

HOUSE to HOUSE
HEART to HEART

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House to House Heart to Heart

VOLUME 23 NUMBER 4



Forgiven to Forgive

Allen Webster

When a counselor asked a lady, “Have you heaped coals of fire on your enemy?” (thinking she would remember Romans 12:20, “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head”), she replied, “No, but I’ve tried scalding water!”

Resentment and vengeance are two ingredients for a miserable life. A happy person is a giver, a forgiver, and a thanksgiver. The Bible teaches that we are forgiven to forgive.

WE MUST BE FORGIVERS TO BE LIKE GOD (CF. 1 PETER 1:15–16).

William Arthur Ward said, “We are most like beasts when we kill; we are most like men when we judge; we are most like God when we forgive” (cf. Ephesians 1:7). Alexander Pope said, “To err is human, to forgive divine.” There is no higher goal than to be like God and His Son Jesus—and both are forgivers.

John said, “These things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father,

Jesus Christ the righteous . . . and you know that He was manifested to take away our sins” (1 John 2:1; 3:5; cf. Isaiah 53:5).

WE MUST BE FORGIVERS TO PLEASE GOD.

Since God commanded us to forgive others (Mark 11:25–26; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13), when one refuses to forgive, he disobeys God and stands to be rejected (Matthew 7:24–27; Hebrews 5:8–9). Forgiveness is not optional. One may as well not take the Lord’s supper, refuse baptism, or be unfaithful to one’s spouse, as to hold a grudge. It is a life and death matter (Revelation 22:14; John 14:15).

WE MUST BE FORGIVERS TO BE FORGIVEN BY GOD.

Jesus said, “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14–15). Since all need forgiveness, all must forgive. A hand closed to give forgiveness is closed to receive forgiveness.

- Joseph forgave his brothers (Genesis 45:5–15).
- Moses forgave Miriam and Aaron (Numbers 12:1–13).
- David forgave Saul (1 Samuel 24:9–22).
- The father forgave the prodigal (Luke 15:20–24).

Jesus told of a servant who owed a king ten thousand talents (a tremendous sum of ten million dollars) (Matthew 18:23–35). Josephus, a first-century historian, recorded that all Palestine's annual taxes was only about 800 talents. One man obviously could never pay this debt.

The king commanded that he, his wife, and children be sold so some payment could be made. The servant begged the king saying, "Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all." The king was moved with compassion and forgave him the entire debt.

The same servant then went and found a fellow servant who owed him a hundred pence—about fifteen dollars (only 1/600,000 of 10,000 talents). He took him by the throat and said, "Pay me." The servant pled, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you all." (Sound familiar?)

The man refused to show mercy. He had the man put in prison until he could pay the debt. When other servants saw this, they were sorry and reported to their king what had been done.

The king said to the servant who had been forgiven of the huge debt, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" The king was so angry he delivered him to tormentors.

Jesus concluded: "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." The person who says, "I can never forgive you for that," does not realize the peril in which he places his own soul.

WE MUST FORGIVE TO BE HAPPY.

If we hold grudges and harbor bitterness, hatred, and mistrust in our hearts, we will be miserable. Forgiveness brings joy (Psalm 32:1), but it must be full forgiveness. Charles Spurgeon

said, "Forgive and forget; when you bury a mad dog, don't leave his tail above the ground." When we sweep the floor, we do not leave dirt behind the door; when we forgive, we bury the hatchet—handle and all. Someone said, "A grudge is one thing that does not get better when nursed." To gain peace of mind, we must avoid keeping a mental filing system to remember offenses (cf. Hebrews 8:12; 10:17).

The Civil War left a tragic aftermath of bitterness, hatred, and resentment in America. The wounds inflicted were deep and painful. The guns fell silent, but anger continued. Many were unwilling to forget what had been done.

One who refused bitterness was General Robert E. Lee. Though Lee had led the Confederate armies through most of the Civil War, he urged reconciliation between North and South. He opposed the erection of Confederate monuments because they kept wartime passions alive. While visiting in Lexington, Virginia, a lady took Lee to her backyard and showed him the mangled stump of a once beautiful tree. She explained, bitterly, how Union troops had destroyed her property.

Expecting sympathy, she waited for his response. Finally, Lee spoke: "Cut it down, my dear Madam, and forget it."

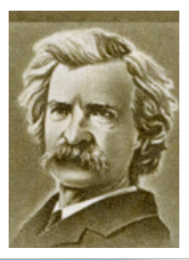
How many of us have something we need to cut down and forget? Paul wrote, "One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God" (Philippians 3:13–14). He also said that all bitterness and malice should be put away (Ephesians 4:31). Moses wrote, "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). James said, "Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned" (James 5:9).

