



MAP ♦ 575 US Highway 250 ♦ Greenwich, OH 44837 ♦ (419) 962-1515 ♦ July 2021

## The General Epistle of James

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| <p><b>1. Two basic questions</b></p> <p>a. Can a man have faith &amp; not do good works?</p> <p>b. Can faith without good works save a man?</p> <p><b>2. The professing believer who is unconcerned &amp; neglectful</b></p> <p>a. He claims faith, yet refuses to help the needy</p> <p>b. Conclusion: His faith without works is dead</p> <p><b>3. The two men of arrogance</b></p> <p>a. One claims faith; another claims works</p> <p>b. Conclusion: One's faith is shown by works</p> <p><b>4. The orthodox religionist</b></p> <p>a. He believes in one God, but the demons also believe</p> | <p><b>B. Temptation 2:<br/>Professing Faith Without Works, 2:14-26</b></p> <p>14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?</p> <p>15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,</p> <p>16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?</p> <p>17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.</p> <p>18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.</p> <p>19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble</p> | <p>20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?</p> <p>21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?</p> <p>22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?</p> <p>23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.</p> <p>24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.</p> <p>25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?</p> <p>26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.</p> | <p>&amp; shudder</p> <p>b. Conclusion: Faith without works is an empty faith</p> <p><b>5. The man who proved his faith by works: Abraham</b></p> <p>a. He offered up Isaac</p> <p>b. His faith &amp; works were interactive, working together</p> <p>c. His faith fulfilled Scripture: He believed God &amp; God credited righteousness to him, to his account</p> <p>d. Conclusion: A person is justified by faith, proven by his works</p> <p><b>6. The woman who proved her faith by works: Rahab</b></p> <p>a. She proved her faith by receiving &amp; helping the messengers</p> <p>b. Conclusion: A body without the Spirit is dead; so faith without works is dead</p> |
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**Section II**  
**TEMPTATIONS AND TRIALS:**  
**COMMON TO ALL CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS**  
**James 2:1-26**

**STUDY 2: TEMPTATION 2: PROFESSING FAITH WITHOUT WORKS**

**TEXT:** James 2:14-26

**AIM:** To determine the genuineness of your faith by examining your works.

## MEMORY VERSE:

***“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26).***

## INTRODUCTION:

What is the word of a person worth? Simply this: only what his actions back up. No person can guarantee what he says. Only God can do that. Therefore, the faith that a person professes is only as strong as his works, which are seen outwardly. No matter how nicely we present our faith vocally, no matter how correct our doctrine, it is our actions that demonstrate just how alive our faith really is. This is an inescapable fact.

The greatest tragedy of the church today is the number of people who profess Christ but do not live for Him. Millions profess to be Christians and are baptized, confirmed, or made members of a church; but they do not follow nor live for Christ. They do not live pure and righteous lives, nor do they give all they are and have to reach the lost and needy of the world. Are they saved? Do they have a genuine faith? This is the discussion of this passage. This is the second temptation that is common to all Christian believers: the temptation to profess faith without works.

## OUTLINE:

1. Two basic questions (v.14).
2. The professing believer who is unconcerned and neglectful (vv.15-17).
3. The two men of arrogance (v.18).
4. The orthodox religionist (vv.19-20).
5. The man who proved his faith by works: Abraham (vv.21-24).
6. The woman who proved her faith by works: Rahab (vv.25-26).

## 1. TWO BASIC QUESTIONS (v.14).

There are two questions that every believer needs to ask himself:

- ⇒ Can a man have faith and not do good works?
- ⇒ Can faith without good works save a man?

Every thinking person who is honest knows that the answer to these two questions is an emphatic, “No!” A person who really believes something does something; he acts. Nevertheless, millions profess faith in Christ and belong to a church, yet they go on and live like everyone else in the world. Tragically, there is little if any difference in their behavior or speech from the rest of society.

James asks a piercing question: “What profit is it if a man says he has faith, and he does not do good works? Can his faith save him?” Note two significant facts.

1. The man *says* he has faith. But it is *only words*; he does nothing to show that he really believes in Christ. He does not live for Christ; he does not live righteously and godly in this present world, looking for the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ. His faith is only one of profession, not of behavior and life. Note verse 17 and you will see what Scripture calls his faith: a *dead faith*.

2. Note that it is called a *dead faith* three times in this passage (Js.2:17, 20, 26). The faith of a false profession is *vain, empty, unprofitable*—a faith that profits absolutely nothing. It is not enough to claim that we have faith and then not live for Christ. We must truly believe Christ—that He is the Savior and Lord of life. And if we truly believe, we will do what He says. We will live for Him and do the works that please Him. We will live *Christ-centered lives, not self-centered lives*. Five examples follow to illustrate the point.

## QUESTIONS:

1. How easily could a person distinguish between your actions and those of an unbeliever? What evidence could the person use to “convict” you of being a Christian?
2. Why is faith without action dead? How is your faith demonstrated by your actions?
3. Describe what it means to live a Christ-centered life on a day-to-day basis.

## 2. THE PROFESSING BELIEVER WHO IS UNCONCERNED AND NEGLECTFUL (vv.15-17).

There is the example of a destitute Christian believer. This example strongly rebukes us, rebukes most believers and most churches throughout the world. And note: the example is dealing with believers, with brothers and sisters in the Lord.

A brother or sister faces some need or problem that makes him destitute. He is unable to properly dress himself, to stay warm, or to secure enough daily food. We see him and share words of comfort with him. We speak peace and sometimes give a few items to help as he seeks to take care of his most basic needs.

Most believers and churches will go this far. When brothers or sisters have a need, we will visit, comfort, and wish them well. But this is not enough. What good is it if we do not give them the things they need?

The point is this: faith, if it does not do good works, is dead. True faith loves and cares and is compassionate in reaching out to help the needy. A person can talk repeatedly about believing

in Jesus Christ, but if he is not reaching out to help the destitute of the world as Jesus did, his faith is dead—utterly meaningless. If we really believe in Christ, we will follow Christ: we will take all that we are and have beyond our own needs and give it to meet the needs of destitute brothers and sisters.

***“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Lu.9:23).***

#### **ILLUSTRATION:**

Horace Mann, the great educator of the 1800s, once quipped that he had never heard anything about the resolutions of the apostles, but he had heard much about the acts of the Apostles.

