

EXALTING CHRIST · EQUIPPING BELIEVERS · EVANGELIZING THE WORLD

CORNERSTONE

NOV - DEC 2019

IN THIS ISSUE:

Our Unchanging God

Ten Commandments of Bible Study

Testifying for Christ

...and more

TO YOU WHO BELIEVE, THIS STONE IS PRECIOUS · 1 PETER 2:7

In my younger years, I spent a lot of time looking at the night sky through my relatively inexpensive but adequately-empowered amateur telescope. I was fascinated with what this basic astronomical apparatus could bring in from the heavens above. I still remember as if it were yesterday, when I focused on the planet Saturn and saw with my own eyes the famous rings that encircled it. What excitement, what joy! I remember thinking how it was worth all the time and the effort for that ecstatic moment. My wonder years had yet another eye-opening experience – there really was a planet named Saturn and it really did have rings just as the science books said.

The Journey Commences

When the wise men began their journey to find the King of the Jews, they also had an ecstatic moment when their search came to an end. All they had to go on was a number of prophecies, most likely from Daniel who had uttered them in the land from which they came. Daniel was not silent in his witness, though at times it cost him dearly (see Dan. 6). His testimony was clear and was probably the means which prompted this group of men to make the long, arduous journey across the arid wilderness to find the Christ Child (Mt. 2). God had provided a "star" with Daniel and then another special star to guide these Gentile inquirers, whose journey was certainly buttressed by Old Testament prophecy (Num. 24:17). This star was not a planet, since it traveled in an opposite path across the night sky. It was not a conjunction of the planets or even a supernova, else everyone would have seen it. It was God's divine provision for these men who took God's Word seriously and acted upon it.

The Journey Continues

When they arrived in Jerusalem, they asked the question "Where is He who was born King of the Jews?" The context implies that they asked this question repeatedly. This is quite strange considering the fact that two years earlier the shepherds came with haste to Bethlehem to see the Lord and afterwards "made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child" (Lk. 2:17). It highlights the *ignorance* of the general population of the things of God right down to the present day, despite the abundance of revelation. Later, Herod secretly summoned the wise men after he had been informed by his chief priests and scribes of the exact location of

the Lord's birth, though they did not make the journey. Their actions highlight the widespread *indifference* to the claims of Christ shown by some even though they have enough facts in hand. Herod's request to have the wise men bring back word to him that he might "worship Him also" underscores the *insincerity* of many others. The wise men however demonstrated true *interest*, indicative of hearts which are diligent in finding the One who would bring their search to an end – just as the Lord promises to all those who call upon Him in truth (Jer. 29:11-13).

The Journey Concludes

The wise men's journey which resulted in great joy is the same pattern for any who would also find the Savior today. Their direction was right – they turned their back on their old life and followed God's leading that drew them ever closer to finding Him. Their diligence was right – they never stopped searching, despite hitting dead ends along the way. Their devotion was right – they demonstrated the faith that brings true joy. How was that devotion evidenced? The object of their devotion was correct; they worshipped Christ, not Mary (v. 11). The order of their devotion was correct; they worshipped Him before opening their treasures. The outcome of their devotion was correct; they "went home another way" with an exciting story to tell (v. 12).

At this time of year when so many are mindlessly celebrating the birth of the One whom they do not know, let's remember that there are some in this world who looking for Him will bring their search for joy and gladness to an end. Perhaps like Daniel, you will be that "star" that will be used of the Lord to help that ecstatic moment come about. •



Mark and his wife Cynthia attend Bethany Bible Chapel in Toms River, NJ where they were commended to the Lord's work in 1993. Mark is an elder, conference speaker and editor of Cornerstone Magazine. He also runs Know the Word Ministries Inc., a non-profit organization established to strengthen and encourage the Lord's people through conferences, Bible studies and special events.

by Mark Kolchin

Editor: Mark Kolchin, mkolchin@cornerstonemagazine.org
Assistant Editor: George Ferrier, gferrier@cornerstonemagazine.org

Editorial Committee:

Mark Kolchin, New Jersey, USA
David Dunlap, Florida, USA
George Ferrier, Ontario, Canada
Brian Gunning, Ontario, Canada
P. T. Tan, Maryland, USA

Advisory Council:

Fred Schwertfeger and James Comte

Donations may be made online:

www.cornerstonemagazine.org

Donations sent by mail:

For U.S. and International donors:

Cornerstone Magazine Inc.
PO Box 690096, Charlotte, NC 28227 USA

For Canadian donors:

Cornerstone Magazine Trust
30 Maricona Way, Ottawa, Ontario, K2T 1H2, Canada

Please mail correspondence to:

Cornerstone Magazine, PO Box 305 Lanoka Harbor, NJ 08734

For address changes or new subscriptions:

gferrier@cornerstonemagazine.org

Design and Layout: Anna Grist, Serendipimoose Designs

Website Design: Matt Williams, Louise Street Marketing

Treasurer: Eileen Lee (USA) · George Ferrier (Canada)

Purpose: Cornerstone Magazine seeks to build up and encourage the Lord's people by publishing Bible teaching articles and reports of the Lord's work. Its aim is to present truth in words that are easy to understand in regard to the person of Christ, His church, and evangelism. Cornerstone does not intend to be the official voice of any group of churches. The editor takes responsibility for the content that is published. For any spiritual blessing, to God be all the glory.

Copyright: Cornerstone Magazine is copyrighted only to preserve the integrity of the material. All rights reserved. Articles may be translated into other languages and used in English periodicals, provided no changes are made to the sense of the article, while showing a credit line "— Cornerstone Magazine". Sorry, unsolicited manuscripts cannot be acknowledged or returned. Printed in USA.

Donations: Cornerstone Magazine is jointly published by Cornerstone Magazine, Inc., an United States Internal Revenue Service 501(c)3 tax-exempt non-profit corporation, and Cornerstone Magazine Trust, a charitable trust registered with Canada Revenue Agency. Cornerstone magazine is dependent upon the Lord to provide for its needs. It is freely sent upon request, as the Lord enables. No subscription fees are charged. Cornerstone is supported by those who appreciate the aims and the work of this ministry. All donations are tax deductible in accordance to law. All funds received are used towards the ministry of Cornerstone Magazine. We are thankful to all who practically support the work of Cornerstone Magazine.

Table of Contents

- 2 Our Unchanging God
Bill Yuille
- 4 Ten Commandments
for Bible Study
Rick Morse
- 6 Report: The Ministry of
Life's Key
Tim Priano
- 8 Testifying for Christ
Joe Spinelli
- 9 The Triumph of His Grace:
The Incarnation in the
Old Testament
P. T. Tan
- 10 Behold Immanuel
Shane Johnson
- 12 Foundations of the Faith:
The Standing and State
of Believers
Gary McBride
- 14 Homecall: David Gooding
Keith Keyser
- 15 Issues & Answers
George Ferrier
- 16 News & Notices

www.cornerstonemagazine.org

TO YOU WHO BELIEVE, THIS STONE IS PRECIOUS • 1 PETER 2:7



OUR UNCHANGING GOD

A familiar hymn states: “Change and decay in all around I see; O Thou who changest not abide with me.”¹ It seems that nothing is exempt from the relentless forces of change in us and around us. But God is! Malachi 3:6 says, “For I am the LORD, I do not change; Therefore, you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.” This text affirms His immutability in three ways.

