

BIBLE MONITOR

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“For the faith once delivered unto the saints”

OUR MOTTO: Spiritual in life and Scriptural in practice.	OUR WATCHWORD: Go into all the world and preach the gospel.
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OUR AIM: Be it our aim to be more sanctified, more righteous,
more holy, and more perfect through faith and obedience.

HOW STRONG AND SWEET MY FATHER'S CARE

How strong and sweet my Father's care,
That round about me, like the air,
Is with me always, everywhere!
He cares for me!

The thought great wonder with it brings,
My cares are all such little things,
But to the truth my glad heart clings,
He cares for me!

O keep me ever in Thy love,
Dear Father, watching from above,
And as through life my steps shall move,
O care for me.

Anonymous

Selected by Lynn H. Miller
Newmanstown, PA

EVEN THE STARLING?

In the last few years, I have become something that I never dreamed possible. Until a few years ago, I rolled my eyes at those that keep numbered lists of bird species they've observed or that schedule vacations to match the migrational patterns of birds. Knowing a few such people, I occasionally poked fun at these "birders". Even when I used to refer to people using this title, my voice didn't hide a hint of shame or ridicule. Yet now, somehow, I think I may have become one of *them*. Yes. A birder. However, I have yet to descend to the level of the annual lists or avitourism. For you non-birders, that's akin to going on bird-cations. Not yet for me anyway.

I attribute this improbable transformation to the fact

that about two years ago, we moved from the farm fields to the woodlands. With that move, came a significant uptick in the variety of birds at the feeder, and nearly all the new varieties are what I previously characterized as quasi-exotics. Beautiful birds! Notably the woodpeckers: Downy, Hairy, Red-bellied, Red-headed, Northern Flicker, Pileated and even the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. All exhibiting the handiwork of God's creation! Well almost all except, perhaps, the Starling.

At our home in the farm fields, much to my dismay, there was a preponderance of starlings. Their ugliness extended beyond their drab appearance. It extended to their call, their song and other noises and even their feeding

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and nesting practices. Very ugly and dirty birds indeed! And so, I declared war on the starlings! I changed the seed in the bird feeder to black oil sunflower seed only, as the starling beak is too thin to open the shell. I covered or filled many nesting cavities in our barn. I tried multiple methods of extermination. Eventually, in desperation, I even went to the extreme of offering my children a bounty for each adult and fledgling starling taken! I won a few skirmishes, but in the end, the starlings won the war.

Why did God create the Starling? I pondered this question a number of times. Besides my troubles with them, it's estimated that they cause \$800 million in crop losses annually in the U.S. They are in fact an invasive species, being introduced from Europe into Central Park, in New York City in 1890 because some Shakespearian enthusiasts wanted to see all birds mentioned in his works represented in North America. The European Starling: scientific name is *Sternus Vulgaris*. Some more familiar with them call them *The Flying Rat*.

Why would God create such an ugly, messy and destructive beast? Could it be that the Starling is simply part of the curse, like thorns and thistles? Could it be that God didn't create the Starling but that it is a product of micro-evolution? (variation within Kinds). After all, there are around 25 bird varieties mentioned in the Bible, but the Starling is not on the list. Could they have a future role at the end of the battle of Armageddon to consume the flesh of kings, captains, mighty men and horses? Or on further consideration, could it be that God doesn't see the Starling as I do? We know from Isaiah 55:8-9, the likeliness of this: *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, any my thoughts than your thoughts."* Maybe now we're getting somewhere.

The more I question God's creation of the Starling; an ugly, messy and destructive beast, the more I'm reminded of a much deeper question about something much uglier, messier and destructive. That being... why did God create Man? Or

deeper still, why did He create me? Why did He create you? It is true that God did not create Man in his current state. God created Man very good. But Man chose to sin and by that choice comes ugliness, messiness, destructiveness and death. In comparison, the Starling is a dirty bird but is incapable of sin. It is incapable of idolatry, murder, adultery and all forms of sin and evil that Man is active in. So which is dirtier? Which is uglier? The Starling or Man?

No matter how we might answer these questions regarding our dirtiness and ugliness, praise the Lord that He does not view humanity as I view the Starling! Praise the Lord that He does not eradicate humanity as if we were a Starlingesque scourge. Praise the Lord that, on the contrary, He loved us in such an extreme that He was willing to sacrifice His life in exchange for ours. Praise God that His ways are above our ways and His thoughts are above our thoughts!

