

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA

CURRENT



ORLANDO

REVIVAL

DOMINICAN
REPUBLIC

VOL. 14/No. 1 Spring 2023

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

Current is published quarterly by the Free Presbyterian Church of North America (www.fpcurrent.com). The annual subscription price is \$15.00 (US). To subscribe, please go to www.fpcna.org/subscriptions. You may also subscribe by writing to Rev. Derrick Bowman, 5865 Woodsway Drive, Pfafftown, NC 27040. Checks should be made payable to *Current*.

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SPRING 2023

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AND THE LORD ADDED TO THE CHURCH DAILY
SUCH AS SHOULD BE SAVED
ACTS 2:47

CHURCH-CENTERED EVANGELISM
.....
FROM THE EDITOR

One of the first books I read as a young believer was *God-Centered Evangelism* by R.B. Kuiper. It was a transformative experience to understand that our evangelistic efforts were being used for the glory of God as we worked in the power of God. As I have grown in grace, I have also seen that it would be beneficial to have a companion volume entitled, "Church-Centered Evangelism."

Considering the work of the Spirit recorded in the book of Acts, we see the centrality of the local church. The early converts immediately organized themselves into a community of the redeemed. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). As the work of God continued, the newest believers were added to the church. "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47).

The church becomes the fulcrum of the life of the Christian. It is the place where they come to worship. It is the place where they are disciplined in the doctrines and ethics of the faith. It is the place where prayer took place for God's blessing on the work of the gospel. It is the church that is the sending body for the earliest missionaries (Acts

13:1-3). The church shares the gospel and strengthens the saints.

Evangelism arises in the church, and is performed by the church for the growth of the church.

One of the marks of the modern evangelical church is immaturity of thought regarding the church. Many Christians think that they can enjoy many of the features of local church life without being committed to a local church. They can receive Bible teaching online and can interact with Christians in a local coffee shop. They can share the gospel without any accountability to a church oversight. These things are not wrong in and of themselves, but they are symptoms of an undervaluing of God's gift of the local church. Christ instituted the church, and His church finds expression on earth in locally organized assemblies. We should delight in Christ's will and commit ourselves to a local church.

It is my prayer that this issue of *Current* inflames your love for the church. You can read of God's work of reviving the church and delight in God's blessings to the churches in Florida, Dominican Republic, and Canada.

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FROM THE PAST
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"A mighty enterprise was begun. It was an audacious thought! The missionaries might well have been overpowered by what lay before them—by the power of a world empire, by the prestige of a brilliant civilization. How insignificant were their own weapons! Would they ever even gain a hearing? But though the enterprise was begun in weakness, it was begun in faith. At their departure from Antioch the missionaries were committed to the grace of God."

J. Gresham Machen,
The Literature and History of New Testament Times, commenting on Acts 13:3 "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

.....REVIVAL AND THE LOCAL CHURCH.....

When Noah exited the Ark, God promised, “While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (Genesis 8:22). God orders the world by seasons.

What is true of the natural world, is true spiritually. Every Christian, church, and denomination—if they advance at all—go through seasons. Seasons are a sign of life.

America’s greatest theologian, Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), believed that the advance of the Church was largely through unusual periods of blessing. He said:

“Though there be a more constant influence of God’s Spirit always in some degree attending his ordinances; yet the way in which the greatest things have been done towards carrying on this work, always have been by remarkable effusions, at special seasons of mercy.”

No local church enjoys a uniform experience of outward signs of divine favor. What is true of individual Christians is true of local churches. We are weak and sinful, and incapable of a perfectly consistent and vibrant spiritual life. As a result, when the fires burn low and the life of the church is dim, it is necessary to seek God that He might bring His people out of their winter season and into a spiritual summer of growth and harvest.

These seasons of awakening—which we call revival—are peppered throughout Church history. Sometimes the revival is part of a larger movement, such as the Protestant Reformation. At other times it is very localized. Edwards’ grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, testified to—what he called—five harvests during his ministry. These were definite spiritual awakenings within his community.

Recognizing revival in the local church

In general, revival is a sovereign work of God, in answer to the prayers of God’s people, that results in an enlivening Christian experience in the heart of believers. Patterns of church attendance increase, and desires for the things of God are multiplied. Subsequently, there is less energy given to carnal things, more devotion to prayer, study of the Word, and evangelism.

In his book, “The Great Awakening”, Joseph Tracy records scores of accounts of what happened in local churches. Some were greatly influenced by evangelists like George Whitefield. But other churches seemed to be stirred simply by the news of what God was doing elsewhere. Detailing the account of the work of God in Wrentham, New England (1741), we learn that “The powerful awakenings and convictions on persons’ minds spread from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, so that by midsummer there were instances in all parts of the town under great concern to know what they should do to be saved. Yea, it appeared to us, so far as we could observe in our respective parishes, that very few houses, if any in the town, were passed by and left without some observable spiritual concern on some or other of the family. Our people, in general, became much more attentive in time of public worship. Their countenances being generally solemn, listening, and tender, showed their extraordinary appetite for the word; and it became a very common thing with us to have a great part of the assembly in tears at hearing the word, and especially when they heard the glad tidings of the gospel, and they were invited to rest their weary souls in Christ the Saviour. While we endeavoured with great plainness to show unto sinners their guilt and danger, and to open the awful contents of the law to

them, these truths would often have their proper effect, in alarming guilty consciences, and filling the minds of many with great concern for their own souls; and then the gospel news of a Saviour, and the freeness of divine grace, would marvellously melt a great part of our congregations into tears, and persuade them, by divine help, to seek the great salvation.”

The report continues, “Our people grew very desirous of lectures, that they might have more frequent opportunities for spiritual instruction, and to join in social worship; where we found God often bestowed his blessing. Many of our people, living three or four miles or more from our places of public worship, are necessitated to tarry at or near about the meetinghouses, through the intermission, between forenoon and afternoon exercises; and there used to be little else but vain and worldly talk among most. But upon the late remarkable divine influence on people’s minds, there was a wonderful change in this regard among, we think, the greatest part of our people. It became a common thing for them to retire in small companies to different places, for religious conferences or reading, and sometimes these exercises were mixed. And more lately there are several societies that spend part of the intermission in praying, reading, and singing together. So that on many accounts the intermission, as well as time of public exercises of God’s worship, is very remarkably holy to the Lord, esteemed honorable, and a great delight unto the more serious among us. And even the time of travel to and from our places of public worship has often been sweetly redeemed for pious discourse between two or three, as they walk in company together.”

This account helpfully illustrates what happens during revival. There is a greater attentiveness to God’s Word, and greater influence upon be-



.....MAY GOD ENLIVEN US TO SEEK HIM FOR GENUINE REVIVAL.....

lievers and unbelievers as they hear the Word, often being moved to tears. New meetings also spring up because of the increased hunger. There is more prayer, singing, fellowship, and spiritual discussion which permeates all of life.

Setting our sails for revival in the local church

Although global and national revival is desirable, it is the experience of revival in the local church that we need to bring before God in prayer as a matter of urgency.

