

Reaching Out

SUMMER 2026, ISSUE 128

WELCOME TO REACHING OUT

a Christian magazine to serve the community. Our goal is to offer Biblical solutions to the problems facing society today.

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Sowing the Seed

by Clay Zimmerman

At our house, we wanted to plant some grass on a bare bank by the road. We tried to do it right. First, we waited for the right time of the year. When spring came in March, we wanted to start, but still other requirements were needed for a good seeding. For the seeds to germinate, the ground temperature had to be 50 degrees Fahrenheit (10 degrees Celsius) or warmer. Next, we tilled the soil lightly to prepare a good seedbed. We picked up rocks and pieces of wood that would not benefit anything. After the seeds were sown, we lightly covered them with straw to help hold the moisture in the ground. We watered the seeds to get them started and kept watering them as needed.

Jesus also talked about sowing seed. He gives the parable in the Bible in Luke 8. He talks about hard ground, stony ground, and thorny ground. None of these types of soil grew good plants. The seed was good, but the conditions were not right.

When he explains the parable, it turns out to be about us! The seed is the word of God, His message to us for our salvation. However, He says that some of us have hard hearts, and the seed can't start. Some have shallow hearts, so the message is soon gone. Others have thorny ground. We start good but making money, hobbies, and other distractions put God's message on the shelf. We are so busy with

everything else in life that God's call really does not become life-changing for us. The seed is good, but if the soil (the human heart) is not right, it cannot produce.

We are glad the parable does not stop there! He goes on to say that some people hear the good news, respond to it, and bear good fruit. These are the ones who are not only saved from the wrath to come but are workers in God's kingdom to help sow more seed.

Sowing and reaping is a principal God created for the natural world and the spiritual world. The rule of nature is simply this: the type of plant that is produced depends on the seed it comes from and the conditions surrounding the seed. Similarly, being friendly, speaking kindly, and respecting others will usually create good relationships. Being selfish, unkind, and speaking disrespectfully to others will make them dislike us. So simple. Plant good seeds, reap good results.

Galatians 6:7-8 tells us how it works in the spiritual (paraphrased): "Don't be fooled, God designed it this way! If we go our own way, do the things we want to do, and live out our own sinful desires, we will be ruined! However, if our life is ordered and instructed by the Spirit of God, thinking, walking, and doing life His way, we will gain everlasting life!" Also quite simple, but so profound! We reap what we sow.

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Reaching Out

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WISDOM FOR YOUTH

Taking a Risk

by Roger L. Berry

Some years ago, I taught school and had one tenth grader in particular who loved to take risks. He would do daring things like trying to see how many stair steps he could skip and still get down the flight of stairs. He especially enjoyed doing stunts on his bike like going up a ramp to see what it felt like to be airborne as he sped over the end of the ramp. Some teased him that he would break his neck if he wasn't careful.

I lost track of this young man for several years but eventually visited his community again. I found out that he was still living in the area and called to see if I could stop in for a visit. He gladly accepted and I looked forward to the reunion. He met me at the door, and I noticed that he walked a bit slowly and with a slight limp. After a brief chat about the "old days," I asked him how things had been going for him since school days. He told me that he had become what some call a "stunt artist." He enjoyed doing amazing things before large crowds of people. Then he told me about his last stunt. As the crowd below watched, he jumped from an airplane and waited as long as possible to deploy his parachute. He had done this several times with no problem. This time, however, something didn't work right, and he continued his free fall. Finally, the parachute opened and helped break his descent a bit, but he hit the ground with a thud. His back was broken along with some other bones, and he was rushed to the hospital. After a long recovery and extensive rehabilitation, he was able to walk again but continued to suffer a lot of pain.

He admitted that he had learned his lesson about stunts and taking such risks. He would

never do such things again, in part because he was no longer able. Such things were really not worth the risk.

Life is full of risks, and it could be argued that most everything we do involves some degree of risk. However, some types of risks can have more serious consequences than others. Many people smoke heavily, realizing, of course, the serious risk of lung cancer. But not everybody that smokes gets lung cancer, so they hope they will be the exception.

There is a risk that is far more serious than falling or disease. It is the risk of living for self, material gain, and the pleasures of this life. For example, people will indulge freely in acts of sexual immorality, risking serious diseases and the regrets that go with such a lifestyle. Neither do they consider the consequences later in life and after this life is over. People fail to realize that refusing to live for God and obeying Him has serious consequences if they do not repent and forsake lifestyles that violate God's standards.

