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M A G A Z I N E



In this issue...

Blessed For His Namesake

A Sweet Aroma to the Lord

Children of God, Part 7- Taming Teenage Troubles

Significant Symbolism of Barley and Wheat

Managing Editor: Jim Patterson
 Editors: Norman Edwards
 Assistant Editor: Jean Jantzen
 Contributing Writers: Tina M. Blumenburg-Williams
 Norman Edwards
 Jean Jantzen
 Edward Malone, J.D.
 Amy Nass
 Duane Nicol
 Jim Peterson
 Jeff Patton
 Consultant: Bruce Horne, PhD.
 Webmaster: Jeremiah Patton
 Circulation: Norman Edwards
 Layout & Design: Marcia Nicol

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Editorial mailing address: Shepherd's Voice Magazine
 PO Box 858
 Plainfield, IL 60544-0858

Circulation office: Shepherd's Voice Magazine
 PO Box 474
 Port Austin, Michigan 48467-0474
SVM@portaustin.net (989) 738-7700

Canada Office: Shepherd's Voice Magazine
 PO Box 74
 287 Tache Avenue
 Winnipeg, MB R2H 3B8

Email us at: info@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org

Send Ask Norm! questions to:

asknorm@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org

Visit our web site: www.shepherdsvoicemagazine.org



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Greetings!

God created all things for His glory. Though this fact may seem simple enough, it has historically been lost, and so the blessedness humankind needs and the ability to truly worship. It is lost on those who do not know God, and can be lost on the faith of individuals and ministries that begin to seek blessings in His name for their own sake, and not the namesake of God. The article Blessed for His Namesake reminds us we live for His blessedness, not our own. As Moses was at Mount Sinai, he was not concerned about his own place in Biblical or church History, as many have been tempted; he was concerned with the Lord's reputation. God will not share His glory with another, but believers are invited into His glory, and to be an expression of it. We are blessed because God is blessed.

The test of this understanding comes under trial and the experiential awareness that leads to true worship. The Bible records Job as an excellent example. The glory that is to be revealed we may only see dimly, but even what we can see and sense brings clarity and purpose to being. We obviously want God to bless us, but first we must exalt God in our hearts and minds before the peace that surpasses all understanding--yes, even Biblical understanding-- comes to full fruition; a true blessing.



In regards to Biblical understanding, it may be of particular interest to some to read this installment of Ask Norm. Occasionally we receive letters by those who claim advanced knowledge of scripture, and have no need of anyone to teach them, though they have much to say in regards to correcting us, and others. Often they feel that this work is not advanced enough in its teachings to entertain the subject matter. They become hypercritical of presentations of the gospel that do not suit their paradigm. Although we do not normally publish all questions and answers of this nature, the often end result of those who claim a unique knowledge of the scriptures should take heed to the conclusion of Norm's answer to a recent question.

The Children of God Series continues for the teenage years – Taming Teenage Troubles, which is the second part for this age group. The title is self-evident regarding the content of this installment, and this is a sensitive and searching age group that can make any number of mistakes that can lead to unnecessary suffering. The article is divided into “Mistake,” sections that should be read by teenagers, parents and anyone who can be an influence on a teen, which essentially covers all of us.

In Christ's Service

Jim Patterson

Blessed For His Namesake

The Value of True Worship

During the inauguration of the U.S. President Barak Obama in early 2013, I listened to the benediction. Repeatedly, the speaker called upon God to bless the nation. Asking God to bless a nation and acknowledging His ability to bring about civic peace and tolerance appears, at least on the surface, to be a reasonable prayer request. The question to ask is it reasonable to God? Will He act on this kind of request for our sakes? Would He act on behalf of a God fearing nation or non-God fearing nation for their sake

For all we can understand from the Word of God and God's creation, both the seen and unseen, He created all that there is for His glory. For this author, the glory for God is the enhancement of His life and that His

"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him" (John 4:23).



By implication of this verse, it appears true worshippers are not easy to come by if the Father is actively seeking individuals to worship Him even for Him in this fallen world that is self-serving and self-preserving. Our passion for His glory comes about when God takes residence in us by His Holy Spirit, and He reveals Himself (John 14:21).

The impression I got from the benediction reflects the presentation of Jesus Christ in many areas of Christianity. There is an expectation that God's great goodness exists for us as Healer and Provider and that His longsuffering and patience is interpreted as acceptance, and therefore acceptance of worldly ideologies, moral, and ethical standards should be blessed. These same selfish expectations of God are even common with God's people, and seem reasonable, but result in divisions (James 4:1-5).

beautiful attributes be made known, and both increasing forever. It is implied by a prayer of Jesus Christ that eternal life is defined by the growing knowledge of His person (John 17:3). Both the enhancement of His life and the knowledge of Him will increase for all eternity for His good pleasure.

So passionate is God about His glory that every solitary individual worshipper is of extreme value to Him. The scriptures reveal His excitement when we know that the heavenly hosts also express joy for the sinner that repents (Luke 15:7). Elsewhere we are told of the believer's value by the fact the very hairs on our head are numbered (Luke 12:7). He sent His Son in the capacity He did for the purpose of redeeming mankind to become true worshippers.

Indeed, we do want to be blessed by God, and God does wish to bless us abundantly. It would make for good sense to understand what motivates God in the first place to bless individuals and nations. This understanding comes from knowing what His passions are which motivate Him to act.

The Kingdom of God, the growth of His family and all that exist serve for His glory. There are fine presentations in Church literature of humankind's awesome destiny to become part of God's Family and enter the Kingdom of God, but both are not the purpose of man. These and all other promises exist to serve the purpose that He is glorified, and through these He is pleased. If we learn to know He is always passionate for His glory, we too can connect and serve with greater capacity. This is the essence of true worship.

We must never underestimate how significant it is to know and become intimately aware of His passion as it will have a profound effect on our lives. Because He is passionate for His own glory, He is by natural consequence passionate for the worshippers themselves.

God's Passion for His Glory

In Genesis 1:1 we learn God created the heavens and the earth. This scripture does not tell us why. It takes scripture, the awesomeness of His creation, and experiential awareness with His Spirit to have a greater capacity to know why.

What is True Worship?

True Worship is born out of tapping into God's inner passion, and no one individual can do this unless He first makes that available to him or her.

The Creation of Humankind

We know God created humankind in His Own image, and we know what He asked them to do first:

So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He

created him, male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Genesis 2:27-28).

To be in His image is to not only in appearance, but also to reflect His beauty. Creation in His image and filling the earth with mankind is first in the creation narrative before we learn where He placed Adam and His instructions to tend the garden eastward in Eden.

God blessed them because being fruitful and multiplying would fill the earth with His image; that is to make His glory known. Moreover, it is intended that we would share in the purpose, and we enjoy this blessing, for our God is an inclusive God. His blessings serve to further His glory, and that is something we must understand as we explore in this article.



The point is made again for Israel through the prophet Isaiah:

"Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him" (Isaiah 43:7).

Sin is a failure to reflect the glory of God. God's great passion for His glory, and the extent to which He has gone for His glory to increase, also reveals how serious sin can be. Christians must be extremely sensitive to this fact. For Christians

to try and find meaning and purpose outside of being who we are in Christ, is robbing God of His glory, and this He will not accept.

The Purpose of Israel

King David understood the Lord's purpose for Israel *"And who is like Your people, like Israel, the one nation on the earth whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people, to make for Himself a name—and to do for Yourself great and awesome deeds for Your land—before Your people who You redeemed for Yourself from Egypt, the nations, and their gods?" (2 Samuel 7:23)*

When Israel was disobedient the Lord would use pestilence and other nations to punish them. He did not utterly forsake them, not for their sake, but for the sake of His own name.

For My name's sake I will defer My anger, and for My praise I will restrain it from you, so that I do not cut you off. Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested

you in the furnace of affliction. For My own sake, for My own sake, I will do it; For how should My name be profaned? And I will not give My glory to another" (Isaiah 48:9-11).

If His reasons to act were for the sake of Israel, He would belittle His glory. When we learn of our own salvation today, we see how the Lord has not changed. No flesh will glory in His sight or boast of salvation by good works, as salvation reveals His great riches and kindness toward us (Ephesians (2:4-9).

Prayers of the Saints

We see from the prayers and admonitions of the saints in the Bible that the glory, honor, and reputation of God were first and foremost in their thoughts.

We may look to God for blessings, but we should first look to the blessedness of God before we have expectations of our own. This creates the right frame of mind that aligns us with our greater purpose which is worship. When we do this, we will understand what a true blessing really is! Peter, when writing to the exiles of the dispersion, did not first address their needs, but turned their thoughts heavenward:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:3-5).

For Peter the first and foremost clear statement to communicate is that because God is blessed, we are blessed. There is a lesson here for us today, instead of looking at our circumstances, allowing them to dominate our ability to worship Him, use them to glorify His Name.

Job is an example of the same mindset. Amidst an extreme loss of family and fortune, he did not allow the change in circumstance to alter his worship:

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

We live for His blessedness, not our own. We are blessed because He Himself is blessed.

Moses, considered a very humble man, was able to connect with God's passion because of his humility.

Then the Lord said to Moses: "How long will these peoples reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them? I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they" (Numbers 14:11-12).

That is quite an offering that the Lord made to Moses, to make a nation of him that is greater and mightier than they. I dare say today, there are those who would be first in line to take God up on such an offer to enhance and vindicate their ministry. But, Moses' concern was not for himself:

And Moses said to the Lord: "Then the Egyptians will hear it, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, Lord, are among these people; that You, Lord are seen face to face and Your cloud stands above them, and You go before them in a pillar of fire by night. Now if you kill these people as one man, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying, 'Because the Lord was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness,'" (Numbers 14:13-16).

Moses' appeal was on the grounds of the Lord's reputation, and it was on those grounds the Lord pardoned them and Israel was saved. The Lord however was not going to relent that His glory be known despite His disappointment:

But truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord— (v 21).

The beloved prophet Daniel understood what it took to get the Lord to act on behalf of himself and his fellow brethren. Study carefully his appeal:

Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his

supplications, and for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. O Lord, hear! O Lord forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name" (Daniel 9:17-19).

Daniel's only hope in the Lord, besides His mercy, was for the Lord's love of His Own name. There was no other ground where he could base his appeal.

King David, after the prophet Nathan had come to him regarding his sin with Bathsheba, wrote the 51st Psalm. As much as he acknowledged his sin and desired cleansing, we must not overlook another element in his confession to the Lord:

Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge (Psalm 51:4).

David knew the spirit of true worship. We should desire to have no less to offer in our own worship:

I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear of it and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together (Psalm 34:1-3).

It is when God is glorified we receive the most satisfaction. That is, He is made more known to us. This is the blessing we want, and this is what we need to glory in ourselves (Jeremiah 9:24).

Though he desired forgiveness and cleansing, he did not forget the Lord's reputation, which is of extreme value and importance. We should consider this in our prayers of repentance. We need to interpret the Christian life properly, and understand what a true blessing it is to know God above all other blessings.

"Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips" (Psalm 63:3-5).

There is a reason that David was considered a man after the Lord's own heart. He felt the passion of the Lord's will that He is glorified, and for David, life's greatest satisfaction came from that. Therein we have the blessedness that we truly should seek. Though our circumstances may change, it is a blessedness that circumstances can never touch.

The Coming of the Messiah

Jesus Christ was sent for the purpose of glorifying the Father, and He is glorified by bringing salvation to mankind. The opening words of Paul to the Ephesians reveals that Jesus Christ was always integral in the beginning when God purposed in Himself to be glorified in eternity past.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

The blessedness of God is first pronounced, and because of this we are blessed in the heavenly in Christ. This is a repeated theme. All of this to the praise of His glory and to the pleasure of His will. A careful study of the first Chapter of Ephesians shows how grace and glory go together (Ephesians 1:5, 6, 9, 12, 14).

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to

abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His Good pleasure which He purposed in Himself ...” (Ephesians 1:7-9).

Before He can be for us, He must first be for Himself. If God values anything of lesser worth above Himself, then He would belittle His own glory by committing idolatry; it would be idolatry for Him to act on the value of anything less. Because there is no one greater than He, He purposed only in Himself to be glorified and creation came to be. Imagine if we can have the passion and the commitment and the joy of the Father. The scripture reveals the joy of the angels.

“When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:7).

And the joy of the Son:

Looking unto Jesus ... who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2).

sake. The real motivation behind salvation was expressed by Jesus Christ in His own testimony regarding His purpose here on earth:

“I have glorified You on earth. I have finished the work which You have given me to do” (John 17:4).

“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name” (John 12:27, 28).

