everybody, and the session ended before midnight. Those elders did not understand what James was teaching.

But along with the miraculous and effective praying of endowed elders of the first century, James also tells us about non-miraculous and effective praying in all centuries by any and all Christians "for one another," with the inspired assurance that the "prayer of the righteous [whether an elder or not] has powerful results" if prayed "in faith" (James 1:6-8, 5:16). Thus James has turned from teaching about miraculous prayer will oil by endowed elders only to non-miraculous prayer in faith by any Christian, man or woman.

James then illustrates non-miraculous praying, effective in all centuries, by the story of Elijah. the fact that Elijah did have miraculous power, even to raise the dead (1 Kings 17:14-16), is not what James tells us about Elijah. James wanted all Christians to know that Elijah's prayer for a long drought and then for fruitful rain was from a man "whose nature was like ours" (James 5:17), that is, in the story of the drought and rain no miracle was involved.

After the long drought (three years and a half) for which he had fervently prayed, then he reversed his prayer, and on the top of Mt. Carmel "he bowed himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees" (1 Kings 18:42). After his prayer, Elijah "said to his servant, 'Go up now, look toward the sea'" (verse 43). After awhile "the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain" (verse 45).

Was that a miracle? It would have been had the rain come from the east - from the dry, arid skies of the Arabian desert (J.W. McGarvey). Rain never comes to Palestine from the east. By nature rain clouds come to Palestine, yes, to Mt. Carmel, from over the Mediterranean Sea. Elijah, a man of like nature with us, knew that, and James knew that, and he was exhorted us all to continue steadfastly in non-miraculous prayer. If what James said means anything to us today, it is that non-miraculous praying should be in every Christian's daily schedule.

In the Baptist Hospital in Oklahoma City, James O. Baird, then president of Oklahoma Christian College, underwent open heart surgery. His heart stopped beating. An electrical stimulus started the beating again. Again his heart stopped. Forty-one electrical shocks were administered before a remedy was found. Downstairs, in the hospital chapel, his wife and family and Christian friends were constantly praying.

In the Lord's providence, another heart surgeon, Dr. Jack Stephenson, a fellow Christian, and a member of the board of trustees of the college, dropped by to see how James was doing. With code blue sounding, he walked into the operating room, looked at James' chart, and exclaimed, "He needs potassium!" When potassium was administered, gradually the heart regained its own beating, and James recovered.

Joyous students on the campus reported a "miracle" had saved James' life. James in a chapel talk, thanked the students for their support in prayer, and disclaimed any "miracle." He told the assembly that in the Lord's providence Dr. Stephenson came by, and that the Lord used him to effect James' recovery by the laws of nature.

We remember (1) that every prayer of every righteous person is heard (1 Peter 3:12), and (2) that the listening Father always answers with what is best (Matthew 7:7-11). Sometimes His answer is "yes" (as in Acts 12:5-17); sometimes, "no" (as in 2 Corinthians 12:7-9); and sometimes, "wait awhile" (as in Romans 15:30-33), and five years later, Philippians 1:12-14).

~Hugo McCord (deceased)

Fight One More Round

When James J. Corbett was asked what was the most important thing a man must do to become a boxing champion, he replied: "Fight one more round."

Our Lord has promised great rewards to those who, in the battle of life, show a never-say-die spirit. If you hope to accomplish worthwhile thing for God and others, time and time again you will have to "fight one more round."

Thomas Foxwell Buxton said, "With ordinary talent and extraordinary perseverance, all things are attainable." The Scriptures say, "...he who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22).

~Bill Dillon

Life Sentences

Life is easier to take than you'd think; all that is necessary is to accept the impossible, do without the indispensable, and bear the intolerable.

~Kathleen Norris

Live each day as if it were your last ~ someday you'll be right. The measure of life is not its duration, but its donation.

~Peter Marshall

I like living. I have sometimes been wildly, despairingly, acutely miserable, racked with sorrow, but through it all I still know quite certainly that just to be alive is a grand thing.

~Agatha Christie

Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone,
Kindness is another's trouble,
Courage in your own.

~Adam Lindsay Gordon

Life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it.

~Lou Holtz

The Certainty of Judgement

Isaiah 59:2 says, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Perhaps the most universal need people have is to be supported not matter what. Unconditional support is a potent drug. The Bible says salvation is conditional. This bothers many people. It stings the conscience. It afflicts the comforted. Some will say, "God is love! God is love! God is love!" This is true, and the most caring thing you can do for another person is to call them to repentance and obedience (Luke 13:3; 1 Peter 3:21). Also, what kind of God do you worship who will not punish evil? The devil says evil must never be punished. If you do not believe in the certainty of judgment, then who exactly do you bow the knee too? Matthew 25:41 says, "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels'."

