

# Loaves & Fishes

Volume 4 • Issue 2 • 2006

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*The power of God alone can multiply  
these loaves and fishes in your hands  
to more than you can contain.*

## I Have a Problem...

"FATHER, I HAVE A PROBLEM. It's weighing heavy on me. It's all I can think about night and day. Before I bring it to you in prayer, I suppose I should pray for those who are less fortunate than me — those in this world who have hardly enough food for this day, and for those who don't have a roof over their heads at night. I also pray for families who have lost loved ones in sudden death, for parents whose children have leukemia, for the many people who are dying of brain tumors, for the hundreds of thousands who are laid waste with other terrible cancers, for people whose bodies have been suddenly shattered in car wrecks, for those who are lying in hospitals with agonizing burns over their bodies, whose faces have been burned beyond recognition. I pray for people with emphysema, whose eyes fill with terror as they struggle for every breath merely to live, for those who are tormented beyond words by irrational fears, for the elderly who are wracked with the pains of aging, whose only 'escape' is death.

"I pray for people who are watching their loved ones fade before their eyes through the grief of Alzheimer's disease, for the many thousands who are suffering the agony of AIDS, for those who are in such despair that they are contemplating suicide, for people who are tormented by the demons of alcoholism and drug addiction. I pray for children who have been abandoned by their parents, for those who are sexually abused, for wives held in quiet despair, beaten and abused by cruel drunken husbands, for people whose minds have been destroyed by mental disorders, for those who have lost everything in floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, and earthquakes. I pray for the blind who never see the faces of the ones they love or the beauty of a sunrise, for those whose bodies are deformed by painful arthritis, for the many whose lives will be taken from them today by murderers, for those wasting away on their deathbeds in hospitals.

"Most of all, I cry out for the millions who don't know the forgiveness that is in Jesus Christ, for those who in a moment of time will be swept into hell by the cold hand of death, and find to their utter horror the unspeakable vengeance of eternal fire. They will be eternally damned to everlasting punishment. O God, I pray for them.

"Strange. I can't seem to remember what my problem was. In Jesus' name I pray. AMEN."





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Volume 4 • Issue 2 • 2006

*Loaves & Fishes* is published quarterly by Lighthouse Publishing as the Lord provides. Our goal is to point those in prison to Jesus Christ and help them experience the life, hope, and freedom of a daily walk with Him.

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14377 Old St. Hwy. 28  
Pikeville, TN 37367  
423-447-3567

info@lighthousepublishing.org  
www.lighthousepublishing.org

*Editorial Staff:*

Lavern Gingerich  
J. Anthony Hertzler

*Advisors:*

Darold Gingerich • Tommy Clayton  
Jeff Chapman

*Photography:*

Jupiterimages.com  
iStockphoto • Jared Cassidy

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*Inside Front Cover:* I Have a Problem...

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From someone who cares...

## A Mirror for God

Lavern Gingerich



*To my friends in prison,*

Greetings in the name of Jesus! May the grace, mercy, and peace of God fill your heart and flow from your life today. To you, life in Christ might be an empty theory you talk about or a confusing idea beyond your grasp. Or maybe for you it's a hard subject to think about, associated with gloomy thoughts of total surrender and sacrifice. Whatever your situation, God wants you to experience Him in a real way. The reality of God's inflow and outflow in your life is available for you! That is my burden for you as I sit here and prepare this issue of *Loaves & Fishes* for publication.

Let's think about you, the special person God made when He created you. Have you ever wondered why God made you? Why didn't God just make us all into monkeys or some kind of animal with no choice but to obey Him?

On the sixth day of creation, God had made the world, the plants, and thousands of amaz-

ing creatures with life in them. His entire creation was good. But to God's creative eye, something major was lacking. His beautiful creation had no one to reflect His image. <sup>26</sup>*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.* <sup>27</sup>*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.* <sup>28</sup>*And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth"* (Genesis 1:26-28).

God needed someone to represent Him here on the earth, but it had to be someone who was like Him. Nature clearly shows us that God is real and speaks to us about Him, but that was not enough for God. He wanted

someone who would worship Him and take pleasure in an intimate love relationship with Him. Someone He could communicate with. And as a result, someone who would display His glory and be a true reflection of His holiness and beauty here on the earth.

We also see that God needed someone to work for Him. He gave man the charge to multiply and fill the earth and to rule over the fish, birds, and animals. So God's purpose for us can be brought down to these two things: 1) to reflect His image and 2) to work for Him.

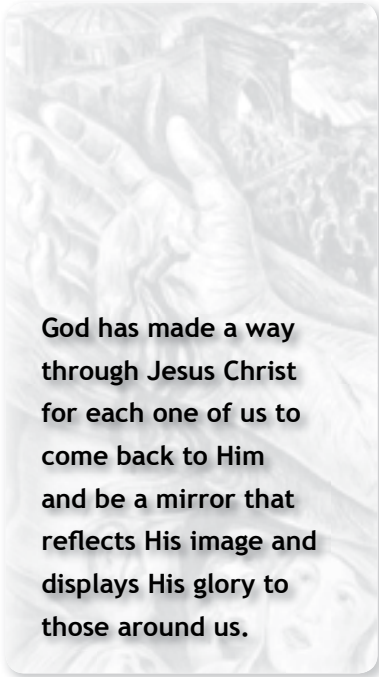
When God made Adam and Eve, they were perfect, and God was pleased with them. But one day the Serpent came to Eve, twisting the truth and questioning God's wisdom. When Adam and Eve yielded to sin

and disobeyed God, they immediately lost their innocence and purity. The sin they committed that day put a barrier between them and God. Before, Adam had loved God's presence, but now his shame caused him to hide. The clean mirror of his life became fogged over by sin, and suddenly God's glory could no longer be displayed by His life.

Jesus said, *"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"* (John 10:10). The devil came to Eve in the form of a serpent with the intent to rob her of her perfection, to bring both physical and spiritual death, and to destroy her ability to carry out the purpose for which God made her. Sadly, he accomplished his scheme, and sin entered into the world and



**God needed someone who would be a true reflection of His holiness and beauty on the earth.**



**God has made a way  
through Jesus Christ  
for each one of us to  
come back to Him  
and be a mirror that  
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displays His glory to  
those around us.**

has been passed down to each one of us. But God didn't give up on us! The Bible says, *"<sup>12</sup>As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned... <sup>18</sup>even so by the righteousness of one [Jesus Christ] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life"* (Romans 5:12, 18).

*"<sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. <sup>17</sup>For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. <sup>18</sup>He that believeth on him is not*

*condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"* (John 3:16-18).

God has made a way through Jesus Christ for each one of us to come back to Him and be a mirror that reflects His image and displays His glory to those around us. My prayer to God is that each one of you would become a mirror for God! It thrills my heart to think of how this world would shine with more beauty and radiance! How glorious it would be to see Jesus in all the lonely, sin-darkened places of despair and hopelessness in all the prisons of our nation!

May God help you walk in the light you have and continue to give you more light as you seek Him in His word and in the following pages of *Loaves & Fishes*. It is my desire to freely give the things God has freely given me. May this small gift be a blessing in your walk and help you to draw nigh to God, so He may draw nigh to you (James 4:8). I am praying for you!

– Lavern Gingerich





## **Bible Reading**

*Genesis 22:1–19*

<sup>1</sup>And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. <sup>2</sup>And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

<sup>3</sup>And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. <sup>4</sup>Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. <sup>5</sup>And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. <sup>6</sup>And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

<sup>7</sup>And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? <sup>8</sup>And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. <sup>9</sup>And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. <sup>10</sup>And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.



<sup>11</sup>And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. <sup>12</sup>And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. <sup>13</sup>And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. <sup>14</sup>And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

<sup>15</sup>And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, <sup>16</sup>And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: <sup>17</sup>That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; <sup>18</sup>And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. <sup>19</sup>So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.



## ***Take This Life***

Danny Garrison, Northern Correctional Facility,  
Moundsville, WV

Take this life, dear Lord, I pray, and make it useful throughout this day. How blessed I am, yet seldom I see how very merciful God is to me! All that I do on earth today, let it always be for you, I pray.

My heart is full and joyously free! Dear Lord, I'm blessed to walk with Thee! Please draw me closer by your grace through Your dear Word to run this race.

May each day be heaven-blest because in You I firmly rest. May Your face in me they see because Your love has lifted me.

# Which of the Two Are You?

Tommy Clayton

This past December, I traveled with my wife and children to visit relatives in Texas. One of the stops we made was at the nursing home where my grandmother has lived for six years.

My grandmother made a big difference in my life, and I was very close to her. When everyone else had given up on me (with good reason), my grandmother was still there. Driven by her faith in God and the love of Jesus, she stood by me during my worst years, even while I was in prison. Without her, I would have felt all alone many times.

Now, as we visited her in her wheelchair at the nursing home, emotions whirled about my heart and a thousand memories rushed through my mind. Joy, love, sorrow, and regret all seemed to want to be expressed at once. It was a difficult time. We parted with the hope of seeing her a few more times before returning home to Tennessee, but that opportunity never came,

for that same evening after we left, my grandmother's condition grew worse. Five days later she passed into eternity. The one who had prayed for me all my life was now with the One to whom she had prayed, and I know that one day I will be there with her.

At the funeral and viewing, I saw a lot of family I had not seen in years, and strangers I had never met before. A highlight of the event was the opportunity to visit

with my grandfather, whom I had not seen in nine years. He was a shell of his former self, weighing only 135 pounds. He had once been a strapping man, hard working and strong; now he was nearing the end of life, where



all must come one day.

We sat in the lobby of the funeral home, and I shared the good news of Jesus Christ with him and presented to him the message of salvation, a message of forgiveness for the guilty, hope for the hopeless, and love for the unlovable. He was a hard man,

## Eternity is real, and everyone must face it.



having lived through World War II, and he needed Jesus. It was a good visit, and I am thankful for the opportunity it gave us to renew an all but lost relationship.

However, this visit sparked a fire in my soul and placed a burden on my heart as I considered that my grandmother had died knowing Jesus, and that she dwells forever with Him in heaven, while my grandfather knows about Jesus, but has not made Him Lord and Savior; for him to die in this state would mean an eternity in the lake of fire. Eternity is real, and everyone must face it.

I recalled an account in Luke 18 of two men who went to pray: *"<sup>10</sup>Two men went up into the temple*

*to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. <sup>11</sup>The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. <sup>12</sup>I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. <sup>13</sup>And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. <sup>14</sup>I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."*

Of these two men, the first prayed, but Jesus says he prayed with himself; God never heard him. This man was proud, self-righteous, and blind to his own need. He compared himself with others, thinking himself better than they. The second man was humble and broken, calling on a holy God, seeking mercy and forgiveness. He knew he was unworthy and wicked as he punctuated his cry of "be merciful to *me* a sinner!" with the beating of his chest, identifying himself as the guilty one. We are told that the second man's prayer was heard, and that he alone was justified (forgiven).

Let me ask you a question: Which of the two are you?

Two thieves were crucified with Jesus, one on the left side

and one on the right. As they all hung dying, one thief mocked and spoke cruelly to Jesus. *“If thou be Christ, save thyself and us,”* he cried, but his request was not out of faith in Christ, but for the selfish pursuit of his own life and freedom. He would take Jesus if Jesus would profit him somehow, but he did not want Him as King and Lord.

The thief on the other side recognized that while he himself was guilty and deserved the sentence he was receiving, Jesus was innocent. At that moment, this thief believed in Jesus as Savior and cried out to Him, *“Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”* And Jesus said to him, *“To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”* (Luke 23:32–46).

Both of these men were thieves, both were judged and sentenced to death, and both died. But after death, despite how similar their lives had been, their eternities were as different as it can be.



The unrepentant man closed his eyes in death only to find himself tormented in flames, while the one who called to Jesus for mercy found himself in Paradise.

Friends, this brings us again to that question: Which of the two are you?

God’s Word tells us that there are only two paths a person can walk. There is no middle road, no side entry, and no bypass. Each of us is on one path or the other.

*“<sup>13</sup>Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: <sup>14</sup>Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it”* (Matthew 7:13, 14).

The strait gate and narrow path lead to life—and few find it. The wide gate and broad path lead to destruction—yet many go that way.

A picture of two paths—one narrow, the other wide. The nar-

*Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican....*

## Which of the

# 2 are you?

row path is the real Christian life, tried and proven by those who have traveled it throughout the generations. It is not the way of the world, nor is it the modern Christianity that allows you all the pleasures of the world as long as you wear a cross pendant. This narrow path is the way of Jesus' cross and sacrifice, dying to self and the lusts of the flesh and giving up all this world has to offer for the sake of Christ. It's a life of saying goodbye to the wicked, immoral, and godless ways that are accepted in today's society and allowing God to replace them with a tender conscience based on Biblical standards of holiness and purity.

