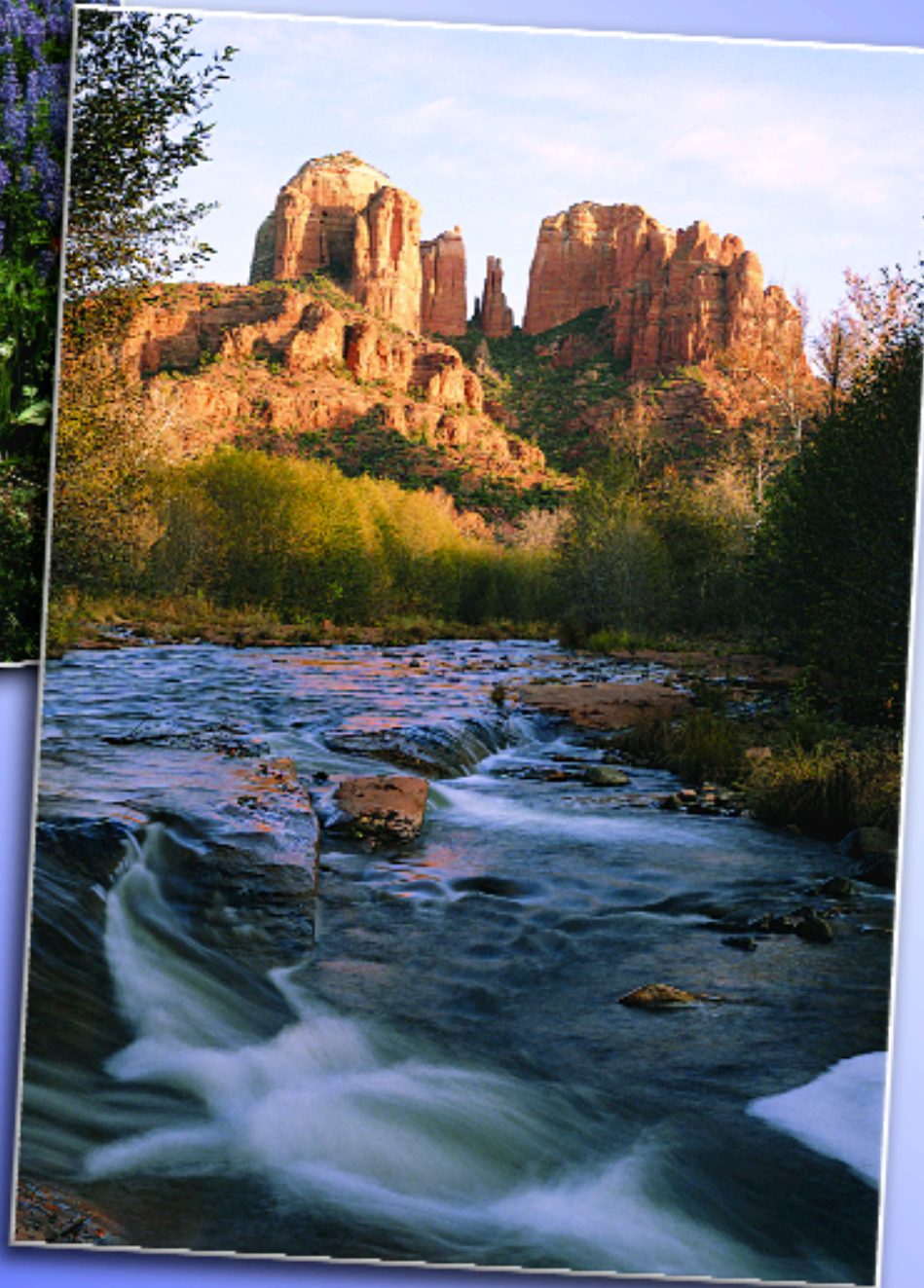


# Megiddo Message

July/August, 2004



O beautiful for pilgrim feet  
Whose stern impassion'd stress  
A thoroughfare for freedom beat  
Across the wilderness.  
America! America!  
God mend thine ev'ry flaw  
Confirm thy soul in self-control  
Thy liberty in law.



# Is Your Antivirus Software Up to Date?



RUTH E. SISSON

As I write this, I have just received warning of another new virus. No, not a summer flu virus but one that can get into your computer and disrupt operations. I should be safe, because my antivirus software is on duty. Plus I try to use caution and not open any e-mail I don't recognize. But there is always the possibility that the virus makers have a new scheme and that we users may be innocent victims.

But there are other viruses I am even more concerned about. These other viruses are just as insidious, spread rapidly, and have even greater potential for damage. They are the viruses that attack the heart—the heart that God sees (1 Sam. 16:7), the heart that is the center of your spiritual life, your emotions, your feelings and convictions; the heart from which Jesus said all evil proceeds (Mark 7:21–23). Viruses that attack the heart are very serious,

*Viruses that attack our heart—our inner life—are serious.*

because an attacking virus can quickly destroy the faith, the conviction, the integrity, the courage that one has taken many years to build. If our inner life dies, what do we have left? As Jesus said, we may have gained *"the whole world."* But if we lose our soul—if a virus kills our heart—what do we have? Nothing! (Mark 8:36).

How can we avoid these heart viruses? There is only one way, and that is to keep God's antivirus software up to date and running in our minds all the time. If we do not, those heart viruses will get in, and spread, and infect everything.

And our spiritual life will be dead.

What are these heart-viruses? They are the deadly attitudes that are all around us, even right in our own heart. A very common one is the negativity virus. Someone is disappointed or unhappy because of a loss, an injury, a gripe, or simply a failed expectation. He or she voices the complaint to the next person. That person adds a bit to the complaint and passes it on to the next. And so on and on the virus spreads—until someone (who is running God's antivirus program) blocks it by saying to the complainer, "What is the *reason* for this complaint? Has anyone checked out the problem? Has anyone tried

to solve it?" Even if the complaint is valid, there is no reason to spread the virus of negativity.

Discontent and negativity flourish in an environment of "me-ism." *My* rights were violated, *my* wishes were not considered, I didn't get the proper respect, *my* effort was wasted, and so on and on the complaints go. Each is a problem with "me." How does God's antivirus protection kill discontent? The disinfectant is called *selfless humility*. It is described in the words of the Apostle Paul, *"Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing"* (Phil. 2:3–4 NLT).

There are many other viruses that can do great damage. A little resentment, a little jealousy, a little feeling of hate, a little hurt feeling, a little uncleanness—it starts little, but it doesn't *stay* little. That is why we need God's antivirus program running all the time. His program has a very special ability. Properly used, it can surround the virus (the antivirus people call it "quarantine") rendering the virus powerless. It can surround the resentment, the jealousy, the irritability, the hurt with a spirit of prayerful gratitude (*"no matter what happens, always be thankful"* –1 Thess. 5:18 NLT). Then the virus is helpless! When the virus is quarantined, it can't do its deadly work. So instead of being spread, it dies.

You think the talk about viruses is grossly exaggerated? You think *your* heart is safe? The antivirus makers say that is precisely why viruses are so dangerous: because most people don't take them seriously. Because most people don't heed the warnings. Because they don't install and update antivirus software and firewalls. Because they still open suspicious e-mails and click on unknown attachments. Is God's experience with us any different?

Viruses that attack the heart are serious. And they are everywhere. Let's not neglect the warnings, because every one of us is vulnerable. I am. You are. We all are. Our only safety lies in taking every possible precaution against them, and keeping God's antivirus software up to date and running in our minds.

All the time. It is our only sure defense. ♦



# GOD Goes Before You

THREE GREAT PYRAMIDS OF GIZA

One of the warmest and most precious of the Divine promises is the promise of God's presence, His guidance, His leading. Wherever we are, wherever we go, whatever God asks us to do or to be, He goes before us. Did He not give His word: *"I will never leave you, nor forsake you"*? (Heb. 13:5).

It was so with Abraham. Look first at this man, comfortably settled in Ur of the Chaldees, where he expected to spend the rest of his days just as his family had done for generations. But one day there came a message from God, and the next time we see him, he and his family have relocated to Haran. And when the Lord speaks to him again, he says, *"I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans"* (Gen. 15:7).

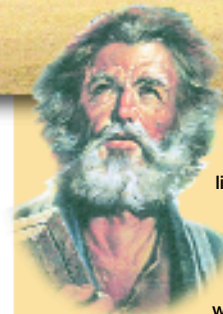
Abraham did not leave Ur alone. God *"brought"* him out. God was leading; God went before him.

The same was true of Jacob. From the day that Jacob left the security of his father's house and set his heart to serve God, everything in Jacob's life, no matter how small or ordinary, was overarched by the high purpose and providence of God. *"Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go,...I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you"* (Gen. 28:15). This was God's promise. God would go before him.

Joseph was equally confident of God's leading. Mistreated by his brothers and sold into slavery when a youth, it would not be strange if for a time he felt the barbs of bitterness in his heart. But as we read the rest of his story, we learn that Joseph was able to see all his life as under God's direction. And near the end, when his brothers, brought to penitence by the severity of famine, confessed their guilt, Joseph showed his great spiritual stature and his unflinching confidence in God when he said. *"God sent me before you to preserve life..."* (Gen. 45:5). Even though it meant hardship and suffering for him, Joseph could accept it because *"God meant it for good."* God went before.

## A Great Follower: Moses

In the book of Deuteronomy, we see another of God's great men following God's leading. Moses is now 120. At one time he had looked forward to leading his peo-



Built of massive multi-ton blocks of limestone, the Three Pyramids of Giza were already a thousand years old when Moses was in Egypt. Moses saw firsthand the futility of earthly glory. The largest of these three rises some 470 feet from a 705-foot wide base.

SPHINX WITH CHEFREN'S PYRAMID



This Sphinx, now weather and war beaten, was part of the Egypt Joseph knew. Some 60 feet high, it was carved from the limestone of a nearby quarry.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TODD BOLEN IN ISRAEL

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## MEGIDDO MEANS...

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

## WE BELIEVE...

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

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

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

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

## THE HERALD AND THE KING

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

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



continued from page 3

ple into the Promised Land, the “land flowing with milk and honey” (Ex. 3:8). But intervening events had changed the picture. God ruled otherwise. Now Moses would be allowed only to view that land of promise from the top of Mt. Pisgah (Mt. Nebo) (Deut. 3:27). He would have to die this side of Canaan.

But Moses is too great a man to be dispirited. He has seen so much of God’s leading and has grown so close to God that his confidence is unshaken. He will carry on triumphantly right to the end. And so he does everything in his power to encourage and support his successor Joshua and to assure both him and the people that God will be with them.

### A Time for Change

Moses addresses the people in these words: “I am one hundred and twenty years old today. I can no longer go out and come in. Also the Lord has said to me, ‘You shall not cross over this Jordan’” (Deut. 31:2). But this did not mean that they would go alone. Never! “The Lord your God Himself crosses over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua himself crosses over before you, just as the Lord has said....The Lord will give them over to you, that you may do to them according to every commandment which I have commanded you. Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you” (Deut. 31:3, 5–6).

Then Moses turns to address Joshua: “Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it” (Deut. 31:7). Reassurance follows assurance: “The Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed” (v. 8).

### Joshua Carries On...

The book of Joshua continues on this same high note of confidence in God. Joshua would have the honor of entering Canaan, along with the solemn responsibility of taking all the people with him.

There they are, sprawled out along the banks of the Jordan as far as the eye can see, a host of them, with their children, and their sheep, and their cattle, all waiting to cross. If you look closely, you see that all eyes are looking in one direction—toward Canaan. They are eager, expectant, almost impatient as they stand there. Waiting. Waiting for the next word of command.

