

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



# *The Word and Work*



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

MARCH, 2002

## GOD'S LOVING LAW

The God of **Law** first reveals Himself as  
the God of **Love**.

His **commands** spring from His **covenant**.

His **demands** are based on His **deliverance**.

\* \* \*

The Lord told His people, in effect,  
"I am not just the Lord God  
but 'the Lord **your** God.'"

*(What a difference that pronoun makes.)*

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# THE WORD AND WORK

*"Declare the whole counsel of God"*

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

The Word and Work (USPS 691-460) is published monthly except December under the auspices of the Portland Ave. Church of Christ, Inc., Louisville, Ky. Subscription: \$11.00 per year, bundles of 10 or more to one address = \$10.00 per subscription. Address correspondence to Word and Work, 2518 Portland Avenue, Louisville, KY 40212. Second class postage paid at Louisville, Ky.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Word and Work, 2518 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY 40212.

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Vol. XCVI

MARCH, 2002

No. 3

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## GO DOWN, MOSES!

MOSES: Lord, I do apologize for bothering you so late in history, but they've sent me back with the commandments. The general view is that they won't do. You see, people want to worship you and all that, but they want you to keep up with the times.

GOD: Very thoughtful. You say it's the commandments that are the problem?

MOSES: Yes, Lord. It's felt they need some revision. Take the first one where you demand an exclusive allegiance. People feel this is intolerant and overdoing it.

GOD: Well, Moses, how would you feel if your wife showed you affection one day a week and ignored you the other six days?

MOSES: That's not the same thing.

GOD: Isn't it? Come, now, what relationship can survive on one day's attention in seven?

MOSES: Perhaps you have a point, Lord. Anyway, what about the second commandment? No graven images. Nothing before you. The general complaint is that you are a bit down on material things. They also say you're always asking for money for your church.

GOD: Quite wrong, Moses. Don't forget I am the author of all material blessings. All I ask for my work is one tenth of a man's income. If a man can't give that, he's put his money before me. His money is then an idol, a graven image, a god. Carry on. What next? And don't drop those tablets because I'm not making another set.

MOSES: Well, Lord, how about swearing? What you call "taking your Name in vain?"

GOD: My commandment stands. How would you feel if one of your children cursed with your name?

MOSES: Really, Lord. You keep making it so personal.

GOD: But, Moses, it *is* personal, isn't it?

MOSES: Well, then, a day of rest and worship. Is it necessary?

GOD: Yes it is. My people need rest and change, fellowship with each other, and spiritual refreshment. So I set aside a special day for these things.

MOSES: Lord, you have good reasons for everything. I don't think we quite understood that.

GOD: That's my impression too. Let's hurry on. I'll put the questions now. You seem to be losing your nerve a bit. How do they feel about honoring father and mother?

MOSES: Well, some of the young object.

GOD: Please ask the young to wait until they have children. What about the sixth commandment? No killing?

MOSES: The general principle is acceptable. They just want an amendment to cover irresponsible driving which is such fun.

GOD: For whom? The driver or the victim? Number seven now. Adultery?

MOSES: Well, Lord, everybody does it. Sex is pretty much a free-for-all now. The laws seem old-fashioned, so people break them.

GOD: No, Moses. They don't break the laws. The laws break them. Just look around. Very unscientific, too. You should know that one doesn't break laws. One just illustrates them. No, Moses, I recant not a word. Not on adultery or on theft or on false witness or on covetousness. My commandments were given to protect and promote man's happiness, not restrict it. You see, I love men enough to want the best for them. To ask me to revise my commandments is to ask me to stop loving. You know I can't do that.

MOSES: No, Lord. No, you can't. So what am I to do?

GOD: Go down, Moses, and say that what I have written I have written. And don't forget—tell them I wrote it because I love them.

--Author unknown; copied from a tract

## **Loving the *Law*??**

Alex V. Wilson

A song in our hymnal, quoting from a psalm, says "*Oh how love I Thy law!*" But I wonder how many people lie when they sing that? Do you like rules and regulations? Most folks don't.

Yet try to imagine life without them. What if referees in a basketball game allowed one team to have eight men playing at the same time, but the other team only the usual five? What if in a baseball game one team had to run the bases as usual, but the other team could run from home to 3rd and back home again --yet it still counted as a run? What if one football team's touchdowns each counted six points but the other team's counted ten? More seriously, what if cars were allowed all the time to drive either on the left or right side or down the middle of all streets, however the drivers wished? These silly illustrations are enough to show that rules really are essential.

Since that is so, how much more do we need *God's* rules?

We've learned pretty well to follow His laws in the physical realm, lest we blow up the lab in college chemistry class. How much more should we follow His laws in the *spiritual and moral* realms, lest disaster result?

Or, from a slightly different angle, suppose you husbands gave your wife a new car as a surprise anniversary present. After many hugs and kisses, she ohs and ahs as she looks at her new treasure with delight. Then, noticing a booklet on the front seat, she picks it up and sees the title: *Directions for Using Your New Car*. To your astonishment she slams it down on the ground, shouting, "I get so sick and tired of these people always telling us what to do! Who do they think they are? Those know-it-alls make me furious!!" At the very least you would stare at her in surprise. And after a cooling-off period you would calmly remind her that since the manufacturer knows more than anyone else about the car, he's not imposing but doing his buyers a favor by sharing his insights.

Oh that we human creatures would humbly admit that our Manufacturer is somewhat wiser than we. Oh that we would truly love His *Instruction Manual* and its contents rather than thinking of Him as an interference and His directions as a nuisance.

Because His directions to us are of such vast significance, we are devoting this and the next two *Word and Works* to a study of His Ten Commandments. Enjoy!

### WHY the Law?

Philip C. Johnson in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* explains an *improper* use of these commands. (Most of the Jews stumbled on this error.) "The Law was *not* given as a means of salvation. It was given to a people already saved (Ex. 19:4; 20:2) in order to instruct them in the will of the Lord so that they might fulfill God's purpose for them as 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Ex.19:6). *The revelation was given 'not to give life but to guide life'* (P. Fairbairn)."

Amen. The Lord knew none of us would ever fully obey Him. He knew our obedience to some of His commands some of the time could not cancel out our disobedience the rest of the time. Yet He gave the law anyway. Why?

The Bible points out at least three *proper* uses of His law. **1st, the governmental use.** He gave Israel the Old Covenant law to help restrain evil and maintain justice, order and mercy in its society. Christians are not under that law today, but are told to obey the laws of our respective governments -- except when such laws directly contradict God's will. (Rom.13:1-7; Acts 5:29.)

**2nd, there is the convicting use of God's law.** When unconverted folks take His commands seriously, they find they fall short. Obeying God's will is not as easy as they expected, and they are not as good as they thought. It thus pops their pride, and proves their guilt and their desperate need for a savior.

As we believers share God's word with the unsaved, especially those who are smug, we should remember that His law is a valuable tool needed to convict sinners. Later we will see how the preacher R. A. Torrey did that.

**3rd, the teaching or guiding use of God's law.** Once we are saved by His grace, we still see in His commands His will for our behavior. That is true of OT laws properly interpreted and applied as moral principles, but even more so of NT commands directed to the church. God's law shows us how to please Him, our Redeemer. And as we grow in Christ we will still find need for its convicting use also, to humble us for our sins and bring us to confess them to Him and be freshly cleansed. (See 1 John 1:9, "the Christian's bar of soap.")

Oh that we children of God may truly declare, "I love your law, O God. It is *sweeter* to me than a chocolate sundae, and more *valuable* to me than stocks and bonds."