The wide path is a superhighway that sweeps travelers straight to judgment and hellfire. This way is normal and acceptable to the millions who travel it every day. Guard and convict can travel this way together. Rich or poor, atheist or religious — it makes no difference. This is the way of the world with all its pleasures and its acceptance of every evil work, where all have a right to be how they want to be, and do what they want to do. "Live how you want to live," they say, "but leave me alone." This is not God's way.

Which of the two are you? You are either lost or saved, condemned or justified, guilty or pardoned.

Throughout eternity, you will be in heaven or in hell; living with Jesus or suffering alone in darkness; eternally worshipping God or forever in the tormenting flames. Which of the two will you choose?

The choice is yours today, and to choose nothing is truly to allow your sins to choose for you. Believe in Jesus while you can; call on His name while there is still time. Surrender your life, your will, and all you have to Him and learn to know Him as Lord, Savior, and Friend; or one day you will know Him only as Judge.

*"<sup>23</sup>Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, <sup>24</sup>Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. <sup>25</sup>When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are" (Luke 13:23–25).*

*"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19).*

*"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).*

□



## ***The Day I Gave My Life to Him***

Jack Smith, Kirkland Correctional Institution  
Columbia, SC

The day I gave my life to Him,  
I had the wings of a dove soaring high and free,  
Being free in Him, my burdens lifted;  
My troubled heart and worries were left behind.

The day I gave my life to Him,  
I had the wings of a dove free from chains of addiction,  
Set free from the bondage of sin,  
Setting my heart at the gates of heaven.

The day I gave my life to Him,  
I had the wings of a dove setting me free,  
Breaking the chains of bitterness and resentment,  
His Spirit flowing through me, letting me forgive.

The day I gave my life to Him,  
I had the wings of a dove bringing peace, joy, and love,  
Filling the loneliness and emptiness of my heart,  
Bringing life and light to my dark and broken spirit.

*"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." John 14:27*

# Heart Searching

## *for Prayer Preparation and Personal Revival*



Confession of sin is necessary for fellowship with God and revival among God's people. One of the problems we face as Christians is that many people do not view sin as bad.

Seeing it as high treason has revolutionized my thinking. (See Ezekiel 39:23.) When a Christian is Christ-controlled, Christ is on the throne of his life and self is dethroned. When the slightest sin is committed, whether in thought, word, deed, or attitude, Christ is dethroned and self is enthroned. Committing sin is self taking the throne from Christ. Because He is King of kings and Lord of lords, it is high treason. Perhaps this is one reason James could say, *"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all"* (James 2:10).

Prayerfully and honestly consider the following questions one by one. Every "yes" answer means sin in your life.

As you are convicted of sin, confess it at once to God. Be

willing to make it right, and then you can claim cleansing and forgiveness. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9).

Be sure to name your sin to God specifically, such as, "Lord, I have not put You first in my plans," or "I have neglected Your work and prayer." Do not make the least excuse for sin of any kind in your life. *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy"* (Proverbs 28:13).

Regardless of what others do or don't do, leave nothing undone on your part. God wants to work through you to bring about a great spiritual awakening. He can begin when you fulfill every requirement shown by the Lord through the Holy Spirit and His Word. A revival from the presence of the Lord can begin today *if you desire it.*

Look up each reference and read the Scripture. Then ask yourself the question. Give a

truthful answer, either *yes* or *no*. Do not go to the next question until you have settled the one at hand. This is not just to be *read*, but *prayed* through.

(1) **Matthew 6:12-14**—Is there anyone against whom you hold a grudge? Anyone you have not forgiven? Anyone you hate? Anyone you do not love? Are there any misunderstandings that you are unwilling to forget? Is there any person against whom you are harboring bitterness, resentment, or jealousy? Anyone you dislike to hear praised or well spoken of? Do you allow anything to justify a wrong attitude toward another?

(2) **Matthew 6:33**—Is there anything in which you have failed to put God first? Have your decisions been made after your own wisdom and desires, rather than by seeking and following God's will? Do any of the following in any way interfere with your surrender and service to God: ambition, pleasures, loved ones, friendships, money, your own plans, desire for recognition?

(3) **Mark 16:15**—Have you failed to seek the lost for Christ? Have you failed to witness consistently with your mouth for the Lord Jesus Christ? Has your life not shown to the lost the Lord Jesus?

Is there any person against whom you are harboring bitterness, resentment, or jealousy?

(4) **John 13:35**—Are you secretly pleased over the misfortunes of others? Are you secretly annoyed over the accomplishments or advancements of others? Are you guilty of any contention or strife? Do you quarrel, argue, or engage in heated discussions? Are you a partaker in any division or party spirit? Are there people whom you deliberately slight?

(5) **Acts 20:35**—Have you robbed God by withholding His due of time, talents, and money? Have you failed to support God's work either in prayer or in offerings?

(6) **1 Corinthians 4:2**—Are you undependable so that you cannot be trusted with responsibilities in the Lord's work? Are you allowing your emotions to be stirred for the things of the Lord, but doing nothing about it?

(7) **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**— Are you in any way careless with your body? Do you fail to care for it as the temple of the Holy Spirit? Are you guilty of intemperance in eating or drinking? Do you have any habits which are defiling to the body?

(8) **1 Corinthians 10:31**— Do you take the slightest credit for anything good about yourself, rather than give all the glory to God? Do you talk of what you have done rather than of what Christ has done? Are your statements mostly about “I”? Are your feelings easily hurt? Have you made a pretense of being something that you are not?

(9) **Ephesians 3:20**— Are you self-conscious rather than Christ-conscious? Do you allow feelings of inferiority to keep you from attempting things you should do in service for God?

(10) **Ephesians 4:28**— Do you underpay? Do you do very little in your work? Have you been careless in the payment of your debts? Have you sought to evade payment of your debts? Do you waste time? Do you waste other people’s time?

(11) **Ephesians 4:31**— Do you complain? Do you find fault? Do you have a critical attitude towards anyone or anything? Are you irritable or cranky? Do you ever carry hidden anger? Do you get angry? Do you become

impatient with others? Are you ever harsh or unkind?

(12) **Ephesians 5:16**— Do you listen to ungodly radio or television programs? Do you read unworthy magazines? Do you partake in worldly amusements? Do you find it necessary to seek satisfaction from any questionable source? Are you doing certain things that show that you are not satisfied in the Lord Jesus Christ?

(13) **Ephesians 5:20**— Have you neglected to thank the Lord for all things, the seemingly bad as well as the good? Have you virtually called God a liar by doubting His Word? Do you worry? Is your spiritual temperature based on your feelings instead of on the facts of God’s Word?

(14) **Philippians 1:21**— Are you taken up with the cares of this life? Is your conversation or heart joyful over things rather than the Lord and His Word? Does anything mean more to you than living for and pleasing God?

(15) **Philippians 2:14**— Do you ever by word or deed seek to hurt someone? Do you gossip? Do you speak unkindly concerning people when they are not present? Do you carry prejudice against true Christians because they are of some different group than yours, or because they do

**Do you have any reservations as to what you would or would not do concerning anything that might be His will?**

not see everything exactly like you do?

(16) **Philippians 4:4**—Have you neglected to seek to be pleasing to God in all things? Do you carry any bitterness toward God? Have you complained against Him in any way? Have you been dissatisfied with His provision for you? Is there in your heart any unwillingness to obey God fully? Do you have any reservations as to what you would or would not do concerning anything that might be His will? Have you disobeyed some direct leading from Him?

(17) **Colossians 3:9**—Do you engage in empty and unprofitable conversation? Do you ever lie? Do you ever exaggerate? Cheat? Steal? Do you overcharge?

(18) **2 Timothy 2:22**—Do you have any personal habits that are

not pure? Do you allow impure thoughts about the opposite sex to stay in your mind? Do you read that which is impure or suggests unholy things? Do you indulge in any unclean entertainment? Are you guilty of the lustful look?

(19) **Hebrews 10:25**—Do you stay away from the meetings of preaching the gospel? Do you often whisper or think about other things while God's Word is being read or preached? Are you irregular in attendance at services? Are you careless in attending or participating in prayer meetings? Have you neglected or slighted daily or private prayer? Have you neglected God's Word? Do you find the Bible and prayer uninteresting? Have you neglected thanksgiving at meals?

(20) **Hebrews 3:17**—Do you hesitate to submit to leaders in the church or elsewhere? Are you lazy? Do you rebel at requests given to you to help the work of the gospel? Do you in any way have a stubborn or unteachable spirit?

(21) **James 1:27**—Have you allowed yourself to become "spotted" by the world? Is your manner of dress pleasing to God? Do you spend beyond what is pleasing to God on anything? Do you neglect to pray about things you buy?

(22) **James 4:6**—Do you feel that you are doing quite well as a Christian? That you are not so bad? That you are good enough? Are you stubborn? Do you insist on having your own way? Do you insist on your rights?

(23) **James 4:11**—Have you dishonored Him and hindered His work by criticizing His servants? Have you failed to pray regularly for your pastor or other spiritual leaders? Do you find it hard to be corrected? Are you more concerned about what people will think than what is pleasing to God?

If you have been honest in admitting your sins, then you are ready for God’s cleansing. Sins that are admitted are sins that are confessed. Remember these three things:

1. If the sin is against God, confess it to God, and make things right with God.

2. If the sin is against another person, confess it to God and make the sin right with that other person.

3. If the sin is against a group, confess it to God and make it right with the group.

If there is full confession, there will be full cleansing. Then the joy of the Lord will follow. There can be testimony and prayer in the power of the Holy Spirit. Revival will follow.

*“Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults”* (Psalm 19:12).



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**“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”** 2 Chronicles 7:14

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## Your Value in God's Eyes

Author Unknown

A well-known speaker started off his seminar by holding up a \$20 bill. In the room of 200, he asked, "Who would like this \$20 bill?" Hands started going up. He said, "I am going to give this \$20 bill to one of you, but first, let me do this."

He proceeded to crumple up the bill. He then asked, "Who still wants it?" Still the hands were up in the air.

"Well," he replied, "What if I do this?" He dropped it on the floor, and started to grind it into the floor with his shoe. He picked up the \$20 bill, now all crumpled and dirty. "Now who still wants it?" Still the hands went into the air.

"My friends, you have all learned a very valuable lesson. No matter what I did to the money, you still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. It is still worth \$20."

Many times in our lives, we are dropped, crumpled, and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way. We feel as though we are worthless. But no matter what has happened or what will happen, you will never lose your value in God's eyes. To God, dirty or clean, crumpled or finely creased, you are still priceless to Him.

*"Thus saith the LORD that created thee... Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. <sup>2</sup>When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. <sup>3</sup>For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour" (Isaiah 43:1-3).*



## **Free on the Inside!**

*A place where prisoners can proclaim Jesus,  
the Deliverer Who sets the captives free.*

### **Time After Time Testimony of Jay Gaudry**

Laurens County Jail, Dublin, GA

**H**ere I sit in jail again, after vowing never to allow myself to get into this situation again. After being here time after time, I thought I had surely learned my lesson and would do the right thing this time.

I was saved in jail in 1998 and thought my life was on the right path. But this is my second time in jail since then, and I'm on my way to prison again. I've been in the county eighteen months now, and I was facing a life sentence this time. During my time in the county jail, I searched to see where I went wrong, and to see if I was ever truly saved. I came up with many answers, but somehow I knew none of them were right. I started praying and seeking answers; the

only answer I ever got was, "Give it up, Jay."

One night, while worrying about spending the rest of my life in prison, I started praying, asking God to show me His ways, and also to help me out of this life sentence. His answer was "Surrender your all, Jay, and put Christ first in your life. The rest will fall where it falls." Meditating on this for a while, I saw how I always kept something the flesh enjoyed, while trying to live a Christian life. I could see why my prayers were not answered, and why I continued to struggle with things I asked for relief from.

This time, I've asked God to take my all regardless of the circumstances—to create a new

heart in me and help me keep my eyes on Jesus and not worry about worldly consequences. I know that I'll still have struggles in life, but I can tell you God is at work. My lawyer came to visit the other night and told me that the district attorney, who hates me very much, dropped my charge that carries life, and we are going to court with a deal worked out. I'm still on my way to prison, but I have no anger or

hate in my heart toward those who were involved in my case.

