

SPIRITUAL INSIGHT FOR YOUR LIFE

FAITH *for life*

*“The **life** which I now live...I live by the **faith** of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Galatians 2:20*

Complimentary Copy

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what love!

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us” (1 John 3:1)

by **pastor tony scheving**

A dying Christian was troubled about the lack of love in his heart toward God. A dear friend offered him some consolation with a personal illustration. He said, “I love my little toddler with indescribable tenderness, but there is no way she could feel the same love toward me. If my heart were breaking it would not disturb her sleep. If I were in great pain it would not interrupt her playtime. If I were dead she would forget me in a few days. In addition to all that, she has never given me a penny, but actually has been a constant expense to me. Yet, there is not enough money in the world to buy my baby. She doesn’t have to do a thing to earn my love, so the issue is not her love toward me, but my love toward her.” The dying Christian began to weep and exclaimed, “Then it is not a



matter of my love toward God, but His love toward me, and that very thought makes me love Him more than ever!”

The Bible says, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). We will never begin to understand God’s love toward us. It’s hard to fathom because it’s unconditional love. Even when Jesus knew that Judas was going to betray Him, the Bible says, *“When Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world*

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FAITH *for life*

What Love!

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unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). With our limited comprehension we cannot understand that kind of love. The Bible says, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9).

Some people have a hard time believing they are loved. Maybe they didn't sense love in the home in which they grew up. Or, somehow they never 'measured up' with good grades, athletic ability, staying out of trouble, or living up to their parents' expectations. Yet, others just feel unlovable, and try to make themselves more acceptable. But when a person realizes that God loves them regardless, it can be life-changing.

The Evidence of God's Love

A preacher once said that God's heart is more tender than the gentlest woman who ever held her baby to her bosom. In fact, the love of all the women in the world for their babies combined is like the glow of a firefly next to the noonday sun when comparing it to God's love.

While the world talks a lot about 'love', it actually understands very little about it. The world has adopted a cheap imitation of real love. There is a big difference between fickle infatuation, and unselfish, sacrificial love. There is no genuine love apart from God, because God is the very source of love (1 John 4:16). If a person is not connected spiritually to his Creator, he's not only void of real love, but is missing the very point of life. Many people are living for money, material things, entertainment, sports, sex, and a number of other things. But there is no substitute for a loving relationship with God. The same One who provides us air to breathe, water to drink, and food to eat along with warmth and beauty, wants to have a loving Father-child relationship.

A story was once told of a little boy whose sister needed a blood transfusion. The doctor explained that she had the same disease the boy had recovered from two years earlier. Her only chance for recovery was a transfusion from someone who had previously conquered the disease. Since the two children had the same rare blood

type, the boy was the ideal donor. "Would you give your blood to Mary?" the doctor asked. Johnny hesitated. His lower lip started to tremble. Then he forced a smile and said, "Sure, for my sister." Soon the two children were wheeled into the hospital room – Mary, pale and thin; Johnny, robust and healthy. Neither spoke, but when their eyes met, Johnny smiled nervously. As the nurse inserted the needle into his arm, Johnny's smile faded. He watched the blood flow through the tube. With the ordeal almost over,

his voice slightly shaky broke the silence. "Doctor, when do I die?" Only then did the doctor realize why Johnny had hesitated and why his lip had trembled when he'd agreed to donate his blood. He had thought giving his blood to his sister meant giving up his life! In that brief moment, he made a great decision. Johnny, fortunately, didn't have to die to save his sister, but Jesus had to die to save sinners like us. Each of us has a condition more serious than Mary's, and it required Jesus to give not just His blood, but also His life. Even though we sin and

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The advertisement features a large photograph of a smiling family: a man carrying a young boy on his shoulders, and a woman smiling in the foreground. The church's logo, a stylized cross with three points, is positioned in the center. The background shows a church building under a blue sky.

What Love!

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turn our backs on God, He sent His Son to pay the price so we could be saved and live with Him for eternity. What motivated Jesus to give His life for us? It was a love that supersedes all human understanding. What a wondrous love!

The Exhibiting of God's Love

William Dixon lived in a small town in England many years ago. He was a lonely widower whose only son had died years earlier. One day, he woke up to see the house next door engulfed in flames. Although the aged grandmother inside the burning home had been rescued, her orphaned grandson was still trapped inside. William Dixon climbed an iron pipe on the side of the burning house and lowered the toddler to safety, but his hands were badly burned in the process. Shortly after the fire, the grandmother died. The townspeople wondered who would care for the little boy. Three different parties appeared before the village council wanting to adopt the toddler. They each gave good reasons why they were the best candidates to give the little orphan a home. When it was William Dixon's turn to speak, he merely held up his badly scarred hands. When the vote was taken by the council, the boy was given to William.

In the same way, Jesus holds out His scarred hands as the exhibit of God's love. Such love can never be fully understood, but it was fully demonstrated for us at Calvary when Jesus died for us on the cross. The Son of God Himself shed His precious blood to pay the price for our sins. Sadly, many people want their sin more than a relationship with God. Yet, the Bible says that "God commendeth (showed) his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). While some people look at God as an angry policeman looking for a criminal, He's actually a broken-hearted Father looking for a lost child.

Our sin separates us from God. The Bible says, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you" (Isa 59:2). How has God proven His love toward us? The Bible says

that Jesus "Loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Revelation 1:5). We can be forgiven by placing our faith in what Jesus did on the cross. Thank God for that sacrifice! Christ's love saved us from hell.

The Experiencing of God's Love

An elderly minister had a bookmark in his Bible that was made of many colored threads. The back of the bookmark looked like a tangled web of cross threads that seemed to be without purpose. But on the front side was a beautiful weaving of thread that clearly said, "God is Love." It was a continual reminder of how life can be full of disorder and sometimes a tangled web without reason or purpose, but the flipside still trumps all the chaos... God is love.

The Bible tells us that God's love is beyond comprehension (Romans 8:38-39). Such love is also unending (Jeremiah 31:3). Such love is unmerited, because it is by grace. Such love is also unconditional because it is a product of the great heart of God. Man can never reach a place where he will not be loved by God. God's love is supernatural, sacrificial, and satisfying.

There is nothing like the love of God! It is the most overwhelming thing a person will ever encounter in this life. It is the greatest thing God ever did for any of us! Our text verse, found at the beginning of this article, says, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us" (1 John 3:1). The book of 1 John is the great epistle of love. It is mentioned 46 times in 135 verses. When the love of God is present in the life of a believer, he will love the Savior, love the scriptures, love the saints (other Christians), love the sanctuary (church), and love the sinners.

The big question to one and all is, "Do you love God?" Do you have a close relationship with Him? Maybe you are at a time in your life when you want to really know God. Perhaps God is reaching out to you in some way. Jeremiah 31:3 says, "The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." ■

To discover how to draw close to God, please read pages 6-7, or go online to 7StepsToGod.org.



Americans view an average of twenty-eight hours of television per week, the highest viewing rate in the world. When an American turns eighteen, on average he has seen 16,000 simulated murders and 200,000 acts of violence. Nearly two-thirds of sampled programming in the 2001–2002 season showed sexual content.

You may be very careful about guarding your front door from unwanted strangers, but are you just as careful when it comes to guarding your television?

NOTABLE QUOTES



"The worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them."

– George Bernard Shaw

"Fewer men survive the test of prosperity than the pressure of poverty."

– Unknown

"I resolve never to do anything which I would be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life."