~Mark Dillon

Bible Quiz

1. What languages were used in the sign over the cross?
2. What was Paul's first sermon subject at Damascus, following his conversion? See Acts 9:20.
3. Who was given an entire city as a wedding gift?
4. What man made an effort to purchase the power of God with money?
5. What everyday substance was changed into a plague of lice?
6. What famous rabbi was Paul's teacher?

1. Hebrew, Greek, and Latin ~ John 19:20. 2. He preached Christ... that he is the Son of God. 3. Solomon's wife also Pharaoh's daughter ~ 1 Kings 11:16; 4. Simon, the Sorcerer ~ Acts 8: 5. Dmsl ~ Exodus 8:16, 17; 6. Gamahel ~ Acts 22:3.





The Walk and The Talk

1 John 2:6

Introduction

1. How can we know that we really know that Jesus is our Savior? Three things stand out in this chapter: (1) We must obey God; (2) We must love God and His people: and (3) We must live holy lives.
2. Our text comes from that portion that is emphasizing the need to obey God.
3. We have in this passage of scripture: A bold profession; a binding promise; and a beautiful practice. For simplicity's sake, we will just let the three main phrases be the outline of our lesson for today.

I. "He that SAITH he abideth in Him."

- A. We must first of all be there to abide!
 1. How do we get into Christ? Galatians 3:26, 27
 2. The consequence of abiding in Him. John 15:1-6
- B. Our profession must be more than just words.
 1. Talk only means a dead faith. James 2:17, 20, 24, 26
 2. Inconsistency means hypocrisy. I John 2:4; Luke 6:46
- C. Talking only is useless.
 1. We become content with "Doctrinal" matters only.
 2. Our knowledge is "objective" not "subjective."

II. "OUGHT" himself also so to walk."

- A. This is the very purpose of God.
 1. It is part of the plan of redemption. Romans 8:29
 2. It is the object of our redemption. Ephesians 1:4
 3. It should be imperative with us. I Peter 2:9
- B. This is the very plan of Christ.
 1. He founded the church to identify his own people. Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 5:25
 2. We are joined to Him in this body. I Corinthians 12:13, 27
 3. All members are to conform to the head. Colossians 1:18
- C. This is the very program of the Holy Spirit.
 1. We have an anointing. I John 2:20

C. This is the very program of the Holy Spirit.

1. We have an anointing. I John 2:20
 2. This is the proof of our sonship. Romans 8:9, 14
 3. It will have the same effect upon us as upon Him. Galatians 5:22, 23
- ### D. This is the very promise that we made.
1. We came to the cross for a new nature. II Peter 1:4; II Corinthians 5:17
 2. We came to the cross without any reservations. Luke 14:27; Galatians 2:20
 3. We come to the cross for a heavenly burden. Matthew 11:29

III. "Even as HE WALKED."

- A. He walked in *holiness*. John 8:46; Hebrew 7:26
- B. He walked in *obedience*. Hebrew 5:8; John 6:38
- C. He walked in *activity*. Acts 20:35
- D. He walked in *self denial*. II Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:7
- E. He walked in *prayer*. Matthew 14:23; 26:41
- F. He walked in *humility*. Matthew 11:29
- G. He walked in *contentment*. Matthew 8:20; Philippians 4:11
- H. He walked in *tenderness*. Luke 23:34; I Peter 2:23
- I. He walked in the *delight of God*. Psalms 40:8; 37:4; 1:2
- J. He walked in *love*. John 15:9, 10, 13; Romans 8:35

Conclusion:

1. "People who can never understand your metaphysics can always understand your conduct, and if they find you wrong at the point they can understand, they will not care to go much further into points which lie beyond their intelligence."
~Joseph Parker
2. Do you know that you know? Are you obeying God? Do you walk as He walked?
3. What did Jesus say about being baptized? (see: Matthew 3:15). What have you been saying about it?

~M.W. Kiser
104 Calhoun Street
Sylacauga, AL 35150



New Readers

• "Dear brethren, Would you start sending me the *Gospel Gleaner*. "Yours in Christ."

~ **Ron Boatwright**
Conway, AR

• "I receive your excellent publication and would like to add my sister to your mailing list. she has recently moved to Charlotte, N.C. and appreciates all information I send her on church publications. Thanks."

~ **Bobby Ausbrooks**

• "Dear Sis: I recently received a copy of your publication *Gospel Gleaner* and the articles in the January ~ June 2005 issue were excellent. If possible I would like to be put on the mailing list to receive this publication. Thank you."

~ **Stephen Meece**
Sheridan, WY

• "Hi friend, I was wondering if I could receive the *Gospel Gleaner* via regular mail? Below is my mailing address..."

~ **Linda Cornett**
Slemp, KY
"Thanks so much!"