*I started praying and seeking answers; the only answer I ever got was, "Give it up, Jay."*

For anyone who continues to come to jail time after time, I pray that you'll seek God's face and not hold anything back when He asks you to give your all. It works—I know! I also ask all who read this to pray that God will always have

His way in my life, and that I will have the courage and faith to seek His face in every decision I make in life. □

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## ***I'm Thankful***

Jeremy Bacot, California Substance Abuse Treatment Facility and State Prison at Corcoran, Corcoran, California

I'm thankful for a lot of things, especially life itself.

I'm thankful for friends and family and even good health.

I'm thankful to have wisdom and faith throughout my life.

I'm also thankful to be blessed with strength through stress and strife.

Some things that I'm thankful for  
Can be taken away, even things I adore,

But what I have shall never depart;  
I'm thankful to have Jesus Christ the Lord in my heart.

# Testimony of Rick A. West

Moberly Correctional Center, Moberly, Missouri

In June 2002, I was apprehended and arrested, and found myself sitting in a jail cell looking at doing four years in prison in Missouri, plus twenty years in Wisconsin, for arson. Before I was arrested, I was going to a small hometown church not far from my apartment in Springfield, Missouri, and I truly thought I had given my life to Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, I had not; I was living as a hypocrite, doing the will of the devil. Life is like a garden; now I was just eating the crop I had planted.

Since coming to prison, I've found out that we can choose to look for the good in everything that happens to us or we can just focus on the bad. As crazy as it might sound, this time in prison is one of the best things that has ever happened to me other than my salvation. This is a time for me to take a good and serious look at my life and where I was going without Christ.

*This time in prison is one of the best things that has ever happened to me other than my salvation.*

Today God has blessed me with a good life and the peace of God. *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"* (Romans 8:28). I am now serving out two and one-half years of a four-year sentence in the State of Missouri, but God has set me free within myself. Although my physical body is locked up inside this prison, my mind is free because of the wonderful healing that only Jesus Christ can give me.

I told God I wanted to use the time while I was incarcerated here, not only to get to know Him better, but also to get to know myself better. So, while I am incarcerated, I have learned to be patient with others, with myself, and with God, too. *"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint"* (Isaiah 40:31).

God has also taught me forgiveness. I have learned to

forgive anyone who has ever hurt me or wronged me in any way, and I've asked God to forgive me for hurting anyone myself, especially my sister.

The power of God is here in this correctional facility, and I want you to know that He is wherever you are, too. There are two other inmates in my housing unit who are also Christians. We read our Bibles faithfully in our individual cells, and sometimes together as a small group, and we faithfully go to the prison's chapel for the weekly worship service.

So, even though I am temporarily separated from all of my family, relatives, and loved ones,

I know the storm will pass over because I am living in the very presence of the King, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Hallelujah, praise God!

Are you doing what God has called you to do? Or are you thinking, "I'll get it right with God tomorrow"? Remember that tomorrow may never come. Give your heart to Jesus today. I want everyone who reads this testimony of mine to know that whatever you may have done, Jesus loves you. He died so that you can live. If I can do it, so can you. May you receive God's peace from this day on.



## ***Count It All Joy***

Frederick McCraney, Pleasant Valley State Prison  
Coalinga, California

When the problems in life start to get you down, count it all joy, for there's no need to frown.

Remember to cast your burdens on God, for He cares for you. In doing so you'll see that He gives you the strength to make it through.

When all around you is darkness and you find that it's getting harder to see, remember to plead the blood of Jesus, for in it is the power to set you free.

Stress not the things which you see, for all is not as it seems. Satan thought he was getting rid of Jesus on the cross, but because of the cross we've been redeemed.

So cheer up and face your problems; life is not all that bad. Don't forget that it's Christ who brings us joy, and it's the enemy who wants to keep us sad. *James 1:2*

## ***Solitary Confinement***

Gary Brown, Apalachee Correctional Institution  
Sneads, Florida

As I sit here in this lonely cell, my mind races back to nothing but a life of hell. In solitary confinement, all you can do is think. And so far I have 31 months of thoughts. To all my fellow convicts and inmates in solitary confinement, use your time wisely and don't let the system break you. Pray for the negative officers because they need help, too. 31 months of pain; knowledge, wisdom, and understanding I had to gain. God made what was so wrong so right. Now I'm out of the dark and in the light. Love to all my brothers in solitary confinement.

## ***One Glorious Day***

Jason O. Gonzalez, State Correctional Institution  
at Pine Grove, Indiana, Pennsylvania

As I sit here inside this prison cell,  
I give thanks to God, for at least I am well.  
Scared and afraid, I used to cry every night,  
But I knew I had to be strong; I had to fight.  
I know not yet what my future will hold,  
Turning to God, giving Him my future to mold.  
He will help me through these difficult days,  
For the Bible tells me of His wonderful ways.  
I now read it daily for comfort and peace,  
Being scared and afraid has finally ceased.  
I thank Him and praise Him in every way,  
For I know I will join Him in heaven one glorious day.

# ***Wrong Place, Right Time***

Keisha Gubson,  
Grayson Co. F. Facility  
Leitchfield, Kentucky



I got out of line,  
Wasn't doing right.  
God reached down  
And grabbed me tight.

He placed me here,  
To make me see  
Where in life  
I needed to be.

Even though it hurt  
It made me realize  
What I was doing  
Right in front of my eyes.

Being so selfish,  
Thinking just of me.  
God chose this moment  
Just to make me see.

I was doing wrong,  
Eventually turning my back.  
He saw I needed teaching;  
Discipline I did lack.

And now, like the dark clouds  
Fading away to the sun,  
I know in my heart  
God is Number One.

Thank You, God,  
For putting me here.  
No more evil  
That I have to fear.

They say You only discipline  
The ones whom You love.  
Thank You, my Father,  
In heaven above.

# Heaven on Earth

## Testimony of Lorne Desmond Pick

Sterling, Colorado

Never before had I felt closer to the Lord than on the day I climbed up a hill above the small town I lived in. I lay on the summit of the hill, just daydreaming through a lazy summer afternoon. In every direction there stretched a wonderful solitary world of both mountains and lowlands. The lake below was gleaming in the sun like streaks of silver. The little town was barely visible at the foot of the hill. Even though I could see the people moving in the streets below, I could not hear a single sound. The little town's bustle could not reach so high.

The beautiful blue sky was all around me. Everything was so peaceful and quiet that God seemed just at hand. I felt Him close to me in everything. I knew He was patiently waiting for me to speak to Him. He was there waiting to hear every word. At that moment, I realized it was in spots like this that Christ Jesus Himself also loved to talk to His

Father. At that moment, I also knew I was alone with my Lord and Savior, alone in heaven on earth. I had finally found true peace.

Yes, praise the Lord, I had finally found true peace. Right at this moment, however, I am just lying in my bunk daydreaming

*Since giving my life to the Lord, I am enjoying a real life of fulfillment and victory in Jesus.*

of this wonderful hill from long ago. I have been in prison since March of 1993. I am not on a quiet hill right now, but since giving my life unconditionally to the Lord in September of 1999, instead of

just going through the religious motions I had gone through for most of the 42 years of my life, I am enjoying a real life of fulfillment and victory in Jesus. Yes! Even in prison. I now have a personal relationship and an eternal life with Christ in heaven!

When I was first sentenced to prison, my greatest fear was dying in prison. Now, however, even though the possibility is just as real and it could still

happen, I am not really worried about it anymore. This is because I now understand that heaven is just as close to me behind these prison walls as in the free world. In some ways, I would say even closer. The Lord willing, I will complete my sentence around

November of 2005. But, it really does not matter because even in here I am living each day to the fullest to glorify the Lord. So, again, I must state that I have finally found true peace. Thank you, Lord!



## ***Mail Call***

John M. Reynolds



Darkness and loneliness fill my cell  
With pain and fear too great to tell.

I wait for the mailman to deliver to me  
As I wipe away tears that no one will see.

I pray sincerely, with head raised above,  
“Please God, soon send a letter of love.”

I long to gaze upon pages so dear,  
With riches to bring my loved ones near.

Words of diamonds on pages of gold –  
A message from heaven as their story is told.

“We love you; we miss you; we pray you’ll be free.”  
A treasure-filled envelope just for me.

Please bring memories of joys I once knew –  
Family, friends, and things I used to do.

The darkness and pain of my cell will prevail,  
As my name, again, was not called for mail.



## ***The Presence of a Caring Hand***

Tim Troutman,  
Kirkland Correctional Institution, Columbia, SC

As I travel down the roads of life—  
The peaks of happiness, the valleys of strife—  
Through crowded cities and barren lands,  
I feel the presence of a caring hand.

When loads got heavy and I'd stumble and fall,  
And at times I couldn't see the other side of the wall;  
While in the dark dungeon of deep despair,  
A voice whispered, "Fear not, for I am here."

"Come to Me; let Me help; just lean on Me,  
And see what it means to be really free.  
Come, be born again in life anew,  
And see how great is My love for you."

And I dwell on my sins and awful mistakes  
And feel in my heart it may already be too late,  
But I cry out, "Oh, God, what can I do?"  
"Nothing," He says. "I've already done it for you."

So He pulls me up with His mighty hand,  
For I am a part of His heavenly plan.  
He never mentions the past I have done.  
He only tells me, "Welcome home, My son!"

## ***I'm Just a Poor Man***

James E. Parker, Dalhart Unit, Dalhart, Texas

I'm just a poor man,  
With nothing to give,  
Just a broken-down heart  
That needs to be filled.

I have no money, riches, or gold.  
Just an empty life  
That's getting old.  
Help me, Lord, before my heart turns cold.

• • • • •

My son, you ask that your heart be filled;  
You don't need riches or gold to give.  
Open your heart and let me in.  
This day, accept salvation; let a new life begin.

Someday you'll have a mansion  
With streets paved in gold.  
You'll have no pain;  
You'll never grow old.

You see, you're not a poor man;  
You have plenty to give:  
A soul that is ready,  
And a heart to be filled.

*"The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."*

*Revelation 22:17*

# Given

Art Mayse, Southeastern Tennessee State Regional  
Correctional Facility, Pikeville, TN

He Who made each grain of sand and placed them by the sea  
While in His hand I saw the dust and heard Him say to Me,  
"Son, let's make a moon and stars and hang them up above;  
Let's make a world of paradise and fill the world with love."  
I watched Him take His chosen dust and sift out all the sand,  
Then form an image of Himself and call that image Man.  
I watched Him make of Man a soul, then watched My Father cry,  
And say to Me, "For Man to live, someone will have to die."

Of all the things My Father made with His own loving touch,  
Why must it be the soul of Man My Father loves so much?  
I heard Him call for heaven's host that gathered in the sky,  
Than cry, "Go forth, You Son of God, or Man will surely die."

I left My home with Father God when I came down to earth,  
Into an humble manger where a virgin gave me birth.  
I walked upon this world we made with love so warm and true  
And made the way for everything that man would have to do.  
I carried out my Father's will so I could pay the cost,  
Then finally walked up Calvary's hill and died upon the cross.  
I gave my life for the soul of man; from sin I've set you free.  
And I ask you as you read this poem,  
What have you given me?

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***Jesus said, "Heal the sick,  
cleanse the lepers, raise the  
dead, cast out devils: freely ye  
have received, freely give."***

*Matthew 10:8*



## ***God's World***

Michael J. Barret

My thanks and my praise You deserve, living God,  
For You created the heavens along with the earth.  
From beginning to end, you gave it its birth.  
You divided the sun from the moon,  
And the night from the day,  
You arranged the stars in the heavens  
In an orderly way.  
You made the mountains, the valleys,  
The rivers and streams;  
You made everything imaginable  
A man would want to see.  
You made the beasts for the fields  
And the birds for the air;  
You did this with the touch of your hands.  
You made the fish for the oceans  
And the great depths of the sea.  
You created man in Your own image,  
So we could share it with Thee.  
Isn't He beautiful?  
Beautiful isn't He?  
Prince of peace, Son of God,  
Isn't He?



## ***The Bible and the TV Guide***

Robert Lunan, Sullivan Correctional Facility  
Fallsburg, New York

On the table, side by side,  
The Holy Bible and the TV guide.  
One is well-worn, but cherished with pride  
(Not the Bible, but the TV guide).  
One is used daily to help folks decide;  
No it isn't the Bible, it's the TV guide.

As pages are turned, what shall they see?  
Oh, what does it matter — turn on the TV.  
Then confusion reigns; they can't all agree  
On what they shall watch on the old TV.

So they open the book in which they confide  
(No, not the Bible; it's the TV guide).

