House to House
Heart to Heart
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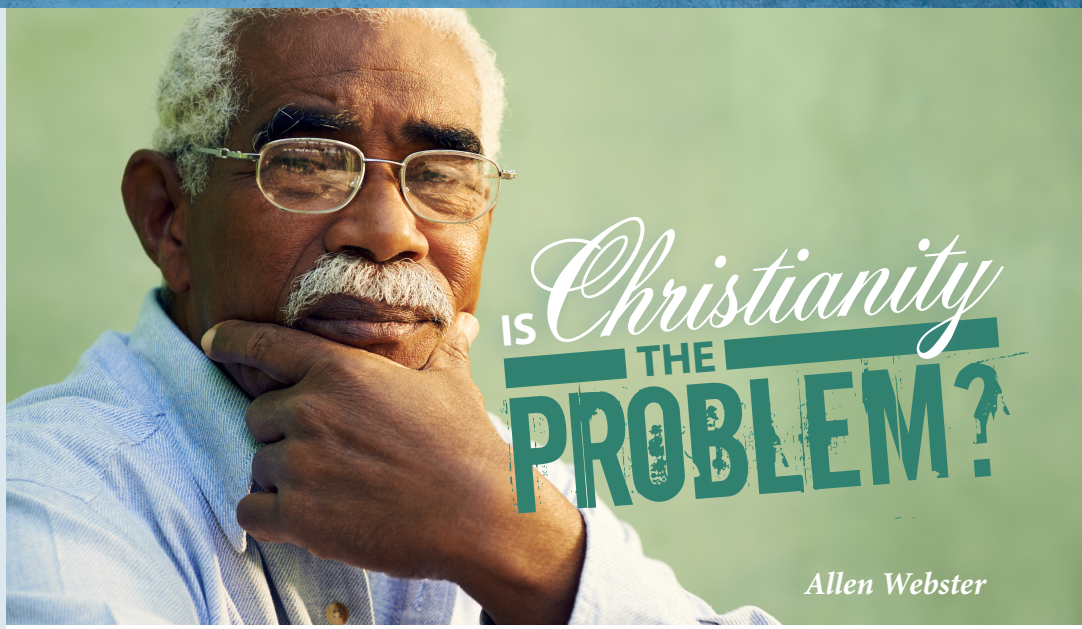
VOLUME 23 NUMBER 11

Heart to Heart



The sacred-secular divide grows wider. And louder. Many secularists see Christians as hateful, judgmental bigots. Some see them as bullying elitists.

The one side believes that most of the world's worries, woes, and wars are due to the forefathers' primitive superstitious thinking, Christianity's discriminatory ideals, and the Bible's barbaric ideology.

Some advocates of Christianity see themselves as the only source of any good in society and want to create a modern City of God by merging church and state.

Let's take a more balanced view. Christians do not have a monopoly on being good or doing good. Secular people are often community-oriented and philanthropic. Nonreligious people love their neighbors and are generous friends, exceptional citizens, and loving parents. Those of other religions often are kind, benevolent, and open-minded. Some who claim to follow Jesus are not much like Him. There certainly are some mean-spirited holier-than-thou types out there.

To be fair, both sides should avoid stereotypes. This article deals with Christianity, so let's define what that is.

We are not defending religion in general. Religion has been a catalyst for many of the world's troubles and presently stands as a threat to humanity's peaceful coexistence. Christianity is a religion, but it does not stand and fall with religion. Each religion's validity must be considered separately. It is easy to say, "Well, all religion is the same," or "Everybody thinks his version is right," without investigating. The easy way is seldom the best way. We have the ability, time, and intelligence to read, compare, and make a fair determination. To be intellectually honest, we should. "Let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18).

We are not defending Christendom. No defense can be made for men's religions that loosely claim to be Christian (Mark 7:7–9). Many churches have been founded over the last two millennia claiming to belong to Jesus that He does not recognize (Matthew 15:13). Among other errors, they perpetrated the Crusades, tortured heretics, and limited science.

Jesus built His church as He wanted it (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2) and forbade tampering with it (cf. Revelation 22:18–19). Those who violate His copyrights, change

His patterns, and revise His doctrines come away with something different from His church (Galatians 1:6–9). Not surprisingly, their religions do not work as intended.