*An old legend tells about a monk who saw a vision of the Lord. He was so happy, but just then someone knocked on his door and asked for his help. He hesitated, but went to assist his brother. When he returned, Jesus was still there and said, “Had you tarried, I would have gone.”<sup>20</sup>*

What a clear statement of God’s expectations! We must put our faith into action, reaching out to others, caring about their needs as well as our own.

#### **QUESTIONS:**

1. How will someone with true faith respond to a brother or sister in need? Why are words of encouragement not enough?
2. How can you use your resources to help someone in need?

### **3. THERE IS THE EXAMPLE OF TWO MEN OF ARROGANCE (v.18).**

James is painting the picture of two men, but only one man speaks and what he says is only one sentence. The speaker says “You have faith and I have works.” The picture is that of two arrogant men.

⇒ The man being spoken to has faith. He believes that he is saved by faith—that God accepts him because he believes in Jesus Christ even if he fails to live for Christ. He believes God has accepted him and will take him to heaven when he dies because he has professed Christ, been baptized, and joined the church.

***“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Tit.1:16).***

<sup>20</sup> Paul Lee Tan. Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations, #3401.

⇒ The man speaking claims to have works—claims that God accepts him because he does good works and lives as good a life as he can. He believes that the important thing to God is to be religious and do all the good that a person can. If a person does this, God will never reject him; God will accept him no matter who he is and no matter what religion he follows.

***“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast our devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” (Mt.7:22).***

Note that James pulls no punches: it is not a matter of faith or works. To say and profess faith alone will not save a person, and to follow works to become acceptable to God will not save a person. James handles both men of arrogance with one clear statement: “Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”

A person who truly believes in Christ works for Christ. He follows and lives for Christ. A person who only professes Christ lives for himself, going about doing what he wants when he wants. He does not live a life of separation from the world, a life of righteousness and purity, nor does he give all he has to meet the desperate needs of this world. He professes Christ but lives for the pleasures and things of this world.

#### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Note the two pictures of arrogance James paints in this passage. Which one is the bigger temptation for you? How can you overcome this temptation?
2. Think for a moment. What evidence in your life shows that you are following Christ?

### **4. THE ORTHODOX RELIGIONIST (vv.19-20).**

There is the example of the orthodox religionists. A true man of religion believes in one God: he is not an atheist or an agnostic nor does he believe in many gods. He is a believer, and note: his belief in God is said to be a good thing. The man does well to believe in God. But there is a *dead belief and a living belief*, a belief that does not lead to salvation, a belief that does lead to salvation.

⇒ Consider the demons or evil spirits. They believe in God; they know that God exists. They even believe in the deity of Christ. On one occasion they cried out to Jesus, “*What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?*” (Mt 8:29). But the demons are not saved. Their belief has not

affected their lives and behavior at all.

Therefore, know this, know exactly what verse 20 says: “*Know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead.*” Do not be vain (empty, useless, foolish); true faith is a living faith, a faith that works, a faith that stirs a person to live for Christ—to live righteously and purely, giving all he is and has to reach a lost and desperate world for Christ.

#### **ILLUSTRATION:**

Faith must be acted upon to be alive. Tragically, many people know the truth, but they simply are not inclined to take action. But there are those who do care. Listen to Chuck Colson’s true story about a young man named Marquis and Marquis’ response to the gospel message:

*I met this young man, Marquis, in Philadelphia a couple of years ago when his grandmother came up to me after a public event and said, “Mr. Colson, thank you for sending my grandson to ... camp last summer. He was saved there—and now he’s preaching the gospel to the other kids in our neighborhood.”*

*I talked with Marquis that day, and I was so impressed. There was a sparkle in his eye as he told me what Jesus meant to him and how he was leading others to Christ in the project in which they lived.*

*His grandmother told me that ... he would have been caught up in the neighborhood gangs, doomed to follow in his father’s footsteps—straight to prison. Instead, having come to faith in Christ, he was taking Jesus to the streets, sharing Christ in Camden, New Jersey, one of the toughest inner-city neighborhoods in America.*

*He also worked in a church, feeding the poor—and, we’ve just learned this past week, talked another kid out of running away from home or maybe even suicide. He was a wonderful Christian witness to everyone he met.*

*Then, two weeks ago, we received a phone call. ... Volunteers who had helped lead Marquis to Christ told us the tragic news. While walking his little brother to school, Marquis—this vibrant young evangelist—was shot and killed.*

*At the funeral, our volunteers gave their condolences to Marquis’s grandmother and turned to leave. But as they did, she began to shout to the hundreds of people in attendance, “You see these people? They are the reason Marquis is in heaven—they took him to camp. He met Jesus there! They are the reason I have hope!”*

*Marquis’s death is tragic. I don’t know whether we will ever be able to control the violence, the death, and the risk*

*in neighborhoods like this. But I do know that our hope is to take the gospel there and with it reach thousands more children. And we can pray that God will raise up more godly leaders like Marquis to help bring others to Christ. And if that happens, we will see cultural changes, one kid at a time.<sup>21</sup>*

Do you have a living faith, faith that takes action? True faith shares Christ with others, no matter the cost.

#### **QUESTIONS:**

1. How is real, life-changing faith different from just knowing the fact that God exists? How can you demonstrate your faith today? This week?
2. What can faith accomplish without works? Why?

#### **5. THE MAN WHO PROVED HIS FAITH BY WORKS: ABRAHAM (vv.21-24).**

There is the example of Abraham, who proved his faith by his works. Note exactly what verse 21 says:

***“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?” (v.21).***

This is a verse that causes great problems for some people, for it seems to say that when Abraham offered up Isaac in obedience to God’s instruction, he was justified. That is, Abraham was justified by works. Is a man justified by works? Is that what is meant? No! What James is saying is that Abraham *proved that he was justified by what he did—by his works*. Abraham’s faith was proven to be a true and living faith by his works. Note what James says:

- ⇒ Abraham’s faith wrought (brought about, worked with, cooperated with) his works (v.22). That is, his faith was acted out and proven by his works.
- ⇒ By his works, Abraham’s faith was made perfect, that is, finished, completed, carried to the end (v.22). Abraham’s faith was proven, shown to be a complete faith. A true and living faith works: it completes and finishes its course. If a faith does not work or act or complete or finish its course, it is a dead faith—an incomplete, unfinished, and unproven faith.
- ⇒ Abraham’s faith fulfilled Scripture. What Scripture? The Scripture that said “*Abraham believed God; and it was imputed unto him for righteousness*” (Ge.15:6). These words

21 Charles Colson. The Difference Faith Makes, on BreakPoint, December 19, 2002.

were declared some thirty years before Abraham ever offered up Isaac. God pronounced that Abraham was justified and saved thirty years before this event referred to by James. James plainly declares that when Abraham offered up Isaac he was proving his faith—not earning it. The reason Abraham offered up Isaac was *because he did believe God*.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. Abraham offered up Isaac on an altar because he believed and trusted God. Has God ever asked you to do something difficult? What was your response? Did your response prove or disprove your faith in God?
2. On a practical level, in what ways can you increase your faith by your works?