– Jonathan Edwards



coping with a complex

by pastor tony scheving

Today's culture places a high value on looks, talent, IQ and money. Society seems to reward the 'haves' and silently punishes the 'have-nots'. The less gifted have to overcome obstacles if they're challenged in intellect, height, facial features, athleticism, weight, abilities or income. It can even leave scars that last a lifetime. It can cause a deep sense of unworthiness and an inability to accept self. It can also cause a lack of confidence. It can even cause resentment toward God. "How could God have done this to me, or allowed this to happen?" Bitter feelings can drive a wall between our Creator and us. We can make our best effort to clothe ourselves in worth, but the feelings remain. It can be difficult to cope with a complex.

The Awareness

Sometimes, we can't guess where insecurity is actually lurking. In the Bible, we find great men whom we think must have been fearless, and yet they had hidden complexes. The great prophet Jeremiah felt unqualified to preach to the people. When God called him into the ministry, Jeremiah said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child" (Jer. 1:6). When David was in line to marry the king's daughter he said, "Who am I? And what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son in law to the king?" (1 Sam. 18:18). Perhaps,

growing up as the youngest child David felt somewhat insignificant. You would think that David's son Solomon would ooze confidence, but when God put him on the throne, Solomon said, "And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in" (1 Kings 3:7). Notice how all these grown men felt unqualified for the task. Outwardly, they sat on thrones of gold, wielding great power. But secretly, silently, in the night, alone in their rooms, they were fearful.

Jesus referred to John the Baptist as the greatest man ever born (Matt 11:11), and yet John showed his weak humanity when he questioned whether Jesus was actually the Messiah or not. Christians are not immune to doubt and insecurity. A complex knows no boundaries. David was a hero, Jeremiah was called of God, Solomon was rich and famous, John the Baptist was powerful, and yet all staggered and stumbled at times. Some people think that a complex may be a sign of mental weakness, but studies have shown that people with higher IQs suffer from low self-esteem as much as others. Success is also no indication of security. Many successful people are incredibly insecure. The reason many are driven to be successful in the first place is because they feel like they have something to prove. Actually, there are a lot of tell-tale signs of insecurity. Those who live paranoid,

and continually 'take things the wrong way', may actually be harboring insecurity. Those who try to bully people around may actually be suffering from a complex. They fight their way through life, trying to hide a bigger issue. Oftentimes, young people who get into trouble are insecure and just trying to fit in with their peers. They feel pressured to drink whiskey or smoke cigarettes, when they don't like doing either one. They hide a complex by trying to impress their friends. The Bible says, "The fear of man bringeth a snare" (Proverbs 29:25). Those who brag or make big promises are often covering up a self-esteem problem. Someone who is always on the defense when no one is actually attacking, has an insecurity problem. Sometimes, continual use of sarcasm can be a cover up for a complex.

Sometimes, people who continually clown around may be desperately trying to find acceptance from others. Comedian Jonathan Winters had a sad childhood with an alcoholic dad and a broken home. Winters stated that he survived his growing up years and found acceptance by being the class clown. The Bible says that, "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful" (Proverbs 14:13). Sometimes, a workaholic is actually someone with a complex that is driven to work long hours in order to succeed and meet an internal emotional need. Dr. Alfred Adler, who first used the term 'inferiority complex', also referred to it as 'the golden complex'. He noted that so many people who suffered serious feelings of inferiority became outstandingly successful. In the observation of Dr. Adler, they overcompensated for their feelings of inferiority and became far more successful than would have been possible had they always felt perfectly competent, secure, and confident. Evidently, there is a bright side to a complex, but insecurity can wear many masks. Many want to impress their friends at the high school reunions with the appearance of success and happiness. While they appear confident on the outside, inwardly they are a 'bowl of worms'. Late at night, when they lay in bed with the lights out, they still struggle with a complex. Insecurity is not always

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Coping with a Complex

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noticed on the surface. We often mask it in a number of different ways.

The Acceptance

How can we overcome a complex and go forward in life? It all boils down to a God-given trust in who God is, and who He made us to be. Proverbs 29:25 says, *"Whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe."* In the Bible, we find a man by the name of Gideon who struggled with intense insecurity. When God called him to perform a task, Gideon said, *"Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."* Gideon had an industrial strength complex. It was only after he put his trust in the Lord and accepted what God made him to be, that Gideon went forward and succeeded in life. The Bible says in 1 John 3:20, *"For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart."* One of the most confident men we find in the Bible is an obscure prophet by the name of Amos. Nothing riled him because he knew he was doing what God called him to do and made no apology for it. The only credential he had was God's endorsement; and that was all he needed.

Another way to get victory over insecurity is to remember that God loves us unconditionally when we are born again into His family. The Bible says, *"Wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved"* (Ephesians 1:6). Based on that truth, we can live in confidence (Phil. 1:6). We don't have to cower, nor cover up insecurity. We can live with a healthy self-image of how God sees us. We don't have to worry about the world's standard or what society thinks. All that matters is what God thinks! (Matt 6:26). God loves us so much that He sent His Son to die for our sins (John 3:16). A true Christian is the object of God's love. We have His attention and favor. He wants to foster a relationship with us. Like a child who has the assurance of being loved by a parent, we can have the confidence that our heavenly Father loves us! More insecurity is bred in the

home than on the playground or at school. Many children receive very little encouragement or compliments from their mom or dad. While it's true that children deserve correction for being selfish, absent-minded, or lazy; good parenting requires mom or dad to look for ways to approve a child and give him praise. Any progress on the part of a child should be reinforced. A child must feel valuable. Self-esteem doesn't come from society, school or even a friend as much as it comes from the home. Parents also need to be careful not to pass their own insecurities and complexes to their children.

The Adjustment

At the age of forty, Moses fell flat on his face. For the next forty years, he lived as a recluse in failure, dealing with the guilt and scars of his past. Guilt often leads to a complex. Moses was so unsure of himself that he stuttered and stammered. When God called him to lead the nation of Israel out of Egyptian bondage Moses said, *"Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"* (Exodus 3:11). God's power and fiery presence in the burning bush was only a few inches away, yet Moses could only see his own shortcomings. He went on to make several excuses but God was insistent. God is able to overcome any complex on our part and turn the barrier into a blessing. Actually, it is when we quit trusting in our own ability that we become someone 'small enough' for God to use! The Bible says, *"And who is sufficient for these things?... Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God"* (1 Cor. 2:16, 3:5).

So how can we overcome a complex? First of all, we must accept ourselves the way God made us (Psalm 139:14-17). God made you the way He wanted you to be. Have you ever noticed how a person's personality seems to match their looks and demeanor? Secondly, don't compare yourself to others. The Bible mentions those who, *"Measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise"* (2 Cor. 10:12). God needs various people

to be carpenters, musicians, engineers, business owners and maintenance men. We are all different by God's design and created by Him to fulfill different roles. That's why even brothers and sisters look and act differently, have different athletic ability, and get different grades in school. Refuse to compare yourself to others. The negative result will be either pride (because you're better than they are), or a complex (because they're better than you). Don't get into a competition with anyone but yourself. We only have a few, short years on this earth; so, just do your personal best and keep your eyes on the Lord instead of others. Thirdly, be sure to respond correctly to your own shortcomings and defects. Try to change what you can, and accept what you can't change. The experiences of life can actually shape you into being exactly what God needs you to be in the 21st century. God even made some children a bit overly active. Instead of channeling that energy, society medicates them. In the process, society may be drugging up the future leaders of this world. Consider your deficiencies as God's markings on your life. Accept your lot in life, including your looks, IQ, talent, abilities and propensities. The Bible says you were *"wonderfully made"* by God (Psalm 139:14). Take an honest evaluation of yourself, and then yield yourself to be what God wants you to be. That's how you'll make the greatest contribution to society. God says in His Word, *"For I say... to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith"* (Romans 12:3). A person who is preoccupied with himself will never be able to properly function in life until he considers himself worthy to God and others. Everyone must feel that he can contribute somehow, and that he is not just a 'fifth wheel'. He must feel that he is valuable in some way. God's grace is sufficient to overcome any complex. It all begins by knowing God in a personal way. ■

For more information, please read pages 6-7, or go online to 7StepsToGod.org.

