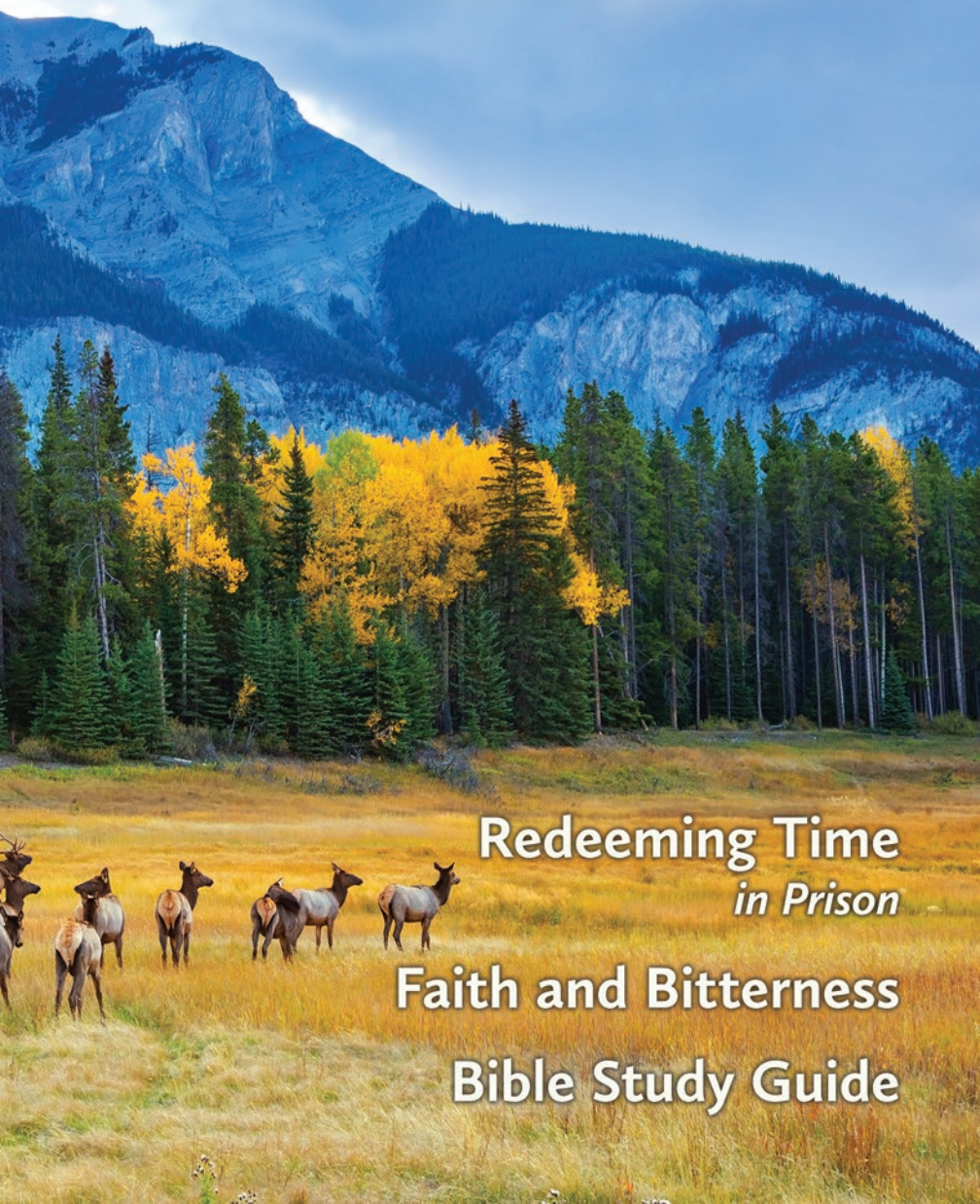


# Loaves & Fishes

Issue 31



**Redeeming Time**  
*in Prison*

**Faith and Bitterness**

**Bible Study Guide**



# *The Word*

More than a book,  
More than a story—  
It's the word of the Lord,  
Full of glory.

Wisdom within,  
Knowledge throughout.  
Faith comes by hearing  
The word; never doubt.

Humble the heart;  
Ready the mind.  
You never know  
What treasure you'll find.

Read it, learn it,  
Love it, live it.  
Freely receive it and  
Then freely give it.

Sharper than any  
two-edged sword.  
Take hold, Christian soldier  
The Word of the Lord!

Sterling Jamison  
Buckingham Correctional Center, Dillwyn, VA



We publish *Loaves & Fishes* as the Lord provides. Our goal is to point those in prison to Jesus Christ and help them experience the life, hope, and freedom of a daily walk with Him.

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# Loaves & Fishes

Issue 31

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## *Inside Cover:*

The Word  
Prayer Overdue

**ALERT: THIS COULD BE YOUR LAST ISSUE**

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# Goodness That Leads to Repentance

Lavern Gingerich

**Y**ou've heard the saying, "God is good all the time," but have you ever really considered what it means? What is the purpose of God's goodness, and who is eligible to receive this goodness?

## God Is Good

It is God's nature to bless His creation. His attitude toward humanity is that of a gentleman—kind, compassionate, and friendly. God is rich in goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering—even to those who don't bless Him in return. In fact, He attracts those still in sin with His goodness (Romans 2:4–11).

While God does not limit His goodness to those who love Him (Matthew 5:45), it is possible for us to harden our hearts and despise His goodness. By doing this, we store up wrath against ourselves for the day when His righteous judgment will be revealed (Romans 2:5).

Those who go on in rebellion will receive wrath and anguish (verses 8–9), but because God is love (1 John 4:8), we can be sure that even His judgment flows out of His love. When He pours out His wrath, it is always because that is the most loving option available, and it will ultimately result in the greatest good to His creation.

God's goodness is evident in His commands. When God asks us to love in tough situations, have compassion on the suffering, be kind to those who don't deserve it, and forgive 490 times in a day without compensation, He is simply asking us to adopt His nature. God's goodness is also revealed in His interactions with mankind, especially in the life and teachings of Jesus (John 14:9).

To establish a foundation for God's goodness, we will consider these questions: *Does God wait to turn to us until we turn to Him?*



When God asks us to be kind to those who don't deserve it, He is simply asking us to adopt His nature.

*What can we learn about God's goodness in the life and teachings of Jesus? What is the ultimate purpose of His goodness?*

### **God Pursuing Man**

Many theologians teach that the main problem with sin is that it offends God, and that because He is holy and we are sinful, God turned His back on sinful mankind, demanding compensation for the sin debt we accumulated.

However, according to the Bible, sin is a fatal wound in our nature which God longs to heal, not a personal insult which causes Him to despise humanity. By disobeying God, Adam brought Creation under the corruption of sin and death. Because God loves us deeply, He refuses to look the other way in disgust while sin destroys us;

instead, ever since the first sin, God has been pursuing us with His goodness, inviting us back to Him.

When Adam turned his back on God, God came *looking for him*: “<sup>8</sup>They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup>Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where are you?’” (3:8–9). Even as God explained the consequences of sin to Adam, Eve, and the serpent, He was already planning their redemption.

Later, in Genesis 4, God said to Cain, “<sup>6</sup>Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? <sup>7</sup>If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it” (4:6–7). God urged Cain simply to do what was right, lovingly warning him that otherwise sin would pounce on him and tear him to pieces. According to God Himself, Cain’s problem was not God’s aversion to him; it was the corruption of sin in Cain’s life. What God asked of Cain was simple: to “do well,” giving up his sin and



God freely forgives us when we ask for mercy, and He expects us to treat others with that same kindness.

submitting to God's good plans for him.

This is how God worked with Abraham, Moses, David, and the children of Israel, and He is still the same today. Time and again, like wayward sheep, we reject God's blessings and get lost in the wilderness. Every time, like a caring shepherd, He comes searching for us, lifts us to His shoulders, and even throws a party to *celebrate our return* (Luke 15:4–6).

In Matthew 18:21–35, Jesus told the parable of a servant who owed his king 10,000 talents (200,000 years' wages). When the servant begged the king for more time to pay the debt, he took pity on him and wrote off the debt instead. Sadly, this servant went to a fellow servant, demanded immediate payment of a small loan he had made to

this man, and had him thrown into prison when he couldn't pay. When the king heard about this, he was furious; he revoked the first servant's forgiveness and sent him to prison until his own debt was paid.

The king in this story represents God, and we are the servants. Each of us has accumulated an un-payable debt of sin. However, instead of demanding payment, God freely forgives us when we ask for mercy (verse 27); and He expects us to treat others with that same kindness (verse 35). If we refuse to forgive someone who has wronged us, we despise the goodness of God; and like the ungrateful servant, we will find ourselves under God's judgment, facing the penalty of our sins (verse 34).