Indeed, not taking God's way is far more than a risk. We have no hope of true happiness in this life and no hope of heaven if we continue living in sin (disobedience to God). We have no hope that we can get away with living for self or that there will be a "chance" that we might not have to face the consequences of a life of sin. Daring to take a "risk" by failing to serve God will have everlasting and devastating consequences. And that is one "risk" that we dare not take. It is a risk that we do not need to take, because *"if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9).





WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

A Workable Peace

by David L. Martin

"That's a beautiful theory—beautiful! But it won't work."

They were discussing nonresistance, the idea that the way of peace is always the wise choice. One man had the idea that nonresistance will not win the opponent's respect but rather lose it instead. Nonresistance will not get you what you want. It will not always win friends and influence people. It will not work.

It is true that force—the opposite of nonresistance—can be very effective. "Some people don't understand nice," and so the government needs to tell them in a way they understand. *"If thou do that which is evil, be afraid"* (Romans 13:4). But there is another side to this for a child of God.

Since Jesus was the one who told His own disciples to turn the other cheek and go the second mile, it is only fair to ask, "How did it work for Him?"

Depending on your viewpoint, it didn't. At least it didn't keep Him out of trouble. Enemies conspired against Him, and when the governor did not want to put Him to death, the multitude shouted, "Crucify him!" When Roman soldiers nailed Him to a cross and Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," what did that win Him? Certainly nothing in terms of saving His life. He stayed on that cross until He died.

His disciples—did they fare any better? They too were men of peace. We read nothing of their picking up weapons to get their point across. Peter in particular had once tried it, but he remembered Jesus rebuking him with the words, *"All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword"* (Matthew 26:52). Peter himself taught the importance of *"not rendering evil*

for evil" (1 Peter 3:9). Peter died a martyr's death, as well as most of the other twelve apostles.

Through the centuries, true followers of Jesus have certainly not crucified others, nor burned them at the stake, nor drowned or tortured them. Instead, they suffered these things. Onlookers might easily have said, "It won't work." What did they get out of not striking back?

They got what Jesus promised: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for *they shall be called the children of God*" (Matthew 5:9).

And again, *"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil*



and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:44-45).

However important our money, reputation, health, and even our lives may be, they pale in contrast to this one reward: to be the children of God. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). This becomes of absolute importance at the close of life, when God is calling His children, name by name, to come home to be with Him.

Of course, the peaceable course has its rewards here and now. "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (1 Peter 3:13). The Christian who courteously informs his neighbor, "Your dog killed

twelve of our ducks" but does not ask for pay may or may not get money, but he will probably have a respectful neighbor. The Christian who accepts paying a fine without trying to make a fool out of the officer will probably win his respect. The Christian who gives food to the enemy soldier who requests it will probably not be shot!

But the Christian keeps his sight above these things. He is looking for eternal gain. "Ye . . . took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance" (Hebrews 10:34).

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Revelation 21:7).

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That the Lord who reigneth above,
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And show us that God is love.

We've a Saviour to show to the nations,
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That all of the world's great peoples
Might come to the truth of God.

For the darkness shall turn to dawning,
And the dawning to noon-day bright,
And Christ's great kingdom shall come on earth,
The kingdom of love and light.

-Colin Sterne (1896)



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THE BIBLE & SCIENCE

Flat Earth: What Does the Bible Say?

by Denton Ford

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro,
and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men,
and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

(Ephesians 4:14)

The idea that the earth is flat has had a resurgence lately. Though certainly not the majority, a growing number of people are promoting the idea. Some even claim the Bible teaches a flat earth. So, what is the truth? Are we being deceived when the earth is depicted as a sphere? Is evidence being hidden? Does it even matter? And what does the Bible really say about it?

History of the Flat Earth Idea

Many people today think that ancient people believed the earth was flat until Christopher Columbus discovered the Americas in 1492, proving the earth is a sphere. As the story goes, people were concerned over Columbus' planned voyage, thinking he would sail off the edge of the earth. Though this is what many of us have heard, it is a myth. At least two thousand years before Columbus, the Greeks not only believed the earth was spherical, but also had fairly accurately calculated the size of the earth as well. Interestingly, it turns out that the debate in Columbus's time wasn't whether the earth was a sphere or not, but about how big it was, and how much empty ocean lay to the west between Europe and Asia.¹

Now it is useful to note that there were ancient cultures that did see the earth as flat, such as the Egyptians and Babylonians. But the claim that the spherical earth is a modern invention is simply a false over-simplification.

The Bedford Level Experiment

One man who had a large part in starting the modern flat earth movement was Samuel Rowbotham. In 1838 he conducted an experiment on a 6 mile straight, flat stretch of the Old Bedford River near Norfolk, England, known as the Bedford Level, supposedly proving the earth is flat. But what did he actually observe?

