

Present Truth

2 Peter 1:12

Dear Readers,

February 2005

“Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” (2 Timothy 1:2) The new year is in full swing. I pray that each of you has made a resolution to draw closer to God than you have ever been. As the time of Christ’s coming approaches, our need to draw closer to God increases. The earthquakes and tsunami that hit Asia are just “the beginning of sorrows.” Jesus said, “Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake.” (Matthew 24:7-9) Hard times will come our way, but we have a refuge in the time of storm. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” (Psalms 46:1) Let God work in you in 2005, and great things will happen.

Onward and Upward

by Lynnford Beachy

(The following study is an edited sermon preached at the Smyrna Chapel, November 6, 2004. *Editor*)

Challenged

I had an interesting experience early one morning recently. About 4 a.m., a friend called me who told me about a friend of his who was staying in his house. This man was somebody who worships Satan, but he came into his home and expressed a desire to give his life to the Lord. My friend was trying to help him and he called me at 4 a.m. so I could pray and talk with him. I initiated a conference call with a couple of other brethren and we all talked together on the phone. Sadly, the man believed a lie of Satan and became convinced that it wasn’t going to work out, so he hung up the phone, walked out, and disappeared. He came back a couple of hours later, but his desire to give his life to the Lord was gone.

In this experience, I learned a few things that have been helpful to me and have challenged me. I thought of myself. I talked with my wife, Kendra, and thought, “What would happen if one of my friends showed up on my doorstep like that, someone who was into Satanism really heavily?” Most of us haven’t encountered people like that very often and maybe we have never seen anybody or talked with anyone in that kind of situation, but this is the way this man was. It makes you wonder how you would react if someone came into your house like that, because you can be almost confident that he is not alone when he comes; he brings with him other evil influences. So, there may be demons in your home now. It would be a pretty frightening situation if you didn’t know that God was

watching out for you and caring for you, and that is one thing my friend said. He said he and his family were not afraid because God was with them. As the Bible says, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31)

Psalm 118:6 says, “The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?” And not just man, but anyone. John writes, “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” (1 John 4:4) Paul boldly declared that, “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” (2 Timothy 1:7)

We can trust in God completely. However, what if there are certain things in our lives that shake that confidence? Perhaps we have been walking contrary to God’s Word, and have not been as steadfast, faithful, and true as we should have been. Then we might wonder if God is going to watch out and take care of us because we have not been close enough to Him. This is one thing that went through my friend’s mind, and he challenged me, and it went through my mind too. Am I really close enough to God to deal with a situation like this and to help a person like this?

I just want to pass on that challenge to you, friend, because the Bible says, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be

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in the faith; prove your own selves." (2 Corinthians 13:5) We need to take an examination and test ourselves to see where we are at, where we have been, and where we are going. It really helps us, because if I tell you how to get to a certain place, the very first thing you have to know is where you are now. That's important! If we expect to get to heaven, we first need to know where we are now, and what our current condition is. And it is not just about heaven, because our goal shouldn't just be heaven! Shouldn't we have a better goal? That goal should be always pleasing God the best way possible. Like Job says, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." (Job 13:15) Job had faith that even if God destroyed him, he was going to serve God no matter what. You know why? Because Job loved God and learned that he could trust Him no matter what!

Letting Our Light Shine

Let us notice a couple, of the many, beautiful things in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16) Here it says that you are the light of the world and that you should let your light shine before men so other men can see that light. "What kind of light are you?" Are you a little, tiny light, or are you a bright and shining light that the Bible mentions. Is your light shining where it can be seen or is it hid under a bushel? Or is it even there? We need to look at what kind of light we are portraying to the rest of the world.

Second Corinthians 3:18 says, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Here we are told that as we behold the glory of God, we are changed into the same image. I understand "glory to glory" to mean, that

it is from one glory, or one amount of brightness, to a greater amount of brightness. From glory to glory we are to go onward and upward. That is God's plan for the way He wants us to walk. The Bible says that if we behold the glory of God, this is what will happen. The glory of God is so much more than any glory that we have, isn't it? As we behold that glory, then we become changed, onward and upward, evermore.

One of my favorite verses is Proverbs 4:18. It says, "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Sometimes we might be content with the light we have. "Oh, look at my light. It is bright. It is shining quite well, and I think I am going to just leave it like it is." But here the Bible talks about a light that shines more and more. It gets brighter and brighter and brighter, unto the perfect day. So, we shouldn't be content in just having a little flashlight that may be just enough to get by with.

I live close to the office where I work. Many times I go home after dark, especially in the winter, and I have to walk down a narrow road and, unless you have ever done it, you don't know how treacherous it could be at night. Unless you have the light of a full moon, it is easy to find yourself right at the edge and maybe even falling over the bank. You probably wouldn't die falling down there, but it wouldn't feel very good. Anyway, when I walk along without a flashlight sometimes I take my cell-phone out and it puts off just enough light to get by, barely enough. I hold it down, and I can see the edge of the road, just barely, and I walk along like that, very careful not to go over the edge. I am content with that, just enough so that I don't fall over the edge.

But are we that way with our Christian lives? Do we have just enough light to get by? The Bible says that "if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Peter 4:18) Do you want to be scarcely saved? Scarcely saved just by "the skin of your teeth,"

so to speak? Do you want to just barely make it; just do enough to get by? Is that the kind of life that we have? I would much rather have a big, bright light! Perhaps you have seen a million candle power light used in boating a lot. With one of those lights I could surely get from here to home without any problem. Sometimes, even with my little light, I get a little stumbled up. I think I am seeing the edge of the road and I am not. So, it is much better to have a bright light, and that is what God wants us to do—to have a bright light; and not just a constant light, but one that gets brighter and brighter and brighter. That is what God wants us to have, and that is what Proverbs 4:18 means. The path of the just is as a shining light that gets brighter and brighter, shining more and more unto the perfect day.

