

Disciple Magazine



Equipping believers for deeper life

Vol. 3, Issue 22
November 28, 2011

Practical Holiness

Living the Eternal Every Day

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Practical Holiness

By J. C. Ryle

It is a solemn thing to hear the Word of God saying “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). I shall endeavor, by God’s help, to examine what true holiness is, and the reason why it is so needful.

First, then, let me try to show what true practical holiness is. A man may go great lengths, and yet never reach true holiness. It is not knowledge—Balaam had that; nor great profession—Judas Iscariot had that; nor doing many things—Herod had that; nor zeal for certain matters in religion—Jehu had that; nor morality and outward respectability of conduct—the young ruler had that; nor taking pleasure in hearing preachers—the Jews in Ezekiel’s time had that; yet none of these was holy! These things alone are not holiness.

What then is true practical holiness? Let me try to draw a picture of holiness, that we may see it clearly before the eyes of our minds. Only let it never be forgotten, when I have said all, that my account is but a poor imperfect outline at the best.

1) Holiness is the habit of being of one mind with God, according as we find His mind described in Scripture. It is the habit of agreeing in God’s judgment—hating what He hates, loving what He loves—and measuring everything in this world by the standard of His Word. He who most entirely agrees with God, he is the most holy man.

2) A holy man will endeavor to shun every known sin, and to keep every known commandment. He will have a hearty desire to do God’s will—a greater fear of displeasing Him than of displeasing the world, and a love to all His ways. He will feel what Paul felt when he said, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom. 7:22), and what David felt when he said, “I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way” (Ps. 119:128).

3) A holy man will strive to be like our Lord Jesus Christ. He will not only live the life of faith in Him, and draw from Him all his daily peace and strength, but he will also labor to have the mind that was in Him, and to be “conformed to His image” (Rom. 8:29). It will be his aim to bear with and forgive others, even as Christ forgave us—to be unselfish, even as Christ pleased not Himself; to walk in

love, even as Christ loved us; to be lowly-minded and humble, even as Christ made Himself of no reputation and humbled Himself.

He will remember that Christ came not to do His own will—that He was meek and patient under undeserved insults; that He was full of love and compassion to sinners; that He was bold and uncompromising in denouncing sin; that He sought not the praise of men, when He might have had it; that He went about doing good; that He was separate from worldly people.

He will lay to heart the saying of John, “He that saith he abideth in Christ ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked” (1 John 2:6); and the saying of Peter, that “Christ suffered for us leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps” (1 Pet. 2:21). Happy is he who has learned to make Christ his “all,” both for salvation and example!

4) A holy man will follow after meekness, longsuffering, gentleness, patience, kind tempers, and government of his tongue. He will bear much, forbear much, overlook much, and be slow to talk of standing on his rights. We see a bright example of this in the behavior of David when Shimei cursed him, and of Moses when Aaron and Miriam spoke against him (2 Sam. 16:10; Num. 12:3).

5) A holy man will follow after temperance and self-denial. He will labor to mortify the desires of his body to restrain his carnal inclinations, lest at any time they break loose. Oh, what a word is that of the Lord Jesus to the Apostles, “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life” (Luke 21:34); and that of the Apostle Paul, “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27).

6) A holy man will follow after charity and brotherly kindness. He will be full of affection towards his brethren—towards their bodies, their property, their characters, their feelings, their souls. “He that loveth another,” says Paul, “hath fulfilled the law” (Rom. 13:8). He will abhor all lying, slandering, backbiting, cheating,

dishonesty, and unfair dealing, even in the least things. Alas, what condemning words are the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians, and the Sermon on the Mount, when laid alongside the conduct of many professing Christians!

7) A holy man will follow after a spirit of mercy and benevolence towards others. He will strive to be useful in his day and generation, and to lessen the spiritual wants and misery around him, as far as he can. Such was Dorcas, “*full of good works and almsdeeds*” (Acts 9:36). Such a one was Paul: “*I will very gladly spend and be spent for you...though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved*” (2 Cor. 12:15).

8) A holy man will follow after purity of heart. He will dread all filthiness and uncleanness of spirit, and seek to avoid all things that might draw him into it. He knows his own heart is like tinder, and will diligently keep clear of the sparks of temptation. Who shall dare to talk of strength when David can fall? There is many a hint to be gleaned from the ceremonial law. Under it the man who only touched a bone, or a dead body, or a grave, or a diseased person, became at once unclean in the sight of God.

10) A holy man will follow after the fear of God. I do not mean the fear of a slave, who only works because he is afraid of punishment, and would be idle if he did not dread discovery. I mean rather the fear of a child, who wishes to live and move as if he was always before his father’s face, because he loves him. What a noble example Nehemiah gives us of this!

11) A holy man will follow after humility. He will desire, in lowliness of mind, to esteem all others better than himself. He will see more evil in his own heart than in any other in the world. He will understand something of Abraham’s feeling, when he says, “*I am dust and ashes,*” and Jacob’s, when he says, “*I am less than the least of all Thy mercies,*” and Paul’s, when he says, “*I am chief of sinners.*”

12) A holy man will follow after faithfulness in all the duties and relations in life. He will try, not merely to fill his place as well as others who take no thought for their souls, but even better, because he has higher motives, and more help than they. Those words of Paul should never be forgotten, “*Whatever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord*” (Col. 3:23). Holy persons should strive to be good husbands and good wives, good parents and good children, good masters and good servants, good neighbors, good friends, good subjects, good in private and good in public, good in the place of business and good by their firesides. Holiness is worth little indeed, if it does not bear this kind of fruit.

13) Last, but not least, a holy man will follow after spiritual mindedness. He will endeavor to set his affections entirely on things above, and to hold things on

earth with a very loose hand. He will not neglect the business of the life that now is, but the first place in his mind and thoughts will be given to the life to come. He will aim to live like one whose treasure is in heaven, and to pass through this world like a stranger and pilgrim traveling to his home. He will value every thing and place and company, just in proportion as it draws him nearer to God. He will enter into something of David’s feeling, when he says, “*my soul followeth hard after Thee*” (Ps. 63:8).

But I do not say for a moment that holiness shuts out the presence of indwelling sin. No, far from it. It is the greatest misery of a holy man that he carries about with him a “*body of death*” that often when he would do good “*evil is present with him,*” that the old man is clogging all his movements, and, as it were, trying to draw him back at every step he takes (Rom. 7:21). But it is the excellence of a holy man that he is not at peace with indwelling sin, as others are. He hates it, mourns over it, and longs to be free from its company.

Neither do I say that holiness comes to ripeness and perfection all at once—far from it. Sanctification is always a progressive work. Some men’s graces are in the blade, some in the ear, and some are like full corn in the ear. All must have a beginning. And sanctification in the very best is an imperfect work. The holiest men have many a blemish and defect when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. Their life is a continual warfare with sin, the world, and the devil; and sometimes you will see them not overcoming, but overcome. The flesh is ever lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh (Gal. 5:17).

But still, for all this, I am sure that to have such a character as I have faintly drawn, is the heart’s desire and prayer of all true Christians. They press towards it, if they do not reach it. They may not attain to it, but they always aim at it. It is what they strive and labor to be, if it is not what they are. Well says Owen, “I do not understand how a man can be a true believer unto whom sin is not the greatest burden, sorrow and trouble.”

But this I confidently say, that true holiness is a great reality. It is light—if it exists, it will show itself. It is salt—if it exists, its savor will be perceived. It is a precious ointment—if it exists, its presence cannot be hid.

