

# The Way of Truth

Vol. 80

“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”

No. 2

## *Following the Holy Ghost's Lead in Reaching the Lost*

*Turn to page 14*

February 2022



## AN ENDANGERED SPECIES

**T**HE SEED thought for this editorial is inspired by an email I received some time ago from Bro. Marc Slate in Alabama:

*Dear Bro. Greg,*

*Was able to view your (God's) message this morning—what a powerful and sobering thought you developed with this—the scrutiny of God's roving eyes! He must be truly grieved with all the pretense of worship He sees designed to entertain and extract money from people for material gain.*

*There are certain locations, often very small, around the planet where there are more species (often rare and endangered) of a given plant or animal than anywhere else. We biologists call these "biodiversity hotspots." Examples: the rainforest of the tiny country of Costa Rica is a hotspot for tree frogs; the rift valley in Africa is a hotspot for cichlid fish; our state's Tennessee river system is a hotspot for freshwater mussels.*

*Here's my point: Surely your congregation there, as seen by God's eyes as He looks over the earth is a rare hotspot for true Christianity; a precious gathering of "endangered species" not found in many other spots and very scattered otherwise.*

### HOW DOES A SPECIES BECOME ENDANGERED, THEN EXTINCT?

There are reasons why species become endangered and eventually extinct. It can be caused by a change from a conducive habitat to a harsh environment affected by weather change or modifications by outside forces. Another element responsible for endangerment is lack of sufficient food sources. A third cause could be the introduction of pollutants into the environment. As often is the case, there is an inability to adapt to changing circumstances. Illegal hunting and legal exploitation are contributors as well.

But this editorial is not about endangered plant and animal species. Pure Christianity has become an "endangered species"!

### HOW HAS PURE CHRISTIANITY BECOME ENDANGERED?

I would like to make some references to the reasons for endangerment among natural species and apply them to modern-day Christianity. Changes in the world environment caused by secular humanism and the destruction of moral standards have wreaked havoc upon pure religion, producing today's distorted view of holy living. There is also a genuine lack of spiritual food. Old-time gospel preaching, which feeds the souls of the spiritually hungry, has been replaced by comedians entertaining the multitudes under the guise of religion. There is lack of men with a calling to preach the truth, thinking a degree from some seminary qualifies a person to "feed the flock of God." Our generation is cursed with the introduction of moral pollutants that squash spirituality. There has been a general inability to properly apply biblical

standards to this generation. This did not happen overnight. Sad to say, it is evident that Satan has had success for years, exploiting the times by hardening hearts against conviction and deceiving saints into lethargy, and ultimately backsliding.

But all is not lost! God is still on His throne and He still has a people. His message is still being proclaimed. But there is and always has been only a remnant of a few. Matthew 7:13, 14, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

### WHO THEN MAKES UP THIS "ENDANGERED SPECIES"?

First and foremost, those who are truly born again.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). There is evidence of being born again! "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17). This salvation does not come from church joining or shaking the preacher's hand or signing a decision card. It is a true one-on-one experience with Jesus Christ that results from godly sorrow, repentance, faith, forgiveness, and a commitment to walk in the light as He is in the light. I John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Notice the scripture says, ... "we have fellowship with one another." Though true Christians be few, we are called to fellowship everyone who has like experience. I 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." Though outnumbered, though endangered, the Church of the living God will never become extinct! For God's children have received the call to be one as Christ and the Father are one (John 17:21). And Christ has said in Matthew 16:18, ... upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

The true people of God live above sin—I John 3:9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Notice Titus 2:11, 12, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

#### ABOUT THE COVER

There are many pathways an individual may choose to travel. Not all will take him in the direction he desires to go. God has called His church to reach the lost and be soul winners. To be successful in this task, we must follow the lead of the Holy Spirit. This important truth is emphasized in the lesson beginning on page 14.

# THE WAY OF TRUTH

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No. 2

*Devoted to the gospel of our loving Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave freely His life-blood, to save us from our many sins, to sanctify our fallen nature and to bring into one body all true believers, by whose stripes we are healed.*

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The endangered species is he who separates himself from the sinful world. Notice I John 2:15, 16: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

Our congregation received this e-mail from one internet viewer:

*"Got around to viewing your night service ... what a great resource you have at your disposal in these young men to step in and deliver on short notice ... a bright future. Bright indeed considering the seductive allure of worldly things that have such strong appeal for our young!"*

Talk about an endangered species, consider this: there are very few who believe in wearing modest apparel. Yet, the Bible says in I Timothy 2:9, "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array."

When Adam and Eve sewed together fig leaves to cover a very limited portion of their bodies, that was not good enough for the Lord. Consider Genesis 3:21, "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them."

In today's world, where immodesty is rampant, it is rare indeed to find people who conscientiously adorn themselves modestly.

It is very rare to find a person who loves Christ supremely—who love their neighbors as themselves—who love their enemies. This is indeed an endangered species!

Throughout the world, it is becoming harder to see people saved. It is rare to find a person who will yield to the convicting power of the Holy Ghost. People will hardly come to services today, and when they do, most refuse to accept His proffered grace.

I would not want this editorial to be negative or discouraging. The good news is that it is possible for an endangered species to be protected and come back from the edge of extinction and flourish again!

One study of marine mammals finds that several once endangered species, including the humpback whale, the northern elephant seal, and green sea turtles have recovered and are repopulating their former ranges.

Though we as saints of God are an endangered species, let us multiply and grow numerically and spiritually. We cannot allow the true gospel to become extinct! It cannot die out!

We have Jesus Christ protecting us. He will provide the conducive environment, supply us with an abundance of nourishment, protect us from the exploitation of Satan, and instead of extinction, this once endangered species—true Christianity—will flourish again!

Though generations pass, may our congregation in Hagerstown and Church of God congregations everywhere always be "hot spots" for the endangered species of true Christianity, even till Jesus comes!

May God bless us all. †

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# WHEN THE FUTURE IS UNCERTAIN

By Bro. Ralph Craig

Every Saturday evening, our congregation meets in the sanctuary for a prayer meeting, remembering the burdens and needs brought to our attention, and praying for the success of our services on Sunday. Several saints take turns leading the prayer meeting with a scripture or a thought to inspire the saints as we go to prayer. These prove to be very challenging and a blessing. On January 1, 2022, the following thoughts inspired us, and we trust will inspire you.

**S**OMETIMES your next step in life is very clear. You finished high school, and it's time for college. College is finished. You have a job lined up. Those steps in life are usually not so difficult.

But then there are choices and decisions we need to make, where we are really unsure what our next step should be: who to marry, where to live, and many other serious decisions.

During these times, the future can seem very uncertain. You might have no idea what you should do next or even what you can do next. Your future is up in the air. These times can be really challenging and discouraging. But we should look at it as a time to grow and to increase our faith, and to strengthen our relationship with Jesus.

Here are a few things you can do when the future is uncertain—

## 1. THANK GOD FOR EVERYTHING HE HAS DONE IN THE PAST

Making choices and decisions for the future can be scary. It can cause anxiety and even fear. But we want our fears to give way to an increase in our faith. One way to do that is to just remember the past. Was there ever a time when God didn't take care of you? Was there ever a time when God didn't use a difficult situation to help you to grow? Was there ever a time when God forsook you? Of course not. And He never will!

I'm sure all of us have had moments in our lives when it felt like God had forsaken us. Even Jesus had that feeling as He hung on the cross. But when we have those moments, we should be able to see some of God's plan beginning to unfold, and we should remember all the ways He has carried us through.

Let your memory of God's past faithfulness inspire you to trust in God's present faithfulness in your life. **TGIF** stands for: *Today God Is Faithful; Tomorrow God Is Faithful!*

God is always calling us to remember His goodness in the past before we move ahead into the unknown future.

## 2. TRUST THAT GOD WILL SUSTAIN YOU IN THE PRESENT

Trusting God in the present moment is a choice we make, especially when the future is uncertain.

It's easy to say we trust that God is taking care of us when we have everything we need and everything is going well. Are we trusting in our own efficiency and our things? Are we trusting the gifts rather than the Giver? Even in the good times, we must actively choose to trust God.

In a time of uncertainty, we must continually tell God, "I trust you." We can know that God is caring for us in this present time.

## 3. REMEMBER THAT THE PATH FORWARD WILL EVENTUALLY BECOME CLEARER

Important to remember that times of uncertainty won't last forever. "To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

When we remember that this season of uncertainty is leading us into something else, we can keep a sense of perspective and maintain a hopeful outlook. It won't always be this way.

God has put certain dreams and desires in you for a reason. You might not know what those reasons are just yet, but He does. He has plans to use you for something full of meaning and purpose.

You might not know where the journey will eventually take you, so just take the next right step. As John Piper once said, "Keep the room clean where you are, and in God's time, the door to the next room will open."

Remembering how God has been faithful to us in the past, and trusting Him with our present, we can look forward with hope to our future.

## 4. PRAY, PRAY, PRAY

None of this is possible without prayer, so allow the uncertainty of this time to increase your dependence on God. Instead of silently worrying about everything you're going through, talk about it with God.

Commit to trusting in God by talking to Him. The only way to build trust with someone is by deepening your relationship with that person, and the only way to deepen your relationship with them is to spend time with them.

Spending more time with God is something you will never regret.

Philippians 4:6, 7: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and your minds through Christ Jesus."

Know that while the future seems uncertain to you, it is not uncertain to God. He knows what's to come, and He's asking you to trust Him. He'll never let you down. †

As many of our readers know, we can be found on the internet at

**[www.wayoftruth.org](http://www.wayoftruth.org)**

where in addition to reading past issues and other information, you can watch our general services every Sunday LIVE at 10:40 A.M and 6:00 P.M. E.S.T. Enjoy Spirit-filled singing and preaching. Also, our mid-week service at 7:00 P.M. Wednesdays is aired live. There is a chatroom where you can interact with us and share your prayer requests. Tune in and worship with us!



# RESPECT

Message by Bro. Tom Harris

(delivered 10/24/21)



**I** WOULD LIKE to use as a text II Timothy, chapter 2, verses 24 and 25: “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.” My few thoughts for this evening are simply, “Respect.”

