

Back To Basics

Volume 5

SEPTEMBER 2007

Number 9

A Monthly Journal Dedicated To Teaching First Principles

AND JESUS LOOKED AROUND

Johnie Edwards

Jesus was concerned about the things which went on around Him. Mark 11:11 states, "And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked around about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out into Bethany with the twelve." We take a look at some things Jesus saw when He looked around.

1) **A MOVED CITY.** "And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?" (Mt. 21:10). Bible cities were often stirred when Jesus visited or when gospel preaching was done like in Acts 8:5, 8.

2) **MONEY CHANGERS.** Jesus saw "money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves" in the temple (Mt. 21:12-13). They were misusing the temple and the Lord "overthrew the tables and cast out, and said, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Mt. 21:13). The Lord's house today must not be misused.

3) **THE BLIND AND THE LAME.** "And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them" (Mt. 21:14). No wonder Jesus is called "the great physician" in song. Also note Matthew 9:12. We have a

physician who can heal all of our sin diseases, if we will obey him!

4) **THOSE WHO SHOULD HAVE BEEN BIBLE READERS.** Jesus asked, "Yea have ye never read?" (Mt. 21:16). The Lord expects us to be readers of His word. "Blessed is he that readeth..." (Rev. 1:3). Paul taught young Timothy, "Till I come, give attendance to reading..." (1 Tim. 4:13).

5) **A BARREN FIG TREE.** "And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves, only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away" (Mt. 21:19). The Lord is not pleased unless we are fruit producers. "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life: and he that winneth souls is wise" (Prov. 11:30).

6) **SHEEP WITHOUT SHEPHERDS.** "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (Mt. 9:36). It doesn't have to be that way!

What would Jesus see today if He came to our city and looked around?

SOUL WINNING IN WICHITA, KANSAS

John Isaac Edwards



Most churches are not growing very much these days. Perhaps the reason is there is not much “soul winning” going on! We have put together an eight-lesson study on Soul Winning with a Soul Winning Tool Kit that is designed to motivate every member to be a soul winner. This material has been taught with much success in many parts of the country and in other countries as well.

Our most recent trip was to Wichita, Kansas, where, during the days of July 13-15, granddad and I together presented this material to the Westside church of Christ in a special soul winning study. Friday at 7 p.m. both of us spoke on lessons related to personal evangelism. Saturday morning we met from 9 a.m. to noon, with an hour lunch break, and

then from 1 to 4 p.m. studying how to be soul winners with a soul winning tool kit provided each one. We both spoke Saturday at 7 p.m. and during the services on Sunday. The meeting was well attended with great interest shown in soul winning.

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Back To Basics, published by Edwards Publishers, is a 16-page monthly journal dedicated to teaching first principles. www.bcktobscs.com

Subscription Information:

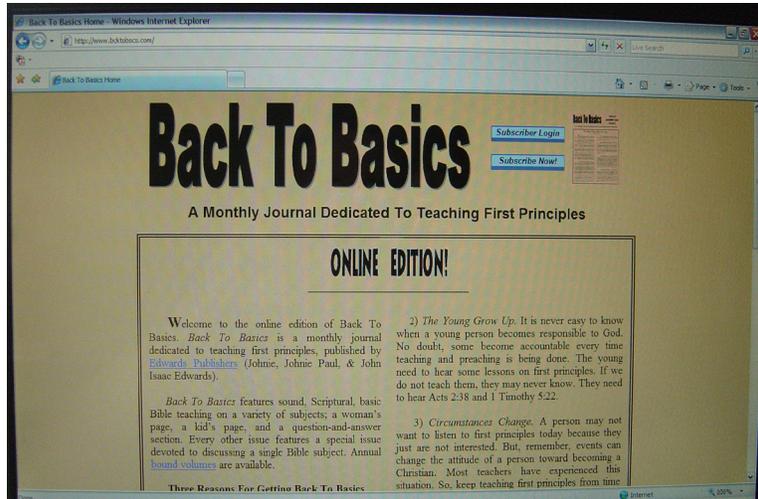
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John Isaac Edwards



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AND WOMEN RULE OVER THEM

Melba Edwards

Isaiah 3:12 reads, “As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them.” From this passage, much of Judah and Israel’s downfall was in leadership. Here the Scriptures reveal that women ruled over them. In a previous writing, we learned that Athaliah reigned over the land after her son, Ahaziah, died (2 Ki. 11:1-3). Let’s see what the Bible reveals about women ruling.