His Name: “I am the Lord”

When he was asked by God to go back to Egypt, Moses objected that he wasn't the man for the task and that the Israelites would question who sent him. The Lord's answer was twofold. He was to tell them, “I am has sent me” and “the LORD (Yahweh) God of your fathers... has sent me” (Ex. 3:14-15). These two descriptions applied to God affirm the same truth. I am that I am! He is! It means that God is like the burning bush which had caught Moses' attention because it burned but was not consumed. He is the living God, unlike the pagan deities of the Egyptians. He is the self-existing God Who has life in and of Himself. He is the unchanging God: the same yesterday, today, and forever. That explains His interest in the Israelites. He promised Abraham that He would multiply his seed and give them the land of Canaan. Abraham didn't live to see the fulfillment of those promises but God never changed His mind. He tells Moses that He was about to reveal Himself as the unchanging Yahweh: “I have also established My covenant with them [Abraham, Isaac and Jacob] ... and I have remembered My covenant. Therefore, say to the children of Israel, ‘I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians... and I will bring you into the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob...’” (Ex. 6:4-8).

His Nature: “I do not change”

We change because of forces that are at work within us over which we have no control. As children we grow up to be adults and as adults we grow old. We change also due to forces outside of ourselves. For example, education helps us grow in knowledge, an accident may leave us with a physical handicap, or a relationship may damage us emotionally.

In contrast, God is “the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (Jam. 1:17, NKJV). It takes us back to Genesis 1:16: “God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also.” There is variability in the sky’s luminaries and there are shadows caused by turning, as when the rotation of the earth causes the sunrise and sunset, or when the movement of the earth and moon results in an eclipse. But there is nothing in God that changes. He cannot grow in power or knowledge or any other attribute because He is perfect in every way. There is no force or event outside God which can alter Him.

*“Great is Thy faithfulness,” O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.”*²

One of the implications of this is that God doesn’t change His mind. We do, possibly because we have erred, but God doesn’t make mistakes. Other times we may be unable to do what we intended, but God isn’t lacking in power. At times circumstances may change our priorities and desires, but God cannot be surprised by the future.

However, there is a sense in which God is spoken of as changing His mind. For example, Samuel says that “the strength of Israel will not lie nor relent” and yet, twice in that same chapter we’re told that “the Lord regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel” (1 Sam. 15:11, 29, 35). But such references to His repenting or regretting do not indicate a departure from what He had promised. Human behavior produces a change on God’s part in His dealings with us but it isn’t an arbitrary thing. He simply responds in a way that is consistent with what always was His sovereign will and purpose. And so, for example, He warns, “I will come near you for judgment.” But He is willing to change His mind, “Return to Me, and I will return to you” (Mal. 3:5, 7).

His Ways: “therefore, you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob”

Some people have the idea that the God of the Old Testament was a God of holiness and righteousness who acted with harshness, severity and judgment, whereas the God of the New Testament seen in the Lord Jesus is altogether different, a God of love and kindness. But God has not changed!

The God of the Old Testament was indeed holy and righteous and demonstrated this in inflicting judgments and in disciplining His people. But they were “not consumed”, because He was a God of love. He loved the people of Israel before they existed: “The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples, but because the Lord loves you...” (Deut. 7:7-8). At the beginning of their history He loved them, “When Israel was a child, I loved him...” (Hos. 11:1). Throughout their history, even when they forsook Him and He was disciplining them, He could still say, “I

have loved you with an everlasting love” (Jer. 31:3). Then in the final book of the Old Testament, He begins with this, “I have loved you, says the Lord” (Mal. 1:2). That’s the God of the Old Testament.

The God of the New Testament is no different. His love has not changed and neither have His other attributes. He is still a God of inflexible righteousness and holiness who hates sin and cannot ignore it. The gift of His Son to die on our behalf was the action of a loving God, “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). At the same time, it was the action of a righteous God: “... whom God set forth as a propitiation... to demonstrate His righteousness...” (Rom. 3:25-26). Consequently, there is forgiveness for those who trust in the Lord Jesus. However, those who refuse this salvation will one day stand before the judge with no excuses, no defense, and no hope when He “will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained” (Acts 17:31).

God does not change! We can count on that. When circumstances are difficult and we question what He is doing or not doing, He hasn’t changed. He still cares. He knows what is going on. He is in control and He continues to work out His purposes in us and for us. When we sin, He hasn’t changed. He continues to love us and desire our restoration, like the father who looked for his prodigal son. When he saw him, he ran and embraced him and welcomed him home. When we are discouraged and feel that the Lord is remote, remember that He hasn’t changed. In the words of Horatius Bonar:

*My love is oft-times low,
My joy still ebbs and flows,
But peace with Him remains the same,
No change Jehovah knows.*

*I change, He changes not,
The Christ can never die;
His love, not mine, the resting place,
His truth, not mine, the tie. •*

Endnotes:

1. *Abide With Me*, Henry F. Lyte
2. *Great Is Thy Faithfulness*, Thomas Chisholm



William Yuille attends Mt Albert Bible Fellowship in Mt Albert, Ontario and is active in Bible teaching in his assembly and elsewhere. He has served on the boards of Kawartha Lakes Bible College, MSC Canada and Legacy Ministries Canada. He has contributed to a number of publications and is the author of two books: *The Faith that Saves* (Studies in the book of James) and *God in Us* (the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit).

by **Bill Yuille**



10 COMMANDMENTS *for* BIBLE STUDY

"Be diligent to present thyself approved to God - a workman irreproachable, rightly dividing the Word of truth."

2 Timothy 2:15 (Young's Literal Translation)

In His wisdom, our God has placed what we might consider three "sentinels" in His Word – one at the beginning, one in the middle, and one at the end (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:5-6; Rev. 22:18-19). It is to warn all who read it to neither add nor take away from what He has chosen to reveal. He also inspired Paul to exhort Timothy to study the Word of God with diligent care, to pursue an orderly and consistent approach to discovering its truths (2 Tim. 2:15). Out of gratitude to those who have mentored and nurtured my own interest in Bible study, I offer these ten "rules of thumb". If observed, they will enable the eager Bible student to rightly divide the word of truth, and to avoid many popular but harmful bypaths which are so readily available today.

1. Observe What The Text Says

Forcing a preconception on what is written usually leads to error. Reading and re-reading a portion slowly, and out loud, is the best way to take in every word. Notice every detail, verb, order, progression, pattern, etc. God does not do things haphazardly. Before we even begin thinking about what the Bible teaches, we need to first establish what the Bible says.

2. Always Establish The Context

Always ask the "WS" questions: **who** is speaking or being spoken to; **what** are the circumstances; **when** was it said; **where** is the locale; and **why** was it being said. Context

is essential for both interpretation and application of Scripture. Failure to observe context usually results in false ideas and thinking.

3. Do Not Add To The Scriptures

God has said everything we need to know (2 Pet. 1:3). Speculations and logical deductions are often corrupting and human reasoning is so infinitely inferior to the mind of God as to be inconsequential.

4. Do Not Take Away From The Scriptures

Never leave things out or pass over them just because they are naturally distasteful. Beware of removing portions on a subject just because they are intellectually difficult. The Bible is no bigger than God intended, read it all.

