

# Disciple Magazine

Equipping believers for deeper life

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## SACRIFICE and the Christian Life

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# Sacrifice and the Christian Life

By Justin Lonas

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The Christian life has always included struggles against sin. Even the Apostle Paul wrestled with this (Rom. 7:15). We understand that our sin natures are not completely cast aside until we die or the Lord returns, and thus we are still capable of disobedience. This does not absolve us of the responsibility to do God's will, however, and certainly does not preclude God from delivering us from our sins.

In 1 Peter 4:1-2, Peter puts an interesting spin on our fight against the sin nature: *"Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has*

*suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.*" Peter's point appears to be that when we take on the sufferings of Christ (contextually, persecution for the faith), we cease from sin precisely because suffering sharpens our focus—the things of the world fade quickly under such circumstances.

The larger themes of Peter's letter (indeed, of the New Testament) are that suffering comes to Christians for the greater glory of God, and that it usually takes two forms—to wake us from our selfish desires and bring us to God's will (as C. S. Lewis said, "Pain is God's megaphone to rouse a deaf world."), or as proof that we are indeed following the Lord (1 Pet. 4:12-19). Peter's goal in telling of the unavoidability of suffering is to motivate us to living sacrificially for Christ.

The concept of a sacrificial life that was so central to the teaching of Christ and the apostles is severely lacking in the Western church today. We are not called to be blessed, to live victoriously, or to focus on inward spirituality. Rather we are called to take up the cross (Luke 9:23, Matt. 16:24), to offer ourselves as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1-2), and to allow Christ to determine our actions (Phil. 2:5). Simply put, if our Lord and Savior would give His own life for us, why would we not give our all for Him? As Bonhoeffer put it, “When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die.”

What does sacrifice mean? In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *zebach* (literally “slaughter”) is translated as “sacrifice.” This is clearly rooted in the Jewish system of animal sacrifice for atonement, and speaks of finality (something sacrificed cannot be reclaimed). This same word is also used figuratively, as

in Psalm 51:16-17: “*For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.*” It is clear, then, that God’s desire is for a life laid down with no reservations and devoted completely to Him.

In the New Testament, the Greek word for sacrifice is *thusia*, which has connotations of complete incineration (also, obviously, implying finality). This word is used by Christ when He speaks of His own sacrifice, and throughout the Epistles to mean that which we offer freely to God. Such sacrifices can take many forms. They can range from physical gifts to the ministry (Phil. 4:18), expressions of gratitude through worship (giving up the idea that we provide for ourselves, as in Heb. 13:15), the work we do in the Spirit (1 Pet. 2:5), or the forsaking

of the way of the world to be like Christ (Eph. 5:2), to martyrdom.

Therefore, through the Bible, we see sacrifice commanded by God as a reminder of guilt and a foreshadowing of His ultimate sacrifice at the cross. By the time of Christ, sacrifice was nothing more than a hollow ceremony—what God really wanted (and, for that matter, always had desired) was submission and loyalty. After Christ, sacrifice takes on the connotation of putting your life aside to let Christ live His life through you.

Spiritual disciplines such as fasting, giving, serving, etc., are all tied to the central idea of sacrifice. They bring some level of discomfort to our physical lives and remove our focus from our own desires to strengthen and regenerate our spiritual lives.

God's strength is perfected in our weakness. This will always be the case, whether we actively embrace weakness or

He brings us to our knees through suffering. To follow Christ has always meant sacrifice—the disciples left their nets (and their livelihoods), forsaking all to be with Him. Jesus demanded of the rich young ruler that he sever his soul from his possessions.

Many believers throughout history have understood and embraced this truth, but the idea that the Christian life is not about us or our comfort is largely lost on today's church. We have to stop and examine the myriad ways in which the culture around us has permeated and corrupted our understanding of the faith. The process is so subtle and so complete that we may not even be aware of it.

The way out of our humanistic, materialistic, hedonistic mire is through the sacrifice and suffering that Christ calls us to. That, the Scriptures repeatedly tell us, is

how God purifies us and prepares us to do His will.

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## **A Mother's Hands**

By Alan Stewart

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Perhaps you have heard the story of the young boy who always made his mother wear gloves out in public because he was embarrassed at the unsightly deformity of her hands. During a presentation by the teachers and parents at his school,

however, he made a discovery that would forever change his perspective.

His mother shared the story that when the young boy was a baby, the family house caught fire in the middle of the night. In her effort to save her baby boy, the mother's hands were badly burned as she fought the flames to rescue him from his crib. The young boy approached his mother with tears streaming down his cheeks, and he slowly removed the gloves from her hands. As he stroked her deformed hands, he said to her, "these scars are symbols of your love for me, and I am so proud of them. To me, they are the most beautiful hands in the world."

In Proverbs 31, Solomon paints a beautiful picture of an exemplary woman and mother. I am not sure if you have ever noticed, but in his description, he has much to say about her hands. Although Solomon failed in relationships with women during his

later years, it appears he took notice of the lessons his mother's hands were displaying during the formative years of his life.

In a mother's touch, there is a wonderful mixture of tenderness and toughness. She possesses a softness in her hands that makes her appear weak and helpless, and yet a firmness to remove the lid on a pickle jar that even dad could not budge. In her touch, there is passion, patience, perception, punishment, and precision.

A mother's hands speak a language that still whispers to our hearts long after her presence is no longer available. When you reflect on the touches your mother gave to your life, just what pictures come to mind?

A mother's hands are resourceful. The woman described in Proverbs 31 used her hands to sow the fields, purchase real estate, clothe her household, and care for the needy. Her hands gave her life balance

and enabled her to do many things well at one time.

Although we were not a rich family when I was growing up, we discovered our wealth was disguised in our stay-at-home mother. Her hands were compulsively industrious and we each learned from the creativity of her hands. Like the few small loaves and fishes in the Lord's hands, the hands of a mother seem to be able to make something out of nothing. Perhaps the very patience and resourcefulness that elevated Joseph as leader in a critical hour came from lessons learned from Rachel's hands. While a mother's hands may reveal effective methods, her hands are also providing the steady confidence that you can do it for yourself!

A mother's hands are revealing. In 1 Timothy 5:14, the younger women are challenged to "*...marry, bear children, guide the house....*" She is the rudder on the family

ship that gives accurate direction to the home. I wonder how many of us would be who we are or where we are had it not been for a mother's hands that pointed out the way for us? It would seem that more than one Jochebed has used her hands to build an ark of bulrushes to protect her Moses, and then carefully and strategically laid him in the flow of life that led him to a successful place.

One of the reasons Mary was chosen as the mother of Jesus is because her hands would never stop pointing the way to the cross for her Son! A mother's hands carry us to places we could not go for ourselves, and they lift us to positions that were otherwise unobtainable.

A mother's hands are resilient. In 1 Samuel 2:19, we are told Samuel's "*...mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year....*" Although Hannah had given her son to the

Lord, her hands never ceased to touch his life!

No matter how old her children may be, a mother's hands are always ready to impart a touch. I find it interesting that you will never see a mother standing around with her hands in her pockets. Her hands are always available. Whether it is to referee a wrestling match or to wipe away tears caused from a failure, her hands are there to serve one purpose: to be used!

As I watch my mother aging, her hands are changing with time. I notice spots that date her, but they are a badge of honor. I notice they are not as smooth anymore, but the lines and wrinkles are trophies from battles she fought and won. I notice they are not as strong as they used to be, but perhaps it is because they gave to me their strength. No matter what they look like over time, to me, they are still the most beautiful hands in the world!

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## **Marriage: The First Fifty Years Are the Hardest—Part 1 of 2**

By Joe McKeever

Margaret Ann Henderson and I were wed on a Friday night in April of 1962. What feels like a few short weeks later, here we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of that event. Time does fly.

April 13, at the exact half-century mark, we dined in one of our favorite New Orleans restaurants with our two sons and our daughter, our sons' wives, and all eight of our grandchildren, who are flying in from various locations around the country for the weekend. Our pastor and wife, Mike and

Terri Miller, will join us for the occasion, as will one other special couple, Beverly and Gerald Nugent.

