

HOUSE to HOUSE
HEART to HEART

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House to House Heart to Heart

VOLUME 22 NUMBER 1

I'm looking for a church That Is Not So Negative

Allen Webster



There is a lot of negativity in our world. The daily news cycle feeds on the scandals, crimes, and suffering dredged up from across the world. The dog-eat-dog business world wears a person down. Bills pile up, health declines. Our sports, political, religious, and entertainment heroes sometimes disappoint us. Everybody works with a “Negative Nancy” or knows a “Debbie Downer,” and a few people live with a “Glass-Half-Empty Gary.”

Is it any wonder people are looking for a positive message on Sundays? The church is the right place to look.

THE CHURCH PREACHES GOOD NEWS

At the core, the New Testament church proclaims good news, a message that brings hope, help, strength, and joy. The gospel is, by definition, “good news” (*euangelion*, 1 Corinthians 15:1–4). God instructed His ministers to “exhort” His people (2 Timothy 4:2), which literally means “to call to one’s side for a word of encouragement.”

God wants people to possess hope, peace, acceptance, and courage. While the negative is useful, it is rarely helpful to

leave that as the last word. To quote William Clark upon finally seeing the Pacific Ocean,¹ “Oh the joy” of serving God!

- To tired people, Jesus says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).
- To those burdened by sin and life’s hardships, He promises, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).
- To those who are troubled, we have a good word: “To you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels . . . when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day” (2 Thessalonians 1:7–10).
- Those feeling lost are shown the way to “the way” (John 14:6).
- Those who feel guilty hear, “There is therefore now no condemnation to

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them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1; cf. John 5:24).

- Those who fear death are assured, “the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality . . . then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:52–57).
- To those who fear that God has abandoned them, the message is, “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful . . . For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever” (Psalm 37:25–28). To those who feel that God is angry with them, there is a comforting word: “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).
- To those who feel God is inaccessible, we say, “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2).

Yes, the gospel is good news!

THE CHURCH ENCOURAGES POSITIVE PERSONAL CHANGE

All men have sins and struggles, addictions and habits, mistakes and regrets (1 John 5:19). They long to rise above and be set free. This classic negative-to-positive form of gospel preaching connects with people. It first shows the sin of man and then follows with the solution of Christ.

There is a land of beginning again. If Jesus were on earth today, He would still offer hope to sinners. He is not, but His church is. It speaks for Him to the hopeless in our communities, saying, “You can start over.” It speaks to those faithful Christians who doubt their salvation and eternal reward, explaining that they have reason to be filled with hope. Preachers are modern day “Barnabases.” Barnabas was nicknamed brother “Encouragement” (cf. Acts 4:36), and we can hardly picture him without a smile on his face. What would it have been like to hear Barnabas preach? “Go, and do thou likewise.”

Two brothers lived on adjoining farms for nearly forty years. After farming side by side, sharing machinery, and trading labor and goods as needed without a hitch, the long collaboration fell apart. It began with a small misunderstanding, grew into a major conflict, and exploded into bitter words followed by silence.

One morning there was a knock on the older brother’s door. John opened it to find a man with a carpenter’s toolbox. “I’m looking for work,” he said. “Do you have any small jobs I could do?”

“Yes,” said John, “I do have a job for you. Look across the creek at that farm. That’s my younger brother’s. Last week there was a meadow between us, but he took his bulldozer to the river levee and now there is a creek between us. He did it to spite me, but I’ll go him one better. See that pile of lumber by the barn? I want you to build a fence—an eight-foot fence—so I won’t need to see his place or his face anymore.”

The carpenter replied, “I think I understand. Show me the nails and the post hole digger and I’ll do a job that pleases you.” John got the materials and left for the day. The carpenter worked hard all day measuring, sawing, and nailing. About sunset John returned, just as the carpenter finished. John’s eyes opened wide and his jaw dropped, for there was no fence at all. Instead there was a bridge stretching from one side of the creek to the other!

Just then his brother, Sam, was coming across the bridge with his hand outstretched. “You are quite a man to build this bridge after all I’ve said and done.” The two brothers met in the middle of the bridge, taking each other’s hand. They talked and talked.

Finally, they noticed the carpenter hoist his box. “No, wait!” said John. “Stay a few days. I have other projects for you.”

“I’d love to stay on,” the carpenter said, “but I have many more bridges to build.” Like him, the church has many bridges left to build and lives to change for the better.

