

Disciple Magazine



Equipping believers for deeper life

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AT THE TURNING OF THE TIDE?

ACTION IN EXILE

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At the Turning of the Tide? Action in Exile

By Justin Lonas

Editor’s Note: This is an uncharacteristically action-oriented piece for Disciple, but if there was ever a time to act on abortion, it is now.

“You may choose to look the other way, but you can never say again that you did not know”—William Wilberforce.

Citizen journalist David Daleiden and his Center for Medical Progress started lobbing weekly grenades into the lap of America’s “safe, legal, and rare” abortion culture in early July. The effects of exposing the ghastly nature of Planned Parenthood’s business have been bracing; footage of PPFA’s insouciant staff tossing out price quotes and lists of body parts over lunch is as damning as the direct images of dismembered children.

I’ve lived my entire life under laws that permit these crimes against heaven, shaking my head at cowardice and prevarication from “pro-life” politicians, discouraged into complacent resignation. This is the way things are in Babylon.

In many ways, God is glorified and the Church is served through marginalization and suffering. Growing accustomed to being down and out in regards to the wider culture seemed (and in many ways still does) a sensible course. We know God is on our side, but we expect to appear as “*aliens and strangers*” to our fellows.

The exile we’ve been preparing for has been centered on the prospect of diminishing religious freedom, particularly in regards to holding a biblical view of marriage. After the *Obergefell v. Hodges* ruling, the wagons were circling and no one was expecting the resurgent roar of the pro-life cause.

The Lord’s plan for exiles is not only humbling and purification, though. He also uses them to speak truth to the hearts of kings (i.e., Daniel with Nebuchadnezzar and later Darius), to secure religious freedom (see Ezra), prevent deadly and unjust persecution (Esther), and to lead the remnant to full obedience (Nehemiah). In all of these cases,

the people involved were called simply to obedience—the action was brought about by God.

Whenever God moves, among the surest signs it is His own doing is that the faithful are as surprised by Him (though joyfully so) as His enemies. The Lord is on His throne as ever, and He delights in such reversals that protect the innocent, reveal the guilty, and bring Him glory.

All this is in His perfect timing, for these issues are not at all unrelated. The degeneration of marriage and the devaluing of children go hand in hand; at the end of this cultural project, we have been forced to reconsider the beginning. The sexual relationship God ordained in marriage to join man and wife as one flesh often, in due course, literally produces one flesh anew through the bearing of children. Fruitfulness is part of the created design for marriage. When we hate the children we create, it is only natural for this chosen fruitlessness to progress to a state of inherent fruitlessness.

Daleiden’s perseverant courage has reminded me of the boldness and persistence a righteous cause should call forth in us. Seeing in cold light the evil of this selfish practice brings me to mourn again for the bloodguilt of my people in celebrating it. Having walked through three pregnancies together, my wife and I appreciate the gravity of abortion in ways we couldn’t when we were younger. To see the familiar features of little children brutally snatched from the womb and cut to pieces sparks a fire to fight for their lives.

For many of us, being “pro-life” has been a part of our identity, but this is the shot in the arm we needed to press the battle to its end. For those who have silently nurtured doubts about the morality of abortion, these videos are confirming their worst suspicions. God’s creation speaks His truth; these are not “clumps of cells” but image bearers of the Most High. There are no reasonable doubts. We are called to care for orphans and widows, and who is more fatherless than a child scheduled for dilation and extraction?

For those who have supported abortion in carefree ignorance, there can be no more simple excuses. To defend Planned Parenthood has always been to celebrate horrendous sin, but no euphemisms remain to hide behind. Sin, as always, has overreached. The complacency and triumphalism of these profiteers of murder gives the lie to every sly evasion. Lives are being ended, and those doing the killing know it full well.

A wave is cresting. This can be a “Selma moment” in the march to secure right to life for the unborn. The cameras are rolling and the world cannot unsee what it is seeing; to oppose the movement now is to stand with the entrenched power of visceral evil. I don’t want to live in a place that lets this continue anymore.

The time to press hard is here, and pursuit to the end leaves us no room to “go wobbly” on the hill we are charging. We don’t fight a vague, sinister force but a corporate conglomerate, an “Abortion, Inc.” Moral questions are being plainly directed at Planned Parenthood, which controls 40% of the national market in this death-dealing. Removing the half of their funding that comes on the backs of taxpayers is a no-brainer. If this round is lost because of lackluster zeal, the shame is ours.

The goal, of course, is the end of abortion for good. Opposition will not always be so easy as it is now, with walls divinely crumbling before us. What we hope is that the demise of Planned Parenthood sparks opportunities to change hearts across the board.

Perhaps, the Lord has allowed the cultural position of the Church to be weakened for such a time as this. These undefended children can no longer be seen as pawns in a political game. The power play is coming from those who would wield the state against the innocent, not the other way around. Over time, as more see this as a moral issue rather than a partisan ax to grind, abortion will fade from the political scene. But this will only increase the need for the Church to love and care for the victims of crimes, poor choices, and sinful deception. To take abortion off the table will bring children from difficult situations, and opportunities to nurture them and their parents alike.

Obstruction and misdirection continue. Satan does not relinquish strongholds but by the power of God, and he is ferocious in a corner. Let us not grow weary in this good aim or be distracted by the smokescreens of the enemy.

We are all sinners, but that does not justify the taking of innocent life to hide sin’s consequences.

Those who have and perform abortions need the Gospel, but that begins with repentance from sin.

Abortion is a consequence of other sins, both individual and institutional, but we must stop punishing the victims in order to show real mercy to the guilty.

Stop. Killing. Babies. Then we can talk about all the rest.

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

The Forest for the Trees

By Shea Oakley

It is sometimes difficult to see the truth in a given situation. This is even more difficult if we are reeling from some pain connected with that situation. All human beings, Christians included, are plagued by the curse of a negative subjectivity that can be overwhelming at times. We may find it very hard to “see the forest for the trees” at such moments, especially when it feels like the tree in question is a Giant Redwood someone has chopped down in our heart.

We are told that God has given us a “*sound mind*” (2 Tim. 1:7), and part of having a sound mind is possessing a certain degree of objectivity in any circumstance we face. When we are thinking rightly, from a truly biblical perspective, we have the ability to rise above the problems that confront us, even very painful ones. Seeing things in spirit and in truth gives us the wisdom to react as Christ would, at least in principle. The problem is that many believers have not yet come to such a place of maturity, at least not many whom I have known (truth be told, myself included).

Moreover, some of us often feel unduly oppressed, insulted, or merely misunderstood because of abusive trauma we have experienced during our formative years and our own bitter response to that trauma. The results of both this injury and response to injury have blended with genetic factors and coalesced into what the world calls “psychopathology”. These days we can give a name to feeling like our glass is half-empty. Depression and anxiety are two I am personally acquainted with.

For people like us, regular transcendence of negative circumstances in our lives is more problematic than for most. Indeed we may come across as overly sensitive to some because adversities in life (that are generally accepted as normal and manageable by others) are magnified into deep crises in our damaged hearts and minds. When this happens, it is absolutely right to admit that we are not in our “right minds”. When we are in the throes of an attack of anxiety or a depressive episode we are almost never accurately “painting” reality. It is at times like these that people with a different, perhaps more objective

perspective are desperately needed to speak into our lives. Whether such persons are spouses, loyal friends, pastors, or counselors, they are a Godsend because they can help restore to us the objectivity we need to avoid making a bad situation worse.

Compounding the challenge is the surrounding society's increasing emphasis on feeling over reason in determining what is real. We are incessantly being told by our culture to "follow our hearts." Well, that is all fine and good if our hearts can be trusted as safe and effective guides. Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately), the biblical Christian knows that the human heart is utterly untrustworthy, but Scripturally-informed, Spirit-filled reason is. This is not to completely discount feelings, but feelings are subjective for everyone—especially so for those of us afflicted with emotional problems that we are still learning to handle in a responsible, Godly way.

In my own life I have taken comfort in realizing that when I'm not accurately seeing things as they really are I can seek help from godly men and women and, for that matter, directly from my merciful God Himself to help me see the truth. Through these divine resources, I am slowly learning not to make bad decisions during times of circumstantial turmoil. As the grace of God continues to flow into my life I am learning that for every trouble I encounter the old adage, "this too shall pass," really does apply. I can trust that real emotional healing lies in my future at the hands of a Savior who always knows what is really going on in my life, and how to use it for His glory and my good.

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Sermon-Killers

By Joe McKeever

My friend Dave, who pastors a church in my neighborhood, reminded me of a story that used to show up in sermons from time to time.

After a war, a soldier who was severely wounded was returning home. As soon as he entered the States, he phoned his parents to say he was bringing with him a buddy who had lost (fill in the blank—an eye, a leg, both legs, etc) and was confined to a wheelchair. He wanted the guy to live with the family and promised that he would take care of him. The mother said, "Now, honey, we appreciate your compassion and your dedication to your friend. But this would be too heavy a burden on your family. This is not a good idea." A few days later, the family got word that their son, the one just home from the war, had ended his own life in a hotel in a distant city. When the remains were shipped home, the family discovered he had one eye, one leg (or no legs, etc.) He had been telling his parents about himself.

Dave and I agreed that such a story, whether true or untrue—it's impossible to know—is a show-stopper; a **sermon-killer**. Let the preacher tell such a story and no one will hear a word he says afterwards. The congregation will be sitting there reflecting on that story, grieving and imagining and reflecting. The wise preacher will never tell a story that clobbers his sermon and destroys the point he was trying to make.

I reminded Dave of another one (which, thankfully, I never used, not even once) but which fits this sad category. A father took his young son and another boy on a fishing trip. A storm comes up, the boat swamps, and they are all dumped into the lake. Since the boys cannot swim

and the father cannot save both, he has to make a quick decision. According to the story, his son is saved and the friend is unsaved. So, Dad abandons his son to drown knowing he will go to Heaven, and rescues the other kid.

