



## His Passion and Our Passion

David C. Morrison Jr.

After several attempts to see *The Passion of Christ*, we were able to see the movie Tuesday night. We had tried to see the movie several times before and it was sold out. There was even a line on Tuesday night! I will reserve my opinion on the movie in order to discuss something related to the film's audience. The large number of people going to see this film would refer to themselves as religious. They would profess to "believe" in God. I am encouraged by the large number of people represented just in attendance alone.

I am glad we live in a land that is still filled with people who claim to believe in God. I am saddened, of course, by the lack of commitment to such statements. I am also saddened by the lack of dedication to his word. While many believe in God, there is a general sense of religious apathy. That is, people don't seem to care enough to go very far beyond the mere words of a stated belief that there is a God. They may attend services occasionally and claim allegiance to some denomination, but that is the extent of

their commitment.

Whenever, there is a discussion in the public arena of religion, God's people should be prepared to look for every opportunity to share the truth with others. A simple question about the topic (i.e., homosexual marriage or the movie) may lead to a deeper discussion of God's word. (Matt. 28:18-20).

Here are some statistics for what they are worth:

Ten percent of Protestants, twenty-one percent of Roman Catholics, and sixty-two percent of Jews do *not* believe in God.

That's the surprising word from a new survey by Harris Interactive of 2,306 adults that shows belief in God varies quite widely among different segments of the American public. How often do they go to a place of worship? Not much. Most people attend a religious service less than once a month. Still, Americans are far more likely to believe in God and to attend religious

*see "Passion" on p. 280*

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## Fellowship With God Conditioned Upon Walking in the Light

Mike Willis

**If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth (1 John 1:6).**

There always have been those who believe that one can maintain an on-going and never-ending fellowship with God while continuing in disobedience to the truth. Our own age is not exempt. Consider some of these examples:

- Oprah Winfrey openly asserts her belief that she is a Christian. Nevertheless, she speaks openly of her live-in lover Steadman.
- The Episcopal Church affirms that one who is a practicing homosexual can, not only maintain the fellowship of God, but also meet the qualifications of a bishop.
- Many who have unscripturally divorced their mates and remarried believe that they can maintain a relationship with God, despite their living in a sinful relationship that the Bible identifies as adultery.

These examples do not count those who are in Protestant denominations which teach “once saved, always saved.” They simply call attention to the modern concept of sin that thinks everyone is entitled to choose the lifestyle of his choice, that God is obligated to accept his chosen lifestyle, and that he can maintain a relationship with God while continuing in the practice of his sin.

However, John affirms that the opposite is true. Those who say that “we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness” are lying and not doing the truth. Note the two points: (1) They are lying when they say they have fellowship with him. This does not mean that they are knowingly lying; rather, John is affirming that their statement is false without regard to their sincerity. Many of those who make such an affirmation are sincere; they believe the false doctrine they have been taught. (2) They do not the truth. Despite their affirmations to the contrary, their disobedience is not the truth. It is sin and

*see “Fellowship” on p. 281*



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## The Mind of Christ and Error

Connie W. Adams

The statement, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5), challenges every disciple from the moment of his translation into the kingdom of God’s dear Son until the time of his transition to yonder’s world. The context of that passage speaks of the willing obedience of the Christ who, though “in the form of God” and “equal with God,” was fashioned in the likeness of men to suffer at the hands of men the humiliating death of the cross. All of this provided us the supreme illustration of what it means to have “lowliness of mind” and to “esteem other better than themselves” (Phil 2:3).

It is not uncommon to equate the “mind of Christ” with compassion, meekness, tenderness, and forgiveness. These were clearly seen in his character. Who could forget his tender compassion for the woman taken in adultery whose accusers fled the scene? Or his commendation of the woman who brought the cruse of expensive perfume which Judas said was a “waste”? How could we forget his tears at the grave of his good friend, Lazarus? Or his fervent “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do” uttered from the agony of the cross? Indeed, he left us an example, that we should follow his steps (1 Pet. 2:21).

While Jesus was compassionate with the sinner snared by Satan’s trap, he was militantly outspoken about sin, the cause of it, and about those who made human tradition equal to the law of God. He saw false teachers as servants of the Devil and branded their doctrine as soul condemning error. He came to seek and save the lost, and false teachers were themselves lost and the cause of others being led astray. To fail to see this is to miss vital truth and to gain a one-sided view of “the mind of Christ.”

It is thought by many, including a growing number of Christians, that it is not nice to reprove error and rebuke sin. We must “think positive,” never condemn, always build but never tear down. Editors and writers in religious journals who dare to examine false doctrine and who name those who promote such error can expect to hear from whiners who don’t think it shows “love” to write in this vein. Sermons along this line will draw complaints from those who wring their hands and think the preacher does not have “the spirit of Christ.”

Consider the following examples of what Jesus said. How better to discover “the spirit of Christ” than from the words of Christ himself?  
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Jesus quoted from Isaiah and applied it to those of his own day when he said, "In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matt. 13:14-15).

Behold the spirit of Christ in Matthew 15 regarding the false teachers of his day. To the scribes and Pharisees he said: "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" (15:3). "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth night unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (15:7-9). "Then came the disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (15:12-14).

When Jesus said, "Leave them alone" he was not telling them to ignore their error. He was charging them not to support it in any way. It was because he had engaged their error that the disciples expressed their fears.

No passage better shows the Lord's attitude toward false religious teachers than Matthew 23. Hear him: "But do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (v. 3). "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (v. 13). "And for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation"

(v. 14). "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (v. 15).

The condemnations were severe. The circumstances merited what he said. Had Jesus been in the good graces of these religious leaders they would not have clamored for his blood. He had no fellowship with them and they wanted no part of him.

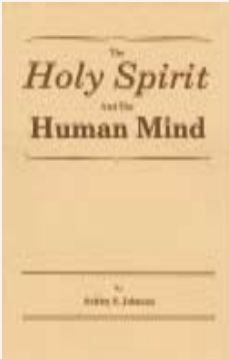
Throughout the land (and the world) there is a need for more militant evangelism. Error struts brazenly without challenge. The airwaves and television channels are filled with the voices of those who are preaching another gospel and who therefore stand under the curse of God (Gal. 1:8-9). Multitudes are led astray by these teachers. In almost every community denominations and sects are thriving on error. In those places where professing Christians are found in large numbers, the religious world scarcely knows of their presence. Our liberal-minded brethren have spent much money (and divided churches) so they could air programs on "The Problem of Aging," "Depression," "How to Cope with Being Alone," and "How to Manage Your Money." Some of us have done likewise. Where are the definitive sermons which draw the line between truth and error, between the church of the Lord and the churches of men, between Bible salvation and false systems of men? Among many of us, why is it that we now have a generation on our hands which cannot abide preaching with backbone? We need teeth in our preaching to take a bite out of sin and denominational error.

The prophets of old spoke plainly. So did our Lord and his apostles. It was out of love for lost souls that they placed truth ahead of popularity. They did not lick a finger and hold it up to see which way the wind was blowing. They did not wait to find out which position would be more popular. They were not reeds shaken by the wind. They were neither men-pleasers nor time-servers. They were servants of the Lord and accountable to him who shall judge the hearts and labors of all men.

My brethren, let's put Bible preaching back in the pulpits. Let's show the difference between truth and error both doctrinally and morally, in terms everyone can understand. Let's call on honest souls to forsake the ways of the Devil and flee to the Rock of Ages for safety. And let's challenge the purveyors of religious error to defend their cause by the word of God, or else, failing that, give it up for the salvation of their own souls as well as the souls of those who are influenced by them. That is also "the spirit of Christ."

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## Observations and Experiences Regarding Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage (3)

**The ideal in marriage is two believers (“heirs together of the grace of life,” 1 Pet. 3:7) being husband and wife together, that their prayers and service to God be not hindered, each helping the other to serve the Lord and to do their best for the Lord and their fellows, preparing for death**

Through the years I have kept notes and records regarding marriages and divorces of people where I have preached and served as an elder of the church. Some of these marriages I participated in, conducting the “marriage ceremony,” filling out the marriage license, and returning it by mail or in person to the courthouse where the license was issued to the couple. I have attended many weddings simply as a guest, not participating in any way in the proceedings. I have attended several divorce proceedings which were conducted in “open court,” where people could go to the courtroom and listen to the proceedings which were open to the public. I have never been a witness in a divorce case nor in a divorce court.