William Burns (1779-1859), pastor of Kilsyth in Scotland, witnessed revival in his congregation and district. When he was asked to speak on "The Mode of Conducting a Revival," he gave several points of practical advice. I cannot relay his sermon in full, but I will touch on three points and make some practical suggestions:

1. Holiness to the Lord should be inscribed upon all and everyone engaged in such a work...all who bear the vessels of the sanctuary should be holy.

This is a call to look inwardly. If we desire spiritual awakening in our local congregation we must examine our own hearts for any carnality and worldliness that lives unchallenged in our lives. Sometimes, like Hezekiah, we have to realize that the temple of God has become cluttered

with unbiblical things and it needs to be removed (2 Kings 18:4). In place of such, we cultivate a sincere and sober walk with God.

2. Prayer, unceasing and earnest, is that wherein the great strength of a revival of religion lieth. This it is which draweth down the pure, life-giving, animating influence which sets all hearts in motion... the concert of united and continued and persevering prayer for the abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit requires to be earnestly pressed and embraced. It has been remarked, as an important and encouraging fact in the history of the revivals with which we are best acquainted, that the moving spring of them all has been prayer—believing, earnest, united.

This is a call to meet consistently. Both at church and at home, we must attend the means God has used in the past. We must physically gather together and consistently pray for the outpouring of the Spirit, power in our evangelistic efforts, the unction of God upon the preached Word, and divine help in preparing another generation of preachers.

3. Another means of carrying forward revivals is the appointment of days of fasting and of thanksgiving.

This is a call to pray urgently. When we are struggling with spiritual barrenness, when we see a lack of forward progress, when the enemy seems to be taking more ground,

and causes of discouragement seem to be multiplying, what do we do? Give ourselves to seasons of urgent prayer. Our sovereign God appoints winter seasons, not to bring us to despair, but to put us on our knees that hope might be inflamed afresh. However, when was the last time you fasted and prayed? Or when was the last time your church had a day of prayer? Given the current spiritual climate, should they not be more common?

Charles Spurgeon said, "We never do anything in this world until we set our faces thoroughly to it. The warriors who win battles are those who are resolved to conquer or die. The heroes who emancipate nations are those who count no hazards and reckon no odds, but are resolved that the yoke shall be broken from the neck of their country. The merchants who prosper in this world are those who do their business with all their hearts, and watch for wealth with eagerness. The half-hearted man is nowhere in the race of life."

Truth be told, God is more willing to pour out His Spirit than we are to seek for it. May God enliven us to see the coldness and deadness of our hearts, and to seek Him for genuine revival.

.....
Rev. Armen Thomassian
Minister of Faith FPC, Greenville, SC
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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC REPORT

The Dominican Republic is a Caribbean nation that shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti to the west. January 15, 2023 was just another day in the life of its citizens, but it will be an important date in the history of the Free Presbyterian Church as the first Free Presbyterian church in the nation was constituted with Ramón Sosa being ordained as its minister.

In 2012, Ramón Sosa started a Baptist church plant, but from the beginning he was troubled because he did not see a congregational system of church government in the Scriptures. He continued studying, reading articles online, and became convinced of a Presbyterian form of church government.

Subsequently, Rev. Sosa came across a video of Dr. Ian Paisley preaching with Spanish subtitles. Ramón was impressed by his energetic preaching. He also found a video of Dr. Paisley taking a stand against the Pope and decided that he wanted to write to him; however, Dr. Paisley had passed away. Rev. Sosa investigated the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster and North America, and after reading about our beliefs, he made contact in September 2015. In August 2016, Rev. Geoff Banister from Indianapolis and Rev. Jason Boyle from Mexico City visited the Dominican Republic for the first time to get to know his family and the church—to talk with the church people and answer any questions. After that, it was agreed to bring Ramón to the October Week of Prayer in Indianapolis, where he was examined, duly accepted under care, and assigned a course of studies

under Geneva Reformed Seminary. Rev. Boyle made annual trips to visit and encourage, and the importance of this developing relationship cannot be overstated. The Lord has been pleased to use Rev. Boyle to guide several men as they have sought to discern the Lord’s will for their ministry and the ordering of the church. It is a cause for praise to review the Lord’s purposes in saving Rev. Boyle, gifting him as a minister with keen ability in the Spanish language.

Ramón finished his studies and was licensed in 2021. That year the presbytery also received a petition signed by eleven people to be recognized as a constituent congregation of the Free Presbyterian Church of North America.

After due process the church was constituted as Word of Life Free Presbyterian Church on January 15, 2023. The moderator, Rev. Geoff Banister, along with deputy moderator, Rev. Larry Saunders and the clerk of presbytery, Rev. Stephen Pollock, made the trip to the Dominican Republic along with Rev. Boyle. Rev. Pollock taught a Sunday School class on the history of the Free Presbyterian church. It was moving to look back to the events of 1951 in Crossgar, N. Ireland and to realize that those men then would likely not have had any idea that the Lord would establish a group of believers in the Dominican Republic—a group of believers happy to worship and work under the banner of Christ as reflected in the work of the Free Presbyterian church; a group of believers committed to the doctrines of grace and to the preaching of Christ in a separated witness.

The moderator led the constitution proceedings and the eleven applicants stood with Pastor Sosa and answered the following in the affirmative:

Do you, in reliance on God for strength, solemnly promise and covenant that you will walk together as an organized church on the principles of the faith and order of the Free Presbyterian Church of North America, that you will conform to the distinctives of the Free Presbyterian Church of North America, that you will be zealous and faithful in maintaining the support of this church by your faithful attendance, giving, prayer and participation in outreach, and that you will be zealous and faithful to maintain the purity and peace of the whole body?

Following the church’s constitution and the ordination of Rev. Sosa, Rev. Banister addressed the gathering from Romans 15: “And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ” (Romans 15:29). It is a mark of God’s kindness to give a community the gift of a man of God who knows the Lord. The gospel of Christ is the message of God’s blessings to sinful men. Temporal provisions vary from place to place and from time to time, but the unchanging blessings of the gospel are to be greatly treasured above all else.

Please keep this work in prayer. Pray for their witness in the community. Pray for the Lord to gift men to serve in office. Pray for the Lord to keep Rev. Sosa, guarding him from the attacks of the evil one in order that saints would be edified under the Word and sinners be drawn to Christ.



Williams Lake Free Presbyterian Mission Church

On Monday, October 31, 2022, I sat with the trustees of First Baptist Church Williams Lake to hear a proposal—a proposal that our outreach ministry be given their church building and its contents for the furtherance of the gospel in that area. Unknown to them, on Sunday, October 9, I stood in that church’s parking lot and asked the Lord if it was His will for us to have the building for our ministry, then He must give it to us. The Lord answers prayer and provides exceeding abundantly above all we could ask or think.

The session and committee of Heritage Free Presbyterian Church (Prince George) met on November 8 to discuss the proposal. Although this would mean a significant financial commitment by Heritage FPC, the men unanimously believed that this was the will of the Lord. I am very thankful for the hard work and commitment of the committee thus far. It has been a significant undertaking with many hours spent dealing with

the practical matters of transferring a building.