That tragic story is supposed to make the point that we must do all we can to reach the lost, and that the saved person goes to Heaven. The message actually received by the congregation, however, is more along the lines of "the preacher just told a weird story of a father who abandoned his son to drown in order to save a kid he barely knows." Such an emotionally packed story destroys a sermon. No one ever hears another word the preacher has to say.

Now, it's possible to take one such story and build the entire sermon around it, the way our Lord did with the Prodigal Son in Luke 15. But, man, that takes skill most of us do not have. I sure don't.

Better to prayerfully build your sermon first, then, looking at the various points you are making, find appropriate illustrations. Not too many or their effect will be lost, and nothing distracting or "attracting," because the illustration is not the point. "The point" is the point, if you will.

A fail-safe method for determining whether a story is a sermon-killer is this: try it on your wife. You will know in a heartbeat. She will tell you in one way or the other. You may not like her reaction, but you'll not be in the dark. If she reacts negatively at all, friend, you have your answer. Do not use the story. Her instincts tend to be more sensitive than yours in these matters. I recognize that's a broad

generality, and like most generalities, it has its exceptions. But not many, I submit.

The sermon is the thing, not the story. Never let the story hijack the sermon. **Preach the Word.**

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Exegetically Speaking—by Spiros Zodhiates

Philanthropy and a Clean Life

James 1:27b

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

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).

There is a story of an old man who carried a little can of oil with him everywhere he went, and, if he passed through a door that squeaked, he poured a little oil on the hinges. If a gate was hard to open, he oiled the latch. And thus he passed through life lubricating all the hard places and making it easier for those who came after him. People called him eccentric, queer, cranky, odd, and even harder names. But the old man went steadily on, refilling his can of oil when it became empty and oiling the hard places he found. He did not wait until he found a creaky door or a rusty hinge and then go home to get his oil. He carried it with him.

There are many lives that creak and grate harshly day by day. They need lubricating with the oil of kindness, gentleness, or thoughtfulness. That can of oil is predominantly one that characterizes the Christian religion. Such a can of oil James wants us to carry around with us all the time.

We have seen that religion means “service” in the original Greek. The religion, the service, which God demands of us is pure and undefiled and consists of two parts: first, philanthropy, or charity to others; and secondly, a clean life. This is what verse 27 declares: “Religion, or religious service, pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the orphans and widows in their affliction, to guard himself unspotted from the world.”

Let us note again that this has nothing to do with salvation, but only with Christian service; it is the demonstration of the doing of the Word. In order that one may claim to be a doer and not a hearer only, he ought to do two things: to visit the orphans and widows and to live a clean life. What does James really mean by that? How many of us have made it a point actually to visit some orphans and widows? Does James mean a physical visit which will enable us to say a few comforting words to a child who has lost his father and to a woman who has lost

her husband? Just to visit is a very easy thing, and yet; how little of it we do.

This is a busy world in which we live and the trouble is that most of our business is concentrated upon making things better for ourselves. Life has become so complex that it has robbed us of the privilege of the fellowship in the suffering of others. Christian, how many times have you just stood by the bed of a sick person; how many times have you held the weak hand of an unknown person? Our greatest lack nowadays is love, and that is the motive of visitation. We preachers sometimes take this business of visitation a little too professionally. We consider it our duty to visit the sick, the orphans, and the widows, instead of considering it our privilege. As we know, when sorrow comes along our way, it is burdensome. But when we decide to share it voluntarily, then it is a source of joy such as nothing else in life can give us.

Henry Ward Beecher, walking down a street, passed a newsboy shivering in the cold. Being moved with compassion toward him, the great preacher bought up all his newspapers, and when he handed over the money to him, he said, “Surely you are cold?” “I was,” replied the lad with a gulp, “till you passed, sir.” Is it not wonderful what warmth a little sympathy will bring, and how quick are those who need it to receive it? Giving of our material means without the necessary accompaniment of love is of little worth. People want us before they want what belongs to us. The same thing is true of God. He wants us before He demands what belongs to us.

A little girl had been told many times by a childless old couple that, if she would come and live with them, they would get her everything she wanted a pony and cart, a piano, and the like. One day when they had been particularly urgent, her father with whom she was riding said, “Don’t you think you had better go with them?” The little girl looked at him in alarm and cried, “Why, Father, don’t you want me?” “Yes,” he replied, “but I can’t give you very much, and they will give you everything nice.” “But I wouldn’t have you!” she said as she snuggled up to him. Our material gifts will never bring the comfort and

cheer that the human soul needs, but mixed with sympathy and love they certainly can accomplish miracles.

I have given you these illustrations to lead to the meaning of the word used by James in our verse. The Greek word is *episkeptesthai*, which in the King James Version is translated “to visit.” In reality, however, there is more to it than the physical presence implied by the verb “to visit.” This Greek verb is the one from which the noun *episkopos*, “bishop,” is derived. It is a compound word which is made up of the preposition *epi*, which means “over, upon,” and the verb *skeptomai*, which means “to look about, to look carefully, to look after.” Later, this verb, when spoken of the mind, meant “to consider, to think on.” Thus, as it is the duty of a bishop to oversee the flock of Jesus Christ, so it is the duty of every Christian to consider the orphans and the widows.

We may say, “What business is it of mine?” The Word of God declares it is, and if we do not consider the poor, we are committing a definite sin. To consider means to help them in any way we can with whatever we can. Of course, many of us say we do not have anything to share. We just manage to live ourselves. Or we say, “I wish I had a million dollars to give for the Lord’s work.” Is it not strange that Christians are so anxious and willing to give that which they do not have? They are like that new convert who came to the missionary who led him to Christ and declared his determination to give all that he had for the Master. He said, “Pastor, if I had 50 pigs, I’d give 25 of them to the Lord.” “That’s very nice,” said the missionary. “If you had 30 would you give 15 to the Lord?” “Of course I would,” said the new Christian. “If you had ten would you give five of them?” asked the missionary again. “You know I would,” he answered. Then the missionary said, “If you had two, would you give one to the Lord?” “Now, Pastor, don’t ask me that. You know I have only two pigs.” He was willing to give everything that he did not have, but not part of what he had. The principle of the Gospel is that as long as we have more than some, it is our imperative duty to share it, and do it willingly.

The Scriptures are full of such admonitions and we shall do well to heed them. “*To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin*” (James 4: 17). “*Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard*” (Prov. 21: 13). “*Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble*” (Ps. 41:1). “*He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again*” (Prov. 19: 17).

When James speaks of the orphans and the widows, he is mentioning a specific class of needy people, but he does not necessarily want us to limit our consideration and help to these, but to include all who are in need. We must remember that in those days there were no insurance policies and social security which the bereaved could draw

upon when the breadwinner of the family passed away. The word “orphans” in the Greek also implies the destitute. Of course, in those ancient days the widows were placed in the same category of destitution as the orphans. The psalmist in his description of the special lovingkindness of God to this class of destitute people calls Him “*a father of the fatherless and a judge of the widows*” (Ps. 68:5).

A minister one Sunday preached a sermon about heaven. Next morning, as he was going to town, he met one of his wealthy members. This man stopped the preacher and said, “Pastor, you preached a good sermon on heaven, but you didn’t tell me where heaven is.” “Ah,” said the preacher, “I am glad of the opportunity this morning. I have just returned from the hilltop up yonder. In that cottage there is a member of our church. She is a widow with two little children. She is sick in one bed and her two children are sick in the other bed. She doesn’t have anything in the house—no coal, no bread, no meat, and no milk. If you go and buy a few groceries and then go there yourself and say, ‘My sister, I have brought these provisions in the name of the Lord Jesus,’ then ask for a Bible and read the 23rd Psalm, and then go down on your knees and pray—and don’t see heaven before you get through, I’ll pay the bill.” The next morning the man said, “Pastor, I saw heaven and spent fifteen minutes there as sure as you are listening.”

James is anxious that we be happy, and we can only be that way as we consider the orphans and widows in their affliction and bring to them a share of the blessings God has entrusted to us as His children.

To help the orphans and the widows is not all, James declares. You should keep yourself unspotted from the world. The Greek word *kosmos* used here and translated “world” has a variety of meanings. Originally it meant “ornament,” and to this day in Greek we use the verb *kosmō* to signify “to decorate.” This is very interesting indeed. Maybe James wanted to call to our attention the fact that the decorations that we borrow from the world for our physical beautification may after all be spots, stains, blemishes, specks on our own character and our testimony which we meant to count for Jesus Christ. Of course, later on *kósmos* came to mean that external framework of material things and influences which tend to affect man adversely in his endeavor for moral integrity and purity. Surely, we are in the world, in this physical universe, but not of the world, not submitting to the evil forces which surround us. The proper place for the ship to be is in the water, but if the water gets into the ship, the ship will sink. The proper place for the Christian is in the world, but if the world gets into the Christian and comfortably lives in him, then the Christian will sink to the depths of unhappiness and disgrace.

As Christians we love to sing, “Jesus saves, keeps, and satisfies,” but do we really mean it? Of course, it is primarily God’s work to keep us. He cleansed us through

His precious blood, but James declares that it is also our responsibility to do all we can to keep clean. “*Keep thyself pure*” (1 Tim. 5:22) was Paul’s admonition to young Timothy.

A preacher once visited a coal-mining district and noticed how very dingy the town appeared. The coal dust seemed to blacken the buildings, trees, shrubs, everything. But, as he was walking with the foreman, he noticed a beautiful white flower. Its petals were as pure as if it were blooming in a daisy field. “What care the owner of this plant must take of it,” said the preacher, “to keep it so free from dust and dirt!” “See here,” said the foreman, and taking up a handful of coal dust, he threw it over the flower.