Spiritual Battles

Job 17:9 says, "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." He that hath clean hands will be stronger and stronger. Do you know that when you go out to a battle and win, the next time you go to battle you are stronger? That is one reason the army of Alexander the Great had so much success. They never once failed. They had no past history of failure to look back on and think that since they failed once they might fail again. Instead, they always won the victory. So, they were eager to go out to battle, they were ready. They were confident that they were going to make it, and that is the way of a righteous person when he has the victory in his life. We have a battle to fight, don't we?

I was made more aware of this spiritual battle that we are fighting last week when I was talking with my friend. There is a spiritual battle going on. It is not just what we see, there is a lot that goes on behind the scenes, things that we can't see. There are angels, many angels that we can't see, watching over Christians. One sister, in relating some very challenging things that happened to her, mentioned her angel was working overtime

last week to make sure she was safe and protected.

I know that each one of us has an angel watching out for us, but Satan has angels too who are trying to harm us. Yet, we don't have to worry about them, because God is stronger. If we walk with God and follow God, then we don't have to worry about Satan and his angels because the Bible says if we submit ourselves to God, and resist the devil, he will flee from us (James 4:7), because he has been defeated already at the cross.

When we get to a battle in our lives, when we enter into temptation, then we can pray to God and He will give us the victory, if we want it. If we really want the victory, we can have the victory every time. Isn't that true? Every single time! And when you get the victory at one time, the next time you come to that battle, you will be stronger. And the next time, you will be even stronger.

I used to be on drugs, addicted to marijuana, and all kinds of things. When I first decided to give my life to the Lord, the marijuana was a really hard thing for me to give up. When I first started on my way, I was still around a lot of drug addicts and drug dealers. I was among them, trying to witness to them, and I sometimes found myself doing the same things they were doing. I felt very guilty and very dirty, but that is the truth. It is what happened to me and that temptation was very strong because it was something I had been accustomed to do all the time in the past. But, what happened is the Lord gave me the victory and He kept giving me the victory over and over again. Even though that temptation had some pull on me for a while, I have gotten stronger and stronger and stronger, so that now if somebody would come in with a marijuana cigarette, it wouldn't faze me. I can walk along and smell that smell, which occasionally happens in the city, but I don't have a desire anymore to go back and do that, because God has given me the victory over that, and that is what He will do for everything.

That is just one example in one little area of life. He will do that for every single thing that we have, whatever we are struggling with. If we fight and win the battle through God's help, the next time we come to that battle, we will be stronger, and the next time stronger and, pretty soon, we will be very, very strong in that point. And that is what God wants us to do, to continue on that upward path.

Jesus used a vine and a husbandman as an illustration of the work He wishes to accomplish in us. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away:..." (John 15:2) Just like any man who has a grape vine, God trims off the things that aren't working anymore so that they don't suck sap from the Vine. And then it says, "...and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." (John 15:2) God is not content with just getting a couple of grapes on a little branch. He wants that branch to put out as much as can possibly come out of that branch. So, He is going to purge it. He is going to work with it. The purging doesn't always feel good as it involves cutting and clipping. However it is done so that the next year it will bring forth more fruit. That is what God does with us. He is happy when we bring forth fruit, but He wants us to bring forth more fruit, so He purges us and works with us. Unfortunately, sometimes His people are content with bringing forth just a little fruit.

Growing in the Lord

Remember the story of the ten talents? (Matthew 25:14-30) One man was given one talent, one was given two, and one was given five. Then the master came back, and the one who had been given five had increased them to ten. The one who had two talents increased them to four. But, the one who had one talent, went and hid it in a hole in the earth and was content with the little bit that he had. When the Lord came, he showed it to Him and said: "See, I still have it." The Lord said, "Why didn't you do anything with it? Why didn't you improve it?" And, he didn't have a good answer, so the Lord took that talent away from him and

gave it to the one who had ten talents, because He knew that the one who had ten would make good use of it.

So, we shouldn't be content with just one little bunch of grapes and when the Lord comes say, "Look, I have a couple of grapes here on this branch. Aren't you happy?" You are proud of these little grapes, but God doesn't want us to have just a little fruit. He wants us to have a basket that is overflowing, so much so that you have to bring in more baskets to fill up what can't fit in the first basket. God wants us to bring forth much fruit and He is going to work with us and purge us until that happens. But, if we are stubborn and disobedient, then His work is going to be in vain for us. and finally He is going to have to cut us off. Do you want to be that way? Do you want to be one of those dead branches that are cut off? No! We need to stay in the vine so we may produce more fruit and become stronger and stronger.

In Matthew 5:48 our Master set the standard for Christian attainment. Jesus said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." That is a high calling, isn't it? He didn't say be perfect just like Paul is perfect, or be perfect like Peter. He says be perfect like your Father in heaven; even as your Father in heaven is perfect. That is a very high calling! This call to perfection is not only here in Matthew 5, but Abraham was told to be perfect. (See Genesis 17:1.) God expected and asked of Abraham to be perfect, and the Bible says that Job "was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed [hated] evil. (Job 1:1) God asked Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" (Job 1:8) What would He say about you today, right now? Just consider that for yourself. We really need to ask ourselves these questions, don't we? If God in heaven said to Satan right now, "Have you considered my servant, Lynnford?" What would be the next words? Would

He say, "A perfect man who fears God and eschews evil?" Are those the words that God would say next?

