

HOUSE to HOUSE
HEART to HEART

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House to House Heart to Heart

VOLUME 23 NUMBER 12

FINDING GOD'S TREASURE



ACTS 8:26-40
Allen Webster

Dr. Williamson, a Canadian geologist, had been slipping along a rain-soaked road that led through Tanzania's back country when suddenly his Land Rover sunk to its axles in the mud.

Pulling out a shovel, Williamson began digging his four-wheel drive out. After some time, he uncovered an interesting-looking pink stone. Being a geologist and naturally curious about rock formations, he picked it up.

The more mud he removed, the more excited he became, hardly believing what he saw. Dr. Williamson had found a diamond!

Any diamond would have been a surprise, but he had found the now famous giant pink diamond of Tanzania. That muddy stone became the main feature of a famous royal brooch, forming the center of a flower with five petals, with white diamonds forming the petals, and Williamson is world renowned for his find—accidental though it was.

It is interesting that the geologist found the diamond. Similarly the Bible tells of a treasurer who found a treasure.

Jesus compared a sinner who learns the gospel to one who finds great treasure (Matthew 13:44-46). This is illustrated by an Ethiopian treasurer who found the gospel treasure on a lonely road leading back to Africa from Jerusalem (Acts 8:26-40). Why did he—of all the people—find the treasure that day?

THE TREASURER WAS WILLING TO LOOK FOR SOMETHING MORE

This Ethiopian had traveled fifteen hundred miles (one way) to worship and was still reading his Bible on the way home. Because he was a eunuch, he had not even been allowed into the temple during the ceremonies (cf. Deuteronomy 23:1). You could say he rode three thousand miles to sit in the foyer.

He knew something of the Bible but wanted to know more. He was like a man at sunrise tilting his manuscript to catch the first light. As he read Isaiah's prophecy of Jesus, he was catching the first rays of the rising sun of Christianity.

Who will find God's treasure today? Those willing to look. It is available to



all, but requires a careful and diligent student (2 Timothy 2:15). One may have to dig out from under denominational teachings and human traditions. One may have to lay aside preconceived ideas and a handed-down family religion.

God promised that all who fear Him can learn the truth (John 7:17), and He will reward those who truly look (Hebrews 11:6; James 4:8; Psalm 9:10; 14:2; 25:14; 145:18; Proverbs 8:17).

Some are too busy seeking worldly things (Matthew 6:32); others are waiting for some supernatural sign (Matthew 12:39; 1 Corinthians 13:8–10); many would rather please man than God (Galatians 1:10). A truly wise person seeks the pure, simple gospel (Matthew 5:6; 6:33; 7:7; Proverbs 8). Its value is eternal; its worth is inestimable.

Many today, like that treasurer, read their Bibles on the way home from church services and wonder why what they have just experienced differs so from what they read in the Bible. If you are one of these, read on . . . We should never be satisfied with a religion less than what we find in Scripture. We can do better. Christ's church exists today, and you can be a part of it!

THE TREASURER WAS WILLING TO LISTEN TO ANOTHER VIEWPOINT

When Philip gave the treasurer an opportunity to learn more of God's Word, he was not rebuffed.

This treasurer was humble enough to admit to a complete stranger that he did not understand what he was studying. (He could have told this aggressive

preacher to get lost, but then he would have stayed lost.)

What was the eunuch reading? "The place of the Scripture which he read was this: 'He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opened not His mouth'" (Acts 8:32). The treasurer listened as Philip showed how Jesus' death on Calvary and His resurrection from the grave fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy we read in Isaiah 53.

Jesus was the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8; cf. Mark 10:45). A goat, killed in the traditional manner, sends out blood-chilling cries that can be heard a mile away, but a sheep submits to the butcher's knife without a whimper. Jesus meekly submitted to the outrages perpetrated against Him and offered no more resistance than a lamb being sheared.

"Who will declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth." How could one describe a generation of people so blind that they did not recognize God's own Son, and then murdered Him?² This was not what the treasurer had been taught in the worship service he had just left. He learned the truth because he was willing to consider another viewpoint.

