



# User-Friendly

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# Friendly Fire



by Bill Dillon

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In war, or even training for war, occasionally our own troops are killed or wounded by our own forces. This terrible mishap is deeply regrettable, especially to the families of the deceased. In combat, with smoke whirling, bullets whizzing, confusion abounding and explosions mounting, and life and death hanging in the balance, it is understandable (though not acceptable) how a fellow soldier, being disoriented and uncertain, might fire at the wrong target.

In religion, "friendly fire" also occurs. In times of conflict and differences, brethren can fire words at each other, wounding and even killing one another's souls. How wise if we, as children of God, would recognize that "death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Proverbs 18:21). Words do hurt and are like bullets fired in time of actual military conflict. James even goes so far as to say, "For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body" (James 3:2). James likewise mentions that "the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity." Also James adds, "But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison (James 3:6,8).

Let's make sure, at all times and under all circumstances, that our words are good words. "Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word maketh it glad" (Proverbs 12:25). "Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones" (Proverbs 16:24).

Perhaps the Lord pinpointed our tongue trouble the best when He said, "...for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks! A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things" (Matthew 12:34,35).

How shameful when the Lord's church is victimized by "friendly fire." We must keep in mind the real enemy of the human race, Satan the Tempter (1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:10), and make sure we're shooting in the right direction at all times lest we inadvertently hit our brother or sister. Let peace and good cheer characterize us as God's people and may we always be known for our good words. ■



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## Begged, Borrowed & Begotten

As long as error exists, there  
must be controversy.

.....  
All wickedness flows from a  
disregard of God.

—John Calvin

.....  
Satan can make men dance  
upon the brink of hell as  
though they were on the  
verge of heaven.

—C.H. Spurgeon

.....  
The word “Hallelujah” is  
common to all languages and  
is never translated.

.....  
People will follow your  
example far more seriously  
than they will take your  
advice.

.....  
Those who will never retract  
their opinions love them-  
selves more than they love  
truth.

—J. Joubert

.....  
No one ever “falls” into adul-  
tery. The adulterer’s heart is  
always shaped and prepared  
by lustful thoughts before  
the actual deed occurs. Like-  
wise, the heart of the thief is  
bent by covetousness. And  
murder is the product of an-  
ger and hatred. All sin is first  
incubated in the mind.

—John MacArthur

## User-Friendly *continued from page 1*

conversions are out! Repentance, holiness and commitment are seldom mentioned. Could the reason be that they are not very marketable—are not very “user-friendly”? Modern worship, or what is advertised as worship, is “user-friendly,” with emphasis upon casual attitude, casual dress, and “personal enjoyment.” “Try it, you will like it!” is the sales pitch. Self-esteem and self-improvement are slickly packaged and are hawked as hot commodities. In the place of commitment to the word of God, commitment is to that which keeps the customers happy. Religious entrepreneurs are cunning and crafty salesmen. They know that the religious consumer demands a “user-friendly god,” a god they can use and enjoy, and so the entrepreneurs know they can sell their product—only if and as they meet the customer’s demands.

Over against all of this stands that which belongs to God. Jesus is still the King of kings, and Lord of lords. His word is still final. His will and purpose are yet high and holy; demanding and humbling. His words are not those being voiced by the religious entrepreneurs, nor do His words accommodate religious consumers. God’s will is final, His glory is essential. In and through Christ, God continues to call all mankind to faith and repentance, to genuine reverence and obedience. God continues to lift up the humble and He continues to resist the proud.

How is it that many will posture as though they long to know and honor God, then turn away to follow the pied-pipers of false teaching and false religions, and fail to even consider that they have abandoned the will of God? Many not only resist the express will of God, they ridicule and reject it. They often reject God’s will in subtle ways. An illustration: Many “sincerely” embrace the message of salvation by “sincerity alone,” (they teach it does not matter what one believes or practices so long as he is sincere). They do not even begin to concern themselves with the blatant assault this “nice sounding doctrine” makes against the Lord Jesus, and against His gospel. If “sincerity alone” is all that is required, no Savior is needed, no Gospel is needed; the facts and commands of the Gospel are of no consequence, etc. Undeniably, many things that are desired by many religious shoppers (and are being offered by the religious entrepreneurs of the day) blatantly reject the revealed will of God. And, this rejection is of no real concern to them. How is it that the vast majority in the practice of their religion, give so little attention to the necessity of knowing God, doing His will, and living for Him? Could it be that God is too demanding and not “user-friendly”? Is it possible that the modern religionists could teach God a few things? ■

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# Trying to Define Terms Without God

Some say that there is no God. This is not a new fad or philosophy. More than three-thousand years ago David wrote, "The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, They have done abominable works, There is none who does good" (Psalm 14:1). It should be noted that the passage does not say, "Because there is no evidence available, some people fail to believe in God." The **fool** of the passage knows the evidence. He may even have examined that evidence and realized that all reasoning and logic show such evidence to be true. Surely, like the Psalmist, he could see and say, "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard" (Psalm 19:1-3). The fool, however, is like those described in the first chapter of the book of Romans. Here we are told:

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man; and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their*

*hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (Romans 1:18-25)*



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He, the fool, simply doesn't want to acknowledge God, even though the evidence all around him speaks of that existence. The fool refuses because of his sinful and prideful heart. He neither wants to acknowledge nor submit of Him.

Even while denying God, the fool will boldly use such terms as honor, truth, integrity, goodness, and morality. Yet, without the existence of God whom the fool despises, he cannot give a reasonable definition of any of these terms. For example, who is to determine that the killing of a human is worse than killing a roach? Without God, who can say that the atrocities of Hitler and Stalin were indeed atrocities? Neither of these leaders violated the law of their land. In fact, they **were** that law! Without God, who can authoritatively declare that the Oklahoma City bombing was any more wrong than when an exterminator destroys a colony of termites? When one takes God out of the picture, he becomes a law to himself, and who is to say that his "law" is superior to the "law" of someone else?

Every definition that one attempts to give for any moral, ethical, or spiritual issue is nothing but his own subjective thinking when he leaves out God. In fact, without God, one cannot even know if a thing is moral, ethical, or spiritual.

Truly, "The fool has said in his heart, there is no God!" ■

# Who is Joe Francis?

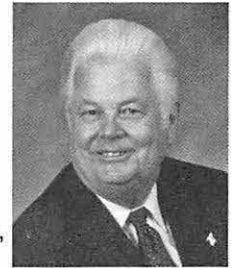
My short answer to this question is, "He is a low life piece of scum that doesn't deserve to breathe another breath of air outside of a jail cell for the rest of his life!" Why do I make such a strong statement as that? Simply because he is the young man who has made multi-millions preying on young women, getting them drunk and enticing them to expose their bodies on camera and offering the tapes for sale on late night television. His defense? They are all eighteen. In fact he admits that most of them are celebrating their eighteenth birthday and "rite of passage" and can legally do what they want! However it has been proven that some were only seventeen. But what difference does that make? Is there something that happens at the stroke of midnight between the age of seventeen and eighteen that makes that which is morally and spiritually wrong become right? Absolutely and positively not! All of us who are older were once eighteen and not one of us had the judgment at that age that came after more years of experience in life. I have ten grandchildren and three great grandchildren and one more great grandchild on the way. Six of them are girls ranging in age from one year to twenty-seven and I call everyone of them *my babies*. (I'd call the boys my babies too, but it is a little embarrassing to them.) I would hate to tell you what I would want to do to a man that approached one of my babies in an effort to engage them in such an activity.

Joe Francis is now in jail in Reno, Nevada, on a tax evasion charge. Before that he was arrested in Panama City, Florida, for

making nude videos of underage girls and spent some time in jail there. Greta Van Susteren of FOX television did a jailhouse interview with him in which he shed big crocodile tears as he talked of the "good ole boys" network in that city and all the "injustices" he suffered at their hands. He said that one day when he was being humiliated by the jail staff and other inmates, a Jail House Chaplain walked up to him and said, "Son, do you ever think of Jesus Christ?" He answered, "I sure do everyday because He went through the very same thing that I am!" How dare he, and how dare Greta allow this lowlife to compare himself to Jesus on worldwide television!

