

"The Heart of a Stranger"

by Elder Phillip Nichols
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"Also **thou shalt not oppress a stranger**: for ye know the heart of a **stranger**, seeing ye were **strangers** in the land of Egypt." (Exodus 23:9).

Greetings my brethren in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord. I pray that God will help us to consider this verse of Scripture, for I feel that there is an important lesson which we are in great need of as our world around us is full of strangers. Before we begin, let us consider what a stranger is. A **stranger** may be defined as an outsider, foreigner, or a newcomer. Also we can consider that a stranger could be a person that we are not familiar with, one who is different, or one who is not an acquaintance.

Here in America, our nation consists of people from every nation under the sun. We have native Americans, Caucasians, Blacks, Asians, Hispanics, Jews-people of all colors, languages, customs and religions. So let us hear, "**Thou shalt not oppress a stranger.**" There are many ways one can be a stranger. For instance, we have all heard stories of a new kid on the block and how he suffered for just being different or just because he is the "new" person around. Sometimes people who have mental or physical problems are strangers and have suffered ridicule as people make fun of them, or even abuse them physically. All because they are not what some people consider "normal." Sometimes when people do not speak English, they are treated like savages just because they speak another language. A black family moves into a white neighborhood, and the white neighbors burn up their house for no reason, other than because they are black. A Jewish home is ransacked and a swastika painted on the door just because they are a Jewish descendent. A white kid takes a short cut through a black neighbor-

hood and a gang of black kids beat him up just because he is white. All true stories in which we have heard how "strangers" have been and are being oppressed. In a less known illustration, we find that in early American history, old Baptists were persecuted, beaten and locked up just because of their religious beliefs, or that they were different from others.

Deuteronomy 10:19 states, "Love ye therefore the stranger; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." Now I confess that being around strangers is truly hard and very much a strain; yet God's word tells us that we are not to oppress them, but to love them instead. We are to show them compassion instead of hate. A perfect example of this is what we call the "Parable of the good Samaritan" found in Luke 10:30-37. This parable begins as an answer to a question. Verse 29 states "...**And who is my neighbour?**". This was asked because of the teaching found in verse 27, that we should love our neighbor as we do ourselves. The man asked the question thinking that he could justify himself, as he evidently loved and cared only for the people close to him, such as his family, friends or the people next door. Now if these alone were his neighbors, then he was most certainly just before God in doing His (God's) will in loving his neighbor. That however, is not the case as Jesus began to answer him by telling him about a parable that teaches about a man who fell among thieves, was stripped, wounded and left to die. We then find that a priest and a Levite came by at different times, and **both passed by on the other side**. A Samaritan then came by. Now Samaritans were what you could call "half-breeds" and were hated by the Jews because they (the Samaritans) were not of a pure lineage, and were considered worse than dogs

by the Jews. Whether the man fallen to thieves was a Jew or not, I do not know; but we do know that he was a stranger to the Samaritan. We find that the Samaritan went to the man who fell among thieves and had compassion on him. It would have been so easy for him to say, "He's just a stranger, I don't know him. It is none of my business. I don't have time for a stranger, and it is not my job to care for him." Yet we find that he did quite the opposite! He went to the man, overcoming any prejudice he might have had, provided medical care, put him on his beast, took him to an inn, took care of all the costs and was willing to pay more if need be on his return trip. Jesus then asked him, "Which now of these three thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among thieves?" And he said "he that shewed mercy on him." Jesus told him then to go and do like-wise. These words are just as valid to us as they were to him, as we should not only help and have compassion for our loved ones or those of like race, culture and faith, but also to those of every walk of life whether rich or poor. No matter how different they are, how strange they are, they are all our neighbors. In other words, the whole world is our neighbor. When we have an opportunity to help someone, we should show love or have compassion on them. Let us do the will of Christ as He said, "Go and do likewise," **and be a good Samaritan!**

The next statement in the text is, "for ye know the heart of a stranger." God was telling them that they should understand because they were strangers in Egypt.

Now Israel knew what being oppressed was, for they suffered greatly under the rule of Egypt just because they were different. The Egyptians made the Israelites slaves, and even

began to kill them. God reminded them of this, that they might remember just how much they hated being oppressed, and that they should treat others just like they would want to be treated. We can also learn from this. We find in Matthew 7:12, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." So whenever you come in contact with a stranger, ask yourself how you would want to be treated, then treat them in the same manner. As God told Israel that they were strangers, we are also strangers. In an eternal sense, **we were strangers to God** because of Adam's sin by which we became dead in trespasses and in sin, unable to recover ourselves (Romans 5:6-29; Ephesians 2:1). In Ephesians 2:4-5, we find the words "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sin, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)." If God could love me, who certainly was a stranger to Him, I should be able to love anyone, no matter what color, nationality, or whatever difference there is, because I "know the heart of a stranger." Not only were we a stranger in an eternal sense, but also as a Gentile not knowing God's covenant of promise. Ephesians 2:12 tells us that we "were without Christ, being **aliens** from the commonwealth of Israel, and **strangers** from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Ephesians 2:19

goes on to state, "Now therefore **ye are no more strangers and foreigners**, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." The Jews had the law or the oracles of God (Romans 3:2). They worshipped God in Jerusalem, and had a worldly sanctuary, yet the Gentiles had not the word, nor the knowledge to serve or worship God (John 4:22). Yes, we were strangers to the household of God, but God broke down the middle wall of partition (Ephesians 2:14) to make us fellow citizens. Even after we were quickened, we were still strangers as far as fellowship until we began to walk in the light; and even now when we walk in a way that denies Christ, He will deny us, or in other words, we are strangers to Him. (Luke 13:24-27; II Timothy 2:12). II Timothy 2:13 states, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." Thank God that nothing can separate us eternally from His love in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38-39), but let us also realize that if we don't obey Christ and walk with Him, we are strangers to Him. I John 1:6 states it this way, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth."

We are strangers also in another sense if we are followers of Jesus, for the world rejects Christ and His teachings. To the world, we are considered old fashioned, weird, and **strange** when we believe in and obey Christ Jesus! The world's ways are in **darkness** and carnality.

Walking with Christ is walking in the

light and after the Spirit of God, not after the world and it's darkness. Even as Jesus was considered a stranger and was hated and persecuted, so will we when we walk in His steps. Let us look at some example of what we encounter today. The world teaches to hate your enemies, but Jesus teaches to **love and to do good to your enemies!** The world tells us if you don't like your companion to whom you are married, divorce and get another one. Jesus tells us if we divorce for any reason other than fornication, it is adultery! The world tells you if it feels good, do it; but Jesus tells us to constrain ourselves, and do only that which is right. The world teaches to do it your way, but Jesus says to do it His way which is truly the best way, and for our good. There are many more examples we could consider, but the main thing we must remember is that our way and the world's way is contrary to God (Isaiah 55:8-9). Whenever we choose God's ways, the world and even sometimes our friends and the brethren in the church will consider us strangers.

Let us remember how it feels to be a stranger, and then let us treat strangers (to us) in a manner that we would want to be treated; and if someone who is different from you has wronged you in some way, forgive him as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. Let us also remember that if we don't forgive others, God will not forgive us now while we live on this earth. (See Matthew 6:14,15). Thank God that in heaven, we will all be like Jesus, and **there will be no more strangers!**

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How I Learned to Stop Criticizing and Be Nice to My Husband

by Nina Roesner

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10:20 pm. I emerged from the garage entrance to the house, setting down my computer bag and purse, and walked into the kitchen. Six hours earlier, the crock pot worked preparing a meal for the family while I left to teach my business communications training class downtown. Now it sat in the sink, filled with soapy water, soaking. Dirty dinner dishes lay on the counter. The pan with the cornbread sat uncovered on top of the stove. I heard snoring. I gazed across to the living room, where my husband lay on the couch, television playing in the background. Tears of exhaustion, anger, and hurt welled in my eyes.