HOW TO FIND GOD AND REALLY KNOW HIM

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

There are three things that you can know for sure...

1) That you are going to Heaven. *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life"* (I John 5:13).

2) That your life will be changed when you get saved. *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (II Corinthians 5:17).

3) You will never lose your salvation. *"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."* (John 10:28).

It all revolves around Jesus Christ!

Who is Jesus Christ? John 1:1 says, *"In the beginning was the Word (Jesus), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* John 1:3 continues, *"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."* Jesus was God in flesh or God the son who created everything.

He came to earth to save us. *"For the son of man is come to*

seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). The first step in going to heaven is to realize we need to be saved from our sin.

How do we get to heaven?... *"Jesus answered and said unto him, verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (John 3:3).

There is a difference between a physical birth and a spiritual birth. *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit"* (John 3:6).

Why do we need a spiritual birth? Man was originally created a three part being in God's image—a trinity. *"And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them"* (Genesis 1:26). Man is made up of body, soul, and spirit.

God placed Adam and Eve in the garden. *"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"* (Genesis 2:16-17). Man ate of the fruit and though he didn't die that day physically, he died spiritually!

When Adam and Eve had children they were now born spiritually dead as well (no longer in God's 3-part image). Genesis 5:3 says *"And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth."* That is why we must be re-born spiritually.

That is also why we have a sin nature. You don't have to teach a toddler to be selfish, lie, steal things, sass back, fight

with siblings, etc...it is also our nature as we grow up.

Most people fail to see themselves as serious sinners. They feel they are a "good person." They are comparing themselves to others, instead of God's standard; the 10 Commandments. Let's see how you rate compared to the 10 Commandments.

#1 Thou shalt have no other gods before me (Exodus 20:3) No one can claim they have never put anything ahead of God (money, career, own self centered goals, pleasure, sports, entertainment, sin, vice, a relationship with another, etc).

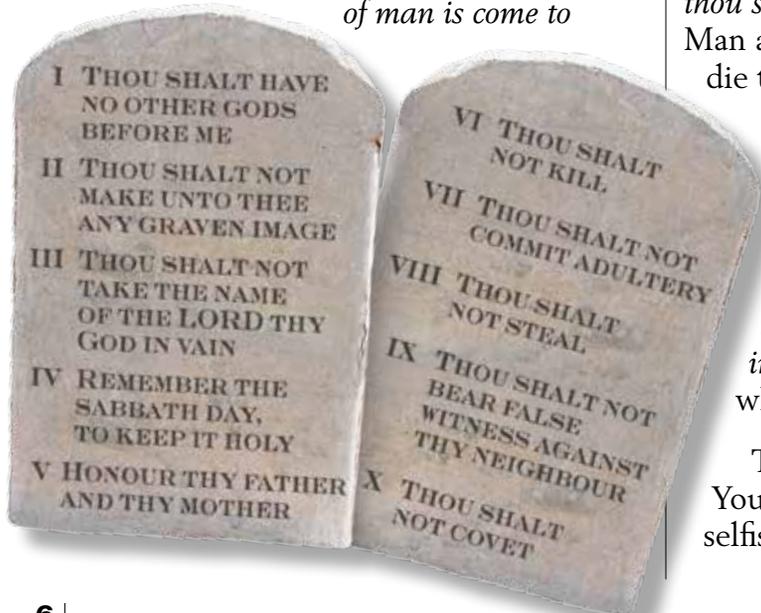
#2 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image (of God) (Exodus 20:4) Many have been guilty of inventing a God of their own imagination and liking... a God who 'suits them.' People want a "God that overlooks sin and takes everyone to heaven." They have improvised and dreamed up a God of their own image.

#3 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain (Exodus 20:7) Re-read that carefully. God is keeping record of every time you've used His name as a curse word and you will answer for it one day.

#4 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy (Exodus 20:8) Have you always honored the Lord's Day or been faithful in church attendance? (Heb 10:25)

#5 Honour thy father and thy mother (Exodus 20:12). Have you ever disrespected or disobeyed your parents. Have you ever argued with them or dishonored them?

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How to Find God

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#6 Thou shalt not kill (Exodus 20:13) Although most people have never committed murder, they are guilty of “murder of the heart.” Jesus clarifies this commandment in Matthew 5:21-2; Whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother... shall be in danger of hell fire. Have you ever been mad or bitter at someone?

#7 Thou shalt not commit adultery (Exodus 20:14) While many have never committed adultery, Jesus said; Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt 5:27-8). Have you ever lusted after the opposite sex? This is adultery of the heart according to Jesus.

#8 Thou shalt not steal (Exodus 20:15) Who could claim they’ve never taken anything that doesn’t belong to them? ... something small or even the boss’s time?

#9 Thou shalt not bear false witness (Exodus 20:16) No one could honestly claim they have never told a lie!

#10 Thou shalt not covet (Exodus 20:17) Have you ever desired anything you didn’t have or didn’t need? Have you ever been discontented, jealous or ungrateful? This is covetousness.

Most people are guilty of breaking all 10 commandments! Many places in the Bible reveal that liars, adulterers, thieves, the covetous, etc will spend eternity in hell! (Rev 21:8, I Cor 6:9-10, Gal 5:19-21). How could you ever expect to get to heaven by “living a good life?”

Romans 3:10 *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:*

Romans 3:23 *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

Sin has a penalty... Romans 6:23 *“For the wages of sin is death”* (hell).

We cannot possibly get to heaven by keeping the law (10 Commandments).

The 10 Commandments were given by God to show us how impossible it is to

be saved by doing good works. *“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith”* (Galatians 3:24). The law (10 commandments) shows us that we are condemned and need a Savior.

You will never get to heaven by doing good works. Titus 3:5 says, *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.”* *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Romans 5:1).

Yet getting to heaven is not automatic just because Jesus died for your sins! Salvation is a gift that must be received. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God”* (Ephesians 2:8). That means that baptism has nothing to do with being saved. Romans 6:23 explains, *“The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

How does a person know when they are ready to be born again? They know they are ready when they mean business with God, and are willing to repent of sin. Acts 3:19 says, *“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.”* II Peter 3:9 says the Lord is *“not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”* Jesus said, *“except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:5). That means being willing to also turn from false religion or false teaching—anything contrary to the word of God, the Bible.

To repent means to change your mind about your sin, and make Christ the Lord

of your life. Are you willing to turn from your sin and turn to God? Do you believe that Jesus paid the full price on the cross for your sins?

Though God hates sin, he loves you and sent Jesus to die for your sins. *“But God commendeth (proved) his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8).

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

If God is dealing with you about your need of forgiveness, and you would like to be saved (born again), the final step is to ask God for the gift through a simple prayer. *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Romans 10:13). Notice the promise of this verse from a God who cannot lie. Titus 1:2 says, *“God...cannot lie”*. Do you believe that God will save you simply because He said He would? Christ will save you if you are willing to make him the Lord of your life.