What about us? Too many religious discussions end with slammed doors and closed minds, raised voices and lowered expectations, and clenched fists and closed Bibles. Are we willing to calmly investigate another perspective? Do we do our own thinking, or do we simply accept what a preacher, friends, spouse, or parents tell us to believe?

Truth never suffers from investigation—if we were right in the beginning, we will simply confirm it with more study. But if we were wrong, we need to know before the Judgment (Matthew 7:21–23).

THE TREASURER WAS WILLING TO LEAVE HIS PAST

As treasurer for his country, he was doubtless an intelligent and industrious man. His religion was good. He was comfortable with it. He knew its customs, understood its theology. It taught high morals and had doubtless benefited his life.

Now the preacher suggested that he give it up for something better. It no longer pleased God and was powerless to grant salvation. What went through his mind? *Change religions? Go against my family? Offend my friends? Start over at my age? Admit I've been wrong?*

Nonetheless, he desired to please God more than others (Galatians 1:10) and was willing to do a hard thing. In heaven, he will never regret his decision—nor will we if we give up false religion (John 12:42) or sinful pleasure (Acts 24:25).

Philip evidently said something about baptism in their study (although Isaiah 53 does not mention it), because the treasurer interrupted this traveling Bible class to point out that they were passing a suitable place for baptism. (Since that was arid country, he may have thought, *If I don't ask now, there may not be another river until after he leaves.*)

According to this Bible example and others in the book of Acts, something is wrong today when someone claims to preach Jesus, but whose hearers never request baptism. How can any man preach the gospel and answer the question, "What to do to be saved?" and not give the answer Jesus told us to give (Mark 16:15–16)?

This treasurer may have been wealthy in Egypt before his journey, but he left this scene a far richer man. In the last view we ever get of him, we imagine a smile on his face.

You would rejoice, too, if you had just found God's treasure.

Endnotes:

¹ Story told by Eldred Echols, *Discovering the Pearl of Great Price*, Sweet Publishing, Ft. Worth, 1992.

² Most scholars date Isaiah at about 750 b.c.



Dear Bertha

This was written by an 83-year-old woman to her friend.

Dear Bertha,

I'm reading more and dusting less. I'm sitting in the yard and admiring the view without fussing about the weeds in the garden.

I'm spending more time with my family and friends and less time working. Whenever possible, life should be a pattern of experiences to savor, not to endure. I'm trying to recognize these moments now and cherish them.

I'm not "saving" anything; we use our good china and crystal for every special event such as losing a pound, getting the sink unstopped, or the first amaryllis blossom. I wear my good blazer to the market. My theory is if I look prosperous, I can shell out \$58.49 for one small bag of groceries.

I'm not saving my good perfume for special parties, but wearing it for clerks in the hardware store and tellers at the bank. "Someday" and "one of these days" are losing their grip on my vocabulary. If it's worth seeing or hearing or doing, I want to see and hear and do it now. I'm not sure what others would've done had they known they

wouldn't be here for the tomorrow we all take for granted.

I think they would have called family members and a few close friends. They might have called a few former friends to apologize and mend fences for past squabbles. I like to think they would have gone out for a Chinese dinner or for whatever their favorite food was. I'm guessing; I'll never know.

It's those little things left undone that would make me angry if I knew my hours were limited. Angry because I hadn't written certain letters that I intended to write one of these days. Angry and sorry that I didn't tell my husband and parents often enough how much I truly love them. I'm trying hard not to put off, hold back, or save anything that would add laughter and luster to life.

Every morning when I open my eyes, I tell myself that it is special. Every day, every minute, every breath truly is a gift from God . . .

People say true friends must always hold hands, but true friends don't need to hold hands because they know the other hand will always be there.

