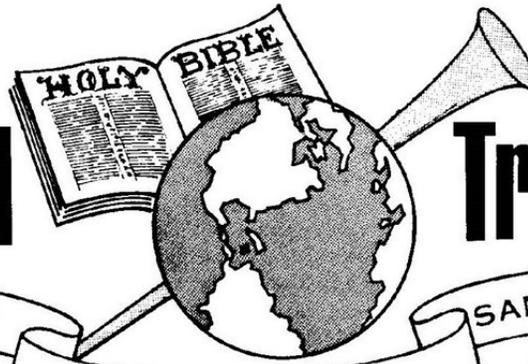


The Gospel



Trumpeter

JUSTIFICATION

"So will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day."

Ezekiel 34:12
Jeremiah 32:39

SANCTIFICATION

"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished."

Revelation 10:7
Matthew 24:31

UNITY & TRUTH

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 52 September 2022 No. 9



**“Stand ye in the
ways, and see,
and ask for the
OLD PATHS,
where is the
GOOD WAY,
and walk therein,
and ye shall find
rest for your souls.”**

—Jeremiah 6:16

"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound,
who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

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**This monthly religious journal is published for the benefit of the
Church of God universally. It is our supreme purpose to reach the
world for Christ through the printed page. Our burden is to reveal
the truth of God's Word to all mankind, to expose sin and error,
war against apostasy, and to eradicate the longstanding traditions
of men that have no Biblical foundations.**

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN

- A personal God (John 4:24)
- A divine Christ (John 1:1, 14)
- An infallibly inspired Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- Salvation from sin (Matthew 1:21)
- The new birth (John 3:3, 5-7)
- A holy life (Luke 1:73-75; Titus 2:12)
- Sanctification (1 Thessalonians 5:23)
- Unity of God's people (John 17:21; Ephesians 4:3)
- Divine, physical healing (James 5:14-16)
- The ordinances (Matthew 28:19-20; John 13:1-17;
1 Corinthians 11:23-34)
- Eternal life (Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:43)
- The Trinity (1 John 5:7-8)

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

- Jesus organized it (Matt. 16:18)
- On a good foundation (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:11)
- Christ governs it (Eph. 1:22-23; Isa. 9:6)
- God admits members (1 Cor. 12:13-18)
- Sin puts you out of it (Rom. 11:22; Ex. 32:33)
- The saved only are members (John 15:2-6)
- Membership is offered to all (Rev. 22:17)
- Final rewards (Rev. 20:12-15; 21:3-4; 22:14)
- Bible name of the Church (Acts 20:28;
Gal. 1:13; John 17:11)

We reserve the right to edit and/or decline any material
for any reason. We are not responsible for unsolicited
articles or items.

CONTENTS

The Awfulness of Hell 3
Thoughts From God's Word 8
Faithfulness Leads to Greatness . . . 9
Especially for Young People 14
The Mirror of God's Word 17
My Testimony 21
Prayer 24
Questions & Answers 25
Upcoming Meetings 27
2023 Camp Meeting Dates 27

Vol. 52 September 2022 No. 9

**Guest
Editorial**



LEARNING CONTENTMENT

*Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak
in respect of want: for I have learned,
in whatsoever state I am, therewith to
be content.*

*1 Timothy 6:6 But godliness with
contentment is great gain.*

*8 And having food and raiment let
us be therewith content.*

In these Scriptures, the Apostle Paul pointed out the importance of being content. Godliness is a major ingredient to having a successful and contented life. If you will take heed to his admonition, it will be a tremendous benefit throughout your life. Being content is truly a lesson many need to learn. Those who will adhere to Paul's words will find it to be of great value. It is unfortunate so few people know about this wonderful benefit. One reason is many have been overtaken with the spirit of materialism. People who are caught up with materialism seemingly can never be satisfied. They are always seeking to obtain more of this world's fineries.

Multitudes believe material possessions bring satisfaction. Jesus said in Luke 12:15, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

The Apostle Paul said, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Paul not only enjoyed the good things he received from the Lord but also patiently endured the things that caused him to suffer. Whether he was rejoicing with the good or suffering with the reverses, he had learned the wonderful secret of how to apply himself to the undesirable. He possessed a deep content-

ment and calmness within his soul, knowing God would lead him through safely and with victory. Paul had a sweet peace within that enriched his life while he endured some of life's most unpleasant trials.

Times of trial and affliction come to all. Financial reverses or great loss may come across your path. The Lord may want to prove you. This is not a time to become discontented or angry with the Lord for allowing this trial to come. You must be reminded God has everything under His control. He has a plan and a purpose for you to attain by the hard places you go through.

Romans 8:28 brings much encouragement. The Apostle Paul wrote, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." In Hebrews 13:5 you can read this beautiful promise, "For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Contentment is not something sent from Heaven as a special gift, and it is not an unconcerned attitude about what happens. Contentment is a state of mind and heart. It is not dependent upon situations or circumstances, but rather it is about trusting in God's wisdom and promises. Allow me to repeat: contentment is a lesson we must learn and develop. Spiritual success is learning to adapt ourself to God's plan. Instead of looking on the dark side of situations, begin to seek for the good that can come from them. Strive to look on the bright side and it will cause your faith to grow.

Selected

Luke 16:19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his

bosom.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come

from thence.

27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house:

28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.



Brother Roger L. Decker

Hell Is Real

This message is considered out of touch for this day and age. Many feel we should not upset people, but rather we should only speak lovely and kind words. Ones do not want to hear this type of message. They do not

want to be reminded of the place they are heading, according to the Scriptures, if they are not saved. The reason this type of message is not preached in many pulpits today is because it is not popular among the people. Surely, we need to be kind, but we also need to obey the Lord and

preach the truth. We should preach "thus saith the Lord" because this is in the Word of God with all the other Scriptures people like to hear.

Our Scripture reading describes the life, death, and destiny of two men. Many times, the fear of God has been lifted to the

place where a message on what it means to be lost has very little, if any, affect on people. Allow the Spirit of God to search your heart, and if you are on the wrong road, God will be true to your soul and help you get back to where you belong. Messages on hell should bring a real soberness to your soul; it should make you afraid to be lost and afraid to fool around with God's Word and disobey it. Hell is real, whether ones believe in it or not. Many of the same ones who do not believe in hell, and who balk at the thought of being lost eternally, do believe there is a Heaven.

Did you know Jesus taught more about hell than He did Heaven? Most of the New Testament was written to the children of God so they would not get off track and eventually wind up there. Hell is more than a word of anger or vulgarity; it is real! Hell is so awful you would not want your worst enemy to go there. Jesus had just finished talking with His disciples about not serving two masters. When the Pharisees, who were covetous, heard this, they sneered at Him. The subject of riches seemed to attract the Sadducees and the Pharisees.

John 2:23-25 tells us: "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." Jesus knows every one of us. He knows what is in your heart, and all it takes are the right circumstances to reveal it.

Every once in a while, we need to be reminded there is a Heaven to strive for and a hell to avoid. Peter, preaching to people who were well established in the



and lose his own soul?"

—Matthew 16:26

truth, said in 2 Peter 1:12, "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth." In essence, Peter said, "I will not be careless and shun my duty and responsibility toward you." Not everyone believes in hell. There are ones who teach the grave is the end. Others believe in annihilation, being burned up, or just disappearing.

God's Way to Avoid Hell

Solomon was the wisest man in the Old Testament. God gave him wisdom and understanding, and God blessed him in many avenues of his life. Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 12:7, "Then shall the dust [the outer man] return to the earth as it was: and the spirit [the inner man] shall return unto God who gave it." Here is a picture of the flesh and the soul: one came from the earth, and the other came from God. When death comes, both return to their former origin.

Some are living as though hell is some big joke and God will somehow, somewhere, work it all out for them. They feel even if ones are not saved, God will still let them go to Heaven because of His great love. The truth is, God has worked out a way where every one of us can miss

hell. If you will obey the Gospel, you will not end up in a lost eternity. Mark 16:15-16 reads: "And he [Jesus] said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved [the Gospel will save you]; but he that believeth not [the Gospel] shall be damned." God has worked out a way, but it is up to you and me to do our part.

In this day and age we are living in now, too many are playing church, fooling around with temptations, failing to avoid sin, and loving the world and the things of the world. No matter how much you are in love with the world, you are going to leave it all behind one day. Your money in the bank, your investments, your nice house, your car, your friends, and your family will all be left behind, and you will become a memory. One day you are going to leave that which passes away, and you are going to face One who abides forever.

In too many cases, there is too much shallow living. God has something better for every one of us than that. There will be no purgatory, millennium, or second chance. All these doctrines taught in false religion to ease the conscience and take away the sting of death will be gone. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthian brethren, said in 1 Corinthians 15:55-56: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law."

God's part for your salvation has already been done. You have one soul and one trip through this life. There is one salvation, one way, one Savior, one God, and one Holy Spirit. If you fail to go God's way, you will be lost. Jesus said in Matthew 16:26, "For what is a man profited, if he shall

gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Otherwise, what are you going to profit, or gain, if you obtain the whole world? No one is going to gain the whole world. Jesus gave a metaphor of what you would lose if it were possible to gain the whole world.

An Appointment With Death

Jesus said, "What are you willing to trade for your soul?" Some will trade their soul for alcohol, drugs, gambling, and partying. There are some who live in adultery and some who have committed a crime and should be locked up in prison. Are you willing to face God with those vices in your life? Many vices can be hidden from people, but nothing is hidden from God!

You are facing eternity with something that is going to pass away. All you have to present to God is what you have attained in this life. The world cannot help you at the Judgment. The world is going to be burned up. There will not be a millennium, and there will not be a restoration of the Jewish nation. The Jewish nation is the church today, the spiritual Jews.

Peter said in 2 Peter 3:9-12: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God,

wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"

What are you going to do at the Judgment when everything in this world is burned up, dissolved, and melted? We all have an appointment, and it is not an appointment we set up. No one is sitting around trying to figure out when he is going to die, but rather most are pushing that thought out of their minds. We have an appointment, and it is on God's calendar. You do not know when, how, or where, but one thing is for sure, you are going to die and then face the Judgment.

Many young people are not concerned about their souls because they feel they have plenty of time. That may be true. You may have plenty of time according to the world's standards, but what is the time you have compared to eternity where time will be no more? Hebrews 9:27 reads, "And as it is appointed unto men [it is set up and fixed; an appointment we cannot change or put off for another time] once to die, but after this the judgment."

Two Different Destinies

There are some things the Scriptures tell us about the subject of hell. There is a hell to shun. Again, in our Scripture reading, there are two different men, two different lifestyles, two different deaths, and two different destinies. What took place after death was because of what took place before death. The rich man did not have time for God or the things of God. The Bible says he "fared sumptuously [or he lived in luxury; life was a big party] every day" (Luke 16:19). He did not know what it was like to be in want. He never had to



worry from day to day about the lack of funds. He had everything he needed to make a living after the flesh, and he had it in abundance.

