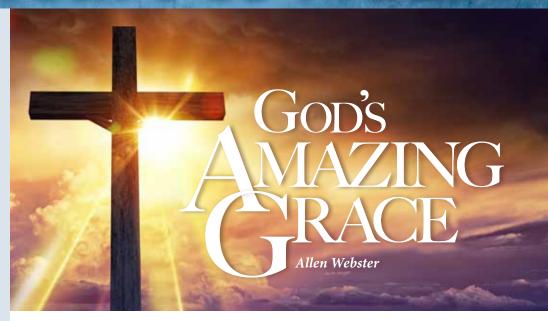


House to House volume 21 NUMBER 6 www.housetohouse.com House to House to House volume 21 NUMBER 6 www.housetohouse.com



In his historical novel based on the life of Lincoln, Gore Vidal pictures a cabinet meeting when it was evident that the South would be defeated and Lincoln's advisors began to make plans for after the war. When asked how he planned to deal with the Rebels, Lincoln said, "I will treat them as if they never left."

That's grace.

Grace is forgiveness that forgets. Grace is favor in absence of merit. Grace is love that stoops. With those who do not deserve anything, grace gives everything for nothing (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Donald Barnhouse said, "Love that goes upward is worship; love that goes outward is affection; love that stoops is grace." The Old Testament word for grace (*chen*) means "to bend." God condescends to men of low estate (cf. Romans 12:17), runs to meet sinners (Luke 15:20), and loves the unlovable (Romans 5:6).

What kind of grace does God have ready for man's needs?

THERE IS ABUNDANT GRACE FOR FLAGRANT SINNERS

NBA basketball teams commit 20.15 fouls in an average game. Once in a while a violation is deemed sufficiently dangerous that it is labeled a "flagrant foul."

Many sins are committed in an average week, but some—racism, drug addiction, prostitution, armed robbery, spouse abuse, alcoholism, molestation, murder, compulsive gambling, adultery—society might deem "flagrant" sins. Are such dyed-in-the-wool sinners salvageable?

Grace is unaffected by the degree of sin, as Jesus was unaffected by the degree of illness in those He healed.

Grace salvaged the "chief of sinners." If there had been a tribe of sinners, Paul figured he would have been their chief; nonetheless the grace of the Lord was "exceeding abundant" toward him (1 Timothy 1:14–15).

Grace salvaged publicans and sinners. Jesus worked among those shunned by the religious elite (Luke 7:34). Although publicans and sinners did not think that religion was for them, Jesus taught that "good" people, such as Pharisees, did not have a monopoly on religion. In fact, the self-righteous were left out of the kingdom while many formerly unrighteous made it (Matthew 21:43). Jesus came not "to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matthew 9:13).

Grace salvaged pagans and moral delinquents. There was no Las Vegas, Rio, or San Francisco in the Roman Empire, but there was a Corinth. Its citizens were widely known for immorality. Evangelizing



there struck fear into the seasoned heart of the veteran missionary Paul (Acts 18:9–10; 1 Corinthians 2:3). *Surely,* he thought, *I'm* wasting my time here. But the Lord knew what Paul did not.

Those whose names were written on police records would soon be written in heaven (Philippians 4:3); those who frequented bars and bathhouses would soon prefer the communion of the Lord's supper and the Lord's people. On any given Sunday, on those church pews would sit former fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, covetous people, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners (1 Corinthians 6:9–11; cf. Colossians 3:5–8; 1 Peter 4:3).

Gospel teachers recognize that the gospel is powerful enough to reach today's worst sinners (Romans 1:16). In meekness each patiently instructs those who oppose themselves, considering himself and thinking that "by the grace of God I am what I am" (2 Timothy 2:25; Galatians 6:1; 1 Corinthians 15:10). Where might many Christians be

- If they had not had believing parents;
- If they had been born into deep poverty;
- If they had not been taken to Bible classes as a child;
- If they had an unbelieving spouse;
- If they had a physical handicap or learning disability;
- If they had been abused as a child or sexually exploited as a teen or adult;
- If they had a mental illness;
- If they had suffered from depression;
- If they had grown up in an area where the church was not planted;
- If they had parents who were alcoholics or drug addicts;
- If they had not had parents to warn of bad friends or restrain from rebelliousness?