From *Holiness*, excerpted in *Pulpit Helps*, August 2000.

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900), the Anglican bishop of Liverpool, was a faithful preacher of God’s Word, a prolific writer, and a fearless advocate of biblical principles in the public square.

Thoughts on Prayer

By Curtis Brickley

What does the Christian, the most ardent Christ-follower, look like if they are completely isolated from other people? The inmate in solitary confinement? The rancher on a 30,000 acre ranch in eastern Montana where there is no church for 100 miles? If you strip away all of the “doing” of God’s work, all of the ministry, all of the business, and are left only with the “being” with God; what would your relationship with Him look like?

You know, I learned how to work with my father. He had a tremendous work ethic and he passed it on to me. But my father and I never just spent time just being together. We never went fishing or played catch. We never talked about life, God or important things...we worked! We dug post-holes, built fence, cleared land, took care of animals, etc.

I wonder how much of that I have carried into my relationship with my Heavenly Father?

In my opinion, woven into the answers of each of these questions is prayer—a subject I like to think I have a good, firm grasp on. At least, I used to think I had a firm grasp on.

In prayer, the man of God abides with his Heavenly Father. And it is in abiding that the individual life, whether isolated or not, is able to bear fruit (John 15) that will withstand the testing flames to which each person’s work will be subjected one day (1 Cor. 3:13).

In prayer, we exercise the greatest faith and we show the deep trust we have for our Almighty God and the promises He has made to us, His children. In prayer, we surrender all hope of personal or public recognition. There will be no fanfare, no parade, no “atta-boys”, no pats on the back, and most often there will be no visible, tangible reward for the investment of time spent in prayer.

In prayer, the power of God is on display for eternal purposes; the heavens are closed up (James 5:17), mountains are moved and all things are possible (Matthew 17:20)! Prayer is the great leveler, the power invoker, and the common thread that binds all believers to the uncommon, miraculous, salvific work that has been given to our Lord Jesus of redeeming every man, woman and child of every tribe, tongue and nation (John 17:1).

Prayer is not merely a task or a goal or a tool to achieve ministerial, material or marital success. Prayer is the life-blood of a long, slow, intimate, deep, dependent, deliberate and abiding walk with our Loving Father and All-Powerful Creator. Ministry “results” produced out of anything other than that kind of relationship are but wood, hay, and stubble. These “results” will one day be reduced to ashes, blown softly about in the courtyards beyond eternity’s gates (1 Cor. 3:10-14).

I am afraid that in our churches today, prayer has been devalued, marginalized, and has become a token add-on to our Christian walk. Too often, we enter into the great throne room of grace cavalierly, without regard to the power and prestige of such an honor. It sometimes seems like we are children using a nuclear weapon to mischievously light a cigarette.

To extend that metaphor, every believer kneels within reach of a spiritual, big, red nuclear button! Unfortunately, most Christians think they are stuck in the factory, merely making bullets for another man’s gun. The war that we are engaged in is not conventional, nor are our weapons conventional. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 tells us, “*for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.*”

It seems reasonable to me that the war we fight with unconventional weapons is actually a relationship. In our abiding, the war is won! In our abiding there is peace! In our abiding, darkness flees and has no hope; it shrinks back into the rapidly receding shadows cast mercilessly by Jehovah God’s Shekinah Glory.

I received this note below from someone I would consider a faithful “prayer warrior” in the U.S. the other day. She said, “...But here I am still in this city—waiting to be ‘*clothed with power from on high,*’ waiting to be sent to participate in the spreading of the Gospel to all nations. When you pray for me, pray that that my lamp won’t go out, or my eyes grow sleepy; that I will be dressed and ready, waiting with joy, continually praising God until I hear the bridegroom coming for me.”

Oh, that she would know she is fully “*clothed with power from on high*”; that she is participating “in the spreading of the gospel to all nations”! Oh, that our brothers and sisters in Christ would know the power of prayer. Oh, that we would all know it is in the being that eternal fruit springs forth from the surrendered life.

Oh, that the Lord would teach me to enter into that abiding walk with Him. And only in that deep, dependent, intimate, abiding walk would my soul be completely satisfied. Lord teach us to be satisfied in you and only you.

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Why We Don't "Deserve It"

By Shea Oakley

People often talk about the prospect of those whom they love or respect receiving something good in their lives in terms of them "deserving it". This is a regular part of the congratulatory vernacular of most people today, including many Christians. Unfortunately it does not reflect spiritual truth. Strictly speaking, none who have walked the Earth since Adam and Eve's fall "deserve" anything good happening to them.

The idea that people do owes more to hyper-individualism and the pride that it too often engenders. In a secular culture where "self-esteem" is most often derived from man rather than God, the use of such phraseology is to be expected and should not be particularly shocking. What is a bit surprising is how often believers jump on the "deserve it" bandwagon when a blessing from God is bestowed on someone or some group.

Devout and biblically-informed Christians in earlier eras of the Church generally had no such illusions about blessings. Rather than exclaiming how deserving the recipient was, they were far more apt to praise God for His mercy and grace when something good happened to anyone. Christians of the past knew that no sinner, even a redeemed one, had earned blessing in and of themselves. They recognized that in a Christian context, the very idea was oxymoronic. So should we.

I understand that telling someone whom we regard highly that they "deserve" a good job or spouse or a nice home comes very naturally to us and is our way of expressing personal regard and respect. But it does not do the recipient any good. It certainly does not help them to understand the grace of God and it may well hinder such an understanding. How can they grasp the idea of "unmerited favor" when we are telling them that such favor is merited by their actions? In our good intentions, we are only giving them reason for pride and an accompanying sense of entitlement.

You might object that when someone does a good job they at least deserve accolades for doing it. This may be true, but keep this in mind: no one has the power to do good in and of himself, no one. Every good thing we do in this life is made possible by God. Such things may come

through common grace (in the case of unbelievers) or sanctifying grace (in the case of Christians) but, either way, they come from God not us.

I am not trying to make a case for making someone feel rotten when something nice happens to them. I am simply saying that it is untrue to say that anyone is intrinsically deserving of good. When that nice thing happens, we would do better to say something like "Praise God for blessing you with that job (wife, home, etc.). I'm so happy that He did this thing for you because I love you and it is wonderful to see how much He loves you too."

To shift from "I'm happy for you, you deserve it" to "I'm happy for you, praise God for His love" may not come easily for those of us who have taken in the colloquialisms of the world without even being consciously aware of it. Indeed I must confess that I have been among those who have said "you deserve it", but I say it less and less as time goes on and I get a better idea of how little good I deserve and how much good I am given by God anyway.

Part of the sanctification of postmodern, Western Christians is a gradual rejection of things that postmodern, Western culture tells us are justified in favor of things the Justifier would have us adopt as His children. Giving up the phrase "you deserve it" may not seem like a very important part of that process, and it may not be, but it is a part of it nonetheless.

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Exegetically Speaking—by Spiros Zodhiates

The Return of the Son of Man: Part 2 of 3

Matthew 24:31-16

From Exegetical Commentary on Matthew, 2006, AMG Publishers

[31] There are three places where we find the phrase "shall send (from *apostéllō* [649] from *apó* [575], from; and *stéllō* [4724], to send; 'to send off from') his angels": Matthew 13:41; 24:31, and Mark 13:27. These all

refer to the final separation of the righteous from the wicked who are cast into eternal fire at the consummation of the age (Matt. 13:39–42). Both here and in Mark 13:27 we read that the “*elect*” are gathered from “*the four winds*,” probably the four points of the compass—“the four corners of the earth.”

