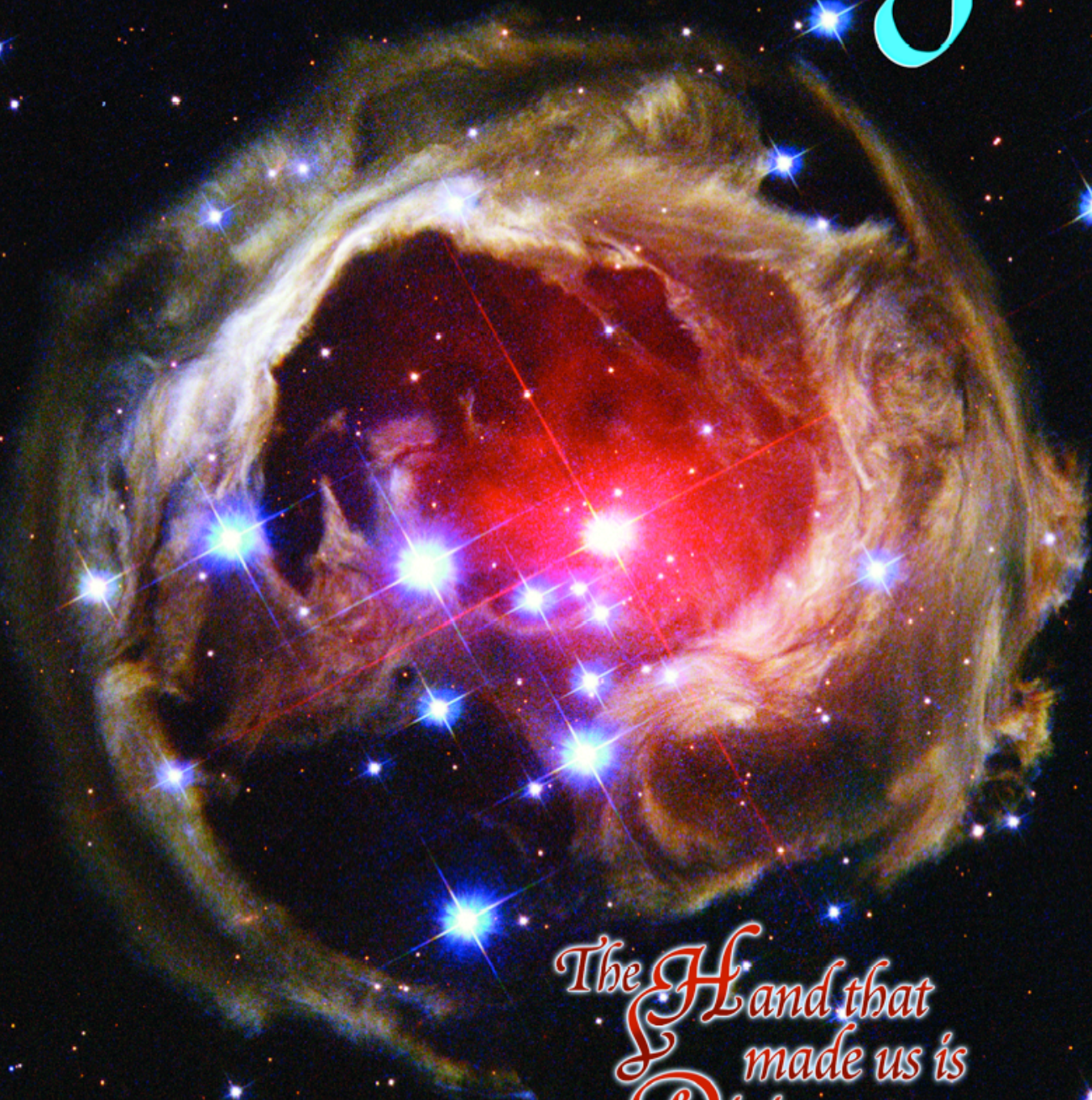


# Megiddo Message

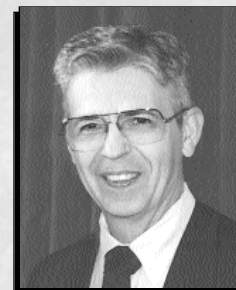
January/February, 2005



The Hand that  
made us is  
Divine.



# Details, Details



GERALD R. PAYNE

When I was employed by a company that manufactured precision parts, I observed many lessons about the importance of detail.

We were making small cylindrical plastic bearings to very tight tolerances. To accomplish this, many details had to be considered. Temperature and humidity were critical. The machinist also had strictly detailed instructions on exactly how to measure the parts using a micrometer. After days of training and retraining, the machinist was finally producing quality parts consistently. Inspection was reduced to a minimum.

Then suddenly, every part produced was trash. The outside diameter was too small. I immediately checked my micrometer to be sure it was in the best of condition and calibration. It was.

The next step was to order the operation shut down, pending investigation and correction. After careful examination, it was determined that the machinist had inadvertently caused the problem by touching the measuring surface of the micrometer. The oils left behind from that one touch resulted in many hours of lost time and a lot of defective parts.

That error reminds me of Uzzah, who was struck dead because he simply touched the ark. David, Israel's second king, had decided to relocate the ark to the city of David. The

*God means  
exactly what He says.*

Lord through Moses had given precise instructions in regard to carrying the ark. But when the oxen shook the cart, Uzzah, apparently unaware, put his hand on the ark to steady it (2 Samuel 6:6-7). The Lord struck him dead on the spot.

Why was the Lord so severe with Uzzah? Wasn't it a small, even thoughtful deed, to reach out to steady the ark? But the Lord wanted obedience to every detail. Uzzah had not paid due respect to the law.

God does not approve our taking His instructions lightly. He means what He says. The result of God's judgment against Uzzah caused David and his people to pay careful attention to God's instructions, in order to prevent further disaster.

If we want to be among the happy ones to partake of God's promises, paying close attention to the details in His Word is prerequisite. Not only does He want us to pay close attention to His Word, but we must not overlook even a detail we consider minor. The Lord is clear: obey my law and live, disobey and die (Ezek. 18:19b-20a).

James says it another way: *"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all"* (Jas.

2:10)—because a broken law stands between him and complete obedience.

Saul is another classic example of one who did not follow instructions precisely. The orders from God were to utterly destroy the Amalekites and all that they had. When Samuel found Saul after the battle, Saul said confidently, *"I have carried out the Lord's command."*

*"Then what is all the bleating of sheep...I hear?"* Samuel demanded.

Saul was quick to blame his troops, but Samuel—and God—knew Saul had disobeyed. *"Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you from being king"* (1 Samuel 15:13, 26 NLT).

Is the Lord harsh and unmerciful for such drastic actions, i. e., slaying Uzzah and rejecting Saul? When we look closely at the circumstances, we see just the opposite. The Lord, who knows the thoughts and intents of our heart, will never slay anyone who will obey Him, but will be with them until their work is completed (Heb. 13:5-6). God is merciful and long-suffering (Ps. 103:17-18), and does not want anyone to perish (2 Pet. 3:9).

Can we find fault if He acts decisively against one who disregards His explicit instructions? (see Ex. 25:14; Num. 4:15; Deut. 10:8).

What was the result of the Lord's actions? King David was so alarmed that he discontinued moving the ark until he had called a priestly assembly and made sure they would do exactly as commanded. David understood perfectly that God means just what He says. (Read what David said in 1 Chronicles 15:2, after Uzzah was killed.)

When the children of Israel went into the Promised Land, God commanded that they destroy all the nations there. Why? He knew His people would be drawn to their abominable practices (Deut. 20:17-18).

Israel did not obey and suffered the consequences.

Do I hear some one saying, "I'm just not a 'detail person'"? If you were about to have major surgery and discovered your surgeon was not a "detail person," how would you feel?

Without those who pay close attention to detail, we would not have our space program, our automobiles, not even the common light bulb.

When God chose to communicate to us through the written Word, He included great detail. The message regarding salvation, what it is, and how we qualify is repeated time and again in different words and with many examples so that we can understand. Isn't it reasonable that He requires attention to detail? And, yes, He gives us examples of what happens when one ignores His instructions.

Every righteous person learned the importance of following God's instructions—every detail. Have you learned it? ♦





# Keep the *Big Picture*

*W*isit devastated Southeast Asia, where a tsunami recently claimed thousands of lives. Drop down in the war-torn cities of the Middle East, or the areas of Africa where ethnic strife has claimed thousands of lives, and thousands of others are starving for lack of the bare necessities of life. Step into the drug zone of any of our larger cities, where violence is the rule of life, and ask: Where is God in the midst of all this?

Or consider the everyday problems in America, where children are growing up without any knowledge of or desire for God; where the Bible is handed out freely in prisons but God's name cannot be honored in public schools. Think about the financial and emotional stresses on family life, the rapid spread of the AIDS virus worldwide, immorality and indecency being glorified daily by the media, and the drugs and alcohol being freely circulated among our youth. Where are we headed? What is the future of our world?

The God of the Bible has the answer: *"Look up!"* Look at the big picture, at the myriad stars that stud the nighttime sky. *"Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing"* (Isa. 40:26).

Yes, look up! Keep the big picture. While civilizations rise and fall, trailing disaster in their wake, we dare not confine our field of vision to the present. The scenes around us are not the whole of life. We need to keep the big picture—of the plan which God is working out in His vast creation; of life as God will have it on our own planet in the near future. We need to remember why we are here, and where we are headed—in God's eternal purpose.

*"Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing"*

—Isaiah 40:26

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Volume 92 No. 1

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## MEGIDDO MEANS...

"a place of troops" (Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon); "a place of God" (Young's Analytical Concordance). Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

## WE BELIEVE...

- ♦ in God, the Creator and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- ♦ in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- ♦ in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to

heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.

- ♦ in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- ♦ in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- ♦ in humankind as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- ♦ in ourselves as capable, with the help of God, of applying to our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

- ♦ in the promise of God, that Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and worldwide Kingdom of peace and righteousness, until God's will is done here as it is now done in heaven.

## THE HERALD AND THE KING

OUR PLANET will soon witness the greatest events in its history. For centuries God has been silent. But that silence will soon be broken by the arrival of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. "*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord...lest I come and smite the earth with a curse*" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Then shall follow the King of kings and Lord of lords, to begin His momentous work of transforming our world into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God.



continued from page 3

Despite the scenes of human misery and suffering that surround us, God is this very moment working out His purpose, and His plan will succeed.