Ezekiel records Noah, Job, and Daniel as being three righteous men. (See Ezekiel 14:14, 20.) What was so special about them? Were these supernatural people? Were they any different from you and me? Were they made differently? Made out of different flesh? No. All of us are the same. It says God has made of one blood, all men. (Acts 17:26) All of us are made the same way. If these people were just men, then we can be like they were. If these people were perfect men, then we can be perfect men and women! We can live to the same standard, and isn't that what God wants? Even though just these three are mentioned, are there more who are going to be in heaven? Sure, there are going to be lots of others in heaven, but God singles out some of these special people. God said David is "a man after mine own heart." (Acts 13:22) "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." (Genesis 5:24) God took him to heaven because he was so close to God. His basket of fruit was so full that it was overflowing.

You have to think, were these people content with a little light, a little light that was just enough to get them by? Is that the type of people they were? No, they didn't want just enough to get by. I remember hearing David Clayton from Jamaica say, "I want to be the closest friend to God, the best friend that God has upon this earth." Isn't that what you want to be? God's best friend!

There is a slogan for the United States Army—"Be All That You Can Be." Isn't that what we need to be for God? I think about this every single day, that there was more that I could have done. There were opportunities missed of blessing people, of helping people, and I would just hate to come to the end of my life and think I have wasted my time. How did my life affect people? How did it help people on their Christian walk? One might say, if he were a scientist, "I made a rocket that went to the moon." That might be

a great accomplishment in some respects, but does that accomplish anything for what is after this earth? When you look at a timeline and you try to draw the time that this world exists, from when God created it until the Lord comes and takes all His people home, how big, in the scope of eternity, would that mark be in your timeline? You couldn't even see it. You would have to get a magnifying glass or a microscope to see that little, tiny speck of time that men are living on this world from the time that it was created until the time that the Lord comes. Six thousand years is nothing compared with eternity! When we even think of our lives, we are given seventy years and it is nothing compared to eternity.

So, all of these things that are going to pass away are not what matters. What matters at the end of the day, at the end of our lives, is what have I done to help others to know God? What have I done to let my light so shine before men that it will help people to glorify God?

Are We Growing or Stagnant?

If we would draw a graph of our Christian experience, what would it look like, from the time that we began our Christian experience until today? Would it go up for a while and then start dwindling off, or staying at an even spot? Is that the way you would draw a graph of your spiritual experience, of your relationship with God? Has it gone up at the beginning and then stayed the same ever since, or up and down ever since? Is that the way that God wants us to be, or does He want us to continue growing stronger and stronger? If we would draw the graph of Christ's life, it would show that His spiritual experience with God was growing and growing and growing, continuously going upward and upward. That is the way the path of the just is, like a shining light, growing brighter and brighter. That is the way a just person lives, and the just, like it says in Job, get stronger and stronger. They continue to go onward and upward but, unfortunately, a

lot of people are content with going upward for a while, but then stopping and staying at an even keel. They say, "Oh, I am good enough now. I'll just stay where I am." We really need to think about this and press onward. Have you made advancements in your life today, further than you were yesterday, or, are you the same? Are you the same today in your spiritual experience as you were last week; or last month; or last year; or, even worse, ten years ago? Are we at the same place, or have we gone upward? If we haven't gone upward, we have a problem, because God wants us to continue higher and higher, stronger and stronger.

I really like what Paul said in Philippians 3:12-14, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." What is that mark Paul is talking about? If you look at the context, it is perfection. He is pressing toward that mark. Absolutely perfect, just like God the Father is perfect. Paul wanted to be just like God. Isn't that a good mark to look forward to? It says, "I press toward that mark," onward and upward. He saw something ahead of him, something higher that he could attain. He kept his eyes on that goal and went toward it, and that is what he is calling us to do. That is what God wants us to do—to look at that goal of being exactly like Christ. Like Paul says, "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5)

Keep that as the goal, that every thought, every word, every action comes from God. "Till we all come... unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:13) That is what Paul was looking for. It says he pressed toward that mark,

and that is what we need to do in our experience. We can't be content with a righteousness that is equal to all those around us. Jesus warned us about such comparisons when He said, "except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:20) Don't be content with having just that level of righteousness that is considered satisfactory by the majority of Christianity, or even of the majority of the church here, or the majority of your family. Wherever you are, don't be content with that kind of Christianity. Press higher and higher. Jesus said your righteousness must exceed this. Be better, go on above, higher and higher.

Is Your Spiritual Life a BMW or a Junker?

We are familiar with automobiles. Most of us have cars and we have all ridden in vehicles, haven't we? You buy a brand-new car and when it comes off the lot, there is nothing wrong with it. The handles all work, the electric windows all work, the door locks work, all the gauges work, everything in your vehicle works properly as it is supposed to when it comes off the lot, but perhaps you are like me. I have never owned a brand-new car. I always have acquired cars after someone else has used them for awhile. Do you know what happens to vehicles as they age? Things cease to function the way they should. In my car right now, the speedometer doesn't work properly. There are certain other defects that just kind of creep up on you so that your car doesn't function properly. There are also different types of owners. Some people just don't care about things falling apart in their cars. As long as it gets them from point A to point B, they are going to continue using their vehicle. The only things they fix are the things that prohibit the vehicle from moving any longer. If the bumper is hanging down, or the muffler is dragging on the ground, or there is a big rust hole in the side, sometimes people just let those things go and keep going. It doesn't matter.

Maybe you have to climb through the window to get in your car. In West Virginia we possibly see those things a little more often than people of other areas. Sometimes cars just start to fall apart. Some people are content to let those things go.