The premise of Rowbotham's experiment was that because of the curvature of the earth, a telescope mounted 8 inches from the surface of the water should not be able to see anything under 16 feet tall six miles down the river. So, he sent a rowboat with a five-foot-tall mast downstream, where he was able to see the boat for the full six miles. Does this mean he was right, and the earth is flat?

Overlooked Refraction

Not at all. You see, he did not consider the way temperature differences affect light. On warm days, over cool water, the water cools the layer of air above it, forming a divide between warm and cool air called a temperature inversion. This temperature inversion refracts or bends light, making objects visible that are below the horizon. It is a very similar idea to (though the inverse of) a mirage in a desert. It appears this is what was at play in Rowbotham's experiment, and interestingly, Alfred Wallace later repeated his experiment under different conditions and got different results. There is even a photographer

¹ Danny Faulkner, *"Falling Flat: A Refutation of Flat Earth Claims"* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2019) Much of the information in this article is covered in Dr. Faulkner's book in much deeper detail.

who has exploited this phenomenon when the temperatures are right to take pictures of the Chicago skyline from across Lake Michigan. Without temperature inversions, distant objects sink below the horizon, even under magnification, just as we would expect on a spherical earth.

Common Arguments

A common flat earth argument is that the horizon appears flat. Of course, this disregards the size of the earth, which even though a sphere, appears superficially flat from our small perspective. Other arguments are claims of faked evidence for a spherical earth. Often it is claimed that humans have never been to space, that the moon landing was fake, that we haven't put satellites into orbit, and that livestreams from the International Space Station are all staged. NASA is seen as a fake organization trying to deceive us. Quite a lot of flat earth arguments appeal to conspiracy and cover-ups, not observable evidence.

It is important to notice the enormous role of conspiracy in the flat earth idea. If true, millions of people involved in industries like space exploration, communications, astronomy, shipping, airlines, and many others must be in on the conspiracy, actively working together to deceive the world about the earth's shape.

Does the Bible Really Teach a Flat Earth?

Let's look at some examples of passages in scripture that are claimed to support a flat earth. First, several passages, such as Revelation 7:1, mention the "four corners of the earth". A sphere doesn't have corners, so it's argued the earth must be flat. But most flat earth models show the earth as a disc. Where are the four corners on a flat circle? It's more likely that this phrase refers to the four cardinal directions. There are also references to the "ends" of the earth such as in Psalm 22:27: *"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee."* Yes, there are no "ends" on a globe, but is this verse really

saying the physical geography, the rocks and dirt of the "ends" of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord? It sounds more reasonable that this is referring to the people from the most remote parts of the world, not the earth's shape.

Evidence for a Globe

There is a multitude of evidence that the earth is spherical, from the shape of the earth's shadow during lunar eclipses, the movements of the sun, moon and stars in the sky, ships appearing to sink below the horizon at great distances, to the phenomenon of the 24-hour sun in Antarctica.

Implications and Consequences

Why is it important to address this idea? Unlike evolution, it does not directly undermine biblical authority, so why spend time on it? Because ideas have consequences. I have personally observed belief in a flat earth to take people down a slippery slope, leading into more conspiracies, consuming their lives and alienating them from others. I have seen it harm churches, wreck families and take away Christians' effectiveness in evangelism. Often involved is a desire for

"secret knowledge", something more than what God gave us in the Bible, similar to the heresy of Gnosticism, in which only a small, special group have spiritual knowledge.

Many may not take it seriously, but remember, beliefs have consequences.

Conclusion

When encountering new ideas, we should follow the example of the people of Berea, after Paul preached the gospel to them. They *"searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so"* (Acts 17:11). We need a firm foundation for our thinking, and there is no more solid a foundation than God's Word. God has given us all we need in the Bible, including how to be saved from our sin. While our belief about the shape of the earth has nothing to do with salvation, belief in Jesus does. Do you believe in Him?





THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Home Aura

by Caleb Martin

You probably didn't think about your most recent breath. No problem. As long as you are surrounded by a safe, healthy atmosphere, you can dedicate your mind to other more important tasks.

Imagine if you had to concentrate on every breath. Do you smell toxins? Are the oxygen levels too high? What is the humidity level? Any pollutants? Dust? The atmosphere in which you exist is critical, but, ideally, you shouldn't have to spend any time thinking about it. The atmosphere is invisible and easy to ignore, and that's a good thing.

When I grew up, I spent virtually no time thinking about the atmosphere in our home. I would argue, sing, meditate, converse, or complain without much thought. But Dad and Mom shaped the atmosphere.

