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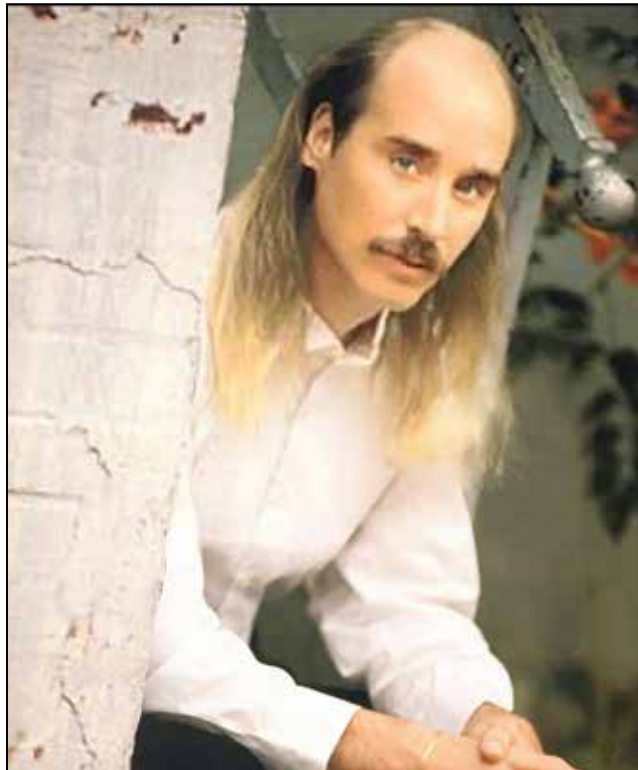
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"GOD IS OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH, AN EVER-PRESENT HELP IN TROUBLE." PSALM 46:1

Christian Music Pioneer Matthew Ward to Perform at Beaver Church



By Faith BroKar

A well-known voice in contemporary Christian music will soon be visiting the Oklahoma Panhandle as Matthew Ward, a pioneer of the early Christian music movement, is scheduled to perform

during a special worship service at First Baptist Church of Beaver.

Ward will present a concert on Sunday, March 29, during the church's 10:50 a.m. morning service. The event will take place at First Baptist

Church, 323 Douglas Street in Beaver, Oklahoma.

Matthew Ward first gained national recognition as a member of the influential Christian music trio 2nd Chapter of Acts, a group he formed with his sisters Annie Herring and Nelly Greisen in the early 1970s. The group became widely known for its rich vocal harmonies and songs that helped shape the emerging contemporary Christian music movement during that time.

Over the years, Ward has continued his ministry through both group and solo performances. In addition to recording numerous albums, he has shared the stage with a variety of Christian artists

and has remained active in Christian music and ministry for decades.

The upcoming service in Beaver will give area residents an opportunity to hear Ward perform and share his music and testimony in a worship setting.

Pastor Jerry Hodges, pastor of First

Baptist Church, said the congregation is looking forward to hosting the special event and welcomes the community to attend.

"We invite everyone in the community and surrounding area to come and be a part of this special concert," Hodges said. "It will be a

wonderful time of worship and encouragement."

The concert will be held as part of the church's regular Sunday morning service, and the public is welcome to attend.

First Baptist Church of Beaver is located at 323 Douglas Street in Beaver, Oklahoma.



CHRISTIAN MUSIC PIONEER
Matthew Ward

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"We invite everyone in the community to come and be a part of this special concert" -
Pastor Jerry Hodges, First Baptist Church

Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Fiction?

By Rusty Wright

At Easter, some might wonder what all the fuss is about. Who cares? What difference does it make if Jesus rose from the dead?

It makes all the difference in the world. If Christ did not rise, then thousands of believers have died as martyrs for a hoax.

If he did rise, then he is still alive and can offer peace to troubled, hurting lives.

Countless scholars—among them the apostle Paul, Augustine, Sir Isaac Newton and C.S. Lewis—believed in the resurrection. We need not fear committing intellectual suicide by believing it also. Where do the facts lead?

Paul, a first-century

skeptic-turned believer, wrote that “Christ died for our sins...he was buried...he was raised on the third day...he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve (Disciples). After that, he appeared to more than five hundred...at the same time, most of whom are still living.” Consider four pieces of evidence:

1. The explosive growth of the Christian movement. Within a few weeks after Jesus was crucified, a movement arose which, by the later admission of its enemies, “upset the world.” What happened to ignite this movement shortly after its leader had been executed?

2. The Disciples' changed lives. After Jesus' arrest and crucifix-

ion, most of the Disciples fled in fear. Peter denied three times that he was a follower of Jesus. (The women were braver and stayed to the end.) Yet ten out of the eleven Disciples (Judas committed suicide) were martyred for their faith. According to traditions, Peter was crucified upside down; Thomas was skewered; John was boiled in oil but survived. What turned these cowards into heroes? Each believed he had seen Jesus alive again.

3. The empty tomb. Jesus' corpse was removed from the cross, wrapped like a mummy and placed in a solid-rock tomb. A one-and-a-half to two-ton stone was rolled into a slightly depressed groove to seal the tomb's entrance.

A “Green Beret”-like unit of Roman soldiers guarded the grave. Sunday morning, the stone was found rolled away, the body was gone but the graveclothes were still in place. What happened?

Did Christ's friends steal the body? Perhaps one of the women sweet-talked (karate-chopped?) the guards while the others moved the stone and tiptoed off with the body. Or maybe Peter (remember his bravery) or Thomas (Doubting Thomas) overpowered the guards, stole the body, then fabricated—and died for—a resurrection myth.

These theories hardly seem plausible. The guard was too powerful, the stone too heavy and the

disciples too spineless to attempt such a feat.

Did Christ's enemies or Jewish religious leaders had the body, surely they would have exposed it publicly and Christianity would have died out. They didn't, and it didn't.

The “Swoon Theory” supposes that Jesus didn't really die but was only unconscious. The expert Roman executioners merely thought he was dead. After a few days in the tomb without food or medicine, the cool air revived him.

He burst from the 100 pounds of graveclothes, rolled away the stone with his nail-pierced hands, scared the daylights out of the Roman soldiers, walked miles on wounded feet and convinced his Disciples he'd been raised from the dead. This one is harder to believe than the resurrection itself.

4. The appearances of the risen Christ. For 40 days after his death, many different people said they saw Jesus alive. Witnesses included a woman, a shrewd tax collector, sev-

eral fishermen and over 500 people at once. These claims provide further eyewitness testimony for the resurrection.

As a skeptic, I realized that attempts to explain away the evidences run into a brick wall of facts that point to one conclusion: Christ is risen.

The above does not constitute an exhaustive proof, rather a reasoned examination of the evidence. Each interested person should evaluate the evidence and decide if it makes sense. Of course, the truth or falsity of the resurrection is a matter of historical fact and is not dependent on anyone's belief. If the facts support the claim, one can conclude that he arose. In any case, mere intellectual assent to the facts does little for one's life.

A major evidence comes experientially, in personally receiving Jesus' free gift of forgiveness. He said, “I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him (or her).”

Worth considering?



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CONTENT

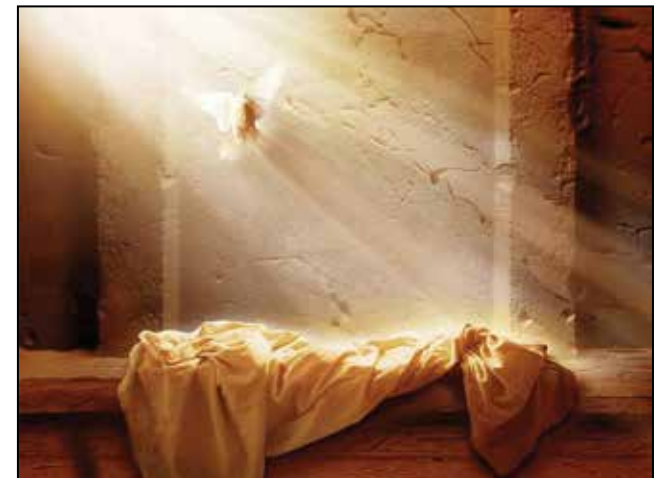
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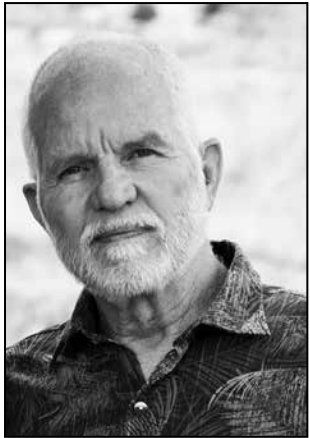
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“It Is Finished”



By Carl D. Everhart

As part of the Easter story, we know that Jesus was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities (see Isaiah 53:5). We also know that “When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit” (John 19:30). While He died for all of mankind, He knew that only a few will accept His offer to be rescued. These few know they are sinners in need of the one and only Savior, Jesus Christ. When He died, many prophecies were fulfilled. Innocent

blood was shed as the payment for our sin. But there was something else Jesus did that I don’t hear very much about in the usual Easter story.

Exactly what was finished? The short answer is that His rescue mission was finished. The penalty for our sin was paid in full, and death was conquered, but only for those who want to be rescued, instead of paying that penalty themselves. The Son willingly did this because of the love of the Father for us. While the specific timeline for each of the seven statements Jesus made from the cross is not clear, before He said, “It is finished,” it’s only logical that He would have cried out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46).

We can begin to connect the dots when we realize that Jesus, who was sinless, took the sins of the world upon Himself, and for the first time He and the Father became separated.

That happened because God will not even look upon sin, let alone be in the presence of it. This separation describes the second death (see Revelation 20). Through His personal sacrifice, Jesus took every filthy and disgusting sin we ever committed, past, present, and future, and He paid our penalty for that sin. When He hung on our cross, it was not the nails that kept Him there, it was His love for us.

Because Jesus did all of this in our place, the Father can and will set us free because our debt was paid in full. The only catch is ... this rescue plan only works for those who know they are a sinner in need of rescuing. (Little children automatically go to Heaven.) Unless raptured first, every God-fearing, born-again, True Christian, will die their first death. We’re born twice, but we’ll die only once. For the majority of mankind, the unbelievers, they’re born only once, and they’ll die twice. Life is ev-

erlasting in Heaven; death is everlasting in Hell!

The only saving hope for us is through Jesus Christ, who is now seated at the right hand of His Father interceding for us. Jesus will return to Earth in power and glory, and when He does, He will not return as the Lamb, but rather as the Lion of Judah. He will come to judge the living and the dead. It is only after we change from unrighteous to righteous that we obtain access to the Father and we gain the desire to live our life pleasing Him, and to do His will, not ours.

