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THE MAGNOLIA

Messenger

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*"And let us consider
one another in order to stir up
Love and Good
works"*

(Hebrews 10:24)

*It's always been
our mission.*



Digital Issue on our website: www.magnoliamessengermag.com

In this issue from *Dennis*



The past three months have been some of the most difficult times in my life, and the life of my family. Our son-in-law, Dave Furguson, had been fighting pancreatic cancer since last year. In one last effort to save Dave, we spent a month in Scottsdale, Arizona, at a renowned pancreatic clinic. Sadly, Dave lost his battle against this terrible cancer (see page-15).

Knowing I would be out of pocket for several weeks, I had asked Danny Dodd and Eddie Lewis to help gather material for this issue. They have done an excellent job of soliciting articles and news and deserve much of the credit for this issue of *The Magnolia Messenger*. It is good to have men with the talent and desire to serve the Lord by spreading the message through the printed page.

In this issue, Dan Winkler's Q&A feature comes from a question he received from a man in prison. This highlights the power of the printed page, which can reach people no matter their life situation. I regularly get letters from prisoners. I do not know how *The Magnolia Messenger* gets delivered into these guarded places,

but somehow, it does. I do know it has resulted in men coming to the Lord in baptism.

A big "shoutout" to our layout editor, Mark Bridges. With this issue, Mark has been working with *The Messenger* for ten years. His talent, work, and vision for this publication have been a big reason for its success. I say it often, and it is true, that "We are the best-looking and most-read publication in our brotherhood!" The "best looking" part is due to Mark's incredible talent. Note his remarks on page 7.

Thanks to everyone who wrote for this issue. You are a blessing to Christian growth in the Kingdom. -dd

Reader's Comments; *I appreciate the work that you've put into the Messenger. In my opinion, it's the best in the brotherhood and mixing doctrine with current events. And to be honest, it's one of the few that I'll read cover-to-cover. The changes that you've made have been appreciated and only increased the value of it.*

-Mark Teske, Dunlap, TN



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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JESUS

THE MARKS OF

by Leon Barnes
Palm St congregation
Lonoke, AR

When Paul reached the conclusion of the Book of Galatians, he said, "from now on, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus." I feel certain Paul was referring to the stripes and scars all over his body that had been left from beatings, both with rods and strips of leather. Most likely he also was thinking of the scars from being stoned and left for dead. Wouldn't you suppose that those rocks left huge scars on his face and head, as well as the rest of his body, even in places that no one besides him could see. When you look over your body, what kind of scars do you see? Many of us see rather large number of scars from surgeries we've had along the way. But those scars say nothing about Jesus. They are scars of challenges of life. But one is just as likely to have those scars as a non-Christian as a Christian.



Leon Barnes

Paul said, these marks all over his body was reason for no one to trouble him any longer. For years after writing Galatians, Paul would continue to add the marks on his body with more rough treatment from others who hated what he stood for. I doubt that Paul was even thinking about all those who hated the cause of Christ and the beatings or stonings they would bring on him. He seems to be focused instead on those false teachers who had followed him as he left one city after another, after preaching Christ to them. They would come in claiming to be followers of Christ as well, but doing everything to try to tear down the work Paul had done. They questioned his being a real apostle of Christ. They were determined to convince every new convert that if they really wanted to be a Christian, they had to be circumcised and obey the Old Law. They gloried in their ability to turn disciples of Jesus into followers of the Law who were going back to a way of life that never saved anyone.

Paul challenged them as ones who perverted the Gospel. He shouted the message that circumcision or uncircumcision makes

no difference and that one who went back under that old law was severed from Christ, fallen from grace, and had become enemies of Jesus. He said these false teachers just wanted to brag about turning these new converts into keepers of the law.

It seems crazy now, looking back, that anyone would want to lead people from the freedom in Christ, to become law keepers, when they had never been under the Old Testament law at all. The very goal of the law was to bring us to Christ and now that Christ has come, why would anyone want to go back under the law. In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, but all are one in Him. Just think of Jesus' final and great commission for His disciples. "All authority is given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore and make disciples in all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Just as He was about to ascend back to the Father, He told the eleven apostles in Acts 1:8 that they would begin in Jerusalem, then go to Judea, then Samaria, and then to the rest of the world.

It's extremely difficult for people who have become accustomed to walls to live in an environment where the walls are torn down. Jesus came, reaching out with a message of salvation and good news to all people, praying that every follower of His would be part of a body united in love. He asked the Father for us all to be one as He and the Father are one, so the world might believe that The Father had sent Him.

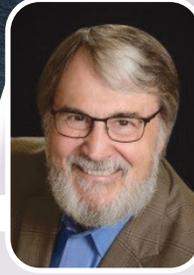
It seems strange that the greatest missionary, outside of Jesus, who ever lived would also be one of the most persecuted people of all time. He carried a message of hope, forgiveness, love, and conversion to every place he entered. He was just as welcoming to the slave as the rich man, to the foreigner as to the Jews, to the woman as the man, and to the half breed as to the pure born.

I wonder today, what kind of marks do we bear in our body for Jesus? What scars are on us that should lead the Christian world not to trouble us." **MM**

Q&A

HOLY BIBLE

*“What Does
the Bible Say?”*



Send your
Questions
to Dan Winkler
danddwinkler@gmail.com

Bible Study more simple

YOUR WONDERFUL QUESTION

[From a brother in one of our state penitentiaries who has come home to our Father]:

Brother Dan, just a few lines to say, Hello! And make a special request of you, if you might spare a bit of time. I've recently been "returned" to the Lord's church in 2024, and daily study my KJV Bible, but I often get "stumped" when it comes to approaching "Interpretation" of certain difficult (at least to me) passages. Please send what would be considered sound / safe guidance or rules for interpreting passages; context?

MY THOUGHTS:

Wow! Thank you for your desire to study and rightly handle God's word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). AND welcome home to the embrace of our Father's grace.

For years I have used a simple method of Bible study that has proven ever-so-helpful. I let each letter of the word S T U D Y remind me of a step I need to take in my effort to understand a verse or verses. I call these Study Steps. Here's how it works.

STUDY Step #1

"S" – See The Whole Picture

I place my passage of interest into its textual neighborhood. I pay attention to two broad fields of thought.

To begin, what part of the Bible do I find my passage? The Old Testament introduces me to my need for a Savior (1 Timothy 3:15) and points me to examples of faith or failure designed to help me live for Him (cf. Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11). The New Testament identifies Jesus of Nazareth as my Savior (Matthew 1:18-23; John 3:16-17) and teaches me what I need to do to be among His saved (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-2). The purpose of both testaments differ and must be remembered for me to use

either of them properly.

Then, what book of the Bible do I find my passage? Each book has a unique emphasis that should guide me through its chapters and verses. In the Old Testament, I must remember whether I'm studying a book of law, (Genesis – Deuteronomy), history (Joshua – Esther), poetry (Job – Song of Solomon), or prophesy (Isaiah – Malachi). In the New Testament, I must remember whether I am studying a book that is reflective, taking me back to the life of Jesus and his church (Matthew – Acts), prescriptive, teaching me how to live for Jesus as members of His church (Romans – Jude), or predictive, alerting me to the future of Jesus and His church (Revelation). These emphases are wind in the sails of interpretation. I can't see them, but they influence every verse they touch and I must keep them in mind as I begin my study.

STUDY Step #2

"T" – Tax the passage with questions

Before I launch into my study, I want to know two things from background of my passage. So, I ask two basic questions.

To whom was my passage initially penned? That always has a bearing on its meaning. Always! For example, was my passage initially written to a divided, immoral church like Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:10-12; 5:1-2)? A united and loving church like Philippi (Philippians 1:9, 16; 2:2)? A scattered group of suffering Christians like those in what we call Turkey (1 Peter 1:1; 4:16)? A single individual Christian like Timothy or Titus (1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4)? I want to know who the Holy Spirit had in mind



and what was going on in their lives.

Why was this passage written in the first place? Was it penned to inform? Correct? Encourage? Whichever, what changes were specified? Why? These behind-the-scenes details are foundational if I want to get off to a proper start in my interpretation of a verse. By the way, one of the most helpful resources for this is Christian Courier's *A Study Guide to Greater Bible Knowledge* by Wayne Jackson. See their website: <<https://christiancourier.com>>. Chapter Five is worth the price of the book.

STUDY Step #3 **"U" – Unravel the context**

Now, the fun begins. It's time to dive into my text and I began by putting my finger on its context and contextual flow. I look for two indicators.

To determine the specific context of my passage, I look for paragraphs. I need to set it into its paragraph and see what is being said in all of the surrounding verses. That keeps me from making it say what I want it to say or what others tell me it says. Some translations are already in paragraph settings. Some have paragraphs set apart with manmade headings. Some just have the grammatical sign for a paragraph's beginning (a bold, two-legged backward capitol letter "P.")

After locating the paragraph that encapsulates my passage, I'm interested in the main idea that flows through these verses. What's being said in the paragraph? Is it the beginning of a new thought, or the continuation of something presented in previous paragraph? This is when I look at the beginning of the paragraph for what I call "pivot terms": e.g. Therefore, Wherefore, Henceforth, For, So, But, or And. These are like the links of a chain joining thoughts together. If my passage is in a paragraph starting with one of these pivot terms, it connects the thought of my passage to the previous paragraph. That's just common sense and it helps me remain true to the basic meaning of my passage and all that is said before it and after it.

STUDY Step #4 **"D" – Disect the verse(s)**

Once I have zeroed in on the context and contextual flow of my passage, I'm ready to focus on its wording. Two kinds of words get my attention.

Words that are used multiple times in the same verse or

surrounding verses jump off the page to me. My mentor and friend, William Woodson, used to call these "key words." The Bible is full of them. For example, read Philippians 2:1-8 and look for some form of the word "mind." Read Colossians 3:1-17 and see how many times you find the word "put" ("put on," "put off" or "put away"). Repeated words help me see what the Spirit was emphasizing in my verse and its context.

Strong words and verbs also deserve my time. I look for the nouns that help my passage breathe. If possible, I find out the term it translated and other ways that same word could be translated. *W. E. Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* can be very helpful with this. I also spend time with the verbs in my passage. Are they past tense, present, or future? With a little knowledge of Greek grammar, I might want to see if the verbs are: (a) present tense (i.e. something that is continuing or should continue), (b) aorist tense (i.e. something that happened at a specific time in the past), (c) imperfect tense (i.e. something that was continually happening in the past), or (d) perfect tense (i.e. something that happened in the past with consequences that remain). This depth of study can make the meaning of words dance off the page and into my life.

STUDY Step #5 **"Y" – Yoke the data**

The final step I take calls for some creative juices. This is where I try to analyze and summarize all of my findings. Whether on paper or in my mind, I put my findings into two carefully worded projects.

First, I try to capsule the meaning of my passage with one short paragraph. It's a paragraph that points out what God wants me to know, or be, or do in my efforts to bring Him glory.

Second, I try to fuse the essence of my passage into one carefully worded sentence. I make this sentence personal and let it specify ways I am going to improve. And I try to use some of the same words I used in the previously mentioned paragraph.

Conclusion!

Well, there you have it. That's the path I travel. I'd suggest you ask others what they find helpful and blend all that you learn into something that works best for you.

Keep studying. Growing. Becoming. Use your investigation, interpretation, and personal application of holy writ to become what God made you to be. Write again and, until then, may your heart echo the words of the psalmist: "Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day"

(Psalm 119:97). **MM**



I Need to Commune with God



Gary Hampton

by Gary C. Hampton, Minister
Siwell Road church of Christ
Jackson, Mississippi

A good brother once told me of an experience which changed his life. It seems he had played an important role in organizing an annual youth rally. Each year the rally continued to grow in attendance. Then, one year he got so wrapped up in the details that he forgot to pray. The day of the youth rally arrived and the crowds were far below expectations. His first instinct was to blame God, but then he remembered he had not included Him in the plans. He immediately went into a room alone, got down on his knees and asked God to forgive him. He then asked God to bring about whatever good possible within the group assembled. My friend told me that was the best youth rally of all. The young people seemed to get deeper into the studies conducted and numbers of them responded to the Lord's invitation. He said from then on he tried to always begin planning by going to God in prayer!