It immediately fell off and left the flower as stainless as before. “It has an enamel,” the foreman explained, “which prevents any dust from clinging to it. I think it must have been created for such a place as this.” Well, that is the kind of Christians we should be in the midst of this sinful and perverse world in which we live. Dirt can be all around us, but if we keep the right spiritual enamel on us, the dirt will not stick.

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.

Words to Stand You on Your Feet—by Joe McKeever

Where Faith Comes from

“*So faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ*” (Rom. 10:17). Let’s say you have a friend who is not a believer—has questions about whether God exists, the Bible is true, and Jesus is real—but is open to the truth. What to do? Where do you start?

Answer: get him or her reading the New Testament. It’s important not simply to “get him reading the Bible,” because the average person knows nothing more than to start on page one with Genesis. That might take a year to get to the gospels. So, take a few minutes to give your friend some guidance.

Start them with Matthew chapter 1. Urge them to read it through and not to take long to do it. We think nothing of reading a hundred pages of a novel before bedtime, but think we’ve done something noble if we take in six verses of scripture. The entire New Testament should be read in a couple of weeks.

Point out that they will encounter some matters hard to understand and may be tempted to quit. But it makes sense, if God in Heaven were to inspire the writing of His message, there would be deep truths included. Encourage your friend to make notes about verses he or she would like to discuss with you.

Faith comes by the Word. Why does Romans 10:17 say it comes by “*hearing, and hearing by the Word*”? Because in the New Testament world, few people (if any) owned personal copies of Scripture. They gathered to worship and someone unrolled a scroll and read a few chapters. By hearing the Word, they received it.

In time, as the Holy Spirit does His work—see John 15:26 and 16:13—your friend will come to see that God is alive, Jesus Christ is here, and He will do what He says he will. At that point, ask if they are ready to pray with you to receive Christ as Savior. You may be tempted to call the pastor to do this, but do it yourself. This is not rocket science. It’s one friend introducing another friend to his Friend. By the way, this is also how believers grow in our faith. We stay in the word and obey it. See what Job had to say about the value he placed on the Word of the Lord (Job 23:12).

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Living out the Living Word—by Justin Lonas

The Lord Has Accomplished His Wrath

Lamentations 4

After the soaring heights of chapter three, the focal point of Lamentations’ acrostic structure, the poet returns to the miasma of Jerusalem in ruins. In that layout, because it is not linear, this is not to be read as a refutation to the worship rendered to God in 3:19-40, but rather another

support that makes that glorious passage stand out all the more. Here again, each the 22 lines (preserved in translation as 22 verses) begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet in order.

Again, Jeremiah laments the destruction of the Temple: “*How dark the gold has become, how the pure gold has changed! The sacred stones are poured out at the corner of every street*” (4:1). The Babylonians had plundered the gold of the sacred tools and adornments of the building that had been the designated meeting place of God and His people. This devastation was a particularly stinging symbolic rebuke of the nation by God.

More than the Temple had been debased, though. The people of God’s chosen nation were bearing in their bodies the marks of His judgment. “*The precious sons of Zion, weighed against fine gold, how they are regarded as earthen jars, the work of a potter’s hands!*” (4:2). Here, he seems to be speaking of the nobles of the land, or perhaps the priests themselves. Once they had been dressed with fine cloth and jewelry, now they were humbled as though made of clay.

Throughout this chapter, Jeremiah dwells on the poverty and deprivation that came upon the people because of God’s judgment. It serves as a reminder of life’s harshness in a fallen world without God’s protection and provision; the economic consequences of sin. He describes the suffering of children who hunger and thirst, but have no one to care for them (4:4), and even mothers can no longer provide milk for their babies (4:3). The rich have been cast into desolation: “*those reared in purple embrace ash pits*” (4:5). The “*consecrated ones*” (Nazirites, as Samson and others) who had been “*whiter than milk,*” “*ruddy in body,*” and polished “*like lapis lazuli*” were made “*blacker than soot,*” so much that “*they were not recognized in the streets*” and “*their skin...shriveled on their bones... withered...like wood*” (4:7-8).

There is a striking description in the midst of this litany: “*For the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the sin of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment, and no hands were turned toward her*” (4:6). On the face of it, Jeremiah calls Jerusalem out for a greater sin than that for which Sodom was destroyed. The Hebrew word used here for “*iniquity*,” though, can refer to both a sin and its consequences—hence why several other translations render this in context as “*chastisement*” or “*punishment*”. This makes sense, given the second part of the line and a following verse. “*Better are those slain with the sword than those slain with hunger; for they pine away, being stricken for lack of the fruits of the field*” (4:9). Israel’s sin was great, crying out to heaven, but the point of this comparison appears less of weighing relative guilt and more of recognizing that there is some mercy in swift destruction rather than drawn out desolation.

At the lowest point, we read that “*The hands of compassionate women boiled their own children; they became food for them because of the destruction of the daughter of my people*” (4:10). The level of madness, depravity, and despair that would result in the killing and

eating of one’s own children and thinking it an act of mercy is nearly unimaginable. Jeremiah says then that “*The Lord has accomplished His wrath, He has poured out His fierce anger; and He has kindled a fire in Zion which has consumed its foundations*” (4:11). There is nowhere else to sink down, the people’s desire to rebel against God has been crushed. Not only their visible sin had been punished, but the root was crushed also; they had nowhere to turn but back to God. They searched for help from elsewhere but in vain: “*Yet our eyes failed, looking for help was useless; in our watching we have watched for a nation that could not save*” (4:17). The only ones who came were those who would destroy (4:18-19).

Israel had been established by God to live out His Law among the nations as a testimony to His power, justice, and love. But they had rejected His plan. Even the prophets and priests were complicit in the sins of the people; they had “*shed in their midst the blood of the righteous*” and were “*defiled with blood so that no one could touch their garments*” (4:13-14). Jeremiah pictures them wandering the streets like lepers crying “*Unclean!*”

Now, the rest of the world looked in on their misery with amazement: “*The kings of the earth did not believe, nor did any of the inhabitants of the world, that the adversary and the enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem*” (4:12). When God brought His judgment, His people were scattered and taken captive: “*men among the nations said, ‘They shall not continue to dwell with us’*” (4:15b). Their pagan neighbors saw confusion (and an opportunity to take the land for themselves), but Jeremiah records that this also was the Lord’s doing: “*The presence of the Lord has scattered them, He will not continue to regard them; they did not honor the priests, they did not favor the elders.*” (4:13-16). To make it clearer still, the royal line was taken from them. Zedekiah, David’s heir, had watched his sons killed by the Babylonians and then had his eyes gouged out before he was marched off into captivity. Here, we read, “*The breath of our nostrils, the Lord’s anointed, was captured in their pits, of whom we had said, ‘Under his shadow we shall live among the nations’*” (4:20).

But these heathen nations should not, Jeremiah writes, take any comfort from Judah’s demise. Simply because God dealt harshly (and justly) with His chosen ones when they broke His covenant did not mean that He held those people who did not even recognize Him as Lord in any higher esteem. “*Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, who dwells in the land of Uz; but the cup will come around to you as well, you will become drunk and make yourself naked. The punishment of your iniquity has been completed, O daughter of Zion; He will exile you no longer. But He will punish your iniquity, O daughter of Edom; He will expose your sins!*” (4:21-22).

With that note of God's justice to be poured out, Jeremiah then turns to prayer to close this poem of sorrow. With that (chapter 5) will we conclude this series next month.

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

Following God—by Erik Christensen

The Blessings of Christ

Spurgeon on Ephesians 3

By Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Editor's Note: Pastor Erik was unable to provide the next column in his Ephesians series this month, so in his stead, we are sharing some meditations from Charles Haddon Spurgeon on an earlier passage in that letter.

I. The Riches of Christ

“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8)

My Master has riches beyond the count of arithmetic, the measurement of reason, the dream of imagination, or the eloquence of words. They are unsearchable!

You may look, and study, and weigh, but Jesus is a greater Savior than you think Him to be when your thoughts are at the greatest. My Lord is more ready to pardon than you to sin, more able to forgive than you to transgress. My Master is more willing to supply your wants than you are to confess them. Never tolerate low thoughts of my Lord Jesus. When you put the crown on His head, you will only crown Him with silver when He deserves gold.

My Master has riches of happiness to bestow upon you now. He can make you to lie down in green pastures, and lead you beside still waters. There is no music like the music of His pipe, when He is the Shepherd and you are the sheep, and you lie down at His feet. There is no love like His, neither earth nor heaven can match it. To know Christ and to be found in Him—oh! this is life, this is joy, this is marrow and fatness, wine on the lees well refined.

My Master does not treat His servants churlishly; He gives to them as a king gives to a king; He gives them two heavens—a heaven below in serving Him here, and a heaven above in delighting in Him forever. His unsearchable riches will be best known in eternity. He will give you on the way to heaven all you need; your place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks, your bread shall be given you, and your waters shall be sure; but it is there, where you shall hear the song of them that triumph, the shout of them that feast, and shall have a face-to-face view of the glorious and beloved One.

The unsearchable riches of Christ! This is the tune for the minstrels of earth, and the song for the harpers of heaven. Lord, teach us more and more of Jesus, and we will tell out the good news to others.

II. Where Christ Dwells

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love” (Eph. 3:17).

Beyond measure it is desirable that we, as believers, should have the person of Jesus constantly before us, to inflame our love towards Him, and to increase our knowledge of Him. I would to God that my readers were all entered as diligent scholars in Jesus' college, students of Corpus Christi, or the body of Christ, resolved to attain unto a good degree in the learning of the cross.