Just before He died, and while His body lay in the tomb, He was temporarily separated from the Father, so we would not be permanently separated from Him. Whether He went to prison or to Hell is irrelevant, He was separated from the Father.

To clarify, the wages of sin are not being mocked, beaten, humiliated, or even nailed to a cross, it’s death, not the first death, but the second death. “For the

wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). In no way am I trying to minimize anything Jesus experienced before, during, or after He was hung on our cross. He experienced the full blast of our sin, guilt, and shame. He took on our condemnation so that we (His children) would be comforted in the promise that there “is no condemnation for those who are in Christ” (Romans 8:1). The penalty for our sin, even just one, is separation from the Father for all eternity.

Augustine wrote, “Two criminals were cruci-

fied with Christ. One was saved; do not despair. One was not; do not presume.”

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for paying the penalty for our sins. May these words find the heart of a true believer so that they may encourage others; the heart of a make-believer so that they may wake up; and the heart of a never-believer so that they may come to know You. Amen.

To read more from this grateful Prodigal son, lay pastor, voice, apologist, and sinner (saved by grace), search: everhartsandsoul.com (then select “Blog”).

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God's Amazing Grace

By Micah Powell, Grace Community Church, Great Bend

God's grace is not only an inspiring idea; it is the blazing center of the Christian faith. When we first come to Christ by faith, grace is not abstract. It is personal, overwhelming, and deeply humbling. We see with new eyes that our sin was real, our guilt was heavy, and yet Christ bore it all.

Paul writes, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Paul teaches us that salvation is a gift because it originates in God alone. Faith is not a human achievement that earns grace; it is the means by which grace is received. The ground of that grace is the finished work of Christ on the cross: His perfect obedience in our place and His substitutionary death for our sins. Grace is free to us because it was infinitely costly to Him.

I was eight years old when I first trusted Christ. I heard the gospel from my pastor-dad and believed. At that age, I could not articulate the doctrines of justification, imputation, or union with Christ. But I knew this: Someone lived the life I could not live, died the death I deserved, and conquered the sin and death I could never defeat. That is grace.

And yet, even after conversion, grace continues to confront us. Why would God choose me? What did he see in me? Scripture is clear: nothing in us compelled Him to save us. "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us... made us alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:4-5). The cause of grace is not found in the worthiness of the sinner, but in the mercy and love of God. Grace is sovereign, not reactive.

Over time, however, grace can become familiar. Life wounds all of us. Sin persists no matter how hard the fight. We grow aware of our remaining

corruption. We may still confess the gospel with our lips, yet find it difficult to rest in it with our hearts. I have regularly found myself measuring God's grace against my failures, as if His favor were fragile.

At one point, I realized I was trying to prepare myself for prayer by mentally rehearsing truths, listing sins, and even reviewing doctrinal precision before I had the courage to approach God. Good theology matters deeply. But I had discreetly reversed the order. I was acting as if my theological readiness gave me access, rather than Christ's mediation. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace." Not the throne of probation. Not the throne of performance. The throne of grace. We draw near because Christ has already secured our standing.

Genesis 15:1-6 further deepened this for me. Abram, called out of paganism by sovereign mercy, stands under the night sky as God reiterates His

promise. "And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). Paul later builds his doctrine of justification on this very verse (Romans 4; Galatians 3). Abram's righteousness was not moral perfection; it was credited righteousness. God justified the ungodly by grace through faith. Abram did not earn covenant status. He received it. The initiative was God's; the promise was God's; the righteousness was God's. Faith was the empty hand reaching out to God's. That is grace.

Theologically, grace is often defined as unmerited favor. That definition is true but incomplete if we

reduce it to mere God's leniency. Biblically, grace is God's sovereign, saving, sustaining, and sanctifying favor toward those who rightfully deserve judgment. It is not simply that we lacked merit; we possessed demerit. Grace does not meet neutral people; it rescues rebels. This grace does not end at conversion. The same grace that justifies also sanctifies. Titus 2:11-12 says, "For the grace of God has appeared... training us to renounce ungodliness." Grace is not opposed to effort; it is opposed to earning. It teaches. It disciplines. It transforms.

Sin remains in believers, but it no longer reigns over

them. When we lose sight of grace, either pride or despair grows. A low view of grace produces either self-righteousness or secret sin. But when grace is seen clearly, it both humbles and empowers.

The wonder deepens when we consider the nature of God Himself. God does not simply possess grace as one quality among many. In classical Christian theology, God is simple, meaning He is not composed of parts. His attributes are not separable pieces. His grace is not detached from His holiness, justice, or love. The grace of God is the holy grace of

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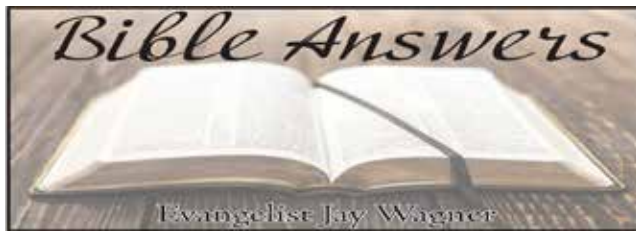
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Q: Can you please explain II Corinthians 5:10 if our works have nothing to do with our salvation?

A: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." – II Corinthians 5:10

We might say that there are two judgments, one of all people and one of Christians. This passage refers to that second judgment, while we find the first in Revelation 20:12: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." – Revelation 20:12. In this first judgment, the deciding factor is if the person is in the book of life: that is, if they have accepted Christ as their savior. Notice that in this judgment we all stand before God (meaning the Father), while the second judgment is before Christ.

Those who pass the first judgment by being in the book of life will make it into Heaven because the requirement is simply to have accepted Christ. The second judgment doesn't decide your city (Heaven or Hell), it determines your neighborhood. It is Jesus looking at what we have done with the gifts He gave us and the callings He put on us. This is why it saddens me when I hear other Christians acknowledge having a gift or a calling and then fall back on the old excuse that they are "waiting on the Lord" before doing anything with that gift or calling. When God gives you a gift or puts a calling on your life, He is not going to take it back (Romans 11:29). Instead, He expects us to do something with it and will bless our efforts as we make them.

I admit that I am doing less with my calling right now than I might like, in part because of health issues and in part because of opportunity. However, when the opportunity to write this column arose back in 2020 I jumped on it, and recently God has blessed both my effort here and the BroKars' giving me that opportunity by allowing them to add Kansas Faith and Family to their publications and allowing this column to also be carried in that publication. In January of 2023 God also called my attention to the possibility of a YouTube channel for my ministry, and I have been posting weekly messages (with a couple of exceptions last year when I had a bad case of influenza) since then (only about six months' worth are available at any given time due to YouTube storage limits). As my health allows, I fully expect God to provide even more opportunities for me to use the gifts He has given me in fulfilling the calling He placed on me. All Christians are given gifts and callings, some huge like Billy Graham and some almost unnoticed like the brother or sister who cleans the church every Saturday, but He expects us to use what we were given to do the job we were assigned, and that's the judgment we find in II Corinthians 5:10: what did we do with what we had toward what we were to do?

I welcome reader questions. E-mail your question to answer67547@gmail.com.

Grace

Continued from page 4

a just and loving God. At the cross, these attributes are not in tension but in harmony. Justice is satisfied; mercy triumphs; love is displayed.

Grace stretches from eternity past to eternity future. Scripture speaks of grace given "before the ages began" (2 Timothy 1:9) and grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13). The believer's future is not less grace but more. Faith will give way to sight, but grace will never cease. Heaven will not be the absence of grace; it will be its fullest enjoyment. We will forever explore the inexhaustible riches of God's kindness in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:7).

If God is infinite, then our experience of His grace will never be exhausted.

We will not grow bored with Him because there is no end to the depths of His glory. Grace will never become old news in eternity. And what of now? Grace meets us in our present struggles. If you carry church hurt, shame, anxiety, or lingering guilt, the invitation stands: draw near to the throne of grace. The grace that justifies also comforts. The grace that pardons also heals. Christ is not a reluctant Savior; He is a willing Mediator.

Paul exhorts believers to think on what is "true" and "beautiful" (Philippians 4:8). There is nothing truer or more beautiful than the grace of God in Christ. From Genesis to Revelation, grace runs like a scarlet thread. There has never been a moment in redemptive history devoid of it.

There is no match for sin in the presence of sovereign grace. Where sin increased, grace abounded all

the more (Romans 5:20). If you are in Christ, you cannot out-sin His mercy, nor can you outgrow your need of it. You cannot earn it. You cannot lose it. As Charles Spurgeon said so well, "It is not your hold of Christ that saves you, but His hold of you." [1]

John Piper famously wrote, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." [2] Grace fuels that satisfaction. The more we behold what we have been given freely in Christ, the more sin loses its shine. Grace does not make obedience optional; it makes it joyful. So reflect on grace in the face of your worst sins. Let Ephesians 2:4–5 steady your heart: "But God, being rich in mercy... made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved." Let the old hymn echo truthfully: grace is greater than our sin.

And when you are tempted to believe that your failures outweigh His favor, return to the cross. Return to the throne of grace. Behold again the most wondrous mystery in the universe: that the holy God saves sinners freely through the blood of His Son.

Grace still amazes me. And it always will.

[1] Charles Haddon Spurgeon, "The Blood," in *The New Park Street Pulpit*, vol. 5 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1859), sermon no. 246, preached December 12, 1858, on Exodus 12:13.

[2] John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, revised edition), quoted in *Desiring God* materials, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him" (summarizing Piper's Christian Hedonism teaching).

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Post-War Iran – How Will It Survive?

Dr. Rodney Crowell

So effective was Israel's and the USA's joint bombing of Iran – they focused on killing terrorist leaders while we eliminated their weapons systems – that when Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian wanted to resign, he had NO ONE alive in Tehran to accept it! The new "Supreme" Leader Mojtaba Khomeini, successor and son of the late Ali, was either dead or comatose in a Russian hospital, wounded in the same strike that killed ol' Dad. Pezeshkian's predecessor Ali Larijani, the Minister of Intelligence Asadi, the Army Head of the IRGC Hossein Salami, and Basij (=protester killers and woman-beating "morality police") head Gholamreza Soleimani were all eliminated -- a total of 40 top leaders and 300 Basij field commanders. Plus, IDF (Israel Defense Force) estimates that over 6,000 IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps)

troops have been killed and about 15K wounded. The current three-man Provisional Leadership Council is Pezeshkian, hard-liner Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei and Senior Shiite cleric Alireze Araf; but stay tuned! Parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf helps maintain control in the chaos, or maybe just continues to lead the "Death to America!" chants if any crowd still dares to gather anywhere.