A family friend once reflected on the interactions that he witnessed in our home. He saw much more than I did. I threw myself into conversations with no thought about how it would affect the home aura. He saw my father patiently and purposefully molding the home atmosphere.

Now I'm a father with young children all around. I understand my enormous influence over my children's emotions and outlook. Parents should carefully shape the home's atmosphere so that children never need to think about it. It's easy for parents to enter the children's atmosphere as an equal and simply react to the stimuli around them.

Lethargic parents that simply "go with the flow" will soon find that the aura quickly bends towards negativity. Conversely, if you stay above the noise and intentionally set the tone, your home can thrive.

This is tricky and takes wisdom. It's good to commiserate when your child bumps his head but as soon as the pain subsides, a wise parent will pivot to a toy or a game. It's good to correct your child when he errs, but soon you will want to resume your cheerful conversation. It's wonderful to enjoy family moments around the supper table but when dessert is finished, a wise parent sets an evening agenda before things evolve into the wild and silly.

Parents often shape their home atmosphere with very simple things. A few cheerful words from Dad in the morning go a long way towards a relaxed and safe environment. A few realistic words from Mom can nip the complaining before it becomes an entrenched mindset. Your next few sounds could set the tone in your home for the next hour. Will it be a few bars of song? Or will you growl about a setback?

This brings up a much more fundamental ingredient of the atmosphere in your home. Are you stressed out? Irritated? Blue? If so, will you let it show? Parents were meant to carry burdens. Your children should see little indication that you are under a load. It's time for you to grow up and manage your emotions—from anger to despondency to complaints, or any other negative emotions.

Another core part of the aura in your home is the expectations that parents create. Children thrive in well-defined boundaries. Parents should set up simple rules, provide ample teaching, and enforce the rules consistently. The goal here should be structure and the long-term good of the children. This is never about a parent's happiness. Rather, this structure should be centered around Jesus. Children should be taught

His values and expected to match them. Christ our Creator set up reality, so He knows the best values for interacting with it. If you want a beautiful home atmosphere, Jesus' wisdom and teachings are the answer.

Also, wise parents set up realistic schedules and wholesome traditions. For example, when my young children wake up, they love to spend their first ten minutes on my lap. A quiet morning with Dad gives them the stability they need to start the day right. Obviously, each home will be different. But parents should be alert to problems in the schedule. If children are regularly out of sorts, then it could point to a problem with the schedule. Is it too chaotic? Inconsistent? Are they going to bed on time? Many of these questions seem simple, but they are powerful antidotes to a healthy home aura. We could spend a lot more time here. Maybe we will explore this more later.

I have plenty of flat spots. One area I think about often comes from a verse written by the Apostle Paul in a moment of obvious inspiration. *"Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"* (Ephesians 6:4). We don't have any indication that Paul was a father. But his writing is poignant. I can certainly relate. I love my children beyond description. But I struggle to relate to them properly. They irritate me when they trot

behind me all day. I tire of their stories. I would rather finish my project than fix their bicycle. Sometimes I lose my temper and talk to them like, well, a child.

But I know better. I see the hurt in their eyes, and I know my responsibility. They can't help that they are undeveloped. It's not their fault that they are children! So I must check my selfish desires, apologize, and make them happy. That means playing with my children when I would rather relax. It means laughing at their stories and adding my own when I would rather ignore them. It means that when they suffer the consequences of a stupid mistake, I commiserate with them rather than scold them. Or, I should say, that's what I try to do. Our home atmosphere is far from perfect because I have a lot to learn.

Children grow. Good parents strive to create an atmosphere that promotes the health and wellbeing of their children as they grow. If children are given a wholesome atmosphere by thoughtful parents, the home flourishes. A flourishing home provides the launch pad for healthy children that are ready to go out and spread the gospel of Christ that this world needs. Parents, your next small choice could set the tone in your home and make all the difference. What will it be?





MONEY AND ME

Get It Now

by Gary Miller

I spoke with a bank teller a few years ago who told me one of the most interesting parts of her job was comparing the computer screen, which told the facts, to the appearance of the person she was helping. Some people would come in looking like millionaires. From their styled hair to their classy shoes, it was obvious that they had loads of money. But the computer screen told a different story. It showed very little in their accounts and sometimes a heavy debt load. Others would come wearing older clothes, yet they had high balances in their savings accounts and no debt.

America is a land of illusions. Perception is everything. You can give an appearance of wealth while actually possessing very little. Marketers promote this, and people are encouraged to buy now and pay later. Credit card companies have also encouraged this instant gratification. They have taught consumers to believe that making small monthly payments after you have taken the product home is easier than slowly saving before purchasing.

