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House to House Heart to Heart

VOLUME 18 NUMBER 1

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

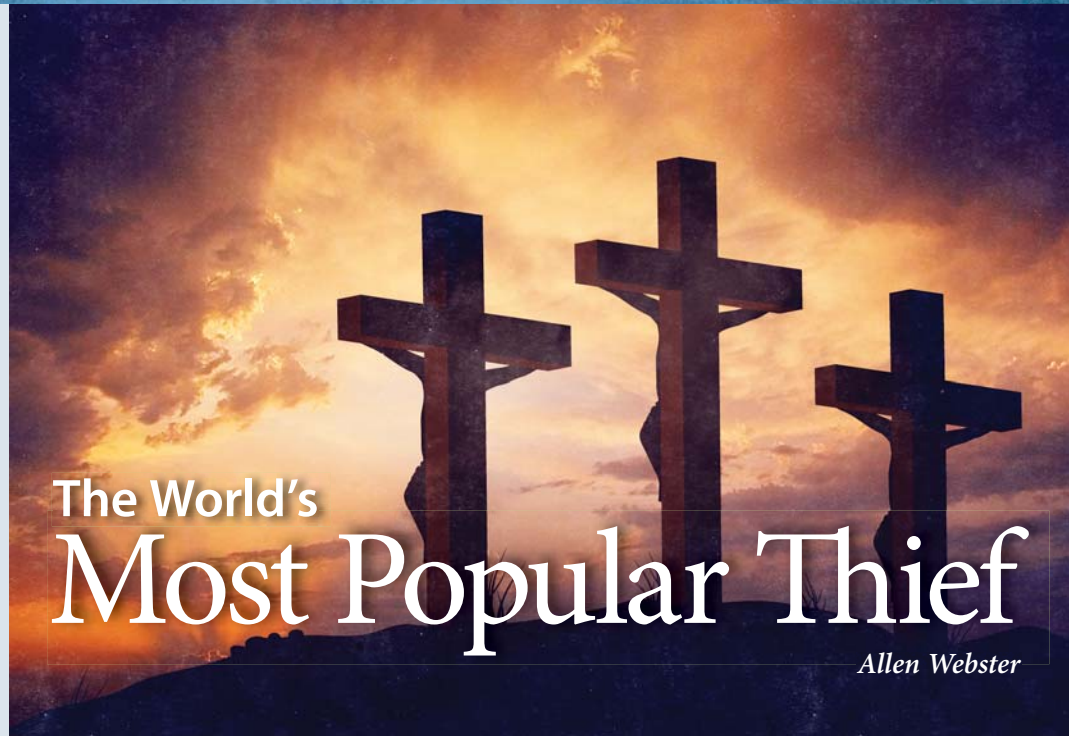
Contribute – 1 Cor. 16:1-2

Mission: Save Souls – 1 Tim. 4:16

Warning: Be Faithful – 2 John 9

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The World's Most Popular Thief

Allen Webster

History's most popular thief is the one who died on a cross beside Jesus. He is one of the best-known characters in the Bible, although he is mentioned in only three of its 1,189 chapters.

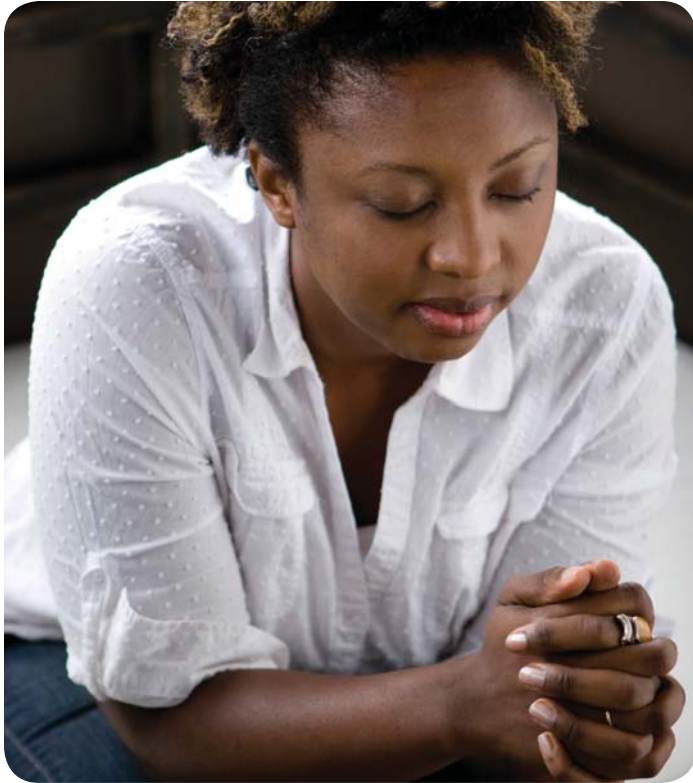
Picture the scene. About noon on Passover Friday, three crosses stood in silhouette along Golgotha's skyline. An agitated, gloating mob milled about, yelling insults at the lonely figure on the center cross. They looked up at His blood-stained torso, higher still to the blood-covered thorns on His brow, and then over to the blood dropping from the nails in His hands and feet.