Perhaps you're struggling with sin, and you see God as a harsh, angry judge who just wants to put you away. Or maybe you "have it together," and you like the idea of a "tough" God who demands punishment for sin instead of "letting people off the hook" by simply forgiving them. These perceptions of God do not reflect the way God has described Himself, and they do not match the compassion shown by the life of Jesus Christ, who was God in the flesh.

## God in Human Flesh

In Christian evangelism, salvation is often presented as a formula that consists mainly of believing that Jesus satisfied God's wrath and paid our sin debt by shedding His blood on the cross. By defining our sin problem as a legal issue between us and God, this version of the Gospel often fails to explain how Jesus can give us real victory over the corruption of sin. It also tends to minimize the importance of Jesus' life, teachings, and resurrection, which are all vital parts of the gospel story (Acts 2:14–39).

When Jesus became a human servant (Philippians 2), He worked for His living, socialized with sinners, and got dirty just like everyone else in the village. Jesus brought forgiveness, healing, life, and good news to all (Luke 4:18–19). He invited those who were tired to come to Him for rest: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.... For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28, 30).

Jesus especially favored those who were weak and vulnerable—the poor, prisoners, oppressed, widows, and children. In Mark 12:41–44, Jesus watched a widow put two small copper coins into

the temple treasury. Jesus told His followers that the widow had given more than all the rich people combined, because she had given all she had.

Once Jesus met a woman of Samaria who had been with five different husbands and now had a relationship with a man who wasn't her husband. Jesus recognized her thirst for peace and fulfillment, struck up a friendly conversation, and offered her living water to drink (John 4).

Once a woman was caught in adultery and hauled into the temple (John 8:2–12). Jesus offered her freedom: "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." In Mark 5:35–43, Jesus turned mourning to joy by bringing a girl back from the dead. In Luke 5:17–26, a lame man was lowered through the roof where Jesus was teaching, and Jesus forgave his sins and healed him. In Mark 5:24–34, a woman who had suffered from a bleeding disorder for twelve years came to Jesus, and He kindly told her, "Your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed."

Eventually, the religious people could no longer tolerate Jesus, so they arrested Him, put him through a sham trial, and had Him flogged and crucified

(Acts 2:23, 36). Even as His enemies abused Him, He willingly gave His life as a ransom to rescue us from the corruption of sin and death.

The most glorious part of the Gospel story is His resurrection. “You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption” (Acts 2:27). By His death and resurrection, Jesus broke the devil’s power over us (Hebrews 2:14) and released us from bondage to the fear of death (verse 15). We are still waiting for the final phase of our salvation when we will be changed from corruptible to incorruptible (1 Corinthians 15:50–58), but until then, He helps us overcome sin and face death without fear.

God is engaged in a life-long project to renew and redeem each of us from the corruption of sin.

## The Whole Point

Salvation is sometimes presented as a legal agreement with God, where we “claim the righteousness of Jesus” and God agrees to ignore our sin on that basis. Those who believe in Jesus are likened to “snow-covered

ding,” and Jesus is described as our “asbestos suit against the white-hot wrath of God against sinners.”

However, according to the Bible, salvation is not about God ignoring our sinfulness—just the opposite! God cares about the harm sin brings to us, and He is engaged in a life-long project to renew and redeem each of us from the corruption of sin.

Salvation includes being saved from the consequences of sin *and* growing in righteousness. Salvation is not a legal game where we win heaven if we crack the right code (“believing Jesus did it all”) or follow a certain formula (obeying a certain set of rules). No, real salvation is surrendering to God and living in a relationship with Jesus that changes your heart and your behavior. Salvation is losing your self-centered life for Jesus and gaining His eternal life in return.

God is good. He is a kind, caring, and helpful Father, and He wants a relationship with you. If you are seeking Him honestly, you will find Him. My prayer is that you will not despise the goodness of God, but let it lead you to abundant life in Jesus Christ. ~



# The Convict on the Throne

## How Faith Conquers Bitterness

J. Anthony Hertzler

**I**n spite of the differences in our stories, the billions of humans who share this world have much in common. One of the things we all share is the experience of suffering. Although we have not all suffered equally, we have all experienced sorrow, pain, and hardship to one degree or another.

Perhaps you know someone who has been through horrible abuse, illness, or injury, only to emerge from the experience with a deep strength, wisdom, and joy that blesses everyone they meet. On the other hand, you likely know people who seem consumed with misery and resentment over past and present hurts. Why are some people destroyed by suffering while others grow stronger?

To understand the answer to this question, we must recognize God's gift of free will. Though we may not be able to change our circumstances or the actions of other people, we can choose

how we respond to what happens to us.

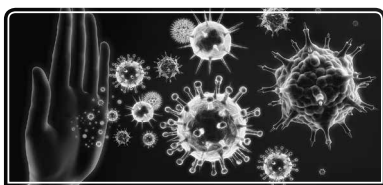
If we choose to focus on the wrongs we have experienced,



Why are some people destroyed by suffering while others grow stronger?

holding grudges and plotting revenge, we will remain prisoners of our past. While we nurse our wounds, excusing our failures because of what others have done to us, opportunities for growth and victory will pass us by unnoticed.

Focusing on the wrongs of others and the problems with our circumstances leads to bitterness—a deep infection of



Faith is the best vaccine  
against bitterness.

the soul that slowly poisons everything in our lives. Bit by bit, bitterness withers our joy and shreds our relationships with others. Because bitter people blame their problems on circumstances and other people, they feel helpless to improve their lives, and they tend to stumble from one dead-end situation to another, each failure supplying them with more excuses to blame their troubles on their surroundings.

Praise God, there is an escape from this cycle of failure, blame, and bitterness. To those who ask Him, God promises the gift of faith (Ephesians 2:1–10). Faith is the best vaccine against bitterness, because it turns our attention from ourselves and our hurts to God's goodness and faithfulness.

Faith allows us to look beyond our present suffering and trust God to use it for our good (Job 23:10; Hebrews 12:11). Faith

believes God's promise that justice will be done in the end (Luke 18:1–8). Faith anchors us to the changeless reality of God's goodness and allows us to maintain hope and purpose even when people and circumstances fail our expectations (Romans 5:1–5).

What's more, real faith reaches beyond belief and changes our behavior (James 2:14–26). When we live in faith, finding our security in God, we can reach out from that solid foundation to bless everyone around us. As active faith becomes a habit, our character deepens and matures, opening new opportunities to influence and bless.

To illustrate the contrast between a life of bitterness and a life of faith, consider two characters in the Bible: King Saul and Joseph.<sup>1</sup>

As a young man, Saul the son of Kish was tall, good-looking, and wealthy. God chose him as Israel's first king, and he proved to be a capable and popular leader. However, as his reign continued and he faced new challenges, a dangerous flaw began to appear in his character.

Saul had trouble trusting God. When he found himself facing a Philistine army that vastly outnumbered his own,

<sup>1</sup> You can read Saul's story in 1 Samuel, chapters 9–31, and Joseph's story in Genesis, chapters 37–50.

Saul wisely decided to make a sacrifice and seek God's counsel on how to proceed. However, when the prophet Samuel, who was supposed to make the sacrifice, was delayed in arriving, Saul grew impatient and simply made the sacrifice himself, though he knew his action was forbidden by God's law.

Eventually, Saul's lack of faith led him to blame others for his own failings. When God told him to completely destroy the Amalekites and their livestock, Saul chose instead to keep the best of the livestock. Yet when Samuel confronted him, Saul blamed the soldiers instead of accepting his responsibility as the leader who had directed the operation.

These events marked the beginning of a long path downward for Saul. The more he disobeyed God, the more God's blessings were withdrawn from his life. Saul began to be tormented by what the Scripture calls "an evil spirit from the Lord." Saul appointed David, a young shepherd whom God had secretly chosen as the next king of Israel, to play music to help calm him and ward off the evil spirit. However, he soon grew jealous of David's success and popularity and tried to murder David in cold blood.

Later, as David continued to gain approval with the people, Saul became so consumed with jealousy that he began hunting David around the country, neglecting his responsibilities and even committing massacres in his insane pursuit of the man he now blamed for all his problems.

At last, discouraged, desperate, and facing a decisive battle with the Philistines, Saul actually sought out a witch for help. The day after this folly, with the enemy closing in, Saul committed suicide by falling on his sword.

Saul's long slide from success to disaster happened step by step, as he refused to trust God, refused to walk in faith, and



By focusing on those he saw as his enemies, Saul allowed bitterness to strangle him like a poisonous vine.

continually blamed his failures on others. By focusing on those he saw as his enemies, Saul allowed bitterness to strangle him like a poisonous vine, cutting off his fellowship with God and finally destroying him completely.

What could Saul have accomplished if he had walked in faith instead of trusting his own smarts and then blaming others when things went wrong? We will never know; but we can see the faith-filled alternative in the story of the shepherd Joseph.

