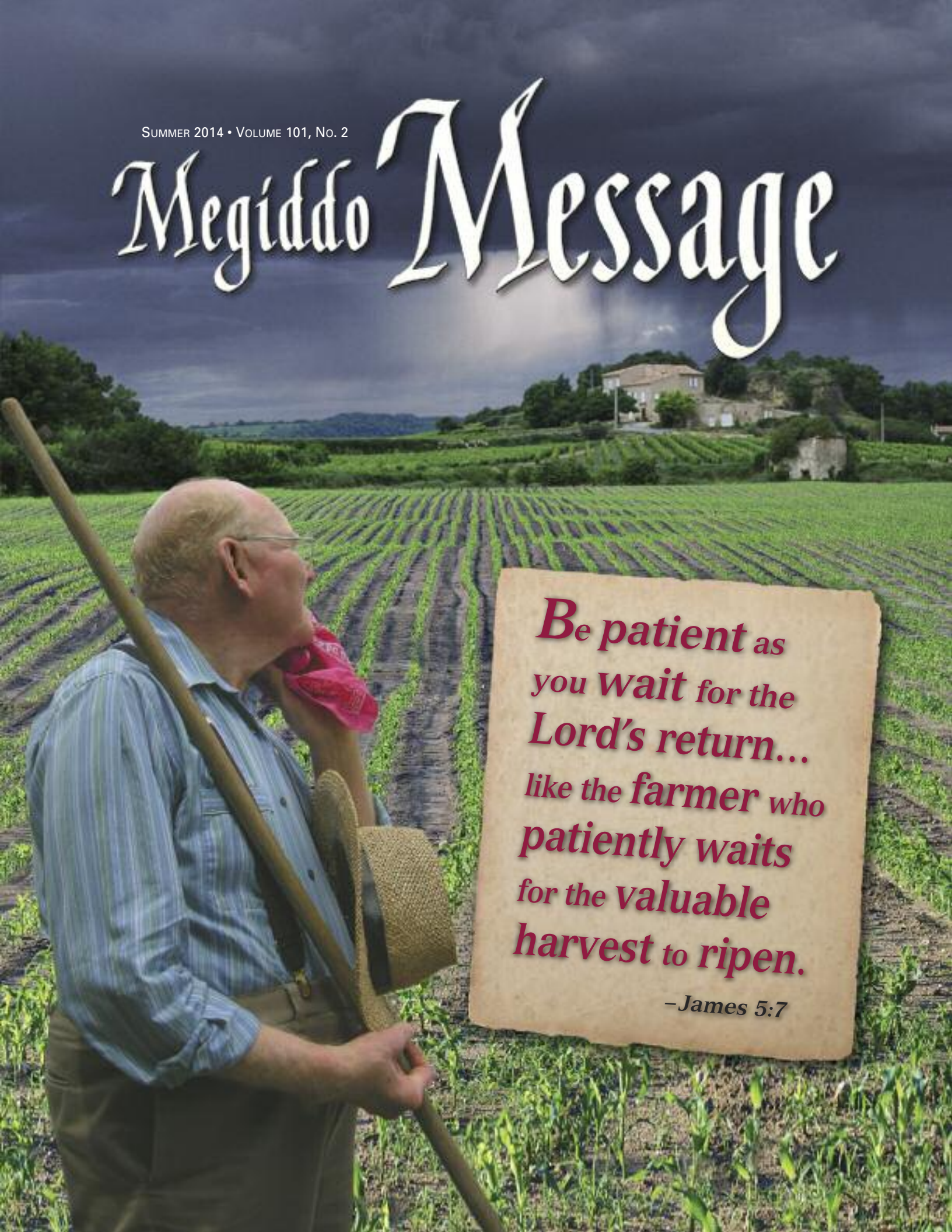


SUMMER 2014 • VOLUME 101, No. 2

Megiddo Message

A photograph of a farmer in a field, looking towards a distant house on a hill under a dramatic, cloudy sky. The farmer is wearing a blue striped shirt, glasses, and a red bandana, and is holding a wooden staff and a straw hat. The field is filled with rows of green plants, likely corn, stretching towards the horizon.

***Be patient as
you wait for the
Lord's return...
like the farmer who
patiently waits
for the valuable
harvest to ripen.***

—James 5:7

Yellow Jacket Persistence

The Scriptures point us to nature to learn valuable lessons. For example, *"Go to the ant, you sluggard, consider her ways and be wise"* (Prov. 6:6). This past summer another little creature presented us with a valuable lesson, this one in persistence. To get the lesson, I must take you back to one morning last summer.

Quite casually, when leaving the house, I notice yellow jackets, often known as "wasps," swarming at our front entrance. A brief investigation reveals that they are making their home inside the wall. No one can go or come without the fear of being stung. These creatures must be dealt with!

Attempt #1: Spray the entrance with insecticide for yellow jackets. They don't like it at first, but after about 10 minutes they are back to normal, not even a fatality...except for three or four that got inside our living room.

Attempt #2: Spray the entrance with a stronger insecticide. There are a few fatalities from the spraying, but the fly swatter produces far more—about another fifty. But the yellow jackets are not discouraged. They just keep coming and going.

Attempt #3: Plug up their entrance into the wall. They quickly search out another entrance just a few inches away.

Attempt #4: Block their new entrance with a very sticky tape that can't be touched without getting caught; surely this will work. Amazingly, they very carefully chew the edge off to gain entrance without a single one getting caught, and continue coming and going as before.

Attempt #5: Fill every visible crack with expandable plastic foam and replace the flashing so they can't squeeze through. You should see them pushing and tugging trying to squeeze through the tiniest opening! They even lie on their backs on the floor and try to squeeze under the flashing, but they can't do it. You can see numerous legs protruding from underneath the flashing from the other side as they try to get out. Can't help but feel sorry for them.

Yellow jackets defeated? Hardly! About 30 minutes later and 7 feet higher one emerges from the top of the door. Then another. An hour goes by, and they are very busy taking out a few dead ones and dropping them to the floor. It isn't long until the others from the outside know about the new entrance. Soon, all is back to normal again, and they are coming and going, coming and going.

Attempt #6: Caulk and plug every visible opening, and watch for any new entrances. Also see what else is available for killing yellow jackets, and spray any new activity. It is said that if the queen is left to winter inside the wall, the cycle will likely begin again in the spring, producing a new colony numbering in the hundreds.

Their entrance is now reduced to one tiny opening; they have to struggle to get through one at a time, but they keep coming and going.

Attempt #7: Modify the sprayer so the foam insecticide can be directed into the small opening, and spray with a generous amount of insecticide. Now they can't go or come without contacting the insecticide, which kills on contact.

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.

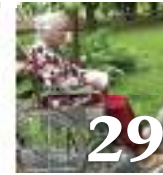
MEGIDDO MEANS...

"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).

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*Be sure
to re-direct
your persistence
toward the
right
goal.*

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Megiddo Message

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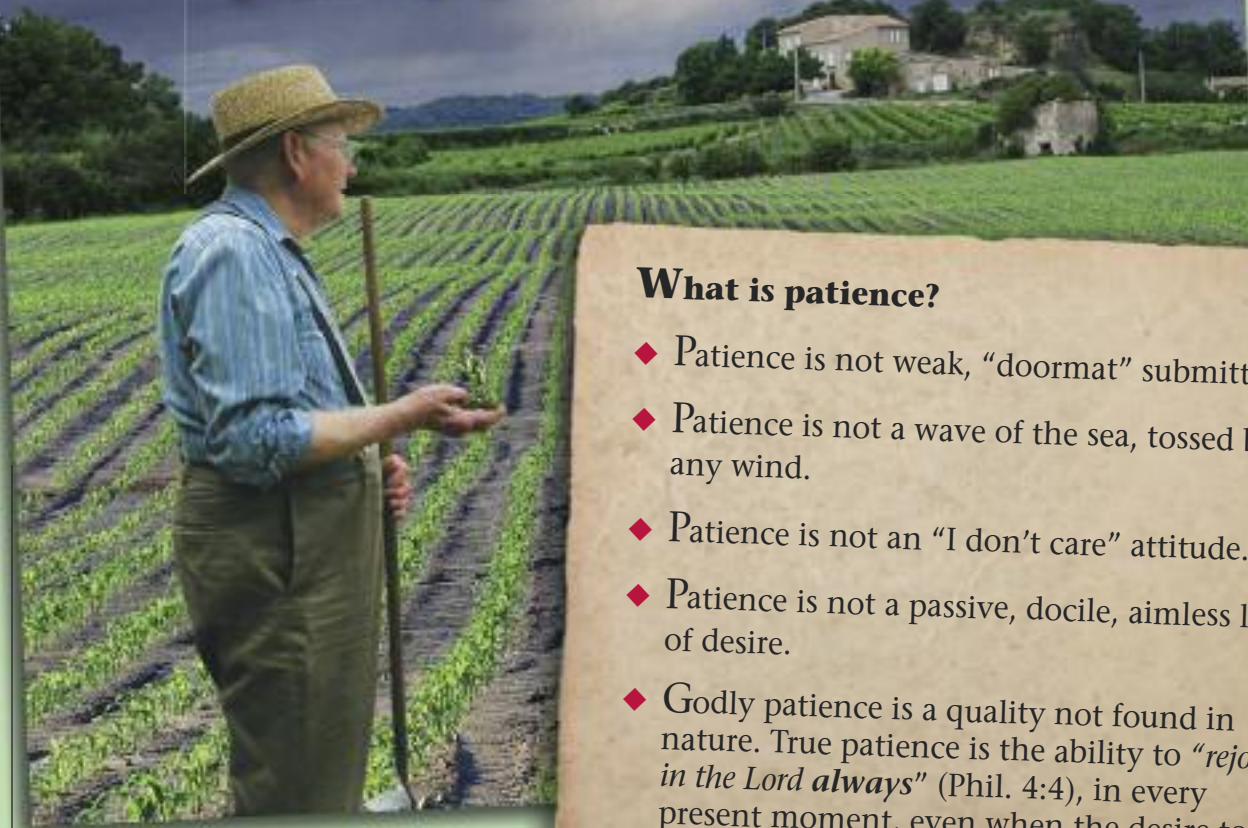
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The following lexicons are abbreviated as:
BDAG—Arndt, W., Gingrich, F. W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (1996). A

Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature; **DBL**—Swanson, J. (1997). Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains; **EDNT**—Balz, H. R., & Schneider, G. (1990). Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament; **GES**—Gesenius, W., & Tregelles, S. P. (2003). Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures; **HAL**—Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M., & Stamm, J. J. (1999). The Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament; **2**—Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S., & McKenzie, R. (1996). A Greek-English lexicon; **LN**—Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : Based on semantic domains; —Strong, J. (1997). The new Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words. THAYER—A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (1889).

Lord, Increase ^{My} ~~Our~~ Patience



What is patience?

- ◆ Patience is not weak, “doormat” submitting.
- ◆ Patience is not a wave of the sea, tossed by any wind.
- ◆ Patience is not an “I don’t care” attitude.
- ◆ Patience is not a passive, docile, aimless lack of desire.
- ◆ Godly patience is a quality not found in nature. True patience is the ability to “rejoice in the Lord *always*” (Phil. 4:4), in every present moment, even when the desire to change it is strong.

W

ho has not prayed for patience? A quality we all need, it is often in short supply.

Why? Why should patience be such a universal need especially among contenders for the eternal crown? Because they (we) are high achievers, intensely goal-oriented, strongly motivated to succeed. What better formula could there be for needing patience? We feel the press of time. Do we wonder why *we* need patience?

Whatever the project we begin, nothing must stand in our way. The sooner, the quicker, the better!

But if we would meet God’s demand for patience, this eagerness, like every other trait of our nature, must be educated, controlled, focused. We feel like praying, Lord, give me patience—now!

Our world and our lives are loaded with God-designed opportunities to help us in developing patience. Have you ever noticed how many of the Christian virtues depend on this heavenly quality? Endurance... long-suffering... forbearance... perseverance—none of these could be perfected without patience.

Yet, again and again we fall short—with our family, associates, strangers, circumstances, or ourselves. To some it is a persistent annoyance, to others a serious besetment. We resolve to be more patient, and think we are doing well—until suddenly the unexpected happens, and our supply is quickly exhausted.

If not reckoned with, this deficiency may discourage us. For what is discouragement but a lack of patience—with ourselves? Perfecting a character to the standard of Jesus Christ is not a dawn to dusk task. It is a work that takes time and patience—steady, persistent patience—before one can stand approved with those who “*through faith and patience inherit the promises*” (Heb. 6:12).

The First Step

The first step toward developing patience is a conviction that God requires His children to be absolutely patient at all times and under all circumstances. Most people see patience as *desirable*, but not necessary—possibly because they themselves are deficient. But impatience is not Christ-like, and it is harmful in most human relationships. Impatience is really only a diluted form of anger, and we read that “*Anger rests in the bosom of fools*” (Eccl. 7:9).

For those seeking a place in the eternal Kingdom of God, patience is not an option. It is a requirement. It is one of the distinguishing marks of the saints. Twice we are told in the book of Revelation: “*Here is the patience ...of the saints*” (Rev. 13:10; 14:12).

Patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit enumerated by the apostle Paul (“the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience...” Gal. 5:22–23 NAB). It is one of the additions in the apostle Peter’s list (“to your self-control add patience...” 2 Pet. 1:5–7 NCV).

James did not say that we should *try* to be patient, but that we *must* practice patience, and to perfection (James 1:4). He also said, “*You also be patient*” (James 5:8).

Jesus said that by our patience (perseverance) we win our souls (Luke 21:19).

Patience is a virtue we must learn, and let us thank God for situations we can use to learn it!

Impatience is fundamentally discontent. But contentment is not necessarily patience. If we were so easy-going and non-caring that nothing bothered or distressed us, this in itself would not indicate patience but—more likely—a lack of the determination and will power.

There are many misconceptions about patience. Some people appear patient because they are mild-mannered and tranquil. But patience is not a mild and tranquil mannerism that tolerates equally any good or ill, right or wrong. Godly patience is a strong, persevering virtue, strong *for* right and *against* wrong.

Christian Patience

By L. T. Nichols.

Patience is not an “in” virtue. But God’s standard has not changed. That is why this message, spoken by our founder more than 130 years ago, is still relevant today. What God asks of those whom He approves to be an eternal part of His family is the same today as it was when Jesus was on earth. God has one standard for all.

For the benefit of those not accustomed to the old English of the King James Version, most Bible texts are quoted from the New King James Version. —The Editor.



One of the essential characteristics of every stone for the spiritual temple of Jehovah when the Lord returns is patience.

Patience is an inseparable part of strong, Christ-like character.

The apostle **Peter** tells us that patience (perseverance) is among the other Christian graces that we must add in order to have that abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:6, 11). If we lack patience, or any other of these virtues, we are “*shortsighted, even to blindness*” (2 Peter 1:9).

Therefore, it is our duty to be sure that we put away all peevishness of every sort and description, and perfect patience. There is no other way of attaining the standard for salvation. If we lack patience in the least degree, we shall ultimately fail. But Peter assures us that if we add patience along with all the other virtues he mentions, we shall obtain an “*abundant entrance*” into His everlasting kingdom (2 Peter 1:11).

One who has no tendency toward impatience is not really “*patient*.” A person is not patient if there is no inclination or reason to act otherwise. We describe the saints as patient for two reasons. First, they achieved this state through struggles with practicing patience, and by changing their disposition to the point where the same situations that formerly distressed them no longer bother them at all.

This is the patience of the saints.

From another angle, patience is the strengthening of our adversity-resisting powers toward attaining a goal. It makes us able to put up with the disagreeable in prospect of something better. For example, one must have patience to be a good wife or husband, a good scholar, a good employee, a good musician, a good artist, or to attain any other skill. How much more for the call of the Kingdom of Christ!

Well may we pray, Lord increase my patience!

Looking Closer...

See if you can identify this miserable disturber of your inner peace. Usually it is a feeling of intense frustration with a definite cause. It is 1) a situation (person or circumstance) not to our liking; and 2) it is a situation we cannot control or change. Because we are unable to change the situation (person, circumstance), a feeling of frustration builds up inside us. We “vent” our impatience in the form of “steam” (harsh words, vengeful actions, disturbed feelings).

According to the Bible, we have a very strong instinct to think too highly of ourselves (Rom. 12:3). Along with this

instinct comes the feeling that everything should happen according to *our* idea and plan. And when it doesn’t, we feel frustrated, defeated, and impatient. It is part of the old nature we must conquer.

What are some of the situations that spark our impatience? They are often petty things, like a negative comment, an annoying interruption, a prejudice toward someone we dislike or who doesn’t think as we do, a change of plans, or a sudden delay. Or they may be bigger issues we cannot change, like sickness, an undesirable living situation, an incompatible companion. The list may be long. And the solution—?

The solution—strangely—is not in correcting the cause but in correcting our attitude.

The Word of God tells us that being able to control ourselves is far superior to controlling other persons, or our circumstances, or the things that irritate us. Greater is he who rules his own spirit than he who conquers a city (Prov. 16:32).

This brings us to the crux of dealing with our impatience. For we can make up our minds that the source of the irritation (trouble, discomfort, aggravation, etc., etc.) will remain. If one irritant is removed, another will appear. To hope for everything and everyone to be just to our liking is to waste our time dreaming. And if everything were to our liking, we would have no opportunity to learn patience.

Two Kinds of Patience

There are two kinds, or stages, of patience, *practiced* patience and *dispositional* patience. Neither is natural, and neither comes without effort.

How do we *practice* Christ-like patience? What is our response to an irritating situation? First, we consciously redirect our thinking toward being content and seeing how we personally can benefit from the situation. In practicing patience, I am working to change my thinking and my attitude to be pleasing to God, even



Patience must rule us not only when all things go along smoothly but when the tempestuous waves run high and we are under severe trial.

The solution to impatience is not self-control but self-transformation.

though things are not to my liking and I can do little or nothing to change them.

Practiced patience, when practiced conscientiously and well, becomes part of our disposition. As a result of the “practice” we no longer feel the strong impulse to impatience but are able to accept the situation and even find joy in it. Even if it be one that might have provoked us, we can still be patient. Why? Because we have made a promise to God, and whether the present situation is to our liking or not, God will be with us in it and we have no reason to be disturbed.

But it is important to distinguish practiced patience from teeth-gritting endurance, because we struggle not just to endure an unhappy situation until it is past but to benefit from it.

It is also important to distinguish between practicing patience and simple self-control.

Self-control is good but it is **not sufficient alone**. Practicing patience **includes** self-control—we tell ourselves that we must not be upset, that we must keep calm, we must not be irritated or disturbed; but in practicing patience we are actually struggling against our feelings of impatience. One who is strongly self-controlled may justify himself in feeling steamy, vengeful, irritated, or disturbed, so long as his feelings do not “show.” He may be “boiling inside” and show little or no emotion. This may be a step toward patience, but it is **not** patience.

God does not require us to **appear** patient but to actually **be** patient. And there is a difference, a great difference. “*Let patience have its perfect work...*” (James 1:4).

The solution to impatience is not self-control but **self-transformation**, an actual change in our attitude so that in the situation where we used to feel aggravation we no longer feel irritated or impatient. This is what Paul meant when he wrote, “*If any man be in Christ he is a new creature*” (2 Cor. 5:17). The “*new creature*” is not the old one fenced in and bound up but a whole new disposition, with new desires, new interests, new aspirations. Self-control may be the old creature roped in with all its unholy ugliness; patience is the new nature, with **one** overpowering desire: to please God. That done, nothing else matters.

This is what Paul advised, “*Whatsoever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord, not unto men*” (Col. 3:23); again, “*Therefore whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*” (1 Cor. 10:31). And Peter wrote, “*If anyone speaks ... If anyone ministers, let him do it... that in all things God may be glorified*” (1 Pet. 4:11). Jesus could say, “*I always do those things that please Him*” (John 8:29).

Does this attitude make a difference? A **great** difference. But remember, the situations may not change; the change must be in **us and our attitude**. We will be

The book of **James** opens with an exhortation to patient endurance under every sort of trial. “*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing*” (James 1:2–4). Patience must be one of the characteristics richly dwelling in each one who enters that eternal, joyful rest promised in God’s Word of truth.

Patience must rule us not only when all things go along smoothly but when the tempestuous waves run high and we are under severe trial. But we will never have patience under trying circumstances until we realize from the deepest recesses of our hearts that we must be tried as gold is tried in the fire. If we would enter the kingdom of God, we must pass through “*much tribulation*” (Acts 14:22). Many temptations are needed to try us, to develop in us that perfect patience, before we can qualify for an inheritance among the pure, holy, and sanctified ones.

James says: “*Count it all joy when you fall into various temptations.*” Yes, count it all joy. Whoever heard of anyone becoming impatient while doing that in which he took joy and comfort? So also, if we count it “*all joy*” when we are severely tried, knowing that it is the means of perfecting a virtue we must possess, we shall be able to take everything patiently, without the slightest feeling of impatience or revenge. This is what we must do.

How contrary this is to our natures! It is not at all natural to rejoice in tribulation; on the contrary, we try to avoid it. We shall have to exercise much care, or we shall find ourselves avoiding tribulation instead of rejoicing in it.

If we would only realize that God means exactly what He says, that we must experience tribulation, that all those who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution, how glad we would be for the trials.

Impatience, fretfulness, and peevishness are never characteristics of the true, meek and lowly follower of Jesus our Lord; they are among the fruits of the fleshly nature. If we desire to be children of God, we must have patience as highly developed as was our impatience in our fleshly nature.

This will take labor. Yes, incessant and hard labor. It

so thoroughly changed in disposition through practicing patience that we no longer feel any impulse to impatience. It is not that everything will be to our liking, but that we have changed our concerns so completely that we no longer notice impulses which formerly upset us.

A patient spirit puts us in control of our attitude toward the events in our lives. It means that our spirit is no longer at the mercy of every disruptive, unhappy impulse that threatens us. We are at peace, steady, fixed, under the control of a higher impulse, part of an eternal program which, if followed through, will carry us into the Kingdom of Christ.



Patience in Action

A homey story illustrates a father's opportunity to learn patience.

It was evening, just time for dinner, when we discovered that we needed milk. The hour was five fifteen, and the store would close at six, so it was decided that I should go immediately, hoping to be back very soon since dinner was almost on the table.

As I rushed down our front walk toward the car, my nearly-four-year-old daughter called to me from the doorway begging to go along. So I jogged back up the sidewalk, intending to scoop her up in my arms and be gone. But on this particular rainy day Niki had discovered the joy of walking under an umbrella. She was not to be whisked up in papa's arms and carried through the drizzle to the car; she must have her own umbrella. For this purpose an umbrella must be found.

I recognized immediately my need for patience.

Mom found an umbrella after a moment or two. Niki walked ceremoniously down the walk and across the street to the car under her umbrella, while papa walked beside her getting a little damp, since it is more trouble than it's worth to walk under an umbrella held by a four-year-old. Getting into the car was my next challenge. As Niki didn't want me to hold the umbrella for her, and of course she didn't know how to fold it up like big people do, her solution was to get as close as she could to the open door, then jump in, abandoning the umbrella to the street. I picked the umbrella up, folded it, and slid damply into the driver's seat.

We arrived shortly at the corner store and located a parking place about fifty feet from the entrance. Again I began with the assumption that I would carry Niki quickly inside, get the milk, and be gone. But—patience again!—the umbrella had to be dealt with, and we walked slowly toward the store.

At last we entered the store, located the dairy counter, and immediately discovered that the milk supply had been sold out. There was nothing to do but make our way back into the rainy darkness, Niki under her umbrella and me trudging alongside, trying to guide her around the puddles, and back to the car, to drive to the next nearest store.

This time, happily, we were able to park just a short distance from the door, and since, I persuaded Niki, with firmness in my voice, that she had practiced using her umbrella enough for today, and that the umbrella was not needed this time. We found our milk, and soon were headed home, where the umbrella was used one last time to get from the car to the front door of our home, where Mom met us with a cheery face and delicious dinner.

Patience is a key to contentment and peace. It

- ❑ strengthens the spirit,
- ❑ smooths the temper,
- ❑ bridles the tongue,
- ❑ steadies the hand,
- ❑ resists temptation,
- ❑ subdues envy,
- ❑ solves problems and
- ❑ gives quiet and calm in the everyday trials of life.

Analyzing...

What attitudes might this father have taken toward the adventure of his four-year-old? He might have told the child firmly at the start that they did not have time for the umbrella, though the father did not realize at this point the challenge the umbrella would present. And once he had consented to the child taking her umbrella, wouldn't he have been selfish to deny her this pleasure—simply because he was in a hurry? After all, the difference in real time was only minutes. Isn't this often true, that "real time" is not the issue; that the things irritating us do not require so much *time* as they do *patience*?

Or suppose the father resented every moment the umbrella consumed, and so adopted an attitude of teeth gritting endurance. He would feel impulses to be abrupt with his daughter, and force her, against her will, to give up her umbrella, to disregard her childish wishes while regarding only his own agenda, and perhaps even show anger toward the child. But perhaps prudence counseled that if he behaved in these ways, he would have a beastly and uncooperative child on his hands during the entire trip, and so he said to himself, "It isn't worth it. I'll grit my teeth and endure it." Why the teeth gritting? Because he really was impatient and was only suppressing impatient behavior, not controlling the impatience itself. His first desire was to get away from the situation with the slow four-year-old and her dreaded umbrella. Had he been sufficiently a good actor and maintained a cool exterior—that is, if he had not actually gritted his teeth, or sighed, or rolled his eyes—then an observer might have been misled into thinking that he was actually patient.

But patience is not teeth-gritting endurance. In real patience, we are at ease, content, at peace. Patience is joy because we know we are pleasing God and keeping the right spirit in obedience to His law for us.

Practicing Patience

How does the aspiring Christian practice patience in a potentially irritating situation?

1) Be realistic about time.

