

HOUSE TO HOUSE

Heart to Heart



“... from house to house... with gladness and singleness of heart...” (Acts 2:46).

Volume 10, Number 2

A publication of the... churches of CHRIST

Founder: Christ – Mt. 16:18

Place: Jerusalem – Isa. 2:1-3, Acts 2:5

Time: A.D. 33 – Dan. 2:44, Acts 2

Head: Christ – Eph. 1:22

Organization:

Christ as head – Eph. 5:23

Elders oversee local church –

Heb. 13:17, Titus 1:5

Deacons as servants –

Acts 6:1-6, 1 Tim. 3:8-13

Members compose body –

Col. 1:2

Name (group):

Church of God – Eph. 3:15

Body of Christ – Eph. 1:22-23

Churches of Christ – Rm. 16:16

Bride of Christ – Rm. 7:4

Name (individuals):

Disciples – John 15:8

Saints – Rm. 1:7

Brethren – Lk. 8:21

Children of God – Gal. 4:26

Christian – Acts 11:25-26

Creed: Jesus/Bible – Acts 8:37

Rule of Faith & Practice:

Word of God – 2 Tim. 3:16-17

Worship: Jn. 4:24

Sing – Eph. 5:19

Pray – Acts 2:42; 1 Thes. 5:17

Teach – Acts 5:42

Communion – 1 Cor. 1:23-26

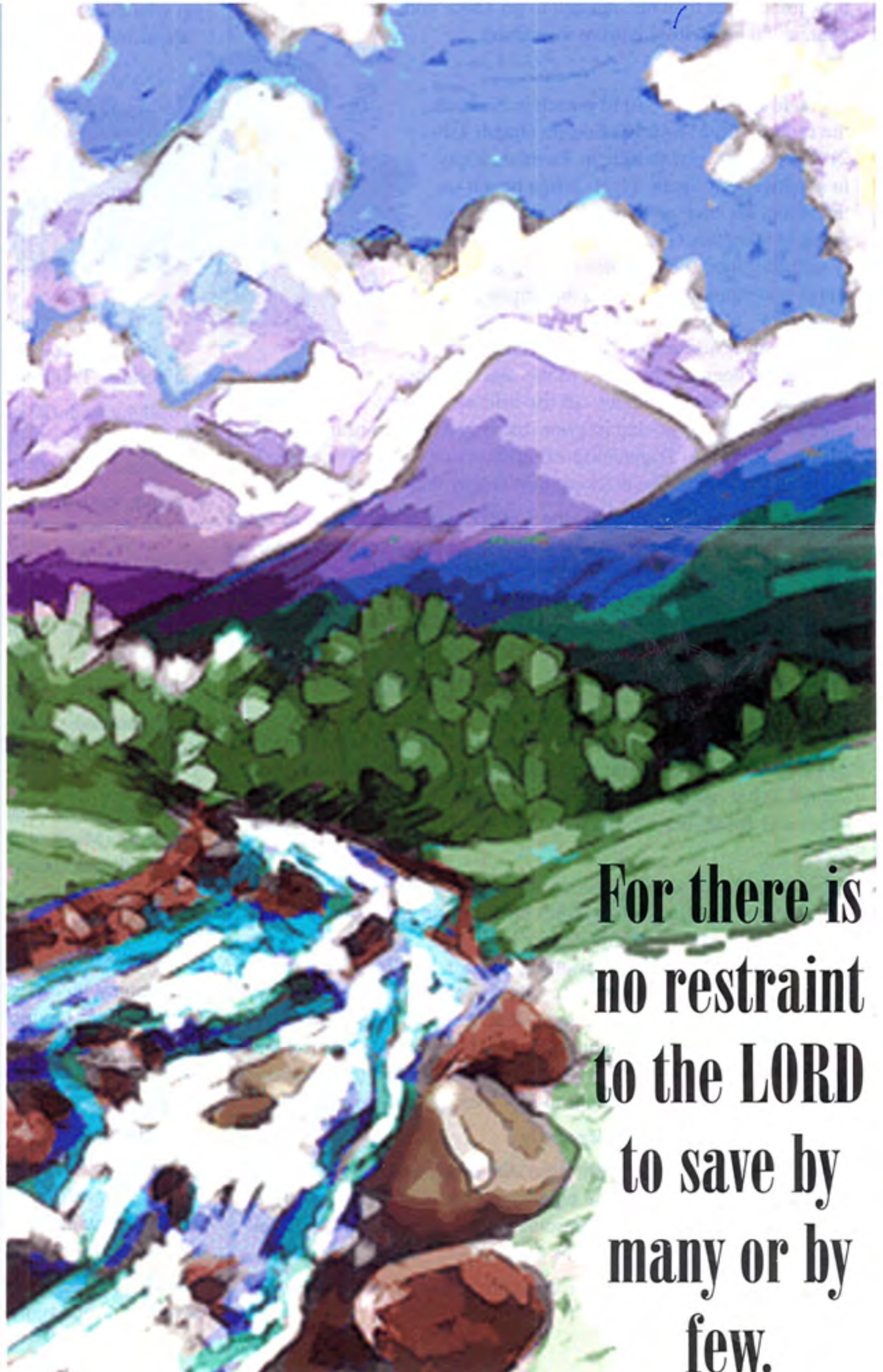
Contribute – 1 Cor. 16:1-2

Mission: Save Souls – 1 Tim. 4:16

Warning: Be Faithful – 2 John 9

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For there is
no restraint
to the LORD
to save by
many or by
few.

Sin's Fish Story

—For Teens—

Allen Webster

This one is true. True, but sad.

The prodigal boy's itinerary listed "far country" and maybe under that, "beaches, bars, and brothels." He probably never read the very fine print that had "pig farm" (Luke 15:11-32). His "summer trip" took him farther than he intended to go. Once you board sin's boat, it can be awfully hard to disembark.

Ask Jonah.

God told Jonah to go *east* to preach in Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire (Jonah 1:1-2). Jonah went *west* to hide in Tarshish, a city in southwestern Spain (1:3). When he got on that boat, he had no idea how far sin was going to take him. God sent a storm and nearly sank the ship. The mariners discovered that Jonah was running from God and threw him overboard. Stop and think. What was that like? Jonah described it, "For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me" (2:3). Drowning is a horrible way to die; to nearly drown is one of the most frightening experiences one can have. Why is Jonah in the water? Sin is taking him farther than he wanted to go.