Jesus lifted women up and condemned those that would exploit and misuse them (John 8:1-11). Yes, Jesus did suffer everything that Joe Francis, or any other man did, and more, but not because of any wrong in His life. Peter declared, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered *for us*, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: *Who did no sin*, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Peter 2:21-25).

"Constitutional rights" may keep Joe Francis from getting what he really de-



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serves for his evil deeds, but there is coming a day when he will. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2

Corinthians 5:10). Those who purchase and/or view his trash are just as guilty as he (Matthew 5:28; 2 Corinthians 6:9-11).

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). ■

## Are We Really Spiritual?

Do you know how it is possible to tell if we are truly spiritual individuals? Is it by crying in worship service? (Although there is absolutely nothing wrong with this if motivated by sincerity and genuineness). Is it by the frequency of our prayers or the amount of our contributions? It is none of these otherwise wonderful things!

A truly spiritual person can have a life jammed full of heartaches and ills; and can know hardships and hazards as close friends. The measure of our spirituality is our attitude toward the Holy Writings! Paul commented in 1 Corinthians 14:37, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." A truly spiritually minded person will understand and believe and live their life according to the teachings of inspired men.

Moreover, an authentic spiritual soul will count every way by which they can give thanks to God. They live in the mode of thanksgiving while others whimper and whine. In the shadow of the cross, Jesus sweat great droops of blood (Luke 22:44). With a horrible agony awaiting Him upon the horizon but a few hours away, Jesus "gave thanks" (Luke 22:19).

In the lives of numerous Christians, tragedy follows fast—misfortune is stacked upon misfortune. Yet sorrow never overcomes those believers; serenity of heart evaporates the black dog of depression, the dark monster of cynicism, and gives a sure cure for the murky blues.

"Count your blessings" is a trite saying, but it's more true than trite. That old saying can be the truth that lifts us out of the pettiness of remembered griefs and forgotten joys.

How odd that we seldom talk about our blessings, but are always ready to count our blisters. We keep track of the bad, thus remembering and dwelling on a week of illness and forgetting a year of good health!

Let our faith in Christ save us from such an ugly analysis of life. Pride is at the root of all ingratitude. What a vanity that makes us feel that we deserve better than what we're getting. Let us learn to be really spiritual because we have, as obedient believers, the fabulous and the forever love of God. ■



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## Quotable Quotes

“You can judge a leader by the size of the problems he tackles—people nearly always pick a problem their own size, and ignore or leave to others the bigger or smaller ones.”

—Anthony Jay

# The Gospel of Christ

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The gospel of Christ is a “good news” revelation from heaven... truly a “wonderful story of love.” It is an authentic message whose author is God (not mere mortal man). It is a message God chose to supply, motivated by love and mercy in view of his desire to reclaim and redeem sinful man whom he had created in his own image. Isaiah the prophet writes: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6). Concerning the gospel, men and angels are prohibited from altering its message in any shape, form or fashion (Galatians 1:6-9). The apostle Paul pronounced a curse upon any who are so brazen as to pervert its message. You and I must not be negligent with respect to it (Hebrews 2:1-4).

## **The Call of the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)**

The gospel of Christ is the “tool” that God has chosen to use to draw all men unto salvation and deliverance from sin’s captivating power through his only begotten Son. Therefore, Christ has given his followers the “Great Commission” with the charge: “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Through the gospel, God invites all sinful men to be a recipient of the priceless gift of the forgiveness of all one’s past sins. As with the Corinthians, we too can be washed, sanctified and justified (1 Corinthians 6:11) through the sacrifice of the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Today Jesus still calls you and me to come unto him for rest (Matthew 11:28) and access to God by the faith of Christ (John 14:6).

## **The Challenge of the Gospel**

Through the gospel, Christ calls upon each of us to repent of our sins and iniquities. The forerunner of Christ, John the baptizer called upon men to repent (Mark 1:2-4). When John was imprisoned, Christ called upon his contemporaries to repent of their sins (Mark 1:15). Christ’s message was filled with the theme of repentance (Luke 13:1-5) to avoid the consequence of eternal ruin and loss of one’s soul in torment. The apostles of Christ preached the same message of repentance (Acts 2:38) in view of Christ’s return and the final judgment (Acts 17:30-31).

It is imperative we come to view sin as God views sin. Since God does not wink at sin, we can not pass it off as something to laugh at. Since God is a holy God, he calls upon us to be holy (1 Peter 1:14-16); and he seeks to motivate us to turn from our sins by contemplating his goodness toward us (Romans 2:4).

## **The Choice of the Gospel**

The gospel provides you and me with a choice that has eternal consequences. You and I can choose to “sow to the flesh” during this life and “reap corruption” or, we can make the choice to “sow to the spirit” and “reap life everlasting” (Galatians 6:7-8). It is a choice no one can make for us.

You and I can be encouraged and take heart as we learn from a servant of God who lived centuries ago. Moses made the choice to identify with the people of God and suffer affliction with them rather than to “enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Hebrews 11:24-26). Bear in mind,

dear reader friend, that the pleasures of sin are truly seasonal. That is, they are only temporary at best, while the reward of holy and righteous living is one that is enduring throughout eternity with a crown of life to wear in heaven (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10).

The gospel is a message of hope and power. The evangelist/Apostle Paul was not ashamed of Christ or his gospel (Romans 1:16) as he recognized it to be "the power of God unto salvation

to every one that believeth..." The gospel has the power to "translate us into the kingdom of his dear son" (Colossians 1:13). The gospel of Christ has: (1) facts that we should believe; (2) commands that we must obey (Hebrews 5:9); and (3) promises to cherish and receive from the bountiful, gracious giver of every good gift. The gospel of Christ can transform your life into one that is glorious indeed! ■

## The Christ and Scripture

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In one of his post-resurrection appearances to his disciples, Jesus said to them, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (Luke. 24:44).

Christ's use of scripture is how he accomplished his work here on earth. He found in scripture the way he would walk, the strength to do his work, and the weapon to overcome his enemies. Scripture was indispensable to him. In fact, his entire life was the fulfillment of what had been written.

In the temptation in the wilderness, it was by his "it is written" that he overcame the devil (Matthew 4:1-11). In response to every effort of Satan to cause him to sin, Christ cited God's word written in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy.

In his conflicts with the religious leaders of his day, Christ repeatedly appealed to scripture. He asked, "Is it not written?" (Mark 11:17) and "Have ye not read this scripture?" (Mark 12:10). He said, "And the scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35) and "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures" (Matt, 22:29).

As he taught his disciples, it was always

by scripture that he proved the truth regarding the certainty and necessity of his suffering, death and resurrection. "Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:25-27). "And he said unto them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day'" (Luke 24:46).

Of all the people who have lived, if anyone could have gotten by without scripture, surely it would be Christ. After all, he is the living Word! Yet when we read the New Testament accounts of his life, we find scripture was everything to him. He yielded himself and submitted himself step by step to the word of God. Is any less expected of us?!

Christ had such an amazing respect for scripture. And so must we. We must not alter scripture to fit our mood. We must not set aside scripture to accommodate our likes and dislikes. As Jesus knew and prayed to the Father, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). ■

Free Bible Literature from *The Gospel Gleaner*

see  
page 27

# I Won't Argue About The Bible

Perhaps you have heard the popular expression, "I just won't argue about the Bible." It may even be that this is your feeling on the matter. It is certainly understandable—at least to a degree. After all, we have all seen abuses of what should be open discussions about God's word. Too often, a candid discussion about the Bible among friends turns into a hateful, name-calling brawl, something completely foreign to the spirit of Christ. Naturally, this offends many sincere people and turns them against **any** discussion of honest disagreement about the Bible.

However, there are several inherent dangers in this attitude which we must face. There are some, for example, who will not discuss the Bible because they believe that it really doesn't matter **what** you believe about it, so long as you believe something—an idea found nowhere in all of Scripture. Then again, some refuse to engage in a Biblically oriented discussion because they feel that it is unimportant, that their time could be spent more profitably, or that it will do no good since, after all, "you can prove **anything** by the Bible." And, no doubt, there are many who refuse to discuss the Bible and their faith because of a lack of courage.

