

3108 Hamburg Pike, Jeffersonville, IN 47130 Ph. (812) 284-3125

Bulletin Articles from June 2016

Questions about Baptism

Eric Welch

On May 27-28, Jack Honeycutt, who will hold our fall gospel meeting, participated in a public discussion with Missionary Baptist preacher Michael Brawner. Jack signed the proposition that baptism is necessary to receive the forgiveness of sin and denied the proposition that faith alone was sufficient.

Debates, when done honestly and civilly, are a great teaching tool. In fact, on Sunday a man who had attended the debate and put off his obedience to the Lord surrendered his life to Christ and was immersed.

The discussion also continues to on social media. The following question was posted by a friend of mine: "I believe you must be baptized also, but under conditions where there is no water available, even if a man changes his heart at such a time, is there, even though he has had a real change of heart before he died, no salvation for him?"

I posted the following answer:

"Couldn't the same be said of faith? What if a Bible is not available for him to read about Jesus and believe? Can that person still be saved?... Also, let's think about all the other commands that God gave His people throughout Scripture. Any of those commands could have been answered with a "what if." That would seem, then, to be a test of faith. To what extent, that is, do I trust God enough to fulfill His command for me to do something? Dig a hole and fill it with water like I've seen pictures of soldiers in Iraq doing? Or travel until I find water as the Ethiopian treasurer did in Acts 8?

Think of the extent to which Abraham was willing to go to obey God. He was willing to sacrifice Isaac, the son he waited 25 years for, upon God's command (Genesis 22). When Isaac asked where the sacrificial animal was, Abraham's deep trust in God responded, "God will provide." It seems this is the answer to the water availability question. Trust in God will take us to great lengths and risks to obey Him.

How the Church Receives Its Funds

The work of the church is unique. The New Testament authorizes the church to work in three areas: 1) Evangelism — teaching and preaching the Gospel (Mark 16:15-16), 2) Edification — teaching and instructing its members (1 Thess. 5:11; Col. 3:16) and 3) Benevolence — helping those in need of the necessities of life (James 1:27; Gal. 6:10).

To do the work God has commanded the church to do requires money (the funds necessary to carry out the work). God has given instruction "where" and "how" the church gets its money to do its work. It is by the free-will offering of its members. The Scriptures authorize a collection to be taken up each first day of the week. In 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 we read, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him...." A famine had made many destitute of the necessary things of life. Churches of Christ everywhere were instructed to help the needy. This passage tells them how to do it.

In the New Testament, you never read of the church of Christ having chariot washes, bake sales, rummage sales, 10K walks, etc., etc. to raise money for its work. There is no Scripture that authorizes the church to solicit (request, seek, beg) money, food, clothes (material goods) from non-members (the general public).

Therefore, you should never see the church of Christ soliciting material things from those who are not members of the church in order to help the church do the work God has commanded the church to do.

- Garland M. Robinson; via the Nile Street Notes, the weekly bulletin of the Anna church of Christ in Anna, IL;

A Voice from the Past

"There is no nation on earth powerful enough to accomplish our overthrow. Our destruction, should it come at all, will be from another quarter: from the inattention of the people to the concerns of their government, from their carelessness and negligence. I must confess that I do apprehend some danger. I fear that they may place too implicit a confidence in their public servants and fail properly to scrutinize their conduct; that in this way they may be made the dupes of designing men and become the instruments of their own undoing." (Daniel Webster)

- via THE SOWER, a weekly publication of the Arthur church of Christ, Arthur, IL.

Dealing with Divorce

I am not an expert on this topic. I am not experienced personally with this circumstance. I only have two things that can help me understand how to deal with divorce. I have the Bible. I have many friends both Christian and non-Christian who I have counseled through the divorce process.

I am writing about this today because it is highly relevant in our society. Anything that advances in our society also finds its way into the church. This article is not going to address the rights and wrongs of divorce. At the proper time classes and sermons will be able to deal with God's principles concerning marriage and how to obey them. Instead I would like to bring to your mind some important concepts concerning how every person can try to understand and properly associate with those who have been devastated by divorce. Hopefully this will help us all show the love of Christ for those in this situation.

