

EXALTING **CHRIST** • EQUIPPING **BELIEVERS** • EVANGELIZING **THE WORLD**

CORNERSTONE

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IN THIS ISSUE:

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The Omniscience of God

My Journey...

...and more

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

After Israel's return to the land following their Babylonian captivity, enthusiasm reigned supreme as plans moved forward to rebuild the temple which had been destroyed 70 years before. The prophet Jeremiah had accurately prophesied of these events (Jer. 25:11-12), but his words went unheeded, and the nation reaped the sad results. Now, decades later, they began their return under the leadership of Zerubbabel the governor, and Joshua the high priest. They had made their plans to gather again in the place where God had put His Name. They were ready to rebuild and put their hands to the work. The year was 535 BC and from an outward standpoint, nothing stood in the way of the people of God. Or so it seemed. But after a few short years, the work abruptly ceased when the Persian monarch, King Artaxerxes issued a decree halting all temple construction. The excitement which had fueled Israel's ambitious plans quickly eroded, replaced by an attitude of complacency and spiritual indifference. Amazingly, God's people were more concerned about personal interests and self-comfort than in His concerns (Hag. 1:4). The result was a ten-year hiatus in the work of the Lord.

As I think through these events in Israel's history, the parallels today during this current pandemic are obvious. Having overcome the hurdle of figuring out how to meet again while abiding by recommended governmental guidelines, we have finally turned the ignition on the engine that has been quiet for far too long. Admittedly, things look and sound much different. The same spiritual furniture which has always been there has been rearranged. It reminds me of my boyhood days when my bedroom was rearranged during spring cleaning. My bed was put against a different wall, the dressers in a different location. They were all the same things, but it and the room had a different feel. That is the way it currently is in many local churches. There is a newness to the landscape and when Zoom is added in, there is unquestionably a sense of excitement in the air. But it is an excitement that can easily wane and dissipate over time if it is not purposefully maintained in the Lord.

Rekindling the Passion


This was the very issue that Haggai addressed in his brief four-month ministry to the Lord's people. An older man, God raised Haggai up to rebuke the returning exiles for their delay in getting back to the work of the Lord after it had stopped. They were convinced that the time had not yet come to rebuild the temple. Spiritual apathy always seems to find a chapter and verse to self-justify. The people thought they had God's timeline down and came up with a convenient and plausible excuse—at least in their minds—to hold back from moving ahead. For many who remain at home and take advantage of video conferencing

options for health reasons, all well and good, and perfectly understandable. But for those who lag in coming back because of the comfort and convenience of a home-based worship alternative, the words of Haggai would clearly apply: *"Consider your ways!"* (Hag. 1:5). Whether it is an issue of fear over faith, or simply a case of spiritual apathy, if the Lord calls out through His Spirit *"Consider your ways,"* it would be advisable to take note!

Calling the people to action, it took a mere three weeks for the people to change direction (Hag. 1:8-12). How we need more prophets like him! The hearts of many of God's people had become dull and they needed a rekindling of their passion. Like the church at Ephesus, we might also need to be reminded in time not to not leave our first love, a rekindling of our passion, especially if we see the excitement begin to settle down. Otherwise, the Lord may send a jolting message from a brother like Haggai to stir us up out of our slumber.

Remembering the Plan

But there is another tact that the Lord takes to help His people move forward by faith. For Israel, it came through the encouraging ministry of the younger man named Zechariah who had a series of eight visions in a single night. They were given to encourage God's people to *"keep on keeping on"* and to keep the bigger picture in view. He wanted to remind them that their labor would not be in vain in the Lord. How many of us need to hear this also! God is working on a much bigger canvas than we can take in at one glance, and we need to take a step back to see the bigger spiritual picture that we have the privilege to have a part in. The Scriptures help us to do just that as Zechariah's visions did for Israel. Through the diligent and consistent study of NT truth and the accurate ministry of the Word, whether it be through young or old, it will accomplish the same effect in our lives as well.

Regathered in place, rekindling the passion, remembering the plan—a sure fire approach to keep the focus clear and the love strong as we live in the light of His imminent return, looking for that blessed hope as we see the Day approaching. 



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by Mark Kolchin

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

CHRIST — OR — CULTURE?

The Woman's Role in the Local Church



To say that the woman's role in the church is a controversial subject would be an understatement! Sadly, the subject in the local church is increasingly being challenged today. Many churches have divided over this issue, resulting in many hurts and families leaving their meetings. The pressures of society, genderism, feminism, and equal rights have brought about great misunderstanding about the role of men and women in society. Unfortunately, because of these misconceptions the issue has spilled over into our churches. There is often an inadequate response as to what the Scriptures teach, why the church takes the position it does, and too often many are not open or do not wish to understand what is meant by biblical equality in the local church. Does equality mean there are no distinctions between men and women in society and in the assembly?

In many present-day cultures and paganist societies womanhood has suffered greatly. Women are subordinate to men, second-class citizens, often abused and degraded. Her role is simply to bear children, be the servant of men, and satisfy his lustful pleasures. "Woman in the mind of pagan man, is little better than a serf oppressed by a lustful lord."¹ This is obviously not the mind or heart of God, nor does Scripture commend this type of attitude. By God's grace may we seek to discern the mind of the Holy Spirit on this important topic.

From the time of creation, God gave unique and distinctive qualities and responsibilities to men and women, that beautifully complement each other. The Bible never suggests that women are unequal to men. Both equally enjoyed precious communion with God in the garden. Both uniquely became "one flesh," when they were brought to each other (Gen. 2:23-24). Adam and Eve complimented each other. There was no sense of inequality prior to sin entering the world. Eve, meaning "the mother of all living," (Gen. 5:20), would bear children and naturally love, care, and nurture their offspring. This honor was given to Eve and through her seed, "seed of the woman" (Gen. 3:15), the Lord Jesus would come.

Sadly, because of sin, there were consequences (Gen. 3:16-19). Judgments were placed on the serpent, Eve, and Adam. Eve would now experience pain in childbearing. In verse 16 God establishes the headship of her husband, but never was it to be a tyrannical headship. "Your desire shall be toward

your husband." This obviously would bring a change in their relationship.

Adam would now toil and deal with many obstacles in his work. Genesis 3:18 says, *"thorns and thistles"* reminding us of the daily problems and struggles still today in the workplace. This was never experienced in Eden before sin. Because of sin, both were removed from the garden and both no longer enjoyed the presence of God walking with them. Sadly, death would eventually bring an end to their relationship as husband and wife.