Nevertheless, we must take to heart Jude's exhortation to the saints of his day: "Beloved, when I gave diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once (for all—ASV) delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). There

can be no shirking from duty on this point, we simply must contend for and defend the faith—the gospel of Jesus Christ. To remain silent when truth is attacked is contrary to the express command of Scripture! Moreover, we are also encouraged to have a ready answer should someone ask us what we believe and teach (1 Peter 3:15). There **is** a time and a place for us to discuss and, yes, even dispute with others concerning the meaning of God's revelation unto man.

To reject this duty would be an indictment against many faithful warriors of years gone by. For instance, consider Elijah and his confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, recorded in 1 Kings 18. Stephen alluded to the continual disputations between the Hebrew prophets and the Jewish fathers in Acts 7, where in verses 51-52 he declared, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One..." We need to learn from the example of Elijah and so many others who would not sit idly by and let the stronghold of truth be torn down.

In fact, what about Jesus Christ himself? Christ was, of course, the greatest controversialist of any age! Jesus divided



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**There can be no shirking from duty on this point, we simply must contend for and defend the faith—the gospel of Jesus Christ. To remain silent when truth is attacked is contrary to the express command of Scripture!**  
● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

families, one member against another; Jesus locked horns with the scribes and Pharisees on any number of occasions as He sought to lead the people closer to God. And what of Paul, His chosen apostle? In Acts 17:2,3 we find him in Thessalonica reasoning with the Jews from Scripture, “opening and alleging” that Jesus is Lord. **The Apostle Paul argued about the Bible!!**

Surely, we too must see the need of discussing God’s word with others. On occasion, there will arise the need to contend for the truth of the gospel (cf. Galatians 2:5). Nevertheless, let us recognize that there is a right way and a wrong

way to discuss the Bible. When we get ugly and bitter; when the best attack against a person’s belief seems to be a **personal** attack against his family, reputation, race or whatever; when we become master of deceit, as were the Pharisees, then we have abused our right and responsibility to reason with any man. However, when it is evident to all that we are seeking to uphold truth in the spirit of love (Ephesians 4:15); when we are “wise as serpents but gentle as doves;” then we are following the perfect example of our Lord. This is the only proper way to “earnestly contend for the faith.” ■

## Spiritual Indicators

The thermometer indicates the temperature, the barometer indicates the air pressure and forewarns of possible calamitous storms that may come, a graph indicates the gain or loss of an enterprise. There are many such indicators in our highly complex world that show us the real condition of existing things. The wise read and then take advantage of these indicators and plot their courses accordingly.

We, Christians, should also realize there are certain spiritual indicators of a spiritual nature. There is no literal thermometer whereby one may know his spiritual fervor (Greek *zeo*, to boil with heat, be hot), or barometer to measure the high and low intensity of one’s spirituality, yet there are real indicators of our spiritual condition.

Prayer is a spiritual indicator. Those who do not pray or pray infrequently are those who do not feel a need of God’s aid, or as a child, do not desire to speak with their spiritual Father. On the other hand, those who rarely open their Bible for reading and meditation indicate they have no desire for God to speak to them. They, in a fashion, hush the mouth of God because they are unconcerned. Forsaking the assembly, shunning the pres-

ence of the Lord at His supper, denying the power of Christ in one’s life—are all indicators of a spiritual low.

That which indicates a spiritual high for the child of God is just the opposite of the thing just mentioned. Frequent

prayer indicates a desire to spiritually communicate with God through His Son. Meditation on His truths indicate a desire for God to speak openly, plainly and instructively to one’s self. Spiritual fellowship in the services of worship as often as opportunity affords indicates that all is well with one’s soul; that one is truly “walking in the light as he is in the light,” and that the Father loves that one and makes His abode with him.

We can read the indicators of the physical conditions about us: thermometer, graphs, etc. We should also know the temperature of our spiritual fervor, the intensity of our calling—the dedication of our souls—by reading our own spiritual indicators. What do your spiritual indicators tell you? ■



by Max R. Miller  
(1925–2001)

# Black Liberation Theology

**Q: What is “Black Liberation Theology”?  
Is there any difference between religion  
for “blacks” or “whites”?**



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**A: No, not as far as the  
Bible is concerned.**

In 2008, “Black Liberation Theology” came to public attention through the preaching of Jeremiah Wright, of Chicago, Illinois. Wright was *not* a radical preacher, but represented its mainstream beliefs: black hatred and suspicion of whites; black racism and arrogance; and belief that America is a white-racist society devoted to keeping down blacks. “Black Liberation Theology” is Malcolm X’s Black Muslim doctrine combined with Stokely Carmichael’s “Black Power” doctrine of the 1960’s disguised as “Christianity,” and has been preached from pulpits for decades instead of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The writings of James H. Cone popularized the doctrine that has formed the faith of numerous blacks. Cone documented:

*However, it was not until the summer of 1966, after Malcolm X’s assassination (February 21, 1965), that the term “black power” began to replace the term “integration” among many civil rights activists. (page 10, For My People: Black*

*Theology and the Black Church*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 10545, copyright 1984, 13th printing, December, 2003) [Bold formatting in quotations from Cone’s books has been added by this writer unless otherwise noted.]

James Cone maliciously divided society, spiritual fellowship, and families along a purely racial line, and has completely broken down the line of communication between many blacks and whites. The National Committee of Negro Churchmen wrote a “Black Power Statement” that was published in the New York Times, July 31, 1966,

*The publication of the “Black Power Statement” may be regarded as the beginning of the conscious development of a black theology in which black ministers separated their understanding of the gospel of Jesus from white Christianity and identified it with the struggles of the black poor for justice. (ibid, pages 10-11)*

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*...Black leadership believed that the time had come for black Christians to make their own interpretation of the gospel by separating black religion from white religion, and then connecting the former with their African heritage and their contemporary fight for justice. Black church leaders would soon openly denounce white racism as the Antichrist and would become unrelenting in their attack on its demonic presence in white denominations. It was in this context that the term "black theology" emerged. (ibid, page 11)*

*...Black theology arose as an attempt to stem the tide of the irrelevance of Christianity by combining both Christianity and blackness, Martin [Luther King, Jr., jtpII] and Malcolm [X, jtpII], black church and black power, even though neither side thought it was possible. (ibid, page 59)*



**The Bible was not written by purely white men; it has no white man interpretation (or black, either!); and it does not uphold white enslavement of black people.**



*...White biblical scholars have not even bothered to train blacks to acquire the skills that they regard as necessary for sound biblical exegesis. What right, then, do they have to say that our exegesis is unsound? (ibid, page 67)*

Advocating "the blackness of Jesus," Cone said:

*We wanted to expose the racism of white churches and also encourage black churches to embrace the biblical Christ who looks much more like oppressed blacks than white oppressors...*

*Unfortunately, American white theology has not been involved in the struggle for black liberation. It has been basically a theology of the white oppressor, giving religious sanction to the genocide of Amerindians [sic, jtpII] and the enslavement of Africans. From the very beginning to the present day, American white theological thought has been "patriotic," either by defining the theological task independently of black suffering (the liberal northern approach) or by defining Christianity as compatible with white racism (the conservative southern approach). In both cases theology becomes a servant of the state, and that can only mean death to blacks... ...blacks recognize that it is incumbent upon them to throw off the chains of white oppression by whatever means they regard as suitable. This is what God's revelation means to black and white America, and why black theology is an indispensable theology for our time. (page 4-5, A Black Theology of Liberation, Twentieth Anniversary Edition, copyright 1970, J. B. Lippincott Company, copyrights 1986, 1990, 18<sup>th</sup> printing, October, 2007, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 10545)*

**Bible Reply:** There is absolutely *no* way to properly identify Jesus Christ with "black" anything. Neither His skin, nor doctrine, nor practice, nor sympathies, nor politics associated Him with "blackness."