“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is

man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.” Psalm 8:3-6

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” John 3:16-17

“...God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Rom. 5:8-9

“...God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”
I John 4:8-10

K. Brock
Stryker, OH

THE HEART OF JESUS

In Israel's War Against Hamas

Each morning, as I rise from my bed in my apartment in the Old City, Jerusalem, I wonder how many souls have gone into eternity because of the war. Haaretz News daily gives the statistics: deaths in Gaza, deaths of women and children, deaths of IDF soldiers, deaths of settlers, deaths of Hamas leaders in Gaza and the West Bank and deaths of those that were severely injured or kidnapped on October 7th. Hamas calls the war Al Aqsa Storm; the nation of Israel calls it Iron Sword. The heart of Jesus would only divide them into two camps: those saved by the blood of the Lamb, which would include innocent children, and those who have refused to claim Jesus as their Messiah.

These words I pen today in November, will they still be relevant when we celebrate the birth of Jesus in December? Indeed, they should be. Jesus was born of the seed of David in Bethlehem where the barley fields of Boaz were gleaned by Ruth. Today, Bethlehem is in the West Bank, an area walled off and barbed-wired-in

to protect the Israeli Jews from their Arab neighbors, who might be terrorists.

The situation is confusing and bewildering because I thought I had answers before I moved to Israel three years ago. After living here with my Arab Catholic neighbors in the Christian Quarter and working daily with the Arab Muslims in the West Bank, I pray for those that do not know Jesus. I shop in the Jewish Quarter and pass Orthodox Jews in the street who might spit on the sidewalk ahead of me, in their open contempt for Christians. I pray for them. I want to remind them of their Holy Book which says in Leviticus 19:33-34 *“And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”*

The land of Palestine that Jesus lived and taught in, was crucified in, and rose again (HALLELUJAH) was a small, distant Roman territory, the

only area that Caesar allowed a sub-group—the Jews to practice their own religion. The Romans were despised in Palestine because they taxed heavily, they carried weapons, and they were not to be questioned. Into these hostilities Jesus said, *“Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven...”* Matt. 5:44-48

I have seen this modeled in the lives of my Arab Palestinian Christian friends. Rami has had his apricot trees cut to the ground by Jewish settlers who have built their homes next to him. He has no police protection and no recourse. Later, when he harvested his apples, he took buckets of them to his Jewish neighbors, with no mention of the previous damage to his apricot trees. He prays for them, he blesses them.

John the Baptist paved the way of Jesus when he said to the people—give what you can to the poor; to the tax collectors—collect no more than is appointed for you; to the

soldiers—do not intimidate or accuse falsely and be content with your wages.

I do not know if this Iron Sword/Al Aqsa Storm War is Psalm 83 or Ezekiel 38 or in the Revelation of Jesus Christ. That is an assumption that was brought to the forefront in the first and second intifadas and no doubt during the two World Wars. I do know the heart of Jesus is to bring ALL men to repentance. Pray for Israel, pray for Gaza, pray for Palestine, pray for the Muslims, pray for the Jews, pray for the Arabs, pray for Hamas and pray that believing Christians might be witnesses for Him. Many of you pray for my safety. I am fifty miles from the conflict and my apartment in the Old City is a self-contained bomb shelter. Pray that above all, I might promote the gospel. I do not live in fear. I live in sadness. And then I am reminded that the *“joy of the Lord is my strength. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”*

Mary Sue Moss
Jerusalem, Israel

PROPINQUITY

Propinquity: noun, from Latin, propinquus, nearness. *From Webster's New World Dictionary.*

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." James 4:8a

This word, propinquity, is often used to describe people thrown together in work situations who see each other every day and become close. As Christians, we need to be careful of working closely with the opposite sex, particularly if we are married. Being together, in whatever context, breeds familiarity.

This same is true with God. If we desire to be close to Him, He will clear the way. *"But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all*

thy works." Psalm 73:28

The Psalmist tells us that it is good to draw near to God. In Hebrews 7:19, we learn why: *"For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh unto God."*

Hebrews 10:22 tells us how: *"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."*

We love Him because He first loved us, and love changes us. It changes our hearts. It changes our behavior. It changes our allegiance. May God help us in all that call upon the Lord will find pasture and satisfaction.

