

"Blow ye the Trumpet and warn the People."

"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."

"Take the Sword of the Spirit which is The Word of God."

Founded in 1929 by Geo. R. Brunk I

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THE SWORD AND TRUMPET monthly magazine is a faith ministry directed by a Board representing various constituencies of the Mennonite Church. It is committed to defending, proclaiming, and promoting the whole Gospel of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. It emphasizes neglected truth and contends for "the faith which was once delivered to the saints." This publication exposes and opposes doctrinal error which compromises that faith and leads to apostasy.

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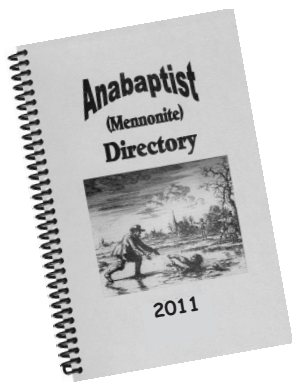
IN THIS ISSUE

1. PERSON OF THE MONTH: Christian K. Lehman	1
2. The Reason for Hope	2
3. FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK: Year-End Musings	4
4. THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS	5
5. NEWSLINES	9
6. Projecting Poverty Where It Doesn't Exist	13
7. COUNSELING FROM THE WORD: The Art of Forgiveness	15
8. Young Women and Discretion	16
9. SERMON OF THE MONTH: The Search of the Shepherds	18
10. Hold Fast	22
11. BOOK REVIEW: <i>The Unquenchable Flame</i>	23
12. The End of Nice	25
13. SONG OF THE MONTH: "O Little Town of Bethlehem"	26
14. Eyeing the Ashes	28
15. BEGINNING ISSUES: Genesis 1 Continued	31
16. Busted Cars and Broken Hearts	32
17. Index	34

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# Person of the Month:

## *Christian K. Lehman*

(1881-1961)



A baby boy, Christian K. Lehman, was born into the home of Daniel N. and Magdalena (Kendig) Lehman of Manor Township, Pennsylvania, on November 21, 1881. Christian's godly parents faithfully disciplined him and taught him the way of life. A picture on the wall of the family home depicting Heaven and Hell made a lasting impression on the boy. The family regularly attended the Masonville-Habecker Church and Sunday school. There was always music in the home and Lehman's parents would sit on the front porch and sing hymns together. Christian remembered when his father used the market wagon to haul home the family's first organ. He was taught to love his church, music, and farming.

Desiring to be a teacher, Lehman graduated from Millersville State Normal School near his home. His first teaching assignment was in Clay Township at Cherry Grove. He went on to teach at Garfield in Mt. Joy Township and at Mastersonville and Fruitville in Manheim Township.

At the age of 24, Christian K. Lehman married Mary R. Leaman of Lititz, on June 7, 1906. At first the couple lived in Lititz, in the borough where Lehman was teaching. Into their home were born ten children—seven boys and three girls.

From 1907-1912 Brother Lehman taught science at Lititz High School. The Lehmans then moved into the family homestead in Manor Township where Christian began farming. However, teaching was "in his blood" so during the years of 1912-1917 Brother Lehman also taught at Central Manor and Prospect Hill.

Christian K. Lehman was ordained for ministry in the (Central) Manor circuit on May 15, 1917, at the age of 35. Because he was now ordained he was asked to stop teaching school. In addition to pastoring he taught thirty singing schools, consisting of thirteen nights each, throughout the conference in order to encourage better congregational singing. He also spoke some as an evangelist and also as a Bible teacher. Lehman also wrote many articles for the *Missionary Messenger* and the *Pastoral Messenger*. An unpublished manuscript was found to have a set of guidelines and procedures for song leaders to follow in the leading of the worship service.

Brother Lehman was ordained as a bishop on September 1, 1938, at the age of 56, to oversee the divided district of John H. Mosemann. As a bishop, Christian was kind and loving to his flock and tried to encourage these same qualities in them through his godly example. In many of his messages he spoke of love in the brotherhood as well as "finishing well" right up to the end of life, as seen in Matthew 24:13. He willingly helped out whenever the conference called upon him to do so.

In 1945-46, at the age of 63, still hearing the call of the classroom, Lehman taught music on the faculty of Lancaster Mennonite School. His desire was for the students to sing to God's glory. In 1948-49 he taught at the Millersville Children's Home School for one year.

*(continued on page 3)*

# The Reason for Hope

by John Meador

**W**hy do you celebrate Christmas? Are you sure of it? The waters of our seasonal celebrations seem to get murkier every year. With “Happy Holidays” (instead of Merry Christmas) and the ever-increasing commercialism of Christmas by our friendly retailers, one can get lost in the reason for celebration. Parents struggle to help children see past the gifts to the real Giver of Christmas. Individuals get to the end of the celebration and often feel a deep sense of emptiness. But Christmas should bring hope, and there is a reason for hope!

It is good to remember that we have a reasonable basis of belief for believing in Jesus Christ—and for celebrating Christmas. In this world of relativism—where everything is relegated to what one “wants” to believe—we must have something more solid than just a **sincere** faith. We also must have a **reasonable** faith. The apostles did not die for something they just sincerely felt. They died for what they KNEW to be true!

We are told to “*be ready always to give an answer [reasonable statement] to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you*” (1 Peter 3:15). As we sit around the dinner table during this time of the year, as we exchange gifts with one another, or worship together with all the incredible beauty and pageantry of Christmas—we insure a true celebration by remembering why we can be confident that Jesus is the reason for the season. We celebrate Christmas—and Christ—because we know He is the Messiah sent from God.

The Apostle Peter knew the reason: “*Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time*

*the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow*” (1 Peter 1:10, 11).

Peter does not exalt common sense or experience as the basis of his belief. He rather appeals to the prophets and the obvious fulfillment of their prophecies as his foundation. These words convey Peter’s answer to why he knew Jesus was the Messiah. This verse also gives our reason—your reason for celebration.

***First, authentic prophecies of divine origin were recorded centuries in advance through recognized prophets.***

The Old Testament prophets were those who spoke directly for God. What’s more, God spoke through them to tell of events that were yet to occur! He told them when to go to war, and who would win. He spoke to them about men He would heal, or allow to die. He also spoke to them, frequently, about the coming Messiah.

The reason we know these prophets were authentic was their accuracy. A prophet who spoke “from the Lord” but who spoke inaccurately about a coming event was stoned to death. A bad prophet was a dead one. That tends to demonstrate who is authentic and who is not, and the authentic prophets are recorded in Scripture.

***Second, these prophets predicted in precise detail the birth, sufferings, and glories of the Messiah.***

These weren’t just vague references to a general event. These prophecies were specific and time-sensitive. Listed on the next page are only a few of the hundreds of Messianic prophecies.

A. HIS BIRTH

Given: Isaiah 7:14—*“The Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.”*

Fulfilled: Matthew 1:18, 24, 25—*“She was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Joseph . . . knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn Son.”*

B. HIS ANCESTRY

Given: Isaiah 11:1—*“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse.”*

Fulfilled: Luke 3:23, 32—*“Jesus . . . being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph . . . the son of Jesse.”*

C. HIS BIRTHPLACE

Given: Micah 5:2—*“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, . . . yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”*

Fulfilled: Matthew 2:1—*“Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea.”*

D. HIS TIMING

Given: Daniel 9:25—*“That from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks [of years].”*

Fulfilled: Matthew 2:1—*“Jesus was born . . . in the days of Herod the king”* (Herod died in AD 4, just after Jesus was born, according to scholarly consensus, while the 69 weeks of Daniel [after the Jewish and Gregorian calendars are reconciled] were completed in AD 33. This fulfills Daniel’s prophetic dating.)

E. HIS SUFFERINGS

Given: Psalm 22:16-18—*“They pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them.”*

Fulfilled: Luke 23:34, 35—*“And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. And the people stood beholding.”*

F. HIS GLORY

Given: Psalm 68:18—*“Thou hast ascended on high.”*

Fulfilled: Mark 16:19—*“After the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven.”*

Some say Jesus “engineered” all these things to be fulfilled. Now, that is a wild statement. How can one possibly control the day of his birth or his ancestors? How can a person determine exactly when he dies, or predict how many pieces of silver he was betrayed for?

Others say Jesus’ fulfillment of over 300 Old Testament prophecies was “coincidental.” Peter Stoner says that the odds of one man fulfilling just *eight* prophecies of this nature are *one in ten to the seventeenth power!* That would be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. I don’t think “coincidence” cuts it, do you? Only God could have orchestrated an event of this magnitude.

***Third, these prophecies were supernaturally fulfilled in Jesus Christ.***

The apostle concludes that these prophecies were heard, fulfilled, and accepted as being fulfilled supernaturally: *“the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven”* (1 Peter 1:12). In other words, this is the witness of the Holy Spirit and Heaven itself—an unarguable fact. It’s what we preach, Peter says—and it is what we can believe.

So, why does all this bring hope? It brings hope to Christmas because it says that God orchestrated all these events, literally moving Heaven and earth, so that we might have a Saviour who would Himself bring us to God. And that, my friends, is hope.

I’m sure of it. ■

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**CHRISTIAN K. LEHMAN . . . cont’d. from p. 1**

In his late seventies he became partially handicapped physically. Two years later, at the age of 79, Christian K. Lehman went “home” to be with his Lord whom he had praised so long, through song, here on earth. The date was March 12, 1961. The funeral was held at Millersville, Pennsylvania. —Gail L. Emerson

## From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

## Year-End Musings

We note that the days of 2011 are rapidly slipping away, together with their opportunities. Christmas season is upon us and we find ourselves pulled in every direction except toward Christ. Busy schedules within our own circles, commercialism with its apparent demands pressing in from the world, and the many details of closing one year and beginning another, rob us of the quiet peaceful meditation which was evidenced in Mary, the mother of our Lord, when the Scripture states that she hid these things in her heart.

This is a time to reflect on the goodness and grace of God over this year as well as previous years. In spite of the turmoil and uncertainty in the world, God continues to be most faithful to His people. The publication you hold in your hand has been in existence since 1929 and has been wonderfully sustained by God's provision. The emphasis has not changed. With continuous teaching against apostasy, this publication ministry has enjoyed the approval of the remnant.

Please allow us to project some of the future vision over this outreach. Times are

changing whether we like it or not, and it seems that we will soon need to supplement the printed version of *Sword and Trumpet* with an electronic version. Please understand that we do not intend to forsake the printed version, but the fact is that some readers are moving toward a paperless existence. An investigation is going forward concerning a paid electronic subscription. We would like to see an expansion of our subscriber base and encourage you, the present readership, to assist us in this goal. We are offering a special introductory rate during January and February only to facilitate such. (See page 30 for details.)

We are accumulating a list of speakers that we could recommend who will be available to provide one-day seminars on specific issues of concern in today's church.

We solicit your prayers, your concerns, your interest, and your support in making the *Sword and Trumpet* more available across the Anabaptist world.

May the blessings of the Incarnation be yours as you pause and meditate on our Lord Jesus Christ. ■



# THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



## *A Devotional Commentary*



by David L. Burkholder

### *Introduction to Quarter's Lessons*

The lessons for the winter quarter (December, January, February) follow the general theme "God Establishes a Faithful People." The lessons for December are from the Book of Genesis with the sub-theme "God's Covenant." (The Christmas lesson, December 25, is from Luke 1.) In January there are four lessons from Genesis, and one from Exodus, under the theme "God's Protection." February's lessons are all taken from Galatians on the theme "God's Redemption." It will be helpful to your study to read broad context to the selected lesson passages.

The Book of Genesis is a book of beginnings: The Creation of the world and man, the introduction of sin into the world, the beginning of civilization, and the establishment of a special people of God through Abraham. One commentator states of Genesis: "Chapters 1-11 provide the keys which unlock the rest of the book as well as the rest of the Bible." Though not included in our lesson texts, these first 11 chapters should definitely be read as background.

Genesis and Exodus are historical by nature. Galatians gives us a concise, comprehensive statement of the salvation plan offered to all men through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, heir of Abraham whom we meet in Genesis.

Let these lessons inspire and challenge you again with God's great power and His concern for His highest creation—mankind.

## **DECEMBER 4, 2011**

### ***Abram: A Blessing for All Nations***

Genesis 12:1-9

God works with long-range plans. About 2,100 years after Creation, when God had set His plans for mankind in motion, He called Abram, who would be the progenitor of His special people, Israel, and through whom, and his descendants, He would bless all mankind. That blessing would be salvation from sin through the sacrifice of His Son to redeem fallen man back to Himself. Abram was to be a key figure in those plans. Not only would the Son of God be born to a descendant of Abram, but Abram would also be known as the

father of the faithful, those of every generation who would accept God's salvation by faith.

Abram had left his ancestral home in Ur of the Chaldees, along with his father and extended family, and settled in Haran, in northern Mesopotamia. It was there, after the death of his father Terah, that God spoke to Abram and instructed him to move on, to a land He would later identify. For Abram this was not just a physical move, but one of decided spiritual consequences. He was severing all ties with his former life and heritage, moving into the unknown with God as guide.

God's call to Abram included the promise of several blessings. Not only did God promise to make of him a great nation, but there was also the blessing of respect and

honor, all in a sense which Abram did not yet understand nor comprehend.

In obedience Abram set forth at the age of 75, taking his possessions and his nephew Lot with him. God had undoubtedly given at least some general direction for Abram's travel, for they set out for the land of Canaan. From Haran to Shechem was a distance of approximately 400 miles which, with Abram's large entourage, would have taken many weeks to cover.

While encamped at Shechem, God appeared to Abram again and promised to his seed the land whereon he rested. Then Abram built an altar and worshipped God who had led him to this place. Then again Abram pulled up stakes and moved about 35 miles and set up camp on the mountain between Bethel and Ai. (Ai was to figure significantly for Abraham's descendants some 600 years later during the conquest of Canaan.) Again, Abram worshipped.

Because of Abram and Lot's large flocks and herds, they found it difficult to find sufficient room among the inhabitants of the land. So they continued migrating southward until famine forced them down into Egypt.

In Abram we have the lessons of faith and obedience. He stepped out at God's direction and followed His leading (mostly) throughout his lifetime. Because of his faithfulness to God he became the source of blessing to all nations of men.

#### **For thought and discussion**

1. Can you imagine the faith Abram had to exercise to pull up stakes and move at God's direction without a clear goal in mind? Suppose God asked that of you. Would you be up to the challenge?
2. Could Abram even begin to grasp the implications of his obedience to God's call? What does that tell us about the importance of obedient trust?
3. Why doesn't God always tell us in advance of the blessings of our obedience? Discuss.
4. Note the first thing Abram did when landing on a place to which God led him. Why?

5. Enumerate the blessings Abram has provided for subsequent generations. Discuss.

*Lesson emphasis:* How Abram's obedience resulted in blessings, not only for himself, but for all subsequent generations.

*Key verses:* 1 and 2

## **DECEMBER 11, 2011**

### ***God's Promise to Abram***

Genesis 15:1-6, 12-18

Following last Sunday's lesson, Abram moved into Egypt to escape famine in the land of Canaan. He had now moved back into Canaan and settled again at Bethel where he had established camp earlier. Due to the size of their flocks and herds, Abram and Lot separated, with Lot choosing the plains near Sodom and Abram taking the hill country. In Chapter 14 we note where Abram rescued Lot and his possessions from the marauding kings of the east.

Chapter 15 then brings into focus another aspect of God's long-range plan and His more immediate plan for Abram. He would have an heir and his descendants would inhabit this land. The Lord's calming of Abram's fear (v. 1) may have had to do with the fact that prior to this God had promised him seed that would develop into a great nation. But it hadn't happened. However, God again assures Abram that his son, not the steward of his household, will be his heir.