Only one time have I ever been a witness in a trial. One day I was in the church building where I preached. My wife had our car and no one would have known I was in the building. New shingles were being put on the roof, but no workmen were there at that time. I heard a noise on the roof, looked out through a door, and a thief was removing squares of shingles from the roof to his pickup truck. I jotted down his license number, called the police, they came, he was arrested, and I confronted him outside the building. He was brought to trial

and, having a prior conviction for theft and being on probation, was sent to prison.

I have always had convictions about marriages and for whom I would “say a wedding ceremony” (there is a big difference, you know, between a wedding ceremony and a marriage!). I have always refused to say a wedding service for anyone who had been divorced, unless the couple involved had been previously married to each other, had realized their error and sin, and were remarrying (and had not been married to anyone else in the interim). I’ve never wanted to help someone enter a sinful, God-forbidden marriage relationship. I have sometimes refused to participate in a wedding service when I knew the people involved and was convinced that their marriage would be “a disaster waiting to happen,” doomed to failure before it ever really began.

Several years ago a couple talked with me, separately, one at a time, a divorced husband and wife who were planning to remarry. They had several children. He had committed adultery and she had divorced him “for adultery” (although the legal decree said “irreconcilable differences” in this “no-fault divorce” state). After the divorce, he married the woman with whom he was committing adul-

tery and lived with her a number of years. Meanwhile the wife, who had divorced him for adultery, met and married a man who had never been married and had a child with him. At the time they talked with me, the man had left his adulterous second wife, moved back to this city, and wanted his first wife to divorce her husband and remarry him. She wanted to do so as she “was not happy” and “had loved him all the time and would never quit loving him,” the father of her children. I told him that he had no right to remarry her because she had divorced him for adultery, and the guilty divorced adulterer/adulteress is not permitted a remarriage by the Lord, even to his previous first wife. He was a “guilty, put away adulterer.” But they went to another preacher, he told them that was the thing for them to do, to remarry, that being the first husband and first wife and the parents of their children, and even though he had been divorced for adultery, that God would have them to remarry to solve their marital problems. So they did, and became members of the congregation where this preacher is preaching. The second husband, whom this woman had scripturally married and who was the father of a child with her, was forsaken and left “high and dry.” His scriptural wife left him for another man, an adulterer!

I have always made it a practice to talk with a couple prior to agreeing to participate in their wedding. This gives me opportunity to learn what their concepts and convictions are about being married, and discuss questions they may have regarding their plans, purposes, conduct, responsibilities, etc., in their anticipated union. The couple may have been Christians whom I thought needed to be reminded of our Father’s will regarding proper attitudes and behavior toward a husband or wife, as taught in Ephesians 5:22-33, 1 Peter 3:1-7, and Colossians 3:18-21. It might have been that a Christian was going to be married to an unbeliever and I wanted a chance to study God’s will with the

unbeliever. Sometimes I have baptized such a one before the marriage; sometimes I have baptized such a one after the marriage; and sometimes I have not baptized such a one at all. Many times I have refused to participate in a wedding when I had concluded that the believer was making a grave error in his/her choice of a mate.

I have never made it a “conscientious scruple” that a believer cannot be married an unbeliever. In some instances it is highly unwise; in some it is not. Since marriage is authorized by God, whose offspring we are (Acts 17:28-29), for the entire human race (Heb. 13:4), for the procreation of children in an honorable birth (Gen. 1:26-28; 3:20), for the moral purity of individuals (1 Cor. 7:1-9), and since the relationship between a believer and an unbeliever in marriage is regulated (1 Cor. 7:12-24; 1 Pet. 3:1-2), I cannot conclude it is a *sin* against God and his holy will. There is no passage of Scripture in the Testament which says so. If the marriage itself is sinful, a believer to an unbeliever, then to abide in the relationship is a *sin*. Yet, both Paul and Peter, inspired apostles, gave instructions regarding such marriages, to continue and maintain them, and told the people to abide in their marriage and try to convert their companion to Jesus Christ, thus saving the soul from sin and death. The ideal in marriage is two believers (“heirs together of the grace of life,” 1 Pet. 3:7) being husband and wife together, that their prayers and service to God be not hindered, each helping the other to serve the Lord and to do their best for the Lord and their fellows, preparing for death and eternal life in heaven.

Four of the nicest, best, most faithful women I have ever known in my lifetime, four sisters in the flesh and in Christ, all married unbelievers and all four of them converted their husbands. One of those sisters and her husband are now deceased. Two of the women are now widows, their husbands having died in the faith and

in hope of eternal life. One sister still has her husband this side of eternity, to comfort and care for her, to worship God and serve him together. Believers should always earnestly try to convert their intended husband/wife *before* the marriage. True believers, beginning their lives together in Christ in the marriage, will save themselves many differences, distresses, and problems in their marriage. Where the unbeliever is obstinate and ugly in spirit, refuses to consider God’s word and to study it, then the believer, by all means, should refuse to marry such a one. Disaster awaits if you do, when all the tell-tale warnings and signs of impending doom are so visibly evident and apparent.

I have seen, as most older Christians have, some of the kindest and loveliest marriages possible, between a believer and an unbeliever. In such marriages, the believer is free, without any hinderances, to worship and serve God, obey Jesus, do his/her duties to God and their fellow-man, and prepare for death and eternity. And some of the ugliest, cruelest, most merciless and vicious marriages and divorces have been between Christians. In one place we lived, when I was in my early years of preaching, I said the wedding service for two of the finest looking people, a young man and young woman, members of the church. Yet, within a couple of years or so, they were fussing, “cussing,” fuming, fighting, slapping, hitting, and committing adultery. Their parents were Christians. They had been “raised in the church.” They divorced. Both later remarried. I don’t know whether they are still living or are dead. One thing I do know: if they did not repent and change their ways, they will go to hell.

Being in the church and associated with brethren, Christians, all these years, most of the marriage problems, separations, divorces, and remarriages, about which I have any knowledge and know somewhat of the details, are among Christians. Being a Christian





## What Is the Church of Christ?

God promised to provide salvation from sin to “all families of the earth” through the seed of Abraham, which is Jesus Christ (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:16). As a further explanation, God promised to set up “a kingdom, which shall never pass away” (Dan. 2:44). In making final preparations for this salvation, Jesus told Peter, “I will build my church,” and he said Peter would reveal the word of salvation in “the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 16:18-19).

After Jesus died as the perfect sacrifice for sin, he arose and ascended to “the right hand of God” to sit on David’s throne as “both Lord and Christ.” Those who wished to be saved were told by Peter, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Three thousand people obeyed the gospel that day. As the gospel continued to spread, “The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (see Acts 2:22-47).

“Church” is translated from the Greek term *ecclesia*, referring to any group of people “called out” of one status or situation to another (see Greek-English lexicons). The Jews were called out of Egypt to follow Moses in the wilderness (“the *ecclesia* in the wilderness,” Acts 7:38). When a mob of Ephesians gathered to protest gospel preaching, this “*ecclesia* was confused” (Acts 19:32). The town clerk dismissed the riotous *ecclesia* and told them to take their objections to “a lawful *ecclesia*” (Acts 19:39). All who are saved in Christ are called out of their sins and thus constitute an *ecclesia*, that is, a group, assembly, or church called to follow Christ.

The gospel went first to the Jews, but when it went to the Gentiles, followers of Christ were given his name as their identifying name. “The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). They were to wear no other names, whether Paul, Apollos, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostal, or Mormon. To wear another name is sinful (1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:3). “There is one body, and one Spirit, . . . one hope . . . ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father”

(Eph. 4:4-6). God did not ordain denominational names and organizations.

All Christians are “in Christ,” in “the church” of Christ, in “the body” of Christ, and in “the kingdom” of Christ, i.e., they have spiritual fellowship with him (Eph. 1:3, 21-22; 5:5). “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). This daily relationship with Christ requires that we put off the old man of sin and put on the new man in serving God in every area of life: family, economic, civil, social, and recreational activities.

In each local community, God ordained that Christians meet to proclaim the gospel and to worship. Our work and worship together as a local church focus on Christ. We focus on Christ when we sing, pray, and teach his word; we focus on him each Sunday as we eat the Lord’s supper and give money for his work (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Eph. 5:19; 1 Cor. 16:1-2). Christ organized each congregation to be independent of all others with its own elders and deacons without any denominational name or affiliation (Acts 14:23; 20:28). The church’s mission is to preach the gospel, provide for scriptural worship and edification, and care for destitute saints (1 Tim. 3:15; Acts 2:42; 6:1-7). The church exalts God rather than entertaining men with quartets, choirs, dramas, instrumental music, concerts, jazz festivals, comedians, contests, social meals, ball teams, and parties.