One of the prime factors in our impatience is an unrealistic view of time. We are a time conscious people, and we ought to be. But we also need to be realistic. Only so much can be done in a given amount of time, and sometimes that "so much" is not as much as we would like. To make matters worse, everything does not work out according to our plan. Often we feel hindered, delayed, thwarted, frustrated. In reality, it is an opportunity to choose whether or not we will be patient.

Try analyzing: What is my primary responsibility?

will not do for us to think that we can be even a little cross or annoyed. Patience must have its perfect work in us (James 1:4), or we cannot expect to be saved. And the sooner we realize this, the greater will be our advancement toward making our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10). We must not look at the matter as I once heard a minister say, "God will overlook and pass by your shortcomings."

Do not let such statements deceive you, for God will not pass by any of our shortcomings. We must overcome them. Only the overcomers will be seated with Jesus on His throne (Rev. 3:21). No others shall be there. We may plead that we lived in a very "foggy" atmosphere or had a very bad temper. But He will say "Depart." Only those who do the will of God will have the privilege of reigning with Jesus (Matt. 7:21).

God calls upon us to be patient under all circumstances, whether the atmosphere about us is cloudy or clear.

Jesus tells us in His parable of the Sower (Luke 8:15) that the good and honest heart (the soil) that received the Word (good seed) of the kingdom, kept it and brought forth fruit with patience. **Bearing fruit with patience** will call for a strenuous effort on the part of nearly every, if not every, individual, for impatience is a sin with which human nature is seriously encumbered. And seeing that impatience is so general and so prevalent even among those who profess Christ, it behooves us to take earnest heed to ourselves.

Jesus commands: "By your patience possess your souls" (Luke 21:19). Ruling ourselves with patience exacts both time and effort.

Many people reason that prosperity is an evidence of Divine favor; adversity, of disfavor. But this is far from being correct. Trouble, trials, tribulation are much more frequently the portion of the truly chosen of God than the reverse. James understood this, for he wrote, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (James 1:12, 1, 2). Why? Because trials and tribulations are necessary parts of the process by which people are developed to fill that high position of blessedness in the eternal kingdom of Christ.

What does God require me to do with my time? After all, I promised to give God my all. That includes my time. If I am delayed, or hindered, that need not hinder my walk with Christ. I have no reason to feel thwarted, frustrated, or impatient. For if my goal is to please God, whether I am doing what I would choose to do or whether I am doing something I would choose not to do (like standing in line, or waiting for an appointment, or suffering because of someone else's carelessness), what is lost? God is pleased if only I am patient, humble, obedient, pleasant—not irritated—about what I cannot change. This is the attitude that will help me to qualify for a place among His children, and so this is all that really matters.

2) Make up your mind that you do not have to be “in control” of every situation.

What reason have we to expect everything to be to our liking? If something is beyond our ability to change, it is not our responsibility to change it; we need to leave it to God. And since we ourselves, our time, and everything we have belong to God, if there is a seemingly needless delay, the problem becomes His, not ours.

3) Ask yourself, What really matters?

If our goal is to have everything exactly our way—to our liking—we are sure to be frustrated. But if we have set our heart on doing our duty to God, we will realize that we can please God just as well—or even better—if things are not to our liking.

So much depends on our attitude. The thousand details of every day can teach us patience, or they can irritate and frustrate us. The choice is ours. For there is no situation of life that cannot be a way of serving... praising... glorifying our Lord. There is no situation of life that can irritate or annoy us unless we allow it. Committed to God, *every* situation can help to prepare us for eternity. This is why Paul could say when he was sitting in prison, “*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say rejoice!*” (Phil. 4:4).

And—think of it!—if what we are doing is preparing us to live eternally, should we not rejoice in it? Whoever heard of anyone becoming irritated or impatient or frustrated when doing what they enjoyed?

4) Let trifles go.

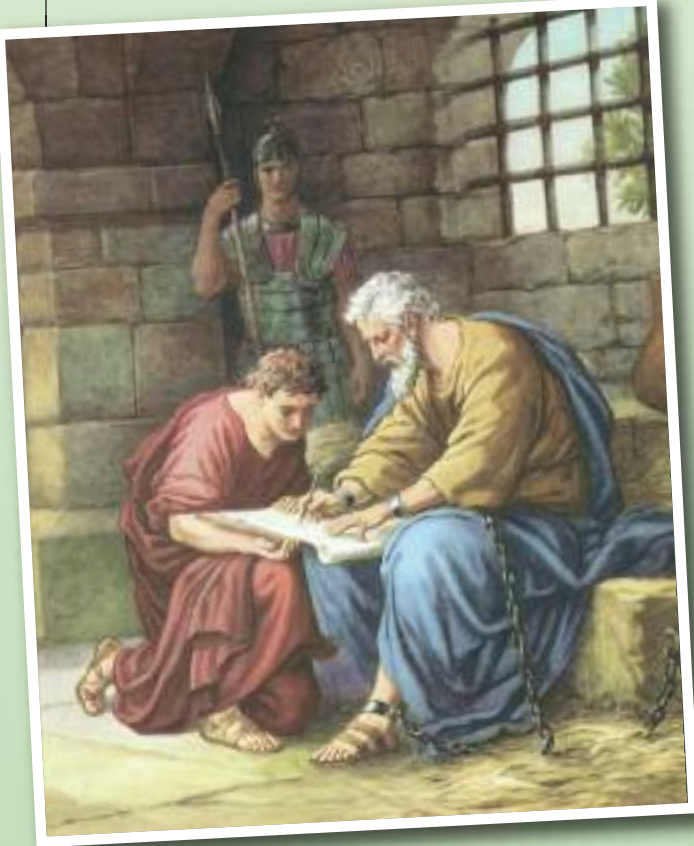
We may find, looking closely, that we cause ourselves needless irritation by insisting on details of little or no consequence. Of course we think *our* way is better, but is it? The point is to separate what concerns our duty to God from what does not. Ask yourself, Is what is important to me *important to God*?

In other words, *let go and let God*. This phrase, popularized in recent years, is very meaningful if properly understood. Some aspects of our lives may be to a great extent beyond our control, i.e., problems of aging, our health, our finances, the economy, the government, the future of our children, etc., etc. In these we should “let go, and let God” take over. If our strongest instinct is to have everything our way, we will find that, spiritually speaking, we are defeated. We can learn a valuable lesson in admitting to ourselves that if God allows something there must be good in it.

Patience Wins

The patient spirit can accept whatever is, gratefully, trusting God that it is for good and within His will. If God has allowed it, if it is all right with Him, it should be all right with us also. This reality should help control our inborn spirit of impatience or frustration.

Sometimes our impatience comes from a desire for a change. This may be



See the apostle Paul patiently enduring without a word of complaint. See him scourged, whipped, bound in fetters of iron, imprisoned, stoned and left for dead, in perils by land and sea, and among many false brethren. Yet we hear not a murmur.

What a noble spirit to imitate! Would we have been as patient if we were called upon to endure as severe trials as Paul experienced? I am afraid many would falter.

good. If we can change something disagreeable, we should do it. But if we cannot, we must accept it as His will, trust Him for strength to bear it, and grow under it. And we can grow just as well—perhaps better—in a situation not to our liking as in one we might design.

Our Christian goals make us persons with a passion for the Kingdom of God, a desire that cannot be satisfied this side of eternity. We want life, and we want it so intensely that we are willing to sacrifice anything to obtain it!

We can be patient not because we have no aims, not because we have no determination, not because we have no strong motivations, but because we *have* all of these—*plus* a greater goal and a greater reason for being patient, a reason so dominant that no circumstance of life can interfere. If we are like the great Apostle, who was “*straining forward*” (Phil. 3:13–14), we like him will reach the point where we do not even notice the things that used to bother us because we are so focused on the goal ahead. He also said that “*to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life*” (Rom. 2:7 ESV).

Patience is freedom, for when we have learned to be patient, we are free to enjoy every situation of life to the maximum, free to live above our surroundings, free to live within the love of God, and know that every situation, however disagreeable, is working for our long-term good; however unwanted or unpleasant, it is only temporary; to use Paul’s words, “*but for a moment*” (2 Cor. 4:17–18).

We can decide immediately that situations will never be just as we would like them, not in this world. We can decide also that everyone around us will not do or be just as we would like them to do or be. So rather than try to change others, by far the more profitable option is that of *changing ourselves*. Here is something we *can* do—*must* do. And let us be doing it so that God may look upon us with pleasure and say, “*Here is the patience of saints*” (Rev. 14:12). ♦

Patience is steadfastness, fortitude, courageous endurance; forbearance and calm self-possession. Patience requires strength of character and is, in turn, a source of strength. Patience is trustful waiting, but by no means idle. It is a kind of hoping and making haste—while waiting.

Paul praised God for his Thessalonian brethren: “*We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you...for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure..., that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer*” (2 Thess. 1:3–6). The patience that is required of every true Christian is patience under all circumstances. There is beauty in this. For us to be patient when there is no cause for impatience is no virtue to us whatever. But to be calm and patient under severe trial manifests true virtue.

But how often we have failed to be patient in the little, apparently insignificant, mere trifling trials. These things ought not to be. If we cannot maintain our patience under these small testings, how can we ever be perfectly patient under severe testings?

Yet God has given the command that we must perfect patience; and that command cannot be broken with impunity. It cannot be broken without endangering our prospects of eternal life. Therefore, let us set to the work of governing our tempers and our tongues, and in time we shall become so controlled, so changed, that we shall show no peevishness or impatience whatever.

See the apostle **Paul** patiently enduring without a word of complaint. See him scourged, whipped, bound in fetters of iron, imprisoned, stoned and left for dead, in perils by land and sea, and among many false brethren. Yet we hear not a murmur, but an exclamation: “*Our light afflictions*”! (2 Cor. 4:17). Hear him declaring that “*...the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*” (Rom. 8:18).

What a noble spirit to imitate! Would we have been as patient if we were called upon to endure as severe trials as Paul experienced? I am afraid many would falter.

Let us hasten to prepare **ourselves** by patiently enduring every trial and test, walking in strict obedience to the entire Word of God, “*not lacking in diligence, fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer*” (Rom. 12:10–11). ♦



HE'S COMING!

*"He's coming!" said the Prophets, and the glory of the Lord
Shall be revealed and all shall see the Christ, the living Lord."
Yes, He will come, Earth's sovereign, our Redeemer, Savior, King,
To fill the world with truth and make eternal praises ring.*

*"He's coming!" said two angels as He disappeared from sight,
Borne up by holy ministers sent forth from heaven's height;
Yes, two stood by to strengthen those who watched Him go away,
To give the sweet assurance that He would return one day.*

*Meanwhile their comrades flashed through space, to bear Him to the throne,
The Highest Throne, where in the Father's presence Christ was crowned!
O joy Supreme! But what of those who stayed behind that day—
Whence came they? Did they just "drop in," their word from heav'n to say?*

*Or had they camping been close by through all the days of stress,
Unseen, yet lending help and aid in loving tenderness?
We only know that they were there when greatest was the need.
How God provides! He ne'er forsakes those who are His indeed.*

*"He's coming!" taught the faithful ones, apostles of our Lord,
As they proclaimed His kingdom and His vital, living Word;
All pressing, fighting, struggling as they lived from day to day
Reflecting Christ their Lord and King in each and ev'ry way.*

*"He's coming!" rings the message still from loyal heart to heart,
As we prepare, our spirits tense, to see our living Lord.
Though nineteen centuries have passed, His word stands firm and true:
"I'm coming!" echoes back His voice. He comes to make all new.*

*"He's coming!" Yes! Lord Jesus, come! with longing hearts we pray,
Bring in the Age of Peace and Truth, and glad eternal Day!
Your chariots gather, Lord, and come! Come quickly to Your home!
Bring in the grand millennium, and make our world Your own!*

—Contributed.

Needed: Soul-Searching PM

by Wilfred Balewski

While employed in the heavy transport trucking industry as a commercial driver, I was impressed with the need for equipment inspection and the preventive maintenance concept. In this industry, there are periodical maintenance intervals (PM). There are annual inspections (from the date of first certification), and some that are mileage based, plus the driver's required daily pre-trip inspections. While enroute, drivers are also required to pull into any D.O.T. inspection stations that are open. Log books are also

Our life's journey has many parallels to long distance travel. The need for each of us to conduct regular soul searching PM is critical. After striving to stay on course in our spiritual voyage, and having overcome many obstacles, it would be unfortunate to allow some form of misconduct to impede our spiritual progress or to discover that we have overlooked a character flaw that will bring us down. Just as a pilot must follow the flight plan that he or she has filed, so we must individually follow the faith plan we committed to. We must stay alert and be ready to receive instructions in righteousness as required.



If we adhere to God's Faith Plan and perform regular PM, we can be sure of a safe arrival in the Kingdom of our Lord.

checked for honesty and various hours of service compliance criteria. The trucking company owners and the drivers depend on well qualified personnel to keep vehicles road-worthy. All this is necessary to be efficient and profitable. Mechanical breakdowns away from the terminal are very costly.

The aviation industry has an even heavier onus on the "Owner-Operator" to keep the aircraft fleet airworthy. Because of this diligence in the industry, flying has become one of the safest forms of travel. However, the recent disappearance of a Malaysian 777 Boeing airliner tragically demonstrates that things can still go terribly wrong. On March 8, when less than an hour out of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, enroute to Beijing, flight MH370 with 12 crew and 270 passengers on board disappeared from civil aviation radar. Except for some indicators on military radar in facilities in that area, no trace of flight 370 has been found to date.

