

# The Mountain Messenger

A CHRISTIAN VOICE FROM THE MOUNTAIN STATE AND BEYOND

**REVERENCE IN WORSHIP**

**DOES IT MATTER WHAT  
WE BELIEVE?**

**SANTA CLAUS OR JESUS CHRIST**

Along with other great articles by...  
Dale Babinsky, Ed Melott, Brenda Poarch, and  
more...

“...The churches of Christ greet you” (Romans 16:16).

# Editor's Note

The holiday season has come! I love this time of year, yet it often seems the world works hard to surround itself with what it thinks is joy. Unfortunately, it encourages us to chase that joy in all the wrong ways by racking up credit card debt, emptying our bank accounts on “holiday deals,” and convincing us that love is shown through overspending. But true joy has never been found in more possessions. It never will be.

As Christians, we do not look to the world for guidance. We draw upon the wisdom of the Almighty through His word. When we turn to Scripture, we learn that the only way to experience lasting joy and true contentment is not through what we own, but through where we are, and that place must be in Christ. Every spiritual blessing God offers is found only in Him: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3 NKJV).

The greatest gift ever given has already been placed before humanity by our Heavenly Father (John 3:16; Rom 5:8). The question is simply this: Will people accept it? This holiday season, instead of being wrapped up in the chaos of worldly celebration, let's help others learn how to unwrap the gift God has given to the world.

The keys to the kingdom were given to the apostle Peter (Matt 16:18–19). He opened the door to salvation when he preached the first gospel sermon at the beginning of Christ's church, the church of Christ, and revealed how we enter the Door, who is Jesus Himself. “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38). This season, take time to teach others about our Savior and how to be placed into Christ through the baptism revealed in the word of God (Gal 3:27).

I pray that this issue of The Mountain Messenger will edify you by engaging your heart and mind and fueling your spirit to work for the Lord all the more. The fields are still white for harvest, and there are countless souls yet to be reached. Let us be zealous workers, compelled by the love of Christ.

As always, thank you for reading The Mountain Messenger. Your prayers and encouragement mean more than you know. If you would like to help keep this magazine free and continuing, support can be sent by visiting [Addedtothechurch.com](http://Addedtothechurch.com) or by mailing contributions to:

Added to the Church, LLC  
4788 Stillwell Road  
Davisville, WV 26142

*Executive Editor* — Daniel P. Curry, Jr. “DJ”

# Contents

4

To Whom am I a Neighbor?  
Dale Babinsky

It's Complicated, and yet Simple  
Brenda Poarch

5

6

Nourished by Design, Cleansed by Design  
Deborah Amos

8

How Do I Regard Others?  
Ed Melott

Does Paul Say Baptism Can't Save You?  
Cole Curry

9

10

Take Heed: Learning from the Past  
Andrew Walls

Spiritual Leadership  
Douglas Pell

11

12

Does It Matter What We Believe?  
Josh Hall

Reverence in Worship  
Sally Rutter

13

14

Santa Claus or Jesus Christ  
Kaylynn Robison

What About My Goals?  
Cheyenne Blizzard

15

16

Can You Keep a Secret?  
Clista Heintzman

Does God Hear the Prayer of a Sinner?  
Connor Curry

17

How to House, Heart to Heart

18

19

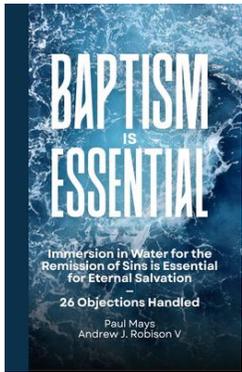
Resources

Back  
Cover

“Power”  
Stephen R. Diehl

# Other Publications

## Baptism is Essential



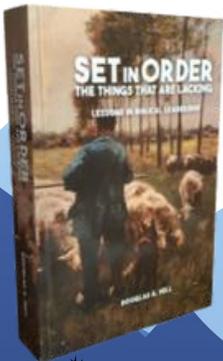
The text publication of Paul Mays' TikTok evangelism effort responding to the 26 most common objections to baptism. Edited and compiled by Andrew J. Robison V. Available on Amazon.

## Salvation Study Cards

Purchase these study chain reference and evangelism cards at [bit.ly/study-card](http://bit.ly/study-card)



## Set In Order The Things That Are Lacking



A new work by Douglas Pell about the eldership and church leadership. Available at Sain Publications!

## New Testament Expositor

A digital publication of scholarly articles on biblical topics. Edited by Scott Judge and Ron Thomas. Included with a digital subscription to *The Mountain Messenger*.



# The Mountain Messenger

Volume 2, Issue 6 — December 2025  
© Added to the Church 2025

*Executive Editor* — Daniel P. Curry, Jr. "DJ"  
*Assistant Editor* — Jon Hescht  
*Graphic Editors* — Andrew J. Robison V, Kaylynn Robison  
*Cover Photography* — Angela Kuhns

Articles in *The Mountain Messenger* may be copied and distributed for use in Bible studies and other such uses without any changes or edits to the text. In any instance of usage, copyright credit must be given to *The Mountain Messenger* a publication by Added to the Church and must include the author's name and volume/issue information cited.

[www.addedtothechurch.com](http://www.addedtothechurch.com)  
[Office@AddedtotheChurch.com](mailto:Office@AddedtotheChurch.com)

**f** "Added to the Church"

Receive *The Mountain Messenger* publication for free via e-mail every other month. View the digital version with your chosen device as a digital flipbook and enjoy the extras not available in the printed version.

OR

Receive a free copy of *The Mountain Messenger* shipped to you or your congregation every other month. This version is excellent for those uncomfortable with electronics or who prefer larger print.

## SUBSCRIBE



# To Whom am I a Neighbor?

## Dale Babinsky

Iryna Zarutska, a 23-year-old who fled from Ukraine in 2022, found herself in the United States seeking safety and a new beginning. On her way home on August 22, 2025, she boarded a public transport train in Charlotte, NC. Tragically, she was stabbed and killed while those around her on the train looked on and then looked away. Nobody helped her, and nobody tried to stop the attacker from leaving. It was as if they were not surprised by this event, keeping their noses in their phones and devices. This raises questions about apathy, the desire not to get involved, or the fear of being sued. While we can make excuses, someone should have helped this poor girl.