## *A Mountain on FIRE!*

Most people in our culture today -- even many Bible believers -- seem to lack a deep sense of awe before God the Almighty. Are we not too careless and casual about Him? Some of us are even flippant and frivolous about spiritual matters. Through Isaiah the Lord said, "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and *trembles at my word*" (66:2). Rarely are we quakers before the Most High. Maybe we have over-emphasized His love and grace . . . NO -- that's impossible! But maybe we have *under-emphasized* His greatness, holiness, justice, power and transcendence.

Most of us are second or third-generation Christians who grew up singing *Jesus Loves Me* and *Jesus Loves the Little Children*. If that's true of you, thank God for your heritage. But it is obvious that such a blessed legacy can also pose dangers. Our very familiarity with church, and the Bible's teachings, and our loving God can tempt us to take Him for granted.

Put yourself in the place of the second-generation Israelites. They grew up eating manna every day! And seeing the divine pillar of fire in their camp every night! And hearing from their parents about the the Lord's plagues of judgment upon mighty Pharaoh, and how God divided the sea for them to cross through. Yet as time passes even fantastic miracles can be taken for granted, and little by little our sense of wonder fades away . . . .

So imagine yourself among those Israelites camped in the desert near lofty Mt. Sinai.

The LORD called to [Moses] from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to tell . . . the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'" (Exodus 19:4-6; NIV used throughout the article.)

And the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and be ready by the third day, because on that day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people . . ." (19:10-11).

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the

mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him . . . (19:16-19).

When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die." Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning." (20:18-20)

We must not misjudge God's motive as He overwhelmed the people with these awe-full displays of power. He was not at all like a bully who inflates his ego by making other kids cower before him. Oh no. He began with a super-gracious offer to them of unimaginable privilege -- to be His nation in a unique sense (19:5-6). And His reason for such fear-inspiring fireworks was to keep them from sinning (20:20). So we must not consider Him as a brute or tyrant. Many people think He has the attitude of the woman who said, "Find out what the baby is doing and make him stop."

Instead, the *God-of-Law* had already proved Himself to be the *God-of-Love*. He had chosen them, called them, delivered them from their oppressors and defeated their enemies. Now He enters into covenant with them. His commands spring from His covenant. His demands are based on His deliverance. He repeats that fact before giving them the first of the ten commandments:

And God spoke all these words: "**I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me**" (Ex.20:1-3).

He says, in effect, **I Am and I Act**. And because of those facts you are obligated to Me. I am the LORD, the I AM, the self-existent creator of all things. So it is only right that you obey Me. And I am not just the Lord God but "the Lord *your* God." What a difference that pronoun makes. From the days of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, He had entered into a special relationship with them. In case they doubted that, He supplied another motive for their allegiance: I am not just a passive, spectator deity, a "watchmaker god." No, I act. I brought you out of Egypt, where you were enslaved to the world's #1 superpower. *Therefore*, because I Am and I Act, now I Ask from you the devotion and obedience which I deserve.

# The 1st COMMANDMENT

**“You shall have no other gods before me”  
(or “besides me”).**

**Ex.20:3 (NIV) & footnote.**

After revealing Himself as the God of love, the Lord here confronts our will. The first command deals with our choices, our priorities. It echoes the great call of Joshua to Israel, “Choose this day whom you will serve!” It is also a preview of Jesus’ claim, “No man can serve two masters.”

In those days all people but Israel were polytheists. If, on a trip, you passed through one country after another, you might worship the god of each region as you went along -- just to be on the safe side. Anyway, your homeland’s god wouldn’t mind, so long as you remembered to worship him too. Those deities were not usually jealous.

There were gods not only of various areas, but of life’s various aspects. Looking for a wife? Visit the temple of Venus, goddess of love. Traveling by ship? Make an offering to Neptune, god of the sea. Marching off to fight? Pledge to give some of your booty to Mars, god of war. Planting your crops? Pray to Baal, god of fertility, and have sex with a priestess (prostitute) at his shrine. Afraid you have offended the god Molech? Then offer your newborn child as a burnt offering to appease him.

Of course if there is more than one God, then divided loyalty would be sensible. Do you believe in two main gods? Then give each of them 50% of your devotion. Or do you prefer honoring three of them? Then you can give 20% loyalty to god A, 35% to goddess B, and 45% to god C. Whatever. But Yahweh, the I AM, the God of Abraham and of Israel, claimed to be the God of the whole world -- the *only* true and living deity. If so, He had the right to require 100% devotion from all His people: “Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one. [Therefore] Love the LORD your God with *all* your heart and with *all* your soul and with *all* your strength” (Deut.6:4-5). Thus, “have no other gods besides Me.”

What about today? **Our god is whatever means most to us.** Whoever I voluntarily give my supreme preference and obedience to. Whoever I willingly dedicate my attention, time, efforts and money to. Whatever I am willing to die for.

Some people are totally dedicated to sports, music or science. Those may be innocent and even worthwhile fields of endeavor, but

not worthy gods. Paul spoke of false teachers “whose god is their belly” (Phil.3:19), or self-indulgence. Many folks today worship at that shrine. Some sage said that most people see their god every morning when they look in the mirror. Symptoms of that religion are numerous: living for pride, popularity, power, possessions, pleasure, position. Even church-leaders are not immune.

In wonderful contrast, “**Jesus is the perfect example of the meaning and fulfillment of the first commandment,**” wrote Merrill Tenney. Here are three strong proofs of that statement: “I do not seek my own will but the will of Him that sent me.” “I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.” “Your will, not mine, be done.”

This first command is **the most important of the ten.** For if you truly obey this one, naturally you will seek with all your heart to obey all the rest. Conversely, if you knowingly, persistently break other commands of the Lord, you cannot claim to be keeping this one. For in this law God claims the authority to be your Law-giver.

One hundred years ago R. A. Torrey was a leading evangelist. He preached the gospel to vast throngs around the world. One night an angry man confronted him after a meeting. The conversation went something like this: “Mr. Torrey, your preaching really upsets me. I’m not a Christian but I’m a good man and lead an upright and generous life. Yet you say I and everyone else without exception must trust in Jesus as savior or be lost. I resent that!”

Torrey replied, “My friend, **you are committing the worst sin there is.**”

*Man:* “That’s *outrageous!* You know my friend here. He brought me tonight, and he too will tell you I’m an outstanding citizen in this community, known and honored for my honesty and my generosity to many charities and good works. How dare you say I’m committing the worst sin there is! What do you think I am? And what is this ‘worst sin’ you mention?”

*Torrey:* “Sir, it is logical that *the worst possible sin is to break the greatest of all God’s commands.* All His commands are important, but Jesus said one is the greatest of all, and you constantly break it. Therefore you are committing the very worst of all sins.”

*Man:* “What is that command?”

*Torrey:* “Jesus Himself said the greatest command is to love God supremely, totally, with all your heart and soul and strength. Are you doing *that?*”

*Man:* "Well, uh, I don't know . . . I guess not."

*Torrey:* "Then you are committing the worst sin there is."

The man went away with much to consider. Whether he ever turned to the Lord is unknown. But the incident also gives you and me much to think about. Am I fully committed to God's authority over me? Am I fully surrendered to Jesus as Lord of all aspects of my life? Or am I holding back some area from His control? Is there some other god I'm giving part of my allegiance to? Or can I truly say that the Lord means *everything* to me?

May God help us to examine ourselves. Thoroughly.