But Joshua is not alone at the head of this great host. At his right stands the new high priest Eleazer, third son of Aaron, who as Joshua’s associate will offer steadfast counsel and spiritual insight to him. And close by is Caleb, that one hundred percent dedicated follower, to offer his support. And—most important of all—*God goes before.*

God speaks directly to His servant: “As I was with Moses,” He says, “so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go” (Josh. 1:5–7). God was guaranteeing to Joshua that he would survive the battles!

It is a message of stirring spiritual support, so simple, yet so startling: “It is God who shall go before you! It is God who shall fight for you! It is God who, little by lit-

**F**ollowing is an acknowledgment that another knows more about the route to take than we do.



**SINAI DESERT NEAR HAZEROTH**  
By leading the Israelites through desert area as seen in this photo of the Sinai Peninsula, God was teaching them to depend on Him for their needs.

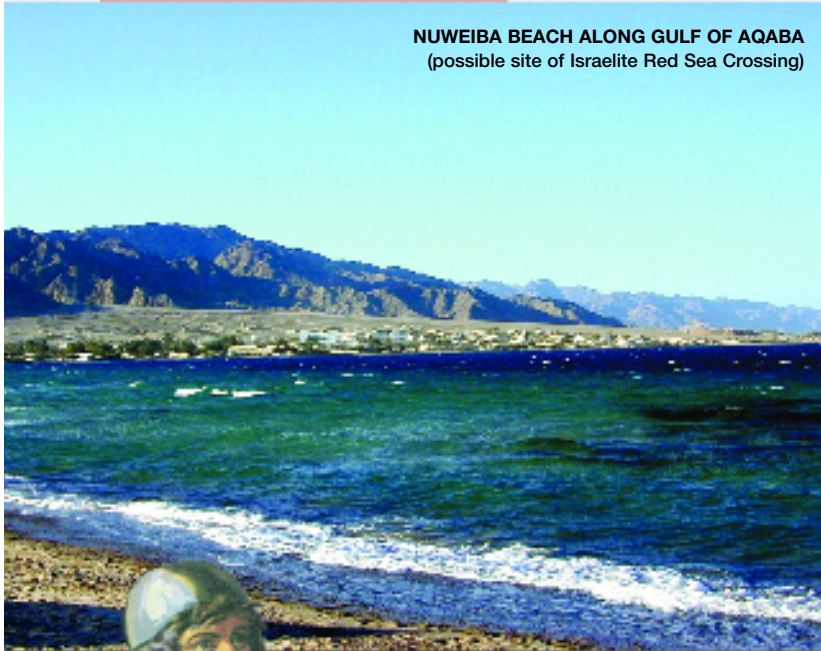
**A**ll things are less forbidding and less threatening when we are confident of the presence of God.



**SINAI DESERT NEAR HAZEROTH**  
“You gave them bread from heaven when they were hungry and water from the rock when they were thirsty.” —Neh. 9:15 NLT



**NUWEIBA BEACH ALONG GULF OF AQABA**  
(possible site of Israelite Red Sea Crossing)



Joshua was among the people who crossed the Red Sea. Forty years later he was one of the only two original adults to survive the entire forty years in the wilderness, and enter Canaan.

*"Then Moses went up to Mount Nebo, which is across from Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead as far as Dan." —Deut. 34:1 NKJV*

new achievements. It was God and he in close cooperation who would occupy Canaan. All would be possible not because Joshua was a great genius but because he was keeping in intimate communion with the Great God, whom he trusted implicitly.

### Just the Same Today

What of us, we who know and serve the same great God? Is it not ours to know and believe today that the God who lived in Jacob's day, or Moses' day, or Joshua's day, is *just the same today*? Is it not the assurance we need, that God goes before *us*, that we are not alone, that we can depend on Him to see us through, all the way to Canaan?

But it is no time for weaklings or faltering ones; it is a time for courage, a time for strength, a time to turn not to the right or to the left but go straight ahead in the work we have begun.

As we begin our new chapters, face new experiences, and enter unknown tomorrows, we find ourselves beset with a certain feeling of apprehension, uncertainty, wonderment. What are God's plans for us? What next? How long? When will the great

Change come? New chapters and new ventures always bring a bit of apprehension.

We need the assurance that has been given to God's people before us. We need the reminder that both God and Moses gave to Joshua. We need to be reminded that there is no cause for fear, because we are not alone: *"God goes before you."* All things are less forbidding and less threatening when we are confident of the presence of God.

### WE MUST CARRY ON...

God's aspirations for us are enormous, beyond all we can ask or imagine—not because we of ourselves are a great people, but because we have a great God, who delights to do great things with and for those who will cooperate with Him.

We never have to make our way  
*continued on page 20*

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TODD BOLEN IN ISRAEL

### DEAD SEA AND MOUNT NEBO

Looking east across the Salt (Dead) Sea toward Mount Nebo, the mountain from which God allowed Moses to view the land of promise before he died.

Four rivers, including the Jordan River, pour 7 million tons of water daily into the Dead Sea. The lowest point on earth—1300 feet below sea level, in Bible times it was most important as a barrier to travel.

Mount Nebo



Salt (Dead) Sea



## Caleb Seeks a Challenge:

# "Give Me This Mountain"

Read Numbers 14:1–10, 21–24

Canaan had been largely subdued. The coalitions of the Canaanite nations had been broken, as far as they were going to be. The time had arrived to distribute the territory among the war weary tribes so that they could settle down and enjoy their inheritance.

Who would be first to claim his inheritance in Canaan? Would it be the tribe of Reuben, or Ephraim, or Benjamin? No, it was not a tribe at all, but—strangely—an individual. The first claimant was Joshua's faithful colleague, Caleb, a man to whom God had promised a special inheritance.



### Caleb was a foreigner

Caleb was not even a full-blooded Israelite. Actually, he was a descendant of Esau's eldest son Eliphaz, who had joined the tribe of Judah by marrying a daughter of Hur. Caleb's father Jephunneh, was a Kenezite (Gen. 36:11).

The fact that Caleb was really a foreigner emphasizes the fact that God does not judge by one's nationality or gifts. Even though God was at this time working with Israel as His chosen nation, He wanted good material whatever its source. The Lord *"looks on the heart."* Caleb stands as one of the earliest faithful Gentiles in the Divine record.

Unlike most who received an inheritance in Canaan, Caleb's right to inheritance was not through simple lineal descent. His right to inheritance was from God, a special reward for special service. Caleb and Joshua had stood unwaveringly on the side of God and Moses in the face of the fiercest protests, even the threat of death. Then, when the people had had opportunity to show which side they were on, God had declared of the rebellious, hard-hearted host, *"not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times—not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it. But..."*

But what? Who? The next statement shows the justice of God. Never does He condemn the innocent with the guilty. He made an exception for His faithful ones. *"But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it"* (Num. 14:22–24 NIV).

The promise was brief—only a few words; but it was from the Lord. Caleb heard it. *"I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it."* Caleb heard

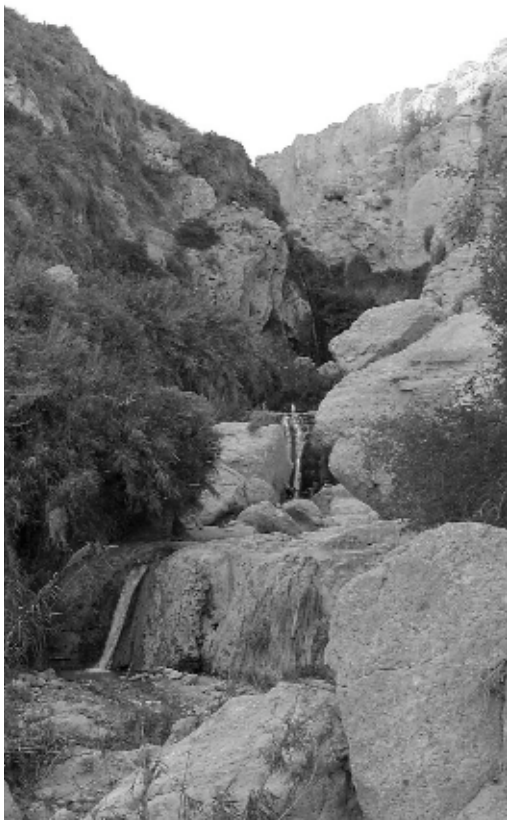
### REPHAIM VALLEY VIEWED FROM NORTH

The Rephaim Valley west of Jerusalem is part of the area Caleb asked for when he said, *"I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me. Now therefore, give me this mountain...."* —Josh. 14:11–12.

PHOTOS IN THIS ARTICLE COURTESY OF  
TODD BOLEN IN ISRAEL

*Are you thinking  
about retiring? Caleb  
was looking for new  
challenges at 85!*





#### WATERFALL AT EN GEDI

The largest oasis along the western shore of the Dead Sea, En Gedi was only a few miles east of Hebron. Its fresh water springs have allowed continuous habitation at the site since very early times.

#### "I FOLLOWED...WHOLEHEARTEDLY"

What an exalted statement: *"I followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly."* And what an assurance to us that complete obedience to God is possible, that we, too, can feel one day the thrill of victory. We hear it in Paul's statement, *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful."* And the words of Jesus: *"I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do."* And the words of the angel to Daniel: *"You are greatly beloved."*<sup>2</sup> Just so Caleb is able to say, *"I followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly."*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>2 Tim 4:7, <sup>2</sup> John 17:4, <sup>3</sup>Dan. 9:23, <sup>4</sup>Josh. 14:8, var. trans.

*Caleb learned a most valuable lesson: to trust God.*

it, and Caleb remembered it, through 40 years of wandering, 40 years of dwelling with the rebellious host, 40 years of delay because of a sin he did not commit. Many a lesser soul would have been bitter, ready to take God to task for making him waste the best years of his life suffering for a sin he did not commit. Where was the justice in it, or mercy, or kindness? But we hear not a word of complaint from Caleb. As the Lord said, *"My servant Caleb...has a different spirit"* (Num. 14:24), a spirit of meekness, a spirit of patience, a spirit of obedience, and genuine joy in the Lord. Caleb mastered the art of serving God patiently, perfectly, joyfully, even in the wilderness, even when compelled to live in the midst of a wicked and rebellious host.

Do we wonder, then, when the wilderness years are past and the land is conquered; do we wonder that Caleb is the first to step forward and request the inheritance he had been promised, the inheritance he had waited for through forty-five long years?

Closely he watches the conquest of the land winding down to a conclusion.

Then, when the time is right, through all the maze of people he makes his way straight to his old friend Joshua, where he spreads his request before Joshua and before the Lord. First he recites a bit of history, which both he and Joshua know only too well. Their minds go back some forty years to the day when Moses the servant of the Lord sent them from Kadesh-Barnea to spy out the land of Israel.

What seemed a simple assignment soon turned into a crisis—and a long-term blessing. For both Caleb and Joshua had stood the test.

And so Caleb tells Joshua: *"You know what the Lord said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh-Barnea about you and me. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh-Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, but my brothers who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt with fear. I, however, fol-*

*lowed the Lord my God wholeheartedly"* (Josh. 14:6–8 NIV).

There is no pride in these words, no self-conceit, only an honest stating of his complete obedience, complete devotion, complete integrity.

Caleb associates his receiving an inheritance directly with his total, faithful obedience. *"So on that day Moses swore to me, 'The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly'"* (v.9).

Just as God recognized Caleb's faithfulness, so now Caleb recognizes the faithfulness of God. God has kept His word. At the advanced age of 85, Caleb is still strong and vigorous, and He gives all credit to God. *"Now then, just as the Lord promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the desert. So here I am today, eighty-five years old! I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day"* (Josh. 14:10–12, NIV).

