

The Mountain Messenger

A CHRISTIAN VOICE FROM THE MOUNTAIN STATE AND BEYOND

ONE NATION UNDER GOD

ATTITUDES ON ATTENDANCE

DOES IT MATTER HOW WE ARE SAVED?

Along with other great articles by...
Douglas Pell, Deborah Amos, Andrew Walls,
and more...

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

Editor's Note

There is an old saying that warns, "Don't ever meet your heroes." Many of us have admired someone at some point in life; perhaps a public figure, an athlete, a preacher, or a leader. From a distance, they seem larger than life. Yet experience often teaches us something sobering: heroes are human, and humans are imperfect.

When expectations are built upon fallible people, disappointment usually follows. Public image does not always match private character. Scripture explains why this happens: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23 NKJV). No matter how admirable someone may be, no man was meant to carry the weight of ultimate trust.

That truth forms the foundation of this issue of The Mountain Messenger. In a world tempted to place its hope in politicians, movements, personalities, or even religious systems, we are reminded again that salvation, wisdom, leadership, and faithfulness all find their source in one place — Christ alone.

Long before any earthly hero was born, Jesus Christ existed with a plan for our redemption. He "was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet 1:20). Unlike earthly heroes, He is not limited by sin, pride, or inconsistency. He does not fail under pressure. He does not disappoint when examined closely. In fact, Scripture declares that God "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph 3:20). However high we exalt Him in our minds, He is higher still. Psalm 118:8 wisely states, "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man." That is not a rejection of gratitude for faithful leaders. It is a reminder of where ultimate allegiance belongs.

As you read this issue, whether considering national identity, church attendance, salvation, complacency, wisdom, or leadership, remember this central truth: Christ is the only Hero who never falls short. Every article ultimately points us back to Him. Meeting earthly heroes may sometimes bring disappointment. Meeting Christ will not.

Thank you for reading The Mountain Messenger. It is our prayer that this issue strengthens your faith, sharpens your discernment, and deepens your confidence in the One who never fails.

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May we place our confidence where it belongs — in Christ alone.

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One Nation Under God



Colton Ferrell

Before I begin this article, I would like to say that we are extremely blessed to live in a country that gives us freedoms. I am all for keeping the Constitution safe and upholding it. So, with that said, there is a huge problem going on in our country. I call this problem Christian Nationalism, and it has caused many to put God to the side and put their nation before God. They have stopped obeying God's law and have turned to politicians, worshipping them instead. This is the foundation of Christian Nationalism, but many would disagree.

Idolatry has been a struggle for human beings since Israel was brought out of Egypt, and it would be a thorn for them throughout the years. Today, we worship politicians, money, and even our own country. Christian Nationalism is full of idolatry, yet these people proclaim to be Christian. They will hold their Bibles high, but they never study the Bible. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, it says, "All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (ESV). The only way to know if we are Christians is by keeping our heads in God's word and making sure our souls are right with God.

I have heard people proclaim that these politicians will save America, but the only one who can save us is Christ. Acts 4:12 says, "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by

which we must be saved" (ESV). Neither Trump nor Biden can save America, but many have this attitude. They will never see this as wrong but will fight tooth and nail. Some will never understand that this is a sin and must be dealt with.

Another text that seems to escape people's minds is Romans 13. Here, Paul is telling the Roman

Christians that they are to obey the governing authorities. Sadly, many will proclaim to be a Christian, but wish harm on these men and women that have been placed in power. January 6th was a dark day for our nation because many charged upon the Capitol to take it back. In this moment, they chose to reject God and his word. They chose what they wanted to do and not what God wants them to do. God would never approve of such behavior!

We as Christians must choose to obey God's word and keep it daily. The only one that we serve is God, not man. Man will not be judging you; Christ will be. All will face Christ and must answer for how they lived in this life. I, for one, want to hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" We will not hear those words if we are putting others in the place of God. ▲



Be Patient

Annette Kenney

I admit it. I am not always a patient person. I'm not good at standing in line to wait for anything. Getting stuck behind slower drivers can give me road rage more quickly than I like to admit. I even tend to get annoyed with shoppers at the grocery store who don't leave enough room in the aisles for me to get my cart past them. My husband says I get surly.