New Testament teaching alone—in its entirety—produces Christ's church. Obeying Christ's gospel produces a Christian (Acts 2:38; 8:35–40). Imitating Christ produces a righteous life (Matthew 1–John 21; 1 Peter 2:21–22).

Blaming Christianity for its cheap imitators is like complaining that a counterfeit bill will not buy anything (Proverbs 14:12; Jeremiah 10:23). The presence of counterfeits does not negate the value of the genuine. Compromised Christianity has no power to save, but power still resides in the original (Romans 1:16).

We are not defending everyone who wears Christ's name. Christianity is often judged by individual failings, but it should not be. This is like the man who bought a pig from a farmer. In the litter, there were six perfectly formed, healthy piglets. There was one misshapen, sickly runt. When the man picked out the runt, the farmer said, "You don't want him. Pick a pretty one." The man said, "No, I'll take him." As he drove off, he remarked, "I'm going around to the other farms and show them the kind of pigs you raise." Was that fair?

None perfectly follow the perfect gospel (1 John 1:6–10). There are moral, ethical, and personal failings among Christ's followers, although perhaps fewer than some suppose. This does not prove the gospel ineffective. Jesus had Judas among the apostles. He warned that "the love of many will grow cold" (Matthew 24:12).

The finest university professors have students fail their classes. It is unfair to point to dropouts as evidence of poor teaching or a failing institution. Every doctor fails to cure some people; each hospital loses patients to death. It is unfair to say a large hospital "let a hundred people die last year," when they saved thousands, or that a doctor cannot cure anybody because she could not help one.

The question remains: Is Christianity the problem? Judge for yourself.

CHRISTIANS TREAT OTHERS AS THEY WISH TO BE TREATED AND ARE KIND TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT.

Jesus said, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them," (Matthew 7:12). His famous philosophy, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31), led Him to treat each person, regardless of race, gender, status, education, or homeland, as equal (cf. John 4). Every person today is worthy of the good news of grace and God.

Christians believe in turning the other cheek and loving enemies (Matthew 5:39, 44). People will be jerks sometimes. The might-makes-right crowd will persecute, given the opportunity (cf. 2 Timothy 3:12). This is inevitable. Responding with grace shows love is more powerful than hate. That is irresistible.

CHRISTIANS HELP THE SICK, HOMELESS, AND DISENFRANCHISED, EXPECTING NOTHING IN RETURN.

Jesus spent much of His brief time on earth helping widows, the poor, strangers, women, and children (Matthew 19:14; Acts 1:1). Publicans, sinners, and outcasts were welcome in His circle (Luke 3:12; 5:27–32; 7:37–50; 19:2–10).

He taught, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8); "Do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great" (Luke 6:35). Those inspired by His example founded most present-day hospitals, orphanages, and homes for abused women.

Studies show that Christians are more likely than others to do good deeds. They volunteer more time and donate more to good causes. When a disaster occurs, they are among the first responders.

AS CITIZENS, CHRISTIANS OBEY THE LAW AND PAY TAXES.

Christians respect the rule of law (1 Timothy 1:9), obey civil government (Romans 13:1–7), and pay tribute (Matthew 17:24–27; Romans 13:7). The only exception is if civil law contradicts divine law (Acts 5:29). Religion, in general, contributes about $1.2 trillion a year to the economy (more than Google, Apple, and Amazon combined).

AS NEIGHBORS, CHRISTIANS LIVE IN PEACE WITH OTHERS.

In practically all communities across the land, Christians and non-Christians live side by side in harmony. They may profoundly disagree on many things, but they get along.

Christians believe in speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) while living "peaceably with all" (Romans 12:18; cf. Hebrews 12:14). With quietness they work and provide for themselves (2 Thessalonians 3:12). They pray that leaders will let them "lead a quiet and peaceable life" (1 Timothy 2:2).

Instead of agitating and making demands, Christians try to stay under the radar. Solomon wrote, "Fear the Lord and the king; do not associate with those given to change" (Proverbs 24:21).

Peace in society starts in the heart. Forgiveness leads to peace with God (Romans 8:1). Peace with God leads to peace of mind (Philippians 4:6). Peace with self leads to peace with others (Proverbs 16:7).

AS TO WORLDVIEW, CHRISTIANS BELIEVE LIFE HERE IS PREPARATION FOR LIFE HEREAFTER (ECCLESIASTES 12:13–14).

