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# PULPITHELPS

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# Readers' Forum



### Dear Editor,

I am the pastor of a Roman Catholic Church in North Bergen, N. J., and also a long-time subscriber to your publication.

I have never done this before, but I feel compelled to respond to a letter that you published in your October, 2008 issue. It was titled "Unseemly Levity", written by Earle Zimmerman of Lebanon, Penn., and criticized some of the "Bulletin Bloopers" published in the August issue.

One of the reasons I subscribed to your publication was the frequent humorous stories and jokes that you published. I would often share them in our parish bulletin and my congregation loved them and looked forward to them. Many asked for extra copies so that they could send them to family and friends outside of our Parish.

"Bulletin Bloopers" made me laugh, because it was so true to life.

God Himself gave us humor and laughter as a gift to the human family. Even recent medical studies have shown that laughter extends the years of our lives.

I have noticed that for over a good number of months, *Pulpit Helps* has significantly removed your previous jokes and stories. To me, this is very sad! Please consider revising your policy and return to the "good old days"!

I realize this puts you into a 'bind'. You see, unless you include these humorous materials, I will be forced to cancel my subscription to a publication that I was once very proud of!

Sincerely,  
Rev. Anthony Robak, pastor

*Editor's Response: We share your belief that healthy humor is an enriching part of Church life, and while it is not a primary goal of our publication, we print cartoons and humorous anecdotes as we have space and content available.*

### Contact Pulpit Helps

The opinions and beliefs found in Reader's Forum are those of the writers, and do not necessarily represent those of *Pulpit Helps*. We welcome and encourage signed letters with different perspectives. Please limit your letters to 250 words or less. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

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## Taken Captive:

### Cultural Heresies and the Church—Part 2

By Justin Lonas

*Editor's Note: This is the second of 10 articles on areas in which entrenched unbiblical attitudes tend to hold sway in the Church. We are seeking to encourage believers to live up to Paul's command to "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world rather than according to Christ" (Col. 2:8).*

#### Tradition Number 2—Legalism and License

Few subjects within the Church have as much variation among believers as our interpretations of personal holiness. On the one hand, few would argue that Christians shouldn't pursue right living. By the same token, what is meant by "right living" and to what degree it is to be pursued perennially causes strife between individuals and denominations.

This is an area in which we are often given to extremes, each of which gratifies Satan more than it glorifies God or edifies His Church.

Many Christians interpret the freedom we have in Christ very liberally. While rightly recognizing that the old Law has no claim to one saved by grace, they tend to run far with their freedom and often pay similarly little heed to Christ's commands. They often have few standards for how they behave, what they choose to eat and drink, what they wear, and what traditions they follow. For those who fall into this camp, the focus of the Christian life is on the love of Christ and the community of the Church rather than the holiness of God and doctrine.

Approaching personal holiness from this angle has many potential pitfalls. As Paul so forcefully warns us in 1 Corinthians 8, our freedom can easily become sinful if we lead a weaker brother into activities that he sees as contrary to the faith. Scripture is clear that personal liberty should always take a back seat to the health of the Body.

At a deeper level, it is very easy for us to have a simple view of holiness because it requires little of us—if all we understand of the Christian life is freedom, our view is likely informed more by the world than by Christ. The sacrifices to which He calls us do not resonate with a "freewheeling" Christianity. This end of the spectrum is characterized by what Bonhoeffer called "cheap grace"—its low view of sin and righteousness can mar our witness by blurring the distinctions between the Church and the world and open us up to the temptations of the enemy to "love this present world" and desert the faith as Demas did (2 Tim. 4:10).

The opposite extreme is represented by legalism—in short, the view in which personal holiness is of paramount importance. Those in this camp go to great lengths to avoid the appearance of worldliness and take very seriously God's call to "Come out from their midst and be separate . . . and do not touch what is unclean" (2 Cor. 6:17 reiterating Isaiah 52:11). Very little in their lives is free from rules and traditions, and they often spend a great deal of time and effort to follow them strictly.

This perspective is a problem when the motivation for holiness is pride rather than the Spirit's leading—righteousness for righteousness' sake is never God's desire. The Pharisees took great care to be "holy" in every aspect of life but Christ saw right through their "righteousness" to their pride, calling them "whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness" (Matt. 23:27).

Legalism becomes grievous sin when it leads us to believe that we have within ourselves the ability to attain God's favor, but as Paul so firmly states in Gal. 2:20, "if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly." Such a lifestyle

finds its roots in the self-determination of the stoics and leaves no room for God's transforming grace. Even when well intentioned, we cannot live up to the required standard (Rom. 3:10, 23). This leads us to rate our sins, judging others and ourselves by the "severity" of our wrongs rather than by God's standard (that all sin is equally offensive to Him and destructive to our relationship). We look down on others by applying our personal convictions to their lives rather than allowing God to lead them.

A strong devotion to holiness does not have to be wrapped up in legalism, however. Just as we dishonor God in pursuing righteousness on our own, we honor Him highly when this pursuit is borne out of love for Him and gratitude for His ultimate sacrifice. Jesus' statement, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments," sets personal holiness as an outcome rather than a condition of belief. His concern is not with individual sins but with sin (that is, whether we pursue Him or pursue ourselves).

As with so many issues, our craving for "black and white" certainty in this area leads us astray from Christ's call. Does the Lord want us to live in righteousness? Absolutely. Did He fulfill the law and set us free? Completely. But His command was neither "keep the Law" nor "be free"—He confronts us with something much simpler and yet so difficult that we can't hope to live up to it outside of the Spirit's enabling: "Follow Me."

The extremes of legalism and license represent the world's ideas of how to live life, not God's. When we follow Him, however, we confound those who seek to dismiss Christians as either prudes or hypocrites. Spirit-led holiness motivated by love is perhaps the most distinctive marker of the faith; it is a picture to a dying world of the hope of forgiveness. Such an attitude is vital if we are to have the impact we are designed for.

**Spirit-led holiness motivated by love is perhaps the most distinctive marker of the faith.**





## Jesus Heals a Mute Man

(Matthew 9:32–34)

*Dr. Zodhiates continues his exegesis of the Gospel of Matthew.*

**[Verse 32]** Another “behold” (*idoú* [2400], the imperative of *eídon* [1492], the aorist of *horáo* [3708], to perceive, calling attention to the extraordinary; see vv. 2, 3, 10, 18, 20, also Matt. 3:16) draws

our attention to a unique miracle that caused multitudes to stand in awe and the Pharisees to drum up fresh criticisms.

Someone brought a dumb man “*possessed with a devil*” (from *daimonízomai* [1139]) to Jesus. In the Greek, the word translated “dumb” is *kōphós* (2974), which indicates that the man was both deaf and dumb; he could neither hear nor speak. In Matthew 12:22 we find a demoniac who was both blind and dumb. These are two of the four instances (see also Mark 9:17–27; Luke 11:14) in Israel’s long scriptural history where we read of dumbness being attributed to demon possession. We do find in Mark 7:32–37 a deaf man who spoke with difficulty (from *mogilátos* [3424]), but we are not told that the cause was demons.

**[33]** The uniqueness of this situation did not daunt Jesus. His presence alone was powerful enough to expel demons, and Matthew skips over the exorcist monologue found in the other synoptics:

“*And the demon (daimónion* [1140], the diminutive “little demon,” implying that there may be “big” demons; certainly, there are “worse” according to Matt. 12:45), having been cast out (from *ekbállō* [1544], to cast out), the deaf person spoke (from *laléo* [2980], to speak, emphasizing the breaking of silence more than the content of speech). (a.t. See the author’s exegetical works on 1 Cor. 12–14.)

In this verse, we have the reaction of the “multitude” (from *óchlos* [3793], a crowd). Based on what they saw, “they were saying” (from *légō* [3004], to speak logically) that such a thing had never occurred in the entirety of Israel’s history.

**Since they believed that demons existed and that Jesus was an impostor, they assumed that He derived His authority from another source.**

**[34]** Secondly, we have the reaction of the Pharisees who opposed Jesus. They, too, saw what had happened. Being educated Jews, they also knew their history. But while they were intelligent, they were also hypocrites (Matt. 23:13–15, 23, 25, 27, 29) who needed an alternative explanation for Jesus’ extraordinary authority. They could not deny the

uniqueness of what He had done, but to accept Jesus as God incarnate (Emmanuel) was out of the question.

So, since they believed that demons existed and that Jesus was an impostor, they assumed that He derived His authority from another source, namely the “prince (*árchōn* [758], chief, originator, ruler) of the devils (demons).

But the Pharisees did not see the trap they had set for themselves. Why would the chief of demons cast demons out of anyone? In the other Gospels, Jesus pointed out this incongruence, the self-defeating nature of such a practice, by arguing that such a kingdom would be an anti-kingdom (see Mark 3:24–30; Luke 11:18–22).



Dr. Zodhiates is president emeritus of AMG International and publisher emeritus of *Pulpit Helps*.

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# The Mystery of the Manger

By Justin Lonas

**E**ACH YEAR AT CHRISTMAS, WE RETURN TO THE MANGER. THE SIMPLE IMAGE OF THE MESSIAH SURROUNDED BY LIVESTOCK AND SHEPHERDS IS FOR MANY AN ARCHETYPE OF THE INCARNATION AND A RECURRING THEME IN OUR HYMNS AND TRADITIONS.

We are right to put Christ's infancy at the forefront of our celebration because God chose to put it at the forefront of the symbolism surrounding His coming. As if the Creator of the universe taking human form wasn't mind-blowing enough, He chose to arrive on the scene naked and helpless, completely dependent upon his parents for nourishment and protection. In divine paradox, He was both Father and child to them.

In spite of His authority and ability to do so, Christ did not depart from these humble beginnings. Isaiah 53:2 says *"For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor*

**In spite of His authority and ability to do so, Christ did not depart from these humble beginnings.**

*appearance that we should be attracted to Him."* He never aspired to "greatness" in the human sense, content to quietly work the will of the Father and withdrawing from the praise of the masses. God-become-man demonstrated His identity precisely by not trumpeting it (Phil. 2:6); those who met Him at the manger were

awed at the very ordinariness of His human form.

Equally significant is the location of His birth. While there is confusion as to the exact placement of

the manger (whether in a stable, on the lower floor of a house, or in a cave), it is a place not befitting human residence, let alone God's. But it was there in a dishonorable, unsanitary space that Christ entered His world. British author and philosopher G.K. Chesterton capitalizes on this in *The Everlasting Man*. Seizing on the image of the cave, he writes, "It was here that a homeless couple had crept underground with the cattle when the doors . . . had been shut in their faces; and it was here beneath the very feet of the passersby, in a cellar under the floor of the world, that Jesus Christ was born." Indeed, His birth as an outcast foreshadowed the life of homelessness that He and his disciples led (Matthew 8:20, Luke 9:58).

The lowly birth of Christ, as Chesterton goes on to state, is the central event of all history, the end of mythology's dreams and philosophy's search, and the trumpet call of victory over Satan. He says, "It is nothing less than the loud assertion that this mysterious maker of the world has visited this world in person. It declares that really . . . right in the middle of historic times, there did walk into this world this original invisible being about whom the thinkers make theories and the mythologists hand down myths: the Man Who Made the World." The manger turns the world on its ear.

God's entry into the world serves a larger purpose than simply flying in the face of

Justin Lonas is Editor-in-Chief of *Pulpit Helps* magazine.

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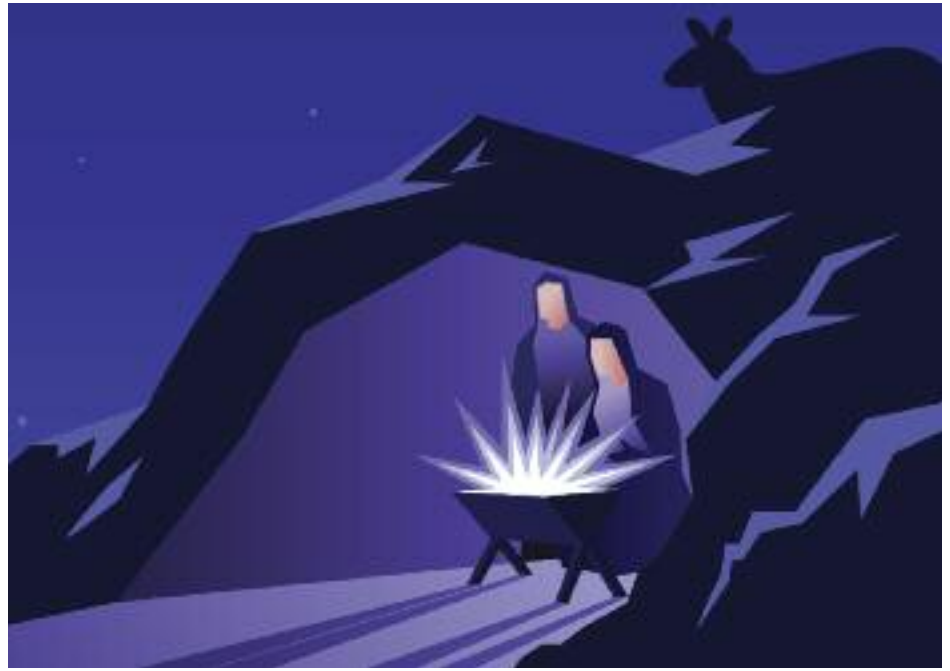
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human conventions, however. His arrival was the ultimate demonstration both of His authority over creation (in being born of a virgin) and His love and concern for man. Because He “showed up” in the person of Christ, His character has been demonstrated for all to see. He cannot be ignorant of poverty, for He was poor. He has ultimate sympathy for the suffering because He was tortured and gave His life. No man can accuse Him of being distant or uncaring because He is “God with us”. By healing the sick and rebuking the proud, He reminds us that He has entered the world to “set it to rights”; He will bring His justice.