• "A Christian friend game me a copy of *Gospel Gleaner*. I have enjoyed reading it very much. Would you please add my name to your mailing list. Thank you."

~ **Marion K. Palmer**
Webster, NC

• "I would like to be put on your mailing list. I enjoyed reading a copy some one gave me. Thanks."

~ **Lucille Nicholson**
Webster, NC

• "Could you add us to your mailing list for the *Gospel Gleaner*? My brother has given me copies from time to time, but I would like to receive our own."

E-mail address: sforbus1999@yahoo.com

~ **S. and J.C. Forbus**
Memphis, TN

• "I would like to receive the *Gospel Gleaner*, I'm a member of Doniphan Church of Christ in Mo. Thanking you in advance."

~ **Eileen Hoefler**
Doniphan, MO

• "I read your publication, that a friend gave me. I would appreciate being on your mailing list. Enclosed is a small donation."

~ **Kenneth Anderson**
Gainesboro, TN

Satisfied Readers

"Thanks for another copy of "The Gospel Gleaner." I look forward to getting it. May God open the heart of those I pass it on to. Bless all of you who have a part in publishing it. Take care and hang in there."

In Christian Love,
Betty Johnson

"I have enjoyed the Gospel Gleaner for a long time.

~ **T.J. Derryberry**
Hazen, AR

Gleaner Among Best

• "I eagerly await the *Gospel Gleaner* each time. It is among the best publications. Keep up the good work."

~ **Sam Pennyman**
Athens, OH

"The *Gospel Gleaner* serves a much needed purpose in the out of the brotherhood. I hope it continues to print sound articles."

~ **Charles Wortley**
Birmingham, AL

"The *Gospel Gleaner* appeals to people like me. Thank you for your work to publish it. The Gleaner is definitely 'the people's paper'."

~ **John Saks**
Flatwoods, KY

A Fine Article

"What a fine article [The Da Vinci Code] in *Gospel Gleaner*, Volume 21, Numbers 1 & 2! [2005]"

~ **Al Sowins**
Clearlake, CA

A Good Recommendation

"Dear *Gospel Gleaner*, Received Volume #21 and it is as powerful in word and deed as all past volumes of your articles have been. I have shared these good works with others and now want to add a few more names to your mailing list, but first I want to comment that besides Glenn McCoy's book entitles "Return to the Old Paths", another good gospel writer that published gospel truth and enlightenment is the late Dillard Thurman in his four books entitles "Charting the Old Paths" which can be ordered through Gospel Minutes, P.O. Box 50007, Fort Worth, TX 76105. Both these men's books are well worth purchasing. May I also say that a fantastic wealth of daily encouragement for women is the book "Daughters of Eve, Strength for today... from Women of yesterday, by Lottie Beth Hobbs."

~ **Roxie Williams**
Clinton, AR

Requests Book

“Please accept my contribution of \$25.00 and add me to your mailing list. If it is still available, I would like a copy of the sermon outlines mentioned in the January - March 2003 issue.”

~*Frank Plemmons*
Idabel, OK

(*Editor's note:* the sermon outline book by *Gospel Gleaner* staff writers is out of print. Sorry!)

Requests Bundle

“Dear Brethren, We have a copy of the ‘*Gospel Gleaner*’ and appreciate it. Enclosed is a \$20.00 donation. We would like to be on your mailing list. Our address is... And, we have a couple we would like for you to send it to, if you will... And, what would it cost to get 25 copies of the last, or the next, paper sent for our congregation. “Thank you.”

~*Harold Stover*

(*Editor's note:* The *Gospel Gleaner* is free of charge. We are happy to send bundles when requested.)

A New Tract

“Dear Bro. Dillon: I enjoyed reading the last issue of the *Gospel Gleaner*. Here is a small contribution to the paper. Too, I enclosed a copy of a new tract that I have just printed. It has also been translated into Telugu in India and printed and distributed by the thousands. Feel free to use any of it if you wish. Best wishes.

~*Perry B. Cotham*
Grand Prairie, TX

A Memorial

“I enjoy and appreciate your paper. Accept this check in memory of my mom whose birthday would have been November 21. She was a generous contributor to many causes for spreading God’s Word. In memory of Lillie Dacus.”

~*Joy Kicklighter*
Memphis, TN

Who Will Be in Hell?

What does the Bible teach about hell? Looking to the future as God has revealed, it will be lake of fire (Revelation 20:14) and a place of everlasting punishment for the wicked (Matthew 25:46); where the smoke of their torment will ascend up forever and ever (Revelation 14:11); where the worm will not die and the fire will not be quenched (Mark 9:48). Hell will be a place created by God and by Him it will be intentionally forsaken. It will be a God-forsaken place of outer darkness with weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:30). Basically, four categories of beings will be in hell: the devil and his angels, the fearfully surprised, those who left Christ never to return, and those who never obeyed the Lord’s gospel. This lesson will focus on *who* the Bible teaches will be in hell.

