



MAP, P.O. Box 128, 575 State Route 250 N, Savannah OH 44874

(419) 962-1515

January 2012

The Minister Followed God First In His Life

Study 2: Galatians 1:17-24

—Teacher's Outline and Study Bible™

1. **First, he went to Arabia: He got alone with God**
 2. **Second, he returned to Damascus: He corrected the wrong he had previously done**
 3. **Third, he went to Jerusalem: He faced his past, vv.13-14**
 - a. Faced Peter & James: Faced them as an equal—did not consult them about the gospel
- B. The Minister Followed God First in His Life, 1:17-24**

17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

- 21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;
- 22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:
- 23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.
- 24 And they glorified God in me.
- b. Made a solemn protest: He was not lying, see vv.11-12
- 4. Fourth, he went to Syria &**

Cilicia, that is, Tarsus: He faced his hometown, Ac.21:39

5. **Fifth, he bore the fruit of a God-centered life**
 - a. His testimony spread
 - b. His life honored God

Section II

THE PROOF OF GOD'S MESSENGER AND MESSAGE Galatians 1:10–2:21

Study 2: THE MINISTER FOLLOWED GOD FIRST IN HIS LIFE

Text: Galatians 1:17-24

Aim: To bear a captivating testimony for Christ.

Memory Verse:

“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death” (Ph.1:20).

INTRODUCTION:

Think for a moment: What is the most exciting testimony you have ever heard? What struck you the most?

If you were put on the spot today and asked to share your Christian testimony, what would it include? One of the most powerful tools of witnessing is your personal testimony. Unfortunately, many Christians have not lived the kind of life that bears a strong testimony for Christ.

The life of the believer should be so strong that it becomes a *trophy* of what God can do in the heart of a person. Note how strong a life and testimony Paul lived.

Paul was under attack by some critics in the churches of Galatia. They were saying that he was not a God-called minister and that he preached a false gospel. They sowed the poison of gossip: that he was in the ministry only as a profession and for what he could get out of it.

The present passage is a continuation of the former verses. Paul was proving that his call and message did come from God, that he was a God-called minister and his message was the true gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, he had never received the gospel from anyone other than Christ Himself. To prove his point, he recounted his journeys right after his conversion. The point is this: he sought to learn the truth from God and from God alone. In the first few years after his conversion, he followed God first in his life, not men.

OUTLINE:

1. First, he went to Arabia: he got alone with God (v.17).
2. Second, he returned to Damascus: he corrected the wrong he had previously done (v.17).
3. Third, he went to Jerusalem: he faced his past (vv.18-20).
4. Fourth, he went to Syria and Cilicia, that is Tarsus: he faced his hometown (vv.21-22).
5. The result of a God-centered life (vv.23-24).

A CLOSER LOOK:

(1:17-24) **Paul's Ministry—Time-Table:** Paul said “immediately...I went into Arabia.” The timetable of his ministry would seem to be as follows.

1. His conversion (Ga.1:15-16; Ac.9:1f).
2. His “immediate” preaching and ministry in Damascus (Ac.9:19-22).
3. His time alone with God in Arabia (Ga.1:17). The three years could be three full years or parts of three calendar years. In comparing this passage with *Acts*, Paul's Arabian experience would seem to fit in best at the close of Acts 9:22. There seems to be a natural break there. Acts 9:23 begins by saying, “And after that many days were fulfilled,” which seems to be saying there was a long period of time between his conversion visit to Damascus (Ac.9:3, 10-22) and the ministry which he launched after his Arabian seclusion. He launched the ministry in the most natural place, Damascus, among the believers whom he knew (Ac.9:23).
4. His second ministry in Damascus after returning from Arabia (Ac.9:23-25).
5. His first trip to Jerusalem for fifteen days to see Peter (Ga.1:18-19; Ac.9:23-30). The apostles in Ac.9:27 would be Peter and James, the Lord's brother.
6. His ministry in and around Tarsus which apparently lasted for about eleven years (Ga.1:21-2:1).
7. His call by Barnabas to help him minister in Antioch (Ac.11:25-26).
8. His second trip to Jerusalem to carry relief goods during a famine (Ga.2:1f; Ac.11:30; 12:25). Some say that this return trip to Jerusalem is the trip to the Jerusalem Council described in Acts 15. However, two significant problems exist with this position. First, Paul emphasizes a private interview in Ga.2:2, whereas the Acts account is a public meeting. Second, where does the famine visit fit in? If the account given in the second chapter of Galatians is not the famine visit, then Paul omitted the famine visit altogether from the account in Galatians. This is difficult to explain in light of the fact that Paul goes to extra pains in giving his contacts with the Jerusalem church. In listing his visits, he declares that he speaks the plain truth, “**I lie not**” (Ga.1:20).
9. His call and commissioning as a missionary (Ac.13:2-3).
10. His first great mission to the Gentiles: to Cyprus and Galatia (Ac.13:1-14:28).

11. His return to Antioch after completing his first missionary journey (Ac.14:26-28).
12. His third trip to Jerusalem to defend the gospel of grace before the Jerusalem Council (Ac.15:1-30).
13. His return to Antioch with the message from the Jerusalem Council (Ac.15:30-35).
14. His second great mission to the Gentiles: to Europe (Ac.15:36-18:22).
15. His return to Antioch after completing his second missionary journey (Ac.18:22).
16. His third great mission to the Gentiles: Asia Minor and Europe (Ac.18:23-21:16).
17. His fourth and final trip to Jerusalem when he was arrested (Ac.21:17-26:32).
18. His journey to Rome as a prisoner (Ac.27:1-28:15).
19. His ministry in Rome while a prisoner (Ac.28:16-31).

QUESTIONS:

1. What lessons can you learn from the time-table of Paul's ministry?
2. What should be our order of priority in serving God?
3. In looking at Paul's life, what special points are challenging to your faith? Why?

1. FIRST, HE WENT TO ARABIA: HE GOT ALONE WITH GOD (v.17).

Paul had just been converted, and his conversion was a most dramatic experience (see Ac.9:1f). Paul's former life had taken two terrible turns.