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## The 2nd COMMANDMENT

"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments." Ex. 20:4-6 (NIV throughout).

Here is a significant fact: Command #1 tells us WHO to worship and forbids *false gods*. Command #2 tells HOW to worship and forbids *false worship of the true God*. So we see that God first deals with our will -- demanding our top allegiance. Then He deals with our mind -- what we think about Him, what kind of being we consider Him to be. Obviously the two are intertwined, for our convictions about His nature will influence our submission to His Lordship.

There are two kinds of idols or images: metal and mental. Both are dishonoring to the Lord and thus harmful to us.

### False Metal Images: Material Idols

This command does not prohibit making any statues or images at all, for the Lord later told Moses to make the two cherubim on the mercy-seat in the Most Holy Place, and also the brass serpent when the people were attacked by snakes. But it forbids picturing God Himself -- who is spirit -- in a material image, and also bowing down in worship to an image of anyone or anything. Such practices promote externalism and superstition rather than worship in spirit and truth.

**True God, False Images:** There are, as we know, churches which use images or statues in their chapels and encourage their devotional

use in homes. They deny that this violates the second command. "We don't bow down or pray to any image itself, but worship God by *means of* the image. It is merely an aid to our worship." That may be true of some people. But in the Philippines we saw countless instances of what those churches officially deny. If someone got sick she would travel to a particular chapel to seek healing from a particular image of Jesus there. But if she wanted safety in travel she would visit another church, and pray to the image of Jesus (or Mary, more likely) in that place. Etc.

Notice too how God reacted just a few weeks after giving this command, when the Israelites made an image of a golden calf.

The Israelites who urged Aaron to make them an image had no idea of **renouncing** the Lord but simply of **representing** Him. They did not break the first command but the second. For Ex.32:4,5 says, "Aaron made an idol in the shape of a calf. Then they said, 'This is your God, O Israel, *who brought you up out of Egypt.*' And Aaron built an altar in front of the calf and announced, 'Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD' "[that is, to Yahweh their God]! The image was set up not as a rival god but due to the reasoning that it would be an aid to the worship of the Lord. Yet God considered it to be sin, disobedience to His command and an insult to His honor and majesty. --J. C. Ryle

Why does the Lord forbid this? People might think He is just picky. Not so. (1) **Images are degrading to God**, for they cannot present Him adequately. John Eddison's illustration is helpful here. What if someone tried to play Beethoven's *5th Symphony* on a harmonica, or translate Shakespeare's *Hamlet* into a primitive tribal language? In no way could the results portray the genius and insights of their creators. The same is true of images of the Lord. They rob us of the true knowledge of God.

2) **They are demoralizing to people**, inclining us to have reverence for certain places (where the image is) and times (when we are in its presence), but not others. Thus they tend to limit God to some locality rather than producing the practice of His presence everywhere.

**False gods, false images:** Today, as then, most other religions use images as they worship false gods. How they need to know the one true God of heaven and earth and Calvary. And how we need to make Him known.

*They bow before that same stone statue still:*

*Idol words.*

*We say we'll tell them, but we haven't yet:*

*Idle words.*

## False Mental Images: Misconceptions of God

To us these are obviously a greater hazard than material idols. For twisted images may exist in our mind without our realizing it. John Eddison suggests four common ones, and with reflection you can think of others.

**1. Kind granddad:** I just love being one, and can't guess how we got a bad reputation! But folks say lots of us granddads spoil our grandkids by overly indulging them. And many people consider God to be like that toward us: so loving and easy-going that *He will overlook our faults and give us whatever we want* (or at least they think He should do that). Certainly he would never make a big deal over our frailties or send anyone to a fearful doom. As one philosopher put it, "Don't worry, God will forgive. That's His business."

**Humbug!** When the Lord forgives it is sheer and marvelous mercy -- totally undeserved and never to be taken for granted. He is the Judge of all the earth, who doesn't owe us a thing, and would be perfectly just to wipe out every last one of us due to our rebellion. Those who reject His costly mercy will face His judgment, perhaps in this life and surely afterward. Though He lovingly yearns for us, we must repent or perish. Jesus said so (Luke 13).

**2. Strict Policeman:** I surely do not mean to stereotype policemen. But a fairly wide-spread idea is that God is *a stern law-enforcer* with a badge, a club, handcuffs and a ticket pad. He is sadistic, eager to write us a ticket or put us away in jail or send us to execution.

**Horsefeathers!** This is of course the opposite extreme from the kind granddad image, and equally false. Fourteen chapters after the Ten Commandments are listed, there is a stunning declaration of God's character. Notice the *balance* but also the *emphasis* in Ex. 34:6-7.

The LORD proclaimed His name to Moses: "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he *does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers* to the third and fourth generation."

Seven aspects of lovingkindness are affirmed. Yet balance is maintained as He proceeds to mention His role as Judge.

"Yeah, see -- look at that last part! What did I tell you," accuses our critic. "God is just dying to zap us all."

No, that's not true. Actually He died to save us all.

“I disagree,” he continues. “God is not only harsh and unloving, but unfair too! Both the 2nd Command and this later passage show that He punishes both the sinner and also his innocent children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren! How do you explain that?”

Well, I'll let John Stott explain it in his usual concise but clear style:

In the second commandment God describes himself as '*a jealous God.*' There is no need to be disturbed by this. Jealousy is a resentment of rivals, and whether it is good or evil depends on whether the rival has any right to be there. Since God is unique, and there is no other, he has the right to ask that we worship him alone.

A comment is also needed on the portrayal of God as '*punishing the children for the sin of the fathers*' for several generations. It is made clear later in the Bible that God holds each of us responsible for our own sins (see Deut.24:16; Ezek.18:1-4 & 20). Nevertheless, there is abiding and solemn truth in what the commandment says. Because of the social nature of evil, children often suffer the consequences of their parents' sins. These may be transmitted physically (by inherited disease), socially (in the poverty caused by drunkenness or gambling), psychologically (by the tensions and conflicts of an unhappy home) and morally (in habits learned from a bad example). (*-Christian Basics*, by John Stott)

In other words, God here is warning us, “If you won't steer clear of wickedness out of regard for Me, or even for yourself, then consider the welfare of your children. Your sins will adversely affect them even if they remain innocent. You will bring hardships into their lives which could be avoided if only you repent. But the poison of your continuing in sin will infect them as well as you. The way of wickedness is hard. Be good to yourself and to your descendants by turning to Me. For I show love to multiplied thousands who obey Me.”

**3. Orbiting spaceman:** This image or *imaginary* god is quickly explained. He is felt to be way out there, somewhere in outer space. He's *out of touch with us*, practically unaware of us (“though some crazy folks believe rumors he will land here someday”), and need not make any practical difference in our lives. Those who believe in this spaceman god “practice the absence (not the presence) of God.” They believe in a god, but He is irrelevant.

**4. Available fireman:** That is, this god is *for emergency use only*. So long as things are going well, forget him. But if trouble comes or a crisis arises, then “Help, God! Something's on fire--S.O.S.! I really need you. Solve my emergency -- bail me out!” But once the problems die down, then indifference and neglect return. (The biggest crowd ever at Portland Ave. Church, at least in the post-Boll era, was

when the Cuban missile crisis arose during John F. Kennedy's presidency! Two Sundays later, or maybe one, the attendance was back to the usual.)

