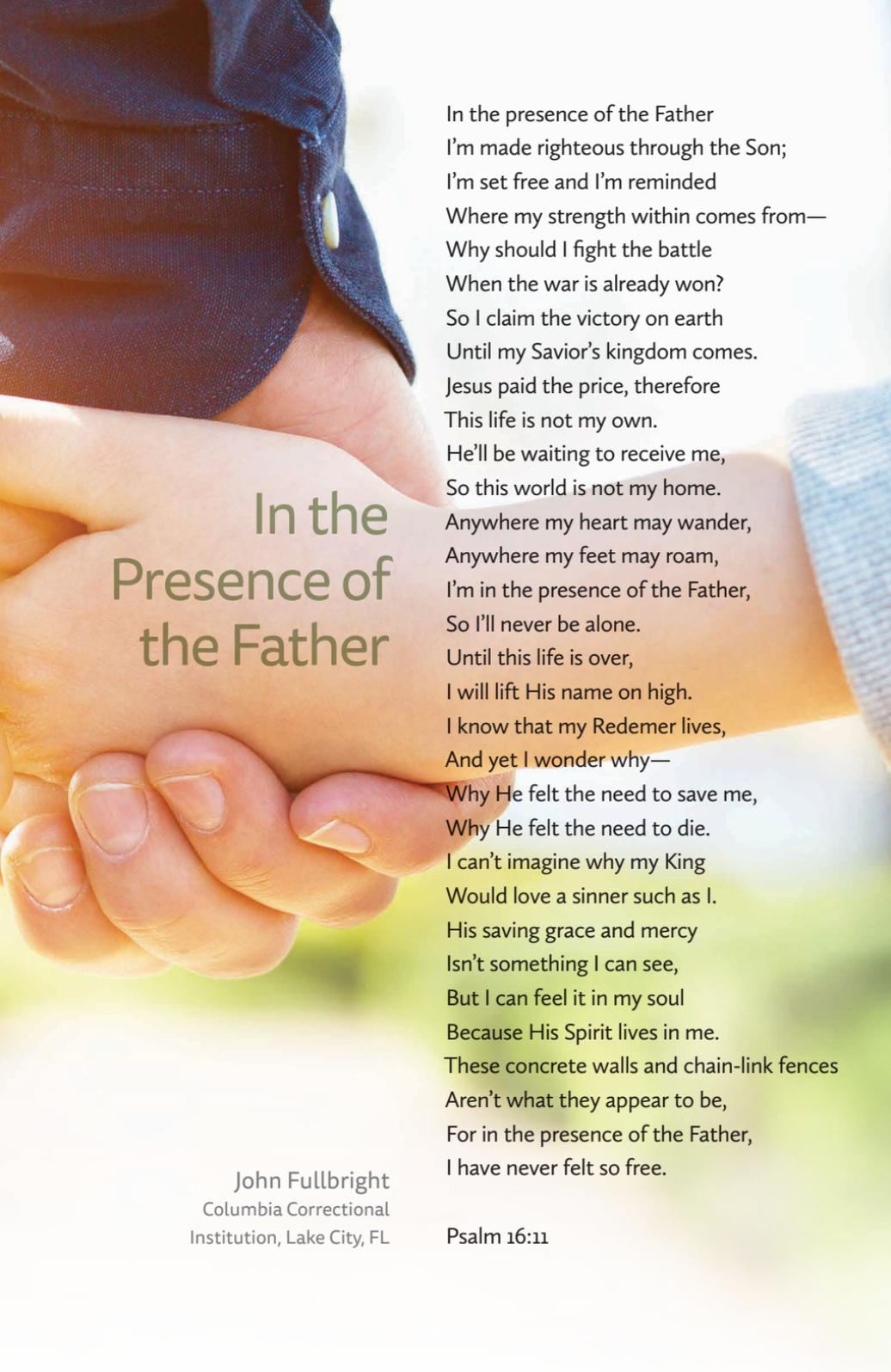


Loaves & Fishes

Issue 36

Bible Studies
in Patience

Puzzles



In the Presence of the Father

In the presence of the Father
I'm made righteous through the Son;
I'm set free and I'm reminded
Where my strength within comes from—
Why should I fight the battle
When the war is already won?
So I claim the victory on earth
Until my Savior's kingdom comes.
Jesus paid the price, therefore
This life is not my own.
He'll be waiting to receive me,
So this world is not my home.
Anywhere my heart may wander,
Anywhere my feet may roam,
I'm in the presence of the Father,
So I'll never be alone.
Until this life is over,
I will lift His name on high.
I know that my Redemer lives,
And yet I wonder why—
Why He felt the need to save me,
Why He felt the need to die.
I can't imagine why my King
Would love a sinner such as I.
His saving grace and mercy
Isn't something I can see,
But I can feel it in my soul
Because His Spirit lives in me.
These concrete walls and chain-link fences
Aren't what they appear to be,
For in the presence of the Father,
I have never felt so free.

John Fullbright
Columbia Correctional
Institution, Lake City, FL

Psalm 16:11

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, subscribe on our website.



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
 Bill Fluke

Loaves & Fishes

Issue 36

In This Issue...

The Longsuffering of God 2
 Somewhere in Psalm 4 6
 Let's Study: Acts of the Apostles 9
 Applying the Principles of Child Training. .12
 The Garden and the Slump 22
 Somewhere in 2 John 26
 That's God's Work 27
 White as Snow 27
 Collar on the Wall 28

Free on the Inside

Roger's Testimony 35
 James's Testimony 38
 Jude 20-21 Word Search 39
 Dwells in My Soul 40
 Lost and Found 41
 Peace 41

Endurance: Crossword Puzzle 42
 Science in Creation:
 The Great American Eclipse 44
 Thank You 49

Inside Cover:

In the Presence of the Father

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.

FROM THE EDITOR...

The Longsuffering of God

LAVERN GINGERICH



In *Loaves & Fishes*, we've been studying the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." In this issue we're ready for *longsuffering*.

Longsuffering is accepting delay, trouble, or suffering without anger or resentment. In the Hebrew language of the Old Testament, longsuffering means *long-nosed* (having nostrils that are slow to flare up). Longsuffering or *patience* is the opposite of *having a short fuse* or *losing your cool*.

As always, God is the perfect example of these fruits, and the Bible contains many examples of God's patience toward people:

- In Noah's time, God gave sinners 100 years to repent before sending a world-wide flood.
- When the prophet Moses was on Mount Sinai talking

with God, the Children of Israel began worshipping an idol. God threatened to destroy them but changed his mind because Moses interceded for them.

- After making a covenant with Abram, God gave the Canaanites 400 years to repent before Israel's conquest of their territory.
- God sent the prophet Jonah to the Assyrians in Nineveh with a warning to repent.

Levels of Persuasion

Longsuffering does not necessarily mean withholding judgment. In fact, that's where God's mercy gets astonishing! Leviticus chapter 26 describes the abundant blessings Israel would enjoy if they obeyed God and the extreme punishments they would experience if they broke His covenant:

"If you do not obey Me... but break My covenant, I will appoint

terror over you... And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you” (Leviticus 26:14–17).

Especially note verse 18: “After all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.” God repeats this warning of seven-fold punishment in verse 21. Four times in this passage the punishment gets seven times worse—making the end 2,400 times worse than the first phase of punishment! The judgment starts with fever and anxiety and escalates to national humiliation and near annihilation. Those who survive would rot away and live in constant fear of attack.

At first glance, it’s hard to see God’s mercy in these warnings, but Leviticus 26 teaches us three things:

1. God longs for a relationship with us. His repeated efforts to communicate His expectations prove His attraction to us.

2. God takes care of His people. He is concerned about our health and comfort, although He may take it away to get our attention.

3. God is intent on restoring us when we stray from him.

He starts with gentle forms of persuasion, and if that doesn’t get our attention, He uses more forceful means until a change of heart results.

Christian teachers often contrast *mercy* with *judgment*, implying that judgment requires God to stop loving. This mindset views judgment as a sign of rejection and hatred, or even anger and disgust. Some portray salvation as Jesus taking the brunt of God’s anger and disgust so we can be saved from God. This model allows God to love us because His “wrath” is appeased, but it fails to reconcile mercy and judgment.

To understand the longsuffering of God, we must understand His mercy in both *forgiveness* and *judgment*.

Mercy in Forgiveness

In Matthew 18, Jesus taught that God freely forgives our sin debt, forfeiting His right to any repayment. This is the deepest act of mercy we can imagine. If God demanded that Jesus pay the entire debt instead of us, which part of the debt did God forgive? If a debt is paid, there is nothing to forgive and no mercy required.

God expects us to imitate Him by showing mercy and forgiveness to those who wrong us. This



God expects us to imitate Him by showing mercy and forgiveness to those who wrong us.

is so vital that Jesus said God will revoke our forgiveness if we don't extend His mercy to others.

The Point of Salvation

The prophet Ezekiel rebuked God's people for saying, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezekiel 18:2). "As I live," God said, "you shall no longer use this proverb... the soul who sins shall die." Throughout this chapter, God insists that we are accountable for our own sins—not the sins of our ancestors—and that forgiveness hinges on repentance (literally turning from our sin).

When the people accused God of being unfair (verses 25 and 29),

He appealed to them: "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions... and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord God. "Therefore turn and live!"

God, the Creator of life, begs His people to turn from their sin, get a new heart, and live! God does everything possible to persuade us that doing things His way is infinitely better than serving sin. Consider His appeal to Cain: "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it" (Genesis 4:7 ESV).

Satan's goal is to destroy life. Satan tries to make sin look enticing, but sin repays its slaves with anxiety, emptiness, turmoil, hate, disease, and eternal death.