Instead of drowning, though, the LORD sent a great fish to eat Jonah (1:17). Imagine what it felt like to be eaten by a fish! Why are you in the fish, Jonah? Sin. Down he went to the sea bottom (2:6). Why are you there, Jonah? Sin. For seventy-two hours Jonah was in a fish's digestive system! What did it feel like? What did it *smell* like? "The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head" (2:5).

Finally God decided class was over and had the fish vomit (God's word, 2:10) Jonah out onto land. What did it feel like to be human vomit? What made Jonah the only person ever to find out? Sin. What did Jonah learn? Sin will take you farther than you want to go.

What does Jonah teach us about taking a trip into sin? *First, it is easy to book passage.* Jonah didn't have to wait for a ship going to Tarshish—the devil had it ready for him (1:3). Satan keeps "boats at the dock" for anybody wanting to sail to "Tarshish" (cf. 2 Corinthians 2:11; 1 Peter 5:8). Sin always lies "at the door" (Genesis 4:7). It is a wide gate that leads to the broad road (Matthew 7:13). If you remain true to God, it won't be because you lacked opportunities to sin; it will be because you had the backbone to say "no" to sin and had faith to say "yes" to God—frequently.

What "boats" does Satan keep ready?

▶ Teens heading to "Tarshish" find that being underage is no real hindrance to buying beer or cigarettes—an older friend will get these items for them or an unscrupulous business man will sell them "under the table" (Proverbs 1:19).

▶ If they want to tell dirty jokes, there are plenty of people who will laugh (cf. Romans 1:32).

▶ If they want to go places and do things their parents forbid, they find that friends will lie to their parents for them (cf. Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 3:2).

▶ If they want to do drugs, it is not hard to find someone who can get whatever they want (for a price). It's so easy to find drugs that about twenty-five teens start using every hour of every day of every year in America.

▶ If teens want to start a sexual relationship, most don't have to look far to find a willing partner (Proverbs 9:14-16).