THE CHURCH SHOWS HOW TO LIVE A MEANINGFUL LIFE

The world is shallow; its diversions are void of long-term meaning. Life is short and people want to understand how to best use their days to make a lasting difference. They don’t want to be pulled down into the selfish, dark life that they see in our culture.

National Geographic wrote of a spider that lives in water but is not a part of water. It creates a bubble house under water with an air tube that runs to the surface. That’s how Christians live—in the world, but not of the world, and with a connection to heaven.

Endnotes:

¹ On the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery Journey (or at least what he thought was the Pacific)

Perfect Love

Someone wrote the following description of true love:

Slow to suspect—quick to trust,
Slow to condemn—quick to justify,
Slow to offend—quick to defend,
Slow to expose—quick to shield,
Slow to reprimand—quick to forbear,
Slow to belittle—quick to appreciate,
Slow to demand—quick to give,
Slow to provoke—quick to conciliate,
Slow to hinder—quick to help,
Slow to resent—quick to forgive.

No doubt, this description reminds us of the one given by Paul in 1 Corinthians: “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” (1 Corinthians 13:4–7).

“The greatest of these is love.”

1 CORINTHIANS 13:13

Is This the Place?

If this is not a place where tears are understood—
Where do I go to cry?
If this is not a place where my spirit can take wing—
Where do I go to fly?
If this is not a place where my questions can be asked—
Where do I go to seek?
If this is not a place where my feelings can be heard—
Where do I go to speak?
If this is not a place where you accept me as I am—
Where do I go to be?
If this is not a place where I try and learn and grow—
Where do I go to be me?

—Ken Medema

“Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest”

MATTHEW 11:28





Little Children

Little ears are listening;
Little minds run wild;
Trying to be like Mom or Dad,
Comes natural for a child.

They want to do the things you do,
And say the things you say;
They're watching and they're listening,
Even while they play!

So Mom and Dad, be very sure,
You're always watching too;
To say and do the things that you
Would have your children do.

—Lalna Owens

"Let your light so shine"

MATTHEW 5:16

Say It with Flowers

A man can let his wife know he loves her by giving her a dozen long-stemmed roses; his grandson can do the same with a fistful of dandelions.

An Honest Prayer

A little boy was overheard praying:
"Lord, if you can't make me a better boy, don't worry about it.
I'm having a real good time like I am."

"A merry heart doeth good"

PROVERBS 17:22

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



My Daddy Is Here

David Elkind, the famous child psychologist and author of the best-selling *The Hurried Child*, tells this true story about his role as a parent:

I remember visiting my middle son's nursery school class, at the request of his teacher, so that I could observe a "problem child" in the class. It so happened that I was sitting and observing a group of boys, including my son, who sat in a circle nearby.

Their conversation went like this:

Child A: "My daddy is a doctor, and he makes a lot of money, and we have a swimming pool."

Child B: "My daddy is a lawyer, and he flies to Washington and talks to the president."

Child C: "My daddy owns a company, and we have our own airplane."

Then my son (with aplomb, of course): "My daddy is here."

The most important thing about loving someone is being there for them. And "being there" often literally means being there. No matter what, God will always "be there" for you.

—Glenn Hitchcock, Warner Robins, Georgia

*"I will both lay me down in peace,
and sleep: for thou, Lord, only
makest me dwell in safety."*

PSALM 4:8

One Last Chance

A man never opened the car door for his wife or any other woman. He felt it was a sissy, Emily Post kind of thing to do. "Besides," he was fond of saying, "she doesn't have two broken arms."

After many years of marriage, his wife died and he was heartbroken because he truly loved her. Somehow, as the pallbearers brought her casket out of the funeral service, he and his family reached the hearse in front of them.

The funeral director was back a few feet, so he called him by name and said, "Open the door for her, will you?" The man reached for the door handle and then, for one second, froze.

He realized he had never opened a car door for her in life. In death would be

the first and only time. Years of regret came crashing down.

Lesson: If you love someone—tell them now. If there is a kind deed you can do—do it now. There will be a time when all our tomorrows are yesterdays, and there will be no more chances to do the little things to show our love.

—Randall J. Medlin



I'm the lady in charge of the chicken . . .

Christian Herter was the governor of Massachusetts in the 1950s. One day, after a busy morning chasing votes and going without lunch, he arrived at an evening barbecue. Herter was famished.