My son Neil and his wife Julie have put together a notebook of photos which will be on display that night. (It feels not entirely unlike the kind of display funeral homes show for memorial services.) Margaret asked me to draw some kind of something for its cover. I've sketched in a few things, and decided on the heading at the top: *The First 50 Years are the Hardest!* That's tongue-in-check, of course, but not much.

Has it been hard? Yes. Has it been wonderful? Sure. Has it been everything we expected when we walked down that aisle at Birmingham's West End Baptist Church so long ago? We had no idea what to expect, so that one's hard to answer. Would we do it all over again? If we were smart, we would. And if we were truly smart, we'd do it better

this time. We made enough mistakes the first time through for several marriages.

The popular thing to write on one's 50th anniversary is a glowing tribute to one's spouse in admiration for her patience and perseverance and in praise for the Lord's triumph. I feel a lot of that. But I know also that few would benefit from reading that. What interests people and benefits other marriages is learning from our mistakes. And we made plenty of those. Here are our top 10 mistakes (Well, the ones we want to talk about, anyway).

## **I. Our Top Ten Mistakes in 50 Years of Marriage**

**1) We received zero marital preparation—none.** Now, if pastors were dispensing premarital advice in 1962, I've not heard. No church we knew held such classes or offered such conferences. On our scheduled visit to the pastor's office to

discuss wedding plans, to our great disappointment, this wonderful pastor whom we adored and still treasure, spent the entire hour telling us about a book on Elijah he was trying to write.

I think he felt since we were active in church and headed for the ministry, he had nothing to offer us. He could have helped us big time. A word to pastors: It's not necessary for your marriage to be ideal to help newlyweds. If you've been married a year, you have much to tell them.

**2) We took unrealistic expectations into marriage.** Margaret will tell you she thought Joe was the Prince Charming who was going to take her away from the conflicts at home and fulfill all her fondest dreams. He would always understand and always be there for her. Joe thought Margaret would keep the home fires burning while he went out to save the world. She would do what Joe's mother had done,

devote herself to raising the family while the husband showed up from time to time.

We were both disappointed quickly. Disillusionment moved in soon after what should have been a honeymoon. A word to pastors: Get to know this lady you are married to. Hear her heart. Keep yourself close to the Lord. He alone will meet both your needs.

**3) We kept our conflicts to ourselves.** Early on, we began to have conflicts. And we dealt with them the way we had been taught at home: Margaret raised her voice and yelled; I bottled them up inside and went for long walks. We needed a counselor. But we did not know one, did not know what happened during counseling, did not know how we could pay for a counselor, and did not do anything except dig a deeper hole for ourselves.

A note to pastors: There was a time when some people attached a stigma to

ministers going for counseling. Only the most ignorant do that anymore. Do not sacrifice your marriage to the false and unrealistic expectations of the weakest members of your flock. Take your wife to a godly and mature counselor if you have conflicts that will not go away. And do not sneak around to do it!

**4) We did not schedule enough time to ourselves after the wedding.** In biblical days, a Hebrew man was exempt from military service for a solid year after his wedding. God's people were so dedicated to the concept of home that a new husband's duties took precedence over his responsibilities to the nation. Not a bad idea.

In our case, we were wed on a Friday night, we were in church on Sunday morning, and back at work on Monday. A few days later, I began my very first revival. This required me to leave home in the mornings for the high school where I was

teaching around 7 am, get home around 4 pm, leave home by 5:30 and drive the one hour to the church. I returned home by 10 pm or later.

That was not smart, but I wanted so badly to preach that when that invitation came to lead a revival, I could no more have turned it down than cease to breathe. This young husband needed a father to sit him down and talk to him about his priorities. Note to pastors: Your relationship with your wife is far more important than with any member or members of your flock. Giving it priority is God's will for your life and ministry, and not a gift to your wife. Do the right thing.

**5) We suffered in silence.** What should we have done when the pain we were both experiencing was so strong and we found no relief? The first thing we should have done, the single action which should have presented itself to us before anything else, was prayer. We should have confided

in a few godly and mature (and thus veteran) believers who would have understood, sympathized, and lifted us to the Father.

As it was, we tried to bear up under it alone. Note to pastors: Don't let your false pride destroy your marriage. A sure sign of true humility is a willingness to ask for help.

**6) We postponed getting help until it was almost too late.** Twice Margaret urged me to go with her for counseling: once when we had been married five years and again ten years later. The first time, I stubbornly (and immaturely) refused. "You don't understand," I told her. "I'm the counselor, not the counselee." I should have been taken out to the woodshed and whipped for that.

After some 15 years of marriage with few things changing, Margaret gave me an ultimatum: either I go with her for marriage

counseling or she was leaving. When I saw she was serious, I responded.

For twelve months, every two weeks we drove 90 miles to the Baptist associational office in Meridian, Mississippi, to sit with Dr. Jack Follis, our counselor. (Jack was a Th.D. graduate of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and a chaplain at East Mississippi State Hospital in Meridian, and a great friend.)

Counseling was awful, counseling was wonderful. Sometimes we dug into ancient hurts and slights, sometimes we fussed, sometimes we cried. Often, we hugged and forgave each other out of sheer desperation from knowing, as Peter said of the Lord in John 6:68, "*To whom (else) shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*" Note to pastors: The longer you wait to go for help, the more drastic the measures required. Nip those conflicts in the bud and

your marriage—and your ministry—will be blessed.

**7) The “D” word was used in our home, more than a few times.** One of my sons used to say that he and his wife determined the “D-word” would never be uttered inside the walls of their home. I was so obtuse I had to ask what word he meant: “Divorce.”

We used it. At first, in those early years, it was Margaret who would threaten to divorce me. This was a frightening thought, I will admit, since—particularly in the 1960s and 1970s—a divorced Baptist preacher was out of the ministry altogether. At one point, and one point only, I threatened divorce. And an interesting thing happened.

I honestly had thought that since Margaret had often mentioned divorce as a possibility, when I suggested it that she would jump for it. Instead, the opposite

happened. I can remember her words to me as though she said them last night:

“Marrying me was the best thing you ever did, mister. And divorcing me would be the worst. I am somebody. If you walk away, I promise that you will look back and regret it the rest of your life.”

She will tell you that was God speaking through her, that she hardly remembers saying that. It was the last thing I expected, but precisely what I needed to hear. Note to pastors: Whether you use the ‘D’ word or not, be realistic. Your marriage is not immune to anything just because you are called of God. If anything, it is subject to more temptation, more stress, and more problems.

**8) We did not tell the next church about our marital struggles.** When we moved to the next church (from the 12-year-pastorate where we had had the near meltdown and gone through the year of

counseling), we were glad to close the door on that difficult and painful period and go forward. The problem is, Satan wanted to use this against us.

In the next assignment—a well-known and historic congregation which we mistakenly expected to be the church of our dreams—we came up against a few people who were determined to undermine us, find all the skeletons in our closet, and use them to uproot us from that ministry. Looking back, I still find this amazing that so-called Christian people would do such.

Now, the Southern Baptist Convention's Office of Communication had interviewed us for their "marriage and family" issue of *Facts and Trends* magazine (May, 1981), and had told the story of our marital problems, the subsequent counseling, and the way God had restored our home. We received the interviewer into our home for two full days and willingly cooperated in

every way for the article. But now, five years later in another church in a different state, a self-appointed sleuth found out about that article. Unable to get his hands on a copy and unwilling to ask me about it, he decided that someone had done a *National Enquirer* type piece on us, had found some kind of scandal, and so spread that word. We became the target of a campaign of gossip.

We ended up staying at that church only 3 years before coming to Kenner (in metro New Orleans) for the last 22 years. As we were leaving that church, I asked a friend, "Had you heard the rumor about Margaret and me being divorced?" He had. I said, "Did it ever occur to you to ask us? After all, she was 19 and I was 22 when we married. How could we be divorced?" He dropped his head and said, "I was afraid of what I would learn."

We could have spared ourselves much of this pain by telling the church up

front. Note to pastors: If there is something in your background that could be used of the devil against you, as much as possible, be transparent up front about it.

**9) We did not help others as much as we could have.** There is a perfectionism rampant in the ministry. Unless I'm everything I ought to be in the pulpit, in the study, in my walk with the Lord, in my prayer life, and in my home, I should not speak to certain issues. This is badly, badly wrong.