Second, sin is progressive. It's a slide down a slippery slope that goes down, down, down. We are told to "live it up"—that's a lie. The road into the "far country" is always downhill. Jonah went

"down" to Joppa, "down" into the ship (1:3) "down" into the sea, "down" into the fish's mouth, and "down" to the sea bottom. Think of sin's downward progression:

▶ Walking with the ungodly leads to standing with sinners; standing with sinners leads to sitting with the scornful (Psalm 1:1; Matthew 26:58, 69-75).

▶ Anger leads to violence; wrath leads to hatred; hatred leads to murder (Genesis 4:6, 8; Proverbs 27:3; Daniel 2:12; 1 John 3:1).

▶ Jealousy and envy lead to cruelty, slander, and vengeance (Proverbs 6:34; 27:4; Song of Solomon 8:6; Judges 19:29-30).

▶ Disobedience to parents leads to lying to parents (Romans 1:30; Ephesians 4:15; cf. Genesis 26:7; Colossians 3:9).

▶ One lie leads to more lies (cf. John 8:44).

▶ Covetousness leads to stealing and violence (Joshua 7:21; 1 Kings 21:1, 15; Micah 2:1-2; Mark 7:22; Ephesians 4:28; 2 Peter 2:3).

▶ R-rated movies lead to X-rated movies; soft-core porn leads to hard-core (Matthew 5:28; 1 Peter 2:11); pornography leads to rape and child molestation.

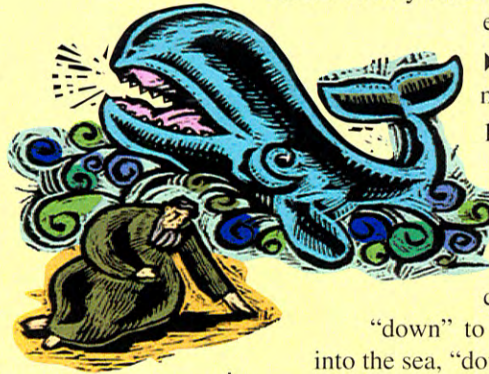
▶ Immodest dress and behavior lead to lust which leads to fornication (Matthew 5:28; 1 Timothy 6:18); dancing and petting lead to sexual sins (cf. Galatians 5:19-21).

▶ Unnatural thoughts lead to homosexuality (Romans 1:26-27; cf. Genesis 19:5; Leviticus 18:22; Judges 19:22; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10; Jude 7, 10); homosexuality may lead to pedophilia (child rape/molestation).

▶ Smoking cigarettes often leads to smoking marijuana (1 Corinthians 6:19-20); smoking marijuana leads to harder drugs (Romans 6:13).

Third, a sinful life is a turbulent life. Jonah found himself in a storm. It usually doesn't take long for teens who forsake Christ to find turmoil (Proverbs 4:19; 15:10; Jeremiah 2:19; Romans 6:21).

The Bible's fish story is true—just as true now as it was twenty-seven centuries ago.



THINK ON GOOD THINGS

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

Directions to His House

I would imagine many of you will put some time in on the road in coming weeks. Like me, you probably look at an atlas or the Internet to find the most direct route. A while back a friend sent me a set of directions to help me find my way. I thought you might find this interesting.

Directions to His House:

Make a Right turn onto "Believer's Blvd" (John 3:16). Go straight down the "Way of the Cross" (Hebrews 5:8-9), passing the mile markers of "repentance," "confession," and "baptism" (Luke 13:3, 5; Matthew 10:32; Acts 2:38). Go through the Green Light, which is Jesus Christ (John 14:6; Galatians 3:26-27).

From there, turn onto the "Shepherd's Path," which passes by green pastures and still waters (Psalm 23). Make a right turn and keep straight. You are on the "King's Highway"—Heaven-bound (1 Peter 1:4)!

Go a second mile, for that's where the most beautiful scenery is (Matthew 5:41). Exit off onto "Grace Blvd" (Ephesians 2:8-9). From there, make a right turn on "Gospel Lane" (1 Corinthians 15:1-3).

Keep straight. Then make another right on "Prayer Avenue." As you go on your way, yield not to the traffic on "Temptation Blvd." Also, avoid SIN STREET because it is a DEAD END.