When we turn from sin and begin walking in the light, God erases our sin debt (1 John 1:7-9; Matthew 18:27; Ezekiel 18:21-22) and gives us power to rule over sin and escape its wages. Jesus died for us, so that we and our sins can die with Him and we can be raised with Him. When we die with Christ, we kill off the old nature that drove us to sin, and we

are resurrected with a new nature and attached to Christ, as a branch to a vine (John 15:1-7; 1 Peter 1:13-25; 2 Peter 1:2-4). As long as we maintain this connection, we naturally bear fruit for Christ and receive power to say no to sin. This is what the Gospel is all about.

Throughout Scripture, God is trying to show us that our problem is not His unwillingness to save us, but our refusal to turn from our foolish ways and obey Him.

Mercy in Judgment

When we realize that our problem is not God's disgust with us, but our own sinfulness, we can begin to see God's judgment as truly merciful. God is love, and everything He does arises from love. When we stray, He refuses to stand by and watch us destroy ourselves. Nor does He explode and destroy us without warning. As we saw in Leviticus, God seeks to persuade us that serving Him is better than serving sin. Each level of discipline is given with the loving goal of turning us back from destruction.

God punishes us for one purpose: To restore our broken relationship with Him. When that purpose is accomplished, His punishment ends. Unlike us

human fathers who make mistakes, God's discipline is perfect; it is always for our good. The pain we experience when God punishes us results from His loving persuasion working against our selfish resistance.

*When we stray,
He refuses to stand by
and watch us destroy
ourselves.*

The Test of Longsuffering

It takes strength of character to forgive another person who offends us repeatedly, but longsuffering goes still farther by helping the offender overcome their sin. True longsuffering means making ourselves vulnerable by investing time, energy, and creative thinking into the lives of others.

In both levels of longsuffering, God is our perfect example: When we stray, He both forgives our sin and helps us get back on track. Imagine the resources God must expend, arranging circumstances and events to give each person exactly the discipline they need!

Because we become like the God we worship, we need to learn as much as we can about God's longsuffering. Although God has not authorized us to escalate punishment as far as

He does, He has authorized the church congregation to punish (by exclusion) brothers and sisters who refuse to repent of sin. Matthew 18 outlines a level-by-level response to sin, a process that stops as soon as the sinner repents. Parents are also responsible to punish their children. If we fail to see the merciful intent of God's punishment and imagine instead that He is merely venting His rage at us, we will punish those around us the same way.

Nothing builds and restores relationships more effectively than longsuffering.

The discipline we inflict on others must have the same purpose as God's discipline: to restore the disciplined person's relationship to God and other people. Any other punishment

motive is based in revenge or selfishness.

Jesus showed us humans how to fight and what weapons to use (Ephesians 5:25–33). He conquers the world not by violence but by love. He died as a criminal for the Church, His bride, so that she could become holy. Jesus gives us the same powerful spiritual weapons He uses. He teaches us to die to ourselves, return good for evil, and love others. Jesus' way appears weak to the world, but nothing builds and restores relationships more effectively than longsuffering.

Know that God loves you, especially when it feels like you're being disciplined for sin. God is not looking for reasons to destroy you, but is investing more than you can imagine in your success. I hope you are inspired to dig in and learn more about God's nature and His plans for our relationships in the Scriptures. ~

Somewhere in Psalm 4

Unscramble the hidden verse (NKJV):

I illw btho eli onwd ni eapce dna leesp rfo oyu
aoenl o odlr meka em dlelw ni afesytt

Reference: _____



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 23 courses in **English**, 19 courses in **Spanish**, and courses in **French, Portuguese, and German**. We want to make these Bible studies available to you.

¿Hablamos español?

Ofrecemos cursos bíblicos gratis en español. Para inscribirse, llene la hoja de inscripción al dorso y envíenla a la dirección de la publicadora. Incluya su nombre completo, su número de encarcelamiento, la dirección de la institución, y su año de nacimiento.

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.

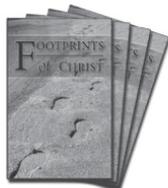
We will continue to send you courses as long as you are interested or until you have studied all the courses.

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.





Let's Study...
Acts of the Apostles
 by Mike Fisher

The Acts of the Apostles, or “Acts” as it is commonly called, is the 44th book of the Bible and the 5th book of the New Testament.

Author & Audience

The book of Acts is the second of two books of the New Testament written by the evangelist Luke. (The first is the Gospel of Luke.) Luke’s name is not mentioned in Acts. However, both Luke’s gospel and the book of Acts were addressed to a man named Theophilus. The introduction to the book of Acts makes it clear that the author was continuing the story he had previously relayed to Theophilus, and so Luke’s authorship of Acts is quite clear. (See Luke 1:1–3 and Acts 1:1– 4.) Luke was a physician.

It is not as clear who Theophilus was. Luke addressing him as “most excellent Theophilus” may indicate that he was a prominent person or government official. If so, the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles may have been Luke’s careful and thorough effort to prove the certainty of the good news of Jesus to an intelligent and open-minded seeker after truth.

Time of Writing

The book of Acts ends with Paul under house arrest in Rome, and so was likely written around 63 AD in Rome.

Historical Context

The events described in Acts took place in the years immediately following the death and resurrection of Jesus. These events occurred first in Jerusalem, then throughout the Roman Empire and beyond.

The Empire controlled the area surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, and was governed by the “Caesars,” or emperors. It was a peaceful period for the region; the time period of 27 BC to AD 180 is often called

the Pax Romana, or Roman Peace. This absence of major conflicts provided an environment favorable to the spread of Christianity, as it allowed safe and efficient travel and communication among the many provinces of the Roman Empire.

The disciples of Jesus moved quickly throughout the Empire during this period, taking the good news with them. This rapid spread alarmed not only the Jewish religious leaders, but also the empire's pagan majority. In one instance, jealous Jews threw the Greek town of Thessalonica into turmoil by complaining of the Christians, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too" (Acts 17:6).

The tremendous growth of the Church was not without struggle. Christians in Judea experienced persecution by Jewish religious leaders, and the Romans at times oppressed believers as well. For the Jews, Christians represented a religious threat. To the Romans, who required ultimate allegiance to Caesar, the Christians' absolute loyalty to Jesus could be problematic.

The Church began as a movement among the Jews, but by the end of the book of Acts, it was a truly international phenomenon.

Summary

Acts is primarily stories, with several longer sermons.

The story begins with Jesus' final words to His disciples and His surprising ascension into heaven before their eyes. This is followed by the coming of the Holy Spirit to the believers and the birth of the Church of Jesus Christ.

The story begins in Jerusalem and moves outward from there. The Church began as a movement among the Jews, but by the end of the book of Acts, it was a truly international phenomenon. Gentiles and Jews joined in worship wherever the good news of Jesus was preached.

Sometimes the spread of Christianity was driven by persecution, as believers moved to safer areas. Other times, it was due to the missionary efforts of the apostles and other Christians. The missionary work of Peter, and especially of Paul, is prominently featured in Acts.

The book of Acts concludes with Paul's period of house arrest in Rome, without telling us about his later trial and eventual execution by order of the Roman emperor Nero.

Theme

The Holy Spirit gave the disciples of Jesus power to spread the good news of His kingdom throughout the earth.

Outline

- I. The disciples' witness in Jerusalem (1:1–8:3)
 - a) The establishment of the Church (2:1–47)
 - b) The Church in Jerusalem (3:1–8:3)
- II. The disciples' witness in Judea and Samaria (8:4–12:25)
- III. The disciples' witness to the end of the earth (13:1–28:30–31)

Key Verse

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Study Exercises

- As you read Acts, make a list of place names where people believed in Jesus.
- Acts describes the conversion experiences of many individuals. Each conversion was unique. Take several conversion stories and compare them. Observe how God worked differently in each of them, but also note the similarities.
- Acts is the story of the beginning of the Church of Jesus Christ. Read the following passages and see what that early church was like. What can the Church of Jesus today learn from the amazing experiences of those first gatherings of believers?

Acts 2:40–47

Acts 4:23–37

Acts 5:1–16

Acts 6:1–7

God bless your reading and study of this fascinating book.



Applying *the Principles* of Child Training

John Coblentz

Knowing that children need teaching, correction, and example does not answer all parents' questions. The following pages describe the nature of children at different ages and provide practical tips for child training. They also suggest age-appropriate activities.

FIRST YEAR

Characteristics

- Baby is dependent and cuddly.
- Communication is simple—facial expressions, sounds, and tone of voice are prominent.

Training Tips

Babies need plenty of love, handling, caring, and cuddling, from fathers as well as mothers. This is the year to cultivate trust.

Spanking may be necessary in the latter part of the first year, but only where parents can clearly communicate their



Babies need plenty of love, handling, caring, and cuddling, from fathers as well as mothers.

wishes to the child, where there is clear resistance to those wishes, and where there can be a clear surrender on the part of the child. Spanking before this time is apt to create insecurity rather than train effectively.

Guidelines for Wholesome Activities

Parental touch, comfort, and care are important.

Children respond to communication—talking and singing.

Parents should care for and communicate with their baby firsthand, rather than depending on a babysitter. Insufficient touch can damage a small child emotionally, mentally, and even physically.¹

SECOND YEAR

Characteristics

Baby begins walking.

Walking increases independence.

This is the age of exploration and experimentation.

Toddler may begin saying words.

Training Tips

Toddlers need to be taught the meaning of the word no. During training, breakable items may need to be moved out of reach.

The child continues to need plenty of closeness and holding, but also begins to need direction and reproof. He should learn to follow simple, one-or-two-word instructions such as “come,” “sit,” lie down,” “sh-h-h,” etc., and should experience discipline when he resists. Of

1. Evidence for the importance of touch is sometimes disputed, but studies indicate that when infants six to twelve months old are removed from their mothers altogether, they suffer what one researcher called anaclitic depression, the symptoms of which included dejection, weight loss, and susceptibility to sickness. Another researcher gave evidence which indicated that the quality of a mother's touch and attention affected children's susceptibility to psychological disorders later in life.

course, parents must make sure the child understands their instructions before giving discipline.