I took off my jacket, rolled up my sleeves and went to work cleaning up. With each dish, I grew more resentful. "How could he not see these?" I stewed. "I work all day, I prepare a home-made dinner for him and the kids before I go teach a class, and he can't even make sure the mess gets cleaned up," I fumed. The slamming of the dishwasher roused the sleeping husband. "I was going to get those before I went to bed," he mumbled, sensing my irritation. "Well, you already went to bed, didn't you?" I responded, wondering how long he'd been blessed with sleep, when both of us had been up since 5:00 am. "Here, let me help," he offered. "I'm nearly done now. I don't want your help," I lied. His brow furrowed. "Fine. Suit yourself. I'm going upstairs," he said.

I had no idea he really did plan on doing the dishes, but accidentally fell asleep on the couch because he, too, was exhausted. I didn't know that he had lovingly spent time with each of our kids, reading them stories before tucking them in and praying with them

before bed. He went to bed that night feeling disrespected. I went to bed feeling unloved. Small interactions like this occurred often enough to create a growing chasm between us. These little conflicts went unresolved or were dealt with in unhealthy ways and resulted in a barren relationship on the road to destruction.

I grew up as a product of second-wave feminism, having learned from the media that men were oppressive, foolish, and incompetent. Perhaps as a result, I spent nearly the first decade of my own marriage "fighting for my rights" with my husband. I criticized him and bossed him around. It wasn't that he was such a bad guy, but rather I was trained to spot potential oppression and domination by the male gender. I took personally his lack of attention to detail around the home or with the baby. I made a practice of letting him know his failings on a regular basis, expecting his behavior to change.

My methods made him feel defensive, and damaged our relationship. I soon found myself in a marriage with a man who stopped sharing his thoughts and feelings with me.

Being a practicing Christian, I eventually ran across a Bible verse that at first angered me: Ephesians 5:33, "and the wife see that she reverence her husband." Another verse suggested I "submit" to my husband (Ephesians 5:22), and I had the same reaction. I couldn't believe God expected me to pay homage to a man who was, in my eyes, uninterested in working on our relationship.

A decade later, I can say that those two concepts--"reverence" and "submission"--saved my marriage. And

it wasn't because I became a doormat or no longer communicated my feelings. I learned that Biblical submission, boiled down, is basically "don't be a contentious competitor to him." After learning that, I argued with him less. I stopped rolling my eyes with disgust when he had something to say - even if I thought it was not such a great idea at the time. I started practicing the Bible verse which reads, "Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and even slower to become angry."

I started asking him questions about his life. I started being interested in him again as a person. I decided he was more important to me than whether or not a dish made it into the dishwasher or his socks were left on the floor. There were even a few things he did that could be considered big mistakes that just didn't seem to matter as much when I viewed him as a person of worth. I could forgive him - and I saw my own flawed nature clearly.

And I decided I was doing all of these things for God, not for my husband's response. It took my husband a few years to notice the changes in my behavior, but by then, it didn't matter. I had grown my relationship with God in the meantime, and I no longer had as great a need for my husband's affections. God filled the hole in my heart that I'd been trying to stuff my husband into for years.

And soon, my husband's behavior began to change as well. He started taking me out more often. He started doing more odd jobs around the house. He even hijacked one of my classes one night, and in one of the most romantic gestures I've ever heard of, gave a ten minute presentation to a group of nearly a hundred people

about what a great friend and wife I was. He presented me with a beautiful bracelet filled with charms, and talked about what each one represented. There wasn't a dry eye in the place.

At the risk of sounding anachronistic, subservient, and a traitor to my gender, I actually suggest to wives that they respect their husbands to improve their marriages. Our non-profit, Greater Impact Ministries, teaches a course to married women and I've written a book, *The Respect Dare*, that teaches women how to connect with God and their husbands on a deeper level, by learning to communicate respect. Many of the suggestions are fairly simple. We suggest women not criticize their husbands, but rather show appreciation on a daily basis, and pay attention to the things he does well. We teach them how to disagree without being competitive or arousing defensiveness. We encourage them to engage in life balance to reduce their own levels of

stress, which in turn impacts all of their relationships. We encourage them to invest in themselves and friendships, also. We encourage them to be bold, brave, and find God's purposes for their lives - and pursue them. In doing these things, they find all of their relationships improving--not just their relationships with their husbands.

Many of them, like me, now have marriages where they and their husbands both seek each other's advice, make decisions together, and are happier. Neither is perfect, but marriage is better because of the continued effort on both parts.

I chose to give respect a chance because I am a Christian and try (emphasis on try) to follow the Bible's teachings on how to live. But even if I did not trust the Bible as much as I do, learning how to effectively communicate respect and love deeply impacts marriages.

We see these Biblical principles show up in marital success, as a recent (2005) study funded by a grant

from the US Department of Justice demonstrates. The research shows "a substantially higher degree of marital success for respondents who are very religious than for even the fairly religious ones. It has long been known that highly religious persons are less likely to divorce than other persons... Belief in such an effect is buttressed by the fact that the values espoused by most religions should promote good marriages and good family relations in general."

Regardless of religion, however, to improve marriage, my belief is that a husband should avoid defensiveness and work on showing his wife love and respect. A wife should learn how to speak the language of respect to be perceived as a team player instead of a threat. I encourage all women to be the change they are looking for in their marriages. If we do, we can turn our marriages around, creating a place where our husbands are delighted to give us what we want or need to feel loved.

Grow in Knowledge

1. "O give _____ unto the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever."
2. "O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his _____: make known his deeds among the people "
3. "It is a good _____ to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most high."
- 4 "O give thanks unto the God of gods; for his _____ endureth for ever."
5. "Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks; for that thy name is near thy _____ works declare."
6. "So we thy _____ and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations "
7. "Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the _____ shall dwell in thy presence "
8. "At midnight I will _____ to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments"
9. "In every thing give thanks: for this is the _____ of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."
10. "And whatsoever ye do in word or _____, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself. Titus 3:10-11

Husbands, Love Your Wives

by Elder Jason S. Solomon
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Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it... - Ephesians 5:25

Easy Love

A lot of lip service is given today to love. Sadly, most of the time love is equated merely with feelings and simple attraction. This is easy love. When times are tough, relationships not built on real sacrificial love are likely doomed. If we cannot love someone while looking past our differences and disagreements, then we are not loving as we should and those feelings will fade. True love is about commitment.

Along these lines, one of the most controversial Bible verses today is Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." Submission is hard for us humans. For many reasons, it is foreign to us. In the Western world especially, submission is seen as a form of weakness.

Christians must look not to themselves or the world around them for guidance. Rather Christ is our great example, and He submitted even to the Cross out of devotion to the Father and love for the Church. How was He able to do so? He trusted in the Father's will. This trust or faithfulness was the basis of His strength, peace, and courage. We too must exercise faithfulness in the Father and His Word in order to find true strength, peace, and courage. In order to have happy, peaceful homes, husbands must create an

environment where trust and faith are fostered. Think of faithfulness as the root of the marriage. Without faithfulness, it dies.