Pass by "Envy Drive," "Lust Circle," and "Hate Avenue." Don't slow down as you pass "Hypocrisy Alley," "Gossiping Lane," and "Backbiting Blvd." These look like short cuts, but they'll get you lost.

Take the time for the scenic view and travel the "Path of Kindness," "Charity Trail," and "Joy's Corridor." You'll have to travel down "Long-suffering Lane," "Persecution Blvd," "Patience Pass," and "Tribulations Street" for part of the journey, but that's all right, because VICTORY LANE is straight ahead!

I hope to see you when we all get home, so drive safely!

—Josh Allen, Morristown, Tennessee

Lincoln Said ...



"We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God.

We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to God that made us!"

—Abraham Lincoln's Proclamation of 1863

The Power of Our Late Night Thoughts



What we think at any time is important (Proverbs 23:7), but it seems to me that our late night thoughts are fraught with particular significance because they "set our course" for the next day. If a person drifts off into sleep with prayerful thoughts about God, heaven, and serving the Lord, it cannot help but impact him for good come morning. But on the other hand, if one fills her head at late night with evil thoughts, it can only be productive of wicked pursuits in her daylight activities.

First, let us note the blessings of good late night thoughts: "Stand in awe, and sin not; commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord" (Psalm 4:4-5). Again, "My soul shall be satisfied . . . when I remember thee upon my bed and meditate upon thee in the night watches" (Psalm 63:5-6). Yes, "The thoughts of the righteous are right . . ." (Proverbs 12:5).

On the other hand, how spiritually destructive are the wrong kind of late night thoughts. Observe this warning from a prophet of old, "Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! When the morning is light, they practice it . . ." (Micah 2:1). The wicked man "deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good . . ." (Psalm 36:4). No wonder the Bible tells us, "the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 15:26).

The way we live our lives is determined by what we think. Solomon stated that what one "thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). Thus, we cannot over emphasize the importance of thinking good things, and especially at night upon our beds.

—Maxie Boren

"... whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" —Philippians 4:8

Questions God Won't Ask



- ▶ God won't ask the square footage of your house, but He will ask how many people you welcomed into your home.
- ▶ God won't ask about the clothes you had in your closet, but He will ask how many you helped to clothe.
- ▶ God won't ask what your highest salary was, but He will ask if you compromised your character to obtain it.
- ▶ God won't ask what your job title was, but He will ask if you performed your job to the best of your ability.
- ▶ God won't ask how many friends you had, but He will ask how you treated your friends.
- ▶ God won't ask about the color of your skin, but He will ask about the content of your character.

Good friends are hard to find, harder to leave, and impossible to forget.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad..." —2 Corinthians 5:10

Correction: The sentence, "It was a great inspiration, therefore, when the distinguished Christian Scientist, Dr. A.W. Dicus joined..." should have read "...when the distinguished Christian scientist, Dr. A.W. Dicus joined..." in the last issue. Dr. Dicus was a member of the church of Christ.

The

HOME PAGE

The Benefits of Kissing



Here's a bit of interesting news. An insurance company's study showed that husbands who receive a good morning kiss from their wives are often happier and more successful.

▶ Husbands who kiss their wives each morning before work usually live five years longer than those who do not.

▶ A kissing husband has fewer automobile accidents, loses up to fifty percent less time from work because of illness, and earns twenty to thirty percent more.

This study should remind us of Paul's exhortation, "Husbands, love your wives" (Ephesians 5:25). Expressing our love for our spouses, whether by a good morning kiss or by other kindnesses, will result in a happier marriage and a better life. Following God's instruction for marriage can make a bad marriage good and a good marriage better. —Tom Keener

"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine"

—Song of Solomon 1:2

... And Talking

In a Harvard study of several hundred preschoolers, researchers discovered an interesting phenomenon. As they taped children's playground conversation, they realized that the sounds coming from little girls' mouths were recognizable words. However, only 60 percent of little boys' sounds were words. The other 40 percent were yells and sound effects like "Vrrroooooom!" "Aaaaagh!" and "Toot toot!" This difference persists into adulthood.

