

# Loaves & Fishes

Issue 32

A Mind to  
Understand Truth

Tools for  
Truthseekers



# Inside I Am Free

As I sit in this empty cell  
Thinking about tomorrow,  
No longer do I feel the pain  
Of yesterday's hurts and sorrows.

Selfish and ungrateful was  
The life I chose to live,  
Looking for a handout,  
Never wanting to give.

Inside was my anger,  
And the pain I put others through;  
The damage that was caused,  
I never even knew.

Until that day I broke,  
I lost everything in life;  
I was once a devoted mother  
And a dedicated wife.

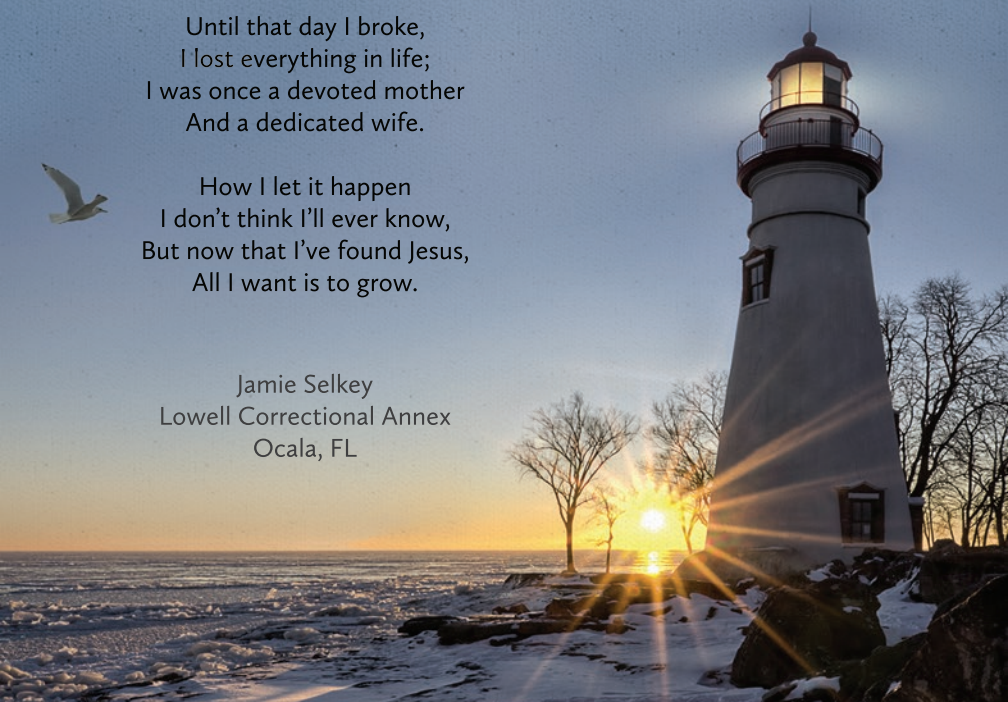
How I let it happen  
I don't think I'll ever know,  
But now that I've found Jesus,  
All I want is to grow.

Jamie Selkey  
Lowell Correctional Annex  
Ocala, FL

To love the way He does  
Is a gift He's given to me;  
I'm sitting in this cell alone,  
Yet inside I'm truly free.

No one can hurt me;  
I have my Savior's loving grace.  
When I close my eyes at night,  
No longer am I in this place.

It's truly astounding, you see—  
The love that one can feel;  
I promise if you search for Him,  
Jesus Christ is real.



*If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.* John 8:36

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.

Subscriptions are free and funded by donations. To subscribe, send us the response form in the centerfold. If there is no form in the centerfold, please check with your chaplain.

If you are a chaplain and want a bulk subscription, call or email us.



PO Box 332  
Bedford, PA 15522  
800-313-1871  
info@lighthousepublishing.org  
www.lighthousepublishing.org

#### The Team

Lavern Gingerich  
Darold Gingerich  
J. Anthony Hertzler  
Mike Fisher  
Mike Kauffman  
Matt Feener  
Bill Fluke

# Loaves & Fishes

Issue 32

## *In This Issue...*

From the Editor.....	2
How Can I Know God's Will? .....	9
You Must Be Born Again .....	12
Truth in Psalms Crossword Puzzle.....	15
Bible Study Guide: Proverbs .....	16
Science in Creation:	
Fearfully and Wonderfully Made .....	18
Tools for Truthseekers.....	22

## Free on the Inside

Loneliness.....	27
Testimony of Thomas Allen Adams .....	28
The Palms of His Love.....	30
Testimony of Amanda Gott .....	31
A New Start .....	32
Corn Cribbs and Prisoners .....	33

## Marriage:

Basic Needs and Common Mistakes .....	34
The Four Learned Fools .....	46

## Inside Cover:

Inside I Am Free  
Seasons of Change

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

If you see "SUBSCRIPTION EXPIRED" on the back cover, use the form in the middle of this book to renew.

This applies only if you get *Loaves & Fishes* with your name on the back.

All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



# A Mind to Understand Truth

Lavern Gingerich

**H**ave you ever faced a dark or perplexing time when you wished God would send you a direct answer to the questions burning in your mind? Have you been confused by the conflicting answers you get from people you trust?

Throughout history, God has audibly spoken to some people, including Adam, Moses, Abraham, the prophets, and the apostles. While God still talks to people supernaturally, is this the primary way He has chosen to speak to us? Is it right to conclude that God doesn't care about us because He doesn't write the answers to our questions in the clouds?

## Searching Diligently

Our goal in hearing God's voice should be learning how to please God, which includes *believing* and *searching* for Him diligently. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for

he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

It is remarkable that when God had the choice to make us robots or to give us free will, He chose to make us free. He knew things would get "messy" if He gave us the ability to choose, but that did not keep Him from making Adam in His image, with a mind that could reason and create. It is amazing how the planets stay in orbit and the birds instinctively care for their young, but a human walking in harmony with God is even more wonderful.



When God had the choice to make us robots or to give us free will, He chose to make us free.

Since the beginning of time, God has been pursuing us. Even after Adam sinned, God went so far as to come to the earth in human flesh to redeem us back to Himself. We can be sure He wants a relationship with us more than we can imagine, yet He will never override our minds or force truth upon us.

Growing in our understanding of truth is a process that requires diligence, obedience, and sacrifice in addition to the help of the Holy Spirit. We can do nothing without God, yet we shouldn't expect God to drop truth on us without any diligence on our part. Only a lazy farmer would lounge around all day, expecting the work to get done by itself. At the same time, the farmer is dependent on God to do His part—provide fertile soil, germinate the seeds, and send enough rain and sunshine to make his efforts successful, etc.

Reading and studying the Bible is one part of diligently seeking God. Sometimes we wish God would answer our questions by speaking to us directly, because Bible study is work and requires patience and responsible use of our intellect. However, it is unrealistic to expect miraculous signs from God if we are ignor-

ing what He's already given to us in written form.

Another aspect of searching diligently is having a desire to actually *do* God's will: "If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority" (see John 7:14–24<sup>ESV</sup>). Imagine that I'm going on a trip and following a good set of directions. If I ignore some of the turns, the directions will immediately become confusing and useless, and I won't reach my destination. Seeking God's truth with no intention to live it out is a formula for deception, but applying the truth you know at each turn in the journey is a foundation for success.

### **Living in the Spirit**

When Jesus was nearing the end of his earthly ministry, he comforted His disciples by promising to send them another Helper, the Spirit of truth, who would dwell in them: "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (see John 14:15–18). Without God's Spirit to help us, we are as orphans, but God has offered to guide us into all truth by His Spirit.

In Romans 8, Paul explains why we must live according to

the Spirit and set our minds on spiritual things: “<sup>6</sup>For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.<sup>7</sup>Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.<sup>8</sup>So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” A natural man is at odds with God and continues to live according to the flesh, because his mind is darkened by sin. He has no power to overcome his carnal desires.

However, God doesn’t override our minds and force-feed His thoughts into us. Rather, He wants to redeem our minds—thoughts, desires, and motives—so they can begin to think God’s thoughts and work as they were intended to. God invites you to *set your mind* on the things of the Spirit and to *begin living according to* the Spirit. Once you surrender your mind to Him, He redeems it and makes it able to understand truth and use sound reasoning.

There are many things that the natural man cannot understand because they require spiritual discernment (see 1 Corinthians 2). “<sup>9</sup>Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has pre-



God doesn’t override our minds and force-feed His thoughts into us. Rather, He wants to redeem our minds.

pared for those who love Him.<sup>10</sup>But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.” Through God’s Spirit we can understand the heart and motives of God in a way we never could before.

Once we are filled with the Spirit and the knowledge of God, do we become immune to false teachings and ideas? No, we will never become infallible, and that’s where our part comes in—training and using our minds responsibly under the guidance of the Spirit.

### **Training the Mind**

“Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature” (1 Corinthians 14:20). A baby is born without sin, with very little knowledge, and with no experience in using knowledge. A newborn doesn’t process ideas with words, but bases its decisions on feelings.



As he or she grows, there are many opportunities to grow in knowledge and understanding of how to use that knowledge. In our behavior we must model the innocence of an infant, but in our thinking, we are commanded to be mature.