God does not do things haphazardly. Before we even begin thinking about what the Bible teaches, we need to first establish what the Bible says.

5. Compare Scripture With Scripture

No verse should be interpreted by itself, but always considered in the broader context of everything else the Bible has to say on a subject. Balance all your observations from the entire Bible, remembering that it is a perfectly harmonious book. Reject any idea which doesn't harmonize with the whole tenor of Scripture.

6. Be Silent When The Scriptures Are Silent

This essentially means do not add to what God has said, because it can never be accepted as divine. Those who claim extra-Biblical revelation must be rejected. We too need to be careful that we do not add our own speculative ideas to what God has expressly revealed.

7. Always Use Scriptural Language And Terms

The use of man-made terms often hinders proper understanding because there is no scriptural reference to define and understand them. This practice often surfaces in

the realms of systematic theology and should be zealously guarded against.

8. Be Certain When Making Interpretation

Interpretation is the exact explanation of what the text says and should never be done carelessly. The inductive method of Bible study is to be preferred, because it yields to letting God's Word establish our thoughts. Using deductive reasoning to form conclusions which are not stated in Scripture is dangerous. Furthermore, looking for "proof texts" to support their own views has become the specialty of so many pseudo-Christian cults.

9. Be Careful When Making Application

When applying a verse or story of Scripture to any matter, be careful not to stretch the point beyond what is revealed or intended. This applies to how the various types, illustrations, and parables are applied, and we need to be careful to not use them beyond how God intended.

10. Consider The Nature And Character Of God

Always ask the question, "What is God like?" when trying to understand difficult portions. Is your explanation "in character" with God as He reveals Himself? If not, then there must be another explanation. Someone once wrote that "God will always act like God." So, when a particular explanation doesn't align with the immutable nature of God described in his Word, then we must wisely reject it.

These ten principles will guard the diligent Bible student from wayward doctrines and personal agenda-serving tangents. The Creator of language chose the correct words and expressions to convey His truth to us. To think we need to add or delete anything to make the Bible more relevant or emotionally tasteful, is foolish and elevates our own thinking above the mind of God.

May our Lord bless every diligent student of His Word, and in turn use them to bless others. •



Rick Morse lives in Berwick, Nova Scotia with Janie, his wife of 40 years. They fellowship at Bethany Gospel Chapel in Dartmouth, NS. Saved at age 21, he is active in his home assembly and frequently ministers in many assemblies in Atlantic Canada. Rick's speaking and written ministry centers on love for apologetics and earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints.

by **Rick Morse**

Report: The Ministry of Life's Key United States

"..to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Isa. 61:1

Life's Key is a prison ministry committed to the Lord Jesus Christ for the purpose of providing current and ex-offenders (men and women) an opportunity to study the word of God, and receive spiritual guidance through correspondence.

The Beginning

The founder of Life's Key ministry was John J. Bell (1939-2008). In 1974, Mr. Bell had received the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior. Realizing the tremendous peace and hope he received in Christ, he became burdened to share the gospel message with those in prison. When John Bell presented the idea of a Bible Correspondence Program to the chaplain of a local maximum-security prison, the chaplain agreed to the program and sixteen men began the first Bible correspondence course, "Born to Win."

We pray that every inmate who starts taking these courses will take them all, and we know if they do, they will have a well-rounded understanding of God's Word, and how to apply it to their lives.

The Organization

The work started in June 1977, but because of the growth in the ministry, an organization was needed so that funds could be channeled through a non-profit rather than through Mr. and Mrs. Bell. In 1979, with the Lord's clear direction and the encouragement of a local church, the initial steps to form a non-profit organization began. It was also decided that Mr. Bell should engage in the prison ministry on a full-time basis. Mr. Bell quit his job

as a truck driver, was commended by the local church, and went on to exert his energy full-time to this ministry.

The Purpose

Life's Key has a vision to present the gospel to current and former inmates so that they may come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. As it says in Romans 10:17, "So faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." In order for inmates to hear the Word of God, someone must present it to them. This is what Life's Key is all about, reaching prisoners with the gospel of Jesus Christ.



The Courses

All courses sent by Life's Key into the prisons are published by Emmaus International. We are proud to have a long-standing relationship with them, and stand behind the Bible-based, Christ-centered message that each one of their courses presents. There are a wide variety of topics covered in the 75 courses that make up our curriculum. Some examples include courses written specifically with inmates in mind, such as "Born to Win" and "Doing Time with Jesus." There are Old Testament character studies, specifically on Joseph, Gideon, and Jonah. There are studies that take an in-depth look at all of the books in the New Testament. There are courses for new believers, such as "The Bible – What's in it for You" and "What the Bible Teaches." There are behavioral studies, such as "Managing Anger God's Way" and "The Believer's Battle with Temptation." We also have some on evangelism, like "Winning Souls the Bible Way" and "Preach the Word." And there is even a course for those

scheduled to be released called “How to Succeed on the Streets.” We pray that every inmate who starts taking these courses will take them all, and we know if they do, they will have a well-rounded understanding of God’s Word, and how to apply it to their lives.

The Director

Through the calling of the Lord, Life’s Key brought on Tim Priano to be the Director as a full-time worker in 2014. Tim had previously worked as a student accountant for an online school when he felt God calling him into full time service. He was somewhat familiar with Life’s Key, as the Bells were frequent visitors to his church in Pittsburgh, PA. Upon seeing the need, and being given clear direction from the Lord, Tim was commended into the ministry by his home church.

The Volunteers

Over the years the Lord has called so many wonderful people to be part of this ministry. Whether it is one of about a dozen people that visit our Pittsburgh office throughout the week, or one of our 40 course commenters throughout the country who respond to the inmate’s questions, or those that do building and tech maintenance, it would be impossible to have this ministry without each and every one of them. Not enough can be said about the time they selflessly give, doing their part to share the love of Christ with each student.

The Need

Life’s Key has been given additional responsibility by Emmaus over the last several years. Distribution is done within state lines, so if a student transfers from one state to another, the responsibility is also transferred from one ministry to another, as different ministries send courses into different states. In the past 5 years, our territory of distribution has ballooned from 7 to 16 states, by far the most under the Emmaus umbrella. One of those states, added in 2018, is Florida which has the 3rd highest prison population in the country. And praise the Lord, the thirst for His Word there is great! So great that we anticipate mailing about 5,500 more courses this year than we did last year, an increase of 31%.

We have been called to serve the incarcerated. Therefore, we are more than aware that we cannot charge them for the materials because in most cases, they simply have nothing to offer in return. Everything is provided to them free of charge including the courses, certificates of completion, and postage both to send and receive mail. We are so humbled at how the Lord has blessed us over the years to be able to offer this to them through the generous donations of churches and individuals. At no point have we ever turned a student away because of finances, and we trust the Lord will allow that to continue.

While seeing such a large increase is a wonderful answer to prayer, we also know that there is a cost associated with it. More courses, envelopes, and office supplies must be purchased. More certificates must be printed. More postage must be paid. So, the need is there for more funding to keep up with the increase in students that the Lord has provided!

We do what we do for a few reasons. First and foremost, to provide the resources these men and women need to learn the Word of God, and ideally come to the realization that they are lost sinners and need to invite Christ into their hearts. Secondly, we want them to use our courses and guidance to grow spiritually. To develop a passion for the Lord like they’ve never had before. And finally, to enable them to share that passion with others.