Encourage activities which require simple motor skills.

Enter into the child's natural explorations—warning of hot or dangerous items, introducing the feel of grass, water, etc.

Guidelines for Wholesome Activities

Encourage activities which require simple motor skills—motion songs, cobbler's bench, building blocks, etc.

When reading, use books with pictures to aid comprehension and attention.

Talk to toddlers—it is vital to their development.

AGES TWO TO SIX

Characteristics

- Exploration is usually followed by testing boundaries. Much of the difficult behavior of the “terrible twos” is not intentional disobedience so much as the natural process of learning limits.
- Preschoolers do a lot of imitating and role-playing—their imagination

and energy seem boundless.

- The child is very trusting—their countless questions offer many instructional opportunities.
- Thinking is concrete rather than abstract. Thus, while the child views God in quite human form (sometimes amusingly so), the unseen is as real to the child as the visible.
- While children can be taught much at this age, they are closer to adults emotionally than intellectually. They probably learn more from what they feel and sense than from what they are told.

Training Tips

Most of the correcting work in children occurs from the second year to the sixth year. Parents must require prompt, respectful obedience. While tantrums and outright rebellion should be disciplined with the use of the rod, don't turn every incident into a confrontation.

Do not scold, threaten, or bribe to get a child to do what

you want. Children will learn to manipulate rather than obey.

Children should be introduced to work appropriate to their age and ability—picking up toys, dusting, dishwashing, making beds, etc.



Corrective work should not only punish bad behavior but also reward good behavior.

Politeness should be taught—table manners, playtime courtesy, and conversational politeness such as “please,” “thank you,” and “excuse me.”

Children continue to need affection and encouragement. Corrective work should not only punish bad behavior but also reward good behavior. Charts setting goals and rewards for appropriate behavior can be effective.

Guidelines for Wholesome Activities

A child needs consistent teaching about spiritual realities. Family worship, bedtime prayers, Bible stories, and Sunday school build a reality base for life.

Active participation is better than passive participation. A sandbox is far better than video games as an activity center.

Activities which stimulate creativity are good: modeling clay, finger paints, and role-playing (playing school, church, shopping, camping, etc.). The whole family can enter into this—have a camp-out in the basement.

Children should do activities which develop coordination and provide exercise: hide and seek, coloring, family walks, tag, bike riding, catch, etc.

Beware of toys which distort reality or encourage sin. Many dolls represent fashionable adult models rather than babies. Grotesque television characters and toys designed to imitate violence trigger wrong imaginations in the child.

AGES SEVEN TO TWELVE ***Characteristics***

- This is often the age most neglected by adults. This child is no longer little, but

is still far from being an adult.

- Sometimes they are silly, teasing, and irresponsible, yet want to do adult things, use adult tools, etc.
- The child is very hero/heroine minded, admiring and imitating favorite young men and women.
- Often this child is sensitive and fearful, but may not express this except to a trusted parent.

Training Tips

Parents need to be sensitive and affectionate to the child this age. Although the body is becoming more adult, the child inside needs tangible evidence of being loved and accepted.

Respect the child's emerging personhood—beware of causing embarrassment by laughing or remarking about oddities, especially in front of others.

Give them time. The quantity and quality of time spent in these years are foundational to solid parent-teen relationships.

Carefully place confidence in the child. Children should not be burdened with adult responsibilities, but let them do what they can. Beware of scolding for failure or inefficiency in something you allowed them to

do. Helpful pointers work better than irritable criticism.

Talk to the child and listen—give him freedom to express himself. Beware of attempting to force communication.

Guidelines for Wholesome Activities

Children this age will likely move toward activities suited to their gender. At this age, girls may want to cease rough-and-tumble activities, while boys may gravitate even more toward wrestling and feats of strength.

Activities which encourage early sexual self-awareness (such as mixed swimming) should be avoided.

Humor should be kept wholesome. Guide children away from activities which are suggestive or which make light of the sacred. Everything from music to reading to parties should be wholesome.

Beware of activities which prematurely pressure children into adult life. At this age, children need time with their parents, working, talking, and playing, rather than, for example, competing on junior leagues. Entertainment media are major culprits in pressuring the childhood out of children.

Entertaining activities should stimulate the mind creatively rather than enslave it. Games of skill or planning are better than games of chance. Beware electronic games which captivate children for hours of intellectual monotony.

Hikes, camping, gardening, baking, cookouts, crafts—these are all ways to spend time productively with children.

Reading materials should provide exemplary characters. The secular market is loaded with sensational and mysterious books for ten-to-twelve-year-old readers. Even “Christian” literature often follows this pattern. There are better options available for this age group, such as stirring biographies which provide Christian role models.

Private talk time continues to be important. Praying together at bedtime may provide for some of this, but it may be necessary to schedule special times, especially as the child approaches adolescence.

TEEN YEARS

Characteristics

- This is the time of transition: physically, children are changing from boy to man or from girl to woman; socially, they are

moving from being dependent to being responsible; spiritually, they are emerging from innocence to accountability.

- Teens ask questions, present challenges, and use logic; answering their questions becomes more difficult, especially if their relationship with parents is strained.
- Young people see the world idealistically and react to inconsistency, hypocrisy, and formalism, even if they have the same vices in their own lives.
- Teens have a growing attraction for the opposite sex.

Training Tips

Youths need to be guided without feeling forced, understood without being threatened, instructed without feeling crammed, loved without feeling babied, heard without being belittled, and trusted without being abandoned.

Generally, the time for spanking should be past by the teen years.

Parents are most effective when they clearly demonstrate love and integrity. Their firmness and frankness should be

tempered with kindness, consideration, and consistency.

Communication continues to be important. This age presents many opportunities for instruction, but its effectiveness depends on how well the parents have exercised control in former years (it is virtually impossible to teach a rebel) and on their willingness to listen to and consider the child's emerging ideas and personality (it is difficult to gain a



Firmness and frankness should be tempered with kindness, consideration, and consistency.

hearing without giving a listening ear).

Privileges should be accompanied with accountability. Although teens sometimes complain about restrictions, they are

happier and more secure when they know their boundaries.

Teens need to be taught financial responsibility and stewardship. This is such a necessary and neglected area that several practical pointers are given at the close of this section.

Teens should be instructed how to respond to overtures from the opposite sex, including requests for dates. Parents should provide guidance and counsel and clearly communicate their expectations.

As personalities emerge, parents should be sensitive to the unique qualities and interests of each child and should openly discuss possibilities for the future, providing encouragement and guidance.

Guidelines for Wholesome Activities

Activities should be intellectually stimulating and enjoyable and should provide for healthy social interaction.

Avoid activities where entertainment is an end in itself. Inevitably the quality of the activity degenerates, and conflicts with authority figures develop.

Avoid activities which consume or tie up resources without justifiable returns, such as the recreational use

of vehicles or other expensive recreational pursuits.

Social activities should be structured to protect youths from moral danger and to strengthen home interests and loyalties. Highly organized youth groups with excessive



Activities should be intellectually stimulating and enjoyable and should provide for healthy social interaction

activities easily do the opposite, making the youth group a rival to the home. Relationships between youth and their parents are stronger where activities are directed by parents from their home rather than by youth sponsors from outside the home.

A family should do things together as a nuclear family, as an extended family, and as groups of families, encouraging different age levels to

mingle. Activities could include picnics, hikes, campouts, ball games, and tours of museums, science centers, nature centers, etc. Christian service activities as a family are also appropriate—visiting shut-ins, singing and holding Bible studies for shut-ins or the elderly in nursing homes, and handing out Christian literature.

Teens should be encouraged to develop hobbies which expand skills, knowledge, or creativity—hobbies such as insect collecting, stamp collecting, rock collecting, painting, music, sewing, basket weaving, knitting, etc. (Note: Collections which accumulate through purchase rather than by observation or discovery tend to be less beneficial.)

GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY TO CHILDREN

Parents must understand and practice Biblical principles of stewardship and responsibility themselves if they are to pass this on to their children.

Children should be taught that everything we have is the Lord's—we are only managers of His goods. Christian generosity

is a tangible demonstration of this.

Parents should teach children the difference between needs and wants and the priority of needs over wants in purchasing.

Parents should not give children and young people the privilege of spending money without teaching them to spend it responsibly. A common mistake parents make in an affluent society is providing their young people with spending money “as needed.” Youths love fun and can find endless ways of spending money—driving around, eating out, buying new clothes, snacks, collectibles, sports equipment, sound systems, music, and a host of trivialities just for the fun of it.

Children need to be taught the direct tie between work and money. Parents should avoid, and teach their children to avoid, the mentality of getting as much as possible for nothing, or looking for the quickest, easiest way to riches.

As children and youths begin earning money, clear policies should be established for how this money is used. There are various options:

Parents receive all the money. The child is taught that his work contributes to the overall family

good, and he receives in return the inner security of belonging and the tangible reward of having his own needs met. Where this option is chosen, parents often give the child a certain “portion of goods” when he reaches the age where he manages his own affairs.

The child receives either a portion or all of the money with budgeting guidelines for how it is to be used. Here the child becomes responsible for Christian giving and for certain needs, such as clothing, and is taught firsthand the experience of management while still under the protection of his parents’ control.

A very limited amount is given for the child’s management, and the remainder is placed in savings for the future needs of the child.

Children need to be taught sales resistance. (Parents usually need to exercise “begging resistance” in the process, and, of course, train their children not to beg.) Teach children to weigh purchase decisions, compare products and prices, and avoid purchasing on impulse.