The God who created us is still in control. This earth is His world, His long-term project, and His plan will succeed. *"The Lord is God, and he created the heavens and earth and put everything in place. He made the world to be lived in, not to be a place of empty chaos'"* (Isa. 45:18 NLT)—*"a world to be lived in,"* not by irreverent, immoral, indecent, lawless human creatures but by a whole new creation, a family of men and women who will live according to His higher laws and enjoy the blessings of peace and righteousness eternally.

However distressing the scenes around us, God is still in control, and when the time is right He will intervene. When the time is right, *"He shall send Jesus Christ"* as He promised. He will keep His Word.

God has planned that the earth shall be filled with His glory, a righteous, upright people glorifying His name and enjoying the matchless benefits of righteousness. For *"the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever"* (Isa. 32:17).

Our little world, with its manifold problems, is not the whole picture. This earth is only one among myriads of stars and planets in God's vast creation. Through countless ages in the past God has been creating and glorifying worlds and filling them with His glory, happy immortal beings to whom sickness and suffering are unknown. For *"the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them"* (Ps. 103:17–18).

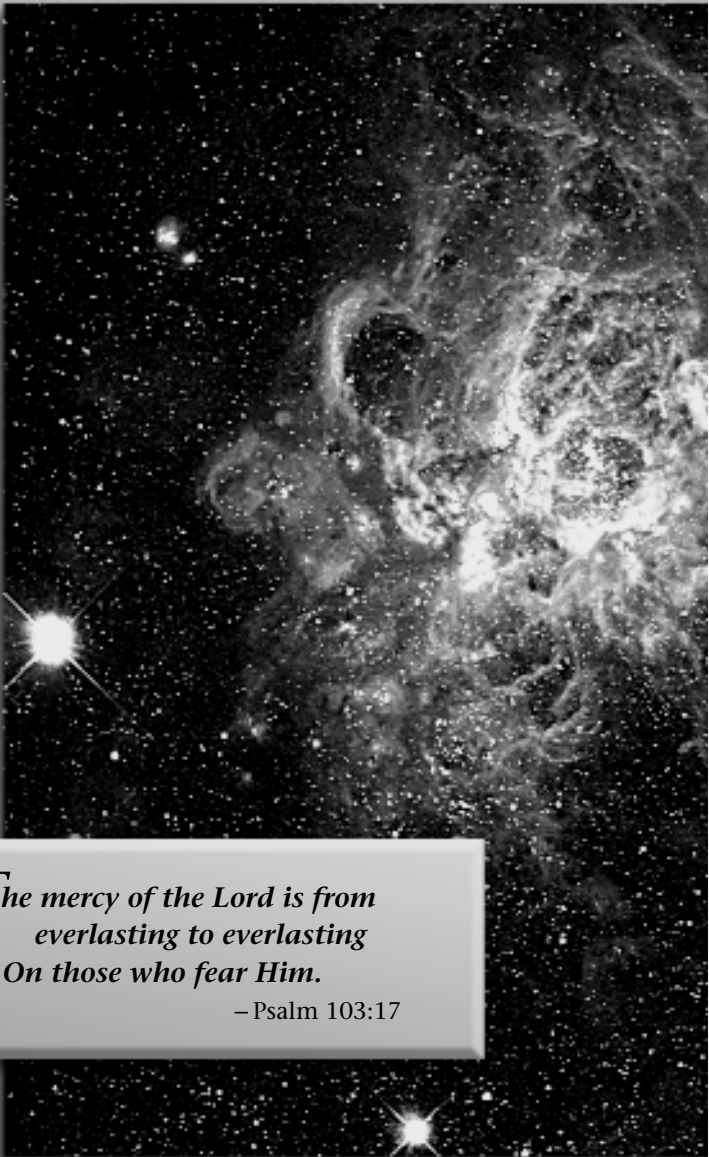
When the mercy of our God is *"from everlasting to everlasting,"* how can we limit our vision to the miseries of our small sphere? Let us keep the big picture! Our God is not the God of one small planet but the God of worlds, the God of universes, the Lord God of hosts—all the hosts of heaven. His territorial claims extend far beyond the boundaries of our earth, or even our solar system. Our galaxy, one hundred thousand light years from rim to rim, six hundred million billion miles of stars—all belong to Him! All the vast stellar empires of space are His, the countless stars and their satellites traveling at inconceivable velocities, all are His! Our Milky Way Galaxy, with its hundred billion stars spinning around a center in the form of a giant disk, is only one among the hundred billion galaxies in His realm.

So numerous are the stars in the Milky Way that it is said that a dime held at arm's length would block out 15 million stars from our view, if our eyes could see with that power.

And some 30,000 light years from the center of the Milky Way is a moderate star, our sun. Hurrying around the hub of its universe, carries with it a family of baby planets. Among those planets is one called Earth. This is our place in the big picture. For *"the heavens belong to the Lord, but he has given the earth to all humanity"* (Ps. 115:16 NIV).

Our sun, powerful enough to impart life-giving energy to every plant on earth, ranks fairly small by the standards of the universe. If the giant star Antares were positioned where our sun is, 93 million miles away, our earth would be inside it! Does not such vastness touch us with a feeling of awe?

Only one other of the hundred million galaxies lies close enough for us to see with the naked eye, and it is two million light years away. This galaxy, Andromeda, showed up on star charts long before the invention of the telescope, and until recent years no one knew that its little blob of light marked the presence of another whole galaxy, one twice the size of the Milky Way and the home of a trillion stars.




*The mercy of the Lord is from  
everlasting to everlasting  
On those who fear Him.*

—Psalm 103:17

continued on page 6





Whatever comes or goes in our little lives, let us keep the big picture! When the future seems bleak, look up! He who can order and direct the universes, can we not trust Him to direct our little lives?

It was God's message to Job. *"Can you bind the beautiful Pleiades? Can you loose the cords of Orion? Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the Bear with its cubs? Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up God's dominion over the earth?"* (Job 38:31–33 NIV). These were questions that God directed long ago to a man who had become obsessed with his own great pain, and had confined his vision to the borders of himself.

What was God saying to Job? Keep the big picture. His message can help us also. With this heavenly perspective, Job could see beyond his problems to other matters which God must attend to in a universe of a hundred billion galaxies—and more.

God's words to Job may seem unsympathetic, but they are the message he needed—and we need—to take to heart: that God is the God of universes, and our little world is part of that vast creation, and His children are never outside the reach of His Omnipotence. Soon, very soon, we shall have help from above.

This is the big picture. Let us keep it vivid in our minds, and grasp heartily the opportunity He has extended to us, to be part of the big picture.

Oh, the big picture! Let the glow of it stimulate us to keep on with our serving, sacrificing, giving, until God makes us a part of it—forever!

Let's learn to think big, above our little problems, our little needs and little aggravations. Let us take a long view of our life and see the present moment as God sees it—a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to prepare for eternity.

Perspective makes all the difference, whether our earth looks large or small. If you are an ant crawling over a blade of grass, a single field seems infinite. If you are an angel looking at the earth from another world, you see it like it is.

We do not want the ant-perspective. We want the angel view. Let's keep the big picture. ♦



o outside on a clear night and look into the star-studded heavens. There light coming from a star strikes our eye. If it is a relatively near star, the light coming from this star left on its journey toward us long ago, perhaps while David was tending his sheep in the Palestinian hills, and it has been coming toward us ever since, traveling at the speed of light, 186,000 miles every second of every hour of every day for some 3,000 years. Does your mind bog down when you can scarcely begin to comprehend the distance in a single light year, to say nothing of 3,000 light years? The Hubble telescope is taking photographs of galaxies that are billions of light-years distant.

To travel the distance of a single light year one would have to make 40 million trips around the earth, the equivalent of six trillion miles.

### **Gifts from Our Magnificent God**

The fact that you and I are able to walk, and talk, and see are all evidence of the marvelous creative ability of our Maker. For the capacity to

## **Look Up!**

think, to remember, and to combine words meaningfully so that others can understand, we depend upon what He has put within the framework of our bodies. All consciousness and intelligence is the gift of God. All science is only the study of what God has made. The magnificent wisdom of God is behind the growth of every blade of grass, every leaf in the forest, every drop of water in the ocean, every cell in our bodies, and every atom in the elements around us, as well as the incomprehensible number of stars in the universes.

Long before our little minds started functioning, God created the things that we are just now *"discovering"* by our advanced knowledge systems and powerful instruments. Behind everything we see and touch and experience is the mighty power of God.

### **Who Am I?**

Who am I in this vast creation? One out of six billion human creatures on one small planet, in





# Whose Footprint?

“F

ather,” said Eric, looking up from his studies. “How do you know there is a God?”

“That’s a really good question to think about, Son. But what makes you ask it?” said the father.

“Well, I heard one of the teachers say that every society makes its own god to fit its needs. Is there any way really to know?”

“Well, Son, do you remember the other day that you were laughing about Robinson Crusoe’s dismay at discovering that there were other persons on the island beside himself? How did he know? Did he see them?”

“No,” answered Eric. “He discovered *one track* of a bare foot in the sand, and he knew it wasn’t his own.”

“That’s right. What else did he know?” encouraged Father.

“Well, he knew that only a human being could have made that footprint and whoever made it was not far away, because the tide had not yet reached it.”

“Exactly!” Father replied “All those things he *knew* to be true, although he had not seen a human being within miles of the island. And all that knowledge was gained from a single mark in the sand.”

“So you see, Son,” his father continued, “if one print of a bare foot in the sand is absolute proof of the existence and presence of a human being, what are we to suppose when we see the footprints of the Master Designer everywhere—on earth and in the heavens?”

“I see—” was Eric’s thoughtful response. “Like—animal instincts that boggle scientists, or the immune system, diseases, or simply the cell...”

“You’ve got it!” beamed his father. “I marvel at the intricate balances in nature—like the dependency of animals and plants on each other.”

“And, Dad,” Eric added, “there are millions of different plants and animals—some really weird, yet they’re alive doing their own thing. Like the ugly sea cucumber we saw.”