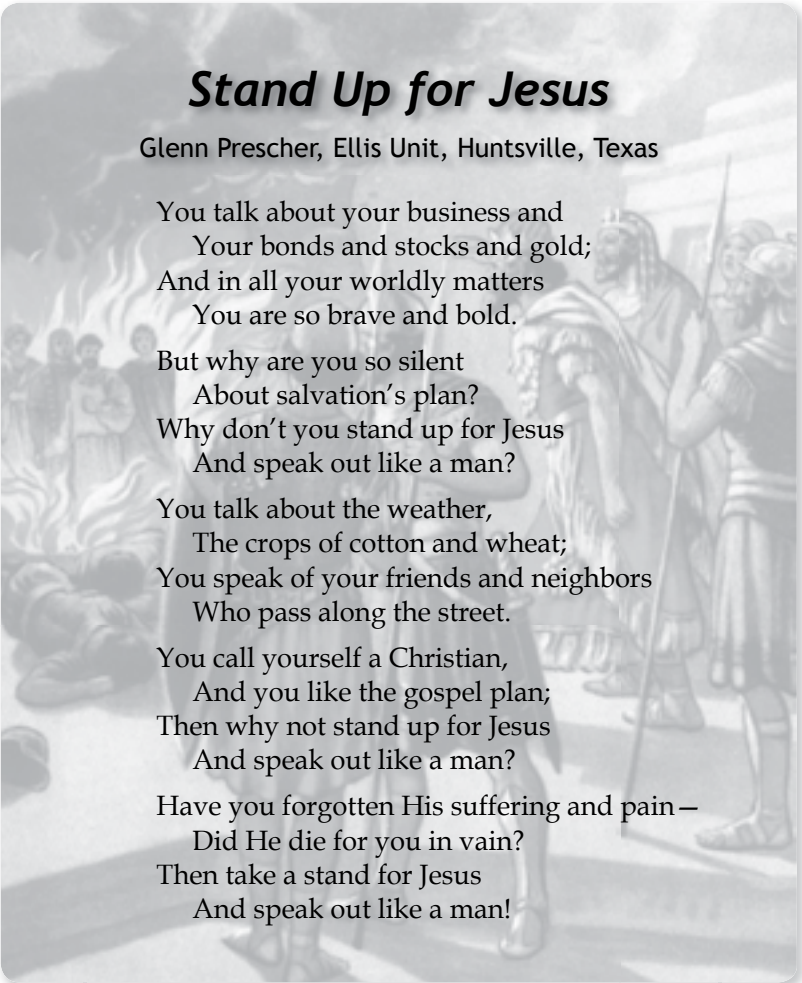
The word of God is seldom read;  
Maybe a verse e'er they fall into bed,  
Exhausted and sleepy and tired as can be,  
Not from reading the Bible, but from watching TV.

So back to the table, side by side,  
Are the Holy Bible and the TV guide.

No time for prayer, no time for the word;  
The plan of salvation is seldom heard.

Forgiveness of sin, so full and free,  
Is found in the Bible, not on TV.





## ***Stand Up for Jesus***

Glenn Prescher, Ellis Unit, Huntsville, Texas

You talk about your business and  
Your bonds and stocks and gold;  
And in all your worldly matters  
You are so brave and bold.

But why are you so silent  
About salvation's plan?  
Why don't you stand up for Jesus  
And speak out like a man?

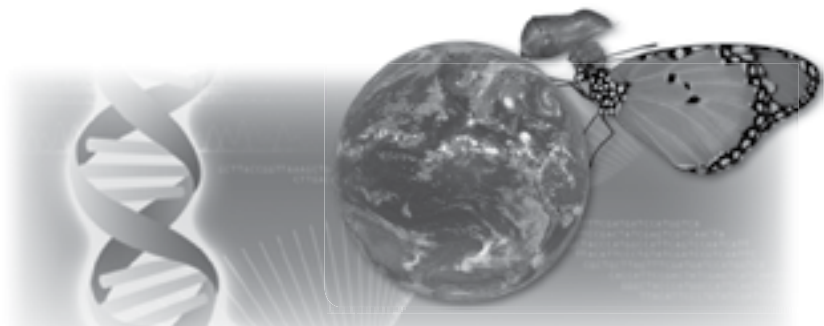
You talk about the weather,  
The crops of cotton and wheat;  
You speak of your friends and neighbors  
Who pass along the street.

You call yourself a Christian,  
And you like the gospel plan;  
Then why not stand up for Jesus  
And speak out like a man?

Have you forgotten His suffering and pain—  
Did He die for you in vain?  
Then take a stand for Jesus  
And speak out like a man!

**“When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”**

**Acts 4:13**



## Science in Creation

### Earthquakes in Divers Places

Andrew Zimmerman

*“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places” (Matthew 24:7).*

November 1, 1755, dawned bright and clear in Lisbon, the capital city of Portugal. It was All Saints Day, and throngs of worshipers crowded the churches. Lisbon, one of the largest and most beautiful cities in Europe, had a cathedral, a palace, a castle, a majestic aqueduct, and several magnificent churches. Without warning an earthquake struck at 9:30 AM, toppling great public buildings and thousands of houses. Three separate waves of water, generated by the earthquake, washed over the coast of Portugal, dragging people and debris out to sea. The waves swept up the

Tagus river, causing extensive damage and destruction as the people of Lisbon were fleeing the collapsing buildings. Fire broke out, and structures that had survived the earthquake were incinerated. The fire raged for six days. It is estimated that up to sixty thousand people

*continued on next page...*

- Brother Andrew has had an
- avid interest in science since
- he started studying it in his
- early years of school. More
- recently, he has been blessed
- by studying the work of cre-
- ation scientists such as Henry
- Morris and Ken Ham. Because
- of his interest in science and
- his belief in a literal six-day
- creation, he enjoys telling oth-
- ers about creation science. He
- lives in Central Pennsylvania
- with his wife and ten children.

perished, and twelve thousand homes were demolished in Lisbon. The quake caused extensive damage across Portugal, Spain, and Morocco.

On September 1, 1923, a great quake shook the Tokyo-Yokohama metropolitan area. The death toll from this shock was estimated at more than one hundred forty thousand. Fifty-four percent of the brick buildings and ten percent of the reinforced concrete structures collapsed. Many hundreds of thousands of houses were either shaken down or burned.

On February 4, 1976, an earthquake struck Guatemala. More than twenty-two thousand perished, and one million people were made homeless — nearly one sixth of Guatemala's population.

Jesus said that one of the signs of the end times would be earthquakes in divers, or different, places. Few things inspire the fear of God in a person like an earthquake. Some people use the expression "as sure as the ground I'm standing on." We like to think that "terra firma" is something we can depend on. But how sure is ground you're standing on when it can buck and heave like the waves of an ocean?

The science of earthquakes is called seismology. Scientists who study earthquakes are seismolo-

gists. What does seismology tell us? What causes earthquakes? How can the "solid ground" move and shake? Can earthquakes be predicted? Why do they cause such destruction?

According to plate tectonics theory, the earth's outer shell, called the lithosphere, is made up of a number of plates that can move independently of each other. These tectonic plates float on the mantle, the core of the earth made up of hot, molten rock. The continents and oceans rest on top of these floating plates. The movement of tectonic plates is normally very slow, measured in inches per year. This is called continental drift. Geologists have identified about a dozen major plates and a number of smaller ones that together make up the earth's crust, and cover the entire globe.

A fault is a fracture in the rocks of the earth's crust. Faults are usually, but not always, along the boundaries of the tectonic plates. When the movement of tectonic plates is slow, they can slip and slide harmlessly by each other. Sudden shifting and sliding along a fault causes an earthquake. Several different types of movement are possible. If one side of the fault rises and the other side drops it is called a normal fault or a reverse fault, depending on whether the

upper or the lower side is overhanging. When the two sides of a fault slide horizontally past each other it is a strike-slip fault. The edge of a tectonic plate slipping under another one is called subduction.

The vertical displacement of the earth's crust can do tremendous damage by causing a seismic sea wave, or tsunami, when an earthquake occurs below the ocean. These are sometimes called tidal waves, but really have nothing to do with the tide. Consider what happens when the ocean floor moves upward. The water above it is also displaced upward. As the water seeks to return to the level, an almost imperceptible, but powerful wave can travel thousands of miles through the water, rising into a monstrous wave of destruction as it nears the shallower waters at the shore line. These tsunami waves can sweep far inland, flattening buildings and changing the landscape. As the water sweeps back out to sea, buildings and people are often taken with it.

Although there can be faults and earthquakes in the interior of a plate, the majority of earthquakes take place along the borders of the plates. One of the major earthquake belts encircles the Pacific Ocean, affecting the coastlines bordering on it.

This includes such earthquake zones as the states of California and Alaska, and the country of Japan. Another belt passes through the Mediterranean region through Asia and into the East Indies.

How are earthquakes detected? Today scientists employ very sensitive seismographs to record movements of the earth's surface. There are thousands of earthquake observatories around the world. By analyzing the shock waves produced by an earthquake, and correlating the arrival time of different types of waves at several observatories, the epicenter (the location of a quake) can be accurately calculated.

The magnitude, or strength, of an earthquake is expressed as a number on the Richter scale, so named because Charles Frances Richter was one of the seismologists who developed it. Each number on the scale is a ten-fold increase in magnitude from the number below it. An earthquake that measures 7.0 on the Richter scale caused ten times as much ground movement as an earthquake that measured 6.0 on the Richter scale.

Is the frequency of earthquakes increasing? Many more earthquakes are reported each year than were in the past. Part of the reason for this is a greater

number of earthquake recording stations around the world, and more sensitive recording apparatus. The really big earthquakes, 7.0 or greater on the Richter scale, seem to be occurring at approximately the same rate for the past century. Insufficient measuring and recordkeeping makes it difficult to compare the frequency of quakes in the more distant past.

The science of predicting earthquakes is making advances, but is still more art than science, and is imprecise at best. Sometimes earthquakes seem to move along a fault, with a quake relieving tension at one area, but increasing the tension and chance for an earthquake farther along the fault line. Scientists say that Europe can expect a severe earthquake, like the Lisbon quake, about every one to two thousand years. The quake may have been triggered by the subduction of a tectonic plate beneath the Straits of Gibraltar. The subduction process appears to be continuing.

We do know that Jesus' prediction of "earthquakes in divers places" will surely come to pass. The book of Revelation also has various references to earthquakes in the end times. God is

## God is in control of earthquakes and uses them for His purposes.



in control of earthquakes and uses them for His purposes. Acts 16 gives the account of Paul and Silas being jailed in Philippi. God used an earthquake to open the prison doors and free Paul and Silas.

One of the greatest events in world history was accompanied by an earthquake. Matthew 28:2 says, "And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it." Jesus rising from the dead was truly an earth-shaking event! When you begin to follow Him, it will change your whole world.







## The Consecration of Jonathan Edwards

I claim no right to myself – no right to this understanding, this will, these affections that are in me; neither do I have any right to this body or its members – no right to this tongue, to these hands, feet, ears, or eyes.

I have given myself clear away and not retained anything of my own. I have been to God this morning and told Him I have given myself wholly to Him. I have given every power, so that for the future I claim no right to myself in any respect. I have expressly promised Him, for by His grace I will not fail. I take Him as my whole portion and contentment, looking upon nothing else as any part of my happiness. His law is the constant rule of my obedience.

I will fight with all my might against the world, the flesh, and the Devil to the end of my life. I will adhere to the faith of the Gospel, however hazardous and difficult the profession and practice of it may be.

I receive the blessed Spirit as my Teacher and Comforter, and cherish all admonition meant to enlighten, purify, confirm, comfort, and assist me. This I have done.

I pray God, for the sake of others, to look upon me as a self-dedication, and receive me as His own. Henceforth, I am not to act in any respect as my own. I shall act as my own if I ever make use of any of my powers to do anything that is not to the glory of God or fail to make the glorifying of Him my whole and entire business.

*continued on next page* . . . .

If I murmur in the least at afflictions, if I am in any way uncharitable, if I revenge my own case, if I do anything purely to please myself or omit anything because it is a great denial, if I trust to myself, if I take any praise for any good which Christ does by me, or if I am in any way proud, I shall act as my own and not God's. I purpose to be absolutely His.

—Jonathan Edwards

## Fuel Quotes



“God, I pray Thee, light these idle sticks of my life, that I may burn for Thee. Consume my life, my God, for it is Thine. I seek not a long life, but a full one, like You, Lord Jesus.”

*Jim Elliot, the consecrated follower of Jesus, who was martyred by the Auca Indian tribe*



“People who do not know the Lord ask why in the world we waste our lives as missionaries. They forget that they too are expending their lives... and when the bubble has burst, they will have nothing of eternal significance to show for the years they have wasted.”

