

**Forum Terrace Church of Christ** 

Sunday Morning Adult Bible Class – Fall Quarter 2025

A Workbook by Daniel R. Vess

# **Table of Contents**

Lesson 1:	How Shall You Escape, If You Neglect So Great a Salvation?  Hebrews 2:3
	Sunday Morning, October 12, 2025
Lesson 2:	Does Grace Ever Make You Angry?
Lesson 3:	Do You Have an Attitude of Gratitude?
Lesson 4:	Who Do You Turn to For Solutions?
Lesson 5:	Would God Send You on a Mission?
Lesson 6:	Can You Say "NO!"?
Lesson 7:	Would You Have Jesus to as a Dinner Quest?
Lesson 8:	Would You Be Late To Your Own Funeral?
Lesson 9:	Which Person in the Bible Best Represents You?
Lesson 10:	Are You Afraid of Death?
Lesson 11:	Have You Told Anyone: "You Can Just Go to Hell"?
Lesson 12:	Do You Really Want to Go to Heaven?

# How Shall You Escape, If You Neglect So Great a Salvation?

## Hebrews 2:3

The Bible contains a question that cannot be answered. I cannot answer it. You cannot answer. In fact there is not a man who has ever lived, is alive today or who will be alive in the future who can answer this question. There is no angel in heaven who has the answer. Satan does not have a clue. God has not provided a solution to the problem of answering this question. What is this question? "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?" (Heb. 2:3). The obvious answer is that no one who neglects his soul's salvation will escape eternal judgment. There is no escape!

# **Blessings of Accepting Salvation**

#### Assurance of Salvation

The first blessing of being saved is the assurance of one's salvation. This is not "once saved, always saved" of the Calvinist doctrine of perseverance of the saints.

Others are concerned that they can never be sure of their soul's salvation. David Roper wrote: "one might try to imagine an Israelite in Egypt, putting the blood on the doorpost as God directed (so that death would not strike in the home) - and then spending the night shivering and shaking. What a tragedy to have enough faith to fulfill the command, but not enough faith to be calm through the night."

God says we can be assured of our salvation. "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God" (1 Jn. 5:11-13).

The confidence in one's salvation from God does not rest on whether the soul deserves to be saved, but on whether God is trustworthy to keep His promise and save the soul. God is trustworthy because He never lies and always keeps His promises (Heb. 10:23; 1 Pet. 4:19).

Salvation is not based on one's feelings. Whether or not one feels assured of their salvation does not prove anything. Feelings can be real emotions but feelings do not change reality. Due to a deception by his sons Jacob felt for many years that Joseph was dead. His feelings of sorrow and loss were real but that did not change the fact that Joseph was alive and well in Egypt. Jeremiah warned, "the heart is deceitful above all things..." (Jer. 17:9). One can feel saved but in reality be lost in sin. Forgiveness of sins are needed from God before salvation can be granted. This forgiveness takes place in the mind of God not in man's emotions. Paul felt assured of his salvation, because he had committed his soul to God in obedience. "For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Tim. 1:12).

## Cleansing by the Blood of Christ

What if one is saved and then falls back into sin? What then? The apostle John deals with this issue. "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to

cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:8-10). Notice that the cleaning by the blood of Christ is conditioned upon confession of one's sins and striving to walk in the light.

#### Prayer

God does not hear the prayers of sinners (John 9:31). God will not regard the prayers of those who insist on continuing in their sin. The Psalmist knew this well, "if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Ps. 66:18). He has promised only to hear the prayers of those who are His faithful children. "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him" (1 John 5:14,15). Prayer is perhaps one of the greatest blessings of being a Christian. Without prayer the unfaithful saint is truly without hope of future forgiveness.

#### Added to the Church

On the day of Pentecost the kingdom began. The King, Jesus Christ, the son of God, sat down on the right hand of God to begin His reign of the spiritual kingdom - the church. After three thousand souls obeyed the Gospel by repenting and be baptized they were "praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). One is added to the body or church at the point of being saved. One is saved at the point of being baptized. The saved are members of the body of Christ who is the "Savior of the body" (Eph. 5:23).

#### No Condemnation in Christ

Condemnation comes to men from God due to their sins and its consequences. Once one is saved "there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1). Paul explained that due to sin man was an enemy of God facing His wrath before salvation through Christ. "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:9-10).

#### Escape Corruption of the World

The greatest disaster ever to afflict this planet created by God is not the causes of globe warming, but all men and women around the globe who are sinning. Sin destroyed paradise in Genesis chapter three. Everything is deteriorating and one day this world will pass away. This has nothing to do with God's ability as a Creator, but man's choice to be a sinner. However, there is a place beyond this world which will not be corrupted by sin and it is this place the saved will live forever - "to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (2 Pet. 1:4).

#### Hope of Eternal Life

Hope is both desire and expectation. The saved can expect to be alive throughout all eternity. "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13).

## Punishment for Neglecting Salvation

What will become of those who neglect their soul's salvation? Those who "have fallen from grace" are those who "have become estranged from Christ" (Gal. 5:4). Those who do not know God or obey the Gospel can only look to the future with fear. "When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed" (2 Thess. 1:7b-10).

Salvation from past sins is free, but acceptance and qualifying is up to you. Present salvation is free, but maintenance is up to you. Salvation throughout eternity is free, but being faithful to the end is up to you. Jesus promised, "be faithful till death and I will give you a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

# Why Many Sinners Neglect Salvation?

Some neglect obedience to the Gospel because they trust in just being a good person. They will argue, "I never cheat on my wife... I work hard...I pay my bills and taxes...I never hurt anyone." This is given as a defense for not doing what God requires of them. They mistakenly act as if salvation from sin can be earned by just being a very good person. Cornelius was a good man. "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always" (Acts 10:1,2). Yet, God sent an angel to have Cornelius sent for Peter "who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved" (Acts 11:14).

Others fail to obey the Gospel and receive salvation because they hope to be saved by faith only. The fact is the only time "faith only" is found in the Bible is in regard to the actuality that one cannot be saved by faith apart from works of obedience. "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). Ironically, those who claim one cannot be saved by any works but by faith only have failed to realized Jesus Himself calls faith a work. Certain Jews asked Jesus, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent'" (John 6:28,29).

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matt. 7:13,14). Man is oft prone to follow the crowd. The majority rules and to many they are always right. However, when it comes to serving God the opposite is most often true. Just think of Noah and his family who were the only ones saved when the whole world was destroyed. Remember only Lot and his two daughters were spared the destruction of Sodom.

Before baptizing someone into Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, I will often ask them to read Luke 14:25-33 in order to them to pause and count cost of discipleship. Jesus did not want half-hearted disciples who did not want to pay the cost of total commitment. "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). Many will neglect the great salivation offered to them through Jesus Christ, because they are unwilling to pay the price of discipleship.

Once I casually invited an acquaintance to visit the Lord's church at Forum Terrace. They quickly replied, "no thanks, we are satisfied with our religion." The same attitude is often found in those who neglect obeying Gospel plan of salvation. They are satisfied in their soul's current situation. But is God satisfied? Many of these will go on and defend their church as being just as good as any other. Christ did not think one church was as good as another (read Rev. 2,3). Can any church be as good as he one Christ died for? "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). The saved are added to the Church (Acts 2:27). Christ is the Savior of only one church. "Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body" (Eph. 5:23; cf. Eph. 1:22,23; 4:4).

Perhaps the primary reason so many souls are robbed of salvation is man's apathy and procrastination. When Paul reasoned with Governor Felix about his soul's needs, Felix told him, "go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you" (Acts 24:25). Later, when Paul shared the story of how and why he became a Christian with King Agrippa II, the apostle received this response, "you almost persuade me to become a Christian" (Acts 26:28).

# Why Do Some Christians Neglect Salvation?

It is not only those who have never obeyed the Gospel who are neglecting this great salvation. Many Christians, once saved, have fallen from grace. Like those mentioned above some are indifferent about their soul's situation and therefore tend to put off doing anything about it. Others have fallen back

in love with this present world like Demus (2 Tim. 4:10). Still some Christians have "strayed from the faith" due to their love of money (1 Tim. 6:9,10). False teachers have lured many away from the truth (2 Pet. 2:20). In short, whatever the myriad of excuses unfaithful Christians might offer none of them are reasons for neglecting so great a salvation.

To neglect so great a salvation is to fail to prepared for heaven. Remember, "if you miss heaven, you miss all there is."

Quest 1.	ions: Why can no man answer the question posed in Hebrews 2:3?
2.	According to John 5:11-13 how can we be assured of our salvation?
3.	Why can't a person trust their feelings in regard to their salvation?
4.	What if one is saved and then falls back into sin? What then?
5.	What role does the church play in one be saved?
6.	Why or how is sin the great disaster upon God's creation?
7.	What will become of those who neglect their soul's salvation?
8.	List a few names of those who earned salvation from their sins by the grace of God?
9.	If faith is a work of God, can we be saved by faith only apart for any works? Explain.
10.	Why is personal satisfaction with one's spiritual condition and unreliable indication of their true spiritual condition?

False Christ thought and taught that one church was as good as another.

11.

12.	Why d	id Governor Felix and King Agrippa II reject obedience to the Gospel?
13.	Why d	o some Christians who have fallen back into sin neglect their salvation?
Applic 1.		A Discussion: hould a person count the cost of discipleship before being baptized?
2.	What a	are some other reasons and means by which some neglect this great salvation?
Home	work:	Consider your soul's salvation by asking yourself: "Have I been saved from sin by obeying the Gospel or do I need yet to be baptized? Am I in a saved state today or do I need to confess my sins in prayer seeking forgiveness? Will I be faithful unto death and be saved in eternity?"

# **Does Grace Ever Make You Angry?**

Are you angry with Grace? We are not talking about a woman named Grace. Instead it is the idea of someone being mad about God's grace. There are several instances in the Bible where men and women were actually upset over the unmerited favor of God being bestowed on others.

#### Jonah the Most Disappointed, Successful Prophet

The prophet Jonah was one of the most successful prophets of God. He was reluctant to do God's bidding and when his mission proved to be of a great success, Jonah expressed great disappointment. Considering God's graciousness toward Jonah you would think he would be the first to demonstrate an attitude of loving-kindness toward others. First, God was gracious in sending Jonah on a mission to warn the wicked Ninevites of their need to repent. When he ran from God and hopped on a ship to Tarshish in a vain effort to run away from his duty, God was gracious in sending Jonah a storm. Next, God was gracious in saving the ship when Jonah had the sailors thrown him into the sea. God was gracious in sending Jonah a sea creature to swallow him, so he would not drown. God was gracious in sparing his life for three days and nights. Curled up in the belly of this great sea creature, Jonah prayed one of the most sincere prayers in the Bible. God was gracious in answering his prayer. God was gracious in giving him a second chance to do his duty. God was gracious in that the Ninevites heeded his message.

Most Bible students already are well acquainted with this part of the story. What you might not know is the rest of the story. Forget about the great sea creature and Jonah's miraculous rescue, look at God's grace. From the King all the way down to the animals the Ninevites repented in sackcloth and ashes. But Jonah was angry (Jonah 4:1-3). Any preacher today would turn green with envy over Jonah's success, but Jonah was angry and envious over the grace of God given to Nineveh. He fell into a suicidal depression. God asked him, "Is it right for you to to be angry?" (4:4). Jonah threw himself a little pity party. "So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city." (4:5). For any Jew at the time saving the Ninevites was not in the best interest of God's people. They deserved to be wiped out with fire and brimstone. Jonah wanted God to show no mercy. He was so willing to receive God's grace for himself and even the pagan sailors but not this city.

God continued to show grace to Jonah by sending a plant to give him shade (4:6). Then to make a point God sent a worm to kill the plant (4:7,8). Next, He sent a blasting east wind to heat him up. Again, God was gracious in asking him again about his anger. "God said to Jonah, 'Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" And he said, 'It is right for me to be angry, even to death!" (4:9). Jonah had been sent on a mission, he did not want to fulfill. The message of warning is one he did not want to preach. The penitent reaction to the message was a disaster in his eyes. The giving of God's grace to such a despicable race was beyond his comprehension. Finally, God showed grace to Jonah by showing him the big picture. "But the Lord said, 'You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?"" (4:10,11).

#### Jesus At Nazareth

Jesus went back to his home town of Nazareth to preform miracles and preach in the synagogue. After quoting a prophecy of Isaiah and applying it to himself, Jesus told them of God's demonstration of grace in the Old Testament. "But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when

the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian" (Luke 4:25-27). This home town audience did not like his preaching. They wanted to kill Him (4:29). Both the recipients of God's grace were Gentiles. Gentiles were not worthy of God's grace in the mind of the first century Jews.

In fact, no one is worthy of God's grace. If they were worthy, it would not be grace. Life is not fair. We do not get what we deserve, especially from God. In fact, none of us wants to get what we actually deserve. If a just God gave you or me everything we really deserved right now, that would mean immediate death and hell.

#### Simon and the Harlot

Jesus was a dinner guest at the home of Simon the Pharisee when in comes a women who of ill-repute who washes Jesus feet with her tears of repentance and her hair. In Simon's view, if Jesus was a prophet as He claimed to be would not let such an unworthy wretch would not even be permitted to serve Jesus in this manner. Jesus told Simon, "Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little" (Luke 7:47). Simon's blood pressure could have caused a stroke over this show of grace to such a undeserving woman.

#### Parable of the Householder

The Parable of the Householder (Matt. 20:1-16) is a response in part to the limited forgiveness that the Jews of the day felt they owed their fellow man. Jesus tells the story of a man who hired various groups of men to come work in his vineyard. Those who came and worked all day received a denarius and those who came and worked only an hour received a denarius. This seemed very unfair to those who worked all day. Yet, no one was cheated. All were paid what was promised. The householder has the right to make contracts with workers and honor such agreements. A denarious was needed by a worked to maintain his household for a day. The boss was gracious in seeing that every day-worker was taken care of based upon an agreement and their need. Likewise, God is gracious, because it is part of His eternal nature. This parable is not about good business practices, but about God's right to show grace to all.

#### Parable of the Elder Brother

Another demonstration of the Pharisees being angry with God's grace is in the last part of the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15). Some hold this to be a separate parable of the elder son. The prodigal son came home and received a welcome home party with a ring on his finger, new clothes on his back, and a pair of sandals on his feet. The elder son was angry, so he threw a pity-party. The father gave his wasteful brother a party that was not deserved. So he stay away and threw himself a pity-party. In his eyes his prodigal did not deserve grace. Instead he felt that he had earned the right to be honored. "Grace is NOT FAIR!" Point made. Lesson learned.

