

Disciple Magazine

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by Joe McKeever

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Seven of the Most Amazing Things Jesus Ever Said

By Joe McKeeever

“Never has a man spoken like this man speaks” (John 7:46).

Somewhere around the house I have an old book with the wonderful title of *657 of the Best Things Ever Said*. It would not surprise you to know most of them are silly. As beauty is in the eye of the beholder, doubtless it's true that the “best things ever said” is also arbitrary. With one exception—literally hundreds of millions of people across this world agree with the judgment of those early Galileans that “No one ever spoke like Jesus.”

Our Lord spoke a solid one thousand mind boggling things never heard before on Planet Earth, all of them surprising and wonderful and memorable. And, let's be

honest, many who heard Jesus also found His words provocative, offensive, and even blasphemous. When Jesus stood to preach, no one was bored.

May I direct your attention to Matthew chapter 11, verses 21 through 30? These seven words from Him are as amazing as anything He said. Matthew 11 is pure gold; the mother lode for sure. Confession: working on this, I have repeatedly cried out in my heart, “*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it*” (Psalm 139:6). I’m so out of my depth here. When we finish, we will have but touched the hem of His garment, this is so rich. And yet, let’s give it a try anyway, while admitting that there is far more to any of this than our finite minds can comprehend. If the Lord’s people see through a glass darkly (1 Cor. 13:12), it’s no stretch to say that we write through a glass darkly too. In the words of Paul, “*O the depth of the riches*

both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!” (Rom.11:33). Now, on to the text.

I. “Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment, than for you” (Matt. 11:21-24)

Jesus’ statement here refers to the hard-hearted citizens of Capernaum, and just before that, the unresponsive populations of Chorazin and Bethsaida. The Lord’s audience must have been outraged by this. The very idea—that wicked Sodom will fare better at the throne of judgment than they! But there it is.

Some people are going to have it tougher at judgment than others in the same way that some will receive a greater Heavenly reward than others. I would never

have thought of that. We did not make it up. Jesus said it.

In 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, Paul spoke of Christians whose works are “*wood, hay and stubble,*” rather than the more imperishable “*gold, silver, and precious stones.*” Perhaps they never grew beyond carnality or were caught up in a cult and spread falsehood from door to door. Whatever the reason for their unworthy works, Paul says, “*If any man’s work is burned up [in judgment when “it is to be revealed with fire”], he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.*” Clearly, there are degrees of reward in Heaven with some people entering glory, as we say, “by the skin of their teeth.”

My understanding of the principle that comes to play here is: What you did with what you had. Those given only slivers of light but who served God well are the champions of faith. Likewise, those who had

it all and became hypocrites and deceivers and abusers are destined for the lowest regions of hell. The inimitable Leonard Ravenhill made this point in a book titled *Sodom Had No Bible*. Heaven's champions are those who served God consistently while enduring the greatest opposition, while carrying the heaviest burdens, while persevering to the end. The implications of this are enormous.

II. *“I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants” (Matt. 11:25)*

The intelligentsia in the audience was offended. I imagine, as the Lord spoke, some people were shaking their heads, refusing to believe Him even before the words left His mouth. Every pastor knows the feeling. You preach your hardest to get

across some wonderful insight from scripture and some closed-minded hearers reject the teaching without even considering it.

I can imagine some Mensa member wondering why Scripture seems like so much foolishness to him. With his unparalleled intellect, certainly he should be able to figure out God, if such a Being actually exists, and the mysteries of the universe should unfold before his scrutiny. To his everlasting consternation the living God has made them off limits to him and has given them to the children! The very idea!

On numerous occasions, Jesus said, *“Except you humble yourself and become as a little child, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven”* (See Matt. 18:16 and Luke 18:16). People unwilling to do this will miss out on the greatest wonders of the universe. No one will get to heaven by his own efforts.

No one will arrive at the gates of glory boasting about having figured out God and circumventing the cross. In Bethlehem, the entrance to the Church of the Nativity was partially bricked in during the Middle Ages (to keep enemies from riding their camels inside, we're told) so that one has to bow to enter. That's a great metaphor for the eternal life. The implications and applications of the Lord withholding His truth from the self important while freely revealing it to the humble are enormous.

III. “Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight” (Matthew 11:26)

Why did God set things up so that the Nobel Prize winner has to struggle to get to faith and the childlike walk right in? Jesus gave us the only answer that makes sense: “He wanted to.” Not very theological, is it?

Some things God does simply because doing so pleased Him. “*It pleased*

God that through the foolishness of preaching people who believe would be saved" (1 Cor. 1:21). A lot of people would like to change this. They don't like sermons and have little use for a system that centers around preaching. Tough cookies. We're not given a choice in this. We self-important earthlings who set ourselves up as divine advisors will just have to deal with this. It's how things are. *"Without faith, it is impossible to please God"* (Heb. 11:6).

Psalm 115:3 states it unequivocally: *"Our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases."* God has His plans and He knows what they are. I do not. I will trust Him or be forever frustrated.

IV. "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father..." (Matthew 11:27)

Just before delivering the Great Commission commanding disciples to take the Gospel to the world and make additional

disciples, Jesus announced, “*All authority in Heaven and earth has been handed over to me*” (Matt. 28:18). He’s in charge. He has the right to issue commands to God’s people.

How the religious authorities must have become enraged over this! The Lord Jesus is clearly acting as the Almighty. He forgives sin, gives new interpretations of scripture, and points to Himself as the Savior and the coming Judge. He is either a usurper of the first degree or the Son of God in the flesh.

The epistles enlarge on this truth in numerous places. This one is mind-boggling: “[Jesus] *is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. For by Him all things were created...all things have been created by Him and for Him. He is before all things and in Him all things hold together. he is also head of the body, the church, and He is the beginning,*

the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything” (Col. 1:15-18). And this: “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete; He is the head over all rule and authority” (Col. 2:9-10). Jesus is Lord. He’s in charge. There are no areas of life on earth in which this truth does not pertain. Jesus is Lord of all.

V. “No one knows the Son except the Father...” (Matthew 11:27)

This one must have driven His hearers up the wall. The nerve of Jesus. Who does He think He is? We know Him. He’s the carpenter of Galilee. The full identity of Jesus—His being all God and all man in His earthly body—eludes us. It did then and it does now. And yet, scholars of every generation try to figure Him out.

“Who is this man?” the crowds wondered as they listened to Jesus teach and saw Him work: “*Never has a man spoken like this man speaks.*” Jesus Christ was the Son of Joseph, carpenter of Nazareth, and the Son of God. He was Son of Man and Son of David. He was Mary’s Son and Mary’s Lord and Savior. Good luck trying to figure all that out. What are the implications of this? They are enormous, far reaching, life changing.

VI. “...*Nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him*” (Matthew 11:27)

This may be the most enraging thing the scribes and Pharisees heard from this itinerant rabbi of Galilee. (The word “*know*” here is *epignosko* and means “full knowledge,” not just a passing acquaintance.) What I find delightful and more than a little humorous is the sheer gall

of this. Imagine saying, “No one knows God except me and the people I introduce to Him.” And then you turn around and say, “I am very humble.” But that is precisely what Jesus did. Both realities are there.

What are the implications of Jesus being the only One who knows the Father and thus the sole access to Him? In John 14:6, He said, *“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”* Clearly, if you want to go to God (and thus Heaven), you’d better come to Jesus. He is the door. And that is where the self-important know-it-alls stumble, at the idea of Jesus being all of this. He is indeed. Jesus is Lord. It’s all about Jesus. Take Him out of your religious faith and you end up with a bunch of pretty nonsense. John said, *“The Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in*

the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him” (John 1:17 and 18).

VII. “Come unto me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my load is light” (Matthew 11:28-30)

Come to Me. I will give you rest.

Learn from Me. It's My yoke, My burden. It's all about Jesus. Do not miss this. We must not divorce this wonderful invitation from all that went before. Only after realizing that all authority in Heaven and earth is in the hands of Jesus, and that He alone knows the Heavenly Father and is the sole access to God, only then do we see the significance of “*Come unto me.*”

It was not a foregone conclusion that the Savior, the Lord Christ, once on Earth

and doing His thing would be available, approachable, and kind. If there is only one God in the universe, nothing says He had to be good. He could have been the worst tyrant imaginable, toying with mankind as playthings, acting like a spoiled brat who delights in torturing his pets. (That, btw, is the precise charge militant atheists hurl toward Him. But it's just so much foolishness. They read one another and feed off each other's anger.)

God is love. Heaven is available. Salvation is free. And we are invited in. To the leper who, against all regulations, ran to Jesus and fell down before Him, saying, "*If you are willing, you can make me clean,*" our Lord said, "*I am willing*" (Mark 1:41). Ladies and gentlemen, we have a willing Savior. Rejoice!

The only precondition to knowing Him and receiving Heaven's blessings is humbling ourselves and becoming as

children. Since we are indeed humble and childlike in the face of all the mysteries of this universe, the puzzle is why this is such an ordeal to many of us.

Joe McKeever is a retired Southern Baptist pastor from New Orleans, Louisiana. He blogs regularly at www.joemckeeper.com.

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Love Precedes Repentance

By Shea Oakley

Some Christian teachers are frustrated by the apparent lack of success they experience in spurring their people to grow in holiness. They accurately use the words of the Bible in carefully exegeted sermons in which they preach the real need for repentance and change but then watch their people in vain for results. Nothing

changes or their flock's moral behavior becomes even worse. Why?

Perhaps it is because exhortation rarely changes the people it is directed at unless someone who they know loves them is the one doing the exhorting. Whether it is a pastor to his flock or one individual to another, love and acceptance must precede truth telling about personal sinfulness in order for real change to occur. Love is what leads us towards true repentance.

Accusation and guilt-manipulation rarely produces the godly sorrow that leads to new life, they usually only provoke the kind of sorrow that the scripture tells us will ultimately lead to death.

Exclusively employing the fear of punishment to try to make a human being stop indulging in some moral trespass is problematic. Sincere repudiation of sin most often happens when the person committing it comes to realize that the wrongdoing in

question is hurting someone they know has their best interests at heart. The someone in question is always God ultimately, but this principle also holds true when the one hurt by the sin is a person who has loved the sinning party well. A child who has done something to offend a truly loving parent will often tearfully breakdown and sincerely ask for forgiveness when that parent gently confronts them in a loving way that shows their own hurt.

