

FALL 2014 • VOLUME 101, No. 3

Megiddo Message



WHAT IS THE WORTH OF YOUR SOUL?

Who Is Responsible for Me?

Of course you've heard it, perhaps even said it. "That's not my problem—it's not my fault." The statement is followed quickly by an explanation intended to convince the listener that there was no other alternative. "The circumstances weren't right." "It was beyond my control." "The machine did it." "There just wasn't enough time." Reasons are endless, and the intended conclusion is the same for all. "Don't look at me—I'm not responsible!"

The reasons are close kin to those that schoolteachers have heard for generations from students who didn't do their homework. They range all the way from not understanding the assignment or not knowing how to do it to the ultimate: "My dog ate it."

Which in reality is only giving us a little more practice telling ourselves that we could not have acted any other way.

Our culture shuns responsibility. Witness the level of personal debt in our nation, the exorbitant costs of the health care system, the frivolous lawsuits, the reluctance of employees to take responsibility on the job, and so on and on.

Where do we stand as individuals? If we are honest with ourselves, there are times each of us has to admit that we didn't have to make the choice we made. We could have turned the situation around. If we had thought first and acted on the thought, we could have done better.

While there are certainly situations beyond our control, God has planned that we take responsibility for our actions—in our homes, on the job, in our communities, wherever we are. When we agree to serve Him, we pledge ourselves to comply with His laws of right and wrong everywhere, all the time. If I do right, it is my credit. If I do wrong, it is my fault. Either way, God intends me to be responsible for my behavior. This was exactly what God said to Cain: *"You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master"* (Gen. 4:7 NLT).

What should I do when I fail? Take David for a pattern. When David had sinned, he prayed, *"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me"* (Ps. 51:10). He did not try to deny his sin. He took responsibility for it, acknowledged it, and asked God to forgive him.

Isn't that far better than holding an attitude of "Don't look at me—it's not my fault"?

The apostle Paul told Timothy that there are two kinds of vessels: one to be honored, one to be dishonored. Regardless of what we were, we can change.

Face yourself—and God—honestly. Take responsibility for your conduct. A new you begins where you do.

A new you begins where you do.

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).

*God intends
me to be
responsible
for my own
behavior.*

Front cover:
Photo by David
and Marie Sutton

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Megiddo Message

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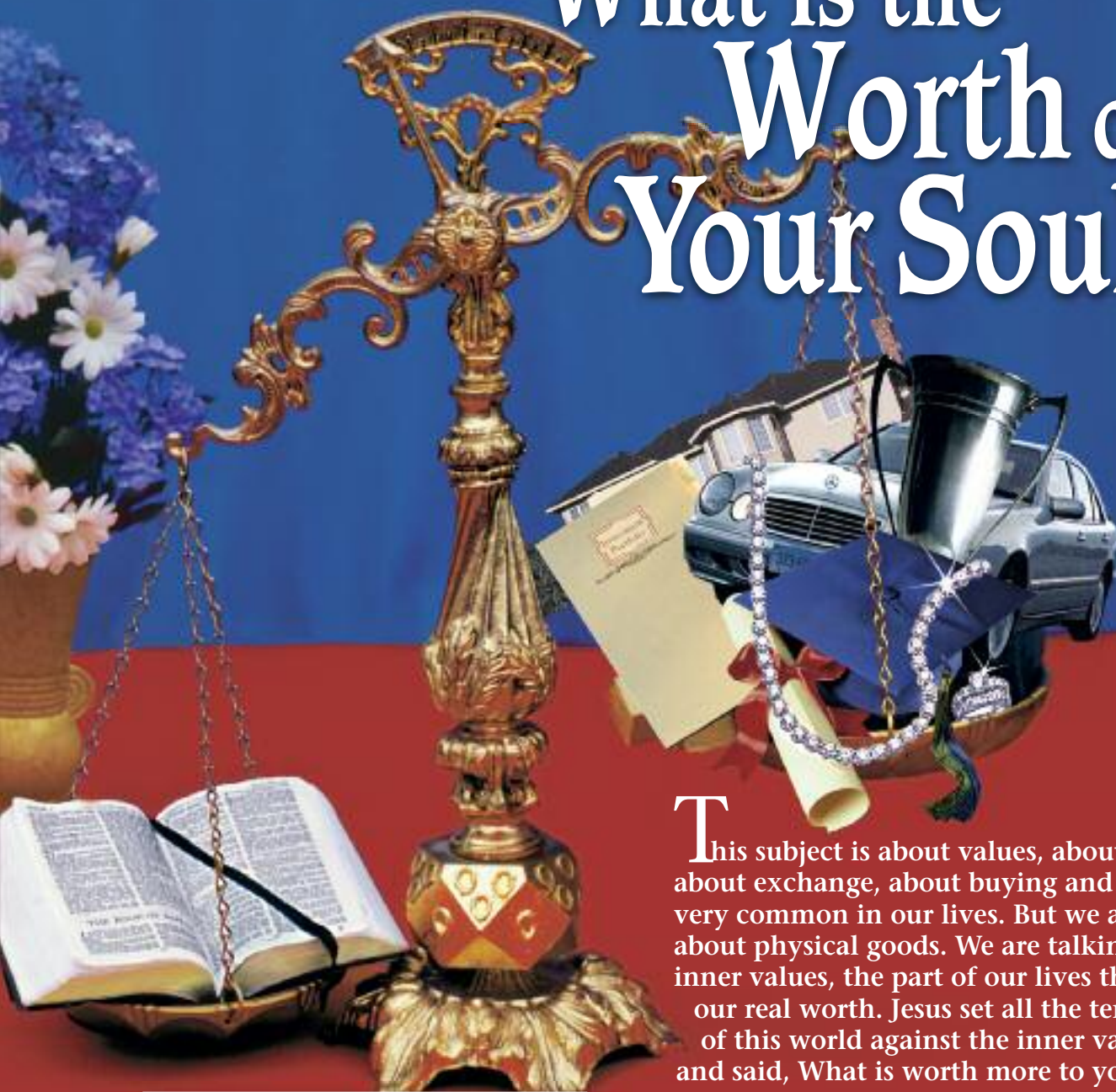
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BDAG—Arndt, W., Gingrich, F. W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (1996). A

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**—Koehler, 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 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).

What Is the Worth of Your Soul?



What are you going to have when all the transactions of life are complete? What is the net benefit going to be? “How do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul in the process?”

This subject is about values, about currency, about exchange, about buying and selling—all very common in our lives. But we aren’t talking about physical goods. We are talking about our inner values, the part of our lives that makes up our real worth. Jesus set all the temporal values of this world against the inner values of life and said, What is worth more to you? Where is your *real* value?

In Mark 8:36–37 Jesus summarized it in two short phrases, “*What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*”—our soul being our life, our very being, and all our prospects for the future.

Life has millions of choices, but underlying them all are only two: eternal death, or eternal life. Every other choice comes down to one of these. We are either choosing the broad road that leads to destruction, or the narrow road to life. We

are choosing to die or to live. There are no other options. Hence Jesus' question for us: Are you purchasing wisely? What are you giving in exchange for your soul (your love, your heart)? What are you going to have when all these transactions of life are complete? What is the net value to you going to be? *"How do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul in the process?"* (NLT).

Every successful business does a careful analysis from time to time, to make sure that its operations are profitable. If they do not review and analyze, they will not be around long. They need to know whether they are making more than they are losing, or losing more than they are making. That is what Jesus advises for our individual life business: Look ahead and plan carefully. Look at the end of this project you call "life," He says, and ask, How is it going to come out? What is it going to be worth—long-term?

Naturally we have a very short-range view of things. We like things that feel good, taste good, look good—short-term. We're very short-term minded. The shiny BMW, the vacation abroad, the six-figure income, the million dollar home—these things may feel like true worth. But Jesus is teaching us that these are not the real values.

"What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world..." The whole world, you ask? I don't expect that!

But some have. Alexander the Great did. When he was conquering in the 4th century BC, it is said that he actually cried when there were no more worlds to conquer. He thought he had done everything possible. Crossing Europe, Asia, and the Orient, he amassed an enormous empire. But he missed one great victory: a victory over himself. Because of this massive defeat, though he had everything, he could not live to enjoy it. In his thirty-third year he died, a drunkard. He had literally gained the "whole world," but lost everything.

Napoleon was another who set out to make a name for himself by building a great empire. But his glory also was brief. It is another reminder of Jesus' words: *"How do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul in the process?"* Very easily we can lose more than we gain.

How do we lose our soul?

When we attach ourselves to the wrong friends, those who will lead us away from God, we murder our soul.

When we view images on screen or in print that are violent, impure, or sensual, not spiritually uplifting, we poison our soul.

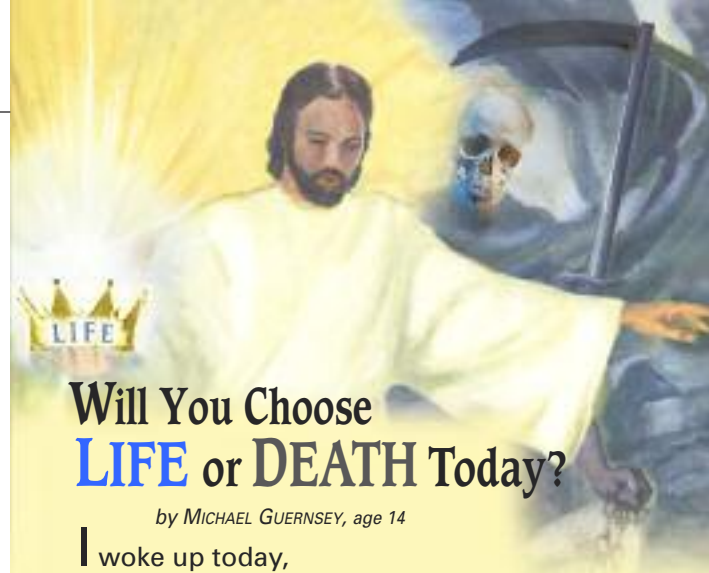
When we believe man-made superstitions in place of the true word of the Lord, we injure our soul.

When we spend our time absorbing information from the news media and neglect the good Gospel of God, the words of eternal life, we starve our soul.

All the treasures of this world are going to come down to zero value. We may enjoy them for a moment, but soon they are gone. If we have exchanged our soul—our prospects of eternal life—for them, Jesus calls it a bad bargain, a loss and not a gain.

Isn't that what Esau did when he sold his birthright—a real value—for a bowl of soup? Can we think of a poorer exchange? Only a short time later, he regretted it, but it was too late. The lesson: Don't exchange your soul for anything of this world. Even if it looks like good value at the time, Jesus says it isn't worth it.

"What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Gain the rewards, honors, degrees, wealth, satisfactions of this world and lose—forfeit, surrender—your soul, your prospects of future life. It is all loss.



Will You Choose LIFE or DEATH Today?

by MICHAEL GUERNSEY, age 14

I woke up today,
And I saw my Lord.
He was standing there
And He asked me this question:

*Will you live today
The way I would,
Or will you choose to die?
Will you choose life or death?*

In the car today,
I turned on the radio.
I started listening to
A pretty cool song.
Then my Lord again,
He asked me this question:

*Will you live today
The way I would,
Or will you choose to die?
Will you choose life or death?*

And at school today,
I found myself,
Looking at those girls,
And thinking those thoughts
Then my Lord again,
He asked me this question:

*Will you live today
The way I would,
Or will you choose to die?
Will you choose life or death?*

And at the movies,
Standing in line.
I couldn't decide whether
I really should watch it.
Then my Lord again,
He asked me this question:

*Will you live today
The way I would,
Or will you choose to die?
Will you choose life or death?*

Then my Lord, He said to me,
"I know it's hard to live the way I would.
But let Me say, it will be worth the pain
When in the Kingdom you receive
A crown of life for all you've done!"

<http://www.inspirationalarchive.com/1398/will-you-live-today/#ixzz3C5csqHZM>



What Would You Give in Exchange for Your Soul?

*W*anderer afar from the Savior today,
Risking your soul for the things that decay,
Oh, if today God should call you away,
What would you give in exchange for your soul?

*M*ercy is calling you, won't you give heed?
Must the dear Savior still tenderly plead?
Risk not your soul on a world full of greed,
What would you give in exchange for your soul?

*M*ore than the silver and gold of the earth,
More than all jewels your life will be worth
If your Creator will grant a new birth!
What would you give in exchange for your soul?

*W*hat would you give? What would you give?
What would you give in exchange for your soul?
Oh, if today God should call you away,
What would you give in exchange for your soul?

When we spend money, we are making an exchange. Jesus says, You are spending your life every day. What are you getting in return?

Jesus viewed everything from an eternal perspective. Why spend time, energy and worry acquiring things we cannot keep? This makes the price tag on those acquisitions very, very high; because we have only a limited amount of life to spend.

There is a story of a man who was reading a newspaper. As he was reading, he noticed that it seemed a little strange. He was reading about events that had not happened. How could this be? The article was assuming he knew of things he had not heard about. Then he looked at the date on the paper—the date was six months in advance! No wonder it didn't look familiar!