### **The True image of God**

The cure for idolatry, for false imaginings about the Lord, is to know what He is really like. And that is done as we concentrate on Jesus, who said "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). Paul called Christ "**the image of the invisible God**" (Col. 1:15). Earlier we said that metal images distort our ideas of God's nature; we compared them to playing a Beethoven piece on a harmonica. But Jesus is the perfect image of God. Focusing on Jesus' presentation of God is like hearing Beethoven himself play his *Moonlight Sonata* on a grand piano! So to purge our minds of unworthy thoughts of God, behold His Son, the Christ, the Lamb of God. He is the eternal Son who became man and dwelled among us -- "and we beheld his glory" (Jn.1:14).

*Whom* do you worship? *How* do you worship? Is your God worthy of worship? And do you honor Him with dignity yet enthusiasm, with reverence yet excitement, with an awed sense of adoration and thrill? A chorus says, "Bow down before Him, Love and adore Him, His name is Wonderful -- Jesus my Lord." Jesus, the exact image of God.

What and how you think about the Lord is of top importance. If you break command #2 by thinking of God unworthily, you will probably break command #1 also -- for you will consider Him unworthy of your total dedication. May we search our hearts on these matters.

\* \* \*

**Idolatry or "Man-made religion...is the supreme expression of human arrogance. It is an attempt to bend God to our will by remaking Him in our own image." -- Barry Webb**

\* \* \*

### *Spare No Idol -- Smash Them All!*

In the early centuries of Islam there was a warrior and idol-smasher named Mahmoud. "In his trail of conquest of northern India he came to the city of Guggeratt, where there was an idol which was held in unusually high esteem by the people." The city's leaders came to the general, pleading with him "that he would spare to them this one idol. He might do as he wished with the others, they said, but if he took this god from them too, they might just as well die. They pleaded with such intensity that the heart of the conqueror was touched. It seemed more than heartless to bereave these poor people of what was apparently life and death to them.

"Then he remembered his vow to spare not one idol. The will of Allah was plain. He had a sledge hammer brought to him, and with it he dealt the idol one terrific blow. To his amazement there poured from the crack in the image a stream of jewels and precious stones. The people had hidden their treasures in the image, hoping to move the conqueror to spare it" (Jonathan Goforth).

Harold Brokke comments on the above incident as follows: "Just as those people stored their treasures in that idol, so all forms of inward and outward idolatry are expressions of man's lusts and heart-treasures." If in your heart you are holding on to some idol -- to anything that competes with God's will for you -- smash it! Only then will you receive the true treasures and riches which He desires to give you. Make William Cowper's prayer your own:

*The dearest idol I have known,  
What-e'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,  
And worship only Thee.*

\* \* \*

*This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. 1 John 5: 2-4*

I would not work my soul to save, For that my Lord has done;  
But I would work like any slave Because I love God's Son.

# The 3rd COMMANDMENT

**“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.” Ex. 20:7, NIV**

Command #1 was about our will. #2 was about our mind. Now we come to #3, which relates to our *tongue*. Our tongue reveals our health, our heart-condition. When we go to a Doctor, he often says, “Let me see your tongue.” When we go to God, He says, “Let me hear your tongue, and what you say about Me. Do you misuse my name -- do you “take it in vain,” for nothing?

You dislike it when anyone mispronounces your name, especially if it is done deliberately.

How much worse and more shameful it is to misuse God’s name, and show disrespect for Him.

In ancient times the Jewish scribes who copied the Bible (with no typewriters or copy machines available), cleaned their quill pens every time before writing the name of the Lord! Maybe they were extreme or even superstitious, but today in our culture we are at the other extreme.

## 3 Ways of Misusing God’s Name:

**1. Profanity or Cussing:** When they get angry, surprised, or excited, many people blurt out, “O God!” or “O Lord!” or “Jesus -- lookit that!” This takes God’s name *in vain* -- in a light, empty, meaningless way. They are not really thinking about Him, at least not properly. (This differs from a Christian who may see an accident, and instinctively cries out “O God!”--as a cry for help, a spontaneous prayer.)

Many folks exclaim “Oh hell!” or call on God to damn someone. If they really mean it, they are asking Him to withhold forgiveness from them. But the Judge of the universe doesn’t need our advice. Or if they say, “God damn...” someone or something and do not mean it, then they speak as if God doesn’t exist or as if they don’t really believe in damnation or hell. Thus they treat holy things with disrespect, and treat the most urgent matters as if unimportant.

Often folks make this excuse: “But it’s *just a habit!* I don’t mean it!”

They just gave 2 good reasons to quit: 1) We shouldn't say things we don't mean. 2) Habits gain strength, so stop -- because it's a *bad* habit that offends God, is a bad testimony to the unsaved and a bad example to other believers.

Some people need to examine and revise their vocabulary. To be really consistent, we should cut out even those words which were coined as *almost-but-not-exactly profanity*. I mean terms like 'gosh' used instead of God, 'gee' used instead of Jesus, 'dam' for damn, etc. Some people use such terms innocently because ignorantly. But they can easily make the wrong impression.

**If Habitual. How To Stop?** 1) Daily Pray Psa.141:3 & 19:14. "Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips." "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my *heart* be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer."

2) Apologize if you fail and do it again. Apologize to human hearers as well as to God, and it will probably help you control your tongue the next time.

**A 2nd Way of Misusing God's Name: Disrespectful Joking or Flippancy regarding the Lord (or other serious or holy subjects).**

The apostle Paul warns against obscenity (smut) but also foolish talk and crude joking. He says such language is out of place; "instead give thanks." J. B. Phillips' paraphrase puts it like this: "The keynote of your conversation should not be coarseness or silliness or flippancy [in other words, vulgarity or shallowness or impudence] --which are quite out of place, but a sense of all that we owe to God." (Eph. 5:4)

Humor is a very good gift from God. Praise Him for the way it can lighten the burdens of life. But if we are not careful it can easily degenerate. (Most ha-ha guys on TV are a prime example.) Some topics are not fit to be joked about: God, hell, even Satan. Remember Jude 9? It mentions people who foolishly "slander celestial beings. But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil ... did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'" Don't jest lightly about Satan. He is your bitter, and powerful, enemy. He is ruining lives all around the world, and around your town and my city. Maybe we should laugh a little less and cry a little more.

Irreverent jesting about God is totally out of line, too. Remember He is holy, and awe-inspiring in greatness and justice. We should replace irreverence and disrespect with veneration, esteem and adoration. Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty!

### 3rd, We misuse God's Name by Hypocrisy -- Pretending.

The Lord said of Israel, "These people honor me with their lips but their hearts are far from me." And Jesus asked, "Why call me Lord but disobey?" Pretense!

**Taking His Name in Vain:** If in court you vow to tell the truth "so help me God," but you don't really think it matters whether what you say is true or false, you use His name in a vain, empty way -- as though He won't hold you accountable.

More common among us is to *call ourselves God's people but not be Godly. To call Christ our Lord but disobey Him. To call God our Father but worry as though we're orphans with no one to care for us.* In such ways we bear God's name for nothing.

Alexander the Great heard that one of the soldiers in his army, named Alexander, was insubordinate and a trouble-maker. He summoned him and said, "Either change your name or change your conduct!" Does Christ feel like saying that to some Christians?

#### Other Practical Applications

We use God's name in prayer. We call on the Father's name, in the Son's name. But do we realize what this implies? A teacher asked her pupil, "What did you say?" He replied, "I don't know, I wasn't listening." Are we ever like that in prayer?

I often *say* my prayers, But do I really pray?  
And do the wishes of my *heart* go with the words I say?

