

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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Editor ~ Wade Stanley

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What Do You Know?

Benjamin Fry

It is not an uncommon experience for me to be asked a thousand questions a day. This is part of being a parent, a teacher, and having a reputation for always having an answer. I know that I'm not alone in having to field all these questions, and most of us don't like to say, "I don't know." Though, sometimes that is the best answer we can give. A small example of this came up recently during a class. We were discussing the Tabernacle and what was used to make it. **Exodus 25:3-5** gives a small part of this list:

"This is the offering you are to accept from them: gold, silver, bronze, blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen, goat's hair, ram skins dyed red, fine leather, acacia wood."

The list continues on, but in most modern translations there is reference in verse 5 to "*fine leather*" or some other obscure type of covering. This is a change where they are admitting that they don't actually know what the original word meant, though they have guesses.

In fact, there are many places where the translators have made their best guess. Nowhere does this affect the message that God has given to us, but it does highlight something for us. There are things that we don't need to know. It would be interesting to know if Adam had a belly button, but I don't need that information! If God were to give us every single detail that we wanted to know it would actually be a distraction to what we are supposed to know. God knew this was a possible issue for his people. He made certain that the Israelites had no form, no picture of what he looked like when he appeared to them. Moses emphasized this shortly before his death.

"Be very careful, then, because you saw no form at the time the Lord spoke to you at Horeb from the middle of the fire. I say this so you will not corrupt yourselves by making an image in the form of any kind of figure" (Deuteronomy 4:15-16).

God specifically told them to not use an image to worship him. It is interesting that no picture of Jesus survived from his life. Not only that, but the apostles never describe his physical form enough that we could recreate it.

To me, this seems to be intentional. God did not intend for the tabernacle to be rebuilt nor did he intend to be worshipped by only one type of people. Jesus came to be the savior of the world, and all too often we fall prey to what we think we know.

I do not say this to make us uncertain of what God plans for us or to rethink his accessibility. On the contrary, I want to make certain that we are able to differentiate between what we truly know and what we think.

What has God made certain for us? Many things! The Israelites knew their covenant. There was no uncertainty in how God expected them to live their lives. In the same way, we too have been told how we are to live. Jesus told his disciple, "*so then, be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*" (**Matthew 5:48**). And we are told that this includes doing good deeds, not being angry with our brothers and sisters, saying what we mean, turning the other cheek, loving our enemies, and so much more (**Matthew 5:16, 22, 37, 39, 44**).

There was no doubt left that we are unable to meet this standard from the very youngest of ages. It is humanly impossible for us to be as perfect as our Father in heaven. Solomon recognized this. Paul recognized this. God recognized this. We need to recognize this. This is the reason that we needed Jesus to come to earth and become human. Jesus, having become one of us, is now able to be the best possible intercessor between us and God.

"For we do not have a high priest incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace whenever we need help" (Hebrews 4:15-16).

This we know! God will help us because Jesus delivers our requests to him. It is through the effort of the Son that we can have confidence. Along with Job we can say with confidence, "*I know that my Redeemer lives!*" (**Job 19:25**).

God has taken care of the cost of our failures through the sacrifice of his Son, and we know that he is reaching down to lift us up. There are many things that we may be unsure of. There may be many questions that we can't answer. But the greatest and most important questions have already been answered for us. We know who God is and what he expects of us. We know that we fail, but that he covers us with the blood of his Son. We know that he has prepared a place for us (**John 14:2**). We know that we can still learn many things.

It is important for us to never think that we have learned enough. We who are one with Jesus have the ability to understand what God wants us to know. As Paul says, "*For who has known the mind of the Lord, so as to advise him? But we have the mind of Christ*" (**1 Corinthians 2:16**). We can learn what God desires and we can learn what God intends, because we have

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the mind of Christ, we have the Spirit living within us. We should not waste these gifts! This conviction is why I have often been quoted as saying, "The day I stop learning is the day I die." But the truth is that I expect that even after death I will still have many things to learn. Maybe Adam will even let me know if he had a belly button.

~ 2324 Delbert St. Bakersfield, CA 93312
benifry@yahoo.com

Jesus Said No

Joshua Riggins

In **Luke 12:13-15**, we read the following account,

"Then one from the crowd said to Him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' But he said to him, 'Man, who made me a judge or an arbitrator over you?' And he said to them, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.'"

Jesus, who would rebuke the disciples for not letting the little children take up his time, would not arbitrate between this man and his brother. Plainly, he told this man, "No." The Son of God did not have time to deal with this situation of the flesh.

Consider exactly why Jesus told this man no. It wasn't because he disliked him or thought his brother was more worthy. It wasn't because Jesus was a stick in the mud. Rather, Jesus could see that this did not serve the mission of his Father. In **John 6:38**, Jesus makes this point clear, *"For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me."* Jesus primarily concerned himself with how his actions fit into the work prepared by the Father. Was settling a dispute between two brothers about their earthly inheritance of value to the purpose at hand? As being arbitrator and judge was not part of his mission (**John 12:47**), Jesus told the man no.

We are a busy society, and there seems to be a constant demand for our time. Oxford University did a study in 2017 which was published in the Journal for Consumer Research. In the study, they explained that, "a busy and overworked lifestyle, rather than a leisurely lifestyle, has become an aspirational status symbol." Culturally we've bought into the idea that busy equals virtue, and we leave ourselves over exerted and lacking in enthusiasm for time spent on good works.

Jesus wants us to realize not all demands for our time are of equal value. Not all busy is glory. Our time on this earth is not for the world and its pull for our attention. We are not on this earth to gain status or feel important because we are needed by so many.

It is certainly true that God is decidedly against idleness (**2 Thessalonians 3:11**), and He placed us on this earth to work (**Genesis 2:15**). However, did God truly place us on this earth to participate in work, seven civic functions, two clubs, and encourage our children to sign up for three or more extra curriculars each? Are we really putting ourselves or our families in the best position to use the precious resource of time in the very best possible way for the Lord?

Paul puts it this way in **Philippians 1:9-11**,

"And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."

Often when we say "yes" to demands which stretch our calendars thin, we think we're loving our brethren. Paul encourages that love here, but he tells us to be discerning and come to understand the things that are excellent. In other words, there may be demands which do not meet the "best" standard, and when we accept those less than excellent demands we leave ourselves in a position to offend. Our attitudes change from one of love to one of stress and anxiety, and we're soon projecting our attitudes on the quality of our work.

There is a time to say, "No." A time when we have no time. A time when it is more loving to answer the request in the negative than provide them with insincere and half-baked efforts. Jesus told us in **Matthew 5:37** to, *"Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No,' 'No.'"* Jesus wants us to be sincere. Paul tells us the goal is to be *"filled with the fruits of righteousness,"* and that will involve our saying "yes." However, if we don't see a demand for our time as beneficial to righteous fruit, and our calendar is already stuffed, be sincere by saying, "No."

At the conclusion of Paul's statement in **Philippians 1:11**, he points to the purpose of our good works. Instead of trying to be "people-pleasers," or "self-pleasers," God is calling us to be "God-pleasers." Our calendars should be filled with activities which praise God.

Consider just a few examples: God is praised when we remain employed and feed ourselves (**2 Thessalonians 3:12**). God is praised when we care for our parents who are no longer able to care for themselves (**1 Timothy 5:4**). God is praised when we make time to communicate with Him (**Luke 18:1**). God is praised when we share our livelihood with brethren (**James 2:15-16**).

To the congregation at Ephesus Paul wrote, *"See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise but understand what the will of the Lord is"* (**Ephesians 5:15-17**). We are called to redeem our time. To use it in the very best way possible in

order to serve the Lord. Are there demands on your time which drain your availability for the Lord? Are there activities taking up precious real estate in your calendar which could better be spent praising God? Learn to be more willing when circumstances necessitate to say, as Jesus said, "No." Be sincere. Be filled with fruits of righteousness. Be discerning. Be a time redeemer. Be a better steward of the precious resource given to you by your loving Father.

"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:17).

*~ 401 Douglas Dr, Bloomfield, IN 47424
jgriggins@gmail.com*

Spiritual Forces (Part Two)

Flint Fenton

EDITOR'S NOTE: Flint's first article appeared in the December, 2018 issue.

Another spiritual being described in the Bible is an archangel. Michael is the only being called an archangel who is called by a name. Having a proper name is very rare among angels with only two to four named depending which terms are to be taken as proper terms (*Michael, Jude 9; Gabriel, Luke 1:26; Lucifer, Isaiah 14:12; Apollyon, Revelation 9:11*). Despite the name archangel literally meaning "chief messenger," Michael never appears in the Bible carrying a message. The archangel Michael is likely connected to the prince Michael in the book of **Daniel**. Michael contended with demonic powers to allow an angel to bring a message to Daniel (**10:12-13**). At the end of the book, Michael is depicted as the leader of God's people through great trouble (**12:1-2**). In **Jude 9**, Michael is said to have contended with the Devil over the body of Moses. Michael was also apparently in conflict with the Devil during his fall (**Revelation 12:7-9**). Considering these things together, Michael is a mighty angel that is always in direct conflict, fighting against evil spiritual forces. Michael is also a leader given great authority. His angels contended with the Devil and it is he that has charge over God's people. Finally, Christ's return will be announced by the cry of command of an archangel and the trumpet of God (**1 Thessalonians 4:16**).

Angels are ministering spirits and likely the spiritual beings that are most familiar. This is because they appear far more frequently in the text than any of the previous categories. Angels frequently are found giving a message from God and interpreting that message for men (**Daniel 10:12-13, Luke 1:26, Zechariah 1:9, Hebrews 2:2**). While angels carry the message of God, they are not the source of the information, and they are not omniscient. In **1 Peter**, we are told that angels desire to look into the plan of salvation, which they themselves, at times, delivered.

In addition to carrying messages, angels are involved with various acts of might. Elisha opened the eyes of his servant in **1 Kings 6:17** and the servant saw an army of angels. After the resurrection of Jesus, an angel rolled away the stone in front of the grave (**Matthew 28:2**) and the angels waged war against the Devil and his angels under the leadership of Michael (**Revelation 12:7-9**). Angels also are involved with giving God praise (**Revelation 7:11**). Angels are spiritual beings that carry out a rather wide variety of tasks for the Lord.

The last category of spiritual beings to consider are the angels who sinned. Some of the more useful texts concerning the angels who sinned are found in **Jude 6** and **2 Peter 2:4**. The angels who sinned rebelled against God under the leadership of the Devil and are reserved for punishment. Although they are chained, they apparently play a similar role to their counterparts delivering a message. In the Old Testament, the demons played a role working through the false religion of idolatry (**Deuteronomy 32:17, 1 Corinthians 10:20**). During the ministry of Christ and the apostles, there are a few instances of these spirits inhabiting or possessing the bodies of humans. Apparently, the demons were loosed for a time while Christ was on earth, so he could show his superiority over the demons (**Colossians 2:15**). Having disarmed these spiritual beings, they again revert to generating confusion about God. In the first letter to **Timothy**, we are told that demons have a doctrine. That those who receive not the love of the truth will have itching ears and will accumulate for themselves teachers. Much of the religious confusion that we see in the world today has been amplified by the angels who sinned. One God delivered one message to establish one church. The great amount of doctrines and churches is not a result of the message of God, but rather a result of the message of the demons. To combat these spiritual perversions, we have the sword of the Spirit or God's Word (**Ephesians 6:12-17**).

"Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Timothy 4:16).

*P.O. Box 43, Lone Jack, MO 64070
fentonflint76@gmail.com*

Glory to God!

The church in **Excelsior Springs, MO** rejoiced when **Don and Doris Lewis** were restored to the congregation on November 4. On November 14, the angels rejoiced with the saints when **Kenny Bradley** was immersed for the remission of his sins.

The church in **Martensdale, IA** gladly welcomed **Mike and Shawna Divis** as members of the congregation.

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Please check your expiration date!

Continued from page 3: "Glory to God"

The church in **Vandalia, IA** rejoiced when **Abigail Dilley** was buried with Christ on November 18.

The church that meets on **Prince Road, Alton, IL** praised God when **Luke Tutterow** was baptized by his father, **Brian** on December 2.

Blessed Are the Dead

Joan Foust, 88, of the **Bolivar, PA Church Of Christ** went to be with the Lord on October 16. Sister Joan fought a long battle of many years with Parkinson's disease and had also been diagnosed with cancer near three years ago. She was a loving mother, grandmother and great grandmother and will be sorely missed by all who knew and loved her.

Connie Rae Price, 72, peacefully departed this world on November 16. She was surrounded by her family in the comfort of her home in Altoona, IA. A lifelong member of the **Pleasant Hill Church of Christ**, Connie was a devout Christian and loved her congregation dearly. Connie will be remembered for her generosity and wisdom. Her final days were full of visits from family, friends, neighbors, and former students sharing their love and admiration. She will be greatly missed but those closest to her take comfort in knowing the exceptionally kind and Christian life she lived.

Clarence Murfin, 96, a longtime resident of Mill Valley, CA, went to heaven on November 25. He was born on March 27, 1922 in Hartshorn, MO, the son of Charles Edward and Margaret Murfin. Clarence was an active and devout lifelong member of the **Church of Christ in Novato**. He loved attending church and seeing other people. Clarence is survived by three daughters, 13 grandchildren/step-grandchildren, 22 great grandchildren/step-grandchildren and 18 great, great grandchildren/step- grandchildren.

Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

~ **Revelation 14:13**

Here and There

Tom Dennis, a Church of Christ evangelist for many decades as well as a former editor and publisher of **The Gospel Message**, recently celebrated his ninetieth birthday. Brother Tom was overwhelmed by the number of cards, letters, and phone calls he received. He thanks all of our readers for the numerous well-wishes he received on this milestone.

"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

The Gospel Message

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% Doug Twaddell
1700 S. Ann Ct.
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Wade Stanley
18078 State Highway 149
Unionville, MO 63565
wadestanley@gmail.com

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The Church and Our Sisters pt. 2

John Morris

In May, 2017, *The Gospel Message* published an article entitled “The Church & Our Sisters” in which I offered what I believe to be the Bible’s answers to the following two questions: (1) What does it mean to be “in church” (1 **Corinthians 14:28, 35**)? and (2) What is the role of our sisters “in church”? In response to that article, as well as to public teaching on the subject before and since, several questions have consistently come up which deserve attention. In this article, I’d like to take up just a couple of those (and, perhaps, in a future article, we can address others).

Question #1: How do we reconcile Paul’s statements in 1 **Corinthians 14:34** (“*Let your women keep silent in the churches*” and “*they are not permitted to speak*”) with his command in **Ephesians 5:19** (“*speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*”) The command for sisters (along with the brothers) to “*speak*” through singing when the church is assembled seems to indicate that sisters are actually *not* required to “*keep silent*” in church.

This is an understandable question, but let us first remember that Paul could not have contradicted himself. Either a sister can obey both of these commands simultaneously, or she must always be disobedient to one of them. Since the second cannot be true, there must be some way in which these commands harmonize. What is it? Their harmony is revealed, I believe, by recognizing that the two passages are addressing different, and separate, spheres of activity. In 1 **Corinthians**, Paul is addressing an individual act; in **Ephesians**, a group activity. In 1 **Corinthians**, his statements concern sisters; in **Ephesians**, both sisters and brothers. In 1 **Corinthians**, he is discussing ordinary speech; in **Ephesians**, singing. In other words, the two passages, when placed side by side, are really apples and oranges. They have nothing to do with each other. The command to “*keep silent*” pertains only to talking publicly in the hearing of the congregation. A sister may sneeze, cough, hush her child, or whisper to her husband with no fear of violating Paul’s prohibition. Those things make sound, yes, but not the kind of sound he was talking about. For the same reason, she may sing. Paul was never interested in silencing her singing.

But doesn’t Paul use the word “*speak*” in both passages? Yes, but there’s little to be made of that. For example, as I write this, the President of the United States is scheduled to address

the nation on network television later tonight. The man who holds the *office* of President plans to speak from the Oval *Office*. But, of course, his *office* (position) is very different from his *office* (workplace). I might say of a man that “he loves to *sing* praises to the Lord.” Of another, however, I may be forced to conclude that “he likes to *sing* his own praises.” Again, the same word was used in both statements, but it did not mean the same thing. The first type of singing is loved by God, the second, hated. The use of the same word in two different commands does not necessarily mean the two commands pertain to the same thing. It’s illegal for someone under the age of 21 to *drink*, but then again, it’s perfectly legal for him to *drink*.

Question #2: What about the sisters mentioned in 1 **Corinthians 11:5-13**? Weren’t they praying and prophesying in church?

Many think so, but such a conclusion would have Paul contradicting himself three chapters later (1 **Corinthians 14:34-35**). There must be another explanation. 1 **Corinthians 11:17-18** provides that explanation, I believe. After concluding his thoughts about brothers and sisters praying and prophesying, Paul writes (and it is worth noting that the NKJV, NASB, ESV, and NIV—just to name a few—all begin a new paragraph here): “*Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse.*” “*These instructions.*” What instructions? The ones he just gave about praying and prophesying, or the ones he’s about to give? Whatever set of instructions he means, they definitely concern the assembly of the saints, because he stated, “*you come together not for the better but for the worse.*” Verse 18 reveals which set of instructions he means: “*For first of all, when you come together as a church....*” “*First of all.*” In other words, in **verses 17 and 18**, Paul is just *beginning* to address the Lord’s Day assembly, that is, “*church.*” In the previous verses, he was not.

So, what then? Were sisters praying and prophesying in the first century, but just not “*in church?*” That must be the case. When would they have done so? Perhaps during occasions like those at Mary’s home, “*where many were gathered together praying*” (**Acts 12:12**). Or on occasions when brethren were together to “*exhort one another daily*” (**Hebrews 3:13**). Just like today, members of the church were with each other more often than just when “*in church.*” Paul taught the brethren at Ephesus “*from house to house*” (**Acts 20:20**). Any of these times could have served as an appropriate occasion for a sister to pray or share an inspired word from the Lord. In fact, as we look at the whole of Scripture, we see that much of the praying and

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prophesying we read about actually happened outside of prescribed meeting times, not infrequently in individual and small group settings (e.g. **2 Kings 22:14ff**; **Isaiah 38:1**; **Acts 12:12**; **20:36**; and many others). The Sunday assembly wasn't necessary for sisters to have opportunity to offer the fruit of their lips, inspired or otherwise.

In conclusion, there are certainly other questions that could be addressed. Perhaps, some that are even more important. Hopefully, the answers above are helpful, however. As always, I welcome any comments or questions.

