

JULY 2017 | ISSUE 1

Godliness. Reverence. Obedience. Worship.

GR W

magazine

a quarterly e-magazine designed to promote
growth in faith and service to God

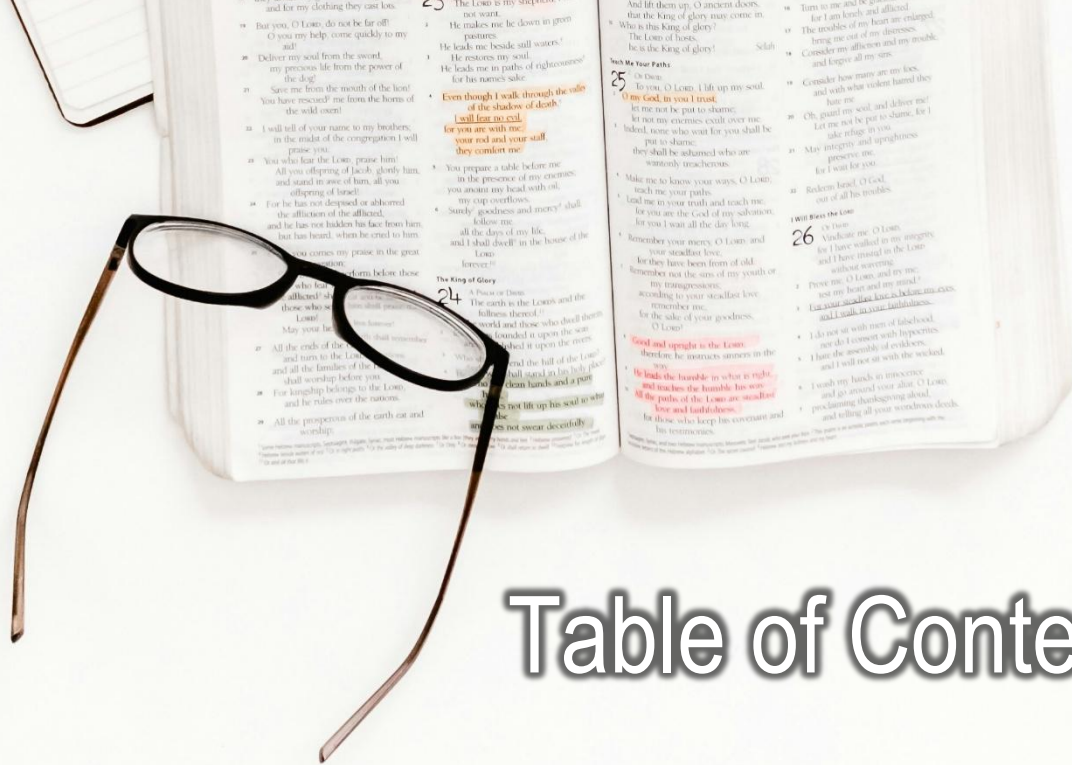


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From the Editors...

We're delighted that you have signed up to receive GROW magazine. We are excited to share this first issue with you. We have a great group of talented authors lined up. They are excellent Bible students and have graciously agreed to participate with us in this project.

Our aim with GROW magazine is to provide a series of articles each quarter that will dig into the meat of the word. This is not a magazine for preachers – it is a magazine for all Christians who seek to GROW in the faith. We trust you will benefit from the material herein. If you find

GROW magazine to be profitable, we encourage you to share it with others. There are a number of ways you can do so:

- Forward the notification email sent each quarter;
- Post the web site or individual articles on social media;
- Print out individual articles (link at the bottom of each web page);
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Now, come GROW with us!

Cordially,

Sean P. Cavender, chief editor

William Stewart, editor & designer



The Poor Example Of Israel, 1 Corinthians 10

SEAN CAVENDER | BALD KNOB, ARKANSAS

God communicates to us and teaches us by example. Many teachers in the Bible used examples, including the Lord Jesus (cf. Luke 17:32). Concerned for the church of God at Corinth, the apostle Paul offered exhortation based upon the poor and negative example of national Israel (1 Corinthians 10). He expected the church to read his epistle and notice the sins of Israel, and how to avoid the same. Notice the statements in 1 Corinthians 10 which show who Paul is concerned for:

- *“For I do not want **you** to be unaware, brethren...”* (1 Corinthians 10:1)
- *“Now **these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved...**”* (1 Corinthians 10:6)
- *“**Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did...**”* (1 Corinthians 10:8)
- *“**Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did...**”* (1 Corinthians 10:9)
- *“**Nor grumble, as some of them did...**”* (1 Corinthians 10:10)
- *“Now these things happened to them as an example, and **they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come**”* (1 Corinthians 10:11)
- *“Therefore let **him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall**”* (1 Corinthians 10:12)

Corinth was following a course set for destruction. The apostle beseeched them to not fall into the same spiritual pitfalls which Israel had done. The church in Corinth had been suffering from division (1 Corinthians 1:11), trusting in the teaching of men (1 Corinthians 1:26), and pride which led to a lack of respect for apostolic authority and correction (1 Corinthians 4:18-21). They were guilty of sexual immorality, going to court against one another, and offending one another's



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conscience in matters of liberty. There were problems in their worship and with the abuse of spiritual gifts. Paul desired for the church to be better; so he wrote about the wicked example of Israel.

Temptation And The People Of God

Paul is specific in his reason for warning the church. He states that he did not want them to be ignorant of sin's destructive nature (1 Corinthians 10:12). The people of God – whether Old Testament Israel or the New Testament church – could quickly be led astray through temptation. Temptation is a struggle all people must endure, whether Christians or not. It is a basic part of our life on this earth. However, Paul wants us to realize that temptation and sin can be overcome if we are prepared.

We must avoid a spirit of haughtiness. Pride and arrogance will deceive us into thinking “since we are the children of God, God is on our side, therefore we have nothing to worry about.” Such reasoning is dangerous and lackadaisical. Christians have the assurance that God is faithful and will provide the way of escape, and we may be able to endure the temptation that is presented before us. Even with those promises and assurances, there is no reason to become

haughty. The promise of God ought to cause us to rely upon Him even more! Temptation will certainly bring its struggles upon us personally, or collectively, but we do not have to give in to temptations. The people of God have been given the assurance that God is with us and will provide the way of escape.

Israel Was Saved

Paul's appeal to Israel begins with the fundamental acknowledgement that they were a saved people. The nation had left behind the slavery and bondage of Egypt and had crossed the Red Sea. They were led by God in the cloud and pillar of fire. They had been *"baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea"* (1 Corinthians 10:1-2). They had the food and water which God provided, nourished and blessed by Christ (1 Corinthians 10:3-4). The children of Israel had spiritual agreement and fellowship with God. Israel had been freed from slavery and delivered through the water. They had been saved, protected, nourished, and cherished by the Lord.

Notice the parallel. Just as Paul spoke of the Israelites to be God's chosen and precious people, so he affirmed the church as the chosen of God today. The church at Corinth was made up of individual saints who had been washed in water and sanctified by the blood of Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:11; 12:27). They were saved people. Yet, they were falling for the same snares as Israel before them.

Israel Was Tempted And Failed

After describing Israel's condition and fellowship with God, Paul transitions. He says, *"Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased..."* (1 Corinthians 10:5). The apostle proves this conclusion with the statement at the end of the verse. *"For they were laid low in the wilderness,"* (NASB) or as the King James reads, many were *"overthrown."* The New King James Version plainly states, "for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness." Many Israelites died for their sin. Though Israel had started out well, they were destroyed. The implication is obvious: God was not pleased

with Israel. There was a change in how He looked at Israel based upon their choices and actions.

Israel craved evil things, fulfilling the lusts and desires of the flesh. While Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the law from God, the children of Israel built a golden calf. They *"sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play"* (Exodus 32:6). They feasted and mocked the power of God by attributing His power to an idol. They worshiped and sacrificed to the image and boastfully claimed the calf had delivered them from Egypt.

Paul listed a number of specific sins Israel engaged in. After the golden calf incident, they committed fornication with the Moabites (1 Corinthians 10:8; cf. Numbers 25:1), which caused Israel to further embrace idolatry. They tried the Lord's patience, longsuffering, and goodness (1 Corinthians 10:9-10). They boastfully, arrogantly, and constantly accused the Lord of bringing them out of Egypt just to die in the wilderness. There was an ongoing antagonism against God's forbearance (cf. Numbers 21:5). Their endless grumbling and testing of God was a sin that must be avoided by any who claim to follow the Lord.