Arise, my soul arise, Shake off thy guilty fears;
The bleeding sacrifice in my behalf appears;
Before the throne my Savior stands;
My name is written on His hands.

To God I'm reconciled, His pard'ning voice I hear;
He owns me for his child, I can no longer fear;
With confidence I now draw nigh;
And Father, Abba, Father! cry. (abbrev.)

Charles Wesley

Lynn H. Miller
Newmanstown, PA

FINISH STRONG!!!

As the calendar year comes to an end, these verses have been rolling around in my mind.

Luke 8:14 *“And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.”*

Heb. 12:1-2 *“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

These verses would tell us that we are to focus and finish strong. Finishing well is more important than starting well. Starting well is important but on the journey, changes and adjustments can be made to focus on the finish. Too many times a good start is made, and we begin to coast or put it on cruise control and get tripped

up. The enemy is looking for any opportunity to put a wrench in our gears. 1 Pet. 5:8 *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”* We must be watchful and always on guard. Rev. 3:2-3 *“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”* This was spoken to the church in Sardis. It is proof that we can start well and lose focus.

Luke 8:14 speaks of hearing and excitedly launching into the race.... We spring forth and get a fabulous start but when a few things come along we get choked out. Luke 14:29 *“Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him.”* The word picture here is a building project that runs out of money before completion. This always

brings questions and people wonder what, why, how? Two verses before says this, *“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”* Christ says we are to pick up our cross and follow Him. He doesn’t want us to start and not finish well. II Timothy 4:7-8 *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”* Paul was looking forward to the day he heard “Well done!” Well done, does not come without finishing well. Well done, does not come to quitters. Paul also said these words, *“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy.”* Acts 20:24a

As this year winds to a close, remember to finish strong. Don’t get bogged down in year-end paperwork, traditions, family celebrations or anything else that may steal your joy or make you slow up or lose focus. We never know when our last breath may be and we need to make sure that whenever that is, we are making God look good. We must represent Him in such a way that those looking on, see Him in and through us, and as a result, want what we have. Matt. 5:16 *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”*

“Life’s journey is not to arrive at the grave safely, in a well-preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, totally worn out, shouting, Praise Jesus, what a ride!” - Mavis Leyer (slightly modified from the original)

Joe Cover
Dallas Center, IA

ENJOYING MOMENTS AT HOME FOR ALL AGES

Many mothers in today’s world seem to be struggling with all age groups within the family unit. I live and work around

many women who want time for themselves and they want their life to center around “ME”. Time seems to be the #1 issue where

children interfere with their lives. They are trying to further their education while they have toddlers running around needing a Mom. They want to do things with their “long-ago girlfriends” like go out for lunch but can’t because of their little ones. They want to go out partying with their peers in the evening hours and can’t find a baby-sitter who is willing to help them.

Maybe at times you’ve said or heard someone else say:

“I’m putting you in time out!”

“Just go to your room!”

“Get out of the house!”

“Go play and don’t bother me!”

Who agreed to have these children anyway? The Bible

says, “*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*” Prov. 22:6

Motherhood is a high calling and can be challenging and frequently requires regular self-discipline and sacrifice. God has given mothers a special role in uniting their families. While we might struggle and be discouraged at times, the short- and long-term blessings of children and raising them to follow the Lord are many!

In my years of motherhood, I have gleaned some practical tips that helped nurture peace, happiness, thankful and joyful hearts in our family.

1. Copy and send an inspiring poem to a friend
2. Teach children to love their animals and give them care at certain times every day
3. Read your Bible for 20 minutes every day
4. Everyone take a half an hour walk
5. Write a letter to an elderly person
6. Pull 25 weeds in the garden
7. Help mother clean up the flower beds
8. Have a picnic lunch, under the shade tree outdoors
9. Light candles to glow throughout the supper meal
10. Peel one potato for every year you have lived
11. Send a recipe to your cousin who lives far away
12. Play a game with one or more of your siblings
13. Have suppertime be a conversation of all family members around the table

14. Read a story to the younger children before their afternoon naps
15. See how many words you can make with the word: omnipresent
16. Sit still and rest (be silent) for 20 minutes
17. Sew on a button on someone's clothes
18. Draw a picture for Grandpa and Grandma
19. Always pray before you eat
20. Have a one-on-one time with Dad
21. Fold 10 pieces of laundry or wash cloths
22. Thank family members at least 3 times today
23. Prepare a dish of food for suppertime
24. Recite your Math facts
25. Share with your siblings without complaining, so you can share with others
26. Put at least 20 items away at the close of the day
27. Ask your parents for things to do to help them
28. Bake cookies, enough for the family and have some to give to friends
29. Plan for 9 hours of sleep
30. Pray with your children before crawling in your own bed

Every family is different but perhaps you see some things here that you might find helpful for your family.