Children need to be taught the principles of giving—the joy of sacrifice, sensitivity to the needy, the danger of giving to be seen,

the value of laying up treasure in heaven, responsibility for the needs of the church, and responsibility for family members in need.

If parents commit themselves to teaching their children the wise use of finances, they must accept that they will be different from many of their friends.

Children need to be taught the dangers of credit. The habit of buying now and paying later is contrary to the teaching of the Bible. This practice is encouraged by people who offer credit cards, collect phenomenal interest rates, and keep people in perpetual bondage to payments. Children need to learn the discipline of saving money, making do with what they have, and repairing and servicing their possessions rather than throwing them away.

If parents commit themselves to teaching their children the wise use of finances, they must accept, and teach their children to accept, that they will be different from many of their friends. They will not cater to their own appetites and desires. They will not have the latest fads.

They will not buy and spend and waste like many people around them.

WORKING TOGETHER

As parents, discuss the quality of your training and teaching. Make a list of weaknesses. Discuss specific ways to improve, and periodically assess your progress.

Assess your use of the rod, rewards, and punishment. Is there need for improvement?

Are there areas which need a clearer reward/punishment system? Again discuss specific improvements, and take positive steps to implement them.

Are there activities in your home which are unwholesome? Discuss how you might improve your activities. Consider your children's interests and skills, and then discuss several creative hobbies which might be started or encouraged.



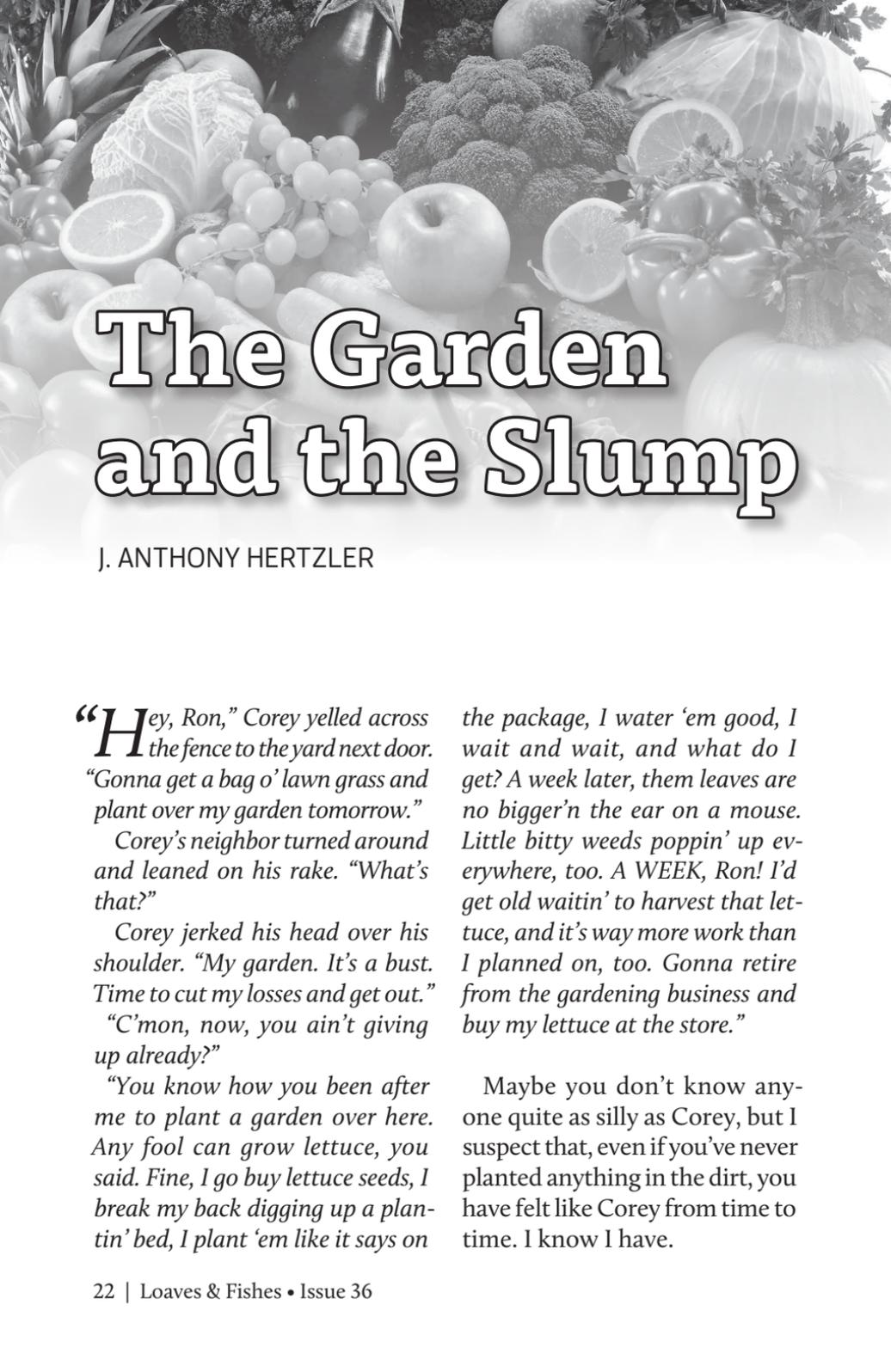
Share Your Poem or Testimony!

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 more submissions than we can use. Thoughtful attention to these guidelines will increase your chances of having your work published. Send your writings to the address on page 1.

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



The Garden and the Slump

J. ANTHONY HERTZLER

“Hey, Ron,” Corey yelled across the fence to the yard next door. “Gonna get a bag o’ lawn grass and plant over my garden tomorrow.”

Corey’s neighbor turned around and leaned on his rake. “What’s that?”

Corey jerked his head over his shoulder. “My garden. It’s a bust. Time to cut my losses and get out.”

“C’mon, now, you ain’t giving up already?”

“You know how you been after me to plant a garden over here. Any fool can grow lettuce, you said. Fine, I go buy lettuce seeds, I break my back digging up a plantin’ bed, I plant ‘em like it says on

the package, I water ‘em good, I wait and wait, and what do I get? A week later, them leaves are no bigger’n the ear on a mouse. Little bitty weeds poppin’ up everywhere, too. A WEEK, Ron! I’d get old waitin’ to harvest that lettuce, and it’s way more work than I planned on, too. Gonna retire from the gardening business and buy my lettuce at the store.”

Maybe you don’t know anyone quite as silly as Corey, but I suspect that, even if you’ve never planted anything in the dirt, you have felt like Corey from time to time. I know I have.

It's a real problem. If you plant a garden from seed, no matter how many green thumbs you have, you'll wait weeks or even months after planting before your work pays off and



Our Lord is coming, but if we give up when we get tired or face problems, we will miss out on the fruit He wants to produce in our lives.

you bite into your first fresh, crunchy radish or admire your first colorful zinnia blossoms. Meanwhile, you have to water, pull weeds, and protect your tender plants from bad weather, rampaging pets, and hungry bugs. Every good gardener expects to spend hours of hard,

thankless effort before the rewards start trickling in.

“Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:7–8).

Here James, the brother of Jesus, compares our lives to the growing season, where the farmer, like Corey, has to wait and labor patiently if he wants to enjoy the crop. James encourages us not to grow discouraged in waiting and suffering. Our Lord is coming, but if we give up when we get tired or face problems, we will miss out on the fruit He wants to produce in our lives. Don't give up, says James. Blessings come to those who are faithful in suffering.

All the best things in life are like a vegetable garden—you have to hang on for a long time before you see much payoff. Reaching our goals requires long-term struggle and commitment, and most people never get far, because they quit too soon.

New beginnings are like seeds, alive with new possibilities and

fresh hope. A good beginning, like good seed, is important. More important, and much harder, is getting through the middle—the part I’m going to call the Slump. The Slump is what happened to Corey when he saw weeds coming up everywhere and realized the first crop of lettuce was still weeks away. The Slump is where your new commitments aren’t exciting anymore, you’ve realized your new life is more work than your old one, and your old friends are harassing you for doing the right thing. In the Slump, it seems like your good choices have made your life worse instead of better, and any blessings you were promised still seem a long way off.

The Slump is why most people forget their New Year’s resolutions by sometime in February. The Slump is where quitters run out of steam. The Slump is the valley between you and eternal life.

If Corey gives up on gardening, he can always get his lettuce at the supermarket. But the best things in life are not for sale. There are no shortcuts to a good job, a beautiful marriage, or a godly character. You can reach these prizes only by keeping on through the Slump, when

everything in you says to just give up and call it quits. When the Scripture talks about long-suffering and patience, this is a big part of what it means.



The Slump is the valley between you and eternal life.

Building a meaningful life is only possible through long-suffering: doing the right thing, over and over, when it doesn’t look like it pays, when nobody is standing on the sidelines cheering, when others are taking the easy way out and trying to drag you along—even when you fail and have to start over.

A successful, effective life is built from only a few key building blocks:

- A deep, genuine relationship with God
- Loyal, lasting relationships with others

- Meaningful, sustaining work

A genuine relationship with God gives us hope in difficulties, healing for our pain, freedom from sinful habits, and a purpose for living. Healthy relationships with others give us the satisfaction of being understood and appreciated and the security of knowing that when we hit trouble, someone has our back. The ideal job brings opportunities for creativity, the joy of knowing we can make a difference, and the privilege of sharing our blessings with others.

Living in a right relationship with God and others and doing good work makes our lives effective and satisfying, even in harsh and unfair circumstances. However, too many people never achieve the ordered, mature character that makes such a life possible. Like Corey, they're willing to do some hard things to achieve their dreams, but then they expect big results right away, and they get discouraged when they run into the Slump instead.