As Christ Loved

I will not kid you. Faithfulness is hard work. Paul writes, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it..." Our example then is Jesus. Wives are admonished to submit to their husbands as unto the Lord, and husbands are commanded to love their wives like Jesus loves the Church. This means sacrifice and adoration even when things are not perfect, and things are never perfect where people are concerned. Faithfulness is hard work, but it is worth it. Just look what it did for the faithful recorded in Hebrews 11.

When Christ is our example of love, then love goes from simple romance to greatness. Jesus was able to trust in the Father's will and love the Church into eternity. His sacrifice for the Church is unparalleled. What can you say about your love?

If we love our wives like Jesus loves the Church, we will live in service to her, extending the grace shown to us. Many people in the world might say that serving another is lowering yourself, but they are wrong. Jesus said that being first requires putting others before yourself (Matthew 20:25-28). When you love her first, she will more easily trust in you and God's commands. When she trusts you, she will

more easily submit to you. When she submits to you, you both are empowered to fulfill God's wonderful design for the family.

Duty Sublime

Leadership may be appointed in the home to the husband, but it is not done blindly. With this position comes immense duty. Husbands, and by extension fathers, are made the head to maintain order. We are not better than our wives, and some of us are worse. Keep that in mind when you feel tempted to have your way.

Headship of the home should be first derived from Christ's throne. It is important for a husband to acknowledge Christ's preeminence not only in his life, but in the lives of his wife and children. Never demand or expect things from them that Christ does not require. Our love should guide and nurture the family by giving place to His goodness above our own. Christ's perfect love and headship are most important. His example is the goal. Even when we were dead in sins, Christ loved us.

The great love stories of the Bible are noted for the duty shown and not just attraction. Jesus' love is just one example. From Abraham and Sarah to Jacob and Rachel to Boaz and Ruth, in every case their relationships demonstrate a reliance upon God and mutual deference to each other along with devoted commitment that hardship does not destroy. In the end, it is about mutual submission. Husbands, I implore you, love your wives.



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For Sermons and Prayer Requests



Seeking The Best!

by Bro. Clay Gill
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What are you seeking? What is it that you are pursuing? This is the question Jesus asked two disciples who were following Him. Two disciples had heard Jesus speak. As a result of hearing Him, they began to follow Him. Jesus saw them following Him, and turned to them and asked, "What seek ye?" The account of this can be found in John 1:37-38

And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?

If Jesus were to ask this same question: "What seek ye?" today, what would be your answer? Take some time to consider and meditate on this question, and then consider the following scriptures which tell us what we ought to seek!

"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:" (Isaiah 55:6).

"One [thing] have I desired of the

LORD, that will I **seek** after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple" (Psalm 27:4).

"And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; **seek**, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Luke 11:9).

"Let all those that **seek** thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified" (Psalm 40:16).

As you consider these scriptures, here are a few additional things that you can seek:

Peace: Psalm 34:14 says, "*Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.*" Today's world is filled with so much busyness and uncertainty. We all need to find the peace of God as a place of refuge. Even when things around us seem to be overwhelmingly chaotic, the peace of God can calm the weary soul. "*And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 4:7).

The Kingdom of God: Matthew 6:33 says, "*But **seek** ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*" God is so good to those who seek Him. Not only has He established a place of refuge for those who seek after Him (the Kingdom), but He has also given us a promise that if we seek first the Kingdom, then "these things" (the needs of the person: food, clothing, shelter) will be given to us by our Lord! He promised!

The King of the Kingdom: "*And ye shall **seek** me, and find [me], when ye shall search for me with all your heart*" (Jeremiah 29:13). Not only are we seeking the Kingdom or peace, but we are seeking the King of Peace and the King of the Kingdom! Look each day for Jesus, and you will find Him, sometimes in the most unexpected of ways and sometimes in the simplest of things. The blessing is that He can be found. Matthew 5:8 says *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*

Answers to Grow in Knowledge

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|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Thanks - I Chronicles 16:34 | 6. People - Psalm 79:13 |
| 2. Name - Psalm 105:1 | 7. Upright - Psalm 140:13 |
| 3. Thing - Psalm 92:1 | 8. Rise - Psalm 119:62 |
| 4. Mercy - Psalm 136:2 | 9. Will - Thessalonians 5:18 |
| 5. Wondrous - Psalm 75:1 | 10. Deed - Colossians 3:17 |

We cannot keep what we collect on earth!

~

We cannot lose what God has prepared for us in heaven!

The Church God Blesses

1. **Jesus Christ** must be the focus of everything we do!
 - a. We must **preach Jesus Christ** and Him Crucified.
I Corinthians 2:2; I Timothy 4:1
 - b. We must serve Jesus daily in our lives.
 - c. We must always **manifest** He is the head of the Church.
Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23
 - d. We must completely **trust Jesus** to add to the Church.
Matthew 16:18

Without realizing it, we sometimes lose focus of Who is to be glorified, Who we are worshipping, Who we are serving, and Who is the head of the Church. Sometimes we serve ourselves, sometimes we worship the building or the preacher, or sometimes we just get so busy doing things, we forget to examine ourselves whether we are doing what Jesus tells us to do, rather than just staying busy with many activities not even in harmony with what God tells us in His word we are supposed to be doing. Though habits and routines can be good, if we forget **why** we are doing what we do, it can become tedious and tasteless, tiring and trudging.

Whatever we do must be done heartily as unto the Lord rather than unto men (Colossians 3:23). While we are serving others, we need to be thinking about the privilege of serving Him by serving others, remembering that if we have done it unto one of the least of these our brethren, we have done it unto Christ (Matthew 25:40).

Our service and worship must be moved and motivated out of love for God. Just "going to Church" or going to visit, or studying God's word can become an obligation we actually dread. But if we are thinking about Jesus and the privilege of serving and worshipping Him, we begin to feel, "I was glad

when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord!" (Psalm 122:1) When the things we do are a work of faith and labor of love for Jesus, we find great joy in the doing of everything we do!

The song-writer expressed it correctly when he said, "Where is the blessedness I knew, when first I saw the Lord? Where is the soul-refreshing view of Jesus and His word? ... Return, O holy dove, return, Sweet messenger of rest! I hate the sins that made Thee mourn, and drove thee from my breast. The dearest idol I have known, what e'er that idol be, Help me to tear it from Thy throne, and worship only Thee."

Another writer said, "How tedious and tasteless the hours, when Jesus no longer I see."

We need to fall in love with Jesus again. We need to re-ignite that flame of love and zeal. We need to think about what He has done, is doing, and shall do for us. We need to realize what a privilege it is to have Him as our Lord and Saviour, our Mediator, our Friend, our Elder Brother.

Like the men who said, "Sirs, we would see Jesus!" we need to see Him clearly. Instead of seeing Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, we need to see no man, save Jesus only! (Read Matthew 17:1-8.)

We need to set our affection on things above rather than on things on the earth (Colossians 3:2).

2. The Church must be the **pillar and ground of the truth!** (I Timothy 3:14,15) God's Holy Word, the Bible, (in English, the King James Version) is truth, (John 17:17) and is to be our only rule of faith and practice.

- a. **Fundamental truth** (Salvation by grace! Election, Predestination, Redemption, Regeneration, Glorification)
- b. **Practical truth** (How to live, and why we are to live our daily lives to

the honor and glory of God.; maintaining Scriptural qualifications for pastors, deacons, and Church members; Maintaining Scriptural activities in the Church; Following God's order and relationships in the home; Maintaining Scriptural activities and positions in the world.)