Local churches which follow the New Testament pattern of teaching are the true churches to which Paul referred when he said, “The churches of Christ salute you” (Rom. 16:16).

Renew Promptly!

## Religious Plays

It has been popular to dramatize biblical events. Movies have been made on Bible subjects. Moses and the Messiah have been used as subjects for drama. Some have been sympathetic treatments — others have been blasphemous. All have been additions to God's biblical account. Everything from passion plays to George Burns playing God on the screen have been presented. "Jesus Christ Super Star" gave a perverted view of the Savior and was attacked by preachers. At the close of the year, denominations across the land give skits on the birth of Jesus. Recently churches of Christ have followed the practice with skits and plays on Bible subjects.

I am convinced dramatization does not correctly convey God's truth. Good-intentioned brethren have promoted something that of necessity adds to the word of God. For example, if one were to dramatize Genesis 11:31-12:3, there would have to be additions to God's description. Could one produce such a skit without conversation? What conversation between Abram and Sarah would be inserted in the play? How would one give a skit on the subject without guessing more than God revealed?

**We should not promote a religious skit or play for they necessitate our being definite where God is indefinite.** If a play on the birth of Christ is produced, how many wise men will be on the stage? A definite number must be present. The Bible, however, is indefinite on the number of wise men. How will you picture Jesus in your Passion Play? In the past fifteen hundred years, Jesus has been pictured as effeminate or as quite manly. In the sixties he was a "hippy." He has been blond, dark, or auburn haired. He has no beard, a short beard, or a long beard. The Bible does not define the physical appearance of Jesus. Isaiah 53:2 is as close as the Bible comes in giving a physical description. Christ's appearance is not emphasized, but his words and deeds are. In a play the appearance of Jesus is definite. Should we do

more than God in presenting the physical appearance of Jesus, the Messiah? Does God's warning about adding to the word apply to the appearance and acts of Jesus, or only to his sayings (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 John 9)? Remember, it was *revealed things* that belonged to Israel and their children (Deut. 29:29).



**We should not promote religious skits and plays, for they necessitate going beyond God's word.**

A Passion play is an example. Catholic tradition has Jesus falling under the cross three times. In fact this is a part of the Catholic Stations of the Cross. From what I understand, Passion Plays follow this tradition, and this is why a man from Cyrene, Simon by name, is shown carrying the cross. Matthew 27 records the act of Simon, but where does the Bible record Jesus falling? Where does the Bible tell us of a conversation between Mary Magdalene and Roman soldiers? A play cannot be produced without adding to God's revelation.

**We should not promote skits and plays, for these are forms of entertainment.** How many, who have not read the Book, will flock to see a movie about the exodus out of Egypt? Why the crowd? It is entertainment. God's truth is not designed to be humorous or entertaining. A movie or play draws a crowd for its entertainment value. What a shame people do not see the value of God's book! Do we cry in a movie, but are completely unmoved when a brother reads John 15:17-30 at the Lord's supper? Why are we moved by a human production, but find no emotional reaction reading or meditating on God's lovely word? God's word is not entertaining. It is instructive. "Ye have not so learned Christ: if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus" (Eph. 4:21, 21).

**We should not promote religious skits and plays, for God tells us the Scriptures were read, taught, and preached in the Lord's assembly (Col. 4:16; 1 Tim.**

## Because He Loves Us

The Hebrew writer focused on the chastisement that God gave to the drifting saints to whom he wrote in Hebrew 12:5-11, probably referring to the verbal discipline that the Lord was administering to them by means of this very letter being sent their way. In verse 6 his emphasis was the motive that caused him to thus chastise them: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." God disciplines his children because of his love for them. Earthly parents who follow the divine model likewise seek to make sure that any punishment is the result of love, lest it convey the wrong message (Prov. 13:24). It is noteworthy that while some parents plead love as the cause for their not punishing their children, the Lord assesses the situation differently. He says it is love that causes them to discipline, but failure to love that withholds the chastisement.

### FOCUS ON MOTIVE

God's motives are always pure, but men's need constant, honest evaluation. Parents must ever be wary that anger not be the cause of needed punishment, because the manner of its administration will likely reflect this wrong motive (Col. 3:21). Teachers of the gospel of Christ and elders leading in congregational discipline must be sure that they act out of love in the rebukes given and the withdrawal in which they lead (Phil. 1:14-17).

Among Paul's problems was the attempt of some to undermine his standing by proclaiming Christ from the wrong motive. Notice that preaching Christ is desirable, but in the passage just noted he mentioned envy and strife as motives against the good will shown by some. Contention characterized the efforts of some, whom Paul accused of

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**4:13; 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Tim. 4:1-5).** The New Testament knows nothing of skits or plays put on by the church. Saints were not edified by going to a religious play in their community.

Skits and plays are defended along these lines: God used drama in the Old Testament. Ezekiel dramatized the fall of Jerusalem and the scattering of Judah (Ezek. 4:1-5:17). Therefore, God approves drama as a teaching method.

I recognize Ezekiel and others used dramatics to convey a message. However, Ezekiel was a spirit-guided man. These dramatics were inspired by God. God wrote and directed the events in Ezekiel. This is not parallel to a play written and directed by uninspired men. In fact, religious plays promoted by men of the world are produced and directed by those disobedient to God. This is nothing like Ezekiel 4.

The death of Christ was shameful, cruel, and hours long. Read the Bible accounts, and be impressed with the reality. He was "smitten of God" (Isa. 53:4). The purpose was "for

our transgressions" (Isa. 53:4, 5). Two others suffered the same death as Jesus. Their pain and death were real. Their suffering was for a *just* reason (Luke 23:40, 41). Although they suffered "the same condemnation" as Jesus, there was a difference. Jesus' death was unique in that he allowed what could have been divinely stopped (John 10:18; Matt. 26:53). He is the Son of God without sin (Mark 14:61, 62; 1 Pet. 2:22). Christ "by the grace of God tasted death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). How can a man acting on the stage accurately show God's love and God's cost in the cross? This cannot be mimicked. Through the word we "know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge" (Eph. 3:19).

God said, "And he bearing his cross went into a place called the place of the skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha; where they crucified him, and two others with him, one on either side and Jesus in the midst" (John 19:17, 18). A Passion play takes two hours to say something similar. How is it done without adding to the word of God?

Skip the play. Read the book.

insincerity, while others preached out of love. Evidently those here condemned were seeking to promote their own standing by “demoting” Paul. They did not turn to the promotion of error, but their motives and methods were as evil as the error they carefully avoided. We here see that truth is not always associated with godly motive or method. It is love of self that creates such a situation, not the kind of love that God shows and desires to be in us.

It is imperative that all who teach the Lord’s message scrutinize their reasons for teaching and their methods in doing the Lord’s work. The teacher is as much in Paul’s view in passages like 2 Corinthians 13:5 and 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 as anybody else. Carefully consider the following questions, designed to help us to probe our own hearts, purposes, and consciences.

1. Is it possible that some of us are underhandedly trying to promote self rather than Christ?
2. Do we sometimes act (teach) out of envy for someone/another church enjoying success in his/their teaching?
3. Have we ever condemned someone’s teaching when it was still questionable that he taught such, all because of some ill will held toward that one?
4. Do we sometimes “fire too soon,” thinking to “kill the enemy” before determining definitely who the enemy is, to create or maintain for ourselves a reputation as a defender of truth?
5. Have we ever enjoyed condemning someone as wrong, either in his teaching or in his life, more because we have some malice of heart than because we love him? Should we not rather remember that “love does not rejoice in iniquity,” either our own or somebody else’s (1 Cor. 13:6)?
6. Do we ever fail to condemn the teaching/actions of someone with whom we enjoy a close relationship, based

on agreement or kinship, while we vociferously protest similarly wrong teaching or action in another with whom we have no such relationship (Jas. 2:1)?

7. Is name calling our standard practice in such condemnations, except when a “member of our party” is involved?

8. Do we really hope the person involved in the sin/error will remain in it, because we prefer a fight over his salvation (Jas. 5:19-20)?

9. Are we sincerely trying to practice the Golden Rule in our treatment of people that we believe to be in error (Matt. 7:12)?

**BECAUSE WE LOVE HIM**

Can we genuinely claim to love another, whom we are supposedly seeking to help, when we teach from such motives as these? Is it any wonder that our motives become suspect and our efforts fail to bear the intended fruit? Any guilty of acting from such an ungodly motive should be ashamed, though they are often praised by others similarly motivated, because they have become a stumblingblock to some and a cause of the enemy’s blaspheming.

