

HOUSE to HOUSE
HEART to HEART

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House to House Heart to Heart

VOLUME 25 NUMBER 12



A New You in a New Year

Allen Webster

This sounds like a commercial line from a weight loss clinic, a fitness club, a hair salon, or a skin cream company, but it is not.

It is about making decisions regarding spiritual well-being. Are you satisfied with your soul at the beginning of a new year? This is the time of year we generally look at ourselves and make resolutions for self-improvement. We often write them down or tell someone, so we will feel some pressure (encouragement) to stick to them. As you think about a new you for the new year, please consider these common clichés and their spiritual applications.

THIS YEAR, "PUT YOUR HAND TO THE PLOW."

The Christian life is compared to running a race (Hebrews 12:1-2), winning a fight (1 Corinthians 9:26-27), sailing a sea (2 Timothy 4:6; "departure," *analu-sis*, "to loose the ropes of a ship and let it drift away"¹), and plowing a field. Jesus said, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). A farmer

who looks back while plowing will have crooked rows. A Christian who looks back longingly to the life he has left behind will have a crooked life (Matthew 7:13-14; Acts 2:40). This year let us keep our eyes focused on the pearly gates of the city laid out as a square (Revelation 21:16), and never look back at the devil's glittering trinkets.

THIS YEAR, "PUT YOUR NOSE TO THE GRINDSTONE."

This phrase refers to applying oneself to a dreaded task. Is there a spiritual duty we need to do which we have put off?

Perhaps it is obeying the gospel. Have you believed, repented, confessed, and been immersed for the remission of sins? (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27; Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21). Perhaps you need to make a public confession of sin but have dreaded doing so (James 5:16). Perhaps you have offended a brother and have put off getting things straightened out.

It is time to do it (Matthew 18:15-18). "Do this, my son, and deliver yourself; for you have come into the hand of your friend: go and humble yourself; plead



with your friend” (Proverbs 6:3). It could be a bad habit—drinking, smoking, cursing, gossiping—that we need to break. Let us go ahead and get right with God and others.

THIS YEAR, “PUT YOUR EAR TO THE GROUND.”

This phrase refers to listening for feedback from associates. It comes from the practice the Indians had of listening for approaching horses or buffalo by literally putting an ear to the ground.

We are wise to listen to the constructive criticisms of those who love us. “Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning;” “He who receives correction is prudent;” “Rebuke is more effective for a wise man than a hundred blows on a fool” (Proverbs 9:9; 15:5; 17:10). Jesus criticized those who were hard of (spiritual) hearing (Matthew 13:15). This applies to stopping the ears to God’s Word (Psalm 58:4) and refusing to hear God’s messengers (Acts 7:51; called “uncircumcized ears” here). We should be open to one we have offended by our actions who comes to talk (Matthew 18:15–18).

THIS YEAR, “PUT YOUR MIND IN GEAR.”

If you had a daydreaming employee or student under you, you might tell him to “get his mind in gear,” meaning “concentrate on the task at hand.” Young Solomon was told to serve God with a “willing mind” (1 Chronicles 28:9). We must be renewing our minds (Romans 12:2; “renew,” *anakainosis*, literally “renovate”), because they can become faint (Hebrews 12:3; “discouraged,” *ekluo*, “relaxed”). If we have just been going through the

motions of worship and Christian living, it is time to get serious about serving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

THIS YEAR, “PUT YOUR SHOULDER TO THE WHEEL.”

If a weight is small, a man might move it with the strength of his wrist; if it is of medium weight, it might require the strength of his arm; but if it is heavy, he will have to put his shoulder to it. “Put your shoulder to the wheel” means “give this project your full strength.”

Christianity is not to be approached with “wrist” or “arm” strength, but with “shoulder” force. Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37). During this year, let us “be even more diligent to make your call and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10, “diligence,” *spoude*, “speed, by implication, dispatch, eagerness”²).

THIS YEAR, “PUT YOUR BACK TO THE WALL.”

One with his “back to the wall” realizes the gravity of a situation. He has but one option—to fight. Christians should appreciate the gravity of the situation in which they daily exist.