In Exodus 35:21-29, we see the role God gave to women and men in the building of the tabernacle. We see a unique oneness in its preparation and building. Both men and women brought their offerings and skills which they presented to the Lord: *"Then everyone came whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and they brought the LORD's offering...They came, both men and women, as many as had a willing heart...And every man who offered an offering of gold to the LORD" (vv. 21- 22); "Everyone who offered an offering of... All the women who were gifted artisans...And all the women whose hearts were stirred with wisdom" (v. 24-26).* It was never a competition; rather they complemented each other in building the tabernacle. The women who were gifted artisans spun yarn for the making of the veil, the door, the gate, the tabernacle covering etc., as well as for the making of the priestly garments. The men built the furniture, the boards, and pillars for the tabernacle. They worked equally, but each had unique responsibilities and they complemented one another and brought glory to God, and blessing to the nation. But there were never women priests!

In the New Testament, and because of Christianity, women are given a unique role, which is not found in our world. In Christ, there are absolutely no distinctions between women and men. *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3: 28).* Yes, there were Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, and male and female in the local assembly, but in Christ, all distinctions are gone. We have been *"accepted in the beloved," (Eph. 1:6).* We are all members of one body (1 Cor. 12:12). This is not true of the world's religions such as Islam, Hinduism etc.

The distinctions between the two genders is beautiful, but they have nothing to do with equality. God created us male and female, nothing more, nothing less and gave us an array of distinctions. Generally, the nature of women is more caring, tender, nurturing and loving. Because Eve was the "mother of all living" she was given these qualities. The husband is exhorted to love (agape) his wife as Christ loved His bride, the Church: unconditionally; sacrificially; and without reserve (Eph. 5:25). *"For the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is Head of the church; He is the Savior (Protector, Defender) of the body" (Eph. 5:23).*

The headship of the husband is not a position of superiority or rights, but of responsibility. He is not to be the bully nor the demanding lord. He is to lovingly respect her, protect her, and be the primary provider for her, and their children.

By divine inspiration, Paul deals with the subject of public prayer and the distinctive roles of men and women in the local church (1 Tim. 2:8-15; 1 Cor. 14:34-35). *"I desire that the men (masculine) pray everywhere" (1 Tim. 2:8).* He mentions the silence of the women in the public meetings of the local church and explains the reason for it (1 Tim. 2:11-15). Nowhere in the New Testament are the sisters given the place of public ministry. But in verse 15, he tells us of the distinctive honor, and unique, dignified position women have in bringing children into the world. In Luke 1:28, Mary was *"highly favored;"* the Lord was with her; and she is called *"Blessed are you among women."* Psalm 127:3 says, *"Behold children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward."* I believe Paul confirms these verses and reminds women of the privilege of raising a family for God. I would never have been able to fulfill the call God placed on me if my wife had not been 101% behind me! Raising children for God can have far more influence than any public ministry in the Church. Yes, there are women who do not marry, and there are those who cannot conceive, but God can give them a ministry far more influential, than public prayer or preaching. However, most women do marry and raise children for the Lord. They too are *"highly favored."* In bearing precious new life, are they not *"saved"* (1 Tim. 2:15), that is are they not elevated to the true honor of motherhood? However, there is a condition, *"if they (both parents) continue in faith, love, and holiness with self-control."* President Abraham Lincoln said, *"I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life."* Take time also to read Paul's teaching regarding the complimentary roles of older and younger women in Titus 2:3-5.

I often wonder who will receive the greater reward in heaven: preachers; teachers; men who take a public part in church meetings; or the mothers and wives who love; support; and stand by their husbands. I think I know, don't you? 

1. James Gunn, I Will Build My Church, p. 136



Jim and his wife Heather make their home in Barrie, Ontario (Canada) where they fellowship at Northside Bible Chapel. Commended to the Lord's work, Jim is a frequent conference speaker in Canada and the USA

by James Comte

The OMNISCIENCE of GOD from Psalm 139

David begins Psalm 139 marveling about God's knowledge: "O Lord, You have searched me and known me." We conduct a search to find something that is lost or to obtain information about something of which we want to know more. But that doesn't apply here. It is not that at some moment God chose to examine David more closely. Rather at any moment it is as though God had done a thorough examination and knew David through and through.

"You know my sitting down and my rising up" (v. 2).

For example, when Philip brought Nathanael to the Lord Jesus, the Lord told him, "When you were under the fig tree, I saw you" (John 1:48).

"You understand my thoughts afar off" (v. 2)

For example, "Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard" (1 Sam. 1:13), but the

Lord knew her thoughts. When the scribes questioned His authority to forgive sins, "Jesus perceived in His Spirit that they reasoned thus among themselves" (Mark 2:8). When the disciples were indignant about Mary anointing Him with oil, "Jesus was aware of it" (Matt. 26:10). When the Pharisees attributed His casting out demons to Beelzebub, "Jesus knew their thoughts" (Matt. 12:25). When the Pharisees were displeased about His healing on the Sabbath, "He knew their thoughts" (Luke 6:8).

"You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways" (v. 3)

Some translations render it, "You search out my path..." (ESV). It may be the idea of soldiers setting an ambush or sending out spies to discover the enemy in his march and ensure that there is no escape. Another suggestion is that it be translated "winnowed" or "sifted," speaking of the most

discriminating examination such that the Lord knows not only what is done but why it is done. Hannah said, *"The Lord is the God of knowledge..."* (1 Sam. 2:3): He knows the facts about every situation, *"... and by Him actions are weighed"*: He knows what is behind the actions taken. That's why Paul could tell the Corinthians that they had no right to judge him and his motives: *"It is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court..."* He hesitated even to judge himself because it is difficult for us to be truly objective in assessing ourselves: *"I do not even judge myself..."* But the Lord knows: *"He who judges me is the Lord"* (1 Cor. 4:3-4).

***"For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether"* (v. 4)**

Sometimes we may be deliberately evasive in answering a question or sharing information. We may even be guilty of saying something that is true but it is said in such a way that the listener gets the wrong message. But the Lord accurately sees what is behind the words spoken. For example, when the Herodians asked Him if it was lawful to pay taxes, *"Jesus perceived their wickedness"* (Matt. 22:18). He knows what is said, why it is said, and what remains unsaid. Indeed, *"Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether"* (ESV).

***"You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me"* (v. 5)**

This could be understood as a statement about God's protection. He hedges us around so that nothing can harm us, much as He did when He allowed Satan to get at Job but limited what he could do to him. However, David is writing about God's knowledge. The ESV reads, *"You hem me in..."* It is almost claustrophobic that He surrounds on every side and there is no escape from His omniscience.