Children need to feel needed and wanted in today's world. They need to hear praise coming from both mother and father, aunts and uncles and Grandparents' lips. I'm trusting that the parents of today have a plan including Christ as head in their home, seeking wisdom and everyday guidance in raising sons and daughters for His Kingdom! Only

then can the world see and know that there is something to raising happy and joyful children!

"Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. The LORD shall bless

thee out of Zion; and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel." Psalms 128

May us older ones, as

grandparents, light the torch of Faith, stand in the gap and pray for the younger generations who are struggling.

Shirley Frick
Greenville, OH

THE HOPE OF MANY COLORS

People always talk about hope and yet I wonder if they really understand what hope is all about. People hope that their dreams will come true. People have a naïve hope they will be successful in everything they do. And the list goes on and on.

Hope has a rather different aspect to it from the spiritual point of view. Yes, many people look at hope from the human viewpoint. That hope is limited to what man is limited to. Some people's hopes are merely dreams that have no real bearing on real life.

For the Christian, hope has a very different significance to it. Hope is not rooted in man's ability, but rather in God's infinity. This simply means that from the spiritual side, hope has no limit.

A person may pursue their life's dream and then a tragedy happens that takes that dream

completely off the table. Their life is ruined, at least from the human standpoint.

It takes a tragedy to get us to appreciate the hope that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

My dreams are rooted in what I can do and my aspirations in life. I am pursuing something; it is the focus of my life and I put everything I have behind that dream. Then suddenly, tragedy strikes.

For the most part, hope is only appreciated in the midst of a tragedy. When a tragedy takes place, it seems to take the human possibilities off the table. What I thought I could do, I now discover that I cannot and that is enough to bring me to a point of real discouragement and even depression. It is at this point that real hope needs to come into the picture. The hope I am thinking about here is not rooted in man, but in God's ability

as well as God's expectation of me in my life. To discover God's expectation for me is the greatest moment of my life.

I like to think of this in the sense of a rainbow. The rainbow is comprised of many colors. I suppose those colors are close to infinite in that regard. A rainbow comes after the storm. It takes that storm to create the atmosphere for rainbow to appear. I like to go outside right after a storm and look for that rainbow. There have been times I have seen the rainbow in a complete circle. I am sure I do not understand that, but I can appreciate the aspect of that rainbow as far as hope is concerned. The tragedy is over and now, new life is available to me and that new life is through the Lord Jesus Christ.

When I am out, staring at the new rainbow I remind myself that that rainbow stands between God and me. That rainbow reminds me that after a tragedy in my life, God is available. The rainbow reminds me of God's character in nature. It is absolutely unlimited, which is something hard for me to get a hold of. I look at that rainbow, I try to call out the colors and I never seem to have enough. When I come

to God, I try to call out the colors of his nature and character and I always run out of words. God's character is bigger than the storms of my life. The rainbow reflects God's commitment to us. I think back to the time of Noah and the rainbow that followed the flood. That rainbow was a covenant God made with man and I need to embrace that covenant today. The rainbow reminds me of God's promise and is a symbol of hope for me. No matter how bad my situation develops, I know that the promises of God are bigger than all my problems put together. The promises of God are rooted in eternity and my problems are rooted in time and you can imagine the difference here.

I do recall those times in my life when I was ruled by pride. My pride said I could handle anything that came along, that my strength was bigger than my problems. That went so far, but then I encountered a problem bigger than my strength. That was a changing point in my life.

When I run out of strength, I need some hope that is bigger than I am. That hope is in God. He has promised that he would always be there for me. I tend to

forget that at times. At times, I try to handle my situation in my strength and I eventually end up in a failure. I must confess that there are times when a tragedy in my life causes me to doubt God and his faithfulness. However, following a tragedy, God steps in and takes over. That rainbow reminds me that after the storm there is hope.