We are in a free-for-all, no-holds-barred, winner-take-all fight for our souls. We are not playing war games or firing blanks. Nobody gets out of this world alive physically (until Jesus comes), and few get out alive spiritually (Matthew 7:13–14; Ephesians 2:1).

This may be the year that determines my destiny. Am I taking my battle with Satan seriously? (1 Peter 5:8). Have I strapped on my armor (Ephesians 6:10–18)? Will I survive? Will my family?

THIS YEAR, “KEEP YOUR FEET TO THE FIRE.”

A man whose feet are held to the fire tends to become enthusiastic! To put a person’s “feet to the fire” makes him/her responsible for his/her actions.

God holds us responsible for our actions. “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Each word we use is significant: “Every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12:36–37).

God likes enthusiastic people. Phinehas was given a covenant of priesthood because he was “zealous for his God” (Numbers 25:13). Dorcas was loved by many because she was full of good works (Acts 9:36). God redeemed and purified us that we might be “His own special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14).

We “are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). God wants us to “consider one another in order to stir up love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24).

THIS YEAR, “KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE PRIZE.”

A man with his eyes on a prize has it as the object of his heart, the apple of his eye. He wants nothing more; he will settle for nothing else.

Paul had his eyes on the prize of heaven: “I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13–14).

May our eyes, too, stay on the prize until we hold it in our hands. A new you for the new year? There’s no better time to start than today!

Endnotes

- ¹ www.studydrive.org/commentaries/dsb/2-timothy-4.html
- ² bibletruthpublishers.com/2-peter-1/king-james-version-with-strongs-numbering/lbc1157KJVStrongs

Five Fingers of Prayer

The fingers on our hands can help us remember for whom to pray.

1. The thumb is nearest to us. Begin prayers by praying for those closest to you. They are the easiest to remember. Praying for loved ones is a sweet duty.
2. The next finger is the pointing finger. Pray for those who teach, instruct, and heal. This includes teachers, doctors, ministers, and church elders. They need wisdom in pointing others in the right direction.
3. The next finger is the tallest finger. It reminds us of secular leaders. Pray for our the president and Congress, leaders in business and industry, and administrators. These people shape our nation and guide public opinion.
4. The fourth finger is the ring finger. It is the weakest finger, as any piano teacher will explain. This reminds us

to pray for the weak, those in trouble, and in pain. They need prayers day and night.

5. Last comes the little finger, the smallest of all. This is where we should place ourselves in relation to God and others. The Bible says, "He who is least among you all will be great" (Luke 9:48). Your pinkie should remind you to pray for yourself. By the time you have prayed for the other four groups, your own needs will be put into proper perspective, and you will be able to pray for yourself more effectively.

—Glenn Hitchcock

"I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men."

1 TIMOTHY 2:1



Alcohol in the USA

Alcohol costs \$239 billion dollars more a year than its taxes bring in.¹ Each year, it is involved in the following:

- 40 percent of the homicides.²
- 25 percent of suicides. Suicide is 120 times more prevalent in alcoholics.³
- 28 percent of all traffic-related deaths.⁴
- 50 percent of all liver-related deaths.⁵
- 5.9 percent of all global deaths.⁶
- 35 percent of child abuse cases.⁷

Endnotes

- ¹ [cdc.gov/alcohol](https://www.taxpolicycenter.org/) and <https://www.taxpolicycenter.org/>.
- ² *Alcohol Involvement in Homicide Victimization in the U.S.*, NIHMSID: NIHMS819806.
- ³ www.mces.org/pages/suicide_fact_alcohol.php.
- ⁴ [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/).
- ⁵ <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets/alcohol-facts-and-statistics>.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/factsheets/fs_child.pdf?ua=1#:~:text=A%20number%20of%20studies%20have,harmful%20drinking%20in%20later%20life.

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise."