When the bombing stops, however – as it must someday, with Israel now focused on a land invasion of Lebanon to repel its missile attacks, and Trump facing the serious escalation of putting U.S. troops on the ground to defend the Strait of Hormuz – what next? As Stephen Green says, "What happens when there's not enough regime left to change?" I'd like to suggest that the Iranian leaders ultimately will choose one of four possible alternatives:

1) WAIT OUT THE BOMBING, then quietly consolidate IRGC-loyal council members behind a more popular, moderate cleric like former President Hassan Rouhani, though he's 77 years old. To keep Muslim rule while quieting the "holy war" fanatics would go far to calm the people and start to heal ties with other Muslim nations angered by repeated Iranian missile strikes against them (Qatar) due to their connections with the U.S. The Mad Mullahs of Tehran even fired missiles at Turkey, Cyprus and Shiite-majority Azerbaijan in a spiteful frenzy. With friends like that, who needs enemies? Iran knows patience is its ally; after all, most parts of their nuclear program are hidden deep underground, unreachable by aerial bombardment. Iran might well choose this route.

2) WAGE JIHAD DOWN TO THE LAST SOLDIER. This is national suicide, nothing more.

Such a policy would leave Iran a contentious political wasteland like Iraq, with the still-nationless Kurds and that hated Muslim/Marxist paramilitary cult, the MEK (Mujahedin-e Khalq) fighting the establishment for control. I wonder, do Muslims believe jihadis gain Paradise if they die fighting fellow MUSLIMS? It's ridiculous. Even the Quran's promise of Paradise for jihadi martyrs is doubtful, for the Syriac (not Arabic!) loan word "houris" -- which does not mean pale-skinned, virgin ladies to deflower as claimed in 36:55 and 78:33 -- merely describes white GRAPES for a snack (44:54)! However, the Christian New Testament warns that mur-

derous, immoral liars like jihadis will face the flames of Hell instead (Revelation 21:8) – no fruit plate for you!

3) RE-JOIN THE CIVILIZED WORLD as a moderate Muslim state. After 47 years, isn't it time? Just surrender and cooperate with U.S. demands. Hey, it's working for Venezuela and Cuba wants to be next! This would require ceasing to enrich uranium for military use. We've promised to give them enough for energy, what's wrong with that? The Iranian citizens would also demand an end to the brutality of the Basij (see above) and a return to the modern dress and cultural life they enjoyed under the Shah. The Qur'an and Hadith (=tradition)

would need to be emptied of jihad and Sharia Law. The mullahs wouldn't allow this, though, unless enough of them die to make opposition futile.

4) BECOME A PUPPET STATE OF CHINA. China has shared satellite-navigation and other missile technology with Iran since the 1980s, though it ceased direct transfers in 2015 following a United Nations Security Council Resolution (#2231). Chinese electrical components have been found both in Iranian and Russian drones used in Ukraine. Antonio Graceffo says, "China is the primary enabler of Iran's missile, drone and nuclear-adjacent programs." Without

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Illinois church severely damaged by tornado

By Lisa Misner, Baptist Press

Journey Church in Kankakee suffered severe damage from a tornado that tore through the community on Tuesday evening (March 10). The church, located on the south side of town, lost two thirds of its roof, with the remaining portion receiving significant damage.

Several tornadoes touched down in northern Illinois and northwestern Indiana Tuesday (March 10), killing at least two people and causing wide-

spread damage.

Just to the east in Indiana, Butch Porter, director of Disaster Relief for Indiana Baptists, told Baptist Press authorities are not yet allowing relief workers into some affected areas, though there is someone performing assessments.

"We are currently locked out of the area by emergency management," Porter said. "We have been in contact with the sheriff's department and emergency management, and we do expect a possible callout within a

projection of terrorist power. Things could get dicey here very quickly.

Two things we know for sure: first, that GOD is sovereign, as even the formerly-demented King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon admitted: "He [God] does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand..." (Daniel 4:35). Second, we know from the historical experience of wicked King Ahaz of Judah – who followed "the detestable ways of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites" (2 Kings 16:3) – that being a puppet state of another empire (Assyria, in his case) only leads to poverty and bondage. Iran, should it choose this option, would learn the same lesson in a short time. Keep the Middle East and all believers there in prayer!

few days."

The Journey Church building is constructed with an A-frame in the center and wings on either side, each with a flat roof. "You can see open sky through a third of the roof," said Dan Eddington, Associational Mission Strategist at Three Rivers Baptist Association.

He explained the other third of the roof's sheet covering was peeled down to the structure's bare wood. "The A-frame was lifted up off of walls about four-inches and set back down," he said. "I assume it's going to be a total loss, but the insurance will have to make that determination."

On Wednesday afternoon, Church Treasurer Rachel Thillsaid the church building was filled

with an inch of standing water, and "water was still coming in everywhere." Thill and others were busy working to remove musical instruments and computers from the church sanctuary to prevent them from receiving further damage.

Thill's husband Jon serves as worship pastor at the church. The church does not currently have a senior pastor. Former pastor, Chad Ozee, is now on staff at a church in Florida.

As he made his way into the neighborhood Wednesday morning, Eddington described seeing homes destroyed by the tornado. In one section of the road he drove by "20 telephone poles tilted at a 45-degree angle" from the high winds.

Illinois Baptists are

asked to pray for the church members and their community.

Glen Carty, Illinois Baptist Disaster Relief Interim State Director, has been in touch with church leaders and Disaster Relief teams in the state are on standby status serve. The area has not yet been opened to volunteers by police and other public officials.

Thousands of area resi-

dents are without power. The church's parking lot is currently being used as a staging area for trucks from ComEd and other utility companies.

There were reports of baseball size hail and 160 mph winds in the area. The National Weather Service is continuing to collect data and has survey teams in the field. It expects to release a report soon.



Strong winds tore the roof off Journey Church's education wing.

Iran

Continued from page 7

their help, Iran loses most of its regional and terrorist threat, even after the bombing stops. Together with Russia and North Korea, Iran and China form, not an "Axis of Evil" but at least an "Axis of Autocracy" challenging U.S. global leadership. Iran doesn't want to lose its "club membership" there, nor its 90% share of China's imported oil-- 14 million barrels per day, half of it coming through the Strait of Hormuz. (China tries to disguise this by falsely attributing the crude oil's origin to Malaysia, Oman or the UAE. Ridiculous!) Due to China's clout at the United Nations, multilateral enforcement mechanisms against Iran's terrorism are inoperable, leaving U.S. action as the primary tool for restricting Iran's

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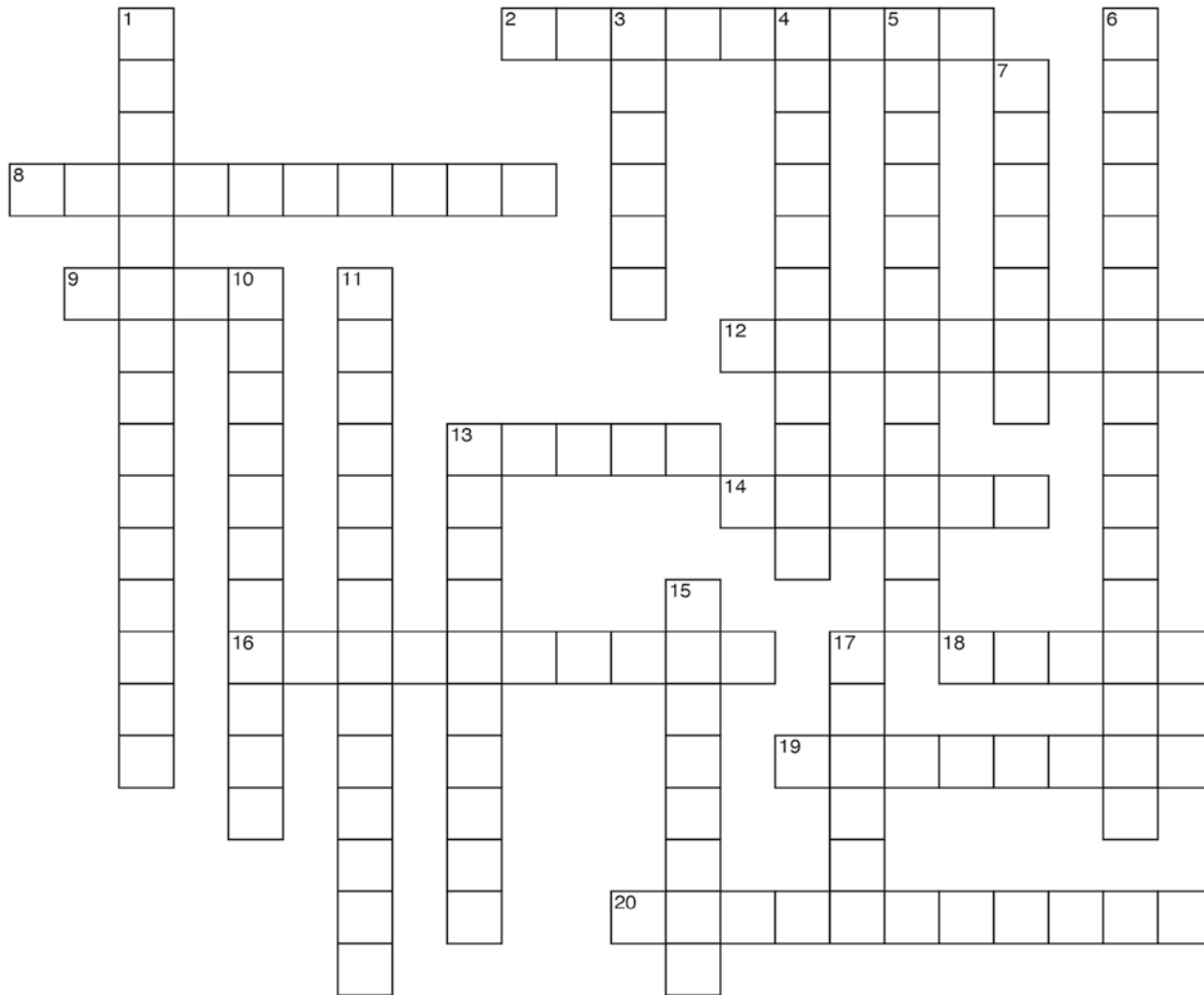
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- 2 He already knows our needs (2 wds)
 8 Seek it first (2 wds)
 9 Life is more than ____
 12 Store them up in heaven
 13 No thief can ____ your treasure in heaven
 14 Solomon was not dressed as beautifully as these
 16 It give our Heavenly Father great happiness to give this to us (2 wds)
 18 Where your treasure is, there your ____ will be also
 19 Can it add a single moment to your life?
 20 Jesus told the rich young ruler to sell them and give to those in need

DOWN

- 1 It is here today and thrown into the oven tomorrow (4 wds)
 3 They don't plant or harvest
 4 What lillies don't do (3 wds)
 5 Don't worry about it (2 wds)
 6 The thoughts of nonbelievers are dominated by these things (5 wds)
 7 Doesn't happen to purses in heaven (2 wds)
 10 What moth and rust do to earthly treasures (2 wds)
 11 They will be added unto you (3 wds)
 13 "____ unto the day is the evil thereof"
 15 Don't be anxious about it
 17 "Shall He not much more ____ you?"