He kept on reading. He turned to the weather page, and even the season was wrong! He turned to another page and saw what was going on sale. Again the season was wrong. He turned to the financial page and noticed the prices of certain stocks and bonds. Then he started to think, "I could really make good here! This is valuable information. Now I know what stocks to buy. I can be really, really rich. I'll have a great fortune in a short time!" And he started dreaming of all the things his money could buy—a Rolls Royce, a home overlooking the ocean, and all the wonderful things everybody dreams about. In just a short time he could have it all!

Excitedly he turned the page. There was the obituary column. And right at the top of it he saw his own picture, his own name, and his own story! Suddenly, everything looked different. None of the things he had been dreaming about had any value—*because he had only six months to live.*

That is the perspective Jesus wants us to keep: everything here is short-term. Use it right, He says, because you cannot keep it. Anything here has value only as you invest it in real worth. Only the world to come is eternal.

Jesus made the same point in His parable of the Rich Fool. This man's land had produced tremendous crops. What could he do with it all! "Oh," he says, "my barns won't hold it. I've got to have more barns." So he decided to build bigger barns to hold all his produce. "Then," he says, "I'll take my rest and eat, drink and be merry." But God had another idea. God said to him, "*You fool, this night your soul will be required of you. Then who will all these goods belong to?*" God said to him, Your life is going to be taken. Then who is going to have all these good things?

The Right Perspective

Jesus wants us to keep the right perspective. The things of this world don't have any long-term value.

If we are squandering eternity for the sake of some little gratification here, how small is our gain! What a very high price we are paying for the questionable pleasure of having our own way! What a very high price to pay for the privilege of doing as we please, for taking the easy course, for that little bit of indulgence, that little bit of pleasure, that bit of lust or gratification, or the satisfaction of saying what feels good at the moment. To think that this is our exchange for something of eternal value!

What is Jesus' advice? You can't afford it. ♦

Where Is Your Treasure?

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." —Matt. 6:19–21

Life is like the gathering of wealth, this embryo parable is saying. A choice confronts us: we can have treasure on earth, or treasure in heaven.

In these verses our Lord deals with the true attitude of His subjects toward the material world. Here is a negative and a positive: *"Do not lay up ... treasures on earth."* *"Lay up ..."* treasures in heaven.

Notice the comparison of values. Treasures laid up on earth are perishable. Moth and rust can consume. Thieves can break through and steal. Treasures laid up in heaven are lasting and sure, for to them neither moth, rust, nor thieves have access.

Next, notice Christ's reason for this injunction: *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

Treasures on earth are beset by risks and end inevitably in total loss. Wealth in Christ's day was not only in coin and monetary exchange; it was partly in fabrics—in rugs, in fine and elaborate clothes and expensive hangings. Vermin threatened the stored treasures, and thieves could easily break through the mud walls. Many a man's wealth consisted in the corn and the grain that he had stored away in his great barns. But into that corn and grain could come the worms which would eat it away. Rats and mice could invade, until the store was polluted and destroyed. In any event, death would soon overtake the owners.

Were Jesus speaking today, He might mention inflation, depressions, and the uncertainty of fluctuating stocks. He would remind us that *"you can't take it with you."* The only bank that will never break is the bank of worthwhile human character laid up in the presence of God.

In this parable Jesus is also showing that the physical and the spiritual cannot be completely separated. Dead-earnest life-seekers still have to touch, use and handle material things, but their minds are fixed on the greater, spiritual riches of Christ.

However much the inner life may be sustained by that which is essentially spiritual, we continue to live with the things which are seen and temporal. And this is the lesson our Lord was teaching: Every Christian must live in the material world; but our heart must be elsewhere; we must be dominated by a superearthy consciousness. We must use the things of earth, always aware that they are not our real treasures.

There is danger that we will attempt to place treasure in



When the Values Are Reversed

J. C. Riley, nineteenth century British theologian, commented on values and the reversing of values. Speaking of the future, he wrote, "I often like to think what a change there will be one day in the values that are around us. I look around this world. I mark the current price of everything this world contains. Then, I look forward to the coming of Christ and the great Day of God. I think of the new order and the day it will bring.

"I read the words of our Lord and realize there will be a great change soon. What are the dear things now: money, precious stones, bank notes, ships, land, houses, horses, carriages, furniture, meat, drink, clothes, and the like. These are the things thought to be of value now. These are the things that command a ready market and a high price. The one who has these things is counted wealthy. Such is the world.

"What are the cheap things now? The knowledge of God, the knowledge of the Bible, the concerns for salvation, the privilege of being God's Son, the right to the tree of life, the promise of an incorruptible inheritance, the offer of a crown of glory that fades not. These are things no one cares about today. They are offered without money and without price, freely, yet no one wants to even buy them. They go a begging. They are scarcely looked at. Such is the world.

"But the day is coming when the values will be reversed. A day is coming when the bank note shall be as useless as rags. The gold and silver and money will be as worthless as dust. A day is coming when thousands shall care nothing for the things they once lived for and shall desire the things they once despised. They shall want the favor of the great King. They shall scorn their silks and satins and velvets and laces. All this will be lost in the anxious desire for the robe of righteousness."

Let's reverse our values now, to be prepared for the great reversing to come. ♦

two places, that we will be straining toward two goals. Should Jesus speak to us today, He might say: "You are not single-minded in your spiritual life; nor are you single-minded in your material life. And these crosscurrents bring collapse. You are trying to lay up treasure in two directions—in heaven and on earth."

The human heart cannot have two first loyalties. If we tolerate conflicting interests in our lives, sooner or later one of these interests will rise up and assume control. The treasure draws the heart after it.

To live a spiritual life in the midst of a material environment has ever been the problem of God's people.

Not For Ourselves

What are we to do *about earthly treasure*? Notice that Jesus did not say, "Do not lay up treasures on earth." What He did say was, "*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth.*"

Actually, we do not own anything, even ourselves. But we can, by proper use, turn the things of this world into the coinage of heaven. **We can use the temporal to gain the eternal.**

What are we to do *about giving*? The selfish Christian is a contradiction of terms, for no one can be Christian and be selfish. We all are beneficiaries of the Lord's goodness to us; we all owe it to Him to help others.

So easily our giving can become selfish, our prayers a show-piece for spirituality; our sacrifices may be performed for effect. Such works lay up only treasures on earth.

But when the same sacrifices are offered from the heart and for God, they turn into "*treasures in heaven.*"

It is a choice each of us must make, for we cannot lay up value in two places; we will not be paid twice. We cannot have our rewards both in this world and in the world to come.

The moment we find ourselves laying up treasures *for ourselves*, that moment we must let it go or lose our treasure in heaven, our genuine Christian character. If we find ourselves seeking power, prominence, the love of display, selfish ease, then our earthly treasures will be only for ourselves.

To know just where the material interests in our lives cease to serve God and begin to spring from selfish purposes requires keen spiritual discernment.

The material world may be a cog or a clog. As long as it fits into God's purpose, it is a cog and we may use it. But the moment it becomes a clog to our spiritual life, we must break with it or be broken by it.

In the heart of the Christian, the currency must not be the coinage of this world. No outside voice can rule there. Every one who desires to be truly Godlike must draw a line somewhere in his life and say to material things, "Thus far shall you go and no further."

When we break the power of the material by dedicating it to spiritual ends, it becomes a spiritual agent.

With wealth often comes temptation to pride and many other evils. That is why Paul warns: "*Tell those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone. But their trust should be in the living God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and should give gener-*



ously to those in need, always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them. By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may take hold of real life" (1 Timothy 6:17–19 NLT).

Why this warning? "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21).

What Do You Treasure?

Every one has something he treasures, whether it be his wealth, his education, a home, a career, a skill, an art, or even his own opinion. In everyone there is a passion to possess. And Jesus does not condemn us for satisfying that passion. His warning, however, is that we satisfy it in the right way. For what we possess will have its effect upon us.

If we take our treasures and place them here, our heart will be here and we will be here, of the earth—earthy, sensual, material-minded. Why? Because our treasure is here. But if we store up our treasure in heaven, lay up our treasures beyond, our heart will be beyond and our life will be lifted. All the love of the infinite will dominate us, and the life of the infinite God will be surging, beating, thrilling, throbbing through us.

By our daily life we show what place we have reserved in our hearts for God. We show by our actions whether we are giving Him first or second place. In every circumstance, in every incident, no matter how petty the detail, we show where our affections lie. This fact is important; for where our treasure is, there will our heart be too.

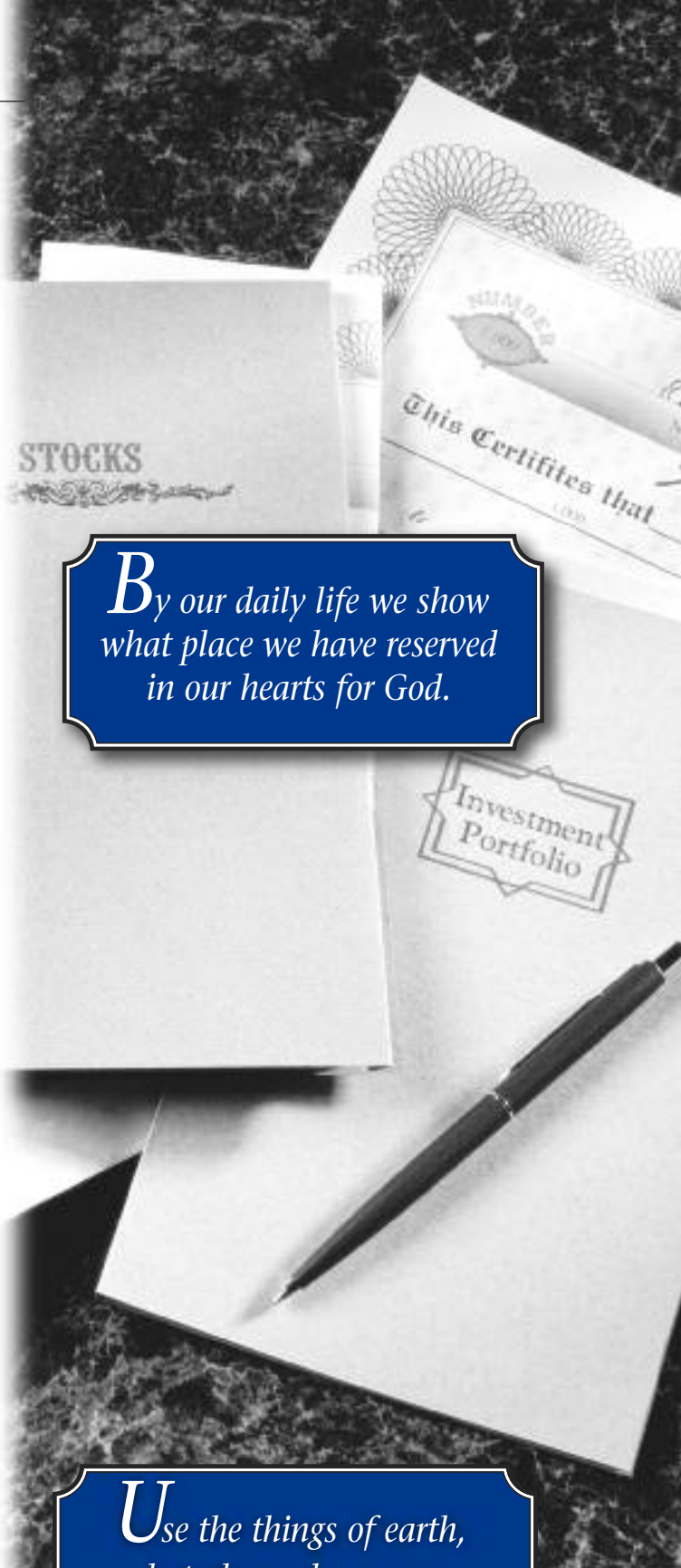
When The Books Are Opened

Unlike earthly treasures, heavenly treasures are within the reach of all. A person does not have to possess outstanding ability, talent or wealth to store up treasure in heaven. In fact, when Christ rewards His faithful workers, they will be surprised that the small and seemingly unimportant tasks done in His name could bring such vast returns (Matt. 25:34–40). Although their earthly lot was modest, a mansion is prepared for them, because during their lifetime they provided all the necessary material.

When the books are opened, others will be surprised to find they have no treasure laid up in heaven. Why? Because they invested what they had in the things of earth, the treasures of this world. They had their reward as they went through life. The work they did may have been worthy, but they did it to be recognized by men, not God. And Jesus said of such, "*They have their reward*" (Matt. 6:2). They may have endured patiently for Christ's sake, yet show little accumulation of true riches because they refused to sell out all to the Lord.

But some will have an abundant store laid up—of patience, kindness, love, courage, hope, gratitude, diligence, and every godly virtue. When the Day of Judgment reveals the quality of each one's work, they shall receive a full reward. They put their entire trust in the Lord, giving gladly and without grudging. Their time and talent they used freely in His cause, "*as working for the Lord, not for men*" (Col. 3:23). Their record of a perfect and holy character will be in God's permanent book of remembrance.