It would be far better never to preach another sermon, teach another class, or write another article than to enmesh the gospel in a tangle of motives so unworthy of the cause of the Savior or to surround truth with actions that bespeak sinful intent or method. Can we truly say that we teach all people, warn the wayward, encourage the weak, and reprove/rebuke the erring because we love them? Only when we always act out of such love will we be able to save both ourselves and our hearers (1 Tim. 4:16). Only when we love as God loves can we say that we “love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

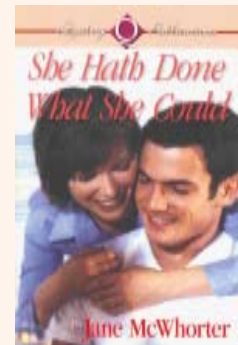
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**SHE HATH DONE WHAT SHE COULD**

by **Jane McWhorter**

“She Hath Done What She Could,” explained Jesus to his disciples as he praised a woman who anointed his head with oil (Mark 14:3-9). This beautiful story provides the foundation for a study of Christian service for women. She uses 13 lessons with discussion questions at the end of each chapter to show that performing simple and common duties can actually become the “glory of the ordinary.” By serving others in a variety of ordinary ways we are actually serving Christ. Imagine Jesus saying to others in heaven about your service, “She hath done what she could.”

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### Porter - Abercrombie Debate

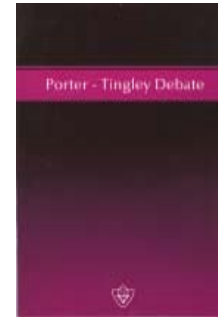
This is a debate between two members of the church of Christ discussing the scripturalness of Bible classes and women teachers. The proposition reads: *The Scriptures teach that when people come together to be taught by the church they should remain in one group, and the teaching should be done by men only, one speaking at a time.* Cecil E. Abercrombie affirms this proposition and W. Curtis Porter denies it.

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### Porter - Bogard Debate

This debate covers two different propositions. 1) The church known as the Missionary Baptist Church is Scriptural in origin, doctrine, practice, and name. Bogard affirms and Porter denies this proposition. 2) The church known as the Church of Christ is Scriptural in origin, doctrine, practice, and name. Porter affirms and Bogard denies this proposition.

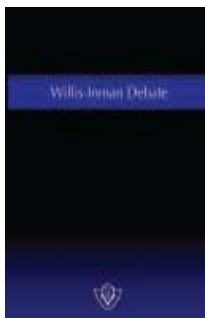


### Porter - Tingley Debate

This debate covers three topics. (1) The direct operation of the Holy Spirit. (2) The necessity of baptism for salvation. (3) Are we saved by faith alone? Glenn V. Tingley was a member of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church and W. Curtis Porter was a member of the Church of Christ.

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### Willis - Inman Debate

A debate between Clifton Inman, Editor of the BIBLE HERALD, and Cecil Willis, Editor of TRUTH MAGAZINE, held in Parkersburg, WV, September 1966. This debate contains a thorough discussion of the issues of church cooperation in evangelism and benevolence.

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### Cogdill - Woods Debate

This debate is one of the most famous of the debates on Institutionalism. Both participants were well qualified to represent their respective positions. This discussion was held in Birmingham, Alabama in 1957. The issue of "Congregational Cooperation" can be thoroughly studied in this debate from every point of view. These issues divided churches of Christ in the past and are relevant for our study today. This debate is being reprinted with the hope that it will be of great help in determining the basic principles and attitudes involved in this great conflict as well as serving as a guide in determining what the Word of God really teaches on these questions.

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### Halbrook - Freeman Debate

Debate between two members of the Church of Christ on whether the guilty party who has been divorced for fornication is free to remarry. An excellent resource on the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Many charts are included in the book which are helpful to the understanding of the arguments presented.

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## Throwing Jonah Overboard

Upon fleeing God and boarding a ship headed to Tarshish, Jonah and his fellow passengers find themselves in a tremendous storm (Jonah 1). The men were all afraid, and were attempting to make every effort to save the ship from devastation. Jonah was asleep when the storm came up and was awakened by the others asking him to help them in crying to the gods for help. In verse 7 the men decided to cast lots to see whose fault it was that all this tempest had come. The lot fell on Jonah and he explained the problem in vs. 9-11. When asked what they needed to do to calm the sea and live, Jonah said, “Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you” (v. 12).

These men were having trouble at sea because they had Jonah on board. Jonah was fleeing God, and God was not well pleased. These men wouldn’t have peace and calm again, until they threw Jonah overboard. However, they didn’t want to at first, but attempted to simply row harder for land with Jonah on board (v. 13). After exhausting every other effort they finally threw Jonah overboard and the sea was calm.

Why hadn’t these men simply thrown Jonah over immediately when they knew he was causing them their pain? I don’t know, but it does seem to be human nature to continue to carry burdens that we know full well are causing us conflict. What I’ve learned is that there are Jonah’s in all of our lives. We have sins, or characteristics that are in our life, that aren’t pleasing to God, and we’re suffering because of them. We need to learn the lesson and throw Jonah overboard! David said, “There is no health in my bones because of my sin, For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me” (Ps. 38:3b-4). What is it in your life that is causing you so much pain you can’t sleep, or sleep too much. Worrying, fretting or feeling depressed over? What’s your Jonah?

### PRIDE

“Pride come before destruction and a haughty spirit

before a fall” (Prov. 16:18). Many are puffed up with pride, and never seem to realize what pain and conflict it can cause. “When pride cometh then cometh shame” (Prov. 11:2). Pride causes us to say and do things that we are later ashamed of. “Only by pride cometh contention” (Prov. 13:10). Again, “A man’s pride will bring him low” (Prov. 29:23). What’s your Jonah? Is it your pride?



### JEALOUSY

Many of my brethren live a life ravaged by jealousy. “But envy is rottenness to the bones” (Prov. 14:30). “Who is able to stand before envy?” (Prov. 27:4). “For where envy and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work” (Jas. 3:16). You cannot have peace and be happy when you are envious of others. People envy others because of their money, influence, power, popularity, job, education, or spouses. I asked a woman the other day who was obviously jealous of another, “Would you give up your kids for a million dollars?” She said “no.” I then asked, “If you have something more valuable than a million dollars, why are you envious of someone who doesn’t have a million dollars?” What’s your Jonah? Is it jealousy?

### MATERIALISM

Many yearn for more and more. Many disguise it under the guise of simply wanting to be “comfortable.” The wise man said that “those that love silver will not be satisfied with silver, nor those who want abundance with abundance” (Eccl. 5:10). We must understand that money and possessions will not make us happy. Paul said that “those who would be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, that drown men in destruction and perdition, for the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim. 6:9-10).

What’s your Jonah, is it materialism?

### DRUNKENNESS

# Is the Lord's Supper a Common Meal?

Johnie Edwards

We are being told by some today that the Lord's supper is nothing more than just a common meal as Christians fellowship together! This growing concept needs some biblical investigation. Thus, we take a look:

**1. Misuse of the Passover.** It is argued by some that the Lord's supper was observed as part the Passover supper. The Passover was a Jewish feast to be eaten in memory of the Lord "passing over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians" (Exod. 12:27). This ordinance was only for Old Testament Israel as the males assembled in Jerusalem to keep three annual feast, including the "feast of unleavened bread" (Deut. 16:16)! When Jesus instituted the Lord's supper, he only took bread and fruit of the vine to set up the communion. Nothing else was said to be part of the Lord's supper. Read it: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins'" (Matt. 26:26-28). The Passover meal was not just a common meal. It consisted of unleavened bread, roasted lamb, bitter herbs, and fruit of the vine (Exod. 12; Matt. 26:29), and it was only eaten of once a year.

**2. The Lord's Supper Among Channels of Worship.** Commenting on what early Christians did in worship, Acts 2:42 says, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in *breaking of bread*, and in prayers." Don't you see that the breaking of bread (the Lord's supper) is listed with gospel preaching, giving, and praying? It is not a common fellowship meal in this passage! Those who think that the Lord's supper is just a common meal have to deal with Acts 20:7 which says, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." We are being told that this was both a common meal and a memorial. In other words, "a memorial within a meal"! The Bible does not teach such.

**3. Making a Common Meal Out of the Lord's Supper Condemned.** Paul shamed the Corinthians who were feasting with the Lord's supper, "What? have ye not houses to eat and drink in? Or despise ye the church of God" (1 Cor. 11:22). The apostle further uttered, "And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation" (1 Cor. 11:34). If the Bible teaches that a common meal and the Lord's supper go together, Paul failed to understand such. No only that, but we could not partake of the Lord's supper without a common meal, if that is what the Bible teaches. If not, why not? Let's get back to and stay with basic Bible teaching concerning the Lord's supper and quit tampering with divine arrangements.