***"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain it"* (v. 6)**

He knows my movements, my thoughts, my actions, my words, my person. He knows me through and through, better than I know myself. It is said of the Lord Jesus that *"He knew all men and had no need that anyone should testify of man, because He knew what was in man"* (John 2:24-25).

He knew what Nathanael was doing when Philip called him: *"I saw you under the fig tree."* And He also knew the kind of person Nathanael was, an Israelite indeed in whom is not guile, such that Nathanael asked, *"How do you know me?"*

Peter recognized that the Lord knew about his boast that he would never deny Him and about how differently it turned out: *"Lord, you know all things."* But the Lord also knew how Peter felt about what had happened and what he really felt about the Lord Jesus: *"You know that I love you"* (John 21:17).

It is a sobering thought. We may deceive others, even deceive ourselves, but we can never deceive God. *"There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and bare to the*

eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Heb. 4:13).

It is a comforting thought. You may have been treated unfairly, you may find yourself in circumstances that are difficult to handle, you may be disappointed with yourself and with others, you may be lonely and feel that no one cares. The old hymn says:

Jesus knows all about our struggles;
He will guide 'til the day is done:
There's not a Friend like the lowly Jesus:
No, not one! no, not one!"¹

I think of Hagar when she fled from Abraham's household. The Lord knew the events that had occurred: her pregnancy, the cruelty of her mistress, her flight from Abraham's house. He knew her circumstances: in the wilderness, alone, abandoned, with nothing to drink. He also knew how she felt: the loneliness, the hopelessness, the frustration. And the angel of the Lord came alongside with a message of comfort about the son she would have. *"Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-are-the-God-who-sees"* (Gen. 16:13).

Finally, it is a challenging thought. David concludes Psalm 139 by asking the Lord, *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"* (vv. 23-24). Obviously, this search isn't for God's benefit. David had begun the psalm by affirming that God already knew everything about him. It is as if he said, "Lord, I have searched myself, and can see no wicked way in me. But Your sight is much better than mine and it may be that You see some evil habit, some unconfessed sin, some selfish attitude, some bad feeling towards another. I would know the worst about myself, that I might take corrective action. Therefore, if You know of any such way in me, cause me to know it also."

Search me, O God, and know my heart today,
Try me, O Savior, know my thoughts, I pray;
See if there be some wicked way in me;
Cleanse me from every sin, and set me free.² 📖

1. *No, Not One*, Johnson Oatman Jr.

2. *Search Me, O God*, J. Edwin Orr



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by Bill Yuille

GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS *Lamentations 3:23*

My Journey from Judaism to Atheism to Faith The Testimony of Larry Kramer

When young I was active in my local synagogue where I had my Bar Mitzvah and was in the youth group. Later in college, I was treasurer of the Hillel Jewish group, but functionally an atheist. I drank heavily and engaged in improper relationships with women but justified this by lowering my standards. I enjoyed debating others including Christians, but none could convince me that Jesus was not just a misguided Jewish man of the 1st century.

While studying toward a master's degree in psychology I began to read the Bible and attend a Bible study to be more "well-rounded." During long walks home from university at night I began silently talking to God, in imitation of what I had read of Abraham. I remembered Abraham bargained with God concerning his nephew Lot, and I figured since I was Jewish, I could also do this. So, I told God that if within one week He gave me the answer to one of my intellectual objections to faith that I would do whatever it took to learn more about who He was, even if it led to something ridiculous like believing in Jesus.



That week I was on the phone with my mother and asked why she and my father had not stepped in more to deal with bullying when I was young and she said it was to avoid keeping me from turning into the man I was meant to be. As I got off the phone it struck me this could be a partial answer to my nagging question of why God allows suffering. I tried to ignore this, but impossible as it seemed, God appeared to have kept His side of the bargain by answering one of my questions. Now I felt I had to keep my end of the bargain with God!

The next day I went to a Christian friend and said that I needed to find out the truth about God. He suggested I read the New Testament and lent me a Bible, but one with archaic English that made reading it difficult. I had many questions including whether God calls people to rational or “blind” faith, and how defensible an agnostic or atheist world view was. I also read some helpful literature such as “The Evidence for the Resurrection” by J.N.D. Anderson.

On a long weekend I drove home to see my father and told him of my struggle to figure out what was true, and frustration at not being able to read the Bible. He said my uncle had sent a modern Bible translation to my brother, who did not want it and had therefore given it to my dad the day before. My dad gave this Bible to me, and I was so excited at how readable it was that I read ten chapters that night.

The next day I drove to my old college town and told my girlfriend Lynne, who was a Christian, that I was conflicted about what I believed. She said I should “put my faith in Jesus” but I said that unless I was sure Jesus was who He claimed to be, I could not do this and that I was close to just tossing the issue out the door. That Sunday I woke with a strange burning desire to go to church. I rushed downstairs, only to have Lynne’s mom tell us we could go back to bed, since the church furnace had broken, and services were canceled. We found another church and arrived as the minister began preaching from a passage that I had just read the last night. In this passage Jesus said “Behold, My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3: 34-35). Hearing this I realized that part of why I was hesitant to believe, despite having most of my intellectual objections resolved, was because I knew my family might be furious.

At the end of the message, I went to speak to the minister, and he walked me through a booklet called the “Four Spiritual Laws.” He read John 3:16 to me and asked if I believed this, to which I replied, that I thought it was possibly true. He then said that the Bible says all people have sinned, leading to spiritual death and separation from God as it states in Isaiah 59:2, and 64:6. He asked if I agreed, receiving another non-committal reply from me.


Now it got uncomfortable because he said Jesus was God’s only provision to deal with my sin, God having demonstrated His love in sending Jesus to die in my place (Isa. 53:5-6; Rom. 5:8). The minister then said that to be forgiven by God I needed to personally put my faith in Jesus, receiving Him as my Savior (Messiah) as it says in John 1:12. He asked if I wanted to do this and to my shock, I heard myself say, “Yes.” The minister was excited and asked me to pray the suggested prayer from the booklet. I refused, saying that if all he told me was true, that God would hear a prayer in my own words, and I proceeded to hesitantly pray.

While the minister was excited, I did not feel any different and was unsure anything had really happened. However,

Lynne was ecstatic and I figured if by some chance something had happened when I prayed, then maybe my life would get easier. Instead, that day I was kicked out of the house by her parents. I drove six hours chased by a winter storm and arrived back where I lived just in time to go to my friend’s home Bible study.