To pray to God thru Christ's name has tremendous implications: Am I willing to help be the answer to my own requests? Am I willing to serve or suffer for this request to become reality? In college I had a teacher who, in the light of these implications of prayer, would sometimes remark before we began a time of intercession, not "Shall we pray?" but "**Dare** we pray?"

**Promises to God** (and humans too):

**Make them cautiously; keep them conscientiously.**

*Ecclesiastes 5:1-7*, "Watch your step when you go to the house of God .... Do not be quick with your mouth, nor hasty in your heart, to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few .... When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is

better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it. Don't let your mouth lead you into sin ... Stand in awe of God."

Now to conclude. "Don't take God's name in vain" means "Do take His name in earnest." As Jesus said, we should pray "Exalted be Your name" and then act consistently with that prayer. Looking back, consider this: The 2nd command, forbidding idolatry, warns us against treating any non-God (an image) as God. The 3rd warns us against treating God as a non-God -- with casual disrespect.

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## Thought-Provokers:

God's LAW is Good, His GOSPEL is *Glorious!*

"We know that the Law is *good*, if one uses it lawfully . . . Sound teaching [is] according to the *glorious* gospel of the blessed God. 1 Tim. 1:8 & 11, NAS

\* \* \*

**BAD News we need to Face;  
GOOD News we need to Embrace**

"The law condemns, the gospel forgives. The law calls out for death, the gospel offers life. The law points out the problem, the gospel provides the solution ....

"The law is perfect and can be kept perfectly only by *perfect* people -- only Jesus fits that description. The gospel is the means of perfection for *imperfect* people -- all of us fit that description." --Max Morrow

\* \* \*

**The *Fruit* of our Faith; our *Thank-offering***

"In my duties as professor of Sanskrit (Persian) in the university of Oxford for forty years, I have devoted as much time as any man living to the study of the sacred books of the East. I have found that one keynote of all these so-called sacred books -- the one refrain through them all -- is salvation by works.

Our own Holy Bible, our sacred book of the East, is from beginning to end a protest against this doctrine. Good works are, indeed, enjoined upon us in the Bible far more strongly than in any other sacred book of the East. But they are only the outcome of a grateful heart --

they are only a thank-offering, the fruits of our faith. They are never the ransom money of the true disciple of Christ.” --the late Dr. Max Muller

\* \* \*

### Around or Beyond?

“Paul did not want to ‘get around’ the law, but to go beyond it,” said Leroy Garrett (quoting a Scottish writer). That is, the Spirit-prompted believer, grateful for God’s grace, will not ask “How can I get out of doing this?” or “What’s the least I can do and still get by?” Rather, out of love to God created by God’s love to him, he will do *more* than the law requires (if such is possible) and seek to go beyond the call of duty.

\* \* \*

### Torah -- from Father to Children

“We assume the Ten Commandments are like the law of the land, a formal code of dos and don’ts, restricting personal freedom for the sake of public order. But the comparison is wrong. *Torah* (Hebrew for ‘law’) means the sort of instruction a good parent gives his child. Proverbs 1:8 and 6:20 actually use ‘torah’ for parental teaching.... That will give you a right idea of the nature and purpose of God’s law. It is there to lead us into those ways that are best for us. God’s parental law expresses God’s parental love.” --James Packer in *I Want to be a Christian*

\* \* \*

### A Rhapsody over the Law

“It did not seem incongruous to the Psalmist to sing about his love for a set of rules: ‘Lead me in the path of thy commandments, for I delight in it...I find my delight in thy commandments, which I love’ (Psalm 119). Today it is hard to imagine even the most enthusiastic government commissioning the Poet Laureate to compose an ode in honor of the statute book! When [theologians who teach ‘situation ethics’ or ‘the new morality’] write about ‘law’ and ‘rules’ they assume that rule-keeping is something dull, dry and oppressive in itself. The Old Testament writers did not see God’s law in that light at all.

“The vital difference lies in the area of relationships....In the Old Testament, God’s law is securely founded on the personal covenant relationship He has already established with His people.” --David Field in *Free to Do Right*

\* \* \*

### *Various Meanings of the word "Law"*

“Quite often in the Epistles ‘law’ is no more that a shorthand abbreviation of ‘*law-keeping as a means of earning God’s approval*’ [that is, legalism, the abuse of God’s law --avw], and in this sense the rule of law certainly has no place in the Christian life....But sometimes Paul means by ‘law’ *the expression of God’s will*. ‘The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good,’ he reminds Christians at Rome (Rom.7:12).” (David Field in *Free to Do Right*.)

“ ‘Law’ has a varying significance in the New Testament. Sometimes it refers to *the whole of Scripture*. At others it designates *the books of Moses*. It may be a term for *moral law*.”

It may denote a *force, or tendency* as in ‘the law of gravity.’ In Galatians 3:15-4:11 it refers to ... the covenant administration of Moses, *the dispensation of Moses*” [i.e., the Old Covenant era --avw]. (Walter Chantry in *God’s Righteous Kingdom*.)

Therefore a careful study of each passage’s context is essential. We must ask, Which aspect of law is the writer considering in this particular passage?

\* \* \*

“As love makes moral law enjoyable, so also do moral statutes make love for God practical. How can we show love to the Almighty? ‘This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments’ (1 John 5:3). Love to God is the *heart* of the moral law. Moral laws are the *hands and feet* of a heart of love. Moral law shows us the way to perfect love. Love gives power and pleasure to the ways of law.” --Walter Chantry in *God’s Righteous Kingdom*

\* \* \*

### **Conclusion: Is Your God Too Small?**

Is your God *good* enough, *great* enough, and *magnificent* enough that you *trust* Him enough, and *love* Him enough to obey Him with all your heart?

If not, then you don’t have much of a god, do you? Get another one! Trade in your inadequate god and get the Real One! --avw

# We are “Not Under Law”

More than once Paul said that we Christians are not under law. So how do the 10 Commands apply to us today?

For one thing, notice that the same Paul also wrote, “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will *fulfill the law of Christ*” (Gal.6:2). And in I Cor.9:20-21 he said,

“To the Jews...[who were] under the law I became like one under the law (though *I myself am not under the law*), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law [i.e. to Gentiles who were never under the Old Covenant] I became like one not having the law (though *I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law*), so as to win those not having the law” (I Cor.9:20b-21).

We Christians are obviously not under the Old Covenant law given to Israel. We need not offer lambs to God, keep the Passover, go to God through a high priest descended from Aaron, refrain from eating pork, place tassels on our clothes, or refrain from planting crops every seventh year. We are His New Covenant people. (Study 2 Cor.3 and Heb.8.)

## God’s Law in General

But what about “law” in the general sense of binding commands? *Must we obey New Covenant commands?* Yes, and no. *Yes* in the sense that Paul told Christians to “fulfill the law of Christ” and also said of himself, “I am...under Christ’s law.” Furthermore he said, “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. *Keeping God’s commands is what counts*” (I Cor.7:19). That verse makes two facts very clear: (1) We are not under the Old Covenant, for it required all males to be circumcised. (2) Nonetheless, obeying our Lord is the very heart and soul of being His disciple. **We dare not neglect either of those points.** Our Seventh Day Adventist friends tend to confuse the first one; and careless, grace-abusing church-members overlook the second. (The sabbath issue will be dealt with in next month’s W&W.) Careless members need to be taught the strong verses just quoted. For “love is not the *finish* of the law (in the sense that it dispenses with it); love is the *fulfilment* of the law (in the sense that it obeys it). What the New Testament says about law and love is not ‘if you love you can break the law,’ but ‘if you love you will keep it.’” (John Stott, *Christ the Controversialist*.)