They were both quiet for a while. Then Father continued. “God’s fingerprints are everywhere we look in this vast universe, perfectly made and ordered, from the tiniest to the greatest. With the electron microscope men can peer into the microcosm and see the marvelous arrangements of the atom. On the other hand, with telescopes like Hubble, they gaze into outer space at a hundred billion galaxies, each composed of billions of stars. What do all those things mean—those billions of footprints on the clay of the world? They mean *God living, ruling, directing, creating!* They mean an Almighty, Omniscient, all powerful *God* and nothing else!” ♦

one small solar system, in one of the smaller galaxies of one of the universes—how does God even know I am here? In the words of King David, “*what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?*” (Ps. 8:4 NIV). So great, so mighty, so all-powerful, yet He has offered to draw His children, those who meet His standards, into the circle of His special concern (Mal. 3:16–17). He has offered to let us drink of the river of His pleasures (Ps. 36:7–9), to taste the joy of His salvation (Isa. 12:3), to give us a share in His Divine nature (2 Pet. 1:2–3), and to crown us as eternal members of His eternal family (2 Cor. 6:17–18).

What shall we think about such a God? What shall we think about so high a calling and honor? Our God is big—big in holiness, big in love, big in goodness, big in giving! He is big beyond our grandest fathoming, even “*exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think*” (Eph. 3:20). ♦



# Ode to the Deity

*Oh! Thou Eternal One!  
Whose presence bright All space doth occupy—all  
motion guide;  
Unchang'd through time's All-devastating flight,  
Thou, only God! There is no God beside.  
Being above all beings! Mighty One,  
Whom none can comprehend and none explore;  
Who fill'st existence with Thyself alone;  
Embracing, all-supporting, ruling o'er—  
Being whom we call God, whom we adore.*

*In its sublime research,  
Philosophy may measure out the ocean deep—  
May count the sands or the sun's rays—  
But God! for Thee  
There is no weight nor measure;  
None can mount up to Thy omniscience;  
Reason's brightest spark,  
Unkindled by Thy light,  
In vain would try to trace Thy counsels  
Their minds so dark  
That thought is lost  
Ere thought can soar so high;  
Lost like past moments in Eternity.*

*Thou in the endless ages past and gone  
Didst form and shape the earth;  
O Lord on Thee  
Eternity had its foundation;  
All sprang forth from Thee, of light, joy, harmony,  
Sole origin; all life, all beauty Thine.  
Thy hand created all, and doth create;  
Thy splendor fills all space with rays divine.  
Thou art, and wert, and shalt be,  
Glorious! Great!  
Life-giving, life-sustaining Potentate!*

*Thy chains  
The unmeasur'd Universe surround;  
Upheld by Thee, by Thee inspired with breath!  
Thou the beginning with the end hast bound,  
And in Thy wisdom mingled Life and death.  
As sparks mount upward from the fiery blaze,  
So suns are born,  
So worlds spring forth from Thee;  
And as the spangles in the sunny rays  
Shine round the silver snow,  
The pageantry of heaven's bright army  
Glitters in Thy praise.*

*A million torches lighted by Thy hand  
Wander, unwearied, thro' the blue abyss;  
They own Thy power,  
Accomplish Thy command,  
All filled with life, all eloquent with bliss.  
What shall we call them?—  
Worlds of crystal light?  
A glorious company of golden streams?  
Lamps of celestial ether burning bright?  
Suns lighting systems with their joyous beams?  
But Thou, to these,  
Art as the noon to night!*

*Yes! As a drop of water in the sea,  
All this magnificence in Thee is lost;  
What are ten billion worlds  
Compared to Thee?  
And what am I then?  
Heaven's unnumbered host,  
Though multiplied by myriads,  
And array'd in all the glory  
Of sublimest thought,  
Is but an atom in the balance,  
Weigh'd against Thy greatness!  
—Is a cipher brought against Infinity!  
What am I then? Naught!*



*Naught!—Yet the effulgence  
Of Thy light divine,  
Pervading worlds, hath reach'd my bosom, too;  
Yes! In my being doth Thy wisdom shine  
As shines the sunbeam in a drop of dew.  
Naught!—but I live, and on Hope's pinions fly,  
Eager, toward Thy presence; for in Thee  
I live, and breathe, and dwell; aspiring high,  
Even to the throne of Thy divinity;  
I am, O God! and surely Thou must be!*

*Thou art! directing, guiding all, Thou Art!  
Direct my understanding then to Thee!  
Control my Spirit—guide my wand'ring heart.  
Tho' but an atom 'midst immensity.  
Still, I am something, fashioned by Thy hand;  
Pray help me serve in faith my course on earth,  
As nearing the end of man's rule now I stand,  
Close to the realms  
Where angels have their birth,  
Just on the boundary of the Glory-land!*

*The realm of being is complete in me;  
In me is matter's last gradation lost,  
And the next step is - Immortality!  
Made in Thy image, who am now but dust,  
A monarch, and a priest, with Christ for God!  
Whence came I here? and how?  
—So marvelously constructed  
And conceived?—Unknown!  
This clod lives  
Surely through some higher energy,  
For, of itself alone, it could not be!*

*Creator! Yes, Thy wisdom and Thy word  
Created me! Thou source of life and good!  
Thou comfort of my spirit, and my Lord!  
Thy light, Thy truth, in their bright plenitude  
Filled me with an immortal hope,  
To spring o'er the abyss of death,  
With angels wear the garments of eternal day,  
And wing my heavenly flight  
Beyond this little sphere,  
Someday to Thee, its Source, its Author, there.*

In the 18th century, Russian poet Gabriel Romanowicz Derzhavin (b. 1743), minister of Justice under Catherine the Great, composed this inspiring tribute to our Creator. English translation by Dr. Bowring.

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Academy/5185/1-4diety.html>



## In Perspective

If you had to pay one penny for every 1000 miles you traveled,

- ◆ You could go around the world for 25 cents.
- ◆ A trip to the moon would cost \$2.38.
- ◆ You might even afford a trip to the sun, for \$930.00
- ◆ Want to head for a star?

Better start saving up now. A trip to the nearest star would cost \$260,000,000.







# How Big Is Your God?

Everyone worships someone or something. Probably a few egomaniacs see themselves as all sufficient for their needs, but most of us soon or late realize that we are not adequate to sustain our own existence. We cannot solve all our own problems, much less those of Planet Earth. The devastation caused in Indonesia by a tsunami is a grim reminder that we do not have power over the forces of nature.

Ancient people used wood or stone to create their idea of what they wanted to worship. Modern gods take the form of money, or pleasure, or lust, or popularity—anything to fill the void of meaninglessness.

When the Apostle Paul talked to the people of Athens, people who did not know the true and living God, he introduced this true God as their Creator. He is the *“God, who made the world and everything in it”* (Acts 17:24)—could any of their handmade gods do anything to compare with the greatness and power of this true and living Being?

Men and women may deny Him, but the facts remain. God is—all powerful, all holy, all righteous, all knowing. In serious moments we realize we do indeed need God. *“I need Thee every hour”* is more than pleasing hymnbook meter. It is a fact we should never forget, for in Him *“We live, and move, and have our being”* (Acts 17:28). Should He cut off our supply of oxygen, all of us would die quickly, as the patriarch Job observed long ago (Job 34:14).

The Bible tells us how in former times people who worshipped God were moved in heart by the thought of His power. They were stirred to holiness by His goodness. They were filled with wonder by His purposes, and awed by the thought of His judgments. Because they had complete con-

fidence in His ability, they trusted their entire lives to His guidance. When they approached Him in prayer, they prayed as though their life depended on gaining an audience in His presence.

How is it with us? How close do we live to God? Is it our strong desire to approach the throne of grace for mercy, forgiveness, and with gratitude for each new day? Or are we, as someone has said, almost casual in our approach to God? *“We turn into His presence almost nonchalantly, shoving the door open with a lazy shoulder. We speak to Him as though He did not matter too much to us, as if He were about on our level, He and we.”*

How do we deepen our realization of God?

I would like to borrow a phrase from a serious thinker of yesterday, J. C. Ryle: *“Think magnificently about God.”*

## **Think magnificently about your Creator.**

To Him each one of us owes our very existence. We came into being by the laws He set in motion. *“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it,”* sang the Psalmist of Israel (Ps. 24:1 NIV). *“For the Lord is a great God, the great King above all gods. In His hands are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to Him. The sea is His, for He made it; and His hands formed the dry*





## The Lord Is My Keeper

*I look up to the mountains—  
does my help come from there?  
My help comes from the Lord,  
who made the heavens and the earth!  
He will not let you stumble and fall;  
the one who watches over you will not sleep.  
Indeed, he who watches over Israel  
never tires and never sleeps.  
The Lord himself watches over you!*

*The Lord stands beside you as your protective shade.  
The sun will not hurt you by day,  
nor the moon at night.  
The Lord keeps you from all evil  
and preserves your life.*

*The Lord keeps watch over you as you come and go,  
both now and forever.*

—Psalm 121 NLT

land. Come, let us bow down and worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker, for He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care" (Ps. 95:3–7 NIV). Yes, think magnificently about God, the Creator!

Think of the narrow range of temperatures we are able to tolerate; also the inclination of the earth's axis at 23.5 degrees. If it were tipped more, or less, we are told a torrid zone would be created that we could not stand. Or tip it the other way, and it would be a deep freeze we could not survive. Every detail must be just right. Think further of the relationship between sea and land, between plant and animal life, and all the natural resources that sustain plant and animal life.

Yes, think magnificently about God! Here is the work of an infinitely Wise Mind, whose creation speaks to us in a million ways of power beyond our ability to fathom, much less duplicate. Here is creative power in extravagance that stirs sensitive minds and hearts to reverence and awe. Yes, think magnificently about God! ♦

*O Lord, our Lord, the majesty of your name fills the earth!  
Your glory is higher than the heavens.*

*When I look at the night sky and see the  
work of your fingers—  
the moon and the stars you have set in place—*

*What are mortals that you should think of us,  
mere humans that you should care for us?*

*O Lord, our Lord, the majesty of your name fills the earth!*

—Psalm 8:1, 3–4, 9 NLT

*A psalm of David, to be accompanied  
by a stringed instrument.*







One of the saddest facts about gambling is that the casino promoters are appealing to senior citizens to use their Social Security checks on gambling. Some Indian-operated casinos now derive 50 percent of their revenues from senior citizens. "To encourage seniors to gamble their Social Security checks, casinos dispatch buses to retirement communities and senior centers and offer free luncheon buffets" (report in the *Los Angeles Times*).

## STATE LOTTERIES

A state lottery is a form of gambling in which a large number of people purchase chances, called lottery tickets. Money collected by the sale of the tickets is divided by the bank or house controlling the lottery. Winning tickets are drawn randomly from a pool composed of all tickets sold or offered for sale to determine the winners of prizes. A large amount of the money collected (typically 40 to 50 percent) is kept by the promoter to cover "costs"—including profits for the sponsoring agent. The remainder is returned to the bettors in the form of prizes to the winning numbers. In most large-scale lotteries, a very large prize is offered, along with many smaller ones.

