

HOW CAN I BE SPIRITUAL?
I Corinthians 2:15

Spirituality is something all sincere believers have a desire to attain. Of course, any interest in being spiritual begins with the new birth. The Holy Spirit is the person who is involved in making spirituality a reality in the life of a Christian. Spirituality and spiritual maturity go hand in hand. The Holy Spirit in control of the life will bring spirituality and maturity to the child of God. Ryrie has well defined spirituality as ***"A grownup relation to the Holy Spirit." It is vital that a new Christian get into the Word and be yielded to the Holy Spirit in order to make progress and mature in the Christian faith. Therefore, the spiritual man will not be stagnate in his Christian life but growing on a steady basis.

I. YIELDEDNESS TO THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE WORD OF GOD - Eph. 5:18

A submissive attitude to the things of God will be evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit in the believer's life (Gal. 5:22-23). A believer with this attitude will bear the marks of grace in the form of Christ-like character and conduct. His attitude will be one of thankfulness, that is, it will be a positive and not one that blames God when circumstances invade our lives which bring adversity. Also, the spiritual Christian will tend to promote harmony and not discord among the brethren (Eph. 4:3).

II. BE IN PUBLIC WHAT WE ARE IN PRIVATE - Matthew 6:1-8

It is relatively easy to be spiritual at church. The real test is in the home and on the job. The reason is that casual relationships are not as revealing as the intimate and continuous relationships. The home is the place where we really manifest our character. The home also provides an excellent laboratory in which to demonstrate the genuineness of our Christian faith. It is impossible for a person to claim spirituality and not have a home that is a blessing to all who come under its influence.

III. CHURCH LIFE IS ANOTHER PROVING GROUND - I Cor. 11:17-18

Church opportunities and responsibilities provide an arena in which the spiritually mature can demonstrate proper Christian character and conduct. How do you react to different opinions in the church? How do you react to recommendations that you change your manner of teaching, especially if someone suggests that it is boring? How would you react to the suggestion that we teach another class or not teach at all? Can you accept criticism, even if you are doing your best? Are you sensitive about your Christian work in the church? Do you consider new people a threat to your established position? All of these questions touch the areas where many believers lack spiritual grace. The person who is really spiritual will do a positive work without "sticking out at the elbows" and irritating other believers around him. He will deal with difficulties, correct problems without tearing up or disrupting the unity of the church. A spiritual person is not spiritual because someone says he is or because he thinks he is, rather because he or she is yielded to the Holy Spirit of God and manifests the Spirit's presence in his life.

HOW CAN I BE SURE I AM SAVED?

This question may appear to be elementary to a prayer meeting Bible study group, but it is highly probable that someone in this congregation is not really sure about his salvation. Some people associate assurance of salvation with certain church rituals or emotional experiences. Both of these are poor substitutes for genuine assurance. The purpose of this study is to suggest four tests to determine the presence of spiritual life.

I. THE BIBLE TEST

The Bible is a mystery to the natural man. It is more a "good luck charm" than a source of spiritual help and strength to him. The unsaved man who reads the Bible usually admits that it does not make sense to him and is of little or no interest. (I Cor. 2:14) One of the first changes the new Christian notices in his life is a heightened interest in the Bible. The Bible becomes a new book to him and in it he finds strength to live the Christian life in a hostile world. The Bible becomes the source of spiritual nourishment for the young believer. (I Peter 2:2) No longer is a person content to read the Bible casually, but rather God's word becomes part of his life as a basis for daily strength and guidance. Whenever a person makes a profession of faith and there is little or no interest in the Bible, this should be a warning signal that such a profession is shallow and has no lasting quality. We are saved by hearing the Word of God, and we are strengthened by studying it regularly. (Romans 10:17, I Peter 1:23, Hebrews 5:11-14)

II. THE SIN TEST

Believers are not sinless. Every Christian has an Adamic nature and is potentially capable of the worst kind of sins. However, the believer is given at conversion a new nature. (II Peter 1:4) To the saved person, sin is accidental and occasional and not habitual. This truth is verified by I John 3:9 where the word "commit" means to "practice." Once a person is saved he does not keep on doing the same sins he did before he was saved. The believer is sensitive to sin because he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. (I Cor. 6:19-20) God will not let a Christian sin with ease. With his new life in Christ, there comes a new awareness of the sinfulness of sin. Psalm 51 is an excellent Old Testament example of the proper reaction of a believer to sin in his life. David's primary concern was not his eternal destination but rather the loss of joy and fellowship he had once enjoyed in the presence of God. The comparison of sheep and pigs with reference to spiritual life is trite but true. The believer is a "spiritual sheep" and will never be satisfied in the "mire" of sin once he has come to know the blessing of life in Christ. The man who clings to his sins cannot walk with the Lord. Therefore, one test to determine whether or not we are saved is our attitude toward sin in the life.

III. THE PEOPLE TEST

Another test for new life in Christ is our attitude toward others. (I John 3:14) Salvation in Christ will cause a rebellious son to become a submissive son. Salvation in Christ will enable one to love the unlovely. If this change is not manifested, there is every reason to question the validity of such a profession. This test can be demonstrated further by our interest in telling others about Christ. The saved man should be concerned about other people and their relationship to God. Someone has well said that we are never more right with God than we are with our fellowman. How we treat our fellowman is usually indicative of our relationship to God.

(Over)

Most believers would like to be successful soul winners. However, as a matter of fact, in any given church real aggressive soul winners are definitely in the minority. The supposed answer to renewed interest and effort in the area of personal evangelism is a course conducted by the pastor. This presupposes that if we know how to do something we will do it. This is not the case in soul winning. We do not bring men to Christ by simply learning a method. Most of us know how to evangelize, the problem is the will and the grace to do it. It is better to know one verse on the subject of salvation and to use it regularly in attempting to win men to Christ than to master an entire course and never try to evangelize. This study will suggest steps which may be helpful in the area of personal soul winning.

I. STAY CLEAN SPIRITUALLY - Psalm 51:10-13

When David was restored to a proper place of fellowship with God, then and only then did he become interested in reaching others. The man with unconfessed sin in his life is not going to be an effective soul winner. Only the believer who is enjoying constant, conscious fellowship with Christ is able to be effective in this area. Loss of fellowship and power bring apathy and neglect into the lives of God's people. A clean vessel in the Lord's hands is the most effective instrument in evangelism.

II. PRAY FOR OPPORTUNITIES - Proverbs 3:5-6

The Christian misses opportunities to witness because he is not sensitive to the Lord's leading in his life. Every day should be a new adventure with Christ. Every new person who comes into our lives should present an opportunity to witness for Christ. When the believer asks the Lord for an opportunity to witness, he must be willing to seize that opportunity and capitalize on it by the grace of God. To pray for such an opening and then to remain silent and let it slip away, when God causes it to happen, will make it much more difficult next time to pray for such an opportunity. Our daily prayer should be: "Lord, bring someone into my life today to whom I can be a witness for Christ." Our blessed Lord will not fail to answer this kind of prayer.

III. BEGIN TODAY - II Corinthians 6:2

If today is the only time God has promised salvation to the sinner, then it is important that we witness today. Our good intentions in Christian service which are postponed until tomorrow seldom become a reality. Our best plans for next week, next month, and next year often do not materialize. Success depends upon starting today. Our field of evangelism is right where we live. Adopt a simple method such as the Romans Road and begin today.

IV. KEEP AT IT - Acts 2:42-46

Paul Little in his book entitled, How To Give Away Your Faith, suggests that some believers witness only once in a while. For these people their witness is out of a deep sense of guilt which builds up over a period of time. They hasten to witness to someone to relieve this sense of responsibility and, when it is discharged, they forget about witnessing until "attacked" by this feeling again.

Dr. H. H. Savage use to use the following expression often concerning the Lord's work: "Keep everlastingly at it." The test of our Christian service is in the area of the routine. Grace for the grind can be turned into grace for reaching lost sinners. The secret of soul winning is staying on the job or, as someone said recently in our Sunday School class: "The fellow who keeps his hook in the water will usually catch the fish." Let's go soul winning beginning today and stay at it until Jesus comes!

HOW CAN I KNOW MY BIBLE BETTER?

Every believer should have a consuming desire to know his Bible better. The Christian never reaches the place where he can slacken his pace in learning the word of God. Most of us want to know our Bible better, but lack the time or energy to do so. This study will be an attempt to make some suggestions to aid in Bible study.

I. TAKE THE TIME AND MAKE THE NECESSARY EFFORT - Acts. 17:11

The study of the Bible is a lifelong venture. The secrets of Scripture are not revealed to the casual reader. A quick glance at a verse or chapter in the Bible will leave the reader empty-handed as far as Bible interpretation is concerned. The believer should reserve a certain time and place every day for serious and thoughtful study of the Bible. Anything less than this will produce "spiritual dwarfs" instead of "spiritual giants" in this spiritually needy generation. Men usually find time to do what they really want to do. The primary need of the Christian is motivation. We need to be prompted by God's Holy Spirit to get into His Word and let His Word get into us.

II. DEVELOP A METHOD - II Timothy 2:15

A method in Bible study will provide the means of getting into the Scripture on a regular basis. The Christian who lacks a method in Bible study will eventually discontinue his study. A method provides the "tracks" upon which the "train" of study can run! There are various kinds of Bible study methods and we will mention a few: (1) Reading the same number of chapters over and over again for at least 30 days. (2) Studying all of the proper nouns in a given passage. (3) A method similar to the Navigators - (a) Paraphrase, (b) Parallel, (c) Problems, (d) Profit. (4) Bible study booklets such as those produced by Keith L. Brooks. (5) Correspondence courses - Scofield or Moody. It is not the purpose of this study to specify a particular method. However, it is important to select a method with which one is comfortable and maintain it on a regular basis.