### **What Shall I Do to Inherit Eternal Life?**

In Luke 10:25–28, an important question is posed: How can we have eternal life in heaven? This question is echoed in Matthew 19:16 by the rich young ruler and in Acts 2:37 by those who had crucified the Lord. The lawyer who asked Jesus this question had a motive; he was testing Jesus, perhaps trying to get Him to say something to discredit Himself. Despite the lawyer's intentions, Jesus chose to teach him. Jesus answered the question with another question, pointing out that the lawyer, an expert in the law, should know the answer. The lawyer quoted from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, summarizing that we must love God with all we have and love others as ourselves. Jesus affirmed that this was correct, emphasizing that doing this would put the lawyer in God's grace.

### **Who Is My Neighbor?**

The answer to the first question led to another: Who is my neighbor? In Luke 10:29, the lawyer sought to justify himself, hoping that the definition of "neighbor" would fit his thinking. The Jews of that time saw only other Jews as neighbors, viewing others as unclean Gentiles. William Barclay describes their attitude, noting that if a wall collapsed on a man on the Sabbath, enough could be removed to determine if he was a Jew or a Gentile. If he

were a Jew, he could be helped; if a Gentile, nothing more could be done without violating the Sabbath. Jesus responded with a parable in Luke 10:30–35, describing a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho who was attacked by thieves and left for dead. A priest and a Levite both saw the man but passed by on the other side. However, a Samaritan, despite being hated by the Jews, had compassion on the man, treated his wounds, and ensured his care.

### **Who Was a Neighbor?**

The Samaritan's actions demonstrated true neighborliness. Despite the animosity between Jews and Samaritans, the Samaritan helped the injured man, using wine and oil as medicine and inconveniencing himself by putting the man on his own beast of burden. He even gave money to the innkeeper to ensure the man's continued care. Jesus concluded the parable by asking who was a neighbor to the injured man, emphasizing that we must be neighbors to all we encounter, not just our family and friends. The lawyer could not deny the truth: it was the hated Samaritan who showed mercy.

Jesus' message is clear: we need to go and do likewise. We must see others in this world as our neighbors, recognizing that we are all just passing through this world. How do we view our neighbors? Are they a nuisance or a burden to be avoided? We must have compassion on others, seeing them as souls in need of both physical and spiritual help. Just as Jesus has been the perfect neighbor to us, we must be neighbors to everyone we encounter. In so doing, we can let the Lord be a neighbor to us. ▲



# It's Complicated, and yet Simple

Brenda Poarch

Christianity is very complicated, and yet very simple. It's complicated because it's not the way that we as mortals would have dealt with sin. The idea that an All-powerful God came to Earth in mortal form, was obedient to human parents, then suffered and died for crimes He didn't commit (because he is a perfect God) seems ludicrous! Why did He even consider giving this gift of forgiveness and eternal life to the very people who were responsible for crucifying Him! It makes no sense at all! And yet, it's all very simple. God is LOVE, and love wants what's best for us. God's love for His children is so pure that He only has one requirement for us to receive the full benefit of this love. We must love Him in return. That's simple... right?

Mankind struggles to understand this pure love. We understand lust, fleshly desires, and powerful emotions, but do we really understand love? God knew that mankind not only needed a Savior, but we also needed an example of what self-sacrificing, fully obedient love looked like. So, He sent Jesus. Only God incarnate had the ability to demonstrate this powerful, perfect love! Sadly, even with the perfect example given to us by a perfect God, we still struggle to understand.

When God created man, He gave us minds that could reason and free will to make our own decisions. We often fail, however, because we believe that we know more than we actually do.



We study Scripture looking for loopholes that would give us permission to sin in ways that are pleasing to our flesh. We focus on the love of God from an earthly viewpoint, believing that because God is loving, He would never send anyone to Hell. We add rules where God has none, and

we eliminate evidence of salvation clearly stated in Scripture. We believed ourselves to be wise, but we mock God with our haughty ways. God is clear about what He thinks of our "wisdom."

"For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate'" (1 Cor 1:19 NIV).

"For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength" (1 Cor 1:25).

When we approach Scripture from a merely intellectual standpoint, we can be deceived into believing that we know more than the One who created us. Scripture must be studied with a contrite heart, a love for our Savior, and a willingness to learn the truth. God's plan for salvation is so simple because it all begins with our hearts—not our minds. God made His plan so simple that even a child can understand it. "At that time Jesus declared, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will'" (Matt 11:25–26).

God wants our hearts because when our hearts are fully committed to following Jesus, we will humbly obey. We'll be like little children who are quick to love and slow to judge. Praise, joy, and gratitude will become our daily song to the Lord. Our God knows His children and, like any good father, He wants us to obey His commands. He wants us to live and love like Jesus!

Ladies, it's really that simple because when we love like Jesus, obeying God will be our goal. We'll stand for the truth and bring the lost to Jesus. This powerful love will give us the strength and determination to deny ourselves. We'll take up our cross daily and follow God's Son, Christ (the perfect One who loved us enough to die for us). We must not change God's pure, easy-to-understand instructions and rewrite them so that they're complicated and difficult to understand. Love God and love each other. It can't be any simpler than that! Amen?

▲

# NOURISHED

by *Design*

# CLEANSSED

Deborah Amos (PhD- Biomedical Sciences)

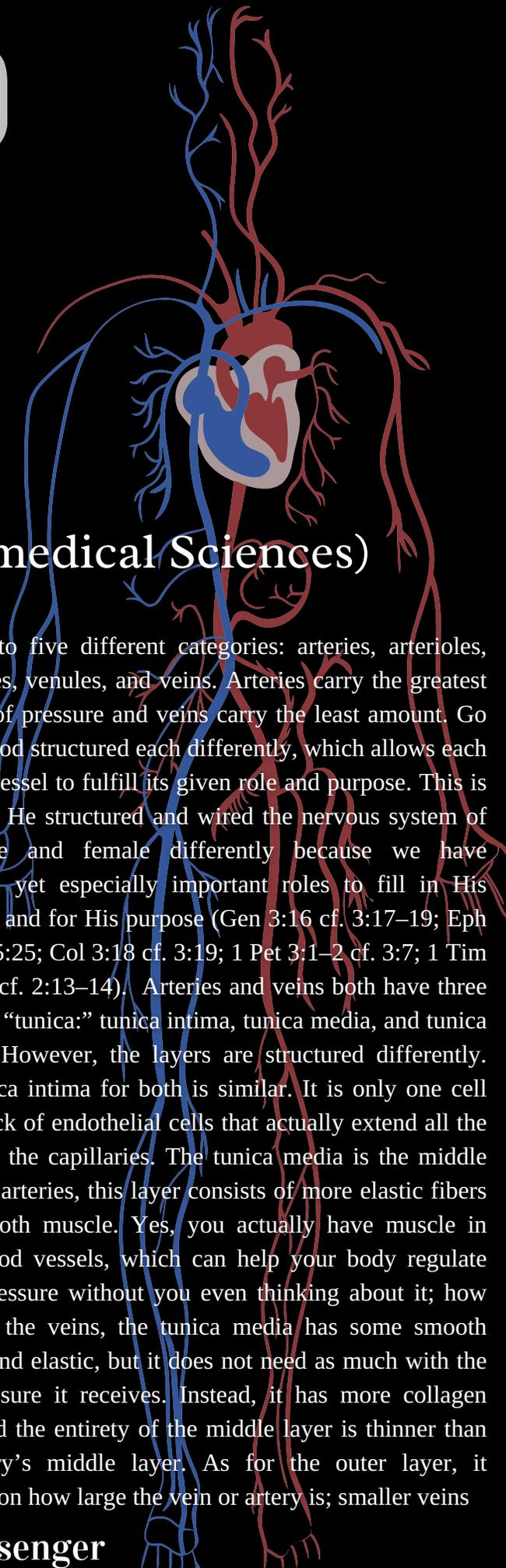
In our last article, we examined the heart and saw the evidence of the intricacy of its design, allowing for proper blood flow. In this article, we want to further what we first studied and look at the vascular system. Most individuals know that we have arteries and veins. Unfortunately, as child-



