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Bulletin Articles

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She Invited Me

I remember the room. I can recall where I sat. The excitement of hearing the stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob for the first time has not faded. I can still taste the sugar cookies and cherry Kool-Aid we had at break. Others may have long forgotten that VBS class that Summer, but I haven't.

Other teachers taught my VBS classes in previous years, and they poured their lives into that material and those students. They loved, and they cared. But I remember Mary's class for one basic reason.

Most of the kids in the class went to church regularly. I didn't. Most of those children were reared in Christian homes. I wasn't. Most of the others had their own Sunday school class. Not me. I don't remember being different. But I do know why I remember Mary's class. She invited me to church.

Even though I had attended VBS for several years, no one ever helped me to make the transition from Summer VBS to regular Bible school. Mary asked. I came. She taught. I listened.

Like any other church outreach, VBS only works as well as the people in it. VBS, Friends' Day, gospel meetings or a host of other church activities all excel when Christians ask.

It wasn't the great study material. It wasn't the cookies and Kool-Aid. That little country church didn't have modern facilities. Nobody had paved the parking lot or carpeted the floor. But one good Christian woman asked a little boy to come back. I'm glad she asked.

author unknown/ via Gloster Street c/C "Messenger", Tupelo, MS

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Understanding the Bible

Larry Thomas

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). We must understand the Lord's way if we are to have life. Jesus said, "For narrow is the gate and straitened is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it" (Matthew 7:14). Thomas asked Jesus the questions, "How know we the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:5-6).

Here are some attitudes you should adopt that will help you to understand the way:

Hunger for truth (Matthew 5:6).

Confidence that you can understand the Bible (John 8:32).

Honesty (Luke 8:15; James 1:23-25).

Humility (James 4:6)

Patience in learning.

Desiring to be saved through Christ (Acts 17:10-11; Romans 6:23).

Learning to live for Christ with heaven as a goal (Galatians 2:20; II Timothy 4:7-8).

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What Keeps You from Bible Study?

Have you heard about William McPherson? A dynamite charge blew up in his face. Damage was severe. He lost his hands. Part of his face was left numb. Realizing how much the Bible meant to him, he set out to find a way he could read it. Without hands, he tried to use his lips to read Braille, but numbness made that impossible. He discovered he could use his tongue to decipher the Moon Type system of dashes. This method left his tongue bleeding and very sore, but he kept at it. Gradually it became easier, and he learned to read. In sixty-five years he was able to read the Bible through four times with his tongue.

Now, what is keeping you from reading and studying the Bible? Is it the TV schedule, ball games or other self-interest that prevents you from reading the Bible daily? Are these things really the problem? The story of William McPherson makes it clear that we do what we want to do. The one who will not read has no advantage over the one who cannot read.

via the Plainview c/C *Proclaimer*

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Worry

A businessman, who was a chronic addict of the worrying habit, determined to find out what he was fretting about, so he made an analysis of his worries. He discovered that 40% of his worries were about things that likely would never happen; 30% were over past decisions that could not be changed; 12% concerned others' criticism of himself, which did not matter anyway; 10% dealt with his health, which he was trying his best to protect as it was. Only eight percent, he decided, were really legitimate worries.

The Christian can beat that - and do as the Word commands: *"Be anxious (worry) in nothing."* How, you say, is that possible? The rest of Philippians 4:6, 7 tells us: *"In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."* So the Christian's secret is: prayer, with thanksgiving, telling God about every need and every problem and leaving all with Him in quiet faith and assurance, without fretfulness or worry! Then, *"the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:7) -- Christian victory. *Gospel Advocate*, 11/4/43

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Beyond the Limits of Human Love

Human love has limits--frightening limits. Suffering and death can hedge in your love, threaten your love, disfigure your love and even destroy your love. Human love, however strong, cannot surmount suffering and death. Truly, we live in terror of both.

"How miserable it is to have to stand in mute sorrow with nothing to say to those we love when they are in great pain. It is a terrible confession that our love is not big enough to surmount suffering" (Thomas Merton). This is indeed a "terrible confession" because it is so true. Is there any greater agony than watching a loved one suffer and be power- less to intervene? I think not.

Oh, the heartache of seeing your sweet child bravely wage a losing battle against leukemia. And how hard it is to watch in mute agony as your spouse wastes away due to cancer. And who can withstand the grief of seeing your beloved mother or father slip away because of Alzheimer's? Suffering can alter the object of our affection into a vessel of sorrow.

Thus, suffering and death are threats to love and can even destroy love. Marriages are much more prone to end in divorce when a spouse or a child contracts a terminal disease. As strong as our affections are, love often cannot withstand the onslaught of suffering and death.

So far, I've been speaking strictly from a worldly perspective. I've been talking about what is understood and felt without God, without faith and without the comfort of God's Word. In the face of suffering, such a perspective is bleak. Indeed, "suffering without faith is a curse," and love without Christ is

lost. Many, many precious and loving souls have lost themselves in the suffering and death of this world, and this is tragic because that doesn't have to be anyone's fate. You can love courageously and openly, without limits or fear. You can love in spite of suffering and death. Why? Because the love of Jesus Christ has transformed both. Christ has immeasurably eased suffering and has completely conquered death.

For example, you don't have to fear death anymore. Death has been overcome by Christ. Indeed, the death of a Christian is a triumph. Shortly before his execution Paul wrote, *"In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing"* (II Timothy 4:8). Upon death a Christian gains a crown and assembles for a great reunion with fellow believers.

Flowers at a Christian's funeral neither cover the dead nor hide our futile attempts to deny the reality of death. The flowers are the sweet aroma of eternal life. They celebrate a passing out of this world and into the glory of the next. They don't so much honor a life ending as a life beginning.

"We neither suffer alone nor conquer alone nor go off into eternity alone" (Thomas Merton). Paul had a sailing partner--Jesus Christ. Christ has disarmed suffering and destroyed death. He can take you beyond the limits of human love.

Ed Rehbein, North Beckley c/C "Life Lines", Beckley, WV

Bible Maintenance

- Break it in.
- Dust it off.
- Wear out the cover.
- Loosen each page.
- You should need to get a new one every 10 years.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

A Sunday school class was emphasizing the memorization of Scripture. One little boy was beginning to get into the program and was working on his memory work at home. His dad was inquiring into the whole procedure and asked him, "Well, what do you get if you learn these verses? What's the prize or reward?"

The little boy eyed him with a simple, childlike look and

said, "We get to learn more!" May we all be more childlike!

"With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word had I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee. O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:10-11, 97).

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Two Sons

He was birthed in beauty of innocence. His emergence from the womb gladdened the countenance of his father and brought joy to the heart of his mother. Like Reuben of old, he was his father's "firstborn, his might, the beginning of his strength, the excellency of dignity and power" (Genesis 49:3). No doubt his years of infancy were a ceaseless source of delight to his parents. Surely, they must have thrilled at his smile, his childlike laughter, his first word and step.

The birth of a second son multiplied their joy. Moreover, their firstborn would now know the elation of brotherhood. Having shared the same womb, the normal pain of developing existed between them. However, undoubtedly, they matured as brothers generally do, often fighting, but each willing to take on the world for the other.

Maturity comes clothed in free will and the result is often disastrous. Weary of home and eager to taste of life in the fast lane, the younger son requested his portion of the family inheritance, "took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living" (Luke 15:13). Poverty and hunger quickly extracted the pleasure from sin. Thoughts of parental love and home tugged at him. Leaving the far country, he retraced the journey of rebellion with the steps of godly sorrow and penitence. His father met and embraced him with compassion and forgiveness. Sounds of feasting and merriment filled the air.

Having learned of his brother's return, the elder son refused to join the festivity, spurned his father's tender entreaty and buried himself in self-pity. The beauty of innocence had been replaced by the ugliness of sin. Brotherly love had been displaced by contempt. Parental delight in his childhood had been supplanted by sorrow and disappointment. The elder son had robed himself in the black cloak of self-righteousness, ingratitude and a callous indifference toward his brother's welfare.