Yet, when I look at the Bible, I realize that (fortunately for me) our God is quite patient. The Bible uses both "longsuffering" and "patience" to describe this quality. "Longsuffering" has more of the idea of bearing with someone, while "patience" carries the idea of endurance.

In passages describing God, "longsuffering" is usually included in the list (Exod 34:6, Num 14:8, Psalm 86:15). 2 Peter 3:9 tells us, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (KJV). A



few verses later, Peter tells us in verse 15, "And account [that] the longsuffering of our Lord [is] salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you." We should be so thankful that God's

longsuffering is indeed salvation!

Patience is a virtue we are supposed to cultivate in ourselves. In several lists of Christian qualities, patience is quite prominent (1 Tim 6:11, 2 Pet 1:6). In Revelation, the churches of Ephesus, Thyatira, and Philadelphia were commended for their patience. In 1 Corinthians 13:4, patience is the very first quality used to describe love. One of the many qualifications our elders must possess is patience (1 Tim 3:3). And in Paul's second letter to Timothy, we are told that "the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient" (2:24).

Clearly, patience is important to God. We are told to imitate Christ (1 Cor 11:1), who was our perfect example of patience. What does that look like in practical terms? We should be patient with new Christians who are still weak (1 Thess 5:14), and help them to understand the Bible better. We need to be patient when trying to teach others the gospel (Jas 5:7), because different people are at different places in their learning. We also need to be patient while waiting on God's timing. It isn't easy to understand why God doesn't act when we want Him to, but we have to remember that God's plan is far greater than just our own little personal sphere.

So, with that in mind, I guess I can give a little more grace to others, knowing that I need people to be patient with me, too. Plus, I will always need to be thankful that our God is patient with me, beyond my ability to fully comprehend. ▲

GOD GAVE US THE *Breath* OF *Life*

Deborah Amos (PhD- Biomedical Sciences)



With this winter seemingly worse than previous winters regarding the number of respiratory illnesses going around, how appropriate to talk about the respiratory system?! In our last article, as we delved into God's intricate design of our human bodies, we took a deep dive into blood flow through our vascular system. Our vascular system is critical for delivering oxygen and nutrients to our cells and removing carbon dioxide and other waste products. How do we obtain that oxygen, though? How is carbon dioxide primarily released? The answer is our respiratory system. Most individuals don't actually know how critical the respiratory system is; it wears many other hats in addition to gas exchange. It helps to warm and moisten air as we breathe in through our nostrils, it helps remove particles and pathogens as they travel through the maze of the nasal cavity, it allows us to speak and sing by use of the voice box, it gives us a certain pitch and resonance via sinuses, it allows us to smell as odorants are breathed in and reach the top of the

nasal cavity, and it can adjust pH by the depth and rate of breathing. Isn't that phenomenal? God gave us all of these capabilities to: protect our cells and organs from dying due to low levels of oxygen or high levels of carbon dioxide; disallow foreign bacteria, viruses, and particles trying to enter body and thus wreak havoc; provide us the ability to detect if something is dangerous by our sense of smell (e.g., rotting food or something on fire); keep pH in check so proteins and enzymes can function optimally; and give us a voice to sing, praise Him, admonish one another, and evangelize. There are a number of roles of the respiratory system, and for time's sake, I'm only going to nose-dive into one complex role to give you an idea of how awesome and wise our Creator is, as shown by His creation (Rom 1:20-21).

Have you ever wondered what exactly happens when you breathe in and breathe out? We actually breathe in air due to a difference in pressure of the atmosphere compared to inside our lungs. Then, during a normal breath, we breathe out simply due to a recoil of what has been expanded. Taking normal breaths is simply your tidal volume. In order for this to occur, your spinal nerves send a signal to your diaphragm to contract. This causes it to move down and bow into the abdomen. Then, good ol' Boyle's law comes into play, stating pressure and volume have an inverse relationship. The volume increased when

God Gave Us the Breath of Life

• Deborah Amos (PhD- Biomedical Sciences) •



the diaphragm moved downward, and so pressure decreased. That actually brought us 2 mmHg (millimeters of mercury) below atmospheric pressure (760 mmHg). Because of this pressure difference, air comes into our nostrils or mouth! Opposite to that, to expel air (e.g., a buildup of carbon dioxide), the diaphragm simply relaxes, and we breathe out. Things become a little more complicated when we wish to breathe in or out as hard as we can. Muscles can only contract, so that means they can only pull; they never “push.” So, one way we are able to force more air in is by using the external intercostal muscles to contract, and that pulls open the thoracic cage (chest). A few other muscles that can contract are around the neck and back region. Opposite to that, the internal intercostal muscles can help us to expel air rapidly by contracting. They cause the thoracic cage to become smaller and thus force air out. What a design?! God breathes life into us every day by the way he physically created us! It’s neat to ponder if the same mechanisms were at play when he breathed life into us when He created Adam in Genesis Chapter 1. There are so many other interesting mechanisms involved with the respiratory system. Let’s consider how we smell in our next edition of The Mountain Messenger!

