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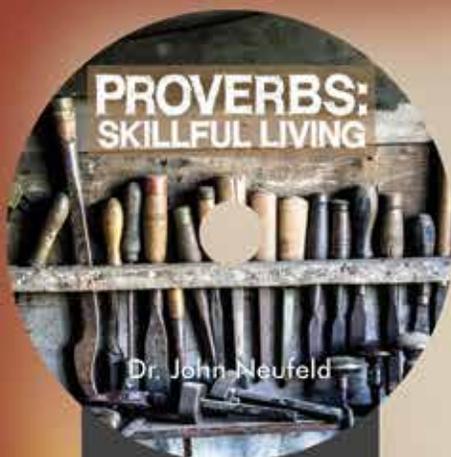
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song; play skillfully
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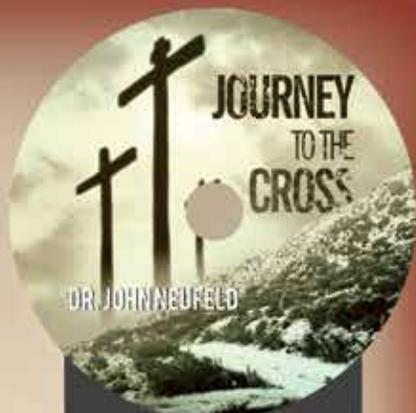
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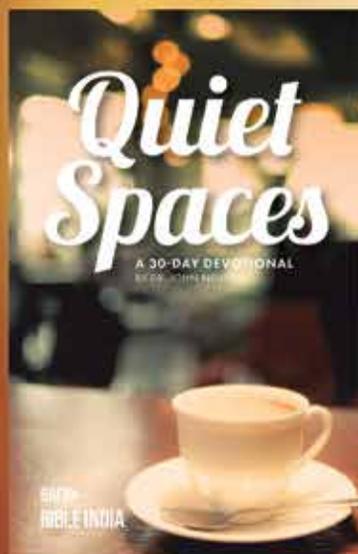
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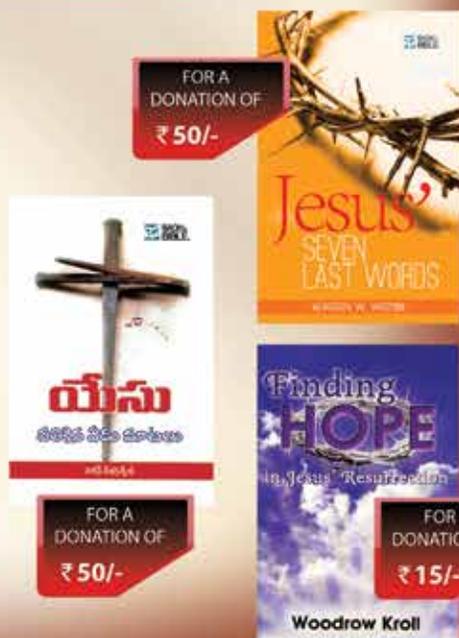
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Designed for your need...

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Rom. 12:1-2

It is our endeavor not only to encourage each one of us to engage with the Holy Scriptures but also to evidence our convictions based on the Bible in our day to day activities. We are living in a world that is so tempting and demanding that we either fit in to its mould or make a conscious choice to stand up for the Truth and make a difference. We are called to live a life of obedience to God's word as we demonstrate our commitment and faith in our Lord Jesus.

Hope you have received the 2017 calendar entitled "Defining Moments" reflecting the 500 years of Reformation. Our prayer is that you will make 2017 a year of returning back to the Bible. Bro.R.Stanley's powerful book "Here I Stand" challenges the readers to think and act in the light of Reformation. He carefully brings out stories from Bible and early church history on how God raised up people who stood for the truth against all odds. This book is sent free to any one upon request. Make sure you ask for your personal copy.

Dr. John in "PRECIOUSNESS OF TIME" clarifies on why many resolutions fail. Time is a scarce commodity and it is precious. Once time is spent, it is gone. He points out on the importance of how we spend our time since that is the only one which cannot be earned again.

Woodrow Kroll explores on how money affects people, Money not only changes hands, it changes people. It can be a curse or a blessing depending on our attitude toward it and our use of it. Martin Luther says 'Every Christian needs two conversions - one for his soul other for his pocket!'

As we meditate on the 'The Passion of Christ and the events surrounding it' we understand that Jesus endured all of the punishment, brutality and torture for us. He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. His suffering should help us to confess our transgressions and iniquities to Him. Lord, help us to understand that love more fully to express that love to others.

We thank you for praying for us and appreciate all those who could join us for the 'Bible Teaching Conference on Expository Preaching' with Dr. John in the month of February. It was indeed such a joy to meet some of you personally.

God bless you!
With Best regards



Rev. A.P. Anil Kumar
Associate Director
(info@backtothebible.in)



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JAN-FEB' 2017

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TIME IS PRECIOUS

Look carefully then how you walk! Live purposefully and worthily and accurately, not as the unwise and witless, but as wise (sensible, intelligent people), Making the very most of the time [buying up each opportunity], because the days are evil. Ephesians 5:15-16 (AMPC)

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God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. — C. S. Lewis



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CHRIST

THE GREAT EXAMPLE

◦Theodore H. Epp◦

Philippians 2 : 5 -11

It is apparent that there was some element of Jesus' equality with God that He was willing to set aside during His earthly ministry. One cannot give up the qualities of his inner nature, but he can relinquish the right, in some respects, to outwardly express his inner nature.

Even though Christ was God Himself and had the right to display His attributes, He willingly gave up this right in order to come to earth to be the Saviour of the world. He did not cease being in the form of God as to His inner nature, but He gave up being equal with God as far as the expression of some of His attributes was concerned.

Remember that the Father did not humble Jesus Christ; He humbled Himself. There is a vast difference between being humiliated and willingly humbling oneself. Jesus Christ voluntarily took a lower position because of His love for us. And this is the same kind of attitude that should characterize those of us who know Jesus Christ as Saviour.

The Bible has much to say about both pride and humility. James 4, verses 6 and 10 says, "But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, 'GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE'... Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you" (NASB). First Peter 5:6 says, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time" (NASB). Matthew 23:12 says, "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted" (NASB).

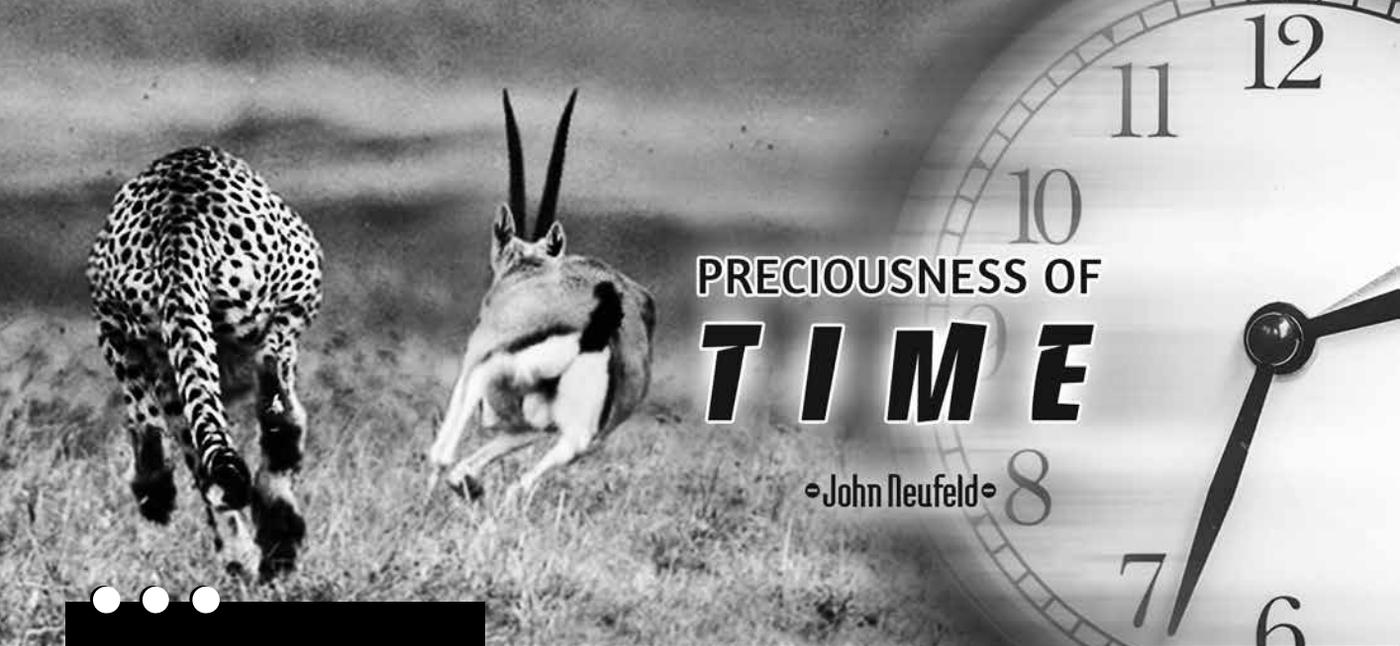
Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves (Phil. 2:3). CL



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PRECIOUSNESS OF **T I M E**

• John Neufeld •

“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.” Eph.5:15-16

In these two short verses, the apostle Paul expresses a clear cautionary warning about time – much is at stake here for us!

The start of a new year is when many people make resolutions, and perhaps you have done the same. But here’s the plain reality: the reason so many resolutions fail is because they do not address the wider issue of how we think of time, and how we use time.

What should be part of our biblical concept of time?

A. Time is a scarce commodity and therefore is precious.

As you and I know, any commodity that is scarce or limited is considered extremely valuable. That is why rare cars, rare paintings, rare minerals, rare anything carries with it a great price.

As Job in the Old Testament was speaking about his suffering and how much his suffering had robbed

him of time, he said the following: “My days are swifter than a runner; they flee away; they see no good. They go by like boats of papyrus, like an eagle swooping on the prey.” (Job 9:25-26) We may view time that way. When we are young, it seems we will always escape the ravages of time.

We are like the rabbit who believes that the eagle circling in the sky is moving slowly and if we run fast enough, we will escape. But there comes the time when we see that this view is an illusion. Time has moved more quickly than we expected – and we feel trapped.

Job continued saying, “For when a few years have come I shall go the way from which I shall not return.” (Job 16:22)

Each one of us should look into the future and see that death is rushing at us like an oncoming train. Soon it will be upon us and we will be no more.

Time is a scarce commodity and it is precious. And this is exactly how the Bible invites us to think about time.

B. Time is an uncertain commodity and therefore precious.

God has not promised us that we will escape the uncertainty of life or the shortness of time. James 4:15 says: ‘What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.’

The Bible tells us that each one of us has an appointment with death– and that day only God knows. “It is appointed for man once to die”(Hebrews 9:27). I think that means more than the obvious truth that we will not escape death. It is that word “appointment” – it is settled– fixed. God has a ‘day-timer’ and the day of your death is written in His eternal plan for you. We will be wiser when we understand that this date may be reached at any time.

C. Lost time can never be recovered.

Once time is spent, it is gone. You can’t save time. You can only spend time. Every once in a while one hears of people spending their money unwisely. I have been told by business people who lost a lot

of money that it is okay, because even though this person has lost what may seem to many to be a vast fortune – he or she knows they have the skill to make the money back.