When we place ourselves and all that we have before God, and say, "These are for Your use, Lord, and Yours alone," then we are not laying up treasures on earth. We are taking earthly treasure and transforming it into the coinage of heaven. ♦



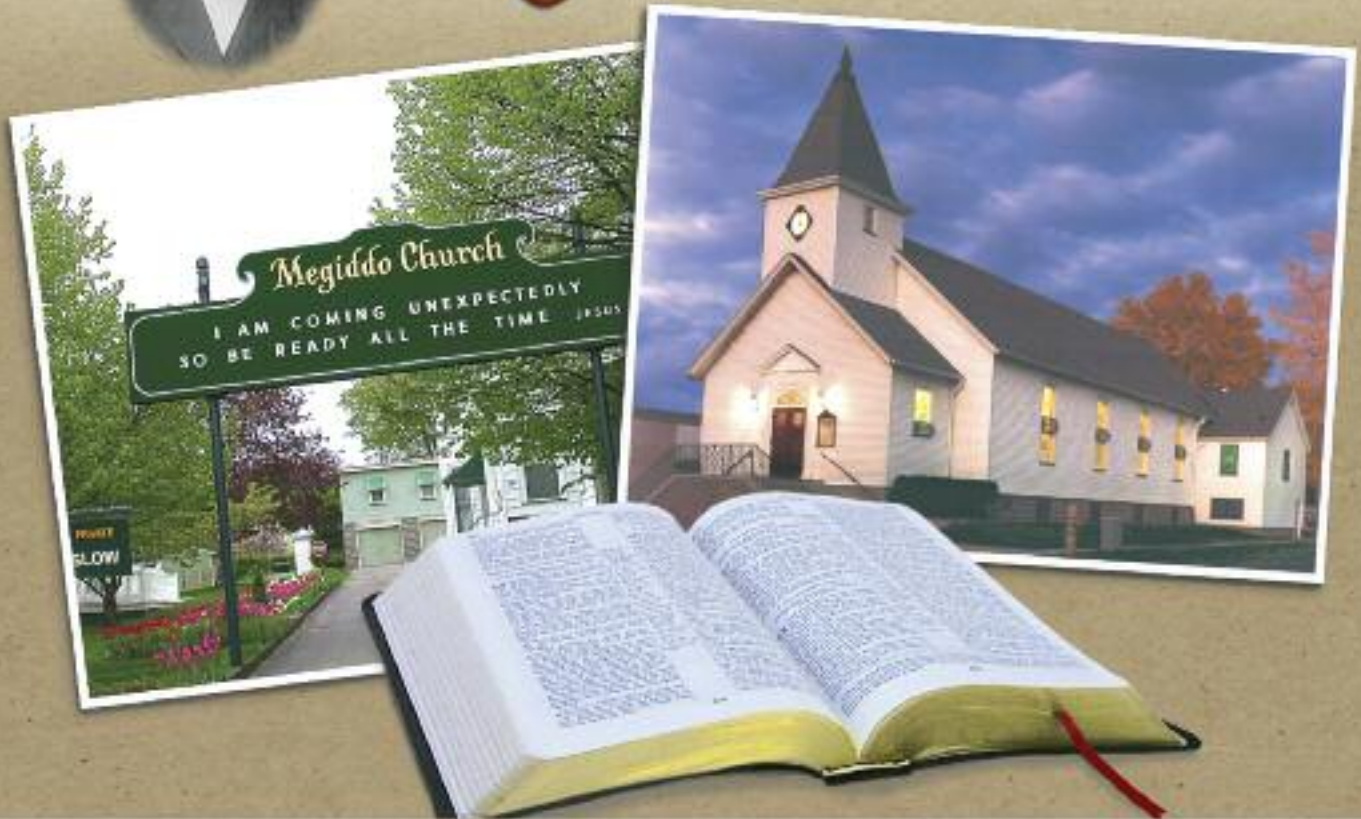
*By our daily life we show
what place we have reserved
in our hearts for God.*

*Use the things of earth,
but always be aware
that they are not your
real treasures.*

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

- 1861: Was offered an annual salary of \$1500 if he would fill the pulpit of a local church.
- 1864: Is married to Harriet Griffis
- 1864: Is drafted into the army only weeks after marriage; refuses to kill his fellowmen based on convictions of Bible teaching; when his life is threatened for his stand, he appeals to President Lincoln and is allowed to serve in the military hospital.
- 1864–1875: Studies Bible intensely, seeking correct understanding of it
- 1868–1873: Settles in Fon du Lac, Wisconsin, circuit preacher for nearby towns
- 1869: Debates publicly in Wrightstown, Wisconsin. Subject: The resurrection
- 1870: Debates publicly at Kasson, Minnesota. Subject: The Bible is all one harmonious teaching
- 1874: Relocates to McMinnville, Oregon, for opportunity to preach
- 1876: Joins Christadelphian fellowship, and becomes an active Christadelphian ecclesia; begins to contribute to *The Christadelphian*, their official publication
- 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: Hosts first annual camp meeting in McMinnville for benefit of scattered Oregon members
- 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 by way of California; purchases printing press in Sacramento
- 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
- 1901: Builds and launches steamship "Megiddo" to spread the Gospel; 90 members sell property and live on board



CHAPTER 4

SEEKING TRUTH THROUGH DEBATE

During his early and middle years, Nichols discovered a strange resource: the atheists. They were thinkers, and the complaints they were bringing against the Bible and Christianity—and the weak replies of nominal Christians—needed answers. Convinced that God did not ask men to stop thinking or to believe anything unreasonable, Nichols took their criticisms of Christianity and the Bible to heart. For if the Bible was indeed the work of an overruling, Almighty God, it should not contain any absurdities, contradictions or incongruities.

Wanting to hear the facts straight on, he confronted the atheist and infidel challenges in debate. In his early years, Nichols engaged in numerous debates, some small and local, some more widely publicized. In the latter part of the 19th century, public religious debates were popular, providing both entertainment and education. People would travel a hundred miles to hear a "good" debate.

As a debater, Nichols was enthusiastic. It wasn't about winning or losing—he wanted the facts. Debate was a tool for arousing interest and discussion. **It was also a tool for learning—an opponent would quickly show where he lacked.** What better way to learn than to have both sides state and defend their positions? Nichols did not fear debate because he had a passion for truth.

The following are a few debates he told about in later discourses, or that have been preserved in notes.

DEBATE: 1869

LOCATION: Wrightstown, Wisconsin

SUBJECT: The Resurrection: Will the resurrected dead come forth mortal or immortal?

Not counting his impromptu discussions with various ministers during his teen years, his first public debate of which we have knowledge was in 1869 with a Mr. Wilcox, at Wrightstown, Wisconsin. A large hall was provided for the purpose. The subject discussed was "The Resurrection." Wilcox affirmed that all come forth from the grave immortal. Nichols' took the stand on what he believed was the Biblical position: that an individual is raised with a mortal body, then judged, and finally rewarded with eternal life or eternal death, according to his works.

DEBATE: 1870

LOCATION: Kasson, Minnesota

SUBJECT: The Bible is all one harmonious teaching

No details are available.

DEBATE: 1877

LOCATION: Carlton, Oregon

SUBJECT: Is man mortal or immortal by nature? Is the resurrection physical? Will there be a literal kingdom on earth?

PARTICIPANT: Professor Thomas Franklin Campbell, President of Christian College of Monmouth

During the summer of 1877, a debate was arranged between L. T. Nichols, "Christadelphian," and Professor Thomas Franklin Campbell. Apparently Nichols had made a stir in town and Campbell's friends had urged him to defend his beliefs on the platform with the newcomer. Professor Campbell, an educator and a pioneer Oregon preacher of the Disciples faith, was President of the Christian College of Monmouth, Oregon at the time. (The name of the college later changed to State Normal School of Oregon.) He was also a lawyer and editor of the *Christian Messenger*. He was said to be a master of languages, including Hebrew. Campbell attended Alexander Campbell's *Bethany College* in West Virginia.



In his early years, Nichols engaged in numerous debates, some small and local, some more widely publicized. In the latter part of the 19th century, public religious debates were popular, providing both entertainment and education. People would travel a hundred miles to hear a "good" debate.

The subjects for the debate were: Is man mortal or immortal by nature? Is the resurrection physical? Will there be a literal kingdom on earth? Professor Campbell was to attempt to prove from the Bible that we possess an immortal soul and go to heaven at death, also that the Kingdom of God is the Church and was set up on the Day of Pentecost with Christ as a spiritual King. Mr. Nichols was to prove the opposite, that man is mortal and sleeps in death until the Resurrection, that the Kingdom of God is a real, tangible Kingdom, which will be established on this earth at the return of Christ.

Mr. Campbell, knowing his opponent to be a farmer, consented, no doubt anticipating an easy victory. Carlton, Oregon, where the discussion was held, was only a village, so in the absence of a larger building, an immense warehouse was secured. The discussion lasted four days, having two sessions each day, each speaker being allotted one hour at each session.

While speaking about the mortality of man, Nichols quoted Gen. 7:22, "*All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died,*" explaining that the word "*breath*" was translated from the Hebrew word *ruach*, the same word used in Ps. 146:4, "*His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish.*" *Ruach* is also used in Eccl. 3:19, showing that both man and beast have the same breath. Referencing Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon, he read the definitions of *ruach*: "Spirit; breath, breath of the mouth; breath of the nostrils; the vital principle which shows itself in the breathing of the mouth and nostrils, whether of man or beast."

Professor Campbell denied that the word *ruach* was in the 7th chapter of Genesis, whereupon Mr. Nichols in his next speech reiterated his statements in regard to the word, and requested that Professor Campbell retract his statements before the discussion could proceed. Mr. Campbell asked for a little time in which to look up the word, saying that he was somewhat rusty in his Hebrew. Mr. Campbell was given until the next day to look up the word. Upon returning the next morning he complied with Nichols' request and retracted his statements, admitting that the word *ruach* was in the 7th chapter of Genesis just as Nichols had stated.

Campbell claimed victory in his publication stating that “we have heard of no one who was convinced by Mr. Nichols.” *“The Christadelphian”* reported that Nichols “had a three days’ discussion with a prominent Campbellite advocate, resulting in obedience to the faith on the part of a number.”²

¹Ruach is actually used twice in the seventh chapter of Genesis, verses 15 and 22.

²Mr. Nichols did have a number of converts during this debate, one being Mrs. Maud Hembree, who later became pastor of the Megiddo Church.

DEBATE: 1878

LOCATION: Salem, Oregon

SUBJECT: The Sabbath

PARTICIPANT: VanHorn, Seventh Day Adventist

In 1878, a discussion was held in Salem, Oregon, with Seventh Day Adventist minister VanHorn, the subject being “The Sabbath.” VanHorn entered the discussion thinking that his opponent believed as most religious teachers, that the Ten Commandment law given to Moses was still in force and should be obeyed, and therefore Nichols could not deny that the seventh day Sabbath must be kept holy. However, before the debate ended, he learned that Nichols took a very different stand. Nichols first showed that the children of Israel were not commanded to keep the Sabbath until after their departure from Egypt (Ex. 16:23), and that the law which was written and engraven in stones was done away (2 Cor. 3:7). He also showed from the Bible that Jesus never commanded anyone to keep the Sabbath, also that Saturday was not the “seventh day” as used in the Bible.

In 1876, an infidel at Lafayette (Oregon) was the means of Sister Maggie hearing the truth. This infidel came to me and wanted me to postpone a meeting I had planned so I could speak at a camp meeting that was going to be held at the same time. I said they wouldn’t allow me to speak. He answered, “They won’t refuse you.” So I postponed my meeting and we went to the camp meeting.

The man on the campground preached a splendid sermon; it only lacked one element: proof. After the meeting, I began to talk with a few, and more kept coming until finally the preacher saw the group and sent someone down to find out what it was all about. Soon the minister himself came down and said, “Dis is a Methodist gampground; we want no more such talk on dis gampground.”

An infidel, Mr. Mercer, was there, and he said he would get us a place to speak.

So he did. He got the court house. Sister Maggie came there. I noticed her, because I saw someone leading her and knew she was blind. She sat and listened with her mouth open. After the meeting, her father invited me to take dinner with them. So the infidel was the cause of Sister Maggie and her father being at the meeting.

Mr. Mercer, the infidel, told me some time later that he would recant if he were not so old; if he had heard me when he was younger, he would have given up infidelity. He said he had heard the ministers preaching such things as hell fire, and three Gods in one, and the garden where a serpent caused Adam and Eve to sin and all men were counted sinners for their transgression, and so God had to send His innocent son to die on the cross. He said he couldn’t believe those things.

—Extract of a discourse by L. T. Nichols on April 22, 1900.



Build on the right foundation

We read of the foundation on which we must be built in Eph. 2:19-21, “*Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:*”

My friends, if this Book is true—and there is not a lingering doubt but that it is—you and I must be built on this foundation, this Word of God, the words of the apostles and prophets and Jesus Christ Himself. If I were not building on this one foundation, I would have nothing on which to stand. And if I cannot give you the chapter and verse for everything I say, do not believe it. I want you to look it up and read it for yourself with your own eyes. I want you to believe it not because I said it but because you can see it is the message that came from heaven, because it was chronicled for our instruction that we might be saved. I want you to believe because, as we find in Rev. 19:9, “*These are the true sayings of*

God”—not only the sayings of God but the *true* sayings of God.

I was astonished when I first read the Bible for myself—how well I remember the time! We were off in a new part of the country. The nearest mill was sixty miles away; we had to travel that far with an ox team to get our wheat ground. And in those days how much the families thought of each other. They thought as much of one another as brothers and sisters. They were anxious for one another’s welfare. Now so many people care for nothing but the almighty dollar. There was scarcely a millionaire in the United States then. In those days people loved one another. I wish all were as interested in their neighbors now.