The result is a crazed and ill-informed mass of people who are anxious to give more and more in hope of winning the lottery. Underneath, the state is taking advantage of the people it is committed to help. And it is undermining the very source of its support, not to mention the virtues of industry, thrift, and patience which are being destroyed by this promoting of avarice, greed, and lust and statistics show that historically, organized crime has been heavily involved in the gambling industry.

## CASINO GAMBLING...GAMBLING TO LOSE

Thomas Jefferson said that gambling was like a voluntary tax. But he didn't know about the modern casino.

The casino gambler is the exploited victim of greedy casino operators. Modern casinos, it is reported, utilize every possible and imaginable scheme to get the gambler to part with as much of his money as possible, and to be happy doing it. Almost

*continued on page 14*

There is no verse in Scripture that says clearly, "Thou shalt not gamble." But many commands bear upon it, either directly or indirectly.

*"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength"* (Mark 12:30). How can one gamble and at the same time show love to the God who gives us all we have?

*"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."* (Matt. 6:24). Gambling easily becomes one's master.

*"The love of money is the root of all evil"* (1 Tim. 6:10). The whole gambling craze is an outgrowth of an uncontrolled love of money.

*"Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be satisfied with what you have"* (Heb. 13:5 NCV). Christians are not to be coveting money they have not properly earned.

*"People who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction"* (1 Tim. 6:9 NLT). In other words, the desire to be rich is suicidal. Gambling is just such a temptation and a snare, ruining those who develop an uncontrolled desire for it.

*"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world"* (1 John 2:15-16). Gambling is an uncontrolled lust for pleasure. It is part of the world, its games, its pleasure-seeking, its lusts, and the Christian is commanded to "come out from among them" (2 Cor. 6:17).

*"They don't care anymore about right and wrong, and they have given themselves over to immoral ways. Their lives are filled with all kinds of impurity and greed"* (Eph. 4:19 NLT). Wagering is greed, and greed is sin.

**What should we as  
Christians do with gambling?  
Have nothing to do with it.**



*continued from page 13*

every element in a casino—the scent of the air, the color of the machines, the cushioning on the stools, the type and intensity of the lighting, the layout of the room—is designed to keep gamblers there longer and to separate them from as much of their money as possible. “Psychologically, casinos don’t want gamblers to realize how much they are losing,” says one dealer.

Casino gambling machines, upon which bettors “play” and stake their money, are designed to give advantage to the casino house operators. Since all casino games give the house a mathematical edge, the longer a player gambles, the greater the house’s chance of winning.

Casinos amass personal information on bettors to reward steady players with “comps”—complementary meals, show tickets, hotel stays—anything to get them to come more frequently and stay longer—and so leave more of their money behind. Computers also track each bettor’s “average worth” (how much he should *lose* based on his time spent gambling and the house’s fixed percentages). Who is the surest winner? The casino operator!

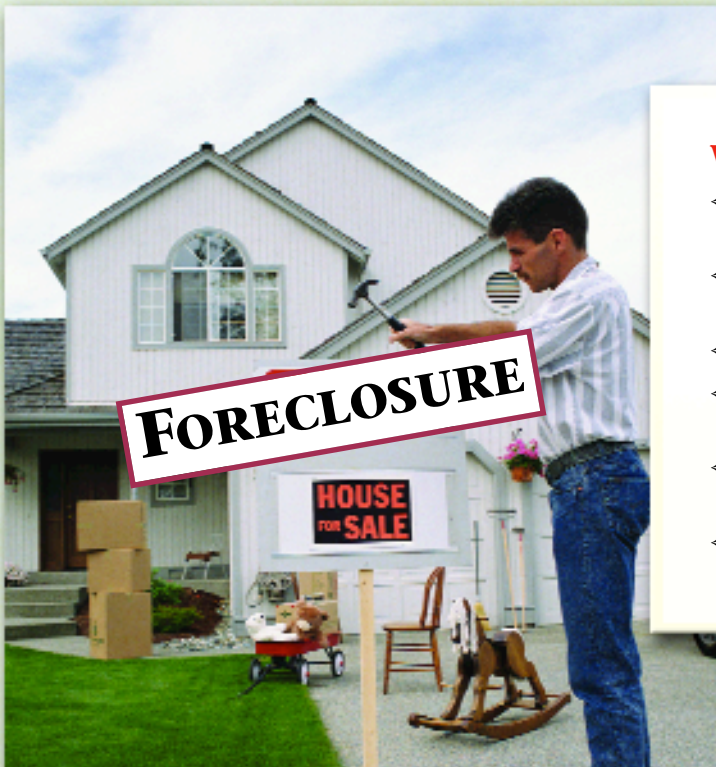
Governments may make gambling legal, but they cannot make it right, or moral, or even profitable for the gambler.



### Teen Poker Leads to Gambling Addiction

A new concern is the astounding popularity of poker among American teens. Fueled by the allure of televised poker tournaments with \$5 million payouts, teens are organizing their own poker games with winning pots ranging from a few coins to hundreds of dollars.

Conscientious parents see the danger of these young people developing a gambling addiction, no less dangerous or devastating than an addiction to drugs or alcohol.



### What's Wrong With Gambling?

- ❖ Gambling puts one’s finances—which are in reality God’s property—at the risk of undirected chance.
- ❖ Gambling puts the desire for money above the proper use of it as a trust from God.
- ❖ Gambling focuses one’s mind on this world.
- ❖ Gambling is rooted in a love of the world, a love of money, and a love of ease, “something for nothing.”
- ❖ The gambler chooses to trust “Lady Luck,” rather than God.
- ❖ Gambling is directly opposed to joyful, meaningful, responsible Christian living.





## GAMBLING, A Misuse of Money

Gambling is a misuse of money. The Bible principle is that we work and receive money in return for our work. *“Those who work deserve their pay”* (Luke 10:7 NLT). Gambling violates that principle with its hope of give little and gain much—instantly.

Money is properly a medium of exchange, value for value, just and fair. This pattern is described in Scripture again and again. A certain amount of money is considered approximately equal to value of the goods or services for which it is traded. When we are employed, we agree to give our employer a certain amount of our time and resources in exchange for a certain amount of money. When we spend money, we are trading an amount of money for an amount of goods or services.

The Bible teaches responsibility in handling oth-

Christian, anti-faith, anti-God. It is even against one's own best interests.

Gambling idolizes money. It is a consuming interest in acquiring of money that places the love of money ahead of love for God, or family, or any other rightful interest.

Gamblers by betting money are acting irresponsibly with their property.

The Bible teaches that all we have and are belongs to God. Everything we have is from God. We are stewards, not owners. We show ourselves irresponsible when we put any of these resources at needless risk.

## WHAT DOES **GOD** SAY?

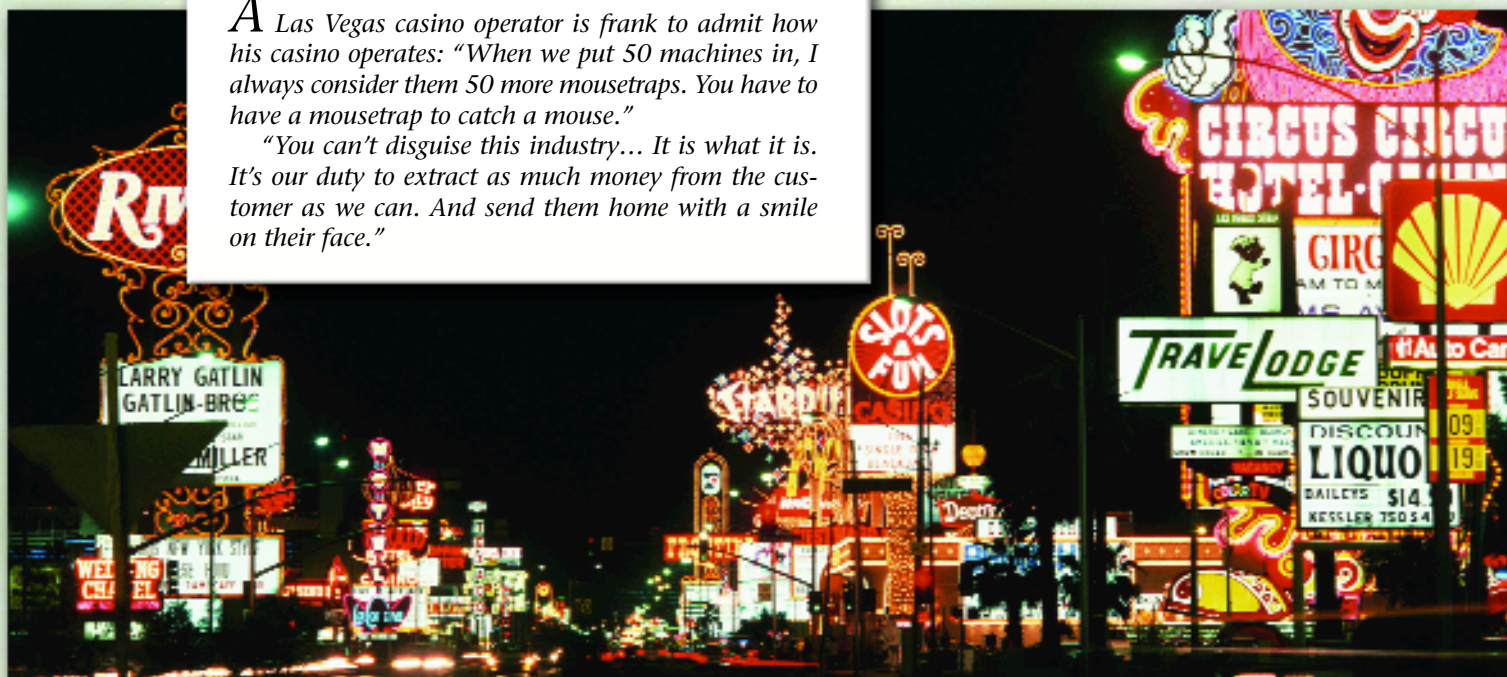
ers' property (Luke 19:11-19; Matt. 25:11-20; 1 Cor. 4:1-3). As Christians, we are stewards, not owners. Everything we have—including our life, our energy, our property, our money—belongs to God and is only loaned to us. *“In him we live and move and have our being”* (Acts 17:28).