God’s love for us is embedded in His passion for His own glory. Love is one of His greatest attributes, and it is perfectly expressed through Jesus Christ. He loves us for Christ’s sake, not ours, therefore we know that He will always love us and will always be committed to His glory.

It is God’s good pleasure to give us the inheritance of the Kingdom (Luke 12:32), which includes all things that pertain to life, which is purposed to His glory. God will always be motivated to act on behalf of His glory, and there can be no salvation unless this is true.

When our Lord gave us the model

Our Calling

“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples” (John 15:8).

Bearing fruit gives God glory. Why? Because it is His work through the Holy Spirit that this happens, and these spiritual fruits proclaim His attributes. You make God known to the rest of creation. He starts to see Himself as a father would see himself in his own child. This pleases Him.

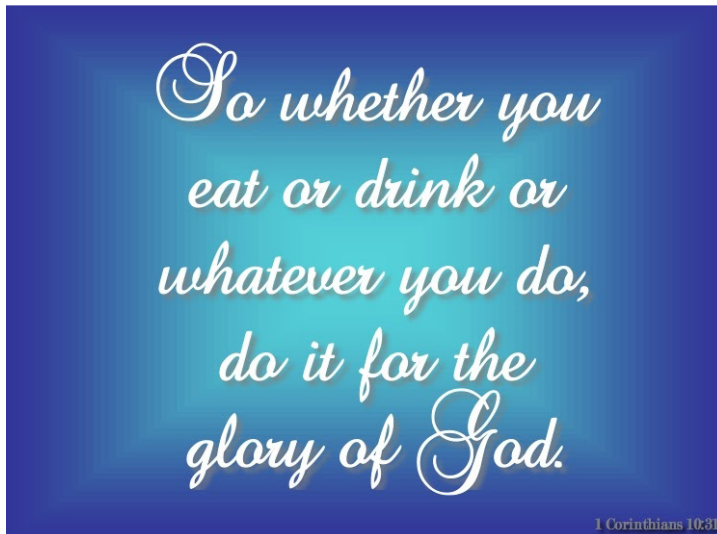
This fundamental truth should affect all areas of our lives.

Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Indeed, as there are many prayers calling on God for a blessing, on behalf of a nation and on behalf of individuals. The Word of God makes clear that a nation or individual who connects and rejoices in the Creator’s glory would have His own blessedness made known to them. Knowing the blessedness of God is what it means to be truly blessed, which is being richly blessed in the heavenly places. We should want to enjoy God more than any other earthly blessing that is commonly requested.

If we look to earthly blessing for reassurance of approval by Him, or to find personal comfort, we need to re-evaluate our worship. If we worship in unfavorable circumstances and during trial, with focus on praising God for who He is, then He will know we are for Him and His glory. A true worshipper we would be.

God created the Universe and gave it meaning and purpose, as well as great promise. It reflects His brilliance, passion, vision and glory. Creation must reflect His glory, both the seen and unseen. Christ came so that mankind can again be restored to reflect His glory. Christ’s message was “follow Me,” let us do this so that we can share in the blessedness intended from the beginning. 🙏



We are invited to share in the passion and the joy. Amazing!

Salvation must be understood in the right context. We often have the idea that God saves sinners because He pities them and saves them for their

prayer, it showed us to ask Him for being enabled to worship Him in spirit and in truth. We are encouraged to make our requests known to Him (Philippians 4:6), for again, His mercies will bring opportunity to glorify His name.

A SWEET AROMA TO THE LORD

"The mark of the immature man is that he wants to die nobly for a cause, while the mark of a mature man is that he wants to live humbly for one." - Wilhelm Stekel

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Romans 12:1,2).

I have always wondered what Paul meant by the previous scripture. How can we be a living sacrifice that will be acceptable to God? I know that most of us understand the word “sacrifice” if we have had children. Raising children is part of our training. We would literally give up our lives for them. But what if it is not your child...would you be so willing to sacrifice your time, your money, your life? Yet, spiritually we are to bring our bodies, alive and eager to God’s altar and let Him use them as He will and a lot of that sacrifice will be in service to others, particularly our brethren. (John 13:34-35) A good example in *The Book of Ruth* of this is Ruth’s voluntary sacrifice of her needs for the needs of her mother-in-law. Paul reveals clearly in his very next statement that another part of that sacrifice is allowing ourselves to be transformed by the renewing of our mind and not be conformed to the world (Romans 12:2). Of course, that takes a lifetime.

It is so easy to get puffed up about ourselves. But it’s not us that is doing it...it is God in us. As a Christian we belong to the body of Christ and are under the obligation in making that body run smoothly and to love each other as Christ loved us. That’s also part of our sacrifice.

A sacrifice is defined as:

1. *an act of offering to a deity something precious; especially : the killing of a victim on an altar*
2. *something offered in sacrifice.*
3. *to suffer loss of, give up, renounce, injure, or destroy especially for an ideal, belief, or end.* (Dictionary.com)

We read much in the Old Testament about sacrifices that the Israelite peoples offered to God and they shed some light on what is expected in a sacrifice. We see that the law of the burnt offering reveals what is required to fulfill the first great commandment, to “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind*” (Matthew 22:37).

A living sacrifice is the voluntary offering of one’s life to God. A sacrifice was wholly burnt upon the

brazen altar; the table of God on the earth (Leviticus 1:9; Malachi 1:12), as a sweet savour to God. No part of it is to be withheld (Matthew 16:24-26).

The fire that consumed the offering was from God (Leviticus 9:24). Fire is used to refine and purify precious metals (Revelation 3:18) and used to typify the manner in which God is proving, purifying and perfecting His godly character in us. (1 Corinthians 3:13)

“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed...” (Revelation 3:18).

... each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is (1 Corinthians 3:13).

How Important is Salt in Your Sacrifice to God?

“And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt” (Leviticus 2:1).

“Salt is a very important ingredient in a sacrifice. Why is that? Notice the phrase “*salt of the covenant*” in Leviticus 2:13. It has been common throughout history for people to confirm their agreements with each other by eating and drinking together, at which times salt is used. As salt was added to foods, not only for spice but also to preserve them from decay, it became a symbol of incorruptibility and permanence. A “*covenant of salt*” signified an everlasting covenant, as we will see. In the Bible, salt also came to symbolize purity, perfection, wisdom, hospitality, durability, and fidelity.” (*Salt* by Mike Ford)

Adam Clarke comments that “salt was the opposite of leaven, for it preserved from putrefaction and corruption, and signified the purity and persevering fidelity that were necessary in the worship of God.

We are told:

“All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to the Lord, I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you as an ordinance forever; it is a covenant of salt forever before the Lord with you and your descendants with you” (Numbers 18:19).

They were salted because it was the food of God’s table, and no flesh is eaten without salt. Jesus says,

“Every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt” (Mark 9:49).

Man is flesh, and his nature, corrupt; therefore, his sacrifice must be seasoned and made more palatable. It only makes sense then that as a living sacrifice we cannot be without flavor. We need a certain amount of zest, a zeal, a joy for living for God. Jesus Christ reveals how He feels about our sacrifice.

“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth”(Revelation 3:14-16).

A living sacrifice needs to be on fire for God. Only then will we be acceptable to Him.

“The role of salt in the Bible is relevant to understanding Hebrew society during the Old Testament and New Testament periods. Salt is a necessity of life and was a mineral that was used since ancient times in many cultures as a seasoning, a preservative, a disinfectant, a component of ceremonial offerings, and as a unit of exchange. The Bible contains numerous references to salt. In various contexts, it is used metaphorically to signify permanence, loyalty, durability, fidelity, usefulness, value and purification.” (Wikipedia)

Are we adding any of those to our list of qualities as a living sacrifice? This

Salt of the Earth

meaning is paralleled in the following verse, Matthew 5:14 in the symbolism of the “*light of the world.*” Matthew, Mark, and Luke accord in the discussion of salt “*that has lost its taste.*” This is a reference to salt that is contaminated with other minerals, causing a weakness in flavor or a bland unpleasant taste. It is a symbolic reference to the possibility of abandoning or deviating from the gospel, especially due to the adulteration of its teachings. Another interpretation of this description of salt losing its taste is that when one is in the world filled with sin and deceit, it is possible for one to become contaminated and thus unsuccessful at being an effective disciple, or sacrifice. Therefore, this verse serves as a warning for disciples to be on their guard; to be in the world, but not of the world.

Salt is a compound of sodium (Na), an unstable metal that can suddenly burst into flame, and chloride (Cl), a lethal gas. Combined, however, they form a substance that is essential for human life. It is not too extreme to state that, without it, we would soon die.

However, salt has many more amazing properties and uses. It seasons, cures, and preserves. It also seals, cleans, and acts as an antiseptic. In a booklet put out by a salt company in the 1920s, the list of uses include keeping the colors bright on boiled vegetables; making ice cream freeze; whipping cream rapidly; getting more heat out of boiled water; removing rust; sealing cracks; removing spots on clothes; putting out grease fires; killing poison ivy; and

treating sprains, sore throats, and earaches. The salt industry goes still further, claiming 14,000 different uses for this under-appreciated substance!

For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another” (Mark 9:49).

“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Colossians 4:6).

The words that come from our mouths reflect upon us more than any other part of our lives. When we gossip, are those words seasoned? Are they “savory” to the ears of others? When we speak in a hurtful manner to our family, both physical and spiritual, are those words seasoned? If we are living sacrifices, and if the altar is God’s table, what kind of dinner-table conversation would be appropriate while sharing a meal with God?

Jesus says “*You [believers] are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men*” (Matthew 5:13).

How Can We as a Sacrifice be Holy and Without Blemish?

“And you shall be holy men to Me: you shall not eat meat torn by beasts in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs” (Exodus 22:30-31).

God expects His children to be holy.

The Hebrew word for “holy” is “*kadosh.*” The basic meaning of holiness is separation. To be holy means to be set apart for a special purpose. When holiness is applied to God, it means that He is set apart from the rest of His creation. God is infinitely separate from all His creatures, even the mightiest. Israel asks the question:

Who is like You among the gods, O Lord? Majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders (Exodus 15:11).

The Israelites sang this song after crossing the Red Sea. The answer to this question is no one and nothing - no angel, no man, and no higher power can be compared to Him. Holiness also implies separation from all that is evil. God is completely separate from sin and impurity of any kind. The prophet Habakkuk informs us:

Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You cannot look on wickedness (Habakkuk 1:13).

Holiness is itself a drawing of a boundary, around that which is uniquely associated with God. In the Old Testament “holiness” meant that Israel was associated with God. This set them apart from the other nations, for His presence resides with and is invested in Israel. Holiness means living for God and living in obedience to him.

We must freely offer to God bodies that are holy, separated from the world, reserved for God’s use alone. There is no doubt that the Apostle Paul has in mind, not just our physical bodies, but our entire person, body, mind, and soul. We are to make ourselves available to Him for His eternal purposes. There is also a warning given to how we use these vessels (our body).

Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work (2 Timothy 2:20-21).

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live (Romans 8:13).

Whenever a person lives the sacrificial life, it means total commitment.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God (Romans 6:12-13).

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; (Colossians 3:23).

The Christian life is an ongoing process of striving for purity, in which we must ensure that our lives are properly seasoned so that we might not lose our “flavor” and succeed in being among God’s firstfruits. We are familiar with the story of Ruth who is a wonderful example of living sacrifice, but I want to share a modern story of sacrifice with you.

My sister’s husband has a brother who is deaf and cannot communicate. When a little boy in a crib, he got caught up in the plastic and was deprived of oxygen for a time, resulting in brain damage and a grade three education. He learned how to read on his own. When Jim was called into the church his mom and dad came too, bringing with them Jim’s older brother, Art. After Jim married Darlene they began taking Art to Church and have been taking him for over thirty years now. They bought clothes for him, did his laundry and made him presentable. They took him to doctors’ and dentist appointments and to the barber for a haircut. They cleaned his apartment week after week, after week without fail, getting rid of his clutter and garbage.


Darlene has done such a good job of attending to Art’s clothes over the years that he now points out small tears or missing buttons or stains. And Darlene dutifully makes repairs. They used to pay for his Feasts and still continue to take him, sharing their time and service to him even though he cannot communicate to them. Some years ago Art broke a leg when he was hit by a car and Jim and Darlene took him into

their home, looking after his personal needs and taking him to Panama for the Feast that year, broken leg and all.

Now with his failing kidneys, once a month, Darlene sits by Art’s side without complaint when he goes to hospital for intravenous because of an iron deficiency. This is a five hour odyssey for Darlene. This is also a financial sacrifice on their part. It costs Darlene \$10.50 just to pay for parking at the hospital, not to mention the gas money for picking him up for church or driving all over the city to the many appointments he requires. Art no longer even looks you in the eye, and does not communicate in any way. He is incapable of showing appreciation, even a small thank you, nonetheless, Darlene loves him without reservation. Jim looks after Art’s personal cleanliness, bathing him before Church. And Darlene writes him notes at church and has done so for over thirty years. This is what being a living sacrifice is all about. Jim and Darlene don’t know how much longer Art will be able to attend the Feast with his declining health...he can hardly get around, but they continue to stand by his side.