# Why Some Are Angry With Grace?

#### A False Belief They Are Deserving of God's Favor

So you are the twelve hour worker and deserve God's blessings, at least more than others? All are undeserving. No one can earn God's grace to cover a single sin. Instead of complaining about God's grace, all should give thanks for God's gift. No one has ever earned God's blessings because of their hard work and sacrifice. God sacrificed His Son to work out our salvation.

#### A Feeling of Obligating God to Gives Us What We Have Earned

Jesus told His disciples, "so likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10). Suppose you perfectly obeyed all the traffic laws of your state. Do you receive any reward? God told Job that He is not under obligation to any man. "Who has preceded Me, that I should pay him? Everything under heaven is Mine" (Job 41:11). God does not owe anyone anything (Rom. 11:35). The Jews had

a sense of entitlement to the blessings of God, because they were Jews. The Gospel says "NO". They had to be saved by the same grace of God as the Gentiles. Christians today need to be careful not to develop this attitude.

## A Sense of Injustice when Comparing Gifts

The elder brother thought his father unfair. The twelve hour laborers thought the householder was not being just with them. When we compare what God gives to others in the way of ability, opportunity, health, wealth, etc., envy toward others and murmuring against God can result. Since grace is not about what one deserves but God's gifts to others this comparison of blessings is not a personal affront by God. All the blessings in the world do not equal what one has earned or deserves.

Notice Jonah never answered God's final question concerning His demonstration of grace (Jonah 4:11). Did Jonah come to know God's universal love? Did Jonah ever overcome his anger concerning God's grace? Did Jonah ever see the folly of his attitude? The Bible does not tell us. Perhaps, this is an effort to have us focus on how we would respond if we were in Jonah's shoes.

God's grace is amazing. Yet are your ever angry with grace? Do you think God is unfair with His gifts of unmerited favor? Are you mad with God for being a loving, kind, merciful God? Perhaps, it is time to let God be God! And God is gracious toward you!

to let C	50d be God! And God is gracious toward you!
Quest	ions:
1.	What made Jonah one of the most successful prophets of the Bible?
2.	How did God demonstrate His grace toward Jonah?
3.	How did the King of Nineveh and the Ninivites respond to Jonah's preaching?
4.	How did Jonah respond to their reaction to his preaching?
5.	Why did Jonah hate the Ninevites?
6.	What did God send Jonah?
7.	Why did the citizens of Jesus' home town of Nazareth seek to kill Him?
8.	List several examples in the Old Testament where God showed His grace to pagans, heathers and enemies of the Jews?

9.	Make a list of those in the Bible who deserved God's grace.
10.	Why did Simon reject the idea of Jesus being a genuine prophet?
11.	In the Parable of the Householder why was the master of the workers justified in his method of payment for the various workers?
12.	Why was the Elder brother upset with his brother, the prodigal son?
13.	Why is it impossible to every earn God's grace?
14.	Why is making comparisons of God's gifts to others with what He has blessed you with by HIs Grace so unwise?
Applic	cation & Discussion:
1.	Did Jonah ever overcome his anger concerning God's grace? Did Jonah ever see the folly of his attitude?
2.	Make a list of the various gifts of grace God owes you? Explain why?
Home	work: Focus this week on the joy you have over God's grace to you and to others.

# Do You Have an Attitude of Gratitude?

Perhaps you have heard of the man who wished to dispose of his home. He went to see a friend who was in the real estate business and, describing his house and grounds to the man, asked him to write an advertisement which he could put in the newspapers His friend did as he was requested and then read what he had written to the home-owner. "Read that again", said the man who wanted to sell his house. His friend obliged, to hear this astonishing remark: "The house is not for sale. All my life I've wanted a place just like the one you have described. But I never knew I had it until I heard what you have written about it."

Remember, gratitude is a matter of attitude.

The failure to be thankful before God and our fellow man is not merely a oversight or minor mistake. Ingratitude was one of the sins characterizing the Gentile world, "Neither were thankful" (Rom. 1:21). Paul says the wicked will be like that in the future (2 Tim. 3:1-5). Thus, any faithful Christians will want to overcome the attitude of ingratitude.

Years ago a boat was caught in a storm in Lake Michigan near Evanston, III. It was so severely damaged that it began to sink. Since it was only a few hundred yards offshore from the campus of Northwestern University some students saw the plight of the passengers on the boat and quickly responded to give help. One man, a strong swimmer, brought seventeen of the passengers to safety. Years later a minister was using this incident as an illustration in a sermon. He was interrupted by a voice from the audience: "I'm that man" the minister then called the man to the platform. "What stands out most in your memory of this great rescue?" he asked. "The thing I remember most," came the man's quiet reply, "was that of the seventeen that I helped save, not one of them ever thanked me!"

# Jesus Contrasts Gratitude whit Ingratitude

Jesus experiences a similar situation after he had healed ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19). Only one of the lepers returned to say "thanks".

As Christ traveled through Samaria to Jerusalem ten lepers cried out to Him for help. So fearful of this malady, the healthy of society would ostracized lepers. The law for this separation is found in Leviticus 13:45,46 and Numbers 5:2. As lepers would approach the crowd would pull back and yell, "Tame, Tame!" (i.e. "unclean"). No specified distance is given, but traditionally they were to be at least 50 yards away. They came to Jesus not merely asking for alms. They wanted to be healed. Perhaps, they recognized Jesus in the midst of his disciples and had heard about His mercy upon the sick.

Jesus responded by telling them to go to the priest and on their way they were healed (14). It was necessary that a healed leper go to the Jewish priest in order to be pronounced clean (Lev. 14:1-32).

Realizing that they had been healed, how would the men respond? Only the Samaritan returned to thank Jesus. At least one of the ten lepers was a Samaritan the others were Jews. Normally, Jews and Samaritan's would not be seen with each other for they had nothing to do with each other.

Jesus could not help but point out the failure of the others. "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" (17,18). Jesus' words were more of a commentary than a question. Only ten percent of those who received the blessings here showed gratitude. What a commentary that is on the human race!

What can we do to develop an attitude of gratitude?

#### Remember the Giver

The Psalmist wrote, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits:" (Ps. 103:2). By nature we are forgetful creatures. Parents must constantly remind children to say "Thank You" hoping that one day this courtesy will become a course of habit.

Scriptures abound with examples of those who forget that they are the recipients of God's great bounty. God told the Israelites to beware lest they forget the Lord who brought them out of Egypt. Their deliverance from Egypt, and His providing for their needs during the wilderness wanderings, but how He gave them cities which they did not build, houses full of good things they did not fill, wells they did not dig, etc. (Dt. 6:10-12). Though Joseph befriended him, the butler forgot him (Gen. 40:23). Only one of the ten healed lepers remembered to say thank you. Jesus asked, "Where are the nine?" Leprosy, which has been considered a type of sin, was fatal. Before Christ came there was no hope. How could a leper be healed and not have a compelling desire to thank Christ? Even worse, how can we be healed of the spiritual leprosy called sin, and fail to express our gratitude.

All that we have comes from God "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (Js. 1:17). A child that always gets a treat when an uncle comes, will cry if he comes without it one time. Why? He is more interested in the gift than in the giver. When God's blessings mean more to us than our relationship with Him, we will soon forget the Father and focus on Mammon (materialism).

#### **Consider How Better off You Are than Most**

Robert L. Heilbroner in his book *The Great Ascent* considers what would happen to the average American home, if they were reduced to the under \$200 annual income category in which more than one billion people in the world find themselves. "Take away the furniture, saving a few old blankets, kitchen table and one chair. Take away all the clothing except for the oldest dress or suit, a shirt or blouse and one pair of shoes for the head of the family. Empty the cupboards of food with the exception of a small bag of flour, some sugar and salt, a few molded potatoes and a handful of onions and a dish of fried beans. Dismantle the bathroom, shut off the water and remove the electrical wiring. Take away the house itself and move the family into a tool shed. Cancel all subscriptions to newspapers, magazines and book clubs. Put the nearest clinic or hospital ten miles away. Discard the bank book, stock certificates, pension plan, insurance policies and leave the family \$5 in cash. Give the head of the family three tenant acres to cultivate. Cut off 25 to 30 years of life expectancy for every member of the family". What if you were reduced to the spiritual condition of most of those in this world? Take way our salvation, return all the guilt of all your sins, remove all the spiritual blessings found in the church, extinguish prayer and the Lord's Supper, discharge all brothers and sisters in Christ, etc. As Christians we have Christ, therefore we have more than anyone without Christ.

Jesus reminds that there is more to life than luxuries. "And He said to them, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Lk. 12:15). Therefore, we need to be thankful for the simple necessities of life. Greater emphasis should be placed upon spiritual things (Eph. 1:3). Unfortunately, many new converts instead of living thankfully by attending, worshiping, studying, praying, teaching, etc. go on searching for more and more material gain.

# **Count Your Blessings, Not Your Bruises**

Since, forgetfulness is a great foe of gratitude, how can one overcome it. Perhaps, we need to take up pen and pad and enumerate our benefits. "Many, O LORD my God, are Your wonderful works which You have done; and Your thoughts toward us cannot be recounted to You in order; if I would

declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered" (Ps. 40:5). Do we practice what we sing? "Count you many blessings name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done." This includes giving regard to both your spiritual and physical blessings.

We tend to magnify our afflictions and minimize our advantages. We even date things according to tragedy: "That's the year I had a triple by-pass." Perhaps, we need to learn to be thankful for your troubles. One little boy was thankful for his glasses, they kept the boys from fighting him and the girls from kissing him. Matthew Henry wrote after he was robbed: "Let me be thankful first, because he never robbed me before; second, because although he took my purse, he did not take my life; third, because although he took all I possessed, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed." Paul learned this lesson according to 2 Corinthians 12:8,9 with regard to his thorn in the flesh. He found that the grace of Christ was sufficient for him.

#### **Be Content**

Israel loathed God's gifts. God miraculously led the Israelites in the wilderness, providing them with bread, water, deliverance from enemies and the removal of obstacles. They despised the manna. "Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. And the people spoke against God and against Moses: 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread'" (Num. 21:4,5). God sent the fiery serpents among them and many died. The serpent of brass was made and placed on a pole so that the bitten could come and look and be healed (vv. 6-9). The manna was God given, and it effectively sustained physical life. Instead of being thankful, they overemphasized their old life in Egypt. (11:4-6). They were not referring to the bread's weight or that it was low in calories when they referred to it as "light" bread -but worthless. The Israelites wandered forty years in the wilderness expressing an attitude of ingratitude by murmuring instead of being content with God's blessings.

One of the most difficult things to learn as a Christian is to be content. The advertizement world focuses our attention on what we don't have. We are fed a line that we must have this new car, this new cereal, this better toilet paper, etc., we cannot be happy. As a result our hearts are filled with longing and discontent. "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5). Since the Lord will be with us what more do we need to be content. Paul informs us that even with the basic necessities of life we can be content. "And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content" (I Tim. 6:8).

# **Express Your Gratitude**

Express it in prayer (I Th. 5:17,18). This is not a mere mental exercise. Though God knows whether or not you are thankful, He wants you to signify it in prayer. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;" (Phil. 4:16). Too many prayers are "Give me, give me, give me." George Herbert: "Our father, Thou hast given us so much. Do, please give us one more thing...a grateful heart!" Express it verbally (Ps. 107:1,2). Although God knows what is in our heart our fellow man is not a mind reader. Others need to hear our "Thank You". Express it in song (Eph. 5:19,20). Express it in your life (Ps. 116:12). "Thanks saying is not necessarily thanks giving, thanks living is".

#### Focus Less on Self and More on the Soul

After stating that a man's life does not consist of his possessions, Jesus told the parable of the Rich Fool. "Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: 'The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, "What shall I do, since I have no room to store my

crops?" 'So he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.' 'But God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Lk. 12:16-21). This is the end of the self-centered man. The only thing of importance when blessed is his desires, his goods, his barns, not his God. Self seeks all the attention and praise therefore there is not room for expressing gratitude to God. Such a man only sees the receiver, not the giver.

What an extreme example of ingratitude did the other nine lepers show? We think to ourselves: "Surely if I had been one of the ten lepers and Jesus came and cleansed me of that dreadful disease I would have been eternally grateful. Yet Jesus has come to us and cleansed us of the leprosy of soul. A spiritual malady which always has eternal damnation as its prognosis unless we are cured though the blood of the Great Physician. Are we really thankful to Him for this cleansing like the Samaritan or does our ingratitude emulate that of the nine Jews?

A wise man upon noticing a man failing to give thanks for his food remarked. "A man who sits down to the table to eat the food that God gives without thanking Him reminds me a good deal of the hog under the chestnut tree eating chestnuts, and doesn't so much as look up to see where the chestnuts come from."

Do we show more of an attitude of ingratitude like the other night healed lepers? Are we just enjoying God's blessings without looking up to thank God who gives them?

Questions:		
1.	Why was leprosy so heinous of a diseae?	
2.	How many lepers did Jeses heal? How many remember to return and give thanks to Jesus?	
3.	Is Jesus experience with ungratefulness just as much a problem today? Explain.	

How can a remembrance of being healed from the leprosy of the soul (sin) help Christian develop

False Forgetfulness is a great foe of gratitude.

4.

5.

True

an attitude of gratitude?

6. In 2 Corinthians 12:8,9 how was Paul able to be thankful for his thorn in the flesh?

7.	How did the Israelites express an attitude of ingratitude during their forty years in the wilderness? Give some specific examples.
8.	What two things Paul says we can have and be content?
9.	List several ways we can express our thanksgiving?
10.	Who is the giver of all good blessings?
11.	Upon what did the rich farmer lose focus?
Applic	cation & Discussion:
1.	Why is it that Christians who have so much to be thankful for live thankless lives? What are several things which lead to an attitude of ingratitude?
2.	Are God's gifts worthless in light of worldly luxuries? Explain.
Home	work: Take pen and paper this week and write down all the blessing God has given you and say a prayer of thanksgiving over them.

# Who Do You Turn to For Solutions?

The tenet's apartment was overrun with roaches, spiders, flies etc. He decided to go to war against the insect invasion and take back his home. "If one bug bomb was good," he thought, "two dozen are better." He set them off and left. When he returned, the bugs were gone and so was his apartment and everything he owned. The fumes from the bug bombs had ignited and blew up his apartment. He told the police and firemen on the scene what had happened. He promised to turn to an exterminator to solve any future bug problems.

When facing a question about morals, worship, the church, etc. every Christians should first consider what God wants. After all, He is the expert. However, many people, when proposing their ideas about an aspect of religion, will ask, "What do you think about it?" Someone else will respond, "Well, in my opinion..." Everyone will listen to the words of wisdom coming from a mere man and the next thing you know the idea is implemented without ever once consulting the Word of God.