#### 6. THE WOMAN WHO PROVED HER FAITH BY WORKS: RAHAB (vv.25-26).

There is the example of Rahab, the converted harlot who proved her faith by works. Why mention Rahab? Because she was a harlot, the very lowest of society. She was the very opposite of Abraham, a rich and respected man. All people, even the lowest person who claims to believe in God, must do good works. They must clean up their lives and follow God. Rahab did. When the spies for Israel were being hunted down by the Jericho soldiers, she hid them. Why would she betray her country and protect the Israelite spies? Because she believed in God and His promises. She said to the spies:

*“I know that the Lord hath given you the land [of promise]...for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath” (Jos.2:9, 11).*

Rahab believed in God; therefore, she acted. She put her faith to work. The conclusion is descriptive:

*“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (v.26).*

A body without the spirit or breath is dead. It does not move, act, live, or work. It is empty, totally useless and worthless. It is a dead body. So it is with faith: faith without works is dead. It does not move, act, live, or work. Faith without works is empty, totally useless and worthless. It does not live for Christ, does not follow Him in righteousness or purity nor work for Him in reaching people and meeting the needs of a destitute world.

#### ILLUSTRATION:

We must back up what we believe with action to demonstrate that we really believe what we say we do. We must prove our

faith by our works.

*The listeners stared at the speaker in disbelief. He had made a preposterous claim, saying “I have something in my pocket that no one in the world, including myself, has ever seen. And after I show it to you, no one will ever see it again.” Then the man took out a peanut, cracked the shell, showed them the nut, and popped it in his mouth.—*

SOURCE UNKNOWN

This man backed up his words with action. Likewise, if we are to affect our world for Christ, we must show that what we claim is the truth.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. What promises of God inspire you to action?
2. In what ways has God asked you to put your faith into action? How did God prove Himself faithful to you when you acted in faith?
3. How has acting on your faith strengthened your commitment to the Lord?

#### SUMMARY:

Do you have a genuine faith? According to James, if you are not putting your faith into action, then your faith is questionable. The charge is serious: the call to action is strong. The only evidence of true faith is good works. Make up your mind today that you are going to live out your faith before others. Put yourself to the real test:

1. Ask two basic questions: (1) Can a person have faith and not do good works? (2) Can faith without works save a person?
2. Remember the professing believer who is unconcerned and neglectful.
3. Remember the two men of arrogance.
4. Remember the orthodox religionist.
5. Remember the man who proved his faith by works: Abraham.
6. Remember the woman who proved her faith by works: Rahab.

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Proverbs 16:16 says, “How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!” The Bible urges us often to seek wisdom above all things (e.g., Proverbs 4:7). But there are different kinds of wisdom. 1 Corinthians 3:19 says, “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.” And verse 20 says, “The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.” There is obviously a difference between godly wisdom and worldly wisdom (see James 3:13-17).

Godly wisdom is, of course, from God and honors God. Godly wisdom starts with the fear of God and results in a holy life. Worldly wisdom, on the other hand, is not concerned with honoring God but with pleasing oneself. With worldly wisdom, we may become educated, street-smart, and have “common sense” that enables us to play the world’s game successfully. Godly wisdom enables us to prepare ourselves for eternity. With godly wisdom, we trade earthly values for biblical values (1 John 2:15-16). We recognize we are citizens of another kingdom, and we make choices that reflect that allegiance (Philippians 1:27; 3:20). Having godly wisdom means we strive to see life from God’s perspective and act accordingly.

The book of Proverbs is part of the Bible known as wisdom literature. Proverbs is full of practical instructions for life. Many proverbs contrast the wise with the foolish and warn against repeating foolish actions (e.g., Proverbs 3:35; 14:24; 15:7; 26:11). Everyone makes mistakes, but the wise learn from their mistakes and take steps to avoid repeating them. The foolish may make the same mistake over and over again and never learn their lesson.

Godly wisdom may look very different from worldly wisdom. Jesus highlighted these differences in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). For example, He said, “Ye have heard that it hath been said, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.’ But I say unto you, ‘Love your enemies, bless them that

curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.” Godly wisdom often requires us to do that which is opposite our natural inclinations. Godly wisdom goes against the “conventional wisdom” of the day; it is not focused on self-preservation but on furthering the kingdom of God. We can only live in godly wisdom when we are committed to crucifying our flesh and living in the Spirit (see Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 5:16, 25).

The primary way we gain godly wisdom is by learning God’s Word (Psalm 119:169). “The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (Psalm 119:130). No one is born wise; we must acquire wisdom from God if we are to be truly wise: “Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. (Psalm 119:98-10),

Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Immersion in God’s Word produces a heart of worship and thanksgiving. That heart of worship becomes fertile soil for seeds of wisdom to grow. Jesus prayed to the Father: “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth” (John 17:17). He wants His followers to be set apart from the world, making godly choices and living godly lives (1 Peter 1:15). We can only do that when His Word lives in us.

We can also develop godly wisdom by carefully selecting those who journey through life with us: “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Proverbs 13:20). Paul instructed the Corinthians, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of

Christ” 1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1). Those who want godly wisdom will choose for their heroes those who exhibit wisdom in their personal lives.

Scripture tells us to ask for godly wisdom: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5). God wants us to have His wisdom. He is delighted to give it to us when our hearts are set to receive it. However, James goes on to say, “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (verses 6-8). God knows the position of our hearts. When we are committed to trusting Him and obeying His Word, He pours out His wisdom on us (see Jeremiah 29:13). But if we want to retain the right to disobey, we are double-minded and may not receive the wisdom we ask for.

Solomon received godly wisdom when he asked the Lord for it (2 Chronicles 1:10-11). He became known for his great wisdom, yet, in his later years, he turned away from following the wisdom he’d been given. He disobeyed the Lord and even began to worship idols (1 Kings 11:1-22). Receiving wisdom did not insure that Solomon would follow the path of wisdom. Sadly, he exchanged his godly wisdom for worldly wisdom, and he suffered for it. The rest of 1 Kings 11 details Solomon’s downfall as the Lord removed His hand of blessing from a man who was once great.