Other people, as soon as one little thing goes wrong, a little scratch in the side of their car for example, they go to the body repair shop and say, "I want that little scratch fixed." Whatever it is, they make sure that everything is working properly all the time, a hundred percent.

I thought about that example in our Christian life. As Christians, are we content having a little dent, a malfunction here in our character, a little malfunction there? We may not be quite up to par in different areas, but we are still doing the main things that we think are necessary to go to heaven, so we will just leave off all those other little details that aren't that important. Is that the way we are sometimes? I know that some people have a tendency to do that, to let things go, to let things slide by that aren't just right, but does God want us to do that? Christ wants to have a spotless bride, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:27) That's one reason, if you look at the sacrificial system, the sacrifices representing Jesus were always presented spotless, without blemish. They represented Christ, but Christ is to live in us, so we are to have the same thing. We are supposed to be spotless, without blemish.

Let's not get to heaven driving this "old junker," with things falling apart here and there and just not quite right. Let's make sure that our Christian experience is one comparable to a car that has been to the maintenance shop, the car wash, and the detail shop so that everything is shiny and working properly. This is the way we need to be as Christians. We need to make sure everything in our life is a light.

How Do We Get There?

How does that happen? It is one thing to say, "Okay, this is what needs

to be done," and then leave you there. It is another thing to say, "This is what you have to do and here is how you do it." That is what is important. It is not enough just to know where we have to go. We have to know how to get there.

First Corinthians 13:4 states, "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." Now, "charity" here is self-sacrificing love. When we read this whole chapter, is this a description of you? The reason I picked out this verse is because I have found myself (all of us suffer with different things—Paul had a thorn in the flesh), suffering long with a particular thing but I find myself being unkind and not very nice about it. So, I read this verse and I say, "Well, this isn't a description of me. This isn't the kind of person I am." I suffer long, sure, but then I am unkind about it. Is that the way love acts? Not according to this verse. It says it suffers long and is kind, tender, and gentle. So, when I read this, I say, "Well, Lord, this isn't me. This isn't a description of me." Something is wrong. It is like that car. One of the doors doesn't open. The only way to get in is you have to go through another way. So, there is a problem here and how can it be fixed? With the door, you have to take the door off, remove the lining, and fix the handle. In the case of my character, something also has to be done. If I suffer long and I am not kind, well, then I need to learn how to suffer long and be kind. That is what it says love does. So, I must not have the love that I need.

We Need God's Spirit

Galatians 5:22, 23 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Here it says the fruit of the Spirit, the first thing, is love, and then joy, peace, longsuffering, and gentleness. The word *gentleness* is almost the same as the word *kind* back in 1 Corinthians 13:4. Love suffers long and is kind. Here it says longsuffering and then it says

gentleness, or another word would be kindness. So, here are things that I need. If I need them and I don't have them, it is because the true Word of God says I don't have enough of the Spirit of God in my life. The Bible says the fruit of the Spirit is these things—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, gentleness. So, how do I get these things, then? I receive them by having the Spirit of God in my life. So, if I am low on these things, then I am also low on the Spirit of God. How do you get the Spirit?

Jesus said: "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:11-13) Jesus said no good father would ever give bad gifts to his children. He was telling us that if we ask God for His Spirit He will give it to us, if we believe. The Bible says, "ye have not, because ye ask not." (James 4:2) It also says, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." (Mark 9:23)

This is something that I really believe we can depend upon, exactly like it says. As a parent, I truly want to give good gifts to my children. Friends, the good news is, God is much more willing to give us His Spirit than we are to give good gifts to our children. God is going to do it because He said He would. If we depend upon that and trust Him for that, then He is going to fulfill His word. He is going to do just what He says.

We need to come to God in childlike faith, depending on His Word. We need to use the Word like Jesus did when Satan came against Him. Jesus said, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4) "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." (Matthew 4:7) "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord

thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Matthew 4:10) Jesus used the Word of God as a tool to fight against Satan, and that is what we need to do too. It is a tool that will enable us to become stronger and stronger; that will enable us to go higher and higher. We need to use the promises the way they were intended. We need to accept them just as they are.

One thing I learned from the experience with my friend I mentioned at the beginning: Satan is constantly trying to convince people that God is not going to be able to help them, that God is no good, and that He is not as faithful as He claims to be. The biggest battle with people, who are into Satanism, is over their faith in God. If they get presented with a little hope that maybe God can help them with this problem, that they are not going to be destroyed because of it, then they can go forward. But Satan tries to crush out that hope, so that they don't see any way that they can get through it, without being harmed or becoming worse. That is what the real battle is that is going on—it is for our faith.


Do you trust God? Do you trust God enough? Some people asked Jesus, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" (John 6:28) Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." (John 6:29) That is what God's work is in the world—to empower you to believe and to trust. Satan's work is to help you to disbelieve and to distrust. These are two opposing views that are in a battle right now. God wants you to believe. Satan wants you to disbelieve.

Second Corinthians 7:1 says, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." These promises are given to us to help bring us to perfection. We can depend on these promises. We cleanse ourselves from the filthiness that is in our flesh and in our spirit through, and by, God's promises.

So going back to our car analogy, if you have a defective door handle, or if you have a speedometer that doesn't work, or whatever is in your experience, some defect that is not quite right, but you have been content so far to just go along with it because you are getting by just fine by leaving that defect there, here it says that you need to cleanse yourself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. All of those defects must go, every single one of them. It says we do this by the promises that God has given us. We have so many promises, and we can depend upon the promises, and they are everywhere in the Word of God. We are not going to see the promises and we are not going to know them if our Bible sits on the shelf and collects dust!