The next week, I read “The Screwtape Letters” by C. S. Lewis. This fantasy novel consists of letters of advice written by a senior demon to a novice demon. At one point, the demon advises how to deceive humans about the true nature of a specific sin. I was astounded to realize that my rationalizations were the same ones the senior demon in the novel had suggested getting humans to believe. Suddenly I felt like God was the size of a mountain looming over me and realized how offensive my behavior had been in the sight of a holy God. I prayed to God something like this, “God, I don’t know if I really believed when I prayed last Sunday, but now I know that I have sinned before You and do need to be forgiven. I believe that Jesus died in my place to pay for my sins and ask You to forgive me based on what He did for me and to be the man you know I should become.”

I valued my Jewish heritage, did not want to discard it and joyfully found in the Bible that the coming of Jesus was a fulfillment of Messianic prophecies (such as Isaiah 53), and that my new faith was not a rejection of my heritage, but a completion. To this day I deeply value my Jewish heritage, observe Hanukah and Passover at home, and have sought to help my children realize how wonderful their heritage is.

God has graciously forgiven me and brought me into a relationship with Himself and given me a wonderful family and career as a biologist. I had previously been foul-mouthed, often drunk, manipulated women, and engaged in petty theft. But by God’s grace, my life was radically changed. I am far from perfect, but I have come to realize that while the mountain top experiences of special joy in the Lord are wonderful, often it is in the valleys of daily life that I best come to know, trust, obey, and become like my Lord. Through it all, I am thankful to God for allowing me to know Him, as not only my Savior and Messiah in Jesus, but as the best friend I could ever have! 



Larry Kramer earned his PhD degree in Cell and Developmental Biology at Rutgers University and teaches at a local community college where he also advises a CRU (formerly Campus Crusade) student group. Larry also preaches and serves the Lord in other ways including youth ministry. He and his wife Linda and family attend Terrill Road Bible Chapel in Fanwood, NJ.

by **Larry Kramer**

Report: The Story of North Atlanta Bible Chapel



North Atlanta Bible Chapel (NABC) was established in the 1940's as a home church. In the early 1950's the assembly erected a building and for many years they ministered in the North Druid Hills neighborhood of North Atlanta, GA. In the early 2000's, the neighborhood transitioned to a more upscale population and little growth was seen in the assembly. In 2013 the Lord opened a door for us to move to a neighborhood full of apartments with unsaved families in Doraville, GA. After much prayerful consideration, we sold the North Druid Hills building and purchased the property in Doraville. On June 1, 2014, we opened the doors for our first Sunday morning meeting, and that evening we began our inaugural ministry to the neighborhood children with a Vacation Bible School (VBS) conducted by Phil and Edna Guikema from Orlando, Florida. Several of the children who attended that VBS professed salvation and we praised the Lord for His great blessing. Since then we have continued running an annual VBS program.

Following our first successful VBS, we understood that we were to be a missionary local church, and we began trying out different types of outreach into the neighborhood, such as basketball games, fall festivals, and children's Friday night and Saturday morning programs. The NABC Kid's Club program on Sunday evenings during the school year became a regular ministry in the fall of 2015. The first year we used Venture Club materials, but in August 2016, we began creating our own materials to suit our particular needs. Each week's Kids Club (ages 5-12) includes a Bible lesson with the children participating by helping to act out the lesson. They learn memory verses that have been set to music, enjoy an active game time, and spend time in small groups with a leader working on a puzzle page that reinforces the memory verse and previous week's lesson. We also provide them a meal at the end of the evening. As the children who attended our first VBS in 2014 continued to come, a separate youth group was created for ages 12 and up.

The children are encouraged to return on Sunday mornings for Sunday School and they have come. Many Sundays there are more children in the pews than adults! Breakfast is always provided before Sunday School and lunch is provided following the meetings. This is the result of a partnership with a food ministry organization that allows us to receive food donations from a large Atlanta law firm each week. The amount of food varies, but oftentimes there is enough to be able to send extras home with the kids to share with their parents.


As we began to get to know the needs of the neighborhood and earn their trust, a clothing ministry was started with donated clothing and other household items being given out free to those who are in need. The clothing store is open to the public one Sunday afternoon each month. Flyers written in English and Spanish are distributed each month in the neighborhood to inform families of the opportunity to receive free clothing. We are grateful to many other assemblies throughout Georgia, Florida, and New Jersey who have heard of our efforts and have donated clothing, school supplies, and other items. It was also a great joy to be able to send ten of the neighborhood children to Camp Hope in Dahlonega, GA this past summer for a week of fun.

Through all of these ministries we have seen over a dozen individuals make professions of faith, follow the Lord in baptism, and begin participating in the Breaking of Bread meeting. We know, of course, that none of this could be done without the Lord's presence and power, the prayers of faithful brothers and sisters of North Atlanta Bible Chapel, as well as saints everywhere.



Our three-fold theme while we wait for the Lord's return is:

1. Worship Him
2. Work for Him
3. Witness for Him

We are praying for more workers, and especially bilingual couples or singles, who are willing to serve with us at North Atlanta Bible Chapel, so we can also reach the parents who for the most part, do not speak English. The work is not easy, but when we run with endurance the race set before us, we find that our God is faithful and does wonderful things! 




Wayne Pulkin is an elder at North Atlanta Bible Chapel.

by **Wayne Pulkin**

FOUNDATIONS

of the faith

THE WORK OF SANCTIFICATION



The wonderful effect of God's grace is that a sinner can cry out to God for salvation and receive forgiveness of sins. But in salvation, God does more than just forgive. He saves people from their sins and begins the process of changing us from a sinner having a desire to sin to a saint having a desire to be holy.

If one wants to walk with and enjoy a holy God, then one must be holy. Five times in Leviticus, the believer is called to be holy (11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7; 20:26; 21:8). Remembering this command, Peter reminds believers that they are to be holy in all their conduct (1 Pet. 1:13-16).

There are three facets to sanctification. The first is seen on the day of salvation, when the blood of Christ purges the sinner from sin and sets the believer apart for God (Heb. 13:12). On that basis, the believer is positionally sanctified (Heb. 10:14) and called holy (Col. 3:12; 1 Th. 5:27; Heb. 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9). *"As he is, so are we in this world"* (1 John

4:17). They are called saints (Rom. 1:7; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2) and this makes it possible for them to live a holy life.

The second facet is practical, or progressive sanctification, and is seen in the believer's daily life (1 John 1:9). Believers are in the process of being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). This means that the believer learns to stop practicing old, sinful habits (Eph. 4:17-5:5), and instead begins having Christ-like characteristics (Eph. 4:15, 25-29; 5:2, 8-9; Phil. 4:8).