1. Paul had been very self-righteous. He had been steeped in religion and its traditions, form, and ritual. He had felt that he was acceptable to God because he was religious and did as much good as he could. He felt that his own goodness and religion made him righteous before God. He failed to see the absolute perfection and love of God and the absolute imperfection and unlovableness of man. He was utterly deceived about the true nature of man and God, of unrighteousness and righteousness, of sin and forgiveness, of life and death.

2. Paul had become so self-deceived that he had launched a campaign of hatred and murder against the followers of Christ. He had used everything at his disposal to stamp out the name of Christ from the face of the earth. The point is that Paul was saved from a terrible life of sin and shame, a life steeped in as much sin and shame as a man could be. He was self-righteous and arrogant, full of bitterness, hatred, and murder; and he went about misusing his position and power just like a tyrant—to the point of imprisoning and murdering those who differed with him.

When Paul was converted, he had a dire need to be alone with God. He did not need the counsel and help of men; he needed the presence and help of God and His Spirit. He already knew the Scriptures. He

W H O This publishing work is registered as a charitable organization in the USA and is supported through freewill offerings. We welcome your articles, testimonies and questions. We reserve the right to edit or decline any material and are not responsible for the return of any articles.

W E A R E Since our beginning in 2000, many people have written to us, asking to be added to our mailing list, while others have sent us names of their friends and family members. We think it is important for us to tell you that the cost of *The Amish Voice* is \$.45 a copy and is totally funded by readers from across our great country, who appreciate the ministry and care to support it. If the Lord would lay it on your heart to come along side of us, by helping with expenses, it would be a great benefit as well as highly appreciated. In order to continue receiving the *Amish Voice*, please keep us informed of any changes to your address.

had studied them at the feet of the greatest religious teachers of his day, but he had not known God nor Christ, not in a personal way. Paul had no knowledge of God, not a personal knowledge. What he had known about God had been twisted and corrupted, misapplied and misused. He desperately needed...

- time to learn how to live with Christ day by day, drawing confidence and strength from Him.
- time to learn the real meaning of the Scriptures: how they applied to Christ.
- time to accurately handle the Word of Truth (the Scriptures).
- time to learn how to fellowship with Christ in daily worship (devotions, quiet times).
- time to learn how to walk in the presence and communion and fellowship of Christ all day.
- time to learn the commandments and will of Christ.
- time to think through how to go about making Christ known to a world in dire need and steeped in sin and darkness.

How much time did Paul need? Apparently, he spent about three years in Arabia. Imagine spending three years seeking the Lord and learning how to live and serve Him!

APPLICATION:

What a lesson for all believers, ministers and laymen alike! What power would be in our lives and ministries if we sought to know Christ as Paul did!

“Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD” (Ps.27:14).

“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Is.40:31).

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Ti.2:15).

ILLUSTRATION:

It is during some of the loneliest times of our lives that we find ourselves with God. This seems to be a paradox, but it is true. For when we are truly alone, we can clearly listen to Him. And as Brother Lawrence, a humble Frenchman of the 17th century, stated so well, we can “practice the presence of God.” How is that done in a practical sense?

Jeremiah Denton was a prisoner of war in North Vietnam for seven horrendous years. As one of the highest ranking American captives, he was subjected to particularly grueling torture, spending almost his entire incarceration in solitary confinement. In such a barren, brutal situation, it would be hard not to focus on the pain and [monotony]. Yet, Denton not only survived but also came back and was elected a United States senator from Alabama.

How did he survive? He stated on many occasions that an essential survival skill was quoting passages from the Bible. Internalized Scripture became the unseen sword that enabled him to fend off the cruelest weapons of the enemy. By inwardly focusing on the power of God to sustain and strengthen him, he was able to rise above the squalor of his

lonely existence. (Charles Stanley. *How To Listen to God.* Nashville, TN: Oliver-Nelson Books, 1985, p. 97.)

QUESTIONS:

1. When you feel alone, does God seem to be more accessible to you? Why or why not?
2. What barriers stand in the way of your spending quality time alone with God? Which one can you work on *now*?
3. What tragedy would it take to get you to totally depend upon God?

2. SECOND, HE RETURNED TO DAMASCUS: HE CORRECTED THE WRONG HE HAD PREVIOUSLY DONE (v.17).

When Paul was converted, he was on his way to Damascus to arrest and stamp out the followers of Christ. It was his intent and purpose to literally cleanse Damascus of all Christians. The bitter persecution had, of course, greatly disrupted the lives of believers. It had forced many to flee for their lives, leaving their families, homes, jobs, and all means of livelihood.

The point is this: Paul had returned to Damascus to do what he could to right the terrible wrong he had done to the believers of Damascus. He wanted to ask their forgiveness and assure them that he had been saved; and, no doubt, he wanted to share Christ among the very people he had been so bent on destroying.

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Mt.5:23-24).

ILLUSTRATION:

Paul did one of the hardest things for a person to do: he went back and made things right with those he had hurt. He wanted a fresh start. Do you? In the book *Is it Real When it Doesn't Work?*, Doug Murren and Barb Shurin recount:

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel awoke one morning to read his own obituary in the local newspaper: “Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite, who died yesterday, devised a way for more people to be killed in a war than ever before, and he died a very rich man.”

Actually, it was Alfred's older brother who had died; a newspaper reporter had bungled the epitaph.

But the account had a profound effect on Nobel. He decided he wanted to be known for something other than developing the means to kill people efficiently and for amassing a fortune in the process. So he initiated the Nobel Prize, the award for scientists and writers who foster peace.

Nobel said, “Every man ought to have the chance to correct his epitaph in midstream and write a new one.”

Few things will change us as much as looking at our life as though it is finished. (Craig B. Larson, Editor. *Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993, p. 123.)

Nobel was fortunate—he had a warning that jolted him out of his ‘comfort zone.’ If you are reading this or listening to this, it is not too late for you to go back and make things right with someone you have

hurt—or even to seek peace with someone who has hurt you!

QUESTIONS:

1. What things do you need to make right with others?
2. Has another person done something to hurt you? If he came to you seeking your forgiveness, what would be your reaction?

____ Total, unconditional forgiveness?
____ Great caution, watching your back for a knife?
____ Very skeptical, questioning his true motive?
____ Unforgiving, the pain is too deep?