We Need Spiritual Tools

I like to have a lot of tools. Sometimes I take it to extremes. I have this little tiny car and much of the trunk is filled with tools. I carry them in case I break down and need to fix something. In our spiritual experience, what is the toolbox? The Word of God! God tells us that we have these promises so that we can cleanse ourselves from filthiness. If you have a problem with something, there is a promise in the Bible just for that problem. There is a tool that fits just right.

The other day I was fixing my brakes. There is a special wrench that you have to have to take the brake line off. Many other jobs also require specific tools. There are special tools in God's Word, but you will not know about them unless you open the Bible and find them. The more you study, the bigger toolbox you are going to have. You will keep adding tools. The more you study, the more tools you will have and you will even increase your tools from specific verses as you will continue to gain insight from them through continued study. That is why it is so important to keep going over it, to keep gaining your tools, so that you can cleanse yourself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit; so that you can go onward, upward, and higher! 



Questions and Answers

by Lynnford Beachy



Question:

"I have a question. Who was the LORD (Yahweh) that appeared to Abraham in Genesis 18? Some say Jesus, since no man can see God the Father, so affirming Jesus as Yahweh, too. Looking forward for your response." *Georgia*

Answer:

The Bible says, "And the LORD [Yahweh] appeared unto [Abraham] in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground." (Genesis 18:1, 2) The remaining portion of the chapter details the conversation that took place between the LORD and Abraham. In verse 22 it says, "And the men [the two angels with the LORD] turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but *Abraham stood yet before the LORD.*"

The account of Abraham's visitors in Genesis 18 indicates that the LORD (Yahweh) Himself appeared physically to Abraham, and carried on a conversation with him. As you noted, this could not have been God, the Father, for "No man hath seen God at any time." (John 1:18 & 1 John 4:12) And Paul wrote about the Father, stating that He is the One "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; *whom no man hath seen, nor can see.*" (1 Timothy 6:16)

The only conclusion I can come to is that someone other than the Father appeared to Abraham—someone who also has the name Yahweh. Moses was informed of a Person who has the Father's name in Him. God said to Moses, "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: *for my name is in him.*" (Exodus 23:20) This was no ordinary angel, for He is said to have the power to "pardon your transgressions," and God put His own name in Him. The Bible says, "And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them." (Exodus 14:19) Paul explained that the Israelites "did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." The "angel of God" who went before the children of Israel was none other than Jesus Christ Himself.

Please do not get confused by the fact that Jesus Christ is called an angel. The Hebrew word מַלְאָךְ (*mal-awk*) that

was translated Angel, literally means, a "messenger" or a "representative." (*Brown-Driver and Brigg's Hebrew Lexicon*) This word is used of men, literal angels, and of Jesus Christ Himself, all of whom are messengers or representatives of God. Jesus is called the "messenger [angel] of the covenant." (Malachi 3:1) So, Jesus Christ can rightfully be called the Angel of the LORD, even though He is not a literal angelic being. As we have seen, the Angel of the LORD has the name of Yahweh in Him, which only makes sense, because He is God's own Son, who "hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than" the angels. (Hebrews 1:4) Children inherit the name of their father. Even so, Jesus Christ inherited His Father's name, and is called Yahweh several times in the Bible.

The name Yahweh literally means, "the existing one," (*Ibid*) or "self existent." (*Strong's Hebrew Lexicon*) Jesus said, "As the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." (John 5:26) God, the Father, gave to His Son the ability to have "life in himself," or "self existence." Therefore, the definition of the name Yahweh can be applied to God's Son because His Father gave Him the ability to self exist.

I hope this helps to answer your question.

Question:

"How will the 144,000 number come to be? Has it already started? If yes, when? If I want to be in that number what can I do?" *Tanzania*

Answer:

John recorded his vision, "After these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel." (Revelation 7:1-4)

The 144,000 are sealed before the four winds are let loose, thus protecting them from the perils of the very last days. This same group is described in chapter 14 as follows: "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. These are they

which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.” (Revelation 14:1, 4, 5) The 144,000 follow the Lamb wherever He goes, indicating complete obedience, and they are described as being “without fault” and having no guile or deceit in their mouths.

Zephaniah gave a similar account when he wrote, “The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.” (Zephaniah 3:13) Here, this same group of people is called “the remnant of Israel.” John also spoke of a remnant in this way: “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (Revelation 12:17) A remnant is what is left over at the end of a job. In a carpet store you can buy a carpet remnant. It is simply a piece of carpet that was left over after a job was completed. The use of this word to refer to God’s people indicates that they are the last group of God’s people upon the earth—those who are alive when the Lord comes to redeem His people.

It is clear that the 144,000 are those who live at the end of time, who will be protected from the perils at the end, who follow Christ completely, who keep God’s commandments without committing sin, and who speak only the truth. They are the ones who will not see death and “are alive and remain” when the Lord comes. (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

You asked how they come about. It is truth that sanctifies (John 17:17) and, as we have seen, the 144,000 will only speak the truth, so they must have become acquainted with the truth. Moreover, they have allowed the truth to work in them to sanctify their souls so completely that they have ceased from sin. “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” (2 Timothy 2:19) This verse will become 100% true for the 144,000. “He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.” (1 Peter 4:1) This complete sanctification will never happen to those who hold on to error, for in whatever area a person clings to error, in that area, he cannot be sanctified.

You asked, “has it started?” The process of sanctification has started, but the final sealing has not yet taken place. It will take place in connection with every case being decided for life or death, when Jesus says, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” (Revelation 22:11) At this point all the righteous living will have been sealed, and will then be secure from being harmed by “the seven

last plagues” (Revelation 15:1), or from being killed by those who wish them harm.

