

## GOD'S BEST FOR YOUR LIFE

By Danny Tunnell

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephesians 6:12.) "In whom the god of this world (Satan) has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Corinthians 4:4.)

You will never have a time in your life when Satan will have compassion on you. He will never back off! He is here to steal, kill and destroy. (John 10:10.) Others cannot fight your battle for you.

God has a handpicked assignment for you to fulfill during your time on earth. At the same time, the god of this world (Satan) has an assignment for you, too. His assignment appeals to your greatest weaknesses and vulnerabilities. He goes around like

a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. (1 Peter 5:8.) Satan knows your time is limited, and he is doing everything in his power to distract you from God's best for your life.

If you give Satan the opportunity he will devour everything that is precious to you. He will devour your marriage, your family, your finances, your health, your career. He latches onto a weakness and uses it as an open door.

What can be done to stop him?

You can choose as Joshua did to serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:16.) To begin with, identify your weaknesses. Don't play around with what tempts you, at the risk of opening a door for the devil that he can barge through. (James 1:14-15.)

It's important to know that your daily routine helps determine your future. Are you getting a good daily

dose of the Word of God? (Psalm 119:9-11.) Every single day is God's Word a part of your life? Are you active everyday sharing what you're learning from the Bible?

It's easy to compare yourself to others, especially those who aren't doing anything. Those who compare themselves among themselves are not wise. (2 Corinthians 10:12.) At the end of the day, the only person you are going to answer to is the Lord. (2 Corinthians 5:10.)

If you are already enjoying God's best for your life, that's great! Just keep doing what you did to get where you are; don't stop! Keep doing what makes your Christian life successful. That's how you will accomplish your God-given assignment and enjoy God's best for your life.

— Miami, OK

## Our Faith Is Not Blind!

By Joe Slater

Skeptics of various types routinely mock Christians for having "blind faith." Unfortunately, many professing Christians have fed that myth by basing their faith (if you can even call it that) on their feelings. Ask them why they believe as they do, and their answer is, "I feel it right here in my heart!" Even some of the songs we sing betray this notion. One quick example: I Serve a Risen Savior has this line at the end of the chorus: "You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart!"

Does Jesus live within your heart? Assuredly so! But is that how you know He lives? Certainly not! You would know nothing of His death, burial, and resurrection but for the fact that God has revealed it in His word! Because His word has been revealed, confirmed, and recorded, our faith rests on solid evidence; it is definitely not blind! And when we put our confident trust in Jesus and obey His will, we ought to feel good about it! But let's keep things in order: first come the

facts (as revealed in the Bible, John 17:17); then comes faith, which is based on the facts (Rom. 1:16); finally come good feelings. (Acts 8:39.)

Facts, faith, and feelings, in that order. When feelings are the basis for faith, we're on dangerous ground! Saul of Tarsus felt like he was doing right by persecuting Christians. Islamic jihadists feel like they are doing right by blowing themselves up to kill Jews and Christians. Those feelings are as real as yours. If feelings are the basis for acceptable faith, then we should honor those behaviors! (But they aren't!)

As Christians, our faith isn't blind, but rests on the rock-solid evidence of the revealed, confirmed, recorded word of God.

"Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them

to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed." (Luke 1:1-4.)

— Justin, TX

# Old Paths

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"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)

## LOVE FOR GOD'S WORD

By Milton Smith

Bible study is not optional; it is expected of every Christian. A common phrase found numerous times throughout the Old Testament is the promise that Jehovah God will show mercy unto those who love Him and "keep His commandments." Deuteronomy 30:16 speaks of the duty of His people to "love Jehovah" and desire to "walk in His ways, keeping His commandments, statutes, and judgments." Most all are familiar with Jesus' words in John 14:15: "If you love me, keep my commandments." But Jesus also said in John 15:10, "If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love." It was the aged apostle John who wrote in his first general epistle that all Christians should love God and keep His commandments. (1 John 5:3.)

Clearly, God expects us to keep His commandments! But how can this be done if we choose to remain ignorant of God's Word? This is where good Bible study becomes a must. I'm often asked what things might be helpful to insure profitable Bible study. Whatever my suggestions might be worth, I'm happy to offer them if they might be of any help. To begin with, any study of the Bible must be done reverently. Respecting the Bible as the Word of God is an absolute must. Any irreverent, haphazard attempt to study God's Word will always fall short of what is needful. The student must always have a desire to learn. This means that the reader must approach the Bible with an open mind and a willingness to do what the Book says to do; even if it means giving up previously held ideas that are not found in the Bible - no matter how cherished those ideas might have been.