In our relationship with God, believing in Christ and repenting of our past life is like planting a seed. It's a great start, but it's just a start. As we follow Jesus, studying the Scriptures,

spending time in prayer, and promptly obeying each new truth He shows us, He will lead us through the Slump, where we will need to give up the comfort of ungodly habits, be rejected by friends who resent our turning away from sin, and break out of our comfort zone to connect with people who support our faith and tell us hard truths about ourselves. Longsuffering in the pursuit of God bears fruit in an unbreakable, life-giving connection with the Father.

In a friendship or a romance, discovering the “spark”—that special connection that draws us toward another person—is like planting a seed. If it's real and mutual, it's exciting, but it's just a start. A healthy relationship requires us to habitually invest in the other person, to sacrifice more than we demand, and to courageously work through our differences in the Slump, when we misunderstand and disappoint each other. Longsuffering in human relationships bears fruit in genuine, lasting friendships and glorious, lifelong marriages.

At work, we may have a vision for a fulfilling, meaningful occupation that fits our natural gifts and goals. Getting that vision is like planting the seed.



Life is a garden, and planting good seed is only the beginning.

But before that dream bears fruit, we must build our character, skills, and reputation in the Slump, by thinking creatively, doing more than our share, and inspiring our coworkers in whatever boring, low-wage job we are responsible for right now. Longsuffering faithfulness at

work bears fruit in opportunity, success, and influence.

Life is a garden, and planting good seed is only the beginning. Before the harvest comes the Slump; but for the longsuffering who fight through to the other side, the fruit of righteousness is more than worth the pain.

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9).



Somewhere in 2 John

Unscramble the hidden verse (NKJV):

egcra cmrye nda pcaee lliw eb thiw uoy morf odg het rethaf dan omrf eth dlro eussj sirth eht nso fo hte atrhfe ni urtth nad levo

Reference: _____

That's God's Work

We don't know the moment or the hour.
Not by might nor by power,
Just by the Holy Spirit here
Will God seek you out and draw you near.

No words will ever describe
The joy and love you feel inside,
So when that time comes to you,
That is God telling you what to do.

So listen to Him carefully,
And He will lead you where you need to be.
You won't know the moment or the hour,
But you will surely feel His power.

Open your heart and let Him in;
The Holy Spirit will draw out your sin,
Will cleanse you from the inside out,
Remove your sins and all your doubt.

Keep in mind when you see
The miracles that are soon to be,
God is behind each and every one;
That's His perfect work being done!

Julie Luke

PULASKI STATE PRISON,
HAWKINSVILLE, GA

White as Snow

This cell is not my home,
For I am just passing through.
Two chairs and prayer, He met me there,
Saying, "Fear not, for I am with you."
I felt my faith slipping with every tear,
My cries to just be strong.
No letters or calls, but lest I fall,
Tomorrow may never come.
I read a verse of God's Holy word
And fell down on my knees.
For I was weak but now I'm strong,
The faith of a mustard seed.
My sins won't be my cross to bear.
God washed me white as snow.
Precious Lord, You hold my hand;
Please don't let me go.
I'll finish this race and keep the faith;
Praise to the begotten Son!
My cup runneth over,
No weight on my shoulder,
My race was already won!

India Marshall

SAN JACINTO COUNTY JAIL,
COLD SPRING, TEXAS



Collar on the Wall

Elmo Stoll

This is a story saddened by suffering, hate, cruelty, and pain. But it is more. It is also a joyful story of triumphant patience, love, and unshakable courage and faith in God. This Anabaptist story which happened in 1557–59 will help you to appreciate more the freedom we enjoy today.

I. Inside the Castle

Hans finished his lunch, stretched his legs, and strolled back to the road. Glancing at the sun, he figured he could make it home by dark. It had been a good trip. He broke into a long, steady stride.

Awhile later, Hans stopped suddenly and shaded his eyes. Two people on horseback ahead. Probably a couple of farmers. I should be fine if I mind my own business. But as the riders approached, Hans made out the judge of the nearby castle. Behind the judge rode his trusted scribe. The judge greeted Hans and rode on, but the scribe stopped. “Where are you going and what have you been doing?” he asked.

“I have been visiting brethren.”

“Hmm. Brethren. Anabaptists, are they?”¹

“Yes, they are,” replied Hans.

The scribe jumped off his horse and grabbed Hans. He shouted at the judge. “Come quickly! I caught an Anabaptist!”

The judge hurried back, pulled off Hans’s belt, and tied his hands tightly behind his back. Then they found a rope, which they tied around his neck, and led him like a stray dog to the castle three miles away. The judge kept up a fast pace and guided the horse through all the mud holes in the road. Hans’s legs were soon covered with mud. By the time they reached

1. A group of Christians during the Protestant Reformation whose practice of adult baptism instead of infant baptism earned them the name “Anabaptist” (re-baptizers). This, among other things, frequently caused them to be imprisoned, tortured, and otherwise punished by their governments.

the castle, Hans couldn't move another step. He stumbled and fell.

"Make him get up," shouted the scribe. "He is just pretending so we will pity him."

Just then the lord of the castle came out. "Have a care," he ordered. "You have nearly killed the man."

Then they found a rope, which they tied around his neck, and led him like a stray dog to the castle three miles away.

They questioned Hans about his faith, then locked him into a cell in the castle. Many more times they repeated the questioning and returned him to the cell. After several weeks, he was led before the council to give the names of other Anabaptists. He refused to tell anything.

"They're all alike!" the judge finally shouted. "They are the most deceived sect there is!"

"I am not a part of any sect but of the Church of God," said Hans quietly.

"It may be the devil's church!" shouted the judge. "How could it be God's Church?" He glared at Hans and the entire council glared with him.

"Since you just came from Innsbruck," snarled the judge, "tell us in whose house you stayed and at whose table you ate."

Calmly Hans answered them, "I cannot tell you what you want to know, for our calling is to help men and not harm them."

"If you don't talk," said the judge, "we will torture you until you wish you had."

Looking earnestly at the men seated in the council, Hans asked them, "Would you call me a good man if I were to betray those who did good to me?"

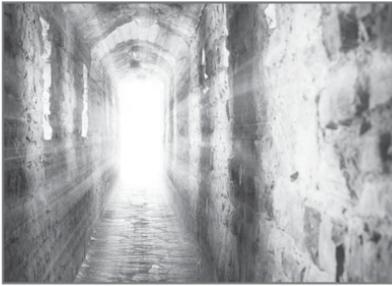
The council seemed stunned by the question. They were caught off guard. Looking at each other, they admitted, "We would hardly consider it good if someone treated us that way."

Hans asked them, "Would you call me a good man if I were to betray those who did good to me?"

Now the judge became furious. "Are you accusing the honorable council of requiring treachery?" he sputtered.

The council begged Hans not to be so stubborn, or they would have to torture him until

he told them what they asked. Eventually they did torture him, and Hans endured it so patiently that the eyes of the bystanders filled with tears. When he still showed no signs of weakening, the executioner tied a rope around Hans's body and suspended him from the ceiling.



“Are you a fool,” said the executioner, “to think that God looks down to see what we do in this hole?”

“Now,” thought the judge, “he is in great pain. He will be ready to do what we say.”

“No,” answered Hans bravely, “I will betray no one, but will suffer what God permits you to inflict upon me.”

Once more the hot-tempered judge flew into a rage. “You swear to each other that you will not betray one another.”

“We do not swear,” Hans replied, “but we do not betray

anyone because we believe it would be wrong.”

Finally the judge left, but the executioner stayed with Hans. Soon some more officers gathered. Constantly they repeated the same thing to Hans. “You do not need to suffer like this,” they said. “Only tell us what we want to know, and we will let you down.”

Again Hans replied, “I am willing to bear whatever God lets you do to me.”

“Are you a fool,” said the executioner, “to think that God looks down to see what we do in this hole?”

Barely had the executioner finished speaking when something happened which showed that God did see what they were doing. The men of the council who had left with the judge now returned, saying, “The lady of the castle has interceded for Hans. He is to be tortured no more, but taken back into prison.”

In the days that followed, priests often came to try to convince Hans that he was wrong. Finally, they gave him up as hopeless and locked him into a deep dungeon in a dark, filthy tower.

In the clammy darkness, Hans could not tell whether it was day

or night. The air was so damp that his clothes rotted on his body until he had nothing left to wear but his shirt collar. Sadly Hans wrapped himself in the only blanket he had left.

One day, wanting exercise, Hans was feeling the wall all around the pit-like room as high as he could reach. His fingers felt something round and hard.



It was an old rusty nail driven into the wall.

“That is a good place to hang the collar,” Hans thought as he took it off of his neck and hung it on the wall.

II. The Garment of Patience

Hans’s room was infested with rats and mice. He could hear them constantly scratching, gnawing, and scurrying around. Only a little food was brought to him once a day; he was constantly hungry, except when he was sick and did not feel like eating. If he placed any food on the floor, the rats and mice would

climb into the plate and devour the scraps in seconds.

“All these things would not be so hard to bear,” Hans thought, “if only I could get some word of encouragement from my brethren.”

As Hans sat thinking one day about his brethren and wondering what would happen to him, he heard someone coming.

“I wonder what they want with me,” Hans thought. He knew it was not time for his food to be brought to him. Then he heard someone whisper at the door, “Hans, Hans!”

“Yes,” answered Hans from the darkness, wonderment in his voice.

“Come closer. I have a message for you.”

Slowly Hans made his way to the door. Was this a trick?

“Do you know Hans Mein?” the voice asked.

“Yes,” answered Hans quickly. His heart leaped for joy. Mein was one of the brethren.

“Hans Mein wants you to send some token to him and the other brethren that you are steadfast in the faith.”



Hans paused. The authorities would torture him again if they discovered he had sent a message to someone outside the tower.

“How do I know I can trust you?” Hans whispered.

“Do you think I would risk my life to bring this message to you if I did not want to help



“Here,” he said, “give this to them. Tell them it is all that remains of my clothes.”

you?” The voice was tense with urgency.