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*“Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2:3-6).*

## Make Every Moment Count

Every minute someone leaves this world behind. We are all in “the line” without knowing it. We never know how many people are before us.

We cannot move to the back of the line.  
We cannot step out of the line.  
We cannot avoid the line.

So while we wait in line:

- Make moments count.
- Make priorities.
- Make the time.
- Make your gifts known.
- Make a nobody feel like a somebody.
- Make your voice heard.
- Make the small things big.
- Make someone smile.
- Make the change.
- Make up.
- Make peace.
- Make sure to tell your people they are loved.
- Make sure to have no regrets.
- Make sure you are ready.”

—Author Unknown

In Matthew 16:26, Jesus asked His followers two questions, and He is asking you:

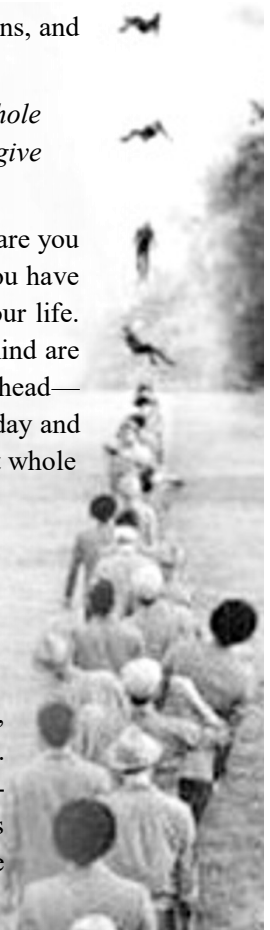
*“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”*

You may not be trying to gain the whole world, but why are you working so hard and so many hours to make a buck? You have continually pushed God, the Bible, and prayer out of your life. Your spouse and children are hurting. Your body and mind are worn down. All because you are trying so hard to get ahead—to make those huge payments—so you can sit back one day and sort of coast along in your last days. Let me tell you, that whole idea is a lie straight from Satan himself.

Jesus goes on to say:

*For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. —Mt 16:26-27*

At any given moment, even while reading this message, your turn could come up—your name could be called. And when that happens, nothing, nobody, can do anything to stop it from happening. Do you know what is required of you to enter the presence of God and not be cast into hell? Are you sure? —Joe Keim



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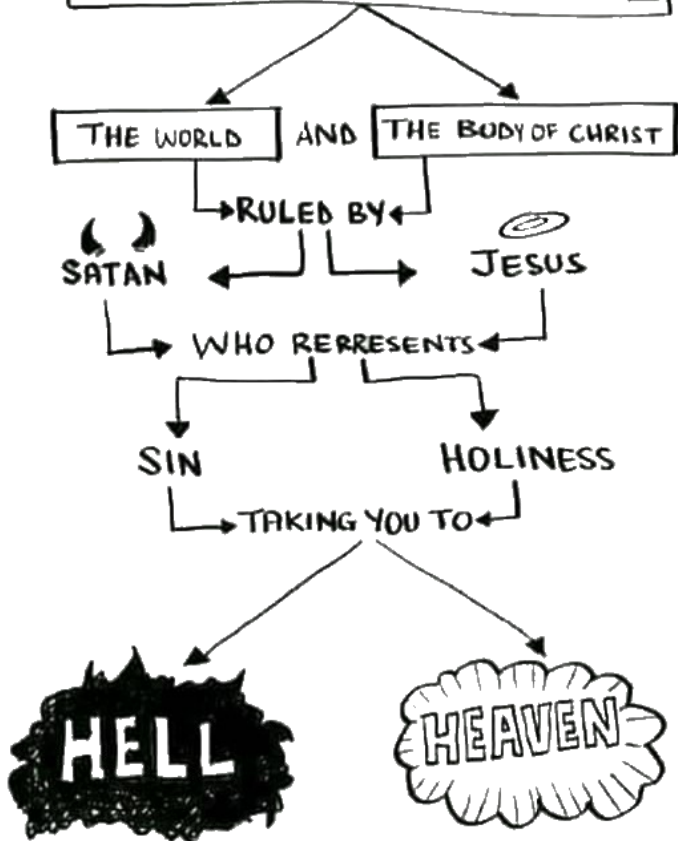


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## The Only Way —by Joe Keim

Do not think for even a moment that being Amish will earn you one ounce of favor with God. Going to the Amish church, following the church rules and traditions of your forefathers, are not what it takes to enter the presence of God when you die. It takes more than honesty, simple living, hard work, and integrity to go to heaven. Salvation is not through a certain culture. Salvation cannot be earned; it cannot be manufactured. Salvation is not through church membership. Salvation is not through baptism. Salvation is not through anything you do.

There is only one way to God, only one way to be saved from death and hell. Only. One. Way!

*“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).*

Salvation, the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, is through faith in Jesus alone. Every English person, every Amish person, every Mennonite person, every Mormon person, every Jehovah Witness person, every single person in the world is connected with God the same way.

*“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:9)*

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**Bible Basics:** What does the Bible say about forgiveness of sins and being born again? (1 lesson)



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*“For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out” (1 Timothy 6:7).*

This verse comes right in the middle of advice on wealth. Paul is saying in verse 3 that if someone doesn't consent to the words of Jesus Christ,

*“He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself” (1 Timothy 6:4-5).*

Gain can be more than money. It can be a position, a social standing, reputation, degrees, friends, or anything a person can strive to gain. But what is it worth if we can't take it with us?

A former counselor once asked me these questions:

**Will it bring short-term pleasure and long-term suffering (hell)?**

Or...

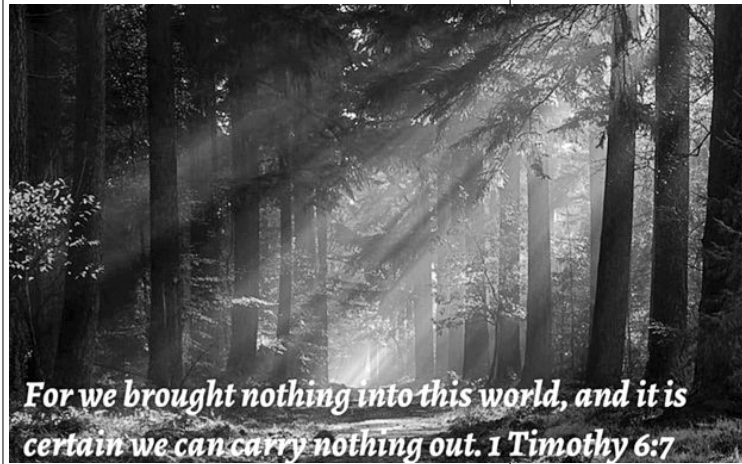
**Will it bring short-term suffering and long-term pleasure (heaven)?**

There are so many things we can strive for, that once we have them, they don't even satisfy...and then we are miserable and keep striving for more.

