BECOMING AND REMAINING THE SALT OF THE EARTH
Bob Berard

In His incomparable sermon on the mount, Jesus said of His disciple, “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men” (Mat. 5:13). It is obvious from Jesus’ words that being salt is good for both the one so described and for the world in which he lives. Equally obvious is the waste of one’s life if he looses his savor, that is, if he looses the quality which makes him like salt. If we are to profit from our Lord’s teaching there are a few things more that we should know about salt and this analogy with godly living.

First, how are Christians like salt? We know that salt improves the taste of food and acts as a preservative; similarly, Christian conduct reflects Christ’s Word and seasons relationships with Heaven-sent attitudes and actions (Gal. 6:10; Mat. 28:19-20). We observe too that salt is used in relatively small quantities in comparison with the food it affects when doing its seasoning and preserving functions; similarly the Christian’s good works are a tiny fraction of the behaviors of men on the earth, but the long-term benefits of such good deeds may afford amazing improvement (Mat. 7:13-14; 5:16; 13:33).

A second worthwhile point about salt is the means by which one may become so characterized. To become a proper flavoring and preserving influence in the world, one must become a true disciple of Christ (John 8:12,31-32). Under Christ’s New Testament provisions, this means
God (Rom. 10:17). This faith is produced by right reasoning with the evidence found in God’s Word (John 20:30-31; 1 Th. 5:21). This faith results when one concludes what God has supplied. By such faith one accepts what God says is true. In other words, one having such faith or belief accepts what the Bible says that God will and will not do and accepts and applies what the Bible says that man should and should not do (Gal. 5:6; 1 John 5:3).

A third related point about salt is how to avoid loosing savor. Salt which is intermingled with “saltless” substances can be diluted into “saltlessness.” In like manner one’s distinctiveness as a follower of Christ is subject to an ebbing of strength and value. The devil is a past master at deceptively and subtly introducing such diluting substances into the lives of the unsuspecting or careless (Rev. 12:9; 1 Pet. 5:8). With outright sinful things or with entanglement with sinless cares and pleasures of this life, he drives or allures men away from God’s requirements and priorities. With an adversary of this ilk it is imperative that one consistently major in those matters that make him salt (Mat. 6:33; Phi. 4:8; Col. 3:17).

Having become salt, as noted above by compliance with the Lord’s will, one can easily undo the good accomplished by allowing the pollution of a saltless world to seep back into his life. This often happens almost imperceptibly. Those who once were zealous for the cause of Christ and abounding in the work of the Lord are by this process reduced to blandness, worthlessness, or worse. There is thus a constant need for renewal (Rom. 12:1-2). The devil’s relentlessness coupled with man’s laziness or laxity is a certain combination for desalination.

In general terms, the formula for continuing as the salt of the earth is simple. The faith building and faith working that produced the salt in the first place must be an ongoing part of one’s life. Of course this does not mean a repetition of one’s initial response of repenting of alien sins (Acts 2:38), confessing faith in Christ (Acts 8:37), and baptism into Christ (Gal. 3:26-27); rather, it means a regular recurring study of the Bible’s teaching so as to fortify one’s faith and confidence in God’s will and a continual application of His directions to the decisions one makes in life (Gal. 5:6). As Paul put it, “be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

Realizing one’s God-ordained purpose in life, reverencing God and keeping His commandments, will unfailing produce the salt of the earth about which Jesus spoke. As such, the faithful child of God will be blessed with God’ best and will be a blessing to others. The awful alternative to remaining salt is loosing one’s savor and thus his benefit to self and others. Shouldn’t the Lord’s words, “good for nothing,” ring in the ears of those so slipping away (Mat. 5:13; Heb. 2:1-4)?

P.O. Box 39; Spring, TX 77383

WHY THE EUNUCH WENT ON HIS WAY REJOICING

Howell Bigham

Christianity is a religion of joy and happiness. Paul wrote relative to the fruit of the Spirit “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23). Habakkuk 3:18 reads “Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” In Acts 8:26-40, we study the conversion of the eunuch of Ethiopia. Verse 39 of the inspired text states “and he went on his ray rejoicing.” We ask “Why did he go on his way rejoicing?” “What factors contributed to is being able to rejoice?” Friend, the eunuch went on his
joicing.” We ask “Why did he go on his way rejoicing?” “What factors contributed to his being able to rejoice?” Friend, the eunuch went on his way rejoicing because of:

**The Propitiation That Was Made For His Sins.** Observe that the eunuch was sitting in his chariot reading from Isaiah 53:7-8 which deals with Jesus dying for the sins of man. John wrote in First John 2:1-2, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” The apostle of love added in First John 4:10, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Yes, the eunuch was able to go on his way rejoicing because of the factor of propitiation.

**The Information He Was Given.** Acts 8:35 states that “Philip...preached unto him Jesus.” The Lord’s church, the church of Christ, has as its primary mission that of preaching the gospel to the lost. Paul with the pen of inspiration wrote, “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom. 10:15). We are to inform man of his need to be saved, the great sacrifice that was made for him, the hope that he has if he obeys and remains true to God, and the horror awaiting him if he refuses to obey the gospel and remain faithful!

**The Application That He Made.** The eunuch was able to go on his way rejoicing because he applied the gospel to his life (Acts 8:36; Jam. 1:21-25; Mat. 7:21; Luke 6:46). All of the information one might receive will not result in his salvation unless he acts upon that information in obeying the gospel!

**The Reconciliation That Took Place.** Prior to his conversion the eunuch was lost. However, when he obeyed the gospel, he was saved from his past sins (Acts 2:38). When he obeyed the truth, he became a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17). God had reconciled the eunuch to Himself by Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:18). He was reconciled to God by obeying the word of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19). This factor contributed to his being able to go on his way rejoicing!

**Conclusion:** As a result of the: (1) propitiation that was made for his sins; (2) information that he was given by Philip the preacher; (3) application of the Word of God to his life; and, (4) reconciliation that took place, the eunuch went on his way in jubilation. Friend, you can too if you will do what he did many, many years ago.

6677 County Road 236 Town Creek AL 34572

**DID MY NEIGHBOR...**

**Bill Jackson**

See that I do not make time for Sunday Bible study?

See that I only give the Lord Sunday mornings, but spend the Sunday evening worship time for my own pleasures?

See that I absent myself from the assembly when guests come into my home, and thus I put men before God?

Hear from my lips speech that is impure, and unbecoming any child of God?

See that I have done little to train up my children in the way of the Lord, and that I have exercised very little discipline in the home?

Then I know some reasons why my friends and neighbors have not shown interest in the truth, and why they may never be converted!

Deceased
Sick and Shut-in
Please remember in your prayers: Mary Muldoon, Leon Waters, Marilyn Hai and Martha Wilcoxson.

Reading/Invitation
January, 1997
Reading: Richard Parker
Invitation: Bill Crowe
January 15, 1997
Reading: Ray Wilcoxson
Invitation: Ray Dodd

Mark These Dates
January 19, 1997—Monthly Bible Bowl at Bellview, at 2:00 P.M. Study James 4 and 1 Peter 1-3.

Pantry Food Needed
Canned Meat

The Average Man and tv
Glenn Colley
An article recently pointed out that the average man in America, among other things, is 5'9" tall and weighs 173 pounds. He is married, and would marry her again. He spends about 7.2 hours a week eating. He prefers showering to taking a bath. He doesn’t know his cholesterol count, but it’s 211. He hates to ask for directions when in the car and he watches 26 hours and 44 minutes of TV a week.
Wait! Almost 27 hours of TV? Now that’s a shocker—especially considering the important things we put off because we “don’t have time.” There are the children who need one-on-one time with their parents. Then there’s the spouse who needs attention and conversation. The Bible says, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise” (Eph. 5:15). I will never see this day but once. Let me spend it wisely.
GIVING DEMONSTRATED...

Toney L. Smith

Have you ever thought of your giving as a test of your faith? When God wanted to test Abraham’s faith, He called upon him to give his son! Abraham proved his faith and his love for God by his willingness to sacrifice the life of his son. Paul in speaking of the faith of Abraham said, “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Rom. 4:20). Abraham did not waver in his demonstration of love for God and his faith in Him. Could it be a weak faith that keeps men from being liberal in the giving of his time and sometimes in the giving of his money.

This Is a Story That Is Actually Supposed to Have Happened. Two well-to-do Christians, a lawyer and a merchant, joined a party that was going around the world. One day in Korea, they saw a field by the side of the road. In this field was a little boy who was pulling a crude plow. An old man held the plow handles and directed it through the rice paddy. The lawyer was amazed and took a snapshot of the scene. “That is a very curious sight,” he said to the missionary to Korea, who was their translator and guide for the tour. “Yes” was the reply. “That is the family of Chi Noui. When the church building was being built they were eager to give something towards its construction but had no money.

So they sold the ox they had and gave the money to the church. This spring they are pulling the plow themselves.”

The lawyer and merchant were silent for a moment. Then the merchant said, “That must have been a real sacrifice. “They did not call it that,” said the guide. “They thought it was fortunate that they had an ox to sell.”

The two tourists had little to say. When they
returned home the lawyer took the picture to his minister and told him the story. “I want to double my contribution to the church, and I am asking the elders to give me some low-work to do.” He told the minister that he had never known what sacrifice and love for the Lord really meant until now, and I am ashamed to say that I have never given anything to God that really ever cost me anything.

This is a true story. It is only when one has faith and real love for God that he will be liberal in the giving of himself and his money. Abraham demonstrated his faith and love in sacrificing his son to God. God has demonstrated His love and liberality for you and me in the sacrificing of His Son of Calvary (John 3:16; 1 John 3:16).

What do I demonstrate?

517 Gaylord Road; Dresden, TN 38225

“ANN LANDERS AND THE CHURCH OF CHRIST”

Robert Dodson

Did you read Ann Landers in the Star Telegram on Monday, November 11, 1996? Someone handed me a copy of her article entitled “Tracing Religious Roots.” It informs us of the founder, place, and time of different religious groups. But she made a mistake when it comes to the Roman Catholic, saying, “Jesus Christ began your religion in the year 33.”

Roman Catholics did not exist until centuries later. The church Jesus built began in Jerusalem, not Rome (Acts 2; Isa. 2:2-3). Jesus was the head of the church, not the Pope (Col. 1:18). Its headquarters are in heaven (Eph. 1:20-22).

Members of Christ’s church were known as “Christians,” not Catholics (Acts 11:26; 1 Pet. 4:16). They belonged to “churches of Christ,” not Catholic parishes (Rom. 16:16).

It was the church of Christ that Jesus founded in the first century, not Roman Catholicism (Mat. 16:18; Acts 20:28). Interestingly, although there are many churches of Christ today, Ann did not mention this church in her list!

The fact is that the Roman Catholic Church is the result of many departures from the faith over a number of years (1 Tim. 4:1-3). In time Martin Luther sought to reform the Catholic Church, and many others established new churches. Jesus built only one church (Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 12:13).

Some say the church of Christ is just another denomination which was founded by Alexander Campbell a few hundred years ago. Yet, the designation, organization, faith, and practice of this church (its existence as revealed in the New Testament) precede Alexander Campbell by about 1800 years! He did not establish a new church; he simply preached the gospel, as many others before and after him. Whenever and wherever this “seed” is planted in the hearts of men and responded to in obedience, there is the church of Christ (Luke 8:11; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38-47; 8:35-39; 18:8). Roman Catholicism and Denominationalism were so “planted” by God—but by man; they will be “rooted up” (Mat. 15:13).

I am thankful to Ann for pointing out the human origin of the many churches of our day—but regret that she would associate my Lord Jesus with the founding of Roman Catholicism.

I am also thankful to her for pointing out that the Salvation Army is “a religious group.” Since it is not the church Jesus began, it must (like all others) be a false religion. Therefore, we should know better than to contribute to its work (or the works of others).

Ann began her article with this question: “Do
Are you moving soon? If you are moving and wish to continue receiving the Beacon, please send us your new address. Each returned issue of the Beacon costs us 32 cents postage. When a returned issue is received the address is deleted from the mailing list.

BELLVIEW LECTURES

The Twenty-second Annual Bellview Lectures, Leadership, will be held June 7-11.

Twenty-eight men will be speaking: Billy Bland, David P. Brown, Curtis Gates, B. J. Clarke, Wayne Coats, Harrell Davidson, Buster Dobbs, Bobby Duncan, Garland Elkins, Steve Ellis, Guss Eoff, Joe Galloway, Joe Gilmore, Noah Hackworth, Michael Hatcher, Bobby Liddell, Jerry Martin, Dub McClish, Joe Meadow, Jerry Moffet, Clifford Newell, Flavil Nichols, Ira Y. Rice, James Rogers, Stanley Ryan, Gary Summers, Joel Wheeler, and Eddie Whitten. The following men will be writing lessons for the lectureship book but will not be speaking: Gary Grizzell, David Hester, Terry Hightower, Keith Mosher, and Fred Stanchiff.

The lecture topics include: Qualifications Of Elders And Deacons, Exposition Of 1 Peter 5:1-4, Elder—Elder, Deacon, Preacher Relations, Elders Duty To Members, Members Duty To Elders, Work Of Deacons, Re-evaluation Of Elders?, Moses—Great Example Of Leadership, Joshua—Great Example Of Leadership, David—Great Example Of Leadership, Nehemiah—Great Example Of Leadership,Jesus—Great Leader Of

Men, Authority Of Elders, Lording It Over The Flock, Qualities Of A Leader, Decision Making In Leadership, History Of Departure In Leadership, Women As Elders And Deacons, Goal Setting In Leadership, How To Handle Criticism, Inspiring Brethren To Good Works, Elders As Watchmen, Elders And The Stewardship Of Souls, Tending The Flock, Congregations Without Elders, Eldership And Old Testament Concepts, Elders And Church Discipline, and The Spirit Of Obedience. The following topics will appear in the lectureship book: Selection Of Elders And Deacons, Elders And Money, Conflict Resolution, Stopping Their Mouths, and Elders And The Hiring Of Preachers.

If you are planning on attending the Bellview Lectures be sure to make your motel reservations now. The Hospitality Inn (4910 Mobile Highway; Pensacola, FL 32506) offers the following price (tax not included) $45—1 to 4 people per room. For reservations call 904-453-3333. When calling for reservations be sure to tell them you will be attending the Bellview Lectures.

Pensacola is a great place to take your summer vacation and at the same time attend the Bellview Lectures. For further information please contact the office by phone, mail or at our e-mail address (whatcher@sprynet.com). We hope to see you in June.

MOVING!!

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Sick and Shut-in
Please remember in your prayers: Mary Muldoon, Leon Waters, Marilyn Hall, Martha Wilcoxson, and Harold Cozad.

Reading/Invitation
January 15, 1997
Reading: Ray Wilcoxson
Invitation: Ray Dodd
January 22, 1997
Reading: Ray Williams
Invitation: Ray Foshee

Mark this Date
January 19, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Bellview, at 2:00 P.M. Study James 4 and 1 Peter 1-3.

Pantry Food Needed
Canned Fruit

Winter Tune-up Special
Adjust your lights so others may see your good works and glorify God.
Set your timing so as to be in the assembly on time.
Adjust your brakes on you tongue; it is in a slippery place.
Tune-up your heart and have the peace of mind that passes understanding.
Align your directions that you may be able to steer yourself up the straight and narrow road that leads to life eternity without a wreck.
Tune your mind so as to think on pure, holy and noble things.
For a quick start and a sure victory, be ready always to do the Lord’s will.
Anti-freeze your heart and “be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”
Lubricate your spirit with the “oil of gladness: rejoicing always in the Lord.”
Re-tire with full assurance of eternal life.

Author Unknown
NOT LOSING HEART IN THE MIDST OF AFFLICTION

Al Macias

Life can sometimes be so unbearable. There are so many things in life that can come our way that can bring us great discouragement if we are not careful. We today are living in a world full of surprises. It almost seems that life is no longer what it used to be in the long ago. In the days of a much simpler form of life, it was easier to deal with life; but now we live in a very hectic world, where all seem to be in hurry to get nowhere. People are sometimes so materialistic and so ambitious to get ahead in life that they have forgotten what life is all about.

In the book written by James, he addresses Christians that were becoming discouraged because of trials and tribulations which were coming their way. And James says to these brethren that we all can learn from those who have gone before us and we can learn from the examples they have left us to follow. We read in James 5:10-11, “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.”

The prophets of old did not meet with much success, and yet they would never give up preaching what the Lord wanted the people to hear. It is very discouraging for anyone who has been involved in sharing the Word of God with...
others to find that there are many who are lost in their sins and in their ignorance, and yet do not want to take the time to hear those words that can help them be right with God. Some of these people are so contradictory that they are not happy just rejecting the Word of God, they have to make the lives of those who are trying to do what is right before God as unbearable as they can. James told the brethren of the first century, as well as us, not be become discouraged with what people may do to us for trying to be as faithful as we can be. Rather we should learn from those that went before us and see how they also suffered much, yet never gave up, and they continued to be faithful all the days of their lives. One good example of one who lost all he had is Job. In one day he lost all of his family, all of his possessions, all of his animals, and all of his servants; yet, he said, “Jehovah God giveth, Jehovah God taketh away; let the name of Jehovah be blessed.” How do we deal with discouragement when it comes our way? Let us never give up, for in due time we shall reap what we have sowed.

8900 Manchaca Road; Austin, TX 78748

RULES FOR IMPROVING THE CHURCH

1. Tell yourself over and over that since you are not perfect, you would not fit into a perfect congregation even if one existed.
2. Instead of picking out some careless member to compare yourself to, pick out the most sincere, dedicated, spiritually-minded person and thank God for them. You will find what you look for.
3. If you are old, treat the young with the same consideration you desired as a young person. If you are young, treat adults with respect you will want when you are mature.
4. When you are tempted to be very critical of someone, try praying for them. It may not help them but it will do wonders for you.
5. When you see some work neglected, instead of being critical, offer to help.
6. Never blame others for your failures, but be sure to credit others with your successes.
7. Consciously look for the good qualities in every brother or sister in Christ. When you think of a brother or sister make a mental note of some of his or her good points.
8. Constantly strive to increase the circle of your associates in the church. Try to do something good for each.
9. Every church has problems if there are any human beings at all in it. Constantly ask yourself, “Am I part of the problem?”
10. Remind yourself every day that the only way you can improve the world or the church is to begin with yourself.

Via “Greenville Messenger”

THE DEATH OF CHRIST

Garry Stanton

The death of Christ was a violent death. Crucifixion on a cross was a horrible way to die. The Jews detested that form of execution, “for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal. 3:13). Even the Romans despised this form of death, Cicero said, “Let the very name of the cross be far away, not only from the body of a Roman citizen, but even from his thoughts, his eyes, his
Crucifixion was not used because it was the fastest way to die but because it was an agonizing way to die. Crucifixion was a slow, painful, shameful death which no man deserved.

The death of Christ was a **VICARIOUS** death. Jesus died for the cause and benefit of others. Jesus lived an innocent life, He did not do anything deserving of death “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (1 Pet. 3:18). Sin always requires death (Rom. 6:23; Eze. 18:20), and Jesus died so that we would not have to die spiritually because of the sins which we have committed. “For when ye were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet periladventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:6-8). We should thank God everyday that He loved us so much that He sent His only begotten Son to die so we might live.

The death of Christ was a **VOLUNTARY** death. Isaiah predicted long ago that the Christ would pour out His soul unto death (Isa. 53:12). Jesus poured out His blood, it was not spilt. Pouring implies an intentional act whereas spilling implies that which is accidental. Jesus “humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phi. 2:8). The voluntary nature of Jesus’ death is clearly seen in His own words, He said, “I lay down my life...No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself (John 10:17-18). Premillennialism is wrong about Jesus’ death when it says that His death was not planned. Jesus predicted nor His own death on many occasions and the bull Scriptures teach that His death was part of the eternal plan of God (Eph. 3:11; 1 Pet. 1:19-20). Jesus’ death was preventable but Jesus and His Father chose not to prevent it. Jesus told Pilate, “Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above” (John 19:11). Jesus could have prevented His own death by calling for the twelve legions of angels” which were at His disposal (Mat. 26:53). Jesus freely laid down His life for us so that we could be saved.

The death of Christ was a **VICTORIOUS** death. The power of God triumphed over evil “when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places...And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church” (Eph. 1:20, 22). The forces of right dealt Satan a death blow at Jesus’ resurrection from which Satan will never be able to recover. All of Christianity is based upon the resurrection for “if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins” (1 Cor. 15:17). “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept (1 Cor. 15:20).

The death of Christ can be a **VAI N** death if we do not obey God’s will. As far as it concerns us, if we do not obey, Jesus died for nothing! Don’t let Jesus’ death be for nothing. Obey and keep on obeying all the days of your life.

2707 Mt. Holly Road; Camden, AR 71701

**MOVING!!**

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Sick and Shut-in
Please remember in your prayers: Mary Muldoon, Leon Waters, Marilyn Hall, Martha Wilcoxon, Harold Cozad, and Robert Bailey (Nancy Loy’s father).

Reading/Invitation
January 22, 1997
Reading: Ray Williams
Invitation: Ray Foshee
January 29, 1997
Reading: Elward Brantly
Invitation: Bill Gallaher

Mark These Dates
January 19, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Bellview, at 2:00 P.M. Study James 4 and 1 Peter 1-3.
January 19, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
January 26, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
February 8, 1997–New Members’ Banquet at 6:00 P.M., in the general purpose building. There will be a pot-luck dinner. All members of the Bellview congregation are invited to be there.

Pantry Food Needed
Canned Fruit

1 Corinthians 16:1-3
“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the church of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.”
MEETING TIMES

SUNDAY:
9:00 A.M. BIBLE CLASSES
10:00 A.M., 6:00 P.M. WORSHIP

WEDNESDAY: 7:00 P.M.

BISHOPS: Paul Brantley, Bill Gallaher, Fred Stancliff
MINISTER: Michael Hatcher
MISSIONARY: Ira Y. Rice, Jr.

“UNDERSTANDEST THOU WHAT THOU SINGEST?”
Dub McClish

In an attempt to help us better understand some of the words and phrases of some of our spiritual songs, I offer the following comments:

When we sing “Ivory Palaces” we sing in the second verse that “aloes had a part” in Jesus’ life. Aloe, a perfume made from the oil of a tree, was provided by Nicodemus to prepare the body of Jesus for burial (John 19:36) and thus symbolizes the sorrow surrounding His death.

What is an “Ebenezer” (“O Thou Fount Of Every Blessing”)? The word means “the stone of help” and it refers to the stone Samuel erected as a memorial of God’s miraculous help to Israel in routing the Philistines (1 Sam. 7:10-12).

In the song “Give Me The Bible” we sing of the “glory gilding Jordan’s wave” (some misread it as gliding). That which is gilded is overlaid with gold. “Jordan’s wave” is a figurative reference to death as Israel had to literally cross the Jordan River to enter the promised land, so we must die to cross over into Heaven. Death holds men in fear, but the promises and comforts of God’s Word make death attractive as though gilded for the faithful servant.

If you won a “Guerdon” (“Beautiful Isle Of Somewhere”), would you know what you had won? “Guerdon” simply means a reward and refers to the promise of God to reward His children in Heaven, that poetic “Beautiful Isle Of Somewhere.”

“Tis Midnight, And On Olive’s Brow” has two expressions that some may miss. First, “Olive’s Brow” does not refer to the forehead of Popeye’s sweetheart! Just east of Jerusalem, across the Kidron Valley, is the Mount of Olives (“Olivet”) upon whose side (“Brow”) is the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus retired there with His apostles and prayed His prayers of agony on the eve of the crucifixion (John 18:1; Mat.
26:36). Second, the last verse of the song speaks of “ether [not either] plains,” which is a figurative reference to the vast regions of space or Heaven. What is “Ebon Pinion” in “Night With Ebon Pinion”? “Ebon” refers to the color black (as ebony). A “pinion” is the wing of a bird. The setting of this song is the betrayal and crucifixion of Jesus. This series of events was so dark and somber that it was as though some great black bird, bearing doom, had cast its shadow over the Lord as He knelt in Gethsemane, was betrayed, tried, and finally crucified.

Hopefully, these few examples of wordings in our songs will stimulate us to look at what we are singing and make those words truly the petitions of our hearts as we address God in song.

Can a member of the Masonic Lodge go to Heaven?

David P. Brown

Yes...

IF God will accept mere men being addressed as “Worshipful Master,” “Most Worshipful Master,” and “Right Worshipful Master” or in the case of the Eastern Star (The woman’s twin to the Masonic Lodge.), “Worthy High Priestess” or “Royal Matron,” etc.

IF God will accept Christians who have kneeled, been blind-folded, and with hands on the Bible took a solemn oath “in the presence of Almighty God, and this Worshipful Lodge erected to Him, and dedicated to the holy Saint John do hereby and hereupon most solemnly and sincerely promise and swear...” and made a “Master Mason” (3rd degree); a “Mark Mason” (4th degree); a “Past Master” (5th degree); and then a “Most Excellent Master” upon taking the sixth degree.

IF God will accept prayers worded in the following manner from Christians and non-Christians. “And when we shall have ended our labors on earth may we forever sing songs of deliverance and joy in that Heavenly Lodge where love is supreme and the ties of fraternity and friendship are never to be broken. Amen.” (Masonic Manual, Grand Lodge, A.F. and A.M. of Alabama, Compiled under Authority of the Grand Lodge by Oliver Day Street, 1940, Reprint 1943, Premier Printing Company, Birmingham, Alabama, p. 145).

IF God will save religious institutions others than the church of Christ. “Masonry, then, indeed, a religious institution; and on this ground mainly, if not alone, should the religious Mason defend it.” (Encyclopedia to Freemasonry, McClure Publishing Co., Philadelphia, 1917, p. 729).

IF, along with the church of Christ, God will accept Masonry as a divine institution. “That the institution is of Divine origin, leaves no not a shadow of doubt on my humble mind.” (The Freemason’s Monitor, Z. A. Davis, Late Past Master of Lafayette Lodge, No. 71, p. 4 of the Preface).

IF God will accept the following statement about a deceased Mason made at Masonic funerals. “As a reminder to the living of that rectitude of conduct which should characterize man in this life, we deposit this apron with the body of our deceased brother with the hope that the virtues symbolized by it will gain ready passage for him from our important lodge here to that all-perfect, celestial lodge above where there is a higher, a wider and a brighter realm of life and labor” (Masonic Manual, p. 84).

IF God will accept the doctrine that whatever a man believes to be the truth is the truth to him (Morals and Dogma, Albert Pike, p. 160).

IF God accepts people into heaven contrary to His will (Mat. 7:21; 2 John 6-11).
WHAT IS OBEDIENCE?

Steve Ellis

That which God expects of man and that upon which our salvation is conditioned may be summed up in one word: obedience. Hebrews 5:9 declares that Jesus is “author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” And what shall be the fate of those who do not obey him? Paul wrote that when Jesus returns He do so “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 The. 1:8).

Since the essentiality of obedience to salvation is so plainly taught in the Bible, why do so many seemingly sincere religious people fail to obey God? Surely one general reason is that they do not understand what constitutes obedience as defined by God in His Word. In view of the fact that the majority of those who claim to believe in Christ espouse the false doctrine of salvation by “faith only,” it is not surprising that denominationalists fail to define and stress obedience to God. In contrast to such error, we need to help people see the truth.

Let us consider some things which are frequently mistaken for the obedience that God requires of those whom He saves. A great many people seem to think that merely working the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7); using mechanical instruments of music in worship (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16); and omitting immersion in water for the remission of sins from God’s plan of salvation (Acts 2:38).

The truth is, of course, that genuine obedience must be complete and precisely in accord with that which has been revealed by God in His Holy Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17). While we understand that sinless perfection is impossible for us (1 John 1:8), it must be that for which we strive (1 John 2:1a). Jehovah has ever required His children to carefully obey His commandments without presumptive addition, subtraction, or substitution (Deu. 4:2; Lev. 10:1-2; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11; Rev. 22:18-19). Noah and his family were saved when the rest of humanity perished because “according to all that God commanded him, so did he” (Gen. 6:22). Satan has duped millions into believing that God will accept and approve such distortions of true obedience as those mentioned above. We must do all we can, through both our doctrine and our lifestyles, to help people understand the truth on this vital issue.
Sick and Shut-in
Please remember in your prayers Mary Muldoon, Leon Waters, Marilyn Hall, Martha Wilcoxon, Nancy Travis, and Scot Brazell.

Sympathy
Our deepest sympathy is extended to Nancy Loy in the death of her father, Robert Bailey. Please keep Nancy and her family in your prayers.

Baptism
Paul McManaman was baptized on January 16, 1997. Keep Paul in your prayers.

Reading/Invitation
January 29, 1997
Reading: Elward Brantley
Invitation: Bill Gallaher
February 5, 1997
Reading: Allen Brazell
Invitation: Louis Herrington

Mark These Dates
January 26, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
February 8, 1997–New Members’ Banquet at 6:00 P.M., in the general purpose building. There will be a pot-luck dinner. All members of the Bellview congregation are invited to be there.
February 16, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Foley, at 2:00 P.M. Study 1 Peter 4-5 and 2 Peter 1-3.

Pantry Food Needed
Canned Fruit
THE WORLD AND IT’S THINKING

DuWayne McNaughton

The religious world is changing at a very rapid pace. More and more churches are going the way of entertainment in an effort to attract and keep its membership. It seems that the demands of the world is having a definite effect on the thinking of religious minded People. The church of Christ is also being influenced by this ever increasing problem. Elderships and church leaders are yielding to the wishes of their prospective congregations, and I am afraid that in some places, the church of Christ has all but lost it’s identity!

No one can deny the attractiveness of the . We have more to entertain us and keep us occupied than ever before. We have television, radio, and games too numerous to count. There is no way the church can compete with the allurements of the world. However, the church is not in the entertainment business. The business of the church is to save souls and edify those who have been saved! It is essential for us to realize that we must develop a strong and active faith to sustain us during these very troubling times. The Bible warns us against being overly attached to the world and its thinking (2 Tim. 2:3-4; Jam. 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17).

As the Lord’s people, we should ever see the need to read and study our Bibles daily (Acts 17:10-11; 2 Tim. 2:15). Also, we need to engage in sincere and meaningful prayer (1 Th. 5:17). And, we should resolve to attend all of the services of the church with a hearty spirit, and a good attitude (Psa. 122:1; Heb. 10:25).

I sincerely believe that the only thing that will safeguard our lives against the evil world and its thinking, is a deeper and personal commitment to Jesus Christ and His Word! But,
let me warn all of us, there is no magical formula, we must be willing to pay the price!

5477 Taylor Road; Anniston, AL 36206

WHAT IS A PREACHER SUPPOSE TO DO?

Oran Rhodes

I read a survey done by Joe Riggs of Jackson, Tennessee, a few years ago in which church members were asked to state the percentage of his time they felt the preacher should spend in different works: Sermon preparation=65%; General church work=25%; Administration=0%; Public relations=45%; Counseling=60%; Visiting non-members=80%; and Visiting members=85%.

All of this adds up to 360% of his time in church work. That evidently would leave very little time for a family or even for sleep. There are 168 hours in the week and thus one would need to add 436 hours to his week in order for the preacher to get done what brethren think needs done. Someone else in commenting on this survey said, “It is also interesting to note the highest percentage involved visiting members. Do we want pastors or preachers? Have we turned so inward, that we really want our preachers to spend 85% of their time holding the hands of the saved rather than reaching out to the unsaved?”

The main thing that comes across to me from this is that it is no wonder so many good men become discouraged and disgusted and get out of local preaching. If one were to pay attention to the desires expressed or to the complaints made, the preacher would never be able to do the work he became a gospel preacher to do. Brethren, we need to put away childish things and grow into maturity!

WHEN WAS HE SAVED?

Al Brown

Most people are not concerned about their eternal destiny. They refuse to focus their attention on how life should be lived and what happens after death. Most are content to remain blissfully ignorant of the Bible, pay a token allegiance to Christ one or two times a year, and then live as if there were no God. Paul described such people in Titus 1:16: “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.”

On those occasions when he sees a need for God, he usually has no idea where to begin. The it is only natural for him to ask religious friends or relatives what he should do. Usually, he gets so many different answers, he becomes even more confused. One thing he will probably hear is: “Just believe in Jesus.” Certainly, belief is essential. This is not, however, the whole answer if the Bible is the final authority on the matter—and it is. It is the only word from God we have. All else is speculation.

Denominational people do not understand the word, “believe,” in the way the Bible uses it in reference to salvation. They think “believe” means: the moment a person “believes” Christ is his personal Savior, he is saved—without doing anything. Thus, he is saved by faith only. He cannot do anything; he cannot obey any commandment that would be a condition of salvation. This is pure Calvinism—a false doctrine.

Besides, they do not really believe in Christ,
for Jesus said: “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say” (Luke 6:46)? They refuse to “do” anything in order to be saved, even if Jesus Himself commands it. It makes one wonder who makes the laws in Christianity—Christ, the head of the church and who has all authority (Mat. 28:18), or finite man?

Many people claim the Bible is their only creed. They say it is God’s inspired guidebook for man; yet most Scriptures relative to salvation, or almost anything else, is explained away just ignored. They may not intentionally mislead others. More likely, what they tell other is what they themselves have been taught. One thing is certain: someone, at sometime, has perverted the gospel, and they have believed is false doctrine.

No one is expected to blindly accept this charge without supporting evidence, but a study of the Scriptures should convince any honest seeker of truth that the charge is not groundless. Those who say one only has to believe also claim he is saved the moment he believes. Nothing else is required, especially baptism. This is what they mean when they say a person is saved “on the point of faith.” Those who hold this view agree that if one is saved, his sins are forgiven; i.e., the instant he believes his sins are forgiven. Hence, he is saved.

Several Scriptures present a very different picture. Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). Peter told those who believed on Pentecost to “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Peter wrote: “baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21). In describing his own conversion, Paul said he was told to “arise, and be baptized, and wash away [his] sins” (Acts 22:16). At this time, he had been a believer for three days (Acts 9:3-18)! If he was saved the instant he believed, why were his sins still unforgiven three days later? Was he saved while he was still in sin? Any one with an honest heart who candidly looks at the evidence in Paul’s conversion has to conclude that he was not saved the moment he believed; but at the time his sins were “washed away” in baptism!

The Bible does not teach one is saved at the point of faith. It does not teach there is nothing he can do in order to be saved. This is what Calvinism teaches. Jesus, who is, after all, the architect of his own religion (Heb. 12:2) teaches the opposite: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 7:21). Can anyone ignore this teaching of Christ, or refuse to obey it, and still be saved?

P.O. Box 39; Spring, TX 77383

THINK ABOUT THIS!!

When Herbert Hoover was President, he, Mrs. Hoover, and an official group stopped one beautiful Lord’s day morning at a little church building in the mountains of Pennsylvania. Most of the members were out for a drive that day and didn’t even give passing thoughts to the importance of assembling for worship. Only 13 people were present when the President’s party came in.

Afterwards, the absent members said, “If we had known that the President would be there we would have gone to church.” This is so typical of people who do not realize the importance of the assemblies of the saints!

True Christians do not miss a President when they fail to attend services—they miss the KING OF KINGS!!

Author Unknown
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Mary Muldoon, Leon Waters, Martha Wilcoxson, Thomas Muldoon Williams, Nancy Travis, and Scot Brazell, Michael Hatcher’s grandmother, Paulene, is in the hospital in Dallas.

READING/INVITATION
February 5, 1997
Reading: Allen Brazell
Invitation: Louis Herrington
February 12, 1997
Reading: Jerry Caine
Invitation: Tim Lamb

MARK THESE DATES
February 8, 1997–New Members’ Banquet at 6:00 P.M., in the general purpose building. There will be a pot-luck dinner. All members of the Bellview congregation are encouraged to be there.
February 9, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
February 16, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Foley, at 2:00 P.M. Study 1 Peter 1 and 2 Peter 1-3.
February 16, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.

PANTRY FOOD NEEDED
Canned Fruit

DIRECTORY CHANGES
Please make the following changes to your directories: change the telephone numbers for Ida Williams to 476-44409, Donna Waites to 969-1805 (pocket rectory only), and David and Kelly to 455-8820 (pocket only).
IF ONLY THEY HAD LET A DOCTOR KILL THEIR BABY
B. J. Clarke

Just a few weeks ago, Brian Carl Peterson and Amy Suzanne Grossberg were indicted by a grand jury in Wilmington, Delaware. They were charged with first-degree murder charges in the death of their newborn baby. According to police, Grossberg secretly gave birth to the child in a motel room on November 12th after which Peterson placed the 6-pound 2-ounce baby boy in a plastic trash bag discarded him in the motel’s trash bin.

What a tragic case, and so unnecessary. If only they had acted sooner, they could have avoided all of these charges and the associated bad publicity. If only they had realized that there were other “more civilized” ways to get rid of a baby. If only they had possessed the dignity to have their baby professionally killed, then all would be well right now. They could have hired a hit-man dressed in surgery scrubs to do the job for them, and it all would have been legal. How could they be so foolish? If they had only thought of it, when Amy first learned that she was pregnant, they could have hired a doctor to employ a vacuum tube with a sharp blade attached to it, and he could have sucked the child from the womb, dicing it up into several pieces. Then, instead of the police picking up the child out of the plastic trash bag, a nurse could have reassembled the severed body parts to make sure that none were accidentally left in the mother’s womb. Surely, that would have been more humane than dumping the child in the trash can.

Or Brian and Amy could have opted for a later method of abortion. Sometime between her
7th and 12th week of pregnancy, a doctor could have entered her womb with a loop shaped steel knife. With this knife he could have sliced the placenta from the walls of the uterus and cut the baby’s tiny body into pieces. Wouldn’t that have been more humane than having the baby and throwing it away?

Still again, between the 12th and 18th week of the pregnancy, they could have hired a hit-man to perform a D & E abortion. In this case, without providing any fetal anesthetic, the doctor could have utilized a sharp toothed pliers-like instrument to dismember the baby part by part until all parts were removed from the womb. The bleeding would be profuse, but it would still be more humane than just throwing the baby in the trash can, would it not? Besides that, it would have been legal!

If only Brian and Amy had realized that after 16 weeks of pregnancy, they had the option of seeking a salt-poisoning abortion. They could have hired a doctor to insert a long needle through the mother’s abdomen into the baby’s sac and inject a solution of concentrated salt. The baby would have breathed in the salt and been poisoned by it. The corrosive effect of the salt would have burned off the outer layer of the baby’s skin. Just over an hour after the injection the baby would have been dead. About 24 hours later, Amy would have delivered the dead child and “professional” personnel could have thrown it into a trash can for her. Then she could have walked out the door and resumed a normal life.

Or Amy could have had a C-section abortion, a hysterotomy. This late-term method of abortion is just like a C-section until after the cord is cut. In a Cesarean Section, the baby’s phlegm is sucked out, and taken to the intensive care of a newborn nursery where everything is done to care for the child. In a C-section abortion, the cord is cut and the child is deposited in the trash can. The method is not that much different than what Brian and Amy did, except that a “qualified” killer legally carries out the operation. It is much more humane to have go doctor throw your baby into the trash can than for you to do it personally.

Amy could have even had a partial-birth abortion, and that with the approval of the President of the United States. Although in March of 1996, Congress gave final approval to a bill to ban partial-birth abortions, except when necessary to save the mother’s life, President Clinton vetoed the bill on April 10, 1996, thus allowing partial-birth abortions to continue to be performed without restriction.

With the permission of the Supreme Court and President of the United States, Brian and Amy could have killed their baby and avoided the indictment of murder for doing so. A partial-birth abortion would have been their ticket to freedom from the baby and from legal action. With the fetal heartbeat clearly registering on the monitor, a doctor could have delivered the baby’s body and arms, everything but his little head. Then, while the baby’s feet were kicking, the doctor could have jammed scissors into the baby’s skull, and then opened the scissors to enlarge the hole in the baby’s head! Of course, the impact of the scissors would have caused the baby’s arms to jerk out in a flinched, startled reaction, like a baby does when he thinks he might fall. But the pain wouldn’t have lasted too long, because the doctor would have stuck a high-powered suction tube into the hole in the baby’s head and sucked the baby’s brains out. The limp and lifeless body of the baby would have been disposed of, and a few hours later, Brian and Amy could have left the hospital to pursue their
If only they had taken advantage of executing their child through the means of the legalized death penalty known as abortion, then they wouldn’t be facing the death penalty themselves. If only they had exercised their choice to go to an abortion clinic and exterminate the baby, they would be cast as national heroes, exercising their freedom to choose. Instead, they are behind bars, facing a potential death penalty. How tragic! If only Brian Peterson and Amy Grossberg had remembered to let a doctor till their baby, they would have been praised and not arrested! What a country!

If you are planning on attending the Bellview Lectures be sure to make your motel reservations now. The Hospitality Inn (4910 Mobile Highway; Pensacola, FL 32506) offers the following price (tax not included) $45—1 to 4 people per room. For reservations call 904-453-3333. When calling for reservations be sure to tell them you will be attending the Bellview Lectures.

Pensacola is a great place to take your summer vacation and at the same time attend the Bellview Lectures. For further information please contact the office by phone, mail or at our e-mail address (whatcher@sprynet.com). We hope to see you in June.

BELLEVIEW
LECTURES

The Twenty-second Annual Belleview Lectures, Leadership, will be held June 7-11. Twenty-eight men will be speaking: Billy Bland, David P. Brown, Curtis Gates, B. J. Clarke, Wayne Coats, Harrell Davidson, Buster Dobb, Bobby Duncan, Garland Elkins, Steve Ellis, Guss Eoff, Joe Galloway, Joe Gilmore, Noah Hackworth, Michael Hatcher, Bobby Liddell, Jerry Martin, Dub McClish, Joe Meador, Jerry Moffet, Clifford Newell, Flavil Nichols, Ira Y. Rice, James Rogers, Stanley Ryan, Gary Summers, Joel Wheeler, and Eddie Whitten. The following men will be writing lessons for the lectureship book but will not be speaking: Gary Grizzell, David Hester, Terry Hightower, Keith Mosher, and Fred Stancliff.

SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Mary Muldoon, Leon Waters, Marilyn Hall
Martha Wilcoxson, Thomas Muldoon, Ida Williams, Nancy Travis, Diana Brazell,
Pauline Hatcher (Michael Hatcher’s grandmother).

RESTORED
Jessie Cozad, Ray Dodd, and Harold Maxey were restored on January 26, 199;
and Lou Gafford was restored on February 2, 1997. Please keep them in your prayers.

READING/INVITATION
February 12, 1997
Reading: Jerry Caine
Invitation: Tim Lamb
February 19, 1997
Reading: Bill Cline
Invitation: Tony Liddell

MARK THESE DATES
February 8, 1997–New Members’ Banquet at 6:00 P.M., in the general purpose building. There will be a pot-luck dinner. All members of the Bellview congregation are encouraged to be there.
February 9, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
February 16, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Foley, at 2:00 P.M. Study 1 Peter 4-5 and 2 Peter 1-3.
February 16, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
February 24, 1997–Bridal Shower for Vanessa Herrington at 7:00 P.M., in the general purpose building. Contact Nancy Loy or Sharon Caine for details.

PANTRY FOOD NEEDED
Canned Chicken or Vegetable Soups
SHOULD WE TRY TO PLEASE THE CRITICS?

Garry Stanton

It is really hard to be consistent especially in religious matters. Some will affirm with all confidence that they know that no one can know anything for sure. Some will condemn anyone who is so bold as to condemn a practice as being wrong. Some will judge it is wrong for a person to judge another person. Some will criticize no one except the critics with whom they do not agree. Surely we see now inconsistent the above examples are. How utterly absurd are some of the comments made by men, even brethren.

Someone said that the critics only seek to control others. The examples of such are many in the Scriptures: the Pharisees, Sadducees, high priests, even some of the apostles at times. But it seems hasty and unfair to say that every critic is seeking undue control over other people. For one thing it is to impugn the motive of the critic, and unless the critic himself has told his motive, we cannot know the motive behind the criticism.

Not all criticism is wrong for, you see, Jesus was critical of people and the things that people did. Jesus’ first recorded words at the age of 12 were of a critical nature. After being found by Joseph and Mary in the temple Jesus said, “How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49). Was not Jesus critical of Peter when He told Peter, “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men” (Mat. 16:23). Jesus criticized the Sadducees and their denial of the doctrine of the resurrection saying, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God” (Mat. 22:29). Jesus gave
a scathing criticism of the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23, calling them hypocrites, blind guides, fools, serpents, and a generation of vipers (Mat. 23:13-33).

Jesus was not killed because He refused to be controlled by the critics. Jesus was killed because the critics refused to be in subjection to the will of God. Jesus criticized those who He criticized in order to wake them up to the errors of their way so they would repent and do God’s will. Therefore, all criticism is not bad, and in fact is commanded by God of man. “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2). Jesus did not teach nor did He exemplify by His life that man is never to criticize. Sin must be criticized at every turn so that the guilty will leave it.

Should we try to please the critics? No, not for the sake of pleasing the critics, we should never seek to please man (1 The. 2:4). But, on the other hand, if the critics are speaking in accordance with what God’s Word says then we should heed them because they speak “as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11).

2707 Mt. Holly Road; Camden, AR 71701

I’M NOT ASHAMED...

Al Brown

We sometimes sing the song, “I’m not ashamed to own my Lord, nor to defend His cause, etc.” It is a beautiful song, and it expresses sentiments which are to be found in every Christian’s life. But are they?

It is noble, and easy, to sing the song and to encourage brethren to put the words into practice everyday. I am sure every faithful child; God fully intends to heed Paul’s advice: “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you list men, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13).

It is not so easy to actually defend the cat of Christ in the midst of those who are hostile Christ and ridicule the Way. Young people know only too well how heavy the pressure a be to dress and act just as their peers do. It can be extremely depressing to their young minds they are looked on with contempt or ridicule.

What they may not realize is that adults find that same pressure just as unpalatable, especially if they still cast longing eyes at worldly ways and things or they are not mature enough to stand for what is right even if they must stand alone. One thing is certain: such a person he never been transformed by the renewing of his mind (Rom. 12:2). He still acts, talks, and thinks as worldly people do.

If, when he is in a group of worldly people, he is very careful not to betray his relationship to Christ, he is, without doubt, ashamed to “own his Lord.” A typical example of this may be seen when a Christian attends a gathering of worldly people. He ought not to even be there. Paul warned: “Abstain from all appearance it evil” (1 The. 5:22).

Everybody has an alcoholic beverage in his hand. Our worldly brother also holds a glass which looks as if it had alcohol in it; and occasionally he pretends to drink it. By inspiration, John wrote: “Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God” (3 John 11).

Someone tells a filthy story. Our incognito Christian laughs along with all the others whose minds are in a sewer. Once again, he has, in compromising with the world, committed sin. Paul said: “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good” (Rom. 12:9). Surely, all of us would agree: he is ashamed of Christ.

Do you and I have the courage and love for the Lord that we will, in unmistakable ways,
show the world whose side we are on—that we will stand up for Jesus?

P. O. Box 39; Spring, TX 77383

THE IMPORTANCE OF BIBLE STUDY

Tommy J. Hicks

Jesus said, “learn of me” (Mat. 11:28-29). Scripture refers to those who follow Christ as disciples. A disciple accepts Christ’s teaching and lives it. Christianity is a system of continual education. This education begins before conversion—“teach all nations—and is termed evangelism. After one is converted the teaching process continues—“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you”—edification (Mat. 28:18-20). New converts are instructed, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2). From spiritual infancy grows in faith through Bible study (Rom. 10:17) until he is full grown, mature, and able teach (Heb. 5:12-14). Christians must come understand the importance of teaching and learning the Bible.

