

Mississippi's "GOOD NEWS" magazine for churches of Christ.



THE MAGNOLIA

Messenger

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*"In the beginning
was the Word, and the
Word was with God,
and the Word
was God."*

John 1:1

*"And the Word became
flesh and dwelt among us,
and we beheld His glory, the
glory as of the only begotten
of the Father, full of
grace and truth."*

John 1:14



Digital Issue on our website: www.magnoliamessengermag.com

"Let us consider one another to provoke unto LOVE and GOOD works."
(Hebrews 10:24)

from Dennis



On the opposite page you will see a picture and article from Al Franks, the founding editor of this publication. This issue will mark five years since his untimely death. Three months later his

son Paul, who was to carry on his dad's work, died of ALS. So, what was to become of *The Magnolia Messenger*?



This Christian magazine has not only survived but has grown into one of the premier publications in the Lord's church. Now in our 47th year, this progress is due to two main factors. First, the strong foundation Al and his Miss June had built for the paper. Traveling across Mississippi

and Louisiana in their motorhome, they built strong connections among churches they visited and worked with. The good deeds they did for churches, and the good faith they displayed in their lives, built a strong bond between the *Magnolia Messenger* and

these congregations. Because of this strong foundation, these past five year's support from individuals, and churches has not diminished but has remained strong.

For most of Al's forty-one years as editor, he did the work himself, including the layout of each issue from his office in the back of their motor home. While he did not always stay on schedule, he did work tirelessly putting together each issue. In his later years, he began to seek and get some help. Call it the providence of God, or good management skills, or just a sense of his own mortality, at his death he left a great team ready to carry on his life's work. (See the list of our staff in the box below.)

This magazine continues to grow. New writers (two this issue) join some of the best writers in the Kingdom, new ads reach out to our readers, encouraging news appears from across the brotherhood, and new regular features and topical issues all help make each issue worthwhile reading from front to back. All along, Al's foundation of supporters has remained loyal to his memory and to this great work. Thanks to all who read, love, and support *The Magnolia Messenger*! -dd



Church of Christ - Kosciusko, MS

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Editor's Note: The mention of a person or church in the Messenger does NOT necessarily mean that we either endorse or approve all the person or church may believe, teach and/or do. We do not (cannot) have full knowledge of every person or church mentioned in the MM; furthermore, we do not believe that our role before God is to be that of a judge. We pray, however, that we will never lend encouragement to anyone or anything in conflict with, or not in harmony with that which is plainly taught in Scripture. Your comments invited and encouraged.

(Dennis Doughty, Editor)

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NEXT ISSUES TOPIC

SATAN
AND THE
Battle for the Heart of Man
BETWEEN
Good & Evil

"he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan"

Revelations 20:2

Send us articles
about Satan, his origin,
his relationship to
God, his mission and
his desire to control the heart of man,
the battle between good and evil.



Respecting the line that God has drawn

SAVED/LOST

By Al Franks, editor: 1978 - 2019

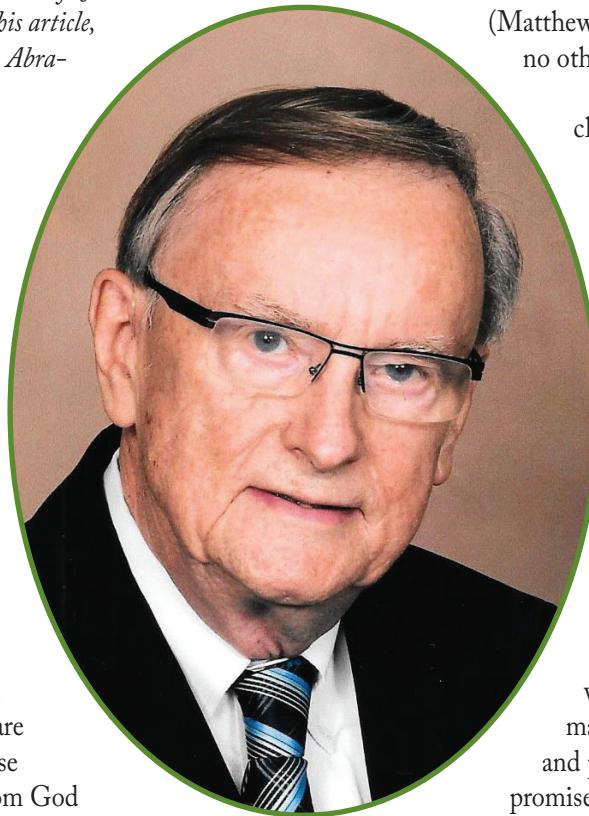
(This issue marks the five-year anniversary of Al Franks's death. He loved the Lord's church, loved his wife June, and loved his Magnolia Messenger. In this article, his words live on while his spirit rests in Abraham's arms. -dd)

Every responsible person on this earth is either "Lost" or "Saved." This includes me. It includes you. Am I (are you) lost or saved? Which? These are vital and urgent questions that deserve correct answers from God's word. Our eternal destiny is at stake!

According to Divine wisdom, God sent His "only begotten" from Heaven to earth to save the lost. Jesus declared that He, "the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). Sin separates man from God. Isaiah wrote, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God.... (Isaiah 59:2). There are two groups of responsible people: those who are still in sin; thus, separated from God (lost!) and those who have been forgiven; thus, reconciled to God (saved!). The continual practice of sin causes one to be "lost"; the forgiveness of sin causes one to be saved.

Where are you? God has drawn a line between the saved and the lost. Each is on one side or the other. People are either saved or lost. All are not saved, regardless of what some funeral preachers may proclaim. Sadly, some who preach funerals get the reputation of "never losing a case" by preaching everyone into Heaven.

I invite you to go with me back to the Bible and review God's



line of separation between the lost and the saved—a line drawn by God that must be respected! Luke 19:10 states that Jesus came to "seek and to save the lost." Jesus is the Savior, so named (Matthew 1:21). He is the "way"; besides Him, there is no other way (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

Jesus made the matter of who saves very clear when He said, "...for if you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). When it comes to who is saved and who is lost, serious Bible students realize that a line of separation has to be drawn somewhere. Here is the critical matter. Does it really matter, in the long run, where you or I draw the lines? What does matter is: Respecting the line or lines God has already drawn and revealed to us in His Holy Book -- the Bible.

Let us consider one of the many verses about salvation from God's Word and prepare to answer the vital question: "Where does/did God draw the line?" That verse is Mark 16:16. Jesus, the Saviour, commanded His disciples to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He promised, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Jesus

clearly drew the line between the saved and the damned. To be saved Jesus said, "believe and be baptized." "Being saved", according to Jesus, the Saviour, comes after faith and after baptism. Jesus then said that anyone who does not believe "shall be damned." Genuine belief requires action; a response to the Lord is evidence of faith. And, without the living faith which is demonstrated in baptism, there is no promise of salvation. Jesus drew the line.

Let's join together in prayer that we, and all others, respect the line that Jesus drew. ALF MM

Q&A

HOLY BIBLE

*“What Does
the Bible Say?”*



*Send your
Questions
to Dan Winkler
danddwinkler@gmail.com*

What's the Point in Preaching

A preacher friend of mine recently texted me a question about preaching. Before you read it, let me tell why I love him.

First, the depth of this man's study and the breadth of his love for God have enriched our podiums and pulpits for 56 years. Wow!

Second, years ago this man invited me into his heart and allowed me to call him a friend. You can't ever have enough of those, but you never have many.

Third, and most importantly, this man's commitment to the truth and the kindness of his demeanor have never been questioned ... not by anyone. (Believe me, that's saying something.)

Finally, as you can see in his question, this man has never stopped growing. Never waned in his efforts to be relevant. Never ceased in his desire to be helpful.

That said, let's look at his question and be touched by the enderness of his motives.

YOUR WONDERFUL QUESTION:

Recent events have made me question if I am preaching what is most needed by the church. I would like to hear [from you about] types of sermons that should be preached throughout the year in a balanced way. -- Yours in Christ's service.

MY THOUGHTS:

Thank you, dear friend, for challenging me to think about something we've both done so long it's as natural as tying shoes. If I understand the meat of your question, you want to make sure you're connecting with cultural norms and personal needs with your lessons. Preaching. You are wanting your heart to be a conduit of God's heart and AMEN to that!

Here's what I think. And I'm not trying to be cutesy or coy. Why not preach the way Peter preached in Acts 2? His sermon really wasn't his. He "spoke as the Spirit gave [him] utterance" (Acts 2:5). And who could argue with the success of that sermon? How many of us have had 3,000 responses to any of our lessons?! I think a study of "Peter's Pentecost Preaching" (How's that for a sermon topic?!?) might help us. So, let's briefly focus on: (a) the "content" and (b) the "concepts" we find in this lesson.

“CONTENT” THAT EFFECTS CHANGE

● **Preach sermons that help people go to Heaven.** Just before Peter began his sermon, he quoted the prophet Joel saying, "And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21; cf. Joel 2:28-32). Then he connected that promise of salvation with the sermon he went on to preach. Salvation. Forgiveness. Eternal life. Our preaching needs to get people ready for and excited about eternity.

● **Preach sermons that draw people closer to Jesus.** If we combine the times we find Jesus, Christ, and Lord in this sermon (Acts 2:22-36), we will find that it was a Christ-oriented, Christ-saturated lesson. He spoke about: (a) the confirmation of Christ (Acts 2:22), (b) the crucifixion of Christ (Acts 2:23), (c) the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:24-32), (d) the exaltation of Christ (Acts 2:33-35), and (e) the conclusion that Christ is the Lord who saves (Acts 2:36).

● **Preach sermons that show people God's grace.** Jesus' death was "according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:24). Jesus' resurrection and ascension were predicted by David's psalms (Acts 2:25-28, 32-35). The point? It was "by the grace of God he ... [tasted] of death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9). Golgotha was all about Grace!

● **Preach sermons that will help people see themselves for who they really are.** Peter was not shy in reminding those present of their guilt in crucifying Jesus. "[T]his Jesus," he said, "you crucified and killed" (Acts 2:23). And again, "God has made both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36). As a result, "they were cut to (literally, "stabbed down to") the heart" and wanted to know what they needed to do (Acts 2:37). Feeling bad about ourselves can be a good thing. The Bible calls that contrition or godly grief (Psalm. 51:7; 2 Cor. inthians 7:10).

● **Preach sermons that teach people what to do to be forgiven by God.** When those touched by this sermon asked, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter was quick to say, "Repent and be baptized every one of you for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38-40). Break that down.

- There was a precept [a dual precept ... one couldn't be obeyed

without the other being obeyed]. “Repent and be baptized” translate imperatives

- There was a purpose specified. To obey God, we must do what He says, the way He says, for the reason(s) He says. Here, repentance and baptism are “for the forgiveness of sins.”

- There was a promise. If obedient, they would receive the "gift of the Holy Spirit." People need to be told what to do, when to do it, and what they can look forward to if they do it.

“CONCEPTS” THAT EFFECT CHANGE

● **Preach and offer people hope.** The sermon in Acts 2 was designed to prove that Jesus is Lord who saves. That's hope. Also, when we read through the book of Acts, apostolic preaching persistently bore witness to Jesus and offered people the hope of two things: (a) a bodily resurrection based on Jesus' resurrection or (b) the salvation of eternal life.

● **Preach and escort people into the life of Jesus.** According to Peter's sermon, Jesus was proven to be God's Son by the "mighty works, and wonders and signs" He did because of God's working (Acts 2:22). Our preaching needs to constantly take people into the gospels, put them into Jesus' world, and bring Jesus into ours. Folks need to see Jesus at work and be reminded that He's still providentially involved in our lives as a great High Priest (Hebrews 2:17; 4:15; 7:25; 9:24).

● **Preach and stand with people in the shadows of Calvary.** Peter was quick in taking his listeners to Golgotha. In fact, he did so at the very beginning and at the end of his lesson (Acts 2:23, 36). Preach about the cross. The events leading to the cross. The seven sayings spoken from the cross. The sayings spoken to the cross. The seven individuals spotlighted around the cross. Get the picture? I make this suggestion with trepidation. The older I get the harder it is to visit Golgotha. It's not the physical hostility. I'm haunted by His heart. To see Him fighting through such agony, when His eyes lock onto my eyes of faith, it's more than I can bare. How could He love me that much? Me? Even me?