To fix the promise in Abram's mind, God took him out on a starry night and asked if he could count the stars. Then God said, "So [numberless] shall thy seed be." In a tremendous exercise of faith, Abram accepted God's promise. God responded by accounting that faith of Abram to him as righteousness.

With that expression of faith, Abram was prepared to enter into covenant relationship with God. At God's direction Abram prepared a sacrifice. This sacrifice

was not only a symbol of the sealing of the covenant with God, but portrayed the future sacrifices necessary for Abram's descendants to maintain a proper relationship with God. And, it looked forward to the ultimate sacrifice of Abram's descendant as the cleansing for man's sin.

God then let Abram in on some of the long-range plans for his descendants, things he would not live to see take place. They would serve 400 years in a foreign land where they would be sorely afflicted. However, God would eventually judge that nation and bring His people out with great substance. Not only would this 400-year period allow Abram's descendants to grow into a mighty nation, it would also give time for the iniquity of the Amorites to ripen. God planned for His people to destroy the wicked Amorites and take possession of their land (see Deuteronomy 20:16-18).

God's covenant with Abram defined the borders of the land his descendants were to eventually possess. (The River of Egypt likely refers not to the Nile, but to Sihor. See Joshua 13:3). The complete possession of this large area did not happen until the Golden Age of Israel during the reigns of David and Solomon (see 2 Chronicles 9:26).

God's promises always come true.

#### **For thought and discussion**

1. What did God's promise to Abram include in verse 1?
2. What was Abram's greatest concern in light of God's promise?
3. What is the basis for faith? Discuss.
4. We don't always live to see the complete fulfillment of God's plan for our lives. How does Abram's experience provide us with incentive for faithful living?
5. Are there aspects of God's covenant promise to Abram that have not yet been fulfilled? Discuss.

*Lesson emphasis:* God's faithfulness to His promises, though long in accomplishment.

*Key verse:* 18

## **DECEMBER 18, 2011**

### ***God Tests Abraham's Faith***

Genesis 22:1-14

In the chapters between last Sunday's lesson and today's, we see the progress of events in Abram's life. We note the birth of Ishmael, the change of names for Abram and Sarai, the covenant of circumcision, Abraham's intercession for Sodom and, in Chapter 21, the birth of the promised heir, Isaac, when Abraham was 100 years old. Also, prior to today's text we note the sending away of Hagar and Ishmael, a young man of perhaps sixteen, because of the conflict he caused in the household.

Here now in Chapter 22 we see Abraham's great test of faith. God had fulfilled His promise in giving Abraham a son, the son of promise, when childbearing for Abraham and Sarah was physically beyond human possibility. Now God was asking Abraham to give him up in a most heart-wrenching manner, by the sacrifice of his life.

However heavy Abraham's heart, he obeyed God's directions and set out for Mount Moriah (see question #6). Notice Abraham's unflinching faith as he told his servants that he "and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." So, on they went with heavy steps and unanswered questions.

To add to Abraham's turmoil, Isaac inquired as to the whereabouts of the lamb for the sacrifice. He was aware there was a missing ingredient in their provisions. Abraham's response quieted the lad's heart and expressed Abraham's great confidence in God and His ability to provide and remain true to His promise (see Hebrews 11:17-19).

We can only imagine the thoughts going through Abraham's mind, and Isaac's, as he prepared for the sacrifice. His father heart yearned for answers, for relief, for a way out. But he was committed to obedience and so followed through as God had directed.



Then at the last moment, with the knife poised, God stayed Abraham's hand. He had seen what He wanted to see—Abraham's unblinking faith and obedience. God was satisfied that Abraham had already, in his heart, given up his son. That affirmed Abraham's faith and moved God to stop the process.

Then, as Abraham had told Isaac, God provided the sacrifice, a ram caught in a thicket behind them. Abraham named that holy and memorable place *Jehovah-jireh* meaning "The Lord will provide."

God knew prior to this test that Abraham was a righteous man and a man of faith (see 15:6 and 18:19). Obviously He used this experience to both deepen Abraham's faith and their relationship to each other (see Isaiah 41:8 and James 2:23).

#### **For thought and discussion**

1. This certainly would have been a traumatic experience for Abraham. Why do you suppose God put him through this test? Discuss.
2. Measure your faith against Abraham's. Could you pass the test? How does 1 Corinthians 10:13 fit into this?
3. What gave Abraham the courage to go on in spite of his fears? How does that help us face seemingly impossible situations? Discuss.
4. There is a very real lesson here in father-son relationships. Study it.
5. What has been your experience when you have exercised faith in God even when circumstances seemed impossible? Class sharing?
6. What was the significance of the mount upon which this drama took place?
7. Don't miss the parallel between Abraham's offering of his son with the experience of God offering His Son as a sacrifice.

*Lesson emphasis:* A firm faith in God's promises will carry us through every difficult situation in life.

*Key verse:* 8

**PAGE 8**

**DECEMBER 25, 2011**

#### ***God Fulfills His Promise***

Luke 1:46-55

Our lessons so far have focused on God's call of Abraham, His promise of blessing to all people through his posterity, and the ultimate test of Abraham's faith. Today we move many centuries forward to the grand climax of God's promise to Abraham, the coming of the long-promised Redeemer, the One destined to be the blessing through Abraham to all nations. It is fitting that on this Christmas Day we examine the events surrounding Jesus' birth.

The first part of Luke 1 (read it all) centers on angel visits predicting the birth of John as Jesus' forerunner and to Mary as the one to bear the Son of promise. Our text, known as The Magnificat, is Mary's expression of praise to God for the fulfillment of the long-awaited prophecy. She praises God for His favor upon her humble status (verses 46-49), she recognizes God's control over all mankind (verses 50-53), and exults in the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham (verses 54, 55). (See also Micah 7:20.)

Mary's expression of praise rose from the very depths of her being, encompassing all her faculties. She was overwhelmed by God's choice of her to bear the promised Messiah, but understood the significance and benefit of her role for all future generations. But she claimed no praise for herself; it was all directed in thanksgiving to God.

Her paean of praise recognizes God's dealings with mankind. He is merciful and benevolent to those who fear Him. He protects and provides for them. By contrast, He destroys the plans of the proud and removes earthly rulers at will. Mary's entire hymn recognizes the sovereignty of God, and subsequently, His control over all the affairs of man. It leaves no doubt that Mary's proclamation was prompted by the Holy Spirit dwelling within her.

Mary, like many of the prophets, did not comprehend the full meaning and implication of her hymn of praise. As one

**SWORD AND TRUMPET**

commentator states: “Only the life and death of Jesus and the Christian experience of all succeeding ages could reveal the full meaning of her words.” But she did understand this whole experience to be the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham and his descendants many years before. This acknowledges Mary’s spiritual insight and that she was one of many faithful ones eagerly awaiting the fulfillment of God’s promise.

Today, let’s rejoice as Mary did in the provision of God for all mankind.

#### For thought and discussion

1. Spend some time discussing God’s choice of Mary to be the mother of Jesus. What set her apart? Describe her character.
2. Pick out historical events in the history of Israel Mary may have been referring to in her hymn of praise.

3. As you examine the life and commitment of Mary, how does that challenge your own life and commitment? Are you worthy of God’s use?
4. We stated in the introduction to the December 4 lesson that God works with long-range plans. How much time had expired between God’s promise to Abraham and the fulfillment of that promise in today’s lesson? What does that tell us about God?
5. Be sure today to rejoice in God’s great gift of salvation and to thank Him that it has been extended to you.

*Lesson emphasis:* To rejoice in God’s faithfulness to His promises, and in His use of common people to achieve His purposes. Also, thank and praise Him for His great gift to mankind.

*Key verses:* 46, 47 ■

## Newslines . . .

by Hans Mast

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incidents events occurrences facts illustrations episodes committees vignettes proceedings problems  
experiences crises adventures transactions meetings tragedies scoops reports conferences happenings  
bulletins questions reports affairs dramas encounters personages actions tidings et cetera

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### James Dobson Interviews Ted Bundy

Now I realize that this is not current events; it’s very old news. It occurred one year after I was born, which is why when I ran across it recently, it was new news for me. It’s been a long time since 1989 but this news item has a very important message that bears repeating; a message that has become 100x more relevant since the interview was recorded. Ted Bundy was a serial killer who sexually assaulted and killed 28 women before being caught and sentenced to death. During his time in prison, he became a Christian. The day before his execution, he requested an interview with James Dobson of *Focus on the Family* to impart the following message which I will try to briefly convey.

**JD:** “How did it happen? Take me back. What are the antecedents of the behavior that we’ve seen? You were raised in what you

consider to be a healthy home. You were not physically, sexually, or emotionally abused.”

**TB:** “No. And that’s part of the tragedy of this whole situation. I grew up in a wonderful home with two dedicated and loving parents. . . . We regularly attended church. My parents did not drink or smoke or gamble. There was no physical abuse or fighting in the home; . . . it was a fine, solid Christian home. As a young boy of 12 or 13, I encountered, outside the home, in the local grocery and drug stores, softcore pornography. Young boys explore, . . . people would dump the garbage, . . . we would come across books of a harder nature—more graphic. . . . The most damaging kind of pornography—and I’m talking from hard, real, personal experience—is that that involves violence and sexual violence. The wedding of those two forces—as I know only too well—brings

about behavior that is too terrible to describe. Before we go any further, it is important to me that people believe what I'm saying. I'm not blaming pornography. I'm not saying it caused me to go out and do certain things. I take full responsibility for all the things that I've done. That's not the question here. The issue is how this kind of literature contributed and helped mold and shape the kinds of violent behavior."

**Later in the interview, TB:** "Basically, I was a normal person. I wasn't some guy hanging out in bars, or a bum. I wasn't a pervert in the sense that people look at somebody and say, 'I know there's something wrong with him.' I was a normal person. I had good friends. I led a normal life, except for this one small but very potent and destructive segment that I kept very secret and close to myself. Those of us who have been so influenced by violence in the media, particularly pornographic violence, are not some kind of inherent monsters. We are your sons and husbands. We grew up in regular families. Pornography can reach in and snatch a kid out of any house today. It snatched me out of my home 20 or 30 years ago. As diligent as my parents were, and they were diligent in protecting their children, and as good a Christian home as we had, there is no protection against the kinds of influences that are loose in a society that tolerates. . . ."

**TB:** "I'm no social scientist, and I don't pretend to believe what John Q. Citizen thinks about this, but I've lived in prison for a long time now, and I've met a lot of men who were motivated to commit violence. Without exception, every one of them was deeply involved in pornography—deeply consumed by the addiction. The FBI's own study on serial homicide shows that the most common interest among serial killers is pornographers."

There are at least two important lessons that we urgently need to draw from this: 1. We need to be proactive in ensuring accountability within our churches to give our people opportunity to gain victory over pornography. I've done a little research (through anonymous surveys) into the prevalence of pornography in conservative Anabaptist circles and it's shockingly high. As Bundy said, he was a seemingly normal

person with a secret. We need to make our churches a place where that secret can be let out without fear of ostracization and rejection, but with clear accountability and follow-up. Secrecy and too much "discretion" is where sin thrives. Unfortunately, we sometimes let the good value of being sensitive about talking in public in a crude fashion override the clear commands of Scripture to teach diligently about this matter. 2. Pornography is not something that hurts only ourselves, but also those around us. Maybe not through serial rape and killings, but through damaged relationships if nothing else.

God's rules for our lives are for our own best interest.

—Excerpt from "Fatal Addiction: Ted Bundy's Final Interview" on PureIntimacy.org.

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### More Tyranny in Russia

Former KGB colonel Vladimir Putin was President of Russia for eight years from 2000 to 2008. The Russian constitution allows only two consecutive presidential terms, so he switched places with his Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev from 2008 to 2012 (however, Putin was still seen as the main power in Russia). He has just announced that they will revert roles again for the 2012 presidential elections. Meanwhile constitutional changes have extended the term to six years, probably meaning twelve more years of Putin as the top Russian leader (nearly a ¼-century of Putin rule, six years less than Josef Stalin).

Putin is very popular in Russia, having boosted the economy and restored law and order after the disastrous Boris Yeltsin years. However, he's brought a little too much law and order with violent repression of any political rivals. He even had a political opponent who had fled to London for asylum assassinated there. He also very carefully controls the public media in Russia.

Overall it seems that Putin is returning Russia—for the most part with the consent of its citizens—to the dark days of the Soviet Union by following the Chinese model of liberalizing\* the economy, but keeping the political system under strict Communist-style control.

—Sources: *Financial Times*

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## Economic Primer

I started this for the preceding asterisk, but as it grew, decided to add it as a section.

\*This can be a confusing term since political liberals tend to favor a conservative, closed-market, centralized control (socialist or communist) economy, and political conservatives tend to favor a liberalized, free-market, free-enterprise economy. Economic terms of conservatism and liberalism are the exact opposite of political terms. Liberal and conservative are always confusing terms since they are relative. More exact terms for economics are Keynesian school (conservative, mercantile, protectionist, interventionist, centralized) vs. Austrian school (liberal, free-trade, free-market, decentralized, *laissez-faire*).

I found an excellent example that illustrates the differences between these two schools of thought in easy-to-understand terms: For years, we've had an interventionist policy toward forest fires. Whenever a forest fire started, our firefighters put it out. The fires burned down valuable timber that we would have preferred to harvest, it put lives at risk, and it polluted the air. We achieved our goal: most fires were quickly quenched. However, an unexpected side effect of that was that the few forest fires that were not immediately extinguished quickly soared out of control at a rate far exceeding historical fires. Before we started intervening, small, natural fires that burned themselves out removed the underbrush and deadwood and left the big trees standing. When those natural fires were not allowed to remove the deadwood and underbrush, the forests became a tinderbox that went up as if fueled by gas. It made the fires much worse and far more dangerous, both to people and the forest. The small, natural fires did not get hot enough to burn the mature treetops, which remained safe. However, the big fires destroyed the mature trees along with the deadwood. The small, natural fires also stimulated new growth by clearing out sunlight-blocking undergrowth and stimulating seed production, which sowed the next generation of trees. Nowadays, forest management services realize that and allow controlled burns to clear out

that underbrush in the way that has happened naturally for years, rather than intervening in every little brush fire to try to maintain 100% tree harvestability and 100% safety. We've recognized that a little short-term pain removes a lot of long-term pain.

Unfortunately, Keynesians haven't recognized that this is a beautiful picture of the same thing that happens to our economy. Keynesians interfere with monetary policy and government spending to try to maintain perpetual growth and squelch little recessions and protect jobs. However, little recessions perform the natural task of eliminating the deadwood—the businesses run inefficiently and the busy-work jobs that are not producing value for people. If those deadwood jobs and businesses and mortgages are protected by interfering with the process of nature, when a recession does get out of control (because nature demands that those inefficient uses of money must be removed; they cannot naturally sustain themselves) it is much worse and wreaks much greater and wider havoc; deadwood and mature trees (good businesses) alike are destroyed.

Furthermore, the short-term pain of small, intermittent recessions makes the overall economy healthier by creating ripe opportunity for new businesses. A good businessman has his best opportunity in a recession since labor is cheap and any goods he produces must be very high quality and low cost; thus a very efficient and excellent business must be the result. Some of our most innovative and value-producing companies have been produced in this environment, setting the stage for an even more prosperous future.

—Sources: *Wikipedia, ChrisMartenson.com Forum*

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## Suicide Bomber Attacks Indonesian Church

A suicide bomber in the Central Indonesian town of Solo blew himself up in an evangelical church. Terrorist groups are upset that churches have been doing a lot of evangelism in Muslim neighborhoods. He killed only himself, but injured 27. He was on Indonesia's most-wanted list in connection with another

suicide bombing in which he drove the bomber to his target: a police mosque.

*The Wall Street Journal* writes, “Sunday’s bombing follows a series of other violent, and sometimes deadly, attacks on religious minorities. In February, hundreds of protesters burned churches and attacked a courthouse in central Indonesia after a Christian convicted of blasphemy against Islam was given what they considered a lenient five-year prison sentence.”