The Reward

We do what we do for a few reasons. First and foremost, to provide the resources these men and women need to learn the Word of God, and ideally come to the realization that they are lost sinners and need to invite Christ into their hearts. Secondly, we want them to use our courses and guidance to grow spiritually. To develop a passion for the Lord like they’ve never had before. And finally, to enable them to share that passion with others. The vast majority of our new students come from other inmates telling them about our program. And these new students lead to an opportunity for their hearts to be opened, so that they may be able to check the box in our first course that says, “I here and now accept the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior.” •



Tim and his family have been with Life’s Key Ministry since February 2014. He and his wife, Amanda, have 4 children: Rebekah (14), Joseph (14), Ryan (12), and Erika (10) and fellowship at Browns Hill Bible Chapel in Pittsburgh, PA. Anyone interested in contributing to this vital, life-changing ministry may contact Tim directly at lifeskeyministry@gmail.com.

by Tim Priano

Testifying FOR Christ

O Lord, **OPEN MY LIPS**, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. Psalms 51:15, NKJV

Witnessing has always been very close to my heart. Someone said that sharing the gospel can be defined very simply as one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. Sometimes we see videos or photographs of starving adults and children and our hearts respond with sympathy at their plight. Even so our hearts should respond much more as we see people all around us living in spiritual darkness and hunger, daily moving to a lost eternity without Christ, without God, and without hope!

As a young man I was extremely shy, and cringed at the thought of speaking publicly. During my teen years I trusted Christ as my Savior at Word of Life Island, in the Adirondack mountains of New York state. During my last two years of high school I worked on the staff of Camp of the Woods, a Christian family conference center, also located in the Adirondack mountains. It was there I began to grow in my walk with the Lord. From the start I had a deep desire to witness for Him, using my musical ability as a springboard to point people to Christ.

After active military duty and while working as a draftsman, I met and married Lillian Klenk. Lillian's father was one of the men who started Pine Bush Bible Camp, located in the Catskill mountains also in the state of New York. For over fifty years my wife and I have been involved in the ministry at Pine Bush. Our three children were also involved in camp as they grew up.

My desire to evangelize spilled over to a thirty-year outreach in area nursing homes, preaching at Yonkers Mission for many years until its closing, and doing open air work in several states. I write this because if the Lord could use a naturally shy person like me in these ministries, I know He can use anyone.

So, for those desiring to witness for Christ, here are a few thoughts to help them get started. Be sure to have a

consistent and in-depth quiet time with the Lord. Your fellowship with Him will be reflected in every area of your life and witness.

Carry tracts in your wallet or purse and pray that the Lord will bring people across your path that need Him. Take time to get to know others, looking for the opportunity to turn the conversation to spiritual things. It never ceases to amaze me how the Lord will direct you to the right person at the right time.

Get involved in your home assembly outreaches: Sunday School, youth work, nursing home services, in rescue missions, and summer camp work. Your service for Christ may begin by a word of testimony, and then lead to counselling, and eventually to taking a Bible study, or even preaching. And remember, you are never too young or too old to start to witness.

We all have been commissioned by Christ to share the gospel with others. We are all His ambassadors, and we are all missionaries. May the Lord help us to show Christ in our lives, and share Him with our lips.

So that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20:24, NKJV) •



Joe has a passion for evangelism, piano and NT church truth. He and his wife Lillian reside in Montgomery, NY and for 50 years have been actively involved in the ministry of Pine Bush Bible Camp in Pine Bush, New York. They have three grown children, six grandchildren, and one great grandchild.

by **Joe Spinelli**

The Triumph of His Grace

The Incarnation in the Old Testament

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” Isaiah 7:14

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder.” Isaiah 9:6

God stepped into human time and space via the ordinary experience of childbirth. And yet His choice to arrive in this everyday manner was also an undeniably miraculous sign of the Divine. It was more extraordinary than the arrival of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah in their old age – it was conception in the absence of human means. To make this event even more staggering, Isaiah states that His name shall be “Immanuel” meaning God with us.

We read in John 1:14, *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”* Those who first heard Isaiah’s proclamation must have scratched their heads and wondered, “how can the child be called, ‘God with us?’ Isn’t that an exaggeration?” Not at all. In these few verses in Isaiah¹, there is such a burst of revelation of God to Judah and indeed to the world that it is hard to find a comparable human experience of the divine self-revelation to man. The only other comparable sign is the sign of Jonah, a picture of Christ’s resurrection. On these two signs rest the foundation of Christianity and the authenticity of Christ’s claims of Who He is.

Without a doubt, great is the mystery of godliness, *“God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit ...”*² In the historical context of Isaiah chapter 7, the sign was given to unbelieving King Ahaz of Judah who was preparing for an imminent siege by Syria and Samaria (the northern kingdom of Israel). Ahaz did what he could as head of national security – he inspected the city’s aqueduct to make sure Jerusalem had enough water supply during the siege while their enemies outside would not. Ahaz was trying to be diligent, but he made a major error in allying himself with Assyria³, a large northern neighbor, to protect his people from Syria and Samaria. Although Ahaz thought it was a prudent move, Isaiah was sent to point out the folly of depending on Assyria for Judah’s safety, and to persuade Ahaz to put his trust in God instead.

Ahaz’s problem is not unique. It is like many problems we face today: personal, job, financial, health, or family security.

When we are faced with such problems, what do we do? We seek counsel from those wiser than us to provide guidance. Ahaz did that – he did what he thought was the rational thing for a king to do – but he failed to put his ultimate trust in the Lord God. It was tough for Ahaz to put his trust in the God Whom he could not see. What does trust in God mean, anyway? How do we trust in God? We trust God by opening up to Him in prayer and seeking His help to face and resolve our problems, whatever they may be⁴.

To persuade Ahaz to trust in God for deliverance from the foreign threat, Isaiah encouraged Ahaz to ask God for a sign – any sign – no matter how big or small. Faithless Ahaz refused and quoted scripture in pretended piety⁵. Isaiah chastised Ahaz for wearying God and said, *“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”*

Isaiah 9 is the continuation of the prophetic utterance on the Child Deliverer for Judah and indeed for the world. Through Ahaz’s lack of faith and dependence on God and shortsighted policy of alliance with Assyria, Judah was eventually attacked by Assyria itself! Imagine a mouse making an alliance with the cat to protect itself against other mice⁶. Assyria is modern Iraq. There was thus the ensuing doom and gloom in the land but not of the such as was in *“her vexation, when at the first He lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Nephthali, and afterward more grievously by way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.”* Jerusalem is not the focus, but the far-flung places to the north west, the route from the north to the south for traders and invaders. It speaks of the people who dwell in darkness as seeing (past perfect tense) a great light! Upon those who dwell in the shadow of death has the light shined! Though the Lord went to Jerusalem during the feast time (especially Passover), and to be crucified, Galilee was the primary place of the Lord’s ministry while on earth. Not Jerusalem.