But to have Jesus ever near, the heart must be full of Him, welling up with His love, even to overrunning; hence the apostle prays *“that Christ may dwell in your hearts.”* See how near he would have Jesus to be! You cannot get a subject closer to you than to have it in the heart itself. *“That He may dwell;”* not that He may call upon you sometimes, as a casual visitor enters into a house and tarries for a night, but that He may dwell; that Jesus may become the Lord and Tenant of your inmost being, never more to go out.

Observe the words—that He may dwell in your heart, that best room of the house of manhood; not in your thoughts alone, but in your affections; not merely in the mind's meditations, but in the heart's emotions. We should pant after love to Christ of a most abiding character, not a love that flames up and then dies out into the darkness of a few embers, but a constant flame, fed by sacred fuel, like the fire upon the altar which never went out.

This cannot be accomplished except by faith. Faith must be strong, or love will not be fervent; the root of the flower must be healthy, or we cannot expect the bloom to be sweet. Faith is the lily's root, and love is the lily's bloom. Now, reader, Jesus cannot be in your heart's love except you have a firm hold of Him by your heart's faith; and, therefore, pray that you may always trust Christ in

order that you may always love Him. If love be cold, be sure that faith is drooping.

Two selections from *Morning and Evening*.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892), “the Prince of Preachers,” was a renowned pastor and author who served as pastor of London’s Metropolitan Tabernacle for 38 years. His works are still widely read today.

Points to Ponder—by David L. Olford

A Passion for the Truth of the Gospel—Part 2 of 4

Text: “*It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the Law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh*” (Gal. 6:12-13).

Thought: There is no question that as Paul wrote the Galatian epistle, he believed that the truth of the Gospel was a stake. And as he concludes this “letter of liberty” (Gal. 6:11-18), he really summarizes the truth that he has sought to explain and defend throughout this powerful epistle. In these verses under consideration (6:12-13), Paul provides a penetrating exposure of the distorters of the Gospel before he affirms the core of the Gospel.

The Apostle has spent much of his attention already in this epistle countering the proponents of what he called “*a different gospel—not that there is another one*” (1:6-7). What seems like a simple thing, insistence on being circumcised, was no small matter to Paul. This meant for Gentile believers that they were being asked to obey the whole OT Law and to be under the Law’s demands. Paul was not against the Law of God, but he understood the Law in relation to the coming and the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul saw everyone who was trying to keep the Law as still being “*under the Law’s curse*” (3:10-11), because they were unable to keep the whole Law. And the very reason that Christ came was to take the curse of the Law upon Himself so that through Him the blessing of Abraham “*might come to the Gentiles*” (3:13-14). This means that God’s promise for His people, which includes righteousness by faith and the Holy Spirit’s indwelling, was not to come by obeying the Law, but by what Christ Himself did and by people entering into the blessings of the work of Christ through faith.

So, we see in these verses before us Paul’s critique of these distorters of the Gospel. First of all, Paul exposes them because they were driven by pride in external religious practice. When Paul speaks of “*the flesh*,” he is referring bluntly to literal flesh (in circumcision), but beyond that, he viewed this insistence on circumcision as being motivated by pride, and a desire for respect before

men tied to religious practice. This desire to look good before others seems related to the forcefulness of these Gospel distorters. The practice of circumcision was a very respectable one in Jewish circles, and having these Gentile Christians circumcised would look good, religiously and culturally.

For reasons we will see later, Paul spoke against this both theologically and personally. He considered his own religious heritage, which included circumcision, as nothing in relation to Christ. This did not mean that he erased God’s plan for the Jews or the privileges that Israel experienced. It just meant that he saw Jesus as the Messiah, and indeed Jesus was the resurrected ascended exalted Lord, so that everything now is to be seen in relation to the new covenant established in Christ. And the Gentiles were to enter into the promises of God through faith in the crucified, risen and exalted Lord, rather than through the ritual of circumcision. The Scriptures “*imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe*” (Gal. 3:22). Christ had come to bring redemption for those under the Law, and now adoption as the children of God was in Christ and by faith. The way of faith was not the way of human respect or pride in external religious practice. Faith in Jesus Christ and Him crucified did not make a good showing “*in the flesh*.”

Paul exposes these distorters of the Gospel furthermore because they sought to avoid persecution for the cross of Christ. Their good standing before men would result in less persecution from those who rejected this new Jesus movement. These Gospel distorters may have had a certain belief in Jesus, but their association with the religious practice of circumcision would help them avoid the persecution that Paul was facing.

Circumcision, Law observance, Temple practices, and Sabbath keeping were basic aspects of Jewish life in Paul’s day, as well as belief in the one true God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But this radical message of salvation for the Gentiles through Christ and His cross caused problems. Identity was now in Christ, and everything flowed out of what Christ had accomplished on the cross, and the coming of the Spirit of God to indwell believers. Note in our text that Paul emphasizes avoiding

persecution specifically “*for the cross of Christ*” (6:12). The cross was a harsh and difficult doctrine. It meant that a curse was placed on Jesus. Paul, of course, saw the Gospel in that curse, because Christ became a curse for us and so redeemed us from the curse of the Law. But, this teaching of a crucified one being the Messiah brought persecution from those who did not understand the truth of the Gospel. Proclaiming a crucified Messiah was a scandal for many, a scandal that needed to be wiped out. Putting a focus on circumcision and on Law keeping would hide the scandal of the cross behind traditional religion.

Paul’s critique continues. These proponents of circumcision could not keep the Law themselves. Their insistence on circumcision would suggest that they were seeking to be obedient to the Law. But, these people were actually hypocrites because even they could not keep the Law. At the same time, they were denying the dynamic of the Christian life that comes only through the power of the cross and the Holy Spirit. In fact, according to Paul, seeking to keep the Law in the flesh without the power of the truths of the Gospel at work in people’s lives was futile. The problem was not the Law itself, but the Law together with the weakness of the flesh. So, in short the “*circumcision*” gospel was no gospel at all because it did not free you from the curse of the Law nor did it enable you to live the life that ultimately pleases God.

Lastly, Paul returns to this matter of the “*flesh*.” These distorters of the Gospel wanted to boast in the flesh of their converts. They wanted to boast in their winning of the Galatians to their camp. This may have meant that they were boasting in the people who were circumcised, or in their achievement of gaining converts. They were taking pride in getting people to respond to their teaching. The whole problem, though, could be summarized in terms of boasting in the flesh, or boasting in what is outward, human, and religiously respectable, and not in Christ. Paul’s boast, we will, see was only in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thrust: We must watch out for anything that would distort or diminish the truth of the Gospel. Adding religious requirements for salvation or any other “baggage” to the Gospel cannot be tolerated. The Apostle Paul makes that very clear in this emotional letter. May we be true to the Gospel and guardians of the Gospel against teachings or practices that would rob Christ and His cross of our total confidence and ruthless allegiance.

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Jewels from Past Giants

Each Man’s Life a Plan of God

By Timothy Dwight

Previously published in Pulpit Helps, November 2001.

“... *When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.*’ This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, *Follow me.*’ Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following...saith to Jesus. Lord, *and what shall this man do?*’ Jesus saith unto him, *‘If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.’*” (John 21:18-23).

These verses of the closing chapter of John’s Gospel present before us some of the last words of Jesus, which were addressed to two of His most prominent disciples, foretelling something of their future career, and especially somewhat as to the manner of their dying.

The characters and work of the two men were very different. Peter was full of energy, ardent, impulsive, ready

for every new and worthy undertaking, practical, a leader for other men of action to follow. John, at least as we know him in his later years, was quiet, calm, thoughtful, dwelling more in the internal than the external, a lover of the truth and meditating upon it, rather than one who found his chief joy and satisfaction in the activities of the world. It is certainly suggestive to notice what Jesus said to them, as connected with these differences.

First, let us consider that the life and death which are predicted for each man is in accordance with the character of each. Peter, the man of fiery energy and eager for action and conflict, had begun his career by the carrying out of his own impulses. He was the impersonation of youth, a firm believer in himself and his own powers; determined to conquer and to succeed. His very method of working would bring him into the midst of dangers and enmities.

The truth for which he strove was disbelieved and rejected by men of every class. It was hated by all who saw in it danger to their own systems of faith, or to their personal success or power. Jesus predicted only what might

be expected—that the time was coming when, having grown old in the conflict and in years, the ardent and active disciple would be overcome and led forth at the will of others, even to execution. He would glorify God by a martyr's death.

But equally in the case of the other disciple was the prophecy of Jesus in accordance with the natural flow of a life like his. The calm spirit moves serenely forward, and the years go by. If the life is lengthened to extreme old age, and the mind is in its full power at the latest season, the passing on and the passing away may be but as the change of the daylight hour to the beautiful evening time.

The text suggests that in the ordering of Providence, we are born with varying characters and gifts, and are assigned to different works for God in the world. Thus we may believe that there is a plan for each one, formed and watched over and carried to its completion by the divine Friend who calls us into His service.

How often we find that we do not escape certain difficulties or trials, which other men around us do not have. We hope to escape them, but we find them always with us. Is it not the Lord's appointment—not as an arbitrary thing, but as an outgrowth of our unique nature? Is it not true that we, in our individuality, were made for the accomplishment of a special divine purpose, and that our experiences are wisely fitted to realize the end? Surely, then, God's plan and purpose encompass every part of our experience, and brings us the lesson of trust and confidence that the natural movement of our life is under a supernatural guidance, and shows that we are guarded and guided by a Father's love.