Communication experts say the average woman speaks over 25,000 words a day, while the average man speaks only a little over 10,000. What does this mean in marital terms? An average wife says she needs to spend 45 minutes to an hour each day in meaningful conversation with her husband. What does the husband sitting next to her say? Fifteen to twenty minutes—once or twice a week!

"And Manoah said unto his wife . . . his wife said unto him..." —Judges 13:22-23

"Guy Things"

ABC's popular news show, 20/20, recently ran a segment on fathers. I was impressed with a little fellow who has never met his father, but wants to. The interviewer asked "What do you want to do with your father?" The boy's simple answer was "guy things."

We have a fatherhood crisis on our hands, and some observers predict dire consequences if we don't reverse it. One family life expert told ABC, "If we don't reverse the trend toward fatherlessness, we are going to be a nation in decline." I would like to think that's an exaggeration, but every time I look at the statistical data on the current status of fatherhood, I feel a little nauseated. Let me just share a few stats to illustrate:

- ▶ On any given night, 40 percent of children go to sleep without a father in the home.
- ▶ Twenty-seven percent (18 million) of American children grow up in a single-parent home. Of these, only one out of eight is headed by a father. (source: Stephen Sumerel, director of Family Life and Substance Abuse, North Carolina.)
- ▶ In the state of Louisiana, 32 percent of children live in poverty; 35 percent live in single parent homes.

Social critic John Leo worries that we may even be approaching a time when fathers are viewed as "troublesome, marginal, and essentially irrelevant inseminators." Daniel Blankenhorn, author of *Fatherless America*, laments the fact that the phrase "good family man" has almost disappeared from our language.

Children of both sexes need male role models, communication with males, and male instruction to become healthy adults. We all know single mothers who have done well in parenting their children (cf. 2 Timothy 1:5), but that's the exception rather than the rule. The Bible clearly makes fathers responsible for passing on spiritual instruction: "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

All four of my children live several hundred miles away, so we don't get together very often. When we are together, my boys and I talk about "guy things" and do "guy things." I'm still enjoying the afterglow of watching a minor league baseball game with my son and grandson. I have a precious granddaughter, but she and her mother had to leave early to enroll my granddaughter at Christian camp. My son and grandson stayed on for a few more days. We did a lot of "guy things." We went fishing, visited a military museum, took in the baseball game, and then threw all dignity to the winds and attended the stockcar races at our local dirt track.

What really impressed me the most, however, was the way my son and grandson interacted with each other. They played computer games together, laughed together, and sometimes you could see them just lying on their backs and talking with one another. A couple of days after they left, the two of them visited a Civil War battlefield together. Because they do "guy things," they also have open discussions about truth, values, and morality.

Girls also need fathers. Fathers provide a sense of security and strength during a girl's formative years. Fathers provide daughters with a role model when they look for a husband. For twenty-nine years, I've been the number one man in my only daughter's life. I'm getting ready to pass the baton to a young man who will reduce me in rank to number two. I'm having a little bit of emotional difficulty in accepting that role. A few days ago, she and I were talking about her upcoming marriage. She said, "Dad, I really have a lot of your qualities." In half-hearted attempt at humor, I said, "Unfortunately, you do." She said, "No, Dad. The best qualities I have, I got from you." Needless to say, Dad's buttons were about ready to pop off his shirt. At that moment, I really came to understand how important "guy things" are to daughters.

The television people found the father of the little boy who wanted to do "guy things" with his Dad. They showed him a videotape of their interview with the boy. His response? He said, "I'm not into parenting." Excuse me, but that's not going to cut it.

Hang in there, Dads. You play a vital role in the shaping of your children and ultimately in the shaping of society. —Norman Bates

"For I was my father's son . . ." —Proverbs 4:3

Ben Franklin said, "I'm an old man and the longer I live the more I'm convinced that God rules in the affairs of men. If a sparrow can't fall to the ground without His knowing it, can a nation (empire) rise without His aid?" (See Proverbs 14:34). —1776 Delegate Convention





Does it really matter what we do in worship if we are sincere?



It is common for religious people today to think that as long as they are sincere and enjoy or find meaningful what they are doing, they can do almost anything in worship. This has led to many innovations in worship, as people seek newer and more exciting worship. Modern man's fascination with new things is not necessarily in accord with God's will, however. Worship is of utmost importance to God, who has demonstrated how serious it is many times,

but perhaps no clearer than in the story of Nadab and Abihu.

