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infuse

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I was seven when my parents began attending the Church of God. I grew up keeping the Sabbath, Holy Days, dietary laws, etc. It was my sophomore year in college while studying the book of James, however, that God opened my mind and helped me grasp and be convicted of a truth I never understood before. In particular, it was when my instructor began to teach James 2:14-26. These verses are about the relationship between faith and action.

I hadn't been living a life of wild parties, drugs, alcohol and debauchery. From a human point of view, my life was about as perfect as it could get. While my lifestyle was moral and clean, God's miraculous hand reached down and showed me my heart and mind were not. I was a sinner who needed to turn her inward heart away from sin and trust in God and Jesus Christ. My works were all about keeping the written law. I thought I was a great person because with ease I was able to do this. After all, I had done so since I was seven. My attitude and actions demonstrated incomplete faith. I had the knowledge, but my thoughts and conduct of giving loving service remained unchanged.

The greatest challenges for me as a young adult was to stop trusting in my own good works of obedience for salvation and put my faith and trust totally in Jesus Christ. When the study of James

JAMES 2:14-26

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

was complete, I learned two valuable lessons. My good works didn't give me salvation, but rather allowed me to avoid discipline from God and since no one but God knows my heart, my works show the glory of God and the message of salvation to the world through my acts of service. I was baptized that sophomore year in college and my life has never been the same. I am profoundly appreciative and thank God daily for His gift of salvation. It is God's love that has filled my life and His greatness that allows me to reach out to others.

I hope that through the articles in this issue of Infuse, you will learn that receiving salvation is a miracle of God which takes effort but isn't complicated.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Noni".

Noni McVey
Editor in Chief

IS THE BIBLE REAL?

By Brian Christensen

I once took a Biology and Botany class in High School. I found it fascinating to learn of the delicate design of a plant or tree and the unbelievable anatomy of animals and human life. The existence of life is truly wonderful and amazing. I don't understand how anyone can look up at the sky or see the beauty of life, and think it all happened by chance (Psalm 19:1-14).

The existence of God and His ways have been questioned since the temptation in the Garden of Eden. How can something so obvious to God's people, be so confusing to others? This is a very deep and passionate subject as it is the very foundation of our faith. It could be the topic of many sermons and Bible study, however, we will explore the basics of this subject to build that foundation.

Most who reject the Bible, believe God does not exist. Some have said the Bible is a collection of "cute" stories, but has no spiritual meaning. Others say the stories depicted in the Bible are far-fetched and impossible to occur. The Bible is a wonderful collection of events and information about our Father and Savior in Heaven. It tells the story of their creation of life and desire for all their children to grow, mature, and become like them. The Bible is full of examples on both good and bad behavior. It is our guide to salvation and shows how we can repent from bad behavior to be forgiven in our maturation process (2 Timothy 3:14-17). This is similar to a parent or elder that has experienced an event and wants to share the wisdom with others to help them in some way.

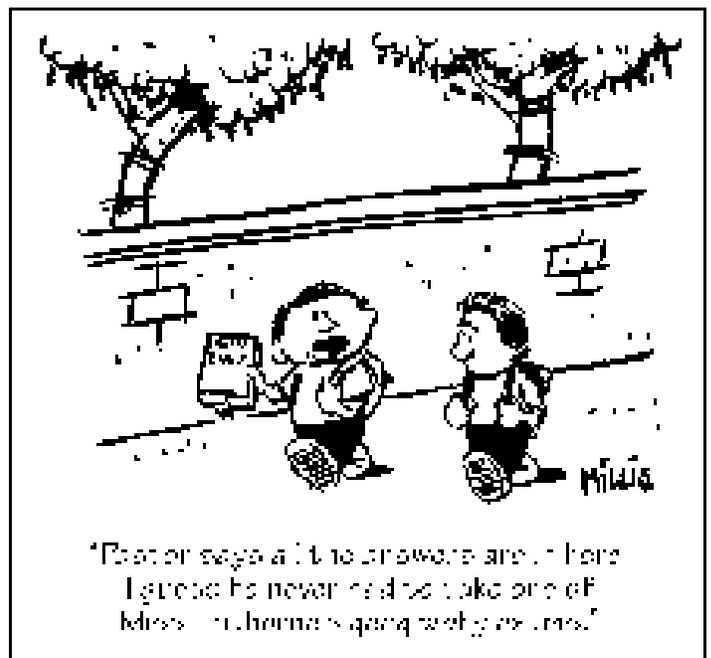
Many have also never read or studied the Bible. When you begin to look at and study the Bible, you start to understand the perfection of God and His reasoning. I have always been amazed at the difficulty of creating the Bible. Each account carefully recalled and recorded, spanning numerous years and authors. This was all during a time when writing was not easily done. Each story and chapter fit so perfectly together, it is impossible to accept the creation of the Bible without divine intervention.

If you were accused of a crime today, I think it is fair to say your defense attorney would be pleased if you had one or two witnesses to support your argument. What if your witness list included; Abraham, Noah, Moses, Jonah, David, Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ruth, Mary, Joseph, Lazarus, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, Stephen, Timothy, Philip, James, and hundreds more? The prosecutor or judge would drop the case and say to you "have a nice day". Yet

Satan has managed to twist this world around so that we as Christians are made to feel doubtful and prove our belief. How many witnesses can support the non-believers? All I see are "experts" with some background on a particular subject matter, not an actual testimony.

Mainstream Christianity seems compelled to eliminate, alter, add, or create changes to the Bible. These, of course, substantiate their position. Some believe in God, but not the Bible. Others believe solely in the Old Testament or the New Testament. Organizations have even created their own books or testimony. The Bible, however, is not multiple choice, it is a way of life (Revelation 22:18,19).

Even though others may not believe or agree, we must be careful that our actions, or fruits, do not contradict our belief. Matthew 7:13-20 tells us to judge others by their fruits. Look carefully at people and their words to measure the fruits. Are they better off or fulfilled because of their view? What would life be like if everyone had their view? How do they conduct their lives? Is the fruit ripe on the outside and rotten on the inside? We must also understand God's way as others view or judge us. Pray for those who do not believe and give thanks to God that you have been blessed with the peace-of-mind in his truth. i



Do we really understand what true repentance is? What does it mean to repent? Is real repentance just an emotional experience? Is it simply being remorseful and upset over past mistakes we have made in life? There is much more to godly repentance than most realize. It is only from God's word that we will find the answer to these questions and come to an understanding of God's definition of "True Repentance."

TRUE repentance

By Loren M. Chamberlain

TTrue Repentance signals the start of a changed and godly life. It involves a fully conscious recognition of one's sinful lawless way of life that is antagonistic toward God and His law, accompanied by a firm conviction to make a total change and to begin to live in full accord with God's way of life as described in the Bible.

Sin in God's eyes is too serious to just forget or be swept under the rug so to speak. God's perfection and holiness is so great, sin or sinners cannot approach Him and live, or be in His presence. The debt of sin must be settled and the books balanced. Once we understand the immensity of His righteousness, and holiness, we can then understand the immensity and awfulness of sin and the necessity for our repentance from the dead works of sin.

It was so important to God for the debt of sin to be expunged, and because He loved us so much, God was willing to allow the life of His own son to be sacrificed to pay the debt that no human being could ever afford to pay. Christ died because God's Character is so consistent that there could be no other way for Him to

extend mercy to us.

The Biblical definition of True Repentance is to turn from your chosen way of life and begin living according to every word in the Bible instead of according to the ways of society or the desires of the flesh and vanity. Adam and Eve, because they had a carnal nature, *and so do we*, partook of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of both good and evil. They did that which was natural for them to do. They gave into their evil pulls, their nature of rebelliousness, selfishness, and vanity against their creator (Genesis 2:17; 3:6). They lusted for what was not theirs (lust of the flesh), what was desirable (lust of the eyes) and what would make them wise (pride of life). "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world" (1 John 2:16). Also, when the Devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness, these were his three areas of attack (Matthew 4:1-11).

True Repentance means we have come to a full realization that we have rebelled against our Creator, just as Adam and Eve did, and we are willing to turn from our rebelliousness

and begin to obey our Creator in all things.

The Apostle Paul revealed much about the doctrine of True Repentance to the Corinthian Assembly. He stressed that sorrow is not repentance. In fact, only godly sorrow works toward repentance. It is from God, produced by the Holy Spirit. It is also directed toward Him for having offended Him through sin. "For Godly sorrow works repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world works death" (2 Corinthians 7:10).

