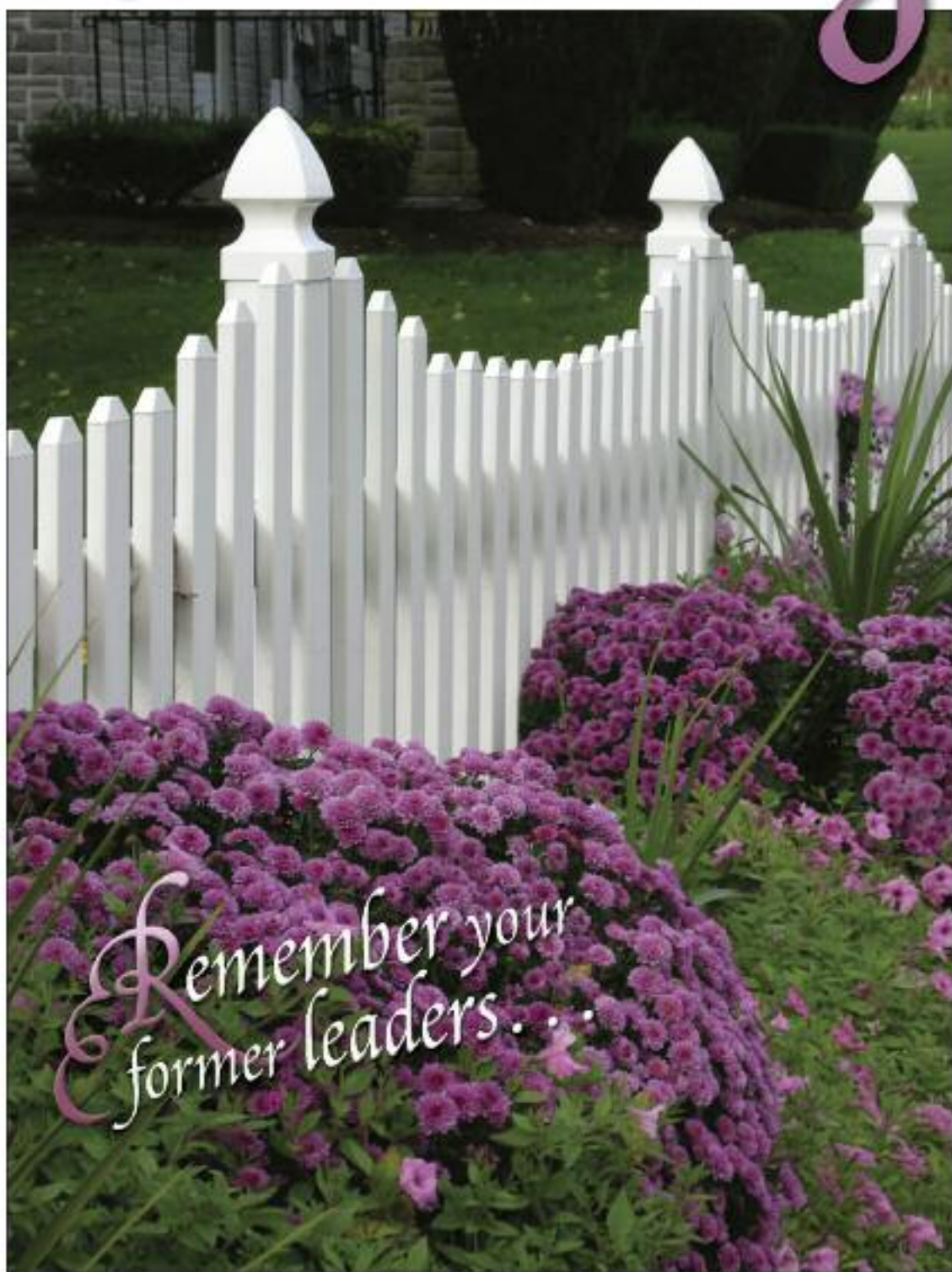


Fall 2013 • Volume 100, No. 3

Megiddo Message



Are You Building On the Right Foundation?

When commuting near Atlanta each day, I drove by a huge area of scrub pines, bushes and weeds that would one day be the site of one of the largest shopping malls in the southeast, The Mall at Stonecrest.

Day after day, month after month I saw huge equipment preparing the area. At the end of nearly a year it seemed they had gone nowhere, but they had been putting in the foundation, which included all the working parts: plumbing, wiring mains, sewers and whatever else goes into the foundation. And long before that there were many months, if not years, of planning. Detailed specifications were essential for a 1.3 million square-foot, two-level, indoor/outdoor super regional retail, dining and entertainment complex such as this. A good foundation had to be put in place before the building could proceed.

I am reminded of our job as Christians. As individuals we too are in the business of building. Each of us is a potential stone for God's spiritual temple (Eph. 2:20–22). How is your building progressing? If your stone isn't showing promise of aligning perfectly with the Corner Stone, maybe you didn't start by consulting the Architect. Maybe you're building on the wrong foundation, trusting man instead of God.

Jesus compared our individual responsibility of preparing for the Kingdom to building a house. According to Jesus, the success of the project depends on having the right foundation. Jesus said *"Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock"* (Luke 6:47–48).

So it is with building a spiritual house. If the foundation is solid, the house will be secure; we must build on the sure, rock-solid Word of God. There must be no eroding sands of error or disbelief beneath our foundation. Like the man building the house in Jesus' parable, we have to dig deep to find the solid Truth, because it has been covered over by centuries of lies, deception and error.

The Master Architect specifies that each stone in the temple the true covenant-makers are building must be perfectly square and polished to perfection. Each person building is responsible for one stone that must perfectly match the Pattern and Chief Corner Stone. We are humbled when we behold this Chief Corner Stone—what a marvel to behold!

Most people who compare themselves to this Chief Corner Stone immediately conclude that no one can ever match it. The preachers discourage their congregations from trying by insisting that perfection is just impossible. Masses accept that the work will be done for them because that is how they want it. Some of us would not buy into that deception. *"We will not be tossed about like a ship that the waves carry one way and then another. We will not be influenced by every new teaching we hear from people who are trying to fool us. They make plans and try any kind of trick to fool people into following the wrong*

*Build your
faith on the
sure, rock-solid
Word of God.*

Front cover photo:
The front of an Amish
home in Lancaster, PA,
by Margaret Tremblay

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).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27

Remember Your Former Leaders...

Remember your former leaders, who spoke God's message to you. Think back on how they lived and died, and imitate their faith. —Hebrews 13:7 GNB



L. T. Nichols
(1880-1912)

As I look around and see the wickedness, it makes me long for the time when the Mighty Potentate will rule in righteousness; when nothing but blessing will flow to all mankind....It is with a heart filled with love and goodwill that I am spending my time in the hope that some few will become all absorbed in the Word of the Lord as the only source of knowledge about the future of man and the goodness of God....We are right down in the end of time. Can we not work for God in the little time left us?



Ella M. Skeels
(1935-1945)

May our garden of virtue today be a place so sweet with the fragrance of pure thoughts, so bright and beautiful with rare exquisite blooms of righteousness, that angels will love to come and linger there.



Maud Hembree
(1912-1935)

I wonder how many, oh! I wonder with a deep love and longing in my heart, how many are going to be ready for that glorious kingdom? If you were as anxious for eternal life as you are for this natural life, you would get up tomorrow morning with the thought, How can I get ready so that the great Day of the Lord will not take me unawares?



Percy J. Thatcher
(1945-1958)

We can make each day better by doing something for Christ that we have never done before. We can do more of the very things that we have done the most of. We can rise to a higher level of thought and feeling and conduct.... No matter how high we have lived, we can live still higher.



Kenneth E. Flowerday
(1958-1985)

If our hope of eternal life is a "real thing" to us, if to obtain it is the burning quest of our lives, an interest for which we gladly exchange everything of the fleeting present, then whatever surrender God's law demands, we will gladly make it. Whatever comes, we will keep pressing right on, submissive to the will of Him who is leading, confident that "all things" are working together for good to all who truly love God.



Newton H. Payne
(1985-1997)

The values of this world are in a constant flux. Do we realize God is offering us payments that have absolute value? Only God can promise everlasting joy (Isa. 35:10), enduring peace (Isa. 32:17), and lasting riches and honor (Prov. 3:13-18). That is why His offers are worth our most valiant effort to obtain.

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Megiddo Message

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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—Koechler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M., & Stamm, J. J. (1999). The Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament; LSJ—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; SHG—Strong, J. (1997). The new Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words. THAYER—A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (1889).



On the Way to Glory!

Planet Earth is on the way to glory!

Sound impossible? No! It is the promise of our Creator: “As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord” (Num 14:21). What is “glory”? In the Bible, glory is a word for light, brilliance, splendor. It especially refers to people to whom God has given immortal life, made like the angels never to die (Luke 20:35–36). People who are glorified, given incorruptible bodies, will shine “as the stars” (Dan. 12:3). When the earth is filled with glorified, immortal people, it will be free from chaos, war, violence, and oppression; free from everything hurtful, harmful, or sinful; free from sickness and disease, even free from death.

A dream? Not at all. It is the plan of our Creator. The Lord God who swore by Himself, the God of the universe, has a plan that is linked with His whole creation. His plan for Planet Earth is to one day include her among His glorified heavenly bodies. This is the plan He has repeated countless times through the ages past, as we are told in the Bible, “The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him,...and to those who remember his commandments to do them” (Ps. 103:17–18). If God’s mercy extends from everlasting past to everlasting future, He must have had animate, intelligent beings during all that time on whom He could show mercy.

The qualification is that they “fear him... and remember his commandments to do them.”

Why can’t *we* be among them? Why can’t *we* have a part in God Almighty’s vast, “everlasting” plan? We can!

This is why God has given us the Bible. Jesus included God’s far-reaching plan in the heart of His prayer: “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). Our earth is destined to become a part of heaven.

Look Up!

Go outside on a starry night and look up. Who designed this magnificent display? Only God Himself can take credit for this, the God who “made heaven and earth” (Ps. 115:15; Jer. 10:10, 12). Here is firsthand evidence of His handiwork. These are His worlds, millions and billions and quadrillions of them.

Consider these facts:

Planets: For centuries, people knew only about our tiny solar system with its ten planets. Now scientists are talking about thousands, millions, even billions of planets just in our own Milky Way galaxy.

Stars and galaxies: So many galaxies have been photographed that estimates of the total number of galaxies in the universe range from 400 billion (400,000,000,000) to a literally infinite number. And each galaxy is made up of billions of stars.

NOT FROM A “BIG BANG”!

Did it all just “happen”? Is blind chance responsible for this magnitude of creation? Never! And where does it all end, when more powerful telescopes only reveal broader expanses—the heaven stretched out as a glittering tapestry—filled with myriads of galaxies? (Isa. 45:12; Jer. 10:12).

Ages ago God’s prophet Jeremiah declared that “the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured” (Jer. 33:22). We can easily believe this claim.

But the stars are silent regarding any information about their purpose. For the plan behind their creation, we must turn to the Bible, the information manual our Creator has provided about Himself and His work.

The Bible tells us that there is a plan, a design, a purpose. Speaking of the earth, the prophet Isaiah wrote, “He created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited” (Isa. 45:18).