ren, we are commonly taught that arteries are red and veins are blue. This is only true for what we call the systemic circuit, where arteries take blood from the heart out to the body tissues to supply them with nutrients and oxygen, then we have an exchange, and veins take back waste products and carbon dioxide to be again filled with good things. The pulmonary circuit, involving the lungs, has arteries carrying deoxygenated blood (more of a blue-purple color) to the lungs to exchange carbon dioxide for oxygen and then back through the pulmonary veins (red). So, a better way to remember each one's role is to think arteries take blood away from the heart and veins bring blood back toward the heart.

We can categorize the vascular system that carries the

blood into five different categories: arteries, arterioles, capillaries, venules, and veins. Arteries carry the greatest amount of pressure and veins carry the least amount. Go figure, God structured each differently, which allows each type of vessel to fulfill its given role and purpose. This is like how He structured and wired the nervous system of the male and female differently because we have different, yet especially important roles to fill in His kingdom and for His purpose (Gen 3:16 cf. 3:17–19; Eph 5:22 cf. 5:25; Col 3:18 cf. 3:19; 1 Pet 3:1–2 cf. 3:7; 1 Tim 2:11–12 cf. 2:13–14). Arteries and veins both have three layers or “tunica:” tunica intima, tunica media, and tunica externa. However, the layers are structured differently. The tunica intima for both is similar. It is only one cell layer thick of endothelial cells that actually extend all the way into the capillaries. The tunica media is the middle layer. In arteries, this layer consists of more elastic fibers and smooth muscle. Yes, you actually have muscle in your blood vessels, which can help your body regulate blood pressure without you even thinking about it; how cool! In the veins, the tunica media has some smooth muscle and elastic, but it does not need as much with the low pressure it receives. Instead, it has more collagen fiber, and the entirety of the middle layer is thinner than the artery's middle layer. As for the outer layer, it depends on how large the vein or artery is; smaller veins

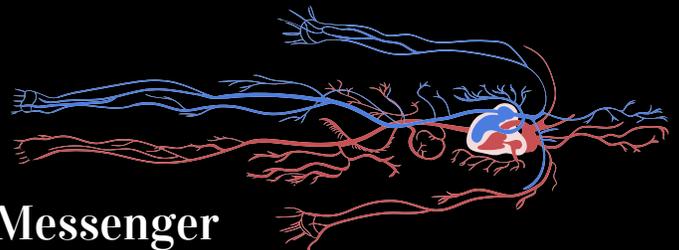


have a larger outer layer made of collagen fibers to help prevent collapse. Larger arteries have a thicker tunica externa than larger veins due to the pressure. Now, the veins have an incredibly special feature since they are working with comparatively low pressure. They have valves. This system is particularly important and is also found in lymphatic vessels, which are an even lower-pressure system than the veins. The valves, as with the valves in the heart we discussed in the last article, prevent backflow. Most veins, especially those in the lower extremities, have to push against gravity. Therefore, the valves help keep blood from pooling. When valves are not working properly, that puts an individual at high risk for varicose veins and deep vein thrombosis. The location of the veins is also very important. They are usually more superficial than arteries, but they also run alongside our skeletal muscles. If you have ever heard of someone having edema in the lower extremities or poor circulation, medical professionals often recommend that the individual pump their legs and flex their calves. This is because the flexing of those muscles actually helps to squeeze the veins and move blood back toward the heart. All the while, the valves are there to be sure, as we flex those muscles, blood does not fall back to its prior position. What a design?!

Now, the most common flow of blood goes from the arteries to arterioles to the capillaries, and then into venules, veins, and eventually back to the heart to repeat. There are a couple of areas where there are portal systems, which can be found at the liver and between the hypothalamus and pituitary gland within the brain. Feel free to check those out in a reputable textbook or online source! Here, I want to discuss the most common pathway. Arterioles are similar to arteries, but their tunica media is simply thinner. The middle layer of the tunica media extends and is the only component of the capillary. This design is of vital importance! Capillaries are only one cell thick, so based on the concentration of oxygen, carbon dioxide, and nutrients between the blood and the tissues, due to pressure and concentration gradient, the proper nutrients are exchanged at each capillary bed. This

would not function properly if the capillary were even one cell thicker! Additionally, as blood moves away from the arteries, pressure decreases; if this did not occur, the capillaries would burst. God designed us with pressure sensors and regulating systems to ensure we remain in a stable internal state (homeostasis). As gases and nutrients/wastes are exchanged at the capillaries, blood then moves into the venules. Compared to veins, venules have a thinner tunica media and do not always have valves. Areas closest to the capillaries will be void of valves.