King Saul experienced worldly sorrow at his rejection by the Lord God. It was loss of respect in the eyes of the army he commanded that worried him the most, not his unfaithful service to God. When the prophet Samuel refused to help him keep up appearances, Saul sought to physically restrain the man of God. In the end he fell on his sword taking his own life. Saul took matters into his own hands without thinking of God or asking for His guidance. Many people are sorry only for the effects of their sins or for being caught (sorrow of the world). Compare Peter's remorse and

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repentance with Judas' bitterness and suicide. Both denied Christ. Peter repented and was restored to faith and service. Judas on the other hand, took his own life.

Is a true Christian a new creation mentally? In the beginning, God created man a perfect physical specimen. A true Christian is a New Creation created to perform Good Works. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). This is a spiritual matter that involves God's Holy Spirit. "This great change takes place in the mind, we might call the heart." "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

STEP ONE The very first step is Repentance, and "True Repentance means a change of "Mind."

STEP TWO The second step, is the acceptance and faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, this also takes place in the heart and mind.

STEP THREE The third step, is something God does—placing within us the gift of His Holy Spirit. When we receive the Gift of the Spirit, a *Renewing* of the mind takes place. "And be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the *Renewing* of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2). Therefore, the Spirit of God is the Spirit of a *sound mind*. "For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

The apostle Paul mentions three characteristics of the effective Christian. "Power, Love, and a sound mind (wisdom)." These are available to us because the Holy Spirit lives in us. Conversion miraculously puts within us the *Mind of Jesus Christ*. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). If we say we follow Christ, we must also say we want to live as He lived. We should develop His attitude of humility as we serve, even when we are not likely to get recognition for our efforts.

We cannot perform good works and break God's commandments with impunity. God ordained that we should walk in the footsteps of Christ for we are His workmanship. We must repent receive God's Spirit, and do the good works that God commands us in His Bible to do. There is "doing" to be done. If we believe God's word, we will be living within His law. This is a demonstration of our Faith in Christ Jesus. If we fail to obey our Savior, we will be outlaws, saying by our "lack of action, we are faithless." Jesus holds in high esteem those who obey Him and keep His Father's commandments. "True Repentance," is an ongoing, life-time effort. It is time for all men to come to True Repentance. **i**

10 Facts About Repentance

- 1. Repentance is a change of mind and behavior.** *Negatively, repentance means turning from sin, which is defined in 1 John 3:4 as "the transgression of the law" (KJV). On the positive side, repentance means turning to righteousness through a life of faith and obedience, the opposite of sin and disobedience.*
- 2. The call to repentance is at the heart of the Kingdom message.** *Matthew 4:17*
- 3. The message of repentance is essential to the great commission.** *Matthew 28:18-20*
- 4. God commands repentance.** *Acts 17:30*
- 5. Repentance is a gift of God.** *God doesn't force anyone to repent; He simply makes the opportunity to repent available. Acts 5:31, Acts 11:18, 2 Timothy 2:25*
- 6. Repentance is the fruit of Godly sorrow.** *2 Corinthians 7:10*
- 7. Repentance is the fruit of God's goodness.** *Romans 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9*
- 8. Repentance is necessary for salvation.** *Luke 13:2,5, 2 Peter 3:9*
- 9. Repentance is inseparable from "saving faith."** *Ephesians 2:8-9, Hebrews 6:1*
- 10. Repentance doesn't end with initial conversion.** *Repentance is a process. It involves continuous introspection, frequent exposure to the Word of God, regular prayer, and perhaps occasional fasting. James 4:7-10*

Read the full article, "Ten Facts You Should Know About Repentance" online at:
<http://www.cgi.org/booklets/repentance.cfm>

WHAT'S YOUR SEED?

By Ruth Kerr

I am a hopeless math moron.

I've always been that way. In the fifth grade, I could not grasp the concept of "less than" (<) and "greater than" (>) signs. I was so confused about which sign was which that I failed every test. Our teacher, noticing a dismal trend in my grades, pulled me aside one day and explained it to me very simply. "Put two dots beside the bigger number, and one dot beside the smaller number," he said. "Connect the dots so they form a triangle. See? You will always have the correct greater-than or less-than sign."

His explanation in the simplest terms possible made all the difference. That's what a good teacher does.

Jesus was such a teacher. He came to a physical world to explain spiritual concepts, such as salvation, the kingdom, God the Father. These are not concepts we thick-headed humans grasp easily. So Jesus had to find ways to explain them to us in ways we can understand. He taught by using parables.

A parable is a story or illustration that teaches certain lessons or principles. Jesus used examples from everyday life, such as a vineyard or a flock of sheep to teach these lessons. In one parable He compared us to a farmer's field. Today, we refer to this parable as "The Parable of the Sower" (Luke 8:3-22).

It's a simple story. A farmer, said Jesus, sows his field by scattering the seed over the ground. Some seeds are eaten by birds. Some fall on poor soil and die quickly. Others fall in a patch of thistles and are soon overpowered by them. But there are those seeds which fall on rich, fertile soil and provide the farmer with a bumper crop.

Jesus is comparing the gospel to a seed, and people who hear the gospel are various types of soil.

The most interesting thing about parables is their timelessness.

The comparisons Jesus made in the parable of the sower are true today.

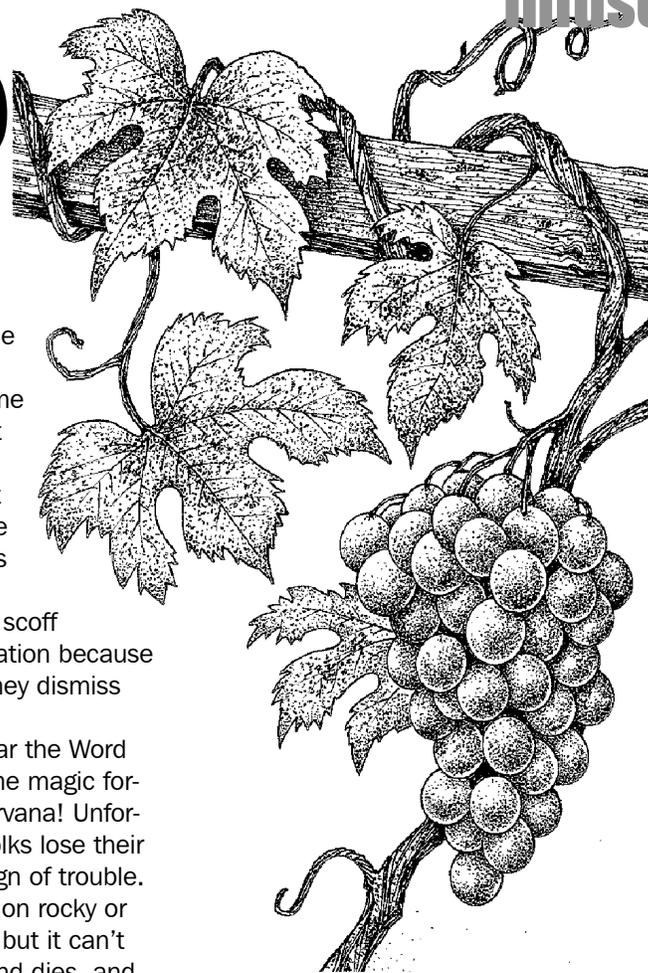
For example, some people hear the Word but they don't understand it. The Word is snatched out of their hearts, almost the same way a bird snatches a seed from the ground. Sometimes these people scoff at the resurrection or creation because they don't understand. They dismiss these things as myths.

Some people hear the Word and are excited! Here's the magic formula! We can achieve Nirvana! Unfortunately many of these folks lose their enthusiasm at the first sign of trouble. Just like a seed that falls on rocky or poor soil – it may sprout, but it can't sustain itself. It withers and dies, and soon these people are chasing some other life-changing philosophy.

Others hear the Word and embrace it, but they allow other things to creep in. Their focus shifts to unimportant things, such as cultivating the perfect wardrobe or setting new records with the latest video game. These things can start to crowd our lives and, like unchecked weeds in a garden, they squeeze the Word out.

But there are times when people hear the Word and let it change them. They seek to understand it more fully. They become more giving, more humble. Others around them benefit from their "fruit." These people are like the seed that falls in rich, dark soil and produces a vine laden with fruit. The vine doesn't exist for its own sake – it produces fruit that nourishes those around it.

Of course, the purpose of this parable isn't for us to try to figure out what kind of soil other people are made of. A parable is meant to challenge us: What kind of soil am I? Will I allow the Word to produce a bumper crop in me?



"REPENTANCE" THAT BEARS NO FRUIT

Again and again Scripture makes it plain that the inner quality of repentance produces "works befitting repentance," or a change in behavior. When a person confesses repentance but has no change of behavior—no "fruit in keeping with repentance"—then there is one of two possibilities: either that person's repentance was "short-circuited" by the cares of this life or unforeseen circumstances (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23), or it never truly existed in the first place.