Was Caleb presumptuous in asking for the fulfillment of God's promise? Not at all. This is only what God would expect. If we show no interest in what God has offered us, no concern, no love or desire for His rewards, what gratitude is there in that? When we have met the requirements, God wants us to seek our reward.



#### An Inheritance!

Exactly what was Caleb's inheritance to be? Did he ask for the broad open plain? No, nothing easy attracted Caleb, nothing of the low country. He wanted a certain mountain area. Said Caleb, *"Give me this mountain"* (Josh. 14:12).

At the time Caleb made this request, *"this mountain"* was still the territory of the Anakims, the same giants that had frightened the ten spies forty years before (Num. 13:21–22). Even after five years of fighting in the land, they were still holding out, strong as ever. But Caleb wanted *"this mountain."* Were mighty giants there? His faith was in a God to whom the mightiest giant was no more threatening than dust. Caleb had no cause to fear. The God who was with him when they spied out the land was still his God



today and *still* able to overcome the enemy. Neither Caleb's faith or Caleb's God had weakened with the intervening years. He still possessed the strong spirit of "*Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it.*"

What was the area of the mountain? It was Hebron, probably the choicest spot in the land of Canaan. And to Caleb it had even more to offer, for Hebron was sacred soil. Here the patriarchs—his "true" family—had spent much of their lives. Here Abraham had built his first altar to the Lord. Beneath its oaks, he had pitched his tents, and its soil had been trod by the angels who visited those tents. Here Abraham and Sarah had heard those blessed words of promise from the angel: "*I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son*" (Gen. 18:14 NIV). Here Abraham had pleaded with the angel to spare the city of Sodom if ten righteous could be found there. Here Jacob had sojourned, and Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah lay buried.

No doubt about it, Caleb wanted *this mountain*—Hebron! He could not be content with the good when by paying the price he could have the *best*.

He was willing to pay the price, even if it involved a heavy conflict. For this was the land God had promised him as a reward for his integrity and faithfulness, and if God wanted him to have it, Caleb would have it! This was the land of which the Lord had said to Caleb, "*His descendants shall possess it*" (Num. 14:24).

All through his life, Caleb showed outstanding qualities of character.

The name Caleb means "all heart." His chief distinction lay in the fact that he never stopped growing. The passing of the years, instead of witnessing a gradual decline, only served to increase his stature and enhance his standing before God. His name is appropriately derived from a Hebrew word associated with the ideals of fidelity, obedience, and alertness—qualities in which he excelled.

Like Moses, Caleb's life divides into three defined periods. Until the age of 40 he was a slave in Egypt. Then, as a leader in his tribe, he was selected as one of twelve to explore Canaan. He spent a second 40 years in the desert, wandering with the children of Israel. During the third period of his life he set out to claim his inheritance. But all the way he was

Caleb's biography, though condensed in a few sentences, illustrates two exhilarating truths: first, that it is possible for life's greatest achievement to take place in advanced age; and second, that there is no retirement in God's service. At no stage of life can we say, "I have done all I need to do." As long as God gives us life and strength, we must keep using it.

following, obedient, wholehearted, for Caleb "*wholly followed the Lord.*"

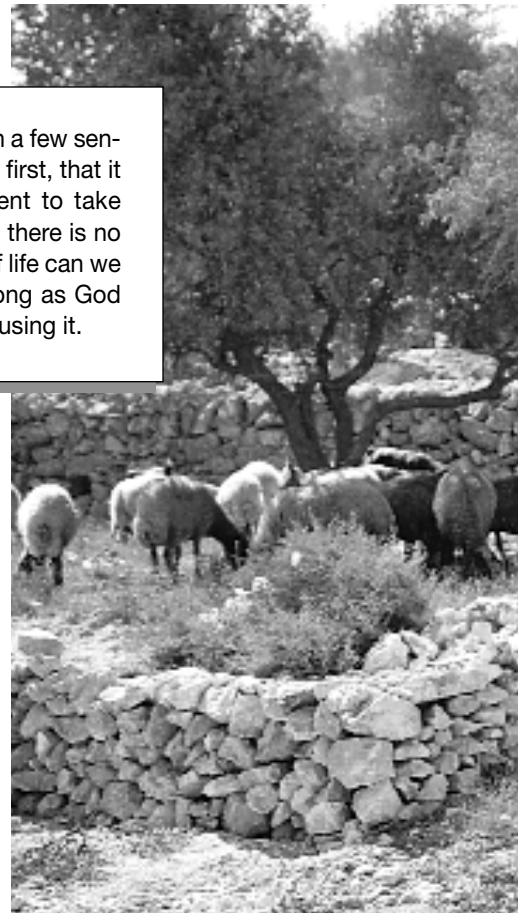
Caleb's early life is not recorded. The first we hear of him, he is among those selected to spy out the land of Canaan. But as soon as he is introduced, his character and conduct stand out as one wholly loyal to God. And qualities like these are not won overnight. Even as a slave in Egypt, Caleb must have been serving God. Even in the miseries of slavehood, he must have practiced the godly qualities of patience and faithful endurance. Even in slavery he could have learned to live close to God. So now, when Moses is looking for special service for God, Caleb is ready.

Of those selected to spy out the land the Lord said to Moses, "*Send men to explore the land of Canaan, the land I am giving to Israel. Send one leader from each of the twelve ancestral tribes*" (Num. 13:2 NLT). Every one a leader: that tells its own story. Leaders do not just happen. But neither are all of sterling character, as the testing of these soon revealed. It all depends on what has been happening behind the scenes, in the everyday tests of life. Of our Lord's 30 years of obscurity, only one incident is recorded, plus the simple fact that Jesus "*increased in wisdom and stature*" (Luke 2:52). But His subsequent years tell us all we need to know about His youth. He was consecrated to God.



#### Caleb in crises

How did Caleb stand up in crises? The very fact that he was selected to explore Canaan shows that he was a leader among his people. Yet, unlike



#### FLOCK OF SHEEP NEAR BETHLEHEM

Sheep are a common sight in the area just east of Bethlehem in Judah, also part of Caleb's inheritance.

Can't we take Caleb's request, "*Give me this mountain,*" as our watchword? As our days are passing by, what advances are we making toward the Canaan upon which we have set our hearts? What yet stands between us and a full and complete conquest? What mountain of sin is still hindering us? What mighty Anakim is still wielding authority over us? Is it pride, or bitterness, or self-confidence, or self-love? Is it impatience, or deceit, or envy or ill-will?

Let our earnest plea arise this very day: "*Lord, give me this mountain.*" Give me the strength, the courage, and the power to assail it, that I may slay the giants of sin and plant the flag of victory on its crest! I *must* yet stand victor over this mountain.





DATE PALM TREES NEAR DEAD SEA

the others chosen, he was never numbered among the murmurers, nor did he hanker for the lost delicacies of Egypt. His goal was the same, whether leading or following: to serve God wholeheartedly. He trusted his life to God—wholly—and allowed nothing to deflect him.

What qualities distinguished him?

**1: Caleb was a man of great moral courage.** Doubtless in his early years, his back had felt the sting of the merciless slavemaster's lash. But instead of growing hard and bitter under the mistreatment, Caleb used it to develop great moral courage—the kind he would need when he and Joshua would have to stand alone against the fury of the multitude and even of the other leaders of the tribes.

It takes a strong man or woman to stand alone. This is one of the most stringent tests of life, for who does not crave popularity? It is all too easy to remain silent or to compromise one's position in the presence of fierce opposition.

But Caleb and Joshua did not compromise. They stood firm and courageous in their attitude of faith, in opposition to the popular majority report of the ten spies, when *"the whole assembly talked about stoning them"* (Num. 14:10 NIV). They refused to be intimidated, or to do

**2: Caleb showed a robust and unwavering faith in God,** another quality which ranks high in the Divine scale of values, for *"Without faith it is impossible to please God"* (Heb. 11:6). His faith was the more remarkable because it grew and flourished amid the unbelieving and rebellious hosts. Caleb was not privileged to grow up and live among those of strong, stalwart faith. He had to be faithful in spite of his surroundings. How easily he could have rationalized that it just wasn't possible to be full of faith among people so unbelieving; or that it wasn't possible to be patient as a mistreated slave. But no excuses for Caleb! He realized that his life was *his* responsibility, and *his* opportunity. It was the only life he would have, and he would make the most *and the best* of it while he could, God helping him.

The magnificent blending of faith and courage that Caleb and Joshua displayed in standing against the popular majority report brought no acclaim from the people. Caleb and Joshua had seen all that the ten had seen. They saw clearly the power of the enemy and the magnitude of the task. Why the difference in their report? The ten matched the strength of the giants with their own grasshopper strength, and were discouraged; while Caleb and Joshua matched them beside the All-powerful, Almighty God. The ten gazed at the giants and wailed, "We can't!"—and true enough, they couldn't—while the two looked up to God and said, "Of course we can, because God is with us!"

Difficulties always dwindle in the presence of God's power. Were there giants in the land? They were bread for them, and as one writer has quaintly put it, "The bigger the giant, the bigger the loaf." Caleb and Joshua trusted a God infinitely greater than the giants.

Unbelief has a notoriously short memory. *"We should choose a leader,"* urged the ten, *"and go back to Egypt"* (Num. 14:4 NIV). How could they say it? Had they forgotten so soon the harsh taskmasters, and the bitter suffering from which they had been delivered? But for Caleb there was no going back, or even thinking back. He countered their fear and unbelief with his own confident statement of faith: *"Let us go up at once and possess the land, for we are well able to overcome it"* (Num. 13:30).

## THE TESTS OF MIDDLE LIFE

One may do well in youth. But what about the tests of middle life? Midlife has its own peculiar testings, both in physical and spiritual realms. They may not be so dramatic as those of youth, but some who have soared like rockets in youth have descended like burnt out sticks in middle age.

There are some obvious advantages when we reach this stage of life. Important life decisions have been made. Ideally, our circumstances are settled and somewhat easier. We have arrived at many of the answers to problems and questions we faced in earlier years.

But there are counterbalancing dangers; for often at this stage of life there develops a loss of fervor and a waning of personal zeal and devotion. A lukewarm sense of duty replaces ardent love. In the absence of the driving force of a worthy and absorbing purpose, life becomes insipid and anemic. We are tempted to ease up on our self-denials and self-disciplines.

It is all too easy to stop growing and striving at any age or stage of life, especially after we have achieved some of our Christian goals, after we have mastered some of our most unruly inclinations. It is all too easy to feel we have "arrived," and begin to relax. Let us all take warning and keep renewing our fervency, our zeal, our determination, our love. Let the path of our life be the path of the just one, shining brighter and brighter unto the perfect Day (Prov. 4:18).

violence to their convictions, even to save their lives. They were willing to hazard all for God.





### Caleb at Midlife

Caleb passed the tests of youth with flying colors, but how did he fare in the heavier, drawn out tests of middle life?

Someone has suggested that in middle life we need the resources of God more than ever before. How did Caleb draw on these resources?

Caleb *“wholly followed the Lord.”* Someone has said that the hardest part of the journey is the middle mile. There is the enthusiasm of the new undertaking which buoys one at the start, and the thrill of reaching the goal near the finish. But it is the middle mile, where you are a long way from the start and still a long way from the finish, that tests most stringently the mettle of the runner. It is in this middle mile that the true believer needs most that virtue of patient endurance, for it determines the end result.

Few have faced so hard and embittering a lot as Caleb. The sin and unbelief of his contemporaries might easily have doomed him to a life of frustration and disappointment for the 40 years that should have been the best part of his life. And could he not have complained, when the apparent reward of his early faith, courage and devotion was aimless trekking through a barren desert, when his powers were at their peak? Worse still, there were funerals almost daily!