Many see the glamorous pictures of the beer commercials and think that drinking makes life better. Nothing could be further from the truth. The wise man said, "Wine is a mocker, and strong drink is raging, and he that is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1). Once again, the drunk is pictured accurately by the wise man when he said, "The drunkard shall come to poverty" (Prov. 23:21) and again, "Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to see mixed wine" (Prov. 23:29-30). What's your Jonah? Is it drunkenness?

Even though these men that were with Jonah knew

what they needed to do to bring peace back into their life, they were hesitant to throw Jonah overboard. They, like us, thought that if they just tried a little harder they could overcome the tempest and still keep Jonah on board. We, like them, must learn that the only way to have peace and happiness in our life is to get rid of Jonah. What's your Jonah? Throw it overboard!

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## A Reverence of God and Respect For His Word

**R**eligious division is due to the changes man has made in God's instruction. The result has been the establishment of a multitude of churches teaching every doctrine conceivable and practicing anything that will bring in more people. Man may love it, but God abhors it.

Nearly thirty years ago, I remember coming into the Tampa area to begin college. On the first Sunday here, a friend took me to services where I first heard brother H.E. Phillips preach. When he began the lesson that morning, his words set a tone of solemnity and reverence that caused me to think soberly about my reason for being there. Brother Phillips noted that he had a great and fearful obligation in preaching the gospel to speak the truth without alteration, for he would one day give account before God. When I heard him preach many times in the years after that day, brother Phillips repeatedly acknowledged his obligation to preach in such a way as to respect the seriousness and solemnity necessary of all who properly handle God's word. There were a great many lessons this writer learned at the feet of our beloved brother Phillips, but none was more clearly taught and exemplified than to "fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth" (Josh. 24:14). Of all the things I miss about my dear friend and mentor, the thing I miss the most is his reverent approach to God and his word. Those were not mere words spoken by brother Phillips, they expressed a way of life that was at the core of his soul.

No man can truly have a proper respect for God's word without first having a deep reverence of the Almighty God. No one who has a proper reverence for Jehovah of hosts can do

any less than respect his revelation in the Scripture. The two are inseparable. Solomon summed up the responsibility of man in these words: "Fear God and keep His commandments" (Eccl. 12:13). The fear and reverence of God clearly begins the process (Ps. 111:9-10). But one of true reverence is moved beyond a mere thought, feeling, or word. The reverent man or woman is humbled before God and in sufficient awe of him to seek his will in its purity without any taint from man. A truly reverent person does not bow to popular will, political power, material gain or personal desire. The only one to whom the reverent person bows is God. That is why the reverent one looks to the word of God to seek direction and accepts that direction without any change. After all, he sees the inspiring breath of God in every word (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

God has always demanded that people obey his will as he delivered it to them. In the beginning, God demanded this of Adam and Eve. When they disobeyed that will, they were condemned by God. In every age, God has continued to insist upon people obeying the standard he has declared binding. God has never left people the right to legislate their own standard, but he has demanded strict adherence to the standard he delivered through inspiration. Moses stated it clearly in these words: "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor

take anything from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you” (Deut. 4:2).

God still demands that we obey his commandments (1 John 2:3-6). The destiny of our soul depends upon abiding within his teaching. “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9).

### HOW DOES A REVERENT PERSON VIEW SCRIPTURE?

A reverent person seeks to abide within and obey the word of God because of his respect for God who revealed that word. The one who fears God does not look at the Bible as an old-fashioned and out of date collection of writings from mere men. So, how does the man or woman of reverence view Scripture? Let us see how God says we should view it.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely to every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). If the Bible is *complete* and it *completely furnishes* one to *every* good work, what else could be needed? It alone is sufficient to guide one in God’s will! One who fears God will ask only what the Bible teaches in order to be guided in all matters pertaining to life and godliness.

“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1:13). The words of the inspired writers constitute a “pattern” for one to follow. Since that pattern was revealed through the Scripture, one can learn that which God expects by studying the Bible. With each doctrine and commandment given, the reverent person sees a part of the whole pattern God has for making one

what God desires. Just as with any pattern, every piece has a purpose in bringing about the intended product. Thus, the one who fears God will treat with care every principle laid down in Scripture and never alter it in any way.

“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). There can be no higher goal for the speech of a reverent man than to speak as God speaks — to let our words be a reproduction of his words. One who truly fears God does not seek to be innovative and original when he speaks of spiritual matters. He seeks merely to hide self and let the word of God be magnified (1 Cor. 2:1-5). The demand of this passage is obvious. It declares that religious teaching which cannot be proven from the Bible has no place being spoken. We are instructed to abide within the revealed will of God for the content and manner of our speech.

“He answered and said to them, ‘Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men.’ And He said to them, ‘All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition’” (Mark 7:6-9). There should be no doubt that the modern practice of writing and adopting human standards for religious conduct is not according to the will of God. Every time men write a creed, establish man-made dogmas, and create manuals to govern in religious matters, they take upon themselves the place that God alone has as the One who reveals all truth. The reverent person would never condone such a usurpation of God’s place. If it is not revealed in the sacred writings of Scripture, the one who fears God will not bow to it.

### CONCLUSION

Religious division is due to the changes man has made in God’s instruction. The result has been the establishment of a multitude of churches teaching every doctrine conceivable and practicing anything that will bring in more people. Man may love it, but God abhors it! The denominationalism we see today can be ended immediately for all who will simply have true reverence for God and respect for his word, allowing it to govern as the divine standard and pattern of truth. Once the commandments and traditions of men are taken away, unity can be achieved using the Bible as the guide in all things. This plan for unity through reverent submission has worked among God’s people in the past and will work today.

As many brethren were departing from the pattern of truth a generation ago, brother Phillips and other faithful men of God called them back to the way of truth. Why did so many ignore the plea? There may be many reasons that are involved, but one part of the problem is evident — they did not have the true reverence for God that would lead them to properly respect the pattern of God’s word. Thank God for men like H.E. Phillips who showed us an example in word and deed of a reverence that led to a profound respect for the holy text.

In our own time, we see a growing ignorance of God’s word and an alarming departure from its teaching. What is the problem? Again, a multitude of factors may play a part, but one thing is certain — a lack of true reverence for God has paved the way for a lack of respect exhibited towards God’s pattern of truth. Let each of us take a deep look within our heart and soul to see if we truly fear God as we ought. If that deep reverence is not at the core of our being, our departure from his word is certain and only awaits the right occasion. Let us be moved by true reverence to respect, obey and defend God’s unaltered word.



# God the Refuge of His People

## INTRODUCTION

On occasion, the people of God face individual troubles, family troubles, congregational troubles, and national troubles. From time to time, we are burdened with uncertainty, sickness, frailty, and sorrow. Yet, the Holy Scriptures afford comfort in trials. This is especially true of Psalm 46, written by the sons of Korah for the chief musician, where God is presented as the refuge of his people.

## GOD PROVIDES SHELTER

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah (Ps. 46:1-3, KJV).

God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; Though its waters roar and foam, Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. Selah (Ps. 46:1-3, NASB95).

God provides shelter and strength. Elsewhere, David said, “He is my rock” (Pss. 18:2; 62:1-2). He furnishes us with confidence (Ps. 62:5-8). Even when it seems like our entire world is falling apart, God offers help to his people (Ps. 23:4-6; Hab. 3:16-19).

## GOD PROVIDES SUPPORT

There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High (Ps. 46:4, KJV).

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy dwelling places of the Most High (Ps. 46:4, NASB95).

God provides support and sustenance for his people. The Lord provided for Israel during their wilderness wanderings (Deut. 8:15-16; Ps. 105:40-43). In like manner Jesus Christ provides us with the bread of life and streams of

living water (John 6:35; 7:38).

## GOD PROVIDES FELLOWSHIP

God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early (Ps. 46:5, KJV).

God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns (Ps. 46:5, NASB95).

God also has fellowship with his people. God was with Israel during the wilderness (Exod. 40:34-38). When Solomon initiated worship in the temple at Jerusalem, the glory of the Lord filled the house (1 Kings 8:10-13). In like manner, Jesus Christ shares an abiding relationship with all his followers (Matt. 18:20; 28:18-20; Luke 17:20-21; 2 Cor. 6:16-18).

## GOD PROVIDES PUNISHMENT

The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted (Ps. 46:6, KJV).

The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered; He raised His voice, the earth melted (Ps. 46:6, NASB95).