First of all, nobody gets married to get divorced. To my knowledge, I have never met a couple who intended from the get-go for their marriage to eventually be dissolved. But divorce does happen. God never gave marriage to mankind so we could break the marriage covenant. Sin allows for divorce to become a reality. Understand that those who are or have been divorced never wanted it to happen in the first place.

Secondly, people who are divorced feel the stigma that is often attached. This is hard to discuss. Should there be a stigma? Have you been a perfect marriage partner? Let me help you – the answer is no. But marriage is a commitment and divorce is a conscious decision to break the commitment. Thus the stigma. At some point somebody didn't want to be married enough to keep their promise. Sometimes, it is merely a Biblical response to the concession allowed by Christ. Other times, a divorce takes place with no Biblical reason or support. Understand that whatever the reason, the divorced feel the stigma. It is a weight for them. They are going to need some help to carry that load.

Thirdly, with divorce there is grief. The grief process is similar to but different than experiencing the death of a loved one. The steps of grieving are the same but the reasons to grieve are different. The long-term effects of the loss are also different. We need to understand that people who have dealt with divorce are going to need to grieve. We should have as much if not more concern and care for them as we do a person who has lost their closest friend or family member.

Finally, there is life after divorce. Some people will have the right to remarry, and some will not. But either way, a second chance to make the best life possible still awaits. We all need forgiveness, mercy, grace, and unconditional love. Every day is a new day and the mercies of God are new every morning. His compassions fail not. God loves us more than we could ever know or imagine.

When things do not turn out well for us, God's parental love for our best interests remains. Regardless of the circumstances, a true child of God will have compassion on any person who has gone through a divorce. If the person is in sin, we should worry about their soul and the changes that need to be made. If the person is living faithfully, we must weep with them that weep until the season of weeping is over. Our willingness to care for people who have experienced divorce should never be related to their level of guilt.

It is my prayer that, as a Christian, God will give me the ability to help those who have experienced divorce. It is my prayer that His church will always reach out and express love to every person in every circumstance. This is what love does.

"The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: 'Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you." - Jeremiah 31:3

- Jeremiah James Tatum preaches for Willow Avenue Church of Christ, Cookeville, TN

Was I Ever Lucky

A very amusing, but provocative, illustration appeared in a publication by Alan Smith recently. He told of a man who had just filled his car with gas at a self-service station. He had paid for his gas and driven away only to realize that he had failed to put his gas cap back on, but had left it on top of his car. When he stopped, he found it gone just as he had expected.

In seeking a solution, he reasoned that if he would do that, others must have done the same thing. He returned to the spot where it most likely would have fallen, thinking he might find one someone else had lost that might fit, if not his.

Just as he had hoped, following a brief search, he found a gas cap. He wiped it off and slipped it on with a satisfying click.

He told his wife as he climbed back into the car, "I may have lost my gas cap, but I found another one that fits and it's even a better cap than the one I had – it locks…!" It was not until he was bragging about his find that he realized it was not such a good deal after all; an expensive gas cap without a key is not a valuable thing to have!

Thus it is with acquiring an understanding of the Bible. Jesus taught in parables, and His apostles came to Him for explanations. They were seeking the "key" to under-standing what they were hearing. He said, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God" (Mk. 4:11).

Confusion has characterized the mind-set of multitudes throughout history as God has spoken to mankind. There was a struggle with the prophets foretelling of the coming of Christ. They just could not grasp the concept (1 Pet. 1:10-12). His ministry was often referred to as a "mystery." Paul spoke of the "Mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19) and the "mystery of Christ" (Col. 4:3), or simply "the mystery" (Eph. 3:9). The general populace of that day had access to a great "product," but could not access it without the "key." That Word had to be taught and understood before it could be of any value to them. It was a "good deal" but of no value. We understand more than those previous generations or even the angels of heaven. We understand the beauty and significance of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. We must give thanks because "the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations…has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery…which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:26-27).