I am constantly reminded

of God's faithfulness. Even though there are many times I am unfaithful, God's faithfulness to me is not built upon my faithfulness to Him. Rather, God is faithful because He is always faithful to His character and nature. What God does in my life is reflective of His love and grace to me.

James L. Snyder
Ocala, FL

CONNECTIONS

As members of the Bible Study Board our hope in writing monthly articles related to the Adult Sunday School Lessons is that we all see afresh different points of connection that reveal the Word made flesh.

John 20 & 21, Also Galatians 4:1-9

In our studies this month, we will close out the Gospel of John. We will again experience the Resurrection of Jesus and His personal time with His disciples following that great event. We will also parenthetically reflect on the *"fullness of time"* when *"God sent forth His Son"* from Galatians chapter 4.

John has given us a better understanding of the Deity of Christ, from the first verse in chapter 1, when *"the Word was made flesh"*, throughout

his writings of His miracles, His teachings, and His relationships with His disciples and friends, as he then concludes in chapter 21.

This month, we concentrate on the last two chapters of John where we have a detailed documentary of the Resurrection of Jesus where He showed Himself to Mary, the account where He shows Himself to the disciples in the room where they are gathered, the appearance where He gives them fishing instructions leading

to a miraculous catch, then the fish fry on the beach, followed with His deep questions and instructions to Peter to feed His flock and follow Him.

As we study through these last two chapters, we find ourselves relating with these men and women in many areas, yes, sometimes of doubts, but hopefully areas of faith.

John gives us two verses in these last two chapters that summarizes the purpose for his writings.

John 20:31 says, *“But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.”*

John 21:25 says, *“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.”*

*On behalf of the Bible Study Board
Brother Bart Hoblit*

Some Thoughts on Matthew 5:21-26 (Anger)

The Mosaic Law teaches us not to commit murder. The taking of life is a terrible crime against God and humanity. Generally, the deed is done because the perpetrator does not value the life of his victim. Either the criminal considers the life of his victim as worthless or other objects such as money are valued above that of human life. That is perhaps why the Bible says the love of money is the root of all evil. The murderer at that point says I want what you have, and I will take your life to get it.

Most people would say

that they have never murdered anyone. However, in verse 21, Jesus speaks about the sin of murder, then in verse 22 is talking about the malice of anger. But Jesus expounds on the subject to include what is going on in the heart. Whosoever is angry with his brother without cause shall be in danger of the judgement. Anger is an emotion in response to some real or imagined injury or injustice. So, anger can be a result of practically anything: being called a derogatory name; being cut off by a driver on the highway; having someone

take something that belongs to you. A drunk driver may cause the death of a loved one. My wife may burn the supper. These events are just a few examples of what can cause us to experience anger.

We may at times feel we have the right to be angry. But do we? We sometimes speak of righteous anger or indignation. In Mark 3:5 we read that Jesus became angry. His anger was righteous because He Himself is righteous! But on the human level, who or what determines righteous anger? What does it look like? What we may call righteous anger too often is just our way of trying to rationalize anger in response to our hurt pride and ego. At any rate, we read further in our lesson. He that is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgement. Some Bible scholars say that the phrase "without a cause" is not in the original text and has been supplied. In fact, some other Bible translations omit that phrase. I think Jesus could have used those words to make a point. Who would have a righteous cause to be angry with a brother? Think about it. When we are persecuted by the

world, are we to be angry? Of course not. We are commanded to turn the other cheek and bless those who would speak evil of us. So, would we have a justifiable cause to be angry with our brother? I ask for us to consider again what would be a right cause to be angry with our brother?

A brother (or sister) may hurt me in some way. Jesus gives instruction in Matthew chapter 18 of steps to take to reconcile with our brother in the event of an offense. And Jesus also teaches us to forgive until 70 times 7! What about the brother who stumbles and falls into sin? At this point we may be apt to use the hurtful terms our Lord referred to in verse 22 of our text. Why become angry at the brother? Why not become angry *for* him. Let our anger be directed toward the evil spirit realm that tempted him to fall! After all we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against unseen spiritual forces. Observe the example of Jesus. At the time He was suffering the most at the hands of wicked men, is the time we read of Him pleading for their forgiveness.