I hope this article caused you to have an even deeper respect for our Creator. Feel free to reach out to the editor or any other member of the church listed in this magazine if you want to learn more about our awesome God! ▲

The Joy of Leadership

Part One

Douglas Pell

There is a peculiar kind of joy that only leaders in Christ's church can know. It is not the joy of being in charge, nor of seeing one's name attached to programs and plans. It is the quiet satisfaction that comes when a soul once distant now sits safely within reach of the Shepherd's arm. True joy in leadership is the contentment of participation in God's eternal purpose; the awareness that you have helped another soul draw nearer to Christ. Paul said it plainly to the Thessalonians — "For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy" (1 Thess 2:19–20 NASB). Leadership joy, therefore, is relational, redemptive, and rarely recognized by men.

The Joy of Servant Identity

Jesus redefined greatness for His followers when He said, "The one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest" (Luke 22:26). Becoming *like the youngest* is a form of leadership that amazes because it is unexpected and moves toward the lowly and unnoticed rather than toward the powerful and prominent. Jesus continues in Luke with *like the servant* [Gr. *diakoneō*] and in Mark, *be*



slave [Gr. *doulos*] of all (Mark 10:44). The Greek *doulos* (slave) reveals a belonging that transforms duty into joy. When we are the *doulos* of Christ, serving satisfies. This echoes Paul's own words: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20). The joy of leadership begins when we cease to own the flock and begin to belong wholly to the Shepherd.

The Joy of Accountability

Joy and accountability are twins in the elder's soul. "They [*your leaders*] keep watch over your souls as those who will **give an account**. Let them do this **with joy** and not with grief" (Heb 13:17 emph mine). Accountability is not a weight; it is our "spiritual service of worship" (Rom 12:1). To stand before God and say, "Here are the ones You entrusted to me" is the elder's highest honor. This is not theoretical joy; it is the anticipation of eternal gratitude. The elder's account will be his victory song. There is joy in knowing that even when sheep wander, the Shepherd knows where to find them—and sacrifices his weary feet to restore them.

The Joy of Living Room Leadership

The living room is that sacred place where leadership steps off the platform and sits on the couch. It's where elders trade lecterns for listening and strategy for shepherding. In that space, a couple struggling with faith finds the courage to talk. Children play in the next room while you open the Word on the coffee table. There is no microphone, no coat and tie, no podium, only

The Joy of Leadership • Douglas Pell

presence. This is the art of being approachable, honest, and spiritually steady when everyone else is shaking. The joy of *Living Room Leadership* comes when you realize that influence is measured not by the number of people who hear you speak, but by the hearts who trust you enough to invite you in. It is in the living room, not the pulpit or church building foyer, where the shepherd's crook does its gentlest work: guiding, mending, restoring. Jesus modeled this joy when He reclined at tables, washed feet, and lingered with people others overlooked. "Just as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28).

Living rooms are the new upper rooms; places where bread is shared, sin is uncovered, fear of death is overcome, the power of prayer is palpable, and astonishing teaching brings a renewal of faith, service, and mission focus (Matt 26:17–30; Mark 14:12–16; Luke 22:7–13; Acts 1:13–14; 9:36–43; 20:7–12).

The Joy of Setting Things in Order

When Paul left Titus in Crete, he said, "Set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city" (Titus 1:5). Leadership is an act of divine order-making. To *set in order* is not to dominate; it is to mend, to restore, to build stability where chaos once reigned. Like a craftsman restoring an ancient wall, the elder finds joy in each repaired stone, each reconciled soul. Setting in order the things that are lacking brings its own pleasure—the satisfaction of knowing the house of God stands a little stronger than before.