Just like the blood system is able to provide all of our various organs and tissues vital nutrients and rid the body of byproducts from ongoing chemical reactions (Ex. carbon dioxide or urea), God provides us a communication and transit system to attain all the spiritual nutrients we need and how to get rid of the negative byproducts (sin) of different events that occur in our lives to keep us spiritually healthy. God's communication system to us is the Bible, which provides His plan for life and salvation. The Bible is our standard and the best way to live. In our body, the master of all processes is the nervous system and the brain. If the blood vessels, heart, and other vital organs did not respond to abnormal circumstances like too high or too low blood pressure, our tissues would not get proper nourishment, and there could be a significant buildup of waste products that could kill the body. On the spiritual side, if sin inhabits a person and repentance and forgiveness do not take place, sin and the accumulation of it will kill the spiritual body. With that being said, if anyone reading this finds that they need more spiritual nourishment, help understanding God's master plan, or assistance ridding their lives of accumulated trauma and wastes, please reach out to the editor, the elders at your local church, or any of the authors of this magazine. We would be more than happy to assist you with any spiritual need. ▲



# How Do I Regard Others?

Ed Melott

The way we love others either validates or invalidates our claim to Christ! For Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34–35 NASB). Jesus gave His followers a new quality or standard of love when He asked us to love others in the way that He has loved us! What does that type of love look like? Is it perfect adherence to what we call the Golden Rule (Matt 7:12)? Is it loving your neighbor as much as you love yourself (Jas 2:8)? The principles in these two verses are challenging to be sure, but still fall short of the great love of Jesus! Paul’s words in Philippians, seem to be closer to the mark — “...regard one another as more important than yourselves” (Phil 2:3b). This outpaces both the Golden Rule and the Royal Law!

This is hyperbole, right? Surely, Paul’s intention is to shock his readers, which includes us, to “shoot for the stars but settle for the moon”? In other words, aim for Philippians 2:3, but settle for Matthew 7:12 or James 2:8? Is it even possible to regard others as more important than yourself? The truth is, that all of these principles, including Philippians 2:3, are the will of God for our lives! The immediate context of Philippians 2 provides us with three steps that will enable us to truly develop this type of love for our brothers and sisters.

To regard others as more important than yourself, one must **ELEVATE A CERTAIN PURPOSE – UNITY** (Phil 2:1–2). The church in Philippi was already a tremendous source of joy for Paul (cf. Phil 1:4; 4:1). However, Paul’s joy would increase if this body of believers had true unity among themselves (Phil 2:2; 1:27). The type of unity, of which Paul longed, was that unity for which Jesus prayed (John 17:20–21) and that which the Psalmist called “good” and “pleasant” (Ps 133:1). When we value unity, we will value others in our fellowship. Selfishness,

jealousy, pride, and all other ungodly attitudes are unbecoming of Jesus’ disciples and only promote disunity and an absence of love! The desire for Christian unity is noble; however, in and of itself, it will not achieve the type of love required by Jesus.

The type of regard, of which Paul spoke, is only conceivable for those who, secondly, **ASSUME A CERTAIN POSTURE – HUMILITY** (Phil 2:3–4). Humility is one of the highest virtues of Christianity (1 Pet 5:5–6). We elevate others because we understand that every member of the body of Christ has great value to the overall function of the body (1 Cor 12:20–22). How may one be more mindful of the contributions of others? (1) Think less of your own contributions (Luke 17:10; Rom 12:3). (2) Recognize that you, too, have many faults and are in constant need of the grace of God (Rom 3:23). (3) Remember that each one is made in God’s image (Gen 1:26–27). (4) Strive to see value in every member of the congregation! Don’t ask what someone lacks but what they add to the body. (5) Learn to compliment the good qualities found in others (Rom 16:1–2). (6) Strive to see potential, not problems. (7) Privately pray for each member by name (Phil 1:3–4).

To regard others more important than yourself, thirdly, one must **ADHERE TO A CERTAIN PATTERN—JESUS** (Phil 2:5ff). Where could Paul find an example of such radical humility and loving regard for others? Search all of history if you can and wait until the world is no more, and you will never find a more appropriate example of “regarding others as more important than yourself.” Jesus pre-existed, which is a reminder that He has always



## How do I regard others? • Ed melott

existed. He is Himself God (John 1:1–3). When leaving the heavenly realm, He didn't insist upon His rights or His honor, as we so often do! He did not regard His equality with God as a thing to be "grasped" (Phil 2:6), for He emptied Himself (Phil 2:7) and took the form of a human slave! The words, "He humbled Himself," don't seem to be adequate enough to truly describe what Jesus set aside and willingly endured for His fallen creation! Did He regard others as more important than Himself? Truly! His entire life was a living sermon on humility (2 Cor 8:9). Remember, dear reader, that Jesus has commanded His followers to love others in the very way that He has loved us!

Lord, please help us to humble ourselves as You did and elevate our brothers and sisters that we may live together in harmony and serve You here on this earth and bow our knees to You in Heaven and confess You as our Lord to the glory of God the Father! ▲



# Does Paul Say Baptism Can't Save You?

Cole Curry

In 1 Corinthians 1:17, Paul says, "For Christ did not send to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect" (NKJV). Many people say that Paul is telling the church in Corinth that baptism is not of the gospel, and so it can't save. When we look at this verse, let's pay attention to the context, especially with a verse that deals with salvation; context is key. Paul is not saying that baptism can't save; the context is the church in Corinth, which is putting more emphasis on who baptized them than being one in Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:11–13 shows this, which is why Paul says, "I thank God I baptized none of you other than Crispus and Gaius" (1 Cor 1:14). To disprove this verse, you would have to prove that Paul was not talking about unity in Christ, but how baptism is not a part of the gospel. In addition, the simple context states that Paul is only talking about unity in Christ. We need to, just as 1 Thessalonians states, "Test all things; hold fast what is good." (1 Thess 5:21). ▲



# TAKE HEED!

## Learning from the Past

Andrew Walls

Lessons from the Old Testament often receive mixed feedback from their audience. One might hear everything from the predictable “We aren’t under the Old Law, so I don’t know why we need to study it,” to “I love stories from the Old Testament and looking at the history of God’s people.” This seems to have been on the minds of first-century Christians as well since Paul mentions it several times in his epistles. Each time, he extolls the benefits to Christians from study of the Law and the Prophets.

In Galatians, he describes the Law as a **παιδαγωγός** (*paidagogós*), meaning “guardian” (ESV) or “tutor” (NKJV), preparing those under the Law for the coming of the Messiah and a new, better covenant. And yes, while many of the commands no longer apply to Christians today (Gal 3:25), these aren’t just stories for Sunday School. Children’s curriculum starts with the Genesis account of creation and proceeds to cover Abraham, Noah and the Flood, Joseph, Moses, and other familiar Old Testament characters. Why? Just as in the first century, the message of the Old Testament points souls to Christ. It may not explain the plan of salvation, but it shows the power of God and, not only what He has done, but what He will do to shepherd His people.