Proverbs chapter 4 is a good source of guidance and serves as a check list for life-seekers.

- "Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; keep her, for she is your life" (Prov. 4:13)
- "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (Pro. 4:23)
- "Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established." (Pro. 4:26)

The clear message all through the Scriptures is: do not deviate from your commitment to God. Deviation leads to disastrous consequences if the required course of correction is not made. Titus 3:8 sums up the matter of our faith plan well, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I want to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men." If we adhere to this plan and perform regular PM, we can be sure of a safe arrival in the Kingdom of our Lord (2 Peter 1:10-11). ♦



How Are We Building?

by Fanella Porter

BUILDING! That is the business on our minds today, the serious business of building for the ages never to end—building for eternity!

How are we building, you and I? We all are active, but is activity enough? All motion, we know, is not progress. Are we just swinging the hammers, so to speak, making *sounds* of building, busily moving back and forth, giving the *appearance* of builders, or are we in reality *building*?

What shall we build that will outlast the ravages of time and decay? The strongest and longest-lasting works of earth's great artisans—material or immaterial—soon crumble. Said the Psalmist, "*As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more, but the righteous are an everlasting foundation.*" Seek as

we may, we shall find that the builders for eternity whose work is to be everlasting have built righteousness according to God's standard. Every other fabric, substance or quality suffers an end.

In the Divine scheme, only that which is supremely good shall remain forever. The everlasting Word of God speaks to us of *everlasting mercy* (Ps. 103:17), *everlasting kindness* (Isa. 54:8), *everlasting righteousness* (Ps. 119:142), *everlasting joy* (Isa. 35:10), and *peace* that shall be *forever* (Isa. 9:7; 32:17). How shall we build that ours may be a temple whose pillars shall be *everlasting*? How shall we build a temple through whose portals shall stream everlasting peace?

We need constantly to nourish those strong inner reserves that make endurance possible. To do this we must develop not a cistern of faith in our hearts, for a cistern's resources may dry up. Rather, we need a well, the resources of which are unlimited! *Unlimited faith!*

Christian building is our project; and if it truly be our purpose to *build for eternity*, then we are builders together with God! What a privilege! What assurance could put us harder to work than that?

Let us keep that exhilarating truth uppermost. It will strengthen our hope, heighten our zeal and mobilize all our powers to banish every weak and synthetic fiber of our character and impel us to build with thoroughness and haste!

Building for eternity is not the work of a day. It demands every moment of the time allotted us. "*Redeem the time*" is the counsel of urgency of that experienced builder, St. Paul (Eph. 5:15–16). By so saying, he means for us to seize every opportunity and turn it to good.

We are constantly building in our contacts one with another. What are we accomplishing as we go along? Are we using the best materials, or we are attempting to build with straw?

Only the mortar of *unshakable faith* cementing together the stones of right-

*We are building every day
In a good or evil way.
And the structure, as it grows,
Will our inmost self disclose;
Till in every arch and line,
All our faults and feelings shine.
It may grow a castle grand,
Or a wreck upon the sand.*

*Some may ask, What building this,
That can show both pain and bliss,
That can be both dark and fair?
Lo, its name is CHARACTER.*

eous deeds will provide a shelter that will survive the mighty besom of God when He sweeps away the refuse accumulated during man's rule on earth (Isa. 14:23; 28:17).

Are we building with *enduring stones*—granite sincerity of purpose, dead earnest effort, strong determination to do right at any cost?

Then there are the *stones of sacrifice*. They come in a wide variety of shapes; but our building will never be complete without them. We must be constantly giving up the lesser for the greater; the temporary for the permanent. Sacrifices of this world's pleasures are a common kind. But to tighten the cornerstone and wedge in and secure the edges, some very pointed stones of sacrifice are needed. We may need to sacrifice being appreciated, or sacrifice being recognized, or sacrifice our desire to be like the world about us in speech, in attire, and attitude. Each sacrifice becomes part of our building and must match exactly the specifications of the Cornerstone—Christ (Matt 21:42).

There can be no daubing with untempered mortar of self-defined virtues, and no whitewashing—all will be washed away with the descending rain of God's cleansing judgments.

How are we building?

How many of the things that get our first attention will stand the test of eternity?

How many of the things that get top priority of our time and attention, the things that were "most necessary" in *our* evaluation, are suitable for the eternal building? Could be

they wouldn't last overnight in a crisis!

How much of our precious energy are we investing in building material of *waste-paper* value—actually, junk, to be scattered like pretty blossoms, or confetti at a celebration.

Building for eternity is rugged work, but a work of matchless benefit. Happy is he who never barter future good for present pleasure.

Happy is he who sees things not in the light of the moment but in the light of an everlasting future.

The things that are seen are temporal. The things eternal are not seen now (2 Cor. 4:18).

What does it matter if passersby, our fellowmen, or our erstwhile friends look on with biting scorn as we bend to the work while they pursue the baubles of this world, on the way to sure and inescapable destruction (Rom. 6:21)?

When the dawn comes up like thunder, shall we be found sitting on the rubble of our procrastination, just an accumulation of stuff piled up while we were making up our minds to get on with the work of building? Or will Jesus find that we have built a solid structure of upright character that He can fit into His eternal temple?

Let's build well, whate'er we do.

Let's build straight, and strong, and true—

You and I.

Let's build clear, and high, and broad.

Let's build for the eye of God—

You and I. ♦

Yellow Jacket Persistence

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Success! After removing the storm door and installing new flashing cut to perfection, using a tube of caulk and nearly a can of insecticide, and swatting hundreds with a fly swatter during the next several weeks, they are conquered!

If you were lost in all the details, that's all right. You get the lesson—these yellow jackets are very persistent!

Isn't it amazing how much our human nature is like these creatures? We persist in "our way," whatever it is, oblivious to all warnings of possible harm—or even death? I am immediately reminded of the Sodomites who ignored the warnings of Lot—and perished. Or the people of Noah's day, to whom Noah preached for 120 years, yet they ignored all the warnings—and drowned. And what about the Pharaoh of Egypt during the time of Moses? Did I count 10 warnings in the form of plagues? That is three more than the yellow jackets got. Pharaoh, like the yellow jackets, was persistent, and drowned in the Red Sea crossing, still insisting that Moses' people remain in bondage.

The ancient Israelites were much the same. They *"refused to heed, shrugged their shoulders, and stopped their ears so that they could not hear. Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing*

to hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets" (Zech. 7:11–12).

You may be thinking, I'm smarter than that! But just stop and consider, how many times has each of us been warned through the Word of God, and how many times have we ignored the warning and kept on in our way? I can think of only one who heeded every warning and never fell to temptation: Jesus Christ. The rest of us, it is alarming to admit, have failed many times—can you even begin to count the number?

But there is hope. We don't have to go our own way. We don't have to go on ignoring the warnings. We can turn our natural yellow jacket persistence 180 degrees and persist in **heeding** the warnings—and save our lives! Eternally.

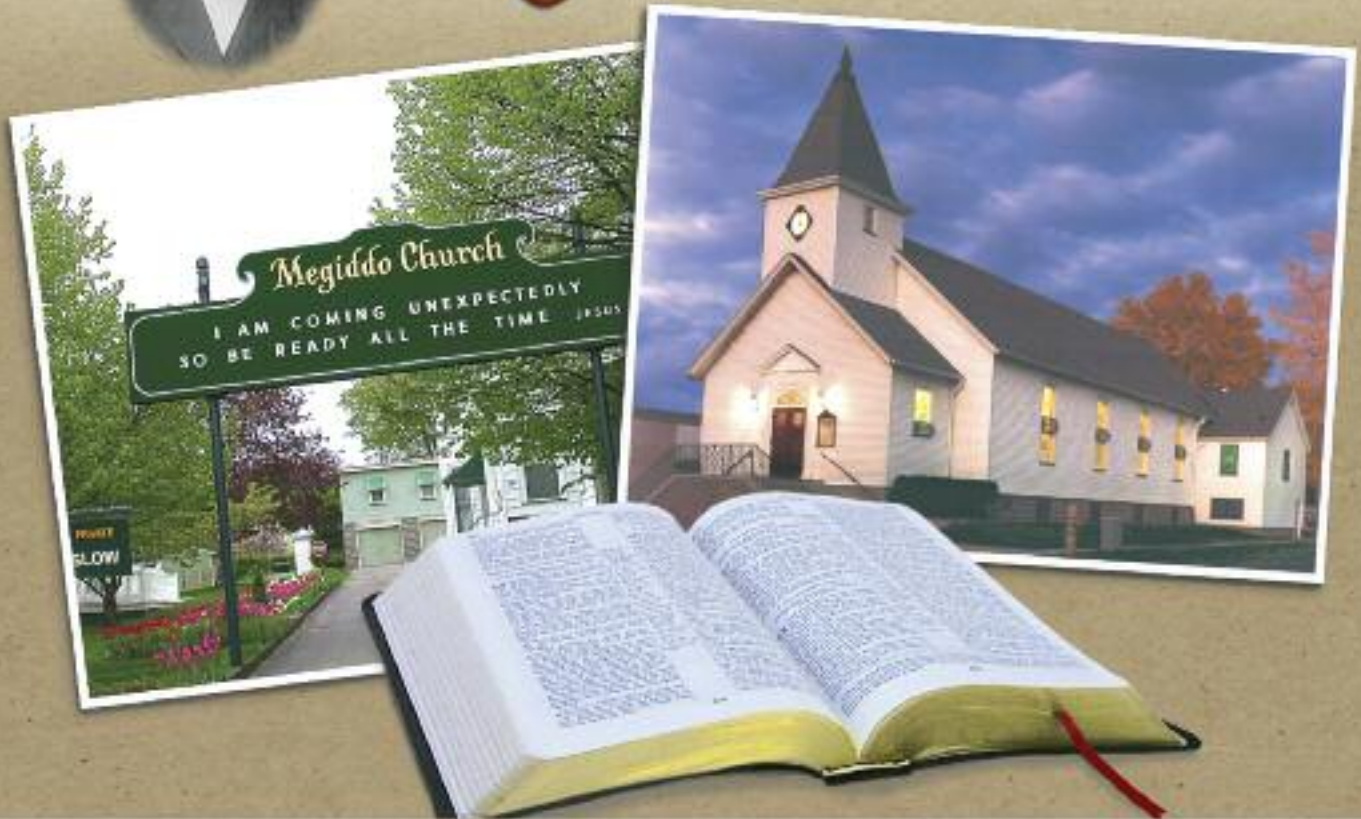
Here we have a powerful ally—the God of heaven. He alone can give life, life that will never end (Rev. 2:7). If we apply our persistence to heeding His warnings and meeting His standards, He will even accept us into His family as His own eternal sons and daughters (2 Cor. 6:17–18).

But if not? If we persist in our own way, our end will be no better than that of the yellow jackets. In the words of Scripture, we will be *"like the beasts that perish"* (Ps. 49:20). ♦

HISTORY OF



Megiddo Church



The Megiddo Church Is ...

The Megiddo Church is a small group of people deeply dedicated to a biblical world view and to the Bible as a way of life. We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of our Creator and our only source of knowledge about God and His plan of salvation for the earth.

A philosophy of life...

Because of our view of the plan of God, our first concern is not to achieve success in this world but to develop a character acceptable to God, so as to receive the eternal salvation He has offered in the Bible.

Our name "Megiddo"...

Our name "Megiddo" is taken from the name of a town in ancient Palestine. Its history spans more than 3500 years, being destroyed and rebuilt more than twenty times on the same spot. Located on a main route for travel between Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia, Megiddo has seen more battles than perhaps any other location on earth, and is to be the staging ground for the final battle of Armageddon at the return of Christ (Rev. 16:16).

In our context, Megiddo means literally "a place of troops" where dedicated soldiers of God fight the spiritual enemies of doubt, sin, and evil in themselves, using the "sword of the Spirit which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17).