"Redeeming the time"

EPHESIANS 5:16



Everyday Survival Kit

ITEMS NEEDED: Toothpick; Rubber Band; Band-Aid; Pencil Eraser; Chewing Gum; Mint; Candy Kiss; Tea Bag

HERE'S WHY:

- Toothpick—to remind you to "pick out" the good qualities in others (Matthew 7:1)
- Rubber band—to remind you to be "flexible." Things might not always go the way you want, but it will work out (Romans 8:28).
- Band-Aid—to remind you to "heal hurt feelings" . . . yours or someone else's (Colossians 3:12–14).
- Pencil—to remind you to "list your blessings" every day (Ephesians 1:3).
- Eraser—to remind you that "everyone makes mistakes," and it's okay (Genesis 50:15–21).
- Chewing gum—to remind you to "stick with it" and you can accomplish anything (Philippians 4:13).
- Mint—to remind you that you are "worth a mint" to your heavenly Father (John 3:16–17)
- Candy Kiss—to remind you that "everyone needs love" every day (1 John 4:7).
- Tea Bag—to remind you to "relax" daily and to think about God's blessings (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

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



How to Settle It

When people disagree about how many ounces or pounds something weighs, they can settle the matter by using a scale, the standard of authority.

When people disagree about the length of a piece of lumber, they can resolve the disagreement by using a measuring tape, the standard of authority.

When people disagree about what is right and wrong in religious matters, they should settle the matter by using the Bible, the standard of authority.

—David Sain

*“Sanctify them by Your truth.
Your word is truth.”*

JOHN 17:17

Well Said

Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered with defeat, than to take rank with those poor spirits that neither enjoy much, nor suffer much, because they live in the gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat.

—Theodore Roosevelt

No farmer ever plowed a field by turning it over in his mind. —George E. Woodbury

One worthwhile task carried to a successful conclusion is worth half a hundred unfinished tasks. —B. C. Forbes

You cannot sink someone else's end of the boat and still keep your own afloat.

—Charles Brower

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

God Made Life Interesting

Seeds may be dropped into the ground upside down or sideways, yet the plants come up to the surface. One grain of corn will produce a stalk on which there may be two ears, with perhaps 742 grains on each ear. A light crop of wheat will produce approximately thirty grains on each stalk; a good crop will produce approximately sixty grains per stalk. There will always be an even number of grains.

Beans grow up a pole from left to right, while the morning glory grows up a pole from right to left. If turned upside down, “twining” plants will uncoil and recircle their support. Guide a twiner in the “wrong” direction, and the plant will rewind itself. The higher a twiner grows, the more tightly it claps its support.¹

The dandelion will grow above its surroundings whether the grass be two, ten, or twenty inches,² for it must get up into the sunlight. An ordinary watermelon

will have ten stripes on it. Larger ones may have twelve to sixteen stripes but always an even number.

Every form of life in the vegetable and animal kingdom has a predetermined set of characteristics, a master plan perfect in every detail—God’s plan. God has a perfect plan for my life and yours which supplies all our needs—His Word (2 Peter 1:3). By His grace we receive strength to rise above all our circumstances (Romans 8:31).

How wonderful to witness His majesty in the changing seasons.

Endnotes:

¹ Brooklyn Botanical Garden.

² After 24 inches, the weight of the flower causes the stalk to bend.

“Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.”

GENESIS 1:31; cf. 1:11–12, 21, 24–25; ISAIAH 40:28; PSALM 104:24; EPHESIANS 3:10



Written in Sand and Stone

Two friends were walking through the desert and got into an argument. One friend slapped the other one in the face. The one who got slapped was hurt, but without saying anything, wrote in the sand: *Today my best friend slapped me in the face.*

They kept on walking until they found an oasis. Thirsty, they stopped for water. The one who had been slapped got stuck in the mire, fell in, and started drowning. His friend saved him. That evening, he wrote on a stone: *Today my best friend saved my life.*

The friend who had slapped and saved his best friend asked him, “After I hurt you, you wrote in the sand and now you write on a stone. Why?”

He replied: “When someone hurts

us we should write it in sand where the winds of forgiveness can erase it away. But when someone does something good for us, we must engrave it in stone where it will be long remembered.”