There is much more we could say about the joy of leadership. Suffice it to say, leadership joy is not the absence of burden, but the presence of purpose, knowing that every act of faithfulness, however small, is seen by God. The elder who leads with this hope joins Paul in saying, "I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls" (2 Cor 12:15). Leadership joy is the product of a heart that delights to serve, a mind that submits to the Word, and a soul that awaits the Chief Shepherd's, "Well done." ▲



Hear, O Israel

Dale Babinsky

Disasters often come with warning signs that, if ignored, can lead to catastrophic consequences. History is replete with examples, such as the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD and the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina. These events remind us of the importance of paying attention to warnings. Similarly, the Bible emphasizes the need to heed God's warnings.

In Ezekiel 33:30–33, God illustrates the importance of listening to His warnings. The passage describes how people hear the words of the prophet but do not act on them. They show love with their mouths, but their hearts pursue their own gain. When the prophecy comes to pass, they will know that a prophet has been among them. This is a clear warning that hearing God's words is not enough; we must also act on them.

Deuteronomy 6:1–3 offers a similar warning. It emphasizes the need to hear and observe God's commandments. Simply hearing the words is not sufficient; we must keep His commandments and observe what has been taught. This message is reiterated in Deuteronomy 4:1, where Moses instructs the Israelites to listen to the statutes and judgments so that they may live and possess the land given to them by God. The importance of listening and observing is further emphasized in Deuteronomy 5:1 and Deuteronomy 6:4–9,

often referred to as the Shema.

As spiritual Israel, we need to hear what the Lord has to say. The Shema calls us to listen to the Lord (Deut 6:4). The Hebrew word "Shema" means to hear and do, not just hear. There is a difference between hearing and listening. We may hear something, but if we do not comprehend or understand, we are not truly listening. For example, when we tell our children to clean their room, they may hear us, but if the room remains messy, they did not listen. God expects more than just the sound of His words resonating in our ears; He expects obedience.

Psalm 95:7–11 illustrates this point, and James 1:22–25 reinforces it by urging us to be doers of the word, not hearers only. If we hear the word but do not act on it, we deceive ourselves. We must look into the perfect law of liberty and continue in it, being doers of the work to be blessed in what we do.

Loving the Lord is another crucial aspect (Deut 6:5). We are to love the Lord with all our heart,



Hear O Israel • Dale Babinsky

soul, and strength. This means loving God with our conscience, mind, and all that we are. It requires our power, effort, and ability. It can become obvious just how much effort athletes put into their games. As I am sure most Clevelanders will remember, LeBron James' performance in game 5 of the playoffs against Boston before he went to Miami showed a lack of effort. Similarly, Malachi 1:6–8 highlights how God feels when we do not give Him our all. If our children or spouse exhibited a half-hearted love towards us, we would feel hurt. How much more does God feel when we do not give Him our all?

To love the Lord fully, we must learn what He requires (Deut 6:6). We need to know His commands to have them in our hearts. This involves learning what God requires, as Moses preached in Deuteronomy. The Israelites needed to learn these things to observe them, so it would go well with them, and they could live (Deut 5:33). Just as students need to learn the code of conduct and expectations in school, we need to learn what the Lord requires of us. We will be judged by what He has told us (Matt 7:21ff; John 12:48; Heb 1:1-2; 2:1).

Finally, we need to lead in the way of the Lord (Deut 6:7–9). This involves teaching these things to our children diligently. The Hebrew word for teaching diligently means repetition. The law was read to the Israelites repeatedly, and children were expected to memorize the Shema at a young age. Teaching should be a constant activity, whether sitting in the house, walking by the way, lying down, or rising up. The teachings should be bound to us in a way that they do not come apart, just as Rahab's scarlet cord was securely fastened to her window. Our teaching must be both visible and audible. Actions do speak louder than words, but both are needed.

Ephesians 6:1–4 emphasizes the responsibility of teaching children lies with the fathers and the household. Too often, we blame the church if our children are not taught what they need to know. However, the church's teaching is supplementary, not the entirety of their education.

In conclusion, we need to listen to the Lord and what He has to say. It is not enough to just hear; we need to hear and do. We must love the Lord with all we have, not just offer lip service. We need to learn what the Lord requires of us and lead others to Christ, especially those in our household. The generation that came out of Egypt with Moses failed at this, as did several generations during the period of the Judges. We can fail too if we do not hear and do. Let us heed the warning in Deuteronomy 6:4–9 and listen, love, learn, and lead. ▲

Does It Matter How We Are

SAVED?