The third facet will be seen in the future, when the believer is in heaven (1 John 3:2; Rom. 6; 2 Th. 3:13; 5:23; 1 Cor. 3:17; Eph. 1:4; 2:21). It is our final sanctification. There will be a day when the process of practical sanctification will be complete, and the believer will no longer struggle with sin (Eph. 5:27; 1 John 3:2-3). How does God practically sanctify the believer today?

It is the Work of the Holy Spirit

He is the power that works within. He regenerates, giving new life to the sinner (Titus 3:5; John 6:63), baptizes the believer into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), indwells (1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Tim. 1:14), and seals (Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30) to produce practical sanctification. He also fills the believer with Christ (Eph. 5:18). The Holy Spirit is not interested in filling the believer with sin or the things of the world. His desire is to fill his people with the character, mind, and heart of Christ (Eph. 1:17-19). In addition, He gives believers spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:7-11). These gifts are designed to build up the body of Christ and for the care of God's people (1 Pet. 4:10). He also comforts (John 14:16-17, 26; Acts 9:31), gives strength to God's people (Acts 1:8), and produces fruit in the believer's life (Gal. 5:22-23). There are so many things the Holy Spirit does on behalf of the believer for our sanctification.

It is the Work of Christ

Believers cannot obtain righteousness and sanctification on their own. It is a work of God. In Ephesians 5:25-26 Paul writes, "*Christ loved the church... gave himself... that He might sanctify.*" What does Christ do to sanctify the believer? He became a Savior (John 3:16), offering Himself as the sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:12-14). He became a Shepherd (John 10:11), guiding believers out of sin (John 8:12), and into paths of righteousness (Psa. 23:3). He is a High Priest (Heb. 4:14), a Mediator between God and man (Heb. 1:3). Through Christ, a sinner can have a clean conscience before God (Heb. 9:14), made possible by the sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 10:10). As High Priest, Christ prays for those who belong to Him (Isa. 53:12; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25), restores fellowship (1 John 2:1), and produces fruit in the believer's life (John 15:1-7).

It is the Work of the Father

The Father cleanses and prunes the believer (1 Th. 5:23; John 15:1-2). Just as a gardener cares for plants, so the Father

takes care of His own. As a plant may have branches that are not useful, so the believer may have things in their life that are not useful to God nor helpful for spiritual growth. In such cases, the Father works to rid the believer of things that are not bearing fruit.

The Father also sanctifies through discipline (Heb. 12:3-12). As parents discipline their children, so the Father disciplines his children. Though never pleasant, it produces the fruit of righteousness (Heb. 12:11).


It is the Work of the Word of God

The Lord longs for his disciples to be sanctified (John 17:17, 19), and uses the Word of God to accomplish this aim (Psa. 119:11). His Word is foundational in believers' lives (Josh. 1:8; Neh. 9:3; Psa. 119:18). It is to form the culture of the Christian's life (Ezra 11:12) and is spiritual bread (Matt. 4:4).

Conclusion

Is it possible to be holy as God is holy? Can God change our desires from being sinful to being righteous? Believers come to God believing that in His love, mercy and grace, he not only will forgive sin, but also cleanse the believer from all unrighteousness. It begins with God's work of salvation where God in mercy, forgives and places the repentant sinner into the family of God. It continues with God's work of sanctification, where God in patience and love, changes the heart and transforms the mind to produce a Christ-like character in the believer's life.

God promises that he will bring to completion the work He began in the life of a sinner when He saved him. With this in mind, every genuine believer should expect to see progress in the area of sanctification. This progress is not produced in the flesh, nor is it an act of the will. It is a work of God.

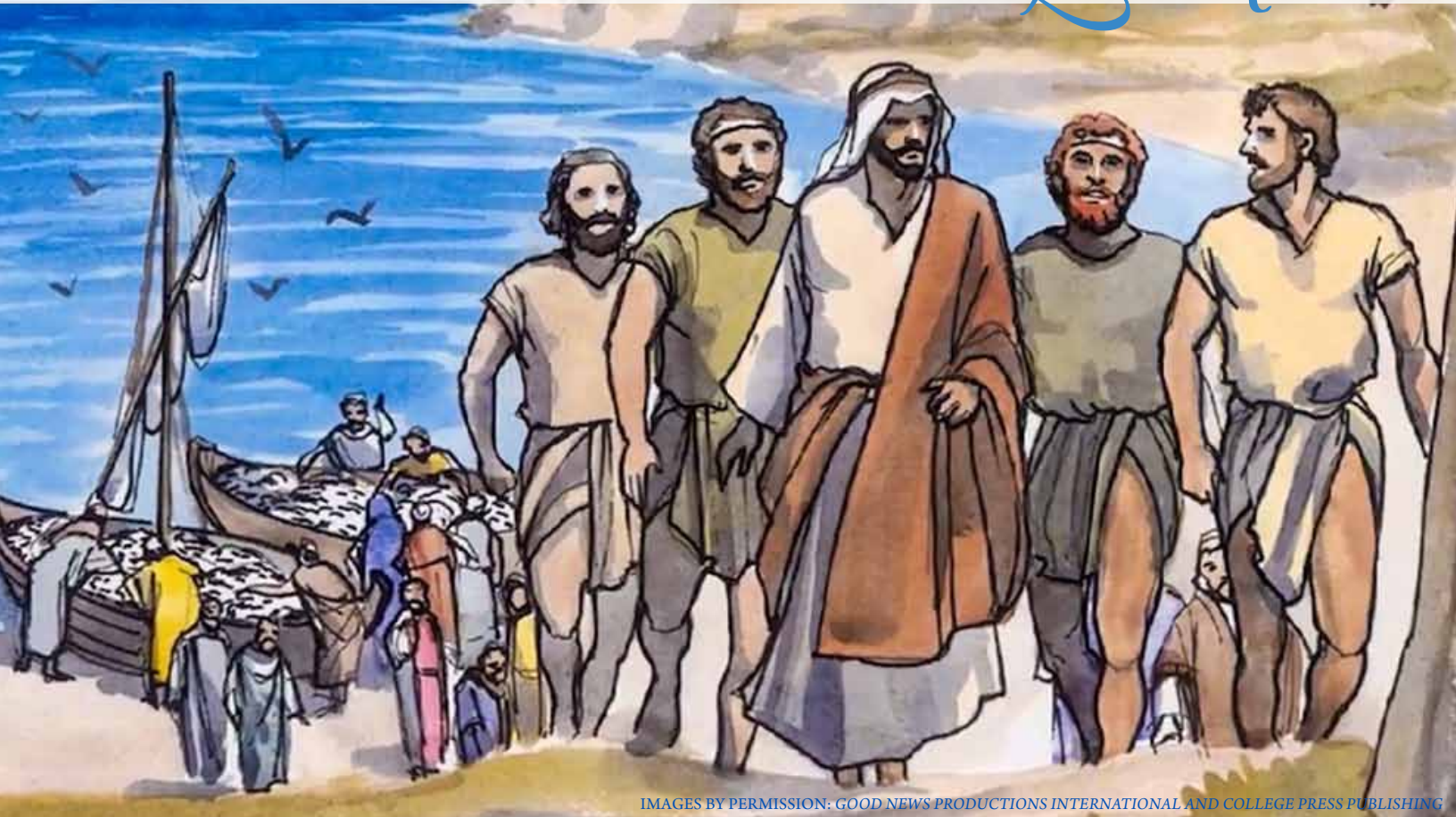
Salvation is more than forgiveness and more than justification. It involves a cry of the heart to be rescued from a life that is saturated with sin, and to see that life changed from having a desire to sin to having a desire to be holy, pure, undefiled, like the character of Christ. Christ does what humanity cannot. He justifies and sanctifies the sinner who has come to God in repentance and faith. 