Soon Art will be moved to another care facility probably more than an hour away from their home and they have to attend his needs at least twice during the week and I know they will be there. I suspect Art knows too. What an exemplary example to their family and to the church family of love and loyalty!

If I were ever to be sick or become disabled, I hope it would be Jim and Darlene that were my caretakers. I also realize they are but one of many examples of sacrifice we don’t hear about in the Church of God.

So let’s continue in our calling and dedicate our bodies to God as a living sacrifice in which we will be a sweet aroma in His nostrils. 

*Salt
of the
Earth*

Scriptures helping us to understand how to be a living sacrifice.

Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And put your trust in the Lord - Psalm 4: 4-6.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise - Psalm 51:17.

For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased - Hebrews 13:14-16.

Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ - 1 Peter 2:4-5.

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma - Ephesians 5:1-3.

For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings - Hosea 6:5-6.

Therefore,

*“...since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in **holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?**- 2 Peter 3:11.*

“For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men— as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully” - 1 Peter 2:14-19.

He shall call to the heavens from above, And to the earth, that He may judge His people: “Gather My saints together to Me, Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice”- Psalm 50:4-5.

Ask Norm!



Questions? asknorm@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org

November 16, 2012

Bob: Hi Norm,

Thanks for sending the Shepherds Voice magazine by email.

I haven't read it all, but I like what I see so far. I feel that you are moving away from the style [of a deceased Bible teacher], and that can only be good. Don't get me wrong, I appreciate the truth that he taught us. It is just that I don't like the lies that he also taught us, and I need to explain that.

My "hard question" for you is: When are you going to stop long enough to listen? If you never stop to listen, you never give yourself the chance to grow.

Jim Patterson said in his Personal, "There is still more that the Lord wishes to teach us..." which, as I see it, is absolutely true. But if we won't listen, how will we ever find out what it is?

Norm: Thank you for writing such a long letter. You raise some questions that most serious Bible students run into at some time in their life. Christ answered many difficult questions in His day and I believe those who want to be teachers of the Bible should be

able to answer letters such as yours and not "shy away from them." This is not for the faint-hearted, so I will pray for wisdom, consult the scriptures and draw upon my past experience to answer each one of them.

Bob: What I am writing now is just a very small thumbnail. I have papers that expand on the points I am making. So I guess the question is, do you want the truth enough to take the time to read them? If you don't want the "more that the Lord wishes to teach", then I can't help you. If you do, then I think I can help.

Norm: Writing for non-denominational Christian publications since 1995, I have had similar offers made to me literally hundreds of times. They essentially say: "My writings explain the Bible better than any others. Please study all of them and then you will understand as well as I do."

I would sometimes ask for them and there were times where I read hundreds of pages of someone's Bible teachings. I learned a lot from some of them. I learned little from others. In general, I found most of the writers unwilling to change on any point, even when presented with evidence that is overwhelmingly clear. But there were some who were willing to discuss as equal students before God, and we learned and worked together in some cases.

By the year 2000, I had received so much material from so many serious Bible teachers that I realized I was not going to study all of it thoroughly before I die. Since that time, I have received a lot more—especially via the Internet. Even if I live to age 100, I will not be able to get through all of it—not even the ones I consider valuable

Bob: You are so close to a breakthrough. On page 9 it says that men wrote history from their point of view. Therefore it was not God "forcing" them to write what God wanted—men wrote what they wanted. But to say that the history recorded by men equates to the words from God's mouth, is—again as I see it—a form of blasphemy.

Norm: Our reference to men writing history from their point of view means that they wrote the details of which they had knowledge. For example, Daniel and Ezekiel lived at the same time in Babylon, but Daniel was in the palace and Ezekiel was "among the Captives by the River Chebar" (Ezekiel 1:1). Each wrote from their point of view, but that does not mean anything they wrote was contrary to God. God was doing two different works with some similar and some different purposes. Likewise, the gospel and epistle writers recorded different things that they understood—sometimes by writing the words of God or of Christ,

other times through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

“for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21).

“However when it, the Spirit of truth, comes, It will guide you into all truth: for It cannot speak of Itself; but whatever It hears, that It will speak: and It will show you things to come. It shall glorify me: for It will receive of mine, and will show it to you. All the things that the Father has are mine: therefore I said, that It shall receive of mine, and will show it to you (John 16:13-15, The Holy Scriptures in English).

If we can trust God has provided for men to accurately record His Words which He dictated to them, we can also trust Him to inspire His words to be written through His Spirit. We can be certain that Christ intended for reliable words about His life to be written after His death: *“I do not pray for these [disciples] alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word” (John 17:20).*

Is Some of the Bible Wrong?

Bob: To say that the 66 books we call the Bible is the “Word of God” is a lie. Sure, it does contain the words spoken by God (the words we are told to live by—Matthew 4:4) but it also contains the words spoken/written by men. We have to extract the truth out of the Bible, not take every word as “truth”. I have found, with God’s help, a system for doing this. It may not be perfect, but it has uncovered a heap of errors.

Norm: The Bible contains a very few places (John 21:25; 1 Corinthians 7:6, 12, 25, 40; 8:8-10; 2 Corinthians 11:17) where the author identifies part of his writing as his own opinion. These have minimal effect on the totality of the biblical message. But nearly every book of the Bible in some way identifies itself to be the truth—many being written in the name—by the authority—of the Father or Christ. Obviously, we cannot go back in time to verify that the Bible faithfully records what God said and did. But we can trust that the Book that has

been published many times more than any other book in the world, that has hundreds of more times as many ancient manuscripts as any other book in the world, is the word that God left for our instruction. It is by the reading and obeying of these words that much good Christian work has been done through the ages. It is by the suppression of these words and/or their replacement with man-made religious systems, that much evil has been accomplished.

You are asking me, to replace the authority of these 66 books, with your system for finding truth. What great fruits has your system borne that would cause me, or the entire Christian world, to abandon the whole Bible for it? What did God expect mankind to do before your system was developed?

Bob: 2 Timothy 3:16 [“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”] is a mistranslation, needed to support the lies of men, and to put those lies on the same standing as the words spoken by God.

Norm: A “mistranslation” means the English does not correctly convey the meaning of the original Greek. I see no mistranslation. The essence of this scripture is in its first three Greek words and can be easily understood from Greek Bible aids:

pas means “all”, “every” or “each” and is used hundreds of times in the New Testament. There are cases where it has minor exceptions, as we might say “I used all my money to buy gas”, where there might still be some change in the glove compartment or under a mat. This is in keeping with the few scriptures above that identify themselves as opinion. The “vast majority” is a good technical definition for *pas*—it cannot fit with large parts of the Scripture being in error as you state.

graphe is translated “Scripture” 51 times in the New Testament and is never translated any other way. While some may argue it always refers to the Old Testament,

Peter speaks of “untaught and unstable people” who “twist” Paul’s writings “to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:16). Peter is referring to Paul’s writings as Scripture, the same Greek word *graphe*.

theopneustos from two words, *theos* meaning “God”, and *pneo* meaning “to breath” or “to blow”. As the New International Version states: “All Scripture is God-breathed.”

Is the “Sermon on the Mount” the “Sermon on the Plain”?

Bob: A quick example. Luke (Luke 1:1-3) said that he recorded the “truth” passed down from the eyewitnesses. When “truth” is verbally passed from one human to another, it can easily be distorted. A human memory is often not perfect. Matthew, an eye witness, remembers Christ saying: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them” (Matthew 5:3, NET). By the time it was passed down to Luke, it was remembered as: “Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God belongs to you” (Luke 6:20, NET).

Again, Matthew remembers: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied” (Matthew 5:6 NET). Luke records the handed down version. “Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied” (Luke 6:21 NET). 30+ years after the events, important bits of information had become lost. Being “poor in spirit” is quite different to just being “poor.”

Norm: Thank you for this example. It helps everyone understand your process in deciding what in the Bible is and is not accurate. In your effort to help me understand your “God-given” system of where the Bible is true and false, one would think you would put forth one of your best examples first. But here, you are comparing what are probably two separate events and declaring Luke to be in error. Christ could easily have said different things at different places—tailoring

a physical or spiritual message to His listeners as He knew best. There are Old Testament verses that teach both of these principles: that the physically poor and hungry will be satisfied, and that those who seek righteousness will be filled. Notice the difference between the settings described in the two gospels:

Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan. And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him (Matthew 4:25-5:1).

And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon (Luke 6:17).

While both books include multitudes from Jerusalem and Judea, Matthew mentions Galilee, Decapolis (10 cities) and “beyond the Jordan” which are all far inland, going as far east as the Jewish kingdom extended. Luke mentions the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, which is as far west as the kingdom extended. This is like the difference between New England and California. Also, Matthew describes a message “on a mountain” and Luke says “a level place.”

We are most foolish if we do not recognize that Christ preached many months and the four gospels can be read in a day. He certainly repeated similar, but not necessarily the identical, messages many times. (If one does not believe that God is that diverse—that He would always stick to the same message, look at the millions of species in His creation. Some are vastly different, others are only very slightly different).

Bob: Luke gives us important history, and a good reason why we don't have all the truth today, but it is totally wrong, in my opinion, to elevate the book of Luke to the same status as the words of God recorded in say, the Book of Deuteronomy. In other words, not “all Scripture” has been personally inspired/breathed by God. The words spoken by God must come first (Deut 8:3, Matt 4:4).

Norm: Does anyone believe that mankind's major problem is following erroneous parts of the Bible that are in conflict with God's true intent? Or is the real problem people disobeying the few Scriptures they do know?

Are We Victims of Bad Bible Translation?

Bob: The source of the problem (again as I see it), and the reason [a deceased Bible teacher] taught us lies, is the KJV. The Bishops of 1611, no doubt with Satan's inspiration, wrote lies into the Bible. You yourself have written an article showing how they “inserted” the word “ordain” into the English, which is not present in the Hebrew or Greek.

Norm: Yes, there were translation errors in the King James Bible. A major error is it frequently uses the word “ordain”—the making of a “lay person” into a “clergy person” with special religious powers. My studies showed that there is no New Testament Word with that meaning, and the only Old Testament word close to it was used for “consecration” (a better word) of Aaronic priests. But God promises: “But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deuteronomy 4:29). Miles Coverdale's translation (a completion of William Tyndale's work) was available in 1535 (76 years earlier!) and only uses the word “ordain” twice in the New Testament—and primarily for actions of God and kings in the Old Testament. The truth was available to those who sought. Of course, today, we have numerous translations and Bible aids that help us find the truth of Scripture when we seek it.

Bob: [The same deceased Bible teacher] did correct some errors: he showed us that the Holy Spirit is an “it” not a “he”. Unfortunately, he did not go on to show us that “logos” is also an “it” when it is translated into English. The translators correctly do this in some places, but not in the critical place of John 1:1. Also, while “word” is a possible translation of “logos”, it misses the point John is trying to make. Even Strong's allows for it to be motive or reasoning, so why not translate it as “grand design” or “master plan?” Remember “logos” is an “it.”

Norm: *Logos* is translated

“word” in most places in the New Testament. Elsewhere, it is “saying”, “communication” and other similar things. According to BibleWorks Greek databases, *logos* is indeed masculine, whereas *pneuma* (spirit) is neuter. So “He” is appropriate. The defining part is that the *logos*, whether “the Word” or “the Master Plan.”

...became flesh and dwelt [“did tabernacle”, YLT] among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me’” (John 1:14-15).

Was Jesus God Before His Birth?

Bob: There are over 140 verses that state or support the concept that Jesus was not a “God” before His birth. There are around 20 verses that men use to say that he was a “God”. Men have “pushed” the Scriptures to say what they want it to say, and they have had to ignore the more important words from God's mouth.

This is what the LORD, Israel's king, says, their protector, the LORD who commands armies: “I am the first and I am the last, there is no God but me” (Isaiah 44:6, NET).

Don't panic! Don't be afraid! Did I not tell you beforehand and decree it? You are my witnesses! Is there any God but me? There is no other sheltering rock; I know of none (Isaiah 44:8, NET).

If God the Father was saying this, then there is no “equal God” called “Christ.”

If Christ is saying it, then there is no equal “God the Father”—a ridiculous statement.

I have articles to further explain this.