If you know that you are ready, you can pray and ask God to save you in your own words such as: “Dear Heavenly Father, I know that I am a condemned sinner unable to save myself, but I am willing to turn from my sins and make Jesus my Lord and master. I now trust in His sacrifice on the cross to pay for my sins. Please forgive me and save me. Amen.” ■

For more information please go to www.7StepsToGod.org

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I Have A Question

by Pastor Tony Scheving

What Is Jesus Doing Right Now?

“So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God” - Mark 16:19

Jesus has been in heaven for the past 2000 years throughout the fall of Rome, the bloody crusades, the Renaissance, the birth of America, World War II, 9/11, and now the information age. So what has He been doing all that time? We're told that He is sitting at the right hand of God the Father overseeing the universe. But is He interested in my life? Is He hearing my prayers? Is He seeing my struggles? Does He understand my hurts? Before Jesus left Earth 1,980 years ago He told His apostles He was coming back. As His disciples watched Jesus ascend back to heaven, the Bible says, *“Behold, two men stood by them in white apparel (angels); Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven”* (Acts 1:10-11).

His Previous Departure

Nearly 2000 years ago, Jesus Christ ascended from Earth. What happened then? Can you imagine His arrival back into heaven? Can you picture Him as He nears the edge of the celestial city slowly floating in? Imagine the Hero's welcome He received after completing His 33-year mission on Earth, culminated by His suffering on the cross! We have all seen the pictures of the ticker tape parade a ball team receives after winning the World Series or the Super Bowl. Imagine the thunderous, deafening noise in heaven when Jesus touched down on heaven's main street with His nail-scarred feet! What a

splendid sight that had to be! He then sat down at the right hand of His Father with all heaven adoringly gazing on Him, and the Father Himself looking proudly at His Son. Mission accomplished! The Bible says, *“When he (Jesus) had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high... this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God”* (Heb 1:3, 10:12).

Have you ever wondered why Jesus had to leave the Earth and be absent for the past 2000 years? One reason is to fulfill the 'Time of the Gentiles'. A Gentile is a non-Jew and it was foretold that there would be a time period when Israel would be bullied by other nations. Jesus said, *“Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled”* (Luke 21:24). God always has a precise timetable. Jesus also went back to heaven to send the Holy Spirit. He said in John 16:7, *“It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter (Holy Spirit) will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.”* Also, if Jesus hadn't gone back to heaven, we would not have what the Bible calls the 'Blessed Hope' of His return. In Titus 2:13, the Bible speaks of *“That blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.”* True Christians have been anticipating that for many years.

With World War II in progress, on March 12, 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt ordered General Douglas MacArthur to flee the Philippines under the cloak of the dark night to escape the Japanese invasion. MacArthur was then flown to Australia where he made the famous speech, “I came out of Bataan and I shall return.” Two and a half years later on October 20, 1944, after fighting the Japanese in many battles, General MacArthur waded through knee-deep sea water to the Philippine shoreline where he made the statement, “People of the Philippines: I have returned. By the grace of Almighty God, our forces stand again on Philippine soil.” If a mere man could keep such a promise, how much more will God the Son keep His word? Imagine the day when Jesus Christ will once again stand on the soil of this Earth!

His Present Duties

What is Jesus Christ doing right now in the universe, the world, or our lives? For starters, He is actively working through His church. The Bible says that the heavenly Father set Jesus *“At his own right hand in the heavenly places...and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body”* (Eph 1:22-23). Jesus was busily working in the first-century church guiding the apostles, empowering a Pentecost, directing St. Paul on his journeys, and giving the Revelation to St. John. In the same way, He's still actively

Nearly 2000 years ago, Jesus Christ ascended from Earth. What happened then? Can you imagine His arrival back into heaven?

working today through His true churches. Ephesians 5:23 says, *“Christ is the head of the church.”* Jesus is also busy in heaven interceding for sinners who desire the saving of their souls. The Bible says, *“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them”* (Hebrews 7:25).

Jesus is also interceding for believers who stumble into sin, and yet, desire forgiveness. He is currently serving as our High Priest and

continued on next page

God's Plan for Getting to Heaven

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mediator. The Bible says, "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:34). 1 John 2:1 adds, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Christians need all the help we can get. Jesus represents us with an understanding heart. As we confess our sins, Jesus nods in our favor to the Father who smiles on our repentance. Jesus holds up His wounded hands as a reminder that our sins have been paid for. One of the reasons the Son of God took on flesh was to be able to understand how it feels to be human. The Bible says, "We have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God... For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Currently in heaven Jesus Christ is also welcoming every believer to heaven when they die. The Bible says, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psalms 116:15). When Stephen was martyred, Jesus stood on heaven's shore to welcome him home. What a comforting thought when it comes time for us to die! There is other scripture to show that Jesus is currently hearing our prayers (Acts 1:24), protecting us (2 Thess 3:3), strengthening us (Phil 4:13), and equipping us to serve Him on Earth (Eph 4:11-13). The Bible also tells us Jesus is currently preparing the mansions of believers in heaven. Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2).

The bottom line is this: Jesus is alive and still working in the twenty-first century from heaven, just like He did in the first century on earth! With Jesus doing all of this in heaven for you, what are you currently doing on Earth for Him?

His Powerful Dominion

Jesus Christ is as alive and powerful as ever. The Bible tells us that Jesus is currently

controlling the universe. It says He "Is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (1 Pet 3:22). "Thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet" (Hebrews 2:7-8). The same power that created the universe now sustains it.

It's well and fine that Jesus is still nurturing the universe, but is He currently involved in my life and yours? Does He know where you live and the struggles you face? Is He aware of the problems you're having with your job, education, car, house or a relationship? It's fine that He is in control of the UN, NATO, the election, the tides of the ocean, and the motion of the planet; but is He interested in the affairs of your life? Do you ever wish you could dial heaven directly to ask the Lord about a specific need? Maybe the thing you were praying about didn't turn out the way you hoped and you don't know what to do next.

The Bible says that Jesus "Can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity" (Heb 5:2). You don't have to struggle alone. Jesus is aware of your situation. In Luke 12:7, He said, "But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." You don't have to walk through the dark valley alone. Have you ever had a burden so great that you couldn't even put it into words? Jesus Christ can interpret your tears. He loves you intensely and will

do what's best for you. Sometimes He will use setbacks to get your eyes off the world. He may be trying to get your attention. Be careful at such times to not get bitter. The Bible says, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

In a world of terrorism, hunger, war, suspenseful elections, rebellion, divorce, wayward children, death, and continual struggles, we can have a sense of peace that Jesus Christ is still on His throne. The Bible says in Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Whenever you ask, "Where is the God of heaven in all of this?" The truth is, He is where He's been for the last two millenniums, calmly seated on His throne, in control, sovereignly running the universe. We are so limited in our perspective of things. We have tunnel vision but Christ sees the big picture in panoramic view. He is patiently doing what's best overall as the enthroned Savior of the world. May that give us a great sense of peace. ■

7 STEPS TO God

BIBLE STUDY

www.7StepsToGod.org

Do you ever wonder *what life is all about?* In a sense, it's actually a dressing room for eternity. In the big picture we're "here today and gone tomorrow." 7 Steps to God is a Bible study designed to prepare people for the next life and also to enhance the quality of this present life. God created you with a special purpose in mind and has a wonderful plan for you. The Bible is the instruction manual to life and at Heaven 88.7 we're here to help people find God through His Word. If you are interested in taking the 7 Steps to God Bible study please contact us. Our staff is available for either a one on one, or group Bible study free of charge.