Mark Swaim and his wife Tami were commended to the work of the Lord in 1997 from the assembly in Palisades Park, NJ. They served in Poland for 11 years, where Mark was active preaching and teaching the Word of God. Since 2009, Mark has returned to Poland numerous times. He has also traveled in recent years to Portugal, engaging in an itinerant teaching ministry and establishing intensive Bible study programs. Mark and Tami have 5 boys and 1 girl and fellowship at Monterey Chapel in Leola, PA.

by Mark Swaim

PEOPLE AROUND THE *Lord*



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THOMAS CALLED DIDYMUS

The Gospel of John gives Thomas, one of the twelve disciples chosen by the Lord Jesus Christ, a description which is different from the one that has characterized him throughout history. John is the only New Testament writer who describes Thomas as Didymus, or the twin, and he does so three of the four times Thomas is mentioned in his gospel. Since twins are often closer to each other than other siblings in their attitudes and activities, we might well conclude that representation of Thomas, as “the twin,” influenced his behavior during that dark time after our Lord’s crucifixion and caused him to be absent from the Upper Room that resurrection evening.

Although Thomas is listed in the middle grouping of the disciples in the four New Testament presentations in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Acts, his speaking role is only recorded by John. Since the Holy Spirit caused John to document his words in John 11, 14, and 20, Thomas must have reflected on them himself, when he was noted as missing from the other disciples.

Where was Thomas when the sheep were scattered after the Shepherd was stricken? (Zech. 13:7) It seems likely that Thomas might have sought shelter with his filial friend—his twin, Didymus. Perhaps after the crucifixion and during their seclusion, Thomas recounted his own encounters with the Lord to his twin, Didymus.

In John’s arrangement of the life of Jesus Christ, all the disciples would have heard the seven great “I AM” metaphors of Christ’s deity, which is stressed in John 8:58, “*Before Abraham was, I AM.*” In fact, Thomas could have told his twin brother Didymus* that his own conversation with Jesus prompted two of the I AM pronouncements. In the matter of Lazarus’ sickness and the request of his sisters to have the Lord return to Bethany to help them, Thomas, knowing the intention of the Jews to stone Jesus (John 10:31), said to his companions, “*Let us also go, that we may die with Him.*” (John 11.16), which suggests character traits not only of loyalty and leadership, but also of pessimism.

Jesus followed Thomas' recorded remark ten verses later with the transcendent fifth deity declaration, "I AM the resurrection and the life... he who believes in Me shall never die." Then a dozen verses later Jesus called, "Lazarus, come out!" Imagine the incredulity of Didymus* when he heard that his own brother saw the divine power of the Lord Jesus raising a decomposing corpse to life with a shout! Surely Didymus would have wanted to know more about his twin's time with Jesus.

Thomas then might have told Didymus that he himself was one of the five disciples to speak during the historic last Passover meal after the traitor had left (John 13:28-14:24). John begins first with a question about the betrayer, which led Jesus to proclaim His new commandment that we "... love one another as I have loved you." Peter then followed with his boast that, "I will lay down my life for You." Thomas may have reminded Didymus that Peter's declaration was not unlike his own bold pledge, "... that we may die with Him."

Before Philip and Jude had their say, Thomas entered the conversation with a question, "Lord we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" Although at this point Didymus might have accused his brother of being the doubter in their family, Thomas could report that his verse led to Jesus declaring His sixth I AM statement, "I AM the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Thomas and Didymus could have spent much time during their hideout discussing the theology of this extensive and exclusive passage. Then, Philip and Jude each make their comments, providing the Lord an opportunity to respond with an eternal and a temporal verity: "I am in the Father and the Father is in Me," and "...if anyone loves Me, he will keep my word..."

The next Johannine conversation that Thomas could have related to Didymus* was when the ten disciples told Thomas after he finally returned to them that, "We have seen the Lord." But, consider the incredulity of Didymus when Thomas related his obstinate demand to touch the wounds of Calvary! "Unless I see..., and put my hand..., I will not believe" (John 20:25).


These three incidents in the life of Thomas must have swirled in his thoughts after the Lord's crucifixion when he was either alone or possibly reminiscing with Didymus - his offer to die with Jesus, his grasp of the way, the truth and the life of Jesus Christ, and his demand for "infallible proofs" to quote Luke in Acts 1:3. Didymus* may have exhorted Thomas to return eight days later to that Upper Room, and, who knows, maybe the twins were together when Jesus said to Thomas, "Reach your fingers here... Do not be unbelieving, but believing." This powerful pronouncement by Thomas that Jesus Christ is "The Lord of me and the God of me!" rings in the decisive truth that Jesus the Man is risen, and that He is God. The Lord Jesus then caps Thomas'

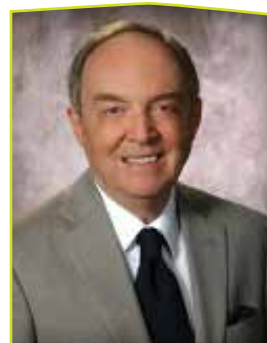
statement with His last and most precious beatitude for us in the gospels, "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

The evangelist then proclaims to us the purpose of why these things were written, including the speaking roles of Thomas, called Didymus, "... that you might believe." Didymus and Bible readers through the coming centuries should thank God for what the Holy Spirit has revealed to us by the apostle Thomas' personal part in John's gospel. His deity affirming announcement about Jesus Christ is "... written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:31)

Later, Didymus might have asked Thomas if he had missed anything because of his absence during that first "Peace be with you" appearance when the risen Lord Jesus Christ appeared amid His disciples. In addition to missing the joy of seeing the Lord, Thomas wasn't there to hear the commissioning of the apostles, to experience the breathing on them of the Spirit (anticipating Pentecost); and to receive the conferring on them of spiritual, judicial privileges. Didymus might want to ask the same question of Christ's followers today, when they are missing from meetings— "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).