—Extract of a discourse by L. T. Nichols on April 18, 1909, in Rochester, NY

CHAPTER 5

ON TO OREGON

In 1874, Nichols and his wife, answering a call for “light” from the far west, decided to relocate from Wisconsin to the Pacific State of Oregon. To us in the 21st Century, such a move could be easily accomplished in a matter of weeks. In 1874, it was very different. At that time there was no railroad through the mountains. The transcontinental railroad was completed in 1883. There were roads, but no bridges. Passes through the mountains followed river beds and creeks, but there were no rest areas, hotels or

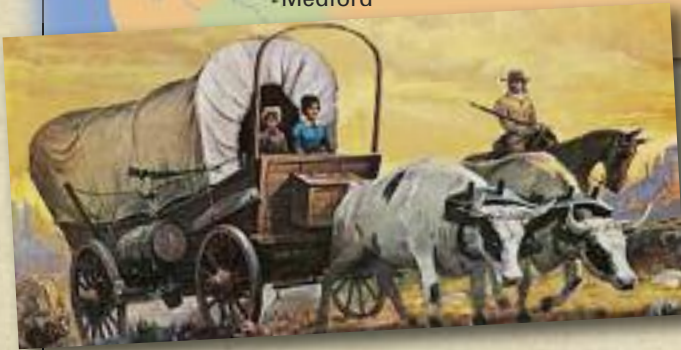
conveniences along the way. Most threatening were the dangers of the wilderness, wild animals and unfriendly natives. And what was the travellers’ means of conveyance? Oxen pulling covered wagons was the most common means. Until the advent of locomotives there was little that surpassed the strength and endurance of the ox for pulling heavy loads through the mountains. How long would it take to make the journey? Based on an estimated distance of 2,000 miles, which is likely conservative because of the absence

of straight roads, the trip by horses would take between 2 ½ and 4 ½ months; by oxen between 5 ½ and 6 ½ months.

Arriving in McMinnville, Oregon, Nichols purchased a large farm of about 340 acres, much of which he subdivided and sold off to his followers in 50 to 80 acre tracks. The farm at the beginning lacked a house, but that was quickly and easily remedied. Nichols also sold sewing machines, and in that timber-rich country he had no difficulty trading a sewing machine for enough lumber to build a house.

A number of Nichols’ Wisconsin group accompanied him to Oregon: his parents, who were now firm believers in their son’s mission; his sister Ella, the Skeels family, his wife’s sister and brother-in-law, Seraph and William Pickering, and a few others, altogether about fifteen. Only a handful, but one wonders that he had any followers at all—when he was repeatedly saying, “What I have been telling you was wrong. The Bible says...” and then went on to explain the new evidence he had uncovered.

Why the changes in his beliefs? Because he was continually studying and learning as he struggled to understand the truths conveyed in the Bible. He was continually separating error from truth. His advice was always, “If you can’t read it in the Bible, don’t believe it”—a statement that reflected his commitment to total honesty and his deep sense of personal accountability to God.



A vineyard in the fertile Willamette Valley

What was Nichols teaching at this time? It was a combination of the doctrines he had been taught as a child, what he had discovered by studying the Scriptures himself, and what he had learned from Dr. Thomas' study of the Scriptures. Though he was at all times teaching the "truth" to the limit of his understanding, there were elements of error which, one by one he left behind as he was able to identify them. As he said in later years when someone would criticize him for changing, "I never led you into any error." From the day of his dedication to God when still a boy, his whole life was a step by step moving away from error as he identified and eliminated it from his own beliefs and theirs. In fact, He was exceedingly grateful for every error discovered. His one goal was to be free from the bondage of anything false, whether in doctrine or practice, so that he could stand approved before the Great Judge, Jesus Christ.

CHALLENGE AND CHANGE

The eight years in Oregon (1874–1883) were eventful. While Nichols was studying, preaching and traveling, his small group of followers fronted some significant challenges—and changes.

A New Affiliation

Nichols had long wanted to follow, not lead. Since meeting Dr. Thomas in Wisconsin some ten years previous, he had been impressed with the doctor's teachings and his careful adhering to Scripture, and had continued to follow the doctor's published discourses, even as Nichols pursued his own serious study. Now Dr. Thomas was deceased (1871), but his followers, called Christadelphians, were carrying on. Was there a possibility that the Christadelphians might be the answer to his prayer, and that he could follow them and not have to lead in his search for the pure and unadulterated truth of the Bible?

Checking point after point with Scripture, Nichols found himself accepting the Christadelphian teachings one by one as he became convinced that each was solidly Biblical. In fact, so much did he accept that he decided to join their ranks. In March of 1876, Nichols was baptized into the Christadelphian faith and his little group became a Christadelphian ecclesia. As new members were baptized, they were reported in their official publication, *The Christadelphian*, along with those of other ecclesias. In Volume 14 of *The Christadelphian*, published in 1877, it was reported that "Brother Nichols" within the first year of preaching as a Christadelphian leader baptized thirty-two new members. The periodical listed their names, along with their former religious affiliation (some were Restitutionists, others had been Methodist, Adventist, Campbellite, Spiritualist, Universalist, some neutral, and even an occasional infidel).

A New Church

When the group arrived in Oregon, meetings were held either in Nichols' spacious farmhouse or in the homes of other believers. Only a few years, and the local membership had grown from about 15 to about 50. It was time to build a church, and a small church was built on the premises of Elijah Millican, father of a blind sister Maggie. The rest of the membership, separated by a number of miles, gathered once a year at the annual two-week camp meeting, which Nichols held for the purpose of bringing the group together for mutual fellowship, inspiration and instruction. The text of the sermons he preached at one of these camp meetings (1882) was put into print and has come down to us, conveying to us his deep love for God and the truth of His Word.



Another vineyard in the Willamette Valley with Mt. Hood in the background



1877: A Year to Remember

A great sorrow

The year 1877 was a time of great sorrow. During the summer of 1877, L. T. Nichols' father Lemuel Truesdale Nichols fell asleep at the age of 64, and was buried in a consecrated plot on his son's farm.

Ella Nichols Married to Henry Skeels

It was also in 1877 that Nichols' youngest sister Ella was married to Henry E. Skeels, a Wisconsin convert who had become one of his most stalwart supporters. Together they were a tower of strength and source of comfort to their leader, sharing the perils, labors, and joys of the gospel field; lifting and supporting.



Ella Nichols in her teens

Maud Hembree Converted

The year 1877 was also a time of great victory. That year saw a notable convert.

In those days, when anyone taught a religious faith different from the orthodox Christian doctrine, he or she was sure to meet with opposition. While some, if given opportunity, may try to take their opponent's life, others, such as Maud Hembree might just wish them to go away. Such was Maud Hembree's feeling against Nichols when she first heard of him. Reared a devout Roman Catholic, she received her education in the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Salem, Oregon. At one time she seriously considered devoting her life to Catholicism. Naturally she had serious doubts about the new preacher who had come to their valley. Not only was he non-Catholic, but he seemed far more dangerous because he was said to be striking at the very foundations of the doctrines shared by Catholics and Protestants alike. She thought he definitely should not be allowed to preach!

Maud Hembree had never attended non-Catholic services, but this case was so extreme. As she later explained, she went for the specific purpose of hearing this newcomer so thoroughly beaten that he would never again dare to disturb the religious peace of the Willamette Valley! But to her surprise, Nichols was not beaten. Regardless of the newspaper report aligned against him, Maud Hembree came away, convinced by the compelling evidence he presented for his "strange religion."

The conclusion of the story was told later by Nichols himself: "How well I remember her at the first meeting—she sat in the very back seat in that great building. But she had reverence for God's Word, and although she did not know Genesis from Revelation she saw the evidence was on our side and she was astonished as someone near her showed her a Bible and she saw how it read. She said to herself, 'I have been hating the very thing the Bible said, and I thought it was Mr. Nichols.' She heard only the eight sessions, but before they were over she was on the front seat, on the 'anxious bench,' as they say. She said, 'If this Bible is true,

Mr. Nichols has the truth; and I am going to buy me a Bible and investigate for myself.'

"It was some weeks after that I saw her at our blind sister's home. It was the first time I had spoken to her. She said, 'I have changed my mind.' And, oh, I was glad I had had that discussion!"

"She was twenty-four years old then, and that debate was the turning point of her life. She secured her first Bible. The rosary and other articles were discarded, and never again did she return to her former fold." In the words of her teacher, her life thereafter was "one constant onward progress."

TO BE CONTINUED



Ella and Henry Skeels:
Lifelong supporters, sharing
together the perils, labors and
joys of the gospel field



Maggie Millican (blind from
age 14) and Maud Hembree

Maggie Millican's parents were among the earliest pioneers, crossing the plains and the Rockies to Oregon in 1843. It was a rugged six month journey with ox teams and wagons. Oregon became a state in 1859.

After Maggie Millican joined the fellowship, her father, also a believer, arranged for her to be looked after by Maud Hembree. The two were lifelong Christian companions.

Near the end of her life, Sister Maggie remarked to Sister Hembree, "You and I have lived together over 42 years and never once had a quarrel or mistrusted each other"—a precious memory to hold.

Hard work on the frontier

What enthusiasm we ought to have, to realize we have an opportunity to prepare ourselves to live forever.

Back in the early days, when Oregon was being settled, there were no steam boats or locomotives. Sister Maggie (a blind sister for whom Maud Hembree made a home) can remember when they ate boiled wheat, and that was all they had. There was only one steam mill in the area, and that was at Oregon City. To get their wheat ground, they had to take it by boat down the winding Yamhill River to the Willamette, and thence to Oregon City. How did they get home? It was upstream, and they had a hard tug to get back. They used to hitch a lasso around a tree and pull the old boat up the river hand over hand, then hitch to a tree again, and so on. It was hard work, sixteen hours a day. We will have none of this to contend with in the future. And to think, then we will be able to go with the freedom of the wind! (John 3:3)

Why is it that we will not go at the work of the Lord with all our mind, might and strength!

— Extract of a discourse by L. T. Nichols on July 4, 1900, in Ellington, MN.



A painting of Oregon City on the Willamette River, c. 1850–1852, by John Mix Stanley.

The horseshoe shaped 40 ft high and 1500 ft wide Willamette Falls furnished power for the first gristmill and other mills west of the Rockies.

Don't lose your first love

...It makes me think of the warning Jesus gave the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2. He said (verse 1), *"I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars."* They were holding to the right doctrine. *"Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted."* He said, There are those among you who have done many good things, who have contended for the truth. We have seen the same in our day, people who have contended for the faith and yet when that faith tells

them what to do, they do not show the same earnest desire.

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee." With all these good things on their record, yet He says, *"I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."* Oh, that first love! We were zealous in belief, zealous in doing then what we saw. But we want to have that same zeal in applying what we learn, in developing a character acceptable to God. Then we would go almost any distance to hear the truth. If we do not have the same zeal now in applying it to our lives, we have lost our first love. Of course it is necessary to know it, but our eternal life depends on living it out.

— Extract of a discourse by Maud Hembree, April 1, 1934, in Rochester, NY.

God will hear your prayer—only if you heed his law

"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Prov. 28:9). I wonder how many of us realize the depth of the meaning of those words: *"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law."* If we want our prayers to reach the throne of the Almighty we must be intent on learning what His law demands, and doing it; not just some great command, but everything God commands thru Jesus, the Prophets and Apostles.

If we want our prayers to reach the throne of God, we must be intent, careful to learn. *"He that hath an ear to hear let him hear."* It is bad to lose our literal hearing, but a million fold worse to lose our spiritual hearing. When we first heard the doctrine and realized we did not have anything right, we were intent to listen to every word. How we would watch the testimonies and take them down! Then we would walk any distance. We walked seven or eight miles and back more than once to get to a meeting, and there were no sidewalks either, it was uphill and down. To keep that same interest up, to be anxious to hear every word we must obey takes diligence.