Paul spends much of the book of Romans discussing the advantage Jewish Christians had over their Gentile Christian neighbors because “to them were committed the oracles of God.” (Rom 3:2 NKJV) They were already familiar with God’s Law, having been taught it from



an early age, and in the Law and the Prophets is revealed the righteousness of God. It tells how God’s people were justified by His grace, which is now available to all men (Rom 3:21–26).

In First Corinthians chapter ten, Paul discusses how those who came before are our examples. He notes several examples in verses six through eleven of God punishing idolatry, sexual immorality, tempting God, and complaining; he then calls the Corinthians to “take heed!” At the conclusion of this section, we find a familiar and oft-quoted verse in verse thirteen. “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man...”. New Testament Christians are better equipped to deal with temptation and sin if we are familiar with how God’s people have dealt with sin in times past.

Not only is the Old Testament beneficial for us as a foundation and an example in withstanding sin, but the Psalms are a wealth of wisdom in dealing with the whole spectrum of human emotion. Are you experiencing one of life’s peaks, and everything is going well? David did, too (Ps 100). Do you feel as though no one can understand your struggles, and you’re at a loss for words? Once again, David did, too (Ps 22).

The writers of the Old Testament were just as much holy men of God writing “as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:21) as any of the authors of the New Testament. So, if we hope to “rightly divide the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15) and live a life that’s pleasing to God, it’s necessary that we have a working knowledge of all Scripture, not only sections we feel are relevant. ▲

# SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

Douglas Pell

“The overseers’ role is spiritual, and the deacons’ role is physical.” I heard that comment in a workshop I conducted years ago, and it still bothers me. Why? Because while it sounds convenient, it isn’t biblically accurate.

Have you ever been in a conversation where both of you used the same words, only to discover later that you were speaking about different things? The result could be a good laugh or, unfortunately, a contract dispute that costs time and money, or worse, a lost soul in eternity. The title of this article, “Spiritual Leadership,” contains two words, each problematic in definition, each subject to considerable confusion. Although we may have an idea of what spiritual leadership is, these words are never found together in the New Testament. Does that surprise you? Depending on the English translation you use, we can discover spiritual gifts, things, thoughts, and words, as well as spiritual food and drink, blessings, songs, wisdom, sacrifices, understanding, and a spiritual house and body. Paul admonishes the Corinthians because they are men of the flesh and not spiritual (1 Cor 3:1), suggesting that spiritual is more than possessing a spirit. There is a level of maturity associated with being spiritual, as when Paul advised that only spiritual brethren should attempt to restore anyone caught in any trespass (Gal 6:1). In these instances, Paul uses the Greek term *pneumatikos*, defined generally by Thayer’s Lexicon as, “relating to the human spirit, or rational soul, as the part of man which is akin to God and serves as his instrument or organ.”

Turning to our other word, leadership, our Lord shocked the world when he defined leadership as, “the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader [Gr. *hēgeomai*] as the servant [Gr. *diakoneō*]” (Luke 22:26). At that moment, Jesus forever cemented the relationship between God’s leader (position) and service (action). So what is spiritual leadership, and how does it relate to the work of overseers (elders, shepherds), deacons, and all

members of the church? Simply put, spiritual leadership is mature action for the benefit of a soul. Whether a sermon is preached, a hospital visit is made, false teachers are corrected, Grecian widows are no longer neglected (Acts 6:1–6), or a floor is mopped, spiritual leadership is on



display. When God is glorified, and the result is “the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love” (Eph 4:16), who can deny that the greatest among us are the servants that said “yes” to a need they saw?

Since all Christians can mature to become spiritual leaders, how should we understand the distinction Paul made when he addressed the church in Philippi? “Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:” (Phil 1:1 NASB). Simply put, elders oversee, and deacons serve. Both are leaders (servants), and both must think spiritually. Consider the following summary:

- Elders oversee the deacons, preachers, and members. The elders are in charge of everything, and the deacons support the decisions made by the elders.
- Deacons submit to the elder’s authority and direction as aides. Think of deacons as aides-de-camp, or as Thayer’s Lexicon defines *diakonos* — those “who execute the commands of another.” ▲

1Thayer, Joseph H. "pneumatikos." Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. 1841. Accordance 13 Bible Software. OakTree Software, Inc.

2 Thayer, Joseph H. "diakonos." Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. 1841. Accordance 13 Bible Software. OakTree Software, Inc.

# Does It Matter What We Believe?

Josh Hall              

There are many beliefs in the world, especially when it comes to religion. Some of these beliefs are passed down through generations, others are taught from pulpits across the world, and still others are invented by individuals to make themselves feel comfortable with their actions in this life. In this first article of a series called “Does It Matter,” I want to look at Scripture and ask the question: “Does it matter what we believe?”

We must recognize that it is possible to believe a lie. Jacob was led to believe that Joseph was dead (Gen 37:31–35), even though his son was still alive (Gen 37:27–38). Jacob believed this lie for more than twenty years before discovering the truth (Gen 45:26–28; 46:4). It is also possible to be very zealous in a false belief. The apostle Paul was once an avid persecutor of the church (Acts 8:1–2; 9:1–10). He did so with great zeal, believing that he was doing right by religious standards (Phil 3:4–6; Gal 1:13–14). Paul would later admit that these actions—once believed to be right—were done in ignorance (1 Tim 1:13). Paul persecuted the Truth because he did not know the Truth. Notice where Paul said he was getting his religious information: he said he was “more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers” (Gal 1:14 NKJV). Paul killed Christians because he believed in the religious traditions of his fathers instead of the words of Christ.

This is a very difficult thing to avoid, especially in the world we live in today, with so many religious ideas available. Oftentimes, these false doctrines or beliefs are dressed up just enough, with out-of-context Scripture references, to make them seem like the Truth. This is a tactic the devil has used since the beginning of time, when he twisted God’s word in the Garden (Gen 2:17; 3:1–4). He attempted to do it again—three times—while tempting our Lord in the wilderness (Luke 4:3, 6–7, 9–11). As Solomon said, “There is nothing new under the sun” (Eccl 1:9). The devil still uses the same tactics today to lead the masses away from the Truth. Paul warned Christians that a time would come when people “will not



endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Tim 4:3–4).

Despite the devil’s best efforts, we can know the Bible—the Truth—can be understood (Eph 5:17). Scripture is clear: God the Father gave all authority to Jesus (Matt 28:18). Jesus promised His apostles that the Holy Spirit would teach them “all things” and bring to their remembrance “all things” He had taught them (John 14:26). The Spirit would guide the apostles into “all truth” (John 16:13). Peter later wrote that Christ’s divine power has “given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Pet 1:3). Jude tells us that this faith has been “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). God has given us the Truth—and we can know the Truth (John 8:32; 17:17).