Christians live in two worlds—a visible physical one and an invisible spiritual one (Philippians 3:20). They wrestle against spiritual wickedness (Ephesians 6:12). These battles take place as Satan tempts humans with the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life (1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 2:15).

Believing they will give account for their behavior motivates them to live soberly, righteously, and godly (2 Corinthians 5:10; Titus 2:12). There is heaven to gain and hell to shun (Matthew 25:46; Luke 16:23).

SEXUALLY, CHRISTIANS BELIEVE IN MODESTY, PURITY, AND MARITAL FAITHFULNESS.

This Bible's teaching on morals differs from the views of many today. God's original intent is seen in Eden. Since it was not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18), God took a rib from man, made Eve, and brought her to be Adam's wife.

On that occasion, God expressed His design for the home in twenty-one simple words: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (2:24). He commanded them to multiply (Genesis 1:28). God gave no instructions initially regarding divorce or same-sex relationships. Later He did, reinforcing His original intent of lifelong male-female relationships (Matthew 19:9; Romans 1:24–27; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11).

Keeping the mind clean (Matthew 5:28) and the body modestly clothed (1 Timothy 2:9); treating the opposite sex respectfully (1 Timothy 5:1–2), and staying pure while single (2 Timothy 2:22) and faithful while married (James 2:11) present challenges. Yet these choices avoid the serious problems that promiscuity brings (Proverbs 13:15), including

- sex addiction,
- embarrassment/unwanted attention,
- lawsuits/loss of jobs,
- sexual disease/infertility,
- unwanted pregnancy/abortion,
- divorce/alimony, and
- conflict/loneliness.

Hooking up and bragging on Instagram may be popular, but it is not the wise path in the long run. The Christian lifestyle is healthier physically, emotionally, and spiritually (1 Corinthians 6:18–20).

God's plan for sex is unchanged by culture (Hebrews 13:4, 8). Calling evil, good, and good, evil do not change them (Isaiah 5:20). His unchanging word will judge all at the end (John 12:48; Jude 1:3). At the same time, Christians know that each person has the right to choose God's plan or reject it. The Bible nowhere appoints Christians as God's police over non-Christians' sexual behavior (1 Corinthians 4:5).

AS FAMILIES, CHRISTIANS BELIEVE IN LIFELONG COMMITMENTS, WHILE HELPING THOSE WITHOUT FAMILIES.

Christians believe in marriage (Proverbs 18:22; 1 Timothy 5:14). Christians believe in lifetime marriage (Matthew 19:6–9; Romans 7:1–4). They view children as blessings to be loved, supported, and educated (Psalm 127:1–5; 1 Timothy 5:8). They believe in caring for parents (1 Timothy 5:16) and helping those who have no one to care for them (James 1:27).

CHRISTIANS BELIEVE IN TEACHING WITHOUT COERCION.

Spreading the good news is fundamental to Christianity. Jesus' final command on earth was, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:15–16).

Thus, Christians go. Christians teach. Christians do not manipulate, coerce, or intimidate. No Christian is authorized to force submission by physical force, cultic practices, or threat of the sword. In the marketplace of ideas, the gospel needs no propping up—it is powerfully attractive by itself (John 12:32). It is like perfume in a bottle. Let it out and it will do the rest.

As farmers, disciples plant seeds, water them (1 Corinthians 3:6), and wait for God to give increase (3:9). He draws sinners with sacrificial love (Romans 5:6–8), the offer of a better life (John 10:10), and the promise of eternity in an unimaginably wonderful place (Revelation 21).

Christianity is good for society. If everybody followed Jesus today, the world would be a better place tomorrow.

It is even better for individuals. It leads to better health, happier lives, and longer lifespans.[1] Christianity is great now, but by far, the best is yet to come.

Endnotes:

[1] relevantmagazine.com/life/surprising-links-between-faith-and-health. Conversely, having no religion is like smoking a pack a day for 40 years (heritage.org/civil-society/report).

Love Those Dogs

The parents of an eight-year-old were having a tough time with their son's going off to summer camp. They had never been away from each other for a whole week. After they had not heard from him in several days, they called the camp to see if he was all right. The parents were disappointed to learn that he had not missed them. Prying for some more reassuring information, his mom and dad asked, "Have any of the other children been homesick?" The boy said, "Only the ones who have dogs." —*Leadership*, Vol. B No. 1, p. 23–24.