1) THE MAN IS TO RULE OVER THE WOMAN. “Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Gen. 3:16). This was the woman’s punishment for eating the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden. The New Testament reminds us, “For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression.” Also, “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3). God, from the very beginning, did not want the woman to rule the home. Someone has to be in charge. God put man in that position. We must respect God’s law of rule in the home. Many problems arise when we do not follow God’s law. We don’t want this to be the downfall of our home.

2) THE MAN IS TO RULE HIS CHILDREN. One of the reasons Judah and Israel erred was the fact that women ruled over them.

Athaliah was a prime example when she counseled her son, Ahaziah, to do wickedly (2 Chr. 22:3). 2 Chronicles 24:7 tells us, “For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the house of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of the Lord did they bestow upon Baalim.” Elders and deacons are to rule their houses well (1 Tim. 3:5, 12). “Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Let’s follow God’s law and let the man rule his children.

3) IN THE CHURCH, THE ELDERS AND DEACONS ARE TO BE MEN. We can read about the qualifications of elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 and deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. In both cases, the Scriptures are clear they must be men! Hebrews 13:17 reads, “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls...” Some are changing God’s law in this area. We also hear of women preachers. Nowhere in the Bible can we find a woman preacher. In 1 Timothy 2:12 we learn, “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” We will err like Israel and Judah of old if we allow women to rule the Lord’s church. This just cannot be allowed!

Women have a role in God’s plan, but it does not include ruling. We need to be content with God’s law of who is to rule which He reveals so clearly and be obedient to it.

EXAMPLE AND INFLUENCE

David McPherson

The Bible has much to say about the Christian's example and influence. For us to be the Lord's disciples indeed, we must heed and apply these truths. Consider the following:

1) **1 TIMOTHY 4:12:** "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity." It is our responsibility, just as it was Timothy's, to live a life consistent with the name we wear. Those of us who are called "Christians" are to act like our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Others should be able to look to us at all times and know what a child of God is.

2) **MATTHEW 18:6:** "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Jesus here is showing the seriousness of an evil influence upon those who are young in the faith. Shame on older Christians who lead others astray. Can we not hate sin enough to leave it behind? Think not only of its damage to you, but of your damage toward others.

3) **GALATIANS 2:20:** "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." Certainly, "to God be the glory," but good for Paul. He, unlike many brethren today, understood that Christ was to live in him. The new life in Christ is no longer about me, but rather the One who died for me. What would Jesus do? If He wouldn't do the things you do, then He's not living in you. A

life without Christ is a life with no hope. It leads to hell, not heaven.

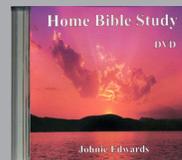
4) **1 CORINTHIANS 11:1:** "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." Paul did not make this plea to his brethren out of some kind of sick arrogance. Rather, it was out of a disciplined life, patterned after the Lord's, that he called upon others to "imitate me." What if your brethren imitated you? Would there be any need for four church services per week? How many combined hours of prayer and Bible study would we all engage in each month? Would anyone be edified?

Brethren, these are serious concerns that must not be taken lightly. God help us to grow, do better, humbly submit, and sacrifice ourselves (Rom. 12:1) for the cause of Christ. No matter how insignificant we may feel, we all have influence. Each of us is setting an example every day. Let us seek to be the salt of the earth and to shine as lights in this world of darkness (Mt. 5:13-16; Phil. 2:15).

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SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN CHRIST

Jeremy Sweets

Paul writes in the book of Ephesians that every spiritual blessing is found in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3). As Christians, we have blessings immeasurable due to the goodness of our heavenly Father. Notice the following blessings identified in Ephesians 1.