Nadab and Abihu were the two oldest sons of Aaron, the first high priest of the Israelites as they made their way to the Promised Land. As sons of Aaron, they served as priests and went into the very presence of God. "Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: and they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness" (Exodus 24:9-10). They were leaders of Israelite worship and were in line to become the high priest upon Aaron's death, but they lost their lives because they trifled with worship (Numbers 3:4).

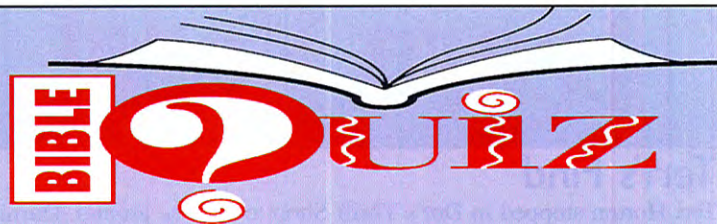
Moses described the death of Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10:1-2: "Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD." Nadab and Abihu died because they "offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not." They were priests, so they were the right people to lead the worship. They had their censers used in worship, so they had the right implements to offer worship. They burned incense, which was a proper thing to do in worship. They were there at the tabernacle, the right place for worship. They were the right people, with the right implements of worship, doing the right thing, in the right place, but doing all of this in the wrong way, so God destroyed them! Even their father Aaron realized they had disobeyed God. "Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace" (Leviticus 10:3).

Nadab and Abihu received instant punishment from God for disobeying Him by doing what He had not commanded. They were probably very sincere, but they displeased God. Jesus called the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites because they cared more about what they wanted in worship than what God wanted. He condemned them, saying, "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:7-9). If we add anything to our worship that God has not commanded, then we are offering the vain worship of disobedience.

—Bob Prichard, P. O. Box 3071, Oxford, AL 36203



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Send us your answers (address on front). We'll grade and return all entries and randomly select one to receive a Bible, New Testament cassettes, or Bible Dictionary.

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Questions Taken from the King James Version

Starts with the Letter "F"

Find answers in Genesis 1:6; 7:6; Exodus 24:18; Job 38:29; Proverbs 2:16; 9:10; Isaiah 38:21; Matthew 2:11; 3:8; 4:2, 18-21; 5:35; 7:5, 15; 10:29; 16:24; 25:1-13; John 8:36; 13:5; Acts 24:25; 1 Corinthians 6:18; Galatians 6:1, 8; Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 1:14; 1 Timothy 6:8; Hebrews 11:1; James 1:10; 2:23; 1 Peter 5:2; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 20:14-15 (not in order).

- _____ is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen.
- Beware of _____ prophets.
- The price of two sparrows _____
- Jesus _____ for forty days and nights before His temptation.
- A haughty spirit goes before a _____.
- Jesus is the _____ of the church.
- _____ must not provoke children to wrath.
- We are to restore one overtaken in a _____.
- The _____ of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.
- Jesus washed the disciples' _____
- _____ trembled at Paul's preaching but did not obey.
- If we walk in the light we have _____ with one another.
- Isaiah used a lump of _____ to heal Hezekiah.
- _____ was presented to the baby Jesus.
- God created a _____ in the midst of the waters.
- We are to _____ cast the beam out of our own eye.
- Some disciples were _____ before Christ called them.
- The immoral woman "_____ with her lips."
- If we sow to the _____ we reap corruption.
- Elders are to feed the _____ of God, taking oversight.
- God used a _____ to destroy the world in Noah's day.
- As a _____, the rich man shall fade away.
- Jesus said each must take up his cross and _____ Him.
- And having _____ and raiment let us be therewith content.
- Jesus told of five wise virgins and five _____ virgins.
- The earth is the Lord's _____.
- God made the ice and the "hoary _____ of heaven."
- In whom we have redemption . . . even the _____ of sins.
- He that committeth _____ sinneth against his own body.
- Moses was on Mt. Sinai for _____ days.
- Hell is described as a lake of _____.
- Hell is described as a _____ of fire.
- If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be _____ indeed.
- Abraham was called the _____ of God.
- Bring forth therefore _____ meet for repentance.