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDY HELPS - II Timothy 4:13

Someone has said you can tell the kind of teacher or preacher a person is by looking at his library. We can learn from the Bible teachers of the past. Every serious student of the Bible should have some basic tools for investigation. In addition to a good study Bible, he should have a concordance, a Bible dictionary and several good translations. He should know good authors and cultivate the habit of purchasing and reading good books. If you do not know some of the books and authors, seek out advice or counsel from an older, more experienced Christian.

IV. A PRAYERFUL ATTITUDE - Psalm 119:18

The Spirit of God is the author of Scripture and He is also the one who enlightens the mind of the student. No attempt should ever be made to grasp the meaning of Bible truths without consulting the Author! As one approaches the Word of God, it should be with a humble attitude and a teachable spirit, willing and wanting to make the truth one discovers operable in life.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

II Timothy 2:15

Robert
Spradling

Sometimes Bible study is neglected for lack of a simple, workable plan. The following are suggested as a personal and devotional study of the Scriptures.

I. BIBLE STUDY PLANS - Acts 17:11

A. Plan #1:

Select a certain number of chapters in a given book of the Bible, for example 10 chapters, and read these same chapters once each day for 30 days. At the end of the 30 days, select 10 more chapters. The Bible student will be amazed at how much will be remembered of the Scriptures by using this method.

W. Griffith Thomas read the Book of Romans dozens of times before he began to teach it.

B. Plan #2:

Study the important words in a selected chapter. For example, in Philippians Chapter 1, verse 1--

1. Paul-look up other references to Paul in the Bible.
2. Timotheus-look up other references and write other information about Timothy in your notebook.

3. Servants

4. Jesus Christ

5. Saints

6. Philippi

7. Bishops

8. Deacons

(These are the primary words in the first verse).

C. Plan #3:

Read a chapter each day. Memorize one verse in the chapter. It may be a familiar or a new verse, but memorize one verse in each chapter read. It is theoretically possible to know at least 1 verse in every chapter of the Bible.

D. Plan #4:

Choose 1 chapter each week to study.

1. Monday-Point of the Passage.

Read it and then write a short summary of its content. (What does it say?)

2. Tuesday-Parallel Passages

Find one parallel passage for every verse in your chapter in some other book of the Bible.

3. Wednesday-Problem Passages

Locate a verse in your chapter which you do not understand at first and seek to find a solution to the problem.

4. Thursday-Profit Passage

What one verse was of special blessing to you in studying this chapter?

(This plan is patterned after the S. T. S. program of the NAVIGATORS.)

HOW CAN I SERVE THE LORD IN OUR CHURCH?
Acts 9:6

"What can I do for the Lord? Nobody every asks me to do anything in the church and I feel left out - useless in the Lord's work." These questions remind us that there are saved people in every church who are not actively involved in the work and need to be challenged to become involved. In recent weeks, the various committees involved in our Faith Covenant Program have been made aware of this situation in our Church and many others around the world. The following ideas deal with areas where every Christian can serve.

I. MAKE YOUR DESIRE TO SERVE THE LORD KNOWN AND MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE - Isaiah 6:8-9

If you have a desire to serve the Lord and yet do not let it be known, it is possible for your talents to go unnoticed and unused. There are many areas in any local church where your particular talent can be used to its maximum capacity. However, unless you express this desire for spiritual service and put it into operation, your abilities and interests in the Lord's work may fall to the ground. The responsibility for your personal Christian service rests with you and no one else. God will never hold a pastor or the leaders of a local church responsible for what some other believer did not do in Christian work. If you want to serve, make it known now.

II. LOOK UPON PRAYER AS A MINISTRY AND NOT A BURDEN - Luke 18:1

The ministry of our blessed Lord and of the Apostles Paul and John placed prayer in the priority position in Christian work. We are prone to tack prayer on as some kind of spiritual appendage, but God's word teaches that prayer is foundational to any ministry. Without effective prayer, our work for Christ is futile. Every church needs a large prayer band who will bear up the needs of that local church to to God in prayer. Our greatest needs are spiritual in nature and, therefore, every Christian can assume the responsibility of praying regularly and faithfully for the work of Christ on earth. Our Church is currently engaged in church-wide prayer vigil with reference to our Faith Covenant Program. Every believer can help us in this vital ministry.

III. GIVE OF YOUR RESOURCES - I Cor. 16:1-2

Every person cannot be a full-time Christian worker and every person will not be a soul winner in a local church. This does not mean that every believer cannot be a witness. However, every believer can serve the Lord with what talent he has and with his financial means. Those who give to the work of Jesus Christ share in the blessing and reward of the work just as those who go. Neither can operate without the cooperation of the other. Wise is the believer who looks upon his giving to the work of Christ on earth as an investment in eternity. Someday, the investments of earth will all be destroyed and, in that day, how glad we will be that we invested our treasure where human hands and eternal judgment cannot touch.

THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

Robert K. Spradling

September 1969

In defence of the deity of Christ, care must be exercised not to destroy the fact that the Bible teaches He was also perfect humanity. The Saviour who is God of very God, seated at the right hand of God, is called "...the man Christ Jesus." (I Timothy 2:5). No person in all of history can say that God does not know, from experience, what it is to live on earth as a man. The second person of the Godhead, when He came to earth, did not come as an angel but rather took on the seed of Abraham and in all things was made like unto His brethren. (Hebrews 2:16-17). This very point seems to be in John's mind when he speaks of our Lord's sovereign position and power in judgment. (John 5:22 & 27). Wrong ideas regarding the humanity of Jesus range all the way from those who say that His body was human but not His spirit, to those who say that all matter is evil and therefore God could not really become a man without partaking of evil. This is the teaching of modern day Eddyism.

The Bible teaches that Christ is true God and true man. Undoubtedly there are difficult questions about the person of Christ which puzzle the minds of men. However, the Word of God teaches this truth, and we dare not go beyond the guidelines of Biblical revelation. This doctrine became the basis of one of the early church councils, namely, Chalcedon in 451 A. D. At that Conference the following statement was issued regarding the Person of Christ: "He is one Christ, existing in two natures without mixture, without division, without separation; the diversity of the natures not being destroyed by their union in the one person; but the peculiar properties of each being preserved and concurring to the One Person." This statement does not confuse the natures nor divide the person of Christ. The following are a list of Scriptural examples concerning the humanity of Jesus:

1. He came to earth as a baby and grew and developed as a human being. Luke 2:5,12,40,52. (The fact that our Lord grew does not suggest imperfection, but rather suggests stages in development. At every stage He was perfect for that stage.)
2. Jesus possessed the emotions of a normal person.
He wept, John 11:35.
He loved, John 13:23.
He was grieved/angered, Mark 3:5.
3. Jesus displayed the normal activities and appetites of human beings.
He was thirsty-John 19:28.
He was weary-John 4:6.
He slept-Matthew 8:24.
He hungered-Matthew 4:2.
4. Jesus looked like a human being.
John 4:9 indicates that Jesus' appearance was like any other Jewish man.
John 20:15-He was mistaken for a gardner.
John 21:4-5-He was mistaken for another man. All would indicate that He looks like a normal person.
5. Jesus' death proved His humanity-John 19:30-34. In these verses the agony of human suffering is clearly seen. The reference to blood and water pointed to the fact that He really died.

Conclusion: Dr. Alva McClain has mentioned in his notes on this doctrine that our Lord has "...every essential characteristic of true human nature but no sin. Sin is an abnormality and not an essential of human nature."

In Jesus Christ we have a Saviour and Mediator who is both God and man. He not only has made provision to deal with the penalty of man's sins, but ever lives at the right hand of God to intercede for His own. He is the man Christ Jesus.

"I DON'T HAVE TIME"

Ephesians 5:16

"Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days." (Phillips Translation)

"Bind up your opportunities, for these are evil times." (Weymouth Translation)

"Grasp at each opportunity like merchants who eagerly buy up a scarce commodity; for the evil days are on us." (Way Translation)

The old excuse, "I'm too busy," is not usually accurate. Often, it simply reveals our inability to properly use or manage our time. People who achieve great goals in life seldom give impression that they are "busy." It is usually the inefficient person who gives that impression. The Lord Jesus lived a full and active life but it was devoid of hurry and perpetual motion. There was no undue haste in his life and ministry. One way to describe Jesus' life is one that was filled with a majestic and measured pace. What was his secret? He knew that God has a plan for every believers' life. Every circumstance and condition is under God's full control. Therefore, the Lord refused to be the slave of time. His goal on earth was to do the will of the Father, and when He died He said with absolute confidence, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." (John 17:4) Jesus had sufficient time in every day to do all that God required of Him. He was never frustrated by the events or interruptions of His day. There was always time to do what God had ordained. When we say we don't have time for Christian work, it may mean that we don't see the opportunity and we do not know how to let God use us for His glory. Our time is not our own, it is a gift from God and we are accountable to Him for our use or abuse of it. God has given man a lifetime on earth and, by any standard, this is a short period and yet our eternal destiny depends on it. Time is very important for with it comes opportunity. Time cannot be saved or postponed, it can only be used. Therefore, it is vital that we make full use of it while we are here on earth. We live in an atmosphere of hurry. Hurry makes spirituality difficult. We have time for sleep, prayer and devotions. If we do not, we are busier than God intended us to be. In his book entitled A Spiritual Clinic, J. Oswald Sanders has an interesting comment on the strategic use of time: "Each week has 168 hours. Let us allow a generous 56 hours for sleep and rest; 21 hours for meals and family devotions; 56 hours for work and study. There still remain 35 hours or 5 hours a day. What happens to them? How are they invested? These are the critical hours of life which determine whether our lives will be commonplace or extraordinary. These are the hours which we so frequently allow to slip from us. Our spare time - and it is not true to say we have no spare time - is at once our danger and our opportunity." The well-ordered person is the one who is so organized that whatever demands are made upon him in a single day, he will find time to accomplish that which is necessary. Every pastor knows how much he is dependent upon the busy people in his church. They are the people who carry the responsibility for its ministry. The rest just sit, observe, and grow weary in watching others work.