- **Preach and use the Bible.** Don't forget Peter used Joel 2 as a springboard for his sermon (Acts 2:21). It should also be noted that he pointed to Jesus' resurrection and exaltation as the fulfillment of predictive prophecies in Psalm 16:8-11 and Psalm 11:1 (Acts 2:25-28; 34-35). We might ought to consider the modus operandi of Paul's preaching. He "reasoned ... from the Scriptures, explaining and proving" his message about Jesus (Acts 17:2-3). Preach Bible. Don't just preach about or from the Bible. Preach Bible. Use the Bible to explain the Bible and apply the Bible. That's Bible preaching.

- Preach and do not hesitate to make sin as cold and as black as it is. Peter offered his

listeners a stark contrast between the way they treated Jesus and the way God treated Him. God raised Jesus from the grave, but they put Jesus in the grave (Acts 2:23-24). They tossed Jesus aside, but God exalted Him to His right side (Acts 2:33, 36). His words were so compelling they struck a chord of contrition: "Brothers what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Sin is still sin. We may deny it. Friends / family may ignore it. Culture may accept it. But sin is still a transgression of God's will (1 Jn. 3:4, KJKV) and it will damn our soul to Hell (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21).

CONCLUSION

Well, I hope these thoughts have proven helpful. I think the Holy Spirit's sermon in Acts 2 offers a well-balanced schematic for sermon planning. Five suggestions from the "Content" of this sermon. Five suggestions from "Concepts" found in this sermon. If we planned lessons that loosely follow these ten suggestions, in one year's time we would preach five sermons that relate to each suggestion and our preaching could closely resemble a sermon that effected a great deal of change in a great many people.

I love you, brother. So, until we text or talk again, “[P]reach the word ... do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (2 Tim. 4:2, 5). **MM**

Dan Winkler



Why? did JESUS die on the Cross

by George Reed

Jesus was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hid their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not” (Isaiah 53:3). Jesus came unto His own, and His own rejected Him (John 1:11).

We know Jesus was born of the virgin Mary (Matthew 1:23); lived a short life of 33 years; suffered a criminal’s death (Matthew 27), and rose from the dead on the third day (Mark 16:9). Many have not given heed to the death of Christ. It is something that cannot go unanswered and not obeyed.

Jesus dying on the cross was threefold. His work on the cross was to justify, reconcile, and make propitiation for the sins of the people. Let’s examine each topic as it is taught in the Bible.

JUSTIFICATION

First, man is in sin (Romans 3:23). Sin is a transgression of God’s Word (1 John 3:4; cf. James 4:17; Micah 6:8). If we ever expect to be with God, we have to be justified to get entrance into the Eternal Kingdom (Revelation 1:5-6). When a person is justified, he is acquitted from all past sins. Thus, he is treated as if he never sinned.

The New Testament tells us we are justified by many things.

1. BY FAITH (Romans 5:1). That faith is an obedient faith.

Read the entire chapter of Hebrews 11.

2. BY WORKS (James 2:21, 24).

3. BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST (Romans 5:9).

Only through His blood we have redemption (Ephesians 1:7).

4. BY GRACE (Titus 3:7).

RECONCILIATION

W.E. Vine states reconciliation is to change from enmity to friendship. He goes on to say, “With regard to the relationship

between God and man, the use of this and connected words shows that primarily reconciliation is what God accomplishes, exercising His grace towards sinful man on the ground of the death of Christ is propitiatory sacrifice under the judgment due to sin, 2 Corinthians 5:19.” Jesus made reconciliation for all men (Hebrews 2:17). It is stated in Romans 5:10, “For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.” Lenski, in his commentary points out the significance of the verb “we were reconciled to God” which is misinterpreted when ‘enemies’ are understood to be people to whom God is an enemy and not people who are enemies to God.”

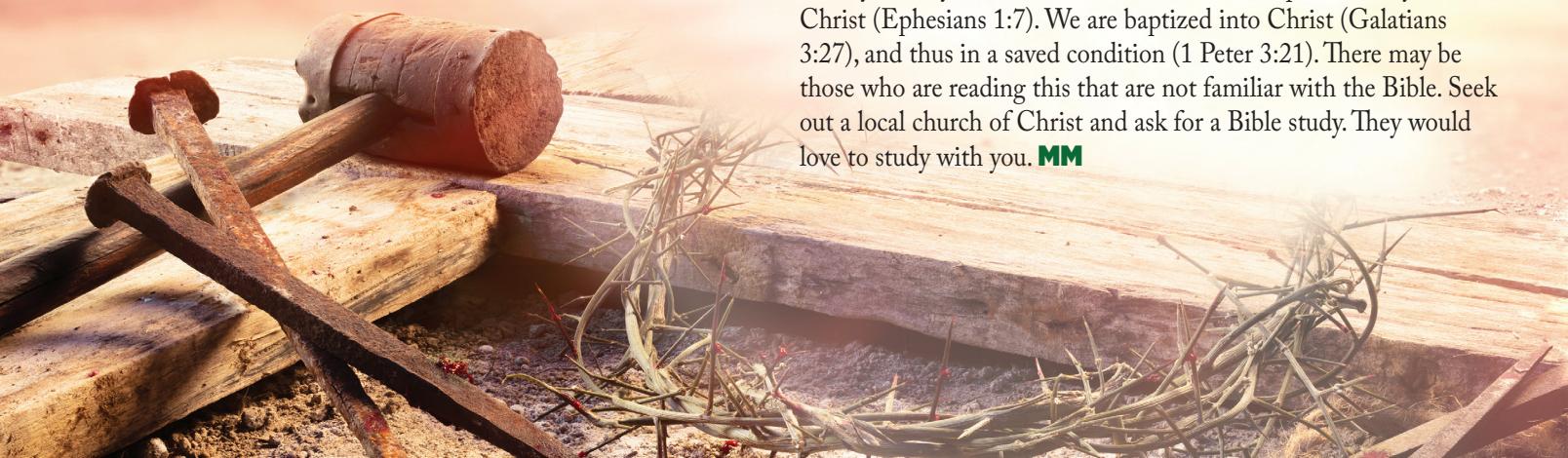
Isaiah tells us that our iniquities have separated us from God (Isaiah 59:2). God would not hear their prayers (cf. Jeremiah 7:16). We need to get back to God. “And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreprovable before him” (Colossians 1:21-22).

PROPITIATION

Propitiation appears in the Bible three times (Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). Propitiation means that Christ appeased the wrath of God for us. Our guilt and sins have been taken away. Guy N. Woods makes this comment on 1 John 2:2: “Here is announced but one of the many aspects of the death of Christ in our behalf. (1) He propitiates the Father, thus rendering him favorable toward us. (2) He reconciles us to God, enabling us to be at peace with him (Romans 5:11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19). (3) As a ransom for us, he paid the debit, permitting us to go free from the thralldom and bondage of sin.”

God in showing His great love for man sent His Son to be a propitiation (atoning sacrifice) for our sins (1 John 4:10). Notice what the apostle Paul says, “Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21; cf. Isaiah 53:10).

Jesus has made justification, reconciliation, and propitiation possible for you. Have you been washed in the blood of the Lamb? Have you obeyed Acts 2:38? Remember, redemption is only in Christ (Ephesians 1:7). We are baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27), and thus in a saved condition (1 Peter 3:21). There may be those who are reading this that are not familiar with the Bible. Seek out a local church of Christ and ask for a Bible study. They would love to study with you. **MM**



Gentleness

*Josh Yates, Minister
Fruitland Church of Christ,
Jackson, MO*



Josh Yates

Galatians 5:22: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." As a Christian, I often think about the fruit of the Spirit. These is a list of characteristics that should be evident in our lives as we strive to walk in the Spirit and be molded into the image of Christ. So of course, I like to think of each one of these and ask myself if I display these qualities in my life. Do I see these things in me? Do others see these things in me? If someone were to introduce me to a stranger and describe the type of person I am, would they use some of these words to describe me?

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

Galatians 5:22:

The funny thing is, the other day as I was thinking on this, I got stuck on it for a second and realized how easy it may be for some of us to think a little negatively about possessing this important trait. When I say some of us, I am thinking particularly of men.

Imagine that a friend is introducing you to someone, and he says, "Oh, this is Josh. This guy loves everyone, and everyone loves him!" (Love). That would be nice, right? Now just go down the list. "Oh, this is Josh, he's the happiest guy you'll ever meet!" (Joy). Well, thanks! "Oh, this is Josh; he is so cool and laid back and easygoing" (Peaceful/Patient). I like that! Keep going! "This is Josh, he's a super nice, super good guy" (Kind/Good). Nice, I really appreciate that! "This

is Josh; he is just so gentle!... Wait, what? Come on, man, where is that coming from? Don't listen to him; he's just joking.

Would any of you have the same reaction? How many men out there would like to be automatically thought of as the "gentlest" man someone knows? I would guess not many, yet it is a trait we should all desire to have. This trait may sound weak and undesirable to a masculine mind, but what is it really?

Gentleness, or meekness, does NOT mean weakness. The Greek word was often used to describe a horse's breaking and training. Even old English used the term "Meeking a horse" in the same way. If one were to "meek" a horse, it wouldn't mean the horse was stripped of its power, but rather that the power of the horse had been harnessed from an uncontrollable state to a controllable one under the hand of its master. Power under humble submission to the master, just as we should be under our master. It means power under control.

When thought of that way, it requires a great deal of strength to cultivate a quality of gentleness. Strength by restraint or self-control. Since gentleness springs from humility, someone who lacks it may instead be described as rash, impulsive, prideful, selfish, easily angered, unreasonable, arrogant, and mean-natured. Now, doesn't being described as gentle seem much better than its opposite?

Jesus Himself said, "I am gentle and lowly in heart". Our all-powerful, almighty Savior could never be described as weak. However, He was gentle and is still gentle with us, which should make us all the more appreciative of this often-underappreciated trait. So be proud to be called gentle. That's just another way of saying Christ-like, and what a compliment that would be! **MM**

(We welcome Josh to the MM family. He is a third-generation preacher following in the footsteps of his father, Mike, and grandfather, Edward. Josh is married to Heather Yates, and together, they have four beautiful children. Josh started preaching after several years in secular work, including being an Army Medic. I appreciate this good article and hope it won't be his last. -dd)

the Starfish and the Spider



Dan Williams, minister
Franklin, Tennessee

Dan Williams

A starfish has between four and 50 arms. If you cut one off, the arm can regenerate. Not only that, but in some species of starfish, like the blue linkia, if you cut off all five arms, you will get five new starfish! That is possible because of the unique physiology of the starfish: it is a completely decentralized organism.

In their book, *The Starfish and the Spider*, authors Ori Brafmon and Rod Beckstrom contrast the starfish with the spider. They point out that if you cut off the head of a spider, it dies, because unlike the starfish, the spider is a centralized organism.

Brafmon and Beckstrom use these two creatures to describe two different types of human organizations. The spider represents the typical Western corporate model, with a CEO and a top-down, centralized hierarchy. The starfish, on the other hand, represents an increasingly common social structure: the decentralized organization.

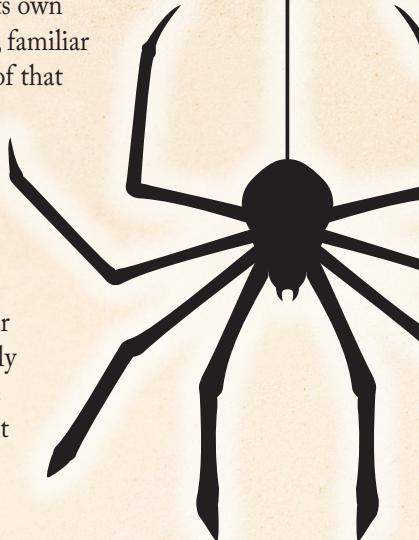
One example of a “starfish” is the Internet. The rise of the World Wide Web has brought a new appreciation for the power of decentralized social organizations. In fact, ARPANET, the original computer network that eventually led to the development of the Internet, was created by the United States Defense Department so that in the event of a war (especially a nuclear war) the military would have a communication system that could not be destroyed. Be-

cause the Internet does not have any centralized command location, it is indestructible.