3. THIRD, HE WENT TO JERUSALEM: HE FACED HIS PAST (vv.18-20).

Before his conversion, Paul had lived in Jerusalem and had been one of the officials of the ruling body (the Sanhedrin) or else had been close to the leaders of the Sanhedrin. We know this because the Sanhedrin had been the official body which stood behind Paul's attack against the Christians. Whatever the case, Paul was well known in Jerusalem, and he knew that some of his former friends would consider him a betrayer to their religion and cause. Nevertheless, Paul wanted to share his testimony with as many of them as could be trusted.

However, Paul's primary reason for going to Jerusalem was to see Peter, the leader of the early Christians. By sharing with Peter, Paul felt that many of the believers would know that he had been truly converted. They would thereby be more ready to accept him and his ministry.

But note: the other apostles were apparently away on evangelistic and mission tours. Paul saw no other Christian leader except James, the Lord's brother, who was pastor of the great Jerusalem church. Imagine the sharing that must have taken place between Paul and Peter...

- as Paul shared his past, his conversion, and his experiences with the Lord in Arabia.
- as Peter shared the life of Christ while on earth.

Remember that Paul was relating his journeys to the Galatians for a very specific purpose: to show that he had not learned the gospel from men; he had received it from the Lord Himself. He was a true apostle and minister of the Lord, and his gospel was the true gospel, the gospel revealed to him by Christ Himself. Paul asserted the truth of his claim with the solemn declaration:

“Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not” (v.20).

APPLICATION:

As much as possible...

- believers should seek to share Christ with former friends and associates. Unbelievers need to see the change Christ can make in lives.
- believers should seek counsel and help as they launch their ministries, in particular the counsel and help of leaders.

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pe.3:15).

QUESTIONS:

1. Have you ever shared Christ with fellow workers? If so, what were their responses? Do they usually see the love of Christ in your life?
2. What was the purpose for Paul's facing his past? What areas of your past do you need to face?
3. Are you comfortable visiting people who knew you before you made a commitment to Christ? Do they see a difference in you now? Do you tell them about what changed your life?

4. FOURTH, HE WENT TO SYRIA AND CILICIA, THAT IS, TARSUS: HE FACED HIS HOMETOWN (vv.21-22).

Tarsus was where Paul's family lived and where his childhood friends were, the place where he had gone to school and played as a child. It was, of course, Paul's desire to share Christ with as many of his family and friends as he could.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mt.5:16).

QUESTIONS:

1. Sometimes, one of the hardest mission fields is at home. What difficulties do you face in sharing Christ with unsaved loved ones?
2. What would it take for every member of your family to make a commitment to Christ? What can you do to lead your family to make that commitment?

5. FIFTH, THE RESULTS OF A GOD-CENTERED LIFE WERE POWERFUL (vv.23-24).

The results of a God-centered life are twofold, and they are powerful results.

1. The testimony of a God-centered life was spread throughout the whole area. Paul had not yet visited the churches in Judaea, that is, the area surrounding Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the believers of the area had heard about Paul's conversion, that he who had formerly persecuted the church was now preaching Christ.

2. The testimony of a God-centered life stirred believers to honor God. The churches of Judaea had never seen Paul, but they glorified God because of his strong testimony about which they had heard.

“Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul” (Ps.66:16).

ILLUSTRATION:

There is a bottom-line when a Christian believer has placed God in the center of his life. Word does get out when God blesses and people want to see living examples of faith. In the book, *Everyday Discipleship for Ordinary People*, Stuart Briscoe wrote:

One of my young colleagues was officiating at the funer-

al of a war veteran. The dead man's military friends wished to have a part in the service at the funeral home, so they requested the pastor to lead them down to the casket, stand with them for a solemn moment of remembrance, and then lead them out through the side door.

This he proceeded to do, but unfortunately the effect was somewhat marred when he picked the wrong door. The result was that they marched with military precision into a broom closet, in full view of the mourners, and had to beat a hasty retreat covered with confusion.

This true story illustrates a cardinal rule or two. First, if you're going to lead, make sure you know where you are going. Second, if you're going to follow, make sure that you are following someone who knows what he is doing! (Stuart Briscoe. *Everyday Discipleship for Ordinary People*. Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1988, p.25.)

Your testimony is either for God or against God. Will your testimony lead others to Christ and stir believers to honor Christ? Or will it lead some innocent souls down the wrong path of life and doom them for eternity?

QUESTIONS:

1. How well is your testimony known? Has your life and testimony been Christ-centered? Has it reached beyond yourself?
2. What difference have you made for the cause of Christ in your family, your church, your community?
3. If you could change one thing about your testimony, what would it be? Why?

SUMMARY:

If you really desire a life that bears a strong testimony, then Paul's life is a great reminder of what it takes...

1. First, he went to Arabia: he got alone with God.
2. Second, he returned to Damascus: he corrected the wrong he had previously done.
3. Third, he went to Jerusalem: he faced his past
4. Fourth, he went to Syria and Cilicia, that is, Tarsus: he faced his hometown.
5. Fifth, the results of a God-centered life were powerful.

PERSONAL JOURNAL NOTES (Reflection & Response)

1. The most important thing that I learned from this lesson was:



Has the Amish Voice been a blessing to you?
Drawn you closer to the heart of God?

Challenged you to live and serve the Lord with a greater passion?

If so, would you consider sending a donation in to help us with the expenses of printing and postage?

Secondly, would you pray for us, as we thrive to encourage and challenge the Amish culture with six more truth packed issues in 2012.

You may send your donation to:

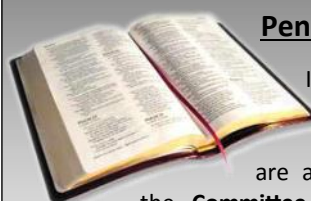
The Amish Voice
PO Box 128, Savannah OH 44874

2. The area that I need to work on the most is:
3. I can apply this lesson to my life by:
4. Closing Statement of Commitment:

The Teacher's Outline & Study Bible, Galatians™; [Leadership Ministries Worldwide, Chattanooga, TN., 1994, 2010], page 1-4, used by permission, all rights reserved.