The same parents' teaching and training do not guarantee a plurality of children with equal concern for God and spiritual matters. Proverbs 22:6 is a general principle, not an ironclad law. Faithful parents must not be blamed for children who exercise their own volition by choosing to travel the low road of sin and shame. Frank Chesser

via "Virginia Christian"

B-U-S-Y

While impatiently waiting in traffic the other day, I saw a bumper sticker that read, "BUSY" - Being Under Satan's Yoke." I didn't pay too much attention because I was in a hurry to get some things done.

Thoreau said, "Our life is frittered away by detail. Simplify. Simplify." Being too busy can get our focus off our heavenly Father. Being too busy can get our focus off our family. Being too busy can ruin our physical and emotional health. *"For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity"* (Ecclesiastes 2:22-23).

Do you remember how Moses encouraged the Israelites when they were escaping from Egypt? He said, *"The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace"* (Exodus 14:14). Do we recognize the importance of being "still"? *"Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation"* (Zechariah 2:13). How often are you "still"? *"Be still, and know that I am God..."* (Psalm 46:10a).

Being still before the Lord means that we come before Him with respect, reverence and a repentant heart. We acknowledge His eternal presence and cast our burdens on Him. We trust Him. We believe and obey Him. We slow down. We rerioritize our objectives and goals. We take time to breathe. We give Him our time. We give Him our work. We wait on Him. *"I had fainted, unless I had believe to see*

the good- ness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD" (Psalm 27:13, 14).

Jeremy King

via Crieve Hall c/C, Nashville, TN

PEACE

There once was a king who offered a prize to the artist who would paint the best picture of peace. Many artists tried. The king looked at all the pictures, but there were only two he really liked, and he had to choose between them.

One picture was of a calm lake. The lake was a perfect mirror, and majestic, towering mountains were all around it. Overhead was a blue sky with fluffy white clouds. All who saw this picture thought it was the perfect picture of peace.

The other picture had mountains, too, but these were rugged and bare. Above was

an angry sky from which rain fell and in which lightning played. Down the side of the mountain tumbled a foaming waterfall. This did not look like peace at all. But when the king looked, he saw behind the waterfall a tiny bush growing in a crack in the rock. In the bush a mother bird had built her nest. There, in the midst of the rush of the angry water, sat the mother bird on her nest.

The king chose the second picture as the winner. "Because," he explained, "peace does not mean being in a place where there is no noise, trouble or hard work. Peace means to be in the midst of all those things and still be calm in your heart." That is the real meaning of peace.

author unknown

SENTENCE SERMONS - ACCOMPLISHMENTS

"Difficulties mastered are opportunities won." - Winston Churchill

"Refuse to be troubled by trifles." - Joe Barnett

"Obstacles are those frightening things you see when you take your eyes off the goal." - Hannah Moore

"Take heart. Suffering, when it climbs its highest, lasts but a little time." - Aeschylus

"Success is not measured by the heights one attains, but by the obstacles one overcomes in its attainment." - Booker T. Washington

"To do anything in this world worth doing, we must not stand back shivering and thinking of the cold and danger, but jump in and scramble through as well as we can." - Sidney Smith

BE A BETTER STUDENT

Be familiar with the textbook (II Timothy 2:15).

Get to know the instructor personally (Hosea 6:3; Philippians 3:10; cf., John 8:32).

Take copious notes (cf. Deuteronomy 6:7-9).

Do not drop out of the course (II Timothy 4:7).

Consider the long-term benefits of the study (I Timothy 4:16).

Work on making practical use of the material (Philippians 4:9; cf., Acts 1:1; 10:38).

Be prepared to share your knowledge with others (I Peter 3:15).

Use your knowledge when it is time for tests (James 1:2-5).

Make it personal through dedication (II Timothy 3:14-15).

Study with alertness and zealously to eliminate laboriousness (Hebrews 2:1).

Neal Pollard

Cold Harbor Road c/C, Mechanicsville, VA

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Give Me Something to Do

Have you ever said or heard someone say something like this: "I do not have anything to do." I

remember as a child making the comment, "I'm bored." I then received a list of things which were all around me. I simply failed to "open my eyes" to the possibilities.

Therefore:

Seek out and teach some lost soul about Jesus! Many are dead in sin and doomed for eternity outside of Christ; thus, lost. Like our Savior we must "seek" them out. Most will not come to us (Mark 5:18-20).

Put forth a real effort to restore some fallen brother or sister to God! To restore an erring Christian is to save a soul from death (James 5:19-20). To fail to try is to die with their blood on our hands!

Visit and cheer a lonely soul! To know that someone remembers and cares is a treasure more precious than gold! Many a burden has been lifted because of the thoughtfulness of another (II Timothy 1:16-18).

Call on the sick and offer your help! Jesus cared for the suffering, and we can show our love by using our hands and feet to care for them. To "visit" the sick means more than to drop by for a chat. It includes doing that which needs to be done (James 2:17).

Assist in supplying the needs of some individual or family who may be encountering a difficult financial deficiency! Hospitality is to be a hallmark of every Christian (Romans 12:13), but being hospitable requires more than merely being cordial; it demands that we be helpful (James 2:14-17; I John 3:17-19).

Mail a card or letter to encourage someone who is "down and out". Let this individual know you care by expressing your appreciation in writing. A visit or call is good, but a card or letter allows the downcast to be refreshed over and over again (Hebrews 12:12).

Offer a prayer on behalf of those who need God's help! The earnest petitions of the righteous are powerful with God (James 5:16; II Corinthians 1:10-11; Philippians 1:18-20). We fail to do all we can do to support our fellow man when we fail to pray for them as we ought.

There is much for all to do in the kingdom of God. Let us not sit idly by, because no one gave us a special assignment. Jesus took care of that a long time ago! *"For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping"* (Mark 13:34-36).
(adapted, via Coldwater, MS)

Spend your time in nothing which you know must be repented of; in nothing which you might not pray the blessing of God; in nothing which you could not review with a quiet conscience on your dying bed; in nothing which you might not safely and properly be found doing if death should surprise you in the act.

William Baxter

Abhor

One sure lesson history teaches us: the more association we have with evil, the less evil it appears. The commonness of vice makes it seem harmless and respectable. But neither ugliness gets pretty, nor wrong gets right by association; we just get more accustomed to it. We change--not the evil influencing us. Thus, through a gradual process, environment can tempt the purest to pursue the things once despised.

Lest we come to adore what we now abhor, may we not take these simple but deadly steps: associating with evil, condoning evil, approving evil, embracing evil, addiction to evil.

"Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good"

(Romans 12:9).

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George's Farewell

In front of the federal building in New York's financial district stands a bronze statue of George Washington. The world has moved on in a dizzying pace since George's time, but the figure has not moved an inch. Also unchanged are the vital and eternal principles which shaped his personal and public life. To the passing throng he still preaches in the memorable words of his farewell address:

"It is my earnest prayer to God that He would be most graciously pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility and specific temper of mind which were the characteristics of the divine Author of our religion; without a humble imitation of whose example in these things we can never hope to be a happy nation."

I am thankful that one of the men that founded our great nation realized the importance of imitating the character of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul calls us to "*have the mind of Christ*" (Philippians 2:5). He says we can have JOY if we have this mind. To accomplish this mind we must be like-minded, have the same love, be one in spirit and one in purpose with Christ. Paul says these things produce humility.

How would things change in your life if it were characterized by the mind of Christ? It can happen if you will let it (Galatians 2:20).

Eddie Lewis (via Greenville, MS)

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What Satan Fears Most

By Jan McIntosh

What Satan fears most is a man on his knees,
Not marching armies with great weaponry.
He knows he can stand against the powers of man;
To engage in battle is mere sport to him. in prayer
Is something quite different to the prince of the air.

For when he sees us in prayer to our God Most High,

He knows we have seen through his devilish lies.