~ 420 NW 1251st Rd., Holden, MO 64040
johnandamber@zoho.com

Decisions

Blake Stanley

In **Luke 15**, Christ tells the parable about a man who goes to his father with a presumptuous request: to receive his inheritance now. His father grants his requests, and in a short time the son leaves home and squanders his inheritance on, as the Bible describes it, prodigal living. Just prior to the man making a change in his life and going back to his father, we find him penniless and feeding pigs. He is even jealous of their food because it is better than what he is eating. What brought him to this place, or started him on this path, can be traced back to that first decision: he decided that he wanted what he felt like was his right now. Had he never made that decision he probably would not have found himself in the company of swine, jealous of their food.

The Bible has many anecdotal stories and accounts of people who, like the prodigal son, made a poor decision that led to subsequent poor decisions. Comparatively speaking, the prodigal son ended up in a much better place than many others. David chose Bathsheba. Lot chose Sodom. Jeroboam chose idolatry. We see the fruits of those decisions: David stole a man's wife and murdered the husband; Lot found himself defending angels from being raped by a mob of men; Jeroboam built golden calves that infected an entire nation with idolatry.

Each of these consequences began with a certain framework of thinking that led these men to make these poor decisions. Based on the parable Nathan uses in **2 Samuel 12**, it appears David had a sense of entitlement. As the rich man felt that he was entitled another man's lamb, David felt he was entitled to another man's wife. Lot appears to have become more and more comfortable with the sins of the men of Sodom. In **Genesis 13**, he chooses the plain around Sodom for his herds to graze and pitches his tent near the city. By **Genesis 14**, he is living in the city (**Genesis 14:12**). In **Genesis 19**, he is sitting at the city gates. He seemingly disregarded the condition of the

people and fully vested himself, and his family, in the city. Lastly, Jeroboam decided the people's allegiance to him was more important than their allegiance to God. That drove him to build idols for the northern kingdom to worship and an entire religion with priests and feasts to distract the people from returning to the temple in Jerusalem. Each of these men had a framework of thinking that caused them to make the wrong decision again, and again, and again.

These events highlight the importance of correctly framing our thinking. If our decision-making starts with the wrong framework -- like a feeling of entitlement, or a comfort with the sins of the world, or an attitude where we put ourselves above God, or even a misunderstanding of the scriptures -- it is likely we will make the wrong decisions. In a sense, we have laid a foundation and now every decision is viewed by what could be built upon that foundation. If that foundation is not correct, if it is not truth, the results can be disastrous. It can lead us down a terrible path and even blind us from the truth.

We see these effects all around us. I would suspect we all have people in our lives -- many times people very close to us -- that we have watched make poor decision after poor decision and we think, what are they doing? Why are they making these decisions? Or maybe we have even found ourselves somewhere where we never thought we would be and we think, "How did I get here?" Looking back, we will likely see a decision that led to a poor decision that led to a poor decision.

We also see people blinded to the truth because of the framework of their thinking. There are so many people who won't even lend an ear to hearing about Jesus Christ because they have been convinced there is no God. How do you talk to someone about Christ when they don't even believe in the existence of a higher power? We even see it in the religious community as many are so lost as to the purpose and the function of the church.

As we make decisions, we can't make them only based on what is directly in front of us. We must be willing to look back at the principles that guide our decisions to make sure they are grounded in the truth of the scripture and in the knowledge of God's will. We also must look forward to where those decisions might take us, to "*ponder the path of our feet*," as **Proverbs 4:26** instructs us to do. Do they lead us along paths of righteousness? And in those moments when we find ourselves in the wrong, we must be willing to tear things down and start back from the beginning. Like the prodigal son, we must be willing to swallow our pride and walk back into the loving arms of our Father.

~ 1101 Wiltshire Blvd., Raymore, MO 64083-8318
~ blakestanley28@gmail.com

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

Blessed Are the Dead

Robert (Bob) Flack, 80, of Pleasant Hill, IA, went to be with the Lord on the morning of December 16, 2018 surrounded by the love and comfort of his family. He is survived by his wife, Marge, three daughters, seven grandchildren, and two great-grandsons. Bob joined Christ's Church on April 5, 1970 and served as a deacon and later an elder at the **Pleasant Hill Church of Christ** until his passing. He was a pillar in his faith and always happy to talk about how Christ had changed his life. He loved God and loved his church family. He was confident in his faith and found great comfort in the promises of Christ. He left a legacy of faith and love for his family.

Eula Jane (Green) Lancaster, 91, passed away December 27. Jane was a member of the **Gregory Blvd. Church of Christ, Raytown, MO**. She married her childhood sweetheart, **Ray Green**, and raised three boys. Jane was a Den Mother for the Cub Scouts and a room parent at school. She was a stay-at-home mom that loved her family and supported her boys in all of their endeavors. Ray passed away shortly after their fortieth anniversary and Jane was a widow for 16 years until **Daryl Lancaster** swept her off her feet. They started a new life together with 99 years of marriage experience between them. That marriage lasted for another 16 years. Jane was unwavering in her love for Ray and Daryl, her first family and her second family, but especially for her Lord and Savior.

Editor's note: Many of our readers knew your editor's grandparents, **Chad and Ruby Lee Freeman**, charter members of the **Gregory Blvd. Church of Christ**. Chad passed away on January 2. He was preceded in death by Ruby Lee. The thoughts below are from your editor's comments at Chad's funeral.

Death has a way of bringing the unexpected to mind. When I received the call that Granddad had fallen and hit his head and was bleeding on the brain, the words of Elisha came to mind, *"My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!"* (**2 Kings 2:12**). Following Elijah's departure, Elisha expresses his dismay by tearing his clothes – a sign of mourning in his culture – and then picks up the mantle left behind by Elijah. I realize many people have already carried on the work of Granddad. His work in God's kingdom has gradually diminished over the past 20 years, and others have taken his place. But that's not the lesson I want to draw from Elisha.

One of the attributes I grew to admire about Granddad was his restless energy, his unwillingness to be satisfied with the status quo. When I first got into the work in 2006, I would visit Granddad and Grandma on a pretty regular basis. We would spend hours talking about my work, my training, and about the church. Whenever I would complete a big assignment like a

weekend meeting, Granddad would invariably say, "Great. What's next?" For Granddad, a completed project or an accomplished goal was not only reason to find satisfaction, but also a reason to look toward the horizon, to force yourself to think 1, 2, or 3 steps ahead; in short, to be a proactive leader in God's kingdom.

Yes, the passing of the mantle symbolizes the next generation carrying on God's work; but to me, it also represents Granddad's attitude – don't live in the past, move forward, seize this moment but constantly look for new opportunities.

God has built us to heal from separations like this; when we mourn in a healthy way, we can find comfort and closure in most circumstances. But as you remember Granddad, I urge you to ask yourself, "What's next?" There are souls who are dying, brethren who are hurting, churches who are struggling and laborers are few. Take up the mantle, look to the horizon, and see all the possibilities to serve in God's kingdom.

There was nothing Granddad loved more than the Lord and His kingdom. In my experience, a conversation with Granddad naturally drifted to the church. He was deeply passionate about the church and its well-being. With Granddad, one could easily spend hours discussing the ins and outs of church government, the challenges faced by church leadership in the 1960's-90's, the contemporary dangers posed by post-modern American culture, etc. He was watchful, vigilant, prayerful even after his health prompted him to step aside from the eldership.

In their younger years, he and Grandma loved to visit other congregations. If Gregory had a basket dinner and an afternoon service, you would almost certainly find Granddad and Grandma at Ottawa or Claycomo or Lawrence for a Sunday evening service. They loved being with the Lord's people.

In his first epistle, the apostle John states several truths in unambiguous terms; among them is if you love Jesus you need to love His people. One cannot abide in Jesus unless he or she loves the church Jesus purchased with His death. One who claims to love the Lord while hating his or her brother or sister abides in death. To love the church is to love Jesus.

And when we love both the Lord and His people with more than just words, we can be confident in death. John says, *"My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him"* (**1 John 3:18-19**). Those who are serious about their faith take the words of John to heart. Life has a way of sowing doubt through trials or sin or false teaching. When doubts begin to creep in, John urges us to evaluate our lives in the light of simple truths such as, "Do we truly love our brethren?" The man or woman who answers yes finds an assurance to silence all doubts. If you love God, then love His people and you will know where your life is headed.

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Continued from page 3: "Blessed are the Dead"

Over the last 15 years, Job was Granddad's favorite book in the Bible. I can't tell you how many times he would say, "I was reading Job today," or "I love the book of Job." As the years passed and the disappointments mounted, the health troubles multiplied, and the tears flowed with increasingly greater ease, Job seemed to grow more beloved to Granddad. It's easy to understand his affinity for the book. Job, a righteous man fallen on excruciatingly hard times, asks God the most fundamental, but the most difficult, question in human existence -- "Why?"

It was hard for Granddad to find purpose these past few years. Most of our visits would naturally drift toward statements like, "I don't know why I'm still here," or, "Why am I here and Ruby Lee and Marcia are gone?" I confess, I had no answer for him at the time. I too struggled to understand why a man living on the edge of death for decades was still here.

However, time and perspective have a way of re-framing suffering. As we look back on most of life's difficult episodes, meaning and purpose seem to clarify. Would we ever learn patience were it not for the occasional, or persistent, trial? Can faith mature without the refining fire of testing? Is righteousness produced by comfort and ease or by the correction of God's chastening? The beauty of Jesus can only be seen in one who lives in self-denial, who nails his or her desires to the cross, who surrenders all.

The beauty we saw in Granddad – his gentleness and warmth, his thankfulness in all things, his determination to be cheerful regardless of how he felt, his endearing self-deprecation, his keen interest in the well-being of others, his profound and moving prayers – (these) were the fruit of the Spirit he bore as his faith was pushed and stretched to its limits.

"Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct" (Hebrews 13:7).

Glory to God!

The Rock Creek Church of Christ, Ottawa, KS, welcomed Tidus and Jennifer Spencer as well as Phil Wharton as members of the church.

The Church of Christ in Topeka, KS rejoiced when three were baptized for the remission of sins: Erica Clark on June 30, Richard Heflin on November 4, and Jesse Heflin on November 4.

In December, the brethren in Vandalia, IA welcomed Morgan Edwards as a member of the congregation.

Special Meetings

The church in Topeka, KS will celebrate their fiftieth anniversary of meeting in their present location on February 10. Praise God!

Please let your editor know if your congregation plans a special meeting for 2019!

The Gospel Message

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The Gospel Message
% Doug Twaddell
1700 S. Ann Ct.
Independence, MO 64057
twadsquad@earthlink.net

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Wade Stanley
18078 State Highway 149
Unionville, MO 63565
wadestanley@gmail.com

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THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Volume 61, Number 3

Editor ~ Wade Stanley

Publisher ~ Doug Twaddell

March, 2019

Yes, Unless...

Charles Fry

In the years that the young man David spent fleeing from jealous King Saul, a story in **1 Samuel 23:1-14** tells of a time when David actively led his band of outcasts to rescue a town of Judah, named Keilah, from marauding Philistines. Before David set out on his rescue mission, he inquired of the Lord whether he should go or not and was assured that he should go. Some of David's men were afraid, so David inquired a second time and was again assured by God he should go, and that God would give him victory over the Philistines. David did win a great victory, as promised, winning spoils of war and saving the inhabitants of Keilah.

In the next stage of the sequence of events, King Saul heard of David's exploits against the Philistines, learned David's current location, and perceived this as an opportunity to capture David by besieging a city of his own people. With no guidance from God, and contrary to all that God had previously shown him, Saul rationalized his rebellious course of action as seizing an opportunity given by God (**1 Samuel 23:7**). Perhaps he thought God had made a mistake. Meanwhile, as Saul prepared to march to war against a peaceful town of his own people, David in turn received word of Saul's intentions and preparations. David responded by inquiring of the Lord, two specific questions.

David had good information from sources that he trusted about Saul's intentions and movements, but nevertheless asked whether Saul would indeed march down with his army and besiege the city of Keilah, and the Lord's answer was, "*He will come down.*" The second question was, "*Will the people of Keilah hand me over to Saul?*" And the answer again was in the affirmative, the Lord said, "*They will surrender you*" (**1 Samuel 23:10-12**). To save himself, and to save Keilah a second time from invasion, David and his troop of about 600 men abandoned Keilah and resumed a vagabond subsistence of hiding in remote places. Saul was told that David had left Keilah, and so he cancelled his expedition and did not march to Keilah (**1 Samuel 23:13**).

David's dependence on consulting God for guidance in making his decisions is certainly a positive lesson in this episode of his life's story and is in stark contrast to Saul's presumptive decisions and actions that he disingenuously ascribed to "God given" opportunity (**1 Samuel 23:7**). There

are also lessons here about depending on men, which David was wise enough not to do. He did not determine his course of action based on the feelings of his followers (**verses 3-4**), nor did he act solely on the basis of definite information supplied by allies (**verses 9-10**), and David did not assume that the folk of Keilah would gratefully protect him against Saul because of the good he had done for them (**verse 11**). Then too, David behaved with dignity and mercy when he left Keilah in peace, rescuing the town a second time from military forces by his decision to simply leave in peace without retribution or vindictiveness. He chose to do the right thing, knowing that others would not.

One other insight we might take from the things that happened to David in those days relates to what would have happened but did not happen. David asked specific questions of God and received specific answers about what would happen. "*Will Saul come and besiege Keilah? Will the people of Keilah surrender me to Saul?*" Those two questions were answered in the affirmative, "*Yes, Saul will come.*" And, "*Yes, they will surrender you.*" However, neither of these things happened. These two true prophecies of God did not take place, because they were specific to circumstances that depended on what David did. When David exercised his freewill to take warning and leave Keilah, Saul in turn exercised his freewill and chose not to go to Keilah. Neither of the prophecies was "fulfilled" because both prophecies depended on circumstances that were malleable, dependent on what men would do. If God's foreknowledge were deterministic, then everything would have played out according to inevitable fate as stated. Saul would have come, and David would have been shut in and betrayed by Keilah. Instead we see that the Lord's true foreknowledge served to warn and avert an outcome that certainly would have occurred if David had not acted on the information he had. David could and did choose a different course, and a different outcome occurred. Human choice truly affects what happens in this world, including acts of God, and including our relationship with God. Numerous Biblical records similarly recount instances when divinely predicted outcomes were or could have been different if people listened to the prophet and changed their behavior (e.g. see Elijah's prophecy against Ahab, and God's mercy when Ahab repented, **1 Kings 21:17-29**; or Jeremiah's word to Zedekiah, **Jeremiah 38:17-23**; or Jonah in Nineveh, **Jonah 3-4**).

Long ago the prophet Ezekiel spoke the Lord's word to Israel and said, "*As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord,*

continued on the next page...

Continued from front page: "Yes, Unless..."

I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11). Our choices matter so much that God himself acts upon our decisions and requests.

~ 2312 Delbert Street, Bakersfield, CA 93312-2114
cfry@bak.rr.com

Stewardship

Richard Garbi

In six days, God created all that is. Having created the heavens, the earth and all that is in them, He owns it all. *"Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is" (Deuteronomy 10:14).* Other scriptures that express this same concept are **Psalm 24:1**; **Psalm 89:11**; **Genesis 14:19, 22**; **Exodus 19:5**; and **1 Corinthians 10:26** to name a few. The truth of His ownership is spread so pervasively throughout scripture that we ought to consider its implications for us. God owns all that is. Therefore, anything that I have is His. In the Old Testament, God gave the land of promise to the children of Israel (**Deuteronomy 1:8**, **Leviticus 25:23**) and He has given us everything that we have. God wants us to know that He owns everything, so that we will understand that we are not the true owners but rather stewards over His possessions.

As stewards of the Lord's possessions, understanding that all we have is not our own, we must determine what the Lord wants us to do with what He has entrusted us. We are responsible for putting His possessions to work for Him.

In **Luke 12:42-48**, we are told a parable concerning two stewards. One steward was faithful and wise. This steward was responsible with his master's possessions and made sure that his master's affairs prospered. Jesus summarizes the duties of a steward as someone *"whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season."* The steward is put in charge of managing the possessions of the master and is to ensure that there is no lack. The phrase *"to give them their portion of meat in due season"* indicates that the steward was in charge of everything down to the food that was on the table.

We know that Joseph was steward over Potiphar's house and that Potiphar *"left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat."* If nothing else, this ought to illustrate the enormous responsibility that is placed upon stewards. The Lord has entrusted His possessions to us and wants us to be using them for His glory. Jesus tells us, *"Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so*

doing." Paul tells us in **1 Corinthians 4:2**, *"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."*

Our Lord is coming back, and He will determine what it is that we have done with His possessions. In **Matthew 25**, Jesus tells us a parable about three servants to whom a man dispersed his possessions while he went on a journey.

"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:14-30).

This parable reinforces the concept that the Lord has distributed His possessions to us. It teaches us that when He returns, we will give an account for how we have used His possessions, and He expects a profitable return on His investment. The Lord does not want us to return what we have received back to Him. In fact, this parable seems to indicate that the Lord is looking for a several-fold return on his investment. It also teaches us that as we demonstrate the ability to wisely allocate the Lord's resources, He will entrust us with more.

God has blessed us all with many blessings both physical and spiritual. Let us pray for wisdom and guidance that we may use God's blessings in such a way that brings Him glory. Paul tells us in **Colossians 3:17**, *"And whatsoever ye do*

in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” And later in verse 23 of the same chapter, “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.” If we approach our life recognizing that we are stewards of the Lord, then doing everything heartily in the name of the Lord is a natural extension of our stewardship.

*~ 1105 SW 14th Street Terrace, Blue Springs, MO 64015-4929
richard.garbi@gmail.com*

Digital Gospel Message

Wade Stanley

Over the course of the past six months, I have been working on a digital edition of *The Gospel Message*. Technology has dramatically changed the nature of communication. So long as these changes continue to evolve, Doug Twaddell and I foresee a day when many subscribers will prefer a digital edition of this publication that can be conveniently downloaded onto their electronic device. Anticipating these changes, I assumed responsibility for the paper's website several years ago. The website address is:

www.gospelmessage.net

Thanks to the hard work of **Evangelist Dan Huff**, *The Gospel Message* has maintained a presence on the internet for over two decades. Dan built the first website for the paper and took it upon himself to post each month's articles for years. In addition, Dan worked hard to bring the archives of this paper to the internet. Hundreds of articles were posted online thanks to hundreds of man-hours on Dan's part. I know that I speak for many when I thank Dan for all of his sacrifices for the kingdom. Your hard work has edified many!

If you have navigated to the website recently, you will have noticed a change in presentation. Thanks to the help of a very talented brother in Christ, I have moved the website to a new host and constructed a new site. The new site is responsive – it adapts to the visitor's electronic device so that the site can be easily viewed with a computer monitor, tablet, or phone.

For the past few months, I have uploaded digital copies of *The Gospel Message* in both PDF and eBook formats. PDF copies can be downloaded and printed. If you have a phone or tablet with a book reading app, you can download the paper in eBook format. The eBook format is evolving, so please send feedback to me. I hope to have a permanent format worked out by the end of 2019, Lord willing.