Our problem is with priorities. We do not always know what is important. Someone has described a fool as a man who has missed the proportion of things. Undue attention to petty matters can crowd out the primary responsibilities of life. Another problem is planning. Without a plan, we tend to drift. If we can divide our day into parts we can accomplish goals. Much of what we do daily must be done in short segments or not done at all. Our devotions, reading, even Sunday School preparation will probably have to be done in shorter time periods than we would like. However, the secret to accomplishment is doing something now rather than waiting for another time when we have more time. We are all creatures of habit and only God can help us break some of these which bind us to unimportant activities. If our lives seem to be full of pressure and tension, perhaps we should look more carefully at what we are doing and rework our schedule - putting important things first and refusing to do more than we can do well. The following are a few questions for discussion purposes:

(Over)

Radio - Sept. 1973

IF I WERE GOD

Hosea 11:9

Robert K. Spradling

September 6, 1972

Seven years ago,

2 Last fall, during the evangelistic meetings here at the Church, the evangelist spoke on this subject. I have been intrigued with the subject since that time and want to develop the ideas which he used for his message. Many times, men boast of what they would do if they were God. These people usually point an accusing finger at God and suggest that He is not fair or kind in his dealings with all men. However, there is another side to this subject. This is the basis for our study tonight.

1. If I Were God, I Wouldn't Give My Son to Die for Anyone (Romans 5:8, John 3:16)

My children mean a great deal to me, as your children do to you. Let us suppose that it was possible theoretically for the death of your child or mine to make provision for all of the dregs of humanity to enter into the presence of God. Would you be willing to let your child die for such worthless humanity? I doubt very seriously if anyone of us would be willing to make such a sacrifice. The Bible states that was exactly the kind of sacrifice God made for His enemies! This is the Biblical truth that the sinner has never seen, namely, that God loves him and sent His Son to die on the cross so that sinners could be saved. This is the message men need to hear today.

4 2. If I Were God, I Wouldn't Answer the First Prayer of A Christian Who Didn't Seek to Win Souls to Christ (Matthew 28:19-20, Proverbs 11:30)

God has established His priorities in the Bible. He is concerned about the spiritual welfare of men. The Lord Jesus was concerned that men have an opportunity to hear the Gospel and be saved. He has given the great commission to evangelize the world to His church. An yet, many professing Christians do everything else in the church but seek to win souls to Christ. They will give their time to build buildings, run programs, become involved in community activities, but they will not major on the priorities which God has laid down in his Word. If I were God, I wouldn't listen to the prayers of a Christian who pays no attention to my clear instructions concerning winning the lost to Christ. However, I am not God and He is long suffering, even to those who do not take His Word seriously. The winning of souls is difficult work. It requires effort and prayer and a willingness to forget about self and put Christ first. Perhaps this is why the soul winning efforts of many local churches is neglected. If I were God, I would have little time or patience with the professing Christian who had never made a serious attempt to win another person to Jesus Christ.

1 3. If I Were God, I Wouldn't Wait Five Minutes Longer For The World To Repent (Acts 17:30-31, II Peter 3:9)

For thousands of years, God has been patient with sinful mankind. There has not been one murder, one lie, or one immoral act which has taken place upon the earth that escaped God's watchful eye. One would wonder how He could observe the exceeding wickedness of sinful mankind and not destroy the earth before the setting of tomorrow's sun. Men curse His Son and ignore everything that is precious in God's eyes. And yet, he is patient with men giving them ample opportunity to repent. If I were God, I would not wait much longer.

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

Robert Spradling

July 1969

Men are questioning authority. In government, education and in every other area where certain lines of authority have existed over the years, now that authority is being tested as never before in history. Many people look upon the Bible as being in conflict with science and, therefore, is to be condemned as out of tune with the times. Every generation has had its Ingersolls, who take delight in scoffing at the Scripture. However, in our generation there has arisen even among evangelicals those who are questioning the importance of the doctrine of inspiration.

There is widespread misunderstanding about the term "inspiration". When this word is used with reference to the Scriptures, we mean that, in the original, autographs were fully and completely inerrant and infallible. The Bible is indeed the very product of God in bringing the record of His revelation of Himself to man. The old cliché, "if the King James version was good enough for Paul, it's good enough for me", is thought by some to be the thinking of most fundamental Christians. The folly of such thinking requires little comment.

We do not formulate our doctrine by the latest writings and pronouncements of the theological world. Our test for the truth of any subject regarding Christian faith and practice is simply - what does the Bible teach? What the Scripture says is our basis of doctrine; therefore, a careful examination of several key verses on the subject of inspiration will be our procedure.

I. II Timothy 3:16.

The word "inspiration" in this verse is the word "theopneustos" which means "God breathed". It does not mean that God permitted certain men to write the Bible and then put His stamp of approval upon it. It means, rather, that the Scriptures are indeed the product of God. The Scriptures are placed in the same category as God's universe and man. Psalm 33:6; Genesis 2:7.

2. II Peter 1:19-21.

Peter is referring to his own eyewitness account on the Mount of Transfiguration. In comparison to that, he maintains that we today have "a more sure word of prophecy". We have a foundation upon which our faith rests, which is far better than visions, voices, or anything pertaining to the senses alone. We have the Scriptures which did not come to man by "private interpretation", that is as the result of human efforts of reason and thinking. The Scriptures came from God and as such are completely trustworthy.

3. Matthew 5:17-18.

Jesus believed in the inspiration of Scripture. He alluded to the Creation, Flood, the Exodus, Jonah and many other persons and events of the Old Testament as being factual persons and events. His attitude toward the Scriptures should be the attitude adopted by the believer. A "tittle" is the small horn on some of the Hebrew letters of the alphabet, a "jot" is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

IS GOD REALLY DEAD?

Psalm 14:1

Robert Spradling

July 1969

A few years ago a new breed of theologians startled the religious world with the idea that God is dead. The three most articulate spokesmen for this idea were: Thomas Altizer of Emory University, Paul Van Buren of Temple University and William Hamilton of Colgate Rochester Divinity School. This new concept marked a continued shift in the theological world--a shift from God to man. This shift began at the turn of the century, in this country, with the teaching of the social gospel. The God of the Bible is no longer in the thinking of many religious educators. To them, man is central and they neither fear nor serve the God of the Bible. Some of this kind of thinking has been called 'Christian Atheism', which is in fact a contradiction of terms. One might just as well speak of "honest thieves" or "truthful liars" or "moral sex offenders" as to speak of "Christian Atheism"!

There was a day when idolatry was characterized by worshipping a small heathen god made of wood or stone. However, in our sophisticated society man's idols have assumed another form--his idols are the work of his brain rather than the product of his hands BUT they are idols just the same!

There is a very simple, clear answer to those persons who say God is dead - Psalm 14:1. The Hebrew word "fool" suggests "loss of connection". This man has not searched out the matter, but rather, has flatly stated such because he is out of touch with God. The emphasis of Scripture is just the reverse of these new ideas - God is not dead, man is! (Ephesians 2:1). Until a person comes to know God in Christ he cannot know the true and living God, so the fool says therefore that God does not EXIST.

There are some very interesting questions one could put to this new theological trend:

- (1) When did God die?
- (2) Where did God die?
- (3) At what time?
- (4) Of what did He die?
- (5) Who presided at the funeral?

These questions may border on the ridiculous but they are no more ridiculous than the blanket statement that God is dead.

When we speak of the God of the Bible we speak of a God who is able to do things. (See I Kings 18--the false gods were powerless to hear or to help.) However, the God of the Bible is able to help His own - Daniel 6:26-27. Notice several verses in the Scriptures which speak of a Living God.

1. I Samuel 17:26, 36-37.

The armies of the Philistines learned a lesson in theology and in military tactics that day! The God of Israel was alive!

2. I Kings 17:1

Elijah's God could and did shut up the heavens. James attests to the fact of this. James 5.

3. Ezekiel 20:33

"As I live" is the basis of fulfilled prophecy. A living God can keep His word. The New Testament is filled with verses on a living God:

1. Acts 14:15--The living God a cure for idolatry.
2. II Corinthians 6:16--(cf. the ideas of pagan cultures)
3. Hebrews 10:31--A dead God could not judge man. Cf. Revelation 20.

IS THERE SUCH A THING AS AN UNPARDONABLE SIN?