Norm: I have received and studied numerous articles on many sides of the “nature of God” and “preexistence of Christ” debates. I know one church group that devoted nearly all of its evangelical resources to “One God” teaching. Years ago I asked the leader of that group how his teaching helped believers preach the Gospel, feed the hungry, heal the sick and fulfill the

other Scriptural mandates for which we will be judged (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10). He said “not very much,” though it helped them pray more effectively once they understood the nature of God. I asked if people consistently received spiritual gifts, healings and other evidence of God’s power once they started praying with his understanding, and he said “No.”

In regard to how many verses do or do not support the pre-existence of Christ, those things are in the eye of the beholder. Other papers will talk about how many verses support Christ as God, and how few verses disagree. To me, there are no verses that contradict each other. Christ said, “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30) and “... he who has seen Me has seen the Father...” (John 14:9) and “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (John 6:38). If we pray to either, we will receive the same answer. The numerous Hebrew Scriptures that say “God is one” used the Hebrew word *echad*, which can mean a unified entity with two persons:

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one [echad] flesh (Genesis 2:24).

A unified God is in stark contrast to the pagan Gods which were many and continuously fought with one another and argued with each other. These false, quarrelling gods are what the verses you sited are referring to. Even though most of the world probably believes in them, they are not gods and they are neither equal to nor competing with the God of the Bible. Various verses indicate the One who interacted with ancient Israel as the Father (which you know), others His Son (Matthew

23:37; 1 Corinthians 10:4) and some say angels (Exodus 23:20-23; Acts 7:53, Hebrews 2:2). I am not overly concerned about exactly Who said what through Whom because I know that it would be the Father’s will however it was done. My mission is to obey the Scripture, not to be able to explain “divine agency”—which may be above my understanding (Job 42:3).

The Hebrew for God, *Elohiym*, is a plural word. Christ prayed to extend His unity with the Father to all who will walk together with them in unity:

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one” (John 17:20-22).

Passover & Last Supper

Bob: I also have articles that show that Christians should not keep something called the “Passover”. Last Supper, “yes”; Passover, “no”. The “Passover” is Old Covenant, and should be kept for people living under the Old Covenant. Also they are two separate events, held on different days.

Norm: I am certainly well aware of the issues you are bringing up. I spent several years studying the scriptures on the subject and changed my belief and practice as a result. You can read about it here: <http://www.servantsnews.com/sn9701/s70101.htm> <http://www.servantsnews.com/sn9703/s703017.htm>

But as far as Feast-keeping is

concerned, I believe it continues into the New Testament:

Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

Where Is This All Going?

Bob: But the question still is, “Can you stop long enough to check it out?”

All I can do is, again, offer to help.

From an imperfect servant of Christ,
Bob Orchard, Australia

Norm: Thank you for your letter. I hope this answer is helpful to you. I have long ago given up trying to tell people that their lives would be so much better if they just knew all I know about the Bible. Even Christ could not teach all He knew to his Chosen apostles (John 16:12). I simply try to deliver relevant teachings on specific subjects where they will do some good: whether in magazines, on radio, on the Internet or individually.

I think you should know that I have watched about a dozen individuals—completely independent from each other—go through a sequence similar to this:

1. They understand the Bible very well—they think people should be listening to them.

continued on page 31

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Photo: <http://ryanpeterwrites.com>

Parallels between the Book of James and the Sermon on the Mount

Scribe's Square

A lawyer's discussion of Biblical laws

Jesus' brothers may not have believed in Jesus during the time of His earthly ministry, but apparently at least one of them was paying attention during the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus' younger brother James became a follower of Christ and later wrote the New Testament Book of James. Biblical scholar Virgil V. Porter, Jr. points out that allusions abound in the Book of James to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount originally recorded in Matthew chapters 5 through 7 ("The Sermon on the Mount in the Book of James," by Virgil V. Porter, Jr. in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July 2005).

Another scholar, William Davies, in noting the parallels between the thinking of James and that of Jesus in the synoptic gospels, says "the cumulative effect of the parallels is impressive" (Davies, William D. 1964. *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*. Cambridge University Press., 402-3).

Because the recurring themes and the very words and statements in James' letter are so strikingly similar to that of Jesus' Sermon

on the Mount and because the Sermon on the Mount as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew was probably not available to James at the time James wrote his epistle, this scribe suspects that James actually listened to Jesus' sermon and reflected in his epistle what he recalled by memory from his brother's words.

The body of James' epistle begins with an exhortation to "count it all joy" when one encounters various trials (James 1:2). This encouragement is similar to Jesus' blessing for those who are insulted, persecuted, and slandered for His sake. Jesus encourages such people to "rejoice and be glad" (Matthew 5:11-12). James says that trials are necessary for the follower of Christ to "be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:4); Jesus commands his disciples "to be

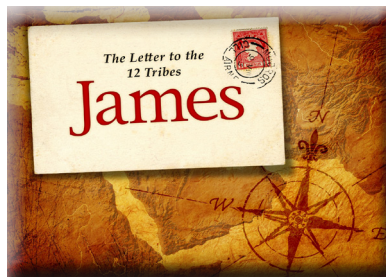
perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

James instructs anyone lacking wisdom to ask God who gives to all men without question or reproach and it will be given to him (James 1:5). Perhaps James was harkening back to his elder brother's instruction to "ask, and it will be given to you" (Matthew 7:7-8).

Both Jesus and James speak of earthly wealth and happiness and poverty and mourning as temporary states, warning against pride and encouraging humility. The relevant passages are as follows:

Let a brother of low position exult when he is raised; but let one who is rich exult in being lowered; for the rich will pass away like the flower of the grass--up comes the sun with the scorching wind and withers the grass, its flower drops off, and the splendour of it is ruined: so shall the rich fade away amid their pursuits (James 1:9-11, Moffatt Translation used throughout).

Blessed are the mourners! They will be consoled. Blessed are the humble! They will inherit the earth . . . But woe to you rich folk! You



will get all the comforts you will ever get. Woe to you who have your fill today! You will be hungry. Woe to you who laugh today! You will wail and weep (Matthew 5:4-5; Luke 6:24-26).

Jesus warned against a superficial faith, declaring that not everyone who called him "Lord" would enter into the Kingdom of God, but those who did the will of the Father (Matthew 7:21). Likewise, James warned that just as the body without the spirit is dead, faith without works is dead (James 2:26).

Other subject matter contained in both the sermon and the epistle include the ability to know others by their fruits (Matthew 7:16; James 3:18); commands to have mercy upon others and to love one's neighbor (Matthew 5:43; James 2:8; Matthew 5:7, 6:14-15; James 2:13); warnings against double-mindedness (Matthew 6:24; James 1:8; 4:4) admonitions to keep all of God's commandments; and cautions against judging others and swearing oaths (Matthew 7:1-2; James 4:11-12; Matthew 5:34-37; James 5:12;).



Those are just a few parallel topics and statements found both in Jesus' most famous discourse and in the writings of his brother and disciple James.

The Book of James is recommended reading for beginning and intermediate readers of the Bible as well as new Christians. After reading the four Gospels and Acts, reading the Book of James might be easier than trying to take on Paul's writings which by Peter's very own admission

contained some knotty points. With its recurring allusions to the very sayings of Jesus Christ; lack of reference to any public events, movements or catastrophes; and simple emphasis on faith in Christ and living a righteous life for Christ based upon that faith, the epistle of James is one of those timeless documents which anyone can read and understand without commentary or exegesis. Take a look and have a delightful and informative reading. 📖

Watch Live Sermons on line...



Children of God

Part 7 —Taming Teenage Troubles

Our last part of this series was titled “Empowering Teenagers” (SVM Winter 2013 issue). The best way to prevent troubles is to fill everyone’s lives full of good and godly things. So we encourage everyone to read that issue, either by writing us (see page 2) or reading it at www.ShepherdsVoiceMagazine.org.

Nevertheless, no matter who we are, we would be foolish to think that typical teenage troubles will never affect us. Experienced parents and teens both know this. Those of us who are older can remember some troubles we had when we were teens—or we can identify with the “repressed teen” section later on in this article.

Even those of us with no teenagers in our lives must realize that they are a searching, sensitive group: We may suddenly meet a teen someday, and find that they are not listening to their parents currently, and they are shaping their lives based upon our advice. This writer has seen troubled teens, who were not getting along with their parent(s), seriously seek to be legally adopted by other adults whom they had known for only a few weeks. If something like that ever happens to us, are we going to help, hurt or hide?

Believe it or not, nearly all teenage problems stem from motivations that are basically good:

- **Parents** want to protect their children and guide them in ways that are good
- **Teens** want to be in charge of their own lives and make decisions for themselves.

So how do these good motivations create conflict?

- **Parents** often try to make their children “better than themselves”—holding them to standards that they do not keep themselves. Parents often try to prevent children from making any mistakes that might hurt anyone in any way. They lack an organized plan for turning responsibility over to their children, so their teens frequently take it. Lastly, when teens do make mistakes, many parents are too quick to “bail them out” to alleviate the pain, without letting them learn from the consequences of their actions.
- **Teens** often are so desirous of making “adult” decisions for



themselves, that they make mostly bad ones. Bad decisions are easy to make and brazenly promoted by so much of our electronic media as fun with few consequences. Teens frequently forget that running their own life means procuring the skills

and money to produce the things they want. They have not yet “grown up” if most of their activity is still centered around gaining control of their parent’s or other’s resources—rather than developing their own capabilities.

As with all interpersonal conflict, cooperation by both parties involved produces the best results. Nevertheless, even if only one party understands the problem and its solutions, life can still be made better for both.

- **Parents** need to set a good example for their teens by working to overcome their own problems as they ask their teens to overcome theirs. Parents must officially turn over responsibility to their teens, and then hold them accountable for the results. They should support even fairly good decisions by their teen, and refuse to support the bad. They must explain what will happen if their teens do well, and what will happen if they make bad decisions. For example, if they make their teens responsible for getting their sleep and waking up for school, they must let them suffer the consequences of missing school, and explain to them that they are living in the world that they created for themselves. They must further explain that in the USA, chronic truancy could result in them being removed from their home and placed in some juvenile detention facility. Most teens will get control of their life long before that happens.

- **Teens** must learn to cooperate with their parents—whether they are good or bad. In some cases, they must frequently remind parents that they will legally be

able to leave home in some few number of years (It varies from 16 to 19 in various states), and that they would like to take on responsibility while they still have parents to advise them. Teens must strive to make good decisions—to excel at jobs, school, sports, music and other activities, to treat the property of others responsibly, to refrain from trouble, even though “everybody’s doing it”. If parents are utterly slow in turning over responsibility, their teens need to be patient—even though that seems very difficult—and begin preparing to move out, but wait until they are of age. Teens almost always want friends—they must seek out good friends who are interested in real preparation for adulthood—not interested only in fun.

What’s Ahead

The following 13 sections are each about a common mistake that young people make. It is based on Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25: “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” This obviously refers to ultimate spiritual death. But there are numerous mistakes we make, which seem right, but cause an awful lot of trouble in the end. Each section highlights why the way seems right, and what usually happens in the end.

Parents need to teach these things to their young people, letting them know that when they make their own decisions, they are responsible for what goes wrong—or right! Teens need to read and understand these lessons as soon as possible—before they prove the truth of them by their own suffering.

Mistake #1: Ignoring God’s Purpose for One’s Life

This section is not about teens blindly following their parents religious instruction, but about them realizing that when they leave the accountability of their parents they are now accountable to God. They need to work out their “own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). Whether teens try to accept and live by all of their parents teaching, or some limited subset that they understand, that is far

better than living in rebellion against God or atheism. Parents should accept a young person who is committed to love God and love his neighbor as himself (Matthew 22:36-40), as well as to eventually grow to live by every word of God and the grace of Christ (Matthew 4:4; 2 Peter 3:18)

Rejecting God may seem right to young people as it provides a sense of “freedom” to do what they want and removes feelings of guilt. It fits with the rest of the world’s concept of evolution—that mankind evolved from dead matter, so he is accountable only to himself

Life without God suddenly looks much worse when young people are victimized by others who have no respect for God or the golden rule. After being lied to, cheated and/or abused, a purpose for human life and laws for loving one’s fellow-man seem much better. Indeed, the high rate of teen suicide is often linked to alienation from family and friends—and lack of any purpose for life. Sometimes, initial teenage rejection of God later drives them to follow Him for life. Unfortunately, it can take decades to recover from a few short years of rejecting God. Clearly, the best way is establishing one’s belief early—and never letting go.

Mistake #2: Habitual Lying

For some people, a big part of growing up is learning enough about the common issues of life to be able to tell effective lies to get what they want. For example, when a teen is late for school or work, what do they say? Do they simply apologize or tell the truth of what happened? Or do they learn the creative skill of speaking with a convincing voice a made-up excuse that is most likely to be believed but not likely to ever be discovered? That is a tall order. But some people become good at it. Some learn it from their parents (shame on them!).