"A merry heart does good"

PROVERBS 17:22

For more material on the home and family, fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, grandparents, and family finances, go to www.housetohouse.com.

How to Build *Trust* in a Marriage

How does a couple regain trust when an incident has seriously damaged it?

It's not easy.

Trust Builds over Time. Research shows that deep trust only comes from seeing that your partner is there for you over time. A wife, for example, can only slowly regain her trust in her once unfaithful husband. The best thing that can happen is for a considerable amount of time to go by without a serious breach of trust. That takes commitment and new ways of living together. They cannot afford to let the same kind of distance build up again. And if a husband has another affair, it will probably be impossible for his wife to trust him again.

Each Partner Takes Appropriate Responsibility. The best thing a man can do to regain his wife's trust is to take full responsibility for his actions. If the wife sees her husband doing all he can to bring about serious change without her prodding and demanding, her trust will grow; she will gain confidence that things can get better—not perfect, but better. It is easier to trust when you can see your partner's dedication.

A wife can also help to rebuild her husband's trust. For one thing, he will need to see that she does not plan to hold the affair over his head forever. Can she really forgive him? If she reminds him about the affair, especially during arguments, he may grow hopeless and give up.

Recognize That You Can Do More to Further Damage Trust Than to Regain It. It takes a long time to regain trust but only a moment to crush it. If the husband comes home on time each night to be with his wife, she will gain a little more trust. If he comes home two hours late without a good reason, her trust will take a step backward. Mistakes will happen, but the commitment to change must remain clear. The commitment says that you have the time and motivation to rebuild trust.

Surveillance Does Not Increase Trust. You cannot regain trust by following your partner around every moment of the day to make sure he or she does not do anything wrong. It will not add to a wife's trust to call his friends and ask what he has been up to.

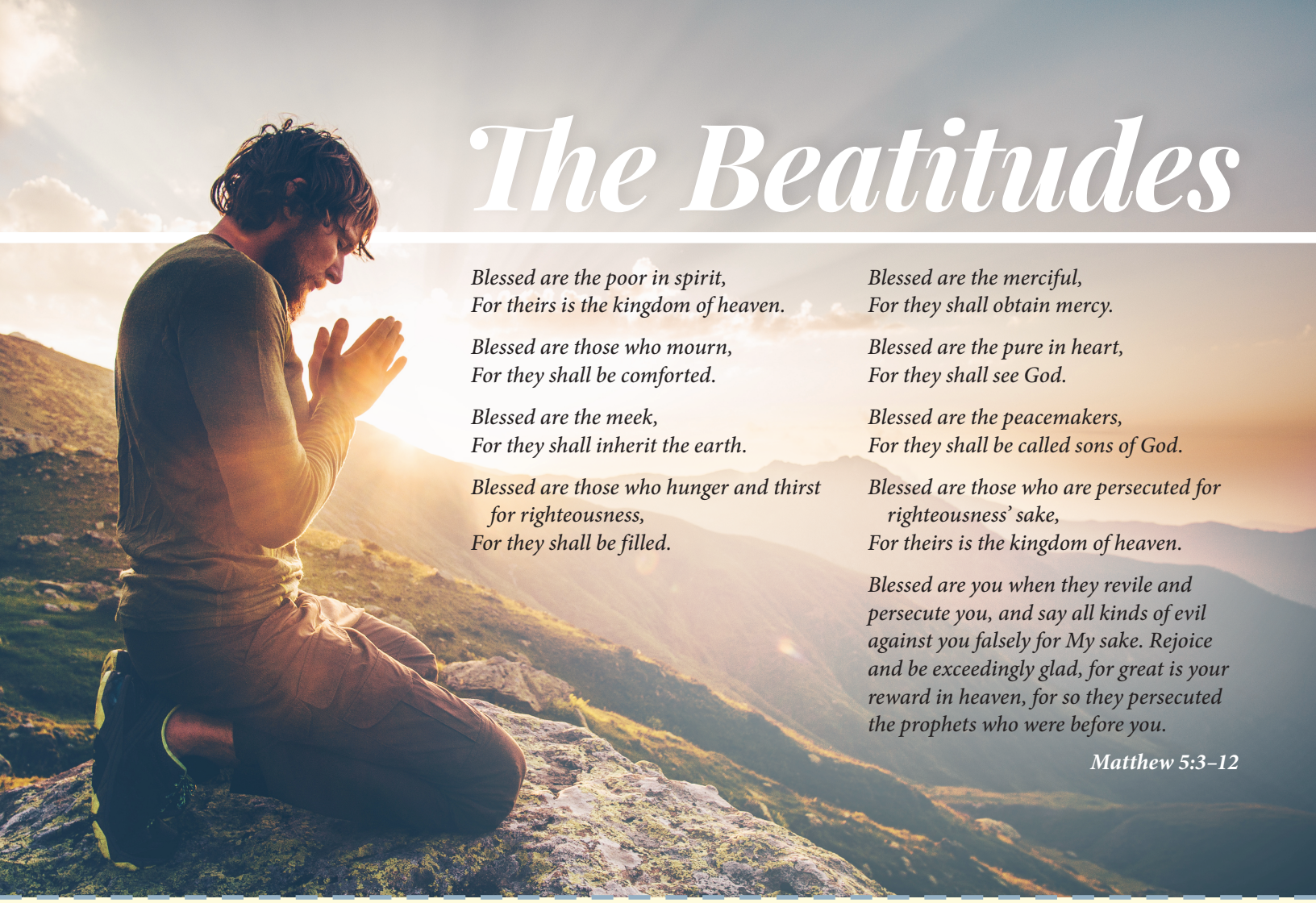
The exception to this is when you both agree that some checking up is okay. A wife and husband can agree that for a time, he will call frequently or she will touch base more often than usual. But long-term, she will have to come to trust her husband for both of them to relax in their relationship.