Since our money is God's property in our hands, we are accountable to God for how we use it. Gambling opposes the basic principles of responsible handling. Gambling is the voluntary placing of one's property at an uncontrolled risk of chance. It is anti-

*The casino gambler is the exploited victim of greedy casino operators.*

*A Las Vegas casino operator is frank to admit how his casino operates: “When we put 50 machines in, I always consider them 50 more mousetraps. You have to have a mousetrap to catch a mouse.”*

*“You can't disguise this industry... It is what it is. It's our duty to extract as much money from the customer as we can. And send them home with a smile on their face.”*







### More about casinos...

The casino typically accepts all bets made by its patrons within a limit established so that a patron cannot win more than the casino can afford to pay. *Every game offered gives the casino a mathematical expectancy of winning, and it is unlikely that a casino might lose money on its games, even for one day.* Because of this virtual assurance of gross profit, casinos regularly offer big bettors extravagant inducements in the form of free spectacular entertainment, transportation, and elegant living quarters. Even lesser bettors are offered reduced-fare transportation, hotel rooms, free drinks and cigarettes while **gambling**, and other inducements.

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<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?tocId=9001560>

### A SELF-APPOINTED GAMBLING "HERO"

#### *Bugsy Siegel*

born February 28, 1906, Brooklyn, New York, USA  
died June 20, 1947, Beverly Hills, California, age 41

**B**y name of **Benjamin Siegel** New York and California gangster was the U.S. crime syndicate's initial developer of Las Vegas **gambling**.

Young Siegel began his career extorting money from Jewish pushcart peddlers on New York's Lower East Side; he then teamed up with Meyer Lansky about 1918 and took to car theft and later bootlegging and **gambling** rackets in New York, New Jersey, and Philadelphia; he and Lansky also ran a murder-for-hire operation, the forerunner of Murder, Inc. In 1931 he was one of the four executioners of Joe "the Boss" Masseria.

In 1937 the syndicate leaders sent him to the West Coast to develop rackets there. In California the handsome gangster successfully developed gambling dens, gambling ships (offshore beyond the 12-mile limit), narcotics smuggling, blackmail, and other illegal enterprises and equally successfully cultivated the company and friendship of Hollywood stars and celebrities. He developed a nationwide bookmakers' wire service and in 1945 began realizing his dream of a gambling oasis in the desert northeast of Los Angeles. In that year he built the Flamingo Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada—"Siegel, Bugsy."

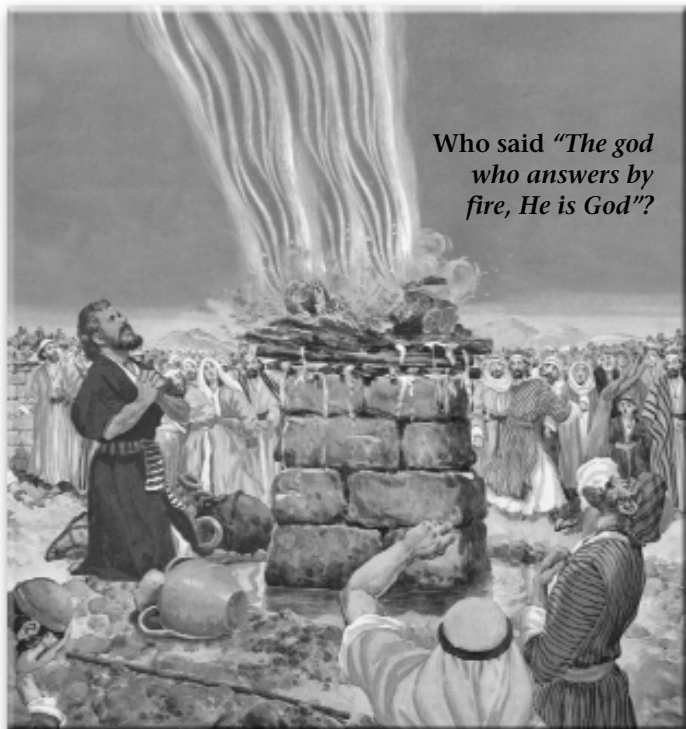
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*G*ambling is  
*anti-Christian, anti-faith,*  
*anti-God. It is even*  
*against one's own*  
*best interests.*

The statistics in this article were published by "American Institute for Economic Research," published July 14, 2003; the 1994 Britannica Book of the Year, subtopic "Gambling", also from the Encyclopedia Britannica 15th Edition, Vol. 7, Subtopic "Gambling" and Vol. 29, Subtopic "United States of America." Also the following websites:

<http://reports.mintel.com/sinatra/mintel/new/report>  
[http://www.desiringgod.org/library/fresh\\_words/2003/010103.html](http://www.desiringgod.org/library/fresh_words/2003/010103.html)  
<http://www.naspl.org/sales&profits.html>  
[http://www.reviewjournal.com/lvrj\\_home/2003/Jun-24-Tue-2003/business/21592447.html](http://www.reviewjournal.com/lvrj_home/2003/Jun-24-Tue-2003/business/21592447.html)  
<http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory?id=288462>  
<http://www.cnn.com/2004/EDUCATION/11/29/poker.playing.teens.ap>





Who said *"The god who answers by fire, He is God?"*

## WHO SAID IT?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ "I will go over and see this strange sight; why the bush does not burn up."
2. \_\_\_\_\_ "My God sent His angel and He shut the mouths of the lions."
3. \_\_\_\_\_ "Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece. This time make the fleece dry and the ground covered with dew."
4. \_\_\_\_\_ "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands."
5. \_\_\_\_\_ "I...was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit."
6. \_\_\_\_\_ "About noon as I came near Damascus, Suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground."
7. \_\_\_\_\_ "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"
8. \_\_\_\_\_ "How can a man be born when he is old?"

## FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. "If you love Me, you will obey what I \_\_\_\_\_."
2. "For the wages of sin is \_\_\_\_\_, but the gift of God is \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ Jesus our Lord."
3. "Children, obey your \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_, for this pleases the \_\_\_\_\_."
4. "Jesus answered, 'I am the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_, and no one comes to the \_\_\_\_\_ except through Me.'"
5. "But the angel said to them, 'Do not be \_\_\_\_\_. I bring you good \_\_\_\_\_ of great \_\_\_\_\_ that will be for all the people.'"
6. "The Lord is my \_\_\_\_\_, I shall not be in \_\_\_\_\_."
7. "Therefore, if anyone is in \_\_\_\_\_ he is a new \_\_\_\_\_; the old has \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ has come!"
8. The first and last tree specifically mentioned in the Bible is the tree of \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is \_\_\_\_\_.

## FAMILY

1. "Honor your \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ ...is the first commandment with promise."
2. "And these words, which I command you today shall be in your \_\_\_\_\_. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when; you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."
3. "My child if sinners \_\_\_\_\_ you, turn your back on them!" (NLT)
4. "My son, hear the instruction of your father, And do not forsake the \_\_\_\_\_ of your mother."
5. "Children, \_\_\_\_\_ your parents in the Lord: for this is right."
6. "And, you \_\_\_\_\_, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."
7. "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; With my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all \_\_\_\_\_."

## ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

### FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. Command (John 14:15)
2. Death, eternal life (Rom. 6:23)
3. Parents, everything, Lord (Col. 3:20)
4. Way, truth, life, Father (John 14:6)
5. Afraid, news, joy (Luke 2:10)
6. Shepherd, want (lack nothing) (Ps. 23:1)
7. Christ, creation, gone, new (2 Cor. 5:17)
8. Life (Gen. 2:9; Rev 22:14)
9. Death (1 Cor. 15:26)

Picture: Elijah (1 Kings 18:22, 24)

### WHO SAID IT?

1. Moses (Exodus 3:3)
2. Daniel (Dan. 6:21-22)
3. Gideon (Judges 6:39)
4. David (Psalm 19:1)
5. John (Rev. 1:9-10)
6. Saul or Paul (Acts 22:6-7)
7. Rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16, 22; Luke 18:18)
8. Nicodemus (John 3:4)

### FAMILY

1. father, mother (Eph. 6:2)
2. heart (Deut. 6:6-7)
3. entice (Prov. 1:10)
4. law (Prov. 1:8)
5. obey (Eph. 6:1)
6. fathers (Eph. 6:4)
7. generations (Ps. 89:1)



# FAITH in Action

Bible Text: Acts 17:1-9

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

2 Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,

3 explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ."

4 And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

5 But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

6 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.

7 Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus."

8 And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things.

9 So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

by RUTH E. SISSON

## ON TO THESSALONICA

 READ ACTS 17:1-9

Leaving Philippi, the missionary trio took to the road. They "*passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica*" (17:1). It is all said in one sentence, but from Philippi to Amphipolis was 33 miles, and from Amphipolis to Apollonia was another 30 miles, and from Apollonia to Thessalonica was 37 miles. This was no easy afternoon stroll!

Thessalonica, the chief city of Macedonia then and now, had been founded more than 300 years earlier when Cassander (the son of Antipater and husband of the step-sister of Alexander the Great) was ruling Macedonia.

Where did Paul go when he reached Thessalonica? To the same logical place he had gone before: *the synagogue*. Why? Paul always took advantage of the Jews' background and the opportunities it gave him in teaching the Gospel of Christ. These people had background that would help them understand Paul's message...if, if only they would reason, if only they would listen with their ears and not with their emotions. Would Paul risk the opposition? Absolutely, because always there was the hope that some would be attracted to his message before the opposition took over.

Recall that Paul had a number of weeks at Philippi before he was pursued. Perhaps the same would happen again in Thessalonica.

It did. Paul had at least three weeks of peaceful time, teaching in the synagogue and reasoning with them from the Scriptures (17:2).

1. What were the Apostle Paul's credentials as a teacher in the synagogue? (Acts 9:15) \_\_\_\_\_

2. What was the source of Paul's teachings? (17:2) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Who was the central person in his teaching? (17:3) \_\_\_\_\_





Paul, Silas and Timothy were ambassadors of the King of kings. They were absolutely sure from the Scriptures that God had foretold the coming of Jesus Christ, and that Jesus had come just as predicted, He had been crucified just as predicted, and resurrected just as predicted. It was all in the Scriptures.

Would this message make Paul popular? No. But it was the only message he could preach, because Jesus Christ was right at the center of his faith in God, and also at the center of the prophecies of Scripture.