As he moved down the serving line, he held out his plate to the woman serving the chicken. She put a piece on his plate and turned to the next person in line:

“Excuse me,” Governor Herter said, “do you mind if I have another piece?”

“Sorry,” she told him. “I’m only allowed to give one piece to each person.”

“But I’m starved,” the governor said.

“Sorry. Only one per person.”

Governor Herter was usually an unassuming man, but this time he decided to throw a little weight around. “Do you know who I am?” he said. “I am the governor of this state.”

“Do you know who I am?” the woman replied. “I’m the lady in charge of the chicken. Move along, mister.”

Authority is a funny thing. Christian Herter was a man of authority, but the chicken lady showed him just how far his authority reached. No matter how much authority we think we possess, there is only so much we truly have authority over in this life.

In Jesus’ time, the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and chief priests were viewed as people of authority, but Jesus showed His authority was greater (Matthew 23). In a conversation with a man of great authority, Pilate, Jesus said, “Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above” (John 19:11).

We will always be limited, but Christ is not. Throughout the Bible, He is shown to be God in the flesh:

- Jesus taught with authority (Matthew 7:29; Mark 1:22, 27; Luke 4:32, 36).
- Jesus had authority to forgive sins (Matthew 9:6; Mark 2:10; Luke 5:24).



- Jesus had the authority to “execute judgment” (John 5:27).
- Jesus gave authority to others (Matthew 10:1; Mark 3:14–15; 6:7; Luke 9:1).
- Jesus has “all authority” (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 2:10).
- At the end of time we will be judged by Jesus’ authority (John 12:48).

There are some incredibly powerful figures in our world, but their authority at most reaches within this life alone. God is the ultimate authority. We should look to Him for the standard in salvation, worship, family, and even for social and political issues (2 Peter 1:3). No matter what happens in this life, make sure God is your ultimate authority.

—Brett Petrillo, Denver, Colorado

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

Bible Quiz

VOLUME 22:1

Send us your answers to receive a free Bible bookmark! We’ll grade and return your questions and enclose the bookmark “Hebrews 11: Faith’s Hall of Fame” 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

Rich Man, Poor Man: 1. Purple (Luke 16:19); 2. Every day (365) (16:19); 3. Beggar (16:20); 4. Sores, unable to walk (16:20); 5. Crumbs from rich man’s table (16:21); 6. Dogs (16:21); 7. Lazarus (16:22); 8. Abraham’s bosom (16:22); 9. Angels (16:22); 10. Yes (16:23–31); 11. Hell/torment (Hades) (16:23); 12. Abraham, Lazarus (16:23); 13. Lazarus (16:24); 14. Water (16:24); 15. Flame (16:24); 16. Great gulf (16:26); 17. Five (16:28); 18. Lazarus (16:24, 27); 19. Repent (16:30); 20. A visit from someone raised from the dead (16:30–31).

What’s Her Name?

Directions: Find your answers in Genesis 15:2; 24:15–19; 30:14; 31:19; 36:12; 38:12–15; Numbers 26:59; Joshua 2:1–6, 18; Judges 4:18–21; 16:18; 1 Kings 18:4; 1 Samuel 1:20; 2:18–21; 18:27; 25:18; 2 Chronicles 23; Luke 1:5, 14; Acts 16:12–14; 1 Timothy 2:9–10; 5:9, 14.

1. What wicked queen has become synonymous with a treacherous woman? _____
2. What did Abigail give David to apologize for her husband’s behavior? _____
3. What was the name of David’s first wife? _____
4. According to Paul, how should women make themselves attractive? _____
5. At what age should a widow be considered for the church’s financial support? _____
6. What did Paul instruct younger women (widows) to do? _____
7. What priest organized the overthrow of Queen Athaliah? _____
8. What is the name of the concubine of Esau’s son Eliphaz? _____
9. Near what city was Lydia converted? _____
10. What objects did Rachel steal from her father Laban before fleeing with Jacob? _____
11. What kind of plant did Rachel ask Leah to give her to increase her fertility? _____
12. What was the sign not to slay the people in Rahab’s house? _____
13. Who was Elizabeth’s father? _____
14. Who posed as a prostitute so that she could meet with her father-in-law? _____
15. Who offered to water Eliezer’s camels at the well? _____
16. What woman got Samson to divulge the source of his strength? _____
17. Who was the mother of Moses? _____
18. Who drove a tent peg through the skull of Sisera? _____
19. Who hid two spies on her roof? _____
20. Who made her son a coat each year and took it to him? _____