By all normal standards, Caleb would have been justified in being resentful, despondent, and disagreeable. But none of this for Caleb. This stalwart man of God survived the long, sustained test and built his spiritual integrity on the very situations that would have ruined a lesser man. He was one of those rare souls who was not offended with God's way of dealing. Maybe he did not understand, but that did not matter. Caleb had learned that most valuable of all lessons: to trust God.

Then, too, there was the matter with Joshua. When Moses died, it was Joshua—not Caleb—who was chosen by God to be Israel's leader. The two had lived and worked together, shoulder to shoulder, for many years. Together they had shared the lessons of life, and grown because of them. Caleb might have been hurt, deeply hurt, and bitter at God's decision. Was not *he* just as good, and just as qualified as Joshua? Had he not been just as loyal and just as faithful? But

**A** living, working faith has power. It lifts us above the ephemeral and temporary, into the realm of the permanent and eternal. It corrects our perspective because it sees everything in the light of an eternal future. In such a light, even 40 years of desert wandering could be fruitful and fulfilling—because they were 40 years walking with God, 40 years biding God's time.

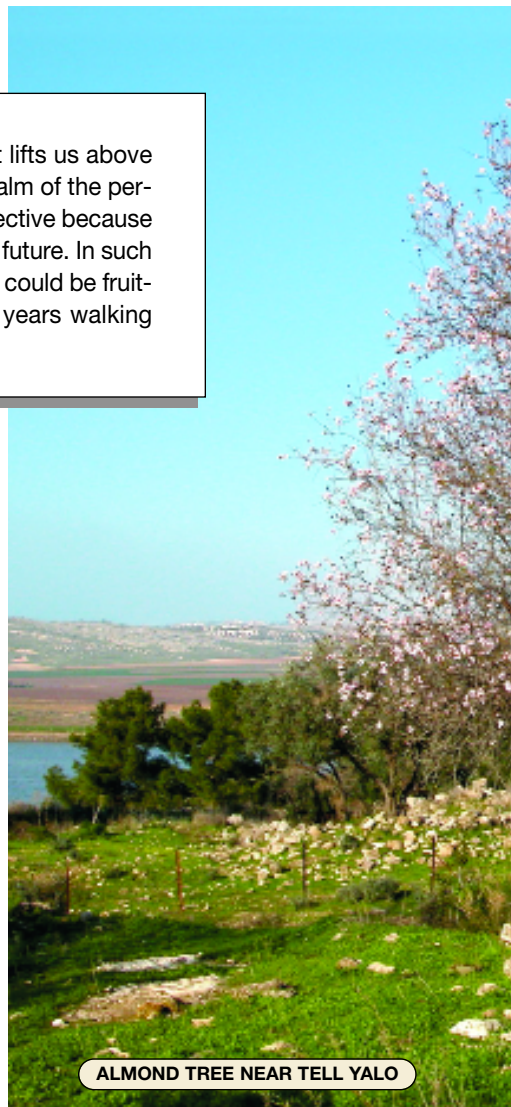
in this great man's heart we hear of neither jealousy of Joshua nor resentment against God. Perhaps He realized immediately that Joshua's higher call was not a reward but a duty, a stern duty. After all, who could want to be responsible for that complaining, unbelieving, hard-hearted host?



### Caleb in Mature Years

Caleb, who had soared with wings in his youth, now mastered the art of running without growing weary. But what about the next challenge, the adventures of old age? Could he continue to walk without fainting in old age?

No other Bible character presents such an inspiring and optimistic picture of one's mature years. The supreme chal-



ALMOND TREE NEAR TELL YALO

### PRAYER

**H**eavenly Father, we know that there are yet mountains in our lives to conquer. Help us to renew our steadfastness of purpose, our courage and our fortitude, to be Yours wholly, to do whatever You would have us do and not consult our fleshly instincts or give in to any assault of our lower nature. You give all that we need, if only we will work with You.

Father, we pray for a fresh supply of courage, and may we go forward with faith and not with fear. Remind us that we do not walk alone, that as surely as You were with Your people in the past, so surely You will be with us. We know You are leading; and all who stay on Your side and follow Your instructions will enter the Land of Promise! Amen.

lenge of his life came when he was 85 years old, the age when most are dreaming only of security and comfort. This hero of 40 is no less a hero at 85, demonstrating to all that advanced years need not mean spiritual deterioration.

William Barclay told of receiving a letter that concluded with, “Yours, 83 years old and still growing.” Such was the spirit of Caleb. To him, old age was but a continued pressing on to grander attainments, not slowly descending the

*F* **faith gives  
perspective to life.**



Do we shrink from the rigors of battle? As our years advance let us pick up the spirit of Caleb and attack our enemies with new energy. “The best is yet to be”—the best in spiritual attainment, the best in new heights of holiness, and sincere devotion to God.



**WATCHTOWER AT YAD HASHMONAH**  
Watchtowers were built in Bible times in vineyards and fields to protect the crops from thieves. See Matt. 21:33

### FOR US...

Let our conviction ring with the challenge of Caleb: “Give me this mountain.” But remember, with God’s gift comes also a conflict—and the strength and help we will need to overcome it. He does not leave us on our own. He fights for us. He goes before us.

Whatever our mountain, whatever is keeping us from enjoying the hundredfold blessings of Canaan even now and the surety of an eternal inheritance in the future, let us pray God for the strength to conquer, to subdue the enemies that assault us.

With God to help us, and the strength of our convictions, and brotherly comrades to help us, how can we fail?

God will give us this mountain in victory if we but let Him fight for us. The mountain can be conquered, if we face it honestly for what it is, and go forward in the strength of Jehovah. With God on our side, we cannot be defeated. With God on our side, we shall yet enjoy the fullest blessings of Canaan, even life for evermore!

mountain but ready to scale another peak; not senility, but adventure and a desire for new achievement. His life moved steadily forward, not to termination but to consummation.

Caleb’s strength came from the fact that all his life he was clinging to the promise of God. For 45 years Caleb waited patiently for the fulfillment of God’s promise to him through Moses. In his interview with Joshua at the partitioning of the land, five times he refers to the Lord’s promise. It was the one and only certainty in his future, the promise that had carried him through 40 weary desert years and guaranteed him a possession in the land of Canaan. The passing years had only strengthened his faith in God and sharpened his ardent spirit.



### Caleb Believed God

Caleb’s faith in God was nourished by yet another promise that had accompanied the promise of an inheritance: that his life would be prolonged until he reached the land of Canaan. This promise grew richer and dearer every day as he saw thousands and thousands of his generation dying in the wilderness. None of us have ever experienced anything like this. Being continually in the presence of death—and death for disobedience—would surely keep one very conscious of his personal accountability. Continued life was part of God’s promise to Caleb. God had said, “...Not one of you (the Israelite people who left Egypt) will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun” (Num. 14:30 NIV). In other words, Caleb and Joshua would come into Canaan. Each day of continued life thus became a reassurance to Caleb that God was being true to His word.

So Caleb trusted God.

And do we not have the same strong reasons to trust? Do we not serve the same God? Do we not have the same assurance that Caleb had, that God is leading us, that He is in full control, and that what He has promised He will fulfill?

The Apostle Paul did not have such physical youthfulness in his later years as did Caleb, for he describes himself in one of his letters as “Paul the aged,” at a time when he was probably not even 60 years old. All are not blessed with physical strength and health, but all *can* be strong in spirit. All can bind on their shoes of iron, ascend the mountain and rout the giants of sin. Even as we grow weaker in body we can grow stronger in heart and soul (2 Cor. 4:16).

And so Caleb makes his request. “Give me a mountain, that I may go out and conquer it.” Not an easy, fertile river flat, but a mountain that had held fearsome giants. Caleb asks for the most difficult assignment in the nation! His request revealed the caliber of the man.

The flame of Caleb’s courage had not died down, even in old age.

Caleb was the oldest man in all Israel at this time, because all others his age—except Joshua—had fallen in the desert. And none of the younger men had succeeded in expelling the enemy from the territory. But it is recorded that “from Hebron Caleb drove out the three Anakites, ... the descendants of Anak” (Josh. 15:14 NIV). Concerning other Israelites, we read the melancholy refrain, “They did not utterly drive them out....The Canaanites would dwell in the land....” How contrasting the record of Caleb.

What was Caleb’s secret? How did he succeed while the rest of his generation of Israelites failed? Seven words say it all: “I followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly” (Josh. 14:8). His undivided allegiance to God never wavered. There was no swerving from his direct course. “I followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly,” he could testify with a clear conscience.

“You have wholly followed the Lord,” Moses affirmed (Josh. 14:9). As leader of the nation, Moses had every opportunity to appraise Caleb’s character and devotion to God.

But the most astounding testimony comes from God Himself: “My servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly” (Num. 14:24 NIV). What higher eulogy could one seek! ♦





# What Does GOD Say?

The background of the title features a collage of words related to lust and temptation, including 'Allure', 'Enticement', 'Sodomy', 'Sensuous', 'passion', 'Lust', 'Lusty', 'Erotica', and 'Enticement'. In the center, a hand holds a key that fits into a lock shaped like the letter 'D' in the word 'GOD'.

*"In the Lord's name, I tell you this. Do not continue living like those who do not believe. Their thoughts are worth nothing. They have lost all feeling of shame, and they use their lives for doing evil. What you learned in Christ was not like this." – Eph. 4:17–23 NCV*

**Part One**  
by GERALD R. PAYNE

If we want to qualify for a profession—doctor, lawyer, teacher, engineer, or some other desired skill—we want to know what professionals say about the field of our interest. We study and apply what we learn so that we can be accepted for employment. We know that if we do not pass the exams we will not qualify, and those exams will be based on what the professionals in the field have said.

Where shall we turn for knowledge about life and how it should be lived? Who knows better than the God who made us, the God who will ultimately decide our destiny and the destiny of our world? Does it not make sense to consult Him about moral issues, and issues of right and wrong, about what promotes a good life and what hinders it? How can we expect to be accepted when Christ returns unless we study and apply what we learn so that we can pass all the exams (tests) given us, so that we may grow to the full stature of Christ; in other words, be like Him?

In a series of articles, we will be looking at what God says about various cultural issues. The purpose of this series is:

1. to learn what God says about issues of right and wrong
2. to learn how to apply His word to our lives
3. to learn how to live so as to have Christ's approval

We cannot really know Christ until we have walked in His steps; i.e., learned obedience through the things we experience, just as Christ did (Heb. 5:8).

Christ did not say "I think..." or "I feel..." or "I believe..." or "In my opinion," thus and thus. He did not speak His own words (John 14:24). He even told His Apostles that if they had seen Him they had seen the Father (John 14:9). What did He mean by this statement? He came to do the will of the Father (Heb. 10:9). This was the equivalent of asking in every detail of life, "What does God say?" Jesus took every word of God very seriously.

We live in a culture of diminishing spiritual values, where people prefer to follow their own ideas of right and wrong without regard to any higher authority. "I think" or "I feel" or "I believe" is sufficient to dictate one's personal code of conduct and morals. In other words, it is "right" for you or me if it feels good; there is no ultimate or absolute truth.

But God is still the author of life. We still need God to give us our breath. He is still our Creator and Sovereign Lord.

Do you want to know what God says that is beneficial for aspiring Christians? Will you listen and take the words of God to heart? Do you really want to know: What Does God Say?



# Divorce & Remarriage

Today's laws are liberal in allowing divorce and remarriage. But God, the Creator says "No".

Do God's moral laws for the serious Christian seem severe? They are part of His process of developing citizens for His coming Kingdom. They are His formula for happy, stable families and clean, upright living.