Paul goes on to say:

*“But godliness with contentment is great gain” (v. 6). “And having food and raiment let us be there-*

*with content” (v. 8). “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition” (v.9). “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (v.10).*



What then instead?

*“But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses” (vv 11-12). “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (vv 17-19).*

There is so much that we can put our trust in and it is a false security. For some people, the things they trusted in vanished and they are now left without their "security blanket/crutch".

I myself have felt this way about money, but financial hardship is causing me to humble myself before God and acknowledge that there's nothing I can do. The Lord either allows the debtors to be gracious, or He provides—which He did again twice within the last few days! I'm so grateful. I don't deserve it.

I want my trust to be in Christ for He is ultimately in control and holds the riches of the world in His hands. Why do I need to strive—only to be in misery and unfulfilled because

I'm striving for the wrong things? When our focus is on eternity and wanting to please the Lord, who gave us the gift of salvation, then it will change our view of life. If it doesn't, there's something wrong.

Christ's kingdom is not of this world, so we should not be seeking to get comfortable here. We are only pilgrims passing through.

***“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13).***

I used to be a very different person. Life did not make sense to me. It seemed purposeless... a mix of happiness and sorrow, with death waiting at the end at an undetermined point in time. Driving past graveyards always left me with an ominous feeling. *What was the point of life? And what was waiting for me after death, if anything?*, I often asked myself.

Along with my inner emptiness and fear of dying, my conscience also bothered me. I had a nagging guilt about my self-centeredness. I coped by comparing myself to others who appeared to be more selfish than me, but I couldn't shake the fact that my own guilt was piling up higher every day.

I'm guessing you might be able to relate.

The surprising news is that all those negative things are no longer part of my life. I'm no longer afraid of dying. I'm actually looking forward to it, but only when my life's purpose (which I now know) is done. Moreover, my lifelong weight of guilt has been lifted. Better yet, I've been set free from my former habits and addictions that created all of that guilt.

Those are just a few of the things that have changed. My transformation has been nothing short of miraculous. What made all of these changes occur?

It all started when I discovered that God loved me much more than I'd ever imagined. I discovered that He was concerned about my fear of death, my emptiness, my purposelessness and my guilt. He wanted to fix those things and much more. (I'm no one special. God loves you more than you realize as well.)

I discovered all of this good news from reading about Jesus in the Bible. Some people say that Jesus is just a myth, but that is like saying Julius Caesar is a myth. No real historian claims that Jesus did not exist. There is irrefutable histori-

cal evidence that Jesus actually walked on this earth and that lots of people interfaced with Him. Tens of thousands of people were eyewitnesses to His life and ministry.

All of Jesus' closest friends eventually died defending their belief that He was born, lived a public life, performed incredible miracles, claimed to be God's Son, was crucified, died, came back to life, and ascended into the sky. Obviously, they believed in Him. People don't die to defend a hoax.

Naturally, Jesus' closest friends spent the rest of their lives talking about Him, and in some cases writing about Him. Their writings are in the Bible. Their eyewitness testimonies influenced many of their contemporaries who were not eyewitnesses, who also wrote what they heard and learned. As the number of Christians grew and the church spread throughout the ancient world, it resulted in an unbroken chain of historical literature that you can read today. It can all be traced back to one amazing life.

But what about the incredible stories of Jesus' miracles? Aren't they a little hard to believe? Don't they convey a mythical message?

Actually, Jesus' miracles are no more spectacular than the millions of miracles—that no scientist can explain—happening outside your window and inside your body right now. Think about it. There is a micro and macro magic show going on 24 hours a day—all of our lives. If you aren't aware of it, it is only because you take it for granted. It is just another way that God, who loves us so much, is trying to get our attention. And if God ever temporarily came to the earth disguised as a man, wouldn't you expect some accompanying miracles from someone who created the universe?

Some people think of Jesus as just an

inspiring moral teacher. But Jesus didn't leave anyone that option. Good, moral teachers don't claim to be God's Son.<sup>1</sup> They don't pretend to have the authority to forgive sins.<sup>2</sup> They don't claim to be the only source of eternal life.<sup>3</sup> They don't accept worship.<sup>4</sup> They don't expect people to love them more than they love their parents, spouse and children.<sup>5</sup> But Jesus did all of those things.

Based purely on what He said (apart from all that He did), there are only three possibilities regarding who Jesus was. He claimed to be the Son of God, so either He was lying or telling the truth. If He was lying, either He knew or didn't know He was lying. So:

- 1.) If He knew He was lying, He was one of the most wicked liars who has ever lived, as He has deceived hundreds of millions of people, many of whom have died for their faith in Him.
- 2.) If He did not know He was lying, then He was a lunatic, claiming to be the Son of God when He wasn't.
- 3.) If He was telling the truth, however, then He was the Son of God.

Those, then, are the only three choices. A man who claims to be equal with God when he is not, can hardly be called a great moral teacher! No, Jesus was either *a liar, a lunatic, or Lord*.

When you add all of the miracles that Jesus performed (opening the eyes of blind people, raising the dead, multiplying food, and so on), plus all of the predictions made in the Old Testament hundreds of years before His appearance on earth—predictions that He could not have fulfilled by His own doing (like the city of His birth, the manner of His

1 John 5:18; 8:56-58; 10:30-33

2 Matthew. 9:2

3 John 3:14-16; 5:24; 6:40; 10:27-28

4 Matthew 14:33; 28:9; John 9:36-38

5 Matthew 10:37; Luke 14:26

death, and His coming back to life)—the only logical conclusion is that Jesus was who He claimed to be. So that leaves us with a decision to make. Will we believe that Jesus was who He claimed to be, or will we cling to some lie about Him?

Many people choose to believe lies about Jesus because they instinctively realize that if they accept the truth about Him, they would have to start living their lives differently. That is a tragic decision, because no one loves people more deeply than Jesus. Love for people motivated Him to become a human being, spend 33 years on the earth, and then willingly die an excruciating death on a Roman cross.