Lately, it seems like I’ve found myself noticing more and more the lack of respect that people have for one another in the world today. You don’t have to talk to too many people or listen to many news outlets before you realize that people have very little respect for one another. Across lines of politics and different opinions, I’ve been amazed from time to time in hearing people childishly calling people names. It’s so sad, for there’s little respect in the world today. I think, as Christians, it’s very important that we have respect for all people. You know, it’s easier to respect people that you look up to, but I believe we’re to respect all people. It’s hard to respect some people, but I think that we need to respect even those that might not seem like they deserve it.

There are a couple different kinds of respect. I have great respect for Bro. Greg as our pastor. The respect that I have for Bro. Greg is quite different than the respect that I might have for a politician. I respect Bro. Greg so much that I value his advice, his wisdom, his experience, and his knowledge. That’s one kind of respect, but I shouldn’t necessarily have that same kind of respect towards a politician, as an example. But there needs to be a basic level of respect that we have for people just because they are people, and that respect we are supposed to have is based on the intrinsic value, the natural value, that each and every soul has.

God has put a soul in each and every man. We need to respect that soul, and therefore, that person. I know we all know that Jesus died and made His sacrifice for every single person. Sometimes it’s easy just to think about that and not really put faces and names of the people that Jesus died for. If you think about it, Jesus died for the lazy person. Sometimes I find it very hard to respect some people that I see that are lazy. But you know, Jesus died for the lazy person.

Sometimes I find it hard to respect people who are very self-centered, very conceited, and proud. That’s hard to do sometimes; but you know, Jesus died for the self-centered, conceited, and proud person. Since Jesus made His sacrifice without partiality for every single person, who would I be to withhold respect from any person? As Christians, we need to have respect for other people. Regardless of their nationality or regardless of anything else, people merit some respect from us. I

really believe that we can only lead people to God if we do respect them.

Now you might ask, how do we show respect to people? There are a couple of different things that I want to talk about, but in the very first place, you show respect to people simply by valuing them and letting them know that you do value them. I think there are a lot of people who don’t feel valued by many people. I think it’s up to us, as Christians, to show people that God values them. In order to show them that God values them, I think we first have to make people realize that we value them before they can see that God values them. I think that’s the progression that it needs to take. Again, we need to respect all people.

I believe that everyone might not deserve our respect, but I really think everyone *needs* our respect. Again, I mentioned that it’s easy sometimes to forget that and not put a face to the name, but if you think about that person, it rubs you the wrong way in every conceivable way. I think that it’s probably not a stretch for everybody to picture the person I’m talking about—that person who really gets under your skin and really frustrates or annoys you. It’s hard to smile at that person and have the right attitude toward that person. We need to respect that person.

I’ve noticed lately that it’s very easy to be disrespectful towards people whenever they’re not around. I don’t think that’s a new revelation to anyone, but sometimes it seems as though you hear people talk about others behind their backs, and it can really be easy to join in with that and feed fires that don’t necessarily need to be fed. I think that happens a lot, especially in politics. Again, you notice that there are some people who feed fires that just don’t really need to be fed. It doesn’t matter if we value or are pleased with politicians or a leader or not, we still need to respect them, if for no other reason than they are persons, and that Jesus died for them just as much as He died for us. That’s a real thing. I don’t want to say we can never disagree or challenge someone, but our text says, “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.” Again, I don’t think feeding fires that don’t need fed really shows a spirit of true meekness.

I feel like I’m talking a lot about people who are hard to respect, and I don’t want to harp on it too much, but I think it’s good for us to consider and think about some of the people that we find hard to respect, because it’s a real thing we encounter in this world. Sometimes I find it hard to respect those that are wrong and very adamant in their wrongness. They’re very determined and set in their wrongness. That can be seen in many different things. People have world views. There might be people in false religion that to me it might seem so obvious that I might think, well, how blind can you be? But that’s not the attitude we’re supposed to have. We need to have respect even for people that are wrong. That might not be easy to do sometimes.

There was a man by the name of Ravi Zacharias, originally from India. I believe he’s still living. He grew up in Hinduism, but he became a Christian. He’s a very intelligent man. He’s taken upon himself to be an advocate for Christ. He’s been to different colleges and different universities that teach different religions. I don’t

remember exactly which university he was at, but it was one that was either teaching Hinduism or some other religion. Anyway, as an advocate for Christianity who lectured to that student body, they had great respect for him. They appreciated him coming because he had respect for them as a people. I don't believe he was derogatory, but he had respect for them.

I think there's a lot of power that we can have, as Christians, to show people that we respect them, because whenever they see us respect them, it makes them a whole lot more receptive to what we have to say. People tend not to listen if we try to tear them up or prove them wrong, but we have great power in letting people actually hear what we have to say if we show them we respect them. It's really important.

I was thinking of all the people to respect, we might find it hard perhaps, to respect those who don't even believe in God at all. It is important that we respect them as well. The atheist. I keep saying this, but we need to have a basic level of human respect for all people.

What is that basic level of human respect that we need for all people? There are couple of different things I want to mention quickly. The first thing: to basically respect people, I think it means that we don't speak evil of them or slander them. We read in Titus 3:2, "To speak evil of no man [and it goes on to say], but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men." Speak evil of no man. What about the evil man? What about the bad person, the person who has done you wrong? There are evil and bad people out there, but this says "speak evil of no man." Our text says that we are to be gentle and patient and apt to teach all men. I think that's part of the basic respect that we need to have for all people. Again, the Bible says "speak evil of no man."

The second thing: to be willing to respect someone enough to give of ourselves, at least, to really listen to someone. I think there's a whole lot of respect that is shown to someone if we show we're just willing to listen to that person. As I thought about that, I wondered if Jesus was a good listener. I don't know, but I wish the Bible had gone into more detail, maybe about Jesus sitting around a fire with the disciples and listening to them, but I do think Jesus was a real good listener. The Bible says in Jeremiah 29:12, speaking of God, "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you." And Jesus, God in the flesh, said, "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

I went to Sight and Sound to see the drama of Jesus. I thought it was so interesting to see the actor portray Jesus going into the house of Mary and Martha and sitting around and laughing with His friends. It's an awesome thing to think about. Jesus sitting there and listening to people. We read in scripture that we're able to cast all our cares upon Him because He cares for us. I think that Jesus showed that spirit of caring by listening when He was here on Earth. He showed people that He cared about them, and I want people to know that I care about them.

I thought of Zacchaeus. I want to read a couple verses about Zacchaeus. Luke 19:4-7: "And [Zacchaeus] ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came

to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they [scribes and Pharisees] all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner." I picture Jesus sitting in Zacchaeus' house, just talking to him. Imagine just talking to Jesus and telling Him about the things you care about or the things you're afraid of or worried about. I see Him just smiling and nodding and doing all those things that a real good listener tends to do.

Did you notice in so many of the examples of Jesus and His interactions with people that He didn't stand on ceremony with many people. There's a place in Matthew where the scribes and the Pharisees came to Jesus' disciples and said, "Why does your Master sit and eat and go to be with publicans and sinners?" Jesus didn't care. He didn't stand on ceremony that He had. If anyone could have stood on ceremony, it would have been Jesus. Jesus didn't have that holier-than-thou attitude that some people tend to have. If anyone was holy, surely, it was Jesus. It is so interesting to think of the respect that the great God of heaven had for just people in general. It is a wonderful thing.

In thinking about our text, "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves," I think that listening to people is a prerequisite to being able to instruct them and being able to reason with them. You have to listen to people before you can reason with them. It could be tempting, perhaps, to easily fall into the snare of thinking, "Oh well, if I ever have the opportunity to sit down with an atheist or someone who had all these misconceptions about religion, I'd like to lay it all out for them and tell them exactly why they're wrong." I think sometimes I find myself on the verge of falling into that snare, but I think many people would be much more willing to listen to what we have to say if we show ourselves willing to listen to them. I think many people who might be lost or might not have the truth, really need someone to just listen to them and then show that they care before they then are able to start considering the true questions and the true meaning of life.

In closing, as we think about Jesus, He wasn't afraid to get involved with people. Again, I'm talking about showing respect to people by listening to them. Sometimes I found it hard to really want to listen to people, because if I listen to them it means I would have to get very involved with their problems. That's not always a fun thing to do. But again, I think listening to people, showing them that we care is part of that basic human respect that we need to have for all people.

I mentioned in the foregoing part of the message that Jesus made the sacrifice that He made by dying on the cross for each and every person. I think I shared this thought with you before: Jesus knew exactly how bad things were going to be today. Whenever Jesus was crucified, He didn't just think about forgiving and sacrificing for that generation then that was actually crucifying Him, but I believe He thought about the 10, 20, 30 generations down the road, and maybe today, of those who have made bad decisions and who have caused problems. But Jesus made that sacrifice for them.

Whenever I find it hard to respect people, I want to keep in my mind the fact that Jesus did sacrifice for everyone and think if that sacrifice was something that Jesus was willing to make, truly I must be willing to show a basic level of respect to people.

Now so many thoughts and different messages can be summed up quite concisely. This thought this evening on “respect” all boils down to having a love and a real value for people’s souls. I believe it was Jesus who said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” I want to try to have a greater soul burden so that I can have a greater respect for people. I think, as Christians, it is our desire to reach people. I find myself lately realizing that I need to have a greater soul burden, a greater respect, and a greater value for people’s souls.

I pray that these few thoughts have been an encouragement. May God bless us all. †

## SHADOWS OF GOOD THINGS

By the late Russell R. Byrum

### (Part V)

#### THE TABERNACLE AND ITS FURNITURE

(Exodus 25-27, 30, 35-38, 40)

##### The Laver

(Exodus 30:17-21; 38:8)

**T**HE ALTAR was typical of our justification through the atonement of Christ.

God has given us less specific information concerning the laver than of the other articles of furniture in the tabernacle. We are told that it was made of brass (copper), of the brazen mirrors of the women. Here the priests must wash both hands and feet before entering the tabernacle, or ministering at the altar, lest they die. Its shape and size are not given; but probably it was round in shape as was customary of such vessels. It was large enough to contain sufficient water for the

washing of the priests, and probably also for the washing of the sacrifices to be burned upon the altar. The laver was located in the court between the brazen altar and the entrance to the tabernacle. It is stated of it, “And he made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass.” This seems to imply that the foot was something separate from the laver.