What about those who have failed and want to do right? Are all violators without hope? By no means! God has abundant mercy and forgiveness for all who truly repent and seek His forgiveness.

**Adultery:** illicit relations between a man and woman when either or both is married to someone else.<sup>1</sup>

**Fornication:** sexual immorality of any kind.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> See Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains

At a time when the number of divorces in a year is about equal to the number of marriages; when morals are often determined by the situation, words like *adultery* and *fornication* still shock us, though they have become a cultural norm. They still sound base and depraved, sins to be avoided at all cost.

But are we aware that, by Jesus' definitions, one who has divorced and remarried is an adulterer? And couples who live together without marrying to "try it out" are guilty of fornication?

The Bible has very clear and definite laws about moral issues, and those laws strictly prohibit both adultery and fornication. The command in the law God gave to Moses for the governing of the Israelite nation was plain: "*You shall not commit adultery*" (Ex. 20:14). The penalty: death!

Jesus, repeating the command of Moses' law, did not soften its force but extended the meaning of adultery beyond the physical act to include even the lustful look, a command hitting hard against the evils of pornography as well as any unlawful sexual desire. He said, "*You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart*" (Matt. 5:27–28).

The Apostle Paul listed adultery and fornication among the fruits of the flesh (Gal. 5:19), and concluded by saying, "*those who practice such things will not inherit [have no share in] the kingdom of God*" (Gal. 5:19–21). In his letter to the Corinthians he was also very specific, that those guilty of fornication (usually used of sexual immorality outside marriage) would be barred from the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9–10).

*Harper's Bible Dictionary* states that freedom from fornication was one of the four minimum entrance requirements for aspiring candidates to Christian groups in the early centuries. Contrast this with today's standards. (Fornication includes adultery.)

Why was adultery so serious an offense? Because it has such far-reaching consequences. We see these consequences today in broken homes, children left without a caring father or mother, one parent trying to earn the living and care for the children at the same time, and children left at a young age without proper supervision or abused, or abandoned. When the children suffer, very soon the whole social structure suffers.



# Divorce Law Before Jesus

*What were the divorce laws in Israel under Moses?*

Moses' law, which was given by God for the governing of the Israelite nation, permitted divorce under limited conditions. We read, "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance" (Deut. 24:1-4).

What was this law saying? It was allowing a man to divorce his wife for some uncleanness; but if she should remarry and that marriage ended in her divorce, the first man was not free to take her back—because she is "defiled." This would also suggest that a) one who would marry a divorced person was entering a "defiled" union; and b) if the divorced woman had remained unmarried after being divorced, she would be free from adultery. The defilement was apparently the result of the remarriage, not the divorce. This is not, however, to say that divorce was endorsed.

As Jesus said, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Matt. 19:8).

There is another fact about Moses' divorce law: it did not apply to everyone equally. The sons of Aaron were not allowed to divorce or to marry a divorced person. We read, "They shall not take a wife who is an harlot or a defiled woman, nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband; for the priest is holy to his God" (Lev. 21:7). The marital law for the high priests was: "And he shall take a wife in her virginity. A widow or a divorced woman or a defiled woman or a harlot—these he shall not marry; but he shall take a virgin of his own people as wife" (Lev. 21:13-14). Clearly the ideal was: no divorce.

## **Divorce was not God's intended plan for His people.**

Moses' law on divorce was apparently given to control a practice that could not be eliminated. But Jesus' statement that "From the beginning it was not so" tells us that for a significant period of time (some 2500 years) prior to Moses, there was no allowance for divorce.

Why was divorce never a part of God's plan and remarriage said to be defiling? Very possibly it was for the protection of the wife and children, and to prevent the spread of disease. God wanted families to be stable, clean, and secure.

## JESUS' LAW: No Divorce

Jesus set the ideal standard by taking Moses' law and expanding it to become the law of all who aspire to be children of God. We read in Matthew 5:31-32, "Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery." In other words, Moses' law permitted you to divorce, but I say, the person who divorces causes his wife to commit adultery (assuming that she will remarry, see Matt. 19:9 below); and the person who marries a divorced person commits adultery. Jesus is condemning adultery in very strong terms.

In Matthew 19:9 Jesus reaffirms His position: "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced

commits adultery." If either the wife or the husband enters a second marriage they have committed adultery.

### **Any Exception?**

What about the exception that Jesus seems to allow in these two verses: "except for sexual immorality" (Matt. 19:9)?

If adultery in one partner or the other could lead to the dissolving of the marriage and free both partners from obligation to each other, this would have the effect of making adultery, or the pretense of having committed it, the one way to get rid of a marriage which had become distaste-





ful, and so would put a premium on adultery, which Jesus surely did not intend!

This exception does not occur in the parallel passages in either Mark or Luke (see Mark 10:11–12 and Luke 16:18). But whatever Jesus may have meant by the exception clause in two of the four passages, He is clearly affirming the permanence of marriage. And that was what the disciples who heard His words understood. Note their response: *“If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry”* (Matt. 19:10). Even though social laws may permit divorce, God does not recognize it as freeing either partner from the bond. So far as He is concerned, the marriage vow is insoluble. Marriage that is God-

decreed can be broken only by the death of one of the partners. *“So then, they are no longer two but one flesh.*

*Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate”* (Matt. 19:6). It is precisely this permanence of Christian marriage that leads both husband and wife to do their utmost to make their marriage a success.

What was the one situation in which Jesus said divorce could be allowed? A close look at the Eastern custom of marriage may provide the answer to our question. We have an example in the Biblical account of Mary and Joseph. When Joseph discovered that Mary was pregnant, he considered putting Mary away for unfaithfulness. Note that Joseph had this very serious concern before we would consider them married. In our terminology, they were engaged. As the Bible words it, this was before she and Joseph *“had come together.”* Joseph could have put her away at that point in time and been free to find another wife. This seems to be the situation Jesus was addressing in the “exception” He allowed: *“except for sexual immorality [adultery, KJV].”* Such an offense could occur in the betrothal period when a Jewish man and woman were considered married but had not yet consummated their coming marriage with sexual intercourse. If in this period the woman was found pregnant (as was Mary; Matt. 1:18–19), a divorce was legitimate to break the contract. An engagement is a contract between two parties, and in such a case it would be legitimate to divorce (put away) the “wife” for unfaithfulness, as Joseph had thought to do regarding Mary. There was no indication that Joseph would have been wrong to have done so but just the opposite: the Bible says *“Joseph, being a just man...”* Jesus was not giving open license for the multitude of divorces which occur today, most of which are for unfaithfulness in one or both partners. Nor was He allowing premarital

sex (which comes under the Biblical term “fornication”), which today is justified by more than half of the members of our society.

We might note, however, that our Lord does not forbid separation. He does not say that the married partners must always live together, come what may. Separation may under certain conditions become a duty. If one partner proves unfaithful, violent, or adulterous, the other partner may not be able to live safely with him or her, though each should always be ready to forgive the other when he or she repents. But never does God recognize either partner as free to choose another living companion so long as both are living. Even if a divorce may seem to be the only solution to avoid the worries of financial burdens imposed by one separated partner on the other, still the law of God does not recognize the marriage as dissolved. Only when one partner dies is the other free.

The Apostle Paul explained the Christian position in these words: *“Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife....A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord”* (1 Cor. 7:10–11, 39; see also Romans 7:1–3). Husband and wife are bound as long as both live. The law of God allows only one living companion. We do not have any examples in the New Testament where divorce and remarriage is justified.

Most of the world today—even many of the clergy—do not take Christ’s law of marriage seriously. Multitudes of marriages are lightly formed and easily discarded. Then new marriages are formed, often more unsatisfactory than the first, and more problems result.

God wants those who will obey His law; and that law does not make any allowance for a divorced person to remarry so long as the first spouse lives.

Is the law of God restrictive? Yes. Does it limit our options as human beings? Yes. Does God make exception for our liberal-minded 21st century social patterns and practices? No. Does His law exempt the well-intentioned ones who want to serve God and still continue to divorce and remarry as they please? God says no, and we must realize that He has made these laws for our good.

## Jesus’ Law Not for Everyone

The law decreed by Jesus is the ideal, but it does not apply to everyone. Only those who voluntarily place themselves under it are bound by it. Our national and state laws, which do permit

**When God says  
“No,” He is saying no  
for our good.**



divorce and remarriage, are the authority for most people today. As a result, men and women divorce and remarry freely in our society and do not feel they have done wrong. Even so, the action is wrong in the sight of God, but those not subject to His laws are not accountable to Him for the sin and do not receive any of the penalties of His law. *"For as many as have sinned without (outside) law will also perish without (outside) law"* (Rom. 2:12). Only those who are under the law *"will be judged by the law."* Sin is *"not imputed when there is no law"* (Rom. 5:13).

## When We Repent, God Forgives

Suppose a man or woman should divorce and remarry when not under the law of God (or under covenant), then later one or both partners decide to come under His law and serve Him. What happens then?

Even though a man or woman was not committed to obey Christ's law when they divorced and remarried, they still have created a situation in which he or she has more than one living partner and as such are living in violation of God's law. What can they do to become right with God? A marriage is a contract which, under God's law, cannot be legally undone. To divorce would only add another sin to the record.

So what can one do who sincerely wants to serve God? Are these individuals barred from serving Him acceptably? Is there no hope? Yes, there is hope. Even when one's life is so entangled in sin that there seems to be no way out, there is hope because Jesus said: *"...all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter..."* except one, and that is the sin *"against the Holy Spirit..."*—which we today cannot commit because we do not have the Holy Spirit power (Matt 12:31–32; Mark 3:28–29; Luke 12:10). This means that all sins—including adultery and fornication—can be forgiven. When we seek God in true repentance of heart and show by our lives that we truly want to live by His law and serve Him with all our heart, He promises not to hold our former sins against us. In fact, the promise is, *"none of his sins which he has committed shall be remembered against him"* (Ezek. 33:16).

## Examples

Do we have any examples in Scripture?

Jesus told *the woman who had been caught in the act of adultery*, *"Go and sin no more"* (John 8:11). We do not have any other details, but this would infer that she was forgiven of any previous act of adultery.

*King David was guilty of adultery and murder while under covenant with God, and had he been judged by Moses' law, both sins would have*

*been punishable by death. But God could read David's heart and see that he was truly penitent. God condemned him severely, David humbly repented, and God in His mercy forgave him. Do we wonder why David concluded so many of his psalms with this immortal phrase: "For His mercy endures forever"?*

But even though David was forgiven and his life spared, he still had to live with the consequences of his sin, consequences that followed him the rest of his life.

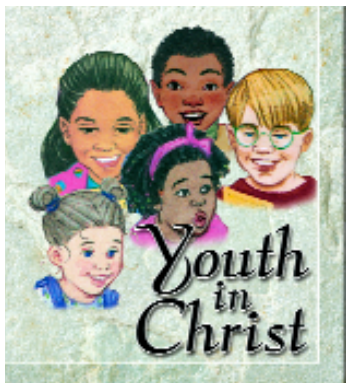
*The Samaritan woman at the well* was an adulteress. If because of this sin she was barred from any hope of finding favor with God, Jesus should never have spoken to her. Having Holy Spirit power, He could read the woman's mind and know that she had had five husbands and was living with another man that was not her husband (John 4:17–18). Did Jesus turn her away and have nothing to do with her because of her immoral life? Or did He tell her bluntly there was no hope for her? No. He said, *"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water"* (John 4:10, 17). Jesus wanted her to ask. She did ask. He told her who He was, she believed, and He gave her *"living water,"* the words that could be for her the way to life eternal.