Throughout the Scriptures there are examples of men who decided to handle situations according to their own wisdom without seeking God's Will. Ahaziah, one of the Kings of Israel, was injured by falling through the lattice of his palace. He sent out messengers, "Go, inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this injury." God sent Elijah to the messengers, "Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?' Now therefore, thus says the Lord: 'You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die." (2 Kings 1:2-4). By failing to consult the true God of Israel Ahaziah would not recover.

Ahaziah was not the only King of Israel to make this mistake. The very first King of Israel, Jereboam was faced with a problem. Although God gave him ten of the twelve tribes to rule over as long as he was faithful, Jereboam feared losing his people to Jerusalem when they went up to the Temple to worship. Instead of consulting God, Jereboam decided to build two golden calves. He set these up at Dan and Bethel. He told the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" (1 Kings 12:26-33). All the kings of Israel were led astray from God by following his example. Eventually, Jereboam's failure resulted in the ten tribes being taken away into Assyrian Captivity.

Even King David, who was called a "man after God's own heart," failed to consult God's Will and made a mess of His life and cost the lives of others. When the Philistines carried away the ark in a battle, David had the privilege of returning it. He decided to have an ox cart carry the ark back to Israel. Instead, he should have consulted God's Word. He would have found that the correct manner of transporting the ark was to have the Levites to carry it upon poles. When the ox cart started to tip, one of David's men, Uzzah, reached up to steady the ark and was struck dead. This all could have been avoided if David had only sought and followed God's Will (2 Sam. 6:3-11). Later, David was in his palace when he saw a bathing beauty. He gave into his lust and called for Bathsheba. He committed adultery with her and soon she was pregnant with his child. Instead of turning to God repenting and confessing, David decided to handle things his way. The end result was the murder of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband. As a punishment, the baby died and the sword would not depart from David's house (2 Sam. 11,12). Finally, toward the end of David's life he decided it would be wise to number the people of Israel. This also was a violation of God's Will. True, all the other kings of all the other nations were doing it. It was a logical and practical thing for a monarchy to do. However, God sent a plague that took the lives of 70,000 (2 Sam. 24). All of these tragedies could have been avoided if David had only sought out the Will of God.

The failure of God's leaders in not checking with Him before they act goes all the way back to Aaron. Moses was up on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments. Down below the Israelites, following Aaron's lead, were breaking the Ten Commandments. Moses had been gone too long for the impatient Israelites. Aaron was fearful of a riot on his hands. So he gathered up their gold jewelry and fashioned a golden calf for them to worship. Sure enough, this plan kept the Israelites happy, busy, and content to stay at Mt. Sinai instead of running back to Egypt, yet it was a violation of God's Will. Aaron should have turn to God to deal with the problem (Ex. 32).

At last, we come to an example from the pages of the New Testament. Jesus told a parable of a farmer who was so blessed with a bumper crop that he needed a solution. So he made a decision, "saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke 12;17-19). This sounds like a great plan for any wise business man. However, "God said to him, 'You fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" (Luke 12:20). If only he was smart enough to first consult what God would have wanted him to do with his financial windfall.

In contrast, there are other men who wisely checked with God instead of rushing foolishly to implement their solutions or ideas. Moses was constantly confronted with the murmuring and belly aching of the Israelites in the wilderness. They cried out for food and God sent manna. Yet they still complained that they had nothing but manna and no meat to eat. Borrowing from modern vernacular they were complaining, "Where's the beef?" So, Moses took the problem to God who made them eat nothing but meat for a whole month (Num.11). Moses' only solution was to think about slaughtering all the animals they had but even that would not have fed the people. God's solution was to send a large covey of quail to cover the camp.

Moses' successor, Joshua, was also confronted with problems while leading God's people. By following God's plan the walls of Jericho came tumbling down. However, the smaller town of Ai proved to be too much for Israel. At their defeat, Joshua and the elders of the people turned to God with the problem. The reason for their defeat proved to be sin in the camp. Achan had taken contraband from Jericho and hid it in his tent. Only when he was disciplined with stoning did victory return to Israel (Josh. 7).

Many years later Hezekiah, a good king of Judah, was faced with a siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians. They sent a letter demanding the surrender of Judah. Hezekiah took the letter in prayer to the Lord. God sent an angel that night against the Assyrians' camp leaving 185,000 Assyrian soldiers dead the next morning (2 Kings 19:14ff). Unlike King Ahaziah of Israel when Hezekiah was facing death he turned to God and was giving fifteen more years of life (2Kings 20:1-7).

After the Babylonian destruction of Israel, groups of Jews began to return from the seventy years of captivity. Nehemiah was still in exile serving the King of the Medo-Persian Empire as a cupbearer. When his brother told him that the walls of Jerusalem still lay in ruin, Nehemiah turned to God for help. God heard his prayers and soon Nehemiah was governor of Judah. He set about to rebuild the walls, but was faced with constant opposition from without and from within. Yet, each time he turned to God who in the end blessed him. The walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt under his leadership in a mere fifty-two days (see Neh. 1-6).

Who or what do you turn to for solutions? Do you turn to situation ethics to solve the problems in your marriage and decide under the circumstances to divorce even though it is contrary to God's Will (Matt. 19:9)? Do you turn to the experts for advice, like lawyers, doctors and psychiatrists? A lawyer may tell you to sue a brother in Christ (1 Cor. 6:1-7). A psychiatrist may tell you to improve you marriage with pornography? A doctor may tell you to start drinking or have an abortion. First, you should STOP! Check with God before you blindly follow their advice (Matt. 15:14).

Perhaps, you turn to popular trends and fashions. You can always argue, "Everybody is doing it these days." You can answer the problem of teenage sex by saying, "They are just going to do it

anyway." Are you willing to let the world out vote God? Does God have a right to vote on these matters? As a Christian in God's Kingdom you are not under a democracy, but a theocracy. Only God has a right to cast a vote. Do you turn to astrology, psychics, etc? Maybe you just turn to you favorite preacher?

Here is a novel idea. Why not turn to the Bible like the Bereans did after hearing the preaching of Paul? "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). Why not have a "Thus saith the Lord" behind all you say, do, and plan? (2 Tim. 3:16,17; 2 Peter. 1:3).

It would be an excellent idea if every Christian could learn the hard lesson of turning to God first when seeking solutions to the problems of life. You want the local church to grow? Turn to the Gospel instead of the Social Gospel. Seeking a wife or husband? Turn to God in prayer. He has the most extensive and powerful search engine in the universe to find you a spouse. Look to God's Word for the characteristics you need to find in a future mate. Can't decide on a occupation? Consult the Bible before making a decision on whether to be a bartender or a masseuse or an abortion doctor. Deciding on moving you family to a new town? Remember Lot and remember his wife. Trying to decide whether you are going to spank your kids or not? Check out Proverbs 13:24; 22:15. Maybe Solomon is wiser than all those child experts. Want to improve worship services? Don't poll the community or the congregation to see what they like. Read John 4:23,24. Want to know how to be saved? Great! Start by turning off the televangelists and read the book of Acts.

Trying to solve problems without God's guidance is only to invite more trouble. Self-discipline yourself into the habit of always turning to God and consulting His Will before you make any decision.

#### Questions:

1.	Why is God an e	xpert on just	about everything?

- 2. Who do men often turn to first for solutions?
- 3. Who did King Ahaziah consult about his injury?
- 4. What did Elijah prophecy would happen to Ahaziah?
- 5. What did King Jereboam do about his fear in lossing citizens to Judah when they went up to Jerusalem to Worship?
- 6. What was the end results of King Jereboam's solution?

7.	How was King David's solution for moving the ark responsible for the death of Uzzah?
8.	What was the Scriptural way to move the ark?
9.	What did David do to cover up his adultery with Bathsheba?
10.	What were the consequences of his solution?
11.	What was the consequences of David's numbering the men of Israel?
12.	What was Aaron's solution to the people's complaints at Mt. Sinai while Moses was up on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments?
13.	What did the farmer fail to consider when he was looking for a solution to his great bumper crop in Jesus parable in Luke 12?
14.	Where did Moses find a solution when Israel murmured for meat to eat?
15.	What solution did God provide Joshua for their defeat at AI?
16.	What did the Bereans do which was so fair-minded?

# **Application & Discussion:**

1.		nany times did Nehemiah go to God in prayer for solutions to his problems while trying to I the walls of Jerusalem? What role should prayer have when you are looking for solutions?
2.	Give so	ome example where the world gives solutions to problems which are in total contrast to the God.
3.		ome other Bible examples of those who failed in life because the did not turn to God for ons to their questions and problems.
4.	List so	me good Bible examples of those to did turn to God for solutions.
Homev	work:	When faces this week with questions, troubles or problems turn to God in prayer and is Word for solutions.

# Would God Send You on a Mission?

A politician was working his way through some farm communities in the Midwest drumming up support for his upcoming bid for re-election. A bad hail storm had destroyed the crops for the second year in a row. The farmers demanded of the politician, "What are you going to do about this? We can't keep losing our crops to these hail storms!" The congressman promised, "Well the first thing I am going to do after you re-elect me to congress is to introduce a bill to have all these hail storms stopped!"

The above story sounds like an impossible mission for even congress. You remember the old television series called "Mission Impossible" and the subsequent series of motion pictures by the same name. An impossible mission was given to an agent or agents that appeared to be an unimaginable task. Well, God has given men and women throughout the ages what appears to be impossible missions. Let us consider a few...

# Noah: "Build and Ark to Save Your Family and Mankind"

During the time Noah was raising his family "the earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth" (Gen. 6:11,12). "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8). God was so upset with how man used his free-will to disobey and corrupt His creation that He decided to destroy all of mankind with a great flood. However, He could not completely wipe man from the face of the earth for He had made promises which could only be fulfill through the seed of a woman (Gen. 3:15). So God gave Noah a mission to build an ark and save the land animals and his family. All of humanity depended upon Noah's faithfulness. "Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did" (Gen. 6:22). When the task was completed God told Noah to "Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation" (Gen. 7:1).

Although we may not live in a world that was as corrupt as the one of Noah's day, God still has plans to destroy it one day. He will not send a flood, but it will be altogether consumed with fire (2 Peter 3:10). We are to save our family and the sinners in this world by going out into the world can sharing the Gospel (Mark 16:15,16). First, we must see to it that we ourselves have been truly saved. This salvation involves water. "when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (1 Peter 3:20,21).

# Manoah and His Wife: "Raise a Leader to Save My People"

Many years after Noah built the ark the children of Israel were in Canaan, the land of promise. They failed to remove the wicked nations and thus were prone to imitate their idolatry. God would punish them by sending a nation to oppress them until they turned to Him in repentance. On this particular occasion God sent the Philistines to aggrieve the Israelites. When the people turned to God, He prepared a Judge to relieve their suffering. He would bless an elderly couple of the tribe of Dan and raise up a deliverer. First, an angel appeared to the wife of Manoah and informed her of God's blessing. When she told her husband, he wanted the Lord to teach him how to take care of the child. "Then Manoah prayed to the Lord, and said, 'O my Lord, please let the Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach

us what we shall do for the child who will be born" (Judges 13:8). God honored this noble request and sent the angel to Manoah. "So the Angel of the Lord said to Manoah, 'Of all that I said to the woman let her be careful. She may not eat anything that comes from the vine, nor may she drink wine or similar drink, nor eat anything unclean. All that I commanded her let her observe" (Judges 13:13).

The request of Manoah needs to be a part of the heart of every parent. From the day a father and mother first hold the gift of the newborn life in their arms they should pray: "Lord, please teach us what we shall do for the child who has been given to us!" Even before the child is born parents need to make preparations. Mothers should care for their bodies in a very special way for the life of a child is dependent upon her choices. After it is born a father and mother need to heed the Will of God on how to "to bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Once a father bragged to me about raising his three boys, saying, "I made sure I taught them three things: how to shoot, how to swim and how to drive." What low goals for manhood. No wonder his sons turned out to be drunken, adulterers who had little respect for their fellow man and very little notice of the Almighty. My own father never had much time with providing for six kids and wife and a mountain of medical debt. He did take the time to teach me that the most important thing in life is my soul's salvation, he always took me to church, he baptized me into Christ, he encouraged me never to fight, never to do drugs, never to drink and to save sex till marriage. Parents, look to your Heavenly Father on how to raise the children He gave you.

# Mary: "Be the Mother of God's Son"

God also sent an angel to tell a young virgin that she was to have a child (Luke 1:26-31). However, her son was not to be just any child. He was to be the Messiah, the very Son of God. Mary's mission was to be blessed with helping to fulfill the great prophecies of old that went all the way back to the very first one in the Garden of Eden found in Genesis 3:15. Mary did not merely need to remain a virgin until she was miraculously pregnant, she had to remain a virgin until she gave birth to a son (Is. 7:14). Thus Joseph did not know her sexually until after Jesus was born (Matt. 1:25). This was a mission she was able to fulfill faithfully.

Today, we are informed by all the experts that young people will be sexually active. There is nothing that can be done to stop them. Mary proved them wrong and also raised a perfect son, Jesus. We are to raise our children to be sons and daughter's of God. Parents need to be sexually pure. They owe it to their children. Do not abort your children. Mary would not have done even so if she could. Bring your children to God for worship. Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem. Raise them to be well-rounded both mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially. This is the kind of parenting practiced by Joseph and Mary. "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52).

# Job: "Suffer Trials and Temptations Patiently"

One of the most difficult tasks ever given to a man was given to Job. Here is a man who lost everything in a short period of time (Job 1:7-12). He lost his children, his wealth, and then his health. We could argue that he even lost the support of his wife and friends. One thing he did not lose was his faith in God. Job was part of the struggle between good and evil, between God and Satan. No doubt he cried out "Why! WHY!!!" God never told him why? He suffered greatly but did not attack God. Job accomplished his great mission of enduring great temptation and suffering with patience before God.

We need to endure our trials, hardships and temptations in life like Job (James 5:12). Christians must accept them patiently knowing that we will be blessed and receive a crown of life (James 1:12). At the same time we should not blame God who does not tempt any man to do evil (James 1:13-15). Never at any time does God tempt us beyond what we are able to endure but with each temptation provides a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). Instead of trying to find a way to excuse our failures or accuse God or others we need to focus on searching for the escape hatch in every trial.

# Ananias: "Share the Gospel with Your Enemy"

Could you imagine God sending you out to teach the gospel to someone like Osama bin Laden? Yet God sent Ananias on a special mission to teach the greatest enemy of the faith in the early first century (Acts 9:10-16). Saul of Tarsus was a Pharisee who not only arrest men and women for being Christians, but he also consented to their deaths. He was a terrorist to the church of the first century. Ananias had a good reason to be fearful of Saul. Yet his love for God overcame his fear and he went out and found blind Saul. He also saw to it that Saul obeyed the Gospel.