**Answers in next
month's issue**

Mikey's Funnies

Linda and Marion were comparing notes on the difficulties of running a small business.

"I started a new business last year," Linda said. "I insist that each of my employees take at least a week off every three months."

"Why in the world would you do that?" Marion asked.

"It's the best way I know of to learn which ones I can do without," Linda said.

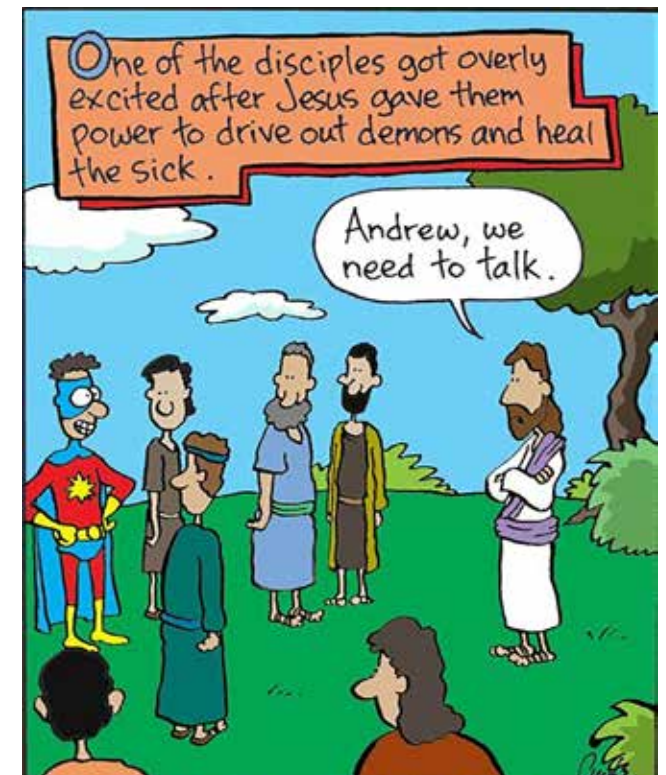
Teaching your kids in the heat of the moment is bad heir-conditioning.

YOU might be a school employee if you believe that unspeakable evils will befall you if anyone says, "Boy, the kids sure are mellow today."

YOU might be a school employee if you think caffeine should be available in intravenous form.

YOU might be a school employee if meeting a child's parent instantly answers this question, "Why is this kid like this?"

YOU might be a school employee if you know how many days, minutes, and seconds are left in the school year.



The Power of the Resurrection

By William S. Stoddard

“For I know that my Redeemer lives” (Job 19:25).

Read: Job 19-25; Psalm 130:7-8; Isaiah 44:22-23; Titus 2:13-14; Acts 4:33.

What is God Saying?

Job is presumed by many to be the oldest book in the Bible. And the oldest of books has to do with the oldest of problems:

“Why do the righteous suffer?”

Up to this verse in the story of Job, he is asking questions. Tough ones. “Man dies, and is laid low; man breathes his last and

where is he?” (14:10). “If a man die, shall he live again?” (14:14).

They were unanswerable questions that rose from a perplexed and anguished heart. But with his cry of faith,

“I know that my Redeemer lives,” he is on solid ground.

He is led of the Spirit to make the statement that has conveyed assurance to believers down through the centuries. He says, “I know.” He points with certainty to the fact that the solution to all problems,

the ultimate answer to all questions, whether they be old and persistent or new and passing, lies in knowing that the Lord, our Redeemer lives.

God in Christ is on top of it all.

He lives.

He has conquered the last great enemy which is death.

He is “declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4).

How Does This Apply To Us?

With Job in spite of ev-

ery argument to the contrary (and he was deluged with them), we, too, may know that the Redeemer lives. Furthermore, to live successful Christian lives we must know that.

God’s plan for the believer is that by the testimony of the Holy Spirit and by opening one’s eyes to see the innumerable evidences of God’s power and authority in the world of nature and history, we may come to a place where we can say we know.

God’s agenda is that we come to know. That is

why the Bible was given. “I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13) – know, not guess, not suppose, not wish, not wonder but know.

Pray With Me

Lord, to meditate upon this magnificent truth brings glory to my soul and a peace that remains unshaken amidst the shattered dreams of a Christ-rejecting world. I know that my Redeemer lives. The bond between us is personal and close.

I am not a number on a long list of data that has been fed into a celestial computer.

I have a name and You know it.

I need a living Redeemer that I can call my own and You are that Redeemer.

I know that my Redeemer lives. God be praised for the ability to know, with knowledge as clear and as sure as Your own Word. There is no vagueness in Your promises, no wondering if You really mean it, no wandering about in the wastelands of philosophical speculation.

I know that my Redeemer lives. I am delivered from the bondage of the fear of death. I am free because I am possessed by

Continued on page 11

Back to the Word: Kansas Churches Emphasize Scripture in 2026

Across Kansas and beyond, many Protestant and evangelical churches are placing renewed emphasis on daily Bible reading and Scripture-centered discipleship in 2026, marking what some leaders describe as a “return to the Word” in an increasingly distracted culture.

Churches in communities ranging from larger metro areas like Wichita and Kansas City to smaller rural congregations are encouraging members to engage more intentionally with the Bible through structured reading plans, small group studies, and family-based devotions.

One example comes from Christ Community Church in the Kansas City area, which launched a year-long Bible engagement initiative at the start of 2026. The effort encour-

ages participants to read through Scripture together, with coordinated teaching, sermons, and group discussions designed to help members better understand and apply biblical truth in daily life.

While programs may differ from church to church, the overall goal remains consistent: helping individuals and families build a stronger foundation in Scripture.

Many pastors point to a growing concern that biblical literacy has declined in recent years, even among regular churchgoers. In response, congregations are shifting focus away from topical or culturally driven messages and instead returning to verse-by-verse teaching and full-Bible reading plans.

In rural Kansas communities, where churches

often serve as both spiritual and social anchors, this emphasis is taking on a practical and family-oriented approach. Parents are being encouraged to read Scripture with their children, while youth groups are incorporating more Bible study into weekly activities.

Church leaders say the renewed focus is not about introducing something new, but rather returning to a long-standing foundation of the Christian faith.

“This isn’t a new idea,” one pastor noted. “It’s getting back to what the church has always been built on—God’s Word.”

In many congregations, the shift is already showing results in increased participation in Bible studies, stronger attendance in midweek services, and

greater engagement among younger families seeking direction and stability.

The movement also reflects a broader national trend, as churches across the country report similar efforts to deepen discipleship and encourage consistent time in Scripture amid the fast pace of modern life.

For Kansas communities, the renewed emphasis on the Bible highlights the continuing role of local churches not only as places of worship, but as centers for guidance, connection, and spiritual growth.

As 2026 continues, many church leaders remain hopeful that this return to Scripture will lead to lasting impact—both within their congregations and throughout the communities they serve.



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Power

Continued from page 10

One who has power to lift me up and hold me above the entangling alliances of sin and the bitter harvest of eternal, spiritual death.

He is real to me. I know Him.

He is my great eternal Redeemer because He lives.

His voice is rich and warm, not a dead echo of superstition or the faint whispering of wishful thinking.

His hand is strong and His eyes are kind.

He lives, and to eternity I shall praise Him that "because He lives, I too shall live."

In the name of Him who ever lives to make interces-

sion for me. Amen.
Moving On In the Life of Prayer

"You ask me how I know he lives, He lives within my heart."

That is the great finale to a familiar and cherished hymn. It is also the experience of the steadfast Christian.

In his or her heart the Christian knows that Jesus is alive and in control and that He will come again, as He promised, to receive us unto Himself.

The secret of joyous living lies in knowing that whatever happens, Jesus Christ is real – He is really ours and we are really His.

Do you know that your Redeemer lives?

Then, by your life show that your Redeemer lives!

New missionaries share what surprised them most

By Kristen Sosebee, Baptist Press

Sometimes it takes two hours just to get groceries. A doctor's visit will most likely require Google Translate at some point. Air pollution skyrockets during winter months. Language learning is not for the faint of heart.

And yet, showing up is more important than saying the right thing. Children are magnets for meeting people. And, even when it takes three hours of tea to get to a Gospel conversation, making Christ known is worth it.

These are just some of the hard-won pearls of wisdom International Mission Board missionaries Forrest and Paige mulled over one evening as they reflected on their first year overseas.

When they moved to Central Asia last year to

work among Muslim people groups, Forrest and Paige knew being flexible was a requisite for the work of missions. But they revealed one thing that surprised them most of all.

"In Central Asia, there is an expectation for you to have spiritual conversations if your faith is important to you," said Paige, explaining how, unlike in the U.S., religion and spiritual matters are not taboo topics. "If you withhold your faith until later in the relationship, people are surprised that you waited so long to talk about it."

One day, when a new, Central Asian friend brought up God early in their conversation, Paige was caught off guard but excited. Her friend remarked that someone had told her to read the Bible and asked Paige what she

thought. "And from there, the remainder of our conversation was spiritual," Paige recalled. "We talked about the grand narrative of Scripture and the Gospel. We opened the Bible and read it together, and I asked her what she thought about it."

She had a similar experience while meeting another new friend at a coffee shop. After Paige shared some of her testimony, the friend pressed for more information. "So, who is Jesus and why did He die?" They spent the rest of their conversation reading Scripture together and sharing deeply about the Gospel.

But even while social norms facilitate open conversations about faith, Forrest and Paige have found talking about Jesus often leads to loss of relation-

ship. And, though the government isn't openly hostile to Christianity, local believers, especially, face cultural and familial persecution when they share Christ.

Part of their work, Forrest explained, includes coming alongside the local church as they count the cost for sharing the Gospel with their friends and family, and empowering local believers to take the Gospel to places where missionaries can't go.

Forrest recounted a recent conversation with one local believer who had never considered his access to regions and countries where missionaries are unable to gain entry.

"He was like 'Oh, I never even thought of that,'" Forrest said. "It does require

Continued on page 20

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How Can I Honor God in My Decisions?

By Jay Thomas, Ligonier Ministries

Some decisions come easier than others. The choice between a hamburger and a pizza may take a moment of reflection, but usually there is no great distress over the decision. But other decisions—the big ones—sometimes leave us grasping for a sign from heaven. Which college should I go to? Is the person I am dating the person I should marry? I have two really good job offers, so which one should I accept? Suddenly, given the weight of the decision, we feel we need more than mere prudence—we need a sign.