*Nate Saint, one of Jim Elliot's companions, who was also martyred*



“If we will follow the spirit of the apostles and martyrs and not count our own lives dear, if we will give ourselves unconditionally to make Jesus known, our nation will be shaken.”

*Michael Brown*



“The Bible is full of ordinary people who went to impossible places and did wondrous things simply because they decided to obey God, even when others said, ‘You can't do that.’ They weren't more qualified for their tasks than we are. But they trusted God to open the doors and give them the power they needed in their particular situations.”

*Brother Andrew*

## WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

# Abraham and Isaac

Genesis 22



Find these words in the puzzle below:

ABRAHAM  
ALTAR  
ANGEL  
CALLED  
CAUGHT

FATHER  
FEAREST  
HEAVEN  
HORNS  
ISAAC

KNIFE  
LAMB  
LORD  
LOVEST  
MEN

MOUNTAINS  
MULTIPLYING  
OBEYED  
OFFERING  
RAM

SON  
STARS  
THICKET  
WOOD  
WORSHIP

D O O W G K D E L L A C M A O X  
M F Q L T A E N Y Z S E R L I K  
U F S U W O R S H I P T F T N E  
L E M U L T I P G Y I N A A P T  
T R W O S H I P M E N S T R O H  
I I M O N T A A I N S L O V S G  
P N I D H C H D E L L A M K N U  
L G E L O A H E R C R O L P Y A  
Y N S L R C K E T I U Q R Z E C  
I W S B N R O S K N A U G D H T  
N C A H S A A C T H I C K E T P  
G M B L E O U A N S L L A C M I  
H E A V E N I A G N L E A W O S  
R S I P T N H I D G Y G U B N C  
A B R T S E V O L E H N M A M J  
R E A S T F A T H E Y A C R A M  
E E D O T S E R A E F E V E N H  
F P H K N K I E S R O H B N L O  
I D R T L A M B B S T R A O S M  
N Z O A A I S C A P C A A S I O  
K Q U M N F R S E D E O S A N U

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*“And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;  
because thou hast obeyed my voice.” Genesis 22:18*

# *The Pursuit of Godly Seed*

**Denny Kenaston**

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All rights reserved. • Web site: [www.homefirespub.com](http://www.homefirespub.com).

Denny and Jackie Kenaston were saved in 1972 out of the “hippie culture.” The Lord Jesus delivered them from drugs, drinking, and many other things that go along with that life-style. They have raised their eight children in the rural setting of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania for the last 23 years. In this setting, they find many opportunities to extend their home school far beyond the classroom.

They were first called to this location to help start Charity Christian Fellowship where Brother Denny serves as an elder. He also travels extensively in a church planting and preaching ministry. God has placed an anointing upon him to call the church back to a burden for the family, and through this, many families have fallen on their faces in repentance and received a new vision for a godly home. Our prayer is that your heart and home will be challenged and changed by this section taken from his book *The Pursuit of Godly Seed*.



*I never cease to be in awe as I gaze into the face of an innocent child. When God gives them to us, they come as a blank sheet of paper – clean, pure, and waiting to be inscribed upon. They trust us, open themselves up to us, and receive whatever we give them, whether it be good or bad. Lord, teach us how to guide and train them!*

# The Influence of a Godly Home

Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men... manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ.  
2 Corinthians 3:2, 3a

I have been relating to you about passing on a godly heritage to the next generation. Well, now let me share a little story with you about a family God used to implant some things in my heart that have changed the destiny of my children and inflamed me with a vision for a godly home. It all started when I met this family twenty-two years ago in Fort Frances, Ontario, Canada. This is a small town of about 6,000 people, a twin city to International Falls, Minnesota.

I was in International Falls working with a revival team and serving Lou and Ralph Sutera with the Canadian Revival Fellowship. They were there having meetings and seeking God for revival. These twin brothers have been my dear friends and mentors for revival for twenty-five years.

Well, much to the delight of my own heart, the meetings for revival lasted three weeks. Every night, there was this family that kept coming to the meetings,

and I noticed them. They were a little bit different. The men wore lapel suits, but they didn't wear ties. The women dressed more modestly than the other women who came to the meetings and wore this black veiling on the back of their heads. I had never seen Christians like them in my life, and I was intrigued with the testimony of the family. They came every night, never missed, and always sat up front. I remember one evening when Ralph Sutera asked them to sing. Dad, Mom, and seven children sang in four-part harmony, without instruments. Wow, was that ever sweet!

One evening, the father of this family walked up to me after the service and said, "I would like you to come to my house for breakfast. Can you come?"

I said, "Yes, I can," wondering why I got an invitation.

We set a day and time, and he gave me some general directions on how to get there, I said goodbye, and he went his way.

**M**y vision was sadly lacking in those days, but God was about to change that.

Well, I started fellowshiping with other people, and I told them, "I have been invited for breakfast on Tuesday morning," and I gave the name of the family. When I said these words, their faces lit up with a great big smile, and they said, "Oh, you will really enjoy that home." I had no idea what they meant by that, but I remembered the family's unique testimony in the meetings. My vision was sadly lacking in those days, but God was about to change that.

Tuesday morning came, and I headed out for Fort Frances with a friend. We had to cross over the border into Canada. As I was driving through the city of Fort Frances, I made a turn or two that must have been wrong and got myself lost. I thought, "Now what am I going to do, and how am I going to find this brother's house?" I pulled into a little minute market there in the town to ask for help. I started to ask rather reluctantly because I

didn't know whether anybody would know them.

I said, "I have gotten myself lost." I gave the name of the family to him and asked, "Do you know where they live?"

The man behind the counter got a big smile on his face and said, "Sure! I know where they live! Go down this highway, make a left-hand turn, make another right-hand turn and another left and you'll be there."

I looked at him, a little puzzled, got back in the car, and headed down the highway, pondering these things in my heart.

As I was driving down the highway, somehow I missed the turn that I was supposed to make. You know how it is when you miss a turn. You keep driving and looking, thinking it will be the next road. Well, I went on like this for some time before I decided that I must have missed the turn.

I stopped at an old gas station out in the country and said to the old man sitting there, "I'm looking for a special family." Again, I gave him the name and asked, "Would you have any idea who that is and where they live?"

The old man in the gas station got a big smile on his face, and he said, "Sure! I know where they live! Go back up the highway and make a right hand turn." He gave me directions from there,

and I went on my way again, pondering.

This is not a fictitious story; it really did happen, and I usually can follow directions pretty well. Sometimes I think God put a fog over my mind so I would get lost again and again.

I went down the highway, made the turn, and somehow (let's blame it on providence), ended up lost again in a residential area. I thought, "Now what am I going to do?" The answer came quickly as the Lord reminded me of the many residential doors I had knocked on while out winning souls. So, I knocked on a door, and someone answered. I proceeded with my usual questions (I was getting pretty good at it), and I found the same response. They got a big smile on their face, and said, "Sure! We know where they live!" Well, they gladly gave me the final directions, and I arrived at the farm.

As I pulled up to the farmstead, I found the typical farm scene. The boys were still outside finishing the chores, and the girls were in the kitchen with Mama, helping her prepare breakfast. There were seven children at home at the time. Five had already left home. After the boys finished the chores, they all came into the house, and after the proper introductions, we all

sat down at the table together for a nice country breakfast. All the conversations at the table were about spiritual subjects, and I was just taking all of this ordered experience into my heart. It was a lively table, with much rejoicing, and everyone was very active in the discussions. My head turned back and forth as I listened to the family table talk.

When the meal was over, the Papa, who was a short German man with a gruff voice, took his Bible and handed it to me. I was sitting at his right hand, and he put the Bible down and said, "Here, you will have devotions this morning." Now, I was a young Baptist preacher, and used to having some time to prepare, so I was on the spot. I opened up the Bible to Ephesians and started reading as I whispered a prayer to God. While I was reading, feeling insecure in the situation, I looked up to see what everyone's responses were to my reading. I was taken aback, to say the least. All the children had their hands folded, and their eyes were shut. They looked as though they were squeezing everything they could out of the verses I was reading. That was very unusual to me, as I had never seen such earnestness in a family before.

All entered into the discussion we had out of Ephesians chapter 1, and when we were finished, I

closed the Bible. Then the father passed out songbooks and said, "We're going to sing a while." Well, was I ever in for a treat and a lesson. When that family started singing, the heavens just opened up. The glory of God came down into that little dining room. I trust you know what I mean by that. The Spirit of God was there. It wasn't a dead devotion. It was alive with God. I was just sitting back, taking all this in and wondering, "What have I found here in this family?" When we were finished with the singing, we had prayer together, and then were dismissed for more casual fellowship.

As soon as I got up from the table and started toward the end of the room, the boys were right on me. They had tracts in their pockets – gospel tracts, tracts on the verbal inspiration of the Bible, and others that they wanted to give me. They were "throwing" tracts at me left and right, asking me questions. I was so impressed with these zealous young men.

When I finished talking to the boys, the mother of the house pulled on my coattail and led me into the living room. As I looked at her, she started crying. Then she said, "Please, pray with us for Fort Frances. We are praying that revival will break out in our town!" I had never seen

anything like this before, and I was just taking it all in.

After I visited with the ladies in the house, the boys took me on a tour of the farm. They showed me the different facets of their farm. All during the tour, we were talking about the Lord. I was impressed, to say the least.

As we were heading toward the milk house, the milk truck pulled in to pick up the milk. One of the boys stopped right in the middle of his conversation with me, jumped up on the milk truck, stuck a track through the window and said to the man, "Hey, have you been born again?" I was just watching it all, taking it in, and wondering about this family. We finished our tour, with many more questions about the Lord and the Bible, and I could tell that each one of them loved God. This was how my whole visit went, so refreshing and inspiring.

I said goodbye to the men, but as I was getting into my car to leave, the dear mother of the house came out to say goodbye. She had a loaf of German bread and a dozen eggs that she put in the back seat of my car. I thanked her, waved goodbye, and drove away, just pondering this whole visit, wondering, "God, what are You saying to me? This is an unusual visit that I have had."

With these thoughts on my mind, I made my way back down the roads, and came to the gate to go across from Canada into the United States. It seems that God was not finished getting my attention, but had one more smile to impress upon my heart. As I pulled up to the customs booth, a big tall Canadian in uniform walked up to the door of the car. You know how officials are. They always seem to have a real gruff voice and frown on their face, ready to catch anybody who is being dishonest.

He spoke with a gruff voice, "Where are you going?"

I told him, "I'm going back to the United States. I have been visiting friends."

Then he asked me, "Do you have anything in the car?"

My first thought was "no," but then I remembered the bread and eggs that were given to me, and I said, "Yes—yes, I do. I have a loaf of German bread and a dozen eggs in the back seat."

When I said that, his frown turned into a big smile, and he said, "I know where you have been." He then gave me the name of the home where I had just visited, with a smile on his face and joy in his voice.

I looked up at that man with a look of bewilderment, and he said, "All right go ahead, on

your way." I pulled away from the gate, pondering this whole thing, and wondering what God was trying to say to me.

God did something very special in my heart that day. He gave me a vision. We have stated already, "Without a vision, the people perish," but the opposite is also true. With a vision the people prosper, and I don't mean materially. That visit has affected me and our home for more than 22 years now. At the time, we only had three children: Rebekah, Daniel, and Elisabeth. Rebekah was about four years old; Daniel was two; and Elisabeth was a little nursing baby.

Our home has never been the same, from that day forward. God took His finger that day and drew a picture on the table of my heart, a picture of a godly home, a picture of the influence of one family on a community. Oh, the power of one dedicated Christ-centered home! God, please give us many more, all over this land of ours! The memory, the inspiration, and the revelation of that visit are still upon my heart as I sit here writing these words. It is so sweet to me! My heart rises up to God in worship and thanksgiving as I reflect upon His visitation to my poor blinded heart.

God gave me a vision that day as I saw the power of a godly home. It took a few days to settle



God gave me a vision that day as I saw the power of a godly home.

and form in my heart, but as it did, my heart began to cry, "God, I want a home like that! I have got to have a home like that! Lord, if you can do it for that father, you can do it for me!"

Jackie and I were just a couple of converted "hippies" out of the late sixties and early seventies. We were not very old in the Lord at that time. We didn't have much vision for our home, but a fire began to burn in my soul.

I spent another week helping Lou and Ralph, and all the days were spent pondering this new vision. My prayers deepened as the purpose of God became clearer. A longing, a craving settled down upon me, and I began to pray, "Lord, I want a home that glorifies You. I want to have a family that is a testimony in the community where we live. I want to have a family that loves God, and everybody else knows

it. I want to have a family that can preach the gospel and win souls when people come into the home. That's the kind of family I want!" My heart said, "And I shall have it, by Thy grace."