“*His angels* (from *áγγελος* [32])” are all ministering (from *leitourgikós* [3010]) spirits who serve the needs of the “*heirs of salvation*” (Heb. 1:14). They are closely associated with Christ’s incarnation and subsequent comings. An angel brought “*tidings of great joy*” (Luke 2:10) at the birth of Jesus our Savior. Each occasion of a sinner’s repentance heralds a message of great joy to the messengers in heaven (Luke 15:10), implying that angels carry the good news of salvation in both directions. Their numbers are very great (Matt. 26:53; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 5:11).

Jesus Christ will send angels to earth at the consummation of the age (Matt. 13:39–42) to gather believers and unbelievers for judgment at the end of the Tribulation. But this coming (*parousía*) is subsequent to the rapture of believers (1 Thess. 4:16–17). This event will truly be the arrival (*parousía*) of the Lord Jesus to the earth, His coming to sit on His glorious throne (Matt. 25:31).

The final ingathering of unbelievers and believers at “*the consummation of the age*” is mentioned in Matthew 24:3 and in the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24–30). The wheat represents the seed of the Gospel that grows and bears fruit, and the tares represent the work of the devil (verses 38–39). These two, the wheat and the tares, will coexist on earth until the Lord sends His angels to make a final separation at the time of harvest. These events constitute the consummation of the age.

The gathering of believers will be worldwide. “*With a great trumpet*,” Jesus will send out His angels to “*gather together* (from *episunágō* [1996] from *epí* [1909], upon; and *sunágō* [4863], to lead; to bring together, to group) *His elect*” (a.t.). In 2 Thessalonians 2:1, a form of the related noun *episunagōgē* (1997) is used in conjunction with the “*coming*” (*parousía*) of the Lord and “*our gathering together unto him*.”

[32] “*Now learn* (*máthete*, the aorist active imperative of *manthánō* [3129], to learn),” Jesus continued, “*a parable of the fig tree*.” The aorist tense means “learn once and for all!”

“*Disciples*” (verse 3) are *mathētaí* (from *mathētēs* [3101]), learners. In the matter of prophecy, Jesus gave neither a simple chronology nor a series of exact dates regarding His return. Matthew 24 and 25 together constitute the longest reply Jesus ever gave to such a short question. Because the events that point to His return are not easily discernible, people will begin to mock the prophecies (2 Pet. 3:3–5). But Peter said “*that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*” (2 Pet. 3:8).

The signs mentioned in Matthew 24:4–14 can be misconstrued because they are general in character. But the signs given in verses 15–28 are specific and discernible. Then in verse 29 the sun, the moon, and the stars will be involved, signs that immediately follow the seven-year period of the Great Tribulation. These signs point clearly to Christ’s appearance on earth. In the same way, the fig tree, when “*its twigs get tender and its leaves come out*” (NIV), points to summer’s approach.

[33] Jesus said that if we are alert when we “*shall see all these things*” take place, we will then “*know*” (from *ginōskō* [1097], to experientially know) that the coming of the Lord is “*near*” (*eggús* [1451]), at the very doors. The adjective *eggús* is relative and should be contrasted to *hēkō* (2240), to be here, to arrive (2 Pet. 3:10). “*These things*” refers to the sensational heavenly disturbances referred to in verse 29. Through these visible events, the Lord will knock at the doors of people’s hearts.

[34, 35] Jesus concluded His teaching with these words, “*Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled*.” When the sun and moon are darkened and stars fall from the skies, Jesus advised us to realize that the end is near. These events will take place in rapid succession.

The word “*generation*” (*geneá* [1074]) means the average duration of a human life. In the age of the patriarchs, a generation spanned about one hundred years (cf. Gen. 15:13, 16 with Ex. 12:40, 41). However, as the ravages of sin slowly deteriorated the average span to three score and ten or seventy years (Ps. 90:10), we find the term “*generation*” narrowing down to approximately forty years. Thus, the generation that grieved the Lord in the desert died out in forty years (Ps. 95:10). The period from the beginning of the Babylonian Captivity (586 B.C.) to Christ, specified in Matthew 1:17 as fourteen “*generations*,” yields five hundred and eighty-six fourteenths or about forty-two years per generation. Ancient Greeks counted three generations in each one hundred years, or about thirty-three and one-third years each.

In general, Jesus taught that the generation that “*see[s] all these things*” (verse 33) will not pass away without witnessing the completion of all the events prophesied. “*All these things*” were typically fulfilled in the forty years from A.D. 30 to 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed. Jerusalem’s destruction was a sign for believers to prepare for the rapture of His church and *parousía*. Typical fulfillment of prophecy enhances imminence—the nearness of the Lord’s return.

Imminence in these verses refers to Christ’s coming in judgment after the Tribulation period and is aimed squarely at unbelievers; as Paul says, “*Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief*” (1 Thess. 5:4). The parable of the fig tree helps us realize how rapidly the events predicted will take place. Lack of preparation is not excused: the evil servant who in verse 48

says, “*My lord delayeth* (from *chronízō* [5549] from *chrónos* [5550], a space of time; see also Matt. 25:5; Luke 12:45; Heb. 10:37) *his coming*,” is assigned a place with the hypocrites. Christ will come as a welcome (from *apekdéchomai* [553]) liberator to the elect in the end times but as a plundering thief in the night (Matt. 24:43; Luke 12:39; 1 Thess. 5:2-4; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3; 16:15) to unbelievers.

[36] Jesus continued, “*But of that day and hour knoweth* (from *eidō* [1492], the aorist of *horáo* [3708], to see and perceive with emphasis on perception) *no man* (*oudeís* [3762] from *ou* [3756] “not”; *dé* [1161], even; and *heís* [1520], one; “not even a single man”), *no, not the angels of heaven, but* (*ei* [1487], “if”; and *mē* [3361], “not”; i.e., “if not”) *my Father only* (*mónos* [3441]).

Mark 13:32 adds a significant detail: “*But of that day or hour* (*ē* [2228], or *hōras* [5610], exact hour) *no man knows, nor* (*oudé* [3761]) *the angels that are in heaven, neither* (*oudē*) *the Son, but the Father*” (a.t. [MJ]). In the fourth century A.D., Arians used Mark’s text to try to disprove Christ’s deity by arguing His ignorance regarding the timing of His return. The argument is quite simple: if the Son of God does not know a particular proposition—the time of His return—He cannot be omniscient by definition, that is, knowing all propositions. The verse is difficult to exegete. Without exhausting all the logical possibilities, Jesus no doubt clearly taught that “*the Father only*” knows the time of His return, *ei mē* best interpreted as in all the English versions either as “*but*” or “*except*.”

As God, Jesus Christ is omniscient and knows all things innately. The Father does not reveal things to the Son of God as He would to an angel or a human. Since the Son of God is omniscient by definition, revelation to Him is meaningless. Innate omniscience cannot “receive” revelation.

If we take the unqualified “*Son*” here as the Son of man—not the Son of God—then we can offer the rational interpretation that the triune God, the Father, the Word, and Holy Spirit, did not reveal to the human nature of Christ (the “*Son of man*” who “*increased in wisdom*” [Luke 2:52]) the time of His return of which the *Lógos* or Infinite

Wisdom had no need of revelation. In His humanity, He may have laid aside this particular detail as He did His glory.