Leadership Ministries Worldwide, 3755 Pilot Point
Chattanooga, TN 37416 USA, (800) 987-8790
Web Site: www.outlinebible.org

You can own the Teacher's Outline and Study Bible (TOSB) Commentary, Galatians? To order, please go to the back cover (page 11) and use the ordering form.



Pennsylvania Deitsh Testament

If you would like to obtain a New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs in Pennsylvania Deitsh, they are available for \$13.95 postpaid from the Committee for Translation, 3864 Township Road 162, Sugarcreek, OH 44681. Phone 330-852-4663.

You do not need to send money ahead of time; they will bill you with your order. Your local Christian bookstore may also have them available.

One of the most interesting and inspiring explanations anywhere with regard to our new relationship in Christ is in Romans chapter 7 where Paul likens the walk of grace to a marriage scenario. But first we will visit briefly what law is like.

The trade mark of law is punishment. A law is not a law unless it has teeth. Rules that have no teeth are only guidelines or suggestions. Parents may have house rules that children need to obey. There are two primary reasons why children or adults will obey. One reason is the fear of punishment and the other is not wanting to disappoint someone we love. Of course the latter is always a better motive.

The whole of our society needs the rule of law because love and respect are not present in all people all the time. The penalty of not obeying a stop sign is spelled out by the law. Our forefathers went through the same intersections as we do without stopping, yet did not violate law until the corner had a stop sign posted. So now we become lawbreakers simply by default. The nature of law is to always need more law. Even though we oppose more law, its increase is inevitable. No country can exist without laws.

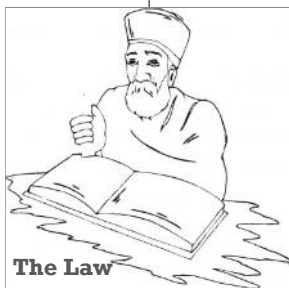
Likewise the Old Testament had law spelled out in details that were to govern Israel. The law was designed to deal with sin. When the church was first getting started, many being from Jewish background were struggling to deal with trying to fulfill those laws. So the apostle Paul explained how believers now are to deal with sin in the new Testament way. Incidentally, the law continues forever. It is not about to be removed or become extinct.

Now to Romans 7:1-4: *Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.*

So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

There are three players in the above scene:

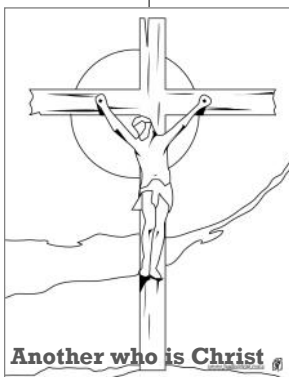
1. First, is the husband who is the Law of Moses.
2. Second, the woman who is us, that is the church.
3. Third, the next husband known as 'another' who is Christ.



The Law



The Church



Another who is Christ

When we are born to our parents as all are, we are under Law. No matter where you are born, you come under God's Law. That is not escapable. The law is right and true. The first husband is totally righteous and demanding. He does not offer her, the woman, any help to perform his requirements. His demands are just, proper and true. But the woman is unable to meet all his demands. She is easy-going, casual and hap-hazard. Life is indeed very difficult. She is fully aware of her inability to carry out his demands. Since divorce is impossible, she seems stuck with her fate. And he (law) is not about to die. (Matthew 5: 18)

But, there is a way out. She has to die. Verse three says that if he died, she is free to marry another man. And therein lies the secret of the Christian life. We must be counted as dead in order to be born again. Now it becomes apparent from Matthew 5 Sermon on the Mount that the new husband is no less demanding, but has an even higher standard. BUT the big difference is this; the new husband in verse 4 carries out the requirements in himself. That is the only way to produce fruit.

You can never take satisfaction that you have lived a life good enough that you can take credit for getting yourself into heaven. If that were possible, Jesus would not have needed to come to earth. Only one sin, one slip up and the law says the soul that sins must die. That concept of dying seems hard to understand, but rest assured that God knows how to do this. Call in total honesty and openness of heart on the name of Jesus and ask him to do it. It will change you forever.

Eli Stutzman — Ontario Canada
Phone: (519) 866-3737

Christian Suffering



entrance into the Kingdom of God was strewn with days of tribulation.

Today, new gospels are preached that tell Christians to expect the world to be laid at their feet. Our forefathers, however, knew that Jesus had warned us "In the world you will have tribulation ... "

Christians of a by-gone era prepared themselves for trouble. They expected hard times and a difficult life. They understood that

The book of Job is a book about suffering in this present world. It is about a man who loved God and yet experienced a day of suffering like none of us has ever experienced. In one day Job lost his source of income, and everything he had set aside for retirement. He not only lost his income, he also lost all of the tools that he needed to do his work.

Worse of all, Job's children, all of them, were killed in a wind storm. Today's preachers who teach that only good comes to those who love the Lord, can never take their texts from the book of Job.

You may be reading this and saying, "I have had a terrible week this week." You may be saying, "In fact this has been the worse week of my life." You may be crying to yourself, grumbling to your friends and even complaining to God, but before you continue acting like that, read the book of Job.

Read the first two chapters and you will see what happened to Job. Read the last five chapters (38 – 42) and you will hear God answering Job's complaints about having to suffer. —Paul

Have you ever felt like no one appreciates you for who you are? Do you ever feel like you are trying ever so hard to get ahead and yet no one notices?

The feeling that no one cares and appreciates you can get very discouraging and can lead a person to question whether its worth living.

Jesus said in John 10:10:

...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

At times, we may read Jesus' statement and think, "well, that may work for others, but it sure doesn't work for me." In fact, you may feel like you are living in a lifeless body that wonders the earth from day to day, just waiting to die and get it over with. Finances may be difficult. Relationships between you and a friend or spouse might be suffering. But deep inside, you hope and pray that some day soon, a miracle will take place and bam!, you'll snap right out of your discouragement and life will be different.

My friend, chances are, things will not happen that way. How they are today is probably how they will continue to go unless you do something about it. Let me explain: There are seven billion people walking the earth right now and you and I cannot change one single person. Not even one! The only person you can change is 'you'. That's it.