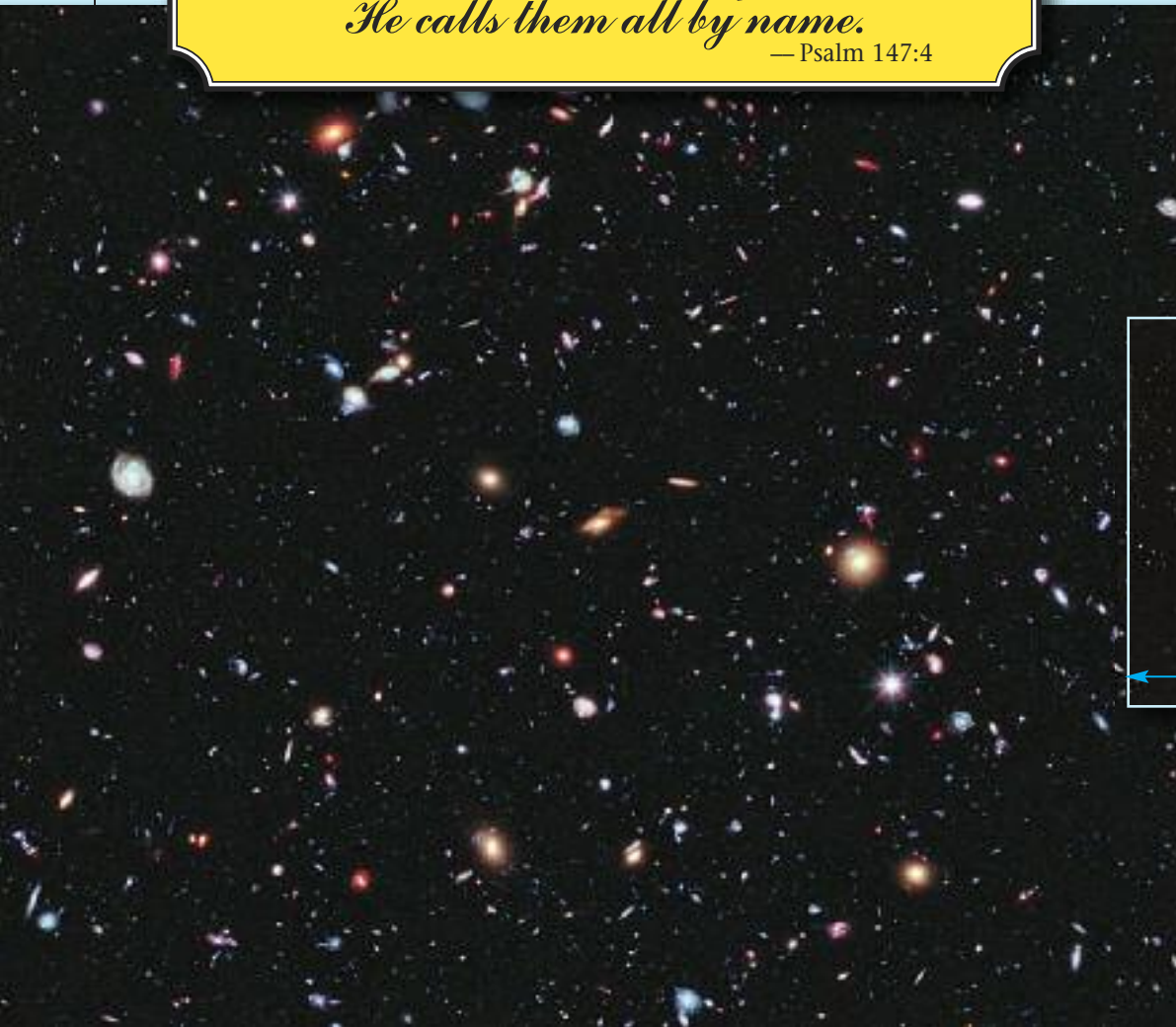
OUR PLACE IN IT ALL

Does the God who orders and supports this vast creation take notice of our tiny planet—and the human creatures that live and die here?

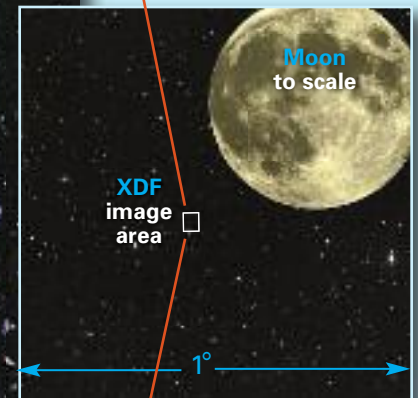
The answer is *yes*! God is mindful of all who are mindful of Him. They are His “special treasure,” His own “prized possession.” We cannot fathom such a Being!

Planet Earth is “On the way to Glory!” And when at last the earth is filled “with the glory of the Lord,” it will shine with “the brightness of the firmament,” and all its inhabitants will be immortal. ♦

*He counts the number of the stars,
He calls them all by name.*
— Psalm 147:4



Size of Hubble XDF image
area on the sky in
relation to the Moon



Digitized Sky Survey
(ground-based image)
for comparison

eXtreme Deep Field (XDF)

This Hubble telescope photo is of a very small area of sky in the constellation Fornax.

Called the **eXtreme Deep Field**, or **XDF**, this photo was assembled by combining 10 years of NASA Hubble Space Telescope photographs totalling about 2 million seconds or 22.5 days of exposures.

- ★ The XDF provides a “core sample” of the heavens by penetrating over *13 billion light-years into space*. (At an angular diameter of *one-half degree*, the Moon spans an area of sky only *one-half the width of a finger* held at arm’s length.)
- ★ The XDF reveals about *5,500 galaxies* in its small field of view.
- ★ The faintest galaxies in this photo are *1/ten-billionth the brightness* of what the human eye can see.

Credit:
NASA, ESA, G. Illingworth, D. Magee,
and P. Oesch (University of California,
Santa Cruz), R. Bouwens (Leiden
University), and the HUDF09 Team

Release Date: September 25, 2012

GOD'S Mercy

"from everlasting to everlasting"

The following comments made by our founder in the year 1900 point up his deep insights into the work and purposes of our Creator years before the vastness of the heavens was perceived or documented by scientists.

As I was looking into the heavens last night, I thought, how grand to be able to visit those lovely worlds! They seemed so bright and beautiful; it made me think of a little rhyme:

*Twinkle, twinkle little star,
How I wonder what you are,
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.*

How I wonder! If we were to take a trip to even the few stars we see, it would take us a good long time; but then if we spent a thousand years on each one, we would have just as much time left! To think of taking such a trip as that! But it is just as certain that the faithful will enjoy these things, as that there is a great Creator who is the Ruler of them all.

In the first of Genesis God is simply enlightening us regarding His plan of salvation upon this earth. But people in general have such a vague idea of God's plan of salvation. I was talking a few days ago with an individual, and during the conversation the point came up that only few would work out their salvation during the six thousand years from Adam to the Millennium. He thought it a dreadful thing that so few should be saved from a six thousand year time span; thought that God had made a failure of His plan of salvation. I asked him, "When do you think the first man was made?"

He replied: "About six thousand years ago."

I said to him: "Do you not think it would be a much greater failure if in all the thousands and millions of ages in the past not one man had been created, not once had God moved the wheels of salvation?"

Ah! My friends, that family of God has been from eternity past and still is expanding continually. They extend on and on to other planets and universes. God has plenty of space, and plenty of time. Because time is so precious and so limited to us is no sign that it is limited to God. His purpose is to fill this earth with righteous people, glorifying Him. Go to Numbers 14:21, and there we read His purpose: "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." Ah! God has not made a failure. He would not make a failure if it took Him millions of years to accomplish His purpose. But He would make a failure if the inhabitants of the earth were the only ones in all the universe to be saved.

We read in Ps. 103:17-18 how long this day is in which God has been showing mercy. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his right-

eousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." His mercy is. "from everlasting to everlasting." It has been from eternity past and will be to eternity future.

How could God's mercy be from everlasting to everlasting unless there were men and women living who needed that mercy? I cannot be kind to the poor if there are no poor. The Divine Record declares that His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon those that remember His commandments to do them—this shows that from an eternity in the past, and not simply for six thousand years, there have been those who have remembered God's commandments to do them.

Adam and Eve were merely the first of our race to be called to work in the garden of the Lord. They were not the first man and woman created on our earth. God has unnumbered worlds which are passing through the probationary stage the same as we are. Salvation on this earth is *according* to His eternal purpose. There are unnumbered worlds in the Almighty's vast universes already filled with happy immortal beings who have worked out their salvation. This operation on our earth is only one fold of many in the more than wonderful plan of the Almighty God. Paul tells us of it in Eph. 3:10-11: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." His plan on this earth is not His eternal purpose, but only according to His eternal purpose; a sample of the glorious plan of salvation which He has been working out through untold ages in the past on other worlds.

With his mind expanded to grasp the magnitude of God's plan, I cannot wonder that Paul exclaimed (Eph. 3:14-15): "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." The "whole family in heaven and earth" are all named of God—a family that includes the inhabitants of glorified worlds on high, those saved through an eternity past.

Dear friends, the Bible does not teach the false theory that God commenced His work only about six thousand years ago. Great light is thrown upon this subject by Eccl. 1:9-10: "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us." God's plan on earth is only according to that which has been going on through eternity. There is no new thing under the sun.

No wonder Paul could exclaim (Rom. 11:33), "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" ♦

What Is SPIRITUALITY?

CULTURAL VIEW SPIRITUALITY —defined by the culture

A widely accepted view of *spirituality* is summarized in this posting on the Ohio State University website:

Spirituality is not religion and is not even necessarily affiliated with religion. While the definition of spirituality is different for everyone, here are some common themes associated with spirituality:

- ♦ The idea of a process or journey of self-discovery and of learning not only who you are, but who you want to be.
- ♦ The challenge of reaching beyond your current limits. This can include keeping an open mind, questioning current beliefs, or trying to better understand others' beliefs.
- ♦ A connectedness to yourself and with others and with the world around you. This connection can facilitate you finding "your place in the world."
- ♦ Searching and moving forward in the direction of meaning, purpose, and direction for your life.
- ♦ A higher power, whether rooted in a religion, nature, or some kind of unknown essence.

—from <http://swc.osu.edu/about-us/spirituality/>

BIBLICAL VIEW SPIRITUALITY —defined by the Bible

In the Bible, *spirituality* is a concept, a behavior, a total commitment to obey the commands of God as defined in the Bible. "Spirit" is *pneuma*, literally "breath" which comes from God and gives life, in contrast to "flesh" which is carnal, earthly. For example:

- ♦ **One who is spiritual restricts his thinking to the law of God, in contrast to his own fleshly thoughts:**

"For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:6).

- ♦ **One who is spiritual makes decisions in line with the commands of God:**
"If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37).

- ♦ **One who is spiritual follows the pattern of conduct dictated by God's higher law:**

"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).

- ♦ **One who is spiritual restricts His thinking to God's will and wisdom:**
"For this reason we ... pray for you, ... that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col. 1:9).

- ♦ **One who is spiritual studies God's Word humbly and reverently, recognizing that it is the revealed knowledge of God and bears the authority of God. He lets scripture define scripture to avoid introducing any human philosophy.**

Paul stated the rule that governs the study of God's revealed knowledge: *"comparing spiritual things with spiritual."* Why is this necessary? Because *"the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"* (1 Cor. 2:13–14).

Are You **SBNR**?

(Spiritual But Not Religious)?

ACCORDING TO **SBNR**:

RELIGION

—a binding set of beliefs as structured by a church or organization.

SPIRITUALITY

—a “higher” or “inner” awareness that does not limit one’s freedom. “My own personal faith” or direct relationship with God—no church or organization needed.

For a large number of people today, “religion” is out and “spiritual” is in. Why? Because “religion” suggests the structure of a church having a fixed creed, while “spiritual” often means “my own personal faith” or direct relationship with God—no church or organization needed. In our modern culture, “spiritual” has lost all connection with “Christian”—but what can one expect when there are over 38,000 denominations or groups calling themselves Christian, most of them claiming to be “right”?

What is a “religion”? The word comes from the Latin word *religare*, which is a combination of *re* (“back”) *ligare* (“to tie, to bind”), suggesting that which restricts, restrains or limits one’s freedom.

“Spiritual” assumes a “higher” or “inner” or mystical awareness that is unrestricted, unrestrained, and does not limit one’s freedom. “Spiritual” has become popular because, to use a current term, it is user-defined. It is “all about me” and finding out who I am. It is a type of self-identity, as in the popular phrase, “spiritual but not reli-

gious” (SBNR). To be SBNR, I start on an inner journey with an emotion or feeling of intimacy for God, and adopt whatever religious beliefs or concepts or mystical emotions I find meaningful, until I have a belief system that represents *me*. The number of people who belong to this group is growing rapidly. In 1998, a survey of American adults showed 9% SBNR. Nine years later, *Newsweek* poll estimated 30% of Americans refer to themselves as SBNR. In a 2009 survey of millennials (ages 18–29), 72% said they are “more spiritual than religious.”

Why is SBNR so popular? Perhaps because it aligns with the philosophy of those who want to “take charge” of their lives, including their beliefs. “Being a Lone Ranger fits the tenor of our times,” says a professor of theology and philosophy. Another says proudly, “I bow to no one.”

Being “spiritual” also appeals because it avoids the ordinary, the everyday, the physical, the material. It generally has no connection with how you teach your children, or earn your living, or wash the dishes, or get along with the neighbors, or obey the traffic laws, or pay your bills. Its obligations are personal and social, not moral. It may or may not include being honest, morally upright, patient, or self-controlled—the choice is one’s own.

One who is SBNR feels justified in following his or her own thoughts apart from any church or established religion. Even an atheist can be SBNR without any belief in God or the Bible.

Some who claim SBNR are influenced by Eastern religions and philosophies, which substitute a belief in the connectedness of the human body with the higher planes, and the power of the mind to influence reality, for any belief in God or His Word. ♦

SPIRITUALITY, According to **Scripture**

For those committed to a faith founded on the Bible as the Word of God, the word “spiritual” has an entirely different meaning. In the Bible, “spiritual” refers to that which comes from God, as His knowledge, or His law, or the attributes of virtue, or life itself. “Spiritual” is derived from the Hebrew and Greek words translated “spirit,” which means “breath.” Since only God can give the breath of life, the term “spirit” is used in Scripture of that which only God can give. The Greek word translated spiritual is *pneumatikos*, and means literally “non-carnal” (SHG). It comes from *pneuma* which in

the Bible is often used of that which has God as its source, that which like His “breath” comes from His mouth, or His realm, or His utterances. Jesus called His words “*spirit*” and said they were the source of life eternal (John 6:63, 67, 68). He said also that His words came from God. By His own testimony, Jesus said “*I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak*” (John 12:49).