All of these changes are re-orienting *The Gospel Message* to a fully-digital platform. Once the transition is made, Doug and I will discuss whether or not to charge a small subscription fee for these digital services. Though more cost-effective than a

printed copy, there are modest costs involved with web-hosting, equipment, software, etc. to keep a digital format afloat. For the present, please take advantage of these complimentary services and tell us what you think

Having said the above, rest assured, if God is willing, printed and mailed copies of *The Gospel Message* will continue to be available for the foreseeable future. Doug and I realize many will prefer a printed copy. The transition to a digital format will be gradual and we do not intend to eliminate printed copies once the transition is complete.

In the midst of all these changes, I did run into one problem. Unfortunately, the hundreds of archived articles posted by Dan prior to 2010 did not migrate to the new website. There are several technical issues standing in the way of easily copying from the older format used by the previous site to the new site. We have all of the articles backed up and we are in no danger of losing all of Dan's hard work. A solution is forthcoming, and we hope to have these articles posted by the end of the year. Please bear with us as we look into how to migrate the archives to their new home.

In the meantime, I have been digitizing the archived issues in PDF format. **Dwain Stoops**, an elder of the church in **Ozark, MO**, scanned roughly half of the past volumes of TGM. Dwain did not have all of the issues, so the collection was incomplete. **Larry Hammar**, also a member of the church in Ozark and a former evangelist, left a large collection of past TGM issues in his estate. From Larry's collection, as well as TGM archives I received from brother **Tom Woody**, I have been filling out Dwain's good work. Volumes 1-20 are available on the website for any visitor to download all of these archived issues in PDF format. The documents are searchable. I am confident the collection is nearly complete. In future months, as time permits, I will continue scanning and uploading new volumes. God willing, by the end of this year, Volumes 1-61 (1961-2019) will all be available to download in PDF format.

As always, Doug and I are very thankful for our subscribers. This paper is for you and we appreciate any feedback, especially constructive criticism. We are not always able to fulfill your requests or suggestions, but we do appreciate your interest in the publication.

*~ 18078 State Highway 149, Unionville, MO 63565
wadestanley@gmail.com*

Glory to God!

The church in **Excelsior Springs, MO** praised God when **April Peacher** was restored to the congregation. Her husband **Tom** also placed membership. Also in the month of January, **Connor Bush** was baptized for the remission of his sins!



Please check your expiration date!

Foreign Report

It has been many months since your editor updated you on the Lord's work in the Philippines. He is glad to report some exciting developments. Two elders were recently appointed at the **Guinatan church of Christ, Ilagan Isabela**. Evangelists **Francisco "Saul" Pagulayan** and **Jonathan Ildefonso** taught several sessions on church government. Evangelist **Jinny Cris Sarceda** assisted with appointing the elders. The elders subsequently appointed **Ronio (Ron) Cabante** and **Edgar Licodini** (known by many as **Mar Biljera**) as evangelists and these brothers are working hard to share the Bible's pattern for church leadership in their area.

Evangelist **Sonny "Jun" Tobias** reports the **San Vicente Church** on the island of **Leyte** is close to appointing elders. Brothers **Roger Wanasen** and **Jun** have taught extensively on church government over the course of the past three years. They plan a trip at the end of February to teach and, God willing, ordain elders.

Brother **John Morris** and your editor visited both churches in 2017. Brothers **Louis Garbi**, **Charles Ross**, and **Charles Fry** have visited the **Guinatan church of Christ** in the past.

There are other churches who have requested more teaching on church government. Your editor will let you know as elders, deacons, and evangelists are appointed in the future.

Here and There

The church in Brookfield, MO invites everyone to join them on Saturday, May 18 for supper and an evening of singing.

Brother **Keith Owens** reports the church in **Gingellville, MI** changed its meeting time on Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. This is the only time the church meets during the week. If you are visiting the Detroit, MI area on a Sunday, please make plans to join these good brethren for worship and fellowship!

"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."

Special Meetings

2019 Meetings

April 13-14.....Ottawa, KS
April 20-21.....Dean Avenue, Des Moines, IA
May 4-5.....Lawrence, KS
May 25-26.....Murray Road, Lee's Summit, MO
June 8-9.....Vandalia, IA
June 15-16....Annual Youth Meeting, Excelsior Springs, MO
July 1-5.....Midwest Bible Campout, Eminence, MO
July 25-28.....College Study, Smart Road, Greenwood, MO

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THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Volume 61, Number 4

Editor ~ Wade Stanley

Publisher ~ Doug Twaddell

April, 2019

The Unique Body of Christ

Jay Graham

Jesus said in **Matthew 16:18**, “...on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” The church Jesus established in the first century was intended to be a most unique organization on this earth. At that time, idolatry existed. It was the most popular belief and was accepted by the vast majority of mankind. There was also the Jewish faith that had been established by the Lord just under two thousand years before. This particular belief had been established for the Jewish people to bring forth the Christ as well as the Old Testament which was intended to show the world of the one true God. However, the new church Jesus was to be the Chief Cornerstone of, was to be something different and unique for the souls of men and women. (Webster’s Dictionary defines the word *unique* as “Existing as the only one or as the sole example, etc.”)

There are many facets of this new body that would make it unique. Unlike Judaism, into which most Jews were literally born, this new church would be entirely made up of volunteers, people who would choose to be part of it. These new adherents would be spiritually born into this new body, for this body would not be made for people of a specific nation or culture or race or gender or any other physical identity, as the prophet prophesied in **Joel 2:32**, “And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” This is the body that was created in **Acts 2**. It is the only body that Jesus died for, and the only one He saved. We are added to it as taught in **Acts 2:47**. There has never been any other like it nor will there ever be another.

Because the church has been built by our Lord and continues to be governed by Him through His Scriptures, His church is not ours to manipulate to our image. To be sure, it can be left by those who refuse to submit to His will, but it cannot be changed by man. The letters to five of the seven churches in the Revelation letter teach that individual congregations can depart and separate from the Lord, but these unfaithful congregations cannot change the Lord’s church as a whole. It remains complete and safe under His care.

With all of this said, one of Satan’s challenges has been how to combat this unique spiritual organization. In **Revelation 12**, we see the picture of Satan fighting against the Lord’s people, those in this new body. It did not take very long for him to begin this fight. Within a few centuries, Satan was able to

manipulate and deceive the hearts of men by forming another body, one that would attempt to deceive by claiming to be the church Jesus established. But of course, it was not the body Jesus built, though many claimed it to be. And, over the past two thousand years, one of Satan’s most effective tools against the Lord’s church and the gospel it preaches was the formation of hundreds, even thousands, of religious bodies all claiming to be the one Jesus established.

This has effectively caused much confusion among those who might seek the Lord and His will for their lives by giving people “alternatives” to the Lord’s one true church. However, none of these “alternatives” could do the work and will of the Lord, for they only “appeared” to be from Christ, when in reality they were of the evil one, for these other “alternative” churches could not provide the salvation that the one unique church Jesus established in **Acts 2** could provide. The religious landscape of today is indeed one of confusion that Satan has deliberately created to deceive the hearts and minds of men and women.

Now let us return to the unique nature of the body Jesus established. The church Jesus created is indeed unique in the world. Unfortunately, it is easy for us as Christians, as members of this great body, to forget how unique the church of Christ is. The church Jesus established is not in competition with the world’s denominations. The Lord’s church is not one of many denominations. The Lord has separated His Christians out of and from the world. Nor is the Lord’s church a “Protestant Denomination.” It is not protesting anything. It is the “heavenly Jerusalem” as described in the verses at the close of this article. It is beyond man’s “categorizing.”

The Lord has placed Christians within His body. It is the one body established on Christ’s blood. It is the one body established on the writings of the New Testament apostles and prophets as taught in **Ephesians 2:19-22**. Accordingly, the gospel of Christ preached by the church is not an “alternative” to the various gospels of men. It is the one gospel as taught in **Galatians 1:6-10** that can provide the one answer to man’s problems with sin and death. There is no other.

It is man’s arrogance that proclaims his churches are of equal value. It is man’s pride that proclaims his gospels can provide for man’s greatest needs. It is Satan behind these alternatives. And these churches and messages of man’s devising are not and can never be in competition to the Lord’s church and the one true gospel it preaches.

Our hope is to be part of His church. Our message is to be His

continued on the next page...

gospel. Our salvation is from Christ and His crucifixion. There is no other alternative.

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect..." (Hebrews 12:22-23).

~ 7715 Quarterhorse Cir, Flagstaff, 86004
jayhgraham@live.com

Peace is Freedom

Tad Morris

The obvious benefit of a Christian life is eternity with God, but the peripheral benefits are numerous. Christians enjoy the support of angels, the fruits of a moral life, and an enormous network of fellowship. Among all these benefits and blessing, somewhere near the top of the list is peace. As a Christian, you have access to peace that is inaccessible to the rest the world. It's yours to have, if you'll take it.

What is Peace?

Peace is freedom, including freedom from worry. Not freedom from problems, but the ability to confidently and rationally choose not to worry about those problems. Jesus never said he would take away our problems in this life, but he did say we could have peace. **Matthew 6:25-32:**

"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things."

Peace is freedom from fear -- not freedom from enemies or persecutors, but the ability to confidently and rationally choose not to worry about those enemies. **Matthew 10:28-31:**

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper

coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows."

Otherworldly Peace

The kind of peace Christ promises is unique. **John 14:27:** *"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."* When the world offers peace, it requires compromise. The world says if you want your problems to go away, you need to give up some of your convictions. Even if you do get a little peace in the world, it will never last long. Peace in Christ is different. This kind of peace is secure, built on conviction and faith.

Finding Peace

The thieves of peace are predictable: family problems, health problems, and spiritual problems. What can you do to find peace in the face of these problems? Peace in Christ is free, but it does require some sacrifice. To have peace, give up fleshly thinking. **Romans 8:5-6:**

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

To have peace, give up your selfish desires. **Romans 14:16-19:**

"Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another."

To have peace with God, you might have to give up peace in other parts of your life. **Matthew 10:34-39:**

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."

To have peace, pray. **Philippians 4:6-7:**

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Joseph Wept

Charles Fry

As a young man of about seventeen Joseph, son of Jacob, was hated by his older brothers (**Genesis 37**). They sold him into slavery, misleading their father to conclude Joseph was dead. After many difficulties as a slave and then, even worse, a prisoner, Joseph, by then 30 years old, after years of godly behavior in all circumstances, was suddenly elevated by the Pharaoh out of prison and into the position of governor over Egypt. When Joseph had faithfully served in that position through seven prosperous years, a famine began that would last seven more years, a famine Joseph had carefully prepared the land of Egypt for during his entire tenure as governor. The whole region, including Canaan, where Joseph's brothers lived with his aged father, was affected. Food shortages compelled Joseph's older brothers to come to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain to survive. After more than twenty years of separation, with drastic changes in Joseph's status and appearance, the brothers did not recognize him, but he did recognize them. In their interviews with him, conducted through an interpreter, Joseph was moved to tears by the brothers' comments to one another as they fretted about what they had done to both Joseph and their father decades earlier. They blamed each other for the misery they had caused and their lack of compassion for Joseph in his distress. Joseph *"turned away from them and wept"* (**Genesis 42:21-24**). Perhaps Joseph might have wept in his previous distress, when sold by his brothers, when he lived as a slave and a prisoner, but we have no statement in the scriptures about that. Only as a man of authority, on the occasion of hearing his brothers bare their guilty souls, fussing with one another about the evil they had done more than twenty years earlier, do we read that Joseph wept.

Not trusting his brothers on that occasion, after weeping privately, Joseph manipulated circumstances in order to force them to bring their youngest brother to him in Egypt, probably intending to protect Benjamin from the caprices of the men who had already betrayed one younger brother and their own father. Eventually, the brothers were compelled to do as Joseph directed and return to Egypt a second time to purchase food, bringing their youngest brother along. For the second time, Joseph dealt with them as though he were a stranger, speaking through an interpreter, but when he saw his younger brother once again, now a grown man, Joseph went aside and *"he entered his chamber and wept there"* (**Genesis 43:29-30**). Joseph wept.

When Joseph had seen his older brothers guiltily fussing among themselves over old wrongs, he wept in anguish. When Joseph saw his younger brother Benjamin he wept, apparently in relief and gladness. Shortly after this, Joseph contrived a situation that would force Benjamin to stay behind in Egypt as

an apparent prisoner while the other brothers returned to Canaan. Joseph still didn't trust his older brothers, or completely believe their story. As Joseph's plan was carried out though, his older brothers begged him for mercy, not so much mercy for themselves this time as mercy for their old father in Canaan who was waiting for the safe return of his youngest son. Joseph's brother Judah not only pleaded for mercy, he offered himself as a prisoner or slave to purchase freedom for Benjamin to return safely to Jacob. When the brothers were begging Joseph and voicing their genuine fear for their father's fate, Joseph *"could not control himself"* and ordered everyone except his brothers out of the room. Then Joseph *"wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it" and he made himself known to his brothers* (**Genesis 45:1-2**). This third time Joseph wept, most likely an emotional dam twenty years in the making broke open, spilling out the loneliness he had endured mixed with relief and joy and understanding and gratitude. The circumstances of his life, all the misery and loss and unfairness and hardships despite his own fidelity came together into focus as he was able to have what for him was a genuine reunion with his family. For the ten older brothers, it was confusing and frightening. Joseph wept in thankfulness and gladness as he hugged and kissed each of his brothers and openly talked to them (**Genesis 45:14-15**), and again later he greeted his father the same way (**Genesis 46:29**). Joseph wept.

After Joseph wept in reconciliation with his brothers, he welcomed his whole family into Egypt, with assuring explanations of God's providence and good outcomes despite their evil intentions and effusive forgiveness. Seventeen years passed with the family secure in Egypt (an ironic bookend – see **Genesis 47:28, 37:2**), and then their father Jacob died. When Jacob died, Joseph's brothers had their doubts, old fears surged as they felt powerless and dependent on the brother they had wronged, not quite believing that Joseph truly forgave them. In fear they concocted a tale, telling Joseph that their father made a deathbed request for continued mercy and good will toward the older brothers (**Genesis 50:15-17**). When Joseph heard this message, once more *"Joseph wept when they spoke to him."* This is grief again, not relief or gladness or reconciliation, but terrible disappointment that his brothers were still carrying around guilt and shame that he had honestly, in the sight of God, forgiven. He forgave them, but they were still doubtful and afraid. Joseph wept.

Being a godly man, Joseph forgave as God forgives, as Jesus forgives, as Christians are to forgive (**Colossians 3:13**). Seeing others trapped in guilt and fear made him weep. Foreshadowing the Redeemer, Joseph's message to his brothers was *"don't be afraid"* (**Genesis 50:19-21**) and he *"comforted them and spoke kindly to them."* Joseph wept, and offered forgiveness, solace and reassurance to the fearful and doubters.

Consider also **Philippians 3:18** and **Jude 1:20-23**.

~ 2312 Delbert Street, Bakersfield, CA 93312-2114
cfry@bak.rr.com



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Glory to God!

The church which meets on **Prince Road, Alton, IL** praised God when **Alexandria Harvey** was clothed with Christ on February 28.

The church in **Martinsville, IN** was overjoyed when **Joe Jewel** was buried with Christ on March 3. **Taylor Griffin** added to their joy when she was baptized for the remission of sins on March 4.

Here and There

Brother **Keith Owens** reports the church in **Gingellville, MI** changed its meeting time on Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. This is the only time the church meets during the week. If you are visiting the Detroit, MI area on a Sunday, please make plans to join these good brethren for worship and fellowship!

Special Meetings

The twenty-fourth annual **Ladies' Day** in **Kirkville, MO** will take place May 4, if God is willing. This year's theme is "*The Butterfly Effect*" with lessons presented by **Shonya Klein, Jenny Kusmec, and Cathy Poyner** from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Registration begins at 9:30. Lunch will be provided. For housing accommodations, please call (660) 627-4003. More information can be found at **KirkvilleChurchofChrist.org**.

The church in **Brookfield, MO** invites everyone to join them on **Saturday, May 18** for supper and an evening of singing.

The church in **Excelsior Springs, MO** is pleased to announce they plan to host a **One Week Meeting in 2021**. This meeting will take place during the traditional time the annual **Two Week Meeting** occurred in past years. More details will be announced in the future, if God is willing.

2019 Meetings

April 13-14.....Ottawa, KS
April 20-21.....Dean Avenue, Des Moines, IA
May 4.....Ladies' Day, Kirkville, MO
May 4-5.....Lawrence, KS
May 18.....Supper and Singing, Brookfield, MO
May 25-26.....Murray Road, Lee's Summit, MO
June 8-9.....Vandalia, IA
June 15-16....Annual Youth Meeting, Excelsior Springs, MO
July 1-5.....Midwest Bible Campout, Eminence, MO
July 25-28.....College Study, Smart Road, Greenwood, MO
August 31-September 1.....Pleasant Hill, IA

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Wade Stanley
18078 State Highway 149
Unionville, MO 63565
wadestanley@gmail.com

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THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Volume 61, Number 5

Editor ~ Wade Stanley

Publisher ~ Doug Twaddell

May, 2019

Discerning Hearts

Dan Huff

"He answered and said to them, 'When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times" (Matthew 16:2-3).

The Pharisees tested Jesus, asking for a sign from heaven. There was a plethora of evidence for them to consider. The problem was not a lack of facts, testimony, or miracles to pore over. No, the error lay in their lack of discerning hearts. Please note, they were able to use their minds to discern the temporal but failed to discern the eternal: that God was among them, fulfilling His promises. The Lord expected them to have discerning hearts.

Discernment is the engaging of one's mind – weighing the evidence to distinguish and come to a just conclusion. God through the ages has encouraged and expects His people to have discerning hearts. Nowhere does God give or expect an impossible task; this is not beyond our abilities. This is something we can do! Scriptures teach us that we are made in the likeness of God (**Genesis 1:26**). We, like none other of God's creation, have an internal ability to discern, like Him. God is seeking for souls who have discerning hearts. He looks for those who are willing to take the time to consider, think, seek and make righteous judgments.

As the young man Solomon came to the throne with the great responsibility to lead the children of Israel, the Lord appeared to him in a dream, asking *"what shall I give you?"* Solomon humbly asked for an *"understanding heart"* to govern God's people, that he could *"discern between good and evil."* Such a desire pleased God so much that He gave Solomon things he didn't ask for. ESV says Solomon asked for, *"understanding to discern what is right"* (**1 Kings 3, 3:11**).

Should we not seek to have a discerning heart, to understand what is right in God's eyes? Will not God be pleased with such efforts? Later in his life, Solomon, using his God given wisdom, wrote, *"For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding"* (**Proverbs 2:6**). God's word is the source for our discernment.