## A Contradiction?

Why, then, did Paul say twice that Christians are not under law? Isn’t he contradicting himself? No, he is trying to make sure we don’t

*spoil* our obedience by wrong goals and motives. For *obedience in itself can be a dangerous thing!* Obedience can lead to deadly legalism. Listen again to John Stott:

Paul's statements that the Christian is "not under law" never meant that the category of law has been altogether abolished for him, but rather that he does not look to the law for either his justification or his sanctification....

God has done for us and in us what the law could not have accomplished. And He has done it by the sending of both His Son and His Spirit. He justifies us through the death of His Son and sanctifies us through the indwelling of His Spirit (Rom.8:3,4). That is, God's way of acceptance is not our striving to obey the law but the finished work of Christ. His way of holiness also is not our striving to obey the law, but the inward work of the Spirit. As for our justification: "*You are not under law but under grace*" (Rom.6:14; see also v.15, and Gal.5:4). As for our sanctification: "*If you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law*" (Gal.5:18)....For "law" means our own efforts at obedience; "grace" means the saving initiative of God through His Son and His Spirit.

But this repudiation of law both as the ground of our justification and as the means of our sanctification does not dispense with it as the standard of our conduct. Although we are not justified by law...yet God justifies us "in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Rom.8:4). Again, although we are not sanctified by the law but by the Spirit, yet what the Spirit does in sanctifying us is precisely to write the law in our hearts (Jer.31:33; 2 Cor.3:3). Thus the observance of the law, though not the ground of our justification, is the result of it, and though not the means of our sanctification is the essence of it. Samuel Bolton, the Puritan, summed up Paul's teaching about the law and gospel in this epigram: "The law sends us to the Gospel, that we may be justified, and the Gospel sends us to the law again to enquire what is our duty being justified." (*Christ the Controversialist*)

### Another Thought-Provoker

Augustine also made a beautiful summary statement on this subject: "*The law was given that we might seek grace. Grace was given that the law might be fulfilled.*" That's true. Listen to Paul on the first sentence just quoted: "Through the law we become conscious of sin." "I would not have known what sin was except through the law." "Law brings wrath." (Rom.3:20; 4:15; 7:7; also in 7:7-13 Paul tells how this principle worked in his own life.) Thus God uses His law to puncture our smugness and drive us to seek His grace.

But what about Augustine's second sentence above: "Grace was given that the law might be fulfilled." Is that true? Hear Paul once more: Does he say that God, knowing His law was powerless because of our weak sinful nature, removes the condemnation of believers' sin

. . . *period, the end, that's it?* Oh no. Notice carefully: God sent His own Son "as an offering for sin...in order that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Rom.8:1-4, NASV). We are not saved *by* obeying, but are saved *to* obey. And an obedient life is possible. The law's requirement can be fulfilled in us. He doesn't say it is fulfilled *by* us, as though we do it on our own. Nor does he say it is fulfilled *for* us, as though the Lord does it without us at all -- we are totally passive. No, the law can be fulfilled in us as *we* walk by the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

May we experience these glorious truths more and more. Thank God for His commands that convict us, His grace that forgives us, His commands that help guide us, and His Spirit who empowers us.

*[David Reagan's article next month will show us more about the relationship between the Covenants.]*

\* \* \*

### Some Additional New Testament Texts that show the Continuing Importance of God's Law:

1. "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not covet,' and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." Rom. 13:8-10, NIV.

2. "If you really *keep the royal law* found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.' If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom." James 2:8-12, NIV.

3. "Sin is the *transgression of the law.*" 1 John 3:4, KJV. "Sin is *lawlessness.*" 1 John 3:4, ASV, NASV, RSV, NIV. The word "transgression" emphasizes acts that violate the law. The word "lawlessness" goes deeper, and emphasizes the attitude of rebellion that says, "You have no right to rule me; I'll do what I please." Either way John makes it clear that to disregard God's will expressed in His commands is the essence of sin.

# WHO WANTS TO GO TO JERUSALEM?

J. Robert Ross

And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples apart, and on the way he said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify: and the third day he shall be raised up.

... even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Matthew 20:17-19, 28

Spring, especially Easter week, finds many churches advertising "evangelistic" or "revival" services. In view of this text, which reminds us that in the spring Jesus went up to Jerusalem to be mocked, tortured and crucified, I wonder if this is really the best time to invite people to accept Christ. After all, who wants to go to Jerusalem with Jesus?

The Christ of the cross, the Jesus who set his face to go to Jerusalem when it means bearing in silence the unjust criticism of the enemies of Jesus? When I am treated unfairly, believe me, I want the whole world to know about it. I do not want to be silent--give me a megaphone. If I am mistreated, expect a scream not silence. But Jesus is silent before his accusers. Who wants to go to Jerusalem with Jesus to endure without protest the lies that are spoken against him?

Jesus goes to Jerusalem to suffer. He is spit upon, tortured, and finally nailed to a tree to die a slow, agonizing death. Who wants to go to Jerusalem to suffer with Jesus? I want pleasure, not suffering. Give me fun, not pain. Give me the easy way, not the hard way. Who wants to go to Jerusalem for a public execution? Not Peter, not James and John, not me.

Jesus goes to Jerusalem to serve, to lay down his life on behalf of others. He goes there to give, to give his very blood. Who wants to go to Jerusalem to serve? To do the menial chores? The slave's labor? To take a back seat? Maybe second or third place, on Jesus' right or on his left in his glory--that's what James and John wanted. I could go for that. But last place, the servant's place? Who wants to go to Jerusalem for that?

I want to go to Jerusalem, yes, but to find grace, at least grace that does not cost me too much. I want grace, but not the forgiveness of sin that frees me from sin; I want the grace I bestow on myself, as Dietrich Bonhoffer puts it. I want the "preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession. . . grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ."

If I want a cross it is only that sort that I can put on a church steeple to make the building more beautiful. Clarence Jorden, who was once shown such a cross which had cost the church \$10,000, remarked to the proud pastor, "You got cheated; time was when Christians could get them for free." But there is not much demand for that sort of cross, the kind that is "free," the cross which awaited Jesus in Jerusalem.

One of my students wrote a term paper on the book of Acts and noticed the vibrancy, love and good works of the ancient church described by Luke. This student had a thought: "Maybe a new denomination should be started called "The First Century Church of Christ," which would be totally based on Acts. No, it would not work," was his second thought. "No one would join and pay the price of losing their possessions and even their lives. I do not think I could either." Good questions: who wants to join a "First Century Church of Christ"? Who wants to go to Jerusalem?

Bible-based, born-again religion is getting popular today. All kinds of books are being published on how to be born again and how to enjoy the great benefits of the Christian life. TV evangelists tell us how wonderful it is. And evangelicalism has become one of the more powerful religious and political forces in our nation. Yet, according to a recent Gallup poll many people say that religion has less influence on their morals than ever before. Divorce, alcoholism, and materialism seem to be almost as rampant among Christians as anyone else. Charles Colson suggests that "what we offer is no more than a better way for man to achieve his humanistic goals--from personal gratification to nationalistic power."

Jim Wallis made these comments on the connections, or lack thereof, between the new birth and Christian discipleship. "The characteristics of the gospel that are least marketable--self-sacrifice, servanthood, the way of the cross, identification with the poor and oppressed, a prophetic witness to the state, a life of simplicity and sharing, justice and peace--are those characteristics that don't get communicated to the society when the media explains what being born again is all about.