To understand the spiritual principle in operation here we might do well to compare the reaction to sin exhibited by the Pharisees with that of Jesus. The Pharisees of the Gospels never accepted a person unless the person was morally pure according to their rules. If you did not live up to those rules you were rejected and looked down upon. Pharisees were never friends with “sinners”. By contrast Jesus welcomed such people into His presence. The Bible

tells us the religious elites of His time accused Him of being a friend of drunkards and prostitutes. This is because He was. For Jesus acceptance came first because He knew that it was primarily the kindness of His Father, which led people towards repentance, not His wrath, as, justified as it might be. The love of Christ for a man or woman preceded their contrition and, in fact, it was this initiative of unconditional love, which made the contrition possible.

We do not earn the right to tell another human being that they need to turn from a sin until we have shown them we love them in both word and deed. Otherwise they will either ignore us or be spiritually and emotionally damaged by us, or both. Before we presume to exhort we must first embrace and accept the person in question even though we do not embrace and accept their wrongdoing. This is the way to turn someone from their sin and back into right

relationship with God and others. Love precedes repentance.

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Converted from atheism in 1990, Shea Oakley has written over 350 articles for electronic and print publications since 2002, including *Disciple Magazine* (and *Pulpit Helps Magazine*), *The Christian Herald*, *The Christian Post*, Christian Network and Crosshome.com. In 2003 he graduated from Alliance Theological Seminary with a Certificate of Theological Studies. Shea and his wife Kathleen make their home in West Milford, New Jersey. [Table of Contents](#)

The Seven Churches of Revelation—Part 1: Introduction

By Ray P. Burriss

Editor's Note: This is the first of a series of articles on the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3.

What caused Christ to dictate a letter to each the Seven Churches in Asia at the opening of His Revelation to John? To find the answer, I'll take this series of articles to focus on the historical, political, and economic setting of the cities of these Seven Churches mentioned in the book of Revelation.

Who was the writer of the book of Revelation? He identifies himself in 1:1 as John, but some argue that this was not John the Apostle but a John who was an elder at the church in Ephesus. Others state there were two different writers. Most orthodox scholars accept that it was John the Apostle.

Two things have to be considered when a person studies any prophetic statement in the Bible. First, there is "forth-telling" which is meant the message of the

letters was for the people or church receiving the message at that present time. Second, there is “fore-telling” which is for Christians and/or churches sometime in the future.

Before we going into detail concerning the Seven Churches, here is some important background information. On a current map, you will notice that these seven churches are in the nation of Turkey—some of these towns are still there, others have been abandoned. Since these churches were so close together geographically and because of the good Roman road system, it's thought the book of Revelation was delivered as a circular letter. This would indicate it was one letter but was taken to each church mentioned rather than written as seven different letters. *“Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to*

Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea” (1:11).

Politically in the first century, Rome ruled from what is now Spain, over to Turkey, all of the Middle East and most of northern Africa. Rome seemed to tolerate all forms of religious activity, except Christianity. One of the reasons for hating the Christians is they were thought to be too secretive in what they did. For example: Romans thought they drank blood and ate bodies. Also the Christians claimed theirs was the only true God. This idea of Christianity being the only true religion was not well accepted, especially by the emperor of Rome (at the time of this letter, most likely Domitian, who reigned from 81-96 A. D.) who demanded to be worshipped as lord.

Because of the persecution of Christians at that time, some think that parts of Revelation are written in “code” that can be understood by those in the churches

receiving the letter, but not understood by others who were not Christians. Writing in code was done as a form of protection in case enemies of the church confiscated the letter. Trying to decipher this language in the present time is not easy, as can be evidenced by the many books on the interpretation of the book of Revelation. But, to the churches at that time it was no mystery what John wrote to them.

While many of the letters of the New Testament are written to individuals, this Revelation was written to the churches and their leaders. The leaders are represented by the “*stars*” or “*angels*”. When he writes about the lampstands, John is referring to the churches. The writer is not speaking of Jewish Menorahs (one lampstand with branches going out on each side), But, the writer uses the plural, “*lampstands*”. Most likely John is referring to the type of lampstand that was used to provide light

when it's dark. This type of lampstand would have a cup or bowl at the top to hold oil and not a candle.

What Christ is doing in dealing with the leaders of these churches and of the churches is establishing His authority by stating He has them in His right hand. *“As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches”* (1:20).

Christ points out four things to five of the seven churches. This is because while five of the churches received condemnation, two did not. The reason these two churches didn't receive condemnation will be discussed in future articles. For easier reading, here are the four things that Christ stated to John concerning these churches except the churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia: **Commendation,**

Condemnation, Correction, and Consequences.

Since this will be a series of articles, next month we will explore the church at Ephesus asking why Ephesus was the first church to receive this circular letter, why did they leave their “first love”, and who are the Nicolaitans whom Christ hates?

Ray P. Burriss is a retired missionary (having served in Puerto Rico) and is a marriage and family counselor ordained by the Southern Baptist Convention.

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Exegetically Speaking

by Spiros Zodhiates

The Growth of the Implanted Word

James 1:21

From Faith, Love & Hope: An Exposition of the Epistle of James, AMG Publishers, 1997.

“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21).

One of the hardest things for the Christian of our day is to recognize the presence of sin in his own life and all around him. We often try to minimize the presence of sin and to make light of its effects upon us.

J. Wilbur Chapman told of a distinguished Methodist minister of Australia who preached on sin. One of his church officers came afterward to talk with him in his study. He said to the minister: “Dr. Howard, we don’t want you to talk so plainly as you do about sin, because if our boys and girls hear you talking so much about sin,

they will more easily become sinners. Call it a mistake if you will, but do not speak so plainly about sin.” The minister took down a small bottle of strychnine that was marked “Poison.” He said, “I see what you want me to do. You want me to change the label. Suppose I take off this label of ‘Poison’ and put on some mild label, such as ‘Essence of Peppermint.’ Do you not see what would happen? The milder you make the label, the more dangerous you make the poison.”

The Apostle James was one preacher at least who never hesitated to call sin by the blackest name he could find in the Greek language. That is what we have in verse 21. What is he trying to describe here? Remember what he spoke about in the previous verse? It was the wrath, the anger, and the hot temper of man which cannot work the righteousness of God. Now make no mistake; he does not call it by a mild name such as “human weakness” or a

“psychological complex.” It is sin, a filthy and wicked sin at that. There is no dillydallying with this preacher. He hits the nail on the head.

Let us not deceive ourselves into believing that, since we have been re-created by the Word of truth, there is no more sanctification to be accomplished. There are a great number of things which we must get rid of. There is much extra luggage which we drag with us into the kingdom of God from our previous sinful lives and we have the audacity to pretend that we are as light as a feather. We are like that flippant youth who, as he heard an Indian evangelist preach, interrupted him by saying: “You tell me about the burden of sin. I feel none. How heavy is it? Eighty pounds? Ten pounds?” The preacher answered: “Tell me, if you laid four hundred pounds weight on a corpse, would it feel the load?” “No, because it is dead,” replied the youth. The

preacher said: “That spirit, too, is dead which feels no load of sin.”

If you do not feel the great burden of your temper as sin, it may be that you are still spiritually dead and do not realize it. When you are self-satisfied, fully believing in your sinless perfection in spite of the anger which exists in your heart, it is difficult to accept the Word of God for your own heart and life. You may like to hear it, but you apply it to someone else.

The actual command of the verse under study today is, “Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.” But James is speaking to people who are already brothers in Christ, to those who have been re-created through the Word of truth. How can they be saved over again? The word “*saving*” or “*salvation*” does not always refer to that initial act of God whereby we are brought from darkness into light, but often to the day-by-day

salvation from the power of sin, and especially this sin of temper. In fact, the Greek verb *sōzō* used here means also “to preserve, to keep safe.”

If you do not want to be muddled up and confused as you read the Scriptures, do not for one moment think that every time you see the word “*salvation*” or “*save*” it necessarily means that original act of re-creation or new birth. It does not mean that here, but rather “to keep safe, to keep alive, to preserve.” Do you not see how wonderful the meaning of the whole sentence is? If you want to keep your soul safe, you had better accept the Word of God in your heart and keep a cool head.

I believe that the word “*souls*” here refers to that part of your personality whence spring all the sentiments and impulses, such as that of anger, which the divinely inspired author has been discussing in such a masterly way. God always wants to deal

with the root rather than with the actual manifestation of sin. Your soul is what He sent His Son to save and it is that which He wants to keep safe to the very end.

Remember the Master's words: "*And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake, but he that endureth to the end shall be saved*" (Matt. 10:22).

In order to keep our souls safe, James tells us, we should accept or receive "*the implanted word.*" What does He mean by that expression? In the original Greek the word "*implanted*" (*émphutos*) commonly means "innate," but here it is necessary to see the etymology of the word and from it derive its exact meaning in this context. It comes from the preposition *en*, which means "in," and the verb *phuteúō* which means "to plant." In other words, it means "to plant in." In this connection James speaks of the Word, of the Lord Jesus

Christ, who has been planted once and for all in our hearts, as we saw in verse 18.

The planting of the seed has already taken place, but of what benefit is it if it remains in that stage, as far as others are concerned? You have often heard the expression, “saved to serve.” That is exactly it. The Word planted in your heart and mine must grow, must bear fruit, and the fruit seen by others will bring glory to our heavenly Father. It is significant that the tense in which this main verb of the sentence, *déxasthe*, “receive” is written. It is in the aorist imperative, which refers to that once-and-for-all, at some time in the past accepted Word of truth. What this new acceptance actually resembles is the watering and fertilizing of the ground in which the seed was planted. How we need to be under the constant teaching and acceptance of this Word, this Christ who must grow to His full stature within us.

The worst thing that can happen to a Christian is to allow the Word of truth to remain in the seed stage in his life. God demands growth. Yet how many of us are satisfied to remain at the seed stage.

Spiros Zodhiates (1922-2009) served as president of AMG International for over 40 years, was the founding editor of *Pulpit Helps Magazine* (*Disciple's* predecessor), and authored dozens of exegetical books.

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Words to Stand You on Your Feet

by Joe McKeever

Serving God: Why We Must and Why We Don't

“...in beatings, in imprisonments....in the word of truth, in the power of God, by the

weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left...as sorrowful yet always rejoicing...you are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections” (2 Corinthians 6:4-12).