<sup>12</sup>For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, <sup>13</sup>for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. <sup>14</sup>But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.” (Hebrews 5:12–14<sup>ESV</sup>).

Babies progress from drinking milk to eating solid foods—from knowing nothing to teaching others; but what causes this process to stall? As verse 14 points out, maturity comes through constant training of the mind so that it becomes a useful tool for understanding truth. Maturity happens slowly, over years of practice and observing how things work. As you walk according to the Spirit, constantly seeking God’s truth and following Jesus in all the practical ways you can, your thoughts and actions will be transformed to be

more and more like God’s, making false ideas easier to identify.

Romans 12:2 reinforces the idea that discernment comes through walking in the will of God: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” <sup>ESV</sup>

Maturity makes us useful in the kingdom of God. The more you are tuned into God’s way of thinking, the more value your thoughts have in discerning truth and strengthening your Christian brothers and sisters.

Mature thinking requires intellect, the ability to reason and understand ideas objectively (basing conclusions on facts instead of personal feelings and opinions). As we mature, we learn to use sound reasoning, which is essentially thinking and making decisions in a helpful, logical way. Here are some pointers to help you exercise good thinking:

**Value knowledge.** Truth comes in the form of knowledge which we must acquire and apply to our lives. A mature thinker is diligent to grow in knowledge (2 Peter 1:5) and expand his or her worldview through educa-

"Infant thinkers" like to defend ideas that feel right, but when they are challenged to defend the truth of their position, they often withdraw or attack their opponent.

tion and observing how things work. "An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge" (Proverbs 18:15<sup>ESV</sup>).

**Love the truth.** Those who will not endure sound doctrine and turn from the truth have little chance for discerning truth (2 Timothy 4:1–5). According to 2 Thessalonians 2:9–12, God sends a strong delusion to those who love unrighteousness to confuse their discernment.

**Defend truth intelligently.** God uses many arguments throughout Scripture to reason with us, and we also must learn to defend the truth logically. When addressing a question about the second coming of Christ, Paul encouraged his readers to follow their reason even if it contradicted a message appearing to come from the Apostle Paul (study 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12). "Infant thinkers" like to defend ideas that *feel* right, but when they are challenged to de-

fend the truth of their position, they often withdraw or attack their opponent. If we want the truth, we should welcome the light of honesty and reason into our discussions and reject the use of double standards, where we judge other people with a standard we don't use on ourselves (see 2 Timothy 2:14–19, Titus 2:6–8).

**Never stop learning.** There is no particular church or teacher with a monopoly on truth, and as humans we all have flaws in our thinking. Until we know everything, we should always have a hunger to learn more of the knowledge of God. Make a practice of pursuing truth instead of defending your own way of thinking, even if it's uncomfortable. Sometimes taking a stand for truth means humbly disagreeing with teachers and organizations you used to admire, but it's the only way to grow in your search for God's truth.

**Hold firmly to the Scriptures.** One mark of a faithful church leader is his ability to give instruction in sound doctrine and to refute those who oppose the truth (study Titus 1). The key is in holding firm to the trustworthy word of God. ~





**Lamp and Light Publishers, Inc.**



## **Free Bible Study Courses!**

Lamp and Light Publishers is a non-profit ministry that specializes in Bible Correspondence Courses. We offer 22 courses in English, 18 courses in Spanish, and courses in French, Portuguese, and German. We want to make these Bible studies available to you.

### **How it works**

Use the enrollment form on the other side of this page to enroll. We will then send you the course of your choice. When you have studied the lessons, you complete the test(s) and mail them to our office for grading. We then send you the next study books. You only pay postage to send us the tests; the study booklets are yours to keep. We give a small certificate of recognition for every course completed successfully.

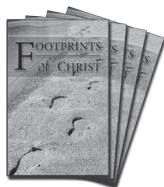
We will continue to send you courses as long as you are interested or until you have studied all the courses.

### **A few of the courses we offer:**



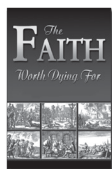
*The First Step:* A basic study of the Gospel of John; requires no previous Bible knowledge. 4 books, 20 lessons.

*Steppingstones to God:* Discusses basic concepts of God, the Bible, sin, salvation, and the Christian life. 4 books, 10 lessons.



*Footprints of Christ:* Practical teaching on everyday discipleship and the Christian life. 4 books, 20 lessons.

*In Step With the Prince of Peace:* A study of the Bible's teaching on love and non-resistance. 4 books, 10 lessons.



*The Faith Worth Dying For:* A look at the historic Christian faith, with practical applications for us today. 1 book, 13 lessons.



**Building Christian Homes:** A detailed study of the home. 4 books, 18 lessons.

**Studying His Word:** Discusses various aspects and methods of Bible study. 1 book, 6 lessons.



**Praying to Him:** Offers helps for a meaningful prayer experience. 1 book, 5 lessons.

### ENGLISH ENROLLMENT FORM

(For ages 14 and older.)

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY USING ALL CAPITAL LETTERS.

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(First name) (Middle name) (Last name)

Inmate number \_\_\_\_\_

Name of institution \_\_\_\_\_

Full postal address \_\_\_\_\_

(City)

(State/Province)

(ZIP/Postal Code)

Year of birth: \_ \_ \_ \_

(Check two boxes) ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Single ☐ Married

Religion (check one box) ☐ Protestant ☐ Catholic ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

If you are PRESENTLY our student, write your student number here: \_\_\_\_\_

Please select only one course:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The First Step                   | <input type="checkbox"/> The Faith Worth Dying For |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Steppingstones to God            | <input type="checkbox"/> Building Christian Homes  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Footprints of Christ             | <input type="checkbox"/> Studying His Word         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In Step With the Prince of Peace | <input type="checkbox"/> Praying to Him            |

### MAIL THIS FORM TO:

Lamp and Light Publishers

26 Road 5577, Farmington, NM 87401-1436

*¿Habla español?*

*Ofrecemos cursos bíblicos gratis en español. Para inscribirse, escríbanos a la dirección de la editorial. Mande su inscripción a: Publicadora Lámpara y Luz, 26 Road 5577, Farmington, NM 87401. Incluya su nombre completo, su número de encarcelamiento, la dirección de la institución, y su año de nacimiento.*

# How Can I Know God's Will?

John Coblentz

Should I go into Christian service or keep my current job? Should I marry—and who? Where should we attend church? Is it right for a Christian to enter sweepstakes, buy lottery tickets, watch movies, buy and sell on the stock market, use the Internet, use credit cards, seek healing through “alternative medicine,” or take medication for depression?

Christians face decisions about a host of issues. Some decisions are major, with far-reaching consequences, and others are relatively minor.

How can we know the will of God? Some people emphasize using “open and closed doors” in discerning God’s will. Others

emphasize an “inner peace” by which they “know” what God is saying to them.

It’s true that God leads through circumstances and speaks in our hearts by His Spirit; but people commonly misinterpret these signs, using them to claim they are following God’s will when they are actually following their selfish preferences.

Following is a checklist of questions to help a Christian make sound decisions:

## *1. How can I best glorify God?*

“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). We should do nothing, say nothing, wear nothing, involve ourselves in nothing that would bring shame to the name of God.

## *2. Do I have any selfish motives?*

“You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures” (James 4:3). How easily our selfish motivations distort our attempts to know and do God’s will!



People may claim they are following God’s will when they are actually following their selfish preferences.

3. *Am I willing to do whatever God says?* “If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority” (John 7:17). A commitment to obey God, whatever His direction may be, gives us a healthy premise for discerning God’s will. (Study Jeremiah 42.)

4. *Is this within the umbrella of God’s universal will?* “Whatever is not from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23). God will never lead us to do something Scripture forbids, or to disobey something Scripture commands.

5. *Is this in harmony with God’s purposes for my life?* “Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? Nevertheless we have not used this right” (1 Corinthians 9:6, 12). Within the boundaries of God’s will for everyone are boundaries God may set for each individual. To know God’s will, I must consider not only what is right and wrong, but also what is best according to what God wants from my life.

6. *What do my authorities say?* “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account” (Hebrews 13:17). God often gives

us guidance through those in authority.

7. *What makes the best use of my resources?* “He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much” (Luke 16:10). God expects me to use my resources according to His purposes, not mine.

8. *Is this God’s timing?* “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way” (Psalm 37:7). How easily we are distracted from peace in the Lord’s wisdom and timing when we compare our lives with others!

9. *Has God opened the doors?* “For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries” (1 Corinthians 16:9). God can and does confirm His will through open and closed doors.

10. *Do I have an inner peace?* “Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you



In discerning God’s will, a pure heart is essential.



turn to the left” (Isaiah 30:21). God can and does speak to the hearts of those who have learned to recognize His voice.

In discerning God’s will, a pure heart is essential. That is why the last two points above should be considered only after all the others. Open doors and inner peace can be subject to our own interpretation, so if we depend on those alone, we may convince ourselves God is show-

ing us His will when really we are following our own desires. We can safely assume that when we truly want to know God’s will, He will show it to us.

Although knowing God’s will is important, *doing* His will is the mark of true wisdom. “And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:17). ~

Copyright Christian Light Publications. Used by permission.

---



## *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.

# YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN

.....