He came as a man to redeem the world. He had to take part in birth and death to defeat the power of Satan over men (Heb. 2:14). As Athanasius of Alexandria put it, He came “to renew men according to His image.” Because of the manger, birth and life are honored with the presence of the King. In lowering Himself, he gave significance to the daily tasks and struggles of life. He came to set a standard by which we should also live.

This then is the mystery of the Incarnation—through all these things, He



commands us to follow Him. From the manger, he bids us to follow into a life of lowliness, wandering, sacrifice, and submission to the Father. The irony of God’s destruction of earth’s status quo is that it simultaneously frees us from slavery under

the law and calls us to a higher road. The very Word of God, by whom all things were made and are held together, has shown us the way, and we are to be imitators of Him. Such is the gift of Christmas.



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# Transforming Race—Part 2

By Michael Reneau

*In this month's installment, we look at ministry and missions in America's different Christian communities.*

Reggie Poindexter and Tim Schoap are two pastors whose congregations have been changed through intentional cross-cultural cooperation. Poindexter, an African American, pastors Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, while Schoap, who is white, co-pastors Signal Mountain Bible Church (both are in the Chattanooga, Tenn. area). While Greater Friendship's congregation is a predominantly African American and Signal Mountain Bible's is mostly white, the two churches have developed a close, intentional and strategic partnership in several ministries, including Sunday School programs, Vacation Bible Schools and joint mission trips to Haiti through AMG International.

Whereas many American churches struggle to partner with other churches at all, let alone with churches comprised of a different race, the congregations at Greater Friendship and Signal Mountain Bible

make it a point to expose themselves to a congregation of a different race.

"You cannot have a church and not want to be inclusive," Poindexter said. "If it's the Church—built on Christ—the racial concerns are not there."

Schoap agreed that while the Chattanooga area has (at best) a checkered past on race relations, the congregation at Greater Friendship continues to grow closer to Signal Mountain Bible despite the area's history.

Much of the two churches focus together has been on international missions, particularly in Haiti. Poindexter went last year with a team from Signal Mountain Bible to Haiti. He said that experience led to Greater Friendship participating in its first church missions trip soon after. Out of the 10 who were part of Greater Friendship's trip to Haiti this summer, seven had never been on the mission field before, he said.

Poindexter continues to pray for members of his church to be more mission-minded.

"God has led me to be more focused on mission in our church," Poindexter said. "We've done a lot to raise awareness about missions."

Poindexter came to Greater Friendship about six years ago and has seen tremendous growth in the way of a missions vision.

"I always use the analogy of the growth of a child," Poindexter said. "We're probably like a 6-year-old. We're out of kindergarten. We're trying to move people from the inside to the outside."

An instrumental part of Poindexter's vision for missions was Jim Sutherland.

Sutherland has devoted much of his adult life to reconciling the races in white and African American churches, particularly in the area of missions, and is now the director of Reconciliation Ministries Network, Inc. (RMNi). Sutherland, who is white, was once the pastor of a predominantly African American church and has involved himself in inner city ministries for years. His job at RMNi is to plant seeds in African American churches to become missions-minded congregations.

"Jim lit the fire for missions in me," Poindexter said.

White churches and African American churches in America have had different focuses for decades, according to Sutherland. Whereas many white churches have been involved in global missions and sending and supporting missionaries for centuries, the African American church has largely focused on ministering to African Americans and its own congregations. Because of social injustices and racism, Sutherland said, many African American churches have been inwardly focused and not involved in global missions.

RMNi and Sutherland's goal is to light other fires amongst African American churches, similar to what happened with Poindexter, and help propel them into global missions. RMNi tries to have representatives in individual African American churches and sets up short-term missions opportunities and support ministries for African American congregations.

One of the bigger needs in African American churches' push for missions is the financial support, which is why partnering with congregations with more

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Michael Reneau is a senior journalism major at Bryan College in Dayton, Tenn., and worked as a summer intern for *Pulpit Helps*.

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Pastor Reggie Poindexter (far right) and Bertha Lloyd (third from right) from Greater Friendship MBC with a team from Signal Mountain Bible Church and Pastor Rodné Romeus of Grand Bassin, Haiti (third from left).

resources and organizations like RMNi is helpful, according to Poindexter. After the Civil War and emancipation, Poindexter added, the African American church had a vision for missions but lost the ability to support that vision financially due to events in American history. Instead of global missions, then, Poindexter said the vision of the African American church became more of a “social mission.”

“Our mission became our own people,” he said.

These trends have monopolized resources, Sutherland said. Since there were no models or teaching in African American churches for how to do missions, if a member wanted to do missions work he became a pastor. This led to a multiplication of black churches, which widely dispersed the resources of the Christian community.

Now African American churches are able to support missions work, Poindexter said, but working with other congregations is still a necessary component.

Speaking about his own church in inner-city Chattanooga, Poindexter said more support is needed.

“If we’re going to truly be successful, we’re going to need more support. I don’t think our church has the finances,” he added.

When it comes down to the actual ministry and missions work, Poindexter said there are subtle differences between white churches and black churches, mostly due to differing congregational cultures and personalities. But the purpose is the same for both groups.

“The ministries are the same, but they’re done differently because of the culture. But the purpose has to be the same if we’re the Church,” he said. “The true purpose is to win souls for Christ, meet needs, and share the Gospel.”

Sutherland has seen differences in how white Christians and African American Christians work on the mission field, particularly in Africa. He said bonds form instantly between African Americans and Africans, which offers opportunities for more “connective” ministries.

Despite the push for international missions, Poindexter said his church also sees the Chattanooga area as part of “global missions,” so his congregation maintains its ministries in the community along with the international push.

“We’re looking for volunteerism—to spread the Gospel through a sense of service,” Poindexter said.

Poindexter, Schoap, and Sutherland are all optimistic about the future of African American churches and missions ministries. Poindexter said because of ministries like RMNi and partnerships with other churches, more young black pastors are gaining exposure to missions and coming to the pulpit with a broader vision, which spreads to entire congregations.

“They want to look at the Church beyond the walls of the church,” he said. “You have to get them on the [mission] field. Once you accomplish that, you’ll see a real explosion in missions.”

All this pushes younger African American church members into missions, and as these members become adults, Poindexter said, missions work will explode within African American churches. But, the push needs to happen now, he added.

“It has to start now. The full fruit will be with younger people,” he said.

Sutherland agreed completely.


“There are little brushfires all around the country. It’s coming,” he said about African Americans going into missions. “I’m very optimistic about the future; it’s the present that’s so difficult.”

As RMNi and similar ministries continue to mobilize African American churches in missions, cross-cultural and interracial work like that between Greater Friendship and Signal Mountain Bible seems to be crucial. Indeed, such partnership is key to showing a skeptical world that the blood of Christ connects believers from every tribe and tongue in ways that aren’t explainable in human terms.

“We believe there’s such a strong cross-cultural commandment,” Schoap said. “Every church needs cross-cultural involvement.” Poindexter agreed, saying that the key for his church was to not put much of an emphasis on racial divides; they simply try to work across cultural divides.

“We don’t think of ourselves as an African American church; we just happen to all be African American,” he said. “If you’re open to [cross-cultural ministry], it’ll happen on its own.”





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## Today's Iranian Revolution:

### How the Mullahs Are Leading the Nation to Jesus—Part 1

*Editor's Note: Both parts of this article appeared in the Sept-Oct. edition of Mission Frontiers, but space constraints led us to run it in two parts. The author has written under a pseudonym to protect his work in Iran.*

**T**he only way were going to stop them is to kill them." This seems to be the present consensus of Iran's national cabinet concerning the growing Christ-ward movement spreading throughout the nation. Legislation is now being prepared that would make it a capital offense to leave Islam. These strict measures have come about to stem the tide of a growing dissatisfaction with Islam among Persian young people resulting from the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Now today, it seems Iran is on the verge of yet another revolution, ironically caused by the first and with Jesus at the center. The story of how this has come about is perhaps one of the most intriguing examples of God's sovereignty at work to accomplish his unchanging purposes among the nations.

#### A Little Background

In the early 1960s, just two decades before Iran would become completely closed to mission work, a team of American missionaries began a work among the Persian Armenian community in Tehran. Most of these Armenians were the descendants of a forced exile to Iran in 1604 under the Shah Abbas. Over the centuries they developed a unique culture, dialect,

and appearance (don't ask) as they assimilated with their host nation. The missionaries recognized the potential for these Persian Armenians to serve as a "bridge-people" between Islam and Christianity, and so began work among them with this in mind.

This Spirit-led hunch turned out to be correct. One of the first five disciples of the American missionary team was a man named Haik Hovsepian. In the late 1960s he received a call from God to go as a missionary to the northern province of Mazandaran with the specific purpose of starting a work among Muslims. Though he was officially commissioned by the church in Tehran for this purpose, his burden for Muslims was one that few Persian Armenians shared or understood at that time. Most believed he was wasting his time. However, by 1976, after about eight years of laboring, five house churches had been established with around 20 Muslim background believers. Though only a small beginning, somehow Haik had a sense that God was building a foundation for a much greater work. Having a gift for music, one of the most important investments he made in the future Persian Church was his translation and authorship of over 150 worship songs into Farsi. According to those who knew him, he envisioned the day such songs would be sung by millions of believers.

By 1981, the Persian church in Mazandaran had grown to around 60 members, and many leaders were emerging. In that year, Haik was asked to return to Tehran to become the leader of the Council of Protestant Ministers (a group that is roughly the equivalent of the National Association of Evangelicals in the United

States). His appointment to this post was very timely for the church in Iran. Just two years after the Iranian government was seized by the Ayatollah Khomeini, (the influential Muslim cleric with a vision for Islamicizing the country), the emerging church in Iran was beginning to feel the pressure of an increasingly hostile government.

**Slowly but surely, a kind of solidarity was beginning to build between the persecuted Armenian believers and the "persecuted" youth of Iran.**

However, at the same time, the church in Iran was not the only group to chafe under the new regime. The Persian people themselves were beginning to react in a negative way to the harsh restrictions imposed by the implementation of Islamic law. A silent rebellion among young people (70% of Iran is under the age of 30) was beginning

to build momentum. Among this age group, if the government opposed something, they were for it. When the government burned American flags, they wrapped themselves in it. Most importantly, when the government began confiscating Bibles, they couldn't wait to get hold of one.

Slowly but surely, a kind of solidarity was beginning to build between the persecuted Armenian believers and the "persecuted" youth of Iran. In defiance of the law, Haik began to encourage the Armenian Evangelical churches to open their doors to Persians and to begin using the Farsi language in their services. As new Persian believers began pouring into the churches, the government issued an ultimatum demanding that all such believers be reported. In response, Haik courageously rallied the churches to send a unified response back to the government: We will never submit to such demands.

#### Breakthrough

By the late 1980s, the number of Persian Muslim background believers had grown

Continued

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into many thousands. Then in the 1990s, two things converged to turn this momentum into one of the greatest watershed events in the history of Persian Christianity. The first was a wave of government-organized crackdowns and assassinations of Christian leaders (including Haik Hovsepian in 1994, whose campaign to stop the execution of a Persian convert received both national and international attention). The result of this was that hundreds of Persian lay leaders rose up to take the place of these martyrs and a nation-wide house-church movement was born. Indeed, the boldness of Haik and the other martyrs, both Armenian and Persian, had a profound effect on the Evangelical church, but most

especially upon the Persian believers themselves. At Haik's funeral, hundreds of Persian MBBs turned out to honor him despite the presence of government agents documenting all who were present.

All of this was God's foundation-building for what would come next. In the year 2000, Christian satellite broadcasting began beaming the gospel to almost every home in Iran. This was made possible by the fact that millions of satellite dishes had been illegally smuggled into Iran by corrupt members of the same government that had outlawed them. The Christian satellite programs became a lifeline for the church in Iran. Much more, when the Iranian people learned that the government was trying to

scramble the broadcasts, they became an overnight sensation. Recent nationwide surveys reveal that over 70% of the population is watching Christian satellite programs. These same surveys indicate that at least one million have already become believers, and many millions more are on the verge.