“Self fulfillment and satisfaction are the undisputed and unrivaled gods of this culture. All this has produced a self-centered religion, and the born-again phenomenon has played into the self-centered consumer ethics of this society. The leading question of the evangelical revival has become, ‘What can Jesus do for me, how can he make me happier, more content, more successful, better adjusted and more *prosperous*?’” (*Sojourners* magazine).

Frank Labauch reminds us that “at judgment God will not ask me to display my trophies, but he will count my scars.” And the ancient martyred bishop of Antioch, Ignatius, left the members of his church these sober words, “As long as a Christian’s blood has not been shed he is only a beginner in discipleship.” Most of us are beginners.

In his book, *A Severe Mercy*, Sheldon Vanauken writes about the carefree, uncommitted life style he enjoyed with his devoted wife Davy and their little dog, Flurry. When Vanauken awakened to the call of Jesus to go to Jerusalem he faced some troubling questions. “I wanted--what did I want? I wanted the fine keen bow of a schooner cutting the waves with Davy and me--just Davy and me and Flurry--happy and loving and comradely on her decks. Well, there was nothing unChristian about that, as long as God was there too, and as long as we were neglecting no service of love. But though I wouldn’t have admitted it, even to myself, I didn’t want God aboard. He was too heavy. I wanted Him approving from a considerable distance.” Thus Vanauken concluded, “It is not possible to be ‘incidentally a Christian.’ The fact of Christianity must be overwhelmingly first or nothing.”

A poignant hymn poses our question in these words:

The Son of God goes forth to war, a kingly crown to gain;  
His blood-red banner streams afar: Who follows in his train?  
Who best can drink his cup of woe, triumphant over pain,  
Who patient bears his cross below, he follows in his train.

A glorious band, the chosen few on whom the Spirit came,  
Twelve valiant saints, their hope they knew, and mocked the cross  
and flame

They met the tyrant’s brandished steel, the lion’s gory mane:  
They bowed their necks the death to feel: who follows in their train?

A noble army, men and boys, the matron and the maid,  
Around the Saviour’s throne rejoice, in robes of light arrayed:  
They climbed the steep ascent of heaven through peril, toil and pain:  
O God, to us may grace be given to follow in their train.

# Giving 100%

JOYce Broyles

A motto I heard recently at school says "Always give 100% at work! That's 12% on Monday, 23% Tuesday, 40% Wednesday, 20% Thursday, and 5% Friday."

That made me smile, but after I heard it, I had to take inventory. After more than thirty years of working, I do not have the energy level I had at the beginning. As I put up a hasty, less than beautiful bulletin board last week, another teacher reminded me of the ones I used to make. I took pride in those, changing them every two weeks. Now I leave these up for months.

Though I have slowed down in bulletin boards, I have tried to keep up with the other chores that are mine. Helping students find information they need is number one on that list, and I still give full attention to that.

Through the years, many talented teachers have shown genuine concern for their students. Some were generous and outgoing while others were quiet. I have known numerous benevolent teachers who have helped students with clothing or money and with time for special tutoring or extra chances to make up work.

Generous people are often impulsive, giving away words, gifts, or money without hesitation, and later, have no regrets. Their kindness has always impressed me.

The other side of impulsiveness is that sometimes it causes those same generous people to blunder into mistakes. Dorothy Haskin says that she often does things she wishes she had not done, but she does not carry on about them. Instead, she has **three rules for getting the most out of regret.**

First, if she has done something she wishes she had not, she rights it. Second, if she cannot make it right, she tries not to do it again. Third, if she can neither correct it nor use it as a reminder to be a better person, she forgets it.

Though forgetting is not easy, it is a choice she makes. Instead of remembering and regretting, she forgets and has peace.

In the Bible, Jesus tells his disciples to keep from letting their hearts be troubled. Asking for forgiveness or forgiving others is a

good way to keep from having a troubled heart and to gain that peace. For some, it means making changes.

Whether it be in the workplace or life in general, giving 100% comes only after choosing to do so.

Remembering kind acts encourages the doer and the receiver. Giving may involve rejection or hurts along the way, but being generous is best. To do less is living doubt instead of showing faith in our personal expressions.

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## Beware of MIS-Quoting the Bible

A.V.W.

Recently I saw a video about the Bible. It had some good points, but also a few extreme examples of **quoting scripture out of context** and thus twisting it. Near the beginning it quoted various great verses from all over the Bible, to show how significant and relevant the ancient book is today. One verse was, "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees."

What a perfect basis for the current hyper-environmentalist movement -- except that the context shows it has *nothing* to do with that!! For the verse continues, "...until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God" (Rev.7:3). Surely we should oppose reckless and needless destruction of animal and plant life. But Rev.7:3 is about something else entirely.

Later the video mentioned the Ark of the Covenant which formerly was kept inside the temple. Explaining that no one knows either what happened to it or its location if it still exists, it said that some people are avidly searching for it today. The video continued: "But if they find it, they might be sad, for the Bible says if anyone looks upon it 'their flesh will rot away while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets and their tongues will rot in their mouths' -- according to Zech. 14:12." It's true that verse contains those words, but the video omitted its opening statement: "This is the plague with which the Lord will strike all the nations that fought against Jerusalem:...." The passage says absolutely nothing about the ark of the covenant!

**Check up on preachers, videos, tapes and books, to make sure the Bible really says what they say it says.**

# VOICES From The FIELDS

Tom and Sharon Schreiner    Kenya, Africa    Mar. 4,2002

*Family Heads "Upcountry"*    In just two days we will be heading for a village upcountry, in the same tribal area in which we will be working, where we will stay with another Kenyan family for four and a half weeks before finally heading to Kapsowar. During these weeks we will continue to learn Kiswahili, but this time we will be employing some "language helpers" and will be in control of what we actually learn and practice. Pray with us that we will find some good helpers who have an adequate grasp of both English and Kiswahili.

The rainy season has begun in earnest (it's a few weeks early) and in anticipation of the mud we have all purchased "gum boots". We don't know very much about our host family, only that they have kids, and have a spare bedroom, but we'll tell you more after we arrive if we are able - I'm not sure if we'll have access to e-mail while we're there, so if there is a five week silence you'll know why.

*Matatu Days are Numbered*    After some disappointments (twice we were on the verge of buying a car, until the mechanic's report changed our minds) we have found a car, and Tom is taking care of all the requisite paper work today. We are so grateful to have found a suitable car before leaving Nairobi. It is a 1993 Toyota Prado, which seats 8. As so often is true, God provided the car just in time. One day later and we would not have had time to take care of all the details prior to our heading upcountry and as it has turned out, the mission will need our car to transport us. (We are expected to utilize public transportation during orientation.) It is a relief to know we will have transportation when we arrive in Kapsowar, as it would have been difficult to find a car from there, so we are very grateful to the Lord for answering this prayer, and thankful for all of you who prayed with us.

*House Addition Started*    The addition to our home has been started by AIM-Tech. We are believing God to provide the necessary funds. Thank-you to all who have contributed thus far. If you wish to give toward this project, please send checks made out to AIM and designated for "Schreiner House Addition" to the address listed below. As Tom will be needed to start work at the hospital as soon as we arrive in Kapsowar, we were happy to find we could arrange to have the rest of the house painted when the addition is painted.

*Care Package Arrives*    We were thrilled to receive a large box put together by one of our Louisville churches and brought by Diane Hoagland as she traveled to Nairobi to work in some rural health clin-

ics. It was a definite lift to our spirits to see such a practical expression of love. Thank you to all who contributed.