But not so with time. You will never make it back if you use it unwisely the first time. Time is precious because it is irretrievable.

D. Time can introduce us to either wisdom or evil.

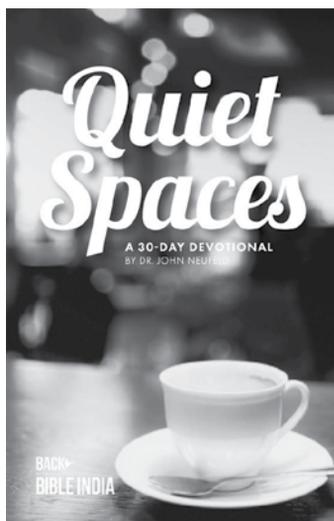
Paul reminds us – the days are evil. In evil days, the use of time becomes ever more important. He reminds us that we need to 'look carefully how we walk' and to spend our time wisely as the unremitting toil of the days can overwhelm us.

APPLICATION:

Think about how much time you have already had, and what you will do with what you have left. Let us not be fearful but ask God to give us wisdom for the days ahead.

Time is a scarce commodity and it is precious.

(Adapted from the devotional book "Quiet Spaces" by Dr. John Neufeld. This book is now available for a donation of Rs. 50/- only).



Worthwhile Resolutions FOR EVERYDAY

To talk with God before I talk with men.

To be strong in the presence of temptation, alert in the presence of opportunity, open-minded to the call of conscience for service or sacrifice, open-minded to the views of truth which differ from mine.

To work and not worry, to be energetic and not fussy.

To be true to myself and false to no man.

To cherish friendships, and guard confidences.

To be loyal to principle at the cost of popularity.

To be faithful to every honest obligation.

To be sweet-tempered under criticism, charitable in my judgments, discriminating in my adjectives.

To honor no one simply because he is rich.

To despise no one simply because he is poor.

To be sympathetic with the sorrowing, gentle to the weak, helpful to the fallen, courteous to all.

To be simple in my tastes, pure in my speech temperate in my pastimes.

To keep company with good books, cherish inspiring thoughts, and to keep my body as God's dwelling place.

To fear nothing but sin, hate nothing but hypocrisy, envy nothing but a clean life, covet nothing but character.

And at last to leave the world a little better for my stay, to face death without a tremor, with faith in Christ who overcame the grave that I might walk into the larger and perfect life.

Adapted from an article on Resolutions in one of the earliest issues of Psychology for living.

TOO GREAT TO FULLY COMPREHEND

◀ William Mac Donald ▶

Too Great to Fully Comprehend

Can you search out the deep things of God?

Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?

They are higher than heaven— what can you do?

Deeper than Sheol— what can you know?

Their measure is longer than the earth

And broader than the sea. — Job 11:7-9

God is greater than our minds can take in. He is greater than the finest intellects, greater than human reasonings at their best. He cannot be fathomed by any created being.

Stephen Charnock said, “It is visible *that* God is. It is invisible what He is.” And Richard Baxter observed, “You may know God, but not comprehend Him.”

We may know what God has chosen to reveal of Himself in creation, in providence, in conscience, in redemption, in the Bible, and supremely in the person of Christ. Although no one has seen God at any time, yet “the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared¹ Him” (Jn. 1:18). So perfectly has the Son revealed the Father that He could say, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (Jn. 14:9).

If we could fully comprehend God, we would be as great as He is. If He were a graven idol, we would be greater because we could design and manufacture Him. If He were a mere man, we could understand Him because we would be His equals. Even if He were an angel, He would not be beyond our comprehension because He, too, would be a created being.

But how can we comprehend a God who had no beginning, who has all power, all knowledge, all wisdom, and who is everywhere at once? How can we understand one God existing in three equal persons— Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Or how can we understand the mystery of the Incarnation how the Lord Jesus Christ can be fully God and fully man?

And while we cannot understand Him, we can and must have the deepest reverence for Him. We must stand in awe as we think of His inscrutability. We must sing and love and wonder as we contemplate His fathomless majesty. And we must clothe ourselves with proper humility when we realize how shallow and transparent we are by comparison! Many years ago, Josiah Conder captured this idea:

But the high myst’ries of His Name The creature’s grasp transcend;
The Father only (glorious claim!) The Son can comprehend.
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou,
That ev’ry knee to Thee should bow!

Notes

1. The word translated “declared” originally meant “lead out.” Our word for a careful expounding of the meaning of a biblical passage, exegesis, comes from this verb. The idea is drawing forth and declaring or expressing the content or truth about something or, in this case, Someone.

“God is consistent with his nature and declared purposes in Scripture, but he is not limited to our finite understanding of him or the ways we think he should work.” — Craig S. Keener.

Letters from Readers...

- I'm receiving Confident Living Magazine regularly. Just as Jesus satisfied 5000 with five loaves and two fish this magazine satisfies my spiritual appetite. I pray that it would satisfy many more too, from the left overs. Hallelujah! Thank you very much for the beautiful calendar. May the LORD shine His face upon you and be gracious to you.

— K.S. Bishwas, Madhya Pradesh

- Thank you very much. I am receiving the confident magazine regularly. Indeed it is a wonderful magazine. Personally it helped me to grow more spiritually and also to know about Christian values. It helped me to grow more spiritually and also to know about Christian values. It leads, encourages and inspires me. I always pray for your ministry and especially for your family.

— Mrs. Helen Anthony Paul, Goa

- I have been a subscriber and a receiver since the 60s' at that time my giving was small due to the children education and the salaries were small- not like the salaries today. I have been receiving and reading your magazines these past years. I remember all the old writers – Warren Wiersbe, Theodore Epp and many others. Their articles are interesting to read. Every year I receive the magazine and calendar. I did the Bible courses and have certificates.

— Mrs. Pricilla Barnett, Jaipur

- We want to thank you for the 2017 scripture text calendar as well as the daily scripture through SMS. We pray that God will fulfill the needs of the ministry.

— Mrs. Anita M Hermon- Sainikpuri

- Thank you for the regular Confident Living Magazine and also for the lovely calendar you have sent for 2017.

— Mr. Benhur Luke, Mettuguda.

- I'm really blessed by the Confident Living Magazine where I get lifted up in my dryness. Our love to you all and we want to bless you and lift you all in our prayers.

— Miss. Catherine Fernandes, Mumbai

- Thank you very much for the confident living . very useful and Helpful.

— J. Natraj, Mumbai

- Dear Brother, Thank you for your patience and commitment in sending WhatsvApp Daily Devotions, I am blessed with the verses and illustrations. They were helpful for me and my husband to grow immensely. I want to bring it to your knowledge that, it is helping us, and that we appreciate your act. Thank you.

— Ruby Paul, Hyderabad

Share with us how you have been blessed by the ministries of Back to the Bible.

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Names of those who sent the Answers for the Quiz (Nov-Dec' 2016) on Matthew: CONGRATS TO ALL THE WINNERS !!

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2. P.H. Priyadarshini- Kurnool
3. Neena Verghese- Hyderabad
4. C. Uma- Sanga Reddy
5. Gnana Sree- Secunderabad
6. Jacobaiah Chowdhary- Warangal
7. Ravindra Kalanke- Pune
8. J.R.Dhanaseelan- Bangalore
9. Vanaja Samuel- Bangalore
10. Birdie Stanley- Kannur
11. Sheila Deodhar- Pune
12. Nandini Vinod Arlakatti- Dharwad
13. Rita I Hukkeri- Mangalore
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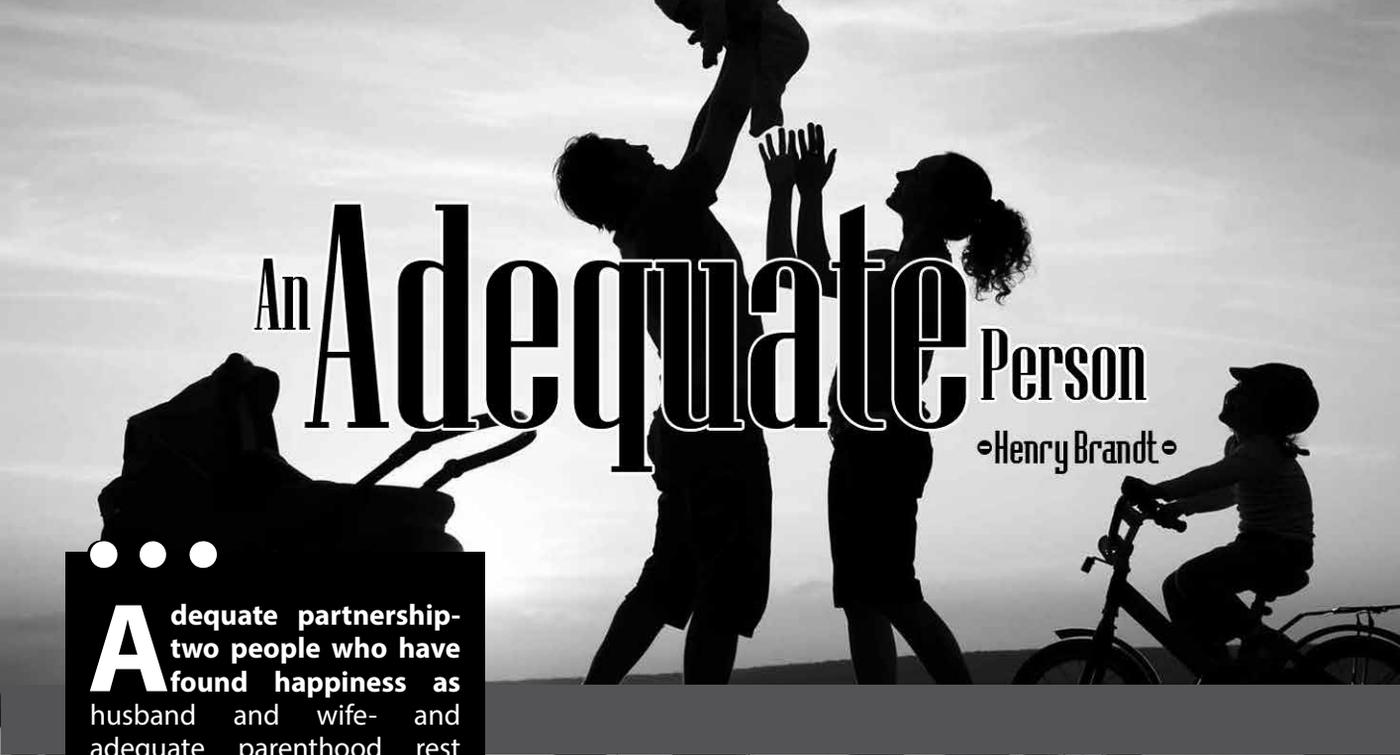
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An Adequate Person

◦Henry Brandt◦

Adequate partnership—two people who have found happiness as husband and wife— and adequate parenthood rest squarely on adequate persons. To be an adequate person one must have found personal contentment consistent with Biblical principles. The happy family life presented in the preceding chapter is possible to the fullest extent only as each marriage partner has found contentment through personal dedication to the word of God and has joined with the other to bring the entire family into submission to God.

The following chapter, then provides additional depth for what has gone before in this book.