I've found that most of the time when we are discouraged and feeling beat up, it's because we have our eyes focused on self. In other words, we keep having our own little pity party. And we think to ourselves, "poor me"; if only people would have to walk in my shoes for one day, they would find out very quickly how difficult my life really is.

I've also found out, when I get my eyes off self and look toward others, I soon forget my discouragement and miserable state. Consider what Jesus said in Luke 6:38:

Give, and it shall be given unto you;

And then Jesus continues...

good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye use, it shall be measured [back] to you again.

What Jesus is saying, if you want to live a life of great abundance (an overflow of joy), you have to give it out to others before it can be given back to you. The more you give out the more you get back.

If we judge, condemn and are unforgiving of others—men and God will treat us the same.

If we do not judge and condemn others, but rather forgive them, then God and most men will not judge and condemn us; they will also be forgiving.

So the question is, how much forgiveness, joy and fulfillment do you want today?

You want a lot? Give a lot. You want little? Give a little.

If you are wondering about ways to give, consider the following:

We all know the power of congratulating others. Rewarding people with our praise is one of the easiest and most powerful ways to motivate others. Simple words of encouragement can change a person's life when given at the right moment. Saying "Good Job" or "That Looks Great" can encourage the other person and make them want to try harder to please you. Your positive comments will also give them a much needed sense of accomplishment for the hard work they have invested.

My children are now in their twenties and serving the Lord. One day, I asked them, what is the one thing that caused you to continue serving and living for the Lord? Well, they said, "dad, you and mom knew how to encourage us along the way. Even when we made



mistakes, you still encouraged us with positive words. You patted us on the back whenever you had a chance, and you made us feel like we were somebodies."

To which I replied, "Wow! You mean patting you on the back and saying, you did great job meant that much?" "Yes", they said, "it made us more confident of ourselves as well as helped us see God as One who loves us, even when we made mistakes in life."

What happens though, when no one gives "You" that needed praise? Who encourages the encourager? Who tells the guy at the top "Good Job"? Oftentimes, nobody does this. Even a self-motivated person has a point where they just need to hear someone say "I appreciate what you are doing." So what do you do when those affirmations are few and far between?

Encourage yourself! David did that in 1 Samuel 30:6.

And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for

his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.

Maybe you've never had someone ready to stone you, but there have probably been times when you wondered if even your closest friends cared for you.

David understood that this was one day when encouragement from others was not going to come. They were tired, discouraged, and let down. He knew there was nothing he could do or say that would cause them to appreciate all he was trying to do for them. The only thing left for David to do was to "Encourage Himself". The scriptures say he "...encouraged himself in the Lord his God."

Wouldn't it be something if we could know exactly what he said or did to do this. What were his words? Maybe he talked out loud to himself, and said:

Don't worry David, God's got your back. You're doing a great job for the Kingdom of God. Don't be discouraged, the Lord knows where you're at right now.

These are things we might say to another person to encourage them, so why not say them to ourselves?

I confess, I talk to myself on occasion. Not like a lot of people do, but rather to encourage myself. A few years ago, I began to become very discouraged when it seemed that no one else seemed to appreciate the hard work and tremendous accomplishment that I was experiencing. So, I began to do something that might sound a bit strange to many people. I began "patting myself on the back". Seriously, I literally patted myself on the back and said to myself, "Good job Joe. No one else may notice what you just did, but I did and I think you did a fantastic job."

Pray for yourself. Lay hands on yourself and pray for yourself like you pray for others. Should God not heal you, simply because you are the one doing the praying?

The point is, be sure that you stay encouraged. Be sure that you stay blessed and healed. Don't do for others and let yourself become beaten down. What you do for others, do for yourself. **Stay encouraged!**

He is the First and Last, the Beginning and the End! He is the Architect of the universe and the Manager of all time. He always was, He always is, and He always will be..... Unmoved, Unchanged, Undefeate^d Undone! He was bruised and brought healing! He was pierced and eased pain! He was persecuted and brought freedom! He v^e dead and brought life! He is r^e and brings power! He reigns brings peace!

The world cannot understand armies cannot defeat Him, th^e cannot explain Him, and the le^g not ignore Him. Herod could Him, the Pharisees could not Him, and the people could not h

Nero could not crush Him, Hi^s not silence Him, the New A^p replace Him, and no one can ex^e away!

He is light, love, longevity, and Lord. He is goodness, kindness, gentleness, and God. He is holy, righteous, mighty, powerful, and pure. His ways are right, His word is eternal,

His will is unchanging, and His mind is on me. He is my Redeemer, He is my Savior, He is my guide, and He is my peace! He is my joy, He is my comfort, He is my Lord, ^{and He is my} life!



I serve Him because His bond is love, His burden is light, and His goal for me is bundant life. I follow Him because He is the wisdom of the wise, the r^e of the powerful, the n^et of days, the ruler of r^es, the overseer of the comers, and the sover^erd of all that was and to come.

seems impressive to for size. His goal is a

relationship with ME! He will never leave me, never forsake me, never mislead me, never forget me, never overlook me, and never cancel my appointment in His appointment book!

When I fall, He lifts me up! When I fail, He forgives! When I am weak, He is strong! When I am lost, He is the way! When I am afraid, He is my courage! When I stumble, He steadies me! When I am hurt, He heals me! When I am broken, He mends me! When I am blind, He leads me! When I am hungry, He feeds me! When I face trials, He is with me! When I face persecution, He shields me! When I face problems, He comforts me! When I face loss, He provides for me! When I face death, He carries me Home!

He is everything for everybody, everywhere, every time, and every way. He is God; He is faithful. I am His, and He is mine!

So, if you are wondering why I feel so secure, understand this...He said it and that settles it. God is in control, I am on His side, and that means all is well with my soul. Every day is a blessing for God is.