Joseph's life did not start out well. His family was torn by jealousy and infighting, and his ten half-brothers hated him so deeply that they sold him to foreign slave traders to get rid of him. He was hauled to Egypt and sold to an army officer as a house servant. There was little chance he would ever see his loved ones again.

If anyone ever had reason to resent his circumstances and grow bitter, Joseph did. But Joseph chose to trust God and bless those around him, regardless of his circumstances. Impressed by his diligence and faithfulness, Joseph's master, Potiphar, soon put him in charge of the entire estate.

In spite of his success with Potiphar, Joseph's faith contin-

ued to be tested. His master's wife tried to lure him into bed with her, and when he rejected her immoral invitations, she went to Potiphar and accused Joseph of attacking her when they were alone in the house. The reward for Joseph's faithfulness was imprisonment for sexual assault.

At this point, many people would conclude that since no good deed goes unpunished, there's no point in trying to live right. Joseph must have been tempted to think this way, too; but he refused to despair. Instead of brooding over his own hurts, Joseph reached out to the other prisoners, listening to their stories and seeking to help those who were troubled. The prison warden, recognizing Joseph's character, soon made him manager of the whole prison.

It was a friend Joseph made in prison who ended up introducing him to Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Recognizing Joseph's gifts and character, Pharaoh appointed Joseph as his personal deputy, ruling the most powerful nation on earth by the authority of the king himself.

In his new position as Pharaoh's deputy, Joseph saved much of the region from starvation in a seven-year famine.



Because Joseph had chosen to remain faithful even in a system rigged against an honest man, God could use him to save many thousands of lives.

Consider the contrast between the lives of Saul and Joseph. Saul began his career as a king and ended in suicide. Joseph began as a slave and ended as a world leader. It was not their circumstances that made the difference between these two lives; it was their choices. Saul chose mistrust, blame-shifting, and bitterness, while Joseph chose trust, hope, and active faithfulness. Because of their choices, Saul's life was a disaster, while Joseph's was a success.

You and I face the same choice today; will we react to hardship by wallowing in self-

Saul chose mistrust, blame-shifting, and bitterness, while Joseph chose trust, hope, and active faithfulness.

pity, despair, and bitterness, or will we respond with faith and hope in God's goodness? Will we nurse grudges against those who have hurt us, or will we use the lessons we learn from suffering to soothe the pain of others? Will our suffering be an excuse for failure or an opportunity for growth?

If you have been bruised by hardship and injustice, your response to those experiences will determine whether your story ends in defeat or in triumph. Bitterness or faith—which will you choose? ~



# Somewhere in Genesis 1

*Unscramble the hidden verse (NKJV).*

ni het ngnbenigi odg ectrdae hte aenvehs adn eht rhtea.



Reference: \_\_\_\_\_

# REDEEMING THE TIME

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## in Prison

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Mike Fisher

Imagine that someone gave you one hundred thousand dollars with one condition: *this is all the money you will have to live on for the rest of your life.*

If you are a wise person, you would realize that one hundred thousand dollars can disappear quickly if poorly managed. You would begin planning immediately how to invest the money so it produces a steady income.

Most of us have not been given this much money. However, each of us has been given a different gift: time. God has given us each a certain amount of time to live. How we use that time is our choice, but when we die, it is used up and cannot be recalled.

The Bible says, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:15–17). In other words, you can waste your time like a fool, but it is much better to be “circumspect” (cautious), and redeem (make the best use of) the time that you have. God wants us to use His gift of time wisely.

In prison, your choice of activities is limited. Without a vision for using your time well, it is easy to waste day after day watching TV, playing games, or reading worthless trash. I want you to learn to think of your time as a precious gift from

God, and be inspired to take control of it. Even in prison, you have many choices about how to spend your time.

Don’t think of your life as being “on pause” or wasted while you’re in prison.



Think of your time as a precious gift from God.

Instead of waiting for some elusive time in the future, start growing and prospering in the Lord right now. The difficulties you face, including the mundane duties and the boredom, can be an opportunity to grow your character, skills, and knowledge.

What is God's will for your time in prison?

God wants you to grow in knowledge. To know God better, spend time reading the Bible. Beyond that, there are many people who have read the Bible before us, and their writings can help us in our quest to know God. If you have access to a library, look for books on biblical topics. Of course these books do not have the same authority as the Bible itself, but they can be helpful in understanding the Scriptures.

Another option is to enroll in Bible study courses. In this magazine, you should find an advertisement and order form for mail-order courses from Lamp and Light Publishers, Inc. Take advantage of one of the courses they offer. If the form is missing, write to Lamp & Light Publishers at 26 Road 5577, Farmington, NM 87401-1436 and request a course catalog.

Reading is a great way to expand your knowledge, but choose your books cautiously.

Read to become a better person, not merely to escape reality.

Another wise way to use your time is to maintain your relationships with friends and family outside. Don't abandon your role as a spouse, parent, or friend just because you are behind bars. Write those you care about, or give them a call if you are able. Show interest in their lives and try to keep up with what they are doing, rather than focusing on your own problems.

Staying in touch is not always possible; you must respect restraining orders, and sometimes people you care about simply don't want to be in touch. Respect other people's wishes, and do not be discouraged if they don't respond to you as often as you like. Even if you can't talk much with your loved ones, you can always pray for them. If you get visits, use them to learn as much as you can about your visitor.

The Bible advises us to use our time well, because "the days are evil." Keep yourself informed about what is going on in the world. Pray for the leaders of our country and for the safety and success of God's people in the world.

Find a Christian ministry to pray for, and get in touch to

let them know you are supporting their work in prayer. Mission organizations do a lot of hard work, and though you might feel like you have nothing to give, a simple note in the mail to let them know you are praying can give them fresh inspiration to keep on.

Prayer is a wonderful way to make good use of your time. In prayer, you don't need to be talking all the time—take time simply to be still and open your heart to God's voice. Organize others to pray with you; there is power in believers praying together. Make lists of prayer needs and assign them to yourself and others. Your prayers reach God, and His power can accomplish what we cannot.

You may find it helpful to keep a journal. Writing down what you are learning from your reading and study can help you remember important milestones in your spiritual growth. Taking notes of prayer requests will keep them fresh in your mind so you can pray for them throughout the day. Use a jour-

Your prayers reach  
God, and His power can  
accomplish what  
we cannot.



nal to record a story of a victory God helped you win or a prayer God answered.

Invest your time building a strong body of believers in your unit. Organize group study times where you can gather to encourage one another and learn together. If you disagree with others, take time to research the issue in the Bible and share your findings.

God wants us to use our time to pursue those who are in need of Christ. You can be an evangelist. Take the good news of Jesus to those who are in despair. Teach them the words of Jesus, and be an example of a Christ-follower yourself. Sharing the good news of Jesus takes much patience, persistence, and wisdom, but there is no better way to make use of your time than by doing the Lord's work.

Use your time to take care of your body. God has given you your body; in fact, the Bible calls our bodies "God's temple." Don't give up on physical discipline; use every opportunity to exercise. Physical discipline



clears your mind, helps you focus and learn, and is good for your health. I once had a friend who did an incredible number of sit-ups daily in his unit. You can do this anywhere.

God loves peace and harmony even in practical matters. Take time to maintain personal hygiene. Find ways to bring order to your surroundings, starting with keeping your living space clean and organized. Depression and stress thrive in dirty and disorderly surroundings. (I know how I feel when my garage looks like the aftermath of a tornado!)

If you have educational opportunities, use them. Take any class that might be helpful to you, even if you don't expect to use the skills or knowledge. Take advantage of work opportunities; work provides both physical exercise and opportunities to develop your skills.

Work also provides a chance to increase your social skills. As you learn to follow directions and cooperate with others, you

Physical discipline clears your mind, helps you focus and learn, and is good for your health.



are building leadership skills for the future.

God also wants us to use some of our time to rest and relax. The book of Genesis says that after creating the world in six days, God rested on the seventh. Rest your mind and body by enjoying a good conversation, playing a friendly game, or pursuing a hobby if you have the opportunity.

Finally, don't forget the needs of others. Often when Jesus was weary of ministry, He was still pursued by crowds of needy people. He was willing to sacrifice His personal time in order to talk to them and heal them. Use your time to help someone else. Perhaps you can assist them with a problem or help them with a project. Especially seek opportunities to help someone who has nothing to give in return.

Time is like sand in an hourglass; it is slipping quickly by us every day. Don't be a fool; make the best use of God's precious gift of time.



# Word Search Puzzle

Isaiah 43:1-3a (NKJV)

*Find each word from this Bible passage in the puzzle. For an extra challenge, memorize the passage when you're done. Enjoy!*

"But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."