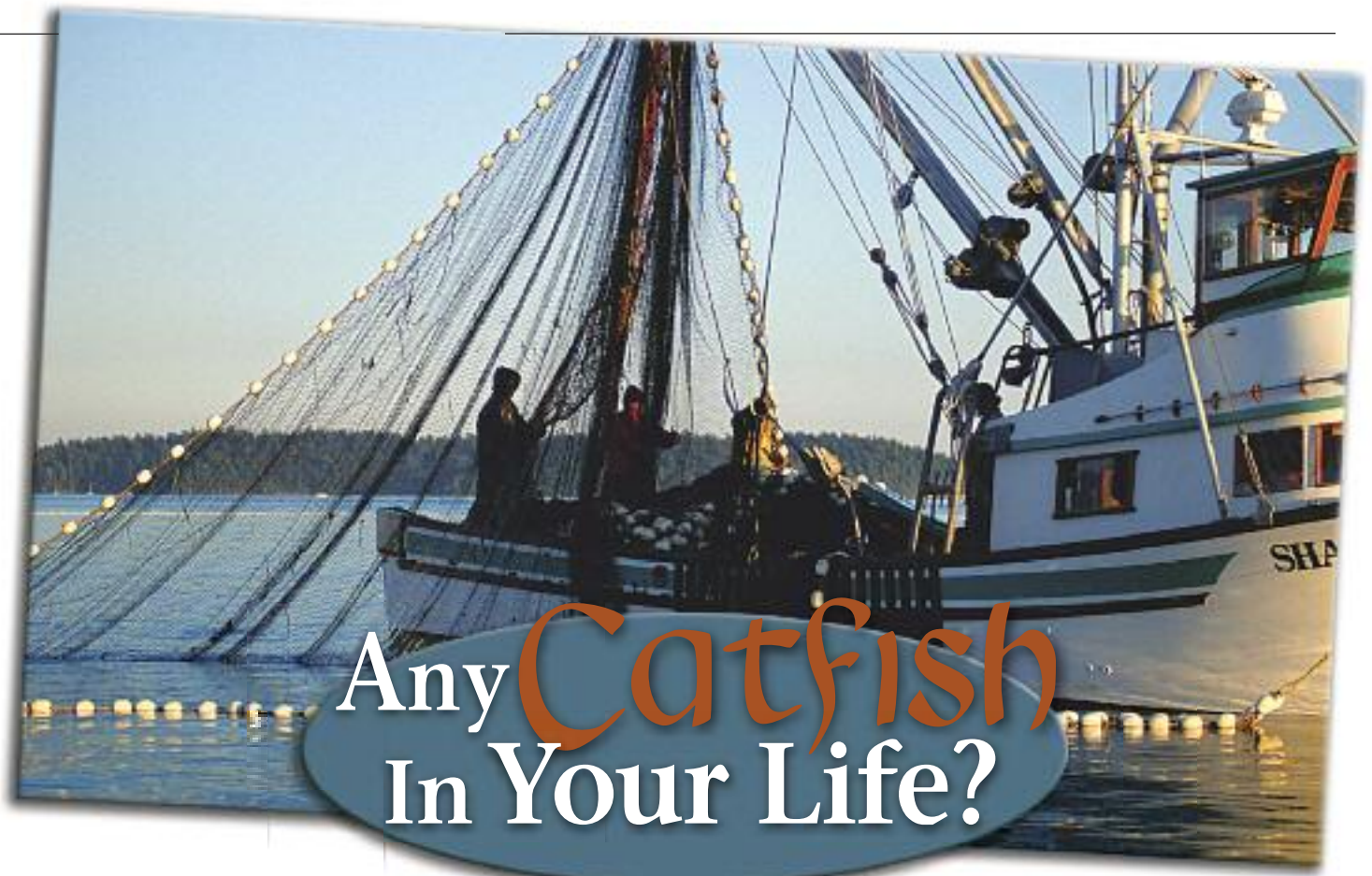
We must be so earnest, so watchful, so anxious to listen to



everything God commands, and say, God's way is best.

If you are turning your ear away from the law, God says your prayer is an abomination. How slow we were to take that in. We thought we could sin and confess, sin and confess. We thought we should not steal or commit murder or do anything of that kind, but that law also says, *"Cease from anger and forsake wrath, fret not thyself in any wise to do evil"* (Ps. 37:8-9). It is a serious thing not to turn our ear away from hearing God's law.

— Extract of a discourse by Maud Hembree, February 16, 1933, in Rochester, NY.



Any Catfish In Your Life?

The cod fishermen of Maine have found a unique solution to a serious problem. The difficulty is that after the cod are caught and placed in the holding tanks aboard ship, they just lay in the bottom and don't move. Consequently, their flesh becomes soft and flabby and they are of little value to the buyer.

The fishermen, however, have an ingenious way to keep them swimming and strong. They keep a large catfish in the holding tank. Catfish and cod are natural enemies.

Therefore, its presence keeps the cod swimming to stay away from its stings and jabs. As a result, the cod remain active and strong, and are suitable for the marketplace.

All too often we are like the cod. We're content to take it easy and do as little as we can. We accept what is, we are content with ourselves as we are. We do not feel the urgent need to change to what God wants us to be. As time goes by, we become spiritually flabby and ineffective in the cause of Christ.

To keep us active and strong, God may allow a "catfish" into our lives. It may be one of the children, someone we work with, or a fellow member of our church. They don't agree with our opinions. Their words and actions are a constant irritation. They try our patience and test our self-control. But it's all for our good, if we take it in the right way. It makes us strong, mature.

If you have a "catfish" in your life, thank God for him or her. Without them you wouldn't be as spiritually strong as you are. And you would have missed many a valuable lesson.

Perhaps—perhaps you even need another catfish. If so, count on one appearing!

Every experience in life isn't pleasant, but when the growing days are done, we shall be more than grateful for every "help" that brought us to the measure of the stature of Christ, when He says to each mature son and daughter, "Well done!...Enter in." ♦





FROM THE BOOKS OF MOSES

1. Along with what command do we read, "My spirit shall not always strive with man"?
2. Who said, "Rise up Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered"?
3. To whom did the Lord give the promise "Five of you shall chase an hundred"?
4. Of whom was it said that he was "very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth"?
5. Who said "My punishment is greater than I can bear"?
6. Of whom was it said when he died at the age of one hundred and twenty, "His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated"?
7. Who asked "Am I my brother's keeper"?
8. Who promised his people, "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace"?

QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS

1. To whom has a banner been given (Psalm 60:4)?
2. Who spoke the prophecy, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all"?
3. What emperor banished all Jews from Rome?
4. Who wrote, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended"?
5. Who asked God to put his tears into His bottle?
6. Who asked, "Is there no balm in Gilead?"
7. Who wrote, "The soul that sins it shall die"?
8. Who was commanded, "Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest"?
9. Who asked the question, "Is it well with the child?"
10. What is the verse about being "joined to idols"?
11. Who asked, "Should such a man as I flee"?
12. Who received the promise that, if he meditates on God's law, "then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success"?
13. Where and by whom does it say, "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading"?
14. Of whose pursuit of the enemy is the phrase used, "Faint, yet pursuing"?
15. Where does it say and by whom. "They have sown the wind"?
16. Who was told to fight when he heard "the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees"?
17. Of whom did the children of Belial say, "How shall this man save us"?

18. Where and about what is it said, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more until he comes whose right it is"?
19. What are the sacrifices of God _____ (Ps. 51:17)?
20. Who said, "The mountains shall bring peace to the people"?
21. Who said, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"?
22. To what Prophet was it said, "O thou man of God, there is death in the pot"?

THANKSGIVING & PRAISE

Finish the verse, and give the text.

1. "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into _____"
2. "Let us come before his presence with _____"
3. "We give thanks to God always for you _____"
4. "Giving thanks always for _____"
5. "O give thanks unto the Lord, _____"
6. "For the Lord shall comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, _____"
7. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with _____"
8. "Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, _____"
9. "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same _____"
10. "Offer unto God _____"
11. "That I may publish with the voice of _____"
12. "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the _____"

ANSWERS ON PAGE 28





LETTERS

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

Keep Focused on the Kingdom

Brother John in 1 John 2:15–17 warns us not to *"love the world"* or *"the things of the world."* The pleasures of this world are ephemeral. They have no lasting reward.

As we walk in the narrow way and encounter situations, we should ask ourselves the question, "What would Jesus do?" If our conscience tells us that we would find no peace of mind in pursuing a certain action, we can be sure that we are straying from the narrow way. The Psalmist tells us that if we love the law of God, we will have peace (Ps. 119:165). *"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul,"* and in keeping of the statutes of the Lord, *"there is great reward"* (Ps. 19:7, 11).

We all need encouragement and direction from someone already on the road to the Kingdom. Living alone, I am grateful for a sister in Texas who takes the time to send me encouraging e-mails.

Of course, the daily e-mails from the Church and all the sermons and literature are very much appreciated, too. Good, up-lifting music also helps fill the mind with right thoughts.

Let us keep our focus on the Kingdom of God with all its pleasures, and not on the transient pleasures of this world, because *"the night is far spent, the day is at hand"* (Rom. 13:12).

E. R., Ontario, Canada



If He Should Come Today!

If you have ever grown trees, or shrubs, or grape vines, you know the importance of pruning. A few years ago, I set out four spirea bushes. Two of them were doing well, producing dense growth and lots of clusters of pink flowers. But the other two weren't doing much. Last year they both had lots of dead twigs and branches. They looked so puny that I thought about digging them up and throwing them away. Then I decided I would cut away all the dead wood and give them another year. I was amazed by what happened. This summer they were twice as large as they were last year with lush, healthy green foliage and pink clusters of flowers shining like jewels among the leaves.

I thought about what Jesus said, "I am the vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:1–2).

If we are sincerely doing our work, we will apply the Word of God, until it

purges out all our old sinful ways. But if we are not working, if we are more interested in the things of this world than in Divine things, we will be rejected by the Judge. We will be uprooted and destroyed. Let's not let that happen to us.

A few days ago, I was reading in the 1968 volume of the Megiddo Bible Lessons. There was a story about a gardener at a villa on the shore of a beautiful lake. One day a traveler came by, and the old gardener showed him around.

"How long have you been here?" the traveler asked.

"Twenty four years," replied the old man.

"How often has your master been here? When was he last here?"

"Twelve years ago," was the reply.

"He writes often?"

"Never once."

"From whom do you receive your pay?"

"His agent on the mainland."

"His agent comes here often then?"

"He has never been here."

"Who does come then?"

The old man said, "I am most always alone! It is very, very seldom that even a stranger comes."

Then the traveler said, "Yet you have the garden in such perfect order, everything flourishing as if you were expecting your Master's coming tomorrow."

"Oh no! As if he were coming today, sir, today!" exclaimed the gardener.

Today! Yes, if our Master came today, would we be ready for Him to see our spiritual garden? Or, would we be wishing He had delayed His coming a few more days?

We don't know when He will arrive, so let's live every day as if we knew it would be our last day to get ready.

S.K., Tennessee



What does Your Tone Reveal About You?

The way we serve God is as important as that we serve Him. In the tone of our spiritual performance, the little affairs of life, our daily dealings, we manifest our true selves, what we really are. In each thing we do every day our mannerism displays the spirit of our lives. In a conversation on any subject of life, the tone of our voice will many times display our real feelings.

Peter left an admonition when he said: *"Love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; ...He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue*

from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit." (1 Peter 3:8, 10).

We are to *"be an example of the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity"* (1 Tim. 4:12). Jesus said, *"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks"* (Matt. 12:34).

We cannot overestimate the need for care in our conversation. Jesus went on to say, *"for by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned"* (Matt. 4:37). The Golden Rule demands that we think of the effect of our words on others (Matt. 7:12). This surely includes the tone of voice.

The apostle Paul, with his wonderful capacity to preach a sermon, told us something about genuine, godly love. "Love," he said, "has good manners, is very kind, is never rude, is never selfish." The way we say and do things is very important to our fellow men, and also to our God. The outward tone and inward heart are one.

B. C., Iowa



Listen to the Warning

All through the ages God has been warning, warning. We who have been listening have heard His call to righteousness through His Word, and the tremendous reward He has prepared for those who overcome their old nature and put on the new character of Jesus Christ.

The Creator and Giver of life spoke early in the day of salvation, *"Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David"* (Isa. 55:3).

While the day of salvation has been mercifully extended, may our delight in approaching our God in worship be according to the ordinances of our God. He will reprove those who worship in error (Isa. 58).

If we conscientiously pursue the renewal of our minds, we can achieve the character of Jesus Christ (Rom. 13:14). If we harken to and endure God's chastening, he will treat us as His own sons and daughters (Heb. 12:6–7). Then when we call to Him, the Lord will answer and say, *"Here am I"* (Isa. 58:9). And in due time, they who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, and *"mount up with wings as eagles"* (Isa. 40:31), even *"ride upon the high places of the earth"* (Isa. 58:14). *"And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him"* (Mal. 3:17).

W. B., Ontario, Canada



HOPE FOR THOSE WHO SLEEP

"I believe that when we die, our souls go to be with Jesus in heaven, and when He comes back, He will bring us to be reunited with our bodies, in the resurrection. Paul says that 'God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.' See 1 Thess. 4:14."

These words of Paul are meaningful to all of us because we are all mortal and need to understand the state of death and the resurrection.

Apparently the Thessalonian brethren were worried about some of their loved ones who had died. Their concern was that those who had died would be at a disadvantage when Jesus returns. So Paul begins by saying, *"I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope"* (1 Thess. 4:13).

Why do believers not sorrow as others? Because they have hope—hope of being resurrected, i.e., brought back to life, just as Jesus was. *"We believe that Jesus died and rose again"* (v.14).

In verse 15, the Apostle states plainly that he is speaking *"by the word of the Lord,"* and he says that those who are alive when Jesus returns will not have any advantage over those who are asleep in death. And in verse 16, He tells why: *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first"* (1 Thess. 4:16). Those who died *"in Christ will rise first"*—so that they can have an equal share in the events to follow.

Then what? Read verse 17: *"Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord"* (1 Thess. 4:17). The believers who have been resurrected and the believers who are living when Jesus comes will rise together to *"meet the Lord in the air."*

Paul makes several points in this passage that are reinforced throughout Scripture.

1: Death is a sleep. The Bible teaches the dead are asleep, unconscious, totally unaware of their environment or of the passage of time. The Bible says *"the dead know not anything"* (Eccl.