I need to remember my brother's lesson every day. It is important for me to take time to pray. Yet, as I hurry from place to place trying to fulfill all of my commitments, there just does not seem to be a convenient time to pray. Daniel's solution was to set aside 3 specific times each day for prayer. In fact, so dedicated was Daniel to that routine that his enemies tried to use it to destroy him. They got the king to say no one could petition any god or man other than King Darius for 30 days. "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he

knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days" (Daniel 6:10). For Daniel, prayer was a part of his daily routine. I find it much easier to pray when I make prayer a habit, in terms of setting aside special times for prayer.

Crowds sometimes kept the Lord busy from sunrise to dark. He got up long before daylight so He could commune with His Father (Mark 1:35). Rather than saying I need to develop a more meaningful prayer life someday, I need to plan a time right now and keep my appointment with my loving, heavenly Father!

Specific times of prayer are often made better by praying in a private place. Mark reports that Jesus got up long before daylight, "departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed" (Mark 1:35). Matthew tells of another occasion, "And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on a mountain by Himself to pray. And when evening had come, He was alone there" (14:23). During the sermon on the mount, the Lord instructed,

"And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut

your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly" (Matthew 6:5-6).

Public prayer certainly has its place (1 Timothy 2:8). However, it can be even more important to recognize the value of private prayer. Jesus wanted the 3 disciples to watch with Him while He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. He wanted them near, yet, He wanted to be alone. Such circumstances allow me to talk with my Creator and Father about the most personal things. It gives me an opportunity to pour out all of the doubts and fears, as well as private sins, which may be hindering me from doing my utmost in service to Him!

Setting aside the time and place for prayer will prove ineffective if I do not believe God will provide an answer. The singer of Israel said reassuringly, "The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing" (Psalm 34:10). Jesus promised His disciples, "And all things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive" (Matthew 21:22; Mark 11:24). James stressed the importance of belief in his epistle to the scattered first-century Christians.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask

I find it much easier to pray when I make prayer a habit, in terms of setting aside special times for prayer.

How time flies away

"The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

Psalm 90:10

I remember Al Franks using this scripture in a Gospel Meeting at the Clinton, MS, church of Christ. The illustration was that at his age at that time, by this scripture, he could not even get approved for a four-year car loan. Makes you stop and think.

At that meeting, Al asked me if I wanted to help him with a layout of one of the articles for the June issue of the *Messenger*.



Mark Bridges 2015 issue.

The next day at lunch I did the layout and brought it back that night for him to critique. Al liked it! He said that was quick work; I ended up doing the entire June

2015 issue. From that point on, Al would send me the articles and photos and let me go. Being about 4 years from retirement I thought this would be great working with Al in my retirement years. Al allowed me to make some changes in the layouts and cover designs, even change to a magazine format.

Then, in October of 2019, things changed. Al would fly away, (***I remembered the four-year car loan statement***). Now what about retirement and the *Messenger*. I remember June calling and asking, "what do we do?" I told her, "you just keep sending the articles and we'll keep moving forward as long as we get the support from churches and other supporters."

This issue is the 10th anniversary of my having the opportunity to keep Al's vision of the *Messenger* going. Time does fly away!

Thanks, first to all those that support the *Messenger* financially, it could not happen without you. Also, to Dennis, Glenda, Eddie, Greg, Beth and all the writers for keeping the mission of the *Messenger* alive. **MM**

"And let us consider one another in order to stir up Love and Good works."

(Hebrews 10:24)

"Jesus promised His disciples, "And all things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive"

(Matthew 21:22)

of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:5-8).

Of course, I have to pray for the right reason. James later wrote, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (4:3).

Students in a class I taught suggested making specific requests in our prayers to God is good. Paul requested that the Colossian church ask God to give him an opportunity to preach the Gospel. He also wanted them to ask God to speak in the right way, walk wisely around unbelievers and use his time well (4:3-5). They also said it is good to develop a prayer list. Children are particularly good at this in the

prayers before bed. It is not unusual for them to include every family member they can think of as well as pets and dolls! After reading Paul's letters to various churches and individuals, it appears he too had a list (Romans 1:8-10; 1 Corinthians 1:4; Ephesians 1:15-16; Philippians 1:3; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3; 2 Timothy 1:3-4; Philemon 1:4).

Like most other people, no matter where I have travelled, I have always wanted to stay in touch with those I love. For the Christian, that certainly ought to include our Father. So, I need to set aside times to pray. It may be helpful to do a portion of my praying in a private place so I can talk openly to God. Too, I must believe He will hear and answer, or my prayers will be ineffective. To be even more effective, it is good to make specific requests of God and develop a list of people and things you want to be sure to take before the throne. **MM**



The Depths of Grief

Finding our way out of the depths of grief is not a short-term process.

by John E. Dobbs
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Monroe, Louisiana.

Almost every human being, at some point in life, will be affected by the reality of grief. Ever since Adam and Eve learned of the death of their son Abel, grief has been a part of the human experience. Solomon observed in Ecclesiastes 3, “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die...” Grief is a painful element of life for all of us. When we experience a significant loss, we begin to recognize the depths of grief, the ongoing nature of loss.

When we suffer a significant loss, no part of our lives is left untouched. Losing a loved one affects every aspect of our lives. It can disrupt our senses, alter sleep patterns, hinder our focus, and even divide families. Grief affects the deepest parts of our thoughts, emotions, and being. Many suffer from depression or even despondency following the loss of a loved one. To be submerged in grief, feeling as though there is no way to rise above it, can be excruciatingly painful.

Grief impacts us in deep and meaningful ways because it represents permanent separation in this life. As long as we walk this earth, we will not hear our loved one’s laughter or feel their concern. This intensely personal loss is not a surface irritation but a wound that requires attention.

When we find ourselves in the depths of grief, where can we turn for help? We should first turn to the Lord with any

struggles weighing on us. The Lord already knows our pain, and we should not hesitate to express our feelings to Him and seek His help. Psalm 147:3 declares, “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” That healing may not be instantaneous, but it is real.

One effect of grief is that we feel alone and wonder where God has gone. Psalm 34:18 reassures us: “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” The Bible is filled with verses affirming God’s concern, presence, care, and strength for those enduring grief. He knows that we are suffering through a difficult experience.

We can find support among our Christian family and friends. This can be challenging. Often, our friends do not know what to say in the face of profound loss. They may offer platitudes that sound comforting but provide little solace. However, among our Christian friends are those who have suffered similar losses. Often, they will reach out and let us know they are available if we need to talk. This is a comforting blessing.

We may find support groups for those who have endured a loss. Whether it is GriefShare, Compassionate Friends, or Heartbeat, ask around in your community to find those who gather to share the burdens of loss. Often, those who have experienced the same grief can offer comfort that no one else can.

We will find ultimate hope in the promises of God that our pain will not last forever. Revelation 21:4 assures us, “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and

death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

We will experience healing as we help others heal. At some point in our grief journey, we may feel stronger. We may reach out and help others who are struggling. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” Deep healing can occur when we help someone else with their struggles.

Finding our way out of the depths of grief is not a short-term process. It may take years to regain our footing. As we struggle through, we must remember that God notices every tear. Psalm 56:8 reminds us, “You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?” No tear is wasted or unnoticed. Throughout your journey with grief, do not give up—do not be afraid. Instead, hold fast to God’s promises to the brokenhearted. We are not hopeless—quite the opposite. Romans 15:13 encourages us: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” **MM**

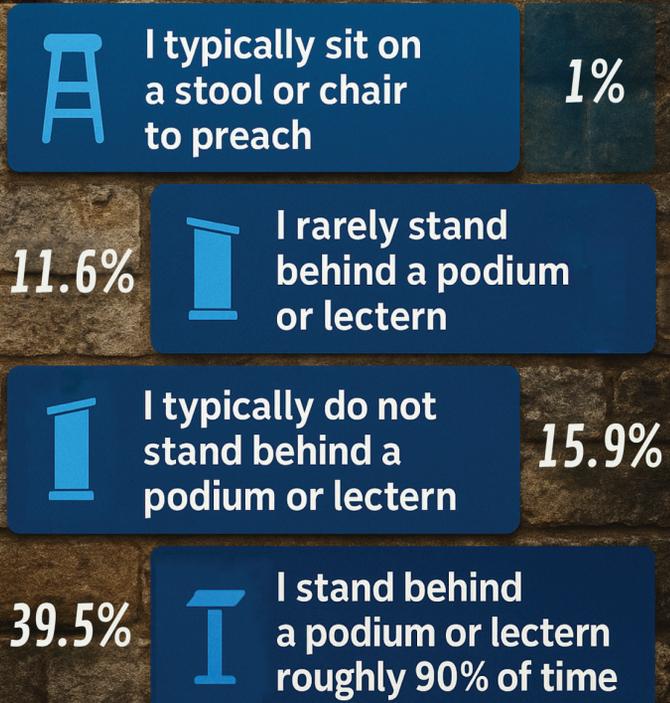
John E. Dobbs is the minister for Forsythe church of Christ in Monroe, Louisiana. He is the author of six books, two of which are on the subject of grief. Through Your Tears and Merry Christmas To A Broken Heart. All are available on Amazon.

The Preacher's Page

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Where Do You "Stand" When You Preach



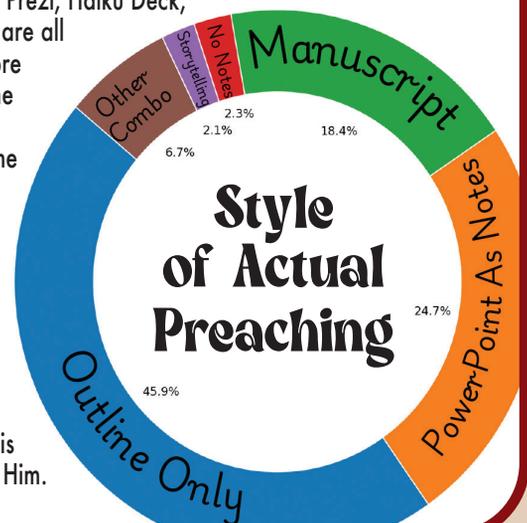
Preach the Word...
 Make full proof of your ministry...
 Do the work of an evangelist.
 (2 Timothy 4)

DO YOUR BEST

Whether you stand behind a podium with your hands holding on to the pulpit, walk around the stage, or sit in a chair, do your best. Whether you use PowerPoint, Prezi, Haiku Deck, or none of the above, do your best. Whether your sermons are all expository, textual, topical, or a combination of these, do your best. Whether your tone is more conversational or didactic, do your best. Why should we do our best? It is not so that everyone will like us.

It is not so we can become more famous. It is not so we will be invited to speak on big-time lectureship programs or make more money. We want to do our best because we want to be approved by God, we want to handle correctly the Word of God, and so that lives will be changed. Our dear brother Paul made this clear. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15). As you know, this passage is also translated as "Study to show yourself approved..."

It is true of our study, just as it is true of our proclamation that it must never be about us. Paul also said that his stewardship of the Grace of God was "given to me for you." (Ephesians 3:2) We will study and we will preach our best when we understand that we do this for God and for those who hear us. May He help us always to do our best, for them, and for Him.



THE GOSPEL *in* 5 SECONDS

by Hugh Fulford, Minister, Writer
Gallatin, Tennessee

The Gospel required a

1 SECOND COVENANT or TESTAMENT. “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second” (Hebrews 8:7). “He takes away the first that He may establish the second” (Hebrews 10:9b). Why was this the case? “For the law (the old covenant), having a shadow of the good things to come (the New Testament), and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices, which they offered continually year by year, make those who approach perfect...For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (Hebrews 10:1,4). The old covenant was made with the children of Israel (Deuteronomy 5:2-3). The new covenant is for every creature in all nations (Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20). The old covenant (law) was a “schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (Galatians 3:24-25). The New Testament sets forth the “one faith” (Ephesians 4:5), “the faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). We do not go to the old covenant (the Old Testament) today to learn the particulars of how to become a child of God, how to acceptably worship, or how to live a faithful Christian life!