Key Dates in the life of L. T. Nichols, founder of the Megiddo Church

- 1844: Born in Elkhart, Indiana
 - 1849: Nichols family relocates to frontier state of Wisconsin, where life was rugged and difficult.
 - 1854: Young L. T. (age 10) attends Christmas party, where Santa Claus' false face falls off, revealing Deacon Graves—starts him questioning fundamentals of religious beliefs.
 - 1855: L. T. is carrying a Bible to school, studies and talks to classmates during recess. Vows that he will never lie or steal, or take the name of God in vain, or use tobacco or alcoholic beverages
 - 1861: Was offered an annual salary of \$1500 if he would fill the pulpit of a local church.
 - 1864: Is married to Harriet Griffis
 - 1864: Is drafted into the army only weeks after marriage; refuses to kill his fellowmen based on convictions of Bible teaching; when his life is threatened for his stand, he appeals to President Lincoln and is allowed to serve in the military hospital.
- 1864–1875: Studies Bible intensely, seeking correct understanding of it
 - 1869: Debates publicly in Wrightstown, Wisconsin. Subject: The resurrection
 - 1868–1873: Settles in Fon du Lac, Wisconsin, circuit preacher for nearby towns
 - 1870: Debates publicly at Kasson, Minnesota. Subject: The Bible is all one harmonious teaching
- 1874: Relocates to McMinnville, Oregon, for opportunity to preach; holds annual camp meetings for followers
 - 1877: Debates with Professor Campbell at Salem, Oregon. Subjects: Is man mortal or immortal by nature? Is the resurrection physical? Will there be a literal kingdom on earth? Maud Hembree (his successor-to-be) is converted.
 - 1878: Publicly debates at Salem, Oregon. Subject: Is the sabbath observance binding now?
 - 1880: Discovers cornerstone Bible teaching: that one's salvation depends on knowing and obeying every command of Scripture, as expounded by Jesus.
 - 1882: Travels east through Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio
 - 1882: Returns to Oregon
 - 1883: Leaves Oregon, travels to Texas, then settles in Ellington, Minnesota
 - 1883–1900: Serves several congregations in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois as traveling circuit preacher
 - 1887: Holds public discussion in Owatonna, Minnesota. Subject: Is the Mosaic Law binding today?
 - 1888: Establishes church at Barry, Illinois, places church under the direction of Maud Hembree
 - 1891: Makes 6-month trip by ship to England and Wales in an effort to persuade Christadelphians of his convictions about the Bible and its teachings
 - 1893–1894: Travels with wife to St. Augustine, Florida



CHAPTER 3

SEEKING TRUTH: THE EARLY YEARS (1864–1873)

From a very young age, Nichols had a deep love of life—and a dread of death. At least part of this dread of death came from losing his little brother when he was still very young. Years later he told about it.

"The minister said he had gone to heaven. I said, 'What has gone to heaven? There is my little brother in the coffin.' The minister explained that his soul had gone to heaven. 'What is the soul?' I asked. 'The immortal part of us,' the minister answered. 'What is that?' I asked. 'Well,' the minister said, 'you must not ask so many questions.' I asked him if he had either seen or felt this immortal soul. He said, 'These are things we must not pry into.'"

Obviously the minister had no answer, and Nichols was not satisfied. "It was all too vague. I wanted something tangible," he said. "I wanted to know what the Bible said"—because he was convinced that the Bible, if it was indeed the Word of God Almighty, was the one source of information that he could trust.

Nichols was already aware that some of what he had been taught was not according to the Bible. Was the popular idea that we go to heaven at death another fallacy?

He determined to discover the truth of the matter. Surely, if we have an immortal soul, the Bible should at least mention it. The ministers had to be getting it from somewhere!

He began at Genesis and read the five books of Moses. Then he read Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. He read on, through Job, and through the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. No immortal soul. Then he read all through the Prophets, and on through the Gospels and the writings of the Apostles. Still, to his surprise, there was no mention of an immortal soul.

Well, he thought, perhaps God would make up in Revelation for what He had left out of the other books. Probably he would find it there. And so he read Revelation with special care, right through to the last "Amen." And—to his amazement—he failed to find it even once. Over and over he had found the words "soul" and "spirit," but not once was either said to be deathless, undying, or immortal. On the contrary, he found that souls "die" (Ezek. 18:20), that "the grave" or "sheol" is the "house appointed for all living" (Job 30:23), that "the dead praise not the Lord" (Ps. 115:17), and "the dead know not anything" (Ecc. 9:5, 10). He found also that the only possibility of life after death is by means of a

physical resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20, 23). The great Apostle even went so far as to say that without a physical resurrection his preaching was vain! ALL hope of life after death depends on a physical resurrection.

Never again would Nichols believe anyone who told him his loved ones were in heaven, or safe in Jesus' arms!

How much more was there to discover? Surely somewhere among the more than a thousand different faiths there was someone who had discovered the true teachings of the Bible. Surely there was someone he could follow. For though a natural leader, he preferred to follow.

Challenging the Creeds: The Restorationists

Young Nichols was born at a time when the Christian creeds were being challenged in the Old World and even more in the New. On the American frontier it was known as the Restoration Movement. This movement was to the Protestant churches what the Reformation had been to the Roman Catholic Church. Its free thinking leaders, not satisfied with the teaching being handed out by the churches, were studying the Bible for themselves, and were challenging many "ortho-

A PASSION FOR TRUTH

If Truth Is Relative ...

Ask the average person to define "truth," and he or she will likely tell you "it all depends." It depends on the situation, the issues, and who you are. What is true for you may

not be true for me. And what is true for me today may not be true for me tomorrow, because all truth is relative to time and circumstance. What about truth in matters of one's beliefs? "You have your truth and I have mine!"

The typical 21st century mind is comfortable with the idea that truth is relative. Even the modern dictionary, defining truth, states that "conceptions of truth and moral values are not absolute but are relative to the persons or groups holding them" (The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition copyright ©2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company). Take away relativism, and you return to the debate, hatred, murder and wars of former generations.

BUT...

If truth is relative, then there is no absolute right and wrong.

If truth is relative, then only subjective and indefinite answers exist for the purpose and meaning of life.

If truth is relative, then a lie is as viable as truth in certain environs and circumstances. Perhaps this is why historians can rewrite history, distorting facts, and never blush.

If truth is relative, is there any benefit in knowing Bible truth?

Whether we admit it or not, if we accept the "new" definition of truth, we are victims—or slaves—of relativism.

Seeking Truth...

A century and a half ago, the founder of the Megiddo Church committed his life to the search for truth in religion. He had a passion for truth, and could be satisfied with nothing less than absolutes—absolutes as compared with one source: the Bible. Nichols had a passion for truth. It was a matter as serious as life and death. But he knew nothing of the "new" definition of truth. For him, truth was any thought or principle that bears the authority of God, our Creator, as stated in the Bible. When Nichols challenged every popularly held belief with "Is it true?" his real question was: "What does the Bible say?" If God didn't say it, it was worthless because, as Nichols said in essence, "You can't make it happen, neither can I. Therefore, if God didn't say it, don't believe it."

This was the beginning and end of his lifelong passion for truth.

Very early in life, Nichols observed the lack of truthfulness in the Christian world. When only ten years of age, he had discovered his elders had lied to him. His confidence was broken. If the people he most respected would lie to him about Santa Claus and Christmas, how could he trust what they said about heaven, or God, or future life? It was a serious issue, complicated by the fact that there were over a thousand faiths in the world, all claiming the Bible for their support. Where was truth?

With such a diversity of opinions extant, he concluded that truth could not be found in the halls of higher learning, since these only taught the errors that men's minds



dox” beliefs and practices. To them, what the Bible said was more important than the words of any man, whoever he might be. Many came to America to distance themselves from the creed bound Old World.

Among the earliest Restoration leaders was Alexander Campbell. Born in Ireland in 1788, Alexander was the son of a Presbyterian preacher who was already an independent thinker, though formally bound by the creed of his church. Young Alexander, following in his father’s footsteps, became a Presbyterian preacher. But coming to America in 1809, he united with his father in preaching independent of any denomination. Studying the Bible for himself, he was soon doubting many of the religious theories of his church. It was not long before he cut loose from all ecclesiastical bodies and called upon those who would worship God to take the New Testament as their guide, though he retained most of the orthodox beliefs. His followers were known as Campbellites.

Into this free thinking atmosphere young Nichols came—his mother was a Campbellite. Although she taught her children the traditional beliefs—this was all she knew—she had a loyalty to the Bible above any creed. In her home God was

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

had produced. The only solution was to study the Bible for himself, with an open mind and a firm commitment to believe only what he could be satisfied was the clear, straightforward teaching of Scripture. It would not be easy. There would be pressures from friends, and from the whole structure of religious teaching before him. There would be the temptation to go with what is popular, and to compromise when he was opposed. And there would be the subconscious desire to uphold a popular idea or belief. After all, it is only natural to want to be accepted and respected. But he had made up his mind very early not to be swayed by popularity. What was it worth if the whole world proclaimed it—if God did not say it?

And so he made his commitment to God and His Word, to believe all and only what he could read. What mattered the hardships and risk of life if only the truth of the living God could be found and applied? Truth was the gem he was seeking—truth as declared by the God of heaven in His written Word; the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Any clouding of error, for whatever reason, was not pure truth.

An Ongoing Passion

The story of the Megiddo Church is the story of an ongoing passion for truth. This passion affects every aspect and avenue of life—social, moral, spiritual, physical.

The Megiddo Church stands on these fundamentals:

1. *Absolute truth exists.*

We live in an orderly world, designed by our Creator and operating by known and predictable laws put in place by our Creator (laws of health, of physics, of science, moral laws, etc.).

2. *The Bible is today the sole source of truth about our Creator and His absolute standard of right and wrong.*

3. *Bible truth is independent of human concepts or ideas.*

4. *By a proper study of the Bible, truth can be known.*

5. *Bible truth understood and applied to one’s life is the key to future life and glory.*

Given the above, truth becomes an absolute term, and an absolute necessity to understand and know. This means:

■ Truth does not change with the culture, the times, or circumstances.

■ Truth does not depend on being accepted or believed.

■ Truth is true, even if nobody believes it.

■ Truth is true, even if nobody lives by it.

■ Truth is true, even if everybody rejects it.

■ Truth is true, because its source is the Creator of all in heaven and on earth.

In a culture where belief in absolute truth has been replaced by the right of every individual to interpret for himself, truth according to the Bible has lost its authority and even its relevance. But whether one acknowledges it or not, all life still depends for its source on God. There are no new inventions, or better superglue, or superior means of flight except may be found existing in nature; the scientist or engineer only borrows from what is already there. Nor is there life except God gives it. No man has created even a single living cell. Once life is gone, no one can get it back; it is a fact of nature. And just as absolute are the facts revealed in Scripture. And whatever anyone may think or believe, there is no truth except the infallible God endorses it in Scripture.

The whole issue then becomes, *What does the Bible say?* How can we apply the Bible to our lives today so that God will accept us and give us what He has promised?

This is why it is vital to study the Bible with a mind open to the evidence. For as J. L. Borges expressed well, *“Truth never penetrates an unwilling mind.”* ♦

revered, and the Bible was read and studied with loving devotion as the Word of God. If there was a conflict between the Bible and creed, the Bible stood. With her, as with others of the movement, what the Bible said meant more than any creed.

This devotion to the Bible was shared and promoted by a number of other leaders of the Restoration Movement, among them a man named Benjamin Wilson. Born into a Baptist family in England in 1817, Wilson came with his family to the New World in 1844 where he joined Alexander Campbell. A serious Bible scholar, he soon separated from Campbell as his studies led him to reject certain beliefs common in Christian circles, including belief in a literal devil, in a pre-existent Christ, and in the immortal soul. Most important was his contribution to the resurgence of Bible study among the Restorationists: a complete interlinear translation of the New Testament, known as the "Emphatic Diaglott," which he completed in 1864. This was a work that Nichols procured and found to be a most helpful tool in his personal studies.

Wilson had left Campbell due largely to his communications with another ex-Campbellite, Dr. John Thomas, who was to play an even larger role in the life of young Nichols. Born in London in 1805, Dr. Thomas studied medicine in London, then emigrated to Brooklyn, New York in 1832. Narrowly escaping shipwreck on the voyage, Thomas, a Baptist at the time, vowed that should his life be spared he would dedicate it to discovering the true teaching of the Bible about the matter of life and death.

During the next 30 years Dr. Thomas continued to study the Bible while traveling, lecturing and writing, often challenging the orthodox beliefs. One of his earliest convictions was regarding the Bible teaching on the nature of man, that man is mortal and does not have an immortal soul. He also taught right beliefs were essential to one's salvation, that the kingdom of God was to come on earth at the return of Jesus, that there was no literal devil, and no burning hell, and that the Holy Spirit was not a person but a power.

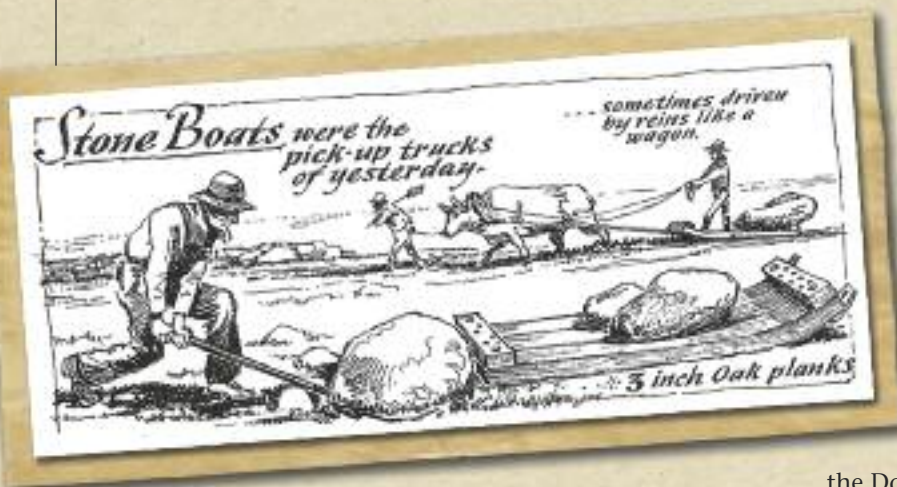
Dr. Thomas attracted a small number of followers, but had no name for them until the American Civil War brought the issue into prominence. Based on his study of Scripture, Dr. Thomas also believed that war was wrong and that believers should not participate. In order to be exempted from military service, the American government required affiliation with a recognized religious group. For this purpose Dr. Thomas coined the name Christadelphian, and his followers were granted the status of conscientious objectors.