This is logically scriptural, and it was the mainstay argument of the most famous Greek Trinitarian in Christian history, Athanasius. It was used successfully against the Arians in the fourth century, the Nestorians in the fifth, and against every cult that has denied the Trinity since. The fact that Jesus said “*Son*” in the third person implied that the Word (*Lógos*; see John 1:1, 14), the divine Person, was speaking. In other words, the *Lógos* did not say, “I do not know” but rather, “*neither the Son* (i.e., Son of man, the third person; see Mark 13:32).” Though the end product is complex, no contradiction results from the Word incarnating in flesh. The Chalcedonian Christology accurately summarized this complexity: Jesus Christ is true God and true man, without mixture and without confusion.

When Jesus spoke of the day and hour (both singular), we should recall Peter’s words that “*one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*” (2 Pet. 3:8). He did not say one day with the Lord is one thousand of our years. He used “*as*” (*hōs* [5613]) to guard his readers from creating useless equations. The simile is anthropomorphic. Because God is timeless and immutable, He does not experience time at all. For example, He doesn’t wait for things to happen, watch a clock, or get bored and impatient.

Some events within the Day of the Lord, like the transformation of believers’ bodies to conform to Christ’s glorified body, will take place in an “*instant*” (from *átomos* [823] from *a* [1]; and *tomē* [n.f.], cut, from *témnō* [n.f.], to cut, divide; ‘indivisible time’), the “*twinkling* (*rhipē* [4493]; from *rhiptō* [4496], to cast, throw) *of an eye*,” that is, the time it takes to change the direction of a glance (1 Cor. 15:52). By definition as divisionless, an instant is timeless since time is always divisible.

Spiros Zodhiates (1922-2009) served as president of AMG International for over 40 years, was the founding editor of *Pulpit Helps Magazine* (*Disciple*’s predecessor), and authored dozens of exegetical books.

Living out the Living Word—by Justin Lonas

The Glorious Gospel of Our Blessed God

1 Timothy 1:6-17

Last month we introduced a series of expository articles on 1 and 2 Timothy. In verses 3-4 of 1 Timothy chapter 1, we saw Paul exhort Timothy to stay on in ministry at Ephesus to curtail and correct the false teaching of some in the leadership of that church. Now, Paul continues, describing further the error of these false teachers.

He has reminded Timothy that “*the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith*” (1:5), and now shows how the false teachers have a different mode of operation. “*For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying*

or the matters about which they make confident assertions” (1:6-7).

The first accusation Paul levels at the false teachers is that they are “off the reservation” when it comes to Christian motivations. Whereas Paul and those He had trained (like Timothy) were teaching the true Gospel of Christ out of a sincere gratitude for their salvation and a holy desire to reach the lost, these false teachers were looking for something else. In context, it seems as though they were seeking positions of greater influence by teaching things outside of the truth.

Secondly, Paul undercuts the teaching of these leaders, showing that they were in over their heads, teaching things that they themselves did not even understand. We don’t know exactly what they were teaching, but it was marked by a deviation from the “main thing” (the Gospel message) and the elevation of secondary issues to the level of fixation (“*fruitless discussion*”).

He tells us that they tried to teach the Law, but without grasping that the Law had been fulfilled by Christ. We know from chapter 4 that some of this teaching took the form of legalistic asceticism (“*men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created*” [4:3]). It is possible that this falsehood was rooted in the teaching of the Judiazers whose work Paul denounces in Galatians and elsewhere. Those men taught that following the Law of Moses was as necessary to salvation as the sacrifice of Christ, and Paul eviscerated their arguments by showing that “*if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly*” (Gal. 2:20).

In all these errors, however, these leaders in Ephesus were confident. Paul’s description of them sounds like Ronald Reagan’s quip about his political opponents, “it’s not that [they’re] ignorant, it’s just that they know so much that isn’t so.” They were boldly proclaiming lies and misconceptions as truth, and Paul charged Timothy to boldly refute their message and their influence with the truth of Scripture.

Paul then turns to two brief discussions that seem peripheral to the case he is making to Timothy, but that serve to intensify and shore up his position. The first is a counterpoint to the false teachers’ views that places the Law in its full context, interpreted in the light of Christ’s work on the cross. “*But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted*” (1:8-11).

Paul reaffirms his teaching from other epistles (notably Romans and Galatians) that the Law cannot save

anyone, but serves to convict mankind of sin by revealing the holy standard of God. The Law is not for the righteous (i.e. – those who have been given God’s righteousness through the blood of Christ) but serves as a “*tutor*” (Rom. 2:20, Gal. 3:24-25), teaching the ungodly of their depravity and need for a Savior.

The rigmarole of sinful behaviors Paul rattles off here fits with similar lists in Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6, and elsewhere, though commentators note that the last few sins here mirror the 5-9th of the Ten Commandments. Paul’s point whenever he makes such a list is to show the gamut of sins mankind is guilty of to make sure that anyone who might consider himself righteous finds some sin in his own heart and to show the depth and breadth of Christ’s forgiveness. The law points up “*whatever...is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God*” to show us just how much we need that Gospel.

Paul then moves from his statement about the Law to a statement of his own personal testimony. He says at the end of verse 11 that he has been “*entrusted*” with the Gospel, and then briefly shares his story: “*I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus*” (1:12-14). He builds on his earlier point by showing that God was using him to spread the Gospel, in spite of his past life of heinous sin, because of His abounding Grace.

Continuing his story, Paul interprets his own salvation in light of the “big picture” of God’s glorification: “*It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life*” (1:15-16). Don’t miss what he is saying here—the scope and public nature of his sin served to amplify his witness for Christ. He says that Christ chose him, not because he was a righteous man, but **because** the depth of his sin would bring God great glory through his redemption!

This is really the crux of Paul’s entire argument, not just in the Pastoral Epistles, but throughout his ministry—“*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*” Jesus said, “*It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners*” (Mark 2:17). This is the touchstone of the Gospel, that none of us are righteous, but that we are made righteous through the cleansing blood of Christ. The message of Christ is one of total grace; we have nothing to offer God, but He loves us and redeems to

showcase His own glory. Our works and efforts to follow the Law in our own strength come to nothing, and are, at heart, a rebellion against the free gift God offers.

It is because of this “upside-down” nature of the Gospel (which, in contrast to every other religion, disregards man’s efforts for his own salvation) that Paul can make such bold statements. While Christians, through the Spirit’s leading, are able to put their faith in action through good works, we know that we can’t ever earn our way into heaven. While Christians take joy in living in obedience to God’s Word, “doing the right thing” should never be the ultimate focus of our faith. What Paul demonstrates so profoundly is that owning our sin is crucial to the witness of the Gospel. If we present ourselves as anything other than sinners saved by grace, our proclamation of truth to the world will smack of “holier than thou” condemnation and undercut the glorious message.

It is for this mind-boggling reality of redemption that Paul proclaims praise: “*Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen*” (1:17). If anyone other than God receives the glory and credit for our life change and for any good things we do, we are robbing Him and proclaiming another gospel “*which is really no gospel at all*” (Gal. 1:7 NIV).

This is the message which Paul has entrusted to Timothy and which he is urging him to cling to and defend against falsehood with all his strength. It is for the sake of the Gospel that Paul commends to him everything he writes through the remainder of both epistles.

Justin Lonas is editor of *Disciple Magazine* for AMG International in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Points to Ponder—by David L. Olford

The True Message of Christmas

Text: “*This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief*” (1 Tim. 1:15).