4. What positive response did Paul have from the Thessalonian people?

\_\_\_\_\_ From what strata of the society were they? (17:4)

Did their lack of social status matter to God? \_\_\_\_\_ How do you know?

(1 Cor. 1:26). \_\_\_\_\_

5. What did Paul later write about the Thessalonians when they first heard the Word of God? (1 Thess. 2:13) \_\_\_\_\_

Paul's letters to the Thessalonians written some years later show how readily some of the people listened to Paul's message and responded in faith to become earnest believers, *"So that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe"* (1 Thess. 1:7).

### Hatred and Persecution



READ ACTS 17:5-9

But the peace was shortlived. Wherever Paul went, trouble seemed to be waiting for him around every corner. It was a drama repeated, and repeat-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF "BIBLE PLACES.COM"



(above and right)  
**Forum of ancient Thessalonica.**

Very little has been uncovered at ancient Thessalonica because present day Thessaloniki sits atop the remains.

ed, and repeated. The setting changed, and the characters, but the plot was always the same. Always Paul was the object of their fury. Thessalonica was no exception. The synagogue authorities in Thessalonica, however, had a different way of making trouble.

6. Why did the Jews in Thessalonica make trouble for the Christian missionaries? (17:5) \_\_\_\_\_

7. How were the methods of the troublemaking Jews in Thessalonica different from those in towns Paul had visited earlier? (17:5) \_\_\_\_\_



Insight

### Paul Taught the Scriptures

We do not have any details about Paul's preaching in Thessalonica, only that he *"reasoned with them out of the Scriptures."* Paul did not spend his time talking about economics, or politics, or philosophy, or science, or even the latest world events. He did not give them the lectures he would have learned from his teacher Gamaliel. He taught them from only one source: the Word of God.



From the Word

### "Three Sabbath Days"

The Bible tells us he taught for *"three Sabbath days."* This could mean that he taught them daily during a period of three weeks. For those who wanted to learn, Paul was ready to present the whole Gospel of God, the whole plan of salvation, beginning with the Old Testament history and prophecies and concluding with the fulfillment of those prophecies in Christ the Messiah, who was born, suffered, died, and was resurrected and is coming again.



In Acts 17:6, Luke used the Greek word *politarches* (lit. "city ruler") to describe the city officials. This word is found nowhere else in Greek literature, but it was discovered in 1835 in a Greek inscription on an arch that had spanned the Egnatian Way on the west side of Thessalonica. The arch was destroyed in 1867, but the block with the inscription was rescued and is now in the British Museum in London. The term has since been found in 16 other inscriptions in surrounding towns of Macedonia, and elsewhere.



A closer look

### The Word With Power

Paul was no prosperity preacher. He taught the word of truth with power, power to change human hearts and lives. He presented the evidence in a way that was logical, conclusive, and convincing. The result: *"some of them believed"* (17:4). And as he later wrote to the Thessalonians, when *"you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe"* (1 Thess. 2:13).

Oh, the power of the Word of God!





#### A closer look

##### Guilt By Association

When the conspirators could not find Paul and Silas, they turned on Jason. The accusation: that they were teaching things “contrary to the decrees of Caesar, speaking of another king, Jesus” (17:7). This was actually a serious indictment. It was the equivalent of treason, and treason was no small offense.

The Jews designed their accusation to arouse the Roman authorities. Pretending to be concerned with the well being of the Roman Empire, they accused Paul and Silas of causing turbulence and disturbing the peace. Who were they fooling? Everyone knew that the Jews had no love for the Roman Empire, and all that Paul had done was to preach the Gospel peacefully.

Anyone who wanted to cast his lot with the Christians in those early years needed to consider seriously the risks. If you were seen with the offenders, if you were caught helping their cause, you could suddenly and without warning find yourself in the hands of the opposition. Or sitting in prison. Or laid out for a beating. Or dead.

No doubt Jason was grateful to have been released so easily. But believing in Christ was—and is—a commitment to suffer with Christ. “If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him” (2 Tim. 2:12).

8. What action did they take? \_\_\_\_\_

Why did the Jews hire “*certain lewd fellows*”? Were they perhaps hoping to divert attention from themselves? Isn’t it possible they used idle mischief makers who were hanging around the marketplace so that if the riot got out of control, they (the real instigators) would not be culpable?

9. Why did the Jews resist Paul’s teaching? (17:5) \_\_\_\_\_

10. What was the result of the troublemakers’ work? \_\_\_\_\_

Whose house did they attack? \_\_\_\_\_

Why? (17:5) \_\_\_\_\_

Using mob psychology, they soon had the whole city turned against Paul.

Apparently Paul’s friends had picked up a warning of what was about to happen, and by the time the mob reached Jason’s house, the missionaries were gone.

11. Whom did the authorities arrest? (17:6) \_\_\_\_\_

12. What was Jason’s offense? (17:7) \_\_\_\_\_

The troublemakers didn’t want Jason and his fellow believers; they wanted Paul.

13. What backhanded compliment did the troublemakers give to Paul and his fellow missionaries? (17:6) \_\_\_\_\_

The true gospel has power, power to make things happen, power to change a person from the inside out, power to put one’s whole life on a new course, in a new direction, with a new goal. The enemies did not hear the message, but they felt its effects and knew it had power.

14. On what condition were Jason and his fellow believers released? (17:9) \_\_\_\_\_

*to be continued*

## Obituary

Mary T. Wiejek



On December 31, 2004, we met to pay our last respects to a friend and sister, Mary Wiejek, of our Rochester Congregation. Sister Mary was born in Palmer, Massachusetts in 1909 to parents whom had emigrated from Poland. She was married in 1929 to Stanley Wiejek, who was also from Poland. They had two children, Peter and Priscilla, both of whom survive her.

When still a young woman, Sister Mary, then a devout Catholic, heard about the “strange” faith from a sister-in-law who had joined the Megiddo Church. Debates were heated, and being a loyal Catholic, she strongly resisted the influence. But before long, the compelling power of Bible evidence was too much to withstand, and point by point she found herself retreating from the old way and embracing the new faith.

Sister Mary was of a buoyant disposition. Exceptionally energetic and vigorous, she had a vivacious and dynamic personality.

singing in the choir, or cleaning, or cooking, or shoveling snow! With her, to decide was to do.

Sister Mary was active in any part of the church work where she could contribute. She was responsible for composing the text of the weekly Bible School notes for many years, until their publication was discontinued. Their straightforward, question-and-answer format has been appreciated by many. She also worked in the mailing department for many years, being responsible for manually maintaining and updating the metal plates that addressed the Messages for mailing, until the system was computerized about 1980.

Whatever she did, she did it with all her heart, whether it was a drama part, or working with the Message subscriptions, or planting her garden, or

She especially enjoyed music and played drums in the band with the same enthusiasm she gave to every other part of her life.

She loved her Bible, and had a wealth of Bible knowledge, Bible history and choice verses at her command. The “watchword” lists were her daily manna, and she also committed many chapters to memory. During advanced years when her mind began to fail, she could still recite long passages of Scripture almost without a mistake.

Sister Mary invested a lot of time mentoring a young member of the Church who was also a former Catholic. He credits her as having been a strong Christian influence in his life. Especially during her declining years, Brother Ronald took the opportunity to return some of the kindness she had showed him.

Her book is closed. She sleeps, until the day when Jesus returns and the dead in Christ will rise to receive according to what they have done (1 Thess. 4:16-18; Rev. 22:14; Matt. 16:27). ♦



# Why Abib?



We do not have any direct command in the Bible to celebrate the first month of the Jewish year. However, the Bible does tell us to give *"honor to whom honor is due"* (Rom. 13:7 NRSV). We are also told not to conform to the customs of this world (Romans 12:2), and not to be entangled with its affairs (2 Tim. 2:4-5). We are also told to *"Come out from among them and be ye separate"* (2 Cor. 6:17). Because of these commands, combined with the widely recognized fact that December 25 is a date wholly pagan in origin and not the birth date of Christ, we do not celebrate the traditional Christmas in any way.

As for the recognition of Abib, or Nisan, the first month of the Bible year, the Law of Moses was specific. *"Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover unto the Lord thy God"* (Deut. 16:1). The month Abib, being the first month of the year, was to be observed as an important day. Abib, by definition, means "spring, sprouting month, the month of green ears, beginning with the new moon of April or March;...the month of flowers." The ancient Hebrew people recognized the first of Nisan, or Abib, as the beginning of the Sacred year (Ex. 12:2; 13:4-10).

Why do we recognize the month of Abib today? Not because of the command given to Moses but because the evidence of Scripture points to Abib 1 as the time when Jesus Christ, the Messiah was born. The evidence is not conclusive, however a number of points of Scripture suggest it.

First of all, it was an important day on the Hebrew calendar. Psalm 81 speaks of a significant new moon feast, which was a time of celebration and rejoicing, and which was a *"statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob"* (Ps. 81:2-4). The Psalmist tells us also that this new moon, which was recognized as an important day on the Hebrew calendar, was the day when the Israelites left Egypt (Ps. 81:5). It seems likely that the observance of this new moon feast,

rather than the tax decree (Luke 2:1-7), was the event that called both Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, because the presence of only the male member of the house was required for registration. And it was at this time that Jesus was born.

Another factor pointing to the birth of Christ at the new moon in the spring is the setting up of the tabernacle in the time of Moses, an event that has a spiritual parallel in Jesus Christ. Moses was ordered by God specifically when to set up the tabernacle: *"on the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent"* (Ex. 40:2). Is it not reasonable to believe that Jesus, the head of the spiritual house of the Lord (Heb. 3:6), the first to be completed for God's eternal temple, even its *"chief cornerstone,"* would be born on the anniversary of the setting up of the physical tabernacle? (see Heb. 1:10; 9:2, 9, 11.)

As professing Christians, we want to honor Christ, and we want to honor Him at a time that is suitable and in a manner that is reverent. For this reason, the members of the Megiddo Church have for almost a century observed the first day of the sacred New Year on the first new moon after the spring equinox (this year, April 9, 10), as New Year's day and also as the anniversary of the birth of Christ. By dedicating this day to Christ, we renounce the paganism and commercialism of December 25<sup>th</sup> and take a stand for God. At the same time, we recognize Him as one of our race, who was sent by God to be our Perfect Example (Heb. 5:8-9), who shared our nature (Heb. 2:16), our struggles and temptations (Heb. 4:15), and our mortality (Deut. 18:15, 18); who died, was resurrected, and was rewarded with immortality at His Father's right hand, and who is coming soon to be King of the whole earth (Zech. 14:9; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 1:10-11).