We are to do good to our enemies. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:43). What better demonstration of this passage could there be than for you and I to share the Gospel with our enemies.

# Jonah: "Go preach to Nineveh"

Personally, I must face the fact I could have never done Jonah's job. First, of all I do not think could have ever found a sea creature that could have stomached me for three days. Second, Jonah's sermon was very, very short: "Let forty days and Ninevah will be destroyed." I could never have preached such a short sermon. But could I or would I have been able to preach to the great enemies of God's people?

#### Jesus: "Leave Heaven come to Earth to Die and Resurrect and Save All Men"

There are several good reasons we could not have fulfilled Jesus mission to leave Heaven and come to earth in the form of a man and sacrifice our live via crucifixion and be raise upon the third day. First, we are not deity. No man could have filled Jesus' shoes on earth, because He was more than a man - He was the very Son of God. Next, only Jesus could have fulfilled all the Messianic prophecies. Finally, Jesus had to live a sinless life in order to be the perfect sacrifice for sin, that is, without blemish. Could you image being told that you had to come to earth and never commit one single sin all your life? Jesus declared, "and He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him" (John 8:29). He even challenged His enemies, "which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?" (John 8:46). The Hebrew writers claims Jesus "was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15b).

No man could have ever been the perfect sacrifice "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

Because Jesus was not only able to fulfill the monumental task of being our Savior, no other man include you, could have been the Savior for any other man. This should cause us all to have a greater appreciation for what the Son of God has done for us.

Furthermore, could you, would you have left Heaven to come to Earth for sinners? Would you have been willing to live a life of poverty? Would you have been willing submit to all the abuse and suffering which Jesus had to endure? What about willingly sacrificing your life in death upon a cross? Not only could we not fulfill Jesus' mission, no man would want to.

Although there are many men and women who lived lives worthy of emulating, the deeds of some would have been very difficult for us to have accomplished. The faith of Abraham is worthy of our imitating. Yet when you think about God requiring him to sacrifice his son, Isaac, as a test of the patriarch's faith, any reasonable saint would begin to wonder whether they really have that great a faith. Then there is Paul's great miracle of raising Eutychus from the dead after he fell asleep during the apostle's sermon and fell from the third story window. You fall asleep during one of my sermons and you

are flat out of luck. Even if I could raise the dead. Jesus gave the Apostles the mission of: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel" (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15). This is a mission to the lost souls around us we all must consider. However, no one could have ever accepted the divine assignment given to the Son of God. Jesus along could and did accomplish "Mission Impossible".

Like all these men and women of the Bible, God has given you a mission that is not impossible. "But Jesus looked at them and said to them, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matt.19:26). Especially with Him as our Helper. To sum up this mission: obey the Gospel, share the Gospel, and be faithful to the Gospel until death (Rev. 2:11).

Questions:			
1.	Why was God going to destroy the world with a flood during Noah's day?		
2.	What mission did God give Noah? How big of a project was this?		
3.	Why did God select Noah? How well did Noah perform his mission?		
4.	Why did God send Philistines against Israel?		
5.	Who did God select to raise up a deliver?		
6.	What special instructions were given on how to raise this deliver that would be born?		
7.	Has every parent been given a mission by God? What is this mission? How do they go about fulfilling this mission?		
8.	Why did God chose Mary for the mission of giving birth to Jesus? What made this a very challenging mission?		

Has God given the duty of remaining a virgin until marriage to every couple? Explain.

9.

10.		ave we been give a mission similar to that of Job? How does the example of Job help us is mission?
11.	Why w	as Ananias' mission so potentially dangerous?
12.	Why d	id Jonah run from his mission and why was he so upset when the mission was a great se?
13.	List se	veral reasons by no man could fulfill Jesus' mission?
14.	Give s	everal reasons why very few men would want Jesus' mission?
Applic	ation &	Discussion:
1.		ady to discuss the following missions God has given each one of us. List the ties/duties and what characteristics you need to have to complete the mission?
	a.	Raise your children up in the instruction of the Lord.
	b.	Pick up you cross daily and follow Jesus.
	C.	Be faithful until death.
	d.	Edify and encourage your fellow saints.
2.	What a	are some things which have hindered you in fulfilling your God-given missions?
Homework:		List all your God-given missions this week and see how well you are accomplishing these.

# Can You Say "NO!"

The editor of a magazine asked a limited number of prominent writers to respond to a number of questions, including the following: "In your judgment what word is the most misused?" and "What word in the English language seems the most useful to you?" Nearly all agreed that the most misused word is "YES", and the most useful word in the English language is "NO".

Failure to utilize these two minor but mighty words reflect the undisciplined disposition of this generation. The deftness at saying "no" with definite resoluteness is a most-valuable asset to anyone's character. Saying "no" gives one: strength, freedom, and courage.

# Strength

"No" is one of the least, but a most significant word in our language. Little! Yet so big that only big people can communicate it. No man's character is larger than his facility in saying "NO". It is the citadel of a man's strength.

Just as long as an individual can say "no," he can remain strong. This was exemplified in the life of Samson (Jg. 16). Again, again and again this Herculean man said NO! NO! NO! and his strength remained with him. A temptress enticed him to say "yes" when he should have said "no" and he lost his strength. Today we have many "Samsons." The only thing that can shear them of their might is their saying "Yes" to things that rightly necessitate a "NO." A young lady rearranged her date's nose because he would not, take "no" for an answer. He finally got the message. Someone has said, "No has protected more women than all the knights of chivalry, and more men than all the armor of the world."

#### Freedom

A psychiatrist dealing with a disturbed young lady who had been diminished to a burned-out lump by all-night parties, drugs, and sex on a whim asked her, "Why don't you just stop it?" "What!" she exclaimed, "You mean I don't have to do what I want to do?"

Doing what we want to does not always equal freedom. It can often lead to slavery. Doing what we ought to do is freedom - and it is peace. "No" is the spirit's declaration of independence. He who can speak it is master of himself, and no man's slave. Don't become a mere puppet on a string! You have freedom of choice to move and talk at will.

The apostles were condemned by the Jewish leadership for preaching Jesus. They were punished and threatened. Yet, they maintained their freedom of religion by utilizing the power of choice. In effect they said: "no." "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29).

# Courage

"Guts" - courage to make a stand, staying power, and intestinal fortitude. If the Yes;s always have it, then life is nothing but a Yes-Yes, rubber stamp existence. The No's must have it part of the time. Pilate lost to majority because he was too weak to say "no" to a blood thirsty, blustering mob. He washed his hands in the regal token of showmanship thinking he could excused himself from making a trustworthy pronouncement. "When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was

rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it." (Matthew 27:24).

It takes courage to say "no" and really mean it. "No" must be backed up by the way we talk, walk, and think. When Joseph was approached by Potiphar's wife. He was able to say "no." When that did not work he took to his feet and ran from her enticements (Gen. 39:1ff). Although consequences befell him, he abided steadfast in his stance toward God and sin.

Remember, if the background for this strength and courage is not already there, you can't manufacture it on the spot and it cannot be self-produced! Developing the ability to say no and mean it in your heart stems from one's relationship with the Will of God. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD!" (Ps. 119:1). Many Christians fall into sin because, the New Testament was never anything more to them than "black words printed on white pages." Yet, those who esteem the Bible as more than just another book, will be able to use it as a guide book on when and how to say "no."

The government helped promote the "Just Say No" campaign to help curb drug abuse. The program infers that individuals must accept personal responsibility for their actions. Each is responsible for what he chooses to do. The program also presumes free-will, i.e., each person is able to choose not to use drugs. This "Just Say No" concept is found throughout the Scriptures, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age." (Tit. 2:11,12). The Bible encourages Christians to say "no" to various divergent and damaging vices.

# Say No to Drugs

The Bible mentions drug abuse in it's list called the *works of the flesh* found in Galatians 5:19-21. The word for "witchcraft" or "sorcery" is *pharmakia* which is the same word from which we derive "pharmacy." This word implies the use of drugs for illegitimate intentions. Drugs were used in conjunction with ancient sorcery and the occult just like Satan worshipers use them today.

The most exploited drug by far is alcohol. This abuse could be significantly limited. Instead of teaching our children "how" to drink, we could teach them to say "no" to alcohol. That sort of policy has proven to work with alcoholics. Why not teach our young to "just say 'no' to alcohol" before they become alcoholics? If you say "no" to the first drink, then you will not have to distress about drunkenness or alcoholism and all the dreadful consequences of drinking. The Proverbs warns: "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, Those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it swirls around smoothly; At the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, And your heart will utter perverse things. Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, Or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: "They have struck me, but I was not hurt; They have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?" (Pr. 23:29-35).

# Say No to Sex

In California a few years ago, a debate was raging over billboards directed to teenagers which said: "If you can't say 'no'..." and then proceeded to advocate the use of a popular birth control device in order to have "safe sex." The implication is that some "can't say 'no'." Thus giving approval for promiscuous behavior. This advances nothing less than unabashed self-gratification.

The Christian is to restrain his flesh. Paul said this is done by crucifying the flesh. "And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24). No, the "flesh" is not easily crucified. It resists every step of the way, but it is feasible

We need to teach no sex outside of marriage. Instead of spending tax dollars to send Planned Parenthood representatives into the schools to teach children that there are no moral absolutes with

respect to sexual practice, how to use condoms, receive free birth control pills, and where to get an abortion, why not organize a program which teaches children the danger of pre-marital and extra-marital sex? Former Secretary of Education William Bennett declared, "Young people should be told that the best way to prevent sexual transmission of AIDS is to refrain from sexual activity until as adults they are ready to establish a mutually faithful monogamous relationship."

Teach them that sexual fulfillment is in marriage only. "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4). Young people must say "no" to premarital sex and married people are required to say "no" to extramarital sex.

One of the prime instances of standing against temptation and saying, "no," in an unfavorable environment is that of Joseph. (Gen. 39:7-12). If ever a man had occasion to do evil this young man had that opportunity and yet something gave him the stability to stand against it. The opportunities were: Potipher's wife offered herself to him for sex; she was a powerful woman; it was an ongoing temptation; and they were totally alone. How was he able to say "no"? His fountain of fortitude to say "NO" was his respect for God and his fellow man.

# Say No to Peer Pressure

Our youngsters have peer pressure exerted upon them on almost every front: at school, at play, on the job, etc. It takes a lot of mettle for them to say "no!" You should make no mistake about peer pressure being just a problem for the youth. When asked about one of the most troubling aspects about being in a rest home the answer was "peer pressure!" The only thing is, after the passing of time you outlive your peers.

Nehemiah was a man who demonstrated the ability to say "no." He was governor of Judea and rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. His fellow governors (peers), Sanballat and Geshem, were trying to stop him. They asked him to come down to the plain of Ono. Now, Ono was located about 20 miles north of Jerusalem. He suspected foul play and he was right! After all, it would be as easy, if not easier, for them to come to him.

Four letters were sent pressuring him. Each time he sent the same response: "I answered them in the same way." He would not come. Nehemiah withstood the peer pressure by saying "Oh, NO" to Ono.

You too need to be able to give your "no" emphatically enough that whoever made the proposal will realize that you mean just that "NO!" Don't be a "yes man" for your "friends." Remember, the wise words of Solomon, "My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent." (Proverbs 1:10).

# Say No to Satan

Say "no" to Satan by saying "no" to temptation. Temptation comes from the Devil himself (James 1:13-15). He is cunning and deceptive. However, we need not be ignorant of his cunning devices, (2 Cor. 2:11).

To defeat the Devil one must learn to say, "no." Decisive resistance of the devil will put him to flight. "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

The Bible is packed with examples of men who learned to defeat the Devil by declining his enticements. When our Lord was tempted by the Devil, He said "no" on every occasion. He had the force of scripture behind His "no" (Matthew 4:1-11). Moses refused the passing pleasures of sin and opted for a life of reproach serving the Will of God (Heb. 11:24,25). You and I, too, can reject the Devil's temptations, because there is always a way of escape (I Cor. 10:13). "No" is a handy escape hatch.

"Just Say No" is not a simply a axiomatic and commonplace saying, but a Bible command for all those who wish to live righteously and godly in this present age.

## **Questions:**

1.	What did Samson's "no" have to do with maintaining his strength?
2.	How did the Apostles willingness to say no to the demands of the Sanhedrin result in their freedom?
3.	Why did Pilate just wash his hands instead of releasing Jesus whom he had declared to be innocent?
4.	When we say "NO" how should be back it up?
5.	What was the "Just Say No" campaign? Is this idea supprot in scripture? If so, where?
6.	What is the meaning of the Greek word for sorcery found in Galatians 5:19-21?
7.	Make a list of all the reasons to say no to drinking alcohol according to Proverbs 22:29-35?
8.	What does it mean to crucify "the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24).
9.	Why is Joseph a good example of a young man who could say "no" to sex outside of marriage? How was he able to do it?
10.	Discuss how Nehemiah was able to deal with pressure from his peers.

11.	How did Jesus say no to temptation from the Devil?
12.	How can 1 Corinthians 10:13 help us say "no" to temptation?
Applic 1.	ation & Discussion: Whenever someone is expreiencing marital problems the world's advice is just ot get a divorce. List reasons why we should say "No' to the temptation of divorce apart from a spouse comimiting adultery (Matt.19:3-9).
2.	Modern parenting experts have told a generation of parents not to use the word "no" with their children. Explain why this is not in the best interest of the child or the will of God.
Home	work: Learn the value of the word "no" and how to use it appropriately as a Christian.

# **Would You Have Jesus as a Dinner Guest?**

While running for president Newt Gingrich was asked by A&E's Bio.com to choose any six dinner guests from the present or from history. He selected Orville and Wilbur Wright, John Ford, Thomas Edison, Winston Churchill, and Charles Darwin. Conspicuously missing from the list was Jesus Christ.

Who would you invite for dinner? Jesus has been the top pick from a vast number of people who have answered this question. The fact is, Jesus was a dinner guest at least ten times in the Gospel of Luke. When Jesus came to dinner you can rest assured that it was a memorable and learning experience. However, not everyone was happy He came.

The first visit is in the home of his most outspoken disciple, Peter. "Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon's house. But Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them" (Luke 4:38,39). Hopefully, the only lesson you get out of this passage is not that Peter had a wife and therefore could not have been the first Pope. By having Jesus come into his home Peter witnessed the blessing of having his mother-in-law restored to good health. She was healed immediately as seen by her getting up and serving the dinner guests. This may have had the side effect of vindicating Peter's recent choice of leaving his fishing business and following Jesus. His mother-in-law may have been very pleased with her son-in-law.