The word of God, when absorbed and applied to our lives penetrates and probes the thoughts and intents of the heart. It

gives us the tools to discern, to judge right from wrong (**Hebrews 4:12**).

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:12-14).

The inspired writer desires for us to weigh the good and evil and to evaluate what will be pleasing to the Lord – what will be helpful and beneficial not only to ourselves, but also to others. We must be able to distinguish between truth and error.

Should we not seek to have a discerning heart, to understand what is right in God's eyes? Will not God be pleased with such efforts?

I imagine in my mind a large scale. On one side is the word of God – THE truth (**John 17:17**) – and on the other side is the thing we are considering. How does it balance with the wisdom from above? We must do this so that our lives are not weighed in the balance and found wanting, as happened to Belshazzar, king of Persia (**Daniel 5**).

We must have our senses exercised, skilled in the word of righteousness. To have spiritual discernment —the ability to use our minds to comprehend and make godly judgments or decisions – is vital to the Christian's spiritual growth. Paul prayed that Christians' love, knowledge, and all discernment may be growing more and more to the glory and praise of the Lord. Love, knowledge, and discernment go together (**Philippians 1:9-11**). Our Father has equipped us for all that we need to grow and develop, to be mature and pleasing unto Him (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**). Maturity filters everything through God's word.

"These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the

continued on the next page...

Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). May it be said of us, too.

*~ 7 Ross Rd., Eldon, MO 65026-4416
werhuffs@att.net*

Digital Worship

Michael Allen

There are some in the world today who are of the opinion that the future of the church will mirror the apparent future of retail sales as we see it in this country. In this, many have seen retail stores migrate over the years, from locally owned neighborhood stores, into nationally owned megastores, and then finally into what we are starting to see today – online stores that bring the product directly to your own home. Many religious organizations over the years have followed this business model and have also transitioned from small neighborhood places of worship, into megachurches where all kinds of religious opportunities are available, and lastly into what we are starting to see today – religion that is available without ever needing to leave your home. Some feel that in the future, some groups will measure their physical growth not by taking attendance each Sunday morning, but by seeing how many views or likes that they have had online. As we consider this, the transition for some religious groups may be an easier one for those with less individual participation. If people view worship from the point of view of a spectator, rather than a participant, then the transition away from the group to the home may be an easier one for some. But is this what God really intended?

Don't get me wrong. I think it's awesome when you need to purchase something rather obscure, instead of driving around town all day looking for it, you can immediately order it from your phone, and have it delivered to you in 24 hours. But can we achieve scriptural New Testament worship by forsaking the physical assembling of the saints, in lieu of digitally assembling?

Some aspects of our worship can be done not only as a group but also on our own. We can sing praises to God on our own. We can offer prayer to God on our own. There are a lot of really great mp3 and video sermons available online; the number of things like this that we can take advantage of is growing by leaps and bounds each day. How wonderful is it, to have these lessons preserved for us so that we can listen to them over and over again? How great is it to have these things available for those who at times are unable to attend services? Either for shut-ins, or for those traveling, or for those who are ill. Being able to connect when you cannot attend is a wonderful option

to have. But I feel that the inclusion of digital information such as this is intended to add to your necessary worship, not to completely replace it. We can achieve things like edification and evangelism without a physical one-on-one contact, but I don't think that this was intended to be a long-term worship and outreach solution.

Words like fellowship and communion convey the meaning that they could not be achieved individually but only as part of a group. And, to take this a little further, the implication in each of these is that it could only be satisfied through physical contact and not remote access. One thing that seems to muddy the waters at times is how some define the word church. In the New Testament, it comes from the Greek word *ekklesia* essentially meaning the assembly or congregation. In this we are not talking about brick and mortar, but the physical assembling of believers. What about things such as baptism, and the partaking of the Lord's Supper? What about the need for elders to have oversight over the congregation? Would physical observation during the assembly need to be replaced by a constant observation of one's social media accounts? And while people seem very willing to share details of their lives that in previous generations would have been seen as private, there still is a certain connectivity that we can only get when we are face to face with someone. How many text messages and emails have been misconstrued, because the reader was unable to hear the tone of the sender's voice, or unable to read subtle facial clues? How many of us have received a message that was mistakenly put in ALL CAPS, and then inferred that the person was yelling at us? How many of us have received messages where autocorrect has mistakenly fixed a word and completely changed the meaning of a sentence? These are things that become nonfactors when we take the time to talk to someone in person.

I do feel that changes in technology have made some good improvements in our worship service. People in the pew can have access to multiple Bible versions and resource material that in times past would have been difficult to match. Being able to project maps on to the screen that everyone can see is great. Being able to project two different verses side by side on the screen and compare them is good to have also, along with many other different things. And for those in our groups that are visual learners, having this option can add another dimension into what we are teaching. We can do more and engage more people in our classes with the use of these types of things. We can reach many more people outside of our services, when we have things to offer on our website. But, we can't let these things become the focus of our worship, and we can't let these things replace our worship. At the heart of all of this seems to be the principle of doing things our way instead of trying to see what God wants us to do.

One set of verses that comes to mind is **Matthew 22:34-40**, where Jesus is asked what the greatest commandment is. And in his response, he gives the top two: to love God with

everything you have and to love others in the same way that you love yourself. And that if you get these two right, then everything else will fall into place after that. So, the question then becomes, can we satisfy both of these conditions if we are not willing to physically meet with the saints? Am I putting God first in my life if I only consider remote worship? And am I concerned about the souls of my fellow man if I am not interested in meeting with them? Is worship about God and the saints or is it about me?

507 N. Cherry Circle, Nixa, MO 65714
nixachurchofchrist@gmail.com

The Blessings of Death

Kevin Crittenden

"Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away" (Psalm 90:10).

It is April 9, 2019. Kathleen and I find ourselves crossing the threshold of the Daesung Korean Presbyterian Church in Sunnyvale, CA, where many fellow mourners have gathered for the funeral of Nam Kyoung-Ah, who succumbed at age 47 to the ravages of cancer. Through her volunteer work with the American Cancer Society, Kathleen had met Kyoung-Ah, developing a bond that shortly thereafter included myself. Kyoung-Ah, from Korea, earned a PhD in a foreign language, then worked as a university professor. As a teacher, she can use her passing to inform our own lives, thus helping us live more fully.

When we sing, "Count Your Many Blessings," we rarely include death in our thoughts.

Why?

Because most of us are not comfortable with the inevitability of death. We try to delay it or deny it by use of diets, exercise, and buckets of Oil of Olay. Sometimes, plastic surgery is employed. Others fight against the dreaded image in the mirror by pretending they are still youthful and acting in a manner that, in time, becomes increasingly embarrassing. Some even look for a "cure" for death by genetically altering cells to be immortal or have themselves cryogenically suspended until such a time as "medical science" can cure them.

The predominant view of death is that it is a medical event and that the most we can hope for is to make the best of a bad situation. But suppose we lived a life that turned toward what death had to teach, rather than trying (like Jonah) to run from the inevitable? Such knowledge blesses our lives; we can live more fully when we get comfortable sitting with death.

Blessing 1: GOD is in control of our lives.

As much as WE want to be in charge, we need to let go. Obsessing about ways to extend our lives is not God's Will for us. Counting glasses of water and the number of steps we take MIGHT be helpful for the quality of our lives. But if we do it because we worry about dying too soon, then let's see what wise Jesus has to say: "*Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?*" (**Matthew 6:27**).

Of course not. So, let it go and live more fully for God.

Blessing 2: We are not ENTITLED to a long life.

As Scripture tells us, "*Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that'*" (**James 4:14-15**).

Blessing 3: We should NOT put our lives on hold, waiting for that "perfect" moment.

Just do it – now.

Blessing 4: Despite our great faith in medical science, disease is not always curable.

Again, who is in charge? Neither Western medical science nor Eastern Chinese medicine is in charge. God is.

Blessing 5: Take what the "authorities" tell us with a grain of salt and inquire of the Lord for guidance.

King David was surrounded by learned men, the authorities of his day, who gave their advice, but he also inquired of the Lord at least nine times, praying for guidance. (See: **1 Samuel 23:1-3**, **1 Samuel 23:4-5**, **1 Samuel 23:10-11**, **1 Samuel 23:12-14**, **1 Samuel 30:8-9**, **2 Samuel 2:1-2**, **2 Samuel 5:17-21**, **2 Samuel 5:22-25**, **2 Samuel 21:1**)

David was always intent to know God's will. Of him God said, "*I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.*" (**Acts 13: 22b**).

We can use David's example to help make the many difficult decisions at the end of our lives, cultivating the habit of inquiring of the Lord and waiting for His answer.

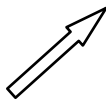
It is written: "*In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths*" (**Proverbs 3:6**).

Blessing 6: Examine our lives.

Discover what is important to God (and thus to us), and then GROW in those directions WHILE WE CAN. And those important possessions, which helped form our self-esteem, will not necessarily be valued by our heirs.

"Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised" (**Job 1:21**).

continued on the next page...



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Continued from page 3: "The Blessings of Death"

Blessing 7: As wise people wait in Heaven's anteroom, they learn to graciously cede power and accept help.

Blessing 8: We can learn to die with dignity, so when it is our time, we can trust in Him as He reaches out to draw us to His bosom.

And what a wonderful blessing it is to realize that our TRUE treasures here in this life are not silver and gold, wealth and status, power and position, but rather loving relationships, with God and with those who have become our family. At the bottom of the human heart is the place where such loving relationships flourish. They are the foundation of joy in this life.

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

*Dedicated to Kyoung-Ah (July 1, 1971 – March 23, 2019):
Daughter, niece, friend, teacher, global visionary....*

*~ 19130 Meiggs Ln. Cupertino, CA 95014
kcritt2@aol.com*

Glory to God!

The church in **Brookfield, MO** rejoiced when **Deborah Rude** was clothed with Christ on April 4!

The church which meets on **Prince Road, Alton, IL**, rejoiced when **Rachel Watson** was baptized on April 13.

Special Meetings

The twenty-fourth annual **Ladies' Day** in **Kirksville, MO** will take place **May 4**, if God is willing. This year's theme is *"The Butterfly Effect"* with lessons presented by **Shonya Klein**, **Jenny Kusmec**, and **Cathy Poyner** from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Registration begins at 9:30. Lunch will be provided. For housing accommodations, please call (660) 627-4003. More information can be found at **KirksvilleChurchofChrist.org**.

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July 20.....Old Lamine VBS (rural Blackwater, MO)
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September 21-22.....Brookfield, MO

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Wade Stanley
18078 State Highway 149
Unionville, MO 63565
wadestanley@gmail.com

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THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Volume 61, Number 6

Editor ~ Wade Stanley

Publisher ~ Doug Twaddell

June, 2019

The Household of Cornelius

Steve Wright

Acts 10: A Lesson in Unity and the End of Patriarchal Law for One Man and His Family

Cornelius was “a Centurion,” one of sixty officers in a Roman legion (**Acts 10:1**). Each centurion would command over 100 men like a modern army captain today. He was a part of the “Italian regiment” (or “cohort”). Ten cohorts of 600 men each made up a legion.

Cornelius “feared God” (**verse 2**). This was a technical term that the Jews used to refer to pagans who had abandoned, or did not follow, the pagan religions, but instead favored the worship of Jehovah. Gentiles at this time and place in the world could have varying degrees of adherence to Judaism. They could be *benefactors* like the centurion in **Luke 7:1-10**, who supported the Jewish community and presumably were sympathetic to Jewish beliefs. There were “God-fearers” like the one here in our text, **Acts 10:2**, and others such as **Acts 13:16, 16:14, 17:4**. There is an important mention of this category of “God-fearers” in an inscription from approximately 210 A.D. in Aphrodisias in modern Turkey.

There were also *full proselytes* who converted to Judaism and embraced all of its requirements. Josephus mentions a certain Izates of the royal family of Adiabene, who embraced Judaism and had himself circumcised in order to accept fully the Jewish way of life (see Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20.2., 3-4). The event of the conversion of Cornelius in **Acts 10** would not have the significance that it does had Cornelius been a full proselyte to Judaism.

Luke calls Cornelius “devout” (**verse 2**). In other words, he was right in his attitudes toward both God and man and by grace he was living a godly life (see **Acts 17:17**). Cornelius “feared,” that is he revered God, as did his whole household, which includes family and servants (**verse 2**). Because of this man’s influence, a large group of people attended synagogue with him. They were segregated because they had not yet become fledged proselytes, they had not been circumcised, and they did not keep the dietary laws. They could listen attentively, and they did. They learned. They gave generously to those in need. They prayed to God and sought his direction for everything in their lives.

Look at **verse 37**: Peter’s statement makes it clear that Cornelius knew about Jesus. Therefore, he knew about the

gospel! Many scholars believe he wanted to accept Christ and to receive the Holy Spirit but had been told that he must first become a Jew. I agree with that supposition because of the context of this story. It is very possible or even likely that his praying to God at this time was pertaining to his consideration of taking that very step at this very time. But that would just not do! So, God had to prepare Peter. Did Cornelius’ devotion include compelling his servants to believe like he did (**verse 7**)? No.

Peter says it was “unlawful” for Jews to eat with Gentiles (**verse 28**). Was this God’s Law? No, this was a taboo, that is, something contrary to Jewish (man-made) standards of custom and tradition. Remember this when you read **Acts 11:3**. Peter’s comments reveal his acceptance of a new (godly)

The peace of the gospel is Jesus. By paying the price of sin through His sacrificial death, Christ established peace between man and God, and therefore, peace between man and man.

standard in the place of his own (ungodly one): “God shows no partiality” (**verse 34**). This is the lesson of the animals on the sheet. There is nothing new about this in reality from God’s perspective. It was taught in the Old Testament as well as the New (see **Deuteronomy 10:17; 2 Chronicles 19:7; Job 34:19; Romans 2:11, 3:29-30; James 2:1**). So, this is truth, not a new truth, but truth that is taking on new dimensions at that time. Peter, in **verse 35**, “accepted,” meaning he “marked by favorable manifestation of the divine pleasure.”

Christ, Peter says, went about “preaching peace” (**verse 37**). The peace of the gospel is Jesus. By paying the price of sin through His sacrificial death, Christ established peace between man and God, and therefore, peace between man and man. The substance of Peter’s sermon here was Christ (**verses 37-43**).

By “household,” Luke refers to all who were under Cornelius’ authority and care who could comprehend the gospel and voluntarily believe and obey (see **Acts 11:14**). This did not include infants.

continued on the next page...

"God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life" (Acts 11:18). This is one of if not the most shocking admissions in Jewish history, but an event that the Old Testament prophesied would come (see Isaiah 42:1, 6; Isaiah 49:6; Acts 2:39; Ephesians 2:11-13).

In closing, here are some things to notice about what changed and what did not for Cornelius:

- These people did not become "*The Circumcision*."
- They did not stop eating pork.
- They did not suddenly begin to don yarmulkes or wear Jewish style clothing.
- They did not start wearing their hair (or beards) in the manner of the Jews.
- They did not begin to build and arrange their houses like the Jews.
- They were not required to learn and speak Hebrew or Aramaic.

Why can one draw such conclusions? Because such things are not to be considered as the proper definition of "*ONENESS in Christ!*" In fact, unless there are cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and individual distinctions between people, in the kingdom of Christ, then the picture of spiritual unity which transcends all of these things is lost. Unity is not uniformity!

~ 2508 S.W. Granthurst, Topeka, KS 66611-1272
forfeathers@yahoo.com

Dealing with Discouragement

John Morris

The story is told that one day Satan put his tools up for sale. They were many and varied. Tools of similar type were grouped together. On one table were displayed sins like pride, selfishness, addiction, and hatred. On another were displayed tools of a different variety—things not sinful in and of themselves, but which the tempter can skillfully manipulate for his own purposes: pleasure, friendship, talent, anger. And then set apart from these collections, on a third table, was another tool, one without a price tag. A curious shopper asked Satan about the tool, to which he responded, "That one's not for sale. It's too valuable to me. With that tool I can pry into almost any a human heart, and once in, begin to work my will." Impressed by such a description, the shopper inquired, "What's it called?" Picking it up, and weighing it in his hands appreciatively, Satan replied, "Discouragement."

Discouragement is a loss of hope. It is a loss of expectation

(the Bible's meaning for "hope") that a desired end can or will ever be achieved. It can be prompted by circumstances arising from without or within, can vary in severity, but is always characterized by the same basic condition—lost (diminished or destroyed) hope. Loss of hope that my spouse will ever change. Loss of hope that I will ever be able to break a sinful habit. Loss of hope that members of my congregation will ever truly seek first the kingdom of God. Loss of hope that I will ever make it through a trying time.

But losing hope—at least, in matters related to our walk with God—is dangerous. It is so, because when we lose hope (if we lose it entirely), we lose the will to act. And when we lose the will to act, we cannot but lose to the evil one. "*Faith without works is dead*" (James 2:20). And so, discouragement is something to be avoided. And when it does come, it needs to be overcome. But how? God gives us answers in 1 Kings 19.

Elijah had just had what one could call a mountaintop experience. Atop Mount Carmel, before an assembly of double-minded Israelites, he had called upon Yahweh to demonstrate His power, and God had responded with fire from heaven! The people had fallen on their faces, had declared, "*The LORD, He is God!*" and then obeyed Elijah's command to execute the state-funded prophets of Baal. A resounding victory! But then events took a drastic turn for the worse. Elijah was informed by the queen's messenger that the victory was going to cost him his life. Jezebel had not been moved to repentance, but to revenge. And so, in very short order, Elijah was transported from the mountaintop to the valley of the shadow of death. He ran for his life, heading south to safety, and on the way, began to brood. And he came to some conclusions: "*I am no better than my fathers!*" (1 Kings 19:4). I'm a failure. "*I alone am left*" (1 Kings 19:10). No one is serving God but me. "*It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life*" (1 Kings 19:4). Kill me and put me out of my misery.

Elijah was a deeply discouraged man. He had lost hope and had lost heart. Life was no longer worth living. His was a wasted existence. There was no use in even trying anymore. What could be said or done to help this man overcome his discouragement? God shows us the way.

God took care of Elijah's flesh.

First, He let Elijah get some rest, and then He made sure Elijah got something to eat (1 Kings 19:5-6). He did this twice (1 Kings 19:6-7). Sometimes, the best bridge between despair and hope is a good night's sleep. Sometimes, just getting a little something in our stomach can do wonders for our mental outlook. The flesh is weak. Lack of sleep, lack of nutrition, lack of exercise—these are all well-known, potential contributors to discouragement and depression. Sometimes, though it may not solve our problems completely, we can help ourselves just by taking care of the flesh.

God helped Elijah with his thought life.