Y Y I Q S H A L L S Y W O P J F T H E  
E O V E R F L O W Y N O I V X Y Y O U  
J C T H E F F O R M E D U T T O E F Q  
N S A N E J O G R X P G I O H U Z W E  
R F H L O D A R H E T G N L Y S I H X  
D I Q A L T V N W U D T R V F O T O Y  
M R E M L E N Z O A U E U A L O U H O  
G E Y M G L D Y T B T E E H A V E A U  
R L O O I D Y L W L V E I M M X S V R  
T O U T U N Y O U G M T R L E D A E L  
H U R H W B E R Q P X L N S E D C W U  
E Q S E V A N D O T I U Y N C T Q H N  
U F J A C O B A V H B Y R Q O O K E C  
X O O N E T Q N S E E U C K H E R N Q  
S F E R G H F D N Z B E R W U U U C T  
U H A I S R A E L A B N E N O O S U H  
W N G Q C O V F Y O U I A M B U N J E  
N O W S U U F F O L C Y T M H E R L Y  
R C W X T G P T U I L J E T E S A Y S  
W I P O H H T V J O B V D P A H X R A  
U O V N O T R S H B B Y N H J H Y N O  
M H D E S N S O J M K L O O S H A L L  
T O I S R A E L U W A L K U R A D E K  
O H H K P S V S C G I O W A R L V G S  
Y D E N C V I I H T H R O U G H T L B  
Y O P F E A R E O D M D E C W B T H Z  
V H U W I L L L U R L Q G O D Y O U E



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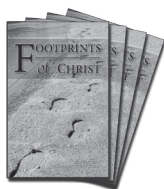
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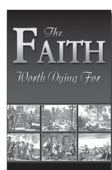
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# Let's Study...

## Titus

by Mike Fisher



- **Titus** is the 56<sup>th</sup> book of the Bible and the 17<sup>th</sup> book of the New Testament.
- **Author and Audience.** Titus is a letter written by Paul the apostle to Titus, his friend and coworker in the church.
- **Time of Writing.** Paul wrote this letter around AD. 63, likely after being released from prison in Rome.
- **Historical Context.** Titus was a troubleshooter, peacemaker, administrator, and missionary. He was a Gentile convert to Christianity and a great help to Paul's ministry. He traveled with Paul to Jerusalem for the crucial discussion about receiving Gentiles into the Church (Galatians 2). He traveled with Paul on his third missionary journey. Titus hand-delivered Paul's severe letter of reprimand to the Corinthian church (referred to in 2 Corinthians 2:3), as well as the letter of 2 Corinthians itself, so he was no stranger to difficult situations.

Perhaps this is why Paul had assigned to Titus the task of shepherding the Christian churches on the Mediterranean island of Crete. Crete is 160 miles across, and its civilization has a long history. Christianity may have come to Crete by way of Cretan Jews who were in Jerusalem for the Jewish holiday of Pentecost, just weeks after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, at the time of the founding of the Church itself.

The people of Crete had an established reputation for lying, laziness, and greed. The church in Crete was threatened by false teachers, disorganization, and instability. Titus' task in Crete was to "set in order the things that [were] lacking." Both he and Paul wanted to see the growth and maturing of the community of Christians on the island.

- **Summary.** One of Paul's most important concerns was that Titus would be able to establish solid leadership in the churches of Crete. To this end, Paul gave Timothy instructions about the kind of person who would make an able pastor. It is vital for a leader in the church to be above reproach, Paul wrote, and listed the key qualifications for leaders. A chief task of these pastors would be to identify and rebuke the false teachers who were preying on the immaturity of the believers.

As an aid to Titus's pastoral work, Paul addressed concerns related to each of the age and gender groups in the church. Paul's goal was for the church to be an outstanding testimony of the grace of God to observers. Paul also spoke of the call to godly living in the context of the glorious future appearance of "our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."

Paul reminded Titus of his and Titus's own conversions to Christ after having been "foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." Remembering his own sinful past and God's mercy toward him would help Titus deal gently with the people of Crete and their many problems.

- **Themes.** *Sound doctrine* (teaching) is a recurring theme in Titus. Truth is the cure for false teaching. Another important theme is *elders*—the leaders who patiently and unselfishly serve the people of God. Paul also addresses *proper conduct* repeatedly in the letter, which is so important for the testimony of Jesus Christ in the world.

- **Book Outline**

- I. Greeting (1:1–4)
- II. Titus' ministry in Crete (1:5–16)
  - A. Qualifications for elders (5–9)
  - B. Issues in Crete (10–16)
- III. Sound teaching (2:1–15)
- IV. The importance of good works (3:1–11)
- V. Final instructions and closing (3:12–15)

- **Key Verse.** “But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine” (2:1).
- **Study Exercises**
  - » Read the book of Titus through at one sitting. This is a personal letter from Paul to Titus; someone has said that reading the epistles (letters) of the New Testament is like reading someone else’s mail. In Titus, we’re learning by looking over Paul’s shoulder.
  - » The letter to Titus is solid advice from one missionary to another. If you desire not only to serve Jesus well yourself, but also to help others grow and mature in their life of faith, this book is for you. In it, we can observe leadership strategies for chaotic times and hope for messy situations.
- **Key Questions**
  - » List the qualifications for an elder in the Church from Titus 1:7–9.
  - » What is the advice Paul gives for *your* specific age and gender group? (2:1–8)
  - » If you were Titus, how would you have found this letter helpful to your ministry?
  - » How have Christian teachers, pastors, or other leaders been helpful to your faith and life?
  - » List some ways this letter inspires you to bring order, growth, and maturity to others within your sphere of influence.

Some material from ExecutableOutlines.com, by Mark A. Copeland. Used by permission.

## Somewhere in 2 Thessalonians 2

*Unscramble the hidden verse (NKJV).*

onw mya uor ordl ejesus thcirs lfhesmi, dna oru dgo nad atherf, hwo ash ldveo  
us nda nevig us evtgsinreal ocooalttnsi dna godo ophe by ragce, moftocr oryu  
ahsrte nad lsbeistah yuo ni eyerv oogd dowr dan kowr.

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Reference: \_\_\_\_\_



# Science in Creation

## Migrations

Andrew Zimmerman

God's creation holds countless fascinating surprises just waiting to be found. What animal has a brain the size of a pinhead and can navigate two thousand miles to a specific tree? What weighs six grams and flies five hundred miles non-stop without refueling? Let's take a look at migrations, the seasonal movement of animals from one region of God's earth to another. The marvelous travel distances and navigation skills of birds, insects, and other animals show them to be more intelligent than we often think.

The migrations we most commonly see here in Pennsylvania are those of migratory birds. Each fall we see and hear the Canada geese flying south, stopping at ponds and lakes to

rest on their long flight. In the spring, they fly north again. Occasionally a pair will raise a nest of goslings next to a pond in our neighborhood.

Canada geese are social birds, traveling in flocks. The "V" shape of the flock allows the lead goose to break the air so the birds behind him can maintain their speed with less effort. The geese

*Andrew has had an avid interest in science since he started studying it in his early years of school. Because of his interest in science and his belief in a literal six-day creation, he enjoys telling others about creation science. He lives in Central Pennsylvania with his wife and children.*



*What weighs six grams and  
flies five hundred miles  
non-stop without refueling?*

take turns in this strenuous lead position.

The monarch butterfly is another wonderful example of migration. This insect, weighing less than a gram, can fly thousands of miles to the very tree where its great-grandparents spent the previous winter. The monarchs of eastern North America migrate to several sites in western Mexico. In the spring they fly north, and several generations live and die in the north. Most monarchs live only two to six weeks, but the last generation of the summer lives eight to nine months. This generation of butterflies is in reproductive diapause, meaning they don't mate and lay eggs until the following spring. They live on stored fat during the journey south and through the winter.

Ruby-throated hummingbirds are another tiny species that travels long distances in annual migrations. They winter in southern Mexico and northern Panama. Unlike Canada geese, hummingbirds are loners. They may start heading north as early as January. Before they cross the Gulf of Mexico, they fill up on insects and spiders, doubling their weight to six grams. The five-hundred-mile trip across the Gulf takes about twenty hours, and a hummingbird may weigh only two and a half grams after making the trip. Some hummingbirds find resting places on oil rigs and fishing vessels in the Gulf. After reaching the States, they spread northward, following the blooming flowers for nectar. In August and September, they begin traveling south again.

The Arctic tern holds the record for the longest distance traveled in any migration. This medium-sized seabird experiences two summers every year as it travels from the Arctic to the Antarctic and back again. Rather than flying the shortest route, the Arctic tern follows coastlines and uses prevailing winds to cover long distances, spending most of its time in the air. A 2013 tracking study





*A 2013 tracking study showed some Arctic terns flew 56,000 miles in a year.*

showed that some Arctic terns flew 56,000 miles in a year.