By Alva J. McClain

There has been so much discussion, often fruitless, surrounding what is called the "unpardonable sin", that one may justifiably hesitate to enter a field where well meaning men have widely disagreed. However, even leaving out of consideration those texts in the Synoptic Gospels about which much of the controversy has raged, it can be affirmed that there is described in Scripture a sin for which, by its very nature, there is no divine remedy. The general nature of this sin may be stated as follows:

1. There is but one place where a holy God can justly forgive sinners, that is, "in Christ, whose death upon the cross satisfies in full all the claims of broken law for those who take refuge in Him. (Romans 3:21-26). Outside of Christ, not even a sovereign and omnipotent God can forgive men their sins. (Acts 4:12).
2. Now, by divine appointment, it is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit to bear witness to Christ as Savior and bring sinners into Him. (John 15:26, 16:8-14). All the ministry of what we call evangelism, from beginning to end, is under the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit. No man can even say with a true confession that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. (I Corinthians 12:3).
3. Therefore, to resist the ministry of the Holy Spirit, as He seeks to lead sinners into Christ, is to refuse to be led into the one place where divine forgiveness is morally possible. (Hebrews 2:3-4). For outside of Christ there can be nothing for the sinner but the wrath of God. (John 3:36).
4. This means, by the very nature of the case, that sin against the Holy Spirit is unpardonable sin. It is not, as some have carelessly supposed, that the Person of the Spirit is somehow more sacred than that of the Son, or that sin against the Spirit is more damnable than sin against the Father and the Son; but rather that the Spirit's peculiar work is to bring sinners into Christ, the only place where God can forgive. Hence, for the man who "hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace", there can be no help nor remedy for his sin. (Hebrews 10:26-29).
5. This sin against the Holy Spirit may begin as a single act of resistance to the voice and ministry of the Spirit, on the part of some sinner in rejecting Christ as the place of salvation; and then by constant repetition the sin may become a settled state of hostility or indifference toward Him as Lord and Savior. (John 19:15, Acts 7:51-52.).
6. Even the initial and single act of rejecting Christ as Savior, if persisted in, holds the sinner inexorably in a place where forgiveness is morally impossible on the part of a holy God: "...he that believeth not is condemned already"-John 3:18. But such a sinner may yet be reached by the voice and ministry of the Holy Spirit if he is willing to hear. (Hebrews 4:7). The "door" is open, as wide as a sovereign God can open it. (John 10:9).
7. When, however, by repeated acts of resistance and rejection, the sinner hardens his attitude into a fixed state, his condition may become utterly hopeless. (Ephesians 4:18-19 ARV). The voice of the Spirit no longer reaches his heart. (Matthew 13:14-15). Such a man may even mistake the Spirit's testimony and ministry for the work of Satan. (Matthew 12:24, 31-32). When this point is reached, it is possible for the sinner to say "No" to God for the last time, and like Judas, perish while still upon earth. (John 17:12 ARV).

ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

Robert Spradling

March 1971

One of the most perplexing problems on the international scene has to do with the occupation of the tiny country called Israel. To whom does Palestine belong? The Arabs and Russians say it belongs to the Arabs. The Jews and countries like the United States say it belongs to Israel. This difficult question is not a new problem. It is at least 4500 years old and increases in intensity and difficulty with every passing day. The Secretary of State of the United States said in last night's paper that the solution of the Arab-Israeli problem is absolutely mandatory or we will probably see World War III erupt in the Middle East. Several years ago Dwight Pentecost made a similar observation when he said: "We know not when, nor by what pretext, another great world conflagration may be set off, for this Arab-Israeli dispute might erupt as a great volcano spreading destruction as lava over the face of the earth, embroiling the world in the greatest war ever seen." I mention this quotation in order to point out the sensitivity of this problem in world affairs.

The so-called Jewish problem has been one of the greatest problems in human history. These people have been subjected to persecution and distress more than any other single race of people in all history. However, in spite of this, they remain a distinct people who have not been absorbed or assimilated into the various races of the world. Even in America, the great melting pot of races, the Jew has remained distinctly a Jew.

Throughout the ages men have sought to destroy Israel. Beginning with Egyptian kings in the Old Testament and as recently as Nazi Germany, tyrant after tyrant has sought to destroy the Jew and always unsuccessfully. There must be some other reason apart from human agencies, for the survival of these people. The Bible teaches that from the creation of Adam to the call of Abraham, God dealt with all of the peoples of the earth without recognition of national distinctives. All men stood on level ground before God without respect of race. However, after the Flood when all men turned their back upon God, it was necessary for the preservation of the race for God to select one nation as a servant nation through whom He would bless all the nations of the world. The man God called was Abraham and the nation established was the nation of Israel. The Jewish nation was drawn into a special relationship to God, not because they were superior to other nations, but in order to preserve the knowledge of the one true God on the earth. An important Scripture on this subject is Genesis 12:1-7. In this portion of the Word of God, the Lord promised Abraham personal, national and universal blessing. This promise that God gave to Abraham, He renewed to Isaac in Genesis 26:3 & 4 and also to Jacob in Genesis 28:13 & 14. Another important and clear passage on this subject is Jeremiah 31:35-37. According to the Word of God, Israel has an undisputable right to their land. The right to the possession of this land is based upon God's unconditional promise to Abraham. The fact that the Jews exist as a nation today is an indication of God's sovereign work in their behalf. Israel is God's covenant people and apart from God they would have been obliterated centuries ago. God has not forgotten the unconditional covenant which He made with Abraham and reconfirmed to Isaac and Jacob. The history of Israel is not over. The fact that they have disobeyed God and are suffering the penalty involved in that disobedience in no way destroys the covenant God made with Abraham.

It would appear that God has set aside the land of Palestine to be the exclusive home of the nation of Israel. (Cf. Joel 3:1 & 2) Any nation or nations which seek to counteract this divine grant may expect the judgment of God upon them.

JUSTIFICATION

Robert Spradling

Omit
(November 1969)

There are several great Bible words which deal with certain aspects of our salvation. One of these words is the term justification. Justification is a legal term which refers to that judicial or declarative act of God whereby He pronounces the believing sinner just before the law of God upon the basis of Christ's work upon the cross. Justification is not something a believer feels, it is an act of God by which He declares us righteous before Himself.

All sinners are guilty of sinning against a holy God. In God's act of justification the believing sinner is more than pardoned, he is treated as if he were never guilty of the crime!

1. Romans 5:1

This verse, along with several others in the New Testament, shows the way of justification - it is by faith. We have come into a right relationship to God. Where once there was a state of war and opposition, now there is peace. W. H. G. Thomas has described justification in the following manner: "Justification is the strait gate through which we enter the narrow way of holiness, and from this point we are to deal with the way and not the gate."

Romans chapter four is one of the great chapters showing how God justified men. Abraham and David were two persons in the Old Testament who experienced the blessedness of being right with God. Their example is used as an illustration of this great Bible doctrine. The word "faith" has been used as the way of justification, and in Acts 13:38-39 the word "believe" is used as a synonym for the same operation.

2. Romans 3:24-28.

In these verses the word grace is coupled with faith concerning justification. There are 3 important facts about our subject mentioned in this verse:

- a. We are justified freely. The Latin word is "gratis". We did not pay anything for our justification - God paid the full price for us.
- b. We are justified by grace. This means we did not do anything to deserve what God did for us. It is God's loving favor to those who are really undeserving and unworthy of such favor.
- c. We are justified through Christ. God's justification of the believing sinner is because of Him. We are accepted in Him. (Ephesians 1:6).

3. Romans 5:9.

This is the only verse in the New Testament which links our justification to Christ's blood. The verse shows that we who know Christ have been saved from the wrath of God. There is a wonderful contrast of great comfort in the context of this chapter; If man in all of his ungodliness (v.8) could be dealt with in loving favor, how "much more" shall our blood relationship to Christ preserve us from God's wrath. The blood of Christ was the basis of our redemption. Revelation 1:5, 5:9; Ephesians 1:7.

* Old Testament illustration in Exodus 12. God saw the blood.

THE LEADING OF THE LORD

Genesis 24:27

Since the dawn of human history, men have been conscious of the existence of God, but even in those early days there were men who were conscious of God's special leading in their lives. When a person knows that God is directly involved in his life, he does not need to resort to chance, luck, or the movement of the stars to explain purpose in life. In the Word of God, there are several references to the unusual way in which God has lead His people.

I. GOD LED BY A SOUND - I Chronicles 14:15

When David encountered the Philistines, he sought to know the Lord's direction in his conflict with these ancient and warlike people who plagued Israel for years. On one occasion, God gave David a verbal commitment that he would be victorious over the Philistines. On the second occasion mentioned in verse 14, David was restricted from battle. God indicated that His leading into battle would come through a sound in the tops of the mulberry trees. This sound would indicate that God was going before David to smite the Philistines. The whole point of the passage was to show that Israel's victory was not in David's military skill but in his confidence and faith in the God of Israel. This never changed in all of David's life, beginning with Goliath and culminating with his death. It is interesting to notice how God used certain sounds to accomplish His will. (Compare Joshua 6:20) In I Corinthians 14:8, Paul uses a principle that certain sounds are expected from certain instruments. The "uncertain sound" of a trumpet would be dangerous in the time of battle. So God sends forth His "certain sounds" so men can understand clearly His direction in their lives.

II. GOD LED BY A SIGHT - II Kings 6:17

The story takes place with Elisha and his servant. They were surrounded by their enemies but Elisha knew of hidden reinforcements which his servant could not see. Notice in verse 17 "and he saw." God often has His spiritual reinforcements near at hand but we do not see them. What this young man saw strengthened his faith in God.