15 Interesting Facts

1. The Earth weighs around 6,588,000,000,000,000,000,000 tons.
2. The highest point in Pennsylvania is lower than the lowest point in Colorado.
3. The katydid bug hears through holes in its hind legs.
4. The longest word in the English language, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis.
5. The starfish is one of the only animals who can turn it's stomach inside-out.
6. There are more chickens than people in the world.
7. To escape the grip of a crocodile's jaws, push your thumbs into its eye-balls -- it will let you go instantly.
8. When opossums are playing 'possum, they are not "playing." They actually pass out from sheer terror.
9. Women's hearts beat faster than men's.
10. You can only smell 1/20th as well as a dog.
11. Your stomach has to produce a new layer of mucus every two weeks otherwise it will digest itself.
12. A cockroach can live several weeks with its head cut off.
13. A goldfish has a memory span of three seconds.
14. A man named Charles Osborne had the hiccups for 6 years.
15. Babies are born without knee caps. They don't appear until the child reaches 2-6 years of age.

What does the Bible say about the end of the world?

Answer: The event usually referred to by the phrase “end of the world” is described in 2 Peter 3:10:

“But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

This is the culmination of the events referred to in the beginning of that



verse as “the day of the Lord,” the time when God will intervene in human history for the purpose of judgment. At that time, all that

God has created, “the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1), He will destroy.

The timing of this event, according to most Bible scholars, is at the end of the 1000-year period called the millennium. During these thousand years, Christ will reign on earth as King in Jerusalem, sitting on the throne of David (Luke 1:32-33) and ruling in peace but with a “rod of iron” (Revelation 19:15).

—Continued on page 10—

—Continued from page 8 (End of the World)—

This morning, I learned a simple, but also valuable lesson. Have you ever noticed how God uses our children to show us the kind of mess we ourselves are? Yeah, I thought so!

This morning's lesson all began with my little girl waking up at 4:45. She cried and cried and cried, and I could not comfort her. I think all moms (and dads too) find this to be quite frustrating.

My husband is traveling again (his business takes him out of town on a frequent basis), so there is no backup, and I happen to have a sore neck and shoulder right now. I finally figured out that she has an earache.

So, you know how it goes...you rock and rock and rock, and finally they drop off to sleep. Then you gently lay them down, only to have them wake right back up. This is repeated several times.

In the meantime your mind travels to other grievances in your life, things that have been frustrating you or hurting you, or are simply unhandy. You get more frustrated. You try to

hush the baby. Meanwhile, it is time for the other children to get ready for school. They have needs too, or are grouchy from being awakened by a crying baby too early in the morning. You get the idea, I'm sure!

By the time the older children are off to school, mama is tired, her shoulders and neck are REALLY sore, and baby is still waking up every time she gets laid down. Mama wants to shower, eat, give her shoulders a break, but baby says, 'Nothing doing!'

Now, I doubt any of you get to this point, but, much to her shame, this mama, got a little rough and told her little one to quit it and go to sleep. Immediately I repented.

As I was praying, God reminded me of how often He tells me He knows I am uncomfortable with some of my circumstances, and how some of them have been hurting me, but that He wants me to rest and let Him take care of things, just as I want my baby to rest, knowing Mama is nearby and will take good

care of her. I felt thoroughly chastened by that reminder.

But yet another aspect comes to my mind...my baby normally quiets in my arms...and I remember the countless times God as my Father welcomes me into His loving embrace and I refuse, or continue to fight and wrestle, thinking He is somehow causing all the pain, similar to a baby who does not understand that Mama is not hurting her, and wiggling and fighting only makes the pain worse. Sigh! How patient our Father is with us!

So my new challenge for today is to simply rest in God's arms, knowing He is so very capable of caring for me...much more capable even than I am of caring for my own children because He is not limited the way we are. He sees and knows all things. Let's trust Him.

Lynn Miller
Kentucky



Law Moved Aside; Faith In Christ Stepped In It's Place

—Joe Keim

But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified [made acceptable to God] by faith.

But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. —Gal 3:23-26

“Before faith came, we were under the law”—before Jesus’ work on the cross was completed, all of mankind was under the law. The law, could be described as a person who is constantly watching over your shoulder, and every time you break a law, he points his finger in your face and cries: Law breaker! Guilty! Condemned! Judged! Failure!

People who place themselves under the law (yoke of bondage) try as hard as anybody to please God, but in their own mind they can never measure up. This of course leads people to feel burdened down, as if some heavy ball of steel hung around their neck and shoulder.

Furthermore, living under the law has a tendency to lead people into a state of depression and bring about feelings of worthlessness. To top things off, God often feels un-reachable, uncaring and far away. Why does it work that way? Because people under the law gage their connection with God by how well they keep the law.

“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ”—The Apostle Paul tells us that the law, in a sense, acted as a school teacher. To help us understand this better, let’s say that you are

a student who arrives at school and the teacher points out that she wants you to study your arithmetic lesson very well, because at the end of the day, she’s going to hand you a test and the goal is to score a hundred percent. Then the teacher goes on to explain that if you have one wrong answer, you fail the whole test.

So you get your book out and study hard all day long. Finally, at the end of the day you take the test, only to find out you failed. The next day you try again and fail. Days turn into weeks and weeks turn into months. You keep trying and trying to score a hundred percent on your test—some days you come closer than others, but eventually you realize, it is impossible to get a perfect score on your test.

The law works the same way. You and I will never score a hundred percent. We will always come up short. Even if we live ten thousand years. James 2:10 says:

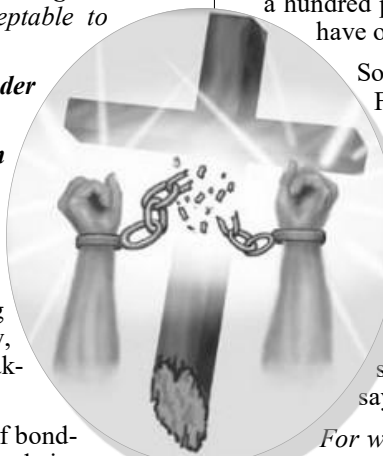
For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend [fail] in one point, he is guilty of all.

I have never murdered anyone, and I doubt that you have, however, if we so much as cheated once in our life time, we are just as guilty as the one who murdered.

“But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster”—law moved aside and faith in Christ stepped in it’s place. That ought to make someone shout amen! Glory to God!
—Continued on page 10—

—Continued from page 9—

You see, the law was put in place for the following reasons:



- we can never measure up to God and His requirements.
- the law helped us see our great need for Christ.