Lying appears beneficial when it delivers one from trouble with parents, employers, school or the law. Lying sometimes appears to get one things that they want: popularity, respect, money and other things. Almost everyone knows someone who is quite a liar, but also appears quite happy. But is that happiness simply another lie?

The truth of the matter is the more one lies, the more one has to lie to “cover up” previous lies. When the recipient of a lie discovers it, the result is almost always worse than if the truth had been told from the beginning. Long-time habitual liars are often the loneliest people in the world. Their families and former friends almost always abandon them. They have associates who are not yet wise to their lies and people who tolerate their lies because they plan to get something from them. After lying so much, they themselves may no longer be able to discern what is true or false.



The literature of our day continually pictures male/female relationships starting on a foundation of lies. Each lies to the other about their jobs, their cars, their background, etc. to make themselves look better than they are. The hope is that they can get to know another “great partner” and then break all the news about the lies. But what most often results is disappointing and troubled relationships—ending in a breakup.

Parents can help teens most by being truthful themselves, even if they have not been in the past. It will be difficult to make this change, but worth whatever difficulty. Parents must be willing to accept the truth, even when it hurts. For example, when parents ask “where have you been?” and their teen gives them an answer that they don’t believe, is it easier to just accept that lie than it is to dig deeper and maybe find out that they were in trouble? Parents should always encourage the truth because it is the only way they can help. Consequences of mistakes should always be less when the

truth is told than when the parents have to discover it themselves. Nearly all the rest of the mistakes, below, require a teen to be an effective liar to accomplish—it is better if they never get started.

Mistake#3 Excess Emphasis on Sex

Sex is a wonderful thing made by God, but it is so overused to market products and provide entertainment that we should not be surprised by all the trouble we have with it. Many young men feel that they are somehow inadequate if they are not continually explicitly talking about women's bodies and what they would like to be doing with them. Pornography use is frequently considered healthy. Young women feel they must be continually wearing fashionable, attractive clothing, and must always have a boyfriend and/or lots of men who are attracted to them.

Life certainly seems exciting when one is receiving attention from the opposite sex. To be accepted by many peer groups today, one needs to appear thoroughly knowledgeable if not thoroughly experienced with all aspects of sex and/or the latest news of who is with whom. Indeed, many apparently successful people claim to have had fun all of their lives by placing a great emphasis on sex. However, when one asks, "Are you satisfied with the relationship you have now?" The answer is almost always, "No".

What young people must know is that satisfaction only comes through love, not through sex. Sure, God designed sex to be exciting so it would add that important element to marriages. But if all the ingredients of good relationships are not present, no increase in the amount of sex-appeal will make it satisfactory. If people do not understand this, they tend to seek harder core versions and greater quantity of this false sex—and then often turn to the problems listed below.

Continual pornography use and sex talk gives men a totally unrealistic approach to women and drives them further from the lasting, loving relationship they really desire.

Similarly, women who concentrate on the status and girly trappings of clothes, relationships and sex make themselves less desirable and less able to attract good men. For both, results are typically numerous bad relationships, and moving on to "Casual Sex", below.

If parents are watching sexually oriented entertainment that they do not allow their teens to see, they will be of little help to them. The question is not, "When is a person old enough?" The question is, "What is right and what is wrong?" Telling a teen they are "not old enough to see this" fights against their desire to be mature and causes them to take their "growing up" somewhere else—to a friend's home where they can see it.

Mistake #4: Casual Sex

Our entertainment, our public schools and our medical profession now frequently teach that casual sex acts between teens are normal and to be expected. They try to teach them how to do it as well as provide birth and disease control starting around age 12. Teens growing up without any moral education from parents or churches are left to fend for themselves in these very dangerous waters.

In spite of the massive educational effort, every year there are about 20 million Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs) and about 2 million unwanted pregnancies—half of which are killed. The powerful emotional feelings associated with human sexuality make it unreasonable to expect participants to properly implement birth and disease control. Indeed, our means of dealing with casual sex, as a nation, is a clear failure. Yes, teens want to make adult decisions, but do they really want to be deciding which of several only partially effective STI treatments they will use? Do they want to be deciding between an 18-year commitment to raise a child, an adoption or a murder they will remember for life?

The age group where STIs are growing fastest is among teens and young adults. Half of sexually active persons will get an STI by age 25. An even less known destroyer of young people's lives is the reaction of our

present legal system to teen sex. While states vary greatly, most do not prosecute sex among consenting minors (usually under 18). However, when one of a pair reaches majority (usually 18) and the other does not, sex often becomes a crime. Indeed, states vary in making allowance for couples that are close to the same age, but in most, if they are two to four years apart, the older one can be found guilty of a felony, do years in prison, and be required to register as a sex offender for life. He or she will find it incredibly difficult to find anywhere to live, work or relate to friends and family. It often does not matter if the younger person lied to the other about their age.

To many teens, casual sex seems to be a free ticket to a good time. For very good looking women and men, it seems to be a ticket to the good life: wealthy friends, free places to stay, good food, etc. Some few people claim to enjoy a lifetime of casual sex relationships. Magazines and TV shows contain such claims made by various "stars", but those are often fictions used to promote their movies or music. Even the most popular sexually active singles, when writing or speaking candidly, report continuing dissatisfaction and depression with this lifestyle

Simply explained, however, casual sex is a "way of death". The devastating emotional and physical trauma from multiple sex partners, the intimate sharing followed by rejection and the feeling that one is a product for sale is almost universal after a few years. Frequent casual sex destroys the ability of people to have a normal, happy marriage. Only about half of the couples who navigate this mine-field will be able to have children of their own. Men are disappointed because women seem to just take the nice things they buy and move on. Women who think they can capture a husband by dishing out "good sex" before marriage are universally disappointed. Casual sex works against the essential marriage skill of working out differences—the habit of "moving on and getting someone new" prevents long-term relationships.

The way out of this dilemma is to

PABC Update

When the Law Goes Awry

Our last PABC update was in the fall of 2012. A lot has changed since then—mostly for the good. From our all-time high of 41 people reported last update, all but 3 found housing. Most of them went to long-term housing and are still there. We have acquired 11 new people since then, bringing our new total to 14. Five of those here now have jobs and should be moving on in a few months. As of this writing, with almost 3 years of operation, we have provided over 15,000 bed-nights.

A few of the people we help at PABC are here because of inequities in our state and federal justice systems. They are desperately trying to recover their lives from trouble that they did not even realize they were getting into. Before we go further, we do acknowledge our thankfulness that we do have a justice system—as some nations simply have a dictator and “secret police”. Nevertheless, consider the following:

Most children in public junior and senior high school are treated as if they are going to be sexually active. They are given instructions on how to do it, educated in birth/STD prevention methods, encouraged to get STD vaccines, etc. They are told that as long as both people are consenting to sex, that it is their own choice. The food and drug administration has now approved “Plan B One-Step” morning-after contraceptive pills to be sold over-the-counter to women as young as 15.

So what happens when one of those 15-year old women, with her sex-ed in mind and pills in purse, takes a liking to an 18-year old guy, tells him she is 18 and has sex with him? The answer can be very complicated—and this young woman and man probably do not know it.

In some states, the man could be sentenced to 10 years in prison and be forced to register as a sex offender for

life. The fact that he did not know her true age, and the fact that she wanted sex may not save him. In other states, no legal action could be taken. Nearly all states have laws against adults having sex with minors, but some have “Romeo and Juliet clauses” that make exceptions for young people within a certain age range—usually 2 to 4 years. Unfortunately, nearly every state is different.

There are many thousand of young couples who can legally have sex if they drive across the border to another state, but the older one would be committing a felony by staying in his/her home state. There are also couples that get together, for example, when they are 14 and 16 and are breaking no laws. But as one of them becomes an adult for sexual purposes—usually age 18, but can be 16-19—then their sexual activity becomes a crime for the older one of them. This is further complicated by varying ages where the states recognizes individuals as adults for sexual relationships, contracts, voting, drinking etc. In additions to those ages, most states have an “age of consent” at which time legal minors are allowed to decide for themselves if they will have sex with adults.

Lastly, but certainly not least, is the action of the younger partners’ parents or guardians. Often, they do not even find out about their children’s sexual activity, and if they do, most take no action. This leads to a feeling of complacency among young people. On the other hand, sometimes the parents do not let the local prosecutor rest until the adult partner is prosecuted. These cases are usually easy to prosecute because the young couple often claims to be “in love” and willingly admit what they did. That leads to a “successful sex offender prosecution” which looks good in statistics when the prosecutor runs for re-election.

By contrast, the sex offender who is dangerous to the public, the one who everyone wants to see locked up, the one who waits in shadowy places and forces others into sex against their will—that one is often difficult to prosecute. When he is arrested, he may claim it was mistaken identity—



he was not there at the time of the crime and his friends will testify that he was somewhere else. If trapped with DNA evidence, he may claim that the woman was a prostitute and that he paid for her services. Few women want to stand up to those kinds of accusations in court—even when they are false. The true abusers are practiced, skilled liars and much more difficult to convict—but they were the ones who were intended to receive the severe penalties written into the sex offender laws.

Most of the sex offenders we have seen at PABC were not involved in forcing anyone to do anything. Most have not been convicted of any other crime of any kind. PABC helpers, male and female, were not afraid to drive them to appointments by themselves. But most have received a year or more of jail/prison time, years of probation, and are required to register as sex offenders for decades or for life. Even those who only had a consensual relationship with someone a few years younger are listed in the registry as “Tier 3”, the most dangerous rating! How is anyone supposed to tell the difference between those who are truly dangerous and those who are not? From our PABC experience, the sexually most dangerous people that have come to us were either not listed in the registry at all or rated “Tier 2.”

It is difficult enough for a young person to honestly get started on their own these days—but these circumstances make it almost impossible. And all of this trouble came upon them from doing what many of their friends were doing—

quit “cold turkey” and begin planning for a godly marriage. There is the tendency to worry like this: “Nobody will want a Christian marriage with me because of my past.” Not true. Unfortunately, in this day and age, there are plenty of other Christians who engaged in casual sex, repented, and now want a godly marriage. Pray for a good one!

Mistake #5: Sexual Relationships without Marriage

Many people, burned in the fires of casual sex, seek out a steady sexual partner. Others start that way with their first relationships. Even most secular sociologists recommend monogamous relationships—for as long as they last—instead of casual sex. These provide a sexual experience without most of the emotional trauma and diseases associated with casual sex. People can “ease into” these relationships and if they go bad, there is no need for divorce. They just go their separate ways, handling any property disputes via arguments or small claims courts. In the USA, income taxes are less for unmarried couples who are both employed. A few states actually recognize common law marriage when couples live together long enough and represent themselves as married. But we should trust that our Creator knows better!

Sexual relationships without marriage seem like an easy and pleasant way to go. But they do not picture the faithfulness that God wants to teach us through marriage—and they are a disaster for the children involved!

Marriage should be a life-long commitment, prepared for and supported by the couple, their parents, family and friends. Weddings should be the point separating the former planning stage from the stage of life-long marriage—which includes sex. Putting sex before the planning and commitment aspects often causes them to suffer. If problems arise later, it is often easier to break up than to solve them.

Young people should ask themselves, “Do I wish my parents were happily married? Do I want to be from a single-parent or bad marriage home?” Married couples have a much higher

chance of remaining together than do those who just live together. Property ownership, inheritance, child custody, insurance and other issues are much easier to deal with when a marriage has taken place. In spite of media hype to the contrary, society still honors a child with 2 parents

Mistake #6: Homosexuality

The causes of homosexuality are multiple and complex. The Bible teaches that homosexual acts, like adultery, are devastating. Those who do either of them need to repent and change—for their own good, and for the good of our society.

Because of its strong media support, homosexuality seems like one of multiple options for companionship and sexual satisfaction. Some people think they were “born gay”, others try it for fun, yet others seek homosexual relationships after failed heterosexual relationships, and a few have been forced into it. Unfortunately, there are a few long-term homosexuals who will claim to have had wonderful, fulfilling lives.

But whether one goes to the ancient Scriptures or modern statistics, homosexuality matches the Proverbs description of a “way of death”. A person who begins homosexual practices as a teen, and continues them, has a life expectancy 20 to 30 years shorter than a married heterosexual. STIs, most diseases, suicides and even murders are several times more common among them. Homosexuals suffer from anxiety, depression and other mental disorders much more often. They have the continual stress of frequent making and breaking of relationships.

In nearly all cases, homosexuals do not have children to love and care for them when they are old. If your mother or father had been a lifetime homosexual, you would never have been born.