God told Elijah, *"I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal"* (1 Kings 19:18). Elijah's dismal outlook was based, in part, on bogus information—namely, that he was all alone. Correcting that misunderstanding helped bring about a revolution in how he felt. The same holds true for us. Sometimes, we need to tweak what we're telling ourselves...about ourselves, about others, about our circumstances, about God. Are we telling ourselves the truth? David asked, *"LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle?"* The answer? *"He who...speaks the truth in his heart"* (Psalm 15:1-2). Truth is important, even when we're talking to no one but ourselves. And it's powerful. It changes how we think, which changes how we feel, even when there may be no change in our circumstances. *"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:32).

God gave Elijah meaningful work to do.

Work is therapeutic. It gives us a sense of purpose and accomplishment (integral to joy) which can, in turn, cast people and experiences in a different light. It also helps us get our minds off ourselves and the things that discourage us. Sometimes our low times come simply because we're spending too much time thinking about ourselves and how things aren't going our way. Meaningful, engrossing work can really help crash a pity party! God gave Elijah a trifecta of tasks, three new jobs—anooint Hazael as king over Syria, anooint Jehu as king over Israel, and anooint Elisha as prophet in his place (1 Kings 19:15-17)—plenty of work to keep him busy, and also, significantly, not busy work. It was meaningful work, God's work. Always, there is more work to be done in the kingdom than there are workers to accomplish it. When discouraged, it may, sometimes, serve us well to just get our minds on, and our hands busy in, God's work. It worked for Elijah.

God gave Elijah a godly friend.

The man who believed he was all alone was given a companion to work with for the rest of his life. *"There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother"* (Proverbs 18:24), and Elisha would stick with Elijah to the very end. No man is an island. Everybody needs somebody. But that somebody (or somebodies) can be hard to find, at times. Elijah had to travel from Horeb back to Israel to find Elisha, a journey of over a month. We may need put forth some extra effort, as well. We may need to drive to other congregations, attend some meetings, cross generational gaps, or get outside our comfort zone in some other way. *"A man who has friends must himself be friendly"* (Proverbs 18:24). But the blessing of a good, godly friend will make it worth all the inconvenience. Such a friend can make all the difference when discouragement comes calling.

~ 420 NW 1251st Rd., Holden, MO 64040
johnandamber@zoho.com

Blessed are the Pure in Heart

Wade Stanley

When Moses boldly asked God to *"show me Your glory,"* the Lord responded, *"No man can see my face and live"* (Exodus 33:18, 20). Man, tainted by sin, cannot bear to be in the presence of God. Jesus says, *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."* How do we purify our hearts?

We cannot purify our own hearts.

In Christian baptism, God sprinkles the heart with the blood of Christ, cleansing the heart from an evil conscience (Hebrews 10:22). Christ purifies what is within, thus removing the stain of guilt.

Internal purification does not stop with baptism. God fills His children with the Holy Spirit, equipping them with the means by which we *"(crucify) the flesh with its passions and desires"* (Galatians 5:24, Romans 8:13). Through His word, God reveals *"the thoughts and intents of the heart,"* thus enabling us to see our inner workings more precisely (Hebrews 4:12). And if we ask Him to help us know our hearts, He will assist us: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"* (Psalm 139:23-24). If we want to know "what makes us tick," God will help us, just ask Him. He knows you better than you know yourself.

A pure heart must be an honest heart.

David asks, *"Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart"* (Psalm 15:1-2).

Though society counsels us to "follow our hearts," the heart is not always a reliable guide; in fact, God calls the heart *"deceitful above all things"* (Jeremiah 17:9). In my own personal struggles with sin as well as those I have witnessed in others, a lying heart is often a contributing factor. We think we stand only to fall. We think a temptation no longer holds sway over us only to follow our desires *"as an ox goes to the slaughter"* (Proverbs 7:22). Purity of heart cannot happen unless we humbly recognize our limitations.

A fear of God purifies the heart.

There are a few verses in the Bible that keep me awake at night. Romans 2:16 is one: *"in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."* I know I have had thoughts and desires I hope never see the light of day. I suspect I am not alone. When I think that one day, my inner workings will be laid bare before all, I am afraid. David says,



Please check your expiration date!

Continued from page 3: "Blessed are the Pure in Heart"

"The fear of the Lord is clean;" it is clean because true, godly fear, motivates us to clean out all of the garbage, both inside and out.

~ 18078 State Highway 149, Unionville, MO 63565
wadestanley@gmail.com

Glory to God!

The angels rejoiced when **Rosalyn Stanley**, daughter of your editor, was baptized in the name of Jesus Christ on May 11!

The brethren in **Kirksville, MO**, gladly received **Thelma Messer** and **Lori Cox** when they placed membership with the congregation on My 12.

Blessed Are the Dead

Eldon Leroy Cox, age 82, of Nixa passed away April 23, 2019. He was born February 15, 1937. Eldon married Shirley Bullington August 16, 1959 and were married over 42 years until her death in 2002. Eldon was a member of the **Nixa Church of Christ** and became a lay preacher preaching at churches in Missouri, Colorado, Kansas and Arizona. Eldon met **Laura Stice** at **Jay Street Church of Christ** in **Lakewood, CO**. Six years later Eldon and Laura were married on April 12, 2011. Eldon is survived by his wife Laura of eight years; five children and five great-grandchildren.

Zelma Green, a faithful sister in Christ and member at the congregation **Union Hills Church of Christ** since 1956, passed away on April 29th, 2019 in her home in **Glendale, AZ**. Her husband, **Brother Amos Green**, cared for her at her bedside for about 4 months.

Here and There

A special card shower has been arranged for **Calvin and Shirley**

Spencer, members of the the church in **Lawrence, KS**. On **June 7**, Cal and Shirley will celebrate **fifty years** of marriage. Please help us celebrate by sending them your well wishes: **1621 Vermont, Lawrence, KS 66044**.

2019 Meetings

June 8-9.....Vandalia, IA
June 15-16....Annual Youth Meeting, Excelsior Springs, MO
July 1-5.....Midwest Bible Campout, Eminence, MO
July 20.....Old Lamine VBS (rural Blackwater, MO)
July 25-28.....College Study, Smart Road, Greenwood, MO
August 31-September 1.....Pleasant Hill, IA
September 21-22.....Brookfield, MO

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Wade Stanley
18078 State Highway 149
Unionville, MO 63565
wadestanley@gmail.com

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THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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The Beauty of Misery

Louis Garbi

Misery is one of, if not the best thing we can feel when we are lost. It testifies we are sensitive to our predicament. Misery enables us to see the truth of our condition more clearly. It is an inherent acknowledgement there is something better. Anguish contains a potential to yearn for something better, and, if we will, to search for something better.

Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).

An old saying goes like this: "Misery loves company." That is probably true if we want to stay miserable. And if we want to stay miserable, we won't learn a thing, joining in a partnership of commiseration and blame with others in this empty occupation. This type of misery is in vain. On the other hand, productive misery is a lonely, but necessary, journey. It is guided by the hope of something better. We can take no one with us as we examine the fruit of our behavior. No one can think for us. No one can appreciate for us. No one can regret for us. No one can repent for us. No one can yield to the hope of good news for us. God will do none of those things for us. We must do it alone. However, God makes it possible for us to accomplish those things. He has sent His Son to be the victim of our conduct. As the victim who overcame the burden of our sins, Jesus upholds reconciliation for us to receive. He has given a testimony for us to consider, and He has given us time. Within the passing seconds we breathe. Blood courses through our brain. Synapses connect. What we do with our God-given natural birth is up to us. Will we yield to reconciliation or not? God will not live our lives for us. And a good thing it is. He made each one of us individually unique. We are meant to make up our own minds, by ourselves alone.

But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load (Galatians 6:4-5).

We are not alone. The very hairs of our head are numbered. God sees us and desires our salvation. He wants us to live. Some of us have loved ones in the Lord who are praying for us – intercession. They earnestly look for the day of our salvation.

Many souls have no one they know saying prayers on their behalf, yet there are saints who pray for the unknown souls who are searching for a better day. In a world of cause and effect, prayers have power to stir events which can bring relief to the mind of the weary, and the prospect of solace for the lonely. We are not alone!

If we have submitted to the Lord in faithful obedience, know this:

There is no temptation taken you but such as is common to man. But God is faithful who will not allow you to be tempted above that which you are able to bear, but will, with the temptation, make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13).

The Father wants us to know that others face similar circumstances. He doesn't want us to retreat into the notion

On the other hand, productive misery is a lonely, but necessary, journey. It is guided by the hope of something better.

that no one can understand our problems. Jesus understands. Jesus was tempted in all points as we are. He knows what temptation is like. We also have brethren who understand, who have received mercy. They have learned to see life through the mind of Christ, sharing His meek and lowly heart.

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:1-2).

Between the Father, Jesus, and the brethren, a way is made for us to be victorious and a net for when we stumble.

God is the best of Fathers. He has a plan for us. He has the means for us to be educated in the highest form of learning. As our Creator, He has the ultimate design for us to fulfill. This design will give us supreme happiness and purpose. However, each of us must face the truth of our inadequacies and failures. There is a sure misery in facing such things. But, if we hold to the hope of God, there is beauty in the darkness. It comes from the light at the end of the tunnel.

~ 124 Locust St., Barnett, MO 65011-1004
~ garbi14@gmail.com

Enduring the Load

Kevin Crittenden

Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth." Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me" (Genesis 4:11-14).

In my work with ESL students, I often explain the meaning of idioms to them. It is amazing how many we use. For instance:

- I'm at the end of my rope.
- I can't take it anymore.
- I've got nowhere to go.
- I can't see any way out.
- There's no light at the end of the tunnel.
- I'm caught between a rock and a hard place.
- I'm up the creek without a paddle.
- I'm caught between the devil and the deep blue sea.
- (Or for you highbrow types) I'm caught between Scylla and Charybdis.

I *could* go on, but Wade Stanley tells me to put a lid on it.

All the idioms I've listed have to do with feeling overloaded by busyness, stress, anxiety, fear, unrealistic expectations, and feelings of depression. There seems to be no way out.

We've all felt like this, but we soldier on through thick and thin with even more idioms to encourage us: Grin and bear it. Put on your big boy pants and deal with it. When life gives you lemons, make lemonade. Keep on keeping on. Nil desperandum. Fall seven times and stand up eight. It's always darkest before the dawn. Every cloud has a silver lining.

We all know these, but they may not be the best thing to say to comfort a depressed friend. Fortunately, none of Job's friends led off with these when they came to sit with him in his great distress.

Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was (Job 2:13).

But there is another saying that we sometimes use to comfort someone. We tell them, "God doesn't give you more than you can handle." Sound familiar? It's meant to be comforting, but I think that it can backfire and make a person feel even worse

by adding guilt to the mix of overwhelming stress. They might think, "I'm drowning here, I've forgotten how to swim, and yet I'm supposed to be able to extricate myself."

And now, sounding like the serpent in the Garden, I might ask, "Did God **really** say that He will never give you more than you can handle?"

Certainly, there is a verse very much LIKE that in **1 Corinthians**:

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it (10:13).

This verse is talking about **temptations** and our ability to resist them, **NOT** the overloads that life presents us with. Terrible things that are beyond our control do happen and we might indeed legitimately say, "This is more than I can bear." But temptations **are** under our control; we **always** have a choice in the matter. And there **always** is a godly choice provided.

We remember that Moses felt agonizingly overwhelmed and was tempted to the point of asking God to take his life. He said:

"I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. 15 If this is how you are going to treat me, please go ahead and kill me—if I have found favor in your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin" (Numbers 11:14-15).

Did God reply to Moses, "I never give you more than you can handle. Go sort it out?" Did He tell Moses, "Hey, when I give you lemons, make lemonade?" What **DID** God do? He offered a reasonable and workable plan to offload Moses. God provided a way out.

The Lord said to Moses: "Bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the tent of meeting, that they may stand there with you. I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take some of the power of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them. They will share the burden of the people with you so that you will not have to carry it alone (Numbers 11:16-17).

This is a Biblical example that, indeed, God may **OFTEN** give us more than we can handle. Why would He do that? So that **WE** will learn to **DEPEND** on **HIM** rather than ourselves.

If we could handle everything ourselves, would we need God?

Maybe it is time to quit mindlessly accepting every load that comes our way and allow Him to guide our decisions about what we add to our schedule, what bricks we add to our workload, and what tasks we take on as commitments.

After all, we're only human.

~ 19130 Meiggs Ln. Cupertino, CA 95014
kcritt2@aol.com

But the Midwives Feared God

Charles Fry

The first few chapters of **Exodus** bridge the gap from the end of Genesis, Jacob's family in Egypt for a long time, to Israel's new beginning as God's nation. The story of Israel's exodus from Egypt, receiving the Law at Mt. Sinai, and wandering in the wilderness for 40 years follows, ending in **Deuteronomy**. Moses becomes substantially the hero of the story, rightly admired as a man of God. However, before Moses became a hero there were others who stepped up and did what was right in the first four chapters of Exodus.

Prior to Moses's birth, the Egyptians had begun to fear the growing numbers of the children of Israel who were flourishing in their land. **Exodus 1:8-14** describes the ruthless treatment of these unwelcome descendants of foreigners and their brutal enslavement. Despite their hardships, the Hebrews continued to flourish. Consequently, **Exodus 1:15-21** describes the Egyptian Pharaoh summoning the midwives who assisted the Hebrew women in childbirth. He commanded them to kill every male Hebrew baby at birth. The women quietly defied Pharaoh and killed no boys, because *"the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them"* (**Exodus 1:17**). These two women, named Shiphrah and Puah (**Exodus 1:15**) chose obedience to God rather than yielding to an immoral command from the king. Other followers of God have sometimes had to make the same kind of hard choice over the centuries (see **Daniel 3** and **6**; **Acts 4:19-20**; **5:27-33**). These women are the heroes of **Exodus 1**, and it is very likely that Moses's older brother Aaron was one of the boys saved by their determination to follow God.

When Pharaoh saw that the Hebrew midwives would not help, he issued an executive order that directed his people to sacrifice infant Hebrew boys by throwing them into the Nile River (**Exodus 1:22**), and the Egyptians complied with this monstrous edict. Under this law, Moses was born. When Moses was born his mother *"saw that he was a fine child"* (**Exodus 2:2**). Rather than obey the king, she hid him for 3 months. As later described, *"they were not afraid of the king's edict"* (**Hebrews 11:23**). Unable to hide her growing son, Jochebed (**Exodus 6:20**) decided to put him in a prepared basket carefully placed in the reeds along the shore of the river. Her daughter, Miriam, Moses's older sister (**Numbers 26:59**), assisted with placing the child in the river and then watched to see what would happen (**Exodus 2:3-4**). Jochebed and Miriam, like Shiphrah and Puah, chose to do what was right in the eyes of God rather than obey the king. By their acts of quiet heroism, they saved the boy that God chose to lead his people out of Egypt (see **Acts 7:19-21**). These four women in **Exodus 1-2** are the heroes of the story in those dark days in Egypt.

Besides the four Hebrew women in **Exodus 1-2**, another

important woman also made an heroic decision. Exodus doesn't provide her name, though it was well known to Moses and his Hebrew kin. She is only described as *"Pharaoh's daughter"* (**Exodus 2:5-11**). When little Moses was placed in the reeds by his mother and sister, this woman found the child, and wanted to save him. First, she paid for his nursing (by his own mother) and then raised him as an Egyptian prince. We don't see Pharaoh's daughter as a follower of God, but she is a hero of the story of Israel's beginning, showing compassion for a condemned child, saving his life, and fostering him as her own son.

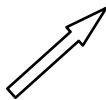
The rest of Exodus 2 describes a failed attempt on Moses part to become a secret helper for the Hebrew slaves, but the tale (**Exodus 2:11-22**) does not give us a very heroic picture of Moses, who fled Egypt into exile in Midian. There he started a family and began a new life as a shepherd of his father-in-law's sheep. Years later, **Exodus 3-4** tells of Moses's encounter with the Lord at the burning bush, and God ordering Moses, contrary to Moses's own desire, to return to Egypt and (with Aaron's help) lead the Hebrews out of Egypt to worship God at Sinai. Again, there is nothing heroic in the way Moses is depicted in **Exodus 3-4**. Nevertheless, there is one more act of heroism that does occur in that context, in **Exodus 4:25-26**. While Moses was making the trip from Midian to Egypt, we read abruptly that *"the Lord met him and sought to put him to death."* We have very little detail, but the issue that was going to cost Moses his life was the uncircumcision of his son. Circumcision was a mandate of the covenant God had given Abraham (**Genesis 17**). Moses must have known that this was required, the covenant with Abraham had been specifically mentioned by God in their conversation at Sinai, but Moses had neglected his obligation. He could not possibly lead Israel (called God's son, **Exodus 4:23**) to keep God's covenant if he would not do so himself. When Moses's life hung in the balance, his wife, Zipporah, understood and circumcised their son. It is clear from her words and actions that she deplored doing so (**Exodus 4:25-26**), but she did what was necessary under God's covenant, and saved Moses's life.

These six women who did what was right in **Exodus 1-4** literally changed the world by what they chose to do. Four women who were slaves, one a princess, and one who was a shepherd's wife saved the day and are the heroes of the story, making it possible for Moses and Aaron to have their day and learn to become heroes as well.

~ 2312 Delbert Street, Bakersfield, CA 93312-2114
cfry@bak.rr.com

Glory to God!

The church in **Kirkville, MO** gladly welcomed **Thelma Messer** and **Lori Cox** when they placed membership May 12.



Please check your expiration date!

Continued from page 3: "Glory to God"

Shirley Cochran also placed membership on May 21.

The church in **Martinstown, MO** praised God when **Rusty Kimmel** was immersed in Christ on June 6!

Blessed Are the Dead

Daryl Lancaster, 96, of Raytown, MO, left to be with the Lord on May 8. Brother Daryl was a charter member of the church that meets on **Gregory Boulevard, Raytown, MO**. Brother Daryl was preceded in death by his two wives: **Jessie "Bernice" Wright** and **Eula "Jane" Hall-Green**.

Susan Zimmerman, 104, of Beloit, KS, went to be with Jesus on June 11. Sister Susan was a charter member of the church which meets in Beloit.

Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

~ **Revelation 14:13**

Here and There

On April 14, your editor appointed two men to serve the church in **Martinstown, MO** as deacons: **Eric Davis** and **Doug Kimmel** join **Chad Gatlin** (deacon) and **Darl Davis** (elder) as officers in the church.

Your publisher appointed three new officers at the church in **Lawrence, KS**: **Terry Martin** joins **Calvin Spencer** as an elder. **Nathan Asamoah** and **Jeremy Reno** join **Kevin Morton** as deacons.

May God be praised for these newly appointed leaders in the Lord's church!