Some persons say that psychologists can look you over and tell all about you. They pay attention to your hands, your feet, the way you fidget, the way you look, the way you wrinkle your eyebrows, and then ask some magic questions known only to them and not to you. Actually, do you know what psychologists can tell you about yourself at first glance? Very little. So you can relax. There is very little that anyone can tell you about yourself by just

looking at you. If a counselor is to be of any help to you, it will be only as you are completely open and honest with him.

Generally, people who walk into a counselor's office are well-dressed. If the client is a woman, her hair is neatly done up, her make-up is on perfectly, her clothes will be her best. Men, too, are generally well-dressed and clean-shaven when they come. Even though people look prosperous and contented, they have a need. Otherwise they would not come. However, the counselor cannot tell a thing about who you are or what your relationship is to God simply by looking at you as you enter the room.

It is equally true that few people have much of an idea about your adjustment to life. You have a family life and an inner life that only you know about. You know your own needs. My knowledge of you stops at your skin. You know what goes on underneath your skin—in the quietness of your own soul. No one else knows all about your life. But you do.

Basis for Personal Contentment

A lawyer asked Jesus: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?"

If you were to pick just one commandment to live by, which one would it be? This is what Jesus said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment" (Matt. 22:37,38). The base, the root of good adjustment, the foundation for personal happiness is a proper relationship between you and God. More important than the appearance you make in society, or your gaiety before the people you know, is your relationship between you and God in the quietness of your own soul—your dedication to serving and pleasing Him.

I remember the days when I was courting my wife—happy days. I had trouble thinking about anything else. I would just enjoy thinking about her— could not wait to see

her again. When a letter came from her, do you think it would lie on the desk several days before being opened? It was opened immediately and read over and over. She gave me a picture that I gazed upon constantly. What wonderful days!

There were times, however, when I had to reconsider our courtship. My wife, too, had occasion to ponder her commitment. To be together meant not being in someone else's company. To please the other often meant not pleasing self. The courtship—pleasant as it was—meant giving up equally pleasant activities and relationships with others. It meant reconciling differences of opinion, differences in likes and dislikes. Marriage, too, begins with a commitment. It often requires a recommitment. It requires giving up equally pleasant and rewarding activities and relationships outside the marriage.

Your relationship to God can be compared with relationships in courtship and marriage. How much time do you spend thinking about God? How much time do you spend thinking about how you can please God in your business, or your personal life, or your social life? How much time do you spend in reading His Word? Do you make a conscious effort to live by it? Do you make decisions in favor of pleasing God rather than equally pleasant decisions not pleasing to God? Your dedication to God is not only in terms of carrying the Bible under your arm, or simply memorizing parts of it, or going to church. Your dedication is also in terms of ordering your thoughts, your desires, your feelings, your actions, your relationships according to the Bible because you want to please God.

Jesus said that the second commandment—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22:38,39) is like unto the first one: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37). At first glance it is hard to see just how the two commandments are alike. I believe that they are related in this way: If you are rightly related to God, you will naturally love your neighbor. When your relationship to God is right, His love is shed abroad in your heart. This love is certain to be manifest in the things you do and say in your relationships with your neighbors. Do you truly love your neighbor... every neighbor? And don't forget that your closest "neighbors" are your partner and your children!

However, simply to "love thy neighbor" is not all there is to that second great commandment. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Surely Jesus is not

being facetious in this; and if He is not, then there must be a direct relationship between what you think of your neighbor and what you think of yourself. By direct implication our Lord is telling us it is entirely proper for us to love ourselves; in fact, we are commanded to do so.

Do you love yourself? In the quietness of your own soul, what do you think of yourself?

You look into a mirror to see yourself. You look to be assured that your outward appearance is satisfactory. Did you ever look yourself in the eye in the mirror and say to yourself, "I am satisfied with you. I like what you said today. I like the tone of voice you used today. I like the thoughts that crossed your mind today. I like what you felt today. I like the secret desires of your heart. I like your thoughts about your partner and about your children"—did you? Try it.

One of the foundation stones of happiness is to have the deep-seated realization that what you are thinking, what you are saying, what you are feeling, what you are doing, and what you desire—all these are acceptable to God. Good relationships with others are based on "love thy neighbor as thyself."

To illustrate, a woman in great distress, seeking peace for her soul, told this story: When she was twelve years old, her mother left her father for another man. Her father was an irresponsible drunkard. This twelve-year-old child, the eldest of six children, was faced with seeing the family broken up or assuming the responsibility of mother to the children. She assumed the responsibility and successfully managed to get through high school as well as take care of the family. Neighbors, teachers, church people, and the community helped. She kept the house and the children clean and neat, got the children off to school, saw that they went to church. Every Sunday the six of them marched down the aisle of the church, occupying the same pew. She received the plaudits and admiration of many for the fine, sacrificial job she did. However, the girl deeply resented being placed in this position. She dreaded the dawning of every new day. This was her own little secret. She endured the task for seven years, then her father married again. She left home immediately, using the desire for higher education as the excuse. In her heart she knew that she was laying down a task that she despised. The praise of the people only served to make her miserable. She knew that this praise was undeserved, because she was hiding an intense hatred toward her father and the children. The deepest desire of her heart had always



Satan's STRATEGY AND **YOUR DEFENSE**

◦Warren W. Wiersbe◦

cont...

Your Defense

THE INDWELLING SPIRIT OF GOD

Pride is such a strong weapon, and Satan is such a strong adversary, that only a stronger power can give us victory. That power comes from the Holy Spirit of God.

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Philippians 2:12-13

Only God the Holy Spirit, working in you, can control your will and enable you to please God.

"Work out your salvation" does not mean "work for your own salvation." Salvation is a free gift, purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. To "work out your salvation" means to bring your Christian life to completion, to accomplish in character and conduct what God has planned for you. The Greek word means "to carry out to the goal, to bring to the ultimate conclusion." God has a definite plan

for each life, and we must cooperate with him in fulfilling that plan. According to Ephesians 2:8-10, there are three "works" involved in the Christian life:

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

The first work that Paul names is salvation—the work that God does for you. This work was completed by Jesus Christ on the cross.

"I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do." John 17:4

Therefore, when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. John 19:30

But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God. Hebrews 10:12

Everything else that God does in your life is based on this finished work of Christ.

The second work is sanctification—the work that God does in you. Salvation is but the beginning; it must be followed by spiritual growth and development.

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 3:18

This leads to **the third work**—service, the work that God does through you. God works in you that he might work through you and accomplish the tasks that he has already prepared for you. It is not necessary for us to manufacture things to do for God; he already has a perfect plan for our lives and special works that he wants us to fulfill for his glory.

How does God work in us? Through his Holy Spirit. But what must we do to enable the Spirit of God to work in us? The answer to that question is found in two of the most familiar verses in the Bible—Romans 12:1-2:

Therefore, I urge you brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

The Holy Spirit can work in your life when your body, mind, and will are yielded to him.

But these are the very areas which Satan wants to attack! He wants to attack your body with suffering to make you impatient with God's will. He wants to attack your mind with lies to make you ignorant of God's will. And he wants to attack your will with pride to make you independent of God's will.

If you yield these three areas of your life daily to the Spirit of God, then the Spirit will empower you to defeat the devil. As the Spirit of grace, he will give grace to your body so that you will be able to endure suffering to the glory of God. As the Spirit of wisdom, he will teach you God's Word and bring it to your mind when Satan attacks with his lies.

And as the Spirit of power, he will empower your will to say "No!" to pride. The Holy Spirit will work in you and through you to defeat the wicked one.

Remember: in the battle against Satan, the only way to conquer is to surrender—surrender to God.

Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. James 4:6-7

Let me be very practical about this matter of Christian surrender. The verb "present" in Romans 12:1 carries the meaning of "a once-for-all surrender." It is not necessary for you to keep walking an aisle to be a yielded believer. Make a once-for-all presentation to God of your body, mind, and will. But it is good to reaffirm that surrender at the beginning of each day. When you first awaken, immediately give your body to God as an act of faith; and prove that you mean it by getting out of bed. The discipline of getting up in the morning is a part of spiritual victory.

The next step is to reach for your Bible and present your mind to God for spiritual renewal.

It is the Word of God that renews the mind and transforms it. If you do not have a system for reading the Bible, get one. Personally, I like to read straight through the Bible regularly, but I do not give myself a time limit. I start in Genesis 1, Psalm 1, and Matthew 1, and I keep reading. There are some days when I read and meditate on only a few verses; on other days, I may read all three chapters. I am not in a hurry; I am not trying to set any records. My purpose is to meditate on the Word of God so that the Spirit of God will be able to transform my mind and make it more spiritual.

After you have given God your body (and gotten out of bed) and your mind (and meditated on the Word), your next step is to give him your will; and this you do in prayer. The Word of God and prayer always go together.

"But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." Acts 6:4

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." John 15:7

If you have only the Word, without prayer, you will have light without heat; but if you have prayer without the Word, you will be in danger of becoming a fanatic—heat without light or "zeal. . . not in accordance with knowledge" (Romans 10:2). The important thing in prayer is to yield your will to God's will in the matters that you pray about.

When you have taken these three steps, you will have surrendered yourself totally to the Lord— body, mind, and will. The Spirit of God will be able to work in you and give you victory. The Holy Spirit uses the Word.

For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. 1 Thessalonians 2:13

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us. Ephesians 3:20

When God's Spirit is at work in us, he produces humility and not pride. Humility is not thinking meanly of yourself ("I'm not worth anything! I can't do anything!"); humility is simply not thinking of yourself at all! The Christian must be honest with himself and with God. That is why Romans 12:3 is in the Bible.

For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to

think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

When God called Moses to go to Egypt to deliver Israel, Moses argued with God. He protested that he was slow of speech and could not do the job.

Was this humility on Moses' part? Of course not!

It was pride; in fact, it was the worst kind of pride: false humility. The person who is truly humble has these characteristics: (1) he knows himself; (2) he accepts himself; (3) he yields himself to God; (4) he seeks to better himself that he might serve God better. The humble man realizes that all that he has comes from God and must be given back to God. John the Baptist said: "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven." John 3:27

And Paul echoed this truth: For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? 1 Corinthians 4:7

To boast of your gifts is a sin, because God gave them to you and you cannot take credit for them. But to deny your gifts is also a sin. We must accept our gifts and affirm our gifts to the glory of God. We must not think more highly of ourselves than we ought, but neither should we think less of ourselves!

So when Satan comes with pride to attack your will, surrender immediately to the Holy Spirit and let him work in you to produce humility and submission before God. Do not attempt to go beyond your gifts or the faith you have to exercise those gifts. Satan can use spiritual things to make you proud: your ability to teach or preach the Word; your prayer life;

your success in witnessing and soul-winning.

The story may be apocryphal, but it illustrates the point. A famous Christian businessman was visiting a church and was asked to give a word of greeting. He got carried away telling all that God had done for him. "I have a successful business, a large house, a lovely family, a famous name, enough money to do the things I want to do and be able to give to Christian works. I have health and opportunities unnumbered. There are many people who would gladly exchange places with me. What more could God give me?" From the back of the auditorium a voice called, "A good dose of humility!"

Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. James 4:10

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Here I stand!

◦R Stanley◦

God's Promise to those who long to see the Church come back to where it should be:

*"Those from among you shall raise up the **foundations** of many generations; and you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, the Restorer of Streets to dwell in." (Isaiah 58: 12)*

"Here I stand!"

The year 2017 marks the 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. It was on the 31st of October 1517 that Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses, against unbiblical beliefs and practices, on the main door of the All Saints Cathedral in Wittenberg, Germany.