The Serengeti region of Africa is the site of the largest terrestrial mammal migration in the world. The Great Migration, one of the Seven Natural Wonders of Africa, is driven by the availability of grazing for wildebeests, zebras, gazelles, and other plains animals. From January to April, the herds graze the short grass plains in the southeastern part of the region. Most of the wildebeest calves are born in February during a two or three-week period. This large number of calves in a short time lets most of them escape hungry predators, such as lions and hyenas. As the rains end in May, the animals start migrating northwest to the Grumeti River area, where they graze for

a couple of months. Crossing the river into Kenya around July, they spend the rest of the dry season there. In November they start moving south to return to the short grass plains, completing the migration circle.

Pacific gray whales spend the summer months in the Bering Sea between Alaska and Russia, where they feed on small fish and invertebrates. They build up layers of blubber under their skin, adding up to thirty percent to their body weight. This extra blubber serves as insulation and stored food for the long swim south to their warm winter waters off Baja California (the Mexican state). It's a twelve-thousand-mile round trip each year, one of the longest migrations for mammals.

How do these animals know where they can find a hospitable climate? For some of the migrants, we could imagine that each generation learns about the migration because they were a part of it, like the baby wildebeest, who goes on the migration with its mother.

However, some migrations don't occur every generation. Monarch butterflies spend several generations in the north, and the generation hatching in late summer develops specifically

for the journey south. This generation has never made the journey, and all the butterflies who did are dead. Yet somehow the information about how to navigate to the wintering sites gets passed down for several generations.

How do migrators find their way? Science has yet to find a clear answer. The monarch apparently calculates its location from the sun's position and the time of day. Birds seem to navigate by the sun and stars. Some birds have magnetic sensors in their ears, allowing them to navigate by the earth's magnetic field. Some scientists believe birds can smell their way.

Some birds switch their diet from bugs to berries before migrating. Scientists believe the antioxidants and other nutrients in the berries help them prepare for the long migration flight.

There is much in the world of wildlife that is not well understood by science. The amazing strength and navigation skills of migrating species show the greatness of the Creator.

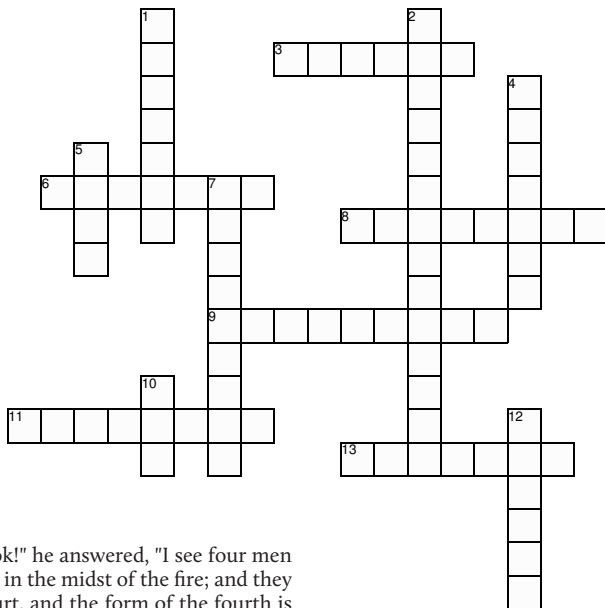
*"Even the stork in the heavens knows her appointed times; and the turtledove, the swift, and the swallow observe the time of their coming. But My people do not know the judgment of the LORD"* (Jeremiah 8:7). ~

*Some birds have magnetic sensors in their ears, allowing them to navigate by the earth's magnetic field.*



# Our God Is Able

Crossword Puzzle Based on Daniel 3



## Down

1. "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, \_\_\_\_ in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" (3:25).

2. \_\_\_\_ the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon (3:1).

4. These three men, Shadrach, \_\_\_\_, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace (3:23).

5. Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and \_\_\_\_, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego (3:13).

7. And he \_\_\_\_ certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace (3:20).

10. "If that is the case, our \_\_\_\_ whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king" (3:17).

12. Therefore, because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire \_\_\_\_ those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego (3:22).

## Across

3. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to \_\_\_\_ you in this matter" (3:16).

6. "Whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery \_\_\_\_" (3:6).

8. "\_\_\_\_, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you." (3:12).

9. "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and \_\_\_\_, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?" (3:14).

11. The king \_\_\_\_ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon (3:30).

13. "But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we \_\_\_\_ the gold image which you have set up" (3:18).

Created on TheTeachersCorner.net Crossword Maker. Clues taken from the NKJV.



# Free on the Inside

Prisoners encourage Prisoners

## Closer Walk With Thee

No longer in pain,  
Set free from my chain,  
With hands lifted high,  
Lord, I praise Your name.

Comprehending Your love  
As I'm looking above,  
I thank you, gracious Father  
For giving Your Son.

Your death set me free;  
You arose on day three.  
When I trust in You,  
Faith carries me through.

With a lamp for my feet  
And a light on my path,  
I'll reach that golden shore, Lord,  
And meet You at last.

Your forgiveness is true;  
Walking closer to You,  
Following Your footsteps,  
I'm learning to do.

Brandi Lawley, Adamsville Jail, Adamsville, AL



# The Journey

We all endure this journey,  
God's gift to us called life,  
Using the Word of God  
To help us get through the strife.

And now on this great journey,  
You've really yet to perceive  
The truth of all God's blessings,  
That you by His love receive.

Your worst can be in the past,  
Repent, believe as well;  
The best can be straight ahead,  
That God's grace will tell.

Let Scripture be your blueprint;  
Thank God for a better way.  
For you to be redeemed,  
He gave His Son to pay.

The Lord wants to bless you,  
That you may praise Him and grow—  
Your walk will be rewarding,  
His wisdom you can know.

Understanding His will and undying love—  
The message that He brought:  
Hope for lost souls, the broken hearted,  
All those whom sin has caught.

So let your journey continue,  
To ever-higher ground,  
Above all earthly pleasures—  
You now are heaven-bound! Selah.

Holbert E. Bridgeman, East Arkansas Regional Unit, Marianna, AK



# TESTIMONY OF DENNIS HOLLERAN

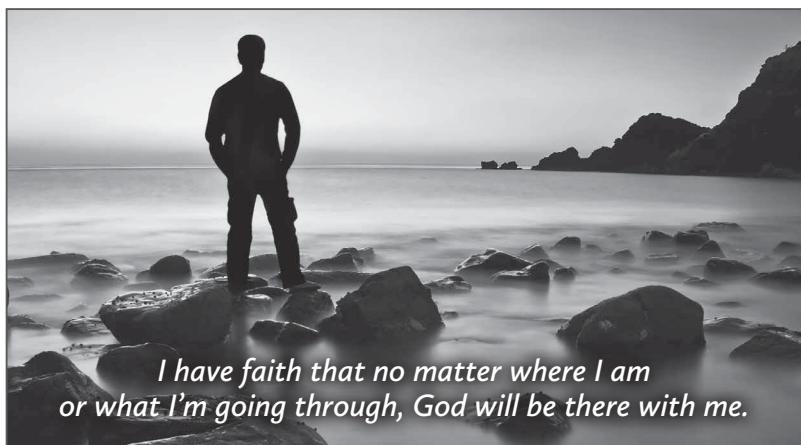
Hillsborough County Jail, Tampa, Florida

**M**y name is Dennis Holleran. I am twenty-one years old, and I was born in Key West, Florida and raised in Tampa. I have always wanted to be part of God's army, but I let drugs and alcohol blind me to the truth and to the importance of my spiritual life. I tried over and over to stay away from drugs and alcohol, but I couldn't seem to shake the addiction.

One day I was involved in a car accident at a speed of more than one hundred miles per hour. Somehow, I survived it. When I woke up in the hospital,

I knew God must have a purpose for me and that I needed to get it together. So I cried and prayed, telling God how much I needed Him and pleading for Him to forgive and change me. From that day on, any time I need comfort, God has comforted me and helped me stay focused.

I was sentenced to life in prison, but God has held me steady. I have faith that no matter where I am or what I'm going through, God will be there with me. My days are no longer dark, and I know Jesus Christ my Savior will guide me home. ~





# A Blind Man

David Doss, Baldwin State Prison, Hardwick, GA

I saw a man the other day,  
That by his bunk did kneel and pray,  
Giving thanks to God above  
For His never-ending love.

This man was blind and could not see,  
Yet he saw more than you or me,  
For as he did his prison time  
He repented for his crime.

His vision was within his soul,  
Believing Scripture he was told—  
Asking forgiveness of his sin,  
That after death he'd live again.

I saw a man the other day  
Who made me bow my head and pray;  
I felt a tear roll down my cheek  
As my Savior I did seek.

Now each day I kneel and pray  
And thank God that man came my way—  
This man whom I thought could not see,  
Yet who saw more than you or me.