Since "there but by the grace of God go I," each worker reasons, "there by the grace of God, I go" (Mark 16:15–16).

Sin is powerless against the gospel in a committed heart.

- It takes the drunkard from his bottle;
- It takes the pornographer from his websites;
- It takes the homosexual from his nightclub;
- It takes the smoker from her cigarettes;
- It takes the thief from his loot; and
- It takes the addict from her needle.

So do not fret if you fall into the "flagrant sinner" category. The gospel is for you. The church is for you. God is for you (cf. Romans 8:31). Do not judge yourself unworthy of eternal life (Acts 13:46). All people everywhere can repent—and all people everywhere should repent, for there is coming a day of judgment (Acts 17:30–31).

People can change. Never use the excuse that you have been in sin too long. Change may not be easy, but you can do it through Christ who will strengthen you (Philippians 4:13). Take a step in the right direction, and He will help you finish the journey. Come as you are, and He will start there to make you better.

THERE IS NECESSARY GRACE FOR ORDINARY SINNERS

With such grace to offer, one would think that church buildings would fill every Sunday and that ministers would have to take appointments to fill requests for baptisms. But there are no lines or backlog. Why?

The reason is that most persons do not understand that they need grace. They think, "Bad people need grace, but I'm a pretty good person. I'm not perfect, but I'm better than most."

Lincoln said, "We have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us" (National Day of Prayer proclamation, March 30, 1863). Flagrant sinners see themselves as too bad for grace, while ordinary sinners see themselves as too good for grace. Both are wrong. One overestimates his sinfulness and underestimates God's grace; the other overestimates his goodness and underestimates God's holiness.

The question is not, "Am I better than other people?" but, "Have I ever sinned?" One does not have to feel lost to be lost. One does not have to break all of God's laws to be a lawbreaker; he only has to

break one: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Most criminals in prisons are there on a single conviction.

Paul discusses the three types of people—the immoral (Romans 1:18–32), the moral (2:1–6), and the religious (2:17–3:18)—and concludes that without Christ each class stands guilty before God (Romans 3:23; 6:23). Every person needs grace, for there is no one righteous, not even one (Romans 3:9–12).

Naturally, it is better to be a good person with high morals, but when compared to a holy God, any sinner is wretched. "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6; cf. 6:5; Luke 5:8). The Empire State building is much taller than the FedEx Ship Center next to it. But which is closer to the moon? Technically, the top of ESB at 1250 feet is closer than the top of FedEx, but does it really matter from 240,000 miles? In the presence of thousands of miles, there is no appreciable difference in hundreds of feet (cf. Isaiah 59:1–2).

Any sinner is lost. Being a good person does not erase sin. Being a nice guy does not mean one will be saved at Judgment. Nearly every person saved in the book of Acts was already deeply religious or impressively moral. But each was lost without the gospel (cf. Acts 2:36; 10:2; 11:14).

To go to heaven a person must believe in Jesus (Acts 16:31), repent of his sins (Luke 13:3), confess Christ (Romans 10:10), be baptized to wash away his sins (1 Peter 3:21), and be faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10; Titus 2:11–13). Eternity has no middle ground: to miss heaven is to go to hell. The way to life is narrow, and few there be that find it (Matthew 7:14). Whatever else you do in life, be sure to be in that few.

THERE IS REMEDIAL GRACE FOR PENITENTS

God gives "more grace" (James 4:6) as we need it. He does not deal with us "according to our iniquities" (Psalm 103:10).

David once fell. He lusted for Bathsheba and murdered Uriah. Confronted by Nathan, he repented and pled with God: "Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (Psalm 51:2). God granted him grace (Psalm 32:1).