Thought: As we approach the Christmas season, there are many words, greetings and messages shared. But, there is no message that matches the message of Christmas itself, a message found in these words of Scripture. The Apostle Paul is giving thanks for God’s grace towards him in Christ and for the privilege of being in the ministry. In the midst of these comments he presents a “*faithful saying*,” which really declares the “core” of the Christian Gospel, indeed the Christmas message. This message is worth hearing, accepting, living, and proclaiming. Why?

I. This Message is a Reliable Message

“*This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance....*” Not all messages are worth listening to nor should they be accepted or passed on to others. This message, this “*faithful saying*” is worth hearing, accepting, and proclaiming. It is true verbally—its words are true. It is true historically—its facts are historically accurate. It is true universally—it is always true and worthy of acceptance by all.

II. This Message is a Gospel Message

“*...That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners....*” This message is the ultimate good news for a world that is in desperate need. For ultimately, the greatest problem is sin and, our greatest predicament is that we are sinners deserving the judgment of a Holy God. We’ll just

ask and answer a few questions about this message to understand why it is “good news” for us today.

Who is the subject of this message? Christ Jesus: He is the answer to our problem and predicament. What did He do? He came into our world to meet us at our point of need. To say He “*came*” not only speaks of His supernatural arrival, but of His perfect life and ministry and of His suffering, death and resurrection.

When did He come? He came over 2000 years ago as a baby born supernaturally. He came at God’s time in fulfillment of many prophecies. Indeed, He came in the “*fullness of time*” (Gal. 4:4). Where did He come? He arrived specifically in Bethlehem, but as the text says, He “*came into the world.*” He came from His realm of perfection into our needy sin-filled world.

Why did He come? He came to save sinners; to provide an answer for the problem of sin and the predicament of God’s judgment and punishment. He came with grace, mercy, and love to provide a way of salvation for sinners. He took upon Himself our sin and received the punishment for our sin by dying for us and in our place. He took upon Himself the wrath and judgment of God so that sinners who accepted Him and His way of salvation could be saved from sin, judgment and eternal death.

III. This is a Personal Message

“*...Of whom I am chief.*” This message, though, is not a general announcement that deserves little or no response. Rather, it is a message that needs to be heard personally and accepted personally. In the words, “*of whom I am chief,*” we discover the Apostle Paul’s personal acceptance of this message, which is a model for us today.

This message needs to be accepted **humbly**—“*of whom I am chief.*” The Apostle Paul is admitting that he was a sinner in need of God’s mercy and grace. He accepted his need of a Savior because He acknowledged his sin. He was a “*blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man*” (vs. 13). And looking at his own life and the story of God’s grace and mercy, he could humbly say that he considered himself to be the chief of sinners. Such a declaration speaks of his humble admission of sin, his repentance and acceptance of the salvation that could be found in Christ alone.

This message needs to be accepted **meaningfully**. In the surrounding verses (13-14, 16) we gain a sense of the Apostle’s appreciation of and understanding of the Gospel. He admits that he was a sinful unbeliever in need of God’s mercy and grace (verse 13) and longsuffering (verse 16). He received abundant grace (with faith and love) and obtained God’s mercy. The Apostle even saw himself as a pattern for all who would believe on Christ for everlasting life (verse 16). This means that the Apostle himself believed on Christ Jesus, and by grace he was saved unto eternal life.

The Apostle Paul not only understood this message of Christmas, he accepted it **personally**. He accepted the message personally before he declared it publically.

This message needs to be accepted **thankfully**. In verse 17, the Apostle breaks into praise and doxology as he reflects on his salvation and his calling into the ministry. But, both his salvation and his calling are dependent on the message. This message of Christmas was what brought salvation to him, and this message was now at the core of his ministry. May we likewise be thankful for the true message of Christmas.

Thrust: The True Message of Christmas makes all the difference in the world. Have you ever really understood the message of Christmas? It is a reliable message, it is a Gospel message and it is a personal message. It can change your life today if you will truly accept it personally, meaningfully and thankfully. It not only makes all the difference in the world, and it can make all the difference in your world today.

David L. Olford teaches expository preaching at Union University’s Stephen Olford Center in Memphis, Tennessee.

The Story behind the Song—by Lindsay Terry

Rescued from the File Cabinet

Song: “Shine, Jesus, Shine”

“I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness” (John 12:46).

“Barely a day goes by without a [Graham] Kendrick song being sung by a group of Christians somewhere on the planet,” Cole Moreton wrote in London’s *The Independent* on a Sunday. Few songwriters from the United Kingdom, or any nation on earth, have touched the lives of God’s people as has Graham Kendrick.

He was born in 1950, in Northhamptonshire, England, the son of a Baptist preacher. Although he had prepared himself to be a teacher, as a young man of 22, he began his singing and songwriting career. Although his first efforts in Christian music were of the contemporary folk music style, he has moved his skills of storytelling and memorable tunes into a worship vein. As a result, his songs have penetrated deeply into almost every area of Christendom.

Graham is the cofounder of the March for Jesus movement, which had its beginning in the mid-1980s and has involved more than 55 million people over the years. They are prayer, praise, and proclamation events. Graham received a Dove Award in 1995 for his international work. In 2000, Brunei University conferred upon him an honorary

doctor of divinity degree in recognition of his contributions to the worship life of the church. At least two major hymnals have included Kendrick songs.

Graham said of his success as a songwriter, “I don’t have any formal musical training and often envy people who do. I’ve learned mainly by trial and error. I take the ‘hit and miss, try it this way, try it that way, hope for happy accidents’ approach.”

Graham’s song has become the most popular modern hymn of the last decade in the United Kingdom. Graham said, “This song is a prayer for revival. A songwriter can give people words to voice something that is already in their hearts but that they don’t have the words or the tune to express, and I think ‘Shine, Jesus, Shine’ caught a moment when people were beginning to believe once again that an impact could be made on a whole nation.”

Graham pointed me to his Web site for the story behind his famous song.

“Bearing in mind the worldwide popularity of this song, perhaps the most surprising thing about the writing of it is the ordinariness of the circumstances. I had been thinking for some time about the holiness of God, and how that as a community of believers and as individuals, His desire is for us to live continually in His presence.

“My longing for revival in the churches and spiritual awakening in the nation was growing, but also a recognition that we cannot stand in God’s presence without ‘*clean hands and a pure heart.*’ So I wrote the three verses and ‘tested’ it in my home church. Though there was clearly merit to the song, it seemed incomplete, so as I was unable at the time to take it any further, I put it back in the file. Several months later I was asked to submit new songs for a conference songbook, and as I reviewed this three-verse song, I realized that it needed a chorus. I remember standing in my music room with my guitar slung around my neck trying different approaches. The line ‘Shine, Jesus, shine’ came to mind, and within about half an hour I had finished the chorus, all but some ‘polishing.’

“Though I felt an excitement in my spirit at the time, I had no inkling at all that it would become so widely used. There were other songs I rated more highly at the time that most people have never heard of!” Graham’s story is used here by his permission.

Graham and his wife, Jill, have four daughters. The Kendricks attend Ichthus Christian Fellowship, an independent free church, where Graham serves as a member of the leadership team. They make their home in London.

The overriding message of “Shine, Jesus, Shine” is that those who follow Christ, the Light of the World, should ask Him to “set our hearts on fire,” in order that our “lives tell the story.” In that way we point men, women, boys, and girls to the Savior, “*the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man*” (John 1:9).