Jesus said, “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). Simply put, it does not matter what your family has believed, what a preacher or pastor says, or what anyone has determined in their own mind. It is up to each

individual to spend time in His Word to ensure that what they believe is in agreement with the Word of God.

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). ▲



# Reverence in Worship

Sally Rutter

The dictionary defines reverence as “honor or respect felt or shown; profound adoring awed respect.” How do we handle reverence in our worship service, Bible class, Lord’s Supper, during the sermon, the prayers, and the invitation song? It’s not always children who are distracting during these events. It is mostly the adults. We are taught from an early age that we are to be quiet during prayers. Why is it that adults don’t remember this?

During the Lord’s Supper, we are to be focused on and remember the death of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who was nailed to the cross. He had a crown of thorns on His head; He hung there with nails in His hands. When they thrust His side open with a spear, blood and water flowed from His body. They did not have to break His bones as He hung there to kill Him, because He was already dead. If we are thinking about these things, how can we find it in our hearts to talk about anything else at that moment?

Prayer is us talking to God. How can we talk to God, our Heavenly Father, and whisper at the same time? I realize that we don’t talk to Him at this time like we do in our private prayers, but we are supposed to be listening to the gentleman leading us in prayer. How can we add an amen to his prayer if we haven’t heard it because we are talking?

Some people find it convenient to talk while the preacher is delivering his lesson, which he has spent hours preparing. We don’t have the respect for him nor

the reverence toward God, whom he is talking about. If it is hard for you to concentrate on the preacher, take notes. This not only keeps you quiet, but it also helps you focus on what he is saying, and if they are using PowerPoint, you can see the illustrations as well.

As the invitation song

is being sung, are we gathering up our papers, coats, gloves, and keys? Or are we singing the selected song, praying that someone might come forward who might want to be baptized or be restored to the church? We may be the reason they do not come forward. They may think everyone seems to be in a hurry now, so I’ll wait until another time. How would we feel if that were their last opportunity to obey God’s plan of salvation?

I realize that sometimes children don’t feel good, want down to play, or need to go to the restroom. This is understandable. But as adults, can’t we plan our trips out of the auditorium better? Sometimes there are health problems that make it necessary to leave the services. We understand that too.

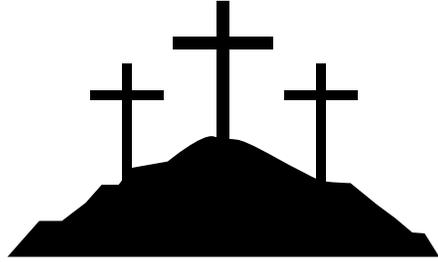
Our main objective in worship to Our God and Father is to reverence Him and keep our minds centered on the things of Heaven and not on things on this earth. For our worship to be acceptable to our God, we need to make sure we do the following five things.

- **Sing-** “Speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph 5:19 KJV).
- **Pray-** “The prayer of a righteous man availeth much,” (Jas 5:16).
- **Partake of the Lord’s Supper-** “But let a man examine himself and so let him take of that bread and drink of that cup” (1 Cor 11:28).
- **Study-** “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth” (2 Tim 2:15).
- **Give-** “Every man according as he purposeth in heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, nor of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7).

If we focus on all of these acts of worship that are commanded of us, we should not have time to whisper during any part of the service. We are here to serve God. ▲



# Santa Claus OR Jesus Christ



Kaylynn Robison



A few years ago, we were watching a family Christmas movie. Toward the beginning of the film, a little girl - whose family was on a tropical Christmas vacation - stood on the beach, looked up into the night sky, and proceeded to earnestly ask Santa for snow to make it

feel more like Christmas. I was immediately put off by this because it was eerily similar to how we talk to God. This girl was essentially “praying” to Santa.

Some people argue that if we do not let our children believe in Santa, it takes away the “magic” of Christmas. If the “magic” of Christmas comes from a belief in a fictional being that brings you presents, that is a very skin-deep approach to Christmas. Many today use a belief in Santa to bribe good behavior out of their children. The issue is, 1) bribery is not a replacement for discipline, 2) if your child(ren) is not actually well-behaved, are you really going to give them coal? No, you will not, so the approach is inconsistent and bad behavior gets rewarded, and 3) children are encouraged to write letters or even “pray” to Santa for what they want. We have put Santa Claus in God’s place for the sake of presents and (potential) good behavior.

“He’s making a list, he’s checking it twice...”

- “And I urge you also... help these women... with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, **whose names are in the Book of Life**” (Phil 4:3 NKJV).
- “And anyone not found **written in the Book of Life** was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev 20:15).

“He sees you when you’re sleeping, he knows when you’re awake...”

- “**You know my sitting down and my rising up... You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways**” (Psalm 139:2–3).

“He knows when you’ve been bad or good...”

- “And **there is no creature hidden from His sight**, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Heb 4:13).
- “... God is greater than our heart, and **knows all things**” (1 John 3:20).

“So be good for goodness’ sake.”

- “... overcome evil with **good**” (Rom 12:21).
- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, **goodness**, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law” (Gal 5:22–23).
- “But love your enemies, **do good**, and **lend, hoping for nothing in return...**” (Luke 6:35).

# Santa Claus or Jesus Christ • Kaylynn Robison

Perpetuating a belief in Santa involves lying to our children. That was one promise we made to our oldest when he reached the age to understand truth versus lies—we would never lie to him. Perpetuating a belief in Santa involves allowing our children to believe in an “all-knowing,” virtually “all-powerful” being that is not God. This is a problem.

We do not believe in Santa in our home... BUT we still watch Santa Claus movies and read Santa Claus books. The difference is, in our home, Santa is just another character, like Buzz Lightyear or Mickey Mouse. This does not take away the “magic” of Christmas, but

instead allows us to more effectively teach our children about the love of God; He gave us the ultimate gift of His son, Jesus Christ. Our kids need to know that the gifts under the tree are from their family, who loves them, and not some “magical” guy. Our kids need to know that they are able to have these gifts because God - and not some “magical” guy - has blessed their family. Our kids need to know that our Heavenly Father is the only all-knowing, all-powerful being in the universe, and our lives are lived according to His will and not the seasonal whims of some “magical” guy. ▲

## What About My Goals?

### Cheyenne Blizzard

We all have goals. These goals are important to us, but sometimes when they don't work out, we can often get angry or just give up on setting goals at all. While goals are good to have, it is also very important to remember who is in control of our lives. God always has our best interests at heart, and He knows what will be best for us. When one of our life plans or goals doesn't go the way we want it to, it can be God changing our life path.