Beyond that, the Bible teaches that God's love for people is the motive for all His commandments. He isn't trying to make us miserable. Rather, He is trying to make us truly and permanently happy. His commandment to love other people as we love ourselves, for example, clearly demonstrates that He wants everyone to love and be loved. Who can find fault with that? If everyone did that, the world would be a much better place for everyone. According to Jesus, only those who love will live forever in heaven.<sup>6</sup> He promised, however, that He would give His Holy Spirit to live in everyone who believes in Him, which would enable them to love others.<sup>7</sup>

It was when I believed—*truly believed*—that Jesus is the Son of God, that my life changed so dramatically, because that is exactly what Jesus promised would happen to anyone who believes in Him.<sup>8</sup> Of course, many people *say* they believe that Jesus is God's Son. But they really don't believe it, because if they did, they would *act* as if Jesus were the Son of God. That is, they would make Him the most important person in their lives and start trying to please Him, following His com-

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 25:31-46  
<sup>7</sup> John 7:38; 14:17, 23; Romans 5:5  
<sup>8</sup> John 3:16; 6:35; 7:38; 11:25-26; 12:46; 14:12

mandments. People who say they believe that Jesus is the Son of God but who don't seek to obey Him are like people who say that a tidal wave is coming while they continue sitting on the beach. If they really believed what they were saying, they'd be scrambling for higher ground.

Jesus claimed that God, His Father, gave Him all authority in heaven and on earth and appointed Him as everyone's future judge.<sup>9</sup> Anyone who believes Jesus has that kind of authority and future responsibility does everything possible to line up with how Jesus told us to live.

I hope you will stop and consider what you *really* believe about Jesus. Life and eternity change when you truly believe He is the Son of God. When you believe in Jesus, He forgives you for every wrong thing you've done, and He starts changing you. It is a miracle. I wish everyone would believe in Him and experience His transforming mercy, goodness and love. Please think about it!

What should you do once you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?

First, you should tell Him you believe in Him by talking to Him in prayer.

Second, you should begin reading about Him in the Bible and start doing what He said to do. The first four books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are all about Jesus. They were written by His earliest followers, who either were eyewitnesses of His life or got their information from eyewitnesses.

Next, read the book called Acts, which is all about the early Christians. You will soon notice that, back during those early days, the Christians and the Christian church looked much different from today. The difference is that the early Christians didn't just *claim* to believe that Jesus was God's Son. They actually

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 28:18, John 5:22

believed it and lived accordingly.

Once you believe in Jesus, you will find that you want to tell your friends and relatives about Him. That is because, as I've already said, once you believe in Him, He changes you, and in a mysterious way, He comes to live inside you. He loves everyone and wants everyone to believe in Him, so you should not be surprised that He wants to live through you.

If any of your friends or relatives decide to believe in Jesus along with you, you can read the Bible and pray together. If they don't believe, pray for them. If they make fun of you, keep loving them, as that is what Jesus said we should do when others criticize us.

Finally, feel free to write to me or call me. I would love to hear your response to this article or answer your questions. My address is P.O. Box 33, Smicksburg, PA 16256. My phone number is (412) 722-3075. May God bless you!

**END**

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### **The Revelation—What's the World Coming to?**

(part 1 of 5)

Chip Ingram cuts through the imagery and the metaphors in the book of Revelation to deliver one of the most compelling and inspiring presentations on this often misunderstood part of Scripture. This series puts life into perspective and brings clarity and purpose to your everyday struggles like never before. If you long to make wise choices, live your life with steadfast purpose, and experience joy and peace in the midst of uncertain and chaotic times, this is a great place to start!

### **Marriage**

(part 3 of 3)

Message from Pastor John Marino.

### **Christian Theology - Mankind - part 1**

(part 6 of 11)

Correct doctrine is the foundation of our faith as Christians. In this eleven part series on Christian theology, we explore what the Bible teaches on sound doctrine regarding sin, man, salvation, and other topics. Message by Pastor John Marino.

## August

### **Book of Romans (Romans 5:1-11)**

Message from Michael Pearl.

### **The Revelation—Will You be Ready When He Comes Again?**

(part 2 of 5)

Message from Chip Ingram.

### **On Money**

(part 1 of 2)

What lies at the bottom of our money problems? In this two-part podcast series, Pastor John addresses that the way we manage our money tells us something about what we worship. The Bible admonishes us not to serve the "master" we call money. John also develops several biblical principles on a right handling of our finances. - Pastor John Marino

### **Christian Theology - Mankind - part 2**

(part 7 of 11)

Message by Pastor John Marino.

## September

### **Book of Romans (Romans 5:12-21)**

Michael Pearl has been studying and teaching the book of Romans for over 40 years. This verse-by-verse teaching is presented for the layman from the unique perspective of a student that believes the Bible rather than from a scholar that critiques it. Michael addresses all of the hard theological issues that have been the foundation of Christian faith down through the centuries.

### **The Revelation—Why Your View of Heaven Will Change Your Life on Earth**

(part 3 of 5)

Message from Chip Ingram.

### **On Money**

(part 2 of 2)

In this two-part series, Pastor John Marino develops several biblical principles on the right handling of our finances.

### **Christian Theology - Sin**

(part 8 of 11)

Correct doctrine is the foundation of our faith as Christians. In this eleven-part series on Christian theology, Pastor John Marino explores what the Bible teaches.

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# Feedback and Response

1

To Whom it may concern: First I would like to write about the hypocrisy on the front page heading and picture. Throughout your paper, you downplay the old order churches and the non-conformity in dress standards and the why's of doing. Do you realize if they would not have had those standards the 300 plus years, there would be no such thing as the Amish church? You then would have to change your front page heading, because there wouldn't be anything like a horse and buggy going down the road, or a family walking towards the 'New-Jerusalem' gates in old traditional garb. If it doesn't matter how we dress or what we drive, then why not have a picture of a high-horsepower Corvette racing down the highway? Why not use a more typical American couple on the cover; like a man in shorts and a woman in scanty-clad summer garb with only one child with them; since an American woman has a career to fulfill, not just wiping faces and cleaning diapers? It's all about being 'born-again' and being right with God and cultural assimilation doesn't matter? All honor to our risen Lord, An Old-order Mennonite who, while working in the Lord's vineyard, appreciates the 'hedge' around it.

Thank you for your letter. You bring up a couple of good points. We, at the *Amish Voice*, love the old paths, as the prophet Jeremiah mentioned:

***Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein*** (Jeremiah 6:16).

What, though, are the old paths that this is referring to? It is not the Amish ways, nor the Mennonite ways, nor the Baptist ways, but the ways of God as told to us in the Bible. Certainly tradition can be a very good thing—or it can be a stumbling block.