- Mike King Lakeside church of Christ Orange Park, FL www.lakesidechurchofchrist.com

Take Up Your Cross

As we move from late May to early June across our nation colleges and high school celebrate students who have achieved whatever it is that organization has required for them to graduate. Graduation cannot be seen as an end, whether it is from pre-kindergarten (yes they even have those now), to kindergarten (yes even those) to sixth grade (yes . . .) to high school, to an AA, a BA, a MA, or even a Ph.D. Graduations which are seen as an end do injustice to the doors they open to one's future. Graduation is all about opening more doors.

The doors of life are many. The journey we call life is filled with many opportunities and obstacles. Both opportunity and obstacle have a way of becoming either positive or negative based on how an individual handles them. The greatest journey we are all on is the journey we take, the path we walk as we live our Christian lives. Jesus stated, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Lk. 9:23).

The most important graduation we all will experience will be the one from this mortal body to an immortal eternal body. It is an eternity in heaven we must spend this life pursuing. Taking up our cross involves taking on those hardships, making them opportunities, and those opportunities with the right frame of reference. The reference we must have, to be one of Jesus' is that of self-denial and humility. It may be hardship, obscurity, persecution and dishonor in a world that knows not our Lord and Savior we must live. If any of those constitute our cross, then we must take up that cross and bear it with a joy and a peace that only a Christian can know.

As Christians move from one phase of life to another, whether that phase is a school graduation, a life change such as marriage, or having children, or grandchildren, or retirement, or any of a number of significant life changes, each one brings with it a number of crosses. It is up to us to bear those crosses in as much the same way that we can as our Savior did as He bore His for us. He bore that physical cross and mental cross in a way that allowed Him to serve as a sacrifice for each one of us. We must bear our crosses in ways that glorify Him. To do anything less is to deny Him. Rather than deny Him, deny yourself, live sacrificially each and every day in a way which allows your Christian light to shine and glorify our Creator and Savior. Take up your cross. Follow Him through every door.

- David McDonald Lakeside church of Christ Orange Park, FL www.lakesidechurchofchrist.com

Questions about Baptism II

Eric Welch

Last week someone asked a question on social media about the availability of water for baptism. The follow-up question is similar. "So you die on the way to find the water. Are you still unsaved?"

The following is my answer: The same principle applies if you were to die on your way to hear a sermon about Jesus before you have a chance to believe or an illiterate person cannot read the Bible for himself. Let's remember that a person is unsaved, not because they have not had a chance to believe on his way to hear a sermon about Jesus or on her way to the water to be immersed. They are lost because they have sinned against God - Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23.

Think of Naaman in 2 Kings 5 as an illustration. Naaman had leprosy. Elisha commanded him through a messenger to go to the Jordan River and dip (immerse) himself seven times and his skin would be restored. He objected to God's command and as long as he resisted God, he would not be healed. His lack of faith and trust in God's command did not lead him to the water. However, after being persuaded by a humble servant girl, he changed his mind (repented), but his skin was still not healed (or he remained leprous) until he came up out of the water that seventh time.

Did the water heal him? The matter is not what would heal him. God promised he would be healed. God did the healing. The question is when. When would he be healed? He was healed, received God's blessing or promise to be healed, when he submitted to God and obeyed Him. It was never about the water, it was always about his faith that trusted enough to obey. His faith that God would heal him was not the moment he received the blessing of God's grace--which was the healed skin. It was at the moment he obeyed. Did he deserve it? Absolutely not. He even objected. No one deserves salvation.

Did God heal him? Yes. Did he heal himself? Yes, from a certain point-of-view. He had no power to heal his own skin from the leprosy, but God did give him the power to make that choice. Eventually, he chose deliverance, salvation from the leprosy. He surrendered himself by obeying his Healer. Peter said this similar thing in Acts 2:40 - "save yourselves from this crooked generation." It didn't mean that they had the power to forgive their own sins or that they deserved it. They saved themselves by surrendering to God's command through Peter to repent and be immersed (Acts 2:38).