Thackeray and Dickens, two English literary giants, became rivals. After years of hatred, they met accidentally in London. They coldly faced each other, and then turned to leave. On impulse, Thackeray turned back and seized Dickens' hand. Dickens was touched by the gesture; they left smiling with the old jealousy ended.

Just a few days after this incident, Thackeray died. Little did Dickens know that the next time he saw Thackeray he would be in a casket. A writer, later recalling the incident, asked, "Is it not always well to seek forgiveness now?"

Do you need to forgive or receive forgiveness?





Mark Twain and Science

Though an atheist, Mark Twain had little use for the evolutionary doctrine of uniformitarianism

("the present is the key to the past"). The Bible teaches catastrophism—such cataclysms as the Genesis flood have occurred. The following observations from *Life on the Mississippi* are interesting:

"Since my own day on the Mississippi, cutoffs have been made at Hurricane Island 100, and at Council Bend. These shortened the river 67 miles. In my time a cutoff was made at American Bend which shortened the river 10 miles. Thus, the Mississippi River between Cairo and New Orleans was 1,215 miles long 176 years ago . . . its length is only 973 miles at present . . . If I wanted to be one of those ponderous scientific people, and 'let on' to prove what had occurred in a given time in the recent past, or what will occur in the far future by what has occurred in late years, what an opportunity is here! Geology never had such exact data to argue from! Glacial epochs are great things but they are vague—vague. Please observe:

In the space of 176 years the Mississippi River had shortened itself 242 miles. That is an average of a trifle over one mile and 1/3 per year. Therefore, any calm person, who is not blind or idiotic, can see that in the Old Oolitic Silurian Period, just a million years ago next November, the Lower Mississippi River was upwards of one million three hundred thousand miles long, and struck out over the Gulf of Mexico like a fishing rod!

And by the same token any person can see that in 742 years from now the Lower Mississippi will be only a mile and 3/4 long, and Cairo and New Orleans will have joined their streets together, and be plodding comfortably along under a single mayor and mutual board of aldermen."

There is something fascinating about science; one gets such wholesale returns of conjecture out of such trifling investments of fact. Evolution has its basis in so-called Historical Geology, the geologic timetable. Twain has shown its absurdity. Truly, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Psalms 53:1).

—Curtis A. Cates, *The Yokefellow*, Memphis, Tennessee



The Gerber Boy

In 1975, Raymond Dunn, Jr., was born in New York State. The Associated Press reported that at his birth, a skull fracture and oxygen deprivation caused severe retardation. As Raymond grew, the family discovered further impairments. His twisted body suffered up to twenty seizures per day. He was blind, mute, and immobile. He had severe allergies that limited him to only one food: a meat-based formula made by Gerber Foods.

In 1985, Gerber stopped making the formula that Raymond lived on. Carol Dunn scoured the country to buy what stores had in stock, accumulating cases and cases, but in 1990 her supply ran out. In desperation, she appealed to Gerber for help. Without this particular food, Raymond would starve to death. The employees of the company listened.

In an unprecedented action, volunteers donated hundreds of hours to bring out old equipment, set up production lines, obtain special approval from the USDA, and produce the formula—all for one special boy.

In January 1995, Raymond Dunn, Jr., known as "the Gerber Boy," died from his physical problems. But during his brief lifetime, he called forth a wonderful thing called compassion. —Larry A.

Payne, Amarillo, Texas. *Leadership*, Vol. 16, no. 3.

God's Plan for Saving Man

God's Grace: Ephesians 2:8

Christ's Blood: Romans 5:9

Holy Spirit's Word: Romans 1:16

Sinner's Faith: Acts 16:31

Sinner's Repentance: Luke 13:3

Sinner's Confession: Romans 10:10

Sinner's Baptism: 1 Peter 3:21

Christian's Love: Matthew 22:37

Christian's Work: James 2:24

Christian's Hope: Romans 8:24

Christian's Endurance: Revelation 2:10



Ten Things for Which a Parent Will Never Be Sorry

1. For doing your level best even when discouraged.
2. For hearing before judging in family quarrels.
3. For thinking before speaking when emotionally upset.
4. For not harboring unkind thoughts of a talebearer.
5. For being generous to an enemy, perhaps the next-door neighbor.
6. For stopping your ears to gossip heard over the fence.
7. For standing by your principles in dealing with your teenagers.
8. For asking pardon, when in error, even of your child.
9. For being square in business dealings.
10. For accepting the stewardship of another child.