Jesus had company in His agony. A thief hanged at His right hand; another at His left. These malefactors joined in the mockery, and "cast the same in his teeth" (Matthew 27:44). As the day waned, though, one thief changed his tune. Luke records:

One of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise (Luke 23:39-43).

That robber had a change of heart, rebuked his companion, and threw himself on Jesus' mercy. Jesus promised he would be in paradise that same day.

This is one of the most thrilling instances of forgiveness in Scripture. What a final day that man had! He started out condemned in the morning, received grace by noon, and was in glory by nightfall. Matthew Henry says of him:



This malefactor, when just ready to fall into the hands of Satan, was snatched as a brand out of the burning, and made a monument of divine mercy and grace, and Satan was left to roar as a lion disappointed of his prey.

These facts are undisputed. Some, though, appeal to this example as an argument in favor of pardon without baptism. Can people living today be saved like the thief on the cross?

Consider three facts in answering this question.

FACT #1: THE THIEF LIVED UNDER A DIFFERENT LAW THAN WE LIVE UNDER TODAY.

Suppose someone declares,

I will not pay income tax to the federal government because George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln did not pay it.

It is true these did not pay income tax as we do, but this is because the tax system did not become a law until after their deaths. (But what do you think they would do if they lived today?)

Similarly, religious requirements have changed during the three periods of sacred history. Abraham, living under Patriarchal Law, was never commanded to observe the Lord's supper. Today, in the Christian Dispensation, we are not obligated to keep the Passover or to offer animal sacrifices as people were during the Mosaic Dispensation.

The Law of Moses, which did not require baptism, was in force during Christ's life. He kept it, fulfilled it (Matthew 5:17), and then removed it in death (Colossians 2:14). John had preached

baptism in preparation for Christ, but it was not part of Moses' Law. It is possible (some argue likely) that the thief had been among the multitudes baptized by John, as he referred to Jesus as "Lord" and had some knowledge of the kingdom (Matthew 3:1–6).

Either way, this promise was before Jesus' death, and thus before the new law, the gospel, came into effect. Jesus' will is the New Testament. Like our wills, it did not go into effect until after the death of the one who made it:

For this cause he is the mediator of the new testament . . . For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth (Hebrews 9:15–17).

The thief died before the Testament requiring baptism came into effect. Since Jesus' death, no one has the right to offer salvation on different terms than Jesus stipulated.

FACT #2: WHILE ON EARTH, JESUS HAD THE POWER TO PERSONALLY FORGIVE SINS.

In Mark 2:3–12, a paralyzed man was brought to Jesus. Jesus said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee" (2:5). The Jewish leaders believed Jesus to be a blasphemer, for they reasoned (and rightfully so), that only God can forgive sin (2:7).

Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Whether is it easier to say . . . Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise . . . and walk. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins . . . I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way" (Mark 2:9–11). In healing the man, Jesus proved His authority to forgive sins.

Jesus was still on earth when He forgave the thief. No one today can be saved like the thief because Jesus is no longer on this earth to personally forgive sins.

FACTS #3: THE THIEF DIED BEFORE JESUS SAID, "HE THAT BELIEVETH AND IS BAPTIZED SHALL BE SAVED."

It was after His resurrection that Jesus said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). Jesus would not utter, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16), until forty-three days after this conversation with the thief.