We have a building—what now? The Heritage FPC session has now accepted the outreach ministry as a Free Presbyterian Mission Church under our care. The congregation meet on Sunday mornings to watch our live-streamed service from Prince George. Then, on Sunday evenings I preach in person to the congregation. Mr. Jonathan Eccles, from Northern Ireland and a third-year Whitefield College of the Bible student, will be coming to Williams Lake for the summer, God willing. He will preach at the Sunday services and prayer meetings and conduct outreach in the local area. The church has a comfortable basement suite for visiting preachers to stay in.

Williams Lake is a city located in the British Columbia interior with a population of 10,000 people. The city also acts as the primary service area for the surrounding area. To my knowl-

edge, our mission church is the only conservative and reformed church within a three-hour radius by car. The opportunities here are immense, especially with the increasing population of the city.

Rev. Ian Goligher made initial contact with the people from the Williams Lake area, and they became regular listeners to his Sermonaudio and radio broadcasts. I held one meeting in 2016 when visiting for the summer, and then a monthly meeting began in 2019. The congregation met in several buildings, and although the expenses of owning a building are higher, it has brought stability to the work.

We would greatly value the prayers of God’s people as we seek to plant a church for the glory of God in this area. The Lord would have us do this, but we need divine power and blessing to come upon the work in ways we have never known before. “Brethren, pray for us!”

*Oh, for the floods on the thirsty land! Oh, for a mighty revival!
Oh, for a sanctified, fearless band, Ready to hail its arrival!*

.....
Rev. Andrew Simpson
Minister of Heritage FPC,
Prince George, BC
.....



REV. LOGAN ELDER—GOD’S MAN IN ORLANDO



On January 13, 2023, Rev. Logan Elder was ordained and installed as the third minister of Orlando Free Presbyterian Church. Following the ministries of Rev. John Wagner and Rev. Derek Erwin the church had faithfully persevered during a pulpit vacancy of over five years. The church family and visitors rejoiced in the Lord’s kindness in answering prayer and sending an under-shepherd to care for His people. Truly the risen and ascended Christ had given a pastor-teacher gift to His church, “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12).

What follows is Rev. Elder’s account of the Lord’s leading in his life. (Editor)

Conversion to Christ

In October 2015, the Lord gave me a saving knowledge of Christ through His Word. I did not grow up in a truly Christian home. When I was about thirteen, I started becoming a regular user of various kinds of drugs and alcohol. From that time on, I began to engage in very dark acts of wickedness. I thank God that, although I was allowed to go considerably far into that world of sin, God largely preserved me from the life-altering and destructive effects that lifestyle is ordinarily attended with.

The Lord is long-suffering and got my attention in my senior year of high school through various means. The Lord had brought the Bible into my life through my workplace and some Christians that came by to give everyone a gift bag containing, among other items, a Gideon’s New Testament. About a year later, through two severe car wrecks, in which I was miraculously spared any injury, the Lord put a question into my mind: “Why am I being kept alive?” Through those events, I started to read the Bible for answers. I read from Genesis to Jeremiah, but stopped for various reasons and began to read John’s Gospel.

I believe the Lord led me to Christ through John 5:39–40. After reading that portion, I cried out to God on several occasions for this life that He promised. He graciously answered that prayer and gave me new life; I became a new creature in Christ Je-

sus. The Lord immediately delivered me at the time of my conversion from the vices that I had been enslaved to for so long, but it was a process for some of those vices which took the daily effort of mortifying the deeds of the flesh. Early on, the Lord gave me an insatiable desire to study the Scriptures, for which I am very thankful. It was the Word of God that helped me then and that helps me now to renew my mind and stir up the grace of God in my pursuit of personal holiness.

Call to Preach The Gospel

About six months to a year after my conversion I began to feel burdened to preach the gospel. Due to the nature of my life before Christ, I was extremely hesitant about such a thing. I felt and still feel extremely inadequate for such a task. It was through reading the call of God to Moses that the Lord gave me assurance that I needed to pursue the preaching ministry. I readily identified with the words of Moses in Exodus 4:10, but the Lord’s response to him in verses 11–12 was greatly impressed upon me by the Spirit. To this day I still turn to these words when I seek encouragement regarding the preaching of the gospel. I then spoke with the man who was my pastor at the time about this burden and began to pursue training for the ministry. Eventually, that pursuit led me to Geneva Reformed Seminary (GRS) where I received a Bachelor of Divinity degree in June 2022. A lot of testing happened during that time both within the classroom and without,

but the Lord is faithful who called me and has kept me pursuing this sacred responsibility of preaching the gospel to every creature.

Call to Orlando FPC

Several factors led to my acceptance of the call to Orlando FPC. My family and I first visited the Orlando congregation in July 2022. During that time, the Lord gave me an initial burden for the work of God there. Matthew 9:36–38 was a part of my Bible reading and the Lord used it to plant the desire in my heart to take up the work in Orlando. I was concerned about this burden being a mere emotional response, but I would not be able to return to Orlando for the next several months due to other engagements. I knew that if the burden was genuine that the Lord would sustain it through those months. The Lord did sustain the burden as the months went by so that as my licensing was approaching, I was still uniquely interested in the work of God in Orlando.

At the end of October, after a congregational vote, I was surprised to learn that the Lord had led the congregation to vote unanimously in favor of calling me as their minister. The Lord used this to speak very keenly to my heart. Although that was an enormous indication of the Lord’s will, I did not yet have full assurance that I should accept the call. The morning after the presbytery had ratified the vote, I opened my Bible and began to read again and pray over the call



Members of Presbytery with Rev. Elder



The Elders with Mr. Ken Walters (elder) and Mr Gary Thomas (deacon) and their wives.



from Matthew 9:36–38. As I prayed, the Lord began to impress two other texts upon my heart in relation to my burden for this work: Colossians 4:17 and Nehemiah 2:10. All three of these portions began to assure me that the Lord would have me accept the call. I believed this call was an answer to prayer and a ministry that the Lord was appointing me to. I believed that I needed to take heed to it, receive it, and endeavor to fulfill it, by God’s grace, as a man going to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. Even with that, I was still not fully convinced and I wanted more assurance. That assurance came to me the next morning. A part of my regular reading was Psalm 56:9 and the Lord impressed upon me the latter part of verse nine, “This I know, for God is for me.” In a strange way, as I meditated on that text at that moment and



for the rest of the day, I became fully assured that God was “for me” in my receipt of this call to Orlando FPC and that He would have me serve Him there.

I am thankful that the Lord has given my family and me a promise to rest upon and plead before Him as I begin my ministry in Orlando. We covet your prayers as we seek to serve the Lord in this new stage of our life.

THE SIGNS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK

In this issue of *Current*, articles have focused on the blessing of God in local churches. There has also been time to reflect on the subject of revival in a local church. The subject of revival came to prominence in the mind of many Christians in the month of February as reports came from Wilmore, Kentucky about a prolonged season of worship among the young people in Asbury University. Almost immediately social media posts described this as a revival. It was heartening to see a desire among people for a work of God in our generation. The events certainly stirred up interest in our denomination for, upon ordination, our ministers and elders affirm their commitment to “the necessity of giving ourselves to earnest prayer for a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit’s power to make our service effective and glorifying to God, and for genuine revival in our day.”