I would argue that the original “World Wide Web” is the church. Neither Jesus nor the apostles made any provision for a centralized structure: there is no President or Pope in the New Testament, nor is there any headquarters or ecclesiastical bureaucracy. Jesus is the only “head” and He has “all authority” in the church (Ephesians 1:22-23, Matthew 28:18).

This decentralized structure is a great strength. It protects all of the churches from the domination of any one individual. It respects the headship of Jesus over the church, which is His body (Ephesians 5:23). It helps to prevent the rise of man-made denominational structures and hierarchies. And, it ensures that the church cannot be easily corrupted or destroyed, because if one congregation is attacked or corrupted, others can easily spring up to carry on the Lord’s work.

In keeping with the pattern of the New Testament, the churches of Christ are, and always have been, “starfish” organizations. Each local church has its own leaders, chosen from that congregation, familiar with the challenges and opportunities of that community, accountable to the flock, responsive to the needs of the people. There is no distant national or worldwide denominational structure controlling the churches or dictating doctrine. Our congregations are connected, but by two spiritual ties: our common allegiance to Christ as our only “head,” and our heartfelt desire to “love the brotherhood” (1 Peter 2:17). May it ever be so. **MM**



The Preacher's Page

/ PRESENTED BY THE JENKINS INSTITUTE



Fulfill Your Ministry



Ministry Verse of the Quarter

FULFILL YOUR MINISTRY

When Dr. Luke addresses the Book of Acts to

Theophilus, he reminds him that he had written about all that Jesus began both to do and to teach. The work of our Lord prior to His death on the cross was two-fold in nature. Our Lord preached the Word everywhere He went (Matthew 4:23-25). We also know that everywhere Jesus went, He did good for others (Acts 10:38).

Our brother, Paul, gave his final instructions to his younger protégé, Timothy, and through these letters to all preachers. He first tells us that we should "Preach the Word" (2 Timothy 4:2). A couple of verses later he gives this instruction. "But as for you, use self-restraint in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (v. 5).

Our two greatest examples in Scripture understood that the nature of our work is to both preach the Word and to busy ourselves in our work. There seems to be some preachers who think it is impossible to do both. Some seem to want to focus completely on the preaching aspect of our work. They are great students who present marvelous sermons. But, often, the ministry aspect of the life of the preacher suffers or is completely non-existent.

On the other hand some are awesome ministers. They are highly engaged and involved in every program or ministry of the local congregation. They are known for doing good in the community. But, their preaching suffers from lack of study.

If we want to follow the example of our Lord, we will both "do and teach." If we want to follow the example of Paul, we will both preach the Word and we will work hard to fulfill our ministry. The idea is that we will preach the Word and fill our lives full of Kingdom work. Brothers, we cannot just sit behind a closed door in an office all week long and expect that our words will connect and be effective. We must sometimes get out of the office and into the lives of the people who we wish to influence. Brothers, let's do our best to preach the Word and fulfill our ministry.



Mentoring
21.8%

Serving Others
27.7%

View of Scripture
14.9%

Making Disciples
35.6%

WHY WE STAY

Our studies have shown over and over that in comparison to denominational churches, ministers who minister in churches of Christ have a higher level of satisfaction, stay longer, and are less likely to quit. We're going inside the numbers and asking what makes us unique that might lead to these findings:

SERVING OTHERS AND MEETING NEEDS. CHURCHES OF CHRIST EMPHASIZE PRACTICAL SERVICE AND BENEVOLENCE. MINISTERING TO THE POOR, SICK, AND NEEDY IN TANGIBLE WAYS CAN BRING GREAT JOY.

MAKING DISCIPLES AND SEEING LIVES TRANSFORMED THROUGH CHRIST. SINCE IN THE CHURCH WE PLACE SUCH A STRONG EMPHASIS ON EVANGELISM AND BAPTISM, HELPING LEAD PEOPLE TO FAITH AND SEEING THEM GROW AS DISCIPLES IS REWARDING AND FULFILLING.

BECAUSE CHURCHES OF CHRIST HAVE A "HIGH VIEW OF SCRIPTURE" AND BIBLICAL AUTHORITY, THE MINISTERS ARE FREE TO PREACH ANY TEXT AND SAY WHAT IT SAYS. IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT IN-DEPTH BIBLE TEACHING AND EXPOSITORY PREACHING ARE CENTRAL. THIS SORT OF PREACHING IS BOTH FREEING AND SATISFYING.

MENTORING AND DISCIPLING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS. CHURCHES OF CHRIST HAVE LONG BEEN DRIVEN BY A DESIRE TO TRAIN AND TEACH THE NEXT GENERATION. WE LOVE TO EMPHASIZE YOUTH.

MINISTRY IS



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The Enemy Called **NOSTALGIA** **A WARNING**

to the Church about looking back!

Brandon Baggett • Preaching Minister, Luverne church of Christ • Luverne, AL

Nostalgia / no-stal-juh / noun

a wistful desire to return in thought or in fact to a former time in one's life, to one's home or homeland, or to one's family and friends; a sentimental yearning for the happiness of a former place or time

Have you ever been struck by strong feelings of nostalgia?

Maybe it was a certain smell, toy, or video game that took your mind back to your childhood. Perhaps it was a song you heard on the radio that transported you to a different place,

A portrait photograph of Brandon Baggett, a young man with short, light-colored hair, smiling at the camera. He is wearing a light blue button-down shirt.
Brandon Baggett
time, or culture. It might have even been a movie or television show that reminded you of a happier, much simpler time. The chances are high that we've all had those nostalgic feelings before. The truth is, those happy, rose-tinted memories of the past can be quite addicting. Although we all have regrets and painful memories, there's just something warm, happy, and comforting

about remembering the past. For many people, reflecting deeply on their past is a strong coping mechanism, especially when their present is difficult and their future seems bleak.

But nostalgia can be dangerous!

It's possible the "good old days" were not as good as we remember. Sometimes we can be guilty of looking at the past through rose-tinted glasses, picturing the past more positively than we should. Additionally, thinking too much about the

past can cause us to grow weary and dissatisfied with the present, and it can cause us to develop a defeatist attitude towards the future. While we should not forget the past, it is important to know that we can't keep living in the past. We can't allow the past to so arrest our attention and affection that we lose interest in today or hope for tomorrow.

Nostalgia has hurt God's people before!

There are many examples in the Scriptures of God's people looking back when they should have been looking forward. For example, God led His people out of Egyptian bondage in the early chapters of the book of Exodus. They had faced slavery and infanticide, and they were crying out to God for salvation. Jehovah heard their cries, raised up Moses to be their deliverer, and he defeated Pharaoh and "all the gods of Egypt" (Exodus 12:12) in the mighty plagues. However, they quickly began to think about Egypt just after they reached the safe side of the Red Sea. In perhaps the Israelite's greatest lapse of faith, the Bible records them saying, "Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt? Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt" (Numbers 14:4). God's people should have been looking forward, greatly anticipating their arrival in the Promise Land. However, they were looking backwards, foolishly longing for their past life in Egypt.

Similarly, God's people were struck with strong feelings of Nostalgia towards the end of the Old Testament. After the Jews spent seventy years in Babylonian captivity, God decreed that his people could return home and rebuild Jerusalem. Their first order of business was to rebuild the temple of God, the place that signified God's presence among them. As the book of Ezra reveals, there was much shouting and crying when the foundation was laid. However, it was not all positive.

Some shouted and cried for joy, but the older generation was shouting and crying out of sadness (see Ezra 3:12-13). The younger generation was thrilled to see a foundation laid for a temple, but the older generation was sour because they were still thinking about the former temple that was destroyed. Eventually, the building process halted for over a decade, and God sent Haggai to stir them up to keep working. Amazingly, Haggai had to address their feelings of nostalgia in his preaching. There were still people in his day who were thinking about the former temple, and they were weary and disinterested in building the current temple. Because they were so consumed with strong feelings over the past, they viewed the current temple "as nothing" (Haggai 2:3 ESV). Haggai had to redirect their focus. They had to stop living in the past.

Nostalgia still hurts the church!

Nothing has changed; God's people are still very sentimental over the past! Many congregations are deadlocked in neutral because they refuse to let go of the past. It's not uncommon to hear church members fantasizing over the past. They talk about the "glory days" of their church when it was growing by leaps and bounds, when the classrooms were filled with children, and when a beloved past preacher was here. These seemingly harmless daydreams are quite dangerous; they are often coupled with a disinterest in the present. Many seemingly believe the best days of their congregation are behind them, not in front of them. No preacher will ever live up to their heroes of the past. No good ideas, works, or programs will ever yield the same results as the things they "used to do."

When a church idolizes its past, they paralyze their present. Every church has a past, but we need to remember that everything in a church's past happened as the church was moving forward. That's the direction God wants to keep before us. The church can't be like the ancient Jews who kept looking back; God wants us to look forward! Looking forward requires new ideas, new changes, new people, new opportunities, and new vision. We can't live in the past; we must seize the present and serve God now!

Solomon once said, "Say not, 'Why were the former days better than these?' For it is not from wisdom that you ask this" (Ecclesiastes 7:10 ESV). Solomon was right; it's not wise to think of the past as being better. So stop believing the lies of nostalgia. Wisdom makes us look forward. Let's appreciate our past. Let's learn from our past. Let's celebrate our past. But let's stop trying to live in our past. Let's be God's church today! And don't ever forget that because of Jesus, our best days will always be in front of us! **MM**

(Branden is one of our bright young writers and I appreciate his study and talent. -dd)



*"We can't live
in the past, we must
seize the present and
serve God now!"*

Baptists and Baptism

Phillip Slate,
Memphis Tenn.

At a more than superficial level, churches of Christ seem to share more theological beliefs with Baptists than with most other groups. Baptism is a case in point. Certainly, we share views on the issues of the subjects (who are to be baptized?) and action (how the act is performed) of baptism. We have differed with most of them on the design (what are its purposes?) of the ordinance. Many of our respective preachers have debated this issue.

Interestingly, on both sides of the Atlantic in recent years several Baptists have reexamined in an exegetical manner the functions of baptism. George Beasley-Murray stated the case well in his *Baptism Today and Tomorrow* (St. Martin's Press, 1966/ London: Macmillan) when he pointed out that (1) Baptists are a separatist group significantly because of the views on baptism. (2) But when outsiders read their literature and speak with them, Baptists seem to be staunch about the who and how questions while waffling on the why issue. In short, they seem to attach no great theological significance to it as an act.

(3) But since we live in an ecumenical age, a church can hardly afford to be separatist except on good theological grounds. Thus, (4) Baptists need either to begin joining up with others who also attach little significance to baptism or to justify their separatism by shoring up their theology of baptism. Good points.

Already in 1962, Beasley-Murray's volume, *Baptism in the New Testament* gave his exegetical views on baptism (a volume I first saw in the public library in Ilkeston, Derbyshire, in about 1964). It is hard to disagree with most of Beasley-Murray's exegesis of the critical texts on the purposes of baptism. Years later he was asked in Searcy, Arkansas, whether he had had occasion to change his mind about what he had written some thirty years earlier. He responded, "No, not at all. I did not write a Baptist book or a church of Christ book. This is what the world of New Testament scholarship has concluded about baptism." For several years Beasley-Murray taught at Southern Baptism Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. There he found the younger men very much

open to his exegesis, but that the older preachers and scholars resisted it or stood aloof. He accounted for that in part by pointing out Baptist reactions in the 19th century when Alexander Campbell succeeded in winning over to his views on baptism the largest Baptist church in Louisville, Kentucky!

More recently, however, Anthony R. Cross of Regent's Park College, Oxford, has written "The Evangelical Sacrament: baptisma simper reformatum" (*Evangelical Quarterly*. 80.3 [July 2008]: 195-217; it is also accessible on the Internet). His bibliography is large and reflects the current rethinking on the subject. Somewhat earlier, Robert H. Stein, professor at the Southern Baptism Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, wrote in 1998, *Baptism and Becoming a Christian in the New Testament*. (Pull it up on the Internet).