God the Father is a teacher (John 6:45; 1 The. 4:9). Christ was never called preacher in the Bible. However, He was addressed as teacher many times (John 3:2). Christ’s teaching is so important that John wrote, “Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9). According to Jesus, even the Holy Spirit is a teacher (John 14:26). The apostles were commissioned by Christ to teach (Mat. 28:18-20). The church continued in the apostles’ teaching (Acts 2:42).

Prophets of old taught lessons for New Testament, taught the will of God as they directly received it form the Holy Spirit—while they were miraculously endowed the New Testament had not been written—they and their teaching were stabilizing forces in the church (2 Pet. 1:18-20; Eph. 4:11-16).

Evangelists, or preachers, are teachers. Paul told the young evangelist Timothy, “Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shall save both thyself and them that hear thee” (1 Tim. 4:16). Elders are to be teachers because one of the qualifications they are to meet is “apt to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2). Each individual member is a teacher if we look at Colossians 3:16. While women cannot teach men (1 Tim. 2:12), they are instructed to teach one another (Tit. 2:3-5). Every strata of spiritual being in the church and within heaven, including the angels, either have taught or are teaching. This should prove conclusively the magnitude and importance of Bible Study!

P. O. Box 459; Gainesville, TX 76241

LIBRARY BOOKS

The George Darling Memorial Library has increased in the number of books over the past years. Several new books have recently arrived. If you haven’t utilized the library before, now would be the perfect time. The following new books are available for checking out: Reason & Revelation (1987-1996); Discovery (1991, 1993-1996); Can Man Live Without God by Ravi Zacharias; Handbook of Today’s Religions by Josh McDowell and Don Stewart; Bones of Contention: A Creationist Assessment of Human Fossils by Marvin L. Lubenow; and, Darwin On Trial by Phillip E. Johnson.
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Mary Muldoon, Leon Waters, Marilyn Hall, Martha Wilcoxson, Thomas Muldoon, Ida Williams, Nancy Travis, and Diana Brazell.

READING/INVITATION
February 19, 1997
Reading: Bill Cline
Invitation: Tony Liddell
February 26, 1997
Reading: Mike Dobbs
Invitation: Jerry Lindesmith

MARK THESE DATES
February 16, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Foley, at 2:00 P.M. Study 1 Peter 4-5 and 2 Peter 1-3.
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February 24, 1997–Bridal Shower for Vanessa Herrington at 7:00 P.M., in the general purpose building. Contact Nancy Loy or Sharon Caine for details.

PANTRY FOOD NEEDED
Canned Chicken or Vegetable Soups

DIRECTORY UPDATE
Please update Tony Liddell’s address to include his telephone number: 941-0471.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS
Sylvia Alexander, who was member here at Bellview, has moved. Her new address is: 3070 North West 208th Terrace; Miami, FL 33056.
SO, YOU WANT TO GET MARRIED...

Stephen P. Waller

Getting married is the second biggest step you will ever take. The first is committing your life to Jesus and being baptized for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38). Deciding to get married involves many, many matters. In just a few paragraphs we will not be able to exhaust all the thoughts necessary to giving a complete understanding of marriage matters. But, there are some key thoughts that all who are contemplating marriage need to consider most seriously.

Some Christian parents look off into the future, in their mind’s eye, to the time when their children will get married. They have a picture of their children being faithful Christians, and their children marrying faithful Christians. Sadly, in many cases, this does not happen.

Marry a faithful Christian. Yes, there are many good moral people who may treat you better than some who are hypocrites in the Lord’s church. But, don’t judge all prospects for marriage by the hypocrites in the church. There are many faithful Christians. You must be patient enough and persistent enough to look for them. Marrying a non-Christian begins a marriage in an already divided situation. Marriages have enough obstacles to overcome without purposely adding to those obstacles. One may think he can influence the non-Christian, and he may. But, in a sad majority of cases the Christian who marries the non-Christian is adversely influenced, and becomes unfaithful to Christ. Yes, there are exceptions...but, they are just that: exceptions, and thankfully so! In too many cases, the Christian does not win the non-Christian to Christ after the marriage vows. If you only date faithful Christians, you will only marry a faithful Christian. Go where faithful Christians may be found. What my seem insignificant right now
will become very important in the future so far as your mate and religion is concerned.

**Marry one who is scripturally eligible to get married.** Don’t marry someone who does not have the scriptural authority or right to marry. The New Testament teaches that there are three classes of people who may scripturally marry. They are:

1. Those who have never been married who are marrying someone who is scripturally eligible to be married (Mat. 19:5-6).
2. Those persons whose companions have died, who are marrying someone who is scripturally eligible to be married (Rom. 7:2-3).
3. Those persons who have put away their companion because that companion has committed fornication, and who are marrying one who is scripturally eligible to be married (Mat. 19:9).
4. No one else has the scriptural right to marry.

Don’t even try to marry someone you don’t have a scriptural right to marry by asking a faithful gospel preacher to perform the ceremony with the idea that so-doing will sanctify an unholy relationship. It won’t work.

When you have finally found the one whom you will marry, and you begin making the wedding arrangements, consider the following:

1. Plan for a long engagement in order to better learn your fiance.
2. If you find that he or she is not right for you, be courageous enough to cancel the wedding, even if it is the last minute before the ceremony.
3. Make arrangements with the preacher who will perform the ceremony well in advance of the wedding date. Too many wait until just a few weeks or days before the wedding to select the preacher.
4. Both of you be willing to set aside and spend plenty of time with the preacher to study and learn about marriage and what is expected.

Marriage is too serious to just decide one day then get married the next.

14835 Carrollton Drive; St. Louis MO 63044

**VISIT OR VANISH**

It has been said that the church that does not visit will vanish! Certainly the growth of the Lord’s church and the number of souls saved are influenced greatly by the amount of visitation done by a congregation. It is not only important but also necessary that members of a local congregation do some needed visiting at every opportunity possible. Think about these points:

1. Visitation strengthens the home in which you visit, and the one doing the visiting.
2. Visitation is the most effective way to people know they are cared for personally.
3. Visitation keeps people more regular in attendance.
4. Visitation reaches the unsaved and influences them to consider the present relationship of their souls to God.
5. Visitation changes attitudes and wins people to Christ and to His church.
6. Visitation brings about a joy and fellowship not brought in any other way.

The formula for a congregation becoming vanishing influence in a community results most directly from the abandonment of visitation. How many visits have you made in the last week? month? year? If the church seems to be vanishing to you, be careful there is not a direct relationship traceable to your own uninvolve-ment in regular visitation.

At times we all need a visit from our Christian brothers and sisters, when we are having medical problems and possible hospitalization when we have lost a loved one, when we are undergoing hardships, or just for encouragement. The unsaved need visits to let them know how much we care and that we are interested in their spiritual welfare.
CARING ENOUGH
Mark Hanstein

“When you care enough to send the very best...” is a familiar slogan. Hallmark wants you to buy their products when you attempt to show another you care.

Caring enough prompts many notable deeds. God cared enough for us that “he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). Christ cared enough for us in that He “emptied himself...and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross” (Phi. 2:7-8).

As God’s children, we must care enough, too. He expects this of us. Our actions must match our words. Yet, when we fail in our duty, we tend to rationalize and make excuses. We can say we care—we can say we love, but our actions may tell a different story—the truth.

The Pharisees were condemned by Christ for saying one thing and doing another (Mat. 23:1-4). When the Corinthians promised to send assistance to the saints in Jerusalem, the apostle expected to see the “proof of their love” (2 Cor. 8:24; 9:13). James stressed the hypocrisy of thinking we are faithful to God while sending away a brother naked and hungry (Jam. 2:15-17). Of such, the apostle John asked, “how doth the love of God abide in him?” (1 John 3:17).

What good does it do to say we love our neighbor if we never try to teach him the gospel? It is no excuse to say we don’t know enough to teach somebody else since what can be more important than another’s eternal destiny? Where are the Christians who take Christ’s great commission seriously?

When a Christian is overtaken in a sin what good does it do to take special note (2 The. 3:14) of that one if we have never tried to convert him from the error of his way (Jam. 5:19)? Where are the “spiritual” people who will attempt to “restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness” (Gal. 6:1)?

Perhaps it is time to take a hard look at what we are really doing. When we truly care enough about others, our lives will show it.

Via “The Broadway Bulletin”; Gainesville, TX

LOOKING AT THE GOAL

The snow covered the ground, and three young boys were playing in it. A man said to them, “Would you like to try to race with a promise of a prize for the winner?”

The boys agreed, and the man told them that his race was to be different. “I will go to the other side of the field,” he said, “and when I give you the signal, you will start to run. The one whose footsteps are the straightest in the snow will be the winner.”

As the race commenced, the first boy began looking at his feet to see if his steps were straight. The second lad kept looking at his companions to see what they were doing; but the third boy just ran on with his eyes fixed on the man on the other side of the field.

The third boy was the winner for his footsteps were straight in the snow. He had kept his eyes on the goal ahead of him.

A long time ago, another man using similar words taught the same principle. It was Paul who said, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phi. 3:13-14).

Author Unknown
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Mary Muldoon (she is in Sacred Heart Hospital, room 440), Leon Waters, Marilyn Hall, Martha Wilcoxson, Thomas Muldoon, Ida Williams, and Nancy Travis.

SYMPATHY
Our deepest sympathy is extended to the family and friends of Al Brown who passed from this life on February 11, 1997. Brother Brown was the minister at the Spring Church of Christ in Spring, Texas. Please keep them in your prayers.

READING/INVITATION
February 26, 1997
Reading: Mike Dobbs
Invitation: Jerry Lindesmith
March 5, 1997
Reading: Robert Fletcher
Invitation: Fred Stancliff

MARK THESE DATES
February 24, 1997–Bridal Shower for Vanessa Herrington at 7:00 P.M., in the general purpose building. Contact Nancy Loy or Sharon Caine for details.
March 9, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
March 16, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Fairhope, at 2:00 P.M. Study the book of I John.
March 16, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.

PANTRY FOOD NEEDED
Canned Chicken or Vegetable Soups
GOD’S CARE FOR HIS CHILDREN
(Matthew 6:33; Romans 8:28)
David P. Brown

In His creation of this present material world God in His omniscience has fashioned a perfect place and system to prepare for heaven. By “perfect,” I mean that it is complete for what God intended it to be—a place to build a character fit to live in His presence. Hence, God has not only ordained a system of salvation for lost man through an obedient faith, but He has also prepared a proper place where such a faith system could be carried out or worked by man (Rom. 8:29-30; Eph. 3:10-11; 2 Tim. 1:8-10; Heb. 5:10).

Matthew 6:33 teaches us that doing God’s will must take precedence over all things. When such a course is followed God will take care of us spiritually and physically. Romans 8:28 is declaring that through God’s great power and providence ALL THINGS help Christians to live the Christian life. So Paul declared: “my God shall supply all your need according to his riches” (Phi. 4:19; Also see Rom. 8:37-39). Thus, with Paul we ask: “What shall we then say to these things: If God be for us, who can be against us?”

From the book of Exodus we see a clear demonstration of God’s providential care of His people. Regarding these matters the following is by no means exhaustive. (One should also note God’s providence in the account of Joseph in the book of Genesis as to how God caused Israel to be in Egypt.)

1. Though Pharaoh decreed the death of all male infants born to Hebrew mothers, God preserved Moses for the work He had chosen him to do.
2. Moses learned from his hired nurse, who was his own mother, the truth regarding God and His people.
3. Because he was the adopted son of Pharaoh’s daughter, Moses received the best
secular education available for his day as well as how his future antagonist reasoned and functioned (Acts 7:22).

4. As a shepherd in Midian for forty years he had time to think, learn leadership, mature, and learn well the area through which he would later lead the children of Israel.

Another great example of God’s providential care is Job.
1. Job declared that God could do all things and His purposes could not be hindered (Job 42:2).
2. In Job’s trials we come to understand that the suffering of Job was a part of God’s process of working things for Job’s spiritual well being, but such was not a pleasant process. Hence, all suffering is not bad nor necessarily the consequence of sin in a person’s life.
3. God can and does overrule the devil and use him for the accomplishing of His will (Job 10).
4. The only power that Satan has is what God allows him to possess (Job 1:12; 2:6).
5. The book of Revelation as well as that of Job declares that regardless of how things appear, God and His way will be victorious.

Assuredly these things were written aforetime for our learning (Rom. 15:4). With David we can say: “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread” (Psa. 37:25). Our Lord’s way and only His way will lead us to victory in heaven at the end of this present age.

Our conclusion is that God does provide material and temporal good along with moral and spiritual blessings as such relate to God’s eternal purpose for His saints. His providence also allows for the use of pain and suffering in preparing souls for eternity. Having drawn that aforementioned conclusion it must be understood that the ultimate design and end of God’s providence is the eternal salvation of man in heaven. God, therefore, is not primarily concerned with rescuing man’s temporal prosperity or simply making him materially happy. God’s giving or withholding of physical blessings relates directly to God’s will and His omniscient insights into the spiritual needs of every faithful child of God. In our prayers we should these points in mind.

God knows all that is knowable and cannot operate contrary to His will. He is the only one who can see all things in the composite, and therefore, how all things come together for the good of the faithful child of God.

Understanding these things to be so does no mean that we should try to take note of every thing that happens each day of our lives forth purpose of trying to determine just what God means by or is doing with them. We cannot as God sees and therefore such efforts are futile at best. Such vain pondering of events in our lives also manifest a lack of faith in God’s of saving our souls. The Christian’s business if to know God providentially cares for His own. Therefore, we should give our lives over to learning and doing God’s will as it is revealed in the Bible. God will take care of those thing that are His business.

Hence, from a proper study of God’s providence faithful children of God know that God will take care of them regarding what they need here in order to get them into glory. Such a disposition of mind motivates us to keep ourselves from sin. This mind set assures us that God has not forsaken His children though we suffer like Job. The same is also true regarding God’s chastisement of us because of our sins for such chastening by our heavenly Father is designed to correct us (Heb. 12:5-13).

Hence, our trust in God is strengthened because we know that this life is designed to test our faith, trust, and confidence in God; to help us as we strive to become like Him. Our duty is to go to God’s book and face life’s problems
according to His will. Thereby, we will operate with the attitude of “not my will, but thine be done.”

Furthermore, much anxiety and worry will be excluded from our lives. Our primary responsibility is understood in the following words of one who well understood the message of this article. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

25403 Lancewood; Spring, TX 77373

BEATITUDES FOR TEACHERS

1. Blessed are the teachers who set a good example before their students in all things: for they are worthy members of a great calling.
2. Blessed are the teachers who know their subject: for their students shall learn much.
3. Blessed are the teachers who share with their students that which they have learned: for this is the true nature of teaching.
4. Blessed are the teachers who strive to understand their students: for they will be able to comfort and guide them.
5. Blessed are the teachers who make provision for differences in individuals: for their students will rise up and praise them for their understanding.
6. Blessed are the teachers who make their work interesting and profitable: for they shall attract many into their classes.
7. Blessed are the teachers who exhibit self-control: for they shall influence their students to do likewise.
8. Blessed are the teachers who plan their work wisely: for their students shall be led to more successful understanding.
9. Blessed are the teachers who use a variety of methods: for they shall keep their student’s attention.
10. Blessed are the teachers who maintain good classroom order: for they are leading their students toward self-discipline.

Author Unknown

NEW BIBLE CLASSES BEGINNING

New Bible classes for all age groups (youth and adults) will begin March 2, 1997, for the Sunday morning classes and on March 5, 1997, for the Wednesday evening classes.

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

ADULTS I–The Eternal Kingdom III, Paul Brantley, room 7.

WEDNESDAY SCHEDULE

ADULTS I–Preaching God Demands, Ray Foshee, room 7.
ADULTS II–The Bible Doctrine Of Christian Fellowship, Michael Hatcher, room 1.
ADULTS III–Jesus Christ: The Hope Of The Home, Bill Crowe, room 5.

Plan on attending the Bible classes and take advantage of the excellent teaching from the Word of God.
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Mary Muldoon, Leon Waters, Marilyn Hall, Martha Wilcoxson, Thomas Muldoon, Ida Williams, Nancy Travis, and Tina Foshee.

READING/INVITATION
March 5, 1997
Reading: Robert Fletcher
Invitation: Fred Stancliff
March 12, 1997
Reading: Howard Johnson
Invitation: Henry Born

MARK THESE DATES
March 9, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
March 16, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Fairhope, at 2:00 P.M. Study the book of 1 John.
March 16, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.

PANTRY FOOD NEEDED
Canned Chicken or Vegetable Soups

LUKE 18:28-30
“Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. And he said unto them Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world come life everlasting.”
In joyful anticipation of our marriage on Saturday, the fifteenth of March Nineteen hundred and ninety-seven we, Vanessa Irene Herrington and Anthony Allen Liddell together with our parents Mr. and Mrs. Louis Herrington and Mr. and Mrs. Bobby Liddell invite you to join with us in this celebration of love at four o'clock in the afternoon Scenic Hills Church of Christ Pensacola, Florida
DOES EVERYONE KNOW WHOSE SIDE YOU ARE ON?

**David Jones**

The story is told of a person who was unable to hear or speak. Yet, every time the doors of the church building were opened, he was present. He would sit through the service as though he heard and understood every word spoken.

Someone stopped him one day and asked him why he went to services, in view of the fact that he could not speak nor hear anything being said, or the songs that were being sung. It was difficult to get the man to understand the question, but when the questions was finally understood, using sign language the man responded, “I can’t hear what is being said in a service, but I want everyone to know whose side I am on.”

What an encouraging story this is! I actually knew, such a man in a congregation where I used to worship. The brother would walk to the services because his children would not bring him! Can you imagine such?

Now, brethren, if you do not attend all the services of the church and can possibly be here, what is your excuse? The Bible clearly teachesthat forsaking is sin (Heb. 10:25)! When you wilfully forsake, you are saying you are on the devil’s side. Moses asked the question, “Who is on the Lord’s side?” and it is about time some brethren today considered the answer!!

**THE PRAYING JUDGE**

**Howell Bigham**

Judge Roy Moore, of Etowah County, has been publicized greatly in recent months for refusing to take down a writing of the ten commandments in his courtroom and for refusing to cease praying in his courtroom. While New Testaments Christians realize that we are not under the ten commandments today, we should appreciate the courage of Judge Moore for keeping the ten commandments in view of the people in his courtroom. Although the ten commandments are not “carried over” to the New Testament (Col. 2:14), we are taught in the New Covenant to obey these precepts (with the exception of keeping the Sabbath day holy). Judge Moore has intensified interest in the Word of God among the people, and for that we should be thankful. Furthermore, he has continued having prayer in his courtroom despite efforts by others to stop this good practice. I do, not know if Judge Moore is a Christian, having the blessed privilege of prayer (Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 3:10-12). However, I believe that we need more officials today who are mindful of God. We desperately need more lawmakers today who will make laws in harmony with God’s law instead of seeking to supersede the authority of God!

The recent interest in Judge Roy Moore made me think of a judge in the Bible who believed in praying to God. His name was Samuel. Samuel said in 1 Samuel 7:5 “Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord.” After the people desired to be like the nations around them and wanted a king to be over them, Samuel was greatly disturbed. What did he do? The divine account reads “And Samuel prayed unto the Lord” (1 Sam. 8:6). In addition, after King Saul disobeyed God’s command to utterly destroy Amalek, the Lord spoke to Samuel and said, “It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned bad from following me, and hath not performed my commandments.” What was the reaction of Samuel? The verse continues, “And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the Lord all night” (1 Sam. 15:11). Samuel was a praying judge or deliverer of God’s people under the Old Testament—the Israelites.

What are some lessons that we can learn from the present day example of Judge Roy Moore and the Bible example of Samuel, “The Praying Judge”? Let us notice three: First, those in authority must realize their dependency upon...
God. When we pray we are saying that we understand that God is far, far superior than lowly man. Judges, lawmakers, presidents of nations, etc., must comprehend that God is in heaven and rules “in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will” (Dan. 5:21). Jesus told Pilate “Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above” (John 19:11). Second, officials and non-officials alike must realize the importance of prayer. The judge in Etowah County has placed a premium on prayer. Samuel made it a habit to pray! We should realize the value of prayer (1 Thes. 5:17; 1 John 5:14-15). Third, people are interested in the subject of prayer. In the “Bible Belt” of North Alabama, in an unscientific poll conducted by WHNT, channel 19, out of Huntsville, an overwhelming majority of people supported Judge Roy Moore’s actions. In the Bible, the Israelites petitioned Samuel to pray for them (1 Sam. 12:19-26). May we be impressed with the subject of prayer and follow the Bible’s teaching on it!

BELLVIEW LECTURES

The Twenty-second Annual Bellview Lectures, Leadership, will be held June 7-11, 1997.


If you are planning on attending the Bellview Lectures be sure to make your motel reservations now. The Hospitality Inn (4910 Mobile Highway; Pensacola, FL 32506) offers the following price (tax not included) $45—1 to 4 people per room. For reservations call 904-453-3333. When calling for reservations be sure to tell them you will be attending the Bellview Lectures. For those who have RVs, a limited number of hook-ups are available on the grounds of the building. Contact the office to reserve a space.

Pensacola is a great place to take your summer vacation and at the same time attend the Bellview Lectures. For further information please contact the office by phone, mail or at our e-mail address (whatcher@sprynet.com). We hope to see you in June.
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Mary Muldoon, Thomas Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Marilyn Hall, Ida Williams, and Nancy Travis.

RESTORED
Jennette Nail was restored on March 2, 1997. Please keep her in your prayers.

READING/INVITATION
March 12, 1997
Reading: Howard Johnson
Invitation: Henry Born
March 19, 1997
Reading: Bill Cline
Invitation: Tony Liddell

MARK THESE DATES
March 9, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
March 16, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Fairhope, at 2:00 P.M. Study the book of 1 John.
March 16, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.

PANTRY FOOD NEEDED
Canned Meat

ECCLESIASTES 12:1
“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.”
DENOMINATIONALISM IS REBELLION AGAINST CHRIST

W. Terry Varner

Denominationalism is inherently sinful and stands in opposition to the will of Christ. Everywhere different religious bodies exist in which each and all profess to be Christians. They all sing practically the same hymns, filled with great zeal, motivated by high ideals and pray to the same God of heaven in the name of Jesus. YET, they are in rebellion against Christ and His teaching.

Denominationalism Rebels Against Christ’s Authority

Underlying the problem of denominationalism is the question of authority. When the Scriptures are rejected as the rule of faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:16-17) and are in turn modified by their various “disciplines” and “decrees,” then Christ’s authority is rejected and confusion reigns.

The rejection of Christ’s authority and the Scriptures as the rule of faith and practice allows denominationalism to minimize the importance of doctrine and teaching. But, the Scriptures teach otherwise and thereby condemn denominationalism as rebellious to Christ’s authority. Paul emphasizes the importance of “sound doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:3; Tit. 1:9, 13; 2:1); i.e., sound doctrine issues forth and sustains spiritual health among baptized believers. Jesus instructed Christians to “observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Mat. 28:20). Moses taught that the “doctrine of God” was “something that is received” and is refreshing and life sustaining as rain and dew upon the earth, “My doctrine shall drop as the rain...as the dew” (Deu. 32:2).

Denominationalism makes “doctrine” unimportant and, as a consequence, “false doctrine” is preached with its many additions (2 John 9-11),
subtractions (Rev. 22:19), and changes to the apostolic doctrine (Acts 2:42; Gal. 1:6-11; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). The consequence is that denominationalism is rebellion against Christ’s authority.

**Denominationalism Rebels Against Christ’s Plea For Unity**

Denominationalism sends forth the cry, “unity is found in diversity” and “unity is found in our ability to agree to disagree.” Denominationalism is divided into hundreds of different religious groups, each bearing different names and teaching and practicing different doctrines from those doctrines taught and practiced by the others. The consequence of this is religious confusion and rebellion against Christ’s plea for unity. Biblically, we are taught the importance and basis of unity in Christ and the sinfulness of division as advocated by denominationalism. Jesus prayed for unity of believers based on the revealed Word of God (John 17:20-21); thereby condemning the denominational concept of unity. Paul condemned division (denominationalism) as the “works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:20). Paul spoke strongly against division by stating, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). The “same mind” implies unity of faith and purpose and the “same judgment” implies action. Paul further instructs us to “mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them” (Rom. 16:17). Denominationalism is rebellious to Christ’s plea for unity and in no way should denominationalism be embraced! God’s children.

**Denominationalism Rebels Against Christ’s Teaching on Salvation**

Almost all denominations hold to the basic principles of Calvinism concerning salvation; i.e., man is so depraved that he cannot so much as believe the gospel until he is made alive by direct operation of the Holy Spirit. While this underlying principle exists, the various denominations do not teach the same thing concerning salvation, though all claim to be on the same road to heaven. Denominationalism likewise teaches that a man can be saved without being a member of the church.

The Scriptures teach that those who heard the gospel were pricked in their hearts and cried out “what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). These believers were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38) Those whose sins were remitted, who were saved, were saved by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28; Heb. 9:22) and were added to the church of the New Testament, the church of Christ (Mat. 16:18; Acts 2:47). Our Lord lays down the rules for entering His church. The process of becoming a Christian makes one a member of the church.

**MODERN DAY ELIJAH**

_Elijah of the Tishbite_ is one of the greatest characters of Old Testament history. He had great courage, boldness and zeal for God. He withstood Ahab, faced down false prophets’ dealt with discouragement, departed the world gloriously and reappeared on the mount of transfiguration.

**ELIJAH WITHSTOOD AHAB FOR HIS IDOLATRY AND COMPROMISE WITH HEATHEN NATIONS (1 Kin. 17-21):** Elijah respected God’s commandments. Many preachers today would rather “compromise with the heathens” and follow their religion than to simply...
preach the powerful, life changing Word of God. Let us ring forth the truth today as Elijah did in his day. There is one God, though our world says there are many (1 Cor. 8:5). It is not narrow-minded to take the Bible and show men that one true God. There is one church, though the world says there are many right ways (Mat. 16:18). Neither is it narrow-minded or mean-spirited to take the Bible and show men that one true church. Elijah stood for God and right. God give us some modern day Elijahs who will stand today!

ELIJAH STOOD AS “A MAN OF GOD” (1 Kin. 17:18, 24): There is a need for modern day Elijahs to let the world know that the church of Christ is not a denomination. The church of Christ is not a division of anything (1 Cor. 1:10-13). The church belongs to Christ and wears His name (Mat. 16:18). It is possible to be a Christian and a member of the church of our Lord without being in any denomination. May God help preachers today to, like Elijah, have enough courage to go up on the mountains of our land and stand face to face against those who lead souls to worship and serve contrary to God’s teaching. Brethren, it is time to STAND rather than compromise!

ELIJAH AND MODERN DAY PREACHERS: The moral and spiritual lessons derived from Elijah are great. (Please take time to study 1 Kin. 17-21; 2 Kin. 1-3; Mat. 17; and Jam. 5:17.) Elijah was a man of prayer. He was of like passion as we. He showed kindness to widows. He was uncompromising on God’s truth. Elijah stands in stark contrast to the compromising, grace-only, faith-only, love-only preachers among us who want us to condemn nothing, accept everything and join hands with everyone regardless of what God says. Life was not easy for Elijah. But let us pray that God will raise up some modern day Elijahs who are not ashamed of Christ nor His church and who are unyielding on matters where God has spoken.

P.O. Box 551; Greenville, AL 36037

BEHOLD, A BALL TEAM...

Behold, a ball team went forth to play a game. The pitcher was on the mound, ready, but his heart was rather heavy as the team didn’t really seem to care. Just as the umpire said, “Batter up,” the catcher for the team arrived and hurriedly took his place.

The first baseman had sent a note saying he couldn’t be there because some “unexpected” things (?) had come up. The center fielder and the second baseman had a habit of always dragging in after the first or second innings were over, and, as usual, they hadn’t arrived yet. The third baseman had been up late the night before and had forgotten about the game and was still asleep. The shortstop was present, but he had left his glove at home. The right fielder and left fielder were in their places, but had a feud going on between them, and were not speaking to each other, and certainly not to the pitcher, who had tried to settle their differences.

But the game had been announced and the visitors were there, so there wasn’t anything the pitcher could do but go ahead with the game and pitch, and hope for the best. As you might suspect, the team lost. Some in the crowd began to say, “What we need is a new pitcher...he just isn’t getting the job done as he should!” The coaches didn’t want any trouble, so they decided to make a change. The owner of the club just shook his head in pity.

Behold, a preacher went forth to preach—ah, but that is a different story....
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Mary Muldoon, Thomas Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Marilyn Hall, Ida Williams, and Nancy Travis.

READING/INVITATION
March 19, 1997
Reading: Bill Cline
Invitation: Tony Liddell
March 26, 1997
Reading: Jim Loy
Invitation: Scot Brazell

MARK THESE DATES
March 16, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Fairhope, at 2:00 P.M. Study the book of 1 John.
March 16, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.

PANTRY FOOD NEEDED
Canned Meat

A WARM CHURCH
G. K. Wallace
Leroy Brownlow says, “If the church I seems cold, move to the front. There is more warmth in the Amen corner than in then Z-row.” True! Our own ice freezes us and is all about us. When we talk of the congregation where we worship, do we say “we” or “they”? It should be “we are doing” and not “they are doing.” Some attend worship and only sit, stare, and look sour A little lad went hunting with his dad and when they returned he said, “We killed a bear, but Pa shot it.” Even though he did not actually shoot a bear, he felt as though he was a part of the hunt. Pray, don’t just bow. Sing, don’t just carry a melody. Meditate, don’t just eat bread. Listen, don’t just sit. The donkey brays and the bird sings....

Deceased
MEETING TIMES

SUNDAY:
9:00 A.M. BIBLE CLASSES
10:00 A.M., 6:00 P.M. WORSHIP

WEDNESDAY: 7:00 P.M.

BISHOPS: Paul Brantley, Bill Gallaher, Fred Stancliff
MINISTER: Michael Hatcher
MISSIONARY: Ira Y. Rice, Jr.

LET GOD DO THE CLAPPING

Bobby Duncan

From time to time a question arises concerning the practice of clapping during our worship periods to show our approval of something said or done. This practice is, generally speaking, relatively new among churches of Christ. That fact within itself does not make the practice either right or wrong. Neither does the fact that it is a practice borrowed by our denominational neighbors from the entertainment industry, and then by churches of Christ from our denominational neighbors. The rightness or wrongness of an act is determined, not by its antiquity or its novelty, not by who has or has not made it a practice, but by whether or not it is in harmony with the teaching of the New Testament.

Clapping during worship fits into the agenda of those who are trying to change the church. Some of them have made it plain that worship must be changed to make it more appealing to the worshiper. Calvin Warpula wrote, “I also believe we should let individuals and congregations use the musical format they like without judging them.” Rubel Shelly said, “The tired, uninspiring event we call worship in traditional churches has to give way to the exhilarating experience of God that exhibits and nourishes life in the worshipers.” He also said in the same speech, “The church has got to change. If it doesn’t change, my kids are not going to stay with it.”

These statements suggest that worship must please the worshiper. They ignore the fact that worship is designed to honor God. When the design of worship is to entertain the worshiper, we expect those being entertained to show their approval by clapping.
There is the same authority for clapping in Christian worship as there is for playing a piano or organ. It is doing something for which there is no divine authority. Furthermore, those among our brethren who first started clapping in worship are the same ones who have stretched the tent of fellowship over the denominational world, and who will not say those who use the instrument in worship sin in so doing. While clapping has now caught on with some who are otherwise, it should be remembered that hand clapping in worship was originally borrowed from the denominations by some who believe those in the denominations have God’s approval.

It would be admitted by most that clapping the hands in worship does not in any way add to the dignity and solemnity of the occasion. It does not do honor to God; we honor Him by doing what He has told us to do in worship, and He has not told us to clap.

It is also a fact that, until recent years, it was considered in bad taste to applaud any religious activity. If you think otherwise, consult the books by Emily Post, whose name for many years was synonymous with etiquette.

Who is being applauded when there is hand clapping in worship? Are those who clap their hands doing so to honor God? If so, they are seeking to honor God in some way He has not authorized instead of as He has directed. “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Second John 9 says, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” It will be admitted by all that we can abide in the doctrine of Christ without ever having a round of applause in any of our worship assemblies.

If hand clapping is something of value in our worship, then why didn’t God prescribe it? Could it be that those who initiated this practice think they have thought of something God overlooked? Or did God simply not know of its great value? Brethren with such wisdom would do well to read First Corinthians 3:18-20: no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him come a fool, that he may be wise. For wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.”

Those really interested in the peace and harmony of the church will not insist on clapping in worship. They themselves will agree that clapping is not necessary in order to have scriptural worship. They will acknowledge also that clapping is not an act God has prescribed. Therefore, they must confess they can worship scripturally and conscientiously without applauding. In love for those who conscientiously oppose it, and in the interest of peace and harmony, it should be omitted.

Occasionally one will be heard to say hand clapping is no different from saying “Amen.” But there is one slight difference: saying, “Amen,” is authorized in Scripture: First Corinthians 14:16, “Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?”

Where is the verse which mentions clapping hands in worship?

I would emphasize that I am not one who is opposed to change, provided the change is in harmony with the will of God, and provided the change will be an improvement. However, if we are to improve our worship, it will not be by adding other acts, but by improving the
worshipers.
If there is to be applause in connection with our worship, let it be by God; he is the only audience. All of us are participants.

ENDNOTES
2Statement made in a speech at the Richland Hills church in Dallas, TX.

4207 Adamsville Pkwy Adamsville AL 35005

LEST WE FORGET
Eddie Whitten

The church of our Lord Jesus Christ is a legacy that does not change with the passing of time, advancements in science, refinements in culture or fickle philosophy. The values men put upon life are determined by the times. The philosophy that is so popular today is passe tomorrow. The world changes every day, but the church never changes in its basic structure, principle or practice.

The never-changing church is a concept which is difficult for the world to understand. It is sad that many in the church have lost sight of the singular distinguishing characteristic of the church that makes it different from the world. The Bible is unique in that it is the only book ever written that applies with equal force and freshness for every generation that passes. It is as meaningful for us today as it was to those living when it was penned by inspired men.

For those who believe the church must change to accommodate each generation, we must point to some considerations that not only do not change, but which cannot change and the Bible remain the standard by which men can live and be acceptable to God.

1. **Jesus promised to build only one church.** Matthew 16:18 is the only time Jesus promised to build His church. He did not promise to build a multitude of churches, each teaching something different for men to do. He said there would be forces that would try to prevail against His church, but they would fail.

2. **Jesus gave only one creed to follow.** He said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). John said, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). Jude said, “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (v. 3). Jesus warned that the words He had spoken would be that by which man would be judged (John 12:48). The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every person who believes it and who obeys it (Rom. 1:16; 2 The. 1:7-9).

3. **The gospel is unchanging and unchangeable.** The times in which one lives has nothing to do with the teaching of the gospel. The gospel is God’s wonderful message of salvation through Jesus Christ His Son. No other person, convention, counsel, conclave or synod has the power to change the final will and testament of the one who purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28; Heb. 10:28).

We must be reminded that when we are dealing with the church, we are dealing with God’s business. Man can change the things which fall under the scope of his own power. The church is not subject to the power of man. God has put the church in the world at awful cost for the benefit of mankind. We must never make the mistake of thinking we can improve on God’s order of things and enjoy his blessings. We need to think on these things, lest we forget!

3616 Brown Trail Bedford, TX 76021
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Mary Muldoon, Thomas Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Marilyn Hall, Ida Williams, Nancy Travis, Harold Cozad, Tina Foshee, and Patty Cody (Marilyn Hall’s niece).

READING/INVITATION
March 26, 1997
Reading: Jim Loy
Invitation: Scot Brazell
April 2, 1997
Reading: Harold Maxey
Invitation: Jeremy Caine

MARK THESE DATES
March 22, 1997–Work party to lay sod.
Meet at the building at 8:00 A.M. (rain or shine). Bring rakes and shovels.
April 6-10, 1997–Gospel meeting at Foley Church of Christ, Foley, AL. Bobby Duncan will be speaking. Sunday: 9:30 & 10:30 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. Monday-Thursday at 7:30 P.M.
April 13, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
April 20, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
April 20, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Jay, at 2:00 P.M. Study 2 & 3 John, Jude, and Revelation chapters 1-2.
April 30, 1997–Fifth Wednesday Singing.

PANTRY FOOD NEEDED
Canned Meat

DIRECTORY CHANGES
Please make the following changes to your directory: Wanda Batten’s new telephone number is 944-3187. Add Tony and Vanessa Liddell. Their address and telephone number are 6474 Greenwell Street; Pensacola, FL 32526; 941-0471.
DOES IT MATTER HOW WE DRESS WHEN WE COME TO WORSHIP?

Jerry Jenkins and Mack Lyons

I am absolutely appalled at the attire of some church members. Is this just my age or is there a problem developing? When I was growing up, I recall so vividly my mother every Saturday night getting our clothes ready for Sunday. It was the one day of the week that we would “look our very best.” We were going to worship God! Now I see young and old coming to worship this same God in clothing that would not meet our local school code.

Physiologists have known for a long time that dress does have influence on behavior. Slouchy dress creates slouchy work in school. Does it matter how we dress when we come to worship?

This has led some high schools, colleges, universities, and even some work places to insist that their students/employees dress as though they were serious about their work. I am not suggesting that every man wear a white shirt and tie. I am saying that the importance of worship should cause us to want to give some special attention to our appearance.

Make no mistake about it; shorts, tank-tops, T-shirts advertising beer, rock groups, and beer taverns send a message about the wearer. Most respectable eating places have a sign, “No shirt, no shoes, no service.” Are we approaching the day when such signs would be appropriate for the house of worship?

What has happened to the human race? Have we no self-respect? People appear in public everywhere—un-washed, uncombed, unshaven, untrimmed, unshod, even undressed, and generally unkempt with no apparent shame at all! Is there nothing appropriate? Or immodest? One might expect this from those who walk after the
flesh, but who would have ever dreamed that Christians who are led by godly principles would be so much like the world? Even elders’ and deacons’ children come to services with seemingly little regard for the example that church leaders should set. The Bible tells us that “the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). Are we going to misuse and abuse this Scripture so badly that we endorse a state of decadence? It is true that God does not have a dress code for worship! A true spirit of awe, reverence, and worship dictates that Christians going to worship would not dress as Christians going to some sporting event.

I encourage every Christian here to have a poor and contrite spirit (Isa. 66:2). Let us have the attitude spoken by the writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 12:28-29: “let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.” I encourage our young ladies to wear dresses and skirts that are not so short when they are sitting that nothing is left to the imagination. I encourage our young ladies and young men to be modest in their dress when coming to worship or when coming to work for God. If your parents are unthoughtful, please take the initiative to do right. If your parents are too old to remember what “lust” is, you dress in such a manner that you will never be a contributing actor to another’s lustful eye.

No! God does not have a dress-code for worship and work! Of course He does not. He assumes the humble, worshipping heart will dictate proper attire and behavior. A true spirit of awe, reverence, and worship dictates dignity and propriety in dress and demeanor. God does not command us to kneel or stand or bow our heads when we pray, but doing so manifests a humility of heart that honors and respects the; sovereign God whom we praise and petition. So does proper dress.

WHAT VISION?

Lennie Reagan

When this country was first being settled, a shipload of explorers and people who wanted a “fresh” start landed on the northeast coast. Their first year in America proved profitable as they built the new town. The second year this group of people elected a town government. With the arrival of the third year the town council planned to build a road five miles westward leading a new ground, a new wilderness to conquer. However, the fourth year, the people tried to impeach the town council because of the road leading westward. The town thought it was a waste of money to build such a road. Who needs to go there anyway?

Notice the transition? These people had the vision to come some three thousand miles and endure and overcome great difficulties to get there. But now, just five years later, they were not able to vision five miles down the road. These people had lost their spirit of vision.

We are, by nature, creatures of comfort. When we reach a comfort zone, we tend to do enough to maintain that comfort zone. We tend to maintain the status quo or to “hold our own. Certainly we understand that God’s design and purpose is not to simply “hold our own. Rather, God is not willing that any should perish. With a heart willing to “see” what we can accomplish in Christ, no ocean or mountain can be too difficult. However, if we limit our vision, we seldom move beyond our current boundaries.

Via “The Messenger”; Coldwater, MS
I SAW SOME BRETHREN AT THE BALL GAME
Roddy Covington
On a frigid fall evening, my family and I decided to go to the local high school football game. I knew there would be some familiar faces there, but I didn’t expect to see so many Christians who were so dedicated to such an important cause.

At the football game I saw a sister whose poor physical condition hindered her from attending worship services! She was sitting next to a family who had brought some visitors that had unexpectedly “dropped in.” Even though the temperature was extremely uncomfortable, not one person left before the game was over, including overtime, nor did any of them complain, but seemed to enjoy the extended period of play! I also saw some of the players’ parents, who had to make special arrangements with their bosses in order to be present at every game.

Most of the brethren there had memorized the name and number of every player. When the marching band played the fight song, they sang so loudly they could have been heard clear across town. When the game ended, many got together to discuss the game and talk about next week’s game with eager anticipation.

As I contemplated the things I had seen, I thought how unkind it would be to visit one of these brethren if he or she ever missed a game. I thought of how offensive it would be to tell them that the team needed their support, financially and spiritually. However, I knew that such would never be necessary, for these individuals displayed such devotion, dedication and determination that neither wind, rain, snow, nor a herd of strong horses could keep them from supporting the team in person—every time!

I left the scene feeling overwhelmed with the dedication that Christians can display when they really want to. (The preceding event is fiction, but the principles are oftentimes true.)

ALMOST SAVED IS STILL LOST
Louis Rushmore
The apostle Paul preached and taught the gospel to everyone everywhere he went. Once, he explained the gospel to King Agrippa, but the king did not obey the gospel. “Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuades! me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28).

There is no evidence that King Agrippa ever decided to become a Christian. It appears that the king remained lost! He was almost saved when he almost became a Christian. However, almost saved is still lost!

Have you become a Christian yet? Are you thinking of becoming a Christian? Remember King Agrippa. Do not be almost a Christian because almost is still lost. Friend, decide today to become a Christian. To become a Christian is the most important decision anyone can make.

Do not make the same mistake King Agrippa made. Be saved now! Believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Savior (John 8:24); repent of your sins (Luke 13:3); profess your belief in Jesus (Rom. 10:10); and be baptized for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38).
SICK AND SHUT-IN

Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxon, Marilyn Hall, Ida Williams, Nancy Travis, Harold Cozad, Tina Foshee, Patty Cody (Marilyn Hall’s niece), and Clayton Richards (Linda Parker’s father). Thomas Muldoon has been diagnosed with lung cancer.

READING/INVITATION
April 2, 1997
Reading: Harold Maxey
Invitation: Jeremy Caine
April 9, 1997
Reading: Horace Myrick
Invitation: Michael Hatcher

MARK THESE DATES
April 6-10, 1997–Gospel meeting at Foley Church of Christ, Foley, AL. Bobby Duncan will be speaking. Sunday: 9:30 & 10:30 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. Monday-Thursday at 7:30 P.M.
April 13, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
April 20, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
April 20, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Jay, at 2:00 P.M. Study 2 & 3 John, Jude, and Revelation chapters 1-2.
April 30, 1997–Fifth Wednesday Singing.

PANTRY FOOD NEEDED
Canned Meat

ISAIAH 59:1-2
“Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”

BEACON
Bellview Church of Christ
4850 Saufley Field Road
Pensacola FL 32526-1798
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED
IS YOUR HOME A PLACE FOR ANGELS AND OTHER STRANGERS?

Terry Hightower

The writer of Hebrews urged: “Let brotherly love continue” (Heb. 13:1). Then he followed by observing: “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Heb. 13:2). I do not know that we have entertained angels” in our home, at least the variety that appear directly from heaven, but since the word “angel” also means “messenger,” many People have come to visit us who were like messengers (in the secondary sense) sent from God. What the passage says is that we ought to show hospitality to strangers with the sense of expectancy that each guest comes as a messenger of God within the scope of God’s divine providence. Notice a few choice verses on New Testament hospitality:

“Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren and strangers; Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well...We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth” (3 John 5-6, 8).

“Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality” (Rom. 12:13).

“I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also” (Rom. 16:1-2).

“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good be-
haviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2).

“Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work” (1 Tim. 5:10).

“Use hospitality one to another without grudging” (1 Pet. 4:9).

**NOTE:** With the Bellview Lectures coming in June, visitors will be attending the lectures and some may be in need of housing in Christian homes. If you can provide housing for someone during the lectures, please contact the office.

### EVIL SURMISINGS

**David P. Brown**

One of the sinful marks of a person who will not uphold “wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ” is “evil surmisings” (1 Tim. 6:3-4). The word “surmisings” is translated from “Huponoya.” It appears only in this form in First Timothy 6:4 and is defined: “suspicion, conjecture or to suspect.” The verb form of the word, “Huponoeco” means “to deem, think, suppose” and is used by Luke in Acts 13:25; 25:18 and 27:27. Please notice, therefore, that for one to suppose something does not necessarily mean that such an one is guilty of “evil surmisings.”

When Paul wrote: “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Th. 5:21), he declared that nothing should be accepted unless it passed the test of being authorized by the Word of God (Col. 3:17). Again, the apostle John instructed: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Further, Jesus commended the church in Ephesus saying, “thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars” (Rev. 2:2). In the above cases it is obvious that some persons were **supposed** to be what, in fact, they were not.

When the apostle Paul sought to join the disciples in Jerusalem, Luke tells us that those who were disciples before Paul “were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple” (Acts 9:26). Barnabas stepped in and took Pad to the apostles and dissolved everyone’s fears of Paul by offering evidence that confirmed him to be a Christian. Were these disciples guilty of “evil surmisings”; or were they wise in demanding proof that Paul was a Christian before accepting him as a brother in the Lord? We do not hesitate to answer that said disciples were indeed wise; for they were in complete harmony with the principle of First Thessalonians 5:21 in their demand for proof that Paul was what he claimed to be. It was a matter of fact that Paul had been a persecutor of the church: and until the evidence was offered to the disciples that Paul had been converted, they supposed that he remained a persecutor of the church.

“Evil surmisings,” however, flow from a certain state of mind or attitude. It is a suspicious nature and sees in everything and everybody a hideous monster that is ever lurking and about to pounce on the person who has such a disposition of mind. No peace of mind belong to such a character. Fear reigns supreme in such miserable lives. Thus, they are constantly trying to read into every word and action of their fellows some wicked motive. Such persons an never free of the following types of question and statements: “What did he mean by that statement?” “Why did she come to see me today of all days?” “You can’t fool me; I know he meant more than what he said.” “Everybody is against me.” In such people’s minds there is always an ulterior motive
of the deepest and blackest dye. Such “reading between the lines” is what is condemned by Paul in First Timothy 6:5.

From an innate fear rooted in a cultivated selfishness these persons turn inward and seek to escape reality. Thus, such minds constitute the emotionally and mentally ill. Hence, it is extremely important that we fully realize that there are evil thoughts as well as good thoughts; and we are responsible for which kind we entertain in our minds (Phi. 4:8-9). Whether good or bad, such will manifest themselves in our daily lives. “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Pro. 23:7).

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Pro. 4:23). “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7). Let us heed the message of God’s Word and not be found guilty of the sin of “evil surmisings.”