Secondly, let us notice what Jesus answers Peter when he asks what John's fate will be. The Lord answers, "*If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?*" It is a pointed question, followed by the bidding: "*Follow thou me.*"

What is the lesson given here? Evidently, in part, that curiosity about the future is not to occupy our minds. Not questioning but working is the Christian's duty: This is the first part of the lesson. A second part seems to be that duty lies in the pathway of individual capacities and powers. Peter was called to follow the Lord in the line where he could best serve Him. In his case, this would result in his martyrdom. But simply following of the Master was to be the object of his thought. Think not of tomorrow; think of today, and its work. How simple the bidding was: "*Follow me.*"

The future belongs to God. It will be one thing for one of His children, and another for another; and for both alike it will be but the following out of His plan from the beginning. If each shall follow the call of the Lord, the ending will be provided for, and, whatever it be, it will glorify God.

This is the essence of our Lord's words at the beginning of His public ministry: Live the right life today, and be not anxious for tomorrow (Matt. 6:33). What a wonderful peace there must have been in the souls of these two disciples if they guided their lives by these words in the years which came afterward—both hearing the Lord's voice daily, saying, "*Follow me,*" for the present: and, "*What is it to thee?*" of the future."

A third suggestion of the text pertains to the value which is to be placed upon different kinds of life. Mankind is always prone to praise the leaders in the struggle and warfare. But it is a striking fact that it was not Peter, but John, to whom the longest life and the accomplishing of the greater work was assigned. Peter followed the Master, and did an honorable service and glorified God, at its ending, by a death which corresponded with his life. But it was the meditative and thoughtful disciple—the one whom Jesus loved—to whom the last work of the Apostolic Age was appointed. After Peter and Paul had fulfilled their mission, John came to finish what they had begun. And the message which he sent down the ages is the most precious inheritance of the church.

We know little of what Peter taught or thought, but the thoughts of John set forth the deepest mysteries of the Christian truth, and let us into the innermost secret of Christian living. They open before us the heart of God, and read us lessons for which the thoughts of the other great apostles are only preparatory.

But the text also teaches that what seems the quiet, calm life, away from the stir and strife of the world is as near, or even nearer, to the heart of Christ, than one which is most conspicuous in its Christian labors. It was the meditative, loving disciple to whom was committed the task of writing the story of the Lord, which bore witness most fully of His divinity and humanity in their marvelous union. The believer who thinks and loves stands equal with the one who works and wars.

We may also note the importance of the union of the two types within the church. The work of Christianity is to be accomplished by human agencies and in human lives. Were only the more active virtues to be seen, the end would be but half-secured. Were they not seen at all, the aggressive force upon the world would be mainly lost. But God has joined the man of energy and the man of quiet and thoughtful spirit, and given to each his own sphere of working for Him.

Lastly, does not the question addressed to Peter respecting his fellow-apostle come with a divine emphasis and tenderness to each one of us? The command, "*Follow me,*" fills all the sphere of duty; and the question, "*What is it to thee?*" commits the future to His keeping, and thus may give to everyone a perfect peace. We know not the end, but it will be the end of service to Him here, and the opening of something higher and better than earth.

Timothy Dwight (1752-1817) was an early American academic, widely regarded in his day as a cultural, educational, religious, and (at times) political leader. A grandson of Jonathan Edwards, he worked as a minister in Massachusetts and also served two terms in the state legislature there before moving to Fairfield, Connecticut, to

pastor a church in 1783. In 1795, he was appointed president of Yale College (now Yale University) in New Haven, a position in which he served until his death. He is remembered as a stalwart defender of the faith who left a lasting impact on his students and the spiritual life of the United States.

Counselor's Corner—by James Rudy Gray

What About Boundaries?

Originally published in Pulpit Helps, November 1999.

“Don’t come out of your room,” his dad said. But three-year-old Johnny had to test the limits. He stood in the doorway and looked at his father sitting in the den. He stuck his head out of the room. Next, he jumped out of his room and rushed back. Finally, he walked out—and into a teachable moment. He learned something about boundaries: learning to say “no” and respect “no” is a positive quality for good living.

Boundaries are the fences we need in order to feel safe and be productive. Henry Cloud and John Townsend have written two books entitled *Boundaries* and *Boundaries for Children*. In these books, they present a strong and biblical case for the necessity of good and godly boundaries.

Boundaries are those personal property lines that help us define what we are responsible for and what we are not responsible for. They, in essence, help us understand who we are and who we are not. Cloud and Townsend make the point for boundaries clear: “The earlier a child learns good boundaries, the less turmoil he or she experiences later in life.”

Helping our children develop a godly boundary system means teaching them that behavior has consequences. It requires wisdom from God because the tendency to be either over-controlling or conversely, lax about boundaries, is always a temptation. Both of these options result in negative and dysfunctional behavior

patterns for children. The goal of good standards and limits for our children is to motivate them to develop their own godly boundaries and teach them to respect the boundaries of others.

It takes both freedom and limitation in order to spur a child forward in the maturing process. God’s Word gives us principles to teach. His Spirit gives us the ability to model good boundaries for our children. His promise is that He will give us the insight we need for each challenge He sets before us (James 1:5). As good parents, part of our own boundary development is knowing what God does for His children and what God expects His children to do for His glory. Good boundaries can help us to live a life in which love, freedom, discipline, responsibility, service, and enjoyment are realities.

Boundaries, like fences, don’t simply keep bad things out, but also keep good things in. Boundaries, unlike fences, can be flexible and adaptable. Boundary development should start early in life and continue throughout life. Having Godly boundaries is being a good steward.

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.

The Story behind the Song—by Lindsay Terry

Hearing God’s Invitation

Song: “Come, Now Is the Time to Worship”

Previously published in Pulpit Helps, December 2007.

“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him” (John 4:23).

The subject for this story is one of only three worship songs presently on the Christian Copyright Licensing International’s (CCLI), “Top 25 Songs” list in six of the seven countries where the list is published: United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand,

and South Africa. It was written by a talented Canadian songwriter, who has a heart for God and his family.

Brian Doerksen was born into a very musical home in Abbotsford, just outside of Vancouver, British Columbia. His father, Harry Doerksen, sang in the Ambassadors Quartet, a Gospel group which traveled in that area. He, his brother, and his mother, Agnes, would often go with Mr. Doerksen and sit in the back listening to the singing. “Consequently,” Brian told me, “I have been interested in music as long as I can remember. I started piano lessons as a child, but as soon as I was old enough to make my own decision, regretfully, I quit.”

“I grew up in a Christian home, and it wasn’t as if I didn’t know the truth of the Gospel—I just didn’t want to live it. But when I was 15 years of age, probably as a result of my parent’s prayers, I had one of those sovereign encounters with God. One night in my bedroom, in the home from which I’m now speaking to you, the presence of God came into the room and I was convicted of my sin. I heard the Lord saying, ‘Give me your whole life to serve me. And I said, ‘Yes.’ Shortly afterward people around me noticed an incredible difference. My dreams and plans that were going in one direction, changed courses. I began to have a heart for serving God.”

“God really called me into a ministry to serve Him. I had previously poured myself into athletics, becoming a star basketball player, but almost overnight my interest in sports was gone and in its place was this incredible hunger to serve God through music. I began learning to play the guitar. I played for hours each day, and started worshiping God in my room.”

“Shortly afterward I formed a little Christian music group and tried to write songs for us, but soon gave that up. It was not until I was the full-time music pastor at Langley Vineyard Christian Fellowship, in British Columbia, that I began to write songs once more. I was using songs from other sources, but became convinced that we needed something else, other expressions to worship God.”

One of the first songs that Brian wrote, “Faithful One,” has become so popular that it is always on the CCLI “Top 25 Songs” list in Canada and the United Kingdom. I then asked Brian to give me the details surrounding the writing of his most famous song, “Come, Now Is the Time to Worship.” Tighten your seat belt!

“Emotionally and spiritually the song came at the end of the darkest and lowest season of my life, the summer of 1997. We had tried a major ministry project that had failed. A group working with me, and I, lost over one million dollars. I lost our home.”

“I moved to England and became the worship pastor of Southwest London Vineyard, meeting in the Elliot School. I had no other place to live and no job offers. I felt as if I was barely hanging on to my faith in God. We were severely tested both with our losses and with finding out

that three of our six children had a condition called Fragile X Syndrome, a form of mental retardation.”

“One morning, within months of moving to London, I went for an exercise/prayer walk, as I often did. I walked just to clear my head, to pray, to give my day to God, and to pour out some of my pain and my dreams. As I was walking through southwest London, very close to Wimbledon Stadium, I heard this line as clear as a bell, floating through the air, ‘Come, now is the time to worship...’ I thought, ‘WOW!, the call of worship is being sounded all of the time and in all kinds of ways.’ God is reaching out to us as His creation, inviting us to come to do the very thing we were created to do. I was sweating, and walking, and singing that line over and over again, just sensing the nearness and the presence of God.”

“When I got home I ran upstairs—I think the kids were getting ready for school and for breakfast. I sat down at the piano and found the key of the song I had just heard and began playing it over and over again, trying to unlock, ‘What is this song? What is this call that is going on?’ I took a pad and began to write down everything I could think of concerning a call to worship. How is He inviting us? Is He saying, ‘Come, just as you are, come to me?’ Suddenly I realized that I was in my own dark time, and that His call to worship doesn’t just come to those who have it all together, that have no doubts, that have no darkness or hard experiences, but it comes to all of us, across the board.”

“The song became like wings to lift me up from those shadows that had almost engulfed me. It was my private song for several days. I spent time writing and rewriting it. I made sure of every word. I tried it out on my wife. I then brought it to my church. Within weeks of teaching it to our congregation I began hearing reports of other churches singing it. Within months reports came of the song being sung in other countries. People who had connections with the Vineyard Churches, passing through London, were carrying it to other churches. I soon heard that it was being sung in South Africa.”