I. Normal Working Conditions for Believers

Anyone who decides to dedicate his life to following Jesus should buckle his seat belt. This could be bumpy. There will be plenty of highs and lows in the Christian life—mountain peaks and valleys, grassy meadows and rocky badlands. There will be times of great harvest—“The Lord really blessed us!”—and seasons of barrenness when you will wonder, “Where is the Holy Spirit?” It’s all part of the bargain.

In this passage the Apostle Paul is describing some of the working conditions believers may expect. Everything from beatings and imprisonment to enjoying

teaching the word and seeing God's power, from sleeplessness and hunger to being honored and applauded, from moments of glory to months of pain. Anyone who finds the Christian life uneventful or boring isn't doing it right.

In the opening of this little passage, Paul says, "*In everything commending ourselves as servants of God*" (6:4). That's the idea. Serve the Lord in whatever ways and whenever He tells you. See what happens.

We need not remind anyone choosing to follow Jesus that His steps led to a cross. So we must not be discouraged when our path also takes that kind of turn. But keep in mind that His did not end there. After the cross came a crown. "*For the joy set before Him, Jesus endured the cross*" (Hebrews 12:2).

Of course, many of us shrink from that call and responsibility in the face of

much lesser struggles, but the Lord (speaking here through Paul's pen) won't let us off the hook there either.

II. The Real Reason You Are Not Doing Your Job

I'd serve the Lord better if I just had a better job. Lived in a bigger house. Were married to someone different. Were married. Were not married.

I could witness to my neighbor if I had that kind of outgoing personality. I could teach a class if I were not so shy. I could tithe if I made more money. I could lead my family if I had more time. The list of reasons why we are not doing what we ought to be doing for the Lord is endless. Most pastors have heard them all.

The Apostle Paul is gently rebuking the Corinthians ("*I speak as to children,*" he says in 6:13). He tells them, "I am not your problem." In fact, he said, "*Our mouth has*

spoken freely to you; our heart is opened wide" (6:11). I take that to mean, "I'm doing everything I can for you. I'm on your side." "The problem," Paul says, "is you."

"You are restrained by your own affections." That's the modern interpretation of a word literally meaning "inward parts" and translated "bowels" in the wonderful old KJV. You and I might say, "The problem is with your unbelief." Or, "Your problem is your stinking thinking," as I've heard some put it.

We should quit blaming the devil. We must quit blaming God ("Why did the Lord put me in this situation?" "Why doesn't God hear my prayer?"). And we must quit blaming the preachers and teachers He has given us. Take charge of your own spiritual responsibilities. Get up off the couch and do what God has told you to do! Whatever that may be for you.

Immediately following, Paul tells the Corinthians to break some unholy relationships they've built with the forces of unrighteousness. God's people are His temple (vs. 16). They must be holy, must team up with His people, and must serve Him faithfully without making excuses.

Joe McKeever is a retired Southern Baptist pastor from New Orleans, Louisiana. He blogs regularly at www.joemckeeper.com.

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Living out the Living Word

by Justin Lonas

Dry Springs, Empty Clouds, and the Enticement of Sin

2 Peter 2:15-22

In writing to strengthen the brethren to stand firm and grow in holiness, Peter

spends much of his letter excoriating false teachers. At first glance, this seems at cross-purposes with his reason for writing, but this encouragement and warning are of a piece: “*the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment*” (2:9). Without reminding them of the certainty of coming judgment, the very presence of such false teachers might cause many to lose heart.

At the close of chapter two, Peter reaches a fever pitch, exposing any who would seek to lead the Church astray as sinful, hollow, deceived, and damned. From the beginning of the chapter, he has connected the threat of false teachers to the history of false prophets that plagued Israel, and in verses 15 and 16, he calls one out by name. He writes that these false teachers were, “*forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of*

Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, for a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet” (2:15-16).

Recall briefly the story of Balaam, recounted in Numbers 22-24. Intimidated by the approach of the Israelites on their way to the Promised Land, Moabite king Balak and his nobles gathered funds to hire “freelance prophet” Balaam to curse Israel. At first, Balaam resists the commission to speak against Israel, but eventually succumbs, accepting his price. God warns him, however, to only speak the words He would give to him, but Balaam disregarded the Lord.

Upon travelling to deliver the message, though, God sent an angel to slay Balaam (rather than allow him deliver a false prophecy), and he was only saved because

his donkey saw the angel and refused to keep walking. When he struck the donkey, the Lord opened her mouth to speak a rebuke to Balaam, and then his eyes were opened to see the angel. As a result, instead of speaking the curse he had been paid to deliver, he was only able to speak God's blessing on His chosen people and His judgment on other nations.

Likewise, some of the false teachers Peter attacks had turned from the truth to lies for the sake of financial gain—whether in terms of “fleecing the flock” or simply in the temporary reward of prosperity from compromises to avoid persecution. Peter is clear, though, that just as God rebuked Balaam (by some very unique means), so He will stop the influence of false teachers in His timing. In the long run, what is false will be shown to be false, and those who spread lies will be called to account by the Author of truth.

Peter then turns to another metaphor to show the corruption of these men: “*These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm*” (2:17a). The teaching of the Word of God (repeatedly called the “*word of life*” in the New Testament) refreshes weary souls, telling us of our salvation and justification before the Father, bringing truth and light so that we may see how we should live, and strengthening us to follow Him all our days. By contrast, Peter says that false teachers promise the same sort of benefits that faithful teachers deliver, but their words are fruitless, only bringing destruction and despair. Following them will prove as disheartening as finding a spring in the desert only to discover dust, or waiting for rain to water your crops only to see the clouds pass without relief. As with every other description he has offered, Peter bookends this one with a reminder of their

coming judgment: “*for whom the black darkness has been reserved*” (2:17b).

Further, he describes some of the motives by which the false teachers operate: “*For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved*” (2:18-19). Few come to the church teaching error without doing so in order to justify the lusts of the flesh—the Law of God serves to convict and restrain our sinful impulses, and it must be explained away in order for us to be “at peace” with our “*fleshly desires.*” Here, Peter calls a spade a spade, warning believers that the primary appeal of the enemy is sensual, not intellectual, and that the end of any supposed freedom from God’s Law is only death.

Peter has been teaching that our thoughts and beliefs influence our moral choices—“*grace and peace...in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord*” (1:2) lead to faith and righteousness; “*destructive heresies*” (2:1) produce all manner of sin and sensuality. What he illuminates here is that this is a two-way street—pursuing immorality degrades our belief in the truth and entices us to accept false doctrine. The temptation that subdues us enslaves us, so we must be ever on our guard not to compromise truth for sin. Peter’s warning echoes Paul’s assessment of sinful man: “*For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator...for this reason God gave them over to degrading passion...receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error*” (Rom. 1:25-27). Unbelief is both the root and result of sin.

There is a theme of sexual sin that runs through Peter's description of these teachers. To be sure, this is a temptation common to all, and can certainly lead any of us astray if we let our guard down. Deeper than that, though is the metaphoric reality of sexuality. The union of man and wife is a picture of Christ and His Church—marital fidelity and spiritual fidelity go hand in hand. In the same way, physical promiscuity and faithlessness tag together. The Old Testament consistently calls Israel's unfaithfulness to the Lord "adultery", as they turned from Him to other gods.

As the chapter draws to a close, Peter brings out the harshest charge: *"For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not*

to have known the way of righteousness than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, 'A dog returns to its own vomit,' and 'A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire' (2:20-22). Those false teachers who have been a part of the Church, learning Scripture and seeing it lived out will incur great judgment for their betrayal—so much so that it would have been better for them never to have heard the Gospel.

This passage urgently calls us to see that danger of falling away from the faith. Peter's stark pronouncement that blasphemy of known truth is a greater sin than blasphemy in ignorance unsettles us. Is this the unforgivable sin? Who among us is safe from this threat? Remember, though that he is writing to those who "*already know [the Gospel message], and have been established in the truth which is present with*

you" (1:12). His purpose for them, even in such heated statements, is caution and comfort, not condemnation. If we are concerned, our response should be "*to be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you*" (1:10). God preserves and protects those whom He calls. This side of glory, none of us is free from sin, but our perseverance in belief and obedience are proof of His power and holiness, not of our strength and will. As Jude reminds us, it is God "*who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy*" (Jude 24).

Peter seems to indicate that those who knew the truth and turned away were never called by God to begin with. These are difficult words (cf. John 6:60-68), and we should not gloss over them or flippantly disregard them. All of us have known friends or relatives who grew up in the Church,

under the instruction of Christian parents, and yet have forsaken the faith—perhaps you have even been in that place yourself. Where is the cure for our fears? Peter will answer this in the next chapter, reminding us that the Lord is longsuffering, “*not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance*” (3:9).

God’s judgment on sin and error should spur us to proclaiming again His message of deliverance, because no one in this life is beyond the pale of repentance and belief. This is precisely where Peter’s letter will drive us, asking us “*what sort of people ought [we] to be in holy conduct and godliness*” (3:11) in light of the knowledge and love He has shown us. “O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood, to every believer the promise of God. The vilest offender who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.”

Justin Lonas is editor of *Disciple Magazine* for AMG International in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Table of Contents

Following God

by Erik Christensen

Do This, Not That: How Christ Lives through Us

Ephesians 4:28-32

How then should we live? What a question for believers! In his letter to the Ephesian believers, Paul first addresses the believer's position in Christ, and now in chapter four deals with the activity or walk of believers. Contextually, Paul makes it very clear that our works are an outflow of our position in Christ. Christ lives in us and as a result we are called to put off our old, sinful ways and walk in a manner worthy of the calling that we have in Him.

In verses 28-32, Paul is very clear about what a worthy walk looks like with regard to work, speech, and attitude as well as the way in which we should treat one another. In verse 28 Paul speaks to the issue of theft. Stealing is simply taking something that does not belong to you. Clearly, from the Word of God this is sin. The idea that a believer, indwelt with the righteous, holy, Son of God, would participate in theft is not what “*walking in a manner worthy*” looks like. The opposite of stealing is giving.

Paul shares with the believers what we are to do. Rather than stealing, the believer now is to work with the idea of being able to share with those in need. When we earn an income, we recognize that the Lord has blessed us and are in turn to share with others who are in need. We should not do for others what they are capable and expected to do, “*laboring,*

performing with his own hands what is good,” but rather to share with those who are in true need. Unfortunately in our day and age “need” has been twisted into many different ideas. With wisdom we are to bless those with what we have been blessed with.