God is looking for the good and honest heart. He is not looking for an unstained past, but for those individuals who will acknowledge their sins, who will truly repent in sincere contrition of heart, and seek His forgiveness. God will be true to His promise: *"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon"* (Isa. 55:7).

On another occasion Jesus said, *"I did not come to call the righteous [self-righteous], but sinners to repentance"* (Matt. 9:13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32). He does not expect us to start in a sinless condition. But He does expect us to attain that state by growing in humility, holiness, and obedience.

God's laws on divorce and remarriage are exacting, but they are intended to produce individuals of the highest quality, to keep families intact and children secure, and to provide clean, healthful, moral living, all of which make for happiness and well-being in this world. They are the laws by which all people *should* live, and by which all Christians *must* live if they would have their life work accepted by God and inherit a place in His coming Kingdom. ♦

*All sins—including adultery—can be forgiven when one truly repents and turns to God with all his heart.*



**B**ut we cannot afford it. You must think money grows on trees!" Mr. Isaac Barnswallow, was speaking.

"But we must keep up with the other Barnswallows," answered Rebekah; Mrs. Isaac Barnswallow, that is.

"All of the other Barnswallows are lining their nests with down," and with that she pulled her handkerchief out from under her wing and started to cry.

"All right, all right," said her husband, "I will see what I can do, but feathers are very expensive this year."

Mr. Isaac Barnswallow was no bird's fool when it came to business matters. Also, he was very, very industrious. "The early bird catches the worm" was his motto. So the next morning by the time the other birds came to the barnyard to dig for breakfast worms, he had already collected a supply and had opened a little restaurant under an oak tree in the corner of the barnyard.

On the outside was an attractive sign, "Swallow at Barnswallow's." Mr. Barnswallow stood in the door and called to the passing birds, "Worms for feathers. Get your breakfast here. Why waste your time and soil your fingers digging? Barnswallow's worms are guaranteed to be slick and boneless."

"How much are your worms?" asked Speedy Skylark as he paused in front of the door. Speedy's real name was Joseph, but since he was so fast and quick on the wing, his school-mates called him "Speedy." However, Speedy was anything but quick and fast around his home; in fact he was lazy—so lazy that he just hated to dig his own worms for breakfast.

"Two for a feather," answered Mr. Barnswallow. "How many will you have?"

"I'll take four please," answered Speedy. Turning he plucked two feathers, one from each wing, and handed them to Mr. Barnswallow. He gobbled down his four worms and hurried away to school.

"Two feathers don't matter," he said to himself. "It is so much easier to trade feathers for worms than to dig for them. I'm so glad Mr. Barnswallow has opened a restaurant."

Of course Speedy did not eat there every morning. Sometimes he dug his own breakfast. But there were quite a few mornings when he roosted late or felt lazy. At such times he would rush over to Mr. Barnswallow's and exchange two or three more feathers for worms—until after a month or so he started to notice it. Still, Speedy did not think it mattered very much—at least that is what he thought until yesterday.

Yesterday was the day of the big Wing-Meet, with school birds from all over Skyland County gathered for the races.

The Wington School was in first place with 256 points, up to the very last race—the 100-yard flash. Speedy had been

selected to represent the Wington School in that particular race because he had won it the year before. It was generally agreed that no bird was more swift and quick on the wing than Speedy. The Wington watchers were very confident as Speedy and six other birds lined up in the maple tree at the end of the stadium.

"Ready," said the referee, "on your limb, Go!"

Speedy darted forward with all his might, expecting to be in front all the way. To his amazement, three other birds were ahead from the start. Half way to the goal, two others passed him. That left only Pete Buzzard behind. Pete was a graceful bird on the wing but was considered one of the slowest flyers in Skyland County. But just short of the finish line, Pete sailed past Speedy, leaving him seventh and last in the race and throwing the Wington School from first place to third in total points.

"What was the matter?" said Baldy Eagle, the coach, to Speedy after the Meet. Speedy could only hang his head. Deep in his heart he knew what was the matter.

That night he could not sleep for worrying. Then there came to him what he thought was a wonderful idea. The next morning he was up bright and early and digging worms, even before Mr. Barnswallow arrived. When Mr. Barnswallow did appear, Speedy rushed up to him.

"Look, Mr. Barnswallow," he said, "I have a box-full of worms. How many feathers will you trade me for these? Please sir, I want my feathers back."

"Trade you feathers for worms?" said Mr. Barnswallow. "Why you silly little bird. My business is to trade worms for feathers, not feathers for worms." With that he turned and walked away chuckling, leaving Speedy alone and broken-hearted.

So he carried his worms home to his mother and then told her the whole story.

"I am so sorry, Mother. What shall I do? Will my feathers grow out again? Will I ever be able to fly as I once did?"

"I do not know," Mrs. Skylark answered slowly. "We can only wait and see. My son," she concluded, "you must remember that God has given us some things which He expects us to guard and keep at all times. If we fail to do that, and allow them to get away from us, we can never buy them back again—not at any price."

Poor Speedy Skylark! Mr. Barnswallow was right. What a silly little bird, to trade his beautiful, wonderful feathers that God had given him—for worms! ♦

From "Bird Life in Wington", by J. Calvin Reed.



# THE WRONG KIND OF EXERCISE



**I**t was almost lunch time at Douglas Franklin School and Shelley couldn't find her lunch money. She felt in her pockets carefully. It wasn't there. It wasn't on her desk. She looked in her locker but she couldn't find it anywhere.

Suddenly she had a thought. "Maybe I left it on my desk and someone took it during play period. That's what must have happened to it."

Shelley scowled. "Someone stole my lunch money," she announced loudly. "And I know who did it—it was Nicky."

Nicky's mouth opened in surprise. His face turned red as everyone looked at him.

"I—I didn't take it," he stammered. "Honest, I didn't—I didn't even see your money!"

"You were standing right by my desk when I came into the room," Shelley said accusingly. "Maybe you forgot your own lunch money, so you took mine."

Nicky shook his head. "No, no! I didn't! Cross my heart, I didn't."

But Shelley wouldn't listen.

Poor Nicky felt miserable. The other children stared at him suspiciously and scarcely talked with him the rest of the day. And as he walked home from school, two girls sang, "Nicky is a thief, Nicky is a thief!" The hurt showed in Nicky's eyes as he looked at them. And he hurried away.

Shelley rushed home to tell her mother, "Nicky DiBella is a thief. He stole my lunch money off my desk today."

"Are you sure?" asked Mother. "Did you see him do it?"

"No-o-o. But he was standing at my desk when we came in from play period. And my money was gone. So I *know* he took it."

Mother looked concerned. "Look on the table, Shelley," she said.

Shelley gasped. There on the kitchen table was her lunch money.

"You see, Dear, Nicky didn't take your money. You've accused him wrongly," Mother said sadly. "You are getting your exercise the wrong way—jumping at conclusions. Your money is just where you left it this morning."

Shelley was speechless.

"I hope you didn't tell anyone else you thought Nicky had stolen it," Mother continued hopefully.

"But I did," wailed Shelley, looking ashamed. "What'll I do now?"

"What do you think you ought to do?" asked Mother.

"Oh, Mother, I just can't tell Nicky and the others what happened. It would kill me," burst out Shelley.

"Then you don't feel you should make it right?" asked Mother gently.

Shelley brightened up. "Sure. I'll tell God about it and ask Him to forgive me."

"Is that enough? Will that correct the wrong or make Nicky feel better?" prodded Mother gently.

How Shelley hated to admit she was wrong! She bit her lip. "Mother, guess I'll have to tell Nicky and all the others what happened. And I should tell Nicky I'm sorry for what I thought and said about him. Oh, Mother, I'll simply die! I'll feel so silly and stupid."

Mother gave Shelley a hug. She understood. "Try to imagine how happy Nicky will feel, and how pleased God will be when you have made it right. And, Honey, you'll feel great about that victory."

*Next time*, decided Shelley, helping herself to a glass of milk and a fresh blueberry muffin, *I won't be so quick to accuse someone.* ♦

## PRAYER:

*Lord, help me to be quick to forgive and slow to accuse. And if I do accuse someone wrongly, help me to admit it and ask forgiveness. Then You will forgive me. Amen.*

## MEMORY VERSE:

*"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."* —John 7:24.

## POINT:

*Do not accuse anyone until you have seen definite evidence.*

## GOD Goes Before You

continued from page 6

alone because God is the same “yesterday, today and forever.” He who keeps eternal vigil; He who “neither slumbers nor sleeps” (Ps. 121:4), He the Eternal God stands guard over the lives of those whom He has called.

Tasks may seem impossible and tomorrows fearful to face when God is left out, but when we live in the awareness of His presence, there are no impossibles.

All through the wilderness, the Israelites were reminded of the visible presence of God with them. All through those forty long years, the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day gave silent testimony to the fact that they were not alone. The promise was, “Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared....For My Angel will go before you” (Ex. 23:20, 23).

We stand today on the very verge of Jordan. Even now we see by faith the shining of the land of Canaan before us. An uneasy feeling comes over us as we look ahead, a feeling that we are alone. But shall we think that we are on our own? No! God still goes before His people. Let us not fear, even for a moment. The God who has been with us and has brought us safely to this hour will not leave us in the wilderness. He will surely see us through. His angels still

encamp. “The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them” (Ps. 34:7). If our eyes could be opened we might see this very hour the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, angels watching over us, ministering to our needs. “Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?” (Heb. 1:14). We are not alone. As surely as God was with our forebears, so surely will He be with us. His cause cannot fail.

God is with us because there is yet work to be done. There are yet battles to be fought and won before the land of Canaan is our own. There are yet attitudes to be surrendered, life patterns to be refined, wills to be broken; wandering thoughts to be harnessed; feelings to be controlled; conflicts to be settled; giants of sin to be conquered. But through it all, God goes before us. His promise still stands: “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5).

Joshua was told emphatically that if he kept God at the center of his concern, he was bound to prosper, conquer, and enjoy enormous success. “Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go” (Josh. 1:7).

The same is true with us. We simply cannot overexpose ourselves to God. His guiding precepts at the very center of our lives, the responsibility for careful

following rests with us. The positive response of our wills to His depends on us. It is for us to carefully carry out every command and ordinance of our God.

If we do this, we can be certain that He goes before us. It is He who provides the power, the courage, the capacity to conquer. The Apostle Paul put it so well, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen” (Eph. 3:17–20 NIV).

If we stay with Him, we shall yet claim the inheritance we have been promised, even the whole earth for our everlasting home.

“Those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth” (Ps. 37:9).

“The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (Ps. 37:11).

“For those blessed by Him shall inherit the earth” (Ps. 37:22).

“The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell in it forever” (Ps. 37:29).

“Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land” (Ps. 37:34). ♦

### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 21

#### METALS

1. The head of the image was of gold, its chest and arms of silver, its trunk of bronze, and its legs of iron (Dan. 2: 28, 31–33)
2. Thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:14–16)
3. As it was ‘blood money,’ they would not take it back into the Temple treasury, but purchased with it ‘the potter’s field’ as a burial ground for strangers (Matt. 27:3–10)
4. Tubal-Cain (Gen. 4:22)
5. The prophet Daniel (Dan. 7:2, 7)
6. Silversmiths, led by Demetrius (Acts 19:23–28)
7. Bronze (Num. 21:6–9, see also John 3:14–15)

8. “A word fitly spoken” (Prov. 25:11)
9. Twenty shekels of silver (Gen. 37:28)
10. “The trial of your faith” (1 Pet. 1:7)
11. Og, king of Bashan (Deut. 3:11)
12. The army of Egypt—“Pharaoh’s chariots and all his host.” (Ex. 15:4–10)
13. The seven churches of Asia (Rev. 1:20)
14. Bronze (1 Kings 7:15–22)

#### WORKERS AND TOOLS

1. Mending a fishing net (Matt. 4:21)
2. Sling and staff (1 Sam. 17:40)
3. Jael (Judges 4:21)
4. Cedar and pine logs as well as skilled men (1 Kings 5:1–8)
5. Carpentry (Matt. 13:53–55)
6. Axe head (2 Kings 6:1–7)
7. Seamstress (Acts 9:36, 39)
8. Shepherd (1 Sam. 17:34)

9. Silversmith (Acts 19:24)
10. Swine (pigs) (Mark 5:1–14)
11. Amos (Amos 1:1)
12. Hammer (Jer. 23:29)
13. Seller of purple cloth (Acts 16:14)
14. Gibionites (Joshua 9:22)

#### RECOGNITION

1. Peter (Matt. 16:16)
2. Saul (later Paul) (Acts 9:5–9)
3. Thomas (John 20:28–29)
4. Nathanael (John 1:48–50)
5. The Samaritan woman (John 4:4, 29)
6. John the Baptist (Luke 3:15–16)
7. Two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–31)
8. The wise men from the east (Matt. 2:1–11)





#### METALS

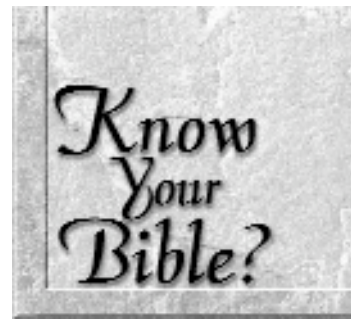
1. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had a dream in which he saw a great image constructed of four different metals. What were they?
2. How many pieces of silver did Judas receive from the chief priests for betraying Jesus?
3. When Judas repented of his treachery and returned the money, what did the chief priests do with it?
4. What is the name of the first man recorded in the Scriptures as a *"forger of all instruments of bronze and iron"*?
5. Who saw a vision of *"a fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong; and it had great iron teeth"*?
6. When the Apostle Paul was at Ephesus, a guild of craftsmen opposed his preaching. What was their trade, and who was their leader?
7. When Moses was instructed by God to make a model of a fiery serpent to erect on a pole, what metal did he use?
8. What according to Solomon is *"like apples of gold in a setting of silver"*?
9. For how many shekels of silver was Joseph sold by his brothers to the Ishmaelites?
10. What according to the Apostle Peter is *"more precious than gold, which though perishable is tested by fire"*?
11. What pagan king had a *"bedstead of iron"*? Over which land did he reign?
12. Who, according to Moses, *"sank as lead in the mighty waters"*?
13. In his opening vision in the Book of Revelation the Apostle John sees seven golden lampstands. What did those lampstands represent?
14. Standing in front of Solomon's temple were two great pillars, each eighteen cubits in height. Of what metal were they made?

#### WORKERS & TOOLS

1. What were James and John doing when Jesus called them?
2. What tool did David use in his early years?
3. What woman used a 'workman's hammer' to put a tent peg into a most unusual spot?
4. What did Hiram of Tyre furnish for Solomon's temple?
5. Joseph (Mary's husband) was involved in this trade.
6. This borrowed tool fell into the water and Elisha miraculously recovered it.
7. What was Dorcas' occupation?
8. King David started out his life in this occupation.
9. What was the occupation of Demetrius?
10. What animals were kept in the country of the Gadarenes?
11. God called this man from among the *"shepherds of Tekoa"* to be a prophet.
12. Jeremiah compared the word of God to this tool.
13. What was Lydia's occupation?
14. What group of people as punishment for deceiving were made to serve as woodcutters and water carriers?

#### RECOGNITION

1. Who gave recognition to Christ by saying, *"You are the Christ, the son of the living God."*
2. When Jesus struck this man blind, the man said, *"Lord, what do you want me to do?"*
3. This man said, *"My Lord and my God!"* Jesus said to him, *"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*
4. This man was convinced that Jesus was the son of God because Jesus had said, *"When you were under the fig tree, I saw you."*
5. This woman said of Christ *"Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did."*
6. Some people thought this man was the Christ, but he said, *"One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose."*
7. During a seven-mile journey they failed to recognize Jesus, but when He broke the bread at supper their eyes were opened and suddenly they realized who He was.
8. They gave Jesus gold, frankincense and myrrh.



answers on page 20

# The Brittle Stars

(*Ophiocoma wendtii*)



People used to feel sorry for me because I didn't have eyes. Well, I've been seeing all the time—and in all directions at once—thanks to my wonderful Designer! Yes, my half-inch disc-shaped body is literally covered with crystalline lenses that work together like one big eye! Scientists now find that these lenses my Designer crafted “have exceptional optical performance,” superior to any manufactured lenses! Designed with just the right curvature to focus light to the nerve centers inside my body, they make it possible for me to get information whenever there is daylight. Predator nearby? Or some delicious morsel for dinner? Or a good place to hide? I see it right away!

With five thin, long arms extending from my half-inch size body, altogether about the size of your outstretched hand—you guessed it. I'm a type of starfish, and a close cousin of the sea urchins, sea cucumbers, and sea stars.

You think my long bony arms are

just for swimming around? Oh, no! Besides being my means of getting food into my mouth, they are part of my “eye” system. You see, my Designer put clear “windows” in my bony arms. Each of the bones in my arms is a single calcite crystal, with a “window” in the shape of a double lens. Special cells (called chromatophores) clustered around these “windows” contain light sensitive pigment that controls the amount of light that enters my body. The result: I change color twice a day, much like you change your clothes! During the daytime I'm a darkish red, and at night I change to blackish brown and gray.

What do we brittle stars of the sea do all the time? We're part of the sea's housekeeping team. I just lay on the sand at the bottom of the sea, and let my arms wave in the flowing water above me. The curling tips of my waving arms catch organic particles, little sea animals and worms, and pass them down to my central mouth—you'd call it scavenging, but it's food for me.

What if a hungry fish grabs my arm? Snap! He can have it—but that's all he gets! No tugging me off by my arm! Just a few weeks, and I'll have grown a new arm.

When I want to move, the spines on my arms provide traction to help me grasp the bottom. Someone watching

might think I am lunging awkwardly. But I'm very agile. Turn me upside down, and flip! I'll be right side up in seconds!

I'm not particular where I live, whether in shoreline shallows or 6000 feet down in the sea. You wonder that I'm not crushed by the weight of the water over my head? I wonder, too. Even a large bucket of water on your head would feel pretty heavy. But picture a bucket 6000 feet high—that's what you have on top of your head when you're at the bottom of the sea at that level. And if you humans want to explore at that depth, you have to build a device to withstand the water pressure. You build it with plates of steel several inches thick to take the pressure.

Now think about little me with all that water on top of my head, and I don't even get a headache! No, I just lie on the ocean bottom waving my arms. How can I do it? You will have to ask my Designer! These wonders are beyond me!

Sometimes we multiply in incredible numbers, making a carpet on the sea floor up to an inch thick. And if you come by you'll find all our little arms waving together, a living carpet of arms, all waving praise to our awesome Designer as we housekeep our part of the sea!

All praise be to Him! ♦



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# Weeds, Weeds, Weeds!

*Weeds thrive on simple neglect.*

## SPOKEN WEEDS

by CLIFFORD L. MATHIAS

When we hear the word “weed” we think of those common plants that volunteer to grow in our gardens. Most weeds are highly prolific and produce an enormous number of seeds. A single chickweed is said to produce 15,000 seeds; a single shepherd’s purse, 40,000 seeds per plant; a single lamb’s quarter weed, about 70,000 seeds. With no effort at all, the gardener can have an enormous crop of weeds—and little else.

But there is another type of weed with even more far-reaching consequences. That weed is the thoughtless, critical, unkind or malicious words we speak. Jesus warned, *“You must give an account on judgment day of every idle word you speak. The words you say now reflect your fate then; either you will be justified by them or you will be condemned”* (Matt. 12:36-37 NLT).

Senator Byrd delivered a speech to Congress on July 10, 1998, entitled “The Spoken Weed.” He realized most people use a lot of unnecessary words, but he failed to mention the slang, vulgar and swear words that blight the world of TV, theatre, drama, music, art, common conversation, and even school literature books today. We are surrounded by people who show little or no reverence for God, and who give little or no thought to taking His name in vain. The serious professing Christian must guard warily against using the God-dishonoring language so prevalent today.

How do we get rid of all idle, degrading words (weeds)?

We read in Jeremiah 4:3: *“Thus saith the Lord...Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.”* Fallow ground is ground that has been plowed but left unseeded during a growing season, and becomes a natural and undisturbed seedbed for all kinds of weeds. Our minds are like fallow ground. If left alone, they will not stay weed-free very long. That is why we must keep them stirred, and be careful of the seed-thoughts we allow to sprout.

Do you want to keep your spiritual garden free of weeds? Then plant it so full of good seeds from the Word of God—seeds of love, kindness, patience, holiness, courage, and hope—that all the thousands of weed seeds that blow by won’t find any room to grow. ♦

## PULL THOSE WEEDS!

*“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in its lusts.”*

—Rom. 6:12

Pulling weeds can be a struggle. Whether you are unearthing the quack grass shoots or digging up dandelions, they are rooted deep and are highly resistant to being uprooted. Let a soaking rain come, and soften the soil, and they yield more easily. Also, haven’t you noticed that the youngest weeds are easiest to remove? The older ones are more stubborn.

Aren’t bad habits like that? The longer they remain, the more difficult they are to remove. If we uproot them early, we have a better chance of success. But at any age or stage of life, it takes a lot of diligence and effort to get them out and keep them out.

Do you have some weeds in your life that need pulling, weeds of pride, lust, impatience, hatred, or envy? Be at it today! You can’t get them any sooner. ♦



## HOW TO GROW A “NO-CARE” LAWN

*Ever tried it? It’s easy!*

A diligent lawn-care professional said his dream was to write a book someday about how to grow a no-care lawn.

“All the pages will be blank,” he said, “because that is what is required: nothing! Just leave it alone. In no time, dandelions will sprout, crab-

*continued on page 25*



## Do We Have AN IMMORTAL SOUL?

***Your magazine is nicely put together, however I don't agree with some of the things I read. I believe it was a couple of issues back, you mentioned death and resurrection but you also mentioned the death of the soul at the time of the bodily death. The body is mortal but the soul is immortal and lives on. The body dies when the soul leaves the body. An easy illustration is a peanut in a peanut shell. Once the peanut is removed the shell is just an empty case, much like our bodies are without our souls. Our bodies are just our earthly tents.***

***I hope this gives you a better understanding that you can allow the loss of someone to be an even more joyful experience, knowing they are experiencing a joyful peace. At the resurrection the bodies of the faithful will be glorified and reunited with the souls.***

We recognize your belief in the immortal soul as one of the cornerstones of popular Christianity. Almost every church in Christendom would agree with you.

But we are most concerned with what is taught in the Bible, and we find in the Bible that souls die (Ezek. 18:20). Souls are people, the whole person. As "All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt" were seventy souls, or 70 persons (Gen. 46:25-27). They went into Egypt to buy bread during a time of famine. The definition of *nephesh*, the Hebrew word translated "soul," is "properly a breathing creature, i.e., animal or vitalities; used very widely in a literal, accommodated or figurative sense." It is a term used of a living, breathing creature, body, person.

Our founder offered \$1000 to anyone who could find any instance in the Bible where the soul is called immortal, undying, or a similar term, and the offer

stands unclaimed. Nowhere does the Bible say that the body dies and the soul lives on. It does say, however, that when a person dies, "his thoughts perish" (Ps. 146:3-4). It says, "The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing" (Eccl. 9:5). Again it says, "In death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" (Ps. 6:5). Also "Sheol cannot thank You; death cannot praise You; Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your truth" (Isa. 38:18). There is no consciousness in the death state.