And now that Christ has come, we are no longer under the school teacher (law). Unless of course you would rather continue beating yourself up in reaching perfection by living under the law.

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus”—

- What makes us part of God’s family? Faith in Christ!
- What makes us brothers and sisters? Faith in Christ!
- What makes us justified before God? Faith in Christ!

The story is told of a man who cried out for help as he dangled helplessly from the edge of the cliff. "Can anyone up there help me?"

"Yes," answered a heavenly voice. "I'll help you, but first you must let go"

"Let go!" gasped the man. "But then I'd fall!"

"I'll catch you," replied the voice.

After a long pause, the man called out, "Can anyone else up there help me?"

This story illustrates mankind's refusal to accept God's offer of salvation. Rather than accepting God's faith way to salvation, people cry out for another way. Paul had clearly taught the Galatians that *faith in Christ* was the only way.

Simple *faith in Christ* can be scary because it seems so easy. It seems too simple to let go of the rope of good works and have a faith relationship with God.

So what did the Galatians do? They listened to the false teachers who taught that letting go of the rope of self-effort was foolish.

These false teachers convinced the gullible Galatians that they can have heaven and a relationship with God by clinging to good works.

The Apostle Paul, who was called to the Gentile nation, kept looking



back over his shoulder and wondering about his own people, the Jews, who were trying so hard to become justified by their good works. In Romans chapter 9, he wrote:

I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

Paul would have willingly given his salvation up for the sake of his own people, and gone to an everlasting hell. In the very next chapter, chapter 10:1-4, he wrote again:

*Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. **For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.***

Maybe you too have been hanging onto the rope of righteousness, afraid to let go, for fear no one would catch you. If you have, please let go. I promise, God will catch you. Have faith!

Ephesians 2:8-9 says: *For by grace are ye saved **through faith**; and that **not of yourselves**: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

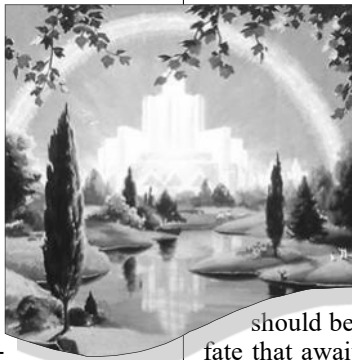
—Joe Keim

At the end of the 1000 years, Satan will be released, defeated again, and then cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7-10). At this point, the end of the world described in 2 Peter 3:10 occurs. The Bible tells us several things about this event.

First, it will be disastrous in scope. The “heavens” refers to the physical universe – the stars, planets, and galaxies—which will be consumed by some kind of tremendous explosion, possibly a nuclear or atomic reaction that will consume and obliterate all matter as we know it. All the elements that make up the universe will be melted in the “fervent heat” (2 Peter 3:12). This will also be a noisy event, described a “great noise” There will be no doubt as to what is happening. Everyone will see and hear it because we are also told that “the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.”

Then God will create a “new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21:1), which will include the “New Jerusalem” (v. 2), the capital city of heaven, a place of perfect holiness, which will come down from heaven and descend to the new earth. This is the city where the saints—those whose names were written in the “Lamb’s book of life” (Revelation 13:8)—will live forever. Peter refers to it as “the home of righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13).

Perhaps the most important part of Peter’s description of that day is his question in verses 11-12:

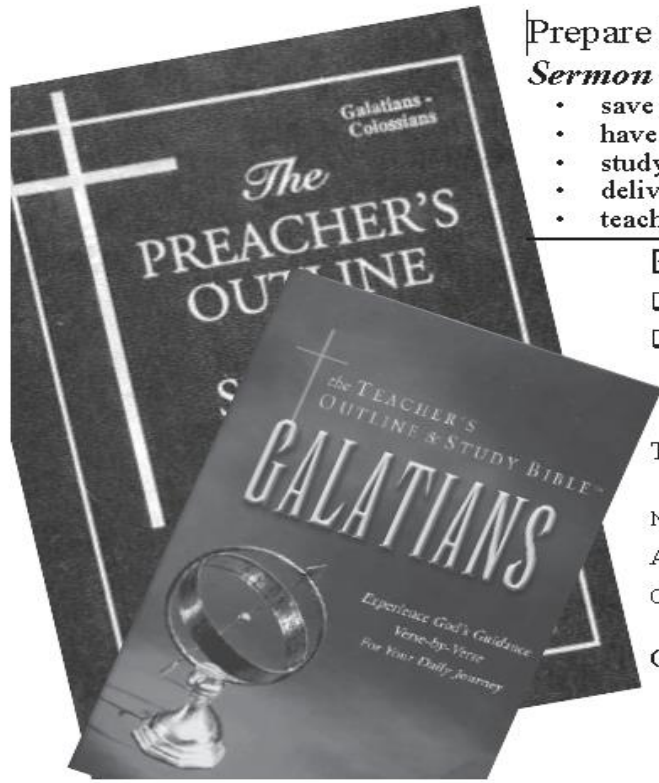


Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? —2 Peter 3:11-12

For Christians, this means we should live our lives in such a way that we reflect our understanding of what is going to happen. This life is passing away quickly, and our focus should be on the new heavens and earth to come. Our “holy and godly” lives should be a testimony to those who do not know the Savior, and we should be telling others about Him so they can escape the terrible fate that awaits those who reject Him. We wait in eager anticipation for God’s “*Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.* —1 Thess 1:10

This question and answer article was taken from the book, GOT QUESTIONS? Reprinted with permission.