Leaving aside the events in Kentucky, these reports did provoke the question: “How might we recognize real revival?” Some are uncomfortable with the question. Does it not imply skepticism? Discernment might appear to some as skepticism, but according to God, it is a Christian’s duty. We are called to “try the Spirits” (1 John 4:1).

There are two immediate problems. First, the word *revival* is used differently by different people. In this magazine Rev. Armen Thomassian describes it as an “awakening... a sovereign work of God, in answer to the prayers of God’s people, that results in an enlivening Christian experience in the heart of believers.” Others will have different concepts in their minds. Asbury University is associated with seasons of self-styled revival. On this occasion, some Christian leaders have wisely been cautious in labeling revival. Second, people looking back to seasons of spiritual interest and vigor may or

may not use the word revival. Some manifestations have been termed “revivals” and are used to judge present events—without necessarily using biblical criteria to ascertain if they were true works of God or not.

In seeking to recognize a revival it may help to leave aside the term. All parties agree on the claim that a revival is the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we need to ask, “How do we recognize the work of the Spirit?” That question is answerable from the Scriptures.

The Holy Spirit produces conviction of sin. “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8). This conviction of sin involves a recognition of those things revealed as sin in the Word of God. It is a necessary foundation for true repentance. The Spirit opens the mind to true definitions of sin. This conviction is also essential to true holiness. When the Spirit brings a soul to conviction, sin is left behind and there is a pursuit of obedience to the Lord according to His Word.

The Holy Spirit produces prayer and praise in a climate of reverence for God. “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6). Spirit-led prayer and praise come from the hearts of those who are persuaded and delight to express revealed truth. The Spirit works in our emotions through the truth and true revivals are founded upon and thrive upon the exposition of truth and the worship of God expressing the truth in the beauty of holiness.

The Holy Spirit leads sinners and saints alike to the Lord Jesus Christ. The idea of being led to Christ must itself be defined in a day of biblical ignorance. We could say that the Holy Spirit leads sinners and saints

alike to trust in Christ alone, through faith alone, for full salvation. The Holy Spirit leads to a faith that trusts in Christ’s work alone, without our works, as the only ground for acceptance with a holy God. Those who are born of the Spirit (John 3:6) receive Jesus Christ as their Savior (John 1:12–13). When the Spirit works, He leads people to the scriptural truth concerning Christ—His person and substitutionary work. True revival is not an experience shared by false religions, including Catholics, and liberal Protestants alike. One of the features of some “revivals” in the past 100 years is the fact that the Roman Catholic church and Charismatics were able to share in the “delight” of the experience. This is spurious unity and, as a denomination, we vow in our Statement of Purpose, “*To contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3), opposing the enemies of the gospel, especially the antichristian system of Roman Catholicism and the unscriptural Ecumenical and Charismatic movements...*” In true revivals, Christ Jesus is central, not the Spirit. That is not to suggest they are unequal in the Godhead, but the Lord tells us that the Spirit’s work is to testify of Christ and to glorify Christ (John 15:26; 16:14).

It is true that when God works, the devil attacks. It is also true that when God works there are often false spiritual signs present. When these things occur, those who are born of the Spirit discern the false and seek to separate from it. The Spirit cannot lead contrary to the Word and so we identify true revival by observing scriptural conviction of sin, a longing to know more of the scriptural Christ resulting in worship expressing scriptural truth.

.....
Rev. Stephen Pollock
Editor and Clerk of Presbytery
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C.H. Spurgeon on the Church Prayer Meeting

What should be the great objective of the prayer meeting and that for which we should seek the answer?

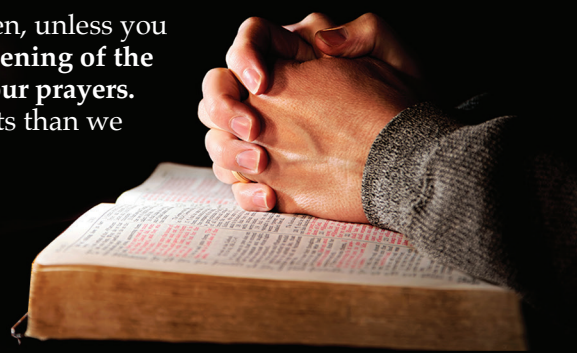
First, it must be **the glory of God** or else the petition is not sufficiently put up. How much of the Lord's Prayer consists in prayers for God, rather than for ourselves! "Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

And then, in subservience to that, let us pray for a **blessing on the church**. We ought to exercise a little of our love for one another in praying for our fellow-members. Pray for the minister, for he needs it most...Pray for the church officers. Pray for the workers in all organizations. Pray for the sufferers. Pray for the strong, for the weak, for the rich, for the poor, for the trembling, for the sick, for the backsliding, for the sinful. Yes, for every part of the one great body of Jesus let our supplications perpetually ascend.

Then we should also pray for **the conversion of the ungodly**. Oh! this ought to be like a burden on our hearts. This ought to be prayed out of the lowest depths of a soul that is all aglow with sympathy for them. They are dying without hope.

It is of no use my preaching to the people, my dear Christian brethren, unless you pray for them. **It is of no use holding special services for the quickening of the spiritually dead unless the Holy Spirit is brought into the field by our prayers.** It may be that you who pray have more to do with the blessed results than we who preach.

From *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Volume 60, No. 3421
Delivered by C. H. Spurgeon on Lord's Day evening,
August 30, 1868



Free Presbyterian International Congress Northern Ireland: July 1-5, 2024



KEY VERSE - 1 Corinthians 2:5

**That your faith should not stand
in the wisdom of men,
but in the power of God.**

SUMMARY OF FIRST CORINTHIANS CHAPTER TWO

Is there anything like preaching the cross of Christ? To the apostle Paul preaching the cross was everything. It was God's all-sufficient message revealing God's way of saving sinners. The cross of Christ exposed every other religious notion to be foolishness. For this reason, the apostle told the Corinthians that he was "determined not to know anything among [them] you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). He would do so that their "faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:5).

He even restated his dedication to preaching the cross again, adding, "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory" (1 Corinthians 2:7). The term "mystery" is not the popular idea of mind-boggling confusion. It simply means that salvation by a crucified Savior was not so clearly revealed in former times as in New Testament times. In verses 8–16, the apostle went on to show that Christianity is the religion of the supernatural.

He showed that before sinners can receive and believe the message of a crucified Savior their hearts and minds must be enlightened by the Spirit of God. The unregenerate man is totally blind to spiritual things. Only born-again believers "have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16).

OBSERVATIONS ON PREACHING THE CROSS OF CHRIST

1. Preaching the cross is at the heart of the Christian gospel.

Building on his theme in chapter one, Paul makes the cross the central focus of gospel preaching. He shows how the cross of Christ cuts through the wisdom of this world. We learn that gospel preachers must set themselves to expound the revelation of the cross because:

A social Christ without a cross is humanism—man's way to work for his own salvation.

A dead Christ hanging on a cross is ritualism—man's way to put God at a distance.