Answers to Last Issue:

Starts with the Letter "H": 1. Hair (2 Samuel 14:26); 2. Happy (Proverbs 16:20); 3. Hard (Proverbs 13:15); 4. Harlot (James 2:25); 5. Haughty (Proverbs 16:18); 6. Head (Ephesians 1:22); 7. Hearing (Romans 10:17); 8. Heart (Proverbs 4:23); 9. Heaven (1 Peter 1:4); 10. Hell (Psalm 9:17); 11. Helmet (Ephesians 6:17); 12. Help (Psalm 46:1); 13. High (Isaiah 6:1); 14. Holy (1 Peter 1:16); 15. Home (Titus 2:4); 16. Honey (Psalm 19:10); 17. Honor (Exodus 20:12); 18. Hope (Hebrews 6:11); 19. Hour (Matthew 24:36); 20. House (John 14:2); 21. Humble (James 4:10); 22. Hunger (Matthew 5:6); 23. Hunt (Proverbs 6:26); 24. Husband (Ephesians 5:25-28). *Love, Love, Love, Love*: long, kind, provoked, evil, truth (1 Corinthians 13:3-8).

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Teri's Find

Teri Horton stopped in Dot's Thrift Shop to browse around. During her junket, she stumbled across a bright abstract painting and decided that it might make a good gag gift for a disheartened friend. Teri shelled out \$5.00 for the 66-inch by 48-inch canvas and then lugged it home. Teri's friend, Theresa, got a big laugh out of the hideous present, but turned it down because it barely fit through her front door. Teri took it home again, but after a year decided it was taking up too much space and so she offered it to yet another friend who was an art professor.

The work turned out to be an authentic Jackson Pollock worth millions! Pollock (1912-1957) was a leader in the American expressionist movement of the 1940s. He employed large canvases and "painted" by pouring liquid pigment out of a can and dripping color with a brush.

No one knows for sure how the masterpiece ended up at the thrift store. Some think it may have been purchased at an estate sale in Southern California; others believe it may have simply been given away by Pollock's brother following his untimely death. In either case, "Untitled 1948" found its way to the little store near San Bernardino where it sat for years until Teri Horton happened along.

Imagine. A multi-million dollar design sold for only five bucks. The store owner had no idea what she possessed.

Maybe you've never thought about it before, but like Teri Horton, you have an incredible treasure in your home. It is bound in genuine calf skin, printed on thin rice paper, and written in black Indian ink. It is the holy (Jeremiah 23:9), inspired (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and infallible (Psalm 19:7) Word of God (Psalm 33:4). Splashed across its pages are the thoughts of the greatest author in the universe.

"How precious is the Book divine, by inspiration giv'n!
Bright as a lamp its precepts shine,
to guide my soul to heav'n. Holy Book divine!
Precious treasure mine!
Lamp to my feet and a light to my way to guide me safely home."

Have you read it?

—Mike Benson



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The Needle and the Thread

The Bible uses some interesting figures to represent Christians and their relationship to God: Vine and branches, clay and Sculptor, sheep and Shepherd. Another interesting metaphor came not from the Bible, but from an African convert. This young man prayed one evening, "O Lord, you are the needle and I am the thread." He had just visited a school where girls were learning to sew. He watched intently and noticed a simple principle: wherever the needle went, the thread followed. That, he decided, represented his relationship to God. If he would stay close to the Lord, praying, reading His Word, depending entirely upon Him and following Him, God would always lead him where he needed to go. He simply was the thread following the needle. God will guide if we will follow. We often sing the song, "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

"... Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest ..."
— Luke 9:57



The Only Opinion that Matters

Babe Ruth was at bat and Babe Pinelli was the umpire behind the plate. The first pitch was a swing and a miss, as was the second pitch. Babe Ruth dug in for the next pitch. The pitcher wound up and delivered, and Ruth didn't move. From behind the plate the umpire cried out, "Strike three!"

Ruth got in Pinelli's face and said, "There's 40,000 people here who know that last one was a ball, tomato

head." Pinelli took a look around the stadium, then responded to Ruth, "Maybe so, but mine is the only opinion that counts. The batter's out!"