Thomas himself saw that Jesus had died, and then he later witnessed the wounds of the risen Savior. But what do we see when Jesus is in our midst? We see bread and wine, signifying the body and blood of Jesus Christ and reminding us of the risen Savior, placing Him in our midst. His presence should be acknowledged by noting His headship over those gathered in His name. These are the infallible proofs for us to see today.

Postscript: Just as Peter was restored by the Lord in John 21, so too Thomas was especially identified by John as the second of the seven fishermen in the boat that morning on the Sea of Galilee. A denier and a deserter became fishers of men. Could one of the two unnamed disciples in that boat have been Didymus*? We know that Peter was to fish among the Jews. Tradition tells us that Thomas fished in India. Perhaps Didymus was catching fish there also. 



Fred Schwertfeger and his wife Ruth attend Wauwatosa Bible Chapel in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he has been an elder for many years. Fred serves on the boards of Emmaus Bible College and Perrin Foundation. He is on the Advisory Council of Cornerstone Magazine. The Schwertfegers have two children and five grandchildren.

by **Frederick F. Schwertfeger**

Challenges IN THIS Current Age

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May We Introduce...

Matt Williams

Website Development

Matt Williams is a husband, father, entrepreneur, and in fellowship at Tavistock Bible Chapel in Tavistock, Ontario. Recounting his salvation Matt states, "I was saved very early in my childhood and grew slowly and steadily through great Christian influences in my assembly and throughout Southwestern Ontario." He married his wife Deanna in 2015 and they now have two boys, Micah (2) and Jonah (4 months).

Describing their current ministry he says, "Deanna and I have a passion for the spiritual growth of young adults and run a C&C Group Bible Study as well as being involved in other activities at our assembly." He started his digital marketing company, Louise Street Marketing Inc., in 2010 and it has grown steadily ever since. They service



ministries, nonprofits, and corporations. He desires to use his company to support Brethren assemblies, camps, ministries, and more. They do this by providing website development to local churches at cost as well as giving discounts to non-profits and ministries. They have worked with clients such as Uplook Ministries, MSC Canada, Gospel Folio Press, Know the Word, Cornerstone Magazine, and many more. If you have any questions or need help with your website or digital marketing presence, please feel free to contact them directly at mwilliams@louisestreet.com or visit louisestreet.com.

The Cornerstone Magazine committee is thankful to the Lord for Louise Street Marketing's contribution to this far-reaching ministry to encourage His people. 

ISSUES *and* ANSWERS

"Search The Scriptures..." John 5:39

Question: Can the Unpardonable Sin Be Committed Today?

In Matthew 12:31-32, the Lord says, *"Therefore I say to you, Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come."*

The Pharisees committed the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit in response to the Lord casting a demon out of a blind and mute man. They claimed that He performed it through Beelzebub, the ruler of demons. As in the past, they deliberately chose to deny the evidence in front of them, but on this occasion, they took it to another level. Their slanderous accusation showed that they had reached the point of no return. Their consciences were seared, their hearts were hardened, and now they could only oppose Christ.

Their darkened minds demonstrated irrational thinking—how could a house divided against itself stand? (Matt. 12:25-26). Since there were some Pharisee associates who had a ministry of casting out demons, their malevolent hearts revealed a biased inconsistency (v. 27). Why would these rulers affirm their own ministry but not Christ's? They defamed the Lord, accusing Him of performing this miracle by the power of a devil. Doing so they called the Holy Spirit a devil.


These Pharisees belonged to the generation of Israel that had rejected their King and consequently the kingdom. In spite of Christ's obvious credentials spoken of by the Old Testament prophets, their hardened hearts prevented them from hearing and believing the truth (Isa. 35:5-6; 61:1). Later, the martyr Stephen would tell them that they always resist the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51). Contrast this with the apostle Paul who had opposed Christ in ignorance until his eyes were opened on the Damascus Road.

To speak against the Holy Spirit in this manner cannot be repeated today in the church age. The Lord gave the specific time period that this sin could be committed. He said *"in this age or in the age to come."* When He was speaking to the Pharisees He spoke according to their understanding. Since the church was a mystery not yet revealed, the Pharisees

and the Old Testament prophets understood that the age to come was the future kingdom.

The Lord told them that if one committed this sin during their current age (before the church age) or in the kingdom age to come (after the church age) it will not be forgiven. That is because in the future kingdom the Lord will again be bodily present on earth. Christ is not bodily present on the earth today, so no one can personally see the Lord perform a miracle and then attribute that power to the devil. It is a sin that was possible to commit when Christ came to offer His Kingdom at His first advent and it is a sin that could possibly be committed in the future when Christ has begun His 1000-year earthly rule.

Those born during the Millennial Kingdom will witness Christ's mighty works and power. In that day the Lord Jesus will rule with a rod of iron (Psa. 2:9; Rev. 12:5; 19:15). Each sin will receive an immediate, appropriate, and measured punishment. If any should blaspheme the Spirit during His reign, it will not be forgiven.

Yet, there is an unpardonable sin today. It is the sin of unbelief. To the one who resists Christ's offer of salvation means that there can be no forgiveness for that individual. Today is the day of salvation, after death it is too late. It is not our individual sins but the sin of unbelief that assigns one to a lost eternity. However, the believer may rest assured that they cannot commit an unpardonable sin. All our sins were paid for at Calvary and God chooses to remember them no more. To God be the glory! 

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



George Ferrier is a commended full-time worker who fellowships at Bridlewood Bible Chapel in Ottawa, ON. In addition to itinerant preaching and teaching in North America and overseas, he is a regular contributor to Choice Gleanings Calendar. He is on the board of Cornerstone Magazine Inc. and also serves as assistant editor.

by George Ferrier

News & Notices



109th Labor Day Conference

September 4-7, 2020
Twin Cities, MN

Expected speakers, in the will of the Lord, are Randy Amos and Scott DeGroff. For more information see www.mnldc.net or Glen Ellis at (763) 572-1379.