Sin Is Not Overlooked By God

We understand that anyone who does not believe in God nor His Son, and openly lives in sin will be punished with eternal destruction in hell (cf. Matthew 10:28). God is a just God – He does not ignore sin, but brings His vengeance upon those who rebel against His laws and commands.

Some mistakenly believe that once they are saved, then God simply overlooks their sin. One of the lessons from the example of the children of Israel is that God does not overlook sin, especially the sins of His own people!

The chosen people of God are expected to live holy lives. Israel was told, *"You shall be holy for I the LORD your God am holy"* (Leviticus 19:2). His justice demands sin be punished. Thus, after many Israelites committed fornication with the daughters of Moab, God destroyed them, 24,000 died in one day (Numbers 32:28). God's justice

demands that sin be punished.

Many people subscribe to the teaching of “once saved, always saved;” that once you are a Christian, nothing you do can cause you to be lost. The apostle Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 10 proves the exact opposite to be true. Even those who were saved, like Israel who had fellowship with God, when they sin against the word of the Lord, will be punished. A whole generation of Israelites died in the wilderness because of their stubbornness and wickedness. These serve as an example so that we might avoid the same attitude. God will punish all who abandon His will to live in ungodliness. Paul warns the Corinthian brethren, *“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall”* (1 Corinthians 10:12).

If it were true that once you are saved there is no sin that could cause you to be lost, then Paul was warning of an impossibility. And if it were impossible to fall and be lost, then what would be the purpose in mentioning it? Paul’s admonition is poignant and strong – Israel fell and died in the wilderness; the sanctified of God who turn against Him and His commands will be destroyed. If we sin and fall away from the Lord then we will face retribution for our evil deeds.

God Provides The Way Of Escape

Paul concludes this section by noting the faithfulness of God. He acknowledges the common nature of temptation. Temptation to sin is universal – every human of a responsible age that has lived on the earth has been tempted. However, that does not mean God is unfaithful, unkind, or unloving. He allows our faith, will, and obedience to be tested; however, He does not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to handle. He provides the way of escape. Paul does not assure us that we will never face temptation, nor that God will make temptation lose its attractiveness. God will provide a way of escape so we may be able to endure and overcome the temptations the devil hurls at us. The Scripture exhorts us to “watch and pray” so we may be strengthened in the hour of adversity. We do not have to give in to temptations; we can

overcome them. We can rely upon God to lead us by the instruction of His word to overcome the devil. With each temptation Jesus encountered from the devil, He answered with, *“it is written”* (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). The Psalmist said, *“How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word ... Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You”* (Psalm 119:9, 11). The word of God is our strength in times of temptation.

We should also note that God provides a way of escaping the power of sin. Even if we succumb to temptation, the Lord loves us and desires for us to be in a right relationship with Him. We must humbly repent of our sins and confess them before God, like the children of Israel (cf. Numbers 21:7).

After Israel sinned in the wilderness and many died, having been bit by serpents; God instructed Moses to build a bronze serpent. Any who looked upon it would live (cf. Numbers 21:8-9). The bronze serpent was a foreshadow of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He said, *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:14-15, NKJV). Not only does God provide the way of escape from temptation, but He also supplies atonement for sin. Not only can we overcome temptation, but we can have victory over the power and strength of sin. Through Jesus Christ we can be forgiven of our sins.

Conclusion

Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, encouraging them to learn from the example of Israel. The children of Israel sinned and forsook the Lord. Even though they had many advantages and had fellowship with God, that fellowship was severed because of their sins in the wilderness. For every unrepented sin there was (and continues to be) a just punishment will come. Christians must be proactive and careful to avoid the same spiritual pitfalls that befell Israel. The church at Corinth was on a destructive path, but Paul exhorted them to repent and seek God’s way. When facing temptation, saints must take heed and seek the

the way of escape.

** All passages quoted from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.*

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How To Grow In The Local Church

TODD THIELBAR | BLUE SPRINGS, MISSOURI

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“Dad, can I help you work?”

This is the question I am asked anytime I sit down with my laptop. The question comes from any of my three boys and I am sure my daughter will soon be asking the same question as she gets older. I admit, sometimes I get annoyed with the question because they cannot really help me with my work. Even as I am writing this article, I have our youngest boy at my side just waiting to hit the “W” on the keyboard because his name begins with a “W”. I sometimes will let them “help,” but other times I just want to get the job done, so I brush them off and distract them with something else. I am not really proud of that, but it happens. Does this sound familiar to you? I am sure you have wanted to accomplish a task and somebody wanted to help, but you knew allowing them to help would slow you down.