The rich man did not end up lost because he was rich. We do not read anywhere in the Scriptures where he told his servants to take Lazarus away from his gate and beat him. The rich man was lost because he was uncharitable, hardhearted, and had no feelings for others. He needed his spirit changed. He did not glorify God, but he took glory unto himself. He was not concerned that outside his gate was a world filled with poverty. In Luke 12:15 we read, "And he [Jesus] said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

Lazarus was different. The Bible says he was a beggar. He was a constant sufferer who laid at the gate of the rich man. Both men had two things in common: they both needed God, and they both had to die. However, death was a relief to the beggar. There was no more suffering, being in want, and living for handouts from day to day. He went from suffering to comfort. During his death, the Bible tells us he "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22).

Deuteronomy 31:6 reads, "Be strong and of a good courage,

fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." God will be with those who are saved in the hour of death. Speaking of the angels, Paul said in Hebrews 1:14, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

The rich man also died. However, the Bible does not speak of angels comforting him. He did not go to a place of comfort. The outward man, the shell, was buried, and his soul went to hell. All of his wealth, pomp, splendor, servants, and all he had obtained could not keep him from a lost eternity. The rich man went to hell because he did not deserve to go anywhere else. Immediately, he was in torments!

A Place of Consciousness

After death, the identity of oneself is preserved, and there is a life of personal conscience. One torment of hell is the undying memory of this life spent knowing it did not have to end that way.

Look at how Lazarus and the rich man changed places in suffering. In Luke 16:21 Lazarus desired "to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores." In verse 24 Jesus said, "And he [the rich man] cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

The smallest of the smallest requests are denied in hell! The rich man did not ask for a glass of water or for a swallow or a drink, but rather the tip of Lazarus' finger dipped in water. That is not very much water; it is only a drop. All the rich man's faculties were working. He could see,

hear, feel, remember, and desire. Hell is real, dear one. The torments, suffering, and conscience are all real. There is no more mercy, and hell is forever. We read in Luke 16:26, "And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed [settled, determined]: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."

The comfort this world offers passes away, but the comfort of serving God lasts forever. The soul does not need this body to function. First Peter 3:4 tells us, "But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." In Matthew 10:28 Jesus said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Hell is a terrible place. Jesus does not warn you about hell for you to take it lightly. These warnings should cause you to deepen down in your experience and live closer to God so you do not have to end up there. One writer said, "Ones must be fast asleep who are not startled by the thought of it."

Hell is a place of consciousness. The rich man awoke to reality. He was not dead in his soul; he was still conscious. Luke 16:23-24 reads: "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

Hell is a place of torments. The rich man was doing something he was not used to doing; he was suffering as he never

knew one could suffer. He was used to faring sumptuously, or living in luxury. Verse 23 says he was "in torments," and verse 24 says he was "tormented in this flame." He saw where he could have gone, and no doubt, that added to his suffering. He saw Lazarus afar off, and he was comforted. In verse 28 he said, "I have five brethren," and he did not want them coming to this place of torment.

Darkness Without Hope

Hell is a place of darkness. Have you ever heard someone say, "If I go to hell, I will have plenty of company"? What good would the company be if everyone was suffering? Jesus said in Matthew 25:30, "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matthew called it "outer darkness," a terrible place for a soul. The soul in darkness now has the hope of the Gospel, but in hell, he is surrounded by darkness without hope. It is a place of eternal separation. Again, Luke 16:26 says, "And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."

In hell, there is no mercy. Nowhere do you read of mercy in any of these verses of Scripture. A little drop of water was denied. The rich man was used to having what he wanted at his command. In hell, the smallest of the smallest requests are denied. He was used to telling someone to get him what he wanted. All that changed. Again, Luke 16:24 reads, "And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

If you were to take a glass of

water, dip the tip of your finger in the water and touch it to your tongue, that was all he asked for. It was the tiniest request for water. He wanted mercy, but it could not be obtained. Mercy is available now if you want it. You may not want it now, but remember, when you do want it, you may be in a place where mercy is not available. Obey God so you do not have to go to the awful place called hell.

What does hell consist of? It is a place of consciousness, darkness, torments, eternal separation, where all hope is gone, and where you will be haunted by your memory. It will be difficult having a memory of all your life and being unable to change it. It is a place you do not have to go if you obey the Gospel.

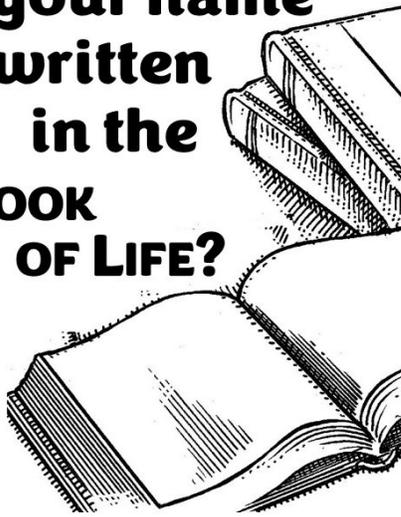
The Judgment Scene

This message is to remind you it would be tragic for you to be lost. Do not trust in the fact you have been raised in religion or around the Church of God all your life. Get your own experience with the Lord, for that is what it is going to take on Judgment Day. Remember, you have the rule over what you do with your soul. God will force no one to serve Him. God gave us the Gospel. We do not have to obey it; we can reject it.

Let us get a picture of the Judgment scene. Revelation 20:11-15 states: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell

delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

**Is your name
written
in the
BOOK
OF LIFE?**



This will all take place at the final Judgment. There are no do-overs. You will not be able to say: "Wait a minute! Give me another chance!" There will be no debating going on concerning the record of our lives. It is all written in the books. Whether ones lived under the old covenant or the new covenant determines which book their lives are written in. There is another book called the "Book of Life." Those who have been born again will have their names written there.

Is your name written in the Book of Life? Do you have an up-to-date experience? You may have repented years ago, but is it still fresh today? If not, then all you have is a profession, and you need to repent and turn back to God. The Scriptures tell us it is possible to have your name removed from the Book of Life. It would be terrible to live all your life in religion, giving, and going to church, and have your name removed from the Book of Life. That could happen if you fool

around and play with sin.

Read the words of Jesus in Revelation 3:3-6: "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." All seven of those letters to the churches end the same: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Counting the Cost

Has the Holy Spirit spoken to you? If so, you need to hear and do something about it. God loves each and every soul. God is against the false religious systems people are bound up in. His desire is and always will be that people miss this awful place called hell.

The song "Have You Counted the Cost?" written by A. J. Hodge, says:

*There's a line that is drawn by
rejecting the Lord,
Where the call of His Spirit is lost,
And you hurry along with the
pleasure-mad throng,
Have you counted, have you counted
the cost?*

*You may barter your hope of
eternity's morn,
For a moment of joy at the most,
For the glitter of sin and the things
it will win,
Have you counted, have you counted
the cost?*

While the door of His mercy is open
to you,
Ere the depth of His love you
exhaust,
Won't you come and be healed,
won't you whisper, I yield,
I have counted, I have counted
the cost.

Have you counted the cost, if your
soul should be lost,

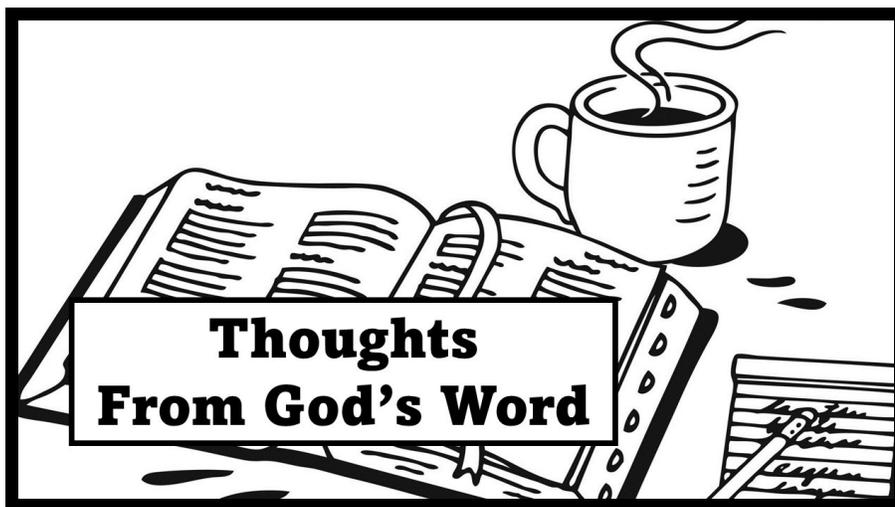
Tho' you gain the whole world for
your own?
Even now it may be that the line you
have crossed,
Have you counted, have you counted
the cost?

I trust you will count the cost.
Your soul is worth more than this
whole world. There is not
enough money in this whole

world that would come up to the
value of your soul. Do not trade
it for something cheap, but turn
your soul over to God. Your soul
is going back to God in the end,
so why not give it back to Him
clean, the way He gave it to you?

(Compact Disc TR-2452)

God has worked out a way where every one of us can miss hell.



"Give us this day our daily
bread."
— Matthew 6:11

As part of the Lord's Prayer, when Jesus taught the disciples how to pray, He said, "Give us us THIS DAY our daily bread." We need strength for this day, this moment, and the situation we are facing now. God has what we need. We just need to ask Him for our daily bread, our daily strength, to triumph in this life.

When you eat, you do not eat for tomorrow; you eat for today, for right now, whether it be breakfast or lunch. You do not think about the meals you will have three days from now. When you pray, pray for strength for

today and now. Do not focus your prayer on strength for an event three months from now. God works in the here and now.

If you take it one day at a time, you will make it to your future. You can look back and say: "I don't know how God did it, but He brought me through one day at a time. It seems like yesterday I was only dreaming of being here."

The key is to go to God daily, just as you go to the table daily. You cannot survive very long without food and proper nutrients to stay healthy. How long has it been since you went to God's banqueting house and gained spiritual strength? God

has a meal prepared for you every day. He wants you to come and "sup" with Him at His table. There is bread of life (the Word of God) prepared for you.

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

— Matthew 6:34

"If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?"

— Luke 11:11

"He brought me to the banquetting house, and his banner over me was love."

— Song of Solomon 2:4

"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."

— Isaiah 55:6

"Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually."

— 1 Chronicles 16:11

Brother Alex Orr

Faithfulness Leads

to Greatness



Brother E. David Stegmeier

The Marriage Vow

Faithful means "to be true, to be constant in affection or allegiance; to be loyal and firm in adherence to promises, oaths, or undertakings." You need to be true to God. I love the church. The church has the message of truth. I am not ashamed of what the church stands for. I look for opportunities to share the doctrines of the Church of God. They make a lot of sense. Faithfulness is a virtue that is not considered as important today as it once was. On the contrary, it is just as important today as it was centuries ago.