1) **ELECTION (v. 4).** We have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. God has chosen the avenue of our salvation – Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). Furthermore, God has established the character of those who will be saved in Christ. They should be holy and blameless.

2) **ADOPTION (v. 5).** God has also predestined us to adoption as sons. Close fellowship has always been God’s desire for us. Once separated from God, because of our rebellion and sin, we can now enjoy the special relationship of children (1 Jn. 3: 1).

3) **GRACE (vv. 6-7).** In Christ, we can enjoy the riches of His grace which He has given in abundance. God’s favor and salvation were extended to us even though we were undeserving (Rom. 5:6-8).

4) **REDEMPTION (v. 7).** Jesus Christ paid the price for our iniquity. He died on the cross so that we could be ransomed from our sin (1 Tim. 2:5-6). Because of Jesus, our sin is forgiven and no longer charged to our account.

5) **REVELATION (v. 9).** According to His kindness, God has made known to us the message of salvation in Jesus. The gospel is a message of glad tidings and good news, and it should be eagerly received. God’s revelation further provides

us with instruction for avoiding the dangers of sin and living a godly life (1 Pet. 1:14-16; 2 Pet. 1:3).

6) **ADMINISTRATION (v. 10).** God has designed an administration or plan of delivering salvation to mankind. This plan reached its culmination in Jesus, as He brought together God’s design from the beginning, fulfilling the Scriptures and prophecy (Eph. 3:11).

7) **INHERITANCE (v. 11).** Jesus’ sacrifice allows us to experience renewed fellowship as children of God. An inheritance has been provided for the faithful children of God, consisting of a future home in heaven (1 Pet. 1:3-4).

8) **ASSURANCE (v. 13).** After hearing and obeying the gospel message of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit was given to the first century Christians as a down payment or guarantee of their future inheritance. We enjoy the benefits of that provision today through the revealed word (Eph. 3:3-5; 1 Cor. 2:10). God’s promise is certain and sure, as evidenced by the giving of the Holy Spirit.

The benefits of being in Christ are tremendous. A relationship with Christ begins when a repentant sinner confesses faith in Christ, commits his life to God and is baptized into Christ (Jn. 8:24; Acts 17:30; Rom. 10:9-10; Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Pet. 3:21). Have you done what is necessary to take advantage of the benefits found in Christ? If not, there is no better time than today (2 Cor. 6:2).

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THE OX AND THE DONKEY

Norm Chastain

In Isaiah chapter one, we read of Isaiah's vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of certain kings of Judah:

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the Lord has spoken: "I have nourished and brought up children, And they have rebelled against Me;

3 The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; But Israel does not know, My people do not consider."

1) THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL ARE PROVIDED TWO REAL LIFE ILLUSTRATIONS. "The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib." God then provides a contrast: "But Israel does not know, My people do not consider." Even though the people of Israel would recognize these two illustrations, they did not recognize some basic facts. One, they did not know that the Lord God was their master. Two, they did not consider that God daily provided for them. God said that Israel was in rebellion to Him.

2) IF YOU ARE NOT A CHRISTIAN, DO YOU RECOGNIZE SOME BASIC FACTS? After all, the ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib. Do you know that there is a God in heaven who created the world and you? Do you know that He daily provides for you and that He sent His Son to die for your sins? The writer in Hebrews 11:6 says that "without faith it is impossible to please" God. In Acts 17:24-26, Paul tells the people of Athens that God "made the world," that He had made "every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth." John 3:16 tells us, "For God so loved the world that

He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." In Acts 2:37-38, when Peter preached Jesus, the Son of God, to the Jews, they asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Therefore, if you are not a Christian, believe in God. Believe that He created the world and you. Believe that He sent His Son to die for your sins. Act upon your faith in God and Jesus Christ by repenting of your sins and being baptized for the remission of those sins.