# The Choice Is Yours

In those times of doubt  
When faith is hard to find,  
And you're searching for an answer  
That can bring you peace of mind—

When failure keeps on shouting,  
That you'll never get it right,  
And discouragement has beat you down—  
Not a shred of hope in sight—

You might be tempted to just give up  
And never try again,  
Believing that your enemy  
Will never let you win.

But what you must remember is,  
The battle is not yours.  
It was fought long ago,  
On a far distant shore.

The victory was won that day  
By a King, strong and true.  
He fought not for Himself  
But for me and for you.

He overcame our enemy  
And won back the key  
That unlocked the chains  
And set us prisoners free.

Linda Leonard,  
Lockhart Unit, Gatesville, TX

So no matter how many times  
The devil lies to deceive,  
The final choice is yours:  
Whom will you believe?

The One who showed His love for you  
Was nailed to a tree,  
His heart bleeding openly  
For all the world to see.

He died for us that we might live,  
And live abundantly,  
Not only on this earth  
But throughout eternity.

Only you can decide whom you will serve—  
Jesus, Lord of love, life, and joy—  
Or will you help the enemy  
To steal, to kill, and to destroy?





# New Beginnings

Miriam Rubano, Lowell Correctional Institution, Ocala, FL

No matter what the haters may say,  
Even if the devil tries to lead you astray,  
When you want to win, the Lord is the way.

Be ready for obstacles along your path;  
Every course has its demons bringing you wrath.  
Get your gear on and be prepared to fight;  
In the end, you will flee darkness into light.  
Never lose hope no matter what you face;  
Nobody can stop you from winning the race.  
It is worth the trials, the tears, and the pain;  
No fruit will grow in a land without rain.  
Give it your all to find victory at last;  
Stay focused on your dreams and let go of your past.

# Treasure Chest From Heaven

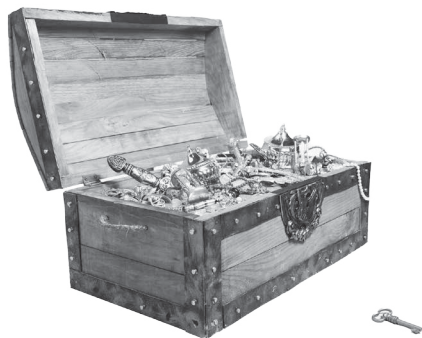
William Ferris Billington  
CCI, Cheshire, CT

There is a treasure chest from Heaven,  
And it's filled with words of love—  
Words of comfort, words of faith;  
And they come from God above.

One by one God placed inside  
Words to help us grow—  
Words to teach us right from wrong  
And to guide us where we go.

You will find within this chest  
Words of peace and hope—  
Words to help you understand  
And words to help you cope.

All the words you'll ever need  
God has placed within this chest;  
You only need to look inside  
And by the Word of God be blessed!



# TESTIMONY OF SHANE ALLEN MIKEL

Garza East, Beeville, TX

**S**ome people here think I'm crazy, not for the things I do, but for the things I don't do. I don't play cards or any other games. I don't argue, fight, or look at girlie pictures. All I can say is "Thank you, Lord!"

I won't go into details, but my last twenty years have been filled with drugs, jail, and a bad lifestyle. Now I'm in prison with a twenty-year sentence for aggravated robbery. "Thank you, Lord!" This the best thing that has ever happened to me. This is God showing me grace and mercy, saving me from myself before I threw it all away!

Now I know the Lord; He is my life. Every day I dig into

His word with devotionals and Bible studies. Through reading the word and prayer, my attitude and outlook on life have changed. I'm happier here in prison than I have been in a long time. For the first time in my life, I'm free—free from bondage and addiction, free from the power of sin, lust, and immorality. It is not easy, but it surely is worth it—no matter how long I'm here, it will be worth it.

One day I may get another shot at life, and I don't ever want to be the same man I was before. So I'll take one day at a time. I'll keep seeking God, searching His word, and most of all telling Him, "Thank You Lord!" ~



**My sentence was God saving me from myself before I threw it all away.**





# Biblical Principles *for Marriage*

John Coblentz

**T**he Bible refers to marriage as a mystery. In Scripture this word has nothing to do with clues and detectives; rather, it refers to knowledge that can only be revealed to us by God.

According to God's revelation, marriage is a union that binds two people by invisible heart ties. God intends marriage to be a lifelong commitment, reflecting the higher relationship of love and commitment between Christ and the church. This is why Paul wrote concerning marriage, "This is a great mystery" (Ephesians 5:32). This also helps us to see why humans, left to their own understanding alone, make such a mess of marriage.

Without God's revelation, people tend to view marriage mainly as a means to achieve their own personal goals. Personal happiness, need, and convenience guide them, not only into marriage, but also back out of it. Against the flood of ruined marriages, Christians

need to defend the levees of truth, both by word and by example. God's word is true, and His instructions are right. A relationship God has joined together must be lifelong.

## **God's Plan—One Man, One Woman, Till Death**

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). This is the first marriage instruction in Scripture. After quoting this, Jesus added, "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:6). The apostle Paul wrote, "For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband" (Romans 7:2). God's standard is clear—one man, one woman, till death.

Such a union requires commitment. Both husband and wife are called to a self-sacrificing, faithful love which excludes all other partners.

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.... So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies.... Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself” (Ephesians 5:25, 28, 33). “...and let the wife see that she respects her husband... the older women likewise... that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children” (Ephesians 5:33; Titus 2:3, 4).

What does it mean to love? Married love is often portrayed as beautiful dreams and feelings of exhilaration. Love does feel wonderful, which is why people are universally drawn to it. However, true love in marriage involves much more than feelings; it demands commitment.

The surface part of love is not only attractive, but also easy. It's natural for a husband to love a wife who pleases him, and the reverse is true as well. However, no one can always have his or her own way. Sooner or later, life brings tests which require the deeper part of love—commit-

ment. New responsibilities add stress, plans go wrong, sickness and accidents occur; and the newlyweds find that love is not all floods of exhilaration. To be in love means giving, working, sacrificing, weeping, losing sleep, caring, forgiving, forbearing, adjusting, and then giving and giving and giving some more.



**“True love in marriage involves much more than feelings; it demands commitment.”**

This is not to say that married love is no longer enjoyable after the first year or two. Later love brings a depth of joy much richer than the first taste; but this rich, mature love is only for those who are truly committed, who have moved beyond the thrill of receiving love to the joy of giving love sacrificially.

The true joys of marital love become real only as we learn to sacrifice, and the willingness to sacrifice is based on the understanding that love is a commitment. This level of sacrifice and commitment are beyond the understanding and power of fallen humanity. “Love is of God” (1 John 4:7). Marital love calls both husband and wife to their knees in the realization that they cannot love this way without the presence of Christ in their hearts. Christ lives His life only in those who are emptied of themselves.

Because of these things, marital love is in many ways an exercise in brokenness and spiritual growth. Indeed, the richest parts of marital love are spiritual, for the source of this undying love is the undying Savior.

### **The Godly Wife**

Now we will look more specifically at the individual roles and responsibilities of the partners in a marriage. What kind of husband and what kind of wife make for a solid marriage? Is this the same for everyone? We will begin by considering some descriptions of a godly wife from the Scriptures.

*“Who can find a virtuous wife?  
For her worth is far above rubies.*

*The heart of her husband safely  
trusts her.... She stretches out  
her hands to the distaff, and  
her hand holds the spindle. She  
extends her hand to the poor,  
yes, she reaches out her hands  
to the needy.... She opens her  
mouth with wisdom, and on  
her tongue is the law of kind-  
ness. She watches over the ways  
of her household, and does  
not eat the bread of idleness”  
(Proverbs 31:10 ff).*

*“But every woman who prays or  
prophesies with her head uncov-  
ered dishonors her head, for that  
is one and the same as if her head  
were shaved.... let her be covered”  
(1 Corinthians 11:5, 6).*

*“Wives, likewise, be submissive  
to your own husbands.... Do not  
let your adornment be merely  
outward—arranging the hair,  
wearing gold, or putting on fine  
apparel—rather let it be the hid-  
den person of the heart, with the  
incorruptible beauty of a gentle  
and quiet spirit, which is very  
precious in the sight of God”  
(1 Peter 3:1–4).*

*“The older women likewise, that  
they be reverent in behavior, not  
slanderers, not given to much  
wine, teachers of good things—  
that they admonish the young*

*women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed” (Titus 2:3–5).*

This is the kind of woman God admires. We can see just how different the world’s ideal is from God’s ideal by looking at what the two teach.

**By the world’s standards, you are an ideal woman if:**

1. You have an attractive face and figure.
2. You dress to accent your feminine attractiveness.
3. You have a tan.
4. You have a charming smile, a quick laugh, and perpetual optimism.
5. You acquire education and skills that allow you to get a well-paying job.
6. You marry a man who is successful by the standards of your peers.
7. You put your own career and life goals first.