When Jesus commissioned His apostles to write the Scriptures guided by the Holy Spirit power they would

receive, He said the result would be the *"Spirit of Truth,"* the written Word (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). This spirit is not an emotion or a feeling but the revealed truth of the Living God as recorded in His Word, backed by the authority of God Himself (1 Pet. 1:21). This "spirit" is the law of the God of heaven, given to guide those who are seeking the goals He has set before men, the promises that are the reward of obedience to that law. If we disrespect or disregard God's authority, as stated in His Word of Truth, we disregard the spirit that gives life and will miss out on what God has to offer us.

The apostle Paul used the term "spiritual" with deep meaning when he said that all Scripture is "God breathed," that is, inspired by His infinite wisdom, as if "breathed out" of His mouth, in this way life-giving and vitalizing.

What about "religion"? We who uphold the Bible as our rule of faith have no problem with either term "spiritual" or "religious." The Book of James defines "religion" as a practical application of the law of God to one's life, even men-

If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless —James 1:26

tioning specifically the duties of the religious. *"If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep one's self unspotted from the world"* (James 1:26–27).

In contrast to the freedom and wide open choices associated with "spiritual" in the current culture, "spiritual" in the Bible is a term restricting one to knowledge that comes from God as the only source of true knowledge concerning the future and the plan of God. For this reason, the word "spiritual" immediately commands an attitude of reverence and humility in the Divine presence. Paul uses the term a number of times (as in Romans 8), each time with a similar meaning, and defines it as *"not carnal"* (see Rom. 7:14). He also contrasts the end of being carnal with the end of being spiritual: *"To be carnally minded [having one's mind fixed on the things of this world] is death; but to be spiritually minded [having one's mind fixed on God and His law of life] is life and peace"* (Rom. 8:6).

Paul emphasized to the church at Corinth that they should become "spiritual" by outgrowing their party spirit and the divisions it was causing in the church body (1 Cor. 3). Writing to the Ephesian church, Paul praised God for *"all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"* (Eph. 1:3). "Spiritual blessings" are those that result from knowing and serving God.

What about SBNR?

For the believer in the Bible, SBNR is an impossibility. For the believer in the Bible, being "spiritual" means being "religious," i.e., being voluntarily committed or bound to adhere to and obey the system of beliefs taught in Scripture. Why? Because they are the only beliefs backed by the authority of God. All other beliefs—human ideas and philosophies—can only benefit this life.

As committed servants of Christ, we recognize the Bible as our sole guide in matters pertaining to our beliefs and the life we live before God. In the words of the apostle Peter, *"All things that pertain to life and godliness" come "through the knowledge of Him" who has called us to "glory and virtue"* (2 Pet. 1:3). The Bible is *"profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

In Bible terminology, being spiritual means taking on the character likeness of Christ, which means *"you cannot do the things that you would"* (Gal. 5:16–17). Far from being totally free of restrictions, it is the highest type of restriction. It means taking Christ for our example in all matters of faith and everyday conduct, following Him implicitly (Luke 9:23). As Jesus commanded His apostles to teach, it is doing *"all things"* He has commanded (Matt. 28:19–20; Prov. 30:5–6), without addition or subtraction.

To many who call themselves SBNR, a commitment to the Bible and the God of the Bible is viewed as narrow minded, judgmental, intolerant, even ignorant. Many feel that any and all beliefs should be admired and/or accepted as intellectually beneficial.

What is the bottom line? It is the difference between man's thoughts and God's. It is the difference between a faith based on human philosophies and a belief system backed by our Creator. Only our Creator can give life. God has a plan, and He is working in every part of His vast creation *"according to" His "eternal purpose"* (Eph. 3:11). There is but one way to share in that plan, and that is to accept the Bible as the authoritative Word of God, to learn what it teaches, and build our lives upon it. That is why the apostle Paul told Timothy not to develop His own way of thinking, or not to learn from the people of His time, nor attend the schools of his day, but instead *"focus on reading the Scriptures to the church, encouraging the believers, and teaching them"* (1 Tim. 4:13 NLT). He told Timothy to preach, both when it was convenient and when it was not convenient; and whether people would accept it or not (2 Tim. 4:2). ♦

How About HUMAN PHILOSOPHIES?



Human philosophies were popular in the first century also, and the apostles of Jesus, especially Paul, addressed the subject directly. What did he say that is recorded in Scripture? Notice his many different descriptions of human thought and philosophy

- ❑ 1 Corinthians 2:6
*"However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not **the wisdom of this age**, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing."*
- ❑ 1 Corinthians 3:19
*"For **the wisdom of this world** is foolishness with God. For it is written, 'He catches the wise in their own craftiness.'"*
- ❑ Galatians 1:8 (NKJV)
*"...if we, or an angel from heaven, preach **any other gospel** to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed."*
- ❑ Colossians 2:8
*"Beware lest anyone cheat you through **philosophy** and **empty deceit**, according to **the tradition of men**, according to the **basic principles of the world**, and not according to Christ."*
- ❑ Colossians 2:18
*"Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his **fleshly mind**."*
- ❑ 1 Timothy 1:3-4
*"...Charge some that they teach no **other doctrine**, nor give heed to **fables** and **endless genealogies**, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith."*
- ❑ 1 Timothy 1:5-6
*"Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to **idle talk**."*
- ❑ 1 Timothy 4:7
*"But reject **profane** and **old wives' fables**, and exercise yourself toward godliness."*
- ❑ 1 Timothy 6:3-5
*"If anyone teaches otherwise...he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with **disputes** and **arguments over words**, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, **useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds** and **destitute of the truth**, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself."*
- ❑ 2 Timothy 2:14-16
*"Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about **words to no profit**, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun **profane** and **idle babblings**, for they will increase to more ungodliness."*
- ❑ 2 Timothy 2:23
*"Avoid **foolish** and **ignorant disputes**, knowing that they generate strife."*
- ❑ 2 Timothy 4:4
*"They will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to **fables**."*
- ❑ Titus 1:13-14
*"Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to **Jewish fables** and **commandments of men** who turn from the truth."*
- ❑ Titus 3:9
*"But avoid **foolish disputes**, **genealogies**, **contentions**, and **strivings about the law**; for they are unprofitable and useless."*

People may seek a belief system that validates or expresses their own thoughts and feelings, something they are comfortable with, but if it has no higher authority than their own mind, its value cannot extend even one moment beyond one's present lifetime. Paul described such as *"always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the Truth"* (2 Tim. 3:7).

All human philosophies are a dead end street as far as pointing the way to future life. They are of no benefit beyond this life unless God is behind it, for only God can give or perpetuate life. ♦

SPIRITUALITY, GOD's Way

“You who are spiritual” (Gal. 6:1)—*what does it mean?*

What group of people was the apostle Paul addressing when he spoke to “you who are spiritual” (Gal. 6:1)?

The Apostle, with divinely given insight, separated people into two basic categories: “natural” and “spiritual.” The “*natural man...does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him*” (1 Cor. 2:14). He lives and dies without God and without hope in the world (Eph. 2:12). Included in this group are those whom Paul called “*carnal*,” who live only to satisfy their baser instincts.

The “*spiritual*” are those whose primary interest is in God and the future as revealed in His Word.

The apostle Paul had both groups in the churches of Galatia. Some he felt compelled to reprove as “*foolish Galatians*” who would “*not obey the truth*” (Gal. 3:1). There were also some whose good fruits warmed Paul’s brotherly heart and moved him to address them with loving, tender fondness as “*you who are spiritual*.” These are Paul’s words: “*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted*” (Gal. 6:1). No room here for any spirit of “I-told-you-so,” or “I was trying to make you slip,” but only a close bond of brotherly love and a sincere desire to see each other prosper in Christ.

What is the meaning of the term spiritual as the apostle Paul used it? “*God is spirit*,” reads the gospel of John (4:24). Some people conclude from this that God is non-physical, having no likeness, form or substance. However, the passage in John 4:24 defines itself if we look further at the context, for in the same sentence where we learn that “*God is spirit*,” we learn also that we who worship Him must worship Him “*in spirit and truth*.” This tells us that the word “*spirit*” combines with “*truth*” to describe qualities we must acquire to worship God acceptably, and if Jesus was saying we must copy His non-physical being, we certainly cannot copy that! What we can and must identify with is His **character** likeness. “*God is spirit*” in that He represents the highest level of divine holiness and virtue, and He wants us to approach Him while reaching for that high level of truth.

We worship God “*in spirit*” when we allow our affections, appetites, and desires to be influenced and guided by God’s Word, God’s law being the ultimate standard of all that is right, the ultimate truth of all that is true.

ALL THINGS SPIRITUAL

In Scripture terms, God is the source of all that is “*spiritual*.” This thought lends meaning to various passages in the New Testament which describe something as “*spiritual*.”

—Spiritual Songs

Paul wrote to the Colossians, “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*” (Col. 3:16). Don’t we all need the uplift of “*spiritual*” songs?

—Spiritual Understanding

The apostle Paul wrote also of this, as he prayed that his brethren “*may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*” (Col. 1:9). Here is understanding more profound than the finest human philosophy. It is understanding of things pertaining to God and right living.

—Spiritual House

What is the “*spiritual house*”? It is the “*church*” (Col. 1:18), composed of those who are growing in the new and divine life as “*lively [living] stones*” (1 Pet.2:5). No ordinary building is this; it is a “*spiritual house*”—termed “*spiritual*” because of the holy and God-like character of those who compose it. This is the house Ezekiel described, whose “*whole area [surrounding the mountaintop] is most holy*” (Ezek. 43:12). That is why every stone that is part of it must be perfectly cut and polished.

—Spiritual Sacrifices

The apostle Peter tells what happens in this “*spiritual house*.” Its is a place where a “*holy priesthood*” is ordained to “*offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*” (1 Pet.2:5). What is this daily spiritual sacrifice? It is the living sacrifice each of us must offer, a sacrifice which is but our “*reasonable service*” (Rom. 12:1).

—Spiritual Blessings

What are “*spiritual blessings*”? In a broad sense, all of our blessings are “*spiritual*” in that they all come to us from our heavenly Father, “*to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth*” (1 Tim. 4:3). But by mentioning “*spiritual blessings*” in particular, Paul suggests the blessings which benefit directly the life of the inner-man, the new nature that must be growing in every believer. “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*” (Eph. 1:3). These rich spiritual blessings help us see everything of the present in the perspective of the “*world to come*” (Heb. 2:5). This is our greatest “*spiritual blessing*.” ♦

Living the **SPIRITUAL** (God-Centered) **Life**

How can you and I in our everyday circumstances live the spiritual, God-centered life that God has promised to recognize and bless? What can we do to become spiritual men and women—because most of us must admit that at times we feel very un-spiritual.

Let us begin by looking at a few examples of people in the Bible who were truly spiritual, i.e., known for their strong and definite connections with God. Why do we judge these people spiritual? What set them apart for God?

Think about **Enoch** who “walked with God ... three hundred years” (Gen. 5:22). That was a long time to maintain his faith and courage.

Think about **Abraham** who “believed God,” and was called the “friend of God” (Jas. 2:23)—who put loyalty to his God above even his beloved son, Isaac.



Think about **Moses**, with whom the Lord spoke “as a man speaks to his friend” (Exodus. 33:11).

Or think about **Elijah**, who stood before Ahab, king of Israel, and said, “As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand...” and delivered his message of the coming three year drought (1 Kings 17:1).

Or think of **Elisha**, whose life witnessed so vividly to the cause of the God he represented that the woman of Shunem, who welcomed Elisha and his servant into her home, said to her husband, “I know that this is a holy man of God” (2 Kings 4:9).

*For to be carnally minded is death,
 but to be spiritually minded is
 life and peace. –Romans 8:6*

Think about the prophet **Daniel**, far away from his homeland, in the Babylonian court, praying for his people and confessing their sins, and while he was still speaking,



“the man Gabriel,... being caused to fly swiftly,” reached him about the time of the evening offering and said, “O, Daniel I have now come forth to give you skill to understand... you are greatly beloved” (Dan. 9:21–23). Think of

Daniel again, late in life, praying to the God of heaven with his window open toward Jerusalem, without regard to the edict that nobody could pray but to the king (Dan. 6:10).

Think of **Jesus**, pursued by the multitudes but maintaining such close communication with His Father that He was able to do “always the things that pleased Him,” and to speak only the words He received from His Father (John 8:26–29).

Think of **Peter** and **John**, being cross examined before the Jewish Sanhedrin, showing such dauntless courage and surety of faith that the unbelievers could recognize that “they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

What Can We Do?

What changes can we make in our lives that will make us more spiritually minded?

Perhaps the first step is to learn to **think spiritually**, that is, think on the level of *things spiritual, things Divine*. Spiritual thinking is the practiced art of those who have studied God’s words so intently that they have exchanged their thoughts for His, and —consequently—their **ways** for His.

