

# Disciple Magazine



Equipping believers for deeper life

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## The Gospel in an Abortion Culture

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# **The Gospel in an Abortion Culture**

By Russell D. Moore

As the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision approaches, most Christians recognize, and rightly so, the loss of millions of unborn human lives. What we often forget is the second casualty of an abortion culture: the consciences of countless men and women.

Too often, pastors and church leaders assume that, when talking about abortion, their invisible debating partner is the “pro-choice” television commentator or politician. Not so. Many of the people endangered by the abortion culture aren’t even pro-choice.

In your congregation this Sunday, and in the neighborhoods around you right now, there are women vulnerable to abortionist propaganda, not because they

reject the church but because they're afraid they'll lose the church. Pregnant young women are scared they will scandalize church people when they start to show, so they keep it secret. Parents are fearful their pregnant daughter, or their son's pregnant girlfriend, will prompt the rest of the congregation to see them as bad families.

As they keep all of this secret from the Body of Christ, many of them fall prey to the false gospel of the abortion clinic. "We can take care of this for you," these people say. "And it will all go away."

Moreover, there are thousands of men and women in our churches who have aborted their children, or urged the abortion of their grandchildren. Bearing the shame of this, they keep it secret. And in the concealment, the satanic powers accuse them: "We know who you are; you're a murderer, like us."

Every time pastors and church leaders speak, they are speaking, at least potentially, to these men and women, the aborting and the abortionists. Many of these people don't argue that the "fetus" is a "person." Their consciences testify to that, and they're either tortured by this or violently trying to sear over that persistent internal message.

The answer, for the church, is to preach the Gospel to the conscience.

For many evangelicals, to "preach the Gospel" seems to be obvious and ineffective because they think this means to, by rote, prompt people to accept Jesus and go to heaven. But the Gospel speaks right where the abortion culture is in slavery, to the conscience.

For one thing, those guilty of this silent atrocity often don't think we're talking to them. For some, the demonic structures have helped them to conceal this secret,

and to convince them the safest thing to do is to try to forget it altogether. Others are so burdened down by guilt, they really don't believe they are included in the "whosoever will" of our Gospel invitations.

Speak directly to these people. To the woman who has had the abortion. To the man who has paid for an abortion. To the health care worker who has profited off of tearing apart the bodies of the young and the consciences of their parents.

Speak clearly of the horror of judgment to come. Confirm what every accusing conscience already knows: clinic privacy laws cannot keep all this from being exposed at the tribunal of Christ. When the Light shines, there's not enough darkness in which to hide and cringe.

But don't stop there.

Proclaim just as openly that judgment has fallen on the quivering body of a

crucified Jesus—accused by Satan, indicted by the Law, enveloped by the curse.

An abortion culture knows that hell exists, and they know judgment waits (Rom. 2:14-16). Agree with them, but point them to the truth that God is not simply willing to forgive them. Show them how in Christ God is both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:26).

The woman who has had the abortion needs to know that, if she is hidden in Christ, God does not see her as “that woman who had the abortion.” He hasn’t been subverted from sending her to hell because she found a Gospel “loophole.” In Christ, she’s already been to hell. And, in the resurrected Christ, God has already told her what he thinks of her: “You are my beloved child and in you I am well-pleased.”

The consciences around us don’t believe what they’re telling themselves.

They're scared and accused. Shine the light in the eyes of their consciences.

Prophetically. All for justice, legally and culturally, for the unborn. But don't stop there.

After all, the spirit of murder doesn't start or end in the abortion clinic (Matt. 5:21, 15:19; Jn. 8:44; Acts 9:1; Rom. 1:29; Jn. 3:15). And the blood of Christ has cleansed the consciences of rebels like all of us.

Warn of hell, but offer mercy. Offer that mercy not only at the Judgment Seat of Christ, but in the small groups and hallways of your church.

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## **Engage the Culture if You Dare, Pastor**

By Joe McKeever

*“And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might*

*be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:11-17).*

A half-century ago, theologian Langdon Gilkey wrote a book titled *How the Church Can Minister to the World Without Losing Itself*—It’s worth buying just for the title.

That’s the challenge. God’s people are sent to be in the world but not of it, to relate to the world without loving it, to bring the Gospel to the world without succumbing to its enticements.

And yet, many of us love the culture where we find ourselves. Is this wrong? Adrian Rogers used to say, “We are like a fellow in a boat. As long as the boat is in the water, he’s fine. But as soon as the water gets in the boat, he’s in trouble.”

At what point does the culture threaten to swamp our lifeboats? I’m a football fan, and love cheering on the New Orleans Saints. Am I succumbing to the world? Seminarians discuss these matters in classrooms. They study books in which philosophers and theologians bring up the ramifications of engaging culture. Eventually, the young minister develops a set of principles for future ministry. In time, he graduates and goes forth to pastor a church with real people.

Suddenly, all bets are off.

In the urban setting where his seminary was located, the culture was one thing. In rural America where he has gone to

pastor, it's something else entirely. One of his classmates has started an innovative church in the artsy section of Chicago where the culture is unlike anything he has ever known. A classmate is now serving a mission in Smalltown, Ohio, a community dominated by labor unions and factory life. The highpoint of the social season, he says, is the tractor pull at the local arena. Another friend has been appointed missionary to the bush country of West Africa where the culture is pagan, primitive, and powerful. Lastly, a colleague has taken a county seat ministry in the heart of the Bible Belt, where four churches stand on the corners of the major intersection and every community leader belongs to one of them.

Nothing to it, right? Just “preach the Gospel, servant of God.” There are no easy fields in which to labor. This being a fallen world, all people groups on the planet are known to be sinners, therefore in need of

salvation, and yet strongly resistant to the Holy Spirit. The servant of God who goes to bring the Lord's word to the Bible Belt or the untaught primitives of the most backward nation will face similar challenges: How to relate to the cultures of the people to whom he has been sent.

Recently on the radio, I heard the sports guys were tossing this subject around in connection with professional football teams. Should San Diego, for instance, go after players who will mesh with their laid-back "beach" culture? Should the New York City teams draft athletes with star appeal who will fit right in? They finally answered their own question: Regardless of background and culture, if a player makes that team a winner, the people will welcome him as he is and not require him to adapt to them.

The easiest approach to this challenge is to remain aloof from the culture

and condemn it. I live in metropolitan New Orleans. As I write this, it's January 6, 2012. Today marks the official end of the Christmas season and the opening of what is locally called the Carnival Season. This means parades and parties, endless theme-oriented displays and colors and conversation, king cakes in the stores and on the tables, all of which ends with a full-fledged holiday in which the city shuts down. February 21 is "Mardi Gras."

Suppose a new pastor moves to this city and takes over the leadership of a church. The first question some will ask is his position on Mardi Gras. It's a loaded question. Local church people are not in agreement at all on how Christians should relate to this festive culture. Some attend the parades, insisting that theirs are as benign as a homecoming parade back in their Alabama hometown. Others arm themselves with tracts and march forth into the throngs

to witness for Christ. Most simply stay home and treat it as a day off.

My friend Jerry Clower, a widely acclaimed Christian comedian and first-rate story-teller, was a Baptist deacon and outspoken Christian. Some 20 years ago, when a “krewe” in this city invited him to ride as their “king” or grand marshal, Jerry took them up on it. Immediately he began getting criticized. Mostly he ignored the barbs, but a couple of times he told how this opened doors for witness. After all, as a member of the Grand Ole Opry, he frequently found himself backstage counseling entertainers whose marriages were on the rocks or whose lives were being ruined by strong drink and wayward living.