Suddenly a simple story becomes almost urgent. By asking what kind of soil we are, we have to take a hard look at how we live our lives. How we treat others. How closely our lives resemble the standard Jesus set. A plain little story about seeds and dirt makes us evaluate everything about ourselves. It's explaining a profound concept in the simplest way possible.

That's what a good teacher does. i



God's Patience & You

By: Craig Smith

We've all been in those situations listening to one of our favorite radio station, or much anticipated T.V. shows, when all of a sudden that unexpected Emergency Alert/Broadcasting System intrudes with an annoying, and loud tone that continuously rings away. Imagine if you were forced to listen to that bothersome beep & ring for 24 hours straight. Not much fun right? How about listening for a whole week of that constant ringing? Wow, it would most likely drive you insane or make you go buy earmuffs! Well imagine the painful and perpetual ringing of yours and everyone else's sins that God has to listen to. How amazing His patience and endurance must be.

In the beginning God warned both Adam and Eve to stay far away from the forbidden fruit, in order to prevent them from the devastating effects of sin, but we all know what happened in Genesis 3. They failed to adhere to God's warning. Dinggggggggg went the first couple of echoing rings of sin to God's perfect plan for mankind. Although the effects of Adam and Eve's sin eventually lead them to death and curses, God had patience.

As time traveled onward we see God once again unveil His ways of redemption through a sacrificial system, a system of animal sacrifices pointed to the need to take away sins and guilt. But once again immediately after learning God's protective law's & Commands, His people decided to turn away from their loving God. Beeeeeeep, once again went the unceasing sound that God was faced with. After all this time, and after all these chances for God's people, He still had a master plan!

God's master plan would be to send His only Son, as the perfect and flawless Passover Lamb, Jesus The Christ. Only Jesus is The One to silence Satan's snares of sin. Through Jesus, you and I have the only hope of salvation. Just think, God has endured all of our sins and lawlessness for so long, while providing The Way to become a member in His hallowed family! God is a loving God indeed, but a wise God that has given the world a choice—a choice to be finally free from our past sins—past sins of racism, hurt, anger, and sexual impurities that are certain to corrupt. We may still bear the scars of our past, but we will never have to worry, or fear, with Jesus The Messiah to help continually pick us up, and cleanse us.

What is the choice the world must make in order to

be healed, and have true hope of everlasting life? Well let's find what Jesus Himself said. Don't take my word for it, look in your Bible.

John 3:3 says, "Most Assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Did you understand what that verse says? There is Only One Way

There is Only One Way to see the Kingdom of God, and that is through being born again, or Baptized, and Repentance (John 3:3).

to see the Kingdom of God, and that is through being born again, or Baptized, and Repentance as we also see in Acts 3:19. The world wants you to thoroughly believe that Repenting and being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (as we see in Matthew 28:19) is only a way to being Saved or Clean enough to enter into God's Kingdom, but Jesus said it is The Only Way! The author of Hebrews also stated in Hebrews 12:2 that "Jesus is The Source of eternal salvation to those that obey Him."

I encourage you, the reader that may currently be curious as to what the powerful meaning of Salvation truly is, to continue to test all things and quietly meditate upon God's true word in your bible. Please remember God wants to heal you so much, He is just waiting for You to take His hand and trust in Him. **i**

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"God makes people right with himself through their faith in Jesus Christ.

This is true for all who believe in Christ, because all people are the same: All have sinned and are not good enough for God's glory, and all need to be made right with God by his grace, which is a free gift. They need to be made free from sin through Jesus Christ." Romans 3:22-24

Are You Ready?

BAPTISM

By Loren M. Chamberlain

How do you know when you are ready to be Baptized? Most of the time when you think you are ready, you probably are, and what you are really seeking is confirmation from another qualified source that you are indeed prepared and ready to accept the responsibility of giving up your life to the Lord Jesus.

The best way to get the help you need is to go to a Minister of Jesus Christ and ask for help. You will find him very anxious to help you. True, he will ask you serious and sometimes very personal questions, but as you know, Baptism is serious business.

It will help if the initiate (the one seeking baptism) has a full understanding of the baptism ceremony. This baptismal ceremony is performed by immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins upon true repentance and acceptance of Christ's sacrifice. After this initial ceremony, and as a result, one receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands.

Baptism symbolizes the renunciation of the past sinful way of life, the burial of the "old man" in a watery grave, and the emergence of a new spirit-led man living with Christ's mind and following in His footsteps.

The New Testament places great stress upon the ceremony and symbolism of water baptism. It is a deeply meaningful initiatory rite referred to in Hebrews 6:1 as one of the foundational doctrines of Christian belief. John the Baptist is the one who introduced water baptism as a ceremony through which one outwardly demonstrates his inward attitude of repentance and his desire to submit to God.

It was Jesus Christ himself that approved the baptism of John and set the example for us by Himself undergoing the ritual (Matthew 3:13-17). Even the Father Himself put his stamp of approval on baptism by saying through an angel immediately after the baptism of Jesus, that Jesus was His beloved Son in whom He was "well pleased" (v. 17).

On the day of Pentecost when the New Testament Church began the apostle Peter gave an inspired sermon that pricked the hearts of the people, (Acts 2:14-40). The people were so upset they said, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" Peter then said unto them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Therefore, if we are to be saved from the death penalty of sin, we must repent and be baptized for the remission of those sins. Baptism symbolizes to God our belief and faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ for our sin. Also it is symbolic of putting to death the old sinning self by burying it under water.

What must we do to receive Eternal Life?

Here are a few things the initiate (one who seeks baptism) must understand to prepare him/herself for baptism. First of all the initiate must believe that he is a sinner. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

Secondly, the initiate must "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved" (Acts 16:31). That is, the initiate

must believe that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again to save sinners like all of us. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24). The initiate must trust Jesus, for He alone can save (Acts 4:12).

Thirdly, the initiate must confess his/her sins and ask to be cleansed of all sin. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Fourthly, the initiate must believe Jesus Christ has done it. The initiate must take God at His word and confess Him before men. “If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9, 10).

Fifthly, the initiate must forsake his/her sins. To repent means to forsake or turn away from. He will give us power to do this. “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God” (John 1:12). Being sorrowful for messing up your own life is not a Godly Sorrow. “For Godly sorrow works repentance to salvation” (2 Corinthians 7:10). “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19).

Jesus promised His followers a Kingdom, but He also said they would face difficulty and suffering because of their faith. Those sitting on the fence had better count the cost, or end up with a half completed building, (Luke 14:25-30).

God’s Holy Spirit convicts our minds, but it does not overcome sin for us, that would take away our free moral agency. God’s Holy Spirit will lead us into truth exposing sin, and then it is up to us to overcome the sin.

Paul contrasted the desires of the sinful nature and the works of the Spirit-filled life in Galatians 5:19-21 and 5:22-23. Paul’s list of sins falls into four categories. These particular sins of sexual immorality and witchcraft, as well as other less obvious sins such as ambition, anger, and envy, were especially prevalent in the pagan world, and the Galatians would have readily understood them. With few exceptions, we recognize these sins as present in our own time as well. In chapter 5, verses 22 through 23, the introduction of the word *fruit* by Paul is filled with meaning. By it Paul conveyed the meaning of a full harvest of virtues. Fruit is a by-product; it takes time to grow and requires care and cultivation. The spirit produces the fruit; our job is to get in tune with the Spirit. Believers exhibit the fruit of the Spirit, not because they work at it, but

lives well is infinitely beyond our ability. Sometimes we are afraid of God’s power and God’s plans because we know His power would easily crush us if He used it against us. Be unafraid to let God correct your plans. He will give you wisdom if you are willing.

In Psalm 51 we find David was truly sorry for the sins he had committed against God. For when we sin we sin against God and God only. He knew his actions had hurt many people. But because David repented of those sins, God mercifully forgave him. No sin is too great to be forgiven. While God can and will forgive us for any sin upon sincere repentance, He does not always erase the natural consequences of our sin. Psalm 51 is a part of God’s word the initiate should read and meditate upon before baptism.

What does Jesus really want from us? Jesus wants total dedication, not half-hearted commitment. We can’t pick and choose among Jesus’ ideas and follow Him selectively. We have to accept the tree of crucifixion along with the crown, judgment as well as mercy. We must count the cost and be willing to abandon everything else that we have sought security in. With our focus on Jesus we should allow nothing to distract us from the manner of living He calls us to. “And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand

Jesus wants total dedication, not half-hearted commitment. We can’t pick and choose among Jesus’ ideas and follow Him selectively.