Let us hope that her trust will not be misplaced. To trust is a risk. Your partner could let you down again, and there is no way to be sure that will not happen.

As with forgiveness, it involves letting go. **—Mike Benson, Oxford, Alabama (Research: Howard Markman, Scott Stanley, Susan L. Blumberg, "Forgiveness and the Restoration of Intimacy," *Fighting for Your Marriage*, 224–225)**

"The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain"

PROVERBS 31:11



The Beatitudes

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 5:3–12

Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.

Bible Quiz

VOLUME 23:11

Send us your answers to receive a free Bible bookmark! We'll grade and return your questions and enclose the bookmark "Chapter to Chapter – Acts" as a way of saying thanks for spending time in the Word (quantities may be limited).

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State: _____

Phone: _____

Answers to Previous Quizzes

V. 23:9, *14 Odd Things Found in the Bible:* 1. Elisha's (2 Kings 13:21); 2. Joshua (Joshua 10:13); 3. Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:33); 4. (Hint: Solomon was the king) Abiathar (1 Kings 2:27); 5. Jairus (Mark 5:22–40); 6. The Ethiopian Eunuch/Treasurer (Acts 8:26–38); 7. The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–36); 8. Elisha (2 Kings 2:22–23); 9. Uzzah (2 Samuel 6:7); 10. Bears tore them up (2 Kings 2:24); 11. Eutychus (Acts 20:9); 12. David (1 Kings 1:1); 13. Absolam (2 Samuel 18:9); 14. Shechem had defiled Dinah, their sister (Genesis 34:13)

V. 23:10, *Husbands and Wives:* 1. Alone (Genesis 2:18); 2. Wife (Proverbs 18:22); 3. Prudent (Proverbs 19:14); 4. Leave, cleave (Genesis 2:24); 5. Fornication (1 Corinthians 7:2); 6. Rejoice (Proverbs 5:18); 7. Body, body (1 Corinthians 7:4); 8. Bodies (Ephesians 5:28); 9. Honor (1 Peter 3:7); 10. Love, children (Titus 2:4); 11. Innocent (Proverbs 6:29); 12. Liveth, liberty (1 Corinthians 7:39); 13. Heirs (1 Peter 3:7)

Joy in Christ: Questions from Philippians

Directions: Use a Bible to find your answers in the book of Philippians. Questions taken from the New King James Version.