The Gospel demands a

2 SECOND BIRTH. To Nicodemus, Jesus said, “Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God” (John 3:3). He went on to explain, “Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God” (John 3:5). Though He was talking to Nicodemus, the force of Jesus' words is that anyone who would see and enter the Kingdom of God must be born a second time. Writing to Christians, Peter spoke of their “having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the Word of God which lives and abides forever” (I Peter 5:23). Our first birth was a fleshly birth from our mother's womb. The second birth is a spiritual birth “of water and the Spirit.”

The Gospel sets forth a

3 SECOND LAW OF PARDON, a way for Christians who fall away from the Lord to return to Him. In Acts 8:9-13, we have the account of the conversion of the Samaritans, including a sorcerer by the name of Simon. Later, Simon tried to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit with money, that is, he wanted to have the ability to bestow the Holy Spirit on others (Acts 8:18-19). He was immediately rebuked by the apostle Peter and told “your heart is not right in the sight of God” (Acts 8:21).

He was then instructed, “Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.” This second law of pardon is not for aliens but for children of God who fall into sin. Christians who sin are told, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9). But let us not confuse God's second law of pardon (for the sinning child of God) with His first law of pardon (for the alien sinner) (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; et. al.).

The Gospel tells of a

4 SECOND COMING OF CHRIST. “And to those who eagerly wait for Him, He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (Hebrews 9:28b).

Christ appearing a second time “apart from sin” simply means that at His second coming He will not be offering Himself as a sacrifice for sin (as He did at His first coming), but rather for the eternal salvation of His faithful followers. At His ascension, two men in white apparel (apparently angels) announced, “This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:9-11). At our Lord's second coming and after the dead saints have been resurrected (along with all the rest of the dead, John 5:28-29), the living saints will be “caught up together with them (the resurrected saints) in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (I Thessalonians 4:16-17).

The Gospel warns of a

5 SECOND DEATH. To the tribulation-torn saints in Smyrna, Jesus said, “He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death” (Revelation 2:11). Later we read, “And Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:14-15). The first death is the death of the body, a death appointed to all (Hebrews 9:27). The second death is the eternal separation from God that all of those who do not know God and who do not obey the Gospel of Christ and who do not remain faithful will experience (cf. Romans 6:23).

These five “seconds” of the Gospel are important to understand and properly apply (cf. II Timothy 2:15).

In conclusion, think about this: The person who is born twice (see two above), will die only once (physical death). But the person who is born only once (the fleshly birth from his mother's womb, but without the second birth “of water and the Spirit”) will die twice (both physical death and the second death in the lake of fire and brimstone)! Succinctly summarized it is this: born once, die once! Born twice, die once! **MM**

Hugh Fulford <huford@comcast.net>

DUST to DUST

“Can a Christian be Cremated?”

by *Dennis Doughty, editor*

Questions about the Bible often lead to a study of topics we preachers might otherwise overlook. I have been asked on occasion, “What does the Bible teach about cremation?” And “Can a Christian be cremated?” This is a good question, especially in light of current practices.

Cremation has become increasingly popular in America. In 1985, only 15% of deaths were cremated. That number rose to 35% in 2007. The National Funeral Association reported in 2023 that the cremation rate had reached 60%. I would say that this increase is directly attributable to the rising cost of a traditional burial. Which raises the question of what the Bible teaches about Cremation.” There is no teaching of scripture, either in the Old or New Testament, concerning exactly how a person is to be buried, or any teaching forbidding a certain type of burial.

Under rare circumstances, bodies were cremated in the Old Testament. After Saul and his two sons were killed in battle by the Philistines, their bodies were hung on the wall of Bethshan. Valiant men went by night, recovered the bodies and they were burned. Their bones were then honorably buried at Jabesh (1 Samuel 31:8-13). This cremation was probably done to prevent disease as their bodies had been abused and had begun to decay.

Joseph in Egypt was embalmed by their customs, and his bones were carried out of Egypt 400 years later (Genesis 50:22-26). Jesus was buried in a rock-hewn tomb, his body wrapped in linen and anointed with spices as was the custom of the times (John 19:40).

Several died by fiery means as a judgment of the Lord. God rained down fire and brimstone upon the city of Sodom. We read of the sin of Nadab and Abihu, the

sons of Aaron, who offered up “strange fire” which God had not commanded, and “fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them” (Leviticus 10:1-2).

Cremation and the Resurrection

While there is no teaching forbidding cremation, some worry that it might affect a person’s resurrection from the dead. Some might worry that if a body is cremated and the ashes scattered, the person might not be able to be resurrected on the last day. This comes from a misunderstanding of the resurrection.

Our resurrection will come from the place where our souls go after death, a place Christ called “Hades” (See Luke 16:19-26). This is the place where all dead souls go to wait for Christ’s return. When Christ returns, our souls will be given a new body. “So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body” (1 Corinthians 15: 42).

For those who are alive on the earth when the Lord returns, we are told that we will “be caught up together with them in the clouds,” and our physical bodies will be changed, “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 16-17).

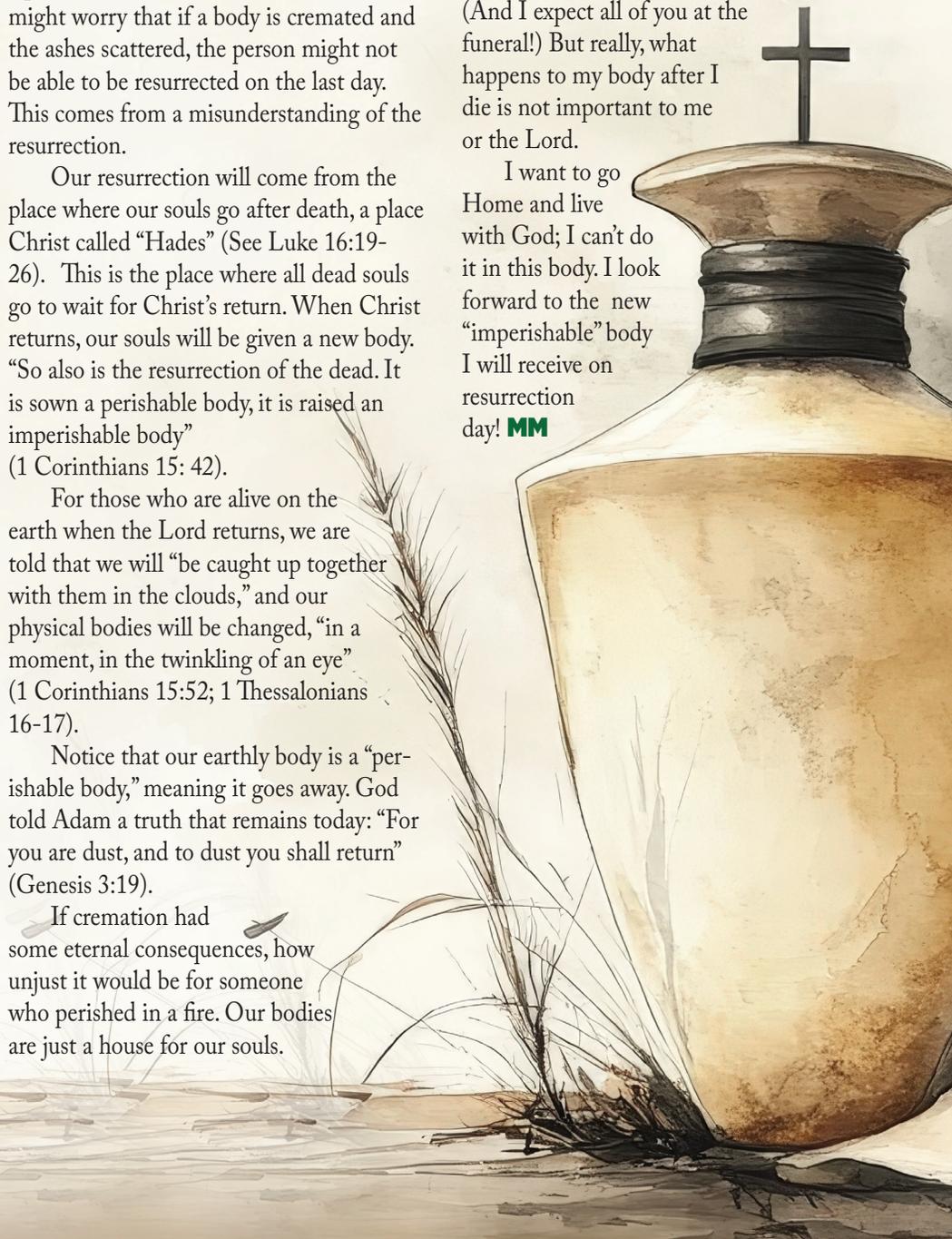
Notice that our earthly body is a “perishable body,” meaning it goes away. God told Adam a truth that remains today: “For you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19).

If cremation had some eternal consequences, how unjust it would be for someone who perished in a fire. Our bodies are just a house for our souls.

Death is the separation of soul and body (James 2:26). When the soul leaves, the body has fulfilled its purpose and has no spiritual value.

However, we should honor the wishes of the dead and dispose of their remains in a loving and respectful manner. For me, I would like to be buried in a traditional way. (And I expect all of you at the funeral!) But really, what happens to my body after I die is not important to me or the Lord.

I want to go Home and live with God; I can’t do it in this body. I look forward to the new “imperishable” body I will receive on resurrection day! **MM**



God's Tables

by Cecil May III
Levy church of Christ
North Little Rock, AR.

The favorite part of my workday is lunchtime, and it is not just about the food. In our office building, most days of the week, we come out of our siloed offices to lunch with fellow staff. During that hour,



Cecil May III

Rarely are the food items mentioned, but the participants, the conversations, and the benefits of table fellowship are reported. God has a history with tables.

The Table of the Tabernacle/Temple

When God provided Moses instructions for the construction of the tabernacle, including its rather limited furniture, he included a table. Exodus 25:23-30 goes into great detail about the materials, dimensions, and decor of the table. The table was to be continually set with both drink and bread. This was God's table in

the conference table becomes a lunch table. There is food. There is also welcoming, conversation, laughter, and sharing.

Numerous times in the gospels Jesus is found "reclining at table" with various peo-

ple. God's tent. He was the host. The table was always ready for guests. The bread had a special name. At one time we used the word "showbread." More recent translations of our scriptures communicate the idea and purpose of this table by the phrase "bread of the Presence."

Leviticus 24:5-9 details the recipe, the portion amounts, the shelf life, and the instructions for consuming the bread of the Presence. Each week twelve loaves were baked. The new loaves were placed on the table on the Sabbath. As the fresh bread was set in its place, the older bread was to be eaten by the priests. The bread pictured God's presence with Israel, His provision to the 12-tribe nation, His covenant with them, and the memory of His care for them.

When the tabernacle was replaced by the extremely more lavish temple constructed in the days of Solomon, the new house of God contained ten (10) tables. God wanted Israel to know he loved them, desired their fellowship, and relished the role of host providing an abundance of blessings.

The Church and the Table

Malachi 1:7 and 12 refer to the "Lord's table." In that context, the table is the altar on which the Israelites offered their

sacrifices. Remember that in the sacrificial system, some of the sacrifice was burned to the Lord while some was consumed by priests. In 1 Corinthians 10:21, the "table of the Lord" is in contrast to the altars upon which meats had been offered to idols and demons. (1 Corinthians 10:19-20). For two millennia now, the temple with its sacrificial alters, tables, and the bread of Presence have been removed. Even so, God has kept a table in the plan.

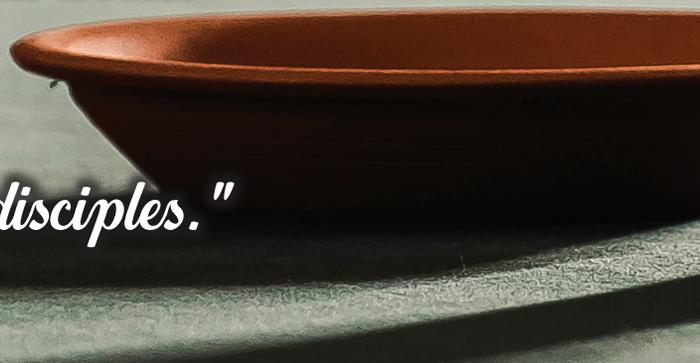
One of the aforementioned "reclined at table" gospel passages is Luke 22:14. That particular table was a Passover table. On the night of His betrayal and arrest leading to crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus initiated a new table tradition for His disciples. Jesus took some of the bread and drink, blessed each, passed it around the table, and asked that His body and blood, symbolized by the bread and wine, be remembered. Jesus began a new tradition for a "new covenant" (Luke 22:20).