God gave His Son in order that we may have life and life everlasting. To give and to have mercy on those who are poor and in need is the heart of God. Paul commands believers not to participate in such a fleshly activity that is contrary to who we now have been declared by God to be. With Christ in us, having been “*blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*” the believer is now commanded to turn from the old way of living and walk in the newness of Christ’s life.

Paul also deals with the issue of speech. He commands believers not to allow any unwholesome word to proceed

from our mouths. The word “*unwholesome*” means putrid or rotten. Have you ever forgotten to throw the trash out in the summer time? It stinks. It is putrid. Paul again contrasts what we should not be participating in with what we should be—rather than rotten speech coming out of our mouths we should be encouraging one another. Our encouragement should be serving others in such a way that, at the moment of their need, whatever that may be, there is grace given to them in and through what we say.

As believers, the encouragement from the Word of God in the context of Ephesians is the reminder of “whose” we are and “who” we are in Christ. This becomes an encouragement for all believers in the midst of life’s distractions and hardships to be reminded of our salvation and the strength that we have in Christ Himself. How many times have we walked through

difficult, painful experiences in which the Lord, through another brother or sister in Christ has reminded us of God's love for us? What a blessing we have to enjoy and share with one another!

Paul continues by stressing that we are not to "*grieve*" the Holy Spirit of God. We are not to offend the Spirit of God who we have been sealed in. The Spirit of God is constantly working in our lives as He now indwells us. Resisting the Holy Spirit or walking according to our old way of life grieves Him, and Paul commands us not to do this. The fact that the Holy Spirit lives in us to convict us of sin, empowering us and guiding us in His ways is an amazing truth. What a blessing that in Christ He has given us the Comforter. We are not to grieve Him but rather are to submit to Him.

In our attitudes and actions toward one another, we can see whether we are submitting to the Spirit of God. Our

relationships with one another are a picture of our relationship with the Lord. If we are rightly related to the Lord, we will also through the power of God be rightly related to one another. If we are not rightly related to one another there is evidently a problem in our relationship with the Lord. Paul commands that all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander along with all malice be put away. Each of these words deal with attitudes that can destroy our relationships with one another. Every attitude listed here is an attitude out of the old fleshly nature rather than the new nature of Christ's life in us.

Paul summarizes this with the word "*malice*". Malice is that evil or wickedness that is reflective of our old nature. When we are walking in the flesh rather than the Spirit, our treatment of fellow believers does not reflect the kindness, tenderness, or forgiveness that is from the Lord. He has

forgiven us, and with that in mind we are to forgive others. God has been kind to us, tender hearted toward us. This is then what should characterize our treatment of one another.

Our activity will always be a picture of what we believe and whether we are rightly related to the Lord or not. Paul admonishes believers to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we have been called. Christ has come to live in us. Having been sealed in the Holy Spirit we are to submit to the Lord. We are to turn from our old sinful nature and through the empowering ability of Christ, walk in the new nature that is ours in Him. How are we following Him today? How is the life of Christ being seen in and through our speech, attitudes and relationships with the Lord first and then one another?

Erik Christensen is senior pastor of Hoffmantown Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Table of Contents

Points to Ponder

by David L. Olford

At the Feet of Jesus—Part 4

Text: *“Then, one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks”* (Luke 17:15).

Thought: As we walk through this miracle account, we are fixing our eyes on Jesus to see why we ought to be at His feet as well—offering Him praise and thanksgiving. We ought to be at Jesus’ feet not only because **Jesus’ Extends Divine Mercy** (17:11-14a), and because **Jesus**

Provides Total Cleansing (17:14b-15a), and because **Jesus Receives Sincere Gratitude** (17:15b-18), but also and finally because **Jesus Affirms Saving Faith** (17:19).

The Samaritan had already offered his sacrifice of praise for his cleansing at the feet of Jesus. Whether he would go to a priest later does not seem to be clear from the end of the account. Jesus tells the man to “*rise and go your way.*” Then there are these important words, “*your faith has made you well.*” Now we know that Jesus healed the man, and faith was the necessary response to the words of Jesus. It was in the light of the faith expressed that the healing took place.

Let’s go deeper—another translation of this verse could be, “*your faith has saved you.*” That word “save” can refer to almost any form of deliverance, temporal or eternal. Even if Jesus is just referring to his physical

deliverance, “Your faith has led to your leprosy being healed,” it certainly at least points to salvation in the broader or wider or deeper sense. Knowing Luke’s emphasis on Jesus as Savior and the salvation He brings, Luke wants us to recognize that Jesus is the Savior, and that faith in Jesus and thanksgiving directed to Jesus are the right responses to who He is and the salvation He brings.

These words of Jesus affirm the faith of the Samaritan, a faith that he may have shared to some degree with the other men who were cleansed, but a faith that brought him back to the feet of Jesus with praise and thanksgiving. The Samaritan had a grateful faith. There were nine others that should have been there at the Savior’s feet, but they weren’t. Only one responds in a way that is an example for us in this passage of Scripture. There are many truths presented in this text, but one of its unique features is

the emphasis on the one who fell at Jesus' feet. Yes, He cried out for mercy and received cleansing, but also he worshipped at the feet of Jesus and received words of affirmation concerning his faith. Such grateful faith is approved by our Lord and is the kind of faith that is "saving faith."

Thrust: It may be today that we are seeking His divine mercy and touch afresh in our lives. He is adequate. He sees, He knows, He responds. It may be that we need to be forgiven and cleansed from sin, we need to recognize that Jesus is the savior who went to Jerusalem to die on a cross to be our substitute and to pay the penalty for sin. He is the one who grants forgiveness and cleansing from sin as we trust in Him. It may be that we just need to express our praise and thanksgiving even as this Samaritan did because of what the Lord has done for us. Lastly, it may be that we need to hear His words affirming and

strengthening our faith as we are in His presence.

David L. Olford teaches expository preaching at Union University's Stephen Olford Center in Memphis, Tennessee.
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Jewels from Past Giants

The Message of Jude—Part 1

By G. Campbell Morgan

Originally published in 1912 as part of The Living Messages of the Books of the Bible. Edited slightly for length and modern spellings.

This letter is one of the briefest of the New Testament writings; but it is by no means unimportant. It is characterized by great and grave solemnity, making appeal to

“them that are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Christ Jesus.” It is universal, and has perpetual application to the people of God.

Its purpose is evident. We have to spend no time in seeking to discover its message; it is in itself a definite message. Its solemnity is increased by the fact that the writer declares that whereas he had purposed writing on an entirely different subject, he turned aside from that original purpose, in view of the urgency of the need, as he saw it, for solemn warning.

Glancing at the early verses of the letter, let us notice first the reason for the writing; secondly, his own declared purpose in writing; and then, before turning to the statement of the message, let us notice the method he adopted in the writing.

The reason is declared in verse four; there were certain “*ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and*

denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” When Jude was giving all diligence, that is, making careful preparation, to write a treatise on the subject of our common salvation, there was borne in upon his spirit the necessity for writing this letter, because there were certain men within the circle of the Church, who had crept in secretly, and were being received and listened to, and whose influence was affecting the life of Christian people. They were “*turning the grace of our Lord into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*”

Jude gave with equal clearness the purpose for which he wrote the letter in the words, “*I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints.*” The method of the letter is that of giving illustrations of apostasy, showing

its nature and results; and also instructions for fidelity.

Here again, in another way, and from another viewpoint, and with other emphasis, the great theme is that of the Hebrew letter, the two great values of which were the revelation of the perils of apostasy, of how death comes through apostasy; and of the powers of faith, how the righteous man lives by his faith. The same two underlying thoughts are in this brief letter.

The central teaching of the letter is that of the peril of apostasy. Apostasy is first defined as to its character and its characteristics. Secondly, illustrations of its nature and issue are given: Israel, Angels, Sodom and Gomorrah, Cain, Balaam, Korah. The abiding appeal consists of an inclusive command; an exposition thereof; and finally an inspirational doxology.

When I speak of apostasy being defined, I am referring of course to apostasy

within the Christian faith and fact. The illustrations are taken from the Scriptures and history of the Hebrew people; consequently they touch the underlying principle, rather than the immediate fact of the apostasy of which Jude was afraid as he wrote this letter to Christian people.

Apostasy is not finally intellectual; it is volitional; but it is closely united with the intellectual. It may be very difficult for us to say whether apostasy from Christ, the denial of faith, the turning of the back upon the Lord Himself, begins with intellectual doubt, or moral declension. If I were asked personally for an opinion—which I shall only give as a personal opinion—I should be inclined to say that the very order in which Jude has stated it is a revelation of the order in which it happens.

First some moral declension, some disobedience to the Lord Himself, some turning of the grace of God into

lasciviousness, the outcome of which is some denial of the Lord and Master Himself. My own conviction is that heresy within the Church is almost invariably the outcome of disloyalty to the teaching of the Lord at some point in the life. When a man turns the grace of God into lasciviousness, when he consents to act upon the idea that because he stands in grace, therefore his conduct is of very little moment, he is apostatizing. That is the most terrible of all apostasies.

There have been periods when that apostasy has been formulated into a definite doctrine; the antinomian heresy declared that because a man is in Christ he cannot be lost, and therefore it matters little what his conduct may be, because nothing he can do can sever as between Christ and himself. That is apostasy in its worst form. No man can hold that doctrine without denying the Lord and Master.

That is to deny everything for which He stood; to deny the real meaning and purpose of His dying, to deny the whole purpose of His heart, as He came to destroy the works of the Devil, in order to make possible to man a life of purity, to save man not merely from the punishment of sin, but from sin itself. To continue in sin that grace may abound is to deny the perfection of His Person; the passion of His heart that bore Him through the Cross; and His purpose for the establishment of the Kingdom of God in righteousness and holiness through the whole world.

Doubt is not apostasy. I believe there are a great many who, passing through a period of honest doubt and difficulty and inquiry in the presence of the great mystery of our Lord's Person, do not apostatize because they remain true to the measure of light they have, and they do not turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. In other

words, apostasy, according to this first definition and whole argument, is not intellectual mistake, but moral failure on the part of those who name the name of Christ.

In verses twelve, sixteen, and nineteen, we have the characteristics of apostasy; they each begin with the same words. Perhaps there is no more forceful passage in the whole of the New Testament than that of verses twelve and thirteen. It is figurative but graphic. Reading it, one is conscious of the awfulness of apostasy. In verses sixteen and nineteen we have a description of those who apostatize, what they are in themselves, and what they do in the assemblies.