**By God’s standards, you are an ideal woman if:**

1. You demonstrate a quiet and reserved manner.
2. You have a morally excellent character.

3. You are loyal, supportive, and faithful to your husband.
4. You dress simply and modestly.
5. You meet the food and clothing needs of your family with diligence and skill.
6. You avoid gossip and slander.
7. You bear children and provide a home atmosphere suited to godly training.
8. You show hospitality and kindness, especially to the poor.
9. You grow in wisdom and use your insight and experience to counsel younger women.

It’s easy to see how these different ideals produce different kinds of home life. In a home where the wife is driven by worldly values, the schedule is likely hectic, children may be seen as a nuisance, meals eaten at home may be prepackaged, and the husband and wife will likely clash over cars, house furnishings, jobs, and any number of other things.

On the other hand, in a home where the wife is driven by godly values, there will likely be more children, more love, more contentment, better meals, more working together, and an at-

mosphere in which the husband and children feel secure.

### **The Godly Husband**

What does the Bible say about the husband?

*“Her husband... praises her”*  
(Proverbs 31:28).

*“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.... So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.... Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself”*  
(Ephesians 5:25 ff).

*“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord”* (Ephesians 6:4).

*“Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered”*  
(1 Peter 3:7).

*“Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice with the wife of your*

*youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; And always be enraptured with her love. For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, And be embraced in the arms of a seductress? For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, And He ponders all his paths”*  
(Proverbs 5:18–21).

Again, the Lord’s ideals for a man are quite different from the ideals of the world. What sort of man is admired in the world today? What do men think is important for their happiness and fulfillment? Let’s contrast the two views.

**By the world’s standards, you are an ideal man if:**

1. You are handsome.
2. You are tall, muscular, and tanned.
3. You drive an expensive car.
4. You have enough money to travel widely.
5. You hold a position in business, preferably with a title.
6. You can flaunt your economic success, with extra vehicles, recreational equipment, etc.
7. You are well-educated and have plenty of long-term investments.

8. Beautiful women want to spend time with you.

**By God's standards, you are an ideal man if:**

1. You resist evil influences.
2. You are understanding, respectful, and faithful to your wife.
3. You are gentle with children.
4. You work hard and honestly to supply the material needs of your family.
5. You order your home with material simplicity, focusing on heavenly investments.
6. You give generously to the poor.
7. You lead your wife and children in the worship and praise of God.
8. You provide teaching and training to help the family grow spiritually.
9. You constantly pursue a deeper understanding of God's ways.
10. You have the maturity to offer wise counsel and encouragement to others.

Again, consider the difference in the home life of the man of the world and the man of God. With the man of the world, there may be plenty of money, con-



**A man of God is marked by love, leadership, and understanding.**

flict, and hurry, but little family time. In contrast, the life of a man of God is marked by love, leadership, and understanding.

For more insights, let's compare the marriage of a worldly couple with that of a godly couple. The relationship of the worldly couple will likely be full of things but lacking in joy, meaning, and fulfillment. The godly couple, on the other hand, will use material things for eternal purposes, and their marriage will be rich in love, security, and significance.

Of all God's precepts for husbands and wives in marriage, the most controversial today may be the submission of the wife to her husband. Let's look specifically at what the Scriptures say on this.



## Freedom and fulfillment are found in pleasing God and serving others.

*“But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God”  
(1 Corinthians 11:3).*

*“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything”  
(Ephesians 5:22–24).*

The submission of the wife to her husband is often misconstrued to suggest that she is of less importance, unequal, and in bondage. The wife of a self-centered husband may feel this way, but no godly and obedient husband will treat his wife this way. Misconceptions about the roles of husbands and wives are rooted in worldly misconceptions about personal fulfillment. A worldly mind imagines that freedom and fulfillment come from doing as we please. From this perspective, liberty is fulfillment and submission is

oppression. In reality, for both husband and wife, freedom and fulfillment are found in pleasing God and serving others. Neither the husband nor the wife has an advantage over the other in God’s kingdom.

The godly wife is not free to do as she pleases, but neither is the godly husband. He will be free and fulfilled only as he understands, loves, and provides for the needs of his wife and children.

However, according to the Scripture, a wife is under the authority of her husband. She is to obey him, submit to him, and support him. The Bible does not make exceptions for the things the wife disagrees with or dislikes or thinks unwise, although there certainly is a place for dialogue and appeals. A wife may also appeal to other authorities, particularly if the husband is abusing his authority. Of course, if a husband asks his wife to do something directly against the Word of God, she, like the apostles, must “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

However, submission goes much deeper than the mere

details of what a wife does or does not do. The core of submission is the wife's spirit or disposition toward her husband. A wife who gladly and freely supports her husband for the Lord's sake gains a freedom which no one can chain. Furthermore, as a wife embraces her role of support through words, actions, and attitude— helping her husband to be the best he can be— she will often find her husband more considerate of her, and she will grow in the ability to respond wisely to specific problems.

The arrangement of loving leadership on the part of the husband and loving support on the part of the wife is so important to the Lord that He has given Christians the opportunity to express it visibly. According to 1 Corinthians 11, the wife's long hair and veiled head and the husband's short hair and unveiled head give testimony to his submission to Christ and her submission to him.

When husbands and wives disregard God's instructions for marriage, much confusion and pain result. Husbands feel threatened and manipulated, and wives feel misunderstood and bullied. Rather than discuss the many ways husbands and wives may fail, let's look

at four principles for working through marriage problems successfully.

### **1. Only those who follow God's plan will experience God's blessing.**

Human reasoning tends to draw conclusions about right and wrong based on the specific situation. However, while it's important to understand specific situations, our decisions must be founded on what God has said. The husband is to lead; the wife is to support. Where he is weak, she can help him be strong, but she can never step into his place. Where she is out of place, he can instruct, encourage, rebuke, love, and provide for her, but he can never step beyond the bounds of Christ's example. A husband is never authorized to force his wife to support him. Again, honoring God's plan is the only way to have God's blessing.

### **2. The failings of one partner place pressure on the other.**

An unloving husband is hard to honor and support. An unsubmitive wife is hard to love and cherish. Therefore, any partner who has a complaint against the other should honestly and prayerfully take personal in-

ventory. “Am I being what God intends me to be?”

### **3. To help your partner fill the proper role, focus on becoming the partner you should be.**

An alienated wife will not respond well to being ordered to submit; but a husband may well win her honor and submission by redoubling his love, consideration, and understanding toward her. A harsh, demanding husband is unlikely to respond well to reminders from his wife that he is supposed to love her; but a husband’s heart may be won “without a word” by the

loving support and godly submission of his wife (see 1 Peter 3).

### **4. Even if they have married unwisely, eligible partners are bound by marriage for life.**

Haste and folly bring hurt and trouble. Too many people today wake up after the intoxication of the marriage altar and wonder how Cupid could have turned out so stupid. Their married life is a change for the worse. What can be done when a marriage has been a serious mistake?

*“When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed—Better not to vow than to vow and not pay. Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error”*  
(Ecclesiastes 5:4–6).



**When husbands and wives disregard God’s instructions for marriage, much confusion and pain result.**

God calls us to faithfulness to our vows. Even though we may have made a mistake in choosing a companion, after marriage we must accept the reality that this companion is now the only legitimate partner for us. Honoring our vows may bring suffering, but God works mightily for those who commit their lives to Him. ~

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# The Candle

*adapted from Leo Tolstoy*

Long ago in Russia, peasant farmers were bound to serve the interests of powerful lords who owned the land. The peasants were required to work for the landlord a certain number of days each week. Some landlords treated their tenants well, while others made life miserable for everyone under their authority.

One nobleman had appointed a superintendent, Michael Simeonovitch, who treated the peasants under his control with outrageous cruelty. He began by forcing them to work for the landlord more days per week than the laws required. Then he built a private brick factory and forced the peasants to do the back-breaking work while he sold the bricks for his own profit.

The peasants sent a committee to the landlord himself to complain about Michael's mistreatment, but the landlord was busy and paid no attention to them. When Michael found out they had spoken to the landlord, he was furious and beat and

tortured the peasants so brutally that several of them died.

Soon the peasants learned to run and hide whenever they saw Michael approaching, as if he were a wild beast. Some of them began to gather secretly



*Michael Simeonovitch  
treated the peasants with  
outrageous cruelty.*

to discuss ways to murder the superintendent. One such meeting was held in the woods where Michael had sent the peasants to clear some land.

"We've had enough of this man's abuse!" said one of them.

“He’s working us to death; night and day we and our wives get no rest. How long are we going to let this go on?”

“Well, what are we waiting for?” shouted a man named Vasili, who had often been flogged by Michael and whose wife had been forced to leave home to cook for the superintendent. “This evening Michael will come out to check on our work; when he starts abusing us as usual, we’ll throw him off his horse, kill him with one blow of an axe, and bury him like a dog. No one will know what happened to him.”