Since that time, on the first day of the week disciples of Jesus have gathered together to break bread. (Acts 20:7). 1 Corinthians 11:20 designates this practice "the Lord's Supper." The church gathers for the Lord's Supper around the Lord's table.

The Table in Paradise

Psalms 23 pictures a life shepherded by

"On the night of His betrayal and arrest leading to crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus initiated a new table tradition for His disciples."



I'd rather be a **DOORKEEPER**

Jehovah. Life with the shepherd experienced green pastures, still waters and righteous paths. Eventually life encounters the valley of the shadow of death. The poetic picture takes the reader into an afterlife in which God prepares “a table before me.” At this table in the eternal house of the Lord, enemies are kept at bay, refreshing care is provided, and one’s cup overflows with blessing.

Surely this Psalm 23 scene is reenacted in the person of Lazarus as his story is reported by Jesus. In poverty, he was not welcomed at the tables of the wealthy in this world. Yet, when he died and was escorted by angels to Paradise, he was seated at a banquet table, honored to be by Abraham’s side. (Luke 16:19-24). All who die in the Lord will be granted a seat at the table along with Abraham and Lazarus. (Matthew 8:11).

God desires intimate presence with His family. As Father and host He delights to provide blessings in abundance. There is no greater place of warmth and welcome than God’s table. You are invited. **MM**

"How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty. My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of my LORD; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God" (Psalm 84:1-2).

by **Danny Dodd**
Levy church of Christ



Danny Dodd

What an amazingly splendid spirit! No wonder David was a man after God’s own heart. Such a passion for God. Such a desire to worship Him. Such a need we now have to recapture this desire. It is the right emphasis, the proper priority, and the passion that will build a people and a church. It is the spirit of revival. It flowed out from David’s heart of revival. No surprise then, what he says next:

"Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere: I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked" (vs. 10).

Wow! David was a king, remember? He was used to the kingly lifestyle. Pomp, circumstance, ceremony, honor, yet his priority was spot on. He would rather be God’s doorkeeper—a servant’s role for sure—than hang out with those who opposed his God. I wonder, do we agree? Do we want this job? All kinds of terrific reasons why we should. In God’s house is:

■ **Permanency.** God’s house is eternal (see 2 Corinthians 5:1). Nothing insecure or temporary about it. We can’t say that about tents. They are made to fold up—especially the wicked kind. Being the doorkeeper in God’s house is a forever job.

■ **Praise.** God’s house is defined by praise. It uplifts and edifies. A new song of Moses and the Lamb is sung. “Holy, holy, holy” is continually proclaimed (see Revelation 4-5). Back in Psalm 84, David states, “Even the sparrow has found a home and the swallow a nest for herself, a place near your altar.” This will not be discovered anywhere in the temporary tents of the world. There is no praise there, just punishment. In God’s house, a doorkeeper’s job is beautifully blessed and framed by praise.

■ **Presence.** God’s that is! His divine, holy, majestic presence makes it all possible. It is for what David’s soul yearned, and his flesh cried out, “You have made known to me the path of life,” he marveled in Psalm 16:11. “You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.” No wonder he wanted to be His doorkeeper.

■ **Purpose.** Real, lasting, meaningful purpose is found in being that doorkeeper. At first blush, it may not be viewed that way, particularly from the viewpoint of the wicked tents, but it is ever true. King David, honored above all in his day, knew it. Do we?

Look past the temporary. Discover the blessings of being God’s doorkeeper, of being God’s simple servant. It is one of the highest callings around. I’d rather be a doorkeeper! How about you? **MM**



from a
Woman's
VIEWPOINT

"In Memory of Miss June"

“Remembrances”

by *Madolyn Gibson Lewis*

An ordinary drive to worship one Sunday revealed a very unordinary email that popped up on my phone. I didn't recognize the sender's name, but the beginning sentence, "I was meditating this morning and you came to mind" caught my curious attention. As she revealed herself



Madolyn Gibson Lewis

to me and what she was remembering, my thoughts and emotions exploded with tears of joy and thanksgiving as I realized this happened 47 years ago.

She remembered being in a hospital room with her Aunt when I walked in, and she immediately began singing the books of the Bible song. I had taught her this song in Sunday school at the Winona, MS, church of Christ.

She then said, "You got the point immediately and your FAMOUS smile with tears lit up the room. REMEMBER ME ???". At this point I stopped, reflected back and, thankfully, God blessed me with a vivid memory of the time this took place.

She continued to refresh my memory by describing herself as a little motherless and fatherless, black, nine year old girl who was brought to Sunday school by a neighbor in 1978. A song and a smile is something she remembered.

What a small gift to give to another person and yet so powerful when that's all a tender heart needs. Small seeds of genuine love were planted in this child's heart that day and she never forgot. We plant and God gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6). We may never know how the seeds of love we plant have grown in someone's heart unless they reach back with a thankful heart. I am so glad she did. God uses our ability to remember so that we can reach back over time and space and say "thank you" to those who have made an impact on our lives. She moved to

Illinois, but has recently moved back to Mississippi. Yes, I will make it a priority to get together with her in the near future.

What can make a woman or deed memorable? One woman from the Old Testament, Abigail, can teach us the art of persuasion and how it payed off in ways she never expected (1 Samuel 25). David, undoubtedly, remembered Abigail as being a lovely, godly, humble woman filled with wisdom and kindness. The actions she took saved her unworthy drunken



IN MEMORY OF

David Ferguson 1975-2025

On March 5, our family lost my son-in-law, Dave Ferguson, to pancreatic cancer. He was only fifty, had young children, a loving wife, a successful business, and a new home. He wanted to live and fought bravely till the end to survive. He was the center of our family, and his death has devastated us.

Dave became interested in the martial arts as a kid. After a couple of years fighting in the ring, he established his own gym in the Memphis area. After marrying our daughter, Kandace, he built the gym up to be voted the "Best Gym" in Memphis year after year and voted "Best Boss" in Memphis this past year. When the Tennessee



Martial Arts Hall of Fame was established, Dave was unanimously inducted as its first member. He was a great influence in the lives of many young men and women he trained and worked with. His memorial service was attended by several hundred, many who came from long distances to honor Dave.

Long before I baptized him into Christ, Dave had many Christ-like qualities. Like Jesus, "He went about doing good." For anything I needed done, he would say, "I can make that happen." He loved his trail bike, our family vacations, and watching his girl and boy play sports.

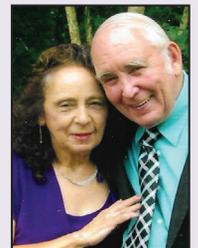
My mom had died at 91, also from pancreatic cancer. But she looked forward to death and joyfully told others that she had only a few weeks left to live. While we miss her, her death was a sweet blessing. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord" (Revelation 14:13).

Death can be a blessing, but it can also tear your heart out. Our thousands of prayers and the best medical care could not save Dave. His death has shaken us to the core and tested our faith. The great comfort is that he died a Christian, is with the Lord, and is now embraced in my sweet mother's arms.

Dennis Doughty

James Mitchell Norman of

Ferriday, Louisiana, passed away on April 20, 2025, at age 86. He was born on October 29, 1938, in Calvin, Louisiana, to the late Marshall Hudson Norman and Ima Louisa (Guthrie) Norman, who preceded him in death. Mitchell was married to his loving wife and co-laborer, Theresa Marie Norman, for 59 years. Of their six children, three have served as elders and have preached, which Mitchell was very proud of. In all, they had 22 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.



He proudly served in the US Army and was honorably discharged after 4 years of service. Popularly known as "Brother Mitchell," he preached for over 60 years for numerous congregations in Louisiana, Arkansas, Illinois, and Texas. Known for his selfless and diligent efforts, he often took on other jobs as needed to support his preaching work in smaller congregations.

For the past 9 years, he served as the preacher for the Ferriday church of Christ.

husband and the males of his household from being killed. She could have found satisfaction in getting rid of him but she didn't. I pray we never feel like someone is beneath our social standing or deep enough in sin that we can't love and reach out to help them.

This is a beautiful and powerful story of a wise woman doing the right thing and not seeking vengeance herself but leaving that in God's hands (Romans 12:19). As she fell on her face and bowed before David, he listened. Humility can open doors. She appealed to the goodness in David's heart reminding him of God's love and forgiveness towards him (2 Samuel 12:13; Ephesians 4:32). She encouraged David to look towards the future and not have to live with the remembrance of murdering lives out of anger. Abigail was not forgotten as David sent for her to be his wife when her husband, Nabal, died.

God remembers too. It is good to have a fear of the LORD. We are told in Malachi 3:16-17 "Then they that feared the LORD spoke often one to another; and the LORD hearkened and heard it and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD and that thought upon His name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of host, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spares his own son that serves Him." Beautiful words for those that love and serve our God.

Malachi's message to Israel was that God loved His people and wanted to bless them, but many were being insensitive to His love. Among those were priests who were unfaithful. Also, many of God's people were practicing infidelity in their worship and marriages. This message of warning applies to us today. If we turn our devotions and love towards God, He will claim and bless us. If we don't, we will be cursed and separated from Him forever. When that day comes for His righteous judgment, true worshipers will be spared. God will not forget who you are.

As Jesus prepared to go to the cross and give the eternal sacrifice of His blood and body for each of us, He asked to be remembered (Luke: 22:19). We do this each Lord's Day when we partake of the Lord's Supper remembering His death, burial, and resurrection. This feast should deeply touch our hearts. We want to be able to humbly say the same words that were spoken by the thief that hung beside our Lord, "Remember me when thou come into thy kingdom" (Luke 23:42). **MM**

POLISHING THE PULPIT:

Spanish-Language Expansion in 2025

by *Marlon Retana*

As a Hispanic, I was introduced to PTP as a student. In recent years, an



Marlon Retana

increasing number of Hispanic brethren have attended the event. Recognizing the thirst for sound biblical teaching among Spanish-speaking Christians, more

and more families and leaders from Hispanic congregations have journeyed to experience the richness of PTP.

Their participation has not only enriched their personal faith but has allowed them to take invaluable lessons back to their home congregations, fostering growth and unity within the Hispanic churches of Christ.

Now, by the grace of God, an incredible new chapter is unfolding. Lord willing, starting this year, PTP Branson will offer Spanish lessons! There have been previous opportunities with a few lessons during the weekend or some sessions with live interpretation, but this year, PTP will have 27 Spanish sessions, where six men and three women will teach lessons from the Sermon on the

Mount. This milestone marks a significant moment in the ongoing effort to reach and support Hispanic brethren.

The inclusion of Spanish lessons at PTP Branson is not just an addition to the program—it is a powerful statement about the unity of the Lord's church and the recognition of the vital role that Hispanic Christians play in its growth. It is no secret that the Spanish-speaking population in the U.S. has grown, and this effect is seen in our congregations.

This effort ensures that Spanish-speaking brethren will receive biblical teaching tailored to their needs while being part of the larger PTP experience. It serves as an invitation for even more Hispanic Christians to join this enriching event, to grow alongside their English-speaking brethren, and to be further equipped for the great work of evangelism.

We are deeply grateful to God for making this expansion possible. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the PTP organizers

who have embraced this opportunity to serve a broader audience. Their commitment to providing a space for Hispanic brethren to learn, fellowship, and be encouraged is truly commendable.

If you are a Spanish-speaking Christian, we invite you to be a part of it. Make plans to attend. If you know of brethren who would benefit from this exciting new development, spread the Word, and pray for the success of this effort. More details can be found at www.polishingthepulpit.com/espanol.

May God continue to bless the work of everyone involved in this effort, and may this new opportunity bear fruit for His glory! **MM**

POLISHING THE PULPIT
Branson
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JULY 16-21, 2025
Branson Convention Center

Registration 

Schedule 

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Follow us on Instagram and Facebook for news and updates.