Cost Counting and other Things

The initiate must realize that there is a great cost in being a disciple of Jesus. To be a disciple of Jesus is to love Him more than you even love your own family members. Jesus wanted His disciples to know that their love for Him should be so complete and wholehearted that their love for family members and for life itself would pale in comparison. Disciples must be willing to put aside their own selfish desires and earthly security, in order to spread the Good News, and to follow Jesus to the death if necessary.

simply because the Holy Spirit controls their lives. The fruit of the Spirit separates Christians from a godless, evil world, reveals a power within them, and helps them become more Christ like in their daily lives.

We should always be willing to be corrected by God indeed we should seek out His correction. “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps. O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in your anger, lest you bring me to nothing (Jeremiah 10:23-24). God’s ability to plan our

to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).

We have all sinned in the past, and even after baptism, try as we might not to sin, we will occasionally make a mistake, slip and fall, and sin. However, keep this in mind, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:1-2). **i**

By Jeff Reed

infused

at the Feast of Tabernacles



Early Thursday morning September 16, 2004, the eye of Hurricane Ivan passed directly over Gulf Shores, Alabama. It was the Feast Day of Trumpets and I awoke early that morning to hear the news. Our local elder, Clint Mahoney, had informed me the night before that our Trumpets service in Oxford, Alabama would have to be canceled. We would spend the day watching and waiting for Ivan to continue its destructive path through our State. As I had unfortunately anticipated, Pensacola Beach, Florida was on the western side of Ivan's eye wall and was damaged severely. I would later learn that it was the hardest hit community of all four hurricanes that devastated Florida this year.

I had been looking forward to the Feast of Tabernacles at Pensacola Beach all year. I was especially excited about participating with the Infuse services for teens and young adults that was planned. As the strong rain and winds pounded outside my house, my thoughts dwelt on the fact that the Feast at Pensacola Beach would no doubt be canceled. The Infuse services were very important and, as far as I could tell, were not going to take place. Clint confirmed what I already knew the next day. The Pensacola Beach feast site would be canceled. But fortunately Infuse would still take place, but in another location. Because of the hard work of many people it was announced the following Monday that the Infuse services would be in North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Hurray! I was even more excited.

DAY 1. Everyone involved with Infuse had a luncheon between morning and afternoon services. This was an informal gathering, which served as the kickoff of Infuse at the Feast. A wide variety of sandwich fixings and fruit were provided for the hungry participants. Loren Chamberlain, Noni McVey and Mike James spoke on the creation of the Infuse program and the challenges of bringing it to North Myrtle Beach. "I think that we are going to see some great things happen because of you young people who care and want to be a part of God's church," Mrs. McVey told the gathering. Some great things were going to happen during the week.

DAY 2. In order to accommodate with the existing plans of the Feast, Infuse services began at 9:00 a.m. This was pretty early for me and for many others. For those from the western time zone this

would be the equivalent of 6:00 a.m. Many of those folks were there an hour early setting things up! It was thrilling to see all the enthusiastic young people ready for the first Infuse service ever. The service started with praise music that is very different than a typical Church of God service. The music had a contemporary sound and the lyrics were projected on a big screen. There was no one song leader. There was an entire group of talented musicians and singers leading the songs. I could see many were hesitant at first to sing along, but by the last day of services everyone was singing loud and praising God.

Mike James led the first service. He spoke about the reality of the resurrection and the process of being changed from mortal to immortal in a twinkling of an eye. He illustrated this by using volunteers to recreate a science experiment. Two volunteers represented an atom. The other two represented the detection devices that affected and measured the experiment. Mike electrically charged and split the atom and the two volunteers "split" and walked back to their detection device. One of the detection devices affected the spin of one piece of the atom. At the exact same moment, "in a twinkling of an eye", the other piece of the atom changed its spin without being touched by the device. There is communication between these two parts of the atom that science cannot explain. This was a great illustration to show God's awesome power and that the future resurrection is a reality.

Later in the second day there was a table-hopping activity that was planned. Two rows of chairs were lined up so that they faced each other. The participants sat in the chairs and would get to know the person directly in front of them. After a few minutes had passed, one row would shift so that each person was now facing someone new. This continued until everyone had a chance to get to know everyone else.

DAY 3. Several experts were on a panel that led the dialogue on a living a Christian life in pop culture. Some of the issues discussed included dating on the internet, facing challenges in college, what to say to family members that leave the church, the roles of women in the church, and how to live and eat healthy. It was an open discussion where anyone could voice his/her opinions or concerns. I personally found this format very rewarding.

DAY 4: I awoke even earlier so I could participate in the morning exercise program led by George James. He is a professional trainer and is very skilled in the exercises he taught the class. George would demonstrate the techniques and give explanations for each movement that was performed. Everyone who participated learned a great deal from this activity.

Services on this day were led by Tony Buchert. He discussed the six characteristics of leadership. Tony talked about our future leadership roles in God's Kingdom and the necessity of developing leadership now. He passed out a worksheet that covered these characteristics and encouraged participants to discuss evidence of leadership in their life. The characteristic that he emphasized the most was being a servant. The example of Christ's servant leadership was used to show us how we should serve in God's church.



DAY 5: I was given the opportunity to speak at the Infuse service. I told the story of how I began to learn about God's truth. I spoke about a friend that I attended high school with who was in God's church. I had even participated in filling his school locker with garbage one year while he attended the Feast of Tabernacles. His example of following God's laws eventually influenced me, even though he never knew it. I discussed the events in my life that led to my baptism and

looked at how to know when one is ready for baptism. The goal of my message was to show the need for baptism and being infused with God's Spirit to meet the challenges in our lives and be in God's Kingdom.

Later that day the Infuse volunteers helped build a house. We assisted the Habitat for Humanity of Horry County. Everyone participated in various aspects of the building process. Some hammered nails, some drilled, and some lifted trusses into place. Everyone had a job to do. We worked together as a team and made a great deal of progress toward the completion of the house. This exemplified what Tony had discussed the previous day about being servants like our Savior. This was the most fun I had at the entire feast. It demonstrated that we in God's church can work together with our various abilities and achieve positive results in whatever He has for us to do.

DAY 6: Duane Nicol spoke about biblical touchstones. They are the standards by which we should live our lives. They are principals that when put into practice give us positive results. He discussed the aspects of our society that can lead young people astray. This led to a discussion about the sexual immorality that has become popular in our society and how this leads to unhappiness. Marriage was shown to be a touchstone that leads to happiness and fulfillment that the immorality of the world is unable to provide.

DAY 7: The final day of Infuse consisted of a discussion of creation versus evolution. Mike James introduced the topic by presenting the differences between micro and macro-evolution. He also discussed the fallacy of theistic evolution. This was an interactive study of God's word and scientific principals to prove the truth of creation. There was a lot of participation from the group, which made the discussion more satisfying for everyone involved.

When it was all over, I asked many people what they had thought about Infuse in North Myrtle Beach and the response was overwhelmingly positive. It was successful from the very first day. The topics discussed were challenging, the activities rewarding, the music uplifting, and the participation was phenomenal. We gathered together to praise and rejoice before our Lord. I can't wait until next year! The future looks bright. i

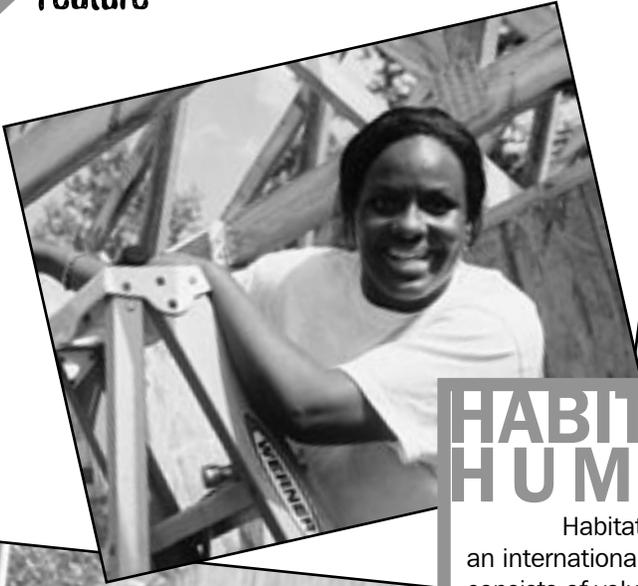
View the Infuse Video and More Photos from the Feast of Tabernacles Online at infuse.cgi.org

My MEMORIES from the Feast of Tabernacles
By Adam Boyd

There was an inviting, warm-spirited feeling in the air as I walked into the front door of the Ocean Creek Conference Center. Cheerful smiles and joyous laughter filled the room. Most importantly, the wondrous light of our Almighty Father shined upon everyone. The Feast of Tabernacles 2004 in North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina had a terrific turn out.