It seems that many "religious organizations" in the world today have lost sight of the fact that the true Church of Jesus Christ is the pillar and ground of **the truth.** (See I Timothy 3:14,15). Some even say it does not matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere. It matters to God what we believe. It matters to God what we teach. It matters to God what we sing. It matters to God what we do. If it is not TRUTH, it is not pleasing to Him! Jesus said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him **must worship him in Spirit and in truth.**" (John 4:24). If we are not preaching the truth, we are not worshipping Him! If we are not singing truth, we are not worshipping Him! If we are not walking in the truth, we are not serving Him!

Truth must be revealed to us by God. When Peter declared who Jesus is, Jesus told Peter he was blessed because the Father had revealed that truth to him. (See Matthew 16:13-18.) God shows us more and more of the truth as we study and follow His word. His word is truth! Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31,32). We can know the truth! We are taught to "Buy the truth, and sell it not" (Proverbs 23:23). We "buy the truth" by prayerfully and diligently studying God's word, asking Him to show us the truth. We also "buy the truth" by listening to men of God preach the word, receiving what we hear with all readiness of mind, then studying to see whether the things

they have preached are the truth. We also “buy the truth” by walking in the light of His word, and experiencing the truth in our own lives.

We are taught to study to be able to **rightly divide** the word of truth! (II Timothy 2:15). Failing to “divide” between the different “heavens”, different “hells”, different “worlds”, different “salvations”, etc. will result in false teachings and a failure to see how the word of God harmonizes, and does not contradict itself.

It is necessary to continuously be examining ourselves to see whether we are abiding in the truth. As others depart from the truth, or err from the truth, it is important to convert them from the error of their way. Through diligent labor, we can save our brethren when they depart from the truth. (James 5:19,20). When others willfully depart from the truth and deny the truth, it is necessary for us to “earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3). A heretic (one who is not teaching the truth), after the first and second admonition must be rejected (Titus 3:10). Those who cause divisions by teaching contrary to the truth are to be marked and avoided. (See Romans 6:17.) Many Churches today are not standing and defending the gospel (Philippians 1:17), because they do not have a great enough love and appreciation for the truth, and do not understand that we cease to be the Church when we compromise on the truth!

3. We must understand, enter, and teach the **Kingdom of Heaven/God!**

- a. We must understand and teach the difference in the eternal heaven and the kingdom of heaven.
- b. The Kingdom of Heaven/God was the focus of **Jesus’** ministry, the Apostles’ ministry, and the ministry of the disciples! (See Matthew 3:1,2; 4:17; 10:5-7; Luke 10:1,8,9; Mark 1:15; Acts 8:12; 20:25; 28:30,31.)
- c. **Every New Testament parable** is about the Kingdom of Heaven/God. (See Matthew 13:24,31,33,44,45,47;

25:1,14.)

- d. Jesus declares we are to **seek first** the kingdom of God! (See Matthew 6:33).
 - e. Before we can enter the kingdom of heaven/ kingdom of God, we must **REPENT!**
1. **Remorse** is feeling bad about sin in our lives; while **repentance** is turning away from sin in our lives.
 2. Repentance is commanded by God repeatedly in the Old Testament and the New Testament. (See Ezekiel 18:31; Joel 2:12; Matthew 3:1,2; 4:17; Acts 2:38; 8:22; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; Mark 6:12; Luke 24:47;)
 3. Repentance is a **condition of God’s blessings**. (See II Chronicles 7:14; Leviticus 26:40-42; Deut. 4:29-31; Psalm 51:17; Isaiah 57:15; I John 1:9; James 4:8-10.)
It is important that we carefully examine ourselves, ask God to show us the error of our ways personally, as well as the **church repenting as a body**. (Rev. 2:5,16; 3:3,19)
 4. **LOVE** must be pre-eminent in our lives!
 - a. John 13:35 “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”
 - b. I Corinthians 13 (Without love in action, everything else is useless, and vanity!)
 - c. Matthew 22:36-40 (Love God; love thy neighbor!)
 - d. Galatians 5:6,22
 - e. Ephesians 3:17-19; 4:16; 5:2
 - f. Colossians 3:14 “And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”
 - g. I Timothy 6:11
 - h. I John 4:7-21
 - i. Remember: Love and discipline are inseparable! Hebrews 12:6; Revelation 3:19; Proverbs 13:24; I Cor.5:1-13
 - j. Remember: True love manifests itself by action! John 14:23; I John 3:18;
 - k. Remember: love brings unity among believers
 - l. Hebrews 13:1,2 “Let brotherly love

continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

5. The Church members must be full of **zeal, commitment, and devotion!** Matthew 22:37-40; Colossians 3:23,24; Ecclesiastes 9:10; John 9:4; Jeremiah 29:13; Philippians 3:13,14; Romans 12:1. Lukewarmness, slothfulness, and indifference are despised by God (Revelation 3:14-19; Amos 6:1; Matthew 22:1-7; 7:26,27; 25:26-30; 25:41-46; Luke 12:47; James 2:14; 4:17)(We must be full of the Holy Ghost!!! Therefore, full of power!)
 - a. Faithful in **home/family life**
Husbands (Gen. 2:23,24; Ephesians 5:25; I Peter 3:7; Proverbs 5:18)
Wives (Ephesians 5:22; I Peter 3:1; Proverbs 31:10-31)
Parents (Teach-Deuteronomy 6:4-12; Train-Proverbs 22:6; Provide for-II Corinthians 12:14; Nurture-Ephesians 6:4; Control-I Timothy 3:4; Discipline- Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13)
Children (Proverbs 23:22; Ecclesiastes 12:1; Ephesians 6:1-3)
 - b. Faithful in **visiting**.
Widows, orphans (James 1:27); sick (Matthew 25:36); Erring members (James 5:19,20; Galatians 6:1,2) Sick (Matthew 25:34-36; James 5:14; Job 2:11; II Kings 8:29; 13:14)
 - c. Faithful in the **study of God’s Holy Word**. John 5:39; II Timothy 2:15; Acts 17:11; Hosea 4:6; Romans 15:4; Matthew 22:29.
 - d. Faithful in **prayer**-Matthew 21:13; Luke 18:1-14; I Thessalonians 5:17; James 5:13-20; II Chronicles 7:14; Mark 11:24; I John 3:22. Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplications!
Fervent prayer; continuous prayer.
 - e. Faithful in **witnessing; being the light of the world!**
Acts 2:37-47; 4:8-13,33; 6:7; Proverbs 11:30,31
 - f. Faithful in **giving**. Matthew 23:23; Malachi 3:8-10; I Cor. 16:2; II Cor. 8:12; 9:7.
 - g. Faithful in **humility!** Luke 17:10; Matthew 18:1-4; 20:25-28; Isaiah 57:15; Micah 6:8; James 4:10; Romans 12:3

“Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” (Proverbs 16:18).

h. Faithful in **examining ourselves and re-examining ourselves** in the light of God’s word concerning our be-

liefs and activities. (Using God’s word as our only rule of faith and practice.) I Corinthians 11:28,31; II Corinthians 13:5; 10:12,13

"The Keeper of the Spring"

The late Peter Marshall used to love to tell the story of the "Keeper of the Spring."

by Elder Edward McIntyre
Fitzgerald, Georgia

The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul. Proverbs 16:17

The Keeper of the Spring was a quiet forest dweller who lived high above an Austrian village along the western slopes of the Alps. The old gentleman had been hired many years ago by a young Town Council to clear away the debris from the pools of water up in the mountain crevices that fed the lovely spring flowing through their town. With faithful, silent regularity, he patrolled the hills, removed the leaves and branches, and wiped away the silt that would otherwise choke and contaminate the fresh flow of water. By and by, the village became a popular attraction for vacationers. Graceful swans floated along the crystal clear spring, the mill wheels of various businesses located near the water turned day and night, farmlands were naturally irrigated, and the view from restaurants was picturesque beyond description.