All worldly evil can be summed up in three words: “The nations raged.” Yet, when God comes in judgment, the kingdoms of men fall (Ps. 2). Although the power of evil appears invincible, Satan’s doom is sealed (Rev. 20:7-15). Let us, therefore, be God’s allies and not his enemies (Heb. 12:25-29).

## GOD PROVIDES PEACE

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah (Ps. 46:7-11, KJV).

The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah. Come, behold the works of the Lord,



Who has wrought desolations in the earth. He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariots with fire. Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah (Ps. 46:7-11, NASB95).

God affords peace in several ways. Physical peace prevailed when Israel was faithful to God (Lev. 26:6). Spiritual peace is granted to those who trust and obey (Phil. 4:6-7). Familial peace belongs to those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways (Ps. 128:1-6). He also shows us how to enjoy peace within congregations (Rom. 14:16-19).

### CONCLUSION

Consider the following words, written by my sister-in-law Anne Stevens. This song was finished at Texas Children's Hospital where her second newborn grandson was struggling with a variety of serious health problems:

Oh, waste not this day in worry.  
You must face the past and let it go.  
For the Father who knows your sin and sorrow  
Is the Father who loves you so.

Oh, waste not this day in worry.  
Oh, borrow not tomorrow's woe.  
For consider the birds in all their glory  
Neither gather, nor reap, nor sow.

Oh, waste not this day in worry.  
Won't you treasure ev'ry single hour?  
For your life, it is nothing but a vapor  
Like a lovely but fading flow'r.

Chorus: Waste not this day in worry.  
Spend not this day in fear.  
For he knows the sparrow,  
Is He, your loving Father, ever near.

Great blessings come to those who are right with God. They enjoy shelter, security, support, and sustenance. It is not so with the wicked. The only thing they can rightfully expect to receive is the outpouring of God's wrath. Where do you stand? Is your heart right with God? Are you a faithful Christian? If not, obey his word, rejoice in his grace, trust in his goodness and love, and come to know

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## Thank You Loyal Customers

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We are trying to provide churches and individuals with quality Bible materials at reasonable prices and your continued support helps greatly in being able to keep these materials available. We have many new workbooks now on our shelves and also a number of older books have been put back into print. Our website ([www.truthmagazine.com](http://www.truthmagazine.com)), which is maintained by Donnie Rader, has seen a large increase in visits as well as purchases.

Workbooks recently reprinted include: *Evangelizing the Lost* by Charles Goodall, *Sermon on the Mount* by John Smith, *God's Perfect Plan* by Kelly Ellis, *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage* by Donnie Rader, and *The Family Circle* by Leslie Diestelkamp. Books back in print include five W. Curtis Porter debates, *The Cogdill-Woods Debate*, *Boswell-Hardeman Discussion*, *The Willis-Inman Debate*, *The Halbrook-Freeman Debate*, *The Spirit and the Word* by Z.T. Sweeney, *Porter's Sermon Outlines*. Many more are planned for the near future. We could not provide such materials without your support and we just wanted to say THANKS!

Andy Alexander  
Manager  
Truth Bookstore  
Visit us at [www.truthmagazine.com](http://www.truthmagazine.com)

## Why the Modern Pulpit Faces a Crisis

God's means of saving the lost and edifying the saved is by the preaching of the simple gospel of Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19; 21, 1 Cor. 1:21). When the pulpit turns from preaching the gospel in its fullness (Acts 20:27), a great crisis comes among God's people — they begin to depart from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1).

The first departure from the faith came with a change in the preaching. Fisher, in his church history, says: "The sermon in the fourth century became more rhetorical (emphasis of style, often at the expense of thought — Webster, dt). Its brilliant thoughts or witty expressions were sometimes received with loud applause" (120). Mosheim, in his church history, says: "The sermons, or public discourses addressed to the people, were composed according to the rules of human eloquence, and rather adapted to excite the stupid admiration of the populace, who delight in vain embellishments; than to enlighten the understanding or to reform the heart. . . . For the people were permitted, nay, even exhorted by the preacher himself, to crown his talents with clapping of hands and loud acclamation of applause" (106).

There is a great crisis in preaching in the church today. Many preachers have stopped preaching sermons on first principles, and have also stopped using passages of Scripture to prove their points; instead they use "tales" and illustrations. Some no longer preach sermons that identify the true church. A failure to show that the church of the New Testament is distinct from man-made churches will mean that those who are baptized under this type preaching will be weak and without conviction. Some preachers do not take a definite stand against specific sins like adulterous marriages, immodest dress, social drinking, gambling, or other issues that threaten God's people.

False concepts of presenting the truth are found in the minds of some preachers. Some contend that there should be no "negative" preaching. This is not what Paul told Timothy for he said: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). Application of the gospel must

be made to the sinner whether it be sins of immorality or sins of a religious nature. Some would argue that we should not preach against any issues like institutionalism, premillennialism, or instrumental music. If we fail to preach on controversial subjects like these, the church will be filled with weak, ungrounded, and unsound members!

There is a rising wrong perception of the role of the preacher in the church today. Many do not view him as a proclaimer of the word of God; he is viewed more as a manager, an entertainer, a professional visitor, or a counselor. The New Testament pictures him as a proclaimer of the word of God (2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Cor. 1:21; 1 Tim. 2:7), not as a manager, an entertainer, a professional visitor, or a counselor.

Many today have the false concept that preaching is to be molded by the expectations of society. The New Testament teaches that society is to be molded by the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 12:1, 2). What has brought about this change in preaching? The change in society! People today want "what satisfies me"; their prime concern is "what makes me happy," so preaching has become more related to self-interest. Preaching now reflects man's interest in himself, his wants, his needs. Man does not want to face his true needs as God has revealed them in the gospel of Jesus Christ (Jas. 1:22-25).

Preaching has come to be looked upon as a profession. Some are more interested in where the preacher went to school, his education, and how "polished" he is in the pulpit than they are in his knowledge of the word of God, his faithfulness, or his soundness in the faith.

We all need to understand what God's purpose in preaching is — the salvation of men (Mark 16:15, 16; 1 Cor. 1:21; 1 Tim. 4:16). Any other purpose does not please God. Brethren, it is up to us to go back to preaching the word "in season, out of season" (2 Tim 4:2) and try to save men from everlasting punishment in hell! (Matt. 25:46).

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*From Bulletin, Market St. church of Christ, Athens, Alabama,*

## Muhlenberg County Trip

On February 9, 2004 Aaron Erhardt, Ron Daly, and I traveled to Muhlenberg County, Kentucky to labor in the gospel for a week. God truly blessed our efforts and much good was accomplished for the kingdom of heaven.

Thanks to be to God, who allowed us to saturate the entire area with various forms of advertising. We were able to take out a total of eight newspaper ads advertising the preaching efforts as well as six large debate challenges. Perhaps our most effective form of advertising took place on the radio. We recorded eleven commercials which were two minutes in length each. These adds were played over 144 times throughout the week on WKYA 105.5FM in Greenville. Several listeners called the station opposed to the truth we were teaching.

There is no doubt the truth was heard throughout the region. In fact, we received several reports from local brethren saying we were being talked about in the schools, hospital, courthouse, and by some police officers in the local businesses. Several Baptist churches put snide remarks like “There Is No Debating” and “He who angers you controls you” on their signs, but it was no comparison to our relentless attacks.

The format each evening went as follows: Two sermons per night with a question and answer session after the final lesson. Denominational preachers were offered the opportunity to publicly defend their doctrines on the spot (Jude 3; 1 John 4:1). While no denominational preachers were willing to give an answer (1 Pet. 3:15), we did have several questions from others each night.

On Tuesday and Thursday evenings, a man from the Apostolic Church engaged us in a discussion about the Lord’s supper and falling from grace. We answered his questions from the Scriptures, showing that saints are to break bread on the first day of the week to commemorate the death of Christ (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-34). Also, we discussed the context of Hebrews 4-6 and 1 John 1-2 in regards to the possibility of falling from grace.

Also on Thursday evening, a man from the Pentecostal Church engaged us in a discussion about the Mosaic Law (Heb. 8:6-13). After we were dismissed, he continued to study with Aaron for about two hours, afterwhich he agreed to continue visiting with the brethren at Willow Glen.


Friday evening several people from the community were in attendance including an institutional preacher from an area church of Christ. By night’s end we engaged in five personal studies, two of which agreed to further study with the local evangelist. It was a wonderful end to a great week of evangelism!

Aaron, Ron, and myself commend our brethren who travel to foreign countries to preach the gospel in a most noble way. However, we also believe that we must not overlook our own backyard. There are many places in the United States that are destitute of churches and in need of strong preaching. Therefore, we plan to continue this effort. We have already received invitations to visit Wisconsin, Michigan, and Missouri.