Reformation is to bring back the Church from where it is to where it should be. The Church that is, is not the Church that was. The Church that is, is not the Church that should be. Reformation includes Revival, Renewal and Restoration. Reformation in general means correction of error, or abolition of abuses and malpractices.

- The Bible abounds with stories of Reformation. Here are some examples —

God raised **Judges** to restore the spiritual condition of His people.

The summary of the story of the Judges runs like this: "When the Lord raised up Judges for His people, He was with the Judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the Judge; for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them. And it came to pass, when the Judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods... They did not cease from their stubborn way" (Judges 2: 18, 19).

Then there was restoration under godly **Kings**. Hezekiah was 25 years old when he became King. "He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden images and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; because until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it. He called it Nehushtan (= just a piece of bronze)" (2 Kings 18: 3-7). Another King used by God for Reformation was Josiah. He came to the throne as early as when he was eight years old. We read about him in 2 Kings 22. His very first work was the repairing of the House of the Lord. There's a striking statement in verse 8:

The High Priest said to the Scribe, I have "found" the Book of the Law in the House of the Lord! Think of the Bible lost in the Church! When the Book was read before King Josiah, he tore his clothes (v11). He called people to come "Back to the Bible!" (v13).

Then came **Reformers** like Ezra and Nehemiah. Ezra was used by God in the rebuilding of the Temple, and Nehemiah in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. The study of God's Word played a vital role in this Reformation (Ezra 7: 10; Nehemiah 9: 3). Prayer and confession followed. Against all odds and threats of the enemies, Nehemiah shouted, "I cannot come down!" (Nehemiah 6: 3).

Then the Lord sent **Prophets**. The repeated words in their messages were Repent, Return and Reform. For example, look at Hosea 6: 1-3, "Come, let us return to the Lord... He will heal us... bandage us up... revive us... raise us up, that we may live in His sight... He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain!"

Several of God's men and women continue to carry His burden in their

hearts concerning His people, and Christ's love for His Church. They keep lamenting in secret before God like Prophet Jeremiah. To them comes God's promise: Isaiah 58: 12, "Those from among you shall raise up the **foundations** of many generations; and you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, the Restorer of Streets to dwell in."

In spite of the Reformations that God brought about through Judges, Kings, Reformers and Prophets, there was frequent backsliding among God's people, especially among the leaders. This is why John the Baptist had to address the Pharisees and Sadducees as a "generation of vipers" (Matthew 3: 7). Jesus pronounced repeated "woes" on Scribes and Pharisees who were hypocrites (Matthew 23). Apostle Paul predicted that "wolves" would come to devour God's people after his death (Acts 20: 29-32). Apostle Peter called the false prophets and false teachers as "dogs" and "pigs" (2 Peter 2: 1, 2, 22).

● This brings us to look into the Church History. The years from the first century to this day may be divided into eight periods —

1) *The Apostolic Church* (AD 30 to AD 100) This is the period of the early apostles, extending from the Day of Pentecost to the death of Apostle John.

2) *The Persecuted Church* (AD 100 to AD 313) King Constantine of Rome was "converted" to Christianity in AD 312. Christianity became the State religion of the Roman Empire. Christians who were only 4% suddenly swelled up to 80%, but with no conversion! A man of God calls this "the worst disaster since Noah!" Imagine how the percentage of Christians would have shot up in India if Mahatma Gandhi or Dr. Ambedkar had become Christians!

Nominalism and formalism in Indian Churches would have reached Mount Everest!

3) *The Imperial Church* (AD 313 to AD 476) The Apostles Creed, the Athanasian Creed and the Nicene Creed were written during this period.

4) *The Medieval Church* (AD 476 to AD 1517) The Church entered Dark Ages in AD 476.

5) *The Reformation Church* (AD 1517 to AD 1648) This period began on 31st October 1517 when Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses on the Church door in Wittenberg, Germany. It significantly affected the moral and political climate of entire Europe.

6) *The Enlightenment Church* (AD 1648 to AD 1789) This was the age of reason. God used men like John Wesley, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards and George Fox to explain the faith of the Gospel.

7) *The Modern Church* (AD 1789 to AD 1970) The ministries of men like C. H. Spurgeon, D. L. Moody and Billy Graham impacted this period. The famous Welsh Revival was born in 1904.

8) *The Post-modern Church* (AD 1970 to present)
We know what it is!

● When we talk about the Protestant Reformation, we must gratefully remember certain individuals outstandingly used by God —

1) John Huss (1369-1415)

He was one of the earliest Reformers. He was burnt alive for his faith.

2) Martin Luther (1483-1546)

He was the most well-known Reformer. He was a monk and a professor of theology. He raised his voice against the Roman Catholic doctrine of Indulgences (i. e. forgiveness of sins through the purchase of tickets). His theme text was, "The just shall live by faith!" (Romans 1: 16, 17). His arguments were presented as 95 Theses which were copied and widely distributed around the world. During his defence he said, "**Here I stand!** God help me! I can do no other!"

3) William Tyndale (1484-1536)

He translated half of the Old Testament and the complete New Testament into English. The translation of the world-renowned King James Version used most of Tyndale's translation. At the stake in 1536 he prayed, "Lord, Open the eyes of the King of England!" This martyrdom prayer was answered and the King ordered a translation!

4) Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556)

He influenced the Church of England to adopt the Reformation truths. He wrote the "Common Book of Prayer" used mostly in Anglican Churches. (Under my mummy's compulsion I memorized as a teenager a number of prayers, known as Collect, from this Book.)

5) John Calvin (1509-1564)

He wrote many Bible Commentaries. His theology gave rise to Calvinism.

Dear Reader, may be you can stand up where you are for a minute of silence to thank God for these and many such Reformers who refused to relent saying, "Here I stand!"

*Stand up, Stand up for Jesus!
Ye soldiers of the Cross;
Lift high His royal banner
It must not suffer loss.
From Vict'ry unto victory
His army shall He lead;
Till every foe is vanquished
And Christ is Lord indeed.*

The Slogans of Protestant Reformation

The summary of the Reformers' theological conviction is as follows, in Latin and in English —

1. "Sola Scriptura"
Scripture alone!
2. "Sola Fide"
Faith alone!
3. "Sola Gratia"
Grace alone!
4. "Solo Christo"
Christ alone!
5. "Soli Deo Gloria"
To the Glory of God alone!

Of the nearly 40 Calendars of 2017 I received from various Churches and Christian organisations in India, not one of them has made any reference to 2017 as the 500th Anniversary of Reformation. Even the Reformation Day, 31 October, is not specially marked. It may not be too much on my part to conclude that we have by and large forgotten the heritage and truths of Reformation. No wonder the present generation has no idea whatsoever about the roots of Reformation. The only Calendar that has carried the theme of Reformation this year (2017) is that of the ministry of "Back to the Bible," known also as Good News Broadcasting Society. Congratulations to this ministry for living up to its name! Their Calendar is titled as "**Defining Moments of our Faith,**" with these five slogans printed on page one. Each month's page features the places or Church buildings the Reformers were associated with.

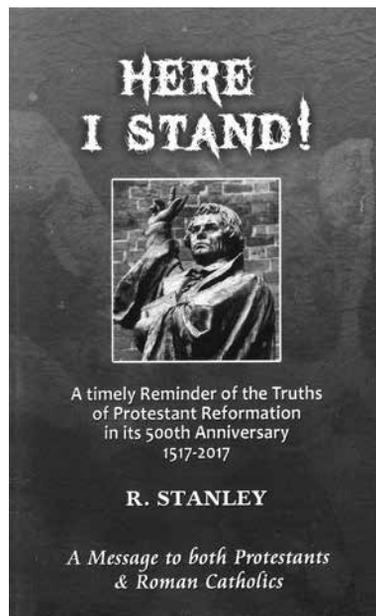
Following the Reformation, several denominations were born. Lutheran, Presbyterian, Congregationalists, Methodists and Baptists are some of them. Pentecostals came later. Each denomination has its strengths and weaknesses. No single denomination has the full understanding of all the Biblical truths. There's therefore no place for boasting. Among these denominations, there may be minor differences, but the fundamental truths are stated by these five **solas**.

In his book, R. Stanley takes us through these 5 slogans of Protestant Reformation in the Biblical light and their practical implications and relevance in the lives of Christians and the Churches.

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• So whoever knows
• the right thing to
• do and fails to do
• it, for him it is sin.
• James 4:17

• "Silence in the face
• of evil is itself evil:
• God will not hold us
• guiltless. Not to speak
• is to speak. Not to act
• is to act." — Dietrich
• Bonhoeffer

•••••



PURSUING GOD

◦A.W.Tozer◦

My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. Psalm 73:26

As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? Psalm 42:1-2

O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. Psalm 63:1

Receptivity is not a single thing; rather, it is a compound, a blending of several elements within the soul.

It is an affinity for, a bent toward, a sympathetic response to, a desire to have. From this it may be gathered that it can be short devotions and rush away, hoping to make up for our deep inward bankruptcy by attending another gospel meeting or listening to another thrilling story told by a religious adventurer lately returned from afar.

The tragic results of this spirit are all about us: Shallow lives, hollow religious philosophies, the preponderance of the element of fun in gospel meetings, the glorification of men, trust in religious externalities, quasi-religious fellowships, salesmanship methods, the mistaking of dynamic personality for the power of the Spirit. These and such as these are the Symptoms of an evil disease, a deep and serious malady of the soul.

Do you not know that your great sin is this: the all-pervading and eternal presence is here, and you cannot feel Him? — AW Tozer ("Who Put Jesus on the Cross?")

For this great sickness that is upon us no one person is responsible, and no Christian is wholly free from blame. We have all contributed, directly or indirectly, to this sad state of affairs. We have been too blind to see, or too timid to speak out, or too self-satisfied to desire anything better than the poor, average diet with which others appear satisfied. To put it differently, we have accepted one another's notions, copied one another's lives and made one another's experiences the model for our own. And for a generation the trend has been downward. Now we have reached a low place of sand and burnt wire grass and, worst of all, we have made the Word of Truth conform to our experience and accepted this low plane as the very pasture of the blessed.

It will require a determined heart and more than a little courage to wrench ourselves loose from the grip of our times and return to biblical ways. But it can be done. Every now and then in the past Christians have had to do it. History has recorded several large-scale returns led by such men as St. Francis, Martin Luther and George Fox. Unfortunately, there seems to be no Luther or Fox on the horizon at present. Whether or not another such return may be expected before the coming of Christ is a question upon which Christians are not fully agreed, but that is not of too great importance to us now.

God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. — C. S. Lewis

What God in His sovereignty may yet do on a world-scale I do not claim to know. But what He will do for the plain man or woman who seeks His face I believe I do know and can tell others. Let any man turn to God in earnest, let him begin to exercise himself unto godliness, let him seek to develop his powers of spiritual receptivity by trust and obedience and humility, and the results will exceed anything he may have hoped in his leaner and weaker days.

Any man who by repentance and a sincere return to God will break himself out of the mold in which he has been held, and will go to the Bible itself for his spiritual standards, will be delighted with what he finds there.