25403 Lance wood: Spring TX 77373

BELLVIEW LECTURES

The Twenty-second Annual Bellview Lectures, Leadership, will be held June 7-11.

Twenty-eight men will be speaking: Billy Bland, David P. Brown, Curtis Gates, B. J. Clarke, Wayne Coats, Harrell Davidson, Buster Dobbs, Bobby Duncan, Garland Elkins, Steve Ellis, Guss Eoff, Joe Galloway, Joe Gilmore, Noah Hackworth, Michael Hatcher, Bobby Liddell, Jerry Martin, Dub McClish, Joe Meador, Jerry Moffet, Clifford Newell, Flavil Nichols, Ira Y. Rice, James Rogers, Stanley Ryan, Gary Summers, Joel Wheeler, and Eddie Whitten. The following men will be writing lessons for the lectureship book but will not be speaking: Gary Grizzell, David Hester, Terry Hightower, Keith Mosher, and Fred Stancliff.


If you are planning on attending the Bellview Lectures be sure to make your motel reservations now. The Hospitality Inn (4910 Mobile Highway; Pensacola, FL 32506) offers the following price (tax not included) $45—1 to 4 people per room. For reservations call 904-453-3333. When calling for reservations be sure to tell them you will be attending the Bellview Lectures.

Pensacola is a great place to take your summer vacation and at the same time attend the Bellview Lectures. For further information please contact the office by phone, mail or at our e-mail address (whatcher@sprynet.com). We hope to see you in June.
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Mary Muldoon, Therm Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Marilyn Hall, Ida Williams, Nancy Travis, Harold Cozad, Neva Bryant, Patty Cody (Marilyn Hall’s niece), and Clayton Richards (Linda Parker’s father).

BAPTIZED
Breanna Cutler was baptized on March 19, 1997. Please keep her in your prayers and help her grow as a Christian.

READING/INVITATION
April 9, 1997
Reading: Horace Myrick
Invitation: Michael Hatcher
April 16, 1997
Reading: Richard Parker
Invitation: Bill Crowe

MARK THESE DATES
April 6-10, 1997–Gospel meeting at Foley Church of Christ, Foley, AL. Bobby Duncan will be speaking. Sunday: 9:30 & 10:30 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. Monday-Thursday at 7:30 P.M.
April 13, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
April 20, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
April 30, 1997–Fifth Wednesday Singing.

TIME CHANGE
Day light savings time begins Sunday, April 6. Remember to set your clock ahead one hour prior to going to bed Saturday night.
MEETING TIMES

SUNDAY:
9:00 A.M. BIBLE CLASSES
10:00 A.M., 6:00 P.M. WORSHIP

WEDNESDAY: 7:00 P.M.

BISHOPS: Paul Brantley, Bill Gallaher, Fred Stancliff
MINISTER: Michael Hatcher
MISSIONARY: Ira Y. Rice, Jr.

BAPTISM

Shan Jackson

When we are judged on the day called Judgment we will be judged exclusively by the Word of Christ (John 12:48). Furthermore, Jesus equates our love for Him with compliance with His commandments (John 14:15). Therefore, it is essential for us to know, understand, and keep His teaching (Mat. 28:20). With that as our foundation let us consider the essentiality of water baptism as taught by Christ.

What is baptism?

Baptism is not, as some stylize it, an outward sign of an inward working, but is, according to the inspired Word, “the answer of a good conscience toward God” (1 Pet. 3:21). In Acts 2:38 Peter teaches us what a good conscience toward God is; he says, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” When an individual is baptized for the remission of his sins he obeys from the heart that form of doctrine which makes him free from sin (Rom. 6:17-18). And the “form” that Paul speaks of is baptism. Peter refers to it as “the like figure” (1 Pet. 3:21). Baptism is the likeness, or figure, of what Christ did in reality (i.e., put to death, buried, and arose from the grave). Therefore takes water, in fact, “much water” (John 3:23). The water must be sufficient enough in which to “bury” the individual which is being baptized (Rom. 6:4). Also, Colossians 2:12, “Buried with him in baptism.”

What is the purpose of baptism?

Baptism is a word that was transliterated from the Greek word baptizo and is translated as “to dip, plunge, or immerse” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary, pp. 88-89), and, something in which to dip, plunge, or immerse into is required (i.e., water, “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?”—Acts 8:36). It takes water, in fact, “much water” (John 3:23). The water must be sufficient enough in which to “bury” the individual which is being baptized (Rom. 6:4). Also, Colossians 2:12, “Buried with him in baptism.”
we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:4-6). It is by obedience to that form of doctrine that puts an alien sinner into Christ. Baptism is the final step in God’s process of obedience (Gal. 3:27). Now, some are attempting to say that Peter and Paul differ on their feelings toward baptism. Such is not the case. Peter says that baptism is for the “remission of sins” and Paul says baptism is to put us “into Christ.” However, remission of sins is in Christ (Col. 1:14). Jesus says, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 7:21), and the will of the Father is stated by Christ as belief and baptism (Mark 16:16), and “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Mat. 28:19). The will of the Father was also told by His angel to Cornelius in Acts 10. He was told to send for Peter and he would come and “speak [teach] unto thee” (v. 32). After Peter spoke (taught) them he “commanded them to be baptized” (v. 48). God also told Saul to go into the city and he would be told “what thou must do” (Acts 9:6), and what he was told was to “arise, and be baptized” (Acts 22:16).

Who should be baptized? Questions in this vein have long been discussed. Some feel that baptism has something to do with membership in their religious organization. Others feel that baptism is a prerequisite for receiving the Holy Spirit. Still others feel that infants can bypass Christ’s teaching on conversion, belief, and repentance and need to be baptized (sprinkled) sighting Mark 10:14ff as their guide. However, Jesus did not have those children baptized, rather He took them in His arms and “blessed them” (v. 16). In reality His teaching was on; humility and child-likeness of attitude rather than salvation.

The answer to our above question is given by Jesus in Mark 16:15-16. In what we call the Great Commission Jesus taught that those who should be baptized are those who have been taught the gospel and believe it. It would be useless for anyone who does not believe the gospel to be baptized. This also shows that a degree of maturity is required of the individual prior to baptism. Jesus says we must have “heard” and “learned” before we can come to Him (John 6:45). Hence, only those who capable of hearing, believing what they have! heard, repent of their sins, and acknowledge Christ as Lord and Savior are ready for baptism. Following their conversion to Christ and baptism into Him, the individual begins their Christian life. As a Christian they are given the “right to the tree of life” (Rev. 22:14) and will faithfulness until death they will be given life eternal (Rev. 2:10).

P.O. Box 904; Palacios, TX 77465

DID YOU KNOW...

1. The Bible nowhere says “Accept Jesus as Your Personal Savior”?
2. Not one denomination is to be found in the New Testament?
3. “The Rapture” isn’t once mentioned in the Bible (neither by name nor by concept)?
4. No one was ever told to “Ask Jesus Into Your Heart” in answer to the question “What Must I Do To Be Saved”? 


7. The New Testament authorizes singing only as the vocal music to be used in worship to God? (Read Eph. 5:10; Col. 3:16.)

8. “Faith only” is mentioned just once in the Bible, and that in a condemnatory fashion? (Jam. 2:24).

9. You must obey the will of God to be saved eternally? (Read Heb. 5:8-9; Rom. 6:16-18.)

“IS CHRIST IN YOU?”
Al Brown

A recurring theme of the New Testament is for Christ to rule in the hearts and lives of His followers. One of Paul’s favorite terms was: “Christ in you.” In Galatians 2:20, he wrote, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ living in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me.” Again, he wrote: “My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you” (Gal. 4:19). On another occasion, he wrote: “Christ in you [is], the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27).

“Christ in us” (ruling or controlling our lives) involves much more than the basic questions with which Christians are likely to concern themselves, such as: “Shall I go to worship—attend Bible class—visit—teach—be careful about what I say and do before outsiders?”

These are all important, but “Christ in us” goes deeper—all the way down to our attitudes and aspirations. It affects what we truly want to do and the basic desires of our hearts. If Christ is really in us, we are trying to mold our attitudes, desires, aspirations and priorities in such a way that they are identical with the way Christ was when He lived among men.

This is the grandest, most noble, and satisfying aim one can have. If he is to be successful, he must come to know Christ as He was when He lived in the flesh. This is basic. He must see Christ in all His simple—yet sublime manliness, dignity, and beauty. He was everything God could be and still be in the flesh. He was also all man ought to be in bearing God’s image.

Jesus was love—as only divine love can be, and this love absorbed every other trait. In dealing with men, love expressed itself in compassion, a forgiving spirit, humility, sacrifice, tenderness, kindness, and patience. Toward His Father, it expressed itself in faithfulness, meekness, righteousness, sinlessness, fidelity, courage, and obedience. His greatest desire was to do His Father’s will.

If we would have “Christ in us,” we must follow Him in all these ways. Hence, it is improper to ask, “How near to the ideal do I have to get?” This implies doing only enough on which to get by. The Lord’s attitude was the very opposite: the compulsion of love—the desire to please God. The proper question is, then: “How near am I to letting Christ rule my life, and how much closer can I get than I am now?” Is this attitude in you?

Deceased
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Mary Muldoon, Thomas Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Marilyn Hall, Ida Williams, Nancy Travis, Harold Cozad, Neva Bryant, Hairston Brantley, and Patty Cody (Marilyn Hall’s niece).

BAPTIZED
Mary Floyd was baptized on March 26, 1997. Her address is 6395 North Blue Angel Parkway; Pensacola, FL 32526. Her telephone number is 944-3187. Please keep Mary in your prayers and help her grow as a Christian.

SYMPATHY
Our deepest sympathy is extended to the family of Linda Parker in the death of her father, Clayton Richards, in Corpus Christi, Texas. Please keep Linda and her family in your prayers.

READING/INVITATION
April 16, 1997
Reading: Richard Parker
Invitation: Bill Crowe
April 23, 1997
Reading: Ray Wilcoxson
Invitation: Ray Dodd

MARK THESE DATES
April 13, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
April 20, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Jay, at 2:00 P.M. Study 2 & 3 John, Jude, and Revelation chapters 1-2.
April 20, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
April 30, 1997–Fifth Wednesday Singing.
May 4, 1997–Dinner on the Grounds and Singing after the morning service.
THIS IS THE 90s?

Brian W. Jones

In Willowick, Ohio, Fire Captain Garry Edward Strater is now Fire Captain Megan Elizabeth Parsons. That’s right, he is now a she. The new Ms. Parsons claims that she is, “happier living as a woman.”

On August 5th, the 46-year-old veteran firefighter took on the new identity after hormone treatment, make-up, and a name change. Ms. Parsons had previously been married twice and has a daughter. The former wale plans to eventually have a sex-change operation and get a divorce from his/her current wife.

Fire Chief Harley Rudersdorf insists that the change has brought little opposition in the Department. Mr. Rudersdorf went on to say, “...This is the 90s, and you have to accept things.”

The preceding story immediately caught my attention when it was published in the morning paper. The whole story is rather weird and unnatural. The most intriguing part of the story to me is the quote by Chief Rudersdorf, “This is the 90s, and you have to accept things.” My personal response is, “So what if this is the 90s, some things are just plain wrong no matter what age we happen to be living in.”

What frightens me most is this message of tolerance is slipping through the door of the church. The word tolerance carries the following ideas: to not interfere with; allow; permit; to bear; to put up with (someone or something not especially liked). Granted, there are times when Christians are not tolerable enough. Especially in regards to personal matters. However, we’re seeing more and more Christians who are accepting doctrinal and moral changes that once sent chills up the spine.

Instrumental music in worship? “It’s a matter of opinion.” Pornographic movies (really most R-rated)? “It really doesn’t effect me any.” Social
drinking? "Oh, just when I go to a fancy restaurant." Cheating on income taxes or on tests in school? “Everyone does it.” Speeding down the interstate? “Hey, I’m in a hurry.” Homosexuality? “Well, I don’t care for it, but each to his own.” Government leaders involved in sex scandals? “That’s a private matter.” Lying to my boss or my parents? “I was in a tough bind.” Baptism for the remission of sins? “You know we really put too much emphasis on that subject.”

Brethren, it’s these types of attitudes that are hindering the church today. Are some things acceptable in the 90s which were not acceptable a few years ago? Test it against the Bible. The words within it are timeless.

2900 Camden Avenue; Parkersbury, WV 26101

TAKE THE PROM PROMISE—PROMISE NOT TO GO (Part 1)

B. J. Clarke

Every year I see signs and advertisements encouraging young people to take The Prom Promise. The essence of the promise is that they will not drink and drive. I hope that young people will promise not to drink whether they intend on driving or not. But there is another Prom Promise that young people need to make and that is the promise not to attend the prom at all. I realize that some young people already have attended. I hope that they will read this article and promise never to go again. I pray that those young people who have never attended the prom will promise that they never will. The reasons why are enumerated in this article from notes I have taken across the years.

For many years dancing has been a very popular amusement. In fact, anyone today who speaks out against the modern dance and its many evils is definitely not pursuing the pathway of popularity with young people who dance or parents who condone such. The opponent of the modern dance is considered to be an old fogy or an ancient fossil.

There is a growing laxity in society. Standards of conduct have been lowered. Many things that were formerly considered wrong by almost everyone are being engaged in freely.

One of these things is dancing. Man; schools that used to oppose dancing are now sponsoring it. The majority of parents, teachers and preachers used to oppose dancing. The evils, dangers and sin of dancing were fully recognized and exposed both at home and in the pulpit.

But some interrupt and defend dancing by pointing out that dancing is spoken of in the Bible; people engaged in it and were not condemned by God. The purpose of this study is to examine dancing in light of the Scriptures, It may be that you’ve never thought dancing to be wrong and you may not be fully convinced when you have completed this article. But I sincerely ask you to honestly consider what is written, not according to your desires, but according to the light of Divine Truth.

What The Issue Is Not

In the first place, I do not question the need and value of recreation. Second, I am not speaking of dancing that takes place between husband and wife in the privacy of their own home. Third, I am not speaking of dancing that takes place among members of the same sex. For example, women doing aerobics together alone would not necessarily be sinful. Dancing in and of itself is not a sin. It can become wrong depending on whom you dance with and where you dance. Some dancing in some forms may be acceptable, but not the modern dancing of mixed sexes.
common today. Let it be clear that the mixed dancing condemned in this article would include the cheek to cheek waltz between unmarried partners. Such close proximity of the bodies moving together is certainly capable of arousing unholy desires.

What The Issue Is

The question is this: Is lustful dancing between mixed sexes an acceptable form of recreation in God’s sight? Does the Bible condemn mixed dancing (Exo. 32:6, 9, 18; Mat. 14:6-7)? In reply we would point out that:

1. Dancing Is Viewed As Questionable Even By The World. If it weren’t we wouldn’t be dealing with it in this article (Rom. 14:23). Many worldly people, even many who dance, see the evils of it and confess that it is wrong and they know what it can lead to. “The difference between wrestling and dancing is that some holds in wrestling are barred.” That statement wasn’t made by a preacher. It was made by Arthur Murray, a popular dance teacher as quoted by Reader’s Digest.

2. Dancing Is Lasciviousness. Galatians 5:19-21: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wraths, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” One of the words in this passage has dancing as a part of its meaning. The word is lasciviousness. The following definitions are given of lasciviousness: “1. Having wanton desires; lustful; lewd. 2. Tending to produce sensual desires (Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary). 3. Characterized by or expressing lust or lewdness; wanton. 2. Tending to excite lustful desires (Webster’s New World Dictionary). 4. Wanton (acts or) manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females, etc.” (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament).

From these definitions it is obvious that anything which tends to produce lewd emotions, create evil thoughts, or excite unlawful sexual desire is lasciviousness. Does dancing do such things? In a study in which 44 boys who danced were interviewed, 41 of them admitted that dancing caused them to have immoral thoughts and desires!!! This word strikes at the very root of the dance, because dancing does create lustful desire. The testimony of thousands who have gone astray makes this plain (Gal. 5:16-17).

NOT WASTED

A young woman, who was a great lover of flowers, had set out a rare vine at the base of a stone wall. It grew vigorously, but did not bloom. Day after day she cultivated it and watered it and tried in every way to coax it into bloom. One morning, as she stood disappointedly before it, her invalid neighbor, whose back lot adjoined her own, called over and said, “You can’t imagine how much I have been enjoying the blooms of that vine you planted.” The owner looked and on the other side of the wall was a mass of blooms. The vine had crept through the crevices and flowered luxuriantly on the other side.

So often we think our efforts are thrown away because we do not see their fruits. We need to learn that in God’s service, our prayers, our toils, our crosses are never in vain! Somewhere they bear fruit and hearts will receive blessings and joy.

Author Unknown
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Mary Muldoon, Thomas Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Marilyn Hall, Ida Williams, Nancy Travis, Harold Cozad, Neva Bryant, Hairston Brantley, Lou Gafford, Angela Fletcher, Wanda Batten, and Patty Coty (Marilyn Hall’s niece).

BAPTIZED
Andrew and Daniel Hatcher were baptized on April 10, 1997. Please keep them in your prayers and help them to grow as Christians.

READING/INVITATION
April 23, 1997
Reading: Ray Wilcoxson
Invitation: Ray Dodd
April 30, 1997
Reading: Ray Williams
Invitation: Ray Foshee

MARK THESE DATES
April 20, 1997-Monthly Bible Bowl at Jay, at 2:00 P.M. Study 2 & 3 John, Jude, and Revelation chapters 1-2.
April 20, 1997-Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
April 30, 1997-Fifth Wednesday Singing.
May 18, 1997-Dinner on the Grounds and Singing after the morning service.
June 7-11, 1997-Twenty-second Annual Bellview Lectures. This year’s theme is: “Leadership.” Make plans now to attend.

ADDRESS CHANGES
If you are moving and wish to continue receiving the Beacon please send in a change of address so we can continue sending you the Beacon.
TAKE THE PROM
PROMISE—PROMISE
NOT TO GO (Part 2)

B. J. Clarke

Objections Answered

1. People danced in Bible times with God’s approval. Answer: Exodus 15:20—This wasn’t mixed dancing. It was done by women. Furthermore, it wasn’t modern dancing. This dancing consisted of a whirling and jumping with joy. It was an expression of religious rejoicing. The dancing of 2 Samuel 6:12-16 was done by David alone. There is no mention of mixed dancing in this Bible account. What we read here is nothing like an incident that occurred in Dallas, TX, a few years ago. After communion had been given, a picture was made depicting the Methodist Chaplain and an attractive college co-ed dancing up and down the aisle. The young girl was wearing shorts that revealed her thighs, not leaving much to the imagination. In the early ’70s a dance was advertised by the Second Presbyterian church in Memphis, TN. Girls who wore hot pants were to get in at half price. The boys and more modest girls had to pay full price. The advertisement read, “Come and enjoy the scenery.”

2. “But, I don’t think evil thoughts when I watch others dance—Some people just have dirty minds.” Answer: even if this were true, what about others who are watching you or snuggling up close to you (1 Cor. 10:32)? Don’t be a stumbling block (Luke 17:1).

3. “Well, I won’t dance. I’ll just go to the prom and watch others dance.” Answer: A father finally gave in to his daughter’s request to go to the dance on the condition that he must drive her to the dance. On the way to the dance he stopped at a coal mine and told her to walk through before going to the dance. She complained and said, “But even if I don’t touch anything I can’t help
but get dirty.” It is impossible to participate in worldly activities without being stained just as it is impossible to journey into a coal mine without getting a white shirt dirty. A boat can be in the water and sail safely, but when water gets into the boat there’s going to be trouble (2 Cor. 6:17; 1 Pet. 2:11; Jam. 1:27; 1 The. 5:22; 2 Tim. 2:22).

4. “But, if the dance is supervised, wouldn’t that make it all right?” Answer: Supervising the dance cannot make it right. Supervision cannot control the minds of the dancers. The close embrace of the sexes will arouse unholy thoughts (Mat. 5:27-28). “All the police and school teachers in town cannot control the thoughts and desires of the dancers and keep dancing from being lascivious. Neither can the surroundings make it right. Whether in the parlor, or in the school gymnasium, dancing is wrong because the charges herein set forth against it are true regardless of where it is done. Sin cannot be made right by supervision” (Tract by A. G. Hobbs).

5. “But I won’t be popular if I don’t dance.” Answer: It is better to be tall in the eyes of Jehovah and small in the eyes of man. Besides, it’s not true that you can’t be popular unless you dance. Many young people, and some parents, think dancing is essential to popularity. But many of the most outstanding, respected, and popular young people do not dance. *Teenage Christian* carried an inspiring story of a teenage girl who was elected Queen of her high school. The tradition was for the Queen and King to host a Coronation Dance. This Christian girl did not believe in dancing. When she was told she would have to give the dance she refused to violate her convictions and offered to surrender the Queenship. Members of the school board did not feel she should be penalized for refusing to violate her convictions. Thus, the Coronation took place, as planned, but there was no dance following. Instead, there was a reception at which the Royal Party received their guests and it was a tremendous success. Many honors were bestowed upon this young lady. In addition to being named Queen, she was named Cutest Girl, President of the Girls’ Recreation Association, P.T.A. Sweetheart, a member of the Student Council, and a member of Future Teachers. During her Junior year she had been selected as Junior Class Favorite and Junior Sweetheart. This teenager is very active in church work, and regularly teaches a Bible class. She has proven that a person can be a Christian and refuse to participate in questionable activities with no loss of popularity.

**Concluding Questions**

1. Does the dance incite me to unlawful thoughts and desires?
2. Does it provoke such thoughts in the mind of my partner?
3. Does the dance serve to arouse emotions that were intended by God to be aroused only in the marriage relationship?
4. Does the dance serve as a steppingstone to baser things?
5. Does the dance increase the respect which good people have for me?
6. Does the dance make me delight more in reading the Bible?
7. Does participating in the dance increase my love for God?
8. Does the dance lead me to want to pray more to God? “A dancing foot and praying knee: don’t grow on the same leg.”
9. Does the dance increase my zeal for the spread of the Lord’s church?
10. Can I honestly say that the dance helps me to be a better Christian?

The modern dance as generally practiced by young people today is sinful in itself and leads to numerous other sins as well. As such, Christians should have no desire to participate in nor to view these activities. Parents owe their children the right to protection from these evil influences, even if the young people don’t want such pro-
tection. There are plenty of things which our young people can do that are not sinful. They may not want to do them because they would rather dance—but God has seen to it that no one has to engage in sin for entertainment purposes. Christian parents and young people, abstain from the modern dance and the evils associated with it.

PO Box 128; Southaven, MS 38671

THE ROOT CAUSE OF A CULT’S SELF-DESTRUCTION

Steve Ellis

Last March 26th the world was shocked to learn of the mass suicide of some 39 people (21 women and 18 men, ranging in age from 26 to 72) who belonged to a weird cult calling themselves “Heaven’s Gate.” Authorities believe that most of these terribly misguided individuals died from suffocation over a three-day period, March 23-25, 1997. They suffocated as a result of plastic bags being placed over their heads after they voluntarily consumed applesauce or pudding laced with Phenobarbital and washed it down with vodka. According to their own videotaped explanations, they cheerfully killed themselves in order to facilitate getting aboard a giant UFO, four times the size of earth, which they believed to be following the Hale-Bopp Comet!

Of course, the root cause of death for 38 of these people, incredibly gullible “New Age dreamers,” was their willingness to submit to a master manipulator and “blind guide”: their leader, Marshall Herff Applewhite. Former cult members have revealed that Applewhite’s followers believed him to be a “modern-day Christ.” Whether or not Applewhite himself believed such nonsense, it is readily apparent that those who followed his lethal instructions had complete confidence in this false teacher.

What can we learn from this tragedy? Among the most obvious lessons is that the bizarre demise of the “Heaven’s Gate” cult is yet another demonstration of the truth of Jesus’ teaching that “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Mat. 15:14). The fact that Applewhite’s disciples were sincerely wrong and honestly mistaken did not prevent them from suffering the same tragic fate as their spiritually blind and deceitful leader. Truly, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Pro. 14:12).

One does not have to be a member of some strange cult led by a psychopath in order to be headed for the ditch. Some false teachers are far more subtle than Marshall Applewhite, but they are “blind guides” nonetheless. Everyone who is following any kind of religious leader should ask himself, “Does my religious guide tell people to become Christians in the New Testament way through belief in Jesus, repentance, confession and baptism for the remission of sins (John 8:24; Acts 17:30; Rom. 10:10; Acts 2:38)?” All should inquire, “Does my church seek to carefully follow the New Testament pattern in worship, teaching and practice (2 John 9-11)?” Each one should ask, “Am I being taught to believe what Jesus said about the danger of following blind guides?” May God help all people to learn from this most recent mass suicide to “believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

Knight Arnold Church of Christ
4400 Knight Arnold Road; Memphis, TN 38118
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Mary Muldoon, Thomas Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Marilyn Hall, Ida Williams, Nancy Travis, Harold Cozad, Neva Bryant, Lou Gafford, Angela Fletcher, Wanda Batten, and Patty Coty (Marilyn Hall’s niece).

SYMPATHY
Our deepest sympathy is extended to Kay Hollowell and her family in the death of her father, James Summers. Please keep this family in your prayers.

READING/INVITATION
April 30, 1997
Reading: Ray Williams
Invitation: Ray Foshee
May 7, 1997
Reading: Edward Brantley
Invitation: Bill Gallaher

MARK THESE DATES
April 30, 1997–Fifth Wednesday Singing.
May 18, 1997–Dinner on the Grounds and Singing after the morning service.
May 18, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Bellview, at 2:00 P.M. Study Revelation chapters 3-8. Scot Brazell is the study leader.
June 7-11, 1997–Twenty-second Annual Bellview Lectures. This year’s theme is: “Leadership.” Make plans now to attend.

ROMANS 15:4
“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”
HOW MUCH SHOULD A PERSON KNOW TO BE SAVED?

Waymon Swain

We often hear the question, “How much should a person know to be saved?” We also hear some ask, “How old must one be to become a Christian?” These are not easy questions to answer. How old is old? How short is short? How much is quite a bit? How long is a piece of rope? These are intelligent questions and need to be answered. How much did the people on Pentecost Day know? How much did the man called the Ethiopian Eunuch know when he was saved? What each of these knew they heard in only one sermon.

There are some things one MUST know in order to be saved. This is the reason Christ wanted His message to be preached, so people can hear, learn, believe, and obey His teaching. Jesus said, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44). How does one come to the Father? The next verse tells us, “It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me” (John 6:45). Coming to the Father (God) is a process of education, a process of learning, being taught of God and His Word. We MUST believe that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6).

We MUST repent of our sins in order to have the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Repentance is a command (Acts 17:30). One MUST confess his faith in the fact that Jesus is the Son of God (Acts 8:37).

After this one MUST be baptized into Christ

There must be an understanding of these matters in order for one to be saved. Do you understand each and every one of the above listed things? If you do then you know enough to be saved. Yes, there are many more things one needs to know and have an understanding of, such as worship, the church, work, and how to live the Christian life. So the questions are these, do you believe all of the above things? Do you understand them? Do you accept all these truths? If so, you know enough to be saved. Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).

PO Box 34; Bastrop, LA 71221

SENTENCED TO CHURCH FOR A YEAR

Bob Plunkett

That’s right! U.S. District Judge David O. Belew, Jr., sentenced Emma Jean Oliver to one year of church attendance with death about the only excuse for missing. A probation officer was assigned to enforce it. Emma Jean has four children. She was guilty of drug trafficking and faced a three year sentence in federal penitentiary and a $250,000 fine.

It shook the legal world. One side said, “What kind of message does this send to drug traffickers if they know their sentence will be sitting in church for an hour or two a week?” Another said, “It makes church attendance sound like a punishment when it should be a joy.” Surely some will cry, “It is unconstitutional.” What this really shows is the total frustration of judges. She didn’t have $250,000. Who will take care of the children if she goes to prison? After three years will she start all over in drug trafficking?

What judges are noticing is this: Parents who take their children to Sunday School and worship and then live and practice Christian principles at home have about a ninety percent success rate with their children. Some have said, “Oh, we took our children to church, but just look at them.” Nothing could be more frustrating to a child than to hear the beautiful principles and values of Jesus and then live with parents who never practice them. It takes both.

The judge was sending a message here to parents and the message is this: If you love your children and want them to grow up with values and convictions and you want them to lead a productive life, then take them to Jesus, the greatest teacher and the greatest life that has ever been lived. Then live this kind of life before them. There are a few of these who are overcome by the world and peer pressure, but only a few. Jesus said, “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me” (Mat, 19:14). “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Pro. 22:6).

How is Emma doing? Emma has not missed a service and she says she loves it. She says being with better people is making her better. What if the judge had sentenced Emma to us? What would she see in our house? The whole country is watching Emma’s case.

WHO WILL BE ABLE TO STAND?

Tim Ayers

“Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?” (Psa. 76:7). Here the psalmist reminds God’s people in this great psalm of the fact that
The congregation here at Bellview is saddened because of the passing of a grand lady, Ida Williams. She was born August 3, 1911, and died April 27, 1997. She inhabited this earth over 85 years.

She made a difference by being an exemplary wife and mother to her family. She made a difference by promoting Christ’s church in her home and her neighbors. She, in loving cooperation with her husband George (also deceased), made a difference by helping to establish this congregation and supporting by monetary resources and physical labor in several expansions.

She leaves three children, Lurice Spruill, Ray and Charles Williams, and several grandchildren and great grandchildren. Her passing will be long mourned because she was greatly appreciated by all whose lives she touched.

God has two sides, one of which is “severity” (Rom. 11:22). “For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29). When the God of heaven is made angry because of sin, His wrath is terrible. In a similar thought, John wrote of destruction at the end of time, when men would call for the mountains and rocks to them from “the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Rev. 6:16-17).

The judgment day is coming, of that we are assure throughout Scripture (Mat. 25:31-46; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Pet. 3:9-12; Heb. 9:27). Who will be able to stand in that day? In other words, who will be approved and accepted by God, and thus able to avoid the punishment that results from judgment? And who will be rejected, cast “into the furnace of fire” (Mat. 13:50)?

First, let us notice who WILL NOT BE ABLE TO STAND:

1. The alien sinner (Eph. 2:12), the one who has never fully obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ (2 The. 1:7-9; 1 Pet. 4:17), the “ungodly shall not stand in the judgment” (Psa. 1:5).

2. The honest person who has been deceived, who thinks that good works alone or sincerity alone is enough, will not stand (Mat. 7:21-23; 15:13). Obedience to the gospel of Christ and faithfulness throughout life is the way to escape hell (Rom. 1:16; 6:17-18; Rev. 2:10). That is why it is so vital that we get busy teaching the gospel to our neighbors (Mark 16:15).

3. Backsliders, that is, those who were converted to Christ but then later fell back into the world, will not be able to stand (2 Pet. 2:20-22; Heb. 6:4-6; 1 Cor. 10:12).

Next, let us notice who WILL BE ABLE TO STAND:

1. The righteous will stand (Pro. 12:7). This refers to those who keep God’s commandments (Psa. 119:172), and they will have access to the tree of life (Rev. 22:14).

2. The redeemed will stand (Heb. 9:12; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Eph. 1:7), those who are in the body of Christ (Eph. 5:23).

3. Those citizens of God’s kingdom who remain loyal to King Jesus will stand (Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:9; Heb. 12:28; 1 Tim. 6:15; 1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10).

So, let us “hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end” (Heb. 3:14), for “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31).
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Mary Muldoon, Thomas Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Marilyn Hall, Nancy Travis, Harold Cozad, Wanda Batten, and Patty Coty (Marilyn Hall’s niece).

SYMPATHY
Our deepest sympathy is extended to Preston Silcox and his family in the death of his grandmother, Christine Bradley. Please keep this family in your prayers.

READING/INVITATION
May 7, 1997
Reading: Elward Brantley
Invitation: Bill Gallaher
May 14, 1997
Reading: Allen Brazell
Invitation: Louis Herrington

MARK THESE DATES
May 18, 1997–Dinner on the Grounds and Singing after the morning service.
May 18, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Bellview, at 2:00 P.M. Study Revelation chapters 3-8. Scot Brazell is the study leader.
June 7-11, 1997–Twenty-second Annual Bellview Lectures. This year’s theme is: “Leadership.” Make plans now to attend.

VISITATION
V - italizes the work of the church
I - ncreases the attendance
S - ecures more cooperation
I - nspires regular attendance
T - rains for the greater service
A - ffords soul winning opportunities
T - ypifies the life of Christ in His people
I - nsures a better fellowship
O - pens the doors of new homes
N - urtues friendliness and good will

Author Unknown
THE CYCLE OF BLESSING

Bill McDonough

Each week my mail contains appeals for support of orphans, radio and T.V. evangelism, famine relief, preacher training schools, Christian education, literature evangelism, and the list goes on and on. Never have Christians been so bombarded with appeals to help. We rejoice that so many good works are in progress. Knowing how and where to help is sometimes difficult. Our first obligation is to give regularly and systematically to the work of the local church as commanded in First Corinthians 16:2. We are also to give directly to those who are in need as we have opportunity and ability (Gal. 6:10).

John MacArthur, Jr., lists seven principles to guide us in non-hypocritical giving.

1. Giving from the heart is investing with God. “He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (2 Cor. 8:6).

2. Genuine giving is to be sacrificial, David refused to give to the Lord that which cost him nothing (2 Sam. 24:24). Generosity cannot be measured by the size of the gift. The question is how much do you keep of what God has given you? 99%, 95%, 90%???

3. Responsibility for giving has no relation-ship to how much a person has. “He that is faith-ful in that which is least is faithful also in much” (Luke 16:10). A poor person who is not generous will not be generous if he becomes rich. The “when things get better syndrome” is not from God.

4. Material giving correlates to spiritual bless-ing (Luke 16:11-12). There are not truly spiritual people who do not give generously. Remember Jesus telling us that our heart is where our treasure is kept.

5. Giving is to be personally determined; “not grudgingly, or of necessity” (2 Cor. 9:7). The
Macedonians gave out of poverty (2 Cor. 8:1-2), and Philippians gave spontaneously with generous hearts (Phi. 4:15-18).

6. We are to give in response to need (Acts 2). In Jerusalem, Christians gave according to the need that existed.

7. Giving demonstrates love, not law. The New Testament contains no specific percentages to govern our giving. The amount of our gift will be determined by love of our hearts and the needs of others.

The words of an old hymn well express God’s desired cycle of giving: “I gave my life for thee, what hast thou given for me?”

Copied

“GOD’S AMAZING GRACE”

Jim Law

The words “grace” and “gracious” can be found almost 200 times in the Scriptures. The word comes from the Greek word “charis,” which was a word greatly admired by the Greeks. It refers to the heartfelt attraction one would have for another. There were times when they would use this word to express generosity without thought of reward or favor from the other person. As time would go along, the word would come to be used to mean a “gift,” and that came to mean the gift of salvation—the kindness and love of God in forgiving us and saving us. Perhaps the best known meaning of this important biblical term is “unmerited favor” or “divine favor,” that is, a favor that is freely bestowed upon those totally unable to return the favor or who do not merit it. It demonstrates the goodness of God toward those who deserve His wrath. On the basis of the death of Christ, God’s grace provides a way for God to offer the free gift of eternal life to guilty sinners. We deserved punishment. God’s grace removes the punishment and grants to us the salvation we did not deserve. It is truly, “unmerited favor.”

Paul in writing to Titus states, “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another” (Tit. 3:3). Man was in a deplorable condition, as this verse indicates. It is a terrible picture of what life is like without God. Even though Paul is not saying that we are all guilty of each sin listed in the passage, he is, however, saying that we are all guilty of sin. Therefore, we need to be saved. The person without God is “foolish” (Tit. 3:3) that is, he is thoughtless, dull, senseless, and without understanding in spiritual matters. He is ignorant of God and unwise in dealing with God. However, as terrible as that picture is, Paul then begins to give one of the greatest summaries on salvation found in all the Scriptures. In this passage he states, “But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Tit. 3:4-5). This is the message that must be preached if people are going to be reached for Christ and if we as Christian people are to be rooted and grounded in the truth. Salvation comes from God. The kindness and goodness of God motivated Him to save us. God’s love is so great that He has handled the sin and death problems for man and has provided an escape from condemnation. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). As the passage teaches, one does not merit salvation (v. 5), but one must respond appropriately in order to enjoy the benefits of the grace God has provided. Paul’s reference to “the washing of regeneration” must refer to that point in time when individuals
respond to the grace of God by being baptized into Christ out of an obedient faith. The word “regeneration” (v. 5—palingenesias) means to be regenerated or given new life. It means to be given a new birth, as salvation is a spiritual rebirth (John 3:7). It is through baptism, then, that we receive the benefits of the blood of Christ and the grace of God (Rom. 6:1-6). When one comes to baptism in wholehearted faith and repentance, it becomes just what God intended—a “new birth,” that is, salvation from sin. So, Paul says, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7).

207 Farris Ln: LaFollette, TN 37766

IT IS JUST A MATTER OF TIME
Edsel Burleson

Solomon said, “The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways” (Pro. 14:14). Jesus warned, “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Mat. 24:12). John told the church at Ephesus “thou hast left thy first love” (Rev. 2:4). When a Christian begins to show less interest in things eternal, he is going the wrong way. When one is getting weaker instead of stronger, something is seriously wrong. If this backsliding is not arrested, it is just a matter of time and he will be spiritually dead.

A preacher once told this unusual experience. A man came to his office one day and told him this story of his life.

Only forty-one years old but he had come to face a problem that was the greatest of all human experiences in this world. He had tears in his eyes as he told of the many years he had gradually neglected God and the church. He didn’t intend to ever be where he was at this time—but he was! He continued his story of how he had taken up habits of impure words and thoughts—these led him to neglect prayer because his heart despised hypocrisy. Thus, he began to neglect the assembly of the church for he felt out of place.

Finally, he even became angry if someone visited him and asked of his absences. After all, he said, the absences from the assembly were not the problem. It was the things of the heart and his way of living that actually forced him to stay away. So a few days before, he decided he would confess his faults to a brother in Christ (Jam. 5:16) and ask for prayers. He continued on to say that unless he did this he knew that it was just a matter of time until he would be dead (spiritually).

QHow desperate was his soul as he asked the preacher to pray with him for God to forgive him and to make him alive again.

When the way to the meeting house seems too far; when the sermons seem too long; when one begins to dislike the company of brethren; when the sermons make one mad instead of penitent; when reading the Bible puts one to sleep; when one frets if called on to give more—dangerous symptoms of a backslider are beginning to surface.

NEW ARRIVAL
Karen Hoffay is the proud grandmother of Ethan Donald Hoffay, born on May 2, 1997, to Doug and Buffy Hoffay of Biloxi, MS. Congratulations to all!

PROMOTION
Congratulations are extended to Mike Dobbs who was promoted to his present rank of Master Sergeant, U.S. Marine Corps, on May 1, 1997. Mike will be transferring to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, in June.
**SICK AND SHUT-IN**
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Mary Muldoon, Thomas Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Marilyn Hall, and Nancy Travis.

**READING/INVITATION**
May 14, 1997
Reading: Allen Brazell
Invitation: Louis Herrington
May 21, 1997
Reading: Jerry Caine
Invitation: Tim Lamb

**MARK THESE DATES**
May 11, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
May 18, 1997–Dinner on the Grounds and Singing after the morning service.
May 18, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Bellview, at 2:00 P.M. Study Revelation chapters 3-8. Scot Brazell is the study leader.
May 18, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
June 7-11, 1997–Twenty-second Annual Bellview Lectures. This year’s theme is: “Leadership.” Make plans now to attend.

**ADDRESS CHANGES**
Harold and Jessie Cozad have moved back to Colorado. Their address is 3144 South Wheeling Way #305; Aurora, CO 80014. Their telephone number is 303-751-0195. Scot Brazell has moved. His address is 300 Bayou Blvd. #316; Pensacola, FL 32503. Please update your directories.
PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR PRAYER

Batsell Barrett Baxter

1. Pray immediately upon rising. In what better way can we begin the day than by thanking God for His protection and care during the night and by asking His guidance and help during the new day? Prayer at the beginning of the day is an insulation against evil throughout the entire day.

2. Pray before every meal. God has provided for our needs in such a bountiful manner! The least we can do is express our gratitude as we sit down to enjoy each meal. In these days when we eat many meals in a crowded public restaurant, a few moments of silent prayer often must serve for the audible prayer which we pray around our tables at home.

3. Pray at set times. The ancient Jews, and others, reserved specified periods each day for prayer. We find it helpful, too. These regular times serve as reminders and help keep the busy world from crowding out our periods of communion with God. One woman uses her dish washing time for prayer.

4. Pray when you are discouraged. Most of us do not need much encouragement to pray when we are discouraged or when we face some special problems. At such times prayer comes naturally. It is comforting to know that God listens to our prayers in times of crisis. The Christian has the privilege of leaning upon the Lord in times of difficulty.

5. Pray when you are happy. It is easy to pray in times of crisis...and easy to forget to
pray when life is running smoothly. Christians need to thank God for their happy and prosperous lives.

6. **Pray immediately before retiring.** After the cares and toils of the day the child of God needs to talk with his heavenly Father. There are blunders to be confessed, sins to be forgiven. And there is gratitude to be expressed for the blessings of the day. Sleep will be sweeter if we have committed ourselves to the Lord’s loving care.

7. **Pray fervently.** James says, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jam. 5:16). Christ commended the importunate widow for her persistence (Luke 18). We must feel deeply the things we say to God, and must say them earnestly, fervently in full faith.

**SYMPTOMS**

*Dan Flournoy*

Fever is a symptom. **Shortness of breath** is a symptom. **Skin discoloration** is a symptom. A “symptom” is a sign that something is wrong. It indicates that there is a problem. A good doctor will seek to cure the problem which has caused the symptom rather than simply treating the symptom.

In regard to worship, **absenteeism** is a symptom. It is a sign that something is wrong. When one is willfully absent from worship, week after week, it demonstrates that a serious problem exists. A prudent individual will seek to cure the problem that produces the symptom, Worship is an expression of our love of God, Therefore, when other things take precedence over worshipping God, it is simply that one does not truly love Him.

Obviously, there are circumstances that make it **impossible** to attend every service. However, we are not talking about those who are ill or whose employment occasionally keeps them from attending every service. We are considering those who simply **choose** not to attend worship. They are at home in front of the TV or at the ballpark or lake. These folks have a serious problem—a lack of love for the Lord.

When Isaiah was confronted with a vision of God, he was driven to his knees to worship the Almighty (Isa. 6:1-6). He confessed his sins, was purged and then sent out to serve the Master’s cause. Saul of Tarsus was confronted by the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus. He fell to the ground and asked, “Who art thou, Lord?” and “What shall I do, Lord?” (Acts 22:6-10). When an honest heart is confronted with the greatness of God, it will repent confess and seek God’s forgiveness.

Can you imagine Isaiah or Saul (Paul) **choosing** to stay at home while the rest of the congregation is worshipping God? Can you! hear Paul saying to Aquila and Priscilla, “You two can go on to the worship service today; I’ve been making tents all week, and I need rest?”

When the saints are gathered around Lord’s Table to remember the death of Christ, where will you be? When Christians are singing, “Oh How I Love Jesus,” will you be in their midst? When God’s Word is held up and the saints are being edified, where will you be?

When God’s people are singing, “When The Roll Is Called Up Yonder, I’ll Be There,” will you be among them?

If you are among the number who make it a practice to be absent from the worship of God,
consider your attitude in light of Hebrews 10:24-31. For those who love God, nothing could have a greater priority than expressing that love in Christian worship.

Irving, TX

DOES PROVERBS 31 SANCTION SOCIAL DRINKING?

Shan Jackson

Before we address this question in light of Proverbs 31 let me say, there is no passage of divine script that sanctions social drinking. Our passage reads, “Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more” (Pro. 31:6-7).

Several things need to be remembered as we discuss this text. First, we need to remember that the dispensation that this proverb is addressing is different than the dispensation of Christ under which we find ourselves. There were many things that they did and were allowed to do that are not acceptable under Jesus’ commands (i.e., owning slaves, bigamy, musical instruments in worship, etc.).

These verses are not giving sanction to drink, rather, they are showing how desperate man can become. These men are burdened down, however, when their need is to turn to God they turn to drink instead. Using 1 Peter 4:4, Christians avoid such life styles.

Some scholars also point this passage to the potion which was given to the condemned prior, or during their execution. Mark 15:23 refers to a mixture of wine and myrrh that was offered to Jesus on the cross. This strong drink was to help ease Him from life to death. Wine “maketh glad the heart of man” (Psa. 104:15) and thereby dull the senses in the death hour.

Emphatically, however, this is not a sanction for social drinking. Christians are to “Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Th. 5:22).

PO Box 904; Palacios, TX 77465
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Marilyn Hall, Nancy Travis, and Inez Brantley. Mary Muldoon is in Baptist Hospital, room 406.

READING/INVITATION
May 21, 1997
Reading: Jerry Caine
Invitation: Tim Lamb
May 28, 1997
Reading: Bill Cline
Invitation: Tony Liddell

MARK THESE DATES
May 18, 1997–Dinner on the Grounds and Singing after the morning service.
May 18, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
May 25, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Bellview, at 2:00 P.M. Study Revelation chapters 3-8. Scot Brazell is the study leader. Note the change in date.
June 7-11, 1997–Twenty-second Annual Bellview Lectures. This year’s theme is: “Leadership.” Make plans now to attend.

NEW ARRIVAL
Jay and Carmen Worley are the parents of a baby boy, Hunter Lane, born on May 11, 1997. The proud grandparents are Orville and Linda Worley. Congratulations are extended to everyone.

GRADUATE
Bryan Loy will graduate from Washington High School on May 24, 1997. We wish him all the best in the future.
Modern Idolatry

Oran Rhodes

While most people think of idolatry as image worship, there are many different forms of idolatry. In this day and age there are even yet many prevalent forms of this ancient evil. Four particular kinds of idolatry come to mind as being very much in vogue today.

First, there is nature worship. “And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded” (Deu. 17:3). I grant you that the type of nature worship of which I am thinking 18 somewhat different today, but it stems from the same feeling. People travel far and wide on weekends to “commune with nature” on lakes, seashores, and in the mountains. Some contend that they worship God as well, or better, in the mountains as they can in a church building. The proof of the pudding is that they do not take the time to do so. In fact, nature has become their god.

Second, there is pleasure worship. “Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:4). Some would reckon this to be a close kin to nature worship, but it is much more far-reaching. I am not speaking of perversions, lusts, nor any sin-directed activity. Primarily, I am concerned about such things that are not inherently bad, but because of obsessions in quest of the pleasure derived, become objects of worship. I enjoy sports of almost every kind, but when a second nine holes of golf or football game on television interferes with attendance at worship or doing something good for the Lord, then we have made pleasure an idol of worship. The pleasure derived from some activities, varying naturally from person to person, is not the result with many people, but the total goal of life. This makes pleasure the worship center of our lives.

Third, there is mammon worship. “No man
can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Mat. 6:24). How sad it is that seldom, if ever, one will admit that money is the center of his life. Then, there might be hope for such people. It matters not whether people have much money and greedily want more, or have little and want some, Jesus still said, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal” (Mat. 6:19). As long as money means more than any and every facet of the Lord’s work, we are worshippers of mammon.

Fourth, there is self worship. “For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ... whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things” (Phi. 3:18-19). To many today are trusting in money instead of God’s Word. As long as we do these things we are actually worshipping ourselves as the almighty, all-knowing being.

Idolatry is still around; therefore it becomes an imposing and necessary responsibility for us to be watchful that we do not fall into this particular snare of the devil.