That's why Satan fears most a man on his knees,

And we'll keep him trembling, if our prayers never cease.

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Real Peace Within

"Happiness is in us, not in things. God wants His children to be happy, but the fountain of contentment must spring up in the mind of each Christian. There is 'joy and peace in believing' (Romans 15:13) and in obeying the will of the Lord. . . . Thus friend- ship with God, in obedience to His Word, is indispensable to all true peace of heart. Otherwise, there will be no real peace within." -- Perry B. Cotham

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The BIG Picture

Understanding the Bible is essential to our Christian life because it is the document that relates to us all that the Christian life is to be, and it does it in the form of a book. And, it's book-ness is precisely the problem.

As a book it details the lives of individuals and events as it unfolds God's plan for man, and without an overall understanding of God's purpose, the book will become a group of isolated stories and sayings that do not interrelate and develop God's intended goal. Therefore, we MUST know how to use the Bible, and such understanding begins with a realization of the big picture of the Bible.

If we lose sight of God's designs and the motivation behind them, we will become like the Pharisees who Jesus condemned for their empty-hearted religious adherence to outward forms (Matthew 23, John 5:39). A problem the Jews constantly dealt with was their lack of intimate knowledge of God (cf. Hosea 6:6; John 8:19, 25 - they knew about God, but they did not KNOW God), which is precisely the type of knowledge that Jesus said constituted eternal life (John 17:3; 14:6; 10:30). What about us?

- I. What is the BIG picture?
 - A. John 3:17 - This is the purpose statement of the Bible.
 - B. John 5:39 - the seed promise, the development of God's purpose.

1. Genesis 3:15-16 - introduced
 2. Genesis 22:17-18 - through Abraham's descendants
 3. Genesis 49:10 - through the tribe of Judah
 4. II Samuel 7:12-16 - from the Davidic line, (cf. Vs. 17ff; Ezekiel 21:25- 27; John 6:15).
 5. Acts 2:29-31a - announced as being fulfilled in Jesus
- II. What does it mean for us?
- A. Who we are - sinners (Romans 3:23)
 - B. What we need - salvation (John 11:25; 14:6)
 - C. What is required - responsibility - become (Acts 2:37, 38), love (Matthew 22:35-40), live (John 14:15)
- III. What does it mean for us?
- A. John 14:6 - the only way to God is through Jesus
 - B. John 5:39; I Corinthians 2:10-16 - the only way to Jesus is through the

Bible

As we study, we will need to always keep God's purpose for writing the Bible before us, because without it, our study becomes lost. Josh Hartswigen

Together We Can

There is an old story about a blind man and a crippled man who stumbled into each other in a forest. They were both lost, and they struck up a conversation, sharing their sad stories.

The blind man said, "I cannot see to find my way out." The crippled man nodded and responded, "I cannot get up to walk out." As they sat there sadly talking, the crippled man cried out, "I've got it! You hoist me up onto your shoulders, and I will tell you where to walk." Together they found their way out of the forest.

All of us are like the two men in the forest. We need help from time to time. The pressures of the world, the discouragements of life and the sin that entangles gets us down.

We struggle to find our way back to the Light--back to the right way. We need help! That's why God gives us a family. Each of us has a gift to share to build up the body of Christ. Each of us can offer an encouraging word to a discouraged or struggling member. Each of us can let our light shine for the whole world. Together we can make a difference!

via Central c/C, Harrisonburg, VA

"Only let your conversation (manner of life) be as it be- cometh the gospel of Christ... that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;"
(Philippians 1:27)

What Can I Do?

If you are really looking for an opportunity to render services in the Lord's vineyard, you can find it. Perhaps you do not feel that your talents are very great, but your help can be priceless in the church of our Lord. Do whatever your hands find to do with all your might *"forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord"* (I Corinthians 15:58). When you work for the Lord it always pays off in due season. Here are a few things that you can do:

Mail a card to the sick.

Visit those who are ill and shut-in.

Visit the new members of the church who have moved into our city.

Invite friends to the services of the church.

Welcome our visitors with a smile and a hearty handshake; make them feel at home.

If you drive a car, bring someone with you who might not otherwise have a way.

Read and study your Bible daily.

Avoid harmful criticism and gossip.

Attend all services possible.

Be a diligent and faithful personal worker.

J.A. McNutt

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The Need for Discernment

"But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Hebrews 5:14). Christians are always faced with questions concerning right and wrong. In teenage classes invariably these questions arise: Is it wrong to dance? Is it wrong to attend certain movies? Etc. The Scriptures do not give us a list of all things that are bad or good. We are then faced with the dilemma of how shall we discern what is good and evil.

There are some matters that present no difficulty. Certain works of the flesh are enumerated in Galatians 5:19-21 and emphatically it is said *"that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God"* (v.21). There are some places and activities that were not in existence when those words were written. What about them? How do we determine what is right and wrong? Obviously, one can easier reach some conclusions as they grow and mature in the faith. There are some suggestions we would offer as well. These suggestions are not original with me. Thy come from a variety of sources, but perhaps they will be helpful.

Anything that destroys the identity of the Christian is sinful. Christians live in the world, but they are not of the world (John 17:14-19). It should never be necessary for a Christian to tell another that he is a Christian. It should be known by his fruits (Matthew 7:20).

The Christian should never participate in any- thing that destroys or weakens his influence. Influence is one of the Christian's most powerful means for good. Men are often led to serve God by good example when there has been a failure to convince by the Word. *"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation [manner of behavior] of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation [manner of behavior] coupled with fear"*

(1 Peter 3:1-2). *"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16).

Anything that the Christian allows to hinder him in performing his Christian duty is wrong. "God First" should be our motto. Anything that draws our affection from the Lord is sinful.

Anything that corrupts the heart is sinful. One's thoughts are largely governed by the books and papers he reads. Many have poisoned their minds by vile literature and the immoral scenes and evil suggestions of the movies. *"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are honest... just... pure... lovely... of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things"* (Philippians 4:8).

That which is harmful to the body is sinful. We are to glorify God in our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:20). our bodies are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. We cannot afford to desecrate the temple of the Holy Spirit.

It is not enough to rationalize by saying, "I can't see any harm in that." Harm may still be there. God's word is still the standard by which all things must be measured. That's the source from which discernment comes. -- Leon Cole, Greenville c/C

(scriptures edited to KJV)

Serious about Christianity

If there were some way we could just back up and watch ourselves for a while, would we see someone serious about Christianity? God said we should do that very thing. *"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed you are disqualified?"* (II Corinthians 13:5). The following questions should help each of us take a look at ourselves:

1. Does my life glorify God and cause others to glorify Him? (Matthew 5)
2. Am I happy to be a servant of God? (Philippians 3:1; 4:4)
3. Do I love people, even to the point of loving my enemies? (Matthew 5:44)
4. Am I a daily Bible reader, serious about learning God's will? (Acts 17:11)
5. Does my prayer life reflect faith and trust in God? (Matthew 6:5-15)
6. Have I ever won one soul for Jesus? (II Timothy 2:2)
7. Am I teaching anyone the Gospel and praying for their salvation? (Titus 2:11-15)
8. Do I focus my life on temporary things or on eternal things? (Matthew 6:19-21)
9. Will I sacrifice myself and what I have for Jesus? (II Corinthians 12:15)
10. Am I willing to repent of my sins and to correct attitudes and actions which are un-Christ-like? (Acts 17:30-31)
11. Do I put God and my duty to Him first in life? (Matthew 6:33)
12. Have I made the world a better or a worse place by my living? (Galatians 5:19-23)
13. Am I using myself in God's work (talents, money, time... etc.)? (I Corinthians 15:58)

One must obey the Gospel to be saved (Mark 16:15-16). The Lord adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47). The saved person must remain faithful till death (Revelation 2:10; II Timothy 4:6-8). Obey the Gospel of Christ and live for Christ now so that you may live eternally with Him. -- Charles Box

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The Lord's Secret Service

An unknown author has written the following observations which describe so well those who serve God without fanfare.