No one questions the need of times of formal address to God, but few admit in any practical way the need of quiet waiting upon God, gazing into His face, feeling for His hand, listening for His voice. God has special confidences for each soul. Indeed, it would seem as though the deepest truths come only in moments of profound devotional silence and contemplation. — Charles H. Brent

Let us say it again: The universal Presence is a fact. God is here. The whole universe is alive with His life. And He is no strange or foreign God, but the familiar Father of our Lord Jesus Christ whose love has for these thousands of years enfolded the sinful race of men. And always He is trying to get our attention, to reveal Himself to us, to communicate with us. We have within us the ability to know Him if we will but respond to His overtures. (And this we call pursuing God!) We will know Him in increasing degree as our receptivity becomes more perfect by faith and love and practice.

O God and Father, I repent of my sinful preoccupation with visible things. The world has been too much with me. Thou hast been here and I knew it not. I have been blind to Thy presence. Open my eyes that I may behold Thee in and around me. For Christ's sake, Amen.



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How Money Affects People

—Woodrow Hroll—

Continuation...

Bad News- Money Can Be A Curse

Money not only changes hands, it changes people. It can be a curse or a blessing depending on our attitude toward it and our use of it. The Bible graphically portrays how money affects people.

Money can be a curse and frequently is. Typical of the side effects of wealth are deterred spirituality, heightened pride and fruitless friends. Let's see how the bible addresses each of these.

1. Deterred Spirituality

Sometimes wealth causes the rich to forget God completely, and for the Christian this is a severe deterrent to spiritual growth.

Again and again Moses cautioned the Israelites about their attitudes when they entered the Promised Land and life became more "comfy" for them. Deuteronomy 8:11-14 warns, "Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God... Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses... and when thy herds

and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied....

Then thine heart be lifted up and thou forget the LORD thy God."

Having a little bank account does strange things to some people. In many cases it makes them feel quite but they should remember the Lord's words against the Laodicean church in Revelation 3:17: "Thou says, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

He dropped a penny in the bag, then meekly raised his eyes; glad that his weekly rent was paid for a mansion in the skies. – Anonymous

QUOTE: But for those who desire to be rich fail into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction. 1 Timothy 6:9

PRAYER: Heavenly Father we pray that you will keep us away from the love of money. Help us to see that our sufficiency is in you alone.

2. Heightened Pride

Once some people have 'arrived', once they have become comfortable in their wealth, there is frequently a sense of self-accomplishment and pride. This is a dangerous attitude since it runs counter to the truth that all wealth is a sovereign gift from a gracious God.

Consider the case of the prince of Tyrus. Ezekiel 28:4,5 describes him this way: "With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten the riches, and has gotten gold and silver into thy treasures: By thy great wisdom and by thy traffic hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches."

Paul gives a stern warning against heightened pride. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim.6:17).

Money can be a curse if we are proud of what we have and forget its true source, the good hand of God.

QUOTE: Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. Matthew 6:19-20

PRAYER: Merciful Father, all of us are guilty of being proud in one area or the other. Forgive us, break us. humble us for Jesus sake.

3. Fruitless Friends

One of the great tragedies of coming into a little money is the menagerie of friends you suddenly acquire. They are fruitless friends; they bear no fruit themselves because they want all of your bananas. With money you can buy all the friends you want, but they are never worth the price.

What does the Bible say about them? Proverbs 14:20 states, "The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends." But are they really friends, or are they just friendly freeloaders? Remember, a friend you can buy can be bought from you.

Proverbs 19:46 remind us, "Wealth maketh many friends.... And every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts." Having money, any amount of money, can be a great curse. While money won't buy real friends, it does appear to be able to lease a few acquaintances, but they are usually not the kind who have eternity in view.

Money does not have to be a curse, and it isn't at all for many Christians. This is because these people, some wealthy and some not so wealthy, have learned how to make money, wealth and possessions a blessing, both now and eternally.

Good News - Money Can Be A Blessing

Remember, the basic difference is attitude. Whether you earn ₹ 10,000 a year, ₹ 1,00,000 a year, or ₹ 10,00,000 a year, if your attitude toward money is right you can make it a source of extreme blessing. How will you do that?

1. By Honouring The Lord

In Proverbs 3:5,6 we read, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Almost immediately after these great verses we encounter this statement; "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (vv.9,10).

This is not the Levitical law; there is no mention of animal sacrifice, how many baskets of grain, and so on. This is a simple command: Honor the Lord!

"honor" is the Hebrew *kabad* which literally means "to be heavy." In the bad sense this word would be translated "burdensome" or "severe." In the good sense it means "numerous" or "rich." To honor the Lord with our substance- that is, our money, wealth and possessions- is to lay them upon Him in a rich and numerous fashion.

Now think with me. This is a simple command-"Honour the LORD with thy substance." Do you think it is possible to be stingy with God and fulfill this command? It is even possible to use 10% as a guide and fulfill this command. Would you consider someone who gave you only 10% of his time or money to

be honoring you, to be numerous or rich in what he gave you? Of course not, and neither does God.

Money can be a blessing if we honor God richly instead of minimally. Money can be a blessing if we give God the firstfruits of our increase instead of whatever is left out after we honor everyone else.

QUOTE: Tithes are the debts we owe and offering are the seeds we sow.

PRAYER: Gracious Father, we have cheated and failed so often in honoring you with our money. Thank you for not dealing with us like you did with Ananiah and Sapphira. we want to change and obey you for Jesus' sake.

2. By Helping The Poor

The industrialized world is facing a difficult problem. There is a widening gap between the rich and the poor. Homelessness is growing. Christians can ignore the poor and homeless altogether, but their need will not go away. We can put all of our resources and energy into addressing the social plight of the poor, but their spiritual need will not go away. Or we can do what Jesus did- hold the social needs of the poor high on our list of priorities, second only to their greatest need, the spiritual need.

Christians cannot escape the Bible's frequent references to the needs of the poor.

"he that giveth unto the poor shall not lack but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse" (Prov.29:27).

"He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor (Prov.22:9).

The man who gives bread to the poor is also "good of eye", meaning

his eyes tell people what he is like inside. (Luke 11:34)

With Social Security, Welfare and other social programs, most Christians don't see the poor as often as they did in Bible times, where you literally had to close your eyes to avoid them. But we must never close our eyes to the needs of others, especially those of the household of faith. God places money in our hands to be a blessing to the poor.

QUOTE: "The door which is not opened for the beggar will open for the doctor." Rabbinical proverb.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father often our alms are done in public to attain recognition we lay our motives bare for your perusal please clear the garbage so Jesus is glorified in everything.

3. Giving God's Way:

If we are not sticky-fingered, and instead act as a channel of blessing, it is likely we will be giving God's way. Perhaps the best way to understanding God's way of giving is to consider descriptive words which show us how to give. In this chapter are a dozen distinctive descriptions of giving the way God wants us to (i.e.).

Giving With The Heart
Giving With The Head
Giving with the Hands

Be a Channel of Blessing

Money, wealth and possessions can either be a curse or a blessing, depending on whether we see ourselves as a repository or a channel.

The late Arthur DeMoss was an excellent example of a man who saw himself as a channel of God's blessings. A hard-working, godly man, DeMoss was an innovator. He

pioneered methods of marketing insurance that no one else dreamed of, and God blessed him significantly. But Mr. DeMoss never saw himself as just the recipient of God's blessing; he always viewed himself as God's channel to others. He turned his beliefs into his practices.

The best way to keep money, wealth and possessions from becoming a curse is to honor God, to see to the needs of others, and to keep only what you need for yourself.

"Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can." It's the secret to blessing. —John Wesley

QUOTE: 'Every Christian needs two conversions - one for his soul other for his pocket. Martin Luther

PRAYER: Dear God on many occasions in order to obtain something we desire we sacrifice our character on the altars of worldly pleasures greed and selfishness. Please forgive us and transform our thinking.

Giving With The Heart **Giving Is Compassionate**

Grateful people give out of a heart of love, not out of a sense of duty. When writing to the Corinthian church about giving, Paul said, "I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love" (II Cor.8:8). Giving to God in order to help others should not become a matter of law but a matter of grace. We give to Him because God first gave to us (John 3:16).

Giving Is Responsive

When God plucks the strings of our heart with a particular need, we must be responsive to that need. This is not giving in to our emotions; it's being obedient to our hearts.

Acts 11:28-30 records a great dearth throughout the world during the days of Claudius Caesar and say, "Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea" (v.29). This offering was collected in response to immediate need. This is responsive giving.

Giving Is Cheerful

The rich young ruler asked Jesus, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" (Matt. 19:16). Jesus told Him to sell all his worldly possessions, give the proceeds to the poor and follow Him.

This was not done to buy His way into heaven; no one can do that. Salvation is the free gift of God. What Jesus was teaching the reluctant young man is that nothing can be permitted to stand between us and the Saviour. Therefore, giving is to be spiritual, showing that our LORD, not money, reigns in our hearts.

Since giving is an act of the heart and not of the head or hand only, it is to be done with full faith and confidence of the heart.

2 Corinthians 9:7 describes giving this way: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity for God loveth a cheerful giver." God loves a giver who gives with praise on his tongue and a smile on his lips.

Now let's turn our attention to God's description of giving as it relates to our head.

QUOTE: For where your treasure is there will your heart be also. Matthew 6:21

PRAYER: Loving Father, may our heart pulsate with the kind of giving that was demonstrated at Calvary.

Giving With The Head

Giving is Systematic

Giving is not a haphazard thing; it is done with forethought, with a great deal of planning Paul advises the Corinthians, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him, that there be no gathering when I come" (1 Corinthians 16: 1,2).

There must be order to our giving—pre-planning—so that we do not end up throwing into the offering plate whatever we happen to have in our pockets.

Giving is Proportionate

God's expectation of our giving is always reasonable. That's why the Bible indicates that our giving should be in proportion to our ability. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (1 Corinthians 16:2). The key words here are "as God hath prospered Him." (See also "according to his ability" in Acts 11:29.) We give in proportion to what God has given to us. God doesn't expect us to give any more; He won't accept any less.

Giving Is Purposeful

Not only should our giving be as God has prospered but it should be as we have purposed as well. Again, II Cor. 9:6,7 helps us to understand this principle. "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly ; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give."

Giving is Sacrificial

One day Jesus sat near the treasury of the temple, watching people "nickel and dime" the LORD in their giving. When a widow threw in two little mites Jesus observed,

"Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury; For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living " (Mark 12:43,44).

Our giving is blessed by God in proportion to the amount of sacrifice we make, not according to the amount we give. God is interested in the balance written on the stub, as well as what's written on the cheque.

Finally, let's explore God's description of giving as it relates to our hands.

QUOTE: "Let everything be done decently and in order". 1 Corinthians 14:40

PRAYER: Dear Father we are so fortunate to serve a God of order and purpose may our giving reflect this your attribute.

Giving with the Hands

Giving is Generous

Generosity and sacrifice go hand in hand, though it is possible to be generous without making a sacrifice.

Consider the example of Barnabas. When the early church in Jerusalem came under severe persecution, Barnabas responded by giving generously. "And Joses, Who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas... A Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet" (Acts 4:36,37).

Go break to the needy sweet charity's bread; For giving is living. The angel said. And must I be giving again and again? My peevish and pitiless answer ran. Oh no. said the angel, piercing me through, just give till the Master stops giving to you. — Anonymous

Giving generously, at the leading of the Holy Spirit, sometimes means making the ultimate financial Sacrifice.

Giving is Rewarding

It would be sinful for us to give in order to get. If we gave in order for God to make us rich, our motives would negate any possibility of reward in heaven. But it is a proven fact of our Christian lives: Genuine giving proves rewarding to our hearts, our heads, and our hands.