—Encounter, the National Research Bureau

"And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two."

MATTHEW 5:41

Happy Families

What do people consider the greatest source of pleasure in their lives? According to a study conducted for Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Corporation, the overwhelming answer is "family," selected by sixty-three percent of respondents.

"He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord."

PROVERBS 18:22

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

"The Meanest" Mom

We had the meanest mother in the whole world! While other kids ate candy for breakfast, we had to have cereal, eggs, and toast. When others had a Pepsi and a Twinkie for lunch, we had to eat sandwiches. And you can guess our mother fixed us a dinner that was different than from what other kids had, too.

Mother insisted on knowing where we were at all times. You would think we were convicts in a prison. She had to know who our friends were and what we were doing with them. She insisted that if we said we would be gone for an hour, we would be gone for an hour or less.

We were ashamed to admit it, but she had the nerve to break the child labor laws by making us work. We had to wash the dishes, make the beds, learn to cook, vacuum the floor, do laundry, and all sorts of cruel jobs. I think she would lay awake at night thinking of more things for us to do.

She always insisted on us telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. By the time we were teenagers, she could read our minds, and life was really tough.

She wouldn't let our friends just honk the horn when they drove up. They had to come up to the door so she could meet them. While everyone else could date when they were 12 or 13, we had to wait until we were 16.

Because of our mother we missed out on lots of things other kids experienced. None of us have ever been caught shoplifting, vandalizing

other's property, or ever arrested for any crime. It was all her fault.

Sundays were reserved for church services, and we never missed once. We knew better than to ask to spend the night with a friend on Saturdays.

Now that we have left home, we are all God-fearing, educated, honest adults. We are doing our best to be mean parents just like our mom was.

The world just does not have enough mean moms anymore.

—Wit & Wisdom, July 30, 1998



Are the Various Denominations Branches of the True Vine?

Jesus identified Himself as the vine: "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser" (John 15:1). He explained the work of branches was bearing fruit, warning that, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes" (15:2).

Some suggest that this parable is a picture of the contemporary church, with all the various denominations forming the Lord's church. It is sometimes shown in the form of a tree, with various branches depicting how different religious groups have grown out of one another. The text reveals, however, that the branches are not the different religious sects of "Christendom," but instead are individual Christians.

In John 15, Jesus is speaking to the apostles as individuals, not religious groups. The emphasis is on what the individual disciple must do. "I am the vine,

you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples" (15:5-8).

The disciples "are the branches." Branches are people, not churches ("If anyone does not abide in Me").

The branches must bear fruit for the farmer. Fruitfulness is the product of a Christian life and comes only from abiding in Christ. The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, "for without Me you can do nothing" (15:4-5).

What we can do in Christ, however, is unlimited. "I can do all things

through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). The key is to be in Christ, abiding in Him. Paul said, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27).

Christ did not want His followers to divide into various religious groups and denominations. As He prepared for the cross, He prayed, "I do not pray for these alone [the apostles], but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:20-21).

He wanted all who believe the testimony of the apostles to be united.

—Bob Prichard

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Bible Quiz

VOLUME 23:4

Send us your answers to receive a free Bible bookmark! We'll grade and return your questions and enclose the bookmark "Church History Timeline" 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. 23:2 *Wonderful Women*: 1. Far above rubies (Proverbs 31:10); 2. Wisdom (Proverbs 31:26); 3. The law of kindness (Proverbs 31:26); 4. Godliness (1 Timothy 2:9-10); 5. Hannah (1 Samuel 1:9-11); 6. To be a "help meet" (suitable) for Adam (Genesis 2:18); 7. Elisabeth (Luke 1:5-6); 8. Mary (Matthew 1:16-21); 9. Priscilla (Acts 18:2); 10. Submit (Ephesians 5:22-23); 11. Trust in God; Holiness; Love their children; (1 Timothy 5:5; Titus 2:3-4); 12. Sarah, Rahab (Hebrews 11:11, 31); 13. Lois, Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5); 14. A crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

V. 23:3 *John: The Gospel of Belief*: 1. No one (John 1:18); 2. Cephas (1:42); 3. Water to wine (2:9); 4. Was born again (3:3); 5. She was a Samaritan (4:9); 6. It was the Sabbath (5:16); 7. Adultery (8:3); 8. Set (make) you free (8:32); 9. Five loaves, two fish (6:9); 10. Leftover bread (6:13); 11. Pool of Siloam (9:7); 12. Bethany (11:1); 13. Four days (11:39); 14. Husbandman (Vinedresser, Gardener) (15:1); 15. Branches (15:5); 16. Laying down his life for his friends (15:13); 17. In the same way as Jesus and God are one (17:11-12); 18. Fought for Him (18:36); 19. Passover (John 2:13-17); 20. Nicodemus (3:9-16).