PREDESTINATION

Jay Yeager
“God, from all eternity, did by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever come to pass” (Presbyterian Confession of Faith, chapter 3, section 1). Beloved, do you understand what that means? Well, it means that your eternal destination was sealed before you were born. Either you are destined for heaven or destined for hell, and that destination is unchangeable. Now hold that thought for a moment, for not only does that statement pertain to the souls of men, it also means that God unchangeably ordained whatsoever comes to pass.

In recent times we have had several murders in the area. One of them involved a 4-year old girl brutally murdered by her mother. If this doctrine is true, then God-ordained unchangeably for that death to occur in exactly the way it happened. Imagine laying such a crime at the feet of God. I trust you find that as revolting as I do.

Let me give you a biblical example of how absurd this idea is. In Genesis 6:5-7 we find this: “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.”

If predestination is true, these verses would be a cruel joke. Those people would be nothing more than puppets on a string. That their hearts were evil continually would have been ordained by God, unchangeable, beyond their control. Then again, when God made this statement was it in mock anger? I am going to destroy man because he did exactly what I ordained unchangeably to happen. Not only does this defy any logical concept of God, it denies the Scriptures. James, writing with the pen of inspiration, forever refutes such an absurd theory (Jam. 1:13-15).

Now let’s look at the souls of man. Was our eternal destination sealed before we were born? I am not suggesting that there are not people who would find that a comforting thought. No personal responsibility. “I cannot choose to serve
God, because I have no choice in the matter.” Have you considered the reverse of that? “I serve God because He forces me to!” Is that true? Are we nothing more than robots with an unchangeable program, heaven or hell already written into our lives?

I do not believe that for a single moment, and I can prove it false by simply noticing three things: (1) God changes His mind. (2) The lost being saved. (3) The saved being lost.

(1) **God changes His mind.** “In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live. Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying, Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years” (Isa. 38:1-5). God heard the prayer of Hezekiah, saw his tears, changed His mind and added 15 years to his life. That alone proves this doctrine false.

(2) **The lost being saved.** Listen please! If this doctrine is true, the saved are saved and the lost are lost. You cannot alter the unchangeable. But listen to 2 Peter 3:9, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” How could that possibly be true if our eternal destiny is set in stone?

Beloved, let me give you two verses that are a dagger in the heart of this theory. “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:13). How can you lose a person who is predestined for heaven? Then again, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

How can one go from not being God’s people to being God’s people, from no mercy to having mercy if God predestined one to go to heaven before the world was? The person elected would always be God’s chosen if this doctrine was true; however, this doctrine is anything but true.

(3) **The saved being lost.** (a) The possibility—“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phi. 2:12). The predestined would hardly have need for fear and trembling. “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4). You simply cannot harmonize that doctrine with this verse.

(b) The reality—In Revelation 3:1-5, Jesus tells the church at Sardis that they had a name of being alive, but they were dead. The message to these Christians was simple and direct— repent or perish. Cleanse your garments or be blotted out of the book of life. Listen please! You cannot be blotted out of the Lamb’s book of life if you were never in the book in the first place.

Now I need to close, but I do not want to do that without saying what I have proven to be true. Leviticus 1:3 states that there is a voluntary will. Put that verse in your memory along with Joshua 24:15, “choose you this day whom ye will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” Friends, what will your choice be?

P.O. Box 2437; Springfield. OH 45504
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Mary and Thomas Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Marilyn Hall, Nancy Travis, Louise Cline, and Inez Brantley. Sadie Horton (a friend of Allen and Diana Brazell) had heart by-pass surgery last week. Dee Ann Estep (Kathy Brammer’s sister-in-law) is in critical condition.

READING/INVITATION
May 28, 1997
Reading: Bill Cline
Invitation: Tony Liddell
June 4, 1997
Reading: Mike Dobbs
Invitation: Jerry Lindesmith

MARK THESE DATES
May 28, 1997–Farewell reception for Robert and Angela Fletcher and their children Stephen and Tia, who will be transferring to Okinawa; and Mike Dobbs who is transferring to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. The reception will be held after the evening Bible classes in the general purpose building.
June 7-11, 1997–Twenty-second Annual Bellview Lectures. This year’s theme is: “Leadership.” Make plans now to attend.
June 15, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
June 22, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.

DIRECTORY CHANGE
Wanda Batten’s new telephone number is 944-6642. Please update your directories.
THE PROBLEM OF COVETOUSNESS

Al Macias

Today we are living in a world that seems to have become too materialistic. When a person has done well in accumulating some of this world’s wealth, such a person is called a success. Yet, if someone has not done so well, he is called a failure. It seems that this way of thinking is ingrained in the minds of so many, that trying to speak to these people of the spiritual things is almost an impossible task. What do the Scriptures teach in regard to those who wish to be faithful to God and, Yet, are also interested in being prosperous with this world’s goods?

The Lord dealt with the question of money versus those who wish to follow Him. We learn in Luke 12:13-21 concerning one man who came to Jesus, hoping that Jesus would side with him in regard to an inheritance he had received, apparently from his father. The man who came to Jesus told Him, “Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” In addition to what the Lord told this man in this portion of Scripture, the Lord also related to him the parable of a man who had produced a great harvest—so great, that he did not know where he would be able to store such a harvest! This man decided to tear down the barns he already possessed so that he could build some bigger ones, and then be able to store all he had harvested, and thereby be able to enjoy security for many years.

As we study this section of Scripture, it is not difficult to see immediately just what the Lord thought about the material versus the spiritual. God called this man a fool. The question all of us should ask ourselves is, “Why did God call this
HELPERS OR HONKERS?

Leroy Brownlow

A woman driver had the misfortune of having her car stall in heavy traffic. Furthermore, she could not get it started. A man in the car behind her expressed his impatience by blowing his horn every few seconds. Finally, the perturbed and shaken lady got out of the car, walked to the honker’s car and said, “I’m having difficulty starting my car. I’ll make you this proposition: if you’ll start my car for me, I’ll honk your horn for you.”

There are a lot more honkers than helpers. The reason—it is easier to honk than to help, to talk than to work, to criticize than to assist.

If you really want to help your fellow-man, lift a hand—and that includes off the horn.

When we are stalled out there on life’s highway, we are indeed thankful that God does not blow a horn at us. Instead, He helps us. In recognition of His help, the Psalmist said, “My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber” (Psa. 121:2-3).

With deep appreciation we sing: When other helpers fail, and comforts flee, Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

SUMMER HEAT IS ON AND THE CLOTHES ARE OFF

Pathetically, it never seems to fail. When summer heat starts coming on, the clothes start coming off. For the same reason, Christians seem to be no exception. They often have the shortest shorts, the scantiest swimsuits, the highest hem lines and lowest necklines—and the flimsiest excuses in town. The Lord commanded that Christians should be adorned in proper clothing, modestly, and discreetly (1 Tim. 2:9). The principle applies to men and boys as well as to women and girls. There was a time when people were expected to be decently covered. In today’s society (and unfortunately in the church of our Lord, as well) it is no longer necessary to be decent and covered.

While there is no logical reason for going around in public half-nude, there are a number of psychological reasons for it. (1) There is the NEED TO BE NOTICED AND ADMIREDP—perhaps with the intent of being “desired” by the opposite sex. Is it not strange, though, how indignant and offended these bare beauties become when some guy gets turned on and makes an ungentlemanly remark or “proposition” to them? (2) There is the need of VANITY. Those who are physically attractive, or think they are, will try to “show off their assets” to the bene; advantage. Some “grown up” women evidently feel they
must compete with their daughters for their “fair share” of the attention and admiration of the male population. This is a sure sign of psychological inferiority and in reality is an effort to compensate for a lack of character.

Jesus once met a man “which had devils [evil spirits] long time, and ware no clothes” (Luke 8:27). When Jesus cast out the evil spirits, the man was found “sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind” (Luke 8:35). When Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit of the tree of “knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:17), they became aware of sin and their nakedness (Gen. 3:11). They covered themselves with leaves to hide the fact of their nakedness (shame) from each other. It would be gratifying if some such awareness of the shame of nakedness, suggestive behavior and immodest exposure could be passed around today.

This article should not be construed to mean the writer is against comfort and fashion. It should be understood that the writer does believe in God’s standards, and that comfort and fashion must yield to common sense, good taste and respect for one’s own character. As Christians, with summer’s heat coming on let’s insure that our Christianity—and not our nakedness—is that which is on display to the world.

Author Unknown
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Mary and Thomas Muldoon, Martha Wileyoxon, Marilyn Hall, Nancy Travis, Louise Cline, Joyce Simmons, Inez Brantley, and Stephen Fletcher. Sadie Morton (a friend of Allen and Diana Brazell) had heart by-pass surgery. Dee Ann Estep (Kathy Brammer’s sister-in-law) is in critical condition.

READING/INVITATION
June 4, 1997
Reading: Mike Dobbs
Invitation: Jerry Lindesmith
June 11, 1997
Bellview Lectures

MARK THESE DATES
June 7-11, 1997—Twenty-second Annual Bellview Lectures. This year’s theme is: “Leadership.” Make plans now to attend.
June 15, 1997—Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M. in room 7.
June 22, 1997—Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.

THANK YOU!!
We wish to thank several people for work that has been done around the building in the past several weeks. Painting of the hallways: Debra Mowery, Tina Foshee, Karen Hatcher, Jane Herrington, Daniel Hatcher, and Dot and Elward Brantley. Replacing one of the air conditioner units. Dallas Diamond, Louis Herrington, Henry Born, Richard Parker, and David Kelly. Pressure washing the outside of the building: Karen Hatcher, Denise and Debra Mowery. Building cabinets and a counter top in the general purpose building: Fred and Rheba Stancliff.
MEETING TIMES

SUNDAY:
9:00 A.M. BIBLE CLASSES
10:00 A.M., 6:00 P.M. WORSHIP

WEDNESDAY: 7:00 P.M.

BISHOPS: Paul Brantley, Bill Gallaher, Fred Stancliff
MINISTER: Michael Hatcher
MISSIONARY: Ira Y. Rice, Jr.

FAITH, LOVE, AND OBEDIENCE

Al Brown

Faith is at the center of the religion of Christ. Everything else rests on it. No hope is offered without it; no effort has value unless faith prompts it.

Of course, other things are necessary, but they become part of our lives and mold our thinking in direct proportion as we believe the divine pattern of conduct and thought revealed in the Word of God. What one believes religiously must be based on God's Word, not the opinions men have about religion. This is why Paul wrote: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

The wise man said: “For as he thinketh within himself, so is he” (Pro. 23:7). In other words, whatever a person believes determines his character and what he does. So we are told: “Keep thy heart with all diligence; For out of it are the issues of life” (Pro. 4:23). Jesus was emphasizing the same point when he said: “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Mat. 12:34). Acceptable, saving faith is “...conviction and trust, conjoined with obedience.”

What a person believes is important. Hence, the entire Bible, and especially the facts, commands, and promises of the New Testament, will be accepted as true and the guide for his life. If he really believes the Bible is the revelation of the will of God for man, he will not hesitate to do what it requires.

The Scriptures teach: “without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). If someone believes the Bible is true, he will accept whatever it says about God—His wisdom, power, knowledge, love, kindness, justice, faithfulness, etc. He will believe the promises of God are valid and will be given when and if the conditions are
met upon which they are offered.

Jesus said, “except ye believe that I am He, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8: 24). Men are to believe Jesus was who he claimed to be—Emmanuel, God made flesh, the Son of God. We are to believe He lived a perfect life, taught the very words of God, the words of life. We are to believe He died on the cross-shedding His blood for the remission of man’s sins, was raised by the power of God, ascended back to the Father, and now sits on His throne on God’s right hand reigning over His kingdom—the assembly of those called out of the world—the church of Christ.

Faith, if it is to be acceptable to God, must be active, Paul said, “But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness” (Rom. 6:17f). James said: “Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself (Jam. 2:17).

If one believes what the Bible teaches about God and His Son, he believes God wills only good for man. He is very much aware of the love God had for men, even when they were hostile and enemies of God (Rom. 5:6-10; Col. 1:21f; 1 John 4:10). That divine love moves him to love God in return, so love (along with faith) is the motive for what he does (1 Cor. 13:1-3). If he claims to love God but will not obey God’s commands, for whatever reason, his professed love is a sham. Jesus said: “If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my words” (John 14:23-24; see also John 14:15; 1 John 5:3; 2 John 6). These passages stress that if one loves God he will obey the Lord’s commandments.

If we believe what is taught in Scripture, our faith is a result of hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). We learn of God’s great love only from the Word, and both faith and love are the motives for our obedience to God’s will, This is what Paul was talking about when he said that faith works through love (Gal. 5:6).

Those who insist that salvation is “by grace only” and “faith only” show they really do not understand the meaning or the relationship of faith, love, and obedience. Acceptable faith (conviction and trust conjoined with obedience) in God manifests itself in the kind of love Jesus had. Belief generates such love. A believer, cannot be unconcerned or nonchalant about God’s expression of His love toward man in the gift of His Son. Paul wrote: “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their, sakes died and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

Faith that pleases God is active. A faithful person obeys every command of the One in whom he believes. Indeed, that is why he is considered faithful. Jesus challenged those who professed faith in Him but would not obey Him: “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). This verse shows how contradictory it is to claim to believe in the Lord and at the same time refuse to obey His will.

Jesus again showed the necessity of obedience: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mat. 7:21-23). They professed to believe in Christ, but to their everlasting horror, their failure to obey Him brought about their eternal ruin.
Faith moves us to live by God’s great moral code (1 Tim. 1:5; 5:22; 1 John 3:3). It prompts us to submit to every aspect of God’s revealed will. We do not obey the Lord in order to merit salvation as a debt owed to us; we do it because we know this pleases Him, and that is our aim (2 Cor. 5:9).

URGENT MESSAGE
THE “HOMOSEXUAL AGENDA”

The “homosexual agenda” has a well thought-out, heavily funded, and highly coordinated plan to break down their opposition.

Consider the following: Who among us has not heard about the infamous “coming out” episode, of ABC’s sitcom. “Ellen” which aired on April 30? This was when the lead character of this sitcom revealed that she is a lesbian. This episode is being hailed as a milestone by homosexual activists. A number of “media stars such as Oprah Winfrey” appeared on the show in support of the homosexual cause. Now is the most important time for “YOU” to act:

Due to a successful campaign by a number of INDIVIDUALS and Pro-Family groups, several large companies including General Motors, Chrysler, Johnson & Johnson, Nike, Delta Airlines, and J. C. Penney said that they would not sponsor the April 30 episode. **Chrysler and J. C. Penney went a step further and said they will STOP sponsoring the show altogether.

HERE IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY: We could have a single, well-written letter signed by 200 people which would be meaningful, but it is a well known fact that 200 INDIVIDUAL short letters is many times more meaningful to the recipient. PLEASE, PLEASE take a minute and write the following “suggested” brief note to show our support to those companies who will surely be threatened and abused by the media and homosexuals.

“My family wishes to thank your company very much for not sponsoring the ABC-TV sitcom ‘Ellen.’”

John F Smith, Chairman
General Motors Corp.
3044 West Grand Blvd.
Detroit, MI 48202

Robert J Eaton, Chairman
Chrysler Corp.
1000 Chrysler Drive
Subum Hills, MI 38426

Ralph S. Larsen, Chairman
Johnson & Johnson
One Johnson & Johnson Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Chairman
Nike, Inc.
1 Bowerman Drive
Beaverton, OR 97005

Ronald W. Allen, Chairman
Delta Air Lines, Inc.
P.O. Box 20706
Hartsfield Int. Airport
Atlanta, GA 30320

James E. Oesterreicher
J. C. Penney Co., Inc.
8501 Legacy Drive
Plano, TX 75204

**Source: Time Magazine & Focus on the Family
Via “Christian Worker,” May 1997
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Mary and Thomas Muldoon, Martha Wileoxson, Nancy Travis, Louise Cline, and Joyce Simmons. Marilyn Hall is in Sacred Heart Hospital, room 447.

READING/INVITATION
June 11, 1997
Bellview Lectures
June 18, 1997
Reading: Howard Johnson
Invitation: Fred Stancliff

MARK THESE DATES
June 15, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
June 22, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.

HITCHHIKERS
With his thumb, the hitchhiker says, “You furnish the car, the gas and oil, attend to repairs and upkeep, supply the insurance, and I’ll ride with you. However, if you have an accident, I’ll sue you for everything you have.” That’s pretty onesided, it seems to me.

Think of hitchhikers in the church! They seem to say, “You furnish the building, the preacher, the lights, air conditioning, the insurance, all the educational materials, and take care of the general building upkeep; and we’ll ride along with you. If things don’t suit us, we’ll complain, criticize, and probably hitchhike to another church. We’ll give ten dollars to ‘keep the record straight,’ but let others pay the bills.”

Let’s be careful that we “bear our burden” (Gal. 6:5). We are “pilgrims,” not hitchhikers (1 Pet. 2:11).

Via Colorado City Church of Christ
HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE (Part 1)

Shan Jackson

I remember as if it were yesterday attending a lecture by Brother Neil Lightfoot on “How We Got the Bible.” I remember sitting there in awe as this learned professor presented a factual account of how the Bible was formed, codexed, preserved, and handed down from generation to generation. I remember later reading his book by the same title and reading things like “The Bible did not just happen nor has it been preserved through the years by mere chance. The Bible is a marvel all its own.” Even today I am in awe of the Bible. I am in awe not only for what it says but also how it came to us.

We were not simply “lucky” that it has come to us today. God was just as much in control in our receiving it as He was in the inspiring of it using selected penmen. Though the skeptics may moan and groan they cannot disprove the Bible as God’s Word. Though the modernist rant and rage they also cannot disprove its inspiration. Though the atheists, agnostics, and infidels try everything they can think of to disprove, discredit, and disarm, it cannot be done. Genesis begins with God and Revelation ends with God and “the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psa. 14:1).

For the purpose of understanding I have divided this material into three sections. Each can easily stand on its own but the combination of the three will serve as our intended emphasis.

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the圣Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. That the man of God
may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:14-17). Brethren, God’s Word is inspired. God Himself attests to this fact. Just as Jesus is God’s “only begotten Son” the Bible is His only inspired book. Just like Jesus is not like any other man, the Bible is not like any other book known to man or written by man.

Shortly before Jesus went back home He promised His apostles that the Spirit of truth would come and guide them “into all truth” (John 16:13). This we see promised in John 13 and realized in Acts 2 and beyond. Paul commended the people of Thessalonica because they received the “word of God” (1 Th. 2:13). The Spirit guided these men “into all truth.” That truth is the “word of God.” It is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. WHY? Because it is inspired. It is given by God. Inspired literally meaning “God breathed.” God breathed truth into these men, they wrote down His truth in its completeness, and it is profitable for “doctrine, reproof, correction, etc.” Therefore, when we talk about the Bible we are talking about the actual thoughts of God, the mind of the Father.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2 that his preaching was a “demonstration of God’s power.” He says, “As it is written” (v. 9). “But God hath revealed them unto us” (v. 10). He has given to us what He wants us to have, and if we do not have it then God is saying that we do not need it. Jesus said we can know the truth because it is the truth that will make us free (John 8:32). In Matthew 10 He says “there is nothing covered.” When Jesus was upon the earth, He said His teaching was from God. The Hebrews writer tells us that God used to speak to His people in various and sundry ways but speaks now only through His Son (Heb. 1:1ff). Paul said that his message was not received from man but was by the “revelation of Jesus Christ.”

“Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:5, ASV). I do not understand all that was involved in God’s inspiring of the apostolic writers. But I know that God made sure that they knew truth and wrote truth. I do not know everything, but I know God was in control.

We often refer to the Bible as a book but actually it is a collection of books. It is a collection of books written by around forty men over a period of 1,500 years or so. Forty men who lived at different times. Forty men who were from different countries. Forty men who wrote in different languages and came from various backgrounds. But when they finished and someone else put all their works together it fit perfectly—free from contradiction, free from distortion, free from doctrinal error. Imagine if you will finding forty artists from various countries. Forty artists who speak several different languages, and came from different cultural backgrounds. You commission each of them to draw a particular portion of a painting. One was to paint a foot, another a hand, another an ear or a nose, etc. Do you think when you assemble all these pieces of art together they would fit? Well, the Bible fits! And not only did it fit then, it also fits today. However, not only did the pieces fit but they are also timeless.

If we looked at a science book from fifty so years ago we would be amazed that some things that science thought was true back then they know is not true today. And some of the things they thought were true then they know are true today. But this is not the case with the Bible! The Bible never needs to be revised. It is as timely today as it was then, 01 will be tomorrow. It is also just as accurate; And, of equal import, it is just as binding nml as then. Peter says that the Word of God “liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Pet. 1:23). He also says “the word of the Lord endureth forever.” Jesus says that His Word will judge us in the last day (John 12:48).
THE ADMONITION
TO TEACH
Monte L. Evans

As we study and read our Bibles on a daily basis, we must acknowledge that the admonition or the command to teach and preach the Gospel of Christ is imperative to the enhancement and growth of the church. It is impossible for a devoted Bible student to read or study the New Testament and conclude that teaching and preaching the Gospel is not commanded or is unimportant. Hosea, the inspired prophet declared, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6). This same scenario is present today among God’s people and the religious world. Thus, we must give heed to the words of our Savior to preach and teach the Gospel (Mat. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16).

Christ’s Example

By reading and studying the New Testament, one learns that Jesus the Christ took advantage of every situation to teach and that He was not particular regarding the environment or the location where such teachings took place. The Holy Scriptures give record of our Savior teaching in private homes (Luke 5:17-19; 10:38-42), and by the sea shore (Mark 4:1). One learns from the New Testament that Jesus taught from the deck of a ship (Luke 5:1-3), in the synagogues (Mat. 14:23, 9:35; Mark 6:2), in the wilderness or desert place (Mat. 14:13-14), in the Temple (Mat. 26:55; Luke 21:37), and in cities and villages (Luke 13:22). Jesus taught in various situations and locations thus, giving us an example of the importance of teaching the Gospel regardless of environment or location (2 Tim. 4:1-3).

Proclaim the Word

Purposing is involved in teaching the Gospel of Christ. Before Christians are able to successfully teach the Gospel of Christ, they must purpose in their hearts to broaden the borders of the Kingdom. When Christians purpose in their hearts to teach the Gospel of Christ, they will first come to the understanding that every accountable person walking the face of the Earth is lost without Christ and His saving message. Secondly, purposing Christians realize that they have the good news that men need in order to be saved.

Preparation is involved in teaching the Gospel of Christ. One must prepare for the task at hand by seeking knowledge concerning God (2 Pet. 1:5; 3:18; 1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:12-14).

Prayer is involved in teaching the Gospel of Christ. One must pray for courage, strength, and for the opportunity to promote New Testament Christianity. When one has obtained the ability to teach the Gospel of Christ and one is given an opportunity to teach the Gospel of Christ, one has the responsibility to teach the Gospel of Christ.

After one has purposed, prepared, and prayed to teach the Gospel of Christ, one must perform. One may perform their duty of teaching the Gospel of Christ by distributing various publications or Gospel tracts to friends, neighbors, or associates. One may enroll friends or family members in structured Bible correspondence courses, or purchase a subscription to faithful brotherhood publications and journals. The simple act of sending an individual the Gospel plan of salvation may be all that is needed to convert a soul to Jesus Christ.

It is the mission of the church to evangelize the wisdom of God (Eph. 3:7-10). As Christians, we must sow the seed (the Word of God) and let God give the increase (1 Cor. 3:6). Let us Purpose, Prepare, Pray, and Perform so that the church of our Lord will experience growth and that obedience to the great commission statement is accomplished.
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Louise Cline, Joyce Simmons, and Marilyn Hall.

READING/INVITATION
June 18, 1997
Reading: Howard Johnson
Invitation: Fred Stanciff
June 25, 1997
Reading: Bryan Loy
Invitation: Henry Born

MARK THESE DATES
June 15, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
June 22, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
June 22-27, 1997–Indian Creek Youth Camp (teen week) with Jerry Martin.
July 6-11, 1997–Indian Creek Youth Camp with Ronnie Hayes.
July 21-25, 1997–Family Bible School with classes from cradle roll to adults, 7:00 - 8:30 P.M. The theme for this year’s youth classes is “The Bible Tells Me So.” Joel Wheeler of Foley, AL will teach the adult class. Make plans now to attend and bring your family; friends, and neighbors.

THANK YOU
Again we wish to thank several people for work that has been done around the building. Re-painting the parking stripes in the parking lot: Jim and Nancy Loy, Bill Crowe, Andrew and Daniel Hatcher Preparing displays for the bulletin boards Jane Herrington and Nancy Loy.
HOW WE GOT
THE BIBLE (Part 2)

Shan Jackson

Now, concerning the actual way that we got the Bible I want to be brief. First, of all we need to realize that we have none of the original manuscripts. The writings of the Prophets, the original writings of David, Solomon, and the other Old Testament writers are not held by man. The actual letters that Paul, Peter, and the other New Testament writers wrote are not in man’s possession. We do have some very ancient copies, but none of the originals. Some of these copies were written on papyrus, but papyrus becomes very brittle with time so we only have a few of these. Papyrus was replaced by vellum. Vellum is prepared animal skin and is quite durable. We have several very ancient texts written on vellum. But remember, we have none of the original manuscripts.

For the most part the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. Yet, we are still missing a very important feature in this discussion if we fail to see God’s hand in all of this. God wants His Word to be known by man. He spake in times past in visions and dreams, as well as directly. He spoke through His prophets, but today He speaks exclusively through the Bible. WHY? Because He still wants His Word known by man.

Brethren, we are commanded to “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2). Obviously, those who do not know God’s Word cannot know God. God has revealed Himself to man through His Word. He has let man know what He wants and what He does not want. He has let us know what He desires and what He wants us to avoid. And, He has done this in only one way, through His Word.
Now, it is possible to be educated and not know God. It is possible to be refined and not accept God. It is possible to be affluent and not trust God. But it is impossible to know God and not know His Word. And when we know God, Paul says, we are to preach His Word. When Paul traveled to Athens he went there to “preach the word.” Those Athenians thought they were filled with knowledge but they did not know God. WHY? Because they did not know God’s Word (Acts 17). Oh, they knew a lot but they didn’t know God. Paul told them that their willful ignorance was not acceptable. Brethren, the world by its own wisdom will never know God. In fact, the world by its own wisdom cannot know God. First Corinthians 1:21 says, “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” Paul is again talking about “preaching the word.” You see, God gave us His Bible so that we could know Him.

Likewise, we also need to know God’s Word to know Jesus. The Bible tells us that because of their ignorance the Jews killed Jesus. But their ignorance was no excuse! (Acts 3:17). The Jews killed Jesus in ignorance. The Athenians worshipped in ignorance. And many in our world are just as ignorant of God’s will.

I remember when I was in school I would try to pay attention when the teacher was teaching. I tried to read the assignments ahead of time. I tried to turn in all my homework. But right before the test I would try to “cram.” Cram means to get all the needed information into my brain all at one time. Sometimes that worked, but more often than not it did not. Now, the Bible is not to be studied only to be forgotten. The Bible is for our soul what food is for our body! David said, “Blessed is the man that! walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psa. 1:1-2).

Brethren, it’s good to know how we got the Bible, but it is essential to know the Bible. Remember, it was Jesus that told us to “Searching the scripture” (John 5:39). However, Bible! study with the wrong motive seldom produces the right results. While in school I seldom studied for lasting knowledge. I just studied to ‘pass the test. Therefore, most of what I studied in my past I now have forgotten. Now, the religious leaders of Jesus’ day “searched the scriptures” but they were never able to find God’s truth. They found the rules and regulations. but they never found the Savior. You see, the Bible is not to be studied and then forgotten. The Bible is to be studied and used.

David stated “Thy word have I hid in mine heart” (Psa 119:11). He also prayed “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (v. 18). Jesus said we can “know the truth.” He defined the truth in John 17:11 when he said, “thy word is truth.” He also said! that if any man will do God’s will “he shall know the doctrine” (John 7:17).

You see, God is right. God is always right” And His Word, the Bible, is always right as well. We are only right as long as we conform to His Word. The Bereans serve as our example. They were called “noble” because they “searched the scriptures” to prove the truth was truth.

Who could produce a book like the Bible other than God? Men and women of great literary ability have produced wonderful material but none have surpassed or even come close to the Bible. Philosophers have magnified the frailty of the human condition, but the Bible has unlocked
the meaning of life.

The Bible answers all the questions that man has to ask. “Open thou mine eyes that I might behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Psa. 119:18).

STOP COMPLAINING

Doug Couch

Christ-centered people rarely complain, but unconverted men complain at the slightest inconvenience.

This is why we are reminded to “Do all things without murmurings and disputings” (Phi. 2:14). The temptation to complain is one of the five kinds of sins which can cause Christians to fall from grace (1 Cor. 10:6-10). A grumbling spirit tests the patience of God and others. To silence a murmuring nation. God once sent venomous snakes (Num. 21). What does the Bible reveal about a complaining spirit?

1. Complainers reveal their character (Exo. 15:24-26). Three days after passing through the Red Sea. God deliberately led a thirsty Israel to Mara, a pool of undrinkable water. He did this to test their faith (v. 25). Their murmuring revealed much about their tongue. What you complain about tells much about the condition of your heart. A grumbling heart is symptomatic of a petty, self-centered and distrusting heart. Only by obedience to God can our hearts be changed (v. 26).

2. Complainers often exaggerate their misery (Exo. 16:2). After one month of freedom, Israel accused Moses and Aaron of trying to starve them to death. “Egypt’s flesh-pots were better than this!” Were the “good-ole-days” really that good? Had Moses and Aaron really cooked up some diabolical plot to kill Israel? Today, grumblers often try to gain sympathy by overemphasizing their suffering.

3. Complainers resent discipline (Num. 16:11). After complaining against Moses and Aaron, Korah and 250 leaders in Israel died when the earth swallowed them up. The next day, Israel accused Moses of killing the 250, thus God slew an additional 14,700 with a deadly plague. Even today, many people seem to resent standards of discipline. Those in leadership are told, “You expect too much,” or “You are too harsh.” However, if these complainers got their way, all standards of excellence would be watered down to levels of mediocrity. Personal accountability and craftsmanship usually mean little to the complainer.

The only legitimate time one can complain with God’s approval is when we express disapproval over a wrong situation. Yet, even then we must accept responsibility to correct the wrong. When Grecian widows were neglected by the church, Greeks began complaining against the Jews. But the ones who had complained became a part of the solution. Seven men with Greek names were chosen to deal with this problem. They served faithfully and the church “multiplied exceedingly” (Acts 6:7).

A grumbling disposition is like a bitter poison in our hearts. But by cultivating a spirit of thanksgiving, we can purify our souls and become more Christ-like.

Copied

A preacher is expected to be prepared to preach a funeral at any time; but how many people do object when he tries to prepare them for their funeral.
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muld Martha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Lucille Cline, Joyce Simmons, Marilyn Hall, at Ella Hammac.

READING/INVITATION
June 25, 1997
Reading: Bryan Loy
Invitation: Henry Born
July 2, 1997
Reading: Jim Loy
Invitation: Paul Brantley

MARK THESE DATES
June 22, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
June 22-27, 1997–Indian Creek Youth Camp (teen week) with Jerry Martin.
July 6-11, 1997–Indian Creek Youth Camp with Ronnie Hayes.
July 21-25, 1997–Family Bible School with classes from cradle roll to adults, 7:00 - 8:30 P.M. The theme for this year’s youth classes is “The Bible Tells Me So.” Joel Wheeler of Foley, AL will teach the adult class. Make plans now to attend and bring your family, friends, and neighbors.

ADDRESS CHANGES
Mike Dobb’s new address is 501 Wood Haven Drive; Jacksonville, NC 28540.
Robert and Angela Fletcher’s new address is: PSC 559 Box 6392; FPO AP 96377-6392. Please write to them and keep them in your prayers. We hope to see them back here again.
A POOR TRADE

Dalton Key

The first reports were curious; the latest, more curious still. It seems a prisoner from a Pampa, Texas, prison escaped from his work detail. While this is not unusual in and of itself, there is a quirky aspect to his flight; he had just three weeks left in his prison term.

All of us who heard the news wondered the same thing—why, with such a short time left of his sentence, would a prisoner risk escaping?

The prisoner was caught and now faces the very real possibility of twenty-five additional years of incarceration.

But the whole matter grows even stranger. Information was revealed which may answer the question of why the prisoner escaped.

He was desperate for cigarettes. That’s right. According to news reports, he escaped, with just three weeks left in his prison term, in order to get his hands on some cigarettes.

Curious? No doubt this is an understatement. Why would one trade a quarter century of freedom for a few cigarettes?

And yet what about us? Are we not even more foolish when we trade our very souls, and an eternity of bliss, for a few years of sinful, selfish pleasure? Because of Jesus Christ, because of His precious, cleansing blood, we are close—so very close—to living with God forever. But all can be lost forever in our frenzied desperation to live like the world. The result? A punishment lasting far longer than twenty-five years; a punishment the Bible refers to as “everlasting” (Mat. 25:46).

The words of Jesus are both haunting and true:

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mat. 16:26).

Whose trade is really more foolish? the man who exchanges twenty-five years of life for a few
THE SERMON YOU PREACH

Walter Buchanan

The first sermon preached each Sunday is not by the pulpit minister, but by YOU.

YOU preach a message of good cheer when you say “Good Morning!” to those you meet.

YOU preach a message of “Welcome! We have room for you!” when you slide down the pew instead of forcing others to squeeze in front of you.

YOU preach a message of hope and joy when you sing enthusiastically during the song service.

YOU preach a message about the power of prayer when you fervently enter into our time of prayer together.

YOU preach a message of respect for God and His Word when you listen attentively and follow in your Bible and take notes during this sermon.

YOU preach a message of Hope when you reverently partake of the Lord’s Supper.

YOU preach a message about Faith when you cheerfully give your offerings.

YOU preach a message of Love when you smile, say hello, introduce yourself to guests and invite them to return.

Many messages are preached before and after the preacher stands at the pulpit. If your message is positive and consistent, THEN the message he gives from the pulpit will be much better received.

Come each Sunday and preach your sermon—it has eternal significance!

1 Corinthians 16:1-2

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye: Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”

NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON GIVING

Giving is an act of worship designed by God to develop a Christ-like characteristic in His people. Christ gave Himself for His people.

If the Devil could change the purpose and motive behind giving as an act of worship, he then could actually encourage giving and at the same time lead Christians away from their Lord!

New Testament Plan/Pattern For Giving

Periodic: “upon the first day of the week.”

Personal: “let each one of you.”

Provident: “lay by him in store.”

Proportionate: “as he may prosper.”

Preventive: “that no collections be made when I come.”

Voluntary: “not grudgingly, or of necessity” (the free-will offering of a loving heart).

Purposeful: “let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart” (planned, systematic, with purpose).

Confidently: “God is able to make all grace abound unto you” (He who believes God’s promises can give liberally without any fear or suffering by doing so!).

THERE’S TROUBLE IN THE LAND

Dan Goddard

There’s trouble in the land. No wide-awake person will deny it! These upheavals have caused many parents to express apprehension concerning the future of their children. That’s understandable. When our children graduate from high school and leave home, suddenly they are exposed to an environment hostile to Christ, and even to the basis principles of morality. If a young person is not equipped to handle this he is in grave trouble.

Unfortunately, at a time when families should be doing everything in their power to “beef up” their spiritual defenses and intensifying their fight against Satan, many are permitting the safeguards to be torn down. Neglect of Sunday evening services, absence from Wednesday Bible study, and failure to encourage children to become totally involved in church-centered activities are some of the more obvious evidences of this foolish neglect.

Parents need to get their priorities straight. Those of us who preach seldom have the courage to remind weeping parents of the problem. But when dads and moms begin crying over what has happened to their kids they could be reminded of the days they chose camping instead of the church, weekend trips, night recreation instead of Sunday night inspiration.

It only takes one hole in the fence to let the sheep out. It’s amazing how prolific some people are at inventing new excuses to rationalize their habitual neglect. I would much prefer a person to be honest enough to say, “I just didn’t want to” than forever blame job, health, grandma, or baby. What advantage is there in covering up the real facts of the case? That only adds to sin! Parents, give your kids a break! Put first things first! Let nothing interfere with regular church attendance. Be sure they are deeply involved in (our) youth programs. Then, after they’ve gone from home with what good training you could provide, you can do what you want with your own life. And I have a feeling by that time you’ll be thrilled putting spiritual things first, and will make it a lifetime policy.

HAVE YOU QUIT THE CHURCH?

Have YOU quit the church? Is your excuse any better than some of these?

“The people were not very friendly.” (Perhaps we need to read and examine Pro. 18:24, “A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly.”) “I was mistreated by some in the church.” (Do you think Jesus was never mistreated? Did He quit? Jesus rather prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” Luke 23:34.) “My parents made me go to church services when I was a child, and now that I am older, I am going to quit.” (Have you quit brushing your teeth—taking a bath—working, etc? No doubt your parents made you do all these things when you were younger.)

“I quit the church because there were too many hypocrites.” (Ever stop to think that each person must give account of HIMSELF to God (Rom. 14:12)? You are not going to have to answer for the hypocrite, BUT FOR YOU!)

“The preacher said something I didn’t like, so I quit.” (What’s he for—to tickle your ears?)

Want to know why people quit—because they want to!
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Louise Cline, Joyce Simmons, Marilyn Hall, and Ella Hammac.

READING/INVITATION
July 2, 1997
Reading: Jim Loy
Invitation: Paul Brantley
July 9, 1997
Reading: Harold Maxey
Invitation: Jeremy Caine

MARK THESE DATES
July 6, 1997–Visitation Group 1 will meet at 7:00 P.M., in room 1.
July 6-11, 1997–Indian Creek Youth Camp with Ronnie Hayes.
July 13, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
July 20, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting a 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
July 21-25, 1997–Family Bible School with classes from cradle roll to adults 7:00 - 8:30 P.M. The theme for this year’s youth classes is “The Bible Tells Me So.” Joel Wheeler of Foley, AL will teach the adult class. Make plan: now to attend and bring your family friends, and neighbors.

NEW AREA CODE
Effective June 23, 1997, the area code for Bellview Church of Christ will be 850. The old area code of 904 will remain in use until March 1998. Please take note of this change in area code.
IS GOD RESPONSIBLE FOR MY PROBLEMS?

Gary W. Summers

Periodically, over a few weeks’ time, Parade Magazine has published responses of young people to the question, “Do you believe in God?” Much of the thinking has been quite superficial and insubstantial, whether the person believed or disbelieved. The truly disturbing thing about many of the responses 18 that created beings seem to think they have the right to sit in judgment on the Creator.

Consider what an 18-year-old girl from Riverdale, New Jersey, writes. “I was taught that God was the Almighty and was good, but the past few months have set me straight. There is no God. At least not the God everyone is talking about. If He/She was real, then there wouldn’t be so much disease, death, hurt and heartbreak in the world. In December, one of my friends lost her mother. In January, a friend was killed on his way to school. In April, a friend of the family lost his long battle with AIDS. And in May, one of my best friends also lost her mother. What God would do this to anyone? None that I know of or believe in.” (This scathing denunciation of God appeared on page 23 of the October 15, 1995, issue.)

What an outburst of unrighteous indignation! Her philosophy of God may be summarized as follows: (1) God does not run the world the way I think He/She should; (2) Therefore, God does not exist. How arrogant for one merely eighteen years of age to think that she has disproved God’s existence based on so few observations. Those who have watched their loved ones be killed in Nazi death camps (with much greater reason to doubt God’s benevolence) have emerged with a strong faith in God while she has barely become acquainted with life’s tragedies.
She is obviously even less acquainted with the Word of God, to which one goes to find reality and truth. A study of some fundamental matters might be of some help to those who feel as this young girl does. Some crucial doctrines follow.

**God Is Almighty**
The Scriptures affirm this truth in a number of passages, but it is the inference some draw from this fact that is erroneous. Many think that since God is Almighty, He will control everything that happens, but such is not the case—yet. When God created man, He gave us “free will.” We may choose to obey or disobey Him. If we choose the latter option, many evil things will result. Suppose, despite all of the warnings against the dangers of drinking and driving someone goes ahead and does so. If he loses control of the vehicle and crashes into a tree and is killed, whose fault is it? If God prohibits harm, there is no free will; if He allows free will, tragedies will abound. God does not stop people from bearing the consequences of their actions.

**God Is Good**
God created a perfect world in which man could dwell, but we exercised our free will in a negative way and allowed sin to enter Paradise. Man could not be man without this possibility. We either must be robots, programmed to always do right, or we can enjoy freedom (recognizing that such a privilege means we bear the consequences of our actions). Unfortunately, when a person chooses to sin, innocent people usually suffer, also. The drinking driver, for example, may not simply hit a tree and kill himself; he may suddenly swerve across the center line and kill a family of innocent people. Does God cease to be good because He does not intervene in the natural course of daily events?

Certainly, we are tempted to think so—especially if the victim were our family. But God cannot be blamed for man’s decisions. The person who acted irresponsibly is the one who is at fault. God is doubly good in that He not only created us—He recreates all who obey the gospel. He allowed Jesus to die on the cross for our sins so that we could be redeemed from the consequences of our own actions. Accepting the salvation He offers through repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38) enables us to triumph even over death.

**Why Disease?**
God’s gender, despite the feminist influence, is not a mystery. The student of the Bible realizes that God is not He/She, but He. We pray to “our Father” (Mat. 6:9). The female respondent needs to spend some time in the Book to learn about the One she apparently hates so much.

Why do disease, death, hurt, and heartbreak dominate this world? There is an answer for each of these things—SIN!! God did not sin; man sins. Because we have chosen to disregard God’s commandments and principles, all these things plague us. Why does AIDS exist, for example? Did it come about by mankind being morally pure? No, it developed because of man’s perversions of sex—the practice of bestiality, homosexuality, fornication, and adultery. All of these are denied in the Holy Scriptures as violations of God’s holy law, but mankind has repeatedly rejected these teachings because he would rather satisfy unlawful lusts. As is usually the case with sin, innocent people have suffered for a no more sinister reason than that they needed a blood transfusion (through which they contacted the AIDS virus). But most contracted and suffer from AIDS because they chose to disregard the warnings, just as cigarette smokers indulge themselves—although they are fully aware of the suffering they will one day face.

Man’s dilemma is that he wants to sin without facing the consequences of his actions. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal. 6:7-8).
We tell children that fire burns. If they choose to handle it, they will suffer for their poor judgment. God likewise warns against what will burn us spiritually. If we choose to ignore the truth, does that make God evil?

“What God Would Do This To Anyone?”

This statement is biased enough to be laughable. The youth who wrote it apparently pictures God as a capricious individual who takes delight in finding unsuspecting souls to inflict with pain. God is a God of comfort (2 Cor. 1:3-4) and a help (Psa. 46:1). Satan is the adversary (Job 1-2). No reason is assigned for loss of either friend’s mother, nor is it explained why a student was killed on the way school. But without knowing the details, there can be no doubt that the cause was sin. Somewhere Satan is laughing at all the hurt which people experience; he probably doubles over and rolls in the aisles when mankind then tries to pin the blame on God instead of him and themselves. Do we mistakenly think that if everything always went well, everyone would we and serve God? What happened in the garden of Eden disproves that faulty notion, live tragedy-free lives and do not believe God. Why not concentrate on the things that had done for us and ask ourselves, “Why; God done all this for me?”

312 Pearl Street; Denton, TX 76201

WHAT IS WRONG WITH INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC?

Darrell E. Beard

Most people find it very curious that churches of Christ do not use instrumental music in worshipping God. Since this is so unusual in the religious world, the question naturally rises, “Why?” Something so familiar seems so right. People ask, “What is wrong with using an instrument in worship?” In response to such a question asked sincerely and with an open, inquisitive mind, let us make a few suggestions.

1. Instrumental music often springs from the wrong motive. In worship we are to express praise and adoration to God in ways authorized by and pleasing to Him. Sometimes people forget this as they defend instrumental music on the grounds that they enjoy it. Is our motive in worship to please God or ourselves? If we worship to please God, should we not do what He has authorized?

2. Instrumental music involves the wrong kind of worship. Jesus taught that God seeks worship offered in spirit and truth. God’s Word is the standard of truth (John 17:17) and guides us in the acts through which we worship. The New Testament teaches singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). The doctrines of men constitute vain worship (Mat. 15:19). Since instrumental music is of men rather than God, it is vain as worship.

3. Instrumental music is in the wrong dispensation. Under the Old Testament age, God tolerated the use of instruments which were introduced by David. However, the church is a New Testament institution guided by a new and better covenant. The law of Moses has been taken away (Col. 2:14). Such things as animal sacrifice, sabbath day worship, instrumental music, and feast days which were characteristic of the old system are not part of the new.

4. Instrumental music is from the wrong source. Singing is the specified music of the New Testament church. God is the source of vocal music. Instrumental music was introduced hundreds of years after the church was established. Man, not God, is the source of instrumental music.

The use of instrumental music is wrong. It is a sin because it goes beyond God’s Word and adds something not authorized by Scripture (2 John 9; Rev. 22:18-19).

P.O. Box 1761; Tupelo, MS 38802
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Louise Cline, Joyce Simmons, Marilyn Hall, and Ella Hammac.

READING/INVITATION
July 9, 1997
Reading: Harold Maxey
Invitation: Jeremy Caine
July 16, 1997
Reading: Horace Myrick
Invitation: Bill Crowe

MARK THESE DATES
July 6, 1997–Visitation Group 1 will meet at 7:00 P.M., in room 1.
July 6-11, 1997–Indian Creek Youth Camp with Ronnie Hayes.
July 13, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:01 P.M., in room 7.
July 20, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
July 21-25, 1997–Family Bible School with classes from cradle roll to adults 7:00-8:30 P.M. The theme for this year’s youth classes is “The Bible Tells Me So.” Joel Wheeler of Foley, AL will teach the adult class. Make plans now to attend and bring your family friends, and neighbors.

ISAIAH 25:1-4
“O LORD thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth...For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.”
WHAT CAN BE DONE AND CALLED “WORSHIP”?  
William Woodson

Three articles (Time, 4/5/93; Newsweek, 8/9/93; Tennessean, 11/14/93) echo the latest national and local religious news: Doing Strange Things Called the Worship of God. All indicated these activities are used in the name of “relevance” or “luring the crowds.” Whether in the name of trendy churchianity, reaching the “Baby Boomers,” or connecting with the unchurched, the menus are virtually the same all over. The real distinction seems to be what is the outlandish thing a church can/will do in worship” to top the last “act.”

On the outer fringes of the unusual, several vie for top honors. Which is your pick: Have communion for 1,000 people in just five minutes, have the actress of the year do a skit “in the sanctuary,” have a room remarkably empty of religious paraphernalia in which, on a riser behind the pulpit, a giant teddy bear sits in the background, have the preacher sit on a stool instead of standing behind a pulpit, or have him/her change clothes between the first and second services to identify better with the people? My own pick varies between the one which offers a “pet ministry” for adopting stray animals, the one where songs run the gamut from “O, What a Beautiful Morning” to “Danny Boy,” and the one whose preacher, clad in sneakers, closed the service with a round of hugging by the audience, raised his arms high in deeper spirituality, and boomed, “Hey, God, make my day! Go for it.”