Also this year a mob of 1500 people attacked another religious minority group, killing three and injuring six. Twelve mob members received three- to five-month sentences while a man defending himself from the mob received a six-month sentence.

—Sources: *The Wall Street Journal* (Asia Edition), *Voice of America*, *AFP*

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### News Snippets

Humans are better at pattern recognition than computers. It took computer gamers of the online game *Foldit* a grand total of ten days to solve a problem that had stumped AIDS experts (with their many computer algorithms) for ten years: the folded shape of a particular enzyme that allows an HIV-like virus to reproduce. These gamers had no background in biochemistry. —*TIME*

The grass is always greener in the other ditch. While Americans have generally been bemoaning the poor state of education in the U. S., especially when compared to stellar scores of such Asian countries as Japan and Korea, South Koreans are looking to move to a more American system which encourages more creativity above straight academics. In fact, they’ve gone so far in the fight to cut back the enormous amounts of studying by high school students trying to gain acceptance to the best universities that they’ve set a curfew on the ubiquitous private *hagwon* night schools of 10 p.m. —*TIME*

A Dallas-area business has an unusual condition to using a coupon for a \$20 oil change: Recite John 3:16 from memory. The owner said (as paraphrased by *CBS DFW*) he “did it as a conversation starter in an effort to talk to people about what he

believes.” He goes on (in a direct quote) to say, “It’s one thing about America, you can go and do what you want. I’m not making you do anything and I’m tired of people making me do something.” —*CBS*

*DFW* writes, “Dallas attorney Andy Siegel, who has handled discrimination and denial of service cases before, said with no connection to federal funds, or federal highways, the discount appears to be within the law, though he said the conversation could have been started a different way. ‘The study of the Bible has many rewards. I’m not sure that God intended a lube discount to be among its many riches.’ ” —*CBS DFW*

Equatorial Guinea spent \$800 million, several times its annual education budget, on building a new resort to host the annual African Union’s (AU) summit. Each African leader was built a luxurious villa with an elevator and gourmet chef and overlooked an artificial beach carved out of the coast. This bribe bought a regime, notorious for human rights violations including electroshock torture of its political opponents, a unanimous resolution from the AU endorsing a U. N. human rights prize to be named after the dictatorial president (came to power in coup 32 years ago, executed predecessor) of Equatorial Guinea. With AU support, the U. N. resolution will probably pass. This makes further mockery of the U. N. as a fair and impartial international body. This is the same U. N. whose human rights commission has included such members and chairpersons as China, Zimbabwe, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Algeria, Syria, Libya, Uganda, and Vietnam. The worst, however, was electing Sudan as a member when it was engaged in the notorious Darfur “ethnic cleansing” slaughter of 300,000+ civilians and 2.8 million displaced people. —*AP, Wikipedia*

An Iranian pastor has refused to convert to Islam (though offered the opportunity three times) to save his life. He has been convicted of apostasy (converting from Islam to Christianity) and sentenced to death. —*International Business Times*

As always, I welcome your feedback to [hansmast@hansmast.com](mailto:hansmast@hansmast.com).



# *Projecting Poverty Where It Doesn't Exist*

by Steve Saint

I have been in relationship with the Waodani since 1956, when they killed my dad Nate and four of his friends. My relationship continued through the time my aunt Rachel lived with them beginning in 1958 through her death in 1994. I most recently lived with the Waodani beginning just after Aunt Rachel's death in 1994 until later in 1997, maintaining a house and spending about one quarter of my time with them until 2008.

When people visit the Waodani, they look around and think, "Wow, these people have nothing!" People from the outside think the Waodani are poor because they don't have three-bedroom ramblers with wall-to-wall carpeting, double garages so full of stuff the cars never fit and, I guess, because they never take vacations to exotic places like Disney World.

So, on speaking tours I began describing these jungle dwellers as "people who all have waterfront property, multiple houses, and spend most of their time hunting and fishing." The most common response I have gotten when describing the Waodani this way is, "Wow, would I ever like to live like that!" I agree completely.

Mincaye, on the other hand, sees the way we "Outsiders" live here in "The foreigner's place" and makes comments like: "Why, never sitting, do the foreigners run around and around in their car things speaking to each other on their talking things but never hunting or fishing or telling stories to each other?" After traveling and speaking with me in the U. S., Canada, and Europe, Mincaye is always greatly relieved to get back to his thatched-roof hut, with the open fire wafting smoke in his face, eating whatever happens to be in the cooking pot. He sits around in jungle-stained clothes and the look on his face tells it all. He would not live in North America for all the green paper and little pieces of plastic he could carry. He

doesn't understand how money and credit cards work but he knows foreigners can't leave home without them.

Mincaye is a rich man. Or, he was until someone taught him to drive a golf cart and he started thinking how much fun it would be to take his 57 grandchildren for rides up and down the Nemompade airstrip where we used to live together. Now he wants his own golf cart (which means he would need a charging station, and a solar panel farm to power it, and a shop to maintain it, and spare parts to keep it running, . . .).

From my life experiences with the Waodani—and other people groups in Africa, Asia, and South America who live simply and materially contentedly—I have learned that it is unreasonable to evaluate their "lack" based on our distorted and exaggerated perception of need. When we try to meet phantom needs of people who live at a lower material standard than we have learned to consider "minimal," we not only fall into a trap that keeps us from seeing their real needs but we also tempt them into a snare that can raise their perception of need beyond what their economy can support.

When we project poverty on people where it doesn't exist, we also overlook the actual poverty with which they struggle. Solomon said it well, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them" (Eccl. 5:10, 11).

## *Dangerous Charity*

Often charity to help the poor attracts more people into poverty. One example I have noticed takes place when North Americans try to care for the needs of orphans in cultures different from our own. If you build really nice orphanages and provide good food and a great education, lots more children in those places become orphans. I

see this happen all over. When we attempt to eradicate poverty through charity, we often attract more people into “needing” charity. It is possible to create need where it did not exist by projecting our standards, values, and perception of need onto others.

So what is poverty? We in the “Wealthy West” have little understanding of “poverty.” As our standard of living has risen in developed countries, our perception of poverty has changed.

Consider how our definition of an orphan is different from most other cultures. In the U. S., you are an orphan if your mother and father have died. In South America (where I grew up), as in other contexts where extended family structures are intact, you are not really considered an orphan as long as you have a living grandparent, uncle, aunt, or older brother or sister who is capable of helping take care of you. So when North Americans build an orphanage in South America, we “create” orphans by tempting family members to take advantage of our well-intentioned largess. This is seldom in the best interest of those children who are “orphaned” by our desire to meet what we perceive as their need.

### ***Provoking Poverty***

In the same way, proximity and exposure to wealth can provoke a sense of poverty. A group of North Americans going on a short-term mission—with our international cell phones, iPads, fancy clothes, and fat wallets to buy curios and spend on hotels and restaurants—can create more comparative poverty than most of us can imagine.

But, all of that is not the issue. Do we have a responsibility to care for the poor? Yes. First Corinthians 8:11–15 hits the nail on the head. Let me summarize—“No Christ-follower should have too much while anyone else has too little.” So, should we all become poor so that we are no longer responsible? No. Paul also points out that this teaching is not intended to put the poor at ease and to burden the wealthy (2 Thess. 3:6-12).

Among *people living simply amidst abundant resources*, poverty is not measured in annual income or net worth, but in “what I have in comparison to what those around

me have.” In such context poverty is more of an attitude and a mood than an actual state of having or not having something. In such contexts, contentment is the secret. Some people think 1 Timothy 6:6 says, “Godliness is a means of gain,” but really it says, “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” Where there is godliness with contentment there is no perceived “poverty” until discontentment has been stirred.

### ***Building Up Christ’s Body***

Our goal in planting Christ’s church where it doesn’t exist must be to produce churches that are self-propagating, self-governing and self-supporting; especially where the members come from a background of hopelessness, powerlessness, and inadequate resources. The most important aspect of church planting is whatever that fledgling congregation needs most. In a growing number of cases, the greatest need new churches have is to become self-supporting.

Giving handouts creates more problems than it solves. It is like casting out demons with long leases. Break the lease or they will come back and bring more roommates (Luke 11:24–26). Where the Church is being established among people that perceive themselves as powerless, there is a great need for deep discipleship, wrestling with the roots of poverty at the community level rather than concentrating on the individual.

Financial help that does not develop sustainable, local, financial self-sufficiency is much more likely to create poverty than it is to meet real needs. Until we realize that we can’t overcome poverty with handouts, we will never be much help in completing Christ’s Great Commission.

As followers of Christ we must fight poverty through discipleship rather than covering it with spiritual frosting. Either we do God’s will God’s way or we aren’t doing His will at all. Discipleship means teaching others what we have learned so they can teach others to care for their community’s physical, economic, emotional, and spiritual needs on a sustainable basis (2 Tim. 2:2, Matt. 28:19–20)! ■

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## Counseling From the Word

# The Art of Forgiveness

by Nolan Byler

What Bible character comes to your mind when you think of people that were greatly wronged in many ways? I think of Joseph. If anyone ever had reason to be bitter, angry, and vengeful, it was Joseph. But I don't read that he was. We have all suffered wrongs at some time or another. But how many of you are hated by your family? How many of you have been thrown into a pit by your brothers? Have you been sold as a slave? How many of you have been falsely accused of impurity? Have you been thrown into prison when innocent? Very few of you have suffered wrongs of this magnitude. How did Joseph handle it?

I'm certain that Joseph had hurt feelings. He suffered a lot of pain in his life. Joseph, however, had learned the art of forgiveness.

What is it? Forgiveness is the release from an obligation. It is the act of setting someone free from an obligation that is the result of a wrong done against you. In monetary terms, it means canceling a debt completely. The king in Matthew 18 forgave his servant of all his debt. The servant no longer owed the king a cent. Forgiveness means giving up an inward feeling of injury and resentment. It includes the trading of a feeling of anger for a feeling of love and acceptance. With God's help, Joseph was able to do that.

But how do you forgive? Someone has pointed out that forgiveness is an act of faith. It is a refocusing from the offender to God. You look at the offender as a tool in God's hand. Though it can be very painful, you realize the good that can come from it. Joseph did that. He said, "But as for you, ye

thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good" (Gen. 50:20).

Notice the beautiful attitude Joseph had toward his brothers. He carried no ill will. He saw God's hand in it all. He was focused upon God rather than on the offenders. Now don't think for a moment that it was easy.

Forgiveness is a process that needs to be practiced on a continual basis. Remember, Joseph was seventeen when he was sold into Egypt. He was thirty when he became ruler. It was nine years later when he revealed himself to his brothers. So Joseph had been practicing forgiveness for twenty-two years already. Then Joseph's family moved to Egypt and it was some years until his father Jacob died. Apparently, Joseph's brothers still had guilt and anxiety over what they had done because they feared Joseph would take revenge after their father had died. Yet, Joseph continued to practice forgiveness. He realized that forgiveness was a means of exalting the Lord and His purposes. Do you and I see it that way?

Some people insist that you have not forgiven if you do not forget the wrong that was done to you. I believe that is a misconception that haunts many people. Instead of the cliché "forgive and forget," a better one would be "forgive and love." You may be able to forget very minor wrongs in your life that you have forgiven. But do you think Joseph ever forgot how his brothers or the Potiphar's wronged him? No! Do you have some hurts in your life that have been forgiven, but still remember? No doubt you do. I do. People might quote Jeremiah 31:34 where God says "and I will remember their

sin no more.” But God doesn’t forget. He knows all things. What that verse and other similar passages are saying is that He does not remember them *against* us anymore. The debt has been paid in full. He forgives and loves just as we are to do. It is not that you totally forget, but that your attitude is right. The injury has healed, but there are still scars.

***Let me share some practical steps of forgiveness:***

1. Choose to forgive.
2. Confess your sin (your failure to forgive) to God.
3. Ask the forgiveness of those you have wronged.
4. Ask God to bless the person who has hurt you. Pray daily for him. God will put love in your heart for that person.
5. Do something nice for the person who has

- hurt you. That is a sign of true forgiveness.
6. Accept the person the way he is, even when he is all wrong.
  7. Look at the person through the eyes of faith believing that God can change him.

God needs more “Josephs” who are willing to forgive and love. Forgiveness is not always easy. In fact, it can be very painful. When you refuse to forgive others, however, you not only deepen your own hurt, you grieve the One who gave Himself completely so that you might have eternal forgiveness. You prevent Him from forgiving you and giving you peace. Perhaps God has shown you some unforgiveness you have been harboring in your heart. Follow the example of Joseph. Practice the art of forgiveness and experience the freedom it will bring to your life. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Deeper Life Ministries* newsletter, July/August 2011.

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## Young Women and Discretion

by Walter E. Isenhour

*“The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness . . . that they may teach the young women to be sober . . . to be discreet, chaste . . . that the word of God be not blasphemed” —Titus 2:3-5.*

**I**n the fifth verse of the second chapter of Titus the aged women are to teach young women “to be discreet.” What does it mean to be discreet? It means to be prudent, judicious, cautious; wise in conduct and management, especially as to matters of propriety and self-control.

A young woman who measures up to these qualities in mind, heart, soul, spirit, and life certainly rises above the degrading principles of sin and wickedness. Her life is one of nobility, beauty, usefulness, and sublimity. She sets examples before her husband, children, and neighbors that are worthy of emulation. They know her life is hid with Christ in God. She possesses the Spirit of our Lord, and this enables her to discern between the evil and the good, and

to avoid evil, error, and anything and all things that would mislead her. She likewise shields her husband and children from evils and errors, sins and wickedness, that they are environed with. At least she warns and cautions them against such, and shows them the higher, better, holier, and more beautiful and worthwhile things in life.

The discreet woman is possessed with the spirit and ability to adopt “means to an end,” and of course this means that which brings her and the family to a good end. She avoids the means that would injure her life, character, soul, and influence, and that would likewise injure her family and those about her. She must realize that what she takes into her life will have its effect, through the years—and will bring her to a

good end, only as the means are good. She knows that the good will work out right, while the bad will work out wrong. She realizes that the good is a means to a good end, but the bad is a means to a bad end. Therefore she takes into her very soul the good and rejects the bad. She is discreet. Those who know her realize that she is a woman of great and commendable discretion.

Her discretion includes prudence. She is careful about her conduct, her influence, her aims, plans, and purposes. She guards her tongue, her temper, and her dress. She is decent in dress, upright in manners, and is careful to lead others right. She uses economy at home, seeing that nothing is wasted, and lives within her income. Extravagance is far from her. She is not stingy by any means, as there is a vast difference in stinginess and economy. Rather, she is blessedly liberal, yet she is cautious to see that money is not foolishly and uselessly expended; that food and clothing are not wasted, and that anything usable is not cast into the rubbish heap and carried away as rubbish.

Perhaps she is a faithful tither. In fact, every Christian woman should tithe. God always blesses the one who tithes. Not only should women tithe their means faithfully, but men should do likewise. This is God's financial plan for our lives. It always works right. Praise to the Lord.

The discreet woman is likewise judicious. She is governed by sound judgment. She is wise. The devil can't lead her into the snares, traps, and pitfalls that he leads the sinful, wicked world into. She prays for wisdom, for sound judgment, and God gives it unto her. She helps her husband with his problems, and helps him in his decisions, plans, aims, and purposes. She uses her good judgment in the home, in the church, in the community; and when she passes on anything, it is usually right. The enemy can't "pull the wool over her eyes" as he does the woman who only lives in sin and serves the world and the flesh. To God be the praise and the glory. What a blessed thing for a wife and mother to be sound in her judgment—and when she passes on anything, for it to be in reason and

within the will of God! If sometimes she errs, it is an exception, and is of the head and not the heart. God overrules in all such and brings good out of it (Rom. 8:28).