Back to the original question. What if Naaman died before he got to the Jordan River? He would still have had the leprosy on him. He had the leprosy on him not because he did not dip himself in the river.

Acts 2:36 - 38

A Little Child Shall Lead Them

By David A. Sargent

Stuart Cash describes Rivers Clark as "a four year old girl full of life, energy and love for Jesus." For most of her life, Rivers has come with her grandparents, Bob and Jacquie Barringer, to church services at the Pleasant Valley Church of Christ in Little Rock, Arkansas. Now, another member of Rivers' family is worshipping with them. Stuart Cash tells us how it developed...

A little over a year ago, Rivers began asking her 'Da Da', Ron Clark, if he would read her a Bible story before bedtime every night. Even though he himself wasn't going to church or following Jesus at the time, he still agreed. Night after night of reading Bible stories to her, he began to think about his life – about things like peace, joy, happiness, and of course, purpose.

After a few weeks, Rivers asked her 'Da Da' if he would come to church with her. Even though he didn't really want to, he once again said he would just because she wanted him to. When he first started bringing Rivers to Pleasant Valley, he would take her to class and then sit in the back of the auditorium, doing his best to avoid any conversations. Truth is, he felt guilty for even being in church. He was under the misconception that in order to attend a church, you have to have your life in order; you couldn't have a past; you had to have all of the answers. Since he knew that he didn't, he felt guilty even being there. But week after week, he started to notice that others there were also struggling with temptations. They didn't have it all together or have all the answers. They, too, had a past, just like he.

Slowly he started to talk with people, build relationships, attend classes, and study the Scriptures with one of the ministers on staff. One Wednesday night in the 4-year-old-class, Rivers asked the teacher the most beautiful question anyone has ever heard, "Are you going to baptize my

³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" ³⁸ And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

DaDa?" A year after Ron started coming to church with his daughter, he made the decision to put Christ on in baptism for the forgiveness of his sins. He realized that his life was in need of a Savior. He finally found the purpose for which he'd always been searching.*

Stuart Cash also wrote: "Just like Ron, we all have a story. We all have a past. We all have things in our lives of which we aren't proud." But that is the very reason for which Jesus came: to save us from our sins (Luke 19:10)!

God loves us so much that He gave His One and Only Son to die on the cross for our sins (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2). On the cross, Jesus paid the price for our sins so that we can be forgiven and receive the gift of eternal life (Ephesians 1:7; Romans 6:23).

God will save those who put their faith and trust in Jesus (Acts 16:30-31), turn from their sins in repentance (Acts 17:30-31), confess Jesus before men (Romans 10:9-10), and are baptized (immersed) into Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). He will continue to cleanse from sin those who continue to walk in the light of His Word (1 John 1:7).

Aren't you happy for Rivers' dad, Ron, for his decision to be baptized into Christ? Aren't you also thankful for little Rivers who loved her Daddy so much that she wanted him to know about Jesus?

"A little child shall lead them..." (Isaiah 11:6). Won't YOU also become a Christian?

- David A. Sargent, minister for the Church of Christ at Creekwood in Mobile, Alabama.

* "Child Leads Father to Christ" by Stuart Cash Pleasant Valley Church of Christ

Love Without End

Eric Welch

One of my favorite country songs is Love Without End by George Strait. The chorus of the song is the response of a father whose son got into a fight at school. The boy was dreading what awaited him at home. However, the dad tells him: Let me tell you a secret about a father's love. A secret that my daddy said was just between us. You see, Daddies don't just love their children every now and then. It's a love without end, amen. It's a love without end, amen. On Father's Day, many of us will remember and honor our fathers.