1. Who was with Paul when he wrote Philippians? _____
2. Where was Paul when he wrote the letter to this church in Philippi? _____
3. Who did Paul say almost died for the cause of Christ? _____
4. "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to _____ for His sake."
5. In Philippians 2, whose example of humility did Paul tell the Philippians to follow? _____
6. Even though Paul was in prison, he spoke of joy. What did Paul tell the Philippians they could do to make his joy complete? _____
7. Paul told the church at Philippi that their joy was in Christ, but where did he tell them their citizenship (conversation) was?_____
8. "Beware of _____, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!"
9. "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your _____ be known to all men. The Lord is at hand."
10. How did Paul believe he found the strength to be content in whatever his circumstances? _____
11. From what Jewish tribe did Paul descend? _____
12. Who has a name that is above every name? _____
13. In addition to preachers, with what three groups of workers does Paul identify in the early church (1:1)? _____
14. Who does Paul hope to be able to send to Philippi soon? _____

—adapted from funtrivia.com

The Bible Is...

The greatest text in the Bible on the Bible is 2 Timothy 3:15–17. It shows characteristics of the Bible. The Bible is

- **Simple—from a child**
- **Knowable (John 8:32)**
- **Holy (1 Peter 1:13–16)**
- **Written form—Scriptures**
- **Inspired—God-breathed**
- **Powerful—"able" instruction, correction**
- **Complete—for every good work**
- **Soul-saving—for salvation**

Have you read the whole Bible? Why not make that your goal?

Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.

Recommended **Resource**

The Gospel Broadcasting Network is unique in the world of religious TV—commercial free, and they never ask for money! Sponsored by the churches of Christ, GBN is available on many cable systems as well as through their smartphone apps, the Roku device, and at **gbntv.org.**

I want to learn more **about the Bible!**

Name: _____

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Phone: _____

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Prayer requests or comments: _____

_____

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☐ A DVD Bible Study

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New Tracts!

- ☐ Does God Require Us to Do Anything to Be Saved?
- ☐ God's Stewards
- ☐ Gold-plated Christianity
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☐ Lonely

☐ The Reason We Have Two Ears and One Mouth

☐ Scruples

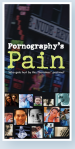
☐ Seven Things God Hates: A False Witness

☐ Seven Things God Hates: A Proud Look

☐ Seven Things God Hates: Feet Swift in Running to Mischief

☐ Married for Life

☐ Old Age: Taking Care or Taking Advantage?



☐ Porno-grphy's Pain

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VOLUME 23:11

All materials are completely FREE of charge (including shipping in the U.S. or Canada).

Finding the *Pearl* of Great Price

Jesus said the kingdom is like a man who found a priceless pearl (Matthew 13:45–46). The kingdom is the church, so finding the right church is equivalent to finding great treasure—eternal treasure. You can identify it by the following traits:

The New Testament Church was built by Christ and belongs to Him.

Jesus promised, "I will build My church" (Matthew 16:18). Christ is the foundation and chief cornerstone of the church (1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:19–22). The church carries His name (Romans 16:16).

The New Testament church has a specific pattern of worship (John 4:24).

They meet on the first day of the week (Sunday) (Acts 2:1; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1–2; Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1–2; John 20:1–2, 19, 26).

They partake of the Lord's supper on the first day of the week (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23–25).

The New Testament church worships in prayer (Acts 2:42).

The New Testament church sings praises to God (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).

The New Testament church is edified by the preaching of God's Word (Acts 20:7; 2 Timothy 4:2–4).

The New Testament church makes a contribution on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1–2).

The New Testament church has a specific organization.

Jesus Christ is the head (Ephesians 1:22–23; Colossians 1:18).

Each congregation has its own elders who oversee the work (Acts 14:23; 1 Peter 5:1–2; Philippians 1:1). They are called bishops or overseers (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7), and shepherds or pastors (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 5:1–4). The elders must meet specific qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9).