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4 FOCUSES of EFFECTIVE PARENTS

by **cary schmidt**

I love being a parent! If you have children, I hope you do too! We live in a culture that divides the home—if not physically, then relationally. A casual look at many American families would lead you to conclude that parents don't like their children, and children don't like their parents. From parents who neglect family time for work or personal interests, to kids who hole up in their bedrooms to 'hang out' on Facebook—it appears that some families do everything possible to avoid each other. I challenge you to resist—to reverse this trend. Like a fish swimming upstream, choose to develop your family differently.

Effective parents fight the trends and keep family first. They focus on biblical priorities, and draw clear boundaries around their home life. They fight for closeness, for transparency, and for strong relationships. They understand their mission and embrace it with biblical understanding and clarity. In the next few paragraphs, I'd like to share four values that I see in effective parents. These are values I'm still learning and developing, but I've seen them often in the lives of parents who have effectively raised their children for the Lord. What do effective parents do well?

Effective Parents Delight in Their Children

Proverbs 3:12 states, *"For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth."* Again the Bible says in Proverbs 29:17, *"Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul."* It's easy when reading those verses to focus on the correction or discipline, and miss the delight! Do you delight in your children? Do they know that you delight in them?

The word 'delight' means "to be pleased with, to show favor toward, and to accept." Delight shows up in a warm smile, words of praise, sincere admiration, accepting laughter, physical affection, and personal affirmation. Delight delights! You can't imagine how your delight delights your children's hearts. Having your approval and acceptance is one of their deepest longings in life.

If you delight in your children, you will like them. You will enjoy them. You will laugh with them. You will relax with them. You will 'hang out' with them and treasure every moment. You will photograph them, video them, praise them, and pray for them. It's impossible to hide delight! Delighting in your children involves planning family fun, budgeting family fun, saving energy for family at the end of a busy workday, noticing the right things they do, and making a big deal of success. Effective parents always delight in their children, and children find it much easier to receive correction from a parent who truly delights in them.

Effective Parents Disciple Their Children

Deuteronomy 6:7 gives every parent a tall order—*"And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."* This passage speaks to parents of teaching and training our children in the ways of the Lord. God's command is that our relationship should be one of constant discipleship—constantly explaining and making sense of God's laws and the principles of Scripture.

It's easy to miss teaching opportunities. It's easy to dismiss them for fear that we don't know what to say. It's easy to ignore the promptings of the Holy Spirit moment by moment. But effective parents embrace this role. They see themselves as the perpetual mentor of these young lives. They see every day as a new teaching opportunity. And they are constantly shining the light of biblical truth upon every circumstance of life—helping their children to authentically develop a biblical world view.

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4 Focuses of Effective Parents

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Discipleship requires time and intentional training. It makes all of life a classroom, welcomes any question, and brings God's principles into practical application. Discipleship determines to have even the toughest conversations and difficult talks that most parents would rather avoid. Discipling parents don't leave their kids alone to struggle with any topic or temptation. They prepare them. They train them. They recognize that kids can handle the truth when it comes from a compassionate, nurturing parent.

If you wonder what to teach your kids, I challenge you to do a few things. First, read good parenting books. These books will fill your heart with subjects and principles to transfer. Second, consider what you struggled with at their ages—the things you wish someone had talked to you about—and then go for it. Finally, consider where they are in life and what's coming next, and prepare them. Look at the road ahead for the next couple of years and help them know what's around the next bend. Give them biblical principles that will help them know how to think and how to respond.

Dad, have you talked to your son about the struggles of his particular age, coping with crushes, the development of sexual desires, the changes of the teen years, what God might be preparing him to do, what his biggest burdens are in life right now, how he is struggling spiritually right now, how to navigate tough things like friendships and the teen social scene, how to be a spiritual leader, how to take a stand, how to rely on God for help in every area of life, how to use the internet safely, etc.?

Dad and Mom, have you talked with your daughter about physical changes she will experience, why she should value her body and be modest, how to avoid the world's message of making her appearance all important, dealing with sexual issues, relationships and friendships with the opposite gender, seeking to honor God in appearance and behavior, dealing with peers and pressure, asking God for help in every area of life, what God is preparing her for, what her gifts and strengths are, becoming virtuous, staying pure, etc.?

If they don't receive the truth from you, your children are exponentially more susceptible to deception! Effective parents always disciple their children.

Effective Parents Develop Their Children

Ephesians 6:4 teaches, *"Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."* The command is to "bring them up"—to nourish them to maturity. Yes, this includes discipling them spiritually, but it also includes developing them practically. The state of the family today lends to neglect, which lends to teenagers merely vegetating their way through life—playing video games, skateboarding, facebooking, and generally just hanging out.

Effective parents seek to involve their children in opportunities that will grow and prepare them for life. They minimize things that merely distract or entertain. They limit video games, movies, TV, and social networking; and they maximize opportunities for growth, service, and the development of personal gifts and abilities. Effective parents constantly ask themselves—is this child developing or vegetating?

Developing our children requires discernment of their gifts, interests, and abilities. It involves the sacrifice of finances and time to support those gifts. It involves patient investment over years; but the commitment is always worth it!

Effective Parents Discipline Their Children

Proverbs 19:18 states, *"Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying."* Discipline is the process of bringing my child's behavior into obedience to the Heavenly Father—teaching my child to live in submission to the authority of God

and His Word. It is not merely controlling or modifying my child's behavior. It is not punishment for doing wrong. It is not limiting the embarrassment that my child causes me in public. Authentic, biblical discipline is chastening, which involves nurture and training. It's always developmental and motivated by selfless love.

Effective discipline should always be restorative rather than punitive. In other words, it's motivated by a desire to restore the heart not merely punish it. Effective discipline should always flow from an obedient, humble heart—not an angry frustrated one. In other words, I discipline my children because God commands me to, not because they anger me. Finally, effective discipline should include prayer and Scripture. The end of a discipline moment should include affection, expressions of love, and a transparent moment before the Lord in prayer together.

Probably the biggest mistake parents make today regarding discipline is that they are too tired to deal with it! Real, biblical discipline takes energy, time, and training. It's easier to send them to their room, ground them, and forget about it. Effective parents don't operate this way. When we are too tired to engage in biblical discipline, we are saying, "Go ahead and destroy yourself... I don't care."

So there you have it—the job description of a biblical parent in four statements, even alliterated! The effective parents that I have watched over the years - those with a track record of success - always had these four focuses in place. They delighted in their children. They disciplined their children. They developed their children. And they disciplined their children.

Now here's your assignment: sometime in the next few days, sit down with your spouse in a quiet moment. Read through this article together, and evaluate. Ask yourself, "How am I doing?" Then determine to make some changes or improvements. Decide to make these four focuses a reality in your parenting this week! ■

BY PASTOR AUSTIN WARTNER

LIVING abundantly in a materialistic WORLD



“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” Luke 12:15

John Davison (JD) Rockefeller was the founder of the Standard Oil Company and the richest man in America at the time of his death in 1937. In his later years, Mr. Rockefeller was being interviewed and was asked, “Considering all that you have done and all that you have - more than you could ever spend or use - how much is enough?” Mr. Rockefeller simply responded, “Just a little bit more.” Mr. Rockefeller’s response is similar to many people within our society. We have come to believe that big bank accounts, large portfolios and material possessions are the pathway to happiness. Yet, why are so many people with those things so miserable? Even Mr. Rockefeller stated one time, “I have made many millions, but they have brought me no happiness.” How many people have this type of mindset, always trying to acquire, but not finding fulfillment? The world tells us that material possessions equal happiness, but is that true?