9:5). The person who has died has no power to think (Ps. 146:4), or worship or praise God. *"The dead do not praise the Lord, nor do any who go down into silence"* (Ps. 115:17).

The Psalmist says, addressing God, *"There is no mention of You in death; in Sheol who will give You thanks?"* (Ps. 6:5). He also stated this fact as a negative question in Psalm 88:10-11: *"Will You work wonders for the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise You? Shall Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave? Or Your faithfulness in the place of destruction?"* The answer to all is, No, because there is *"no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going"* (Eccl. 9:10).

Hezekiah, speaking of the state of death, said, *"Sheol cannot thank You, death cannot praise You; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your truth. The living, the living man, he shall praise You, as I do this day; the father shall make known Your truth to the children"* (Isa. 38:18-19).

Many times in the Bible the dead—good or bad, righteous or wicked, peasants or kings—are spoken of as being asleep. Again and again in the account of the kings of Israel and Judah, we read that a certain king *"slept with his fathers,"* i.e., he died. The wicked are said to *"sleep a perpetual sleep and not wake"* (Jer. 51:57).

When Jesus received word that Lazarus had died, he told His disciples, *"Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up."* The disciples thought that Jesus referred to natural sleep, and replied, *"Lord, if he sleeps he will get well."* Then Jesus clarified His statement about Lazarus and said to them plainly, *"Lazarus is dead"* (John 11:11-14).

2: There is no consciousness in death. The idea that the soul is an entity in itself that separates from the body at death and goes immediately to heaven is not found in the Bible. Actually, the idea came from ancient Greece, from the philosophers Plato and Socrates, and into the Christian church by first century converts who had been educated in the Greek world. Even though it is almost universally accepted, there is no Biblical support for the idea that the soul, spirit, or personality survives the death of the body. The words translated "soul" or "spirit"

in the Bible are not once described as immortal or undying. When the body's vital functions cease, the whole person (called "soul") dies.

The Bible uses the presence of breath to distinguish the living, animate body from one that is not living. James says the *"body without the spirit"* (breath) is *"dead"* (James 2:26). Job spoke of himself as alive when *"my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils"* (Job 27:3). He said also, *"the spirit of God hath made me, the breath of the Almighty gives me life"* (Job 33:4). The breath is not an entity that lives apart from the body. It is the result of the breathing process of the functioning body. No where does the Bible state that the breath is a living, conscious entity on its own. The Hebrew word translated *"soul"* is *nephesh* and means *"a breathing creature"* (SHG).

Job describes our dependence on God for the animating breath of life: *"If He [God] should set His heart on it, if He should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust"* (Job 34:14–15). This is precisely what Ecclesiastes says happens when we die: *"Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it"* (Eccl. 12:7). The same is true for animals; in fact, the Bible says that we—animals and man—have all *"one breath; man has no advantage over animals"* (Eccl. 3:19).

(For further discussion on this subject, see our booklet, *After Death, What?*)

The resurrection is necessary because the majority of the people who have served God during the last six thousand years have died. Before they can be rewarded for their life work, they must be judged to determine their worthiness. For *"we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad"* (2 Cor. 5:10). And before they can be judged they must resurrected. Paul wrote to Timothy about the purpose of this resurrection, that Christ would be coming to *"judge the living and the dead at His appearing"* (2 Tim. 4:1).

But the sleep of death is not a sleep from which one can awake apart from the power of God. Writing about the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul spoke of believers who had died as *"sleeping,"* then said that if there be no resurrection of the dead—if Christ has not been resurrected—then *"those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished."* Then he added, *"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable"* (1 Cor. 15: 18–19). But thanks be to God, Christ has risen from the dead, *"and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."* Because of Jesus' resurrection, all believers have hope of a resurrection.

Now let us look at your question. The saints are said to be *"asleep in Jesus."* And *"we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."* Bring them from where? From the dead (1 Thess. 4:14).

Paul has not said anything about the sleeping saints being up in heaven. He is speaking of the fact that God brought Jesus back from the dead, and He will do the same for all who *"sleep in Jesus."*

All hope of future life depends on a resurrection. Without a resurrection, those who have fallen asleep in Christ *"are perished"* and are without hope (1 Cor. 15:18).

The resurrection is at the heart of all Christian teaching. This is Paul's point in 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17, that believers who have died will be at no disadvantage because they will be restored to the level of the living, so that together with the living they can meet the Lord in the air.

Even Jesus could not bring Himself back from the state of death. The Bible states very definitely that God raised Jesus from the dead (see Acts 2:24; 3:26; 13:33; 1 Cor. 15:15; 1 Pet. 1:21; Acts 3:15; 4:10; 10:40; 13:30,37). Paul made the same statement in 1 Corinthians 6:14, that *"God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power."* He said it again in 2 Corinthians 4:14, *"Knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you."*

The resurrection is the sustaining hope of every serious believer. A free paraphrase of Paul's thought in 1 Thessalonians 4:14 might read something like this: If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, we can believe also that God will bring back to life along with Jesus those who sleep in Jesus.

◆ WHY SACRIFICES?

Q: "Why does God want sacrifices? Why did He need animal sacrifices?"

Let us first think about the meaning of the word sacrifice. A sacrifice is the forfeiting of something highly valued. It is the act of giving up something for less than its presumed value. It is also the act of offering something of value in homage or worship to God. Many times in the Old Testament God's people offered a sacrifice as an act of worship or homage to God. By giving up something of value, they declared their loyalty to God. They were openly declaring their faith by an act of worship that had cost to them personally.

Beyond the voluntary act of worship, God at times commanded specific sacrifices. The outstanding example is that of Abraham who was commanded to offer his son Isaac as burnt offering to certify his absolute faith in God and his willingness to obey Him, whatever the cost. It was a supreme test, but Abraham's faith did not falter. God had said, *"Take now your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering..."* (Gen. 22:2). Abraham did exactly as he was commanded, but just as Abraham *"stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son... the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!...do not lay*

your hand on the lad or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” (Gen. 22:10–12). As a result of Abraham’s obedience, Abraham became the father of all who believe (Rom. 4:17), and God renewed the promise He had made to him, that in blessing *“I will bless you and I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and the sand which is on the sea shore... because you have obeyed my voice”* (Gen 22: 16–18).

Why did God ask this sacrifice from Abraham? It was a test of his faith and his loyalty (see Heb.11:17–19).

The Bible records many other sacrifices, such as those offered by Isaac and Jacob and others (see Gen. 4:3–4; Gen 26:25; 31:54; Judges 6:26; Judges 13:19).

Why did God want these sacrifices? Often it was in obedience to His command. It was also a common act of worship, of paying homage to God and showing the value they placed on their faith in Him.

From another angle, God does not ask sacrifice from us because He needs it, but because we need to give it. The apostle Paul, speaking to Athenians who had no knowledge of the true God, spoke to them about our Creator, saying, *“God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things”* (Acts 17:24–25). God gives us everything we have—certainly He does not need anything from us (see Ps. 50:14). But we need to worship Him, to serve Him, to show our devotion and loyalty, and to do this we must give up something that belongs to us, even if it is only our own way. God wants our obedience to His law, and that is sacrifice (Isa. 66:2).

The Psalmist gives a comprehensive answer to the “why” of sacrifice by defining it: *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart— these, O God, You will not despise”* (Psalm 51:17). ♦



Zacchaeus

*Zacchaeus was a little man
Who didn't stand very high,
So he climbed a nearby sycamore tree
When Jesus was passing by.*

*He didn't think that Jesus knew
That he was in the tree,
But Jesus knew and said to him,
“Come down, and dine with Me.”*

*One look from Jesus and Zacchaeus vowed
He'd give half his goods to the poor,
And if he'd defrauded any man
He would fourfold restore.*

*I wonder if when Jesus comes
One look from Him will make
Us wish that we had never sinned
As we stand to hear our fate!*

*Get ready now, my friend, right now,
He will be knocking soon
He said it could be midnight,
At cock's crow, or at noon.*

*To welcome Him get ready!
Your sinful ways forsake,
Oh, change your life like Zacchaeus did
Before it is too late.*

—MELVA WALTON

AWESOME DESIGNS

"Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God!" - Job 37:14

Seeds to Go and Grow!

All summer long, plants everywhere have been fulfilling one of their most important functions, that of making seeds. Some plants produce only a few seeds and others produce thousands. I am sure you have marveled at the wide variety of seeds to be found. Some seeds are encased within fruit, some have pods, some have wings and others have burrs or long sticky hairs on them. Some orchid seeds are as fine as dust with about one million seeds per gram. A single Coco de mer, the largest seed known, may weigh as much as 50 pounds. The variety is astounding. When God created each unique plant He created them to make their own unique type of seed as well. Every plant's seeds are best suited to be distributed and to grow in the areas that are best for that plant. Seeds are essential to the continuation of most plant species. They are also an essential food source for many animals, including humans.

When we look closer, we see that every seed contains within itself the potential of another plant like or similar to its parent plant. What an awesome design in every seed!

A seed is a small embryonic plant with a food source enclosed in a seed coat. Once the plant's flowers have been pollinated, the fertilized ovule within the flower begins to grow. Most of the seed's bulk is actually the food supply for the newly germinated plant while it is establishing its first roots. The seed coat, which protects the embryo from injury and from drying out, may also have on its surface the means for the seed's distribution.

Can we even imagine the wonderful provisions of the Great Creator for the survival of an infinite number of plants?



JOHN MCCOIGAN, ALASKA FIRE SERVICE

It is awesome how the **knobcone pine seeds** are saved even while the parent tree is burning up. The knobcone's ripe seeds are sealed inside very tough cones that are released after a fire. As the tree burns to ashes, the cones are freed and explode like popcorn, scattering their seeds to soon germinate in the fertile ashes.



DAVID BLUMENFELD

Imagine life in a seed surviving 2000 years! (above) A **Judean date palm** sprouted from a seed found in an excavation at Masada in 1973. The **date seeds** were left untouched in a drawer until November 2005 when one was planted and—amazingly—germinated.



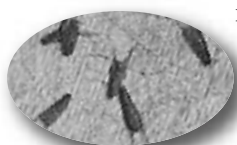
The wind aids in scattering the wonderfully designed **dandelion seed** hanging from its parachute.

God designed each seed to protect the tiny life within it so that when conditions are right the young seedling could grow and flourish in its environment.

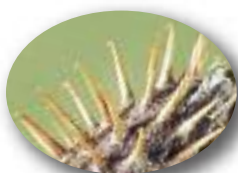
Seeds are distributed in many different ways. How the seed cases are formed often determines how the seed is distributed. Seeds like the maple and the ash have wings. The dandelion, milkweed and cottonwood have delicate “parachutes” that make it possible for the seeds to be carried from the parent plant by the wind. When fruits are eaten by animals, the whole seeds that pass through the animal are deposited far from the parent plant. Nuts and acorns are buried by squirrels, chipmunks and other animals and later germinate far from their source. Other seeds are transported by moving water. Cockle burrs, stick tights and



When the **witch hazel seeds** are mature, the seed case contracts, propelling their seeds outward with great force.



These seeds have tiny barbs and are dispersed by catching a “ride” on clothing or on animal fur.



many grass seeds are equipped with little hooks or barbs that cling to the fur or clothing of those brushing against them. Some seeds are distributed by mechanical means designed into the seed cases. The mature seed pods of the Touch-Me-Not will burst open at the slightest touch and fling their seeds far and wide. The fruit of the squirting cucumber releases its seeds in a powerful jet of liquid. Such unique designs don’t just happen or evolve. Behind each of these designs is the Almighty Creator.

Another amazing wonder of seeds is germination. Why do some seeds germinate readily and others lie dormant for years? A few years ago, while excavating Herod the Great’s palace in Masada, a Judean date palm seed was found and recovered. This seed was carbon-14-dated to verify that it came from that time period. In 2005, after nearly two thousand years, this seed sprouted and is now growing! There are other reports of ancient seeds, such as a Chinese lotus seed and wheat from a pharaoh’s tomb, that have sprouted. Seeds may live for centuries in a dormant state until conditions are right, then sprout. Just imagine the vitality in such seeds to remain alive for all those years! Life—the patent that only our Almighty Creator holds.

Germination

What does it usually take for a seed to germinate and start to grow?

1) Moisture. All seeds require water to penetrate the seed coat and swell the tissues. The swelling cracks the seed coat, activates hydrolytic enzymes that break down the stored food resources, and allows the seedling to germinate and grow until it reaches the light.

2) Oxygen is needed for the seedling’s metabolism until it can start photosynthesis of its own.

3) Proper temperature.

Temperature also affects seed germination. Most seeds germinate at the temperature of their environment, but there are some that must freeze before dormancy can be broken. And—can you believe this—some seeds must be exposed to the heat of a forest fire before they will germinate!

4) Light. Some seeds need light to germinate; others require darkness.

5) Abrasion. The seed coats on some seeds are so hard that water cannot penetrate unless the coat is first scarified, or scratched. This may happen when the seeds are tumbled along a sandy streambed during a rainstorm. It may also happen by the acid in an animal’s stomach as they pass through.

Seeds are indeed marvelous and fascinating. What they are and what they require is just too complex to have happened by the chance of evolution. Actually, wouldn’t it be a far greater wonder if the intricacies in each seed evolved wholly by chance, rather than by the design of an Almighty, All-wise God? How can we begin to comprehend the wonder and awesomeness of over 550,000 species of living organisms!