So, we try to read the “codes” that God leaves us, or unusual circumstances, or dreams, or the theme of a recent Netflix show we just watched, or even zucchini bread. Yes, zucchini bread. A close friend of mine in college desired to be married. He also did not want to go through all the typical dating rigmarole. One day, my friend prayed and asked God to send a sign. He asked that the young woman God had set aside for him bake him zucchini bread complete-

ly out of the blue. Guess what? It actually happened. A young woman, a friend of his, baked him zucchini bread—I kid you not. They started dating. Two years later, she broke up with him. What? But the bread! Maybe God had a sense of humor, but that bread was not the way to know God’s will, and my friend learned a lesson: Providence alone is not the foundation of discernment.

So then, how does one ascertain what God wants us to do when we face a big decision?

Let me use the illustration of a three-legged stool that sits atop a solid floor. The floor is the Word of God. The Bible refers to “the will of God” primarily as the revealed Scripture, not the particulars of a future action. When God leads people, it is always by virtue of His revealed will and character in His Word. We often forget this. God’s will, before it is vocation or location, is about our character, our values, and our holiness. A classic text that has guided me is Proverbs 3:5–6:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your

own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

This word of wisdom reminds me that God and His Word must be the focus of all my decisions. What will honor Him? Am I planning out of confidence in God or out of fear or self-ambition? As I make decisions, big or small, that focus on God, then He promises to straighten out the way ahead. How does He do that? That brings us to the three-legged stool.

1. Desire

The first leg is desire. The Bible rebukes ungodly desires, but desire itself is part of our humanity. We live according to our desires, which influence our

intellect, our will, and even our emotions. As the floor of God’s Word penetrates our hearts, then our desires are baptized in God’s revealed will. We can look to those desires as they direct us. The Lord puts vocational, relational, and locational desires in us as we first desire God Himself. So, ask yourself the question, “What do I desire to do in this situation?” But that alone is not enough.

God may design the journey to be complicated, but that is part of your growth.

2. Ability

The second leg is ability. Do you have the ability to fulfill the decision? You may want to run a mile in four minutes, but if you are not a gifted runner, your desire has met its match.

You will need to discern your God-given gifts as you look at an opportunity. Let’s say you desire to attend a prestigious college. You must be realistic about your academic ability. Can you do well at that college with proper discipline and balance? You may desire to go to Harvard, and you may be gifted enough to thrive at Harvard, but there is still yet another issue. Harvard must invite you to study there. Desire and ability must be tethered to an open door, which brings us to our final point.

3. Opportunity

The third leg is opportunity. God opens doors and God closes doors. We do not like closed doors. But a closed door is God’s clear direction, for it clearly tells

you what God does not want. Learn to accept and even be thankful for closed doors. But God also opens doors. He may open more than one. In that case, that is when you look at desire and ability and see if one seems more attractive. What if it’s a tie? This is where you use the wisdom of godly input from others, prayerfulness, more reading of Scripture, reading solid Christian books that focus your heart on Christ, and other means to root you in God’s revealed will and heart for you. Over time, the decision will often become clear. God wants to straighten your path, and He will not tease you. He may design the journey to

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Is Assurance Possible?

By John MacArthur

Is it possible to have full assurance of salvation?

Scripture categorically answers yes. Not only does the Bible teach that assurance is possible for Christians in this life, but the apostle Peter also gave this command: “Brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you” (2 Pet. 1:10). Assurance is not only a privilege; it is the birthright and sacred trust of every true child of God. We are commanded to cultivate assurance, not take it for granted.

True assurance is a taste of heaven on earth. Fanny Crosby expressed that truth in a well-known hymn:

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!

O what a foretaste of glory divine!

Puritan Thomas Brooks observed the same reality and titled his book on assurance *Heaven on Earth*. To possess genuine assurance is to experience a bit of divine bliss this side of heaven. The greater our sense of assurance, the

Decisions

Continued from page 12

be complicated, but that is part of your growth. A decision is often about the character formation in getting there and not just the decision itself.

Conclusion

I have found that Scripture and wisdom-based decision-making protects us from so much anxiety and fiddling around

more we can savor that glory in this earthly life.

In contemporary Christianity, assurance is too often either ignored or claimed by people who have no right to it. Too many people believe they are saved merely because someone told them so. They do not examine themselves; they do not test their assurance by God’s Word; they are taught that doubts about their salvation can be only detrimental to spiritual health and growth. Yet multitudes of these people give no evidence of any spiritual health or growth whatsoever.

Assurance in the Reformation

The Protestant Reformation teaches us much about assurance. The Roman Catholic Church denied—and denies to this day—that anyone on earth can have assurance of salvation. Because Catholic theology sees salvation as a joint effort between God and the sinner, the outcome must always be in doubt. If a person fails spiritually

with cloud formations and liver shivers. This means of following God is still complicated, but it is less complicated than trying to find the God-codes left for us as a bread-crumbs trail. God sometimes does use unusual means to guide us, but even those should be tested against Scripture. May God’s Word, with a consideration of your desire, ability, and opportunity, help you navigate a life that pleases the Lord.

before salvation is complete, that person forfeits eternal life. Since no one can know with certainty whether he or she will have the strength to endure to the end, no one can really be certain of heaven.

The Reformers, by contrast, taught that believers can and should be fully assured of their salvation. The early Reformers went so far as to define faith in a way that included assurance. Calvin’s definition of faith is often quoted: “It is a firm and sure knowledge of the divine favour toward us, founded on the truth of a free promise in Christ, and revealed to our minds, and sealed on our hearts, by the Holy Spirit.”[1] By calling faith “a firm and

sure knowledge” of God’s favor, Calvin taught that assurance is of the essence of faith. That means the moment someone trusts Christ for salvation, he will have some level of assurance.

Calvin’s definition of faith aligns with Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Thus it is clear from Scripture that a measure of assurance is inherent in believing.

Often, however, the assurance of faith is darkened by doubt. Calvin also recognized that, and wrote, “When we say that faith must be certain and secure, we certainly speak not of an assurance which

is never affected by doubt, nor a security which anxiety never assails, we rather maintain that believers have a perpetual struggle with their own distrust, and are thus far from thinking that their consciences possess a placid quiet, uninterpreted by perturbation [distress].”[2]

Scripture is clearly on Calvin’s side here. Some assurance belongs to the essence of faith, but believing does not necessarily bring full assurance. “I do believe; help my unbelief” (Mark 9:24) is a sincere expression of every new believer’s heart. Even the apostles pleaded with Jesus, “Increase our faith!” (Luke 17:5).

Later Reformed theo-

logians, recognizing that genuine Christians often lack assurance, denied that any assurance is implicit in believing. On this issue they disagreed with Calvin, who, arguing against Rome, was eager to emphasize the possibility of immediate assurance. The later Reformers, battling antinomian tendencies in their movement, wanted to emphasize the importance of practical evidence in the lives of believers.

The Westminster Confession of Faith, completed in 1646, distinguishes faith from assurance. The Confession includes this:

This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that

Continued on page 18

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WEEK OF PRAYER: Collegiate church planters see God do ‘more than we could’ve ever imagined’

By Tony Hudson, Baptist Press

Editor’s note: This year’s Week of Prayer for North American Missions was March 1-March 8 and was focused on the theme: More Than a Gift and the theme verse of Ephesians 3:20-21. The emphasis spotlights the spiritual needs and ministry taking place on the North American mission field leading up to the annual Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (AAEO) for North American Missions. All gifts given to the offering support missionaries and resources on the mission field. The AAEO provides half of the annual funding for the North American Mission Board. Gifts to the Annie offering can be given through local Southern Baptist churches or online

at give.anniearmstrong.com. This year’s goal is \$80 million.

In August, Erin and Ellie were strangers. By October, they were best friends. That’s what can happen when two nevermet-before college freshmen get assigned one small 250-square-foot dorm room in which to live.

“We met the first day of college,” Ellie says, “and I guess it was inevitable – we got really close, really fast.”

Erin Chapmond and Ellie Dunlevy are two of the more than 50,000 students at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind., where the birth and growth of almost-instantaneous friendships is an everyday event. That makes West Lafayette, according to North American mission-

ary Jordan Adams, the perfect place to plant a church.

“Students here live this incredibly interconnected way of life,” Jordan says. “They eat together, live together and go to class together. So, when you introduce one of them to Jesus, multiple students hear about it, and the Gospel spreads like crazy.”

For Jordan and Jessamy Adams, Purdue University is the latest stop on a decade-long collegiate church planting journey.

“We both kind of caught the bug when we were students at Iowa State,” Jordan says. “We became part of a local church’s college ministry called The Salt Company, and when we saw students there worshipping and sharing the Gospel and being sent out, we really latched on to their dream of

‘What if this could happen everywhere?’”

In 2016, after the Adams’ church in Iowa launched The Salt Network with the goal of planting a church on every major college campus in the U.S., Jordan and Jessamy moved to Minneapolis to help plant a Salt Network church and a Salt Company collegiate ministry at the University of Minnesota.

“That whole experience of moving to a far-off place and starting something new was kind of scary,” Jessamy says. “It was a lot of change, and change is hard. But it was so sweet to see how God was faithful. He provided everything we needed, and helping plant that church was one of the best experiences of our lives.”

It was in Minneapolis where Jordan and Jessamy discovered why college campuses are such fertile ground not just for starting

a church but a movement.

“I think there’s a perception that college students are closed off to the Gospel, but we found that wasn’t true at all,” Jordan says. “They’re at a really unique stage of life because they’ve been removed from the environment where they’ve been told what to think, and now they’re forced to ask themselves, ‘What do I really believe?’”

“That’s how we ended up with a church full of excited, new believers saying, ‘Where are other places that need church plants? When I graduate, I want to go there.’”

In 2023, Jordan, Jessamy and a team of almost 50 people moved to West Lafayette to plant another church – The Chapel – and another Salt Company collegiate ministry.

“We brought a church to plant a church,” Jordan says. “We had recent col-

lege grads. We had retirees. We had all kinds of people move here to help us plant. They met their neighbors; they found jobs, and when people asked them, ‘Why’d you move here?’ they got to share the Gospel.”

The Gospel is not something Chapmond would’ve described herself as interested in when she first arrived at Purdue.

“I just kind of figured it was great if other people found something that worked for them,” she says. “But for me, I was never into religion or church. Not until I met Ellie.”

Dunlevy, Erin’s randomly assigned roommate, grew up as a missionary kid in Argentina, and, unlike Chapmond, she was “very much into church.” Shortly after Dunlevy started attending The Chapel a few weeks into her and Chapmond’s freshman

Continued on page 15



To Jordan Adams, unheard of things like 38 baptisms in one worship service have become “heard of” for his congregation. Several years ago, Jordan planted a church in West Lafayette, Indiana, to reach students at Purdue University. “Now,” he says, “we’re seeing a movement of the gospel that I’m convinced will change our world through college students.” NAMB photo by Ben Rollins



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Prayer

Continued from page 14

year, Dunlevy did what any newly minted best friend would do.