Y'all talk about **BAPTISM** *too much!*

*“...See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be **BAPTIZED**”? (Acts 8:36)*

Can't talk about the GRACE OF CHRIST without talking about **BAPTISM**.

(Ephesians 2:8-9; Acts 19:1-5)

Can't talk about the COMMANDMENTS OF CHRIST without talking about **BAPTISM**. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Can't talk about the DEATH OF CHRIST without talking about **BAPTISM**.

(Romans 6:3)

Can't talk about the BLOOD OF CHRIST without talking about **BAPTISM**.

(Acts 22:16; Revelation 1:5)

Can't talk about the RESURRECTION OF CHRIST without talking about **BAPTISM**.

(Romans 6:4-5)

Can't talk about the FORGIVENESS OF SINS IN CHRIST without talking about **BAPTISM**.

(Acts 2:38)

Can't talk about the CHURCH OF CHRIST without talking about **BAPTISM**.

(I Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:22-23)

Can't talk about the NEW BIRTH IN CHRIST without talking about **BAPTISM**.

(John 3:1-5; II Corinthians 5:17)

Can't talk about the BLESSINGS OF CHRIST without talking about **BAPTISM**.

(Ephesians 1:3; Galatians 3:26-29)

Can't talk about the SALVATION OF CHRIST without talking about **BAPTISM**.

(I Peter 3:21)

Can't PREACH CHRIST without talking about **BAPTISM**.

(Acts 8:35-39)

Seems like **BAPTISM is not talked about enough!**

Finding Peace In my Grief

Some Initial Responses To Loss

by **Brandon Baggett, Minister**
Luverne church of Christ
Luverne, Alabama

How would you describe grief? What words would you borrow from the languages of the earth to capture the pains and sorrows of this experience?

Grief is the echo of love in the hollow left behind. It's the silent ache in the spaces where laughter once lived. It's the shadow that dances in the light of memory. It's a roller coaster marked by unexpected twists and turns. It's an uninvited guest who enters your life without permission and refuses to leave quickly. Grief is like salt-water poured over your soul—it both cleanses and stings as it seeps deeply into your being. It's like a long winter night, where the stars seem too distant and the frozen hours stretch on endlessly. Grief is like trying to rebuild your life from the rubble after a devastating earthquake. It's like a song sung in the key of silence, and it must be allowed to play until it reaches its final note. Grief is a journey—a long road marked by shadows of what used to be, faintly lit by the distant and flickering light of hope. Grief is a universal language, a common tongue shared by all who make their pilgrimage through this life. Thankfully, grief is a language God speaks too, and His Word is there to guide us through all the pains and hurts we endure.

The Bible speaks deeply and compassionately about death and grief, giving us a realistic look at loss and the comfort found in Jesus. Death entered this world as a result of the fall (cf. Genesis 3:6–19; 1 Corinthians 15:21–22), and its impact has been felt by all flesh since the entrance of sin into this world. As Solomon noted, “For everything



Brandon Baggett

there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die” (Ecclesiastes 3:1–2). Unless the Savior comes before then, each and every living person will eventually die (cf. Hebrews 9:27; Psalm 89:48). However, death is not the end—it's merely a transition into eternal life for the child of God. As Jesus promised, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die” (John 11:25–26).

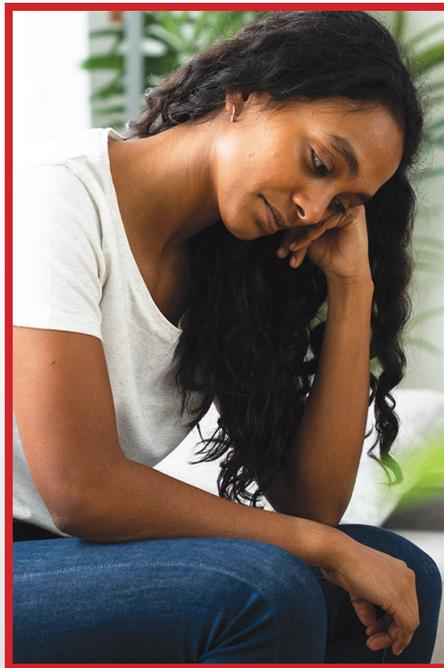
It may be that you are going through a season of grief. You are in good company! John 11:35 reminds us that even “Jesus wept,” and He wept over the death of Lazarus with full knowledge that

He would raise him up again. It's only natural to feel pain, sorrow, and sadness over the death of someone you love. The various emotions you are feeling right now are completely normal, and your grief experience is validated in the Scriptures. Your plight is something God Himself intimately understands. He knows what it's like to suffer sharp pain and loss, and He has promised to draw near to those who are brokenhearted (cf. Psalm 34:18; Matthew 5:4).

God's people aren't shielded from suffering or loss, but we are deeply blessed to serve “the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles” (2 Corinthians 1:3–4). The journey of grief is a long and winding road, but God meets us in the valley and tenderly walks with us each step of the way.

Even though your life will never be

the same, the good news is there's life after loss. You will never truly “get over” losing a loved one, but each forward step you take brings you closer to peace, acceptance, and new life. There are some important initial steps you can take to begin moving forward to-



*It's like a song sung
in the key of silence, and it
must be allowed to play until
it reaches its final note.*



ward peace. You might feel helpless and without control. Don't lose heart! Here are some things you can do right now:

■ **Evaluate the state of your health.** Grief is a powerful experience—it impacts us physically, emotionally, and spiritually! The grief process can make you feel fatigued, nauseated, cause stomach issues, lead to headaches, and interfere with your sleep and diet. Furthermore, grieving can potentially worsen existing health problems or cause new ones you've never experienced before. When we find ourselves grieving, though, the last thing we tend to think about is the state of our own health. It's wise to get in touch with your doctor as soon as possible, make them aware of what you are experiencing, and seek their help. A strong body will enable you to grieve healthily and effectively. Don't forget about your health during this difficult process.

■ **Talk about your loved one.** We need to know that it's okay to talk about our deceased loved ones. We may assume we are burdening others by talking about their death. We might fear the painful emotions that will rise to the surface if we bring them up in conversation. However, talking about our loved ones is a beautiful and healthy step in the healing process. It's normal to talk about the circumstances surrounding their death. It's a good thing to acknowledge their death. It's a beautiful thing to talk about the good times and special memories. Also, don't be afraid to open up to others who can help. It might be a preacher, a church member, a relative, or even a therapist. When you talk about your feelings and thoughts, it makes them real and helps you heal.

■ **Make time for solitude.** Finding solitude after a loss can initially be a huge challenge. After the death of a loved one, you are bombarded with people, phone calls, visits, and important appointments. In between medical personnel, church and family members, and the funeral itself, it's hard to have a lasting moment of quiet and solitude. Eventually, though, the initial chaos begins to settle down. When the visits become less frequent and the last casserole dish is returned, the true reality of the loss begins to sink in. Resist the urge to busy yourself to stay distracted. It's important to have time for reflection, acknowledgment, and the venting of your

emotions. Remember, what you are feeling is normal. Give those feelings a healthy outlet.

■ **Prepare yourself for difficult reminders.** You will find yourself experiencing “grief triggers” at various points along your grief journey. It might be a song on the radio, a movie that comes on TV, a certain smell or food that sparks a memory, or a key date on the calendar. These are triggers that remind us of our loved one, and they often bring a flood of emotions. You may find yourself having a “good day,” and then encounter a trigger and fall to pieces. This is a normal and healthy experience—it's not a sign of weakness! It's a reminder that grief is a lifelong journey. Prepare yourself for these difficult moments.

■ **Celebrate your loved one.** Choosing to celebrate your loved one is central to your healing! A person never truly dies as long as we keep their memory alive in our hearts. Initially, celebrating your loved one will likely involve a funeral or a memorial service. This might be a difficult event to plan and attend, but it will be a healthy outlet for your emotions. Beyond the initial service, though, there are many things you can do to continue celebrating that special person. Write to them or about them (e.g., a letter, a blog, a journal). Create a memorial in their honor (e.g., a wall of pictures, a garden in your yard, a tree in their memory). Keep doing the things they loved (e.g., certain traditions, eating at a favorite restaurant, watching a cherished movie). Death may take our loved ones, but it cannot take the memories we hold in our hearts.

You may be walking through the valley of grief, but you don't have to walk it alone. The God of all comfort is there to walk beside you. He wants to hold you close in your sorrow. He wants to remind you that His light has not gone out—not even in your darkest night. It is my hope that you can begin now to take some healthy steps forward in your journey of grief and find the peace of God that passes all understanding. Above all, I pray that you will remember this: death does not have the final word—God does! And God's word is life, hope, and everlasting comfort for His special people. **MM**



That **YOU** might **KNOW!**

by **Eddie Lewis**

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he offers two prayers on their behalf. The first is in chapter 1:15-23 and emphasizes them gaining knowledge and wisdom of Christ. The second prayer is in chapter 3:14-21 and emphasizes enablement. It is not so much a matter of knowing as being. Paul is saying, "I want you to get your hands on your blessings from Christ, realize how vast they are, and start using them!"

It is important to note that this prayer, as all of Paul's prison prayers, deals with the spiritual condition of the inner man and not material things. Paul knew that if the inner man was right with God, the outer man will be taken care of in due time.

First, the Invocation (v. 14-15). Notice Paul's posture in prayer—"I bow my knees." It must have been a unique experience for the soldiers chained to Paul to see him pray. No wonder so many were converted. The Bible nowhere commands a posture in prayer. In scripture we see leaders standing to pray, others sitting to pray, and Jesus falling on his face in Gethsemane to pray (Matthew 26:39). What is important when we pray is to bow our hearts before God and ask Him for what we need.

Paul's prayer is addressed to the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." All prayers in scripture are addressed to God the Father. He is the Father of all through creation. But at some point, we sin and become a child of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2-3). When we accepted Christ as our Savior and submit our will to him, we are "born again" into the family of God (John 3:3). He is our Father.

Consider the Petitions (v. 16-19). There are four requests in this prayer. Paul prays that the inner man might be strengthened spiritually, which will lead to a deeper relationship to Christ, which will in turn enable them to comprehend God's great love, which will result in their being "filled unto all the fullness of God." So, Paul is praying for—strength, depth, comprehension, and fullness.

■ **STRENGTH** (v.16). The presence of the Holy Spirit in us is evidence of our salvation (Romans 8:9; Ephesian 1:14). The power of the Holy Spirit in our lives enables us to live the Christian life and that is what Paul wants for his readers. The inner man of the sinner is dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1). Only when we yield to the call of the Gospel and are baptized into Christ does the spirit of man come alive: in Christ (Ephesians 2:4-10). When we let the Spirit of God control the inner man we succeed in living to the

glory of God. This means feeding the inner man with the word of God, praying, worshiping, keeping clean, and exercising our senses by loving obedience.

■ **DEPTH** (v. 17). Paul uses three words to convey the idea of spiritual depth. They are dwell, rooted, and grounded. Dwell means "to settle down and feel at home." Paul is praying for them to have a more comfortable (at home) relationship with God. Rooted pictures a tree that has roots that run deep into the soil and gathers nourishment and stability. Our roots must be deep in the love of God. A good question for us is "From what do we draw our nourishment and stability?" Grounded is an architectural term. It refers to the foundation on which we build. The storms that blow reveal the strength of the foundation. As the parable of the wise and foolish builders reveals, we must build on the rock of Christ (Matthew 7:24-29).

■ **COMPREHEND** (v. 18-19a). This word means "to grasp." It is talking about grasping the meaning of something. Paul wants them to grasp the vast meaning of the love of God. This is a paradox because Paul says the love of God is so great that it "passes our understanding." If the Christian prays for spiritual strength and spiritual depth, he will be able to comprehend—get his mind around—all the resources of God's love and grace (Philippians 4:13).

■ **FULLNESS** (v. 19b). God wants us to experience fullness—His fullness. The means of this fullness is the Spirit (5:18b). The measure of our fullness is Christ (4:13b).