The apostle Paul described this all-important change as being “transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2). Jesus pinpointed the root of all evil when He said, “From within out of the heart [mind] of men proceed evil thoughts...” (Mark 7:21). Change the pattern of your thoughts, and your whole life will be changed. How can we possibly expect to bear in our lives the fruits of the Spirit, the higher life—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

meekness, temperance (Gal. 5:23–24)—if our mind is filled with self-centered, carnal thoughts?

There is a story of a mountain man who spotted a city tourist trying to get a drink of clear water from a muddy streamlet. “Stranger,” he advised, “you won’t get any good water until you go up and drive the hog out of the spring.” So it is in our lives. We can’t expect to live pure and upright lives until we cleanse the source of the evil—our mind. How careful, then, we should be, of what we allow to enter our minds.

Naturally all our thought and interest is on the human plane. We think of what we need, want, like, and like more, and spend our lives getting more and more of these things. Jesus described it as being preoccupied with what we eat, drink, and wear (Matt. 6:31).

Our modern world has, if anything, strengthened these natural motivations. The end product of all industry, all

production, all education in this world is first to meet the **needs** of the individual, and then his **wants**. The current mindset is usually to **learn** more to **earn** more, and **earn** more to **spend** more, and God’s offer of future life is ignored.

Adopting the “*mind of Christ*” (Phil. 2:5) turns the natural pattern of thinking squarely around and says: God **first**, all other things—even necessities—**second**. “*Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*” (Matt. 6:33).

If we would be spiritual, we need to nourish our minds with *spiritual* food. It is quite literally true, in a spiritual sense, that we become what we eat. Living by instinct we feed our lower nature. We go after what we like, driven by our animal passions and instincts. Do we wonder why our lower nature is stronger than the higher, *spiritual* (God-directed) nature in us?

Who Is SPIRITUAL?

One who is *spiritual* is humbly and kindly helpful to a Christian brother or sister.

- ★ The apostle Paul said it well in Gal. 6:1, “*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*” The problem is not a deliberate breaking of the law of God but a slip as might come to one on an icy road. There is always danger of slipping, even to those who are making a serious effort to live the Christ-life. And when one does slip, it is the duty—even the privilege—of the loving spiritual brother or sister to help that one to his feet lovingly and meekly, realizing that he could be the next to slip.

Here is a sharp rebuke to all conceit and superiority. There is no place for either in the heart of the spiritual one. Nor is there any slight desire to retaliate, or to feel hurt by the one who slipped. We must help one another as we ourselves want and need to be helped, remembering how many times we ourselves have known the right course and taken the wrong one.

One who is *spiritual* develops new tastes.

- ★ To cut one’s self off from unwanted associations or break the line of established habit is an accomplishment. But to change one’s tastes completely is accomplishment supreme, yet it is the most successful transformation, as we learn to love what God loves and abhor all that He abhors. This is what the truly spiritual person succeeds in doing. Then, when a would-be temptation comes along, he does not have to say, “I truly want it, but I will refrain because I know I should not.” No, he says rather, “I don’t even want it. Such folly I abhor!” Why? Because “*to be carnally minded is death,*” and to give in to a temptation only makes it easier to give in again and again, is taking the broad road which Jesus said leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13–14).

One who is *spiritual* takes Christ as his standard.

- ★ He realizes there are many things which others may do that he cannot do. Others may spend their time in any way that appeals to them; he cannot. Others may parade themselves and adorn themselves to please themselves; he cannot. Others may engage in any pleasure or pastime that suits their fancy; he cannot. Others may ruminate upon any thought that comes into their minds; he cannot. And so it goes.

To have an abounding *spiritual*, God-centered life, we must focus our mind on thoughts that honor God. This requires strong measures of self-discipline and determination, but it can be done.

Yes! There *is* a way for spirit to triumph over flesh! There is a way *we* can become *spiritual*. It is by aligning our lives strictly with the law of God, so that when we are tempted to violate God's law and gratify some fleshly, selfish desire, or promote ourselves, we choose what is right according to God's law instead of doing the things we naturally would (Gal. 5:16–17).

What will be the result of focusing on things spiritual and heavenly? We will be counted among those "*who are spiritual.*"

As the *spiritual* life grows and develops within us, we will feel less and less a part of the present system and will have less and less interest in the things of this world. Our mind

and interest will be bound up not in what is about us but in what is coming. We will be "otherworldly-minded," displaced persons, sojourners seeking a better land. Our temporary residence will be here; our *citizenship*—and our "heart"—will be in the world that is coming, the eternal Kingdom of God (Phil. 3:20–21).

Is there anything more beautiful than the character of one who is truly spiritual? And what is it that makes the sacrifice and conflict worth the effort? One sentence from one of God's most spiritually minded men answers our question forever: "*For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace*" (Rom. 8:6). It is the difference: between "*death,*" and "*life and peace.*"

Why choose the easy, "*carnal*" way—and death—when we can live the higher, spiritual, God-centered life and lay hold on eternal life! ♦

And yet it is wrong to call spirituality a "restriction," for there is nothing hampering about being spiritual. Yes, it is adhering strictly to the laws of God and holiness, but living by His law opens the door to an expanded range of experience far beyond anything we could know without God and His knowledge. Rather, it is the most broadening and expanding of experiences, for in being separated from the lesser—from self and the standard of others—we attach ourselves to the infinite, even God.

One who is *spiritual* is separate without being superior.

★ Being superior is taking the attitude of the Pharisee in Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (see Luke 18:8–16). The Pharisee thanked God that he was not like other men. He stood aloof, self-satisfied, feeding on his own ego and enjoying the diet. And he prayed, but only to himself, not to God. Being above "other men" was his goal, not seeking the approval of God. The Pharisee was saying, in effect, "See how spiritual I am," but it was only a parade of self-admiration. Totally satisfied with himself, he was far from God.

The one who is spiritual is set apart from himself and for God. This standard is difficult to achieve, because it rules out many self-satisfying attitudes. It rules out the "I-told-you-so" mentality. It rules out pouting, for one who pouts is feeling sorry for himself. It rules out all feelings of hurt and injury to one's reputation, for the spiritually minded person has learned to trust himself and all that he has to the keeping of God. In all his work he thinks not of satisfying himself or of any praise he may get from others, but only of pleasing God.

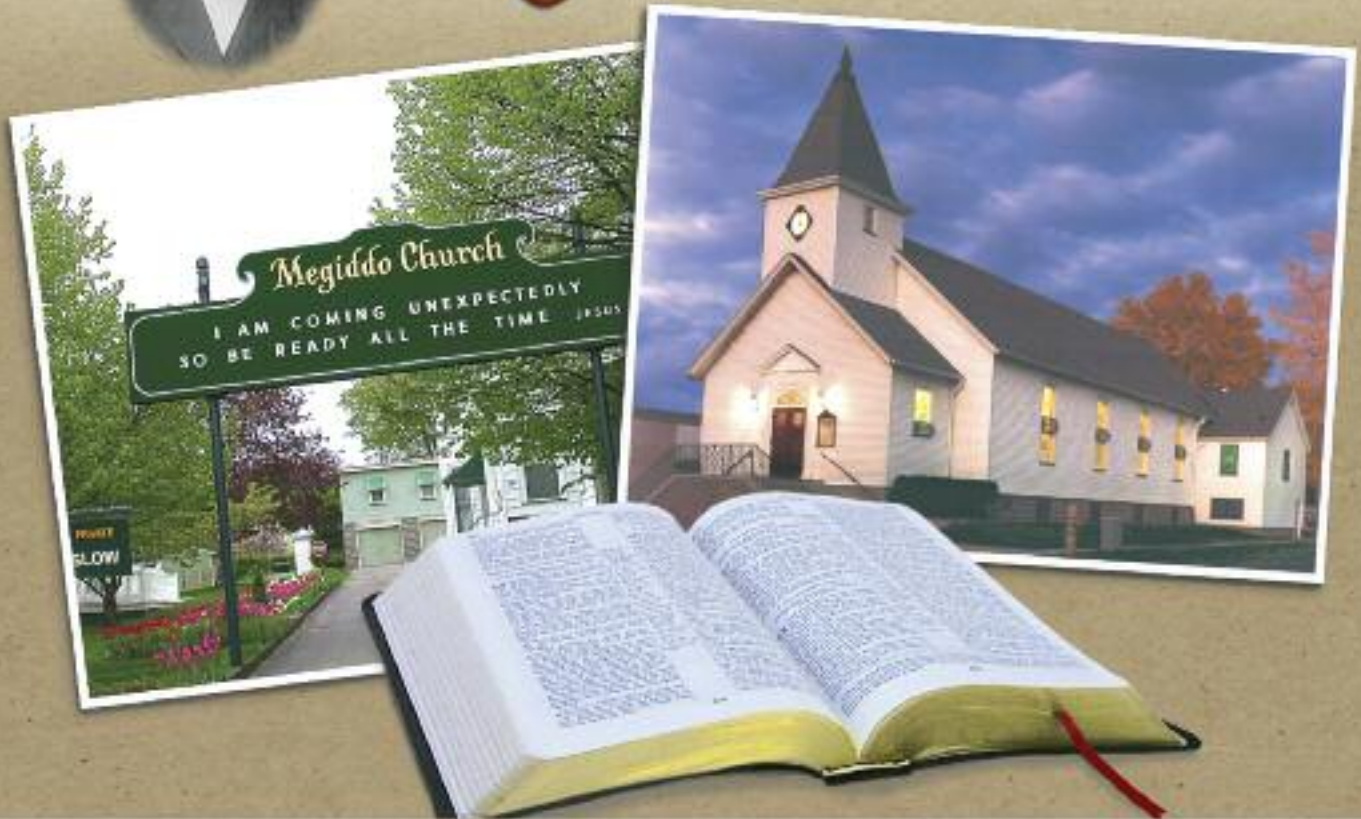
One who is *spiritual* is discriminating without being critical.

★ There is a fine line between discernment and criticism. The *spiritual* brother or sister is not a self-appointed *spiritual* detective continually pointing out thorns and never seeing a rose. The perspective of such a one who is hypercritical becomes so warped that the whole landscape is distorted, and nothing looks right. The unremitting critic finds it hard to give another due praise or commendation, for fear that the one receiving it will become proud—how abhorrent! At the same time, the critic has set up his own standard (not God's) to which he thinks everyone should bow. Such a one is not *spiritual*. Yet the spiritually minded person must be discriminating. Gullibility is no virtue. Says Paul, "*He who is spiritual judges [examines, R.V.] all things*" (1 Cor. 2:15). One who is *spiritual* tries to inspect all things from God's point of view. He knows that love which is tempered with knowledge and discernment (Phil. 1:9–10). He knows what to love and what not to love. He is grieved at another's faults, but he is supremely concerned for his *own* faults—which he readily admits and goes to work at once to correct. For well he knows that the divine Architect will not accept any defective stones for His eternal temple (Jude 24). ♦

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
- 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.
- 1865–1875:** Studies Bible intensely, seeking correct understanding of it
- 1869:** Debates publicly in Wrightstown, Wisconsin. Subject: The resurrection
- 1868–1874:** 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 in an effort to help recover wife's health; while isolated from his people, writes "General Letter to all the churches"
- 1897:** Makes second trip to England



CHAPTER 1

BEGINNINGS

The story of the Megiddo Church begins with the vision of its founder. L. T. Nichols (L. T., the initials of his father, was his only given name) was born in Elkhart, Indiana, on October 1, 1844. Five years later his pioneering parents settled in the frontier State of Wisconsin, where he literally grew up with the country.

In his own words:

"Life, to me, began with earnest toil. In my northern Wisconsin home there were no luxuries, and few of even the necessities of life; but love lightened the toil, and contentment made happy its hours. A boy of fourteen, with only what I could earn by daily toil; an invalid father, a devoted mother, a loving sister, dependent to a great extent on my exertions; I faced the battle of life with few hours to spend in the schoolroom, and none within a college hall. While other boys were at play, I was poring over my books. Truth was the gem for which I sought—and my soul's cry was: 'Oh, tell me where can it be found?' I started out in life determined to reject error, it mattered not in what deceptive form it might appear, or however honored by long acceptance."

Having a profound reverence for God and the Bible while still very young, he made the Bible his constant companion. At school, he was dubbed "Elder Nichols" by less serious classmates. Already he was beginning to challenge some of the orthodoxy in which he had been reared. Not only did he find it at odds with the Scriptures but revolting to any sense of reason and justice. The result was a skepticism that rejected everything he could not find taught in the Bible. The process was simple: whatever the time-honored belief, if he could find it taught in the Bible, he accepted it. If not, be it ever so hallowed and respectable, it had to go. This forthright honesty set the pattern of things to come.

In his teens he was locally known as the "boy preacher." In the schoolhouse, which served the frontier community as church and public forum, he often used the Bible to challenge the beliefs of local ministers. On one occasion a visiting preacher solemnly warned the congregation against "the devil who goes about with a black



Nichols talks to classmates at school

TRUTH DOES NOT CHANGE

Do you ever talk to anyone about the really BIG issues—life, death, God? If you do, chances are you get as many different views as you have voices. Of course each feels that his/her belief is “right,” the others are “wrong.”