If you want to be in that number, study your Bible to know the truth, develop a strong, personal relationship with God and His Son by spending time with Them in prayer and private devotions, and allow the truth to have its way in your heart by yielding your life to God—“Not my will, but thine be done.” (Luke 22:42) The Bible says, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and *not suffer sin upon him.*” (Leviticus 19:17) Let this be true about yourself as well. Do not suffer sin upon yourself. Whenever a sin comes to your mind, confess it and forsake it immediately. (Proverbs 28:13)

I hope this helps to answer your question.

Question:

“Sometimes I work in hardship, without anything to supply my needs. Is it possible to ask a church member to give me his tithe?”

Tanzania

Answer:

This is a good question. Let me begin by pointing out some principles from the Bible.

I know that it is difficult to take care of the basic necessities of life in Africa, and many people struggle with these issues. Yet, God has given His people a command to return a tithe (tenth) of all that they possess and all they acquire, to support the ministry of the gospel. God asked, “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” (Malachi 3:8-10)

Here, God is giving all of us a challenge. He asks us to prove whether His word is true, by returning a tenth of all of our increase to the Lord. He says that if we do this, He will be faithful to supply us with blessings over and above what we need. Jesus said, “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.” (Luke 6:38) This promise is not just for the rich, but for all people, regardless of how much they have. If you work today, and earn ten dollars (or ten Tanzanian shillings), then one dollar (or one shilling) of that belongs to the Lord. If you use it for your own personal needs, you have robbed God.

One day Jesus was watching the worshipers coming into the temple. “And he looked up, and saw the rich men

casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.” (Luke 21:1-4) This woman did not have to give “all the living that she had,” but she did it anyway, even though she only had two mites. God required of her to give ten percent of her living, but instead, she gave it all. This was more than the rich because they only gave a portion of their living, while she gave it all. I am sure God was pleased with this gift, and poured out blessings more than she could receive, just as He had promised.

The poor in Africa are just as obligated to return tithe as the richest people in Europe, Australia, or the United States. A lot of poor people in Africa think that because they only get a small amount of food and money that God does not expect them to return the tithe to the Lord. That is a big mistake, and may be part of the reason why they get so little. Jesus said, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.” (Luke 16:10) If you are not faithful with the little that comes your way, do you think God will send great things to you? Certainly not!

The fact is, even poor people eat food, so they must have acquired it in some way. When Elijah was sent to a poor woman in Zarephath who was collecting sticks to cook her last meal for herself and her son before they died, Elijah said unto her, “make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.” (1 Kings 17:13) God tested her faith by asking her to give a portion to Him first, and then He blessed her with food for many days. If someone gives you one loaf of bread today, one tenth of that belongs to the Lord, and should be returned to Him by entrusting it to the hands of a minister of the gospel. If this was done faithfully in Africa, the ministers of the gospel should have enough food to feed themselves and their families without relying on aid from overseas. Paul wrote, “The Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” (1 Corinthians 9:14)

Now, back to your question. Can you ask people to give you their tithe? I don’t see this type of thing practiced in the New Testament. Paul received tithes and offerings, but I don’t find a record of him directly asking someone for it. There were other ministers as well. Paul said, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” (1 Corinthians 3:6) I doubt that Paul would have asked someone to give *him* tithe as opposed to giving it to Apollos or one of the other apostles. I, personally, have met ministers who have asked me to give them tithe, and it always left a bad taste in my mouth. I felt that if they were working for God, God would supply their needs without them having to directly ask people for money.

When Jesus sent forth workers into the ministry He said, “Carry neither purse, nor scrip... And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire.” (Luke 10:4, 7) Jesus did not tell them to ask people to give them food, but said that they should eat and drink “such things as they *give*.” It is your responsibility, as a minister, to instruct people concerning their requirements regarding tithe. Paul said, “I have not shunned to declare unto you **all** the counsel of God.” (Acts 20:27) After you have instructed them, then leave it in the hands of God whether they give their tithe to you, or to other ministers.

I hope this helps to answer your question.

Question:

“On my table there are many invitation letters from far away in the country? What can I do to work for them? I am well known, widely all around Tanzania. This is my problem for which I need your explanation.” *Tanzania*

Answer:

I know there are a lot of needs in Africa, and very limited resources. It takes money to travel and meet with the brethren in distant places. Hopefully the brethren who have asked you to come are willing to help a little with the expenses of your trip, and your needs while there, just as Jesus expressed in Luke 10:4, 7. However, all the brethren who need a visit may not be able to help you with your expenses, and therefore you need to get help elsewhere. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.” (2 Corinthians 11:8) The excess of other churches served to supply the lack in those who were more needy. This is something that needs to be done a lot in Africa because of the widespread poverty there. It is the responsibility of every Christian in richer countries to financially help ministers in poorer countries to spread the gospel. (I know of many ministers struggling to preach the true gospel in Africa who are receiving little or no support from overseas.) Even if help comes from overseas, the brethren there should help as much as they can, and then pray that the Lord will provide what is lacking.