It would be fifty days before Peter, having received the keys to the kingdom (Matthew 16:18–19) would say, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

The thief on the cross could hardly be expected to obey commands not even given until after he was in paradise!

If the thief on the cross were here today, he would doubtless tell us, "Whatsoever he says unto you, do it" (cf. John 2:5).

I just spent \$43.87...

at the dollar store. How could I spend so much money at a place where things cost only one dollar? I went in to buy paper cups and craft sticks for a church project plus Spanish moss and pretty gift bags, if they had any.

Turns out the store had all of these things—and much more. Like this cool nail file that has green sparkly flowers on one side. Paper towels, sunglasses, a magazine that's only slightly out-of-date. Chewing gum. I even found a darling yellow hat for my granddaughter. And this purple pill organizer that lets me put all my supplements for the week in one place.

Wait. I'm beginning to see how I could spend \$43.87 at the dollar store. I did it one dollar at a time.

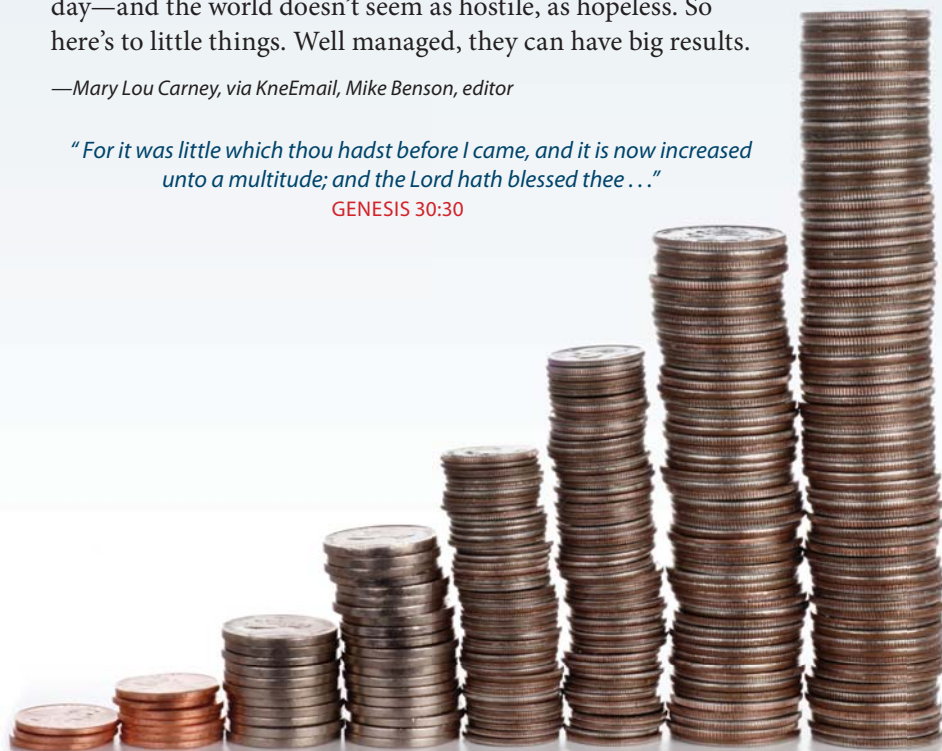
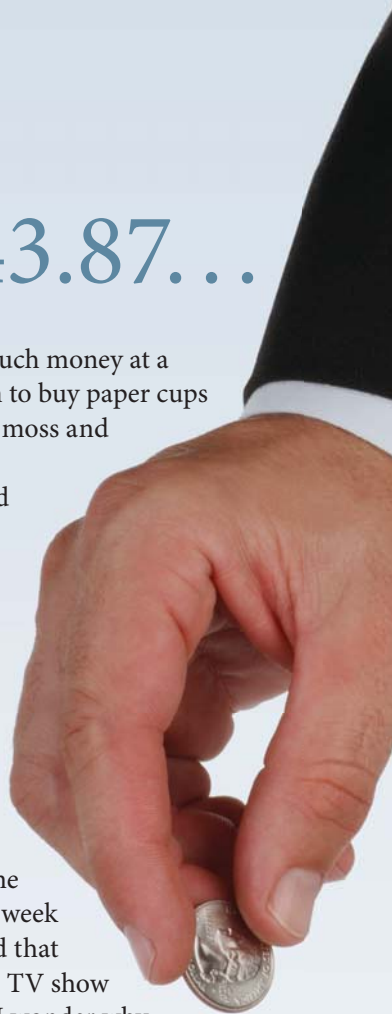
Little things tend to add up. A cookie here, some ice cream there—a pair of jeans that won't zip. A week too busy for devotional reading, a day so crowded that there's no time for exercise, an evening when one TV show turns into hours spent staring at the tube—then I wonder why I'm feeling sluggish, physically and spiritually.