Between the declaration of the character of apostasy and the description of its characteristics, we have a series of very startling illustrations. In Israel the form of apostasy was that of unbelief; and the issue of it was that they were destroyed. The

nature of the apostasy of Angels was rebellion; they kept not their proper habitation, they moved out of their God-appointed orbit; choosing for themselves, they wandered out of bounds; and the issue was that they are kept in bonds. They wandered out of the bounds of His law, and therefore they are kept in bonds, reserved in darkness until the final day. Sodom and Gomorrah afford a startling illustration, in its recognition of the solemn fact that there light is given in some measure to every nation and man, and that men are judged by God according to the light they have. The apostasy of Sodom and Gomorrah consisted in their giving themselves over to all manner of lust and fornication. The issue was that of the age abiding fire.

Then three persons are given as illustrations; Cain who was self-righteous; Balaam whose sin was greed; and Korah whose sin was presumption. All these are

contrary to faith. Go over the ground again. In the first illustration it is plainly stated, the sin of unbelief. The angels when they left their first estate, their proper habitation, did so as the result of unbelief. In the case of Sodom and Gomorrah it was failure of faith. The sensual life is the opposite of the life of faith. Sodom and Gomorrah, when they gave themselves to fornication, were answering the clamoring call of the carnal and sensual which is always a contradiction to faith. Cain's attitude was devoid of faith; his was the self-righteous attitude of life. Balaam's attitude was in contradiction to faith. In a sense Balaam had faith; he had belief intellectually. He failed in faith in that he did not obey. So also with Korah's presumption.

Where faith fails, morality fails. I pray you interpret that word morality in its widest sense, not as it is interpreted by the man in the street or by the magazine writer. The

immorality of the angels was the denial of the government of God, and rebellion against it. Wherever you find it, immorality is denial of faith. Not the ending of intellectual conviction, that is not immorality. Immorality is refusal to obey the truth of which I am convinced, and that is also apostasy.

Where there is such apostasy, inevitably the judgment must fall. It is contained in germ within the apostasy. "*My righteous one shall live by faith.*" If faith fail, God is not unfaithful; which does not mean that He will maintain the promise when the conditions are broken; but that He cannot maintain the promise when the conditions are broken.

George Campbell Morgan (1863-1945) was a prominent pastor, theologian, and evangelist. Born in Gloucestershire, England, he was taught at home by his parents and tutors because of his frailty. He

had a quick mind and an insatiable desire for knowledge. At the age of thirteen he preached his first sermon in a Methodist church. He became a powerful Bible commentator and one of the greatest expositors of the Word in the early part of the twentieth century. At age 35 he was called to preach at the Fifth Presbyterian Church in New York City. But it was at the Westminster Chapel in London that he preached his famous sermons later published in the eleven volumes of *The Westminster Pulpit*.

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Counselor's Corner

by James Rudy Gray

The Power of Encouragement

*Originally published in Pulpit Helps,
November 2009.*

Simple but effective, encouragement is often an overlooked or forgotten part of counseling with others. When we encourage someone, we help to inspire them with courage. People who need to make changes in their attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors usually need personal courage in order to make those important adjustments.

Encouragement is a skill. It must be applied appropriately and effectively. It must be realistic and genuine. A counselor could offer false encouragement or encouragement for the wrong things or the wrong reasons. The outcome of that kind of “encouragement” can be disastrous.

Encouragement should be timely and true—flattery is not encouragement. It is honestly helping a person to see the more hopeful and brighter side of something. Psychologist Larry Crabb wrote something that should be sufficient motivation for every

Christian counselor, “As part of my post-fifty reflections, I’ve had to admit that I still struggle with a lot of the same problems people pay me to help them deal with. That’s not a new thought, but it strikes with more force today than it did ten or twenty years ago. I thought I’d be farther along the path toward maturity than I perceive myself to be.”

Since we are all fellow strugglers, that is even more reason to offer well-meaning and accurate encouragement to people who come to us for help. That does not imply compromising the truth of God. It does mean doing to another person the same good we would like for someone to do for us.

To Christians, God says we should consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, “*not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all*

the more as you see the day drawing near”
(Heb. 10:25).

The goal of a Christian counselor is to glorify Christ in his or her counseling. We cannot do that if we do not hold people accountable to the Truth of God. However, we must not neglect to encourage them in what is good and right. We must encourage them so they can build hope. Hope in a client's heart is a great step toward making godly changes in his or her life.

The Holy Spirit convicts of sin. Counselors and pastors are not the Holy Spirit or even an assistant, but we are the people of God and we can walk in the fullness of the Spirit. We can also grieve the Spirit. We can possess spiritual gifts and we can be anointed with the power of the Spirit. We cannot be the Spirit—we are tools of the Spirit. There are things that only God can do, and there are things He has given us to

do. Encouragement is one of those things He has counseled us to do for others.

A counselee who has received effectively and honest encouragement from a counselor often finds more motivation for moving forward in the work of sorting out wrong patterns of thinking or sinful ways of relating. Through encouragement, they can be empowered to recognize sin, confess wrong, and embrace new ways of thinking and living. A diagnosis may help, but encouragement may be the additional help that influences a person toward real cognitive and behavioral change that not only helps them deal with the issues of life but brings God honor in the process.

Encouragement is not an end in itself. It is an uplifting heart touch that can be applied in virtually any situation.

Discouragement destroys motivation. Encouragement builds motivation. As counselors and people who minister to

others, we are about building up what is good and healthy. May God help us to use this powerfully effective force in our counseling ministries.

James Rudy Gray is certified as a professional counselor by the National Board for Certified Counselors, and is a member of the American Association of Christian Counselors. He serves as the editor of *The Baptist Courier*, the official newspaper of the South Carolina Baptist Convention. Table of Contents

The Story behind the Song

by Lindsay Terry

A Song to Bridge a Gap

Song: "You Are My King"

Billy Foote was born into a minister's home in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1966. His

parents, Billy and Winky Foote, demonstrated their support of their son's musical aspirations by providing guitar lessons, starting at age nine. He quickly advanced to the point of playing in his dad's revival services.

It was in one of those services that young Billy gave his heart to Christ. He told me, "I would hear my dad preach about the need to have Christ in your life. I remember responding to an invitation. I had been under conviction about my need for about a month before I actually surrendered to Christ."

By age sixteen Billy knew that God had work for him to do. He said, "I had no idea what kind, but I had the assurance that God was going to use me somehow."

Foote enrolled in East Texas Baptist University, in Marshall, Texas, in 1985. In the summer of 1986, he met a person who was to be a friend and mentor—one who would influence him as a worship leader

more than any other. That person was David Guion. He was leading worship at a camp in which Billy was a counselor. Billy was greatly affected by the way David led the students in worship. He said, "My eyes were opened to what it means to blend the old and new songs, and to call people to ascribe worth to the Lord."

Billy also said that his eyes were more opened during that camp to what worship can really be in a corporate setting. He told me, "I went back to college and helped start a night of worship each week. We had a time of worship through singing, and then a friend of mine, Neil McClendon, would speak to us. Students were able to make much of God and what he means to them."

Billy said of his early songwriting, "I had been out of college for about six years and had been leading worship full-time since my graduation. At that point in my life, I

would not have considered myself a songwriter. In fact, I had only written a couple of songs before ‘You Are My King.’”

Following is how he described the writing of his now famous third song: “I happened to be at a night of worship, and the phrases ‘I’m forgiven because You were forsaken’ and ‘I’m accepted’ kept running through my mind. I wrote those phrases down on a piece of paper, and the whole song came together.

“I believe the Spirit of God just reminded me of truths I had been taught at a young age. I knew I was forgiven because of what Christ did for us on the cross. I really don’t have a grand story of how it came together. I just believe it was a gift from God. As with many of my songs, the melody came with the words. I was able to run the lyrics by a couple of men whom I trust with their understanding of the Bible. They believed the lyrics to be of sound theology, and so I

started using the song wherever I was leading worship.

“I remember the first summer church camp that I sang the song. From the very first line, it seemed as if the students had known the song their entire lives. It was incredible to watch students respond to the Lord.

“It is so encouraging to know that this song is being used to help people bless the Lord around the world. We are forgiven and accepted because Christ was forsaken and condemned. We are alive and well because Christ arose from the grave. It really is amazing!”

Billy and his wife, Cindy, lead worship together as a team. Cindy, a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has become the lead vocalist for the worship band since Billy was diagnosed with a condition that affects his voice. Billy

continues to write songs as he seeks to obey God's call on his life.

“Carry the cross patiently and with perfect submission, and it shall carry you” - Thomas à Kempis.

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Lindsay Terry has been a song historian for more than 40 years, and has written widely on the background of great hymns and worship songs including the books *I Could Sing of Your Love Forever* (2008), from which this piece is excerpted, and *The Sacrifice of Praise* (2002).

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Church Builders

by Bernard R. DeRemer

John Newton: Trophy of Grace

“Grace! ‘tis a charming sound,
Harmonious to the ear, Heaven with the
echo shall resound, And all the earth shall
hear” - Philip Doddridge.

Perhaps there is no greater trophy of grace than John Newton (1725-1807). He was born in London; his mother died when he was seven. For six years, he sailed with his father, a merchant shipmaster on the Mediterranean. “His early life was one of sad and wanton profligacy” with intermittent, failing attempts to “live right.” Shortly after setting out on his own, he was impressed (forcibly enlisted) into the Royal Navy—where his arrogance and disagreeable

nature resulted in severe discipline and multiple transfers.

During this time, he became attached to ships involved in the horrible African slave trade, but his refusal to get along with others caused one captain to maroon him as an indentured servant to an slave trader's African wife. He was rescued in 1748, and during a severe storm that almost sank his ship on the return voyage to England, Newton experienced a dramatic conversion. He began reading the Bible and came under the influence of evangelical Anglican leaders like George Whitefield and John Wesley. He married his childhood sweetheart, Mary, in 1750, and though they had no children of their own, they later adopted two orphaned nieces.

Though the effect of his salvation in his behavior and attitude was almost immediate, Newton continued for several

more years in the slave trade, both as a slave ship captain and an investor.