Years passed. One evening the Town Council met for its semi-annual meeting. As they reviewed the budget, one man’s eye caught the salary figure being paid the obscure Keeper

of the Spring. Said the Keeper of the Purse: "Who is this old man? Why do we keep him on year after year? No one ever sees him. For all we know the strange ranger of the hills is doing us no good. He isn't necessary any longer! By unanimous vote, they dispensed with the old man's services.

For several weeks, nothing changed. By early autumn, the trees began to shed their leaves. Small branches snapped off and fell into the pools, hindering the rushing flow of sparkling water. One afternoon someone noticed a slight yellowish-brown tint in the spring. A couple of days later, the water was much darker.

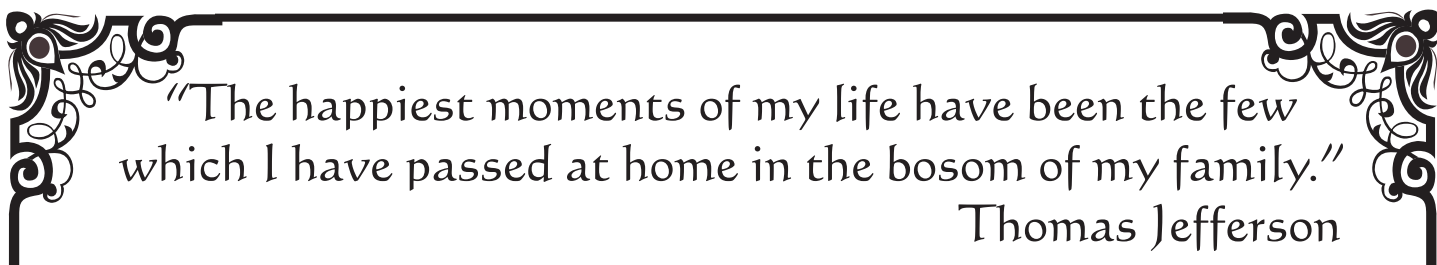
Within another week, a slimy film covered sections of the water along the banks and a foul odor was soon detected. The mill wheels moved slower, and some finally ground to a halt. Swans left, as did the tourists. Clammy fingers of disease and sickness reached deeply into the village.

Quickly, the embarrassed council called a special meeting. Realizing their gross error in judgment, they hired back the old Keeper of the Spring... and within just a few weeks, the veritable river of life began to clear up. The

wheels started to turn, and new life returned to the hamlet in the Alps once again. From Peter Marshall's book, "Mr. Jones, Meet the Master" (Grand Rapids, Fleming Revel, 1982 p. 147-158)

There has never been a time when there has been a greater need for Keepers of the Springs. There are more polluted springs in our nation than ever before. There has never been a time when there were more polluters than now. There are those who are throwing debris and even poison in our springs of morality and decency. If the Keeper is not "rehired" in America our country is doomed. If the Keepers of the Springs in our homes desert their post in the midst of these days, the home is doomed. We all have responsibility to be Keepers of Springs. **But, it is very important that Mothers and Fathers realize they are Keepers in their homes and NOW is the time to clean the Springs from which they and the children drink.**

May God bless us all with the tools of understanding found within the Bible to clean and preserve the purity of the springs from which we all "drink."



"The happiest moments of my life have been the few which I have passed at home in the bosom of my family."

Thomas Jefferson

Early Detection Saves Lives!

by Bro. Brooks Strickland
Gray, Georgia

I work in a Quality Control lab. We constantly sample rock aggregate so that we can assure that our final product meets the specifications of our customers. We have pick-up trucks to go and get these samples from our plant and bring them back to the lab. One of our trucks has recently developed a bad bearing and some other issues in the front wheel. While driving it the other night to get some samples, I started thinking, "What if the front wheel came off while driving?" I wasn't thinking about what would happen to me so much as I was thinking about all the other damage that would be added to that part of the truck, and possibly the whole truck. We really need to fix it to prevent further damage that could cause bigger problems as well as cost us more if we keep ignoring it. But lives are sometimes saved by early detection of problems.

It's amazing how when we ignore small problems, they only cause us bigger problems later. I began thinking about how so many instances of sin are just like this. Many sins start small and we have a golden opportunity to nip them in the bud by handling it. Our biggest battle many times is simply being cautious to recognize the signs of something leading to greater sin and being quick to handle it. Peter warns us of the seriousness of sin when he said, be sober. We need to fix the small problems before they turn into big problems. Very few sins remain small! They normally always turn into something bigger. In fact you could look at many small sins as just being a seed to bigger sin. As a sin progresses, so does the overall price we pay for it. Knowing this, we can summarize that most all major sin could be eliminated by our handling it in the beginning stages. Just like the wheel on the truck, if we take care of it in the beginning, it is

manageable and the damage minimal. But when we don't, it becomes much worse and causes so much more trouble later.

There are many major sins that come from not turning away from a smaller sin. When we look back at the step by step process, the beginnings can easily be seen. I want to focus on three sins that cause major problems in the lives of God's children and that start from specifically not handling a smaller "gateway" sin.

Anger is a sin that can absolutely take us out of our mind when we allow it to get out of control. It reminds me of a fire that burns hotter and hotter; and the hotter it gets the harder it is to control. Just like any hot fire, it starts with a spark. Sometimes we get miffed by what people do or don't do to us. It can easily be handled in the beginning stages. We feel like someone was rude to us or we feel like someone did something that was against us or made us look bad.

These things can be put off easily enough. If we don't go to that person and talk to them about it as the Bible says, or simply forget it, it sits there on our heart and mind. It does not idly sit there. If left alone, it will grow and lead to more sin. Since it's on our mind and not forgotten, we will dwell on it. Not only is it leading to a more fierce anger, we are already sinning by thinking about it and slowly letting it affect our whole attitude. We are in rebellion of Phil 4:8. As it becomes more and more a feeling of anger, rather than a slighted feeling, we are then sinning by letting anger rest on our bosom. With each angry moment, we are adding a new sin to the one we originally had which was a small amount of anger. Then, of course, the anger will result in a really bad attitude or being mean to others or even seeking some kind of revenge on

that person. Because of this, our light is nowhere near shining, and a whole progression of regrettable things could follow. If you had handled it in its earliest stages by going to that brother or sister, or by forgetting it, you could have prevented a multitude of sins. It's a shame that all this came from something so small and so manageable. It could have been handled by talking to that person, or thinking pure thoughts, or focusing on your blessings among other things.