The God I Know

Directions: Find your answers in the verses listed. Questions are taken from the King James Version.

Paul said, "I know whom I have believed" (2 Timothy 1:12). It is possible to know God, but not without knowing about God.

1. I know Him to be the _____ God, the _____ God and an _____ King (Jeremiah 10:10).
2. I know Him to be the _____ (Genesis 1:1).
3. I know Him not to be a _____ (Hebrews 6:18).
4. I know Him not to be a _____ (Numbers 23:19).
5. I know Him to be the _____, His work _____, without _____ (Deuteronomy 32:4).
6. I know Him not to be a respecter of _____ (Acts 10:34-35).
7. I know Him to be all-_____ and all-_____ (Romans 11:33).
8. I know Him to be from _____ to _____ (Psalm 90:2).
9. I know Him to be a provider of my _____ (Matthew 6:8).
10. I know Him to be a hearer of the _____ of the _____ (Proverbs 15:29).
11. I know Him to be _____ (1 Peter 5:7).
12. I know Him to be the one who wants _____ (1 Timothy 2:4).



DON'T BE LIKE THE FROG

A story is told (perhaps apocryphal) that if you place a frog in boiling water, it will quickly jump out. Yet if you place a frog in a kettle of tap water and slowly increase the temperature, the frog will remain until it boils to death.

America was founded on the principles of the Bible. Early leaders and citizens read, believed, loved, and revered God's Word. Today, less than half of Americans read the Bible once a week. Of those who do, less than ten minutes a day is spent in study. Is it any wonder that Bible knowledge is lacking?

Our environment (culture) affects us. We are in a lukewarm kettle that may boil us to death. Too little time is occupied with Matthew, Mark, Peter, and Paul and too often occupied with TV,

cartoons, Oprah, and ball. How can we keep from becoming like the frog?

We must recognize the value of a good working knowledge of the Bible.

The Bible is the only book which can tell our past, present, and future. We were created in the image of a loving God (Genesis 1:27); our purpose is to praise Him (1 Peter 2:9); and our future can be heaven with Him (John 14:1-3). The only way to become a child of God is to learn the Bible's teachings (John 6:44-45). No other book contains the way of salvation (John 14:6), hope in death (1 Peter 1:3), or the road to heaven (Matthew 7:13-14).

Studying is the only way to become what God wants us to be. Christians become strong by study (Acts 20:32) and, conversely, weak without it (Romans 10:17). Those with weak faith make easy prey for the devil (Ephesians 6:16).

We must not be satisfied with the status quo (2 Timothy 2:15). We might say, "I know as much as the average person." Paul wrote of those who compare themselves among themselves. His conclusion: They "are not wise" (2 Corinthians

10:12). Let's be like the sponge that is always thirsty, and unlike the camel that goes for days without a drink.

We must count the cost and be willing to pay the price. One remarked of his desire to know the Bible like a certain preacher: "I would give half my life to know the Bible like he does." To which was replied, "That is the price he paid."

We must do more than wish; we must work. We must do more than desire; we must dig. We must do more than read; we must remember. The Bereans were commended because they searched the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11), and David delighted in the Word day and night (Psalm 1:2).

If one expects to grow, he must feed on the "pure milk of the word" (1 Peter 2:2). Just as a man with no appetite is physically unhealthy, so the man with no hunger for sacred knowledge is spiritually sick (Matthew 5:6). We become concerned if a loved one loses his appetite; we should exercise greater care if the spirit never hungers.

Why not resolve to make reading God's Word a daily part of your life? Don't be like the frog!

—Allen Webster, Jacksonville, Alabama

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Recommended Resource



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☐ I'm Looking for a Church That Is Not So Negative



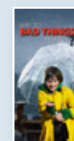
☐ Does God Really Care about Instruments



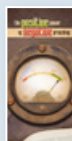
☐ The Rich Man, the Desperate Man



☐ Don't Get Carried Away



☐ Why Do Bad Things Happen?



☐ The Positive Power of Negative Preaching



☐ Why Should I Study a Book of Jewish Mythology?

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VOLUME 23:4





How Can We Not Follow Him?