In the sacred bond of marriage, faithfulness is not deemed as essential as it was in former years, but it should be. Unfaithfulness starts in the mind. We have to be very careful. We must have the Holy Spirit to filter out any thoughts unbecoming to being a Christian. I have never deliberately looked at pornography. I do not want to look at it. I

am afraid of losing my relationship with God. I have a wonderful wife and a wonderful congregation. I have taught thousands of children, and I do not want to betray them or God.

We must rigorously and diligently discipline ourselves and be careful of what we read. I am very careful because I do not want to bring in thoughts that would trouble my mind. Many husbands and wives are no longer faithful to each other. No matter what the percentage of divorce is, it is too high. Many statistics indicate it is more than 50 percent, but some experts say that is not an accurate rate. The marriage vow says "till death do us part." Divorce is sad for everyone involved.

I taught in the public school system for fifty years, and I saw many sad situations. One day when I was teaching a science class, a girl was crying, so I asked: "Can I help you? Is there something I can help you work out?"

She said: "My parents are di-

vorced. This weekend I have to go spend time with my dad, and the situation is not good between my parents." That is sad.

The marriage vow is beautiful. If you want something to last, you must treat it differently. You must shield and protect your marriage. You should never abuse it or make it common or ordinary. If it ever becomes tarnished, you must lovingly polish it until it gleams like new. It becomes special because you make it so, and it should grow more beautiful and more precious as time goes on.

Many are unfaithful in their commitments to Christ in the Kingdom of God. I have committed my life to the service of God and the work of God. By the grace of God, I want to be faithful. Without a doubt, faithfulness is a quality or virtue needed in this day and age, not only in the institution of marriage, but also in the work of God. Many people are not committed. When something becomes difficult or the

standard is mentioned, they are gone.

The Parable of the Talents

In John 6:67 Jesus said, "Will ye also go away?" Then in verse 68 Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." You have to keep pressing on. Revelation 2:10 says, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; . . . be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." We are tried, but we are not tried as the martyrs or Christ was tried.

When I was growing up, we heard little about the Holocaust, but in recent years, history classes have included units on it. Six million Jews were slaughtered. I believe the leaders of those people were to blame because they did not warn the people, and they did not live as they should have. They did not heed the warnings of Christ; therefore, they brought the judgment of God down upon their people. You should read some writings regarding this and how they had to go into the furnaces and the gas chambers. It is beyond comprehension. Ministers have a tremendous job to warn people to be sure they are where they ought to be and to listen closely to the voice of God.

Jesus said in Matthew 25:14-20: "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 [he was industrious and busy], 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."

I read an article in *The Gospel Trumpeter* magazine that said every congregation should work to gain and to find people for Christ. Many years ago, one minister said, "When something is as important as the message, we all should be soul winners." Soul winning is not just the pastor's job. It is the job of everyone in the congregation to be involved, working with someone, looking for an opportunity to study, and to encourage people. I like to keep looking for possibilities.

"Faithful Over a Few Things"

Jesus continued in Matthew 25:21-30: "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."

I want to focus your attention on verse 21, which states, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things." This verse tells you no matter what you are doing for God, though it might seem trivial and insignificant to you, keep doing it. You should not let down because if you are

faithful in a simple little concept, God is going to give you more responsibilities.

Everyone has a talent. You should use the talent God has given you with one thought in mind, and that is to further the Kingdom of God and to bring glory to Him. Each of us has abilities we should use faithfully in building up the Kingdom of God. Good servants realize their duty to carry out their responsibilities. If you have a responsibility and something comes up, you ought to call the pastor and let him know. People do that at school and at work.

In this lesson, the servant with the five talents gained five more talents. The servant with the two talents gained two more talents. The servant with the one talent said he hid his talent, and consequently he lost it. Each of us should gain. There are only two kinds of people. You are either a saint or a sinner. You are either holy or unholy. You are either a child of God or a child of the devil. You are either faithful or unfaithful.

There are some examples in the Old Testament of faithful men and women: Daniel, Noah, the three Hebrew children, and Joseph were all faithful Bible characters. God wants each of us to use our talents and abilities faithfully for His glory and His interests.

Faithfulness Begins at Home

In the Parable of the Talents, think about this: one man had five talents, one had two, and one had one. Your reward will be based upon how faithful you are in using your gifts for the Lord, not necessarily on how much you have achieved. The more you do for God, the more you will be enabled to do for Him.

Proverbs 20:6 says, "Most men will proclaim every one his

own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?" The Church of God has them. The faithfulness and the godliness of the people brought my mother to the Church of God.

I have four points on faithfulness I want to cover. Faithfulness begins at home with your father, your mother, your children, your brothers and sisters, and your husband or wife. Joseph was faithful to his father. When his father told him to go and check on his brothers and bring back a report of how they were doing, Joseph was faithful. The Bible says Joseph was the son of his father's old age. I believe there was something special about Joseph his father really appreciated. During the many years I taught school, I really appreciated the students I could trust.

Genesis 37:3 says, "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours." Perhaps the treatment of Joseph by his father invited the envy of his brothers. Envy is a terrible thing. Verse 4 reads, "And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him."

Some people have become unfaithful because they have allowed jealousy and envy to come between them and someone in the congregation or another minister. The Bible says in Proverbs 27:4, "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?" God is in control. We must be very careful of how we live. We need to work on it. My greatest enemy in life is me. I want to be where God wants me to be.

Joseph had dreams that intensified the envy of his brothers. Genesis 37:7 reads, "For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold,

your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance [or honor] to my sheaf." His brothers thought, "That will never happen."

Verse 9 continues, "And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me." They understood the meaning, and it only intensified more jealousy and envy. You need to recognize if those things are working on you. The biggest problem a person has in life is self. Be careful of your thoughts, what you say, and your body language.

Faithfulness in Temptations

Acts 7:9 states, "And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him." Romans 8:31 tells us, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" God was with Joseph. Joseph's brothers hated him so much they planned an evil plot against him and caused their father to grieve. Genesis 37:28 says, "Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt." What a sad picture!

Joseph was faithful to his brethren and his parents. Second, he was faithful in the time of temptation. Young men have many temptations. In Egypt, he was sold as a slave to Potiphar, a captain in Pharaoh's army. Joseph was faithful in Potiphar's house. The Bible lets us know he was a very handsome young man. Potiphar's wife eyed him every day when he went into Potiphar's house for business. If he had gone in there to subject himself to temptation, I believe he would have fallen. However,

he was there for one reason, and that was for business. If you go where you should not be, you are going to get into trouble.

One day in Potiphar's house, Potiphar's wife caught him and took his garment. She laid up his garment and tried to blackmail him. We should receive comfort from this Scripture. Every temptation is common to man. Everyone has temptations. Even Jesus had temptations along these lines. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able [and beyond your ability to cope with it]; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

God controls the intensity of your temptations. He knows how much you can bear. As long as you are where you should be, God will not allow a temptation to come on you too strong for you to handle. However, you must never expose yourself to a temptation unnecessarily. You should not go somewhere you know you should not be and say, "I can handle it." A person who has been delivered from alcohol should stay out of a beer joint. He would have no business being there.

Faithfulness in Trials

A Christian is faithful in his home and in his environment. He is also faithful in the hour of temptation. My third point is, he is faithful in trials. Joseph was put into prison unfairly. Genesis 39:20-23 states: "And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison. But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

"And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper." All those words are so profound.

The butler and the baker told Joseph about a dream they each had, and Joseph interpreted each man's dream. Each man's experience happened exactly as Joseph had interpreted. The baker was executed, and the butler was restored to his position. Joseph asked the butler to mention him to the king because he had been falsely accused and put in prison. However, the butler forgot about Joseph.

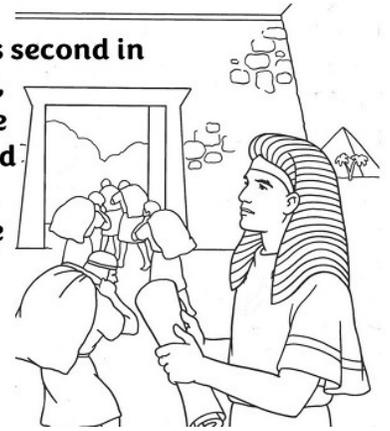
It came to pass at the end of two full years Pharaoh had two dreams. Pharaoh dreamed about the seven fat cows and the seven lean cows. Those thin cattle ate the fat cattle, yet they remained thin. Then he dreamed about seven healthy ears of corn and seven that were not so healthy. Pharaoh wondered, "What can this mean?" The butler said: "Oh, there was a man in the prison who interpreted my dream. You should ask him."

Joseph was patient. He did not get out of sorts or become bitter. The Bible lets us know Joseph shaved and changed his clothes in preparation to go before Pharaoh. Luke 21:19 says, "In your patience possess ye your souls."

Faithfulness in Prominence

The fourth point is, Joseph was faithful on the throne. Genesis 41:38 reads, "And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we

Joseph was second in command, but because he remained HUMBLE, he was able to be used of God.



find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" Faithfulness leads to greatness. Verse 40 states, "Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled." Joseph was second in command, but in his exaltation, he remained humble and able to be used by God. That is an important point.

Joseph was a very kind, loving man, but he was going to prove his brothers. When they first came to Egypt, he spoke very roughly to them, and they were horrified. Their consciences smote them, and they remembered the way they had treated their younger brother. Eventually, Joseph made his identity known to his brothers. Every time I get to Chapter 45 of Genesis, I cry when I think of how Joseph so tenderly talked to his brothers and said, "I am Joseph your brother" (verse 4). They could hardly believe it!

Genesis 46:29 says, "And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and [Joseph] presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while." What a reunion! You need to be faithful because in your faithfulness, God is going to bless you with greater and more responsibilities. Always stay humble and ask God to help all your actions be for the glory of God and the upbuilding of His cause and kingdom.

Genesis 50:20 reads, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." The Bible is so profound and so awesome. No other book is like the Bible. Joseph was a boy, about seventeen years of age, when he was sold into slavery. I do not know how old he was when he became a leader in Egypt, but it led to his greatness. He was an example of faithfulness.

Faithfulness starts at home. Sometimes, the hardest place to draw on grace is at home. Have you ever found that to be true? Children may not be ready to

leave to go somewhere when they are supposed to be. The car may not start or you might have a flat tire or something else may happen in the house. Sometimes things happen and you may let down your guard and say something and you need to go back and say, "I'm sorry I said that." We must be faithful.