III. GOD LED BY A SIGN - Judges 6:36-40

God used this particular occasion to deal with this particular servant. I know of no place in the Word of God where we are taught to "put out the fleece." For the New Testament believer, there are some inherent dangers in pursuing this policy too far. Sometimes, the "putting out the fleece" is a mark of something other than faith and trust in God. Faith does not necessarily need a fleece; it needs only God's clear command. The point of the passage before us is that God made His leadership clear. God used an unusual method to call an unusual man to an unusual conflict. He does not resort to this kind of direction for every believer.

IV. GOD LED BY A SENSE - I Samuel 3:8

When God called Sameul, Eli "perceived" that it was God's working in Samuel's life. There are some things we "perceive" God is doing and have confidence that this is His leading. I realize we are not to base the Lord's leading on how we feel, but God does not always violate our feelings to bring direction into our lives.

V. GOD LED BY A SCRIPTURE AND HIS SPIRIT - Romans 12:1-2

More often than not, God will speak to us through a verse rather than by a voice. The indwelling Holy Spirit will make the believer sensitive to the Lord's direction through the Word of God. Our prayer should be that God will make us aware of His leading in our lives as we study His Word. We may resort to the Scriptures daily for the Lord's leading and direction in our lives.

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

February, 1975

Robert K. Spradling

For the next few weeks, we will be studying about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. There are hundreds of books on this subject. However, let me suggest a few which may be helpful in our study. (1) The Bible -- Know what the Bible says about the life of Christ. There is no finer book on the subject. (2) Christ Incomparable -- By J. Oswald Sanders (3) A Guide to the Gospels -- W. Graham Scroggie (4) The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah -- Alfred Edersheim. At your convenience, purchase a book for your library.

Even the calendar reminds us that the birth of Jesus Christ is indeed the "hinge of history." The letters B.C. and A.D. remind us of this fact. No person in all of human history has so affected this earth as did Jesus Christ. He was born in a country 126 miles long and 46 miles wide and yet it was the crossroads of the world. The first thirty years of His life were spent in a little town called Nazareth. Three years of His public ministry literally changed the world. Let us examine the Scriptures and the Pre-existence of Christ. The Gospel of John abounds with verses on this subject. (John 1:1, 1:14, 1:15, 6:62, 8:58, 17:5, 24.) The uniqueness of Christ is that His birth did not mark His origin or beginning but merely His appearance on the stage of history. "Of Him alone can it be said that His life did not begin when He was born." (Sanders) The writer of Hebrews reminds us that our Lord had neither beginning of days nor end of life. (Hebrews 7:3) The Epistles also attest to Christ's prenatal existence. (Philippians 2:5-7, Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 1:3-11.) The Old Testament also teaches this fact. The Old Testament person called "the angel of Jehovah" was a pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ. (Compare Judges 13:15-18 with Isaiah 9:6) The angel of the Lord never appeared after Christ's birth. This very angel demanded worship which was forbidden of other angels. (Compare Exodus 3:1-5 and Revelation 22:8) The reason Christ's pre-existence is emphasized is that it fills the Old Testament with the person of Christ. (Compare John 5:39) When we understand this great truth, it is not difficult to see that Christ's first appearance was not when He was born of Mary. These Old Testament theophanies were frequent.

QUESTION: What is the most perplexing idea in your mind concerning the person and work of Christ? Can you recite from memory one verse concerning the life of Christ?

SUGGESTION: Learn a verse this week on this subject and share it with us next week.

LITERATURE

Phil. 4:8

Christian literature sales are at an all time high. Christian people are reading more books than at any other time in the history of the church. A few years ago, a best selling Christian book could be expected to sell 10,000 copies annually. Now, that figure would surpass 100,000 copies or more annually. In 1973 there was a 21% average increase in sales at Christian bookstores across America. Hal Lindsay's book on prophecy has sold over a million copies and the Living Bible has sold approximately 17 million copies.

A word of caution should be sounded even though this paper is for the purpose of encouraging our church family to purchase and read good literature. Not every piece of material from an evangelical publishing house is worthy of purchase, and not every book in your local bookstore is worthy of your consideration. Be selective in your buying. Be careful about current "popular" type reading. Some of these writers advocate "strange" doctrines. However, along with this note of caution there should be a word of praise for some of the good works coming from the press.

I. Literature in the Home

Every Christian home should be characterized by good Christian literature. Books by reliable authors should be handy in several rooms of the home. Reading is usually done in short segments of 5 - 15 minutes. Keep a book in the bathroom, bedroom, family room and anywhere else in the home where you might have an opportunity to read a few pages. Christian publications such as, Moody Monthly, Faith, The Voice, The Baptist Bulletin, The Good News Broadcaster should be available in your home.

II. Literature in the Church

The church staff is interested in seeing that all material for Sunday School, D.V.B.S. and other organizations is of the highest quality. This is not an easy task. Quality material is difficult to find. One reason for the study sheets on Wednesday evening is to get Bible oriented material into the hands of our people. The church library is filled with many excellent volumes on a variety of subjects. Stop by and browse at your earliest opportunity. The tract rack is another source of material.

III. Christian Literature In Other Places

If you are a Christian businessman, why not keep good Christian literature in your office or waiting room? Carry tracts and booklets in your pocket for distribution. A book kept in your car will provide a useful way to spend time while waiting at railroad crossings, parking lots, etc.

Every believer should take the time to know dependable authors and material. Some real bargains are available to the student who seeks sources of material. For example, Scripture Truth Book Company, Box 11, Fincastle, Va. 24090, will send a discount list of good books at substantial savings - all yours for a small effort to learn about literature. Why not read a book this month? Summertime is a great time to read!

"A LITTLE BIRD TOLD ME"

Hebrews 2:12 - 13

As a child, when this writer was taught by his mother in some forbidden deed, she always attributed the source of her amazing ability to, "A little bird told me!"

Pastors listen more carefully to what their flocks are saying than many realize. The following ideas are presented as a representative list of topics that are voiced in churches from time to time.

1. "Our church is so big, I don't know anybody anymore." It is a statistical fact that the average person knows about sixty people in a given church regardless of its size. If a congregation is eight hundred, you will know about sixty people. Persons who complain about church growth are really manifesting a selfish spirit. The Great Commission requires us to grow in numbers as well as in grace. The quote "let's stay small" philosophy has caused more church splits with all the accompanying fighting, bickering and quarreling than almost any other single factor. A church designed to stay small usually fails under the control of a few unspiritual, power conscious people. If the ministry of a church is good for a few, it is also good for many. It is possible for a church to be both large and friendly but the people must work to make this a reality. A well organized church will provide small units for instruction and fellowship, such as Bible classes and educational ministry on a graded basis.

2. "You will see our mortgage payments when a depression comes!" We have no logical reason to believe that such a crisis is coming. If it does, we will trust God then as we trust him now to take care of His work. God is greater than financial resources. Question: How do any of us plan to meet our personal mortgages in the years to come? Do we expect to keep our homes even when finances are difficult? If we can meet our own personal debts, surely the church can do the same. Moody Church, in Chicago, was built during the Great Depression and never missed a single payment to the bank. Some folk believe in eternal security and Social Security but when it comes to trusting God for money, faith vanishes! If God's people seek to do His work in His way for His glory, He will take care of our needs! (Philippians 4:19)

3. "Everybody is leaving our church." Building programs always test the genuineness of our faith. It is easy to talk about love for Christ and allegiance to our local church until one is asked to support this program with personal resources. A time of building usually puts people on the spot in this regard. Consequently, such times provide an opportunity for people to leave who were not really in sympathy with the work. Those persons who depart are usually non-biblical, non-bond buyers, etc. Such movement is no basis for concern. Watch the attendance records, giving receipts and souls walking the aisles, if you want to know the real test of church growth. To be sure, it is difficult to measure spiritual progress but these indications do give some idea of proper directions. The fact that some folk may decide to leave a church during a building program is no basis for criticism. This is the Lord's work, let Him bring in and send out as He chooses.

4. "Our young people are not as spiritual as they use to be." They never were. The events of yesterday are always better in our eyes, than the activities of today. Our young people usually reflect the spiritual attitudes of their elders. If we were more "on the ball" spiritually, the young people would follow our good example.

5. "What will become of our elderly members when we move to the new church." Older people are sometimes forgotten in church activities but this need not be the case. We plan to provide transportation in certain areas for our elderly. As a matter of fact, with the completion of the expressways this year, accessibility to the new site will be great. No longer will we have to fight narrow streets and cramped parking quarters.

6. "We aren't as missionary minded as we use to be." This is always a matter of deep concern. Our church must grow in numbers but it must also grow in missionary commitment. We do have many missionary activities such as a Missionary Conference, a Missionary Committee to keep in touch with missionaries, personal letters written by members and the pastor, prayer cards, the reading of prayer letters every Wednesday evening where missionary requests are given, to mention but a few activities. Missionary vision depends upon our burden for the lost both at home and abroad. Enlarging our number and facilities will make it possible to enlarge our missionary outreach.

7. "Our boards run the church and I really don't know what's going on." This is a complaint which arises out of lack of understanding of the church constitution. All matters necessary and required by the constitution are brought to the congregation. Nothing of significance is done without congregational approval. It is not necessary, however, for all matters of business to be brought to the congregation before action is taken. The constitution gives certain powers to representative people and boards to act on their behalf. Leadership is based upon confidences. If a congregation is unhappy with its pastor or boards, this is a very easy matter to correct. The constitution provides the right to petition to safeguard a church from one man or board domination. However, such action does require factual information rather than suppositions.