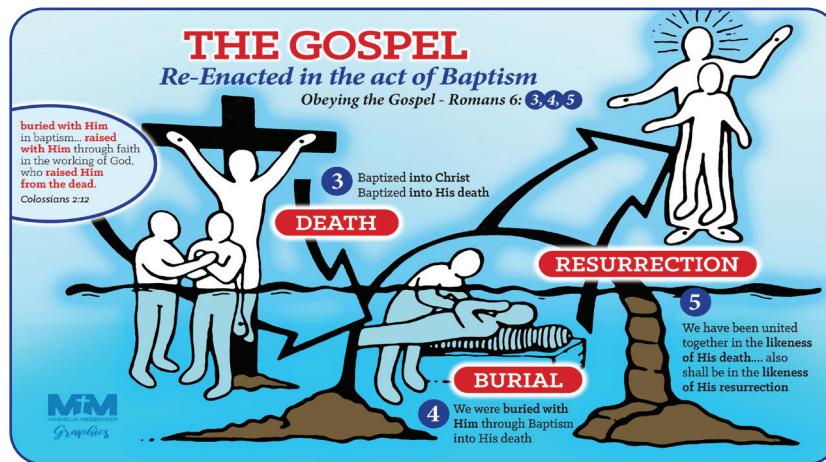
He sees faith, repentance, confession, and baptism as part of one process, a point our thoughtful preachers and teachers have made all along. His exegesis of the baptism texts is good. However, one will find some of his views on the Holy Spirit and the thief on the cross somewhat disappointing. Nevertheless, his article is another evidence that some Baptists are re-examining and

re-thinking their more or less traditional stance on the functions of baptism. Interestingly, Cross refers to the fear of having any external action connected with salvation as "Protestant Gnosticism." Not incidentally, that is a term used in the title of an interesting book by a Canadian Presbyterian: Philip J. Lee, *Against the Protestant Gnostics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987)

By reading at least Beasley-Murray's *Baptism Today and Tomorrow* (a brief work) and Cross's substantive article, one will be in a better position to talk at a more informed level with our friends in the Baptist Church. -C. Philip Slate (cpsmissions@gmail.com)

--First published in the British publication, *Christian Worker*. MM

(Brother Slate taught Bible at Harding University for many years and his biblical knowledge and writings are well respected. We are always glad to share his thoughts. -dd)



The Gospel

IN 5 SECONDS

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. The Gospel, which translates to "good news," is the profound message about the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus.

INTRO: The Gospel in 5 Seconds deals not with time increments but sequential events: E.g., 2nd Greatest Command (Mark 12:31), 2nd Adam (1 Corinthians 15:47).

What is the Gospel in 5 Seconds?

- 1. The Gospel is contained in a 2nd Law!** Christians live under a **2nd law** (John 1:17; Col. 2:14; Jeremiah 31:31; Matthew 5:17; Gal. 3:19).
 - a. Hebrews 8:6-7 - The New Covenant is superior to the Old.
 - b. Hebrews 9:15-17 - Death established the New Covenant.
 - c. Hebrews 10:9 - 2nd Covenant is based on better promises.
- 2. The Gospel commands a 2nd Birth!** To become a Christian, a person must be "born again" (John 3:3-7). Cf. 1 Corinthians 4:15.
 - a. "Born again" = born from above (Gk., *anōthen*).
 - b. We must be born of "water" (Acts 8:36, 39; 22:16).
 - c. We must be born of "the Spirit" (Titus 3:4-5; Acts 2:38).
- 3. The Gospel promises a 2nd Coming!** Jesus is coming back!
 - a. Acts 1:11 - Angels promised that Jesus would return.
 - b. Hebrews 9:27-28 - Jesus' return is as sure as death.
 - c. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 - Jesus' return is comforting.
- 4. The Gospel warns of a 2nd Death!** Following life, there is no more death; after death, there is no more life.
 - a. Revelation 20:11-15 - Judgment is serious and final.
 - b. Revelation 21:8 - Rejecting Jesus, suffers the 2nd Death.
 - c. Romans 6:23 - Death is the result of unrepented sin.
- 5. The Gospel provides a 2nd Law of Pardon!** Christians who sin have a second chance if they repent, confess, and pray.
 - a. Second chances are needed: Jonah (3:1), Peter (Acts 16:7); Simon (Acts 8:12-24).
 - b. God forgives penitent souls (Acts 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9).

CONCLUSION: We live under a second law, look for a second coming, avoid a second death, and believe in a second chance for those who sin.

Carrying our Cross

by **Kathy Goff-Brummett**
Batesville, Mississippi

Recently I had an opportunity to spend a few weeks in preparation for five lessons at Sardis Lake Christian Camp on the topic of carrying your cross and denying self from Luke 9:23-27 and Galatians 2:20. As often is the case, the teacher learned more than anyone. For some reason, I have not been able to get those sessions off my mind. We talked about the sacrifice, commitment, endurance, and perseverance involved in taking up our cross. We learned that denying self brings transformation and growth. But the thing that still challenges me is that denying self to carry my cross opens doors for me to share my faith and evangelize. It truly changes my community.



Kathy Goff-Brummett

By carrying our cross faithfully, we become a witness to others of Christ's love, grace, and forgiveness. Our attitudes and actions in the way we carry our cross can draw others to Christ and inspire them to follow Him. Our life becomes a personal testimony to the transformative power of faith. It's going to be very difficult for our family and friends to argue with our story when we show them that while we are not exempt from life's challenges, through faith, we find strength and purpose to make it through the difficult times. Our example can prompt questions about our faith and provide openings to share the Gospel message.

Carrying our cross also allows us to identify with the suffering of others and relate to them in ways we would not otherwise. We should not carry our crosses alone even though we often feel that we are alone in our suffering. As Jesus carried His cross, He also experienced weakness,

from a **Woman's** VIEWPOINT *"In Memory of Miss June"*

discouragement, and temptation. But God didn't leave Him alone. He put Simon of Cyrene there to help him – to carry the cross for Jesus. We are part of a community of believers who can support and encourage each other. We can lean on each other for strength and guidance as we navigate the challenges of discipleship. We can support someone else who is carrying a heavy cross. As well as being blessed by community, we are to be community to others who struggle.

Several passages reinforce that we are meant to be in community with other Christians and to uphold and support them during their difficult times.

1 Peter 3:8 encourages us to express love to others with unity, sympathy, love, humility, and tender hearts. Proverbs 17:17 says that we are born to love and serve others during their adversity. Philippians 2:1-2 tells us to love with the same mind and love as Christ. Galatians 6:2 tells us to bear one another's burdens. Hebrews 10:24-25 admonishes us to encourage each other and stir each other up to love and good works. 1 Corinthians 12:12-20 makes it clear that WE NEED EACH OTHER. But my favorite is Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, which says to lift each other, keep each other warm, and fight for each other. It tells us that a cord of three cannot be easily broken. One of the greatest joys in my walk is my personal Strand of 3 that prays together weekly.

In Luke 9 when Jesus says, "come after me", He's inviting us into a relationship with Him; He's inviting us to deny self and follow Him; He's inviting us to take up our cross daily. What areas of my life is Jesus sculpting to make me more like Him? Who needs me to be Simon and help carry their cross? Do we have our own Strand of 3 that cannot be easily broken as we support each other? Community is for me, and I am for my community. That's a part of denying self and carrying the cross. **MM**

<kathygbrummett@gmail.com>

admonishes us to encourage each other and stir each other up to love and good works.

Hebrews 10:24-25

Purpose of Life

by Elizabeth Turner Beall,
MM copy editor

“Let Us make man in Our image,” God said, then followed that up by giving mankind dominion over every non-human living thing in the sea, on the land, and in the air, and followed that up with the command to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:26-28).

Why would the all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere-present God/Deity create this amazing and beautiful world, and then create mankind to fill it up with humans, knowing that most of those humans would

not choose to show Him love or follow Him in the way He desired (Matthew 7:13-14)? God created mankind to desire to worship something or someone, and with the ability to make choices based on the ability to reason and understand. God loved/loves His creation—mankind—and that love is so great that He is willing to let us/mankind choose which path to follow.

Yes, He wants all of mankind to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4), but He loves us enough to allow us to make our own choices. He did not make us with strings to be puppets pulled in ways that make us conform to His will. Neither did He make us to be pushed around like men on a chessboard. He loves us enough to allow us to love Him back, or not; to seek out the truth in the inspired (God-breathed) Word (2 Timothy 3:16), or not; and to learn what He wants us to do. Just because He wants everyone to be saved, and just because He offered that salvation to us “because of His purpose and grace before the ages began” (1 Timothy 1:9), does not mean that everyone will be saved and go to

By conforming our lives to Christ's life and giving God the glory for everything we have and everything we do!

Heaven when they die. We are called through the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14); many will hear it, but not everyone will believe it and obey it.

Thus, our purpose as human beings is to love God as our Creator and show Him that love by learning and keeping the commandments He gave us (John 14:15; 15:14); conforming our lives to Christ's life (Romans 12:1-2) via obedience through baptism/immersion (Acts 2:38) for the forgiveness of our sins, “putting on Christ” (Galatians 3:27), and living faithful, devoted lives to God as we “walk in the light” (1 John 1:7), making sure that all we do in word or in deed is done in His name (Colossians 3:17), giving Him all the glory (1 Corinthians 10:31), so that at our life's end we can say with Paul, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge will award to me on that Day (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

As Solomon concluded in his book of Ecclesiastes, “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14), we look to the New Testament that confirms Solomon's conclusion. What's our purpose? How do we “fear God and keep His commandments”? By conforming our lives to Christ's life and giving God the glory for everything we have and everything we do!

“Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:58). **MM**

(Beth has been our copy editor for every issue for the past five years. She is an excellent member of our staff, and we appreciate her writing skills as well. -dd)



Elizabeth Turner Beall

As Solomon concluded in his book of Ecclesiastes, “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man”

(Ecclesiastes 12:13-14),

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Time: 8:30 - noon
(Lunch will be served)

Featured speaker:
Aaron Gallagher
Theme: "Answering the Error"

Tim McCarter, Minister

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*Your brother in Christ,
Don Blackwell,
Executive Director, GBN*



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East Laurel Church of Christ community cook-out

August 24th was a great day. What a fellowship, what a joy divine when the church and the neighborhood came together to greet, eat, and enjoy activities that children and adults both enjoyed. There was a water slide, jumper music, games, and plenty of barbecued hot dogs, hamburgers, sausages, chips, cookies, baked beans, drinks, and all the condiments needed to make the food extra delicious, and we can't forget watermelon!

Brother Jerry Graham is the minister at East Laurel, and Brother Rodney McDonald serves as our assistant minister.

The church recorded visitors' names and addresses so we could follow up our successful day of community fun. Jesus did say, "go into all the world making disciples" (Matthew 28:19-20). We are starting in our neighborhood.

(Thank sister Gwendolyn for this report and her good support of The Messenger. We must make our name known in our communities. It is a wonderful and productive way of reaching people with the Gospel. -dd)



Pennsylvania Men's Retreat

Around 20 of the male members of the Kittanning, Pennsylvania, church of Christ got together on a farm outside Dayton, PA, September 13-14, for what has become an annual retreat. The men enjoyed fellowship, including campfires with mountain pies and S'Mores! Keith Fussell from the Christian Counseling Center of Bartlett, Tennessee, and the Oliver Creek church of Christ also in Bartlett was honored to travel to PA to speak on Becoming Men of Integrity based on the life of Joseph in Genesis. The congregation concluded the weekend on Sunday, September 15, with worship and a potluck meal! Keith's father-in-law, Clarence McDowell, planted the Kittanning Church in 1977. The Kittanning Church now numbers over 100, which makes it one of the largest churches of Christ in Pennsylvania!

Keith Fussell
Christian Counseling Center
of Bartlett, LLC • Bartlett, TN 38134
www.BartlettChristianCounseling.com



(Keith is an elder at Oliver Creek in Bartlett, and a full-time counselor. I appreciate his service to the church as an elder, and the many good works he does as a counselor. -dd)

Calvinism VERSUS THE BIBLE

*A Special Issue of
House to House Heart to Heart*

**Total depravity!
Unconditional election!
Limited atonement!
Irresistible grace!
Perseverance of the saints!**

Calvinism is not in the Bible, yet our communities are full of people who have been taught these doctrines and are basing their eternities on them. They need the Bible's simple teaching to set them free.