Despite the many hurricanes in the Atlantic Ocean, North Myrtle Beach wasn't affected, and the weather was delightfully pleasant. A crowd of brethren, a little over 300 (including many "refugees" deterred from Pensacola) traveled from diverse places to come and

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HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Habitat for Humanity is an international organization that consists of volunteers who build homes for those in need. It was founded as a Christian ministry and remains that. In 1976 Millard Fuller and his wife Linda in Americus, Ga founded Habitat for Humanity. Since Habitat for Humanity began it has built more than 175,000 homes. It operates through locally run affiliates. The houses built are not extravagant, but to a family that has been living in a shack the home is a dramatic change. Their philosophy is to build simple, decent, affordable homes. The homes are purchased by the homeowners at an affordable price, at no profit and no interest on the mortgage. Homeowners also help build their home. They put in 300-500 hours of "sweat equity." The homes are not built for people, but with people. If you are interested in helping with your local Habitat for Humanity visit the international website at www.habitat.org.



REAL SALVATION

By Loren M. Chamberlain

Salvation is to save all mankind, “if they accept it” from the spiritual consequences of sin. Salvation also means preservation, and the Bible affirms this definition.

There are many people who profess to be Christian but unknown to them their belief is in a “dead faith.” It is not enough to believe in Jesus Christ, and the fact of His sacrifice for the sins of mankind. The Scriptures explain it this way. “We were created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them, (Ephesians 2:10). Obviously the responsibility of Christians is to do good works, and these good works cannot be done with a dead Faith.

The true Christian will obey God and do good works, for “faith without works is dead” (James 2:20). Our good works do not save us, but they do demonstrate faith. James wrote, “I will show you my faith by my works” (James 2:18). If we do not obey God we possess nothing but a “dead faith,” which is no better than that of the demons who themselves believe God exists but refuse to obey Him (James 2:19).

WE ESTABLISH THE LAW BY FAITH

Please note what the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, “Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law” (Romans 3:31). By these words of Paul we see that Faith establishes the Law.

James goes on to remind us of the Faith of Abraham. How he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar. “Because he was willing to do this, he was justified by works,” (Genesis 22:16-18; James 2:21-24).

Faith establishes the law, and by obeying the law, faith is made perfect. Is it possible for us to keep God’s Commandments?

Take note of the fact, that we are justified “forgiven” our past sins, reconciled to God, through our faith in the sacrifice of Christ (Romans 3:24-26).

See also that only those that obey God’s spiritual law are justified (Romans 2:13).

JESUS WILL SAVE US FROM OUR SINS

In this order, we must believe, repent, and have a willing heart to obey. We are justified, or forgiven our past sins, by our faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, not by being law keepers (Romans 3:20). But, this justification is conditional. We must repent of transgressing God’s Law, and then begin obeying by the power of the Holy Spirit, that we receive after baptism, by the Laying on of Hands. We who are now justified live out lives of obedience by Faith (Hebrews 10:38; Romans 1:17).

THE FAITH OF CHRIST

Now we can begin to understand that it is by the “Faith of Christ” Himself that we are enabled to live a righteous and obedient life in harmony with God’s Spiritual Law (Philippians 3:9; Romans 3:22).

It is no longer necessary for us to live our lives by our own inadequate faith. We can have the very “Faith of Jesus Christ.” This is a most marvelous gift. The very “Faith” of Jesus Christ by which we receive eternal salvation, is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8-9).

By reading Galatians 5:22 we will learn what the fruit of the Spirit is. Take note of the fact that Faith is one of the virtues of the Spirit! When we receive the Holy Spirit, we receive all these virtues and faith is among them. We were not born with the kind of Faith Jesus has, but God wants us to have this living Faith, once we repent and turn to Him. It is this Faith of Christ that enables us to obey God’s Spiritual law. The Holy Spirit furnishes us with this Gift of Faith.

As long as we continue in contact and fellowship with God, growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, (2 Peter 3:18; 1 John 1-3), all by God’s grace as His Gift, and not anything we have earned by our works; and now if we continue overcoming, growing spiritually, and all this actually through God’s Power, you shall inherit The Kingdom Of God, and be made immortal to live forever in happiness and joy. Now that’s “Real Salvation.” **i**

Remind Yourself that When You Die, Your “In Basket” Won’t Be Empty

We all go through life always having a long “to do” list. Inside we have the desire to accomplish everything on the list thinking it is our purpose. We think that once everything on the “to do” list is completed we will be happy, relaxed and calm. Many times we end up ignoring our family, loved ones, get up early, stay up late, avoid having fun and forget about our relationship with God. In reality we never complete everything on the “to do” list. Once something is checked off there is always something else to replace it with.

Your “in basket” is meant to be filled with things to complete, not to be empty. There are always bills to pay, phone calls to make, emails to respond to, errands to run, work to be done, etc. To be successful it is good to have a full “in basket.” Remember though many of the things in your “in basket” can wait till tomorrow. Stop obsessing about getting everything done. Remind yourself that your purpose in life is not to get everything done. You are to enjoy each step a long the way. Don’t miss out on important events in life and make your loved ones wait for you because they might not stick around. Make time for your family and for your relationship with God to grow. God will always be there for you but He wants to hear from you daily. When you die your “in basket” will be full which is how it should be but hopefully you lived a life of love filled with many wonderful memories and spiritually full.

Reference: Don't Sweat the Small Stuff . . . and it's all small stuff by Richard Carlson, Ph.D. pp. 19-20.

Scriptures to Remember

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 3:23

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:9

This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4

For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Romans 5-10

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worship God as we are commanded to do in Leviticus 23:33-44.

This was the inaugural year for the Infuse program. Even though it was originally scheduled to take place in Pensacola, everyone put endless effort and worked hard to put it together in Myrtle Beach. Exercise classes at 7 in the morning enticed those with a health inclination and a will to get up early. The Infuse services began at 9 am kicking off with live music, and continued into involved, young adult oriented

messages. The main service was held at 11 am. We were all blessed to hear enlightening, prudent messages every morning.

Activities included two dances, a fun show, and a beach party, outing to a local amusement complex and volunteering to help build a house for the Habitat for Humanity. The Feast of Tabernacles is a wonderful family festival and is very spiritually uplifting to all who attend. Everyone will eventually experience this Feast of our Lord as it

says in Zechariah 14:16-19: (where the time setting is in the future) everyone will “go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.” We understand that it’s commanded for us to keep this statute forever in our generations, as it’s written in verse 41 of Leviticus 23. If the Feast is just a taste of the Kingdom of God, imagine what the whole meal will be like. I can’t wait. **i**

What Does *Baptism* Mean?

By Margie Marang

What does baptism mean to me? It means getting all wet from head to toes in your clothes. Is that all it means? I should say not! Before baptism there are certain things you are required to do.

Here is what Peter said about baptism. "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified. Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter *said* unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:36-38).

What do we repent of? We get rid of the "old man". What does that mean? That means to change from being hateful and putting love in its place. Change from being antagonistic and put love and concern for others in its place. Change from wanting to "get even" and pray for love and understanding of others. Romans 6:4-7 says it best;

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein? Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; for he that hath died is justified from sin"

Your attitude has a lot to do with wanting to do good and coming to the point of baptism. You must know Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose again. This is what happens when you are baptized. The water represents the grave and

the old self (the old man) is buried. When you come up out of the water that represents you being raised from the dead. You have buried your "old self" and you have come up as a "new man". Your sins are forgiven and God sees you clean and sinless. You have left your old ways behind and will now do things to please God.

Then comes the laying on of hands. When the minister places his hands on your head he will ask that God grant you His Holy Spirit. He will ask that God's Holy Spirit go with you for the rest of your life and it will guide and direct your mind and lead you in a way God wants you to go.