## John 3:1-21

Mike Fisher

**I**n a conversation with a man named Nicodemus, Jesus made this absolute statement: “You must be born again.” Jesus made it clear that one must be born again in order to see and enter the kingdom of God. This new birth is like the “username and password” into His kingdom; without it, you cannot access the good news of Jesus.

### **Is it necessary to be born again?**

*Must* is not a comfortable word. It is not flexible; it is not a suggestion.

Our world has different kinds of laws. Some are arbitrary, such as the speed limit. Such laws can be changed at any time. But there are other laws that cannot be changed, because they are not made-up rules; rather, they *reflect reality*. The laws of nature are in this category. The law of gravity, for instance, is not an arbitrary rule anyone can ignore or change; it is a reality of the natural world that we all must respect if we want to stay alive.

The law of Christ is that one *must* be born again to enter His kingdom. This rule is like the laws of nature; it reflects reality. You *cannot* see the kingdom of God *unless* you are born again.

The phrase “to be born again” describes the transformation that happens through repentance, belief in Jesus, the filling of the Holy Spirit, and baptism. It is such a powerful metaphor that it is one of the most common expressions used to describe becoming a Christian.

Jesus said, “<sup>3</sup>Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus did not understand him, and Jesus said again, “<sup>5</sup>Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Again in verse 7 He said, “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’” Three times Jesus said this as emphatically as He could. For those who want to enter the kingdom of God, there is no alternative to being “born again.”

## Why must we be born again?

Here is the primary reason Jesus gave Nicodemus: “<sup>5</sup>Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup>That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”

The kind of person you are when you are born is the kind of person you remain. That’s what Jesus refers to with the words “that which is born of the flesh is flesh.” This “flesh” is our physical body. Each of us had a physical or “fleshly” birth from our physical mother. From our mother and father we inherited our human nature, and everything that includes.

According to Jesus, if we have only been born “of the flesh,”

we will live according to the flesh, and we will not inherit the kingdom of God. However, if we have been born “of the Spirit,” we will live according to the Spirit, and we will see and enter God’s kingdom. Paul said, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). We must personally receive God’s nature through a new, spiritual birth.

Here is another reason we must be born again: we need to be saved. Jesus said, “<sup>17</sup>God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” We humans are in trouble because of our evil practices. Sin brings condemnation, judgment, and death. Being born again allows us to be saved from sin and its consequences.

## What does it mean to be born again?

Nicodemus asked, “<sup>4</sup>How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Later he asked, “<sup>9</sup>How can these things be?” These are good questions.

Jesus answered by saying, “<sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it wish-



Like the wind, the new birth  
has effects you can see.

es, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” This tells us something about being born again: it is not something you can see with your eyes as you can a physical birth. However, like the wind, the new birth has effects you can see.

Jesus explained specifically what it means to be born again. <sup>14</sup>“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that *whoever believes in Him* should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whoever believes in Him* should not perish but have everlasting life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. <sup>18</sup>*He who believes in Him* is not condemned.”

Finally, He said: <sup>21</sup>“He who does the truth *comes to the light*, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” What does it mean to “come to the light”? It means to open one’s life to God and other Christians, with nothing to hide. Belief in Jesus is not meant to be experienced alone. Public



Believing in Jesus means  
being dedicated  
to a life of loving, faithful  
obedience to Him.

confession and baptism are part of the new birth.

In short, being born again means believing in Jesus. Believing in Jesus does not mean mere agreement with a certain creed or set of facts. It does not mean the repetition of a prayer or other formula, or performing certain good deeds. Believing in Jesus means accepting His entire message of good news. Believing in Jesus means being dedicated to a life of loving, faithful obedience to Him. This sincere faith is what brings new birth.

### **What is the alternative to being born again?**

Jesus presented being born again as a choice. He said, “He who does not believe is condemned already.” The alter-



native to coming to the light is loving darkness because one's deeds are evil. "Everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."

The opposite of eternal life is eternal death. The opposite of God's kingdom is the kingdom of Satan, the world, and all who refuse to serve God. One who rejects the new birth will have a

life of selfishness and sin instead of faith, love, and obedience. Finally, the alternative to being born again is an unthinkable eternity of separation from God.

At the heart of it, being born again comes down to believing in Jesus Christ with all your heart. If you obey the call to believe in Jesus Christ, you will certainly be born again into a new life in the kingdom of God. ~

# Truth in Psalms Crossword Puzzle

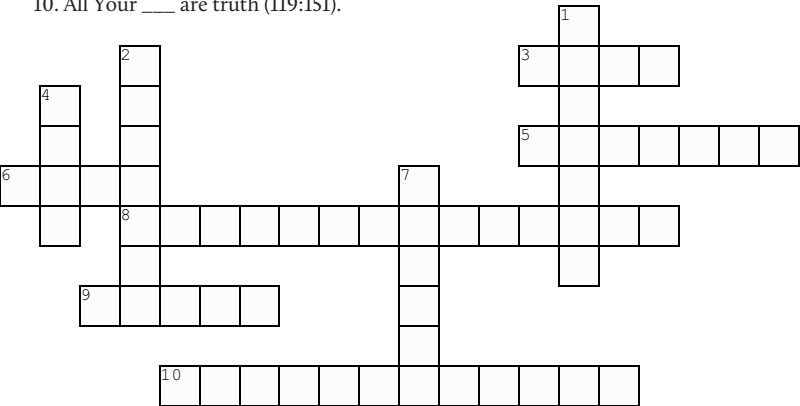
*Clues taken from the book of Psalms.*

### Across

- 3. The \_\_\_\_ of the LORD is right (33:4).
- 5. Your mercy reaches unto the \_\_\_\_ (57:10).
- 6. O LORD, I will \_\_\_\_ in Your truth (86:11).
- 8. Let Your \_\_\_\_ and Your truth continually preserve me (40:11).
- 9. All the paths of the LORD are mercy and \_\_\_\_ (25:10).
- 10. All Your \_\_\_\_ are truth (119:151).

### Down

- 1. Who keeps truth \_\_\_\_ (146:6).
- 2. His truth shall be your shield and \_\_\_\_ (91:4).
- 4. The LORD is \_\_\_\_ to all who call upon Him (145:18).
- 7. Righteousness and peace have \_\_\_\_ (85:10).



# Let's Study... Proverbs

by Mike Fisher



- **Proverbs** is the 20<sup>th</sup> book of the Bible and of the Old Testament.
- **Author and Audience.** Proverbs is a collection of proverbs (short, memorable wise sayings) written primarily by the Jewish King Solomon, and by several others.
- **Time of Writing.** Solomon ruled Israel about 950 years before the time of Jesus Christ. The compilation of these proverbs likely occurred over the next 150 years and was completed around 700 B.C.
- **Historical Context.** Solomon was the son and successor of the well-known Jewish king David. At the beginning of his reign, when God asked him what he desired, Solomon asked God for the gift of wisdom and knowledge. God's extraordinary answer to this request is demonstrated in the book of Proverbs. Solomon's practical wisdom became so well-known that during his lifetime his fame spread not only throughout Israel, but also to other nations. "Men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon" (1 Kings 4:34).
- **Summary.** The book of Proverbs teaches believers how to live skillfully by relying on God's wisdom. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7). From its many statements of common sense to its practical guidelines for life's challenging situations, Proverbs offers a broad range of instructions for everyone. In Proverbs, wisdom is not treated as mere theoretical information but as knowledge that works in real life.

From sexual purity to overeating to guarding one's speech, Proverbs addresses life's key issues. Proverbs helps the reader avoid traps that ensnare others, and to enjoy life as God meant it to be lived.

- **Themes.** The fear of the Lord is the prominent theme of Proverbs. Cause and effect in the moral realm is a repeated message. Wisdom

and folly are constantly pitted against one another. (Each is personified as a woman at different points in the book.)

- **Book Outline**

- I. Words of wisdom for the young (1–9)
- II. The proverbs of Solomon (10:1–22:16)
- III. Words for the wise leader (22:17–24:34)
- IV. More proverbs of Solomon, Hezekiah’s collection (25–29)
- V. The sayings of Agur (30)
- VI. The sayings of Lemuel (31)

- **Key Verses**

- » “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (3:5–6).
- » “A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel” (1:5).
- » “Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; remove your foot from evil” (4:26–27).

- **Study Exercises**

- » From Proverbs 1:2–6, list the things that Solomon’s proverbs can do for you.
- » Read the story of the seduction of the young man in Proverbs 7, and list the mistakes he made which led to his downfall.
- » Study the two “women” described in chapter 9. Each of them calls out to the passersby. Note how those who follow their call end up in two very different places.
- » As you read the proverbs, identify which ones expose a particular fault in your life by underlining them in your Bible. Then use these verses as a prayer guide, and ask God to change your heart on these issues.
- » Chapter 31 includes one of the greatest Biblical descriptions of womanhood. The noble character of this woman is portrayed at length. Compare her to the seductress of chapter 7 and note the many contrasts between the two.

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

Answers to *Truth in Psalms* crossword puzzle on page 16: **Across**—3 word, 5 heavens, 6 walk, 8 lovingkindness, 9 truth, 10 commandments. **Down**—1 forever, 2 buckler, 4 near, 7 kissed.



## Science in Creation

# Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Andrew Zimmerman

**T**he human body is a wonder, though it can seem so ordinary that we forget to appreciate it fully. Even David the Psalmist, without the aid of modern medical research and technology, knew he was part of a marvelous creation.