Anyway, how dark must a person's skin be for Cone to trust him? Cone establishes his doctrine by quoting from the writings of some white-skinned philosophers, endorsing white Karl Marx, and accepting the writings of lightly-colored W. E. B. DuBois from the early 1900s. *Hypocritically, Cone decries all theological help from whites in understanding the Bible, but accepts philosophical and sociological assistance from white men to shore up his prejudice against whites!* Cone anticipated this criticism when he said:

*There are essentially two responses. First...  
...When I say that white theology is not  
Christian theology, I mean the theology  
that has been written without any refer-  
ence to the oppressed of the land. This is  
not true of Karl Barth... ..Dietrich  
Bonhoeffer... ..Reinhold Niebuhr... ..I do  
not condemn all persons who happen to  
look like white Americans; the condemna-  
tion comes when they act like them... ..Sec-  
ondly, it is characteristic of the oppressed  
to be limited to the thought forms of those  
who call themselves the masters. (ibid,  
Chapter 1, footnote 4, pages 203-204)*

In other words, Cone will use white authors when they are on the side of the oppressed blacks, but decry them as "racist" when they teach a Scriptural equality of mankind! He shows the futility of mind like those who have not learned Christ but are "having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Ephesians 4:17-18). *If people were to read all of Cone's "Black Power/Theology" books, substituting "white" every time "black" is used, no one could miss the "white racism" in them. Even Cone admitted he could be wrong:*

*I realize that my theological limitations and my close identity with the social conditions of black people could blind me to the truth of the gospel. And maybe our white theologians are right when they insist that I have overlooked the universal significance of Jesus' message. (page 126, *God of the Oppressed*, Seabury Press, Inc., 1975, New Revised Edition 1975, 10<sup>th</sup> printing, October, 2007, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.Y. 10545)*

The attitude of a false teacher is one who:

*...does not consent to wholesome words,  
even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ...  
...is proud, knowing nothing, but is ob-*

*essed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth... ..From such withdraw yourself. (1 Timothy 6:3-5, emphasis mine, jtpII)*

Cone prejudicially condemns all white students of God's Word, "evil suspicions," then proceeds to preach his "envy, strife, reviling" based upon what *some* whites have done to *some* blacks. Cone chafes at white man's interpretation of Scripture, and seems ignorant of "knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21). *The Bible was not written by purely white men; it has no white man interpretation (or black, either!); and it does not uphold white enslavement of black people. In fact, the Gospel of Christ was accepted completely by a man of Ethiopia (Acts 8:26-39) who said nothing whatever about it "enslaving" him to whites! When it comes to "theology," Cone should not be trusted by either whites or blacks.*

### Cone Twists History for His Purposes

Cone completely misrepresents history and magnifies one part above all else. Granted, human slavery has been reprehensibly practiced by many, but white men (and Americans particularly!) have not been entirely responsible for the practice.

British Historian Tiffany Nairne has said:

*Romans enslaved Eastern Europeans—hence the name slavery comes from Slavs, from the Slavic nations (Slovakia obviously, but also its neighbours; this treatment of Slavic nations is still seen in modern times with the ethnic cleansing wreaked upon Romania). The English were so named by a Roman Emperor who saw a "slave" from the British Isles. Commenting that the child had the face of an angel, the Isles were hence called "Angel-land," and the slave*

people Angels (or Angles, of the Anglo-Saxon stock). Hence the Colonial past of the United States is rooted in a land named after a slave race, inheriting a name given by the slave masters from Rome! The first servants taken to the American colonies were not African but Irish. The Ottoman



**The proper response to white racism is not black racism, but to teach from the Bible that the God who made us, saved us, and gave Himself for us to be one in Him, is neither black nor white...**



Islam's enslavement of black people has continued for over 1400 years! Why doesn't Cone object even more to the Muslim practice in history than to whites? Could it be that Cone wants everyone to be as blind as he is to the rest of history (Cf Matthew 15:14)? **Has he willfully ignored the white people who died to free blacks from slavery during the War Between the States?**

*Making racially-prejudiced statements is morally wrong regardless of the skin-color of the one making the statements!* The Bible teaches that Eve "was the mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20). After the world was destroyed by flood, it was from Noah and his three sons that "the whole earth was populated" (Genesis 9:19). After Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, Jews "from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5, 38, 40-41) and then Gentiles (Acts 10:1-48; Romans 10:12-13) heard

*Empire of the Turks made vast fortunes from the slave trade, and Saudis, Iraqis, Afghanis, etc., still do make money from trading in slaves. (Personal correspondence, 8-15-08)*

The fort, El Mina, built by the Portuguese in Ghana, West Africa in 1482 (incidentally before Columbus discovered America), became the primary point of departure for blacks sold by blacks to the whites. White man's enslavement of blacks lasted about 300 years, but Muslim/

and obeyed the same message of salvation from sins. The Bible teaches that by Creation and after judgment in the Flood, the human "race" came from the same family; but by the blood of Jesus Christ, God wants His spiritual family to come from every nation (Matthew 28:18-20). *The proper response to white racism is not black racism, but to teach from the Bible that the God who made us, saved us, and gave Himself for us to be one in Him, is neither black nor white (John 4:24; Luke 24:39). Jesus Christ "has broken down the middle wall of separation" (Ephesians 2:13-16) between people who hate each other; Cone seeks to build a hateful middle wall of separation that divides the human race. Has Cone not even read these passages of Scripture?*

### **Cone Twists Bible for His Purposes**

Cone twists many Bible terms out of their Biblical sense, as condemned in 2 Peter 3:16, redefining them to refer to Black liberation from white racism:

1. **Exodus of Israel from Egypt:** "By delivering this people from Egyptian bondage and inaugurating the covenant on the basis of that historical event, **God is revealed as the God of the oppressed**, involved in their history, liberating them from human bondage" (A *Black Theology of Liberation*, page 2).

**Bible Reply:** God said He freed Israel (from slavery imposed by Africans!) to possess the land He promised to Abraham (Exodus 3:6-10; Leviticus 25:38; Joshua 21:43-45) and did this for no other nation (Deuteronomy 4:33-39)! Israelites were not to enslave one another, but could buy slaves from other nations (Exodus 21:1-12, 20-27; Leviticus 25:39-46). Because of their unfaithfulness, God let them become slaves again for 70 years out of their land, but returned them, as prophesied (2 Kings 17:5-20; 2 Chronicles 36:15-23; Ezra 9:9). *Nowhere is it recorded that God liberated all oppressed people in all countries, or that He is the "God of the [physically] oppressed blacks [only]."*

2. **Resurrection:** "If the history of Israel and the New Testament description of the historical Jesus reveal that God is a God who is identified with Israel because it is an oppressed community, **the resurrection of Jesus means that all oppressed peoples become his people.** Herein lies the universal note implied in the gospel message of Jesus. **The resurrection-event means that God's liberating work is not only for the house of Israel but for all who are enslaved by the principalities and powers**" (*ibid*, page 3).

**Bible Reply:** Jesus Christ was raised from the dead to: declare Him to be the Son of God (Romans 1:3-4); permit sinners baptized into His death to arise as new creatures (Romans 6:4-5); and to prove there will be a general resurrection of all the dead some day (1 Corinthians 15:12-13; Acts 24:15). *Jesus' resurrection did not mean "that all [physically] oppressed peoples become his people,"* but only those baptized into His death and raised with Him to life, that is, the obedient (Hebrews 5:8-9).

3. **Kingdom:** "The appearance of Jesus as the black Christ also means that **the black revolution is God's kingdom** becoming a reality in America" (*ibid*, page 124).

**Bible Reply:** The kingdom of God: "is not of this world" (John 18:36); was taken from the Jews and given to another people (Matthew 21:42-45); came during the lifetime of those who heard Jesus (Mark 9:1); is where disciples observe the Lord's Supper (Mark 14:22-26); is for those who are reborn (John 3:3-5); and is entered by obeying the Gospel of Christ (Acts 8:12); and faithfulness shown in suffering as the church (2 Thessalonians 1:3-6). *Nowhere is it associated with black revolution!*

4. **Repentance:** "For Jesus, repentance is a precondition for entrance into the kingdom. **But it should be pointed out that repentance has nothing to do with morality or religious**

**piety in the white sense...**...The kingdom is what God does and **repentance arises solely as a response to God's liberation.** The event of the kingdom today is the liberation struggle in the black community" (*ibid*, page 124-125).