Finally, Paul gives his benediction (v. 20-21). With all these marvelous spiritual blessings and experiences in mind, Paul bursts forth in praise to God. Note all the words that Paul uses to describe the abundance of power in us because of the Holy Spirit. He says, "exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or think." The point is His power is like His love, beyond our understanding. This power is "working in us" and enables us to walk the Christian life in a way that we never dreamed possible. Think about this. His power is working in us and we can accomplish beyond all that we think possible. **MM**

(Eddie is an important part of the work of The Magnolia Messenger, strengthening brethren as he travels throughout southern churches. -dd)

Offering An “INVITATION”

The command to
“confess your sins to
one another and pray
for one another”

(James 5:16)

by Dan Williams, Franklin, Tennessee
Harding University, Searcy, Arkansas

The command to “confess your sins to one another and pray for one another” (James 5:16) is a general one and may be accomplished in a variety of ways, depending on the circumstances. People are sometimes surprised to learn that the use of an “invitation” to encourage people to come to the front of a worship assembly is a fairly recent practice.

According to R.T. Kendall in the history *Stand Up and Be Counted: Calling For Public Confession of Faith*, back in 1741, a preacher named Eleazar Wheelock gave the first “invitation” in modern times during a worship service in his church in Lebanon, Connecticut. A mighty movement of revival had broken out in nearby Enfield, when Jonathan Edwards preached his now-famous sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of a Mighty God,” and the emotional floodtide had spilled over into Wheelock’s congregation.



Dan Williams

Individuals in his audience were so convicted of their sins that the preacher had to raise his voice in order to be heard over their moans, groans, and cries of distress. Finally, in desperation, Wheelock called the distraught individuals to gather in the pews below his pulpit so that “he might the more conveniently converse with them, counsel, direct, exhort them, etc.” This was considered an innovation at the time, but gradually

came to be an accepted practice in many churches.

Not all sins need be confessed publicly in a worship assembly. The means of confession should be appropriate to the wrong that has been committed and the persons who are affected. A good rule of thumb is that the circle of acknowledgment should be as large as the circle of knowledge of the sin.

For example, if your actions have harmed a fellow-Christian; if you have cheated or mistreated a friend; if you have been unkind or untrue to another family member; do not come down to the front of the worship assembly and offer some generic “I want to be a stronger Christian so everybody pray for me” kind of request. Jesus teaches us to go instead directly to that individual (Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-16). Be a big enough person to look the person in the eye and declare, “I was wrong, and I’m sorry. I want to make things right and I hope you’ll forgive me.”

When our actions have openly demonstrated an ungodly life, however, then our responsibility to our church family and to our own reputation suggests our confession should make just as open a statement that now we have changed (Matthew 18:17). It doesn’t really matter whether someone walks down to the front, or to the back, or writes a note to an elder to be shared with the church – the important thing is to make things right with the Lord when we have gone astray. And, when our past rebellion has made a public statement against God, then our present repentance should make just as public a statement for the Lord! **MM**

“ON THE ROAD AGAIN” with the Editor

CELEBRATING 200 YEARS!

THE ROAN’S CREEK CHURCH OF CHRIST

by Dennis Doughy, editor

The first meeting of the two great Restoration preachers, Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell, occurred in 1824 in Georgetown, Kentucky. As Andrew Jackson began his first term as President of the then-24 states of America, seven of Stone’s followers drifted south into middle Tennessee. There, they began to gather and worship.

A year later, in 1825, they were given a small parcel of land on a hill, near acreage owned by Davy Crockett, and built a brush-arbor style church building, establishing what is today known as the Roan’s Creek church of Christ.

The congregation flourished along with the Restoration movement’s teaching of a return to New Testament principles. As the movement grew, it eventually had a building that could seat 800. (Today, we do not understand how immensely popular the concept of “Speaking where the Bible speaks, and being silent where the Bible is silent” of the Restoration movement was.) Roan’s Creek became the area’s mother church, with ten churches starting from this congregation.

I was glad to be invited to attend the church’s 200th Anniversary celebration this past May Fourth. Around 150 people gathered to celebrate Roan’s Creek’s remarkable history. Many past members and extended families enjoyed beautiful singing, a good lesson, and partaking of the Lord’s Supper, all of which remain the core worship of First-Century Christianity.

There may be, but I know of no other church that is any older and worshipping on its original site than Roan’s Creek. What an exciting heritage we have in churches like this. It was a great day to celebrate this church, these people, and the greatness of the Restoration movement that gave it birth. **MM**



The congregation is on Highway 22, about five miles north of Interstate 40 in central Tennessee.

Nick Jones, a former youth minister, spoke of the congregation’s past and future.



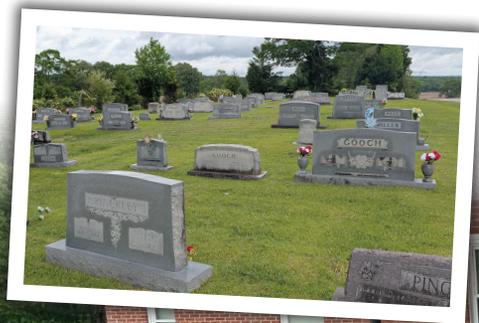
Sister Eileen Pritchard, who has lived in Roan’s Creek for most of her life, emailed me, inviting me to this celebration. Thank you, Miss Eileen, It was a great day!



Mark and Lori Simons. Mark has been the full time minister for the church for 22 years. He is holding his Great-Great-Great-grandfather’s Bible, which was printed in 1829.



The congregation furnished a delicious meal for everyone. Notice that all the tables were covered with old quilts from present and former members.



The church cemetery is located on five acres of church property. The earliest tombstones go back to the 1840’s.

The large crowd gathered for the 200th year Homecoming celebration. The congregation was established in July of 1825.



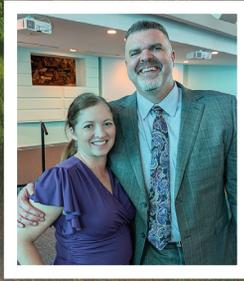
on down the road...

Since our last issue in March, I have worshipped with several congregations across our brotherhood. While my son-in-law, Dave Ferguson, was in treatment in Scottsdale, Arizona, we worshiped several Sundays with the **Camelback church of Christ**. They have an active congregation and a beautiful building at the foot of Camelback Mountain. Their preacher, Daniel Hays, is from East Tennessee, and he and his wife have enjoyed their two years “out west” with this active, friendly congregation.

The church in **Coffeeville, Mississippi**, is proud to have a new preacher after several years of searching. Anthony and Courtney Myers have moved into the nice minister's home next to the church building and will be working full time with the congregation. I was able to preach the last Sunday before Anthony began his duties and thanked the congregation for the opportunity to preach for them every couple of months.

Here in Memphis, the **Kirby Pines Independent Living Center** is a beautiful facility and home to around eighty members of the church. Recently, I went to visit two old soldiers of the cross who live there, Larry McKenzie and Phil Slate. Larry was a minister at Highland Street for over fifty years, and my prayer mentor and friend. Phil taught at Harding Graduate School for several decades and has been writing regularly for *The Magnolia Messenger*. It was my pleasure to spend the afternoon in the company of greatness.

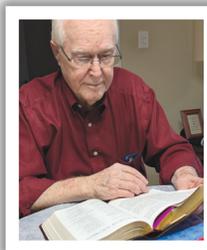
On May 11th, Mother's Day, I was invited to speak at the **Mt. Zion church of Christ** in Brookhaven, Mississippi. They are looking for a new minister. I always enjoy speaking on behalf of mothers on that special day, and everyone enjoyed a great “catered” meal afterwards. I thank Ronnie Lofton for the invitation and the enjoyable weekend in this wonderful southern Mississippi city. It will be an attractive work for the next preacher. **MM**



Daniel and Erin Hayes, Camelback church of Christ



Coffeeville church and minister's home



Got to spend an afternoon with Larry McKenzie and Phil Slate



Ronnie Lofton Led the singing

Dennis Doughty “INSCRIPTIONS”

“Are You Still Sleeping?”

“Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. Then He came to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting” (Matthew 26:43-45)?

Ever been in church and found it hard to stay awake? Fighting sleep, yet catching yourself nodding off? In the Garden of Gethsemane, the three apostles were asked to “keep watch with me,” yet when Jesus returned from praying, “found them sleeping from sorrow” (Luke 22:45). The troubles of the day had overcome their devotion to Jesus.

Sometimes, it is hard to “keep watch” with the Lord. We, too, find ourselves dozing off on the job in our Christian service. The trials and worries of this world often leave us asleep in Gethsemane. It is easier to sleep than to serve, nod off than toil on, or rest than help others. Are we sleepwalking in Christ, or awake and watching for His return? “So then let us not sleep as others do but let us be alert and sober” (1 Thessalonians 5:6). Upon Christ's return, will He find you watching or sleeping?

What John Saw

“But coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe” (John 19:33-35).

Of all the apostles, we know of only one who followed Jesus to Golgotha's cross. John stood there by Mary, Jesus's mother, even conversing with Jesus briefly (John 19:27). Both witnessed firsthand the cruel and inhumane act of crucifixion. Finally, John saw the soldier jab the spear into his Lord's dead body. The unimaginable horror of it all! This apostle, whom Jesus loved, recorded these events “so that you also may believe.”

That Sunday morning, John would rush to the tomb, stand inside, and gaze upon the empty grave clothes, and “he saw and believed” (John 20:7-8). The apostle John wanted you and me to stand where he stood, to see what he saw, and believe his testimony that Jesus died on the Cross and was raised from the dead. He wrote of these things “so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31).

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

Winona, Mississippi: A Desegregation Story

by C. Philip Slate, Memphis, TN

It is both easy and, to some extent, necessary to imitate what we see as the majority behavior in our society. That is one way we are socialized and accepted as valid members of our society. So, for dress, housing, much of our vocabulary, food, etc. we go along with what we see. The gospels do not portray Jesus as dressing so differently from others that one could spot him a hundred yards away. Nevertheless, He declared before Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36).

Those who would follow Jesus are told, “Friendship with the world is enmity with God” (James 4:5). Does that mean true Christians should live in exclusive communities, away from “the world”? Jesus is the ultimate example to His followers of living “in the world” while not being “of the world” (John 17:15-16). He clearly functioned in the real world of people—sinful, misguided, hypocritical, immoral—but their values did not shape Him. Of course, not all values and behaviors of non-Christian people are wrong since they marry, become parents, and work as carpenters, mechanics, engineers, and nurses. It is easy, however, to participate thoughtlessly in one’s cultural patterns. Accordingly, people have practiced cannibalism, slave trading, infant exposure, wife-beating,

and honor killing without questioning those “normal” activities. One becomes vulnerable to the world’s influence, however, when one fails to examine and filter its values and behaviors through the values of Christ.

Occasionally, we hear stories of people who “march to a different drummer” and are willing to swim against the tide to counter the patterned life of their community. The following incident is one of them. Betty Choate told me the story about her home congregation in Winona, MS, and she mentions it briefly (p. 130) in her recent biography of her late husband, *A Vision Too Great: The Biography of J. C. Choate* (2025).

To the best of her memory, the incident occurred in the early 1970s. Someone in Oklahoma was studying the Bible by correspondence with World Bible School. That person knew Katy Purnell, who lived in Winona, MS, and encouraged her to take a WBS course. She did.

As Katy displayed keen interest in her studies, the people at WBS felt someone should follow up with her. They sent her information to the church of Christ in Greenwood, MS, that in turn passed it on to the church in Winona, where Betty’s father, Clyde Burton, and Gene Gibson contacted Katy. They learned that she

The Cloud of Prejudice.

by Dennis Doughty, editor

I became the preacher for the church in Lexington, Mississippi, in the early 1970s. Lexington is a small town on the edge of the Mississippi Delta. Some racial problems were brewing, and for a while black citizens were boycotting white businesses in town.

The church was small but had a nice building, thanks to the support of the church in Batesville. I was in my second year, and as a young preacher, I tried my best to “do the work of an evangelist.” I did a daily radio program, tried to work with the community, and had a Boy Scout troop meeting in our building. I studied with a couple in their home and was proud that the wife became the first person in Lexington to be baptized.

I started a bus ministry—the “JOY BUS” outreach was popular at that time—and began bringing 10-15 children to services on Sunday mornings. The church seemed to be doing well until one of our men asked to meet with me one

morning.