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### HIDDEN WISDOM

By Mark Oshman

Solve the acrostic by using the clues listed below to guess the words and by transferring the letter above each number to its appropriate place in the diagram. The result will be a Scripture verse of admonition, comfort, instruction, or promise. When read vertically, the initial letters of the answers will contain the name of the book from which the verse was taken. All quotations are from the KJV.

1G	2D	3A	4B		5N	6K	7M	8H	9J		10C	11B	12F		13L	14H	15E
16M	17C	18G			19A	20K	21F		22E	23H	24I	25B		26F	27C	28L	
29A	30H	31M	32O	33J	34I		35G	36F	37C	38I	39H	40K	41M		42D	43G	44A
	45L	46F	47K	48M	49I	50C	51N	52J		53D	54O			55K	56E	57A	
58N	59M	60I	61B	62L	63O			64K	65E	66N		67H	68M	69O	70A		
71B	72N	73G	74E	75I		76F	77H	78L	79K		80B	81J	82M		83N	84F	85C
86A	87K	88G	89D	90H	91I		92L	93A			94C	95M	96F	97K	98H	99I	100O
	101J				102A	103E			104D	105K	106N			107G	108C	109L	110O

### CLUES

A. Jesus spoke here while in Nazareth

93 57 19 102 29 3 86 70 44

B. Fr. novelist (1871-1922)

61 25 11 4 71 80

C. "I would not have you to be \_\_\_\_\_, brethren"

85 17 10 108 50 37 27 94

D. A molar, for example

104 53 89 42 2

E. Abase

56 65 103 22 74 15

F. Listlessness

76 84 12 46 26 21 36 96

G. Jezebel's father

18 1 43 88 35 73 107

H. Offer oneself for service

14 77 8 90 39 67 23 98 30

I. A Molech-worshiper, for example

38 49 60 99 24 75 34 91

J. Addams' family cohort

9 81 101 52 33

K. David's rival, for several years

47 40 105 64 20 97 6 79 55 87

L. Christ was crucified here

45 92 62 78 13 109 28

M. Dangerous (colloq.)

31 16 95 59 7 48 41 68 82

N. The first Christian martyr

5 66 106 58 72 51 83

O. Tipped one's hat in greeting

32 69 100 54 63 110

Answers  
on page  
36

# A Woodcutter For the Poor

Song: What a Friend We Have in Jesus



*“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves” (Rom. 15:1-7).*

It is said that on the streets of Lake Rice and Port Hope, Ontario in Canada, a man could be seen walking along carrying a saw and a sawhorse. It is reported that one day a gentleman from across the street who observed him remarked to one nearby, “That looks like a sober man, I think I’ll hire him to cut wood for me.” The response came back, “that’s Joseph Scriven. He wouldn’t cut wood for you because you can afford to hire him. He only cuts wood for those who don’t have money enough to pay.” That seemed to be the philosophy and the spiritual belief of Scriven, a devoted member of the Plymouth Brethren Church. He had a sincere desire to help those who seemed helpless.

**He wouldn’t cut wood for you because you can afford to hire him.**

Joseph was born on September 10, 1819, in Ireland. His parents had financial means enough to afford a wonderful educational opportunity for their son, who was enrolled in Trinity College in Dublin. His college training was interrupted when he decided to join the army. His military career was short-lived due to health problems, so he returned to college and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree.

In this young man, Ireland had the prospect of a great citizen with high ideals and great aspirations. He met and fell in love with a young lady who was eager to spend her life with him, but on the day before their wedding she was involved in a horrible accident at a lake in which she was drowned. Young Scriven never overcame the shock. Although a college graduate, and ready to embark on a promising

career, he began to wander to try to forget his sorrow. At the age of twenty-five his travels took him to an area near Port Hope, Canada, in 1844, where he labored among the poor until his death at age sixty-six.

The doctrines and belief of the Plymouth Brethren church, led him to do menial tasks for poor widows and sick people. He often served for no wages, and was regarded by the people of the community as a kind man. He often shared his clothes with those less fortunate than himself, and did fix-up chores for the poor. Although he was highly regarded by the people of the community, he was considered to be eccentric. Yet, he fell in love again and planned to marry a wonderful young Canadian woman. Again, tragedy reared its ugly head. She died before they could wed, after contracting pneumonia.

Little did the town’s people know that Scriven had any poetic gifts until a short time before his death. Joseph became ill and a friend visiting with him discovered a poem nearby that he had written to his mother in a time of sorrow, not intending that anyone else should see it. He had titled it “Pray Without Ceasing.” The friend asked Scriven who had written the poem. It is reported that he answered, “The Lord and I did it between us.” He was not able, financially, to go to see his mother, but he thought the poem would, perhaps, bring some comfort to her in her time of need.

No one knows for sure how the poem came to the attention of those who published it in a book entitled, “Hymns and Other Verses.” Musician Charles Converse set the poem to music and titled the song, “What a Friend We Have In Jesus.” It has

since become what I consider one of the greatest hymns in the English language. It is one of the first songs that many missionaries teach their converts. In polls taken in the United States to determine favorite hymns, “What a Friend We Have In Jesus” is always near the top.

Another accident befell Scriven on an October day in 1886, and his body was pulled from Rice Lake near Bawdly, Ontario. In his memory the people in the nearby town of Port Hope erected a monument for a poor, unselfish, working man who gave most of his life and energy to help those who couldn’t repay him. On the monument are inscribed these words from Scriven’s famous song: “In His arms He’ll take and shield thee. Thou wilt find a solace there.”

*What a friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer!  
Oh, what peace we often forfeit,  
Oh, what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry  
Everything to God in prayer.*

One of the overriding attitudes of Christianity can be wrapped up in one word: OTHERS. We come back to it again and again. Anything done for Christ must be done for others. Our true worship of God always leads us to those for whom Christ died, wanting to share with them His glorious message of hope and salvation.

## Reflection:

Prayer, as presented in this song, is the most powerful force available to Christians everywhere. Any person who neglects the opportunity to commune with God and to draw on His resources is limiting his happiness and prospects of success for the Savior.



Lindsay Terry has been a song historian for more than 40 years, being published in a number of publications, including *Pulpit Helps*. He has also written some 34 books and church training manuals.





# Addiction and the Counselor

**A**DDICTION TO DRUGS AND ALCOHOL CONTINUES TO BE A HUGE PROBLEM IN OUR WORLD. THE DRUG OF CHOICE FOR MOST ADDICTS IS STILL ALCOHOL, BUT MOST ADDICTS TODAY USE MULTIPLE DRUGS.

In the Christian community, how can we effectively help addicts?

I have worked with a residential alcohol and drug addiction ministry for over 10 years. The success rate has been estimated to be over 60% which is rather phenomenal. I have also counseled with addicts individually or in marriage counseling situations. One of the most rapidly growing addictions, however, is not related to a drug at all—pornography.

With the convenience of the internet, pornography addiction has reached epidemic proportions. Professing Christians are becoming addicted to this type of behavior at an embarrassingly high rate. Gambling is another addiction that continues to snare many people including professing Christians. There are many other addictions, some more destructive and others less so, but all corruptive and hurtful.

Individual counseling for addictions is not nearly as effective as group type settings. Many churches have started various types of recovery groups. Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and Narcotics Anonymous meetings continue to be a large avenue of help for many. The key to helping an addict is to first enroll the person in a residential program. Why? That is the best first step for success.

Dr. Stephen Arterburn has stated, "After 30 years in the addiction field, I have come to believe in a recovery model that integrates physical, emotional and spiritual treatment, best delivered at some point in an intensive inpatient or residential program."

This type of treatment works best because it puts the addict in a new environment and with other people who are

also recovering from an addiction. Accountability is high in programs that work. Alcoholics and drug addicts are typically accomplished at the art of deceit. I have had hundreds of addicts tell me that they are some of the best liars in the world! That type of deceit can pervade an individual counseling situation, but it loses most of its power in a group setting with other addicts. As the old saying goes, "You can't con a con artist."

After a period of time in a residential center (usually 8 weeks or so), the addict has had time for his or her mind to clear and to remain sober for a while. Hopefully, they have learned some things about themselves and the importance of faith in God and obedience to His Word. They then "graduate" from the program and go back into the world they recently left. This is when the real test begins. This is also when they must be sure they have a sponsor, mentor, or accountability partner. They need to attend weekly group meetings to help in their ongoing sobriety.

Once the person has broken the addictive habit, they face the challenge of knowing themselves and the reasons behind their addictive behavior in the first place. In most cases, some type of pain is behind the move into addiction. It is important that after the addict has come through a good Christian residential program, they follow-up with individual counseling and discipleship. Individual counseling will work much better after the time in a residential program. I believe the counselor must be part of a team working with the

family of the addict and the sponsor or mentor as well.

I do not believe there is an addictive gene. Some people may be more prone to addictive behavior than others but those are personality issues. Learning to identify, accept and even appreciate the person they are in Christ is a large challenge in the follow-up process. Learning to be the

**The key to helping an addict is to first enroll the person in a residential program.**

person God has created and redeemed them to be is the positive hope for those in recovery. Addicts can be helped. God works to convict, free, and

empower them through His Spirit and by His Word. I have seen this work hundreds of times. Some fail, but those who truly deal with sin and self honestly will find hope.

In John 8:34, Jesus said, "Everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." Is addiction sin? Yes. It is sinful thinking and behavior that possesses a person. It often creates chemical dependencies. But the cycle can be broken and the person can be set free. In John 8:32 Jesus said, "You will know the truth and the truth will make you free." Sin binds in many different ways. Truth sets a person free through one way—Jesus Christ Himself. The foundation for personal change is Christ and His truth. He uses many different means, but He is the only source and power for lasting change.



James Rudy Gray is certified as a professional counselor by the National Board for Certified Counselors, and is a member of the American Association of Christian Counselors. He pastors Utica Baptist Church in Seneca, S.C.

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## Who Is This Child? (A Christmas Sermon)

Intro: At Christmas, the God of the universe entered His Creation. Without changing who He is, He showed us His love as never before. In the Christ child dwelt all the fullness of the Father.

- I. He is The Word of God (John 1:1-18).
    - A. Eternal (vv. 1-2).
    - B. Powerful (vv. 3-5).
    - C. Present (v. 14).
  - II. He is the King
    - A. He has come
      - 1. "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?" (Matt. 2:2)
      - 2. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 3:2)
    - B. He is present always (Matt. 28:20).
    - C. He will come again (Matt. 24:29-31).
  - III. He is the Suffering Servant
    - A. He is misunderstood (Is. 53:2-4).
    - B. He is punished on our behalf (Is. 53:4-6).
  - IV. He is the Lamb of God
    - A. Innocent and Willing (Is. 53:7-9).
    - B. Atoning (John 1:29).
    - C. Worthy and Reigning (Rev. 5:11-14).
- Conclusion: The Child in the manger is none other than Creator, Redeemer, and Ruler of all things. Worship Him in spirit and truth this Christmas.

Justin Lonas

## 7 Ways Trouble May Minister to You

Romans 8:28

Intro.: This verse is a Rainbow of Hope overarching our life as Christians.

- I. Troubles May Bring a Correcting Ministry:
  - A. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth" (Heb. 12:6).
  - B. "Afterward [chastening] yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:11).
  - C. David: "Before I was afflicted I went astray" (Ps. 119:670).
  - D. So we can thank God for troubles.
- II. Troubles May Bring a Deepening Dependency:
  - A. Paul's thorn (2 Cor. 12:7-10).
  - B. When we sail through life without difficulties, we don't depend on God.
  - C. Blessings can become curses, when we become self-sufficient.

- D. So we can thank God for troubles.
- III. Troubles May Bring a Confirming Testimony:
  - A. Troubles come to us so we can comfort others (Cor. 1:3-4).
  - B. Paul's prison experience furthered the gospel (Phil. 1:12).
  - C. If troubles give us a stronger testimony, we can thank God.
- IV. Troubles May Bring Increasing Maturity:
  - A. God's plan for us is to be matured in the likeness of Christ (Rom. 8:29).
  - B. We learn patience [endurance] through afflictions (James. 1:4).
  - C. So we can thank God for maturity.
- V. Troubles May Bring Excelling Glory:
  - A. Trials bring the Spirit of glory upon us (1 Pet. 4:12-14).
  - B. Examples are Stephen on trial (Acts 6:15); and 3 Hebrew youths in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:16-27).
  - C. So we can thank God for troubles.
- VI. Troubles May Bring Baffling Mystery:
  - A. God's ways are high above our ways (Isa. 55:8-9; Deut. 29:29).
  - B. Warren Wiersbe notes that we live by promises, not explanations.
  - C. So we can thank God for our unknowns also.
- VII. Troubles WILL Bring Eternal Victory:
  - A. "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).
  - B. We will understand that there IS victory in Jesus!
  - C. So, can we not give thanks always, in all things?