The prophesy talks about God multiplying the nation (in contrast to the depletion of people through deportation) and of joy as when a victorious army divides the spoils, and as in the day of Midian when Israel defeated the vast army of the Midianites with just 300 men. What a change in mood

...continued on page 11

Behold... Immanuel



“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”

Isaiah 7:14

At a time when the empire of Assyria was bulldozing nations, Isaiah boldly proclaimed the coming of the victorious virgin-born child. Assyria was on the rise but so was God. While Tiglath-Pileser sought to make himself of great reputation, God was plotting to make Himself of no reputation. One sovereign wanted to enslave the world; the other wanted to free it. Therefore, while Assyria was quickly and loudly amassing soldiers and horses and chariots, God was slowly and quietly smuggling in a ruler of His own choosing: a virgin born child.

The vast kingdom of Assyria was characterized by cruel oppression. The great steles of Assyria found today boast of powerful kings conquering their captives and dragging them behind their chariots by hooks threaded through their noses. Not so the kingdom of the coming Child. He would conquer by love not force. His kingdom will be of peace and “of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end” (Isa. 9:7).

The kingdom of Assyria was also characterized by moral decay and shameful lust. Apparently, according to Herodotus, every native woman of Assyria was bound, once in her lifetime, to go to the Temple of Mylitta (the Assyrian name for Aphrodite) and give herself to a stranger. The first man to toss her a coin, of any amount, was the one who could have her. After she had performed this shameful act, her duty to the goddess was fulfilled and she was free to leave.

Against this backdrop, the virgin birth of our Savior was announced. Instead of by disgusting acts of prostitution, this child would be born through a virgin. A pure, innocent virgin would be the vessel of the Lord. The entry of our Savior into the world would be morally superior to any other, and the government would be placed upon His strong, weak shoulders. He will be our Counselor, Warrior, Father and Prince. No more would Israel, or any nation for that matter, need to fear barbarity and oppression.

I find it ironic that God would announce this prophecy at the exact moment the Assyrian nation was on the rise, even at its pinnacle. At a time when the King of Assyria thought he was the master of the world’s chessboard, God revealed that he was just a passing pawn. Little did He know his overthrow would be through the birth of a child. Assyrian, Babylon, Persia, Rome - all were temporary pawns on the tiny chessboard called time, as God slowly moved up His eternal king one move at a time.

Man seeks to enslave others while God seeks to free them. Seven hundred years before it ever happened, God spoke about bringing His Son into the world to seek and to save sinners. But He had been planning it long before even that. Before the foundation of the world we read that God had already decided to give up His Son (Rev. 13:8). Therefore, the Apostle Paul declared that “when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under law, that we might receive adoption as sons” (Gal. 4:4, 5). While Tiglath-Pileser was planning to enslave the sons of the nations, God was thinking of a way to adopt them.

The fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy... brought about a tiny crack in the kingdoms of men. Not many on earth heard the tiny sound, save a handful of nameless shepherds. But it was from that tiny crack that God made His entry into the world.

Thus the prophecy of Immanuel signaled the end. The birth of God-with-us sounded the death-knell for oppressors and freedom for the oppressed. The Christmas carol falls short as it proclaims, “O come, O come, Immanuel, and ransom captive Israel,” for it is not only Israel that will be ransomed by the coming of Immanuel but the whole world. Those who receive Him He ransoms from the power and fear of death and when He comes again a second time He will “order all things far and wide.”

Immanuel, or the Incarnation as we call it, was the greatest event ever to happen on planet earth. The Lord spoke to Ahaz saying, “Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above” (Isa. 7:11). In heaven and earth there would be no greater sign given. To a virgin God’s Son would be born, being made in the likeness of men, being found in fashion as a man, and this would forever earn Him the name that is above every name. The One who had the unspeakable name took the lowest name in order to acquire an even higher name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow (Phil. 2:5-11).

They say it only takes a tiny crack in a massive structure to bring the whole edifice down. It is only a matter of time, they say. So it is with God and the kingdoms of this world. The fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, which came 700 years later, when Immanuel was born, brought about a tiny crack in the kingdoms of men. Not many on earth heard the tiny sound, save a handful of nameless shepherds. But it was from that tiny crack that God made His entry into the world. From then on, that crack became a fissure and that fissure became a fault line, and one day all the kingdoms of the earth will fall and become "the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever" (Rev. 11:15). Once more the chessboard will be shaken, removing the things that can be shaken, so that the things which cannot be shaken will remain. And He shall have the glory.

I love the chime of bells at Christmas time. One of the largest bells to ever chime resides in the walls of Notre Dame Cathedral. That bell has been appropriately named Immanuel. So huge is the bell that its tongue alone weighs five hundred pounds. On Christmas day its chime can be heard clanging through the city, ringing through the streets of Notre Dame, trumpeting the day of Christ's birth.

In a similar way, I believe, the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World, can be likened to a bell heard ringing around the world. At first it made just a tiny sound. Only the shepherds heard it ringing on the plains of Bethlehem. It chimed again in Nazareth and Galilee when He went about

teaching and preaching the kingdom of God, training "The Twelve" to be His emissaries to the world. At last, it made its final sound on Golgotha's tree when the Lord sounded His victorious defeat. "It is finished!" He shouted and made all our sins fall dead like soldiers fallen in battle.

Three days later that bell began to chime again. Immanuel's bell can now be heard ringing in all the lands and from ear to ear, people have been responding. Soon its long tongue will clang against the walls of every nation, tribe and tongue, saving those who want to be saved, destroying those who reject the God who created them. Then, one final time, the Son of God will come with the clouds and every eye will see Him. Then every knee shall bow. Then every tongue will confess. But for some it will be too late. Behold Immanuel and trust the Savior while you still can. •



Shane Johnson is a high school teacher and father of five children. His ministry includes itinerant preaching, teaching youth and writing devotional books. He and his wife Shelly are in fellowship at Bethel-Park Bible Chapel in Brantford, Ontario.

by **Shane Johnson**

...continued from page 9

from darkness and gloom to the enlarging of the nation and increasing its joy. Isaiah says that "garments rolled in blood" will be used for burning and fueling of fire (Isa. 9:5). Why?

The reason is provided in vv. 6-7, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." This is the continuation of the earlier prophesy in Isaiah 7:14. This is also a literary device in Hebraic poetry: the use of repetitive couplets to emphasize a point and to elaborate its meaning. The phrase, "Child is born" emphasizes His humanity. The phrase, "Son is given" emphasizes His Deity.

The image of a child as a Deliverer is a paradox⁷. Instead of a mighty hero charging into battle, Isaiah depicted the Deliverer as a Child – a picture of dependency, humility and vulnerability. This is God's way of dealing with the problem of oppression and foreign conquest: sending a Deliverer who appears weak, vulnerable, harmless and humble, to turn enmity, hostility and oppression into friendship, goodwill, and peace. The weakness of God is stronger than the strength of man⁸. This is the triumph of His grace: overcoming oppression not by meeting force with greater force, but by sacrifice and forgiveness so vast that it is pointless to resist⁹. •

Endnotes:

1. In Micah 5:2, is the prophecy he would be born in Bethlehem, Judah. Isaiah focuses on His Person. Micah focuses on the place.
2. 1 Timothy 3:16
3. For which Ahaz had to pay a huge ransom to Assyria, emptying the Temple's treasury.
4. "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek." Psalm 27:8
5. Ahaz, quoting Deuteronomy 6:16, had a form of godliness, but denied the power thereof. 2 Timothy 3:5
6. John Oswald, *Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, pp. 55-59
7. John Oswald, *op. cit.*
8. 1 Corinthians 1:15-21
9. John Oswald, *op. cit.*



PT Tan and his wife Juio fellowship with the New Hampshire Avenue Gospel Chapel in Silver Spring, Maryland where he serves as an elder and President of the board of trustees. A retired attorney, PT practiced law as a partner of a few large international law firms for over 30 years in Washington, DC. He is currently on the boards of Bible Conferences Corporation and Cornerstone Magazine, Inc.

by **P. T. Tan**

FOUNDATIONS

of the faith

THE STANDING AND STATE OF BELIEVERS

A person may be a citizen of a country and commit treason or in some way embarrass their nation on the world stage. This type of activity may result in punishment but one does not cease to be a citizen of their own country. In the same way, our children may rebel against our authority, move out of the home, and engage in activities that we as parents strongly oppose. Even if this happens, they do not cease to be our children.