Do you want to grow in the local church? Do you want to help in the local church? One of the first things we need to have is a local church which will let you help. We often complain about how only a few do all of the work, then someone comes along wanting to help, yet we do not want to take the time to let them. So, we brush them off and distract them with something else. Sound familiar?

And Let Us Consider One Another In Order To Stir Up Love And Good Works – Hebrews 10:24

Allowing others to help is one of the best ways to promote love and good works. Too many times we consider the work that needs to be done and we lose the opportunity to “consider” one another.

We sing a song called, “The Army of Our Lord.” I love this song because the lyrics speak to the need for others to be ready to grow and work. One verse in particular says, *“Our elders long in battle years, alas begin to fade, but from the*



ranks, young men appear, and lead their first crusade.” What a great visual – the passing of the torch. How do we grow in the local church? We first need to have an environment which facilitates growth.

If you know a Christian who is anxious to get involved and excited about working in the church, the last thing you want to do is discourage them. Grab on to them and let them work! Maybe you are that Christian who is anxious to get involved and excited about the work, but you don’t know how to help or what to do, follow the example of others and ask to help.

Let’s examine ourselves to make sure our attitudes are correct. Are we able to work well with others? Work in the local congregation is about unity – submitting to the same authority, working for the same reason, working with like-minded people (Philippians 3:15-16). Paul illustrated the church with the human body when he discussed this very topic in 1 Corinthians 12.

**If The Foot Should Say, “Because I Am Not A Hand, I Am Not of the body,’ Is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body?
(1 Corinthians 12:15-16)**

This illustration makes a lot of sense when we think about the human body, but it should make just as much sense when applied to the local congregation. If you want to work, then you have to be a “*fellow worker*” of God (1 Corinthians 3:9). Stop and think about that idea – a fellow worker of God! What a great distinction and privilege it is for us to be described as God’s helper. In order for us to work and grow in the local church, we have to be God’s fellow workers. How do we accomplish that?

**Only Let Your Conduct Be Worthy Of
The Gospel Of Christ, So That Whether
I Come And See You Or Am Absent, I May
Hear Of Your Affairs, That You Stand Fast
In One Spirit, With One Mind Striving
Together For The Faith Of The Gospel.
(Philippians 1:27)**

God wants the environment in the local congregation to allow all maturity levels to thrive. This can only happen if we stand fast in one spirit, striving together with one mind. It is hard to grow and mature in a congregation that lacks unity, has selfish members, does not value cooperation, is full of bitterness, anger, and wrath. Now, this does not mean if your congregation has some, or all of those qualities, you cannot grow. You absolutely can. You will have to show others the proper attitude in working together. It may be hard and slow, but growth can still occur. Think about the church in Corinth and their many problems, yet they matured some by the time Paul wrote the second letter. It takes members who examine themselves and commit to being more like Christ.

Finally, to grow in the local congregation, we have to do something; we have to work. I cannot tell you exactly what work you need to do because God has blessed each of us with different abilities. We each have something we can do, and can do well. Consider some of your abilities and make the decision that you are going to do **something** for Christ’s church.

1. Spend more time with other Christians. Specifically, spend more time studying with other Christians. I am part of a men’s Bible study that meets every other week and those men are my brothers. We have a bond unlike anything I have experienced before. I have known many of these men most of my life, but when we started studying together, that bond strengthened immensely.
2. Offer to help in a Bible class. Perhaps you have never taught a Bible class before, or you think you would not be a good teacher. You don’t know unless you try, and there is no better way of trying than to sit-in with an experienced teacher. Be an assistant to another teacher. You don’t have to lead the class. Be prepared, take notes, make a comment or two, and I guarantee you will grow, by learning how to teach from an experienced teacher.
3. Open up your home. Have some Bible studies at your home and have a singing at your home. You may not feel experienced enough to lead either of those things, but you can always ask someone else to do so. Invite others over to just share a meal and visit. Make sure you invite those who you know well, but also those who you may not know well.
4. Accept invitations to other’s homes. This may seem odd to list, but I have seen fellow members become discouraged because they ask several people to come over and spend time together, but everyone is always too busy to accept the invitation. We need to make sure we have time for each other, which means we need to say yes more often than we say no.