“Four or five months later we recorded an album of songs titled, *Come, Now Is the Time*. All over the world, as people heard the song, they, for some reason were calling it ‘Winds of Worship.’ Requests began to pour in asking permission to record “Come, Now Is the Time to Worship.” Soon after that we moved back home to Canada, to the house I was raised in. We were able to purchase it from my parents.”

Brian now produces recordings, teaches a songwriting course at Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford, and leads the worship team in the church where his family attends. He also directs workshops on worship leadership and songwriting. When his other responsibilities allow it, he appears in some of the great worship gatherings

in other countries, with other leading songwriters and worship leaders also participating.

Life is better now in Abbotsford for Brian, his wife, Joyce, and their children, ages 5 to 16. At the time of this writing, Brian has just finished a new album of songs and had the joy of having one of his daughters play an instrument on the project.

Oh, that you and I were constantly in the mental and spiritual state that we, too, could hear God's invitation, "Come, now is the time to worship."

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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) and *The Sacrifice of Praise* (2002).

Church Builders—by Bernard R. DeRemer

Millionaire Missionary

Originally published in Pulpit Helps, June 2002.

News of William Whiting Borden's sudden death, cabled from Egypt, sent "a wave of sorrow... 'round the world." Many U.S. newspapers carried accounts of his brief but memorable life, and tributes from outstanding Christian leaders as well as fellow students and other acquaintances poured in. Indeed, it was said to be "doubtful whether any life of modern times has [given] the world a more inspiring example."

Borden was born at Chicago in 1887, into a home of wealth and piety (contrary to the popular but false rumor, this family was not related to the dairy people of the same name). Very early he came to know the Lord, and committed his life for divine service, reflecting especially his mother's constant, godly influence. He attended Hill School, a private Christian institution with high standards, where he impressed others because of his "reserve and dignity [with] steady, quiet strength."

This heir to great wealth submitted regular expense statements to his parents! On Oct. 26, 1902 he listed "Contribution, \$1.00; pillow, \$1.50; posters, \$1.05" among other items for a total of \$25.68. His wise stewardship of time, talent, and treasure began early and never wavered. After graduation from Hill at 16, Borden set out in 1904 on a trip around the world, which his parents felt would be advisable before he entered college. From China, Japan, India, and other points William reported on his travels, especially contacts with missionaries. The sights, sounds, and smells of multitudes in heathen darkness profoundly affected him.

Soon after his return to America, he enrolled at Yale, where a whole new world awaited. He found many worldly influences, but rejoiced to discover fellowship with "some fine Christian men."

The YMCA, then strongly evangelistic, provided opportunity for witness and instruction. The Student Volunteer Movement also nurtured his growing missionary interest.

Perhaps the most outstanding contact of those days was with Dr. Samuel Zwemer, the famous missionary to Muslims. From him Borden caught the burning burden of three million Muslims in China, without a Christian witness among them, and he was powerfully moved by their plight.

Meanwhile, New Haven, a seaport town, was drawing vagrants of all sorts, so William helped found the Yale Hope Mission, where he witnessed effectively as often as possible, sending home glowing reports of Gospel triumphs.

Even all this could not exhaust his energies. He became a trustee of Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, perhaps the youngest man ever elected to that august board. In addition, he served the National Bible Institute and other organizations in various capacities.

While at Yale, Borden participated in football and other sports, but never to the neglect of studies or spiritual service. Indeed, he was elected president of Phi Beta Kappa, among other honors. However, he was unwilling to join any fraternity or secret society.

After graduation from Yale in 1909, Borden entered Princeton Theological Seminary in further preparation for his field. Wide missionary reading helped to broaden his vision.

He found time for tennis, led in the Student Volunteer Movement, and was always present at its early morning Wednesday prayer service. When possible he even traveled back to New Haven to look over the work of the Yale Hope Mission.

During his final year at Princeton, his weekly class at Marble Collegiate Church numbered from 60 to 100. He also delivered a series of lectures to National Bible Institute students. When a financial crisis threatened that school, Borden took up the entire indebtedness, in addition to his many other benefactions. He was a member of the committee which prepared Moody Bible Institute's comprehensive doctrinal statement, still used today.

To those who expressed surprise that one with his gifts should “throw himself away as a missionary,” Borden countered, “You have not seen heathenism.”

Late in 1912 he sailed for China under the China Inland Mission (now Overseas Missionary Fellowship). However, he stopped in Egypt for intensive study of Arabic and Muslim culture. Alas, in April, 1913, he was stricken with cerebral meningitis, and called home to glory before reaching his chosen field.

What a legacy he left, in so many ways! Two remarkable wills were probated within a few days of each other: Borden’s and that of J. P. Morgan, whose wealth totaled almost \$100 million (\$2.4 billion when adjusted for inflation). The great financier had made a profession of

faith (which his life denied), yet at age 75, he left little more than half as much to the work of God as William Borden did at 25!

One missionary spoke for many when he said, “I have absolutely no feeling of a life cut short. A life abandoned to Christ cannot be cut short.”

Bernard R. DeRemer chronicled the lives of dozens of heroes of the faith in more than a decade of writing for *Pulpit Helps Magazine*, and continued to serve in this capacity as a volunteer contributor to *Disciple*. He joined those he had written about so faithfully in the Lord’s presence in 2014.

Advancing the Ministries of the Gospel

600,000 Patients and Counting

By AMG International Staff

Every ministry of AMG is pursued **1)** to honor God through faithful obedience to His call, and **2)** to be faithful stewards of the resources you provide to transform lives in Jesus’ name. Over the years, we have seen time and again how the Lord has taken your gifts and prayers and multiplied the harvest for His great glory. Often, this is far from what the world sees as “success”—it is measured in lives transformed, not in dollars, buildings, or programs. Sometimes though, He sees fit to bless the work in ways that the world can’t help but notice.

AMG’s **St. Luke’s Hospital in Thessaloniki, Greece**, is being used by God to provide physical and spiritual healing to thousands. The hospital is celebrating **40 years** of service in God’s kingdom this year, and I thought you might like to know more of the story.

In the early 1960’s, God gave a vision for what would become St. Luke’s Hospital to two men: Dr. Demosthenes Katsarkas, a young physician from Thessaloniki, and Dr. Spiros Zodhiates, then president of AMG International. Together, they wanted to see a hospital in the region that would give the best possible medical care, but also spread the light of Christ to the sick and their visitors so that they could experience God’s love and learn of His salvation. Dr. Katsarkas understood that when a person is healthy, they stand upright and focus their attention on the world around them, but when they are sick or injured, they are on their back and must then look up, and see God.

It took over ten years before enough funds were provided for the hospital to open in 1975. Dr. Zodhiates often recounted the struggles and fears AMG faced during those years and the miraculous ways God worked to bring His plan together. He wrote once: “I remember the panic

that gripped all of us when we thought we would lose the hospital because we didn’t have the money for the final payment. But God, who is never late but seldom early, provided the money just in time through His people.”

Now, by God’s grace, St. Luke’s continues to be a lighthouse for Christ to people across the Balkans, and is recognized as a top-quality hospital throughout Europe. Dr. Katsarkas is still the hospital director, and now serves on AMG’s board of directors as well. It has grown over the years to a 280-bed facility treating over 3,000 patients each month and over **600,000** through the past four decades. Each patient who visits St. Luke’s hears daily devotional messages delivered through the P.A. system and receives compassionate care in Jesus’ name from Christian doctors, nurses, and support staff.

The ministry of St. Luke’s is not just confined to the hospital grounds. In good years, profits from the hospital have provided for other AMG ministries in Greece and elsewhere. Because the medical team at St. Luke’s has treated hundreds of missionaries, diplomats, pastors, and church leaders across Eastern Europe, the ministry of the Gospel throughout that part of the world has been blessed. In addition the hospital’s excellence has enhanced the reputation of the entire evangelical community in Greece (just 0.3 % of the population).

Recently, we received a testimony from one of our friends in Athens. He went to a local bank branch, and a banker asked if he was an evangelical. Finding that out, the banker asked if he had ever heard of St. Luke’s Hospital (which, of course, he had). This banker then shared that his child had a serious medical condition that the hospitals in Athens had not been able to resolve. He took the child to St. Luke’s (over 350 miles away), where AMG’s doctors

treated his child and provided warm, loving care to this family during their time of suffering. Moreover, he shared his thanks for this ministry and said that he had been reading the Gospel materials he received at the hospital with great interest!

We are truly humbled to see how God has used St. Luke's through the years! The hospital's example has inspired our national directors in other AMG fields to start clinics and hospitals as well (in India, Guatemala, Uganda, and Haiti, to name a few). All of this is made possible through the Spirit-led generosity of believers like you, and we are trusting the Lord to continue to provide for these vital ministries in the future!

To learn more about AMG's medical ministries around the world, and discover how you can get involved, 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.

Marks of the Master—by the Old Scot

The Really Different Tree

Originally published in Disciple, April 11, 2011.

What is it that can be made into “millionaire’s salad” at one end and into toothbrushes at the other? While you are pondering that question, let us add that almost everything between those ends is also useful for man.

What is it? It is the palm tree—or rather, the family of palm trees, for there are hundreds of varieties.

One of the good things to eat which some palms furnish is the growing green bud at the top of the tree. It is sometimes called “millionaire’s salad,” because removing this bud signals the tree’s death. Presumably only millionaires can afford such waste just for the sake of a delicacy.

Various palm species also furnish dates, coconuts, sago, oil, and the betel nuts that are chewed by millions as a stimulant. The leaves of palm trees are widely used in the tropics for thatching roofs, as well as being woven into panels for walls and sunshades. Furniture used by millions worldwide is made from another, the rattan palm. And the husks of some palm seeds are hard enough to use as gravel for roads—or, in the case of the ivory palm—to make into beautiful buttons. What about the toothbrush? For uncounted centuries some peoples have used pieces of palm tree root to clean their teeth. Altogether, the palm is so useful that it has been dubbed “the prince of the plant kingdom.”