In addition to you making visits, you should heed the counsel of Paul to Timothy. He wrote, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2) When Jesus was here He trained twelve disciples to spread the gospel. They, in turn, trained others to do the same thing, and today the message has reached most of the world. This same process needs to be repeated over and over until “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations.” (Matthew 24:14)

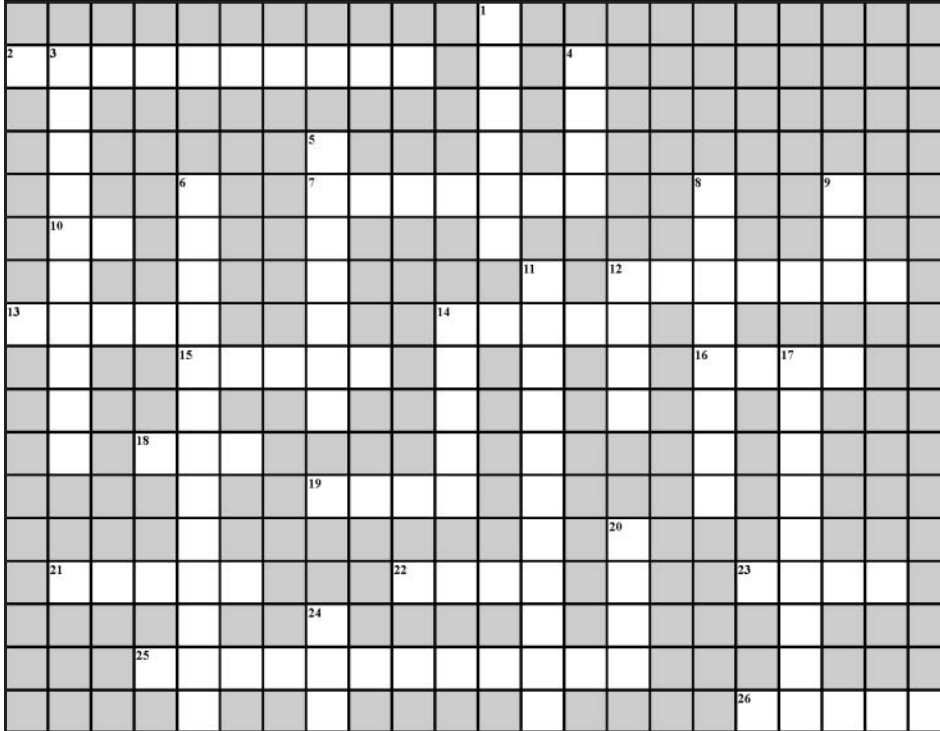
I hope this helps to answer your question.



Something for the Young at Heart

This month we are continuing a series of crossword Bible studies that are based on the "These Last Days" Bible Lessons. In order to maintain the flow of the study, this crossword puzzle is not split into Across and Down sections—Across or Down is indicated at the end of each line.

The Treasure in the Temple



Answers are on page 12

➤ When the temple of God was opened in heaven, the _____ was seen. Revelation 11:19—**18 Across**

➤ The Ten _____ were written on tables of stone and put in the ark Moses built. Deuteronomy 10:3-5—**25 Across**

Note: The ark containing the commandments is depicted in Revelation as being in the sanctuary in heaven. God's commandments constitute the law of His universal government. The Psalmist declares that God's kingdom "ruleth over all," and that all the angels "do his commandments." (Psalm 103:19, 20) The Ten Commandments are recorded in Exodus 20:3-17.

➤ A person dishonors God by _____ His law. Romans 2:23—**8 Down**

➤ Some people have made _____ God's law. Psalm 119:126—**19 Across**

➤ Jesus said, "If ye love me, _____ my commandments." John 14:15—**12 Down**

➤ If we keep God's Commandments, we can be sure that we _____ Him. 1 John 2:3—**16 Across**

Note: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 John 2:4) "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not grievous." (1 John 5:2, 3)

➤ Jesus said we should do and _____ even the least of the commandments. Matthew 5:19—**26 Across**

Note: Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matthew 5:17, 18)

➤ Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would _____ the law. Isaiah 42:21—**7 Across**

Note: Notice how Jesus magnified the sixth and seventh commandments: "Ye have heard that it was said..., Thou shalt not kill.... But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." (Matthew 5:21, 22)

"Ye have heard that it was said..., Thou shalt not commit adultery.... But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." (Matthew 5:27, 28)

➤ In His flesh, Christ abolished the law of commandments contained in _____. Ephesians 2:15—**3 Down**

➤ The feast of Passover was called an _____. Exodus 12:43—**17 Down**

Note: In Old Testament times God's people performed ceremonial ordinances involving burnt offerings and the sprinkling of blood. (Ezekiel 43:18) While it was not the blood of bulls and goats which took away their sins (Hebrews 10:4), such ordinances were a means of demonstrating their faith in Christ. (Hebrews 11:4, 28) Since they served only as a foreshadowing of Christ, those provisional laws were no longer needed after His death.

➤ Christ nailed to the cross and blotted out the _____ of ordinances. Colossians 2:14—**11 Down**

➤ Yet, God will not alter things that come out of His _____. Psalm 89:34—**20 Down**

➤ God _____ the Ten Commandments with His own lips. Exodus 20:1—**14 Across**

Note: We must not confuse the ceremonial ordinances with the moral law which is summarized in the Ten Commandments. Just as God does not change (James 1:17), neither do His

commandments. God's commandments are His righteousness (Psalm 119:172) which He puts in us when He justifies us. (Compare Romans 3:22 with Hebrews 10:16, 17.)