Learn to write your hurts in sand and carve your benefits in stone. Someone observed that it takes a minute to find a special person, an hour to appreciate them, a day to love them, but an entire lifetime to forget them.

“On the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him.”

2 CORINTHIANS 2:7



A Baptism in the New Testament

It is interesting to go back in time to see the church in its primitive state, when the Spirit was still directly instructing Christians on how God wanted religion practiced.

One of the most detailed cases of conversion is the Ethiopian whom Philip taught while traveling down a lonely back road (Acts 8:26–40). This treasurer requested baptism, and Philip conducted it in the way God approves.

Note carefully how baptism was done in the New Testament. The treasurer made a confession of faith before baptism. He said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (8:37). No one can be scripturally baptized unless he has faith in Jesus (John 8:24; Mark 16:16) and is willing to make it known (Romans 10:9–10). Note that he did not confess that God had for Jesus’ sake already forgiven his sin, since his baptism was for the purpose of forgiveness (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21).

The treasurer was immediately baptized. He did not hesitate nor procrastinate. He was not told he would have to be voted on (unheard of in the New Testament) or that he would be on probation for some time. He did not have to go through weeks of classes or wait for several others who also wanted to be baptized. Someone has noted that no sinner in the book of Acts ate, drank, or slept before being baptized once they learned that they were lost.

Both the candidate and the administrator got in the water. They both went down into the water and came up out of the water (8:38–39). An older lady heard a preacher say that the eunuch was holding up a water jug when he said, “See here is water.” She remarked, “My Bible says they both went down into the water. Did they both went down into a jug?” (Insert “jug” for “water” in the text and see the silliness of it.)

Baptism in the New Testament was

always a burial—never sprinkling or pouring (Mark 1:10; John 3:23; Romans 6:4–5; Colossians 2:12).

Baptism began a joyful journey with God. Acts 8:40 says this new Christian “went on his way rejoicing.” Why? Because his sins were washed away and he had been added to God’s family, the church (Acts 2:47). Each of God’s steps to salvation is important:

- Faith changes man’s thinking (Hebrews 11:6);
- Repentance changes his lifestyle (Acts 3:19);
- Confession of faith identifies him with other Christians and separates him from the world (Matthew 10:32);
- Baptism changes his guilty state (from “outside” to “inside” Christ’s body, Galatians 3:26–27).

Study the other cases of conversion in the book of Acts and note carefully the original pattern. Let’s do what they did.

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



Bible Quiz

VOLUME 23:12

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

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

Answers to Previous Quizzes

V. 23:10, *Husbands and Wives*: 1. Alone (Genesis 2:18); 2. Wife (Proverbs 18:22); 3. Prudent (Proverbs 19:14); 4. Leave, cleave (Genesis 2:24); 5. Fornication (1 Corinthians 7:2); 6. Rejoice (Proverbs 5:18); 7. Body, body (1 Corinthians 7:4); 8. Bodies (Ephesians 5:28); 9. Honor (1 Peter 3:7); 10. Love, children (Titus 2:4); 11. Innocent (Proverbs 6:29); 12. Liveth, liberty (1 Corinthians 7:39); 13. Heirs (1 Peter 3:7)

V. 23:11, *Joy in Christ: Questions from Philipians*: 1. Timothy (Philipians 1:1); 2. Prison (1:7, 14); 3. Epaphroditus (2:25, 30); 4. Suffer (1:29); 5. Christ’s (2:5); 6. Be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind (2:2); 7. Heaven (3:20); 8. Dogs (3:2); 9. Gentleness/moderation (4:5); 10. Through Christ (4:13); 11. Benjamin (3:5); 12. Christ Jesus (2:9); 13. Saints, bishops, deacons (1:1); 14. Timothy (2:19)

Houses of Worship

Directions: Use these Scriptures to answer the questions: Judges 9:46–49; 1 Kings 6; 16:29–32; 2 Kings 5:17–18; 19:36–37; 1 Chronicles 10:8–10; 2 Chronicles 36:7, 22–23; Ezra 6:1–12, Ezekiel 1, 40–42; John 2:19–21; Acts 19:27–28; 1 Corinthians 3:16–17; Revelation 1:4; 11:1–2; 21:22.