Individuals who, by telephone call, express concern at the absence of another.

Families who provide transportation for those who otherwise could not worship with us.

Those who prepare the Lord's Supper each Lord's Day.

Those who visit the shut-ins and send cards to the sick.

Christians who say, "You and I are interested in this particular member who needs to be encouraged. Let's pray for him and see what we can do to prove our interest in him."

The secret giver who can always dig a little deeper to help some individual in need or increase his contribution to see that the Lord's work can go forward.

Those who are called in last-minute emergencies and calmly say, "I'll do the best I can."

Those who go around giving words of encouragement to their brothers and sisters in Christ who are using the talents God gave them.

There are so many more categories of nameless people who could be added to the list. They, too, do their service quietly and secretly. We see the benefits, but not the benefactor. How could we ever do without the Lord's "Secret Service"?
Pulpit Helps

Life Is Too Short

As people get older, they often remark about "how time flies". Time is the same for young and old, but as we get older, we tend to become conscious of the swift passage of our life. Job said, "My

days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle..." (Job 7:6). The Psalmist said, "For he remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth way, and cometh not again" (Psalm 78:39). James wrote that life is "... even a vapour, that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away" (4:14).

We mention this to emphasize that life is too short for us to deliberately pass by

the opportunities for joy and enrichment that come our way. It is not so much that others deprive us of happiness, but that we deprive ourselves. It is tragic that some miss so many of the good things of this world simply because they will not allow themselves the pleasure.

Life is too short to neglect friendships. No one has too many friends and no friendship is of negligible value. Probably every day, there are opportunities for making and strengthening relationships with others. A stranger today could be a brother tomorrow.

Life is too short to neglect fellowship with Christian friends. The public and private occasions when we can be together to share interests, to share laughter and to show affection are blessings from God. We realize that even the most gregarious persons need some time to be alone. We also realize that the opportunities will soon be gone. Faces we remember from past times are not seen any more. Their cherished voices and pleasant laughter are absent now. We can deprive ourselves of so much by refusing to be a part.

Life is too short to entertain bad attitudes. Sometimes it happens that someone will get upset or cross about something and let a sore fester within them for months and even years. Their chief satisfaction is the satisfaction of being consistently miserable. This does, of course, affect and hurt others, but the worst injury is to themselves. Time is too short, and life is too precious to be ruined by unchristian attitudes.

Life is too short to refuse the opportunities to do good for others. The building blocks of a meaningful life are kinds words and helpful deeds. Most people think of this after it is too late. Perhaps the one time many of us think Jesus may have been mistaken was when He said, "... *It is more blessed to give than to receive*" (Acts 20:35). Our own selfishness can rob us of great blessings.

Life is too short to neglect opportunities for spiritual enrichment. One who feels he can live a consecrated life without much help simply does not understand the Christian life. Bible classes, special services, literature, are not intended as activities just for people with nothing to do. It is a sad irony that so often those who most need help are those who deny themselves such opportunities.

Life is too short to fail to speak to others about the Savior. We are a dying race, and very soon our friends and ourselves will be gone. Gone to where depends entirely upon our relationship to Christ. This life affords no greater privilege than the privilege of helping another to be saved. But worldly pride, selfishness, indifference and lack of preparation are keeping us from even trying. Too soon we will watch our neighbors perish. Too soon we will "go, and empty-handed".

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psalm 90:12). David Pharr

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Does The Bible Teach?

Does the bible teach people should join the church of their choice? No! The

Bible teaches that God adds saved people to His one church. "Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (**Acts 2:47**).

Does the Bible Teach That I Must Be Right With My Brethren Before I Can Worship God Acceptably? Yes! Jesus left no doubt about this matter for He gave a full explanation in the Sermon on the Mount. "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (Mt. 5:23-24)

Does The Bible Teach That The Child Of God Cannot So Sin As To Be Lost? No!

Many have read John 10:29 and have concluded that one cannot so sin as to be lost. The passage says, "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand." The Bible teaches everywhere that if man is faithful no power can snatch him from God's protection. However, that does not say that one can be unfaithful and still remain saved! A study of Galatians 5:4 shows that it is possible for a Christian to so sin as to be lost.

Does The Bible Teach That The Child Of God Must Teach The Gospel To Others? Yes! "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (**2 Tim. 2:2**) One who has been taught, teaching another who will then teach another is God's way of evangelism. "Preach the gospel to every creature" (Rom. 1:16) is God's message to each Christian.

--- Charles Box (edited) ---

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A Visitor's View

I am a visitor, and sometimes I see things you church members don't notice. I can appreciate things you take for granted--and be repulsed by things you have learned to accept. Your building may be beautiful, your sermon inspiring and your church perfectly aligned with the Bible--but most of the time it's not these things, but the little things I notice.

When I walk in the door, I feel like a stranger-- for that's what I am. So it means a lot when someone welcomes me with a friendly greeting. I don't mean just the preacher or an elder, but one of the "regular members". It's nice when they want to know my name, and even better when they want to know me. They try to help me feel at ease. They show me where my Sunday School Class meets. They introduce me to someone in my class. I make two new friends.

I like Bible classes where there is love, excitement and participation, where the people

seem glad to be there. I like it when they introduce me as a visitor, when someone asks me to sit next to them and when a person I've never met helps me find I Corinthians 13 in my Bible. The class members are eager to discuss the lesson and to see how it applies to their everyday lives, and they talk about God in language I can understand. I'm not used to that in my old church. I leave class with some new understandings and some things I need to think about.

Someone from the Bible class invites me to sit with him in the worship service. When the singing starts, I notice there is no organ, but it sounds beautiful any way. My friend next to me is not a fantastic singer, but he sings enthusiastically--like he means what the song is saying. Everyone is participating, and the people seem to be enjoying church. I'm not used to that, but it makes me feel good, too.

After worship, I usually figure it's time to head home to my paper and TV. But all the people around me make an effort to meet me and welcome me. They invite me to come back to visit again--they invite me home for Sunday dinner. They want to get to know me better. All of them seem to know and love each other, and I have a hard time getting through the crowd, so I stay and talk and meet more people. The TV and paper can wait.

When I get back home again, I often forget what the building looked like, or even what the sermon was about. But I remember where I met people who loved God and each other. I want to come back so I can find out what makes them that way.

Johnny Burkhart, New Albany, MS

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If You Were a Visitor

It has long been my conviction that Christians are too often unaware of the influence they have on others. When we meet together for worship, we usually have visitors in our midst. Many of them are not church-goers at all, and it is a completely new experience for them. Others who attend may be members of denominations who are attending their first assembly of the Lord's church. In these cases, your actions may be the first and only impression which they will ever get regarding New Testament Christianity.

Two passages relate to us the need to be concerned about what kind of impression we make. Paul told the Corinthians that their assemblies, which focused on the chaotic tongue-speaking in languages unknown to the visitors rather than instruction from the Word (prophecy), would confuse and repulse non-Christians. Paul's advice was to leave off tongue-speaking (unless done in an orderly manner with interpretation), and to emphasize prophecy which warns about the deadly effect of "respect of persons" in the assemblies of the saints (James 2:1-13). James evidently knew that in the early church some Christians would give great honor to the rich and well-dressed and show disregard for the poor. His words are bold: *"But if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin, and are convicted of the law as transgressors"* (2:9). Clearly, Christians must be concerned about how our actions impact those who visit our assemblies!

With that Biblical background in mind, if you were a visitor, how would you feel if:

you were ignored by church members?

you were not greeted and warmly received?

you saw members acting disinterested and bored?

you observed members not participating in praise?

you were distracted by members who would not stay in the assembly but were like bouncing balls, up and down all the time?

you noticed many sleepy-eyed members dragging in late?

you saw several who got up and left early?

you saw many sleepers during the preaching?

you could hardly concentrate on what was being said because of the members nearby who liked to talk the whole time?