A living Christ, who was crucified and rose again, is the gospel.

Paul's message was unique and contrary to the so-called wisdom of the world. He forthrightly declared the death of Christ as God's good news to a perishing world.

We must realize how opposite is the message of a crucified Christ to the

worldly man's way of thinking. To announce to sinners, whose minds are fixed on the things of this world, that there is good news in a man's death seems odd. Yet, when coupled with the resurrection, it is God's good news to the world. This was Paul's core teaching, and he came back to it continually as he did near the end of this letter. See 1 Corinthians 15:1–4.

Dr. Zwyer, the famous missionary to Muslims, stated, "If the Cross of Christ is anything to the mind, it is

surely everything—the most profound reality and the sublimest mystery. One comes to realize that literally all the wealth of glory centers here. The Cross is the pivot, as well as the center of New Testament thought” (Cited in *The Outlined Galatians* by Robert E. Lee).

Without faith in the Christ of the cross who died and rose again for our justification, no one can testify to being a Christian. But if you have come to Christ for salvation, and by faith you depend upon His work at Calvary and in the triumph of His resurrection, you are saved. You are a Christian in the true and fullest sense of the gospel.

2. All ministers of the gospel need to preach the cross as God’s message to men.

Paul had no time for the tricks and techniques of the Greek philosophers. He could not join the lovers of human wisdom in their attempts at human persuasion. Paul called them “enticing words of man’s wisdom” (1 Corinthians 2:4); devices to entrap their hearers. Paul simply heralded forth God’s message about the cross-work of Christ as God’s way of saving sinners. He did not depend on personal techniques to persuade men. Paul did not go to the pulpit in his own name, nor in his own authority, for he preached “the testimony of God” (1 Corinthians 2:1).

Paul preached the good news of the gospel plainly, boldly, straightforwardly, and obediently as God’s ambassador. He sought to stir hearts to faith in the redeeming and saving power of the cross of Christ. To him, that was true gospel preaching. We need that apostolic preaching in our pulpits today. The more of Christ’s

person, purpose and triumph in His death that sinners and saints hear the more they will experience the power of the gospel in their lives. Such preaching will be a proper “demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Corinthians 1:4). In place of using human techniques to attract men to mere religion let there be a thorough declaration of the meaning of Christ’s atoning death. Souls need to hear, from the Scriptures, of Christ’s redeeming power in His death to turn away God’s wrath from their heads.

3. Preachers of the cross must depend upon the personal and powerful ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit makes the cross-work of Christ real to sinful men by the miracle of regeneration. Otherwise, this wisdom of God in the cross of Christ is lost to the natural man. This is Paul’s insistence from verses 8–16 of this chapter. Note his statements about the darkened state of the natural, unregenerate mind. “Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it; they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Corinthians 2:8).

The apostle’s logic is striking. It ought to have struck fear into all who were guilty of crucifying the Lord, but in their spiritual blindness they cried out for the Lord of glory to be crucified. How blind they were! “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

This is cited from Isaiah 64:4. It does not relate to man’s knowledge of heaven, but refers to the things believers enjoy through the gospel after conversion to Christ.

Without conversion man’s faculties are dead to God; “the things of God knoweth no man” (1 Corinthians 2:11). There is an immeasurable distance between the levels of the unconverted man’s mind and the mind of God. “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). This text is the death knell of the unregenerate man’s hope in self.

Without the Holy Spirit’s power no one is capable of receiving, knowing, or discerning the true knowledge of God unto salvation. Sadly, this is true of all unregenerate men and women, but marvelously, it is not true of you if you are a born-again believer. Paul said, “But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit...” (1 Corinthians 2:10). You have received the Spirit which is of God, and you are given to understand the blessings of the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:13).

By the Holy Spirit you now have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). To have the mind of Christ is to have the outlook of Christ. Because you are born again through the power of the Holy Spirit you see through new eyes that are opened to spiritual things—the things of God. Therefore, Christianity is the religion of the supernatural. Without the work of the Holy Spirit opening blind eyes, unstopping deaf ears, and enlightening dark hearts by His effectual power, no one can be saved by the preaching of the cross.

.....
Rev. Ian Goligher
Retired Minister, formerly
Cloverdale FPC, BC
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To Do:

- If you are born again, praise God for opening the eyes of your understanding to behold the saving power of God in the cross-work of His Son.
- Pray for the ministry of the Holy Spirit wherever the cross of Christ is preached. The Spirit’s work is vital to effective gospel ministry, and we must never forget that the regeneration of a soul is solely the work of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity.

TC TEEN CONNECTION

By Rev. Derrick Bowman

Life's Most Important Decisions

As a teenager, you face many challenges that are different from the ones that your parents faced. It can be frustrating trying to navigate through the many decisions, hurdles, and temptations that come your way. However, there are three specific things that I would like to discuss with you in this article that I believe will help you figure out the three most important decisions you will ever make in your life. These are three things your parents have already had to deal with, and three things your children will have to deal with after you. In fact, everyone who has ever lived has had to deal with these three things. I want to talk to you about *life's master*, *life's mate*, and *life's mission*.

Let's start by discussing what I mean by *life's master*. First, I need to ask if you are saved? Have you ever been born again and decided to follow Jesus? That is the most important decision you will ever make in life. It is at the very top of the list, and nothing comes close to it. Is Jesus your Master, and do you follow Him wholeheartedly? I hope He is, and if He is not, then start here. Make Christ your life's Master.

There is a wrong way of thinking among some professing Christians,

who do not view Christ as their Master: that is, they do not want to be ruled by Him. These people are happy to call themselves Christians and attend church, but their Christianity and church attendance are only outward. Inwardly, they still want to maintain the mastery of their own lives. They might not say it, but their attitude is that they are going to do whatever they want, and no one has the right or authority to tell them otherwise. They are rebels at heart and do not submit to the rule of anyone. For example, can you honestly say that Christ is the Master of the music you listen to? Is He the Master of what you watch on television or what you do online? Would you be embarrassed for Jesus to follow you on Instagram, or would He be pleased with what He sees on your TikTok? If Christ is truly the Master of your life, then it will be evident in the way you live and the things you do.

The second most important decision you will make involves your *life's mate*. It is impossible to overstate the importance of the person you decide to marry. You need to understand that the overwhelming testimony of Scripture is that it is God's plan and purpose for young men and women to get married. There are rare exceptions such as the gift of celibacy

perhaps alluded to in 1 Corinthians 7:7, but the biblical norm is for young people to desire marriage.

Concerning your life's mate, you must marry in the Lord. Paul specifically states that a Christian is not to be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever (2 Corinthians 6:14). Never date or pursue an unbeliever. Regardless of what you might think, dating is not for the purpose of evangelism. If they are not saved, they are automatically off the list of options. From the believers you have left to choose from, they should be demonstrating that they have made Christ their life's Master. Simply being saved is not good enough. Look for someone who is growing in his or her relationship with the Lord. After that, there are other values to consider like their family background, personality, character, etc. Many young people have destroyed their future by choosing the wrong mate. For example, a rebellious wife can disqualify a young man from the ministry or even from holding a church office (1 Timothy 3:4–5; 11–12). It is difficult to overstate the importance of whom you marry, and it is also difficult to overstate the joys of marrying that one whom God has designed to be your helper in life.