The Psalmist says of the person who is wealthy and esteemed and dies, "Those who trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him—for the redemption of their souls is costly, and it shall cease forever—that he should continue to live eternally, and not see the pit. For he sees wise men die; likewise the fool and the senseless person perish, and leave their wealth to others...like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling" (Ps. 49:7-9, 14). Ecclesiastes makes the same point: "For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies so dies the other. Surely they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity. All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust" (Eccl. 3:19-20).

The illustration of the peanut in a peanut shell may seem logical, but it is not according to Scripture. When the body ceases to function, when the lungs no longer take in and expel air, when the heart stops beating, and the body processes cease, the person is dead, without life, without consciousness, without personality. The whole person is dead. The Psalmist described it in these words: "You take away their breath,

*they die and return to their dust. You send forth Your Spirit, they are created"* (Ps. 104:29-30). This is what the writer of Ecclesiastes was saying in chapter 12, verse 7, "Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it." When a person dies, and ceases to breathe, his breath returns to the reservoir of the earth, the same reservoir from which all living creatures draw every breath from their first to their last.

### □ Jesus or God?

***Who is supposed to be more important in the Christian's life, Jesus or God?***

The question of who is more important in the Christian's life, Jesus or God, seems irrelevant because both are very important and can hardly be compared. Each has His respective role in the Christian's life. God, being the Almighty Creator, the One who is offering eternal life, the One who gives us our breath and everything we have, and who set up the laws by which we live, is vital to us and everyone who lives, whether He is recognized in His rightful role or not. None can live outside the laws He set in motion. We can disregard His authority and His right to command us, but that does not change anything. He is still the Almighty Creator, we live and breathe within His will, and He will have the last word. As Paul the Apostle said, "In him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

Jesus Christ is the Son of God, One who was sent especially for us, to set us an example of the life that pleases God, to be our Mediator and our means to the Heavenly Father and to show us the way to eternal life (John 14:6). Jesus, being one of our race, "made like His brethren" (Heb. 2:17), can identify with our struggles and our problems. "For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempt-



ed, He is able to aid those who are tempted" (Heb. 2:18). That is why Jesus was raised up, to be an example, to show us the way, so that we can follow His footsteps (1 Pet. 2:21).

Jesus is also our God-appointed Judge and coming King (Luke 1:31-33). He received His authority from the Father (John 5:22), and will judge and reward all who have served Him. All who serve Him will be called to appear "before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10), where each will receive just according to what they have done, whether good or bad.

Christ will be choosing those who overcame as He overcame to be His eternal associates and share His throne with Him (Rev. 3:21), to be His associate kings and priest and rule in righteousness forever over a glorified earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

#### □ Ezekiel's Wife

#### ***In the Old Testament, which prophet was not allowed to attend his wife's burial?***

It seems that you are speaking of the Prophet Ezekiel. The Lord told him first that his wife was going to die, then told him that as a lesson to His people he should not mourn for her as was customary at the time. The next day his wife died, as the Lord had said, and Ezekiel obeyed the Lord's command, and did not mourn for her.

The people did observe Ezekiel's unusual behavior, and questioned it. "Will you not tell us what these things signify to us, that you behave so?" (Ezek. 24:19). Ezekiel responded by giving them the word from the Lord, just as the Lord had told him to do. "Speak to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Behold I will profane My sanctuary, your arrogant boast, the desire of your eyes, the delight of your soul; and your sons and daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword. And you shall do as I have done, you shall not cover your lips nor eat man's bread of sorrow....but you shall pine away in your iniquities and mourn with one another. Thus Ezekiel is a sign to you; according to all that he has done you shall do; and when this comes, you shall know that I am the Lord God"' (Ezek. 24:20-24).

The Lord had chosen Ezekiel to be His prophet, and every part of Ezekiel's life was part of his career for God. We have to admire Ezekiel's obedience, even to a test as difficult as not mourning for the wife he loved, but he was obeying

God and teaching his people a deeper lesson: that because of their willful sin, they would suffer, and at that point be caused to remember the Lord their God. They were seeing the fulfillment of what Ezekiel had prophesied. ♦

## *Most failures are expert at making excuses.*

#### **HOW TO GROW A "NO-CARE" LAWN**

*continued from page 23*

grass will spread, weeds with all their long Latin names will thrive where the lawn used to be. The magic formula is: no water, no fertilizer, no weed killer, no care."

The book, of course, would be immensely unpopular because who wants that kind of lawn? Yet they may end up with one simply through neglect.

The writer of Proverbs observed the same pattern long ago as he walked by the field of a lazy person. It was "all overgrown with thorns. It was covered with weeds, and its walls were broken down"—a clear case of neglect. But he saw a deeper lesson. "As I looked and

*thought about it, I learned this lesson"* (Prov. 24:30-32 NLT).

When I'm weeding my garden, I often ask myself if I'm putting as much time and effort into maintaining my spiritual life as I am my garden. Am I careful to dig every sprouting weed out of my mind? How easily weeds of anger and discouragement can take root in my heart. How quickly anxiety over some petty, temporal issue crowds out peace.

The formula for a no-care lawn and a no-care life are exactly the same. Do nothing.

In other words, let the weeds have it. ♦



We were saddened to learn of the passing of a long time friend and subscriber, Sarah Jackson, of Rome, Georgia, on July 14, 2004. She was 98 years of age.

Funeral services were held in Rome, Georgia, on July 19. She is survived by one son, William Hudson; and three daughters, Thelma Moore, Ida Belle Fleetwood, and Mattie Sims; also 22 grandchildren, 62 great-grandchildren, and 40 great-great-grandchildren, and a host of nieces and nephews.

Sister Sarah was able to live in her own home even during advancing years, being looked after by members of her family who lived nearby. She was always happy to be visited by her Church friends.

Sister Sarah corresponded regularly and was a bright light for her faith. She believed firmly in the Bible hope of the resurrection and future life in Christ's Kingdom, when earth will be annexed to heaven and the Lord's Prayer will be fulfilled.



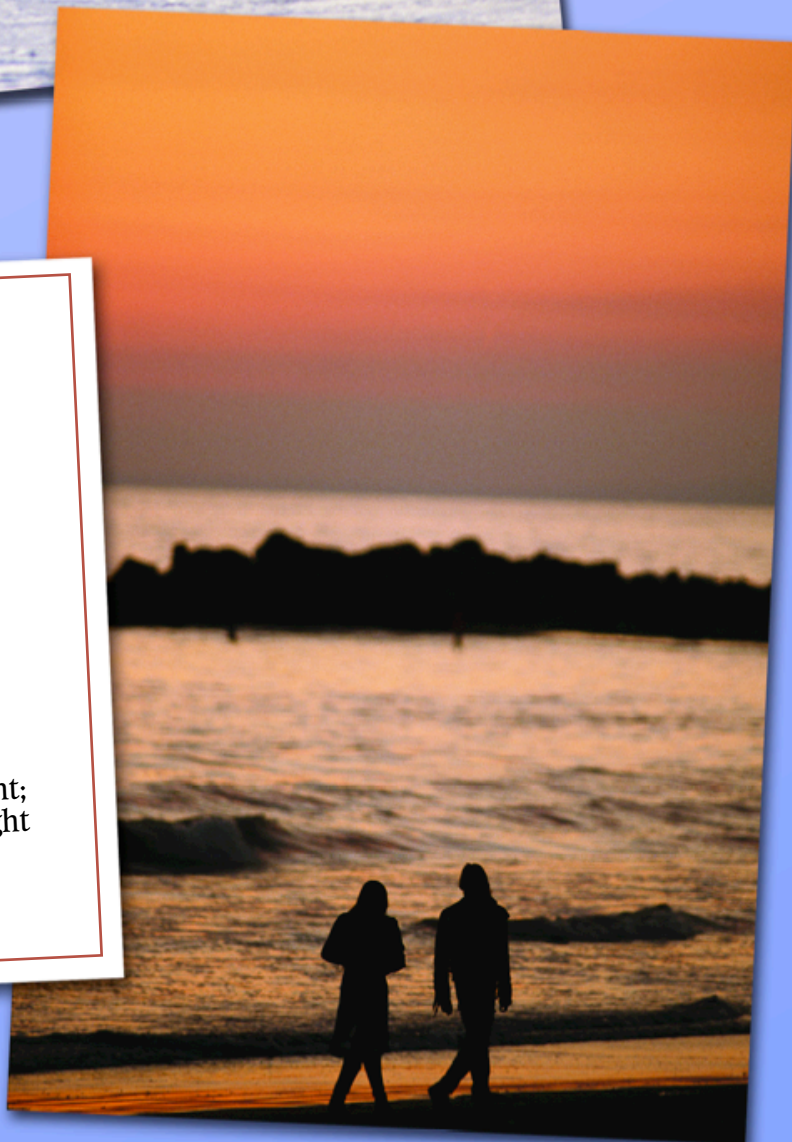
## Keep Looking Up!

**K**eeP looking up—  
The waves that roar around your feet  
The Lord your God will downward beat  
When looking up.

**K**eeP looking up—  
Though darkness all about you roll,  
The light of life shall fill your soul  
When looking up.

**K**eeP looking up—  
When worn and distracted with the fight;  
Your Captain gives you conquering might  
When you look up.

—Selected





God will not look us over for medals or diplomas,  
but for battle scars.

*A pound of loyalty is worth a ton of cleverness.*

*Brightening up the life of someone else  
will put a fresh shine on your own.*

No!" is a complete sentence. Use it often when you come up against temptation to do any evil. A strong No repeated often enough and long enough will cause your stubborn evil to move and in time will move it right out of your life.

To know God's will is man's greatest opportunity; to do God's will his greatest achievement.

My great concern is not whether God is on my side; my great concern is to be on God's side.

A wise man will make more opportunities than he finds.

*The man who lives for himself operates a very  
small business.*

One who travels thoughtfully and reverently  
adds another dimension to life.

Train yourself to listen. You'll be amazed how much you can learn when your mouth is shut.

*My Father's care, His loving care,  
Will lead me to His Kingdom fair,  
If I but trust Him day by day,  
And walk within this narrow way.*

*So I'll serve Him while I may,  
With feet and hands and heart today.  
Then I will know where'er I be,  
His loving care is over me.*

The kind of music people should have in their homes is domestic harmony.

A pint of example is worth a barrelful of advice.

Sin pays full wages. There are no cuts in pay, and many an unexpected bonus in misery.

Improvement begins with "I".



*The things that haven't been done before,  
Those are the things to try;  
Columbus dreamed of an unknown shore  
At the rim of the far-flung sky,  
And his heart was bold and his faith was strong  
As he ventured in dangers new,  
And he paid no heed to the jeering throng  
Or the fears of the doubting crew.*

*The many will follow the beaten track  
With guideposts on the way.  
They live and have lived for ages back  
With a chart for every day.  
Someone has told them it's safe to go  
On the road he has traveled o'er,  
And all that they ever strive to know  
Are the things that were known before.*

*But a few strike out, without map or chart,  
Where never a man has been,  
From the beaten paths they draw apart  
To see what no man has seen.  
There are deeds they hunger alone to do,  
Though battered and bruised and sore.  
They blaze the path for the many who  
Do nothing not done before.*

# The Things That Haven't Been Done Before

*The things that haven't been done before  
Are the tasks worthwhile today;  
Are you one of the flock that follows, or  
Are you one that shall lead the way?  
Are you one of the timid souls that quail  
At the jeers of a doubting crew,  
Or dare you, whatever you win or fail,  
Strike out for a goal that's new?*

by Edgar Guest