1. Gruesome object Philistines fastened in Dagon’s temple: _____
2. Goddess that had a notorious temple at Ephesus: _____
3. Why did John not see a temple in New Jerusalem? _____
4. Whose temple did Abimelech burn while the people of Shechem were hiding inside? _____
5. What prophet exiled in Babylon received a vision of the Jerusalem temple? _____
6. Who is called to be the temple of God today? _____
7. What Assyrian emperor was assassinated by his sons while worshipping in his pagan temple? _____
8. Who had a vision to measure the Jerusalem temple? _____
9. Who carried away furnishings from the Jerusalem temple and put them in the temple at Babylon? _____
10. What was Jesus talking about when He spoke of destroying the temple and raising it up in three days? _____
11. Who built the first temple in Jerusalem? _____
12. Who built a temple for Baal in Samaria? _____
13. Who asked Elisha’s forgiveness for worshipping in the temple of the god Rimmon? _____
14. What king allowed the Jews to rebuild the Jerusalem temple? _____

STAR PERFORMER ON THE WINTER CIRCUIT



Go almost anywhere in the suburbs or the country, and you will see chickadees. A full-grown chickadee seldom weighs more than half an ounce, about the weight of an ordinary letter. Inside that tiny body is a heart that beats close to 500 times a minute, so fast that through a stethoscope its sound is practically a buzz. Its body temperature ranges around 105 degrees, which accounts for that high-tension activity.

On a cold day a chickadee needs its own weight in food to keep the inner fires burning. Its feathers, which make it appear the size of a sparrow when they fluff out, help hold warmth, while the dark back and head gather additional heat from the winter sun.

This bird is a lively personality! It can be a ham actor, a bully, a wheeler, or an acrobat. It loves a human audience and comes to the dooryard feeder as much for companionship as for a snack. As an entertainer, the feathered song-and-dance performer gets, and deserves, top billing on the winter circuit of the dooryard feeders. —*Reader's Digest*

"So God created . . . winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good."

GENESIS 1:21

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

Recommended Resource



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

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I would like:



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Featured Tracts!

- Salvation Is Free, But It Is Not Cheap
- Salvation. Who Needs It?
- The Irony of Calvary
- The Day the Atheist Sat Next to the Preacher



More subjects:



7 Things God Hates: Feet Swift in Running to Mischief



Seven Things God Hates: Hands That Shed Innocent Blood



Seven Things God Hates: He That Soweth Discord Among Brethren



7 Things God Hates: A Heart That Devises Wicked Imaginations



Shall We Gather at the River?



Simon Says



The Advantage of Disadvantage



The Scourging of Jesus



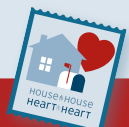
Watered Down Baptism



The Best Giver in the New Testament

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VOLUME 23:12



KNOWING GOD OR KNOWING ABOUT GOD?

Many know about God who do not know God. The Prince of Granada was sentenced to Madrid's old and infamous prison, The Place of Skulls, in fear that he might aspire to the throne.

For thirty-three years he remained in solitary confinement with but one book to read—the King James Bible. He read it hundreds of times, but what did he learn?

- There are 3,538,483 letters in the Bible.
- The word “girl” appears once in the Bible.
- No word of more than six syllables can be found in the Bible.
- The ninth verse of Esther is the longest verse.

He knew all these things, but he never became a Christian! What a difference there is in head knowledge and heart knowledge. It is a tragedy for one to spend hours in study and not make any application of that which is read.

Parade magazine once carried a story about a little village church in Kalinovka, Russia, where attendance at Sunday school picked up after the minister started handing out candy to the peasant children. One of the most faithful was a pug-nosed, pugnacious lad who recited his Scriptures with proper devotion, pocketed his reward, and then fled to the fields to munch on it.