3) IF YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN, DO YOU RECOGNIZE SOME BASIC FACTS? After all, the ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib. Do you remember that there is a God in heaven who created the world and you? Do you remember that He daily provides for you and that He sent His Son to die for your sins? In 2 Corinthians 5:9-10, Paul says that you must make it your aim "to be well pleasing" to God, because "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." Therefore, as a Christian, make it your daily aim to please God and to live for Christ.

Concerning all of us, may God not say, "The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; But these people do not know, these people do not consider." Otherwise, like Israel of old, we will be in rebellion to the God of heaven.

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THE TEST OF A PROPHET

Steve Monts

In the Bible, we see a prophet is the mouth of God (Ex. 4:16; 7:1, Aaron was called Moses' prophet for he was his mouth). A prophet did not claim his message was his own and often prefaced his message with, "Thus saith the Lord." Prophets were an integral part of revealing God's will. Yet, God knew that some would rise up claiming to be prophets when in fact they were not. Thus, God devised a way to know who was a prophet and who was not.

1) **TEST OF A PROPHET.** Deuteronomy 18:20-22 says when one supposes to speak for the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass then the Lord has not spoken. Galatians 1:6-9 adds that when anyone (including an angel or apostle) speaks a different gospel that a curse rests upon him. These two passages say we can test the predictions made by supposed prophets and their words if in anyway they contradict what is already revealed (the Bible).

2) **JOSEPH SMITH FAILS THE TEST OF A PROPHET BECAUSE...**

■ *His predictions failed.* In *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 84, Joseph Smith prophesied that New Jerusalem and a Mormon temple was to be built in Zion, Missouri by his generation and that he would dedicate it with his own hand. Yet, Mormons were run out of Missouri and a temple was never built during Smith's life, nor by his contemporary generation. In *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 111, Joseph Smith prophesied that Salem, Massachusetts would be given to the Mormons and in it they would find great treasure to pay all their debts. The Mormons never received Salem, nor any treasure.

■ *His book is full of errors.* He writes of horses, oxen, and cows as native to North America (1 Nephi 18:25). Yet, they were all introduced by European settlers after Columbus. He has Jesus saying, "I am the alpha and omega" in the book of Mormon. Those are Greek terms, but the book of Mormon supposedly came to the Native American Indians who would not have known Greek. Oops. It looks like Joseph Smith did a little borrowing from the Bible and a little lying about the Indians.

■ *His book is full of changes.* I have in my possession a book entitled "The 3,913 changes made to the Book of Mormon." If Joseph Smith truly was a prophet from God, why would there need to be any changes? God's word does not change. There have been no changes to the Bible. Mormons claim their book is the most accurate translation, yet, as time goes on, they keep "updating" their book.

■ *The gift of prophecy ended long before Joseph Smith.* Joseph Smith lived in the 1800's; yet the Bible tells us that when God's word was complete, prophesy would end (1 Cor. 13:8). The word of God came to completion at the end of the 1st century. Jude wrote of "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). And, when John laid down his pen, he closed the Scriptures with a warning not to add to it nor take from it (Rev. 22:18-19). Yet we are told to believe that nearly 1,700 years later a man came along and added more to it! Sorry Sir, just a little bit too late! Joseph Smith fails the test of a prophet and passes the test of a false prophet (Matt. 7:15-20).

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THE PATRIARCHS: ABRAHAM (PART 5)

John R. Gentry

After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham journeyed from the oaks of Mamre (Gen. 18:1) toward the territory of the Negev (i.e., the desert, or the south) and sojourned in Gerar (Gen. 20:1). While here Abraham encountered Abimelech, king of Gerar, and the son of promise, Isaac, was born.

1) **ABRAHAM'S TREACHERY.** Upon arriving in Gerar, Abraham told Abimelech that Sarah was his sister; therefore, the king sent and took her to be his wife (Gen. 20:2). Abraham, again fearing for his life (v. 11; 12:10-20), deliberately deceived the king. While it was true that Sarah and Abraham had the same father (v. 12), and were therefore brother and sister, they caused Abimelech to believe that which was false, that they were not husband and wife. God abhors deceit (Ps. 5:6). Jesus said it is evil and defiles a person (Mk. 7:20-23). We must never be guilty of telling only part of the truth in order to lead someone to believe something that is false! Because Abimelech took Sarah as a wife, God closed the wombs of his house and was going to take his life (vv. 18, 3, 7). God told him to ask Abraham to pray that he might live and his family be healed (v. 7). Abraham prayed and they were healed (v. 17). God answers prayers and by His power people are healed (Jas. 5:16-18).