We should have known on that Monday in March of 1981. The previous night, Margaret and I had taken the full hour of the evening service to share our story about what we called "The Home God Healed." Then, the next morning, the church phone rang off the wall with people scheduled appointments to get help for their marriage. Columbus, Mississippi had no marriage counselors to speak of then, so it was go-to-the-preacher or nobody.

They knew we would understand since we had been where they were. And we did understand. What we seem not to have understood, looking back, is that in order to have an ongoing ministry to troubled (and normally difficult) marriages in the community, it was not necessary for our marriage to be perfect. I think we felt that people now looked upon us as the shining example of what marriage should be. And it was never that. The struggle for us was constant.

I should have preached on the home more. Margaret and I should have worked up presentations to help marriages, parents, and homes more than we did. We had more to offer than we knew. Note to pastors: Do not fall into the perfectionism trap. If God required helpers to be perfect, you would not be allowed to preach Sunday.

**10) We were not as honest with ourselves and others as we should have**

**been.** While writing this, I called Margaret at home and read the first 9 “mistakes” to her. She agreed with each one. I asked, “What’s the tenth?” She said, “We should have been more honest and transparent with ourselves and with others.” She agrees that we felt, because our marriage was far less than perfect, we were unqualified to give others the help they needed. She added, “I think we were ashamed.” Ashamed. I remember that.

In fact, after the *Facts and Trends* article on our marriage appeared, a number of state Baptist papers and a few secular dailies ran it. Even the *Houston Chronicle* ran a feature. Somewhere in a file in this office are the forty or more letters we received in response. A couple of them said our story had saved their marriage. But not all. One person told us a preacher (whom he did not name) said, “Joe and Margaret should not have gone public with that story.

This sort of thing reflects poorly on the Gospel.”

If you know anything about the frailties of the human heart, you will agree that that one negative comment weighed more heavily on us than the forty positive letters. Such is the condition of the insecure and selfish heart. I wish we had been bolder, stronger, more courageous.

Note to pastors: If you admit to the congregation that your wife and you have to struggle to get along, you will offend two people. But another hundred will appreciate knowing their pastor is human, will benefit from seeing the transparency, and will be able to pray for you more effectively.

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# Exegetically Speaking

by Spiros Zodhiates

## The Last Supper

Matthew 26:17-30

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

[17] Passover was a weeklong celebration that started on Thursday in A. D. 30 with the feast of “*unleavened bread*” called *ázuma* (the neuter plural of *ázumos* [106], unleavened. The verb *zumóō* [2220] means to cause fermentation).

Both feasts, commemorating the Hebrews’ liberation from slavery in Egypt, were celebrated in Jerusalem. The Passover began on Thursday after six in the evening when ceremonially the new day began with each Jewish home searching for leaven

(used to make dough rise) in their houses and removing it. It takes much less time to make unleavened dough than leavened. The shortened preparation and baking period was to remind the Jews of their hasty departure from Egypt (Ex. 12:33, 34). Because of its permeating effect, leaven became a symbol of the spread of evil (Matt. 16:6, 11-12) and also of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 13:33) throughout the world.

The word “*passover*” (see v. 2) comes from the Hebrew *pesach* (6453, OT), derived from the Hebrew verb *pacach* ([6452, OT], to leap over). When the angel of death saw the blood of the slain lamb sprinkled on the lintel and doorposts of a house, he would “pass over” that house, sparing its firstborn children (Ex. 12:27-28).

The disciples asked Jesus, “*Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?*” (a.t.); similarly, Mark 14:12: “*that You may eat the Passover?*” (a.t.). They

knew Jesus wanted to share the Passover meal with them, but they were not expecting Him to lay down His life as the Passover Lamb in a few short hours.

**[18]** Jesus told them to “*go into the city.*” Jerusalem was crowded during this time, but the Passover had to be celebrated inside the city. Jesus sent them “*to (prós [4314], toward) such (deína [1170], an indefinite pronoun used when a person does not wish to disclose a name) a man (not in the original text).*”

Though from a human perspective Jesus had probably not made prior arrangements, the triune God foreknew the person and the meeting. Luke 22:8–12 tells us that Peter and John went into the city to meet and follow a man bearing a pitcher of water into a house. Jesus told them to tell this person that the Master was going to eat the Passover meal with His disciples at his house: “*The Master (didáskalos [1320],*

teacher, the title by which Jesus was acknowledged) *saith, My time (kairós [2540], season, appointed time) is at hand (eggús [1451], near, ready); I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.*”

**[19]** The disciples then “...*did as Jesus appointed (from suntássō [4929], arranged together; from sún [4862], together; and tássō [5021], to order, arrange) them; and they made ready (from hetoimázō [2090], to prepare, to make ready) the Passover*” (a.t.).

**[20-21]** In the evening (*opsías [3798]*, the close of the day just before darkness), Jesus ate supper with His disciples within the city limits. While eating, He addressed the disciples: “*Verily (amēn [281]) I say (légō [3004], I say intelligently and firmly) unto you, that one of (from ek [1537], out of from within, i.e., the circle of disciples) you shall betray (from paradídōmi [3860], to betray or deliver) me.*” In the strongest manner, Jesus

asserted that one of those nearest to Him would betray Him.

**[22]** Only Matthew records the fact that the disciples became “*exceedingly* (*sphódra* [4970]) *sorrowful* (from *lupéō* [3076], to make someone sorrowful or grieved)” twice during the latter part of Christ’s ministry. In Matthew 17:23, they became sorrowful because of Jesus’ predicted death. The fact that Jesus promised that He would be raised from the dead should have comforted the true disciples, but they did not understand this.

Now the true disciples became sorrowful because Jesus told them that one of them would betray Him. “*Every one*” (*hékastos* [1538], each) individually asked whether he himself were the one. They all use the negative *mē*, which in Koine Greek, is used in a direct question to indicate an expected answer of no. “*It is not I, is it?*”

They all felt certain they could never stoop so low.

**[23]** Jesus did not answer them directly but said, “*He that dips (embápsas, the aorist participle of embáptō [1686], to dip in; from en [1722], into; and báptō [911], to dip; thus, proleptically, “the one having dipped” or “the one who dips [once]”) his hand with Me in the dish (from trúblion [5165], a bowl or dish), the same shall betray (from paradídōmi [3860], to deliver) me*” (a.t.). John tells us that Jesus originally spoke these words only to John himself as he leaned back onto Jesus’ breast as they reclined at the table (John 13:22–26).

**[24]** Here in Matthew, Christ explained that the “*the Son of Man goeth*” to conform to Scripture “*as it has been written (gégraptai, the perfect passive of gráphō [1125])*” (a.t.). But in Luke 22:22, Christ gave a more specific reason why “*the Son of Man goeth,*” using *hōrisménon* (the perfect

passive participle of *horízō* [3724], to define or specify), “*as it is specified*” or “*defined (by the Father)*” (a.t.).

Not every detail was prophesied, however, as for example, Judas’ name. Psalm 41:9 says rather generally, “*Yes, My own familiar friend whom I trusted, who ate My bread, has lifted up his heel against Me*” (a.t.). Does this mean that Jesus on this occasion became aware that Judas was going to betray Him? No, the Scripture says, “*Jesus knew (from oída [1492]) from the beginning...who would betray Him*” (John 6:64; a.t.).

*Oída* (the perfect [used as a present] of *eídō* [1492], to know innately), is also the verb used in John 13:18: “*I know whom I have chosen.*” This innate knowledge contrasts with *ginōskō* (1097), a knowledge acquired by experience. Jesus knew when He chose His disciples who among them were genuine and who were not. In John

13:18, Jesus stressed a personal knowledge based on prior choice: “*I speak not of all of you. I know (oída, from eídō [1492], to know innately; there is no indication here that there was ever a time that the Lord did not know) whom I selected (from eklégomai [1586], to select for myself)*” (a.t.).