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Lindsay Terry has been a song historian for more than 40 years, and has written widely on the background of great hymns and worship songs including the books *I Could Sing of Your Love Forever* (2008), from which this piece is excerpted, and *The Sacrifice of Praise* (2002).

Church Builders—by Bernard R. DeRemer

Robert Wilder: Missionary Recruiter

Robert P. Wilder (1863-1938) was born of missionary parents in India. His early education was in the local native school. He accepted Christ, became a church member at about 10, and resolved to become a missionary.

His parents returned to America, and he studied at Princeton. There he took the lead in organizing the Princeton Foreign Mission Society and became its first secretary. After graduation from Princeton, he attended the College Students’ Summer School D.L. Moody conducted at Mt. Hermon, Mass., in 1886. There he “persistently promoted foreign missions” and 100 students declared their intention to go to the field.

From these beginnings, the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (SVM) emerged with Wilder as its virtual founder. Over the next year Wilder visited many colleges and universities all over the country, enlisting hundreds of missionary volunteers.

In 1887 he attended Union Theological Seminary for further preparation. The next year he was again the traveling secretary for the Movement; John R. Mott became the first chairman.

In 1891 Wilder left for India under the Presbyterian board, but he spent more than a year in Europe, helping to organize the Student Volunteer Missionary Society of Great Britain and Ireland.

He met Helene Olsson; a year later they were married and left for India, where he worked diligently among students.

His many travels would have qualified him for frequent-flier miles in today’s economy. From 1897-1899

he spent time in America on behalf of the World’s Student Christian Federation. He returned yet again to India, but in 1902 suffered a nervous breakdown. Then he went to Norway, where he and his family lived for several years. He toured Europe on behalf of foreign missions and in 1916 moved back to America, working among youth in Montclair, N.J.

In 1929 he established a new home in Cairo, Egypt, “to visit among the students and missionaries of the Near East,” but in 1933 his health failed, so he returned to Norway for the rest of his life.

In the post-World War I era (and much to Wilder’s dismay), the SVM was sadly caught up in the tide of liberalism and began to drift away from Scripture and missionary zeal in favor of a social gospel. This ultimately led to its decline and disbanding in the 1960s. Still the impact of the thousands of missionaries it recruited during its faithful decades reverberates around the world.

Wilder’s example of missions in the “backfield” of logistics, mobilization, and prayer should encourage all of us to recognize our unique gifts and roles in reaching the nations for Christ. His long record of promoting foreign missions and enlisting a multitude of volunteers for the field eminently qualified him for a “*well done, thou good and faithful servant...*” (Matt. 25:21).

Bernard R. DeRemer chronicled the lives of dozens of heroes of the faith in more than a decade of writing for *Pulpit Helps Magazine*. He continues to serve in this

capacity as a volunteer contributor to *Disciple*. He lives in West Liberty, Ohio.

References: *Who Was Who in Church History*, by Elgin S. Moyer; 1962. Wikipedia, “Student Volunteer Movement”, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Student_Volunteer_Movement.

Counselor’s Corner—by James Rudy Gray

The Damage Caused by Drugs and Alcohol

Proverbs 20:1 declares, “*Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.*” Because God’s Word is true, the truth in that one proverb is becoming increasingly more evident as we become more technologically advanced.

I have worked with alcoholics and drug addicts for over 14 years now in a Christian rehabilitation on campus ministry. The men come for eight weeks. Some transition to a halfway house for another six months to a year. Slowly, they move back into the mainstream of life.

Over the years, I am becoming more convinced that many alcoholics and drug addicts need more than a few counseling sessions or even an eight-week residential recovery program—they need a year or longer!

Dr. Todd Clements is a board certified psychiatrist who specializes in nuclear brain imaging. He writes, “Drugs and alcohol can damage brain functioning at almost every level. The prefrontal cortex (which handles cognitive processing) is especially susceptible to the effects of substance abuse. Ironically, this is the area of the brain that needs to function optimally in order for a person to have the best chance at a successful recovery.”

It takes about 30 to 45 days to break a habit and create a new and better habit. If a person goes into a typical residential rehab program, it will last for about 56 days. Then, the person tries to resume life. The problem is that they almost always need more time to heal. It is not that they cannot work. They simply cannot do it as effectively as they can a year later. Dr. Clements writes, “Brain imaging studies have demonstrated it often takes a year of sobriety to see significant changes in proper brain functioning.”

A major problem with recovering alcoholics and drug addicts is relapse. This experience often occurs because the prefrontal cortex functioning of the brain is not functioning at an optimal level. Sober living is the key. Sober living systems and communities offer a recovering alcoholic or drug addict the best option.

The idea of sober living communities is something God’s church can support and even fund. As Dr. Clements notes, “The newly sober person is given the opportunity to re-engage the ‘real world,’ but in a supportive community with clear oversight, accountability, boundaries and consequences.”

If you work with alcoholics or drug addicts, please help the recovering person achieve at least a year of sobriety. The prefrontal cortex is damaged by alcohol and drugs. It takes time for that part of the brain to improve so the addict can be stronger in his or her fight to stay clean and sober.

Many rehab centers have halfway houses for their graduates. As you may have occasion to work with these people in need, check out the centers that offer this extended time to heal and recover. It can literally save a person’s life.

James Rudy Gray is certified as a professional counselor by the National Board for Certified Counselors, and is a member of the American Association of Christian Counselors. He serves as the pastor of Utica Baptist Church in Seneca, S.C.

Book Reviews—11/28/11

Editor’s Note: As we sometimes do, in this issue, due to a recent influx of books (but in the absence of time and energy to read them all in depth) we are offering brief overviews of five noteworthy recent releases in lieu of our usual full reviews.

Deeper into the Word: Reflections on 100 Words from the Old Testament, Keri Wyatt Kent, 2011, Bethany House, Bloomington, Minn., ISBN 9780764208430, 256 pages, \$13.99, softcover.

Kent briefly and insightfully expounds on 100 key terms from the Old Testament, from “altar” to “glory” to “firstfruits” to “wisdom”, to help readers grasp more deeply the message of Scripture. Though she brings Hebrew into the discussion, this is not an exegetical work in the strict sense but more of a devotional designed for the average Christian reading the Bible on their own.

The Essential Commandment: A Disciple’s Guide to Loving God and Others, Greg Ogden, 2011, InterVarsity

Press, Downers Grove, Ill., ISBN 9780830810888, 202 pages, \$16.00, softcover.

Ogden writes this follow-up to his *Discipleship Essentials* as a way to help small groups and individuals equip one another for love and good deeds by focusing in on the twin great commandments of Jesus to love God with all our hearts and love our neighbors as ourselves. This is designed as a study book, with reflection questions and discussion guides.

Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary, J. D. Greear, 2011, B&H Publishing, Nashville, Tenn., ISBN 9781433673122, 266 pages, \$14.99, softcover.

Greear, a pastor from the Raleigh-Durham area of North Carolina, offers a powerful challenge to today's Church to remember the Gospel of Christ—that it is the blood of Christ alone that saves us—and to beware the substitution of that message by moralism and legalism. He engagingly urges Christians to rediscover the Gospel message as the heart and only true motivator of good deeds and transformational work in the world.

Letters to the Church: A Survey of Hebrews and the General Epistles, Karen H. Jobes, 2011, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Mich., ISBN 9780310267386, 496 pages, \$44.99, hardcover.