Did he do the right thing? To join the culture or try to avoid it altogether is a matter between oneself and the Lord. “*Who are you to judge another man’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls*” (Romans 14:4).

Psalm 137 is the perfect illustration of the Lord's people remaining aloof from the culture in which they found themselves: "*By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion. We hung our harps upon the willows... for those who carried us away captive required of us a song. Those who plundered us requested mirth, saying, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion'.*" Got the picture here? Exiled in Babylon, Israel's temple singers are being asked to perform some of the songs of their faith.

That looks to us like a great opportunity to witness. They didn't see it that way. "*How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill. If I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, if I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy.*"

Think of that question, Christian: *“How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?”* That is precisely what we have been called on to do. Our “strange land” lies just outside the doors of church. Anyone can sing the hymns of Zion indoors where the faithful gather and no one minds. But, to sing the Lord’s song in the factories and schools, in the clubs and restaurants, in the theaters and concert halls and playgrounds and stadiums is far better, much harder, more productive, and far more hazardous.

The Apostle Paul and Don Richardson have a great approach. In Acts 17, when the Apostle confronted the philosophers of Athens with the message of Jesus Christ, he began with their own culture. Paul was sufficiently familiar with Athens to know of their addiction for new ideas and their fear of all the possible gods in the universe to the point of erecting a

monument to “The Unknown God,” just in case. Paul said, “*Therefore, the one whom you ignorantly worship, I proclaim to you*” (17:23).

A good approach? It seems so. I’m impressed, I’ll tell you that. But others disagree. Now, Paul had found a point of connection with those people, an area where the message of Christ touched them perfectly. No syncretism here, in which one simply treats the Gospel as an additive and mixes well with the current religious fads and erroneous ideas. However, critics point out that Paul’s message that day never was finished. The moment he mentioned the resurrection (17:32), the crowd turned into a mob and took over the meeting. Some say Paul even admits as much when he tells the Corinthians—the group to whom he went immediately on leaving Athens—that “*when I came to you, I did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the*

*testimony of God*" (1 Cor. 2:1). They say Paul was reacting against the approach he had attempted in Athens.

Don Richardson wrote a book called *Peace Child* some years ago detailing the discovery he and his missionary team made with a remote tribe in Papua New Guinea. The work was hard and slow and the results were miniscule, until the day Richardson learned of a custom the warring tribes had by which one group would give the other a small baby, called a "peace child." The receiving tribe had to raise the infant. So long as the child lived, peace reigned between the tribes. Thereafter, in his ministry to these people Richardson drew parallels between God giving us Jesus Christ His Son—who came to us as a Baby—and "*He himself is our peace*" (Eph. 2:14). That day, the people began to "see" and to believe.

Later, Richardson's second book, *Eternity in Their Hearts*, recounts tales from tribal cultures across the globe wherein missionaries had found stories, myths, customs and legends that were ready-made vehicles for the Gospel. The title came from Ecclesiastes 3:11. This principle calls on us to learn the culture of the people to whom we were sent, and then prayerfully look for avenues and tie-ins and parallels which the Lord has prepared for alert disciples to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let the Christian worker not look for the easy way out, but become a student of the culture and look for the hand of God in what he finds. No Gospel worker who chooses to remain aloof from the culture where he goes to minister will have much effect on it. He will not know how to relate his message to its intricacies or needs. There is no place for lazy evangelists.

I received a note once from a young minister in another state looking for a church to pastor. “But let me emphasize,” he said, “I do not want to waste my time with a lot of people stuck in their traditions. I’m looking for a church poised for growth, where everyone loves the Lord and each other. They’re ready to follow a dynamic leader and willing to do whatever it takes.” I responded that we did not have any churches like that, that all our churches were made up of believers at every conceivable stage of spirituality and maturity, that most of our people were struggling to rebuild their homes and their lives after a devastating hurricane, and that he should probably look elsewhere. I never heard of him again.

An old manual for missionaries puts it this way:

“A necessary qualification for missionary work is a love and appreciation of one’s own culture

demonstrated by involvement in it. A Christian who has a lively interest in history, economics, politics, music, art and literature will appreciate the same things in other cultures. If he cherishes his own social values and institutions, he will be more likely to respect those of others.

“The multicultural nature of the United States makes it an ideal training ground for the missionary who will be communicating across cultural barriers. It offers unlimited opportunities for involvement with different cultures and subcultures, which will give invaluable experience on the foreign field.

“I have difficulty believing the sincerity of a man who has no concern at all for Afro-Americans, Chicanos, Indians, and Chinese here in America but who will cross oceans

to love these same people in other parts of the world. The English say, ‘Charity begins at home.’” (From Pius Wakatama in *Cultural and Social Qualifications for Overseas Service*)

The Lord’s workers must avoid the extremes. The church of Constantine’s day seems to have joined the culture and adopted its values and lust for riches. As a reaction against this surrender to the world, concerned priests—monks—began to pull aside from the culture and live in isolation in deserts and mountains. Monasteries were built for groups of monks whose isolation was a protest against the self-indulgence and surrender of the church to the standards of the world.

Both extremes are just that, however, extremes. We should not join the culture; we must not abandon it. We must engage it. That will require us to study and learn it, to appreciate what is good about it, and to

identify and use the portions which prepare the hearts of its people for the Gospel of Jesus. Therefore, most Christian workers will learn to live with tension. There seems to be no clear path between the world on one side and the Lord's way on the other. The two seem to overlap at places and to be strangers to the other at other times.

In the racially troubled south of my early days in the ministry, some pastors I knew turned their pulpits into platforms for their own racial prejudice or rage against racism. Others—among whom I count myself—tried to find ways to minister to our people who were themselves struggling to find “the way” out of their Jim Crow past but without capitulating to the liberal theology of some of the extreme activists. There was always tension. We were always getting shot at by both sides.

In time, I came to believe that tension is the norm for those trying to bring the

Gospel into their culture. They will be working to learn it and relate to it but working just as hard to keep a healthy distance from its worst values and seductive charms. There are no easy answers. I like them as much as the next person, but there just don't seem to be any.

We will give the Apostle Paul the final word on this today. "*I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some*" (1 Cor. 9:22). Now, all we have to do is figure out what that means.

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# **Increasing or Decreasing? The Christian Life according to John the Baptist**

By Justin Lonas

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So much ink has been spilt through the years on leading a Christian life that one would think we should have figured it out by now. Perhaps part of the reason we haven't (and no one would say that we have) is tied to the proliferation of people telling us how. Maybe, just maybe, the Christian life is much simpler than we want to make it. A tremendous example of how we ought to live in relation to our Lord and to the world around us is found in the person of John the Baptist.

As much reverence as most believers have for John (whom Jesus described as the greatest of men in Luke 7:28), I've not heard many claim him as a hero or role model. Something about this rough-and-tumble guy, who lived in the desert with little thought to his appearance and sustenance, preached one message over and over, was hated by the leaders of the day, and made every effort to take no credit for his work, just doesn't sit well with our ideas of "success" or the "victorious Christian life." Behind John's quirky behavior and simple message, however, is an attitude that every Christian should strive to imitate to the fullest—an intimate connection with the Father and an unwavering focus on His will.