The discreet woman is cautious as to how she lives, with whom she keeps company, where she goes, what she says, and what she does along life's journey. She helps her husband and children to be cautious. We might say, too, that the unmarried woman is discreet—and every one should be—who uses much caution as she journeys through the years. She is cautious as to her company, as to her courtship and companionship, as to her character and virtue, her conduct, and influence. She is cautious about everything that pertains to noble and beautiful womanhood. She regards her character far above riches, and the trifling evils, pleasures, amusements, and destructive sins of the world. To her, clean, pure, upright womanhood is a "pearl of great price" (Matt. 13:46). She would not sell her virtue, character, and pure womanhood for all the gold and silver, rubies, diamonds, jewels, and pearls in the world. She is not for sale at any price. That's womanhood at its best. That is what makes a woman a real lady in the sight of both God and man. Men respect her, admire, love, and appreciate her, out of hearts that are godly, which likewise make them Christian gentlemen.

The discreet woman conducts herself wisely. Life to her is real and earnest. It is noble and sublime. Her deportment is such that men take knowledge of her—that she has "been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). She possesses great self-control. She cannot be led astray, like silly women who are worldly and ungodly. She anchors her life to God, to Christ, the mighty "Rock of Ages."

To be a discreet woman is a wonderful height to reach in life. It is more to be desired than education, fame, honor, and earthly glory. The woman of great discretion certainly out-rises, outshines, and far outdistances the ungodly movie star, actress, popular worldly flapper, or anyone else that lives for the devil. ■

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## Sermon of the Month



*Each month we will feature a Biblical sermon in this column. We would like to emphasize expository preaching and ask our readers to submit good expository sermons for consideration. Please send typewritten copies by "snail mail" or E-mail to: Editor, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803; swandtrump@verizon.net.*

### *The Search of the Shepherds*

by Robert E. Neighbour

**Luke 2:8-18**

**T**he Christmas story from any angle is most interesting. Our study is well named, for the duty of the shepherd IS to search for the sheep that go astray.

We remember that wonderful song "There Were Ninety and Nine." The song describes the ninety and nine lying safely within the shelter of the fold, while one was out on the hills away, lost and wandering. The Shepherd in this song is Christ, and He passes on through the "thorns" of Calvary until, at last, He finds the sheep, and, placing it on His shoulders, brings it home with rejoicings.

We remember that Christ is the Good Shepherd of the sheep, because He gives His life for the sheep; that He is the Great Shepherd, because He came forth from the grave in resurrection power; and that He is the Chief Shepherd in His glorious Second Coming.

We need not marvel, therefore, that the Lord came to certain shepherds who were in that same country watching their sheep by night. The Good, and the Great, and the Chief Shepherd of the sheep, came to the underling shepherds who were faithfully fulfilling their task.

1. God, in sending the angel to the shepherds, was, in fact, suggesting that He was sending Christ, the Shepherd of Israel, to die for His sheep.

2. The shepherds, in seeking the Lord's Shepherd, and in worshiping Him, were acknowledging the supremacy of the Heav-

enly Shepherd over the earthly shepherds. There are shepherds many, but there is but One, who is Chief. Even in the church, pastors are called shepherds (1 Peter 5:2-4), but they all are subservient to the Chief Shepherd, who will soon appear with His crown for the under-shepherds.

3. Christ was the Lamb of God, and the shepherds were seeking for the heavenly Lamb. We know that Christ was announced, in after years, by John the Baptist as, "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." He, then, who was Shepherd, was also Lamb.

This is one of God's paradoxes; the **Shepherd** of the sheep, went like a **Lamb** to the slaughter; and the Shepherd was like a sheep standing dumb before His shearers.

Thus, the great Bible doctrine of substitution is set forth in striking symbolism. He who was Shepherd, becomes Lamb. He who was the Shepherd seeking the sheep which was lost, becomes the Lamb "lost" for us; bearing our sins; while the "shepherds of the country" came seeking Him.

#### **I. "Let Us . . . Go!"**

The words "Let us go" are found in Luke 2:15. They were spoken by the shepherds on that memorable day of Christ's birth. We will pick up the threads and seek to discover the reason for the shepherds' words.

Why did the shepherds say, "Let us go"? In the nearby country, lying around Beth-

lehem, there were shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night. "And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid." Then the angel said unto them, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

No sooner had the announcement of the angel of the Lord been ended, and the fact been given that the Babe would be found wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger; than, "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." When this great sight was completed and the heavenly glory that surrounded them had passed, the shepherds said, "Let us go."

How many of you would have liked to have gone with those shepherds, in search of the Lord's Christ? The wise men came from afar, seeking Him who was born King of the Jews. Would you have been happy to have joined them in their journey over the sands seeking the Christ Child? Certainly you would! Even today, after the lapse of almost two thousand years, your heart thrills with joy as you join in the singing of carols unto Him.

Certainly you would, and yet, we wonder if you have really come to Him, and have opened your heart to receive Him as your Lord.

Jesus said once, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Did you answer, "I will go"? Then, did you go to Him? The prodigal son said, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." What followed? "And he arose and came to his father."

Have you come from the far country seeking the Lord? Have you found Him? Are you at home with the Lord; saved, robed, and satisfied?

How many, in the days of old, came to Jesus, seeking salvation and healing? Come, let us join them, and seek the Lord. Let us sing that good old song which our

mother sang and our father loved:

I will arise and go to Jesus,  
He will embrace me in His arms;  
In the arms of my dear Saviour,  
Oh, there are ten thousand charms.

## II. "Let Us Now Go!"

We have added one word of three letters, to the theme of the first part. That little word *is* most vital in our decision to go to Christ. The word is "**now**."

There was no thought of delay with the shepherds, no desire to procrastinate. They said let us **now** go. Does the same spirit of prompt decision, and of immediate action rest with all who hear this word?

**1. NOW is God's time.** "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

We live in one eternal **now**; we cannot climb over **now**; we pass around **now**; we cannot crawl under **now**. We have no other time than **now**.

**2. TOMORROW is a fool's word.** "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow" (James 4:13, 14).

Our life is but a vapor which appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away. How dare we, then, waste our little **now**? Shall we say, "When I have a more convenient season"? Do we know that such a season will ever be ours?

**3. Today is the time for decision.** Joshua said, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15). If we are not coming at God's time, when will we come? How long will we halt between two opinions? If God be God, let us follow Him.

Is it right for us to say, "Not now, by and by," when God says **today**? "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Hebrews 3:15).

We once entered a lawyer's office. On his desk stood a motto beautifully framed. The motto read: "Do it now." We asked him if the motto meant much to him. He said that it meant success in business. Shall we have a weaker motto in things which relate to eternal life?

### III. "Even Unto Bethlehem"

The shepherds said, "Let us now go **even unto Bethlehem.**" They purposed in their hearts to go all of the way. There was no thought of stopping short of a full obedience. How many there are who fall by the wayside!

**1. The prodigal son came to his father.** First of all he said, "I will arise and go to my father." Did he fall short of his purpose? Not he. "He arose and came to his father." Beloved, you dare not loiter by the way. Until you have found certain salvation in Christ and have experienced a *real* salvation, cease not your search. To tarry on the doorstep of peace and life, is sheer folly. Go even unto Bethlehem.

**2. To start, and then to fall back, is folly.** Christ said, "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

Shall we say, "I will follow thee, but let me **first** go and bid them farewell, which are at home at my house"? Shall we say, "Lord, suffer me **first** to go and bury my father"?

Paul wrote to the Galatians, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" They had started, but turned back and had become entangled again in a yoke of bondage. Is it not better, not to have known the way of righteousness, than, having known it, to turn away from it? Herod heard John and heard him gladly. He even observed John and did many things; but Herod was not willing to give up his brother Philip's wife, whom he had wrongfully married. Let us go "even unto Bethlehem."

**3. To faint by the way is to fail to reap our harvest.** There is a message here for Christians as well as for the unsaved. We read in God's Book: "Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, **if we faint not.**"

How many Christians fall by the wayside! How many are like the seed among thorns, which proved unfruitful because the cares of this life, the pleasures of the world, and deceitfulness of riches choked their growth! We need to go through with God—**even unto Bethlehem.**

PAGE 20

### IV. "Let Us See This Thing Which Has Come to Pass"

Truly a great "sight" was to be found in Bethlehem. There in a manger was a Saviour who was Christ the Lord. There in a manger was "God, manifest in flesh." There in a manger was "Immanuel," God with us.

**1. We wonder if Christmas revelers fail to see this GREAT "THING" in the Christ of the manger?** We sing our nativity songs and do homage to the Babe of Bethlehem. Do we remember that that Babe was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy: "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder"? That Babe, according to the Prophet, was to be called, "Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of peace." Do we recognize Him as such?

**2. We wonder if Christmas revelers see in "this thing, which has come to pass," "a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord"?** If a ship was sinking slowly but surely at sea, could a greater sight be seen than a "saviour ship" heaving to for the rescue? No marvel that the Angel of the Lord said, "I bring you good tidings of great joy!" No marvel that the shepherds said, "This thing which has come to pass"! God had given promise that the Seed of the woman should bruise the head of Satan; now that promise had come to pass.

Isaiah, in the Spirit, had written, "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shalt call his name Immanuel"; now that "thing" had come to pass.

Micah, in the Holy Spirit, wrote, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting"; now that very "thing" had come to pass.

### V. "They Came . . . and Found . . . the Babe"

Let us mark three things:

**1. They came**—obedient to the word of the angel. They came—they put action to their conviction. They came to the place

SWORD AND TRUMPET

where they were told to come—to Bethlehem, to the city of David. Let us look for Christ where He is to be found. The women sought for Him in the sepulcher, but the two angels said, “He is not here, but is risen.”

Today we cannot find Jesus the Lord where the shepherds found Him, in a manger. Today we cannot find Him in the grave, where the women failed to find Him. He is now at the Father’s right hand, exalted a Prince and a Saviour.

**2. They came with haste.** They had the urge within them to hurry. They did not want any event to take away the Lord before they arrived.

Suppose that Bartimaeus had stopped his cry for help when many bade him to hold his peace—he never would have seen Christ; for that day Jesus was passing through Jericho for the last time.

**3. They came and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe.** The word spoken by angels was sure and steadfast. Nothing said by angels needs to be unsaid, or modified. The word spoken by the prophets, in the Holy Spirit, is likewise sure and steadfast. This first coming was fulfilled, according to the word spoken by the angel. Christ’s Second Coming will be just as faithfully fulfilled. Not one word shall fail.

We wonder how many of you have come and found the Saviour? Hear the promise, then shall ye “find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”

#### **VI. “The Babe Lying in a Manger”**

What surprises cling to the birth of Christ! His humble parentage—(Mary, the wife of a carpenter). His humble village of birth—(Bethlehem, little among the cities of Judah). His humble crib—(Ye shall find the Babe in a manger). Let us linger awhile in the stable and view the manger.

Oh, my soul, be hushed, and wonder,  
In the manger, on the hay,  
Mid the cattle and the plunder,  
Christ the infant Child doth lay.

Why was He laid in the manger?

**1. There was no room for Him in the inn.** Christ had come to the world, and the world was made by Him, but the world

knew Him not. Christ had come to His own, and His own received Him not.

**2. There was, in the manger, a token that He was easy of access.** Had He been laid in a cradle, bedecked with the jewels of royalty, the shepherds and the common people would have been more than afraid to have sought Him. Where is he who would not seek the Lord, in a manger?

**3. The “manger” spoke of His humiliation.** He humbled Himself, and came in fashion as a man. He was God, but was God bending low to the lowly.

**4. The environment of His cradle—the cattle,** told that He was to mix and mingle with sinners—seeking the lost that He might redeem them.

#### **VII. They Returned Praising God**

Thank God for the happy climax! Is it not always thus? He who finds the Christ, and worships Him, will find in Him, “all joy.”

**1. They rejoiced because they had proved God and found Him true.** They knew that they had not been deceived by the angel. They were assured in their own minds that the Word of God was “yea and amen.” Beloved, let us know that God’s Word is forever settled in Heaven.

**2. They rejoiced because the fact that they had found the Babe according to the word of the angel made what the angel said ABOUT the Christ also “yea and amen.”** That is—they had found more than a Babe—they had found a Saviour who was “Christ the Lord.”

**3. They rejoiced, because they realized that in that Babe there was God’s promise of “good will to men.”** The far-reaching results of the birth of that holy Babe, we know today, better than they knew; yet they knew that He was a Child of destiny—a deliverer of Israel from her woes.

**4. They rejoiced and glorified God.** They rejoiced and shared with others their joy. They certainly told abroad what they had heard and seen.

*Let us go and do likewise!* ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Biblical Evangelist*, November/December 2007.

# Hold Fast

by John Master

**M**aintaining a Biblical worldview is always a challenge. How tempted we are to view life from the perspective of our circumstances rather than through the lens of God's revelation!

The first readers of the Book of Hebrews were losing their focus. These believers faced suffering (Heb. 11:32-39). Some of their group may have already been martyred (13:7). So, others were responding by minimizing their stand for Jesus, keeping a low profile, even staying away from the assembly of believers (Heb. 10:25).

Their wavering reminded the author of Hebrews of the Old Testament incident at Kadesh-barnea. There the children of Israel failed to trust God's power and goodness and refused to advance into the Promised Land (Numbers 14; Psalm 95; Hebrews 3). The writer of Hebrews does not want to see this pattern repeated in his readers. In Hebrews 10:23 he warns: **"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)."**

When the author reminds the Hebrews to **"hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering,"** he recalls the basic content of their belief. God had saved them. Their confession of Jesus recognized Him as God come in the flesh. He had died to pay the penalty for their sin. His obedience had also involved suffering; "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross" (Heb. 12:2). Yet the pressures of the moment were blurring their confidence that the One who had provided salvation could meet their present needs.

But "holding fast" may be easier said than done. So to this command the author first attaches the theological truth: **"He is faithful that promised."** Like the Israelites at Kadesh-barnea, the Hebrews

were forgetting the character of God. God had redeemed them from Pharaoh, brought them through the Red Sea, met them at Sinai, directed them with a cloud, and provided for their needs. Yet the Israelites looked at the size of the people and the height of the walls, and they panicked. Current obstacles obstructed their vision of God's faithfulness.

The Hebrews, too, were distracted by persecution. They were drifting away (Heb. 2:1) and hardening their hearts (3:7). What if, instead, they were "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (12:2, 3; 3:1)? What if they remembered the God who had appointed His Son "heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (1:2), the God who had provided them salvation, the God who had sustained His servants throughout history (11)? **"He is faithful that promised."**

But the instruction does not end there. The author paired the admonition to "hold fast" with the practical command to **"consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works"** (Heb. 10:24). God had placed the believers in a group to remind one another of "the profession of our faith" and the faithfulness of our God. The author had already mentioned this encouragement (3:13), so necessary to keep believers centered on God's provision and His power in their lives.

The instruction becomes even more pointed. In order to encourage one another to love and good deeds it was key that they **not forsake "the assembling of [themselves] together."** Such "assembling" not only identified them with the people of God but involved lifting up the weak, praying for each other, and, most importantly, reminding one another of the promises and the power of their faithful God. "Assembling



together” helped clear their view.

How dangerous if we were to follow the pattern of Kadesh-barnea or the path of some of the Hebrews, and forfeit God’s blessings! How sad if, through neglect of the Word, we were to lose the joy of our salvation! How difficult if the pressures of the Word were to rob us of the confidence that the God who met our greatest need will meet all our needs! How shallow if our interactions with other Christians were merely

social, rather than concentrated on creatively, actively affirming other believers in their Christian walk! How empty if our church services reflect what pleases us, rather than emphasizing what God has promised! How critical if we allow other cares or interests to remove us from the encouragement that God has designed for our holding fast! ■

—Reprinted with permission from *PBU Today*, Spring 2011.