“We’d spent so much time together, and I was curious,” Dunlevy says. “I was like, ‘Do you want me to go to church with you?’ And she was like, ‘Yeah, that’d be fun.’”

Chapmond’s first time at The Chapel turned out to be more than she expected.

“That Sunday, when Jordan started speaking, I felt like he was talking directly to me,” she says. “I learned that Jesus was an actual person who loves me for who I am, even though everything was broken about me. It completely reinvented how I view myself.

“Now, I’m a child of God.”

Erin is one of 81 people The Chapel baptized in their first year.

“We had pretty big dreams of what God would do when we came here,” Jordan says. “But seeing what He’s done with students like Erin and Ellie, seeing auditoriums overflow and all these students getting baptized – this has been way more than we could’ve ever imagined.”

The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® provides half of NAMB’s annual budget, and 100 percent of the proceeds go to the mission field in North America. The offering is used for training, support and care for missionaries, like Jordan and Jessamy Adams, and for evangelism resources.

Faith in the Public Eye: Kansas Churches Navigate Cultural Tensions

As churches across Kansas continue their mission in local communities, some are also facing a growing challenge that extends beyond their walls—public demonstrations and cultural tensions surrounding the Christian faith.

In recent months, a Kansas-based protest group known for its controversial and confrontational approach has announced and carried out demonstrations targeting churches, public events, and institutions across the state. The group, widely recognized for its extreme messaging, has drawn national attention over the years for protests that often blur the line between religious expression and public disruption.

While such demonstra-

tions remain relatively small in number, their presence has created moments of tension for congregations and communities unaccustomed to this type of activity.

Church leaders across Kansas have responded in a variety of ways, but many emphasize the importance of maintaining a clear distinction between their own beliefs and the messages promoted by fringe groups.

“Most churches in Kansas are focused on serving their communities, sharing the Gospel, and caring for people,” one pastor shared. “What you see from these protests does not represent the heart of the local church.”

In both rural and urban areas, congregations have

continued their regular services and outreach efforts despite occasional disruptions. Some churches have taken proactive steps to ensure the safety and comfort of attendees, while also encouraging members to respond with calmness and respect.

Community leaders note that while the demonstrations can draw attention, they often do not reflect the broader experience of Christianity in Kansas, which is largely characterized by local service, volunteerism, and community engagement.

In many cases, churches have used these moments as opportunities to reinforce their own mission and message, focusing on unity, compassion, and

outreach rather than confrontation.

The situation also highlights a broader reality facing churches nationwide: navigating how faith is expressed in an increasingly visible and sometimes divided public sphere.

For Kansas communities, particularly in smaller towns where churches play a central role in daily life, the contrast between local congregations and highly publicized protest groups is often stark.

Despite the challenges, church leaders remain focused on their longstanding role within their

communities—providing spiritual guidance, supporting families, and serving as a place of connection.

As one pastor noted, “Our responsibility is to stay grounded in what we believe and continue doing the work we’ve been called to do.”

In the midst of changing cultural dynamics, Kansas churches continue to emphasize that their identity is not defined by outside voices, but by the consistent, everyday work of faith lived out in their communities.

“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.”

Matthew 10:32

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Why Fear?

By Van Yandell

Joshua 1:9 “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go”.

Some men fear death! Some fear life. Some fear other men while others fear pain and many fear uncertainty. Fear of disease or fear of poverty may be the summit of the fears of many, and fear of the future may bring other to tremble.

Some jump out of airplanes; others face wild animals or poisonous snakes. Why do some appear to have no fear while others allow their fears to destroy their lives? Why

will some engage in a business venture while many are content to work for another in the safe haven of a weekly paycheck?

These questions are impossible to answer because every person has a thinking mind, different experiences and separate ancestral proclivities.

Are some fears common sense? Of course! In the early 2020’s we feared covid. We took precautions to keep from contracting the virus. Certain actions are engaged in to alleviate our fears while others are out of our control.

Many in the world today fear cancer. That of course is somewhat justified. We can take precautions to quell that fear with a sensi-

ble diet, an active lifestyle and having the right ancestors. That ancestral choice is not ours to make but we know from observation, family history seems to be a link.

Guilt can lead to a state of fear. Guilt is said to be the most wasted emotion. For the believer in a crucified and resurrected Christ Jesus, sins are forgiven.

1 John 1: 9 “If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” To fear the afterlife is unnecessary because of this absolute promise of our Creator.

In the 23rd Psalm verse 4, David wrote “Yea, though I walk through the

valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” The presence of God in David’s life prevented fear.

Isaiah 41:10 “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

We have scriptural assurance of the unwarranted feeling of fear. God gave us a mind to analyze the sources of our fears and eliminate them.

If any character in the Holy Bible had a reason to fear it was the Apostle Paul. In spite of his certain future of physical pain

administered by those opposing the teaching of the Gospel of Christ, Paul trudged on with his God given purpose.

2 Corinthians 11: 24-26 “Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren.”

Paul’s body must have been a mass of scar tissue having been flogged

five times. Because of Paul’s encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road (Acts 9: 3-6), he was of a certainty of the reality of salvation through Christ Jesus.

Paul had no doubts of the reality of Christ’s divinity and His power. Can we have that assurance? Of course we can through faith. Faith is a belief system and among our greatest gifts from God.

Many of us have found our greatest weapon against fear is prayer. When we encounter those (many times superfluous), reasons for fear, prayer is constantly available. God never hides or sleeps!

Continued on page 17

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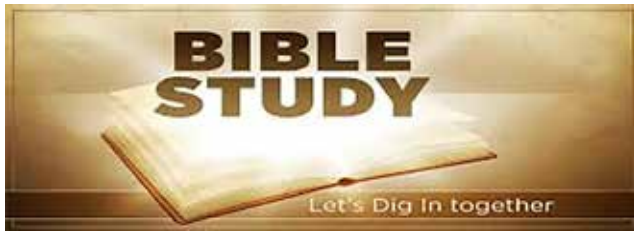
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The Authority of Scripture

Scripture Focus: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

Introduction

We live in a world filled with competing voices. Opinions shift, culture changes, and truth can feel uncertain. In the midst of this, Scripture stands as the unchanging authority for the believer.

The Bible is not simply a collection of human ideas—it is the very Word of God. Because of this, it speaks with authority into every area of life. Understanding this shapes how we think, live, and relate to God.

1. Scripture Comes from God

2 Timothy 3:16 tells us, *"All Scripture is breathed out by God."* Though written by human authors, its source is divine.

2 Peter 1:21 adds,

"For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

Because Scripture comes from God, it carries His authority. It does not change with time or depend on human opinion.

2. Scripture Is Sufficient for Life

Scripture is *"profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness."* It gives everything needed for spiritual growth.

Psalms 119:105 says,

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Through His Word, God provides guidance and clarity. We are not left to figure life out on our own.

3. Scripture Must Be Obeyed

Because Scripture is authoritative and sufficient, it calls for a response.

James 1:22 says,

"Be doers of the word, and not hearers only."

Jesus said in John 14:15,

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

Obedience is not about earning favor but responding to God with trust.

Application

This week:

- Read Scripture daily
- Ask God for understanding
- Identify one area to apply
- Act on what you learn

Closing Thought

God has spoken, and His Word is trustworthy and unchanging. The question is not whether Scripture is true, but whether we will submit to it.

Fear

Continued from page 16

Over five billion people in our world have not found the solace of life offered by Christ Jesus. Did Jesus fear? Luke 22: 44 *"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."* The man Jesus knew fear because of His immediate future (Hebrews 5: 7).

He could have called twelve legions of angels (Matthew 26: 53) and stopped His inevitable future, but He did not. He

went, voluntarily, sacrificially to the cross for the sin of all mankind.

We do not face crucifixion as did Jesus. We do not face the flogging whip as did Paul. Our fears seem miniscule in comparison.

If one's greatest fear is death or the process of dying, consider the depth and promise of Revelation 21: 4. *"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."*

We have the promise of

God written by the Apostle John. That place called Heaven awaits the believer in Christ Jesus (John 14: 1-3).

It surely appears many Christians fear greatly the command of Jesus before ascending (Acts 1: 8-9) and that is to tell others about Him. With our world eroding further into chaos as we watch, the only solution for survival beyond total anarchy is our Jesus.

We must not have fear of our verbal witness of the teachings of the Holy Bible, God's word. Matthew 28: 20 *"Teaching them to observe all things*

whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

We are not alone!

The Bible teaches there is only one eternal salvation. That is by a faith-based belief (Ephesians 2: 8) that Christ Jesus was crucified (Matthew 27: 35) for the remission of sin (Romans 4: 25), resurrected (Matthew 28: 6) and ascended alive into Heaven (Acts 1: 9).

Van Yandell is a retired Industrial Arts teacher, an ordained gospel evangelist and missionary. His email is vmy3451@gmail.com.



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Assurance

Continued from page 13

a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be partaker of it: yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means, attain thereunto. And therefore it is the duty of everyone to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure; that thereby his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance: so far is it from inclining men to looseness (18.3).

In other words, the Confession taught that assurance is something distinct from faith. A person can thus become a genuine believer yet remain unsure of his salvation. To the Westminster divines, assurance was possible—even highly desirable—but not automatic. They believed some Christians need to “wait long” and wrestle with God before He grants them assurance. Most Puritans shared this view.

So on the one hand, Calvin tended to make the

grounds for assurance objective, urging believers to look to the promises of Scripture to gain a sense of personal assurance. On the other hand, the Puritans tended to emphasize the subjective means of establishing assurance, counseling people to examine their lives and behavior for evidences of their election.

In fact, some of the Puritans carried their teaching on assurance to implausible extremes. They tended to become mystical on the issue, implying that assurance was something God grants supernaturally in His time and in special measures for select saints—almost like a heavenly vision one could be zapped with, or an added work of grace. Most of the Puritans taught that believers could not expect assurance until long after conversion, and only after a life of extended faithfulness.[3] They tended to make assurance

dependent on the believer’s ability to live at an almost unattainable level of personal holiness. I have profited greatly from reading their works, but I often wonder how many of them were able to live up to their own standards.

As we might expect, the Puritans’ demanding preaching led to a widespread lack of assurance among their flocks. Christians became obsessed with whether they were truly elect, and many lapsed into morbid introspection and utter despair. That explains why so much of Puritan literature was written for people struggling with the question of assurance.

By contrast, today assurance is rarely made an issue. Few professing Christians seem to lack assurance because evangelistic preaching is usually devoid of any call to holy living. Evangelists and counselors normally

seek to dispel doubts about salvation by pronouncing them groundless, or by teaching converts to view all doubts as an attack by the enemy. Preachers are so fearful of shattering anyone’s confidence that they seem to forget false assurance is a more serious problem than no assurance (cf. Matt. 7:21–23).