John's commitment to God's objective truth gave him the will to live the message God had called him to, rather than to pander to what those around him wanted to hear. John's character is revealed in John

1:19-27 in an exchange between himself and some priests and Levites sent by the Pharisees. Perceiving their motive, John responds to their question, “Who are you?” by saying “*I am not the Christ.*”

When they press further, demanding to know if he is Elijah or the foretold prophet (of Deut. 18:15), he responds progressively shorter denials. John was obviously not eager to talk about himself. Finally forced to describe himself in verse 23, he does so by quoting the words of Isaiah, “*I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the Way of the Lord.’*” John then proceeds to turn the conversation back to his message in verses 26-27: “*I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know. It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.*” From this brief passage we can infer volumes about how we as Christians are to live:

First, our priority should always be to do the Lord's bidding. John knew how to conduct himself because he had spent his life growing in spirit (Luke 1:80), presumably through prayer and studying the Scriptures. If God's word and will are firmly planted in our hearts, they will be quick to come to us as we go forth into the world.

Second, we should not seek to build ourselves up or take credit for the ways God works through us. John was clear in showing that all glory is for God, describing himself as "*a voice*." He knew full well that he was but a conduit for the word of the Lord. What a message for Christians of today! How many pastors have not, at some point, wished that they could be the leader of a megachurch or have a far-reaching media following? Perhaps now more than ever we need to be on guard against the temptation to make ourselves great (or even to simply "get the just reward for our hard

work”) under the guise of spreading the Gospel.

John’s concern was never for his reputation (or even his safety) but always for God’s purpose. We would do well to ask ourselves often “Am I preparing the way of the Lord? Am I doing this in order to be recognized or in order that the Lord will shine through?” This has tremendous implications for how we choose to engage the world.

In the culture wars, are we focused on being seen taking a stand (or even on winning arguments) instead of taking care to follow Christ’s lead and endeavoring to let Him shine through, whatever the outcome? When we respond to criticism, do we listen and turn the other cheek so that the love of Christ can confound our accuser or do we seek to defend our position in anger? When we practice evangelism, are we attempting to better our standing among believers by

winning souls or do we approach the lost with a genuine compassion for their state and fervor for their salvation, as Christ did, acknowledging that we are only tools to help Him work in their hearts?

The third lesson ties into the first two: we should live life with an awareness of the fact that the work of Christ is far bigger than we or any of our institutions are. John is remembered for saying in John 3:30, "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*" This submission to God's plan is surely what Paul had in mind when he called us to be "*living sacrifices*" in Romans 12:1. Such an attitude of commitment to God, acknowledgement of His sovereignty, and willingness to be used in whatever way He sees fit is all that He requires of us. God is not interested in what we know, what we've accomplished, or what others think of us. He only wants us to bow before Him, ready to be used. The truly

complete Christian life fades into the glow of His glory.

Virtually every decision we make can be boiled down to either an opportunity to build ourselves up or to follow God's lead. In every situation we can choose to increase or decrease, to take the glory or to fade into the shadows so that God's name is made great. As you go about your ministry, which will you choose?

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## **Exegetically Speaking**

by Spiros Zodhiates

### **The Parable of the Ten Virgins: Part One**

Matthew 25:1-7

*From Exegetical Commentary on Matthew, 2006, AMG Publishers.*

The Tribulation period as described in chapter 24 ends with the return of our Lord Jesus Christ to earth to set up His millennial kingdom.

In the second part of the Olivet discourse, Jesus addressed the separation of unbelievers from believers in three parables that illustrate what will take place at that time. Although we believe there will probably be only one judgment, these parables show three aspects of what separates believers from unbelievers. They indicate who goes into the millennial kingdom and who does not.

The first parable concerns watchfulness and discusses the difference between prudent (*phrónimos* [5429]) and foolish (*mōrós* [3474]) people on earth when Christ returns. The primary focus here is on

those who claim to be God's people, either as the nation of Israel or as members (both possessing and professing) of His church.

While many aspects in this parable parallel the rapture, the context describes the end of the Tribulation period. The rapture at the beginning of the Tribulation period is when Christ will come for His bride. The virgins in this parable were not expecting to become the bride. The bridegroom had not proposed to ten women and then married only five of them because the other five weren't ready. Instead, these virgins were waiting for the wedding reception. The bridegroom had taken the bride from her house to his house to consummate the marriage and celebrate the wedding, paralleling the rapture of the church and our ascent to heaven to be with Christ forever. These virgins were coming to a prearranged place to meet the newlyweds. They would place the lamps they carried in

little niches on the wall to provide illumination for the festivities.

**[1, 2]** The parable begins with the adverb “*then*” (*tóte* [5119]), referring to a specific time in the future, in this case, the return of Christ with His Bride to earth at the end of the Tribulation period. Jesus compared those who are alive when He comes back to the ten virgins, five of whom are wise (from *phrónimos* [5429]) and five of whom are foolish (from *mōrós* [3474]).

Because these two words are antithetical in character, we can consider *mōrós* to be the opposite of *phrónimos* and, therefore, synonymous with *áphrōn* (878), which means lacking *phrēn* (5424), moral understanding and self-control. For example, the rich farmer who built larger barns (Luke 12:16–21) is called a “*fool*” in the English text (v. 20), but the Greek term is *áphrōn*, lacking wisdom. Similarly, Jesus called the Pharisees “*fools*” (also from

*áphrōn*; Luke 11:40) because they believed that outer cleanliness proved inner purity. The “*fool*”—not the occasionally foolish believer but the completely immoral and godless person—is not born from above (John 3:3-7) and is thereby not restrained by the power of the Holy Spirit. The one who lives for himself only is not indwelt by God (Luke 16:19–31).

*Phrēn*, the noun from which *phrónimos* comes, is prudence, the quality of applying God-given moral wisdom correctly. In Modern Greek, *phréna* (the plural of *phréno*) are the brakes on a car. Figuratively, we can think of prudence as the moral brakes we apply before we collide with immorality.

In Koine Greek, *phrēn* means “mind” (equivalent to *noús* [3563]). *Áphrōn*, therefore, indicates “mindlessness.” The ability to exercise prudence, as exhibited by

the wise virgins, is part of God's wisdom given to His people through His Word.

People do not have the innate wisdom God has. We all have a measure of wisdom because we were created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27; Luke 16:8; James 3:9), much of which was lost in Adam's fall. But all true wisdom comes from redemptive revelation, that is, the gospel: "*But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory*" (1 Cor. 2:7). God's wisdom (*sophía* [4678]) is distinctly differentiated (see Mark 6:2; Luke 11:49; 1 Cor. 1:21-30; etc.) from human wisdom which is always qualified by limiting adjectives like "*of the world,*" "*of this age,*" or "*earthly, sensual, devilish*" (James 3:15, cf. Matt. 12:42; Luke 11:31; etc.).

The apostle Paul contrasts *mōrós* and *phrónimos* in 1 Corinthians 4:10: "*We are fools (from mōrós) for Christ's sake, but*

*ye are wise* (from *phrónimos*) *in Christ*.” In the context, Paul was looking at an apostle’s office from a worldly perspective. Apostles were appointed to martyrdom (4:9), humiliation (4:9), weakness (4:10), hunger, thirst, and poverty (4:11), nakedness, blows, and homelessness (4:11), persecution (4:12), defamation and degradation (4:12-13). Such a life is for fools, and the comfortable are the wise, from a worldly perspective. Paul clearly was making use of sardonic irony. The Corinthians, no doubt, understood his point. They should follow his foolish (from a worldly perspective) but wise (from God’s perspective) path.