“No,” replied Hans, “I believe you are a friend, but what can I send as a token that I am still true to God?”

“Even a piece of straw is enough.”

“Alas,” cried Hans, “I fear this den is so barren I cannot find even a piece of straw to send!”

“Surely you can find something,” the voice whispered desperately. “But do it quietly and in haste before someone discovers me here.”

“Father in heaven,” Hans groaned, “what shall I do? If I send nothing they will think I am no longer true to all that I hold so dear.”

In a flash, Hans remembered the collar he had hung on the wall. He fumbled for it. “Here,” he said, “give this to them. Tell them it is all that remains of my clothes.”

When the brethren saw the collar, they rejoiced that he was still true to God, but they felt sorry for him.

“He must suffer greatly in that damp tower room,” they said. “Somehow we must find a way to send him some clothing.”

They sent a message that they would send him clothing or anything else he needed if he could receive it.

But Hans said, “No, do not bring me anything. If you do and they find it out, they will torture me to get your names. I must be content with the garment of patience.”

All summer Hans was left to lie in misery in the filthy tower, but with the approach of winter he was moved to another prison.

If he expected improved conditions at the new prison, he was cruelly disappointed. Here, one hand and one foot were placed in stocks so that he could not sit or lie properly. People often came to make fun of him.

“Here lies a holy man,” they mocked, shaking their heads. “Nobody is as wise as he; there he sits as a light to the world, and as a witness of the people of God and His Church!”

Patiently Hans bore the taunting remarks and the punishment of the crippling stocks.

Nearly two years had passed since Hans had been arrested. One thawing day in late winter Hans was startled to hear someone slip quietly up to him. It was the servant who farmed the grounds around the castle, and in his hands he held a ring of keys.

“I’m going to free you,” he whispered nervously, fumbling with the keys. He tried one after another.

When Hans saw how frightened the servant was, he said, “Do not do it, lest you suffer on my account. I am better able to suffer than you are.”

At a noise outside, the servant paused, terror in his eyes. Then he grabbed his keys and fled.

Several days later the servant returned, but this time he was

not hiding or fearful—his face was beaming with good news. “The lady of the castle sent me with a message for you,” he told Hans eagerly. “She says if you will do but two things you may go free.”

“What two things?”

“Only confess that you are wrong and allow the priests to instruct you.” The kind-hearted servant smiled; he felt sure that now Hans would go free.

“But those are two things I cannot do,” Hans replied. “It would be wrong.”

“Do not worry about that,” the servant went on eagerly. “The lady of the castle says she will take upon herself the sins you commit, so that no guilt will come to you.”

But Hans knew he could not accept that offer. “She has enough sins of her own to answer for,” he told the disappointed servant. “She does not need any of mine.”

One day an order came that since Hans was so stubborn in his refusal to give up, he should be sent to the sea. There he would have to work on a ship as a galley slave.

“Wait till you get to sea,” the lords said, leering. “Then you will find out what it is to be whipped. You’ll wish yourself back in our

kind care.” They laughed loudly at their own joke.

Hans’s only reply was, “I trust the Lord to help me and give me patience. He is on the sea as well as on the land.”

Before Hans could be taken to sea, he had to learn to walk again. The cruel imprisonment and the stocks had crippled him, so that when he first tried to walk, he fell flat on his face.

When Hans could walk again he was given into the care of a wicked servant to be taken to the sea. This servant took every opportunity to curse Hans and call him names. The two days of travel toward the sea were a miserable experience. At the end of the second day, they entered a tavern in the city of Niederdorf. Hans’s heart was heavy as he witnessed the swearing and the godless drinking that went on around him that night.

At last the servant, overcome with wine, flung himself on the table and fell asleep.

Something stirred in Hans’s heart. Did he dare? Quietly he got to his feet and tiptoed out of the room. He locked the door soundlessly behind him. Half an hour later he paused outside the village. Grateful tears sprang to his eyes. Humbly he bowed his head. “Thank you, heavenly Father,” he whispered with awe in his voice. “Thank you for hearing my prayers and delivering me from the hands of the wicked.”

The soft light of the moon above him illuminated his path as he raised his head and quickened his step. He longed to fall on his knees in thankfulness, but he knew he could not loiter there. He had miles to go before he would see the faces of the brethren he loved so much.

“Will they not marvel?” Hans’s face lighted up with joy. “Will they not marvel at the goodness of God?”

Adapted from “Collar on the Wall” by Elmo Stoll in *Seeking True Values*, Pathway Publishers, copyright 1968. Used with permission.

ANSWERS TO A LIFE OF ENDURANCE CROSSWORD PUZZLE:

ACROSS—1 walk, 4 meekness, 7 patience, 8 salvation, 12 quarrel, 16 commandments, 17 possess, 18 pursue, 19 self-control, 20 repentance.

DOWN—2 kindness, 3 patient, 5 crucified, 6 establish, 9 longsuffering, 10 labored, 11 tribulations, 13 gentleness, 14 overcomes, 15 perseverance.



Free on the Inside

Prisoners encourage Prisoners

My name is Richard, and I'm forty-four years old. I believe each individual soul is meant to be a glowing song to the world. Here is a true account of how God gave me the beautiful words to my song.

Through the trials of prison life I experienced true brokenness. I want to use my broken pieces to help others who have been broken. As you read my testimony, remember that God intends to break us into pieces and put us back together again as a stronger man or woman.

When I first read about love in the Bible, it appeared very alien, but I was deeply inspired by the selfless grace and love of Jesus. I grew up in a violent, broken home, and I did not know such a love existed. I was far from God in those years. Looking back, it is easy to see how I got that way.

My parents separated when I was nine. The last memory I have of my father is of him angrily threatening my mother and me with a rifle as we ran out of our home into the cold, rainy night.

Alone and not knowing how to provide for her children, my mother moved in with her family on my grandfather's tobacco farm. The physical abuse stopped for my mother, but for us children a new form of abuse began.

My grandfather and uncle constantly called me dumb or lazy. Being around them made me so nervous and afraid of being hit that I usually messed up whatever task I was given to do. My mother, unable or unwilling to help, did nothing.

When I first read about love in the Bible, it appeared very alien, but I was deeply inspired by the selfless grace and love of Jesus."

My mother suffered nervous breakdowns and was hospitalized, leaving us children in the hands of her younger sister, who deeply resented having to care for her sister's children. Being dark-skinned, I was singled out for extra mocking. I deeply felt

the shame of living in a house where I wasn't loved or wanted.

When I was around thirteen, my uncle convinced my mother to put me in a boys' home. I was totally hurt to my heart to be put into a juvenile prison, which was what it was. Abandoned, betrayed, and lonely, I hated my uncle.

When I finally returned home I was changed. I knew that a mother should not let others abuse her children, and so I could no longer respect my mother. Many times we ran out of food, but she was never out of cigarettes. Instead of working and providing for her family, she split us up among relatives.

At fourteen, I smoked marijuana and hung out with much older people, dropping out of school to work. By sixteen, I was sent to a juvenile prison because my mother could no longer control me. I was numb to everything and everyone, and got into fights. I got into rap music, trying to escape my past of poverty and shame by being hip.

I was released, then sent to another home for boys in Norfolk, Virginia. Several months later, I escaped and ended up on the streets of Ocean View, Virginia, a small five-mile strip of motels, bars, and crack houses running

parallel with the beach. The fast money of selling crack brought an indifference to all the suffering going on around me. It finally took the death of my girlfriend and our unborn child from a crack cocaine overdose to make me realize the hopelessness of being addicted.



But God had other plans.

At seventeen, I was arrested for selling crack to an undercover cop. This time I was sent to prison as an adult. Twenty-two months of fights and riots, as well as witnessing beatings and rapes, left me with a cold, hard heart. I was given twenty-five dollars and set free, and was soon back in the city selling drugs. One night a gang member robbed me at gunpoint, causing me to realize the danger of the life I was living. When my parole officer found this out, he

made me leave the city. I went to Martinsville, Virginia, where I got a job in a factory and met the mother of my daughter.

But the hard days were not over. There were more armed robberies, a lost job, running from the law, and years in prison. I was shot with teargas, beaten, stabbed, starved, and electrocuted repeatedly and put in isolation, until I was so degraded and dehumanized I did not care if I lived or died. With over forty years of prison ahead of me, I was hopeless and poised to spend the rest of my life this way. But God had other plans.

One night, after many years of self-destructive behavior, I gave my broken life to Jesus. If it were not for God's undying mercy and perfect timing, I would be dead. Ephesians 2:8-9 reads, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

For the first time, I felt completely loved."

There is no way to comprehend or explain God's unmerited favor, and all we can do is humbly accept it. Being

saved changed my life forever. There was a wrenching in my chest, an inner longing for God and a better way of life. Kneeling on that cold floor of my cell, I called out to God. I cried out, "God, please take the pain, bitterness, and loneliness away!" Immediately the power of God spoke to my heart. The Holy Spirit pulsed through me like the burning of fire. Tears ran down my face. For the first time, I felt completely loved.

The Bible says that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him. I love the Lord, but having a relationship with God doesn't immunize us against all difficulties. After I became a Christian, I was diagnosed with diabetes and hypertension, and for years I wrestled with the shame of bringing a child into this world that I couldn't support.

My daughter was born while I was in prison. Through prayer, God has continuously blessed her. In 2016, she graduated from ODU in Norfolk, Virginia.

God gave me the ability to go back to school and get my GED. I love poetry and writing.

In a few years, I could be free on parole after twenty-four years in prison. I long for good Christian friends with whom I

can fellowship and learn from as I prepare to reenter society.

There is one church, the bride of Christ, filled with believers, and we are all connected by our Lord Jesus Christ. God meant for His people to stand together against this world system, yet Satan wants some of us to feel alone, forgotten, and discouraged.