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A 3x4 FENCE

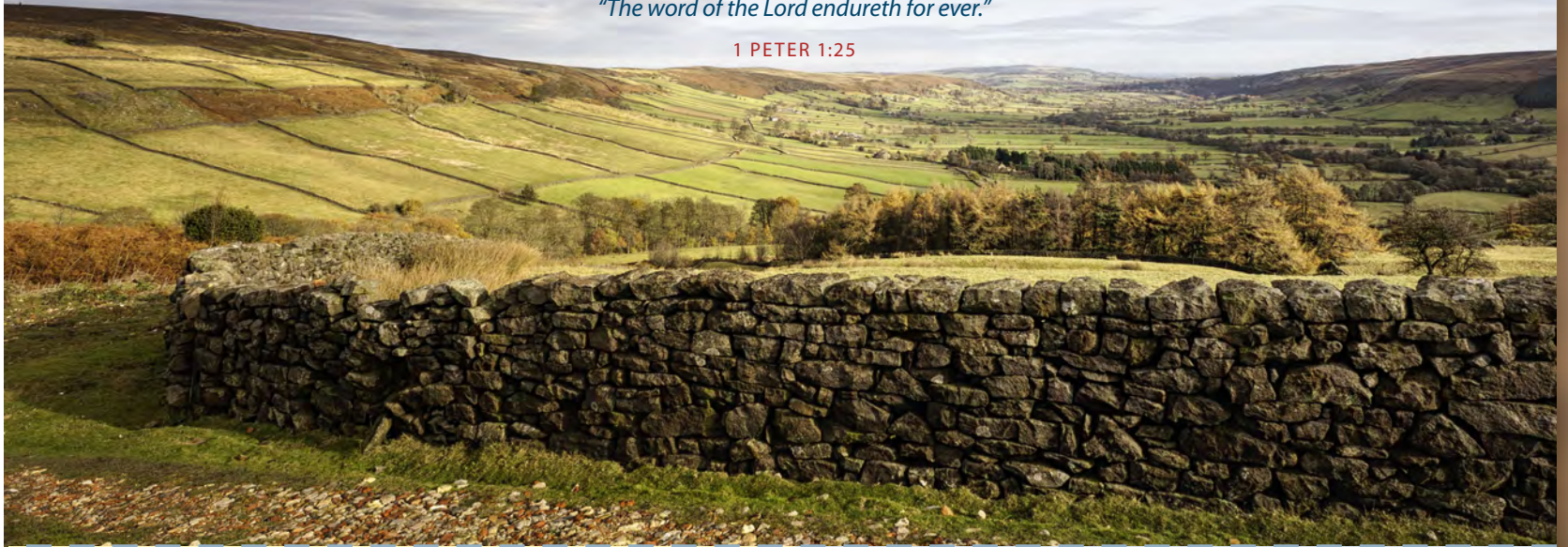
A person might as well put his shoulder to the burning sun and seek to stop it on its flaming course as to seek to destroy and stop the circulation of the Word of God.

The Bible is like the Irishman who had trouble with his neighbor knocking his fence over. He built a wall four feet wide and three feet tall. When asked why he had built such a wall, he replied, "When they knock this wall over, it will be just that much higher."

G. C. Brewer said, "When all kingdoms set up by men have utterly failed and their foundations have crumbled to dust and their glories have become subjects to ridicule, when day and night shall be no more, the moon ceases to wax and wane, the sea shall flow and ebb no more, when earth and the heavens shall have been shaken and have passed away with a great noise, the word of God shall stand imperishable, immovable, and unshaken!" —Wendell Winkler

"The word of the Lord endureth for ever."

1 PETER 1:25



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.

I want to learn more about the Bible!

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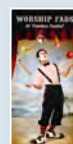
An In-Home Bible Study

New Tracts!

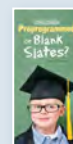
- How Did We Get So Many Churches?
- What Is Happening to America?
- Never Make These Excuses to God
- I Would Go to Church but All They Want Is Money



More subjects:



Worship Fads or Timeless Truths?



Children: Preprogrammed or Blank Slates



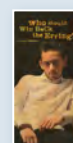
Mary and Jesus at a Party



Our Alligiance to God Should Show on Sundays



Understanding Children



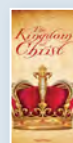
Who Should Win Back the Erring?