Calvinism is not a new false teaching, but some of the ways that it is being shared, and some of the audiences, are new. Most younger members in your congregation watch videos online. Every young person in your community does. Most of the religious videos they see are teaching Calvinism. They are not hearing the truth unless churches of Christ show how Calvinism differs from Scripture.

Soul-winners reached out to us and requested that we do an issue of House to House entirely on this topic. If you are not currently using House to House, you can choose to participate in this issue as a one-time mailing with no other obligations. If you want to preview the issue or email it to the members of your congregation, email us and we will send you a copy to share.

Remember, someone in your community—maybe someone you know—is studying the Bible and watching videos about Calvinism. Someone may believe false teaching and make a decision that will affect his or her eternity. You can help by sharing the truth on this subject. Contact us before April 11 to send this special issue of House to House in your community. Let's work together to reach the lost in our communities. **MM**

Matt Wallin
matt@housetohouse.com

The Wonderful WORD of LIFE

by Clarence DeLoach, Minister
 Church of Christ at Sycamore
 Cookeville, Tn



It is vitally important for every Christian to love and study the Bible. The prophet Jeremiah expressed this truth when he said, "Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jeremiah 15:16). It is imperative that we glean and gain the treasures it contains. I fear that in our time so many Christians have at best only a superficial and shallow knowledge of scripture. No other volume compares with the sacred volume—the Bible. Consider these attributes:

1. It is infallible. From beginning to end it is marked by perfection. "The law of the Lord is perfect (Psalms 19:7). It is flawless because God is its author. "Every word of God is pure" (Proverbs 30:6). No other book can make this claim.

2. It is inerrant. This means it is true and accurate in all its parts. It is marked by truth on all topics it treats—origins, history, science, and geography. The Psalmist stated it this way, "Therefore all your precepts concerning all things I consider to be right, I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:128).

3. It is complete. Nothing needs to be added. Several cultic religions insist it needs some latter-day revelations. The liberal neo-orthodoxy brand of theology insists that the Bible was merely a comment for its day on spiritual experiences, but for our time, a new comment is needed. One writer has said that a new Bible is needed because we need to know what God is doing now. But the Bible is infallible in its totality, inerrant in all its parts, and complete in its substance.

4. It is Authoritative. It is the last word! The final court of appeal. Isaiah said, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear O earth; for the lord

has spoken" (Isaiah 1:2). When God speaks, we must listen! We may discuss its implications, applications, and meaning, but never whether it is true!

5. It is Sufficient. It is abundant and complete. It thoroughly furnishes us! It is all-sufficient for salvation, maturity, hope, and blessing. From it, one can learn how to be saved; then it will teach and reprove us when we are wrong; and encourage us in the right. It is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in right living (see 2 Timothy 3:15-17).

6. It is Effective. It will accomplish God's design for it. (Isaiah 55:11). It is powerful in its effect upon us "for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance" (1 Thessalonians 1:5). It effectually works in those who believe. (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

7. It is determinative. How you welcome, receive, and respond to the Word will determine the direction, meaning, and substance of your life here and your destiny to come. Because the word that Jesus spoke will "judge you at the last day" (John 12:48).

Please allow His holy Word to saturate your soul, enlighten your mind, motivate your will, feed your emotions, and direct your life. **MM**

(Brother DeLoach is well known and respected for his many years of preaching God's word. He also told me he was a long-time reader of The Messenger.

I asked him to send me an article; he has done so and this one is a true Gem! Young men, this one will preach! Thank you, brother DeLoach. -dd)



In the SPOTLIGHT

Robert Rawson Retires

Over Sixty Years of Ministry in Mississippi

The greatest man we know, Robert Rawson, taught us how to live, love, and serve in The Lord's Kingdom. After 60+ years of service in the Lord's Kingdom, he has officially retired from preaching in Mississippi, but his influence will last through eternity.

Daddy has lived his 77 years in the State of Mississippi. He grew up in Kosciusko, worshipped with his parents at the Nile Congregation, and began preaching at local churches when he was only 13 years old. After high school, he went off for two years to Freed-Hardeman College in Henderson, TN, to further his education in ministry, but he promised his momma when he left for F-HU that he would be back to preach and serve in Mississippi. He returned to Delta State for his final 2 years of college. Thankfully, he met our mother, Jane Hull, while at F-HU, and she joined him after graduation. For 56 years, they have lived and served in various towns in Mississippi, including Ruleville, Okolona, Batesville, and Crockett. Our Dad's longest min-

istry was with the Batesville church for 34 years, with his final years of service being 12 years in the Crockett community outside of Senatobia, MS.

While fulfilling his preacher duties, he was also passionate about training preachers through the Training School For Better Service program he and his father-in-law, William Hull, founded. This program produced many preachers in Mississippi who have gone on to do great work for the Kingdom.

His influence reached way beyond the church building walls, as he was an active leader in many civic organizations and could share the Gospel with the community members because of his ability to build relationships with them.

He served over 40 years with Sardis Lake Christian Camp as a director and a board member. He was famously known throughout North Mississippi for his 15-minute radio broadcast, "Moments with the Master", every weekday for over 30 years on WBLE, following Paul Harvey each morning.

Sadly, Daddy's compromised



health, memory complications, and limited mobility have brought on a new set of challenges for our family. Mom and Dad have moved to Alamo, TN, where Bobby, Brooks, and their families live.

We are thankful to have witnessed his leadership, voice of reason, and always relying on the Bible to guide his family and those around him. Daddy has never been "just a preacher," but a true minister. He always found a way to serve and care for those around him. Many lessons were taught to us through the years: "Be kind and helpful to everyone because someday we might just be able to share the Gospel with them."

Thank you, Daddy, for your years of service in the Lord's Kingdom.

Finishing this article, it would only be fitting to use our dad's signature Bible verse: "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" 3 John 1:2.

~Bobby Rawson, Brooks Rawson, and Beth Rawson Ledbetter

(I have known Robert since our days at Freed-Hardeman. When I returned to preach in the Delta, Robert was preaching in Batesville and was the first person I went to visit. When he moved to Crockett, we spent more time together, as I was preaching in nearby Tunica. When I was named editor of The Messenger, Robert was the first person to call and encourage me. My best wishes to him as he enjoys a much-deserved rest. - dd) MM

In each issue this year we want to highlight one of our great schools of Preaching:



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The Growth of the Kingdom



Gary Hampton

by Gary C. Hampton, Minister
Jackson, Mississippi

The mustard seed is the smallest seed sown in a garden. Yet, where Christ spoke, it grew to a height of ten feet. The bush is as large as some trees in the region. Birds use the branches of these bushes to build their nests.

Jesus likened the growth of the mustard seed to that of the Kingdom. Its humble beginnings are found in the birth of a child lain in a manger. His Kingdom was proclaimed as "at hand" by a man dressed in camel skins and eating locusts and wild honey. It was not vast armies but twelve men who were charged with going into all the world and preaching the Gospel (Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:17; Mark 1:18; 16:15-16).

Pentecost saw about three thousand souls added. Peter and John preached in the temple and the number of men who believed came to near five thousand. Daily preaching in the temple and every house resulted in the number of disciples multiplying. The apostles dealt quickly and effectively with the problem of daily ministering to the Hellenist widows and Luke states, "the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 6:1, 7).

Paul was able to say the Gospel had been preached in the whole world (Colossians 1:23).

**Leaven only
works if it is in the dough.
Christian influence will only
have an impact on the world
if we are living exemplary lives.**

(Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Peter 3:15-16)

Neil Lightfoot

Cooks in Jesus's day saved a lump of leavened dough from each baking. It was added to more meal to ferment. The leaven hidden in three measures of meal "represents the quickness, quietness, thoroughness, and sureness with which Gospel truth diffuses itself through human society" (McGarvey).

Neil Lightfoot reminds us that leaven only works if it is in the dough. Christian influence will only have an impact on the world if we are living exemplary lives (Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Peter 3:15-16). The Gospel can only work if one allows it into his heart (Mark 4:20; Luke 8:15; Acts 2:41; Revelation 3:20). Lightfoot also notes leaven has the ability to change things. It changed a persecutor into a preacher (Acts 26:9-11; 9:17-22). God translates the obedient from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of Christ. A man's goals will be changed from temporal to eternal (Colossians 1:13; 3:1-17). He is a new creature, living a new life (2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:3-4).

Lightfoot also notes leaven is contagious. Andrew's invitation to follow Jesus caused him to find Peter and invite him. Philip urged Nathanael to come see the one whom he believed Moses and the prophets had written about (John 1:35-51). The angel of God told Cornelius to send for Peter so he could be told what he must do. When Peter arrived in Caesarea, he found "Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends" (Acts 10:1-24). Paul felt compelled to preach the Gospel to all who would listen (1 Corinthians 9:16).

Lightfoot noted leaven's ability to disturb things it contacts. Meal that is fermenting bubbles and expands. The Gospel disturbs. Some at Philippi took Paul and Silas to the magistrates (Acts 16:20-21). Others in Thessalonica said, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too" (17:6).

David Lipscomb said, leaven "may be an active working principle of good, or it may be an active principle of evil. Place either in an inactive mass, it will leaven the whole mass into a good or bad working mass." He continued, "The church often becomes an inactive, lifeless mass. A leaven of good or evil working and spreading in the church will work for good or evil and leaven the whole church for good or evil." No wonder Christians need to constantly encourage one another to "love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24). **MM**

The Desire to be “Like all the Nations”

by Dennis Doughty, editor

When Israel gained the “Promised Land,” it was ruled by the judges and prophets God sent. As Samuel grew old, the elders said, “Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.” God warned them of the consequences of having a king, “He will take a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards and give to his officers and to his servants. He will also take your male servants and your female servants and your best young men and your donkeys and use them for his work” (1 Samuel 8: 5, 15-16). God warned them of many such consequences.

“Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, ‘No, but there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations’” (1 Samuel 8:19-20).

Well, how did that work out for Israel? Yes, David and Solomon reigned well. But then things went awry quickly. A fight over the throne split the nation in half. Each of the two kingdoms stopped following God and drifted away into idolatry. Eventually, both nations were overthrown, their cities fell, the great temple was destroyed, and the people were carried away into Babylonian captivity.

Israel’s desire to be like those around them eventually became their undoing.

Sadly, a similar desire has grown within the church today to be “like all the nations” around it. The teachings of scripture that make the New Testament church stand out have given way to the desire to fit in with the religious practices around them. Rather than “draw a line in the sand,” some “elders” of today would rather “go along to get along.”

When Peter gave in to his Jewish brethren and did not associate with Gentiles, and “the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy,” Paul “Opposed him to his face because he stood condemned” (Galatians 2:11-14). Following the crowd did not work well for Peter, and it will not work for the New Testament Christians today.

We see this desire to be like others in the instrumental worship services some churches have begun. Before starting this practice, did they first invite biblical studies about using instruments in worship? Probably not. Did they consider the division it would cause in their congregations? Doubtful. Many have begun two worship services, one by the scriptural teaching to “sing and make melody in your heart unto the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19), and the other service to appeal to some who feel the need to “sing and play” instruments. This results in splitting the church into two congregations. We are taught to be “diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). The instrument does what it has done throughout history: it causes division. It al-

ways has, and it always will.

In one of his columns, Hugh Fulford wrote, “Sadly, there are far too many elders in the church today who have little conception of apostolic Christianity and how the church is to function according to the pattern set forth in the New Testament. Little is heard from today’s pulpits about the need to go back to the Bible and be governed by it in all things, including how we think, speak, and write of the church of our Lord.

“And we wonder why the church in many places continues to slouch further and further toward denominationalism! I marvel! Worse still, I weep!”

Much of the blame for this trend can be put upon our pulpits. Over a span of years, how many preachers have presented a scriptural study of how we worship God “in Spirit and in truth?” Do we speak of the Restoration Movement and of how many discarded the instrument to “sing with the spirit and with the understanding also” (1 Corinthians 14:15)? Preacher, when have you “preached the Word” on the topic?

A mega-church in our area ran a billboard that advertised their two worship services. It read, “9:30, Choir and Orchestra/ 11:30 Praise Band.” Are we to choose our worship depending on whether we are “a Little bit Country Or a little bit Rock-n-Roll?” Perhaps we should take another look in scripture and ask, “What kind of music does God want?”