Jesus said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).

Let's not give to get but give to give. When God fills our hands, let's give again to be a continual channel of blessing.

Giving is Spontaneous

In an earn-all, spend-all world, Christians please the Lord when we do not spend it all, but save some funds from which we can spontaneously give when the need arises. Did not the disciples act spontaneously in Acts 2:45 when they sold their possessions to meet the need of others?

And did not they act spontaneously when in Acts 11:29 they sent relief to the poor Christians of Judaea? God wants us to be prepared so our hearts and our heads can move our hands spontaneously, when we learn of a legitimate need and He impresses that need upon us.

QUOTE: The more you spend on others, the more your income will increase... the more you try to save the more you will be troubled by 'rust' and 'thieves' Watchman Nee

PRAYER: Gracious Father help us to see the heed in our brother and reach out in love in Jesus name we pray.

Giving Is Probationary

Lest we forget, God places money in our hands in order to test what we do with it. In the parable of the steward, Jesus concludes with this question, "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" (Luke 16:11).

If we prove that we cannot be God's channel for blessing with a little money, how will it be possible for Him to entrust to us the really

important things of His kingdom? God places money in our hands on probation to see if we are stewards worthy of more worthwhile stewardship. Only I can respond for me, and only you can respond for you.

Giving God's way does not mean we give what He gave; we can't, for He gave His only begotten Son to die for our sins. But we can give the way He gave.

Whether we have little or much in our hands appears to be irrelevant. What makes the difference is our attitude toward giving. Consider this little bit of verse.

Its not what you'd do with a million, If riches should e'er be your lot, But what are you doing at present With the dollar and quarter you've got? — Anonymous

QUOTE: There is one who scatters yet increases more: and there is one who withholds more than is right, but leads to poverty. Proverbs 11: 24

PRAYER: Compassionate God thank you for blessing us so abundantly. Give us a heart to withhold nothing that would bless others for your name's sake.

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EXPOSITORY PREACHING CONFERENCE

PUNE & HYDERABAD
FEBRUARY' 2017



In line with the Vision of Back to the Bible to provide sound Bible Teaching, God has enabled to conduct ongoing Pastor Training Conference in India. In our attempt the two of them were held in February 2017 in the cities of Pune and Hyderabad. Over 300 Pastors in the area attended, to be trained in expositional Bible teaching by Dr. John Neufeld.

It was indeed such a joy to meet with Pastors and Leaders from different churches and organisations and some of them even travelled a long distance to get Equipped in this Seminar.

Our sincere thanks to all the participants for making this a fruitful one.



See what the Delegates said:

- I am blessed and inspired by recollecting and getting the knowledge of Expository preaching by Dr. Neufeld. --Mrs. Sukany Mangesh, Pune
- Expository preaching is the best way to convey the gospel. And we need to rely more on the word of God to give the gospel.-- Mona Kapadia, Pune
- Expository preaching is foundational to the life and health of the Christian church well explained. --Raymond Deniese, Pune
- This seminar was very helpful and it would be good to have more such seminars, so more and more Pastors. Teachers will be enlightened.— Suhas Waidande, Pune
- After attending this conference, I decided to study God's word diligently, apply it in my personal life, prepare sermons well and then teach. -- Suhas Waidande, Pune
- Attending this conference I want to be more disciplined in my sermon preparation and be consistent in doing it. --Praveen Aaron, Pune
- Through this conference I understood the importance of studying the text before developing the outline of the sermon. – T. Karuna, Hyderabad
- From now onwards I will study bible properly, use different translations of Bible and I will preach the Gospel in season and out of season. – Sachin Jadhav, Pune
- I will try to learn the principles of expository preaching and practice them in my preaching at the local church. – Dr. R.D. Joseph, Pune
- This conference has helped me to understand clearly on how to prepare a message. Dr. V.L. Sadgun, Pune
- I have decided to spend more time in God's presence in preparing for a sermon.—Ashok, Hyderabad
- The examples of the passages outlined were most useful in this conference.—K. Paul Thilak, Hyderabad
- In my preaching and teaching, I will read the passage repeatedly before referring to the commentary.—Jubaraj Bardhan, Pune
- Great attempt to arouse and realise the need of expository preaching in contemporary church age.—P. Samuel John, Hyderabad
- Expository Bible Teaching is most useful because it is not just giving information but for transformation of lives. – D. Dyvadeenam, Hyderabad
- I am inspired by this seminar to preach expository sermons because this provides true teaching. –G. Sandhya, Hyderabad
- I have realized that I desperately need to spend more time in studying God's word.—S. Steven Ramesh, Hyderabad



Rules

GOVERNING THE GIFT OF TONGUES

◦Theodore H. Epp◦



Chapter 14 of I Corinthians, which is the longest of this book's three chapters on spiritual gifts, deals with the limitations of a gift, rules covering its use and severe warnings concerning its abuse. No earnest believer who wants to please the Lord can treat this matter lightly. Neither should he draw from this chapter conclusions contrary to its whole meaning.

General Rules

Two general rules govern the use of tongues. We have already touched on the first one. It concerns the fact that the Apostle Paul encouraged the Corinthians to seek spiritual gifts but stated a preference for prophecy rather than for tongues. Anyone who claims to be directed by the Spirit of God but who changes the divine order and emphasis in relation to these two gifts is going contrary to the revealed will of God. No matter how much the Person and work of the Holy Spirit may be emphasized by such an individual, the Holy Spirit is dishonored and grieved if His instructions are brushed aside.

The second general rule has to do with order in the meetings of God's people. Confusion and disorderliness are alien to the Spirit of God (see I Cor. 14:26,33). A good deal of confusion and disharmony

marked the meetings in Corinth as a result of speaking in tongues.

Specific Rules

The first of these is found in I Corinthians 14:6: Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?" This means that Bible truth must be given if the tongues gift is employed in the way God intends it to be employed. The Word of God benefits the hearers. Through the Word the Spirit of God works in the hearts of His people.

A good question to ask ourselves with regard to any claim of speaking in tongues is this: "Is the Word of God expounded as a result of this gift? Are people being built up in the faith which was delivered to the saints? Is Christ being exalted?" If the answer to these questions is no, then we must question if the Spirit of God is causing the tongues speaking.

Second, the tongues gift should be used for the edification of the whole church and not be limited to

the personal benefit of the person with the gift (see vv. 2,12). Spirit-given gifts are not playthings. They are not to be used selfishly but for the building up of the Body of Christ. The believer is not his own; he has been bought with a price. Any spiritual gift he receives is not for his private entertainment or benefit but for the good of all believers with whom he has contact.

Third, in a group where all, including the one speaking in tongues, spoke the same language, someone had to interpret the message. He was either to be his own interpreter, or someone else was to interpret for him. Otherwise, the tongues speaker was to remain silent (v. 28).

This gift would be of great benefit to foreign missionaries, who must spend months and even years in learning a new language. Some of them, in fact, have to learn several new languages in the course of their missionary work.

At the turn of this century some enthusiastic and earnest Christians went to the mission field with the

firm conviction that they had the gift of tongues. They believed it would not be necessary for them to learn the language of the people to whom they would minister. These would-be missionaries were sadly disillusioned. Many of them became spiritual wrecks as a result of their disappointment. The fault did not lie with God but with them and the teachers who had misinterpreted the Scriptures with regard to the gift of tongues.

A fourth rule is that private praying in a tongue was not to be encouraged unless the one who prayed understood what he was praying about. The standard Paul laid down was that one should pray not only with the human spirit but also with the understanding (vv. 14,15).

A fifth rule is that a definite order was to be maintained when the gift of tongues was exercised in a public meeting. No more than three tongues speakers were to take part in any one service and then only one at a time with someone to interpret (v. 27). Since only one was to interpret, this in itself would tend to keep several tongues speakers from trying to speak at the same time. Confusion would be eliminated, and one of the disorders accompanying the zeal of those employing the gift would be corrected.

We have already considered the fact that if a believer employed the gift of tongues, he was to give Bible truth. When this admonition was given to the Corinthians, more than one miraculous gift was needed in order to protect believers from false prophets, and this is the sixth rule. Paul said, "If I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?" (v. 6).

Bible truth, or new truth from God, was to be given if the hearers were to be edified. In this way the gift of prophecy would be joined with the gift of tongues. This meant that not only would the rules governing tongues be employed, but an additional rule governing prophecy would also have to be followed.

This particular rule is given in v. 29: "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge." The function of a judge in this case would be the discerning of spirits, because in the days before the New Testament was complete, additional truth would be revealed from time to time. But, along with this, the danger of the introduction of false doctrine also existed. A check on the teaching of the prophets was needed, because evil spirits could interject false teaching. This judge, then, would try the spirits, and he would need the gift of the discerning of spirits for this.

In a situation of this nature three miracle gifts were needed—the gifts of tongues, prophecy and the discerning of spirits. Does this not indicate that if one miracle gift is to be used today, several or even all of them are needed to keep the rest in balance? The gift of tongues is greatly emphasized, but what of the other gifts? Mark 16:17 is often referred to as proof that the gift of tongues is a sign that will follow believers. But why pick out that one gift and ignore the casting out of demons, the handling of serpents, the drinking of deadly poison or the healing of the sick? And do not overlook another gift spoken of in Matthew 10:8—raising the dead!

A seventh rule is given in I Corinthians 14:32: "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." This principle applied to the tongues speakers also. The expression of their

gift was not beyond their control. It was their responsibility to use it wisely and in an orderly way. Too often God is blamed for what is really the believer's own lack of restraint.

Eighth, a very serious consequence to the use of tongues without an interpreter is dealt with in vv. 21-25. This is a portion that has not always been clearly understood.

The apostle emphasizes in this chapter that spiritual gifts are to be used for the edification of the believers. Obviously, believers could not be edified if they could not understand the language being used. But what would be the effect on unbelievers who attended the church services? This is the subject Paul dealt with in these verses.

He wrote: "In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth" (vv. 21-25).

The first question we want to answer is "In what sense are tongues a sign to unbelievers?"

The answer is found in this portion. The word "law" refers to

the Old Testament, and the passage quoted in Isaiah 28:11,12. When the messages of the prophets were resisted by hard-hearted unbelievers among the Israelites, God warned that He would judge them by sending foreign invaders into their land. These men would speak languages unknown to the Israelites, and the presence of these conquerors would be proof of God's retributive judgment on His people who would not believe in spite of this sign. They would "not hear" the Lord. Consequently, the uninterpreted tongue was a judicial sign to unbelievers. The uninterpreted tongue would indicate judgment on the unbelieving and would not be a means of leading them to faith in Christ.

This was the very opposite of what God intended at Corinth. It stands to reason that the unbelievers who visited the meetings of the Christians in Corinth were not hardened against truth but were seeking spiritual help.

The Greek word for "unbelievers" in v. 22 is the same as the word used for "unbelievers" in v. 23. But the context indicates that the unbeliever in v. 22 is different from the unbeliever of v. 23. Tongues were a judicial sign against hardened unbelievers. But in their meetings the Corinthians probably would not have been dealing with hardened unbelievers but with unbelievers who were apparently seeking spiritual help. By using the gift of tongues without an interpreter present, they were misrepresenting God's attitude toward these lost persons. Another bad result of the uninterpreted tongues would be that the unbelievers attending the services would think God's people were mentally unbalanced.