PROVERBS 20:1

God's Plan for Saving Man

- Divine Love:** John 3:16
- God's Grace:** Ephesians 2:8
- Christ's Blood:** Romans 5:9
- Holy Spirit's Word:** Romans 1:16
- Sinner's Faith:** Acts 16:31
- Sinner's Repentance:** Luke 13:3
- Sinner's Confession:** Romans 10:10
- Sinner's Baptism:** Acts 22:16
- Christian's Love:** Matthew 22:37
- Christian's Work:** James 2:24
- Christian's Hope:** Romans 8:24
- Christian's Endurance:** Revelation 2:10

Respect for Fathers

Three boys were talking as they walked to school. The first boy said, "My dad wrote a poem that was published, and he got \$50 for it." The second boy boasted, "My dad wrote a story and got \$100 for it." The third boy responded, "That's nothing. My dad writes a sermon every Sunday, and it takes four men to collect all the money."

"I was my father's son, tender and the only one in the sight of my mother."

PROVERBS 4:3



Children in Church

A Sunday school teacher asked her children, as they were about to go to a church service, "Why is it necessary to be quiet in church?" One bright girl replied, "Because people are sleeping."

After a sermon one Sunday, Jason sobbed all the way home in the car. His father asked him three times what was wrong. Finally, the boy replied, "That preacher said he wanted us brought up in a Christian home, and I wanted to stay with you guys."

Three-year-old Reese prayed, "Our Father, Who does art in heaven, Harold is His name. Amen."

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."

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



The Mayonnaise Jar and the Coffee Cup

When things in your family life become too much to handle, when 24 hours in a day are not enough, remember the story of the mayonnaise jar and the coffee cup.

A professor stood before his philosophy class on the first day of the semester. As class began, without a word, he picked up a large, empty mayonnaise jar and filled it with golf balls. He asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was.

The professor picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. As he shook it lightly, the pebbles rolled into the open areas between the golf balls. He then asked if the jar was full. The students again said it was.

He took out a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand fit in the crevices. He asked if the jar was full. The students responded with a hesitant "yes." He produced two cups of coffee from under the table and poured them into the jar. The students laughed.

"Now," said the professor, "this jar represents your life: The golf balls are the important things—God, family, spouse, children, health, friends, and favorite passions, things that, if everything else were lost and only they remained, would still make your life full.

The pebbles are the other things that matter, like your job, house, and car. The sand is everything else—the small stuff."

"If you put the sand into the jar first," he continued, "there is no room for the pebbles or the golf balls. The same goes

for life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for things that are important.

Pay close attention to things that are critical to happiness. Take your wife out to dinner. Play with your children. Take time to get medical checkups. Maybe even play another 18 holes of golf. There is always time to clean the house and fix the disposal. Take care of the golf balls first. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand."

One student raised her hand to inquire what the coffee represented. He smiled and replied, "I'm glad you asked. It just shows you that no matter how full your life may seem, there is always room for a couple of cups of coffee with a friend."

"Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established."

PROVERBS 4:26



“What Kind of People Go to Your Church?”

Some might ask this question as they consider attending our worship services. It is natural to enjoy being around people like yourself, so some look for a church filled with folks much like themselves.

Some organizations are designed to include people who are alike, with similar backgrounds, abilities, education levels, or wealth. God’s church is not designed with these things in mind. Jesus came to break down the barriers that divide people in society and to bring us together in Him. Paul said, “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:27–28). We also find, “He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation” (Ephesians 2:14).

When you visit, you will meet some people like you—and some who are not

just like you. On any given Sunday, you may find people of many ethnicities and those of other backgrounds.

You will find some who are financially prosperous and some who do not have much money. You will find some who did not finish high school and some with advanced degrees. You will find old people and young people. You will find people with white collar jobs and blue collar jobs.

You may find people who are originally from all parts of the nation. Some have outgoing personalities, and some are quiet. We have many varying likes and dislikes and different strengths and weaknesses. We realize that we still have a long way to go in learning to love all. We are imperfect but we know that God wants us to grow in love.

What is it that holds such a diverse group together? It is a common faith in Jesus Christ and a common respect for the authority of His Word. God created us different from each other, but we all want to be like Jesus. We realize that we

are saved by the blood He shed on the cross, and we have a common destiny of eternal life with Christ in heaven.