Some have supposed the foot was a saucer like basin below the laver in which the feet and hands of the priests were washed and which supported the laver by a shaft rising from its center.

*Typical Meaning*—That the laver had symbolic and typical significance is to be gathered from the importance attached to the washings there. Twice it is stated

of the priests who washed there, “That they die not.” Moreover the New Testament is quite clear as to its typical meaning. “He saved us, by the washing of regeneration” (Titus 3:5). The marginal reading of the Revised gives “laver” of regeneration instead of “washing.” So it is translated in the Emphatic Diaglott. The same Greek word is used here as is used in the Greek Septuagint in Exodus 30:18 for laver.

This washing at the laver is not to be understood as typifying water baptism, as some have supposed. Sound principles of symbolic interpretation forbid making a literal thing symbolic of a similar literal thing. Besides, this was essential to entrance into the ancient house of God; but one may enter God’s church before water baptism, as was evidently true of the thief on the cross, of Paul, or of Cornelius.

But the “washing of regeneration” is a cleansing that is necessary to entrance into God’s church. Jesus said, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). The kingdom and the church are practically identical. Regeneration and the new birth mean the same. As those justified at the altar and entering that ancient house needed this washing at the laver, so we today need, not only justification from committed sins, but also regeneration of our hearts.

The laver was typical of this regeneration as the altar was of justification. The water typifies the word of God, which, in conjunction with the *Spirit of God*, is an agent for affecting the new birth (John 3:5). “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you” (John 15:3). “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth” (James 1:18). “Being born again ... by the word of God” (I Peter 1:23).

Conversion is twofold in its nature. It brings the sinner into right relations with God, and effects right character in the sinner, thus enabling him to keep in right relation with God. We need to be justified or pardoned of our committed sins, and we need also to have power over the power of the indwelling sinful nature so that we can keep justified by living a holy life. Justification would be of little practical value to us without regeneration. This regeneration is variously described as a new birth, becoming a “new creature,” receiving a “new heart,” and as being “created” anew.

It may be well described as salvation from the reigning power of the sinful nature. We naturally have a depraved nature that impels to sin. This depraved nature is a derangement of the moral nature. It is a perversion of the affections, and a weakening of the conscience and of the will insomuch that the sinner says, “To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Romans 7:18). Now, regeneration is not an entire removal of depravity; for it is the testimony both of the Bible and experience that depravity still remains in some sense in the regenerated. But we know that when one is born again a new power comes into his life that makes him triumphant over the depravity of his nature. Then he can say, “The law [power] of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law [power] of sin and death” (Romans 8:2).



THE LAVES AND "THE FOOT"



The incoming of the Spirit of the Almighty gives power over every sinful desire. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17). "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not" (I John 5:18). "A new heart also will I give you ... And I will ... cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26, 27).

Thank God, we are not only pardoned at the altar, Christ, but we are enabled to live well-pleasing to God by the laver of regeneration. How beautifully the process of our salvation is foreshadowed in this ancient type! It is a clearer and more systematic presentation of the method of salvation than is given anywhere in the New Testament. †



Dear Young People,

What a blessed achievement to be found acceptable in God's sight! It implies approval, and to have God's approval opens the door to all that is best for us now and for eternity.

As you read Sis. Jillian Gossard's thoughts this month, please take time to examine the thoughts and meditations that are allowed to take root in our hearts.

Blessings,  
Bro. Doug

## MEDITATION

By Sis. Jillian Gossard

I WOULD LIKE to take some time to comment on a thought based on a verse that I have been thinking about a lot lately. The verse is Psalm 19:14—"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer." And though the words of our mouth are very important, I'd like to focus more on how we can keep the meditation of our hearts acceptable in God's sight.

What does it mean to *meditate* about something? It means to "think deeply about or spend our time thinking on something." We know that it is important to make sure that our actions and words in our daily life, which those around us see and hear, follow how God wants our example to be. However, I find that sometimes it can be more difficult to make sure that our thoughts, even thoughts or attitudes that no one else knows about, would be acceptable in God's sight. The Lord knows exactly what is in our hearts. We must all make sure that both our public example and private thoughts are what is becoming of a Christian.

If we allow our hearts to meditate regularly on worldly influences, we can easily lose our focus on God

and start replacing Him with other things. Oftentimes in the Bible, when "the heart" is referred to, it is referring to who we truly are, our identity. It is the source of our thinking and helps us make decisions and establish our worldview. Our hearts can be led by many things, but we must be sure that our hearts are being led by the Holy Spirit in order to please God. We must be careful to protect and guard our hearts and minds, as well as what we spend our time thinking about, to ensure that the Holy Spirit can dwell in us and guide us.

Jeremiah 17:9, 10 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of His doings." Since God searches for our truest intentions and thoughts, it's good for us to examine ourselves regularly. Proverbs 4:23 tells us to "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." I believe that if we aren't cautious about what we spend our time meditating on, we can become more susceptible to temptation and can weaken our spiritual life. As Christians, when we get saved, God takes out our stony heart and replaces it with a heart of flesh, a heart that desires to please Him (Ezekiel 36:26, 27). If God gave us such a precious treasure as having a heart that wants to honor Him, we need to protect it.

We must be careful about what we watch, listen to, who we spend time with, and where we go. All of these things affect our priorities and what we think about most. We are not meant to think like the world. Romans 12:1, 2 says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a 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 you mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Let's also remember that it is so important to prioritize devotional time with God. Another way to protect your thoughts is to learn to recognize the devil when he comes. Learn what patterns he uses to distract you the most, and remember that through the Lord, we can resist him.

When we truly endeavor to be totally transparent with God and keep the meditations of our hearts acceptable in His sight, what does that give us? Jeremiah 24:7 says, "And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart." When we give the Lord control over our innermost thoughts and feelings, He draws us closer to Himself. We can see Him more clearly, and we can have our thoughts become His thoughts. We become more like Him.

In conclusion, I want to encourage you all to stay true to God. This spiritual walk is a battle sometimes, and we have to fight to keep ourselves who God desires us to be. But our God is faithful. Let's all make sure to examine our thoughts from time to time, to be sure that we live a life that is pleasing to God. He is so worthy of our everything.

The Lord bless you all! †





# THE POETRY PAGE

## GOD'S LOVE

**Beverly J. Anderson**

God's love is ever boundless,  
It spans a world-wide chart;  
Yet reaches down to you and me  
And dwells within our heart.

God's love is ever faithful,  
Steadfast through every day.  
A love that never will forsake—  
He'll be with us always.

God's love is never-changing,  
He's every day the same.  
He loves us now. He always will.  
Oh, glory to His name!

God's love is never-ending,  
Lasts through eternity.  
Forever and forevermore  
His love for us shall be!

## BEARING UP

**Jean Wood**

When life was young and simple,  
I didn't know my fate  
Would be to garner courage,  
And bear up such a weight.

As challenge piles on challenge,  
There is a buoyant force  
That builds determination,  
And strength to stay the course.

The power that waits my calling,  
As close as hand to glove,  
Was there from the beginning,  
Its name is God and Love.

## HE IS ALWAYS THERE

**Dolores Karides**

"I am with thee always"  
Are the words He spoke to me  
When I went to Him in prayer  
Upon a bended knee.  
He banished all my troubles  
With His abiding love,  
And I received His blessings  
From heaven up above.  
So never fear your problems  
Are more than you can bear,  
For God is always with you ...  
He is always there.

## GOD PROMISED

**Dottlee Dugan Reid**

God did not tell me,  
Only roses would grow.  
That I'd find no sorrow,  
On the path I must go.

But He promised to be there,  
Each step of the way,  
Providing a way to escape,  
The temptations each day.

His grace is all sufficient  
Daily to see me through.  
He'll help me to conquer,  
And be victorious, too.

## A LITTLE POOL OF QUIETNESS

**Alice Hansche Mortenson**

A little pool of quietness  
Abides within my heart;  
A well of deep serenity,  
Untroubled, set apart  
From all the outer world's unrest,  
Anxiety, and care;  
And when I turn prayer's golden key  
I find Him waiting there.  
A little pool of quietness  
Set deep within the Rock  
Of Ages to withstand the stress,  
The pressure, and the shock  
Of these dark days in which we live.  
No bomb, no gun can blast  
This shelter of His love for me;  
It will forever last. †

# IF YE LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS

RADIO MESSAGE BY  
BRO. GREG TYLER



**ONCE AGAIN**, we will open up our Bibles and look into the Word of God. St. John 14:13-15: “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

We’d like to emphasize on this broadcast the words of Jesus as found in our text of St. John 14, verse 15: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” This is a very straightforward and simple statement, and yet, it is overlooked by most religious people today. Sad to say, it appears that most religious people have the idea that you can be a Christian or claim to be a Christian and live just any kind of way. Friends, it is not so! Sometimes we feel that the Church of God ministry is like a voice crying in the wilderness. Just a few, here and there, that’s crying out and letting the people know “this is not so,” for the Lord Jesus Christ said very plainly, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

Farther on down in St. John 14, verse 23, this is what it says: “Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” You see, the Word of God, when properly understood and rightly divided, makes perfect sense, and it blends from the beginning of Genesis to the last end of Revelation. There is no confusion in the Word of God. Apparent discrepancies are done away with when the Holy Spirit is able to reveal the truth of the Word of God; and the truth is, if we really love Jesus Christ, we will keep His commandments. On the flip side of that: if we don’t keep His commandments, do we truly love Him?

The Bible gives us a direct association between love and obedience. Notice St. John, chapter 15, verses 9-11. Jesus is again speaking: “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” Do you see the association between love and obedience? Friends, the Bible tells us, “If we love Jesus Christ, we will keep His Word.” We will do our very best to keep the commandments of God. This is not something new.

If we really study the Bible, we will see that God expected Adam and Eve to keep His commandments, even in the Garden of Eden. In fact, Friends, they disobeyed. That is why they were cast out of the garden. Right on through history, we see that the Lord expected those who profess to love Him to keep His commandments.