Some members heard I was letting the black preacher from Tchula, the next town over, come and use our baptistry. One member had commented, “If I had known that a black person had been baptized in this water, I would have never been baptized.” The congregation was also concerned I might bring some black children in on the bus. I was politely, but plainly, asked to find myself another church.

I moved on. Over time, the membership drifted or died away, and the building sat in ruins for many years.

The Lord’s ways are not our ways. In the spring of 2020, the Hanging Moss Road congregation in Jackson, Mississippi, under the leadership of brother Curtis Pittman, took on the challenge to establish a new black congregation in the town of Lexington. After many man-hours by



its membership, and thousands of dollars spent refurbishing the abandoned church building, the church held its first worship in an assembly in the spring of 2022. I was proud to be invited, along with John Pigg, to be one of the speakers that day.

Times and culture do change. A new and brighter future emerged under the cloud of prejudice, and the Gospel is now being preached to all in the little town of Lexington. **MM**

had studied the Gospel to the point she wanted to obey Jesus Christ in repentance and baptism, and to live for Him. The men assisted her baptism into Christ. Then the question arose as to where she would worship.

At that time, every church in Winona was segregated, so a few of the members of the church of Christ met for worship with Katy in her home because she was African-American. After several months of that arrangement, Burton and Gibson, with others, decided it was wrong to have separate worship meetings purely because of race. Thus, they decided to discuss it with the entire congregation. There was a sharp division of thought. Some said, "If she comes here to worship, we will leave." The nearest all-black congregation was 25 miles away, and the Winona elders decided they would be no part of forcing her to drive that far for a Christian assembly. The two elders faced a dilemma: a divided church or excluding a fellow Christian because of her race. They decided to do what they were convinced God wanted them to do and have Katy as a member of the Winona church. About half (50 or so) of the congregation left.

Katy proved to be a devoted Christian, and others in her family became Christians, as well as numerous other African-Americans in Winona. Soon after Katy's conversion, a Protestant friend challenged her membership in "that White church," urging her to "come back." Katy's response was a strong "No! I can't go back!" And she didn't. In spite of heckling from her "community," she was faithful until the end of her earthly life.

What happened in the following years? In 1997, the divided church came back together with heartfelt confessions made by those who had left. Betty Choate wrote, "Today, no one seems to see 'color' in our congregation. We are all ONE in Christ Jesus. I am glad that my home church, the Winona church of Christ, was the first church to integrate into our city. It was the right thing to do before God." Indeed, it was. That is a good example of being in the world but refusing to accept all its values and behavior. **MM**

Philip Slate <cpsmissions@gmail.com>

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In the **SPOTLIGHT**

Jerry and Wendy Moore

Jerry and Wendy Moore live in Holly Springs, Mississippi. Jerry serves as one of the elders for the congregation there. Both graduated from Freed-Hardeman in 1990 with degrees in education. They went on to Ole Miss and got their Masters. One is in Curriculum/Instruction and the other is in Leadership/Administration. Wendy taught school for 28 years, while Jerry coached before becoming a school administrator. He served as a superintendent of schools and worked for the MS Dept. of Education/Ole Miss prior to retiring after 29 years.



Upon retirement, they began working primarily for World/Ukraine Missions, a ministry of the South Thornton Street church of Christ in Piggott, AR, that was established in 2004. The ministry adopts orphanages overseas, mainly in Ukraine but also in Central America and other nations, and works with local churches in those countries to assist with providing for those orphanages to help spread the Gospel both to the children residing in the orphanages and local community members. When the war in Ukraine started, they also began providing aid to refugee centers and elderly homes in and around Ukraine, primarily in Poland.

The mission sends forty-foot containers of supplies from a warehouse they leased in Holly Springs. They have sent over 130 forty-foot containers of medical supplies, food, clothing, shoes, survival buckets, and Bibles to areas in desperate need since 2020. Area schools and churches from the Tri-State area have gotten involved in loading these containers. The mission also has a warehouse in Poland from where they distribute goods/supplies. They have also helped other organizations/churches during disaster situations in the United States. Jerry and Wendy are in charge of the warehouse in Holly Springs and are tasked with the fidelity of collecting/organizing supplies, distribution, and ensuring shipment of supplies. Galatians 6:9 has been a guiding light for their ministry. They stand as a shining example of what it means to be a servant of God.

Jerry and Wendy are also heavily involved with the work at Sardis Lake Christian Camp. Jerry recently published a book, "**Little Jerry: Ten Life Lessons Learned**" (available on Amazon/Kindle). A large portion of the proceeds from that book go to SLCC.

Jerry and Wendy have three sons, one amazing daughter-in-law, one daughter-in-law arriving in June, and one of the greatest two-year-old granddaughters imaginable.

They are always willing to come speak about the mission and/or SLCC. **MM**

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

February through April 2025

by Eddie Lewis

We appreciate so much the opportunity to inform you about our mission work among the churches in North Mississippi and the ministry at the Christian Student Center at Mississippi Delta Community College in Moorhead, Mississippi. We appreciate the Germantown church of Christ sponsoring us in our North Mississippi ministry. Several churches and individuals support the work at the CSC. This report covers the months of February to April 2025. I preached two Sundays for the Crockett church of Christ and three Sundays for the Coffeerville church of Christ.

February 2: Madolyn and I visited with the Bluff Road church of Christ in Arkabutla, Mississippi. Orlando Davis has been the minister there for over fifty years. One of his sons, Joshua Davis, is gradually taking his place as the pulpit minister. Bro. Orlando is blessed to have all four of his sons active in the



Natasha and Caleb Bennett

congregation. The church has three elders and around 130 in attendance. They have a good mix of ages, with an active youth program with classes in leadership development and financial

management. It's a very welcoming congregation. Madolyn and I really enjoyed our visit with the brethren there. Orlando taught the Bible class and Joshua had a very powerful sermon.

March 9: I was invited to preach for the Cleveland church of Christ. Tim McCarter is the long-time minister there. He and Debbie were out of town on vacation. They have no elders and around 40 in attendance. We always enjoy visiting with the good folks there. I ministered there for eight years and have many wonderful friends. I preached from Thessalonians and Ephesians.

March 16: I was invited to preach for the Batesville church of Christ. Michael Bates is the long-time minister there. Michael was away holding a Gospel meeting and asked me to fill in for him. They have four elders and around 150 in attendance. They have a good mix of ages, and support several mission works, including the CSC at MDCC. They have an active youth program and are very involved with the community. We enjoyed getting to see many friends. My lesson was from Ephesians.

April 6: Madolyn and I visited with the New Albany church of Christ. They were hosting a "Friends and Family Day." We were excited to attend and visit with several old friends. They have four elders and around 140 in attendance. They are involved in



Phillip Hines

several mission works and have an active youth program. They are currently looking for new pulpit and youth ministers. The congregation has a great mix of ages and is very welcoming. We enjoyed our visit with them. Their guest speaker was Phillip Hines from Hartselle, Alabama. Bro. Hines has been helping them since the first of the year. He had two great lessons: "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," based on Galatians 6:14, and "What Every Child Should Know," based on Exodus 20:12. Please be praying for this church.

April 13: Madolyn and I visited with the Potts Camp church of Christ. Todd Sanderson and Kerry Reid, ministers at the Holly Springs church, rotate coming and preaching for them. This Sunday



Carlisle Bufford, Cary Mayer, Ralph Claydon

Todd was the speaker. They have no elders and about 30 in attendance. They told us that several families with children had left to attend New Albany church because of their youth program. It's sad to see that happen, but I realize that parents must think of their children's spiritual growth. Todd presented a wonderful lesson on the call of Peter, Andrew, James, and John from Matthew 4. One of the men in the congregation, Ralph Claydon, lead the Bible Class in a study of Acts 17. We enjoyed our visit.

April 20: Madolyn and I visited with the Central Academy church of Christ, located between Batesville and Oxford. They have no elders and 9 people in attendance. In February, they had to let their minister go because they could no longer afford to pay him. We wanted to check on them to see how they were doing. Students from the MSOP have



Members at Central Academy

been coming to preach for them each Sunday morning. One of the local men teaches the Wednesday night Bible class, and the minister from Enid church comes on Sunday night to preach for them. When we arrived, only one man was there. Ralph had opened the building and was praying that God would send someone to preach for them that Sunday since all their regulars were not able to come because of Easter. All the responsibility of making arrangements for the church have fallen on Ralph because he is the only man left able to lead the church. I just happen to have a couple of lessons. So, I taught the Bible class and preached in the worship. God does provide. They are facing several challenges. Please be praying for this church there as they strive to keep the congregation alive.

April 27: Madolyn and I visited with the Strickland church of Christ in Glen, Mississippi. Terry Smith is the minister there. They have around 130 in attendance and four elders. They have lots of young people and an active youth



Terry Smith and Lawrence Barr-Strickland

program. They are involved in several mission works around the world. Terry mentioned "Mission Mississippi" coming up the first of June. A group from the church travels to south Mississippi and conduct a VBS and door knocking campaign to help one of the local churches.

One of the elders there is an old college friend. Lawrence Barr and I were in a social club together at Harding and played in a stage band. It was fun eating lunch with Lawrence and Faye and catching up on family. Terry preached on Numbers 13 and the story of the 12 spies. It was a great lesson. We enjoyed our visit with Strickland.

Update on the CSC at MDCC: We started out the month with our annual Lasagna Dinner to benefit the CSC. Madolyn made over 90 plates of Lasagna for the faculty and staff and friends from the Moorhead community. It was good to see so many friends from the campus. Corey has been doing a great job with the Wednesday night Bible Studies. They had an average of around 29 each night in February. The students seem to be enjoying his lessons and the fellowship afterward. Mary Ashley had been making some wonderful meals for the students.



Madolyn serving lasagna

March 5, Joshua Davis from the Bluff Rd. church in Arkabutla, MS, visited and served as a guest speaker, and brought



Jeffery, Timotheus, Orlando, Joshua, Jonathan Davis

along his father, Orlando Davis, and their friend, James Bradley. Joshua spoke powerfully on the parable of The Wheat and the Tares. Additionally, he and Orlando are beautiful singers and led some lovely worship songs following the lesson. We had 34 students in attendance! It was the perfect way to send off the students for Spring Break!

During Spring Break, the Ramseys



traveled down to Panama City Beach to spend some time with Corey's family (who were visiting) and Mary Ashley's sister (who lives there). Then, they headed to Jackson, TN, to meet Gran and Eddie at the Freed-Hardeman Lectureship. This was a wonderful and enlightening experience for them (albeit a bit challenging with both kiddos). Is there anything as beautiful as hundreds of voices lifted up to the Lord in praise? Corey headed back down to Moorhead for Wednesday Night Bible Study. With 14 students in attendance, Corey spoke on Gentleness and served hot dogs and cookies. The smaller group led to some vulnerable conversation and lively fellowship afterward. March 26, they had 14 students attend Bible study. April 8, they had the "Walk for Water" march around campus to raise money for digging water wells in Africa. The final Wednesday night study in April, they had 19 students to attend. As they near the end of the year, please be praying that they can continue breaking down barriers and really connect on a deeper level with these students. So many of them won't be returning next year, and it's heavy on their hearts to share as much of God's love and truth as possible with them before their window closes. We are thankful for your prayers and support! **MM**

A living SACRIFICE



by Greg Ledbetter, minister
North Brandon church of Christ

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” —Romans 12:1

God commands us to assemble for worship (Hebrews 10:25). In that assembly, we sing, pray, hear God’s Word, partake of the Lord’s Supper, and give. These are vital acts of worship, but they’re not the whole picture. Worship is not limited to one hour on Sunday; it’s a lifestyle.

What does it mean to be a living sacrifice? In the Old Testament, a sacrifice was laid on the altar and burned; it was total, final, and complete. Paul’s words in Romans take the imagery of a sacrifice and apply it to the Christian life today. But instead of dying, we live fully and completely for God, holding nothing back.