We sing a song that describes unity in these words:

A common love for each other,
A common gift to the Savior.
A common bond holding us to the Lord,
A common strength when we’re weary.
A common hope for tomorrow,
A common joy in the truth of God’s Word.¹ —Brent Missildine

Endnote

¹ www.rjstevensmusic.com/product/a-common-love/



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



Bible Quiz

VOLUME 25:12

Send your answers to receive a free Bible bookmark! We will grade and return your questions and enclose the bookmark “The Tabernacle” as a way of saying thanks for spending time in the Word (quantities may be limited).

Name: _____
Address: _____
City/State: _____
Phone: _____

Answers to Previous Quizzes

V. 25:10 *Starts with the Letter “Z”*: 1. Zacchaeus (Luke 19:2–3); 2. Zacharias (Luke 1:13); 3. Zadok (2 Samuel 8:17); 4. Zamzumim (Deuteronomy 2:20); 5. Zarephath (1 Kings 17:9–10); 6. Zaretan (Joshua 3:16); 7. Zeal (John 2:17); 8. Zealot (Luke 6:15); 9. Zebedee (Matthew 4:21–22); 10. Zeboiim (Genesis 19:29; Deuteronomy 29:23); 11. Zebulun (Numbers 1:9); 12. Zechariah (Ezra 5:1); 13. Zedekiah (1 Kings 22:11); 14. Zelophehad (Numbers 26:33; 27:1–11); 15. Zeresh (Esther 5:10–14); 16. Zerubbabel (Ezra 3:2–8); 17. Zion (2 Samuel 5:7); 18. Ziba (2 Samuel 19:2–17).

V. 25:11 *Getting to Know the Minor Prophets*: 1. 12; 2. Justly, humbly (Micah 6:8); 3. Hosea (Hosea 1:3–4); 4. Joel (Joel 1:4–7); 5. Zechariah (Zechariah 9:9); 6. Chaldeans (Babylonians) (Habakkuk 1:6); 7. Hosea (Hosea 1:1–2); 8. Amos (Amos 5:24); 9. Joel (Joel 2:28); 10. Good, live (Amos 5:14); 11. House, many, up (Micah 4:1–3); 12. Temple, silence (Habakkuk 2:20).

Starts with the Letter “Q”

Directions: Find answers in the following passages: Exodus 16:12–13; 1 Kings 10:1; Psalm 127:5; Ecclesiastes 4:6; Matthew 27:51; Mark 6:19; John 13:27–28; Acts 12:4; Romans 16:23; Ephesians 6:16; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 3:4. Questions are taken from the King James Version.

- Bird sent to satisfy Israel’s hunger in wilderness _____
- A Christian at Corinth _____
- A company of four Roman soldiers _____
- The _____ of Sheba visited Solomon with hard questions.
- Herodias had a _____ against John the Baptist.
- Faith allows us to _____ all the fiery darts of the wicked.
- The Word of God is _____ and powerful.
- A meek and _____ spirit is of great price to God.
- “Better is an handful with _____, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit.”
- “Happy is the man that hath his _____ full of them [children].”
- Judas was told, “That thou doest, do _____.”
- When Jesus died “the earth did _____, and the rocks rent.”

Kings and Things

Directions: Find answers in 1 Kings 3:3; 5:1; 7:13–14; 10:1; 14:1–2. Questions are taken from the New King James Version.

- Who “loved the Lord” but sacrificed and burnt incense in high places? _____
- Who “came to test” Solomon with hard questions? _____
- Who was “filled with . . . skill in working with all kinds of bronze work”? _____
- Who “had always loved David”? _____
- Which prophet did Abijah’s mother go to see when he was sick? _____

Some or Sum



Biblical unity is based upon common teaching and practice (1 Corinthians 1:10). Common teaching and practice come about by following a common standard (John 12:48). The common standard is complete allegiance to God's Word—all of it.

Obedying God involves doing the "sum" of what He said rather than "some" of what He said. "The sum of thy word is truth; and every one of thy righteous ordinances endureth for ever" (Psalm 119:160, American Standard Version). The New King James Version says, "The entirety of Your word is truth."