2) **THE BIRTH OF ISAAC.** God kept his promise and visited Sarah; she conceived and gave birth to Isaac (Gen. 21:1-3; Heb. 11:11). Though Abraham and Sarah were passed child-bearing age, "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise" (2 Pet. 3:9). It had been at least 25 years since God had made the promises to Abra-

ham (Gen. 12:1, 4; 18:5). The son of promise was born and another chapter in the scheme of redemption began to unfold.

3) **HAGAR AND ISHMAEL.** After a few years, Isaac was weaned and Ishmael began to mock and make fun of Isaac (Gen. 21:8-9). Seeing this, Sarah said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son..." (v. 10). Paul used this passage to describe the differences between being a slave to the old law and being free under Christ, as well as the persecution of Christians by those Jews who remained slaves to the old law (Gal. 4:21-31). Abraham was very displeased with sending his son away, but the Lord assured him that he would take care of him because he was his son (vv. 11-13). So Abraham sent them away (v. 14). Their water ran out and Hagar assumed they were going to die (vv. 15-16). However, as God promised, He provided for them (vv. 17-19). Ishmael grew and produced a great nation (Gen. 21:18, 20-21; 25:12-18).

4) **TREATY WITH ABIMELECH.** Abimelech desired that Abraham swear to deal kindly with him (vv. 22-24). First, Abraham desired to settle a dispute over a well. With seven ewe lambs serving as a witness, they settled the matter and swore an oath. Abraham named the place Beersheba (vv. 25-32). There he planted a tamarisk tree and called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God (v. 33). "And Abraham sojourned many days in the land of the Philistines" (v. 34).

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THE PATRIARCHS: ABRAHAM (PART 6)

David Eldridge

The faith of the patriarch Abraham is seen in a number of events recorded about his life. Perhaps the greatest example of his faith is seen in the sacrifice of Isaac.

1) **ABRAHAM COMMANDED TO OFFER ISAAC.** The Lord instructed Abraham, “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of” (Gen. 22:2). Remember Abraham was told, “Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him” (Gen. 17:19). God tested Abraham by asking him to offer the son of his old age, the son of promise.

2) **ABRAHAM’S TRUSTING FAITH.** As an obedient servant of the Lord, Abraham rose up early in the morning. Taking two of his servants, he went to sacrifice his son Isaac. Once they got to the place of which God had told him, we see Abraham’s trust in the Lord demonstrated. Though he was told that Isaac was to be offered as a burnt offering, Abraham told his servants, “...I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you” (Gen. 22:5). Also, when Isaac asked where the lamb was for the offering, Abraham told him, “My son, God will provide himself a lamb for burnt offering” (Gen. 22:8). Of Abraham’s trusting faith, the Hebrew writer said that by his faith Abraham was “Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure” (Heb. 11:19). Abraham trusted that God would fulfill His promises.

3) **ABRAHAM OFFERS ISAAC.** “And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son” (Gen. 22:9-10). Though the hand of Abraham was stayed and the life of Isaac was spared, in the eyes of God it was as if Abraham had offered his only begotten son. It is recorded in the New Testament, “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son” (Heb. 11:17). No wonder Abraham is called “the friend of God” as he was willing to do that which God would do some 2,000 years later at Calvary.

4) **THE LORD WILL PROVIDE.** Abraham was told by the angel of the Lord, “Lay not thine hand upon the lad...And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son” (Gen. 22:12-13). “And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh...” (Gen. 22:14). *Jehovah-jireh* means that Jehovah will provide. Even as the Lord had provided the ram in the thicket to be offered in the stead of Isaac, for us He has provided His only begotten Son to be offered in our stead. Thus, John the baptist says of Jesus, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29). God is still Jehovah-jireh, providing for the needs of His people.