If you were the only example of New Testament Christianity a visitor had, would you leave a favorable impression? Would they want to come back? Would they report to friends that God is indeed among those people (I Corinthians 14:25)? Would they believe that they had seen true Christianity for the first time in their lives?

Darwin Hunter

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P-R-O-M

Spring is here! With the coming of Spring comes Prom time and the need to revisit the question of dancing. Let's do so using "prom" as an acronym:

Popularity. God created us as social creatures; we instructively desire the company and approval of our peers. Desiring to be popular is not wrong. When you are willing to sacrifice your principles to gain popularity, however, then popularity has become your god. Christians have long been scorned and spoken against because they avoided worldly activities (I Peter 4:4). But, is dancing really worldly? Or may a Christian dance with- out compromising his/her principles? Continue reading....

Recreation. "Girls just wanna have fun." (Yeah, so do boys.) God is not out to ruin all your fun. Neither should you allow "fun" to become your god (Philippians 3:19, "*whose god is their belly*" -- not stomach, but "belly", considered to be the seat of all the fleshly appetites). Right or wrong are not determined by whether an activity is fun. Good things can be fun, but anybody over about three years old knows that doing things you shouldn't can also be lots of

fun! Many find dancing to be fun. But is it right or wrong? Continue reading....

Offense. *"Woe to the world because of offenses (occasions of stumbling)! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes"* (Matthew 18:7). Your behavior affects other people, whether for good or ill. Aside from the vulgar lyrics of much dance music, dancing involves close bodily contact and suggestive movements. Both of these put a stumbling block in the way of the dancers and the observers. Is this what Jesus wants you to do?

Modesty. An honest look at dancing forces us to the conclusion that its appeal is sexual in nature. (How many boys dance with boys? Girls with girls? What would be said about them if they did?) Far from the modesty commanded by God in His Word, the suggestive movements and close bodily contact of dancing make it a "work of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19-21).

Dancing may be popular; it may even be fun. Are you willing to put a stumbling block in another's way (as well as your own) in order to have fun? Are you willing to put aside God's warning about the works of the flesh in order to be popular? Parents, grandparents and young people, are you listening? -- Joe Slater

How Teamwork Increases Effectiveness

There's a wonderful story about Jimmy Durante, one of the great entertainers of a generation ago. He was asked to be a part of a show for World War II veterans. He told them his schedule would permit only a brief appearance, but if they wouldn't mind him doing one short monologue and immediately leave for his next appointment, he would come. Of course, the show's director happily agreed.

But when Jimmy got on stage, something interesting happened. He went through the short monologue and then stayed. The applause grew louder and louder, and he kept staying. Pretty soon, he had been on 15, 20, then 30 minutes. Finally, he took a last bow and left the stage. Backstage someone asked him, "I thought you had to go after a few minutes. What happened?"

Jimmy answered, "I did have to leave, but I can show you the reason I stayed. Look out at the front row." Seated there were two men, each of whom had lost an arm in the war. One had lost his right arm and the other had lost his left. Together, they were able to clap, and that's exactly what they were doing, loudly and cheerfully.

That's teamwork, in action and in spirit. It illustrates how the body of Christ operates. Our process of becoming "whole" cannot exist without others. As the poet, W.H. Auden has said, "We must love one another or die." We really do need each other, and we need to work with one another. Jesus offered criteria for identifying his disciples, *"loving each other... even as I have loved you"* (John 13:34). Teamwork is what makes that love possible, tangible. It wasn't in vain that Christ said, *"Where two or three are gathered together, there I am in their midst"* (Matthew 18:23). Our working together is important, vital to Him. There is an "us-ness"

in the Christian faith.

When people work and serve together, there is a potent magic about it. It is called "synergy". The word means "the sum total is greater than the total of the separate parts." Stemming from the roots, "syn" and "ergo" meaning "to work together," it implies that a team can be far more powerful than the separate members working individually. Buckminster Fuller, in his book Synergetics, explains that it is very possible that "one plus one can equal four if we put our efforts together in the same direction."

Don't try to go it alone. The process of growing spiritually as an individual Christian and as the body of Christ in this place involves a firm understanding of how we need each other and how the power of teamwork multiplies as we work together. --Douglas Parsons

April 28-May 1

- Gather on time each service.
- Offer your songbook or seat to visitors.
- Sincerely worship God.
- Pray for the preacher and for the lost.
- Encourage the lost to obey.
- Listen attentively.
- Meet all visitors with a smile.
- Enjoy a meal with friends.
- Enthusiastically sing.
- Take a seat toward the front.
- Invite your neighbors to come.
- Never be noisy or distracting.
- Give someone a ride to the worship services.

| Indifference | How Will Your Record Read? |
|---|---|
| <p>A poster had the following on why customers quit: 1% die, 3% move away, 5% are influenced by friends, 9% for competitive reasons, 14% are dissatisfied with the product, but 68% quit because of indifference displayed toward customers by some employee. Could it be that 68% of those who quit the church do so because "faithful attenders" are indifferent about their spiritual welfare?</p> | <p>Church attendance - Irregular In worship services - Unfaithful Bible Study - Did not attend Teaching others - Not prepared to do this Prayer - Only when trouble comes Interest in church - Not concerned</p> <p>My friends, how will it be for us when we stand in judgment and the books are opened?</p> <p>from <i>Life, Humor & Biblical Briefs</i></p> |

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Brother Clarence DeLoach will be here for our Spring gospel meeting, April 28-May 1. We offer this brief article as a "whet" to your spiritual appetite for lessons he will bring to us.

Agonize for Souls

Let us pray God that again *"the knowledge of the Lord will fill the land"* and there will be a harvest of souls. I sense a revival of interest in personal evangelism. How would you define "personal evangelism"? It is as broad as all the combined influences brought to bear upon leading a soul to Christ, and everyone can have a part in the process. The one who does the personal teaching is only one link in the chain.

What is personal evangelism? It is taking the time to send, grade and answer questions through World Bible School. It is talking to a neighbor, a friend or a co-worker about Christ and His church. It is taking enough interest to give or send someone you know an article that deals with a subject of expressed interest. It is demonstrating before your fellow workers, neighbors and friends the joy of being a Christian. It is inviting your postman, plumber, grocery clerk or pharmacist to come to worship with you. It is getting together a number of interested people for a Bible study. It is handing someone a religious tract. It is going on a campaign and knocking doors to find a soul. It is planting a thought in someone's heart which may in time blossom. It is having someone in your home and showing genuine concern for someone who has experienced a tragedy. It is using your automobile to transport people to worship. It is being involved with the bus ministry. It is sharing a burden someone is bearing. It is lifting and encouraging a new member. It is showing your confidence in a youth by a pat on the back or a hug. It is being available in time of sickness and death.

And on and on we could go! Personal evangelism is not one thing, but many. To cultivate the environment makes the actual teaching more effective.

Let's learn to be soul-conscious. Let's agonize for souls! Remember, one soul is worth more than all the world. via *The Voice of Truth International*

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Saving Faith

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6 NKJV).

What pleases God? This text teaches us that without faith it is impossible to please God. What are the elements of the faith for which God is looking? This verse and its context answer that question.

"Saving faith" believes. Saving faith believes *that God is*". We may look at the intricate design of nature and recognize that there is a Designer. *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork"* (Psalm 19:1). *"For since the creation of the*

world His [God's] invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). "By faith we understand that (even though we were not present) the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible" (Hebrews 11:3). Nature teaches that God exists. Saving faith believes in the existence of God.

"Saving faith" trusts. Saving faith, according to the text, believes that God "is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him". This aspect of faith includes the element of trust--taking God at His word, relying upon His promises. As the Scriptures teach: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

"Saving faith" seeks. The Hebrew writer stated that "he who comes to God must believe that... He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." "Saving faith" diligently seeks Him. God "has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and had determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings" (Acts 17:26). For what purpose did God do these things? Observe as the text continues: "SO THAT they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:27-28).