Life's mission is the third most important decision you will ever make. "What are you going to be when you grow up?" is the question that you may have already been asked a thousand times. It is a valid question because God has designed for you to work. Some are surprised to learn that work existed before the Fall in the Garden of Eden. The difference was that work was not laborious and Adam did not try to avoid it. After the Fall, work began to involve the "sweat of thy face" (Genesis 3:19). Even with its difficulties, life's mission that God has for you can be very rewarding and satisfying. Some young people try to select a career based on their interests or the salary potential that a job might fulfill. A Christian young person's primary question in selecting life's mission must be "What does God want me to do?" Chasing a paycheck should not be the Christian's vocational objective.

One of the lasting benefits of the Protestant Reformation is the teaching that all legitimate work is sacred in the sight of God. In fact, Martin Luther said, "The works of monks and priests, however holy and arduous they may be, do not differ one whit

in the sight of God from the works of the rustic laborer in the field or the woman going about her household tasks . . . All works are measured before God by faith alone." While personal happiness is not necessarily the end goal, you will be the happiest when you find God's will for your life's mission and do it with all your heart. It does not matter if God calls you young men to preach or to work at the local garbage facility—as long as you are following Christ as life's Master and following the Lord's mission, you will be a happy man. As a young woman, you may be called to the mission field or as a godly homemaker with little ones of your own. Either way, as long as you are following the Lord as life's Master and following life's mission God has set for you, you will be a happy woman.

Finding *life's Master*, *life's mate*, and *life's mission* are the three most important decisions you will ever make. I would encourage you to discuss these things with your parents. If you have godly parents, they will want God's best for you. Pray together about these things and seek the Lord's direction in these most important decisions of life.

If you would like to submit a question, please email Rev. Derrick Bowman at dbowman@gracefreepres.org. If your question is selected, it will be presented anonymously.



FP YOUTH CAMP
ROCK MOUNTAIN BIBLE CAMP
JULY 15–22, 2023
Ages 13–18

Ask your minister or contact Rev. S. Pollock for details (malvernfp@yahoo.com)

BOOK REVIEW

Why I Preach from the Received Text

“Are you sure your Bible is the purely inspired and infallible Word of God?” has been the often-raised question ever since the serpent asked Eve in Genesis 3:1, “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” The devil was tempting her to doubt God’s Word, and he succeeded, resulting in her sin against God. Since that moment the servants of the devil have continued to sow the seeds of doubt in unsuspecting souls concerning the truth of God’s Holy Word.

In the late 20th century, and even now, evangelical New Testament scholars dare to foster doubts in Christians’ minds about the truth and infallibility of God’s Word. For example, Dr. Kurt Aland wrote the following:

“If the catholic (general) epistles were really written by the apostles whose names they bear and by people who were closest to Jesus, then the question arises: was there really a Jesus? Can Jesus really have lived, if the writings of His closest companions are filled with so little of His reality? The catholic epistles, for example, have so little in them of the reality of the historical Jesus and His power, that it suffices for James, for example, to mention only Christ’s name in passing... When we observe this—assuming that the writings about which we are speaking really come from their alleged authors—it almost then appears as if Jesus were a mere phantom....” (Kurt Aland, *A History of Christianity*, Vol.2, 106. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985).

His Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament rejects the authenticity of many words and some whole passages of the New Testament.

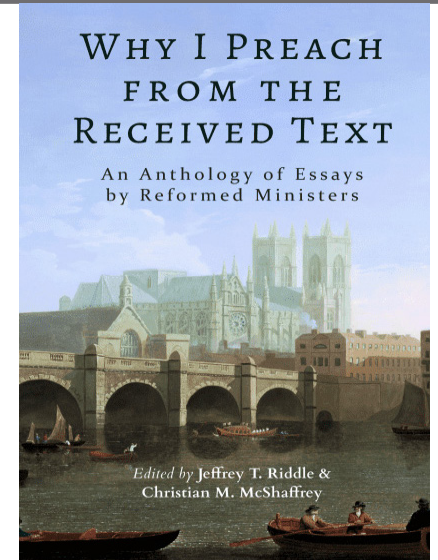
More recently, the presumed leading New Testament Greek authority, Dr.

Daniel Wallace, wrote, “We do not have now—in our critical Greek texts or any translations—exactly what the authors of the New Testament wrote. Even if we did, we would not know it. There are many, many places in which the text of the New Testament is uncertain” (Hixson and Gurry, eds., *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*, xii. Madison, WI: Intervarsity, 2019).

These humanistic authorities have assumed the office of declaring to the church and to the world which words may have come from God and which words probably did not. Roman Catholicism assumes the same office as the sole dispenser and interpreter of God’s Word to the masses. Providentially, God took from Romanism their most distinguished New Testament scholar, Desiderius Erasmus, and used him to publish the cream of all the extant New Testament manuscripts, gifting the church the Received Text. That text provided all of the Protestant New Testaments with all of the Scripture quotations in the Protestant confessions and catechisms.

Thankfully, the Lord has many servants on Earth that never trusted the humanistic scholars who “handle the Word of God deceitfully.” In addition, a new generation of Reformed ministers is now turning to the old paths regarding the Received Text of the New Testament.

Jeffrey Riddle and Christian McShaffrey have compiled a wonderful anthology of testimonies by Reformed ministers entitled, *Why I Preach From The Received Text*. Ministers from various Reformed denominations (including Rev. Philip Gardiner and Rev. Pooyan Mehrshahi, both graduates of Whitefield College of the Bible in N. Ireland) explain why they agree with Edward Hills’ conclusion that



God has preserved the “Ecclesiastical Text” in His church for 2000 years. Some of the testimonies reveal a younger generation’s discovery of the great works of the Protestant forefathers—discovering the sound textual scholarship of John Calvin, Theodore Beza, Francis Turretin, John Owen, and John Lightfoot of the Westminster Assembly. What refreshing good news of the turning away from the proponents of modern textual criticism who seek to ascertain the words of the New Testament using methods akin to the theory of evolution.

The question at the beginning of this review can be satisfactorily answered by answering another question: Can you consistently believe that God supernaturally inspired His Word and at the same time believe that He failed to supernaturally preserve His Word?

***Why I Preach from the Received Text* is available from several online providers.**

.....
 Rev. Myron Mooney
 Minister of Trinity FPC, Trinity, AL

LOVING YOUR HUSBAND

My friend Doris and her husband had been married for ten years before the Lord saved them. Prior to their salvation, they were religious, but had not heard the gospel. As they grew in grace, old habits fell away; however, one area continued to be a problem—their marriage. Doris was so frustrated because she could not get her husband to do what she wanted him to do. She tried everything to no avail until she attended a Bible study on marriage. The teacher insisted that each class member complete the homework, and Doris, feeling desperate, committed to the class. The Lord used that study to open Doris’s understanding to the truth of God’s Word regarding marriage relationships. Her marriage transformed beautifully from then on! Her husband pastored churches for many years until retiring and she developed *Help Meet 101*, an unpublished Bible study for wives.