Many times, when we get the courage to talk to someone who supposedly has offended us, we find that what we perceived was never intended by the person. Something else the Bible says that addresses anger (and more specifically the tendency that children of God have to let anger grow over long periods of time) is to never let the sun go down on your wrath. This would nip in the bud the tendency that we have of letting slighted feelings turn into anger over time from not handling it. We would have to handle it that day. And almost 100% of the time, these things would never turn into anger because they are so small originally, and a day is not enough time for them to start boiling and grow into something bigger. We are given that day and no more than that to get it handled. God does us the favor of this time limit. What a blessing, because it is so miserable to carry animosity for days on end. Many people can concur by experience. This does not, however, give us permission to walk around mad all day. It does guarantee that the small things will not become big because it cannot go past this day. Sometimes our anger goes from the earliest stages to the full blown anger all in one day. This still guarantees that it will not be carried over to tomorrow no matter how far along it got today. In either sense,

this prevents the growing of anger and continuance of anger, and handles the overall picture in its beginning stages. So much headache, heartache, and sin could be prevented if we would, like the case of the truck, fix the small problem before it leads to more damage. With the load of sin and miseries that anger brings to us, our lives will be much happier if anger can be squashed in its infancy.

Adultery is another sin to consider that starts out from smaller sins that are left unchecked. Probably one of the worst sins that children of God can commit, and that causes more hurt than most, is adultery. The fact that it starts with small sins can be encouraging, because we can find relief in knowing that such destruction can easily be prevented. Much like anger, it starts with a small sin that snowballs by leading to more sins as you progress toward the final sin. Each additional sin serves as a stepping stone to the next. Most times adultery comes from someone thinking about it long before actually committing it. Thinking seems small and actually manageable compared to the actual adultery. However there is an even smaller sin that when not handled, leads to thinking. It is called "looking." Our minds are very complex and can do so many things. The mind can hold all kinds of information and process it in many different ways. It can imagine many things and create many ideas that truly are a testament to how amazingly God created us and more specifically our minds. The mind however, needs a source of input before it can process or create any output. Seeing and hearing are by far the two most productive sources of input. Without these two, the brain doesn't have much with which to work. Hearing doesn't have much to do with sexuality. Vision is the source of nearly all the input the brain uses to have lustful thoughts which then lead to other things. I have heard many times that it doesn't hurt to look. Brethren let me assure you, "It DOES hurt to look!!!" Looking is where it all begins. You have

to see it before you can even think it, and you have to think it, before you can do it. Maybe this mentality of it not hurting to look is what has caused so many men and women to err. Either they went all the way through this process non-stop from looking, or they didn't realize they were in sin until after the point of looking. The further they progressed, the harder it was to handle. As time and events progress, it became more difficult to escape the progression of sin until the final act of adultery was fulfilled. These are the things that can happen when we don't realize that looking is where adultery begins. We could save ourselves untold heartache, and escape the snare of Satan, if we identified and handled this sin sooner. It's impossible to handle if not identified. Isn't it Alcoholics Anonymous who says the first step to fixing your problem is admitting or identifying you have one? Well, don't let anyone tell you it doesn't hurt to look. The Bible tells us to bring our thoughts into captivity! When our thoughts are evil or ill-intended, all we have to do is look the other way when our eyes begin to stray. This is much easier than bringing thoughts into captivity and extremely easier than physically walking away from the act of adultery. Be sure you handle this major sin in its earliest stages when it is most preventable and manageable. Do this by handling the sin of looking, and later on if needed, by handling the sin of thinking and/or lusting.

The third sin I want to mention that can easily be handled in the beginning is drunkenness. In the beginning stages, much like adultery, it can be dismissed as something harmless and innocent. We've all heard that one drink isn't going to hurt anything. Whether or not one drink hurts someone every time is not the point. The point is that one drink has been the open door to major destruction in the lives of many of God's children. There is a step by step process in two sinful scenarios with alcohol. One is the one-time drunkenness. This is the clearest picture of how such a small step as one

drink leads to a major sin. If you are out with some friends and find yourself in a party setting and are offered one drink, you may be able to take it and not take it down the road to drunkenness, but one way to guarantee that you don't, is to not take the one drink. Plenty of times people never mean to get drunk but that one drink opened up the door to drink more. And like other progressions, as you go further and further down that path to drunkenness, it gets harder and harder to stop or to turn back. Just like how turning your head from looking at someone is easier than that next step of bringing your thoughts into captivity with adultery, so is making the decision to avoid drunkenness while you're sober easier than while you are slowly becoming inebriated. This whole process of going from one drink to complete drunkenness, from beginning to end, could happen all on one occasion. Another step by step process with drunkenness that could be prevented by that first drink or beginning stage is the tendency to reach drunkenness over time. Maybe people start out on their path to drunkenness by only drinking one every now and then, or when some people first become casual drinkers they never plan to get drunk. Sometimes they are not used to alcohol enough to get drunk on the first occasion. This can be deceiving because we gain much confidence in ourselves when we don't get drunk from this casual drinking. We gain confidence in our own abilities and are really playing with fire by flirting with that wide open door. We are also building up a tolerance to drink more and more. We progressively get to where occasional drinking is more often than originally intended, and we finally reach drunkenness. Then drunkenness becomes more frequent than intended. Here we see where someone finally arrived at drunkenness step by step by not turning away from each previous step. This scenario is the same as the other, only it is stretched out over time. Also, this scenario often involves much more al-

cohol than the one time drunkenness because it takes place on more than one occasion. It also involves being drunk multiple times where the previous does not. The “one time” scenario of drunkenness and the overall scenario of becoming a drunkard both follow the same processes in that someone did not handle the beginning stages, and became drunk.

In the case of all three of the above sins, we see where a major sin that can lead to much destruction began with situations that were very small and manageable. This is something to rejoice in but also something to fully be aware of. Because the beginning stages of all three are so small, they are that much easier to overlook and to be deceived by. Satan or others can easily

make you think they are harmless. May we all be able to identify early stages of anger, adultery, and drunkenness. May God help us to stop under-estimating the power small things like a ‘little’ bitterness, a quick look, and one small drink. It is the little foxes that spoil the vine! May God help us to start looking for the “little things” that need to be changed in order to save lives!

Blessed Beyond Belief!

by Bro. Joshua Leach
Blackshear, Georgia

“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (I Thessalonians 5:18).

I am learning that we all need to be thankful in every situation in every moment of our lives. Job was able to worship God in the midst of the devil’s temptations and in the midst of his affliction. In one day, he received the news that all his oxen, donkeys, sheep, camels, servants, and children were taken from him. Immediately after hearing this news, **Job worshipped God!** He knew the Lord had blessed him abundantly!

“Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped. And said, Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly” (Job 1:20-22).

We tend to focus on “the Lord hath taken away” rather than realizing the blessing of “the Lord gave.” Rather than focusing on the negatives in life, we need to thank God for the positives. When we lose loved ones, we need to reflect on the blessings we received, and the time we were able to spend with them. We need to thank God and acknowledge that “every good and perfect gift is from above...” (James

1:17).

In every situation, even in the darkest moments of our lives, we can find something for which to be thankful. Psalm 68:19 states, “Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah.” I am so thankful for the blessings that God gives me each day. Take a moment and think about the daily blessings God gives you. Things that come to my mind are each breath I take (Psalm 150:6), the peace that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7), the love of God (Romans 8:38-39), the surety of the promises of God (II Corinthians 1:20), and so many more. Every day that we awake is a gift, and we should wake up proclaiming, “This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalms 118:24). I encourage you to take time to study and pray over these examples I have given and to find more in the word of God.

We need to be thankful for “Emmanuel”, which being interpreted is, “God with us.” God is with us every day! Matthew 1:23 states, “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” The Lord Himself came to the earth wrapped in flesh and lived among us. He is able to help us through each trial and tempta-

tion we face. “For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18). What a wonderful reason to be thankful each day!