Now, what makes palm trees so different from other trees? Chiefly, it’s the palm’s manner of growth. In fact, it grows a lot more like a stalk of corn than like usual trees. A corn stalk has a pithy center. So do palms, notably including the sago palm, which stores edible starch in its pithy center. A corn stalk does most of its growing in a thick outer layer, and so does the palm.

“Normal” trees grow outward throughout their life, thanks to a living sheath of cells, called the cambium layer, which continually adds woody tissue on the inside and bark on the outside. But palm trees have no cambium layer, and for this reason generally cannot grow bigger around. The few varieties that do swell outward above ground do so from pressure generated by cell growth in the interior of the trunk.

One striking result of this growth habit is the palm tree’s ability to survive fires that decimate trees all around them. Since the palm’s life is centered inwardly rather than outwardly, it can often survive, even with a badly burned exterior.

Palms also have tremendous resiliency, thanks to the tough fibers that are packed densely in the outer layers of their stems. This enables them to bend and rebound in high winds that can shatter other trees.

We should ask how such a different kind of tree happens to exist. Evolution does not provide a very good answer. The theory of evolution is success-oriented. Winners become ever more successful, and crowd out the losers. In theory, there shouldn’t be much place for great variety in a world formed by evolution. And that should be particularly true in the tropics, where the competition for growing space is fierce. Yet it is chiefly in the tropics that this very different family of trees thrives.

There is a more reasonable answer to the question of how all things came to be, and that is the Bible answer. The Bible says: “*God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth, and it was so...and God saw that it was good*” (Gen. 1:11-12).

Palm trees **are** good. They are a blessing gift to mankind from a great and good Father-God—a God who created the Earth as a glorious garden and placed man in it

as the pinnacle of His creation. This, the Bible tells us, is how it all began.

But the Bible also tells of man's great fall, and how in falling he spoiled the garden. Death and destruction thus entered into the very warp and woof of Nature. The Bible also tells us that Nature will not always remain ruined. A day is coming when this will be reversed, and all things shall be again as they were in the beginning.

No man knows when that great restoration will take place. But we do not have to wait for that in order to find perfect peace with God in our hearts. There is a way **now** to be reconciled to our God and our Maker. That way is through God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ (whose entry into Jerusalem in the last week of His life, incidentally, was heralded by crowds waving palm leaves, cf. John 12:12),

who declared: "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life, and no man cometh to the Father but by me*" (John 14:6).

He said it, He means it, and it is God's absolute truth.

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.

Sources: *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Trees*, Herbert Edlin and Maurice Nimmo, Harmony Books, NY, 1978; *Cowles Encyclopedia of Animals and Plants*, Cowles Education Corp., 1968, pp. 112-114.

Book Review—August 2015

Recent Releases

A Christian Guide to the Classics, Leland Ryken, 2015, Crossway, Wheaton, Ill., ISBN 9781433547034, 112 pages, \$9.99, softcover.

In this brief guidebook, popular professor, author, and literary expert Leland Ryken explains what the classics are, how to read them, and why they're still valuable. Written to help you become a seasoned reader and featuring a list of books to get you started, this guide will give you the tools you need to read and enjoy some of history's greatest literature.

Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel, Russell D. Moore, 2015, B&H Publishing, Nashville, ISBN 9781433686177, 208 pages, \$24.99, hardcover.

As the culture changes all around us, it is no longer possible to pretend that we are a "Moral Majority." That may be bad news for America, but it can be good news for the church. What's needed now, in shifting times, is neither a doubling-down on the status quo nor a pullback into isolation. Instead, we need a church that speaks to social and political issues with a bigger vision in mind: that of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As Christianity seems increasingly strange, and even subversive, to our culture, we have the opportunity to reclaim the freakishness of the Gospel, which is what gives it its power in the first place.

The Trinitarian Devotion of John Owen, Sinclair B. Ferguson, 2015, Reformation Trust, Lake Mary, Fla., ISBN 9781567694314, 140 pages, \$16.00, hardcover.

The writing and teaching of John Owen, a 17th century pastor and theologian, continues to serve the Church. Daily communion with God characterized his life and equipped him for both ministry and persecution. In *The Trinitarian Devotion of John Owen*, the latest addition to Reformation Trust's "Long Line of Godly Men" series, Ferguson offers careful reflection and insight for Christians today as he highlights Owen's faith in the triune God of Scripture, reminding readers that regardless of our circumstances we can know God, enjoy Him, and encourage others.

Unshaken: Real Faith in Our Faithful God, Crawford W. Loritts, Jr., 2015, Crossway, Wheaton, Ill., ISBN 9781433545047, 144 pages, \$14.99, softcover.

Calling Christians to a faith that does not waver in a God who does not lie, radio host and pastor Crawford Loritts challenges readers to live fully for Christ, confident in God and his unshakable promises. Highlighting God's faithfulness in the past, plan for the future, and presence for the here and now, Loritts shows how to cultivate a bold faith capable of enduring whatever the world throws your way.

Urban Legends of the New Testament: 40 Common Misconceptions, David Croteau, 2015, B&H Publishing, Nashville, ISBN 9781433680120, 288 pages, \$14.99, softcover.

Urban Legends of the New Testament surveys forty of the most commonly misinterpreted passages in the New Testament. These “urban legends” often arise because interpreters neglect a passage’s context, misuse historical

background information, or misunderstand the Greek language. For each New Testament text, professor David Croteau describes the popular, incorrect interpretation and then carefully interprets the passage within its literary and historical context. Careful attention is given to sound principles of biblical interpretation to guide readers through the process and reach a more accurate understanding of each text’s meaning.

News Update—August 2015

Story Behind Hymn “Amazing Grace” Being Told on Broadway

Perhaps the most famous hymn of all time, “Amazing Grace” is now on Broadway in a show that tells the story behind it. Carolyn Rossi Copeland stated “We’re hoping people are willing to...buy a ticket, because it’s great theater and it speaks to their heart and it speaks to their soul.”

The musical tells the story of John Newton who penned “Amazing Grace.” Newton was a former slave-trader who later repented of being involved in the trade and became an abolitionist, evangelist, and pillar of the Christian faith.

An official description of the performance, according to The Blaze, reads: John Newton...a willful and musically talented young Englishman, faces a future as uncertain as the turning tide. Coming of age as Britain sits atop an international empire of slavery, he finds himself torn between following in the footsteps of father—a slave trader—and embracing the more compassionate views of his childhood sweetheart.”

Not often do stories of faith get onto Broadway, and not often do they open with such perfect timing

Copeland describes how God orchestrated the opening of the performance: “We were waiting for a theater December, January, February, March, April—then we finally get the theater at the end of April and we’re in previews the week that this horror happens in our country,” she said, referring to the tragic June shooting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. “And the president sings ‘Amazing Grace’ and all of the sudden we have requests to do national television. “I don’t want to piggy back off of somebody’s horror,” Copeland continued, “but the timing was unbelievably providential that we didn’t open in April or May or June.”

Copeland and the show’s composer, Chris Smith, are hoping that many people will come out to see this story of faith and redemption.

Not a New Thing: Aborted Baby Body Parts Have Been Sold for Years

Although the Center for Medical Progress’s undercover videos documenting the sale of aborted baby body parts have caused a major outcry, there is evidence that fetal tissue sales are not a new occurrence.

In a One News Now report, Linda Royall, a reporter for The Stream, says that one of the first things Bill Clinton did when he became president in 1993 was to remove moratoria that were in place to prevent fetal tissue sales. That, Royall says, is what got the industry going.

In 2009, Royall interviewed a doctor who operated a late-term abortion clinic, who, she reports, asked to remain anonymous, but was very forthcoming with his information on the process of fetal tissue sales.

“He made clear that what is described above is business as usual in the fetal body parts industry in America. Many a child is slaughtered in the womb and then rendered, packaged and brokered to a multitude of industries, whose products and projects comprise the aftermarket for the roughly 1.2 million U.S. abortions annually,” Royall reported.

“It’s big business and getting bigger,” she continued, also commenting on the fact that most people in this industry view it as just that—a business like any other business. In 2009, the business of fetal tissue sales was an \$85 billion industry. Royall also reported that, prior to 1993 when Clinton repealed the moratorium against fetal tissue sales and research, the only research allowed to be done with fetal tissue was with that obtained from an ectopic pregnancy or from a miscarriage.

The recently released undercover videos are already having an impact on policy, with three states so far passing measures to defund Planned Parenthood, and a bill (which failed to get the 60 votes need for cloture) introduced to the U.S. Senate to cut off federal funding to the organization.

Christian Headlines

John Stonestreet Named President of the Chuck Colson Center for Christian Worldview

John Stonestreet has been appointed president of the Chuck Colson Center for Christian Worldview. A gifted communicator on areas of faith and culture, published author, and a popular conference speaker, Stonestreet is the anchor for The Point and BreakPoint This Week radio broadcasts. Since the death of Chuck Colson in 2012, Stonestreet (who has been a contributing writer to *Disciple*) has served as co-host with Eric Metaxas on Colson’s daily radio program, BreakPoint.

Regarding his appointment, Stonestreet said, “Working with Chuck Colson was one of the greatest honors of my life. I believe deeply in his vision of Christianity as the fundamental truth about reality and the task of Christians to be the restorers of culture.”

Stonestreet is the co-author of three books—the latest being *Restoring All Things* (with Warren Cole Smith). He remains a featured faculty member of Summit Ministries in Manitou Springs, Colorado, and has engaged deeply in collegiate life, lecturing frequently on college campuses and formerly serving on the teaching faculty of two Christian colleges.