Everyone applauded Vasili’s plan, but when Michael arrived, no one had the courage to act. He found fault with their work, beat several of them viciously, and then rode home without suffering any harm. Disgusted at themselves for failing, the peasants became even more determined to kill the superintendent.

As the Easter holiday week approached, Michael warned the peasants that instead of taking the week off as usual, they would be expected to plow and plant oats. Furious, the peasants gathered at Vasili’s house and once again began plotting to finish off the evil superinten-

dent for good. However, a man named Peter Mikhayeff objected to their plans.

“Brothers,” Peter said, “Murder is a sin. Killing a person is easy, but what happens to the souls of those who do it? God will give Michael the punishment he deserves. We only need to be patient.”

“Nonsense!” shouted Vasili. “Of course murder is wrong, but Michael’s a rabid dog, not a human. It’s a sin to let him live. Being patient will get us nothing but more whippings.”

“Brothers,” said Peter, “This is not merely my opinion; the law of God commands us not to repay evil for evil. If you kill this man, you will think you have gotten rid of the evil, only to find the seeds of a worse evil sprouting in your own hearts.”

The meeting broke up with no agreement, some of the men agreeing with Vasili, and the others with Peter.

On Easter Sunday, there was no work. However, toward evening an officer arrived with orders from Michael Simeonovitch to start plowing the next morning. The peasants were angry, but none of them dared disobey Michael’s orders.

On the morning of Easter Monday, the church bells rang,

calling people to the Easter services; but while everyone else prepared to enjoy a holiday, the peasants under Michael Simeonovitch were going to the field to plow.

Michael slept late that morning, took a stroll around the farm, and then returned to the house to drink hot tea with his wife and daughter, who had been to church earlier and returned. Michael lit his pipe and called his officer.

“Go check on those lazy peasants and make sure they’re working. Tell them I’ll be there after dinner, and I expect to find an acre and a half done for every two plows. It had better be done right, too, or somebody’s going to catch it. And pay attention to what they say about me, and tell me everything when you get back!”

“I understand, Sir,” said the officer, and he galloped away on his horse to do as Michael had ordered.

Michael’s wife, a kind-hearted woman, had overheard his conversation with the officer. Now she approached him and said, “Sweetheart, please remember the importance of this holiday. For the sake of Christ, let the poor peasants go home.”

Losing his temper, Michael slapped his wife in the face, and she ran from the room crying. Michael ate a hearty meal, and he was just finishing when the officer arrived with his report of the peasants’ work.

“Well,” asked Michael, “were they plowing?”



*If you kill this man,  
you will think you have  
gotten rid of the evil,  
only to find the seeds of  
a worse evil sprouting in  
your own hearts.*

“Yes,” answered the officer. “They’re about half done with the field, and the work is done well. They’re clearly afraid of you.”

“Well,” said Michael, “so what did they say about me?”



The officer hesitated. "They complain, Michael Simeonovitch! They complain bitterly. They all seem to agree that the devil owns your soul."

"Delightful," laughed the superintendent. "Do you remember any remarks in particular?"

"I hate to repeat it, Sir, but Vasili said you would die like a dog."

"Oh, that's what he said, is it!" exclaimed Michael. "Fine, Vasili, you'll be hearing more from me. What did Tishka say?"

"He said your back should be broken."

Michael Simeonovitch laughed out loud at this. "So that was Tishka's opinion? We'll see whose back gets broken first. And Peter Mikhayeff—was that fool cursing me too?"

"No; actually, he was the only one with nothing to say."

"What was he doing?"

"Well, it's strange. He was plowing diligently, but as I approached him, I heard him singing hymns. Then, when I got quite close, I noticed a flicker of light, and I saw that he had fixed a little candle on his plow. In spite of the wind and the shaking of the plow, it kept burning brightly. He was wearing his best shirt, and when I came up, he stopped singing

only long enough to wish me a blessed holiday, and then continued plowing and singing. All the other workers were making fun of him."

"Did he say anything to that?" asked Michael.

"Well," said the official, "Once when they were especially noisy, he stopped, and said 'There should be peace on earth and goodwill toward men.' Then he kept plowing and singing, and his candle burned even more brightly than before."

Michael Simeonovitch was no longer laughing. He fell into deep thought for a few moments; then he ordered the officer and the cook to leave the house. Soon afterward, his wife found him on the bed in his room, moaning as if in serious distress. "He has conquered me," Michael moaned, "and my end is near!"

"Listen, dear," said his wife, "go to the peasants in the field and let them go home; then everything will be all right."

"It's too late," howled Michael. "I am lost!"

"What do you mean?" his wife said. "I'll have a horse brought up at once, and you can go out there and turn this around."

In a daze, the superintendent climbed onto the horse his ser-

vants brought him. The road to the field led through the village, and as he rode down the main street, he saw the villagers fleeing in all directions to hide from him. When he reached the far gate, it was closed, and when he called for someone to open it, no one came.

Michael dismounted and opened the gate himself. As he hoisted himself back onto the saddle, the horse became startled and jumped to one side, throwing Michael across the picket fence. A sharp picket pierced his stomach, and he fell to the ground unconscious.

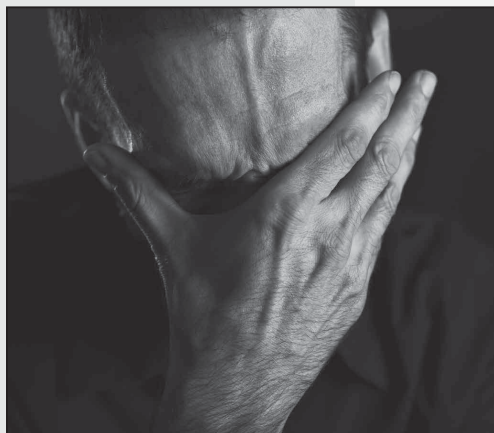
When the peasants arrived at the village gate that evening, their horses refused to enter. Investigating the reason, the peasants soon found the body of the superintendent next to the fence, lying face-down in a pool of blood.

No one wanted to approach the body, but Peter Mikhayeff courageously dismounted, closed the dead man's eyes, and arranged to have the body prepared for burial.

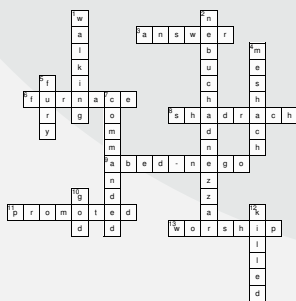
When the nobleman learned how his superintendent had died and how brutally the peasants had been treated, he freed them all, allowing them to continue

farming his land for only a small rent fee.

Thus the peasants clearly understood that the power of God is manifested not in evil, but in goodness. ~



*"He has conquered me,"  
Michael moaned, "and  
my end is near!"*



Answer key to *God Is Able*  
crossword puzzle on page 26.

Forgiveness is important because  
When we don't forgive, we cling to that which was.

The hurt, the pain, the anger, and the sadness will last  
When we clench it within our grasp.

The memories of these will fade away  
When we stop reliving them every day and pray.

Forgiveness comes from heaven above  
In God's unconditional love.

The Lord's Prayer instructs us to forgive;  
In forgiveness is how God wants us to live.

Rhonda Jones, York Correctional Institution, Niantic, CT

## *Send Your Work to Loaves & Fishes!*

Do you have a testimony, poem, or other inspirational writing to share with the rest of our readers? To improve your chances of being published in *Loaves & Fishes*, please keep the following in mind:

- If your poetry uses rhyme and rhythm, the rhyme and rhythm should be consistent throughout the poem.
- The message of the writing should be clear and focused, not rambling from subject to subject.
- The writing should be consistent with the truth of the Bible.
- If you write your Christian testimony, it should not focus on your sinful past or your attempts at self-improvement, but on God's redemptive work in your life.

We receive far more submissions than we can use. Thoughtful attention to these guidelines will increase your chances of having your work published.

**Important:** We cannot return your material.  
Make a copy before you send it.

# Prayer Overdue



My Father, Who is in heaven, I cry out to You  
For wisdom and understanding, and nothing but the truth;  
I try to figure out a way to say to You  
The things I'm really sorry for; my prayer is overdue.

I am truly blessed to have You in my presence;  
It makes me a stronger person through my prison sentence.  
I see a better future that You gave me, through these eyes;  
I try to forget my past, and how I told so many lies.

Thank you Lord, for it is You who restored my faith;  
It's only You who can judge me; for that I'm feeling safe;  
So Lord, please, I beg You, bless me with another day;  
With You in my heart, I know tomorrow will be okay.

Jason Paul Rivera  
Fulton Reception and Diagnostic Center, Fulton, MO



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**“He who does not love does not know God,  
for God is love.” 1 John 4:8**