Bible Conference on the Bay Harvey Cedars Bible Conference

September 14-18, 2020
Long Beach Island, NJ

Paul Young from Wales (UK) will be the special speaker for Know the Word's annual Bible Conference on the Bay. It will be held at the deluxe Harvey Cedars Bible Conference on Long Beach Island in Ocean County, NJ. Join with other believers for five uplifting days of rich ministry and great time of fellowship.

Events for the week include a visit to a New England-style seafood restaurant followed by a tour of the historic town of Ocean Grove, NJ, famous for its rich Christian heritage and renown Great Auditorium. The cost for the week: \$430 pp.

Register online by going to www.knowtheword.com or send the full amount to Know the Word c/o Mark Kolchin P.O. Box 305 Lanoka Harbor, NJ 08734. Email any questions to knowtheword@gmail.com.

Next Cornerstone Magazine Webinar

Monday September 21, 2020

The next Cornerstone Magazine webinar will be held on Monday September 21 on the topic "What is the Gospel." David Dunlap will be moderating a panel comprised of Ray Jones (ON), Gary McBride (ON), Harold Summers (BC), and Peter Kerr (ON). Stay tuned for more details.

At the time of publication these events are scheduled to take place. Due to COVID-19 please call or check online to find out if any changes have occurred.

Weekend in the Word

September 25-27, 2020
Community Gospel Chapel
Voorhees, NJ

Community Gospel Chapel will be holding their annual Weekend in the Word Bible Conference from September 25-27, 2020. The speaker will be Mark Kolchin, speaking on "The 40 Day Experiences of Scripture". Meetings will be held at the chapel and via Zoom. Times: Friday: 7:00-9:00PM; Saturday: 9AM-12NOON. To get connected virtually, contact cgospelchapel@gmail.com

Brooklyn Bible Chapel Fall Young Peoples Conference

October 3-4, 2020
Brooklyn Bible Chapel
502 Jack St, Baltimore, MD

For over forty years, Brooklyn Bible Chapel has hosted an annual fall conference for young people. By the grace of God and within His will, the Fall Young Peoples Conference is scheduled for October 3-4, 2020. This year's speaker will be Richie Benitez of New York. The conference begins Saturday at 10:00 A.M. and ends at Sunday at 2:00 P.M. There will be an afternoon activity determined by the restrictions in the area. The cost of the conference is \$10.00 and housing is provided in homes of chapel families. There is limited Friday night housing for those traveling long distances. For additional information contact John Hoy at (410) 923-2288 or johnjeanhoy@gmail.com or Jerry Young at (410) 636-0131 or jyoung18@juno.com.

Upcoming Cornerstone Magazine Webinar

Monday October 19, 2020

The October Cornerstone Magazine webinar will be held on Monday October 19 on the topic "Evangelism and the Local Church" Mark Kolchin will be moderating a panel comprised of Wade Leblanc (NB), Larry Price (FL), Layton Kerr (ON), and Chris Schroeder (MI). Stay tuned for more details.

Walk Worthy Weekend

Scheduled for October 23-25

Walk Worthy Weekend will not be held this year due to COVID-19

Cornerstone Magazine Conference

Saturday November 7, 2020

Maplewood Bible Chapel

127 Burnett Ave, Maplewood, NJ

The annual in-person Cornerstone Magazine conference will be held at Maplewood Bible Chapel on Saturday November 7. The speakers will be Jim Comte and Alexander Kurian on the topic "Christ or Culture — The Roles of Men and Women in the Church and Home."

"Through the church, angels are being taught the manifold witness of God. They can see men and women restored to God and to the roles for which the Creator designed them, when out of love for Christ they use the symbols that indicate their acceptance of the order that the Redeemer has laid down."
—Dr. David Gooding

New Assembly in Houston

We are a new assembly in the Houston area. Meetings are Breaking of Bread Sunday 9:30 am, Sunday evening service 7:00 pm, Wednesday night prayer and Bible study 7:00 pm. It is a pleasure to welcome all in fellowship with a commendation letter from the assembly you have previously been with. For more information contact E. Frank Detwiler at (979) 922-3837.

Attention Canadian Donors

In addition to current ways to contribute to Cornerstone Magazine, Canadian donors may now also donate through MSC Canada. To designate a gift to Cornerstone Magazine through MSC Canada via credit card, eTransfer, or pre-authorized bank withdrawal, go to <https://www.msccanada.org>.

Ministry Opportunity

Full-time camp workers needed to serve at Camp Horizon in Central Florida. We are looking for couples or individuals with a heart to serve the Lord in Christian camp work. The positions are paid and provide housing. Interested candidates for maintenance or food service (this one could be part time) positions should contact Billy Skelton (Search Committee) at 352-536-3781 or doubleportion2@outlook.com.

Legacy Ministries Canada – President's Position

Legacy Ministries Canada (LMC) is a Canadian assembly-based charity committed to assisting believers in the Lord Jesus Christ with their stewardship responsibilities. At the present time we are seeking an individual to fill the role of President within our organization. The successful applicant will report to the Board of Directors and will be responsible for overseeing all operational, administrative, and regulatory functions with the organization. Any interested applicants should send their resume to Robert Sullivan at rsullivan@bssmatters.com.

Service Opportunity: Church Planting in Goldsboro

Around 1954 Christians in Goldsboro, NC began meeting for breaking of bread, fellowship, the apostle's doctrine, and prayer. The work continued until recently with many of the saints going home to be with the Lord, leaving only Dale and Issi Harris. Pembroke Family Fellowship, which is approximately 110 miles away, would like to partner with someone willing to lead this church plant in Goldsboro and come alongside for spiritual help. The building and a home are available for someone exercised for this work. If any brother is interested please contact Dale Harris of Goldsboro at dukeblue.1@netzero.com or 919-734-8786, or Ron Locklear of Pembroke at Ronlocklear@bellsouth.net or 910-740-7782.

We Want Your News & Notices!

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

My Rest is in Heaven

My rest is in heaven, my rest is not here,
Then why should I murmur when trials are near?
Be hushed my sad spirit, the worst that can come
But shortens the journey and hastens me home.

It is not for me to be seeking my bliss,
And building my hopes in a region like this;
I look for a city which hands have not piled;
I pant for a country by sin undefiled.

Let trial and danger my progress oppose,
They only make heaven more sweet at the close;
Come joy or come sorrow, what'er may befall,
A home with my God will make up for it all.

With Christ in my heart, and His Word in my hand,
I travel in haste through an enemy's land;
The road may be rough, but it cannot be long,
So I journey on singing the conqueror's song.

Henry F. Lyte