This is a broad but thorough overview of the general epistles of the New Testament (i.e., those not addressed to a specific church in a specific city or region), Hebrews, James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, and Jude. Jobes gives a background on the authorship, cultural context, and

message of each of these books, showing how they helped shape the early Church and continue to impact Christians today. This reference work is designed as a textbook, complete with charts and illustrations to help students understand these letters.

Paul through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians, Kenneth E. Bailey, 2011, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill., ISBN 9780830833945, 590 pages, \$30.00, softcover.

Bailey, author of *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes* and other cultural studies books, brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to bear on the cultural background to Paul's epistles. While Scripture is plainly understandable to all in its major themes, a cultural hermeneutic such as Bailey's can be immensely illuminating to specific details and difficult passages. This is a thorough, scholarly work, and will serve as a good reference volume for pastors and Bible teachers.

Reading Scripture with the Reformers, Timothy George, 2011, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill., ISBN 9780830829491, 258 pages, \$16.00, softcover.

In this short volume, "George takes readers through the exciting events of the 16th century, showing how this dynamic period was instigated by a fresh return to the Scriptures" (from the cover notes). It is impossible to understand the history of Europe or church polity in the modern era without grasping that the Reformation was driven wholly by the reading and study of God's Word by more people than ever before. George brings a theologian's eye for God's hand to this engaging history.

News Update—11/28/11

Malaysia: Subtle Attempts to Convert Christian Preschoolers?

Parents in Sarawak, Malaysia, are concerned about subtle attempts to impart Islamic teachings and practices to children in preschools in the rural, predominantly Christian area, *Free Malaysia Today* reports.

Sarawak legislative assemblyman Baru Bian said there was a "very real problem" because parents had complained of their children coming home from school reciting Islamic prayers.

Hundreds of new preschools and kindergartens have been opened in the state in recent years to increase the accessibility to early education, but Bian said the people were concerned that the schools were staffed by teachers

from outside the local community, many from the Muslim-majority Malaysian peninsula, and that the curriculum included lessons about Islam.

Bian proposed to the legislature that as part of the 2012 budget, teachers from local communities be recruited and funded instead to ensure "fair teachings."

Religion Today Summaries

Study: Only 46 Percent of Children Grow Up in Intact Homes

A new study shows that only 46 percent of children in the United States will reach age 17 having grown up in a home with biological parents who are married, a figure that

has a significant impact on the nation's graduation, poverty and teenage birth rates, *Baptist Press* reports.

The data shows the intact family rate is highest in the Northeast (49.6 percent) and lowest in the South (41.8 percent), highest in the state of Minnesota (57 percent) and lowest in Mississippi (34 percent), and highest among Asians (65.8 percent) and lowest among blacks (16.7 percent). The study also shows that high poverty rates, low graduation rates and high teenage pregnancy rates are closely linked to the breakup of the family.

"The foundational relationship of marriage has quite an impact on the well-being of children and on the welfare of both the states and the nation," said Pat Fagan of the Family Research Council, one of the study's co-authors. "We have never faced anything like this in human history."

Religion Today Summaries

"Arab Spring" Means "Christian Winter" For Millions of Persecuted Christians

Millions of Christians in the Middle East and Africa are enduring what some are calling a "Christian Winter" in the midst of the "Arab Spring," a movement of political unrest that has given way to Muslim domination and rising hostility against Christians, according to Christian Freedom International (CFI).

Secular regimes are being replaced with Islamic states that have instituted sharia (Islamic) law, which is enforced on citizens of all religions. For the small Christian minorities, it has resulted in increased persecution, discrimination, violence and even death.

"The Arab Spring is truly a Christian winter for these persecuted people," said Robert Sweet of CFI, adding that there was a concerning lack of action on the part of Western Christians to assist and speak out for their Middle Eastern counterparts.

Religion Today Summaries

U.S. Birth Rates Hit New Low

A new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows a drop in national birth rates for the third straight year, OneNewsNow.com reports. The declines were seen in most age groups and for all races, and rates for teens and women in their early 20s were the lowest since record-keeping began in the 1940s.

The report stated that experts believe the downward trend is tied to the economy—women with financial worries might feel they can't afford to start a family or add to it.

There were 4 million births last year; rates have been dropping since an all-time high in 2007.

Religion Today Summaries

From Pakistani Slum, 5,000-Seat Church Rises

A newly built church in a Karachi slum that can seat as many as 5,000 worshippers is a testament to the resilience and hope of Pakistani Christians amid persecution in the violent, Muslim-majority country, the *Washington Post* reports.

The three-story St. Peter's of Karachi is the largest yet in Pakistan, and was built on the site of a smaller church in an area that is home to around 15,000 Christians. "There were so many people here it was not possible for us to accommodate them on Sundays," said Father Saleh Diego. "Now we can pray together, all 5,000 people, worship the Lord and really share and strengthen our faith."

As in the case of St. Peter's, new churches built in Pakistan are typically in poor Christian neighborhoods—ghettos of extreme poverty often separated from their Muslim neighbors by high walls—so there is usually no direct opposition to their construction. Father Diego said his church was concerned about rising radicalism and persecution in Pakistan, but that his building had received no threats.

Religion Today Summaries

Refugees at Risk in South Sudan

Amid reports of Sudan bombing the new nation of South Sudan and of rising tensions between the two countries—apparently over how they will share crude oil reserves—thousands of Christian refugees are caught in the crossfire, Mission Network News reports.

Carl Moeller, president of Open Doors USA, said the situation in South Sudan was quickly deteriorating and questioned why international officials hadn't addressed it: "We have seen and documented bombs falling on refugee camps in critical areas.... We have 300,000 displaced in that area. We've got people being killed on a regular basis and literally bombs being dropped, and it's as if nothing is taking place.... If there's a full-scale war going on, eventually it'll come to the world's attention. But unfortunately at that point it may be too late to do anything about it."

Moeller called on international organizations and U.N. officials to condemn the violence, and asked Christians around the world to pray for the plight of the Sudanese church.

Religion Today Summaries

Sermon Helps—from www.sermonhall.com

Sermon Outlines

Three Views of Life

“The Good Samaritan” is one of the most familiar parables in the Bible. The primary question is, “*Who is my neighbor?*” Three different sets of people had three different answers.

- I. What’s Yours Is Mine, So I’ll Take It (v. 30)
 - A. The sin of greed.
 - B. Stealing was the way these thieves made a living.
 - C. There is little respect for the Eighth Commandment, “*Thou shalt not steal.*”
 - D. There are different forms of stealing.
 1. Taking a possession that is not yours.
 2. Taking credit for what someone else has done.
 3. False accusations to harm someone’s reputation.
 4. Cutting someone down to build self up.
 - II. What’s Mine Is Mine, and I’ll Keep It (vv. 31-32)
 - A. The sin of selfishness.
 - B. The priest and the Levite were worse than the robbers, for at least the robbers would admit to being thieves. These religious people covered their selfishness with a holy pretense.
 - C. Satan loves to watch God’s people just doing nothing bad, but not doing much good.
 - III. What’s Mine Is Yours, So I’ll Share It (vv. 33-37)
 - A. The virtue of compassion.
 - B. The Jews had no dealings with Samaritans. If the situation were turned around the Jew would not have helped the Samaritan.
 - C. All of us need the Samaritan’s view of life, for we are “our brother’s keeper.”
 - D. We need to have a willingness to help with selectivity, since we cannot meet all the needs. We also need to offer institutional help. And, finally, we need to change the causes of the sin.
- Conclusion: Matthew says, “*When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion*” (10:36). Jesus is still saying to us, “What’s mine is yours, I’ll share it. Will you do the same?”