The ten virgins equally conformed to one law of God—chastity, but they were not moral equals in other areas. Today’s church contains diligent students, who accept the Word of God and adapt to it, and sloths who have never completely adapted to the Word of God. Five virgins did not believe that the

Bridegroom's return was imminent so they did not prepare for it.

**[3]** The five foolish virgins took their lamps (v. 1) but no additional oil when they went to meet the bridegroom. Essentially, they were morally unprepared like the “evil (*kakós* [2556], bad) servant” of Matthew 24:48 who counted on a delay (from *chronízō* [5549], to take time) in his lord's return.

To understand this parable, we can refer back to the contrast between the two servants given in Matthew 24:45–51. One is faithful (*pistós* [4103]; v. 45), wise (*phrónimos* [5429]; v. 45), and blessed (*makários* [3107]; v. 46), while the other is evil (*kakós*; v. 48), hypocritical (from *hupokritēs* [5273]; v. 51), and beats his fellow servants (v. 49).

In Matthew 25:3, five virgins are called “foolish” (from *mōrós* [3474]), but this should not be understood as the innocent

ignorance of infants. It is the accountable, conscious foolishness of adult women. The fact that they remembered their lamps evidences conscious thinking about oil from the beginning; after all, lamps require oil. But they “*took no oil.*” They chose not to take oil for the same reason the lazy servant buried his talent in the subsequent parable of the talents (25:14–30). They were too foolish and lazy to buy the oil needed for the extended journey. The critical point is that the text says they “*took no oil*”, not that they forgot oil. Had they used their God-given intelligence and properly responded to His call, they would have been prepared.

**[4, 5]** The wise virgins, on the other hand, prepared themselves: “*But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried (from chronízō [5549], to take time, linger, delay, defer), they all became drowsy (from nustázō [3573], to become sleepy) and were*

*sleeping* (from *katheúđō* [2518], to sleep)” (a.t.). During the bridegroom’s absence, all ten virgins became drowsy and fell asleep. No blame is attached to this; rather, accountability began when they first “*took their lamps...to meet the bridegroom,*” some with and some without extra oil, long before they fell asleep (v. 1).

**[6]** At midnight, an hour when most people do not expect visitors, a “*cry*” (*kraugē* [2906]), presumably from an advancing messenger, announced that the “*bridegroom*” (*numphíos* [3566]) was coming. The sudden and swift appearance of the bridegroom is likened to the explosive rush of the Noahic flood in other Scriptures (Matt. 24:37–39; Luke 17:26, 27; Heb. 11:7; 2 Pet. 2:5).

The cry goes forth, “*Behold* (*idoú* [2400], the imperative of *eídon* [1492], the aorist of *horáō* [3708], to perceive, calling attention to the extraordinary; see Matt.

3:16), *the bridegroom cometh* [from *érchomai* [2064)].” When the bridegroom came in that culture, he brought the bride with him. We sing, “Here comes the bride”; they cried out, “The bridegroom cometh.” The “*behold*” was intended to awaken the virgins. All ten are then commanded to “*go...out to meet him.*”

**[7]** Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed (from *kosméō* [2885], to put in proper order) their lamps. All ten virgins got ready to meet the bridegroom, but five lacked oil, the source of the flame that represents the inner spiritual life. Five virgins neglected this oil, which may represent the Holy Spirit, the fiery source of all Christian graces (Gal. 5:22-23). Although they maintained their lamps in good order, they could not function without oil, just as Christians cannot function without the Spirit of God.

The five prudent virgins attended to the right thing. They not only kept their lamps in good order, but they were filled with the oil of God's presence. Accordingly, they "*adorn[ed]* (also from *kosméō*, from which comes the English 'cosmetics') *the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*" (Titus 2:10). The wick of a lamp may be carefully trimmed, but if the lamp contains no oil, no light can shine forth.

The good servant in Matthew 24:45, who corresponds to the five prudent virgins, was called "*faithful*" (*pistós* [4103], believing and loyal). He believed his master would return soon, he watched for him expectantly, and he behaved accordingly. The evil servant, who corresponds to the five foolish virgins, on the other hand, was faithless and morally disloyal. He believed his master was procrastinating, and he took advantage of the time to beat his fellows.

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.

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## **Living out the Living Word**

by Justin Lonas

### **The Church's One Foundation: One Salvation for All**

1 Timothy 2:1-7

At the beginning of chapter 2 of 1 Timothy, Paul seems to shift his focus from rebuking the false teachers to prescribing the conduct of those in the church. As in all biblical passages, however, context is the driver of meaning, and the issue of the false teachers cannot be far from Paul's mind as he instructs Timothy on order in the Church.

His opening phrase tells us as much, as he begins with the phrase *parakalō oun*, literally something like “*Please, therefore...*,” tying the injunction that follows to the ongoing discussion.

What does Paul ask of Timothy?  
*“First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity”* (2:1-2). This is sound advice to be sure—Christians should always be engaged in prayer for others, both inside and outside the Church, and praying for peace and safety from government (particularly where believers are persecuted) ought to be a regular part of our communion with God.

The context bids us to look beyond this principle to the surrounding issues as well, and sheds light on the precise nature of the false teaching spread by the straying

leaders at Ephesus. There are two prongs to Paul's command here: 1) that prayers are to be made for "*all men*," and 2) that the prayer for governing authorities be focused on their allowing the work of the Gospel to go on unhindered.

The deduction we make from this is that the false teachers were proclaiming some exclusionary ideas, whether teaching that the whole Jewish Law must be kept by Christians (inferred by 1:6-8) or a legalistic asceticism (inferred by 4:1-3), which claimed that salvation was not a free gift for all but the special privilege of some earned by human action. Whatever their teachings, their misrepresentation of the true faith and the discord they were sowing in the Body apparently raised the ire of the local authorities, prompting Paul's concern for the reputation of the Lord and His Church (reflected also in his qualifications for elders in 3:7 and his instructions to slaves in 6:1).

In light of the situation there, Paul reminds Timothy and the Ephesian believers of the Gospel which they have believed and the actions that should flow from their salvation. Even so, the nature of his instruction reflects his pastoral heart—he confronts the false teaching through exhorting believers to deeper obedience to the true faith through fervent prayer. Too often, we fail to recognize, as Paul did, that our first reaction to pressure should be to bring our concerns to God, entrusting him with the outcome before we undertake any other actions.

Paul bolsters his statement by appealing to God's eternal plan: "*This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (2:3-4). Again, he points out that salvation is available to **all men**, based on their "*knowledge of the truth.*" God is the author

of our salvation and gives it freely by His grace through faith; no one of us deserves this, nor can we earn it in any way. To distort the grace of God by demanding religious works is Satan's oldest ploy to deceive men and lead them to death, and the false teaching at Ephesus most likely was part of a long line of mendacity from father of lies. This line of reasoning supports Paul's opening command: if God desires all men to be saved, then clearly it is pleasing to Him that the Church prays for all men according to this desire.

Continuing on, Paul delivers one of the most eloquent summations of the Gospel in all of Scripture: "*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time*" (2:5-6). His formulation here again drives home the point that there is one salvation for all men at all

times, and that Christ Jesus is its source and security. Our ransom was paid by His blood, and His resurrection and reign serve as witnesses to the gift He has given.