An early church member was guilty of scandalous sin—a sexual relationship with his father's wife. Paul instructed the church to withdraw its fellowship from

him if he did not repent (1 Corinthians 5). He did not and they did.

Later, he came to his spiritual senses and repented. Paul wrote back of God's grace and forgiveness, saying church members ought now to forgive him, comfort him, and confirm their love toward him (2 Corinthians 2:6–8; cf. Romans 14:1, 19; 15:2, 7; 16:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:11).

The same welcome awaits returning prodigals today—encouraging words (Ephesians 4:29), invitations for meals and social activities, and restoring to active service in the church (2 Timothy 4:11). If you have wandered, come back (Acts 8:22; James 5:16). You will be welcomed with open arms.

THERE IS DAILY GRACE FOR ALL CHRISTIANS

The grace of God teaches Christians to live soberly, righteously, and godly (Titus 2:11–13). Yet Christians sin (1 John 1:6–10). Thus God's grace requires holy living, and holy living requires God's grace.

Most Christians would confess to sins of thought, word, or action each day. They are even unaware of some sins and need grace for "secret faults" (Psalm 19:12).

Secret sins can be

- Sins we know we commit that others do not know (e.g., hatred or lust in the heart).
- Sins that others know we commit that we do not know of (e.g., offending someone who did not tell us).
- Sins unknown to us and others, but known to God (e.g., sins of omission).

Sin—any sin, all sin—requires grace. How can grace be obtained so frequently? "Come boldly unto the throne of grace" to "obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

THERE IS BEGINNING GRACE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Youth is synonymous with inexperience. Inexperience is synonymous with mistakes. Some mistakes are sinful. We understand then why David prayed, "Remember not the sins of my youth" (Psalm 25:7). While teens are often among the most dedicated soldiers in God's army (1 John 2:14), many could join with Jeremiah to confess that "from our youth even unto this day" we have not obeyed the Lord (Jeremiah 3:25).

Youth are capable of enlisting, resisting, and persisting, so available grace and inevitable mistakes are no excuse for bad behavior (Romans 6:1–2). Solomon urged, "Remember now thy Creator in the days

of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Young faith is pure and exemplary (1 Timothy 4:12), but when youthful sins come, and penitence follows, God is there with grace.

THERE IS SUFFICIENT GRACE FOR THE OLD

Life's final stretch can be fraught with concern. Senior saints wonder, "Have I done enough? Since death and judgment cannot be far off, how will it go for me? When my health goes, who will take care of me? If my mind fails, will people take advantage of me?" The psalmist prayed: "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth" (Psalm 71:9; cf. 71:18).

Grace is reassuring at such times. An aged Paul writing his final book was confident in God's grace: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him" (2 Timothy 1:12). When Paul's body was failing, Jesus told him, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Corinthians 12:9). David observed, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psalm 37:25; cf. 92:13–15).

Justin Holcomb, in *On the Grace of God*, tells of Abraham Lincoln going to a slave auction. Appalled when he saw a young woman on the auction block, Lincoln bid until he won. After paying the auctioneer, he said to her, "You're free."

"Free? What's that mean?" she asked.

"It means you are free," Lincoln answered, "completely free."

"Does it mean I can do whatever I want to do?"

"Yes, free to do whatever you want to do."

"Free to say whatever I want to say?"

"Yes, free to say whatever you want."

"Does freedom mean that I can go wherever I want to go?"

"It means exactly that you can go wherever you want to go."

With tears of gratitude, she said, "Then, I think I'll go with you."

This story—perhaps apocryphal—illustrates what God did. He bought us with a costly sum—the life of Jesus (Ephesians 1:7). When Jesus paid for us, He set us free—and if the Son "shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

The question remains: Will you go with Him?

Why Go to Worship?

Some go to church to take a walk.

Some go there to laugh and talk.

Some go there to meet a friend.

Some go there their time to spend.

Some go there to meet each other.

Some go there a fault to cover.

Some go there for observation.

Some go there for speculation.

Some go there to doze and nod.

The wise go there to worship God.

—Spurgeon

"Come and see."