“I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well” (Psalm 139:14).

God’s works within the created universe are indeed marvelous, showing us His greatness even when we understand only a little about them. The human body is a small but complex part of the Lord’s works.

Let’s first examine the human eye. Our eyes are well-designed, intricate, visual receptors.

They’re like cameras feeding visual data to the brain. They focus quickly and adjust color automatically as they flit from near to far and take in a plethora of sights. Two eyes give us a *stereoscopic* image, providing depth perception. The retina, which lines the rear wall of the eyeball, is a superb image sensor, with 100 million rods to detect

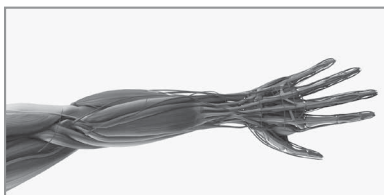
*Andrew has had an avid interest in science since he started studying it in his early years of school. Because of his interest in science and his belief in a literal six-day creation, he enjoys telling others about creation science. He lives in Central Pennsylvania with his wife and children.*



light down to low levels, and 6 million cones to detect color and fine detail. The aperture of the iris automatically widens or narrows to let in more or less light, allowing us to see in both bright daylight and dim starlight.

The really intriguing part of our sight is the image processing the brain uses to make sense of the visual data from the eyes. In our brain, billions of neurons are connected to each other through innumerable paths and connections. Visual signals are transmitted from the retina to the brain by electrical impulses traveling over sensory neurons. As we scan a scene, the brain collects multiple snapshots and blends them, discarding any blurry images and automatically balancing the scene by brightening dark areas and darkening light areas, allowing us to clearly see both bright and shaded areas. Then it blends the left and right data streams to paint a comprehensive mental picture of the scene in front of us. This picture has its colors adjusted to compensate for differences in lighting, and it includes depth information, very bright and very dark zones, and ten million colors.

Hands are another fascinating human feature. They are deft



*Most of the muscles that control the fingers are in the forearm, connected to the fingers through an amazing system of bones and tendons.*

manipulators and delicate touch sensors, yet they also have a strong grasp. To keep the fingers slender and dexterous, but still strong, most of the muscles that control them are in the forearm, connected to the fingers through an amazing system of bones and tendons. This system works so well that experienced rock climbers can support their entire body weight on one finger, a pianist can play many notes per second with each hand, and a good typist can type a hundred words a minute.

The amazing design for our eyes and hands is embedded in the DNA-containing chromosomes within each cell of our bodies. From the moment of conception, the DNA of a growing baby includes the in-

formation for its developing eyes and hands, as well as the colors of the skin and eyes, the height, and myriad other traits. There are so many traits in so many combinations that every human being is unique.

Creation holds many other biological wonders. A woodpecker, with its special skull, stout beak, short legs, and other design features, can peck holes in wood to build a home or find insects. Gazelles can run sixty miles per hour. Migratory birds can fly for days and navigate to

their destination with pinpoint accuracy.

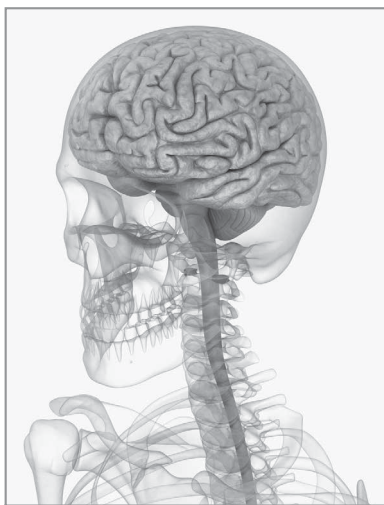
However, out of all forms of life on earth, we humans are special. This is not because of our biological construction; biologically, all life forms are wonderful. Other creatures have eyes. Some animals even have grasping “hands.”

Then what is special about humans? For one thing, with a brain to body weight ratio of about 1 to 50, we have larger brains than any other creature in the animal kingdom. We have creative abilities unmatched even by the smartest animals. Though we cannot create things from nothing as God did, we use His gifts to imitate His creativity by making all sorts of things, from paintings to fine furniture to software to musical arrangements.

Still, there is much more that differentiates humans from animals. One clue to what it is can be found in Genesis 1:

“God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27).

While we humans have some unique biological features, it is not merely biology that makes us human. Beyond our physical intricacy, we are made in the im-



*With a brain to body weight ratio of about 1 to 50, we have larger brains than any other creature in the animal kingdom.*

age of God. Maybe that's why we can be "makers" in ways animals cannot.

God is the source of life. God created humanity and breathed life into the first man. Every human has an eternal soul.

"The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7).

God put Adam in the garden and made him its caretaker. God gave humans dominion over the animals.

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it" (Genesis 2:15).

Humans are created for fellowship with God. In the garden of Eden, God walked and talked with Adam and Eve. Since that communion with God was broken by sin, there is a missing piece, a "hole," at the center of each person. Only Jesus can mend that broken relationship and make us complete again.

God's good creation was cursed by humans' choice to disobey Him, our Creator. Because of sin, our bodies are dying. As we age, our hands become frail. Our eyesight loses sharpness as the lenses stiffen and lose their focusing power.

However, humans have a spiritual nature and an eternal destiny. We have anatomical characteristics and skills that animals do not share, but our spiritual and eternal characteristics are what really differentiate us from the animal kingdom. It is our spiritual nature that gives human life its high value.



*It is our spiritual nature  
that gives human life  
its high value.*

Jesus can cleanse us from sin if we accept His atonement. With our sin washed away, we can have a relationship and communion with God. This relationship is a part of our design, and we are not complete without it. As our mortal bodies age, we can look forward to receiving a brand new body and living eternally with our Creator! ~

# Tools for Truthseekers

## Discerning Truth in a Noisy World

Anthony Hertzler

Jesus has promised to send us the Spirit of truth (John 16:13), who will teach us God's truth and help us obey His will. However, the religious world is full of voices offering different versions of "truth" (2 Peter 2:1-3). How can we avoid being led astray by teachers who falsely claim to speak God's words?

First, we need to believe Jesus' promise that if we seek we will find. We can take that to the bank; if we want the truth and pursue it diligently, we will find it (Luke 11:9-10).

Second, we must have honest hearts that seek to obey what we learn. If our purpose in seek-

ing truth is to win arguments, to justify our own lifestyle, or to appear holier than regular Christians, then we are playing games, and our search will fail. Learning without obeying is a sure path to deception. But if we seek truth in order to obey it, we will grow in wisdom (2 Peter 3:14-18).

Third, even if we have honest hearts, learning and growing in the truth is not a magical process that happens without our involvement (Proverbs 2:1-5). God has given us many tools to help us discover truth, gain wisdom, and escape deception (2 Peter 1:3-11). In this article, we'll be looking at some of these God-given tools, and how to use them to find the truth we need to grow in wisdom, obedience, and spiritual maturity.

If our purpose in seeking truth is to win arguments, to justify our own lifestyle, or to appear holier than regular Christians, then we are playing games, and our search will fail.

### The Scriptures

The Scripture ("the Writings") which we often call the Bible ("the Book") is the tool of truth most Christians think of

first, for good reason: it is full of the words of God, recorded and preserved for us by believers from many times and places (2 Peter 1:19–21; 2 Timothy 3:14–17). The Scriptures are divided into two main sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament shows us who God is, how He created our world, how the world was damaged by sin, and how He has worked with His people to free us from sin and restore our relationship with Him. The Old Testament points forward to a coming age when God would once again live among His people as in the beginning, restoring us and our world to perfection under His just and generous rule (Isaiah 65:17–25).

The New Testament completes and builds on the Old Testament. It records the life and teachings of Jesus, who took on a human form to show us exactly what God was like (John 1:1–14), then died to redeem us from sin and lead us into the kingdom of God, a new society shaped by God’s peace and justice (Acts 2). The New Testament contains the letters and records left by the earliest men and women to live in Jesus’ new kingdom. Their lives and

teachings show us how God’s kingdom works in everyday life.

Because the Bible is so important to our understanding of truth, some people claim the Bible alone will teach us everything we need to know. However this belief contradicts the Bible itself. For instance, Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees that their study of the Scriptures was useless, since they chased personal glory rather than truth and made rules that contradicted Scripture (John 5:37–44; Mark 7:1–13). The Pharisees needed more than the Bible: they needed humble, honest hearts, open to the Spirit of God (Matthew 13:18–23).

Another vital element to help us understand the Bible is *community*. While individual believers can learn truth from the Bible, it is meant to be read, interpreted, and lived by groups of disciples, not by “lone rangers” (Ephesians 4:11–16). Individuals studying the Bible without enough input from other mature Christians have come up with many false teachings. Studying the Bible together not only boosts our understanding, but also helps build relationships with other Christians and teaches us humility and patience as we work together to resolve differences in understanding (Romans 12:3–8).



## Reason

The Bible warns us against trusting our own thoughts. When ungodly people seek to reason out the truth without God, they make serious mistakes and often cause terrible harm to other people (Romans 1:18–25). However, this does not mean that reason is evil; on the contrary, it is a good gift of God to help us discern truth. Like any gift of God, reason can lead us into evil if we use it selfishly, but reason submitted to God can protect us against deception (Romans 12:2).