The next home Jesus is to visit according to Luke is another disciple of Jesus: Matthew who was also called Levi. "Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, 'Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:29-32). Jesus had called Matthew to be a disciple while the publican was sitting at his tax table. This was not a situation where he just met Jesus for the first time and spontaneously gets up and follows Him. Matthew was a hated publican and tax-collectors were the friends he invited to meet Jesus. Publicans collected taxes for the Romans and were seen as traitors. They were often known to be unjust in the collection of the revenue. Jesus is not declaring the Pharisees as the righteous in contrasts to all publicans. It was not a sin to be a tax-collector (and yes, a Christian can work for the IRS). Jesus informed His dinner companions that His purpose in coming was to call all men to repent. Not everyone would like to have a dinner guest who called everyone sinners and commanded them to come to repentance.

When Jesus came into the home of Jarius the ruler of the synagogue, he performed a great miracle (Luke 8:49:56). Jarius' daughter was sick and had died. Jesus raised her from the dead. She arose and ate food. Needless to say her parents were astonished. When Jesus comes to our homes today He can still give newness of life to those dead in their sins.

Jesus was often in the home of His friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Martha had welcomed Jesus into her home. However, while she busied herself with preparing dinner, her sister, Mary, just sat at Jesus' feet and listened to His teaching. She demanded Jesus to command her sister to get up and help her. "Jesus answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41,42). If Jesus came home with you, would you boss Him around? Would you only focus on hospitality and neglected His wisdom? Would Jesus rebuke you for your backward priorities?

Jesus did not just visit in the homes of His disciples and friends who invited Him. He also spent time in the homes of the Pharisees. This religious sect did not always approve of Jesus and they often

became the subjects of His warnings and rebukes. They noticed Jesus had not washed his hands before He ate dinner in the home of a certain Pharisee. Jesus commenced to rebuke them for their man-made traditions (Luke11:37-54). As one of the lawyers pointed out, Jesus was also reproaching them. The dinner turned out to be something of a debacle. "And as He said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things, lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him" (Luke 11:53,54). Most likely Jesus' behavior did not get Him a second invite to dinner.

In the home of another Pharisee Jesus was a guest invited under false pretenses. The Pharisees were looking to pick a fight with Him. They did not have to wait too long until Jesus gave them the opportunity by healing a man with dropsy on the Sabbath day. Today, dropsy is a physical symptom called edema, that is, a condition of swelling in the body which is often sympatric of heart, kidney or liver disease. Jesus asked them, "Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?'And they could not answer Him regarding these things" (Luke 14:5,6). He followed up this rebuke with the parable of the wedding feast. The message of the story was the Pharisees were rejecting God's invitation to join His kingdom. And therefore would not be a part of it and the Gentiles would be invited.

Whereas Jesus did not get along too well with His hosts when they were Pharisees, He did have better experience with publicans. When Jesus passed through Jericho on the way to Jerusalem He noticed diminutive Zaccheus up in a tree. "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house" (Luke 19:5b). When Jesus heard of the chief publican's attitude of repentance He "said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (19:9,10). Salvation was the end result of having Jesus come into his home.

When Jesus came to the home of the High Priest on the night He was arrested, it was not as a guest but as a criminal on trial for His life. Peter, who claimed he would never deny Jesus, followed at a distance. When asked about his relationship to Jesus Peter denied Him not only once but three times (Luke 22:54f).

Later that night Jesus was sent to the home of Herod by Pilate. "Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate" (Luke 23:7-11). Again, Jesus is a guest who is mistreated by his host.

After His mock trials by the High Priest and Herod, Jesus was delivered up by them to the Romans for crucifixion. After three days He arose from the dead. Having risen from the dead Jesus joined two men from Emmaus. He used this trip to discuss the prophecies concerning Himself. "Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight" (Luke 24:30,31).

So, would you really want Jesus as a dinner guest in your home with your family and friends? What if He called upon you to repent? What if He rebuked you for your failure to except God's invitation into the Kingdom? What if He asked you embarrassing questions you did not want to answer? What if He told stories which reproached you? What if he rebuked you in front of your family members for have carnal priorities? Would you attack Him with questions and accusations of sin? Would you respond by denying any relationship with Him? Would you treat Him like a circus clown ordered to perform for your amusement? Would you allow others to mistreat Him?

Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Rev. 3:20,21). Jesus stands at your door and knocks wishing for you to invite Him into your heart? Will you invite Him in? If

you do, it may bring you salvation and the hope of eternal life in Heaven. Invite Jesus home with you and He just might invite you to come home with Him.

#### Questions:

- Why would have Peter's mother-in-law have been very pleased with Peter inviting Jesus to the house?
- 2. Why did Jesus eat with Matthew's publican friends?
- 3. How did the Pharisees react to Jesus' being a dinner guest of Matthew?

#### When Jesus Came to Our Town

By G. A. Studdert-Kennedy

When Jesus came to Golgotha
They hanged Him on a tree,
They drove great nails through hands and feet,
And made a Calvary;

They crowned Him with a crown of thorns, Red were His wounds and deep, For those were crude and cruel days, And human flesh was cheap.

> When Jesus came to our town, They simply passed Him by, They never hurt a hair of Him, They only let Him die;

For men had grown more tender, And they would not give Him pain, They only just passed down the street, And left Him in the rain.

Still Jesus cried, "Forgive them, For they know not what they do," And still it rained the winter rain That drenched Him through and through;

The crowds went home and left the streets without a soul to see, And Jesus crouched against a wall And cried for Calvary.

- 4. What did Jesus do in Jarius' home?
- 5. How was it that Mary had chosen wisely and Martha did not?
- 6. How did the scribes and pharisees treat Jesus as a dinner guest and why?
- 7. What did the Pharisees accuse Jesus of when He healed on the Sabbath?
- 8. How did Zacheus react to Jesus' visit and how was the chief publican blessed?
- 9. How as Jesus treated in the home of the High Priest and Peter on the night in which he was betrayed?

11.	Who d	id Jesus eat with after His Sunday morning ressurection? What did they discuss?
12.	Is Jesu	us wanting you to invite Him into your home and heart today? How will you respond?
Applic	ation &	Discussion:
1.		the other Gospels instances of where Jesus was invited into someone's home and make all applications.
2.		dimately how many times was Jesus a guest in someone home in the Gospel of Luke? Iften is Jesus welcomed in your home? Please explain.
3.	How w	e Jesus sitting with you while you are watching TV or looking on your phone or laptop. ould you feel about Him being there if the language coming forth was vulgar or a show was ng partially nude or nude men or women or displaying such people engaging in sex?
Home	work:	This week place a chair at the table and designate a seat in your den or living room where you and visualize Jesus' presense. Meditate on how the changes would words, actions and thoughts.

10.

How was Jesus treated by Herod and his soldiers?

# **Would You Be Late To Your Own Funeral?**

A Florida grave side service at ten o'clock in the morning for Wade Griffth was to be my first funeral. At 10:20 that hot, humid morning everyone was there except the guest of honor. No one knew where the funeral director was at or why he was so late. Suddenly, a white hearse comes rushing through the cemetery gates. The hearse was bouncing up and down as it raced through the maze of tombstones. The funeral director bought it to a quick and grinding halt and threw it into reverse. He jumped out without a word and randomly picked out six impromptu pallbearers. (One poor man was only there to deliver flowers to his wife's grave just two stones down.) As soon as the casket was in place the funeral begins. Five minutes into it a fourteen year old girl passes out during a prayer due to the heat.

After the service a very apologetic funeral director explained why he was so late. Just as he was about to leave the funeral home a very distraught family came to him having just lost a loved one at the hospital across the street. He was so involved trying to assist and comfort them that time just got away. This explains why Mr. Griffth was late to his own funeral. The director had already explained this to the widow and asked if I would make apologies again to her and the rest of the family.

The first thing I did when entering the home of Mrs. Griffth was to tell this new widow with red swollen eyes and a handkerchief tightly gripped in her right hand how sorry I was about the mishap at the grave side. To my surprise she just smiled and said, "That's quite all right, Dan. For eighty years Wade was late everywhere he went, so it was only fitting that he was late to his own funeral."

Reminds me about a lady who was late to everything. So, when she died her family decided to set the time of the memorial service, but then wait ten minutes before starting it.

It has been an old saying for procrastinators for many years that they would even be late to their own funeral. In the case mentioned above, poor Wade was. It made no difference to him or to his good humored widow. However, being too late could cost you too much. This is especially true in your relationship with salvation, death, and the end of time.

You may be late to your own funeral, but you will not miss your appointment with death. The Hebrew writer reminds us, "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). Many of us will try to avoid death, yet it is the one appointment all men will keep. All men may not know when death will come, but death will come to all men.

A man was in a car accident. He was thrown from the vehicle and impaled through the chest on a fence post. Astonishingly, he lived. The next year he went down to the beach to watch a hurricane come into shore. He was swept out to sea and drowned. Death will come for all no matter how lucky they feel or indestructible they might be.

You may be late to your own funeral, but you better not be too late for salvation. Paul wrote, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). So many procrastinate their soul's salvation until one day they hear "You fool! This night your soul will be required of you" (Luke 12:20). After hearing the Gospel and being warned of the coming judgment the Roman Governor Felix told Paul, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you" (Acts 24:25). The convenient time to be saved is today, don't delay.

You may be late for your own funeral, but you will not be too late for the Second Coming of Christ. "Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, and they also who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him" (Rev. 1:7). Every eye will see Him and Jesus tells us that every ear will hear Him. "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and

those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (Jn. 5:28,29). Many will want to hide from Him, but according to the Scriptures no one will miss earth's final curtain call.

You may be late for your own funeral, but you will not be late to the Day of Judgment. Again, we go back to Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). This is an appointment you will keep with the Lord. "Every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:11,12). No malfunctioning alarm clock, no flat tire, no distraction will keep you away from Judgment Day.

Many have a problem showing up late for work. Not only can tardiness be an embarrassment, it can cost people their jobs. Many bosses across American hear all kinds of excuses for workers who show up late, such as,

- "I dreamed that I was fired, so I didn't bother to get out of bed."
- "I had to take my cat to the dentist."
- "I went all the way to the office and realized I was still in my pajamas and had to go home to change."
- "I saw that you weren't in the office, so I went out looking for you."
- "I couldn't find the right tie, so I had to wait for the stores to open so I could buy one."
- "My son tried to flush our ferret down the toilet and I needed to tend to the ferret."
- "I ran over a goat."
- "I stopped for a bagel sandwich, the store was robbed and the police required everyone to stay for questioning."
- "A bee flew in my car and attacked me and I had to pull over."
- "I wet my pants and went home to change."

However, about eleven percent of the time tardy employees simply confess to oversleeping.

Tardiness is not just a problem for funerals and the workplace. Many Christians are have a bad habit of showing up late for worship services and Bible Study. There are those who have good reasons for being late such as those with small babies or several children or those who are coming off of work or those caught in traffic or a flat tire or any of a number of legitimate reasons why they are late. For those who do not have a good excuse for their tardiness may we suggest using one of the following reasons:

- "I drove all the way here at five miles per hour so my car wouldn't do much damage in the event of the rapture."
- "The service ran late last week, so I figured you owed me a few minutes."
- "The dog ate my wife's head covering."

No matter what reason there is for showing up late, please by all means show up to worship God and study the Bible with the saints. When it comes to church it is "better late than never."

If you are in the habit of coming to services several minutes late a little self-examination may be in order. Why are you coming in late? Are you late for work on a regular basis? Does it bother you to be late? How often are you late for worship services? Once every two months? Once or twice every month? At least once a week? If you fall into one of these categories, these thoughts are for you.

# Is Tardiness a Big Deal?

Being late to services is a significant problem because it disrupts classes where God's Word is being studied and services where God is being worshiped. When Bible class began the teacher announced the page in the class book or the text in the Bible where the brethren would be studying today.

When you finally stumbled into the classroom you had no idea what the class was discussing. The Bible class teacher may feel the need to interrupt his train of thought to "catch you up" on what has been said. The person beside you on the pew missed part of what was taught because they were trying to help you find the proper page in the class book and in your Bible. Children disrupt their classroom, just like their parents do. By getting to services late you show your children just how much the Lord really means to you. It can be extremely difficult to get your mind on the worship or Bible class when you're late. Do you think God appreciates your disruption of the worship of other worshipers?

Late arrival for work is costly for the economy. The growth and stability of our national economy is effected by tardy workers who lose money and pass those loses on to their investors and those who purchase their products. Jesus said, "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work" (Jn. 9:4). We too need to realize that there is a limited time for the work and worship we must do. The spiritual economy or growth of the soul is greatly hindered by latecomers. Most congregations have visitors at worship services on Sunday morning. Tardy members are not present to greet the visitors. They are not their to assist others in finding classes. They set a bad example and show to visitors just how unimportant worship and Bible Study is at their congregation.

Some might be thinking at this point: "Okay! I will not come to Bible Study or Worship at all." The sin of forsaking the assembling of the saints is not a solution to habitual and careless tardiness. The only mature and godly solution is to repent. When members do not attend when than can attend and when they know they should attend but simply choose to not obey God's commands to worship and exhort one another by their attendance - they are sinning. The Hebrew writer warned, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." (Heb. 10:25). When you do not attend all or even part of worship services you could be forsaking the assembling of the saints.

By being tardy a Christian is endangering their soul's salvation. Since no one knows when the Lord will return they must watch and pray every day. The day you are late to services could be the day of His return. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2b). As servants of God you will want to be trustworthy. With most jobs you have job evaluations where you are evaluated for your job performance. Habitual, careless tardy workers are not those employees that are advanced in a company or receive bonuses and raises. They are fired. Christians who are habitually tardy are not found to be faithful servants. When the Lord comes again they will be FIRED! (Matt. 25:30). So, you may be late to church, you may be late to your own funeral, but just remember, no one will be late for Judgment Day (Heb. 9:27).

# **Timely Solutions to Tardy Time**

Once a factory manager found that production was being hampered by the tardiness of his employees returning from the lunch hour. When the whistle blew few were at their machines. He posted a sign by the suggestion box offering a cash award for the best answer to this question: "What should we do to ensure that every man will be inside the factory when the whistle blows?" Many suggestions were submitted, and the one that was selected solved the problem. But the manager, a man with a sense of humor, liked this one best, though he could not use it: "Let the last man in blow the whistle."

What are the best solutions to the problem of those who are late to worship services and Bible study?

#### Be Like God Who is Always on Time

Paul wrote, "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son born of a woman, born under the law to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:4,5). God had a timetable for the redemption of mankind. Jesus was born when everything was right for His appearing. The time was right religiously, culturally, politically etc.