I Need the Prayers of Those Who Love Me



Is the Kingdom the Same as the Church



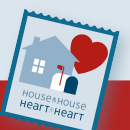
Kingdom of Christ



Don't Fall

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VOLUME 22:1



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5 THINGS THE GOSPEL CANNOT DO

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Man's true hope of going to heaven through Jesus is revealed in the gospel. Yet there are some things the gospel cannot do.

The gospel cannot save a person who is determined to live in rebellion against God.

The gospel has the power to make believers and save obedient believers (Romans 1:16–17), but it cannot save those who will not repent of their past sins and submit to God's word.

The gospel cannot help a troubled marriage as long as both spouses refuse to hear and heed what the gospel says.

The New Testament has specific, helpful instructions for every wife and every husband (Ephesians 5:22–33). When such teaching is carried out properly, marriages will not only survive, they will also bloom. But as long as neither spouse is willing to do things God's way, the gospel cannot help their situation.

The gospel cannot do the work of the church.

The gospel does not preach itself (Mark 16:15). The gospel itself cannot feed the needy. God's gospel can motivate Christians to be compassionate, but His children must step up and share their bounty. The gospel contains com-

plete instructions that can strengthen and equip the church, but the gospel itself cannot take what Christians have learned and teach it to others so that they too can teach (2 Timothy 2:2).

The gospel cannot serve as a substitute for prayer.

The same Savior that tells us to preach the gospel also tells us to pray (Luke 18:1). The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write that the gospel is God's power unto salvation (Romans 1:16), but He also led that same apostle to pray for opportunities to preach the gospel (Colossians 4:2–3). We live the gospel, teach the gospel, and defend the gospel, but we still bring our petitions and thanksgiving before our heavenly Father in prayer (Philippians 4:6–7). The gospel is great, but it cannot take away the need to pray.

The gospel cannot take the place of faith.

"We have the gospel. What else could we need?" It is true that faith comes by hearing God's word (Romans 10:17). It is equally true that the word of God can build us up and give us an inheritance among the sanctified (Acts 20:32). However, we must not be deceived into thinking, "Hey, we have the gospel, so why do we need to have faith?"

Faith is man's proper response to the gospel message. The faith that pleases God is the faith that acts by love (Galatians 5:6). There is no benefit or consolation in having several copies of the Bible in our house if we are not going to put its teaching to use in our lives. It is still true that "without faith it is impossible to please" God (Hebrews 11:6) and "the just shall live by faith" (Hebrews 10:38).

I am so thankful that precious people taught me the gospel. I thank God for the power of the gospel to change people's lives and people's eternal destiny. But there are some things that even the gospel of the Lord Jesus cannot do.

—Roger Campbell

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

An Unwanted Mansion

The state of Idaho has discovered that it is easier to take a mansion than it is to give it back, reports John Miller.

The hilltop mansion was built by J. R. Simplot, potato magnate who became a billionaire by building a corporation that supplied McDonald's with its golden French fries. Simplot, who died in 2008 at age 99, gave the mansion to the state of Idaho in 2004. The mansion was given to the state to serve as a residence for the governor of Idaho. But the current governor doesn't want to live in it.

The majority of people recommended returning it to the Simplot family, but the family doesn't want it.

Meanwhile, the state of Idaho is spending thousands of dollars to maintain the empty mansion. Imagine—an unwanted mansion!

There is a "mansion" that is infinitely better than the Simplot mansion, one that everyone should want to inherit, not only because of its beauty but also because of the One who has made it possible for each of us to inherit it.

Jesus Christ, God's Son, once comforted His troubled disciples with these words: "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2).

Do you want your mansion?

—David Sargeant (adapted)



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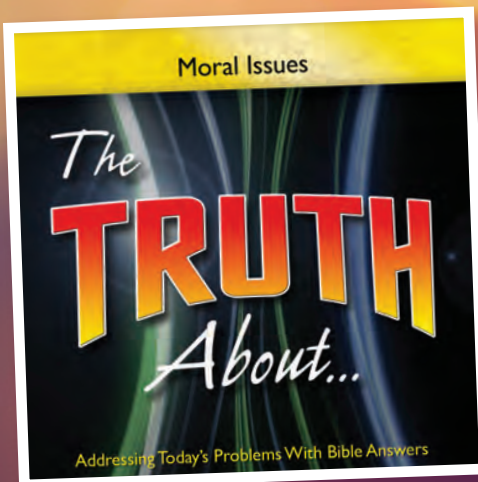
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