We read from the book of Nehemiah, chapter 1, verses 8 and 9: “Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will

I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.” Even in the time of Nehemiah, the true children of God were expected to keep the commandments of God.

The prophet Ezekiel, speaking for the Lord, cried out, “I am the Lord your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them” (Ezekiel 20:19). Very simple, isn’t it? One thing I want to emphasize before we go on: *God would not command us to do something that is impossible to do.* He is not that kind of God. Neither would Jesus Christ our Lord ask us to do something that is impossible for us to do.

We hear in the religious world so much about “the flesh, the flesh, the flesh.” But we read in the Scriptures about the Spirit having preeminence over the flesh, and when we are saved, the flesh is dethroned. The flesh is no longer in control.

When Jesus told His disciples, “If ye love me, keep my commandments,” He was telling them to do something that was very reasonable and very possible to do. Surely, it took some consecration, and some sacrifice, but it could be done, it can be done, and it ought to be done today. Jesus expected this from His disciples, and if we are true disciples of Christ, we will carry out His commandments.

When the woman was caught in the act of adultery and brought before Jesus, He was challenged by the men as to what should be done with her. We all know the story of how Jesus said to them, “Ye that are without sin, cast the first stone,” and He began to write on the ground. But in verse 10 of St. John 8, where this is told, Jesus asked the woman, “Where are those thine accusers?” In verse 11, she said, “No man, Lord.” Jesus answered, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.” Can’t you see, Friends, that this is the gospel? Part of the gospel is the teaching that we must be holy and upright, and without sin and blemish. When we were living in sin, we were sinners, but when we were saved, something else was expected from us other than sin. This woman said, “No man accused me, Lord.” And Jesus said, “I don’t accuse you, either; but listen, go, and sin no more. Don’t go back to your life of adultery. Don’t back to the life you once lived. Go, and sin no more.”

Jesus healed a man one time. The Bible tells us in St. John, chapter 5, verse 14, “Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.” That man was healed, and I believe he was saved, but Jesus told him “sin no more.” Now people might be able to take issue with me as a minister of the gospel, or with the Church of God and what we stand for, but how can someone take issue with the Word of God?



The Word of God is very plain. We are told in Titus, chapter 2, verses 11 and 12: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Again, the Word of God is very plain, is it not? "We should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

If you are still in doubt as to whether Jesus wants or expects you to keep His Word, to keep His commandments, and to live without sin, all you have to do is to turn to the sixth chapter of the book of Romans. There, the apostle Paul, one of the greatest warriors of the cross, said very plainly in verses 1 and 2: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Some might say, "But, but, but," but Friends, this is what the Word of God says in verse 6: "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." That's a powerful verse of scripture, is it not? Skipping down to verses 11-15: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?" Again, Paul says, "God forbid."

Paul continues in verses 16-23 of Romans 6: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were [past tense] the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity [in past tense]; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." When you keep the commandments of God, you are living a holy, godly, and righteous life in this present world. This doesn't mean you won't ever make a mistake. It means when it comes to the Word of God, and it comes to your intention and will, you are desiring and willing to carry out the will of God in your life. †

February 2022

## BIBLE LESSON OF THE MONTH

### PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING

#### CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP (offerings)

**Scriptures:** Proverbs 3:9; Malachi 3:8; Luke 6:38; 12:15; 21:1-4; Acts 2:44; 11:29; 20:35; I Corinthians 9:11.

Proverbs 3:9 Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase.

Malachi 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

Luke 6:38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

Luke 12:15 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.

Luke 21:1 And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.

2 And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites.

3 And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all:

4 For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.

Acts 2:44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common.

Acts 11:29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea.

Acts 20:35 I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

I Corinthians 9:11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?

**Memory Verse:** Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase.

—Proverbs 3:9.

**Aim:** To show the Christian's responsibility of giving to the Lord's work.

#### INTRODUCTION

**S**INCE THE Lord's work in the earth must be carried on by men and women and the work is of such an extensive and important nature, it takes a great deal of time and involves much expense in building, operation, and efforts in charity. If the proper and sufficient amount of funds is not available, then the certain result is that the work of the Lord will be neglected and souls will be lost in the never-ending eternity. No child of God wants to see anyone lost; therefore, he is ready to do his part in responding to the biblical instructions on paying tithes and to the occasional call of the Lord for offerings. Our business affairs should be adjusted so that we always are in a position to give whenever the Lord calls. Many do not properly manage their business so they can do this. We need training on this point. It is very easy to get into the habit of spending everything on ourselves and then not being able to

satisfy the desires of the flesh. Self-restraint and discipline are very good for all. Money spent on ourselves will yield no reward in eternity, but every penny that is spent on the work of the Lord will bring a proper reward from the hand of the Lord in the day of judgment. Giving is a grace of God, and if we seek the Lord for His help, the grace will be forthcoming that will enable us to do a great work for the Lord in this direction.

## **MEDITATIONS**

**HONORING GOD—Proverbs 3:9—With thy substance—**Our substance in this instance is the amount of material things that God has put into our hands, whether it be in the form of money or increase of the land. To give to God of the things that God has prospered us with, honors God. It is not pleasing to God for us to give the left-overs or imperfects, but the great and kind God that He is, is deserving of the very best that can be given. The following verse carries a promise to all who honor God with their substance. God will bless the increase in a real way. Today, America is wonderfully blessed with material things. Such things come only from God, for He alone has the power to give from the bountiful storehouse of nature. He sends His rain on the just and on the unjust. Those who live in other lands and do not have as much in a material way still need to give to the Lord's cause. Let everyone give unto Him that which is rightfully His.

**TAKING GOD'S PORTION—Malachi 3:8—Robbed me—**Some think that it is impossible to rob God. It is because they do not know God and have received no teaching from the Word of God on the question. It is true that God does not need anything from the hand of man for Himself. If He did, He would not ask man, for everything already belongs to Him—cattle and all—but He does need help from the hands of man that His work may be carried on unhindered. All the money that goes into the treasury of the Lord is for the purpose of defraying the expense of the Lord's work; and the wisdom of God has been such that He has properly gauged the amount so that there will always be meat in His house, if men do not rob God. But now, as in the time of Israel, men rob God, and the work of the Lord suffers. This ought not to be. If God gives all, surely we can return unto His work not only the one-tenth, but also the offerings He calls for occasionally.

**MANNER OF GIVING—Luke 6:38—Good measure—**In dealing with our fellowmen, we should always demonstrate a spirit of liberality. This always denotes a gracious spirit in the one who shows generosity. He who gives short measure displays a small and stingy nature. In time the measure that he has given will be returned unto him, for there is an unseen hand that constantly overshadows him that cannot be deceived. So let every measure, regardless of what it may be, be full, pressed down, and running over.

**THE OPPOSITE OF GENEROSITY—Luke 12:15—Beware of covetousness—**We are told in the Word that covetousness is idolatry, and God hates idolatry. In this scripture, it is made plain that life is not made up of material things; therefore, it is a great

mistake to put too much emphasis upon them. Material things will pass away at the ending of time, and he who has put all his affection upon them and lived for them alone will be destitute when the end comes.

**GOD ALWAYS SEES—Luke 21:1—Looked up—**Little did men realize that in the person of Jesus was an eye that could see without looking up. He knew the hearts of men perfectly and the deepest secrets that were there. How little did these rich men realize that the One who was watching them was the One who had prospered them! So it surely would do us all good if sometimes we could see ourselves as God sees us.

**THE WIDOW'S MITE—Luke 21:2—Casting in—**This small amount of money was little noticed by anyone of this earth, but being poor did not remove from the widow's heart the conviction that she had in supporting the work of the Lord. The amount she gave did not tell the world that she had any love for the work of the Lord, or that she felt any responsibility; but had everyone given as liberally according to his ability as she did, there would have been more money in the treasury than they could have used.

**JUST JUDGMENT—Luke 21:3—More than they all—**The poor widow had no reserve. That which she had in hand was that which she needed for that day's living. She denied herself and gave her living; therefore, according to the just judgment of God, her offerings, though only two mites, was greater than the large offerings of the rich men, and her reward in heaven will be greater. It is only true loyalty and devotion that can cause anyone to give as the widow did. Men often give out of their abundance to be seen of men. True humility acknowledges God as the Giver of every good and perfect gift, giving Him the glory for the blessing of wealth. The carnal heart seeks to draw attention unto himself through the display of riches.

**COMMUNITY OF GOODS—Acts 2:44—All things common—**Some have tried to teach that the practice of the early church as related here is the pattern for all time, but such is not the case. The spirit of it should apply to the church at all times, but not always the letter. The early church had such love for the work of the Lord that they found it a pleasure to give for the furtherance of the kingdom of God. They felt that the survival of the church was far more necessary than their own personal business or ambitions. Generally speaking, God expects Christians to build homes and live an entirely normal life, contributing to the welfare of the community in which they live. Why should we not have Christian businessmen and school teachers and such like? There is no reason, and to this end we as Christians should labor. It is very unreasonable that we should be sending Christian children to be taught of men and women who may be atheistic or sectarian in attitude.

**WORK OF CHARITY—Acts 11:29—Send relief—**We never know what another day will bring. It may be wealth or poverty, sunshine or rain. At all times we should be prepared, as much as possible, for that which may happen. Of course, the first thing that everyone should make sure of is that he has favor with God and



then do with all his might what his hands find to do. Diligence does not fail to catch the eye of God, and He gives proper reward. There is always somewhere someone who stands in need and always will be, for Jesus declared that we would have the poor with us always; and as far as we are concerned, according to the teachings of Christ, it is always more blessed to give than to receive. So if we desire to add to our present blessings, we must develop more fully the art and grace of giving to the poor.

**CHRIST'S ATTITUDE—Acts 20:35—Support the weak**—Sin is at the bottom of all sickness, weakness, and failure. Some do not have the capacity to make it through life and must be helped, but the average person has more than enough ability to make his way through life. Therefore, the Lord knowing this has decreed that he who has and is able to produce with his hands more than he actually needs should divide with the unfortunate. This present age of machinery, in which man's hands in production have been greatly strengthened, should provide much more to be given to worthy causes than ever before.

**OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO THE MINISTRY—I Corinthians 9:11—Sown ... spiritual things**—According to the Word of God, the preachers who bring the truth of God and look after the spiritual welfare of the people should receive from the ones who are taught the material things of which they may have need.

### CONCLUSION

The church has a responsibility to give offerings from time to time to help reach the lost with the soul saving gospel. The saints also have a responsibility to help the poor and needy. But we also need to be aware of where we are to give. We are not to give to support false religion. And Paul said if a man won't work neither shall he eat. So we need to make sure our giving is actually helping God's cause and those we give to are needy and worthy. We have no responsibility to help support sin and wrong.

It is to be hoped that the study of this lesson has brought to the forefront, not only our responsibility as custodians of health and wealth, but also our opportunities really to do something in the great work of carrying the gospel to the ends of the earth. The speed of spreading the gospel today is hindered because men do not catch the vision of what is possible to be accomplished through the proper use of their money. Schools need to be established with a Christian teaching staff. Radio stations should be erected which give preference to the gospel message; orphans' towns should be established, built exclusively over the Christian pattern. Lack of consecrated funds hinders this great work, and it is to be hoped that there shall be a great awakening along this line.

### FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. What is God's plan for the carrying on of His work as far as finances are concerned?
2. What is wrong when it is hard for people to give to the cause of God?
3. How was it that the widow gave so much when she gave so little?

4. What does covetousness in the heart indicate?
5. What prompted the early Christians to give so liberally?
6. What should our attitude be toward the unfortunate? †

## THE CHILDREN'S CORNER



### PLEADING THE FIFTH

A Bible Lesson by Sis. Rebecca Bland

"Honey, we're back!" my dad called out as he and my younger sister, Twila, and I entered the house through the kitchen door, our arms loaded with bags of groceries.

"Did you get everything on the list?" my mother called back from the next room where she sat at the sewing machine. My mother was the one who usually went to the grocery store, but she was working on an order that had to be finished by the end of the day, and so my father had gone to the store instead.

My father grinned. "I got every last, single, solitary thing on the list," he called back.

Twila and I reached into the bags that now rested on the kitchen table. One by one, we pulled items from the bags and lined them up on the counter, ready to be put away in the cupboards.

"Did you happen to get any extras that weren't on the list?" my mother asked.

My father looked at my sister and me and laid his finger on his lips. I froze, my hand on a little glass bottle that I had just begun to pull from the bag. It was a bottle of sweet maraschino cherries, the kind that people often serve on top of ice cream. Our family occasionally bought a half-gallon of ice cream to share among the six of us, but we almost never had maraschino cherries along with it. My father liked them a lot, but my mother considered them an unnecessary luxury. "We have to save our pennies," she would say when we pointed out the cherries on the shelf at the grocery store.

My father chuckled. "I plead the fifth," he called back to my mother.

"Well, what was it that you bought?" my mother asked. We heard the sewing machine stool scrape as she got up. She appeared at the doorway to the kitchen, a half smile playing around her lips. With a sheepish grin, my father took the jar of maraschino cherries from me and showed it to my mother.

"Could have been worse, I guess," she said.

"Yes," my father agreed. "I could have bought two jars of them."

"Humph!" was all my mother said in reply, as she helped us put the groceries away.

"How about changing your clothes and going with me to do the chores?" my dad said to me after the last empty grocery bag was folded and stored for reuse.

In no time at all, my dad and I were in the barn. I scooped grain to pour into the calves' feeding troughs while my father forked hay over the fence to the cows.

"Dad," I asked after we had worked for a while, "what is the 'fifth'?"

"The 'fifth'?" he asked. "What do you mean, the 'fifth'?"

"You said to Mom, when she asked you if you got any extras at the grocery store, 'I plead the fifth.' What does that mean?"

"Oh," my dad said. "I see what you're asking." He paused to think for a moment. "When you 'plead the fifth' it means you don't have to tell on yourself."

This was wonderful news to me. Maybe from now on, when my mother asked if I had done something I didn't want to acknowledge, I could just say, "I plead the fifth."

The very next moment, my father dashed my newborn hopes. "But you can't 'plead the fifth' when your mother or I ask you if you did something," he said.

"Then when can I use it?" I asked.

My father was silent for a few moments. He must have been wondering how to explain a cardinal concept of democracy to a nine-year-old. Finally, he said, "The law of our land is found in a document called the Constitution. At the end of the Constitution is a list of ten special amendments. The fifth amendment says that a person accused of a crime does not have to testify against himself. If he is asked what he did, he has the right to 'plead the fifth.' That means he has the right to remind his accusers that he doesn't have to tell on himself. Witnesses may testify against him, but he doesn't have to testify against himself."

"It wasn't a crime for you to buy the maraschino cherries, was it?" I asked him.

My father threw back his head and laughed. "No," he said, "it wasn't a crime. When I said, 'I plead the fifth,' it was just a humorous way of telling your mom that I didn't want to admit to buying the cherries." But then my father's face grew serious. "The rights listed in our Constitution are no laughing matter, though," he said. "They are important to our freedom as Americans."

All these years later, as a teacher of social studies, I think of my father when I explain the fifth amendment to my students. I think about the rights that the United States Constitution accords even to those citizens who have been accused of a crime.

But the fifth amendment cannot protect a criminal when evidence is brought forward that proves his guilt. Whether or not he testifies against himself, he can be found guilty.

A courtroom is a serious place. It is a place where an accused person stands before a judge and is found innocent or guilty of breaking a law. But it is far more serious to stand before God as our judge. He knows whether we are innocent or guilty of breaking His commandments. He doesn't have to wait to see whether or not we will tell on ourselves. He knows all things.

This month's wise saying comes from Proverbs 14:5 which says, "A faithful witness will not lie; but a false witness will utter lies." No matter what others say about us, and no matter what we say about ourselves, God knows the truth. Children, you would be wise to remember that, and always live honestly in the sight of God.

### Activity

Unscramble the letters below to discover a word that describes God's ability to see and know everything.

NICESIMONEC

### Answer to Last Month's Activity

"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23). †

## OUT OF BOX 88

Dear Bro. Greg,

I am so blessed and enjoy reading *The Way of Truth* magazine. Please continue the good work. Enclosed is a small amount for postage.

May God bless you and your family.

Thank you!

—J. A., Arizona

Dear Friends,

Greetings in Jesus' name. Just a few lines to send this money for your encouraging paper. I thank the Lord for it. God bless you all for sending it to me.

—M. G., Pennsylvania

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Please use this donation to help keep *The Way of Truth* moving across our earth, God's beautiful world ... I pray for you all and the wonderful work you do. There is nothing in this world better than knowing we have our Savior in our hearts.

Blessings to all!

—S. M., Indiana

Thank you for the beautiful work of the Lord. Your ministry is appreciated very much, especially in this evil and difficult time we are living in: attacks on "God" and our country of America. May God be with us mightily.

—L. W., Virginia

Calvary greetings to you in Jesus' name,

Thanks so much for sending us copies of *The Way of Truth* magazines and Sunday school booklets. The lessons are evergreen and aiding our spiritual growth. May God continue to make us doers of the Word.

I pray God will continue to enlarge your coast. He will keep us to the end.

Thanks so much.

—E. O. O., Nigeria †





These questions and answers are taken from *The Way of Truth Question and Answer Book, 1946-2001*.



**QUESTION:** May I know the meaning of Psalm 23:4?

**ANSWER:** Psalm 23:4 conveys a spiritual truth by using a material thing from life. David, of course, was not a sheep, so he speaks from the spiritual standpoint. The rod and staff were used by the shepherd to protect and guide the sheep. The Lord, through His Word and Spirit, will guide, comfort us and instruct us.

Some have advanced the idea that the staff may have been something the shepherd sat down on to rest. I question that, but it could have been a rod or stick to help the shepherd walk or even fight off a wild animal.

**QUESTION:** Who are these people in the Bible: (a) Asaph, who wrote Psalm 50, 73-83; (b) Heman, who also wrote Psalm 88; (c) Ethan, who wrote Psalm 89? Are they in the Old or New Testament of the Bible? I have not come across their names in the Bible, only know them as the writers of those 14 Psalms. I knew about Moses who wrote Psalm 90 and King Solomon who wrote Psalm 127. Please help me.

**ANSWER:** *Asaph* was a Levite who was appointed by David as a director of choral music in the house of the Lord, and was retained in the same capacity by Solomon in the temple. (See I Chronicles 6:39; 15:17-19; 16:5-7.)

*Heman* was a grandson of Samuel and also served under David. He was honored by being picked to serve as one of three leading Levites in the impressive worship services and became the head of a guild of vocalists and instrumentalists. (See I Chronicles 6:33; 15:17, 19; 16:41, 42; 25:1-6.)

*Ethan* was the son of Kisha, a Levite. He belonged to the exclusive group of singers in David's sanctuary. At the time the Ark of the Covenant was brought up to Jerusalem. Ethan had a prominent part in the festivities as a cymbal player. (See I Chronicles 6:44; 15:17-19.)

Information for this answer was taken from the book, *Everyone In the Bible*, by Wm. P. Barker.

**QUESTION:** Is it OK for Christians to celebrate Valentine's Day?

**ANSWER:** Valentine cards carry expressions of love, and, of course, it is not wrong to express love for others.

What is objectionable is its origin. According to *The World Book Encyclopedia*, the day "probably came from an ancient Roman festival called *Lupercalia* which took

place every February 15. The festival honored Juno, the Roman goddess of women and marriage, and Pan, the god of nature."

**QUESTION:** Luke 14:23 states that the Master compelled sinners to come to the feast. Does that infer that even sinners would be saved in the end because the Master compelled those unworthy to sit at the feast?

**ANSWER:** A similar parable is found in Matthew 22:1-14. We understand Jesus is telling the people how God sent His Son into this world to give Himself for their sins. The Hebrews were first "invited," but, as a nation, they made "excuses," then the "messengers" were told to go and invite the Gentiles.

We are not to understand the word "compel" to mean they were forced to come, but rather they were prevailed on, persuaded, to come. Adam Clarke says: "No other kind of constraint is ever recommended in the Gospel of Christ; every other kind of compulsion is anti-Christian."