Some who claim to believe the Bible is completely inspired (2 Timothy 3:16) adopt a cafeteria-style approach to it. They pick the parts they like and put them on a theological food tray while rejecting other portions.

Jehoiakim had this attitude. He listened to Jehudi read the Word of God as recorded by Jeremiah, and, upon hearing part of

a prophecy of Babylonian captivity, took the scroll, cut it with his penknife, and cast it into the fire (Jeremiah 36:23).

Obedience is doing all that God said (Matthew 28:20). One of the most dangerous words in the English language is *partial*. After a snowstorm, for instance, streets may become partially cleared. Those few patches of snow and ice are still treacherous. In fact, the cleared spots can cause drivers to be overconfident.

To obey God partially is to disobey Him. In 1 Samuel 15, Saul told God he had obeyed Him—well, almost. God had commanded that everything from the Amalekites be destroyed, but Saul spared King Agag and some animals.

Saul blamed his soldiers, but the problem was Saul's pride. He had only partially obeyed God. God was displeased; He took the kingdom from Saul and gave it to David.

Jesus' mother gave good advice that should be followed today: "Whatever

He says to you, do it" (John 2:5). Paul told the Ephesian elders that he had not shunned to declare the "whole counsel of God" to them (Acts 20:27). Preachers must preach God's whole counsel, not just the parts that may be popular in the current generation (read 2 Timothy 4:2–4).

A small church just getting started could not afford a sign to go in front of their building. A furniture store in town got a new sign about that time and gave the church their old one.

They painted over it and put it out front. After some years, the paint began to peel. It said, "The church of Christ meets here." And where the paint had peeled off it read (underneath): "Easy Terms." We must never make easier terms than Jesus gave. He said, "Take up the cross, and follow me" (Mark 10:21).

"Sum" is much better than "some."

—Anonymous

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!

If you knew for sure that the religious path you are on would not get you to heaven, would you change? If there was the possibility of a doubt, would you investigate? Why not request a personal Bible study today?

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Prayer requests or comments: _____

I would like:



A Bible Correspondence Course



A DVD Bible Study



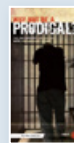
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Featured Tracts!

- Watch out for Bad Apples
- I've Got Friends in Low Places
- How to Have a Great Spiritual Retirement
- Where Is Your Life Going?



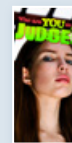
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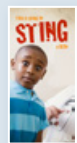
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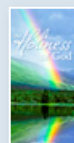
Anger, Violence, and Murder



Who Are You to Judge?



This Is Going to Sting a Little



The Holiness of God



First Sweethearts



A Man Who Took Walks With God



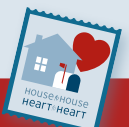
In Pursuit of Integrity



The Gospel Is for All

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Do Christians Become *Angels* When They Die?



No. It is sometimes said in funerals, especially if the funeral is for a child, “There is now another angel in heaven.”

There is no evidence in Scripture, however, that any person becomes an angel upon death. In fact, the Scriptures teach otherwise. The myth that humans become angels is popular with the entertainment industry, and numerous movies and television programs depict this theme.

A person supposedly goes to heaven but must come back to earth to perform some good deed, to earn his “angel wings,” or some such thing. These ideas from man’s imagination may make good stories, but the Bible is the standard for man’s beliefs (John 12:48).

God created angels separate from humans. The psalmist said, “Praise Him, all His angels; praise Him, all His hosts! . . . for He commanded and they were created” (Psalm 148:2, 5). God created angels before the world’s foundation. Job 38 speaks of the creation of the world, then says “the sons of God (angels) shouted for joy” (Job 38:7).

Angels compose that heavenly host that worships God. Nehemiah wrote, “You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You” (Nehemiah 9:6).

Men, good and evil, die. Jesus told of Lazarus the beggar: “So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the an-

gels to Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22). Lazarus died, but he was still Lazarus. He did not become an angel. Instead, angels carried him to Paradise.