8. "This is my church. It's not perfect but I'm for it. What can I do to help." Praise the Lord for people who see and believe the promises of God instead of the "glitches and walled cities." Every worthwhile undertaking has difficulties. Every church is filled with two kinds of workers. Those who are willing to work and those who are willing to let them! Our church is blessed today, as it has been in the past, with many spiritually minded people. They have a vision and burden for the Lord's work. They are willing to sacrifice to accomplish certain goals for the glory of God. We never really trust God until we tackle the impossible. In such ventures, He has promised to be with us.

If you will listen, some Spring morning, to the sound of birds singing, perhaps you will hear the sound of the little bird who told me these things!

THE LOCAL CHURCH

Robert Spradling

January 1971

The New Testament refers to churches which were located in certain places. For example, Acts 8:1 refers to the "church at Jerusalem". Acts 13:1 refers to the "church at Antioch". The first local church in the New Testament was in Jerusalem. A careful study of that first church will be helpful in understanding the purpose of all local churches. Local churches are vitally related to Jesus Christ. The Bible suggests that Christ was in the midst of the seven churches of Asia and maintained a personal relationship to His churches. (Revelation 1:13)

The church at Jerusalem was a local group of born-again believers, according to Acts 2:41-47, associated together for the purpose of: 1. Doctrine, verse 42. The instruction in this early church was according to the teaching specified by the apostles. The early church was doctrinal in its convictions. (A good verse to remember for those who say doctrine is not important.) 2. Fellowship, verse 42. This kind of association is unique to the church. It refers to that common life which we have in Jesus Christ. We share the same kind of life and should therefore have mutual interests in the work of Jesus Christ. 3. Breaking of bread, verse 42. This refers to the worship associated with early believers. Fellowship around the Lord's Table was in obedience to the Lord's command to His church. 4. Prayers, verse 42. The fact that the original language contains the definite article the would suggest that these were regular meetings for the purpose of prayer, in other words, they met at a specified time where prayer was wont to be made! 5. Together, verse 44. This phrase suggests that there was a spirit of sharing and helpful cooperation in the early church. This particular aspect of Christian fellowship was unique to the Jerusalem church, however, the principle was perpetuated throughout the churches. 6. With one accord, verse 46. The unity of life of these early believers resulted in unity of purpose. There was none of the conflict in this church that was evident in the Corinthian church. 7. Praising God, verse 47. Praise was a regular part of worship in the early church. 8. Having favor with all the people, verse 47. The testimony of the early church was forceful in the community in which it functioned. 9. The Lord added to the church daily, verse 47. The consistency of life and testimony of this local church resulted in the Lord's continued blessing in enlarging the number and strengthening its witness in the city of Jerusalem.

The necessity of church membership has been questioned by some groups today. However, in the New Testament it would appear that every believer became a member of a local church. Profession of faith, baptism and association with a local church was never questioned in the New Testament. It was the responsibility of every believer to be associated with the local church. Even in the New Testament there were circumstances which might lead a believer to leave one local church and seek the fellowship of another. However, there is no special authority for abandoning fellowship with the local church and seeking to live the Christian life in isolation. An integral part of the Christian profession of faith involves fellowship with other Christians. This was one of the unique aspects of Christianity. The New Testament would indicate that there was a unique balance between voluntary association and strong organization in the local church. According to Acts 2:41 and 4:4, the exact number of believers was known. This would be difficult to know without some kind of records. In the pastoral epistles Paul spoke of special rolls which were kept concerning widows. (Cf. I Timothy 5:9) The election of duly authorized leaders would imply some kind of roll. (Cf. Acts 6:2-5) The fact that certain members were disciplined would suggest that membership rolls were kept. (Cf. I Corinthians 5:13) In some way the sinning brother at Corinth was to have formal action taken concerning his severance from the membership of the local church. This would require action on the part of the leaders and members of the Corinthian church.

THE LOOKS OF OUR LORD

This study is not dealing with the appearance of Jesus. There is little or no indication in the Scripture concerning the physical appearance of Christ. The emphasis of the Bible is upon His moral glory. Many times in the Scriptures, the word look is used to denote an action. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." (Isaiah 45:22); "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...." (Hebrews 12:2); "Looking for that blessed hope...." (Titus 2:13); "For our conversation is in Heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ...." (Philippians 3:20). Frequently, in the Gospel of Mark, we are told of the way our Lord looked at certain people and situations. This is the basis of our study today.

I. THE LOOK OF COMPASSION - Mark 3:1-5

The scene is at the synagogue. This was the place for teaching the people of God. It was a Sabbath Day. The "they" of verse two refers to Jesus' religious critics who secretly watched to see what He would do to the man with the withered hand. This group was more interested in "rules" than "cures." The religious leaders were not concerned about men's needs but rather religious restrictions. This kind of indifference stirred our Lord to anger. His anger was not the rising passion of a person who responds quickly to a personal insult or injury. It was the calm wrath of the God of the Bible who saw the hypocrisy and pretense of a religious crowd that was totally indifferent to the needs of sinful humanity. Jesus was angry because of their religious sham.

II. THE LOOK OF CLEANSING - Mark 5:25-34

The problem of the woman with an issue of blood had been a long and painful illness. Human sources had failed to correct her situation. The medicine of that day was not much help to the needs of suffering humanity. Jesus was her last resort. She had nowhere else to go. There are two interesting words in this passage, they are touch and truth. This woman's faith was revealed in the stretching forth of her hand to touch Christ. This woman was willing to face the truth before God. All men must come to grips with Christ and truth before they can be cleansed.

III. THE LOOK OF CORRECTION - Mark 8:31-33

Peter did not understand the importance and significance of Calvary. Calvary was in the plan of God even if it were not in Peter's plans. Peter adopted the common philosophy that one must avoid suffering at all costs. Jesus was pointing out to His disciples that the plan of God for one's life is more important than any other single factor. Satan was using the well-meaning and the good intentions of a disciple in an attempt to thwart the plan of God. In verse 33, Jesus was not calling Peter Satan. He was looking behind Peter at Satan who was prompting him to make such statements.

(Over)

The Man Who Sought Wisdom Instead of Wealth

I Kings 3

Robert Spradling

July 1972

Many Bible students remember the sad affair between David and Bathsheba and the death of the son who was born out of their adulterous relationship. However, we tend to forget that another son was born, after they were married, and he was one of the outstanding men in all of Hebrew history - his name was Solomon.

I. Solomon the Diplomatic Ruler v. 1

There is some difference of opinion among the commentators regarding Solomon's diplomatic relationship with Egypt especially since it involved marrying an Egyptian woman. Ultimately Solomon moved away from the land because of his aversion for many wives. There is some question in the Bible concerning the fact that Egyptians were not always viewed with the same suspicion as the Canaanite races and others. (cf. Moses) Be this as it may, it is interesting to observe Solomon's ability to get along with the nations about him. Chapter 5 records his relationship with Hiram king of Tyre which resulted in a fast friendship between the two kings. David had the reputation of being a soldier but Solomon became known as a man of peace. Every nation needs great statesmen and Solomon distinguished himself in this area as one of Israel's great kings.

II. Solomon the Religious Ruler v. 3

One of the discouraging aspects of Old Testament history has to do with the large number of kings in Israel and Judah who had no interest in the things of God. They used their position as a base to satisfy their own selfish interests. This was not true in the early days of Solomons reign. He began his rule in Israel as a man who had a heart for God. Imagine how the events of history would have been changed for good if it could have been said of most kings that they "loved the Lord."

III. Solomon the Humble Ruler v. 5-15

An age old desire of men is to be wise. This desire has led many into sin and disobedience to God because it was sought after at all costs. (Gen. 3:6) Men like to impress others with their power and wealth but no motivation is more subtle than the desire to be wise for selfish reasons. The text of this chapter reveals a man who wanted to be wise for God's glory! In v. 7 Solomon's humility was revealed as he was confronted with the responsibility of ruling the kingdom.

IV. Solomon the Wise Ruler v. 16-28

Because Solomon sought no personal gain as God's ruler, the Lord blessed him not only with the wisdom he desired, but also with riches and health. Solomon's wisdom surpassed any of his peers and his reputation spread around the world. James M. Gray says: "He was an author of wise sayings and songs by the thousands. He was a master of forestry and arboriculture, of zoology, and ornithology and ichthology, so that kings as well as lesser people came to listen to and confer with him." No demonstration of Solomon's wisdom was more widely remembered than the story of the two women recorded in this chapter.

Application:

Col. 1:9 ff. God will give His men the kind of wisdom they need to serve Him in this world. In most areas of learning, perspiration and patience are the keys to success. However, there is a special wisdom for the believer who walks near the Lord.

MARKS OF MATURITY

Robert Spradling

January 1972

Newborn babes are cute, but no parent wants his child to remain in infancy. The desired goal for all babies is adulthood with all of its pleasures and responsibilities. God wants His children to grow up spiritually and behave as mature believers. To remain a spiritual baby is both undesirable and abnormal. Spiritual maturity is simply growth and development to such a degree that the Christian reacts to every situation in life in a mature and Christ-like manner. J. Oswald Sanders says maturity is "...the ability to meet the demands and emergencies of everyday life in a mature and not in a childish way. The spiritually mature Christian is one who is able to function happily in any circumstances." Needless to say, such an attitude toward life and its difficulties does not come naturally nor easily.