It is our prayer for the sake of the souls in our own country, the furtherance of the gospel will not be neglected in our own backyard. May God be praised for all the good accomplished!

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**REFLECTING ON  
THE HOLY SPIRIT**

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Jim McDonald

## “As Ye Would That Men Should Do Unto You”

**All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them; for this is the law and the prophets (Matt. 7:12).**

Just as John 3:16 is called the “golden text of the Bible,” so Matthew 7:12 is called “the golden rule.” Gold is perceived to be of great worth and while it is not to be compared with the precious blood of Christ in redemptive power, it is of great value. Tested and proven faith is likened unto gold which has gone through refiners’ fire. (1 Pet. 1:18f; 7).

Through the ages men have struggled with what constitutes right behavior toward a fellow human. J.W. McGarvey wrote: “the great sages, Socrates, Buddha, Confucius and Hillel each groped after this truth but they stated it thus, ‘do not do to others what you would not have them do to you’ thus making it a rule of not doing rather than of doing” (*Fourfold Gospel* 265). Even so, it was a vast improvement over the spirit of conquest and plunder which then seemed to rule the world.

Negativism is contrasted with the golden rule in the “Parable of the Good Samaritan” (Luke 10). There while neither the Levite nor priest did injury to the injured man (an improvement over the deeds of the robbers), their actions fell short. The Samaritan put into positive practice the “golden rule,” doing to the injured man what he would have wished that man to have done to him.

Of this principle Jesus said, “. . . this is the law and the prophets.” Jesus did not mean that the law and the prophets actually recorded these words: they do not. Still the spirit of the law implied such. The Law’s edict, “Love thy neighbor as thyself” implies doing to others what we would wish them to do to us. The Parable of the Good Samaritan was given in response to a lawyer’s question “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29). The prophets implied the same (see Isa. 1:19). How essential it is that we incorporate

this principle into our own lives. Consider three pertinent matters. First, we must deal honestly and fairly with others. A merchant must have profit to buy necessities for his own needs. Yet, it is one thing to make a fair and equitable profit in commerce, quite another to gouge and overprice his wares. This is contrary to the principle Jesus gave.

Prudence and caution requires that we guard our words, certainly to those whom we know may misuse them, but to lie is something else. Who wants someone to cheat or lie to him? No one. Then we should not cheat or lie to others.

Second, in disputed matters, we should give others the “benefit of the doubt.” We should not put the worst possible construction on the actions of others; we must be free from evil surmising (1 Cor. 13:5d; 1 Tim. 6:4). When the daughters of Israel greeted Saul’s returning army from their successful engagement with the Philistines after David had slain Goliath, they honored both Saul and David when they sang “Saul hath slain his thousands and David his ten thousands” (1 Sam. 18:7) Yet this honor caused Saul to eye David “from that day and forward” (1 Sam. 18:9). He put an evil construction on everything David said or did although many times David proved his motives were pure.

Many in Jesus’ nation listened to him with wrong motives. They “hung on his words” that they might either ensnare him in his speech or have something for which they might accuse him (Matt. 22:15). How sad that in controversy among brethren, contention frequently digresses to the point that both parties consider the other an adversary rather than a brother, and view suspiciously each word or deed which originates from the other. In such circumstances, unless all involved return to this vital principle from Jesus, peace and understanding will never exist. If we do not wish others to falsely accuse our intentions, we should not be guilty of trying to read their hearts. God alone can do that. Finally, we must always be willing to help others who need our help. The following is Luke’s record of Jesus’ “golden rule”:

## Warped Views of a Primitive Baptist

Recently, I heard a Primitive Baptist preacher who was a guest on a radio talk show. Primitive Baptists believe, among other things, that God from eternity elected some to be saved and predestinated all the rest to be eternally lost, that is, condemned in hell. Babies, they say, are born dead, spiritually in sin, and when they become adults, they can do nothing for themselves to be saved, that God does it to them. This he expressed on the radio as well as some other things.

I called the radio station and was put on the air to converse with this Baptist preacher. I asked him: “What happened to the millions of babies that have died in times past? Did most of them go to hell, or did some of them, or none of them?” He refused to deal with my questions head-on. He realized his problem, evidently. If any of these babies are condemned to hell because they were not included in the elect, then the preacher makes God a cruel monster. If he had said that all the babies would go to heaven, then why is it that dead babies are elected, but the babies who grow-up, only a few of them are in the number of the elect? The preacher tried to divert attention to another subject. I would interrupt him and bring him back to the subject about the destiny of babies. He became annoyed and told me to “shut my mouth.” Well, the talk host graciously permitted me to continue to prod the preacher for an answer. He never would answer.

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“. . . as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. And if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for even sinners love those that love them. And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same. And if ye lend to them of who ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? even sinners lend to sinners, to receive again as much. But love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing: and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High: for he is kind toward the unthankful and

evil” (Luke 6:31-35)  
P.O. Box 135032, Lufkin, Texas 75915

### A FEW FALSEHOODS REFUTED

Let us notice some of the falsehoods this Baptist preacher espoused on the radio broadcast and then refute them.

**1. Election and predestination.** This Primitive Baptist preacher’s concept of election was contrary to what the Bible teaches. Indeed, the word of God teaches election or predestination, but the predestinated are those who are in Christ Jesus by their own free will. Paul writes, “According as he hath chosen us in him” (Eph. 1:4). We are chosen, elected, predestinated *in* Christ, which constitutes a class or kind of people who are chosen, namely, Christians. In Romans 8:29-30 we observe that the predestinated are called, followed by justification, and then glorification. We are called by the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14), and those who are called are justified, then glorified. The called constitute the predestinated or elect. The Primitive Baptists are wrong!

**2. Babies are born in sin, totally depraved.** This makes sin a genetic problem. Sin is a transgression of the law of God (1 John 3:4), not a transmission through the genes. This Baptist preacher said on the broadcast that sin passes through the father, not the mother, to the child. You can read that in the blank pages of your Bible. Ezekiel wrote that the son does not bear the iniquity of the father (18:20).

So, that leaves the mother, if the theory of inherited sin is true. That throws some theologians into a “tizzy” as to what to do with Jesus who was born of Mary with no earthly father. The Catholics came up with the Immaculate Conception of Mary. They say that she was born without sin, with God intervening, in order that Jesus could be born without inheriting Adam’s sin. What a web false teachers weave for themselves. By the way, in Catholicism, they sprinkle the babies to remove the inherited sin, they think, and those babies who die in sin go to limbo (whatever that is), but not to hell. Limbo is a whole lot better than hell, but not quite as good as heaven.

A couple of passages that are frequently used to try to prove that babies are born in sin are Psalms 51:5 and 58:3. Both passages are what is called poetical hyperboles (cf.



John W. Haley, *Examination of Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible*, 161-162). The idea is that David in Psalm 51:5 and the wicked in Psalm 58:3 began to sin at a very early age, as soon as possible, and to go astray. Babies could not go astray if they are born astray.

Babies are sinless. Jesus said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3; cf. 19:14). Paul stated, "For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (Rom. 7:9). He was alive, spiritually, as a small child, but when he became accountable, he sinned and he died spiritually. Hence, he needed a regeneration (Tit. 3:5). Regeneration implies a degeneration, but Calvinists would have to teach generation, nor regeneration. They say babies are born dead in sin, not alive, so no regeneration could take place.

**3. Man can do nothing to be born again.** This preacher on the radio said that we have no more to do with our spiritual birth than we have with our physical birth. But the physical birth is a result of seed being implanted followed by conception, whereas with the Primitive Baptists the spiritual birth has nothing to do with seed, but rather a direct operation of the Holy Spirit to give life in the sinner. Their concept of the new birth would be more like a virgin birth. Really, the spiritual birth is the fruit of the seed, the word of God, being planted in an honest and good heart (Luke 8:15). We are born of incorruptible seed, by the word of God that lives and abides forever (1 Pet. 1:23). The radio preacher said there is no life in the gospel. Oh, no one is so blind as he who will not see! (cf. Heb. 4:12).

To compare the new birth with a physical birth in every aspect is to say that there is no life before a baby is born since there is no spiritual life before the new birth. So, I suppose abortion would be about like removing a tonsil, an adenoid, a wart, or other living tissue of the body. Pshaw! Too, a newborn baby cannot feed itself. Following the Baptist preacher's analogy all the way through, before and after birth, a new convert would have to have the Lord to feed him in some direct way. Let me suggest that in figures of speech, never extend them beyond what they are intended to teach.