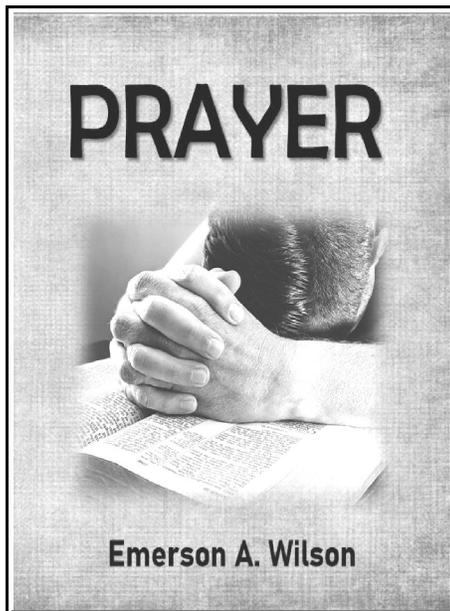
Joseph was faithful in Potiphar's house in temptation and faithful in prison, even when the situation seemed hopeless. We are in those places sometimes, but stay right in there and keep the faith. Do not compromise. When all seems hopeless, be faithful. If God gives you a posi-

tion in the church, you need to stay humble. Joseph was faithful on the throne, in the place of prominence. You need to be careful of pride and power. Some people like power, and that is wrong.

Here are the four points summarized. First, you must be faithful at home, even in difficult surroundings. Second, you must be faithful in the temptations. Third, you must be faithful in the trials when the conditions seem hopeless. Fourth, be faithful in the place of prominence and power.

(Compact Disc TR-1653)

BOOK REPRINT



Prayer

by Emerson A. Wilson

Prayer is the Christian's greatest weapon, and the enemy does not want us to use it. That is because he knows the great power there is in prayer. Every great move of God among His people came about because of effectual, fervent prayers of righteous men and women!

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See book excerpt on page 24.

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ESPECIALLY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Who Is Unclean?



I would like to draw your attention to a serious disease in the Bible called "leprosy." There are several stories about leprosy in the Bible. One example is the story of Jesus and a leper, which is found in three of the Gospels. Luke 5:12 says, "And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

It is thought that today's leprosy may not be exactly the same as the leprosy mentioned in the Bible. For instance, in Bible times, if someone had ringworm, psoriasis, eczema, or many other different skin conditions, it was determined he might have leprosy. He would need to quarantine for a set amount of time to make sure.

Leprosy has been referred to as the oldest recorded disease. In Bible times, it was very contagious, but how it spread was not known. A Bible dictionary says it often began with spots on the eyelids and on the palms of the hands. In time, a leper would get lumps all over his body. His hair and nails would fall out. Bald spots would appear on his head, and parts of his eyebrows would disappear. The cartilage on his nose would shrink, causing facial disfigurement. His voice would become hoarse because of the sores on his vocal cords. It was

said that the voice of a leper sounded like a growling dog.

The disease ate away at the bones and at the tissue in between the bones. When that happened, the fingers and toes would curl in and even fall off because of the disintegration going on inside from the disease. The leper became numb and lost feeling. Some of the lepers' colonies in poor countries have been very unsanitary. There have been occasions when, during the night, rats and vermin ate part of the lepers' fingers, but the lepers could not feel it.

In the Bible, God gave detailed instructions on how to deal with leprosy. If someone was thought to have leprosy, he was to go to the priest and be examined. If the priest determined it was leprosy, the Old Testament Law said he had to always wear torn clothes, let his hair hang loose, and keep his upper lip covered (resembling wearing a mask). The leper could not live with his family but had to live in a leper colony outside the camp. He was to wear bells on his clothes, alerting people when he was coming. If he saw another Israelite, he had to yell: "Unclean! Unclean!" He was to remain six feet away from all other humans who did not have leprosy, including his family, and if the wind was blowing, he was to be 150 feet away.

Leprosy was considered in-

curable. If someone had this disease, he was unclean for the rest of his life unless examined by the priest and determined to be healed or misdiagnosed. If a person touched a leper, he had to quarantine until it was determined that he was not infected.

To contract leprosy in medieval times was equivalent to receiving a death sentence. Funerals were held for lepers because they were considered dead to their families. Leprosy was a very serious and terrible disease. It ostracized and separated ones from others.

Luke 5:12 says this man was "full of leprosy"; he had obvious symptoms. Matthew 8:1 says great multitudes were following Jesus. We do not know for sure, but I can imagine when Jesus came close to this leper, there was no longer a great multitude closely following Him. No doubt, this leper did not smell very good because the flesh was decaying. He was sick and perhaps unable to care for himself. He could not live with his family. Who was there to help him? He was an outcast from society.

One commentary says rabbis would throw stones at the lepers to keep them away. This man who approached Jesus was not supposed to be mingling with society, and if any of the teachers saw him, they might have thrown stones at him. If the leper was following the Law, as Jesus

approached, he would have called out: "Unclean! Unclean!"

What did Jesus do? Jesus could have, with one word, healed the leper. In Matthew 8:16 we read that Jesus "cast out the spirits with his word." He *spoke* the world into existence. However, when this leper came, Jesus did not speak a word of healing. Matthew 8:3 says, "And Jesus put forth his hand, and *touched* him." Mark 1:41 states, "And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and *touched* him." Luke 5:13 says, "And he put forth his hand, and *touched* him."

Compassion caused Jesus to do more than just speak. Everyone else was avoiding the leper. Some may have been throwing stones at him. To have spoken to the leper would have been more than what others did, but Jesus reached out and *touched* the leper, something completely unheard of in this culture.

What did this interaction do for the leper? It changed his life and healed him. I can imagine Jesus, with love and compassion, putting forth His hand and touching the leper, not with one finger, but with His entire hand. It was as if Jesus said: "You are unclean and an outcast. No one wants anything to do with you, but I love you. I care about you."

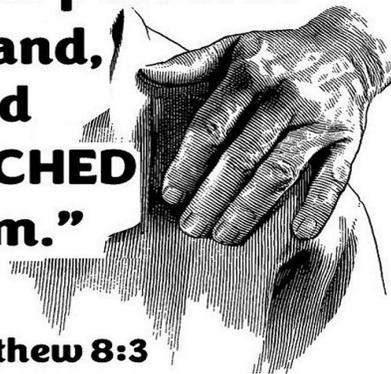
You may not know of anyone who has the literal disease of leprosy, but consider a spiritual application. Who might be considered "unclean"? Maybe someone who is a misfit and does not fit in with others. They are odd or quirky. If you hang out with them, people will think you are odd; so you may decide to stay away from them. Maybe they smell bad or are dirty, and you do not want to get close to them.

Sometimes people come to the church services, and they look rough or are very different.

How many people avoid welcoming visitors because of this?

What about people who have a negative attitude or a bad reputation? Although, they might be difficult to be around for very long, should you completely avoid them? Some may say: "When they get a better attitude or get their life straightened out, then I will talk to them. Right now, they are unclean! Unclean!" Consider what would a kind word mean to such a person?

**"Jesus put forth
his hand,
and
TOUCHED
him."**



— **Matthew 8:3**

Although the leper was dirty, unclean, and sick, he desperately needed Jesus' hand of compassion. Think about someone who has made fun of you or mistreated you. It is tempting to think, "If he wants to treat me that way, two can play that game." Is he now "unclean," someone to be avoided and looked down on?

There will always be some people who are harder to reach out to, touch, or have a kind word for than others. How should you treat people to whom you might apply the word "unclean" to? Unclean is such a harsh word, and while we might not use this actual word, are our actions towards others similar to the Jews who would have nothing to do with the "unclean"? God has worked with me on this. This kind of behavior can work on all of us, but God will check us if we let Him.

In Mark 7:24 we read Jesus traveled to the region of Tyre

and Sidon. This was an area full of people who were considered "unclean." It was outside the Promised Land. It was a country full of heathens and pagans, people who were bitter enemies of Israel. The Jews had nothing good to say about these people. They were at enmity with each other. Jesus intentionally walked miles out of His way because He knew someone was there with a need. He walked thirty to fifty miles to an area considered by the Jews to be unclean. There was a woman whose daughter had an unclean spirit, and she needed help. Look at how far Jesus went out of His way for this woman who was not a Jew.

Are you willing to go out of your way for a person who differs from you? It is easy to only see the one or two things that make them different. You could feel they are an enemy for some reason. Jesus made

time for a woman who was an enemy of the Jews. The devil can put these thoughts in your mind: "They have talked about you. They have said this and done that. They have mistreated you; so just avoid them! Unclean! Unclean!"

There may be someone sitting all by themselves. Sometimes I see that in youth groups. It might be you. You may feel ostracized, thinking, "Nobody is reaching out to me." Sometimes, it may be your turn to reach out. We cannot all sit there hoping someone reaches out. What about the person who is awkward and always says the wrong thing? Is there a person who continually irritates you? You may think: "Unclean! Unclean! He drives me crazy. I cannot be around him." How do you treat someone who is not saved, the person who makes fun of you, or the one who seems to never stop talking?

Sometimes, we might look in the mirror and remember that we have had times when we might have been considered by others to be "unclean"! There were times when we might have irritated others, made fun of people, forgotten deodorant, been awkward, and said the wrong things. I have been mean to others. In my life, there have been times when I might have been considered "unclean" because of such behaviors. However, there were people in my life who reached out to me with a hand of compassion and said: "I love you. I care about you. What can I do to help you?"

What a challenge to read this verse about Jesus' interaction with the leper. He did not just touch him with a finger or just speak a few words to him, but

Jesus reached out with His entire hand to someone who was considered unclean, whom everyone else was avoiding. God wants to help us, showing us areas we need to work on. Can we agree with the song that says, "Make me more like You, Jesus"? Is there anyone whom we are not willing to reach out to as we should?

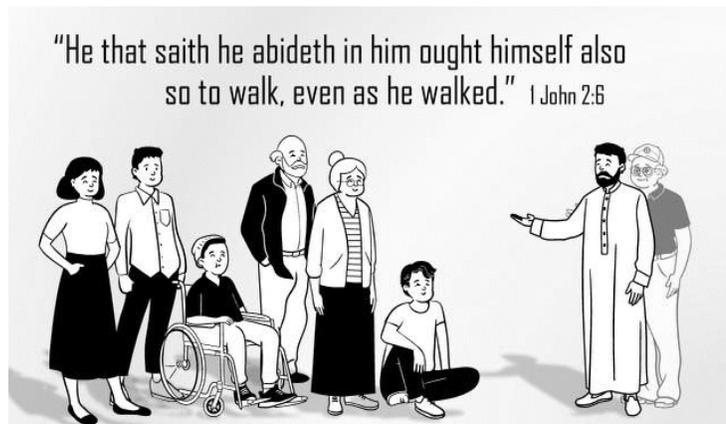
Jesus ate with sinners, touched lepers, and actually talked to a disgraced woman at the well. It was prohibited for teachers or rabbis to speak with women, especially this woman. She had been married five times, and the man she was with was not her husband. Yet, Jesus took the time to talk with her at the well and helped her find the true water.

Jesus asked a tax collector,

someone with a hated profession, because they usually were stealing from the people, to be one of His disciples. Do we pray, "Make me more like You, Jesus"? When Jesus reached out and spent time with sinners, He was not putting His stamp of approval on their sins or on their behaviors, but He was showing them love.

Are you avoiding certain people? Maybe it is not intentional, but it could be necessary to let God search your heart. This is something we all can work on. There are people all around us who need a touch, a word of appreciation, a smile, or some time spent with them. It very well may change their life.