This is also true of those who are citizens of heaven and members of the family of God. Bad or sinful actions will have consequences but our citizenship and relationship does not change because of our behavior. What we are in Christ relates to our standing, things that were true of us the moment we were born again. What we do or how we behave is a matter of our state, our state may fluctuate but our standing never will.

The word “*state*” is found only in Philippians 4:11 where Paul uses it in a non-theological way. Paul is talking about the circumstances of life. He says that he has learned to be content with little or with much in a material sense. However, there is no way a Christian can be content with their state when they are engaged in sinful behavior.

When saved we are justified, that is declared right in God’s sight. Nowhere in scripture does it teach or support the undoing of justification. We are given eternal life as a present, personal, and perpetual gift; note it is eternal not temporary. The Holy Spirit sealed, indwelt, and brought us into the family of God. The use of the past tense is indicative of the fact



that our standing in Christ is unalterable. We are saved, justified, sanctified, reconciled, made righteous, and our sins are forgiven. All of these truths relate to our position or standing in Christ as those who have been redeemed by His blood.

A lack of understanding of the distinction between our standing and our state has led to poor interpretation of some scriptures and certain doctrinal difficulties. Some believers use passages that are about our state to support the possibility of losing one's salvation but as we will see this often stems from this misunderstanding.

A number of words or phrases expresses this distinction. For example: our relationship and our fellowship; our position and our practice; our positional and our practical sanctification; we are holy but we are to be holy. We died with Christ but we are to put to death our members; we have rest in Christ but we are to labor to enter that rest; God has given us everything we need to live the Christian life but we are to be diligent to add to our faith. We are secure in Him but we are to make our calling and election sure; we are made worthy through the work of Christ but we are to walk worthy of our calling. There are many more such phrases but these show the distinction and reveal the "tensions" in God's Word.

Following are some examples that show how our view of this reality affects the interpretation of a passage.

In John 15:1-8, the Lord Jesus gives an extended metaphor from agriculture. There are various interpretations of this passage often presented from an existing theological position. Some would say the fruitless branches are Christians who have left their union with Christ and have thus lost their salvation. Others say the fruitless branch represents a professing believer who has not persevered thus revealing their unsaved position.

The context is that the Lord Jesus was addressing His own disciples and the pronoun "you" gives support to this fact. The Lord is not addressing believers and non-believers but only those who are in Christ. The topic is fruit bearing which is a result of "abiding." The act of abiding relates to fellowship, thus has to do with our state not our standing. There are conditional clauses, "unless you abide" and "if you abide in Me" indicating we as believers have a choice. If it were a matter of our standing, the passage would be teaching a works-based salvation.

Verse 6 sounds like a text that supports the possibility of a person losing their salvation. Note that it is "they" who gather and burn and it is not the Father. The consequence of a fruitless Christian life is that there is no testimony before the unsaved. This is similar to the salt that has lost its savor and "is to be thrown out." (Mt. 5:13).

In 1 John 1:1-2:2 there are various interpretations given for this passage. The context is that John is addressing believers

as indicated by the pronouns, "we," "you," "us," and "ours." Note also the conditional clauses, "may have fellowship," "if we walk in the light," and "if we confess our sins." Some commentators look at verses 6, 8, and 10 as referring to the unsaved. The subject is "fellowship," mentioned twice in this passage; the collective pronouns indicate that there is already a relationship.

As believers, we can move out of fellowship due to unconfessed sin. The statements in verses 6, 8, and 10 present a denial of sin in a person's life. The resources in verse 9 and chapter 2:2 provide a means to restore fellowship. Verses 7 and 9 can only apply to Christians, as it is not possible for unbelievers either to walk in the light or to receive forgiveness and cleansing through confession. The only clause that touches unbelievers is in 2:2, "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."

Our standing is solely on the work of Christ on the cross and the offer of salvation. We become children of God, are adopted as sons, and become part of the body of Christ. Our state or fellowship is solely up to us and is a result of either obedience, which maintains fellowship, or disobedience that breaks fellowship. Sin sends unbelievers to a lost eternity but for believers unconfessed sin breaks fellowship.

There are many precepts, and even imperatives, that apply to our state or practice. Consider for example the book of Romans. The first eight chapters reveal God's judgment on sinners and the fullness of the salvation found in Christ. In chapters 12 to 16, the theme is how we respond to what the Lord has done for us. Presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice is a reasonable response in light of God's mercies. The verses after 12:1-2 tell us what a living sacrifice looks like and how it behaves. For instance, Romans 12:9-19 describe how a believer should act and react. These things may or may not be true of my conduct on any given day. I know I do not always give preference to others, nor always bless those who persecute me. A lack of obedience in these areas affects my fellowship with my Savior. I would think that every believer who has ever lived has failed in one of the twenty items in that list at some time or other. Thankfully, our position and security in Christ is not dependent on us. •



Gary McBride lives in Northern Ontario and fellowships at Kirkland Lake Bible Chapel. He is involved in his local Assembly but also preaches at camps and conferences. He is married to Gloria and they have two children and six grandchildren.

by Gary McBride

David Gooding (September 16, 1925 - August 30, 2019)

'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them." Rev. 14:13

My Personal Recollection of Dr. David Gooding

I first had the privilege of hearing brother David Gooding's ministry at the 1990 CMML Men's Bible Study at Greenwood Hills Bible Conference in Pennsylvania. His reputation as an accomplished professor of classics and expert on the Septuagint filled me with preconceived notions of his personality and style. Rather than dry and pedantic, I found him to be personally engaging and ever-willing to answer questions before and after the sessions. He tirelessly spent time with the brothers, paying special attention to the younger men in attendance (I was seventeen at the time.)

His thorough grasp of the Bible was not only evidenced in the teaching sessions, but was also displayed at meal times and in private discussions. Besides having the ability to discuss any portion of the Scriptures in detail, Dr. Gooding was able to break down the literary structure of the various books of the Bible. For example, I once saw him outline the book of Numbers on napkins in the dining hall. Many believers remember him intoning in his elegant British accent: "There is pattern, structure, and thought flow - but the greatest of these is thought flow!" It is no exaggeration to say that his detailed expositions of God's Word revolutionized my personal Bible study and influenced scores of others throughout North America and the rest of the world.

Brother Gooding had a tremendous love for his brothers and sisters in Christ, and was especially interested in missions around the world. During the authoritarian Franco regime, he bravely visited believers in Spain, and is especially remembered for his meetings at La Granja Bible camp. Towards the end of the cold war, his good friend John Lennox and he used their academic credentials to share the gospel among many of the intelligentsia in the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s they wrote extensively for - and sometimes travelled to - countries that had long been deprived of sound Bible teaching. Separately, he also made many visits to missionaries around the world and kept up friendships with believers from every corner of the globe.