Still others—the "unlearned" (v.23)—were adversely affected by

the uninterpreted tongues. The word "unlearned" in the original primarily meant a private person rather than a public official. In this context it denotes a person or persons who, though saved, were untaught or unlearned as far as tongues were concerned. So, like the unbelievers of v. 23, these unlearned persons would consider the foreign language used by the tongues speakers as mere gibberish and would think the speakers were not emotionally stable.

God's purpose in giving out His Word is to reach the unsaved and bring them to a saving knowledge of Christ. In addition, it helps the believers grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord. He does this by reaching the understanding through intelligible words and appealing to the conscience at the same time. God's Word is heard through the speaker, but if the speaker uses language that is not understood by his hearers, then God's purpose cannot be carried out. To declare that a person is judged (v. 24) means that his heart is searched by the Word and he is inwardly sifted. Each successive speaker in the assembly who speaks in the power of the Holy Spirit deepens the work of the Spirit in these individual hearts.

V. 25 shows the third stage in this person's conversion if he is an unbeliever: The secrets of his heart

are made manifest. First, his true condition is revealed. According to v. 24 he stands self-condemned and sees his own thoughts, motives and desires in their true light. He is awakened to his need and falls down before God.

Finally, women were forbidden to speak in the public assemblies. Connected as this thought is with the subject of tongues, it is very apparent that the women were not allowed to speak in tongues in the early church (see vv. 34,35).

One is forced to admit in light of these rules that, although Paul said, "Forbid not to speak with tongues" (v. 39), he was not strongly encouraging the use of the gift. He left room for the Holy Spirit, however, to exercise His sovereign will in the matter. People tend to go to extremes, and when a doctrine of the Word is misused, many believers avoid it or oppose it. But if the Lord were to throw out every doctrine that people have misapplied or abused, we would have no Bible left.

The New Testament indicates that it was the purpose of God to suspend the use of the miraculous gifts, at least in general, but not because they had been used in the wrong way. Until God suspended their use, the believers were to have freedom in exercising them.

We request for Prayer and Support towards the printing of *'Strength for the Journey'* as the translations are carried on in **HINDI, MARATHI, ORIYA & TELUGU.** Thank you **A.P.Anil Kumar, Associate Director**



PASSION OF CHRIST

EVENTS SURROUNDING THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST

If you have seen the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, then you know the film opens with a verse from the Bible. Let's begin this study at the same place, Isaiah 53:3-6:

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:3-6 KJV).

One of the most startling facts about this passage is that it tells us why Jesus endured all of the punishment, brutality and torture portrayed in the film. He did it for us. He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. Let's take a moment and think about this.

BEATEN AND BRUISED

Isaiah 53:3-6

Wounds are external cuts and abrasions, like the lashes he bore for us. These wounds were in payment for our transgressions.

To transgress means to break away from authority. When we live by our own standards, deciding that what is good for us at the moment must be right even if it is lying or stealing, we are breaking away from God's authority. For He is the only One who has the authority to determine what is right and wrong. In living by our own standards, in going our own way, we are rebelling against Him. A transgression carries a penalty, but Jesus paid that penalty. He was wounded for our transgressions.

He was also bruised for our iniquities. Iniquities means to wander away; to lose oneself. This verse tells us that we all have gone astray. Jesus paid the price for our wanderings; He was bruised for our iniquities.

The bottom line is that God loved us and wanted a way to cleanse and heal us from our sins. So Jesus became the sacrifice for us all. And with His stripes we are healed. Have you accepted His sacrifice?

APPLY IT

As you remember the wounds and bruises portrayed so vividly in the movie *The Passion of Christ*, understand that Jesus, the real Jesus, bore that and much more for you. Have you confessed your transgressions and iniquities to Him? Have you asked Him to forgive you? Have you received His forgiveness? Keep it personal; don't think of the sins of others but of your own. Remember, His death was very personal.

EXPRESS IT

Jesus, I acknowledge what You did for me. You were wounded for my transgressions and bruised for my iniquities. You paid the penalty for all my sins. Please forgive me of my past and help me to forgive myself and others. Thank You for what you did for me.

FORGIVEN

John 8: 1-11

I want us to explore the life, death and resurrection of our Lord from the perspective of three witnesses, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, John, the beloved disciple of the Lord and an unnamed woman.

Let's begin with the unnamed woman taken in sin (John 8). She lived in a time very different from ours but like so many of us she made mistakes and got herself into a lot of trouble. When she met the Christ she was in about as much trouble as a woman could get. Her story is our story, the story of a life redeemed and a heart won by the compassion of Jesus. Join me, as I explore The Passion of the Christ from the perspective of the forgiven sinner.

Let's look at the story as it's given below:

"But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, they said to Him, 'Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. Now in the law of Moses commanded us to stone such a woman; what then do You say?' They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up and said to them, 'He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.' Again He stooped and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman,

where she was, in the center of the court. Straightening up, Jesus said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?' She said, 'NO one, Lord.' And Jesus said, 'I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more'" (John 8:1-11 NASB).

Taken in the very act of adultery. How horrifying, how humiliating, how frightening this must have been. Adultery is a sin. It is self destructive in almost every case. And when adultery is publicly exposed, it becomes an embarrassment and a tragedy for all involved. But in the time of Jesus, adultery was a capital offense. The punishment was death by stoning. When the angry mob took the woman that day, she knew their intentions, but only in part.

This mob of men wanted to do more than condemn this woman when they brought her to Jesus. They wanted to trap Him as well. They asked Him, "Moses says to stone her, what do you say?" They knew if Jesus told them not to stone her, He would be violating the Law of Moses and thus offend the Jewish people. If Jesus told them to stone her, He would be calling for a judgment that violated the law of Roman occupation (the Romans would not allow the Jews to put anyone to death). Either way, they had Him. This day they would stone an adulteress and ensnare this so called Messiah.

But John tells us that Jesus, on whom the Spirit of Wisdom abided, gave an answer that dumfounded the cagey crowd. His words struck their hearts like hammer blows. "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."

What grabs my heart is that Jesus was the only man there that day who was without sin. He could have condemned her. He was the only One

who had the right to do so. Yet, He did not. For perhaps the first time in her life, this woman looked into the eyes of a man and saw acceptance, forgiveness and dignity. Jesus lifted her up both literally and spiritually.

In the movie The Passion of the Christ we see the mob drop their stones and turn away. We see a hand reach out to touch the feet of Jesus. We see the woman slowly, hesitantly look at Him, and we see Him offer His hand to her. That day, her heart and her life were forever changed by His words, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more." These words still sound forth to all repentant hearts today. Have you received His forgiveness?

APPLY IT

Whether the woman in John chapter eight was Mary Magdalene or not, she met Jesus in her most desperate hour. She had no time to make herself presentable. She had no time to get her life straightened out, to make amends for all her mistakes and sins. She fell at the feet of Jesus just as she was. She expected condemnation. But her life was transformed by the words of the Lord. Jesus forgave her, He forgave the thief on the cross, He forgave those who crucified Him even as they taunted Him. He will forgive you. Confess your sins to Him. Humble yourself before Him as this woman did. Reach out to Him. He will show you the same love, forgiveness and respect He showed her.

EXPRESS IT

Jesus, thank You for Your mercy. Your love has touched me today, I humble myself and reach out to You. I confess my sins to You. I repent for the wrongs I have done. Thank You for forgiving me, for loving me, for giving me dignity. Help me to live everyday in the knowledge that You love me.

What We Do Know About Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene, called such because she was from the town of Magdala, a city near Capernaum, supported Jesus ministry with her material possessions (Luke 8:2). And we see from scriptures like Matthew 28:1-10 and Mark 15:40-16:9 that Mary followed Jesus not only to the cross but to the tomb as well. These scripture record that she was the first person He appeared to after His resurrection. She was the first person to spread the good news that He had risen from the dead and though the disciples did not believe her at first, they soon discovered she was telling the truth and they recorded her message.

LORD

John 2:1-5

Let us examine the passion of our Lord from the unique perspective of His mother, Mary.

We do know that Mary was at the cross when Jesus died. As Christians we do not worship Mary but we do respect her as the mother of the Lord.

He was her child. Even before He was born, she knew this child was different. As an adult, sometimes the things He said made sense. Other times she struggled to understand Him. She had seen Him heal the sick, the blind and the lame. Some called Him "Messiah," others called Him a blasphemer. She called Him "son."

"On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; and both Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not

yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Whatever He says to you, do it.'" (John 2:1-5 NASB).

The scriptures tell us a lot about the mother of Jesus. We know that she was betrothed to a man named Joseph. Before they were married, however, an angel appeared to her telling her she would have a child by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:26-38). We know that she gave birth to the child in Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-7). We also know that both of these events were in fulfillment of the Scriptures. But for me the most telling verse relating to the relationship between mother and son is found in John chapter 2.

Mary was invited to a wedding and the party ran out of wine She told her Son about this and He replied that it was not yet His time; this was not His wedding. But Mary told the servants in attendance at the wedding, "Whatever he tells you, do it"

(John 2:5 NASB). Jesus told them to draw water and fill the water jars. Then He turned that water into wine. It was a great miracle. Miracles are always attention getters but that line, "Whatever He says to you, do it" is what rings in my ears.

The Bible tells us that Jesus died for our sins. He bore our iniquities on the cross. How do we respond to such a sacrifice? I think the best way is to follow Mary's advice. We should read His Word, and then whatever He tells us to do in that Word, we should do it. Jesus told us to forgive those who do us wrong, to pray for each other, to love God. We should take these as more than mere suggestions.

In the Book of Romans we are told: "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans

10:9). This verse does not say confess Jesus to be a great man, or the Son of God or even Savior, it says confess Him as "Lord." The title "Lord" implies supreme authority and control. As Lord, Jesus should have our allegiance, obedience and our love.

Mary followed Her Son all the way to the cross. From the beginning of His life to the end, she was there. And though she was His mother, it is recorded that she told us to obey Him. Make a commitment to do what the mother of Jesus told those waiters to do over 2000 years ago. Make His lordship of your life more than lip service and whatever He tells you to do, do it.

APPLY IT

Have you accepted Jesus as the Lord of your life? For many years I saw Jesus as a friend, as the One who died for me, as the Savior of all mankind, but He was not the Lord of my life. My relationship with Him did not dominate my life. His words and teachings did not set the limits of my personal behavior. I did not order my personal relationships in line with His teachings.

He was not my Lord. I made a change several years ago and put Jesus as true Lord of my life. Now, when tough situations arise in my life, I go to His Word and look for His wisdom on what to do. I pray, asking His advice first before anyone else. Analyze the place Jesus has in your everyday life. Is He Lord? If not, take Mary's words to heart and whatever He tells you, do it.

EXPRESS IT

Jesus, I recommit myself to You. You are not only the One who died for me, but You are my lord. I put You in the place of authority over my life, my actions, my words. Show me Your ways from Your Word and help me to follow You every day.

LOVE

John 17:19-20, 26 and John 15:12-14

We see the portrayal of three of the disciples of Jesus; Peter, the disciple who denied and abandoned Jesus; Judas, who betrayed Jesus; and John, who followed Him all the way to the cross. Of the twelve hand-picked disciples of the Lord, only John, believed to be one of the youngest of the disciples, is mentioned in Scripture as being present at the Lord's death. What can we learn from this faithful follower of the Lord? What was it about his relationship with Jesus that caused such dedication? The answer is found in the Gospel of John, the gospel of love.