Sister Sheri Strelecky



The phrase, "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery" means that the greatest compliment you can offer another person is to try to act, speak, dress, or resemble them in some manner. It shows that you admire the person whom you are attempting to imitate enough to want to be like them. As Christians, we are called to be imitators of Christ. If we truly admire Him, our supreme desire should be to resemble Christ in our speech and in our conduct.

The Bible lets us know that the disciples of Jesus were first called "Christians" in the Syrian city of Antioch (Acts 11:26). At this time, the word was intended to be an insult or derogatory nickname, but it stuck. Today many people around the world wear the

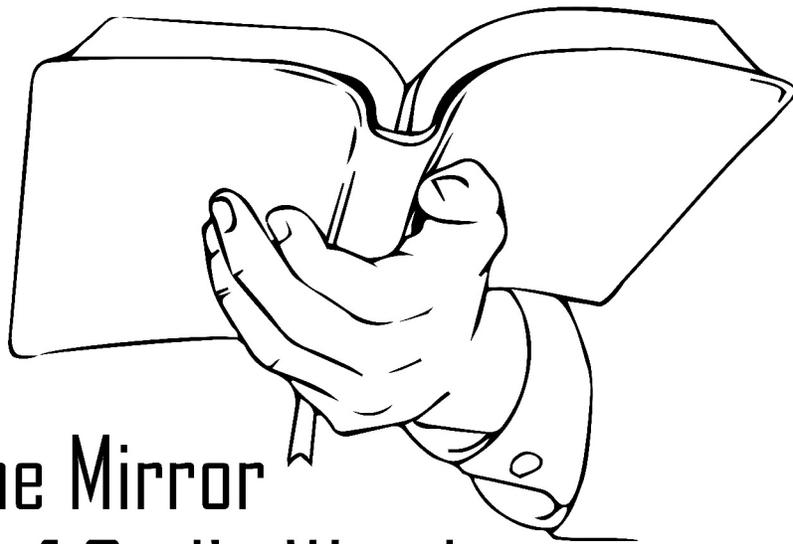
title proudly. However, do we really understand what it means to say, "I am a Christian"?

The word *Christian* means "follower of Christ." The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." The word translated in this Scripture as *followers* means "to imitate or to become." In other words, when we say that we are a Christian, our words and actions should imitate those of Christ's.

Jesus' example is so wonderfully portrayed for us in Scripture. We read of His compassion when He fed and healed multitudes. We see His humility when He washed the disciples' feet. He displayed forgiveness when He prayed, "Father, forgive them," while hanging on the Cross. All these and more are wonderful attributes that we need to incorporate into our lives.

As a father, I receive great joy when people say my one-year-old son looks like me. Ones have said, "There is no denying you are his father." His looks were none of his own choosing, but lately, he has been trying to imitate me. He has noticed me taking deep sighs and things of that nature, and he mimics me. He watches me shave and fix my hair, and he wants to do those things too. It pleases me to see him grow and want to be like me. God is the same way. He wants His children to imitate Him. He receives great joy when we properly resemble His heart and mind. I wonder, is there any mistaking who your Father is?

Brother T. J. Foster



The Mirror of God's Word

Brother Allen Borders

The Desired Reflection

The Word of God is like a mirror. The definition of *mirror* is "a polished or smooth surface (as of glass) that forms images by reflection; something that gives a true representation; an exemplary model." A mirror is made by taking hot silver or aluminum and putting it on a cooler glass. A mirror portrays a reflection of what is in front of it. The most common use of a mirror is to check our own reflection. Mirrors are necessary so we can look presentable before going out into the public.

When you see your reflection in the mirror, you do not get mad at the mirror. You realize the mirror is only reflecting the object standing in front of it. You may be disgusted with what you see, but you work on the object, not the mirror. The mirror may have a smudge or a splatter on it that needs cleaned, but you still work on yourself. You rarely leave the mirror until you achieve the desired reflection. As you go through your day, you may recheck the mirror several times. It is natural to want to look

good and make sure things look the way you intend them to look. If something is not right, you correct it.

There is a correlation to a mirror mentioned in God's Word. James 1:22-24 says: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." This verse refers to one who hears the Word, but does not put on the Word in his life.

God is faithful to hold up the mirror of His Word to show you if there is a problem and you need to measure up. However, instead of doing something about it, many walk away from the mirror and forget what they saw. God's Word will shine a spotlight on the problem areas of your life. It is foolish to look the other way and close your eyes as if you see nothing wrong.

The job of the watchman on the wall is to let people know what the dangers are on the out-

side. People who are standing on the inside of the wall may not see any problem. That is because they are only seeing the wall. It compares to standing in front of the mirror with your hands over your face. Many do not want to see the problem, or they do not want the watchman pointing out their problem. They do not want to look in the mirror of God's Word because they do not want to be responsible. We are all responsible! If God's Word shines a spotlight on a problem area in your life, and you look the other way, you are brushing away God's mercy and faithfulness.

God's Word Illuminates

If you were to walk up to a mirror and see a glob of ketchup on your face, and you had no idea it was there, you were fine until you saw it. You did not know it was there. However, once the mirror plainly showed your true reflection, what would you do about it? Would you get mad at the mirror and say: "That stupid mirror is picking on me. Why is it always showing me my faults?" Or would you say, "Can you really expect me to stay clean?" Would you blame it on someone else? "It is not my fault ketchup is there. I did not put it there." Would you pretend you did not see it? Would you try to cover it up with something? Or would you take care of the problem?

Some responses I just mentioned are the exact responses and reactions ones have when they look in the mirror of God's Word. When the mirror of God's Word illuminates a spot or a blemish in their life, they get mad at God, the church, or the pastor. The problem is not God, the church, or the pastor. The problem is the reflection they see in the mirror.

My dad told me many times, "Son, you need to go and look in

When you see your reflection in the mirror, you do not get mad at the mirror.



the mirror to see where your problem is." You can run from your problems, but guess where your problems are? They are in the car with you. When you pull the little mirror down from the visor, the person looking you in the eye is your problem. You may want to run away across the country, but you will take your problem with you. Running will not do you any good. You must face your problem.

It does no good to get mad at the reflection. Someone may say, "The pastor is picking on me," which is like saying, "The mirror has it out for me." Is that not silly? Hebrews 13:17 reads, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

A true pastor is not trying to hurt anyone or make anyone feel bad. He grieves and prays for those he sees are making a grievous error in judgment. When he sees someone making a terrible mistake, he prays God will give him wisdom and an opportunity to say the right words to help that one avoid the cliff he is about to fall over. He prays for God to open the door and help him step through in a way it is not offensive and would cause that one to walk away. A pastor is concerned and does not want to hurt anyone, even as a shepherd would never want to harm his sheep. He wants to help them

in a way they will respond to positively.

A True Pastor

A pastor is concerned when he sees ones in the congregation make choices without going to him for counsel. If you are getting ready to make a really big choice, it is important to get the pastor's counsel. Sometimes people do not go to the pastor because they do not want to hear what he has to say. If you do not want to hear what the pastor has to say, you probably already know deep down what you are doing is wrong. I witnessed someone asking a minister a question. The answer he received was not what he wanted to hear; so he immediately turned off the answer. I was shocked and wondered to myself why he asked the question if he did not want the answer. It was not the answer he wanted to hear.

I tell my children, if I stop what I am doing to tell you something I think is important and I am concerned about, it means something. If your pastor calls you and says, "I am concerned about this," it must be important. However, many people think he is getting into their business. A true pastor does not have enough free time to dig into your business. The pastor is busy, but he is still burdened for you. He is watching for your soul.

Some feel the pastor is preaching at them. The truth is, God knows who is going to be in each service before the pastor starts studying. God knows what the needs are in the congregation. When you feel the message is aimed at you, it is. God gives the message for the hour. He wants to see each one succeed. God walks up and down each aisle and puts the message in

your lap, so to speak.

A woman was brought to Jesus in John, Chapter 8, who was caught in the act of adultery. Jesus told her something profound. John 8:10-11 reads: "When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

Jesus did not tell the woman to go and do the best she could or to go and try not to get caught the next time. He also said nothing about waiting for a millennium. Jesus gave her a command to "go, and sin no more." How unjust would it be to give a command to do something if it was impossible? Some people look in the mirror of God's Word and ask, "How can I stay clean in this sin-filled world?" Titus 2:12 states, "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." When God holds up the mirror of His Word and you see you are not clean, He expects you to get clean and stay clean. There are no excuses.

The "Blame Game"

As parents, we have expectations for our children. Sometimes our children think up all kinds of excuses, but as parents, we invalidate them. Parents see what their children are doing. They may do things right in front of their parents and act as if their parents cannot see them. When you do things in front of God and act as if He cannot see, you will start to make excuses. God knows what is going on. Nothing is hidden from Him. If the mirror shows an imperfection, a blemish, or a place of uncleanness, fix it and clean it up.

Some like to play the "blame

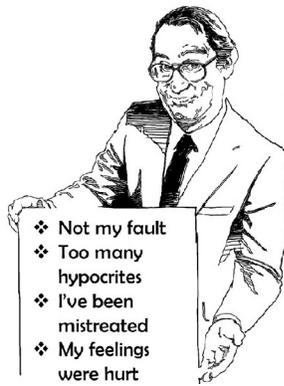
game." They look in the mirror and say, "It is not my fault." If you see your physical reflection in the mirror and there is a problem, you are going to fix it, even if it is not your fault. If someone drops a bowl of soup and it splatters all over you, you are going to wipe it off. You will not leave it there and say: "I did not do it. It was not my fault."

Some people say they cannot go to church because there are too many hypocrites. The hypocrite gets blamed for many things. Ones say they cannot get saved because of all the hypocrites. That is like saying, "I would go to the store and buy a good meal, but there are too many out-of-date products in that store." Check the dates and do not buy outdated products. One brother said, "I would much rather go to church with hypocrites than end up in hell with them."

Some blame the way someone treated them for their unforgiveness, bitterness, or hatred. Others say, "I cannot serve God because of the way so-and-so treated me," or "I do not want to go back to church because of the way someone spoke to me."

We need to be careful how we talk to others. Some have left good congregations because of what people have said to them. Many souls have been hindered because some people could not control their tongues. Someone may say, "Well, I was just joking." Your joking might hinder a soul. I would rather be no fun than have people get their feelings hurt. I never want to hinder a soul because I was joking around.

We should never make fun of anyone. It is not appropriate. Young people should never make fun of other young people, hurting them and treating them so badly they do not want to come around. If you see someone new, you should greet them: "Oh,



Are you playing the "Blame Game"?

it is good to have you! Come back and see us again!" That is a wonderful example and the way it is supposed to be.

Ignoring the Message of God

If you are on the receiving end of being made fun of, do not allow the devil to use that and say: "Well, I was mistreated. I cannot come to church anymore." You need to stand up against the devil. The devil will use every tool in his belt to discourage you. Peer pressure and being made fun of should not happen, but when they do, do not allow the devil to use them as a tool against you. Second Corinthians 2:11 says, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." Be aware of Satan's devices.