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THE PATRIARCHS: ABRAHAM (PART 7)

Shane Williams

In Genesis 24, Abraham's desire is to find a suitable bride for his son Isaac. An appropriate wife for Isaac was not about convenience, but was worth great sacrifice.

1) **ABRAHAM AND HIS SERVANT.** Abraham entrusted his oldest and most loyal servant with the task of bringing back a wife for Isaac. He made the servant swear by the Lord that he would bring this wife from Abraham's country and not from the daughters of the Canaanites. Isaac would soon understand just how important this was, as Esau's Hittite wives brought him much grief (Gen. 26:34-35).

2) **THE SERVANT'S CONCERNS.** Abraham's servant had some concerns about how he would accomplish this great task. What if the woman wouldn't come back with him? Should he take Isaac there? Abraham told his servant not to take Isaac to this land, but that the Lord would send His angel before the servant into the land. However, if the woman was not willing to follow the servant back, he would then be free from the oath he had sworn.

3) **REBEKAH IS CHOSEN.** While at the well outside the city of Nahor, the servant prayed to God. He prayed to know who the Lord had chosen for Isaac based upon her response to his question (Gen. 24:12-14). Rebekah was making her way to the well, even before he was done speaking. The response the servant was praying to God about was precisely what Rebekah said in answer to his question. When the servant was sure that Rebekah was the choice, he bowed down low and worshipped the Lord (Gen. 24:26-27).

4) **REBEKAH'S QUALITIES.** The Scriptures describe Rebekah as "very beautiful" and had had no relations with a man (Gen. 24:16). It is clear that she was kind and considerate, as she "quickly" lowered her jar to give the servant a drink (Gen. 24:18). She then "ran back to the well" to get water for all the servant's camels.

5) **"THIS IS FROM THE LORD."** The servant of Abraham was unwilling to eat until he had told the household of his business. He relayed everything that had happened from Abraham's wealth to the choosing of Rebekah at the well (Gen. 24:34-49). He wanted to know if the household would deal kindly and truly with his master Abraham. Laban and Bethuel responded by saying, "This is from the Lord." They then told him that Rebekah would go with him and would be the wife of his master's son, as the Lord has spoken (Gen. 24:51).

6) **ISAAC AND REBEKAH'S MEETING.** Isaac saw the camels coming, as he was in the field. Rebekah inquired of the servant to find out who was walking to meet them. The servant told Isaac all that he had done. Isaac brought her into his mother's tent, who was deceased. The text tells us that she became his wife and he loved her. Rebekah was a comfort to Isaac with his mother's passing.

After Abraham died, God blessed his son Isaac (Gen. 25:11). He was the one through whom God's covenant with Abraham would continue (Gen. 17:21).

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CAN ONE RIGHTFULLY DIVORCE FOR ANY CAUSE?

David Eldridge

God's divine institution of the home is constantly under attack by the media, movies, denominations, as well as some brethren. The evidence of this barrage is seen in the high number of divorces recorded in this country every year. The common thinking in the world today is that one can divorce their spouse for just any reason. Just about anything is cited by many as being justifiable grounds for divorce, such as if she burnt the toast, if he doesn't put his dirty clothes in the laundry basket, if one person in the marriage doesn't handle money well, or if we fuss too much. There are even some in the church who are attempting to teach that one can divorce for any reason, though they may still state the truth on who may remarry.

Is this thinking not at the very heart of the question asked of Jesus in Matthew 19:3? There the record states, "The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?'" Instead of considering purely emotional arguments or listening to the "wisdom of men," let us look to the answer of the One who alone has "the words of eternal life" (Jn. 6:68). In the verses that follow this question of the Pharisees (Mt. 19:3-9), Jesus gives the answer three times. Many simply look at these verses to see who may remarry once they are divorced, but there is also a need to look at the subject that is directly being addressed — what can one divorce for and be right with God? Let us listen carefully to the clear answers of Jesus to this question, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?"