Surely there is a middle ground. Scripture encourages true believers with the promise of full assurance, while making false professors uncomfortable by seeking to destroy their false sense of security. A

true believer’s sense of assurance should not rise and fall with emotions; rather, it is meant to be an anchor even in the midst of life’s difficulties. But a false professor has no right to assurance.

Those are the twin emphases our preaching should reflect. We must recover a biblical understanding of assurance.

If we confuse the issue of assurance, we will have multitudes, on the one hand, whose spiritual lives are crippled by doubt, and multitudes, on the other, who expect to be ushered

into heaven but will hear the Lord say, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness” (Matt. 7:23).

Because assurance is such a key doctrine—and should be a great comfort to the believer—we are dedicating this blog series to answering basic questions about assurance: What is it? How can we measure our assurance? How can we know if we have false assurance? Next time, we’ll begin exploring this topic by asking, Is assurance objective or subjective?

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Evangelism gets an Upward boost through sports, say pastors



Danny Downing, at right in dark hoodie, leads a pre-game prayer at an Upward basketball game at Johnson Ferry Baptist Church. Photo by Martin Giles

By Scott Barkley, Baptist Press

The break Trinity Baptist Church took from its Upward Sports program in 2018 was supposed to be brief, an opportunity to reset a ministry that had become very popular in its community.

COVID and a devastating tornado that destroyed the church building postponed those plans until last fall. But Upward's long-anticipated return has reaffirmed its role in drawing people to Christ.

Andrew Riddle was voted in as Trinity's pastor on March 8. But when he joined as student pastor and worship leader in 2011, he and his brother-in-law sought out a ministry to reach children and youth.

"We really wanted to do something that was going to build the kingdom," he said. "We saw the need, and we had a great facility for it with a full-sized gym, so we ran with it."

Upward Sports was founded in 1995 and, ac-

ording to the organization, has grown to become the world's largest Christian youth sports ministry. Local churches provide more than 1,500 Upward Sports experiences such as basketball, soccer, cheer, volleyball, flag football, baseball, softball and pickleball.

Over half of players indicate they don't have a church affiliation, with each athlete averaging three to four family members attending a game, according to Upward's stud-

ies.

After the 2002 tornado that devastated the building, Trinity Baptist met in a movie theater and then a school. Although the gym survived, it was heavily damaged and was ultimately brought down as well.

The rebuild began with a new gym, both due to how quickly it could be constructed and its multi-purpose use. A new sanctuary will come, but for now, Sunday services and 10-year-olds chasing a basketball before a devotional share the same floor.

"We had Upward in mind with the new gym," said Riddle. "We put in more space for spectators and things like that."

Danny Downing launched the Upward Sports ministry at Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga., 26 years ago as associate pastor of sports outreach. It's a year-round effort that requires some 500 coaches leading approximately 2,600

participants across over a dozen sports and activities.

"It's one of our No. 1 ways to reach our community," he said. "We see it as one of the doorways into the church."

Those doorways are the only ones open to some people. The area of Cobb County, where Johnson Ferry sits, is widely known for its youth sports programs, particularly baseball. The financial and time demands are simply too much for many families, though.

"Upward brings a lot of balance to that," said

Downing. "If you sign up for baseball, you're going to have a 90-minute practice and then a game on Saturday. It leaves time for family life."

Over two-thirds of those players are from outside Johnson Ferry's walls. "It gives us a great way to reach our community, reach people, make a connecting point and invite them to church," Downing said.

Coaches hold devotions for teams. Families receive the opportunity to take ma-

Continued on page 20



Trinity Baptist Church in Idabel, Okla., relaunched its Upward Sports program last fall after years of delay brought by Covid and a devastating tornado. Photo by Kristi Wood



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2. It's the most translated book in history

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3. The shortest verse in the Bible

John 11:35 - "Jesus wept."
Just two words - but full of meaning.

4. The longest chapter

Psalms 119
- 176 verses
- Focuses entirely on the Word of God

5. The Bible was originally written in 3 languages

- Hebrew (Old Testament)
- Aramaic (small portions)
- Greek (New Testament)

6. The Bible has 66 books

- 39 in the Old Testament

- 27 in the New Testament

7. The word "Bible" means "books"

It comes from the Greek word biblia, meaning a collection of writings.

8. Shepherds are everywhere in the Bible

Shepherding was a major part of life:

- David was a shepherd
- Jesus is called the "Good Shepherd" (John 10:11)

Surprised

Continued from page 11

casting vision and training people to catch that spark."

As they consider the remainder of their first term and beyond, Forrest pointed out the importance of steadfast missionary presence.

"I think something I'm learning is that it takes long-standing faithfulness to see fruit," he said. "When you're doing the work, consistently showing up in people's lives and being there really, really matters."

Though the work of mis-

9. The Bible's central message

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sions hasn't always looked like they expected, Forrest and Paige expressed their gratefulness to God for exposing the idols of convenience and control in their hearts and teaching them to go with the flow.

"Sometimes it feels like I've had three hours of tea just so I could get to a five-minute conversation about the Gospel," Forrest said, "but I've realized sometimes three hours of tea is the work."

"On the hard days," Paige agreed, "all of it just points to the worthiness of Christ."

Some names have been changed for security

Sports

Continued from page 19

materials home for continued use.

"Whether you have a spiritual background or not, the devotions are going to give solid teaching that's going to support the family," said Downing. "We would have to spend a lot of time writing our own devotions. But because of Upward, we get a lot of first-class resources that allows us to spend our time investing in our coaches and meeting with people from the community."

Trinity held a Kick-Off weekend last fall when Upward made its return. It quickly became evident how the benefits from the ministry flow both ways, said Riddle.

"We had a great turnout," Riddle said. Adults and teenagers helped with everything from the concession stand to leading devotions to reffing. They really, really enjoyed serving. People are already signing up for next year."

Bible Trivia

Question: How many different authors were involved in writing the Bible?

Answer

About 40.

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Matthew 10:32



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Happy Wife, Happy Life?

How the Subtle Temptation of Passivity Can Destroy Marriage

By Cindy Pickett, *The Gospel Coalition*

The year was 1996. Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, I stepped into my first day as a federal agent, clad in a crisp cream pantsuit and a sensible ponytail and wearing a silver cross around my neck. My training officer sat in his office, finishing a personal call.

“Oh geez,” he groaned. Click. “Happy wife, happy life, I guess!” Followed by a sinister laugh and a few God-blaming expletives.

This was my introduction to a career filled with men who spoke about their wives with sarcasm, cynicism, or resigned humor. You’d think it would have turned me off to marriage. For a while, it did—until I realized the real danger wasn’t in their words but in what I was absorbing.

I started keeping an internal checklist: Never be a nag. Never have a honey-do list. Never talk too much. Always stay at-

tractive so he won’t stray. I didn’t realize it then, but I was crafting my own version of the “perfect” wife—the one who would never be the subject of a “happy wife, happy life” complaint.

This phrase isn’t biblical, and if we’re not careful, accepting it as a principled excuse for passivity can disrupt God’s design for marriage.

Excuse for Passivity

On the surface, this common saying sounds harmless—perhaps endearing. But dig a little deeper, and the message is clear: A husband’s job is to keep his wife happy to avoid trouble. Is this what Adam thought when he stood by and let Eve take the fall?

Genesis 1 tells us God created man and woman to steward creation together. But in Genesis 3, Adam chose passivity: “She also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he

ate. . . The man said [to God], ‘*The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate*’” (vv. 6, 12).

Adam could’ve led. He could’ve slain the Serpent. He could’ve stood firm. Instead, he stayed silent and later blamed Eve (and God).

Yes, the Bible warns of quarrelsome wives (Prov. 21:9), but it also calls husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the church—sacrificially, not passively (Eph. 5:25). God’s vision for marriage is mutual love and mutual respect, with husbands called to lead through humble, servant-hearted sacrifice, not appeasement.

Mark of Reluctant Compliance

Some might argue “happy wife, happy life” is just about loving gestures—giving her the bigger closet, letting her pick the movie. But the phrase

rarely conveys that kind of joyful sacrifice. More often, it suggests reluctant compliance: Just say yes and avoid conflict.

This creates a distorted dynamic. The wife becomes more dominant—not necessarily through strength or virtue but often through emotional or sexual control, anger, or manipulation. The husband, rather than stepping up, disengages. She gets her way but loses his heart. He keeps the peace but forfeits respect and godly leadership. Over time, this dynamic can breed resentment and leave them both feeling unsatisfied and longing for a genuine partnership.

A strong marriage isn’t about power struggles. It’s about serving and submitting to each other in love (Eph. 5:21–33). Submission isn’t blind obedience, and love isn’t weak compliance. It requires courage, humility, and a desire

to glorify God, not self.

Marriage isn’t about keeping peace at any cost. It’s about reflecting Christ’s love for the church—a love that sacrifices and sanctifies.

That kind of happiness far outweighs the temporary calm of appeasement. God’s design for marriage is good; it’s good for us, and it pleases him. Sometimes that means a wife doesn’t get what she wants. Sometimes that means a husband needs to lead and stand firm. That’s not a loss. It’s the beauty of God’s design at work.

Different Kind of Marriage

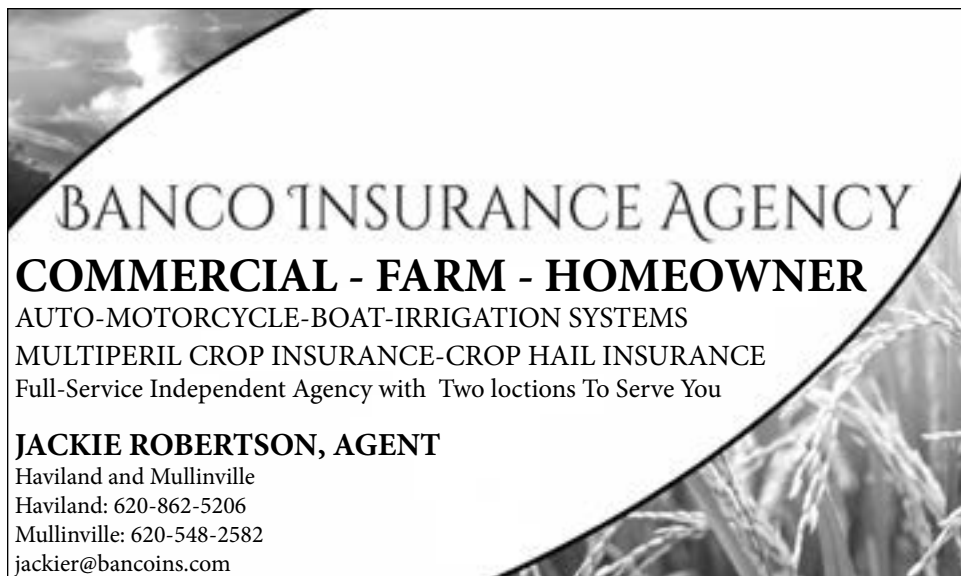
As I walked with God through singleness in my 30s, I had to unlearn the jaded lessons I’d picked up from the “happy wife, happy life” mentality in my early career. Instead of merely enduring while wanting to escape single-ness, I learned to experience it as a full and mean-

ingful season of life. I was a whole person, not waiting to become complete.