Over the years, my family was privileged to visit brother Gooding multiple times. He was unfailingly hospitable and was an excellent conversationalist (many international students also found sanctuary in his home). He was genuinely interested in others and particularly loved talking about the gospel and evangelism. He also possessed a great sense of humor which was shown by a particularly embarrassing moment for me: I was doing my "Gooding" impersonation with a friend at a large conference, never realizing that he was standing behind me! He said nothing at the time, but when I encountered him later at the same gathering, I sputtered: "Brother Gooding, I'm Keith Keyser; I met you sometime ago at Greenwood Hills . . ." He replied with a bemused expression and tone: "Yes, I remember YOU very well!"

I am grateful for the way that the Lord used brother Gooding in my life and in the lives of many others. Happily, much of his ministry is preserved in audio and video format (see the outstanding website: www.myrtlefieldhouse.com), as well as books on Luke, Acts, John, Hebrews, Biblical ethics, The New Testament's usage of the Old Testament, and various apologetic books coauthored with brother John Lennox (they may be ordered from Gospel Folio Press or directly from Myrtlefield House).

A fitting way to honor brother Gooding's memory would be to love the Lord more fervently with our minds, applying our mental energies to carefully studying the Scriptures and living them out. As he said in an impromptu talk to some friends:

"The Bible likens this life to school, for a believer in the Lord Jesus. We are being trained, we are being educated, we are being prepared for the real life that lies ahead. The Bible says that creation herself, the great and glorious creation that is around us, has been made subject to vanity. To this very present, she groans in travail, waiting for the revelation of the grown-up sons of God. Even now, with its curse, all its blight, suffering, and illness, creation around us is a fascinating thing; and the universe still more fascinating. I am looking forward to getting out of school, to entering into real life, and to reigning with the Savior over the vast universe of God; and to developing with God all those wonderful schemes that God has in His mind." •

by Keith Keyser



ISSUES *and* ANSWERS

“Search The Scriptures...” John 5:39

Question: What does the Bible say about pastors?

Three biblical words are used in the New Testament to identify men overseeing the spiritual matters of the local church. Though each word describes the same role, they individually highlight specific features of their responsibility.

The first word is “elder” (*presbuteros*), literally meaning an older man¹, underlining his **competence** (Acts 14:23; 20:17; 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5). He demonstrates his suitability by his decorum and spiritual maturity. An elder must not be a novice (1 Tim. 3:6). This does not refer to physical age; instead it indicates that a spiritual novice is not qualified to lead the Lord’s people. One who is young in the faith does not yet have the biblical understanding and experience to guide other believers. Being thrust into leadership before he is ready could easily fill him with pride and its resulting condemnation.

Next is the “overseer” (*episkopos*), sometimes translated “bishop”² (Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1; Titus 1:7). This word highlights the **character** of the work, depicting it as “watching over”³ believers in the local church. The overseer keeps an eye on the spiritual condition of believers entrusted to them by Christ, the Overseer of our souls (1 Pet. 2:25). On behalf of Christ, they govern the spiritual affairs of the local church.

The final one is “shepherd or pastor” (*poimen*), the Greek word literally meaning one who is a shepherd⁴ (Eph. 4:11). The related verb (*poimainō*) means to feed, tend, care for, or shepherd (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-2)⁵. This emphasizes the **compassion** that the shepherd has for the flock. His care for them must pattern the love, sacrifice, and selflessness of Christ, the good Shepherd Who gave Himself for the sheep (Jn. 10:11).

In Scripture, these three words are used interchangeably for the same men. For example, in Acts 20 Paul called for the elders (v. 17) and told them that “the Holy Spirit has made you overseers”⁶ (v. 28). He then goes on to tell them “to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

Again in 1 Peter 5:1-2 we read, “The elders who are among you I exhort... Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for

dishonest gain but eagerly.” Here Peter exhorts the elders to shepherd or feed God’s flock, serving as overseers by watching over them.

Once again in Titus 1:5 we read “for this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you.” Later in verse 7 Paul says “For a bishop (overseer) must be blameless,” the word “for” connecting it to the previous two verses.

God’s pattern is for a plurality of elders in the local church. Many references substantiate this (ex. Acts 11:30; 14:23; 20:17; 1 Tim. 5:15; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet. 5:1). The only time the word is used in the singular is when it is referring to a specific person (ex. 1 Tim. 3:1-2; Titus 1:7; 2 Jn. 1; 3 Jn. 1). Second, one must serve willingly, exercised by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1; 1 Pet. 5:1). No one should ever be arm-twisted into this role. Third, pastors must be blameless, possessing the spiritual and character qualifications to lead the Lord’s people (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9). Fourth, elders must lead by example, not as domineering dictators, remembering that the flock belongs to Christ, Who bought them with His Own blood (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:3). Therefore, elders are under-shepherds, stewards on behalf of Christ, the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4). Fifth, Scripture never assigns a title of “pastor” to anyone exercising that gift.

In conclusion 1 Timothy 3:1 says, “If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.” Shepherding is a noble, commendable, and vital work for the Lord. •

Endnotes:

1. Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc. Publishers, 1985)
2. This word is often erroneously used in Christendom to refer to someone overseeing a wide region but scripturally a bishop oversees the flock in a local church
3. Vines op. cit.
4. Vines op. cit.
5. Vines op. cit.
6. All Bible references from the NKJV

If you have a question for this column please submit it to gferrier@cornerstonemagazine.org

by George Ferrier

News & Notices



Friends of Israel Conference

Nov 2, 2019

Westmount Gospel Chapel,
59 Kingdom St, Etobicoke, ON

Westmount Gospel Chapel is hosting a conference for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry (FOI) on Saturday November 2 from 9:00 am. to 4:00 pm. A light lunch will be provided. The speakers will include Steve Herzig, Director of North American Ministries and John Plant. For more information contact Paul Lamont at p.lamont@hotmail.ca.

Bible Lands Study Tour to Israel

Nov 4 - 13, 2019

The Bible Lands Study Tour is designed to aid spiritual growth while visiting the most beautiful land on earth. No wonder the Lord calls it His Land! Rex Trogdon is customizing a study guide for all participants to prepare for the tour. The Study Guide will be their personal Travel Journal as they enjoy a ten day "Bible conference on location." Contact Rex Trogdon at 704.516.4825 or rextrogdon@me.com to request your brochure.

Augusta College & Careers Fall Conference

November 15 - 17, 2019

Believers' Gospel Chapel,
3565 Peach Orchard Rd., Augusta, GA, 30906

The Augusta College & Careers Fall Conference begins Friday evening at 7:00 pm with speakers Steven Harrell (NC) and Jon Glock (IA) with singing by Jamie Wolfram (TN). The theme of this year's conference is "The Imperative of the Gospel: Doctrine, Practice, and Methods for Our Post-Christian Culture." For more information contact David or Tammy Hollingsworth 706.726.3987, Luke Urban 706.401.7610, or on Facebook at Augusta Fall Conference. Follow on Instagram, Snapchat, etc... Kadeem Green at kg_doulos.