 **Book Review . . .**

by Rosalind J. Byler

## *The Unquenchable Flame: Discovering the Heart of the Reformation*

Author: *Michael Reeves*

Publisher: *B&H Publishing, Nashville, TN, 2010. 207 pp.*

Available from: *B&H Publishing Group and Barnes & Noble*

Growing up in a home where church history was important, I felt fairly well-acquainted with the significant figures of the Reformation. Their names were familiar to me and I had a general idea of what had been accomplished by such men as Martin Luther, Jan Hus, William Tyndale, and our own Anabaptist heroes: Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, and Menno Simons. With the simplistic prejudice typical of children, I assumed that of course the Anabaptists were the ones who had finished the Reformation well. The others had made a brave start but had then gotten derailed with issues such as infant baptism; debating the doctrine of the Trinity; or taking up the sword, thus to perish by it.

Years later, attempting to acquaint our own children with church history, I found the available information limited and confusing. Christian writers contradicted one another, with each denomination honoring

those who held its particular position; secular writers had little interest in the subject other than its political repercussions. Books by Anabaptist writers (admittedly few) tended to glorify the part played by our forebears; books by non-Anabaptist writers ignored us or summarized our contribution in a sentence or two. I began to wonder if a disinterested reporting of the actual events could be found.

*The Unquenchable Flame: Discovering the Heart of the Reformation* provides just such a resource: a detailed and yet accessible (not much over 200 pages) overview of main Reformation events and figures. It is well-researched and told with contagious enthusiasm and an apparent lack of denominational partisanship. Author Michael Reeves is familiar enough with the subject to summarize skillfully while adding little-known details and dashes of humor. Beginning with a brief background of the religious climate that sparked the Reformation, Reeves then sketches biographies and doctrinal positions of some of the era’s leading characters.

The longest chapters are devoted to

Martin Luther and John Calvin, although pre-Reformers such as John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, Petrarch, and Desiderius Erasmus merit thumbnail sketches in the laying of historical groundwork. While Luther's ninety-five theses are often thought of as the dramatic start of the Reformation, he was actually still a loyal Catholic at that point and was merely protesting the misuse of Catholic practices such as relics and indulgences! His progress through frustration and fear to realizing the great truth of justification by faith is interspersed with the stories of Ulrich Zwingli, Andreas Carlstadt, and other would-be reformers who did get derailed into forcing "fast-track reform."

John Calvin, a somewhat misunderstood and maligned French scholar, is featured realistically yet sympathetically. Reeves says, "Calvin never intended to found something called 'Calvinism,' and he hated the word!" Calvin's mistrust of Anabaptists seems to have been provoked by the actions of a few radicals; he disliked anyone who gave the Reformation a bad name through hotheaded actions or questionable theology. His *Institutes of the Christian Religion* was designed to "look at all things through the spectacles of God's Word" (p. 118).

On the subject of the Reformation in Britain, Reeves illustrates how politics hampered the spread of true evangelicalism, alternately sketching the religious and political figures involved. The reformations of Scotland and England were both politically driven, yet in different ways; the heart of the true Reformation was doctrine, not merely political or social reform. The time was ripe for the Puritan attempt to "reform the Reformation" with their passionate love for the Bible and its study and exposition. You will meet well-known Puritans such as John Bunyan and the lesser-known but intriguing Richard Sibbes, followed by a sobering assessment of what caused the Puritan movement to lose its theological depth. The book closes with a chapter entitled "Is the Reformation Over?" in which Reeves concludes that the need for reformation is as significant as ever: in a culture

that tries to use self-esteem and positive thinking to deal with the age-old problem of guilt, the Reformation has "the most sparkling good news!" Two appendices contain a helpful time line for the Reformation along with suggestions for further reading (some available online).

This book is well-written and an enjoyable read; probably its main attraction for me lay in its realistic portrayal of historical characters with their confusions, errors, and feet of clay as well as shining discoveries of truth. Reeves' commentary on the Anabaptists was the longest I have yet seen in a non-Anabaptist publication. I noted with appreciation that he neither glorified his favorites nor villified opponents of his cause. I would add one caveat: some of the Reformers came of peasant stock and were likely to use rather coarse language. If you are reading this book aloud to your family, you will want to edit judiciously. ■



#### THE END OF NICE . . . cont'd. from p. 25

and self-controlled world of nice or free as a bond-servant of Christ? Is my parenting based upon what others perceive or on what God requires of me? Is my sense of worth built upon a comfortable, middle-class house of sticks? Am I fickle, shallow, and so self-absorbed that I have equated God's call with God's obligation to make me happy? Will I only love and serve God if He's nice to me? Do I really believe mission, true *Missio Dei*, can come cheap?

These are the angels I wrestle with. They are not demons. These are divine messengers that confront my world of nice and help me accept the call with joy, trust the leading hand, and learn contentment. These angels are not nice. They rarely answer direct questions with direct answers. They beat around the bush. They beat upon my weary soul. They leave me with a limp. It is not nice.

But, "yes, Lord," it is good, and I know by now that something is up. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, August 2011.

# The End of Nice

by Phil Wagler

I had a nice house: the wide front porch my wife always hoped for, a great backyard the children could frolic in, a garden, a master suite with fireplace, and claw foot tub. It was all so, well, nice.

Then God called.

I wasn't expecting to hear from Him as clearly as I did. At least not in an Abrahamic "Go west, young man!" kind of way. But, with a myriad of subtleties, this is what the Lord did. He came with His still, too quiet voice, and disturbed my nice.

Had I not known of Abraham and his strange propensity to heed the speaking silence, I may have concluded I had lost my marbles. Instead, there was an unquenchable rightness and drive to pack up and hit the trail. My wife and I both felt it. Our children recognized something holy in the wind. We said, "Yes, Lord."

## *Risky Speech*

"Yes, Lord" has always been risky speech. If you want safe and nice, avoid this "yes." Of course, that will be like throwing wet sand on the campfire of your soul, but, let's be honest: "Yes, Lord" changes everything.

"Yes, Lord" will disturb everything you hold as nice. It will be the most right and wrong thing you ever say. You will know you know you want to say it, and then—much to your chagrin—you discover the Lord is up to more than merely satisfying your itch for adventure and self-fulfillment.

I should have known something was up when our house wouldn't sell. The weeks passed and not a hint of interest. We prayed, oh, we prayed. We spruced it up. Not a whiff. Days dropped off the calendar, a sinister countdown to a nomadic life with nowhere to lay our heads. This is not nice.

Then, an email. A generous family in

our new city, 4,000 kilometers away, would open up their basement apartment for us. All seven of us—in a *two*-bedroom apartment suite? "Yes, Lord." We packed up to head in an occidental direction, wondering if this was an accident waiting to happen.

I should have known something was up at the airport. Our earthly possessions boxed and shipped, we arrived as a clan to wing our way west. Our youngest, still bearing signs of the chicken pox, was spotted by a meticulous attendant. The threatening 10-month-old would not be permitted to fly. The plane was boarding as we stood rejected and dejected at security. Five of us would go ahead. My wife and red-spotted, blond-topped son would stay behind. Nice. "Yes, Lord!"

Reunited in a land far, far away, we awaited the sale of our home so we could settle in the land of call. Nothing. Nada. Zip. As the months passed, it seemed we were destined to raise our children in someone else's basement while our perfectly nice house sat empty an inaccessible distance away. So many signs of the Spirit's leading; so many logical arguments to run in the opposite direction. I wrestled with everything. I wrestled with God. Like Abraham's grandson, I asked for blessing.

## *A Perilous Adventure*

"Yes, Lord" is perilously adventurous. "Yes, Lord" gives verbal consent to holy refining. I should have known better. In this year at the end of nice, I have been thoroughly tested.

Am I God's man or the man of my own making? Do I love my wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her or am I just a selfish bundle of all-too-adolescent testosterone? Will I live bound in a self-concocted

*(continued on page 24)*



# Song of the Month

Douglas A. Byler, Music Editor

“... singing with understanding!”

## “O Little Town of Bethlehem”



by Brooks/Redner

**Lyrics:** Phillips Brooks (1835-1893) spent much of his life serving in leadership roles in the Episcopal Church. Being very gifted as a speaker and author, Brooks served in many ways throughout his life. He spent time as the rector for several churches, and finished his ministry as the Bishop of Massachusetts, a position that he only held for about fifteen months before his death.<sup>1</sup> It was during his time as rector of the Church of the Holy Trinity in Philadelphia that he composed this hymn.

Travel in the 19th century was much more difficult than today, and Phillips Brooks had the unique opportunity to spend a year traveling in Europe and the Middle East. This included a visit to the town of Bethlehem, and a place on the hills outside of town where the shepherds were said to have seen the angel. A letter written home during his trip reveals that the geographical context of Christ's birth made quite an impression on him. While the words of this hymn were not penned until three years after his journey, it seems reasonable to assume that it is inspired largely by his visit to Bethlehem. He wrote the text in 1868 as a carol for children, and gave it to his organist to write a tune for it. The verse that identifies this as a children's carol has been omitted in most of the modern printings of this hymn, but has been included here for interest's sake:

Where children pure and happy  
Pray to the Blessed Child,  
Where misery cries out to Thee

Son of the Undeified,  
Where Charity stands watching  
And Faith holds wide the door,  
The dark night wakes the glory hearts  
And Christmas comes once more.

**Music:** Lewis Redner tells the story of the composition of this hymn:

“As Christmas of 1868 approached, Mr. Brooks told me that he had written a simple little carol for the Christmas Sunday-school service, and he asked me to write the tune to it. The simple music was written in great haste and under great pressure. We were to practice it on the following Sunday. Mr. Brooks came to me on Friday, and said, ‘Redner, have you ground out that music yet to “O Little Town of Bethlehem”?’

“I replied, ‘No,’ but that he should have it by Sunday. On the Saturday night previous my brain was all confused about the tune. I thought more about my Sunday-school lesson than I did about the music. But I was roused from sleep late in the night hearing an angel-strain whispering in my ear, and seizing a piece of music paper I jotted down the treble of the tune as we now have it, and on Sunday morning before going to church I filled in the harmony. Neither Mr. Brooks nor I ever thought the carol or the music to it would live beyond that Christmas of 1868.”<sup>2</sup> ■

1. [Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org)

2. As quoted on [hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com](http://hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com)

# O Little Town of Bethlehem

ST. LOUIS 8.6.8.6.7.6.8.6.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, 1868

LEWIS H. REDNER, 1868

1. O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem! How still we see thee lie;  
2. For Christ is born of Ma - - ry, And gath - ered all a - bove,  
3. How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly, The won - drous gift is giv'n!  
4. O ho - ly Child of Beth - le - hem! De - scend to us, we pray;

A - bove thy deep and dream-less sleep The si - lent stars go by;  
While mor - tals sleep, the an - gels keep Their watch of won - d'ring love.  
So God im - parts to hu - man hearts The bless - ings of His heav'n.  
Cast out our sin, and en - ter in, Be born in us to - day.

Yet in thy dark streets shin - eth The ev - er - last - ing Light;  
O morn - ing stars, to - geth - er Pro - claim the ho - ly birth!  
No ear may hear His com - ing, But in this world of sin,  
We hear the Christ - mas an - gels, The great glad ti - dings tell;

The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee to - night.  
And prais - es sing to God the King, And peace to men on earth.  
Where meek souls will re - ceive Him still, The dear Christ en - ters in.  
O come to us, a - bide with us, Our Lord Em - man - u - el!



# Eyeing the Ashes

by Elwood McQuaid

Almost 50 years ago in America, the cry “Burn, baby, burn!” swept across Los Angeles, California, as riots that began in the Watts neighborhood raged out of control. They would be the first wave of a tide of destruction and rebellion that represented the dismal 1960s.

In a street that had become a war zone, a teenager surveyed the wreckage of a pilaged store and with no semblance of remorse said, “You just take and run, and you burn when there is nothing more to take.” The aftermath of those riots in August 1965 was 34 dead, 1,032 injured, 3,952 arrested, and more than \$40 million in property damage.

However, rather than fixing the grievances within the black community, Joe R. Hicks, former executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* that the riots “only made things worse. And since then the problems have metastasized.”

The Watts riots evoked the theme of virtually every out-of-control mob on the planet: Burn the establishment to the ground and wait to see what arises from the ashes.

## *Wishing a Way to Paradise*

When mobs took over the streets in Egypt in February, copycat riots broke out around the Middle East and in some American cities. The premise was that defying order would be the best route to achieve desired goals. Too often, however, such demonstrations turn to chaos, instigate violence, and reap bitter results.

For example, at the height of the demonstrations in Wisconsin, Michael Capuano, a seven-term Democratic congressman from Massachusetts, declared, “Every once in awhile you need to get out on the streets and get a little bloody when necessary.” The

*Boston Herald* said the comment “drew wild applause and cheers.” Capuano now says he regrets his “choice of words.” However, the inflammatory rhetoric is a bad omen and should be a wake-up call to all Americans.

The protests and violence that have cascaded like dominoes across the Middle East have exposed the underbelly of dark forces that feel the time is right to subjugate the region. At the same time, the West’s staggering ignorance, naiveté, and unrealistic appraisals of the area’s driving forces strain the limits of comprehension.

There is no greater manifestation of this delusional thinking than the statement by U. S. Director of National Intelligence James Clapper to a congressional committee. “The term ‘Muslim Brotherhood,’” he said, “is an umbrella term for a variety of movements, in the case of Egypt, a very heterogeneous group, largely secular, which has eschewed violence and has decried al-Qaeda as a perversion of Islam.”

Clapper is not the lone voice of such gross misinformation. From politicians to media moguls to correspondents, the message resonates that to be on the “right side,” we must join the milling masses stiffing the system. With many, it’s all about being on the winning side when governments collapse. And therein lies the problem. Which side is the “right side,” and who will emerge as the new powerbrokers?

No one questions that most oppressed people desire to be free, particularly in the heavy-handed totalitarian regimes of the Middle East. But with no discernible democratic leaders in charge of the march toward change, who is organized to take control when the dust settles?

## *Enter the Muslim Brotherhood*

The group that is organized to rise to the top across the region is the Muslim

Brotherhood. This is not a passel of benign, secular do-gooders. And any Western attempt to sanitize this Islamist menace disgraces all obligations to honesty and to the people struggling for a free and democratic government.

Early on, Brotherhood spokesmen proclaimed a disinterest in leading any new governments that might materialize from the chaos. This is a ruse. At issue is the power to control, even if only behind the scenes, until the time is right to impose the Allah-vested regime they espouse.

We could wonder if this bait-and-wait method can succeed. If Westerners learned anything from history, they would already know. But we don't learn from history, and the tutorials staring us in the face are evidence of our collective dereliction. The bait-and-wait process transformed Iran into the tyrannical mullacracy now threatening us all. In the Gaza Strip, after Israel's now-lamented unilateral withdrawal in 2005, jihadist Hamas went from a bit player to a daily threat to Israeli citizens by wresting power from the feckless Palestinian Authority. Hezbollah terrorists, helped by Syria and Iran, have grown from an Islamist nuisance to the power in control of Lebanon.

The Muslim Brotherhood's true nature was seen on October 6, 1981, with the assassination of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat. As a column of army vehicles passed the reviewing stand during festivities commemorating Egypt's attack on Israel in October 1973 (the Yom Kippur War), assassins charged the stand, throwing grenades and firing weapons into the gathering of dignitaries that included the president.

The attackers were later identified as Islamist nationalists associated with the Muslim Brotherhood and using the name Islamic Jihad. In the eyes of the Brotherhood, Sadat's capital crime was making peace with Israel in 1979.