Mistake #7: Smoking

To many young people, the decision to smoke seems like a defining point in growing up. It puts them “in” with a “grown up” crowd. It shows they are controlling their own body, not anyone else. There is a certain genuine

solidarity among smokers—they help each other find times and places to smoke; they furnish cigarettes to each other when they are out. Smoking provides a mystique of “getting away with something” as it is generally illegal for teens to obtain cigarettes. Yet it is not legally dangerous, as it is rarely prosecuted. Smoking can provide a certain calmness in stressful situations—which troubled teens encounter frequently. Teens seem wise in their own eyes to ignore the health warnings because very few people have any health consequences when they first start smoking.

Almost all smokers eventually wish they had never started: some within a few months, others within a few years, the rest when their health deteriorates. Most new smokers are amazed at how difficult it is to quit even shortly after they start. They also underestimate the problems: financial cost, bad breath, stained teeth, increased illnesses of all types and loss of relationships with people who do not like smoke

Unfortunately, the decision to smoke often represents a general attitude of accepting long-term trouble to obtain short term happiness. It represents a willingness to do things that are illegal. Parents need to recognize this warning sign, clean up their own



addictions and begin spending much more time with their teens, learn what they are thinking and figure out how to best help them. Parents need to make efforts to ensure their teens have social outlets among non-smokers—either in church groups, scouts or other wholesome organizations.

Mistake #8: Drunkenness

The Bible teaches the use of alcohol in moderation but opposes drunkenness. Federal law prevents persons under 21 from buying alcohol, but most states allow consumption of alcohol at a young age in private settings or when parents are present.



Like smoking, drinking alcohol makes some teens feel like they are grown up and in control of their destiny. It seems fun and enjoyable for the moment. Like smokers, drinkers are frequently friendly to their own—giving a sense of belonging. It can sometimes open the way to business opportunities, relationships and sex that would not happen if all involved were sober. Some people appear to live successful lives in spite of ongoing heavy drinking. But the Bible unmask that deception:

Who has anguish? Who has sorrow? Who is always fighting? Who is always complaining? Who has unnecessary bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? It is the one who spends long hours in the taverns, trying out new drinks. Don't gaze at the wine, seeing how red it is, how it sparkles in the cup, how smoothly it goes down. For in the end it bites like a poisonous snake; it stings like a viper. You will see hallucinations, and you will say crazy things. You will stagger like a sailor tossed at sea, clinging to a swaying mast. And you will say, "They hit me, but I didn't feel it. I didn't even know it when they beat me up. When will I wake up so I can look for another drink?" (Proverbs 23:29-35)

Alcoholics Anonymous meetings are held in almost every county. Teens can either go to the meetings or find people there who will share the story of what alcohol did to their lives. Accidents caused by drunkenness are a leading cause of death and disability among young people. Many worthwhile school, work and social opportunities are lost because people are recovering from drunkenness rather than doing what they really wanted to do. Continual excess drinking reduces life expectancy and frequently turns into an addiction that is very difficult to break. Again, parents need to support social outlets where drinking does not occur.

Mistake #9: Drug Use

Drug users frequently feel like they are doing something to solve their problems, whereas others just go on suffering with them. Users genuinely feel better while they are on their drugs. Drug users have a wide choice of completely illegal drugs or misusing prescription drugs—which are sometimes their own or their parents' prescriptions. Again, like smokers and drinkers, they tend to befriend each other.

On the other hand, addicts often become so desperate for drugs that they prey upon their fellow users.

In general, the more powerful a drug is, the better feeling it produces, the more harmful are its side effects and the more destruction it brings. Drug-related accidents and diseases are another major cause of death and disability of young people. The cost of buying drugs often leads to crime. Many good jobs are not available to people who produce "dirty" drug tests. Teens should be able to wisely decide against drugs by simply taking an honest look at the millions of lives ruined or cut short by addictions to non-prescription, prescription or illegal drugs. But breaking an addiction is extremely difficult and virtually all addicts wish they had never started.

If parents discover their child involved in alcohol or drug addictions, they need to first talk and see if they are willing to accept help and stop. If the teens say, "no", or if they lie about it and try to continue secretly,

parents must make sure that they do not enable ongoing addictions. Any alcohol, abusable drugs, money, and easily saleable items need to be locked up beyond their reach. It is better to force the addict into crisis than to provide the means for ongoing addiction. Sure, teens may threaten to or actually move out for a while, but it is worth that disgrace and difficulty to help them decide to kick an evil habit.

Mistake #10: Other Illegal things

For some reason, some teens seem to enjoy other illegal things such as: shop-lifting, burglary, drug sales, prostitution, illegal driving, vandalism, etc. Taking on the risk of arrest, fines and imprisonment to get what they want, especially if teens are successful for a time, provides teens a great sense of power. As it is, our legal system sometimes lets minors off with little punishment. The boldness, as well as the illegally acquired money impresses some friends. Unfortunately, the literature of today often glorifies people who live by crime. Corruption in government, business, schools and churches also encourage some young people to take an attitude like: "they are all getting theirs, I might as well get mine any way I can." Some teens even have a "Robin Hood" approach, breaking "establishment" laws to help the young and poor

Teens with the above issues need to have their drive and daring channeled to productive use—which may involve major changes. They need jobs. Parents may often complain: "My child isn't old enough to be out working with people I don't know." But he or she is already working with other criminals that the parent does not know. Those who are trying to rectify social injustice through crime need to get involved in government and civic organizations. They can accomplish much more by writing letters and circulating petitions than by committing crimes. 18-year olds have become councilmen or mayors of small towns simply by getting their friends to register and vote for them.

Parents who are too focused on money need to search their hearts

and repent. Some parents frequently envy wealthy people, complain about their own lack of funds and say that they would be so much happier if they could just afford more stuff. They are hurting themselves and sending a dangerous message to their children.

Teens need to know that there are enough legal ways to have a good life that the risk of illegal activity is almost never worth it. While only a fraction of lawbreakers are actually punished for their crimes, most continual criminals are caught eventually. Erratic justice sometimes over-punishes. Young people have spent ten years in prison because they were simply at a party or in a car where illegal drugs were sold or a serious injury occurred—even though they had nothing to do with the crime. People committing crimes are frequently the victims of crime. If someone is robbed or raped at an illegal drug party, who wants to call the police or be a witness?

Parents should take their children to their local courts, maybe on a day when they are sentencing young criminals. The court clerks will know in advance when these sessions are scheduled. It makes teens ask the question, “Do I want this to be me?” Teens need to know that getting a job, an apartment and a spouse become many times more difficult once one has a police record.

Mistake #11: Continual Violence

Usually, it is men who seem to think success in life can be achieved by threatening, shoving, hitting, or in some other way forcing others to do what they want. Some of these may be good athletes, but others are cowardly school bullies or abusive boyfriends. Of course, our movies and video games are loaded with violence.

Parents and teens need to work hard against this behavior as soon as it is recognized. Violent parents must control themselves and stop—for the sake of themselves

and their children. Teens must learn to solve their issues by talking, and use their pent-up energy by working. They need to realize that violence leads to crime (see previous section) and that many people who would be good friends avoid violence. “A violent man entices his neighbor, and leads him in a way that is not good” (Proverbs 16:29). Violent people cannot keep good relationships or marriages.



Breaking a long-term habit of violence is as difficult to break as a drug addiction. Most people want to stop, but find themselves unable. Violent people need to study the life of Jesus Christ. Even though He had undefeatable physical power, He humbled Himself and led a mission of peace—and empowered us to have His peace:

But Jesus said to him, “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:52-53).

When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly (1 Peter 2:23

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

Mistake #12: Continual Unpleasantness

More often, but not exclusively, it is women who seem to think that they must continually assert themselves in an angry, vulgar, whiny or “bitchy” tone of voice to get what they want in life. It often results in continual complaints and a refusal to cooperate in simple things. These unpleasant people sometimes have a super-friendly side to them, but it is fake and only lasts while they are getting something they want.

In an effort to assert their own independence, young people find unpleasantness an effective means of gaining control. Many people, even school and government authorities, would rather give them what they want than argue with them. Unpleasantness will often get them out of work, school or social engagements they do not want. Unpleasant people are sometimes admired for their ability to get others to do their bidding.

A very few people, who are either highly skilled or in great demand for some other reason, can go through life bullying people by their unpleasantness and obtaining compliance from them. But most find themselves very lonely. Who wants to be their long-term friend? Even worse, they never know how many school, work and relationship opportunities they have missed because unpleasant people were not wanted there.

Most young people go through an “unpleasant” stage, but then soon learn it does not produce good relationships and good opportunities. They eventually learn that pointing out a problem is not solving the problem. Wisdom and action provide better solutions. In some cases, where parents punish a teen for unpleasantness, it may mutate to words and inflections that are still not very pleasant, but just below the threshold of “punish-ability”. Hopefully, the parents can encourage the teen to change their heart and not just their outward appearance

As a guess, maybe 5% of the American population never figures out that unpleasantness is not worth it. They go through life thinking that everyone else is against them for some unknown reason. They are mystified that others

will talk nicely to them for a while, then simply abandon them without a word. They still see their unpleasantness as “independent thinking”, not the wretchedness that it is.

Mistake #13: Witchcraft, Occult, Satanism, etc.

Satan acts as both a “roaring lion” (1 Peter 5:8) and an “angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). Any practice which provides supernatural power that is not from the God of the Bible falls into this category. Some teens fully recognize this as a religion, others may see it as an isolated way to get something that they want. For example, a person mistreated by a friend, may borrow a curse from some occult novel to read against them. Or, a person who lost a valuable item might call upon a dead relative to show them where it is. They still may consider themselves fully Christian.

To many teens, there seems to be nothing wrong with any of these practices—especially since nobody is hurt by them. These things appear to be exciting, powerful and practical to people who do not know God or His Word. They appear to give people what they want now, whereas God and parents usually say: “work hard and deny yourself now and you will have love, money and power later.” But God says:

And when they say to you, “Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,” should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? (Isaiah 8:19).

The leaders of Witchcraft, Occult and Satanism frequently claim that their religion gives them everything that they want in life. Many of them flaunt great wealth, health and virility. But if one “reads the fine print”, one also finds that lying is acceptable in these religions—especially when it produces what one wants. These boasts are to capture new members.

These religions operate much differently than Christianity. In Christianity, the same biblical knowledge is taught to and used by new converts and long-time believers—everyone learning to get along with each other and love each

other. In these satanic religions, the leaders teach the new people what they want them to believe so that they are useful to the leaders.



They give new people a sense of personal empowerment, but they get them away from their family and Christian friends so that they can be used and abused without anyone to deliver them. Satan gives, but he always takes away more. Those who try to leave are viciously attacked, often killed. People who physically gain the most from Satanism usually die without friends, family or love from anyone.

Vital Comments on the Above Sections

The first thing young people may say when they see the above mistakes is, “My parents do some of these things.” Yes, parents may do some of these things. Young people sometimes perceive the problems to be worse than they are, but the older people often minimize or ignore the problems in themselves.

Important message to parents: You can do far more to help your children by cleaning up any of these problems that are in your own life than you can do by continually preaching to your children about them. This will not be easy, but with God it is possible.

Important message to young people: If you use your parents’ failings as an excuse for your failings, you will still be failing. If you are growing up, and making decisions for yourself, you must

decide not to make the mistakes that they are still making. This will not be easy, but with God it is possible.

When a parent realizes that they have sins and shortcomings, there is a natural, carnal tendency to want to hide them from their children. In reality, the parent will be more effective if he or she admits his or her problems and then encourages young people to be stronger than the parent and to live a better life than the parent. Some young people react very well to this kind of challenge

This article is not about condoning sin or saying that young people’s sins are “no big deal”. It is about dealing with young people who may be tempted or deceived into sinning. Parents need to realize that God does not instantly send us off His planet when we have a major sin. So, parents should not automatically send out their teenagers when they sin. Young people need to be taught that sins will probably appear good for a while, but that these sins have been tried by others and their results are known.

Jesus Christ was patient with his disciples even though they sinned multiple times. He was able to be with them and encourage them to do right, without sinning Himself. He wants to live His life through every Christian parent, today.

Dealing with the Rebellious Teen and Serious Sins

On the other hand, there were people whom Jesus rejected as disciples because of their serious sin of which they did not repent. Similarly, there are rebellious children that have serious sins that endanger not only themselves, but the entire family. While a rebellious child still needs to learn the consequences of sin, he or she cannot be allowed to destroy other people’s right to live and learn their own lessons. Parents have the right to insist that one child does not keep everyone else in the house awake at night with their music or noise. They can insist that a child not play with guns, gasoline or other things that might injure the family or set the house on fire. They

should not lend their car to a child who cannot get a license, who gets lots of tickets or who has careless accidents. These kinds of common sense rules (which may not yet make sense to a rebellious child) should be enforced at home because they will be enforced anywhere the child goes: friend's house, college dorm or even the military.