We hear or read about anger

management advice to help people overcome bouts of anger. Some helpful tips may include taking deep breaths, counting to ten, walking away from the situation that caused the anger for a time to settle down. All of these could help alleviate some of the surface results of anger. But these do not deal with its root causes. Anger often reveals our own pride, self-centeredness, and lack of Christ's love for our brother.

So, we have previously mentioned that the murderer demonstrates the life of another is, in his estimation, next to worthless. But look at the other phrases spoken by Jesus in verse 22b, and so on. Whosoever shall say to his brother Raca shall be danger of the council but who shall say Thou fool shall be danger of hell fire. Here, Jesus is referring not to actions but to derogatory words. Remember what Jesus said in Matt. 12:34 that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Raca and fool are words that convey the individual is an idiot, stupid, good for nothing, worthless. Spoken words do reveal the heart and these noted examples demonstrate an un-Christlike

spirit. Can we see then that the same heart of the murderer that viewed the life of his victim as worthless is quite like the heart that said to his brother "you are worthless." That is why such words spoken to our brother are, as one speaker put it, small acts of murder. Such words indeed can kill the reputation and spirit of our brother. And such words in effect say, "I have no need of you in my life." Contrast that with what Paul said to the church at Corinth; that no one is unimportant or unnecessary in Christ. 1 Cor. 12:12-22,25.

Back in Matt. 5:23, Jesus is describing an act of worship. During that time, as you attempt to draw closer to the Lord, you may remember that there is a rift between you and your brother. Go and be reconciled to your brother, then return to offer your gift to God. He really values the relationships between us and our brethren. From 1 John 4:20-21, the answer is clear! God is saying if I am not right with my brother, then I am not right with God to be making an offering to Him! Seek reconciliation, then come and worship.

Jesus continues in verse 25. Agree with thine adversary

quickly. With God's help, and out of obedience to Christ, endeavor to put to rest any animosity and conflict with anyone. Time does not heal all wounds. Often, time only allows hurts and conflicts to seethe and fester that later demonstrate themselves in unpleasant or violent behavior. We are not perfect people and occasionally we will offend or be offended by someone's word or deed. Anger will seek to raise its ugly head. Seek to make amends quickly when there is a problem between brethren (or sisters). Avoid glossing over or minimizing an offense against another. Talk it through with the attitude of a learner. Ask forgiveness. We may think the other was 75 percent wrong and we perhaps

only 25. The problem is the other brother looks at it the opposite way! To him you may be the one who is 75 percent wrong. Ask forgiveness for your "25 percent!" As the Bible says in another place: "*As much as lieth in you live peaceably with all men.*" Is there not enough strife, hatred, anger, rage, and other destructive emotions in this world? We expect that in the fallen, unrepentant, rebellious, unbelieving realm of the world dominated by sinful men. But there is no room for it in the body of Christ! Let us not harbor anger toward anyone, particularly our brethren and sisters. Are we not members one of another?

Edward Trone
Hanover, PA

PHIL'S PONDERINGS

As we "study to shew *ourselves* approved unto God..."
December 2023 Bible Study Commentary

Dec. 3 - John 20:1-13 – Hopeless During a Hopeful Time

As important as any other truth in the Scripture is our study of the resurrection of Jesus. Without the resurrection, Christianity is just another religion among many others. Without the all-conquering life of Christ defeating the powers of death, our hopes will fade in the face of an eternity that holds no eternal answers in which we can rejoice.

But as we study and listen to the accounts of each Gospel, we see human responses overcome by the joyous awareness of the eternal life that Jesus offers to everyone. Mary Magdalene is a good example. It is unclear whether Mary is aware of the embalming that Joseph and Nicodemus have already done. But she has come to the tomb prepared to do as much as is necessary to accomplish the final task in serving her Lord. What she discovers is horrifying. The stone has been removed. In the fading darkness she can tell that the body of Jesus is missing but she does not investigate further. She is convinced that the body of Jesus has been taken and presumably hidden. Mary, unintentionally, has become a false witness.