Special Meetings

The church in **Kirkville** is excited to announce their annual VBS set for **July 15-17**, from **6:30-8:00 p.m.** This year's theme

is "Marooned: Steady Faith in Shifting Sands." Evangelist **Dan Huff** will lead the VBS. The VBS will cover three lessons drawn from the biblical period of the Divided Kingdom.

The church in **Martensdale, IA** is pleased to announce their plans to host a **Spring Meeting** on **March 28-29, 2020**.

2019 Meetings

July 1-5.....Midwest Bible Campout, Eminence, MO
July 20.....Old Lamine VBS (rural Blackwater, MO)
July 25-28.....College Study, Smart Road, Greenwood, MO
August 31-September 1.....Pleasant Hill, IA
September 21-22.....Brookfield, MO

The Gospel Message

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% **Doug Twaddell**
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twadsquad@earthlink.net

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Wade Stanley
18078 State Highway 149
Unionville, MO 63565
wadestanley@gmail.com

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THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Volume 61, Number 8

Editor ~ Wade Stanley

Publisher ~ Doug Twaddell

August, 2019

Christ is RISEN!

Joshua Riggins

“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:20-21).

Paul’s words point to a pivotal moment in our history. The scriptures brought us here. Jesus told his disciples in **Luke 24:44**, *“that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.”* His resurrection is our hope (**1 Peter 1:20-21**), is our justification (**Romans 4:25**), and it is our life (**Romans 8:11**).

In studying through the gospels, it becomes clear that each writer presents tremendous evidence of Christ’s resurrection, but not always with the same details. In this article, I will present a chronological narrative of the resurrection encompassing all details provided by the four inspired authors. I pray you will find this aerial view helpful in your own study. Due to constraints, references will include only one gospel reference. Any additional commentary has been italicized.

Early on the first day of the week, prior to sunrise, a great earthquake shook. An angel descended from heaven and rolled the stone away from the door (**Matthew 28:1-2**). When the angel finished, he sat on the stone. His presence, the earthquake, and the rolled stone terrified the guards (**Matthew 28:4**).

A group of ladies headed to the tomb that morning, planning to anoint Jesus’ body with valuable spices (**Mark 16:2**). There was no need, though. Indeed, Mary Magdalene had already anointed his body in life (**Mark 14:8-9**). When they arrived, they found the stone rolled away (**Luke 24:2**). Mary Magdalene ran to find Peter and John (**John 20:2**). The remaining ladies entered the tomb and found two angels. They told the ladies not to be afraid, but to go and tell the disciples he is risen (**Luke 24:3-8**). At first the ladies were quite distressed and told no one, *“for they were afraid”* (**Mark 16:8**). Soon thereafter the initial shock wore off, and they went to tell the disciples (**Luke 24:9-10**).

Mary found Peter and John and urged them to the tomb. John

outran Peter, but Peter entered the tomb first. They saw his clothes folded but no body. Peter and John went back to their homes amazed at what they saw (**John 20:3-10**). Mary stayed at the tomb weeping. She met two angels. These angels asked her a question. They did not respond to her answer, letting Jesus do the talking. When Jesus arrived, Mary thought he was the gardener. Jesus helped her see and encouraged her to go tell the other disciples what to expect (**John 20:11-18**).

While the ladies were on their way to tell the disciples, Jesus met them with the exclamation, “Rejoice!” (**Matthew 28:9-10**). It is noteworthy that Jesus presented himself, first, to many ladies. Our Lord values faithful women within his kingdom.

The guards came to the chief priests and elders, who told the guards to lie. This must have been a difficult proposition,

It is noteworthy that Jesus presented himself, first, to many ladies. Our Lord values faithful women within his kingdom.

because Roman soldiers were known for doing whatever it took to accomplish their assigned duties (cf. **Acts 27:42-43**). However, the Jews promised to appease the governor, and so the soldiers complied (**Matthew 28:11-15**).

The group of ladies told the disciples they met the risen Lord. However, the disciples did not believe (**Luke 24:11**). Mary Magdalene also came and told them what she saw. Again, the disciples did not believe (**Mark 16:3**).

Sometime that day two disciples walked toward a village called Emmaus. Jesus met them on the way and explained to them the scriptures. When they arrived in the village, Jesus opened their eyes. Immediately, they ran back to tell the others what they witnessed (**Luke 24:13-35**).

That evening, Jesus appeared to a group of disciples, including 10 of the apostles. He rebuked them for not believing the testimony of others (**John 20:19-23**). He also offered them peace, of which he had spoken so often just prior to his crucifixion (cf. **John 14:1, 27**).

continued on the next page...

On the eighth day after resurrecting, Jesus appeared to his disciple Thomas (**John 20:24-29**). He wanted men to believe the testimony of others. He challenges us who have not seen to still believe the faithful eye-witnesses, knowing we will be blessed for having done so.

Some days thereafter, the disciples were waiting for Jesus in Galilee. Not really knowing what was coming next, they decided to go back to fishing. Jesus met them on the shore and filled their nets with fish. He then encouraged them to see that their purpose wasn't in catching fish, but in catching people (**John 21:1-23**). The 11 disciples and Jesus go up on a mountain in Galilee, where Jesus sent them out to make disciples (**Matthew 28:16-20**). Throughout this interim period, Jesus showed himself alive to over 500 hundred disciples (**1 Corinthians 15:6**).

Finally, Jesus led them to Bethany, just outside of Jerusalem (**Luke 24:50-53**). He gave them their final instructions and ascended into heaven. He was with them forty days after resurrecting from the grave (**Acts 1:4-12**)

The angels told us this one who ascended will also descend (**Acts 1:11**). When he comes again, will you be ready?

"Therefore stay awake--for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning..." (Mark 13:35)

~ 401 Douglas Dr, Bloomfield, IN 47424
jgriggins@gmail.com

Offenses Will Happen

Jay Graham

Jesus taught in **Matthew 18:6-7**:

"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!"

For those of us who have been members of the Lord's body for any amount of time, we have seen offenses happen, and many of us have caused them, even inadvertently, and yes, sometimes on purpose. Offenses are part of our lives because, while the Lord's body is the perfect body, those that make it up are not. We live in the flesh, and offenses are a part of living in the flesh.

Now to be clear, I am using the word "offense" as Jesus was using it in the above verses -- to cause another Christian (generally a weaker Christian) to sin or to cause them to leave the Lord's church or even to be a "stumbling block" to another. I realize that many use the word today to describe something that another simply may not like or objects to. This type of offense is not what I am speaking of.

In my mind offenses happen in three primary categories. Some happen inadvertently. A Christian might say something or act in a manner that causes another to sin that was not with purpose. Sometimes we may not know our words or actions will cause a problem with another. This happens, and instances such as these can easily be rectified by an apology or explanation. Reasonable people can easily overcome such offenses with proper spirits and intentions.

However, a second category is when a Christian knowingly puts a stumbling block in another's path, perhaps out of pride or religious arrogance. These types of injuries can lead to great spiritual harm to both parties involved. They can come from a lack of caring and concern for another for various reasons. When such offenses happen, they can be rectified through humble and forgiving spirits. If we have caused such an offense, this is sinful, and it can be very harmful to an individual Christian or to an entire congregation of the Lord's people. When people offend in this manner, they might deceive themselves into thinking no one knows what they have done. However, the Lord knows. Or they might think they did nothing wrong, for the one offended should "know better" or some other excuse.

I believe it is this second category Jesus is addressing. Judging by His words in the above verses, He takes such offenses VERY seriously. We can keep ourselves from such offenses by having humble spirits. By taking into account our words and actions. By wanting what Christ wants: the salvation of all souls. By being longsuffering and gentle toward those who are younger or weaker in the faith. It can be very easy to dismiss those weaker or younger than we think we are, and this may lead us to treat others in an unkind manner. And worse of all, it can cause souls to be lost and, yes, even our own.

There is a third category, and we can often do nothing about them. There are some who seem to be "looking" for such offenses. I have known instances where it seemed a Christian was looking for an excuse to be "offended." Perhaps they wanted an excuse to leave the Lord's body. I know there have been instances where a person was not content with the body, and instead of simply leaving the Lord's church as he or she perhaps wished, he or she said or invented horrible things of another Christian that were very hurtful toward an innocent believer. These seem to be instances when the one "offended" uses this as an excuse to do what he or she wanted to do all along. Perhaps he or she simply wanted to appease his or her

own conscience and rationalizations. Offenses such as these will also happen and can only be overcome when the Christian humbles himself or herself and repents.

Paul warned of the danger of putting “stumbling blocks” in our brethren’s path in **Romans 14:13**, “*Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way.*” The apostle Paul also wrote of the danger of a Christian purposely using what he or she perceived as a “liberty” that could become a stumbling block in the path of another. He wrote of this danger in **1 Corinthians 8:9**, “*But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.*” Such “offenses” can also lead to a person not becoming a Christian.

As a Christian, there is certainly one thing we can do in regard to our own spirits. We can determine to never be “offended” by another in this manner. In other words, we must endeavor to not allow anything another might say or do to keep us from walking with the Lord and being an active part of His body. If following the Lord is the most important thing in our life, we must make it true.

We can also be attentive to our own actions and words. Even though “offenses” are part of our lives, we should strive to avoid them whenever we can. It is for this reason we should strive for our actions to always be edifying toward others, for we should always act toward others in a manner that will encourage them to follow the Lord. We should act in a manner toward them that will help them want to follow the Lord – not to follow us or our way of thinking or our way of living, but to follow the Lord. For it is in Him from which our salvation comes!

~ 7715 Quarterhorse Cir, Flagstaff, 86004
jayhgraham@live.com

There is Power

Thomas D. Dennis

Just those three words probably remind most readers of this article of that old gospel song “There is Power in the Blood of the Lamb” that was used so often in days gone by in tent and revival meetings. And, indeed, those words are true, but let us consider some other thoughts about power. It seems that people are impressed with power whether it be political power, national power, mechanical power, electrical power, muscular power, etc., etc... the list goes on.

Think of the incomprehensible unlimited power of God. From **Genesis to Revelation**, He is spoken of as “*God Almighty*” or “*Almighty God.*” If men truly believe the holy scriptures, they cannot but be impressed by the record of the creation (**Genesis 1 and 2**). Perhaps we do not read those amazing passages as often as we ought. God did not have to use a

drawing board, or thousands of experiments to lay out the orbits of the sun, moon and innumerable stars and planets, or the design for each type of plant and animal with their various forms, shapes, sizes and methods of reproduction, or the complexities of the human body, soul and spirit, in some likeness or image of God Himself. And it didn’t require eons of time as unbelieving men would believe. The creation was finished in six days (**Genesis 1:31-2:1**).

Psalm 33:6-9 makes the creation sound so easy for God. For lack of space we will not quote the entire passage, but as you read it, notice **verse 9**: “*For He spoke, and it was done. He commanded, and it stood fast.*”

Oh, the marvelous power of God! “*With God all things are possible*” (**Matthew 19:26, Mark 10:27**; see also: **Mark 14:36, Luke 18:27 and Jeremiah 32:17**). Someone will refer to **Titus 1:2** saying, “*God cannot lie.*” That indeed is true, but that has nothing to do with God’s power. It is a matter of God’s character, His divine nature, and His righteousness.

We often think of the power of prayer. We are taught to pray for all men (**1 Timothy 2:1**). And that “*The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much*” (**James 5:16**). But even in prayer, it is God’s power that is manifested. And I am convinced that God knows our needs and what is best for us better than we mortals do. Far too often, even with good intentions, we may “ask amiss” (**James 4:3**). “*Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us*” (**1 John 5:14**). For this cause, we ought always to pray for God’s will, not ours to be done.

As long as this world stands, we must never forget the power of Satan and of sin. If sin and temptations were not so powerful and strong, we might not be so prone to sin, but “*the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*” (**1 Peter 5:8**). Do not be conformed to the things of this world (**Romans 12:2**) or be deceived by false doctrines of men (**2 Thessalonians 2:3**).

~ 207 W. Hunter Drive, Nixa, MO 65714

Glory to God!

The church in **Nixa, MO** welcomed **Paul Cox** when he placed his membership with the church in June.

The church in **Vandalia, IA** rejoiced when **Emma Ingle** was baptized for the remission of sins in June.

The church in **Kirksville, MO** was overjoyed when **Rebecca Aquino** was clothed with Christ on June 13.

The church in **Summersville, MO** praised God when **Katie Moore** was buried with Christ on July 2.

continued on the next page...



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Continued from page 3: "Glory to God"

The church in **Kirkville, MO** welcomed **Lynn Flynn** as a new member of the congregation on July 10.

"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:4-7).

Special Meetings

The **White Oak church of Christ** (rural **Ethel, MO**) has set aside a special Sunday meeting for **August 25**. Speakers will include **Dan Huff, John Morris, Eric Owens** and **Wade Stanley**.

The church in **Martinsville, IN** plans a special **Ladies' Day** for **September 14**. Their topics include:

- Live Without Pretending
- Love Without Depending
- Listen Without Defending
- Speak Without Offending

The day's activities begin at 8:30 a.m. The congregation will provide meals and notebooks for all of the participants.

The church which meets in **LaVerne, CA** will be organizing and overseeing the bi-annual campout meeting at **Camp Edison, Shaver Lake, CA**. The meeting will take place **July 22-26, 2020**. For more information, please contact **Dennis Shearer** at:

dennishearer713@gmail.com

The annual **Midwest Bible Campout** is scheduled for **June 29-July 3, 2020**. The church which meets on **Prince Road, Alton, IL** oversees this event. Information can be found on their website:

princeroadchurchofchrist.org/campout

Campsites will not be available until **3:00 p.m., Friday June 26**. Lodge rooms will be available at **3:00 p.m., Saturday, June 27**.

The church in **Kirkville, MO** continues to plan for the **2020 Two-Weekend Meeting**. Please mark your calendars for **July 25-August 2, 2020**. Also, please remember the church is organizing a tour of Restoration sites for the week following.

2019 Meetings

August 31-September 1.....Pleasant Hill, IA
August 25.....White Oak (rural Ethel, MO)
September 14.....Ladies' Day, Martinsville, IN
September 21-22.....Brookfield, MO
October 19-20.....Nixa, MO
December 26-28.....Winter Youth Rally, Raytown, MO
December 26-28.....Winter College Rally, Lone Jack, MO

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Being or Becoming

John Lee

Most of you reading this article would consider yourself a human being. That is the way we commonly refer to ourselves. Webster defines human as, “belonging to or typical of mankind and being as: the state or fact of living.” So, if we are living and part of mankind, we are human beings, according to Webster. This definition implies a state of arrival into the race of man.

But scripture refers to our time on earth not as an arrival but a journey. We are called pilgrims and sojourners. “Being” connotes a state of completion, but are we complete? If not, would it not be better to consider ourselves “becomings” rather than “beings?” Herman Bavinck reminds us, “The contrast between being and becoming marks the difference between the Creator and the creature. Every creature is continually becoming. It is changeable, constantly striving, seeks rest and satisfaction and finds it in God, and in Him alone for only He is a pure being and no becoming. Therefore, in scripture God is often called the Rock.”

The very concept of sanctification is the process of becoming holy or more like God, a process that is continual throughout our earthly journey. Many godly characters in the Bible are noted for their “becoming.” Abraham “becoming” a man of faith. Job, a righteous man in **Job 1**, finally sees God in **Job 42**, an example of “becoming.” Moses “becoming” humble and a leader. Paul “becoming” a believer. All of these men and many others were human beings in the terminology of man, but all were “becomings” in their nature, spiritual growth and mind of God.

Just as no book, other than God’s word, is the final word, no being, outside of God, is the final knowing. Because we live in a “not yet” state, “not yet” fully perfected or fully glorified. When we are converted and obey, our sins are washed away yet we live in this “not yet” world of sin and death. We are not home yet. We are held in an imperfect world.

As long as this earth is our home, we have not yet reached our ultimate state of being. Paul looked forward to this ultimate state when he wrote

“Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal

for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14). He longed for the perfect “being” yet realized he was still “becoming.”

“*I AM who I AM*” sums up who God is and who we are not (**Exodus 3:14**). It is an affirmation of His eternalness and His power over time and space -- that He is unchanging (immutable) and complete in every way. Those words describe no other but God, not you or me or any man. Each of us are unique and “wonderfully made” but we are not “*I AM*” because we are the created. God is the *I AM* because He is the Creator. He is the complete and perfect being.

The word “being” is a form of the verb “to be” which can be expressed as “I am” and is often used in the expression “I am ... something.” For instance, you might say “I am strong.”

We have a heavenly target and our heading set, but we still live in a temporal setting, a “not yet” world and for that reason we are “becomings.” We are always “becoming,” either for better or worse. We are always changing, for better or worse.

Saying “I am strong” creates a definition or description of what or how you are. But if you say, “I am becoming (or getting) stronger,” you are now placing yourself somewhere between strong and weak. “Becoming” places you on a path taking you from weak and heading towards strong. It implies change and transitioning and with a positive direction it implies growth. To be (being) is static. To become (becoming) is dynamic.

We have a heavenly target and our heading set, but we still live in a temporal setting, a “not yet” world and for that reason we are “becomings.” We are always “becoming,” either for better or worse. We are always changing, for better or worse. When we walk away from God, we are becoming worse. When drawing near to God we are becoming better, but we are always “becoming.” Remaining stationary is never an option only an illusion. We need to be a “human becoming” and not

continued on the next page...

just a "human being."

Life, at any age, is a journey, which means we should be moving, growing and "becoming" as we walk the walk. Our lives are to be more than simply surviving or being. Life is to be more than reaching what we or others think is an acceptable plateau. Life is about growing and becoming more sanctified and holy each day. Just existing places us in a state of "being." But to "become" we must do more than simply exist. To become who God wants us to be, we have to transcend and grow beyond who we are at the moment.

To "become" means to grow, to change and to transform. Paul urges us to be "*transformed by the renewing of our minds*" (**Romans 12:2**). When we are becoming, we are in motion, we are moving along a path, we are realizing our potential as God's creation. We're on the way to flourishing as never before.

To truly live, flourish and serve, we need to look and move above ourselves and toward God. Only then can we realize the "becoming" we must do to become the "being" that can enter heaven's portals. Life must be about more than existing or surviving; it must be about "becoming" what God created us to be. How is your "becoming"?

~ 13210 S. Harris Rd., Greenwood, MO 64034-9730
jlee864675@gmail.com

In the Garden

Charles Fry

On the night of Jesus' betrayal he went out to a garden on the slope of the Mount of Olives, a few hundred yards east of Jerusalem. John mentions the garden setting twice as the place of Jesus' prayers and arrest (**John 18:1, 26**), a place where Jesus had met with his disciples many times (**John 18:2**). Matthew and Mark give the local name for the place as Gethsemane (which means the olive "oil press," **Matthew 26:36, Mark 14:32**), suggesting there was an olive orchard there. John also wrote that the crucifixion was in a place with a garden (**John 19:41**), and Jesus was buried in a new tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, in that garden (**John 19:38-42, Matthew 27:57-61**). So, Jesus prayed in a garden, was arrested and fettered in a garden, died and was buried in a garden. That means he also rose from the dead in a garden, since that's where the tomb was located (**John 20:1ff**).