God is always right on time. In fact, the Bible is a witness to God always being on time. He was right on time in sending the Flood during Noah's day, allowing Joseph sold into slavery, having Moses

being plucked out of the water, raised in Egypt, opening the Red Sea, raising Christ on the third day, etc. God will also be right on time with the second coming of Christ. As His children we should learn to be on time as well. Godly people follow God's example.

#### • Use Saturday Night Right

After a late Saturday night it is hard to get up. In the morning many Christian exclaim "There's nothing to wear!" while standing in front of their closet. Later, Dad will sit in the car; roaring the engine and honking the horn. To make up for lost time he will gun it at every green light. Mom will be stomping an imaginary brake pedal while screaming "We won't get there any faster if we're dead!"

The best way to honor God Sunday morning is to honor Him Saturday night. Start seeing Saturday night as an extension of Sunday mornings. Pick out the Sunday clothes before going to bed on Saturday night. Remember, to turn off the television early and go to bed. Faithful servants of God are "not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord" (Rom. 12:11).

#### Redeem the Time

A couple of generations back grandma or great-grandma used to get up on Sunday morning, cook a big breakfast for her large family, milk three or four cows, churn the butter, clean house, kill and dress the chickens for dinner, dress the children, then go with the family in the buggy or wagon five miles to the worship and get there early! Today, breakfast comes in a cereal box, the milk and butter are in the frig next to the chicken already prepared for cooking, and the distance to the church building is measured in blocks, not miles, covered in a modern automobile with AC. Yet, some still cannot make it for Bible Study. The problem is not the amount of time or too much to do on Saturdays and Sundays it is a failure to make the most of the time you have.

The congregation could schedule the services fifteen minutes later if that would help, but this would not stop the tardiness for most habitual latecomers. Habitual tardiness results from planning to close "to the minute." If you live five minutes from the building, plan to leave home twenty minutes before starting time instead of five minutes before starting time. On the other hand, if some last minute problem causes you to leave later than you planned, you can still arrive before services began.

Once on the way to church one of the rear tires blew out. After I pulled the car into a hotel parking lot I told my wife and daughter to go find a phone to call someone to pick up sister Lucy for services since we had a flat. As they left my teenage son helped me change the tire. We were still able to arrive for Sunday morning Bible Class with two minutes to spare.

Jesus was in His agony in the garden when He said to the apostles, "Could you not keep watch with me for one hour?" (Matt 26:40). Cannot Christians plan to be with the Lord for one hour instead of just forty-five minutes? They can if they plan ahead.

#### Set Proper Priorities

Are you late to work in proportion to the your tardiness for church? How long would you be employed if you did so? Is your job more important than the worship of God?

When you became a Christian, Christ and His kingdom should have been moved up to the number one position of importance. Jesus said, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33). He has announced His intention of being with us "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:20).

When Peter arrived at Caesarea, he found Cornelius waiting for him with his kinsmen and friends (Ac. 10:24). "So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God." (Acts 10:33). They were impressed with Peter's timely arrival. It should them how important their souls were to Peter.

Someone has said that "Tardiness is the subtlest form of egotism". When you are late it tells God that your time is more important them Him or His family.

#### Become A Habitual Early Comer

Replace your bad habit with a good habit. If you cannot be on time, be early. It is a well known fact that good habits are hard to make and easier to break than bad habits. However, Christianity isn't

for whimps and sluggards.

8.

True

Some people may be late to everything. It was that way with their family for generations. In fact, their great-great grandpa came was so late he came over on the Juneflower. Yet there is no reason you cannot break with the traditions of the past.

## Remember Your Job Evaluation is Coming Up

Whether or not an employee is promptly punching the time clock is an important consideration during a job evaluation. Business have learned that strict penalties for lateness such as instant dismissal lead to better behaved workers.

What can congregations do to motivate members to attend on time? On Church bulletin had a blooper which warned: "Ushers will eat latecomers." What they meant was that someone would be there to greet latecomers. What every church needs to someone to confront latecomers to encourage them to deal with their bad habit before it is too late.

When Judgement Day arrives it is time for all to receive their final and most important job evaluation. God has heard all the excuses. He knows which of His children have legitimate reasons for being late and those who are must plain lazy or careless. The worst penalty of all for tardiness is when the gates of Heaven are shut leaving the latecomers outside in the eternal darkness.

make r	Since you are resolutions to in	reading this article, God has blessed you with another year of life. A new year to approve upon last year. If you have been an habitual latecomer in the past please make it your habit this year to be at every service and be there one time.
Questi	ions:	
1.	Why will no on	ne be late for their appointment with death?
2.	Why will not or	ne miss the Second Coming?
3.	Why will no on	ne miss Judgment Day?
4.	What are some	e excusable reason why some are late for church services?
5.	How is tardine	ss disruptive to church services?
6.	True False	When it comes to church it is "better late than never."
7.	True False	When you do not attend all or even part of worship services you could be forsaking the assembling of the saints.

False Being a latecomer to church services has no effect upon one's salvation.

9.	Explain or give examples of how God is never tardy.	
10.	What sort of things might someone do on Saturday nights to help them be on time for church services on Sunday morning?	
11.	How does planning to be their by the exact starting time promote tardiness? What coule be a better plan?	
12.	What does tardiness reflect about one's priorities?	
13.	What is the Christians job evaluation?	
Applic	ation & Discussion:	
1.	What sort of things do people do to make sure they are at work on time or have the children to school on time? How can a Christian utilize these to help being to church services on time?	
2.	What can someone do to brake their habit of tardiness to church services and what might one do to develop that good habit of being on time?	
Homework: Strive to be one time to worship God who in time will give you eternity.		

# Which Person in the Bible Best Represents You?

The internet has a plethora of personality quizzes, such as, which Superhero are you? (Mine came back as SuperDan). Or which Disney Princess are you or what Pokémon are you? (The answer I received will forever remain private). Or which Greek god are you? or which U.S. President are you? Or which animal best represents you? (Mine came back "extinct"). And then there is one for those who are interested in spiritual things: which person in the Bible best represents you? By taking the quiz one will discover whether they are more like Peter or Judas, Paul or John the Baptist, Adam or Eve.

Although I did not take the quiz, however, after some thought I would not want to be like several Bible characters. If you could be any man or woman in the Bible who would you want to be? Your answer to the question might be harder than you think. Personally this question is pretty harmless. After all, there is no chance of ending up as any one in history. Yet, think about a question concerning your future: Which person in the Bible would you would NOT want to be?

I would not want to be...

- Noah's neighbor when the ark door was shut and the rains came down.
- One of Lot's sons-in-law when the brimstone started falling in Sodom.
- A firstborn Egyptian son during the tenth plague.
- Pharoah's chariot driver when crossing the Red Sea.
- A philistine in the time of Samson.
- Boaz, because before he got married he was Ruth-less.
- A prophet of Baal at Mt. Carmel facing Elijah.
- One of the soldiers Nebuchadnezzar ordered to throw Daniel's three friends in the burning fiery furnace.
- One of the Persian leaders who accused Daniel and had him cast in the den of lions.
- An Apostle when they were all in one Accord, because they is wait to crowded for a Honda.

#### An Atheistic Fool

Seriously and obviously, one would not want to be an atheist. Atheists, it is said, have their own holiday, April Fool's Day. God calls atheists "fools." "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good" (Psalm 14:1). Why are they fools? Because they state as a fact: "there is no God" which cannot be proven. In order to prove there is no God an atheist would have to be everywhere, because the one place he was not, God might be there. He would have to know everything, because the one thing he did not know, might be God. And he would have to exist at all times, because the one time he did not exist, God might exist at that time. In other words an atheist would have to be everywhere (omnipresent), know everything (omniscient), and exist at all times (eternal) in order to prove there is no God. In conclusion an atheist would have to be God in order to prove there is no God. One day in Judgment they will believe God when they meet Him on the Day of Judgment. "For it is written: 'As I live, says the Lord, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God" (Rom. 14:11).

#### ■ The Rich Farmer

Many atheists and agnostics are naturalist. They only believe in the here and now and are

materialistic. The foolish farmer in Jesus' parable was blessed by God with a bumper crop but could only focus on his own materialistic existence. "And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" (Luke 12:17-20). In providing a living, he forgot to live. In planning for himself, he forgot his neighbor. In reckoning his goods, he forgot the Giver. In providing for his body, he forgot his soul. In counting on time ("many years"), he forgot eternity. In striving for riches, he missed heaven. No, you would not want to be this rich man on the day of Judgment.

#### ■ Governor Felix

Even though he had Paul the apostle to preach to him the Gospel, Felix rejected salvation. Ad Paul, "reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, 'Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you'" (Acts 24:25).

#### King Agrippa II

Not only would it be bad to be like Felix who rejected the opportunity to saved, King Agrippa II may have listened to Paul but he was not fulling persuaded. "Agrippa said to Paul, 'You almost persuade me to become a Christian" (Acts 26:28).

#### Nadab and Abihu

One might be flattered to be like two of the first priests to serve God, however Nadab and Abihu were fired from the job. "Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Lev. 10:1,2). When God gives someone the Divine "pink slip," they are truly fired. Why? Moses explained to Aaron their father, "This is what the Lord spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me, I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified' " (Lev. 10:3).

#### ■ Jonah

Another servant of God, Jonah, was given a job to preach God's message of mercy and grace to the city of Nineveh. "But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord" (Jonah 1:3). God sent a sea creature to swallow the prophet. It vomited him up after three days of prayer. He went and preached. Nineveh repented. Yet Jonah was upset (Jonah 4:9–11). To be like Jonah means one would be without mercy and mad at the grace of God.

#### Martha

Not to leave the ladies out who would want to be like Martha who was too busy to learn at the feet of Jesus. She wanted Him to get on to her sister for not helping in the kitchen. Jesus said, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41,42).

#### King Jeroboam

When God tore the kingdom of Israel apart from Rehoboam He gave ten tribes to Jeroboam. God promised him that he would be blessed and secure in his kingdom so long as he was faithful. However, he appealed to comfort, convenience, and self-indulgence by changing the Divine pattern for worship under the Law of Moses. "Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, 'It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" (1 Kings 12:28). God required the Israelites to travel to Jerusalem to worship three times a year. The trip would be too long and expensive. Dan and Bethel were a whole lot closer. The king chose convenience for his people instead of obedience to God. Next, he changed the object of worship (12:28,29). He set up golden calves for the people to worship. This was the same mistake Aaron made (Ex. 32:4). The time of worship was changed for the Feast of Passover to the

eighth month which was more convienent in the north where the harvest was a month later (12:32,33). The place of worship was changed from the city of Jerusalem to the cities of Dan and Bethel. This gave people a choice of two places to worship instead of just one.

Today, many clamor for the right to worship at the church of their choice instead of at the church of God's choice. Under the Law the priesthood was restricted to those of the tribe of Levi after the linage of Aaron. Jeroboam changed it so there were no restrictions according to tribe (12:31). All of these changes would have made King Jeroboam very popular with the people. However, he disobeyed God and left a legacy of evil for many kings and generations to follow. "... Then Jeroboam drove Israel from following the Lord, and made them commit a great sin. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight," (2 Kings 17:21-23). No; I would not want to be Jeroboam.

#### Queen Athaliah

Who was the most evil woman in the Bible? The woman who was the worst wife, mother, grandmother and queen in all the history covered by the Word of God was - Athaliah. She is referred to as "that wicked woman" (2 Chr. 24:7). Like her mother, Jezebel, Athaliah served Baal. In truth, she served mostly herself. She led Judah into idolatry and wickedness. She was a murderous woman. "Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal heirs of the house of Judah" (2 Chr. 22:10). None of the good women I know would want to change places with her on Judgment Day!

## ■ The Self-Righteous Pharisee

Throughout the ministry of Jesus He contrasted Kingdom righteousness with that of the Pharisees. In fact, Jesus told the common people "unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). In Matthew chapter 23 he pronounced eight woes against the Pharisees. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence" (Matt. 23:25). Jesus accused them of rejecting the will of God. "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him" (Luke 7:30). It is one of Jesus' final rebukes that should explain to everyone why they would not want to be one of these Pharisees on the Day of Judgment. He rebuked them, "Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?" (Matt. 23:33).

#### Herodias

It was Mae West who said, "when women go wrong, men go right after them." From the beginning this was so with Adam and Eve. This was also true of Herod Antipas and his wife Herodias. She did not like the preaching of John the Baptist. It stepped on her toes and meddled in her business. "Because John had said to Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife" (Mark 6:18). So John was sent to prison by Herod. One day Herod lost his head over a dancing girl and promised her up to half of the kingdom. Her mother, Herodias, told her to ask for the head of John the Baptist. Herod gave it to her. Now if he had been thinking instead of drinking that day he could have told her: "John's head is not in that half of the Kingdom which I was offering."

#### One Talent Man

Finally, there is the one talent man who hid his money in the dirt and dug it up to give back upon the return of his master. The master condemned him, "cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 25:30). Surely you would not want to be like the one talent man standing before the throne of God.

Enough of the negative characters from the Bible. However, there are many others anyone would like to be compared. Jeremiah, unlike Jonah and Martha, was dependent upon God's directions. He said, "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23).

Who would not want to be compared to a noble Berean? Paul preached at Thessalonica but was

run out of town by the Jews. Yet, the people of Berea "were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

To be one of those of Pentecost who were convicted by the preaching of Peter. They asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:37b,38).

Young men would want to be like Joseph. He was tempted to commit adultery with Potiphar's wife. He had the self-control and courage flee fornication. *Joseph told Potiphar's wife, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"* (Gen. 39:9).

Father's would want to be compared to Joshua who told the Israelites "...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15b).

Paul would be an excellent for the elderly to emulate. In his final letter to Timothy just before he was beheaded by Nero, Paul wrote, "for I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

On the other hand, of all those in Bible history who would you NOT want to be? Now this question is a lot easier. Of course, the ultimate model to mimic would be that of Jesus who was submissive to the will of God. Facing the crucifixion He prayed, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will" (Matt. 26:39).

Of course no one of us could have performed Jesus' mission. So back to the original question: If you could be any man or woman in the Bible who would you want to be? Consider the man to whom the master gave two or five talents. Wouldn't you want to hear on Judgment Day what they heard their master say: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matt. 25:23)?

Take Jesus' Gospel "quiz" and see who you will turn out to be like. Have you heard the Gospel (Rom. 1:16; 10:17)? Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God (Mark 16:16; James 2:24-26)? Have you repented from sin and turned toward God (Acts 2:38)? Are you willing to make a public confession of your faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9,10)? Will you be baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins (Romans 6:3-5; Acts 22:16)? If you answer "yes" to all of these than you will be called a Christian.