One of the key passages on maturity is recorded in Hebrews 5:11-6:1. The first characteristic of the underdeveloped Christian is dullness of hearing. The immature Christian is not sensitive to what God has to say. (I Samuel 3:9). The Hebrews passage also states that the immature Christian is self-centered. When these professing Christians should have been teaching others and looking for opportunities to minister the Word of God to others, Paul says they were still preoccupied with the "ABC's" of the faith. They should have moved up to stronger things as well as retaining the foundational doctrines so necessary for the new convert. Paul also mentions that the immature have a diet problem. Milk is the constant food of babies. However, as they begin to grow something more substantial is necessary in the diet. Paul calls it "strong meat". The immature also has a discernment problem. He lacks judgment in making proper decisions pertaining to the things of the Lord. The underdeveloped Christian usually moves from one set of problems to another without resolving his difficulties.

The marks of Christian maturity are traits all believers should desire. The mature believer is characterized by:

1. A Resilient and Joyful Personality

The believer who manifests a sad and gloomy attitude toward life reveals his own internal conflicts. The joy of the Lord will be part of a wholesome Christian experience. (Philippians 4:4).

2. A Generous Attitude Toward Others and God

Babies are characterized by a desire to get rather than a desire to give. The love of sharing and giving to others must be learned and practiced before maturity is achieved. (Acts 20:35).

3. A Willingness to Be Taught and Disciplined by the Lord

When the Lord is instructing us in areas where we need growth, we should welcome His hand in our lives even if the lessons to be learned are difficult and painful.

4. A Desire to Serve Rather than to Be Served

Our Lord was a servant. (Mark 10:45). The real benefits of life come to the person who desires to serve others. The mark of spiritual babyhood is the preoccupation with one's own personal interests to the exclusion of the interests and needs of others.

5. A Fruitful and Meaningful Life

One primary mark of maturity is the ability to reproduce. Fruit is the evidence of maturity. (Galatians 5:22-23; Psalm 1; II Timothy 2:2).

THE MEETING PLACE

Exodus 40:34 (A.S.V.)

Responsible people are careful about keeping appointments. There are some people you may count upon to be on time or early for any appointment. There are others who are never on time. Their time and schedule is their primary concern and the fact that they keep other people waiting seems to be irrelevant.

The term "tent of meeting", refers to that tent used on an interium basis before the Tabernacle proper was constructed. "It was a simple place of revelation and of the meeting of the people with Jehovah." (I.S.B.E.) The meeting with His people, has been the way of God throughout history. It was His habit to meet with Adam daily. (Genesis 3:8 - 10) The history of Israel was filled with many occasions when God met with His people. The ministry of Jesus was characterized by meeting His own. He met Mary at the sepulchre. He met Peter in the Garden. He met the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. (Luke 24:13ff.)

God wants to meet His people on a regular basis. As a matter of fact, He expects His people to keep their appointed times with Him. He is delighted when we meet Him at regularly scheduled times. Each morning our "quiet time" before the Lord will provide joy and strength for the day. Each evening, this time will provide reflection and appreciation of God's presence in our lives. Many of the problems and frustrations of the believer may be traced to the simple neglect of the quiet time. It is not possible for the believer to move through a hectic day with measured grace and quietness of heart apart from time spent in His presence.

Question: Do you keep your appointed time each day with God? He expects us to do this and is disappointed when we do not.

The following suggestions are presented to help develop a "quiet time" each day:

1. Have a specific place. This will enable the believer to save time and shut out the world when he comes to that specific place each day.
2. Have a specific time. Unless such a time is scheduled it is too easy to neglect or forget the time.
3. Use your Bible first in your devotional life. Other material may be helpful but the Word of God is primary. Let nothing become a substitute for the Bible.
4. A devotional time need not be long but neither should it be hurried. We are reminded in the Scriptures that it is the person who "waits upon the Lord shall renew his strength."
5. Protect the "quiet time" from outside intrusions. Satan does not want the believer to spend time with the Lord. It is easy to fill this time with apparent necessities, but nothing is more important than spending time in His presence.

Ideas from personal experience:

THE MIDEAST SITUATION
Ezekiel 38:18 - 39:4

Russia intends to rule the Middle East. The current naval buildup in the Mediterranean to approximately 100 ships, plus the recent move to cut off Middle East oil to the western nations, is all part of the plan. Russia is eager to expand its influence and control into that strategic part of the world where western oil firms have been dominant for the past 50 years. The Middle East contains more than 75% of the Western world's oil reserves. Western Europe gets 80% of its oil from this area and Japan 90%. America gets about 5 to 10% from the Mideast, but future demands will push this figure upward. Russia is determined to drive the United States and other Western nations with their oil interests out of this area of the world. Such a move would deal a serious blow to N.A.T.O. Alliance, which has been the main force to thwart Russia's movement in Central Europe. If she could somehow neutralize this fighting force through its dependence upon petroleum, part of her goal of expansionism could be realized.

The Arab nations are receiving vast amounts of military equipment from the U.S.S.R. in exchange for oil. The fact that Russia has designs on the Middle East does not automatically guarantee her ability to carry out all of these plans, but she has begun her efforts to squeeze the Western nations at a very vital point, namely, the need for petroleum. After the Six-Day War of 1967, it appeared as if Russia had lost out in the quest to use the Arabs as the spear point of her program in the Middle East. However, Russia did make some significant gains.

The U.S.S.R. greatly enhanced her position in the Middle East and in North Africa by making the Arabs dependent upon Russia for trade and military hardware. It is believed by some of our best military strategists that, sooner or later, Russia will call upon the Arab nations to pay their huge debt for Russian arms. Russia's strong naval presence in the Mediterranean would make it possible for her to lead a large military force against the Arab world to guarantee such payments, and thus control the Arab countries. A 1967 article in the U.S. News and World Report entitled, "How Russia Builds Up Power in The Mediterranean," makes the following observation in this regard: "When the time comes, we can be sure that the Soviet navy will be on the scene, a visible evidence of Soviet power, ready to act if necessary, in order to insure that those ashore see the light." This statement was made six years ago when the Russian presence in the Mediterranean was not nearly as ominous nor powerful as it is now. Approximately 25 years ago, Louis S. Bauman wrote the following statement with reference to Ezekiel 38:4, 15 and Daniel 11:40. It is very significant in the light of the current oil crisis: "Who is it that owns a full ½ of all the horseflesh on the face of the earth today? Russia! The agents of Stalin, before World War II, scoured the earth for all horses fit for battle, bought them, and sent them to Russia. Other nations may put their trust in gasoline for mobile purposes if they wish to do so. But the wily old northern bearscents the possibility of bombs breaking up the oil fields of the earth to such an extent that the great gas-propelled war machines will

THE MINISTRY OF MUSIC
Colossians 3:16

When D. L. Moody was asked to give reasons for his success as an evangelist, he named several important factors such as prayer, Bible preaching, but high on the list was the ministry of music conducted by Ira Sankey. Every born-again believer knows the tremendous blessing music can be in the worship of God. In Hebrew history, the Hebrews devoted much study to the practice of music. Besides poetry, music was the only art form that seemed to be developed to any extent in ancient Israel. Music formed an intricate part of the worship of God by the nation. Also, it was part of their social life. Music accompanied the leading of honored guests in the home. It was used to celebrate a triumph over enemies and to welcome conquerors home from their victorious exploits. (Compare Exodus 15:20, Judges 11:34, I Samuel 18:6)

In recent weeks, this writer has been interviewing men from various parts of the country about the importance and nature of music in the church. There is much difference of opinion concerning what is good taste in music today. The word "ministry" is the key to understanding the function of music in a church. Sacred music should minister to the hearts of God's people. Music should enhance the preaching of the Bible and the worship of God. Whenever the performance of the musicians becomes primary and the message of the music becomes secondary, music then has ceased to minister and becomes entertainment. It is my conviction that much of contemporary church music is designed to entertain and not to bless. There is a great deal of preoccupation with the beat and the sound of music and not necessarily with the words. As a matter of fact, much of our current gospel music says little or nothing of scriptural importance.

In a society bent on entertainment, churches have not escaped this atmosphere. The philosophy of the "all-night sing" has moved into the church. Without fear of a successful contradiction, I think this kind of music is strictly show business in nature. This statement is not made out of ignorance because it was this type of music which I learned in my early Christian experience. However, without trying to be critical, I feel confident that this music is the music of the spiritually immature and caters to the flesh rather than the spiritual part of the Christian.

The power of music for either good or evil can be readily observed. Businesses use music as a backdrop in order to get shoppers to relax and buy more products. Who can withstand the compelling beat of a marching band? We have learned in recent days that some of rock music has been used to subliminally speak to young people concerning the drug culture. (Illustrate with modern rock music.) One of the amazing things of our time has to do with music. Phil Kerr has suggested that the Devil has played a trick on America. While we have been sending missionaries to Africa to teach children choruses like "Jesus Loves Me," Satan has brought the music of the savage to America and our kids have swallowed it. He suggests that there is little

A NEW GOD IN AMERICA
Exodus 30:1-8

Webster's dictionary defines idolatry as "excessive love or veneration for anything." Anything that takes the place of God in a person's life is an idol. In our country, we are witnessing a new form of idolatry, a new kind of religion centered in the sports arena. This new idolatry is filled with emotion and fanaticism. Men not only argue in favor of their favorite superstar and team, but they are willing to fight for them. The fall version of the new idolatry is called professional football. This year, over 10 million people will attend pro football games in various stadiums around the country. Over 30 million will watch via television each weekend. When you add to this figure the multiplied millions who are taken up with professional baseball, basketball, wrestling, auto racing, swimming, skiing, hockey, tennis, etc., one can begin to see the magnitude of this new cult.