Paul’s greatest chapter on the resurrection is 1 Corinthians 15. He wrote, “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:51–53).

The change the Bible teaches is resurrection. If men became angels at death, it would not be resurrection, but reincarnation.

Angels are a distinct creation of God—neither divine, nor human, nor animal. Jesus is above the angels. Christ “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they” (Hebrews 1:3–4).

Because of His love for man, Jesus was made “a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone” (Hebrews 2:9).

God has plans for His children in eternity, but it will not be necessary for them to become angels to carry out those plans.

—Bob Prichard

“Let’s See a Marriage Canceler”

It is no secret that many couples find the wedding knot to be a slip knot. Nearly half of couples launching on the sea of matrimony end up sailing into a storm.

Many who once perceived their spouse as “Mr. Right” or “Miss Right” now see him/her only as “Mr./Miss Right Now.” In many marriages, the difference in courtship and marriage is like the difference between the pictures in a seed catalog and what eventually comes up.

Many couples who could salvage their relationship with a little work just throw it away. Instead of seeing a marriage counselor, they go to a marriage “canceler.”

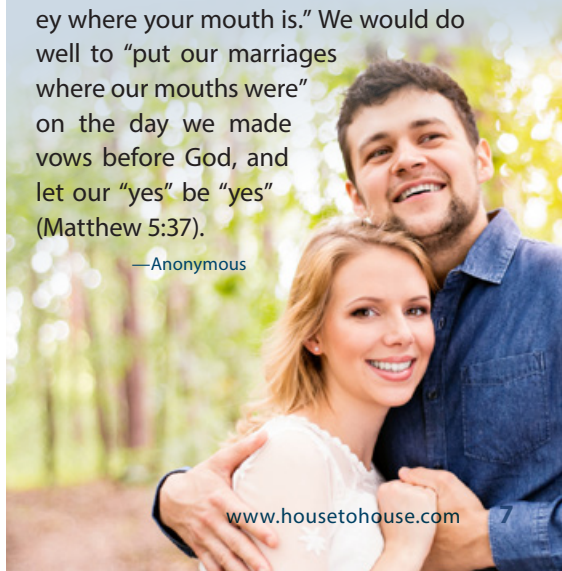
God intends a marriage to be something better than that. In the words of Genesis and Jesus, husband and wife are to “become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5). What God has joined with a yoke, man must not divide with a chasm (Matthew 19:6). He wants marriages to last (Malachi 2:14; Romans 7:2).

God has not left us without insight about marriage maintenance. It requires a mutual submission of self to the interests of the other (Ephesians 5:21)—the wife to her husband in her God-appointed way (5:22–24) and the husband to his wife in his God-directed manner (5:25–29).

The motivation for this maintenance must come ultimately from sacred vows, not from subjective viewpoints. Jesus linked His teaching on marriage and divorce (Matthew 5:31–32) to His teaching on the necessity of carrying out sacred oaths God (5:33–37).

We have often heard, “Put your money where your mouth is.” We would do well to “put our marriages where our mouths were” on the day we made vows before God, and let our “yes” be “yes” (Matthew 5:37).

—Anonymous





The Most Valuable Gift

No one teaches second grade without teaching reading.

One story my class always reads is, “The Legend of the Bluebonnet.” In this story, Comanche Indians are suffering through a terrible drought. They are desperate for help. They are told of a superstition that says rain will come if their “most valuable possession” is sacrificed in a fire. The people want help, but selfishness keeps them from sacrificing their possessions.

The main character is a little girl named “She-Who-Is-Alone.” She is alone because her parents died during the drought. She has a doll her late mother made her. It means the world to her, but she sacrifices the doll for her people. Rain comes, and the land is saved!

Of course, superstition is unfounded and the two are unrelated, but this story illustrates a profound truth. When humanity was desperate for salvation, God “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16). He gave His most prized possession—an “incredible gift” (2 Corinthians 9:15). He sacrificed Jesus to give us life and hope.

Peter wrote, “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18–19). Paul added, “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

Thank you, Father. —Anonymous



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