Building the reasoning skills to recognize false ideas takes time and practice. Studying books of logic to learn the difference between sound and unsound arguments can help you separate truth from error; but be sure your goal is to obey the truth, rather than merely to win arguments.

Following are some questions that can help you use your reasoning skills to detect false teaching:

- Who is promoting this idea? Do they have any reason to lie? Will they make a profit if I believe them (2 Corinthians 2:17)? (Example: Preachers who promise you spiritual rewards if you send them money)
- Do the arguments this person is making actually support the conclusion, or are they designed to distract from the real issue? (Example: The claim that because a certain politician has done evil things, it is your Christian duty to support his or her opponent)
- Does a Bible teacher focus on Bible passages that seem to support a pet doctrine and ignore or explain away verses that contradict it? If the whole Bible is true, it cannot contradict itself, and any teaching that's true must harmonize with all of Scripture, not just a cherry-picked verse here and there. (Example: The popular claim that our salvation

Building the reasoning skills to recognize false ideas takes time and practice.



and our eternal destiny have nothing to do with our actions)

### **Advice**

As we use sound reason to apply the Scriptures to our lives, we need the help of others (Proverbs 11:14). As you consider a decision or ponder a new idea you have found in Scripture, share your thoughts with several people you trust and ask for their advice. Seek out people with a variety of perspectives, not just peers who think like you do. Though you won't be able to follow all the advice you hear, exposing yourself to several points of view may alert you to problems with your idea or suggest a better plan than you would have thought up yourself.

Pay special attention to the advice of people who are living fulfilled, righteous lives, at peace with God and others (Hebrews 13:7). If unsuccessful, unhappy friends offer advice, listen respectfully; but remember that if their way of thinking doesn't work for them, it is not likely to work for you.

Before following any advice you receive, be sure to compare it to the truth of Scripture (Acts 17:10–11).

### **Experience**

Much valuable education comes to us through the events we experience. One important part of maturity is gleaning the lessons from our experiences in order to make better decisions (Hebrews 5:11–14). Experience alone is an insufficient guide for our lives, but it is a valuable help when we combine it with other truth-seeking tools.

### **Spiritual Intuition**

Spiritual intuition is an inner “sense” given by the Spirit of God, warning us away from certain paths or nudging us toward others (Isaiah 30:21). For a person with long experience in obeying and hearing from God, this spiritual insight can be a useful source of guidance. However, we've placed it last in this list because we cannot depend on it by itself. People who are unfamiliar with the Scriptures, who have poor reasoning skills and little experience, and who do not heed advice well can easily imagine that the chatter in their own minds is the voice of God's Spirit (Jeremiah 23:13–40).

The following questions can help us determine whether the inner message we think we are hearing is the voice of God or our own imagination:

God does not contradict Himself, so He will never tell you to do something contrary to the Scriptures or the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels.



1. Does it agree with what the Scriptures reveal about God's will?
2. Does it harmonize with the example and teachings of Jesus recorded in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)?
3. Does it bring me peace and clarity, rather than confusion and tension?
4. Does it match God's past work in my life?
5. Does it harmonize with the advice of experienced, godly people I know and trust?

If you can honestly answer yes to each of these questions, the message you think you have heard is safe to follow and should bear good fruit.

If your word from the Lord does not fit questions four and five—if it contradicts God's past work in your life or the advice of godly friends—be very cautious; search the Scriptures with an

honest heart and spend much time in prayer before accepting it as a word from God.

Unlike points four and five, points one and two are absolutely essential. God does not contradict Himself, so He will never tell you to do something contrary to the Scriptures or the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels (1 Timothy 6:3–5). Many people claim to hear prophetic words from God but live in disobedience to the clear teachings of Jesus. Their path leads to deception and disaster; do not follow them (Luke 6:46–49).

If you seek the truth with a humble and obedient heart—searching the Scriptures, studying the life of Jesus, using sound reason, asking advice, learning from your experiences, and listening for the Spirit's voice in your heart—God will reward you with truth and wisdom, and His truth will set you free (John 8:31–32). ~



# Free on the Inside

Prisoners encourage Prisoners

## Loneliness

Tears of loneliness drop down my face  
In a world of turmoil, in this dark and lonely place.  
Time seems to have stopped; these days seem to drag on.  
I sit here and wonder where my life has gone.

On my desk lies a book I know so well  
(Though from past behavior you could hardly tell).  
I open it up, and what do I find:  
A familiar and favorite Scripture of mine.

For those who don't know,  
And are curious what Scripture it could be,  
Open your Bible and read Isaiah forty-three!  
With a God like that, who could lonely be?

Angela Marquez  
Chowchilla Womens Facility, Chowchilla, CA



Fear not,  
for I have redeemed you;

*I have called you by your name;*  
you are MINE.

Isaiah 43:1b

# TESTIMONY OF THOMAS ALLEN ADAMS

East Arkansas Regional Unit, Marrianna, AR

**M**y name is Thomas Allen, and I am thirty-six years old. I was named after my grandfather on my mom's side, and my grandparents were very instrumental in my becoming the God-fearing and loving man that I am today.

As a child I was abused in more ways than you can imagine, possibly by family members, whom I've learned to forgive. Over ten years' time, I was placed in more foster/group homes and mental institutions than I can count. There I was abused even more by other kids and adults. Yes, I had to learn to forgive them too.

When I was almost seventeen, I went to live with my beloved grandparents. There I finally found love and peace, with firm but loving discipline when I did something wrong.

They showed me more love than I'd ever seen. My Pawpaw was a preacher as well. He taught me how God loves and forgives everyone and wants us to do the same to others.

One Saturday night I took my Pawpaw's truck keys so he could not come find me when I sneaked out to party with friends. The next morning he found me in the camper parked in the front yard, still drunk but OK. He told me that he knew where I went, and knew I was drunk, but was glad to see I was safe back home. However, he did not punish me. I would find out why later on. Instead, he just asked if I still wanted to go to church that morning. If not, he would understand why. I opted to go to church with him. This was the best choice I would ever make in my life. That morning the pastor preached on the prodigal son. That got my attention and changed my life. I gave my life to God after the service that morning.

Now I'm not going to tell you that my life got much better then. I didn't start doing what I'm doing now, which is reading and studying my Bible daily, among other things that are pleasing to God. I got away from



church after I moved out on my own. I got into drugs and alcohol and promiscuous sex. But true to His word, God brought me back to the right path, showing His mercy, grace, love, and forgiveness. I'm glad He still loves me and cares for me and I praise Him daily.

I learned that I was not punished by my Pawpaw because he had something else in mind: God's love. My grandparents showed that to me and taught me much, and I would eventually learn more about loving and forgiving others as God does. I now write some family members telling them that I truly forgive them and love them. I pray for them to find salvation through God's mercy, grace, and love, and to know they can be forgiven by God.

Yes, I'm in prison, but I am free on the inside, and I love this

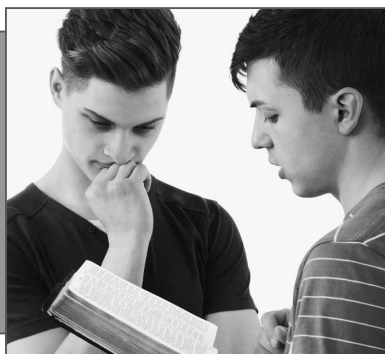
freedom. I now know that I will someday be reunited with my grandparents, who are resting in heaven with our Lord and Savior.

However, while I'm still on this earth I will continue to share God's Word and His love with those who want to know Him. I pray for those around me who don't want to have anything to do with Him, that their hearts will be turned from stone to flesh.

To those who are reading this, please remember the prisoners as if you were chained with them (Hebrew 13:13). We need your prayers as well. Some of us are lost, some are brokenhearted, and some are innocent, but all of us are loved by God. I pray that God will bless you and keep you in His everlasting arms. ~

Respectfully,  
A child of the one true King  
Tommy Adams

While I'm still on this earth, I will continue to share God's Word and His love with those who want to know Him.



# THE PALMS OF HIS LOVE



From His hands and feet  
Flowed cleansing blood  
That drowned my sin  
Beneath its flood.

Its crimson flow  
And the power thereof  
Captured my soul  
In the palms of His love!

The price was high;  
It was costly shed.  
It was freely poured out  
In my selfish stead.

The penalty was paid,  
Now written above.  
The proof? The scars  
In the palms of His love!