The scriptures, not peer pressure, pleasing God, not men, and the pride of following truth, not following the crowd, should be our guide in being the church of Christ. **MM**

The New Testament Church Today is Different:

- *Established on Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, around AD33, at 9:00am.*
- *No Hierarchy but ruled by “elders in every city.”*
- *No instrumental music in worship*
- *Partakes of Lord’s Supper “every first day of the week.”*
- *Wears no name but “Christian”*
- *No creed book but the inspired scriptures.*
- *No “Ordained” ministers or Clergy-Laity System*
- Christ’s Kingdom “will be different from all the other Kingdoms” -Daniel 7:23.*

From Scripture to Strategy:

Building Stronger Church Leadership

by Paul Merideth, Minister,
Northside Church of Christ
Temple, TX

When it comes to church leadership, I'm going to assume we've all covered the essentials—integrity, family fidelity, mature faith, and so on. If you're looking for a deep dive into those qualities, abandon this

read and study instead
1 Timothy 3, Titus 1,
1 Peter 5, Ephesians 4,
and Acts 20.

My focus here is on suggesting a few modern, practical principles to sharpen our approach to church leadership best practices. These strategies are meant to build upon, not replace, the Bible's foundational guidance. Why the pragmatic approach? Because over the years, I've witnessed too many leadership habits that breed dysfunction rather than stability. We have a serious task at hand, so we need effective ace leadership. So here are a few insights on practical church leadership for today's challenges.



Paul Merideth

leadership best practices. These strategies are meant to build upon, not replace, the Bible's foundational guidance. Why the pragmatic approach? Because over the years, I've witnessed too many leadership habits that breed dysfunction rather than stability. We have a serious task at hand, so we need effective ace leadership. So here are a few insights on practical church leadership for today's challenges.

1. Invest in Teambuilding

Elders, deacons, and ministers should operate as a cohesive network with a Kingdom focus rather than as isolated silos vying for control. A united team reflects the oneness Jesus prayed for in John 17:21: "That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." This unity isn't just for show; it builds a culture of collaboration and mutual support where ideas and resources flow freely.

Leaders should foster unity, encour-

age open discussions, and make decisions together, embodying the humility and team spirit described in Philippians 2:2-3: "Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves." This requires leaders to intentionally cultivate trust, making teambuilding not a one-off event but an ongoing commitment to the mission they share.

From a preacher's perspective, frustration often mounts when elders limit the role of the minister, disregarding input on matters where the preacher has unique insight or experience. This not only strains relationships but undercuts the potential for a strong united front in leadership. Including ministers as key team members and valuing their perspectives brings balance and depth, strengthening the overall leadership team.

2. Improve Leadership Meetings

Leadership meetings should focus on practical goals, clear strategies, and mutual encouragement. Too often, church meetings get bogged down in minor details or devolve into battlegrounds for personal preferences. Meetings should inspire action, clarify vision, and align everyone around shared goals. Effective meetings require preparation, respect for everyone's time, and an environment that promotes constructive and outcome-oriented discussions.

A well-structured meeting also helps prevent misunderstandings and future conflicts. As Proverbs 15:22 reminds us, "Without counsel, plans fail, but with

many advisers they succeed." When leaders collaborate thoughtfully, they set a strong foundation for growth and cohesion. Planning and structured follow-ups keep everyone on track, setting the stage for a unified and effective ministry.

In my experience, one big obstacle to effective collaboration is inconsistent communication habits. Not everyone checks email, responds to texts, or even opens snail mail. So, how can we ensure clear communication when it feels like we're on different information-sharing planets?

A practical solution is to establish a unified communication strategy that meets people where they are. This might mean using a combination of methods—such as group messaging apps, regular email updates, and even physical notices in the church bulletin or meeting areas—to ensure everyone stays informed. Leaders should encourage each team member to commit to at least one primary communication channel. By setting clear expectations and diversifying methods, we can close communication gaps and create a more cohesive, informed leadership team.

3. Communicate Transparently and Invite Input from the Church

Clear communication fosters trust within the church and encourages members to feel involved. Leaders shouldn't just talk to the church but also listen to it. Proverbs 11:14 states, "Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety." By welcoming feedback, leaders tap into the wisdom and perspective of the congregation, building a strong and

healthy community.

When leaders openly share church plans and invite input, members are more likely to engage and participate actively in ministry. James 1:19 offers solid guidance: "Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger." While this applies to personal relationships, it's also key for how leaders should interact with the congregation. Open communication, combined with a willingness to listen, creates an environment where people feel valued and fosters a spirit of unity.

Additionally, when the congregation senses a culture of secrecy among church leaders, it erodes trust, and the energy that could fuel ministry is often replaced by suspicion and gossip. This perception, even if unintended, can cause members to feel excluded or undervalued, weakening their engagement and enthusiasm.

The fix? Leaders should prioritize transparency and make a deliberate effort to share not only decisions but also the reasoning behind them whenever possible. Regular updates, open forums, and Q&A sessions create space for questions and clarity. The time when unilateral closed-door decision-making was tolerated has passed. By being proactive and forthcoming, leaders can foster an environment of trust where the congregation feels informed and involved, reducing room for rumors and strengthening unity within the church community.

4. Prioritize Mentorship and Leadership Development

An often-overlooked element in church leadership is mentorship. Effective leadership isn't just about meeting today's needs; it's about investing in future leaders who will carry the church forward. As Paul instructs Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2, "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." Mentoring emerging leaders

ensures the church remains strong and mission-focused for generations.

Mentorship within leadership cultivates wisdom, accountability, and resilience among newer leaders. Experienced elders, deacons, and ministers can intentionally model effective leadership, share insights, and guide others in decision-making and spiritual growth. This doesn't just empower the emerging leaders; it strengthens the overall leadership structure. When today's leaders commit to nurturing others, they create a legacy of wisdom, continuity, and unity.

Investing in mentorship helps bridge generational gaps, ensuring that core values and the church's mission are preserved. This transfer of knowledge creates an environment where newer leaders feel supported and prepared to step into roles of greater responsibility, enhancing the strength and sustainability of the church's leadership.

In conclusion, church leadership today is grounded in both timeless biblical truths and thoughtful, practical strategies. Church leaders can foster a healthier and more effective ministry by cultivating teambuilding, refining meeting practices, committing to transparent communication, and prioritizing mentorship. Anchored in God's Word and responsive to modern needs, these principles enable churches to build a vibrant, unified, and engaged community that radiates Christ's love and wisdom in action. **MM**

When leaders collaborate thoughtfully, they set a strong foundation for growth and cohesion.

Dr. Bobby Bush

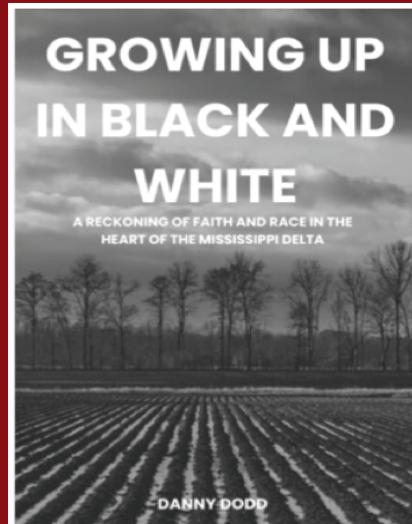
of Henderson, Tennessee, passed away at home on August 14, 2024. He was 94 years old.

He was raised in Corinth and attended Foote Street church of Christ there for over 45 years, and Starkville, Mississippi, church of Christ in the mid- and late 1970s.

He received his Master's and Doctorate at Mississippi State University. He spent the last 48 years at the Henderson church of Christ and taught for 25 years at Freed-Hardeman University. He also did mission work and preached all over the world.

He was married to the former Betty Richter and have two children and six grandchildren.

In his honor, the university has announced the Dr. Bobby Bush Endowed Professorship in the School of Business, the first-ever endowed professorship at F-HU.



It was the 1960s in the heart of the Mississippi Delta, Greenville. A young boy was coming of age as the Civil Rights movement was unfolding around him. Becoming ever more aware of the tension, he began a journey of faith and reckoning, sorting out his own heart to finally discover that "God is no respecter of persons." This is his story. It is a story of race and grace—Growing Up in Black and White.

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Paul Merideth <pnnmerideth@gmail.com> (Paul Merideth has served as a minister with the Northside Church of Christ in Temple, Texas, since 2016, where he resides with his wife, Amanda, and their family. Paul is originally from Tennessee and a graduate of Freed-Hardeman University. He taught Bible at Ohio Valley University and holds advanced degrees in Biblical Studies. Dedicated to community service, Paul also teaches at Bell County Jail and the local community college)

Every time the doors are open?

by Danny Dodd
Levy Church of Christ
N. Little Rock, Arkansas

Many of us grew up like that—attending church every time the doors were open. This was the standard practice of our parents and grandparents. Whenever the church met for whatever purpose, we were there if, indeed, the doors were open. It reflected the prioritized commitment of those generations to support their local church.

In my generation, that level of commitment has faded. Sure, being at church that often sometimes got old—especially for kids. Sure, there is no biblical precedent for every one of the church meeting times. (Did the first-century churches meet on Wednesday nights?) Sure, things have changed. It is a busier time now. Schedules have to be managed to include other activities that perhaps were not an option back then. Every time the doors are open? Is it really doable anymore? If, on occasion, I ever even hear that phrase, it is typically accompanied by a chuckle and eye-roll—a relic of another time and place.

Those who study church trends now tell us that the new standard for defining regular church attendance is twice a month. So, from every time the doors are open to twice a month. That is the generational change. It makes me wonder about the next generation. What will those who study church trends say about them?

In case you haven't figured it out, this is a lament. While the every-time-the-doors-are-open practice may have seemed very stringent—more of a connection to a church tradition than to the Lord—twice a month seems somewhat of a low bar. What kind of connection does it build or support? Has attending the local church become reduced to just another item to select from the vast array of choices on our scheduling menu? Is there any chance now that church could again be elevated to the main menu item, with everything else becoming the side dishes?

Yes, a preacher is writing this. Yes, there is more—much more actually—to our relationship with God than attending church. Yes, I am thrilled to see folks in worship anytime, including twice a month. Yes, I know worship happens outside of a building.

But there is a biblical emphasis on regularly going through the church's doors when it meets (Hebrews 10:25). There is the God-designed and irreplaceable element of fellowship (1 John 1:7) that accompanies spending time together at church. How can we speak to one another in songs and hymns and pray together as directed by God (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; James 5:16) if we are not here? How do we stay firmly connected to God's community and be supported in our efforts to remain firmly connected to God if we neglect meeting with the people who desire to offer that support?

Every time the doors are open? Maybe something in that generation's commitment to this standard could still inform us. **MM**



Gospel Sharing Ministries was formed in October, 2013. Seeing a need to minister to all sizes of churches, five men met and formed a non-profit corporation to meet this need. They became the first members of the Board of Directors. They asked the elders from the church of Christ of Palestine in Palestine, Texas, to oversee the ministry, to which the elders agreed.

Gospel Sharing Ministries is a ministry designed to help churches learn to approach people with the Gospel. They are available to help congregations of any size.

A group of Christians experienced in approaching and teaching people give personal training to members of a congregation during an evangelistic campaign. These Christians pay their own expenses to and from the campaign.

To hold a campaign, Gospel Sharing Ministries would conduct a Training Seminar prior to the event. This seminar would first show ways to approach people in different situations and go through a simple, yet effective way to engage them in a presentation of the saving Gospel. Secondly, the seminar would focus on After Care, a vital part of keeping a new babe saved and in maturing that person to becoming a strong Christian.

A decision from a congregation to have a campaign requires a \$200.00 non-refundable commitment. Gospel

Sharing Ministries will then help them prepare for the campaign in order to have a more effective campaign. Then, at the appointed time, a group of experienced workers will come and go into the streets, taking members of the congregation with them in order to help them learn how to talk to people about Jesus. **MM**

For more information about scheduling a Training Seminar or Campaign please contact one of the following Board of Directors:

Trevis Bonnett—281-409-6571

William Hardy—903-948-3554

Larry Lovett—512-964-3525

Jim Smith — 817-894-1472

Charles Shelton—501-909-1329

Or go to www.gospelsharingministries.com for more information.