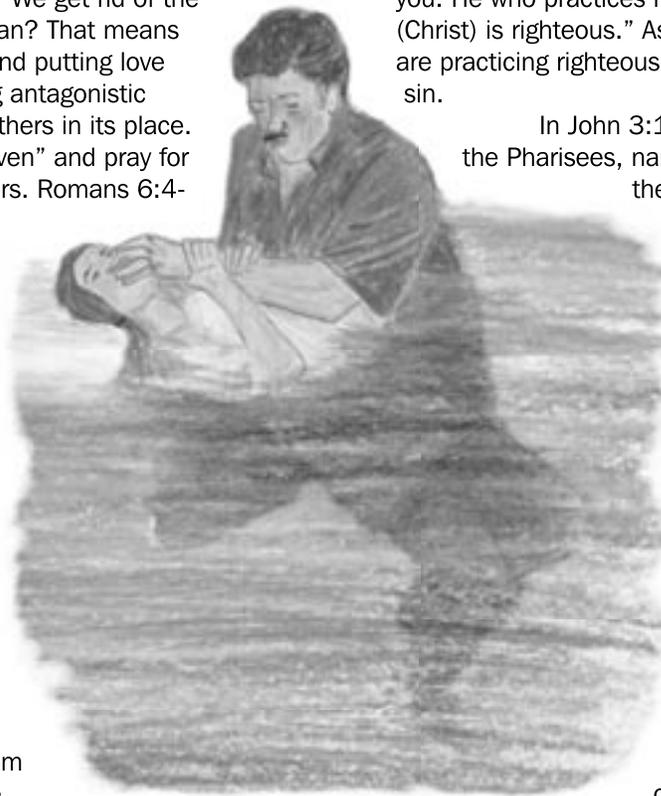
When we are first converted we become babes in Christ. I John 3:7 says, "Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous just as He (Christ) is righteous." As long as you try to do your best, you are practicing righteousness and Christ keeps you free from sin.

In John 3:1-2 it says, "Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came unto him by night, and said to him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him."

When we are baptized we become sons and daughters of God. God doesn't want to loose any of us, so He gives us to Jesus Christ for Him to take care of us. Here is what Christ has to say. "And again: I will put my trust in Him. And again; Here am I and the children whom God has given me" (Hebrews 2:13).

Another message we should heed is in John 6:37-39. "All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day."

Baptism means you have accepted both Jesus Christ as your savior and His gospel message. Through baptism the guilt of past sins have been washed away and His Holy Spirit will help you walk in obedience until His return. **i**





By Rory Ries

Many years ago there was a movie called, “The Vikings.” My teenaged friends couldn’t wait to go see this movie and so, on Saturday night we went together to see this action filled movie. Not only was there a lot of action in this movie, there was a lot of emphasis placed on a Viking needing to die with his sword in his hand to immediately enter into Valhalla. We were intrigued by how the Viking warriors would reach for their sword and then scream out the name, “Odin!” as they met their death.

Of course this is nothing but Nordic Mythology. It is just another name for deception. Whether you read Nordic Mythology or Greek Mythology, it is all the same, a deception. Just looking at the word mythology should tell you it is based on a myth. There have been many myths over the years on what happens to people when they die. There have been many myths taught to people and some of those myths have become doctrines in many different religions.

Some religions teach you can actually talk or pray to the dead. We have a man made holiday that honors the night of the dead called Halloween. We have people who call themselves, “Psychics,” and it is taught you can possibly talk to a loved one who has died through a Psychic. We even have an example in the Bible where Saul tried to have contact with Samuel through a Psychic or Medium (1 Sam. 28:8). This fascination or belief we can talk to the dead has been going on for thousands of years.

These practices have come from ancient pagan beliefs. The idea when someone dies and goes to heaven was created a long time ago. Again, it is just another deception that Satan has used to cause people to separate themselves from God. What have you been taught and what do you believe? There’s no better place to go than the Bible to see what truly happens after someone dies.

The Bible, God’s true word, teaches us the dead know nothing (Ecc. 9:5). Jesus Christ said it himself, “no one has ascended to heaven (John 3:13).” Peter also preached that David was still in his tomb and had not gone to heaven (Acts 2:34). You can also go to Hebrews, Chapter 11, and read how those who have been faithful have not received the promise. What promise? They have not yet

received that promise which is their inheritance that includes eternal life and reigning with Jesus Christ in the city he has prepared for them (Heb. 11:16).

When someone dies, he is dead. Lazarus was dead for four days before Christ brought him back to life (John 11:17). He didn’t go to heaven and then come back. The idea of dying and going to heaven is a counterfeit to God’s plan for His children and for all of mankind. The idea of going to heaven and meeting Peter at the pearly gates is another myth taught by churches that take many scriptures out of context.

Taking an obscure scripture and building a theory based on that one scripture usually create deceptions. Plus, the worldly teachings and practices are integrated and a person then develops a falsehood or a deception. Many people then start to follow these teachings and they become traditions. Yet, these followers have never taken the time to look in the Bible to see what God really says.

God says each precept is built upon another precept and a line is built upon another line (Isa. 28:10). It’s bad practice to take one scripture and try to build a doctrine based on that one scripture. We are told to prove all things and we are told to test the spirits to see what is from God and what is from the father of lies (1 John 4:1). For every good thing God has created, Satan has tried to come up with a counterfeit to mislead people and to deceive many. What is one of the many wonderful things God has created?

God has created a plan for mankind (2 Pet. 3:9). It is a plan for those whom He has chosen at this time and it is a plan for all of mankind that has ever lived (1 Pet. 2:9 and Rev. 20:11). Those who have died in Christ are still asleep and they await his return (1 Thess. 4:14). Those who are now living and have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior also wait for his return (Rom. 8:23). The ones who have overcome and died in Christ and those who are overcoming will receive their reward when Christ does return and they will be resurrected as spirit beings (1 Cor. 15:50). The children of God will then be born into the Kingdom of God when Christ returns (John 3:5).

Now that is a plan that stirs up the blood and can cause

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& HELL

By Bob Swimm



All throughout the world of professing Christianity, every Sunday morning preachers will scare the daylighters or worse out of their parishioners with the threats of an ever-burning Hell fire that awaits unrepentant sinners.

Little children in Sunday school will hear what happens to bad boys and girls when the devil gets them in Hell.

We have all kinds of jokes about Hell, the devil and his demons. Some people invite others to go there.

Former President Harry S. Truman when asked why he gives people hell, said, "I don't give 'em hell, I tell 'em the truth and they think its hell."

There are all kinds of concepts of HELL. There's no doubt about it, the idea, concept and doctrine of Hell is mighty effective.

Heaven, on the other hand, is a nebulous concept. Preachers talk of angels, harps, beatific visions, streets of gold, milk and honey and cloud nine. All of this seems tame, almost boring compared to say, thick steaks, vacations on the French Riviera, sports cars, jet planes and rock music.

On the other hand, the idea of HELL FIRE conjures up a frightful image. The idea of burning in a fire that never ceases' burning is horrific beyond imagination. In my city of Southgate, Kentucky back in 1977, the posh super club, The Beverly Hills, where entertainer John Davidson was performing, caught fire and nearly 300 perished in that blaze. To this day the fire fighters, survivors, and rescue workers have nightmares from that fateful night nearly thirty years ago. So we clearly can see what a gifted speaker can do with the impending torture of eternal burning in the flames of hell fire to get our attention.

With such an important subject as hell, it is vital we understand what the Bible says about it, and more importantly what it doesn't say, but merely comes from human thought and invention.

The common concept is that Hell is somewhere down below; and it is a place of torture and torment run by Satan and his demons. Dante depicted it as a place with bodies writhing in constant pain, on fire, but never burning up while Satan and his demons race around in boundless joy with pitchforks jabbing the hapless victims.

Roman catholic theologians have subdivided Hell into four compartments:

1. Hell itself: the final place of damnation.
2. Limbus Parvulorum: a place for the unbaptized who are stained with original sin and must undergo some sort of punishment.
3. Limbus Patrum: holding pen for those who died before Christ.
4. Purgatory: for the just, stained with venial or minor sins, owing debts of punishment before being allowed into heaven.

All of these sound rather impressive, except they are nowhere to be found in all of sacred scripture.

Jesus said, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

The Bereans searched the scriptures daily whether these things are so. Paul told the Thessalonians to prove all things and to hold fast to that which is good.

If the popular doctrines of Hell,

Limbo, Purgatory and the like are true as taught in the churches, they should be able to stand the test of the Bereans, the Thessalonians and us. Let's see.

The King James translators have rendered the Hebrew word Sheol, and the Greek words Hades, Gehenna (or Geena) and Tartaroo as Hell. Is this really intellectual honesty? No, it is not! [Note: It is the same selective interpreting that is used with the words Nephesh and Psuche to establish the doctrine of the immortal soul. Another interesting study for another time].

Let's take a brief look at the meaning of the words translated Hell:

Sheol: world of the dead, the grave, the pit, hell.

Hades: place of departed souls: i.e. the grave.

(Strong's Concordance, 7585, 86)

Neither of these words have the slightest notion or connotation of a place of punishing or punishment. Sheol appears 65 times in the Old Testament. It is rendered the grave 31 times, the pit three times and hell 31 times.

A clear example is in Psalm 86:14. The word sheol is translated thusly. "For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths of the grave." However, the King James version of the same verse translates the word sheol as hell—interpreting and not translating.