But those who are wise will stop and ponder this proposal. Is this really easier? Is it really better to buy a product before you can pay for it? Or is this simply an illusion? We are susceptible to illusions. Illusions are especially effective when we don't take time to consider. This is true when purchasing with credit. Very few people would fall for many of the marketing ploys out there today if they simply took a little time to prayerfully consider.

Instant gratification is an illusion. In years past, Grandfather needed to occasionally buy things just as we do. If he needed a piece of furniture, for example, he probably saved his money. Little by little, he accumulated the needed cash until the day finally arrived when he had enough to purchase the furniture Grandma had been wanting.

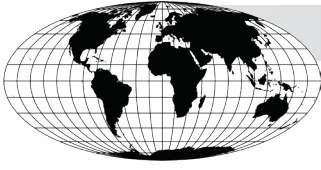
Credit card companies have gone to great lengths to convince us things are different now. The focus of consumer credit companies is instant gratification. Saving, they insinuate, is a historical process no longer in vogue. Not only should you have what you want, they tell you, but you should have it now. And more than that, you deserve it now!

In the book *The Science of Self-Control*, researchers placed pigeons in a cage.¹ In this cage were two buttons, one red and the other green. At certain times throughout the day, these buttons would light up. When a pigeon pecked at these illuminated buttons, a portion of feed would be dumped into the pigeon's feeding tray. When the green button was pecked, one ounce of feed immediately dumped into the tray. But when the red button was pecked, two ounces dumped into the tray after a waiting time of four seconds. In other words, the pigeons would receive more food if they were willing to wait. The researchers found that nearly all pigeons, when given the choice, will choose to receive the feed immediately, even though they receive less.

Credit card companies have proven that we are not a lot smarter than pigeons. Too often we are not willing to wait. Even unbelievers understand the danger of credit cards and the potential they have to create illusions in our lives. But for those of us who desire to build the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, just refraining from reckless use of credit cards is not the solution. The greater problem is the selfish desire that drives us to instant gratification.

May our desire to assist the poor, to reach the lost, and to build within the Kingdom be so strong that we are unaffected by the latest trinkets and illusions.

¹ Howard Rachlin, *The Science of Self-Control*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2002, p. 39.



THE WORLD TODAY

Why Do Bad Things Happen?

by Daniel Allgyer

Tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, and blizzards are all acts of God. When storms destroy homes, property, and even lives, we wonder why. Is God angry? Other bad things happen in the world today—accidents, disease, violence, divisions. Are these things God's fault or mankind's fault?

Many bad things happen because of human error (two airplanes in the same airspace at the same time). Many times, people make poor choices which result in trouble (drive into flood water and perish). Some trouble is simply the result of sin (prisons full of thieves and murderers).

We live in a fallen world where struggle and trouble are normal. This curse came because of sin. In the beginning, God made the first man and woman perfect, but with a free will (not robots or instinct). We can do whatever we want to do. However, we must endure the consequences of our choices. God's law is that we reap what we sow.

Man chose to rebel and sin against God, so the earth is now cursed and fallen and full of troubles. But God has sent Jesus to save us from our sins and restore our soul and spirit to a perfect relationship with Him again. However, the earth is still cursed, and we still live in imperfect bodies. Troubles and trials will continue for our earthly lives.

Bad things are the fault of self, sin, and Satan. But God can use bad things for His purposes. What does God want us to learn from the troubles in our lives?

God wants us to focus on the important things in life. Troubles and trials should drive us to call on God. They should make us slow down and evaluate our relationship with God and others. Many times, a natural disaster causes a community to pull together and help each other. That is how it should be. Trouble can help us realize that we are frail and foolish and need God's help and the touch of other people in our lives.

God wants us to consider our sinful ways. Sometimes God allows trouble to wake us up to our faults and sins. We need to search our hearts for sins and weaknesses. God calls us to contrition, repentance, and an opening of our hearts for Him to reshape and refine. God allows trouble to reduce us to what He wants us to be—broken and contrite before Him.

God wants us to detach from earthly things. Losses or financial trouble should help us to remember that our earthly possessions are temporary. The glittering bank account, the rugged 4x4, the comfortable villa, and even our vibrant health can pass away in a short time. God calls us to set our affection and energy on eternal things that will last forever.

Ultimately, God wants us to love and trust Him completely.

He wants our focus to move from our trouble to our God. He wants us to pursue a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ, His Son, so that no matter what bad things happen in life, good will be waiting for us in the end. Bad things can be perplexing and painful, but for those who love God, all things work together for our eternal good.