"This is My commandment, that you love one another just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that is to lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:12-14 NASB).

The disciple John is credited with writing four books in the New Testament. One of the themes that unify these writings is the topic of love.

In chapters 13 through 21 of the Gospel of John we find a description of the passion of Christ. If you have not read these chapters, I strongly urge you to do so. Let's focus on a portion of chapter 17.

In this chapter, John records the prayer that Jesus prayed just before going to the cross. Not many of the prayers of Christ are so clearly recorded, so this portion of Scripture is worth reviewing. It is also one of my favorite passages.

Here we find what was on the heart of the Lord only hours before His death. This is what He was

thinking about, not Himself, but the disciples and all of us.

"For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their words; ...and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them and, I in them" (John 17: 19-20, 26 NASB).

John heard these words when Jesus prayed and he knew that everything Jesus was about to face was for this one purpose, that the love God the Father had for Jesus could be extended to him. He knew what Jesus faced in those dark hours was for his sake.

At the last supper, we see the Lord take a piece of bread and offer it to His disciples as His body, broken for them. We see Him take a cup and offer it to them as His blood poured out for them. John knows that the suffering he is watching was done for one reason—love.

And that same love has been extended to you and me. This prayer includes all of us who have come to faith in Christ through the words of His disciples recorded in the Bible. That is why the cross of Jesus can be personally applied to each of our lives. He died for us, each one of us, because He loved us. And the greatest expression of that love was His death on the cross.

John was witness to that expression of love. He went every step with Jesus. He watched every drop of blood fall from His body. He heard every word, listened to His last breath. John knew the full depth of the love Jesus had for each of us. My prayer is that you understand its depths as well.

So, what is our response to this great love? We love Jesus, but He asked more of us. He asked that we love each other.

He said we should lay down our lives for each other. When others treat us badly, what should be our response? Jesus gave us one command, love each other. That means I have to sometimes put aside my plans and expectations in favor of others. Sometimes I have to give up my way of doing things in order to allow others to have their way. I lay down that little part of my life. And sometimes that is very hard. But compared to what He did for me, it is a small thing He has asked.

APPLY IT

How do you define love? Do you love only those who love you? Do you love others because of what they do for you? Jesus loved us unconditionally; He loved us when we did nothing for Him. Have you received His love unconditionally? Have you ever loved anyone unconditionally? You cannot love others until you have received His love yourself. Purpose today to love others with the love Jesus has shown you. Remember the passion of the Lord and that He died for all, even those we find hard to love.

EXPRESS IT

Lord, thank You for showing me what true love is all about. I understand that You gave up Your life, that You poured out Your blood because You loved me. Help me to understand that love more fully and to express that love to others.

Courtesy: www.backtothebible.org

OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF DEATH

◦Stephen David◦

No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death. (Ecc. 9: 8)

There was a woman who met with a serious car accident. As she was close to death in the hospital, she called for her mother, took her by the hand and said, "Mom, you taught me how to sew, how to cook, and how to keep the house. You taught me everything about living, but you didn't teach me how to die!"

True, many people know only about living; they don't know how to die.

Did you learn how to die? Are you prepared to face death? How would you react if you knew you were going to die in a moment? Do you know what will happen after death?

Maybe you are not interested in thinking about these things. Or maybe you want to escape facing questions like these — disturbing questions.

In a world of rapid advancements, people have become so obsessed with their activities and achievements that they don't want to think about the inevitable fact called 'death'. Nevertheless, it is written, "Death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart" (Ecclesiastes 7: 2).

But the philosophy of the world we live in is, "There is no better thing under the sun, than to eat, drink, and be merry. Enjoy all the pleasures of earthly life. Attain anything you can. Do whatever your heart says. After all, life is everything."

Of course, we have to enjoy life and excel on earth, but that should not leave us to confront death unprepared. We need to learn how to live, as well as how to die. In the words of The One (about whom you are going to read), "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet lose his own soul?"

Take this to heart — when we face death we leave all our fame, money, power, possession, pleasures, position, job, knowledge, titles, degrees, loved ones and everything.

As it is written, "Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing

from his labour that he can carry in his hand" (Ecclesiastes 5: 15).

Do you know how to die with hope?

There was a person who came to teach us how to die. He came to save you from dying a hopeless death.

Some call him a 'religious person'. Some call him a 'great moral teacher'. Some call him a 'prophet'. Some love Him. Some hate Him. It was written about Him, "He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him" (John 1: 10).

Regretfully, the world still doesn't recognize Him. Many are perishing in their ignorance about the One who can save them.

The Word of God calls Him the Creator of the whole universe and the Saviour of the people. He tasted death so that He can save us from dying in sin. He rose again from the dead as the Living Saviour to give us eternal life.

He taught us how to die with hope and courage. Yes, He is the one you need. He is none other than Jesus Christ!

God's Word declares that by His death Jesus destroyed the power of death to free those who were held in slavery all their lives by their fear of death (Hebrews 2: 15). Death in Him is a doorway into eternal life.

Dear friend, you may believe this as the truth or reject it as a myth. You have a choice. Martin Luther said it right, "Every man must do two things alone; he must do his own believing and his own dying."

If you repent of your sins and trust in Jesus' sacrifice for all your sins, you will receive forgiveness and eternal life. It seems so simple but it cost the life of Christ to save you by His grace.

Jesus Christ, the invincible conqueror of death, stated a powerful truth and left us with a choice to make, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though He dies... Do you believe this?" (John 11: 25)

- GLD

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1 & 2 Timothy – Kindly Answer the Quiz with Bible References (NIV)

1. Love comes from _____ and _____.
2. The law is made for righteous? T/F
3. God has shown mercy on Paul because of his _____ and _____.
4. _____ and _____ were handed over to Satan by Paul.
5. Recent convert may become conceited and fall under the same judgement as the devil? (T/F)
6. Some will abandon the faith to follow _____ and _____.
7. The widow who lives for pleasure is _____ even while she lives.
8. Those who work in Teaching and Preaching well are worthy of _____.
9. Entertain an accusation against an elder with one witness? T/F
10. People who want _____ will fall into many foolish and harmful desires.
11. _____ is great gain.
12. _____ is the root of all kinds of evil
13. Lois is the mother of Timothy? T/F
14. _____ refreshed Paul and was not ashamed of his chains.
15. _____ and _____ say that resurrection has already taken place.
16. Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from _____.
17. _____ and _____ opposed Moses.
18. Every one who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be _____.
19. _____ makes you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.
20. All scripture is God breathed and is useful for _____, _____, _____ and _____.
21. _____ deserted Paul and gone to Thessalonica because He loved _____.
22. _____ did great deal of harm to Paul
23. An over seer should not be a lover of _____.
24. The Deacons must be _____ first, before serving.
25. Timothy should set an example for believers in _____, _____, _____, _____ and _____.
26. Anyone who does not provide for immediate family is worse than a _____.
27. Jesus Christ brought _____ and _____ to light through the gospel.
28. God cannot _____ himself.
29. Preach the Word; be prepared in _____ and _____.
30. Christ will judge _____ and _____.

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The next quiz will be from the book of **Genesis 1-25 (NIV)**

Quiz Answers: Matthew

- (1) False 1:3 (2) 7:12. (3) False. 5:17. (4) In the Jordan. 3:6. (5) Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. 28:1, 9. (6) Gethsemane . 26:36,49. (7) Sitting at the tax office. 9:9. (8) Jacob 1:16 (9) 42 (10) 40 days & 40 nights. 4:2. (11) Jesus 1:21. (12) Micah 5 :2,4 (13) Hosea 11 :1 (14) The kingdom of God and His righteousness.6:33. (15) Chorazin and Bethsaida. 11:21. (16) Kingdom of heaven. 25:1. (17) False 27:46. (18) Moses and Elijah.17:3. (19) Judas 26:47,50. (20) To Caiaphas the high priest 26:57. (21) To go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. 28:19 (22) False. 3:4. (23) Simon of Cyrene 27:32. (24) Herodias 14:6,8. (25) Thirty 26:15. (26) Golgotha. 27: 33,35. (27) Bethlehem 2:1. (28) True. 25:45. (29) The first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread. 26:17. (30) Message about the kingdom. 13:19.

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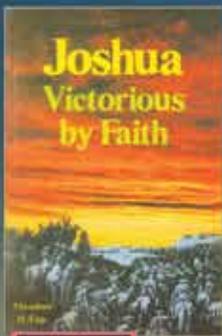


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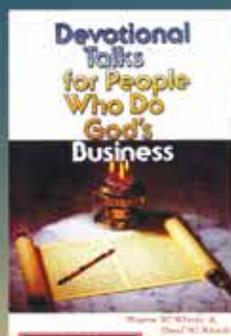
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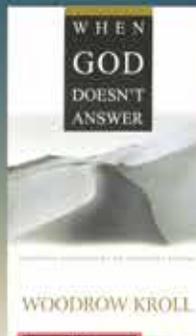
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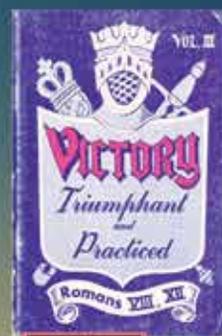
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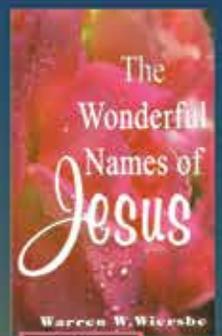
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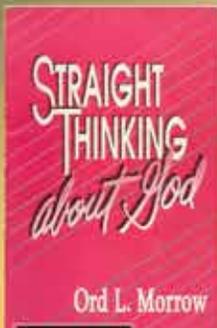
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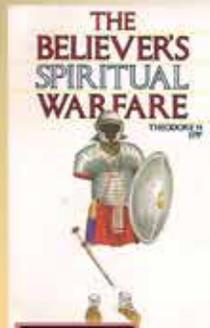
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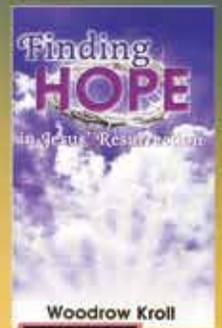
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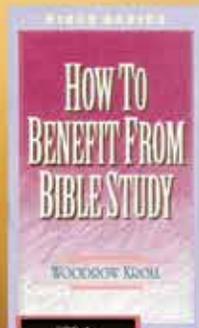
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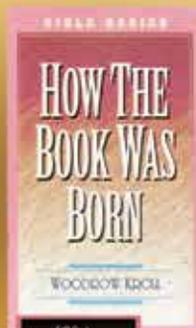
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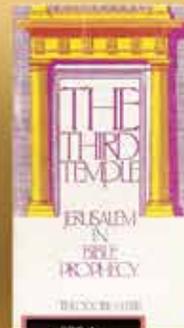
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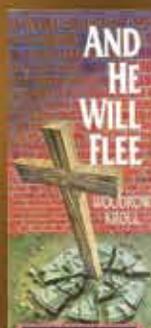


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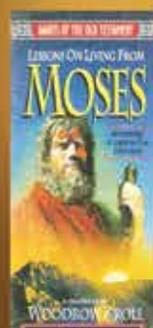
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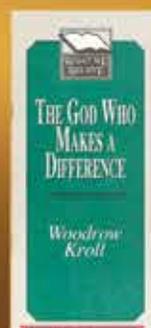
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