<http://www.gotquestions.org>



Prepare lessons or study from *The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible* or *The Teacher's Outline & Study Bible* to:

- save study time
- have verse-by-verse outlines
- study commentary, support Scriptures & applications
- deliver more content to those listening
- teach with confidence

Yes, I want to order today! Send me:

Galatians-Colossians-Preacher's Series \$39.99

Galatians-Teacher's Series \$15.99

Add shipping for each book ordered \$ 8.95

Please include tax only for TN 9.25% or SC 6% \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, ST, Zip _____

Call 1-800-987-8790 for more info or send check or money order to:

LEADERSHIP MINISTRIES WORLDWIDE

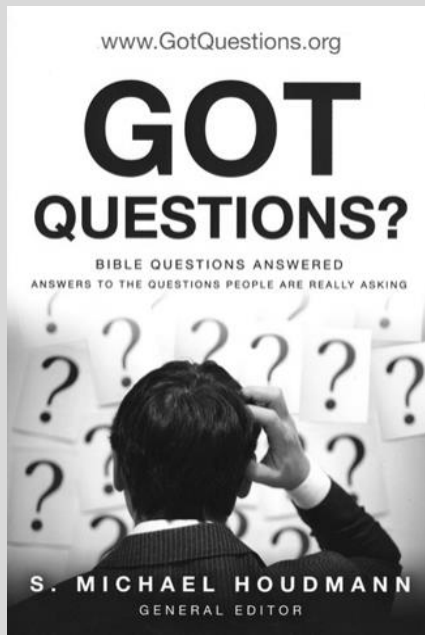
3755 Pilot Point

Chattanooga, TN 37416

☆ A117AV

GOT QUESTIONS?

Everyone has questions. Young children ask "why?" Teenagers ask "why not?" Adults sometimes lament "what if?" The God who created us and who loves us has given us the answers to life's most pressing questions in His Word. Yet many people have no idea that God has the answers and has made them available in the Bible. Whether it is a question about where we will spend eternity or how to deal with the pain of a broken relationship, you can be sure it has been asked and answered already on www.GotQuestions.org, the source for this book.



Sadly, many individuals and ministries who offer advice are not biblically and theologically solid. That's why Got Questions? is crucially needed—a resource that answers

questions explicitly from a biblical perspective, with solid evangelical theology.

Written in an easy-to-understand format and organized in easy-to-follow sections, Got Questions? will help readers find the answers to the most frequently asked questions regarding spiritual matters. The questions were asked by real people struggling through real-life issues who received solid, practical answers from the Bible. The articles in this volume are compiled from the more than 1600 frequently-asked questions on our website, which are read over 3 million times each month. Some of the articles have been translated into more than

110 languages.

Many books present teaching in a question-and-answer format, but few have delved into the questions that people are actually asking. Having received and answered more than 200,000 questions, Got Questions Ministries has a unique understanding of what questions are truly on people's minds.

Sample questions:

1. How can you recognize the voice of God?
2. What does the Bible say about homosexuality? Is it a sin?
3. Masturbation - is it a sin according to the Bible?
4. Who was Cain's wife?
5. What is the Christian view of suicide? What does the Bible say about suicide? What about a believer who commits suicide?
6. Do pets / animals go to Heaven?
7. What happens after death?
8. What does the Bible say about drinking alcohol? Is it a sin for a Christian to drink alcohol?
9. What does the Bible say about sex before marriage?
10. Where was Jesus for the three days between His death and resurrection?

To order your copy today, please send a check to:

The Amish Voice
PO Box 128, Savannah OH 44874

Soft Cover: \$27.00 (includes shipping)

Receiving duplicate mailings?

Please note your correct name and address and return all labels to the Amish Voice

Non Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Ashland, Ohio
Permit No. 188

Moving?

Please send us the new address

Not interested in the Amish Voice?

Please remove the label from your newsletter, mail it to us, and we will take you off the active list. **Without the label, we are unable to remove your address from the active list.**

Current Resident

Penciled in the Margins of My Bible

—by T. Suzanne Eller

So many of us, men & women alike have areas in our lives that are broken and only our Heavenly Father can heal them.

Revelation 21:4

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

One day a friend commented on how “inked up” my Bible was while pointing to the underlined words, comments and prayers written beside scriptures.

“I don’t write in my Bible in ink,” she said. “I only write in pencil.”

She explained that she had a tough childhood. While growing up, there were many people in her life that had let her down. Eventually she let herself down, and it hurt not only her, but her children and her marriage.

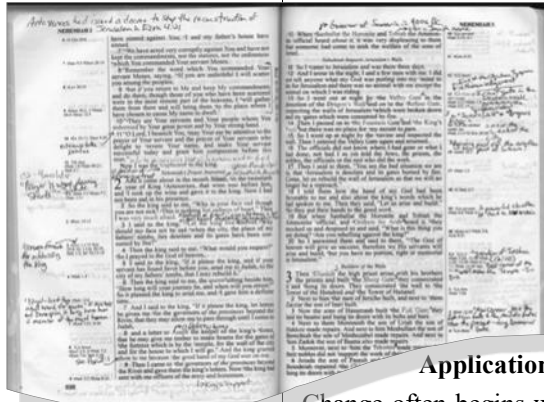
One day she picked up a Bible and started reading it. To her, many of the scriptures seemed harsh, and she assumed those that were hopeful were meant for someone else. As she read, she wrote down comments. She wrote down questions. She penciled in a picture of a broken heart next to one scripture.

Then, over time, those scriptures started to make sense. What once seemed harsh now seemed loving. “God wasn’t trying to take anything away from me. He was trying to give me life,” she said.

The more she read, the more she wrote in the margins of her Bible, but always in pencil. Question marks were erased and comments of gratefulness replaced them. Scriptures that once seemed written for others were claimed as her own. One day she erased the picture of the

broken heart and penciled in an image of a new heart — one that was whole and beautiful.

In Revelation 21:4 we are assured that God “wipes” away old things. That word means “to erase.” He is continually writing in the margins of our lives, erasing tears and writing in joy. Mourning or sadness ebbs away as He gently writes in hope for tomorrow. What we might see as permanent, God sees written in pencil.



Perhaps today you feel as if nothing can change. Are you willing to invite God into the margins of your life?

Your thought life. Your hurts. Your failures. Your feelings.

When we do, change begins. Old things pass away and we are made new as God rewrites truth into those areas. We become more like Him, discovering God has so much more for us as He etches His love on our hearts and our lives.

Application Steps:

Change often begins when we show God those places where we still doubt, where we hurt and where we desire new life. It’s not that He doesn’t see them already, but when you and I invite Him in, it is a huge step of faith!

Get alone with God. Be as honest as you can. Show Him the raw places. Show Him your doubts.