Some years ago, I read an account of how a law professor helped his students recognize how easily eyewitnesses can misinterpret what they see and hear. While lecturing, a student entered the classroom, yelled a number of words, then fired off several shots aimed at the professor. The intruder quickly left the scene of the crime. The dead professor then stood up, much to the relief of his students, and began asking them questions about what they had just seen. There were many answers they gave but seldom corroborated by all the other witnesses in the classroom. Nevertheless, the students could provide a reasonable account of all that took place. While not always agreeing on every detail they could agree on the most important details of what occurred. Similarly, as we study the resurrection of Jesus, including all the accounts in the Gospels, we are provided a much clearer picture of all that took place. Ultimately it is Jesus who sweeps away the false assumptions and clarifies what was misunderstood. This process is often a part of our own experience with the Lord. As we study His Word we gain deeper insights that help reconcile what seems at first to be conflicting accounts. Mary's sorrow will shortly turn to great rejoicing as she hears her name spoken, not by the gardener, but the Lord Jesus himself.

Dec. 10 - John 20:14-31 – Casting Aside Nets and Doubt

Have you ever felt distraught? Has life as you know it seem to have come crashing down upon you, stripping you of all hope? Have you

been unable to connect the dots that help make sense of your life even though they lie in plain sight before you? If your answer is “yes” to some of these questions, then you know something about what Mary is experiencing. She has a conversation with two angels who are sitting inside the tomb. Yet the text does not suggest that she knows who she is talking to. A man standing near her asks the same questions as the angels. But Mary does not recognize that it is Jesus speaking to her. She continues to beg for any information that will lead her to where the body of Jesus may be hidden. She is desperate to find and protect His dead body. But with one word Jesus opens her mind and heart to an unbelievable reality that completely transforms the bitterness and lostness that she has been experiencing. She hears this man address her by name. “Mary.” Beyond all expectation of any rational thought Jesus stands alive before her. Without any forethought Mary addresses him as Rabboni (meaning teacher) and prostrates herself clinging to His feet and perhaps kissing His feet as well. May each one of us hear our names called, both in this life and in eternal life with Christ, with all the joy and humility that frees us to prostrate ourselves before our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Dec. 17 - John 21:1-14 – No Ordinary Fish Fry

The last verse in this passage of Scripture tells us that this was the third time that Jesus appeared to His disciples. It is a strange new world that the disciples find themselves living in. Jesus has been resurrected. They are certain of that. But by the time of this passage we are studying, two or possibly three weeks have passed since Jesus was first resurrected. Why are His appearances spread out over what seems like a long time? Why isn't Jesus spending everyday with His disciples? I don't have any definitive answers. But it must be part of the way that His disciples were to learn what to do next. There is a bridge between the time of Jesus' resurrection appearances and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Under the direction of the Spirit the church begins to grow. With that growth comes questions about what is distinctly Christian and what is still Jewish. Is there a difference between salvation by faith and adherence to the law of Moses? Answers to these questions and many more

took time to figure out. Those answers will always be found in the teachings of Jesus. The significance of His incarnation, crucifixion, as well as His resurrection, await each new generation of believers. Waiting for Jesus is part of the learning and growing process that every Christian experiences. We've also been waiting for more than 2,000 years for Jesus' return. There must be more we are to learn before Jesus returns again. Our faith is meant to be tried and tested. Our understanding must develop deep roots in what the Lord has provided for us and in us through His Word. Faithful following may lead us to many a night when our nets keep coming up empty. But our confidence is not in our skills at casting nets. Rather, It is in following His directions. Whether the results are a few or an overflowing abundance our praise will always be to the Lord who fulfills His will using us for His purposes.

Dec. 24 - Galatians 4:1-9 – The Birth of Christ

(Include in your reading chapter 3:26-29) Gal 3:26 *“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”* One of the great dangers that threaten many Christians is the tendency to exalt ourselves above other believers. We tend to emphasize our differences that justify our conclusions that we are superior in a variety of ways. This is one of the problems that Paul keeps confronting in his epistle to the Galatians as well as other churches. He writes this to the Ephesian church. (Eph 3:8) *“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints...”* How is Paul comparing himself to others? Is this how we typically think when we compare ourselves to others? Too seldom do we give thanks for their faith in Christ. Too often do we criticize the differences in our practices as believers. Too little do we rejoice in our oneness through faith in Christ. How do we move from pointing fingers of suspicion to reaching out with arms that embrace our shared oneness in Christ Jesus? Let us be clear. Embracing our shared faith in Christ is not settling for something less. Our faith in Christ is what most clearly defines us. It is the result of God sharing with each of us the Spirit of His Son and in turn frees us to cry out to Abba Father together in the most personal way that we are able.