Further, let me point out that all that God calls are sinners! Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. He did not come to call the righteous to repentance. However, when they respond and "come," they are saved and are no longer sinners.

The idea that sinners would be saved in the "end" is not supported by this scripture. If people refuse to heed God's call and die in their sins, they will suffer the same fate as the Hebrews who rejected Him. "For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper" (Verse 24).

**QUESTION:** Does man have an immortal soul?

**ANSWER:** False prophets make a play on words in trying to deceive the people. One meaning of the word *immortal* is "living forever." Then they refer to Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death," and thus they try to prove that the soul or spirit in man is not immortal. But the word has other meanings such as "everlasting; perpetual; lasting." Much confusion is the result of not understanding the meaning of spiritual death. Spiritual death is not the ceasing of existence, but separation from God, and there are two (not just one) such "deaths" taught in the Bible. If "death" meant "ceasing of existence," how could one soul or spirit die TWICE? Ezekiel 18:4 says, "Behold ALL SOULS are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: THE SOUL THAT SINNETH, IT SHALL DIE." This death takes place when the soul becomes accountable for his acts, and he sins (Romans 6:23). This is the first spiritual death, and the soul is separated from fellowship with God. This is what Paul was talking about in Romans 7:9. From this death a soul can be "resurrected" or made alive through salvation by meeting Bible requirements. The second death is also separation, but it is final, and there is no recovery from it. This "death" takes place when the wicked are cast away from the presence of Christ at the judgment. (See Revelation 20:14 and 21:8.) So the soul or spirit will exist forever, either in a state of "death" in the lake of fire, or "life" in heaven. †

# Following the Holy Ghost's Lead in Reaching the Lost

Lesson from 2021 Hagerstown Convention Message by Bro. Richard Lehman



*Bro. Richard Lehman from Carmichael, California, was our speaker on Sunday morning during our annual convention in July 2021. After he brought the lesson on "Following the Holy Ghost's Lead in Reaching the Lost," a number of the brothers asked him if he could write it up in a more complete way for them to have and to study.*

*Though rather lengthy, we are printing this lesson in its entirety.*

## REACHING THE LOST—5 KEY FACTORS

### ENABLING US TO FOLLOW THE HOLY GHOST'S LEAD, NOT OURS

**Number 1: What the Holy Ghost has said to the individual matters most; not what we have to say. God speaks to every soul.**

"My spirit shall not always strive with man..."—Genesis 6:3.

This lets us know that from the very beginning, and even until today, that God's Holy Spirit is faithful to deal with the heart of every individual. This scripture, of course, also shows us there's a time when He stops dealing with mankind, and that is when mankind ignores what he knows God has shown him.

But most importantly, this also informs us that if a person will turn and pay attention to what God has already shown them, then God will begin to speak to their heart again.

So let us pay attention! These are huge principles concerning the way that God's Spirit works. When reaching the lost, let us pick back up the conversation that God has already started with them. Let us bring their attention back to where they pay attention to what God already told them.

Did you notice in all of this that this has nothing to do with what you and I think should be said to them? And we are talking about anyone. Even those who have never heard the gospel nor heard about Jesus.

"For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another; In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."—Romans 2:14-16.

Did you fully catch and understand what the apostle Paul just said in this last scripture? The Gentiles that have never heard the gospel from a preacher have

something already working in their hearts that God has set in motion. And by this, God's Spirit judges even the secrets of what is in their heart. And it says that this is by Jesus Christ, according to the gospel. So this very personal interaction with the Spirit of God and the conscience of man is also part of the gospel. In fact, it is the first gospel that everyone will hear in their lives.

But do we know how to work with this part of the gospel? The very beginning of the gospel that starts the work within the hearts of people? If we miss this first step, will we still have the opportunity to work with them in the rest of the gospel? If people never fully process the first step of the gospel (their first interaction with God's Spirit), then are they actually ready for the next step?

Remember, we are supposed to be workers together with God. We should never go out with the Bible to labor unless the Lord has sent us and is directing our steps. In other words, we must follow the Holy Ghost's lead.

"Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."—I Corinthians 3:8, 9.

Many are waiting for the right time to testify to someone the words that they have prepared in their own mind. And sometimes the Lord may work that way. So I don't want to belittle someone's sincere desire to help that they have prayed and sought the Lord about. But often the right time and the right words are actually determined by the right question to ask rather than the "right thing" we have prepared. Because when we prepare, the right time often never comes. But when we know how to ask, then the right time comes much more often, and the right answer is given to us in that very moment.

This takes us out of our own comfort zone because we tend to want to be in control of most everything in our lives, and because deep down we are more fearful than we want to admit. And so, some of us even formulate "our gospel" for our own protection. I'm sorry, but as individuals, as ministers, and as congregations, we must be broken of this overly self-protective way of operating or else we become irrelevant to the lost souls around us.

"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."—John 4:35.

So according to Jesus, there's actually a huge field of opportunity out there because the Spirit of God has already been speaking to everyone. But do we really



desire to find out what He has already been saying to them? That may lead us into a conversation that we have not prepared for. But nevertheless, that is the conversation that needs to happen.

“But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.”—Matthew 10:19, 20.

Often, it is not about you and me having the answer, but rather about knowing the One who has the answer: Jesus Christ, and then praying with the individual that Christ would help them with the answer for their need. Ultimately, the answer to their need will be Jesus Christ Himself! And when they respond to that call and that love relationship, then the answer to their needs will also come.

Jesus Himself relied on the Spirit of His Father to direct Him and show Him what to speak and when to speak. Jesus followed the Holy Ghost’s lead with all His heart.

“I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.”—John 5:30, 31.

Now almost anyone you meet today has been deceived in some way into believing in some kind of false doctrine or belief system. And if we know the truth, we have to be careful that we just don’t classify them by their false belief system as if that is who they truly are spiritually. Let me explain what I mean.

Who they truly are—is that determined by Satan who deceived them? Or is who they truly are based on what God has already spoken to their heart about and what they did with that? The gospel actually clearly tells us that who people are spiritually is determined by what they do with what God has already shown them individually.

“Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”—Romans 1:19-21.

Your spiritual heart is darkened when you ignore what God has been speaking to your heart. And that is what determines who you are spiritually.

Through ignoring God, one may open up the door further to Satan’s deception. But realize, there is a world full of people who have only known some false doctrine that was taught to them since they were a child. Their deception is not based on their own personal rejection of what God has shown them. So may God help us to not be so quick to classify them as someone who cannot be reached with the gospel.

Additionally, often the first touch of the gospel on a person’s life is not about us showing something to them, but rather about us helping them to have faith

to do what they already know—to do what the Holy Ghost has already personally shown them. Please, I plead with you, seriously consider this!

People of all religions, many with no knowledge of Jesus Christ, recognize that there are two spirits striving with mankind. The Spirit of goodness and love, and the spirit of evil and selfishness. In our conversation with them, if we focus on what the good Spirit has impressed upon their heart and avoid doctrinal arguments, we will get much further. And a deep discussion about personal and intimate true spiritual insights will get us beyond the religious doctrinal defenses. Also, it will enable us to go much further towards the truth as we compare personal witnesses of the Spirit of truth with one another, rather than going to the doctrinal differences first.

For example: perhaps in conversation (because of a question you asked) a Muslim shares with you a time when they knew the Spirit of God spoke to their heart, convicting them of something. And perhaps you share something that God did similarly with you in the past. (Again, avoiding your doctrinal differences.) You could compare both of your experiences this way: If the Muslim ignored what the Spirit of God said to them and they continue the rest of their religious observances, including daily prayer, would those religious observances absolve them from what the Spirit of God showed them? And if I claiming to be Christian, ignore what the Spirit of God has shown me, yet I continue my daily prayer and religious practices, would those religious observances absolve me from what the Spirit of God showed me?

And so the conversation continues. By this type of conversation, I have brought their mind and conscience back to paying attention to what the Spirit of God is speaking to them. If they continue to pay attention to the true Spirit of God, eventually He is going to lead them to the full truth!

Now if we have become rigid and legalistic in our walk with the Lord, this is usually because we ourselves have neglected responding to the Spirit of God. If that is the case, we have no authority to be able to have this type of conversation with anyone. This is because we are no longer responding to the Spirit ourselves, but rather we have adopted a religious observance.

So like Jesus, we’re going to also have to follow the Holy Ghost’s lead. And yes, even Jesus did that by first asking questions. (Remember, Jesus said, “I can of my own self do nothing.” While on Earth, Jesus was subject to the same limitations we are. His ability to do all that He did was through His spiritual connection with God. And we cannot accomplish anything spiritual, except by our spiritual connection with God, and letting Him lead.)

Let us follow the scripture in Matthew 19:16-22 where Jesus speaks to the young rich man: “And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”

Jesus begins the conversation in a very general way, not speaking to anything specific about the young man.

"He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?"

Now Jesus, after listening to the answers from this young man and observing his honest and very sincere spirit, is able to answer him to his need. Note this very important difference in this young man. He is not just observing commandments, but rather the young man is responding to a pricking of his conscience by the Holy Spirit. He senses that he needs to be doing more than just following the commandments.

So now discerning the working of the Spirit, Jesus recognizes that God is actually calling this young man. "Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." Recognizing this man's need and the fact that God is calling him, Jesus also calls him and invites him to follow Him, even using the same words that Jesus called His apostles and disciples by: "Come, and follow me." Jesus was giving this man a call to the ministry. But anyone called to the ministry does not make their own choice for that calling. Jesus always requires us to have to let go of something that is important to us, so that we might fulfill the specific calling of the Master for us. In this case, it was this young man's riches that needed to be let go. This man's first calling from God was to minister to the poor. That is why Jesus said "go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor."

"But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." The young man was not willing to answer the call. And sadly, throughout history and even today, many a person has been called, but few could be chosen, because few are willing to forsake in order to answer the call of God on their lives. God calls us to more than just following commandments, and that calling is specific and unique to each one of us. Jesus will not force Himself on anyone. He accepts our service when it is done willingly from the heart and under His direction.