"Saving faith" obeys. We may read the whole chapter of Hebrews 11 and understand that "saving faith" causes one to act in response to God's instructions. "By faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice" (V. 4) "By faith Noah... prepared an ark" (V. 7). "By faith Abraham obeyed" (V. 8). "Saving faith" will cause a person to act.

For this reason, those who heard the Gospel (the good news) of Jesus Christ were told not only to believe on Him (Acts 16:31), but also to repent of their sins (Acts 17:30), confess Christ (Romans 10:9-10) and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). And, by faith, many obeyed and were saved from their sins (see Acts 2:37-41).

"Saving faith" believes in God, trust God, seeks God and obeys God. Do you have the faith that saves? God bless you.

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"The Bible and Euthanasia"

or
"When Is It Right to Die?"

There is a dangerous trend that has taken shape in this country known as "mercy killing," or "euthanasia". Some think it is a recent phenomenon, but it isn't. The death of King Saul (II Samuel 1:1-16; I Chronicles 10) provides some valuable information along this line of thought. Saul was wounded on the field of battle (I Samuel 31:3). Knowing that his enemies were relentlessly pursuing him, that he was in pain and dying anyway, and that capture would mean torture, he requested that his armor-bearer thrust him through, but the armor-bearer would not. God does not endorse "active euthanasia", whether it involves thrusting a sword into a wounded, dying king or injecting a syringe full of phenobarbital into the veins of a dying person. What do we suppose God would have thought if Saul had been rescued by paramedics and put on life support, only to have some Amalekite unplug him?

There is a vast difference between "mercy killing" and letting someone die if that person is already dying. We need to give attention to whether we are "sustaining life" or "prolonging life". One-time Surgeon General C. Everett Koop said, "The whole thing about euthanasia comes down to one word: motive. If your motive is to alleviate suffering while a person is going through the throes of dying, and you are using medication to alleviate suffering, even though it might shorten his life by a few hours, that is not euthanasia. But if you are giving him a drug intended to shorten his life, then your motivation is for euthanasia." The Bible teaches the sacredness of human life. Once it is gone, it cannot be re-claimed. We must remember that we are not our own; for we were bought with a price (cf. I Corinthians 6:19-20).

The trend in this country is to cut spending, which is the thing to do in certain areas; but if the "younger generation" decides that we shouldn't spend money to prolong life of our older citizens who are weak, feeble and no longer able to contribute to their exorbitant spending, what then? Does the thought that their fate may be left in the hands of a "younger generation" to decide whether they live or die contribute to the security of the aged?

There was a time in Biblical history when the younger people made the wrong decision relative to the fate of Israel. Subsequent to the death of Solomon, the "older men" of Israel advised Rehoboam to make lighter the yoke which had been placed upon his people by his father (cf. I Kings 12:4). But the counsel of the aged was rejected in favor of the counsel of the "young men" (V. 8), and Israel's burdens were increased, resulting in a split in the Old Testament kingdom of God (Verses 16-17).

To deliberately shorten a life that belongs to God is wrong, and we need to remember, *"For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"* (Hebrews 10:30-31).

Noah Hackworth

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How Difficult Is It to Be a Christian When ...
there is no love in one's heart?
one is always thinking of worldly things?
one never depends on God for help?
one never, or hardly ever prays?
one never studies the Bible?
one is selfish--never thinks of others?
one never forgives?
one never gives of his means--never returns to God
what He has let him use?
one is always discouraged?
one never teaches others?
How difficult is it? It is impossible!

Gene Horton

"For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good..."

(Luke 6:43-45a)

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Faithful, but Not Perfect

I was listening to a tape while driving to an appointment. The speaker (John Brown) made a point which would cause most husbands to cringe. In essence, he asked, "If you were to ask my wife if I am a perfect husband, what could she say? But, if you were to ask her if I am a faithful husband, then she could say, 'Yes'." The point applies both ways. None of us qualifies as the "perfect" husband or wife--the one which never says or does anything wrong. No one in this world knows our faults and weaknesses better than our spouse. Marriage is not built on a foundation of perfection, but it should be built upon a foundation of faithfulness! Please do not confuse the two ideas. They are not the same.

"Faithful" is defined by WEBSTER'S NEW WORLD DICTIONARY as "maintaining allegiance to someone or something; continued, steadfast, adherence to a person or thing to which one is bound by an oath, duty, obligation, etc." (503). It is a good word,

and every husband, as well as every wife, should be faithful in their marriage relationship. We should be faithful to our children, to our spouses and to God.

If we are first and foremost faithful to God, then it must follow as we submit to His will for our lives that we will be faithful to each other and our children. The very first Christians in this world were noted for this quality in their lives -- "*And they continued steadfastly...*" (Acts 2:42). Paul concludes the great 15th chapter of I Corinthians by admonishing us to "*be steadfast, unmoveable*". The best foundation for a successful marriage and home is a faithful Christian life for both partners. As we navigate the course of life there will be none of us do it perfectly, even as a Christian. However, we all can do it faithfully in our relationship to the Lord.

A faithful Christian by necessity must be a faithful spouse in a marriage and a faithful parent where children are involved. If one who is a Christian is not a faithful spouse or a faithful parent, then he/she cannot be a faithful Christian. Marriage and the lives we live in our homes have eternal consequences for each of us. Most of us are shocked by the current state of marriage and the home in our society. We spend billions of dollars and pass all kinds of laws to try to deal with the breakdown and decay of these foundations. We have all heard the excuse, "Well, nobody is perfect," as a justification for these failures. Yet, while no one expects perfection, a lot of these problems would be solved if people would just be faithful spouses and faithful parents!

The search for the perfect Christian, perfect husband, wife, parents and children can continue, and we will all fail to meet the standard, disappointing ourselves and others about us. In that failure and disappointment we can find excuses for breaking up churches, marriages, families and homes. None of us can do anything about being perfect, but all of us can do something about being faithful. How long must one be faithful? Inspiration answers--"*unto death*" (Revelation 2:10). How long should one be a faithful Christian, a faithful spouse, a faithful parent or a faithful child? Common sense answers, "unto death". Where else could "faithful" stop???

Steve Stevens

Therefore Stand, 10/98

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E-mail Wisdom

Received via e-mail. Don't know the author, but it surely gives one pause to think. How "busy" are you?

The Devil's Convention

Satan called a worldwide convention. In his opening address to his evil angels he said, "We can't keep the Christians from going to church. We can't keep them from reading their Bibles and knowing the truth. We can't even keep them from conservative values. But, we can do something else. We can keep them from forming an intimate, abiding relationship experience in Christ. If they gain that connection with Jesus, our power over them is broken. So, let them go to church, let them have their conservative lifestyles, but steal their time so they can't gain that experience in Jesus Christ. This is what I want you to do, angels. Distract them from gaining hold of their Savior and maintaining that vital connection throughout their day!"

"How shall we do this?" shouted his angels.

"Keep them busy in the non-essentials of life and invent un-numbered schemes to occupy their minds," he answered. "Tempt them to spend, spend, spend; then borrow, borrow, borrow. Convince the wives to go to work for long hours and the husbands to work six or seven days a week, 10-12 hours a day so they can afford their lifestyles. Keep them from spending time with their children. As their family fragments, soon their homes will offer no escape from the pressures of work

"Over-stimulate their minds so that they cannot hear that still small voice. Entice them to lay the radio or cassette player whenever they drive, to keep the TV, VCR, CDs and their PCs going constantly in their homes; and see to it that every store and restaurant in the world plays non-Biblical, contradicting music constantly. This will jam their minds and break that union with Christ.

"Fill their coffee tables with magazines and newspapers. Pound their minds with news 24 hours a day. Invade their driving moments with billboards. Flood their mailboxes with junk mail, sweepstakes, mail-order catalogues and every kind of newsletter and promotional offering free products, services and false hopes.

"Even in their recreation, let them be excessive. Have them return from their recreation exhausted, disquieted and unprepared for the coming week. Don't let them go out in nature to reflect on God's wonders. Send them to amusement parks, sporting events, concerts and movies instead; and when they meet for spiritual fellow-ship, involve them in gossip and small talk so that they leave with troubled consciences and unsettled emotions.