God tells the exiles from Jerusalem, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future” (Jer 29:11 NIV). God also has great plans for us, and they will make us prosper and give us hope and a future with Him. God knows what we need before we know it ourselves; He will give us a good outcome.

Romans 8:28 tells us that all things work together for good to them that love the LORD. If we truly love God,

things will work out for our good. God loves us unconditionally, no strings attached. He will never do anything to harm us or to lead us astray.

Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us to trust in the LORD, and He will make our paths straight. God straightens our path. Since He knows what is best for us, He will work out all of the mistakes in our goals if we allow Him and submit to His will, so that we can have a more beneficial outcome.

I say all of this for several reasons. One, we need to give God our lives. He knows all, and He knows what plans He has for us, and He will make goals for us to serve His purpose and to give us a good life. Second, we don't know what

tomorrow holds, but if we give our lives to God, He will use our lives for His glory.

Give God your life and lay it all at His feet. He loves you and wants what's best for you. He will not let you down. ▲



# Can You Keep a Secret?

Clista Heintzman



“I can keep a secret. It’s the people who I tell who can’t” (Abraham Lincoln). Why is it so hard to keep a secret? James says, “The tongue is a fire—no man can tame it” (Jas 3:6,8 NKJV). We all know someone who feels she must tell everything she knows. I Timothy 5:11-15 warns younger widows to marry and keep busy to avoid the temptation to gossip. Titus 2:3-5 admonishes older women to teach younger women to be discreet. The inspired man who wrote Proverbs 20:19 says that one who reveals secrets is to be avoided.

Certain circumstances call for privacy, yes, even secrecy. There were times when Jesus warned someone to keep a secret. After Jesus was transfigured, He commanded Peter, James, and John not to tell anyone what they had seen until He had risen from the dead (Matt 17). Several times, Jesus told those he healed, including a leper in Matthew 8 and two blind men in Matthew 9, not to tell anyone what He had done.

In The Sermon on the Mount, Jesus mentioned some religious acts and acts of service that we are to perform secretly. Charitable deeds are to be done in secret to the extent that our left hand knows not what our right hand is doing. Prayers should be offered in private to “our Father Who is in the secret place,” and should we choose to fast, we are forbidden to appear to others as if we are fasting (Matt 6:17-18).

Those who are wise don’t tell everything they know (Prov 10:14). We all yearn for a friend in whom we can confide. In reality, though, those who can keep a confidence are few. Keeping a secret requires self-control, which involves having discipline over our desires. You may have a desire to pass along a piece of information to which you are privy, but think before you speak! What trust might you betray? “A wounded friend is harder to win back than a fortified city” (Prov 18:19). Someone once said, “Broken trust is like melted chocolate. No matter how you try to freeze it, it will never return to its

original shape.” Be a person to whom someone can vent or safely talk about a problem she is having.

Privacy matters. What is the value of private conversation? First, being able to talk confidentially promotes conflict resolution. It allows both parties to express feelings and issues more freely and potentially solve them without further fueling the situation or involving others. Second, some information, such as financial information, personal struggles, or health issues, is sensitive. Additionally, talking confidentially provides a boundary to control the spread of information and fosters a safe environment for sharing (10 Reasons Why Privacy Matters by Daniel Solove, an expert in privacy law).

Telling everything you know could be hurtful or dangerous to another person’s life or livelihood. What if Jonathan had not been a trusted confidant of David? Saul would have murdered him (1 Sam 19). What if Jehosheba had not been able to keep a secret? Young Joash would have been killed, and the line of David would not have been preserved (2 Kings 11, 2 Chron 22).

Keeping a secret requires self-control, a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:19-21). Strive to add this fruit to your life. “There is a time to speak and a time to be silent” (Eccl 3:7). Guard your tongue. You’ll be glad you did. ▲



# Does God Hear the Prayer of a Sinner?

Connor Curry

This question has been asked many times and answered many times in different ways, but today I would like to only give you the Bible to see what it says. Firstly, I would like to go over two views on this topic: 1.) God does not hear the sinner. 2.) God does hear the sinner.

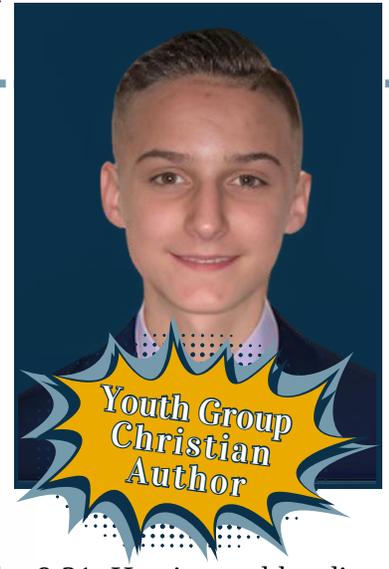
So now that we have the two different views, let's look at the first view on this topic. God does not hear the prayer of the sinner. When looking at this view, it seems correct; they would point to John 9:31 that outright says that God doesn't hear the prayer of the sinner. Furthermore, Isaiah 59:1-2 states, "Your iniquities have separated you from your God." With just these verses in mind, it really does sound like God doesn't hear the prayers of sinners. But now let's look at the second view.

What does it mean that God hears sinners' prayers? What people with this view would bring up are verses like 1 John 5:14 that says "...if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (NKJV) or the account of Saul's conversion story in Acts 9. Saul, later known as Paul, wasn't baptized yet, so he was not yet saved, but God heard his prayer (Acts 9:11). Some denominations will say this proves that baptism isn't essential and that Paul was saved before baptism, because God heard his prayer. This idea is false. The reason God heard Paul is the same reason why God heard Cornelius when he prayed despite not yet being baptized for the

remission of his sins (Acts 10:4 cf. 10:47). God hears the prayers of sinners because of His omniscience (Heb 4:13). Even when these prayers are not according to His will, He still hears but will not heed them. This

may be what is meant in John 9:31. Hearing and heeding are completely different, yet sometimes the word hearing is supplemented for heeding in our vocabulary.