There is no verb *eklégō* in the active voice. All the references in the New Testament are from *eklégomai* (Mark 3:20; Luke 6:13; John 6:70; Acts 1:2; 1 Cor. 1:27-28; Eph. 1:4; James 2:5; etc.). In John 13:18, Jesus spoke of the true disciples, not of Judas. Thus, Jesus’ personal knowledge of His disciples was not based on any historic experience but on innate divine foreknowledge. Nevertheless, He pronounced a “woe” (*ouaí [3759]*) on the one who would betray Him, the same threat spoken repeatedly to the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:13–16, 23. The two Greek verbs “*goeth*” (from *hupágo [5217]*)

and “*is betrayed*” (from *paradídōmi* [3860]) indicate deliberate actions. What Jesus did (“*goeth*”) and Judas did (“*betrayed*”), they both did willingly.

Jesus concluded the sad story of Judas by saying, “*It would have been good* (from *kalós* [2570]) *for that man if he had not been born* (*egennēthē*, the aorist passive of *gennáō* [1080], to give birth)” (a.t.). “*Good*” referred to Judas’ (that man’s) good; in other words, it would have been better for Judas if he had never been born. Judas’ actions were disastrous to his own destiny. Had he died in the womb, his destiny would have been far better than his living to betray the innocent Son of God.

**[25]** Judas repeated the disciples’ question but with one conspicuous difference. They addressed him as “*Lord*” (v. 22), whereas Judas addressed Jesus as “*Master*” or “*Rabbi*.” To him, Jesus was just a teacher, not a personal lord and certainly

not the Lord. Jesus answered, “*Thou hast said,*” confirming the fact but not making an accusation. We are not told that after this exposure, Judas left Jesus and the disciples immediately (John 13:30).

Some believe Jesus distributed the bread and wine after Judas left. But how then could Judas have dipped the bread in the dish with Jesus? Jesus said, “*The hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table*” after He distributed bread and wine according to Luke 22:19–22. If Jesus did not exclude Judas from participation in this meal, no minister should limit the Lord’s Supper to those he thinks are worthy of it. In a pure sense, no one is worthy of what Jesus did, but faith in the Lord’s shed blood is a reverence that values Christ’s sacrifice. Nevertheless, every minister of Christ should warn people to examine themselves so they participate worthily as eleven of the Twelve Apostles did (1 Cor. 11:28).

**[26]** Jesus took in His hand a “*loaf of bread*” (from *ártos* [740], bread, a loaf) and blessed it. To commemorate Passover, this was a flat disk of bread made without yeast. The Textus Receptus and the United Bible Society version have “*blessed*” (from *eulogéō* [2127], to bless or speak well [to]; from *eú* [2095], good, well; and *légō* [3004], to speak), while the Majority Text has “*thanked*” (from *eucharistéō* [2168], to thank). The two verbs are related, both rooted in the adverb *eú*, good, with gracing (*charístō*) simply being the content of the speaking (*légō*). “*To speak well* [or good]” and “*to bless*” are the same action.

Jesus then “*broke*” (from *kláō* [2806], to break into small pieces) the bread and “*gave*” (from *dídōmi* [1325], to give) it to the disciples, and said, “*Take, eat; this is my body.*” The broken bread symbolized His body that was about to be sacrificed on the cross.

**[27]** Jesus then blessed the cup of wine. During the Passover feast, four cups of wine represented four promises given to the Jews prior to their exodus: *“I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD”* (Ex. 6:6–8).

**[28]** Jesus then said, *“For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed* (*ekchunómenon*, the present passive participle of *ekchúnō* [1632], to pour out, “which is being poured out,” spoken

proleptically) *for many for* (*eis* [1519], in order that, for the purpose of) *the remission* (from the noun *áphesis* [859], removal, forgiveness, putting away; from the verb *aphíēmi* [863], to send away, forgive) *of sins.*”

The blood of Jesus still coursed through His veins when He spoke these words, but it was soon poured out on the cross. It would atone for all sins, no matter what kind. Jesus did not mean that the symbol, the wine itself, would be shed to forgive sins, only the reality behind the symbol—His physical blood, for “*without shedding of blood [there] is no remission (áphesis)*” (Heb. 9:22).

In John 6:54 Jesus said, “*Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life*” (a.t.). But this should be taken in light of the immediate context: “*It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak to you are spirit and are*

*life*” (v. 63; a.t.). Accordingly, “*Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*” (Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4; a.t.). The Word of God is food to us, and we should treat it as such.

Metaphors based on eating foods and drinking fluids are common in the Bible. Unbelievers are said to have “*drunk of the wine of the wrath of (the whore of Babylon’s) fornication*” (Rev. 18:3); to have “*blood to drink*” (Rev. 16:6); and they would drink of “*the wine of the wrath of God*” (Rev. 14:10). In 1 Corinthians 10:2–4, Paul tells us that those baptized into Moses at the crossing of the Red Sea drank from the spiritual rock that was Christ. No one would question the metaphorical nature of these statements and, in light of their extensive use throughout the Bible, it is foolish to press for relative literalism here. We say relative, because even here an absolute literalism would require Christ’s physical body and

blood—not so-called “converted” bread and wine.

Nothing we do materially can result in our regeneration. Faith, specifically “*in his blood*” (Rom. 3:25), secures eternal life. Paul says, “*For by grace you are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift (dōron [1435]) of God*” (Eph. 2:8; a. t.). Physical bread and wine cannot propitiate the wrath of God. Only faith in Jesus’ atoning death produces the legal remission of sins and sanctification. Jesus qualified this as the blood of “...*the new* (from *kainós* [2537], qualitatively new, i.e., of a different kind, no longer the blood of lambs and bulls that could not take away sin; Heb. 10:4) *testament* (from *diathēkē* [1242]; a person’s will to his heirs upon his or her death).”

The United Bible Society and most modern English versions, following a few older manuscripts, do not have the adjective

“new” (from *kainós*) but only “*the blood of the testament* (or covenant).” But in Luke 22:20, Christ clearly said, “*This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.*” The Father wills to His heirs eternal life—His own life—on the death of His Son. Believers become “*joint-heirs with Christ*” (Rom. 8:17, cf. v. 29; Heb. 2:11). The life of God in humans was lost when Adam sinned at the beginning of history. In the Old Testament, it was regained by faith in the promises of God.

That is what Abraham did (John 8:56). He looked forward to what Christ came to do as we look back to what He did. A new chronology would have given us a *néa* (from *néos* [3501]) subsequent but not qualitatively distinct) testament, but we have a *kainē* (from *kainós*, qualitatively new) testament (Luke 22:20). What is new is based on the death of the Testator, Jesus Christ.

Why does Matthew 26:28 say “*for many*” (1 Tim. 2:6; 4:10; cf. 2 Cor. 5:17)? Did Jesus Christ in becoming flesh (John 1:14) die only for many or for all? He died for all by giving all an opportunity to believe, and among the “*all*,” we find those who did believe, those who do believe, those who will believe, and those who did not or will not believe. But this latter group refuses to accept His free gift of salvation and thus do not obtain it. That is why Paul, in 1 Timothy 4:10, calls Him “*the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe.*”

The present participle, “*being shed*”—reflecting once again Jesus’ fluctuation between the timeless plans of the Father and the temporal realizations—does not contradict the once-for-all (*hápax* [530]; Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 3:18) nature of the atonement. Jesus does not die again (Rom. 6:9, 10; Heb. 6:4–6).

**[29]** The single “*not*” in English translates the two Greek words *ou* (3756) and *mē* (3361). The two combined gives the strongest negative possible in Greek: never at any time, never in any way, absolutely not. The aorist tense of the verb “*drink*” (*πίῶ*, the aorist subjunctive of *πίνῶ* [4095], to drink) implies “*at any one time.*” “*Until that day*” brings us to the return of Christ. Jesus did not tell us just how this new (from *kainós*, qualitatively new) commemoration will be celebrated.

In 1 Corinthians 11:26, the apostle Paul tells us that whenever (*hosákis* [3740]) we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, it shows forth His death till (*áchris* [891], continually) He comes. This celebration will extend through the age of grace, until Christ returns in glory (Matt. 25:31) to create His new (from *kainós*) heaven and a new (from *kainós*) earth (Rev. 21:1, 4). A new order will supplant even death.

**[30]** When Jesus and His disciples finished their last meal together, they “*sang a hymn*” (from *humnéō* [5214], to praise with a hymn), possibly from Psalms 113-118, which the Jews called their *Hallel*, from the Hebrew verb “*to praise*” (2 Chr. 7:6; Ezra 3:11). Psalm 114 especially celebrated Israel’s exodus from Egypt.