In the 1750s, he left the business, and began to pursue Christian ministry. He studied Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac, was ordained a deacon, and received a curacy at Olney. There he became an intimate friend of William Cowper, with whom he collaborated on the production of *Olney Hymns*, which ranks high in English hymnody. In 1780 he was appointed rector of St. Mary's Woolnoth, London, the post he held for life. Newton was a "main pillar of the Evangelical party in the Church of England."

Later in his life, Newton came to see the evil of slavery, and renounced his participation in it fully. In 1788, he published a widely distributed pamphlet, *Thoughts on the Slave Trade*, in which he described the gruesome details of the trade and apologized for "a confession, which... comes too late.... It will always be a subject

of humiliating reflection to me, that I was once an active instrument in a business at which my heart now shudders.” He threw his influence behind the fledgling abolitionist movement, allied with William Wilberforce, and sent his pamphlet to every Member of Parliament.

In addition to Wilberforce (for whom Newton played a key role in shepherding him to stay in politics and serve God by passing just laws), he strongly influenced major leaders such as Thomas Scott (the pastor of a neighboring church who later became one of the founders of the Church Missionary Society), Charles Simeon (another co-founder of the CMS and influential evangelical pastor), and Hannah More (a playwright, author, philanthropist, and fellow abolitionist). Newton lived to see Wilberforce’s abolition bill passed by the House of Commons in March 1807.

A prolific writer, Newton's books include *Omicron*, *Cardiphonia*, and *A Review of Ecclesiastical History*. His classic song "Amazing Grace" has been called the greatest hymn ever written, its popularity undiminished after more than two centuries. One wonders how and indeed whether the light, giddy, pop tunes widely heard today will survive in coming years. His best known and loved hymns also include "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken" and "How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds."

"...*Well done, thou good and faithful servant...*" (Matt. 25:21).

Bernard R. DeRemer chronicled the lives of dozens of heroes of the faith in more than a decade of writing for *Pulpit Helps Magazine*.

He continues to serve in this capacity as a volunteer contributor to *Disciple*. He lives in West Liberty, Ohio.

Reference: *Who Was Who in Church History*, by Elgin S. Moyer; excerpts used by permission of Moody Publishers.

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Advancing the Ministries of the Gospel

The Gift of Knowledge: Scholarship Ministry

By AMG International Staff

Scripture overflows with admonition to learn and to teach the things of God. King Solomon's words sum up this theme well: *"My son, keep my words and treasure my commandments within you. Keep my commandments and live, and my teaching as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister,'*

and call understanding your intimate friend'
(Prov. 7:1-4).

The Lord wants us to know Him and to teach others to know Him. At AMG, we have long seen that part of fulfilling this calling includes helping those who hear the Gospel to gain the tools to grow in their knowledge of truth and share it faithfully with others. This passion drives many of our ministries—from Bible correspondence courses that accompany our media evangelism efforts to intensive pastor training outreaches.

Perhaps the most important area where we teach others is through our childcare ministry. We serve kids around the world, providing food, clothing, shelter, and medical care as needed. The core of our work with each of these children, though, is built around giving them the Gospel, training them in God's Word, and fostering spiritual maturity. When a boy or girl comes under

AMG's care through child sponsorship, securing them a good education is a top priority for us. In some fields, AMG operates our own schools; in others, we provide food, school supplies, tutoring, and other services to ensure that children are able to take advantage of existing local schools.

Even with this assistance from AMG, school fees for upper grades in many countries where we work, particularly Guatemala and Uganda, are still out of reach for most students who wish to finish high school. Many children drop out after sixth grade or even earlier to help their families make ends meet. To address this problem, AMG seeks to supplement our regular sponsorship program with a special **scholarship fund** provide through the generous support of faithful ministry partners.

In so many cases, the lack of full education condemns young boys to lives of

physical labor and poverty, susceptible to the influence offered by criminal gangs or the escape of drugs and alcohol. Young girls are led to teenage pregnancy, abuse, and desperation, even potentially falling prey to human trafficking.

It doesn't have to be this way, though.

AMG scholarships can make all the difference in helping children break the cycle of poverty and enter adulthood ready to earn a living and make an impact on their families and communities. In addition to opening doors for advanced study, even a high school education in many countries qualifies a child to work as a teacher, policeman, or business administrator, offering them a path to a healthier, more stable life.

Israel, a young man from Uganda, shows just what an impact these scholarships can have. He was matched with an AMG sponsor when he was in the

fourth grade; one year later, he came to know Christ as his Savior.

He writes: "Praise be to God for the wonderful work done in my life. AMG met me when I was hopeless due to the death of both my parents. No one in my family could afford to pay my school fee. But AMG was able to pay my school fees and school requirements. God has done immense things in my family because I preached to my brothers and sister. My whole family was Muslim, believing in Allah alone. Now my two elder brothers are saved plus one sister. Jesus is their Lord and Savior. I thank God for that. I thank God also that last year I finished high school and joined comprehensive nursing school for two and half years. I have a heart to provide assistance in treatment and medication for the suffering people in hospitals."

Every day, **AMG's Scholarship Fund** helps children just like Israel not just

to further their education and become productive citizens, but to equip them for spiritual growth and leadership in ways that impact communities and nations with the Gospel. Just **\$10 per month** can help send a Guatemalan child to junior high; **\$40 per month** can see them through high school. For **\$125** per month, you or your church can “adopt” a Greek Bible College student to support their preparation for ministry. Many other opportunities are made possible by your generous support.

Will you join AMG in praying that the students we reach will work hard and honor God? Will you pray with us for God’s provision for tuition and other school needs? Will you partner with us in support of this critical ministry of teaching and training the next generation to support their families, to build their communities, and to reach the world with the message of Christ’s salvation? With your help, we will continue

to carry out this work; striving to give students the gift of a lifetime.

To learn more about AMG's education and scholarship ministry, and how you and your church can partner with us, please visit www.amginternational.org or call 1-800-251-7206.

Advancing the Ministries of the Gospel (AMG) International is a non-denominational, international missions agency based in Chattanooga, Tenn. AMG's distinctive has always been its reliance on national workers to carry the Gospel in their own cultures. Today, they operate ministries in more than 30 countries around the world through partnership with national believers.

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Marks of the Master

by the Old Scot

Those Magnificent Grasses

Originally published in Disciple, May 10, 2010.

What in the world would we do without the grasses? This family of organisms can easily qualify as royalty in the kingdom of plants, for they are the most useful and needful to man of all the plants on earth.

Of course, I'm not referring to our decorative lawn grass varieties. They are nice, but hardly needful. Instead, think of wheat, from which bread—the “staff of life”—is made. Wheat is a grass. Then think of rice, which feeds most of the world's population. It is a grass. Think, too, of corn

(or maize), which also feeds a large part of the world. It, too, is a grass. There are also oats and millet, rye and barley: all grasses.

Without these cereal grains, as they are called, human life would only be possible on a vastly smaller, simpler scale. Without grass, there would be no grazing animals. Down the long centuries, men would have had to walk instead of ride, and carry their own burdens rather than loading them on animals—or on wagons drawn by draft animals.

Without grains there could be no teeming cities, for cities demand the kind of large food reserves which grains chiefly make possible. The world would have remained a world of subsistence agriculture—a world of only small farms and small villages. Hunger would never be far from minds and stomachs, because only grains are easily capable of long-term storage. Modern civilization would probably

never have arisen, for technology rises from abundance.

If we look more closely at the nature of grass, we shall see how truly remarkable it is. For example, it is good for grass to be grazed upon, or mowed. Most plants grow from the tips of their stems, so if the tip is cut off the plant cannot grow anymore. Grass, however, grows upward from the base. Cutting the top of a grass plant merely encourages new growth from additional buds at the base.

Furthermore, grass even benefits from being trampled by cattle! Many types of grass spread by sending out runners, and when these are cut by the hooves of cattle they often send down roots at the point of the break. New plants grow from these new roots.

Thus there is a balanced beneficial relationship between grazing animals and grass. The animals fill their bellies with

tender leaves and stems, and are content. The grass, in turn, is encouraged to spread by being clipped and trampled, and also is fertilized by dung from the animals.

Meat-eaters among us recognize another big benefit from the grasses, for without grass there would be no grazing animals—and no meat for most dinner tables. Hunting would be the only means of satisfying man's taste for meat (and even that would be difficult—most wild game eats grass also!).

Have we exhausted the list of things to be thankful for about grass? By no means! Grass also serves as a means of preserving precious soil: the spreading root systems of many grasses form sod, which absorbs rain and works to prevent soil erosion. Again, in many parts of the world men make furniture, ships, houses, and even water pipes from grass—for bamboo is

also a grass, and many useful things can be made from bamboo.

Truly, we are fortunate indeed that our world is so well provided with grass! But how did it happen? Was it an accident of nature that brought into existence a family of plants that almost begs to be eaten? Absurd! This is contrary to every principle discoverable in nature. How is it, we ask, that in nearly all varieties of plant life, growth takes place at the tip—but not so with grass? It is almost as though someone had deliberately designed grass to be good for animals and man.

And that, we believe, is exactly the case. Someone did create grass with the precise characteristics needed to undergird civilization for mankind. We know that someone as God. In the Book of Genesis, the Bible says: *“And God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth grass...and the herb yielding*

seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind, and it was so” (Gen. 1:11).

God also made dry grass to be good for starting fires—and thus giving us both tinder for fires and a powerful example of the impermanence of our physical bodies. “*All flesh is as grass,*” the Bible says, “*and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and the flower of it falls away. But the word of the Lord endures forever*” (1 Pet. 1:24). We are not here for long. But we are someplace forever. This also is the message of the Bible. The patriarch Job was well aware of this, thousands of years ago. He said: “*I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God*” (Job 19:25-26).

Job didn't know his Redeemer's name, but we do: His name is Jesus Christ, Son of God and God with God (cf. John 1:1;

Phil. 2:6; etc.). The Bible also says: “*The sting of death is sin...but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Cor. 15-56-57). Job’s Redeemer can be your Redeemer also, if you will call upon His Name.

The Old Scot (Ted Kyle) served as managing editor for *Pulpit Helps* magazine (*Disciple’s* predecessor publication) from 1993-2008. He was always fascinated by the natural world, and readily saw God’s hand in every detail. Ted went to be with His Creator and Savior in April 2013.

Source: *Grass, the Everything, Everywhere Plant*, by Augusta Goldin, Thomas Nelson, Nashville & NY, 1977.