Health Talents International: 51 Years of Serving Guatemala

Health Talents International (HTI) has been dedicated to providing medical, surgical, and dental care to underserved communities in Guatemala for over 51 years. Through our clinics—Clinica Caris and Clinica Ezell Hospital—we serve more than 44,000 Guatemalans each year, making a lasting impact in the region.

Our 13 annual surgical trips to Clinica Ezell are vital to this mission, with volunteer teams offering life-changing surgeries and care. In 2024, we expect over 650 volunteers to have joined us, and we are actively filling spots for our 2025 trips to ensure we continue meeting the critical healthcare needs of the communities we serve.



Urgent Need for Nurses in 2025

Nurses are essential in our work, providing crucial pre-and post-operative care, education, and support. As we plan for 2025, we are facing a shortage of nurses for our medical trips, and we need your help. We are seeking both nursing students and experienced professionals to join us on our missions.

By volunteering with HTI, nurses can gain global health experience, make a tangible difference in underserved communities, and be part of a team that has been transforming lives for over five decades.

If you are interested in joining a trip or want to learn more about how you can get involved, please contact US Missions Director Bode Teague at bodeteague@gmail.com or 501-593-3581. We look forward to having you on our team!

For more information or to sign up, visit www.healthtalents.org.

“ON THE ROAD AGAIN” with the Editor

It was good again to set up at the Harding Bible Lecture-ship, to meet and greet and spread the word about *The Magnolia Messenger* to all who came. This Christian University greatly emphasizes world missions, has inspired many to go to foreign countries to spread the Gospel, and whose campus is home to many past missionaries.

As always, I enjoy visiting all the other displays. I was happy to meet Carl and Carrie Royster, the new management team at 21st Century Christian Publishers in Nashville. It was good to get caught up with the publishers of my two books.

I was invited to attend a luncheon hosted by Mission Para Cristo. These impressive Medical Mission works are being done throughout the Latin American countries of Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Honduras, headed by Benny Baker, Steven Teel, and Bode Teague. These men are heading up programs that save both lives and souls.

While we have emailed some, I met in person Erik Tryggestad, President and editor of the *Christian Chronicle* magazine. This tabloid-style magazine reports on Christian stories and news around the world. We had several things in common to talk about. -dd

Benny Baker, Steven Teel, and Bode Teague of Mission Para Cristo. Erik Tryggestad, editor, Christian Chronicle. World globe at Harding promotes their World Mission emphasis.



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Visiting among Churches in north Mississippi

By Eddie Lewis, Missionary to North Mississippi, 9423 Laurel Hill, Olive Branch, MS 38654. E-mail: lewis7946@gmail.com



August through October 2024

We appreciate the opportunity to inform you about our mission work among the churches in North Mississippi and our ministry at the Christian Student Center at Mississippi Delta Community College. We appreciate the Germantown Church of Christ sponsoring us in our North Mississippi ministry. Several churches and individuals support us in our work at the CSC. I preached one Sunday for the Indianola church of Christ.

■ **August 4:** Madolyn and I visited with the Winona church of Christ. They have two men serving as bi-vocational ministers. Brad Gray is a coach and teacher in Mathiston and Chris Garton is an insur-



Chris Garton and Brad Gray

ance agent. The congregation doesn't have elders currently. They have around 50 in attendance. It was fun visiting old friends and eating with Betty Choate. Madolyn and Betty share grandchildren. We enjoyed our visit with the wonderful folks in Winona.

■ **August 11:** I was invited to preach at the Indianola church of Christ. Jason Zuehlke is serving as the interim minister. They have no elders and around 20 in

attendance. In worship, I preached on "Prayer" that morning and Sunday night on the importance of being a "Fisher of Men" based on Luke 5. It's always good to visit with the church family there.

■ **August 18:** We celebrated Mission Sunday with the Germantown church of Christ. I presented a report about our work among the churches in North Mississippi and our work at the Christian Student Center at Mississippi Delta Community College. It was an exciting day of fellowship as we ate together and visited with each other.

■ **August 25:** Madolyn and I visited with the Iuka church of Christ. Lance Foster has been the long-time minister there. He and Sandra have done a wonderful work with the congregation. Lance has made several mission trips to



Africa and India during his many years of ministry. We enjoyed eating with them after services and catching up on our families.

Sunday evening we attended the first Area Singing at the Marietta church of Christ. Several churches from the area were represented. The singing was

wonderful. 118 attended. We had a time of fellowship afterward. I want to thank Ronnie Livingston for getting it started.

■ **September 1:** Madolyn and I began our tour of Greece with the Huffard Bible Lands Tours by attending church at the Elliniko church of Christ. Dino Roussos is the lead minister there. The Germantown church now sponsors Alfred Zike with the Albanian ministry there. We were so happy to be able to attend the church and meet some of the brethren. The English service was mainly composed of our tour group. They have Greece, Albanian, Ukrainian, and English services each Sunday. We enjoyed our visit.



Dino Roussos Elliniko Greece

■ **September 29:** Madolyn and I attended the Anchorage church of Christ. We traveled to Anchorage to celebrate Madolyn's birthday with her son. The church has two elders and around 250 in attendance. The preacher for the Anchorage church is Tony Cloud. He serves as one of the elders. He had a wonderful lesson on "From Caterpillar to Butterfly." He talked about our conversion from sinner to saint and gave many examples from scripture. In Bible class the other elder for the church, Stephen Heffington, gave an encouraging lesson.

■ **October 6:** Madolyn and I visited with the Hills Chapel church of Christ near Booneville, Mississippi. Craig Chandler has served the congregation as a bi-vocational minister for six years. They have no elders and over 50 in attendance. The congregation has a good mix of ages. They support several works including the *Magnolia Messenger*. After services we enjoyed eating with Craig and Micah and their son. A good family and a good work.

■ **October 13:** I was invited to preach for the Cleveland church of Christ. Tim McCarter is the long-time minister there. He and Debbie were away on

vacation. He asked me to sub for him. I worked with the congregation in the 1980s and 90s. It's always good to visit with old friends.

October 20: We visited with the Snowdown church of Christ near Booneville, Mississippi. Rick Jones is the new minister there. Keith Sanders serves as a bi-vocational associate minister. Rick was out of town, so Keith taught the Bible class and preached. The church is served by four elders and has around 70 in attendance. They have a good mix of ages in attendance. They support several mission works. We enjoyed meeting the members and making new friends.

Sunday evening, we visited with the Northside church of Christ in Corinth, Mississippi. Linnis Nowell has served the church for over 30 years. They have no elders and around 30 in attendance. It was good to see Linnis and Janice. I



Keith and Samantha Sanders

have known them since I preached at Foote Street in the 1990s. We enjoyed meeting the brethren. Linnis asked me to give a report about my ministry among the churches in North Mississippi and our ministry at the Christian Student Center at MDCC in Moorhead, Mississippi. I was happy to speak.

Update on the CSC @ MDCC:

Welcome to Corey Ramsey, the new Director of the Christian Student Center at the Mississippi Delta Community College! Corey is accompanied by his wife, Mary Ashley, and their two children, Aria (5) and Rhett (2 months). They have been members of Brentwood Hills church of Christ in Nashville for many years. This couple is uniquely qualified to minister to a wide range of perspec-



tives. His wife, Mary Ashley, is Madolyn Gibson Lewis' granddaughter..

August 13 and 14, we had the coaches over to eat dinner on different nights. The Basketball and Baseball coaches came on the 13th and the Football coaches came on the 14th. As always, Madolyn did a wonderful job of preparing food and making the occasion a night to remember. Cory was there, so we were able to introduce him to the coaches.

Thursday night we had an ice cream social for the MDCC Band. They have 40 members this year and sound great.

Friday, Eddie lead the benediction at the Freshman Convocation. We had a display table at the convocation and met lots of students.

On August 22nd, Corey set up a table at the college Health and Wellness Fair as an advocate for spiritual wellness. He had conversations with around 100 students and we were excited to see some new faces at our second Wednesday Night Bible Study as a result. We were blessed to have 38 students show up on August 28th for Corey's first lesson, focusing on our identity and calling as "children of God." Corey polled the students about their use of social media. As the majority of students prefer Instagram, Mary Ashley created a profile for us. If you're on Instagram, feel free to follow us @csc_at_mdcc for updates!

As we have gotten deeper into the semester, we've been so grateful for snacks and support from friends at the Indianola, Greenville, and Greenwood

churches of Christ. Our Bible study group has settled down to a consistent core. Facebook: CSC.MDCC, Twitter: @CSCMDCC, Instagram: @acsc_at_mdcc CSCMDCC@gmail.com. Follow Us: group of students. We had 21 students at both of the first two studies in September. There have been several post-Bible study ping-pong tournaments, and the boys from the basketball team have really enjoyed teaching Aria how to play! Our softball girls like to hang out and chat over snacks, and of course, they are smitten with baby Rhett!

In October, we averaged around 10 students each week for Bible Study. We were encouraged that several new students came for the first time, and the smaller groups have allowed us to build deeper connections with the students.

Additionally, Corey has been in discussions with the MDCC coaches to coordinate team-specific devotionals that will work around their practice schedules. If they can't make it on Wednesday nights, he wants to take Bible study to them!

Overall, we are looking forward to continuing to build on this foundation. Thank you for your support, faith, and encouragement as we embark on this new journey. We are so excited about the relationships we've been able to start cultivating and can't wait to see how God uses us to further His work and touch the hearts of these sweet kids. Please keep us in your prayers. -Blessings, Corey and Mary Ashley Ramsey **MM**

To have a Friend!

Is to Be a Friend!

by Greg Ledbetter

North Brandon Church of Christ

In today's world, friendships are precious treasures. Proverbs 18:24 reminds us, "A man who has friends must himself

be friendly." This simple truth speaks to the heart of what it means to build and sustain meaningful relationships: we must first extend our hand in friendship if we wish to receive it in return.

I can remember when I was in elementary school, I struggled to make friends. I would invite many people to my birthday parties because that is how you make friends. I would always have candy to give out because everyone likes the

guy who gives out candy for free. It never seemed to work. As I grew older, I realized being a friend doesn't always mean grand gestures; sometimes, it's the small acts of kindness, a listening ear, or a genuine smile that speak louder than words. Friendliness is about creating a welcoming spirit, showing empathy, and taking an interest in others. When we approach people with warmth and sincerity, we open the door to deeper connections.

Jesus modeled the perfect example of true friendship. He reached out to those who were overlooked, isolated, and burdened, offering unconditional love and compassion. As His followers, we are called to mirror that same attitude in our relationships, showing care and kindness to those around us. As Jesus said in John 15:12-13,

"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."

Do we take the time to show kindness to those we meet? Are we approachable and willing to invest in others? Building friendships requires effort, but the rewards are immeasurable. When we extend our hand in friendship, we not only bless others, but we also enrich our own lives in return.

So, this week, let's challenge ourselves to be more intentional about our friendliness. Reach out to someone who may need a friend. A simple conversation or an act of kindness might be the beginning of a lasting and meaningful relationship. I Thessalonians 5:11, "Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing."

May you be blessed as you continue to walk in friendship with others and Christ! **MM**

My trip to GUAM

I recently spent 17 days in Guam with the church of Christ Guam. This church meets in the home of Wade and Joanna Phillips and includes 24 beautiful souls. Wade and Joanna have been resident missionaries in Guam for almost three years. I was blessed to be with the brothers and sisters there in Guam. They are hard workers and are on fire for learning God's Word. While there, I preached one Sunday and taught six Bible studies. We set up at one of their open markets, giving out ten Bibles and some study material. We had the opportunity to talk to many people about the church and Jesus. One of the things that the church of Christ Guam does each year is to give out book bags, school supplies, and a study Bible to the kids who need it. The people in Guam are very poor, and in many cases, they would not get these supplies. The church supplies a need and makes contacts. Right now, book bags are much cheaper in Guam, and we have taken advantage of the sales. While at the store loading up book bags, we had many ask what we were doing,



and we were able to tell them about the church. That day we made two contacts. You can help. The church of Christ Guam needs funds to buy book bags and the school supplies to go in them. Last year they gave over 200 book bags away, and it still was not enough.