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# Living out the Living Word

by Justin Lonas

## God's Table Servants: Qualifications for Deacons

1 Timothy 3:8-15

Last month, we looked at the first half of 1 Timothy chapter 3, in which Paul tells Timothy the qualifications a man must demonstrate before he can be entrusted with leadership in the church as an overseer or elder. The second half of the chapter describes the qualifications for the other biblical officers of the Church—deacons.

The leadership of the early Church was based in discipleship—Christ poured Himself into the twelve who by the Spirit became His apostles, and they “*entrust[ed His teachings] to faithful men...able to teach others also*” (2 Tim. 2:2)—and this is

reflected in the requirement that overseers be “*able to teach*” (1 Tim. 3:2). Paul does not attach that requirement to deacons, a distinction which is rooted in the origin of the office.

In the New Testament, it is somewhat assumed that there will be overseers, elders, or “shepherds” over each local church (and that if there are not, there should be, as Paul instructs in Titus 1:5), and most texts referring to these men focus on their qualifications for office. With deacons, however, we have recorded for us what I believe is the inauguration of this office in Acts chapter 6.

*“Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, ‘It*

*is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:1-4).*

This position of a church helper or “deacon” was created in response to this conflict in the early Church about the service of widows in which there appeared to be racial discrimination. For the good of the Church, the apostles established a new role designed to address the serving of those in the fellowship. For the record, even though the term “deacon” doesn’t appear in English translations of this passage, the Greek *diakonia* (often translated as service or ministry) shows up in verses 1 and 4 (though there as the “*ministry of the word*”), and *diakonein* (the verb form, to serve or minister) is found in verse 2.

In 1 Timothy, Paul uses *diakonous* (servants) to describe those who serve in this capacity, and it is simply transliterated as “deacons”. Some scholars doubt that Acts 6 makes a good foundation for the office of deacon because the title is not used. Still, there was a clear movement in this direction within the early Church, and we see by the time Paul wrote Philippians near the end of his ministry that it appears as an established office: “*To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers (episkopoi) and deacons (diakonoï)*” (Phil. 1:1).

What we see here is a fourfold rationale for the ministry of deacons. **1)** There are services to be provided and conflicts to be resolved in order for the Church to function well and achieve its mission. **2)** The apostles (and, by extension, elders) serve primarily as teachers and spiritual leaders, and this function requires

prayer and focused study that deserves to be protected for the good of the Body. **3)** Therefore, a separate office is needed which is specifically focused on the humble service of the physical needs of the Body (“table service”) to preserve harmony and facilitate a focus on the mission. **4)** Because this is a delicate and necessary service, those to whom it is entrusted should be carefully chosen according to their faithfulness and wisdom.

All this brings us back to the passage at hand, in which Paul outlines the qualifications for service as a deacon: *“Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear-conscience. These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach.”* (3:8-10).

Much of this is very similar to the character qualifications for overseers listed previously. Those who would serve the church must be **men of dignity**, that is, of strong character, not thinking too highly of themselves, and willing to serve selflessly. They are to be honest, **not double-tongued**, in order to be trustworthy to handle sensitive situations within the Church with full integrity. Like overseers, they are **not to be addicted to** anything that would control them; their allegiance must be to Christ and His Church. They should **not be fond of sordid gain**; their honesty and diligence should be reflected in all their personal and business dealings.

Foundational to their character, deacons should **hold to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience**. Paul's language here is in direct contrast to the wrong belief of the false teachers at Ephesus who are "*straying from*" (1:6) "a

*good conscience and a sincere faith*” (1:5). This might seem an odd requirement for men who are called to be “table-servants”, but Paul doesn’t mince words that everyone who serves and represents the Church should have a clear understanding of the Gospel of Christ and trust in Him alone for salvation. A false convert can be just as damaging to the Church in the message he conveys through serving as a false teacher can be in proclaiming lies. Because of this, men must **first be tested** in order to serve as deacons—the congregation should know by their confession and the evidence of their speech and conduct that they are true believers and **beyond reproach** before they are called to serve.

Paul then addresses another group, presumably also serving in the Church: *“Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things”* (3:11). Some translations render

this as “wives” (the Greek *gunaikas* can mean either wives or women in general), supposing that Paul would have been more specific if he had meant “deaconesses” (*diakonon*, as in Rom. 16:1). “Women who serve” seems to be the sense here, both because of the context and the fact that he does not include a similar statement about women or wives in his message on overseers.

Whether or not a church gives these women an office (in service, not leadership) every church I’ve ever know is served tirelessly in childcare, meals ministry, Sunday school, etc., by a host of faithful women. Similarly to the overseers and deacons, Paul lays out character qualities that should be evident in these serving women. Like deacons, they should be **dignified**. They should **not** be **gossips**, given to spreading untruth around the church (in contrast to the “*busybodies*” of

5:13). They should be **temperate**—that is, clear-headed, not allowing their emotions to determine their attitudes and decision-making. Like all who desire to minister in the Body of Christ, they should be **faithful** to their Savior, to their local church, to their families, and in their service.

Paul then returns to addressing the male deacons (almost as a “One more thing...”): “*Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households*” (3:12). Just like overseers, deacons are expected to be “one-woman men”, faithful to their spouses and families, and effective leaders and peacemakers in their home. Paul rightly reasons that those who cannot serve those closest to them well have no business being ordained to serve publicly in the church.

Because of the strict requirements for their appointment and the hard work set before deacons, Paul reminds them of the

honor that is theirs in service: “*For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and a great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus*” (3:13). Service and sacrifice in the name of Christ strengthens one’s faith in the assurance of His indwelling power, without which none of us could be humbled to serve.

Paul goes on to explain to Timothy his reason for spelling out the character and behavior expected of faithful believers (chapter 2) and especially church leaders and servants (chapter 3). “*I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth*” (3:14-15). Paul clearly understood that, in order for the message of Gospel to be preserved and the mission of the Church to be continued, there needed to

be an accountable, replicable structure to the Body. The Church itself is the means of accountability and edification for individual believers, and its leaders must both be held to the highest standards and hold the Church to its commission and to godliness.

From this, I believe we clearly see that the church polity modeled in the Early Church is one of leadership by a plurality of overseers or elders assisted by the servant role of deacons. These roles delineate between teaching of the Word and the physical service of the local church and provide for the faithful accomplishment of both tasks in a way that moves the whole church to fulfill its mission.

Unfortunately, this is not uniformly applied across churches. Perhaps you come from a church background that is very hierarchical, with layers of bishops who set policy and appoint pastors for local congregations. Perhaps you come from a

tradition where the local church is autonomous and the pastor functions as a CEO with oversight from a group of men in the body called trustees or deacons.

Perhaps you are most familiar with these two offices as named in Scripture, but those who hold them have not been held faithfully to the requirements Paul lays out here.

In whatever case, the misapplication of the biblical model can lead to frustration of the Church's mission. Without a plurality of faithful overseers, a local church's authority can be abused and its commitment to teaching sound doctrine can slip. Without committed, faithful deacons as servants, the needs of the local body can be overlooked or delegated to individuals and committees who are neither called by the whole church nor accordingly held accountable.

Obviously a biblically founded church polity will not, in itself, ensure the faithfulness and fruitfulness of any local

church or denomination. Still, Scripture holds forth this model for church administration with good reason, and when it is set aside for any tradition of men (however venerable), we open the door to a host of brambles that threaten to choke out the effectiveness of our witness.

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## **Points to Ponder**

by David L. and Stephen F. Olford

### **Perfect Peace**

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**Text:** *“The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in*

*You. Trust in the Lord forever, For in God the Lord, we have an everlasting Rock” (Isa. 26:3-4).*

**Thought:** There is undoubtedly a close connection between the opening verses of Isaiah 26 and the words of our text. In his song of victory, Isaiah describes a strong city with salvation for its walls and bulwark, and open gates for those whose lives are characterized by righteousness and truth. The prophet then goes on to speak of the security and serenity of those who live within this city of God. With exquisite language the writer of this evangelical prophecy unfold the source, scope and secret of God’s peace.

## **I. The Source of Perfect Peace.**

*“The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You.... For in God the Lord, we have an*

*everlasting Rock.*” The source of this wonderful peace is the Lord Jehovah. He is spoken of in these matchless verses as the “*everlasting Rock*” or literally, the “Rock of Ages.”