But you might meet (or be) one who believes ANY belief is all right if it works for you, that none is any more “right” than another. If you’re comfortable with what you believe, that is all that matters. Nothing is absolute, nothing is really true.

The reality is, however, that certain things are true and certain things are not, whether the subject is history, or math, or science, or religion. For example, I might tell you that San Francisco is located on the East Coast of the United States, and that US Highway 1 will take you there. This statement is either true or false. If you try it out, you will find that it is false. And even if I continue to say that it is true, the facts will not change.

Or I might say that water is a combination of the elements oxygen and nitrogen. Here is another statement that can easily be proven false. I may continue to say that it is true, even after the evidence has been clearly demonstrated, but the facts will not change.

The same is true in religion. A certain belief is either true or false, and the criteria is not what you think or what I think. What our Creator, the author of the Bible, has stated is true, and you and I have no power to change it. We may reject it, but that does not change the facts.

Such was the reasoning that the young L. T. Nichols followed as he avidly pursued his study of Scripture.

As a result of his lifework, the Megiddo Church believes:

- ◆ that God in Heaven is the omnipotent Creator of all life, all being, all creation
- ◆ that the Bible is our only source of knowledge about God and His plan today, and is without error in the form in which it was originally written
- ◆ that the Bible presents one God, one faith, and one way of salvation
- ◆ that the Bible is in no way responsible for the maze of false religions which have been handed out in its name
- ◆ that the Bible reveals God’s plan of salvation and that worthy individuals can participate in that plan and receive eternal life in Christ’s Kingdom
- ◆ that obedience to the principles of the Bible is the law of life and the only means of escape from death.

Continue reading in this series to see how this powerful system of beliefs developed. —*The Editor.*

Bible under his arm.” But he held fast to the principle he had found in Scripture: “*Let God be true, [though] every man a liar*” (Rom. 3:4).

When still in his teens, a minister representing a large New York City church happened to hear him preaching and recognized his talent. What salary would lure him to take the big city pulpit? Although needing the money to supply the necessities of the family, he refused every offer, fearing the obligation would bind him to a system he was convinced was error. Like the apostle Paul, he resolved to preach the gospel without charge. In that way he would be free to speak the truth as he found it in the Bible, whether others would listen or not.

While he could have obtained a formal seminary education, he did not want the influence of human philosophies. His autobiography describes his reasoning:

“I looked over the field of human thought to see by what means I could accomplish the greatest good, and decided that of all the literature of earth the Bible contains the requisite knowledge which benefits humanity for both this life and the one to come. On the very threshold of my investigations I was met with much to appall and bewilder an even older head: over one thousand faiths in the land, all teaching different things, and all claiming to speak the words of an infallible God, the words of Holy Writ, yet that very Bible teaching that all its sayings are Yea and Amen, not Yea and Nay (2 Cor. 1:19–20), and that its followers must be perfectly joined together in the same mind, all speaking the same thing (1 Cor. 1:10)!

“With such a state of affairs, I could not wonder that the world was turning infidel. I did not wonder that the inquirer after truth, bewildered by the confusion arising from jarring sects, began to doubt the infallibility of this blessed Word, and infidelity was adding thousands to its ranks. Either the Bible was Divine, the work of an infallible God, or the work of fallible man; there was no halfway ground upon which to stand. I met prominent infidels and I could not answer the charges brought against it. I saw that the wise of the world, the great teachers of the day, those trained in the theological schools of the land, could not meet them. I saw that the time-honored creeds of the day would not stand the test before the ‘bar of reason and evidence.’ If all others had failed, what could I do? I trembled at the magnitude of the undertaking. Thus passed days and weeks of anxious study, when often upon bended knees and with falling tears I prayed to God for light.

“One day while carefully reading, my eye caught a striking testimony in Prov. 2:3–5, ‘Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.’ How the reading of these testimonies impressed my mind! I must search as for hid treasures to ever find the knowledge of God.

“I knew that the world would only sneer at the thought, but others had been sneered at, and had succeeded for a lesser prize.

“It has been truly said: ‘Every great cause for which heroes have bled and brave souls have suffered, has once been on coward tongues an impossibility.’ I need not be discouraged because I stood alone. If I could but learn to read aright I could grasp the key of knowledge that would open the door to the storehouse of truth and enable me to grasp her treasures—more precious than the rubies of earth, more to be desired than the gold of the Transvaal.”¹

(TO BE CONTINUED)

¹ Transvaal, former province of South Africa: Most “important to the Transvaal’s future were discoveries of diamonds and gold deposits (1868–74) along the Vaal River and other sites, which heightened British interest in gaining control of the region.” —*Encyclopædia Britannica*

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

A little boy who had decided to walk his dog was valiantly holding on as the dog dragged him along. “Where are you going?” someone asked. “I don’t know yet,” the boy replied, “When the dog decides where he wants to go, I’ll take him there.”

Who is in control?

Many people go through life much like that little boy, with no defined purpose, pulled this way or that by circumstances. Paul warned us not to be children tossed to and fro, carried about by every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14). If we have the current culture on the end of our leash, we will find ourselves constantly pulled this way and that. We will be bombarded on every side by something to buy, a place to go, a way to dress, an idea to accept. If we do not make a conscious effort to resist these powerful influences, we will find ourselves thinking and acting like everyone else, part of the system that God says is “passing away” (1 John 2:15–17).

The only solution is to let go of the leash, step out and proclaim our personal loyalty to God and His word. People may scoff, call us naïve, even think us simpletons or fools. But what does it matter? Yes, they have minds on some fleeting thing that is going by—a new song, a game, a movie, some bit of trivia. Like the little boy holding desperately to the leash while the dog pulls him this way and that, we will find ourselves overpowered by the things around us. Only by letting go of the leash can we make our life our own, commit it to God, and look forward to the great things He holds in store for His children.

Many people think they are free when in reality they are slaves. Holding tightly to the leash of the world, they are not even aware it is pulling them. Paul told us we are slaves of whomever we yield ourselves “servants to obey,” whether it be of “sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness” (Rom 6:16). When we yield we are like the little boy who thinks he is taking the dog for a walk, when in reality the dog is taking him.

What is on the end of the leash you are holding? If the loves and lusts of this world are at the other end of it, you may find yourself in the same dilemma as the little boy. Where ever it decides to take you, you will go. Many young people have brought all sorts of trouble on themselves because they

were holding onto the wrong leash and were led to places and to doing things they never expected to do. It happens one step at a time. This is why Solomon advised, “My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent” (Prov. 1:10). If they should say, “Come, throw in your lot with us; we’ll all share the loot,” we need to take the advice: “My child, don’t go along with them! Stay far away from their paths” (Prov. 1:14–15 NLT).

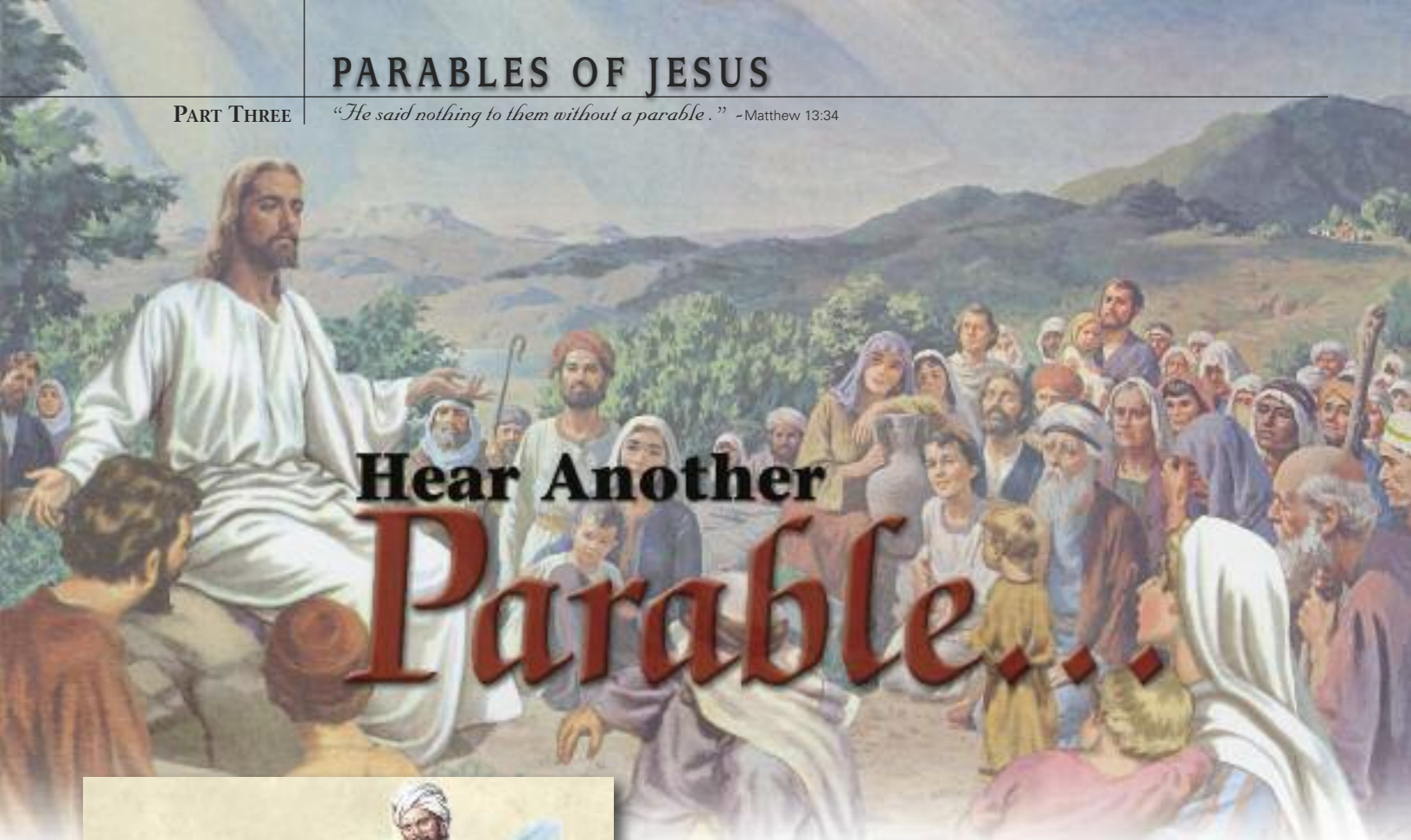
Do you remember the answer Nehemiah gave when his enemies tried to call him away from the work he was doing? He let them know plainly just where he stood. He said, “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?” (Neh. 6:3).

Shouldn’t we have the same response to anyone or anything that would pull us away from the prize God has set before us? What in this world can even begin to compare with eternal life in Christ’s Kingdom?

Drop the leash of this world, and take hold of the law of God. Set your heart on living in Christ’s kingdom. Let go of the leash of this world, then you won’t even feel its tug. ♦



Who is in control?



THE PARABLE OF the Unjust (Shrewd) Steward

He also said to His disciples: "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. 2 So he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.'

3 "Then the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. 4 I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.'

5 "So he called every one of his master's debtors to him, and said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 6 And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' So he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' 7 Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' So he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' 8 So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.

9 "And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail [it fails, Greek]*, they may receive you into an everlasting home. 10 He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. 11 Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12 And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?

13 "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

* Nestle-Aland Greek NT, 27th Edition

DID JESUS COMMEND DISHONESTY?

by Ruth E. Sisson

HONESTY, integrity, strict adherence to upright principles in all business and personal dealings is a solid fundamental of Christ-like conduct. How then could Jesus have presented a parable that seemingly justifies dishonesty? He could not, without violating His own character and standard.

What should Jesus' Parable of the Unjust Steward teach us?

The characters

The parable has two main characters:

A wealthy master: "*a certain rich man*" who had a business lending to common landowners, whose whole income was from the crop to be harvested at the end of the season. They would borrow money to meet expenses through the year, agreeing to repay the loan either in kind or in cash at harvest time.

A professional business manager, or "steward." Educated in accounting, he was given complete control of the wealthy master's property. The steward's job was to find responsible creditors, negotiate the type and terms of payment, lend the money, and see that the loan was properly repaid. If payment was to be in crop, the steward may also have had the task of converting that crop into cash. The steward may have been compensated with a commission, or cash, or benefits of housing, food and clothing during the year, or a combination of these; we are not told.

The parable

Jesus' parable is a mini-drama of an irresponsible steward who had no problem finding people to take his master's money, but who

was apparently making loans without sufficient surety of a return (as numerous banks did recently). Did he overstate the amount the creditors had to repay? Did he overtrust friends (or family members) who were high risk? Did he charge too much for his services? Or was he just not doing his job?

Whatever the offense, when rumors (or facts) reached the ears of the master, he did not question the report but acted immediately to dismiss the steward who was mismanaging (“wasting”) his property. Calling him in, he demanded a complete accounting, and handed him his pink slip—he was fired. The steward offered no defense.