Our society today tends to judge a person’s value by what he owns, and not by his character. The driving desire of many is to gain as much as you can, as fast as you can, any way you can! Yet, is life that meaningless? Sadly, for some, it is. Testimony after testimony exist that makes

one question the idea that ‘having it all’ means your quality of ‘life’ is better. John Jacob Astor was a multimillionaire and the richest man in America at the time of his death (died on the Titanic). He said, “I am the most miserable man on earth.” The railroad mogul, W.H. Vanderbilt, said shortly before his death, “The care of \$200 million is enough to kill anyone. There is no pleasure in it.” Andrew Carnegie once said, “Millionaires seldom smile.” Henry Ford also said, “I was happier when I was doing a mechanics job.” Despite what those ‘at the top’ say, we are still programmed to think the only way we can be happy is if we have more. However, researchers have found almost no correlation between income levels and happiness. Between 1957 and 1990, income levels in the US doubled. Yet in the same period, people’s levels of happiness did not increase. In fact, reports of depression actually increased tenfold. Incidences of divorce, suicide, drug abuse, and alcoholism rose dramatically. In a country that has so much, is this the best material things have to offer? Let’s consider some thoughts from our passage about how we can live abundantly despite living in a materialistic world.

The Warning

In the Bible text, Jesus gives us a clear warning about having a materialistic mentality, and states that ‘life’ itself is more than just the things we have. We have been

told by advertisements, the people we meet, and our own hearts that we ‘just gotta have it’; whatever ‘it’ is. Yet, when is enough, enough? Proverbs 27:20 says, “...*the eyes of man are never satisfied.*” Many people would say, “Just one more thing”; yet, it wouldn’t stop there. Jesus warns that your fulfillment in life, your joy, your happiness is not in what you own!

There’s nothing wrong with having things. If you have a good job, good for you. If you have a nice house, that’s wonderful. If you have a large portfolio, that’s great. It’s not the things that Christ warns about, it’s the heart behind pursuing those things that has driven the average person to do things he never dreamed, leading to an unnecessary mess in his life. The Bible says, “*For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows*” (I Timothy 6:10). Notice that the verse doesn’t say money is the problem; it’s the love of it! What’s the result of that? People dealing with many sorrows in their lives. How many are living under the burden of debt? Or how many marriages fail due to one spouse overworking to obtain ‘things’? Jesus said, “*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*” Where is the value of life? Not in the pursuit of things.

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The Waste

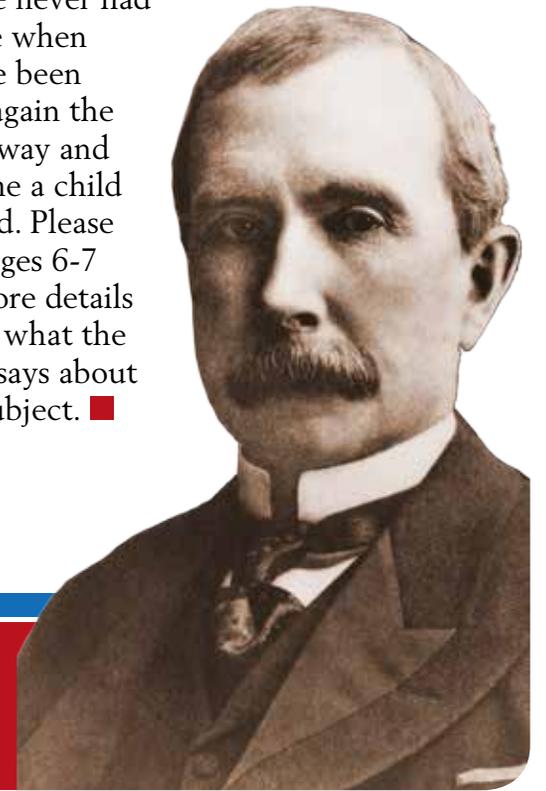
So many people spend so much of their lives pursuing things; they often miss some of the most important things in life. Back in the 1980s, there was a saying popularized on t-shirts and bumper stickers stating, "He who dies with the most toys wins!" As silly as this statement is, people do live their life as if this statement is true. However, you never see a hearse towing a U-Haul. At funerals, people never talk about the type of car somebody had, the toys he had, or the size of the individual's estate. It is always about what type of person he was, how he helped other people, or how he was to his family. If the person is a Christian, people will mention how he served God faithfully. How many, though, waste their lives, get to the end, and have nothing but regrets! A well known author once said, "Our lives will be summed up in one sentence, pick it now". In the end, living for things is certainly a waste of one's life.

The Win

So how does somebody live abundantly in a materialistic society? I believe it starts with re-focusing on the priorities. Our first priority should be God. The Bible says, "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matthew 6:33). When God has first place in our lives, everything else falls into place. Secondly, we need to get rid of the 'Me' attitude, and be more considerate of others. The most joyous people I know are people who do what they can to help others. The Bible says, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:4-5). Thirdly, be thankful. So many people are just not thankful for what they have in life. Too many people in this country don't consider the fact they have it better than most people around the globe. I have personally been in refugee camps and third world countries and came back with a great appreciation for what God has given me here in America.

Fourthly, be content. The Apostle Paul wrote, "*for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*" Contentment is coming to the place that I need nothing more than what I have regardless how much that is.

Can we live abundantly in a materialistic world? We certainly can with God's help. But that means a person has to know God to get that help. Maybe you've never had a time when you've been born again the Bible way and became a child of God. Please see pages 6-7 for more details about what the Bible says about this subject. ■



"...how much is enough?"

"Just a little bit more."

- John D. Rockefeller

Who Is Intolerant?

by M. Youssef

The drum beat of those who preach the religion of "tolerance" in our time has been growing louder and louder every day. This is not a surprise, nor is it by accident. Throughout history, whenever attempts were made to silence the Christians, their persecutors often implemented the "false accusation of intolerance method."

Remember Nero and the Roman Empire? First-century Rome worshipped at the altar of "tolerance." They were tolerant of many gods and numerous religions. The one thing they could not stand and sought to eliminate were those pesky Christians who insisted that there was only one true God, and He came from Heaven in human flesh, born of a virgin, died on a cross, and more importantly rose from the dead on the third day.

Those Christians, who claimed that Jesus was the only way to salvation and Heaven, represented a threat to the "tolerance" of Rome, and its love for polytheism (many gods). Silencing them, by any means, became the state's mission!

The courts, the media, public opinion, religious leaders of the day, and yes, even the government were all united to expose and punish the Christians for their "intolerance" and their refusal to believe that "all roads lead to the light"...sound familiar?

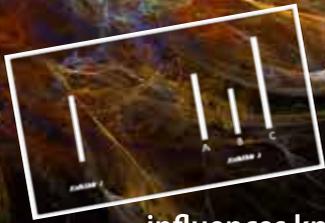
To be sure, Rome did not have hundreds of years of Christian enlightenment and history as we do now, and that is why the judgment upon those who are on a mission to silence the true Christian voices today will be far more severe than those of ancient Rome.

Early Christians should teach us a number of lessons:

1. We must pray for our oppressors and those who set themselves as our enemies. (Luke 6:27-28)
2. We must never return hate for hate. (Luke 6:29)
3. We can be sure that our love will conquer their intolerance of Christians and Christian values. (Romans 8:36-39)
4. We must be prepared and willing to pay the price of our discipleship. (Matthew 5:10-12)

Following Christ Jesus does not come without paying a price, but we know that it cannot be compared to the riches of eternal life. (2 Corinthians 4:17)

powerful peer PRESSURE



Parents shouldn't take anything for granted when it comes to their children. Peer pressure is one of the most powerful influences known to mankind. Everyone has the desire to be accepted, the desire to fit in, and the desire to not be different from others. If adults struggle with this strong force, imagine how hard it is for kids. The following is a case in point:

Psychologist Dr. Solomon Asch conducted an experiment on 'conformity'. He brought eight teenagers into a room and seated them at a small table. Seven of the eight were actually 'plants' who were in on the experiment. There was only one real subject; everything else was carefully scripted. The moderator arrived and told the group that they were going to be part of an experiment to determine people's visual judgments. She then placed two cards before the group. The card on the left contained one vertical line and the card on the right displayed three vertical lines of different lengths.