**4. Their name is not in the Bible.** Where do we read of "Primitive Baptist Church"? Does the name suggest that they are the earliest Baptist church? We read in the New Testament of one Baptist, whose name was John. We don't read of Baptists (plural), Baptist church, or Baptist churches. Hence, why Primitive Baptist church? John the Baptist did not establish the church; Jesus did. It is his church (Matt. 16:18). He purchased it with his blood (Acts 20:18; Eph. 5:25). Paul wrote, "The churches of Christ salute you" (Rom. 16:16) not "the Primitive Baptist churches salute you."

Ladies and gentlemen, the Primitive Baptists are wrong about many things. In addition to what we mentioned above, they are wrong about Jesus just shedding his blood for a few, the elect (cf. Heb. 2:9; 1 Tim. 2:6), the free will of man (Josh. 24:15), once saved, always saved (cf. Gal. 5:4), the frequency of the Lord's supper (cf. Acts 20:7), and other things as well. Their doctrines will not stand the test of divine scrutiny.

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87 Ormond Dr., Scottsville, Kentucky 42164

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**"Passion"** continued from front page  
services than people in most other developed countries, particularly in Europe.

### WHO BELIEVES IN GOD?

While 79% of Americans believe there is a God, only 66% are absolutely certain of it. Nine percent do not believe in God and twelve percent aren't sure. And weirdly, not everyone who calls himself a Christian or a Jew actually believes in God.

### WHO WORSHIPS AT A RELIGIOUS SERVICE?

Just over half (55%) attend a religious service a few times a year or more. Thirty-six percent attend once a month or more often, and just twenty-six percent say they attend every week. Forty-one percent of women and thirty-one percent of men attend once a month or more. Protestants (47%) are more likely to go to church once a month or more often than are Roman Catholics (36%). Jews are least likely to go with sixteen percent saying they go to synagogue once a month or more. Church attendance is highest in the mid-west and lowest in the west.

### BELIEF IN GOD BY GEOGRAPHY AND AGE

Eighty-two percent of mid-westerners and southerners believe in God, compared with 75% in the east and west. Our beliefs get stronger as we age. Of those twenty-five to twenty-nine years old, 71% believe in God. That number jumps to 80% for people over forty and hits 83% for those sixty-five and over.

### OTHER FASCINATING FACTS ABOUT WHO BELIEVES IN GOD

Eighty-four percent of women believe in God, compared with seventy-one percent of men. Ninety-one percent of African Americans believe in God, compared with eighty-one percent of Hispanics and seventy-eight percent of whites. Eighty-seven percent of Republicans believe in God, compared with seventy-eight percent of Democrats and seventy-five percent of Independents. Eighty-two percent of those with no college education believe in God, compared with seventy-three percent who went to college.

## OUR PASSION?

I noticed on the marquees of many of the denominations in our small community that the sermon was going to be “His Passion For Us.” While I have not heard any of the lessons, the title indicates the strong desire that God has for his creation. God’s desire for our salvation was such that he gave his only begotten Son (John 3:16). Again, I am thankful when man is made conscious of the great love of God and his passion for his creation.

May I suggest that merely being made aware of his great love is not enough. God wanted that “message” — that “good news” conveyed to the lost by those who are filled with a passion for God. “Go ye therefore and teach” (Matt. 28:19). “Go ye into all the world and preach” (Mark 16:16).

I have no doubt about God’s passion for man. However, such great love as this demands a “real” and lasting response. “We love Him, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). How will we respond to his love? To what degree? To what extent will it produce fruits in our lives?

“If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). The question I am raising is a matter of passion for God. By passion, I mean our “intense emotional drive or excitement, specifically our love.” There is a vast difference in loving the Lord thy God with *all the heart and with all the soul and with all the mind and with all the strength* (Mark 12:30) and the “belief in God” reflected in these statistics.

When was the last time you shared your passion for God with a lost soul?

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## “Fellowship” continued from page 2

error, without regard to what they believe about it.

Our age has been taught that one should not be judgmental of others. Americans live in a pluralistic society and have a pluralistic view of religion. Pluralism teaches a tolerance of others, but it is not the old view of tolerance; it is a new tolerance. The old view of “tolerance” was a view that one should not forcefully compel another to accept his religion. In the intolerance of that age, those who had the most might persecuted those who were unorthodox. This led to the Spanish Inquisition and other forms of religious persecution. The American experiment was to allow freedom of religion. In this view, one could practice whatever religion he wished without fear of persecution. All of us believe in this concept of tolerance.

However, a new understanding of tolerance is emerging. In this view, tolerance is equivalent to approval. If

one speaks out against homosexuality or abortion, calling it sinful behavior, he is judged to be intolerant. Is that because he wishes to persecute those who are practicing homosexuality or abortion? No! It is because he labels that conduct as sinful. A preacher who expresses his view that such conduct is sinful is judged to be “intolerant.” Indeed, some who are “tolerant” in the pluralistic sense are ready to categorize preaching that calls homosexuality a “sin” as “hate speech” and persecute those who so preach!

Without regard to what our society does, the Christian believes in the revelation he has received from God. That revelation announces that those who practice sin cannot maintain an on-going and never-ending fellowship with God. That revelation addressed the same issues in the first century and warned about the danger of being deceived into thinking that one could maintain a fellowship with God will continue the practice of sin. Paul wrote,

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).

## CONCLUSION

Oprah may go on national television and preach her “gospel according to Oprah,” in which she is not ashamed to speak openly of her live-in lover named Steadman, but that does not change the plain revelation of God. John, the Apostle of love, said it best, “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth” (1 John 1:6). The choice is simple: Do you believe John or Oprah?

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# Preacher Needed

be discussed privately. If you are interested, please contact by e-mail: stone.fam@prodigy.net, or voice mail (210) 674-4188, or mail: Church of Christ in Valley-Hi, 4302 SW Loop 41, San Antonio, TX 78227. Lee Thomas.

San Antonio, Texas: The church of Christ in Valley-Hi in San Antonio is looking for a preacher whose first love is teaching the lost and who is willing to support the members in their efforts to convert their neighbors. The preacher should also be interested in "working the community" for prospective in-home classes. Monetary support, working conditions, etc. will



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# First Annual Truth Magazine Lectures

## The Renewing of Your Mind

July 12-15, 2004

Bowling Green, Kentucky — Convention Center

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

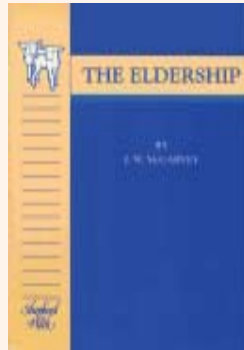
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
8:00 - 8:50	Scientific Foreknowledge and the Bible (Larry Dickens)	House Churches (Harry Osborne)	Testifying in the Worship Assembly (Bobby Graham)
9:00 - 9:50	Renewed View of Morals (Aaron Erhardt)	Renewed View of the Church (Larry Hafley)	Renewed View of Jesus (John Isaac Edwards)
10:00 - 10:50	Renewed View of Sexual Morals (Lewis Willis)	Renewed View of Unity (Russell Dunaway)	Renewed View of Biblical Interpretation (Marc Gibson)
11:00 - 11:50	Renewed View of Marriage (Brett Hogland)	Renewed Commitment to Balanced Preaching (Ron Halbrook)	Renewed View of Worship (Jason Longstreth)
<b>Lunch Break</b>			
<b>Ladies Classes</b>			
1:30 - 2:20	Material available for Children's Classes (Vernita Goodall)	A Biblical View of Femininity (Anne Stevens)	Issues for a Preacher/Elder's Wife (Bobby Adams)
<b>Auditorium</b>			
1:30 - 2:20	Evangelism in Canada (Brian Sullivan)	Evangelism in India (John Humphries)	Evangelism in Nigeria (Karl Diestelkamp)
2:30 - 4:00	Open Forum: No Assigned Topic	Open Forum: Role of Government in Divorce/Remarriage (Mental Divorce): Ron Halbrook, Harry Osborne, Donnie Rader, Greg Gwin	Open Forum: Sunday Evening Communion (Al Diestelkamp, Dick Blackford)
<b>Singing: 7:00 - 7:30 Led by R.J. Stevens</b>			
"The Renewing of Your Mind" (Rom. 12:1-2) (Mike Willis)	Renewed View of Parental Discipline (Weldon Warnock)	Renewed Commitment to Evangelism (Connie W. Adams). This service will begin at 8:45 p.m.	Recommitment to Biblical Authority (Bill Cavender)



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