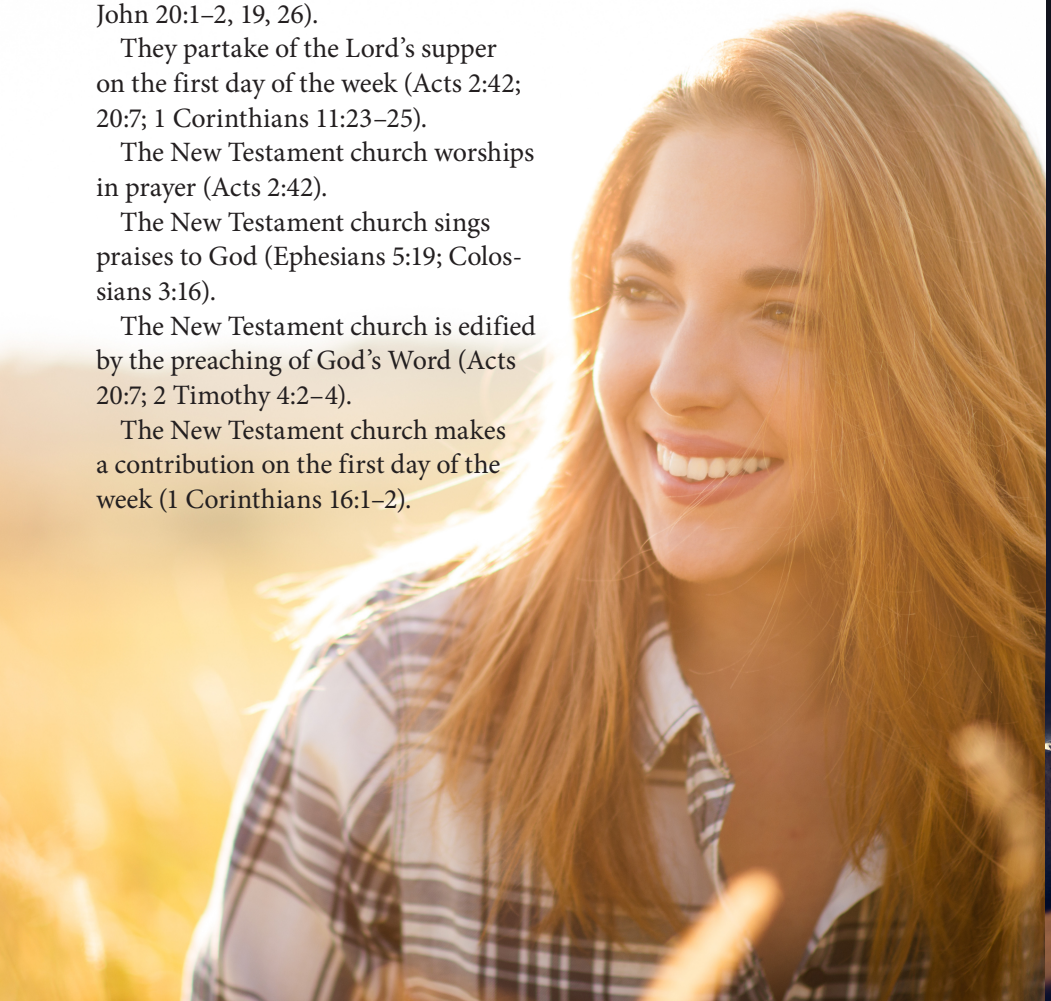
Deacons are the servants of the church (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8–13).

Evangelists, ministers of the Word, are preachers of the gospel (Acts 21:8; Ephesians 4:11; 2 Timothy 4:1–5).

—Author Unknown

"I will build My church"

MATTHEW 16:18



The Power of His Resurrection

Paul wrote of "the power of His resurrection" (Philippians 3:10). What is that?

- **The seal of a finished work (Acts 13:29–30).**
- **The sign of a glorious triumph (Hebrews 2:14; Ephesians 4:8).**
- **The pledge of a coming resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20–22).**
- **The certainty of a future judgment (Acts 17:31).**

—Mark Posey, Decatur, Alabama

Consider

If you knew for sure that the religious path you are on would not get you to heaven, would you change? If there was the possibility of a doubt, would you investigate?

—Why not request a personal Bible study today?

"Be even more diligent to make your call and election sure"

2 PETER 1:10

Thoughts from the HEART

Self-Examination Never Hurts

Years ago a boy walked into a drugstore and asked if he could use the telephone.

Receiving permission, he took the receiver and said, "Operator, give me number 604. Hello, Dr. Anderson, do you want to hire a boy to cut the grass, milk the cow, and run errands for you? Oh, you already have a boy. Dr. Anderson, are you completely satisfied with the boy you have? OK then. Bye, Doctor."

As the boy thanked the druggist and started out the door, the druggist called to him, "Just a minute son, if you are looking for work, I could use a boy like you."

"Thank you sir," replied the boy, "but I already have a job."

"Didn't I just hear you trying to get a job with Dr. Anderson?"

"No sir," said the boy. "I'm the boy working for Dr. Anderson, and I was just checking up on myself."

This points out the great need for self-examination. Perhaps Paul's exhortation would encourage us: "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). —Gary C. Hampton, Jackson, Mississippi

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