The strain of hatred for Israel still runs deep in the ideological minds of the new breed of Brotherhood leaders who may eventually become Egypt's headliners. They assert that the peace treaty should no

longer be recognized, which is another way of proclaiming the resumption of a state of war with the Jewish nation. Incidentally, the Hamas element now controlling Gaza claims to be an affiliate of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Brotherhood's goals are not confined to regional conquest; its objectives are global. In short, it seeks to convert Muslim countries into states ruled by Sharia (Muslim) law, reestablish the Caliphate, and ultimately dominate the world. Its slogan makes the case: "Allah is our objective; the Prophet is our leader; the Qur'an is our law; jihad is our way; dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope."

The imposition of Sharia law alone should repulse the entire civilized world. In January a 14-year-old girl named Hena was raped by a 40-year-old man outside her home in Bangladesh. Consistent with Sharia law, the local mosque in her village issued a fatwa ordering that Hena, though a rape victim, be given 100 lashes for "sexual immorality." The girl collapsed after 60 lashes and died six days later.

#### ***Living in an At-Risk World***

We've said it many times, but it is a message that doesn't seem to resonate well in a culture eager to turn away from any unpleasantness that threatens to invade its space. Indeed, one of the foremost reasons chaos has descended on such large sections of the world is the well-founded perception that the West, led by America, has gone soft. And our enemies do not hesitate to say so.

The Muslim Brotherhood's supreme guide, Muhammad Badi, has said the U. S. is on the threshold of collapse due to its immorality. He said the United States "is now experiencing the beginning of its end, and is heading toward its demise" and that jihad will bring Americans and Zionists to their knees. Not too long ago there was a no-tolerance stance against terror. No negotiations with terrorist groups or nations giving them aid and comfort. Those attacking innocent civilians were given no quarter.

A sterling example of this position was

Israel's daring rescue of 103 hostages from the Entebbe airport in Uganda on July 4, 1976. Palestinian terrorists hijacked an Air France plane carrying 248 passengers and held them for a week. The Israel Defense Forces struck the facility, released the hostages, and dealt with the terrorists. The raid sent a clear message: Terror not tolerated; try it, and you lose. The principle is universal. Survival is based on strength and the capacity and will to employ it when necessary.

Our enemies have thrown down the gauntlet. Implausibly, while they daily announce their intentions to take us out, many of our leaders insist on protesting that the Muslims don't really mean what they are saying. Western politicians seem to believe back-slapping diplomacy and a few more perks can tame the savage beast. This is not only nonsense, but it imperils the lives of the citizens whom these leaders have pledged to protect.

Obviously, Israel is in the epicenter of the coming storm. Inexplicably, many of those who should be first in line to stand with our one true friend in the Middle East, and perhaps the world for that matter, side with her enemies.

Also imperiled and living with a growing sense of uncertainty and fear are the Christians of the region. A hint of what may lie

ahead surfaced before a crowd of 250,000 at Tahrir Square in Cairo in February. Muslim Brotherhood cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi "asked Christians to bow in Muslim prayer in an act of submission to Allah," wrote *WorldNet Daily* reporter Aaron Klein. The request could mean only one thing: The Brotherhood wants Christians to submit to Allah and eventually to the dreaded Sharia law. And should Sharia and Islamist domination become their order of life, how much aid and comfort can they expect from the "free world"?

I was asked by a pastor friend recently if I thought we were seeing the beginning of the last battle, meaning Armageddon. My answer was no. But, I added, we are certainly seeing the warm-up stage. And while the world stands in confusion and uncertainty, staring at the ashes of societal demolition and waiting to see what will arise from them, we believers have a sure hope. We don't look down but up—expecting the fulfillment of His promise and our blessed hope that one day soon He will call us home.

A hymn by the late Pastor Cleavant Dericks says it well: "We'll soon be done with troubles and trials. Yes, in that home on the other side . . . gonna sit down and rest a little while." I'll subscribe to that! ■

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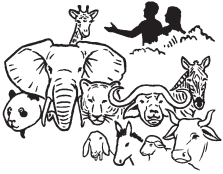
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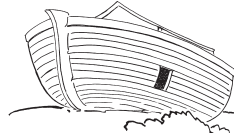
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## *Beginning Issues*



# Genesis 1 Continued . . .

by John Mullett

**I**n spite of the controversy surrounding Genesis regarding its interpretation, there is little questioning its place as a book of beginnings with a wide range of influence; not only throughout history, but it continues to do so in our post-modern world. I'd like to look at a few of today's institutions/doctrines that find their beginnings in Genesis 1 specifically. These are not necessarily "Christian" doctrines, although every known Christian doctrine does find its root, directly or indirectly, in the first eleven chapters of Genesis, but doctrines or institutions that have (and continue to) affect all of humanity. They are evidence of the Bible's long and illustrious history and point to the accuracy of its claims regarding our origins.

The first of these I'll address is the measuring of time based on the "lights of heaven." According to Genesis 1:14, 15 the measuring of time and for signs and seasons, along with giving light for the earth, were the purposes that they were created for. To this day our calendars are based on either the sun, the moon, or both depending on the calendar a society uses. Our measures of year, month, and day are all based on both the sun and moon. One notable exception is the week which we will discuss next.

The seven-day week (the seventh day is not mentioned until Chapter 2). There is no other basis for this pattern outside of the Biblical record, although the Epic of Gilgamesh of ancient Babylonian references it and some argue that it predates Genesis.

Regardless of how old one believes the earth to be, it is clear the seven-day week has been used across almost all cultures for most of history. There have been (and still are) exceptions, although most of those have been short-lived and of small influence. While it doesn't "prove" it, its near-universal application points to the seven-day week being present from the very beginning—just as Genesis tells us. In an additional note of interest, in many of the cultures that used measures other than the seven-day week often still incorporated days of rest in regular intervals.

Finally I'd like to touch on human sexuality (Gen. 1:27). Once again outside of Scripture there is no moral basis for a male/female sexual procreation model and the family foundation. Throughout history many cultures have embraced models (such as polygamy) other than the Biblical (Christian) model of one-man-for-one-woman, but the constant has been male and female as the foundation of the family. Of course for the procreation of the human race nature demands it and in spite of the vicious attack on marriage we're witnessing in western societies today it remains, as the Apostle Paul also pointed out (Rom. 1:26, 27), more "natural" when we're coupled as male and female. Jesus directly referenced Genesis as the model to look to when talking about marriage and when He did so He did it in the context of representing the **beginning** of the marriage model as God intended it to be (Matt. 19:3-6). ■

# *Busted Cars and Broken Hearts*

by Melissa Baccarella, *missionary in Italy*

I was concerned for Giusy. She had come to the Lord in an authentic act of repentance, but she had moved four hours away from me and was isolated and young in her faith.

I wanted to talk to her about finding a church and being baptized so I invited my friend Michela, another new believer, to visit her with me. Little did we know that God had something entirely different in store for our trip.

## **Meeting Samiya**

After a long bus ride, we arrived at Giusy's house. We were surprised when a woman named Samiya met us at the door. Like Giusy, Samiya is a 20-something, single mother. Her three-year-old daughter Isma is the same age as Giusy's son Marco. Samiya and Isma usually lived with Samiya's parents about 15 minutes away, but their family car had broken down just two days prior. Without transportation, Samiya needed to stay within walking distance of Isma's nursery school as well as a bus stop, since she was looking for work.

Samiya, a Muslim originally from Morocco, welcomed us in a fashion, but it became immediately clear that she distrusted us. Her beautiful daughter Isma was, for a three-year-old, also unusually quiet.

It wasn't long after introductions and a bit of settling in, however, that Isma leaned up and whispered in her mother's ear, "I like Melissa."

We didn't know it then, but God was beginning to work.

As the evening progressed, Michela and I found ourselves on the couch with the toddlers reading a children's Bible I had brought as a gift. Giusy and Samiya retreated to the front porch, but then Samiya reentered the house and rushed upstairs. Giusy followed her, and they disappeared for about an hour.

Everything seemed to be unraveling. We

had planned to come and minister to Giusy, but Samiya was consuming her time and energy.

When Giusy came back downstairs, she explained that Samiya had been crying. During their talk Samiya had told Giusy that she never met people like us before—we were so loving she felt like the room was "warmer" with us in it. Strangely, it had made her feel lonely, sad, and angry.

It was then that Michela and I felt strongly that Samiya's presence at the house was no accident, and we began to pray that God would help us to know what to do and that His will would be accomplished.

The next morning everyone but Samiya loaded into the car to go to church. The small group of believers at the church was extremely welcoming in every way, and there was a tangible sense of family. Throughout the service Giusy quietly cried at my side, and by the time we sang "The Heart of Worship," it was clear that Giusy's newborn faith had been revived and the church family seemed eager to adopt and care for her.

We returned home that day refreshed and excited for what was to come. That evening Giusy persuaded Samiya to join a Bible study with us; I had brought two copies of a new believer's Bible study called "Step by Step."

We read: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). I began to move very slowly through the material—partly because of Samiya's presence but also because Giusy needed to review. It was immediately clear that Samiya was spiritually hungry; she was visibly shaken and extremely attentive.

After many illustrations and further Bible verses outlining the Gospel, we began to read Isaiah 53. We had already spoken about the significance of the phrase "child



of God,” and so when we arrived at verse 10 where it speaks of his “offspring,” I was able to connect the dots and ask Samiya if she wanted to be a part of His family.

Samiya quickly responded, “Yes.”

Working in Italy, I had started to think that it took years for someone to come to faith. It seemed unusual that Samiya would accept Christ so quickly. The fact that Samiya was Muslim only seemed to further cloud my mind and heart.

I began to ask Samiya about her family to understand the nature of her Muslim upbringing. Samiya’s mother tried to faithfully practice her Muslim faith; her father, described as a “hard man,” was outwardly Muslim but inwardly antagonistic. Samiya was strongly influenced by her grandmother, who encouraged her to believe in Allah. She grew up reading the Koran and attending the mosque regularly. Isma was the consequence of a rebellious phase. While initially furious, six months after Isma’s birth Samiya’s father accepted the fact of his granddaughter and reconciliation took place.

While Samiya and I spoke of the importance of the decision, both Michela and Giusy began silently praying at our sides. There was a holy hush in the room.

I warned Samiya that her Muslim background would render her decision to follow Christ particularly difficult for her family, and depending on their reaction, may even be dangerous for her. She seemed to understand this instinctively. By this time it was after midnight, and I could see she needed time to reflect and decide.

For the next 30 minutes the room was filled with silence. Samiya had closed her eyes, her hands on the Bible in front of her, apparently weighing the decision she was trying to make. Giusy, Michela, and I silently battled in prayer for her soul. When we were done I gently squeezed her hand, and she turned to me and simply said, “I’m ready.”

I opened to Psalm 116, the same psalm that God used to save me 18 years ago, and I asked her to read it out loud. Just as it had for me, the words seemed to jump off the page for Samiya—describing her emotions, reality, fears, and her great need of salvation.

We were all crying, and then we were all laughing. All four of us instinctively moved

toward each other, joining hands, and Samiya prayed aloud: “Father, adopt me, save me. . . . I believe in Jesus, Son of God, who died and is risen for me.”

Michela gave Samiya some paper so she could write the date of her salvation and the nature of her decision. I suggested she choose a verse to include with it, and after some reflection she chose 1 John 5:13, the first words she had ever heard from the Bible.

The next morning we prayed together at the kitchen table, and Michela led her first devotional. We then spoke about practical matters, about how they could continue to work together through the “Step by Step” Bible study; how to make church attendance a priority; and spending time each day in God’s Word and in prayer.

At lunch we spoke about the significance of baptism, and afterward we took them to a grocery store with a James 2:15, 16 mission in mind: Fill Giusy’s refrigerator with food. We let the girls loose in the grocery store to buy everything they needed, and Michela and I took care of the bill. While in the grocery store, Isma was seated in the front of the cart, and Giusy exclaimed, “Samiya, look at Isma—her face!”

We all turned to look at the little girl. The serenity she expressed was striking to both Giusy and Samiya. Isma looked up at her mother and said, “I feel very good,” and Samiya began to cry again.

Michela and I had set out on this journey to encourage Giusy. We hadn’t imagined that God’s plan for Giusy’s encouragement and growth was to give her a sister she could walk with. Moreover, the trip was life-changing for Michela also, a sure step forward in her personal walk with Christ.

About an hour into the drive home we received a text message from Samiya: “Thank you for all that you have done for ME. You have shone a light and guided me on the right way, causing me to find Jesus, and now I feel like a different person. I feel the presence of Jesus in my heart, and I love Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Association of Baptists for World Evangelism Message*, 2011.

**Note:** *Since Samiya became a Christian she has endured persecution from her family. Pray for her safety and for her faith to grow.*

# Index, Vol. LXXIX, 2011

## Index by Title

- Adoration—The Basis of Our Worship, Larry Bergey, Oct 34
- Affirmations and Denials: A Proposed Definition of Biblical Counseling, David Powlison, Feb 33
- Air Conditioning Hell: How Liberalism Happens, R. Albert Mohler, Jr., Aug 2
- “And the Evening and the Morning . . .,” John Mullett, Nov 25
- Apologetics for the Glory of God, Timothy S. Yoder, Oct 2
- Apostasy: Latest Twist, Paul M. Emerson, Aug 5
- Appeal to American Anabaptists, An, Roger Hertzler, Feb 2
- Are Aliens Among Us?, John Mullett, Mar 21
- Are We Too Gullible?, Paul M. Emerson, Oct 5
- Art of Forgiveness, The, Nolan Byler, Dec 15
- Back to Genesis (Genesis 1:2), John Mullett, Aug 34
- Back to the Beginning, John Mullett, Jun 32; (Part 2), Jul 30
- Back to the Beginning (Genesis 1:2-5), John Mullett, Oct 24
- Balancing Discernment With Charity, Eric Brubaker, Oct 17
- Bias of Nature, The, Leonard Sankey, Feb 6
- Biblical Counseling and Accountability, Jeremy Lelek, May 36
- Breathing God in an Ocean of Amoral, Ray G. Mummert, Jul 2
- Busted Cars and Broken Hearts, Melissa Bacarella, Dec 32
- Christian’s Hall of Judgment, The, Edwin R. Eby, Mar 36
- Christ’s Answers for Affluence, Arlin Weaver, Feb 25
- Clothed, Allen Faus, Nov 31
- “Come Out of Her, My People,” H. C. VanWormer, Sep 16
- Condemnation of Man, The, Norm Miller, Jul 26
- Counseling With Wisdom: Lessons From the Apostle Paul, Jeremy Lelek, Mar 18
- Creation Definitions, *Answers in Genesis*, Sep 27
- Deadly Exposure, Jeff Colón, Jan 19
- Developing a Spiritual Appetite in Our Children, Luke Bennetch, Jan 34
- DNA: A Designer’s Marvel!, John Mullett, Feb 28
- Empty Column, The, *Family Life*, Oct 22
- End of Nice, The, Phil Wagler, Dec 25
- Erotic vs. the Spiritual, The, A. W. Tozer, Apr 8
- Euthanasia: A Biblical Appraisal, J. Kerby Anderson, Mar 2
- Eyeing the Ashes, Elwood McQuaid, Dec 28
- Farewell Sermon, A, Jonathan Edwards (Part 1), Mar 28; (Part 2), Apr 25
- Fool-Proof Apologetics, Jason Lisle, Apr 22
- Free-Market Generosity, Bert Wheeler, Feb 31
- General Resurrection, A, Jason H. Martin, Jun 26
- Genesis 1 Continued . . . , John Mullett, Dec 31
- Giving Yourself to God Is the First Step Toward Healing, Keith Kaynor, Jun 15
- God Is . . . , Mark D. Avery, Nov 32
- God Knows No Defeat, Clarence Martin, Mar 20
- God’s Answer to the Skeptic, Dr. Jack MacArthur, Jun 17
- Halfway Anabaptists, David Steinhauer, Nov 26
- Hard-Hitting Rob Bell Interview Goes Viral, Michael Foust, Aug 15
- Hedonistic Pleasure or Joy?, Paul L. Miller, Nov 12
- Helping People Deal With Change, James Rudy Gray, Apr 20
- History and Impact of the Book, The: *The Genesis Flood*, John C. Whitcomb, May 15
- Hold Fast, John Master, Dec 22
- Homosexuality: Genetic, Healthy, and Beneficial? Flaws in the Arguments, Kiah Wenger, Jan 16
- How Sufficient Is God’s Grace?, Ray Crooks, Nov 17
- How to Get Assurance (Part 1), B. Charles Hostetter, May 29; (Part 2) Jun 33; (Part 3) Jul 31; (Part 4) Aug 28
- How to Wisely Manage Money, Harold S. Martin, Nov 20
- Humility, Mark D. Avery, Feb 36
- I Call It Heresy!, A. W. Tozer, Apr 2
- If You’ve Glimpsed God . . . , Arlin Weaver, Sep 7
- “The Indestructible Church,” William R. Rice, Feb 19
- Instruments in Worship?, Robert B. McCracken, Jan 2
- Interesting Facts About the Bible, compiled by Oliver B. Greene, Jun 2
- Is Lasting Victory Possible?, Tom Blangiardo, Jan 36
- Kentucky-Fried Dino Anyone?, John Mullett, Apr 36
- “The Kingdom of God Is Not Meat and Drink,” Edward Ker, Jr., Nov 2
- Last Meridian, The, Michael G. Loftis, Jan 22
- Learning to Pray, Mark D. Avery, May 6
- Letter to the Editor, Stephen S. Weaver, Feb 7