The phrase “*at the proper time*”, in Greek *kairos idiois* (lit. the perfect or set apart moment), occurs several times in Paul’s writings, always in reference to the work of the Father, Son, and Spirit in the “grand scheme of things.” It seems to be for him something of an intensifier, furthering his point that God is in control of the whole work of saving men and women and calling them together as His Church. At just the right time, when God knew the world was ripe for it, Christ came into the world to complete His ransom.

More than that, however, it appears that Paul is evoking the full measure of God’s grace in salvation. As he says elsewhere, “*For while we were still helpless, **at the right time** Christ died for the ungodly.*”

*For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom. 5:6-8). The “*proper time*” for Christ to come give His life for us is while we are still sinners, when we completely do not deserve it, not when we have “cleaned up our act” or begun to follow the Law. In using this terminology, Paul shows that Christ’s sacrifice is something wholly different from the message of the false teachers and that they, consequently, are outside of God’s will and subverting the Gospel.

Paul concludes his declaration here by reaffirming his own calling to the ministry of this Gospel for all: “*For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth”* (2:7). By appealing to his God-given ministry to the

nations (*ethnōn*), he shows once again that the work of Christ is for all men, not just Jews or those who live by the Law. In this, he is drawing a clear contrast between the message he is bringing (“*faith and truth*”) and the divisive, demoralizing religion of the false teachers. He hearkens back to his statement in 1:5 that “*the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*”

Through all this, Paul is using the occasion of confronting and refuting the false teachers to exhort the Church to return to the “main thing”—the proclamation of the true Gospel of Christ for all mankind. He calls Timothy to remind the Church of the reason for their existence, urging them to preserve their focus, and giving them tools to be proper witnesses to this truth to the world at large. His charge begins with prayer and sound doctrine, and continues (as we will see in coming months) with many

practical guidelines for a God-honoring church life and ministry. Throughout 1 and 2 Timothy, he is unequivocal that everything about the Church flows from this foundation.

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

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## **Points to Ponder**

by David L. Olford

### **Wisdom Is out of This World**

**Text:** *“But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?.... From where, then, does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding?”* (Job 28:12, 20).

**Thought:** The 28<sup>th</sup> chapter of Job contains a poem on the subject of wisdom. This poem

is found in this unique book that wrestles with the reality of and the reasons for suffering in this world. These words are part of one of Job's discourses. One has to read the complete account to appreciate the dynamics of the discourses that take place—after the amazing introduction (Job 1-2) and before the climactic conclusion (Job 38-42, esp. 42). Wisdom is especially needed when one suffers in our world for no “apparent” reason, even as righteous Job suffered.

Those who suffer personally can struggle to understand why they are suffering and they may feel that they have no access to God to plead their case. This was Job's experience. We certainly have gained a fuller understanding of suffering through our suffering Savior and His cross and resurrection. But there is still the need for wisdom as we live in this world filled with suffering. Indeed, it is after addressing the

issue of trials that James instructs and encourages his readers with these words: *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him”* (James 1:5). Ultimately, as we will see, Job 28 will point us in the same direction for wisdom.

## **I. The Fruitless Search for Wisdom (Job 28:1-22)**

Using various images related to mining and examples from nature, we are shown that wisdom cannot be found in this world (1-14). It is not in the land of the living (13), it is not in the deep or the sea (14), it is hidden from all living (21), and it is only a rumor in the realm of death (22). Thus, although the miner can find valuable treasures hidden below the earth's surface, **wisdom cannot be found** by man's search in this world. The whereabouts of wisdom remains a mystery.

Wisdom cannot be found and **wisdom cannot be bought** (16). Wisdom's value cannot be matched by the treasures that man can find (15-19). The various precious stones mentioned indicate that the value of wisdom is great and beyond human calculation. When the hidden-ness and the value of wisdom are brought together, we are forced to conclude that there is a mystery to wisdom that must be revealed or discovered. Man cannot search out wisdom and it is too valuable to purchase.

## **II. The Majestic Source of Wisdom (Job 28:23-27)**

God is brought into the poem in verse 23. With beautiful descriptive words, we are shown that God is the ultimate majestic source of wisdom. The God who sees all and directs His creation knows all about wisdom. Wisdom is not a mystery to God. Indeed, "*he saw it, and declared it; he*

*established it, and searched it out” (28:27).* These verbs indicate that the omniscient creator God is the author of wisdom. This must be read in contrast to what we have already noted in the earlier part of the poem. Wisdom is not of man, nor can it be found by man in this world. Wisdom is of God and can only be found in God and through God.

### **III. The Revealed Secret to Wisdom (28)**

It is one thing to say that God is the source of wisdom, but how does mankind learn or gain wisdom. We learn in this text that wisdom is dependent upon God’s revelation, the words of God (“*And he said to man....*”) Wisdom will not be found through a search in this world, nor can it be purchased. Wisdom is revealed by God to man, and in this verse, God gives man the key to wisdom. Indeed, the way to know wisdom and to live wisely is as follows:  
*“Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom,*

*and to turn away from evil is understanding”* (28:28). This is really the summary statement concerning wisdom found in the “wisdom books” of the Old Testament, and it is confirmed and vindicated when you reach the end of Job.

Positively speaking, it is wise to live reverently in the light of who God is. To acknowledge who God is and therefore to live obediently before Him is the basis of wise living. Negatively speaking, turning away or departing from evil reveals the same wisdom or understanding, since one is rejecting a life that disregards God, His covenant and righteousness.

So, one does not find wisdom by searching in the material world, one is wise by honoring God and living in accord with His Word. This is the way not only to gain wisdom, but to “live wisdom.”

The Apostle Paul writes that Christ Jesus “*became wisdom from God*” for us (1

Cor. 1:30). We are grateful for the new revelation in Christ. Christ is everything to the believer. We should not think, though, that Christ as our wisdom contradicts the truths that we learn from Job 28. Wisdom still has come to us from “out of this world,” God is its source and we acquire real spiritual wisdom through responding rightly to God’s revelation (now in Christ Jesus). Job’s word on wisdom is fulfilled in Christ, even as Christ became the ultimate living redeemer of whom Job spoke (Job 19:25).

**Thrust:** Especially in the context of suffering, there is the need for wisdom. But wisdom is not found through a philosophical search; wisdom is found in God, His revelation, and in obedient living in the light of both God and His revelation.

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

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## **The Story behind the Song**

by Lindsay Terry

### **My Only Song**

**Song:** "This Is the Day"

*"The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation" (Ps. 118:14).*

Here is an interesting thought from Les Garrett, who lives in Australia and is the author of one of the most popular Christian songs in the world today.

"Often during a service the only hymnbook we would have was the Bible. So we sang out of the Bible. I know approximately three hundred songs that we

could sing right out of the King James Version of God's Word."

As you will see, Garrett's love for God and his thirst for the Bible were the greatest contributing factors in the birth of his song. Les remembers the events that led up to the writing of "This Is the Day," and he related them as follows:

"In 1967, at age twenty-four, I moved with my family to Brisbane, Queensland, in Australia. We were going through a difficult time in our lives. I was starting to minister as a traveling evangelist and was going through a bit of a valley. We had very few finances. Actually, we couldn't even buy petrol for the car.

"I was reading my Bible through on my knees, and on this particular day I was reading in Psalm 118. When I came to verse 24, I paused and read that verse a second time, and as I did a tune came to me—all of sudden. I simply was reading my Bible and

worshiping the Lord, and had no thought of writing a song. I have very little musical ability and do not play an instrument; therefore I can only believe that it was a gift from God.