To seek and save the lost in Guam, Wade and Joanna need funds. I can tell you from personal experience this work is worth supporting. The brothers and sisters love each other, love God, and love the lost. I reminded them as I remind you Galatians 6:9, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." To support this outstanding work, Checks should be written to: Wade Phillips Missions, Mail to: Wade Phillips Mission, c/o: North Brandon church of Christ, P.O. Box 251, Brandon, MS 39043. If the support is for book bags and school supplies, please note it on the check. **MM**

Greg Ledbetter

Youth & Family

The MAGNOLIA MESSENGERS / PREACHER SEARCH

CRYSTAL SPRINGS CHURCH OF CHRIST

Is seeking a minister for a congregation of about 45-55 regular members, meeting in the town of Crystal Springs, Mississippi. We are currently led by three elders along with four deacons. If you are interested in serving this community with us, please email your resume or other info to: mabridges1757@gmail.com or Call Mark Bridges at 601-941-3726 or John Mark Meadows at 601-260-5953.

CENTERVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST

a small church in the middle of Alabama, needs a working preacher to help grow a congregation now consisting of mostly of older Christians. Please send a short resume to the church at 824 Montevallo Road, Centreville, AL. 35042.

MIAMI FLORIDA CHURCH OF CHRIST

Looking for a Preacher, here in Miami Florida, congregation of 30 to 45 members suffering the passing of our own preacher recently. Please feel free to contact. Onofre Barrientos 305 951 8077.

THE CALLAHAN CHURCH OF CHRIST

in Callahan, Florida, is seeking a full-time minister with a strong faith, who is doctrinally sound. Our congregation has approximately 55 members, led by a Christ-centered group of men. Our preference would be a married/family man but it is not required. Candidates with experience and advanced Theological/Biblical training will be preferred.

Primary duties will include preaching on Sunday mornings and Sunday nights, along with teaching Adult Bible Classes on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights.

Please email an up-to-date resume along with a link to recent sermons and classes taught to preacher-search@callahanchurch.org

COFFEEVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST

A congregation of 45-50 members. Salary based on experience. House is provided.

John Allen 662-473-8702 • Jim Peters 662-675-8623

THE CHRISTOPHER CHURCH OF CHRIST

Is seeking a minister for a congregation of about 33 members, located in southern Illinois. Salary is \$36,000 per year.

Please send resume to jurbanmail@gmail.com or call George Marshall at (618) 218-1401.

INDIANOLA CHURCH OF CHRIST

We are searching for a new full-time minister. We have office space in the building and a 3-bedroom 2-bath house within city limits. IndianolaMScoC@gmail.com 662-887-4025 - church building 662-207-9843 - Jason Zuehlke

THE CLARKE COUNTY CHURCH OF CHRIST

is seeking a minister in Athens, located 70 miles from Atlanta. For more information, visit clarkecouncil.org.

DEGAULLE DRIVE CHURCH OF CHRIST

4700 Degaulle Dr., Algiers, La. 70131, Looking for a sound, energetic, evangelistically minded Gospel preacher. Salary dependant upon experience. approx. 60 members. WesleyArabie 504-858-2881 aascreenglass@bellsouth.net

THE EUPORA CHURCH OF CHRIST

Eupora, MS, is looking for a full-time preacher. We have approximately 42-51 that attend. We have a preacher's home. huntppe@yahoo.com or text/call Paul Hunt 662-634-1651. However, I do prefer text messages.

MERIDIAN CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Meridian church of Christ, located in Meridian, MS, is in search of a full-time minister. E-mail Andy Duncan (Elder), hadunca62@gmail.com Tom Fair(Elder), htfair1@gmail.com

ROCKY CREEK CHURCH OF CHRIST

Youth Minister Search. Contact: Rocky Creek Church of Christ in George County. Stan James Email: Stanjames4him@gmail.com

THE CORNERSTONE CHURCH OF CHRIST

in Baton Rouge, LA, is looking to grow its Youth Ministry. If you are humble, spiritual, and scriptural, we may be a good fit. Please contact George Myer 225-229-5830

MANKATO CHURCH OF CHRIST

is seeking mission-minded Christians in Minnesota. At this time, we are seeking part-time preachers, teachers, and general volunteers as we work to build a vocational ministry, starting with the focus in the city of Mankato, MN. <mankato-churchofchrist@gmail.com>

HAPPY HAVEN CHILDREN'S HOME

has immediate openings for: HOUSE PARENTS (wife is the salaried employee, with housing, utilities, van, & other benefits provided; if she is married, the husband is free to find employment or to preach locally). Happy Haven exists to help young ladies in need of residential child care and is sponsored by Churches of Christ & other interested individuals. Please print off applications, fill out and return: <http://www.happyhaven.org/documents/EmploymentApplication.pdf>. Office: 931-526-2052 Fax: 931-372-8837 happyhaven@frontiernet.net. Houston Bynum, Administrator.

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KINDER CHURCH OF CHRIST

We are looking for a sound, full-time preacher, married, energetic, willing to work with children of all ages, and be active in the community. We are a congregation of just under 40 members. We have 2 elders and 2 deacons. Kinder, Louisiana, 413 2 second Street. Please email resume to Sbm eaves@yahoo.com or call Seth Eaves 337-302-4070

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

In New Jersey is actively seeking a full-time minister. Approximately 125 diverse members led by elders and deacons. The primary responsibilities include preaching, teaching class, evangelizing in the community, and ministering to the family. The Compensation includes housing. tcocpreacher-search@gmail.com

CHURCH OF CHRIST IN SAYRE

On the border of New York and Pennsylvania, the church of Christ in Sayre, PA, is entering its tenth year. We are looking for a sound, loving minister of the Gospel to take this church into the next phase of growth.

Contact Arthur Barry - arbry21@gmail.com Evangelist at Valley Cities church of Christ Sayre, PA 607 280 1732

JOHNSON GROVE CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Johnson Grove church of Christ in Bogue Chitto, Mississippi, is actively seeking to employ a full-time Associate/Youth minister but could be open to a bi-vocational person under the right circumstances. The primary focus will be ministering to our youth group of 20+ young people. please email: Andrew Redd (Elder) aredd5268@gmail.com Douglas Kimble (Minister) dkpreach@bellsouth.net

OXON HILL CHURCH OF CHRIST

is searching for a full-time minister. We have 50+ members. The position requires someone who is sound in biblical knowledge and has excellent communication and writing skills.

Contact: 1oxonhillcoc@gmail.com, or mail to Oxon Hill Church of Christ at 4201 Brinkley Road, Temple Hills, MD 20748.

MEIGG STREET CHURCH OF CHRIST

a congregation of approximately 50 active members and located in Corinth, Ms, is seeking a full-time minister to fill the position of current minister. Submit resume and a video/audio of a sermon to Meigg Street Church of Christ; P.O. Box 47, Corinth, MS 8834 by December 28, 2023. Paul Waddle: (662) 523-5708

IUKA CHURCH OF CHRIST

We looking for a full-time minister for about 90-100 members. We have 3 Elders and 2 deacons. We are located in Iuka MS, which is in northeast MS, close to Pickwick Lake. We have recently become involved in the House to House evangelism program and are looking for a preacher that is interested in local evangelism.

Contact-Dwight Pharr (662) 427-0076 pharrhouse@att.net

GEORGETOWN (SC) CHURCH OF CHRIST

seeking experienced minister. 100 member congregation with elders. Send resume with references, including training with recent video sermons, by email or mail to Preacher Search Committee, Georgetown Church of Christ, P.O. Box 250, Georgetown, SC 29442 Email: GeorgetownCofCSearch@gmail.com

ACADIANA CHURCH OF CHRIST

Looking for a part-time preacher in Lafayette, LA. We are a congregation of around 50 members. If you are interested, contact us at office@acadiana.church. Cafferty Email: grmccaf@cox.net

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(Birmingham, AL)

MARY BETH DIETZ

Steven & Nancy Carden
(Mulvane, KS)

IN HONOR OF

PAYTON & BRUIN HAYES
Anne Hayes
(Fayetteville, GA)



by Dennis Doughty "INSCRIPTIONS" "ALONE"

We have enjoyed watching the History channel's hit survival series called "Alone." Ten men and women who have exceptional survival skills, are taken and placed one at a time across some great northern wilderness area. Each one takes with them ten items and are provided with several cameras to record their experience. Building a shelter, living off small game and fish, they see who can last the longest alone as bitter weather moves in.

It is amazing how many of them can go 50-60 days by themselves, living off the land in primitive shelters. While a few may quit because of hunger or injury, most use their satellite phones to "officially tap out" due to loneliness. Being alone takes its toll. Missing family members becomes too much to endure. It is loneliness that drives them to the breaking point. We do not know how long Adam was by himself in the garden of Eden before God realized that "It is not good for man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18). We do not function well by ourselves,

physically or spiritually. Loneliness is a powerful negative force. God calls on us to be together, to "bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2), and to "encourage one another and build up one another" (1 Thessalonians 5:11) We all need each other to survive in this world. Do not try to make it alone.

"TOGETHER"

Man is a social being, and as such, God wants us to serve Him as a group; "Oh magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together" (Psalm 34:3). As we say, there is strength in numbers, and that is true as we strive to serve the Lord. We are encouraged to be evangelists, to bring others to the Lord, to "compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled" (Luke 14:23). God likes a crowd!

God wants His "crowd" to get along. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1). I've heard it said "you can't worship anywhere, if you can't worship everywhere." In our "one body," we are instructed to be "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3-4). God wants a united crowd.

The first church in Jerusalem loved to be around each other. "They were together and had all things in common...taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart" (Acts 2:44-45). They had daily gatherings to pray (Acts 3:1). There is safety in numbers, but danger away from the group. Satan is always looking for the "loners" among God's people. It is assuring to know that "where two or three are gathered together, in my name, I am there in their midst" (Matthew 18:20.) God is also part of the crowd. **MM**

If you would like to receive Dennis' weekly "Inscriptions;" column drop him a note at dennis1848@bellsouth.net.

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3. Jeremiah & Shelia Woodard	45. Mattie Ann Owens	91. Wanda Cochran	133. Roscoe Slate	181. Brandi McKinney
4. Jeremiah Woodard	46. Phyllis Spiers	92. Perkins Cochran	134. Don Lee	182. Jon McKinney
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Question Box - Fall 2024

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SON

*This word search is from Luke 15 (NKJV), a parable:
you have often heard it called the parable of the Prodigal Son.*

C	A	H	B	D	K	H	I	C	K	S	B	P	E	D
F	A	K	Z	A	M	C	O	M	C	I	L	E	X	K
J	W	L	R	N	Z	O	I	H	O	N	Z	Q	Y	E
A	H	D	F	C	S	M	N	A	M	N	T	V	T	N
L	K	S	X	I	W	P	E	R	M	E	R	P	P	D
I	B	E	S	N	I	A	D	L	A	D	A	O	O	A
V	N	R	T	G	N	S	I	O	N	V	N	S	D	T
E	F	V	E	N	E	S	I	T	D	F	S	S	S	T
L	O	A	P	A	M	I	C	S	M	B	G	E	U	T
I	U	N	L	U	D	O	C	H	E	Z	R	S	F	M
H	N	T	E	Z	Y	N	Z	J	N	S	E	S	A	A
O	D	S	A	S	A	F	N	R	T	F	S	I	M	L
O	J	Q	D	R	E	U	P	O	I	B	S	O	I	I
D	R	N	E	V	U	B	K	B	D	D	E	N	N	V
L	Y	M	D	W	I	R	X	E	T	W	D	S	E	E

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TRANSGRESSED	COMMANDMENT
COMPASSION	POSSESSIONS
LIVELIHOOD	SERVANTS
DANCING	HARLOTS
FAMINE	PLEADED
BREAD	SINNED
FOUND	CALF
JOINED	ALIVE
SWINE	ROBE
PODS	

Question Box answers for Fall MM 2024

Paul's Missionary Journeys

1. G	4. J	7. M	10. D	13. E
2. N	5. I	8. O	11. C	14. A
3. L	6. B	9. K	12. H	15. F

Prepared by Glenn & Beth Beall, foyfoyrish@gmail.com

Please Send Your Answers To Us

(Print your name... Please. Thank you!)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____ Phone: _____

NOTICE: Each person who sends in answers will be recognized in the next issue of the "MM" (see page 31). ALSO, by random drawing, the name of ONE student will be selected to receive a beautiful New Study Bible.

"The Question Box"
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