At this point the parable turns to the steward’s plight. Defrocked of his prestigious job, he faced a harsh future. Who wanted a steward with a bad reputation? And no way would he, one of the educated elite, stoop to demeaning physical labor, or, much less, to begging. What could he do?

Desperate and quick thinking, the steward sized up his situation and lighted upon a plan. He would act quickly and use the resource still momentarily available to him—his master’s creditors—to secure his future. He would make the creditors his friends!

How? One by one he called in each of his master’s creditors, and officially discounted their obligation.

Did one owe 100 measures of oil? “*Sit down quickly and write fifty.*” Astonishment and wide-eyed wonder crossed the creditor’s face.

Did another owe 100 measures of wheat? “*Take your bill and write eighty.*” Smiles and handshakes. And so it went until he had met with each one.

The steward was doing his rightful job, and of course the creditors were pleased with the steward. He would be a “forever” friend! If ever he needed anything, they would be there for him.



The Lesson: Act Quickly!

Was Jesus recommending irresponsible, fraudulent or careless handling of one’s property? We know He was not. Was the steward being dishonest, as is often assumed? No, because “*the master commended the unjust steward [previously “unjust” because of his mismanagement] because he had dealt shrewdly*” (Luke 16:8). In no way would the master have commended the steward’s action if the steward was undercutting or cheating him.

Does “*shrewd*” mean dishonest? The Greek word translated “*shrewd*” (“*wise*” in the KJV) has for some of its definitions “*wise, having the capacity to understand, often in the daily things of life, hence, shrewd (Matt. 7:24)*” (DBL). *The Complete Word Study Dictionary* defines it as “*prudent*” and comments, “*It denotes the wise, prudent and sensible manner in which one conducts himself and his affairs.*”

Jesus immediately draws this shocking lesson from the steward’s quick action: that “*the sons of this world,*” those seeking only this world’s gain, are “*more shrewd [wiser] than the sons of light,*” those who are pursuing the eternal benefits God offers (Luke 16:8).

Apparently the steward adjusted the creditors’ obligations to an amount that was acceptable to the master, for the master commended his action. But the steward’s primary intent was to look out for his own interests and win friends.

Jesus does not justify or condemn the steward’s action upon being caught, but bases His lesson on the steward’s resourcefulness. The steward was “*shrewd*” or “*wise*” because he 1) acted quickly when finding himself in a bad situation; 2) he used the worldly resources available to him while he still had them; and 3) he used those resources for his personal benefit—to secure friendships that would benefit him in the future. All of this, says Jesus, is exactly what kingdom-seekers must do. But sadly, He says, those pursuing a **temporal** interest (the “*sons of this world*”) act more wisely and prudently than “*the children of light,*” those who have an **eternal** inheritance at stake.

The steward acted quickly because his situation was **urgent**—he had been dismissed. Our situation is also urgent. Our present resources, too, are going to fail. Life is brief. It is only a matter of time, and our present opportunity will be gone. We must act now to secure our future **before** the opportunity is gone.

1. Use Your Resources to Make God Your Friend

In Luke 16:9, Jesus explains His point even further: “*And I say to you*”—He attaches positive, personal authority to the words which follow—“*Make friends for yourselves by [means of] unrighteous mammon.*”

What is mammon? Mammon is any resource we have been given in this world—our time, our talents, our money, our energy, anything God has entrusted to us. It is His property, and we are in His employment.

With whom should we make friends? In the parable, the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23



Is God Fair?

"I do not understand how anyone can say God is fair. Paul makes Him sound like an almighty dictator. 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy' (Rom. 9:15). Then he says, 'it is God who decides to show mercy. We can neither choose it nor work for it' (Rom 9:16 NLT)."

In Romans 9, Paul is talking to his Jewish brethren who have as a nation been disloyal and apostate, in spite of their high calling and privilege. At the beginning of the chapter he addresses them with reminders of the special privileges their nation enjoyed: *"who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came..."* (vs.4-5).

However, Paul is very clear that the unfaithfulness of the nation does not void God's long range promises to Israel. Paul is equally clear that the Israel he is speaking about, those who will inherit the promises, are not qualified by having the right blood (being natural blood descendants of Abraham). *"They are not all Israel who are of Israel"* (Rom. 9:6). Simply belonging to the family did not make one an inheritor to all the promises to Abraham. As Paul said in Rom. 2:28-29, the Israel he is speaking of are the loyal family of believers from every nation. In *"every"* nation, God is looking for those who will reverence Him and do what is right (see Acts 10:34-35).

The natural children of the family are not God's children, but *"the children of the promise"* are the ones who will be blessed.

In verses 9-13, Paul makes a specific example of Jacob and Esau, children of Isaac and Rebecca. Contrary to custom, the younger was preferred above the elder, even before the children were born.

Was God being unfair to select one and not another, to love Jacob and hate Esau? No. He was not being unfair in the least. God has the right to set His own criteria and choose according to character. By making the selection before the children were born, He was not overruling their will to make their own choices in life; He was only choosing according to what He knew those children would do and be.

Now we come to the verse in question: *"For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion'"* (Rom. 9:15). This verse is not clear as translated. The wording is clearer in the original Greek, which reads: *"I will pity whom I should pity, I will compassionate whom I should compassionate"* (Emphatic Diaglott, Wilson; see also Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament). The phrases *"whom I should pity"* and *"whom I should compassionate"* are in the subjunctive mood, which means they are conditions. God is showing mercy

and compassion as *He should*, according to His pre-established terms. He is not being whimsical or unfair. And His decision to pity or not to pity is determined by each one's actions and final character. In other words, God does not judge the way we judge.

Paul's words in verse 16 point up this fact: *"So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy"* (v.16). Paul is reinforcing what he said in verse 15. God shows mercy according to what He should do, based on His preset standards. We must obey His commandments, keep His covenant, to obtain His mercy. He explained the extent of His mercy to Moses: *"Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments"* (Deut. 7:9). His mercy is even from everlasting to everlasting upon *"such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them"* (Ps. 103:17-18).

We may set our own standards and decide what we will or will not do. This is what the Jews had done, but Paul is saying

God is not whimsical or unfair. He acts by His pre-established terms.

that their being loyal to their own laws and meeting their own standard had no weight with God. Nor will God's predetermined standard be changed by what we might will or desire. There is only one way to obtain His mercy, and that is to come to His terms.

This is God's right as supreme Ruler and Creator. As the one dispensing the mercy and compassion, He has the right to make His own rules. He raises up or puts down according to His will, as Hannah said in her prayer in 1 Samuel 2, *"The Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up. The Lord makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He has set the world upon them"* (v. 6-8).

Everything God does is according to His plan, as revealed in His Word. And according to that plan, men and women are free moral agents, free to select their own destiny by their behavior. They are free to choose to live by His rules or forget Him, since God has promised to reward *"every man according as his works shall be."* This principle is stated

repeatedly in Scripture (see Ecc. 12:13–14; Rev. 22:12; Job 34:11; Jer. 17:10; Rom. 2:6–8; 2 Cor. 5:10).

God is sovereign, but He does not do anything to interfere with our freedom of choice. In our individual realms, we prove ourselves fit (or unfit) for His eternal blessings by what we do. If God did not follow this plan, we would be merely robots and God would not be fair.

To whom does God not show mercy? Only to one who has openly rejected His goodness, as Pharaoh did in the time of Moses. As Paul explains, God used Pharaoh, who had rejected God, to show His power, that God's name might *"be declared in all the earth"* (Rom. 9:17). That is why Paul says God has mercy *"on whom He wills"* (those who cooperate with His goodness and live by His laws), *"and whom He wills He hardens"* (those who reject His laws, and in that sense harden themselves against God).

The question is often asked, did God harden Pharaoh's heart? Each time when Pharaoh resisted Moses' request to let

the Israelites leave Egypt, the record states that his heart became hard. The hardening is said three ways. Three times it is stated directly that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 8:15, 32; 9:34). Ten times it is said that God did it, or would do it (as in Ex. 4:21; 7:3; 9:12). Seven additional times it is stated as a fact with no mention of an agent, either God or Pharaoh (as in Ex. 7:13, 14; 8:19; 9:35). In all cases the meaning is the same. God was using Pharaoh for His purposes, but Pharaoh resisted God's will from the very first. When Moses first went into his presence with the demand from the God of Israel *"let my people go,"* Pharaoh's response was, *"Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go"* (Ex. 5:1–2).

God was not being unfair to Pharaoh, but neither was He allowing Pharaoh to block His will for His people.

God used the ten plagues as an example of His almighty power to put fear and awe into the hearts of other nations. His powerful hand on Egypt was long remembered. ♦

THE PARABLE OF the Unjust (Shrewd) Servant

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

steward made friends of those who would be able to help him (his master's creditors) after he lost his job. Jesus is telling us to make friends who are able to secure *our* eternal future. No one can give eternal life but God and Christ.

How does He say we should make these friendships? By using the *"mammon of unrighteousness"* in the right way. Because everything we have now is some type of *"unrighteous mammon,"* Jesus is telling us how to conduct our lives. We make friends of God and Christ by the way we use our time and money, our energy and everything else we have.

2. Be Faithful in Little Things

In Luke 16:10, Jesus further removes any idea that He might be advocating careless or fraudulent handling of property by commending faithfulness. *"He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much"* (Luke 16:10). God sees how we use resources. The key word here is *faithfulness*.

Does it matter how we spend **our money** and **talents**? **Yes!**

Does it matter if we do **our job** carelessly or carefully? **Yes!**

Does it matter how we spend **our time** and **energy**? **Yes!**

Does it matter what we **talk about**, or what we **love**? **Yes!**

Does it matter what we put in **our minds**? **Yes!**

Does it matter how we spend **our leisure time**? **Yes!** All are part of our stewardship. In all we must be *"faithful,"* i.e., reliable, dependable, steady, persevering, realizing that these resources are only ours on loan. We are not owners, but only stewards using property that belongs to another (God). And as the apostle Paul wrote later, *"It is required in stewards that one be found faithful"* (1 Cor. 4:2).

If we cannot administer this small trust properly, how will we ever be trusted with greater gifts?

3. Be Trustworthy with Others' Property

Jesus raises His lesson to yet another level of challenge: *"Therefore if you have not been faithful in the **unrighteous mammon**, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"* (Luke 16:11). The last word *"riches"* has been supplied. Jesus says that if we cannot prove faithful in handling the little we have now (*"unrighteous mammon"*), how can we expect God to trust us with *"the true"*—the eternal, limitless benefits He is holding for those who are *"called, and chosen, and faithful?"* (Rev. 17:14). The *"true"* is the ideal, in contrast with property that is ours only as stewards (1 Chron. 29:16).

The apostle Paul described the benefits that accrue to those who are faithful in their duties here, who *"store up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come."* What is the benefit? *"That they may lay hold on eternal life"* (1 Tim. 6:17–19). They are rewarded for their faithfulness in handling *"what is another man's"* (Luke 16:12)—which is our current situation. The *"unrighteous mammon"* does not belong to us.

Jesus concludes the parable with a simple statement of fact: the *"unrighteous mammon"* is meant to be our servant, not our master. God must be our only master, because *"No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon"* (Luke 16:13).

If we are faithful in what belongs to another (the property of God and Christ, who are the true owners of all the *"unrighteous mammon"*), someday God will give us real, enduring value for our very own, even a place in His eternal Kingdom on the earth made over new (Mark 10:29–30; Matt. 5:5; 6:10). ♦

KNOW YOUR BIBLE

"Let the wise listen and add to their learning" -Proverbs 1:5

OLD TESTAMENT ABCs

A 1. **A** _____
Persian king who chose Esther for his queen

B 2. **B** _____
City where it was prophesied that Jesus would be born

C 3. **C** _____
Persian king who gave the Jewish captives permission to return home

D 4. **D** _____
Christian worker who loved to have the preeminence and rejected advice from the apostle John

E 5. **E** _____
Priest who brought up Samuel at the tabernacle

F 6. **F** _____
"All who f_____ thee will be ashamed."

G 7. **G** _____
Name of Elisha's servant, who was stricken with leprosy

H 8. **H** _____
Name of prophet who wrote, "The just shall live by his faith."

I 9. **I** _____
Youngest son of Aaron

J 10. **J** _____
Fiftieth year in Israel, when all slaves were freed and all debts erased

K 11. **K** _____
Israelite who led a rebellion against Moses and died by Divine judgment

L 12. **L** _____
Book of the Bible written by Jeremiah; reflects on the reality of God's judgments upon sin

M 13. **M** _____
Book of the Old Testament that prophesies the coming of Christ's messenger

N 14. **N** _____
King of Babylon noted both for his conquests and his dreams

O 15. **O** _____
Son of Ruth and Boaz, grandfather of David.

P 16. **P** _____
Location of Jacob's wrestling with the angel

Q 17. **Q** _____
"In q_____ and in confidence shall be your strength."