1) **No!** Jesus answered them, "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and

shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?" (Mt. 19:4-5). The fact that they are no longer two, but bound together by God as one flesh shows that it is not lawful to divorce your spouse for any cause. It is also interesting to note that Jesus asks them, "Have ye not read?" The reason there is so much misunderstanding on this subject is that people either have not read, or have chosen to simply disregard, what the Lord has commanded on this subject. By stating the fact that husband and wife are one flesh, Jesus answers the question may one divorce for any reason. The Lord's first answer to this question — NO!

2) **No!** We find Jesus' second answer in the statement, "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mt. 19:6). The statement, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" leaves no option — it is a command. By stating that a man and woman are God-joined in marriage, and that man is not to separate that bond, Jesus again answers the question may one divorce for any reason. Our Savior's answer — NO!

3) **No!** In response to these answers of Jesus, the Pharisees asked, "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away" (Mt. 19:7). Again the Lord reveals the mind of God on this matter as He proclaims, "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so" (Mt. 19:8). The Pharisees attempted to appeal to the law of Moses. However, Jesus goes to that which was in the mind of God from the very institution of the marriage relationship. In saying, "but from the beginning it was

not so,” Jesus is stating God’s stand from the very beginning on this issue — marriage is to be one man and one woman for life. When God joined Adam and Eve as husband and wife in the garden of Eden, God never intended for them, nor their descendants, to divorce and separate this relationship. What is Jesus’ third answer to the question, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” Once again, His answer is a resounding “NO!”

The only honorable end to a marriage is death (Rom. 7:1-3). Can one divorce for just any

cause? No, No, No! One can only divorce without coming under the condemnation of God if they are the innocent party, having a spouse that has been unfaithful (Mt. 19:9). If one has divorced for any cause other than fornication, how can they be forgiven of this sin? As with any other sin, they must repent. Repentance would dictate that they attempt reconciliation to the one whom they had no right to divorce, and, if this is impossible, that they remain unmarried.

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Every second - \$3,075.64 is being spent on pornography

Every second - 28,258 Internet users are viewing pornography

Every second - 372 Internet users are typing adult search terms into search engines

Every 39 minutes: a new pornographic video is being created in the United States

The pornography industry is larger than the revenues of the top technology companies combined: Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay, Yahoo!, Apple, Netflix and EarthLink

US porn revenue exceeds the combined revenues of ABC, CBS, and NBC

There are 4.2 million pornographic websites (12% of total websites)

42.7% of Internet users view porn

Average age of first Internet exposure to pornography: 11-years-old

Average daily pornographic e-mails/user: 4.5 per Internet User

90% of 8-16 year olds have viewed porn online (most while doing homework)

Kids Activity Page

Aleisha Edwards

The Letter "C"

Fill in the blanks. All answers begin with the letter "c."

1. _____ rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him (Gen. 4:1).
2. Jesus was crucified at the place called _____ (Lk. 23:33).
3. "I _____ do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).
4. Jesus is the _____ of our salvation (Heb. 2:10).
5. If our body is not in subjection, we will be a _____ (1 Cor. 9:27).
6. Another name for Simon Peter is _____ (Jn. 1:42).
7. Goliath was a _____ of the Philistines (1 Sam. 17:4).
8. There appeared a _____ of fire when Elijah went up into heaven (2 Ki. 2:11).
9. Without _____ we are nothing (1 Cor. 13:2).
10. "I believe that Jesus _____ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37).
11. The disciples were called _____ first at Antioch (Acts 11:26).
12. The Lord added to the _____ daily (Acts 2:47).
13. A man is to leave his father and mother and _____ to his wife (Gen. 2:24).
14. Jesus invites us to _____ unto Him (Mt. 11:28).
15. Blessed are they that do his _____ (Rev. 22:14).