JOHN 1:39



God's Plan for Saving Man

God's Grace, Ephesians 2:8 Christ's Blood, Romans 5:9 The Holy Spirit's Gospel, Romans 1:16 Sinner's Faith, Acts 16:31 Sinner's Repentance, Luke 13:3 Sinner's Confession, Romans 10:10 Sinner's Baptism, 1 Peter 3:21 Christian's Work, James 2:24 Christian's Hope, Romans 8:24 Christian's Endurance, Revelation 2:10



My Daddy Prays for Me

When Daddy prays, the house gets still; His voice is slow and deep. We shut our eyes; the clock ticks loud. So quiet we must keep.

When Daddy prays, he doesn't use Those words the preacher does. He prays for lots of different things, But mostly he prays for us.

His prayer gets awful long sometimes, And hard to understand. So I just wiggle up close And let him hold my hand.

I can't remember all of it; I'm little yet, you see. But there's one thing I can't forget: My Daddy Prays For Me.

> "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

> > 3 JOHN 1:4



For more material on the home and family, fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, grandparents, and family finances, go to www.housetohouse.com.

FORGIVE, as God Forgives

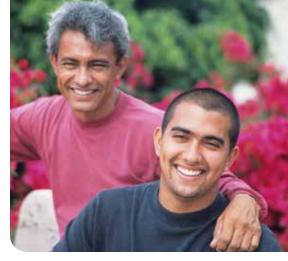
Years ago a young man quarreled with his father and left home.

He kept in touch with his mother and wanted badly to come home for Christmas, but he was afraid his father would not allow it.

His mother urged him to come home, but he did not feel he could until he knew his father had forgiven him.

Finally, his mother wrote and said she would talk with the father, and if he had forgiven him, she would tie a white cloth on the tree that grew alongside the railroad tracks near their home, which he could see before the train reached the station. If there were no white cloth, it would be better if he went on.

So the young man started home. As the train drew near his home he was so nervous that he said to his friend who was traveling with him, "I can't bear to look. Sit in my place and look out the window. You tell me whether there is a white cloth on it or not."



His friend changed places with him. After a bit the friend said, "I see the tree."

The son asked, "Is there a white cloth tied to it?"

For a moment the friend did not say anything. Then he turned, and said, "There is a white cloth tied to every limb of that tree!"

Each of us is the prodigal boy. Jesus is the white cloth our heavenly Father tied to the tree—to the cross of Calvary—signaling that it was safe for us to come home. —Unknown

"Be ye followers of me... as I also am of Christ."

1 CORINTHIANS 11:1

BUILDING A HOUSE is not the same as

BUILDING A HOME

On July 21, 1983, 288 construction workers were waiting for the sound of the gun that would mark the beginning of construction on a house in Palmer, Alaska.

They were going to be timed to see how fast they could build a house. They were encouraged by a crowd of 6,000 spectators and a country band. The record they set was incredible. In just 3 hours, 53 minutes, and 59.49 seconds the lucky couple, Rocky and Pat Weldon of Anchorage, stood on the steps of their brand new house. The two bedroom house cost \$80,000.

To top things off, a furniture company then furnished the house in less than four minutes.

"Instant houses" are possible, but not instant homes. Homes take time to build. They are not built out of brick and mor-



tar, but out of love, hope, patience, and trust. There will be no band playing, no crowd of spectators to watch, not much fanfare. It takes perseverance and commitment. There is never a time when you can sit down and say, "It's finished." There is always need for consideration, tenderness, and thoughtfulness.

But there is a real joy that comes from the building. Seeing your children grow up into fine Christians is a great thrill. Watching your mate mature and grow is exciting. With love as the foundation and a Christian home as your goal—building can be one of life's greatest pleasures.

—Dick Mercear

How to Be Healthier and Better Looking

We have all had those times when we looked in the mirror and have been unimpressed with what we saw. So here are some simple tips to become much healthier and better looking.

Want to lose weight? Cast all your heavy cares and worries on the Lord (1 Peter 5:7; Matthew 11:28–30).