**Bible Reply:** Bible repentance only relates to a sinner's response to sin. It: is for sinners (Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32) responding to "the goodness of God" who wants all to repent (Romans 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9); must only be motivated by "godly sorrow" (2 Corinthians 7:10); is followed by baptism "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38); is shown in those who "do works befitting" it (Acts 26:20). *Nowhere is it only for freed black slaves!* Repentance has everything "to do with morality or religious piety" in the Biblical sense!

5. **Salvation:** "In most societies where political oppression is acute and religion is related to the state, salvation is interpreted always in ways that do not threaten the security of the existing government... ...With the poor counting on salvation in the next life, oppressors can humiliate and exploit without fear of reprisal. That is why Karl Marx called religion the opiate of the people" (*ibid*, page 126-127)... ...**Salvation, then, primarily has to do with earthly reality and the injustice inflicted on those who are helpless and poor. To see the salvation of God is to see this people rise up against its oppressors, demanding that justice become a reality now, not tomorrow**" (*ibid*, page 128).

**Bible Reply:** Salvation: is only in the name of Christ (Acts 4:12) for both Jew and Gentile (Romans 1:16) who obey Jesus (Hebrews 5:8-9); is learned through Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15); requires godly living (Titus 2:11-12); will not be offered after death (Hebrews 9:27-28); and concerns a soul's eternity (1 Peter 1:6-9). *Nowhere in the New Testament is a soul's salvation associated with overthrowing physical oppression!* The Apostle Paul was

saved (1 Timothy 1:15-16) but denied being any part of “people rising up against its oppressors” (Acts 25:7-8).

6. **Church:** “...the church must be a revolutionary community; breaking laws that destroy persons... ...The task of the church is three-fold. First, it proclaims the reality of divine liberation... ...**Secondly, the church not only proclaims the good news of freedom, it actively shares in the liberation struggle...** ...Thirdly, the church as a fellowship is a visible manifestation that the gospel is a reality” (*ibid*, page 130-131).

**Bible Reply:** The church of Christ: is composed of all those who obey the Gospel of Christ (Acts 2:36-38, 40-41, 47); only met and prayed about the Apostle James death and Apostle Peter’s imprisonment (Acts 12:1-5); scattered when persecuted (Acts 8:1); shows God’s manifold wisdom to the world (Ephesians 3:8-12). The Apostle Paul denied ever “inciting the crowd” (Acts 24:10-13; 25:7-8) and taught civil authority is God-given for an orderly society (Romans 13:1-5). *Nowhere was the church of Christ a “revolutionary community, breaking laws that destroy persons!”*

### **Cone Needs to Read the Black Print on the White Page**

The Old Testament indeed shows how God delivered the Israelites from Egyptian slavery (Exodus 1-15), but *has Cone not read* that John the Baptist identified “Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” (John 1:29)? Jesus is concerned with “sin” not “skin”! *Has Cone not read* Jesus’ description of the origin and types of sin (Matthew 15:19-20), not one of which is “slavery”? *Cone must have quit reading the Scriptures* before Paul taught “bondservants” and “masters” to treat each other with goodwill (Ephesians 6:5-9)! It is bondage or slavery in sin (John 8:34-36; Romans 6:1-22) from which Jesus can free any people (Galatians 3:23-4:7). *Cone completely misrepresents the central message of Scripture*, but Jesus

said, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29).

### **What part of Jesus’ teaching does Cone endorse?**

#### **Love?**

**Cone:** “White people should not even expect blacks to love them, and to ask for it merely adds insult to injury” (page 21, *Black Theology & Black Power*, 1969, Harper & Row, 18<sup>th</sup> printing, November 2006).

**Jesus:** “But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you” (Luke 6:27-28).

#### **Non-Violence?**

**Cone:** “If whites do not get off the backs of blacks, they must expect that blacks will literally throw them off **by whatever means are at their disposal**” (*ibid*, page 22).

**Jesus:** “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36).

#### **Example to Follow?**

**Cone:** “He [Jesus, jtpII] certainly never resorted to violence... ...**We cannot solve ethical questions of the twentieth century by looking at what Jesus did in the first. Our choices are not the same as his... ...His steps are not ours**” (*ibid*, page 139).

**Jesus:** “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me” (John 14:21). “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6).

#### **Moral Law?**

**Cone:** “This means that the Christian is placed in a situation in which he alone makes the choice. **The dichotomy between ‘good and evil,’ ‘right and wrong’ is a false one**” (*ibid*, page 142).

**Jesus:** “A good man out of the good treasure of

his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things" (Matthew 12:35).

James H. Cone, and all Black Liberation Theology preachers, should be made aware of the warning Jesus gave in Matthew 23:13: "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in *yourselves*, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in." Don't be so narrow-minded that you only try to extricate black people from "white-American enslavement."

*For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones*

*who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is bought into bondage." (2 Peter 2:18-19)*

Rather, preach "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) that all people who obey the Gospel of Christ may be made free indeed (John 8:32). Jesus Christ drew no racial lines when:

*He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15-16 NKJV) ■*

***This article is available free in tract form while supplies last.  
Please contact John T. Polk, II; 125 The Trace; Dover, TN 37058***

## To the Face

by Mark Dillon

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In Galatians 2:11-12, Paul says, "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision." Paul's integrity drove him to stand up to Peter, his fellow apostle on the issue of accepting Gentiles into the church. Acts 15:1-32 describes this issue in detail. This was a controversial issue for the early church. It provides a pattern for how the church today can resolve disputes. Paul shows us what to do. Paul's motive was pure. His goal was to help, not humiliate. Paul was sure the issue

was worthy of debate. Does it really matter? If not, let it go. If so, then **fight** for it. Paul was specific. He didn't drop hints. He just came right out and said it. Don't undermine the other person's integrity. They might honestly believe they are in harmony with scripture, and you are not a mind reader. If you conduct yourself honorably, you have at least defeated evil within yourself, if not within your opponent. Controversy and debate were a part of the early church. They are a part of the church today. To avoid the issues is to invite disaster; to confront the issues, with scripture, is to put ourselves in the same league as the apostle Paul (1 Peter 3:15; Jude 3). ■

# The Road Less Traveled

by George Hulett

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## The Road Less Traveled

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood  
and sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
and looked down one as far as I could  
to where it bent in the undergrowth;  
Then took, the other, as just as fair,  
and having perhaps the better claim  
because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
though as for that, the passing there  
had worn them really about the same,  
And both that morning equally lay  
in leaves no feet had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.  
I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took, the one less traveled by,  
and that has made all the difference.*

—Robert Frost

**Which road are you taking?** The story is told of a young man in a hurry. He left Memphis on I-40, crossed the river and was driving West at nearly 100 MPH when he was stopped by the Arkansas State Police. When questioned by the trooper, he said he was in a big hurry to get to Nashville because he was going to play the Opry that night. Then the trooper informed him that he had driven almost to Little Rock and wouldn't be making it to Nashville that evening. You see, he could drive as fast as he wanted too, but as long as he was headed away from Nashville, he wasn't getting any closer.

**We are all heading somewhere.** The problem is, we are all going one day to have to face

the judgment throne of God to give an answer for the things we do while we are on this planet (Romans 14:10-12; Hebrews 9:27). Some of us will be judged righteous and be rewarded beyond our greatest imaginations (Revelation 21:1-7). Some of us will be judged unrighteous and suffer beyond our darkest fears (Revelation 21:8). So, which way are you going? We're all heading somewhere, the choice is yours.

**So, which way are you heading?** Most of us, if we are honest with ourselves, are actually heading away from God. We are mostly pretty good people, and we're not horrible by any means. But, we do those things that give us pleasure rather than looking to see what God would have us do. The Bible tells us that we all have to change our ways and live according to God's ways if we want Him to bless us. This is called repentance. In addition, Jesus tells us what we need to do to be saved: "not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' will be saved, but he that does the will of My Father" (Matthew 7:21). There is no "magic potion," "great work," "salvation pill," or "sinner's prayer" mentioned anywhere in the Bible. These things cannot save you. Nor do you have the power to save yourself. God knew this, so He offers you salvation through His grace—He paid the price for you (John 3:16). This is called grace. And Jesus made it very clear how you obtain God's great gift of grace—"He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). How hard can that be to understand? We can all enjoy that hope and promise.