Bestselling author and radio host Eric Metaxas praised Stonestreet’s appointment: “After working with John and co-hosting BreakPoint for the past three and a half years, I have no doubt that John is God’s choice to take the Colson Center forward. I congratulate the board on this important decision and rejoice to think what lies ahead for the Colson Center under John’s leadership.”

Christian Headlines

D. C. Bible Museum to House Large Collection of Israeli Antiquities

The Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C. will display artifacts from Israel. According to TheBlaze.com, the Museum of the Bible has reached an agreement with the National Treasures Department at the Israel Antiquities Authority. Micky Saban, head of the authority, said the Israeli artifacts will include items from the Canaanite period and the First and Second Temples.

The Museum of the Bible, which is privately funded, is slated to open in 2017 and will display the personal collection of the museum’s founder, Steve Green. His collection includes tablets from Abraham’s time, biblical papyri, Dead Sea Scroll pieces and rare Bibles. The items from Israel have never been displayed in Israel because of a lack of space for display.

“When we set out to build the most advanced museum in the world, we knew we could do even better if we joined forces with one of the greatest collections in the world,” museum president Cary Summers said. According to TheBlaze.com, it is the largest Israeli collection of artifacts to be shipped overseas.

“The historic collaboration of the Israel Antiquities Authority and Museum of the Bible will serve as a showcase for the nation’s treasures and excite millions of visitors each year as they meet tangible evidence from archaeology and the history of the land of Israel — the cradle of Old and New Testaments,” said Israel Hasson, director of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

About 4.5 million visitors are expected each year at the museum.

Christian Headlines

Sermon Helps—from www.sermonhall.com

Sermon Outlines

The Christian’s Knight in Shining Armor

Revelation 19:11-21

Prop.: Christ’s Second Coming is meant to comfort believers, not discomfort them.

I. Allow the Vision to Comfort You (vv. 11-16)

- A. His attributes comfort us (v. 11).
- B. His appearance comforts us (vv. 12-13).
- C. His armies comfort us (v. 14).
- D. His arms comfort us (v. 15).
- E. His ascription comforts us (v. 16).

II. Allow the Voice to Comfort You (vv. 17-18)

- A. God provides for the hungry in all creation (v. 17).
- B. God punishes the haughty of all classes (v. 18).

III. Allow the Victory to Comfort You (vv. 19-21).

A. The bosses of evil will be seized (v. 20).

B. The losses of evil will be swift (v. 21).

Conc.: We need to meditate on the Second Coming of Christ more often (cf. 1:3).

Steve Eutsler

Seven Commitments of a Peacemaker

Intro.: Peacemakers are committed to...

I. Letting the Peace of God Rule in Their Hearts (Col. 3:15)

II. Telling Others the Good News of Peace with God through Faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 10:36; Rom. 5:1).

III. Recognizing as God’s Children All Who Are in Christ, Regardless of Race, Sex, or Culture (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26-28).

IV. Accepting Fellow Believers Who Have Conscientious Differences of Opinion (Rom. 14:1-4; 15:7).

V. Ministering Reconciliation Between Brethren Who Are at Odds with Each Other (Gen. 13:8; Phil. 4:2).

VI. Making Every Effort to Keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace (Eph. 4:3).

VII. Living at Peace with Everyone and Pursuing the Things that Make for Peace (Rom. 12:18; 14:19).

Victor Knowles

Illustrations

Sharing Christ

It was our first meeting at UCLA, at the sorority house of Kappa Alpha Beta. I had no knowledge of what God was about to do. I was begging Him to confirm that my vision to help reach the world for Christ really was from Him. This was our first meeting of its kind since Campus Crusade for Christ began.

That night the Holy Spirit touched the 60 women in that house. Over 30 of them stood in line to say that they wanted to become Christians when I invited them to receive Christ. We were thrilled at what God did that night and were greatly encouraged for the future.

Sharing our Lord and His great message of love and forgiveness is like passing a magnet over a field of iron filings. The filings leap to the magnet. When we exalt Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, those who are listening are drawn to Christ in the same measure.

Christ's sheep recognize His voice, and they know Him and want to follow Him. I am convinced that if people could just grasp something of the depth of Christ's love for them, they would run to Him. Our challenge is to effectively communicate that love to a world dying for love. Of course, to communicate the whole counsel of God, we also need to communicate the stark spiritual reality of a life without Him, in this world and the next, a chilling truth. If in the power of the Holy Spirit, we communicate God's love and the important choices people need to make concerning Him, God will take care of the results.

Bill Bright

Ego Reduction!

The naturalist William Beebe told of an exercise in humility practiced during visits he made to Theodore Roosevelt at Sagamore Hill. Often, after an evening's talk,

the two men would stroll over the wide-spreading lawn and look up into the night sky. They would see who could first find the pale bit of light near the upper lefthand corner of the Great Square of Pegasus.

Then either Beebe or Roosevelt would exclaim, "That is the spiral galaxy of Andromeda! It is as large as our Milky Way. It is one of a hundred million galaxies. It is two and a half million light-years away. It consists of one hundred billion suns, many of them larger than our own sun!"

After a moment of awesome silence, Roosevelt would grin and say, "Now I think we are small enough. Let's go to bed!"

Anonymous

Bulletin Inserts

On Giving

What you are is God's gift to you; what you make of yourself is your gift to God.

Jim Wilson

The first great gift we can bestow on others is a good example.

Thomas Morrell

It is impossible to be just if one is not generous.

Give God what's right, not what's left.

Don't give from the top of your purse—give from the bottom of your heart.

Most people want to serve God, but only in an advisory position.

Tithe if you love Jesus! Anyone can honk!

These five anonymous

If you want to be rich—GIVE! If you want to be poor—GRASP! If you want to be needy—HOARD! If you want abundance—SCATTER!

The Old Union Reminder

Puzzles and ‘Toons

Church ‘Toons by Joe McKeever



Answers to last issue’s puzzles:

Hidden Wisdom Answers

Proverbs (10:9): "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely; but he that perverteth his ways shall be known."

A. Welsh • B. Habakkuk • C. Wyeth • D. Phallu • E. Ruth • F. Owl • G. Vantage
 H. Ethyl • I. Resist • J. Bittern • K. Swarthy • L. Helpeth • M. Hat

Hidden Wisdom and Father Abraham
 By Mark Oshman
 Originally published in *Pulpit Helps*, November 1999

Father Abraham’s Answer Box

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Burning incense in the Temple (Luke 1:9). 2. Three months (Luke 12:56). 3. Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1). 4. Anna (Luke 2:36–38). 5. "Exact no more than that which is appointed you" (Luke 3:12, 13). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Elias (i.e., Elijah) and Eliseus (i.e., Elisha) (Luke 4:25, 27). 7. Simon Peter (Luke 5:8). 8. A man with a withered hand (Luke 6:6–10). 9. Nain (Luke 7:11–15). 10. "About twelve years of age" (Luke 8:42).
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Father Abraham’s Question Box
 By Mark Oshman

The Gospel of Luke, Part 2

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where did Jesus Christ feed about 5,000 men? (Luke 9) 2. Why did a village of Samaritans refuse to receive Jesus Christ? (Luke 9) 3. Which city did Jesus Christ declare would be "thrust down to hell"? (Luke 10) 4. According to Jesus Christ, who is truly blessed? (Luke 11) 5. What will happen to those who confess Jesus Christ before men? (Luke 12) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. In the parable of the fig tree, how many years did the owner vainly seek fruit? (Luke 13) 7. Whom did Jesus Christ refer to as "that fox"? (Luke 13) 8. According to Jesus Christ, what will happen to one who humbles himself? (Luke 14) 9. In the parable of the prodigal son, what three things did the father order brought and given to the prodigal? (Luke 15) 10. Complete this statement from Jesus Christ: "Ye cannot serve God and _____" (Luke 16)
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See answers on page 26

Hidden Wisdom on next page

Hidden Wisdom: Bible Acrostic

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!

1E	2J	3C		4A	5F	6I	7H		8B	9G		10K	11E	12G	13F		14E
	15C	16D	17G	18A	19I	20F	21E	22H	23B	24K		25I	26C		27A	28D	29J
		30B	31D	32F			33K	34I		35J	36A	37G	38C	39E	40F	41B	
42D	43C	44A			45H	46G			47I	48F	49D	50H	51A	52C	53G		
54D	55C	56A	57B		58J	59D	60C	61B		62A	63E	64F	65B	66G		67J	68D
		69C	70I	71G													

CLUES

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| A. <i>Eudromias morinellus</i> | 44 | 18 | 62 | 27 | 51 | 36 | 56 | 4 | |
| B. Most gentl | 57 | 8 | 23 | 30 | 41 | 65 | 61 | | |
| C. Object of idolatry destroyed by King Hezekiah | 43 | 3 | 69 | 38 | 15 | 55 | 52 | 60 | 26 |
| D. Jeremiah's home town | 42 | 68 | 31 | 16 | 59 | 49 | 54 | 28 | |
| E. Might the Tasmanian devil have sailed from this seaport? | 21 | 11 | 39 | 14 | 63 | 1 | | | |
| F. "Christ died for the _____" | 61 | 48 | 20 | 5 | 13 | 40 | 32 | | |
| G. A stop on Israel's wilderness itinerary | 71 | 37 | 9 | 46 | 17 | 12 | 66 | 53 | |
| H. Two or three-masted sailing vessel | 7 | 45 | 22 | 50 | | | | | |
| I. Small wooden tub used to store lard or butter | 34 | 70 | 6 | 47 | 25 | 19 | | | |
| J. The tenth part | 58 | 67 | 35 | 2 | 29 | | | | |
| K. "For a living _____ is better than a dead lion" | 24 | 33 | 10 | | | | | | |