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Book Review—October 2014

Recent and Forthcoming Releases

After Acts: Exploring the Lives and Legends of the Apostles, Bryan Liftin, 2015, Moody Publishers, Chicago, ISBN 9780802412409, 192 pages, \$14.99, softcover.

What happened to all those biblical figures once the Bible was finished? We've all heard it said: "According to early church tradition Peter was crucified upside down," or "Paul went to Spain." Did Thomas found the Indian church? Or did Mary live in Ephesus? Were the twelve disciples all eventually martyred? Where do these ancient traditions come from, and how historically reliable are they? What is meant by the term "early Church tradition?" *After*

Acts opens up the world of the Bible—right after it was written. Follow along with New Testament scholar Litfin as he explores the facts, myths, legends, archaeology, and questions of what happened in those most early days of Christianity.

Look and Live: Behold the Soul-Thrilling, Sin-Destroying Glory of Christ, Matt Papa, 2014, Bethany House, Bloomington, Minn., ISBN 9780764212512, 256 pages, \$15.99, softcover.

Matt Papa was a “professional Christian” in full-time ministry, ready and determined to change the world. All the while he was depressed, addicted to the approval of others, and enslaved to sin. But then everything changed. He encountered the glory of God. All of us live in the tension between where we are and where we ought to be. We try our best to bully our desires

into submission. And we all know, this is exhausting. Are you tired? Stuck? Still fighting the same sin you've been fighting for years? The call in these pages is not to work or to strive, but to lift your eyes. You don't need more willpower. You need a vision of greatness that sweeps you off your feet. You need to see glory. "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*"

Luther on the Christian Life: Cross and Freedom, Carl R. Trueman, 2014, Crossway, Wheaton, Ill., ISBN 9781433525025, 224 pages, \$17.99, softcover.

Martin Luther's historical significance can hardly be overstated. Known as the father of the Protestant Reformation, no single figure has had a greater impact on Western Christianity except perhaps Augustine. In *Luther on the Christian Life*,

Church historian Carl Trueman introduces readers to the lively Reformer, taking them on a tour of his historical context, theological system, and approach to the Christian life. Whether exploring Luther's theology of protest, ever-present sense of humor, or misunderstood view of sanctification, this addition to Crossway's Theologians on the Christian Life series highlights the ways in which Luther's eventful life shaped his understanding of what it means to be a Christian.

Prepare: Living Your Faith in an Increasingly Hostile Culture, J. Paul Nyquist, 2015, Moody Publishers, Chicago, ISBN 9780802412560, 160 pages, \$14.99, softcover.

Much like a person who has awaked from a decades-long coma to be introduced to a radically different world, evangelicals

are just awakening to the reality that they have lost the culture war in this country. We are seeing the rapid deterioration and dismantling of a Judeo-Christian culture in America, and believers are finding themselves in unfamiliar positions. Trend lines, unless altered, point to accelerated cultural change and even greater drift from the historic roots of this country. As a result, there is a growing intolerance towards believers and their message. Increasingly, followers of Jesus are being viewed as narrow, bigoted and hateful. Yet all of this was predicted by Christ before His departure. *Prepare* sets forth a biblical, theological, and practical approach to navigating the challenging days ahead and a reason for hope and optimism—the power of the Gospel and the possibility of societal transformation.

The Stories We Tell: How TV and Movies Long for and Echo the Truth, Mike Cospers, 2014, Crossway, Wheaton, Ill., ISBN 9781433537080, 240 pages, \$15.99, softcover.

Studies show that the average American watches 5 hours of television every day. Collectively, we spend roughly \$30 billion on movies each year. Simply put, we're entertainment junkies. But can we learn something from our insatiable addiction to stories? Mike Cospers thinks so. The tales we tell and the myths we weave inevitably echo the narrative underlying all of history: the story of humanity's tragic sin and God's triumphant salvation. This entertaining book connects the dots between the stories we tell and the one great Story—helping us better understand the longings of the human heart and thoughtfully engage with the movies and TV shows that capture our

imaginations and our neighbors shaped by this culture.

This Is the Life!: Enjoying the Blessings and Privileges of Faith in Christ, Warren W. Wiersbe, 2014, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Mich., ISBN 9780801016516, 144 pages, \$12.99, softcover.

You have received an inheritance of joy, peace, and grace—so live like it! When we are redeemed by Christ, we are given new life. A life of pervading joy, persistent grace, and promises kept. Yet we so often live as if we must trudge on day by day, just getting by until we reach a heavenly reward. We let the things of this world determine our outlook, attitude, and actions. But God has promised so much more—and He always keeps His promises. In *This Is the Life!* beloved theologian Warren W. Wiersbe shows that the way to joy is through

cultivating a close relationship with God and obeying His Word, calling us to enjoy all the blessings and privileges of a life of faith—right now. He helps us confront the habits that bind us, the negative attitudes that control us, the people who bother us, the needs that depress us, and the challenges that frighten us—showing how they can all be handled by God, if we will let Him have His way.

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News Update—October 2014

Chinese Pastor Who Organized against Church Demolition “Grateful” for Prison Sentence

A Chinese pastor maintains that he is grateful for the opportunity to serve a prison sentence. Huang Yizi faces up to seven years in prison for criticizing the

government's campaign to demolish church buildings, according to the *Christian Post*.

China Aid reports Pastor Yizi gathered church members and other believers to defend Salvation Church by creating a human wall to keep authorities out on July 21. Fourteen people were seriously injured that day.

On Aug. 3, police took forty-year-old Pastor Huang Yizi of a Wenzhou-based church into criminal detention. Aug. 28 he was arrested for "gathering a crowd to disrupt public order."

"He [Yizi] seems well. He is grateful that God has given him the chance to serve time in the detention centre," Beijing-based rights lawyer Zhang Kai Ahaojie said.

Upon approval from Pingyang County People's Procuratorate, this bureau placed Huang Yizi under arrest on August 28, 2014 on suspicion of "gathering a crowd to disrupt public order." Huang Yizi is currently being

detained at Pingyang County Detention Center.

Christian Headlines Daily

City of Houston Subpoenas Sermons that Address Homosexuality

A group of pastors in Houston, Tex., have been ordered to turn over to the city their sermons that address homosexuality or be held in contempt of the court. Sermons that mention gender identity or Annise Parker, Houston's first openly gay mayor, have also been subpoenaed.

Five Houston pastors have filed suit in Harris County court, arguing that the subpoenas are "overbroad, unduly burdensome, harassing and vexatious." Attorneys from Alliance Defending Freedom are representing the pastors in the case. Attorney Christina Holcomb said, "The city's subpoena of sermons and other pastoral communications is both needless

and unprecedented. The city council and its attorneys are engaging in an inquisition designed to stifle any critique of its actions.” She continued, “Political and social commentary is not a crime. It is protected by the First Amendment.”

The pastors and their attorneys believe that Houston’s demands, which are under the city’s new non-discrimination ordinance, are really an attempt to “out” the pastors, publicly shaming them for being “anti-gay”. Steve Riggle, senior pastor of Grace Community Church and one of the pastors served with a subpoena, said, “This is an attempt to chill pastors from speaking to the cultural issues of the day. The mayor would like to silence our voice. She’s a bully.”

Christian Headlines Daily

Supreme Court Opts Not to Hear Appeals, Gay Marriages Begin in New States

The United States Supreme Court on October 6 refused to hear five gay marriage appeals yesterday, a decision that allowed homosexual couples in Virginia, Oklahoma, Utah, Wisconsin and Indiana to marry immediately.

Virginia became the first southern state to legalize gay marriage. Family Foundation of Virginia president Victoria Cobb expressed a dissenting opinion. Cobb said that voters banned gay marriage; the Supreme Court justices discounted the voice of the people and “left Virginians without a definitive answer.”

Six other states that were currently fighting gay marriage bans in appeals courts will also be affected by the Supreme Court’s decision. North Carolina, West Virginia, South Carolina, Wyoming, Kansas and

Colorado will likely be the next states to allow homosexual couples to marry. This will bring the number of U.S. states that permit gay marriage from 19 to 30. In recent days, likely taking a cue from the high court, lower court rulings or dropped lawsuits have overturned gay marriage bans in Idaho, Nevada, Alaska, and Arizona.

Christian Headlines Daily

Mark Driscoll Resigns from Mars Hill Church

Mark Driscoll, the larger-than-life megachurch pastor who has been accused of plagiarism, bullying, and an unhealthy ego that alienated even his most devoted followers, resigned from his Seattle church October 14, according to a document obtained by Religion News Service.

The divisive Seattle pastor had announced his plan to step aside for at least six weeks in August while his church

investigated the charges against him. Driscoll's resignation came shortly after the church concluded its investigation. "Recent months have proven unhealthy for our family—even physically unsafe at times—and we believe the time has now come for the elders to choose new pastoral leadership for Mars Hill," Driscoll wrote in his resignation letter.

Driscoll was not asked to resign from the church he started 18 years ago, according to a letter from the church's board of overseers. "Indeed, we were surprised to receive his resignation letter," they wrote. Seven elders and one member of the board of overseers conducted this investigation, and the board of overseers provided findings and conclusions.

Christian Headlines Daily

Asia Bibi's Death Sentence Confirmed by Pakistani High Court

Asia Bibi, the Pakistani Christian mother charged with blasphemy, has been sentenced to death by the Pakistani High Court. Bibi's appeal has postponed by the court at least five times before the death penalty was confirmed by the court October 16. Following her 2009 accusation, Bibi was sentenced to death by hanging in 2010.

Nasir Saeed, director of the Centre for Legal Aid, Assistance and Settlement (CLAAS), the organization that has represented Bibi said, "I am very disappointed with today's result and my thoughts and prayers are with Asia's family. It is not surprising that the judges were swayed by pressure from local influential Muslims, but I had hoped that justice would prevail and that the case would be judged based on its merits. While the rest of the world condemns such draconian laws, Pakistan continues to persecute its minorities simply because of their religion."

Bibi's attorneys will submit a final appeal against the ruling to the Pakistani Supreme Court within 30 days. "I have to now remain hopeful that the Supreme Court judges will look at the case objectively and allow the final appeal, eventually acquitting Asia," Saeed said.