In two of his letters, Paul specifically pointed to Jesus as the new or second Adam, the "*man from heaven*" (see **1 Corinthians 15:22, 45** and **Romans 5:12-14**). Other scriptures also allude to

Jesus as fulfilling God's purpose for man (e.g. **Hebrews 2:5-15**). The Hebrew word "Adam" in **Genesis 2:20** and elsewhere in the Old Testament is also the Hebrew word for "man" or "mankind" or "a human being." The human race is given the name of the first man God created. In **Genesis 2:7** where most English Bibles say that "*the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground*," the Hebrew word for "man" is "*adam*." When we read of the first Adam, Genesis describes the place God put the man he created as "a garden in Eden" (**Genesis 2:8-17**) with abundant fruit trees, all but one available to the man for food, and also to his partner, the woman Eve. These two people were to take care of the garden. The garden in Eden was "*planted by God*" and is elsewhere referred to as the "*garden of God*" (see **Ezekiel 28:13, 31:8-9** and **Genesis 13:10**). The garden by God belonged to God. The man and woman were to care for it and eat its fruit freely, except for one tree God reserved. The garden, of course, became the scene of treachery and rebellion against God, the place where sin and death entered the world and became driving forces in human destiny (**Genesis 3**). God had interacted with the man and woman in the garden, until sin blighted Adam and Eve and their relationships. Adam's sin forced mankind to leave the garden, but God has always wanted and intended to have that kind of unencumbered interaction with people he created, to be with them/us in the garden he planted, to share the abundance of the garden with trustworthy human caretakers. Human sin did not cause God to abandon his purposes to share his garden with mankind.

In one of Isaiah's kingdom prophecies he wrote of God's promise to make Zion like the garden of Eden:

For the Lord comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song (Isaiah 51:3; see also Jeremiah 31:10-18).

The New Testament asserts that the Lord's church inhabits that Zion which the prophets foresaw,

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel... (Hebrews 12:22-24).

Considering that God started humanity in his own garden, where sin tragically began, and that God promised a flourishing garden as the future location of divine fellowship and abundance, it is fitting that Jesus came to a garden that night on the Mount of Olives, that his suffering began in a garden and climaxed with his death on the cross in a garden, and that he was buried and resurrected in a garden. Given that the first Adam was a gardener in the garden of God, it is fitting

that Mary Magdalene on that morning of the first day of the week, when Jesus rose from the dead in the garden, mistook him at first glance to be “*the gardener*” (**John 20:14-16**). To borrow a phrase from N. T. Wright, “of course she thought he was the gardener!”

When the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek in the centuries before Jesus was born, the word for garden used in many of the passages referring to Eden is “*paradise*.” The word *paradise* refers to an orderly enclosed garden or orchard. In **Genesis 2:8**, the Greek text could be rendered “*God planted a paradise in Eden*.” When Jesus in Luke’s gospel said to the penitent thief on another cross, “*today you will be with me in paradise*” (**Luke 23:43**), that man’s context for Jesus’ words was **Genesis 2-3**, and other references to the garden God had provided for the original sinless human pair, with the promises of the prophets that such a place would be the future dwelling of God’s people in his presence. Using the word “*paradise*,” Jesus connected the garden of God with his own imminent kingdom (**Luke 23:42**), and he promises life in the garden of God to all who share his victory.

*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise [garden] of God (**Revelation 2:7**).*

~ 2312 Delbert Street, Bakersfield, CA 93312-2114
cfry@bak.rr.com

*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. And he said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place” (**Revelation 22:1-6**).*

Glory to God!

The church in **Pleasant Hill, IA** praised God when **Kinnick Ingle** was buried for the remission of his sins on July 14.

The church which meets on **Prince Road, Alton, IL** was overjoyed when **Justin Dunn** returned to the fold of safety and repented of his sins on July 24.

The church in **Kirkville, MO** welcomed **Ron Wolf** as a member of the congregation on July 28. The brethren rejoiced again when **Tiffany McKeethan** was baptized into Christ on July 30. The church rejoiced a third time when **Lois Conner** was baptized for the remission of sins on August 13.

*“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance” (**Luke 15:4-7**).*

Blessed Are the Dead

Ruth Marie Madden, 90, passed away May 25. Sister Ruth was a pillar of the **Rock Creek Church of Christ, Ottawa, KS**. Sister Ruth was preceded in death by her husband Nelson, an elder of the church for many years, and leaves behind a loving, faithful family.

Lois Marie Nitcher, 93, passed away June 11. Sister Lois was also a member of the **Rock Creek Church of Christ, Ottawa, KS**, and leaves behind a loving family.

Marlene Bown, 79, went to be with Jesus on July 31. Sister Marlene was a member of the church in **Martensdale, IA**. She leaves behind her husband, Fred, who serves the congregation as a deacon, as well as a loving family.

Mary Alice Fillman, 87, fell asleep in the Lord on August 1. Sister Mary was a member of the church in **Pleasant Hill, IA**. She is survived by her husband, Harold, and a loving family.

Earl DeVries, 88, entered his eternal rest on August 4. Brother Earl was a faithful member of the church in **Blue Springs, MO**. He is survived by his wife, **Georgia**.

*Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them” (**Revelation 14:13**).*

Here and There

The church in **Kirkville, MO** reports that **Ron White** was appointed a deacon of the church by Evangelist **Landon Anderson** on August 14. The following week, Brother Landon returned to his work in Honduras.



Please check your expiration date!

Special Meetings

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The church which meets in **LaVerne, CA** will be organizing and overseeing the bi-annual campout meeting at **Camp Edison, Shaver Lake, CA**. PLEASE NOTE: your editor mistakenly listed the dates as **July 22-26, 2020** in the August issue, but the meeting will take place **June 22-26, 2020**, Lord willing. For more information, please contact **Dennis Shearer** at: dennishearer713@gmail.com.

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The church in **Kirkville, MO** continues to plan for the **2020 Two-Weekend Meeting**. Please mark your calendars for **July 25-August 2, 2020**. Also, please remember the church is organizing a tour of Restoration sites for the week following. Concerning this special activity, the congregation sends the following note:

Join evangelists **Rick Sparks** and **Mike Kirby** as well as elders **Barry Poyner** and **Dan Green** for a tour of the Restoration Movement **August 3-8, 2020**. Tour highlights will include visiting locations that were once home to Restoration leaders such as James Shannon, the Sommers, John Walker, T.M. Allen, Barton W. Stone, and Alexander Campbell. We will see famous restoration sites in Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, West Virginia, and Kentucky. The locations that we plan to visit will include the Old Mud Meetinghouse, the Shaker Village, Cane Ridge, the home of Alexander Campbell, the Historical Society in Bethany, Butler University, Culver Stockton and Sand Creek. Transportation, hotel accommodations, and breakfast in each hotel is included in the cost of the tour. More details

regarding the trip will be added soon to the kirkvillechurchofchrist.org website. Payment options are available. Please contact **Corey Salter** for more information by email at corey@lsgrouptours.com, by phone at **660-342-9816** or by chat at lsgrouptours.com.

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September 14.....Ladies' Day, Martinsville, IN
September 21-22.....Brookfield, MO
October 11-13.....Doug Twaddell @ Bolivar, PA
October 19-20.....Nixa, MO
December 26-28.....Winter Youth Rally, Raytown, MO
December 26-28.....Winter College Rally, Lone Jack, MO

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1700 S. Ann Ct.
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twadsquad@earthlink.net

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Wade Stanley
18078 State Highway 149
Unionville, MO 63565
wadestanley@gmail.com

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THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Volume 61, Number 10

Editor ~ Wade Stanley

Publisher ~ Doug Twaddell

October, 2019

The Love of Money

Tad Morris

You might be wealthier than you realize. If you make \$30,000 annually, you're in the top 50% of all wage earners in the United States. If you make \$50,000, you're in the top 30%. If you make \$100,000, you're in the top 10%. With an annual salary of \$135,000, you're in the top 5% of all wage earners. For additional perspective, consider this: world-wide, the average household income is about \$10,000.

Wealth is not a sin, but it is a problem. A serious problem. If you have more wealth than the average person, you also have:

- More responsibilities than the average person.
- More problems than the average person.
- More temptation than the average person.
- A lower chance of going to heaven compared to the average person.

What creates these issues?

Wealth can become an addiction. The story of the rich young ruler makes this clear. He seems to have been a good man, faithful to the law. But when challenged to let go of his earthly possessions, he found his weakness: "*But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions*" (Matthew 19:22). Wealth can become an idol and addiction, even for people who are otherwise righteous. No amount of virtue or moral living can compensate for an addiction to wealth.

Being wealthy makes it harder to be saved! Jesus goes on in **Mathew 19:23**,

"Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?"

Why is wealth an obstacle to salvation? Wealth gives us a sense of comfort even when everything is all wrong.

Even poor people can be poisoned by wealth. Just the pursuit

of wealth creates distractions and temptations. **1 Timothy 6:9**:

"But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Greed and the desire for wealth manifests itself in many way, sometimes more subtle than just wanting to be more wealthy. Greed has many faces: wanting to look wealthy, wanting to fit in with wealthy people, wanting more things, and wanting more luxuries.

Paul says these selfish desires lead to temptations, snares, destruction, perdition, and sorrow. Wealth doesn't add to happiness; it adds to sorrow. The desire for wealth or the appearance of wealth leads to bad decisions and the inevitable consequences. So says Solomon in **Proverbs 28:20**, "*A faithful man will abound with blessings, But he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.*"

How do these issues manifest themselves in our daily life? We spend too much time making money. We spend too much time spending our money. We spend too much time thinking about our money. The time we spend pursuing and using our wealth is inversely related to our spiritual productivity. Wealthy people tend to be unfruitful. **Matthew 13:22**: "*Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.*" Wealth will lie to you and choke you.

What's the solution?

Learn to be content. Paul said in **1 Timothy 6:6-8**, "*Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.*" Let's be honest... having some extra money is fun. But if you lost everything, could you still wake up in the morning content? My grandmother Nora Lee Ingle grew up during the depression. She always says, "We were poor but we were happy." Their toys were sticks and rocks. Their playground was the yard. Contentment with or without wealth must be a defining characteristic of a Christian.

To protect yourself against greed and covetousness, share your wealth. **1 Timothy 6:17**:

continued on the next page...

Continued from front page: "The Love of Money"

"Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share. storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

There is much to be gained by giving. In the context of the rich young ruler, Jesus said in **Luke 18:29-30**: "*Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life."*

Give money to the church, but also budget more money for people you find in need. Pick a dollar amount you can afford and find someone that needs it more than you. If you forget one month, that's more money you have to give the next month. Whatever wealth God gives you, he gives with the expectation you will share.

~ 610 E. Current Circle, Ozark, MO 65721
mr.thaddeusmorris@gmail.com

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Intelligence

Louis Garbi

Intelligence: 2. The ability to comprehend; to understand and profit from experience. (from *The Sage VII – English Dictionary*)

"My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you, So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding; Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding, If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:1-5).

Intelligence is sometimes used as a synonym for wisdom. We might say, "That was an intelligent thing he did," indicating information was gathered and used to produce a desirable outcome. On the other hand, intelligence can be a word denoting a person's ability to amass facts or seeming facts. For example, there are some who are brilliant in retaining information and organizing it but consistently arrive at biased conclusions. Why? The information is skewed by such problems as pride, malice, envy, or presumption. We can see this very thing in religion, politics, social networking, neighborhood gossip, and science. Sometimes, perpetrators of bias are viewed as intelligent because their conclusions match the expectations of the blind.

"But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

Spiritual blindness is different from eyes that are not functioning properly or are ruined. Spiritual blindness has to do with allowing our lives to be the final authority on what is accepted and true. It is blindness because we are not the authority. When we make ourselves the authority, we can only reflect upon our projections of reality. So, we surround ourselves with a type of knowledge limited to ourselves. This excludes knowing what is beyond us because we cannot admit contradictions to the biases of our fleshly mind. Being impressed with ourselves is a little like being in a room of mirrors, wowed at the seeming infinite, while after all being in a small room.

"The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:22-23).

The above teaching of Jesus compared human eyes with spiritual eyes, the ability to weigh one thing against another. This is where our perception originates. There is warning in

this lesson – we can determine a thing to be true when it isn't. This light that is darkness, this seeming truth, concerns grave issues. He said, *"how great is that darkness."* This tells of a deception accepted as a fundamental reality. Many people recognize things vital to our existence: God, families, and nations. Yet, our determination of what to do with such recognition is ruined if we make ourselves arbiters of knowledge rather than looking to God. Inquisitions have been perpetrated to suppress others from determining the will of God for themselves. The accused have been burned in the name of the Lord. In favor of the state, Communists have oppressed people seeking God. This is ignorance. It is a problem of flesh rather than spirit, the carnal mind trying to determine and act upon vain concepts of what is real. So, the importance of self suppresses the greater value of kindness. No wonder suicide bombers cry out to their notion of God in the act of blowing people to bits. What a dark, dark light!

"They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me" (John 16:2-3).

The early church suffered at the hands of the Jews who rejected Jesus. However, it was not too long before that changed. Instead of Jews, it became those under the banner of the cross who did the persecuting. It is a great temptation for us as Christians to make people after our own image. It is like every other stripe of humanity, culture, and nation: "Make them mind! Make them be like me!" Christians, we dare not suppress the good news of salvation in favor of what we think the world should be. That would be the work of antichrist. We don't want to become antichrist, for that is the ultimate ignorance.

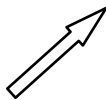
Intelligence – what is it? We do not possess it by a great degree of mental acumen. It is found by listening to God. He is the intelligent one. *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7).*

~ 124 Locust St., Barnett, MO 65011-1004
~ garbi14@gmail.com

Glory to God!

The church in **Kirksville, MO** rejoiced when **David Mathes** was baptized into Christ on August 20.

The church which meets on **Prince Road, Alton, IL**, welcomed new members **Murray** and **Mary Harbke** on August 25. **Steve** and **Donnelle Campbell** joined the congregation on September 5.



Please check your expiration date!

Here and There

Darl and Linda Davis of the church at **Martinstown, MO** are celebrating 50 happy years of marriage. They were married on October 11, 1969 at **Parkview Church of Christ** in **Unionville, MO**. Church friends are invited to attend a reception hosted by their children on **October 13, 3:00-5:00pm**, at **Pine Trail Barn** in **Livonia, MO**. Expressions of congratulations can be mailed to Darl and Linda at **18343 387th Rd, Unionville, MO 63565**.

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THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Volume 61, Number 11

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Publisher ~ Doug Twaddell

November, 2019

Satisfaction

Zach Crane

In 1965, The Rolling Stones recorded a song that became their first international chart-topper and catapulted them toward super-stardom. The song was entitled “I Can’t Get No Satisfaction,” a ballad bemoaning the lack of fulfillment found in the typical worldly pursuits of commercialism, materialism, and self-indulgence. Over the decades, many different factors have been credited for this song resonating so deeply with fans all over the world. Factors ranging from the band’s fortuitous timing of riding the coattails of “Beatlemania” to the catchy guitar riff intro. However, Mick Jagger, the band’s famous front man, provided a different explanation in a 1995 interview, saying the song “encapsulated the feeling of the times.” In December 2004, *Rolling Stone* magazine referred to it as “the sound of a generation impatient to inherit the earth.” From this, it would appear that a major reason this song struck such a chord with so many listeners was the relevance of its subject matter. A message with which the audience could readily identify. One they could sing along to with absolute sincerity: “I can’t get no satisfaction.”

While I certainly don’t dispute that the sentiments of this song accurately reflected many people’s feelings and experiences at that time, I’m also certain that such feelings were by no means confined to that particular time or generation. Nearly 3,000 years before The Stones recorded their #1 hit, wise King Solomon had already (and much more poetically) recorded these very same insights and conclusions in the book of **Ecclesiastes**. Possessing fame and wealth beyond what Mick, Keith, and the rest of the band could likely even fathom, Solomon set out on his own journey to find meaning and fulfillment in life. Throughout the early chapters of **Ecclesiastes**, we find Solomon testing his heart with mirth and releasing it to indulge in pleasure (see **Ecclesiastes 2:1-3**). He sets his gaze on amassing possessions and achievements, establishing a legacy, and surrounding himself with entertainment (see **Ecclesiastes 2:4-11**). He indulged in whatever he wanted. And from all outward appearances, his pursuits seem to have been a great success. **Ecclesiastes 2:9** says that he became great and excelled more than all those who were before him in Jerusalem. Solomon’s life was filled with things that constitute the very definition of success for many today and, presumably, ensure satisfaction and fulfillment. And yet, that wasn’t Solomon’s perspective of his accomplishments. Instead, he proclaims it to be “*vanity of*

vanities, all is vanity.” Elsewhere in his writings, he described it as madness, foolishness, grasping for the wind, and asks, “what does it accomplish?” Solomon found it to be a futile and exhausting exercise that leaves the participant empty, unsatisfied, and deeply frustrated.

A lack of satisfaction in all the fleshly trappings this world has to offer is nothing new or novel. It was true in Solomon’s time. It was true in 1965, when the Rolling Stones sang about it. And it’s a truth that is still being realized and proven by many today. Despite being encouraged to be whatever we want, be with whoever we want, and do whatever we want, there only seems to be a growing spirit of discontentment and dissatisfaction among so many. And it’s something we are, by no means, immune to ourselves. Thinking that if we could only achieve a certain milestone, obtain a certain prized possession, or get past this one difficult circumstance in our life – then we’d be satisfied. Only to discover the same harsh reality that Solomon did; that when we get there, we are not. I know I’ve certainly been guilty of this type of thinking; asking too much of people and possessions that were never intended to fill such voids.

Fortunately, this is not the type of satisfaction that the Lord offers in His word. It’s not something that is fragile, fickle, or transient - something that comes and goes. It’s a satisfaction that is focused on the condition of the inward man rather than his external circumstances and how they make him feel. True satisfaction is possible, but only in Him who is truly capable of delivering on such a promise of real, lasting fulfillment. The One who:

- Was instrumental in making all things (**John 1:3**).
- Helped take a void, empty, dark mass (**Genesis 1:2**) and filled it with the organization, goodness, light and beauty.
- Sustained and provided for Israel, His chosen people; supplying their daily bread and bringing life-preserving water, in abundance, out of rocks.
- Pleased the Father that, in Him, all the fullness should dwell (**Colossians 1:19**).
- Offered the Samaritan woman at the well, in **John 4**, living water and the multitudes in **John 6** the bread of life; that whoever comes to Him shall never hunger, and he who believes in Him shall never thirst.