But it works in a positive way too. One little act of kindness, one smile at a hassled clerk, one card sent to brighten someone's day—and the world doesn't seem as hostile, as hopeless. So here's to little things. Well managed, they can have big results.

—Mary Lou Carney, via KneEmail, Mike Benson, editor

"For it was little which thou hadst before I came, and it is now increased unto a multitude; and the Lord hath blessed thee..."

GENESIS 30:30



Drug Inspection

A Drug Enforcement Administration officer stops at a ranch in Montana and talks with an old rancher.

He tells the rancher, "I need to inspect your ranch for illegally grown drugs."

The old rancher says, "Okay, but do not go in that field over there," as he points out the location.

The DEA officer verbally explodes, saying, "Mister, I have the authority of the federal government with me." Reaching into his rear pants pocket, he removes his badge and proudly displays it to the farmer. "See this badge? This badge means I am allowed to go wherever I wish, on any land. No questions asked or answers given. Have I made myself clear? Do you understand?"

The old rancher nods politely, apologizes, and goes about his chores.

A short time later, the old rancher hears loud screams and sees the DEA officer running for his life, chased close behind by the rancher's prize bull. With every step, the bull is gaining ground on the officer, and it seems likely that he will get "horned" before he reaches safety. The officer is clearly terrified.

The old rancher throws down his tools, runs to the fence, and yells at the top of his lungs, "Your badge! Show him your badge!"

"He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast."

PROVERBS 15:15



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

Home PAGE



Passed Note

A nearsighted minister glanced at the note that Mrs. Jones had sent to him by an usher. The note read:

“Bill Jones having gone to sea, his wife desires the prayers of the congregation for his safety.”

Failing to observe the punctuation, he startled his audience by announcing:

“Bill Jones, having gone to see his wife, desires the prayers of the congregation for his safety.”

“Rejoice with the wife of thy youth.”

PROVERBS 5:18



Ain't Misbehavin'

Preparing my five-year-old son, Keegan, for his first overnight sleepover, I explained, “Eat whatever is served, say thanks, and make sure you behave yourself.”

“Oh, don't worry, Mom,” Keegan replied. “I never sin at anyone else's house.”

—Suzy Ryan, California. *Today's Christian Woman* “Small Talk.”

“Then was our mouth filled with laughter.”

PSALM 126:2

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



Provoking Children

There are so many angry teens. Much frustration and angst, disrespect and rebellion. What's causing it? Hollywood? Music? Poor sports role models and star examples?

Possibly each of these contributes, but there may be another cause—an absent or distant father. Paul wrote, “Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

What are some ways we can provoke or anger our children?

We can “over-parent” (smother) them. “Helicopter parents” interfere with their children's ability to interact naturally with other children and adults.

We can show favoritism: “Why can't you be more like your brother or your sister?” Jacob made that mistake in favoring Joseph (Genesis 37).

We can force our unfulfilled dreams on them. “I didn't get to be a physician, son, but you will be!” But what if he wants to be a forest ranger?

We can be hypercritical of them and withhold our approval from them (Matthew 7:1–2). We can focus so much on what they aren't doing, that we can't see what they are doing. We should affirm our children whenever possible. Someone said, “A father needs to be on his child's team—not on his back” (cf. Romans 14:19). As fathers we can set an atmosphere of construction instead of destruction!

We can make them feel unimportant. How many dads send this message to their children: “You are not as important to me as my job, my TV program, my iPad, my sports team, or my fishing trip”? Spending time with our children is the best way to show our love (Ephesians 5:16) and often means more than spending money. Money can buy a toy, but without a daddy to share in playing with it, it is no fun. Some-

times fathers have to say, “I have to work today, or take care of this responsibility right now, but we'll have fun when I get back.” It is important, of course, to keep that promise when we get home.