Annual Ladies Christmas Retreat

November 15 - 16, 2019

Guelph Bible Conference Centre
485 Waterloo Ave., Guelph, ON

We're closer than you think! The annual Ladies Christmas Retreat will be held again this year from November 15-16 at Guelph Bible Conference Centre. It is a great opportunity for fellowship, food and fun to refresh your heart and soul. This year's speaker is Diane Carr. For more information see guelphbiblecc.com, call 519-824-2571 or email gbcc@guelphbiblecc.com.

Tavistock Area Fall Conference on Biblical Church Principles

November 16, 2019 • 9:30am - 4:30pm

Tavistock Mennonite Church,
131 Wettlaufer St., Tavistock, ON

Invited speakers: Brian Gunning will be speaking on "The History and Working of Brethren Assembly Meetings" and Bruce Hulshizer on "Discovering and Developing Your Gift."

Believers Bible Conference 2019

December 27 - 30, 2019

Murfreesboro, TN

Save the date for the biennial Believers Bible Conference. General Session speakers this year will be Mike Atwood (MS), Brady Collier (TX), and Paul Young (Wales, UK). Details and registration information available in the ad on the back page.

Israel Tour

February 24 - March 9, 2020

We have tentatively set aside dates for our next Israel trip which is a teaching tour of the Biblical sites that we come across in our travels. We will also visit the Assembly in Nazareth and share the Breaking of Bread together. Final pricing is being determined as well as the port of departure. Look for more information in the months ahead. For more information contact Steve Allan at turkeysteve@yahoo.com or 636.744.5723.

We Want Your News & Notices!

Do you have a conference, event, or service opportunity you wish to advertise to print subscribers from across Canada and the United States, and to online readers on every continent?

Submit 2-3 months in advance of the issue you would like it to appear in for print, or 3-4 months in advance for two months inclusion.

Submit online:
cornerstonemagazine.org
or by email:
gferrier@cornerstonemagazine.org

Israel/Jordan Study Tour

March 19 - April 2, 2020

Get excited about studying God's Word through a Study Tour tentatively planned in Israel and Jordan (Petra). They will be studying the Scriptures, and breaking bread with the saints at the Assembly in Nazareth. The cost is tentatively set at \$3850.00 and includes meals, airfare, entry into Jordan, and site entrance tickets. This price is based on a San Francisco departure. Any additional expenses will be borne by the traveler. This tour is open to all including those who do not know the Bible but are interested in learning. For more detailed information and registration, please contact Abraham Chacko at mamukoya@hotmail.com or 408-439-9212.

Israel Study Tour

April 28 - May 14, 2020

Roger & Myriam Liebi (Switzerland assembly), who have led previous trips in German and French, are organizing an English language trip to Israel. They will lead you through the land of Israel from the south to the north of the country. Participants will study the Word of God, and consider the Biblical, historical, archaeological, prophetic, and practical relevance of all the numerous discoveries they make in the Land of Promise. The cost is \$2995 (does not include airfare). A previous reading of Roger's book "The Messiah in the Temple" (www.ariel.org/books/the-messiah-in-the-temple) would be a good preparation for the trip. For more information contact them at info@rogerliebi.ch.

Faith & Practices of the Brethren

A new book by Alexander Kurian is now available on Amazon.

It attempts to rediscover the great biblical heritage of the Christians generally known as Plymouth Brethren by looking at their practices, why they matter, and also offers specific recommendations for evaluating and shoring up the spiritual foundations of the assemblies. For more contact Alexander Kurian at (817) 680-9973.

Full Time Camp Workers Needed

Full-time camp workers are needed to serve at Camp Horizon in Central Florida. They are looking for couples or individuals with a heart to serve the Lord in Christian camp work. The positions are paid and housing is provided. Interested candidates for administrative, maintenance, food service, or program positions should contact Steve Slusser at info@camphorizon.org and Billy Skelton at doubleportion2@outlook.com.

Head Coverings For Sale

An assortment of colors, styles, and patterned lace head coverings are available for purchase from headcoveringsonline.com. Please inquire about custom or bulk orders.

Commendation of Clive and Elisa Berry

The saints at Palms Bible Fellowship in Phoenix, Arizona have commended Clay and Elisa Berry to the grace of God for the work to which the Lord has called them. Clay has been faithfully engaged for many years in speaking at local churches, camps, and conferences in the southwest, as well as being involved in counselling and discipleship. They would value your prayers for Clay and Elisa as they continue to labor for the Lord.

Help Wanted: Voices for Christ

Voices for Christ (voicesforchrist.org) is a ministry to make Christ-centred messages available to a wider audience. They have a large list of audio messages available that can be downloaded or listened to online. They are looking for volunteers to help in this important ministry. If you are interested please contact Doug Engle at dougengle76@gmail.com or 620.200.2045.

Saints Serving

To help saints sing together, 300+ recordings of spiritual songs are available to stream or download for free on SaintsServing.net. There is also a growing number of songs on the Saints Serving YouTube channel. Most of them are a cappella or piano recordings. On the website they are keyed to the Hymns of Truth and Praise and the Hymns of Worship and Remembrance books. Some songs have alto, tenor, and bass separated out to help one learn a harmony part. See www.saintsserving.net/songs.php or subscribe on the YouTube channel to get notified when new songs are added.

Camp Director at North Star Bible Camp, Willow, AK

Interested in serving the Lord? Why not expand your horizons by serving Him on the Last Frontier at North Star Bible Camp in Willow, AK? A full-time on-site Camp Director position has opened and must be filled by October 2019. They are now taking applications and are looking for godly, Spirit-motivated couples to apply. General camp experience, good business sense and communication skills are required. This is a missionary venture and not a paid position. Hence, the applicant will need to seek the Lord for provision. Your local Assembly commendation will also be required. Please send your initial contact or resume to Stu, at stuamitchell@gmail.com or 208.971.8318.

Cornerstone Tax Receipts

A 2019 tax-deductible receipt will be issued for gifts postmarked on or before December 31, 2019.

A 2020 tax-deductible receipt will be issued for gifts received or post-marked after December 31, 2019.



CORNERSTONE Magazine
PO Box 305 Lanoka Harbor, NJ 08734

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Believers Bible CONFERENCE 2019



ILLUSTRATIONS BY PIKISUPERSTAR/FREEPIK

DECEMBER 27 - 30 • MURFREESBORO, TN

EMBASSY SUITES & CONVENTION CENTER • 1200 Conference Center Blvd., Murfreesboro, TN, 37129

GENERAL SESSION SPEAKERS

CONFERENCE FEES



**PAUL
YOUNG**



**MIKE
ATTWOOD**



**BRADY
COLLIER**

21 SESSIONS • 3 YOUNG ADULT MESSAGES

Registration includes: 3 nights accommodations, meals (3 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 dinners), conference sessions, handout materials, taxes, gratuities, parking and use of the hotel facilities.

Single \$399.00 USD/person Double \$329.00 USD/person

Triple \$289.00 USD/person Quad or More \$259.00 USD/person

Family Rate 2 adults @ \$329.00 USD ea + ___ children ages 5-12 @ \$59.00 USD ea • no charge for children under 5 years

Commuter Packages: A. All sessions & meals 179.00 USD/person

B. All sessions & meals for one day \$69.00 USD/person

TO REGISTER VISIT: WWW.BIBLECONFERENCES.ORG