"Let them be involved in soul-winning, but crowd their lives with so many good

causes they have no time to seek power from Christ. Soon they will be working in their own strength, sacrificing their health and family for the good of the cause."

It was quite a convention in the end, and the evil angels went eagerly to their assignments, causing Christians everywhere to get busy, busy, busy and rush here and there. Has the devil been successful in his scheme? You be the judge. How about this definition of "busy":

B-being

U-under

S-Satan's

Y-yoke.

Makes one think. Satan's goal is to take our hearts and minds off Christ, then steer us toward the cares of the world. God wants us to enjoy life, but He must first be our Life. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things of the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:1-4).

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Spiritual Laziness

Webster's Dictionary says laziness includes such things as "having an aversion to work or effort; indolent; slow moving; sluggish." It has been estimated that laziness costs companies and employers millions of dollars each year. Employees give less effort on the job than they are paid to do; wasting time due to laziness is a national problem.

Laziness is not the exclusive territory of the secular work place. The church is blighted by it, too. This is evidenced in congregations having members who won't work or, if given an assignment, will drag their feet relative to completion. Excuses punctuate the conversations between leaders and followers, as persons promise to get-around-to-it-tomorrow.

Spiritual laziness not only shows up in the work programs of the church, it also exists in the personal lives of the members. Such positive growth practices as prayer, Bible study, meditation in the Word and efforts to control the inner man are neglected or engaged in lazily. Some are even lazy relative to stewardship and church attendance.

The Bible contains a number of admonitions against laziness:

"How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? ... a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man" (Proverbs 6:9-11).

"As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him" (Proverbs 10:26)

"The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat" (Proverbs 13:4).

"The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing" (Proverbs 20:4).

"Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit" (Ecclesiastes 7:8).

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

"Who gave himself for us, that he might re- deem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).

Laziness is usually disguised in acts of procrastination. This is the *manana* syndrome of planning to do something tomorrow, but somehow, this magical day never arrives.

Likewise, students in Bible classes do an injustice to their teachers and God's Word by not preparing for classes. Some come to classes with workbooks are used without having spent time studying or "filling in the blanks". Others come to textual classes without prior reading or study in the text. The most popular excuse is, "I didn't have time." Both teachers and students use it frequently to justify laziness or procrastination. This is contrary to the Christian's priority of putting the kingdom first in his life (Matthew 6:33).

The CURE for laziness is action. The cure for procrastination is DO IT NOW. This, however, is easier said than done; especially when psychological issues are involved in producing these problems. Laziness is a serious problem and must be eliminated if one desires to please God and do His work effectively.

J.J. Turner

via South Florida Avenue c/C "Messenger",

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Getting the Most Out of a Sermon

Several universities have experimentally demonstrated that we remember only about half of what we hear (some say 10% of sermons). To get more out of sermons, remember these suggestions:

1) Get a good night's rest on Saturday. Dull minds are found in exhausted bodies. Listening is work. It increases the heart rate, increases blood circulation, and raises the body temperature.

2) Get rid of distractions. If you are easily distracted, move closer to the speaker. Do not concentrate on the cute little children in front of you. If you must be doing something with your hands, take notes.

3) Learn to concentrate. You can think four or five times faster than the preacher can speak. Use the extra time to weigh what he says. Review what he has already said.; anticipate what he might say next. Did he offer scriptural proof for his point? If you disagree, what arguments does he offer to change your mind?

4) Don't allow the mind to wander down a "rabbit trail". Let menu planning, business deals, lesson plans and fingernail-filing wait.

*"For the preaching of the cross is to them
that perish foolishness, but unto us which
are saved, it is the power of God."*

I Corinthians 1:18

via State Street c/C "On Line", Bristol, VA

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Serious about Christianity

If there were some way we could just back up and watch ourselves for a while, would we see someone serious about Christianity? God said we should do that very thing.

"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? -- unless indeed you are disqualified?" (II

Corinthians 13:5) The following questions should help each of us take a look at ourselves:

- * Does my life glorify God and cause others to glorify Him (Matthew 5:13-16)?
- * Am I happy to be a servant of God (Philippians 3:1; 4:4)?
- * Do I love people, even to the point of loving my enemies (Matthew 5:44)?
- * Am I a daily Bible reader, serious about learning God's will (Acts 17:11)?
- * Have I ever one even one soul for Jesus (II Timothy 2:2)?
- * Am I teaching anyone the gospel and praying for their salvation (Titus 2:11-15)?

- like
- * Do I focus my life on temporary things or on eternal things (Matthew 6:19-21)?
 - * Will I sacrifice myself and what I have for Jesus (II Corinthians 12:15)?
 - * Am I willing to repent of sins and correct attitudes and actions which are un-Christ like (Acts 17:30-31)?
 - * Do I put God and my duty to Him first in life (Matthew 6:33)?
 - * Have I made the world a better or a worse place by my living (Galatians 5:19-23)?
 - * Am I using myself in God's work (talents, money, time, etc.) (I Corinthians 15:58)?

One must obey the gospel to be saved (Mark 16:15-16). The Lord adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47). The saved person must remain faithful until death (Revelation 2:10; II Timothy 4:6-8). Obey the gospel of Christ and live for Christ now so that you may live eternally with Him.

-- Charles Box

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A Christian

Could I be called a Christian
If everybody knew
My secret thoughts and feelings
And everything I do?
Oh, could they see the likeness
Of Christ in me each day?
Oh, could they hear Him speaking
In every word I say?

Could I be called a Christian
If everyone could know
That I am found in places
Where Jesus would not go?
Oh, could they hear His echo
In every song I sing --
In eating, drinking, dressing
Could they see Christ in me?

Could I be called a Christian
If judged by what I read,
By all my recreations
And every thought and deed?
Could I be counted Christ-like
As I now work and pray
Unselfish, kind, forgiving

To others every day?

author unknown

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Overcoming Obstacles

In briefing rooms of American air bases during World War II there were posters with the following inscription on them:

"By all known laws which can be proven on paper and in the wind tunnel -- the bumblebee cannot fly. The size of his wings in relation to his body, according to aeronautical and mathematical science, simply means that he cannot fly. It is an impossibility. But, of course, the bumblebee doesn't know about these rules, so he goes ahead and flies anyway."

Rather than looking at all the obstacles and listening to everyone tell you what can't be done, realize that you can do whatever God calls you to do, relying on His strength rather than your own.

*"I can do all things through Christ,
which strengtheneth me"*

Philippians 4:13

What My Absence from Worship Did

It caused some people to question the reality of my faith.

It made some think I am a pretender.

It made many think that I consider my spiritual welfare and that of others a matter of small concern.

It weakened the effect of the worship service.

It made it harder for the preacher to preach.

It discouraged other church members and robbed them of a blessing.

It caused others to stay away from worship.

It made it harder for me to resist the temptation of the devil.

It gave the devil more power and influence over lost people.

It encouraged me to become irregular in church attendance.

*"... be thou an example of the believers,
in word, in conversation (manner of life), in
charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity....
Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine;
continue in them:
for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and*

them that hear thee."

I Timothy 4:12b, 16

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I Almost Sold Your Son

A member of the local congregation was actively involved in the visitation program of the church. He visited people in the community regularly and was well known as a good and honest man.

One day he rode the bus down town. He paid his fare, and the bus driver gave him his change. The man took his seat, and then realized the driver had given him 25 cents too much. The man thought, "I will return the quarter as I exit the bus." Then he thought, "It's only a quarter. The bus company charges too much anyway. They will never miss it." As the man exited the bus, he paused at the door and said, "You gave me 25 cents too much change."

The driver replied, "Thank you," and then added, "You are a member of the church on the outside of town, aren't you?"

The man answered, "Yes, sir. I am."