Adrian Rogers

From "Giving Thanks in Tough Times,"  
via Love Worth Finding

## The People's Reaction to the Ministry of Christ

Luke 4:28-37

- I. The Reaction in the Synagogue in Nazareth (vv. 28-30)—The Nazarenes drove Jesus out of the synagogue
  - A. The expression of rage (v. 28)
  - B. The escapade of destruction (v. 29)
  - C. The escape of Jesus (v. 30)
- II. The Reaction in the Synagogue in

- Capernaum (vv. 31-37)—The Nazarene cast a demon out of the synagogue
    - A. They were filled with amazement (vv. 31-32)
    - B. They were filled with wonder (v. 36)
    - C. The district was filled with news v. (37)
- Bill Taylor

## The Wilderness—Part 2 of 3 Bread of Heaven

*"And he humbled thee. And suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, buy by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live" (Deut 8:3 [Deut 8:1-6]).*

Intro: Perhaps you would think that a wilderness experience only comes to the rebel-rouser or the trouble-maker; but not so. The wilderness experience comes to those whom God sees need a change, a challenge, or perhaps a push in the right direction. A wilderness experience can be a 40-year experience or a growth spurt that brings us closer to God quickly.

- I. What "Wilderness" Means:
    - A. Desert: a dry barren wasteland
    - B. Forest: a large thick grove of trees
    - C. Pasture: Uninhabited place for herding
    - D. Spiritual: place of spiritual renewal
  - II. What the Wilderness Does:
    - A. It brings us in direct contact with God (Ex. 16)
    - B. It gets us out of the way (James 4:10)
    - C. It brings spiritual growth (Eph. 3:17-19)
    - D. I become everything through Jesus Christ (Phil. 4:13)
  - III. What the Wilderness Reveals
    - A. Jesus is the bread of life (John 6:35-40)
    - B. The Bread of Life will sustain you (John 6:47-51)
    - C. We must put our trust in the Lord (Isaiah. 40:31)
    - D. All who are hungry may come (Isa. 55:1, 2)
- Conclusion: You cannot go so far into the wilderness that God cannot find you. But the wilderness is a big place and it might be a journey that you may not want to take.

Continued

It is not for you to decide whether you will go, but you will never go alone.

Douglas Reiche  
First Assembly of God  
Sparta, IL

## The Greatest Thing in the World

Ephesians 1:7

Intro.: There is nothing in the world greater than having our sins forgiven. What if we gained the whole world and then lost our own souls (Matt. 16:26)?

### I. Who Needs It?

- Everyone, for all have sinned (Rom. 3:23).
- Everyone, for all have broken God's law (1 John 3:4).
- Everyone, for all have committed unrighteousness (1 John 5:17).

### II Who Makes It Possible?

- God, because of His great love (John 3:16).
- Jesus, because of His sacrificial death (Rom. 5:6-11).
  - To this purpose He was born (Matt. 1:21).
  - To this purpose He lived (John 10:9-11).
  - To this purpose He died (Matt. 26:26-28).

### III. What Does It Mean?

- Your sins are "purged" (Heb. 1:3).
- Your sins are "put away" (Heb. 9:26).
- Your sins are "blotted out" (Acts 3:19).
- Your sins are "covered" (Rom. 4:7).
- Your sins are "removed" (Ps. 103:12).
- Your sins are "remembered no more" (Heb. 10:17).

### IV. How Is It Obtained?

- Through faith in the name of Jesus. (Acts 13:38-39; John 8:24; John 1:12; Acts 4:12).
- Through confession of the name of Jesus (Rom. 10:9-10).
- Through repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38).

Conclusion: Forgiveness of sins is the greatest thing in the world! ALL your sins can be completely blotted out, never to be remembered again by God. You can obtain it today by obeying what Jesus said to do!

Victor Knowles  
Peace On Earth Ministries

## Bulletin Board Sayings

Religion is bread for daily use, not special occasions.

Sorry, but the fruit of the Spirit doesn't include sour grapes.

The Bible promises no loaves to the loafer.

The Lord gives us our faces—but we must provide the expression.

The pits of life can sprout a peach of a person.

The soul without prayer is like lungs without air.

The study of truth keeps an open dictionary, an open mind, and an open Bible.  
From *1001 Fresh Ideas for Your Church*  
by Sidney Stone,  
by permission of the author

Middle age is that time of life when you don't have to have fun to enjoy yourself.

One advantage of keeping silent is that you cannot be misquoted.  
The Church Mouse

If you don't learn from your mistakes, there's no use making them.

The best year-round temperature is a warm heart and a cool head.  
The Church Mouse

The Lord did not burden us with work—He blessed us with it.

The New Testament is a love letter to you from God  
Gregorio Tingson

Train up a child in the way he should go—and walk there yourself once in a while.  
Josh Billings  
*The Book of Living Quotations*

What is Christian perfection? Loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength.  
John Wesley  
*The Book of Living Quotations*

God is not saying to us, "Come, boys, each of you do your thing and try to get along." He is saying, "It is time to do My thing. Take these keys—a gospel that is true, a love that has flesh on it, and the power that belongs to me alone—and open the door to the world."

Leighton Ford

Peace is such a precious jewel that I would give anything for it but truth.  
Matthew Henry

We are always in the presence of God, yet it seems to me that those who pray are in His presence in a very different sense.  
Teresa of Avila  
*The Book of Living Quotations*

A clay pot sitting in the sun will always be a clay pot. It has to go through the white heat of the furnace to become porcelain.  
Mildred Witte Struven

The true Christian ideal is not to be happy, but to be holy.  
A. W. Tozer

Thanks to Ted Matamis for the two above  
He that boasts of his own knowledge proclaims his own ignorance  
Old German proverb

Be kind. Remember: everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.  
T. H. Thompson  
*The Book of Living Quotations*



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# A Gift above all Others

By Trey Graham

**I**N 1991, ANDREW DID WHAT DOZENS OF PASTORS AND SCHOLARS ONLY HOPED TO DO. MY FRIEND ANDREW, WITH NO THEOLOGICAL TRAINING OR PHILOSOPHICAL EXPERTISE, UNWITTINGLY BUT UNMISTAKABLY SHOWED ME THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS.

After Andrew and I returned to college from our winter break, he asked me what presents I had received for Christmas. I began to tell him about the new clothes, the best-selling books, the popular running shoes and all the other items on the list of precious gifts given me by family and friends. He seemed somewhat impressed, pleased at my apparent holiday windfall.

“So, Andrew, what did you get for Christmas?” I asked. Expecting to hear his wonderful list of presents, my roommate instead replied silently, holding up but one small item, an alarm clock that probably cost less than \$5 at the thrift shop. “That’s nice”, I answered, thinking that I was sure glad I hadn’t received such a present, seemingly so small and insignificant.

Later, as roommates often do during late nights of academic studies interspersed with stories about home, I would tease Andrew by pretending to throw that clock into the air and then catch it right before it hit the ground, feigning an attempt to damage his precious clock. Andrew never thought this game was funny, however, because his clock meant much more to him than I ever understood.

As the years passed and our four years together at college came to a close, I noticed that while he moved from room to room and roommate to roommate, Andrew always had that same inexpensive alarm clock stored closely beside his bed. You see, Andrew’s family back in West Virginia was far from wealthy and the only present his parents could afford to give him for Christmas was that simple, unimpressive clock. What seemed like garage sale material for some families was a family treasure for Andrew.

You know what? Today, 13 years later, I cannot remember a single present I received for Christmas that year. You know what else? For the rest of my life, I will

never forget Andrew’s gift. While my parents bought me presents that were more elegant, more expensive and certainly more numerous, that one single present from Andrew’s parents was definitely more precious.

As this Christmas season approaches, God asked me to tell Him what was most important in my life. For what am I searching? What is my top priority? Do I value all the fancy and impressive features in life? Am I searching for notoriety and pleasure, while refusing to acknowledge what is really most meaningful in life?

Sadly, too many people will be like me this Christmas, worrying about my long list of errands, searching for that perfect present, looking for the best bargain, all the while missing the only gift really worth giving. Andrew’s parents understood that if you can only give one gift, you had better make it special. My family and I, on the other hand, thought more was better and more expensive meant more valuable.

God the Father has given us innumerable gifts, including life and freedom and hope and peace and health, all of which are wonderful and make life more enjoyable. One gift, however, is too important to miss. God sent His gift,

His only Son, to be born as a helpless child about 2,000 years ago. Jesus came to earth to live and to die to show us how to live and how to die as faithful followers of His Father, the Creator God. Yet, the parties and decorations and purchases of this commercially driven holiday season have apparently become more valuable to us than the original Gift sent to us by God.

What is important to you? Do you focus on all the things that won’t really matter in

the end, or do you cherish the One who truly matters most of all? Do you even remember all the other places that you hoped to find the answers to life’s questions, or were they simply more dead ends? If my social calendar and my

errands keep me from meeting Jesus this Christmas, I will truly have missed it all.

Thanks, Andrew, for helping me understand that the true meaning of Christmas is in cherishing that which matters most rather than futilely searching after all the trappings of the world. When the advertisers encourage us to spend and buy and give, remember, “*They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable*” (1 Corinthians 9:25). This Christmas, ask God for the gift of life, found only in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Baptist Press



Trey Graham, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Melissa, Texas, is a speaker, columnist, author of *Lessons for the Journey* (America House, 2001), and director of Faith Walk Ministries ([www.faithwalkministries.com](http://www.faithwalkministries.com)).



## Snakes around the Water—Part 4

**A**S WE CONTINUE TO LOOK AT THE SNAKES AROUND THE WATER, THE FALSE PROPHETS, IN THE BOOK OF JUDE, JUDE SPARES NO WORDS IN DESCRIBING HOW UNGODLY THESE SNAKES ARE. IN THIS ARTICLE WE CONTINUE TO LOOK AT THREE FACES OF THEIR UNGODLINESS FROM JUDE 16.

Verse 16 says, *“These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.”* As we saw last month, the first ungodly face is the face of a **grumbler**. A grumbler is one who is always finding fault with others and never in himself.

The second face of these ungodly people that we see is in their **unbridled living**. In verse 16, Jude continues and says that these ungodly false teachers were *“following after their own lusts.”* The words following after are translated from one Greek word: *pōrēuōmai*. It literally means to go from one place to another with random abandonment. It is used here in the sense that these false teachers were totally in bondage to the whims of their flesh. Peter adds some things that help us identify what this means in 2 Peter 2:10a, *“And especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires.”* Whatever the flesh wants, it gets with no restraint. Then again in 2 Peter 3:3 we see how this licentious living is a mockery to God. Peter says *“Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts.”* Peter tells us that this will be the characteristic of the last of the last days.

When Jude speaks of *“their own lusts”* in verse 16, he uses the word *ēpithumia*, which refers to the strong desire of our flesh to do or get something. It is a driving, lustful desire. The word “lusts” is plural—the idea that I get from this is that they are prisoners to whatever lust that presents itself at the moment. So, their ungodliness is seen in one’s grumbling at God’s Word and at life’s circumstances. It is also seen in one’s unbridled, lawless living in the whims of his fleshly lusts.

Finally we see their ungodliness in their **loud-mouthed boasting**. Jude finishes his

description of these false prophets in verse 16 by saying that *“they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.”* It is interesting to me that the word he uses for “speak” in the phrase “they speak” is the word *lalēō*. It does mean to speak, but not necessarily with any intelligence at all. It literally means to make a noise of any kind. Since the verb is in the present indicative active this person who is ungodly is always running their mouth with nothing to say. The word for “arrogantly” is the word *hupērōgkōs* and means oversized; swollen; in the sense of boasting. They are loud mouthed boasters who are always talking and have nothing at all to say, like huge air bags full of hot air.

Peter tells us that their empty words are filled with what people want to hear, “For

*speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality”* (2 Peter 2:18a). The word “entice” is a word that means to bait someone; to lure them into their trap. This last phrase of Jude 16 is a perfect illustration of that. The word translated “flattering” is the word *thaumazō*. It carries the connotation of causing someone to be in admiration or awe of you by your fake and unmeaning words; to entice them. Jude adds that they flatter people *“for the sake of gaining an advantage.”* Anytime an ungodly person such as these false teachers says something that sounds nice and attracts others, it is only for their own profit or advantage that they might gain. They are liars for the sake of their own personal gain.

So, we see the three faces of ungodliness in the act of grumbling; unbridled living; and in loud-mouthed boasting for one’s personal benefit. Quite a bunch aren’t they? Yet believers are still listening to them and supporting them without any understanding of how dangerous they are! Beware!



Wayne Barber is senior pastor of Hoffmantown Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico

### Father Abraham’s Question Box

By Mark Oshman

#### One the Road to the Promised Land

When the Israelites journeyed from Egypt to Canaan:

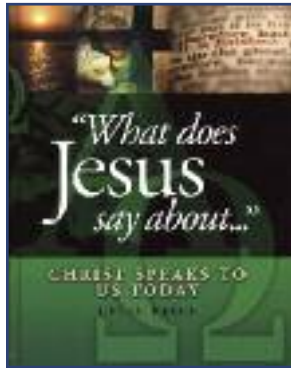
1. Where did Pharaoh’s army overtake the Israelites?
2. Where did Miriam die?
3. Where did the Lord provide them quails from the sea?
4. Where did the Israelites fight against Amalek?
5. Where did Aaron die?
6. Where was manna first seen?
7. Where did the Israelites first encamp after leaving Egypt?
8. Where did the Israelites find seventy palm trees?
9. Where did God send fire upon the Israelites?
10. Where was the Law given?