How comforting to know that in a world where everything seems to be shaking and shifting the Christian can stay his mind upon the Rock of Ages. As the great “I AM.” God is what He is because he is the sources, the motive, the law, and the sustenance of His own being. He is the changeless and eternal One. He is the Rock of Ages. Within the cleft of the Rock is “peace, perfect peace.”

## **II. The Scope of Perfect Peace.**

“*The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace....*” The peace which God offers His own people is not intermittent or occasional, but rather like a river glorious, ever flowing in its unbroken fullness to the

believing heart. Without doubt, the Apostle Paul was thinking of this very passage when he dictated his letter to the church at Philippi: *And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will **guard** your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 4:7).

It is the steadfast mind that is kept in perfect peace in a world so distraught with unrest and tumult of mind and heart. How precious to know that God's purpose for us is "peace, perfect peace."

### **III. The Secret of Perfect Peace.**

*"The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever."* The word for "*mind*" here is a word meaning "thought" or "imagination." It is within the area of our thoughts and imaginations that unrest, turmoil and fear begin, but to stay our minds

upon Jehovah is to know perfect peace and rest.

“What do men do with light things on deck when the ship is ‘pitching?’” asks Dr. Alexander Maclaren. “Lash them to a fixed point. Lash yourself to God by simple trust and then you will partake of His certain immutability in such fashion as it is possible for the creature to participate in the attributes of the Creator.”

**Thrust:** “Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest: finding as He promised, perfect peace and rest.”

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

## A Song to Bridge a Gap

**Song:** “You Are My King”

*“But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him” (Isa. 53:5-6).*

Billy Foote was born into a minister's home in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1966.

His parents, Billy and Winky Foote, demonstrated their support of their son's musical aspirations by providing guitar lessons, starting at age nine. He quickly

advanced to the point of playing in his dad's revival services.

It was in one of those services that young Billy gave his heart to Christ. He told me, "I would hear my dad preach about the need to have Christ in your life. I remember responding to an invitation. I had been under conviction about my need for about a month before I actually surrendered to Christ."

By age sixteen, Billy knew that God had work for him to do. He said, "I had no idea what kind, but I had the assurance that God was going to use me somehow."

Foote enrolled in East Texas Baptist University, in Marshall, Texas, in 1985. In the summer of 1986, he met a person who was to be a friend and mentor—one who would influence him as a worship leader more than any other—David Guion. He was leading worship at a camp in which Billy was a counselor.

Billy was greatly affected by the way David led the students in worship. He said, "My eyes were opened to what it means to blend the old and new songs, and to call people to ascribe worth to the Lord."

Billy also said that his eyes were more opened during that camp to what worship can really be in a corporate setting. He told me, "I went back to college and helped start a night of worship each week. We had a time of worship through singing, and then a friend of mine, Neil McClendon, would speak to us. Students were able to make much of God and what He means to them."

Billy said of his early songwriting, "I had been out of college for about six years and had been leading worship full-time since my graduation. At that point in my life, I would not have considered myself a songwriter. In fact, I had only written a couple of songs before 'You Are My King.'"

Following is how he described the writing of his now famous third song: “I happened to be at a night of worship, and the phrases ‘I’m forgiven because You were forsaken’ and ‘I’m accepted’ kept running through my mind. I wrote those phrases down on a piece of paper, and the whole song came together.

“I believe the Spirit of God just reminded me of truths I had been taught at a young age. I knew I was forgiven because of what Christ did for us on the cross. I really don’t have a grand story of how it came together. I just believe it was a gift from God. As with many of my songs, the melody came with the words. I was able to run the lyrics by a couple of men whom I trust with their understanding of the Bible. They believed the lyrics to be of sound theology, and so I started using the song wherever I was leading worship.

“I remember the first summer church camp that I sang the song. From the very first line, it seemed as if the students had known the song their entire lives. It was incredible to watch students respond to the Lord.

“It is so encouraging to know that this song is being used to help people bless the Lord around the world. We are forgiven and accepted because Christ was forsaken and condemned. We are alive and well because Christ arose from the grave. It really is amazing!”

Billy and his wife, Cindy, lead worship together as a team. Cindy, a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has become the lead vocalist for the worship band since Billy was diagnosed with a condition that affects his voice. Billy continues to write songs as he seeks to obey God's call on his life.

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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

### **James Montgomery: Hymn Writer**

James Montgomery (1771-1854) was a British poet and hymn writer.

Born in Ayrshire, Scotland, Montgomery was the son of a pastor and missionary of the Moravian Brethren. Young

James was sent to be trained for the ministry at the Moravian School at Fulneck, near Leeds, England. While he was in school there, his parents left England to serve as missionaries in the West Indies, where both died soon afterward.

Montgomery was a lifelong lover of poetry and dreamed of writing epics of his own, but he struggled to begin his career as a writer. He worked as a baker's apprentice, then as a helper to a shopkeeper, and finally as the assistant of Joseph Gales, an auctioneer, bookseller, and publisher of the *Sheffield Register*. In 1794, Gales turned the *Register* over to Montgomery, who changed the paper's name to the *Sheffield Iris* and steered it for 31 years.

During the Napoleonic Wars, fears of foreign infiltration and internal subversion led to significant political repression. Montgomery was twice imprisoned on charges of sedition. The first time was in

1795 for printing a poem celebrating the fall of the Bastille; the second in 1796 was for criticizing a magistrate for forcibly dispersing a political protest in Sheffield.

When he sold the *Iris* in 1825, he received public honors. In 1830 he delivered a series of lectures on poetry and literature before the Royal Institution, London. An earnest advocate of foreign missions and of the Bible Society, he also wrote many books on poetry and literature. He also was highly involved in the efforts to end slavery in Britain in the early 1800s and the reform of child labor laws.

His reputation rests mainly on 400 hymns, nearly 100 of which are still in use. "In English hymnody he stands next to Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley."

Among his great hymns are "Spirit of the Living God," "Hail to the Lord's Anointed," "Angels from the Realms of Glory," "Forever with the Lord," "Songs of

Praise the Angels Sing,” “Come Ye That Fear the Lord,” and “Prayer Is the Soul’s Sincere Desire.”

He published two volumes of poems, *Prison Amusements* (which recounted his experience in prison in the 1790s) and the *Wanderer of Switzerland*. In 1831 he compiled from the original documents the journals of D. Tyerman and G. Bennet, who had been sent by the London Missionary Society to visit their stations in the South Sea Islands, China, and India.

Strangely enough, his first recorded public profession of faith was when he joined the Moravian Church in his 43rd year.

Montgomery was well regarded in his chosen hometown of Sheffield, and always played an active part in civic life. He was honored with a public funeral at his death in 1854. Many streets there still bear his name, and in 1861, a monument was erected over his grave (since moved to Sheffield

Cathedral) by the Sheffield Sunday School Union.

On the granite pedestal of the monument is inscribed a fitting tribute to Montgomery. “Here lies interred, beloved by all who knew him, the Christian poet, patriot, and philanthropist. Wherever poetry is read, or Christian hymns sung, in the English language, ‘*he being dead, yet speaketh*’ by the genius, piety and taste embodied in his writings.”

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.

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## **Counselor's Corner**

by James Rudy Gray

### **Cherish the Moment**

A moment is a very short period of time, an instant. It can be a definite period or a point of time. Compared to eternity, moments are almost nothing. Compared to life, they are small and pass quickly. However, life is filled with special moments that we should cherish.

Paul had a great moment in his life while traveling on the Damascus Road. Moses had a special moment when God parted the waters of the Red Sea. The birth of a child is a great moment for the parents. Golfer Bubba Watson had a memorable moment earlier this month when he hit a difficult shot that lead to his win in the Masters Tournament.

Meaningful moments do not have to be spectacular moments in order to add value and blessing to our lives. In fact, some of the great moments in our lives would seem insignificant to others: a family vacation, a birth, a wedding, a walk, a hurt, a surprise, etc. The important thing is not the “size” of the moment, but that we take the time to cherish it when it comes. Valuable moments seem to happen unexpectedly.