“I didn’t teach the song to anyone for two years. The song was given to me near the end of 1967, and all through 1968 and ‘69 no one was singing it but me. The more I sang it, the more I thought, ‘Well, it is just a little thing that God has given to bless me with.’

“Near the end of 1969, I was asked to return to New Zealand to speak at a camp being held in a tent pitched by a river. One night during a meeting, the pastor of the church sponsoring the camp said, ‘Does anyone have anything that he or she would like to share before Pastor Garrett speaks?’ An elderly lady stood and looked straight at me and said, ‘There is someone here that has something that was given to you by the

Lord, and you are not sharing it. God has given you something that you are supposed to share.’

“As she sat down I felt real conviction that I had never shared my song. I stood up and said, ‘I think that message is for me. I have a song that the Lord gave to me, and I have been singing it for a couple of years. I want to teach it to you tonight.’”

From that one camp “This Is the Day” was spread over New Zealand to the extent that in six months it was being sung throughout the whole of that island nation. The following year it was published in the first edition of the famed *Scripture in Song* series of songbooks published in Australia by David Garrett. That publication launched it on its orbit around the world. Les has heard his song sung in many of the twenty-three nations where he has preached.

He remembers, “The people in China were so excited to know that I had written

the song they were singing. It is sung all over China.”

Now for the most unusual part of this story. After interviewing scores upon scores of songwriters, many of whom have written several hundred songs, and some two and three thousand, I was astonished to hear Les say, “That is the only song I have ever written. I did get a quickening about another verse in the Psalms years ago, but I didn’t write it down, so it left me.”

Les now resides with his wife, Caroline, in Queensland on the east coast of Australia.

This is a Scripture song that is oh, so easy to sing, but oh, so difficult to live by. How I wish that each day I would gain the victory that can be mine with the singing and the believing of Les Garrett’s Scripture song “This Is the Day.”

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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).

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## **Church Builders**

by Bernard R. DeRemer

### **H. G. Underwood: Pioneer Missionary in Korea**

Horace Grant Underwood (1859-1916) was born in London. At 10 he was sent to a Roman Catholic school in France.

In 1872 the family came to the U.S. and his father, along with Horace's older brother John, began manufacturing inks and special paper; this business developed into

the Underwood Typewriter Co., long a leader in its field, before electricians.

Horace studied at various institutions, including New York University, and graduated from New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Jersey in 1884. He was ordained to ministry in the Dutch Reformed Church but he joined the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions to begin work overseas shortly afterward. Throughout his ministry, he received much financial support from his family's typewriter business.

Underwood travelled to Korea and, in 1886, opened an orphanage in Seoul which became the John D. Wells Academy, where he served as the principal for years. He taught physics and chemistry at Gwanhyewon in Seoul, the first modern hospital in Korea which was started by a missionary doctor, Horace N. Allen.

In 1889, Underwood married Lillias Horton (1851–1921), a doctor also serving in

Korea, and they had a son, Horace Horton Underwood (1890-1951), who also dedicated his life to missionary service in Korea.

From 1887-1911 he was chairman of the Board of Bible translators at Seoul, which included other missionaries like Henry G. Appenzeller, William B. Scranton, James Scarth Gale, and William D. Reynolds, and of the Korean Religious Tract Society. This group translated the New Testament into Korean in 1900, and completed the Old Testament in 1910.

Also in 1900, Underwood and Gale organized the Seoul branch of the YMCA. Ever pursuing the goal of Christian education, Underwood became the president of Joseon (or Chosun) Christian College in 1915—this institution continues as part of Yonsei University, one of the largest and best regarded universities in Korea. Underwood's long dedication to the

Gospel and the people of Korea brought him influence, and he served for a time as “the unofficial adviser of the king of Korea.”

His writings include an English-Korean and Korean-English Dictionary, *Korean Grammar*, *Call of Korea*, and *Religions of Eastern Asia*.

Underwood returned to the U.S. in 1916 for health reasons, and he died later that year in New Jersey. In 1999, his great grandson had Underwood’s body moved back to Korea.

“The work of Underwood and associate missionaries gave Korea a prominent place among mission fields.” The family legacy in Korea continues to the present day. Underwood’s grandson, who shared his grandfather’s name, served as an interpreter in the Korean War Armistice talks, and other of his descendents continued to teach at Yonsei University, and

work in the U.S. Embassy and various businesses.

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, "Horace Grant Underwood", [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H.G.\\_Underwood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H.G._Underwood)

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# **Counselor's Corner**

by James Rudy Gray

## **The Ministry of Helping**

*Originally published in Pulpit Helps, January 2003.*

Pastors and Christian counselors are often faced with difficult opportunities when hurting people turn to them for help. Humans are complex beings. Our brains are more daunting than the greatest computers. Our behaviors are often not simple and our problems usually do not lend themselves to “one size fits all” solutions.

In the broad picture, sin is the problem and Christ is the answer. But fitting the specific details of our troubles into that picture can leave us bewildered or perplexed.

One of the key strategies in helping someone in Jesus' name is to do what Jesus did: meet people where they are. That does not mean we share their values or beliefs or approve of their wrong or sinful behavior. It does mean we practice the principle of love. We cannot be God's tool for change if we do not connect with the people we are trying to help. We cannot be a catalyst for helping someone move from point A to point B if we never start at point A!

Jesus' own ministry is an inspiring example of how to make the "grace connection" with someone in need. He met the woman caught in adultery with grace and did not condemn but forgave her. However, He did not fail to guide her forward in godly living as He said, "*Go and sin no more.*" Jesus did not take sin lightly and neither should we. He also was known as a friend of sinners. His servants today should have a similar testimony.

There is abundant research from many fields that can help us diagnose or understand a person's situation. There are about 300 different theories of counseling. The significant thing about helping people is that we must actually connect with them. Counseling is different from preaching or teaching. Some teaching may take place, but it is more relational than didactic.

Jesus helped people because He loved people. We must do no less as we practice Christian counseling. That does not mean we must try to generate a certain kind of feeling, because love is not a feeling but an attitude that seeks to do the right and best thing, and does it in a way that is both sacrificial and unconditional. Feelings are good but love is better.

God uses pastors, social workers, counselors, life coaches, and others who seek to serve Him. We are called to help and that journey begins when we care

enough to meet people where they are in their difficulty.

We need information, research, knowledge, etc., about personalities and problems, but we also need a growing understanding of God's truth. A counselor attempts to connect with a person on the foundation of God's truth, in a way that does not compromise doctrine yet accepts the person just as he is. As the counseling relationship grows in trust, the avenues for biblical principles to be applied in loving ways also grow. The result is change—and that is a primary goal in the counseling ministry. We have no better example than Jesus Himself.

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.

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## **Book Review—1/23/12**

***Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary***, 2011, B&H, Nashville, Tenn., ISBN 9781433673122, 265 pages, \$14.00, softcover.

What does your church, your faith, need to “level up?” Is it greater focus on missions, a more passionate worship experience or deeper theological understanding? These are all fine pursuits, but none has the ability to influence quite as deeply as the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Of course, no believer would dispute this — the Gospel is, after all, familiar territory, the basis of our salvation. But what would it look like if individuals and churches let this

doctrine radically shape the very minutiae of their lives?