By the time I went home to my dear wife and children, my heart was fixed. My will had engaged itself with the grace that came through that revelation. I was full of zeal, and Jackie wasn't sure what had happened to me. God bless her. She has had to fasten her seat belt several times in our Christian journey, and this was one of those times. I shared my visit to this godly home with her, and how it had affected me. It tickles me now as I look back on those days. I know I made a lot of mistakes in my zeal, but my heart was sincere, and God blesses sincere desires. I got out the Bible, and I said to the family, "We are going to have devotions." We

didn't have them before that, or very little. Maybe we read the Bible a little bit, but with very little purpose. You know how it can be. I had no purpose! I had no vision! I had no goals! But now, I had a dream, a holy dream, written on my heart.

We started in the children's bedroom. Mama was in a chair nursing the baby, Rebekah was in her little chair, and Daniel was sitting in his crib sucking his thumb (sorry, Daniel!). We started with three songs. I said, "We're going to sing in devotions! Someday my family is going to sing like that family in Canada, and we're starting now." So we took three songs, and we learned them. I'm sure that Mama got a little bored with the same three songs, but we sang those songs day in and day out until we had learned them well. I wanted the children to know the songs. We made a lot of mistakes back in those early days, but our hearts were right. I wanted my family to be a testimony to the glory of God, and that's what God wants for every Christian family. The vision has expanded through the years, but my heart still sings for joy when I remember the whole-hearted passion we had for our children in those early days.

There is a dearth in the land of families like the one I met up in Canada. It is not God's will that

they be hard to find. You have to go a long ways to find one, and this is not right! God is no respecter of persons, remember! God wants to do a work in every single home represented in the reading of this book. He *wants* to do it again; He is *able* to do it again; and He *will* do it again! If we allow God to give us a vision of what He can do, He will do it again! But brothers and sisters, I'm sure we would all agree, it doesn't happen by accident. That godly home I saw was not an accident. There were many holy activities that took place in this home on purpose.

So, what is God saying to us as we sit and ponder these things today? He is saying, "My people! I want you to leave a godly heritage for your children!" He is saying, "My people! My Spirit is moving on the hearts of fathers and turning their hearts to their children. Open your hearts and hear My voice."

God wants us to raise our children to be a reflection of His glory and of His work in these last days upon the earth. That is what He is saying to all of us. It is not right that there be just one or two godly homes here and there that get the attention of a searching heart like mine. There ought to be so many dedicated families in the church that we have many examples to follow. May God

work by His Spirit in such a way that the church of Jesus Christ be filled with godly families. The church should be filled with godly fathers and mothers with a zeal, with a vision, and with a vibrant Christianity that they can pass it on to their children. Then those children will take those hot coals and pass them on to their children, and on down the line it will go.

I will never forget the visit I had at this godly man's home. He died ten years ago. His widow is still living. The church where the fam-

ily went in those days had about forty people on Sunday morning. But at his funeral, there were 750 people out of a town of 6,000 who came to his funeral, out of every walk of life. They came to that man's funeral and honored him at his death. Why? Because one man and one woman, when they were first married, set themselves to raise their children in such a way that it would be a testimony to the glory of God. Let us be the same way, setting ourselves to be a testimony to the glory of God. □

## Prayer ~



*Our Heavenly Father, oh God, we thank You for Your gracious work in one family. But now it's our turn, Lord. Raise up more families who have a clear testimony. I pray that You will raise up more Jonathan Edward families. God, I know that You want to. I pray for each family reading this book. Stir each one of our hearts, Lord. Make us hungry, and make us thirsty, Father. Give us a vision that will not be put out no matter what comes our way. Oh Father, I pray You will turn the Spirit of the living God loose upon every one of us, and may we not resist the grace of God that is turning our hearts toward our children. Father, we thank You for the sweet blessings of these testimonies, and we simply pray, do it again, Lord, do it again. Oh God, if we truly have revival, it will touch our homes, or it's no revival at all. Father, we ask these things in the name of the Lord Jesus, with thanksgiving. Amen.*



# The Spiritual War

*Doctrines to Die For:  
Reproving Sin*



**Nathan Stille**

*Volunteer Assistant Chaplain at Southeast,  
Tennessee Regional Correctional Facility*

**W**ho has the authority to set the standard and make rules for the human race? Who is the rightful owner of man? God is the owner of man; therefore, He has the right to make the rules for our lives. That right also belongs to anyone whom God, our owner, has ordained to be over the affairs of men. This includes the family (Ephesians 6), the church (Matthew 18), and the civil government (Romans 11).

*"Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price"* (read 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). God tells us in Scripture that we are His, both because He created us (see Genesis 1, 2) and because He bought us.

This idea of our ownership by God and purchase by the death of Jesus is not compatible with humanism.\* For many decades, humanism has been taught in our public schools under the guise of being secular or non-religious.

School plays and activities can be openly humanistic without anyone noticing religious intolerance; however, Christian expression is limited because it is defined as being religiously incompatible with governmental affairs. The result is a nation that has been taught a cunningly devised religion based on evolution (no ownership) and humanism (personal enjoyment).

The Kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom with spiritual citizenship. God the King has authority over each member, and in the Bible has given us direction for ordering our lives. The Bible's rules for our behavior are

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\*Humanism teaches that humans are basically good and should rely only on themselves, and that human reasoning is the key to solving the world's problems. Most humanists deny anything supernatural, rejecting the idea that humans need salvation, and that God has revealed Himself to us and requires our obedience.

## The proper way to reprove sin is by the authority of the Word of God.



valid because God, the Creator of man has given them to us. When the commands of Scripture are accepted as a guide for living, peace results, but when someone ignores God's directions, unrest results.

This brings us to our subject of reproofing sin. Reproofing sin is when one human uses the authority of the Bible to correct another human, and when it is done in a godly manner, it is very effective. You may curse about anyone you want, and it will bring you no legal trouble because there is no authority in your own words. However, if you reprove sin on the authority of the Bible, there will be great consequences because the word of God is powerful.

It might seem like a lot of work to define sin based on the authority of Scripture; but when we realize that one must have valid authority to reprove sin, the authority of Scripture becomes important.

The Bible defines God's laws, and the Holy Spirit enlightens the spirit of the believer. When

a person knows that God has forbidden an action, and does it anyway, he commits sin.

Sin is not your reaction to me, but it is a reaction to God and a transgression of His law. So, where there is no law, there is no sin, but where there is a law there is sin. God, by right of ownership, made a law that is valid for His entire creation. This unleashes His judgment on anything in His creation that will not submit to His law. Not only those who acknowledge His sovereign law, but also those who are in His dominion (by ownership) are accountable to keep His law. Therefore, God's dominion and area of rule are the basis of His authority.

If we are members of the Kingdom of God, then we are at war with the kingdom of the devil. This war requires that we fight offensively by reproofing sin. The proper way to reprove sin is by the authority of the Word of God. Jesus demonstrates this by His answers to Satan when He was tempted in the wilderness. Each answer began with "It is written" (Matthew 4).

The effect of God upon sinners tends to either harden them to sin more, or cause them to cry to God for mercy. The sinners who cry for mercy will find it and will change their ways, seeking God with their whole hearts.

Sin can no longer rule in a heart that has been truly changed to be like God. This witness of the power of Jesus Christ in a life causes pain to those who are still bound by sin. Then, when the disciple of Christ points out the sin which has bound the sinner and calls for repentance, the pain of rebellion results in persecution. Persecuting the bearer of God's message is as foolish as beating up the mail carrier for delivering undesirable mail, but that is what often happens.

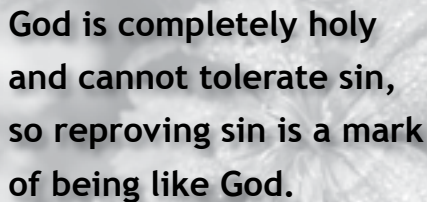
One must remember that the pain of the sinner is the result of a spiritual war caused by sin being exposed. This spiritual war between good and evil comes before the physical conflict. There is physical evidence of this war, but the cause lies below the surface.

Sin is a cruel master who forces his slaves to protect his desires. *"Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death"* (James 1:15). Sin always ends in death, but Jesus Christ frees us from sin. The man who has been freed

from sin will want to see others freed from their sin too. God is completely holy and cannot tolerate sin, so reproving sin is a mark of being like God.

When God's prophets cry out against sin, and people hear and repent, Satan becomes angry. Satan's kingdom will lose financial and social gains through the conversion of men and women, and will fight back. As attacks increase to physical harm, a true Christian will meet persecution or even death.

It is normal for warriors to be killed. *"Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long"* (Psalm 44:22). In war there are heroes who die as sure as there are heroes who live.



**God is completely holy  
and cannot tolerate sin,  
so reproving sin is a mark  
of being like God.**

It is the same in this war against the devil. We as Christians must be ready and available to die for the cause of Christ. What do soldiers in Iraq die for? Do we not have a much grander goal, that of saving people from the wrath of God and eternal death? When we understand that the destiny of man is eternal life or eternal

death, we become motivated from an eternal perspective, and we learn to value spiritual life far higher than physical. In this, our example is Jesus, Who was killed for our eternal good.

The opportunity to die for reproving sin could come to us very soon. John the Baptist was killed when he told Herod that it was sin to have his brother's wife. When Stephen reproved the Jews for killing Jesus and not keep-

ing the law, he became the first Christian martyr. If these two warriors gave their lives because they reproved sin, should we fear to follow their footsteps? □

**“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”**

*2 Timothy 4:2*

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## ***The Lord Says***

Frank Howell, Jamestown, California

When you stand before men and begin to pray,  
Are you speaking words for men to hear what you say?

The Lord says, “Talk to Me.”

If you were in a place where no one could hear you,  
Would you speak the same words as you do?

The Lord says, “Talk to Me.”

When you meet together and pray for another,  
Are the words you speak to encourage the other?

The Lord says, “Talk to Me.”

If the words you speak are not spoken to Him,  
How can you expect the battle to win?

The Lord says, “Talk to Me.”

For if with Him you begin to talk,  
Signs and wonders will follow your walk.

The Lord says, “Talk to Me.”

So when you begin to lift your voice and pray,  
Keep your focus on God in all that you say,

For the Lord says, “Talk to Me.”

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# Pilgrim's Progress

## Part 11

Welcome to John Bunyan's classic story of Christian's journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City!

*Pilgrim's Progress* was written over 300 years ago by a faithful street preacher, who was confined 12 years in a loathsome British prison for preaching without a license. As you read this allegory, remember who wrote it – a man who was free on the inside. God could use him in a great way even while he was in prison!

### What Happened So Far...

*Christian has come a long way since the day he staggered away from his hometown, Destruction, with a huge burden of sin on his back. Healed and freed of his burden, he has conquered many obstacles using his new armor and his faith in God. He has gained a new friend, Faithful, who encourages him greatly. But the journey is far from over.*

*In the last issue, we watched as Faithful's well-placed questions exposed a man named Talkative for the hypocrite he was, and Talkative, offended, left the two friends alone again. Watch now as they meet an old friend, who warns them that they are about to face their worst trial yet. Will they pass the test?*

### Evangelist's Exhortation and Prophecy

When they were almost through the wilderness, Faithful happened to look back and saw following them someone whom he recognized. "Who is that?" he asked Christian.

Christian looked. "Why, it's my good friend Evangelist!" he exclaimed.

"Indeed it is," said Faithful, "and my good friend, too, for he's the one who directed me to the Gate.

When Evangelist caught up with them, he greeted them. "Peace be with you, dearly beloved, and peace to your helpers!"

"Welcome, welcome, good Evangelist!" cried Christian. "The sight of your face reminds me of your past kindness and your tireless work for my eternal good."

"A thousand times welcome," said Faithful. "How

we poor pilgrims love your companionship!”

“Well, friends,” asked Evangelist, “how has it gone since our last meeting? What have you encountered, and how have you lived?”

So Christian and Faithful told him everything that had happened to them on their trip, and the challenges they had conquered to come this far.

Evangelist said to them, “I am glad – not that you encountered trials, but that you overcame them, and that, in spite of your many weaknesses, you have stayed on the path right up until today. I’m glad for my own sake and for yours; I have planted, and you have harvested, and the day is coming when he who plants and he who harvests will rejoice together if you continue; for in due time you will harvest if you don’t give up.

“The crown is before you, and it is incorruptible; run so that you may obtain it. Some people set out to get the crown, and after they have followed far, someone takes it from them. Hold on to what you have; let no one take your crown. (See John 4:36; Galatians 6:9; 1 Corinthians 9:24–27; Revelation 3:11).