The minister took a liking to the boy and persuaded him to attend church school. He preferred doing this to household chores, so he went. By offering other rewards, the teacher managed to teach the boy all the verses of Matthew,

Mark, Luke, and John. He won a special prize for learning all four by heart and reciting them non-stop in a church service.

Sixty years later, he still liked to recite Scriptures, but in a context that would horrify his old teacher. The prize pupil who memorized so much of the Bible was Nikita Khrushchev, the late communist Czar.

Had Khrushchev come to understand and appreciate the great truths he worked so diligently to memorize, how different the attitude of the whole of Russia might have been. But all his efforts were only “building on the sand.” Jesus said (in some of the verses Khrushchev memorized), “Everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house on the sand; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall” (Matthew 7:26–27).

Let's keep in mind the words of the Lord's half brother: “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22).

—Edsel Burluson



Recipe for a Revival

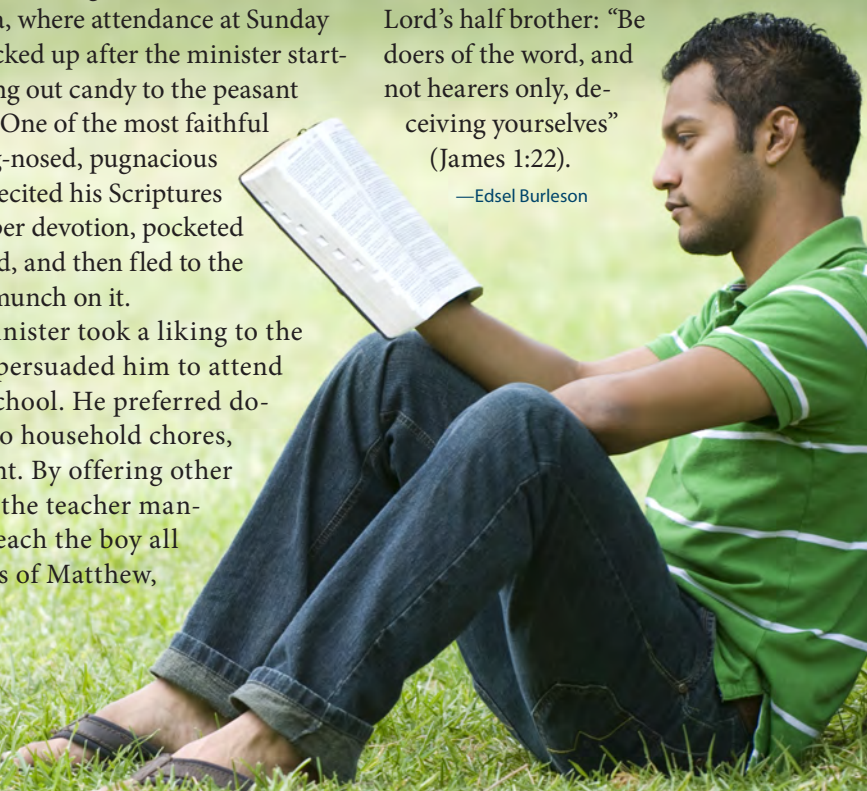
If all the sleeping folk will wake up, and all the lukewarm folk will fire up, and all the dishonest folk will confess up, and all the disgruntled folk will sweeten up, and all the discouraged folk will cheer up, and all the depressed folk will look up, and all the estranged folk will make up, and all the gossipers will shut up, and all the dry bones will shake up, and all the true soldiers will stand up . . . then we will have a revival!

“Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?”

PSALM 85:6

What It Means to be a Christian

- As members of the body one carries out the will of Christ the head (Colossians 1:18).
- As lights in the world one shines forth for Christ the light of the world (John 8:12; Philippians 2:15).
- As a soldier one endures hardness for Christ the captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10; 2 Timothy 2:3).
- As a sheep one follows Christ the shepherd (John 10).
- As a citizen one obeys Christ the king (Colossians 1:13).
- As a branch one bears fruit for Christ the vine (John 15:1–6).



Thoughts *from the* HEART



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