Yet I also hoped for marriage, aspiring to be the kind of woman Scripture calls an “excellent wife,” one who captures her husband’s heart because she “*does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life*” (Prov. 31:10–12). Those years shaped me deeply, forming my faith as I walked with the Lord in his Word and in prayer, and as I gleaned from the wisdom of godly couples.

When I married at 41, my husband and I committed to a different kind of marriage, one built on mutual accountability. Early on, a wise couple told us, “Pray together every day. It’s the key to a strong marriage.” We took that to heart, and in over 15 years, that habit has made us more humble, open, and dependent on God.

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Pedro Aquino gets his medal



By Karen L. Willoughby,
Baptist Press

Pedro F. Aquino, Jr., is to receive a Congressional Gold Medal this Saturday, March 21, 14 years after his death in 2012 at age 89.

His story is one that shows the value for veterans and their families in preserving copies of military records and for Christian leaders and their families saving theirs.

“According to my dad, his military records were among those that were burnt,” Feri Aquino told Baptist Press. She found a document that validated his statement on NationalArchives.gov: “On July

12, 1973, a catastrophic fire at the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis, Missouri, destroyed or damaged approximately 16 to 18 million U.S. military personnel files. The fire burned for 22 hours, with hotspots lasting for days”

U.S. Army Major General, Ret., Tony Taguba told Baptist Press this week that the files were “unrecoverable.”

Aquino’s military documentation from the Philippines states he was a First Lieutenant as part of the U.S. Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) during

World War II.

More than 30 years after World War II, and for almost 40 years, Aquino served God and Filipinos as a Southern Baptist church planter and pastor in California, the Southern Gulf Coast and Oklahoma.

Aquino’s family is to receive his Congressional Gold Medal for his military service at 9 a.m. Saturday, March 21, at Sonlight (Southern Baptist) Church in San Diego.

“We honor Pastor Pedro Aquino now because gratitude has no expiration date,” said retired Navy Commander Don Biadog Jr., who is to present the award. “Our nation is finally giving him the recognition he earned with his life, his service and his sacrifice.”

The Congressional Gold Medal (CGM) has an il-

lustrious history. It is the nation’s highest civilian honor given by Congress. First presented to George Washington in 1776 for his and his troops’ service during the American Revolution, a CGM has been since awarded to more than 150 recipients, including military figures and groups, organizations and individuals.

Each gold medal has been cast with images reflecting the reasons for the medal. The original is placed at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Recipients are given replicas.

Aquino’s medal was awarded by Congress in 2015 to Filipinos and Americans who served in the U.S. military’s Philippines’ war endeavors during WWII.

The CGM is for the fam-

ily as much as for the veteran, Biadog told Baptist Press.

“A CGM becomes a permanent, tangible inheritance. It anchors the family to a legacy larger than themselves,” the retired Naval Commander said. “First Lieutenant Aquino served under the U.S. flag, under MacArthur’s command, in a war that shaped the modern world. His service helped secure the freedoms Americans enjoy today. Honoring him is a reminder to the country that ‘Freedom is not free.’

“Also, spiritual and moral leadership deserves recognition,” Biadog continued. “Aquino was not only a soldier. He was a pastor, a shepherd of souls. His life blended faith, service, and sacrifice. The CGM affirms that courage and character matter. Service to God and country leaves

a lasting imprint. And a life lived for others is worthy of national remembrance.”

Aquino told his family he became an attaché to Gen. Douglas MacArthur for about two years in Okinawa after the liberation of the Philippines.

“He didn’t speak about the war unless you asked him questions,” Feri Aquino said. “Maybe 40 years ago I asked him, ‘Why don’t you talk about the war?’ His answer was very simple and very profound. He said, ‘Because I don’t want you to hate the Japanese.’”

Her father told the family he had met and played chess with a Japanese man during his service in Okinawa, she added.

War years

In 1943, Aquino’s ROTC buddies pointed a gun to

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VISA

Medal

Continued from page 22

his head and kidnapped him because of the leadership skills they had seen in him during high school. They “convinced him” (the alternative was death, he was told) to join their guerrilla group, his family said Aquino had told them. That same year, according to a document signed by the Adjutant General of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, he was added to the roster as a “civilian guerrilla.”

He had nightmares after the war from his experiences, his family said, including hand-to-hand combat fighting Japanese soldiers in the Philippine jungle.

As did many of the “Greatest Generation,” Aquino used his hands to overcome his memories. He began making furniture, eventually met a Bap-

tist pastor through it and a few days later at the pastor’s home gave his life to Jesus Christ. That was in 1964.

His mother had convinced him years earlier to use the G.I. Bill to get a college education. He graduated in 1949 with a degree in architecture, though he continued his business in woodworking.

In 1971 he went to Western Australia Theological Seminary and graduated in October 1975. Two months later, after years of service as a pastor in the Philippines and in Australia, Aquino and his wife Victoria visited two of their grown children who had immigrated to California.

Plan A was to return to the Philippines after a month-long visit and return to a former pastorate.

Church planting

But Aquino in early 1976 met Ed Peol, who suggested Aquino take over in San Diego the Fili-

pino Bible study Peol (pastoring First Filipino Southern Baptist Church in Los Angeles) had started.

About eight years later, after First Filipino Southern Baptist Church in San Diego became self-supporting, the Home (Now North American) Mission Board appointed Aquino to start work on the Southern Gulf Coast.

The Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives in Nashville has Aquino’s monthly reports from San Diego as well as his reports from Metairie, (Metro New Orleans) La., in 1984-86; Gulfport, Miss., 1985-87; Pensacola, Fla., 1986-87; and Del City, Okla., starting in 1987.

Those reports took some digging, SBHLA Researcher James Brimm told Baptist Press. Aquino used “Jr.” as part of his name in California, but not when he served on the Southern Gulf Coast.

Aquino was in his 70s when he returned to San Diego in 1995, but he didn’t retire. He served as an interim pastor for a time, then started Rhema Church in his home. About five years after Aquino’s death in 2012, that house church disbanded.

The Aquino family anticipates about 100 people – family, friends and other veterans – will be present for Aquino’s Congressional Gold Medal ceremony.

“My dad really loved being a pastor,” Feri Aquino said. “He and my mom were just humble servants of the Lord. He would consider this a great honor, but I know he would give God the glory.

“I want people to know how blessed we are,” Feri Aquino continued. “We have our freedom because of brave soldiers like my dad. If it wasn’t for them, people in the Philippines would be speaking Japanese today.”

At the Foot of the Cross

*At the foot of the cross, I lay it all down
Everything in my life, that’s hidden deep inside
I give it away, for my Savior to heal
These fears that I have, that I’ve buried for years
At the feet of Jesus, my heart pours out tears
As I kneel and pray, my thoughts become clear
And I finally see what’s so very dear
At the foot of the cross, I cry out in pain
Anguishing thoughts pour out like rain
But, amidst these tears, I find a peace so calm
As Jesus scurries in, the darkness fades away
My heart is freed, my mind once again sane
And the past torments I’ve had are forever washed
away
My life burns brighter, like the dawning of a new
day
At the foot of the cross, I’m loved and not lost
Where the Holy drops of blood, have paid off sin’s
costs
And the Savior was taken, now risen once more
Through the grace of God, the veil was torn
And the world was cast a new rope of hope
Dangling freely from Heaven, climbable by faith
alone
To an eternal place, where sin and death are dead
At the foot of the cross, life can be found
On your knees draped in blood, on Calvary’s sa-
cred ground.*

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Wife

Continued from page 21

It's hard to cling to control when you're coming together before the throne of grace.

Better Kind of Adage

Since being married, I've heard some good-intentioned souls try to level the husband-wife playing field with a phrase like "happy spouse, happy house," but it hasn't caught on. Even with this phrase, the focus is on the wife and husband. There's a better way.

In *A Grief Observed*, C. S. Lewis writes about "a sword between the sexes

till an entire marriage reconciles them." Marriage heals this battle of the sexes, he continues, because the two of them express the fullness of humanity as they seek God together: "In the image of God created He them."

When, as one, a husband and wife both seek God first and live out the marriage drama in love and humility, their marriage becomes joyful—not because it's easy but because it reflects God's glory.

For this reason, I'll stick to the adage posted on our front door. "*As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*" (Josh. 24:15).

Great Bend Churches Prepare for Easter with Focus on Scripture and Community

As Easter approaches, churches across the Great Bend area are preparing not only for Sunday services, but for a season centered on Scripture, teaching, and community outreach.

In the weeks leading up to Easter, several congregations have placed an emphasis on biblical instruction, reflecting on themes such as prayer, fasting, and the meaning of Christ's sacrifice. At Grace Community Church, recent messages have walked through passages in Matthew, encouraging believers to examine the heart behind their faith and practices. Other churches are

offering unique opportunities to connect the events of Easter with the broader story of Scripture. Heartland Community Church is hosting a special presentation on "The Passover Meal and The Last Supper" on April 4, helping attendees better understand the connection between the Old Testament and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Alongside teaching, churches are also preparing for Easter Sunday services aimed at welcoming both regular attendees and visitors. Encounter Church and First United Methodist Church have announced

Easter gatherings, inviting families to come together in worship and celebration.

In addition to local church services, outreach efforts are also taking place during the Easter season. First Bible Baptist Church is hosting a multi-day camp meeting focused on ministry and fellowship, bringing together preaching, music, and community engagement.

Beyond church walls, the City of Great Bend is hosting several Easter-themed events, including a large flashlight egg hunt and family activities, reflecting a

broader community celebration of the season.

For many churches in the area, Easter represents more than a single day—it is a time of preparation, reflection, and renewed focus on the message of the Gospel.

As one local pastor noted, the goal is not simply attendance, but transformation.

"Easter reminds us of what Christ has done," he said. "But it also calls us to respond."

Across Great Bend, that response is taking shape through Scripture, service, and a shared commitment to faith and community.

OPPOSING VIEWPOINTS

From day-one, it has been the position of Faith and Family not to endorse nor condemn any denomination. We strive to offer readers a wide variety of Christian views and perspectives and allow each individual to come to your own conclusion. Because news sources and contributors to Faith and Family come from a wide variety of sources, it is possible that some stories, opinions and views may conflict with certain beliefs.

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