“You are not yet out of gunshot of the devil; you have not resisted to the point of bloodshed in your fight against sin. Let the Kingdom

be always before you, and believe steadfastly in the things that are invisible. Let nothing this side of the next world settle into you, and above all, look well to your own hearts and their lusts, for they are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Set your faces like a stone, for all the power of heaven and earth is with you.”

Christian thanked Evangelist for this exhortation, and asked him to stay and give them more helpful advice for the rest of their journey. They knew that, as a prophet, he could tell them what was to happen to them, and how to resist and overcome it.

Faithful agreed with Christian’s request, so Evangelist began, “My sons, you know the gospel tells you that you will enter the Kingdom of heaven through many tribulations. You have heard that chains and suffering await you in every city. You should not expect to travel long on your pilgrimage without them, in one form or another. You have experienced some of the truth of this already, and there is more to come.

“As you see, you are nearly out of this wilderness, and you will soon see a town before you. In that town, your enemies will severely attack you, intending to kill you. Be assured that one or both of you will sign your testimony with blood; but be faithful

until death, and the King will give you a crown of life. The one who dies there, although his death will be unnatural and perhaps painful, will be better off than the one who survives. He will arrive soonest at the Celestial City, and he will avoid many miseries that will face the other man on the rest of the journey.

“When you arrive in the town and see my words coming true, remember me, prepare yourselves like men, and commit the care of your souls to God in doing well, as to a faithful Creator.”

### Vanity Fair

Then I saw in my dream that, soon after they came out of the wilderness, they saw ahead of them a town called Vanity. In this town is a fair which runs year round, the Vanity Fair, so called because the town is lighter than vanity, and everything that is sold or brought in there is vanity (Isaiah 40:17; Ecclesiastes 1:2, 14; 2:11, 17; 11:8). The fair is nothing new, but has been there since ancient times. This is how it began:

Over five thousand years ago, there were pilgrims walking to the Celestial City, as Christian and Faithful were now. Beelzebub, Apollyon, Legion, and their



Drawing by Eduardo Santoya, Jr.

***The pilgrims' path to the City led them through Vanity Fair.***

cronies noticed that the pilgrims' path to the Celestial City led through the town of Vanity, and they plotted to establish a fair in the place, where all sorts of vanity would be sold, and which would stay open year round. So all kinds of such merchandise are sold there—houses, land, trades, positions, honors, privileges, titles, nations, and kingdoms. Also available are lusts, pleasures, and luxuries of all sorts—prostitutes, mistresses, wives, husbands, children, masters, slaves, lives, blood, bodies, souls, gold, silver, pearls, precious stones, and much more.

At this fair there are always deceivers, cheats, games, plays, comedians, mimics, villains, and rascals of every kind. There is free entertainment as well—thefts, murders, adulteries, and false swearing, all blood-red.

As in other less important fairs, there are various rows and streets where particular goods are sold;

you can find the American row, the British row, the French row, the Italian row, the Spanish row, and the German row, each with its own kind of vanity for sale. However, in this fair, the products of Rome are the most popular.

As I mentioned, the path to the Celestial City passes right through this town, where the thriving fair operates; anyone wishing to reach the City without passing through this town would have to leave the world (1 Corinthians 5:10). The Prince of princes Himself, when He was here, went through this town on His way to His own country, one fine day. It was Beelzebub, the chief lord of this fair, who invited Him to buy his vanities; in fact, Beelzebub offered to make Him lord of the fair if He would merely worship Beelzebub before leaving town. The Prince was such an important person that Beelzebub took Him from street to street and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world. Beelzebub did his best to allure and cheapen the Blessed One to buy something, but He was not at all interested in the merchandise, and so He left the town without spending so much as a cent on its vanities (Matthew 4:8-10; Luke 4:5-8). So this fair is very old, well-established, and important.

Now, as I said, the pilgrims needed to go through this fair, and that is what they did, but as



Drawing by Eduardo Santoya, Jr.

***The crowd grew rowdy,  
and a riot began.***

soon as they entered the fair, the people there were disturbed, and an uproar about them rose in the town, for the following reasons:

First, the pilgrims' clothing was unlike anything sold in the fair. The people all stared at them; some said they were fools, some said they were idiots, and others suggested that they were foreigners.

Second, their speech was as strange as their clothing. Few people could even understand what they said. They naturally spoke the language of the Promised Land, but the people who ran the fair were worldly. From one end of the fair to the other, they seemed to each other like barbarians (1 Corinthians 2:7, 8).

Third (which was greatly amusing to the merchants), these pilgrims were not interested in their goods; they wouldn't even look at them. When the merchants called for them to buy, they put their fingers into their ears and shouted, "Turn away my eyes from seeing vanity!"

and looked upward to show that their business and commerce was in heaven (Psalm 119:37; Philippians 3:19, 20).

One person, after watching the men's behavior, asked mockingly, "What do you want to buy?" The men looked sternly at him, and answered, "We buy the truth" (Proverbs 23:23). At this, the people scorned them still more; some mocked them, some teased them, some insulted them, and some called others to beat them. The crowd grew rowdy, and a riot began. News quickly reached the ruler of the fair, who came and sent his trusted friends to take the two pilgrims into custody and question them.

The men in charge of the interrogation asked the pilgrims where they were from, where they were going, and what they were doing in such strange clothing. The men answered that they were pilgrims

and strangers in the world, that they were going to their homeland, the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 11:13-16), and that they had not given the townspeople or the merchants any reason to abuse them and hinder them in their journey. All they had done was to tell one salesman that they would only buy the truth.

The interrogators decided that these men were crazy, deranged, or simply troublemakers. So they whipped them, smeared dirt on them, and locked them into a cage for an exhibit to the people of the fair. They lay in the cage, the targets for everyone's teasing, malice, or revenge, while the ruler of the fair laughed at everything that happened to them.

All this time, the men in the cage were patient, not answering insults with insults, but instead blessing their enemies, giving



Drawing by Eduardo Santoya, Jr.

good words in return for bad ones, and kindness in exchange for harm. Some of the more observant and less prejudiced men of the fair began to protest and blame the wicked ones for abusing the pilgrims. Then the others flew into a rage; they said that those who protested were as bad as the men in the cage and that they were actually working with the men in the cage and should be locked up too.

The others replied that, as far as they could see, the men were quiet and sober and meant no harm. In fact, they said, there were many people doing business in the fair who belonged in the cage more than the men they were abusing. While the men in the cage continued to act wisely and calmly, the men outside argued back and forth until they began fighting, and several of them were injured.

Then the prisoners were brought in for questioning again and blamed for causing the fight that had just happened. The others beat them brutally, hung

shackles on them, and led them in chains back and forth through the fair, as a warning to anyone who might speak up for them.

Still Christian and Faithful acted wisely. They accepted the cruelty and shame so meekly and patiently that a few men from the fair took their side. This enraged the crowd still more, and they decided that the two prisoners must die. The cage and the shackles were not good enough, they said; only death was sufficient punishment for the damage they had done in misleading the men of the fair. So they were thrown back into the cage, with their feet fastened in stocks, to await further action.

Here they remembered what their faithful friend Evangelist had told them, and they gained confidence by recalling his predictions. They reminded each other that the one who suffered death would be better off; in fact, each man privately hoped to be the privileged one who would die. But they committed themselves to the wise hands of the One who rules all things, and were completely content as they waited to see what would happen to them next.

— to be continued

Illustrated by Eduardo Santoya, Jr.  
at Garza West, Beeville, TX.

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# THE UPWARD CALL

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*Answering the upward call brings us into the way of discipleship. The way of discipleship is a process that takes time. It calls us to stop, step out of hurry, sit down, meditate, and study. This book, *The Upward Call*, is not a three-hour miracle course. Much rather it is a tool to help you grow and to apply the principles of God's Word to the challenges of real everyday life.*

*In the first three lessons, we explored God's call to follow Jesus. We studied what the call is and what it means to us. In Part 2, we considered some practical issues that face anyone who is serious about following Jesus. Part 3 brings us to a study of our responsibility to work with other members of God's kingdom, passing on the gifts He has shared with us.*

*Will you rise to the challenge of this upward climb with Jesus? It calls for courage. It demands discipline. But this walk also has a destination. Up there, forever with Him, we will seize the prize, and every difficulty we faced here will seem as nothing!*

## Lesson 11 **Serving the Church**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This lesson carries the concepts in Lesson 10 forward into the church. Having a servant heart is not an end in itself. We want to understand servanthood and think servant thoughts and have a servant heart so that the church is built up, and we are bringing glory to our Lord.

Serving in the church will be meaningful to us only inasmuch as the church is meaningful. High views of the church will make service a privilege—a calling from the Lord; and high views of the church will also bring certain character qualities into focus, qualities

**“The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.”**

❖ 2 Timothy 1:16-18 ❖

such as love, faithfulness, and humility. Low views of the church are always accompanied by high levels of individuality and independence, and they turn service into a means to find position, a method of political maneuvering among office holders, or a means of self-expression.

## **PERSONAL INVENTORY**

1. What is your honest view of the church? Is your attitude one of respect? Ho-hum complacency? Cynicism? Other?

2. Do you have a heartfelt love for the brothers and sisters in your local fellowship? How has that found expression in the past week? Month? Year?

3. How do you view responsibilities given to you in the church? Have you done your best?

4. If you were to meet Jesus today, would you feel comfortable with what time, energy, and resources you have put into His church?

## **UNDERSTANDING THE SCRIPTURE**

*“By love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13).*

*“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1–3).*

## **OBSERVATION #1: Love must be the motivating force of all serving in the church.**

The Galatian churches bickered over the importance of circumcision. The church at Corinth bickered over church leaders, and they seemed bent on having spectacular gifts and using them for show in their meetings. To both of these groups Paul spoke clearly of the importance of love. Without love, doctrinal tangles will become a means of “biting and devouring” one another—even those who are doctrinally right, without love, become wrong. Without love, service becomes the means of lording. Strip love from the heart, and we strip all meaning and benefit from the service.

What is the opposite of love? Not always is it hate. The opposite of love as a motivation is self-centeredness. We had better settle it immediately and without question. No matter how talented or trained or charming a person is, if he has not love, he is of no spiritual benefit in the church of Jesus Christ.

Love is a commitment to the eternal good of others. Love for our brothers and sisters is inseparably linked to a devotion to Jesus Christ. Jesus is our Lord and Saviour. We love Him because He first loved us, and because He has shed forth his love upon us, we also love all those who have likewise been redeemed by His love. He who says he loves God but has a fixation on himself instead of a love for others is a liar. He is only fooling himself. Self-centered people cannot love God, and they cannot serve effectively in the church. Their words and their talents and their deeds are spiritually empty and barren.

### ***Study Questions***

1. Look up the context of Galatians 5:13. What happens when we do not serve in love?
2. How might one follow the flesh instead of the Spirit in service? (Consider such service as a Sunday school teacher, a school board member, a song leader, a minister, or a missionary.)
3. Is it possible to exercise a spiritual gift without love, or was Paul writing hypothetically in 1 Corinthians 13?
4. What are the positive evidences of love found in 1 Corinthians 13, and what are the negative evidences (the things charity does not do)? Make two lists and try to imagine a servant in the church having one or the other. How would it affect his service?

*“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4:10, 11).*

## **OBSERVATION #2: Serving in the church is to be according to gifts God has given by His Spirit.**

He who speaks in the church must not speak his own mind. He must speak as one whose speaking is under the control of and anointed with the unction of the Holy Spirit. He who serves in any way (whether speaking, discerning, administrating, or doing) is to be serving with eyes and ears, hands and heart tuned to the Holy Spirit. He who serves in the church by the Holy Spirit’s anointing will bear the evidence of the Holy Spirit in all he does: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit always stands opposite to the flesh. Those who serve under the anointing of the Spirit must have the flesh crucified with its affections and lusts. In the flesh we may have natural abilities – we may have eloquence, we may have a quick mind, we may have organizational ability. But if we are not graced by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we are not equipped to serve the church. The Holy Spirit may anoint and use natural abilities, but He may also anoint and use our weaknesses.

## **OBSERVATION #3: Serving the church by the anointing of the Holy Spirit will bring glory to God.**

The anointing of the Holy Spirit is effectual in ways beyond explanation. Gifted words, gifted minds, and gifted workings will accomplish the seeming impossible. Barriers are broken down, mountains are moved, stony hearts are softened, plans of the enemy are thwarted, and lives of people are transformed when the Holy Spirit has charge of His anointed servants. This work is for the good of God’s people, but it is not for their glory. To the Father and His Son goes the glory. Spirit-anointed service will humble true servants and generate praise in their assembly.