The devil and the fallen angels have set their course for eternal punishment in hell. In fact, hell is a place prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down

to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment (2 Peter 2:4). While this passage probably refers to the place of intermediate torment (cf. Luke 16:23), no doubt they will be cast into the lake of fire which is the second death (Revelation 20:11-15). Satan will suffer in hell. The devil will be tormented day and night forever (Revelation 20:10). The notion that Satan will be exalted in hell is unbiblical mythology. The reality of hell is that the devil will be tormented alongside fallen angels and wicked men forever and ever. There will be no pleasures or exalted places in hell.

Fearfully surprised souls will suffer eternally in hell. In Christ’s depiction of the judgment scene, He taught of a fearfully surprised number among Christians (Matthew 25:44). These obeyed the gospel but had a dead faith (James 2:17-18). Our name can live and our faith be dead (Revelation 3:1). Concerning our faith, we can fool ourselves, but we cannot fool God. These thought obeying the gospel was “good enough” without

continuing in good works and faithful living. They did not see the need in feeding the hungry and helping the poor. They were indeed pitiful examples of what Christianity should be.

A second group of fearfully surprised to be cast into hell will be so-called Christians (Matthew 7:21-23). People will call Jesus "Lord" and still be lost in hell (Matthew 7:21). He *never* knew these surprised souls (verse 23). He never knew them because they never did *the will of the Father in heaven* (verse 21). There is more to *the will of the Father* than merely confessing Christ as Lord. These thought their confession and good works were "good enough" without obeying the gospel. Yet, man cannot save himself. Only the gospel has the power of salvation (Romans 1:16). Man must obey the gospel (Mark 16:15-16). These folks are exactly the opposite of the aforementioned group. These had good works without obedience to the gospel. The first group had obedience to the gospel and no good works. These so-called Christians will be surprised because they have been told a lie. They have been led to believe good works and being a good person will be enough to save. We must ask, if man could be saved only by his good works, then why did Christ die? If man can save himself by being a good person, as the world defines such, he does not need a Savior. The reality is we need not only to obey the gospel and be saved by the Savior's blood; we need also to live according to the Savior's covenant and plan for His people. There is no other way.

Christians who left Christ and never returned will be cast into hell. It would have been better for them to have never obeyed the gospel (2 Peter 2:20-22). These have sinned willfully, trampling under foot the Son of God, counting His covenant as unholy, while despising the Spirit of Grace (Hebrews 10:26-29). For them there remains no more a sacrifice for their sins. One must be keeping the terms of the covenant in order to be saved by its promises.

Those who never obeyed the gospel will spend eternity in hell. Peter asked, "What shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?" *"For the time is come that judgment must be at the house of God; and if it first begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us,*

what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Peter 4:17-18) According to Paul, these shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. *"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."* (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).

Will you be going to hell? Are you in one of these categories? Are you willing to remain on that course? What in hell is worth your soul? You cannot take thing from here to there. What you will have in hell is all you will have. What is there in hell keeping you from obeying the gospel? Will you forfeit heaven's rest for worms that never die? Will you choose smoke that ascends for ever from a fire that cannot be quenched over the chorus of the redeemed? Will you forfeit heaven for the company of Satan, fallen angels, and the wicked of this world?

There are only two destination ~ Heaven or Hell. For the sinner, there is only one way to heaven, only one plan of salvation. Obey the gospel. Hear the message of the death, burial, and resurrected Christ (Romans 10:17). Believe the soul-saving gospel of the Son of God (Hebrews 11:6). Repent from sins to serve the living God (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Confess Christ (Acts 8:37). Be baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27), be cleansed by His blood, and wash every sin away (Acts 22:16). When you become a Christian, follow the Lord. At baptism one becomes united in the likeness of His death (Romans 6:5, NKJV). After baptism one must live by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20). This is the only way for the sinner to avoid hell and make heaven his eternal home.

~ Andrew D. Erwin
3980 Murray Paris Road
Hazel, KY 42049



Contributions Received During the Last Quarter

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July ~ December 2005

Keeping Things in Perspective

If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead 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 somewhere, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.

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 hold up your head with a smile on your face, are truly thankful, you are blessed because the majority can, but most do not.

If you can hold someone's hand, hug them or touch them on the shoulder, you are blessed because you can offer healing touch.

If you can read this message, you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world who cannot read at all.

~Unknown

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<i>Sunday Morning Bible Class</i>	9:45
<i>Sunday Morning Worship</i>	10:30
<i>Sunday Evening Worship</i>	6:00
<i>Wednesday Evening Bible Study</i>	7:00

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