PAGE 34

SWORD AND TRUMPET

Look at the Sales Data, Chester Weaver, Oct 14  
 Lord, Give Us Christian Homes, Paul L. Miller, Jun 5  
 “Lord, If You Will . . .,” J. Mark Horst, Nov 4  
*Love Wins*—A Review of Rob Bell’s New Book, Tim Challies and Aaron Armstrong, Jul 7  
 Loving Self and Hating God, Jeremy Lelek, Jun 27  
 Music in Worship, Ryan Hablitzel, Mar 22  
 Our Great Need, Richard M. Jones, Jan 32  
 Patience Is a Virtue, Denise Braun, Sep 26  
 Peace at Any Price, Dr. V. R. Edman, Nov 37  
 Practicing Biblical Nonresistance in Contemporary America, Timothy Reitz, May 2  
 Principled Use of Leisure Time, The, Ronald Border, Sep 20  
 Properly Dealing With Sin, Lester Coblenz, Jul 25  
 Psalm 73: Too Easy to Be Senseless, Paul Tripp, Oct 29  
 Projecting Poverty Where It Doesn’t Exist, Steve Saint, Dec 13  
 Reality of God’s Sovereignty, The, James Rudy Gray, Jan 21  
 Reason for Hope, The, John Meador, Dec 2  
 Relating to Neighbors, Eugene Nolt, Feb 29  
 Revising Hell Into the Heterodox Mainstream, Denny Burk, Aug 19  
 Rob Bell Book *Love Wins* Stirs Controversy, Denies Core Christian Beliefs, Michael Foust, Aug 13  
 Rob Bell’s *Love Wins*, and the Biblical Doctrine of Hell, Randy Alcorn, Aug 35  
 Scientific Fact or Hype?, John Mullett, Jan 31  
 Search of the Shepherds, The, Robert E. Neighbour, Dec 18  
 Set Apart to Save: MODESTY, R. Kent Hughes, Jul 19  
 Sheep Among Wolves, Chinese house church leader, Sep 35  
 Sin and Fall of Adam and Eve, The, Harold Martin, Sep 2  
 Still Don’t Get It? Look Up!, Dick York, Feb 16  
 Television: Evil Virus of the 21st Century, The, Felipe Yoder, Sep 32  
 Testifying for Christ, Douglas Wantz, May 19  
 “Thou Shalt Not Muzzle the Ox,” Bruce A. Stauffer, Jan 23  
 Thy Kingdom Come, Oswald J. Smith, Mar 8  
 To Whom Much Is Given, Jeff Guernsey, Jan 6  
 TRUE POWER: Servanthood, Humility, and Obedience, Jeremy Lelek, Sep 22  
 Trusting Christians, George Quick, Nov 33  
 Truth About Living Together Before Marriage, The, Harold S. Martin, Oct 25  
 Tutoring Your Successor, Richard Shank, Sep 30  
 Walking With God, Brian G. Toews, Jan 24  
 What Does Scripture Really Say?, John Mullett, May 28

What Is a Christian Worldview and Why Do Christians Need One?, Matt Slick, Nov 35  
 What Preachers Keep Forgetting, Joe McKeever, Jun 24  
 Where Is Your Treasure?, Joshua Strickler, Sep 31  
 Why God Foretells, John Mark Weaver, May 26  
 Why Is Humility Necessary?, Cleason Martin, May 23  
 Wisdom Will Save Your Counselee (and You) From Sexual Immorality, Jay Younts, Nov 18  
 Wondering . . . What if Job Had Been an American?, Max Zook, Jan 28  
 World in Revolt, The, Mike Matthews, Nov 14  
*Worship in Song*, Book Review, Rosalind J. Byler, Jan 29  
 Year-End Musings, Paul M. Emerson, Dec 4  
 Young Women and Discretion, Walter E. Isenhour, Dec 16  
 Youth Respecting Parental Authority, Davy Steinhauer, Apr 18

### *Index by Subject*

#### **Apologetics**

Apologetics for the Glory of God, Timothy S. Yoder, Oct 2  
 Fool-Proof Apologetics, Jason Lisle, Apr 22

#### **Apostasy**

Air Conditioning Hell: How Liberalism Happens, R. Albert Mohler, Jr., Aug 2  
 Apostasy: Latest Twist, Paul Emerson, Aug 5  
 Hard-Hitting Rob Bell Interview Goes Viral, Michael Foust, Aug 15  
 Revising Hell Into the Heterodox Mainstream, Denny Burk, Aug 19  
 Rob Bell Book *Love Wins* Stirs Controversy, Denies Core Christian Beliefs, Michael Foust, Aug 13

#### **Anabaptism**

An Appeal to American Anabaptists, Roger Hertzler, Feb 2  
 Halfway Anabaptists, David Steinhauer, Nov 26  
 Look at the Sales Data, Chester Weaver, Oct 14

#### **Beginning Issues**, John Mullett

“And the Evening and the Morning . . .,” Nov 25  
 Are Aliens Among Us?, Mar 21  
 Back to the Beginning, Jun 32; (Part 2), Jul 30  
 Back to Genesis, Aug 34  
 Back to the Beginning (Genesis 1:2-5), Oct 24  
 Creation Definitions, from *Answers in Genesis*, Sep 27  
 DNA: A Designer’s Marvel, Feb 28  
 Genesis 1 Continued . . . , Dec 31  
 Kentucky-Fried Dino Anyone?, Apr 36  
 Scientific Fact or Hype?, Jan 31  
 What Does Scripture Really Say? May 28

## **Bible**

Interesting Facts About the Bible, Oliver B. Greene, Jun 2

## **Book Reviews**, Rosalind J. Byler

*Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, Jun 30

*Feminine Appeal: Seven Virtues of a Godly Wife and Mother*, Feb 37

*Girls Gone Wise in a World Gone Wild*, Nov 30

*On the Other Side of the Garden*, Jul 28

*Piety and Philosophy: A Primer for Christian Schools*, Oct 36

*Raising a Christian Daughter in an MTV World*, Apr 32

*Spiritual Profiling*, Aug 17

*Unquenchable Flame, The*, Dec 23

*Voices of the True Woman*, Sep 28

*Worship in Song*, Jan 29

## **Book Reviews**

*Love Wins* – A Review of Rob Bell’s New Book, Tim Challies and Aaron Armstrong, Jul 7

*Severe Mercy*, A, Sheryl Hooley, May 37

## **Business**

Tutoring Your Successor, Richard Shank, Sep 30

## **Christian Life**

*Bias of Nature*, The, Leonard Sankey, Feb 6

Christian’s Hall of Judgment, The, Edwin R. Eby, Mar 36

Erotic vs. the Spiritual, The, A.W. Tozer, Apr 8

Hedonistic Pleasure or Joy?, Paul L. Miller, Nov 12

Hold Fast, John Master, Dec 22

How to Get Assurance (Part 1), B. Charles Hostetter, May 29; (Part 2), Jun 33; (Part 3), Jul 31; (Part 4), Aug 28

Humility, Mark D. Avery, Feb 36

Loving Self and Hating God, Jeremy Lelek, Jun 27

Our Great Need, Richard M. Jones, Jan 32

Trusting Christians, George Quick, Nov 33

Walking with God, Brian G. Toews, Jan 24

Where Is Your Treasure?, Joshua Strickler, Sep 31

Why Is Humility Necessary?, Cleason Martin, May 23

## **Christmas**

Reason for Hope, The, John Meador, Dec 2

Search of the Shepherds, The, Robert E. Neighbour, Dec 18

## **Church**

Balancing Discernment With Charity, Eric Brubaker, Oct 17

Breathing God in an Ocean of Amoralism, Ray G. Mummert, Jul 2

“The Indestructible Church,” Dr. William R. Rice, Feb 19

Sheep Among Wolves, Chinese house church leader, Sep 35

## **Church Leadership**

What Preachers Keep Forgetting, Joe McKeever, Jun 24

## **Counseling From the Word**

Affirmations and Denials: A Proposed Definition of Biblical Counseling, David Powlison, Feb 33

Art of Forgiveness, The, Nolan Byler, Dec 15

Biblical Counseling and Accountability, Jeremy Lelek, May 36

Counseling With Wisdom: Lessons from the Apostle Paul, Jeremy Lelek, Mar 18

Helping People Deal With Change, James Rudy Gray, Apr 20

Loving Self and Hating God, Jeremy Lelek, Jun 27

Properly Dealing With Sin, Lester Coblenz, Jul 25

Psalm 73: Too Easy to Be Senseless, Paul Tripp, Oct 29

Reality of God’s Sovereignty, The, James Rudy Gray, Jan 21

TRUE POWER: Servanthood, Humility, and Obedience, Jeremy Lelek, Sep 22

Wisdom Will Save Your Counselee . . . , Jay Younts, Nov 18

## **Creationism**

History and Impact of the Book, The: *The Genesis Flood*, John C. Whitcomb, May 15

## **Current Issues**

Are We Too Gullible?, Paul Emerson, Oct 5

Breathing God in an Ocean of Amoralism, Ray G. Mummert, Jul 2

Euthanasia: A Biblical Appraisal, J. Kerby Anderson, Mar 2

Hard-Hitting Rob Bell Interview Goes Viral, Michael Foust, Aug 15

Look at the Sales Data, Chester Weaver, Oct 14

*Love Wins* – A Review of Rob Bell’s New Book, Tim Challies and Aaron Armstrong, Jul 7

Revising Hell Into the Heterodox Mainstream, Denny Burk, Aug 19

Rob Bell Book *Love Wins* Stirs Controversy, Denies Core Christian Beliefs, Michael Foust, Aug 13

Rob Bell’s *Love Wins*, and the Biblical Doctrine of Hell, Randy Alcorn, Aug 35

Set Apart to Save: MODESTY, R. Kent Hughes, Jul 19

Truth about Living Together Before Marriage, The, Harold S. Martin, Oct 25

What Is a Christian Worldview . . . ?, Matt Slick, Nov 35

World in Revolt, The, Mike Matthews, Nov 14

## **Depravity**

Condemnation of Man, The, Norm Miller, Jul 26

Sin and Fall of Adam and Eve, The, Harold Martin, Sep 2

## **Discipleship**

End of Nice, The, Phil Wagler, Dec 25

I Call It Heresy!, A. W. Tozer, Apr 2

## **End-Times/Second Coming**

Still Don’t Get It? Look Up!, Dick York, Feb 16

Thy Kingdom Come, Oswald J. Smith, Mar 8  
Why God Foretells, John Mark Weaver, May 26

#### **Evangelism/Witnessing**

Busted Cars and Broken Hearts, Melissa Bacarella, Dec 32  
Relating to Neighbors, Eugene Nolt, Feb 29  
“Lord, If You Will . . . ,” J. Mark Horst, Nov 4  
Testifying for Christ, Douglas Wantz, May 19

#### **Finances**

How to Wisely Manage Money, Harold S. Martin, Nov 20

#### **From the Editor’s Desk**

Apostasy: Latest Twist, Paul M. Emerson, Aug 5  
Are We Too Gullible?, Paul M. Emerson, Oct 5  
Bias of Nature, The, Leonard Sankey, Feb 6  
Erotic vs. the Spiritual, The, A. W. Tozer, Apr 8  
If You’ve Glimpsed God . . . , Arlin Weaver, Sep 7  
Learning to Pray, Mark D. Avery, May 6  
Love Wins – A Review of Rob Bell’s New Book, Tim Challies and Aaron Armstrong, Jul 7  
Lord, Give Us Christian Homes, Paul L. Miller, Jun 5  
“Lord, If You Will . . . ,” J. Mark Horst, Nov 4  
Thy Kingdom Come, Oswald J. Smith, Mar 8  
To Whom Much Is Given, Jeff Guernsey, Jan 6  
Year-End Musings, Paul M. Emerson, Dec 4

#### **God and Jesus Christ**

God Is . . . , Mark Avery, Nov 32  
God’s Answer to the Skeptic, Dr. Jack MacArthur, Jun 17  
God Knows No Defeat, Clarence Martin, Mar 20  
If You’ve Glimpsed God . . . , Arlin Weaver, Sep 7

#### **Grace**

How Sufficient Is God’s Grace?, Ray Crooks, Nov 17

#### **Grief and Suffering**

Wondering . . . What if Job Had Been an American?, Max Zook, Jan 28

#### **Health Issues**

“The Kingdom of God Is Not Meat and Drink,” Edward Ker, Nov 2

#### **Hell**

Rob Bell’s *Love Wins*, and the Biblical Doctrine of Hell, Randy Alcorn, Aug 35

#### **Humility**

Humility, Mark D. Avery, Feb 36  
Why Is Humility Necessary?, Cleason Martin, May 23

#### **Home and Family**

Developing a Spiritual Appetite in Our Children, Luke Bennetch, Jan 34  
Lord, Give Us Christian Homes, Paul L. Miller, Jun 5  
Set Apart to Save: MODESTY, R. Kent Hughes, Jul 19  
Young Women and Discretion, Walter E. Isenhour, Dec 16  
Youth Respecting Parental Authority, Davy Steinhauer, Apr 18

#### **Honesty**

Empty Column, The, *Family Life*, Oct 22

#### **Marriage**

Truth About Living Together Before Marriage, The, Harold S. Martin, Oct 25

#### **Media/Technology**

Television: Evil Virus of the 21st Century, The, Felipe Yoder, Sep 32

#### **Ministry/Service**

“Lord, If You Will . . . ,” J. Mark Horst, Nov 4  
“Thou Shalt Not Muzzle the Ox,” Bruce A. Stauffer, Jan 23

#### **Miscellaneous**

Clothed, Allen Faus, Nov 31  
Principled Use of Leisure Time, The, Ronald Border, Sep 20

#### **Missions**

Busted Cars and Broken Hearts, Melissa Bacarella, Dec 32  
Last Meridian, The, Michael G. Loftis, Jan 22  
Patience Is a Virtue (I Don’t Always Have), Denise Braun, Sep 26  
Projecting Poverty Where It Doesn’t Exist, Steve Saint, Dec 13