**"Suffer the little children to come unto me,
and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14).**

MERCY AND FORGIVENESS

Jason T. Leber

Is it possible that some of the undesirable attributes in Romans 1 could be overlooked because they are considered to be characteristics of a reprobate? A reprobate mind is a rejected mind by God; thus could be considered by some to be only those not in the “body of Christ.” However, we should be concerned with judging the “house of God” first (2 Pet. 4:17; 1 Cor. 5:12). With this in mind, let us examine the undesirable attributes: unmerciful and unforgiving (Rom. 1:31). Could this be you? Do you ever have this attitude? Sad to say, many Christians cannot get along. And I am not talking about matters of truth. Some Christians can become like the Pharisees by putting a heavy burden on someone they have no right to (Mt. 23:4). And two of these burdens are being unmerciful and unforgiving. The cliché, can we all just get along, is not the plea of this article; however, it is for the reader and writer to introspectively look at self in the “mirror of God’s word” (Jas. 1:23-24) concerning these two sinful attitudes.

Everyone knows that God expects us to be like Him when it comes to forgiveness (Mt. 6:14). Furthermore, we are to forgive a brother when he repents (Lk. 17:3-4). This being the case because we are to be perfect like God (Mt. 5:48). Yet, with these divine obligations being established by God’s word, I believe we understand them; however, it is the doing not the hearing we have a problem with! Jesus told the Pharisees they were leaving the weightier matters undone which were justice, mercy, and faith. Do you ever leave these undone? Notice the Pharisees were not wrong in teaching “pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin,” but they were leaving something undone (Mt. 23:23)! Let us never leave mercy and forgiveness undone. They are given freely by God to those who confess and repent (1 Jn. 1:8-10). We should do the same.

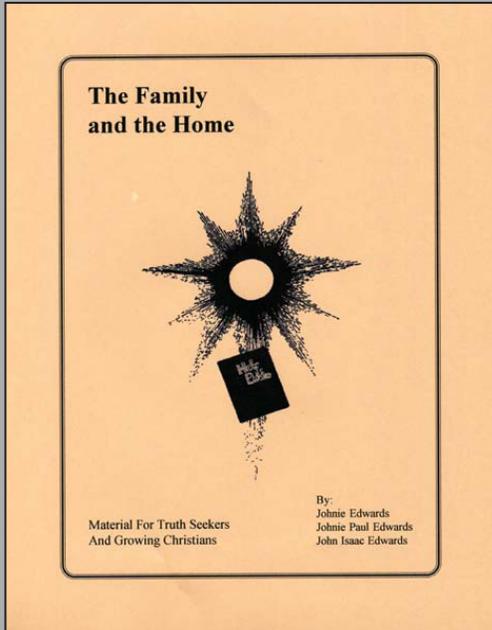
It seems as though unforgiveness and gossip are closely related. Perhaps they are cousins. I do not pen this with a smile; however, I write in disgust. If you do not approach your brother who has sinned against you but run-around telling everyone else about it you are gossiping. Furthermore, if they repent you need not discuss it anymore. Read Luke 17:3-4 again. The obligation is two-fold. When one sins against you then rebuke him. If he does not listen, move to the next step in Matthew 18:15-17 and continue until the matter is resolved. If one sins against you seven times in a day and repents seven times in day you must forgive (Lk. 17:4).

Longsuffering, mercy, and forgiveness are cousins as well. These should bring joy to the heart of every man knowing that God was merciful to send His Son to die for our sins (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 2:2). Seven times in a day may seem like too much to forgive; but what about seventy times seven? God will continue to forgive us as long as we do not willfully sin (Heb. 10:26). Furthermore, we must grow in His grace and knowledge (2 Pet. 3:18). Think about how many times you have sinned when someone comes asking you for forgiveness (Mt. 18:22-35). If you do not forgive, God will not forgive you! Also, think about the attitude Jesus had when He was on the cross. He said, “Father forgive them they know not what they do” (Lk. 23:34). Of course, He was not asking for unconditional forgiveness yet give them the time to repent. Let us be merciful, not self-righteous like the Pharisees (Lk. 18:9-14). Let us be longsuffering like our Father in heaven with the desire that “all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). A merciful attitude will help one to be longsuffering and to forgive. Let us strive to be like Christ!

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