One is not required to know many Bible verses to realize these or other weird efforts have nothing to do with the worship of God revealed in the New Testament. What is one to make of such doings in the alleged name of “reaching this generation?” Perhaps Martin E. Marty, prominent
American church historian, summed it up best: “To give the whole store away to match what this year’s market says the unchurched want is to have the people who know the least about faith determine most about its expression.” There’s more than a clever turn of phrase in that statement.

PARABLE OF A PREACHER

Lee Jestice

Once there was a preacher, a godly man, full of wisdom and with a masterful way of preaching God’s Word. He was diligent to present the Lord’s message in all seasons and was a delight to God.

Satan saw the great strength that lay in the man’s talent and set about to destroy it. He sent workers to complain of the preacher’s lesson subjects; others, afflicted with itching ears, demanded to hear sermons that would not upset them; and still others left when anything was preached that pointed out error.

The preacher, being a man of love and wanting others to love him, began gradually to shun topics of controversy. He quoted many Scriptures and the lessons he presented were based on God’s truth, but they lacked impact to correct error because only “milk” was in them and no “meat.”

Satan was most pleased with his workers. As they did their work the church grew weak from lack of proper diet. This caused the preacher to become discouraged and even less bold to proclaim the Lord’s way God looked on and grieved to see such talent buried.

The end of the parable? You decide:

1. Satan had his way with the preacher. He convinced him that to be popular and friendly he must avoid issues afflicting the church. Much damage was done to the church and many souls were lost including that of the messenger of God.

OR

2. The preacher realized that of all the years he had been in God’s service his most fruitful and happy years were those spent dealing with hard subjects that were causing division in the church. He resolved to repent of neglecting his talents and went forth to proclaim mightily God’s Word.

Dear preacher friends—those who have ears let them hear.

Miami, OK

“WHAT WILL BE NEXT?”

Virgil Hale

It seems to me that we are living in a time when many of those who claim to be “gospel preachers” no longer have a respect for nor interest in a “thus saith the Lord.” Far too many, like Israel of old, want to be like the nations (churches) about them. This problem has been in the church for a number of years but has only really surfaced to a great degree in the last few years. Some have taken their place at the front of the pack as leaders in this determined digression.

I know where I stand, and I know where many of my faithful brethren stand, but the thing that bothers me most, is the future generations will face, if in fact there is a future. I am troubled about the souls of my grandchildren and their children. Since some are determined to destroy the church that we know and love, it makes me wonder what the future really holds.

I have listened to several tapes recently of those who have departed from the truth, and one thing was evident. In fact, it stuck out “like a sore thumb.” Each of them is using the NIV in their teaching and preaching. Is there a reason? I be-
lieve that I can say, without fear of contradiction, that there is a reason, and it is simply this—the NIV comes nearer to saying what they want the Bible to say than does the truth of God’s Word. Rest assured—when one decides that he or she wants something other than truth, they will search for something that seems to agree with them. I have said for a number of years that if you do not like what the Bible says, just wait a while, and someone will come out with something that they call a Bible, and it will read like you want it to. This has been done through the years as denominationalism has sought to justify their teaching by putting out yet another “perversion.”

By what will we be judged when we stand before the Lord one day? Jesus said that His Word will be the standard (John 12:48). Paul instructed Timothy to teach others what he had been taught that they in turn could teach others (2 Tim. 2:2). Please note that he said “the same” not something almost like or similar to it. Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Mat. 24:35). However, preachers today are taking the teaching of God’s Word and making it say what they want it to say. This is what comes under the heading of “the new hermeneutic.” In other words, the Scriptures must be interpreted in a different way than we have done in the past. For example, Jesus prayed for all of His followers to be one, as He and the Father are one, and Paul prayed for all to speak the same thing ... and in the same judgment (John 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10). This is clear enough that all should be able to understand it, but it takes on new meaning to some “more enlightened” preachers today. On tape I heard a once faithful gospel preacher say that when Jesus prayed for unity, it meant anyone who believed in Him, and so it doesn’t really matter what else one may teach or practice. In fact, he said that Jesus meant for all denominations to work together to accomplish what no one church could do alone. He (like some others) repudiates everything that he has ever taught and practiced in the past. To them, the only thing that is important is faith in Christ, and then we can be saved by God’s grace. Faith in Christ is what they call the “core gospel” or as one calls it, “the bull’s eye.” Anything else that is taught or practiced is of no consequence. The area around the “bull’s eye” is not really important. The sad thing is, many are following their pernicious ways, and the way of truth is being evil spoken of, as Peter wrote in 2 Peter 2:1-2. Let us take our stand for truth and stand firmly!

**CHURCH OF CHRIST**

1. You can read about it in the Bible (Rom. 16:16).
2. It has no creed but Christ, and binds no name on its members but the divine name (Acts 11:26).
3. It speaks where the Bible speaks; and is silent where the Bible is silent (1 Pet. 4:11).
4. It exalts Christ as the only head of the church (Eph. 1:22).
5. We plead for the unity of all believers in Christ (John 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10).
6. It is not a denomination, not a group of denominations, but simply the body of Christ (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18).
7. Its founder is Christ Himself (Mat. 16:18).
8. Its aim—to save souls by the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 1:16).
10. It teaches that scriptural unity can be attained on all disputed doctrinal questions (1 Cor. 1:10).
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayer: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxon, Nancy Travis, Louise Cline, Joyce Simmons, Marilyn Hall, and Ella Hammac.

READING/INVITATION
July 16, 1997
Reading: Horace Myrick
Invitation: Bill Crowe
July 23, 1997
Family Bible School

MARK THESE DATES
July 13, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
July 20, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
July 21-25, 1997–Family Bible School with classes from cradle roll to adults, 7:00-8:30 P.M. The theme for this year’s youth classes is “The Bible Tells Me So.” Joel Wheeler of Foley, AL will teach the adult class. Make plans now to attend and bring your family, friends, and neighbors.

2 TIMOTHY 4:2-5
“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, have itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”
GROWING TIRED OF THE CONGREGATION WHERE YOU WORSHIP?

Stephen P. Waller

Be careful now before you answer the above question? Occasionally, one may be heard saying something like, “I’m so tired of the congregation where I worship. I want to find someplace else to go!” It’s not that there is anything wrong with the local church from a doctrinal standpoint, or that there is any great disunity—one just becomes bored or weary. Why? How can we resolve this situation?

First, remember that life is usually as good or ill, happy or unhappy, as we make it. The same holds true with one’s marriage. One says, “I’m tired of this life,” or, “I’m tired of my husband or wife; I want out of my marriage!” Such expressions may indicate that we fail to understand that life, our job, our marriage, takes a lot of work, a lot of maintenance. Some think you get a job and just go to work and one day own the company; or, that you get married and the marriage just kind of grows and takes care of itself on its own. Of course, that’s why people are bored in life, with work, and at home. Anything worth doing or having is worth maintaining with all diligence! This is no less true in the local congregation.

A person or family places membership with a local church. At first, everyone and everything is new, exciting, and challenging. The various programs of work are different than they have experienced before, they get to meet new people and start developing new friendships, the preacher and his preaching style is different from what we have had in the past. It’s quite wonderful. Then, reality sets in after awhile. One begins to learn that people in the congregation are not perfect; and, we may not get along with one
or two, or some problem may arise in the church. The programs begin to look old and we get tired of looking at and hearing the same preacher every Sunday. In other words, the honeymoon is over. What do we do?

Some start looking for another congregation to attend. Some just quit. If that happened in one’s marriage, and one simply decided to seek another marriage partner or just quit the marriage, as some do, what a tragic thing that would be! Others recognize the need for loyalty and steadfastness where they are. They roll up their sleeves and work more diligently. They begin working harder to apply the sermons and Bible class lessons to their lives. They become more actively involved in the works of the church. They start spending more time seeking to learn more of the Bible and developing their talents to be used in the programs of work in the congregation they now attend. They “stretch” themselves and grow spiritually.

Brethren, we owe the local church our loyalty, our faithful attendance at all services of worship and Bible study (Sunday and Wednesday), our active involvement and support in every way that is scriptural! And, if we aren’t giving it our and first priority (Mat. 6:24, 33), then we have little right to complain, or start looking for “greener pastures.”

NO, the answer does not lie in some unscriptural “gimmick” to keep us happy, contented and attending! It lies within ourselves! It’s matter of getting our thinking and priorities in line with what God requires of us.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies! living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye mil prove what is that good, and acceptable, a perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:1-2). “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, m moveable. always abounding in the work of ft Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

“So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We an unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do” (Luke 17:10).

14835 Carrollton Drive; St. Louis, MO 63044

THE SIGN READ

“CHURCH OF CHRIST”

Monte L. Evans

In times past, an individual could walk into any church building that displayed the sign “Church of Christ” and feel confident that it was the church of the New Testament, the same church that our Lord and Savior purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28). Unfortunately, this is no longer the case. Today, when one enters the church of Christ, one is likely to witness numerous things that are not patterned after the New Testament church. A question must come to the mind of every member of the Lord church, “Where I attend, is it really the Lord’s church that is patterned after the New Testament?”

Departure from the Faith

As members of the Lord’s body, it is of extreme importance to be aware of any deviation
from the divine pattern and to stand fast in the faith (1 Cor. 16:13). Sadly, many of our own brethren no longer seem to care if the New Testament pattern is followed. One such deviation, from the divine pattern, is women taking active roles during the worship period. These active roles, such as leading songs, praying publicly, serving at the Lord’s table, and preaching, are contrary to God’s pattern (1 Tim. 2:11-14).

Women serving or holding the office of elder or deacon depicts a blatant disregard of apostolic authority. In 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9, one can clearly read the qualifications of elders and deacons given by the inspired apostle Paul. After careful study of these passages, the honest Bible student must conclude that women are not authorized to hold such offices.

Within the sacred pages of God’s Word, the theme of obedience rings aloud in both the Old and New Testaments (Deu. 10:12-13; 12:30-32; Jos. 1:7-8; Acts 5:29; 2 The. 1:7-9; Heb. 5:8-9; John 8:31; Acts 14:22, Col. 1:23; 1 Pet. 1:13-15; Rev. 22:18-19).

In the Holy Scriptures, one cannot find the existence of denominations or the existence of an “almost” church of Christ. In the New Testament, one can read of only churches of Christ (Rom. 16:16). Today, individuals become members of the church of Christ in the same manner as did individuals in apostolic times, by obeying the plan of salvation.

Today, congregations of the Lord’s people, “churches of Christ,” are established in the same manner as in apostolic times by following the divine pattern found in the sacred text.

When a congregation of the Lord’s people add or take away from that divine pattern, they forfeit the right and privilege of being called the church of Christ. The congregation that deviates from the true pattern becomes just another denomination.

The sign read “Church of Christ,” how depressing, disappointing, and doleful it is that some congregations engage in public deception.

BOOK CORNER

The following books have been recently been added to the library: G. K. Wallace’s Lectures on Denominational Dogmas by G. K. Wallace; The Gospel Preacher: A Book of Twenty-one Sermons by Benjamin Franklin; Paley’s Evidences of Christianity by Richard Whately; Know Your Bible by Frank J. Dunn; Revelation, An Introduction and Commentary by Homer Hailey; Reproducible Maps, Charts Time Lines & Illustrations; Treasures From Bible Times by Alan Millard; Studies in the Book of Genesis (East Tennessee School of Preaching-1996); The Original 1958 Spiritual Sword; The Complete Guide to Bible Versions by Philip W. Comfort; Hailey’s Bible Handbook; McGarvey’s Sermons by J. W. McGarvey; Unscriptural Binding by Gary L. Grizzell; The New Bible Digest by Mary Stone Myers, Bud Hayes, and Kippy Myers; Greek Apologists of the Second Century by Robert M. Grant; The Complete Word Study New Testament by Spiros Zodhiates; The Boles-Boll Debate by H. Leo Boles and Robert H. Boll; Seventy Years in Dixie by F. D. Srygley; Commentary on Romans by Moses E. Lard; Prayer and Providence by Homer Hailey; and, Christianity Restored by Alexander Campbell.

If you wish to check out any books in the library please contact the secretary.
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Louise Cline, Marilyn Hall, and Tony Dodd (Ray and Dot Dodd’s son).

READING/INVITATION
July 23, 1997
Family Bible School
July 30, 1997
Reading: Richard Parker
Invitation: Ray Dodd

MARK THESE DATES
July 20, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
July 21-25, 1997–Family Bible School with classes from cradle roll to adults.
7:00-8:30 P.M. The theme for this year’s youth classes is “The Bible Tells Me So.” Joel Wheeler of Foley, AL. will teach the adult class. Make plans now to attend and bring your family, friends, and neighbors.

PROUD GRANDMOTHER
Marilyn Hall’s new grandson, Zachary William Scott Hall, was born on July 9, 1997, to John and Ellen Hall of Daytona Beach, Florida. We extend our congratulations to the entire family.

Psalm 27:1
“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”
FORGIVENESS
Monte L. Evans

The Bible doctrine of forgiveness is a subject that all members of the Lord’s church must study and practice. We must study about forgiveness in order to learn how to be forgiving. When we learn of forgiveness then we will practice it the way in which the Bible teaches. The doctrine of forgiveness is clearly taught in the New Testament, yet there still remains confusion among many people. In Luke 6:36, Jesus states that we must be merciful as our Father is merciful. Merciful means to be pitiful, to be compassionate for the ills of others, to withhold punishment that is due. Because of God’s great mercy He is willing to forgive us of our sins, thus He will withhold the punishment due us because of our sins. We too must be merciful and be willing to forgive others as they sin against us.

FORGIVENESS IS A COMMAND
Within the sacred pages of the New Testament, the student of the Bible learns that forgiveness is a command of Christ. In Mark 11:25, Jesus states, “And when ye stand praying, forgive.” In the Great Sermon on the Mount given by the Christ, Jesus is recorded teaching how one is to pray. In Matthew 6:12, Jesus says “forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” In Matthew 18:23-35, Jesus teaches the parable of the unmerciful servant or the unforgiving servant. In the parable we learn of a great debt that was owed by a servant to his lord. The servant begged his lord to have patience with him and he promised to pay all the debt that he owed. The debt that was owed by the servant was of such an amount that it could never be paid. The lord of that servant was moved with compassion, loosed and forgave him of his great debt. That same day the servant who had been released from his great debt, went out and found a fellow servant who owed him a very small debt. The fellow servant fell down to the ground begging for patience promising to pay the debt. His request fell upon
deaf ears and he was cast into prison by his fellow servant. When the lord of the servants heard of this unmerciful act, he reminded his servant of the mercy and compassion granted him and noted that the same mercy and compassion should have been given to his fellow servant. Because of the servant’s unforgiving attitude, the lord delivered him to the tormentors until his debt was paid. The lesson that Jesus teaches in this parable is found in verse 35, “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you. if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”

**PREREQUISITE OF FORGIVENESS**

Before we can forgive others of their trespasses, something must be done by the transgressor He must REPENT! Before God forgives alien sinners of their sins, certain criteria must be met. One must have faith (John 8:24), repent (Luke 13:3), confess (Rom. 10:9-10), and be baptized (Mark 16:16) in order to receive the forgiveness of sins. Thus, when a person sins against us, something must be done prior to him being forgiven. The one desirous of forgiveness must repent before we can scripturally forgive him. Jesus makes this teaching clear in Luke 17:3-4. Jesus says, “Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him. and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.” By the words of Christ, we learn that before one can be forgiven of a trespass the individual must be penitent.

**FORGIVING IS FORGETTING**

The writer of the Hebrews letter informs us of the great mercy that God has for the unrighteous in Hebrews 8:12. With the forgiveness of sins that comes when one complies with the commandments of God, there is also the forgetting or the remembering no more of one’s sins or iniquities. This is not to say that God in His infinite wisdom can or will forget our sins, but that He will not hold our sins against us. What is meant by this is that God will not bring up, reflect, dwell upon, or bring before us our past, sins.

Sometimes people are long on memory and short on forgiveness. When an individual repents and requests forgiveness we must forgive him and remember the sin no more. That sin must not be paraded before the individual ever again. Any mention or remark regarding the past sin which has been forgiven, for the express purpose of causing hurt, pain, and suffering to the penitent party is sinful and expresses the lack of true forgiveness. We as the children of God must be able to be as forgiving as our Heavenly Father and be able to forget or remember no more the sins of the forgiven.

**FORGIVENESS A MUST FOR SALVATION**

Our willingness to forgive others is directly associated with our own salvation. In Matthew 6:14-15 this truth is made apparent. Jesus says “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Is this Scripture difficult to understand? We must be able and willing to forgive the trespasses of others after they repent in order for our own sins to be forgiven. Imagine losing one’s own soul because of the inability or the lack of desire to comply with the doctrine of forgiveness. Will you be lost because of your refusal to forgive and forget? May we all strive to be more Christ-like in the area of forgiveness.

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Pet 2:21).

2131 Kingston Muskogee, OK 74401
REFLECTIONS: ON SHORT SKIRTS AND DRESSES
Lindell Doty

At one of the schools I attended back in 1969, (not one of “our” schools) there was a real problem that I faced and observed on campus. The problem was short skirts, “mini” skirts. It was a problem because there were too many opportunities for young men to lust after the young women who wore them. Of course young men were very opportunistic about this matter and frequently tried to get an eye full and did most of the time. Many of the classes were on the second floor and everyday the young men would hang back and let the young women go first. There was no question whatsoever as to why this was done. The skirts were so short they left very little to the imagination. I was very uncomfortable with that situation and tried hard to avoid being at the bottom of the stairs when the girls traipsed up them. Now most of these girls knew what was happening but apparently didn’t care and in some cases seemed to flaunt their nakedness. When they sat down in the classroom it was high thighs on parade. It was distracting, disruptive, and disturbing. It became a serious problem for the school.

As far as I know, these girls didn’t profess to be Christians nor did they concern themselves with Christian principles, they were in and of the world and were practicing the same situation at church with the men. We had a second floor, too. The difference was that these young women wore the name “Christian.” As Paul said, “these things ought not be.”

History has a way of repeating itself. In 1997, we are having the same problem again. In the world, and yes, in the church. One of the ladies came to me Sunday morning after Bible class upset and concerned because one of our young women’s skirt was so short that you could see her underpants as she came up the stairs. She also reported that two of our young men looked down to keep from looking up the girl’s dress as they walked behind her.

Now ladies, that is too short. Is there any doubt in anyone’s mind that such is immodest? Have your Mom, Dad, or other family member or a friend observe you in public and ask if the length is too short. Please be spiritual enough to insure that you are not violating the instruction of Paul and Peter to be modest in attire. Parents, be parents, and provide some guidelines toward modesty for your daughters. May God grant acceptance of the truth in this matter.

Warner Robins, GA

CONSIDER THE PENCIL

I have before me a common lead pencil, but how much like this pencil you are as a Christian.

This pencil was made for a purpose, and properly directed, can be very useful. An inspiring message can be written with it, or a lie, or damaging gossip can be spread abroad with it. It must have the proper guidance.

It bears the name of its maker, and the reputation of the maker depends upon how this pencil does the work. I haven’t seen the maker of this pencil so I must get my impression of him from his product.

To correct a mistake, to erase an error, the head of the pencil must be brought low, in an humble position. As long as the head is held high the mistake is not corrected. Instead more damage is done. Will you take a lesson from this pencil?

Author Unknown
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Louise Cline, Marilyn Hall, and Tony Dodd (Ray and Dot Dodd’s son).

READING/INVITATION
July 30, 1997
Reading: Richard Parker
Invitation: Ray Dodd
August 6, 1997
Reading: Ray Wilcoxson
Invitation: Ray Foshee

MARK THESE DATES
August 10, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
August 17, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
September 7, 1997–Attendance Drive and Dinner on the Grounds, after the morning service.

PROTECTING YOUR INVESTMENT
Back in 1982, Lawrence Olson estimated the cost of feeding, dressing, and educating a first-born son was $226,000. A first-born daughter, he estimated, would cost $247,000. Those figures are now probably nearer $260,000 in 1997 dollars. Reflecting on these figures, Steven Cole commented, “If you had $200,000 to invest, wouldn’t you do some careful research in advance and then watch that investment very carefully over the years? How much time, study, thought, and watchfulness do you exercise over these precious lives in which you invest $200,000?” That is a question that every parent should seriously ponder, but what is more significant is the value of our children which goes beyond dollars—the value of those precious souls entrusted us (Mat. 16:26).

Author Unknown
HOW BEAUTIFUL HEAVEN MUST BE

Shan Jackson

I know a word that can bring happiness to your heart, warmth to your soul, joy to your spirit, and anticipation to your mind. The word is heaven. Thinking of heaven brings emotions to our lives that no other word can. To simply consider what all the Lord has Promised His faithful captivates our dreams. To Christians heaven is what it is all about.

I want to begin this article by reminding you of a wonderful passage penned by the apostle Paul to the church in Corinth. We know that Paul helped establish this congregation in Corinth on one of his great missionary journeys. We also know that Corinth was an evil city and in his letters he addressed their need to remain pure and free from evil. Toward the end of his second letter, chapter 12 verse 2, he introduces us to a man who he will later identify as himself. He says that he had an out of body experience. (Or what might have been an out of body experience). Either way, he says that he was “caught up to the third heaven.” Two verses later he calls this third heaven paradise.

Consider for a moment this word paradise. Paradise derives its origin from a Greek word of Persian extraction and it refers to a “dwelling place.” Simple logic indicates that if there is a third heaven there also must be a first and second heaven. The first we know as the realm of the birds. Jesus said, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head “ (Mat 8:20, ASV). (The KJV translates it “air” but the Greek word is a reference to this first heaven.) The second is the realm of the heavenly bodies, the
sun, moon, and stars. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Psa. 19:1). However, the third heaven of which Paul speaks is always reserved for God. “The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD’S throne is in heaven” (Psa. 11:4).

So we see the word heaven can represent any of three distinct places. The realm of the birds, the dwelling place of the stars, and the habitat of the Almighty. However, let us remember that this was not the first time Paul had gazed into heaven (Acts 9). We also know Stephen was given this privilege as well (Acts 7). In fact, throughout the Bible God has often given us glimpses of heaven. But though He has told us a lot, He has not told us all. And though we know a degree of its beauty, scope, and detail, we do not know it all. In fact, all that we know, though we know a lot, barely scratches the surface of this home of God called heaven. The Psalmist said, “The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God” (Psa. 14:2).

There is another word that, in many cases, is synonymous with heaven. It is the word kingdom. Jesus said, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mat. 25:34).

If you have ever studied history you know that kingdoms come and kingdoms go, but the kingdom of which Christ speaks is eternal. Unlike the kingdoms of men: Rome, Greece, Babylon, etc., the kingdom which is prepared for the church is forever. And, as an eternal kingdom it is greater than man’s hopes, dreams, or anything else man’s mind can fathom. However, there is yet another concept contained in the word kingdom. When John the Baptist began to prepare the way for the Lord he spoke often of a kingdom. It appears his constant cry was “the kingdom is at hand.” When Jesus began to preach and teach He also taught “the kingdom is at hand.” However, the kingdom He and John were alluding to, and the kingdom Jesus mentions in Matthew 25 are different. The kingdom He first mentioned was the church (Mat. 16:18) and the kingdom He later mentions is the church glorified. (If this gives us a bit of difficulty in understanding do not be alarmed. It gave His disciples difficulty as well.) Physical people have difficulty disassociating themselves from thinking physical thoughts. However, His kingdom, whether we are talking about His kingdom the church, or His kingdom the church glorified, neither was a physical kingdom (John 18:36). Just as the victory Jesus promises is not a physical victory neither is His kingdom. In fact, few of Jesus’ promises deal with physical. Kingdoms come and kingdoms go, but His kingdom, because it is not physical, is eternal.

When Paul was facing death he penned these words, “the Lord shall deliver me from even evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom” (2 Tim. 4:18). When Peter wanted to encourage the early church he penned these words, “give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:10-11).

In John 13, Jesus is comforting His disciples for His soon departure. It seems Peter is especially discouraged. To comfort him and to comfort us Jesus says, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:1-2). I suppose of all the
things Jesus said about heaven this passage lays the best foundation. In His teaching here, and because of His teaching here, Christians of all generations have echoed and re-echoed their desire to go. Brethren, as Peter said, let us make our “calling and election sure” (2 Pet. 1:10) because to miss heaven is to miss it all.

“We read of a place that’s called heaven. It’s made for the pure and the free. These truths in God’s word he has given. How beautiful heaven must be.”

PO Box 904; Palacios, TX 77465

IMPORTANT MATERIAL AVAILABLE

Paul Sain

The actual cassette tape of the infamous radio broadcast of Max Lucado (12/96) in which he explicitly teaches one can be saved without baptism is available in a packet of material from the East Hill church here in Pulaski, where I preach. We have prepared a 24-page (8 1/2 x 11) booklet which EXPOSES MAX, RUBEL, MIKE COPE, ETC., with actual photographic reproductions of newspaper articles, bulletin material, posters, etc. Presently we are also including two or three tracts related to this matter (Curtis Gates, Jack Wilhelm, Tom Holland have authored some of the ones we have included, but we are using these as available, so we are NOT specifying the exact ones to be included in the packet.)

The tape, the tracts (2 or 3) and the 24-page booklet are available to anyone who can use them, or need to be convinced of the evil doctrines of these folks—FREE! The good elders here at East Hill are determined to help in the fight against digression. They asked me to compile the booklet/material. They have been an active aggressive part in making this available. It has already been sent out FREE to folks in dozens of cities, and from many states. E-mail messages can be sent to me (psain@usit.net) or anyone can write to the EAST HILL CHURCH OF CHRIST; P.O. Box 329; Pulaski, TN 38478 or they can phone 615-363-2777.

217 East Jefferson; Pulaski, TN 38478

CHALLENGE FOR ONE MONTH

Clyde Freeman

1. Resolve not to miss a single service of the church unless hindered providentially! No excuses this time, but for a change make a few sacrifices for the Lord.

2. Try praying every time you have a problem or a decision to make. If you feel the slightest need, pray! And while you are at it, try praying for your enemies (those with whom you don’t get along too well).

3. Make it your responsibility to bring at least one visitor to services, preferably a family. Don’t just invite them; make a date with them.

4. Take at least one afternoon or evening to go visiting! Not with the ones you know and like best. This time, visit with someone you do not know too well, perhaps someone with whom you feel a little “strained.” Get to know them and see what a difference it makes.

5. Read and study your Bible every day, even if you have to turn off the TV.

Follow these simple rules, and you will be surprised at the results.

Copied
**SICK AND SHUT-IN**

Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Louise Cline, Marilyn Hall, Tony Dodd (Ray and Dot Dodd’s son), Faye Little (Dot Dodd’s mother).

**READING/INVITATION**

August 6, 1997
Reading. Ray Wilcoxson
Invitation: Ray Foshee

August 13, 1997
Reading: Ray Williams
Invitation: Bill Gallaher

**MARK THESE DATES**

August 10, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
August 17, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
September 7, 1997–Attendance Drive and Dinner on the Grounds, after the morning service.

**MY COMPANION**

*Bill Carr*

I wouldn’t think of starting out to face the coming day.
Without a “thank you word” to God to help me on my way.
For when things seem uncertain, and my steps may falter too,
It is then I ask the Father for His help in what I do.
Yes, He’s always there to help me when I stumble and I fall,
To give me aid, and pick me up, and guide me through it all.
What wonderful companion, what a joy in life—to know,
That the Father God walks with me no matter where I go.
MEETING TIMES

SUNDAY:
9:00 A.M. BIBLE CLASSES
10:00 A.M., 6:00 P.M. WORSHIP
5:00 P.M. LADIES’ BIBLE CLASS
WEDNESDAY: 7:00 P.M.

BISHOPS: Paul Brantley, Bill Gallaher, Fred Stancliff
MINISTER: Michael Hatcher
MISSIONARY: Ira Y. Rice, Jr.

HOLD TO GOD’S UNCHANGING WORD

Al Brown

The Bible is under attack, but, then, it always has been by those enslaved to Satan. The world has consistently hated the restraints God’s law places on them. They delude themselves with the empty hope that their eternal destiny is not hell although the Bible says it is.

Denominational people do not consider themselves as being part of the world, but they are. They make no effort to believe or practice what the Bible teaches. In fact, they readily ignore, twist, pervert, or explain away any part of God’s Word that does not conform to their humanly-devised theories. Then, in arrogance and pride, they claim such rebellion is pleasing to God! In what way are they different from the rest of the world?

Only one group of people has the approval of God—those who submit to His will in humble, faithful obedience (Mat. 7:21-23). Obeying God’s will involves, among other things, complying with the conditions of salvation and being added by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:38; Col. 2:12-13; 1 Cor. 12:13).

It is not, never has been, and never will be, the place of man to sit in judgment on the law of the all-wise God (Jam. 4:11-12). Mere men have never been given the power to add to or take away from God’s Word in even the most minute way (Deu. 4:2; Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19). On the contrary, men are repeatedly warned of the severe consequences they can expect if they do.

Even in the church of Christ a certain element (who are more worldly than like their Savior) is continually assaulting some portion of God’s will. God’s people have always done this. Israel was warned about it repeatedly, yet she was in rebellion far more than she was faithful.
This has also been a problem in the body of Christ. Apostasy is condemned in the strongest terms (Mat. 7:15; Acts 20:29-30; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 4:3; Rev. 22:18-19). Still, for whatever cause, some brethren refuse to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where it is silent (1 Pet. 4:11). They do not believe in the verbal inspiration, inerrancy, or the authority of God’s Word, and they are working diligently to destroy your faith.

We do not have to let their worldly wisdom undermine our faith in God’s Word. They may have advanced degrees, but remember: their training was not in the Bible; it was in theology—what infidels to pure Christianity think about God and His religion. This is a classic example of misguided men, who love the sectarian world more than Christ and His will, trying to change pure Christianity into another man-made sect. To believe them is spiritual suicide (Gal 1:6-9).

Deceased

WHICH VERSION OF THE BIBLE SHOULD I USE?

Terry Joe Kee

The Bible is the inerrant, infallible, plenary inspired Word of God. We are so fortunate to have given into our hands the revealed mind of God. The only way for anyone to know what is in the mind of another is to have that one reveal it to him. No one can know the mind of God except God reveals Himself. The Holy Spirit has searched out the mind of God and revealed it to us in words (1 Cor. 2:9-14). The Bible is God’s means of revealing Himself to man.

The Bible is inspired (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The word inspired means God-breathed. What gives life to the words of the Bible is God having breathed into it. Adam was formed from the dust of the ground and lifeless until God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. God has breathed into the words of His revelation, life. The Hebrews writer says the Word of God is “quick [living], and powerful” (Heb. 4:12). The sixty-six books which comprise the Bible are alive.

Life can only come from life. Dead matter cannot produce life. Neither can a dead Bible produce spiritual life. The only way for a man to be spiritually alive today is to obey the life giving Word of God. If we take that which is alive and healthy and insert into it poison, it will decay and die. It matters greatly what version of the Bible I read, study, recommend and obey. Whenever fatal, damnable error is inserted into the text of the Word of God and men obey it, they are fatally wounded and damned.

The danger of the modern versions is their subtlety. Surely, there are out-and-out blatant errors in them, but perhaps more damaging are their subtle changes in the text. Error is not commonly accepted immediately, but gradually over a period of time. When churches begin to stray from the Truth and bring in mechanical instruments of music; have solos, choirs, and choruses; women leading prayers, or leading singing, or waiting on the Lord’s table; teach that salvation is totally and completely of God without man “adding one whit” to his own salvation; salvation by grace alone; the non-necessity of baptism; and on and on the list can go; it must be because we have lost our respect for the Word of God and divine authority.

One of the most devastating weapons the Devil has used is perverting the Word of God. He simply, subtly inserted into God’s Word a little “not” and caused Adam and Eve to die and be cast from the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:4). He tried this with Jesus (Mat. 4:5-7), but Jesus answered by quoting Scripture and refusing to be taken in by Satan’s perversion of the text of God. Oh to God, that our brethren would follow the lead of our Lord and not be taken in by perversions of
When these versions began coming onto the market in the forties and fifties many brethren openly opposed and condemned them. In the seventies and eighties Satan quit trying to convince mature, faithful Christians to accept these perversions of the sacred text and began aiming them at our young people. Elders and Bible class teachers wanted to encourage young people to read their Bibles and handed out these modern versions to them, no doubt thinking they would encourage reading and studying of the Bible. Churches have sown to the wind and are now reaping the whirlwind! We have reared a generation which knows not God and has no concept of Bible authority or how it is ascertained. Further, some of those preachers who supported these versions quietly in the early years now openly endorse them, because they have established a base of support among our young folks. Study the history of liberalism in the churches of Christ and see if it does not parallel the rise of modern versions among us!

FUNNY OR TRAGIC

Funny, how a $10 bill looks so big when you take it to worship, but so small when you take it to the supermarket.

Funny, how reading the church bulletin is a chore, but reading a 30-page newspaper every day is a habit you’ve grown to enjoy.

Funny, how long an hour is spent in worship, but how short it is when golfing, fishing, or attending a ball game.

Funny, how we applaud when the ball game goes overtime, but we complain if the worship hour is over the regular time.

Funny, how laborious it is to read a chapter in the Bible, but how easy it is to read a 300-page novel.

Funny, how much difficulty some have learning the simple Gospel well enough to tell others, but how simple it is for the same people to understand and explain more difficult subjects.

Funny, how people scramble to get a FRONT seat at the ball game, but scramble to get a BACK seat at services.

Funny, how we can’t fit a Gospel Meeting into our schedule with a year to plan for it, but we can adjust the schedule for other events at a moment’s notice.

Funny, that parents are so concerned about school lessons, but are completely unconcerned about Bible lessons.

Funny, how everyone wants to go to heaven, providing he/she doesn’t have to believe, or to think, or to say, or to do anything.

ALL OF THIS WOULD BE FUNNY...IF...IT WEREN’T SO TRAGIC!

Author Unknown

EVANGELISM BREEDS PEACE AND HARMONY

John M. Grubb

It is the desire of every congregation to have peace and harmony. Some try to find it through compromise with error, but this is not real peace and harmony (Jam. 3:16; Eph. 4:3). If every member is active in studying the Bible to answer questions of non-Christian friends, there will not be time for gossip and backbiting. Who gossips and backbites? Is it the one involved in personal evangelism or the idle Sunday morning only member? Evangelism in the local congregation will cause every member to feel like they have a part in the Lord’s work. This will keep them more faithful to the Lord and lessen the need for corrective church discipline. Many become unfaithful because they do not get involved in the Lord’s work. Let’s encourage our members to get involved in the work of preaching the gospel to the whole world.
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Louise Cline, Marilyn Hall, Tony Dodd (Ray and Dot Dodd’s son), and Faye Little (Dot Dodd’s mother). Geneneive Stevens (Fran Waters’ mother) is in West Florida Hospital.

PLACED MEMBERSHIP
Dale Cunningham placed membership with the Bellview congregation on August 3, 1997. His address and telephone are 11 Anne Circle; Pensacola, FL 32526; 456-1529. Please update your directory.

READING/INVITATION
August 13, 1997
Reading: Ray Williams
Invitation: Bill Gallaher
August 20, 1997
Reading: Elward Brantley
Invitation: Louis Herrington

MARK THESE DATES
August 10, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
August 17, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
September 7, 1997–Attendance Drive and Dinner on the Grounds, after the morning service.
September 21, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Foley, at 2:00 P.M. Study Revelation chapters 5-10.

NEW GRANDMOTHER
Jean Cline wishes to announce the birth of her first grandchild, Sarah Elizabeth, born on August 4, 1997, to Gary and Mary Bar of Olive Branch, MS. Our congratulations is extended to everyone.
CHRISTIANS
AND DRESS
Keith A. Mosher, Sr.

Clothing certainly does not determine character for God looks on the heart not the appearance (1 Sam. 16:7). But, one’s character can and does determine the clothing one wears. For some reason, however, some professed Christians seemingly give little thought to their attire even though there are a number of biblical principles relating to one’s dress.

In the very first book of the Bible one can find reference to God’s attitude toward public display of the human body. After the fall of Adam and Eve, they “made themselves aprons” (Gen. 3:7). But God did “make coats of skins, and clothed them” (Gen. 3:21). Obviously, Adam and Eve did not cover enough of themselves with the “aprons,” and a principle of modesty is seen.

The Bible also teaches that Christians are to dress in such a way as not intentionally to discomfort another, nor are Christians allowed to “judge” another by his poor dress (Jam. 2:1-9). Some would overdress to impress, but the Bible demands “modest apparel” (1 Tim. 2:9-10). The term, modest, is kosmios, which word contains the idea of orderly or decent. A kosmios person, to the Greeks, had grace and dignity in all of life—including dress. The style of the world in the first century tended to gaudiness, but Christians then (and thus, now) are not to be slaves to style but to decency.

The Bible also teaches personal cleanliness for Christians: “let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1). The term, flesh, includes personal hygiene. One who loves his fellow man will not offend. During the hippie culture, American medical doctors were reporting epidemics of scabies (itch). Such is amazing in a supposedly enlightened culture.

One’s dress can provoke lust (Mat. 5:27-28). (Many parents used to understand this and so
teach their children. With the influence from the most decadent society in the history of man, overwhelming all the media, even Christians are found now in skimpy wear on beaches; in sloppy wear at worship; and generally dressed like the world. Surely men and women must control their thoughts, and their exhibitionist tendencies. One who influences another to lust is as guilty as the one who lusted.

The Bible further teaches that one should avoid harmful influence to the church and to one’s personal influence. “Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God” (1 Cor. 10:32). The church, i.e., all Christians, is responsible for teaching and for setting good examples. Members of the body of Christ must respect God, others, and themselves in all things covered by the principle of love (Mat. 22:37-39). A word of caution is needed here. Sometimes the newly baptized, secular visitors, etcetera, who are not familiar with Bible principles of dress visit the church. (A poor farmer was once baptized where I preached. He came to service that first Sunday dressed in his best—bib-overalls, a white shirt buttoned at the top, a dark sport coat, and field shoes. An un-loving elder told the man that he was not dressed “properly.” The man never would come to services again and returned to the Methodist church. Christians, while trying to improve their own lives, must be patient with the untaught.

The Bible teaches that God demands that the distinctions between males and females are to be maintained. There is a curious passage in Revelation that reads: “and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women” (Rev. 9:7-8). Of course the former passage is figurative, but hermeneutical rules state that figurative speech must have some basis in the literal. God established distinctions between males and females and does not want such distinctions blurred (Rom. 1:26-27). The principle of male leadership involves a clear understanding of the differing roles of men and women (1 Cor. 11:3). The “unisex” movement in America is an abomination before God, and clothing (including jewelry) is a hallmark of the movement. Men need to be masculine. Women need to be feminine. Sound, sensible, decent judgment by Christians concerning appropriate dress for worship, workplace, recreation, and home is much needed in today’s “anything goes” culture.

The Bible condemns, in principle, immodest public attire, show-off dress, and indecent, inappropriate clothing. Surely Christians can learn not to offend in what they decide to wear. Personal preferences as to style are matters of liberty. Preferences as to decency are matters of faith.

4688 DeSoto Road; Walls, MS 38680

I’LL GET TO IT IN A MINUTE!

Chad Ramsey

“I’ll get to that in a minute,” is a phrase that every parent has probably heard at least one hundred times. Many young people use that phrase to deal with just about every situation. However, when it comes to following God’s Word and obeying the Gospel, putting off obedience is fruitless.

One of the hardest things for young people to understand is the fact that we are not sure how long our lives will last. James tells us that life is just like a vapor, here today, gone tomorrow. “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jam. 4:14). Do you believe God? If so, there are some things you need to do with your life.

First, stop putting off obedience. Don’t wait like the rich man in Luke 16 to decide after death to live as you should and set the right example. Do it now! The Lord said, “Let your light so
shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 5:16).

Second, don’t use an excuse to put off obedience. Excuses don’t produce results, and results are what is required for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 7:21).

Third, make heaven your goal and make doing the work of the Lord the number one thing in your life (Col. 3:1-2). Don’t just talk a good game; back it up with actions (Jam. 2:26). Instead of putting off obedience and “getting to it in a minute,” why not “get to it now!”

Some time ago I was visiting with a member of the church who had not been able to attend worship for some time because of illness. He had been away so long that he had subconsciously excluded himself from the church. How do I know? Simple. He kept talking about the church and its present work and future plans in terms of what “they” are going to do, instead of what “we” are going to do.

It is lamentable, but true, that some members never think of the church in any terms except “they.” Their concept seems to make of the church little more than a corporation controlled by a board of directors that is headquartered in the church building. Thus they think in terms of “How are they going to spend the money?” “They, should be doing” this or that or “They made a big mistake.”

Perhaps it makes them a bit more comfortable to place themselves in the role of mere observers of what the church is doing, instead of including themselves as participants. This allows them to criticize “the church” without criticizing themselves, they think. It also allows them to justify in their minds standing aloof from the service they should be giving the Lord in His church. The “they” members have never been known to accept responsibility in the church, for they don’t feel any. The church is a remote institution to them.

Thankfully, not all members of the church are of this attitude. There are some who are “we” members.

These are people who think in the first person, instead of the third person, when they think of the church and its work. The “we” members speak of what we are going to do, how we are going to spend the money, what we should be doing, etc. These are people who are a vital part of the church and its work and who conceive of the church as a family of people composed of all of the members, functioning together, each having respective responsibilities to serve Christ.

The “we” members are rarely found criticizing the church because they realize this would be a criticism of themselves! The “we” member is the dedicated, loyal, dependable disciple who includes himself in the work and responsibilities of the church. When workers are needed, they think of themselves instead of others. When money is needed, they consider how much they can give. When a gospel meeting series is announced, the “we” members immediately feel that it is their personal duty to bring others and support it faithfully themselves.

“They” members are always on the fringe, almost on the outside looking in, while “we” members are in the center of the activity, making good things happen. It may seem a small thing whether one refers to the church as “we” or “they,” but it is really a true indicator of how one views his relationship to the church. Most of the progress enjoyed in any church is accomplished by “we” members.
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Louise Cline, Marilyn Hall, Tony Dodd (Ray and Dot Dodd’s son), and Faye Little (Dot Dodd’s mother). Genenieve Stevens (Fran Waters’ mother) is in West Florida Hospital.

READING/INVITATION
August 20, 1997
Reading: Elward Brantley
Invitation: Louis Herrington
August 27, 1997
Reading: Allen Brazell
Invitation: Tim Lamb

MARK THESE DATES
August 17, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
September 7, 1997–Attendance Drive and Dinner on the Grounds, after the morning service.
September 21, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Foley Church of Christ, Foley, AL, at 2:00 P.M. Study Revelation chapters 5-10.

NEW TELEPHONE NUMBER
Wanda Batten’s new telephone number is 944-3104. Please make changes to you directories.

TRUE CHRISTIANITY MEANS:
Serve, even when we are not being served.
Love, even when we may not be loved.
Help, even when we have not been helped.
Give, even when we have not received.
Please, even if others do not please us.

Author Unknown
MEETING TIMES

SUNDAY:
9:00 A.M. BIBLE CLASSES
10:00 A.M., 6:00 P.M. WORSHIP
5:00 P.M. LADIES’ BIBLE CLASS

WEDNESDAY: 7:00 P.M.

BISHOPS: Paul Brantley, Bill Gallaher, Fred Stancilff
MINISTER: Michael Hatcher
MISSIONARY: Ira Y. Rice, Jr.

THE CHURCH THAT JESUS BUILT

The church that Jesus built was a subject of prophecy. The prophet Isaiah stated, “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:2-3). From this prophecy we can learn several things.

First, it was to be in “the last days.” The prophet Peter said to his disciples, “And when ye shall see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, then know that the same is near at hand. For these days shall be distresses, such as were not from the beginning of the world even to this day, neither shall be (Mat. 24:8).” This prophecy was fulfilled when the Roman army surrounded Jerusalem and the Jewish people were killed. In the last days, the church will begin to suffer persecution.

Second, Jesus said, “And when ye shall see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, then know that the same is near at hand” (Mat. 24:8).” This prophecy was fulfilled when the Roman army surrounded Jerusalem and the Jewish people were killed. In the last days, the church will begin to suffer persecution.

Third, the church was to be established in Jerusalem. In Acts 2, the church was established in Jerusalem. Hence, the prophecy was fulfilled.

Fourth, the church was to be established in Jerusalem. In Acts 2, the church was established in Jerusalem. Hence, the prophecy was fulfilled.

Fifth, the church was to be established in Jerusalem. In Acts 2, the church was established in Jerusalem. Hence, the prophecy was fulfilled.

Sixth, the church was to be established in Jerusalem. In Acts 2, the church was established in Jerusalem. Hence, the prophecy was fulfilled.

Therefore, we can say that Isaiah was foretelling the coming of the Lord’s church.

Before our Lord was crucified we find Him making a promise. After Peter had confessed Him to be “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mat. 16:16), Jesus said, “Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Mat. 16:18). Our Lord here promised to build His church. Notice what He said, “I will build my church.” When He said “my” we know it was to belong to Him. The apostle Paul told the Ephesian elders that Jesus purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). Therefore, we know that the Lord’s church belongs to the Lord, not to man. Again notice, Jesus said, “I will build my CHURCH.” He DID NOT SAY, “I will build my CHURCHES.” He used the singular tense, which stands for ONE! Jesus NEVER intended for there
to be more than one religion upon the earth! This is why He could pray for unity among all believers (John 17:20-21).

After Christ came forth from the grave He said, “All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth” (Mat. 28:18, ASV). Therefore, if Christ had received all authority, NO ONE ELSE has any authority to start a religion different from the Lord’s church.

The multitude of different religions today conflict with the plan God had for all to be united. Jesus will deliver up His church to the Father at the end of time (1 Cor. 15:24).

RESPONSIBILITY OF MEMBERS OF THE LORD’S CHURCH

Monte L Evans

It may seem strange to some to have an article dedicated to the responsibility of the members of the Lord’s church. It may seem equally strange to some that, as members of the Lord’s church, we actually do have responsibilities. No doubt members who are dedicated to the church and her doctrine recognize that the elders of a congregation have the serious and grave responsibility of leading the flock. These same members will readily recognize that the preacher of a local congregation has numerous responsibilities he, too, is obligated to perform. Do brothers and sisters in Christ have responsibilities and obligations that they, too, must perform? We certainly do!

THE WORSHIPING OF GOD

It is the duty and responsibility of every member of the Lord’s church (this includes elders and preachers) to worship God in spirit and in Truth (John 4:24). In order for this to be accomplished, the member needs to be a daily Bible student (2 Tim. 2:15). When one is a student of God’s Word, then and only then can one be approved of God. When one rightly divides the Word of God, one will be able to recognize true worship. One will be able to distinguish between
God’s authorized pattern of worship, as opposed to man’s pattern of worship. Any additions or subtractions to the five acts of worship does not constitute worshiping God in spirit and in Truth (Mat. 15:8-9).

MILITANT DEMEANOR

The word MILITANT seems to scare some members of the Lord’s church. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the word “militant” means to engage in warfare or to be aggressively active in a cause. In 1 Timothy 1:18, the apostle Paul gives this charge to Timothy, “that thou by them mightest war a good warfare.” Paul declares to Timothy for him to “Fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12). The apostle Paul makes it clear that we, as members of the Lord’s church, are engaged in a spiritual warfare and that we must be arrayed in the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10-18). Friends, if we are in a spiritual war (and we are) and are to be arrayed for battle (and we must) we need to recognize that it is imperative that we be militant. We, as members of Christ’s army, must strike blows for the cause of Christ and broaden the borders of the kingdom. An army of passive soldiers will never be victorious.