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someone to jump with joy. It is also a plan that offers hope for His children and for those who may have died never hearing the name of Jesus Christ. The blind will see and the deaf will hear (Isa. 61:1 and Isa. 42:7). The lame will be healed and jump for joy (Isa. 35:6). No more suffering, no more pain, and no more sorrow (Rev. 21:4). There will be no more deception because Satan will not be around to deceive anyone (Rev. 20:1).

No one will be sitting on a cloud, floating around playing a harp. There will be work for all of us to do in the millennium and then in the Kingdom (Rev. 20:4). No man could ever come up with such a grand idea or plan. Jesus Christ will rule and we will serve him and the Father. All of

this is waiting for us if we turn our lives over to Jesus Christ and allow him to live in us.

The theory man has developed over the years of going immediately to heaven after death is a joke and has no substance. The idea of being able to communicate with the dead or even pray to the dead is a terrible falsehood. Our great God does nothing that is mediocre and it's impossible for Him to lie (Titus 1:2). He has created a plan that is truly meaningful and hopeful. It is for His children and His children's children (Acts 2:39). Are you willing to follow God and His great plan or are you going to allow yourself to be led astray or misled by the many deceptions that exist in this world today? **i**

“No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.” -John 3:13

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Let's go to the New Testament and see a similar application to Hades. Here we find this Word used eleven times and it is translated hell in all instances except in I Corinthians 15:55, which is the resurrection chapter. If Hades refers to a place of punishment, then how could these most uplifting scriptures of hope be recorded here as our victory over hell (the grave) through Jesus Christ? It would make no sense whatsoever. Let us read it together. “Where O death, is your victory? Where, O death (Hades), is your sting?”[NIV]. The King James states, “...O grave (Hades), where is your victory?” (I Corinthians 15:55). There is no intellectual honesty whatsoever to attempt to apply the notion of Hades as a place of punishment or punishing when it and Sheol merely mean a pit, or grave. Before refrigeration, farmers stowed their potatoes in “hell” to preserve them.

However, does this mean there is no place of punishment? No it does not. There is such a place and we want no part of that.

The Greek word for that place of punishment is Gene, rendered Gehenna, which is transliterated from the Hebrew Gai Hinnom. It is a valley of Jesus' day used figuratively as a name for the place of eternal punishment (Strong's Concordance, 1067). Anciently this Valley of Hinnom was a place of fires where children were sacrificed to the pagan god Moloch. In Jesus' day this valley was perpetually kept on fire for burning garbage, thus the association made with the fire of destruction of the judgment of God.

Geena or Gehenna occurs twelve times in the New Testament and is always rendered hell, and rightly so. Let us look at the example in Matthew 5:22, 29, “...But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell (gehenna)...It is better for you to lose one part of your body than

for your whole body to be thrown into hell (gehenna).”

This is a horrible fate for the wicked and those that refuse to repent. But this is an eternal punishment, not eternal punishing. A merciful God will simply put the unrepentant sinner out of his or her misery as any of us would a rabid animal, not continue to let it suffer needlessly.

It is Satan's fate to suffer eternally because spirit cannot die. That is why it is he who has perpetuated the lie of the immortality of the soul and an ever-burning hell and eternal punishment. That is his fate—not mankind's.

The final use of the word hell is tartaroo, meaning to incarcerate in eternal torment—to cast down to hell (Strong's Concordance, 5020). This word appears only once and it has nothing to do with fire. Spirit cannot burn and has only to do with Satan and his demons. As we said, it is Satan and his who will endure eternal punishment.

The victims of Gehenna fire are described in Malachi 4:1-3 as merely ashes left under our feet—that's all you have left after a fire of any physical material—ashes, that's all. The fallen angel's fate is described in 2 Peter 2:4, “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell (tartaroo), putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment.”

Satan and his demons will be tormented forever in tartaroo and the saints of God will judge them as we're told in I Corinthians 6:3.

In review, Sheol, and Hades mean grave. Tartaroo is the place of final restraint for Satan and his demons. Gehenna is the punishment for the wicked and the end of their existence.

Is there an ever-burning Hell, No! **i**

What's Wrong with Counting?

Perfecting our faith.

By Anika E. Sandy-Hanson

Recently, I was reading about King David and what occurred when he decided to take a census of Israel. This account is found in both 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21 and details the events surrounding and resulting from David commanding a census of the children of Israel. Although I had read the scriptures before, I had to research the account for a Bible study, and this allowed me to gain some true insight into this doubly recorded story. What I found has given me a greater appreciation for my perspective as a Christian, and I believe it will be helpful for all of us.

DID GOD TEMPT DAVID TO SIN?

The first lesson comes at the very beginning of the story. In verse one of 2 Samuel 24 in the King James Version (KJV) the writer tells us, "And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." From this wording it appears God incited David to do something we later see is wrong. However, this is dichotomous, or contradictory, to what we know about the nature of our Lord. Would he cause or drive us to sin?

To answer this I looked to the most insightful description of how human beings are tempted to commit sin—the book of Job. In this account Satan and all the angels went to heaven to be accountable to God. Like us, these beings aren't allowed to do whatever they choose, we can be confident that Yahweh is always in charge. This introduction shows that God allowed Satan to test, or tempt, Job. This set a precedence that could lead us to believe that God probably allowed

Satan to tempt David.

In fact, if we read a different translation of the census account we see this is exactly what happened. First Chronicles 21:1 Contemporary English Version (CEV) reads, "Satan decided to cause trouble for Israel by making David think it was a good idea to find out how many people there were in Israel and Judah." This situation occurs for all human beings, but especially for Christians. Satan is always looking for ways to trip us up and trick us out of our salvation. He would have liked

*it's not always
about WHAT
we do, but
WHY we do it*

nothing better than to catch David in a sin from which he couldn't escape. But let's see what David did after Satan put this idea in his head. In 1 Samuel 24 David's command was not to count all the people of Israel as the KJV implies, rather, he wanted Joab to see how many men he could enlist in his army to fight when war time came.

THE PURPOSE OF OUR ACTIONS

This is where we get our second lesson—it's not always about what we do, but why we do it. David was trying to assess his military strength; he wanted to be confident that when battles came he had enough human might to win. We might ask, what's wrong with that? The answer is evident

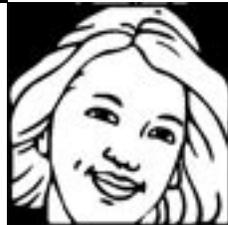
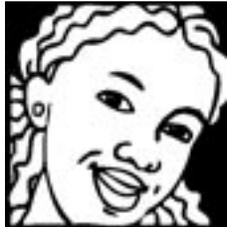
if we look at how David started out his career as a warrior.

When David faced Goliath he wasn't concerned with human might, he was focused on God and the reality that all of our strength is from the Lord. In that battle we see David put his faith in the right place and was rewarded. In the census account David tried to get confidence from man, and he was punished. Likewise, we have to put our faith in God rather than in our possessions, others, or ourselves.

We see this supported in Romans 1:17, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." The King James Version gives an idea of what Paul is conveying; however, the Worldwide English version makes things much clearer; "The good news shows how God puts a person right. God puts a person right when that person believes in his Son and keeps on believing. The holy writings say, 'A person who is put right because he believes, will live for ever.'" Thus, we must repent of our sins and then commit to living a righteous life based on an unwavering faith in God.

Through this formula we can have true success. We must make no mistake that David learned his lesson and teaches us in the process. If we complete both Old Testament accounts we realize that David repented of his sin and gained favor with God and his people. But that is a lesson for another day; for now we can rest assured that faith in God is the best insurance we could ever have and we need to practice this faith until we have it perfected (James 2:22). **i**

Will Non-Christians Be Saved?



By Mike James

One of the major differences between our church and other Christians is our belief on how God will deal with people who don't believe in Christ. The Church of God, International believes non-Christians will have an opportunity to learn about Jesus in the future and be saved if they choose to follow Him. A number of scriptures support this position. Let's look at some.

The most important scripture to remember in this discussion is Revelation 20:4-5. Here we learn true Christians will rise and live for a thousand years in God's kingdom on earth at Christ's second coming. It also tells us that another resurrection will occur at the end of that thousand year period. That second resurrection is likely to include most of the non-Christians who have lived throughout history.

Another interesting item we read about in Revelation 20:7 is Satan will be let out of his bondage at the end of the thousand year reign of Christ. Right before Christ begins to rule he will have Satan put away for a thousand years. Now, why would God allow Satan into the world again at that time? Our belief is those who come up in the second resurrection will be flesh and blood humans again, who can be tempted by Satan. God will need to judge those people just like He is judging true Christians now. We live a life that is influenced by the god of this world, Satan the Devil. Just as

we have to overcome the world to be proven worthy by God to partake of his kingdom, so will those who come up in the second resurrection need to be overcomers to inherit God's gift of eternal life.