But what about things that largely affect only the child? How much control should parents exercise there?

Parents will rightly ask, "As long as I am financially supporting my children, don't I have the right to tell them what to do?" The answer is, "yes". But remember that God "sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). He does not cut off all his blessings from those who reject him. The message for parents is, "how can you best help your children become God-fearing adults?" And the answer is usually to turn over some responsibilities to them while they are at home so that they can learn from smaller mistakes, rather than turn everything over to them all at once. That does not mean that the parent needs to directly support a serious sin. For example, if a child asks for money for alcohol, cigarettes, evil video games, or outlandish clothes, a wise parent will tell their child that the parents will not pay for that—so that they can learn that these sins are expensive as well as damaging. But it does not mean that parents withhold food, bed and everything else when a teen has one major sin.

If a young person is generally responsible with the family car or house, and if the parent demands to approve each place they go or everyone whom they bring home, then the parents have not turned over any responsibility for decision-making to the young people. Just as God sends rain on the just and unjust, the parent must realize that some family resources may sometimes be used by their children for sinful purposes. If sins become habits, and the young person will not hear the parents' plea to stop, then it is probably time to tell the young person that they will have to find their own means if they think they have to continue that sin.

Some parents will say, "If my children are doing that (some serious sin), I will not have them living in my house". There are times to thoughtfully make such rules—especially when they are made before the sin happens and it is likely that the young person will listen and avoid the sin. Sometimes it must be done to protect the other children. But parents must not do this lightly. If they make the rule, they should stick by it, and be prepared to actually have their child leave. If a child wants to leave home when they are 16 or older, many states will not do much to help the parents keep them at home. Some states even have an emancipation procedure where a child can remove himself from all control of the parent. If the parent wants a child under 18 to leave the home and the child does not want to leave, the parents will probably have to get the police and other government agencies involved in order to avoid a possible child neglect charge.

Parents should not support their children in illegal activities. The Bible actually provides a procedure for parents to deal with serious juvenile delinquents (Deuteronomy 21:18-21). That is not the law of our land, but nearly all states have a procedure whereby parents can make a troubled child a ward of the state. The child may then be placed in some type of foster care or more likely a juvenile detention center. Hopefully, the child will realize how good things were at home, repent, and straighten out his/her life.

If parents still want to keep a child at home who is committing crimes, they need to be prepared to face possible legal consequences themselves. Nevertheless, it is good and right for parents to want to help their children, and they should take it to God in prayer. They need to have peaceful, but direct conversations with them about the consequences of what they are doing, and to plead with them to stop. The parent should clearly explain that since they are creating this trouble for themselves, they will be responsible for its consequences. If the child is arrested for a matter the parent has warned about, it will be up to him/her to make arrangements to get out of jail, acquire a lawyer and pay any fines. This writer has seen

this approach work wonders to help young people change their behavior.

Over-Parenting and the Repressed Teen

This writer has also seen some wonderful young people, who knew God, who generally obeyed their parents, but had their spirits crushed by parents trying to be diligent to make sure that their child "turns out right". The parents loved their children, made time for them, and wanted the best for them. The parents did not realize that it is not their job to live a good life for their children, but to give them a good opportunity so they can live a good life. And if it is really their life, the child will make some choices different than the parent! If the parents do not change and the teenager never rebels, the end result of this "over-parenting" is usually a repressed teen.

The repressed teen can take on many forms. The commonality is that the young person's life becomes limited to the areas where the parents have given them freedom and unconditional love. Conversely, the teen will almost certainly no longer be able to continue in the activities where the parents are most controlling. Repressed teens usually do not think out this behavior; to the contrary, they have been taught that they should please their parents, so they want to. However, when the mind does not rebel, sometimes the body does.

For example, if overly strict parents went easy on their child when he was sick, he may nearly always be sick. If the only time a child was not badgered by his parents was when she worked at her job or hobby, then she may do little else than her work at her job or her hobby. If a child was good at sports, music, academics, bible memory, etc. and was continually "shown off" by his parents, the child may develop some injury or illness that prevents his ability to continue in it. If the only time a child was allowed to make decisions for herself was when she was far away from home, then she may move across the country—or to another country—when she is old enough to leave home! Indeed, some children go into missionary work

because the Christian parents would not speak against such a noble cause, because their parents have never been missionaries so they will not try to tell them how to do it, and because it takes them very far away. Young adults who were repressed as teens often do not marry or even begin looking. After all, how could they ever find someone that would measure up to their parents' standards?



The greatest difficulty in resolving the over-parenting situation is getting through to the parents that they are doing it. If asked, most would say something like, “Oh no, we give our teens lots of freedom; we think we are too lax at times. We only interfere with their choices when it is essential for their own protection.” And that is the point that is so hard to make.

Eventually, young people must learn to make choices of their own accord that will protect themselves. It helps to ask these parents when will their teen be old enough to decide what time they will go to sleep, decide whether or not they will go to school or work on a given day, determine what Internet sites they will visit, decide what books/music/movies/video-games they like, decide what clothes to wear, decide who they will go out with, decide what they will do when they are out and when they will come home, and lastly, decide whom to marry. If a parent cannot say their teen is firmly in charge of any of these things, or say when he/she will be at some specific time in the future, then they probably are over-parenting. To the parent who says, “I let my young adult choose their own music (or whatever) unless it is unreasonable and I have to intervene,” that parent is still in charge. As God is sad when He sees us making wrong choices, but

lets us do it, so a good parent will be sad when they see their child making wrong choices, but will let them do it because it is time for the child to learn and develop their own responsibility to God.

Conclusion

This article is not saying, “A Christian parent can just let their children do what they want and everything will turn out all right.” Nearly all Christian parents need to set a much better example for their young people. They also need to do a lot more positive teaching and talking. Turning over decisions to young people is not a disregard for the teaching of the Bible, but a means of letting young people make some decisions while their parent is available to continue guiding them. This is extremely important in a society that often pretends to be righteous, but is very far away from the laws of God. Young people who leave home and are suddenly faced with making many new decisions for the first time, often surrounded by unchristian people, frequently have trouble.

God himself frequently allows people to go on sinning, hoping that they will repent. He gave the Amorites four generations to repent (Genesis 15:16), but they did not (Numbers 21:25). He gave the Ninevites 40 days to repent and they did (Jonah 3:4-10). Even now, Jesus Christ identifies certain sins that are in His churches (Revelation chapters 2-3). He does not cast out the sinners from His churches—otherwise they would not be reading His letters. He shows them their error and commands each one to repent and overcome. A reward is promised to each of those who do overcome.

We can do the same thing for our young people. We can show them the right way, but we can let them make their own decisions. When they err, we do not need to cast them out of our homes, but we can show them what went wrong and ask them to repent. And we can reward them when they do right.

Next time: Part 8 – Adult Children, Caring without Controlling. [🔗](#)

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PABC Update

there was just a year or two more difference in age than their other friends, and there was a considerably more upset parent.

The Scriptures teach that fornication—sex before marriage—is wrong. But all fornication should be treated the same! (Ex 22:16-18; Deut 22:28-29). In a society where fornication is rampant in our entertainment, business and government, why do we so heavily prosecute some small segment of it: 18- to 21-year olds—usually men, but sometimes women—who get involved with a partner a few years younger than they are? Remember that we are talking about willing younger partners—sometimes, they are the ones driving the relationship. Do we as a nation feel somehow justified by prosecuting this small segment of society for doing what so many others do?

Clearly, our country needs to repent of its fornication and its unjust laws. Christians everywhere should be working to teach our young people Godly values. Everyone avoiding all fornication would eliminate these unjust punishments. It would also be good to change the unjust laws. But even if we all started now, that would take years.

In the mean time, how should these young people who have done jail time and are on the sex offender registry for decades begin their lives when there is almost nowhere they can live or work? Hopefully, they will realize that if they had followed the biblical teaching against fornication, they would not be where they are. Hopefully, they can realize it was a loving correction from God and His instruction to them to seek a stable, life-time marriage. And hopefully, the rest of the world will realize that if someone—like PABC—does not give them a place to live, they may well become fugitive criminals in our society, the very thing that both they and we want to avoid. [🔗](#)

Significant Symbolism of Barley and Wheat

The observation from the book of Ruth is that the two spring crops she gleaned from are symbolic of two eras of time in which God garners His elect has been subject to criticism. Many times scripture has come under criticism because of obvious bad speculation and sometimes preposterous interpretations of it, but scripture does contain symbol, story, typology and allegory as all who have come into contact with it know only too well. No doubt some prior to Jesus time made some sense out of the symbols and stories they were so familiar with, and some made nonsense out of it.

One such person who made good sense of it was John the Baptist who declared that Jesus was the Lamb of God. Prior to the actual fulfillment there were, no doubt, those who criticized that interpretation. In the end the pursuit of understanding must go on with symbol, story or allegory because they are the keys to opening up those things hidden within the scripture, things that are the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, (Mark 4:11, Romans 16:25) that which is hidden and to be revealed. The test is within scripture itself; if the symbol, story, or allegory brings enlightenment to the rest of scripture, then it should be given its due respect. Much symbolism was given in the Old Testament, written there for a reason by God. In Matthew 13:52 Jesus instructs us saying “*therefore every scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder bringing out of his treasure things new and old.*”

Interpreting Symbols

Messianic prophecies as they became fulfilled revealed the symbols in the Old Testament had real practical meanings. Jesus, for instance, is pictured in the first celebration as the Lamb and the unleavened bread. This we know because it has been fulfilled, and we

can safely say because of the sheer volume of symbolism and story that remains, many more things are left to be discovered. It is a matter of being able to properly identify the players. Jesus reveals this in His instructions to His disciples in Matthew 13:36-43 where He identifies the players in a parable for them as an example. It was the key to finding out those things hidden from the beginning. (Matthew 13:35) We can see that Gideon and his small army, as old testament Saints, were directly referred to as a barley cake (Judges 7:13-15). It is interesting that God would use barley in an analogy in a dream to encourage His servant. If it would have been a rock many today would be quick to make an attachment to Jesus because He is well known as the rock, but the dream showed a barley cake, and the interpretation of the dream showed that the barley cake was the sword of Gideon (his small army). God had already ordained that the harvest of firstfruits be typified by two wave loaves (cakes), and Gideon and his small band were firstfruits carefully selected out from the whole. The typology seems quite fitting because the Midianites expected the entire army of Israel to come, but lo, it would only be a gleaning from that whole; a firstfruits selection.

Barley and Wheat

Of the two spring food grains to be harvested, barley was the first. This we observe in the account of the Exodus where the barley was smitten by the hail but the wheat was not affected because the barley was in the “ear” and the wheat was not up yet. (Exodus. 9:31, 32) (The harvest practices in Egypt differed little from that of Palestine due to its regional proximity). This harvesting procedure was quite well ingrained in the average Israelite mind, supported by the existence of a fragment called the Gezar calendar from approximately 925 BC which clearly defines this yearly harvest schedule. In it we find the two separate harvests

in the spring, one of barley and one of wheat. In the fall we find the harvest of ingathering where other produce is gathered, these harvests are synchronized with the festivals of God.

Wheat in the New Testament

Our first encounter in understanding wheat as the symbol of the New Testament saints comes with John the Baptist's words that Jesus had come to gather His wheat. (Matthew 3:12) In another account with the people of Sychar at Jacob's well, we see that Jesus made a direct connection with their calling into the new covenant to that of the beginning of the wheat harvest. (John 4:34-38) As identifiably different as barley is from wheat we also observe a difference in the people being called under the old and new covenants. In the symbolic New Testament wheat harvest we hear the words of Paul to the somewhat self-reliant Corinthians when he said “*For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble*” (1 Corinthians. 1:26). The following verses (27-31) go on to describe why God was calling who He was. We see a difference between them and those called under the old covenant where those called were Kings, mighty men of valor, men of renown and Prophets. Gideon and his band were indeed valiant men who rode into physical battle against the enemy of Israel and the church. None of the Corinthians were called to those positions, nor are many of us. We can easily see today that not many Kings, heads of state, presidents, or mayors are now called. To the Corinthian, Paul drove a message of wisdom to diffuse their penchant with status in which they believed to be rich, of influence and a person of rank meant godliness. Under the old covenant many influential people of this sort were indeed called, but seemingly not under the new, and

we see the evidence of this today where we have few (if any) kings, governors, or great army generals in what is known to be the church of God. It is this difference that gives credibility to the use of barley and wheat in symbolically speaking of the Old and New Testament elect.