No matter what caused the blemish, it must be removed for you to be pleasing in God's eyes. Placing blame is a waste of time and a waste of energy. All of us have had bad things happen. We may have had bad things done to us by good people who did not mean to hurt us. The devil could use that to hinder us. There have been times I was hurt by people I had great confidence in. The devil will try to get you to have an attitude of unforgiveness if you are not careful. Turn those things over to God, and stop the devil in his tracks.

There are those who look in the mirror and pretend they see nothing wrong. Hebrews 4:13

says, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Just because you pretend there is nothing showing in the mirror does not make it so. Your world of make-believe is just that—a world of make-believe. You can pretend you do not see the spot, but it is still there.

God is faithful, and through the mirror of His Word, He will show you things in your life that need corrected. David said in Psalm 139:23, "Search me, O God." The devil may be beating on you about something. If you have been praying and asking God to show you any wrong in your life, if there is a need, God will show it to you. God will not make you wait for six months before He shows you a need. That would not be fair. God is a fair, just, and loving God. He will not mislead you and say: "You have prayed and toiled over this for many months now. I will go ahead and tell you what you did wrong." If there are things in your life that need corrected, He will show you. If you really want to live for God and you are praying and asking God for guidance, wisdom, and direction, He will be faithful to you.

As an ostrich buries his head in the sand, ignoring the message God sends your way will only hurt you. Pretending nothing is wrong and closing your eyes will not deaden the blow one bit. Pretending you do not have needs in your life when the mirror of God's Word has pointed them out is flirting with danger. God is patient and merciful, but He will only put up with being ignored for so long. Parents dislike being ignored by their children. We cannot ignore God. He will not tolerate that.

When God shows you a need and you act as though you do not care or it does not matter, you

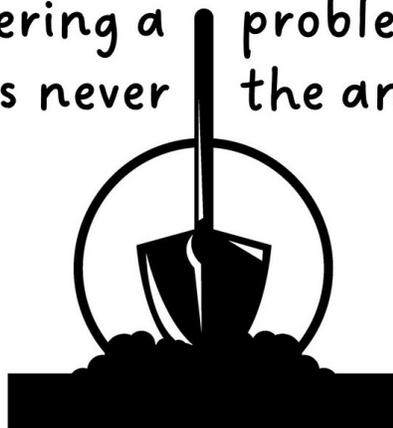
are ignoring God. Second Thessalonians 2:11 says, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." That is a scary thought.

Are You Covering Up Something?

There are those who will try to cover up their blemish, but it never works out very well. The type of "cover" on your bed is good. Any other type is bad. Covering something up is always a bad thing. Proverbs 28:13 says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Covering a problem is never the answer. It always comes to light in time. Matthew 10:26-27 says: "Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops."

In the physical world, there are covers put on products to fix them so they will sell. In the end, the truth always comes out. You may have a bigger problem covering up something than if you fixed it properly in the first place. An old trick used years ago by dishonest car salesmen was to

Covering a problem is never the answer.



put bananas in the oil. When someone started up the car, it would run nice and smooth. There would be no knocking noise in the engine until the bananas rotted. Then the engine would blow up, but not before they sold the car. That is a fix, or a cover, and it is deceitful.

Covering problems always leads to bigger problems later. When God's Word holds up a mirror and says there is a problem, if you try to cover it up, it will lead to a bigger problem later. If you let a little seed of anger, bitterness, hatred, or fleshly desire start to grow and you cover it up, it will quickly get out of control. You may hide it from your co-workers, your family, your church family, and even your pastor, but you cannot hide it from God.

The best thing to do is to take care of the problem as soon as

as the mirror of God's Word identifies it. Sometimes, you may not know there is a problem until God's Word shows you. Take care of it right away while it is small. In God's eyes, it does not matter if the mirror of God's Word shows you a large blemish or a small blemish. It does not matter how or why the blemish appeared or who caused it to appear. It only matters what you do about it.

First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Again, Proverbs 28:13 says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." After you confess and forsake sin, you must do what Jesus commanded the woman, "Go, and sin no more."

Go back to the mirror of God's Word often and pray for God to reveal any need you may have. Our reflection should not be just our reflection, but it should be a reflection of Jesus Christ. Has God shown you anything in your life? Do not linger. Do not walk away. Do not blame it on someone else. Do not look for a reason. Fix it with the help of God.

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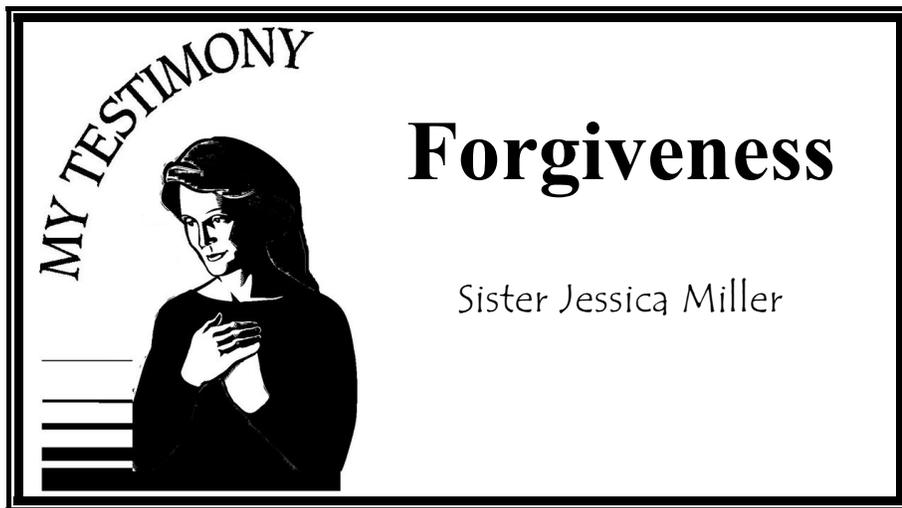
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your experience with God, but about whom you were.

In Catholicism, you have godparents, and my grandfather was my godfather. I remember a year after my father passed away, he asked me, "Do you want to have your communion and confirmation?" I was ten at the time. I loved my grandfather. He was in the Marines when he was younger, and he was called "Mad Red" in the Marines. He had a fiery temper, red hair, and he was tough. This was my mother's father, so you can imagine where some of her toughness came from. I looked over at my grandfather and said, "No." I did not believe in God.

I did not believe in Heaven, hell, the devil, or God. I did not believe in any of it because I wondered why God would take my father and put me in a home I hated, a home that was abusive, fearful, and dangerous. Why would God do this to me? I felt very strongly. My father did not die of something he did to himself. So I was hard and bitter.

In high school, I called myself a "punk kid." I dared to be different. I had pink hair and a nose ring. I was bound and determined to be different; I was not following the norm. This was in New York, and it was common for ones to have piercings, colored hair, and alternative lifestyles. We are seeing it more and more throughout the world. Whenever you see someone like that, do not brush them off and say, "You are just weird." Do not do that to them because they may be looking for something. I was looking for something, and I am really grateful I found it. Some people snubbed their nose at me, but I did not care.

At this time in my life, I was hard, bitter, angry, and dealing with a great deal of depression. Also, I was watching my brother who had a strong drug addiction. I would go into the city

I am Sister Jessica Miller, but I like to go by Jess. My husband is the pastor at the Church of God in Medina, Ohio. We have been married for twenty-two years, and we have seven wonderful children whom I dearly love. This is my testimony, and it includes forgiveness. Jesus said in Matthew 6:14-15: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

I am originally from New York. I was born on Long Island. I am glad to say, I do not have many memories from there. I lived there until I was three years old when my mother's biological sister took me in. I do not remember much, but it was not great, which is why she became my guardian. She raised me through difficult times, and she is still my mom. I moved from Long Island to Queens, and I was raised there until I was seventeen years old.

When I was taken in by my aunt and her husband, it went well. It was about five years of normalcy. I was a daddy's girl, and our relationship was really close. He was a Puerto Rican, so we called him "Poppy," and I was "Poppy's girl." I adored him, and we were so close. When I was nine years old, he was sitting in his car (he did not bring his work

home) after he had gotten a haircut. He called my mom to say: "I am coming home. I am just looking over some paperwork." A truck came off the highway and ran right into him. He was dead instantly. Thank the Lord, he was not in any pain. He would have been a vegetable had he lived.

My world came crashing down. My mom grieved hard. Unfortunately, we did not have a great relationship; so from the beginning it was hard. As I was living there, I began to endure physical, mental, verbal, and emotional abuse. The emotional abuse was really hard. I lived in fear for a long time. I had confusion, which quickly became anger. I was bitter, harsh, and I had no trust. My life was going downhill fast.

When I was in fifth grade, my language became bad. I was lying and getting myself into trouble. It got worse in junior high and high school. I had a lot of anger inside me. I am from a Catholic family (more Catholic by name). I love and appreciate my family dearly, but they were tough. They were loud and proud. I had a very tough upbringing. My mom always called it "tough love." No one in this world gave it as hard as my mom did. When it came to God, my family would say: "You are Irish. You are Catholic. You are a Donnelly." It was not about

with him. I am thankful for that experience because it did not lead me down the same path. Sometimes you can go down that path when you are faced with what I was faced with. I would go into the city with my brother and work with him, being a support to him as he went to clinics to get help. He had to go to a drug rehabilitation center where he was forced to stay or go to jail. He would only get visitations once a month.

There were kids in those clinics who were anywhere from sixteen to about twenty-four years old. They were young, and they could only see their families, if their families visited them, once a month. We would go every time to see my brother. This was in Manhattan, Westchester, or in the Bronx. The Bronx is a difficult place. Seeing all those young people in there who were facing anger and their own demons, getting involved in what they thought was a solution for their lives, opened my eyes so much.

Seeing my brother go through this caused me to go through some serious depression. I went to the lowest you can go and still live. I thought to myself, "I have to do better." I am so thankful my father always told me, "Jess, be the best person you can be." With his love and understanding and my grandmother's sweetness, I had a desire to be the best person I could be.

From seventeen to nineteen years of age, I went to counseling in the city every Monday. While other people were out there being young and carefree, I was baring my soul. I did not want to abuse my children. I did not want to put a family through pain. I wanted to fix myself, and I was looking for help. When I was looking, I was asked by a friend:

"Hey, why don't you come hang out with us? I have some military friends you can hang out with." I thought it sounded great. I liked to hang out and have fun. I just did not want anyone to talk to me about God or politics.

I met Mike (who later became my husband) at that time. As I think back, if I had not had the life I had, if I had grown up on Long Island, there is no way I would have ever met Mike. I am not quite sure how I would have come to know God or the Church of God. God has a way. He can do anything He wants to do. God directed my life. I went to a high school forty-five minutes by bus because I did not want to be in a bad area or hang out with the

I wondered, "How could there be a God who would hurt me this way?"

wrong crowd. I wanted to go to a better high school. Mike and I did not get along at first. He said, "Who is this loud, feisty woman?" I did not have pink hair at that time. I was changing and toning it down a bit. We worked through it and became friends.