However, for some, memory of Dad might be painful. What if the last memory of your father was his back as he walked out the door never to return? What if it is a broken promise or seeing them at their worst? Can even hearing "Our Father" at church trigger negative emotions about our earthly fathers? James Dobson explains that "...young children typically identify their parents...and especially their fathers...with God" (<u>Dare to Discipline</u> 19). Children think in concrete ways, so a child learns to understand God by seeing his father as God. If a father abandons his family, a child could be led to think God the Father will abandon him too. If a father was abusive, perhaps God is that way too. It's easy for them to judge God based upon their human fathers.

How can such children ever learn to trust God as Father? I have three suggestions. **Teach them everything the New Testament says about the love between Jesus and His Father.** Jesus teaches us to understand God as our personal Father. This idea was virtually unknown in Israel. Yes, Israel understood God as father of the nation in general, but not in the intimate way Jesus described. Matthew 7:9-11 *Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!* (Matthew 7:9-11). Jesus tells us that God's love is greater than any earthly father's. It is a Love Without End.

The second suggestion is something that the men of the congregation can do. **Become a father-figure.** Timothy, whose father seemed to be absent, found in Paul such a spiritual father (Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5; Philippians 2:22). Brothers, a strong Christian man can mentor a boy on how to do manly things such as pump gas, change a tire, and repair a leaky faucet. Those are easy. The greater challenge is to show both boys AND girls how to love, how to read the Bible and to obey it, how to pray and how to treat the opposite sex. Jesus did these things too. Be Jesus to them.

Third, **don't let your love be secret**. Tell them. Show them. God did. *God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us* (Romans 5:7-8).

Heaven

Occasionally, someone will ask me how I come up with ideas for all the articles I write. Well, it's not hard when you're surrounded by people who are spiritually minded. Just this week, a friend and brother, Lance Champion made an observation that has really resonated with me and I hope it will with you too.

Lance said, "For those who are Christians, earth will be the closest they'll ever get to Hell; and for those who are not Christians, earth will be the closest they'll ever get to Heaven."

I find that statement to be profound; pregnant with hope as well as sadness.

I have a vivid memory of riding in the car with my dad when I was a boy. We were riding through an area where the houses were dilapidated and children were running around barefoot and barely clothed. I remember sitting at a traffic light, watching the children, and telling my dad how sad I felt for those kids and the conditions in which they lived. I'll never forget my dad's response. He said, "Unless someone teaches them about Jesus, this is the best it will ever get for them."

I hate to think that this world is the very best some will ever experience. It lights a fire under me to be more zealous in sharing the gospel. However, at the same time, I take great comfort in the fact that because I am a child of God, this world, with all its heartaches and hardships will be the worst I'll ever experience!

Thanks for the reminder, Lance!

- Steve Higginbotham preaches for the Karns Church of Christ in Knoxville, TN.

Stepping Away From the Crowd

By Joe Chesser

Most of us know pretty well the story of Peter walking on water (Matthew 14:22-33). It was an incredible demonstration of faith. Can you imagine actually climbing out of the boat and walking toward Jesus? I mean, the odds were stacked heavily against him. The time was somewhere between 3 and 6 AM, the wind was howling and causing the waves to crash around the boat, they were exhausted from struggling all night to cross the lake, and the disciples were terrified at seeing what they thought was a "ghost" (remember it was just before dawn). Yet, at Jesus' invitation Peter had the courage and faith to do the irrational – he stepped out of the boat and walked on the water toward Him.

Usually when we think about this story we key in on two things:

- 1) if we keep our eyes on Jesus we can do amazing things, and
- 2) the minute we take our eyes off of Jesus we begin to sink.

Great lessons, but there's something else in this story worth noticing – the other disciples were still in the boat.

I can't help but wonder what they were thinking when Peter started to climb out of the boat. Did they encourage him or try to stop him? Did they marvel at his faith or question his sanity? Perhaps they were stunned and speechless. Were they praising God or looking for a life jacket? Were they tempted to get out of the boat, too? There's a lot we don't know.