Answers on page 38

## "What does Jesus say about. . ." (Christ Speaks to Us Today)

Cecil Price, AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, TN, 2008, 1901 pages, ISBN 9780899576114, \$34.99.

This alphabetized concordance contains Scripture references on virtually every subject that Jesus addressed during His earthly ministry.



Also, the author gathers New Testament references concerning those whose lives were touched by the Lord Jesus Christ. Each biblical

reference is printed in full using the New American Standard Bible. If one wants to know what Jesus said about a particular issue, he will find it indexed in this excellent reference tool.

For example, if one turned to the reference on the kingdom of God, he would find that Jesus spoke on more than a dozen different occasions on this subject. Price identifies the geographical locations where Jesus spoke on this subject: Galilee, the Temple in Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives, Perea, and the Upper Room. Price sometimes makes brief comments on the subject before he lists the entire passage under discussion.

The post-resurrection appearances of Jesus provide another type of entry found in this concordance. The apostles and other New Testament writers list nineteen references to such appearances. The author tells us where Jesus was and what He said at each of these.

Those who want to study the parables of Jesus will find over seventy references to His parables. Noteworthy are the parables on The Lost Son, The Lost Sheep, and The Good Samaritan.

Appendix A contains further references for study. Appendix B shows a map of the ministry of Jesus.

Price has devoted considerable research to this volume, and his work should be a

valuable asset to a pastor's study. In a world ever increasingly in need of hearing Christ speak, a tool that catalogs His words is a welcome addition to our arsenal.

Glen Jones

**Target: All**

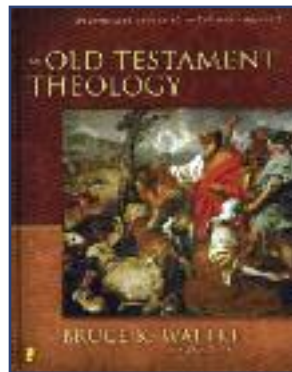
**Type: Reference / Concordance**

**Take: Recommended**

## An Old Testament Theology (An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach)

Bruce Waltke with Charles Yu, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2007, ISBN 9780310218975, 1040 pages, \$44.99, hardcover.

Old Testament seminary professor and prolific author Bruce Waltke has written what may be the capstone of his illustrious teaching career. This massive volume traces the history of the chosen people from Creation through the prophets.



The book explores the events and promises of the Old Testament by categorizing them as gifts from God. For example, Waltke discusses creation in a

chapter titled "The Gift of the Cosmos" and the Poetic Books in 3 chapters titled "The Gift of Wisdom". This is significant in that it shows the author's underlying interpretation of the purpose of the Old Testament: God's revelation of His character and His work to His people through His Word.

Additionally, Waltke opens the book with 6 chapters of introduction detailing the basis for and task of pursuing a comprehensive theology of the Old Testament as well as a thorough explanation of his methodology and hermeneutics. He then leads into the rest of the work with a 30 page overview.

Throughout the book, Waltke stresses the covenant that I AM (Jehovah) made with

Abraham; a covenant that, Waltke contends, extended from the physical nation of Israel to the spiritual nation, the Church. The author does not contend that God replaced Israel with the Church. Rather, he says, the Church brings together the redeemed of Israel and the redeemed from the Gentiles to constitute the kingdom of God.

Waltke implicitly and explicitly disagrees with dispensationalism in his works. He states that "No verse in the New Testament pertaining to salvation history after the resurrection of Jesus Christ represent the fulfillment of Old Testament Land promises in an intermediate Jewish kingdom" (p. 584). He believes that The Old Testament prophecies of a future Land fulfillment are fulfilled in a spiritual sense in the heavenly kingdom.

Covenant theologians will surely find much in this book to strengthen their faith. Premillennialists who believe in a literal 1000 year reign of Christ on earth will doubtless have reservations concerning the author's ecclesiology and eschatology, but should find the book as a whole to be a valuable resource for teaching and preaching the Old Testament and grasping the larger themes of the whole Bible.

Glen Jones

**Target: Serious Bible Students**

**Type: Covenant Theology**

**Take: Recommended**

## Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels

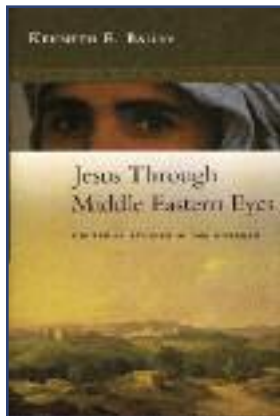
Kenneth E. Bailey, InterVarsity Press, 2008, ISBN: 9780830825684, 443 pages, \$23.00, softcover.

Have you ever engaged in conversation with someone from another culture? Simply knowing the words of their language is never quite enough. Meaning emerges only as you wrap the words you hear (or use) in everything else you know about yourself, about the other person, and how your respective ways of understanding the world were shaped.

Continued

The conversation after all, is between **persons**; and it is about **meaning**.

*Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes* is about your conversation with a Person—Jesus of Nazareth. Kenneth Bailey's objective is to acquaint you with the cultural context in which Jesus' words are



“wrapped.” By doing so, he opens a way to a clearer grasp of what Jesus' teaching words mean.

Bailey's important contribution is refreshing and guile-less; authoritative without being authoritarian; theologically sound without having to sound like a theologian.

As Bible expositors, we know that context matters, and that “context” includes more than the verses or chapters on either side of our sermon or lesson text. To “be there” would help, but is usually beyond our reach and means. Bailey graciously shares decades of life and study in the Middle East with us, to help close that gap.

So approach this book as a walk through Jesus' neighborhood with a “local,” who seems to know the people and places like the back of his hand.

In Bailey's company you will squirm under the stinging heat of the Pharisees' questions, and marvel as the skillful young Rabbi manages to elude every attempt to pin him. You will see the women in the Gospel accounts in a different light, and that Jesus' elevation of, and respect for them was radically different from his contemporaries. Jesus' parables will spring to new life for you as you see them in their original cultural settings.

This is an engaging and compelling read.

Bob Gerow

**Target: Serious Travelers**

**Type: Biblical Studies**

**Take: Must Read**



## Bethany House

*Muslims, Christians, and Jesus: Gaining Understanding and Building Relationships*, Carl Medearis, 2008, 208 pages, \$13.99, softcover. Medearis draws on his extensive experience living and working with Muslims to provide insights into common questions and misunderstandings Christians have. His goal is to show readers how to find common ground with Muslims and develop relationships that open doors for the Gospel.

## Chosen (Baker)

*You Don't Have to Cross the Ocean to Reach the World*, David Boyd, 2008, 192 pages, \$13.99 sardcover. Calling attention to the increasing globalization and multiculturalism of Western society, Boyd encourages Churches to embrace Christ's commission to “go into all the world” by actively pursuing cross-cultural ministries and outreaches.

## Hendrickson

*At Home in a Strange Land: Using the Old Testament in Christian Ethics*, Andrew Sloane, 2008, 246 pages, \$19.95, softcover. Since Christ has fulfilled the law, does the Old Testament have any bearing on how we should live as Christians? Sloane makes a profound case, affirming that the Old Testament is invaluable to believers for its insight into God's character.

*Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, Michael J. Gorman, 2008, 281 pages, \$19.95, softcover. A revised and expanded version of Gorman's excellent introduction to in-depth study of the Word.

## InterVarsity Press

*Signature Sins: Taming Our Wayward Hearts*, Michael Mangis, 2008, 244 pages, \$16.00, softcover. Mangis applies his background in psychology to Christian living in analyzing the way individual personalities affect our propensity to certain sins. He challenges believers to identify their core sins and seek the Lord's guidance on eradicating them.

*Sustainable Youth Ministry*, Mark DeVries, 2008, 232 pages, \$16.00, softcover. DeVries calls on churches to take corporate responsibility for establishing a

vision for effective and long-lasting ministry to students.

## Reformation Trust Publishing

*5 Things Every Christian Needs to Grow*, R.C. Sproul, 2008, 135 pages, \$15.00, hardcover. A revised and expanded version of Sproul's small but deep meditation on the “nutrients” of a healthy Christian life: Bible study, prayer, worship, service, and stewardship.

*Living for God's Glory: An Introduction to Calvinism*, Joel R. Beeke, 396 pages, \$24.00, hardcover. Beeke offers an exceptionally thorough and winsome apologetic for reformed theology. He seeks to move beyond standard soteriological arguments and focus on Calvinism's contributions to Christian life and ministry.

## Zondervan

*1001 Illustrations that Connect*, Craig Brian Larson and Phyllis Ten Elshof, editors, 2008, 536 pages, \$29.99, softcover. A compilation of valuable illustrations, statistics, and true stories designed to help pastors and teachers drive home the truths of scripture. Comes with a searchable CD ROM to help readers find just the right illustrations for their sermons.

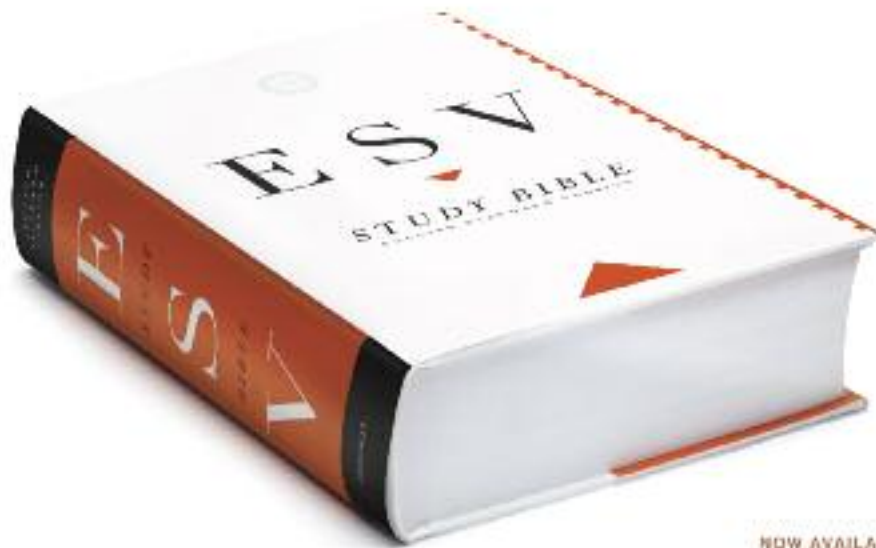
*Leadership from the Inside Out*, Kevin Harney, 2008, 192 pages, \$21.99, softcover. Harney challenges pastors and church leaders to ask God to “search them and know them” to avoid the pitfalls of ministry from pride to boredom and sexual sin. He encourages them to live an “examined life” and serve with passion and joy.

*Should We Use Someone Else's Sermon?*, Scott M. Gibson, 2008, 128 pages, \$14.99, softcover. Gibson raises a growing (but seldom talked about) problem within the Church: pulpit plagiarism—the practice of using a pre-prepared sermon from another source and claiming it as one's own. He provides suggestions on how to avoid the problem or deal with it when it comes to light in a church.



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### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Ann Stewart** graduated with honors from the University of Washington and did graduate studies in film and television at the University of Michigan. She has taught English and music for twelve years at various grade levels ranging from pre-school to college-level. Using her background in acting and writing dramas, she excels at writing in an engaging, expressive style. Ann, her husband and two daughters reside in Paeonian Springs, Virginia.



  
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# The Call to Worship

**Text:** "...Behold wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying "where is he who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." (Matthew 2: 1-2; read also verses 3-11)

**Thought:** Who these wise men were, and how many they numbered, and whether they came from Chaldea, Persia or Arabia may be interesting, but quite unimportant. What is impressive and remarkable is their faith, their search and their achievement. In their hearts was a deep longing for the appearance of a Savior-King, and when they saw His star

there was only one desire which possessed them and that was to fall at His feet and worship Him. To them, the birth of Christ was:

**A Call to Directed Worship.** "We have seen His star in the East, and have come to worship Him" (v. 2). Wherever there are hungry hearts and questing spirits God directs His word to men is, "you will seek Me, and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). God is waiting to direct us to His beloved Son, Jesus Christ the Lord. Just as the star guided those seeking men to the cradle of the Christ, so the Holy Spirit yearns to lead us

to the feet of the Saviour "in wonder, love and praise."

**A Call to Determined Worship.** "We have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him" (v.2). Have you ever sat down with a Bible Atlas and attempted to work out a journey undertaken by the Magi? Wherever they came from, it is fairly evident that they faced vast distances and dangers. How this story condemns those of us who have it so good! With liberty to worship, modern facilities to travel, and religious services planned to accommodate our varied needs, we still absent ourselves from the house of prayer, and never fail to grumble when a little sacrifice is expected of us. Oh that there might be more determination in our acts of worship, not only at Christmastime, but all through the year!