**Prayer Requests** Please continue to pray our goods will arrive safely from the US. Pray for God's continued grace as we finish our orientation and look to a home of our own. Continue to ask God to preserve our health (we are doing better). Our adapting to life (& work) in Kapsowar.

**Tim & Dawn Yates**

**March 6, 2002**

Greetings from Down Under once again!

We got in yesterday morning after a pretty good flight. The girls did amazingly well. The only hitch was that **Not One Piece** of our luggage arrived. They are sending it on today's flight and will deliver it to our door!

Thanks so much to those who hosted us while we were in the States, and for praying for our trip back to Australia. **It Worked!** We've had a good night's sleep and are able to hit the ground running!

**Michiya and Tomoko Shizuoka City, Japan March 2002**

We continue to work toward the purchase of an adjacent property for some additional parking at the church building. Although land is very expensive, if the Lord wants us to secure this property, He will open the door.

We are concerned about the continuing reports of an expected eruption of Mt. Fuji and major earthquakes in the Kanto region (60 miles away). Numerous earthquakes are felt on a weekly basis. Some are small and others are fairly large. Daily the media concentrates on reports from the experts and on issues concerning impending earthquakes and eruptions. All cities, hospitals, schools and community in the Kanto region regularly conduct evacuation and safety drills. My family, like all the others, have stocked up on non-perishable food items, water, and other necessities; and each family member has his own evacuation back-pack ready for such an unfortunate (but very likely) event. Several church members have already suffered from some minor damages incurred from previous earthquakes in the past months. Please pray for the safety of our church members, our church building, and our city.

The Sunday School program has been going very well. We have gained a few elementary school children who have trusted Christ. Also, we have been able to keep the same core members and their parents. Praise the Lord! We are very thankful for this.

Recently, a very sad and unfortunate thing happened within the church. One of our members (and his whole family) left us to join another group. He insisted that we begin practicing healings, speaking in tongues, and miracles in our worship services immediately. My study of the scriptures has not led me to this conclusion, however. Before he left the congregation, there were a couple of incidents which took place during our church dinner and congregational meeting in which this member demonstrated an outburst of his frustration towards me and several other members. Many were shocked by his words, hurt by his actions, and disappointed by his insistence on these practices. He and his family left after this. The sad part is that there are so few Christian in Japan, we do not need splits and schisms over issues on which honest men differ. I believe the more important thing is how we treat each other when issues arise (John 13:35). We are grateful that the Lord is already healing the congregation and strengthening the faith of the members. It was a perfect opportunity for Satan to disrupt and destroy the relationship of Christian brothers and sisters here at the church, but God is good and He is blessing us with his peace and comfort. Please pray for continuing peace and comfort in times like this that we may be still and know that He is the Lord.

## NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

**LADIES INSPIRATION DAY,** Sat. April 13, 8:30-2:30 at Portland Ave. Church in Louisville. "Peaceful Families in a Troubled World" is the theme. A special session for teens will be held, & child-care will be offered.

**From Moto Nomura (Japan)** I hope our visit with Mike Harding & Bennie Hill has renewed our Christian ties over the Pacific Ocean once again and we pray that it will be a new beginning of a new era for our pre-millennial churches in the United States and some of the churches in Japan. We here in the mountains (Bethany Home) need some co-workers to carry on the torch as

we both are getting older. We have established a good beach head here in the mountains. It is our earnest prayer that God raises His men & women to come over to help us grow together. We must spread His message of Good News till He comes.

**Cramer & Hanover (Lexington)** Bennie Hill & Mike Harding had a wonderful 10 day trip to Japan staying in the Bethany Home with Bro. Moto and his wife Yoriko. What wonderful, precious servants of the Lord. It was a joy to assemble in their house-church and share the Gospel with them. The Lord is working in Japan and we praise God

for the way He continues to use Bro. & Sis. Nomura. To read about the history of the work in Japan, you can visit [www.bible101.org/japanmissions](http://www.bible101.org/japanmissions).

**Bryantsville Hunger Relief Project** has a new web-site: [www.bhrp.org](http://www.bhrp.org).

**Woodland Bible Camp**...is actively looking to hire a full/part time camp administrator. This position is important to the future and growth of the camp. If interested or you know of someone who is, please contact Mike Abbot, President at 520 W. Water Street, Borden, Indiana 47106.

**Woodland Junior Week** ...begins June 9th-15th with theme: "Voyage of the Christian Life." Have your Juniors registered? Churches are encouraged to help promote Woodland Bible Camp by enrolling prospective campers! This is a tremendous investment in the lives of young people. For registration forms or information, you may write Woodland Bible Camp at R.R.3 Box 649, Linton, In 47441

"Teaching of the Bible" by Bryan College students in Rhea County classes was ruled unconstitutional by U.S. District Court Judge Allen Edgar. "The real losers are the children who looked forward to the weekly classes and the Bryan College students who became their friends, role models and even heroes for the school year." (Dr. Bill Brown)

**"Sowing the Seed"** radio ministry with Bro. David Tapp is looking forward to continuing broadcasts over WWL 870 AM in New Orleans, LA. The outreach of this station during peak time is twenty-eight states. In order to continue broadcasting - there is a needed commitment from several interested churches or individuals by April 15, 2002. Contact David Tapp at 912 Pounds Lane, Simpsonville, KY 40067

**Manila, Philippines:** We are now looking forward to the coming Central Bible College graduation. At least 25 are expected to graduate from the different courses. --David Moldez, CBC President

**Churches of Christ - Less Separatist?** At this website, <http://www.disciples.org/ccu/documents/armainslie.htm> you can find an instructive & interesting article. It's entitled, "*No Longer Singing Solo: The Rise and Decline of Isolationism in A Cappella Churches.*" It is a message by Mike Armour, for many years a preacher in Dallas and an influential author and leader in Churches of Christ.

**Kentucky-Indiana Christian Fellowship** is being planned for August 5-8, 2002 with the great theme: "Renewing our Commitment to Holiness." Begin planning now to attend this year's conference. This used to be called the Louisville Christian Fellowship Week, in case you're wondering!

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## God's 10 Commands: Unknown & Unkept

In their book *The Day America Told the Truth*, James Patterson and Peter Kim demonstrate that we no longer follow any moral authority. They found that only 13 percent of us follow the Ten Commandments. They also found that merely 40 percent believe in as many as five of the Ten Commandments.

They also found that Americans are no longer an honest people. They say that lying has become an integral part of American culture. They estimate that 91 percent of Americans lie on a regular basis.

It appears they are equally troubled about marriage and family. Even though we still marry, we have lost faith in the institution of marriage. They estimated that a third of married men and women had at least one affair. [Actually, that's *good* news, for most pollsters thought the number would be a lot higher than that!]

The loss of character also translates in the workplace. Their surveys show that American workers spend more than 20 percent of their day goofing off. That translates into about 7 hours a week of no productivity. They also found that half of the workforce calls in sick regularly when not sick.

Civility has also been in decline. Newspapers are running stories asking, "Why are we so rude?" U.S. News and World Report talks about "The American Uncivil Wars." They conclude that "Crude, Rude and Obnoxious Behavior Has Replaced Good Manners."

Articles in the newspaper document the number of incidents of road rage. An American Automobile Association report documents a sharp rise in the use of cars as weapons. A Colorado funeral director complains about impatient drivers darting in and out of funeral processions. Instead of waiting for the procession to pass, they threaten life and limb while ignoring both law and tradition in their rush to get somewhere.

--Provided online by David Mains for others to use