Most of all, we should be thankful for Jesus, who came to save His people from their sins. Matthew 1:21 states, “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.” Did Jesus accomplish this task? What the Lord has spoken and what He has purposed, he also does (Isaiah 46:11). In II Timothy 1:9, Paul states that God “hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” Why? “...according to His own purpose and grace.” We learned from Isaiah 46:11 that whatever God purposes, he also does. When Jesus was on the cross at Calvary, He proclaimed, “It is finished,” then bowed His head and “gave up the ghost according to the power of God” (John 19:30). I am so thankful for Jesus saving His people from their sins.

My prayer is that God’s people learn to be thankful in all circumstances every day, and to focus on the blessings of God rather than the negative things in this world.

Hand In Hand With Jesus

by Bro. David B. Durrence
Waycross, Georgia

As we consider the word of God, we understand that God is great and mighty. His written word describes God in a similar fashion as God describes man; with eyes that see, feet to walk, ears to hear, hands to perform works. In this lesson, we will consider the hands of God and more particular, walking "hand in hand with Jesus".

A song writer once wrote "*hand in hand we walk each day; hand in hand along the way; walking thus I cannot stray, hand in hand with Jesus.*" Songs often teach us truth and they encourage us in our service to God. We must remember that our Lord does not walk with us when we walk in sin for "*The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works*" (Psalm 145:17). If we will walk with Jesus, then we must walk in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. God has promised that if we draw nigh to Him, He will draw nigh unto us (James 4:8). God has warned us that "there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 16:25). So, if we would walk hand in hand with Jesus, we must walk in all His ways. "*Can two walk together, except they be agreed*" (Amos 3:3). "*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness*" (II Corinthians 6:14).

We all need to stop and consider our own lives. Do you feel our Lord Jesus Christ manifesting His presence to you as you daily walk through life's journey? If not, perhaps something is missing in your service to Jesus. May we all strive daily to walk in newness of life, redeeming our time wisely in greater commitment and service to God.

I would like to share with you a few thoughts that I have concerning walking "hand in hand with Jesus." When

you walk hand in hand with Jesus, you submit to walk with Jesus on the strait and narrow way that leads to life. As you walk hand in hand with Jesus, you will feel the scarred hands where the nails were driven through His hand as he was nailed on the cross of crucifixion for your sins and mine. As you hold onto those scarred hands, you will begin to get a better understanding of the great love of God for His people. You might be like old Brother Thomas who doubted the risen Savior; but when you walk hand in hand with Him, you will not doubt any more! Like Thomas, you will cry out, "**My Lord and my God.**" When you see Jesus sitting on His throne, high and lifted up, and you see yourself as Isaiah did, wretched and undone, you too will cry out "*My Lord and my God.*"

As you walk hand in hand with Jesus, you will feel the great love and humility that Jesus had as He welcomed the little children to come unto Him. Jesus said, "*Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven*" (Matthew 19:14). Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, yet He took time for little children to come unto Him. Jesus had compassion on the poor and unfortunate, the tired and weary, the young and the old!. Remember how Jesus said "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*".

When you walk hand in hand with Jesus, you will see great miracles, for Jesus is a miracle worker. If you can believe that God is, and you will read of the great miracles that Jesus performed, you will not only read about them, you will believe them and witness them in your heart and mind, and your faith will be increased. I love to think about how Jesus fed the thousands with only five loaves and 2 fish-

es. When all those present were filled with food, 12 baskets of food were taken up. I love to see Jesus speak to the winds and see how the wind honors God and obeys Him, and how Jesus rebukes the winds and calms the seas. We can only witness and feel these things when we walk with Jesus, hand in hand. **Never man spake like this man!**

We see God's salvation come in more than one way in the scriptures. We are saved eternally by the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. We can also experience daily salvations by keeping God's commandments, and by doing good works and walking in the light as He is in the light. I like to think of brother Peter when he saw Jesus walking on the water. As you think on this story, think of the love and daily saving power of Jesus. Peter, seeing Jesus walking on the water, said to Jesus, "*Bid me to come to thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*" (Matthew 14:28-31). Sometimes we are just like Peter: we take our eyes off of Jesus! We begin to look at all the troubles around us, then begin to sink in life's troubles. Do you know who is the only one that can take your hand and lift you up out of all your troubles today and every day? Do you not only know the One who saved you from your sins at Calvary, but know He is the one who saves you from troubles and problems every day? **His name is Jesus.** Peter was hand in hand with Jesus, and salvation came to him that day. When he cried, "Lord save me!"

He was not talking about eternal salvation, but being delivered from death in the water. We need to call on the name of the Lord every day, and can know He is near if we are walking hand in hand with Jesus!

The psalmist David walked hand in hand with Jesus. He was blessed to pen the words of one of my favorite scriptures in the Holy Bible. The 23rd Psalm expresses such an intimate walk with the Great Shepherd as David walked hand in hand with his Lord. Let's consider these scriptures and think about the mutual love between the Shepherd and the lamb (David). "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely good-

ness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever"(Psalm 23).

We are taught in the scriptures that we are in the hands of God the Father and God the Son. Brethren, there is no place where I had rather be than safe in the hands of God, preserved in Christ Jesus. When we walk hand and hand with someone, it usually implies that we are in fellowship with one another. God is a great God! All power is His in heaven and in earth "and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou" (Daniel 4:35). God has made the heaven and the earth by His great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Him.

God is full of mercy, grace and love, but God is a jealous God and He will not allow His people to go a whoring after other gods of this world. Remember, "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). God's hand is mighty in blessings and God's

hand is mighty in chastening! Failure to look at both the goodness and severity of God, failure to understand that love and chastening are inseparable, has been a major reason for the decline of Christianity in America and in the Churches! God says to His people "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known" (Deuteronomy 11:26-28).

I pray that thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might and keep His charge, and His statutes, and His judgments, and His commandments, always. Walk with Jesus hand in hand in the Kingdom of God "for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17).

If Jesus Came to Your House

by Lois Blanchard Eades

If Jesus came to your house to spend a day or two —
If He came unexpectedly, I wonder what you'd do.
Oh, I know you'd give your nicest room to such an honored Guest,
And all the food you'd serve to Him would be the very best,
And you would keep assuring Him you're glad to have Him there —
That serving Him in your own home is joy beyond compare.
But — when you saw Him coming, would you meet Him at the door
With arms outstretched in welcome to your heavenly Visitor!
Or would You have to change your clothes before you let Him in?
Or hide some magazines and put the Bible where they'd been!

Would you turn off the radio and hope He hadn't heard!
And wish you hadn't uttered that last loud, hasty word?
Would you hide your worldly music and put some hymn books out?
Could you let Jesus walk right in, or would you rush about?
And I wonder — if the Saviour spent a day or two with you, Would you go right on doing the things you always do?
Would you go right on saying the things you always say?
Would life for you continue as it does from day to day?
Would your family conversation keep up its usual pace?
And would you find it hard each meal to say a table grace?
Would you sing the songs you always

sing, and read the books you read, And let Him know the things on which your mind and spirit feed?
Would you take Jesus with you everywhere you'd planned to go?
Or would you, maybe, change your plans for just a day or so?
Would you be glad to have Him meet your very closest friends?
Or would you hope they'd stay away until His visit ends?
Would you be glad to have Him stay forever on and on?
Or would you sigh with great relief when He at last was gone?
It might be interesting to know the things that you would do,
If Jesus Christ in person came to spend some time with you.