J. Paul Getty was at one time the richest man in the world. But J. Paul Getty Jr. rarely saw his father. When he was in high school, Getty Jr. wrote a special letter to his father in which he expressed his feelings.

His father sent the letter back to him with every grammatical and spelling error marked in red pencil. There was no personal response from his father.

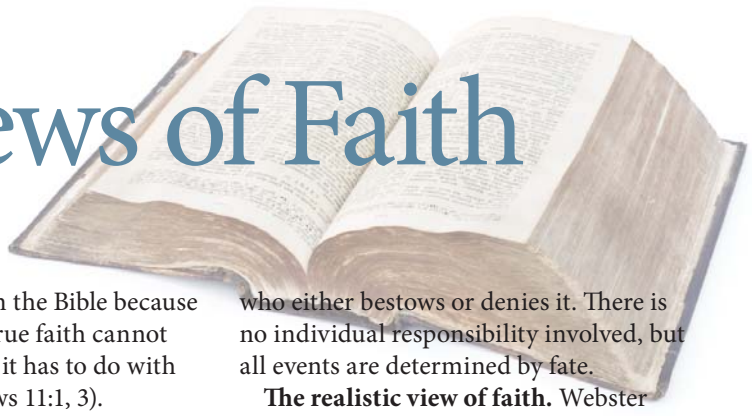
Getty Jr. summed up that experience by saying, “I never got over that.”

We can be unapproachable. According to a *USA Today* poll, when teens are under stress or in a crisis, they turn first to music, second to their friends, and third to TV. Moms came in at number 31. Fathers barely showed up at number 48. In the magazine, *Seventeen*, only 4.1 percent of the teenage girls in America felt they could approach their fathers and discuss a serious problem. We should work on being approachable by listening, taking time, following up, and not overreacting.

Fathers, instead of provoking our children to wrath, let's provoke them unto love and good works (Hebrews 10:24). —Allen Webster



4 Views of Faith



Faith in God is indispensable to pleasing Him (Hebrews 11:6). It is the means by which grace is appropriated (Ephesians 2:8–9); it is the principle by which the Christian lives (Galatians 2:20); it governs our daily walk (2 Corinthians 5:7); and it is an integral part of our armor (Ephesians 6:16).

There is much confusion as to what faith is and how it is obtained. Many think faith comes through feelings, some unusual emotional experience, or even a dream. Others believe that faith comes through prayer. At least four views of faith are much in evidence today.

The rationalistic view of faith. The assent of the mind to a demonstrated truth. “The practice of guiding one’s opinions and actions solely by what is considered reasonable” (Webster). This false view of faith demands that a thing be demonstrated before accepted. If it is not “reasonable” to the human mind, then it must be rejected. The rationalist

rejects every miracle in the Bible because he has not seen one. True faith cannot be put into a test tube; it has to do with unseen things (Hebrews 11:1, 3).

The legalistic view of faith. This conceives a system of good works devised by men which induces God to supply the faith that is lacking. “Conforming to a code of deeds and observances as a means of justification” (Webster). The reasoning is this: If I just do the best I can, God will make up the difference. This false concept has resulted in the counting of beads, offering human sacrifices, forbidding to marry, and abstaining from meats. At the judgment Jesus will say to those who devise their own works, “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21–23).

The fatalistic view of faith. This false view regards faith as a grace imparted by God; if faith is withheld, it is not the fault of the sinner who refuses to believe. The fatalist leaves faith entirely up to the Lord

who either bestows or denies it. There is no individual responsibility involved, but all events are determined by fate.

The realistic view of faith. Webster defines reality as “The character of being true to life or to fact; someone or something real; an actual person, event, situation, or the like.” The realist believes that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). He believes that God has presented in His Word the record concerning His Son, and men must believe that record. He places the most favorable construction upon what the Bible teaches and anticipates the best possible outcome if he accepts and obeys (cf. Mark 16:15–16; Revelation 2:10). His faith is real!

What is your view of faith?

—Author unknown

To ask a Bible question or view previously answered questions, go to www.HouseToHouse.com.

Bible QUIZ

Send us your answers (address on front) to receive a FREE Bible bookmark. We'll grade and return your questions and enclose the Marriage bookmark as a way of saying “thanks” for spending time in the Word (quantities may be limited).