This is not an exhaustive list, but I think it serves the purpose. I hope it gets you to start thinking of other ways to grow and do the work God has given us to do. As you grow, make sure you help others to grow. It might take you longer to get the task done, but think of how much you can edify and encourage someone else.

**But Grow In The Grace And Knowledge
Of Our Lord And Savior Jesus Christ.
To Him Be The Glory Both Now And
Forever. Amen. (2 Peter 3:18)**

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Why Should We Worship?

MARSHALL McDANIEL | WENTZVILLE, MISSOURI

Why should we worship God? That is a good question, not to be dismissed quickly or ignored. Billions around the world worship some deity, while others do not. Among atheists there is a growing number who question the rationale and sanity of God-worshippers: “What kind of self-serving, egotistical God,” they ask, “would demand people to grovel at His feet?” Such an understanding of God and of worship demonstrates an ignorance of the true God and worship. Worship is an appropriate, humbling-but-not-humiliating response to the nature and character of God Himself.

So, why should we worship God?

God Is Worthy Of Worship

First, we should worship God because He is worthy of worship. The Bible says He is “...worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created” (Revelation 4:11). The word “worthy” (Greek, “axios”) conveys the idea of “deserving,” indicating that God deserves worship. Moreover, a similar statement is made concerning Jesus, “...worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!” (Revelation 5:12).

But the Bible also explains why God is worthy. He is worthy of worship “for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created” (Revelation 4:11). The creative and providential power of God makes Him praiseworthy (see also Revelation 14:7). Furthermore, Jesus is worthy of our worship because He is “the Lamb who was slain,” a description that highlights His saving power (Revelation 5:12). The creative providence, and salvation of God – along with His manifold divine qualities – make Him deserving of our praise.



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It is not surprising, then, that the Bible affirms that glory is associated with the name of God and calls for praise of that name (see Psalm 29:2; 99:3; 100:4). Most translators rightly interpret phrases like “the glory of His name” as “the glory due His name.” The name of God is representative of the totality of His person (i.e., attributes, character, deeds). Worship, therefore, is praise of who God is and what He does. God is indeed worthy of our worship.

All Creation Was Made To Worship God

Second, we should worship God because all creation was made to worship Him. The Bible reveals that “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:16). God created all things for His purposes and to His glory (see Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14). We, along with the rest of creation, were made to glorify God.

Yet, our worship of God is unique. Unlike the physical creation, we are given the choice to glorify God. We have been made in the image and likeness of God (see Genesis 1:26-27). Thus, our worship moves beyond the instinctual,

unconscious praise of the cosmos (see Psalm 19:1; 148:1-14). Our worship is not simply external but internal as well, engaging the spirit (see John 4:23-24).

When we worship God, we fulfill His purpose for us – which is actually the only way we can find true, personal fulfillment. The Bible reveals that we have been specially created by God for His glory to declare His praise (see Isaiah 43:6-7, 21). And the New Testament pointedly explains that “...*you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*” (1 Peter 2:9). This is summarized well by Anglican John Stott: “*Our greatest claim to nobility is our created capacity to know God, to be in a personal relationship with Him, to love Him and to worship Him. Indeed, we are most truly human when we are on our knees before our Creator.*”

Worship Expresses Our Love For God

Third, we should worship God because worship expresses our love for God. The greatest commandment in the Bible, according to Jesus, is “...*you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength...*” (Mark 12:30; see Deuteronomy 6:5). Our love for God is an “*affectionate reverence*,” a description that overlaps with that of worship (Thayer). When we love God, we will express that love in worship.

But why should we love God? We should love God because He does “*great and awesome things*” for us (Deuteronomy 10:21-11:1); He listens to us (see Psalm 116:1-2); He protects and sustains us (see Psalm 31:23; 145:20); He tests us (see Deuteronomy 13:1-4; Romans 8:28); and, most importantly, because He loved us first and He continues to love us with an unending love (see 1 John 4:19; Exodus 20:5-6; Deuteronomy 7:9-10). Do we love Him in return?

We demonstrate our love for God through worship and that is done in a variety of ways. We worship when we make decisions to

sacrifice ourselves, consciously choosing good instead of evil (see Romans 12:1). Worship also includes personal and collective expressions of praise (i.e., prayer, singing). For instance, we can express our love for God, echoing the worshipers of times past, with simple statements like, “*I love you, LORD!*” (Psalm 18:1). Love motivates worship!