Doris learned that God in Genesis 1–2 gave Adam certain responsibilities: authority (dominion); be fruitful and multiply; subdue the earth; dress (care for) the Garden of Eden; keep (guard, protect) the Garden. God also gave Adam the desire, drive, and inherent need to fulfill the tasks. Good men desire to take leadership, have children, conquer the earth, care for, and protect their families.

Eve was created to be a help for Adam as he did his tasks, not to do his tasks for him, although her cooperation is certainly necessary, especially with respect to children. A wife helps her husband when she

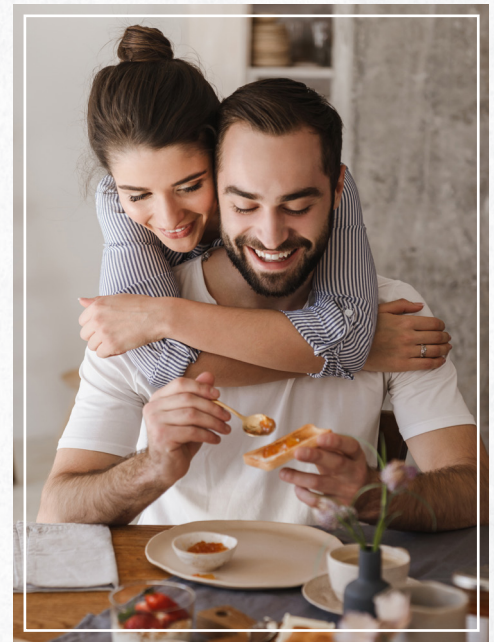
understands and accepts how God made him, admires and respects God’s work in him, focuses on his strengths, empathizes with his difficulties, and prioritizes his needs.

When they sinned, both Adam and Eve failed in their God-given tasks: Adam did not protect his territory or his wife, while Eve ventured out alone without consulting Adam. Terrible consequences resulted, and for women the struggle to control rather than to help her husband became a natural response. When your husband makes a plan, do you have a better one? Do you cheerfully accept his leadership or grumble wanting your own way? Eve traded respect, obedience, and submission for snares, nets, and bands to bind him according to Solomon in Ecclesiastes 7:26. Solomon’s reactions in Proverbs 21:19, 26:21, and 27:15 regarding the contentious wife are quite condemning!

In wonderful gospel mercy, God provides the escape from this grievous temptation. In Titus 2:4–5, older women are to teach the young women “to love their husbands and to be obedient to their own husbands.” Notice the order—being husband-lovers followed by the obedience reminder. Gk. *philandros* means loving her husband in the companionship and friendship kind of way. Best friends, affectionate, cheerful, supportive describe this love. Malachi 2:14 refers to a wife as a companion, of which Matthew Henry commented, “She has long been an equal sharer with thee in thy cares and griefs, and joys. He should freely converse

and take sweet counsel [with her] as with a friend and in whose company he should delight in more than in any other’s.” With such godly camaraderie underlying the relationship, a wise, gracious wife responds with easy respect, obedience, and submission to her husband’s leadership. When her own marriage radiates the joy of easy godly companionship, her home benefits; the church is blessed; and the culture is impacted. The early church caused the pagan Roman culture to increasingly regard women and infants. And in Reformation days, as former priests and nuns married, established homes and families, they created an amazing cultural change in the whole Western world.

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Mrs. Barbara Mooney
Trinity FPC, Trinity, AL
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A GOOD HABIT

Do you have any habits? A habit is something we do over and over again. We do it so often that we don't even think about why we do it; we just do it. There are good habits—like brushing our teeth before we go to bed—and bad habits—like biting our fingernails. Good habits can help us stay in good health and can make our lives easier. One of the most important habits you can develop in your life is the habit of spending time with the Lord each day.

We spend time with the Lord to get to know Him better. Nothing is more important than knowing God.

First, decide on the best time of day. Most people find that the morning is best because there tend to be fewer interruptions. Spending time alone with God before we do anything else gets the day off to a good start. Second, find a place where you can be alone. Have your Bible and perhaps a notebook nearby.

The first thing to do is quiet your heart before the Lord. Think about God. Think about how great He is and how holy He is. Then ask Him

to speak to you from His Word. You might want to use the words of Psalm 119:18 to pray: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Then read your Bible.

It is good to have a plan to follow for your Bible reading. Many grownups read through the whole Bible one chapter at a time every day. Or they may read a chapter from the Old Testament, one from the New Testament, and a Psalm every day. Since you are just starting out, it would be best to read just a short portion each day. Your parents, Sunday school teacher, or pastor will be able to help you find a plan that will work for you.

The important thing is to think about what you are reading. Ask yourself what the verses tell you about God. Do they tell you something that you should do or should not do? Is there something in the verses that you can turn into a prayer? Are there words that you don't understand? Keep notes in a notebook. Write down the day's date, the reference for the Bible verses you read, and the things you learned or that you need to ask someone about.

Some days you may feel it is difficult to understand God's Word. Remember that you can always ask for help from older Christians. Sometimes it helps to listen to the Bible being read in a Bible app while you are looking at the words on the page. There are also Bible dictionaries and other helps for young people. Most importantly, we have the promise that the Holy Spirit will help us understand God's Word. Believe that He will.

Even though reading God's Word may sometimes be hard, it is always worth it. The more you read it, the more you will understand. What a wonderful thing to be able to spend time with God by spending time reading His Word each day!

Bad habits such as biting our nails are hard to break. We wish we had never started them. You will never be sorry for getting into the habit of spending time with God each day.

.....
 Mrs. Judy Brown,
 Faith FPC, SC

WINNERS
 of the winter crossword puzzle:

Erin Barnes, Hillsborough FPC
 Alana Rose, Toronto FPC
 Liam Rose, Toronto FPC
 Janel Tse, Toronto FPC
 Kaelyn van de Bruinhorst, Calgary FPC

Spending Time with God

Use the article on page 18 and your Bible to solve this puzzle.