Josh Hall

A quick look around the world of Christendom today can leave one very confused about how a person is to be saved. Some claim that all one must do is believe in God's existence; others say that one must recite a "sinner's prayer." Still others argue that there is nothing a person can do, because God has predestined which individuals will be saved and which will not. With so many different ideas about how to "be saved," an important question must be asked: Does it matter which one we choose?

We must first recognize that God's salvation has always been exclusive. In Genesis 6, the world had grown so wicked that God decided to destroy it (Gen 6:5-7). One man, Noah, "found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen 6:8 NKJV). God instructed Noah to build an ark (Gen 6:13-22), and it was only within that ark that salvation from the floodwaters was found (Gen 7:23; Heb 11:7; 1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 2:5).

When the nation of Israel was delivered from Egyptian bondage. God sent ten plagues upon Egypt (Exod 5-12). Before the tenth plague, which would kill all the firstborn in the land of Egypt (Exod 11), God instructed the

Israelites to sacrifice a lamb and place its blood on the doorposts and lintels of their houses (Exod 12:3-7). The blood would serve as a sign, and God would pass over those houses (Exod 12:12-14). Only those inside houses marked by blood were saved from the destroyer (Heb 11:28).

Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Most who claim Christianity would agree that salvation is found only in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:12). The difficulty arises when we begin to discuss how a

person gets in Christ. Paul wrote, "Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim 2:10). Scripture is clear that salvation is exclusive to Christ and found only in Him. So we need to ask:



Does It Matter How We Are Saved? • Josh Hall

What does the Bible say a person must do to be in Christ?

Paul provides a clear answer: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” (Rom 6:3). It was in Christ’s death that He shed His blood (John 19:34–35), and it is His blood that cleanses us from sin (Matt 26:27–28; Eph 1:7; Rev 1:5). If we are to enjoy the blessing of God’s salvation today, we must go where the blood of Christ is. When we are baptized into Christ, we come into contact with Christ’s blood and enter the only place salvation is found today—in Christ (Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3–4; 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:27; Col 2:12; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 3:21).

Baptism is not the only requirement associated with God’s salvation. We must first hear the word of God, without it there would be no way to know God’s will (Rom 10:17). We must believe, possessing a faith that goes beyond mere acknowledgment of God’s existence and instead produces obedience (John 3:16; Rom 10:10; Heb 11:6; Jas 2:14–26). Scripture further teaches that we must confess faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Matt 10:32; Rom 10:9). Repentance is also required—a deliberate decision that results in change (Acts 2:38; 17:30; Rom 12:1–2). Following repentance, we are baptized into Christ. Afterward, we must remain faithful, continuing to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ and producing fruit for God’s kingdom (2 Pet 1:5–9; 3:18; Rev 2:10). ▲

How Can I?

Cheyenne Blizzard

We all know someone in our lives who is always willing to answer questions when we have them. In fact, it is hard to think of a time when I asked a question—whether to a friend or even a stranger—and did not receive some kind of answer. When I think about this, I am reminded of Philip in Acts 8:26–40.

In this passage, Philip approaches a chariot and sees an Ethiopian man reading from the book of Isaiah. When Philip asks if he understands what he is reading, the Ethiopian replies, “How can I unless someone teaches me?” Philip does not hesitate. Although he does not know the Ethiopian personally, he takes the time to explain the Scriptures and teach him about Jesus. Because of Philip’s willingness to help, the Ethiopian comes to faith and is baptized.

This story invites us to reflect on our own lives. Are we like Philip? Do we take the time to help others understand when they are confused or seeking truth? Or

do we limit our teaching and sharing of the gospel only to those we already know and feel comfortable with? If we find ourselves holding back, what steps can we take to change that?

God gave the gospel to all people, not just a select few. We are called to help spread it and build His kingdom. Each of us can ask ourselves: How can I bring others to Christ? How can I be more intentional about furthering God’s kingdom in my daily life? ▲



Beware

the Impact of Complacency

Andrew Walls

In Genesis 11 we are introduced to Lot, son of Haran, son of Terah. This clan of Chaldeans was sojourning in Haran, and Lot's father, Haran, died before the clan departed Ur. Among the same clan were Abram and Sarai, later Abraham and Sarah, of whom we read much in Genesis. In the next chapter, we see the Lord call Abram to, "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you" (Gen 12:1 NKJV). When Abram obeys, he includes his nephew Lot among his household.