## **Study Questions**

1. What is the definition of a steward? Of what are we to be stewards?

2. What is the tie between the Greek word translated “grace” and the Greek word translated “gift,” and what insights does this give us regarding spiritual gifts?

3. How are the gifts of the Spirit related to the fruit of the Spirit? What contradictions would result from one without the other?

4. What is the relationship between natural abilities and spiritual gifts? What dangers are there in confusing the two?

5. How might God work through one’s natural weaknesses? Are there Scriptural examples of this?

*“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. . . . But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit. . . . But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. But covet earnestly the best gifts” (1 Corinthians 12:4–11, 31).*

*“Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church. . . . How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying” (1 Corinthians 14:12, 26).*

### **OBSERVATION #4: Spiritual gifts are diverse; each member has a gift, but no member has them all.**

When the Holy Spirit came upon the assembled believers, He divided out the “manifold grace” or the spiritual gifts. Each member was included in this – there is no dead wood in the church. But no one member has all the gifts. Each one does his part, even as the members of our natural body. The eye sees, the ear hears, the foot walks, the hand works, the tongue speaks. Thus every member is important, but no member is all-important. Every member contributes his part, but no member does it all.

## **OBSERVATION #5: The effect of the gifts operating by the Spirit will be a Spirit-filled body of believers.**

When the Spirit of God has His way in the church, the effect is that of a working together of the whole body. This is probably the most overlooked reality of the work of the Spirit today. Many teach the importance of being Spirit-filled. Many are interested in discerning and exercising their gifts. Many speak of what God can do through the Spirit-filled man or woman. All of this has its place. Every member is important. But the emphasis in the New Testament is not so much on what God can do through the Spirit-filled person as it is on what He can do through the Spirit-filled assembly. The Spirit of God is given to the church to make it function effectively as the body of Christ.

Spirit-filled members, then, will have an immediate sense of humility as they see themselves as only one part of the Holy Spirit's purpose and operation. What is the eye outside of the body? Or the ear or the hand? Only in union with the body is any member significant. And only with the help of the whole body is it truly useful. Even so, members of Christ's body who are given spiritual gifts function only in cooperation with the other gifted members. Spirit-filled men and women will be humbled by their need of one another, by the blessing of being part of a much larger work to which each is able to contribute only a fraction.

By this unified working together, the glory goes clearly to the Head. The building and extending of the church is not the work of any one man or woman, but the work of the Spirit, energizing and moving in each member to do the will of Christ the Head.

## **OBSERVATION #6: Spiritual gifts vary in importance; those gifts that build the church are to be esteemed.**

Spiritual gifts are given for a variety of reasons. Whatever is needed for the building of the church is available in the resources of God. Some work in the church was foundational — it was necessary at the beginning. The apostolic gifts, for example, were foundational. God gave special revelations and signs through the apostles. For years the living apostles guided the church. Much of their teaching and their revelations were recorded either by themselves or by companions close to them. We have these revelations preserved

**“For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.”**

❖ *Philemon 1:7* ❖

in what we know as the New Testament writings. These writings continue to be the rule of life and faith for the church. Furthermore, we view these as complete; the Gospel message was “once [for all] delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3), and to add to or take from this Gospel is heresy, attended with a curse (Galatians 1:6-9).

In writing to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul points out that they were wrong in all seeking one gift – they seemed to want the gift of tongues above all. Paul told them the spiritual gifts that best build the church are the ones to be esteemed and sought after. But even those must be sought only in the context of fervent love for the church (Chapter 13), not for personal interests.

### **Study Questions**

1. List Biblical purposes for spiritual gifts. Then make a list of unworthy motivations for having and exercising spiritual gifts.

2. List the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and tell how each has been useful in building the church.

3. How does the concept of the “body” help each member to have the right perspective of his spiritual gift? What is the importance of humility in the exercise of a spiritual gift?

4. In 1 Corinthians 14, tongues and prophecy are held in contrast. What gifts besides prophecy are especially necessary for the ongoing building of the church? What gifts besides tongues may have more limited or occasional use?

*“Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:3, 4).*

*“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:2, 3).*

**OBSERVATION #7: Some members in the church are set apart for special tasks and responsibilities.**

The apostles, we have noted, had a foundational work to do in the church. To that work, they gave themselves wholeheartedly and sacrificially. From that work, they would not be deterred. When need arose for giving oversight to the distribution of material things, the apostles saw that this was work for someone else. They appointed seven men. Notice that although the work of these men was the management of material things, the qualifications say nothing about things material. The men were to have an honorable reputation (literal meaning of “honest report”). They were to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And they were to be men of wisdom.

When there was a specific responsibility given to members — especially an ongoing responsibility in the brotherhood — the church leaders gave a special charge to these members. Thus, deacons, elders, and evangelists were appointed (by what methods we are not always told). The hands of church leaders were laid on them, apparently calling for spiritual gifts to enable the one(s) chosen (see 1 Timothy 4:14). These chosen ones then were charged to be faithful in the work appointed to them.

**OBSERVATION #8: Although no prescribed methods are given for appointing members to offices, the methods employed in the early church honored enduring principles.**

First, those selected needed to meet godly criteria. They were not selected at random. The qualities mentioned emphasize spiritual maturity, and to require these qualities in candidates calls for sound judgment and solid leadership in the appointing process.

Second, the selection process seems to have included the church body. The apostles did not hand pick the seven men who “served tables.” They involved the church in the selection, and the men came from the assembled believers whom the apostles had been discipling for an extended time.

Third, the work of selecting members for particular responsibilities was accompanied with prayer and fasting, a calling on the Lord for direction. Through fasting and prayer, the leaders at Antioch discerned that the Lord wanted Paul and Barnabas to set forth in

evangelism. Through fasting and prayer, Paul and Barnabas later ordained elders in the congregations they had newly established (see Acts 14:23). This is clearly not to be a bid for position by candidates. Ordination to minister in the church must never descend to a political maneuvering between rival parties, prominent families, or aspiring, outspoken members. Ministry in the church is a calling of God, and it is to be taken up with humility, love for the church, and reverence toward God.

### **OBSERVATION #9: A special call to ministry is confirmed through the church.**

Paul had been called as an apostle to the Gentiles the day he met the Lord on the road to Damascus. He began to testify of the Lord's grace immediately after his baptism, and he spoke readily to believers and unbelievers. His ordination to go as an evangelist, however, came years later (at least ten years later, perhaps as many as fourteen). Thus, while his call came to him personally from the Lord, his commission came through the church.

Those today who sense a call from the Lord of the church must trust the Lord to reveal to the church the timing. Various men in the Scriptures reflect the problems that result from running ahead of God, and others the wisdom of waiting on the Lord through years of preparation after receiving a call (consider Moses and David, for example). Paul spent two years in the desert, and then more years in Tarsus. By waiting on the Lord and honoring the direction of the church, Paul became an effective servant.

### **Study Questions**

1. List the qualifications for the men chosen in Acts 6, and tell how each qualification was necessary for the work assigned to the men.

2. Describe the function of these men as accurately as you can from the text. Is there need for such men today in the church?

3. From what work did the apostles not want to be distracted? What might have been the effects of the apostles neglecting their work?

4. What is the meaning of the phrase "ministered to the Lord" (Acts 13:2)?

5. Find the occasions in the Book of Acts where ordinations took place (see chapters 1, 6, and 13). What methods were used? What principles were honored? What different offices were in view?

*“For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? ... And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.... That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it” (1 Corinthians 12:14, 15, 21, 25, 26).*

**OBSERVATION #10: We do not follow Jesus alone; every member needs the church for strength, wisdom, and spiritual nurture.**

The other side of serving in the church is that every member needs the service of the other members. Even as the hand and the foot or any other member of our natural body could not function apart from the body, so Christians are never intended to live their lives independent of the brotherhood. Sometimes Christians develop ideas or plans that fit only themselves, ideas that set them apart and make them unwilling to be involved in the brotherhood. Independent actions and aloof attitudes sometimes may rise from unfortunate experiences — people sometimes get hurt or offended in the church. Or they may observe inconsistencies in other members or in the group as a whole.

The truth is, however, that God never intended any one member to be the church in himself (the church is an assembly, not the private enterprise of an individual). When a member has concerns for another member or for the group as a whole, he must keep in mind his limited insight as one member alone — he needs his brothers and sisters to see the issue properly, he needs the strength that comes from unity with them to stand against Satan and the world, and he needs their nurturing to grow properly. Much of the shaping and spiritual development of members comes in the interaction with brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. This interaction

will include encouragement, working together, submitting one to another, and helping one another. Without this, no member can survive spiritually.

Anytime a member has ideas or plans that set him in opposition to the church, causing him to be critical of the church and to act independently, that member has lost his sense of needing the body. Furthermore, if he does not submit to his need of his brothers and sisters, he cannot be a true servant.

### **Study Questions**

1. Look at the questions asked in 1 Corinthians 12:15-20. These are rhetorical questions (given for effect, but neither requiring nor expecting an answer), but what answer would you give to each one?

2. What would be the effect of a body member trying to act independently? By analogy, what is the effect of a church member acting independently?

3. How does the “body” concept of the church help us to understand the nurture of each member? the strength of each member?

4. How does the overall working together of a group affect each individual member? And how does the lack of cooperation of one member affect the group?

5. What were some of the schisms (factions; conflicts) in the church at Corinth? How does the teaching in 1 Corinthians 12 address underlying problems that lead to splits?

### **APPLYING THE SCRIPTURES**

1. What attitudes are important for serving others? How can we develop those attitudes? What should we do when we observe wrong attitudes in others in the church?

2. What are the distinctive earmarks of serving in the strength of the flesh instead of serving in the power of the Spirit? What should a minister do when he observes a member trying to serve in the strength of the flesh? What should a member do when he observes a minister trying to serve in the strength of the flesh?

3. What are some misconceptions about spiritual gifts? How do we give ourselves freely to the Holy Spirit, even to the point of Him doing among us the unexpected, and avoid the snares of sensationalism and emotionalism?

4. What is the difference between ordaining and commissioning? What might be the benefit of the church commissioning a member for a specific service?

5. How can the church be more effective in including each member in the work of the church? Are there areas of service we ought to explore more? What are the effects of having members who have no specific task to do? In what ways can members take the initiative to serve their brothers and sisters without being assigned to specific tasks?

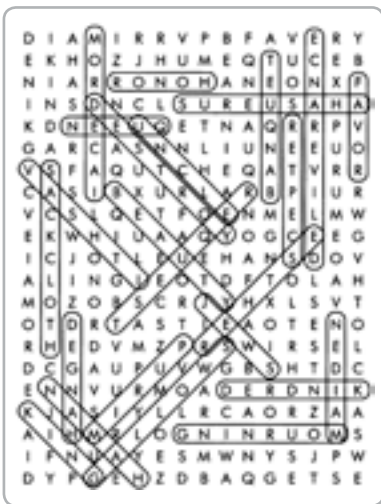
6. What are common needs in congregations today? How can members be meeting those needs? How do well-meaning people try to serve others sometimes when their service is not needed? Can you help someone who doesn't want help? Can you help someone without that person realizing it?

7. Does everyone have a spiritual gift? If so, is this a lifelong gift, and will this be the way the person serves the church no matter where he is? Or does the Spirit give gifts according to the needs

in a given time and place? Is it necessary to know exactly what spiritual gift each one has? What dangers are there in focusing on one's gift instead of focusing on the needs at hand in the church? What dangers are there in focusing on the needs at hand and ignoring whether one has the gift for meeting that need?

8. What evidences are there of independence in church members today? What happens when a member decides he doesn't need the input of the church, or when he becomes generally critical of the church? What qualities are necessary in a

member when he needs to express concerns about the church? Is it possible to emphasize the body concept of the church so much that individual members suffer? What are the effects of over-emphasis on group needs and group decisions?



Answers for puzzle in last issue.



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# Could I Do the Same for You?

Lord, if I'd have taken your place that day,  
Could I do it in all meekness?  
Or would I in my fleshly self  
Fail you in my weakness?

Could I take the stinging slaps? You did.  
And let them spit upon my face?  
Or would I turn and run away  
Because of my own disgrace?

Could I let them nail me to a cross,  
Knowing I was all alone?  
Could I take the sins of all the world  
When I had troubles of my own?

All these things are on my mind  
With no answers I can see.  
So, I want to say, dear Lord,  
"Thank you for being  
there for me!"

Dennis Cole  
Hill Correctional Center  
Galesburg, IL



“Herein is our love made perfect,  
that we may have boldness in the day  
of judgment: because as he is, so are  
we in this world.” 1 John 4:17

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