Although we can't remove each other's heavy burdens, we can share each other's experiences by listening, praying, visiting, and sharing in letters the love we all need.

Now that my heart is thirsting for a better way, I am using my

broken pieces to tell my story for His glory. I pray that those heading down the same road I once traveled, suffering through the toughest of circumstances, can know there is a God who is willing to reach out to them in love right where they are.

My message is that when we are willing to surrender everything to God, He strengthens us in a way that allows us to overcome whatever the devil has used in the past to destroy us.

Thank you for allowing me to share my testimony with you. ☺

Roger Richard Goode

RED ONION STATE PRISON, POUND, VA

My name is James Williams, but those who know me in the free world call me Robby. I am incarcerated in the Arkansas Department of Corrections. My drug addiction and my ways of living have made this my fourth time in prison.

I know God loves me and wants me to live a life that pleases Him. I also know I cannot remain drug-free without God's help. The following is a prayer I have recently continued to pray:

“Dear Heavenly Father, I come to you in Jesus name, and I beg

you to help me learn the difference between Your voice and my thoughts. Help me learn to listen to You and follow You as You guide my footsteps so I can learn to live a life that pleases You. Help me do my part in dedicating my life to You. Heavenly Father, please help me get my heart right before you, and forgive the intent of my heart that I have had. I ask these things in Jesus Christ's name. Amen.” ☺

James Williams

MCPHERSON CORRECTIONAL, NEW PORT, AZ



Word Search Puzzle

Jude 20–21 (NKJV)

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

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

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

Created with The Teachers' Corner.net Word Search Maker.



Dwells in My Soul

I was eighteen when I walked into prison
Mad at myself for my actions and wrong decisions,
Became a follower and joined a gang,
Became a leader but still felt the pain.

The pain and the hurt grew year after year;
Many nights after my prayers came the tears.
I knew in my heart something needed to change,
Something in my life to ease the pain.

So I prayed and asked Jesus,
Could He forgive someone like me?
Could He hear my prayer and set me free?
My prayer was heard and I made parole!

Forgetting about Jesus as I hit the road,
So many years had passed.
So much change I could see,
I found I could not deal with the reality.

My kids were no longer kids,
My big mama was gone.
Now standing in the free world,
More than ever I felt alone.

I found myself searching and crying
And looking for my cell,
Because living in the free world
Seemed to be like hell.

Depression set in; I was losing my mind,
Got hooked on drugs so easy to find,
Lost in this world with nothing to give,
Too embarrassed to be around my kids.

The road of suicide looked easy, so I tried.
The doctor told me more than once I had died.
Once again with a gun in my hand,
To end my life is what I had planned.

I put the gun to my head and started to pray,
Asking God to forgive me for taking my life this day.
Then with a clear voice coming out of the sky
I heard, "Today is the day to change your life."

"Turn yourself in and set yourself free.
Pick up your relationship you once had with Me.
You let go in the past, but I never will,
For you are My son, and My love for you is real."

Today I'm locked up, sober and gang-free.
Jesus saved my life and gave me peace.
I know in my heart I will never let go,
For Jesus lives in my heart and dwells in my soul.

Christopher Giles

WALLACE UNIT, COLORADO CITY, TX

Lost and Found

Lost in my seclusion,
Embarrassed and ashamed,
I've realized the truth:
It's myself I have to blame.

A desperate cry for help
To our Lord from up above,
Knowing of His greatness,
Longing for His love.

No need to try to hide
All the pain I've stuffed inside;
He whispers in my ear,
I've been right by your side.

That reassuring feeling
He gives to you and me
Of His never-ending love
He gladly gives for free.

Thank you, dear Lord Jesus;
I'm feeling so very blessed
For the gift of peace you've given;
I can put my mind to rest.

You've given me direction;
You are glorious in sight.
Such an awesome discovery—
I finally see the light!

Renee Castro

CHOWCHILLA CA WOMEN FACILITY,
CHOWCHILLA, CA

Peace

In the midst of darkness
During the rain,
Jesus gave me strength
To endure my pain.

Jesus lifted me up
When life beat me down;
His grace and mercy
Brought me around.

Jesus instilled in me hope,
Not the spirit of pretension,
Giving me courage
With the promise of redemption.

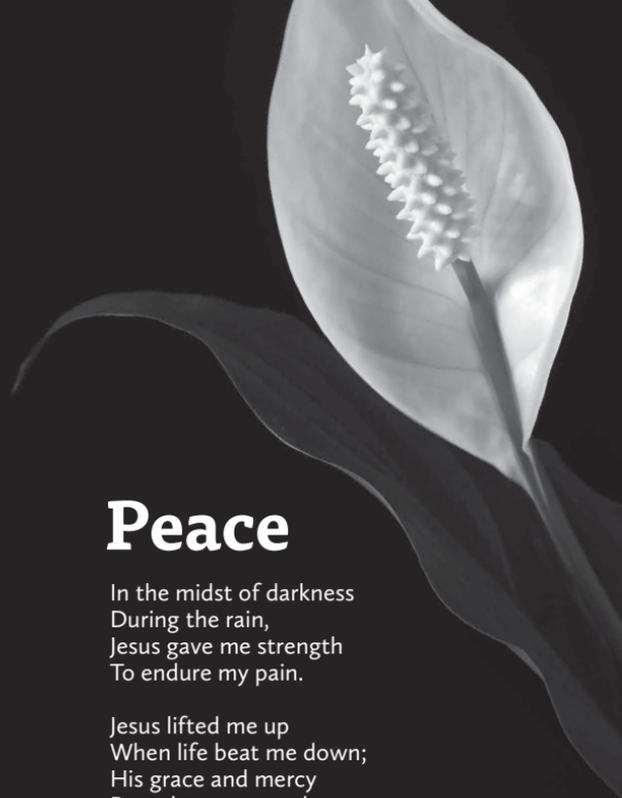
Jesus taught me love
That filtered out my hate,
Giving me a spirit of peace
Instead of that weight.

This measure of faith
I didn't carry back then,
Being filled with sorrow
And fighting a struggle within.

The quiet for any storm
Rests in the Christ,
A refuge for the soul
Paid with His life.

Tobias Smith

BUCKINGHAM CORRECTIONAL
CENTER, DILLWYN, VA





“Endurance”

Crossword Puzzle

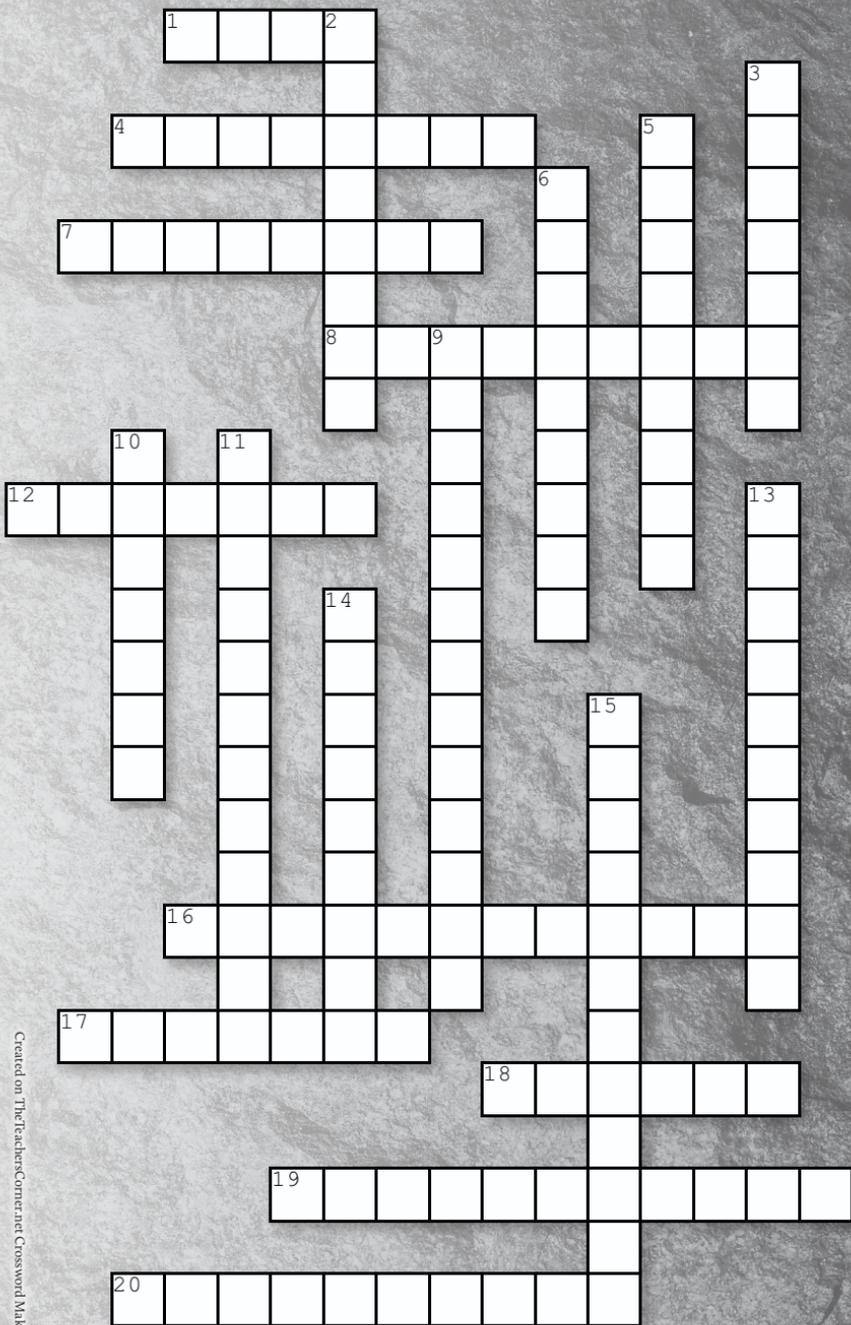
ACROSS

1. If we live in the Spirit, let us also ___ in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25).
4. As the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, ___, longsuffering (Colossians 3:12).
7. Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all ___ and longsuffering with joy (Colossians 1:11).
8. Consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is ___ as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you (2 Peter 3:15).
12. A servant of the Lord must not ___ but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient (2 Timothy 2:24).
16. Here are those who keep the ___ of God and the faith of Jesus (Revelation 14:12).
17. By your patience ___ your souls (Luke 21:19).
18. But you, O man of God, flee these things and ___ righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness (1 Timothy 6:11).
19. ...gentleness, ___. Against such there is no law (Galatians 5:23).
20. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to ___ (2 Peter 3:9).