We are told that Lot had his own flocks, herds, and tents (13:5). As his flocks and herds continued to increase, he was eventually forced to separate himself from his uncle's household. He chose to dwell in the plain, despite being near Sodom, whose occupants were already a notably wicked people (13:13). Even after losing his father and leaving all he has ever known, Lot prospered. He strikes out on his own and chooses what appears to be a desirable dwelling place. It's near a major population center, plenty of land to support his livestock and more.

Lot's troubles begin in Genesis 14 when war arises between two coalitions of kings and Lot, along with his household and possessions, is taken captive by the victors (14:12). Lot could have lost everything had it not been for Abram rousing a force of over three hundred to pursue the

hostile force and rescue him. Despite this close call, we see Lot return to the plain near Sodom.

When we next encounter Lot, he is sitting in the gate of Sodom and encounters two strangers. Unbeknownst to Lot, these men are angels sent from God to bring judgement on Sodom (19:12–15). After witnessing the wickedness of the men of Sodom, these messengers from God warn Lot to flee the imminent destruction of the city. When Lot conveys this warning to his family, his sons-in-law regard him as a jokester (ESV) or one who would mock them (NKJV) (19:14). Lot escapes the annihilation of Sodom, but in the process, he loses not only his home, but two sons-in-law and his wife, who looks back, despite being warned to not do so (19:17, 26).

After the destruction of Sodom, we see Lot and his two daughters living in a tent near Zoar (19:30). How drastic a change, from living in a large city with all the comforts it affords to living in a tent in the hills. In addition to losing physical comforts, his daughters despaired, thinking their father's lineage is at an end. Their solution? They take it upon themselves to get their father drunk and take turns lying with him. Not only have they lost their homes and all their earthly goods, but we also see the impact the total sexual depravity of Sodom has had on the consciences of Lot's virgin daughters.

Lot as a father and leader of his household failed his family. He chose to dwell in a sinful city and failed to bring up his children in the "training and admonition of the Lord" (Eph 6:4). May we always be sober and vigilant (1 Pet 5:8), lest we like Lot find ourselves living too close to sin, as it impacts not only us, but others in our lives as well. ▲



Attitudes on Attendance

Mike Tincer



For nearly all of my life, I have been affiliated with the church of Christ. I fell away from the Church for 16 years and was restored in 1992 at 31 years of age. I started preaching in early 1995 and continue to do so to this day. During this time, I have been observant of

some things that I feel are serious enough to cause literal spiritual disaster if not corrected. While I'm not on a crusade to pick our brethren apart, I do feel there is one thing in particular that has plagued the Church for a very long time.

In Hebrews 10:25, we are told not to forsake the

assembling of ourselves together. We also see throughout the New Testament that there are numerous references made to the disciples being gathered or assembled together as a group. Therefore, it is safe to state that it was not only expected, but a normal by-product of being part of the disciples—as it is, and should be.

But I have all of my Christian life noticed that there are mainly three different groups with three different, distinct attitudes about the saints assembling.

The first group feels that the regular attendance of services is not required at any other time than Sunday morning, if at all. They are always quick to point out that there is no specific commandment to attend services, other than to gather to partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. They will also sometimes point to 1 Corinthians 11:25 where Christ says, "this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" to imply that

Attitudes on Attendance • Mike Tincher

we are at liberty as to when we shall gather to take it because “as oft as ye drink it” shows an irregular observance of the Lord’s Supper. As a general rule, this group is often trying to find a minimal way to be acceptable by God without too much personal sacrifice. They are also usually the ones who use the Scripture commanding Christians to give without a specific amount or percentage mentioned to “sow sparingly” in their giving.

The second group is the ones who never miss a service. They are the ones who can always be counted on to be there. And this is a good thing. But this is usually the extent of their Christian service. They are also quick to point out other members being slack concerning attendance. Often, ridiculously questioning a recently absent member to the point that it seems they will be required to produce a written absence excuse. They feel the determining factor as to whether one is a faithful Christian or not is based upon attendance. They don’t understand that while James 2 does teach that faith without works is dead, 1 Corinthians 13 shows that works without faith or love are dead as well.