Prayer should always accompany good Bible study. This does not mean that God will give us a "new" revelation as we study (for such is not promised to us today). But we can pray - as I have often done - that God might provide us with clear minds and pure hearts as we venture into our study. It is always important to consult other scriptures that might relate to a particular subject that the reader is studying. For example, the gospel writers will often give complimentary information regarding certain events in the life of Christ. One should honestly desire to understand what a passage is saying, love the Word of God, respect it for what it teaches, and live by those teachings. After all, Jesus once said, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge . . . in the last day." (John 12:48.)

May each of us study our Bible every day and respect it for the great truth that it contains!

— Tulsa, OK

## THE WRONG SIDE OF HISTORY

By Dalton Key

Bible reading, once a regular practice for Christians, a daily pastime for families of the Lord's people, and, further, a personal and daily regimen of the masses, has more recently fallen upon hard times. Sadly, the reading and study of the Bible is now too-often ridiculed as amounting to nothing more than the wasted efforts of those with small minds and even smaller intellects.

The ablest leaders and most brilliant minds in history would beg to disagree.

Sir Isaac Newton, renowned scientist, mathematician, and philosopher, once confessed, "I find more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history whatsoever."

William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania, declared, "The Scriptures contain a declaration of the mind and will of God. They ought also to be read, believed, and fulfilled in our day. We accept them as the words of God Himself."

Martin Luther, whose determination sparked the early fires of the Reformation, was a man in love with God's Word. Though we believe him wrong on many counts, he was "spot on" in observing, "Holy Scripture is a sweet-scented herb, and the more you rub it, the more it emits its fragrance."

Our country has been blessed with leaders at the highest levels of government professing deep respect for the Bible. George Washington once said, "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible. He is worse than an infidel who does not read his Bible and acknowledge his obligation to God." John Adams stated, "The Bible is the best book in the world." Thomas Jefferson declared, "I have always said and always will say that the studious perusal of the Sacred Volume will make better citizens, better fathers, better husbands. The Bible makes the best people in the world." And Abraham Lincoln, perhaps the most admired and loved of all past presidents, once acknowledged, "I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible," further advising, "Take all of this book upon reason that you can, and the balance by faith, and you will live and die a better man before God."

Today's "experts" who belittle the Bible and disparage its readers are on the wrong side of history! Don't you think the time has come to commit yourself to a regular and systematic study of the Scriptures?

## TRUSTING GOD AS WE PRAY

By Wayne Robbins

When things are going well we don't have any trouble trusting God with our prayers. However, when things are not going so well, and our situation continues for a long period of time, and especially if suffering is involved, we have the tendency to think God does not care. After all, if we were God we would have taken care of our problem long before now. But we are not God. What we must do is trust God implicitly - no matter what. Here are a few reasons why:

God has promised that He will be ever present to help us. He will never leave us or forsake us. (Hebrews 13:5.) He is not very far from any of us. (Acts 17:27.) He is ever present when we need His help. (Psalm 46:1.) We must trust that He will be there for us.

God wants to help us. God knows what we need before we ask Him. (Matthew 6:8.) Every good and perfect gift comes from Him. (James 1:17.) God wants to give us good things. (Matthew 7:11.) If we ask according to His will, He hears us and gives us our petitions. (1 John 5:14,15.) He asks us to cast all our cares upon Him for He cares for us. (1 Peter 5:7.) God really does want to help us.

God knows the best way to help us. God knows all things. (Psalm 147:5.) God is all-powerful. (Genesis 17:1.) He knows absolutely the right things to do with our prayers. This may not be to our liking because most of the time we want instant action and relief. But God is not limited by our human emotions and shallow thinking. Every prayer is answered with God's unlimited wisdom and on His timetable. When we pray, we are limited in our scope of vision. But God is not limited and sees the big picture that our prayers involve.

We must trust God implicitly. He will answer our prayers in the best possible way, even though it may not be to our liking or timetable (and, yes, sometimes He says, "no).

We are not God! God is God! We must trust Him.

— Arkansas City, KS

"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:26-28.)

EDITORIALLY SPEAKING . . .

## JOY IN THE MIDST OF CRISIS

By Dalton Key

With markets collapsing and a virus spreading, many of us are barely hanging on; so consumed with living in the fantasy worlds of "might-have-been" and "going-to-be" that we fail to see the everyday joy of the here and now.

Yes, in the midst of crisis, even this one, there can still be joy.