Even professing Christians have been caught up in the sports mania. Sports heroes are held up before our children as shining examples in character and conduct despite the fact that they practice their trade on the day which the Bible calls the Lord's Day. Many of these sports figures claim to be Christians but very few will be loyal to a local church.

Church worship schedules in metropolitan areas have been rearranged to make it convenient for church attenders to get to the stadium in time for the game. John P. Williams makes the following observation:

"In short, the whole system of sports-as-idol carries with it a self-defeating promise, for when people seek ultimate meaning from a thoroughly temporal pursuit, they find disillusionment. The children of Israel found that out with their golden calves. Americans are going to find out with their golden boys of the gridiron. It seems that societies struggle to incarnate their over-arching faith in physical objects. The ancient empires built their pyramids and their temples, their highways and their household gods. It may be symbolic that our nation, along with the rest of the Western civilization, has turned its attention from cathedral building to stadium construction in order to express their deep affection for competitive sports."

In some communities everything comes second to sports. Family life, church activities and other community affairs are all second to sports. Like most idolatries, the cult of sports is very subtle as it inches into a person's time and interests. There is nothing wrong with a proper balance and suitable place for sports in one's life. The sin arises when it takes the place that belongs to God.

The following article appeared in a national newspaper several weeks ago. The writer was Carl T. Rowan and the title of the article is, "Let Us Gather at the Stadium."

"Let the Catholics and Protestants fight; let Republicans and Democrats bicker. Maybe they're for real."

(Over)

NEW GOALS FOR A NEW YEAR

Psalm 16:8

Apart from goals, there will be no growth. The person who aims at nothing in his own personal life will hit it dead center. The curse of having no personal goals is reflected in Hebrews 2:1. This verse is a warning concerning danger of drifting. The Christian life should not be one of following the lines of least resistance. Every member of our church should have a desire to better himself spiritually in the coming year. This should carry over into our entire church program. If we do not know where we are going, it will be very difficult to move forward. Growth and development by accident seldom occurs. We usually achieve that which we plan for. This study sheet is a reminder that we should set some standards for the coming year and seek to reach them by God's grace.

I. SET A GOAL IN BIBLE READING AND BIBLE STUDY - II Timothy 2:15

A believer should be a person of the Book. In a generation characterized by Bible ignorance, we, above all peoples, should know what we believe and why. No man will be a strong Christian who is not a devout student of the Bible. Christian growth is linked with our desire to know God's word. Every believer should have a minimum Bible reading program of at least one chapter per day. No Christian is too busy to give at least this much time and attention to the word of God. As a supplementary program, the believer should have in his library good commentaries, books and periodicals dealing with various subjects in the Word of God. Nothing is more important than a specific, systematic study of the Word of God.

II. SET A GOAL IN YOUR PRAYER LIFE - John 14:13-14

Prayer is the inflexible index of our Christian life. Our progress in spiritual development is linked to the prayer closet. No prayer means no power. Little prayer means little power. Much prayer means much power for the Christian. It is a startling fact that many Christian's begin the day without prayer or Bible study. They move out into the Devil's territory without spiritual fortification. Five minutes a day of secret prayer is a basic minimum for any Christian. It is unthinkable that a believer should pray for only five minutes, but it is a matter of fact that some do not pray at all! A prayerless Christian is a spiritual casualty. A prayerless church is weak and ineffective regardless of the amount of activity that may generated in the facilities. Let us personally and correctively get hold of God in prayer this year. May nothing be more important to us than this vital ministry. As a believer, you can perform no greater service than to pray regularly for this local church and its ministry.

III. SET A GOAL IN SOUL WINNING - John 1:41

The way to become a soul winner is to set a goal of reaching one soul this year. Without such a goal, you will come to the end of 1973 without having aggressively sought to love one soul into the Kingdom of God. Ask the Lord to help you win just one soul this year and begin today! A believer with this kind of burden will reach at least one lost person this year. Multiply this by 180 members in our church and you have an aggressive soul-winning program. The reason most people do not win souls is because they do not try. Apathy is the enemy of soul winning and not inability

(Over)

1973 - Wed.
Sun.

Robert Spradling

December 1971

LAST week - one soul -
covenant - 2 or 3.

It does not seem possible for ~~another year~~ to have passed by so quickly. And yet, here we stand on the threshold of a new year with its many challenges before us. The next twelve months will bring many new things into our lives. For some it will be new jobs, new homes, new cars, new friends, new clothes. Some of our church family will grow deeper in their spiritual lives, drawing nearer to the Lord, but others will slip further away and become less involved in the work of Christ on earth. We are not the victims of some kind of impersonal fate. We, as Christians, can and usually do accomplish those goals in life we really want to achieve. The reason some of our goals go unrealized is because we do not really want to attain them.

The following are three "new things" which can be of great blessing in 1972:

I. New Life - 2 Corinthians 5:17

¹⁹⁷²1972 will be the year some folk will come to know Christ as Lord and Saviour. For the new believers ~~1972~~ will be the most important year in their lives. This verse reveals several interesting facts about new life in Christ.

1. Conditional

The word "if" suggests that God has made adequate provision for all men to be saved but the decision to receive this life rests upon man's obedience to the Gospel. Sinners must respond to God's invitation. (It is one thing to have money in the bank, it is another thing to draw it out and use it for some useful purposes.)

2. Universal

"Any man" shows that God is no respecter of persons. Anyone who will plead the merits of Christ's work on Calvary can and will be saved. Personal redemption in Christ knows no racial barriers, it is for all men everywhere.

Rom.
1:16

3. Positional

"In Christ" refers to the believer's new position before God. God sees all men in one of two locations, either "in Adam" or "in Christ".

4. Supernatural

"New creation" is far more than just turning over a new leaf or overhauling the natural man. The same Person who was active in the creation of the world is active in giving the believing sinner new life from God. Man cannot live the Christian life until he has received that life from above.

cf. L. L. Young
Rule =
LOST NATURAL
MAN.

II. New Opportunity - I Corinthians 16:9

Paul was never satisfied with last year's labors. He looked for new areas of service. The blessings of 1971 will not sustain us in 1972. This verse suggests several ideas about our opportunities for service.

1. Personal

"Unto me" reminds men that God has a particular job for each of us. Anything God gives us to do is worth doing well.

2. Powerful

"Effectual" is the word from which we get our English word energy. The Lord's work is just that - work. It takes real effort to win souls and instruct saints. God's work is hard work but very rewarding. / Sh. = mental energy exp. days work.

3. Providential

"is open" suggests that this area of opportunity was the Lord's doing. As we pray and seek His will, He opens doors of service. *Rev. 3:7-8*

4. Perilous

"Many adversaries" are encountered in Christian work. "The door to the room of success swings on the hinges of opposition." Satan will not let us attempt great things for God without great opposition.

III. New Hope - James 5:8

In a world filled with despair, how good it is to know that we have hope in Christ. The coming of the Lord is very near.

The only hope for mankind is in God's Son. This year could be the year He returns for His Bride.

Genesis - Ruin of man
Exodus - Redemption
Lev. Worship
Num. Service (Walk)

NUMBERS

God Supplied
1. Food
2. Water } - 3 million people in a desert!
3. Leaders } God only answer.
4. Clothing + shelter.

Dr. Scofield suggests in his Bible Study series that the central Lesson of Numbers - "unbelief hinders blessing" - Heb. 3:19. God will not bless a people who will not trust and obey Him. There are several interesting pictures of our Lord's Life and Ministry.

WANDERING - 40 YEARS
MURMURING - adds burdens

I. Aaron's Rod - Numbers 17 - God Confirmed Aaron's priesthood.

The priesthood of Christ attested in His Resurrection. Aaron's priesthood and authority called in question by rebellion of Korah. God put life into Aaron's rod alone. Other religions are "dead rods" - only Christ has risen from the dead! Christ, Our Resurrection.

II. Red Heifer - Numbers 19

Typical of Christ who cleanses the believer from the defilement of sin. (Ashes mingled with water) 1 Jn. 1:9
Christ, Our Cleansing.

III. Brazen Serpent - Numbers 21:1-9

Christ on the Cross - "a sin offering" for us.
John 3:14-16; 2 Cor. 5:21
Christ, Our Redeemer.

IV. The Cities of Refuge - Numbers 35

Christ, our shelter from the guilt/penalty of sin. A shelter from judgment.
Christ, Our Refuge.

Continuing reading program. Numbers deals with the journeying, pilgrimage life of the Israelites. The walk/wilderness experience - many lessons. One aspect caught my attention:

Lessons:

I. There Was Order in Their Movement. Numbers 3:15 49

Each tribe had a specific place around the tabernacle when they camped. (Every tribe did not do as they pleased - disciplined group!) Cf. Jesus feeding the 5,000
1 Cor. 14:40

II. There Was Divine Direction in Their Movement - Numbers 1:2 1-2

This is a great lesson. They went astray when they lost sight of God and listened to the voice of the 10 spies. God's will was not the road of least resistance - but it was the one of faith and trust. Disobedience brought loss of goal/purpose.

III. There Was Specific Responsibility - Numbers 33:23 ff.

Each family in Levi's tribe, a particular task in moving the tabernacle. There was no movement until each did the task assigned. (cf. patching a large tent)

IV. There Was Faithfulness to the Assigned Task.