Want beautiful lips? Speak words of encouragement, kindness, and goodness (Hebrews 3:13; Ephesians 4:29; Proverbs 15:4).

Want gorgeous eyes? Look out for the interests of others, not just yourself (Philippians 2:4).

Want to improve your vision? Focus on the things that are eternal, not the things that are physical (2 Corinthians 4:16–18).

Want to hear better? Listen to the words of Christ and act on them (Romans 10:17; Matthew 7:24–27).

Want great hands? Consistently lift up holy hands to the Lord in prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 Timothy 2:8).

Want nice looking feet? Use them to bring the good news of Christ to others (Romans 10:15).

Want the most fashionable clothes? Clothe yourself with Christ through baptism (Galatians 3:27).

Need more exercise? Get up every day to "walk in the light" and run the spiritual race (1 John 1:7; Hebrews 12:1).

Need more strength? Then become strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might (Ephesians 6:10).

Want to smell amazing? Then become a sweet aroma and a fragrance of Christ to God and to others (2 Corinthians 2:15–16).

True beauty has little to do with physical looks and everything to do with our spiritual appearance to God. Don't focus only on the outward appearance, but also on inward beauty (Matthew 23:27). After all, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain" (Proverbs 31:30). Let's remember, "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

—Brent Petrillo, Denver Colorado



Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.

Bible Quiz

Send us your answers to receive a free Bible bookmark! We'll grade and return your questions and enclose the bookmark "Annual Bible Reading Chart" as a way of saying thanks for spending time in the Word (quantities may be limited).

Name:	
Address:	
City/State: _	
Phone:	

Questions taken from the King James Version

Answers to Last Issue

Up from the Grave He Arose: 1. Chief priests and Pharisees (Matthew 27:62–66); 2. To anoint Him with sweet spices (Mark 16:1); 3. Angel (Matthew 28:2); 4. Salome (Mark 16:1); 5. Angel (Matthew 28:5–6); 6. Risen, not (Matthew 28:6); 7. Fear and great joy (Matthew 28:8); 8. Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9); 9. Jesus (Matthew 28:9); 10. They didn't believe it (Mark 16:11); 11. They were given money (Matthew 28:11–15); 12. Galilee (Matthew 28:7); 13. Thomas (John 20:24–28); 14. The disciples (Mark 16:14); 15. All, earth (Matthew 28:18); 16. All, gospel (Mark 16:15); 17. Teach, baptizing (Matthew 28:19); 18. All (Matthew 28:20); 19. At the right hand of God (Mark 16:19).

Rich Man, Poor Man

Directions: Find your answers in Luke 16:19–31.

- What color clothes did the rich man wear?
- How many times a year did the rich man "fare sumptuously"?
- 3. How did Lazarus make a living? _
- 4. What two physical problems did Lazarus have?
- 5. What did Lazarus hope to eat?
- 6. What animals are mentioned in Jesus' teaching about the Rich Man and Lazarus?
- 7. Which man in this story died first?
- 8. Where was Lazarus taken after his death?
- 9. Who escorted Lazarus after death?
- 10. Was the rich man conscious after death?
- 11. Where was the rich man after his burial?

- 12. What two men did the rich man see in the distance?
- 13. Who did the rich man hope could come visit him?
- 14. What did the rich man hope this man would be able to bring him? _____
- 15. The rich man said he was tormented "in this _____."
- 16. What was there between the two places that made it impossible to pass through?
- 17. How many brothers did the rich man have? _____
- 18. Who did he hope might visit his brothers and warn to change before it was too late?
- 19. According to Luke 16:30, the rich man hoped his brothers would do what before death?
- 20. Abraham said that the Word of God (Moses and the Prophets) was just as convincing as what miracle would be?

COMEUP to the STANDARD

Lance Foster tells the story of Confederate troops taking fire from entrenched Union forces on a hill above their position down in a valley. A Confederate officer decided his troops must get out of the valley and take the hill to win the day, so he encouraged his soldiers to take the hill.