A short time before the Civil War started, young L. T. Nichols, hearing of the studies of Dr. Thomas, was attracted to him, as he found his writings liberally sprinkled with references to Scripture. As Nichols had already discovered that there was a great divide between the orthodox beliefs common to so-called Christianity and the teachings of the Bible, he was eager to learn from one who had found the same and was hopefully more advanced.

When he heard that Dr. Thomas was to visit Milwaukee, a city only 60 miles from where he was living, Nichols arranged to go to Milwaukee to hear the Doctor expound what he called the "truth." If it was indeed the truth of the Bible, Nichols wanted to learn about it!

This was in 1864, and not long after hearing the Doctor, Nichols was drafted into the army. But as soon as he was home again, the young Wisconsin farmer was baptized into the faith of Dr. Thomas and began preaching and writing as a zealous Christadelphian.

About this time, life for the young couple was interrupted for several months



A stoneboat served as a carriage until the Nichols could afford to buy one.

when Harriet's health began to fail. There being a history of tuberculosis in the Griffis family, they decided immediately on a course of action. Being still too poor to afford better conveyance, they used what they had: an ox team and a stoneboat. Piling on the needful equipment, the young couple took to the open road and headed for the limitless prairies of Kansas. Days were spent in the sun and nights by the roadside, where rattlesnakes, coyotes and Indians were their neighbors. But the outdoor life proved good medicine, and before long the roses began to bloom again in Harriet's cheeks. They returned to Wisconsin, and Nichols resumed the daily routine of hard work and nights of studying the Scriptures.

Nichols was a Christadelphian, yet he was not one to swallow any man's teaching "hook, line and sinker," especially in so vital a matter as salvation. Point by point he was testing every belief by the Bible, because he would not espouse any doctrine until he was completely satisfied that it was according to the Bible.

What About the Holy Spirit?

During the years when Nichols was a Wisconsin circuit preacher with a small band of adherents (1865–1873), he had a number of encounters with would-be "helpers." Always wary of unfounded claims, Nichols was immediately cautious when a certain Mr. Stroud came forward, proposing that the miraculous powers Jesus gave His followers were "for all time" instead of "to the end of the age," as Nichols was teaching. Mr. Stroud claimed to have that power himself, and said that in a short time the Holy Spirit would be poured out just as it had come on Pentecost during the first century.

After a considerable time of waiting, Stroud boldly claimed such an outpouring had come. Word spread that Stroud was healing the sick, the lame and the blind. Excitement soared!

Nichols was still cautious; he would have to know firsthand for himself!

Then the report arrived that in a distant town Stroud had healed a man who had not walked for six months. Could this be it! Nichols started to the town with anxious hope, yet still wary of possible deception.

Immediately Nichols set about to verify Stroud's claim. If the claim was true, Nichols would embrace it and declare it to all who would listen. If Stroud was wrong, he would expose his error. One of Nichols' followers, an elderly brother named Seymour, hopelessly blind, would provide a suitable test subject. If Stroud could heal Seymour, there would be no question.

The result of Stroud's prayers and anointings was a dismal failure, and the second attempt met with no better results. Nichols promptly denounced Stroud's claims as fraudulent, although Stroud still claimed to "have the power."

Nichols was equally critical of himself whenever he discovered that his own teaching was not in agreement with Scripture. After a thorough study of what the Bible said about Holy Spirit power, he stated that he had been wrong in expecting

Another Brush With Death

"I Had to Give Her Up"

"I know what it is [to give up a child]. I had a loving little one; I had some little arms around my neck once. Little May was so obedient, and was always up in the morning. One morning she did not come to breakfast, said she did not feel well. She asked me if she should die, would Jesus raise her from the dead?"

"Just then I had a Macedonian call to come over and help some brethren, and I had to go off on a trip. I thought of that testimony, '*He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me*,' and went, not knowing whether I should see her again.

"Well, I had only had a few meetings when, after one of the meetings, I got a telegram from my wife saying that little May was much worse, and if I wanted to see her alive, I must come home right away. So I started. Our home was about five miles from the railroad, and there was a stagecoach there. I got into it and finally reached home. When I got there and she saw me, she jumped right up to meet me, and said 'O Papa!' And in three seconds she was dead in my arms. I had to give her up. I had to say, '*He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me*' (Matt. 10:37).

"I said, '*Thy will be done*,' and kept pressing on."

—L. T. Nichols

L. T. Nichols reminiscing...(1911)

Not every one had a father and mother like mine. My father always looked on the bright side. If things went wrong he would say, "Never mind, never mind." And my mother was always pleasant, she never spoke a cross word to friend or foe. They were dear to me.

But oh! Father is no more, Mother is no more, our little girl is dead. The question is, What can we do to live where there will be no dying? If there had been no dying here, mother would be here, father would be here, brothers and sisters would be here, and I would have all the heaven I want. But they are gone...

I want that life to come, that eternal life with Jesus, that grand home in glory. I want it for myself, and I want you to have it, too.

such an event in this age. The present time was the "dry" time between the "former rain" and the "latter rain" of the Holy Spirit foretold by God's Prophet Joel. Jesus' promise of special gifts of miraculous power to the Apostles had been given for a limited time only. They were to last to the end of that age (Matt. 28:19-20). And these gifts had a singular purpose: to confirm the genuineness of the Apostles' message and their Divine calling (see Mark. 16:20; Rom. 15:19-20; Acts 2:22). The power was also vital in helping them write an accurate, God-inspired account of the ministry of Jesus and His teaching, that has come down to us as the Bible (John 14:26; 16:13).

Since that outpouring of Holy Spirit power had been prophesied to end (see 1 Cor. 13:8), it followed that since that age there have been no miracles, no visions, or angelic visits. "Whether there be tongues," wrote Saint Paul, "they shall cease..." (1 Cor. 13:8). The next dispensing of Divine gifts would be a far greater outpouring at Christ's second advent, when God will pour out His "...spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28-29). Then it would not be a small, local event but one affecting a widespread group, as suggested by the description that it would be given to "all flesh"—who could miss it!

Nichols took his stand on the Bible, repudiating his former position, and moved on. He would not hold to any teaching, however popular or dear, unless he was convinced it had full Biblical support.

During his Wisconsin years (1864-1873), Nichols was spending all the time he could spare spreading the "glad tidings." Regularly he made a circuit through the nearby towns, interesting a number of brethren in Fond du Lac, Oshkosh, Green Bay, Ripon and Berlin. Occasionally he went further, into other districts and states. Each weekend he would hitch up his team and, with his wife, spend a day or two or three "feeding the hungry." His followers were few, but his passion was for truth and he would be satisfied with nothing less.

About the same time he also set seriously to the task of acquiring a working knowledge of the original languages in which the Bible was written. Without access to the Hebrew and Greek, he could not have succeeded in his quest because the Bible was not given to man in its present translations; he needed to be able to check the source. When the problem was with the translation, there was no other way. ♦

TO BE CONTINUED

BROTHERS AND SISTERS

1. A great wind blew the house down upon them (Job 1:18-19)
2. Mary and Martha (John 11:1-3, 19-44)
3. Seth (Gen. 4:25)
4. Wilderness of Beersheba (Gen. 21:14, 17-18)
5. Miriam (Num. 26:59)
6. Jacob (Gen. 32:9-15)
7. Rebekah (Gen. 24:29, 67)
8. Seventy times seven (in other words, no limit) (Matt. 18:21-22)
9. Adonijah (1 Kings 1:17-18)
10. James and John; Peter and Andrew (Matt. 10:1-2)
11. James and John (Mark 3:17)

12. Wisdom (Prov. 7:4)
13. Herod (Mark 6:17-18)

FROM JESUS' PARABLES

1. Wayside; stony ground; thorns; good ground (Matt. 13:4-8)
2. Birds ate them (Matt. 13:4)
3. Persecution (Matt. 13:20-21)
4. Mustard (Matt. 13:31)
5. Three measures of meal (Matt. 13:33)
6. Sold all that he had and bought it (Matt. 13:45-46)
7. Sell him and his wife into slavery (Matt. 18:23-25)

8. Five (Matt. 20:1-6)
9. Early in the morning; the eleventh hour (Matt. 20:6)
10. Those hired last. (Matt. 20:8-10)
11. He was the heir, and they wanted his inheritance (Matt. 21:38)
12. Five wise and five foolish (Matt. 25:2)
13. They took more oil for their lamps (Matt. 25:4)
14. At midnight (Matt. 25:6)
15. I don't know you (Matt. 25:12)
16. To each according to his ability (Matt. 25:15)
17. He failed to use the one talent he did have (Matt. 25:24)



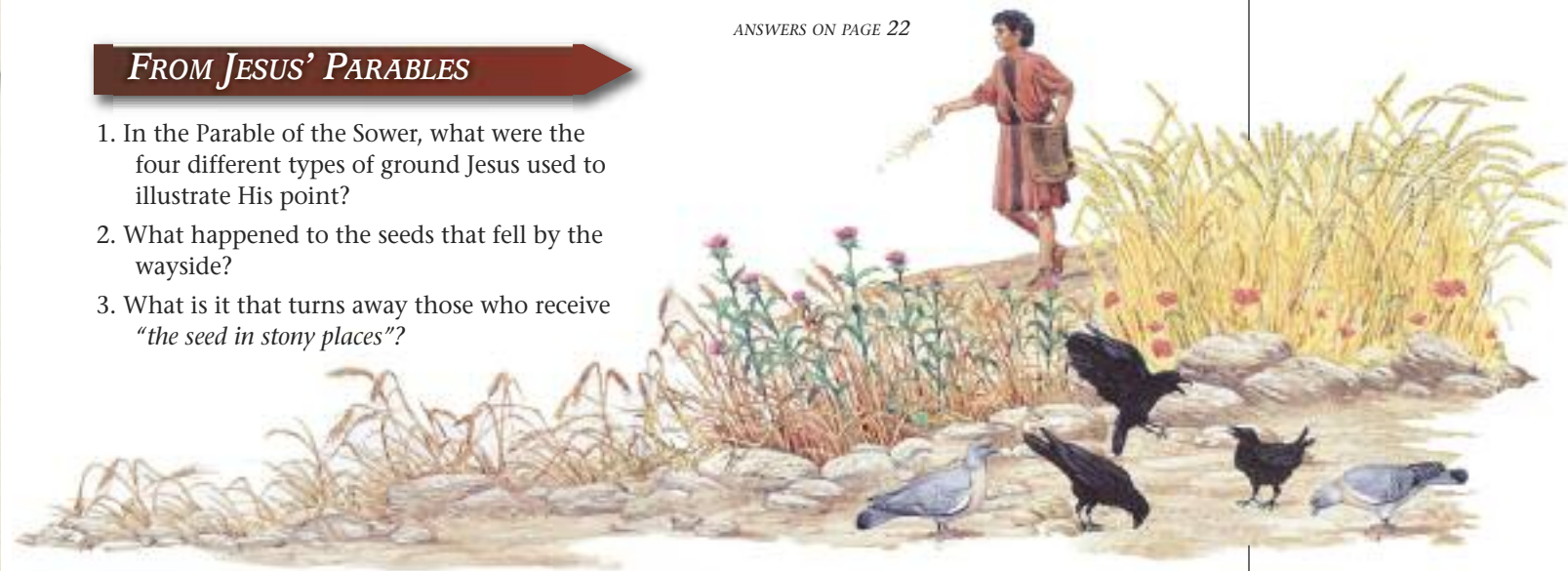
BROTHERS AND SISTERS

1. What happened to Job's sons and daughters while they were feasting in their oldest brother's house?
2. Who were the sisters of Lazarus, the man whom Jesus raised from the dead?
3. Which son of Adam replaced Abel as heir after Abel was murdered by his brother Cain?
4. Where were Ishmael and his mother when she received a promise from God that her son would become a great nation?
5. Who was the sister of Aaron and Moses?
6. Who was so afraid of the anger of his twin brother that he offered him 220 goats, 220 sheep, 30 milk camels and their colts, 40 cows, 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys and 10 foals to appease him?
7. Who was the sister of Laban and the wife of Isaac?
8. According to Jesus, how many times should a man forgive his brother who has sinned against him?
9. Which of Solomon's brothers rivaled him as heir to the throne?
10. Name two sets of brothers whom Jesus called to be His apostles.
11. Which brothers were known as "Boanerges" or "the sons of thunder"?
12. According to Proverbs, to what virtue should it be said, "you are my sister"?
13. Who married his brother's wife and was told that it was not lawful?
4. The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of what small seed?
5. According to Matthew *"The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took, and hid in _____, till the whole was leavened."*
6. What did the merchant man do who found the "pearl of great price"?
7. A certain king was taking account of his servants, and one was brought who owed him ten thousand talents. What was the king's first thought of what should be done about it?
8. In the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, how many times during the day did the landowner go out to hire laborers?
9. What time was it when he went out the first time? the last time?
10. Which of the laborers were paid first?
11. In the Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers, why did the tenants kill the landowner's son?
12. In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, how many were wise and how many foolish?
13. What distinguished the wise virgins from the foolish?
14. At what time did the bridegroom come?
15. What did the bridegroom say to the foolish virgins?
16. In the Parable of the Talents, how did the wealthy man distribute his wealth among his servants?
17. Why did the one-talent man lose out?