Saviors and Responsibilities

When one is faced with duties or responsibilities, three options avail themselves. These options are sometimes referred to as “The Three D’s,” Do it, Ditch it or Delegate it. As members of the Lord’s church, we must recognize our responsibility of saving the lost. Thus we must do it (teach the Gospel) never should we ditch it (ignore it) or delegate it (cast our responsibility upon someone else). Teaching others about Christ is not optional, it is a command (Mat. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). An individual will never receive salvation, the forgiveness of sins or Heaven as their eternal home without Christ (John 14:6). Therefore, one can recognize the necessity of the preaching and the teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As noted above, members of the Lord’s church have the responsibility of teaching the alien sinner the Gospel of our dear Savior. However, members of the Lord’s church who have become apostates are lost and need to be converted (Rom. 5:19-20). It is the duty of every member of the Lord’s church (elders and preachers included) to seek those who have strayed from the fold and rescue them from the pollution of the world (2 Pet. 2:20-21).

This is by no means an exhaustive collection of responsibilities of members of the Lord’s church. However, when one takes these responsibilities seriously, one will be pleasing to God because of proper worship. One will be pleasing to God because of an active role in the war against Satan and his allies. Finally, one will be pleasing to God because of the recognition of the Great Commission.
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxon, Nancy Travis, Louise Cline, Marilyn Hall, Tony Dodd (Ray and Dot Dodd’s son), and Faye Little (Dot Dodd’s mother), and Genenieve Stevens (Fran Waters’ mother).

READING/INVITATION
August 27, 1997
Reading: Allen Brazell
Invitation: Tim Lamb
September 3, 1997
Reading: Jerry Caine
Invitation: Tony Liddell

MARK THESE DATES
September 7, 1997–Attendance Drive and Dinner on the Grounds, after the morning service.
September 21, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Foley Church of Christ, Foley, AL, at 2:00 P.M. Study Revelation chapters 5-10.

WINFRED CLARK
Brother Clark passed from this life Monday, August 11, in a hospital in Athens, Alabama, after a lengthy illness. Funeral services were conducted Wednesday, August 13. Brother Clark was a long time friend of this congregation and spoke numerous times on our lectureship. In the past few years he organized and directed the “School Of Bible Emphasis.” We helped support him in this endeavor. Brother Clark was a great soldier of the cross and will be greatly missed.
WARMTH OF DIVINE LAW

Frank Chesser

There is a growing disdain for divine law in the church today. Some view law as being antagonistic to a grace-faith system. This sentiment has law nullifying grace and rescinding liberty. Law is considered to be cold and legalistic, the antithesis of grace, love and freedom.

In truth, law is a divine gift, an expression of God’s love and concern for man. God told ancient Israel that His commandments and statutes were “for their good” (Deu. 10:13). In contrast to the “all grace no law” philosophy, God considered Israel’s possession of His law as their chief advantage (Rom. 3:1-2).

Israel was surrounded by heathen nations with a propensity for idolatry and an insatiable appetite for all the sins inherent therein. God’s law was designed to serve as a divine protectorate, preserving Israel from the corrupting influences of these pagan nations (Lev. 18:30). Instead of being a cold legal system, there was a warmth to God’s statutes as He sought to draw Israel unto Himself and make them exclusively His.

God has never encased any man in the cold bands of law, severed from grace and love. Though such was often the Jewish perspective, as illustrated by the Pharisee in Luke 18:10-13, that was their problem, not God’s. From Eden onward, God has expressed His grace by clothing man in blessings divine, when man, motivated by love, submitted to His will in obedience of faith.

Every law that God has ever given has been for man’s good. Apart from divine revelation, man would be hopelessly adrift on the black sea of ignorance, unable to chart his own course (Jer. 10:23). Man needs divine guidance, rules to regulate his behavior and thus, prevent his self-destruction. Every “thou shalt and thou shalt not” of the gospel is a manifestation of the warm,
benevolent heart of Jehovah, beating in man’s best interest. There is a gentle, caring warmth to divine law.

6273 Sycamore Drive; Montgomery, AL 36117

THERE’S A CHURCH YOU OUGHT TO KNOW...

This church pleads for the restoration of the New Testament church; practices the unity of all Christians on the basis of God’s Word; has no creed but Christ; and preaches no “Isms.”

This church seeks to present Christianity as intelligent as science, as appealing as art, as vital as the day’s work, as intimate as home, and as inspiring as love.

Our Foundation—“other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11).

Our Creed—“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mat. 16:16).

Our Rule of Faith and Practice—“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Our Name—“And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). “The churches of Christ salute you” (Rom. 16:16).

Our Worship—“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42).

Our Mission—“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Mat. 28:19-20).

Our Prayer—that the disciples of Christ may all be one that the world may believe God sent Him (John 17:21).

Our Invitation—We earnestly invite the cooperation and prayers of all who endorse these principles.

It Is The Church of Christ
Where You May Worship “As It Is Written.”

Author Unknown

THE CAUSE AND ORIGIN OF DENOMINATIONALISM

Rex A. Turner, Sr.

Denominationalism had its origin in the reformation of the sixteenth century. There were several causes which contributed to the rise and prevailing course of denominationalism. An overview of four of the chief causes will suffice for this article.

One contributing cause of the rise of denominationalism was that Martin Luther, the chief leader of the reformation movement, proceeded on two erroneous concepts. Luther, a priest of the Roman Catholic Church who had become very distracted by the intricate rituals, forms, and ceremonies of the Roman Catholic Church, by chance read from Paul’s Epistle to the Romans the statement: “The just shall live by faith.” He seized upon the statement as being the answer to his unrest and confusion; and he construed the meaning to be that the just shall live by faith only—thus the reformation was grounded in the “faith only” doctrine from the very outset. Luther labeled the book of James—which teaches that one is justified by works and not by faith only—as being “a right strawy epistle.” This was one of Luther’s chief erroneous concepts, and his other chief erroneous concept was that he should expend his efforts in an
attempt to reform the Roman Catholic Church. He did not entertain the concept that he should resort to the New Testament as his standard of authority and thus proceed therefrom to restore the New Testament church.

A second contributing cause of the rise of denominationalism was the injection of the doctrine of Calvinism into the reformation movement. In 1533, John Calvin experienced “a sudden conversion,” and he joined in the cause of the reformation. Though he rejected the papal authority of the Roman Catholic Church, together with the numerous rituals and regularities, yet he held many of the Catholic doctrines—particularly the doctrine of original sin and predestination. Calvin proceeded to systematize protestant thought through his “Institutes of the Christian Religion.” Calvin’s system consisted of five very erroneous doctrines—namely: total depravity, unconditional predestination, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints. James Arminius, a Dutch theologian of the reformation movement, came forward to oppose these tenets. His was a move, a step, closer to the truth, but he embraced a modified approach to certain tenets of Calvinism. To illustrate, he granted the doctrine of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit—but he denied that the direct operation of the Holy Spirit is irresistible.

A third contributing cause of the rise of denominationalism was the crystallizing of the doctrine of divine grace—or the direct operation of the Holy Spirit—among all the denominations. The case is that this doctrine is held in common by all the denominational churches—some churches hold that this direct operation is irresistible; whereas others hold that the Holy Spirit, with effort, can be resisted. Now, this doctrine made every man who “received” the Holy Spirit a standard of authority within himself. The Word very naturally took second place with every person who imagined that he had received an experience of grace as a result of a direct operation of the Holy Spirit.

A fourth contributing cause of the rise of denominationalism was the efforts of certain movements, from time to time, to move closer to truth. To illustrate, the sect of the Anabaptists arose to oppose infant baptism. Those of that sect rightfully declared that baptism should be administered to believers only, but they granted that sprinkling is baptism. Calvin gave violent opposition to the movement, and he also reacted violently in his disagreement with the Lutherans over the Lord’s Supper, which in turn resulted in the separation of the Evangelical Church into the Lutheran and the Reformed. In about 1608, John Smyth baptized himself and began to advocate that only immersion would suffice for baptism—a step closer to the truth—but he did not regard baptism as being a condition of pardon for the alien sinner. This gave rise to the General Baptists. In 1644, there arose the Particular Baptists—which was a sect devoted to the Calvinist doctrine that came to embrace immersion only as baptism. In America the Particular Baptists divided into two different fellowships—the Hard Shell Baptists and the American Baptists, which includes especially the now Missionary Baptists. The Hard Shell Baptists hold that the direct operation of the Holy Spirit is irresistible, whereas the Missionary Baptists hold that, with effort, the direct operation of the Holy Spirit can be resisted.

The crux of all this is that every erroneous doctrine embraced made for division; and further, every step toward truth provoked violent reactions. Extremes begot extremes—the Lutherans against the Calvinists, the Calvinists against the Arminians, the bishops against the presbyters, and the Presbyterians among themselves. There was a pressing need for a restoration based solely on the authority of the New Testament. This is the biblical plea (Luke 8:11), and it is the plea of every faithful congregation of God’s people.

P.O. Box 240240; Montgomery, AL 36124
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Harold Maxey, Nancy Travis, Louise Cline, and Marilyn Hall.

READING/INVITATION
September 3, 1997
Reading: Jerry Caine
Invitation: Tony Liddell
September 10, 1997
Reading: Bill Cline
Invitation: Jerry Lindesmith

MARK THESE DATES
September 7, 1997–Attendance Drive and Dinner on the Grounds, after the morning service.
September 21, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Foley Church of Christ, Foley, AL, at 2:00 P.M. Study Revelation chapters 5-10.

RESULTS OF TRACT GIVING
A man was giving out Gospel tracts on a steamer. One gentleman who he approached accepted a tract graciously but said, “I haven’t much faith in that kind of work.” The Christian worker replied, “It was through a Gospel tract given to me in Glasgow twenty years ago that I was converted.” Asking for the particulars, the gentleman discovered that it was he who had given him the tract! He had ceased to do this because he saw so little results from his efforts. He added, “But by the grace of God I shall start again!”

Author Unknown
THE CHURCH OF FREETHOUGHT
Gary W. Summers

Twenty-one years ago I attended the Warren-Flew Debate here in Denton. Later, at a preacher’s meeting, I was asked questions about the debate, several of which centered around attendance. Yes, there were about a thousand people there each evening. Yes, brethren seemed to be supporting the debate. How many atheists attended? “I don’t know. I saw several church buses from Dallas and Fort Worth in the parking lot, but none that read First Atheist Church.”

Invent the silliest thing imaginable, and if you live long enough, you may see it come to pass. The concepts of atheists traveling on their own church bus seemed humorous at the time, but after reading the November 11 front page of the Religion section of The Dallas Morning News, it would not be impossible to see such a strange sight.

The reason for that is that in Irving, Texas, the North Texas Church of Freethought has been formed, nicknamed “the church for the un-churched” (1G). Now some might think that this is a very bold and inventive approach, but don’t give these people too much credit. They are just mostly copycats, as the article clearly reveals.

Take, for example, the statement: “There’s no communion, no Bible readings, no prayers” (1G). What’s unusual about that? Barb and I visited one of “our churches” in Wisconsin on a Wednesday evening a few years ago, and nobody prayed there, either. In many of our churches one could yawn long enough to miss the morning’s allotment of Scripture altogether—if there is one.

Surely atheists would feel at home in such an environment. As for communion, some of the denominations gave up on that a long time ago. Having attended a Methodist Church in my younger years, I was not even aware of anything called communion for a long time. Atheists could surely feel comfortable among some of these “religious groups” without having to form one of...
their own.

Or consider this quote: “It looks like a church, acts like a church, and calls itself a church, except we don’t have the theistic beliefs that go with a church” (1G). Wake up, Mr. Sullivan. Most religious groups gave up on theology years ago. Just talk to some folks who attend various denominations; most of them have no idea what Calvinism is and the theology of their denomination. Most churches have gotten away from preaching such “heavy” items as “the nature of God” or biblical doctrine. Probably, it would just confuse people; so it has been discarded for more relevant issues such as the importance of recycling. Many of our own brethren have given up talking about doctrine due to its divisive nature.

WORSHIP

Now what could atheists possibly do for worship? “To begin the service, Mike Sullivan—one of the church’s co-founders—juggles two bean-bag balls and a plastic bowling pin for the congregation.” Wow!! Talk about “going with the flow?” Nearly anybody who wandered in would think they were in a regular “church service.” Denominations for years have had clown ministries, juggling acts, judo for Jesus, and a hundred other forms of entertainment (many brethren have joined the bandwagon). One would think with their rejection of God and their fierce disposition to stand on their own that atheists would at least come up with something a little more original.

Those interested in becoming members are told to attend two or three services before deciding because “each one is quite a bit different. There are no set rituals and no sacred books” (3G). Well, isn’t that just what some brethren have been advocating? Decrying tradition and charging that true worship is being stifled, they argue for more spontaneous assemblies. The only difference is that what the atheists might call human genius so-called “Christians” would attribute to the Holy Spirit.

They conduct services the first Sunday of each month (1G). Some brethren adopted that pattern years ago—although most of us meet each week. It’s a small consolation to know that these atheists don’t want to be fanatic about their religion.

Why did this group decide to meet? They wanted a time “for socializing, performing community service, and helping each other through difficult times” (1G). Such goals sound very close to brotherhood, benevolence, and comfort, all of which are things taught in the Word of God. How interesting. They reject the Bible but want all the benefits of being a Christian.

Why did they seek the publicity of this newspaper article? Mr. Sullivan, again lacking in originality, commented, “We don’t have horns and a tail.” Now this statement must be strenuously objected to on the basis that he has plagiarized our brethren’s glib speech from the Joplin Unity Summit. When those from the churches of Christ met with those from the Christian Church, that same observation was made. I am offended that atheists would rip off such a sterling and astute insight. Everybody knows that the devil has horns and a tail. We all saw those that belonged to Hitler, Mussolini, Charles Manson, and others of the devil’s disciples.

After reviewing what this church of “freethought” does, it’s obvious that these atheists are a lot more familiar with religion than they would care to admit. How else can you explain them patterning themselves after Christianity? And their lack of horns and a tail should prove that they are not much different than we are.

“God does not comfort us to make us comfortable…but to make us comforters.”

Author Unknown

920 Imperial Drive; Denton, TX 76201
Luke has informed us that the people of Berea were more noble than those in Thessalonica, but why? Two reasons are given: (1) “that they received the word with all readiness of mind,” (2) they “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). A good Bible student is a searcher. A searcher is one who has the following characteristics:

**SACRIFICIAL.** It takes some sacrifices to be a good Bible student. We must sacrifice some of our time. We must learn to tell the difference between the important and the urgent. Many of the things of which we spend our time are forgotten by tomorrow. What were you doing at 6:00 p.m. last night? If you are too busy to study God’s Word you are too busy. We also must sacrifice some of our money. Not everyone needs to spend $10,000 on books (though you can get to that point fairly quickly). But, there are some basics books that everyone should have to assist them in their Bible study. Why would a person start in Genesis 1:1 and read through the whole Bible every time he needs a verse on a particular subject, when for $20 he can buy a good concordance to save time.

**EARNEST.** There is a difference between the KJV and the ASV in the translation of 2 Timothy 2:15. “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed” (KJV). “Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed” (ASV). The reason for the difference is the Greek word behind both translations carries both ideas. The Greeks understood that study was hard work. Americans understand this also. Some of the highest paying jobs are jobs in which people study problems and report on their results (Scientists, engineers, etc.).

**ANXIOUS.** “As the hart [deer, NKJV] panted after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God” (Psa. 42:1). The figure is of a deer that, during a time of drought, keeps searching for water. David searched for a knowledge of God just as anxiously. In a drought it is not enough to know where the water is, we have to drink it. The United States (and the church) is going through a time of spiritual drought. Let us continue to go to the well that will never go dry.

**REGULAR.** We have already noticed the Bereans were daily Bible students (Acts 17:11). David described a godly man as one whose “delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psa. 1:2). If you have failed to plan a way to study your Bible daily you have planned to fail.

**CAREFUL.** It is amazing to me how many things I have missed in the Bible because I was not reading carefully. Two weeks ago I noticed that Jesus rebuked all the apostles because they did not believe the three reliable witnesses who told them He was risen from the dead (Mark 16:12-14). If they could not believe in a resurrected Lord that they had not seen, how could they expect those of later generations to believe their word concerning the resurrected Lord (John 20:29)?

**HUMILITY.** “And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know” (1 Cor. 8:2). Paul is not saying that we cannot know anything. He is talking about the kind of knowledge that “puffeth up” (1 Cor. 8:1). Until we admit that we do not know everything we will not search the Scriptures.

If no less a man than the apostle Peter searched Paul’s writings to gain understanding (2 Pet. 3:15-16), what should we do? Let us all be searchers.

1 JOHN 5:1

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.”

4340 Lylewood Rd.; Indian Mound, TN 37079
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Harold Maxey, Nancy Travis, Louise Cline, and Marilyn Hall.

READING/INVITATION
September 10, 1997
Reading: Bill Cline
Invitation: Jerry Lindesmith
September 17, 1997
Reading: Howard Johnson
Invitation: Paul Brantley

MARK THESE DATES
September 7, 1997–Attendance Drive and Dinner on the Grounds, after the morning service.
September 21, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Foley Church of Christ, Foley, AL, at 2:00 P.M. Study Revelation chapters 5-10.

RESTORATION
Gary Grizzell
I am happy to report a restoration. Who was restored? Not who, what! There has been a restoration of New Testament Christianity. Where has this restoration taken place, you say? It has taken place in every area of the world where men have honored and respected God’s pattern for church government, scriptural worship, plan (steps) of salvation, church work, and godly living. Are you part of the restoration movement to restore New Testament Christianity? (Heb. 8:5).
2128 Crystal Ct.; Cookeville, TN 38501
PASS THE NAIL CLIPPERS

“Why is the church of Christ so rowdy?” asked a recent convert from denominationalism. “What do you mean?” I replied. “Why, the people in the assembly talk and move around right up until the last moment, and then they turn on their worship. One lady in there tonight leaned across me and asked the lady sitting beside me if she could borrow her nail clippers when she finished. Later, she had the nerve to ask me to pass the nail clippers, upon observing the lady had finished clipping her nails.”

If you think this is an isolated, never-to-happen-again case, you are wrong. After having preached in twenty-five states and several foreign countries, I can recall incident after incident of this kind. Incidents that were very distracting as one sought to worship God in the assembly. In our attempts to escape the formalism of denominationalism we have, in some cases gone to the other extreme. In worship service to the living God one may be distracted by one or more of the following:

- The clipping of finger nails. This sounds like a hammer hitting an anvil.
- Passing notes. Some spend their time in the worship service playing Postman.
- Daydreaming. From time to time this person has to be nudged to pass the communion trays or plates.
- Sleeping. This certainly distracts; especially when the person snores.
- Whispering. This interferes with the listening comprehension of those next to you.
- Kicking the pews. This sounds like a drummer sending a signal to a distant land.
- A screaming child. If not soon quieted, can disturb the whole congregation.
- The smacking of chewing gum. I have even seen some blow bubbles during worship services.
- The shuffling and playing with songbooks is very distracting during prayer or communion.
Sitting on the end of the pew. This person hinders by preventing persons from getting in or out. You have to “climb” over some to occupy a seat.

Needless walking in and out of services. In some congregations there is a constant “Parade” in the services.

Going to the front to adjust the thermostat. In one congregation I saw a man and a woman take turns during the service going to the front to check or adjust the setting.

Continually slapping a child on the leg (i.e., just enough to make the child mad).

Tearing and wadding of paper (I have seen boys shoot spitballs).

The child that crawls in the aisle or under the pews is very distracting, too.

Playing with children (i.e., winking or waving at them).

Winding a watch. For some unknown reason many wait until worship services to wind their “Big Ben.”

Filing or cleaning fingernails is another very distracting thing.

There are those who will respond to these observation by saying, “Oh, don’t be petty. None of these things bother me.” While this may well be the case for some rare persons, how about the scores who are distracted during worship? As children of God we must be interested in building up one another. To do this we must do things “decently and in order.” We must be considerate of one another; not doing anything that will offend or distract. May we forget that the flesh is weak. Therefore, let us work on being more reverent in worship.

Author Unknown

Please Come Home

Some of you who are reading this were once dedicated Christians. Your love for Christ and His causes burned bright. Your faith was real and strong. Your life was being built upon Christ and directed by His Word. The church was at the center of your activities. But that has all changed now! You see the old Christian friends once in a while, but it is not the same. Every now and then you get the urge to return to Christ but you put it off “for a while.” I am convinced that you were happier when you were a faithful Christian and that some day you intend to return to Him. I hope the following suggestions will hasten that day.

First, you must face up to it. You have left the Lord! You are no longer faithful to Him! You are no longer living the life of a Christian!

Second, face up to what that means. It means that you are facing life without God’s help and without the blessing of prayer (1 Pet. 3:12). You have got to “go it alone”! And if you die in your present condition, your eternal abode will be with the Devil and his angels (Mat. 25:41).

Third, your course of life will determine the course of life of others. If you remain as you are, your family will be greatly influenced in that direction. If you return to the Lord, chances are some of them will also. You are not just “deciding for yourself”!

Fourth, it is easier now to return than it will ever be. The longer you are away, the more difficult the return. So do it NOW! Don’t wait another minute.

Author Unknown

Grumbling

Joe Goodspeed

Man has made an outcast of the drunkard, strung an emblazoned red “A” around the neck of the adulteress, hung the witch, and cut off the hands of the thief. But, the grumbler has been acquitted. Whoever heard of tying the grumblers to a stake and pulling out his tongue by the roots?
But, in a list of warnings to the Corinthians, Paul has “grumbling” with these unrighteous sisters: lust, idolatry, fornication, and trying the patience of God.

If “birds of a feather flock together,” this covey shows grumbling for the spiritually filthy sin it is. And you know why! The grumbler spreads unhappiness and discouragement everywhere he opens his mumbling mouth. He casts a black vapor of noxious fumes everywhere he gives vent to his pessimism. He pours polluted water on the plants of creativity we are trying to nourish. He verbally kicks and stamps into the ground the courage and hope we are trying to develop.

**ADULTS:** Let’s build up and encourage young people and put an example of uplifting, optimistic conversation before them.

**YOUNG PEOPLE:** Bad mouthing your parents or low rating the church is a sin—one that you can’t afford and a discouragement that you surely don’t want.

There have been times when our conversation has “talked down” the church, disheartened the faith of others, thrown cold water in the face of Christ. Let’s be careful. Let’s “talk the church up.” Encourage the brethren. Up with the cheers. Careful with the jeers.

**Morale is everybody’s business!**

**WE ARE BUT ONE**

**Benny Moore**

With it’s dividing over the mechanical musical instrument the one body became two. However, the Word of God says there is but one body (Col. 1:18; Eph. 4:4). Thus, we conclude that at least one of the two separate groups could not be identified as the one body. This is true because two cannot be one and one cannot be two.

We have heard much terminology recently that is strange to the church of Christ. Phrases like “church of Christ-instrumental” and “church of Christ non-instrumental.” And the calling of members at one church “brethren” or “brother” to members of another church. This is foreign to the Scriptures because we are not brethren with any denomination.

The unity of the Bible is longed for by any person following Christ. Christ prayed diligently for this unity (John 17). Paul’s statement demanded it and explained how it must be achieved (1 Cor. 1:10). In order to arrive at complete oneness we must be “perfectly, joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

With this thought in mind, we declare that to be so joined, either the apostate Christian church must repent of its use of the mechanical instrument and all other practices alien to New Testament Christianity and return to the one truth, or we must lay aside truth and join them. Only by doing one or the other will we be of one mind and one judgment. If not why not?

It is an encroachment on the Lord’s statement of Matthew 16:18 to make statements like the church of Christ non-instrumental and the church of Christ-instrumental. How many churches did He promise to build? Just one. Will we follow the old denominational wresting of the Scripture that speaks of the vine as the church and the branches as the different denominations? May God forbid.

We have long claimed to speak where the Bible speaks and claimed silence where the Bible is silent. Are we now changing? If we fellowship the Independent Christian Church in its apostasy the answer is Yes. And it “don’t” matter what kind of “F” you use in spelling fellowship.
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Harold Maxey, Nancy Travis, Louise Cline, and Marilyn Hall.

READING/INVITATION
September 17, 1997
Reading: Howard Johnson
Invitation: Henry Born

September 24, 1997
Reading: Bryan Loy
Invitation: Paul Brantley

MARK THESE DATES
September 14, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
September 21, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Foley Church of Christ, Foley, AL, at 2:00 P.M. Study Revelation chapters 5-10.
September 21, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.

HAPPY MARRIAGE ANYWHERE?
A preacher and his wife won the Happy Marriage Contest in the Good Housekeeping Magazine. There were 18,000 entries. They said the secret to the success of their 27-year marriage....We gave—when we WANTED to receive. We served—when we WANTED to feast. We shared—when we WANTED to keep. We listened—when we WANTED to talk. We submitted—when we WANTED to reign. We stayed—when we WANTED to leave.

Does this describe your marriage?
A good marriage is much more than a 50/50 arrangement. God said man is not to put asunder when He joined together in marriage (Mat. 19:3ff).

East Hill Church of Christ; Pulaski, TN
“WHAT THE CHURCH OFFERS YOU”

J. D. Bryant

To stay away from church services because we have so many other engagements and so little strength left is like staying away from the table because we are so weak and hungry. The church is the place to get spiritual strength just as the table is the place to get physical strength.

I truly believe that attending and being involved in church services will refresh one who is tired. It will take one’s mind from the busy affairs of this life and center him on the Lamb from which strength comes.

It is wrong for us to become so involved in the business of this world that we have no time left for the things of God. Jesus said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mat. 6:33). Do we believe this? God does not forsake those who seek Him. He is to be sought, found, and placed above all else. If we do not, we are evaluating the perishable things of time above the everlasting riches of the next life.

One man said, “I do not go to church anymore because I get what the church has to offer in better form elsewhere.” Is he right? Absolutely not? When the church gets into the business of offering the world what the world already has, it is in the wrong business. But, many have done that. They have gone into the entertainment business. It is impossible to compete in that world. Forgetting the gospel is “God’s power to save,” that church has no right to exist. If he can get the same things the church offers some place else—the church is offering the wrong things.

Only the church can offer the truth that can save man’s soul. It is the place where God reconciles man unto Himself (2 Cor. 5:19).

Where else can man find the comfort, hope, encouragement, and joy that they get from the church? Where else can they have the fellowship, communion, and associations that they have in the church?
In what other institution can they have the assurance they have in the church? The church offers the world what the world cannot get from any other source. If the world offers you something declared to be for the soul better than you get from the church, you will do well to double check it. It probably isn’t for your soul anyway.

Jesus died for the church. It is extremely important since it was bought with His blood (Acts 20:28). It offers man what can’t be gotten anywhere else.

HOW TO LOSE A WAR
Al Brown

The following is not describing Poland in the days before World War II, nor the end of the United States (although such a scenario is not impossible). This is the condition of “the holy nation”—the church of Christ in 1996! Everything mentioned is a characteristic of many people in the church today. Notice that at each point made, there are glaring inconsistencies between the lives of many brethren and the New Testament ideal noted in the Scriptures cited. Then consider: am I one of the reasons the body of Christ is losing the battle for the souls of men—even our own?

Once upon a time, a small nation was at war with a great aggressor (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:10-13) who had already conquered the rest of the world (1 John 5:19). This country was the only one left, and enemy agents were already at work within the nation itself (Mat. 7:15-20; Acts 20:29-31). In fact, the situation was such that there was no longer a home front as opposed to a battle front (2 Pet. 2:1). Just as happened in Stalingrad in World War II, they had become one and the same, and every person had suddenly become a soldier (2 Tim. 2:3-4).

To make matters worse, the internal situation of the small nation was an amalgam of contradictions. Some loved their country and proved it by actively fighting the enemy in the field and at home. Others professed love for their nation but would not lift a finger to support or protect it. They were such pacifists they would not allow faithful soldiers to even warn them of the dangers they were facing. They kept repeating the lies with which the enemy had blinded them: “We don’t want to hear anything negative” (2 Cor. 4:3-4). They “fiddled while Rome burned,” as it were. The enemy was invading, but they did not care. They were comfortable and did not want to be disturbed. They would not listen to those who tried to warn them even though it was the last hour.

The prevailing attitude in this citizenry almost defied understanding. Discipline was almost non-existent (2 Thes. 3:6; Rom. 16:17-18). Many haughtily declared, “We will do as we please; if the officers don’t like it, we’ll join the enemy.” All but a very few refused to train in order to become effective soldiers (2 Tim. 2:3-4). The equipment with which to fight the war was at hand, as well as capable instructors, but they simply refused to have anything to do with the equipment, the instructors or the army (Eph. 6:10-18).

The attitude, expressed by the actions of too many, was: “This is their war, not mine.” Oh, they wanted to share the spoils, but they did not want to fight for them. They preferred to play and be entertained. A few were fighting for the nation’s life. Others were willing to stop the fighting and make peace with the enemy regardless of what it cost (cf., Tit. 1:15-16). The willingness to sacrifice for the good of the country was almost non-existent (cf., 2 Tim. 2:10).

Most citizens were satisfied with things as they were and used any number of excuses to keep from sacrificing or even becoming actively involved in the war in any way. They charged: “Our leaders make mistakes.” “The war is costing too much.” “I have the right to do what I want to with my money” (Mat. 7:19-21; Acts 20:35; 2 Cor. 9:6-7). While the few true patriots made
great sacrifices for the good of the country, the majority was busy demonstrating against the war. Perhaps they did not realize it, but they were helping the enemy and demoralizing their own troops as much as the invader’s tanks and guns did.

Many opportunities came to deal stunning blows to the enemy, but indecision, cowardice, complacency, and selfishness held them back until the opportunities passed (1 Cor. 16:13). Then they used the closed opportunities as additional excuses for not fighting.

They had a secret weapon which could utterly devastate the enemy, but they refused to use it. Their adversary had deceived them into thinking it was obsolete, irrelevant, and ineffective, so it just lay idle. Instead of strategically deploying this great weapon, they just wrung their hands in despair, for they had no other weapon to use in its place. The very opposite of what they thought was true (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12). The founders of this great nation had used this weapon against seemingly overwhelming odds and had conquered (Rom. 1:16-17). But this was another age and another generation, and they were faithless and afraid (Heb. 10:38-39).

They even had a great general who promised to lead them to victory (Rom. 8:31-39), but most of the people did not believe what he said enough to actually follow his lead. One of the most heart-breaking things about this is that instead of being faithful soldiers, they were really enemies “within the walls,” as it were (Phi. 3:18-19). Some stood up before large crowds and tried to get people to go over the enemy. Their inactivity and incessant, carping complaints demoralized everyone around them. It would not have been as costly if they had deserted.

Of course, anyone can accurately predict the tragic end to which these people came. No country can hope to last for long when such a chaotic, immature, selfish attitude is characteristic of its people, and the church of Christ has reached such a state of dissolution. Our condition today resembles too clearly the situation described in the song:

Tho’ with a scornful wonder,
We see her sore oppressed,
Her doctrine rent asunder;
By names and creeds distressed.

Sectarians parade as distinguished professors in our schools and fill many of our pulpits (2 Cor. 11:13-15). They are leading the gullible, the weak in faith, the ignorant, and the rebellious into apostasy. It grieves us to think of our friends and kin who are caught up in this hell-bound adventure.

The Lord’s kingdom is different from this imaginary country in one important way. We need to emphasize this lest any think the enemies of Christ are right when they say we must change or the church will die. It won’t (Mat. 16:18). Many members may digress into denominationalism or abandon religion altogether. The Lord’s church may be decimated until it seems almost no one is left. Satan will never successfully destroy the church of Christ (Mat. 16:18). No matter what others do, we must remain faithful. Even if every one should fall away, you and I can be faithful; and if we are, we shall surely receive the crown of life (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Make no mistake about that!

Deceased

HEBREWS 12:1-2

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Harold Maxey, Nancy Travis, Louise Cline, Marilyn Hall, and Joyce Simmons.

READING/INVITATION
September 24, 1997
   Reading: Bryan Loy
   Invitation: Paul Brantley
October 1, 1997
   Reading: Jim Loy
   Invitation: Scot Brazell

MARK THESE DATES
September 21, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Foley Church of Christ, Foley, AL, at 2:00 P.M. Study Revelation chapters 5-10.
September 21, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
November 2-7, 1997–Gospel Meeting with Bobby Liddell speaking. Make your plans now to be here.

THE UNBELIEVERS PSALM
“I have no Shepherd, I constantly want. Discontentedly I graze in parched fields; I can find no water to quench my thirst. My soul is weary: I wander in the paths of sinfulness, seeking pleasure. When I walk in the darkness of danger and death, I am afraid; I am all alone. No power or principle gives me comfort. There is not nourishment to strengthen me against my enemies. There is no ointment for my head: My life is empty. Even though God’s goodness and mercy have been available all the days of my life, I shall be banished from the house of the Lord forever.”
   Via “Hurst Street Herald”; Center, TX
WHAT ELDERS CAN DO TO HELP OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

Every elder, preacher, parent and Bible class teacher has a special responsibility to our young people, and we must be willing to accept that challenge. Our youth are pressured by their peers, some atheistic teachers, humanistic television, and a godless world. How can we help them be prepared to stand for the right, and even at their young age be, “set for the defence of the gospel” (Phil. 1:17)?

In the body of Christ we need elders who will see, because it is their responsibility to do so, that we have a strong, stable, effective Bible school program. In too many places, finding a person to even teach the teenage class is about as easy as finding a “needle in the haystack.” Many do not want to teach that class because it will demand too much from them. There is no doubt, we need our most effective, best qualified teachers with our young people. This class has many legitimate questions that demand an answer. If the teachers are not prepared or unwilling to research for the answers, our youth will get the impression the Bible cannot meet our every need and answer our every question.

While elders are looking for good teachers, they must be sure they examine the lives of those prospective teachers. A person who curses, drinks, smokes, or whose life is morally questionable has no place teaching at all, much less teaching our young people. They will teach as much by what they do as by what they say, if not even more. Find a class where the teacher is less than what the Scriptures demand of a Christian and I will show you a class that will be losing, if they are not already losing, their young people. Elders must select the right teachers for our youth, not just someone who is willing to take the class for a while, and that, without a great deal of enthusiasm.

If elders are going to help our young people,
we must be willing to put good materials in their hands. Elders, have you looked at the literature lately? Much of the tried and tested materials of 10 or 15 years ago is no longer available. Some have the same name but different content, besides promoting the use of the modern speech versions of the Bible. Elders, it is your duty to know what is being taught. How else can you, “feed the flock” (1 Pet. 5:2)?

Last, may I challenge the parents of our young people to support the teachers. In too many places our young people are not even getting their lessons for Bible class. Parents, that is your fault. When that faithful teacher condemns things from the Scriptures that our young people want to do (attend the prom, go mixed swimming, etc.), do we support the teacher and stand for the truth, or tell them “that is just his opinion?” After the preacher had exposed the sinfulness of dancing, a preteen asked his mother, “will sister go to hell for going to the prom?” Mother replied, “no that’s just the preacher talking.” The credibility of that preacher was destroyed in the mind of that youth immediately.

Elders, demand something good and productive from your Bible classes. Parents support the teachers, be proud they have the courage to teach the whole truth. Let’s help our young people, their souls are in the balance!

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:1-4). “And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates” (Deu. 6:5-9).

Author Unknown

A GOD OF JUDGMENT

Mel Futrell

Someone from our congregation left a newspaper clipping on my desk titled, “No god of judgment, just Republicans.” The article was written by conservative columnist Mona Charen, with whom I am generally in agreement on political issues. The thrust of the short piece was the welfare system. Apparently, ultra-liberal Senator Ted Kennedy invited ultra-vulgar Whoopi Goldberg “to the Capital to make a pitch for Aid to Families With Dependent Children.” Now, before I share with you the liberal theology she tossed out on this occasion, let me give you a little background information on the Whoopi woman herself. The following is from paragraphs four and five of the above mentioned article:

Whoopi Goldberg was the daughter of a nurse, not wealthy but hardly destitute. She became pregnant for the first time at age 14 and, by her own account, self-aborted with a coat hanger. The following year, she got pregnant again. “I hadn’t been using birth control at that time,” she wrote. “It was the late ’60s; everybody was having sex. You had sex in Central Park; it was that free.” Planned Parenthood performed her second abortion and supplied her with birth control pills. She claims that birth control pills are not “strong” enough for her. “Three times I got pregnant with birth control.” It apparently never occurred to her to try self-control. At age 18, married, Whoopi had a daughter. But she was soon single again and somehow finding herself pregnant again. It’s difficult to count, based on Whoopi’s narrative, but the grand total of abortions she admits to having is six or seven by the age of 25.

What a paragon of virtue Whoopi is and what
a role-model for people everywhere. Brethren, that is simply disgusting. Talk about a selfishly self-indulgent individual, she takes the cake. Like Alexander the coppersmith of old, the Lord rewards her according to her works (2 Tim. 4:14). During the course of her rambling tirade she threw in some of her own self-help liberal theology. See if you can make sense of any of this:

I talk about GOD because GOD and I are very close. GOD gives you freedom of choice. That’s in the Bible. GOD says, Here are 10 rules: Don’t lie—you’ll never remember what you said before. Don’t cheat, because you’re going to be mad if you’re cheated on. Honor your parents, because they brought you into the world, and you’re going to need child care. If you choose to live by them, your life will be better, and even if you don’t, I will forgive you...GOD understands whatever dilemma you’re in and will forgive it if you make a choice that He or She doesn’t think is right.

Well, there you have it, another example of reducing the absolute standards of GOD’s Word to nothing more than self-help texts. Let’s see if we can’t spot some of the many egregious errors and contradictions contained therein.

First, her claim of being “very close” to GOD I doubt very much. It is true that GOD is “not far from every one of us” (Acts 17:27). But somehow I doubt that is her meaning. If she is implying that she is a child of GOD (and again I doubt), then certainly her lifestyle does not measure up to what is demanded of Christians.

Second, amazingly, she is right that “GOD gives you freedom of choice” and that is in the Bible (Deu. 11:26; Jos. 24:15; John 5:40; etc.). However, freedom of will does not sanction any unauthorized practice, neither does it free us from the consequences of those choices. The late brother Franklin Camp said:

While man is free to make his choices, there are limitations that apply to him. GOD determines the consequences of the choices that man makes. One cannot make wrong choices without suffering the consequences thereof. One is free to make the choices, but then certain consequences, rewards, or curses, come with the choices that one makes (“The Divine Principle Of Free Moral Agency,” The Word of Life, Vol. XIII, Number 1, January 1984).

Third, in her statement “Here are ten rules” she is apparently alluding to the ten commandments of Exodus 20. Making some allowances for her wording I suppose she came up with three of the ten (#5, #8 by counting cheating as stealing, and #9 since lying is without a doubt the bearing of false witness). The problem here is the reasons she offers for not lying and cheating. Whoopi’s rule is don’t lie because you’ll forget what you lied about then get caught in another lie. I wonder if she thinks it would be all right to lie if you remembered what you had previously lied about so as to prepare you for the next lie? And please don’t cheat because “you’re going to be mad if you’re cheated on.” My little girls could come up with better and more valid reasons than this. The bare bones truth is that lying and cheating are morally wrong, they are inherently wrong!

As to her statement, “Honor your parents, because they brought you into the world,” that strikes me as the epitome of contradiction coming from a multiple abortionist. Whoopi murdered six or seven children in the womb thereby canceling any opportunity those precious ones (Psa. 127:3-5) had for honoring anyone. I’ve got a strong hunch that we won’t be lining up Whoopi to come speak on “child care.”

Finally, Whoopi is obviously gender confused in her estimation of GOD. She, like the new “Inclusive Version” of the New Testament, is perverted. One more thing, GOD’s forgiveness is conditioned upon man’s repentance. GOD does understand the dilemmas we get ourselves in—but forgiveness doesn’t flow until repentance is forthcoming (Mat. 3:8; 12:41; Jon. 3:10).

Whoopi’s god doesn’t judge, The GOD does! (Ecc. 12:13-14; Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:10).

450 Harleston Road; Irmo SC 29063
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Louise Cline, Marilyn Hall, and Joyce Simmons. Gayle Sanders (Ray and Marge Williams’ daughter) will be having medical tests October 3.

READING/INVITATION
October 1, 1997
Reading: Jim Loy
Invitation: Scot Brazell
October 8, 1997
Reading: Harold Macey
Invitation: Jeremy Caine

MARK THESE DATES
October 12, 1997–Deacons’ meeting, at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
October 19, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting, at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
November 2-7, 1997–Gospel Meeting with Bobby Liddell speaking. Make your plans now to be here.

NEW ADDRESS
Bryan Loy’s address is: Box U-2971; University of South Alabama; Mobile, AL 36688-0001.

TEACHERS’ MEETING
A Bible Class Teachers’ Meeting will be held Thursday, October 16, 1997, at 6:30 P.M., in the general purpose building. A dinner to honor the Bible class teachers will be held prior to the meeting. Further information will be posted on the bulletin boards. All members, but especially teachers, are highly encouraged to attend.
GOD DID
PREDESTINATE!

Bill Jackson

In such passages as Romans 8:28-30 and Ephesians 1:3-12, we find the doctrine of “predestination” mentioned by inspired writers. We have before us one other illustration of how God can be so plain as to His meaning regarding a word or doctrine, and how confusing and difficult men make it when they put their hands to it. There has been a general abuse and misuse of such words as “predestination,” “foreordination,” and “election.” In the misuse, men have concocted doctrines, and in so doing they never can be right!

Wresting the Scriptures

So men took the view that God, before the world was made, looked down the stream of time and saw you and me, individually, and pre-determined our destiny—heaven or hell—prior to our even being in this world. Having thus declared, they then came up against the doctrine of man having free will, and, true to the hold that man-made systems have on men, they rejected free will in order to hold to their own created doctrines. That is how sectarian systems are created in order that the doctrines can be spread abroad.

The Harmony of Truth

But man does have freedom of will, as seen first in Genesis 2:16-17, and 4:7. Then, if man has freedom of will, how is it that God did predestinate? Whatever the answer is, it must be compatible with free will, and we do indeed find it so. Two points help us: (1) God can, and did, predestinate by CLASS (the wicked going to torment, the righteous to bliss), leaving freedom of will to work in every individual. Then, (2) the texts themselves, Romans 8 and Ephesians 1, indicate that involved in God’s work was the providing for the Christ, the gospel, the gospel’s call to man, man’s hearing and responding obediently or man’s refusal to hear and/or respond in obedience. In Romans 8, it is made clear that God did call (v. 30) and justify. God
predestinated that men could be like His Son (v. 29)—and how is that done? By man’s obedience to, and living by, the gospel! The same in Ephesians 1, where Paul speaks of God choosing, predestinating, that we should be His own, living godly lives, and being His children. How is that done? He continues to speak of God's working, providing us the GOSPEL OF OUR SALVATION (v. 13)!

Saved Without God’s Power To Save?
If what men have said about “predestination” were so, then men would be saved long, long before any gospel was provided. Yea, saved by God’s decree toward the individual, even before the creation of Adam! Once more, man has made the matter difficult, by his perversions!

Deceased

JUDGING, SCRIPTURAL, OR UNSCRIPTURAL?

Monte L. Evans

In Matthew 7:1-5 our Savior teaches that one must not judge. In John 7:24 our Savior teaches that one must not judge according to appearance, but judge a righteous judgment. When a babe in Christ reads these verses, Matthew 7:1-5 and John 7:24, they may become confused and wrongly think that there exists a contradiction in the Word of God. The babe in Christ may also come to the incorrect conclusion that Christians are not to judge in any capacity. However, the serious Bible student is able to properly understand the teaching of our Savior in both instances. It is the objective of this writer to clarify exactly what was being taught by the Master Teacher.

You Cannot Judge Me!!
The cliché, “you cannot judge me,” is the cry that rings forth from the lips of our liberal brethren, those who are ignorant (unknowing) of the Scriptures, and of our denominational friends as well. This well known and abused cliché is a crutch that many cling to in order to survive or avoid correction and reproof. It is shameful that members of the Lord’s church pervert and misuse the teaching of Christ located in Matthew 7:15 and totally ignore the teaching of Christ located in John 7:24.

Hypocritical Judgment
In Matthew 7:1 Jesus states, “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” However, to gain the proper teaching regarding what type of judgment is being condemned one must continue reading through verse five. In these verses Jesus teaches a valuable lesson regarding the sin of hypocritical judgment. This lesson, no doubt, was directed toward the religious leaders of the day, the Pharisees, and others possessing the same type of attitude. The Pharisees displayed an attitude of spiritual superiority toward the populace. The lesson Jesus is teaching is, before a person condemns the actions, errors, or sins in an individual’s life, the one exercising the condemnation should not overlook or disregard the actions, errors or sins in their own life. To do so is to be guilty of a hypocritical judgment. Jesus is not teaching that one cannot judge or make a judgment, however, Jesus is teaching that one must not judge in a hypocritical manner.

Righteous Judgment
Our Savior Jesus Christ teaches that an individual is not to judge hypocritically, however, Jesus declares in John 7:24 that one is to judge a righteous judgment. There is a great difference between a hypocritical judgment and a righteous judgment. When one judges, using a righteous judgment, one does so using the objective standard, the inspired Word of God. To judge a righteous judgment is to use the Word of God (Psa. 119:172). Christians must learn to judge a righteous judgment. The following are a few examples why members of the body of Christ must judge rightly using the Word of God as the standard. In Matthew 7:15-16 Jesus warns all
to beware of false prophets or teachers. One learns in verse 16 that false teachers will be known by their fruits (their teaching). Now how are Christians to know whether a teacher is a false teacher? This is accomplished by a righteous judgment, using the Word of God as the standard. By studying the Word of God one can make a righteous judgment as to whether or not a teacher is teaching a false doctrine. Thus, a judgment is made, not a hypocritical judgment but a righteous judgment, using the Word of God as the objective standard.

In the letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul gives this admonition to the brethren: “mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17). In order for this command to be obeyed one must make a judgment, a righteous judgment, as to whether or not an individual has committed deeds contrary to the doctrine of Christ and needs to be avoided. This is accomplished by consulting the objective standard the Word of God.

It is important that Christians judge with a righteous judgment. To make judgments not authorized by Scripture is to violate the law of Christ. Those who advocate that Christians are not to judge, by any means, judge those who make righteous judgments as cruel, unkind, unloving, and hateful. How can they make that judgment?

A farm couple often had arguments, after which they would go to each end of their long front porch and pout in silence for a long period of time. After a heated spat, they took their customary positions. Soon a wagon passed, pulled by two mules side by side. The wife said, “Pa, it ain’t right for us to fight like this. Why can’t we pull together like those two mules?” He said, “Maybe we could if we had only one tongue between us like they have.”

It is a shame, but many times unity in the body of Christ is disrupted because we have too many “tongues” speaking, rather than ears listening to God’s Word. The Scriptures speak of the unity that we are to have as brethren, for example: “that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Phi. 1:27). “Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likened, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Phi. 2:2). “Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing” (Phi. 3:16). “Be of the same mind one toward another” (Rom 12:16). “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul” (Acts 4:32). Note also Ephesians 4:1-6 and Acts 2:42-47.

This unity and likenedness is based upon our acceptance of and faithfulness to God’s truth, the “one faith” that has been “once for all delivered unto the saints” (John 17:17; Eph. 4:5; Jude 3). When we will determine to accept the Bible as our sole authority, follow its rules and regulations, accept its principles, and allow its liberties, then unity will be the natural result. But if any “teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness,” then there is only one thing we can do: “from such withdraw thyself” (1 Tim. 6:3-5). Unity and fellowship are present only when we “Hold fast the form of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13).