Mike questioned me, "How could you not believe in God?" He grew up as a pastor's kid, and even though he was not serving God at the time, he had a respect for God. He could not understand where I was coming from. I explained to him, "How could there be a God who would hurt me this way?" God knew what He was doing, and He was also working in Mike's life to help others.

Mike said to me: "Whatever you were facing or whatever you went through made you the person you are today. Everyone has a time to go, and that was the time for your father to go. Also, you do not know the driver in the other vehicle. Maybe this was a

way for him to see God." He brought love, understanding, and calmness!

I did not know calm. No one around me was calm, and I fell in love with that. I was so grateful Mike fell in love with me too. When your biological parent does not want you, and then the parent who raises you is abusive, you are faced with thoughts such as "You are not good enough" and "You are unlovable." Whenever there is a low time in my life, the devil wants to come in and say: "You are not loved. You are not good enough." That is not true, but the feelings are so real. Parents need to be so careful. Listen and show love. It helps. When someone does not get love, it is hard.

I went to Michigan to meet Mike's family and make wedding preparations.

We were going to get married in Michigan where Mike was from. Mike was living in New Jersey, and I was still in New York. So we were traveling great distances to see each other by train and by bus. I met his family, and they were so sweet to me.

I had no confidence in pastors. The Pope came into town every year when I was growing up, and I thought: "Who is this guy everyone is worshipping? He is just a man." My trust levels were very low, and I also thought, "Pastors are out to make money; they are scam artists." Remember, I was a punk and I was mean.

My future father-in-law was a pastor, and I wanted to get along with him. I told him: "Listen, we really do not need to talk about God. Let us leave God out of it." We were in Michigan in April, and they had a snow day; so we talked about God. I asked many questions. Mike's parents were so sweet and so loving.

I remember Mike's dad going through the whole genealogy of the Bible. When I was growing up, the only story I knew was Noah's Ark from a coloring book. I knew there was an ark with animals and Noah. Mike's dad went through all of this with me, who Paul and Abraham were, but he lost me. Mike's mom looked at me and asked, "When you do something good, how do you feel?"

I said, "I feel good."

Then she asked, "When you do something wrong, how do you feel?"

And I said: "I feel terrible. I cannot sleep at night."

She said, "That is God." That was all I needed! Out of everything I heard, that was what I needed to hear.

Mike's mom gave me my first Bible when I was twenty years old. I also had Mike's Bible because it had a really good concordance and dictionary in it. I had an actual dictionary too because learning the "thee's" and "thou's" was tricky starting off. I was excited! I was like a sponge. I took it on the subway with me in New York, and I was not afraid. I was so grateful!

By the time Mike and I were married in August (it was a nine-month engagement), I was already cleaning my mouth up. I wanted to be careful around family. God was working with me about my words and what I was saying. A few weeks after we got married, I started talking to Mike's mom about salvation, and she told me elementary, basic thoughts that seemed too easy. I got on my knees at about ten thirty at night in the middle of September. (I was not quite twenty-one years old because my birthday is at the end of September.)

I had never prayed to God before. Never in my lowest times did I say, "Dear God . . ."

He was the last One I wanted to go to at that time. Even when I was reading my Bible, I was getting to know God, but I never prayed. So my first prayer to God was that night when I got on my knees. I said, "Dear Lord," then I thought, "This is weird when you cannot see a face."

I said: "I want to do this. I want to better my life!" I am stubborn, so it took three times in a couple of minutes. I asked for forgiveness, and I said: "Lord, I will do anything You want me to do as long as I can have peace in my life." I wanted peace, and God has given me that, and I am so grateful.

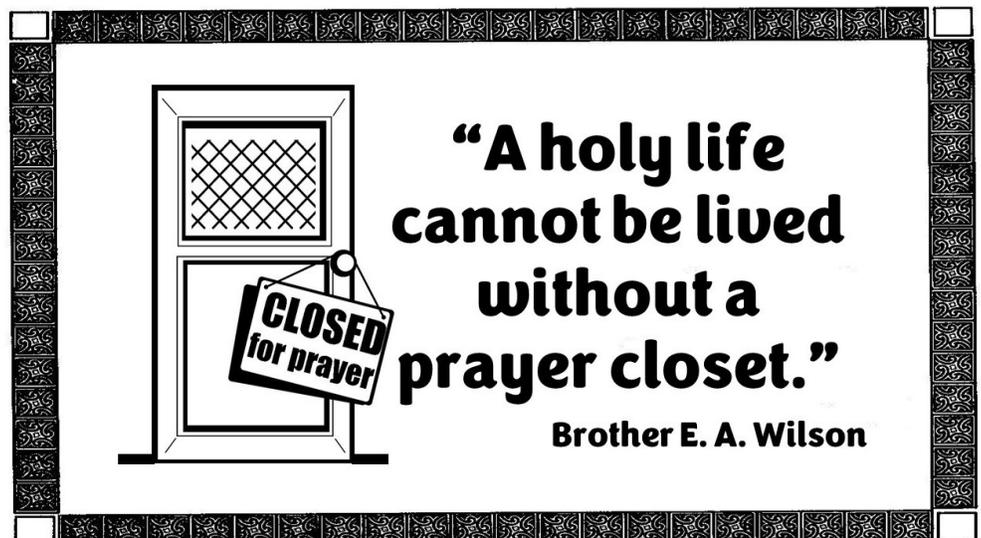
When I got up from my knees, there were no fireworks. Over the years, I have gone to my knees plenty of times saying: "Lord, help me"; "Lord, forgive me"; "Lord, thank You for peace." He came into my life in such a mighty way, and I will never forget it. I am so grateful He forgave me. Because of the things I said about God, He could have said, "Forget her." He could have let me go. The time I wanted to be gone, He could have allowed it, but He did not. He forgave me.

Knowing and understanding some things I went through, I had to make a choice. The beginning of my life was not great, and I would not go back to it. As I look

at my life now, it was so worth it.

As a young person, I did not know the song "Jesus Loves Me." I did not know God. I knew nothing. You are blessed and privileged if you know the truth, know the songs of Zion, and hear the testimonies of the saints of God. I am so grateful that I came to God! It was the happiest time in my life. Some people say: "Hey, I am down and out. I need this or that." They need to come to God. I was newly married and enjoying my life, but I wanted to start it off right.

The mother who raised me passed away a few years ago, and I was able to hold her hand while she was in the hospital and tell her I loved her. I was able to say I was sorry for some things I did. I met my biological mother when I was nineteen. We talked on the phone not too long ago. I am so grateful for forgiveness. We are not extremely close. She does not know how old I am, but she remembers my birth date. That is okay because I am so grateful for the family of God and for my family of seven wonderful children and my husband. I am thankful I made the right choice. No matter what has been dished out, I want to be the best person I can be.





Texts: Psalm 65:1-2; Isaiah 64:4; Hebrews 11:6

In general terms, there is a great lack of really praying today. I say that because we fail to see the fruits (or the results) of it in individual lives and collectively as the church. References to prayer are found in the Word of God hundreds of times, and I believe God has something to say about prayer. It is instilled throughout the Word of God from one end of the Book to the other. Prayer is certainly a great necessity. It is our greatest weapon, and the enemy does not want us to use it. The older brethren used to say, "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest Christian on his knees," and it is still true. We can put forth great efforts (and certainly the enemy is working by moving on the minds of God's people to promote greater programs); but if we fail to pray, it all amounts to nothing.

Nowhere in the Bible did Jesus ever teach anyone to preach, but He did teach us to pray. Without real prayer, there cannot be any real preaching; however, through real prayer someone who cannot preach can preach when God deems it that way. I trust as we study God's Word, the Holy Spirit will stir you. One way of getting your spirit stirred is through the teaching of God's Word. If you look into it honestly, really seeking, your spirit will be stirred, and it will do something for you.

The verses of Scripture that we read in the Book of Psalms and in Paul's writings to the Hebrews let us know God hears and answers prayer. The other text in Isaiah lets us know there is no way of knowing what God will do and how He will work for those who wait on Him in prayer.

I believe there are greater things in store than our eyes have ever beheld. With just a little greater waiting before God in prayer, we can see God work the works that need to be accomplished and greater works. Jesus promised before He went away that when the Holy Spirit came into our lives, we would work greater works than He worked. The Scriptures plainly teach us that the greater works are the spiritual works that He could not do. He preached and gained 120 disciples; but when the Holy Spirit came and fell upon all flesh, a greater work was done, and has been done, than Jesus could do when He walked here on the earth. Friend, I am not talking about fantasies; I am talking about realities.

The Hebrew writer said that God "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." The enemy is working as never before through the power of unbelief. If he can get you to

doubt one part of God's Word as being true, he has done a terrible work on you. It is a fact that God is a rewarder of everyone who diligently seeks Him. You have to go to God (who sees in secret) and pray in secret, and He will reward you openly. If there is anything we need as the church, it is some more open rewards. Thank God for everything that has happened and is happening and for every bit of reward. God has rewarded us in a great way, but there can be greater open rewards. When God openly rewards you, you will begin to lift Him up, and the world will see that God is blessing you as an individual; then the church will be lifted to the place of being a city set on a hill that cannot be hid.

The truth that shines forth in Hebrews 11:6 is that reward comes to diligent seekers. That Scripture is very plain, but sadly, the unbelieving world believes it more than most Christians do. Look at the very scheme of the universe: diligent seeking has caused us to make such progress in scientific fields and other lines in the last fifty years. Scientists believe that if they search, they will be rewarded; so there are scientists who are searching round the clock, and they are being rewarded every day. If we could get the Church of God seeking on spiritual lines as diligently as scientists do in nature, we would be much further up the road as the church. While science has taken us way ahead for the last fifty years, the church has gone in reverse.

Why are we not receiving more from God? Why is there not greater reward? The answer is, there is not enough diligent seeking. What if every scientist were to quit studying and researching and just sat around and took the attitude that many Christians take: "If God wants me to have it, He will send it"? That is not the law; you only get rewarded if you seek Him diligently. The scientists have learned that, and even men who do not believe in God put this principle into practice. They dig into what they term "the laws of nature." Many of them do not want to acknowledge that it is God. They can call it whatever they want, but it is still God.

Oh, how scientists search and search, and the first thing you know, they find something. How did they find it? They were rewarded for their diligent seeking. Brother, God is a just God who rules this whole world. It makes no difference whether you are delving into natural or spiritual things. If you are diligent in your seeking, you *will* be rewarded!

In all honesty, has God shown that you have not been really diligent in your prayer life and, because of it, you have not reaped the rewards? If the devil can keep you praying without getting any reward or answer, all it will take is time until you quit praying. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that you will get an answer the second you ask, but God is a rewarder of those who seek Him diligently. Whether you receive an answer now or later, you will receive it if you ask in faith without doubting.