The moderator then asked the group one at a time to choose which of the three lines on the right matched the length of the line on the left card. The answer was obvious. The procedure was repeated numerous times with different cards. Repeatedly, the seven 'plants' in the group gave the wrong answer on purpose. Although the real participant knew the answers of the others were wrong, they agreed with the group repeatedly. 37 out of 50 subjects gave the 'wrong answer', even though it was obvious. They caved-in and conformed to the other group members due to peer pressure. Dr. Asch was deeply disturbed by the results. He commented, "The tendency to conform in our society is so strong that reasonably intelligent and well-meaning young people are willing to call white, black."

People of all ages continually worry 'what everyone is doing' and how to 'fit in with the world'. In the process, the world presses the vulnerable into its mold. Very few have the backbone to stand in a world that is continually re-inventing new lows. There is tremendous pressure

to conform and society works overtime telling you what you ought to be through television, the music industry, the internet, and the educational system. It's hard for even Christians not to cave in due to intimidation. There is that continual fear of being ostracized, and looking 'dumb' because you're not in-step with society. No one wants to be blackballed because they're 'not on board' with the culture. The world continually says, "Follow our agenda, join our parade, toe the mark, follow the leader, run with the pack and be conventional." As a result, the herd finds itself doing all kinds of bizarre things that would have been considered crazy a generation ago. It's called 'the power of conformity'.

A Christian needs to rise above the drivel of society, and focus on pleasing his Creator first and foremost. We don't have to be shamed into compliance. We don't have to be enamored with the silly stuff the world is promoting. The Bible is full of people who caved-in, like Aaron, King Saul, Nicodemus, and even Peter. Jesus always set the standard. He never worried about 'jumping through the hoops' of society. Although Christians may feel like 'tiny islands of truth in a sea of paganism', we can survive and thrive in places like a rough construction site, a smutty office break room, or a public high school cafeteria.

Even an adolescent can stand tall when cornered by conformity. Parents need to train their kids to remember that ultimately they don't have to please anyone but God. They don't have to drink anything, sniff anything, or be talked into anything by anyone. By overcoming the fear of conformity, they can overcome this incredible influence called 'the world'.

QUIPS AND Quotes

"No army can withstand the strength of an idea when its time is come."
— Victor Hugo

"You go to heaven by grace. If you went by merit, you would miss it and your dog would go."
— Mark Twain

RESURRECTION Richard Dawkins, the well-known British atheist, has stated, "Accounts of Jesus' resurrection and ascension are about as well-documented as Jack and the Beanstalk." Dr. Sam Lamerson, professor of New Testament at Knox Theological Seminary, sees it quite differently. He says, "There are so many pieces of evidence for the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ that if we reject the truth of the resurrection, we must then become total historical agnostics and reject virtually everything that we know about ancient history."

How is it that we put a man on the moon before we figured out it would be a good idea to put wheels on luggage?

Only 28% of Christians have read the Bible from cover to cover. As one writer noted, it's the greatest Book *never* read.

GOLF For a special wild game dinner at their church, Josh told the audience about his latest escapades. He explained how he had recently been on an outing where he had to precariously wade alongside a big, marshy lake, had to run from a mountain lion, got tangled up in poison ivy, almost got stuck in quicksand, and had to fight off an aggressive rattlesnake. Josh then said, "You probably think I am quite an outdoorsman, but the truth is, I'm just a really lousy golfer."

— Adapted from the
Houston Chronicle
9/16/11, p.E12

the **not** so familiar teachings
OF
JESUS CHRIST

by **daniel aceituna**

Ask the average person today what they know about the teachings of Jesus Christ and you will most likely hear, “He taught to love your enemies, to forgive and turn the other cheek, and of course, the golden rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” There are other teachings, however, that don’t tend to be as familiar. Some of them may surprise you...

Jesus taught that few people will make it into heaven. He warned, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14). One reason is because most don’t see themselves as that bad of a person. But Jesus taught that we are all sinners. “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:21-23). Jesus added, “For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matt 9:13).

Since unrepentant sinners are not allowed in Heaven, Jesus taught that hell is the place where they are sent when He said, “The Son of man (Jesus Christ) shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 13:41-42). Jesus

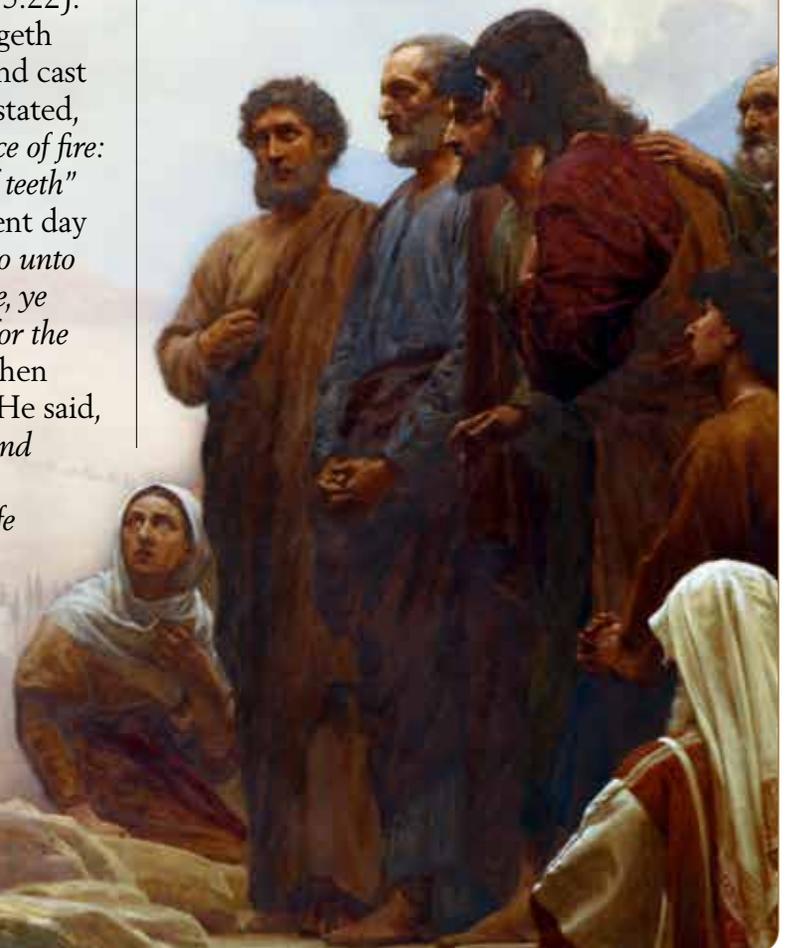
added, “And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell” (Matthew 5:30). Jesus said in Luke 12:5, “But I will forewarn you whom we shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.” In hell, a person does not simply cease to exist because, Jesus taught that hell is a place of eternal torment when He stated, “And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom” (Luke 16:23). Jesus taught that hell was a place of fire when He said, “But whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire” (Matt 5:22). He also added, “Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit I hewn down, and cast into the fire” (Matt 7:19). Then He stated, “(God) shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 13:50). Jesus spoke of judgment day when He said, “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt 25:41). Then Jesus issued a strong warning when He said, “Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire” (Matt 18:8).