Only the Almighty Creator, the God of the Bible, could package the miracle of life in each seed with the potential required to produce a plant like the parent. ♦



The **American lotus’s** remarkable seeds are able to germinate after a century or more.

However, the longevity record belongs to an **Arctic lupine**. According to reports, seeds frozen in a northern lemming burrow some 10,000 years ago were washed out recently in a mining operation. Most amazingly, some of them sprouted and actually grew into healthy plants.

THE SMALLEST SEED

One of nature’s wonders is a certain **orchid’s** dust-like seeds—so tiny that a single pod may contain millions. (One seed weighs about 1/35,000,000 of an ounce.) Light enough to blow for hundreds of miles on the wind, they don’t have the stored food customary in other seeds. To germinate they must have the aid of special fungi that provide necessary nutriment.

What a marvelously delicate partnership—one only the Master Mind could make work!

THE LARGEST SEED



Enormous! The seed of the **coco-de-mer palm** takes the prize for being the biggest seed in the plant kingdom. It can measure 15–20 inches in diameter and weighs 33–66 pounds!

The fruit requires 6–7 years to mature and a further two years to germinate.

Sources: <http://en.wikipedia.org>
<http://www.willgoto.com/1/143631/liens.aspx>
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CONSIDER THE AFFLICTED

One afternoon, when the Kirkwoods had just parked their car in a side street Lilly spotted a strange appearing man shuffling awkwardly down the sidewalk. "Look!" she said, "Isn't he funny."

In a second, two other Kirkwood children were staring at the man. Bradley snickered, "He looks like a scarecrow." Millie laughed out loud as she watched the man's arms shake and wiggle about. Instead of walking straight, he wobbled, and his face twisted as though he were trying to make faces.

Mr. Kirkwood suddenly turned to face Bradley and Millie, and he said sternly, "Hush! Both of you!" His face was red and his voice firm as he continued. "It is not kind to laugh at that poor man. Think how you would feel if you had to be like that and others laughed at you?"

The giggling and snickering in the back seat stopped immediately. One look at Dad was enough to tell them that he meant what he said, and that what they were doing was very wrong.

Mother spoke reprovably to Bradley and Millie: "We can be very thankful that no one in our family is afflicted like that!"

"Mom, what does 'afflicted' mean?" asked Millie, very sober.

"You are afflicted if you have something that hurts, or if you are sick in some way, and can't move or act like most people. That man is afflicted because he can't make his hands or his feet or his face do what he wants them

to do. He can't help it. They call that condition 'spastic', or he may have an affliction known as 'cerebral palsy.' You or I could have something like that too, and we would be just like that man."

"Yes, thank God we don't."

Dad continued: "I remember when I was a boy there was a boy who lived not far from us, and he was a spastic. His throat muscles didn't work well, so it was very hard for him to speak. Only a few people could understand him, and he would thrash his arms around because he couldn't help it. He walked a little like this man does, and other children in the town would come up behind him and make fun of him, and throw snowballs at him in the winter. They thought they were just being funny, but they were really being mean."

"Just because this boy couldn't talk like the rest of us, they said he was stupid. They would even talk about him right in front of him, as though he didn't have sense enough to know that they were saying unkind things about him."

"He couldn't play with the other boys, so he was always alone. I'm sure he felt very lonely, and many times his feelings were hurt because the other children didn't know any better than to laugh at him. He suffered a great deal because even grown-up people, even church people, didn't always show kindness to him."

"Because he didn't have many friends, and because he was exceptionally intelligent, he spent a lot of time reading about history, and geography, and geology. He started a stamp collection, and became very interested in rocks and stones. Even though it wasn't easy for him to get around, he would go long distances on his hands and knees, crawling in the hills and ravines and studying the rocks and soil formations."

"After some years, this boy, whom the neighbors thought was stupid, won

a scholarship in geology from a large university in the west. Now he has his doctor's degree, and a very good job, and has written text books that are being used in colleges."

Mother couldn't remain quiet any longer. "Children, it is wrong to laugh at or make fun of *any* person, either to their face or behind their backs. But we should be especially kind to someone who is afflicted, like this man you saw today. They aren't that way because they want to be, or because they chose to be, and they don't want to be laughed at anymore than you would want to be. Always remember that no matter how a person may look or act, he has feelings just like you do."

"There's a verse in the Bible," added Dad, "that says it really well, and it is a verse that all of you children know. It's by Jesus Himself, and it's one of the beatitudes. Can anyone guess which beatitude it is?"

All was quiet for a moment, as the children looked at each other, and tried to recall the different beatitudes.

"Is it the one about being pure?" asked Bradley cautiously.

"No, Bradley, that isn't the one I was thinking of. However, if we are pure, we will certainly have this quality too. But I was thinking of another one."

Millie spoke now. "I think I know, Dad," she said with more confidence. "It's the one about mercy. You said that having mercy was having feeling for other people, like we would want them to feel for us. So Jesus said, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.'"

"That's it exactly," said Dad. "If we were in that situation, we would want mercy from others, so we need to give that same mercy to others, or Jesus will not have any mercy for us."

"I have an idea," Dad continued. "Let's try to think of some ways that we can help such persons, without making them feel that they are odd or queer. Then we won't be tempted to make fun of them." ♦



GRUMBLE WEEDS

It was a warm fall afternoon, and Mama, Daddy, and Gennie were pulling weeds in the flower beds around their house. The vote had been two to one, with Gennie voting against the whole thing. Mama and Daddy seemed actually to be happy, as they talked about the privilege of doing things together, and how nice it was to make the place look pretty. But pulling weeds wasn't Gennie's idea of a good time. She leaned on the fence feeling most unhappy, until Daddy told her she was to come and help. Slowly Gennie sauntered toward the forsythia bush, feeling more sorry for herself at each step.

"Why do weeds grow in September?" she grumbled as she started by the forsythia bush.

Then Gennie moved near a clump of iris, and grumbled that the weeds looked nicer than the iris. "We should pull up these ugly old iris plants, and let the nice green weeds grow," she muttered.

Near the pansy bed, Gennie grumbled again. It was too hard to get between the little plants. "Why don't these plants grow bigger? Then they would choke out the weeds," she complained again.

Then there were weeds around the roses, and Gennie grumbled about the thorns. "Ouch! Ouch! Ugly old rose bushes! Who wants such things!" she grumbled. "At least these nice green weeds don't have thorns on them."

When she was pulling weeds near the lilac bush, Gennie grumbled about how hot it was. "The sun is just too hot for us to be doing this hard work," she murmured. "When I die of a sunstroke, someone will pick all these old flowers and put them on me. Then they'll be sorry I worked so hard."

Daddy almost laughed out loud at that one. But he didn't, because he was trying to think how he could teach Gennie a lesson. Gennie's grumbling was getting worse all the time.

"Wonder what she will grumble about next?" whispered Daddy to Mama.

He didn't have to wait long to find out. By this time, Gennie was pulling weeds around the chrysanthemums. "My time is worth far too much to be out here pulling these old weeds," Gennie grumbled. "Think of all the *constructive* things I could be doing!"

Daddy quietly left his weeding and went over to the forsythia bush where Gennie had started. Then he walked from

*Do all things without
grumbling and arguing.*

—Philippians 2:14

place to place where Gennie had weeded, looking carefully, but saying nothing.

Gennie stopped weeding to see what Daddy was doing. Each time she heard him softly say, "Hmmm," Gennie grew more and more curious.

"Did I miss a lot of weeds?" Gennie asked at last.

"Well, let's say you planted a lot of weeds," said Daddy. "And I am thankful for the weeds you pulled. But it is these other weeds that concern me."

"Others?" asked Gennie, coming over to where Daddy was standing.

"I don't see any others," said Gennie. "Where are they? What do they look like?"

"They look different, but they're really weeds. Bad weeds—even poisonous. They're called *grumble weeds!*" said Daddy. "Every time you pulled a healthy green weed, you planted an ugly old grumble weed."

"But I don't see any, Daddy," said Gennie.

"You won't see them," said Daddy, "unless you *learn* to see them. But you planted them, and they are growing. And they will keep growing until you pull them up." Gennie looked at Daddy. She was even more perplexed.

"Let's go over to the forsythia bush, and I will show you what I mean. Right there is a grumble weed! It's the 'Why do weeds grow in September?' Rather ugly, don't you think?"

Gennie looked a little ashamed. "Well I really don't see why weeds have to grow in September," she said.

"Neither do I," said Daddy. "But God allows them to grow in September, so we just have to pull them up if we are going to have a nice flower bed."

Daddy moved along the flower row to where the iris were planted. "Now let's see what this old grumble weed is by the iris. Oh yes, this is the 'We should pull up these ugly old iris plants and let the nice green weeds grow' grumble weed."

"Well, the iris aren't very pretty now," Gennie apologized.

"But they certainly were this spring," said Daddy. "Remember the pretty bouquet you took to Sunday School?" Gennie didn't say anything, but she looked sheepish. Gennie knew Daddy was right.

Over by the pansies he stopped again. "Here is another grumble weed, the 'Why don't these plants grow bigger' kind."

Daddy went over to the roses. "We have another grumble weed here. Oh, yes, it is the 'nice green weeds don't have thorns' grumble weed."

Gennie could hardly stand it. Daddy hadn't missed anything she had been saying, and now he was repeating it all back to her. She had thought her grumble weeds quite nice when she had been planting them. But now, as Daddy reminded her of them one by one, they seemed ugly. Not at all like the nice, lovely flowers.

"Now here by the lilac bush we have a giant grumble weed," said Daddy. "I know it's one you really enjoy. It's the 'nobody loves me anymore' variety, sometimes called the 'flowers for my funeral' type."

"Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, pleeeeeease stop!" Gennie shouted. "It sounds terrible when I hear you say these things."

"It must sound worse when the Lord hears these grumble weeds you've planted," said Daddy.

"The Lord?" said Gennie, looking surprised. "He heard, too? I'm so sorry. He doesn't like grumble weeds, does He?"

"No, He does not. Here is what He says about them," Daddy quoted a verse from the Bible found in Philippians 2:14: "*Do all things without grumbling and arguing.*"

"Well, if God doesn't like grumble weeds, then I shouldn't either, so I'd better start pulling them up," said Gennie emphatically.

She went back through the flower bed and pretended to pull out each grumble weed. "There, all the grumble weeds are gone now," said Gennie. "The flower beds look so much nicer without them. And it also looks nicer without the other weeds, too!" she added with a grin.

Gennie walked over to her Daddy and put her hand in his. "Daddy," she said earnestly, "I'll never, never plant any more grumble weeds—ever!" ♦

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS FROM PAGE 19

FROM THE BOOKS OF MOSES

1. The command to Noah to build the ark (Genesis 6:3–14)
2. Moses (Num. 10:35)
3. Israelites (Lev. 26:8, 46)
4. Moses (Num. 12:3)
5. Cain (Gen. 4:13)
6. Moses (Deut. 34:7)
7. Cain (Gen. 4:9)
8. Moses (Ex. 14:13–14)

QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS

1. "To them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth." (Ps. 60:4)
2. Enoch (Jude 1:14–15)
3. Claudius (Acts 18:2)
4. Jeremiah (Jer. 8:20)
5. David (Ps. 56:8)
6. Jeremiah (Jer. 8:22)
7. Ezekiel (Ezek. 18:4, 20)
8. Joshua (Josh. 1:1, 7)
9. Elisha (2 Kings 4:8, 26)

10. Hosea 4:17
11. Nehemiah (Neh. 6:11)
12. Joshua (Josh. 1:1, 8)
13. Nehemiah, Ezra and Levites (Neh. 8:8–9)
14. Gideon and his army (Judg. 8:4)
15. Hosea (Hos. 8:7)
16. David (2 Sam. 5:24–25; 1 Chron. 14:15)
17. Saul (1 Sam. 10:26–27)
18. About the city of Jerusalem (Ezek. 21:3, 27)
19. A broken spirit and a contrite heart (Ps. 51:17)
20. David (Ps. 72:3)
21. Jeremiah (Jer. 10:23)
22. Elisha (2 Kings 4:38, 40)

THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE

1. "his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name." (Psalms 100:4)
2. "thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms." (Psalms 95:2)


3. "all, making mention of you in our prayers." (1 Thess. 1:2)
4. "all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Eph. 5:20)
5. "for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever." (Ps. 136:1)
6. "thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." (Isa. 51:3)
7. "thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Phil. 4:6)
8. "abounding therein with thanksgiving." (Col. 2:7)
9. "with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2)
10. "thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High." (Ps. 50:14)
11. "thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works." (Ps. 26:7)
12. "sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing." (Ps. 107: 21–22)




Go to the Geese

When King Solomon wrote, “Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise” (Prov. 6:6), he was telling us to let the animal kingdom teach us spiritual lessons.


What can we learn if we “go to the geese”?

 *It is said that geese fly in a “V” formation because each bird in the string creates an “uplift” for the bird following, making it possible for the bird to travel 70% further than it could if it flew alone.*

We can apply this principle to our lives. Don’t we all need the “lifting power” of association with others? People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.


 *If a goose falls out of formation, it feels the drag and resistance of trying to fly alone, and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it.*

If we have as much sense as a goose we stay in formation with those headed where we want to go. We are willing to accept their help and give our help to others.