- The ____ of the Commandments is important, but circumcision is not. 1 Corinthians 7:19—**12 Across**
- Paul described God's commandments as _____. Romans 7:12—**4 Down**
- Looking into the law is like unto a man beholding his face in a _____. James 1:23-25—**21 Across**
- When we look into the law as a mirror, it gives us the knowledge of _____. Romans 3:20—**9 Down**
- Paul said he would not have ____ sin except by the law. Romans 7:7—**13 Across**
- God's commandments are compared to a _____. Proverbs 6:23—**23 Across**

➤ Because God's law reveals to us the sin in our lives, it plays an important role in ____ the soul. Psalm 19:7—**2 Across**

➤ Once the law has shown us our sin, does it have the power to justify us? Romans 3:20—**10 Across**

➤ Jesus Christ is the only name given "whereby we must be ____." Acts 4:10, 12—**15 Across**

➤ God ____ that we should make void the law. Romans 3:31—**1 Down**

Note: "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:8) "These things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." (Titus 3:8) "For the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23)

➤ Sin is the ____ of the law. 1 John 3:4—**6 Down**

➤ Sin is not ____ when there is no law. Romans 5:13—**5 Down**

Note: "The strength of sin is the law." (1 Corinthians 15:56)

➤ Where no ____ is, there can be no transgression (sin). Romans 4:15—**24 Down**

Note: Jesus, then, could have eliminated sin without having to suffer. All He would have to do is change the law. Rewrite the law, and there would be no more violation, no need for anyone to pay the penalty. Christ would not have had to die.

The very fact that Christ died is the strongest proof that God could not change His law and still be just. For "it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." (Luke 16:17)

➤ While justifying those who believe in Jesus, God must be ____ at the same time. Romans 3:26—**22 Across**

➤ God's commandments will ____ fast for ever. Psalm 111:7, 8—**14 Down**

Note: Please read Psalm 19:7-11.

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

by George McDaniel

Odds and Ends for the New Year

A New Year has begun. This is a time when many people make resolutions to begin doing things differently, to make improvements in their lives. Unfortunately, by now reality has caught up with many who have resolved to make changes. They have learned that changes are not as easily made as are resolutions. Too many people, when they find out that "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," totally give up on all resolutions as soon as one is broken, rather than renewing their determination and starting over.

If a person is trying to break an old habit and start a new, more desirable one, it may be possible to do so by willpower and determination. However, if one is trying to rid himself of an addiction, it is usually very difficult to do through willpower and determination alone, unless the motivation is very strong.

An ancient precept is "know thyself." This applies to each one of us as we work to develop a plan for our own health. We need to learn to think for ourselves. We can seek counsel and information from others, but take our own stands. Science and medical knowledge are far from complete regardless of what some would like us to believe.

Our health is in our own hands and minds. We are responsible for finding our own paths and our own truths. What is true for one might not be for another. What makes me healthy might not have the same effect for you because

your metabolism is different. Those who hand over their health to another often do so based on a catchy marketing line, relentless advertising, or what is more convenient. Don't buy the conventional wisdom without a healthy dose of skepticism. General George S. Patton is reported to have said, "If everybody is thinking alike, then somebody is not thinking."

Recently I read an article on health that contained the phrase, "George McDaniel says..." I would like to inform you, for the record, that I am not an authority. I do a lot of reading. I have personally tried a lot of things and have found some that work well for me. I am not through reading or experimenting. I still have a lot to learn, and probably a lot I think is truth needs to be discarded. I most likely have more sources of health information than most of you who read this. When I find something I think might be helpful to you, I share it with you. You are responsible for the use you make of it. Please don't quote from what I write and say: "George McDaniel says..." I am not an authority. You should be the authority for your own self.

Vitamin D in the News: If you have persistent, undiagnosed pain in your muscles, joints, and bones, vitamin D might be the answer. In late 2003, Mayo Clinic researchers discovered that 93 percent of 150 individuals between the ages of ten and 65 who visited an inner city clinic with complaints of chronic nonspecific pain had vitamin D deficiency.

The researchers wrote: "All patients with persistent, nonspecific musculoskeletal pain are at high risk for the consequences of unrecognized and untreated severe vitamin D deficiency. This risk extends to those considered at low risk for vitamin D deficiency: non-elderly, non-house-bound, or non-immigrant persons of either sex."

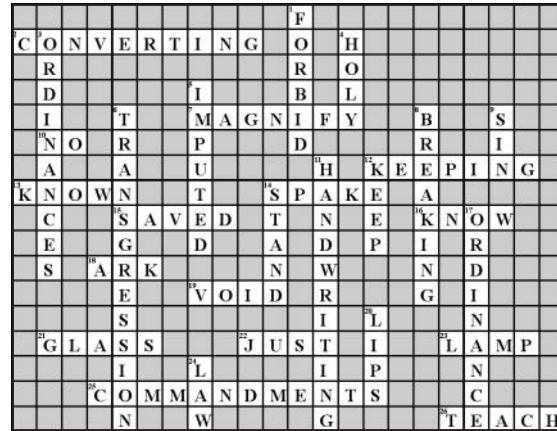
If any of these symptoms sound familiar: chronic muscle, bone, and joint pain, and the cause is unknown, you could get your vitamin D level checked, or just try a safe amount of vitamin D, as much as 2,000 to 3,000 units daily. If this is the problem, you should experience dramatic pain relief in a few weeks. If you do not experience pain relief from trying this remedy, then there is probably another problem other than vitamin D deficiency.

The best vitamin D for the body is that obtained by exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays. However, if you are deficient, and live in the north, in winter, you will need to take a supplement until you can build up your own stores through exposure to the sun.

I don't know yet what will be in next month's article, but between now and then I will probably come across something interesting and beneficial. So, until then, here is to better health for us all in the coming year. ✍️

(George McDaniel is my father-in-law, and has been a registered nurse for many years, which, along with much research, has taught him many useful health principles. *Editor*)

Answers to Crossword Puzzle on page 10



Present Truth is published monthly by Smyrna Gospel Ministries. It is sent free upon request. **Duplication of these papers is not only permitted but strongly encouraged, as long as our contact information is retained.** *Present Truth* is available online at <http://www.presenttruth.info>.

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