Dec. 31 - John 21:15-25 – Come, Dine, and Feed My Sheep

There are certainly some parallels between Peter's denial of Jesus three times and Jesus' threefold questioning of Peter as to his love for Jesus. In our modern vernacular we might refer to Peter as a "loose cannon". Peter's short walk on the Sea of Galilee and using his sword to cut off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest's servant, come to mind. Peter is a man of action and given to action as he pulls the overflowing nets of fish onto the beach. But something more than quick action and bravado are needed in the making of a leader in the early church. The kingdom that Jesus has inaugurated doesn't count victories by the number of dead bodies left on the battlefield. It is about persuading hearts to love Jesus. It is rescuing lost sheep entangled in Satan's briars. It is valuing every person as a brother or sister in the Lord. It is loving the unlovable because Jesus has given His life for them. The love that Jesus asks of Peter does not include silver stars on his outer garments. The only decoration worth wearing is a cross drenched with blood. Feeding sheep is worship. It is the worship of the king of kings. It is the singular act of one who desires more than anything else that Jesus know how much we love Him.

NEWS ITEMS**Sunday School Lesson Plan**

The Bible Study Board would like to inform all readers that the annual Adult Sunday School Lesson Plans will be posted in a downloadable file on the Dunkard Brethren Church website from now on. The goal is for this to become the primary avenue of distribution going forward. Electronic copies have also been distributed to elders across the brotherhood. It is our desire that one of these avenues will be an available source to all members. If needed, an e-mailed copy of the file can also be requested by e-mailing nsmeyers11@gmail.com

On behalf of the Bible Study Board,
Nathan Meyers, Secretary

Subscription Price Increase

For 2024, the subscription price for the Bible Monitor by mail will increase to \$10 per year. Subscribers can still receive the Bible Monitor by both mail and email (e-Monitor) upon request. For subscribers that don't want a paper copy and only want the e-Monitor, the subscription price will remain \$5 per year. While this increase will not completely cover the cost of publishing and distribution, it will come closer than does the current price of \$5 per year.

For those interested in a little history on this matter, when the Bible Monitor began in 1922, the subscription price was \$1 per year. While this might sound like quite a bargain, let's not forget about inflation. Due to inflation over the last 101 years since 1922, that initial \$1 subscription would be equivalent to approximately \$18 today. The subscription price then remained at \$1 until it was increased to \$2 in 1981 (about \$6.70 today) and then increased to \$5 in 1998 (about \$9.35 today).

Bible Monitor Exchange

Do you have some old copies of the Bible Monitor that you would like to donate? Or are you looking for some old copies that you don't have? We might be able to help.

The Brethren Heritage Center in Brookville, Ohio is looking for copies from 1922 into the 1950s and from 2015 forward. If you have some of those copies and wouldn't mind donating them, please contact Shirley Frick at the Brethren Heritage Center at (937) 833-5222 or at sfhistorybutterfly@gmail.com

Also, if you are looking for copies from the late 1950s or early 1960s, Simon Schrock of Virginia has most of these issues and is looking for a new home for them. If interested, please contact Simon at (703) 282-9281.

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS FOR January 2024

Jan. 7 - 1 Thess. 1:1-10 - Know Your Election of God

1. What value is it for us to know our election/calling of God?
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2. In what ways are we leaving behind an example to those that are following behind?
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3. What does Scripture require for us to do while waiting on Christ's return?
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Jan. 14 - 1 Thess. 2:1-12 - Holy, Just, and Unblameable

1. What is our response when we feel contention against the gospel?
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2. How can we get in the way of the gospel?
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3. What does it look like to walk Holy, Just, and Unblameable?
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Jan. 21 - 1 Thess. 2:13-20 - Founded in the Midst of Persecution

1. What does persecution look like in the 21st century?

2. What should our response be when we feel Satan hindering God's work from moving forward?

3. What is our hope and joy?

Jan. 28 - 1 Thess. 3:1-13 - Stand fast in the Lord

1. Why does the church grow when persecution arrives?

2. How do we check our faith to see if we are strong enough to stand when persecution arrives?

3. What does it take to stand fast in the Lord?

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