David Olford teaches expository preaching at Union University's Stephen Olford Center in Memphis, Tennessee

**A Call to Devoted Worship.** "And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His Mother; and fell down, and worshipped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gift to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh" (v 11). These were tokens of devotion and dedication. As far as the wise men were concerned, the Babe of Bethlehem was the King of kings, and therefore worthy to receive their best and their all. Can you and I give Him any less?

**Thrust:** Christmas is a call to worship; so "let us come and adore Him, Christ the Lord."



A man died and went to heaven. He was met at the Pearly Gates by Peter who led him down the golden streets. They passed mansion after beautiful mansion until they came to the end of the street where they stopped in front of a shack. The man asked Peter why he got a hut when there were so many mansions he could live in. Peter replied, "I did the best with the money you sent us."

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# Hope in a Cardboard Home

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO LIVE IN A HOME WITH CARDBOARD WALLS? WE FOUND OUT IN GUATEMALA.

Our team was in Guatemala to distribute Bundles of Love (AMG’s specially selected packages of Christmas joy that include items selected to meet the individual needs of recipients) to needy boys and girls under AMG’s care. AMG Missionary Bob Hastings offered to take a few team members to visit families of AMG-sponsored children. Bob advised us to leave any jewelry or other items of value behind; the neighborhoods were very poor and dangerous. I was both excited and a little frightened.

Our group was small but conspicuous and included three national workers. As we made our way on paved paths and dirt tracks, some children stared at us, probably wondering the same thing we were. “What are these Americans doing here?” A few followed us. Some greeted us, and some giggled and ran away. We were definitely the main attraction.

Stepping around trash, dog waste, and questionable trickles of water triggered a host of emotional responses from our team. We were happy to see children playing, even though they were dirty, poorly clothed and some were sick. But we could not help but wonder, “How safe are these children, and who is protecting them from the evil of this world?” Some of us were frightened when a group of boys shot a bottle rocket at us. Others were saddened to see the meagerness of people’s homes—**thousands** of shacks made of cardboard, corrugated sheet metal, or cinder block.

We came unannounced but bearing small gifts of candy. A 13-year-old opened one door and let us into the house. She and her four younger brothers were thrilled to see us.

The house was one room with a dirt floor, cardboard walls, and a tin roof. We could only imagine what the rains and winds from a hurricane just a few months ago had felt like to the children of this house. The furnishings were meager. Clothes were tacked to the cardboard walls, and a few Christmas decorations hung from the ceiling.

**Though they live in wrenching poverty, their only real hope is the same as ours—an eternal hope.**

There was no stove or refrigerator. We could smell that they had no bathroom, and soon realized their “bathroom” was an outside patch of dirt shielded by a “privacy” fence.

Their mother soon came home, and we wanted to know some of her story. She was 28-years

old and had lived in that property all her life. She had her first child at 15 years of age, and now has five children. When asked what she did for work, because there was obviously no father around, she simply said that she sells things.

We visited more homes and found all their stories to be the painfully similar: generations of poverty, disappearing fathers, and lack of good-paying work.

Words truly cannot fully convey our experience. AMG’s outreach in Guatemala is

truly making a difference among lives that otherwise would not have hope.

Though they live in wrenching poverty, their only real hope is the same as ours—an eternal hope. As we took in the sights and sounds of the people, God reminded us that even though they seem poor, they can still be rich and have immeasurable treasure, “*Did God not choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?*” (James 2:5)

God gave me a unique opportunity ever so briefly to walk where the poor of Guatemala walk **every day**. We found reassurance that our prayers can be realized, that these children would one day be godly men and women. Their growing hope in God finds realization as God’s people get involved through sponsorship and hands-on involvement through AMG’s ministries.

Thank you for investing in the life of a child. You will never be the same!



From *Mission Advance*, June 2008

Visit [www.amginternational.org](http://www.amginternational.org) for more information about what it means to sponsor a child, or to begin your investment in the life and future of a child.

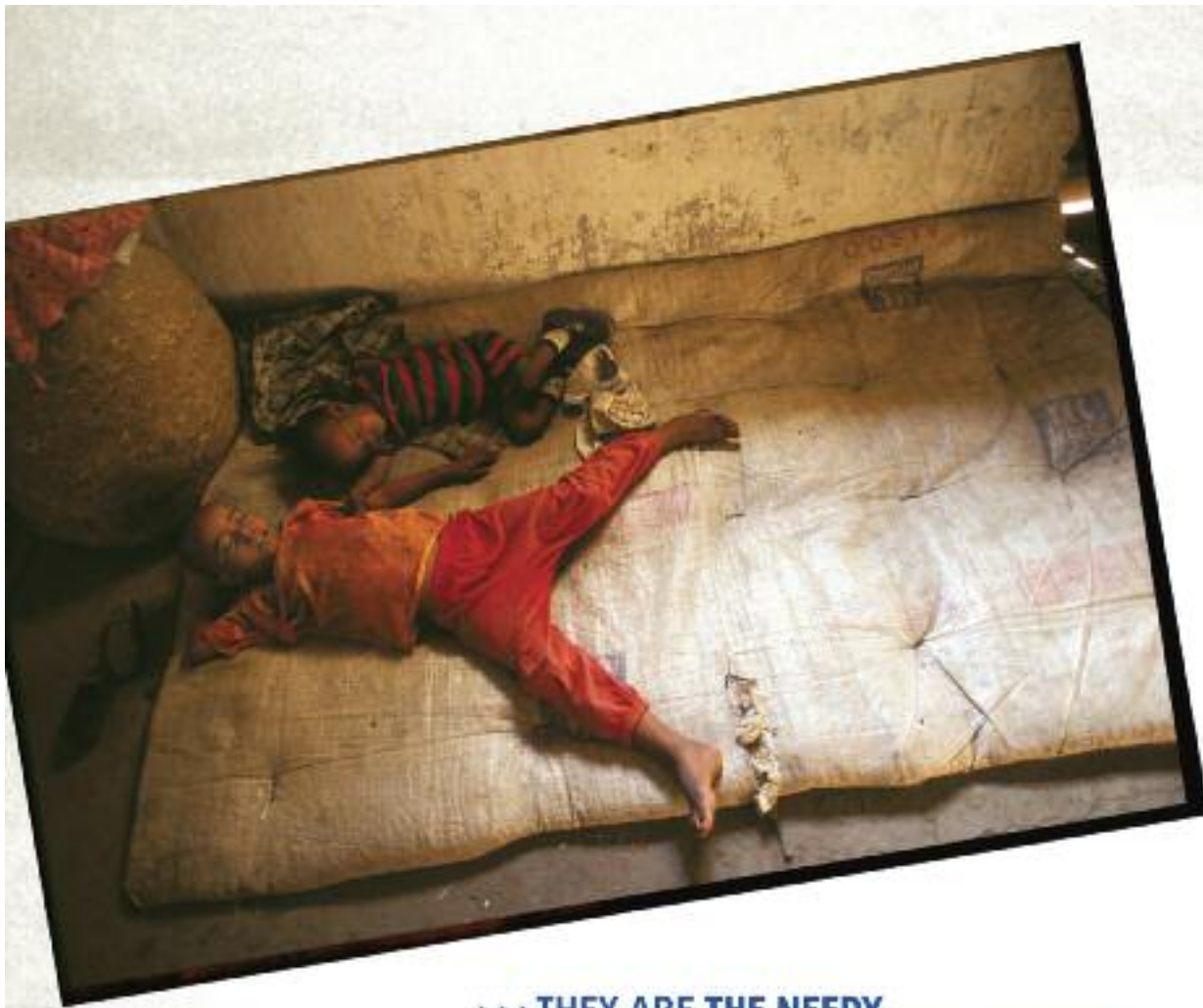
Alicia Hatton was an AMG short-term team leader for 2 years. She and her husband Shane now serve full-time in Asia with Christar.



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*Subject: Leadership*

## A Helper Ministry

In a church I once attended, there was a man of tremendous faith. His wife was an alcoholic, his daughter had psychological problems. He was often in poor health.

Yet, week after week, he never complained. He always smiled and asked me how I was doing. He faithfully brought to church a young blind man who had no transportation. He always sat with the blind man, helping him sing the hymns by saying the words into his ear.

That man was a Christian leader if ever there was one.

Thanks to Ted Matamis,  
asnoteffb@comcast.net

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*Subject: Discipleship*

## General Purpose

On Aug. 1, 1941, Parade magazine, in a three-page spread, dubbed it “the Army’s most intriguing gadget...a tiny truck that can do practically anything.” Some time later, Gen. Eisenhower said that World War II could not have been won without it.

Willys-Overland Co. launched the Jeep in 1940, and soon it was a staple of the U.S. Army. The name “Jeep” was derived from an Army request that it be a “general purpose,” or “GP” vehicle. “GP” eventually evolved into “Jeep.” The Jeeps were invaluable because they would doggedly go wherever the war was being fought. They could always hang with the troops. Today, of course, their civilian descendants are still being useful.

Following, wherever our Lord leads, is “SOP” (Standard Operating Procedure) for Christians. Jesus tracked the divine redemption plan, and endured earthly battles. He said: “Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be” (John 12:26).

The Head of the Lord’s Army wants you simply to follow. The road may lead through the muck and mire of suffering and pain. Steep mountains of rejection and isolation may be on your route. But your mission, should you choose to accept it, is just to follow.

Remember: To be a “four-wheeled” Christian, you must first be “God-willed.”

J. Kenneth Bassett, Timeless Signatures,  
©2003.

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*Subject: Check Out the Teaching*

## Spinach Over-Estimated

The cartoon character Popeye is famous for eating spinach. Whenever he breaks open a can of spinach and eats it he gains enormous strength. Popeye was employed by the US Government during World War 2 to promote the idea of eating spinach. Meat was a rarity during war, but spinach appeared to be a great substitute. In the 1890s, German scientists had reported that spinach contains the same amount of iron as meat. And iron, of course, is one of the essential minerals in building strength.

But the facts were wrong. The German researchers did prove that spinach contains iron, but when they wrote down their results they put the decimal point in the wrong place. They over-estimated the amount of iron in spinach by a factor of 10! Unfortunately, the correction didn’t get across the ocean until after WW2.

This episode shows how easily false ideas can quickly become accepted truth. It’s not uncommon in the area of Christian belief for Christians to quickly give unquestionable status to beliefs that may in fact have questionable origins. We should never be afraid to go back and ask why it is that we hold a particular belief or a particular interpretation of the Bible. Our investigation may prove we got it right, or it may show we didn’t. Either way our understanding and application of God’s Word will only be improved.

Adapted  
Jim Davis, Verse A Week Club

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*Subject: Wrestling Evil*

## Morality Play in the Ring

The Associated Press has reported on a wrestling priest in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. Sergio Gutierrez, with clerical collar, who was in the ring for 25 years. It’s true the

bouts were staged but there were still occasional outbreak of real violence; Gutierrez has broken his nose, ribs, ankle, and arm.

Gutierrez was known in the ring as “Fray Tormenta—Friar Storm.” Proceeds helped fund a 200-bed home for underprivileged boys which Gutierrez opened over 35 years ago.

Popular in low-income neighborhoods in Mexico, lucha libre sometimes draws crowds upwards of 10,000. Fans see the matches as a kind of morality play: good versus evil. One of the priests’ major opponents, Damian, was a taunting, mocking wrestler with 666 on his forehead and flames around his eyes.

The real match, the one Paul calls “our battle”, is real and vicious warfare. Yet, the devil wants the soldiers of the cross to view it with the same earthly eyes as spectators at a Friar Storm match. If Satan can deceive large numbers of believers into viewing our battle as nothing more than religious extremism—well, the body of Christ would be little different than Adam and Eve in the beginning: “naked” and “afraid” (Gen. 3:10).

John Gillmartin, The SHEEP’S CRIB—  
Illustrations

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*Subject: God’s Love*

## The Overlooked Baby

On some occasion, I had settled down for a four-hour flight on a large DC-10, hoping to catch up on some reading. As the plane began to taxi down the runway, one of the flight attendants suddenly noticed a lady with two babies, one without adequate seat belt security. Quickly she took the smallest baby from the mother and looked around for one of the passengers to hold it during take-off. Catching my eye, the stewardess thanked me as she handed it to me. The baby was asleep, but did it ever make noise!

I began to read through the baby noises and 20 minutes went by, 30 minutes went by, and then 40. I finally got up and went looking for the mother. Finding her five rows up, I asked, “Is this baby yours?” She looked up surprised and said, “Oh, I forgot all about him!”

Continued

I have thought about this incident many times. Yes, we may be small in the world's eyes and our own mothers may forget us, but God's arms are always stretched out to hold us, and He will never drop or leave or ever forget us!

Doug Nichols, founder & international director emeritus of Action International Ministries

*Subject: What's Inside Is What Counts*

## What's Inside You?

The preacher placed two identical jars on the table next to the pulpit. He then quoted 1 Samuel 16:7: *"But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."*

"These jars came from the same factory, were made of the same materials, and can hold the same amount. But they are different," he explained. Then he upset one and it oozed out honey. He turned over the other, and vinegar spilled out.