ANSWERS ON PAGE 22

FROM JESUS' PARABLES

1. In the Parable of the Sower, what were the four different types of ground Jesus used to illustrate His point?
2. What happened to the seeds that fell by the wayside?
3. What is it that turns away those who receive "the seed in stony places"?





ON MEASURING TIME

Understanding the Ancient Hebrew Calendar (concluded)

PART TWO

THE MONTHS OF THE HEBREW CALENDAR— BY NAME

Before the Babylonian exile few of the Hebrew months were identified by name. Numbers were the more common designation. It appears, however, that during their exile the Jews adopted names for their months, as all except the first month (Abib) occur in passages written after the return of the Jewish people from captivity. This suggests that the names could have been learned in Babylon and brought to Israel—that they did not originate in Israel.

COMPLICATIONS AND ADJUSTMENTS

There are complications in trying to match a lunar calendar (Hebrew's) with the four seasons, which are determined by the sun. On the Hebrew calendar, a lunar month was from new moon to new moon, which is 29 days, 12 hours and 44/100ths of a minute. Twelve of these months equal 354 ¼ days, which is approximately 11 days short of the solar year. If the Jews followed this calendar for 10 years, with a year of 354 ¼ days, their months would not correspond to the seasons. Only a few more years and they would be celebrating their new year in the middle of the winter, and Abib instead of being "the spring or sprouting month" would be the month of rain and snow.

History relates how the Jews made an adjustment by adding a thirteenth month every few years, to bring the lunar year into conformity with the seasons. This practice is called intercalation. At first it seems the month was added wherever the ruling power dictated. However, a pattern was developed, and the additional month was added after the twelfth month in years 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17 and 19 of the 19-year cycle. This kept the lunar calendar approximately in line with the solar year and the seasons.

A SECOND (AUTUMNAL) NEW YEAR

At some time, not noted in Scripture, the Hebrew people began observing a second new year which they still recognize today. This second new year, in the fall of the year, is often identified as their "civil" new year in contrast to the "sacred." This new year falls in the seventh month, known in ancient Israel as Tishri.

Concerning the spring or fall new year, scholars disagree. Some say that from the time of the Babylonian captivity the Jewish people kept a spring new year, and others say, or at least infer, that from the time of the Babylonian captivity they kept the fall new year. The Winston Dictionary states that beginning with the sixth century B.C. they kept the spring new year, starting with the month Nisan. We quote: "During the exile, under the influence of the more scientific Babylonian calendar, the new year was observed in the spring month, Nisan, at the time of the equinox. During this time the memory of the old year was preserved by an ecclesiastical new year observed in the autumn." But then the dictionary goes on to say, "From the sixth to the first century B.C. the year began with Nisan." This brings us to the time of the birth of Christ.

Hebrew people today recognize the fall new year. They begin their year with Tishri, the seventh month. But they also recognize the month of Nisan or Abib as far as their Passover observance is concerned.

We do not know when the Jews began celebrating the beginning of their civil new year in the fall. But they started their sacred new year in the spring. Exodus 12:2 is a direct command from the Lord to Moses. All their feasts and festivals commanded by God were based upon a spring new year beginning with Abib or Nisan, which means green ears, newly ripened grain.

Jewish people today date their Passover from Abib. Yet they keep Saturday as the Sabbath. But if we read the Bible text carefully, we find that a continuing parallel with our days of the week is impossible. Because the first new moon in the spring determined the first day of the week and their Sabbath was always seven days later, it is not possible to follow a seven-day sequence around the calendar from year to year, as our Saturdays do. The last week of any year would have differing number of days, because the first new moon after the spring equinox begins a new year, a new month, and a new week. And the Sabbath was always the seventh day of the new year, the fourteenth day, the twenty-first day, and so on through the year (see Lev. 23).

ABOUT THE DATE OF CHRIST'S BIRTH

Because of the differences in calendars, noted above, the festivals on the Hebrew calendar cannot fall on the same date on our calendar every year. What do we know about the date Christ was born and why both Mary and Joseph happened to be in Bethlehem at that time?

Prophecy and history alike agree that Bethlehem was Christ's birthplace. Was there any event during the year which attracted Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem? The enrollment as ordered by Caesar Augustus and mentioned by Luke required the presence of only the male member of the household. This enrollment would not have brought Mary to Bethlehem in her condition.

Yet she was there, impelled by some inner urge to make the journey with Joseph. Why? Was it the Passover, principal of Jewish feasts, which motivated Mary to make the long difficult trip? No, because as the Passover was observed in Jerusalem, and Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem when Jesus was born.

Abib being the first month of the Jewish sacred year, it was the likely season for the political rulers to impose a census for tax purposes, because loyal Jews were under obligation to "*observe the month of Abib.*" According to custom, Bethlehem was the town where the family of David assembled to carry out this command. You will remember David mentioned to Jonathan the yearly new moon feast for "*all the family*" (1 Sam. 20:5-6). It appears that it was this yearly feast for the family of David, of which both Mary and Joseph were members, that brought them to Bethlehem with a strong desire to observe the new moon of Abib.

And it was at this time the promised Messiah was born. We cannot say that we know Christ was born the first day of Abib; but we know how precise God is in everything He does, and evidence points to His being born on the first day of Abib, or at least at that season of the year.

It is also noteworthy that the tabernacle was completed on the first day of the first month of the year (Ex. 40:2). The God of heaven being a God of order and Christ being the first fruits from the dead, it seems very possible that God arranged that Christ's birth should coincide with the anniversary of the setting up of the tabernacle.

FEASTS STILL OBSERVED

In the New Testament times, loyal, God honoring Jews were still keeping some of the ancient Hebrew feasts. When Jesus was twelve years old, we read that Mary and Joseph, with Jesus, "*went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast,*" the feast of the Passover (Luke 2:42).

The apostle Paul also mentioned certain of the feasts which were important to him. One was the Passover, as he records: "*But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread*" (Acts 20:6). Again he mentioned that he wanted, if at all possible, to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost (Acts 20:16).

TO SUMMARIZE:

A lunar year was made up of 12 lunar months and that figures out to approximately 354 days. A solar year, the basis of our current calendar, is the interval between two consecutive circuitings of the earth around the sun, which requires approximately 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds. For those using the lunar calendar, to synchronize the lunar year with the seasons of the solar, it was necessary to add one month 7 times during a 19-year cycle. This causes the variation in dates. It is impossible to synchronize the two calendars exactly.

The Jewish New Year began with the actual sighting of the New moon of Abib, which was the first new moon after the spring equinox. Whether the preceding day had been the first or third or fifth of the week, the sighting of the new year moon meant the beginning of the year and the beginning of the week, as the first day of the new year was always the first day of the week. Because of this fact, it is not possible for a succession of Saturdays to parallel the Sabbath observance commanded in the Old Testament. ♦

May I Come In?

*Jesus stands at the door and knocks
Won't you invite Him in?
He will not open up the door
For it is locked within.*

*The door He knocks at is your heart,
He pleads to share your life.
He will not come to visit you
If there is hate or strife.*

*His burdens are so light to bear,
His precepts are so good,
Our lives will be so very blessed,
If we live just as we should.*

—Melva Walton



OWLS: Stealthy Hunters of the Night



Did You Know...?

- ✓ that there are more than 100 different species of owls in the world—they are native on every continent except Antarctica.
- ✓ that owls have the best night vision of any creature known.
- ✓ that owls are very useful in keeping small rodents in check—without them we would be overrun with mice and small vermin.
- ✓ that it is really hard to get out of the owl's line of vision. The owl can't roll its eyes but it can fix its eyes on an object and turn its head to the right and keep turning it until it is actually looking over its left shoulder.
- ✓ that owls fly perfectly noiselessly, because of a special nap on their wings which muffles sound.
- ✓ that owls lay between 1 and 4 eggs, per season, depending on the availability of food (rodents and small pests).
- ✓ that the average lifetime of an owl is about 20 years.
- ✓ that different species of owls make different sounds. Some hoot, others chirp, others whistle, or warble, screech, shriek, chatter, laugh, buzz, bark, growl, or sing.
- ✓ that the owl may swallow its prey whole. Its stomach automatically separates meat from bones and fur.
- ✓ that most owls are not friendly with other birds or with each other. Northern owls prefer to raise their families in December, after other birds have migrated south. They use nests built and abandoned by other birds.

Are you looking for another evidence of your Creator's masterful handiwork? Don't miss the owl.

Do you seldom see an owl? There are probably two reasons. As the sun rises, most owls go to sleep, either in deep shade on large tree branches, in holes in trees, or on the ground. Secondly, they are heavily camouflaged, being mottled in color, to blend with their background. In the far north, many owls have only a faint pattern on a whitish background (like snow); in temperate forests, a bold pattern on a mixed background (like woods); in desert areas, a medium to fine pattern on a field of gray (like sand); in the humid tropics a coarse pattern resembling bark and leaves. (Did the owl decide what color to wear in what habitat?)

The hundred plus species of owls are found in all parts of the world, except Antarctica, and range in size from giants two feet tall down to the size of the sparrow. They utilize virtually all habitats, from grasslands to dense woodlands to rain forests. Most owls feed on rodents, the size of the prey varying with the size of the owl. The smallest owls eat insects and are singularly adapted to catch them. The whiskered owl prefers flying insects, and has been seen performing a unique trick: it will fly up to a large blooming flower and flap its wings to scare out any insects inhabiting the flower, then gulp them down as they emerge. Two species of owls like to eat fish, and are specially equipped to catch them. The bay owl prefers the flavor of bats, and at dusk will station itself at the entrance to a bat cave, ready to catch the bats as they come out to hunt.

COMMUNICATION. Owls are avid and capable communicators, and depend on their sounds to defend their territories and talk with their mates. Some species of owls chirp, others whistle, some warble, some screech, or shriek, or chatter, or laugh. Some buzz, some bark, some hoot or growl—and some actually sing. A certain type of owl has been observed to repeat a singing phrase 100 times without interruption or pause. The North American screech owls, male and female, when separated, often practice antiphonal singing, each answering the other as the two approach together. When eventually they meet, they sing a duet, the female carrying the higher part.

NESTING. In northern latitudes, some smaller species of owls nest a month or two earlier in the spring than most birds. Young owls are frequently covered by several inches of snow. The larger owls native to the colder parts of the Northern Hemisphere prefer to raise their young when other birds have migrated south. They mate in the fall and nest in December, using abandoned nests of other birds (usually crows). Keeping the chicks warm and fed is a full-time job for the parents. But egg laying among all owls is timed so that the young are hatched when food sources are the greatest. Owls have no trouble finding an abundance of rodents, field mice, and other small animals, even in winter if available.

FEATHERS. The owl's feathers are part of its special equipment for survival, and are no accident of chance. The wing feathers of most birds are made for flight, with a stiff shaft and tiny barbs that connect one feather to another. The wings of the owl have soft, fuzzy edges, which muffle the sound of their movement and allow the owl to fly silently. What are the advantages of noiseless flight? The owl while in flight can hear its prey moving on the ground without any interference from the sound of its own wings. And the prey is easily surprised, not hearing the approaching enemy.



The serrated wing feathers of the owl enable near-silent flight because they distribute air rushing over the wing into small vortices, thereby reducing turbulence.

Owls are also dressed for the weather. In the north, the plumage is soft, dense, and loose; and a thick layer of down provides insulation against the cold. (Did the owls figure out how to grow "down" when they were cold year after year?)

FEET AND TOES. The owl is further equipped to catch prey—each foot has four talons, needle sharp and exceptionally strong for the size of the bird—just what it needs to grab scurrying rodents. Its talons are another example of perfect design – they operate much like ice hooks. Once they grab, the prey rarely escapes. And if it tries to bite or snap at the owl, the owl's legs and feet are heavily feathered so that the fighting captive can do little or no harm to the owl. (Did the owl decide to grow feathers on its feet after it was bitten many times?) An exception are those owls that live on fish, which have no feathers on their feet and legs—they don't need them. Besides, they'd be always getting cold and wet!

The owl also uses its sharp talons to lift its prey to its wide mouth, and with one gulp swallows it whole. The owl doesn't have to separate meat from bones, because its stomach is specially constructed to digest the flesh and squeeze the fur and bones into two-inch pellets, which are pushed up its throat and spit out the next day.

EQUIPPED FOR NIGHT HUNTING

Owls are especially prepared to function successfully in the dark.