As you mentioned, there are many American clothing styles, even among Christians, that are not modest. How we dress certainly does matter to God. The problem comes when we become proud of how we dress and when we think that God approves of us based upon our clothing, tradition, and rules. The Bible does not tell us what specific clothing to wear, but to dress modestly and in a way that glorifies God.

We can ride in a buggy and dress very modestly, and yet God still might not be pleased with us, just as He was not pleased with the sacrifices and offerings of the Israelites while their hearts were

far from Him.

Certainly people in different groups can have eternal life and go to heaven, but this is not because of one's church, or their rules, or their clothing. We are all born again the same way: by grace through faith in Jesus. How many people follow the traditions of their fathers and the rules of their church yet do not know the peace, love, joy, forgiveness, and freedom that comes only through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

To pray in a specific language does not make us more holy, for God understands the language of the heart. To read the Bible in a specific language does not make us better or worse, for God tells us to write His Word on our hearts. I do not think the apostles would have condemned the people of Amman's day for not reading the Bible in Greek or for not praying in Hebrew. Our traditions can be good, but as with the religious people of Jesus' day, they can also be the things that keep us from trusting in Jesus.

In Jakob Amman's day, most people dressed very modestly, yet most people in the world then were not born again, just as most are not now. Their modest clothing did not save them. Riding horses did not give them eternal life. People are born again the same way now just as they were in Jesus' day. All are lost who do

not really know Him, who follow self and the world and tradition instead of Jesus Christ alone.

One way to tell what we are trusting in is to think if we will get to heaven without those things. For example, if I think I am going to heaven because I dress a certain way and am a member of a certain church, but would not go to heaven if I did not dress exactly the same way (although still modestly) or was not a member of that church, then I am trusting in those things and not in Jesus.

The apostle Paul warned us about boasting in anything except Jesus (Galatians 6:14). He even told us not to say *I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas*, etc. (1 Corinthians 1:12). Let us not, then, think that God approves of us because of which group we are part of, but let us all be sure that we are following Jesus. Let us dress and work and live to please God, but let us always remember that God is not pleased with how we dress or what church we attend if our hearts are not His—if we are trusting in these things instead of in Jesus. It is good to know that if we trust in Christ Jesus alone, we are born again, and it does not depend upon the size of the brim of our hats or the style of our suspenders, but on God's grace through faith in Jesus. To follow the rules is fine. To trust in them for eternal life is not.

Have you ever wondered what survivors of abuse wish you knew or what they wish for from you? Today, I have a simple list – compiled by survivors – that answers that question.

Earlier this year, I created a group of women who are survivors and friends of survivors. It is more or less an open journal of my journey. It has been good for me to be vulnerable like that, and I hear a lot of positive feedback from the ladies in the group.

When I first popped the question to them of what they wish their family, church, or community understood about abuse, I was not planning on writing based on their answers. But as the answers began pouring in from the survivors, I began to notice the same themes coming through again and again. And so, this list was born. Here are 9 things survivors wish you understood about abuse:



photo by Ann Detweiler

## 1. Your acknowledgment and validation of our pain is needed.

Do you have any idea how much it hurts to be seen as crazy a person who is just trying to get attention after we tell you the most vulnerable parts of our stories? It hurts to hear you say that abuse does not or could not happen here...because we are proof that it does.

Just because the wounds we sustained are psychological, emotional, and spiritual doesn't mean that it didn't hurt. You don't see the flashbacks, the triggers, and the times we randomly cry because something suddenly reminds us of the things that happened to us years ago.

None of this pain is because we did something wrong. We never asked for it. We couldn't make it stop. We were completely powerless.

## 2. Just because the person who abused us was nice to you doesn't make our stories invalid.

Abusers are extremely good at being wolves in sheep's clothing. They look like the best Christians. They are the best employees. They deceive the entire community because as long as they keep you all believing they are good people, the less likely you will be to believe us.

Obviously, false allegations can and sometimes do happen. But it is unlikely. And the best question to ask in those situations is this: "What would motivate the victim to make up something that isn't true?" Because for many of us, we have lost the support of our families, communities, and churches. Who does that for spite or for "attention?"

## 3. Understand that trauma rewires the brain.

Ask anyone who has studied trauma and they will all tell you the same thing: trauma rewires our brains. We are not crazy; we are normal. The neurological system that keeps us safe in times of trauma often gets stuck in that fight, flight, or freeze response mode. This keeps us from living well. And we can't snap out of this mode by making up our mind to "get over it" anymore than a person with a traumatic brain injury or a broken leg can decide to get up and walk.

Remember, we never asked for this. We were violated and traumatized against our will. Our brains are only doing what God created them to do in survival situations. Your understanding and compassion is needed.

## 4. Believe that rewiring a traumatized brain is possible and create an environment where we can heal.

We can heal – at least, we can lead a fairly normal life. But healing must not be put on a timeline. It is a journey. We need ongoing support. We need to be safe AND feel safe. We need dignity and respect. We need to learn to use our voice and be allowed to use it.

It is unlikely we will be able to heal if we are constantly forced to see our abuser, especially if he/she is unrepentant. We cannot heal when we are being told to forgive, "move on," "get over it," "not let our past define our future" and all the other neat little phrases that get used to tell us how to fix ourselves.

There are some things that humans cannot fix. We cannot fix ourselves. You cannot fix us. However, you can create an environment – a "greenhouse"- in which we can have the best chance of healing.

## 5. Give us a voice.

You must understand that during the abuse, our voice was ignored and we were forced to shut up. Because of this, part of healing will include us finding our voice again.

This looks different for everyone. Some of us need to write. Some of us need to draw or sketch. Most of us need to learn to say "No" again, even to good things.

Some of us end up in the advocacy world. We talk about abuse, not because we are bitter, emotional, reactionary, or

because we want to destroy the church. We talk and advocate for change because we don't want other children to go through the horrendous stuff we went through. We need space to be able to learn to use our voice, and encouragement to do so.

## **6. Allow us as much time to grieve and lament as we need.**

You have no idea how much was taken from us. We have had years where we could not cry, and years where we've cried all the time. We know what it's like to pretend to be happy when deep down, we are sobbing inside. We know how to stuff pain- we were taught to stuff it by the use of those nice little cliches I mentioned earlier. Some of us grew up in communities where denial of pain is seen as more godly than grieving it, because grieving is messy. And no one likes messy, right?