Ron Blankenship

What Christ Has Made Possible

Romans 5:1-11

Proposition: To fully appreciate what Christ has made possible for us, we need to:

- I. Remember What We Were
 - A. “*Without strength,*” (v. 6; John 15:5; Phil. 4:13).

- B. “*Ungodly,*” (v. 6).
- C. “*Sinners,*” (v. 8; 3:10, 23; Is. 64:6).
- D. “*Enemies,*” (v. 10; James 4:4).

II. Remember What Christ Did for Us

- A. Died for us (vv. 6,8).
 1. He didn’t have to; He wanted to (John 10:11,18).
 2. He gave His life (1 Tim. 2:5-6).
- B. Justified us.
 1. This we could never do (Titus 3:5).
 2. Justified by faith, (v. 1).
 3. Justified by His blood, (v. 9).
- C. Reconciled us (vv. 10,11).

III. Remember What We Have

- A. “*Peace,*” (v. 1).
- B. “*Access to grace,*” (v. 2).
- C. “*Hope,*” (v. 2b).
- D. “*Holy Spirit,*” (v. 5).

IV. What We Will Have

- A. Salvation from the wrath to come (v. 9; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9).
- B. Eternally saved through His life (6:23).

Victor Knowles

Illustrations

I Traveled on My Knees

Last night I took a journey to a land across the sea, I did not go by boat or plane, I traveled on my knees. I saw many people there in deep sin, and I did not want to send my prayers in. But Jesus said I should go and see how many I could win.

I said, “Jesus, I cannot go and work with such as these.” He answered quickly, “Yes, you can by traveling on your knees.” He said, “You pray, I will meet the need. You call and I will hear.” So I knelt in prayer and felt at ease as I traveled on my knees. I said, “Yes, Lord. I know I can do the job, and my desire is to please. I will heed Your call,” and I traveled on my knees.

Anonymous

When Is It Time to Pray?

Have you ever had anyone come to you and say, “Tell me, how do you know when it is time to pray?” I mean our stomachs growl when it is time to eat. Our eyes start closing when it is time to sleep. When our feelings get hurt, it is time for tears. With a new birth it is time to care. People will often tell us, quite so, when it is time to come, or stay, or go. But how do you know when it is time to pray?

Does an alarm go off next to your bed? Or is there a clanging inside your head? Do your eyes start blinking, a horn start blowing? Or do you listen for a rooster crowing? Just what is your way of knowing when it is time to pray? With me, I find it is time to pray at the beginning and ending of each day. And when I am sick and feeling bad, or scared, or lonely, or lost, or sad. When the bills blow in like sand, I seek a touch of the Master's hand. When I need patience, hope and peace and an abiding love that will not cease. When I am thankful for all there is that now is mine, and yet is His. Gladness, sadness, joy and grief we share in prayer. And it is my belief that whenever my heart has something to say, that is how I know when it's time to pray.

Anonymous

Bulletin Inserts

On Integrity

Three may keep a secret—if two of them are dead.

Benjamin Franklin

When it is good vs. evil or right vs. wrong, neutrality is a sin.

R. Whitson Seaman

While you remain neutral, you help and hurt both sides

Those who close their eyes in order not to be seen, aren't much worse than those who close their eyes in order not to see.

Truly great persons are not aware of their own greatness. They possess great humility. They live for something bigger than themselves.

These three anonymous.

Moderation in temper is always a virtue, but moderation in principle is always a vice.

Thomas Paine

The shortest answer is doing the right thing.

Old Union Reminder

Puzzles and 'Toons

Church 'Toons by Joe McKeever



Answers to last issue's puzzles:

- ANSWERS**
- Green (Job 8:16).
 - Blue and purple (Jer. 10:9).
 - White (Rev. 2:17).
 - Red (Matt. 16:2).
 - Purple (Prov. 31:22).
 - Yellow (Lev. 13:29,30).
 - The grey beard (Prov. 20:29).
 - Blue (Num. 15:38).
 - Three white baskets (Gen. 40:16).
 - Scarlet (Matt. 27:27,28).

- ACROSTIC #38: ANSWERS**
- EPHESIANS (5:33) — "...Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."*
- SOUND IS
 - WHIFF
 - EVERMORE
 - PELETHITES
 - HEEHAW
 - EFFECTUALLY
 - SHEBANIAH
 - IVORY
 - AVERROES
 - NETHANEEL
 - SOUVENIR
 - DESCENT

- Father Abraham's Question Box**
- Mountains**
- Upon which mount did Ehud blow a trumpet?
 - Which mount is called "the mountain of God?"
 - In the Revelation, where did the Lamb stand?
 - On which mount did Elijah challenge the prophets of Baal?
 - Where did Esau live?
 - Where did Jesus and his disciples go after they had sung a hymn?
 - Upon which mount were six tribes called to bless Israel?
 - Upon which mount were six tribes called to curse Israel?
 - Where were Saul and his sons killed?
 - What did the devil do when he took Jesus up onto a high mount?
- See answers on page 27*

Father Abraham and Hidden Wisdom
 By Mark Oshman
 Originally published in *Pulpit Helps*, October 1994

Hidden Wisdom on next page

HIDDEN WISDOM: BIBLE ACROSTIC # 39

BY MARK A. OSHMAN

Solve the acrostic by using the clues listed below to guess the words and by transferring the letter above each number to its appropriate place in the diagram. The result will be a Scripture verse of admonition, comfort, or instruction. Further, the initial letters of the answers will contain the name of the book from which the verse was taken. Happy hunting!

HAPPY SOLVING!!

1E	2N		3B	4G	5K		6C	7J	8E	9A		10N	11C		12I	13O	14D
		15E	16F	17I	18C			19A	20J	21L	22I		23K	24A	25J	26L	27F
28H	29G	30C	31I	32Q	33N	34H	35L		36M	37D	38B	39K	40G	41A		42H	43L
	44G	45F	46D	47N	48J			49C	50G	51M		52F		53E	54H	55C	
56B	57N		58G	59Q	60L		61D	62F	63I		64K	65E	66G	67A		68M	69B
	70C	71H	72E		73L	74E	75J	76I		77A	78E		79H	80N	81D	82K	
	83B	84G		85E	86I	87Q	88G	89J	90H	91N	92A	93L	94K	95C	96D	97F	

- A. A dry hot wind 67 19 92 41 9 77 24
- B. Force upon unjustifiably 69 83 56 38 3
- C. God promised to make Israel more desolate than the wilderness here 55 95 49 6 30 18 70
- D. Dutch colonial governor (1580-1638) 14 37 96 46 81 61
- E. Descendants of Mizraim 8 65 15 74 53 85 78 1 72
- F. A son of Shamer (1 Chr. 7:34) 27 45 16 97 52 62
- G. Having little or no formal preparation (3 wds; colloq.) 40 11 84 29 4 88 66 50 44 58
- H. Young men will see these, according to Joel's prophecy 79 42 28 71 54 34 90
- I. A son of Helah (1 Chr. 4:7) 63 76 22 86 17 31
- J. One of David's older brothers 89 20 48 25 75 7
- K. Began to develop 64 23 94 39 5 82
- L. "The Lord is my _____ and song" 43 21 60 26 93 35 73 12
- M. Number of olive trees in Zechariah's vision. . . 51 36 68
- N. Whims 47 10 91 33 80 2 57
- O. A prank (colloq.) 37 13 32 59