We feel that a life so pure, so holy

and  
dedi-  
cated—and  
so essential to us—

is worthy of special honor. Living in an age when His return is imminent, we feel compelled to do everything in our power to stimulate our hope and encourage others to prepare for the great Day of His return.

We remember His birth not to honor the baby in the manger but to recognize the beginning of a mortal career which shall ultimately be the means of our salvation when He returns, bringing eternal life and blessing to all His faithful servants (Phil. 3:20-21; Rev. 22:12, 14; Acts 1:10-11; 1 Pet. 5:4). An event of

**W**hen we honor Jesus,  
we honor our perfect Example,  
our Judge, our Savior, and  
our coming King.

such significance that God sent special messengers from heaven to announce the glad tidings to the shepherds, *"Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord"* (Luke 2:10-14) and a multitude of His heavenly host to praise and exalt the day, we feel justified in commemorating it in our small way. Even more, we feel it is both our duty and privilege to set aside the first of Abib to honor Him who is our Redeemer, our Savior, and our coming King, Jesus Christ. ♦

*Note:* The observance of Abib falls this year on the evening of April 9, 2005, and continuing through the day of April 10, Bible time being measured *"from evening to evening"* (Lev. 23:32). Since the year begins with the first new moon after the Spring Equinox (March 20), which occurs this year on April 8 at 10:00 pm, Abib begins the evening of April 9.



## The Supercool Squirrel

### Arctic Ground Squirrels

**D**o you know the art of successful hibernation? We Arctic ground squirrels do. We are amazing hibernators. This doesn't mean that we do nothing but sleep, but we have a special ability that I want to tell you about.

*Hibernate: 1: to pass the winter in a torpid or resting state 2: to be or become inactive or dormant (Merriam Webster Dictionary)*

Our Designer has given us the amazing ability to cool our bodies below freezing temperatures and still survive. We do this by a process called super cooling. Don't ask me to explain how it works—I don't know. I only know that it is our means of survival in the extreme Arctic conditions. At temperatures that would cause other animals' blood to freeze in their veins, ours just keeps right on flowing.

Now I've heard that your scientists make comments like "the ground squirrels have developed a unique mechanism that allows their body fluids to become supercooled—to fall below the freezing point" and not freeze! Unbelievable? Yes, it is unbelievable, because we ground squirrels had nothing to do with "developing" the process! We didn't do this on our own, anymore than you control how tall you grow, or the color of your eyes. All credit for the wonderful process goes to our great Designer, God Almighty, who planned the process and implemented it. And all before we came along.

**T**o study the Arctic ground squirrel, scientists surgically implant a data logger in the squirrel's abdominal cavity. The logger contains a computer chip, a battery and a thermometer. It records the squirrel's internal temperature every 12 minutes for a year and a half. The squirrel is also outfitted with a small neck collar that has a transmitter, so that scientists can track the squirrel's activities. In this way, they have been able to learn about what happens in the squirrels' bodies during the extreme conditions they are able to survive.



You see, our Creator made us to survive in the extreme environment of the Arctic. That's why we are equipped to tolerate those intolerable temperatures, like a minus 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

The Arctic is our home, year around, and we are very content. But we have to prepare for those long winter days when there is no food to be found.

How do we do it? We eat very intensely all summer long. Then from about the third week in July to the second week in August, we have an insatiable hunger. Seeds, mushrooms, berries, whatever we can find, we *eat non-stop!* During this time many of us actually double our body weight, in preparation for our long sleep. Then, in mid-August, we tuck into our two-foot deep burrows for an 8-month snooze.

What is so unusual about all this? Only this: that we have an ability your scientists would like very much to understand. If they could understand how we hibernate, they think they might be able to duplicate the process and make some great advances in the area of organ transplants, and save many more lives. But perhaps our Creator doesn't want your scientists to learn that secret. Perhaps He keeps His secrets for a reason. I can't speculate.

What can I tell you about our hibernation process? Our patterns, I'm told, break all the rules. If you should cool your body below 32 degrees Fahrenheit, you would die by cardiac arrest—yes, you'd have a heart attack. Your body cells would break open and leak, causing a deadly inundation of injurious ions.

*continued on page 25*



# "It's Not Fair"

**MEMORY VERSE:**

*Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. —Romans 12:10 NLT*

Returning from a visit to the Reynolds farm, the four oldest Johnson children trooped down the road to Happy Acres Farm. As they neared the vacant Blanchard farmstead, Mark cried out in surprise, "Say, looks like there's some people moving in there!"

Excited over the prospect of having new neighbors just half a mile down the road, the four stared eagerly as they walked by the farmstead which was almost hidden by a grove of trees. They saw a small blue car parked in the weed-grown driveway, and a large van backed to the door of the little brown house.

For five years, since old Mr. Blanchard had died, no one had lived in the little brown house. One of the neighbors had rented the fields and the pasture land of the small farm—and boards had covered the windows of the buildings.

Eager to tell what they had seen, the Johnson children raced home. Stephen was the first to burst into the kitchen and report, "Mom, we're going to have neighbors—down at the Blanchard place!"

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, there's a moving van. We could see them unloading furniture into the house."

Mark and Ann now reached the kitchen, and Melissa came puffing behind them.

"I wonder if there'll be any children in the family. Sure hope there's a boy my age," said Mark.

"And a girl my age," added Ann.

Mom had a puzzled look on her face. "Well, if we're going to have neighbors, we should do something to welcome them. For one thing, I know it will be hard for them to do any cooking the first few days. So we could send them a hot dish or something while they are getting settled."

"I'll take the hot dish over," offered Mark.

"Me, too," said Ann.

"But we don't know how many there are in the family, or if they'll even be staying there tonight—" began Mom.

"I can run over and find out," suggested Mark.

"I want to go over with Mark," said Melissa. So did Stephen and Ann and Paul and Beth.

Mom shook her head. "No, it wouldn't be considerate to have six children barging in on folks trying to get moved into that little house. It will be enough to have just one go. Mark was the first to offer, so we'll let him go."

Mark snatched up the sandwich Mom had fixed, and was off in a flash.

Ann pouted. "Oh, it seems like it's always Mark that gets to go."

"Remember who stayed at home when a certain girl was in town shopping?" Mom reminded her.

Ann nodded. That was the day Mark had broken the lamp chimney.

But she sulked over her sandwich and cookie. When she saw Stephen reach to the cookie plate and take the last cookie, she scolded, "Mom, Steve's had two cookies—and the rest of us just got one apiece."

"Ann," said Mom, "we can't ever expect to get everything evened up. There'll always be somebody who gets



more cookies than we do. And always somebody who doesn't get as many cookies as we do. And as long as we keep counting cookies, and watching that we get whatever somebody else gets, we are not going to be very happy. That's just not the Christian way to live with others. We'll be much happier if we are *'kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;'* (Rom. 12:10). To prefer one another means to put the other person first, to love the other person so that you are glad to let him have a cookie—or something that you may not have had yourself."

"Just think of the fun we had playing secret sister and secret brother—because then we were kindly and affectionate to one to another. I'm sure you won't be envious of



Mark—or of Steve because of that cookie—if you’ll stop right now to think of something good that you can do for one of your brothers.”

Ann got up and went outside. She ran down to the chicken shelters to do one of Mark’s chores for him—and filled all the hog troughs, and was surprised to find her envy all gone. Meanwhile, Mark reached the Blanchard place. There was not a sound to be heard as he walked into

the yard. The van was gone. So was the blue car. The boards were off the windows of the house, but no one answered his knock at the door.

#### LET’S TALK ABOUT THIS:

What are some ways in which we can “outdo one another in showing honor” to one another?

## Don’t Circulate Evil Reports

Each day, one of the Johnson children would run down the road to the Blanchard place to see if the new neighbors had come. But each time there was no blue car parked in the drive, no one who answered the rap at the door.

No one in the Pleasant Valley neighborhood knew anything about the new neighbors except that Mr. Gordon who had rented the Blanchard farm had learned that the new owner was a man by the name of Charles Turner and that he lived in Minneapolis or St. Paul.

Then one Saturday, Ann and Melissa returned from an afternoon with the Schramm twins—and they had plenty to report about the new neighbors. Melissa was the first to reach the kitchen door, and her eyes fairly popped as she cried, “Mom, what do you suppose? The people who bought the Blanchard place—why, the man is a-a-a-”

“A *jailbird*,” supplied Ann. “Mrs. Schramm’s cousin from the Cities was there visiting, and she says she knows about the Charles Turners. She said that Mr. Turner has been in jail several times, and she was pretty sure he’d been in the penitentiary, too!”

“Now, now, Ann,” objected Mom, “are you sure you have heard this right?”

“Yes, it is so,” agreed Melissa. “I heard that lady from the Cities say so. She was sure it was the same Charles Turner. And she said we’d just better stay clear of those Turners!”

“Yes,” added Ann, “and Mrs. Schramm says *they* aren’t going to have anything to do with such people. Those Turners have four boys—and Mrs. Schramm’s cousin says they’re all bad boys and they’ll just be jailbirds like their dad. And Mrs. Schramm said, too, that nobody ever saw Mr. Turner come out here to look at the Blanchard place before he bought it, so she’s been suspicious he’s just—”

Mom put her arms around the two excited girls. “I think we’ve repeated enough now about people we really don’t know a thing about. There might well be several Charles Turners living in the Cities. The Charles Turner that is coming to live on the Blanchard place may well be someone Mrs. Schramm’s cousin knows exactly *nothing* about. Let’s not forget that the Bible says, ‘*You shall not circulate a false report*’ (Exod. 23:1 NKJV). How would you girls like it if folks told bad things about you that weren’t so? Even if

it should be true that Mr. Turner has been in jail, or even in the penitentiary, maybe he’s coming out here to live a better life. It wouldn’t be Christian of us to put a stumbling-block in his way (Rom. 14:13) by making it hard for him to live a decent life.”

“Well, what should we do about it?” asked Ann.

“We are not going to repeat to *anyone* what you have

## WORDS

Keep a watch on your words, my children,  
For words are wonderful things;  
They are sweet, like the bees’ fresh honey,  
Like bees, they have terrible stings.  
They can bless like the warm, glad sunshine  
And brighten the lonely life.  
They can cut in the strife of anger  
Like an open two-edged knife.