Worship Is A Foretaste Of Eternity

Fourth, we should worship God because worship is a foretaste of eternity. Throughout the Bible, heaven is pictured as a place of worship. As early as Jacob’s otherworldly encounter at Bethel, we learn that the heavenly residents constantly serve God (see Genesis 28:11-17). The association of worship with heaven does not stop there, however; the rest of the Bible makes this even clearer. For example, the tabernacle and the temple are representative of the true habitation of God (heaven) and are, accordingly, described as places of worship (see Hebrews 9:8-11). In various prophetic visions the angelic beings are represented as worshiping God continually (see Isaiah 6:1-3; Revelation 4:8-11). Heaven is a place of worship.

Like the physical temple and tabernacle before it, the New Testament reveals that the Christian and the church are spiritual types of the ultimate reality of heaven, they themselves being the house (household) of God (see 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:19-22; Revelation 21:2-3). Individually and collectively, therefore, we should desire to worship because this is a preview of heaven itself.

Yet, if we do not desire to worship God now, we won’t desire it then – and we will never actually gain the opportunity. A.W. Tozer was correct when he said, “*I can safely say, on the authority of all that is revealed in the word of God, that any man or woman on this earth who is bored or turned off by worship is not ready for heaven.*” Are we ready?

Conclusion

Why should we worship God? He is worthy and we were created to worship Him. We should worship because we love Him and it is a foretaste of heaven. Do these reasons motivate us to worship God? If so, we should do so daily as individuals and regularly as an assembly. We should worship God. Will you?

** All passages quoted from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.*

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The Way Of Escape

JOSH WELCH | KOKOMO, INDIANA

Mankind's **ultimate enemy** is, the *"one who deceives the whole world,"* Satan (Revelation 12:9). The **ultimate choice** we face between Satan's allurements and God's commands is the process of "temptation" (James 1:13-15). The **ultimate result** of our failure to obey God's law is sin (1 John 3:4). The **ultimate consequence** of the impenitent, unforgiven sinner is an eternity in hell (Romans 6:23; Matthew 10:28). Our **ultimate response** is that we ought to be vigilant when temptation comes our way and seek God's means to cure the sin problem (1 Peter 5:8).

God's word is clear about the fact *"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). We cannot *"say that we have no sin"* or *"we deceive ourselves"* (1 John 1:8). However, the fact we *"have sinned"* does not mean we must sin. We have a choice to overcome temptation. We have a Jesus who can empower us to be *"more than conquerors through Him who loved us"* (Romans 8:37). The Hebrew writer states Jesus was *"tempted as we are, yet without sin"* (4:15). He goes on to encourage us to pray to our *"High Priest"* and *"find grace to help in time of need"* (Hebrews 4:16). In Peter's epistle, he encourages struggling Christians to *"arm yourselves also with the same mind"* as Christ (1 Peter 4:1). He immediately follows that encouragement, saying, *"he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin"* (1 Peter 4:1). While sin is an inescapable past reality, this should not imply it is repeatable for all futurity. In fact, the apostle Paul argued, when it comes to temptation, there is *"a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it"* (1 Corinthians 10:13). This "escape route" is not a concealed secret, but a practical plan to battling our ultimate enemy. Let's take note of this empowering text and apply some practical applications as we look for the **ultimate escape** from sin!



1 Corinthians 10:12-13, *"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."*

Overcoming temptations begins with **being honest about ourselves**. Paul says, *"let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall"* (10:12). You may have a heart like David, boldness like Peter, obedience like Noah, wisdom like Solomon, and still fall prey to Satan's snares. Let's not view ourselves as super-Christians incapable of ever being put into a situation too tempting. This type of spiritual arrogance is the very type which often ends in shame. It's the Titanic mentality; it is the Sardis syndrome (Revelation 3:1-2). It is a false air of invincibility. The most studious, eloquent of preachers have been brought to stammering tears by their own sins. The most distinguished of elders have brought shame upon themselves by hovering too closely to sinful desires. The sweetest preacher's wife and elder's wife can have a sour experience with evil. The strongest

of marriages can be rocked by a weak moment in temptation. The longest tenured Bible class teacher in a church can be embarrassed by just a short-lived transgression. We must humbly be reminded we can fall. So, pray, as Jesus instructed, *“do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one”* (Matthew 6:13).