#### **Morality/Sexuality**

Homosexuality: Genetic, Healthy, and Beneficial? . . . , Kiah Wenger, Jan 16  
Is Lasting Victory Possible?, Tom Blangiardo, Jan 36  
Set Apart to Save: MODESTY, R. Kent Hughes, Jul 19  
Truth About Living Together Before Marriage, The, Harold S. Martin, Oct 25  
Wisdom Will Save Your Counselor . . . , Jay Younts, Nov 18

#### **Music**

Music In Worship, Ryan Hablitzel, Mar 22

#### **Newsletters**, Hans Mast

Jan 13; Feb 13; Mar 15; Apr 15; May 12; Jun 12; Jul 16; Aug 10; Sep 13; Oct 11; Nov 9; Dec 9

#### **Person of the Month**, Gail L. Emerson

Joseph P. Bontrager, May 1  
Thomas O. Chisholm, Jan 1  
Sarah Pierrepont Edwards, Feb 1  
William W. Graybill, Aug 1  
Amos Hershey Leaman, Mar 1  
Christian K. Lehman, Dec 1  
William M. Strong, Oct 1  
Isabella “Lilias” Trotter, Jun 1  
Walter E. Yoder, Apr 1

#### **Person of the Month**, *Sword of the Lord*

Billy Bray, Jul 1  
Sam Jones, Nov 1  
Mel Trotter, Sep 1

#### **Nonresistance**

Practicing Biblical Nonresistance in Contemporary America, Timothy Reitz, May 2

#### **Politics**

Eyeing the Ashes, Elwood McQuaid, Dec 28



**Prophecy**

Why God Foretells, John Mark Weaver, May 26

**Relationships**

Peace at Any Price, Dr. V. R. Edman, Nov 37

**Resurrection**

General Resurrection?, A, Jason H. Martin, Jun 26

God's Answer to the Skeptic, Dr. Jack MacArthur, Jun 17

**Separation**

Come Out of Her, My People, H.C. VanWormer, Sep 16

**Sermon of the Month**

Balancing Discernment with Charity, Eric Brubaker, Oct 17

"Come Out of Her, My People," H.C. VanWormer, Sep 16

Farewell Sermon, A, Jonathan Edwards (Part 1), Mar 28; (Part 2), Apr 25

God's Answer to the Skeptic, Dr. Jack MacArthur, Jun 17

Indestructible Church, The, Dr. William R. Rice, Feb 19

Testifying for Christ, Douglas Wantz, May 19

Thou Shalt Not Muzzle the Ox, Bruce A. Stauffer, Jan 23

Search of the Shepherds, The, Robert E. Neighbour, Dec 18

World in Revolt, The, Mike Matthews, Nov 14

**Sin**

Deadly Exposure, Jeff Colón, Jan 19

Giving Yourself to God Is the First Step Toward Healing, Keith Kaynor, Jun 15

Properly Dealing With Sin, Lester Coblentz, Jul 25

Sin and Fall of Adam and Eve, The, Harold Martin, Sep 2

**Song of the Month**, Douglas Byler

"Beneath the Cross of Jesus," Mar 26

"Christ the Lord Is Risen Today," Apr 34

"Come, Ye Disconsolate," Jul 36

"For the Beauty of the Earth," Nov 28

"How Firm a Foundation," Aug 26

"O Little Town of Bethlehem," Dec 26

"O Holy Angels Bright," Sep 24

"Take My Life and Let it Be Consecrated," Oct 32

"Teach Me the Measure of My Days," Jan 26

"That Day of Wrath," May 24

"What A Friend We Have in Jesus," Jun 28

**Song of the Month**

"Muse, O My Soul, Set Thy Heart," John D. Martin, Feb 26

**Sovereignty**

The Reality of God's Sovereignty, James Rudy Gray, Jan 21

**Sunday School Lessons**, David L. Burkholder

Jan 8; Feb 8; Mar 10; Apr 10; May 7; Jun 7; Jul 11; Aug 6; Sep 8; Oct 6; Nov 5; Dec 5

**Taxes**

Empty Column, The, *Family Life*, Oct 22

**Wealth**

Christ's Answers for Affluence, Arlin Weaver, Feb 25

Free-Market Generosity, Bert Wheeler, Feb 31

To Whom Much Is Given, Jeff Guernsey, Jan 6

**Worldview**

What Is a Christian Worldview . . . ?, Matt Slick, Nov 35

**Worship**

Adoration—The Basis of Our Worship, Larry Bergey, Oct 34

Instruments in Worship?, Robert B. McCracken, Jan 2

Music In Worship, Ryan Hablitzel, Mar 22

**Youth**

Young Women and Discretion, Walter E. Isenhour, Dec 16

Youth Respecting Parental Authority, Davy Steinhauer, Apr 18

**Index by Author and Source****Alcorn, Randy**

Rob Bell's *Love Wins*, and the Biblical Doctrine of Hell, Aug 35

**Answers in Genesis**

Creation Definitions, Sep 27

**Anderson, J. Kerby**

Euthanasia: A Biblical Appraisal, Mar 2

**Avery, Mark D.**

God Is . . . , Nov 32

Humility, Feb 36

Learning to Pray, May 6

**Baccarella, Melissa**

Busted Cars and Broken Hearts, Dec 32

**Bennetch, Luke**

Developing a Spiritual Appetite in Our Children, Jan 34

**Bergey, Larry**

Adoration—The Basis of Our Worship, Oct 34

**Blangiardo, Tom**

Is Lasting Victory Possible?, Jan 36

**Border, Ronald**

Principled Use of Leisure Time, The, Sep 20

**Braun, Denise**

Patience Is a Virtue . . . , Sep 26

**Brubaker, Eric**

Balancing Discernment With Charity, Oct 17

**Burk, Denny**

Revising Hell Into the Heterodox Mainstream, Aug 19

**Burkholder, David L. – SS Lessons**

Jan 8; Feb 8; Mar 10; Apr 10; May 7; Jun 7; Jul 11; Aug 6; Sep 8; Oct 6; Nov 5; Dec 5

**Byler, Douglas A. – Song of the Month**

"Beneath the Cross of Jesus," Mar 26

"Christ the Lord Is Risen Today," Apr 34

"Come, Ye Disconsolate," Jul 36

"For the Beauty of the Earth," Nov 28

"How Firm a Foundation," Aug 26  
 "O Holy Angels Bright," Sep 24  
 "O Little Town of Bethlehem," Dec 26  
 "Take My Life and Let It Be Consecrated," Oct 32  
 "Teach Me the Measure of My Days," Jan 26  
 "That Day of Wrath," May 24  
 "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," Jun 28  
**Byler, Nolan**  
 Art of Forgiveness, The, Dec 15  
**Byler, Rosalind J. – Book Reviews**  
*Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, Jun 30  
*Feminine Appeal: Seven Virtues of a Godly Wife and Mother*, Feb 37  
*Girls Gone Wise in a World Gone Wild*, Nov 30  
*On the Other Side of the Garden*, Jul 28  
*Piety and Philosophy: A Primer for Christian Schools*, Oct 36  
*Raising a Christian Daughter in an MTV World*, Apr 32  
*Spiritual Profiling*, Aug 17  
*Unquenchable Flame, The*, Dec 23  
*Voices of the True Woman*, Sep 28  
*Worship in Song*, Jan 29  
**Challies, Tim and Armstrong, Aaron**  
*Love Wins—A Review of Rob Bell's New Book*, Jul 7  
**Chinese house leader**  
 Sheep Among Wolves, Sep 35  
**Coblentz, Lester**  
 Properly Dealing With Sin, Jul 25  
**Colón, Jeff**  
 Deadly Exposure, Jan 19  
**Crooks, Ray**  
 How Sufficient Is God's Grace?, Nov 17  
**Eby, Edwin R.**  
 Christian's Hall of Judgment, The, Mar 36  
**Edman, Dr. V. R.,**  
 Peace at Any Price, Nov 37  
**Edwards, Jonathan**  
 Farewell Sermon, A (Part 1), Mar 28; (Part 2), Apr 25  
**Emerson, Gail L. – Person of the Month**  
 Joseph P. Bontrager, May 1  
 Thomas O. Chisholm, Jan 1  
 Sarah Pierrepont Edwards, Feb 1  
 William W. Graybill, Aug 1  
 Amos Hershey Leaman, Mar 1  
 Christian K. Lehman, Dec 1  
 William M. Strong, Oct 1  
 Isabella "Lilias" Trotter, Jun 1  
 Walter E. Yoder, Apr 1  
**Emerson, Paul M. – Editorials**  
 Apostasy: Latest Twist, Aug 5  
 Are We Too Gullible?, Oct 5  
 Year-End Musings, Dec 4  
**Family Life**  
 Empty Column, The, Oct 22  
**Faus, Allen**  
 Clothed, Nov 31

**Foust, Michael**  
 Hard-Hitting Rob Bell Interview Goes Viral, Aug 15  
 Rob Bell Book *Love Wins* Stirs Controversy, Denies Core Christian Beliefs, Aug 13  
**Gray, James Rudy**  
 Helping People Deal With Change, Apr 20  
 Reality of God's Sovereignty, The, Jan 21  
**Greene, Oliver B., compiler**  
 Interesting Facts About the Bible, Jun 2  
**Guernsey, Jeff**  
 To Whom Much Is Given, Jan 6  
**Hablitzel, Ryan**  
 Music in Worship, Mar 22  
**Hertzler, Roger**  
 Appeal to American Anabaptists, An, Feb 2  
**Hooley, Sheryl – Book Summary**  
*A Severe Mercy*, May 37  
**Horst, J. Mark**  
 "Lord, If You Will . . .," Nov 4  
**Hostetter, B. Charles**  
 How to Get Assurance (Part 1) May 29; (Part 2) Jun 33; (Part 3) Jul 31; (Part 4) Aug 28  
**Hughes, R. Kent**  
 Set Apart to Save: MODESTY, Jul 19  
**Isenhour, Walter E.**  
 Young Women and Discretion, Dec 16  
**Jones, Richard M.**  
 Our Great Need, Jan 32  
**Kaynor, Keith**  
 Giving Yourself to God Is the First Step Toward Healing, Jun 15  
**Ker, Edward, Jr.**  
 "The Kingdom of God Is Not Meat and Drink," Nov 2  
**Lelek, Jeremy**  
 Biblical Counseling and Accountability, May 36  
 Counseling With Wisdom: Lessons From the Apostle Paul, Mar 18  
 Loving Self and Hating God, Jun 27  
 TRUE POWER: Servanthood, Humility, and Obedience, Sep 22  
**Lisle, Jason**  
 Fool-Proof Apologetics, Apr 22  
**Loftis, Michael G.**  
 Last Meridian, The, Jan 22  
**MacArthur, Dr. Jack**  
 God's Answer to the Skeptic, Jun 17  
**Martin, Clarence**  
 God Knows No Defeat, Mar 20  
**Martin, Cleason**  
 Why Is Humility Necessary?, May 23  
**Martin, Harold S.**  
 How to Wisely Manage Money, Nov 20  
 Sin and Fall of Adam and Eve, The, Sep 2  
 Truth About Living Together Before Marriage, The, Oct 25  
**Martin, Jason H.**  
 General Resurrection?, A, Jun 26

**Martin, John D.**  
 "Muse, O My Soul, Set Thy Heart," Feb 26

**Mast, Hans – Newslines**  
 Jan 13; Feb 13; Mar 15; Apr 15; May 12; Jun 12;  
 Jul 16; Aug 10; Sep 13; Oct 11; Nov 9; Dec 9

**Master, John**  
 Hold Fast, Dec 22

**Matthews, Mike**  
 World in Revolt, The, Nov 14

**McCracken, Robert B.**  
 Instruments in Worship?, Jan 2

**McKeever, Joe**  
 What Preachers Keep Forgetting, Jun 24

**McQuaid, Elwood**  
 Eyeing the Ashes, Dec 28

**Meador, John**  
 Reason for Hope, The, Dec 2

**Miller, Norm**  
 Condemnation of Man, The, Jul 26

**Miller, Paul L.**  
 Hedonistic Pleasure or Joy?, Nov 12  
 Lord, Give Us Christian Homes, Jun 5

**Mohler, R. Albert, Jr.**  
 Air Conditioning Hell: How Liberalism Happens, Aug 2

**Mullett, John – Beginning Issues**  
 "And the Evening and the Morning . . .," Nov 25  
 Are Aliens Among Us?, Mar 21  
 Back to Genesis (Genesis 1:2), Aug 34  
 Back to the Beginning, Jun 32; (Part 2), Jul 30  
 Back to the Beginning (Genesis 1:2-5), Oct 24  
 DNA: A Designer's Marvel!, Feb 28  
 Genesis 1 Continued . . . , Dec 31  
 Kentucky-Fried Dino Anyone?, Apr 36  
 Scientific Fact or Hype?, Jan 31  
 What Does Scripture Really Say?, May 28

**Mummert, Ray G.**  
 Breathing God in an Ocean of Amoralilty, Jul 2

**Neighbour, Robert E.**  
 Search of the Shepherds, The, Dec 18

**Nolt, Eugene**  
 Relating to Neighbors, Feb 29

**Powlison, David**  
 Affirmations and Denials: A Proposed Definition of Biblical Counseling, Feb 33

**Quick, George**  
 Trusting Christians, Nov 33

**Reitz, Timothy**  
 Practicing Biblical Nonresistance in Contemporary America, May 2

**Rice, William R.**  
 "The Indestructible Church," Feb 19

**Saint, Steve**  
 Projecting Poverty Where It Doesn't Exist, Dec 13

**Sankey, Leonard**  
 Bias of Nature, The, Feb 6

**Shank, Richard**  
 Tutoring Your Successor, Sep 30

**Slick, Matt**  
 What Is a Christian Worldview and Why Do Christians Need One?, Nov 35

**Smith, Oswald J.**  
 Thy Kingdom Come, Mar 8

**Stauffer, Bruce A.**  
 "Thou Shalt Not Muzzle the Ox," Jan 23

**Steinhauer, David**  
 Halfway Anabaptists, Nov 26

**Steinhauer, Davy**  
 Youth Respecting Parental Authority, Apr 18

**Strickler, Joshua**  
 Where Is Your Treasure?, Sep 31

**Sword of the Lord – Person of the Month**  
 Billy Bray, Jul 1  
 Sam Jones, Nov 1  
 Mel Trotter, Sep 1

**Toews, Brian G.**  
 Walking With God, Jan 24

**Tozer, A. W.**  
 Erotic vs. the Spiritual, The, Apr 8  
 I Call It Heresy!, Apr 2

**Tripp, Paul**  
 Psalm 73: Too Easy to Be Senseless, Oct 29

**VanWormer, H. C.**  
 "Come Out of Her, My People," Sep 16

**Wagler, Phil**  
 End of Nice, The, Dec 25

**Wantz, Douglas**  
 Testifying for Christ, May 19

**Weaver, Arlin**  
 Christ's Answers for Affluence, Feb 25  
 If You've Glimpsed God . . . , Sep 7

**Weaver, Chester**  
 Look at the Sales Data, Oct 14

**Weaver, John Mark**  
 Why God Foretells, May 26

**Weaver, Stephen S.**  
 Letter to the Editor, Feb 7

**Wenger, Kiah**  
 Homosexuality: Genetic, Healthy, and Beneficial? Flaws in the Arguments, Jan 16

**Wheeler, Bert**  
 Free-Market Generosity, Feb 31

**Whitcomb, John C.**  
 History and Impact of the Book, The: *The Genesis Flood*, May 15

**Yoder, Felipe**  
 Television, The: Evil Virus of the 21st Century, Sep 32

**Yoder, Timothy S.**  
 Apologetics for the Glory of God, Oct 2

**York, Dick**  
 Still Don't Get It? Look Up!, Feb 16

**Younts, Jay**  
 Wisdom Will Save Your Counselee (and You) From Sexual Immorality, Nov 18

**Zook, Max**  
 Wondering . . . What if Job Had Been an American?, Jan 28