R 18. **R** _____
A Moabitess who accepted and worshipped Israel's God

S 19. **S** _____
Last Judge of Israel and earnest spiritual leader

T 20. **T** _____
Seaport city denounced by the prophets Ezekiel and Joel

U 21. **U** _____
A town which God commanded Abraham to leave; in return, God promised great blessings

V 22. **V** _____
Means by which God revealed prophetic messages to Daniel

W 23. **W** _____
"Happy is the man who findeth w_____ and the man who getteth understanding."

Y 24. **Y** _____
Hebrew name for God

Z 25. **Z** _____
Holy hill where God will establish His King



"Those who feared the Lord talked with each other" – Malachi 3:16

Our willingness
to suffer for Christ's
sake is the measure
of our faith.

OUR BEST EACH DAY

I was sorry to hear about the elderly sister's condition. When we are older, we have less resistance to infections and it takes longer to recuperate. Keep in mind 2 Cor. 4:17–18 *"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."*

Also Revelation 21:4 *"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."* What a day that will be!

Growing into perfection takes a lot of effort but we must do it. Ephesians 5 is a good chapter to tell us how—how to speak, how to help each other, how to follow Christ so as to belong to His church. Chapter 6 deals with the Christian putting on the "spiritual" armor of God. The Apostle Paul has written some excellent books for us to read and apply.

The editorial "Do You Have the Ultimate App?" in the Spring Message is high tech yet for me it was quite understandable. The article "Soliloquy of a Carbon Copy" (the only Original is Jesus Christ) was great!

May all of us expend every effort to be "Ready" when Jesus comes and Elijah. Our efforts will not be in vain (1 Cor. 15:58).

I want to do my very best each and every day, and feel confident that others there want to do the same.

R.C., West Virginia

YOU'LL FORGET HOW HARD YOU WORKED

Our temporal projects (yard and garden) don't always work out as well as we would like, because so many things are beyond our control. But in our spiritual lives, we can take control if we will. We can't control everything that happens to us, but we can control our reactions to what happens, and that is what matters most. The daily setbacks and annoyances we face are opportunities for growth.

Suppose you were offered a job with a starting salary of 10 dollars a month. Nowadays 10 dollars won't buy much—maybe a loaf of bread, a gallon of milk and a gallon of gasoline for the car. But let's say that as a condition of your employment you worked one month as a probationary employee for \$10. If at the end of the month your employer was satisfied with your work, you would be hired as a permanent employee, and your salary would increase to \$1000 a month, and would double every month afterwards. The second month you would get \$2000, the third month \$4000, the fifth month \$8000, and on and on. By the twelfth month of your employment your salary would be more than \$1,000,000. After two years it would be in the billions. It wouldn't take long for you to forget how hard you had to work that first month for \$10.

Making a spiritual application, let's say the first month represents our day of probation, our lifetime. Then if approved, the second month and all the months thereafter represent the prize of eternal life. The prospect of endless life with its endless opportunities to grow and learn makes any difficulties we have now well worth the effort to overcome them!

Let us, like Paul, put everything else behind us and *"press toward the mark for the prize"* (Phil. 3:13–14)!

S.K., Tennessee

ANSWERS TO OLD TESTAMENT ABCs:

- A. Ahasuerus (Esther 1:2–9)
- B. Bethlehem (Mic. 5:1–2)
- C. Cyrus (Ezra 1:1–3)
- D. Diotrefes (3 John 9)
- E. Eli (1 Sam. 2)
- F. Forsake (Jer. 17:13)
- G. Gehazi (2 Kings 5:25–27)
- H. Habakkuk (Hab. 2:4)
- I. Ithamar (Ex. 28:1)
- J. Jubilee (Lev. 25:11–14)
- K. Korah (Num. 16)
- L. Lamentations
- M. Malachi (Mal. 3:1; 4:5–6)
- N. Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2)
- O. Obed (Ruth 4:17)
- P. Peniel (Gen. 32: 24–31)
- Q. Quietness (Isa. 30:15)
- R. Ruth (Ruth 1:1, 16–17)
- S. Samuel (1 Sam. 8:1–9)
- T. Tyre (Ezek. 26–28; Joel 3)
- U. Ur (Gen. 11:31–12:3)
- V. Visions (Dan. 2:19)
- W. Wisdom (Prov. 3:13)
- Y. Yahweh (Lev. 11:44 NJB)
- Z. Zion (Ps. 2:6)



For the Right Reason

A story for young and old —

It was one of those beautiful early fall days, and Bill and Jeff were racing to see who could get his half of the front yard cleaned up the fastest and the best. Bill, the older by two years, had agreed for the half with the rose bushes, to even up the contest.

"Who would think so many leaves could blow into our yard!" exclaimed Bill as he dragged his second bag of leaves to the curb.

"I'm sure glad we have only evergreen trees," commented Jeff, stopping to wipe his brow, "or it would be much worse."

"Well, I'm not so sure," replied Bill. "We've got an awful lot of pine cones and I almost think leaves are easier to rake up. Now for the roses, then I'll be done!" Both boys went back to work in earnest.

Just as Jeff was hurriedly filling his last bag of leaves and sticks, a shiny new Audi 6 sedan slowed down in front of their house. It was Shawn Kruger and his father! Shawn was in most of Jeff's junior high classes, and they often shared equipment in science lab. Shawn's father worked at the plant where Jeff's father was manager.

"Whatcha doin', Buddy?" called out Shawn, as he waved enthusiastically from the open window. Jeff and Bill looked up and waved back as the car sped away.

Bill went over to where Jeff was working. "Can you believe it—they've got *another new car!*"

Jeff muttered something under his breath, then said out loud, "I can just hear Shawn telling everybody in the school tomorrow how perfect this new car is, then looking over at me as if to say, 'And when's your Dad going to get a new one?'" Jeff's bitterness showed clearly.

"Come to think of it," added Bill, "seems like it was about this time last year that they bought one."

"And both our cars are six or seven years old!" exclaimed Jeff. "It just isn't fair."

"What's 'fair' got to do with it?" questioned Bill.

"Because" Jeff explained "I'm sure Dad earns more money than Mr. Kruger does. Dad's the plant manager. Yet they have five or six cars to our one...and lots of long trips, and a big new entertainment center, and a pool in their back yard, and...and we—we get to clean up the front yard! I mean it!...it's not fair!"

"So you wish you were Jeff Kruger instead of Jeff Stevenson?" chuckled Bill.

"Wouldn't mind trying it for a week or two," retorted Jeff as he tossed his last bag by the curb. "What's money for, anyway, if not to enjoy?"

"Maybe there are other things to consider," countered Bill, trying to be reasonable. "For one thing, the Krugers don't have as big a family. They just have Shawn, and Dad and Mom have four of us to support."

"I suppose," Jeff conceded.

Just then the famed six-year-old Ford mini-van turned into the driveway. Their mother was home from grocery shopping. "You're just in time, Mom!" called out Jeff, as she climbed out of the car. "I just finished my half—first." "What a nice surprise! I have such good boys," she said as she reached inside the car and pulled out a bag. "How about some fresh pizza? The grocer was almost giving it away—I assured him I had a good market for it."

"Thanks, Mom!" both boys said in unison, as they leaned against the car to enjoy their pizza. "We'll bring the groceries in," Bill assured Mother. "When this pizza job is done," added Jeff with obvious pleasure.

Mother smiled at her "busy" sons as she turned to go into the house.

Almost immediately the conversation about the Krugers resumed. "Bill, did you see what model that car was?" interposed Jeff, sounding like an automotive pro. "Did you notice the headlights on it, and the hubcaps, and the

skylight, and I'm sure it has leather seats? Those things push the price right through the roof, if I know anything about it!"

"I wouldn't mind having a new shiny car," Bill said thoughtfully. "But..." looking at his brother, as if inviting him to listen, he continued. "Jeff,...do you think Shawn is happier than we are? Only a few weeks ago he was over here because he was afraid to be at home...remember? Would you have traded places with Shawn then?"

Not waiting for an answer, Bill went on. "Then also, both Shawn's parents work, while Mom stays home and takes care of us and everything."

"I know," admitted Jeff quietly.

"And I'm not sure that it's *how much* you earn. Dad and Mom try to think first of what we *need*, and let other things go. It's a big responsibility to manage a family.

"But what's wrong with putting money into a new car?" asked Jeff, not willing to give it up.

"Nothing, if we do it for the right reason," replied Bill. "Would you say it's a 'right reason' if we want a new car because the Krugers have one?"

"We should get a new car because...because ours is wearing out,...and because ours doesn't look up-to-date anymore,...and lots of other reasons:" Jeff was thinking fast.

Just then Father turned into the driveway. "Good! Dad's home,"



exclaimed Jeff as they raced to his car.

Dad looked approvingly at the yard as he got out of the car. "What a transformation, sons. Nice work!"

"I cleaned up this half, Dad," bragged Jeff as he waved his hand to the left. "And I beat Bill."

"I got stuck on the rose bushes," laughed Bill.

"They're kind of prickly to clean out," agreed Dad, "but the roses make it worth it....Did I interrupt a serious conversation?" he asked perceptively.

The boys looked at each other. Bill spoke first. "Well, Dad, Jeff and I were just saying how much we need a new car. Have you seen the Kruger's new one?"

"Yes, I've seen it, boys," continued Father. "But I keep wondering what is right for us. The Lord, you know, has promised to supply all our needs—not all our wants. Is a new car a need, or a want, as the Lord sees it? You know, a lot of people make themselves very unhappy because they are always working very hard just to keep up with their neighbors."

"But Dad!" insisted Jeff, "I can't see why we can't afford a new car at least every other year, when the Krugers can have one every year. Don't you earn more money than Mr. Kruger, Dad?"

"Well, yes, but your Mother and I follow a different plan than the Krugers," explained Father. "The Krugers buy many things on a plan of so-much-a-month."

"What's wrong with that?" questioned Jeff. "At least you get to enjoy some things."

"But Jeff, do you realize what that means? They have a big debt hanging over their heads all the time. It's all fine if times are good. But suppose your Mother and I spend this way, and get all these things we like. Then suppose the plant has a bad year, or I should become very sick, and lose my job. Do you know what would happen?"

Jeff hung his head. He didn't like to think about things like that.

"We plan to have money first for the things we need," continued Father.

"Like food and clothing for all of us," added Bill.

"And fuel for the furnace, and insurance, and money for our education," added Jeff.

"And we pay tithes to the church," added Father.

"Probably the amount we pay in tithes would make the payments on a new car," suggested Jeff. "The Krugers don't even go to church, so they don't have that expense to worry about."

"Are you suggesting that we would be better off to put our money into a new car than to pay our tithes?" asked Dad.

Jeff was silent. Father continued.

"I like to think that when we pay tithes we are investing in a heavenly cause. The money we give is our share in God's work. You know, everything around us belongs to God. *'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.'* There isn't anything that is really ours. If I die tonight, I will not be able to keep one penny. It is all God's."

"I'm sure you and Mom know what you're doing, and someday we'll understand too," replied Bill seriously. "I know you're looking out for us."

"Yes, I know that, too," admitted Jeff as he grinned at his father. "I wouldn't trade you or Mom for any other parents in the whole world."

"And do you know what I was thinking?" added Bill. "The Kruger's shiny new car will be old in just a few years, just like our old Ford van. It's only a matter of time."

Pleased with his sons' response, Father reached into his pocket and handed the boys a bunch of car brochures.

"Would you like to help pick out our next new car, sons?" Father didn't need an answer as he looked into the faces of two beaming boys.

"Remember what Jesus said, *'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.'*" ♦

Are You Building On the Right Foundation?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

path" (Eph. 4:14 NCV). As we study the Scriptures and see others chiseling, shaping, and polishing, we are convinced that it is possible to take an ugly, shapeless stone and make it into a perfect stone, even a perfect match to the Chief Corner Stone!

As we apply ourselves to the chipping and polishing of our characters, we are often discouraged. But we are not in this work alone. The Great Architect and his helpers are there for us. We read in the Instruction Manual: "I will help you,... I will be with you,... I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Isa. 41:10, 13–14; Gen. 26:3; 31:3; Deut. 31:23; Josh. 1:5; Heb. 13:5). The Psalmist assures us that those who know the Lord and put their trust in Him have never been forsaken (Ps. 9:10). With these words we are greatly encouraged.

Then in the Book of Revelation we see *"the holy city, New*

Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" (Rev. 21:2). That city is the temple, bright and shining in its glory. As I read these words I visualize myself looking closely, and there it is! I see a perfect little stone in the wall, plumb and aligned to the Chief Corner Stone. And on that stone my name is written. Oh if only this can be true!

Jesus said, *"With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible"* (Mark 10:27). But possible for me?! Yes, it is possible. The instructions are clear: *"Do not continue living like those who do not believe. Their thoughts are worth nothing. They do not understand, and they know nothing, because they refuse to listen. So they cannot have the life that God gives. They have lost all feeling of shame, and they use their lives for doing evil. They continually want to do all kinds of evil"* (Eph. 4:17–19 NCV). Then I read where we are thrice assured that if we *"endure unto the end, the same shall be saved"* (Matt. 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13). Yes, *"shall be saved"*... if we endure to the end and finish that chipping and polishing now. ♦



THE BAOBAB (BOTTLE) TREE



Same Baobab trees at different seasons.
(above and below)



In Australia this old Baobab tree
was the town jail for a time.