However, there are two things we do know. We know they didn't get out of the boat, and we know that Peter did. Only Peter had the courage and faith to step away from his peers (the crowd) and head toward Jesus simply because Jesus said, "Come." Of the group, only Peter walked on water.

I think that's also what Jesus is asking us to do: "Step away from the crowd, walk on water and come to me." He's asking us to step away from the crowded road and walk the narrow path to life (Matthew 7:13-14). He's asking us to turn away from the unthankful majority and give Him praise even if no one else does (Luke 17:11-19). He's asking us to leave what's comfortable and carry His cross (Luke 14:25-27). He's asking us to stop walking by sight and live by faith (2 Corinthians. 5:7). He's asking us to give up our trust in money and material things, and seek Him first (Matthew 6:24-33). He's asking us to quit making excuses and get out of the boat!! He's asking us to step away from the crowds like Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses and David did (Hebrews 11).

If you had been in the boat with Peter, what would you have done?

- Joe Chesser preaches for the Fruitland Church of Christ, Fruitland, MO.

Afraid to Speak Up

By Alan Smith

Farmer Joe decided his injuries from the accident were serious enough to take the trucking company to court.

In court, the trucking company's fancy lawyer was questioning farmer Joe. "Didn't you say at the scene of the accident, 'I'm fine'?", asked the lawyer.

Farmer Joe responded, "Well, I'll tell you what happened. I had just loaded my favorite mule Bessie into the......"

"I didn't ask for any details," the lawyer interrupted, "just answer the question. Did you not say at the scene of the accident, 'I'm fine!'?"

Farmer Joe said, "Well, I had just got Bessie into the trailer and I was driving down the road..."

The lawyer interrupted again and said, "Judge, I am trying to establish the fact that, at the scene of the accident, this man told the highway patrolman on the scene that he was just fine. Now several weeks after the accident he is trying to sue my client." I believe he is a fraud. Please tell him to simply answer the question."

By this time the judge was fairly interested in Farmer Joe's answer and said to the lawyer, "I'd like to hear what he has to say about his favorite mule Bessie."

Joe thanked the judge and proceeded, "Well as I was saying, I had just loaded Bessie, my favorite mule, into the trailer and was driving her down the highway when this huge semi-truck and trailer ran the stop sign and smacked my truck right in the side. I was thrown into one ditch and Bessie was thrown into the other. I was hurting real bad and didn't want to move. However, I could hear ole Bessie moaning and groaning. I knew she was in terrible shape just by her groans.

Shortly after the accident, a highway patrolman came on the scene. He could hear Bessie moaning and groaning, so he went over to her. After he looked at her, he took out his gun and shot her between the eyes.

Then the patrolman came across the road with his gun in his hand and looked at me. He said, "Your mule was in such bad shape I had to shoot her. How are you feeling?"

There are times in our lives when we are hesitant to say something out of fear. Not fear of being "shot", but fear of being "shot down", fear of being ridiculed, fear of being embarrassed. As a result, given the opportunity to take a stand for Christ, we choose silence instead. It seems "safe" considering the circumstances.

May God help us to replace our fear of men with the fear of God.

"And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. 'And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.' But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." (I Peter 3:13-15)

So......how are you feeling? :-)

Have a great day!

- Alan Smith preaches for the Cruciform Church of Christ in Spring Lake, North Carolina

Will God Really Punish?

By Charlie Gamble

Sometimes when discussing error with others I am confronted with the question: Do you think God will really punish someone because of that?

I have decided to interview some people from the Bible about that but I am having trouble reaching them. Here are the topics along with the last known location of those who were in error:

- Lying: (Acts 5:1-11) Ananias and Sapphira
- Disobedience: (Lev 10:1-2) Nadab and Abihu
- Arrogance: (Acts 12:21-23) Herod
- Worshipping a false god: (I Kings 18:21-40) Prophets of Baal

Actually, I don't need to interview them. I just need to believe this: For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Romans 15:4 (NKJV)

- Charlie Gamble preaches for the Brunswick Church of Christ in Southport, NC.