The third group is the ones who truly get it. They understand that while faithful, regular attendance is required, it is not the only measuring stick of faithful Christianity that is often used in the Church. They understand rightly that there is so much more to Christianity than attendance. They understand that it is

something we should do because we love God and desire to please Him through our gathering with the Saints to worship Him. And they understand that we are commanded to grow as Christians, and one of the best ways to grow is to be together as often as possible to worship, study His word together, sing songs of praise together, pray together, and have fellowship together. They understand Proverbs 27:17, “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend” (NKJV).

They also understand that when we give, it shouldn’t be from our leftovers. God loves and rewards a cheerful giver: “But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work” (2 Cor 9:6-8).

There is one common theme throughout the Bible. God NEVER takes second place to anything or anybody in any and all aspects of our lives.

I hope this causes us to think about what type of Christian we should aspire to be and what God wants us to be; trying to be pleasing and acceptable to Him in all ways. Not because we feel we have to, but because we love him and we want to. ▲

Wisdom from Above

Brenda Poarch

Did you know that there are actually **two kinds** of wisdom? I didn't, but I do now! I thought wisdom was **always good**, and wise people **always** made good choices. Isn't that why we call them "wise?" So, how can wisdom be a bad thing? This is what James says, "But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic" (Jas 3:14-15 ESV) YIKES! You mean to tell me that there is wisdom that's unspiritual and demonic? Yes, there is, and I believe this is a concept we must fully understand to protect ourselves from evil. Let's use the following example.

Don't you just love going to a movie or reading a book knowing that at the end the "good guys" will win? Often, the villain is portrayed as foolish, and the heroes are the smart ones. That's great for entertainment, but it's definitely not realistic! Evil people don't always lose, they're not always caught, and they're certainly not always foolish! When evil people commit horrific crimes, victims are left with more questions than answers. How did this happen? Why didn't someone stop it? What do I do now? Amid all of the pain, our souls cry out for understanding.

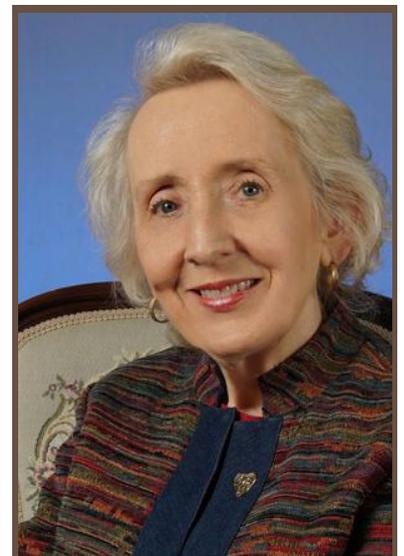
James calls it "bitter jealousy" and "selfish ambition" that cause this type of suffering, and God calls it "sin." Both are true. Whatever name we place upon the actions, the root cause is evil. It's frightening to think that there are those in this world who are wise, cunning, and cruel who want nothing more than to satisfy their own evil desires! We must open our eyes to the fact that not only do they exist, but they may be closer than we think! How many times have we heard stories of someone who committed a horrific crime, and all, including their closest friends and family, were shocked!

So, what should we do? Should we hide in our homes, trembling in fear of the unknown? Absolutely not! God has provided for His children. Let's go back to the book

of James. "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him" (Jas 1:5). We need wisdom! We don't need earthly wisdom, but the kind of wisdom that can only come from God. Godly wisdom will help us to make wise choices, endure difficult times, and repair what sin has broken. We'll make wise choices by going to the Bible and/or Christian brothers and sisters for advice and direction. We can endure the difficult times because we've read Scripture and believe the promises of God. We can repair what is broken by sin through strength from above, forgiveness, and love. Please note that I didn't say it would be easy or fast. Life may never be the same after enduring extreme trauma due to sin, but God is good, and He will help us!

God will punish the offenders if they don't repent. "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord'" (Rom 12:19). We must keep in mind that Satan is real and always be on the lookout for his evil ways. "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet 5:8).

In this life, the innocent will be hurt, and bad things will happen to good people. However, we must never forget that we are pilgrims passing through this world onto the next home for eternity in Heaven with Jesus. Lord, please give us all of the wisdom that comes from above to help us survive this world we are in now and to bring all that we meet to the feet of your Son, Jesus. ▲



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Saturday, March 28th, 2026 • 9:00a.m.