Harold Johnson  
Dodge City Prison, Chester, GA

# TESTIMONY OF AMANDA GOTT

Maryland State Penitentiary, Jessup, MD

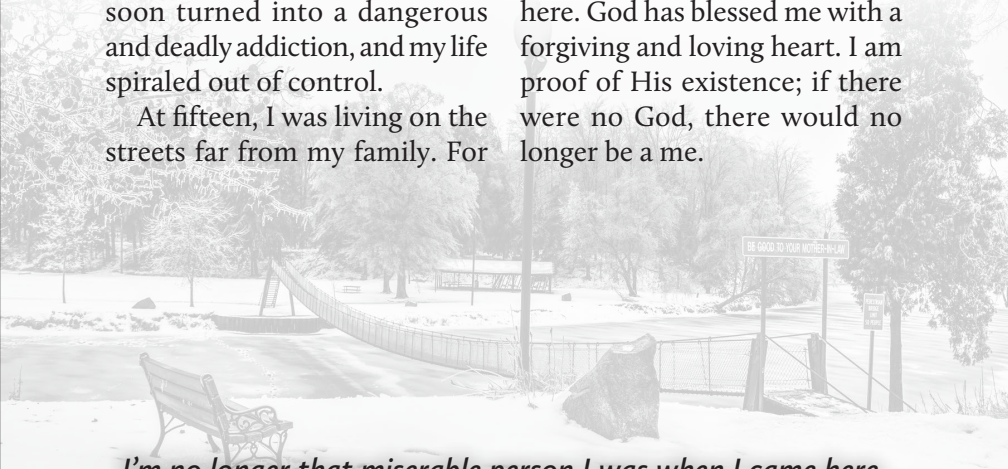
**B**efore I introduce myself, I must first give thanks to the wonderful God above for all He's done in my life and for letting me live to share my story.

My name is Amanda Gott. I am twenty-one years old and serving a sentence in the Maryland State Penitentiary. I grew up in a loving yet dysfunctional household. We attended church on a regular basis; however, none of my family lived by the Word. At a young age I gave into my sinful desires: drugs, sex, money, and manipulations. I replaced church with partying and pushed everything I ever learned in Sunday school out of my head. My sinful desires soon turned into a dangerous and deadly addiction, and my life spiraled out of control.

At fifteen, I was living on the streets far from my family. For

years I managed to survive all the overdoses, brutal beatings, rapes, and black-out periods. I now know that the only reason I lived through it all is because of God's grace and mercy. I entered this prison filled with doubt, fear, and hate. I was a miserable, messed-up individual. Then I was reintroduced to Christianity, and little by little I began to feel a change within me. I started to attend a Bible study and a church. I found out that the closer I got to Jesus, the better I felt about myself and others.

I stand here today a living, breathing, walking, talking miracle. I'm no longer that miserable person I was when I came here. God has blessed me with a forgiving and loving heart. I am proof of His existence; if there were no God, there would no longer be a me.



*I'm no longer that miserable person I was when I came here.*



# A New Start

Johnny Stokes  
Bledsoe County Detention Center  
Pikeville, TN

Battle-hardened, war-torn eyes  
The pain within you can't disguise  
Callous memories deep inside  
Love for most has all but died

Gentle Father, soothing grace  
Holds me in His warm embrace  
Debts forgiven, slate is clean  
Sins are now to Him unseen

A hint of feelings, soon to grow  
Unconditional love to me He'll show  
A fleshly heart where a stone was set  
A friend unlike I've ever met

His big plan for all creation  
The head, the corner of the foundation  
His Son He sent to bear our shame  
So life eternal we would gain

Think about it, your heart will melt  
Gratitude and feelings you've never felt  
Rely on Him, our hearts He'll hold  
The most amazing story ever told

# Corn Cribs and Prisoners

An old, empty corn crib sits alone in a field,  
Neglected, unused, deserted, and crude.  
Can it be that buildings are treated like people,  
Left to age and crumble in their solitude?

Life starts out, full of hope and promise;  
Hearts are warm and look forward to each day.  
Life is made rich, touched by family and friends,  
Walking along with joy in our way.

It's very rewarding to have a family and job;  
There's great pride in always doing one's best.  
Hard work and honesty keep order in life;  
Without them, failure will creep into your nest.

There are always a few who take the wrong road,  
Or are led astray when they should have been strong.  
Their minds wander away from what God wanted for them,  
And they end up being separated for the things they did wrong.

An old, empty corn crib sits alone in a field,  
Its neglect a symbol of the price man must pay.  
Perhaps with time, hindsight, and the hand of God,  
The corn crib will fill, and man will have a new day.

Fred Little  
Iowa State Prison, Fort Madison, Iowa







# Marriage:

Basic Needs

and

Common Mistakes

John Coblentz

**W**hen God created man and woman, He designed them to complement each other. At creation He said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him” (Genesis 2:18). God formed the woman to round out the man’s incompleteness, so that physically, socially, emotionally, intellectually, and even spiritually, male and female would not be rivals, but mates.

Much of the tension and conflict in marriage today, as well as in other relationships, comes from emphasizing rights and downplaying responsibilities. Couples who reverse this emphasis, so that both partners focus on their personal responsibilities, are less apt to fight and more free to serve. Instead of each being concerned with getting their own way, each will be concerned about meeting the needs of the other. This section focuses on some basic needs of

husbands and wives, for those who wish to embrace their own responsibilities in marriage.

## Basic Needs of a Wife

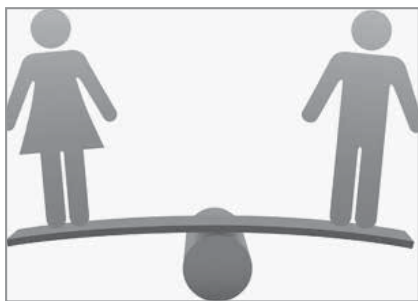
Our understanding of the needs of wives and husbands rests on our understanding of womanhood and manhood and the differences between the genders. Cultural ideas about men and women have fluctuated over the years, and today it is unpopular in some circles to acknowledge fundamental differences between male and female. However, ignoring these differences is both unrealistic and unbiblical.

God made humans male and female, and they are not the same. However, their differences are not differences of value. To recognize that men and women are different is not to say that one is better than the other.

With that in mind, what are the specific needs of a wife?

### **1. A wife needs someone who understands her.**

“Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding” (1 Peter 3:7). This scripture warns against the tendency of a husband to be preoccupied with interests outside his home and marriage and to ignore things which are important to his wife. Every woman has habits, tendencies, fears, likes, and dislikes. In marriage, she feels the need to be understood, and the husband demonstrates his understanding of her by living with consideration toward her. Notice that the Scripture does not say simply that a husband



**God made humans male and female, and they are not the same. However, their differences are not differences of value.**

should know his wife, but that he should live with her according to his knowledge of her.

### **2. A wife needs someone who accepts her as she is.**

This is an extension of the need to be understood. The Scriptures speak of the intimacy of marriage as “knowing” one another. Marriage is disclosure, letting each other know your heart and mind—“the real you.” Such disclosure can be either painful or wonderful. When a husband compares his wife negatively with other women, ridicules her personality, or overloads her with responsibility and criticizes her failure, he sends her a clear message of rejection. On the other hand, an accepting husband, while he may not approve of everything about his wife, recognizes her unique personhood and gives her his support to become all that God intends her to be.

### **3. A wife needs someone who cherishes her.**

Cherishing is another step beyond accepting. Like acceptance, cherishing his wife requires the husband to seek to understand her. Cherishing is really another word for the love a wife needs to feel from her husband. Love is probably the most basic need of a wife in marriage. It is no

accident that the New Testament repeatedly instructs the husband to love his wife. Paul wrote, “So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies... for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church” (Ephesians 5:28–29). The word *cherish* here literally means “to warm, as a bird warms its young.” A wife needs to be understood and accepted as a person. But she needs also to experience her husband’s tender affection. She needs the security of being held close to the heart of her husband, not as a mere plaything, but because he counts her dear and priceless.

We should note here that meeting these first three needs is a cumulative process. Each need depends on the previous one. A husband cannot accept his wife if he does not understand her, and he cannot cherish her if he does not understand and accept her.

#### **4. A wife needs someone who demonstrates strength and wisdom in leadership.**

“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). When the Bible refers to a woman as “the weaker vessel,” it does not necessarily mean she is weaker in every way; and as we noted earlier, it certainly does not mean she is inferior. It does reflect, however, that women are drawn to strength in men, if it is coupled with consideration. Men often flaunt their strength in ways that dominate and exploit women. Such “strength” loses its attractiveness quickly. God intended a husband to demonstrate his strength by protecting his wife and children, by shielding them from hardship and harm, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual, and by guiding the home with consideration for them.

#### **5. A wife needs someone who is faithful.**

“Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame” (Song of Solomon 8:6). Intimate love calls for the exclusion of all others. It includes a healthy jealousy which says, “I belong to you, and you belong to me.” A wife needs the security not only that her husband loves her, but that he loves no one else in the same

way. Of course, there is also an unhealthy jealousy rooted in selfishness. This jealousy demonstrates itself in suspicion and fear, and it can make a husband feel strangled. However, a wife needs a faithful husband, and a husband who understands this need in his wife carefully guards her trust. He does not flirt with other women or look at obscene material. He guards his eyes, his humor, and his heart. He focuses his love faithfully upon the one woman in the world who is his wife.

### **Basic Needs of a Husband**

In many ways, the needs of a husband are the counterpart to the needs of his wife. God made the woman with the man's needs in mind (Genesis 2:18), and He equipped her with exactly the resources to meet those needs. So what are the needs of a husband?

#### **1. A husband needs someone who depends on him.**

God has made the husband responsible to lead the home. There is something about the dependence of a wife which calls out the manliness of her husband. His manhood wants to provide, nurture, care for, and protect. He finds satisfaction and fulfillment in meeting the needs of his wife. Even as the



**A wise wife  
allows her husband  
to be her provider,  
but does not seek to  
manipulate him.**

husband can misuse his strength to dominate his wife, so a wife can misuse her weakness and dependence to manipulate her husband, using tears, frailty, and whining to play on her husband's manhood in order to get her own way. Such "weakness" is as wearisome in a wife as domineering strength is in a husband. A wise wife allows her husband to be her provider, but does not seek to manipulate him.