DOWN

2. By purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by ___, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love (2 Corinthians 6:6).
3. Rejoicing in hope, ___ in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer (Romans 12:12).
5. Those who are Christ’s have ___ the flesh with its passions and desires (Galatians 5:24).
6. ___ your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand (James 5:8).
9. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, ___, kindness, goodness, faithfulness (Galatians 5:22).
10. You have persevered and have patience, and have ___ for My name’s sake and have not become weary (Revelation 2:3).
11. In all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in ___, in needs, in distresses (2 Corinthians 6:4).
13. With all lowliness and ___, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love (Ephesians 4:2).
14. He who ___ shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son (Revelation 21:7).
15. You have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, ___ (2 Timothy 3:10).

Clues from the NKJV.



Science in Creation

by Andrew Zimmerman



The Great American Eclipse

In a previous article we looked at some of the beauty obvious in God's creation. Taking time to appreciate the beauty in creation can inspire us to more fully appreciate the greatness of our Creator. One of the most astonishingly beautiful aspects of creation is the heavens, with its myriad of heavenly bodies. And in my opinion, no sight on Earth is so awe-inspiring as a total solar eclipse.

The August 2017 solar eclipse path of totality stretched across the United States from coast to coast. Millions traveled to the track of the moon's shadow to experience totality. Our family visited the Grand Teton National Park to witness this rare event. Back in 1991, our small, younger family had seen our first total solar eclipse in

Mexico. Now we would get to see one in our own country.

Early on the morning of August 21, we started out for the park from our temporary home in West Yellowstone. As we crossed the Teton mountain range from Idaho into Wyoming, we were greeted with a spectacular sunrise. There were a few clouds in the sky, but we hoped they would clear before eclipse time. We descended into Jackson and made our way toward the park entrance. Traffic was heavy, but thankfully it moved steadily, though slowly. The park service had designated a seven-mile stretch of Gros Ventre Road for one-way east-bound traffic, with the west-bound lane designated for parking. We found an open spot for our vehicles and parked. With plenty of eclipse

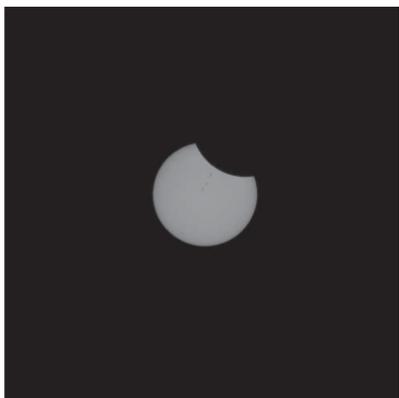
glasses to spare, we were able to supply them to some last-minute folks from California. Never look directly at the sun without eye protection, except during an eclipse totality.

Hiking a thousand feet from the road and up what seemed like a cliff, we came to a broad, elevated, open prairie. To the West, we had a view of the Teton mountains, with their majestic, snowy peaks. In the valley at the foot of the Tetons, we saw the sprawling airport runway and the control tower. To our east we could see Sheep Mountain, also known as the “Sleeping Indian” mountain.

Since we were planning to photograph the eclipse, we lugged tripods and camera equipment with us up the hill. We spread blankets on the ground and distributed snacks and eclipse glasses. I settled into my chair next to my tripod and camera.

The orbits of the earth and moon interact with astronomical precision. The path of the moon’s shadow across the earth can be accurately computed. Each phase of the eclipse was calculated and known years in advance. The moon’s shadow would sweep from west to east across the country, taking only an hour and a half for the trip.

With a dark filter on a telephoto lens, I took some test photos of the sun, noticing the pattern of sun spots. The sky was clear, and we were in the center of the eclipse path. This was the day we had anticipated for years!



Right on time, first contact came as the edge of the moon touched the edge of the sun. When my young son saw this through his eclipse glasses, he exclaimed that the sun had a bite taken out of it. The Native American Pomo used to say that a bear started a fight with the sun and took a bite out of it.

Over the next seventy-eight minutes we watched in awe as the sun became smaller and smaller until it was a mere sliver. As the moon covered more of the sun, the temperature dropped, and I put on my jacket. The sun still appeared quite

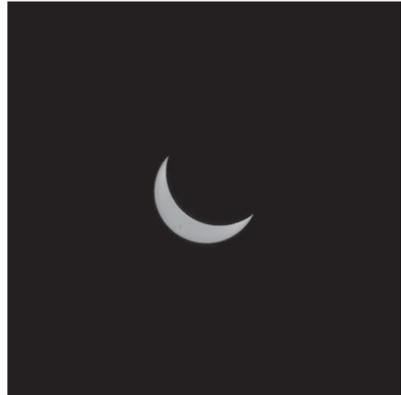


bright, as our eyes adjusted to the lower intensity. Projecting the sun through a pin-prick in cardboard cast a crescent shape on the ground.

The moon's shadow would sweep from west to east across the country in only an hour and a half.

Just before totality, my daughter exclaimed in amazement about the “lines on the ground”. When the light from the sun is reduced by the moon to just a narrow beam instead of the entire disc of light, atmospheric disturbances can project shadow bands on the ground. Just like stars “twinkle” (known as astronomical scintillations), the atmosphere can make the bright sunlight twinkle, and

create these “shadow snakes.” Barely visible except for their movement, and very difficult to photograph, they are faint light and dark lines, a couple of inches apart, skimming across the ground at ten feet per second. I found the shadow bands especially intriguing, as I didn't remember seeing them in the 1991 eclipse.



We looked to the West at the Tetons for the moon's shadow flashing toward us at 1,800 miles per hour. Sure enough, though we couldn't see a distinct shadow edge, the mountains were dark. As the light diminished in the last few seconds before totality, I removed the filter and photographed a “diamond ring” image. And then, with second contact, totality was on us, and we were plunged into darkness!



During totality, the spectacular, iridescent corona (sun's atmosphere) comes into view. Shimmering against the dark blue backdrop of the sky, with the black hole of the moon in

The amazing corona, the hole in the sky, the deep blue, the stars, and a "sunset" completely encircling us, made an unforgettable experience.

the center, it is a rare and exceptional sight. The size and distance of the moon are designed by the Creator to allow the moon to just block the bright light of the sun, while still allowing all the beauty of the corona to be visible from within the area of totality.

The moon's shadow was sixty-six miles wide in this eclipse. The shadow size varies depending on the distance of the moon from the earth. The 1991 eclipse

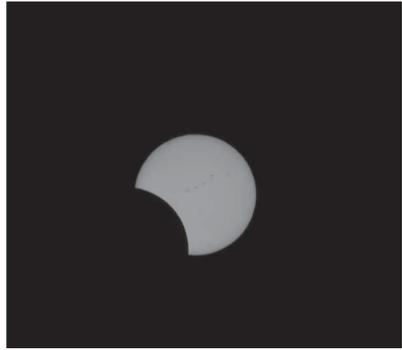
we experienced in Mexico had a 200-mile-wide shadow. With that shadow width, the sky was very dark, quite black, and many stars could be seen. The totality in 1991 lasted for nearly seven minutes. In this 2017 eclipse, with its much smaller shadow, the sky was a deep blue, and only a few bright stars could be seen. Regulus is the bright star visible near the corona in some of the images.

Between taking photos, I took time to simply look, in awe, and drink in the sight. The amazing corona, the hole in the sky, the deep blue, the stars, and a "sunset" completely encircling us, all made an incredible, unforgettable experience.

Totality lasted two minutes and twenty seconds at our location in the Tetons. To be able to experience it with our children and grandchildren made it truly memorable. It seemed like God orchestrated this event just for our enjoyment. All praise

and glory to Him for all things beautiful!

As the first speck of glaring light appeared at the edge of the moon (third contact), and daylight returned, I shot one more diamond ring picture and reat-



“The works of the LORD are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them” (Psalm 111:2).



tached the filter. The “bite” in the sun reappeared, this time starting large, and growing smaller and smaller. With fourth contact, the moon cleared the sun, and the eclipse was over for us.

If you ever get the opportunity, it is worth some effort to seek out the experience of totality, and get inside the moon’s shadow.

Whether or not you get to see a total solar eclipse, you can seek out the works of the Lord. There are beautiful things of creation all around us. But even greater, He gives spiritual blessings and gifts to His children. Seek them out, and you’ll see.

~

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.

Photo credits: Andrew Zimmerman



Thank You

Our Heavenly Father,
We thank You again,
For sending us Jesus
To save us from sin.

We give You the glory
In all that we do,
That others may hear
And come to You.

We cherish, we praise,
We honor Your name,
And ask that You heal
The sick and the lame.

For today is a day
Like all of the rest,
When again with Your sunrise
We are all blessed.

In Jesus' name,
Amen!

David Doss
BALDWIN STATE PRISON,
HARDWICK, GA

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.

**“Repent, and turn from all your transgressions...
and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.**

For why should you die?”

Ezekiel 18:30–31