Therefore, the view that I believe to be correct is the 2nd view that God can hear sinners. He is the almighty God, and we also have several examples in the Bible of God hearing sinners, including what was previously mentioned (Acts 9:11; 10:4). This in no way affirms the false doctrine of "the sinner's prayer" or anything else other than that God can hear the prayer of sinners. In conclusion, now that we know both sides, I encourage you to do more study on your own to see for yourself if either view is correct according to God's intended meaning. "(K)nowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Pet 1:20). ▲



A promotional banner for the International Gospel Hour. The banner has a blue background with a wood-grain pattern on the sides. It features three logos: "CHARGE!" on a TV screen (Friday @ 5:00 AM), "V96.9" (MORE MUSIC BETTER VARIETY! Sunday 9:30 AM), and "WUAM THE TRUE OLDIES CHANNEL" (98.1 FM · 107.9 FM AM 1450 Sunday 9:00 AM). A white speech bubble says "Let us help your local work...call us!". At the bottom, it says "Download the IGH APP...listen at your podcast platform Watch us on our YouTube channel...follow us on Social Media!". The footer includes "A MULTIMEDIA MINISTRY" logo, "INTERNATIONAL GOSPEL HOUR" logo, the website "www.internationalgospelhour.com", and the phone number "855-444-6988".

Reach your neighbors with

# House to House Heart to Heart

## 2026 Topics

The back page will feature an intriguing evangelistic article and is the first thing people see when they receive HTH.

**JANUARY** • What If I Am Lost? • Back Page: When Were You Saved?

**FEBRUARY** • Three Reasons I Want to Go to Heaven • Back Page: What Happens When We Die?

**MARCH** • God's Invitation to an Honest Conversation • Back Page: The Bible Is the Answer to All of Your Problems

**APRIL** • I Want to Look upon His Face • Back Page: Are You Addicted?

**MAY** • Does the Bible Authorize Women to Preach Publicly? • Back Page: Are You Looking for a Church? We Are Looking for You

**SPECIAL ISSUE** • Is Jesus the Only Way?

**JUNE** • Three More Reasons I Want to Go to Heaven • Back Page: Will God Forgive Me? How Do I Forgive Myself?

**JULY** • Do We Have to Join a Denomination? Why the First Century Church Is Better • Back Page: Don't Join a Denomination

**AUGUST** • They Saw Jesus Alive • Back Page: You Can Live Forever

**SEPTEMBER** • God's Secret to a Good Life • Back Page: How Do I Study the Bible?

**OCTOBER** • King Jesus' Kingdom • Back Page: Is the Sinners' Prayer in Romans 10:9-10?

**NOVEMBER** • How Many Churches Did Jesus Build? • Back Page: You Are Worthy

**DECEMBER** • Kingdom or Church • Back Page: This Is the Community You Need

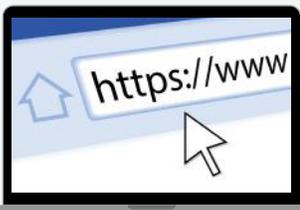


**Interested?**

[matt@housetohouse.com](mailto:matt@housetohouse.com) | [get.housetohouse.com](http://get.housetohouse.com)

\* The deadline to sign up for each issue is 45 days before. As an example, the deadline for the January issue is November 15.





# Resources

## General Resources



**Added to the Church** - Publisher of *The Mountain Messenger* & New Testament Expositor - [addedtothechurch.com](https://www.addedtothechurch.com)



**Our Authors** - Meet the authors of *The Mountain Messenger!*  
[addedtothechurch.com/christian-authors/](https://www.addedtothechurch.com/christian-authors/)



**West Virginia School of Preaching** - 2-year program of classes taught by sound Christians - [wvsop.com](https://www.wvsop.com)



**Sharp Five Media** - Affordable church websites and media by a member of the church - [sharp-five.com](https://www.sharp-five.com)



**Bible Call** - Access Bible information recordings online or by phone. - [biblecallonline.com](https://www.biblecallonline.com)

## Songs & Hymns



**Teaching and Admonishing** - Free to listen and use original hymns by members of the church - [churchofchristsongs.com](https://www.churchofchristsongs.com)



**WVCYC "Pressing On" CD** - Contact Andy Robison to order your CD or Thumb Drive!  
[andycd2020@gmail.com](mailto:andycd2020@gmail.com)

## Podcasts



**The Religious Coffee Hour** - Podcast hosted by Hunter Melott found wherever you listen to podcasts.



**Authentic Christian** - Podcast produced by GBN, hosted by Aaron Gallagher and Scott Ingram  
[gbntv.org/the-authentic-christian/](https://www.gbntv.org/the-authentic-christian/)

## Deepen Your Knowledge



**Apologetics Press** - Articles, videos, books, etc. focused on the defense of New Testament Christianity - [apologeticspress.org](https://www.apologeticspress.org)



**Gospel Broadcasting Network** - Provides Bible-based and unbiased resources from the Word of God - [gbntv.org](https://www.gbntv.org)



**Focus Press** - Provides podcasts, articles, videos, books, and daily devotionals. - [focuspress.org](https://www.focuspress.org)



**World Video Bible School** - Videos and free study courses on Biblical topics - [wvbs.org](https://www.wvbs.org)



**Through the Scriptures** - Study through the entirety of the Scriptures - [throughthescriptures.com](https://www.throughthescriptures.com)



**Families of Faith** - Bible materials for families & churches. - [familiesoffaith.store](https://www.familiesoffaith.store)



**Salvation Study Chain Cards** - Order these tract-like evangelism tools for your congregation. - [bit.ly/study-card](https://bit.ly/study-card)

## Fun and Games



**Birble** - Bible version of Wordle. Guess the five-letter word from the KJV Bible! - [ajrv.us/birble](https://www.ajrv.us/birble)



**Memoria** - Bible verse memorization tool. Removes 1 word at a time as you practice. - [ajrv.us/bible/memoria](https://www.ajrv.us/bible/memoria)



4788 Stillwell Road  
Davisville, WV 26142

# “Power”



Stephen R. Diehl

Surround yourself with fervent prayers,  
satan can not break through.

It is impossible for him to do so,  
for he will flee from you.

Fortify your prayers with Jesus,  
His name is Power indeed.

satan and his demons are trembling,  
for in the Bible, this I read.

he is a coward and the father of lies,  
he will look for weakness within.

Surround yourself with prayers,  
and the Power of Jesus, amen.

1 Thess 5:16–17

Jas 4:7

Phil 2:9–11

John 14:13–14

Acts 4:12; 22:16

Luke 10:17

John 8:44

**SUBSCRIBE TODAY!**

[WWW.ADDEDTOTHECHURCH.COM](http://WWW.ADDEDTOTHECHURCH.COM)