—Jerry Sutton, *The Way Back Home*

No matter what we think, no matter what anyone in the world thinks —God's opinion is the only one that matters.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said ... but I say unto you ..."
—Matthew 5:43-44

Made Like Unto His Brethren

JOSEPH DAMIEN WAS a nineteenth-century missionary who ministered to people with leprosy on the island of Molokai, Hawaii.

Those suffering grew to love him and revered the sacrificial life he lived out before them. One morning before Damien was to lead daily worship, he was pouring some hot water into a cup when the water swirled out and fell onto his bare foot. It took him a moment to realize that he had not felt any sensation. Gripped by the sudden fear of what this could mean, he poured more hot water on the same spot. Again, there was no feeling whatsoever. Damien immediately knew what had happened. As he walked to deliver his sermon, no one at first noticed the difference in his opening line. He normally began every sermon with, "My fellow believers," but this morning he began with... "My fellow lepers."
—Ravi Zacharias

Damien could fully relate to the lepers because he became a leper. He knew personally the struggles that they faced. He could actually feel their pain. Jesus was made like us and therefore understands the hurts we experience.

"Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."
—Hebrews 2:17-18

Father, Forgive Them

The greatest sinners may, through Christ, hope to find mercy. Even for His persecutors and murderers, He prayed, "Father, forgive them." On the Day of Pentecost some of these very people were forgiven by this very God (Acts 2:22, 37, 38, 41).

Jesus' words of forgiveness were directed to the Roman soldiers who had beaten Him so badly that He could not carry His own cross to Calvary. Jesus had the power to stop those who beat, tortured, and crucified Him (John 10:17-19). Surely this Jesus who, with just the sound of His voice, took a dead man and made him alive, could take a live man and make him dead. But He did not punish them nor stop the proceedings. He allowed the soldiers to mock Him with a purple robe and a septre and a crown of thorns. He let them beat Him on the face while He was blindfolded and ask Him, "Prophecy! Who hit you?" (Luke 22:64).

Little did they know that He could tell them who hit Him. They beat Him; He blessed them. There was no blindfold when they nailed Him to the Cross. Jesus did not respond as others they had crucified. Others responded to crucifixion by either spewing vile profanity or weeping for pity. The soldiers thought Jesus' life was in their hands; they did not know He held their lives in His hands.

Jesus illustrated Mark Twain's definition of forgiveness: "Forgiveness is the fragrance that the flower leaves on the heel of the one who crushed it."

How could anyone reject such a Savior?

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" —Matthew 11:28



Three Steps to Heaven



Hell was not prepared for us (Matthew 25:41); rather heaven was (John 14:2-3)! Anyone who does the will of the Father can go there (Revelation 22:14). A journey to heaven really takes only three steps.

As we set our sights on the heavenly city, the first step we must make is the step **“out of self.”** Jesus told His disciples that if they would follow Him, it would require self-denial: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). Once a person has taken this step, God will be placed at the top of his or her priority list (Matthew 6:33).

The next step for one to take toward heaven is the step **“into Christ.”** He is “the way” to heaven (John 14:6), our only access to the Father (Romans 5:2). After the first step, this one is natural, but it is not completed until one has heard the Gospel (Romans 10:17), believed in Jesus (John 8:24), repented of all sin (Luke 13:3, 5), confessed Christ’s name (Romans 10:10), and been baptized to have all sin washed away (Acts 22:16). Then, one must remain faithful to God until death (Revelation 2:10) to be ready to take the final step.

The last step on the journey to heaven is the step **“into glory.”** Paul said, “that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption” (1 Corinthians 15:50). In this step, we will be transformed from physical beings into spiritual ones. This will happen either upon our physical death or the return of Christ. Then there will be a judgment (Hebrews 9:27). What a scene it will be! All nations will be gathered together and then separated. The righteous will be set on the Shepherd’s right hand, and the unrighteous on His left hand. For the disobedient it will be a terrible day. They will be sent away to everlasting punishment. For those who have taken the correct steps it will be a great day! They shall inherit the kingdom that was prepared for them (Matthew 25:31-46).

If you want to go to heaven, then remember the three steps that will get you there.

—adapted from Darrell Powell