What an awesome promise ... and an awesome Lord. It’s why Paul could make the bold statement he does, in **Philippians 4:11-13**: “*for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content ...*

continued on the next page...

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” And it’s why Paul’s prayer for the Ephesian brethren, in **Ephesians 3:14-21**, was not for a change of circumstance or a special physical blessing. Rather it was that:

- They would be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man.
- Christ would dwell in their hearts through faith ... being rooted and grounded in love.
- They may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.
- They would be filled with all the fullness of God.

Sounds pretty satisfying, if you ask me!

~ 13901 E Harvest Ln., Peculiar, MO 64078-9533
zachandcassy@gmail.com

Mastering Emotion

Jared Groves

*...in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. So the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.” Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him (**Genesis 4:3-8**).*

*Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” And they said, “What is that to us? You see to it!” Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself (**Matthew 27:3-5**).*

Recorded for us are two examples of human emotion and sin. Cain became angry and murdered his brother. Judas was grieved and hung himself. Emotions are immensely powerful things in our feeble lives. Men and women both can be quite emotionally driven, even if men don’t want to admit it. **Proverbs 25:28** tells us that a man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without a wall. There is no safety to be found for him or those around him. Destruction is all you

will see.

With that knowledge, sometimes we can see emotions as bad things. I, at the very least, tend to see them as troublesome. Our emotions are not, however, totally useless. One thing we can make our emotions do for us is reveal what our heart loves, treasures, and fears.

*“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings” (**Jeremiah 17:9-10**).*

The Lord knows where our heart is, and we’re going to be judged by that knowledge. Yet, as humans, knowing our own hearts can be a challenge at times. We have this blessing of human emotion to give us clues as to where our heart truly lies. Can we spot a lack of trust in God where we feel fear? Can we find pride, a shortage of patience, or selfishness in our anger? Do we grieve over material things or spiritual things? Think about the emotion that arises in certain situations in your daily life. Does your chest swell with pride? Is your heart made light with happiness? Does your blood boil with anger? These are our indicators. Take advantage of them. Is your heart in the right place? Let emotions be your tool.

Too often we let our emotions make a tool out of us. We get angry and blow up at someone. We feel happiness, and we bask in it until we begin to neglect those around us. We can’t allow our emotion to rule our decision-making process. Nor should we allow them to cause harm to others in our interpersonal dealings. Emotions are like those old mercury thermometers. In the glass the mercury was helpful — it told you the temperature outside, how you ought to dress, and what activities would be appropriate for the day. Outside that glass, however, mercury is deadly. We need to consider our actions and our dialogue before we implement them because we do affect others when we handle our emotions in an irresponsible manner. That’s how our children end up in therapy as adults. This is a big deal. **Proverbs 29:11**, “*A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back*” (see also the ESV: “*the fool gives full vent to his feelings*”).

Another thing we want to keep an eye on regarding our emotions is letting emotion dictate our mood. Things are going to frustrate us or make us sad, yet we should ever be searching for ways to deal with it and get it over with. **Ephesians 4:26-27**, “*Be angry* (from the Greek word *orge*), *and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your wrath* (from the Greek word *parorgismos*), *nor give place to the devil.*” The word translated “wrath” in the Greek, means the stuff that comes along with the anger — the bitterness, the dark mood, the sour disposition. Emotionally responsible people don’t sulk in their negative emotions and allow them to fester. They do what is required in order to deal with them and move forward.

Let’s strive to be responsible human-beings when it comes

to our emotions and our emotional health. Use your emotions as a tool to know your heart; don't allow your emotions to use you. Let's work hard not to be emotionally driven when we interact with others so that we can continue to treat them as they ought to be treated.

~ 15106 E 35th St. South, Independence, MO 64055
jtg437@mst.edu

Glory to God!

The church which meets on **Prince Road, Alton, IL**, welcomed **Dennis McCann, Ethel McCann, Toni McCann, Lois Rhodes, Delores Heishman, Brenda Smith, Karen Sutton, Marie Mudd, Mary Harris, Bev Joyce, Chris Schieber, Tanya Schieber, Ron and Dorothy Warren. Dave Hartman**, one of the elders of the congregation, reports that a local congregation closed its doors and most of the former members have joined the brethren who meet on **Prince Road**.

The church in **Brookfield, MO** rejoiced when **Quincy and Ashley Jones** placed membership.

"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:4-7).

Blessed Are the Dead

Stacey Scott Honeycutt, 48, of Ozark, Missouri, passed way September 5, 2019. He was born January 30, 1971, the son of **George Dale and Theda Rae (Murfin) Honeycutt**. He graduated from Ozark High School in 1989, and received an associate's degree after attending Fort Scott Community College and MSU. Stacey was a talented artist. His paintings were sold at national venues, and an article was published giving praise for his accomplishments. The western themed art was a natural outcome of his love of horses, his days of team roping in high school and college, hunting, and fishing throughout his life. He was known for his artistic ability to paint on feathers. Stacey was a faithful member of the **Nixa Church of Christ**.

Clinton Robert "Bob" Estes, 74, of Excelsior Springs, MO died September 24, 2019. Bob was a Vietnam veteran, having served in the United States Navy for a total of 20 years, both

active and reserves. Bob married the love of his life, **Mary Louise Brunke**, on May 24, 1986. They lived their married lives in Excelsior Springs, Missouri. Bob worked at Gilmore for 20 years, Job Corp for 15 years, and Brunke Hardware. Upon retiring, Bob continued to work alongside his wife. Bob was a long-standing member of the **Church of Christ of Excelsior Springs**.

Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them" (Revelation 14:13).

Special Meetings

As was reported in previous issues, the church which meets on **Dean Avenue, Des Moines, IA** will no longer be holding their annual weekend meeting. Our readers may recall this meeting was held the traditional weekend of Easter. The church in **Martensdale, IA** has decided to hold a meeting to take the place of the Dean Avenue meeting. However, the meeting will be held the fourth weekend in March instead of Easter weekend beginning in 2020. The church will also host the meeting at a community center in the nearby town of **Indianola, IA**. More information about the meeting can be found at:

<http://martensdalechurchofchrist.org/index.php/about-us/spring-meeting-2020>

Your editor received the following message from **Dennis Shearer**, one of the elders of the church which meets in **LaVerne, CA** concerning the bi-annual campout meeting at **Camp Edison, Shaver Lake, CA** scheduled for **June 22-26, 2020**:

The congregation that meets in La Verne will be hosting the Shaver Lake camp meeting next summer and we are going to try something different regarding reservations.

We would like to try and reserve a group site to accompany some individual sites but in order to do that we need to get our reservations in within the first 2 weeks of January.

So, if you are planning on camping with us next summer, we will need a deposit check of \$150 no later than December 20, so we can get everything put together in time.

More information will be forthcoming, but in the meantime, if you have any questions or want to make sure you are included in our emails, please contact **Dennis Shearer** at dennishearer713@gmail.com or by phone at **951/830-9955**.

The annual **Midwest Bible Campout** is scheduled for **June 29-July 3, 2020**. The church which meets on **Prince Road, Alton, IL** oversees this event. Information can be found on their website: princeroadchurchofchrist.org/campout. Campsites



Please check your expiration date!

Continued from page 3: "Special Meetings"

will not be available until **3:00 p.m., Friday June 26**. Lodge rooms will be available at **3:00 p.m., Saturday, June 27**.

The church in **Kirkville, MO** continues to plan for the **2020 Two-Weekend Meeting**. Please mark your calendars for **July 25-August 2, 2020**. Also, please remember the church is organizing a tour of Restoration sites for the week following. Concerning this special activity, the congregation sends the following note:

Join evangelists **Rick Sparks** and **Mike Kirby** as well as elders **Barry Poyner** and **Dan Green** for a tour of the Restoration Movement August 3-8, 2020. Tour highlights will include visiting locations that were once home to Restoration leaders such as James Shannon, the Sommers, John Walker, T.M. Allen, Barton W. Stone, and Alexander Campbell. We will see famous restoration sites in Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, West Virginia, and Kentucky. The locations that we plan to visit will include the Old Mud Meetinghouse, the Shaker Village, Cane Ridge, the home of Alexander Campbell, the Historical Society in Bethany, Butler University, Culver Stockton and Sand Creek. Transportation, hotel accommodations, and breakfast in each hotel is included in the cost of the tour. More details regarding the trip will be added soon to the kirkvillechurchofchrist.org website. Payment options are available. Please contact **Corey Salter** for more information by email at corey@lsgrouptours.com, by phone at **660-342-9816** or by chat at lsgrouptours.com.

The church which meets on **Murray Road, Lee's Summit, MO** plans a new format for their annual VBS. They have planned a one day, Fall VBS to take place on **September 12, 2020**.

2019 Meetings

December 26-28.....Winter Youth Rally, Raytown, MO
December 26-28.....Winter College Rally, Lone Jack, MO

"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."

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Wade Stanley
18078 State Highway 149
Unionville, MO 63565
wadestanley@gmail.com

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THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Volume 61, Number 12

Editor ~ Wade Stanley

Publisher ~ Doug Twaddell

December, 2019

Gifts of the Spirit

Kevin Crittenden

To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:8-10).

Birthdays are celebrations to look forward to, not only for me but for everybody, right? Well, maybe not if you're approaching – ahem - middle age. Anyway, there's a sense of joyful expectation during your birthday month, because the time is coming that you will be fêted with a cake and some presents. Maybe dinner out.

My excitement over birthdays has changed over the years. Once, it was the expectation of receiving something; now, I take greater pleasure in being with family and friends. During a birthday celebration, everybody acts lovingly and treats each other with kindness and compassion. *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).*

Birthdays come but once a year and bring a modicum of joy. The worldly gifts that we really desired lose our interest quickly and are relegated to the back of the closet. But, as I hope you have also experienced, the indwelling Holy Spirit is with us EVERY day, bringing a cornucopia of spiritual gifts that never lose their newness or shininess or desirability.

Can you imagine the joy that each day brings, knowing that each day is a precious gift from God?

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully (Romans 12:6-8).

But, as you see, these priceless gifts are NOT to be relegated to the back of the closet. No, they are given to us as TOOLS to be USED in the Lord's vineyards.

There exist many lists of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be found in the Bible, none exhaustive, and each gift has a bearing on our RELATIONSHIPS with others. *"A new command I give*

you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another (John 13:34).

The Spirit doesn't dole out gifts that make me incredibly handsome (sigh) or make me a one percenter. Passably handsome would be nice, but physical appearance is not the beauty that God values most. Nor should we.

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight (1 Peter 3:3-4).

But, as you see, these priceless gifts are NOT to be relegated to the back of the closet. No, they are given to us as TOOLS to be USED in the Lord's vineyards.

The gift of godly beauty that is given to us stems from grace.

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says:

"When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people."

(What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:7-13).

Again, we are not to bury our gift in the ground like the servant to whom was given the one talent. (see **Matthew 25:14-30**). No, these gifts are to be used *"for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up."*

I hear you saying, "But I really don't know what special

continued on the next page...

spiritual gifts I have. I don't feel comfortable talking to strangers about Jesus, I hate public speaking, I'm not a leader or a teacher, in fact I'm pretty much an introvert. I just don't feel special. So, what am I supposed to do?"

One thing I would tell you is that, no matter WHAT you do, you serve as an example. *"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity"* (1 Timothy 4:12). And I would also tell you that the best way to discover your spiritual gifts is to ask the One who bestowed them on you. Pray about it with humbleness, acceptance and gratitude.

Let our spiritual gifts be as a shining lamp raised high, an encouraging beacon of hope held aloft, reflecting the glory of the Lord for those who continue to stumble in the dark.

"Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works" (Titus 2:7a).

~ 19130 Meiggs Ln. Cupertino, CA 95014
kcritt2@aol.com

Antichrist

Louis Garbi

Anything in opposition is anti-. Therefore, anyone against Christ is antichrist. Or is this the case? One might pose this statement from Jesus: *"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad"* (Matthew 12:30). It would seem to indicate that every unbeliever is antichrist. This is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible gives the term a narrow definition, a definition not extending to the lost at large.

"Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us" (1 John 2:18-19).

There are three items in the above passage which narrow down our perspective of antichrist: (1) *"the last hour;"* (2) *"they were not of us;"* (3) *"they went out from us."*

- *"The last hour"* indicates a specified time. In this case, John pointed out a problem peculiar to the last days, the time of the gospel preached to all nations.
- *"They were not of us"* defines the spirit of antichrist. They did not have fellowship with the apostles—those of whom it is written; *"that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our*

fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

- *"They went out from us."* These were people who had association with the apostles of Jesus Christ or their teaching. These would have had some identification with Jesus. They had the potential to "continue." This points to an active departure in contrast to being faint hearted, being discouraged, or being weak in faith.

Therefore, antichrist describes a people discontent with and disconnected from the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, who make their own rules, and present to the world a counterfeit Jesus made after their own image by counterfeit teaching. John did not make a dry observation about antichrist. It carries a strong note of warning through the book.

Why didn't the apostles stop them? The apostles were never given power to force conformity to themselves. The whole service to God in this new covenant rests on the individual's faith and submission to God. The church has no jail, fine, or other means to coerce souls. We cannot materially bind people to ourselves and still belong to Christ. Therefore, men are at liberty to demonstrate their ideas, even to the detriment of themselves and those they affect. Such was written by Paul, an apostle *"born out of due season."*

"If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant" (1 Corinthians 14:37-38).

Though the apostles could not coerce conformity to Christ they, through the Holy Spirit, did identify the characteristics of antichrist so that we are warned and can avoid them. The following passages of scripture are only a few examples:

- **Matthew 7:15**, *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves."*
- **John 10:1**, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."*
- **Acts 20:29-30**, *"For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves."*
- **2 Corinthians 11:13-15**, *"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works."*
- **2 Tim. 4:3-4**, *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."*

• **3 John 1:9**, “I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.”

• **Jude 1:16**, “These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.”

It is necessary for the follower of Jesus to judge what is taught about Him. “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). We test the spirits by using the standard of the Bible. We must hold to what was written by the apostles and prophets of Jesus Christ. Consider the lesson of the man of God who took refreshment from a lying prophet. Contrary to God’s command that forbade eating or drinking during the journey home, the prophet lied to the man of God: “I too am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, ‘Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water’” (1 Kings 13:18). The man of

Therefore, antichrist describes a people discontent with and disconnected from the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, who make their own rules, and present to the world a counterfeit Jesus made after their own image by counterfeit teaching.

God did not follow God’s command and paid with his life, even though the contradiction seemed to come from a reputable source.

John wrote that there were “many antichrists” (1 John 2:18). This indicates a wide variety of deceptive teachings and practices concerning Jesus Christ. When John emphasized “the antichrist”, he pointed to the leading example. Paul described this:

“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

What did this falling away produce? It produced a religious system that murdered and tortured, amassed land, infused idolatry (statuary and art representing beings from the Bible),

promoted itself as the sole representative of Christ, ruled over nations, etc. We might be aghast at the cruelty of radical Islam, but theirs is a small thing compared to the blasphemy of those who used the name of Jesus as an excuse for power. Antichrist.

And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities” (Revelation 18:4-5).

~ 124 Locust St., Barnett, MO 65011-1004
~ garbi14@gmail.com

Glory to God!

Ryan and Jennifer Rinkenbaugh transferred their membership from the church in **Blue Springs, MO** to the **Prince Road Church of Christ, Alton, IL**.

The church which meets in **Nixa, MO** welcomed **Della Camp** as a member of the congregation.

The Chapel Glen Church of Christ rejoiced when **Brenda Wessel** was immersed for the remission of her sins in October.

The church which meets on **Grant Street in Unionville, MO** rejoiced when **Evelyn Bennett** placed membership.

The church in **Kirksville, MO** was overjoyed when **Larry Elam** was baptized. The congregation welcomed **Jacob Lyons** back to the fold of safety and fellowship on October 20.

Blessed Are the Dead

Louis “Lou” J. Meinke, 86, passed away at his home July 26, 2019. Brother Lou was a founding member of the **Church of Christ in Fayette, MO** and a much beloved song leader. Lou was an agronomy research associate for the University of Missouri, a position he held until his retirement. He loved square dance calling, remodeling and repairing homes, Mizzou football and basketball, and playing Pitch, the Meinke family card game. He is survived by his wife, **Connie**.

Marilyn Allen, 78, of **Nixa, MO**, went to be with Jesus on October 8, 2019. Marilyn was a wonderful wife and mother and homemaker. Her dedication to God was unmistakable. She was very active in her church, **Nixa Church of Christ**. She taught Sunday school to the children and loved to sing. Marilyn made decorations and shadow boxes for the church. She made the church bulletins until her health failed. Sister Marilyn is survived by her husband, **Tom** as well as her children, and her eight grandchildren.

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Continued from page 3: "Blessed are the Dead"

Larry Elam, 60, passed away October, 2019. Brother Larry was a member of the **church of Christ in Kirksville, MO**. Larry is survived by his brother Roger and two nieces.

Robert Leon "Lonny" Davis, 91, of Godfrey, IL, passed away November 2, 2019. He was born April 21, 1928 in Carrollton, IL. He was a member of **Prince Road Church of Christ**. For thirty years, Brother Lonny served as the church treasurer until deacons were appointed. His wife, **Elsie M. Tindall**, preceded him in death August 5, 2003.

Special Meetings

The church which meets in **LaVerne, CA** plans a special New Year's Eve Meeting, "Welcome to 2020: Philippians 3:13-14." Dinner is at 5:30, singing and other activities begin at 7:00.

The church in **Section Church of Christ, Osage City, KS** plans a special weekend meeting for **March 21-22, 2020**. More information will follow in future months.

As was reported in previous issues, the church which meets on **Dean Avenue, Des Moines, IA** will no longer be holding their annual weekend meeting. Our readers may recall this meeting was held the traditional weekend of Easter. The church in **Martensdale, IA** has decided to hold a meeting to take the place of the Dean Avenue meeting. However, the meeting will be held the fourth weekend in March instead of Easter weekend beginning in 2020. The church will also host the meeting at a community center in the nearby town of **Indianola, IA**. More information about the meeting can be found at:

<http://martensdalechurchofchrist.org/index.php/about-us/spring-meeting-2020>

Your editor received the following message from **Dennis Shearer**, one of the elders of the church which meets in **LaVerne, CA** concerning the bi-annual campout meeting at **Camp Edison, Shaver Lake, CA** scheduled for **June 22-26, 2020**:

The congregation that meets in La Verne will be hosting the Shaver Lake camp meeting next summer and we are going to try something different regarding reservations.

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December 26-28..... Winter College Rally, Lone Jack, MO

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Wade Stanley
18078 State Highway 149
Unionville, MO 63565
wadestanley@gmail.com

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