Let them pass through your lips unchallenged  
If their errand be true and kind,  
If they come to support the weary,  
To comfort and help the blind.  
If a bitter, revengeful spirit  
Prompt words, let them be unsaid;  
They may flash through the brain like lightning  
Or fall on the heart like lead.

Keep them back, if they’re cold and cruel,  
Under bar and lock and seal.  
The wounds they make, my children,  
Are always slow to heal.  
May Christ guard your lips and ever  
From the time of your early youth,  
May the words that you daily utter  
Be the words of the beautiful truth.

Author Unknown



heard this afternoon," said Mom, very firmly.

"But are we going to keep running over to the Blanchard place to see if they've come? I'm scared to now!"

"Don't worry about that. Dad and I will take care of it."

That same evening, the Johnsons piled into the old sedan to go for a visit at the Reynolds farm. As they drove past the Blanchard place, Ann squealed with excitement when she spied a blue car parked beside the little brown house. And that little blue car, she decided, looked exactly like the kind of car that a jailbird would drive! ♦

(to be continued)

#### PRAYER:

*Dear Heavenly Father, help me to watch my words. Help me to remember before I repeat a report to ask, Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary? Then I will not regret my words. Amen.*

#### MEMORY VERSE:

*He who loves his brother abides in the light, and in it there is no cause for stumbling. -1 John 2:10 RSV*

#### LET'S TALK ABOUT THIS:

- ☐ Read Romans 14:13. What are ways we may be a stumblingblock to others?
- ☐ If the Charles Turner that comes to live on the Blanchard place is *not* the jailbird that Mrs. Schramm's cousin knows, what do you think Ann and Melissa should do?
- ☐ What Bible commands are we breaking when we gossip about other people?

The above stories are reprinted from *Happy Acres* by Erling Nicolai Rolfsrud. Published by Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois.

## The Supercool Squirrel

continued from page 22

But to us ground squirrels, below freezing temperatures inside our bodies are just a normal part of winter and nothing to worry about. We also build our winter burrows very cozy, with grasses and block the entrance with dirt. Even so, winter temperatures inside our burrows still fall well below zero degrees Fahrenheit.

And when we go into hibernation, our body temperature drops from the standard 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit to about 26.4 degrees Fahrenheit. Most mammals, including people, would be frozen solid at that temperature! But our blood keeps circulating, our heart keeps beating. There are no ice crystals in our body fluids, and no damage to our cell structures. We're just fine!

The dark months are long, and we occasionally get tired of our dormancy. So once in every two weeks or so, we raise our temperature to the standard 98.6 (it takes about four hours) and go out for a little fresh air. Then back into hibernation.

How is it all possible? We can only thank our wonderful Creator and Designer, who made the earth and all things that are in it (Neh. 9:6). ♦

### Ground Squirrels really hibernate!

A comparison of the physiological rates of bears and ground squirrels in Denali National Park:

	SUMMER HEART RATE	HIBERNATING HEART RATE
BLACK BEAR	60 beats per minute	12 beats per minute
GROUND SQUIRREL	200 to 300 beats per minute	3 beats per minute
	SUMMER RESPIRATORY RATE	HIBERNATING RESPIRATORY RATE
BLACK BEAR	30 breaths per minute	2 breaths per minute
GROUND SQUIRREL	60 breaths per minute	holds breath 30 minutes, takes 10-15 breaths, holds breath again
	SUMMER BODY TEMPERATURE	HIBERNATING BODY TEMPERATURE
BLACK BEAR	98.6 f (37 c)	86 f (30 c)
GROUND SQUIRREL	98.6 f (37 c)	28.4 f (-2 c)

For the scientific data in this article we are indebted to:

<http://www.northstar.k12.ak.us/schools/joy/denali/Hummel/groundsquirrel.html>

[http://www.wildlife.alaska.gov/aawildlife/funfacts/ff\\_squir.cfm](http://www.wildlife.alaska.gov/aawildlife/funfacts/ff_squir.cfm)

<http://whyfiles.org/187hibernate/2.html>

<http://www.wired.com/news/technology/0,1282,61413,00.html>

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## THIS, SOON, WILL PASS AWAY

*When some great sorrow, like a mighty river,  
Flows thro' your life, 'tis then you need Truth's power,  
When dearest things are swept from sight forever,  
Say to your aching heart each passing hour:  
This, soon, yes, soon, will pass away.*

*When ceaseless toil has hushed your song of gladness,  
And you have grown almost too tired to pray,  
Let this truth banish from your heart its sadness,  
And ease the burden of each trying day:  
This, soon, yes, soon will pass away.*

*When fortune smiles, and full of mirth and pleasure  
The days are flitting by without a care,  
Lest you should rest with only earthly treasure,  
Let these few words their fullest import bear:  
This, soon, yes, soon, will pass away.*

*When earnest labor brings you fame and glory,  
And all earth's noblest ones upon you smile,  
Remember that life's longest, grandest story  
Fills but a moment in earth's little while:  
This, soon, yes, soon, will pass away.*

*Thank God that worldly things are not forever!  
Thank God, eternity is free from care!  
Its joy and peace, and gladness glowing ever,  
And bliss supreme that waits us there,  
Shall never, never pass away.*



## IT CAME TO PASS

*For our present troubles are quite small and won't last  
very long. Yet they produce for us an immeasurably great glory  
that will last forever! —2 Cor. 4:17 NLT*



Some members of a church were sharing their favorite Scripture passages with each other. A number of the verses were quoted on "assurance," on "faith," on "hope," on "God's provision." One elderly man stood up and said that his favorite words from the Bible were: *"And it came to pass"* (in the KJV the phrase *"And it came to pass"* occurs 396 times). He continued: "When sickness strikes it encourages me to know that 'it comes to pass'. When I find myself in trouble I know it won't last forever, I'll soon be able to say: 'It came to pass.'"

Although this man had placed a different meaning on those words than intended by the writers of Scripture, he saw an important truth that is taught in the Bible. No matter how unending a trial may seem, the time will come when it is no

longer a burden but it may be a blessing. In fact, it will seem like nothing in the light of eternity.

Second Corinthians 4:17 puts trials in this very special light. Paul says, *"Our light affliction is but for a moment."* But that isn't all. He tells us what it is working out for us: *"a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."* Our burdens are temporary enablers for our triumph.

Whether your trials last for days, months, years or a lifetime, they are still only a moment in the light of eternity. Like the wise old Christian, you can also say: *"It came to pass."* Only the eternal crown of glory will come to stay!

**We can endure anything  
for the eternal weight of glory. ♦**



## TIME

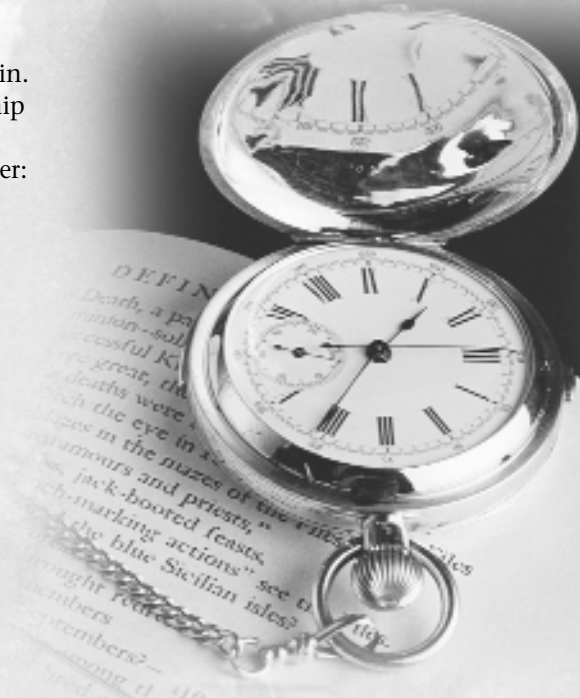
The loss of time is one of the most absolute losses we can sustain. Fortune may return after having taken flight. A severed friendship may be restored. But our wasted hours can never be returned to us....There is but one point at which time is entirely in our power: in the moment that is *NOW*....

*Time WAS is past;  
thou canst not it recall.*

*Time IS thou hast;  
employ the portion small.*

*Time FUTURE is not,  
and may never be:*

*Time PRESENT is the  
only time for thee.*



We determine our future by how we use the present.

God demands more love from us than we have for the distracting things about us.

No one has an enemy worse than himself.

To know God's will is our greatest treasure; to do His will is our greatest privilege.

*If all that we say in a single day,  
With never a word left out,  
Were printed each night in clear black and white,  
'Twould prove queer reading, no doubt.*

*And then just suppose, ere our eyes we could close  
We must read the whole record through;  
Then wouldn't we sigh and wouldn't we try  
A great deal less talking to do?*

*And I more than half think  
That many a kink  
Would be smoother in life's tangled thread,  
If half that we say in a single day  
Were left forever unsaid.*

He who has no vision of eternity cannot know the true value of time.

The path into the New Year is all aglow with opportunity to work for God and His Kingdom.


Try for one day to notice all the little things that help make your day smoother and your work easier, and see if you are not richly blessed.

Ability is of little value without dependability.

Prayer is the key of the morning to unlock Heaven's storehouse of blessing, the spring of the day to keep us going in the way of holiness, and the lock to secure us at night in the safe keeping of the Lord.

*Did you ask the Lord for patience?  
Did you plead for it in prayer?  
Then tribulations great befell you  
And you thought He did not care?  
Oh, my child, He heard and answered,  
Answered full, your prayer;  
"Tribulation worketh patience"—  
That's the gem you've longed to wear.*





*God...has stretched out the  
heavens by his understanding.*

*—Jer. 10:12*



*The spacious firmament on high  
With all the blue ethereal sky,  
And spangled heav'ns a shining frame,  
Their great Original proclaim.*

*The unwearied sun from day to day  
Does his Creator's power display;  
And publishes to ev'ry land  
The work of an almighty hand.*

*Soon as the evening shades prevail,  
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,  
And nightly to the list'ning earth  
Repeats the story of her birth:*

*Whilst all the stars that round her burn,  
And all the planets in their turn,  
Confirm the tidings, as they roll  
And spread the truth from pole to pole.*

*What though in solemn silence all  
Move round the dark terrestrial ball?  
What though no real voice nor sound  
Amid their radiant orbs be found?*

*In reason's ear they all rejoice,  
And utter forth a glorious voice;  
Forever singing as they shine,  
"The Hand that made us is Divine."*

*-Joseph Addison*