In Pastor J.D. Greear's sophomore book, he explores this power of the Gospel and how to center one's life on it. Though at first glance this book may seem targeted toward newer believers, Greear's fresh insight may enliven mature believers and encourage and equip pastors and teachers in their work. As Peter says in 2 Peter 1:13, "*I think it right...to stir you up by way of reminder,*" so this book can stir up Christians of all walks by way of reminder.

*Gospel* is broken into three sections: a contrast of religion with the Gospel, Greear's own "Gospel Prayer," and how to understand life through Gospel-centered lens. All three are helpful, but the "Gospel Prayer," taking up the largest portion of the book, is where he is strongest. It is the heart of his message.

Greear's four-part prayer takes the reader through the Gospel and its implications, starting with a treatise on the Christian's identity and the means by which we can change. His writing really picks up pace, though, as he delves into an explanation of idolatry, which reads like a condensed version of Timothy Keller's *Counterfeit Gods*.

One refreshing chapter is on how American Christians are to handle their finances. The money principles pastors derive from Scripture are many and diverse, but I especially appreciated Greear's balanced approach.

The section most likely to push buttons is the one in which he criticizes different types of churches' failure to operate under Gospel centrality. He addresses "younger" churches, Reformed churches, charismatic churches, you name it, but he does so with gentility and firmness. Beyond

this admonition, this chapter may give pastors and leaders a vision for their churches and ministries that is sorely needed.

The takeaways from Greear's *Gospel* are abundant, but what his book has that many like books lack are non-gimmicky practical applications that will keep its message "frontal lobe." Greear's concluding remarks are a powerful summary of his book, and reason enough to give it a read: "The Gospel is not merely the diving board off of which you jump into the pool of Christianity; the Gospel is the pool itself."

Michelle Bower

**Target: Pastors/all**

**Type: Preaching**

**Take: Recommended**

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## **News Update—1/23/12**

### **Sudan Threatens to Arrest Church Leaders**

Sudan's Ministry of Guidance and Religious Endowments has threatened to arrest church leaders if they carry out evangelistic activities and do not comply with an order for churches to provide their names and contact information, Compass Direct News reports.

The warning in a Jan. 3 letter to leaders of the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SPEC) arrived just days after Sudan's president, Omar al-Bashir, announced that the country's constitution would be more deeply entrenched in sharia (Islamic law).

“We will take legal procedures against pastors who are involved in preaching or evangelistic activities,”

wrote Hamid Yousif Adam of the Ministry of Guidance to the church leaders. “We have all legal rights to take them to court.”

Sources said the order was aimed at oppressing Christians amid growing hostility toward Christianity. “This is a critical situation faced by our church in Sudan,” said the Rev. Yousif Matar, secretary general of SPEC.

Religion Today Summaries

## **Muslim Brotherhood: Ultimate Goal ‘Mastership of the World’**

Earlier this week, Egypt’s newly elected parliament announced that the extremist Muslim Brotherhood would hold a leadership role as speaker of the Islamic-majority governing body that is expected to be seated by the end of February.

According to Christian Solidarity Worldwide, the Muslim Brotherhood’s supreme leader, Dr. Muhammad Badi, said:

“The Brotherhood is getting closer to achieving its greatest goal.... This will be accomplished by establishing a righteous and fair ruling system [based on Islamic *sharia*], with all its institutions and associations, including a government evolving into a rightly guided caliphate and mastership of the world.”

Badi defined the long-term goal of the Brotherhood as “utilizing events, waiting, making appropriate preparations and prior designs, and a comprehensive and total reform of all aspects of life.”

Religion Today Summaries

## **Laos Frees Christian Leaders, But Confiscates Churches**

Seven Christian leaders who were detained and tortured for nearly a month in southern Laos have been released, but concerns remain about the confiscation of

church buildings in the area, according to International Christian Concern.

The Christians, who were arrested for violating their village's local traditional customs and spirit beliefs because of their Christian faith practices, were held in wooden stocks, sometimes combined with exposure to red fire ants as a form of torture, and forced to pay steep fines, said Sirikoon Prasertsee, director of the Human Rights Watch for Lao Religious Freedom.

While pleased the church leaders were released, Prasertsee said he remained concerned about churches being confiscated nearby. Authorities have barred Christians from entering two church buildings in Savannakhet province, and 23 others are at risk of government seizure.

The Christian minority in Laos is generally viewed as a threat to the communist government, although officials

repeatedly deny human rights abuses against minorities.

Religion Today Summaries

## **NYC's 40 Percent Abortion Rate Highest in the U.S.**

According to a recent report released by the local health department, the abortion rate in New York City is more than double the national average, CBN News reports.

Statistics show that 40 percent of all pregnancies in the city end in abortion, the highest rate in the United States. More than 83,000 abortions were performed in 2010, down 1 percent from 2009.

The report showed that the abortion rate was highest in the African-American community, with 60 percent of all pregnancies ending in abortion, and that pregnant teenagers had abortions 63 percent of the time.

Religion Today Summaries

## **Pro-Life Activists Call for Support of 'Sanctity of Human Life Sunday'**

This Sunday, January 22, is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, and pro-life activists are calling for national support.

In a Jan. 13, 1984 proclamation, then-president Ronald Reagan designated the third Sunday of January as "National Sanctity of Human Life Day," a date chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court case that legalized abortion in America. In the now almost 40 years since *Roe v. Wade*, the Guttmacher Institute estimates that more than 50 million abortions have taken place in the U.S.

Christian singer, author and pro-life activist Rebecca St. James is calling on Americans this Sunday to remember the pro-life cause and the mission of crisis pregnancy centers, who every day "empower women to choose life," she said.

Recent statistics show Americans are increasingly supporting the pro-life agenda, she added, and emphasized the need to let their voices and funding make a difference.

Religion Today Summaries

## **Tebow Listed as America's Favorite Pro Athlete**

According to the monthly ESPN Sports Poll, Denver Broncos quarterback and professing Christian Tim Tebow is now America's favorite active pro athlete. In the 18 years of the poll, only 11 different athletes have been No. 1, including Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods and LeBron James, and nobody has been No. 1 so soon after the start of their professional career.

Former NFL quarterback Fran Tarkenton wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*: "...Isn't it refreshing that the chatter around the NFL is about a great athlete with great character who says and does all the right

things and is a relentless leader for his team—and not about more arrests and bad behavior from our presumptive ‘heroes’? Tim Tebow is the story of this football season, and a great story it is.”

Religion Today Summaries

## **Fewer Children Being Born in the U.S., Under-18 Population Declines**

The U.S. under-18 population fell between 2010 and 2011, for the first time in at least two decades, the *Wall Street Journal* reports. In July 2011, the under-18 population was 73,934,272, down 247,000 or 0.3 percent from July 2010.

According to an analysis of Census data by demographer William H. Frey of The Brookings Institution, fewer children are being born and “it doesn’t look like a youth boom will reverberate any time soon.”

States with the biggest drop in children tended to be concentrated in the

Rust Belt and New England; every New England state's under-18 population fell at least 1 percent from April 2010 to July 11.

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## **Sermon Helps**

from [www.sermonhall.com](http://www.sermonhall.com)

### **Sermon Outlines**

#### **Abortion: America's Holocaust**

Intro.: The holocaust which has taken place in America since abortion was legalized in 1973 makes Hitler's plan pale by comparison.

I. Abortion Is Wrong Because It Violates God's Instructions (Gen. 1:28; 9:1)

A. God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.

B. God told Noah and his family to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

C. Satan doesn't want humanity to fulfill God's instructions.

## II. Abortion Is Wrong Because It Violates God's Image (Gen 1:27; 9:6)

A. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God. Though through sin the image was marred, there is still worth in every human being.