So, let us “be of one mind” (2 Cor. 13:11).

UNITY AND LIKEMINDEDNESS

Tim Ayers

“No I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10).
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Marilyn Hall, and Joyce Simmons. Louise Cline is in West Florida Hospital, room 511. Neva Bryant will have knee surgery on September 30. Gayle Sanders (Ray and Marge Williams’ daughter) will be having medical tests October 3.

READING/INVITATION
October 8, 1997
Reading: Harold Maxey
Invitation: Jeremy Caine
October 15, 1997
Reading: Horace Myrick
Invitation: Bill Crowe

MARK THESE DATES
October 12, 1997–Deacons’ meeting, at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
October 19, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting, at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
November 2-7, 1997–Gospel Meeting with Bobby Liddell speaking. The theme is “What Do You Believe.” Make your plans now to attend.

PRIVILEGE
I had rather teach someone to do his duty well, than to have the finest medal known pinned on my coat label.
I’d rather help someone to overcome his fear, than to be a hero in a book, tho’ lauded far and near.
I’d rather cause someone to wear a happy smile, than to wear the finest clothes myself or keep the latest style.
I’d rather help a boy or girl keep the path that’s straight, than hear ten thousand voices shout my name among the great.

Author Unknown
“LET NO MAN DESPISE THY YOUTH”
(1 Timothy 4:12)
Brian C. Adkins

We love our young people very much. We love to see them grow and mature into responsible adults. It is thrilling to see the transformation from youth to adulthood. But what is their responsibility now, while they are still “young?” Do we forget that at some point in their young lives they become accountable for their actions and are responsible to God? In the text presently under consideration, Paul told the aspiring preacher Timothy that he must see his accountability now! The words “but be thou an example” imply accountability. Paul indicated that the potential for disaster in the young man’s influence was quite real. The Greek word translated “despise” is kataphroneo. It means “to think down upon or against anyone” (Vine, p. 301). Paul did not want anyone looking down upon his “son in faith” because of his age.

Paul instructed Timothy to be a pacesetter or a trendsetter. Instead of following the crowd, Paul told Timothy to be a leader among other people. This is good advice for young people today! Why not be the one out in front who sets the standard and pace among people? Our young people should be “light” and “salt” (Mat. 5:13-16). Light and salt are both positive influences in our world. One boy said, “Salt is that which is quickly noticed when it is left out of the potatoes!” How true. There is something noticeable about salt and light.

In what ways should young people be examples? First, Paul said that Timothy must be an example IN WORD. Matthew 12:37 reads, “For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” This is a real danger for young people (and older ones, as well). James has much to say about the tongue. He wrote that we need to bridle our tongues (Jam. 3:2-4); that the tongue is “a fire” (Jam. 3:6); that
the tongue is difficult to control (Jam. 3:6). Earlier, these words can be found in the epistle of James: “be slow to speak” (Jam. 1:19). The fact is, too many people get their mouths in motion before they get their minds in gear! And so, young people, be careful with your words.

Second, Paul instructed Timothy to be an example IN CONVERSATION. This meant that he was to be an example in the way in which he conducted his life. People are watching us every day. Let’s make sure that the way we live will encourage others to come to Christ (cf., Gal. 2:20).

Third, Paul revealed that Timothy should be an example IN LOVE. We must love God supremely. He must come first in everything. He loved us even when we were unlovable (Rom. 5:8). Young people must learn to love themselves. You are very important! God invested His only begotten Son in YOU! Jesus went to Calvary with YOU on His mind! Too many people fail to appreciate their own worth. So many feel like there is no hope for them. This often leads to the tragedies of alcohol, drugs and even suicide. We need to be loved and wanted. When we love God first, then that should affect our relationship to our fellow man. The Bible states that we must “love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mat. 22:39). If I do not love myself very much, how will I react to my neighbor? Young person, be an example of one who loves God, yourself and others.

Fourth, Paul stated that Timothy should be an example IN SPIRIT. This concerns one’s attitude or outlook. Your attitude has a great deal to do with what others think of you. God wants you to have the best attitude you can. While this is often difficult to do today in many instances, it is essential to being a good example.

Fifth, Paul encouraged Timothy to be an example IN FAITH. Faith in God and His Word is very important. Let others see how you trust in and depend upon God. Peter wrote, “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Pet. 5:7). Paul stated, “without faith it is impossible to please him [to be well-pleasing to him]” (Heb. 11:6). Without strong, courageous faith, it is also impossible to set the proper example.

Finally, Paul challenged Timothy to be an example IN PURITY. Our society is plagued with filth and impurity. You are being told to “go for it.” Well, you can “go for it” if it is pure, clean and good. There is nothing more refreshing to our hot and tired bodies than cold, refreshing, pure water. And there is nothing more refreshing to God and His people than a pure, clean soul.

Young people, remember that you are loved. You are important. But, also remember that you are responsible. If you are a Christian, you represent Christ. You can be a powerful influence in a world gone wrong. If you are not a Christian, what better time to obey the gospel and “put on” your Lord in baptism (Gal. 3:27)? Young person—“BE THOU AN EXAMPLE!”

THE CHURCH YOU READ ABOUT IN THE BIBLE

Jim Laws

There has been so much discussion about the church these days. It has been and continues to be a topic which many write about. To some it is nothing more than a human organization which we are free to change at will. To others it is a type of social club to join. Many see no real connection between the church of the New Testament and the all important matter of salvation.

First, let’s consider what the Bible means by “church.” When we speak of the church of the New Testament, we do not refer to a building in which we meet for worship. Someone says immediately, “Yes, I have known that even as a child.” Perhaps this is true, but I think that we
need to be reminded of it again and again. The word church originally comes from the word \textit{ekklesia}, which in essence means “the called out.” Those who have been obedient to the gospel of Christ are the called out ones (2 Cor. 6:14-18). When we speak of the church of the New Testament, we are speaking of people—people who have heard the Word of God and have grown to sufficient faith in Him that they have submissively given their lives to Him. The church is a living building, a spiritual one built of living stones (1 Pet. 2:5).

Second, how important is the church? It is so important to God that it was planned from the eternals (Eph. 3:8-11). Christ has been made the foundation of the church (1 Cor. 3:10-11). It is so important that even death itself could not prevent its establishment (Mat. 16:18). It is so important that Jesus purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). How important is the blood of Christ? This is to say that Jesus died for the church (Eph. 5:25). She is referred to as the “bride of Christ” (Eph. 5:23-24; Rom. 7:4).

Third, is the church essential to one’s salvation? Is the death of Christ essential (Eph. 5:25)? He died for the church. Must we be reconciled to God (Eph. 2:16)? We are reconciled to God in the body, and the body is the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). Is being a child of God essential? One is either a child of God or a child of the devil (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 John 3:9-10). Children of God are born again (John 3:5). We are born into the family of God by being baptized into Christ, and God’s family is the church (1 Tim. 3:15). Yes, indeed, the saved are added to the church (Acts 2:47).

Fourth, will unfaithful church members be saved? Faithful New Testament Christians in the Bible were faithful church members. Can an unfaithful Christian be saved? Read carefully Revelation 2:10. Writing to the church at Smyrna, Christ makes clear by the most graphic of illustrations that the unfaithful will be spewed out (Rev. 3:15-16).

Yes, those in the church are in a heavenly place (Eph. 2:6). We are sons of God, heirs of God, brethren of the Lord. We need to be thankful—thankful to God for all of His blessings. We need to be thankful for the blessings associated with being a child of God, a member of the body of Christ, which is the church of Christ. Do you really appreciate the church that you read about in the Bible as you ought? To those who truly want to go to heaven, the greatness and the blessings of the church will be seen.

1511 Getwell Road; Memphis, TN 38111

DO YOU SERVE THE LORD?

Kenneth McClain

A servant of the Lord is one who will put the Lord’s business above any other business.

A servant of the Lord is one who attends the services of the church on a regular basis.

A servant of the Lord is one who is willing to be a good example for others to follow.

A servant of the Lord is one who thinks more of attending Bible class than staying home to sleep.

A servant of the Lord is one who gives to the church according to what he makes rather than the amount he has left over.

A servant of the Lord is one who helps rather than one who wants help.

A servant of the Lord is one who attends services because he loves to, not merely because it is his duty.

A servant of the Lord is one who has a willing mind to do the Lord’s work.

A servant of the Lord is one who can see his own faults and not just the other fellow’s.

A servant of the Lord is one who is more concerned with winning souls than with the honors men may give.
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Marilyn Hall, and Joyce Simmons. Louise Cline is in West Florida Hospital, room 608. Neva Bryant is scheduled for knee surgery Oct 10.

RESTORED
Dale Cunningham was restored on October 5. Please keep him in your prayers and offer him encouragement.

READING/INVITATION
October 15, 1997
Reading: Horace Myrick
Invitation: Bill Crowe
October 22, 1997
Reading: Richard Parker
Invitation: Ray Dodd

MARK THESE DATES
October 12, 1997–Deacons’ meeting, at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
October 19, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting, at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
October 16, 1997–Annual Teachers’ Meeting and Dinner.
October 26, 1997–Monthly Bible Bowl at Fairhope. Study Revelation chapters 11-16.
November 2-7, 1997–Gospel Meeting with Bobby Liddell speaking. The theme is “What Do You Believe.” Make your plans now to attend.

NEW ADDRESS
Paul and Lanet McManaman’s new address and telephone number is: 99 Cedar Circle; Brandon, MS 39042; (601) 829-9694.
MEETING TIMES
SUNDAY:
9:00 A.M. BIBLE CLASSES
10:00 A.M., 6:00 P.M. WORSHIP
5:00 P.M. LADIES’ BIBLE CLASS
WEDNESDAY: 7:00 P.M.

BISHOPS: Paul Brantley, Bill Gallaher, Fred Stancliff
MINISTER: Michael Hatcher
DEACONS: Henry Born, Elward Brantley, Jerry Caine,
Bill Crowe, Louis Herrington, James Loy,
Harold Maxey, Richard Parker
MISSIONARY: Ira Y. Rice, Jr.

GIVE US A KING
Shan Jackson

Ten centuries before Christ the nation of Israel looked at the leadership of the nations around them and determined that they wanted a king. Through Samuel, God warned them of the problems they would encounter but they were determined. They “refused to obey the voice of Samuel” (1 Sam. 8:19) and said, “we will have a king over us.”

Some sage from generations past observed that history repeats itself which seems to be an accurate assessment concerning our present generation of Christians. It appears that many of our number are taking concerning the Scriptures and are demanding “give us a change.” We know the end which awaited Israel. We realize their immediate future was void of God’s blessing. Yet many today seem bent on following that same unwise path. Paul writes, “Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor. 10:11). However, the forgotten truism is that examples are only good if they are used. If we repeat flawed thinking then the example is useless.

The world and the brotherhood are both in decline. Everywhere and in every situation we are seeing altered thinking and flawed judgment. In areas where once the Lord’s truth rang loud and clear now it has been hushed to an archaic whisper. Society’s thinking on homosexuality, pre-marital cohabitation, substance dependence, honesty, etc., has made a steady march into the minds of many in the church. Whereas we once stood united now our ranks are dwindling. A valid question appears to be: Has God changed His mind parallel to society’s change of theirs?

Paramount to this alarm is the caustic attitude many of our number are taking concerning
change. The idea has been oft expressed that we either must change or we will die. It is almost as if some feel that God no longer has, nor desires to be in control. And, if we think this attitude and thought is not invading the church we are sadly asleep at our watch. There are several affluent congregations among us who are flaunting their women who lead public prayers, teach classes with both men and women present, assist at the Lord’s Table, and it will not be long until they move them into the pulpit. We are also seeing solos and small groups of singers undercut congregational singing. We are also seeing the instrument beginning to once again rear its once silenced head.

Has many of God’s people not viewed their peers and determined “Give us a king?” Since times have changed have they not determined that God’s Word must change as well? What has happened to the embarrassment we once saw on the faces of those caught in sin? What has happened to people’s awe of God and His Word? Why have many stopped using “Thus saith the Lord” in their sermons, in fact, why are so many not using the Scriptures at all in their sermons? Times change, but not God’s Word. Brethren, our walls are being breached. Our ramparts are being torn down and replaced by rhetoric. God’s people are seeking to become like the nations around us? God is being replaced by a king?

Brethren, we need to learn a lesson from the schoolmaster’s ledger. We need to look deeply at the circumstances and ramifications of 1 Samuel 8. World-envy did not work for the children then and it will not work for the church today. Many of our number are making some fatal mistakes, and many more are beginning to desire to follow them, even to their destruction.

Let us return to being a “Thus saith the Lord” body of believers. Let us begin again to do things in Bible ways and call things by Bible names. Let us insist that our elders lead us by the Bible and not by attendance and budget figures. Let us demand that our preachers preach the truth to the exclusion of fables. And if a change is made, let us make sure that it is in our attitude concerning the authority of the Scriptures. May God help us in this battle.

PO Box 904; Palacios, TX 77465

WHY CHURCHES GROW

Ferman Carpenter

Over the last few years, numerous books and articles have been written about why churches grow (or don’t grow). They have offered all kinds of solutions to the problems of declining church growth. Some of their ideas are:

1. Bigger buildings
2. Better location
3. Good publicity
4. Plenty of parking
5. Better qualified staff

Now these are good and if possible, churches need to have them. But when we look at the book of Acts, we see that the church described there grew because of some other reasons. Let’s consider some of them:

They Preached The Simple Message Of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:22-28). Their efforts were not directed at preaching social reform or some kind of revolutionary new gimmick to try on the people. Salvation was (and is) man’s greatest need and they preached the message of the one who could provide it.

They Enjoyed Each Other’s Fellowship (Acts 2:42-46). They spent a lot of time together even when they were not in the public assembly. They ate, prayed, and studied together. They shared their possessions.

They Had A Common Purpose (Acts 4:32). This verse says, “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.” When people are held together by likemindedness and common purpose they are a powerful and successful force.
They Were Respected By Outsiders (Acts 5:13). There was just something about that group of Christians that commanded the respect of non-Christians. Their work, morality, zeal, dedication and spirituality just seemed to make them much better than those outside of Christ.

They Were Committed (Acts 5:29). After being put in jail and being threatened, Peter said, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Christianity was not (and is not now) a practice based on convenience or the mood of the one claiming to be a Christian, but on giving ourselves totally to the obedience of God’s will—whatever the cost.

They Practiced Evangelism Everywhere Every Day (Acts 8:1-4). Those who were scattered as the result of the persecution “preached the word wherever they went.” Preaching and teaching Jesus was not limited to an apostolic hierarchy but it was taught as they had the opportunity.

So, we can see that church growth in the New Testament was not the result of adequate church staffs, big buildings, good locations, but by every Christian being dedicated to the cause of Christ and unswerving in his desire as he had talent and opportunity.

Copied

MARILYN MANSON
Gary W. Summers

You have probably seen some of the devotees of the shock-rock group, Marilyn Manson. They usually wear black clothes and adorn their faces with white paint, accented by heavy black eyeliner and black lipstick. Like other teenagers, they like to hang out at malls—only they look much more “cool” than normal teens.

The lead singer patterned his name after Alice Cooper (whose real name is Vince Furnier), a rock “star” from the 70s, who also selected a girl’s name for himself. But while the name Cooper is not threatening, Manson is. The last name was borrowed from Charles “helter-skelter” Manson—and for a reason: to communicate Santanism.

“Marilyn” calls himself a minister of Satan, and their musical themes match. According to a brief notice in The Dallas Morning News on April 14 of this year, the group is “known for its often obscene lyrics on the occult, suicide and torture in songs such as Kiddie Grinder and Dried Up, Tied and Dead to the World” (2A).

On August 6, the same newspaper says the lead singer “is a member of the Church of Satan and his group is known for lewd on-stage acts and songs about murder, rape, sodomy and self-mutilation. Its latest album is titled Antichrist Superstar” (2A).

About a dozen years ago when many of us were protesting Ozzy Osbourne, we raised questions about what would happen if communities were not allowed to enforce standards. Needless to say, we were waved off as alarmists. Even then, Ozzy Osbourne was coming out on stage with a large replica of the cross, throwing it down, and stomping on it. Who knows what is now being done? If city fathers do nothing, at least parents can.

920 Imperial Drive; Denton, TX 76201

WILL YOU SIGN YOUR NAME?

“I ______ will agree that the church should quit having Bible study, midweek study on Wednesday night, and Lord’s Day evening services, because I believe them to be unimportant. I do not attend and if given an opportunity, will speak against the attendance of others.”

You won’t sign? That’s okay; ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS, anyway.

Deliberate absence is a vote to close the door of the meeting-house for these services, THINK ABOUT IT!

Author Unknown
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Marilyn Hall, Joyce Simmons, Louise Cline, Neva Bryant, and Ray Dodd.

READING/INVITATION
October 22, 1997
Reading: Richard Parker
Invitation: Ray Dodd
October 29, 1997
Reading: Ray Williams
Invitation: Ray Foshee

MARK THESE DATES
October 19, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting, at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
October 16, 1997–Annual Teachers’ Meeting and Dinner at 6:30 P.M., in the general purpose building.
October 29, 1997–Fifth Wednesday Singing at 7:00 P.M.
November 2-7, 1997–Gospel Meeting with Bobby Liddell speaking. The theme is “What Do You Believe.” Make your plans now to attend.

NEW ADDRESS
David and Angie Kelly’s new address is: 4114 West Fairfield Drive; Pensacola, FL 32505. Their phone number is: 455-3363. Please update your directory.

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME ENDS
Daylight savings time ends on Sunday, October 26. Set your clocks back one hour before going to sleep on Saturday.
THE HEARING OF THE GOSPEL

Tommy J. Hicks

Before one can be saved, he or she must hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?...then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:13-14, 17). However, one must make sure he is actually hearing the words of God, “because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

Just because one can quote Scripture does not prove he is a “gospel preacher.” Satan quoted Scripture (Mat. 4:6). Paul warned, “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11:13-15). Furthermore, the gospel can be perverted (Gal. 1:6-9). Doctrines of men (Mat. 15:9) can make vain our worship and separate us from God (2 John 9-11).

How can one know he is hearing the pure, true gospel of Christ? John said, “try the spirits” (1 John 4:1). The Bereans were doing that very thing as they listened to Paul preach. The Bereans “were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

When the gospel is preached, three kinds of hearers may be found. On Mars Hill, Paul found an indifferent audience (Acts 17:16-33). Stephen’s audience in Acts 7 was made angry by the gospel—so angry, they stoned him to death. On the day of Pentecost, Peter found his audience to be receptive. “Then they that gladly received
his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41).

In order to be saved, one must hear the gospel of Christ. But, one must be sure it is “the gospel” by searching the Scriptures. And, one must be receptive or else the gospel does him no good.

5208 89th Street; Lubbock, TX 79424

CHRISTIAN KNITTING

Dave Rogers

Let me “spin you a yarn.” Do you realize that your “fabric” is being tested every day? As a Christian, you are a “strand” in the “weaving” of God! Ephesians 4:16 teaches us that the church, which has many members, is formed by “knitting” all together into one body! So each one of us is, in essence, a “thread” in the “cloth” of the true “tabernacle” (Heb. 8:2).

Please forgive the “punny” paragraph! Its point is simple: we are all part of something greater and more urgently important than any one of us (the church). I am thankful to be part of a congregation which works together! We have elders who take seriously their responsibility to shepherd the flock which works together! We have elders who take seriously their responsibility to shepherd the flock which works here (1 Pet. 5:2). We are blessed with deacons who take their work seriously, and look for ways in which to better the church here; these godly men are gaining a good standing in the faith (1 Tim. 3:13). Our Bible class teachers are certainly some of the “stars” for their faithful labors in teaching us the truth! Many different members of the church recognize and commend these, and others, for their many good works. This is as it should be.

One point I want to make, though, is that the church here cannot grow as it should unless we grow! This means every single Christian here needs to be involved in some way in the work of the Lord (it is never a waste of effort, 1 Cor. 15:58). This is why our teachers send cards to the students who miss Bible classes; this is why our ladies call and check when someone is absent on the Lord’s day; this is why the elders and preacher visit members in their homes! The object is involvement! You wouldn’t wear a shirt with a sleeve missing, unless you absolutely had no choice, would you? Nor would you go out in public with only one sock, unless one was all you had! Jesus does not want His church to be “crippled” because some of the “strands” in its “fabric” are missing. We should be honored to be “yarn” for the Master to “knit together”! Are you?

P.O. Box 285; Lawton, OK 73502

FISHING?? FISHY??

I hate to CARP at you, but I hope you will give me a HERRING while I exhort you a little about our Gospel meeting. Please use your BIG MOUTH to let everyone know. Don’t CLAM up! PERCH on some doorstep and keep inviting people until they say “Yes.” If a woman shows the slightest inclination to come, SNAPPER up at once. And, work on the men too, because most MINNOW that they should also attend. If those you ask act CRABBY or CATTY and say they have a HADDOCK, just give them a couple of aspirins and tell them to come on! We have plenty of room for everyone; we won’t be packed in like SARDINES. So, stop FLOUNDERING around; ask someone to come to our meeting. It will be good for your SOLE!

(P.S. If the above sounds a little fishy, I did it on PORPOISE.)

Via the Cottondale Church of Christ bulletin

MARK 1:15

“"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."
Bellview Church of Christ
Gospel Meeting
November 2 - 7, 1997
Sunday Morning: 9:00 & 10:00 A.M.,
Sunday - Friday Evenings: 7:30 P.M.
with
Bobby Liddell
Instructor at the Memphis School of Preaching,
Memphis, Tennessee
Speaking on the theme:
“What Do You Believe?”
Sunday Bible Class: What Do You Believe About God?
Sunday A.M. Worship: What Do You Believe About The Bible?
Sunday P.M. Worship: What Do You Believe About Christ?
Monday Evening: What Do You Believe About The Cross?
Tuesday Evening: What Do You Believe About The Church?
Wednesday Evening: What Do You Believe About Unity?
Thursday Evening: What Do You Believe About Responsibility?
Friday Evening: What Do You Believe About Eternity?
Covered-dish meal will be provided Monday - Thursday at 6:00 P.M.
Come and enjoy Christian fellowship and gospel preaching.
SICK AND SHUT-IN

Please remember in your prayers:
Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon,
Martha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Marilyn Hall,
Joyce Simmons, Louise Clark, Mildred Bryant,
Joyce Williamson, Nancy Travis, Marilyn Hall,
Marilyn Wilson, Joyce Simmons, Louise Clark,
Nancy Travis, Mildred Bryant, and Amber Maxey.

READING/INVITATION

October 29, 1997
Reading: Ray Williams
Invitation: Ray Foshee

November 5, 1997
Gospel Meeting

MARK THESE DATES

November 9, 1997–Deacons’ meeting, at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
November 16, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting, at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.

LOOK IN YOUR POCKET

A fictitious story to illustrate a good point: A man walking alone in the desert one night was startled by a voice. The voice said, "Stop and pick up some pebbles at your feet and place them in your pocket. In the morning, you will be both sorry and glad." The man obeyed—stooped down and picked up a handful of pebbles and put them in his pocket. At morning’s light he reached into his pocket and pulled out diamonds, rubies, and emeralds worth phenomenal wealth. The prophecy was fulfilled. He was happy that he had obeyed the voice. But sad that he had not taken more.

God’s blessings are available to all. Yet we often grumble and complain. Let’s take time to see what God is giving and thank Him.
THE PLEASANT PROSPECT OF ONE LESS SLEAZY SHOW

Steve Ellis

According to a recent article in The Commercial Appeal (10/10/97), one of Hollywood’s most popular promoters of sexual perversion, Ellen DeGeneres, has threatened to resign from her filthy television show if ABC follows through with their announced intentions to precede the program with an on-screen advisory declaring that the show has adult content and warning parents to use discretion in allowing children to view it. The chagrined DeGeneres is reported to have declared, “This advisory is telling kids something’s wrong with being gay.” While such a conviction obviously is not ABC’s primary motivation for this proposed advisory, there definitely is something wrong with “being gay.”

What is wrong with “being gay” is that such behavior is sinful and sin is that which separates people from God (Isa. 59:1-2). The Bible plainly teaches that homosexuality and lesbianism are despicable sins. Because of the practice of the “very grievous sin” of homosexuality in those cities, the “LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven” (Gen. 18:20; 19:24). Under the Law of Moses, the sin of homosexuality was punishable by death (Lev. 20:13). In the New Testament, homosexuality and lesbianism are termed “vile affections” and those who commit such sins are described as among those who are “worthy of death” and who “shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Rom. 1:24-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-10). The attitude toward sin exhibited by a militant homosexual or lesbian, such as DeGeneres, is spiritually fatal. Whether or not anyone discontinues acts he knows to be contrary to God’s will depends largely upon his attitude toward sin. Jesus said, “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted” (Mat. 5:4). Rather than purportedly “taking pride” in their perversity, homosexuals, like all other sinners,
should be mourning over their wicked behavior and seeking God’s forgiveness in His appointed way!

It is no more “gay bashing” to truthfully state the sinfulness of homosexuality and lesbianism than it is “murderer bashing” or “thief bashing” to truthfully state the sinfulness of murdering and stealing. Those who refuse to turn from sin and to the Lord in His appointed way will forever regret it “in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (Rev. 21:8; John 8:24; Luke 13:5; Rom. 10:10; Acts 2:38).

We should hope and pray that ABC’s proposed warning to parents will be implemented, that DeGeneres will resign and that her disgusting show will be discontinued. We should not be surprised if some parents fail to heed the warning, that some kids will continue to badger their parents to watch as much of “Ellen” as they can, and that some kids will continue to attempt to have their parents adopt the viewpoint of Ellen DeGeneres.

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE MEETING?

Bob Patterson

Making plans is important! However, as important as it is to make plans, it is even more important to carry out those plans! May each one of us determine that we are going to be ready on November 2, having done all that we can to contribute to the success of our planned Gospel Meeting. Here is a check list that may help each of us in carrying out the plans that we have made.

Do your plans include? (check off as completed)
__1. Being ready to attend all the services yourself, with your family?
__2. Checking all your business appointments to insure there is no conflict for those five days (Nov. 2-7)?
__3. Setting aside time to distribute brochures advertising the meeting?
__4. Making a list of others “I” can contact by phone?
__5. Making a list of people “I” will personally invite to the meeting?
__6. Showing interest in, and hospitality toward those who attend the meeting?
__7. Making a point to ask the elders if there is anything that needs to be done around the building prior to the meeting?
__8. Keeping every aspect of this meeting in “my” prayers, praying for the preacher, the song leader, the lost, and this congregation?
__9. Having the proper attitude of anticipation for the great things to be enjoyed in fellowship with God, Christ, and the brethren as eternal truths are taught from the Holy Spirit’s revelation?
__10. Searching the Scriptures daily, making person applications?
__11. Warmly greeting all the visitors, inviting them to return?
__12. Letting reverence and respect for God and His Will govern (even more) “my” daily thinking and manner of life?
__13. Setting affections on things above, and not on things of the earth?
__14. Rejoicing with the precious souls who obey the Gospel of Christ or who come to be restored to the body of Christ?
__15. Being a source of encouragement to all “I” possibly can?

Yes, plans are important and plans do make a difference! Let us always remember what preparations God made in the plan for our salvation (Eph. 1:3-13; 3:11; Col. 1:16-23), even to the giving of His Son on the cross (John 3:16; Rom. 5:6-8). Let’s not forget the plans carried out by the apostles which are, even now, important to each of us! We should also keep in mind that someone made plans that we might know the truth and be Christians!

Copied and Adapted
Bellview Church of Christ
Gospel Meeting
November 2 - 7, 1997
Sunday Morning: 9:00 & 10:00 A.M.,
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with
Bobby Liddell
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Covered-dish meal will be provided Monday - Thursday at 6:00 P.M.
Come and enjoy Christian fellowship and gospel preaching.
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Mary Muldoon, Marsha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Marilyn Hall, Louise Cline, Joyce Simmons, and Neva Bryant. Thomas Muldoon is in Baptist Hospital, room 308.

BAPTIZED
Mary Tillman was baptized into Christ on October 26, 1997. Please keep Mary in your prayers and help her to grow as a Christian.

READING/INVITATION
November 5, 1997
Gospel Meeting
November 12, 1997
Reading: Elward Brantley
Invitation: Bill Gallaher

MARK THESE DATES
November 9, 1997–Deacons’ meeting, at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
November 16, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting, at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.

A NEW DAY
H. Wilson
This is the beginning of a new day. God has given me this day to use as I will. I can waste it or use it for good; but what I do today is important because I am exchanging a day of my life for it! When tomorrow comes, this day will be gone forever, leaving in its place something I have traded for it. I want it to be gain and not loss; good and not evil; success and not failure; in order that I shall not regret the price I have paid for it.

Copied
IS ONE AS GOOD AS ANOTHER?

Charles Box

If you are sick and need a doctor, is one as good as another? If you need medicine, is one as good as another? If you are reading a book, is one as good as another? If you are looking for a wife, is one as good as another? If you are buying a car, is one as good as another? If you are serving God, is one God as good as another? If you are a member of a church, is one as good as another?

Is One God As Good As Another? There is a God in Heaven. The first words of the Bible say, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). Is one God as good as another? The God of the Bible built all things. “For every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things is God” (Heb. 3:4). The heavens declare His glory. “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament showeth his handiwork” (Psa. 19:1). There is no God like the God of the Bible!

Is One Book As Good As Another? The Bible was written by men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:20-21). The apostles were guided into all truth (John 16:13). The message Paul and the other apostles spoke and wrote came by revelation (Gal. 1:11-12). Jesus promised, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Mat. 24:35). Since this promise is certain, is one book as good as another?

Is One Sacrifice As Good As Another? Animals were sacrificed in Old Testament times to the God of Heaven. Daily sacrifices are made
to gods around the world? Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice. His substitutionary death for our sins is the greatest fact of all times. “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Jesus Christ suffered sin’s penalty in man’s place. There is no sacrifice to compare with the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins!

Is One Church As Good As Another? Jesus promised to build His church. “And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Mat. 16:18). All the saved are added to this “one church.” “Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved” (Acts 2:47). The church is those people called out of sin and called into God through Jesus. There is no church like the church of the Bible.

Is One Faith As Good As Another? God’s plan included only one faith. “One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph. 4:5). This one faith is produced by all speaking the same things. “Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). One faith is not as good as another. Jude said Christians must, “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). Even in a tradition bound world it is possible to be a Christian only.

Is One Worship Just As Good As Another? Acceptable worship is in spirit and in truth. “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24). The early church worshipped on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Their worship was simple: (1) Singing (Eph. 5:19), (2) Praying (1 Th. 5:17-18), (3) Communion (Acts 20:7), (4) Giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2), and (5) Preaching (Acts 2:42). Scriptural and acceptable worship is from the heart and according to the New Testament pattern.

Is One Name Just As Good As Another? “And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). The first century Christians were Christians only. We should wear only the name of our crucified Savior. “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Pet. 4:15-16). There is no name like a Bible name!

Is One Plan Of Salvation As Good As Another? Can we pray the sinner’s prayer or “pray through” for salvation? Or must we believe in Jesus (John 8:24), repent of sins (Acts 17:30), confess the name of Jesus (Rom. 10:9-10), and be baptized into Christ (Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). Those who accept the wonderful news that Jesus died for our sins should repent and be baptized to be saved. “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Won’t you choose to be saved in Christ instead of following some plan that will not save?
Is one as good as another? Is there any god like the God of the Bible? Is one baptism just as good as another? Is one church or one doctrine just as good as another? Our only hope is salvation in Christ. Are you in Christ?

**IS DANCING A WORK OF THE FLESH?**

Gary Colley

Each year there seems to arise the need to give scriptural teaching concerning dancing and its evils. Parents must meet the questions of their young people; young people must have answers for themselves and their friends on the question.

It is very important that we know what the works of the flesh are, as well as “such like” things that are mentioned in God’s Word. Because, “that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:21). The words “world” and “flesh” are often used in the Bible to mean evil or worldliness, and thus it does in Galatians 5:19-21.

Is dancing a work of the flesh? The list of words that show us the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21 are: uncleanness, lasciviousness, and revellings. There are other words given, but these apply directly to the subject of dancing.

1. **Uncleanness** is from the Greek word *akatharsia*, which is defined: “lewdness, impurity of motive, the impurity of lustful, luxurious profligate living.” This word is also found in Romans 1:24; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Ephesians 4:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:7 (Thayer’s Lexicon).

2. **Lasciviousness** is from the Greek word *aselgeia*, which is defined: “intemperance, lasciviousness, licentiousness, wantonness; indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females” (Thayer’s Lexicon).

3. **Revellings** is from the Greek word *komoi*, which is defined: “a jovial feast with music and dancing; a carousal, a festive lascivious feasting” (Liddel and Scott Greek Lexicon).

We should not need scholars to explain to us that the modern dance is included in the three words defined above. We can see that the “such like” of Galatians 5:21 does include the dance. No Christian, striving to live so as to please his Heavenly Father, should participate nor allow those under his care and guidance to be a participant in the modern dance. The Bible condemns it as wrong and evil work.

Yet, if there were no such book as the Bible, it seems one should be convinced of the destructive and dangerous nature of the dance simply by studying the reports of sociologists on the evil results of dancing. The fondling and embracing in dancing is proven to do great damage. Certainly no good thought or noble thing has ever come from dancing.

Christians cannot dance and abstain from every form of evil (1 Th. 5:22), for dancing is evil! Neither can we keep ourselves unsotted from the world and dance, for dancing is worldliness (Jam. 1:27). Christians cannot dance and deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, for ungodliness and worldly lusts are found in the dance (Tit. 2:11-12).

The dance belongs to the world. The Christian belongs to Christ. Let us not then jeopardize our own soul’s salvation and the salvation of those we might influence by participating in the modern dance! May God help each of us to so live that Heaven may be our home.

8900 Manchaca Road; Austin, TX 78748

**Conceit is the devil's gift to little men.**
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Mary Muldoon, Nancy Travis, Martha Wilcoxson, Marilyn Hall, Louise Cline, Joyce Simmons, and Neva Bryant. Thomas Muldoon is in Baptist Hospital, room 443.

READING/INVITATION
November 12, 1997
Reading: Elward Brantley
Invitation: Bill Gallaher
November 19, 1997
Reading: Allen Brazell
Invitation: Louis Herrington

MARK THESE DATES
November 9, 1997–Deacons’ meeting, at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
November 16, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting, at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.

QUOTE WITHOUT COMMENT
R. L. Whiteside
Much is said about preaching the truth in love, and so it should be preached. But in love of what? The preacher should so love the truth that he will not sacrifice any of it nor pervert it, and he should so love people that he will not withhold from them even an unpleasant truth. He that does either of these things loves neither the truth nor the people. We frequently fool ourselves; we think we do thus and so to spare the feelings of others, when it is our own feelings that prompt us. “Preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2).

Copied
MEETING TIMES
SUNDAY:
9:00 A.M. BIBLE CLASSES
10:00 A.M., 6:00 P.M. WORSHIP
5:00 P.M. LADIES’ BIBLE CLASS
WEDNESDAY: 7:00 P.M.

BISHOPS: Paul Brantley, Bill Gallaher, Fred Stancliff
MINISTER: Michael Hatcher
DEACONS: Henry Born, Elward Brantley, Jerry Caine,
Bill Crowe, Louis Herrington, James Loy, Harold Maxey, Richard Parker
MISSIONARY: Ira Y. Rice, Jr.

“I WILL LEAD ON GENTLY”
G. K. Wallace

We may “overdrive” by preaching nothing but severe truth, threatenings, and punishment, and never emphasize the great promises of God. It is ours to console as well as to condemn. The great comforting passages of the Bible should not be reserved for funerals only.

We may “overdrive” by manifesting austerity, suspicion, and harshness toward those who disagree with us. We must do good unto all men (Gal. 6:10). To return good for evil is indeed a golden rule (Mat. 7:12). Faultfinding has a place, but not to the neglect of worthy praise. “Fathers, provoke not your children, that they be not discouraged” (Col. 3:21). We may discourage even the strong by dwelling upon the woes and trials of Christianity and saying little or nothing about its joys.

Jesus had a special place in His heart for the poor and downtrodden. He was tender and kind to the most sinful. Even to those who would become leaders He said, “I have yet many things to say
unto you, but ye cannot bear them now” (John 16:12). We should not drive as did Jehu, but lead as did Jesus. We move a lighted candle slowly lest it go out. A fire almost expiring can be put out by a strong wind. A tender plant can be watered too much. In dealing with the weak we would do well to follow the hospital rule: “Walk softly and speak quietly.” We were all little children first and had to learn to walk. “The Lord’s servant must not strive.” We must have “a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and...love, which is the bond of perfectness” (Col. 3:12-14). These qualities help to make a good leader.

PUT YOUR LIFE ON A HOLY FIRE

Deceased

WHAT GOSPEL DO WE PREACH?

Al Brown

“But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world” (Rom. 10:18)! This passage gives an idea of the fervor and vitality with which the saints of God assaulted the citadels of Satan in the first century. A risen Lord had given the charge: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15), and they did! They went everywhere preaching the Word (Acts 8:4) until every nook and cranny of the Roman world had heard the good news that a Savior had come into the world.

The portrayal of the first century church of Christ in the book of Acts is stimulating, to say the least. The joy and zest with which they lived their religion, encouraged, and motivated brethren in every age. By virtue of a new birth, people who would have considered themselves insignificant were changed into fearless soldiers of Christ. They gave their very lives and often all they had in the service of Christ. They walked in His footsteps with a holy zeal seldom seen in our time.

While the divine pattern given in the New Testament for the plan of salvation; the work, organization, and worship of the church; and the standard of morality is perfect, the historical church of the first century was not. The word translated “church” means the assembly of those called out of the world by God (cf., 1 Pet. 2:9). The church always refers to people, and people—even the saints of God—are not perfect. Some are less perfect than others.

The church of Paul’s time had its share of sinning brethren just as we do. Ananias, Saphira, Demas, Hymenaeus, Alexander, Philetus; Phygelus, Hermogenes, Diotrephes, et al., would be a disgrace to any church. Some were worldly (Phi. 3:18; 2 Tim. 4:10) and immoral (1 Cor. 5:1); some were puffed up with pride and a feeling of their own importance (3 John 9). Others gloried in worldly wisdom (1 Cor. 1-3). The church was plagued by people who defrauded their brethren (1 Cor. 6:1-8), committed fornication (1 Cor. 6:13-20), gossiped and slandered (1 Tim. 5:13), and abused their liberties (1 Cor. 8:1-3). Some were factious (Tit. 3:10), smooth-talking infidels (Rom. 16:17f; Tit. 1:15-16) who taught every kind of false doctrine (1 Cor. 15:12; Gal. 6:12f; Col. 2:16-23). But that is only part of the story.

The church of the first century has been unparalleled in history in its faithful dedication, commitment, and sacrifice. The patient, persevering steadfastness of those faithful saints, so many of whom will never be known this side of eternity, still electrifies and animates us to greater service for our wonderful Master. So many times faithfulness demanded a greater gift than we are called to make. Peter and John endured the cutting lash of the whip, but they
rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for that holy name by which they were called (Acts 5:41).

Rejected by those to whom he had preached, Stephen died at their hands, and, while dying, prayed for his murderers (Acts 7:59f). James was beheaded so his murderer could curry favor with the ungodly (Acts 12:1f). Brethren were driven from their homes with only what they could carry on their backs (Acts 8:1). Some were thrown into prison; others were murdered; and those who escaped were hunted down like animals (Acts 26:10f). Yet, those who “were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word” (Acts 8:4).

Some were destitute, so more prosperous Christians sold their property to provide what was needed (Acts 4:34f). The churches of Macedonia, upon hearing that brethren they had never seen were suffering physical privation, begged for the opportunity to help; and out of their deep poverty, their gift far surpassed what they were able to give. Yet, they rejoiced in the privilege to participate (2 Cor. 8:1-5). No wonder one heathen observed the Lord’s church and commented, “Oh, how they love one another!”

Have you wondered why they had a measure of dedication, commitment, and sacrifice unknown in any other group in any age? The answer is in an often overlooked passage: “first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God” (2 Cor. 8:5). They were simply following the teaching of their Master (Mat. 16:24f; Rom. 12:1f) by (1) submitting to the will of God as it was revealed by the apostles and (2) giving themselves as a living sacrifice to their Savior.

This is the same commitment to which we are called. A host of them died for Christ (cf., Acts 21:13), and, of course, there were some who would not (2 Tim. 4:10, 16). We thrill when we think of their bravery, faith, and courage; we shed tears for the price they paid for faithfulness. Their story is unique in the annals of history. How succinct and apropro are Paul’s words: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phi. 1:21). Whether our lot is to live or die, it is imperative that we have Paul’s attitude (Phi. 3:7-12).

We live in a time and place where, more often than not, we are required to live for Christ. This can sometimes be more difficult than dying for Him. Many would die for the Lord who will not faithfully live for Him. In a time of prosperity—especially if the church is not being persecuted, it is all too easy to be lazy, pleasure-loving, and overly concerned with worldly affairs and things. Christians face enormous pressure to prostrate themselves at the feet of the god, mammon, and many find the temptation irresistible.

Yet, these things are deadly to our spiritual life and destiny (Mat. 6:24; 13:22; Luke 8:14). Surely, the most pressing need of twentieth century saints is to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye [we] are called” ( Eph. 4:1). While refraining from evil is important, a worthy walk also involves the renewing of our minds and the sacrifice of our lives in the service of God (Rom. 12:1f)—a commitment so thorough-going that we will allow nothing to come before our Lord.

Whether we imitate the commitment, faithfulness, and fervor of those spiritual giants of the first century, the despicable worldliness of Demas, or something in-between, we need to be aware that this is the gospel we are preaching to the world (cf., 2 Cor. 3:3; 4:1f). Is your life an epistle of Christ?

Deceased

PSALM 8:9
“O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!”
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Marilyn Hall, Louise Cline, and Martha Wilcoxson.

READING/INVITATION
November 19, 1997  
Reading: Allen Brazell  
Invitation: Louis Herrington  

November 26, 1997  
Reading: Jerry Caine  
Invitation: Tim Lamb

MARK THIS DATE
November 16, 1997–Elder’s/Deacons’ meeting, at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.

JUST WHAT CAN YOU DO?
_Buster Acuff_

Have you ever wanted to ask those who put up excuses for everything you ask them to do, “Just what can you do?” We are grateful for those in the church that shoulder any burden placed on them; but there are those who refuse everything and say:

“I cannot sing.”  
“I cannot usher.”  
“I cannot lead prayer.”  
“I cannot teach a class.”  
“I cannot go to Bible study.”  
“I cannot-ah-sorry, call Bob.”  
“I cannot drive our car—nerves.”  
“I cannot help at the Lord’s table.”  
“I cannot come to midweek services.”  
“I cannot speak to visitors—I’m timid.”  
“I cannot give—haven’t any extra money.”

Question: Just what CAN you do?  
Answer: Make a pile of excuses!
WHY DO SOME CHRISTIANS ASSEMBLE ONLY ON SUNDAY FOR WORSHIP ONLY, ONLY ONCE IN A WHILE?

Bob Patterson

When this kind of question is asked, it is not being asked in order to “brow beat” anyone. But rather, there is the genuine concern for the souls of those who find themselves “assembling only on Sunday for worship only, only once in a while.” Indeed, it is quite strange to see this ever present trend among the people of God—people who have been purchased with the blood of Christ, enlisted in the army of the Lord, under the command of the Captain of our salvation, shining as lights in the world, and those who are to put the Lord and His kingdom first (1 Pet. 1:18-19; 2 Tim. 2:3; Heb. 2:9-10; Mat. 5:14-16; 6:33). Thus, in order to answer the question of “Why do some Christians assemble only on Sunday for worship only, only once in a while?”, there are several questions which need to be asked:

IS IT BECAUSE...

There are MORE IMPORTANT THINGS for you to be involved with during the times of assembling (Mat. 6:33; Col. 3:1-6)?

You have NO NEED for additional study (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 2:2; Jam. 1:21)?

You have a SUPERIOR SPIRITUALITY which enables you to “forsake” the times of assembling (Heb. 10:23-25; Luke 18:9-14)?

You try to SUBSTITUTE the times of assembling with “good works” or “service” to others (Lev. 10:1-2; John 4:24; Mat. 8:19-22)?

By absenting yourself from the times of worship and the Bible classes you think you are
being OBEDIENT and SUBMISSIVE to those who rule over and watch on behalf of your soul (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-4)?

By NOT ATTENDING the times of assembling you are showing the world how important it is to be a member of the Lord’s church (Mat. 5:13-16; 2 Cor. 4:3; Phi. 2:13-16)?

Of your DESIRE to be an encouragement to your brethren when you absent yourself from the times of assembly (Heb. 10:23-25; Eph. 4:14-16)?

You are “walking worthy,” and being “stedfast,” and “abounding in the work of the Lord” WHEN you absent yourself (Eph. 4:1, 17; 1 Cor. 15:58)?

By NOT TAKING PART in the “body,” you are saying that we have nothing to supply and no function to fulfill in the body of Christ (Eph. 4:14-16; Mat. 25:14-30)?

You DO NOT NEED the fellowship, strength, comfort, and peace that is intended by God only in the church (1 John 1:7; Phi. 4:6-8)?

Your children, whom you are charged with training, do not need THE EXAMPLE of proper loyalty and devotion to God in every area (Eph. 6:4)?

You are not concerned about UNFAITHFULNESS which will cause you to miss heaven with all of its glory and eternal splendor (Jam. 4:17; Mat. 25:1-13; Rev. 21:8, 27)?

In view of these few observations, it is my prayer that those who “assemble ONLY on Sunday for worship ONLY, ONLY once in a while, will repent and begin to continue “stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42), “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (Heb. 10:25), and will “always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). There can be no doubt that in being a faithful child of God, the time spent in preparing ourselves as well as in properly influencing others (Rev. 2:10; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Tim. 4:12), illustrates to all concerned that faithful Christian living is far better than anything this world has to offer (Heb. 11:24-26; 1 John 2:15-17). Thus, the answer to the question really comes down to whether or not you “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength” (Mark 12:30).

WHO IS THIS MAN?

Dean Buchanan

The young family comes into the lobby on a Sunday morning. The mother lets the toddler down out of her arms to hang up their coats. The toddler runs across the floor and stretches up her arms to a man standing near the door. He smiles, reaches down gently and picks the baby up. For a few moments he is lost in the smiles and jabbering noises the little girl makes in her beginning efforts to talk. As he lovingly hands her back to her mother, the toddler plants a wet kiss on his cheek. Who is this man?

A few moments later, an older person comes in and approaches the man who had played with the baby. It’s obvious from the expression on the older person’s face there is a deep problem of some kind. Already, before anything is said, a look of compassion courses the man’s face. A few words are exchanged and the two men walk into an empty office that is handy and talk intently for several moments. When they emerge, there is a relieved look on the face of the older man. Who is this man?

Following the Bible study hour a teenage, face shining with the exuberance of youth, rushes up to the same man. The teenager talks excitedly with arms flailing for a few moments and just as hurriedly rushes off. During the incident it was obvious from the man’s face, particularly his eyes, he was thrilled and happy for the young
person talking so excitedly to him. Who is this man?

Later that same Sunday afternoon the same man walks into the emergency room of a local hospital. As he walks across the waiting room a middle-aged couple turn to him with faces full of grief. As they embrace him, tears stream from his eyes as they do from the eyes of these parents who have just lost a teenage boy in an automobile accident. Who is this man?