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Questions Taken from the King James Version

Answers to Last Issue: Who Said That? 1. Agrippa (Acts 26:28); 2. Zacharias (Luke 1:18); 3. John the Baptist (Immerser) (Matthew 3:11); 4. Tempter (Matthew 4:3); 5. Jesus (Matthew 4:19); 6. A certain ruler (Luke 18:18); 7. Thief on the cross (Luke 23:3); 8. Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:15); 9. Peter (Matthew 14:28); 10. Jesus (Mark 16:16); 11. Jesus (Matthew 23:37); 12. Centurion (Mark 15:39); 13. John the Baptist (John 1:29); 14. Officers sent to arrest Jesus (John 7:46); 15. David (Psalm 37:25).



Bible Facts

Directions: Find your answers in Luke 23:32–56.

- ____ T/F There were three others crucified at the same time as Jesus.
- ____ T/F The place where Jesus was crucified was called Calvary.
- ____ T/F Jesus was crucified between two malefactors (thieves).
- ____ T/F Jesus called for the Father to repay His executioners with vengeance.
- ____ T/F The soldiers gave Jesus' mother His clothes.
- ____ T/F His mother, Mary, offered Him vinegar to drink.
- ____ T/F The superscription was written in two languages, Greek and Hebrew.
- ____ T/F The superscription said, “This is the King of Kings.”
- ____ T/F Both malefactors asked Jesus to rescue them from death on the cross.
- ____ T/F The thief who defended Jesus knew nothing of Jesus or His kingdom before they met on the cross.
- ____ T/F The thief who defended Jesus admitted his execution was just but that Jesus' was not.
- ____ T/F It got dark at the third hour.
- ____ T/F Jesus said that the thief would be with Him in paradise the very next day.
- ____ T/F The veil of the synagogue was torn from bottom to top during the crucifixion.
- ____ T/F The centurion was unimpressed with Jesus.
- ____ T/F Nicodemus requested the body of Jesus to give it a decent burial.
- ____ T/F The sepulchre (tomb) where Jesus was laid had been used before.
- ____ T/F The women had traveled with Jesus from Perea.
- ____ T/F Joseph of Arimathea prepared spices and ointments for the body.
- ____ T/F The people derided Jesus but the rulers chided them and made them stop.

—Allen Webster

Where Are You Going?

A quaint inscription was found on a gravestone in an old British cemetery not far from Windsor Castle. It read:

Pause, my friend, as you walk by;
As you are now, so once was I.
As I am now, so you will be.
Prepare, my friend, to follow me!

A visitor read that epitaph and added these lines:

To follow you is not my intent,
Until I know which way you went!

That is a good thought, isn't it? Where are you going
when life ends?

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- ▶ The Most Expensive Haircut Ever —Eddy Gilpin
- ▶ Three Books on God's Reading List —Allen Webster

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Recommended Resource

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An excellent study online: http://www.tftw.org/bible_courses.html



More!

- I want to better understand the church of Christ.
- I want to receive your weekly newsletter/bulletin.
- Quiero Recibir *Casa a Casa* en Español.
- I want to learn more about your Bible school and programs.
- I have a prayer request: _____
- I have a Bible question: _____
- I want to know more about what God requires for salvation. Please have someone schedule a personal visit with me.

I want to learn more about the Bible!

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____

Bible Study Helps:

- Enroll me in a Free Survey of the Bible Home Study Course. *Pressure-free . . . work on your own at home.*
- I want to see the *Visualized Bible Study* series (an in-home personal study). *These popular videos have been seen by people of all religions all over the world.*
- I would like a daily Bible reading schedule.

Tracts:

- NEW!** A Covenant Every Man Should Make with His Eyes
- NEW!** Do I Really Matter
- NEW!** A Man Who Took Walks with God
- NEW!** First Sweethearts
- How to Be Saved Like the Thief on the Cross
- Cleanliness Is Next to Godliness
- In Pursuit of Knowledge
- God Believes in You, Too
- Eight Reasons I Want to Go to Heaven
- God's City of Refuge, Part 2
- A True Worshipper
- Jefferson's Bible Is a Page Short
- Should Christians Follow the Jewish Calendar?
- Anger, Violence, Murder
- Heaven Is Four Steps from Any Place on Earth, Step 2
- Suggestions for Learning the Bible
- God Hates #7: Sowers of Discord
- Can a Christian Fall from Grace?
- Can Conscience Be Our Guide?
- How to Get a Good Night's Sleep
- The Day the Preacher Sat Next to the Atheist
- The Old Rugged Cross
- How to Stay Married for Life
- Scruples. Tolerating differing opinions among believers.
- The Amazing History of Instrumental Music (Part 1). Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Church of Scotland/England.
- Reboot Your Cranium
- Watch Out for Bad Apples
- What Must I Do to Be Saved?
- A Lying Tongue
- Can I Change?
- Back issues of *House to House/Heart to Heart*

What Is Jesus Doing Now?

The Present Ministry of Christ

As our Shepherd, He is guiding (Hebrews 13:20).
 As our High Priest, He is aiding (Hebrews 2:17; 4:14).
 As our Advocate, He is interceding (1 John 2:1).
 As our Lord, He is ruling (Acts 2:36).

—Mark Posey, Decatur, Alabama

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

HEBREWS 7:25

Spans: 1500 years • Books: 66 • Chapters: 1,189 • Verses: 31,102 • Words: 773,692

Longest word: MAHERSHALHASHBAZ



Number of promises



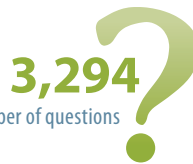
Number of commands



U.S. daily Bible distribution



Number of writers: 40
 Translated into: 1200 languages



Number of questions



BIBLE FACTS

How much do you know about your Bible?

Shortest book: **2 John** Longest chapter: **Psalms 119**
 Longest book: **Psalms** Shortest verse: **John 11:35**
 Shortest chapter: **Psalms 117** Longest verse: **Esther 8:9**

OT: 59.09%	Books	NT: 40.91%
OT: 78.13%	Chapters	NT: 21.87%
OT: 74.41%	Verses	NT: 25.59%
OT: 76.57%	Words	NT: 23.43%

WORDS used in the Bible



Law	History	Poetry	Major Prophets	Minor Prophets	Biographies	History	Paul's Letters	General Letters	Prophecy
GENESIS EXODUS LEVITICUS NUMBERS DEUTERONOMY	JOSHUA JUDGES RUTH 1 SAMUEL 2 SAMUEL 1 KINGS 2 KINGS 1 CHRONICLES 2 CHRONICLES EZRA NEHEMIAH ESTHER	JOB PSALMS PROVERBS ECCLESIASTES SONG OF SOLOMON	ISAIAH JEREMIAH LAMENTATIONS EZEKIEL DANIEL HOSEA JOB AMOS OBADIAH	JONAH MICAH NAHUM HABAKKUK ZEPHANIAH HAGGAI ZECHARIAH MALACHI	MATTHEW MARK LUKE JOHN	ACTS ROMANS 1 CORINTHIANS 2 CORINTHIANS GALATIANS EPHESIANS PHILIPPIANS COLOSSIANS 1 THESSALONIANS 2 THESSALONIANS	1 TIMOTHY 2 TIMOTHY TITUS PHILEMON	HEBREWS JAMES 1 PETER 2 PETER 1 JOHN 2 JOHN 3 JOHN JUDE	REVELATION
OLD TESTAMENT					NEW TESTAMENT				
39 books, 929 chapters, 23,145 verses, 592,439 words					27 books, 260 chapters, 7,957 verses, 181,253 words				

The Harvest Mouse



Every year in the harvest fields of England, there are thousands of little tragedies. The victims are those charming little creatures: the harvest mice.

Early in the year the growing corn seems to them the ideal place in which to settle and bring up a family. The forest of innumerable corn-stocks is their whole world. In it they court and mate and play and bring up their families. Their happiness seems complete—until the harvest.

When the day comes for the owner of the field to reap his harvest, tragedy inevitably strikes the mouse house. The fields which he thought were his world never really belonged to him at all. The field mouse was deceived because for months he was left to his own devices. He never saw the owner of the field, and naturally he knew nothing about the coming harvest.

Many people allow themselves to be deceived because God, the owner of the world, does not put in an occasional appearance. Thus man imagines the field belongs to him and that there is no such thing as an eventual harvest. —www2.bc.edu

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.”

MATTHEW 25:31-32

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