Let's simply take Jesus at his word, "He who hears these words of Mine and does them will be like a wise man" (Matthew 7:24). ■

## Quotable Quotes



**He who cannot obey, cannot command.**

**—Benjamin Franklin**



# How Do We Know?

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Seeking answers to life's great mysteries seems to be that which drives man in his thirst for knowledge. In a recent *Smithsonian Magazine* article (December 2007), author Paul Raffaele went to Ethiopia in search of the Ark of the Covenant that vanished during the time of Jeremiah. For years it has been said that the Ark had been taken into Egypt, but no one really knew. Paul Raffaele thought he would seek an answer to one of life's great mysteries, where is God's Ark of the Covenant? For nine pages he speaks of his odyssey. At the end of the article he said, "But the reality of the ark, like a vision in the moonlight, floated just beyond my grasp, and so the millennia-old mystery remained" (page 47). One's thirst for knowledge was not realized, and satisfied he would have to be with **not knowing** the location of the Ark of the Covenant.

It is not so unusual for people to express an opinion without knowledge; in fact, it happens more times than it should. Thoughtful people desire to be correct in their thinking. To be correct in one's thinking one must have knowledge about the particular topic he is thinking about. When an opinion is offered, there is a desire for the one listening to believe that the one speaking *knows* what he or she is talking about. Many times one will speak with authority on a topic, following it with such sentiments as, "I know what I am talking about." In John 7, we have an illustration of this. When the people were curious about the Lord, some said with certainty, "But look! He speaks boldly, and they say nothing to Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly the Christ? However, we **know** where this Man is from; but when the Christ comes, no one knows where He is from" (John 7:26-27, NKJV, *emphasis added*, RT). Some of the people responded with

certainty—and they were wrong!

Earlier in the Gospel of John (John 4), the Lord was speaking to a woman of Samaria when she said some-thing about the proper place of worship and the differences of opinion between the Jews and the Samaritans (John 4:20 *ff*). The question asked of the Lord was not an expressly stated question, but one that was implied. "How can we **know** where to worship God?" It is that part of the question, "How can we know...", that is important. Later in the conversation, the woman of Samaria said she **knew** the Messiah was coming. We want to ask *how* can one know something with certainty and be confident in expressing that certainty? This question is the burden of the remainder of this article.

The woman of Samaria believed that when the Messiah came, whatever was lacking in her knowledge, she would then know. Jesus declared Himself to her that He was the Messiah she looked for; she received this information because of her previous experience in Him telling her about her past (John 4:19). She now has experience (facts) and she knows what she is talking about. She takes this knowledge and tells others (John 4:28-30,39). On the other hand, when the disciples arrive, there was something they did not know. The Lord said, "I have food to eat of which you do not know"

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**Unfortunately, they desired to make Him a king after their own way of thinking, rather than making Him king after the Lord's way of thinking. It is the difference between these two ways of thinking that brings us our problems today.**  
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(John 4:32). This baffled them. Jesus explains that the food He was eating was to do the will of him that sent Him (John 4:34). A woman asked a question that she had no answer to, but she knew that when the Messiah came He would have an answer. The disciples knew the Messiah came and yet they failed to understand the knowledge (the facts) that was before them. What the people of Samaria did not know, after hearing the Lord, they now know (John 4:42). In this connection, knowledge is related to having facts and understanding those facts.

One of the great mysteries during the time in which Jesus lived was who He was. Many had interacted with Him and were the beneficiaries of many of the good things He had done. On one such occasion, the Lord fed thousands. The multitude was impressed by this and began to associate the Lord with the prophet Moses spoke about (John 6:14; cf. Deuteronomy 18:15). Unfortunately, they desired to make Him a king **after their own way of thinking**, rather than making Him king after **the Lord's way of thinking**. It is the difference between these two ways of thinking that brings us our problems today. The Lord knew why the people gathered around when they did (John 6:26). They were present not because His teaching was necessarily impressive (though it was; Mark 1:22; 2:12), but they were there because they desired to satisfy their way of thinking.

This misdirected way of thinking encourages us to miss the mark of the Lord's teaching. We might see the value of the spiritual, but it is the tangible we desire. "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him" (John 6:27). Jesus uses the physical to teach about the spiritual. Jesus continues by saying that the spiritual is understood when the Father

draws people. The Father draws how? "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who had heard and learned from the Father comes to me" (John 6:45). To be fed spiritually, to gain knowledge in spiritual things, one must listen, learn, and apply God's knowledge (teaching) to life. Being sustained physically is inadequate to man's real need.

Paul took this knowledge from God to another part to the world, where the true God was not known. Paul desired to give them facts so their knowledge would not be speculative (cf. Colossians 2:4-8). When Paul arrived in Athens, he noticed that the Athenians were worshipping the **unknown** god, a god to worship just in case they missed one. This unknown god they worshipped, Paul came to make known to them who He was. "The times of **ignorance** God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given **assurance**, to all by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31, ESV, *emphasis added*, RT). Paul made use of two words: *ignorance*, which they had, and *assurance*, which they could have. The use of these two words would not have escaped their attention. He gave them information (facts), and that information would take them from the speculative realm to the realm of assurance.

Knowledge is related to facts and God gives us information (facts). When man refuses this factual information, he is left in continual ignorance. Gospel facts are a stubborn thing; they continue to get in the way of our own way of thinking that we like to call knowledge, but in truth is not knowledge at all (cf. 1 Timothy 6:20). Our challenge, then, is whether we will be diligent to **know** the Lord's way. ■

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## Quotable Quotes



Being a leader of God's people is a serious task, and no one should accept an office who is not qualified and willing to use that office to help the church.

—Warren Wiersbe



# Could Jesus Be Your Preacher?

WANTED: Mature family man (40-45) to minister to a diverse congregation of God's people; Must be married and children at home are preferred; Must have at least a Bachelor's Degree in Bible from an accredited college or university; Must have 10 or more years of ministry experience; Must be someone who has shown tolerance in the past for those with diverse views of Scripture.

.....

For many congregations of God's people, this classified ad would match perfectly the description of what they are seeking in a preacher. Did you notice not one word was said about saving the lost, preaching the truth or defending the gospel? Such ads beg the question, "What are we expecting of our preachers?" Can you say honestly that your congregation wants a preacher likened to Jesus? Moreover, can you say honestly that Jesus, Himself, could be your preacher? Could the Lord apply for the job? Let us learn whether or not the Lord fits your church's job description for a preacher.

It is commonly accepted that Jesus was crucified near the age of thirty-three. Was He mature enough for your congregation? After all, He was only in His early thirties. To be so young, what possible maturity could He have had? Would your congregation not want a man more "seasoned" to meet the daunting challenges of full-time ministry, rather than someone only in His early thirties?

Jesus was not a family man. He had no wife and no children. Yes, if you were to hire Jesus, you would be hiring a single

man. No wife? No kids? Do you suppose your congregation could survive such a radical selection?!!?

Did you say your congregation was diverse? To what do you refer? On one occasion, when asked what this detail meant, an elder explained to me that it referred to the number of members who had been divorced and remarried in that congregation. This is what their ad meant by "diverse." Could this be said of your congregation? Would this imply that your congregation accepts those who have been divorced for any cause and currently are remarried? If so, could Jesus be your teacher? Picture Jesus, as He would stand behind your lectern and proclaim:

*Whosoever shall put away his wife,  
except it be for fornication, and shall  
marry another, committeth adultery:  
and whoso marrieth her which is put  
away doth commit adultery.*  
(Matthew 19:9)

Do you suppose your congregation would tolerate such preaching? What if a multitude of people became so disturbed that they literally walked out during the discourse? Would your congregation support His preaching? Would your congregation stand behind the Lord? Or, would your congregation view such a lesson to be "too strong" or "too personal." Can you hear the murmuring? Would sister "Never Wrong" blast the Lord, saying, "We can't have that kind of sermon again! You are going to split this church!?" Would sister Never Wrong's husband, the elder, brother "Never Right,"



by Andy Erwin  
preacher@mycitycable.com

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say to the Lord, "You better hope we can get them to come back! Your job depends on your apology!"?