#### **2. A husband needs someone who accepts him as he is.**

Everyone has a basic need for acceptance, and marriage, the deepest level of human friendship, has great potential to meet that need. At the same time, it offers great potential for rejection. Nagging criticism and

discussion of a husband's failures with others are two of the most common ways a wife signals rejection of her husband. As we noted earlier, acceptance does not necessarily mean complete approval. It does mean accepting a person for who he is, as opposed to fighting that reality, and supporting him in becoming all God intends him to be.

### **3. A husband needs someone who encourages and supports him.**

In describing His intentions in making a wife for Adam, God said, "I will make him a helper comparable to him" (Genesis 2:18). The woman is a "helper." This does not mean she is to tag along behind her husband until he happens to need her; rather, she is designed to be an essential mainstay in his life. She is to use her mind, her will, and her energy not in competition with him, but in union with him, to complement his mind, will, and energy. While the wife's potential to encourage and support depends on the husband's willingness to talk and work together, a wise wife will not allow her support and encouragement to mope continually at the foot of her husband's failures. Instead, she will clearly ally herself with him so that both his

strengths and his weaknesses are improved by her presence in his life. One practical way in which a wife can encourage her husband is by showing gratitude for the good in his life. Her smile, her expressions of thanks, and her willingness to find joy even in difficult circumstances will fill one of the most basic needs in her husband's life.

### **4. A husband needs his wife's womanhood in the home atmosphere.**

"The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands" (Proverbs 14:1). "The older women likewise, that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers" (Titus 2:3-5). While the husband is responsible for leadership in the home, he cannot build the home by himself. He needs the womanhood of his wife to establish an atmosphere of order, beauty, cleanliness, and care. Contrary to much modern thought, homemaking is not dull, servile work for women of low intelligence; it is a full-time, lifetime responsibility which demands creativity, intelligence, and management skills of the highest caliber. The womanhood of a wife is in many ways

the heart of the home, and that is where she can best fulfill her husband. The career-focused wife leaves a void both in her home and in her husband which nothing can replace.

#### **5. A husband needs a wife who is faithful.**

“Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her” (Proverbs 31:10–11). Fidelity is essential on both sides of the marriage relationship. Even as faithful love stirs the sweetest emotions in human relationships, so unfaithfulness stirs the bitterest emotions. There is probably nothing so devastating to a marriage as the realization that a third party has invaded the sacrosanct realm of intimacy. Wives need faithful husbands; husbands need faithful wives. A godly wife will guard her manners, her speech, and her appearance, reserving her womanly charm and beauty for her husband alone. “... in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works” (1 Timothy 2:9–10).

\* \* \* \*

**Success in marriage depends on our willingness to each give ourselves to meeting the deepest needs of the other.**

Understanding each other's needs in marriage is the first step love takes toward meeting those needs. If we focus on our own needs rather than on those of our partner, we may easily stumble in self-pity rather than move ahead in love. Success in marriage depends on our willingness to each give ourselves to meeting the deepest needs of the other. This is the exercise of love, and love is the cement of marriage.

#### **Common Errors in Marriage**

The pitfalls surrounding marriage are many, and the pressures to fall into them seem to increase as life grows more mechanized and streamlined. Below we will consider a few of the more common errors people make in marriage today.

##### **1. Financial bondage**

Today's economy pressures us to buy and hoard and consume. Salespeople assure us that



we can buy things we can't afford now and pay for them later. Too easily, married couples find themselves neck-deep in debt and perhaps only ankle-deep in love. In the late 1980s, the average indebtedness of a 28-year-old in the U.S. was \$66,000. Forty percent of Christian couples were paying at least \$2,000 per year in interest, not counting mortgage interest. One survey showed that 20 percent of "Christian" couples were on the verge of divorce and that 90 percent of these couples pointed to financial problems as a factor in their marriage stress.

What is financial bondage? It is when we cannot do what is right or proper for ourselves, for our family, or for the Lord because of overriding interests or obligations in financial matters. Bondage may come from the pressure of debt, unpaid bills, or business entanglements. On the other hand, it may be the result of wrong financial attitudes, such as a desire for wealth, worry over investing, or a willingness to cheat in business deals. Staying out of financial bondage is possible only by a steadfast commitment to the principles of God's Word and by applying common sense to financial decisions.

### **Consider the following pointers:**

- Seek God's kingdom above all else.
- Be honest, fair, and generous in all financial dealings.
- Value family togetherness and upbuilding activities above financial gain.
- Use your money for the glory of God. You are its manager, not its owner.
- Look for opportunities to invest in eternal ventures, not earthly ones.
- Avoid all material involvements which conflict with your spiritual goals.
- Avoid partnerships.
- Avoid borrowing, especially for consumable or fast-depreciating items.
- Do not use credit cards unless you pay the accounts off each month.
- Never co-sign a loan.
- Pay bills promptly.
- Pay taxes honestly.
- Work hard, live simply, give liberally, save wisely.

## **2. Irresponsibility**

According to the Bible, the husband is responsible to lead out in the home and to provide for the needs of his wife and family. The wife is responsible to support her husband in his work

and to maintain and care for the home. Problems arise in marriage when the husband or wife neglect their responsibilities. A husband who is lazy and fails to hold a steady job, or carelessly racks up unpaid bills, inevitably creates insecurity in his wife and problems in the marriage. A wife who leaves the house in a perpetual mess or who spends undue time chatting, pursuing a hobby, shopping, or otherwise neglecting the home causes frustration for her husband and children.

Problems also arise in marriage when either partner attempts to fill the other's role. Some husbands try to dictate household procedures in a way that makes the wife feel her territory is invaded. A wife may try to control her husband, or take charge of his decisions in such things as financial management and family worship. This role-shifting produces long-term problems, because it leads to competition rather than working together. Many a child has testified as an adult to the struggle of honoring a father or mother who was out of place.

**Following are a few pointers:**

- Discuss responsibilities together. Ask each other to

describe any areas of neglect. Listen. Ask each other for pointers in fulfilling personal responsibilities.

- If you disagree with each other about responsibilities, arrange to talk together with a trusted Christian advisor about the problem.
- Pray about your responsibilities.
- If there has been a pattern of irresponsibility, start by improving one thing at a time. Make yourself accountable to someone for regular checkup and encouragement sessions.
- Write out your commitment to your responsibilities. Be reasonable, but specific.
- Where your partner is weak or neglectful, consider how you can be supportive without stepping into that responsibility. Make a list of suggestions.

### **Snapshot From Life**

Dave and Janet had a shaky marriage from the start. Neither was truly a Christian when they were married, although they both had a religious background. Shortly into their marriage, Dave was unfaithful. Janet didn't discover this until after they both became Christians and

Dave wanted to clear himself. Insecure both personally and in their marriage and devastated by the betrayal, Janet found herself unable to function. She left the house in perpetual disaster. Meals were irregular, disorderly, and unsatisfying. Though Dave wanted to follow God, he had his own problems with irresponsibility. He wanted to have family worship, but the time and atmosphere never seemed right. He wanted to find steady work, but he had back problems, and that never seemed to work out either, and Janet had developed such a jealousy that she felt insecure if he worked away from home.

Needless to say, financial pressures added to their struggles. By each focusing on the other's lack of responsibility, they both avoided their own responsibility, making their problem worse.

### **3. Lack of communication.**

This problem is compounded by the hurried pace of the modern age. Husbands and wives rush in the morning, rush through the day, rush through supper, rush away for the evening, rush home, and rush to bed. Hurry increases misunderstandings as it decreases the opportunities to discuss them. It is unfair to any marriage to regu-

larly let the problems of the day accumulate until bedtime and then try to resolve them. Worse, some couples don't even try to resolve their problems. Married life becomes an existence in the same quarters, a place where communication is seldom deeper than hello and good-bye.

While lack of communication is harmful to the whole marriage, the wife generally notices it first and minds it most. A wife needs to hear the sound of her husband's voice; she needs to have the assurance of her husband's full attention. When a husband is uncommunicative, his wife feels insecure and left out. When he does not give her his full attention, she feels unimportant. The husband tends to respond to these feelings by reasoning with her from his own perspective, claiming she is assuming things unfairly, or that she needs to relax and quit being so emotional. He may be correct that she is assuming wrongly, but he is wrong in believing this is simply her problem. A wife's communication needs are often different from her husband's, and he is responsible for meeting her needs. Sometimes this means setting a slower pace, sometimes it means missing the evening newspaper, and



**A wife's communication needs are often different from her husband's, and he is responsible for meeting her needs.**

sometimes it means consciously taking unhurried time to talk with her.

On the other hand, a wife needs to consider her husband and his needs as well. Sometimes pressing duties mean a husband cannot talk immediately. Sometimes a husband is under the weight of a decision or responsibility that occupies his mind, and he may find it hard to focus on his immediate surroundings.

If talk time is needed in a full schedule, setting a time limit may be helpful. A husband's anxiety level may rocket out of control if his wife says, "let's talk," when he knows he has only ten minutes to spare.