The driver then said, "I gave you too much change on purpose. I've been thinking about attending worship somewhere, and I just wanted to see what you would do. I'll see you Sunday."

The man got off the bus, fell to his knees and prayed, "Dear God, I beg Your forgiveness. I almost sold Your Son for 25 cents."

Mike Rogers

Covington *Family News*, Covington, TN

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Dihydrogen Monoxide

A high school student caught everybody's attention with a demonstration of human susceptibility to pseudo-science, presented at Greater Idaho Falls Science Fair in April, 1997. His experiment has been reviewed briefly in several publications. It sparked my interest, too, And I have expanded somewhat on his findings (I do not know his name, since it was not given in the report I read). In his project he urged people to sign a petition calling upon the government for strict control, and preferably, total elimination of the chemical compound dihydrogen monoxide. Among many reasons which can be given for taking such action are these:

1. It is a major component in acid rain.
2. It has a deleterious impact upon soil, making it subject to erosion.
3. It weakens and dissolves most unprotected metals.
4. It decreases the effectiveness of mechanical braking systems.
5. It provides a safe environment for bacteria and is a carrier of many diseases.
6. It enhances the potency of drugs by getting them quickly into the blood.
7. Ingestion of it can cause excessive sweating and vomiting.
8. In its gaseous state it can cause severe burns.
9. If inhaled, it causes immediate death.
10. It is often found in the tumors and tissues of cancer patients.

The student asked people if they would support a worldwide ban on dihydrogen monoxide. Eighty-six percent said "yes". One percent said, "No, because we have no right to infringe upon the rights of others." One percent said, "No, because the helpful properties of the chemical far outweigh any hazards it presents to life and health when used judiciously. Twelve percent were undecided. The thesis of the experiment, proved conclusively, was: People are not well-educated in science. They are therefore gullible, easily persuaded by alarmists who practice junk science, spreading fear of everything in our environment.

Dihydrogen monoxide (H_2O) is water. See how it fits each of the matters listed above, some of which will now be seen as non-hazardous.

1. There is no rain at all without water.
2. Flood or unobstructed water runoff washes away soil.
3. Have you ever seen rust?
4. Wet brakes often malfunction.
5. Polluted water can be made safe for use by applying heat.
6. Just try taking your pills without water.
7. Drinking hot water causes sweating. Drinking lukewarm water can make you vomit.

- 8. Heated water vapor is called steam.
- 9. Inhaling water is called drowning.
- 10. It is found in tumors and tissues of all people. Our bodies are 93% water.

Gullible and improperly educated people are also easily deceived by junk religion. And, truth to tell, there is much more junk religion around than junk science. And I don't mean only such obvious aberrations as the doctrines of Jim Jones and David Koresh, or the Heaven's Gate cult. There are literally thousands of supposedly Christian groups -- some are called "mainstream denominations" -- that enjoy great prestige and favor in the religious world, but they abuse the Bible, the words given to us by God for instruction and edification. They have interpreted scripture to suit themselves and their own purposes. Those who pervert, wrest, alter or otherwise misconstrue the Bible will lead to spiritual death all who follow them (Galatians 1:6-8; 2 Peter 3:15-18; Revelation 22:18-19). Spiritual death is much more serious than physical death because it can become an eternal condition. So we are warned to test the spirits/teachers (those who claim to teach you how to live your life and how to please God) to see whether they are from God or not, whether they are teaching the truth of God or not. Many of them will be exposed as false prophets and antichrists (1 John 4:1-3).

Some call the Bible "a very dangerous book" because they assume and assert, "you can prove anything and everything by the Bible." Not so! When the Bible is properly understood and applied, it states religious truth and exposes all religious error. Read the Bible and you will come to understand whether your teachers are of God's truth or are guilty of practicing and propagating junk religion. If you want to do something that will enhance your health and enrich your life, pour yourself a large glass of dihydrogen monoxide and sit down and spend some time reading the Bible.

Gerald Cowan

Shield of Faith

Marion, IL

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Playing Games with the Bible

Jacob Ditzler and J.S . Sweeney (gospel preacher) were having a debate on the subject of the scriptural mode of baptism. Ditzler showed that a secondary meaning (per modern definition) of the word "baptize" was "to

An Interesting Thought

10...9...8...7...6...5...4...3...2...1, and so goes "the count". The famous "count" of those who choose to let a moment spin out in order to calm their storm. Ecclesiastes says, *"Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry:*

sprinkle .

In reply, Brother Sweeney showed a secondary meaning of "believe" (per modern definition) was "to have an opinion," and the secondary meaning of "saved" (per modern definition) was "to be pickled". He then gave the resulting translation of Mark 16:16: "He that hath an opinion and is sprinkled shall be pickled." Then he raised the valid question, "Is it our aim to see what we can make of the Scriptures, or is it to find our what God has said?"
-- Frank Higginbotham

for anger rests in the bosom of fools" (7:9).

Temper

*When I have lost my temper,
I have lost my reason, too.
I am never proud of anything
Which I angrily do.
I have learned by sad experience
That when my temper flies,
I never do a worthy deed,
A decent deed or wise.*

Bizarre Benevolence

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, numerous volunteer organizations stepped forward to assist the victims. We might wish some had done a better job of handling the massive donations they collected; perhaps they were simply caught off guard by the sheer size and

scope of their task. One group, however, deserves top billing in the Hall of Shame. As its contribution to the relief efforts, Planned Parenthood of New York City offered "free reproductive health care for women affected by the World Trade Center disaster." Of course, they made no reference to abortion, but Planned Parenthood doctrine always couches the killing of babies under the guise of health care. When asked, a Planned Parenthood spokesperson confirmed that the offer included free abortions.

Words like crass, callous and cruel seem entirely inadequate to describe such an insulting offer. Feature it! Thousands of innocent people in and near the World Trade Center are killed along with everyone in the jetliners. Innumerable family members and friends are devastated. And Planned Parenthood's benevolent response is. . . more deaths and destruction!

Such an unvarnished attempt to exploit vulnerable victims shocks our sensibilities. Picture a pregnant wife whose husband has just been murdered by terrorists. Given time to think through her situation, she would never give up this precious link between herself and her late husband. But in the shock of the moment, magnified by depression, she hears of Planned Parenthood's offer and allows them to destroy her baby. Only later does harsh reality set in; the horrid act haunts her for the rest of her life.

Happily, not one person is reported to have taken advantage of Planned Parenthood's two weeks of ghoulish generosity. May God bless those courageous mothers. May their children be strong and healthy. And may this rejection of the culture of death be of some small comfort as, this Tuesday, our nation mourns the 29th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court decision that made abortion-on-demand the law of the land.

Joe Slater

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Sowing Blessings

If you want to make a difference
In other people's lives,
Be thoughtful and considerate,
Be slow to criticize.
Be helpful when you're needed,
Let others know you care,
Be patient and forgiving
When hurts are hard to bear.
Do always unto others
As you'd have done to you,
For when you sow God's blessings,
You'll reap His harvest, too.

V.B . Cheval

God Can Use You

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is the feeding of the 5000. It's amazing to me that this is the only miracle that Jesus did that is recorded in all four gospel accounts (What else besides food could get the attention of four preachers?). John gives us some information about this story that the other three writers do not share. Guess where Jesus got the five loaves and the two fish? Do you remember? "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish... (John 6:9). Imagine that! A boy. A lad. A kid. Jesus used the gifts of a child to do one of his greater miracles.

A journey through the Bible indicates that God can use anybody to accomplish His purpose. God can use...

the aged -- just ask Moses (Exodus 7:7).
the hard-hearted -- just ask Pharaoh (Exodus 4:21).
the young -- just ask Joseph (Genesis 37:2).
the depressed -- just ask Elijah (I Kings 19:4).
the guilty -- just ask Isaiah (Isaiah 1:7).
the angry -- just ask Jonah (Jonah 4:1).
the sad -- just ask Nehemiah (Nehemiah 2:2).
the immoral -- just ask Rahab (Joshua 2:1)

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