EYES. The owl has outstanding eyesight. Each large round eye, encased in a bony socket, is virtually immovable. But this is not a problem, since the owl can turn its head more than 180 degrees in any direction—the owl can look directly backward, forward, straight up, or straight down, or any angle in between without moving its body. (It can actually turn its head a full circle and a half.) In addition, its vision is binocular and three dimensional, which is especially useful for spotting small animals at a distance.

Since most owls are most active at night (a few are daytime hunters), their eyes are especially adapted for

the night. Our Creator has truly designed the owl to work at night. Human eyes have both cone cells (for distinguishing color) and rod cells (for gathering light). The eye of the owl is tightly packed with rod cells *only*, resulting in an absence of color vision but a great increase in light sensitivity. Daytime vision is about ten times better than ours, but their ability to see at night is amazing. The owl cannot actually see in the dark, but the pupil of the eye opens wide and its supersensitive retina is able to gather light from levels as low as the light from the stars, giving the owl an actual sight impression where we would see nothing. An owl can see and catch a small animal in light equivalent to that emitted by an ordinary candle 2500 feet away.

EARS. Owls do not depend entirely on their eyesight to capture their food. More important are their ears. Experiments have shown that the owl can locate its prey solely by hearing. On a dark night, an owl perched in a tree can hear the rustling sounds made by a mouse underneath grass and leaves on the ground below, can accurately localize the signal and strike and capture the prey without any visual aid. This requires a supersensitive and complex hearing mechanism, which we can only attribute to our great Creator's design.

What is singular about the owl's method of hearing? The ear of the owl is surrounded by a ruff of papery feathers that serve to concentrate sound. The very large ears (the eardrums are the largest found in any bird in the world) are located on the side of the head, but are not visible because covered with lacy feathers which permit sound to enter easily. A movable flap toward the back of the ear acts as a baffle to focus sound. The feathers on the owl's face are also designed to collect and bounce sound waves into the eardrums. (Did all this just happen to enhance the owl's ability to hear?)

Since the owl has a large head, the ears are far apart. And they are so constructed that the one ear is inverted to the other—the opening of the ear canal is in the upper part of one ear, and in the lower part of the other. This means that the owl receives sound on two planes, and the sound enters one ear a fraction of a second before it does the other. The time lapse difference may seem infinitesimal, but it is sufficient for the owl to know precisely the direction from which the sound is coming. By cocking its head at different angles, it can get different readings, and can pinpoint an origin of sound many feet away. This acute hearing ability makes the owl an able hunter, by day or night.

How could our Creator provide so lavishly for a small, simple animal of the night?

What can we say, but that the Hand that made them is Divine! ♦

Scientific data in this article is from *The ABC's of Nature*, "All About Owls," pp. 228–229; *Marvels and Mysteries of Our Animal World*, by Peter Farb; published by The Readers Digest Association, pp. 148–149; also *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th Edition, 15:75–77; and 27:160. <http://www.earthlife.net/birds/images/anatomy/owl-feather.jpg>



YOUTH IN CHRIST

"Remember your Creator in the days of your youth." ~ Ecclesiastes 12:1

Memorize:

Let all things be done decently and in order.

—1 Corinthians 14:40

PORKY LIVES HERE!

Mom gasped with surprise as she stepped into the girls' room. Not only were there paper scraps all over the floor, but the table and dresser tops and chairs were strewn with all the different things that can clutter young girls' rooms. What was worse, there on the floor were Ann's night clothes and a dress belonging to Melissa.

The closet door stood open and showed dresses and sweaters all plopped in a heap on the floor.

Paul followed his mother into the room. He saw the look on Mom's face and then he remarked, "They don't keep their room very nice, do they?"

Mom shook her head. It was Saturday. Ann and Melissa had scampered happily off for a visit with two of their schoolmates. They had hurried away without tidying their room.

"This is like the way Porky keeps her place," said Paul as he looked around the tousled room.

Mom laughed. Porky was a big brood sow. Her pen was a messy looking place, and she was constantly rooting and digging the ground.

Mark happened by in time to hear Paul's remark. As Mom closed the door of the girls' room, Mark said to her as he stuck out his chest, "If you are out on an inspection tour, ma'am, just come this way!" He opened the door to the room he shared with Stephen.

That room was, Mom declared, "trim as a barracks." Neither Mark nor Stephen had liked to make their beds or clean their room until a soldier cousin had come to visit and had told them how neatly soldiers had to keep their barracks.

As Mom left Mark's room, she thought she saw a spark of mischief in his eyes. So she was not greatly surprised when she came upstairs an hour later and found a paper sign tacked to the door of the girls' room. In big bold letters the

crayoned sign announced:



Mom left the sign on the door and went about her tasks. She was at work in her sewing room when Ann and Melissa came home and hurried up to their room. She heard Ann exclaim, "Say! Look, Melissa! *Porky lives here!*"

"Why, the idea! I'd just like to know—say, I think Mark made that sign!"

"Why would he put that sign on *our* door?" asked Melissa.

Ann did not have time to answer before Mom appeared. "Girls," said Mom, "did you have a nice time?"

"Oh, yes," chorused the two girls. Then Melissa asked, "Mom, why did Mark put that sign about Porky on our door?"

Mom eyed the messy room. "Well," she said, "I just wonder why!"

Ann's face flushed. *She* wasn't wondering why.

"Porky is a big pig," said Melissa, "and we're girls in this room."

"Yes, but I guess we left our room looking like Porky's pen today," admitted Ann.

Mom went over to the little bookcase and got Ann's white Bible. She opened it to a certain page, and laid it on the table. She pointed to a verse that read: "*Let all things be done decently and in order*" (1 Cor. 14:40).

"This verse wasn't written just for housekeepers," she explained. "It was advice to some people in the church at Corinth who were very disorderly about the way they had church services. But it's good advice for home, too. Being neat and orderly is just plain common sense. You know, if you didn't keep your room in order, why, in a few days you'd be stumbling over things, and you wouldn't be able to find anything without stirring around in the mess. And it's just much easier to live with people who do things '*decently and in order.*'" ♦



HOW ABOUT YOU?

Are you neat and orderly about the way you pick up your clothes, or take care of your things, or do your schoolwork?

Being neat and orderly makes everything easier.



How to Stay

Fresh and New

A few months ago, I was driving near our home with my son and daughter and a four-year old friend, Daryl. On a side street, we saw an old woman in a wheelchair who couldn't walk. I talked with the children about how that woman must feel, how hard it was for her to move, how lonely and dependent she might be. And I told the children that they would someday grow old, too.

That bit of news was shocking to Daryl, who outrightly rejected it.

"I'm *not* going to get old!" he said emphatically, as though insulted by my prediction.

"Yes, you are, Daryl," I said. "All of us will get old if we live that long. It happens to everyone."

His eyes grew big, and he protested again. "But it won't happen to me. I'm not going to be like that!"

Again I assured him that no one can escape.

There was silence in the car for a few seconds, then Daryl said with a note of panic in his voice, "But! But! But I don't want to grow old. I want to stay fresh and new."

I said, "I know, Daryl, I know how you feel. But don't worry, it won't happen for a long time. You have time to think about it."

But his words stayed in my mind, and I found myself saying, "I want to stay fresh and new."

Do you realize it is something beyond the power of you or me or those children or anyone else to control? All of us are caught in the process of aging, as long as we live.

The inability to stay "fresh and new" is a common source of depression. There is something distressing about watching yourself disintegrate day by day, especially after you

have realized that life is temporary. It happens so quickly, too. About the time you realize it, your mind gets fuzzy.

Doctors tell us there is a predictable pattern to the aging process, which begins with the malfunction of the sensory apparatus. We become less able to see, hear, feel, taste, and smell. Then the cardiovascular system becomes less efficient, and our muscles and joints refuse to operate properly.

At this point the life that seemed totally carefree and unhindered as a child now feels captive inside a body that cannot serve it well.

But old age need not be a time of depression and disillusionment. For those who are investing their life in the new and better world to come, the gloom and pessimism are overshadowed by the brightness of hope and expectation. Eternal life in the kingdom of Christ is a real and thrilling prospect which consumes more and more of the aging Christian's thought life. The apostle Paul said it in these words: "*Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed everyday*" (2 Cor. 4:16 NLT). And in the next chapter he continues: "*For we know that if our earthly house, this tent is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because*

*Though our bodies are dying,
our spirits are being renewed
every day. –2 Cor. 4:16 NAT*

we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life" (2 Cor. 5:1–4 NKJV).

As we grow older, as we experience the inconveniences of aging, let that promise of God shine brighter and brighter in our mind, in all its glory and beauty.

And in the meantime let us focus on doing what God requires of us, and being what He wants us to be. Will I be one that He chooses to live in His eternal realm? Am I building into my life the qualities that will make me of eternal worth to my Creator, so He can make me eternally fresh and new?

This high level of commitment is expensive, but it yields the highest returns on the investment at maturity. ♦



The ^{Most} Dangerous Point

Set a watch o'er your lips
As you travel along,
So that naught ever slips
That you know to be wrong.
For whatever your goal,
Whether aged or young,
Life and death you control
At the tip of your tongue.

Oh, the tip of the tongue
Is a dangerous place;
Many evils unsung
To this source you can trace.
It can raise an alarm
Or cast down to despair,
And cause far greater harm
Than a host can repair.

It's a two-edged sword--
Is the tip of the tongue--
That should not be ignored
By the old or the young.
It can turn away wrath
By a soft-spoken word;
Yet a storm in the path
Of its stride may be stirred.

It is quick to complain
Over some fancied slight;
Yet will sing in the rain
When conditions are right.
It can throw out of joint,
Or cause men to be hung,
Can this versatile point
Called the tip of the tongue.

It can kindle a flame
That incites us to war,
While it places the blame
On some one gone before.
Far more deadly than wasps,
By which men have been stung,
Is the poison of asps
In the tip of the tongue.

Yes, the tongue is a fire,
An iniquitous flame;
With King Flesh as its sire,
It will sear any name.
A most dangerous pool,
With its ripples far-flung,
Is this back-biters tool
Called the tip of the tongue.

Once again let me say,
As you value your life,
Keep an eye on the maker
Of discord and strife;
For if given free rein
It will bring you to grief,
Disappointment and pain,
And distress past belief.

As a tree by the edge
Of a hatchet is felled,
So the thoughts by the wedge
Called the tongue are expelled.
Thus a fool may be numbered
The wise men among,
By just keeping a check
On the tip of his tongue.

So should base passions rise
To pronounce you a fool,
In one way remain wise,
And remember this rule:
Think twice ere you're heard
When your reason's unstrung,
And then swallow the words
On the tip of your tongue.

—Liot L Snyder

Declaration of Dependence

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all people are incapable of pleasing God apart from a knowledge of His Word; neither do any of us have power to extend our lives beyond that which is allotted us. We are unable to save ourselves.

Yet we have within us a desire for fruitfulness, for meaning and fulfillment. The great Creator has set eternity in our hearts, and built within us a willpower capable of transcending ourselves and our low surroundings and reaching even to His levels of thought.

But we need guidance. We need the help of a Higher Power to save us from ourselves. We need help from above. We hereby declare our only hope to be this—that we may find favor with the God who created us, and thereby merit His eternal blessings. We therefore, the people who are gathered here today in His Holy Name, do hereby declare our dependence upon Him, with a firmer resolve that we shall show ourselves indeed worthy of our privileges, that sin shall no longer reign in us but that we shall henceforth be His, and shall recognize our right to take no liberties with anything He forbids, but to live wholly within His will, to do always and only the things that are pleasing to Him, and thus ultimately to find freedom from the bondage of mortality.

In humble recognition of God's graciousness to us, and His handiwork all about us, I do hereby declare my dependence upon Him and pledge myself to a life of loving and faithful obedience.

Signed _____



GROWING HABITS

"When I was a little boy," remarked an old man, "somebody gave me a cucumber in a bottle. The neck of the bottle was small, the cucumber was large. I wondered how it got there. Then out in the garden one day, I came upon a bottle slipped over a little green cucumber. Then I understood. The cucumber had grown inside the bottle."

"Often I see men with habits, I wonder how any strong, sensible man could form such bad habits. Then I reflect that they are like the cucumber in the bottle. Likely they grew into them little by little, and now they cannot easily slip out of them."

Let's take a serious look at our own habits. It is easier not to let them be formed, than to break them once they are formed.

The best Christian is not the one who talks most about God but the one who really walks with God.

Life is like a band—we need not all play the same part, but we must play in harmony.

When Jesus chose His disciples, He selected busy men, but not too busy to put first things first.

QUESTION: What makes Jesus' yoke easy and His burden light?

ANSWER: "I will."



WINNING!

*It takes a lot of courage, and a lot of self-control,
And a grim determination if you want to reach your goal
It takes a deal of praying and a firm and stern set chin,
If you really want the Kingdom and are bound that you will win!*

*There's no lazy path to glory; there's no short cut to the top
Keep on climbing toward the summit tho' your weary feet would stop;
For the prize, it calls for climbing, for endurance and for grit,
For a rugged disposition and an "I will never quit."*

*You must take the path of Jesus, you must risk if you would climb,
So expect that in the struggle you will suffer for a time.
But you mustn't shrink nor falter when the climb you once begin.
At the top is LIFE and GLORY for the ones who climb and win.*

—Author Unknown