A life is mostly routine activities, but in each life there are moments worth cherishing. Remembering those special moments can be nice, but taking the time to cherish them when they happen is better.

The greatest moment in history was when Jesus made his fourth statement from the cross in Matt. 27:46, “*My God, My God, Why have you forsaken Me?*” That was the moment when Jesus was judged for our sin; when He became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21); when He paid the price we owed for our sin.

The greatest moment in our personal history is the moment we are born again by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

We speak of the moment of death. Life is fragile and brief. All of us have an appointment with death that we will keep. But life is full of moments that we can cherish. When we do, life, however short or long, becomes richer.

When we counsel with people, they may often feel overwhelmed by the sheer size of the circumstances against them. They probably will not listen to much that we say, but they can be genuinely helped and powerfully encouraged when we help them to see hope in the moment. One moment then leads to another and another. Before long, the person is not nearly as hopeless, and life becomes more manageable. Everything that is wrong may not be corrected. Every hurt may not be healed.

However, the healing of encouragement can happen in a moment.

In 1 Corinthians 15:52, Paul talks about the moment of change for believers at the rapture, *“in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”*

We cannot predict the unique moments that may come into our lives. Most of them will be unplanned and even unpredictable. We can be ready for those moments and cherish them when they come.

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—4/23/12

***The Explicit Gospel***, Matt Chandler with Jared C. Wilson, 2012, Crossway, Wheaton, Ill., ISBN 9781433530036, 224 pages, \$17.99, hardcover.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is something that every evangelical church should consider foundational to their life and ministry. The very word “evangelical” comes from the Greek word for “Gospel”, *euaggelion*. In far too many of our churches and hearts, however, the Gospel is either assumed without being explicated or it is incompletely put forth in ways that undermine its truth and power.

In *The Explicit Gospel*, Texas pastor Matt Chandler seeks to address these concerns by articulating a thorough and biblical overview of the Gospel message.

Chandler looks at the Gospel through two lenses that he calls the “Gospel on the ground” (i.e., the relationship of holy God to sinful man mediated by the sacrifice of Christ) and the “Gospel in the air” (i.e., the cosmic, “big picture” story of God’s plan for His glory). The book is laid out in three sections: two discussing these two perspectives and a third dedicated to their implications and applications.

In the first section, Chandler grabs the reader’s attention by presenting a no-holds-barred picture of God’s holiness as inviolable and man’s sin as “glory theft”. Because of these truths, he reminds us, God’s judgment is just and sure and there can be no self-justification by any one of us. From there, he gives a clear statement of the person and work of Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice on the cross. After considering these things, Chandler shows from Scripture that man’s response to the

Gospel can only go two ways—acceptance (repentance and belief) or rejection (hardened hearts). There is no middle ground of soft religiosity or casual obedience.

In the section on the “Gospel in the air”, Chandler looks to the biblical narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation for a framework for the “God’s-eye view” of the Gospel. He is not treading any new ground here, but his portrait of God’s quest for His greatest glory through creating the universe and then reconciling all creation to its original purpose at the end of all things is a carefully crafted and passionate retelling of these truths. He compellingly argues that the full Gospel message has to include both perspectives to be fully accurate.

The final section holds the meat of Chandler’s appeal. He shows that an understanding of the Gospel that “stays on

the ground too long” will lead us to a man-centered message that reduces the glory of God in salvation to “fire insurance” that has no impact on our daily lives and sucks the drive out of our mission as a Church. The ditch on the other side of the road, however, a Gospel that “stays in the air too long,” leaves us open to a message that tries to make God’s renewal of all things into our job on earth. This leads down the path of syncretism, universalism, and a Christianity that takes its cues from the culture and abandons our God-given mission altogether. The book’s final chapter gives readers a cringe-worthy look at how (on either side of the message) reducing this story of God’s glory into mere moralism robs Christ of His due honor.

Overall, *The Explicit Gospel*, is an excellent resource for new believers and seekers, or as a reminder to pastors and teachers to preach the whole Gospel

faithfully and frequently. While Chandler's style reflects his youth and enthusiasm, it manages to catch the beauty of this changeless Gospel in a helpful idiom for a new generation.

Justin Lonas

**Target: All**

**Type: Practical Theology/Soteriology**

**Take: Highly Recommended**

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## **News Update—4/23/12**

### **World Silent as Saudi Arabia Works to “Destroy” All Churches**

As Saudi Arabia's highest Islamic authority has recently called for the destruction of all the churches on the Arabian Peninsula, religious rights groups are wondering why there hasn't been a

global outcry over the persecution, CBN News reports.

Cliff May, president of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, wrote in a recent Townhall.com column: “Imagine if Pat Robertson called for the demolition of all the mosques in America. It would be front-page news. It would be on every network and cable news program. There would be a demand for Christians to denounce him, and denounce him they would—in the harshest terms. The president of the United States and other world leaders would weigh in too. Rightly so. So why is it that when...the Grand Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia declares that it is ‘necessary to destroy all the churches in the Arabian Peninsula,’ the major media do not see this as even worth reporting?”

May added that he believed U.S. leaders and others had kept quiet on the issue to avoid promoting the notion of

“Islamophobia,” but warned that “the world cannot stay silent much longer.”

Religion Today Summaries

## **A Global Genocide against Christians Underway?**

In addition to the widespread persecution of Christians in the Muslim-majority Middle East, one religious freedom expert says Christians are “very much threatened” throughout the rest of the world, CBN News reports.

Nina Shea, director of the Hudson Institute’s Center for Religious Freedom, said: “We’re seeing a very vicious attack on Christians in a number of countries.... In many places in Iraq, we’re seeing a religious cleansing. That’s a euphemism—it means that Christians are being killed and driven out. About two-thirds of the Christians in Iraq have already left.” In Saudi Arabia, she said,

the government is now hunting down people who pray in their homes, and in Egypt, Christians are “very, very worried about their future because there’s an Islamist parliament now.”

However, Shea notes that it isn’t just the Middle East that’s seeing an increase in Muslim extremism: “There is a radicalization of Islam going on throughout the world and this is having an impact on the tolerance that there is for non-Muslims. So Christians are very much threatened throughout the world, and any Muslim who defends [Christians]—they’re being attacked and killed,” Shea said.

Religion Today Summaries

## **Iranian Christian Asylum-Seekers in Danger of Deportation from Sweden**

Despite efforts from human-rights activists following a decision by Sweden’s

immigration office to deport Iranian asylum-seekers, many Christians still face the possibility of being returned to their home country—and experiencing danger upon their return, Mohabat News reports.

One of the Christians in danger of deportation is Mohammad-Ali Hodaei, an Iranian citizen who converted to Christianity. “If it is Jesus’ will for me to return to Iran, I’ll submit to His will and He will protect me Himself,” he said, but his activities—such as posting daily evangelical messages on social media such as Facebook—could cause great risk for his future if he is forced to leave Sweden.

Another Christian convert facing deportation is Mohammad-Reza Hamedian Esfahani, who entered Sweden using a visa after he was fired from his job in Iran after becoming a Christian; he and his family would also face an unsafe situation if they returned to Iran. Asylum activists continue to

call on the immigration office to protect the Iranian Christians and stop the process of deportation.

Religion Today Summaries

## **Evolution's "Weaknesses" Can Be Taught in Tennessee Schools**

A bill that will allow Tennessee public school teachers to present the "weaknesses" of scientific theories such as evolution has become law without the governor's signature, *Baptist Press* reports.

Republican Gov. Bill Haslam returned the bill to the legislature April 10 without vetoing it or signing it, signaling that he wasn't fully pleased with it but acknowledging that his veto could be overridden. The bill passed the House 72-23 and the Senate 25-8.

The new law states that legislators believe teachers may be "unsure" about some issues, including "biological evolution,

the chemical origins of life, global warming and human cloning,” and that since a major purpose of scientific education is “to help students develop critical thinking skills,” state officials cannot prohibit teachers from “helping students understand, analyze, critique and review in an objective manner the scientific strengths and weaknesses of existing scientific theories.”

Casey Luskin, an attorney for the Discovery Institute’s Center for Science and Culture, said the law would protect teachers around the state who are “harassed, intimidated and sometimes fired” for presenting arguments against evolution, even if they back up their claims with evidence.