 *When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into the formation and*


another goose takes the lead. No one bird is always in the lead.

We need to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership. We do not need to always be the front runner. Sharing the lead, sharing the responsibilities is better for all of us. None of us is the “boss,” but we all need to be willing at times to accept our share of the responsibility, to buck the headwinds of criticism and help those who are following.


 *The geese in formation honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.*

Is our honking always encouraging to those who hear it? Where there is loving, Christ-like encouragement, there is peace and harmony, and production is greater. Everyone benefits. The power of encouragement (to stand by one’s core values and encourage the heart and core of others) is the quality of honking we seek.

Instead of criticizing, let us encourage each other—like the geese.

 *When a goose gets sick or wounded, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help and protect it. The geese will stay with the disabled goose until it is able to fly or dies, then they will launch out to join another formation or catch up with the flock.*

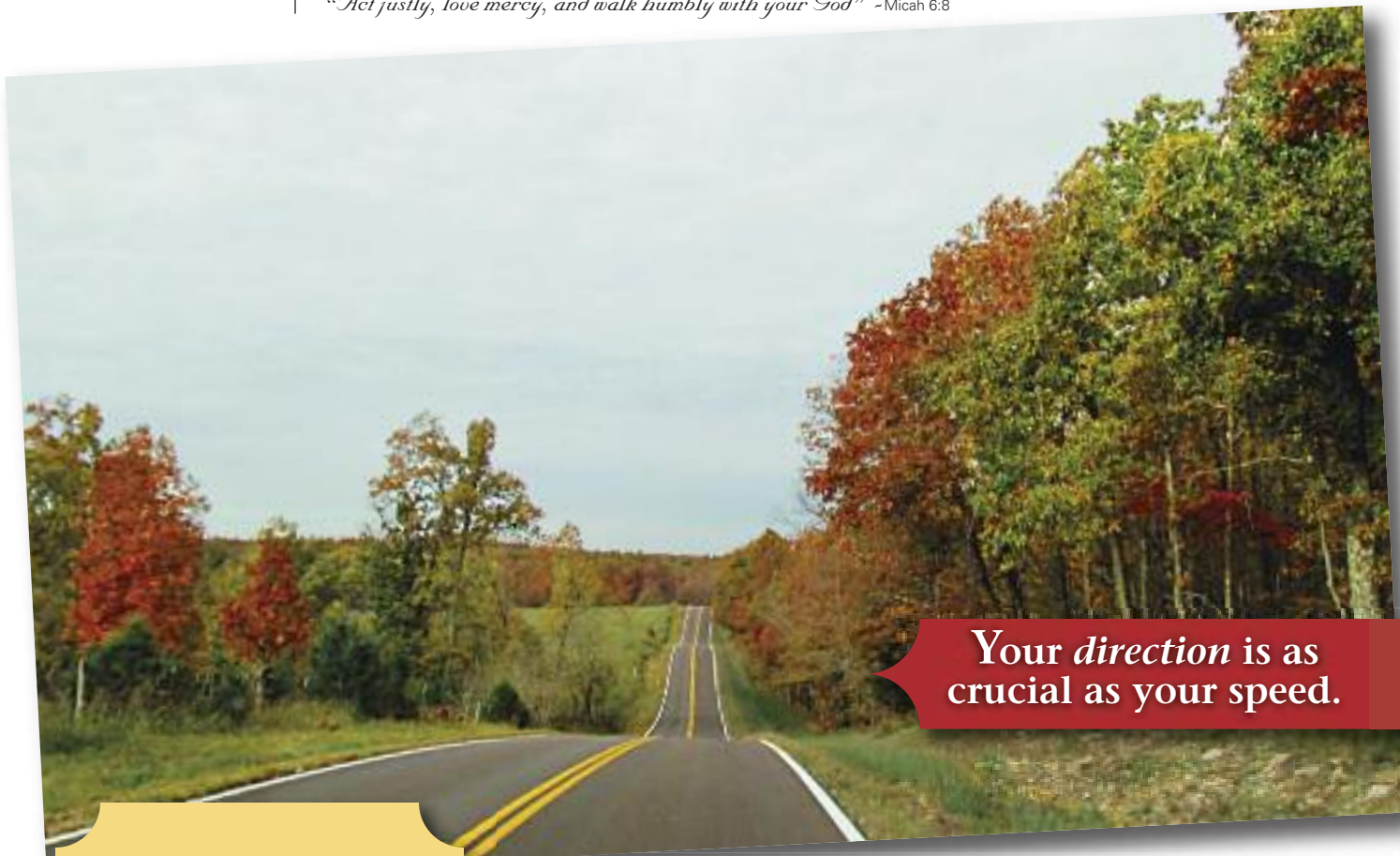
Are we as concerned with the problems of others as are the geese? Do we stand by each other in difficult times as well as when things are calm?

 *It is said that the most characteristic feature of the geese is their closely knit family life. Geese mate for life, and the little goslings are faithfully tended by both parents. The family migrates as a unit to and from the winter grounds, the young remaining with their parents until the beginning of the new breeding season.*

If we go to the geese, as Solomon told us to “go to the ant,” we learn that marriage is for life and that we must work together, teaching our children in the ways of Christ and doing everything in our power to keep the family unit intact.

The next time you look up and see a flock of geese flying in the “V” formation and hear their familiar honk, thank your Heavenly Father that in His wisdom He is teaching you to take lessons from these lowly creatures. Our Lord has told us: “Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?” (Matt. 6:26).

Yes, go to the geese, consider their ways and be wise. ♦



Your direction is as crucial as your speed.

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.
 –Proverbs 14:12

You had time enough in the past to do all the things that men want to do in the pagan world. Then you lived in license and debauchery, drunkenness, revelry,... Now, when you no longer plunge with them into all this reckless dissipation, they cannot understand it, and they vilify you accordingly.
 –1 Peter 4:3–4 NEB

WHERE'S THE RIGHT WAY?

When the crowd is running the wrong way, it's hard to be the odd one who runs the right way.

It is said that during a 10,000 meter cross-country race in Riverside, California, everyone thought one runner named Mike was heading the wrong way. He kept waving at the other 127 runners to follow him, but only 4 believed he had taken the right turn—the rest had missed it.

When he was asked about the reaction to his midcourse decision not to let the crowd determine his direction, Mike responded, “They thought it strange that I went the right way.”

First century pagans felt the same way about the Christians. The apostle Peter said, “*They think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you*” (1 Pet. 4:4). Many people today still feel that way about the followers of Jesus Christ, as though they are going in the wrong direction. But actually, the believers are headed for the victors' crown; the unbelievers are going the wrong way.

The lesson here is that it is dangerous to do what seems right in one's own eyes. “*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but...*” what about its end? Read Proverbs 14:12 to learn the answer.

At every turn, think about the end of the road. Where is it leading you? Are you going to like where it ends?

Keep on the right path, no matter how many are running the other way. ♦

***The direction you are headed determines your destination;
 It's better to be right than to be popular.***

THANKSGIVING

Our forefathers' desire to have a special day of thanksgiving is indeed a laudable quality. While they were poor in many respects they were rich in thanks. We are blessed to be the descendants of such robust, grateful, high-type people. We are the privileged children of a glorious heritage.

It is not what a person gets that makes him truly great—it is what he is thankful for. This shows the nobler side of his soul.

Thanks are justly due for favors and blessings bestowed. And the person who feels no compulsion to say "Thanks" for the courtesies, considerations and blessings given him, is he worthy to receive more?

Even a dog will wag his tail at the person who gives him a bone.

So don't expect happiness if you live below the level of a dog. Indeed, our degree of happiness depends much upon the depth of our gratitude. Have you ever noticed that a grateful heart is a joyful heart?

If life is sweet, give thanks; if bitter, give thanks—that you still have life, which gives you another chance.

*My God, I thank Thee Thou hast made
The earth so bright
So full of splendor and of joy,
Beauty and light;
So many glorious things are here,
Noble and right.*

—Adelaide A. Procter

***Don't worry about doing what is profitable,
prudent, or politically correct. Do what's right.***

*Act with courage, and may the Lord be with
those who do well. —2 Chron. 19:11 NIV*

The sooner I get started, the sooner I'll be done.

The best time to hold on is when you reach the place where most people would let go.

A habit is a shirt made of iron.

May each sun find something accomplished
by way of moral growth.

Don't begin talking until you have begun thinking.

There is no time lost in waiting if you are waiting on the Lord.

Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored.

There's no time like the present.

To be in step with God demands sensitivity.

FORGET AND REMEMBER

*Forget each kindness that you do
As soon as you have done it,*

*Forget the praise that falls on you
The moment you have won it;*

*Forget the slander that you hear
Before you can repeat it,*

*Forget each slight, each spite, each sneer,
Wherever you may meet it.*

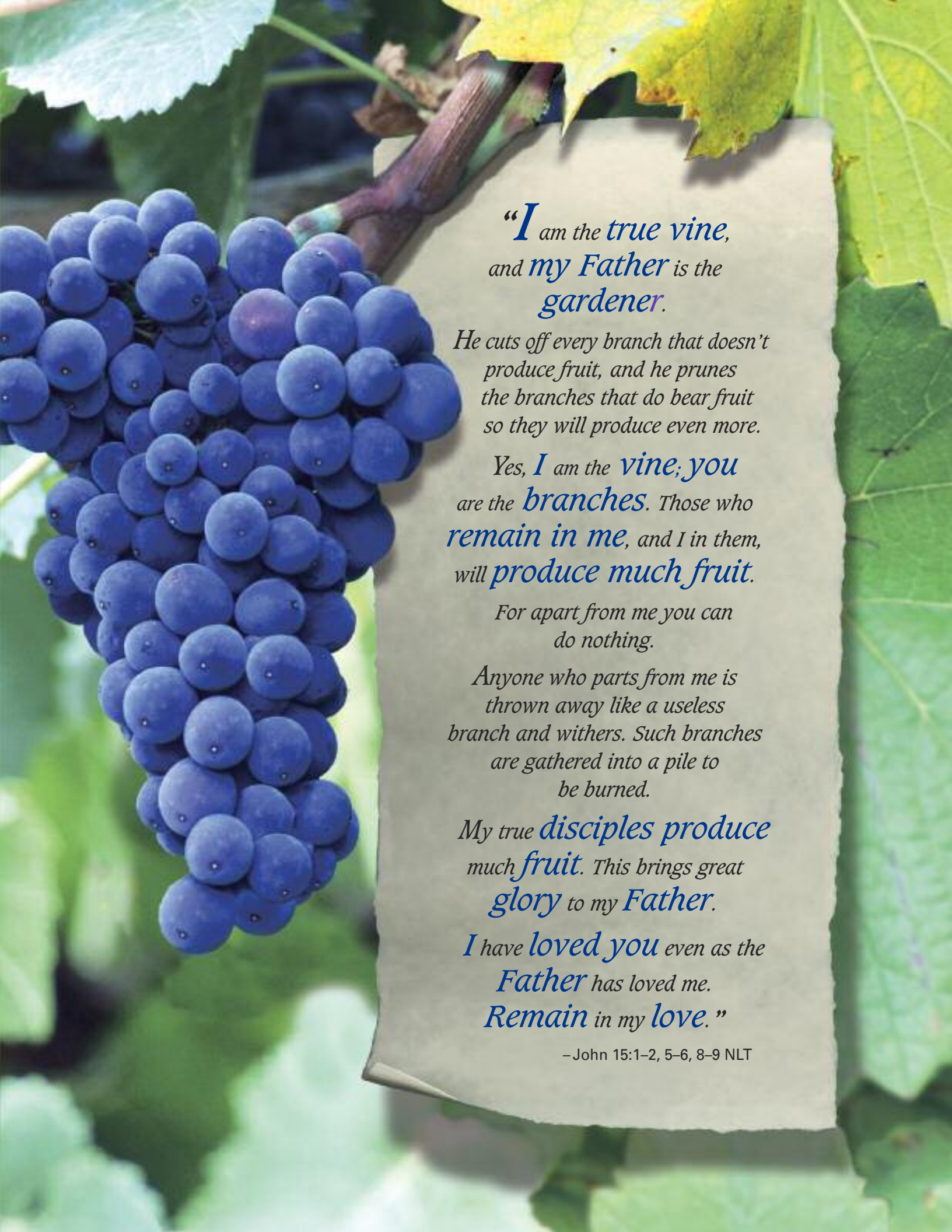
*Remember every kindness done
To you, whate'er its measure;*

*Remember praise by others won
And pass it on with pleasure;*

*Remember those who lend you aid
And be a grateful debtor;*

*Remember every promise made
And keep it to the letter.*

—Selected



*“I am the true vine,
and my Father is the
gardener.*

*He cuts off every branch that doesn't
produce fruit, and he prunes
the branches that do bear fruit
so they will produce even more.*

*Yes, I am the vine; you
are the branches. Those who
remain in me, and I in them,
will produce much fruit.*

*For apart from me you can
do nothing.*

*Anyone who parts from me is
thrown away like a useless
branch and withers. Such branches
are gathered into a pile to
be burned.*

*My true disciples produce
much fruit. This brings great
glory to my Father.*

*I have loved you even as the
Father has loved me.
Remain in my love.”*

— John 15:1–2, 5–6, 8–9 NLT