In Matthew 13:24-30, we find a parable of Jesus explaining the kingdom of God. In it we find character roles that need to be identified. Jesus gave parables to His disciples to teach them about the mysteries of the kingdom of God. It was necessary because there was much speculation as to how the story of Israel was to unfold, and how the kingdom of God would deal with the present crisis with the Roman government. There was much corruption in the nation and even in the Temple system. If one identifies the wheat as being the new covenant elect of God, then this parable speaks to us in a way it otherwise would not, in fact without this insight it becomes difficult to make any real practical sense of it.

In this parable Jesus is calling into question the customary practice of pulling tares out of a crop. Because this crop is of a certain variety He warns about the dangers of the customary practice. The tares planted in the field clearly were the agents of Satan... false teachers and/or brethren who are engaged in deception and deliberate efforts to overthrow the God of Israel. The disciples understanding under the old covenant was that these false brethren and false prophets were to be found out and stoned. (Deuteronomy 13:1-14) The removal of the tare was symbolic of death, cut off from the earth, it spoke to the customary practice of capital punishment. This, of course, was possible because Israel was a nation unto itself, and the elect called out from those confines were thus protected by this practice. This nation had, as all nations do, this right to curb any activity that may threaten its security. The disciples reaction would have been the same as the servants reaction described in v: 27,28.... Jesus knew they held that understanding and now He was telling them it can no longer work... why?... because brethren are now wheat!

Jesus was revealing that things would change under a new covenant. He is saying that tares now growing amongst wheat (new covenant elect) require different treatment. Wheat is clearly symbolized here as the reason for the change in policy. From our vantage point we can look back and see the logic... the new covenant people would face the specter of going into all the world with the light of the Gospel message. They could no longer rely upon being protected by a nation as helpless as Israel had become, for it was in exile and under siege in its own country ready to collapse. The destruction of the temple and demise of the sacrificial system meant there would be no help available to deal with false teachers and false brethren in the customary fashion. (Deuteronomy 13:1-10) The church was now in the world, but not part of it (John 17:16), it was no longer part of any nation so it is limited in exercising any legal authority. In pondering this we are faced with the interesting fact that barley is a much more hardy grain than wheat and so typifies the old covenant elect who exercised capital punishment and went to war to protect the temple system. Barley is also a more nutritional grain; it is more resistant to drought and can be started early. A study of the differences between the root system of barley and that of wheat (*Root Development of Field Crops* by John E. Weaver) reveals that barley has a hardier root system, capable of reaching depths of up to five feet with wheat only up to four. Barley is more resistant to drought as a result and so typifies the four Old Testament saints who often endured the extreme hardships of war and captivity. This root system difference suggests that pulling weeds in barley would not be as destructive to the crop as it would to wheat. Barley is a heavy grain high in sugar content making it a great building and energy food, often preferred as food for animals. All of this makes it the grain of choice to sustain in very difficult and starter situations. Wheat is a lighter grain and sifts well, making it the grain of choice to make very fine breads, cakes and dainties. It has a wider range of usage in baking. As different as these two grains are, so is

the new covenant church from that of the old covenant one. Understanding that wheat is symbolic of a new covenant people unveils this parable, and shows us reason Jesus gave it.

The church is described in Revelation 12 as a prenatal and postnatal entity, and as different as a woman who has never had a child and one who has; so is there by good reason a difference between the Old Testament church (elect) and the New Testament church (elect) in terms of its work? As different as barley is than wheat, though they both be grain, so are the Old and New Testament church's though they both be the elect of God...grain is grain, and grain is the symbol of the elect of God, that which comprises the 'loaf or bread' described in Leviticus 23:17.

The best choice out of the spring grain crops in Palestine to assign to the Old Testament church as a type would be barley, and for the New Testament it would be the wheat. When we consider the Bible, the words of God to human kind, with its obvious heavy content of symbol, story, typology and shadows, we should pay more earnest heed to its usage throughout the book. Many have missed great revelations and understanding because they didn't lay enough importance on the often repeated use of these symbols in scripture. Symbols need to be identified in order for parables to be understood, and prophecies to be revealed. The festivals of God are full of symbolism, and we all know and understand some of them, but there is work yet to do in discovering treasures still there for the picking.

Different Grain Different Need

The difference between the old covenant calling of the elect and that of the new precipitated a need for new things. There was a need for help to do a worldwide work of preaching the Gospel and taking care of those who responded to it. Without rights to capital punishment there was now a real need for divine protection from Satan's agent's who would destroy it all. God provided something new for this new group of people, a helper (John 14:16-18) a comforter or

counselor to be with them always. This comforter, the Holy Spirit, would teach them, and be an aid to them in remembering Jesus' teachings (v26). It would also provide the divine help to defend against the enemy. This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost after Jesus' death and resurrection, and what it provided is clearly laid out for us in the second chapter of the book of Acts where Luke in painstaking detail explains what he saw and heard. What he saw and heard was a display of the power and help of the Holy Spirit being made available for a new job description. Our examination will focus upon the giving of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of service and protection under a new covenant.

A New Gift for a New Church

The "pouring out" of the spirit was the provision of divine gifts to men, and the spirit of understanding to interpret the words of God. As professing Christians it behooves us to examine what God has set before us, and reach out and claim any promises offered so we can properly be equipped to do His will. These gifts are needed primarily because the new covenant elect are in the world, but not part of it. Secondarily, because the High Priest now serves directly in the heavenly sanctuary and not in the earthly copy where a Priesthood was needed to support the sacrificial system. The New Testament saint has the privilege of direct contact with the High Priest with no other in-between. We first must establish what happened on that eventful day of Pentecost.

The miracles performed that day were: (Acts 2:8-11) the gift of speaking and hearing in different languages. This miracle was given at a special time when many were gathered together for the day of Pentecost, and it served the purpose of enabling may to hear the words about the "wonderful works of God" (v11). And it opened up understanding to the words of God, many now recognizing the many stories, prophecies, and symbolisms contained in their literary heritage about Jesus (v: 12-40). It was a gift that served a purpose for a special occasion. It was not the only gift given though, as time moved along

the needs changed and more gifts were given.

Divine Gifts for a New Era

The church was now out from the confines of the nation of Israel and out from under the sacrificial system. It was alone in the world without a physical High Priest, so Jesus sent them the "Comforter," as He so promised, so they would not be left as orphans (John 14:18). While this promise was made to His disciples, it is by extension to a new church which would now take on the job in a new era of garnering saints (grain). That era we see as being, in symbolism, the gathering of wheat. This new era was quite different than the Old Testament era where the saints were gathered out of the house of Israel (family/seed of Abraham). They were by reason of that, needful of birth or conversion into the Nation and its religion with circumcision as the badge. In addressing this with the Gentile church in Galatia Paul states it this way: Galatians 3:16 *Now to Abraham and his seed (family) were the promises made. He said not, As to seeds (families) as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed (family), which is Christ.*" The promises included the inheritance of eternal life, and we see that those under the old covenant that were called died not receiving them yet. (Hebrews 11:13)

In the new covenant our inheritance is as Paul described to the Galatians, one of being through Christ's seed (family) because Jesus was of the house of Abraham, but also; "Before Abraham was I am" (John 8:58) making God the real family being built. The Gentile along with all others in the new covenant now become members of the household of God through Jesus. It is no longer of the old covenant physical birth/adoption into the household of Abraham with covenant signature of circumcision. The household of God is entered via the household of Abraham, and Jesus the Kinsmen redeemer is that door through which all enter.

This new arrangement made it possible to call individuals from all walks of life out of all nations and in all parts of the world. This is what

caused the need for the special gifts to be given to men. To cope with this enormous change in process, divine help was necessary. So upon the New Testament church the Spirit was poured out according to promise.

The Divine Gifts

Many have supposed that the pouring out of the Spirit was for the purpose of miraculously transforming the person from evil to good. "Transformed by the Spirit" is the common idea behind many messages with such content. People have reasoned that the disciples were awkward failing individuals, citing the incident with Peter denying Jesus three times as the proof. They then go on to describe a new transformed Peter in his triumphant sermon on the day of Pentecost willing to lay his life down, yet neglect to recognize that Peter failed that test yet another time in the Antioch incident where Paul had to corrected him publicly. Deeper understanding of what was given to the New Testament church and why, is made easier with this knowledge about Scripture's symbolic use of barley and wheat.

Ignorance Not a Virtue

We should not be ignorant of these gifts. Paul saw that it was vital to instruct the Corinthians about them, so it is here that we need to go to learn. 1 Corinthians. 12:1 "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant". Verses 4,5,6 tell us plainly that there are diversities of gifts, differences of administrations, and differences of operations. The Spirit of God was given then for the aid of the church in the new covenant in three categories; 1. Spiritual gifts, 2. Administrations, 3. Operations. It is clear from this that the body of Christ is organized in a specific way, something the Corinthians were ignorant of. These instructions come on the heels of a terse rebuke to the Corinthians for their failure to recognize who was who in the body, and how the body was to properly function. They were a church that had many gifts but a church that was unable to recognize what body parts belonged where and what body parts were good for what. In fact they didn't recognize the fact that they needed each other to be effective



as a church. These three categories Paul outlines are three different functions — one body, no part being greater or of more importance than another. Legs and feet are made for walking, hands and arms are made for doing things, eyes and ears for seeing and hearing, and the mouth for expressing what the feet and legs have taken the body to, for explaining what the hands have done, and for expounding what the eyes have seen and read, and the ears have heard.

The Head of the Body

In all of this Jesus is the driving mind and head of His Body. Colossians 1:18 *“And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He may have the preeminence”*. Which one of us now dares to take that position? There was one who did dare, however, and we read of him in Acts 8:18-23 and the incident is set

there for our admonition. Simon the Samaritan sorcerer offered money so he could have a special gift of the spirit that he coveted for his own gain. The giving of the spiritual gifts is a job that God reserves for himself, and those gifts when given are supposed to be recognized by the Body when they are manifested. Simon wanted the gift that would give him the preeminence, not some gift God would choose for him. In recognizing gifts it is important to understand the fact that the body functions together in these three categories. As the church moved through the experiences of the ages, some gifts became more important than others, but the Body was still to function as a Body. When the church fled, the legs became most important, a gift of operations. When the church was rebuilding revelations and miracles were important to repair and build faith, a gift of miracles. When the church was established and

spreading the gospel freely organization was very important, a gift of administration. When gifts are given the body should recognize them for what they are, for all gifts are given for the edification of the Body. At the end of the age when Satan becomes wroth with the woman (church) there comes also a famine of the word. Under this difficult circumstance, it becomes important to remember who the head of the church is, and that one member of the Body should not rise up to be preeminent, but rather work humbly contributing to the edification of the Body, using the gift when it is needed, and allowing other gifts to function when they are needed. In times of famine the Body knows it is starving and cries out for food, good administration and operations if they are attuned to the needs and can hear the cry, will activate to alleviate the problem. The head of the Body, when approached will supply the need, by sending food. 📖

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2. They understand the Bible better than anyone else they know. (Sometimes they think they are Elijah or one of the two witnesses.)
3. They know parts of the Bible that are wrong—because they know more than the Bible writers.
4. They discard major sections or an entire Testament of the Bible, because they are close enough to God to know what is right.
5. They reject the entire Bible, because they have found it false, and new religious beliefs that surpass it.
6. This final end varies, but it often results in divorce, suicide, reclusion, severe illness, crime, financial ruin or other disastrous life events.

I hope this does not happen to you. I would highly encourage you to pray and ask God to send another Bible student into your life who has time to go in depth into your studies

and that you would make time to go in depth into his studies. *“As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend”* (Proverbs 27:17).

While I could make a personal effort to “stop long enough to check out” your writings, I do not believe that is how God wants me to use my time. In this letter, I do not see a careful and honest approach to the Scriptures that would make me want to read more of your writings. Any study we might do together would be greatly complicated by your willingness to simply dismiss any verse that disagrees with your teaching as “Bible error.” Even so, I have prayed for God to independently send someone to me (not someone sent by you) to show me if He wants me to read your writings. He has done this in the past, and I trust He will do it again if necessary.

As I find time to study the work of other believers, high on my list will be a group that is reporting ongoing healings, even raising the dead, by “saying the exact things that Jesus said and doing the things that He did.” I have often used some rather long prayers—which have only been partly effective. I received a call from someone who had participated in one of this group’s services and witnessed several miraculous healings.

We must never forget that “knowledge” is only one of the gifts of the Spirit. Every believer does not have to have as much (or as little) knowledge as we do in order to receive spiritual gifts. I encourage you to get involved in serving others, and demonstrate the fruit of your knowledge. May God strengthen His people everywhere, and help all of us to do His work in peace and unity. 📖

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