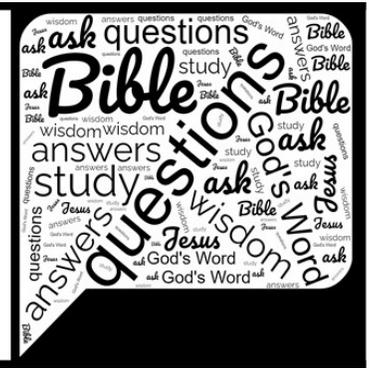
Brother E. A. Wilson

This is an excerpt from the book entitled *Prayer*.

See ad on page 13 for more information.

Questions & Answers From the Bible

Is a Second Cleansing Required to Be Saved? What Is Sanctification?



First John 1:7 declares that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." All agree on this point, but the question arises, how many applications of the blood are required? The Hebrew writer told us if the old ceremonial sacrifices could cleanse man from a conscience of sins, "that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins" (Hebrews 10:2). Hebrews 9:14 tells us that "the blood of Christ [is able to], . . . purge your conscience." Since there is only one type of sin, it only requires one blood cleansing. Even if there was more than one type of sin, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from ALL sin."

If sin remains in the heart subsequent to salvation, think of the questions it raises. If one is saved and yet has sin in his heart, what happens if he should die? If one is saved and there is yet sin in his heart, when does he enter the kingdom or become a member of the church? If he becomes a part of the church when he was saved, is there sin in the church? Or does he not become a member until he is sanctified? If so, what about Acts 2:47, which states, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved"? Also, Ephesians 5:27 tells us that the church is "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." It is obvious from these Scriptures that when one is saved, he is cleansed "from all sin," he is "holy and without blemish," and he is "added to the church."

Concerning the Holy Spirit, we must recognize that in an initial experience of salvation, two things take place: (1) the blood of Christ cleanseth us of all sin, and (2) immediately after we are cleansed, the Holy Spirit moves in to make us a new creature so that we have the power to live free from sin. The Holy Spirit does not do any cleansing. He is the power of new life ("the Spirit is life"; Romans 8:10).

It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). This life begins when we are "born of the Spirit" (John 3:6). This life begins with a birth. Notice the wording of this verse closely: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Just as one

who is "born of the flesh" has *flesh*, so one who is "born of the Spirit" has the *Spirit*. Without the Spirit, we would not have new life or the power to live it!

Jesus expressly taught us the Spirit of God is a person. In John 16:13 Jesus referred to "the Spirit of truth" ("the Comforter"; John 15:26, "the Holy Ghost"; John 14:26) with the personal pronoun "he" or "himself" twelve times in these verses (John 16:8-15). Since "he" is a person, you cannot have part of a person. Either His presence is there, or it is not. A person does not come in portions. John 3:34 reads (when you omit the italicized words the translators added), "God giveth not the Spirit by measure." When an individual is saved, born again, he is born of the Spirit and has the Spirit of God.

The word *sanctification* literally means "set apart." John 17:17 tells us how we are sanctified: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." As we sit under the Gospel, hear the Word preached, and read its precepts, we become enlightened. As we become enlightened, we learn more about how to set oneself apart, how to yield to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and how to incorporate more truth into our lives. As we do this, we become more sanctified.

Sanctification is a continual and progressive truth. The Apostle John said, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). How does this occur? Second Corinthians 3:18 says, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass [or mirror, a symbol of the Word of God; James 1:22-24] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." When the Word is held before us and we see truth and we see Christ, the Spirit of God enlightens us and enables us to take hold of the truth and put it on to wear. We are "changed into the same image." This is our progressive sanctification that continues to progress as we gain light and understanding and become more and more set apart until we are ushered into the eternal realm.

Brother Earl R. Borders



Strength Day by Day

One day when my burden seemed greater
Than my body and spirit could bear,
Weighed down by the load, I faltered
Beneath my sorrow and care.
And I cried to the heedless silence,
As I walked where I could not see,
"Where is the strength that is promised,
Where is the strength for me?"

And, suddenly, out of the silence,
A voice came clear and true,
"My child, you are striving to carry
A burden not meant for you;
And the thought of the years outstretching
Before you, has darkened the way;
While the only strength I have promised
Is the sure strength day by day."

I took one step—and I found it
Quite easy, indeed, to take;
And the burden slid from my shoulders;
And my heart that was ready to break
Gave thanks that my eyes were opened;
And my shoulders were eased of their load,
As I saw, step by step, I was strengthened,
To walk on the roughest road!

Author Unknown





Upcoming Meetings

September 5 — MEDINA, OH

ALL-DAY MEETING: Church of God, 6745 Wooster Pike, Medina, Ohio 44256
 Service times: 10:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. A meal will be served after each service.
 For more information, contact Pastor Mike Miller: 330-725-5993 or 330-421-0187

September 17 — WARRENSVILLE, NC

FOURTH ANNUAL FELLOWSHIP MEETING: Church of God, 2042 Teaberry Road, Warrentsville, NC 28693.
 Service times: 10:00 a.m. & 2:30 p.m. For more information & hotel accommodations,
 contact Pastor Allen Borders: 740-485-8881

September 19-25 — MT PLEASANT, PA

REVIVAL: Church of God, 109 Salvation Lane, Mt. Pleasant, PA 15666
 Service times: Monday - Saturday 7:00 p.m.; Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.
 Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, MS.
 For further information, contact Pastor Paul W. Prinkey: 724-547-2151

September 28 - October 2 — ALTAPASS, NC

REVIVAL: Church of God, 3987 Altapass Hwy, Spruce Pine, NC 28777
 Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, MS
 For further information, contact Pastor Pete Lloyd: 423-388-8141

October 5-9 — WHITE PINE, TN

CAMP MEETING: Church of God, 185 Highway 25/32, White Pine, TN 37890
 For more information, contact Pastor Roger Nethers: 770-206-0786

October 24-30 — SUMMERSVILLE, WV

REVIVAL: The Church of God, 74 Armstrong Rd, Summersville, WV 26651
 Service Times: Monday - Friday 7:00 p.m.; Saturday 6:00 p.m. & Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.
 Evangelist: Brother Calvin Foster, Kensett, AR
 For more information, contact Pastor Earl R. Borders: 304-872-4047
 Visit our website: www.ChurchofGodSummersvilleWV.com
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2023 Camp Meeting Dates

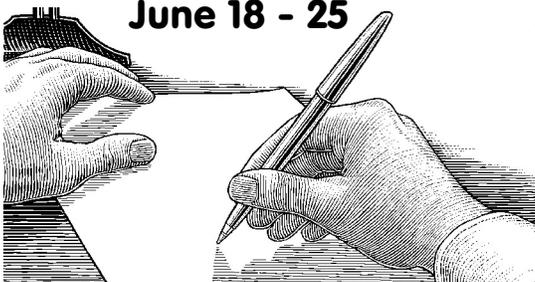
The Church of God, God's Acres

June 18 - 25

July 30 - August 6

December 27 - 31

*(The first service will be
 Wednesday evening at 7 p.m.)*



**Please join us for old-fashioned
 camp meetings next year.**

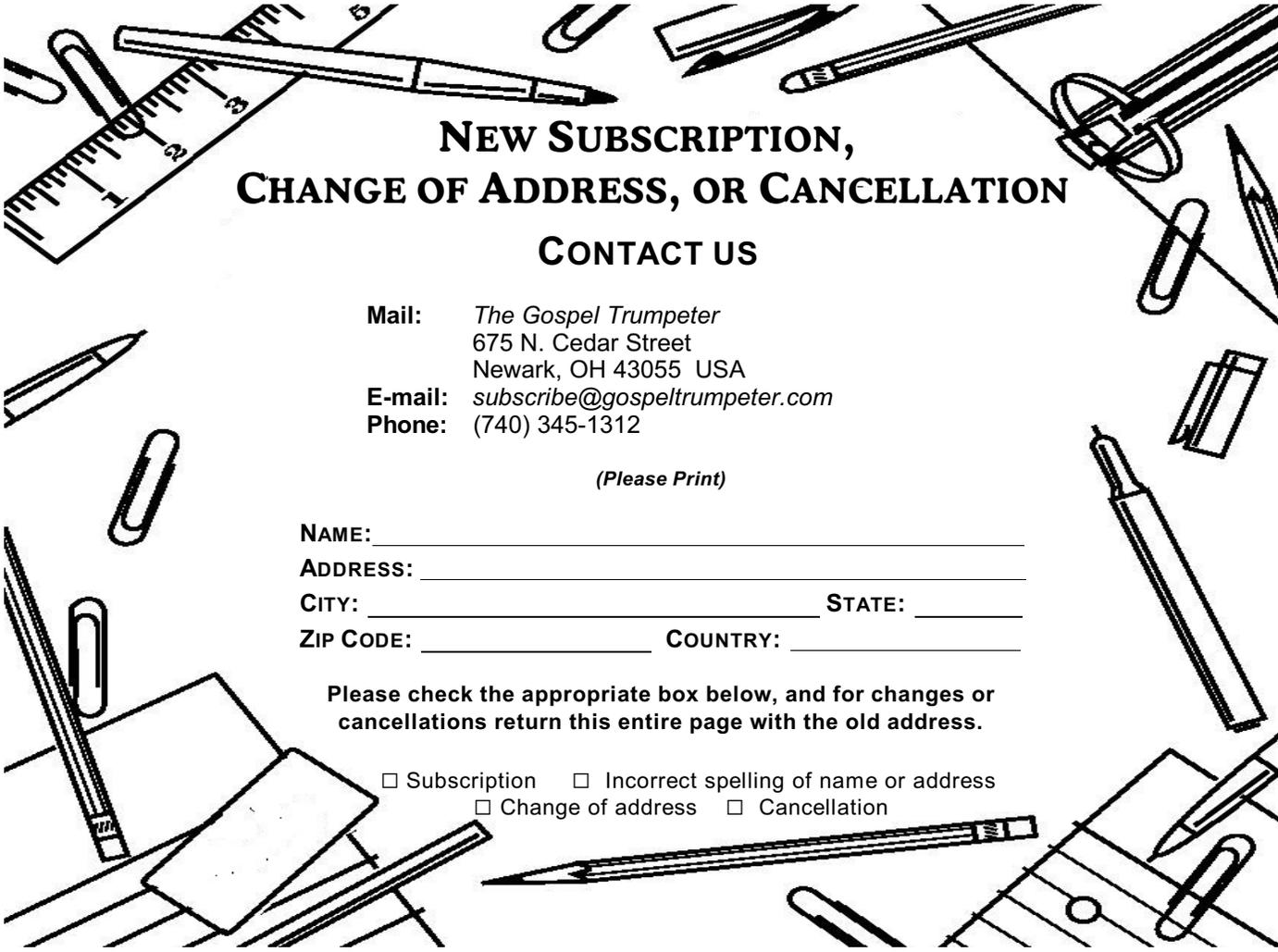
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