Religion Today Summaries

**British Lawmakers Approve Prayer at Town Halls**

The British government has fast-tracked a move to restore the rights of towns and cities to hold prayers as part of their official business, effectively overriding a High Court order to stop the practice, the Religion News Service reports.

In February, the High Court ruled that it was illegal for town halls to continue with the centuries-old practice of conducting prayers at the start of official meetings, but Communities Secretary Eric Pickles spearheaded the introduction of a new “general power of competence of local authorities in England” to give new powers to local governments to resume prayers and sidestep the court ruling.

The parliamentary order took effect immediately when Pickles signed it on April 6. “Parliament has been clear that councils should have greater freedom from interference,” the British government said, adding that the new powers enable councils

to “innovate” and “hands them back the freedom to pray.” Pickles said the measure “sends a strong signal that this government will protect the role of faith in public life.”

Religion Today Summaries

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## **Sermon Helps**

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

### **Sermon Outlines**

#### **Peace in the Home**

##### **I. Peace as a Gift**

A. Peace comes from Jesus (John 14:27; 16:33).

B. Peace comes by faith (Rom. 5:1).

##### **II. Peace as a Guard (Phil. 4:6-7)**

A. The duties of a guard.

B. The practice of the guard.

##### **III. Peace as a Guide (Col. 3:15)**

A. Peace is like a chairman—it keeps things going.

B. Peace is like a compass—it keeps us going in the right direction.

#### IV. Peace as a Goal (Heb. 12:14)

A. The “who” of the goal.

1. Every believer (Matt. 5:9; Eph. 4:3).

2. Fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, elders, deacons, ministers, teachers, etc.

B. The “how” of the goal (James 3:13-18; 1 Cor. 2:6-7).

Victor Knowles

## **Truth or Consequences**

1 Timothy 1:3-11

Intro.: How to teach sound doctrine.

I. Cautions to the Careless (1:3-7)

A. Don't be fraudulent (1:3).

B. Don't be factious (1:4).

C. Don't be fruitless (1:5).

D. Don't be frivolous (1:6).

E. Don't be foolish (1:7).

II. Considerations to the Careful (1:8-11)

A. Use proper discernment (1:8).

B. Use proper direction (1:9-10).

C. Use proper devotion (1:11).

Conc.: But you can't teach sound doctrine if you don't know sound doctrine. How much time do you spend reading, studying and meditating on Scripture?

Jim Stevanus

## **Illustrations**

### **A Mother's Arms**

A sorrowing mother, bending over her dying child, was trying to soothe it by talking about heaven. She spoke of the glory there, of the brightness shed around, of the shining countenances of the Holy Angels; but presently a little voice stopped her, saying, "I should not like to be there, mother, for the light hurts my eyes."

Then she changed her word picture, and spoke of the songs above, of the harpers harping with their harps, of the voice as the voices of many waters, of the new song which they sang before the Throne; but the child said, "Mother, I cannot bear any noise."

Grieved and disappointed at her failure to speak words of comfort, she took the little one from its bed of pain, and enfolded it in her arms with all the tenderness of a mother's love. Then, as the little sufferer lay there, near to all it loved best in the world, conscious only as its life ebbed away of the nearness of love and care, the whisper came, "Mother, if Heaven is like this, may Jesus take me there!"

Anonymous

## **A Mom-Compatible God**

On May 11, 1970, Mrs. Charles Teasdale was promoted to her reward. Mae

Alice spent forty-six tireless years on the mission field of Africa. To the many native women she mothered, as well as two sons, one daughter, and a husband, she was more affectionately known as “Mother T.”

Most mothers are like that. They are on the go constantly, nurturing family, friends, and even strangers. That is why a commercial of the recent past (Robitussin cold medicine) portraying the mother as “Dr. Mom” was so effective. It related well to our relationships with our mothers.

A mother’s love is the closest example we have to God’s love. It is faithful, giving, merciful, forgiving, and sacrificial. Our Creator talks about these two great loves: *“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!”* (Isa. 49:15). Thankfully, moms have an unfailing, higher love from which to draw when they are on empty.

Remember that smart “Dr. Moms”  
always stay in the care of the Great  
Physician

J. Kenneth Bassett

**Bulletin Inserts**  
**On Family and Parenting**

The main problem in our society is that  
people are expected to raise children in their  
spare time.

*The Book of Living Quotations*

Just about the time a mother thinks her work  
is done, she becomes a grandmother!

Time invested in children will always reap  
big dividends.

These two via the *Old Union Reminder*

The most important thing a father can do for  
his children is to love their mother.

Theodore M. Hesburgh

The family altar would alter many a family.

A little boy who was told that it was God who makes people good, replied, "Yes, I know, but mothers help a lot."

One way to curb delinquency is to take parents off the streets at night.

If we teach our children to say "Thank You," shouldn't we thank our heavenly Father?

Home Improvement: Take your family to church.

Some families can trace their ancestry back 300 years, but they can't tell you where their children were last night.

These six Anonymous

# Puzzles and 'Toons

## Church 'Toons by Joe McKeever



AFTER HIS DECISION TO FOLLOW JESUS,  
BOB DISCOVERED HE HAD LOTS MORE  
CHOICES TO MAKE.



## Answers to last issue's puzzles:

### ANSWERS

1. Arad (Num. 21:1-3).
2. Jericho (Josh. 6:1 ff.).
3. Jabin, king of Hazor (Josh. 11:1-15).
4. At Gilgal (Josh. 5:8, 9). The exact location was called "the hill of the foreskins" (Josh. 5:3).
5. The priests carrying the ark of the covenant (Josh. 3:14, 15).
6. Og, king of Bashan (Deut. 3:11).
7. "A goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight" (Josh. 7:21).
8. Hebron (Josh. 14:13).
9. Sihon, king of the Amorites (Num. 21:21-24).
10. The Gibeonites made a peace treaty with the Israelites (Josh. 10:3, 4).

### ACROSTIC #48: ANSWERS

*EPHESIANS (4:26, 27) — "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil."*

- A. EDWARD  
B. PENINNAH  
C. HUTTON  
D. EGYPT  
E. STRUGGLE  
F. INTENTLY  
G. ANTIOCH  
H. NOEVIL  
I. SWERVE  
J. BOONE  
K. ADORE  
L. YOUTH

## Father Abraham and Hidden Wisdom

By Mark Oshman

Originally published in *Pulpit Helps*, August  
1995

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

### **"In The Days When The Judges Ruled"**

1. Which judge had forty sons and thirty nephews?
2. Which judge led an army of 300 men against the Midianites?
3. Which judge was the son of a harlot?
4. Which judge killed 600 Philistines with an oxgoad?
5. Which judge had thirty sons and thirty daughters?
6. Which judge was left-handed?
7. Which judge carried away the city gates of Gaza?
8. Which judge delivered Israel from the king of Mesopotamia?
9. Which judge was also a priest?
10. Which judge had a spouse named Lapidoth?

*See answers on page 27.*

Hidden Wisdom on next page

# HIDDEN WISDOM: BIBLE ACROSTIC # 40

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. The initial letters of the answers will contain the name of the book from which the verse was taken. This acrostic is dedicated to my wife, Carol.

**HAPPY SOLVING!!**

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

- A. A type of evergreen shrub ..... 63 37 10 76 41 50 27
- B. Made ineffective (colloq.) ..... 39 69 16 59 35 3
- C. "The horse and his rider hath he  
\_\_\_\_\_ into the sea ..... 33 61 9 26 53 22
- D. A son of Elioenai (1 Chr. 3:24) ..... 28 1 48 58 78 15 40
- E. First established in Venice ..... 25 66 72 32 4 12
- F. Compensation for services ..... 46 36 8 56 42 70 51 2 19
- G. A son of Jeconiah (1 Chr. 3:18) ..... 38 71 17 64 45 54 31 77
- H. "...thou givest thanks well, but the  
other is not \_\_\_\_\_ ..... 60 13 52 74 18 6 44
- I. Eng. novelist (1721-1771) ..... 14 79 23 43 7 67 73 29
- J. Micaiah's father (alt. spell.) ..... 20 57 68 47
- K. Location of the tabernacle in Eli's days ... 21 5 62 55 49 30
- L. Narrow leather strip ..... 24 34 75 65 11