Do not be without understanding. On one occasion, a multitude left Jesus because they would not accept His teaching (John 6:66). Often, this type of rebellion is viewed as the fault of the preacher—even when it is the result of strong and truthful preaching. Upon the departure of the multitude, the Lord questioned the twelve, asking, "Will ye also go away?" What would be your reply? Peter replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68-69).

Peter understood who Jesus was and that His words were the words of eternal life. He understood only Jesus could provide these words. Peter's attitude was one which stood on the side of truth even if it meant standing alone! Could this be said of your congregation?

The Lord never had a degree and certainly not from an accredited university. Could Jesus be your preacher? Truly, such degrees are not wrong in and of themselves, but admirable of a preacher. However, a degree must never be viewed more meaningful than faithfulness. We need faithful men to fill our pulpits (2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Timothy 4:16). A good education should be considered only an added bonus by both the congregation and the preacher.

The Lord's ministry lasted for the space of three to three-and-one-half years. He did not have ten or more years of ministry experience. Could Jesus be your preacher? Would you say that Jesus had enough ministry experience to meet the unique and challenging needs of your "diverse congregation"? Or, would you reject Him for a more experienced and, thus, a more qualified man?

As for being tolerant of diverse views of Scripture, Jesus did throw the money changers out of the temple—not once, but twice. And, He did rebuke publicly the Pharisees for giving greater honor to the traditions of the elders than to the word of God. If your congregation was to hire Jesus, He would teach that for worship to please God, it must be conducted in spirit and truth. His view of worship does not seem very tolerable

to those who want to worship according to their opinion and satisfaction. Jesus has also taught that a believer must be baptized to be saved. He said plainly, "A man must be born again." And, He said there was only one church. Of this church, He said it was a kingdom, not a democracy, and He was its King. Who possibly would believe such a sermon? He not only taught His disciples to study the word of God, but commanded them to teach others! Did He not know that you have jobs and daily responsibilities?!? Is this not why you are looking to hire a preacher in the first place? And, there was that lesson He gave stating dogmatically that His church should not gossip about one another, but that we should go to one another and address our concerns. Could you imagine that type of unrelenting preacher preaching for your congregation?!? It does not appear that Jesus would be very open to diverse views of Scripture, especially considering that He said we could know truth and that truth would set us free. For Jesus to believe that there is truth, He must believe that some are not true. What right does a preacher have to judge what you believe? According to Jesus, there is only one way to heaven and it is narrow with only a minority of souls finding and walking therein. Could Jesus be your preacher?

Preachers are hired by congregations. If the preacher is guilty of not preaching the truth, that could mean the congregation is guilty of not wanting the truth! You get what you look for and what you pay for in a preacher. If you want a preacher who follows the example and teachings of Christ, hire a preacher who follows the example and teachings of Christ!

This little study simply proves that if your congregation wants a man as is described in the aforementioned classified ad, your congregation would not want Jesus. How do you think Jesus would feel about being turned down to preach in a congregation He shed His blood to establish? "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Revelation 2:4). ■

# The Stream of Divine Love

## John 3:16

### Introduction:

1. Martin Luther called this verse the "little Bible." To him it contained the kernel of the entire Bible.
2. It has also been called "the golden text of the Bible" for the same reason.
3. Psalm 46:4—"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High." Streams flow from that river!
4. This text no doubt speaks of one of those streams—and so is the subject of this sermon.
5. Let us follow some old thoughts on this subject, certainly not original with me.

### I. The Spring Is God's Love.

- A. Time would fail us to tell all that we need to say about God, our heavenly Father. (Consider a list of God's attributes.)
- B. His outstanding attribute is love. (1 John 4:8)
  1. The object of His love is "the world."
  2. This is not the sin of the world; or the inanimate creation; but the people of the world. (Romans 5:12)
- C. God's love to man knows no sticking point!
  1. No social difference. (Galatians 3:28)
  2. No racial difference. (1 Timothy 4:10; Mark 16:15; Romans 10:12)
  3. Not even our sinfulness. (John

6:37; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

### II. The Stream Is God's Gift.

- A. "So loved...that He gave." The expression of His love.
  1. Not merely that He sent Jesus into the world, but—
  2. He gave Him as a sacrifice. (Romans 8:32)
- B. There is great significance in the words "His...son."
  1. Not the son of another! Abraham, or David, etc.
  2. "His"—a part of himself.
  3. We have a special feeling for parents who have lost a child in defense of our nation. No small price to pay!
- C. It was His "only begotten" Son.
  1. Not one of the angels...
  2. Not one among many...
  3. But the only one. Love is best understood in terms of sacrifice. Therefore the supreme sacrifice was made.

### III. The Cup By Which We Drink From That Stream.

- A. There are indeed two sides to the matter:
  1. God must keep the stream flowing, but
  2. Man must dip his cup to drink!
  3. This reminds us of Ephesians 2:8,9.
- B. While God's love is universal, salvation is conditional.
  1. "Whosoever believeth"—



by M. W. Kiser  
104 Calhoun Avenue  
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2. Another "whosoever"— (Revelation 22:18,19)
- C. The Bible speaks of two kinds of belief:
  1. Inactive. (John 12:42; James 2:19; Acts 26:27,28)
  2. Active. (Galatians 5:6; John 3:36) Belief and obedience are used interchangeably in the ASV.
  3. The obedience under consideration is "gospel obedience." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Romans 6:16-18) Baptism is here. (Romans 6:1-6)
  4. One should not think the Apostle John has ruled out repentance and/or baptism. (1 John 5:3; Revelation 22:14)
3. "Should not." God's love has a restraining influence about it. (Romans 2:4) (The text does not say "shall not perish!")
- B. There is something God's love brings to us! "Eternal life."
  1. Eternal life is more than an eternal existence.
  2. It is the great promise of the gospel. (John 10:10)
  3. It is a promise now, and to be enjoyed in the world to come. (1 John 2:25; Titus 1:2; Mark 10:30)

#### IV. The Drink That Satisfies The Soul.

- A. There is something God's love saves us from! "Should not perish." This phrase is used twice: verses 15 and 16.
  1. The word "perish" is full of meaning. (Luke 13:3; Acts 8:20; 2 Corinthians 2:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:10; 2 Peter 3:9)
  2. It is certainly the opposite of being

#### Conclusion:

1. I wonder—is there anyone here who does not know our text by heart?
2. There are several dark corners of the world where this verse has never been heard; where it is not known; but NOT here! Oh, how that leaves us without excuse. Would you claim you don't believe it!? ■

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Past issues will be available on the website as well!

If you wish to continue to receive a hard copy, please send a request to P.O. Box 9; Hickory Ridge, AR 72347.



## Reader's Responses

### Satisfied Reader

Enclosed is a check to help with your work. I really enjoy reading *The Gospel Gleaner*. I find it sound and uplifting.

Yours in Christ,

Glessie Cox  
Flippin, AR

### Trash Can Find

Enclosed is a donation of \$50 to help in your wonderful bulletin and *The Gospel Gleaner*. I really appreciate the work you do and appreciate you including me on your mailing list.