20238 Coal River Rd. Seth, WV 25181

9am: What the Bible says About Repentance

Mike Tincher

10am: What the Bible says About Relationships

Peter Ray Cole

11am: What the Bible says About Unity

Rick Tincher

• **LUNCH IS PROVIDED** •

1pm: What the Bible says About the Second Coming

Dan Kessinger

2pm: What the Bible says About The Holy Spirit

D.J. Curry

3pm: What the Bible says About Overcoming Sin

Isaac Tincher

Call 304-578-3872
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Sunday
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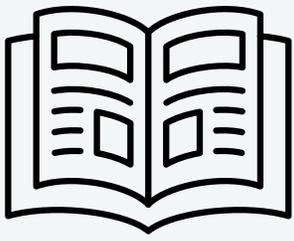
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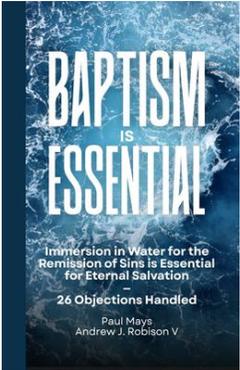
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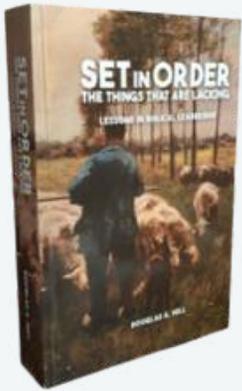
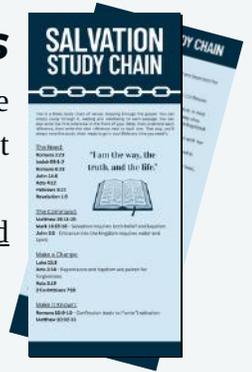
Baptism is Essential

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Set In Order The Things That Are Lacking

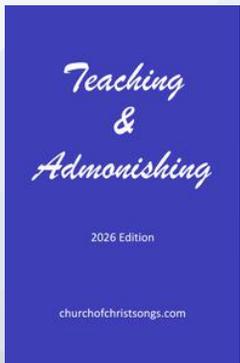
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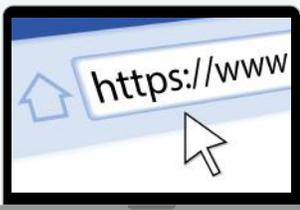
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Teaching & Admonishing

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Resources

General Resources

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 **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

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

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)



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“The Potter’s Clay”

Holy Lord,

You are the Potter, we are the clay,
We are the work of Your hands;
dipped in living water,
born on the appointed day.

For in Your image, we were formed,
intellect, will and emotion.

Our spirit; worked into the clay,
You have chosen.

Lord, You have woven us, in our mother’s womb,
we were fearfully and wonderfully made.

With Your Spirit, we were brought forth,
Marvelously arrayed.

Before we were, Your eyes have seen,
before birth to death, and all in between.

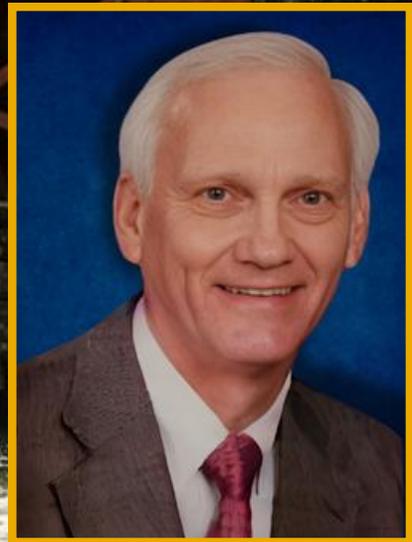
For in Your book, we were written,
our days are fashioned, numbered and hidden.

From the womb, to the grave,
we are tested and tried.

Drawn to the Light,
where You, our God abides.
“Praising You forever by and by.”

Stephen R. Diehl

Genesis 1:27 Psalm 66:10–12 John 8:12
Psalm 139:13–15 James 1:2–4 I John 1:7
Psalm 139:16 I Peter 1:6–7 I Timothy 6:16
Psalm 139:16 Isaiah 64:8



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