"When a jar is upset, whatever is in it comes out. Until the jars were upset, they looked alike. The difference was within, and could not be seen. When they were upset, their contents were revealed.

Until we are upset we put on a good front. But when we are upset, we reveal our innermost thoughts and attitudes. What if someone tipped you over today? What would flow out? Would you reveal the "honey" of grace and patience, or the "vinegar" of anger and sarcasm?

Have a terrific day knowing that the one who upsets you may be just looking for some honey. Don't give them vinegar!

*"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins."* (1 Pet. 4:8)



Author unknown  
Via Verse a Week Club



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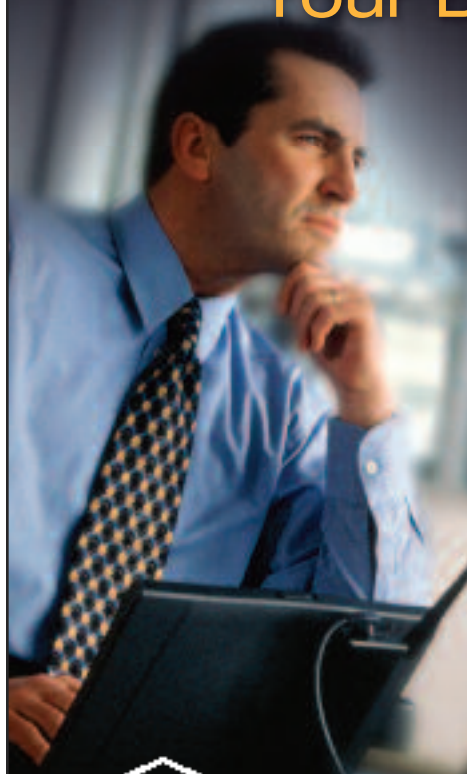
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## Judge Dismisses Lawsuit against God

Religion News Service reports that a judge has dismissed a Nebraska legislator's lawsuit against God, saying the Almighty could not be served notice of the litigation.

"Given that this court finds that there can never be service effectuated on the named defendant, this action will be dismissed with prejudice," wrote Douglas County District Court Judge Marlon Polk of Omaha, Neb., on October 14.

State Sen. Ernie Chambers had filed suit in 2007 to seek a permanent injunction against God, the Associated Press reported. He accused God of causing "widespread death, destruction and terrorization of millions upon millions of the Earth's inhabitants." The law school graduate who never took the bar exam questioned the judge's ruling, the AP reported. "Since God knows everything, God has notice of this lawsuit," Chambers said. Chambers has 30 days to determine if he will appeal.

Religion Today Summaries

## Congress Moves to Inform Mothers, Protect Unborn

A bill to protect the lives of unborn children diagnosed with disabilities has passed both chambers of Congress and is awaiting President Bush's signature.

The Prenatally and Postnatally Diagnosed Conditions Awareness Act, sponsored by Sen. Sam Brownback (R.-Kansas) and Sen. Ted Kennedy (D.-Massachusetts) would provide support and balanced information to parents who receive a diagnosis of Down syndrome or any other condition prenatally or until a year after birth.

The Senate passed the bill Sept. 23, and the House passed it two days later in what Brownback said was "a great victory for expecting parents who learn that their unborn child may be born with a disability."

The bill requires parents who receive a diagnosis of an impairment for their child be provided with the latest information on the condition and be informed of support services available. It also would establish a registry of families willing to adopt special needs children.

Studies indicate that in the United States, between 80 and 90 percent of children diagnosed in the womb with Down syndrome are aborted. A similar abortion percentage exists for unborn babies diagnosed with spina bifida, cystic fibrosis, and dwarfism, according to a release from Brownback's office.

Baptist Press

## Somali Church Leader Assaulted in Ethiopia

ASSIST News Service reports that Islamic extremists beat a 35-year-old Somali church leader (name withheld for security) on September 20 in the neighborhood Saris in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The Washington-DC based human rights group, International Christian Concern (ICC) [www.persecution.org](http://www.persecution.org), says the leader, who lives in another neighborhood in Addis Ababa, went to Saris to pick up documents about the persecution of the Somali churches. The documents author, David Abdulwahab Mohamed Ali, was martyred in Somalia in April 2008 by Islamic militants.

According to the victim, he was ambushed by five Muslim men who kicked and punched him repeatedly until he fainted and fell on the ground. Even after he fainted, the men continued their assault for at least another fifteen minutes, according to the police report. The leader was taken to a clinic and is recovering. The documents are also now safe.

Religion Today Summaries

## India Violence Spreads despite Christian Protests

*The Christian Post* reports that in spite of multiple rallies and peace demonstrations, Christians in India remain at risk as violence continues to spread throughout Orissa and several other states.

This week, a major "dharna"—an Indian method of seeking justice at the door of the debtor while fasting—has gathered participants from church leaders, ministries and Christian institutions. "I believe the Lord is going to use this event," said Gospel for Asia president Dr. K.P. Yohannan, "and I

have instructed our leaders all over India to seek out other Christian leaders and meet with them and stand with them in this time of persecution." He added, "But sadly... even as the dharna is going on, the situation in Orissa continues to get worse. But little is being reported to the outside world now because the media is being kept out, even as entire villages are being destroyed."

Religion Today Summaries

## Five Chaplains Lose Jobs for Praying 'In Jesus' Name'

Virginia Governor Tim Kaine is defending how his administration forced the sudden resignation of five Virginia State Police Chaplains because they prayed publicly "in Jesus' name." Police Superintendent Col. W. Steven Flaherty single-handedly created, then enforced, a strict "non-sectarian" prayer policy at all public gatherings, censoring and excluding Christian prayers, then accepted the resignation of five chaplains who refused to deny Jesus or violate their conscience by watering down their prayers.

House Republican Leader Morgan Griffith and Delegate Charles W. Carrico, (R-Grayson) both issued public statements defending the chaplains, questioning Governor Kaine's role in the affair, and vowing to introduce legislation protecting police chaplains' right to pray according to their own conscience.

Defending Flaherty's persecution of Christian Chaplains, Governor Kaine indicated he himself was being persecuted, saying through his spokesman: "It is disappointing that Del. Griffith would make such a political attack on Gov. Kaine about his faith."

Former Navy Chaplain Gordon James Klingenschmitt, who was also fired in 2007 for praying "in Jesus' name", in uniform (but won the victory in the U.S. Congress for other military chaplains), weighed in: "Governor Kaine campaigned like a Christian to get our votes. But now, instead of governing like a Christian, or respecting his own chaplains' First Amendment rights", he's pursuing a secular agenda.

Continued

Citizens are urged to call Governor Kaine's office at (804)786-2211, to ask that the chaplains be reinstated and the policy reversed, and also email him through his web-site: [www.governor.virginia.gov/AboutTheGovernor/contactGovernor.cfm](http://www.governor.virginia.gov/AboutTheGovernor/contactGovernor.cfm).

LifeSite News

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## Malta, Fiji Forcefully Reject Abortion, Anti-Family Pressure at UN

At the United Nations this week the nations of Malta and Fiji issued forceful interventions in defense of the unborn and the traditional family, respectively, as the Third Committee of the General Assembly (GA) began to address agenda items for the current session.

The permanent representative of Malta, Ambassador Saviour F. Borg, stated that abortion remains illegal in his country, and "Malta firmly continues to maintain that any position taken or recommendations made regarding women empowerment and gender equality should not in any way create an obligation on any party to consider abortion as a legitimate form of reproductive health rights."

Ambassador Berenado Vunibobo of Fiji likewise put forward a strong defense of the family. Pointing to pro-family language that exists in both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, he asserted the "primacy of the family structure" as the fundamental social unit and "the right of mothers and fathers to raise their children in accordance with their values and mores." The Fijian Ambassador criticized those "who would look at children's 'rights' in isolation from the familial context, or seek to weaken the role of mothers and fathers in the care and upbringing of children."

Malta made its statement in connection with the topic "Advancement of Women," whereas Fiji's remarks were made with respect to the "Rights of the Child." Both are areas that the GA's Third Committee, which deals with social issues, will take up in the current session, expected to run through the end of November.

LifeSiteNews

## Pray: Violence Continues to Force Christian Exodus from Mosul, Iraq—

Mission News Network reports that the exodus from the city of Mosul continues after a church was bombed Oct. 14, yet another incident in a string of violent attacks against the city's Christians. To date, nearly 1,500 Christian families have fled the city in spite of police reinforcements to contain the violence. According to Iraqi officials, families remain frightened by a series of killings and numerous threats by Islamic extremists in recent weeks. Some reports trace the violence as a response to recent Christian demonstrations for adequate representation on provincial councils.

Christians are sending desperate text messages to SAT-7, a satellite television service for the Christians of the Middle East and North Africa. The station then disseminates the messages on screen. Many of the messages ask for prayer for the terrorists, "that they would have a 'Pauline experience'—that instead of being persecutors, they would become lovers of Jesus through what's happened."

Religion Today Summaries

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## Pray: Kazakhstan Takes Next Step in Passing Restrictive Religion Law—

Kazakhstan's lower house of parliament passed a draconian law regulating the practice of religion on Sept. 24.

An analysis of the law showed it would be a severe setback for religious freedom in the country by making it more difficult for religious believers and organizations to register, function legally, and worship. Among other things, the law would require the state to review the religious beliefs of communities, ban all unregistered activity and make it impossible for groups that work in multiple locations to register.

Even more alarming, children would need written permission to participate in any religious youth activity, and believers would only be able to share their beliefs in public places with the consent of all citizens present.

This comes as Kazakhstan is due to assume the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2010, a group that

monitors how well its members uphold human rights.

Institute on Religion and Public Policy.

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## Praise: 'Fireproof' Opens Fourth at Box Office—

The latest release from Sherwood Baptist Church's (Albany, Ga.) media arm, *Fireproof*, took the no. 4 spot at the box office this weekend, despite opening in just 800 theaters nationwide. The Christian Post reports that the latest film from the makers of *Facing the Giants* had the second highest grossing opening weekend for a film released in fewer than 1,000 theaters this year, garnering \$6.5 million.

Those figures belie the mere \$500,000 budget that produced the film, which stars *Growing Pains* lead Kirk Cameron.

The film had been screened to Christian pastors and leaders throughout the summer, hoping to build support for the all-important opening weekend. The pro-marriage film tells the story of firefighter Caleb Holt, a firefighter who decides to give his failing marriage one more chance.

Religion Today Summaries  
and LifeSite News

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## Pray: Egypt: Court Gives Christian Boys to Muslim Father—

Following the Appeal Court of Alexandria on Sept. 24 granting custody of 13-year-old Christian twins to their Muslim father, their mother now lives with the fear that police will take away her children at any moment, Compass Direct News reports.

The court ruled in favor of the boys' father in spite of Egyptian law's Article 20, which grants custody of children to their mothers until the age of 15, and a fatwa (religious ruling) from Egypt's most respected Islamic scholar, Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa, giving her custody.

"This decision was dangerous because it was not taken in accordance with Egyptian law but according to sharia [Islamic] law," said Naguib Gobrael, Gaballah's lawyer and president of the Egyptian Union of Human Rights Organizations.

Religion Today Summaries

# W. B. Riley: Grand Fundamentalist

**W**ILLIAM BELL RILEY (1861-1947), WHO WAS TO BECOME A LEADER IN THE CHURCH STRUGGLE AGAINST THE INROADS OF LIBERAL DEBASEMENT OF THE BIBLE, WAS BORN IN INDIANA BUT GREW UP IN A KENTUCKY LOG CABIN, WHERE HE DID HIS SHARE OF CHORES. AT THE AGE OF 9, HE OFTEN “PLOWED AND WORKED THE FIELDS FROM 5 A.M. TO 9 P.M.” SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, AS A RESULT, WAS IRREGULAR.

His early education included normal school at Valparaiso, Ind., where he earned a teacher's certificate. Then he attended Hanover College and later Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Riley was a personal worker during D. L. Moody's Louisville campaign. His first pastorate was the First Baptist Church of Lafayette, Ind. There he met and married Lillian Howard; their marriage was blessed with six children.

Following other posts he became pastor of the First Baptist Church of Minneapolis, where he remained until retirement in 1942. Influential in the city, he advocated various civic reforms and built up his church from 585 to about 3,500 members.

Riley is credited with inventing the term “fundamentalist.” In 1919 he brought together 6,000 conservative Christians for the first conference of the World Christian Fundamentalist Association, which he founded. Riley warned that mainline Protestant denominations “were coming increasingly under the sway of modernism” and led the effort to purge the Northern Baptist Convention of liberals.

He became a leader in the fight against the teaching of evolution, which he called the “propaganda of infidelity, palmed off in the name of science.” With Billy Sunday, Frank Norris, and William Jennings Bryan, he helped to secure passage of Tennessee's anti-evolution law, which led to the famous Scopes Trial of 1925.

Riley founded the Northwestern Bible Training School, later adding a seminary and college (Billy Graham briefly served as president of Northwestern Schools after Riley's death). Central Baptist Seminary and Northwestern College are descended from these institutions.