When Mary first held that beautiful infant, she did not have to wrestle with what He would be called. His Father (not His stepfather) had decided. He sent a messenger to the perplexed Joseph to say, “she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS” (Matthew 1:21).

Jesus . . . what a name! It is now the world’s most recognizable appellation, but at that time it was the New Testament form of the Old Testament name “Joshua.” It means “savior.” Joshua saved God’s people by bringing them into Canaan; Jesus saved God’s people by opening heaven.

The New Testament uses “Jesus” 971 times. You don’t have to know Greek to see that He is the principal character of the world’s bestselling Book.

Why was Jesus chosen by God to save the world?

Because He was the only one who could pay the price for our sin. Paul wrote, “In

Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Ephesians 1:7). His blood was the only substance that could redeem (“buy back”).

A story (perhaps apocryphal) of Abraham Lincoln illustrates this point: One day Lincoln went down to the slave block and saw a girl being sold. He took money out of his pocket and bought her.

Then he said to her, “Young lady, you are free.” She said, “Please, sir, what does that mean?” He said, “It means you are free.” She asked, “Does that mean that I can say whatever I want to say?” He answered, “Yes. You can say whatever you want to say.” She asked, “Does that mean I can be whatever I want to be?” He replied, “Yes, it means you can be whatever you want to be.” She asked, “Does that mean I can go wherever I want to go?” He said, “Yes, you can go wherever you want to go.” The girl thought, and as tears

streamed down her face, said, “Then I will go with you.”

When sin put us on Satan’s auction block, Jesus bought us back with His own blood. Paul wrote, “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). We will never understand that kind of love. Walk through Jesus’ biographies once again and see God’s amazing grace as Jesus deals with people like us who are imperfect, flawed, and frail:

- Zacchaeus the tax collector (Luke 19).
- The woman caught in adultery (John 8).
- The Samaritan woman (John 4).
- The thief crucified (Luke 23).

When we comprehend the riches of His grace, we, too, say, “Then I will go with you.” How can we not follow a Savior like that? —Allen Webster, Jacksonville, Alabama

Why Become a Member of the Church of Christ?

Why should a person become a member of the church of Christ? May I offer some reasons for your consideration? Please read the scriptures found with each one.

- It was founded by the scriptural builder—Christ (Matthew 16:18).
- It was founded on the scriptural foundation—the teachings of Christ (Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 3:11).
- It was founded at the scriptural place—Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2–3; Luke 24:46–49; Acts 2).
- It was founded at the scriptural time—the first Pentecost following the resurrection (Acts 2, “church” is described as an established organization for the first time).
- It has a scriptural name (Matthew 16:18; Romans 16:16).
- It has scriptural organization (Philippians 1:1).
- It has the Bible as its only creed (2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:3).
- It is undenominational (John 17:20–21).

- It administers scriptural baptism (immersion) (Matthew 28:18–19; Acts 8:36, 38; John 3:23; Romans 6:4).
- It gives scriptural answers to the question, “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Mark 16:16).
- Its observation of the Lord’s supper is scriptural (1 Corinthians 11:23–25; Acts 20:7; 2:42).
- It has scriptural music in worship (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).
- Salvation is in Christ’s church (Acts 20:28; 2:47; Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18).

Friend, why not obey the simple gospel of Christ today? Sin condemns one’s soul eternally—but God has given His Son, making it possible for sin to be removed.

We can be members of the same church today that Christ said He would build (Matthew 16:18)—the one that is found within the pages of the Bible. By doing what they did, we can become what they became—just Christians.



If we can assist you in your obedience to Christ, please allow us to do so.



Breathing Holes on the Way to **HEAVEN**

A few years ago, the world watched as three gray whales, icebound off Point Barrow, Alaska, floated battered and bloody, gasping for breath at a hole in the ice.

Their only hope: somehow to be transported five miles past the ice pack to open sea. Rescuers began cutting a string of breathing holes about twenty yards apart in the six-inch-thick ice.

For eight days they coaxed the whales from one hole to the next, mile after mile. Along the way, one vanished and was presumed dead. But finally, with the help of Russian icebreakers, the whales Putu and Siku swam to freedom.

In a way, worship is a string of breathing holes the Lord provides His people. Battered and bruised in a world frozen with greed, selfishness, and hatred, we rise for air in worship, a place to breathe again, to be loved and encouraged, until that day when the Lord forever shatters the ice cap.

—Craig Brian Larson, *Leadership*, Vol. 11, no. 2

"The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely."

REVELATION 22:17



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4/18



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