In another scripture of this same account (but found in Luke), we see clearly that Jesus gave the call to this young man, only after He was able to hear what the young man said. "Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me."—Luke 18:22.

Do we know how to take the time to listen and to discern what the Spirit of God has already been speaking to the heart of another?

Finally, one last example, the account of when Philip witnessed to the eunuch. Philip was an evangelist, and he accomplished much by carefully following the Holy Ghost. We read in Acts 8:29-35: "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readiest?" First, Philip was led of the Spirit to go

to the man, not to try to get the man to come to Him or to His church. And Philip did not have a prepared thought or lesson to tell the man. Instead he asked the man a question. The question was about what the man was doing, not about what Philip was doing, or was prepared to do. He asked the man if he understood what he had been studying. Philip knew how to ask questions important to those he was directed to reach, and then to listen to them. "And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."

Philip began where the man already was—where the Spirit of God had already been troubling the man.

We also need to learn to start where God has already been speaking to them. Following the Holy Ghost's lead.

I realize there is a common time where we gather at the house of God to worship. In that place there are times where the Word of God is taught or preached to a larger audience. And in that case it is one-way message, and the Holy Ghost can speak to the hearts of individuals through that message. Therefore, if that type of service is going to work, the teacher or preacher has to carefully and prayerfully study to get the mind of God about what they should bring. But that is only part of the plan of God for helping people with their spiritual needs. Please continue to read on and you will understand even more about this.

**Number 2: Understanding "why" more than "what" or "how" the scripture teaches. Understanding the principle under the scripture, and being able to be led of the Holy Ghost to apply that unchangeable principle to different people and different situations.**

*Note: It is the principle underneath a particular scripture, (that which reflects the true nature and purpose of God), that doesn't change.*

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein."—Hebrews 13:7-9.

Notice that this scripture passage above is giving us a complete thought in understanding what is most important when we are teaching. Concerning those who teach it, it states: follow their faith, considering their testimony. And to make it explicitly clear as to what their faith and example should be reflecting, the



apostle Paul states: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and God does not change. And then He immediately goes on to state that the heart should be established in grace, and not in the specificity of a rule of the scriptural law.

So the contrast: a minister could change, therefore, remember you must always compare them to the testimony of Jesus Christ, that doesn’t change. That way you will know whether the minister is doing right or not.

Also, the administration of a rule of spiritual law could change. Therefore, the way you will know if it is still aligned with the gospel is by comparing it to the testimony of Jesus Christ, which never changes. It is talking about the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Those are the things that don’t change. Grace is one of those unchangeable principles. Therefore, the scripture stated: “For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats.”

To understand this teaching in even more depth, study on your own in Acts, chapter 15:19, 20. There the leaders of the church established a rule of scriptural law for the Gentiles. This rule directed the Gentiles to not eat meat that was sacrificed unto idols. But then later, the apostle Paul provided us the principle underneath this teaching, and he explained to us when we should be concerned about it. (Read on your own I Corinthians 10:19-33).

So because the scripture earlier in Hebrews 13:7-9 also states that the heart should be established in grace, and not in the specificity of the administration of a rule of scriptural law, this also begs the question: How do you establish the heart in grace, and not in the rule of scriptural law? Well again, in that same scripture, the apostle Paul points to Jesus Christ who never changes. He doesn’t point to the rule of law as something that never changes.

So to deeply understand what is really meant by being established in grace, we must deeply and intimately know Jesus Christ. We must get “the mind of Christ.”

“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.”—I Corinthians 2:13-16.

So this scripture above shows us it takes a spiritual understanding and not a lawyer or legal mind. Rather, someone who can let the Holy Ghost lead. But letting the Holy Ghost lead does not mean the scriptures can be ignored! To the contrary, it means you must not be shallow in your understanding of scripture. You must not just take scripture and legally dissect it. You must understand the reason the scripture was given in the first place. You must understand the principle behind it, or the reason “why.” You must understand the original intent or purpose of the author.

From the dictionary, the definition of *principle*: “a fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning.” Example: “the basic principles of Christianity.”

It is very appropriate for the dictionary to use Christianity to explain principles, because true Christianity is based on biblical principles and not on biblical literal and legal interpretations.

The “why” or purpose of the scripture is the part that never changes, because it reflects an unchanging principle. The “what” that was addressed, or “how” it was addressed changes according to the need, because that is how God works. He addresses each need with an answer that comes from Himself, to meet the specific need. That is why in the book of Revelation, in each letter to each church (chapters 2 and 3), the answer to their specific need came from some characteristic of Jesus Christ already described previously in the book of Revelation. Because Jesus still is the answer for every need in the church. And that is why at the end of each letter it also states exactly the same words: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” It is the spiritual meaning, or principle, that needs to be understood. And you will need the Holy Ghost to help you with that.

In the epistles that the apostle Paul wrote, whenever he addressed a need, he almost always explained the principle that was behind his directions. It is most important to understand the principle that the apostle Paul taught! More than the specificity of his direction addressing a particular need of his day and age, and in a particular place of a specific culture. Pay careful attention to his explanation of the principle.

As an example, consider the teaching of the apostle Paul concerning short hair for men, and long hair for women. Paul explained the principle behind his teaching. “For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman: but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.”—I Corinthians 11:7-10.

The long hair for the woman is to reflect her subjection to the man. The principle is much more important than the specificity of the implementation. Because of environmental and heredity reasons, in some countries there is almost no difference between the length of a woman’s hair compared to a man’s. But yet the scripture still has meaning, because the Christian principle behind the teaching must still be taught in every country.

Additionally, when we take the time to understand the principle, then we are better prepared to understand other scriptures also, because we can compare spiritual teachings to other spiritual teachings. As an example related to the length of hair, consider the prophetic meaning of this scripture in Revelation, chapter 9. By symbolic language, this chapter identifies the characteristics of a false ministry. “And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.”—Revelation 9:8.

If we understand the principle behind the teaching relating to the long hair of women, then we can interpret this scripture to represent a ministry that is operating in submission to a man, rather than operating in submission directly to almighty God. The hair principle informs us of this.

Please do not be shallow in your understanding of the scripture. You cannot simply “parrot” a gospel message that someone else has preached before, even though that someone else was mightily used by God. Although a parrot can speak in amazingly accurate tones and words of the original person, they do not have the underlying understanding to know how to apply language in real world situations.

The gospel is established upon fundamental principles that reflect the very nature of God Himself. That is why we often refer to the scriptures as, “The Word of God.” God is not static nor dead like a legal document, nor is His Word intended to be a literalized directive applied by people who study the letter.

Even though it is important to study the Word of God, we must never forget that it is the Word of the Spirit of God. Therefore, the Word has life when it is directed by God Himself and by who He is.

“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”—Ephesians 6:17. This scripture clearly shows us that the administration of the Word of God belongs in the hand of the Spirit of God. That is why it says “the sword of the Spirit,” and not “the sword of the minister.” Therefore, ministers must be careful that they understand the spiritual principle behind the teaching so that they can prayerfully keep the teaching of the Word under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus told the Samaritan woman, one who had been influenced by an incorrect translation of scripture and tradition, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”—John 4:23, 24.

So also a true ministry must teach and administer the Word “in Spirit and in truth.” For we are also warned in scripture: “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”—II Corinthians 3:6.

So it is very clear that the application of the scripture without the direction of the principle behind the scripture, which reflects God Himself, will woefully fail. In fact, it will have a killing effect. So how do you avoid being a tool for this killing effect? This is a very important question that every gospel worker should be concerned about! Because if you are not concerned about it, you will certainly administer some seemingly powerful but killing messages. And you most certainly will have a very difficult time reaching anyone new, beyond those of your own local congregation.

Many have become so hyper-focused on preserving just the existence of their own local congregation that their gospel has become a “cookie cutter” style of teaching passed on from one generation to the next. And so, the next generation becomes very shallow in their

understanding of scripture, and the pastoral administration of the gospel tends toward a “nursery effect” where the congregants never spiritually grow up to become soldiers of the cross. They go about focusing mostly on their own needs and spiritual life and rarely are taking on new territory in the gospel work.

### **Number 3: Following where the Holy Ghost is working, rather than rerouting the work for our own convenience.**

Today, most of the Western world has settled into their localized congregations, and in doing so we have created whole cultures and norms for protecting the continuance of the local congregation’s identity and existence. Although the notion of reaching the lost may exist once in awhile in a message, the actual reality of doing the work in an effective way, has been majorly reduced. Consequently, any notion of missionary work, where we go out into a new field of labor, seems far-fetched and extreme. How can you consider that when we ourselves are just trying to survive?

We need again to carefully seek the mind of Christ. And to help us do that, let us consider an observation that Jesus had while He was preaching in the Jewish synagogues: “And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.”—Matthew 9:35-38.

Most every Jewish town had a synagogue. And very much like what we do today in church, at the synagogue they would:

1. •gather together to attend regularly,
2. •have leaders and teachers who would instruct the people in the scriptures,
3. •have people lead the singing,
4. •have people lead the prayer portion of the service,
5. •and they regularly prayed for individual people to be healed.

Of a certainty, Jesus approved of this, because He took part in it Himself. As it tells us, “Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues.” But in the scripture above, Jesus is also telling us His burden: “The church-like synagogue service is not enough, because I am looking over the people, and I still feel the burden that they are fainting, and are scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.”

They were doing everything that we do today. But apparently, it wasn’t enough. Could it be that Jesus would express the exact same burden if He was to personally preach in our churches today?

Fainting, scattered, sheep without a shepherd, even while Jesus was there preaching among them? Is that possible?



That's where Jesus felt the burden. And to understand why this was happening, and what He meant by sheep without a shepherd, we have to look at the prescription Jesus gave for the solution.

First, He directed: "Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."—Matthew 9:37, 38.

His view of a shepherd (which He said they needed) is not just a pastor. For He calls them by the more general name of "labourers."

And so in the next chapter, following what He had asked them to pray about, Jesus sent out His apostles into the villages and towns. He specifically was sending them to the exact same people: the Jews. And He specifically directed them away from the synagogues. He told them to visit them personally in their homes. Remember, He said, "We need labourers"; people willing to work with people individually, like a shepherd works with sheep. And He said the place of the harvest is not according to our preference, because it is "his harvest," not ours.