Bottle trees, as the Baobab trees are sometimes called, are awesomely designed! These trees have so many features that are unique and vital to their survival.

There are nine species of Baobab trees that live in the hot dry savannas of Australia, Africa, India and Madagascar. The Baobab's amazing qualities make it ideally suited to the harsh environments in which it lives. In Africa it is called the "tree of life" because every part of the tree provides a valuable resource to the natives.

- ◆ The Baobab trees **grow** 40 to 75 feet tall and 35 to 60 feet in diameter. Some varieties do not grow tall but the trunks get larger and larger every year. Some of the larger trees are thought to be as much as 5,000 years old.
- ◆ All Baobab trees develop **huge trunks** that store great amounts of water during the rainy season. Their trunks are thick, soft and fleshy. The stems of the branches often form "u" shaped channels that funnel the rain water into holding canals, allowing the tree more time to **absorb the precious water** into its fleshy inner parts.
- ◆ The smooth, **shiny bark** of some helps cool the tree by reflecting the hot sun. It also makes it harder for small animals to climb the tree to eat the tender leaves. The **bark is fire resistant** making the trees less susceptible to the wild fires that sweep periodically through the dry savannas. The tough, stringy inner bark is used by the African people to make rope, to weave into cloth, to make fishnets, and even to make musical instrument strings.
- ◆ During the **dry season** the trees are **bare**, making them look like they were planted upside down. Because of this they are often called "upside down trees." This phenomenon helps the tree preserve the valuable water supply that it stored in its trunk during the previous rainy season. When the **rains come** again they **leaf out quickly**. The leaves of the Baobab have a **lemony flavor** and are nutritious, eaten and enjoyed by man and beast.
- ◆ At about 20 years, the trees begin to **flower**. In the summer, large, saucer-sized white blooms hang from long stems all over the tree. The "**rotten meat**" smell of these flowers attracts the fruit bats and insects which act as pollinators.
- ◆ The **ripened fruits** hanging from the long stems are fuzzy, gray, gourd-like objects sought by men and animals alike as a valuable food source. Inside each fruit are about 30 seeds covered with a white powdery substance that is very tasty as well as being high in nutrition. The flavor is described as somewhat acidic and combines the flavors of grapefruit, pear and vanilla.
- ◆ Because the large trunks are **often hollow**, they are used for many purposes, including storage and housing.

A tree with so many useful and valuable features in areas where large trees are scarce is a real treasure to the inhabitants, both human and animal. The Baobab tree's Designer knew just what would be needed for these trees to survive and to benefit those communities.

Again, we praise the Lord God of heaven for His awesome handiwork! ◆



Flower and Fruit of the Baobab Tree



Ripe Fruit from Baobab Tree (left)
Notice the white blossoms on the tree (below)



THE EMPTY PLACE

*A homeless Bad Habit went searching one day
For a spot where it snugly could settle and stay;
It hung around Fred's house three hours by the clock,
But never found courage to step up and knock.*

*The place was too busy and crowded, you see;
Inside all was humming with young energy;
There were lessons to learn and good books to be read,
But no time to be idle from breakfast to bed.*

*"I'd push my way in," thought the Habit—"but then,
Every corner is filled—I'd be turned out again!
It is no use to hang 'round; this is no place for me"—
And he went off as downcast as downcast could be.*

*But Jim's door stood open, not far down the road;
No crowd was about it, no bustle it showed.
The hall was deserted, the study was bare—
Bad Habit stepped in with a satisfied air.*

*"Ah! here's what I want," he exclaimed with a grin;
"I can settle in peace, and grow into a sin.
Jim's life is so idle and empty, I see
It is just the right home for an inmate like me."*

*So it stayed, and it grew till it filled the whole place,
And owned Jim in the bargain, and brought him disgrace.
Poor Jim! Let all others be warned to look out,
For many Bad Habits go searching about!*

—Selected.



True Thanksgiving is a cultivated habit.

*Our Faith is not a certain way of looking at Divine things.
It is a Divine way of looking at everything.*

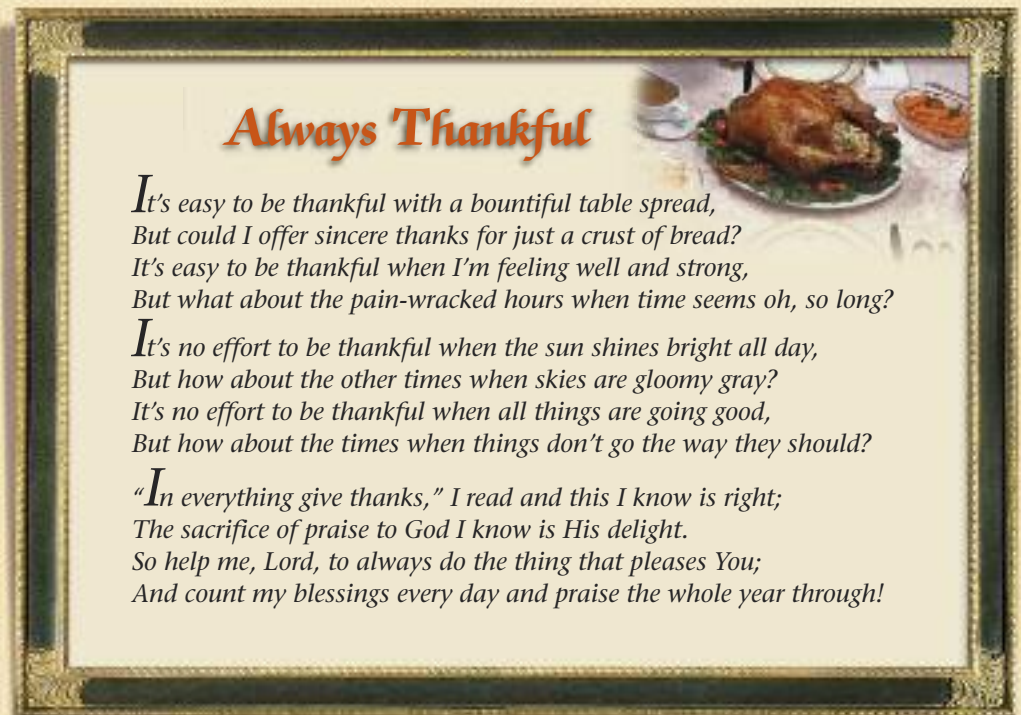
*God wants more than a pompous proclamation of thanks
on one Thursday in November—
He deserves humble, grateful service from us every day of the year.*

*To live well needs a faith fit to live by,
a self fit to live with, and a purpose fit to live for.*

Sin may come upon you by surprise, but do not welcome it as a guest.

Gossip is ear pollution.

You can learn a lot by reading the Bible; you will learn still more by practicing it.





*In my bedroom hangs this Motto,
And its place is near the door,
Yes, it hangs there to remind me
God must always go before!*

*Never do I cross the threshold
But the Motto seems to say
"Just a word with God, your Father,
Before you hurry on your way."*

*When I'm dressing in the morning,
As I see it hanging there,
It reminds me of my duties,
Bids me seek God's help in prayer.*

*Duties, burdens, worries, troubles,
All may come to me this day;
How can I prepare to meet them?
How, I ask, except I pray!*

With GOD We Are Well Able

Disappointing and daunting facts do not warrant discouraging conclusions. It is not likely that Caleb and Joshua were delighted at the sight of the giants and the walled cities,* any more than the ten other spies. The facts were the same for all 12, but Caleb and Joshua *concluded* differently. Why? Because they *included* differently. The ten faced the challenging situation by themselves, while the two faithful spies faced it with God. The ten focused on the giants and walled cities, and said, "It cannot be done." Caleb and Joshua saw the difficulties in league with God and said, "*We are well able.*" ♦

*Perhaps walled cities were new to the recently freed Hebrews, as Egyptian cities typically did not have walls. The desert on either side of Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea to her north were natural barriers against invaders. Therefore, the walled cities of the Canaanites looked formidable to the Hebrews.

*When I plan fresh undertakings,
Then the Motto seems to say,
"Don't in your own strength begin it;
First ask God! Kneel down and pray!"*

*When I'm ready, dressed for walking,
With so little time to spare,
Still I cannot leave my bedroom
Till I've seen that Motto there—*

*Till I've stopped for just a moment,
And in earnest, secret prayer
Placed myself and all my doings
In my Heavenly Father's care.*

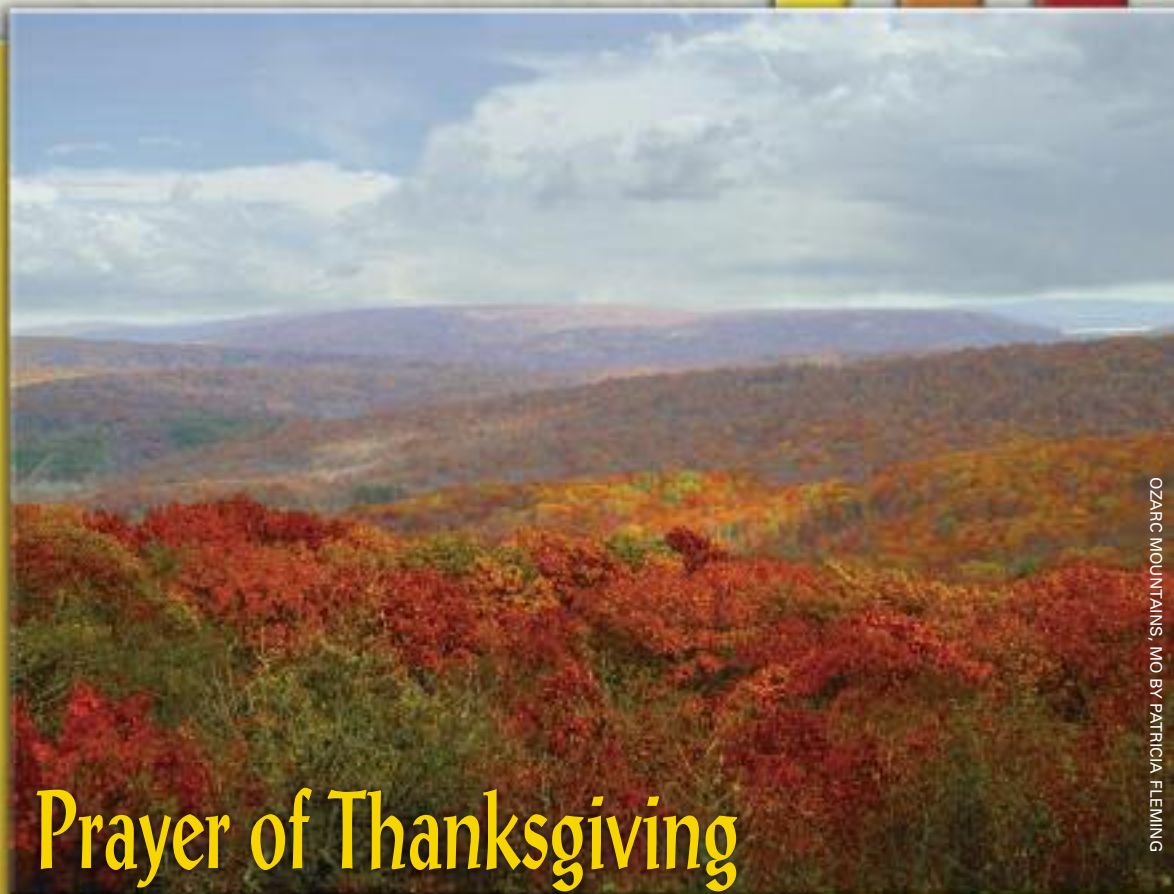
*When the busy day is over,
And for rest I would prepare,
Once again I hear its message,
"First go meet your God in prayer!"*

*Yes, "God First!" must be my Motto
If I would succeed each day;
Do you wish your ways to prosper?
Then you must kneel down and pray.*

*Yes, let "God First!" be your Motto,
He'll your joy and trouble share;
All life's duties, cares or pleasures,
Take them to your God in prayer.*

— Contributed





OZARC MOUNTAINS, MO BY PATRICIA FLEMING

Prayer of Thanksgiving

I ought to be thankful....
For grief unsuffered, tears unshed;
For clouds that scattered overhead;
For pestilence that came not nigh;
For dangers great that passed me by;
For sharp suspicion soothed, allayed;
For doubt dispelled that made afraid;
For fierce temptation well withstood;
For evil plot which brought forth good;
For vital links in friendship's chain
 that sorely tested, stood the strain;
For harmless blows with malice dealt;
For base ingratitude unfelt;
For hatred's keen unuttered word;
For bitter jest, unknown, unheard;
For every evil turned away
 Unmeasured thanks I give today. Amen.

—Author unknown