The troops were hesitant, so he took the flag in hand and began a wild ride up the hill calling out, "Rally around the flag,

men!" Bullets were flying, black smoke was everywhere, but he made it to the top of the hill. Then he looked around. None of his men were with him.

Holding the flag aloft, he called to the men below, "Come on up to the standard, men. Come up to the standard."

A few seconds passed. Silence. Then a faint voice answered, "Sir, bring the standard back down to us."

"Learn of me."

MATTHEW 11:29

God has a standard for us, and He has brought it down to us in the form of the Bible. Yet it is not lowered from one generation to another to fit changing cultures. All men shall be judged by it (John 12:48; Romans 2:16; Revelation 20:12).

God is calling out for us to come up to His standard.

Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.

Recommended Resource



The Gospel Broadcasting Network is unique in the world of religious TV—commercial free, and they never ask for money! Sponsored by the churches of Christ, GBN is available on many cable systems as well as through their smartphone apps, the Roku device, and at **gbntv.org.**

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More subjects:



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Eight Reasons I Want to Go to Heaven



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How



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Anony-

mous



The Birds and Bees of The Gospel

The

Discipline

of Children



They Saw Him Alive



I Want to Look Upon His Face

Don't see the topic you need? Visit **www.housetohouse.com** for more subjects.

VOLUME 21:6





"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight" (Acts 20:7).

Note the time: the first day of the week. Note the purpose: to break bread (the Lord's supper, 1 Corinthians 10:16–17; 11:17–34).

Sunday was quickly established as a meeting day for Christians, a day in which they partook of the Lord's supper. And is it any wonder? This was the day of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead! The day when Jesus was declared to be the Son of God (Romans 1:4). The day when he met with his disciples. John not only tells about the Sunday resurrection day, but also another such meeting with his disciples on the very next Sunday (John 20:1, 19, 26). Sunday came to have such special significance that John referred to it as "the Lord's day" (Revelation 1:10).

That is not to say that Christians did not meet together at other times. They did. Even daily (Acts 2:46). But the first day of the week was special—a day when they "gathered together to break bread" (to keep the Lord's supper).

Some contend, based on Acts 2:46 ("They, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart"), that early Christians partook of communion every day. Read another translation: "Day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts." Does that sound like the Lord's supper to you? In this context it hardly seems like the same kind of "breaking bread" we read about in Acts 2:42.

Scripture and history combine in teaching that Christians met on Sunday to partake of the Lord's supper.

Will you be present this Lord's day to break bread with the saints? —John Gipson

We See Jesus

Hebrews 2:9

We see His sacrifice: what He gave up (Philippians 2:8; cf. 2 Corinthians 8:9). We see His suffering: what He went through (1 Peter 2:21–24; Romans 5:1). We see His success: what He now enjoys (Hebrews 10:12–14; Philippians 2:9–11). We see His salvation: what we may enjoy (Romans 6:1–4; cf. 2 Timothy 2:10).

—Mark Posey

Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus.

HEBREWS 12:1-2



What to Expect on Your First Visit

A warm welcome, but not a twenty-question interrogation. We know the value of low-key.

A simple service—no showy production—just ordinary people offering God sincere worship.

Communion with the Lord. We take the Lord's supper every Sunday, as the early church did (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11). It's spiritual and meaningful.

A Bible sermon. Bring your Bible to follow along (Acts 17:11). Feel free to take notes and ask questions of the preacher after the service.

Gospel singing. No choir will perform, but the whole congregation forms an acapella "choir" presenting songs of praise from our hearts to God. You are invited to join in if you know the songs.

An emphasis on people instead of money. Our members give financially each Sunday, but our guests are not expected to contribute. Simply pass the plate on down the row without feeling like you should have put something in. We are interested in you, not your money.

Free study materials. Not only do we not want your money, we will give you free tracts and other materials for your continuing study of the Word. —Allen Webster

"Come and see."

JOHN 1:39





Please recycle House to House by giving this copy to your family or friends.

6/16