Riley helped prepare *The Fundamentals*. Nearly 3 million copies of these remarkable volumes went out to laymen, ministers, and others around the world. Conferences in major cities followed, and the movement spread overseas. Riley also debated liberals on many occasions. In addition, he held city-wide evangelistic crusades from Worcester, Mass., to Seattle, Wash., where hundreds came to know the Lord.

He wrote some 90 books and pamphlets, including the monumental 40-volume *The Bible of the Expositor and Evangelist*. Other titles include *The Perennial Revival*, *The Preacher and His Preaching*, and *Rethinking the Church*. Nearly a million copies of his books were circulated.

Riley helped to popularize the Daily Vacation Bible School movement, in which he was an early pioneer. After his first wife died, he married Marie Acomb, dean of women at the Bible school.

Horses, dogs, and fishing were Riley's avid hobbies, and for many years, he hunted annually. While he was visiting in Maysville, Ky., a youngster asked, “When you were a boy, did you ever go coon hunting?” “Did I! Many, many times, and how I would like to go again!” Soon he was in a group of ten tramping over the hills until 2 a.m.

Riley spent several months of every year away from his pulpit for other meetings. At home he taught classes in the morning, devoted the afternoon to pastoral duties, attended church meetings and social gatherings in the evening, and from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. did his prolific writing.

One of his deacons declared, “His success as a pastor is due to his remarkable ability in handling people and in helping in their problems. He can reprove you for a



W. B. Riley

fault and make you like it. He has the most gracious spirit...I have ever met.”

One of his students who had fallen into sin told the Bible school, “If any of you students ever get in trouble, you may be sure that Dr. Riley will be the first one who is eager to help you.”

William Bell Riley is remembered as one of the most stalwart defenders of the faith in his century.




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Bernard R. DeRemer, in more than a decade of writing for *Pulpit Helps*, has chronicled the lives of dozens of God's choice leaders across recent centuries.

# Touched By God—Part 1

By the Old Scot

**A.** W. Tozer, revered teacher of not so long ago, set the bar very high for membership in the family of God: “Nothing can take the place of the touch of God in the soul and the sense of someone there.... Where true faith is, the knowledge of God will be given as a fact of consciousness altogether apart from the conclusions of logic.... Whatever else it embraces, true Christian experience must always include a genuine encounter with God. Without this, religion is but a shadow, a reflection of reality, a cheap copy of an original once enjoyed by someone else of who we have heard.” (*The Divine Conquest*, Christian Publications, pp. 25-26)

Implicit in Tozer’s thought is a tremendous and vital challenge: Is he correct, or will some lesser standard suffice? How can a person know if he or she is genuinely a child of God? Surely there can be no more urgent question for us all!

Can we rely upon standards of men or traditions of the church? [And if the latter, which church; which traditions? Where did they come from, and what is their origin?]

I have just been reading an excerpt from the testimony of David Baron (1855-1926), son of a Russian Jewish couple, who sought to find peace with God through the teachings and traditions of his forefathers. But he realized at length that the harder he tried to abide by those teachings the less peace he found. Only through the blood of the Lamb of God, and only through the new birth promised by our Lord Jesus Christ did he finally know that he was truly a son of God. And his belief system was radically changed.

One of the great characteristics manifested by the new nature has to do with our relationship with the Holy Spirit. Formerly it worked on us from without. Now it works from within. And it leads us to “*mortify the deeds of the body through the Spirit*” (Rom. 8:13). We are to walk in the Spirit (Rom. 8:1,4); we are to be led by the Spirit (Rom. 8:14); continue in the Spirit (Gal. 3:3), be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), and live in the Spirit (1 Pet. 4:6).

Surely this is a tall order—an impossible order, because it is a hated order—for the old man in us (Rom. 8:7). But wonder of

wonders, it is both possible and greatly desired by our new nature. Walking, being led by, being filled with, and living in the Spirit is something our new nature yearns to do and delights in doing.

This is a great test—possibly the greatest test—of the genuineness of being born again.

Of course, not long after the new birth comes the discovery that we have a battle on our hands! Our enemy, our deadly opponent, is our own old nature, and it is a fight to the death—no matter how protracted the struggle, one must live and the other die.

The Apostle Paul describes his own inner battle in Romans chapter 7. Ironically, just before he describes his losing battle with his old self, in chapter 6, he informs us that our old selves have been crucified with Christ. It is easy for the new babe in Christ to read into this that victory is already handed to us by our Savior—but the text nowhere says this happens immediately or without a struggle. Crucifixion was a slow process, and we should not be surprised to discover that this struggle will go on for the rest of our lives—and, indeed, that it is a battle that only God, acting through His Holy Spirit, can actually win.

In fact, Paul tells us this. Romans 7:24-25 contains both his wail of failure through his own abilities, and Christ’s victory on his behalf: “*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*”

To summarize, we become children of God through being touched by Him—that is, the Holy Spirit comes to live within us. This touch is absolutely real, and we should certainly be aware of it.

This brings us to what I believe is a huge problem in the church today. Are there not a great many in the church who have been manipulated into saying “yes” to Jesus? They are then assured, over and over again, that they are born again. But they fail to grow. They very likely don’t have a clue as to what is wrong—they try, they attend services more or less faithfully—perhaps trying to supply what is lacking from themselves. Outwardly they may be indistinguishable from Spirit-led Christians. But they don’t grow.

Joe McKeever, a seeker after truth with more than four decades in the pastorate, wrote of his experiences with the easy evangelistic methods he was taught as a young pastor. He came to the conclusion that, while our sovereign God may utilize the least of straws to achieve His will, nevertheless, many of the teachings came dangerously close to manipulation. (See his article, “Why Christians Fear to Witness,” in the October issue of *Pulpit Helps*.)

It may be, dear pastor, that before you turn your evangelistic attention outside the church walls, you should ascertain whether you have a great need for the saving touch of our Lord within your church!

To be continued



## Do you know how many members of the Tate family belong to your church?

There is old man Dic-Tate who wants to run everything, while Uncle Ro-Tate tries to change everything. There’s sister Agi-Tate who stirs up plenty of trouble, with help from her husband, Irri-Tate. Whenever new projects are suggested, Hesi-Tate and his wife, Vege-Tate, want to wait until next year. Then there is Aunt Imi-Tate, who wants our church to be like all the others. Devas-Tate provides the voice of doom, while Poten-Tate wants to be a big shot. And of course there is the black sheep of the family, Ampu-Tate, who has completely cut himself off from the church. But not all members of the family are bad. Brother Facili-Tate is quite helpful in church matters. And a delightful, happy member of the family is Miss Felici-Tate. Cousins Cogi-Tate and Medi-Tate always think things over and lend helpful, steady hands. How about it—do you know anyone in the “Tate” family?

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## Strength for Glory

By Charles Haddon Spurgeon

*"He arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights."*  
1 Kings 19:8

All the strength supplied to us by our gracious God is meant for service, not for wantonness or boasting.

When the prophet Elijah found the cake baked on the coals and the cruse of water placed at his head as he lay under the juniper tree, he was no gentleman to be gratified with dainty fare that he might stretch himself at his ease; far otherwise, he was commissioned to go forty days and forty nights in the strength of it, journeying towards Horeb, the mount of God.

When the Master invited the disciples to "Come and dine" with Him, after the feast was concluded He said to Peter, "Feed my sheep"; further adding, "Follow me."

Even thus it is with us; we eat the bread of heaven, that we may expend our strength in the Master's service. We come to the passover, and eat of the paschal lamb with loins girt, and staff in

hand, so as to start off at once when we have satisfied our hunger.

Some Christians are for living on Christ, but are not so anxious to live for Christ. Earth should be a preparation for heaven; and heaven is the place where saints feast most and work most. They sit down at the table of our Lord, and they serve Him day and night in His temple. They eat of heavenly food and render perfect service.

Believer, in the strength you daily gain from Christ, labor for Him. Some of us have yet to learn much concerning the design of our Lord in giving us His grace. We are not to retain the precious grains of truth as the Egyptian mummy held the wheat for ages, without giving it an opportunity to grow: we must sow it and water it. Why does the Lord send down the rain upon the thirsty earth, and give the genial sunshine? Is it not that these may all help the fruits of the earth to yield food for man? Even so the Lord feeds and refreshes our souls that we may afterwards use our renewed strength in the promotion of His glory.

*From Morning and Evening*

Making a sin legal does not make it harmless.

Pickled drivers cause more accidents than traffic jams.

The Church Mouse

## Hidden Wisdom Answers

Leviticus (19:18)—*"Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord."*

- A. Synagogue
- B. Proust
- C. Ignorant
- D. Tooth
- E. Humble
- F. Lethargy
- G. Ethbaal
- H. Volunteer
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4. At Rephidim (Ex. 17:8-13).
5. At Mount Hor (Num. 20:27-28).
6. In the wilderness of Sin (Ex. 16:14-15; viz. Ex 16:1).
7. At Succoth (Num. 33:5).
8. At Elim (Ex. 15:27).
9. At Taberah (Num. 11:1-3).
10. On Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:12-13).

Our pastor, an avid golfer, was once taking part in a local tournament. As he was preparing to tee off, the organizer of the tournament approached him and pointed to the dark, threatening storm clouds which were gathering. "Preacher," the organizer said, "I trust you'll see to it that the weather won't turn bad on us." Our pastor shook his head. "Sorry," he replied. "I'm sales, not management!"



## Good Times for Expository Preaching

OVER TWO YEARS AGO, I BEGAN THIS COLUMN WITH THE HEADLINE, “HARD TIMES FOR EXPOSITORY PREACHERS.”

That article opened with the following lines: “Expositional preaching has fallen on hard times. In an entertainment-hungry world, and with an increasingly entertainment-hungry church, it would appear that there is just too much serious stuff in exposition for it to appeal to anyone today. We think it doesn’t have the pinpoint ‘zing’ that we can create by delivering message candy of hot topics and controversial issues, so pastors are rejecting exposition in growing numbers, it seems.”

So, what’s changed? Maybe, just maybe, something significant is about to shift. I’ve just returned from Willow Creek’s REVEAL Conference. Over the last two or three years, key leaders from that church (notably Greg Hawkins) and others, dissatisfied with mere attendance numbers as a measure of Church health, have been exploring ways to evaluate and improve the way they disciple people. When you ask the right questions, good things happen. I think they asked an amazingly important question. Not just, “How do we reach them?” but also, “How do we disciple those we reach?” The resulting REVEAL surveys that hundreds of churches took led Willow to a series of conferences and books. They are well worth your time to attend and read.

REVEAL categorizes spiritual growth into four areas: 1) Exploring Christ, 2) Growing in Christ, 3) Close to Christ, and 4) Christ-Centered. Based on congregational surveys, REVEAL helps churches diagnose what percentage of their people fall into each category. They have yet to give tools to improve any particular area, but that (to me) is really good. Because REVEAL is saying, “Instead of a conference where we tell everyone what we are doing, how about if we feature churches who are

really making disciples well?” Great idea.

The conference I just attended brought churches that ranked high in these categories—churches of all sizes, by the way—and put them on the platform at the conference, along with common principles that these churches deemed successful. I won’t go into all those common character-

**There is a non-optional element of spiritual growth—a healthy dose of God’s Word.**

istics, but each of them are biblically relevant and would be well worth your investigation.

Here’s the rub: one of the four characteristics of churches that they deemed to have successfully disciplined their people was “**embed the Bible in**

**everything.**” On the stage at Willow Creek with thousands of church leaders in attendance, here’s what I heard that this means—we, among other things, **must not shy away from expository preaching.** Yes, I heard that from the Willow Creek stage. The leaders of the REVEAL movement recognize there is a non-optional element of spiritual growth—a healthy dose of God’s Word in preaching and teaching. One of the featured church leaders has a banner over his sanctuary that reads, “The Word of God is the Answer.” You’ve got to love that kind of guy.

Another key leader, the session leader and pastor of one of the fastest growing churches in America, said that the REVEAL survey led him to increase his biblical depth and content in messages more than 30% in order to better feed the people toward spiritual growth. Still another, a strong leader in a non-denominational mega-church, said that his only two

responsibilities are to “feed and lead,” and that he spends half his day everyday in preparation for preaching. Now, I know this guy, and I’ve heard him preach—he does indeed focus on the Word.

What is so significant to me about the REVEAL Conference is that the church



most noted for leading the “seeker movement” is now declaring to anyone that will listen that what people really need is the Word of God! Even more significantly, they are changing their focus to reflect that and calling to every church within their realm of influence to do the same.

The tide may be changing—and not a moment too soon. Christianity **needs** something that is radically missing today—life transformation. Only the Word can do that. One of my closing paragraphs two years ago read: “His Word does what only the Word can do. The Word builds faith; it increases one’s knowledge of God; it builds endurance in times of temptation; it gives direction and guidance for everyday living. It convicts of sin and corrects into the right way of living. **In a word, it transforms.**”

It is time to “preach the Word” like never before. May we do this with renewed passion and in increasing number. It is inevitable that the cry would be heard once again for the Word. *“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of God abides forever.”*



John Meador is senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas.



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