Remember what Jesus told us about how a good shepherd works. If you consider it, it goes beyond what just a single person can do for a whole congregation. That is why He said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." It takes a number of others who also have the spirit of a good shepherd, because the work of a good shepherd is very personalized. And as a congregation will grow, one person cannot accomplish that for everyone. It doesn't mean that you wouldn't have an overseer for the entire congregation, like a pastor. But it does mean that it takes more than just one person to grow that congregation and for the people to flourish.

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."—John 10:11-14.

Throughout history, every effective gospel work that has prospered, typically started with a very personalized work in the homes, in the fields, etc. And they continued to focus on laboring within the homes, even though they may have eventually gathered together weekly for a larger church service. And whenever they quit reaching out to the homes, the work again began to stagnate. As they quit reaching out, the natural human tendency is that they would focus on their own organization and survival, and then the Spirit of God becomes less and less effective amongst them.

How can we expect to grow spiritually if the Spirit of God is saying, "Go ye and make disciples of all men"? And the scriptures teach us "become like them, so that you may win more" (I Corinthians 9:20-22). But we are only saying "come to us, and become like us, and take part in the worship services in our church building." It seems like we have turned this around to be more convenient and more manageable: for us.

Every congregation needs to learn again to see themselves as a missionary outpost and not a church service's program endpoint—not the establishment of a static entity that serves its own spiritual well-being at the expense of others. Because if there is not a serious connection to the purpose of Jesus Christ in saving souls and expanding into new territory, then what the congregation is doing is at the expense of others. This is a very human and natural way to fall into. So every one of us will easily follow this pattern if we don't resist it. Consider what happened in Jesus' day:

The apostles tried to turn the inconvenient interruptions of children away. But Jesus said "allow them to come to me." (Note: These children were not the children of the apostles. Consequently, the apostles did not feel the attachment that they should have had to those children's needs—read Mark 10:13-16).

When the apostles were upset at those who would not receive Jesus, they wanted to command fire to come down from heaven upon them. (Is that what we do today with our preaching? Command fire judgment upon them whenever they seem to reject Jesus?) But Jesus said, "You don't know what spirit you are of. We are not here to destroy men's lives, but to save them." So do we know what spirit is motivating us today? (Luke 9:51-56).

When the apostles tried to tell Jesus to take care of Himself and eat something, Jesus said, "I have meat to eat you know not of. Look up at the Samaritans whom you would prefer to avoid, for the fields there are white and ready for harvest" (see John 4:3-42).

What is Jesus saying to us today? Is He still telling us "go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"? Are we willing to follow where the Holy Ghost is working? Or are we rerouting the work for our own convenience? According to Jesus, a new work often starts in the homes, and from there the Holy Ghost takes charge in leading his laborers "into his harvest."

#### **Number 4: Complete willingness to lifelong commitments.**

Almost no one will willingly make huge changes in their life, unless someone is committed to them, to help them through that change.

Think long and hard about this: if somebody is seriously considering salvation, and he/she comes from outside of the church, having never been raised there, it is really difficult! Take a moment to think about everything that the gospel will change in their lives: they must put aside sinful habits that often they have lived with most of their lives. This has been who they are. And now, they are going to become somebody completely different. Are we going to expect them to do this alone?

They will be changing their friends that they have had all their lives. And some of them know in their hearts that their own families will disown them to a degree. Shall we expect them to suffer such a loss and then live their lives alone?

They will change some of the places that they used to go to. They potentially will be changing much of what they used to read and watch. Do you think they don't have a concern about doing all this alone?

Jesus never intended that anyone should have to go through life alone. This was even reflected in one of His last directives while He was on the cross. "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."—John 19:26, 27.

We should never ignore the commitment directives coming from the Shepherd who committed His life on the cross! But are we ready to accept a commitment that we didn't choose for ourselves? A commitment choice that Jesus makes for us?

Every missionary that has ever been successful throughout history was successful because those whom they were sent to, knew that the missionary was committed to them. This is what spells "success" in every age of time and in every field of labor. Many gospel workers have failed because they wanted to make the choice for whom they would commit to. But that is not what "answering the call" of Jesus Christ means.

The reality is, it is very hard to find people who truly are willing to commit to helping someone outside of "their choice."

*Note: It is a known fact that in every type of recovery program (whether it is recovery from drugs, alcohol, gambling, or whatever) that most people drop out of the program because of emotional pains that they cannot face alone. And in every program, there comes a time that they must find an individual that they can seriously trust, because they need someone they can share and unload some very personal emotional pains from their own past.*

Why is it that most dropout? Simply because they can't find someone who truly cares enough to be that committed to them. You see, most of their emotional pain comes from being betrayed by someone in their past. So how can you expect them to share such sensitive information with someone that they can sense is only halfway committed to them?

We often see many people come inside our doors of the church building, and at times, different ones may come up to them and casually say hello. But you can be sure, if someone does not eventually connect with them in a personal way (giving them a sense of genuine commitment), they will leave and not come back. It happens all the time.

In John, the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter, verses 11 through 14, Jesus shows us what the good Shepherd is like: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."—John 10:11-14.

The hireling flees because he is not committed to them. As a gospel worker, are we a reflection of Jesus, or of the hireling? Do you realize that true commitments to other people are for life? That is why we do not want to make our own choice about our calling, because it is

only the calling that comes from God that we will have the grace to stay committed to.

This does not mean that God could not redirect us to another work. But the souls that He has given us to work with in the past, our hearts are still committed to them. We pray for them and show that we still care for them, even if they should not get saved, or even if they should backslide.

The lost world is in desperate need of people who really care about them. And God wants to use us to show them that He cares about them.

"A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation. God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land."—Psalm 68:5, 6.

Is our family one of those families that God can set the solitary into? I have known many people around church that are very much into their own families. But it takes a special family that is willing to have their doors open to a solitary one. Are we teaching our families about commitments that God would choose for us? Or by example, are we teaching them to make their own choices for whom they want to commit to?

In all our commitments, let us be "wise as serpents, but harmless as doves." Let us also remember "a friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."—Matthew 25:35-40.

### **Number 5: Allowing the Holy Ghost to change who we are, again.**

For a certainty, God is in the business of completely changing who we are. The very initial call of God to repentance and salvation is a call to a complete change in us. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."—II Corinthians 5:17.

"All" covers everything spiritually about us. And because of this, He also completely changes our life in terms of how we live and the relationships we have with others.

But in the same scripture where Paul talks about the new creature, he then immediately afterwards talks about something that will again require another change in us. "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation."—II Corinthians 5:18.

He has given us the ministry of reconciliation. But how do we go about it? Well, how did Jesus start His



ministry of Reconciliation? He first became like us so that we spiritually could become like Him. He changed so He could reach us where we are. And He taught us, along with the apostles, that we need to change so that we can reach people where they are. That is the ministry of reconciliation.

We don't want to become a castaway simply because we will not allow the Lord to change us again so that we may reach others. Let us seriously take a look at what the apostle Paul was trying to tell us in First Corinthians, the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter: "What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more."

Did you notice that the apostle Paul considered it a path to abusing ministerial authority if the purpose was not to be a servant to all? Jesus Himself taught that if you are going to minister to others, you must become their servant. You must be willing to change to do this.

"And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

According to the apostle Paul, he changed often. This was not just a one-time spiritual change when he got saved. But this was a change to enable him to reach one that he was sent to serve in the gospel. Whenever the Holy Ghost sends someone into a field of labor, He also expects them to change again.

"And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

So critical was this responsibility to change that the apostle Paul emphasizes to us: if I'm not willing to do whatever it takes to be successful, when I preach to others, I myself can also become a castaway. Why? Because I will end up abusing my power in the gospel by causing others to become more like me for my own convenience, rather than me becoming like them so that I might draw them to Christ.

It is much easier to try to build the church to suit ourselves, to create a work that is more convenient and modeled after ourselves.

It is much more difficult for us to change and become like others so that we might effectively attract them to a church that loves Christ more than us. If we build the church around us, it will certainly become a snare

to us, and it will set us on a course for becoming a castaway.

Are we willing to allow the Lord to change us by Him selecting where we will go, and whom we will become like?

Let us seriously consider the lesson the scripture teaches us when it talks about the potter and the clay: "The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel."—Jeremiah 18:1-6.

It is very clear by the scripture that the Lord believes He has the right to change us more than once. Sometimes when He does this, it might seem very drastic and painful. Can you imagine how our lives could be completely changed in a moment by some disaster or catastrophe affecting us?

But is that the only way that the Lord could put His hand upon us to get us to change, again? Would it not be easier to simply respond to the Holy Ghost when He says go and change so that we might reach new people? But how many of us know how to be led by the Holy Ghost this way? And how many of us are willing to be led by the Holy Ghost this way? †

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### **2022 HONDURAS CONVENTION**

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### **THE CHURCH OF GOD STANDS FOR**

An eternal God	Psalm 90:2
A divine Christ	John 1:1, 14
An infallibly inspired Bible	II Timothy 3:16
Salvation from sin	Matthew 1:21
The new birth	John 3:1-7
Entire Sanctification	Ephesians 5:25, 26
A holy life	Titus 2:11, 12
	Hebrews 12:10-14
Unity of God's people	John 17:21
	I Corinthians 12:13
Divine Healing	James 5:14, 15
The ordinances	Matthew 28:19, 20
Eternal life	Matthew 25:46
	John 3:15; 6:54; 10:28
Eternal punishment	Mark 9:43-46
	Revelation 20:15

### **YOU SHOULD KNOW MORE ABOUT THE CHURCH OF GOD**

Jesus bought it with His own blood	Acts 20:28
It has a good foundation	Ephesians 2:20
	I Corinthians 3:11
Christ is the Head	Ephesians 1:22; 5:23
	Isaiah 9:6
Christ is the Door	John 10:9
	John 10:1
	Acts 2:47
Only the saved are members	John 15:2-6
	I John 3:8, 9
Membership is offered to all	II Peter 3:9
	Revelation 22:17
Membership is rewarded	John 14:2, 3