On Wednesday evening, an hour or two before Bible study, the man sits beside the bed of an aged man in a local nursing home. Even though the man sitting in the chair is many years younger than the man lying in the bed, the eyes that look out from the wrinkled face now wracked with pains of age glow with an obvious fondness for the younger man. A frail hand reaches out to touch the hand of the younger man and in the touch and in the eyes there is a request for prayer. As the younger man prays there is emotion in his voice. In a few moments, as he prepares to leave, his hand gently squeezes the hand of the one lying in the bed and a peaceful smile that says, “Thank you,” tugs at the corners of the wrinkled mouth. Who is this man?

The next afternoon as the man gets home from work his wife meets him at the door with arms open. As she talks to him about the happenings of the day the love he has nurtured for her over the years is written all over his face. He smiles and laughs with her as they spend this time together. Who is this man?

As his wife leaves the room their eleven year old comes running in and lands right beside his dad on the couch, and talking a mile a minute, relates in detail everything that happened in the baseball game at school that day. The man’s eyes glow with love and pride for his son who enjoys everything so much. Who is this man?

About the time he is getting ready for bed the front door slams and with a draft of cool night air, his teenage daughter runs in and starts looking for Dad and Mom. Finding them preparing for bed she sits on the side of the bed and tells them excitedly about her date that night. The man’s face fills with love for this one who looks so much like her mother. He loves to watch her as she talks to him about things that are so important to her. And sometimes he weeps with her at some adolescent disappointment that is so monumental to her at the time. Who is this man?

On Friday morning the man punches the time clock at work and starts toward his workbench. A fellow looks up as he approaches and walks over with a cup of coffee. For a few moments that are obviously enjoyable for both men they sip coffee and talk of the fishing trips they have enjoyed together and the ones yet to come. The warmth and closeness of the friendship is obvious in the man’s eyes and face as he laughs and jokes with his co-worker. Who is this man?

Who is this man? He is an elder in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ! Now he is not this kind of man because he is an elder. Rather, he is an elder because he is this kind of a man. If a man is fully qualified to be an elder, he will be approachable. This is not a new qualification I have added. It is the result of one possessing the qualifications. How can a man be humble and not be approachable? How can a man be hospitable and not be approachable? How can a man be gentle and kind and not be approachable?

What do we mean by approachable? To be approachable is to be the kind of person people trust and feel comfortable with. If one is approachable others seek them out rather than avoiding them. It does not necessarily mean one who is approachable will always agree with others. Rather, it has to do with his attitude toward people. Generally, others will know one who is approachable will always have their best interests at heart.

God be thanked for elders and their willingness to give of themselves to us!
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Marilyn Hall, Joyce Simmons, and Louise Cline.

READING/INVITATION
November 26, 1997
Reading: Jerry Caine
Invitation: Tim Lamb
December 3, 1997
Reading: Bill Cline
Invitation: Tony Liddell

MARK THESE DATES
December 14, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
December 21, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
December 31, 1997–Fifth Wednesday Singing at 7:00 P.M.

Mark 11:23-26
“For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.”
THE WINDS OF CHANGE AND THE CHANGELESS GOD

Al Brown

Suppose it was announced that next Sunday’s sermon would be “Restoring New Testament Christianity.” Would most people, even brethren, react by thinking: “Ho hum; another dull sermon?” Would people make a special effort to attend? Would they forsake their favorite “murder and mayhem” show or that sexy movie starring Gina Bareitall? Would they cancel a visit to see Aunt Suzy or even delay mowing the yard?

Are the cheap, the lurid, and the gaudy so familiar to us that we have no taste for what is good and righteous (cf., Phi. 4:8)? Do the ever-present profanity, filth, and violence seem more appealing than spiritual nourishment? Have most people deserted the Lord and His Word? Jesus faced a similar situation (John 6:66-69). His faithful saints can expect the same (John 15:16-20).

The world is always changing, yet there is an everlasting sameness to it all. Fads and fashions come and go; then begin all over again. Remembering several, we are grateful some do change. Rules, mores, and habits change. Today, morality is at an all-time low. Man faces the same social problems, conflicts, and crises that those before him faced.

Looking for answers, he changes the rules, the moral standard, and customs—only to find new problems that can be more devastating than the old ones. So he changes again—and again—and finally ends up where he began. This characterizes the world’s wisdom and its ways. It is always in flux—unstable and shifting.

Yes, the world has left you and me, but let them go! We have no desire to get on that merry-go-round leading nowhere. The wisdom of the world, including sectarian theology, has never
been able to lead us anywhere worthwhile and lasting.

The prophet was right: "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). When men reject God’s wisdom and counsel, as they do today, they only succeed in making fools of themselves (Rom. 1:21-32).

The foolish always chase rainbows of change. They think: “That’s where the action is!” Considering the ruined lives and the moral morass that inevitably result from such stupidity, we wonder why men are so gullible. Reflecting on the eternal consequences of the few thrills they get, any normally intelligent person should know that following such a course is infantile and self-destructive.

There is a far better alternative. The things of God are stable and unchanging. God is a rock (Psa. 19:14) with whom there is no variation or change (Jam. 1:17). We can always count on Him. He will never leave nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5). “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever” (Heb. 13:8; Mat. 24:35).

God’s kingdom is firm and unshakable (Heb. 12:28). His promises are sure (Heb. 6:13-19) amid the shifting sands of worldly wisdom and false religions.

Many years ago, as death approached, Henry Lyte was impressed by the ageless, enduring blessings of God and wrote a song dear to all of us. In one verse, he contrasted ever-changing material things with those precious gifts and qualities that never change: Swift to its close ebbs out life’s little day;
Earth’s joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me!

Many are searching for something with which to fill their lives. These precious souls need to be let to Christ and His unsearchable riches. They need more than humanly-devised, grandiose schemes that will change again with the passing of time. The human spirit craves something rock-solid and dependable.

Man needs to be forgiven and reconciled to his Maker. The Son of God must control his life if he is to have an abundant life (John 10:10). He needs to be in God’s kingdom and guided by God’s wisdom revealed in Scripture. He needs the direction and wisdom, the purpose and peace, that come only from God. He needs the things that abide—faith, hope, and love (1 Cor. 13:13). The church of Christ is divinely appointed to do this (Mat. 28:18; Eph. 3:10f; 2 Tim. 2:2).

It is heartbreaking that at this very critical moment many brethren have forsaken God’s wisdom for the nothingness of denominational foolishness. They are caught up in the mania for change. They may try to help, but their attitudes and beliefs are as spiritually bankrupt as those they try to assist. They are a disgrace to the noble name they drag through the mud.

Starving souls cry out for the bread of life—the only thing that can satisfy their deep spiritual hunger. Instead, apostate brethren offer more of the same vain human wisdom. They give them the germ-infested sewage of “felt needs” instead of the water of life.

They could tell the lost to be born again (John 3:3-5). They could tell them to believe the gospel, repent of their sins, confess Christ, and be baptized for the remission of sins; but most won’t open their mouths. These timid, cowardly caricatures of true Christians are afraid to ruffle any feathers or step on even the most debauched sinner’s toes.

It is refreshing and exciting to know that many are trying to find meaning and purpose for their lives. They are searching for God. Some brethren, too, have grown soul-weary of the emptiness so common in most of “our” pulpits today. They long to hear the words of the Lord, but they will never hear it from people who reject God’s Word. The greatest service we can render would be to help all of them “receive with meekness the
implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (Jam. 1:21).

**ARE YOU A SUCCESSFUL TEENAGER?**

1. When did you last hug Mom without wanting something?
2. When did you last make an attempt to be especially pleasant to your Dad without asking him a favor?
3. Do you take an interest in your parents’ friends and treat them with respect?
4. Do you take pride in your home, or do you leave trash in the living room and “spills” for someone else to clean up?
5. How about the car? When did you last fill it up with gas?
6. When did you last tell Mom the dinner was good and that you appreciate her cooking?
7. Are you on time when Mom or Dad offers to drive you somewhere or pick you up?
8. Are you where you are supposed to be or do they have to look for you?
9. When did you last do exactly as you were told without saying, “Wait a minute,” or asking, “Do I have to?”
10. Are you proud of your Mom and Dad?

**DESTROY YOUR ENEMIES**

Abraham Lincoln, after becoming President of the United States, was taken to task for his kindness toward his enemies. “Why do you try to make friends of them?” asked his associate. “You are in a position now to destroy them.” Lincoln gently replied, “Am I not destroying my enemies when I make them my friends?”

Many a person lives for the day when he will be in a position to “get even” with those who have wronged him. But, vengeance doesn’t belong to man; it belongs exclusively to God. He announced: “Vengeance is mine” (Rom. 12:19). The sword of vengeance is too heavy for man. He stumbles stupidly when he attempts to wield it. And, he usually falls on it and destroys himself.

An Oriental proverb states: “Water does not remain on the mountain, or vengeance in a great mind.” Dr. Batsell Barrett Baxter told of riding in a plane beside a blind business executive. He was so impressed with the friendliness of the blind man that he couldn’t refrain from asking how he lost his sight.

“A competitor of mine employed a gangster to throw acid in my face,” was the reply. “Do you know who it was?” asked Dr. Baxter. “Yes,” replied the blind man, “but I could not prove it in court.” “Don’t you feel a terrible resentment?” questioned Baxter. “I did for years, but it dawned on me that I was doing myself the real injury,” said the man. “I forgave this man and have actually done him some favors in recent years.” He went on to tell how this attitude toward an enemy had changed his entire life.

He did exactly what the Lord advised. Our text states: “Rejoice not when thine enemy faileth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth.” But, the Lord went even further in His teaching regarding treatment of an enemy: “if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink...Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:20-21).

Spiritual maturity calls for us to return good for evil.

Benjamin Franklin said: “Doing an injury puts you below your enemy; revenging one makes you but even with him; forgiving one sets you above him.”

Forgive! It will destroy your enemies.
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Marilyn Hall, Joyce Simmons, Louise Cline, Tina Foshee, and Ella Hammac.

READING/INVITATION
December 3, 1997
Reading: Bill Cline
Invitation: Tony Liddell
December 10, 1997
Reading: Howard Johnson
Invitation: Jerry Lindesmith

MARK THESE DATES
December 14, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
December 21, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
December 31, 1997–Fifth Wednesday Singing at 7:00 P.M.
January 18, 1998–Monthly Bible Bowl at Bellview. Study John chapters 1, 2, 3.

IT ALL DEPENDS
If a rich man were to say, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be given one thousand dollars” no one would misunderstand; no one would fail to do just that because of the money reward offered. But when Jesus says, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16), somebody is always ready to say, “I just cannot see it that way, that makes baptism too important.” How wise are men for a dollar—how foolish for a soul.

Author Unknown
WHO HAS LEFT THE LANDMARK?
Joseph D. Meador

We are moved immeasurably as we contemplate ourselves standing, as it were, amidst the sepulchers of our fathers in the Gospel. Nearby, “upon the lap of the earth,” rest the heads of Lipscomb, Sewell, Elam, Smith, and McGuinley. These esteemed men of God sacrificed their lives to the altar of loyalty to the word of God to prevent the removal of the ancient landmarks of Holy Writ. Modernism today is removing the ancient landmarks of Biblical facts. The spirit of compromise, and of halting between two sides, is removing the ancient landmarks of Biblical commands. The church, therefore, needs constant admonition to “contend earnestly for the faith.” Christendom, my friends, needs more Nehemias to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. She needs more Ezras to restore the law of God. Christendom needs more Zerubbabels to rebuild the temple of God.

The above quote is from the forward of Hardeman’s Tabernacle Sermons, Volume IV, 1938, as written by brother J. Leonard Jackson of Franklin, Tennessee. It is also interesting to read what brother W. E. Brightwell wrote in the introduction to the same volume. Believing that the church is drifting away from its doctrinal moorings, and contracting the spirit of sectarianism, the supporters of the meeting hoped to awaken some to the situation, and crystallize sentiment for a return to original ground.

In speaking of the spiritual success of the fourth tabernacle meeting, brother Brightwell continued by writing:

The meeting was successful from every standpoint, insofar as it is possible to judge
from appearances. The number baptized was not disappointing, as the meeting was primarily directed toward the amelioration of internal conditions of the church. The fundamentals of the Gospel were restated. By example and exhortation, distinctive preaching and active opposition to all error was encouraged.

Such was the spirit and the tenor of the 1938 tabernacle meeting, particularly, and of every one of brother Hardeman’s tabernacle meetings, generally, which were conducted on five separate occasions in the city of Nashville, from 1922 until the last series in 1942. Too, such distinctive, doctrinal, and exhortative preaching has been the defining characteristic of true Gospel preachers (as opposed to the soft pabulum-peddling sermons of pseudo-Christians) since the first Gospel sermon was preached on Pentecost by Peter.

Many today, and a number in the church it seems, believe that the age has dawned for a new style of preaching. We are constantly being told by “our experts” in communications and in counseling psychology that in order to reach men with the Gospel, we must put the church of Christ undercover and only through subterfuge may we reveal the distinctiveness of the church so as not to be “too negative or offensive.” They also argue that we must utilize an approach to preaching which is drastically different than the sermons that were preached by Christ, His apostles, and the legion of faithful Gospel preachers since time immemorial. Indeed, who has left the ancient landmark of distinctive preaching?

It is written in all truthfulness that the decade of the nineties may well determine the future of the Lord’s church in America. The Euroclydon winds of change, and compromise are beating fiercely against the steadfast foundation of every child of God. Many, including once faithful Gospel preachers, have been removed from their doctrinal harbor by the winds of liberalism and modernism. Today, many among our own ranks advocate the doctrines of Baal by advocating the permissibility of social drinking; marriage, divorce and remarriage for any cause; no disfellowship for any cause; and generally a “come as you are” religion. There are false preachers in almost every locality who speak the language of Ashdod in that they advocate a system of unity on the basis of truce rather than truth. These preachers have an unwillingness to “contend earnestly for the faith” in regard to false teachers who occupy pulpits in the Lord’s church or those who teach in colleges, graduate schools or schools of preaching which are operated by members of the church. The language of Ashdod also includes the introduction of “Social Gospel” theology into the churches of America by our trained cadre of “youth clergy” who specialize in “Christian” entertainment, “Christian” involvement, and “Christian” fellowship. Indeed, who has left the ancient landmark?

The spirit of pacifism has taken the militancy out when the fight was waged and the battles raged, and victory has never come by truce, for God’s battle plan is unconditional surrender on the part of the enemy. How sad it is that some soldiers of the cross are willing to allow more than God allows by extending the right hand of fellowship to one who refuses to totally surrender his baggage of false doctrine. May those of us who are left fight on, and hold fast the ancient landmark (Hos. 5:10).

8900 Manchaca Road, Austin, TX 78748

NOT MINE
TO BEGIN WITH

Glenn Colley

Living the way we should, and understanding the real truth about life requires a knowledge of God. Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.”
Senator Bob McQuin tells the story of going to McDonalds with his little boy. After getting the food and sitting down, the senator reached for one of his son’s fries. The little boy said, “No daddy. Those are my fries.”

Bob thought a minute and then took out a piece of paper and wrote four observations. First, his son didn’t know that if he wanted to, he could take all his fries. Second, if he wanted to he could smother his son in french fries. Third, he didn’t need his son’s fries, he could get his own. And finally, what hurt him the most is that his son wasn’t willing to share that which he had given him.

You know, as we look at our heavenly Father’s blessings we observe that He could remove all of our blessings. Second, He could cover us up in blessings. Third, He doesn’t actually need what we have to offer. And finally, what hurts Him most is when we refuse to give to Him what He has given to us.

Psalms 103:13 says, “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.”

Pasted

“GIVE US SOMETHING PRACTICAL”

Tim Smith

We sometimes hear this request (demand) with respect to teaching and preaching, and by definition it is a worthy goal. However, usually the one making such a statement is making it to get the preacher to get off “doctrinal” and “procedural” preaching and start talking about things that matter less. Let us consider for a moment some practical things the preacher should preach about.

Although they misuse and misunderstand what “doctrine” is, we will begin with this to demonstrate that “doctrinal” preaching is most practical (usable). Second John 9-11 tells us that those not having the right doctrine do not have God with them, whereas those having the right doctrine have both the Father and the Son. First Timothy 4:16 tells us to take heed to the doctrine. Acts 2:42 tells us that early Christians continued in the Apostle’s doctrine. Romans 16:17-18 tells us to mark and avoid those not bringing Christ’s doctrine. Matthew 7:28 tells us that the people were astonished when Christ preached “doctrine” to them. Matthew 15:9 tells us that false doctrine renders our worship vain. First Timothy 4:1 warns of “doctrines of devils.” Titus 2:1 commands that we speak things which befit the sound doctrine. Some want us to stop preaching sound doctrine, others have stopped, but we are commanded to do so and it is a most practical matter to preach on.

It is practical to preach on adding to or subtracting from the Word of God, for God condemns such (Rev. 22:18-19). We are also told that there is no other gospel than the gospel of Christ which offers salvation (Gal. 1:6-9), and since there are many “would-be gospels” competing with the one true gospel, we find it most practical to preach for the one and against all others.

It is practical to preach toward the saving of souls. I have heard men (who have preached long enough to know better) stand before an audience of Christians and non-Christians and speak for 30 or 40 or more minutes and never even give a clue as to what they must do to be saved (initially) or how to be restored. They argue that if one wished to know, one could ask. The same is true for the rest of their lesson as well! If it is not practical to give the plan of salvation or restoration, why is it not? Is it because “everyone” probably already knows it? That didn’t stop Peter (2 Pet. 3:1-2). Preaching is a time to educate and exhort. It is not a showcase opportunity for a public speaker. Tell them what to do to be saved, it won’t kill you...but it might save them.
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Marilyn Hall, Joyce Simmons, Louise Cline, Ray Foshee, and Ella Hammac.

READING/INVITATION
December 10, 1997
Reading: Howard Johnson
Invitation: Jerry Lindesmith
December 17, 1997
Reading: Jim Loy
Invitation: Henry Born

MARK THESE DATES
December 14, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
December 21, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
December 31, 1997–Fifth Wednesday Singing at 7:00 P.M.

WEB PAGE
Bellview Church of Christ is now on the Internet. The URL address is: http://home.sprynet.com/sprynet/dmowery
Please check out our web page. If you have any comments regarding the web page please e-mail us.

“If you find yourself loving any pleasure better than your prayers, any book better than the Bible, and any house better than the house of God...any persons better than Christ, or any indulgence better than the hope of heaven...take alarm.”
Thomas Guthrie
MEETING TIMES

SUNDAY:
9:00 A.M. BIBLE CLASSES
10:00 A.M., 6:00 P.M. WORSHIP
5:00 P.M. LADIES’ BIBLE CLASS

WEDNESDAY: 7:00 P.M.

BISHOPS: Paul Brantley, Bill Gallaher, Fred Stancliff
MINISTER: Michael Hatcher
MISSIONARY: Ira Y. Rice, Jr.

CHRIST AND CHRISTMAS
Dub McClish

Once I referred to Christmas in a church bulletin article by the abbreviation, “Xmas.” One who read the article wrote, inquiring, “What happened to Christ?” and stated, “It has always been a pet peeve of ours for anyone to take Christ out of Christmas, especially for a Christian to do so.” This is an appropriate time of the year to discuss this inquiry which represents a common widespread misunderstanding concerning the observance of Christmas as a holy day.

It is wonderful to see and be a part of the spirit of joy and gaiety that always springs up as December 25 approaches. The gift-giving, the holiday spirit and the attitude of love and good will are all enjoyable and positive. I must confess that I even enjoy decorating the tree and the house for this festive season. However, in all of these activities, I participate, not because I am keeping the birthday of Christ, but because it is a holiday season, like Thanksgiving or July 4th. Now, before I am judged a heathen by my friends, I will explain my rationale for this position.

Who put Christ in Christmas anyhow? It wasn’t God or the apostles. There is not even a hint in all of the Bible that God intended for men to observe the birth of His Son in a special way or on a special day. There is no possible way for any man to know the day of Jesus’ birth, yet God could have easily preserved the exact date had He wanted it to be celebrated. Rather than celebrating the birth of Christ, an irony (by human standards) of the gospel is that God wants men to celebrate the death and resurrection of His Son. It is through His death that our redemption is purchased and through His resurrection our hope of eternal life is made real. God did preserve the day on which His people are to specially observe the death and resurrection of Christ. It is
The observance of December 25 as the birthday of Christ is part of that mass of human tradition that has grown up around the gospel through the centuries. “In the 5th century the Western church [Roman Catholic, DM] ordered the feast to be celebrated on the day of the Mithraic rites of the birth of the sun and at the close of Saturnalia, as no certain knowledge of the day of Christ’s birth existed” (Encyclopedia Americana, V, VI, p. 622). This clearly shows that Christ was never in Christmas until Roman Catholicism put Him there. May we enjoy this season of the year and keep its spirit alive all year, not because Christ is in Christmas, but because Christ is in us!

OPPORTUNITIES:
LOST AND FOUND
Gary Colley

“Opportunity” is a seaman’s term meaning “before the opening.” It represents that one chance to avoid disaster and to save life and the ship from ruin. Missing “the opening” is easily seen to mean that there will be only one and perhaps no more chance given to change the course. Thus comes the saying, “Opportunity knocks but once.” Webster says it means “a combination of circumstances favorable for the purpose; fit time; good chance or occasion” (Webster’s New World Dictionary). So many things could have been so different for individuals and multitudes had the “opening” been seen or found instead of being overlooked, missed, and lost. Neglect here is the great sin of many individuals, nations, and homes.

LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES
IN THE CHURCH

The Lord’s church is the most important institution in the world, both for a full life here and a blessed life eternally. How few seem to be impressed with the wonderful opportunities that abound daily for the Christian. How happy many Christians are who have found their place and serve fully in every opportunity afforded them! Their spirit is healthy and delighted to serve! But just as two individuals may be placed in the same beautiful garden, it is true that while one takes the opportunity to see and enjoy the beautiful flowers, the other may only complain about how many thorns are there! Some in the church seem to think it is their... is a misuse of opportunity! They need the exhortation and prayer of the Psalmist to be theirs: “Set a watch, O L...

Isaiah 56:1-2

"Thus saith the LOR..., Keep ye judgment, and do justice; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it, that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil."
she arose that morning and went forth to draw water (John 4). But the “opening” came for our Lord; and Jesus said to her, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water” (John 4:10). She had had five husbands and now lives with one with whom she does not even have the benefit of marriage. Her sinful condition was like many today (Mat. 19:8-9). Would we have seen this opportunity to teach as did our Lord? This is also her opportunity to change her life and avoid eternal ruin. The Saviour is the right source. His Word is the right guide, and she is certainly in need of repentance and the correct way of living.

We do not know for sure that she entered the new life, but we do know that because of her spreading the word about Jesus “many more believed because of his own word” (John 4:39-42). Opportunities like this are before us each day! Do not miss this blessing of your life, lest your opportunities be dried up along with your soul!

Nothing is more rewarding than opportunities that are found and acted upon in our lives. One who sets his affections on doing all the good possible in this world shall be rich indeed! On the other hand, nothing tends to unhappiness and ruin more than opportunities lost and remembered. One of the most torturous things about eternity shall be the memory of opportunities lost! (Luke 16:19-31).

LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE OTHERS

Among Paul’s admonitions to the faltering Galatians are these words: “So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith” (Gal. 6:10). Not only will taking advantage of the opportunities help those who have a physical or spiritual need, but it will help each participant to be stronger, to be the proper example to others, and be more faithful! If everyone in the church had the attitude you have about helping others, would the church be attractive to the lost? If other Christians treated opportunities to serve as you do, would their salvation be secure? How do we bear the burdens of others, such as the sick and dying? (Gal. 6:2).

Are we taking the opportunities to teach and edify others in the church, or do we say, “Let someone else do it?” (Heb. 5:12; 1 Cor. 14:12). Do we really seek to improve the use of our talents and keep ourselves unsighted from the world? (Mat. 25:14-30; Jam. 1:27). Watch for your opportunities to be multiplied as you take advantage of small opportunities given!!

OPEN YOUR EYES AND LIVE

The reason that many are not now serving the Lord is that their eyes of understanding are closed. That is the reason Jesus says to the alien sinner, “For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them” (Mat. 13:15). Jesus is ready to pardon and save when lost man opens his eyes to the Gospel (John 6:44-45; Rom. 1:16). The Christian likewise can miss opportunities because his eyes are closed! Paul said, “See then that ye walk circumspectly [carefully], not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time [literally “buying up the opportunities”], because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:15-17).

BEGIN NOW!

There is no better time to make correction in your life than right now! This day is the first day of the rest of your life! Look for opportunities to do good in harmony with God’s Word; devote your time, your money, your energies, your all, to the cultivation of your spiritual nature, so that eternal life may be the harvest you shall reap (Gal. 6:7-8).
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Marilyn Hall, Louise Cline, and Ella Hammac. Thomas Muldoon is in Baptist Hospital. Harold Cozad is having medical tests this week.

RESTORED
Dale Cunningham was restored on December 7, 1997. Please keep Dale in your prayers and offer him encouragement.

READING/INVITATION
December 17, 1997
Reading: Jim Loy
Invocation: Henry Born
December 24, 1997
Reading: Harold Maxey
Invocation: Paul Brantley

MARK THESE DATES
December 14, 1997–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
December 21, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
December 31, 1997–Fifth Wednesday Singing at 7:00 P.M.

HORSE SENSE
A horse can’t pull while kicking
This fact we merely mention,
And he can’t kick while pulling
Which is our chief contention.
Let’s imitate the good horse
And lead a life that’s fitting;
Just pull an honest load, and then
There’ll be no time for kicking.

Author Unknown
DYING WITHOUT GOD

Charles Box

Some person you know and love is going to die unprepared for death and judgment. They will die without God and without hope. And remember these are people who are precious to you. This a tragedy of all tragedies.

These precious lost ones do not have to perish (2 Pet. 3:9). Christ Jesus gave His life to redeem the lost from sin. At just the right time Jesus was born. “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal. 4:4). He lived without sin and then died on a cross to save sinners (Heb. 2:9). If it was not for the death of Jesus, God would have no choice but to punish men for sin. But, Jesus died as our sin substitute (2 Cor. 5:21).

The gospel is God’s power to save (Rom. 1:16). You must share this salvation message with as many as you can. Your love, prayer, concern, and effort may lead them to the “Lamb of God” so their sins can be forgiven. “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Are you putting forth an honest effort to win the souls of others for Jesus? Do you want to face God in eternity having done any less than your best in reaching the lost? Do you want to sit by and allow people you love, people who are precious to you, people you work with or even strangers to die without God and without hope? Do you want to look into the cold, lifeless face of a fellow human being and be left with the awful thought that you might have done something to save them from hell if only you had tried.

If souls are to be won specific action must be taken: (1) Select six people who with God’s help, you will try to win for Jesus. The six are: __________; (2) Pray for them daily.
by name; (3) Encourage these lost ones to attend the services of the church. Pick them up for the assembly and sit with them during worship; (4) Have them in your home for a meal and also visit in their home; (5) Study the Bible with them in some organized way; and (6) Be a true friend to these lost ones.

Do not give up. Be persistent in the things above and in other things you can do to bring these lost ones to Jesus. “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psa. 126:5-6).

306 Walnut Street; Greenville, AL 36037

BULLETIN ARTICLE

Michael Hatcher

Occasionally I come across an article where the content is good and profitable, but where I do not know the author. Because of the content, I will thus print the article. Generally, there is no problem with this system. However, sometimes we can and do run into problems using this arrangement. This becomes a problem when the author is not what he is suppose to be. It is not news to anyone that there is a schism in the Lord’s church today. Liberals can and do write some good material, as do denominationalists and even atheists.

When we do not know the author, but the material in the article is good material, what should we do? In many cases, if we only used articles where we personally knew the author, it would limit the usage of articles greatly. Some might say that the solution to this problem is to write everything ourselves. However, some individuals are not good writers, thus this is not a viable option for them. Thus, we often will use an article even though we do not know the author.

On August 18, 1997, this is what I did. I printed the article “As A Public Service...” written by Ken Joines in this bulletin. The content in the article was good and profitable, and I make no apology for the content. However, the problem described above has taken place. A good brother sent me some information concerning brother Joines showing that he is not what he should be. He has associated himself with those who are destroying the Lord’s church. Thus, it was a mistake to print an article from this brother in this bulletin.

As editor of this bulletin, editor of Defender, the lectureship book and a lectureship director there is a great responsibility as to whom I use. This is true not just of me, but of any editor of any bulletin or paper. When we use someone, whether in the pulpit, in a lectureship, or by use of an article, we give an endorsement to that person.

While the situation above can certainly be excused, there is another situation that I find hard to understand. Why would any sound man, wanting sound doctrine, and to only support that which is according to God’s will, intentionally use a man that is not what he should be religiously? The Bible still teaches, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Rom. 5:11). That does not mean that we have no fellowship with a false teacher except by way of material he produces. Paul also taught, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive
you” (2 Cor. 6:14-17). When will we learn (as editors) to be separate? Those within the church who are false teachers are not friends of Christ—they are His enemies. How can we use and support those who are the enemies of our Lord? Instead of doing what God taught in Jude 3, “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” we are giving aid and support to those whom we should be contending earnestly against. Editors, let us never be guilty of intentionally using a man that is hurting the Lord’s church by his actions or teaching, even if the article in question might be profitable and true. Accidentally, the first (accidentally using someone not sound) might occur—that is excusable; the second (using one we know if unsound) is inexcusable.

MANAGEMENT
OR SALES
Jack Gray

We live in a result-oriented society. We want to see the benefits of our labors, and we have set our own standards by which they are to be measured.

We have brought this same spirit into the church. We want to see results, and we are inclined to measure them only in responses, increases in membership or by attendance figures.

These things are spiritual indicators to be sure, but they do not tell the whole story. Moreover, they often do not reflect God’s point of view. In fact, in our insistence on results we sometimes find ourselves in open opposition to His will.

A renowned evangelist wrote that it was one of the most important lessons of his life when he finally realized that God was in management and that he was only in sales. This is simply saying that he had been trying to take over the prerogative of God in deciding on the results, rather than doing his own part well. I am afraid this characteristic is too often seen in the church.

Noah preached one hundred-twenty years without a response. What if you had been on the “pulpit committee”? Do you not know he got discouraged? In our modern way of thinking we would have to judge him a failure, but God had a different point of view. He declared him to be “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Pet. 2:5).

Paul established no congregation in Athens. He preached his heart out and left seemingly utterly dejected, at perhaps one of the lowest points in his career. What if you had been on the “missions committee”? Would you not have been looking for someone else to support? Yet his sermon on Mars Hill still stands as one of the greatest sermons ever preached.

Philadelphia was a congregation without blemish. She was the only one of the seven churches of Asia to receive unmixed commendation. But why? Not great numbers, for all admit she must have been very small. Not because of a liberal budget or an admirable growth rate, but because she was faithful. How could anyone have compared this congregation to Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, or Ephesus? Yet in the eyes of the Lord the church at Philadelphia apparently was one of the greatest churches in the New Testament.

Changing our way of thinking is not going to be easy. We have been caught up on results too long. But in God’s sight Noah was a better preacher than Apollos, when Apollos was getting all the responses in Acts 18. Paul was not a failure in Athens because he was preaching the message as God wanted it preached. Philadelphia was a greater congregation than those with many times her attendance, because God is more concerned with our faithfulness than with numbers.
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Marilyn Hall, Louise Cline, Ella Hammac, Harold Cozad, and Neva Bryant.

READING/INVITATION
December 24, 1997
Reading: Harold Maxey
Invitation: Paul Brantley
December 31, 1997
Reading: Horace Myrick
Invitation: Scot Brazell

MARK THESE DATES
December 21, 1997–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
December 31, 1997–Fifth Wednesday Singing at 7:00 P.M.
January 18, 1998–Monthly Bible Bowl at Bellview. Study John chapters 1, 2, and 3.

IT ONLY TAKES A MINUTE...
...to stop and say a few words to the newcomer, that you have passing by, with a quick “hello.”
...to draw a person who is obviously feeling like an outsider into a chattering group.
...to really listen to what a child is earnestly telling you.
...to take the trouble to pass along the good things that you know about others.
...to build up a person who is feeling low, or seems to be worried or discouraged.
...to write a note to a person who is ill, or who has lost a member of the family.

Author Unknown
THE VILLAIN

Bobby Duncan

Jeremiah, the gentle prophet of God, prophesied for many years leading up to the time when Judah was carried away into Babylonian captivity. When it became obvious, because of the persistent sins of Judah, that there was no avoiding the captivity, God told Jeremiah to warn the people not to resist the army of Babylon. Those who resisted would die; those who surrendered would live (Jer. 38:2). The princes of Judah mistook this warning from God as treason on the part of Jeremiah, and demanded that he be punished. Jeremiah was incarcerated in a dungeon where he sank into the mire. He was made to look like the villain because he had taken his stand with God and had tried to get the people to do that which God would have had them do.

When Elijah called upon the people to turn from Baal and serve the Lord, that call was accompanied by a great demonstration of God’s power. When the contest on Mount Carmel between Elijah and the prophets of Baal was over, the people declared their allegiance to the Lord. Upon the order of Elijah, the prophets of Baal were put to death (1 Kin. 18). But Elijah has now become the object of the wrath of Jezebel, and must live a fugitive. Because he took his stand with God and tried to get those who were doing wrong to do right, he is now in the role of the villain.

Ahab, king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, were planning to lead their armies into battle against Ramoth in Gilead, to take it away from the king of Syria (1 Kin. 22). About four hundred false prophets had prophesied that their success would be certain and the Syrians would be consumed by them. There was one prophet, however, who, when called upon to corroborate the prophecy of these four hundred false prophets, refused to do so. It was not that Micaiah
did not personally like Ahab or Jehoshaphat, or that he personally did not want Ramoth in Gilead to be returned to the ownership of the Israelites. It was simply that God had told Micaiah to say: “I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace” (1 Kin. 22:17). Ahab properly understood the words of Micaiah to be a prophecy of defeat for the Israelites when they went against Ramoth in Gilead. The king commanded that Micaiah be put in prison and fed with bread and water. So it is not wicked Ahab, but rather righteous Micaiah who is now made to look like the villain.

Jesus, Himself, became extremely unpopular when He called attention to the sins of the people, and it was this unpopularity which cause Him to die the death of a criminal on the cross. He told His disciples before His death that the time would come when those who put them to death would think they were doing God a service (John 16:2). It is a sad truth that those who have the courage to try to persuade people to give up sin and do right so often end up looking like the villains.

Let me give you an example or two of the kind of thing I’m referring to:

It is fairly easy for a preacher to maintain his popularity by teaching and preaching only those things which members of a congregation enjoy hearing. Such preaching may even swell the numbers in attendance. On the other hand, when a preacher is loyal to his charge to “reprove” and “rebuke” sin (2 Tim. 4:2), it sometimes disturbs people and makes them unhappy. Troubles may come, and who is made to look like a trouble maker? As was so often the case with the faithful of God in Bible times, those who stand with God are made to look like the villains.

Members of a congregation are asked to register any objections they may have to certain prospective elders or deacons. Some courageous saint prayerfully considers the matter, and then decides his conscience will not allow him to do otherwise than register a legitimate objection. Regardless of how legitimate the objection might be, when the dust is settled, more often than not, who comes out looking like the villain?

We certainly recognize that there are some who unjustly criticize their brethren, and who seem to enjoy finding fault. I do not believe Jeremiah, or Elijah, or Micaiah, or Jesus, or His apostles fell into that category. Speaking to warn those who are on the road to destruction is an act of love. Those who have the courage to do so should not be made to look like villains.

4207 Adamsville Pkwy.; Adamsville, AL 35005

“WALKING BIBLES”

2 Timothy 3:15

Jimmy Clark

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15). One learns from such passages like this that the Word of God was held in high esteem by people like Paul, Timothy, Lois, Eunice, and others in the first century. Paul was encouraging Timothy to hold on to that process that brought on such development in him from childhood. There was a time when religious people, and even some who did not claim to be religious, identified members of the church as “walking Bibles.” Though such a phrase is not found in the Scriptures, its principle is seen throughout. Such knowledge of the Holy Scriptures did not then and does not now come by accident. There are ways by which the Bible must be exercised in order to have such knowledge. Consider three areas where anyone today can be as knowledgeable of the truth as those in the past.

MEMORIZATION

David wrote, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psa.
Again, “I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word” (Psa. 119:16). Sometimes one hears people say, “I cannot memorize scriptures.” If these same people are asked, “Do you know how to do your job without constantly looking at a manual?” or “Do you know how to avoid that series of obstacles in that video game which you play quite often enough?” The answers to such questions, and others like them, are obvious. One retains in the mind what one wants to retain in the mind. The reason David would not forget God’s Word is because “I will delight myself in the statutes” (Psa. 119:16). If a person sees the importance of God’s Word and delights in it, memorization of it is not as difficult as it is often perceived. It may not come as fast or as easy with some as with others, but memorization can come nonetheless with persistence.

MEDITATION

It should go without saying that memorization alone does not make a person wise unto salvation. Satan himself knew Scripture (cf., Mat. 4:6). Meditation involves time to contemplate what the memorized Scriptures mean and how they affect one’s life. David also wrote, “I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways” (Psa. 119:16). Again, “Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes” (Psa. 119:23). Read also Psalm 119:48, 78, and 148. David wrote of the blessed man, “But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psa. 1:2). Paul wrote to Timothy, “Meditate upon these things” (1 Tim. 4:15). There is no profit without practice. James wrote, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (Jam. 1:22). People are not impressed with how much Scripture one knows if he is not going to live it out to the best of his ability. Years ago, respect was given because the word was seen in the deeds, not just in word. May the hearts of all be filled with the desire to put the word in the heart and live it in the life!

EVANGELISTIC AUTHORITY

Bill Jackson

We’d not heard that expression, in the way many are using it, until these last several years. We have seen the expression catch on, and cannot help but notice that it has caught on at just the time when many are challenging the Bible truth concerning elders’ authority! Could there be a connection? We think so.

Elders have authority resident in their work, their office. They are charged with the watchcare of souls (Heb. 13:17), with feeding the flock, guarding, protecting, etc. When it comes to the preacher, or evangelist, we do not read of his office, position in a congregation, etc. We do read of “authority” in connection with his work, but notice that the emphasis is on “what he speaks.” “These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with ALL AUTHORITY” (Tit. 2:15). The authority is, for the preacher, IN THE MESSAGE!

Every preacher worthy of the designation “preacher of the gospel” recognizes, appreciates and values this, and wants it NO OTHER WAY. Every faithful preacher also recognizes, appreciates and teaches the AUTHORITY OF ELDERS!
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Marilyn Hall, Louise Cline, Ella Hammac, Harold Cozad, Neva Bryant, and Hairston and Inez Brantley.

READING/INVITATION
December 31, 1997
Reading: Horace Myrick
Invitation: Scot Brazell
January 7, 1998
Reading: Richard Parker
Invitation: Jeremy Caine

MARK THIS DATE

NEW GRANDCHILDREN
Richard and Linda Parker are the proud grandparents of James Clifton Parker born on December 16, 1997, to Terrell and Alicia Parker.
Shelby and Jennette Nall are the proud grandparents of Stephen Michael Cleary born on December 19, 1997, to Michele and Mike Cleary.
Our congratulations is extended to everyone.

THINK ABOUT IT...
Members living 15 miles away from the church building will be 15 minutes early, members living two blocks away will be 15 minutes late.

Author Unknown
Sometimes You Have to Say “No”

Dave Rogers

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Mat. 6:33).

I love my daughters. I want them to have many things I did not. I am glad they participate in sports, music, and other “extra-curricular” activities. Katie recently learned a lesson about priorities, however. She asked to play in an after-school soccer league, which practices two afternoons each week, and plays games on Saturday mornings. Since she was already in another sports group, which met the other three afternoons during the week, her mother and I said, “no.” “Yes” would have meant sports activities six days out of seven, every week. Sometimes you have to say “no” in order to have enough time for God.

A girl with whom I attended college maintained a 4.0 grade average (perfect grades) during much of her time in San Marcos. She did it by setting schoolwork ahead of everything else, including dating, friends, and even the Lord. She made the dean’s list almost every semester, but she is still unmarried seventeen years after graduating and is now unfaithful to her Lord. Sometimes you need to say “no,” lest you take God off His throne!

A dearly loved brother with whom I grew up is now a successful opera baritone and music teacher. He attended a prominent New England music college. He has worked hard through the years to maintain and improve his beautiful voice. In the meantime, however, he has lived in cities where the Lord’s church is weak or non-existent. He has continuously worked and associated with many people who don’t care about or oppose Christian values and the church. The result is that he has been disassociated from the saints and uninvolved with the church in any way for at
least some of those years. Sometimes we need to say “no” to supposedly “golden” opportunities!

These activities and achievements (sports, education, jobs, etc.) are good and worthwhile in their own right. None of them is as important to our eternal destiny as association with and commitment to Christ and His church. It is a simple matter of priorities. Christians must learn, and we must teach our children, that “no” should be our answer when worldly activities conflict with our growth in and participation as members of Christ’s body. It’s not just whether or not something conflicts with attending Bible classes or worship; it takes time to live the Christian life!

It is especially hard for children to learn, but when they see us seeking God first of all, they will learn to put Him first too. It’s time to say “NO” to things which will interfere with holiness! P.O. Box 285; Lawton, OK 73502

**TEN RULES FOR IMPROVING ATTITUDES WITHIN THE CHURCH**

Joe Kenner

1. Remind yourself over and over that your are not perfect; therefore, would you fit into a congregation of perfect people, if such a congregation existed.

2. Instead of picking out the worldly, denominational, hypocritical members of the church to point to, pick out the sincere, dedicated, spiritual members and thank God for them.

3. If you are old, treat the young with the consideration you desired as a young person. If you are young, treat the old with the respect you will want when you grow old.

4. When you are tempted to criticize the elders, deacons, minister, Bible teachers, and other Christians, pray earnestly for them first. This will not only have an effect upon them, but it will do wonders for your own attitude.

5. When you see work being neglected, instead of being critical roll up your sleeves and get to work.

6. Never, NEVER, blame others for your own failures. Every individual CAN be faithful to God in spite of the bad examples and discouraging attitudes of others, if he is determined to be.

7. Remind yourself everyday that the only way you can improve the world and the church is to begin with YOURSELF! Make self-improvement a daily goal for yourself.

8. Conscientiously look for the good qualities in every brother and sister. Make a quick mental note of the good qualities you have found in him or her.

9. Constantly strive to increase your circle of loved ones (those with whom you associate) in the church.

10. The church has an abundance of problems, etc. Constantly ask yourself, “Am I a part of the problem or the solution? Or, am I trying to be merely a critical spectator?” BE HONEST WITH THAT ANSWER.

**BIBLE PREACHING**

B. C. Goodpasture

Many in this generation berate and downgrade the man who preaches the Bible. This is not altogether surprising. Naturally, those who do not believe the Bible and those who undermine its authority do not think well of preaching it. But, there are those within the church who have reached the point where they do “not endure sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:3). Paul, with inspired prophetic insight, predicted that such would happen.

Again, men sometimes seem to feel that, considering their vast learning (whether real or
imaginary, does not greatly matter), it would be
an act of intolerable condescension on their part
to preach the simple principle of New Testament
Christianity. They want something that “sounds
scholarly and philosophical.” Such were not the
preachers of apostolic times!

On Pentecost, Peter, an inspired preacher,
delivered a great sermon, more than a third of
which was composed of quotations from the Old
Testament. Paul, in his great speech in Pisidian
Antioch, drew very heavily upon the same
source. He even told where to find one passage he
quoted in “good taste”? What a pity that Peter,
Paul, and Jesus, who frequently referred to
portions of the Old Testament (Luke 24:44), did
not know this! They were “Bible preachers.”

Times may change; times do change, but the
time will never come when the Gospel of Christ
will be out of date. Methods of preaching and
teaching and means of transportation may be
improved and used, but man’s need for the
“Truth” that makes men free will not cease. Lost
men must hear the Truth that saves.

It is a crime against God and man not to
deliver such Truth. Gospel preaching which does
not reveal to lost men the way of salvation is not
what they need. “Wherefore do ye spend money
for that which is not bread?” (Isa. 55:2).

DIARY OF A BIBLE

JANUARY: A busy time for me. Most of the
family decided to read me through this year.
They kept me busy for the first two weeks, but
they have forgotten me now.

FEBRUARY: Clean up time. I was dusted
yesterday and put in my place. My owner did use
me for a few minutes last week. He had been in
an argument and was looking up some references
to prove he was right.

MARCH: I had a busy day the first of the
month. My owner was elected president of the
P.T.A., and he used me to prepare a speech.

APRIL: Grandpa visited us this month. He
kept me on his lap for an hour reading 1
Corinthians 13. He seems to think more of me
than do some people in my own household.

MAY: I have a few green stains on my pages.
Some Spring flowers were pressed in my pages.

JUNE: I look like a scrapbook. They stuffed
me full of newspaper clippings, one of the girls
was married.

JULY: They put me in a suitcase today. I
guess we are off on vacation. I wish I could stay
home. I know I’ll be closed up in this thing for at
least two weeks.

AUGUST: Still in the suitcase.

SEPTEMBER: Back home at last and in my
old familiar place. I have a lot of company. Two
women’s magazines and four comic books are
stacked on top of me. I wish I could be read as
much as they are.

OCTOBER: They read me a little bit today.
One of them is very sick. Right now I am sitting
in the center of the coffee table. I think the
preacher is coming by for a visit.

DECEMBER: The family is busy getting
ready for the holidays. I guess I’ll be covered up
under wrapping paper and packages again as I am
every year...

If your Bible could write, what would it say?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: “My people are
destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou
hast rejected knowledge” (Hos. 4:6). The only
source of spiritual growth is the Word of God
(1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:12-14; Acts 20:32).

Author Unknown

“Duty makes us do things well, but love makes us
do things beautifully.”

Copied
SICK AND SHUT-IN
Please remember in your prayers: Leon Waters, Thomas and Mary Muldoon, Martha Wilcoxson, Nancy Travis, Marilyn Hall, Louise Cline, Ella Hammac, and Neva Bryant.

BAPTIZED
Larry McDaniels was baptized into Christ on December 28, 1997. We rejoice with him in his decision. Please keep Larry in your prayers and help him grow as a Christian. Larry’s address is 20 Emory Drive, Pensacola, FL 32506.

SYMPATHY
Our deepest sympathy is extended to Eddie McLeod and his family in the death of his grandmother, Louise Bailey.

READING/INVITATION
December 31, 1997
Reading: Horace Myrick
Invitation: Scot Brazell
January 7, 1998
Reading: Richard Parker
Invitation: Ray Williams

MARK THESE DATES
January 11, 1998–Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.
January 11, 1998–Elders/Deacons’ meeting at 5:00 P.M., in room 7.

PANTRY ITEM NEEDED
Canned meat

MEETING TIMES
SUNDAY:
9:00 A.M. BIBLE CLASSES
10:00 A.M., 6:00 P.M. WORSHIP
5:00 P.M. LADIES’ BIBLE CLASS
WEDNESDAY: 7:00 P.M.

BISHOPS: Paul Brantley, Bill Gallaher, Fred Stancliff
MINISTER: Michael Hatcher
MISSIONARY: Ira Y. Rice, Jr.

SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO SAY “NO”
Dave Rogers
“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Mat. 6:33).
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