Romans 12:1-2 shows that real worship continues outside the church building. It’s daily, ongoing, and personal. God is not looking for a performance. He wants a transformed heart that produces a sanctified life. Being a living sacrifice means you speak with honesty and kindness (Ephesians 4:29), treat others with love and respect (Ephesians 4:32), keep your body pure (1 Corinthians 6:18-20), and handle your money with integrity (1 Timothy 6:6-10). It means choosing what pleases God, even when it costs you.

Jason says “no” to a Friday night party because he values purity more than popularity. Alyssa turns down a dishonest promotion because she wants to honor God, not manipulate numbers. Ethan walks away from a relationship that compromises his values. Maria refuses to post immodestly for social media attention. These choices are painful, but they are sacrifices made on the altar of devotion to Christ.

Romans 12:2 shows us how this transformation happens: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” True change doesn’t start with behavior but with thought. If you think like the world, you’ll live like the world. If you

fill your mind with God’s Word, prayer, and godly influences, you’ll start to live differently.

The fuel for this life of sacrifice is the mercy of God. Paul doesn’t call us to live this way because it’s trendy or easy. He says, “by the mercies of God.” God showed mercy to Adam and Eve after their sin, to David after his failures, and to us through the cross of Christ (Romans 5:8). We sacrifice ourselves not out of guilt but out of gratitude. A Gratitude for what God has and is doing for us. I want you to imagine with me an altar. Not an altar made of stone, but your daily life.

Every day, as living sacrifices, we place our words, our eyes, our body, our career, our relationships, all of it on that altar. You don’t take them back. You don’t negotiate. You simply surrender.

Unlike the dead sacrifices of the Old Testament, we live, but we live for Him. That is what it means to be a living sacrifice. And that is what God calls “reasonable.” Would God call the life you are living today one of sacrifice or of selfishness? We need to take a good, hard look at the way we live and decide if we are for or against God. **MM**

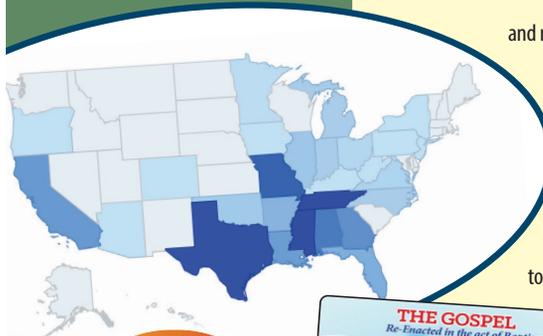
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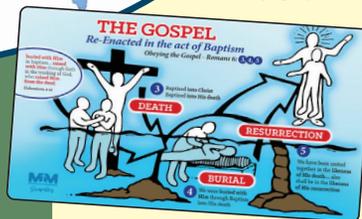
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The MAGNOLIA MESSENGERS / PREACHER SEARCH

■ MT. ZION CHURCH OF CHRIST

Mt. Zion has been meeting in the Brookhaven, MS. area since 1894. We are seeking a full-time minister who is sound in the faith, equipped to teach, and eager to serve others. We are a congregation of about 80 members. **Contact: Ronnie Lofton 601-757-3632 rlofton1979@gmail.com**

■ MONTICELLO CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Monticello church of Christ in Monticello, AR, is seeking a full-time minister. We are a long established congregation here with four elders and nine deacons. **Details of the position can be found on our website: <https://montcofc.org/about/news/2024/12/02/full-time-minister-search> Resumes and videos of preaching can be sent to monticellosearch@gmail.com"**

■ MUNFORD CHURCH OF CHRIST

We are looking for a well-grounded, full-time pulpit preacher. Ideal, but not necessary: middle aged married energetic man wanting to spread the Gospel in a small growing town in west Tennessee. We have about 75 good active members with 2 elders and 3 deacons. Salary is open to experience. **Please send resume to Att. Elders, Munford Church of Christ, 435 S. Tipton Street, Munford, TN 38058, or e-mail to rahwoodshoe@gmail.com or call: Bob Holland 901-331-2346**

■ NEW HOPE ROAD CHURCH OF CHRIST

in Hendersonville, TN (suburb of Nashville), is in search of a full-time Minister. Our current minister will move to an associate's role. Our church size is approximately 60 to 75 members and an eldership is in place. Dedicated office hours are not required. This is a salaried position in mid \$50K range. **Interested parties contact Brian at carricobc@hotmail.com**

■ NEW LIFE BEHAVIORAL INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

"New Life Behavior" English Language curriculum is available to a congregation considering using this evangelistic material. NLB courses consist of 13 lessons and we have all 13 lessons. The lessons (approximately 144 letter-size pages in length). **If interested in this free material, contact the University Church of Christ in Montgomery, Alabama at 334-386-7320 and it will be shipped to you at no cost."**

■ 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.**

■ WELSH CHURCH OF CHRIST

is seeking a full-time minister for a congregation of 15 plus members serving Welsh, La., SWLA along I-10. We are a congregation of mostly older Christians, we are also sending out HTH - HTH, to 3 communities. We need someone faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ to help us evangelize these communities. **Please contact us and we can visit. Jerry @ 337.496.8992 e-mail gljackson@centurytel.Me, Lewis @ 573.703.1243 e-mail lineberryc7@gmail.com , Orise @ 337.458.2603**

■ 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.**

■ 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.**

■ THE CLARKE COUNTY CHURCH OF CHRIST

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

■ NETTLETON CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Nettleton Church of Christ, located in Nettleton Ms, is seeking a new full time minister with a strong faith, who is doctrinally sound. We have around 30 members in attendance and a house is provided. **Please contact Billy Pender @ 662-963-3695, Stephen Lochridge @ 662-963-3217 or Wade Williams @ 662-315-3418 or email Rwwilli2@me.com**

■ 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. **huntpe@yahoo.com or text/call Paul Hunt 662-634-1651. However, I do prefer text messages.**

■ HOUSE OF COMPASSION

The Hands of Compassion ministry in Rochester MN, is seeking Hospitality House Parents to support our guests that are visiting Mayo Clinic for medical care. We are looking for compassionate Christians who feel called to serve our house guests during their visits. Our ministry is expanding and we need you! **If interested, please visit our website, email us or call our chaplain Phillip Quelle. We would love to hear from you! www.hocrochester.com hocministry@gmail.com Chaplain # 507-216-8993**

■ 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.**

■ 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: Georgetown-CofCSearch@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. Roger G McCafferty Email: grmccaf@cox.net**

■ 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 church of Christ <mankatochurchofchrist@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**

■ 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**

■ CHURCH OF CHRIST McKEESPORT, PA

We are searching for a minister. One who is willing to work with a congregation of mostly older brothers and sisters in Christ. We have on average about 35 to 40 attendance Sunday morning, about 10 to 15 Sunday evening and Wednesday evening. We have a 4 bedroom house right at the building that we pay for the main utilities. **If interested contact Arnold Winter 412-225-5441**

■ HAPPY HAVEN CHILDREN'S HOME

has immediate openings for: HOUSE PARENTS (wife is the salaried employee, with housing, utilities, van, & other benefits provided; 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.

■ THE CALLAHAN CHURCH OF CHRIST

in Callahan Florida is seeking a fulltime minister. The church has approximately 30 members. A degree in Biblical studies is preferred. The preach could be retired, semi-retired, or have a secular job. Key Responsibilities: Preach Sunday morning, and Sunday night. Teach Bible class Sunday morning and Wednesday night. **To apply: Send resume to: opawill0115@gmail.com or text/call Woodrow Williams 904-333-8831.**



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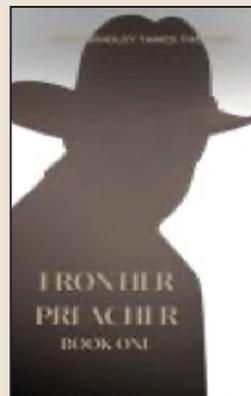
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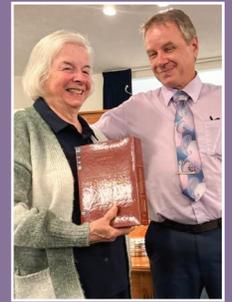
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340. Patricia Semon
341. Peggy Vinson
342. Paul Spears
343. Scott McKinney
344. Annie Conner
345. James Bricker
346. Julius Lee Wales
347. Dottie Graves
348. John Brooks
349. Brandi McKinney
350. Ainsley McKinney
351. Jon McKinney
352. Aven McKinney
353. Carson Alexander
354. Elijah Tucker
355. Richard Morgan
356. Pamela Underhill
357. Mary Grigsby
358. Alice Dempsey
359. Bertha King
360. Shelvie McGuire
361. Charlotte Langley
362. Booker Williams III
363. Dr. Rhea Forum
364. Sandy Dean
365. Henry Norris
366. Carol Pipes
367. Bonnie Howell
368. Betty Breazeale
369. Dee Collier
370. Kenny Young, Jr.
371. Bernece Smith
372. Steven & Joanne Franklin
373. Lucy Ross
374. Sabrina Hartmangruber
375. Sherry Gordon
376. Wilma Lakey
377. Pinkie Supples
378. Josephine Carter
379. Clyde Bradford, Jr.
380. Ida Tuggle Walls
381. Gwendolyn Bryant
382. Joyce Yarbrough
383. Greta Hare
384. Diane Dunaway
385. Mary Warren
386. Canaan Garey
387. Kynslee Garey
388. Paul Rogers
389. Michael Harvill
390. Loretha Widger
391. Lorenzo Carter
392. Elizabeth Hines
393. Barbara Shanklin
394. Natalie Stewart
395. Shirley McCollum
396. Shelia Williams
397. Earl Franks
398. Johnnie Franks
399. Wes & Rhoda Jeans
400. Stephanie Slaydon
401. Michael Grant
402. Charlie Grant
403. Tammy Nailen
404. Scott Floyd
405. Larry Harris
406. Shirley Bostick
407. Johnnie Perry
408. Margie Ross Wilson
409. Barbara Loden
410. Chery Boudreaux
411. Anita Butler
412. Mary Elder
413. James Leonard
414. Lewis Lineberry
415. Sylvia White
416. Ruby Tramme
417. Beverly Armstrong
418. Shelia Grant
419. Betty Shackelford
420. Mary Whitehead
421. Ruby Silvers
422. Monroe Middlebrook, Jr
423. Grace Childers

BIBLE WINNER

Betty Skinner,
Little Rock, MS

Presented by
Charles Warren,
minister for the
Nile Church of Christ,
Carthage, MS



South Huntington Street
Church of Christ
P. O. Box 1578
Kosciusko, Mississippi 39090

Question Box - June 2025

The Zealous Saul-Paul

Paul was very zealous for the Mosaic Law and their traditions.

We first see him watching the coats of those who stoned Stephen (Acts 22:20), then persecuting the new Christians, even to the point of death for some. But God took that zealotry and turned it into a blessing for Christ Jesus and the new body of people choosing to follow Him.

Using the scriptures given, match the following:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1. _____ The place Paul was born (Acts 22:3). | A. Ananias |
| 2. _____ Paul was of which Jewish tribe (Philippians 3:5)? | B. Benjamin |
| 3. _____ The person under whom Paul studied (Acts 22:3). | C. Caesar |
| 4. _____ Paul's early name in the book of Acts. | D. Tarsus |
| 5. _____ Paul watched this disciple being stoned (Acts 22:20) | E. Rome |
| 6. _____ By whom was Paul baptized (Acts 22:12-13)? | F. Priscilla & Aquila |
| 7. _____ They made tents with Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:2-3). | G. Gamaliel |
| 8. _____ He accompanied Paul while Barnabas went with John Mark (Acts 15:36-40). | H. Stephen |
| 9. _____ At whose house did Paul stay in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5-7)? | I. Stoics |
| 10. _____ Paul preached to the Epicureans and _____ on Mars Hill. | J. Jason |
| 11. _____ In Acts 15, Paul made his journey to what city? | K. Silas |
| 12. _____ The island upon which Paul was shipwrecked. | L. Saul |
| 13. _____ Paul was headed to this place when he was shipwrecked. (Acts 26:32-27:1; 28:13-16) | M. Malta |
| 14. _____ To whom did Paul appeal (Acts 5:10-11)? | N. Jerusalem |
| 15. _____ The doctor who traveled with Paul and wrote the book of Acts. | O. Luke |

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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