#### Questions:

- Why does God call atheist "fools"?
- 2. When will all atheist believe in God?
- 3. What did the rich farmer in Jesus' parable, Governor Felix, and King Agrippa all have in common?
- 4. Why did God fire Nadab and Abihu from being priests?
- 5. Why wouldn't a Christian want to be like Jonah?

6.	Why did Jesus rebuke Martha who was simply showing hospitality by preparing things in the kitchen?	
7.	How did King Jereboam change worship for the Israelites in the Kingdom of Israel?	
8.	Why would Athaliah be consider the most evil woman in the Bible?	
9.	Why did Jesus discourage His disciples from being like Pharisees?	
10.	Why should no life emulate Herodius?	
11.	Why should all Christian be like the Bereans?	
12.	Why should young men strive to be like Joseph or Daniel and his three friends?	
13.	Who should fathers want to be like?	
14.	Who are some example the elderly should emulate?	
Applic	ation & Discussion:	
1.	At this point in your life who would best represent you?	
2.	Who would you definitely not want to be on the Day of Judgement?	
Homework: Strive every day to be like Jesus.		

# **Are You Afraid of Death?**

One day my good friend Russ came by with a great plan for us to strike it rich by selling eggs. If my father would let us turn the top part of our barn into a chicken coop, he knew of an retiring farmer who would sell us his hens for fifty cents a piece. Russ was a couple of years older and had a car. He bought thirty hens each and we stuffed sixty hens into the trunk (which was under the front hood) and back seat of a 1974 Volkswagen Beetle.

At first everything went well. We had regular customers. The hens laid so many eggs Russ' dad found an old refrigerator for us to use. One day while gathering a dozen eggs for the neighbors I reached into the back of the frig to grab the twelfth egg and touched part of the metal shelf. The next thing I knew was being knocked across the barn floor and with a dozen broken eggs all around me. (Would you believe that some of the eggs were hot and cooked sunny side up while others were scrambled).

Getting up off the floor I realized that an electrical short in the refrigerator had nearly killed me. For the next fifteen minutes I walked around the barn contemplating my near death experience. Fearfully I prayed, "God, how could this happen to me? I am only fourteen years old." Till that day I had never thought much about actually dying. Death was for old people in their fifties and sixties.

We got rid of the frig with the electrical short. Shortly after that the old, cheap hens stopped laying eggs. With a hatch and my dad's help we turned them into fryers for the freezer. Russ and I barely broke even. However, I never forgot about how I needed to be ready to meet death.

Although I have not seen the movie or can I recommend it, the commercial for *Final Destination* 2 says, "Death is coming." Everyone is terminal. Everyone is dying. "*To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, And a time to die*" (Eccl. 3:1,2). Like Jim Morrison said, "Nobody gets out of here alive." You can eat the best food, exercise daily, get a complete check up once a year, drive the safest car with dozens of warning sensors and 154 air bags, avoid tobacco, alcohol, drugs, stress, etc. and still have your life brought to an abrupt end by a old lime green Frigidaire.

Why is it that so many fear death? Someone told me recently, "I just wish I could go to sleep and not wake up again." They knew death was coming. They just didn't know how they were going to die. Men and women tend to fear the unknown. How will I die? What happens when I die? What will happen to me after I die? These are legitimate concerns, but should we fear death?

According to the Bible, God does not want His children to fear death because...

#### God Is With Us

The twenty-third Psalm is perhaps the most popular passage read at a grave site. Verse four of the Psalm reads, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with Me." Once the shadow of a low flying plane passed over our car. The kids were excited and looked out the window. If the plane had run over our car it would have been a terrible accident, but the shadow of the plane did not leave so much as a scratch. The shadow of death cannot harm us for God is with us.

#### Angels Will Carry Us

Jesus told the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. After the rich man dies he opens his eyes to find himself in torment. When Lazarus died he "was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22). Imagine the comfort of having an angelic escort as we enter into Paradise to be with the famous men and women of faith from the ages past.

#### Christ Will Resurrect Us

Job asked, "If a man dies, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). Man has always wondered about life after death. He later answers his own question. "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:25-27). Job believed in a bodily resurrection after death by his Redeemer.

Although the Devil has used sin to bring death to all men, Christ did no sin and destroyed the Devil's power of death by His resurrection. Even before His death Christ promised, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies" (Jn.11:25). Victory over death is through Christ (1 Cor. 15:55-57). Those who are in Christ need to fear death no longer (Heb. 2:14,15).

#### Saints Will Greet Us

Woody Allen once said that he wasn't afraid of dying, he just didn't want to be there when it happened. When Abraham died, he was "gathered to his people" (Gen. 25:8). When Lazarus died he was taken to Abraham's bosom. When we died we hope to join the saints in paradise. We do not know exactly who will be there for sure, but the scriptures teach us that we can expect to see Abraham, Lazarus and the thief on the cross.

#### Death is a Sleep

Throughout the scriptures death is referred to as a "sleep." "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep" (1 Thess. 4:14-15). We teach our children to pray, "Now I lay me down to sleep...if I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." We need to teach the same about death itself. One day Christ will come again and those who "sleep" will be resurrected.

#### Death Means Being With Christ

Paul wrote, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you" (Phil. 1:21-24).

#### Death Cannot Separate From the Love of God

Death is seen as a great separator. The very definition of death involves the soul being separated from the body. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26). Death also separates us from this world, from spouses, family, friends. etc. It removes the owner from his possessions. As powerful as death may be it cannot separate us from God's love. "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38,39).

#### Death is a Blessed Retirement

Everyone wants to be remembered. How will they be remember? What will their legacy be? Will anyone notice they have passed? What good will they be remembered for? The spiritually-minded will not be overly concerned for such post-mortem notoriety. He knows that death cannot erase who he is or the good that he has done. God knows and will always remember. One of the seven beatitudes of the book of Revelation assures us that death will be a retirement with a lasting legacy. "Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: `Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them'" (Rev. 14:13).

# **Overcoming Fears of Death**

So, what can a Christian do if they still have a fear of death? How can those fears be overcome? First, make sure you are in Christ. Only those who are God's saints or Christians can have the hope victory over death. "This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him" (2 Tim. 2:11). "Precious in the sight of the Lord Is the death of His saints" (Ps. 116:15). "Let me die the

death of the righteous, and let my end be like his!" (Num. 23:10). To be in Christ one must be baptized into his death and resurrected out of the watery grave of baptism to arise in the newness of life as a Christian (Rom. 6:3-5).

Also, make sure you are in the Church. The Church Christ promised to build. "The gates of Hades (death, drv) shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:16-18). He is the Savior of His church (Eph. 5:23). At the end of time Christ will deliver the church back to God (1 Cor. 15:24).

Another thing a Christian can do to abate the fear of death is to strengthen his faith. Christ promised, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). A genuine trust in God to keep this promise of eternal life will greatly reduce the fear factor. One would and should be terrified to jump out of an airplane without a parachute. Yet, thousands have jumped out of high flying planes with a parachute, because they trusted the chute would open safely land them back to earth. Do you have faith in Christ to see you safely through death or do would you have more faith in a man-made parachute.

Wisdom to deal with death comes form the Psalmist. "The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away. So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Ps. 90:10-12). No one can know the literal number of days he has left. All need to make each day count as if it were his last remembering that life is brief (Ps. 39:3-5). This needs to begin while one is still young (Eccl. 12:1). Doing this may not add years to our life, but it can add life to our years.

Of course, a Christian can pray everyday to be ready to meet death and by doing so overcome his anxieties. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6).

Finally, knowing that all will have to die, a Christian must learn to face death. This is more than just buying life insurance, picking out burial plots and making arrangements at the funeral home, selecting headstones, and lining up a preacher, etc. Do not run from the reality of death. It will one day catch you know matter have fast or how far you run. It is wiser to take a walk in a cemetery than go window shopping. It is more beneficial to read the obituaries than the funnies. It is better to go to a funeral than to a party (Eccl. 7:2). After all, the first three letters of funeral spell "fun." However funerals are not fun, but they do make us think. Only fools insulate themselves from the reality of death by drowning themselves in distracting pleasures.

Two final reasons not to fear death are: 1) God is to be feared more because He can destroy both body and soul in hell (Matt. 10:28) and 2) all have but one appointment with death (Heb. 9:27). An appointment with the second death (or hell) is voluntary and optional (Rev. 20:14).

#### Questions:

- 1. What are some legitimate concerns about death and dying?
- 2. Why is there no need to fear "the shadow of death"?
- 3. How was Lazarus transported to Abraham's bosom after his death?
- 4. Why can we have hope in a resurrection from the death?
- 5. Who all can we expect to see in the afterlife?

6.	How d	oes viewing death as going to sleep take the fear and sting out of dying?
7.	Why w	vas Paul torn between dying and going on living?
8.	Why c	an't death separate us from God's love?
9.	How is	s death a blessed retirement?
10.	How d	oes one get into Christ and what does this have to do with death?
11.	How ir	mportant is it to be a member of the New Testament church? Why?
12.	How c	an we wisely number our days on earth?
13.	Why is	s it better to go to a funeral than to a party (Eccl. 7:2)?
14.	What	is the "second death" and why is it to be feared?
Applic	cation 8	& Discussion:
1.		you had a near death experinece? What did you learn from? Or what lasting impression ese event leave on you?
2.	How could the certainty or inevitability of death for each man and woman be used in converting the lost?	
Homework: Before you go to sleep each night repent and confess your sins of that day and prage God to forgive and by his grace and mercy have His angels transport your soul upon death into Abraham's bosom.		

# Have You Told Anyone: "You Can Just Go to Hell?"

A lady was brought before a judge for telling a traffic officer that he could go to hell. This was right after he handed her a speeding ticket. After hearing her explanation the judge made her pay the ticket, but did not charge her anything for her remarks to the officer. He explained his ruling, "She simply stated a fact, that it is a possibility that anyone, including the office, can end up going to hell."

Whether or not you agree with the judge, going to hell is a real possibility. Jesus warned people about the possibility of going to hell. He told the Pharisees, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. ... Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?" (Mt. 23:15; 33). It has been suggested that Christ spoke more about hell than heaven. Even His apostles warned people about the possibility of going to Hell and eternal judgment (2 Th. 1:7-9). We too, if we are following example of Christ and His apostles, must warn people of our day that there is the possibility that they could go to hell.

It would not be recommended that we go about educating people of the dangers of hell by knocking on their door and telling them: "You are going to go to hell unless you obey the Gospel!" Such a shocking and rude approach would do a great deal of harm. Most Christians would find this misguided attempt to reach the lost as quite offensive. Nevertheless, there are several ways we in effect are telling people all around us: "You can just go to hell!"

# We Tell People They Can Go to Hell...

#### By Not Sharing the Gospel

Knowing judgment lies ahead of our fellow man we must persuade them to prepare themselves "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences" (2 Cor. 5:10-11). The Gospel is God's power to save. To withhold the Gospel is to condemn men to hell. You would not dream of withholding a life saving medicine, a life preserver, etc., so why do so many Christians withhold the way of salvation. Others think they are sharing the Gospel, but in reality are teaching a false Gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). By promoting "faith only"; "once saved, always saved"; or using the social Gospel many are lead away from the truth and will lose their souls (2 Pet. 2:19-22).

## By Not Rebuking the Sinner.

Preachers are commanded to rebuke sinners. "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables." (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

You would not fail to warn someone about to walk out into traffic? What would you think of a traffic officer who failed to warn others and lead them away from a disaster? Or warn neighbors their house

on is fire? The law holds one responsible for such neglect and the Bible does as well. "When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul" (Ezek. 3:18-19). When congregations fail to discipline those walking disorderly they do not deliver their souls. Paul commanded Corinth in regard to a impenitent brother, they should "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5). Remember, Jesus left the nintynine to seek for one lost sheep (Matt. 18:11). When a brother sins and some just drop his name from the directory and forget about him, in effect, they are saying to him: "As far as we care, you can just go to hell".

### By Not Attending Services

Christians are to attend to exhort one another. The Hebrew writer said we must "consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another" (Heb. 10:24-25).

Read full chapter ten of Hebrews. When we do not attend when we are able to, we are telling fellow Christians that...

- We do not want to encourage them.
- We do not want to help them get to heaven.
- We do not want to study the road map to heaven.
- We do not want to sing, pray, communion, with them.
- Fishing, the Super Bowl, sleeping in, TV are more important.

And when we to not attend when we can, we are telling our neighbors they can just go to Hell.

We tell our children that we are not concerned about their eternal destiny. On Judgment will there be fingers pointing at you, screaming, your children and loved ones, "Why? You helped bring me to this, 'You never mentioned Him to me' I begged you to take me to church." You did not make them go to church because you did not want them to hate you for it. Ironically, they may end up hating you in Hell, because you did not make them go to church?

We tell the lost that God is not worthy of our time and devotion; the church is not the pillar and ground of the truth.

Jack was coming out of church one day, and the preacher was standing at the door as he always was to shake hands. The preacher grabbed Jack by the hand and pulled him aside. The preacher said to him, "You need to join the Army of the Lord!" Jack replied, "I'm already in the Army of the Lord, preacher." Shocked the preacher questioned, "How come I don't see you except at Christmas and Easter?" Jack whispered back, "I'm in the secret service." Perhaps this is why Jesus will say to some like Jack on Judgment Day, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matt. 7:23).

#### By Not Giving to the Lord

We are commanded to give as we have prospered. Paul wrote, "now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come" (1 Cor. 16:1-2). And Christians are to give out of a willing and cheerful heart. "But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:6-7). If you were lost and needed someone somewhere to give so that you would have a chance to hear the gospel, how much would you want them to give.

Preachers taking up outside work, moon lighting just to be able to keep preaching the gospel are losing valuable hours that could be spent saving souls. Jesus gave it all to save your soul, what will you give to save the souls of others? Perhaps, we should give as if it were Jesus himself passing the plate with His nail scared hands.

#### By Not Setting The Proper Example

Paul warns that even in areas of opinion we can conduct ourselves in such a way as to be a stumbling block. "Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way." (Rom. 14:13). Those who divorce their wives for some other reason than adultery "causes her to commit adultery" when she remarries (Mt. 5:32). In addition to our ungodly examples of not attending, not rebuking, not giving, etc., immodest apparel, fornication, drinking, stealing, fornication pornography, etc. can cause the world to reject Christ, because we have set a bad example of what a Christian is suppose to be. By our negative influence we are saying to those watching us: "Follow me, and you can go to hell".

Yes, you can go to hell, that is, it is possible for you to go there. Let us as Christians live so as never to say by our attitude and actions "you can go to hell" to those around us.

Regardless of how others may live we all have a duty to "work out our own salvation" (Phil. 2:12). Once when Calvin Coolidge was Vice President and presiding over the senate, an altercation arose between two Senators. Tempers flared, and one Senator told the other to go straight to hell. The offended Senator stormed from his seat, marched down the aisle and stood before Mt. Coolidge, who was silently leafing through a book. "Mr. President," he said, "did you hear what he said to me?" Coolidge looked up from his book and said calmly, "you know, I have been looking through the rule book. You don't have to go."