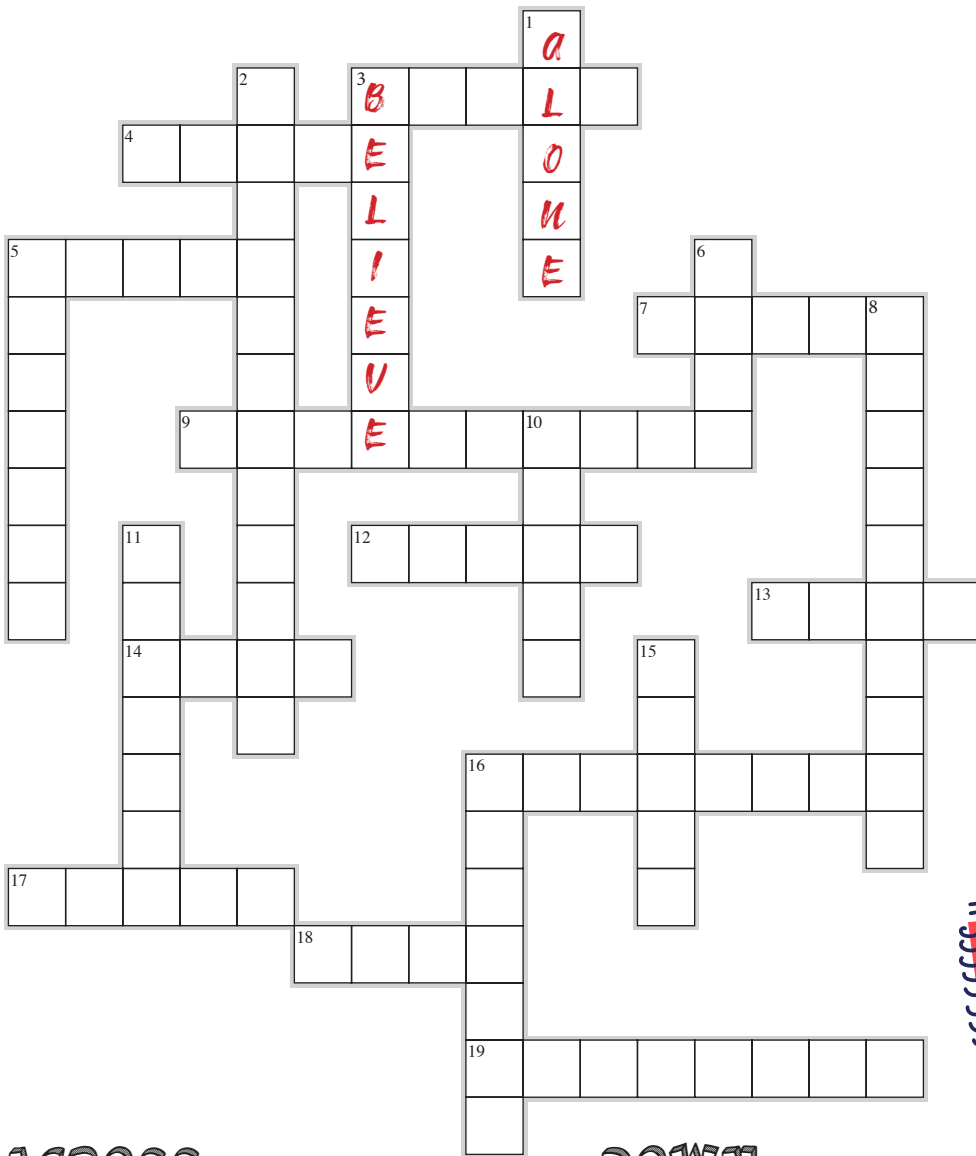


KIDS' CORNER



PLEASE NOTE: Send your completed puzzle to *Current Kids' Corner*, c/o Judy Brown, 651 Ponden Dr., Greer, SC 29650 or to ljsbrown2@gmail.com by **April 30, 2023**.

Include your name, address, age, and the name of the church you attend. Please also include an email address in case we need to contact you about your entry. Five winners will be drawn from all correct submissions received. **The contest is open to young people ages 5-12.** Winners will receive a \$10 cash prize.



ACROSS

3. Something to use when you meet with the Lord
4. What do you do in a notebook?
5. What kind of passage should you read?
7. James says we should not only be hearers of God's Word but also ___ of it (James 1:22).
9. It is sometimes difficult to ___ God's Word.
12. Something we do over and over again.
13. Note this so you know when you read a certain passage.
14. What kind of eyes do you want to pray for?
16. Joshua says we should ___ on God's Word (Joshua 1:8).
17. God's Word is a ___ to my path (Psalm 119:105).
18. Follow this when you read your Bible.
19. Something to use when you meet with the Lord

DOWN

1. A good place to meet with the Lord
2. Something to help you understand what you read
3. Since we have the promise that the Holy Spirit will help us understand God's Word, what should we do?
5. The Psalmist says that God's Word is ___ in heaven (Psalm 119:89).
6. God speaks to His people through what?
8. Timothy was praised for knowing what from a child (2 Timothy 3:15)?
10. What to do when you read your Bible
11. "Nothing is more important than ___ God."
15. What kind of heart do you want to have?
16. A good time to meet with the Lord

A BASELESS ASSURANCE

I once read a book entitled, "In Christianity, or in Christ?" Good question! Lots of folks today are religious but unregenerate. They may be in the church, but are not in Christ! Many are nominally "Christian", are confident of going to heaven, yet are deceived. They have made the mistake of replacing Christ Himself with rites and ceremonies. They have a baseless assurance. There are two aspects of this to consider:

Religious association

People find comfort in just entering a place of worship: a church, temple, synagogue, or mosque. There are some who get their "assurance" from religious performances. They feel so "peaceful" in a service. Perhaps it is the music, the choir, the responsive readings, the various actions of a priest, or even the architecture! This is the assurance of religious ritual, not the peace of God that passes understanding (Isaiah 29:1). There are many who profess to experience "closeness to God" in such things, but it is pure superstition. Consider Amos 5:21 and 6:1. Such people are religious but lost. Paul referred to a "form of godliness" without the "power." We witness the phenomenon of bigger crowds in churches at Easter or Christmas.

There are some who never go near a church, yet they practice religious superstitions. They may make the sign of the cross before flying on a plane, or running out onto a ball-field to play a game—superstition! Many engage in pseudo-religious rites or rituals, while some regard sacraments as a means of protection against harm and danger—a kind of "good-luck charm"! Such folks may tell you they feel good as a result. They state that they "feel close to God", receiving some kind of assurance and peace. But it is not the peace found only in God's salvation, through trusting in Christ the Savior alone!

Righteous activity

There are those who feel a certain assurance that they are right before God, but are, in reality, filled with self-righteous pride. They engage in religious exercises, but they feel no need of true repentance or of being "born again of the Spirit." They are trusting in what they can **do** and not in what Christ has **done**. We see an example of this in Luke 18:9–14. Religious works will save no-one (Matthew 7:21–23).

All the self-righteous people are not church goers. Some think to gather up a store of good-will with God by works of benevolence and charity (Isaiah 64:6; Titus 3:5). Denying their innate sinfulness and depravity they feel they are good enough for God to accept them just as they are. As one put it: "These inflate their own imagined righteousness and belittle God's righteousness, in order to minimize the gap between, and cling to the notion that God is tolerant. If they should fall short at any point He is always at hand to forgive, they think. **The security this attitude affords is a most serious deception.**" Satisfaction with their own supposed goodness closes the minds of multitudes to God's gift of salvation. It gives false assurance, and keeps them in ignorance of their great need of Christ and of God's mercy (Romans 10:3).

God is not impressed by self-righteous activity. If you could gain the favor of God by your own works, why would Jesus have to come and die on the Cross? (See Galatians 2:21; Ephesians 2:8–9) If you belong to one of these categories—trusting in religious association or in righteous activity—forsake such notions today! If you are assured by these, your assurance is baseless. Your prayer must be:

*No works of merit now I plead,
But Jesus take for all my need,
No righteousness in men is found,
Except upon redemption ground.*

.....
Rev. Stephen Hamilton
Minister of Lehigh Valley FPC, PA
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