Many people have trouble understanding this belief because of their concept of what the judgment is. Many believe when the Bible speaks of judgment it means something that begins and ends quickly. That can be one way of understanding the Word, but the Bible also gives us another perspective on what judgment is.

I Peter 4:17 will shed some light on this topic. Here we read that judgment begins with the family of God. The judgment that was beginning with the family of God mentioned by Peter was ongoing persecution that the church was experiencing at that time in history. So we see from this context that judgment can be an ongoing event that can continue for an indefinite period of time. We believe when non-Christians rise in the second resurrection, they will have a period of time to learn about Christ's ways and follow them. If they choose to instead follow Satan at that time, they will eventually suffer the second death.

A few more scriptures I'd like to leave you with can be found in the gospels of Matthew and Luke (Matthew 10:15, 11:20-24, 12:41-42; Luke 11:31-32). Each of these scriptures addresses what it will be like during the

Day of Judgment. Notice something interesting here about the judgment it describes. Let's look at only one of these scriptures in Matthew 11:20-24 and think about what we learned in I Peter 4:17. Jesus rebukes the towns of Korazin, Bethsaida, and Capernum for failing to repent when miracles were performed in them. On the other hand He says that Tyre, Sidon and Sodom would have repented if they had witnessed the same miracles. Then he says that it will be more bearable for Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom in the Day of Judgment than for Korazin, Bethsaida, and Capernum. Now if the Day of Judgment is an immediate sentencing against people for their sins where they are immediately destroyed, why would it be more bearable for the people from Tyre, Sidon and Sodom? Unless the day of judgment were a period of time when God's Holy Spirit will be poured out on all flesh. Those people who never had an opportunity to hear about God's way (Tyre, Sidon and Sodom) will find it much easier to follow God than those who actually witnessed Christ's miracles (Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernum). It may be less bearable for Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernum because of the opportunity they missed when Christ was around the first time.

There are many other scriptures that address this topic. If you would like a list of all the scriptures I have on this subject please send me an email at mjames6043@aol.com. i

DOES MATTHEW 5:19 SAY THAT A COMMANDMENT-BREAKER WILL BE IN THE KINGDOM, THOUGH HE WILL BE LEAST IN THE KINGDOM? DOES THIS CONFLICT WITH SCRIPTURES THAT SAY THAT COMMANDMENT-BREAKERS WILL NOT BE IN THE KINGDOM AT ALL?

Luke 12:42-48 teaches that, when Christ returns to establish His Kingdom, there will be degrees of privilege or dishonor based on how faithfully a person upheld God's standards. The saints—those who inherit the Kingdom at Christ's return—will be the most honored in the Kingdom. Some of the mortal subjects of the Kingdom, however, will have to answer for having neglected to uphold God's righteous standards. Matthew 5:19 does not mean that commandment breakers will enter the immortal, Spirit-born family of God at Christ's return; it simply means that when the Kingdom is established, those who have annulled even the least of God's standards will receive no honor.

DOES HEBREW 6:4-6 TEACH THAT A CHRISTIAN WHO FALLS AWAY IS LOST FOREVER?

Hebrews 6:4-6 states, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame."

The terms used in this passage show that the writer was not speaking of the occasional slip due to momentary weakness or the temporary emergence of an old habit. To "crucify again" Jesus Christ and "put Him to an open shame" involves a deliberate and quite radical departure from the Christian faith.

Yes, the passage does teach that repentance is impossible, for a certain class of people. But these two terms, repentance and impossible, provide the key to understanding how the unpardonable sin differs from other sins.

If an individual, after coming to true conversion and experiencing the joy of salvation, falls into temptation and commits sin, but then "comes to his senses" and repents of his wrongdoing, he has not committed the unpardonable sin—for he has demonstrated in his own life that for him repentance was not impossible.

If you think you have committed the unpardonable sin, are worried about it, and have prayed for God's mercy, you need not fear that the door of salvation has been slammed shut for you. The very fact that you are concerned about it and have sought God's mercy demonstrates a repentant attitude and therefore shows that you never "fell away" to the point that repentance was impossible.

"Flying High"

By R. Gerald Allen Saul

Let's not start this crazy ride
I thought we finished this last time
Why do we torture ourselves so?
When we know, we know

We toss around words like love & hate
Without thinking how much we decimate
We've torn each other down so many times
Is there anything left to do?

But, something is calling us back
Maybe something has changed, this time
We'll never know unless we try
To fill that empty hole again

Do we really know what we feel?
Can we ever understand ourselves, forget each other
Not without a little help from a big Man

So, everything seems to work okay
Maybe we'll be all right, after all
Maybe we've broken free of our sick trap
I think we've broken free, of ourselves

Time has passed now and we're doing fine
Not so much as a little whine
We've passed the decisions up high
And now we're flying high...flying high

Things to Pray For

1. Your family
2. Your friends
3. Your future spouse
4. Your future children
5. Your job
6. World leaders
7. Wisdom
8. Underprivileged people
9. Men and women in the military
10. Spiritual growth and inner beauty

Finding Financial Peace & Freedom



By Tina Chamberlain

Money, or the lack of it, impacts most facets of our lives, but so many of us know so little about it. Your money is yours right? Wrong! Everything belongs to God, not just stuff you don't want, or no longer use—everything. You're allowed to manage it, and sometimes you manage a little or a lot, but keep in mind that it all belongs to Him. No matter what your career choice, if you don't learn how to manage your money, you will have problems in life. So you may be asking where do I start?

STEP ONE: Save \$1,000 as an emergency fund (Proverbs 6:6-9 and 21:20). Be wise and save money now. Don't wait for that raise or winning the lottery. This will take discipline and if you don't make it a priority now, you never will.

STEP TWO: Pay off all debt. Start first with preparing a budget (Proverbs 22:7 and Luke 14:28-30). You will need to balance your checkbook, abandon your teller card and account for every dollar spent. You will not have the same expenses every month, so be prepared to create a new budget each month. The following are suggested budgeting percentage guidelines.

Item	Recommended %
Charitable Gifts	10-15
Saving	5-10
Housing	25-35
Utilities	5-10
Food	5-15
Transportation	10-15
Clothing	2-7
Medical/Health	5-10
Personal	5-10
Recreation	5-10
Paying Off Debt	5-10

Ex: 10% of \$20,000 = \$2,000

Pay down your debt by listing your debts, smallest to largest. You've got your \$1,000 in the bank first, okay? Pay minimum payments on everything but the smallest one, regardless of the interest rate. Each one you pay off, strike a line through it and take that money and dump it into the next one, in addition to the minimum payment. Keep this up until you're out of debt.

News flash about Cash: Of 100 people Age 65 - 97 cannot write a check for \$600, 54 are still working, and 3 are financially free (USA Today).

STEP THREE: Beef up the emergency fund with three to six months' expenses in savings (Proverbs 21:5).

STEP FOUR: Invest 15% of household income into Roth IRAs and pre-tax retirement plans (Psalm 20:4).

Imagine a Bright Future: If a 30-year old couple funded a Roth IRA at \$250.00 per month at 9% growth, at 70-years old, they would have \$1,104,376 – tax free! And if that same couple made \$40,000 and also saved 15% in a 401(k) (\$6,000 per year, \$500 per month, at 12% growth), at 70-years old, they would have at least \$5,881,798 in the 401(k)! By retirement the couple, debt free, saved \$749.95 per month they will have \$6,788,290.

STEP FIVE: Save for your children's college fund (1 Timothy 5:8).

STEP SIX: Pay off your home early.

STEP SEVEN: Build wealth through wise investments, such as mutual funds and real estate.

Even if you are young, it is never too early to learn these lessons (1 Timothy 4:12). Remember, no matter what you are doing in life, no matter where you are, if you follow the Lord's Word, He will answer you when you call upon Him. Psalm 55:22 says, "Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fall." James 1:5-8 says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does." Ask for wisdom. Trust the Lord will give it to you and if you are in doubt, go back to the Word.

Sources: The Bible and Dave Ramsey; a personal money management expert, an extremely popular national radio personality and best-selling author of The Total Money Makeover. Dave Ramsey's new teen series, No Matter What, is an all-inclusive program for teaching money management. "People in their early twenties are one of the fastest growing demographics filing for bankruptcy," said Matt Woodburn, vice president of Dave Ramsey's organization. "Student loans, the proliferation of credit cards on college campuses, and a lack of understanding of how to manage their money have driven this statistic. Want to know more? Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace Resource Center at www.daveramsey.com or 1-888-22-PEACE. i