Christian Headlines Daily
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Sermon Helps

from www.sermonhall.com

Sermon Outlines

When Jesus Prayed for His Church

John 17:20-21

Intro.: After praying for Himself (v. 1-5) and His disciples (v. 6-19), Jesus prays "*for those who in distant lands and far-off ages*

will also enter the Christian faith" (William Barclay). Jesus' prayer for His Church was:

I. Unselfish

A. Not just for His disciples: "*I do not pray for these alone.*"

B. For us: "*Other sheep have I.*"

II. Expectant

A. "*But for those who will believe.*"

B. Jesus' firm faith in the promises.

III. Exclusive

A. Open to "*those who will believe in Me.*"

B. Only in Christ, "*the way, the truth, the life.*"

IV. Validated

A. Prophesied: "*For those who will believe in Me through their word.*"

B. Apostolic teaching validated the claims of Christ.

V. Inclusive

A. "*That they all may be one.*"

B. One Body, One Spirit, One Hope, One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, One Father (Eph. 4:4-6).

VI. Modeled

A. The Father and Son are one in nature, aim, and destiny.

B. While we do not possess divine nature, we can partake of it (2 Pet. 1:4).

VII. Universal

A. *“That the world may believe.”*

B. *“God so loved the world.”*

C. *“Go into all the world.”* The world at its worst needs the Church.

Conc.: How can we be part of the answer His 2,000 year-old prayer? 1) Believe in Christ—be added to His body; 2) maintain the unity—don’t divide over petty things; 3) evangelize the world—join hands together.

Victor Knowles

The Challenge of Living by Faith

James 4:4b-10

Intro.: How may a believer honor God in holiness?

I. By Earnestly Rejecting the World! (v. 4b)

II. By Humbly Submitting to God! (v. 6)

III. By Forcefully Resisting the Devil! (v. 7)

IV. By Faithfully Dying to Self! (vv. 8-10)

Sermon-Outline-a-Week

Illustrations

Don't Let Your Conscience Be Like a Pet Dog

Honestly, what use do we make of our God-given reason? I know what use I make of it. I use it chiefly to provide reasons for what I want to do without admitting it is for pursuing some personal ambition. A man may have his conscience so well disciplined and trained that, instead of blazing a trail before him, it is like a pet dog which just trots obediently at his heels and never so much as barks! *"If therefore the light that is*

in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

E. L. Allen

Christ the Sin-Bearer

An old servant was once carrying a large bough of a tree to have it cut into pieces to make a fire. A little boy, one of the family, seeing the end of it dragging along the ground and making it very heavy, came and took hold of the end, and the burden grew light.

Then said the servant, “Ah! Master Frank, I wish you could take hold of one end of the greater burden that I have to carry; I have a burden of sin; the more I drag it about, the heavier it becomes. I wish Jesus Christ would take hold of one end of it.”

The little boy said, “My mother told me, yesterday, that Jesus Christ carries all our sins; therefore, you do not want Jesus Christ to drag one end of it; He will take the

whole of it.” The poor woman, who had been long seeking rest, found it by that remark of the child. Yes, Jesus does take your sins. If you trust Christ, this is the evidence that all your sins are laid on him.

Charles H. Spurgeon

Bulletin Inserts

On Anger

An angry person is seldom reasonable—a reasonable person is seldom angry.

He who angers you controls you!

It is better to swallow your pride than to eat angry words.

He who goes to bed angry has the devil as a bed partner.

These five anonymous

Anger puts every offense on an endless
playback loop, but love turns off the switch.
Our Daily Bread

A chip on the shoulder is the heaviest load
you will ever have to carry.
R. W. Seaman

If bitterness has crept into the heart in the
friction of the busy day's unguarded
moments, be sure it steals away with the
setting sun. Twilight is God's interval for
peacemaking.
Quick Notes for Quiet Hours
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Puzzles and 'Toons

Church 'Toons by Joe McKeever

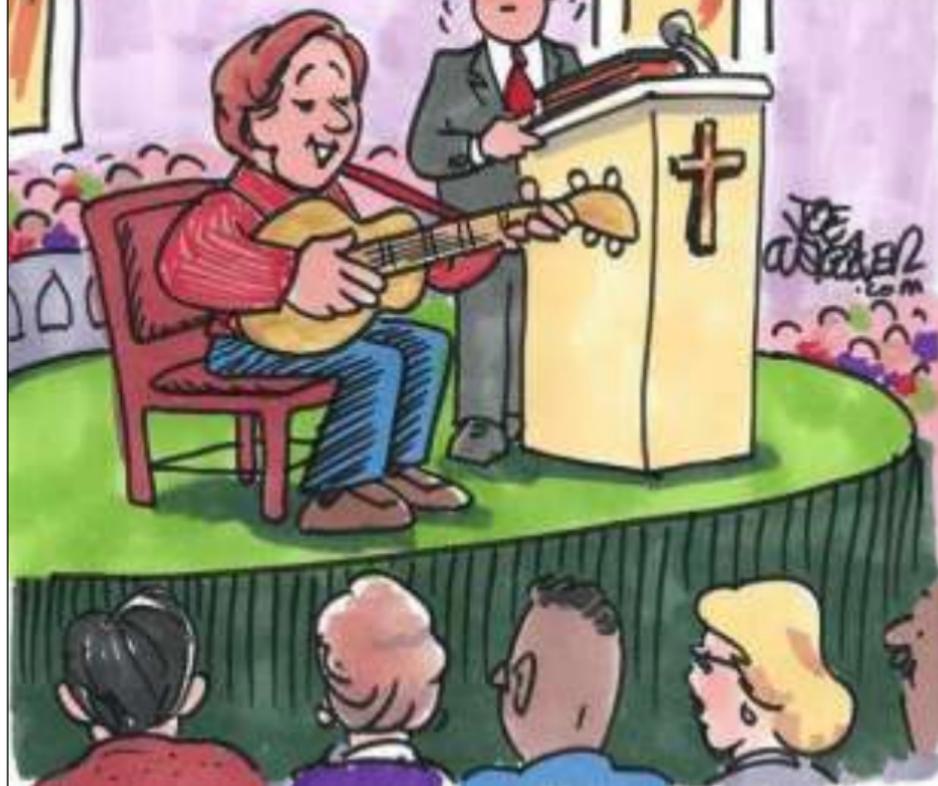
On following pages

"YOU MEAN TO TELL ME THIS IS
WHERE YOU PREPARE SERMONS? ISN'T
THAT CHEATING?"



THE PASTOR'S SECRET REVEALED

"AND HERE'S ONE
FOR ALL OF YOU
WHO ARE BORED
WITH OUR
PASTOR'S
PREACHING..."



Answers to last issue's puzzles:

HIDDEN WISDOM

ACROSTIC #80: ANSWERS

Ephesians (6:11)—*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*"

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| A. Stodgy | G. Sodom |
| B. Twig | H. Iota |
| C. Ethbaal | I. Afford |
| D. Potentate | J. Neuter |
| E. Heavenly | K. Shiloh |
| F. Ewelamb | L. Hut |

Question Box Answers

1. The Chaldeans (i.e., the Babylonians) (Hab. 1:6).
2. The knowledge of the glory of the Lord (Hab. 2:14).
3. Teman (Hab. 3:3), a region of Edom, southeast of Israel.
4. King Josiah (Zeph. 1:1).
5. Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron.
6. Moab and Ammon, respectively (Zeph. 2:9).
7. The prophets of Jerusalem (Zeph. 3:4).
8. Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel (Hag. 1:1, 14).
9. Joshua, son of Josedech (Hag. 1:1, 12, 14).
10. Make him as a signet (Hag. 2:23).

Hidden Wisdom & Father Abraham

By Mark Oshman

Originally published in *Pulpit Helps*, October 1998. On following pages.

Father Abraham's Question Box

By Mark Oshman

The Minor Prophets: Zechariah, Malachi

Fill in the missing word(s):

1. Whom did Zechariah see standing among the myrtle trees (Zech. 1)?
2. By what did name God refer to His servant (Zech. 3)?
3. In whose hand will people see a plummet (Zech. 4)?
4. What was the length and breadth of the flying scroll which Zechariah saw (Zech. 5)?
5. Where did the chariot drawn by black horses go (Zech. 6)?
6. Upon what will Zion's king be riding (Zech. 9)?
7. What did Zechariah do with the thirty pieces of silver given to him (Zech. 11)?
8. What will happen to the Mount of Olives when the Lord stands upon it (Zech. 14)?
9. With whom did God declare He had a covenant of life and peace (Mal. 2)?
10. Whom will God send before the Day of the Lord comes (Mal. 4)?

Hidden Wisdom: Bible Acrostic #81

by Mark A. Oshman

Solve the acrostic by using the clues to guess the words and by transferring the letter above each number to its appropriate place in the diagram. The result will be a Scripture verse of admonition, comfort, or instruction. Further, the initial letters of the answers will contain the name of the book from which the verse was taken. All quotations are from the King James Version. **HAPPY SOLVING!**

1G	2L	3A	4M	5P	6K	7J	8C	9D	10M	11A	12N	13E	14D	15P
		16B	17A	18I	19J	20L	21P	22E	23N	24A	25J	26K	27L	28C
	29A	30K	31B	32J	33O	34I	35N	36H	37P	38J	39L	40M		
41K	42A	43L	44D	45J	46P	47I	48L	49M	50D	51C	52A	53G	54K	55J
56J	57P	58L	59M	60K	61G	62D	63H	64J	65P	66I	67A	68C		
69K	70N	71E	72J	73L	74G	75C	76P	77K	78J	79I	80G	81B	82H	
83L	84P	85J	86G	87I	88A	89O	90D							

CLUES

A. Pertaining to an alpine region of west Austria and north Italy

29 88 52 42 7 11 67 17

B. Whom Nebuchadnezzar set up his large golden statue

81 31 44 16

C. Brit. Statesman (1732-1792)

28 51 8 68 75

D. Number of days Lazarus had been dead before Jesus Christ resurrected him

50 62 90 14

E. A variety of denim

71 22 13 60 41

F. The Israelites used its ashes as a purification for sin (2 wds.)

65 46 15 37 76 57 5 54 21

G. A place where the Philistines assembled an army against Israel (all spell)

74 24 86 53 60 1 61

H. Tag

36 82 63

I. Chain, for one

56 79 66 34 47 67 18

J. Asian country northwest of India

38 85 64 45 7 72 35 19 32 74 31

K. Eunice, to Timothy

20 54 63 77 0 30

L. Substrate

43 53 58 20 48 50 27 1 73

M. Type of antimock fluid used in motor vehicles

52 43 16 1 46

N. A place where the Philistines assembled an army against Israel

12 23 70 35

O. Something the church of Laodicea was not

33 89 5

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