I remember reading, many years ago now, a psychologist's assessment that 94% of people are simply enduring the present as they fill their minds with thoughts of better days ahead. I doubt that percentage has improved.

By and large, many of us are not happy now. We find little joy in today. Oh, yes! when the pandemic is past, when the economy rebounds, when the kids are back to school (or grown), when we are finally able to buy that new car or new house, when retirement finally comes (or comes back), when that someday, ever-elusive "something" takes place, then, and only then, will happiness be ours.

In our preoccupation with tomorrow's possibilities, we sadly fail to appreciate, or even notice, today's blessings. We become blind to the beauty of the moment.

You've heard it before: happiness is not so much the destination as it is the journey. But hearing and accepting are two very different things. The truth is this - if you aren't happy now, with what you have, where you are, as things are, you probably wouldn't be any happier were things to change.

I often take note of the words of a plaque occupying a prominent place in my study, words which simply say, "The really happy man is the one who can enjoy the scenery when he has to take a detour."

We've definitely been taking a detour of late. Are we enjoying the scenery?

The apostle Paul put it this way: "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:11-13.) Not surprisingly, those words follow on the heels of these: "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4.) And a bit later, Paul affirms, "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19.)

Yes, the Lord will bless us. This we believe. But He is blessing us now, today, in the midst of our current situation.

We just have to keep our eyes open and our faith strong.



## WHAT IS THE ANSWER?

By Bobby Key

It was the middle of September, and I was in my mid teens. The day was bright and sunny in the heart of Texas. Along with my brother and two sisters I set out early to begin a new school year at the rural school here we had all attended from the first grade. As we arrived on the school grounds our spirits were crushed.

A stranger was standing on the steps of the three-room school. He had an official looking paper in his hand and said he had a very important announcement. We were all informed, for the first time, that all of the grades from six upward could no longer attend that school. A small squat-looking van pulled on the school grounds to take us away to a bigger and better school. We were loaded and hauled away like a bunch of wild-eyed West Texas steers and placed with strangers in an environment unlike anything we'd ever known.

The trustees and community had no say in the matter. The decision was made for us. The stranger on the steps said this change was for our good. With better educational advantages we could expect poverty to vanish, crime to cease, and all of us would be better prepared to face life or enter college. Of course, in our little community we had no crime, and everybody was poor, but nobody knew it! Though a little rough around the edges and somewhat ignorant by today's standards, we were all as happy as could be.

The years have come and gone. That little rural school no longer exists except in memory. Driving through the community recently, we witnessed a great deal more poverty, saw evidence of crime being on the increase, and observed general deterioration all around. Statistics show an increase in lawlessness, drunkenness, immorality, thievery, vandalism, drugs, and lower test scores with each passing year.

Better educational opportunities are fine, but better education is not the answer to our problems. The only answer is the pure and simple gospel of Jesus Christ found in the Scriptures. (Galatians 1:6-10.)

Literary education and a greater amount of wealth are blessings only when possessed and exercised by those who are under the influence of our great Creator and Maker, God Almighty. The Lord gave the people of old His good Spirit to instruct them. (Nehemiah 9:20.) The Spirit's inspired message is still available to instruct those willing to listen.

We are unable to roll back the years and return to the simpler lifestyle of yesteryear, but, thank God, we still have the Book of Instruction left for us.

## SPEAKING TRUTH

By Ron Stough

Words have always held a special interest to me. Expressing things clearly and concisely so that there is no doubt what is being communicated is important. As God's people, we want our words to convey truth and honesty so that others know exactly what we are saying.

In our society, however, such a view is pretty rare. The philosophy today is to use words that'll neither say too much nor too little. Choose words that may be construed one way or another way. Veil the truth behind abstract words, and let the listener hear what he wants to hear.

The absurdity of the situation was obvious a few years ago when our own President vehemently denied an allegation in one statement, and then admitted the allegation in another statement. His press secretary sought to ease our minds by explaining that the President felt both statements were true.

The world shakes its head and

asks like Pilate of old, "What is truth?" (John 18:38.)

The fact is that we can know truth when we know the source of truth. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." (John 14:6.) God is described as one who does not lie. (Titus 1:2.)

Satan, on the other hand, is the father of lies. (John 8:44.)

We can be assured that God's Word is truth, and when we base our lives on that, we will be men of truth.

— Duncan, OK

"Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, But those who deal truthfully are His delight." (Proverbs 12:22.) "Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another." (Ephesians 4:25.) "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No' be 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one." (Matthew 5:37.) "That we should no longer be children,

tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head - Christ." (Ephesians 4:14,15.)

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