There is so much we need to grieve in order to heal. Do not let a little anger scare you. Anger is part of grieving. Let us ask God hard questions. Let us cry out to Jesus.

What happened to us was beyond horrible. Some of it is hard to describe with words, especially nice words. Don't freak out if we use language that you taught your children not to say when we tell our stories. We need to be able to wrestle without being labeled as bitter, unforgiving, or having a victim mentality.

## **7. Hear us and listen with your heart.**

One wise woman in the group said this: "Dismissing, discrediting, and silencing victims' voices is blasphemy against God." A lot of you don't mean to do this, but when you listen with judgement instead of compassion, you end up dismissing, discrediting, and ultimately silencing us. You are missing out on a front row seat to God's slow but amazing work of

redemption in our lives! Again, you cannot fix us. But you can enter the messiness of our pain like Jesus did when He entered this broken world. You can listen with compassion.

Our behavior may not make sense to you. You might not understand why we pull away sometimes. Be compassionate anyway. It's not about you, your church's, or your family's image – it's about being the hands and feet of Jesus to the people along the Jericho road who fell prey to thieves. It's about being like the Good Samaritan instead of the Priest and Levite.

## **8. Understand that forgiveness is not a magic cure for flashbacks, triggers or pain.**

For many of us, the word "forgiveness" is a trigger. Well meaning people have pushed forgiveness on us to the point that forgiveness has become a weapon to silence us.

Can you simply trust God to show us when it's time to forgive and how to go about it without shoving it down our throats continually? And if you believe the Holy Spirit speaks today to those who cry out to Him, then you can be sure God will speak to us about that subject at some point – because we are crying out to Him!

## **9. Realize that exposure of abuse in our churches and families is God's doing.**

This is not about us or our stories. This is God. This is what mercy looks like. God, in His mercy, is uncovering the generations of abuse. If you believe He is Light and you also believe that abuse is evil, then you must admit that abuse being exposed is a good thing – a God thing. Don't fight it. Don't fight us. You are fighting God.

And that, folks, concludes the basic list of things survivors wish you understood.

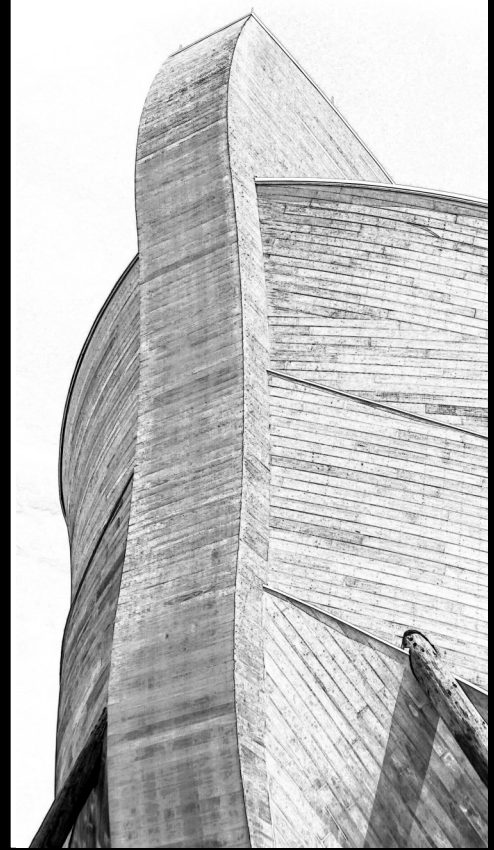
## **Did You Know?**

The Bible specifies the perfect dimensions for a stable water vessel.

*"And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits."* (Genesis 6:15).

Ship builders today are well aware that the ideal dimensions for ship stability is a length six times that of the width. Keep in mind, God told Noah the ideal dimensions for the ark 4,500 years ago.

Taken from *101 Scientific Facts & Foreknowledge* by Eternal Productions



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## The Prodigal Son

—By John Weaver

I have often looked at the parable of the prodigal son and wondered which of the three people in the parable represent me. There was a father and his two sons. Each one had a very different makeup. I think each one of us is represented in either the prodigal son, the older son, or the father.

The focus starts out on the prodigal son. There is no doubt that he was self-centered. He cared nothing about his duty or his responsibility. He was a carnal, selfish person. He was all about himself. Many of us start out this way.

Then there was the older brother. He took responsibility and worked hard on the farm. He was the good boy who never got the recognition that he thought he deserved.

There was also the father. Oh, the father! He was everything that the sons lacked. He represents love, forgiveness, mercy, compassion, kindness, and oh, so much more.

If we can see with spiritual eyes, we will discern so much beyond the surface. All three of these people showed who they were on the inside by the outward.

The prodigal came to a decision. He was done with his life. He knew that he

would perish the way he was going. Then he thought of his father. Maybe, just maybe, the father would have compassion on him, so he did what all of us need to do. HE TURNED AROUND. HE REPENTED. He had a change of heart that brought a change in his life. He was completely unprepared for the depth of the fathers love.

The problem with the older son was the opposite. He never had a change of heart. He achieved a good bit more in his own strength than his younger brother did, but it benefited him nothing. All that he had to offer was his own goodness - and it was completely inadequate. All of our goodness is. Without a transformed heart, we will be like the older brother.

The father is everything that the carnal man cannot be. He represents our Heavenly Father. He is what Jesus was while here on earth. He represents the God of all grace. If we come to the end of ourselves, like the prodigal did in that pigpen, and turn around and go to the Father, we will get the same reception that that poor sinner did—exceeding, and abundantly above all we can ask or even think.

If we are like the older brother, toiling, working away, but angry at the injustice

of not having our own goodness recognized, then we need a new heart, something that no amount of effort will ever achieve. A new heart can only be achieved by laying down our own goodness and coming to the Father. We must all come to the decision in the pigpen...or on the farm.

God will save and transform the prodigal as well as the good person, but as we can see in the parable, it is harder for a good person to be saved.

*Today Lord, we are thankful that you come running to meet us when we simply turn around. We are not worthy to be called your sons. We have spent our times in foolish living like the young son did. But oh, the love You have for us when we turn around! And if we are like the other brother, God we need your help to have our eyes opened. You opened the eyes of the blind, please do it again. Show us our need. Show us how utterly undone we are without a transformed new heart. Above all, Lord, we want to be like You, like the father was in this parable—something that we have no hope of becoming in our own effort. We need You to change us. Thank you Lord, for your goodness to us. Amen.*