#### Questions:

- 1. List other passages which show that Jesus believed in Hell.
- 2. List other verses showing the Apostles and other writers of the New Testament warned fellow-Christians of the possibility of going to Hell.
- 3. True False False teachers are in effect telling others to go to Hell.
- 4. Why should we persuade men to obey the Gospel?
- 5. What are some ways we tell our fellow brethren they "can just go to Hell"?
- 6. What are we telling our fellow-Christians when we do not attend when we are able to?

7.	what are will telling our neignbors?
8.	What are will telling our children?
9.	What are we telling the lost?
10.	How, how often, and why are Christian to give?
11.	How can your example in effect tell people they can just go to Hell?
Applic	eation & Discussion:
1.	How would your giving be effected if it was Jesus who was passing the collection plate with his nail scared hands?
2.	In what ways are spouses telling the spouse "you can just go to Hell"?
Home	work: We cautious this week not to in effect tell people they can just go to Hell. Instead, by your words and conduct show them the way to Heaven.

# Do You Really Want to Go to Heaven?

The five physicians were attending James Smithson, founder of the Smithsonian Institute, all had different diagnosis as to what was ailing the famous chemist. Their amplified squabbling finally induced Smithson to remark: "Why don't you perform an autopsy to discover what is the matter with me? I am dying to know what my ailment is." Smithson is right! There are some things that can only be known for sure after death. Many are curious as to what heaven is like. The only way to experience heaven is by way of a hearse.

Yet, not everyone believes in heaven. One man who questioned the idea of heaven as absurd saying, "Now look here, preacher, you have worried me. I am bothered. How in the world will I ever get my shirt down over my wings?" The preacher replied, "Now look here, you ain't got no problem at all. Your problem will not be, 'How will I get my shirt down over my wings?' but, 'How will I get my hat down over my horns?" Some like this man have concluded that...

# **Heaven is a Mere Myth**

John Lennon wrote in 1971 a song titled *IMAGINE* "Imagine there's no heaven, It's easy if you try. No Hell below us, above us only sky".

Other religions dismiss heaven as a myth. In the comprehensive work on yoga by Mishra called *The Textbook of Yoga Psychology.* "Heaven and hell are the products of man's mind." Alfred North Whitehead wrote: "Can you imagine anything more appallingly idiotic than the Christian idea of heaven? What kind of deity is it that would be capable of creating angels and men to sing his praises day and night to all eternity? It is, of course, the figure of an Oriental despot, with his inane and barbaric vanity. Such a conception is an insult to God" (Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead, 1953).

Oddly enough it is not only atheists and world religions, but also some "Christian" religions which reject the idea of heaven as a fancy myth. Unitarian Universalism confesses the following: "it seems safe to say that no Unitarian Universalist believes in a resurrection of the body, a literal heaven or hell, or any kind of eternal punishment". Christian Science, founded by Mary Baker Eddy, teaches that there is no death. They believe that heaven and hell are states of thought, not places. To her people experience their own heaven or hell right here on earth.

Accordingly, death is all there is and there is no resurrection to a better life. If so, the Christian life is a futile existence. Nothing has any meaning if death is the end. Paul wrote, "Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable" (1 Cor. 15:12-19). Those who believe in the resurrection, also believe...

#### Heaven Is a Real Place

Heaven is not a state of mind on earth. The City of God is not a "pie-in the-sky" fantasy. Some

view eternal life as a carrot dangling in front of the plowing mule, who is to dense to know that no matter how far he goes he will never sink his teeth into it. Heaven is a real place, not a myth or a cruel joke.

The word "heaven" is used in three distinct ways in Scriptures: 1) the atmospheric heavens, *ilel*, the sky; 2) the celestial heaven, i.e., outer space. the universe, thus, "heaven and earth" and 3) the perfect and eternal abode of God. In the Greek it is *ouranos* -"That which is raised up". It appears 284 times in the New Testament . It is this heaven that is under discussion.

The human soul has always longed for heaven. The Egyptians inscribed the name "yaru" or heaven upon the walls of the ancient pyramids. This longing for a better realm of existence has often been the subject of modern literature. Frank Baum wrote in the *the Wizard of oz* of a odd group in search of the Wizard of Emerald City. Sir James *Barrie's Peter* Pan is living is a magical place called Never-Never Land. Louis Carrol wrote that Alice had her Wonderland. Every fairy tale engages a fantasy world where time stops and problems fade.

Throughout the history of mankind on this planet generations have longed for a place of supernatural bliss. The Greek and Roman religions had their Elysium, an abode of recompense for the righteous dead. The Germans and Scandinavians had Valhalla were the dead had the capability of continuing the enjoyments of mortal existence. North American Indians look forward to the happy hunting grounds after this temporal life. Buddhism's heaven is called Nirvana, a condition of obliteration of all yearning and of oneness with Brahma, the creator god. Islam's Qur'an describes various levels of heaven each filled with fleshly delights.

All these concepts of heaven pale in comparison to the place described by the writers of the New Testament. If you really want to know what heaven is like you need to listen to someone who is there. Jesus did not believe heaven to be a "myth" or "state of mind" or "dream". On two different occasions He called it "a place" (topos). He told His disciples, "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2,3). Notice that He called it a "house" (oikos). Jesus taught His disciples that Heaven is just as real a place as our home.

C.S. Lewis wrote in *The Problem of Pain*, "But either there is 'pie in the sky' (reference to "heaven", drv) or there is not. If there is not, then Christianity is false, for this doctrine is woven into its whole fabric. If there is, then this truth, like any other, must be faced, whether it is useful at political meetings or no." Either Christ lied about heaven being a real place or there is a heaven.

A little boy stood on a windy hillside, flying his kite. he continued to release the string of the kite, and it went higher and higher until it was completely out of sight. Someone asked the little boy how he knew there was still a kite on the other end. He replied, "I know it's there; I feel it tugging on the line." Heaven may not be seen with human eyes, but by faith we feel it tugging at our souls.

# Are You Packing to Go to Heaven?

Heaven is a real place, not just a myth. God has promised heaven to faithful believers, in virtually every book of the New Testament. What preparations are you making now to lay hold of the promise of heaven when life is over. Have you started packing for Heaven? First, yet us consider some things not to pack for Heaven.

Do not bother to pack any tissue. Why? Because there will be no tears in heaven. Revelation 21:4 states, "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Neither shall there be any more pain", so leave the aspirin behind.

On every trip you make it is a good idea to pack something to eat and drink. Again, the book of Revelation tells us that the inhabitants of Heaven will neither hunger or thirst. No need to save packing room for snacks and drinks. "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was

the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Rev. 22:1-2).

Our lives have become so involved and fast paced that it is hard to get away from work, even when on a long trip. Packing some paper work in a brief case to help catch up on some overdue duties is not that unusual. In the United States there are an estimated 40,000 different occupations. The good news is, Heaven is a place of rest from our labors. One of the seven beatitudes in the book of Revelation states: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them." (Rev. 14:13). This in no way means that there will be nothing to do in heaven. Instead there will be freedom to worship God without the interference of work schedules and persecution.

It is wise to make sure you have enough cash, travelers checks, credit or debit cards before you embark on a trip. The great things about going to heaven is, Your money is no good in your Father's house. No need to pack money for the trip to Heaven because the streets are paved with gold. Surely Heaven is a spiritual realm where the streets are not literally paved with gold. However, it is a place that is beautiful and fill with every rich blessing of God. Money is a tool of this material realm not a treasure in heaven.

Money can get a man into many places today, but money cannot get a man into heaven. No we can't take it with us. Have you ever seen a hearse pulling a u-haul? Jesus informed His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:19-21).

With skin cancer such a concern for many, packing a hat when going on a trip is a healthy idea. Unless, that is, you are packing for heaven. In heaven God will award each of His faithful children a crown of life (Rev 2: 10; 2 Tim 4:6-8). In his letters to the seven churches of Asia Jesus told the church at Smyrna: "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev 2: 10).

Since the body needs constant upkeep and maintenance it is a good idea to pack some personal hygiene products like deodorant. If you are packing for heaven leave out the deodorant. Why? Man is made up of two parts. When we die, the physical body remains here in the grave and the spirit returns to God who gave it. The Bible speaks of us receiving a "new" body. One not the same but of different quality and type. It will be an incorruptible body (1 Cor. 15:42,51-54); a spiritual body (1 Cor 15:44); and like His (Christ's) glorious body (Phil. 3:20,21).

If your travels require that you camp out or drive during the night it is practical to pack a flashlight. Yet, this is totally unnecessary if you are packing for heaven, because "There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever" (Rev. 22:5).

When packing for heaven you will not even need a calendar or a watch. Because if Heaven is your destination, when you get there you will only spend one day, and that day will last forever.

Now that you have seen what not to pack. Let us take at look of some items that should be on your packing list for the trip to heaven.

First, like anyone making a long journey you will need to pack a map for directions. Some people feel that a map to heaven is unnecessary. They claim that all sincere people will be going to Heaven. Yet, Paul at one time persecuted Christians with a sincere conscious, yet he had to repent. The Lord appeared to him on the road to Damascus to give him directions on where to he must go next. Others are trusting in their good moral life to get them to heaven. No one deserves heaven, You will not go to heaven because you are just so good that God had to let you in. Paul said, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Still many will take refuge in the fact that they are religious. However, the Pharisees were the most "religious" people in their day. Yet, Jesus warned that they were in danger of missing heaven (Matthew 23). Perhaps, the most popular belief is that all roads lead to Heaven. Jesus did not teach or believe this. As a matter of fact He clearly told His disciples that

there is, but two roads or ways in life and only one of them leads to Heaven. Jesus said, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13,14). Some will exclaim, "Only one road to Heaven! Isn't that narrowminded". Truth by its very nature is narrow. This can be said about music and many other areas of life. When it comes to mathematics 2+2 = 4. Only one answer will do. In the chemical laboratory there is no room for broad-mindedness. For example, water is composed of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen. The slightest deviation can be fatal. A high school chemistry teacher drove this point home to his students with a little bit of poetry.

Little Willy was a chemist now little Willy is no more what Willy though was H2O was really H2SO4.

Remember, the Bible. God's Word is the only book that contains the map to heaven.

As you begin you journey to heaven start off right by packing that map: the Word of God. In it you will find that you need to be saved from your sins. To be saved from your sins you must be baptized. So when packing for Heaven, make sure you include you baptismal certificate. That is, make sure you have been properly baptized. In preaching his sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter convicted many of their sins. Thus, they cried out to the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter told them to, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Some denominational churches disagree. Instead, they say that all one needs to do to be saved is to believe in Christ. However, Jesus said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark. 16:16). So, what are you going do listen to some denominational creed or the words of Jesus Himself right out of the pages of your Bible. The Savior said "belief plus baptism equals salvation". Some preachers teach belief equals salvation then you can be baptized. Surely all baptisms are not the same. So when packing for Heaven make sure your baptism is the kind that Jesus commanded.

Although it may sound odd, you need to pack your anchor. Just what is meant by packing an anchor for Heaven? The Hebrew writer explains, "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast..." (Heb. 6:19). If your voyage home to heaven is likened unto a ship upon the sea of life, you will sail on troubled waters. The Devil does not want you to dock our ship in the haven called heaven. He wants to destroy your anchor so that you will lose stability in the time of life's storms and give up all hope of reaching Heaven. What would life be without hope? The farmer plants in hope harvesting a crop. The worker labors all week long in hope of receiving a paycheck. The Christian journey's through life's troubled seas in hope of reaching Heaven.

Not only should you pack your anchor, don't forget to pack your passport. A passport is "an official warrant certifying the citizenship of the bearer when traveling abroad." The ancient city of Philippi was a Roman colony, where citizens were mostly retired soldiers, given full citizenship in the "mother" city Rome. Though far from Rome, they dressed Roman, spoke Latin, observed Roman morals, and were governed by Roman magistrates. They were to live according to the laws and standards of Rome. Roman in every way though far from Rome. As Christians, your citizenship is in Heaven "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20). You live in this world, but are not of this world. You are to live according to the moral and ethical principles of heaven as revealed from God regardless of the standards proclaimed by the world around you. The Christian travels through life as a pilgrim. He has no permanent dwelling place on this earth. He knows his time on this planet it limited. As a traveler, he is on a journey home to Heaven with a passport in hand which verifies his citizenship.

Before embarking on a trip which will require one to stay in a hotel over night, reservations must be made to secure a room. As Christians packing for heaven do not forget your reservations. If you

have not made reservations for Heaven it is time to look to Jesus. Just before His death, Jesus told his disciples, "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (Jn. 14:1-3). Perhaps a better word than "mansions" would be "dwelling places" or "rooms". Nonetheless, think how terrifying it would be to come to the end of life's journey only to find out that you failed to reserve a room in Heaven. It has been truly said, "Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people".

Often people of joke about smuggling someone on a trip packed inside a suitcase. However, this is no joke. When packing for Heaven take as many people with you as possible. If you value Heaven and your own soul you should also hold in high esteem the souls of others. The life of a Christians is not one of solitude. God designed the church for the mutual encouragement of His children. Christians will not make it to heaven alone. The lost will not find their way to heaven without the help of Christians. Therefore, it is time to help each other pack for the trip.

0,	Where are you in relation to heaven? How far have you traveled? The trip to Heaven can be a long journey. Remember, life travels by so quickly. If you are planning on going to Heaven, it is later than you think. It is time to get packing.		
Quest	ions:		
1.	Can any man really grasp the nature of Heaven on this side of the grave? Explain.		
2.	List religions that do not believe in a real Heaven.		
3.	What are the consequences if there is not resurrection from the dead?		
4.	In what three ways is the term "heaven" used in the Bible?		
5.	Make a list of cultures and religious which believe in a form of heaven and their particular names for these.		
6.	Show from the Scriptures that Jesus beleived in Heaven.		
7.	Why not need for aspirin or tissues in Heaven?		

What does Revelation 14:13 tells us about Heaven?

8.

9.	Why no need to bring money or gold into Heaven?
10.	Show from the Scriptures that we will have a new body in Heaven? What is the nature of this new body?
11.	What is the road map to Heaven? Who gave us this map?
12.	What is the Christian's anchor? How does it help us go to Heaven?
13.	How does one "make reservations" for Heaven?
Applic	eation & Discussion:
1.	How ready are you to go to Heaven at this moment?
2.	What sort of things can a Chritians do every day in preparation for Heaven?
Home	work: If you are serious about going to Heaven, start packing today?