Bible Reading Calendar for February

DATE	MORNING	EVENING
1	Exodus 27,28	Matthew 21:23-46
2	Exodus 29,30	Matthew 22:1-22
3	Exodus 31,32,33	Matthew 22:23-46
4	Exodus 34,35,36	Matthew 23:1-22
5	Exodus 37,38	Matthew 23:23-39
6	Exodus 39,40	Matthew 24:1-22
7	Lev. 1,2,3	Matthew 24:23-51
8	Lev. 4,5,6	Matthew 25:1-30
9	Lev. 7,8,9	Matthew 25:31-46
10	Lev. 10,11,12	Matthew 26:1-19
11	Lev. 13	Matthew 26:20-54
12	Lev. 14	Matthew 26:55-75
13	Lev. 15,16,17	Matthew 27:1-31
14	Lev. 18,19	Matthew 27:32-66
15	Lev. 20,21	Matthew 28:1-20

DATE	MORNING	EVENING
16	Lev. 22,23	Mark 1:1-22
17	Lev. 24,25	Mark 1:23-45
18	Lev. 26,27	Mark 2
19	Numbers 1,2	Mark 3:1-21
20	Numbers 3,4	Mark 3:22-35
21	Numbers 5,6	Mark 4:1-20
22	Numbers 7	Mark 4:21-41
23	Numbers 8,9,10	Mark 5:1-20
24	Numbers 11,12,13	Mark 5:21-43
25	Numbers 14,15	Mark 6:1-32
26	Numbers 16,17	Mark 6:33-56
27	Numbers 18,19,20	Mark 7:1-13
28	Numbers 21,22	Mark 7:14-37

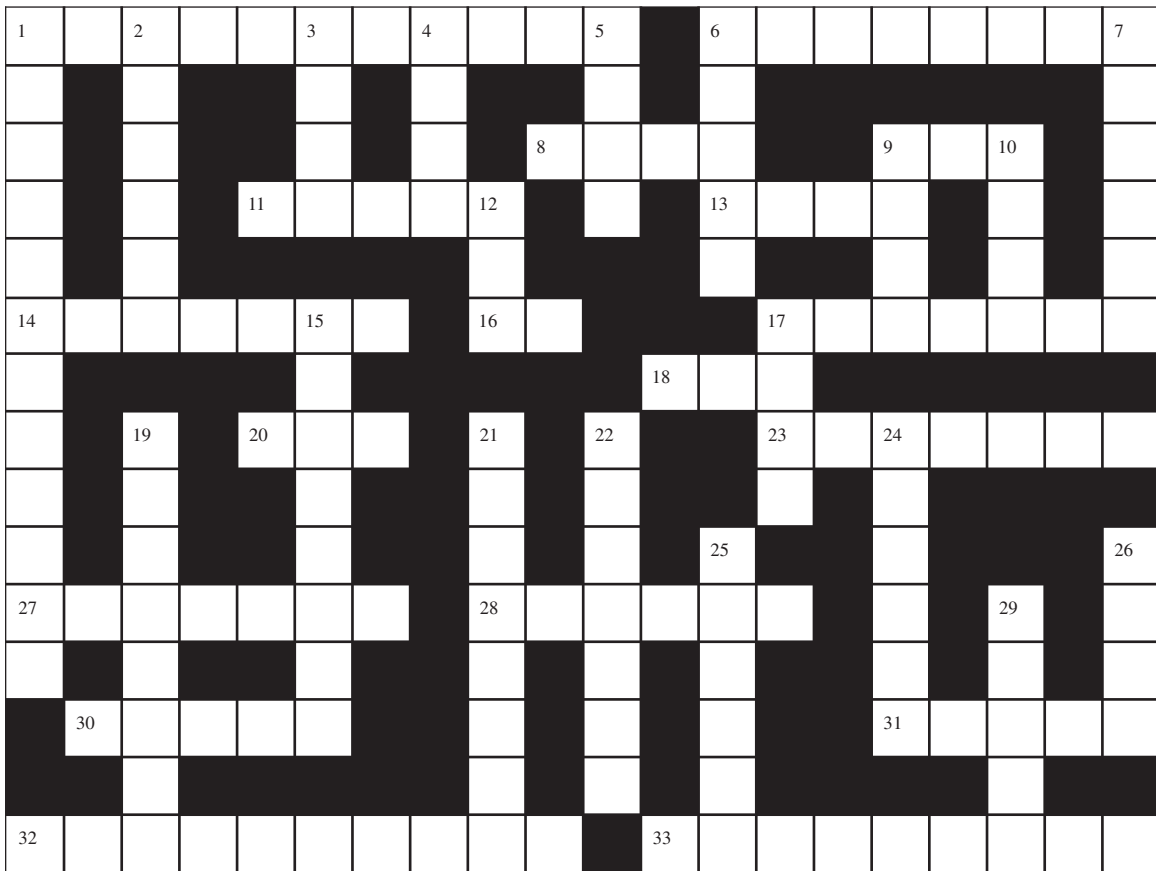
**ANSWERS TO
CROSSWORD
PUZZLE
JANUARY 2013**

1	D	E	S	I	R	2	E		3	S		4	I	N	H	A	5	B	I	T	6	A	N	T	7	S	
	E						R		O		G						R					L				E	
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	E			18	S			19	F	I	R	S	T				L					20	B	U	Y		
21	D	R	I	N	K			V						22	F		23	A	R	T		T			24	G	
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26	T	H	I	R	S	T								27	R	E	J	E	C	T		D				A	
	R			E					28	K							L					29	W			V	
	U		30	M			31	M	32	E	A	N	S			33	P	R	E	V	A	I	L			I	
	T		A							R		O						S				S				T	
	H	U	N	G	E	R			35	W	I	T	N	E	S	S						36	R	E	A	D	Y

Crossword Puzzle

ACROSS

1. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our ____: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought,...." 6. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy _____ forever." 8. "The prophets prophesy falsely and the priests _____ rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" 9. "If we _____ that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." 11. "For the wages of sin is _____;..." 13. "...but my Father giveth you _____ bread from heaven." 14. "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a _____ tree bringeth forth evil fruit." 16. "The ungodly are not ____: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away." 17. "...but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be _____." 18. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous _____ availeth much." 20. "If we believe _____, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." 23. "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds _____ Christ Jesus." 27. "...chiefly, because that unto them were committed the _____ of God." 28. "...Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be _____." 30. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your _____;" 31. "Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, _____ be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." 32. "For if ye forgive men their _____, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:" 33. "And he that _____ the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit;..."



DOWN

1. "...because he maketh _____ for the saints according to the will of God." 2. "All that the _____ giveth me shall come to me;..." 3. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be _____ known unto God " 4. "Blessed is the man _____ walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly;..." 5. "But I said unto you, that ye also have _____ me, and believe not." 6. "And all the inhabitants of the _____ are reputed as nothing;..." 7. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be _____..." 9. "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that _____ me." 10. "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will _____ Father forgive your trespasses." 12. "...and in _____ law doth he meditate day and night." 15. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the _____." 17. "And Jesus said _____ them, I am the bread of life:..." 19. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new _____..." 21. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good _____." 22. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that; if we ask anything according to his will, he _____ us:" 24. "And he shall be like a tree planted by the _____ of water,..." 25. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest; ...if there be any _____, and if there be any praise, think on these things." 26. "...and him that cometh to me I _____ in no wise cast out." 29. "But by the _____ of God I am what I am:..."