B. God gave Noah instructions not to trade blood for blood because God made man in His image (Gen 9:6).

C. Murder is an attempt to kill or destroy the image of God.

D. Abortion is murder.

## III. Abortion Is Wrong Because It Attempts to Violate God's Sovereignty (Ps. 139: 13-16)

A. God formed us and planned our lives before we were born (Jer. 1:5; Luke 1:41).

B. God alone has the right to determine when someone dies. God

is the giver of life to all things (Acts 17:25).

C. God knows the potential that has been lost to us because of abortion.

D. What so many today fail to recognize is that these abortions are not statistics but people.

#### IV. What Can We Do?

A. Don't be apathetic, don't give up.

B. Pray that God will rid our land of this scourge.

C. Place those in leadership who might help abolish abortion.

D. Use every legal, peaceful means at your disposal to bring about the end of this holocaust.

E. Don't be afraid to use your testimony and influence to encourage others to be pro-life.

F. What if you have already experienced an abortion? Ask for and

accept God's forgiveness. Determine to fight for other unborn children.

Anonymous

## **Blinded**

2 Corinthians 4:4

### I. We Are Blinded by Satan

- A. Through doubt
- B. Through deception
- C. Through distrust

### II. Blinded by Sin

- A. Through leisure
- B. Through looseness
- C. Through lust
- D. Through laziness

### III. Blinded by Self

- A. Selfish pride
- B. Selfish pleasure
- C. Selfish plans

Croft M. Pentz

## **Illustrations**

### **The Price of a Grudge**

Some time ago a middle-aged woman sought to be reunited in marriage with her former husband. She told her pastor that they were both Christians when they established their home, and that they had been blessed with two sons. Then one day they quarreled, and harsh words were spoken. Each was too proud to ask the other's forgiveness, and the bitter feelings finally led to a divorce. Neither had found a new mate; and now, 25 years later, with one son dead and the whereabouts of the other unknown, this woman learned that the only man she had ever loved was in the hospital. She went to see him, and with tears they forgave one another.

At their request, the pastor gladly remarried them right there in the hospital room. As he left after performing the ceremony, he thought of the price they had

paid because of their unwillingness to forgive. The prayers of both had been powerless, they could not experience the joy of their salvation, and their sons had suffered because of a broken home. Although the husband and the wife had been reunited, the wasted years could never be recalled.

Anybody who harbors an unforgiving spirit is cheating himself of fellowship with God, the beauty of a Christ-like character, and the best joys of life. The Christian cannot afford to pay the price of bearing a grudge! Since the Lord your debt did pay,  
Saved your soul in grace one day, You with  
charity should live, Always ready to forgive!

Anonymous

## **Common Sense in Witnessing**

The man who charges up to a perfect stranger and demands, "Are you saved?" may indeed be zealous for the Lord, but he

shows very little understanding or love for his fellowman. His tactless approach indicates that he has no real interest in the man as a person, but only as a potential candidate for conversion, an object to witness to.

Common sense is essential even in witnessing. Remember this. You should witness not for the sake of witnessing but for the purpose of winning souls to Christ. As a fisher of men you must exercise judgment in casting the net. Or, to change the simile, you must hold your fire until you see the target. Firing your rifle into the air will not accomplish anything. Let this be the judgment you exercise as a steward of the higher truths of life.

Anonymous

## **Bulletin Inserts On Anger**

Anger puts every offense on an endless playback loop, but love turns off the switch.

*Our Daily Bread*

Forgiveness is a funny thing—it warms the heart and cools the sting.

*Old Union Reminder*

A chip on the shoulder is the heaviest load you will ever have to carry.

R. W. Seaman

He who goes to bed angry has the devil as a bed partner.

It is better to swallow your pride than to eat angry words.

He who angers you controls you!

When the wise become angry, they put their wisdom on hold.

An angry person is seldom reasonable; a reasonable person is seldom angry.

These five came to us anonymously

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## **Puzzles and 'Toons**

**Church 'Toons** by Joe McKeever

On Following Pages



"YES, I KNOW I COULD LOOK IT UP. BUT IT'S SO MUCH SIMPLER TO CALL YOU. JUST TELL ME WHAT YOU CAN ABOUT KING HEZEKIAH — COME ON, MOM!"



PASTOR

JOE  
ATKEEVER  
.COM

## Answers to last issue's puzzles:

### ANSWERS

1. The third day of creation (Gen. 1:11-13).
2. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16, 17).
3. The way of the tree of life (Gen. 3:24).
4. The land of Nod (Gen. 4:16).
5. Nine hundred and sixty-nine years old (Gen. 5:27).
6. Gopher wood (Gen. 6:14) [cypress, according to James Strong].
7. Seven (Gen. 7:2).
8. One hundred and fifty days (Gen. 7:24).
9. Nimrod (Gen. 10:9).
10. In the plain of Shinar (Gen. 11:2-4).

### ACROSTIC #42: ANSWERS

*ACTS (4:33) — "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all."*

- A. PERSEUS
- B. ADONIJAH
- C. TWELVE
- D. WRONGDOERS
- E. HAGGITH
- F. EUPHRATES
- G. TROTTER
- H. AGREE
- I. CHAMPION
- J. TRUEST
- K. SWALLOW
- L. FATTEDCALF
- M. ONENESS

## Father Abraham and Hidden Wisdom

By Mark Oshman

Originally published in *Pulpit Helps*,  
February 1995. On Following Pages

# ***Father Abraham's Question Box***

## ***"The Patriarchs"***

1. How old was Abraham when he left Haran for Canaan?
2. Where did Abraham first build an altar to God?
3. What was the name of Abraham's steward?
4. How old was Abraham when he was circumcized?
5. What did Abraham name the place where he was told to offer Isaac as a burnt offering?
6. How old was Isaac when he married Rebecca?
7. To what city did Isaac travel when a famine came to Canaan?
8. How long did Jacob serve Laban for Rachel?
9. What did Jacob call the heap of witness between himself and Laban?
10. Where did Jacob go after his re-union with Esau?

***See answers on page 27.***

# HIDDEN WISDOM: BIBLE ACROSTIC # 43

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!!

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

- A. Number of days it took the Jews under Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (hyph.) . . . . . 85 27 5 69 41 79 34 51
- B. Eskimo . . . . . 71 2 31 57 49
- C. Mahlon's widow . . . . . 48 43 9 24
- D. Speed-writing system which uses symbols . . . . . 74 10 54 21 29 45 67 83 15
- E. Principles of a scientific discipline . . . . . 32 75 23 82 14 88
- F. One of Daniel's three Hebrew friends . . . . . 19 33 47 81 65 7 53 70
- G. A symbolic name for Samaria . . . . . 16 61 89 3 78 37
- H. Seasonal wind . . . . . 26 42 17 56 62 1 72
- I. The Law was made for them (1 Tim. 1) . . . . . 90 28 77 13 40 4
- J. Aholiab's vocation . . . . . 11 55 64 44 38 22 76 87
- K. Keep oneself hidden (colloq.; 2 wds.) . . . . . 39 25 59 12 86 63
- L. Intensive questioning (colloq.; 2 wds.) . . . . . 68 80 35 52 18 58 6 73 30 46 84
- M. An unclean animal, according to Jewish dietary law. . . . . 50 20 60 8 66 36