These observations reflect a basic difference in the way men and women process and communicate information. Men tend to process information by thinking about it; women tend to process it by talking about it. So when a couple faces a problem, the husband typically wants to think and his wife typically wants to talk. Understanding these differences can make a couple more considerate of one another (to allow for "think time" and "talk time"), and misunderstanding these differences can make a couple irritable and accusing.

### **Consider these pointers for improving husband/wife communication:**

(Note: in the context of prison, not all these practices are possible. Do your best to apply the principles here as far as possible in whatever situation you find yourself; even small additional investments in your marriage can produce remarkable results.)

- Control your work schedules to allow time together other than just at night.
- As a husband, be sure to take time to discuss issues your wife is facing or issues you are facing as a couple.
- As a wife, allow your husband times of silence if he needs to think before discussing an issue with you.
- Refuse to harbor resentment toward one another.
- Commit yourselves to working through misunderstandings and disagreements.
- Be honest and open. Do not hint at your negative feelings; share them kindly but clearly.
- Do not make important decisions without openly discussing them.
- Postpone decisions where there is strong disagreement. (A husband should avoid overriding his wife's objections in decisions, even when she has trouble stating her reasons. Many godly husbands have testified to God protecting them from a wrong decision through a wife's intuitive objections.)
- Never share information with others which betrays trust.
- Never belittle, rail, ridicule, or nag.
- Regularly express gratitude, commendation, and encouragement.
- Be polite and courteous. Say "please," "thank you," "forgive me," etc.

#### **4. Improper ties with the past.**

One of the most painful problems in marriage is the problem of past relationships interfering with present loyalties. The most common example is where either the husband or the wife is loyal to parents at the expense of his or her loyalty to the marriage. The Bible describes marriage as "leaving" and "cleaving." For a husband and wife to join properly to one another, they must properly leave their parents. This does not mean forsaking parents in a hostile way. It does mean that a husband finds in his wife what he once found in his mother, and that she gives him the loyalty she once gave her parents. In giving sons and daughters in marriage, parents must learn to release them. While giving advice is proper, particularly when children request it, interference in the decisions of married children violates God's order. The in-

terference may come through emotional pressure, bribery, or visiting too frequently. Whatever the distance in miles between the two families, a proper distance must exist in loyalties, so that the couple is free to make their own decisions.



**The following pointers may help:**

- A wife should avoid regularly testing her husband's ideas against her father's.
- A husband should avoid regularly suggesting that his wife check with his mother about how to do things.
- If counsel is sought from parents, a couple should go together.
- Both husband and wife should avoid saying, "That's not how my mom or dad used to do it." The husband should avoid a habit of saying, "My mom always..." and

**For a husband and wife to join properly to one another, they must properly leave their parents.**

the wife should avoid a habit of saying, "My dad always..."

- Neither partner should show favoritism toward their own family over their in-laws.
- A persistent problem with parents interfering should be discussed with them frankly but kindly. ~

## Somewhere in 1 Corinthians 13

*Unscramble the hidden verse (NKJV).*

dna gohhtu i vaeh eth ftgi fo hpyorepc, dan urdesatdnn lla trysieesm dna lal  
wogneedkl, nda outghh i eahv all hfita, os thta i uodl omever uotmnsnia, btu  
eavh tno eolv, i ma tinghon.

---

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



# The Four Learned Fools

Adapted from Panchatantra, a book of Indian folktales

Four naive Brahmins, who were great friends, lived in a certain town. One day, they decided to study hard and acquire knowledge. They would then be able to make money. So, they traveled to a new city and joined a hermitage to further their study. For twelve years they studied very hard and mastered many fields of knowledge.

One day, they decided, “Now that we have finally acquired sufficient knowledge in many branches of science, let us ask our Guru’s permission to depart from this hermitage. We are finally prepared to earn money by applying our knowledge.”

They asked their Guru’s permission, who blessed them for success. They then started to travel, carrying with them their *shastras* (holy books of knowledge). After traveling for a while, they came across an intersection, where the path divided in two different directions.

As they stood pondering which path they should take, a huge funeral procession head-

ed their way. The procession included several prominent people, and they were going to the cremation ground.

Consulting the scriptures of the *shastras*, one of the Brahmins declared, “The right path to follow is the path taken by great men!” Thus they decided to follow the funeral procession. On reaching the cremation ground, the people in the funeral procession stopped and initiated the funeral proceedings.

Now the Brahmins started pondering what course of action they should take next. While pondering such, they saw a donkey nearby. Consulting the scriptures of the *shastras*, a Brahmin declared, “A true friend is one who stands by you on all occasions, be the occasion joyous or sad!” Thus, they accepted the donkey as their true friend. They put their arms around the donkey’s neck and adored and kissed him, after washing his hoofs with water.

At this time, they observed a camel running towards them

from a distance. Quickly consulting their scriptures of the *shastras*, one of the Brahmins declared, "Righteousness marches rapidly!" Thus they agreed that the camel marching quickly towards them must be righteousness incarnate, and nothing else.

Another Brahmin, on consulting his scriptures, declared, "A good man should always lead his friend to righteousness!" Thus they stopped the approaching camel and introduced it to the donkey. Then they tied the donkey to the camel in order to lead their friend to righteousness. The camel dragged the donkey, while continuing his journey.

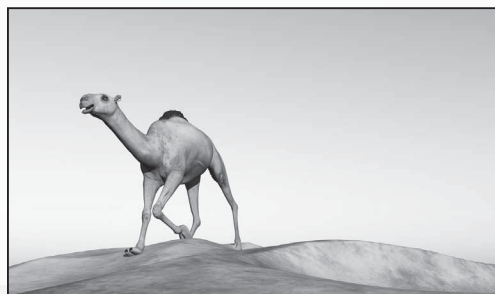
The donkey's master was a washerman, who saw the four Brahmins tie his donkey to the camel. He was angered by this and ran after the Brahmins with a stick. On being chased, the four learned fools ran for their lives and reached a river. They observed that a leaf of a holy tree was floating on the water of the river.

One of the Brahmins declared, "Holiness carries one across the river of life!" He jumped at once on the holy leaf to cross the river. Unable to swim, he immediately began to drown. When another Brahmin

saw him being dragged away by the river, he got into the river at once and caught him by the neck. But the currents of the river were very strong, and he was not able to drag his friend to the bank of the river. He remembered from the scriptures: "When a wise man knows that total destruction is imminent, he will sacrifice half and work with the rest!"

He immediately took out his sword and cut his friend in half. He was then able to drag him to the bank of the river; but by that time he had already died. After mourning the loss of their friend, the three remaining Brahmins continued their journey.

After they had wandered for some time, they reached a vil-



*They agreed that the camel marching quickly towards them must be righteousness incarnate.*

lage. The villagers welcomed them in a very hospitable fashion and offered them different houses to stay. The villagers decided that three different families would serve them dinner.



*One Brahmin was served sweet noodles. He remembered from the scriptures, “Long tactics will surely take a man to destruction!” Thus he did not eat the food, and remained hungry throughout the night.*

One Brahmin was served sweet noodles. He remembered from the scriptures, “Long tactics will surely take a man to destruction!” Thus he did not eat the food, and remained hungry throughout the night.

Another Brahmin was served a bowl of frothy soup. He re-

membered from scriptures, “Whatever is frothy and distended does not last long!” Thus he also did not eat the food, and remained hungry throughout the night.

The third Brahmin was served a tasty food with a hole in the middle. He remembered, “Defects are an imminent sign of approaching danger!” Thus he also did not eat the food, and remained hungry throughout the night.

When the villagers came to know in the morning that the Brahmins had not eaten the dinners they had been served, they laughed and ridiculed them. Angrily, the three learned fools departed from the village. As they started their journey, the villagers went a long distance with them, all the time ridiculing, laughing, and mocking them on their way.

\* \* \* \*

As a wise man once said, “Empty knowledge brings ridicule.” We must apply sound reasoning to our knowledge, or else, like the four learned fools, we will find our knowledge leads us into nonsense instead of truth. ~

# SEASONS OF CHANGE



Seasons of earth, seasons of life;  
Seasons are factors, which can't be denied.  
From winter to spring, from spring to summer,  
From summer to fall, from fall to winter.  
Earth's seasons are ordained of the Lord,  
The orbit, the turning, the tilt of this orb.

Seasons of life are as subject to change—  
From joy to sorrow, from delight to pain.  
Though this may be confusing, hard to understand,  
These changes too are God-given to man.

If we never had troubles, then no occasion to grow.  
If only good times, our need for God we'd not know.  
Tempests and trials serve to teach and to train.  
Times of rest are God-given, but seldom remain.

God remains constant as our seasons change.  
If our eyes stay on Him, then from fear we refrain.  
Remember, He has purpose for all He allows,  
So when you feel forsaken and your life feels bowed,  
Accept His grace, keep the faith, and press on,  
For He loves you without measure; you are forever His own.



Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
Paid  
Bedford, PA  
Permit #10

Burning Bush Mennonite Church

## Loaves & Fishes

PO Box 332  
Bedford, PA 15522

Electronic Service Requested.

---

**“Do not be conformed to this world, but  
be transformed by the renewal of your mind,  
that by testing you may discern what is the  
will of God, what is good and acceptable  
and perfect.” *Romans 12:2<sup>ESV</sup>***