Anonymous  
Las Vegas, NV

*Editor's Note: The above reader found a discarded copy of The Gospel Gleaner in a trash can. The copy was retrieved and read and so we have another example of the old axiom, "one man's trash is another man's treasure." God does indeed work in wonderful ways.*

### Uses Gleaner To Prepare Sermons

Greetings,

My name is Page Barnes and I am with the Lexington Church of Christ in Lexington, VA. I recently found a couple of copies of *The Gospel Gleaner* from 2003 and 2005. They had been sent to our Minister at that time by the name of Brian Ceraolo. He is no longer with us and we are currently without a Minister and I do the speaking on Sunday mornings. I really enjoyed the two issues that I found and have used a couple of articles in them for my sermons on Sunday morning. I would really like to start receiving *The Gospel Gleaner* if it is possible. Is there anything I need

to do to start receiving it? If so, please let me know, as *The Gospel Gleaner* would be a big help to me in the work here in Lexington. It is hard to find many publications which stay true to God's Word and *The Gospel Gleaner*, from what I read in the two I found is surely one of them. I would greatly appreciate any information or help from any one to make sure I will start receiving future publications. Also, is there any way to get back issues? In Christ,

Page Barnes  
Lexington, VA

### Uses Gleaner In Home Schooling

Dear brothers:

I receive *The Gospel Gleaner* and don't have words to tell you how much I enjoy and appreciate it, and how much it is used in my home. I am eighty years old and I am home schooling my fifteen year old grandson and teach him Bible for an hour each day. I use *The Gleaner*—almost every word. When we've finished with it, it is dog-eared, notes in it, and sentences underlined. In other words, each writer is appreciated. Thank you. The favor I'd like to ask: my daughter, a recent liver transplant recipient, would love to receive *The Gleaner*. Not able to send a donation at this time but will when we can. Thanks again. You can't imagine the good you do and the interest you create. My family and I appreciate you so much. Sincerely,

Pearl Middleton  
Evergreen, AL

### Widow's Mite

I'm writing you in regards to *The Gospel Gleaner*. I've been reading it

many years. Would you have some extra copies of Volume 22, Number 2, April-September, 2007? I want to give a copy to some special friends. I have known Brother Hester since 1978 when he was at Garfield Heights Church of Christ, also Ronnie Whittemore. I'm 96 years old. Haven't been able to attend church for 3 to 4 years. Moved from Indianapolis here in a small town. I'm on a fixed income. But I'm sending you a widows' mite of \$15.00 to help in a small way. I pray for your great work.

A sister in Christ,

Ercie M. Jent  
N. Vernon, IN

### Faithful Brother Enjoys the Paper

Dear Brother Dillon:

Thank you for the good work you are doing through *The Gospel Gleaner*. It is a wonderful paper with excellent writers. With all that is going on in the church today we certainly need all the help we can get from faithful brethren. I have enclosed my check for \$100.00 to help with the expenses of the paper.

V. Glenn McCoy  
Yorba Linda, CA

### Gift Appreciated

Dear Brother Dillon and staff of *The Gospel Gleaner*,  
The Holy Bible you sent me will always be a treasured possession. It was such a thoughtful and encouraging gift. I am indeed fortunate to have the instruction and encouragement. It means a lot to me. Thank you!  
Sincerely,

Will Jeffries  
Evergreen, AL

## Bundles Requested

Dear Brother Dillon,  
Enclosed is our check to help in the next issue of *The Gospel Gleaner*. Thank you for the copies you sent of the last issue. We would like to receive 25 copies of the next issue, if possible.  
In Christ,

Harold Stover  
Union City, TN

## New Readers

Please send me your *Gospel Gleaner*. It is easy reading and understandable.

Farley Aiken  
Dewey, OK

I am taking Bible Study course through the College Avenue Church of Christ in Defuniak Springs, FL. Last week when I received my new lesson, they sent a copy of your July-December 2005 *Gospel Gleaner*. I enjoyed reading it very much and would like to be put on your mailing list if it is possible. Below is my address. Thank you for your time.  
In Christ Love,

Richard Sears  
Raiford, FL

Would you send *The Gospel Gleaner* and your bulletin to... Enclosed is a check for \$10.00.  
Thanks,

Lillian Miller  
Livingston, TN

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I don't know who put me on the mailing list but it's the best thing anyone could do for me. I look forward to getting *The Gospel Gleaner*.

er. Then after I have devoured it, I pass it on to someone I know will enjoy it, too. Please send one to... Thank you—God bless you all. Take care and hang in there.  
In Christian Love,

Betty Johnson

I would like to get your paper, *The Gospel Gleaner*, that you send out each month or so. It's really good reading.  
Thank you

Mavis Tate  
Morris, AL

I was given your paper by someone from a church in Missouri. I was so impressed with it that I would like very much to receive a copy of it on a regular basis if that is possible. I am 86 years of age and have been a member of the church since I was 12. I am so distressed by the things that are creeping into the Lord's church today and it was so refreshing to read a paper that is upholding the truth. I am enclosing a small donation which I hope will be of some small help to you.

Anna M. Siders  
Enid, OK

Please place the following names on your mailing list... We were privileged to hear you speak at North Marshall Church of Christ some time ago and certainly enjoyed your message. Enclosed is a small amount to help defray costs. We will send more later.  
Sincerely,

Joe & Jonda Dallas  
Paducah, KY

Dear brethren,  
I would like to re-subscribe to your wonderful and informative paper,

*The Gospel Gleaner*. My family will be living at this address for a good while, and I hate to miss any more of your issues. Thank you again for your great effort for the kingdom, and may God bless you and all who endeavor in this great work.  
Yours in Christ,

Bill Sirdofsky  
Idaho Falls, ID

Dear brother Dillon,  
I have not been receiving *The Gospel Gleaner*. Could you check and see if I'm still on your mailing list and if not please add me to it? Thank you for the good work you're doing!

Sincerely in Christ,  
Roger Comstock  
Bridgeport, AL

Do you still do *The Gospel Gleaner* publication? If so, how do I receive a subscription to it?  
Thanks,

Jerry Norman  
Pleasant Hill, MO

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**Thank you to our readers for your help and support!**

### Contributions Received During The Last Year

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Elizabeth, AR.....\$150.00

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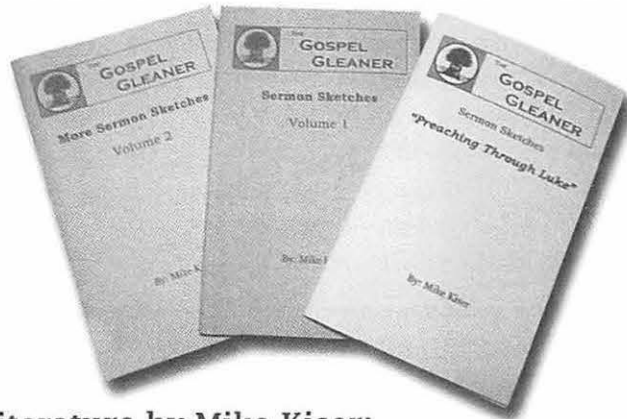
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Flippin, AR.....\$20.00

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Springfield, MO.....\$25.00

**TOTAL..... \$7,985.00**

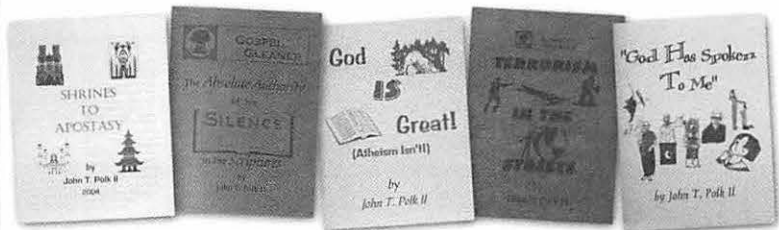
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- Sermon Sketches
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Send your request to: **Mike Kiser**  
104 Calhoun Avenue  
Sylacauga, AL 35150



### Literature by John T. Polk, II:

- Shrines to Apostasy
- The Absolute Authority of the Silence of the Scriptures
- God is Great (Atheism Isn't)
- Terrorism in the Streets
- God Has Spoken to Me
- Black Liberation Theology (featured in this issue)

Send your request to: **John T. Polk, II**  
125 The Trace  
Dover, TN 37058

# Times of Crisis

by Mark Dillon

332 Stephanie Drive • Gassville, AR 72635

Romans 5:3-4 says, *"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope."* Times of crisis can strengthen your character. Such times can build your faith. When the world proves weak then we turn to God. Spiritual strength can grow from physical weakness. Times of crisis help you to identify with the suffering that Jesus endured. 1 Peter 4:13 says, *"But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when*

*his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."* How you react to a crisis can also determine what others think about God. Genesis 41:38-39 says, *"And Pharaoh said unto his servants, 'Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the spirit of God is?' And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, 'Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art.'" A crisis can help you develop the inner core of strength that is characteristic of that rare breed of godly men. ■*

**Sylacauga Church of Christ**  
200 South Broadway  
P.O. Box 126  
Sylacauga, AL 35150

## Schedule of Services

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Sunday Morning Worship	10:45 AM
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00 PM
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00 PM

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M. W. Kiser, Evangelist

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*See page 27!*

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