Jesus taught that a person must repent in order to avoid

hell when He stated, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.” He said in Mark 1:15, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” In Luke 5:32, He said, “Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:10).

To repent means to change your mind about your sin, with a desire to forsake it. This is necessary because Jesus taught that without repentance there is no salvation when He said, “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:5).

Repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ results in being born again. And Jesus taught that, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). “Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again” (John 3:7). Perhaps you may be trusting in wrong things such as baptism, good deeds, church membership or self-righteousness to get you to heaven. Your trust must be in Jesus’ payment for your sins. Have you been born again? If not, what are you waiting for? For more information please refer to pages 6-7. ■



Pastor's Perspective



WHO IS THIS?

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?"

- Matthew 16:13

The blockbuster movie of 1959 was a film entitled Ben Hur, starring Charlton Heston. It was taken from Lew Wallace's 1880 novel: A Tale of the Christ, which dealt with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Ironically, before he penned this novel, Wallace was a confident atheist. He was bold and intelligent and very skeptical of Christianity. In his brilliance and cynicism, he went to great lengths to convince others that the story of Jesus Christ from the Bible was a fairy tale. One day, his fellow atheistic friend, Robert Ingersoll, convinced Wallace to write a book to debunk the story of Jesus Christ, and prove it was only a myth. Wallace traveled to the Holy Land and Mediterranean region eager to disprove the Bible and its account of Jesus. He spent long hours studying the scriptures and comparing them to historical accounts and archaeology. In the process of time, Wallace began to struggle with his skepticism. His well-guarded atheistic 'faith' began to melt. He resisted and fought what was taking place in his heart, but soon had to face the facts about Jesus Christ. Wallace eventually surrendered to the truth and was transferred from the darkness of his atheism into the bright light of faith. He became a passionate Christian and went on to write Ben Hur.

The true identity of Jesus Christ causes some confusion. Most people know only the historical Jesus. Others try to lump Him with other famous, religious men. Is Jesus the eternal God or did His life just begin in the manger of Bethlehem? If He is divine, it unravels all the questions raised by skeptics.

Puzzling Inquiry

Who is this Man? This was even a bone of contention to the clergy and people of His day. Imagine someone like Jesus Christ making claims such as: He was God; He had always existed; He could forgive sins; He was coming to judge the world one day. There was no middle ground then, and there isn't today. Jesus Christ is either 'Lord', or He is a liar and a lunatic because of His claims. You must either reject Him as a madman, or fall at His feet and proclaim Him God. He is either Lord of all, or not at all. These are questions every person must face.

Some try to suppose that Jesus was a good teacher, a prophet, or a moral man; but not actually God in the flesh. They try to patronize Jesus. Yet Jesus Christ claimed to have the authority to forgive sins on many occasions. He also had the power to open blind eyes, calm raging seas, and even raise the dead! As He did, many asked, "Who is this?" When Jesus came on the scene in Galilee, "the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this?" (Luke 5:21). When King Herod encountered Jesus Christ he said, "Who is this, of whom I hear such things?" (Luke 9:9). Pontius Pilate asked Jesus many questions like, "Who are you; where did you come from; are you a king?" Even the apostles asked the question, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:41). Many were puzzled by Jesus Christ.

Proving Investigation

Everything has a beginning: this universe, our nation, and even you; but not Jesus Christ! The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ was with the Father in the very beginning, before the world was made. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Psalms 90:2). The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ was with the Father in heaven in eternity past, being co-equal with God (John 1:1).

The Bible claims that Jesus Christ is the Creator of the universe when it says, "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3). Imagine Jesus looking at the Sea of Galilee, Mount Tabor, the cliffs of Nazareth, and the Jordan River knowing He had spoken all these things into existence. As a teenage boy working in a carpenter's shop, Jesus perspired beneath the very sun He had spoken into existence. At age 33, He died on a cross which was carved from a tree he made and placed on a hill He created. The Bible says, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him" (Col 1:16).

Many testified of Jesus Christ beginning with the angels who announced His birth by saying, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ (Messiah) the Lord," (Luke 2:11). Peter testified when He told Jesus, "Thou art the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the living God" (Matt 16:16). Later on, John the apostle said, "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31).

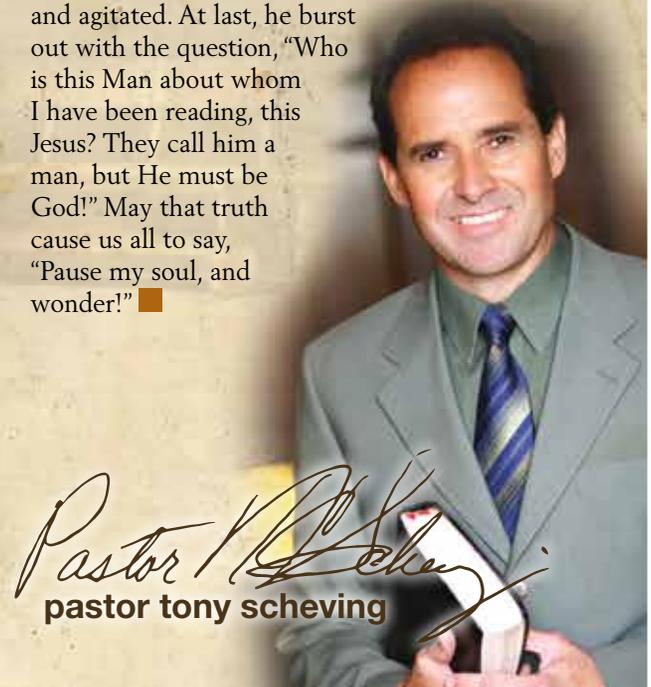
Pressing Importance

Let's bring this matter up into the 21st century. Who is Jesus Christ to you? What does he mean to you in your world, while you're at work, in school, or in your neighborhood? Sadly, some only

use His name when spoken in vain. What do you believe about Him? Is He any more than a great teacher or the founder of a big, world-religion like Buddha, Mohammed or Confucius? Is He just another religious martyr? Many will even answer that Jesus is the Son of God without really knowing what that means. It may be time for many to think deeply about Jesus Christ. The Bible says, "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

What conclusion did the people of His day come to? The apostles said, "We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:69). St. Paul wrote of Jesus, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant" (Phil 2:6-7). Jesus claimed to be God in the flesh many times (John 3:18, 5:25, 9:35-38, 10:36). He spoke of His divinity when he said in John 8:58, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM." He also added in John 10:30, "I and my Father are one." When doubting Thomas looked at the resurrected Jesus and said, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28), Jesus didn't deny it. To try and eliminate the deity of Jesus Christ would be like cutting the heart out of the body. The Bible pulsates with this truth.

So why is this so important? Because Jesus Christ said, "If ye believe not that I AM, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). There is no salvation outside of Jesus Christ. And no one can embrace salvation without embracing the Person of Jesus Christ and who He is. This is Theology 101. Someone wisely said that Jesus Christ could be born 1000 times in Bethlehem, but if He is not born in you, you'll miss heaven. John 1:12 says, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Following World War II, a young Japanese man wanting to learn English was given the Gospel of John by a missionary, to translate into his native language. In a short time the translator became very restless and agitated. At last, he burst out with the question, "Who is this Man about whom I have been reading, this Jesus? They call him a man, but He must be God!" May that truth cause us all to say, "Pause my soul, and wonder!" ■



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