It will help us overcome temptation when we **quit thinking our situation is unique**. Paul writes, *“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man...”* (1 Corinthians 10:13). When justifying sin, people tend to think their unique circumstances give them a special permission to sin. They look for the excuse instead of the escape. They justify stealing because they were in need, or lost their job. They justify the affair because of their miserable unhappiness. They may justify drugs and alcohol because they are trying to forget a painful history. They justify the sins of youth because of the overpowering peer pressure of evil companions. Often, the one caught red-handed in sin looks for an excuse to make their circumstances sound special and justifiable. The fact is, temptation to sin is a common thing. Lots of other people have money problems, loneliness problems, unhappiness problems, anger problems, friend problems, painful memories, and more. Lots of those people have dealt with those problems in a God-pleasing way. Our situation is not unique, but *“common to man.”* Quit making excuses. If you are looking to be unique, then handle your sin in a unique way (Romans 12:1-2).

Paul goes on to say we must **have confidence in our faithful God** (1 Corinthians 10:13). Looking at the earlier context of 1 Corinthians 10, we notice Paul uses various sins from the murmuring Israelites as examples of the types of sin Christians ought to avoid. He exposes idolatry, sexual immorality, and complaining as characteristic sins of the wilderness-wandering Israelite nation (10:7-10). Yet, what is interesting is how these same people were those who had been so blessed by the God who led them out of Egypt. Had they forgotten? Their backs were raw from the beatings of an oppressive Pharaoh’s taskmasters and God reversed the

situation, punishing Pharaoh through a series of ten plagues. As Pharaoh gave chase with the Egyptian army, God faithfully maneuvered His special people to the edge of the Red Sea and miraculously helped them cross into new land. As the people searched for food in the wilderness of Sinai, God gave them daily manna, sent them quail, and even delivered water from a rock. In other words, whenever the situation seemed desperate and hopeless, God was faithful to deliver His people. Yet, they still rejected the God who had been so faithful through many other hard times. Paul wanted his first-century audience to learn from these ancient mistakes (1 Corinthians 10:11). He says, *“...all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition...”* (10:11). We must be warned not to forget the many times God gave hope to a hopeless people and how mistrusting God’s direction ended in destruction.

Additionally, it is comforting to know **God limits the degree of our temptation**. Paul says God *“will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape”* (1 Corinthians 10:13). Before Madonna and Marilyn Monroe, the bawdy Mae West pushed the envelop on the Hollywood screen. Mae West once said, *“I generally avoid temptation unless I can’t resist it.”* West may have gotten a few laughs out of this one-liner but the statement implies a lie. We can resist temptation. This is the assurance of Scripture. Some characters of Scripture fell pray to temptation but others show us they had power to overcome temptation. Job faced a litany of disasters and tragedies which would drive many to their wit’s end. He faced financial loss, family tragedy and physical infirmity. Yet, of Job it is said, *“in all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong”* (Job 1:22) and *“in all this Job did not sin with his lips”* (Job 2:10). Satan tried to expose Job’s weaknesses but God knew all along Job was a *“blameless and upright man, one who*

THE WAY OF ESCAPE | JOSH WELCH

fears God and shuns evil" (Job 1:8-9). God knows us too and Satan is never allowed to go too far. In every sin you have committed, was the choice you made impossible to overcome? If so, we could easily blame our sin on God. But, God is never to blame for our sins for He places limits upon the degree of our temptation here on earth (James 1:13-15). There is a way of escape. We must look past the test itself and to the means to overcome it.

Yet, finally, we must realize **God gives us the strength "to bear it"** (1 Corinthians 10:13). Bearing a load is never easy. The soldier who trudges through rough terrain while carrying a heavy pack is not doing something easy. Yet, he is not doing something impossible either. Our heavenly Father does not let His children carry a pack which will break our backs. He gives strength to carry the load. It may not be easy to overcome the seduction of a co-worker when your marriage at home has been shaky, but keep your clothes on, go back home, and you've overcome. It may not be easy to avoid a lie when it seems like the easy way out, but go ahead and tell the truth and you've overcome the temptation. It may not be easy to turn down

that bottle of beer when everybody else has one in their hand, but just grab a bottle of water and you've done it. It is not always easy to you're your tongue when your patience is being pushed to the brink, but keep those lips sealed, walk away, and you've done it. It can be done. Satan's temptations can make life hard, but a blessing comes to those who choose the right and hard way instead of the broad and easy path. Jesus says, *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it"* (Matthew 7:13-14).

As you face the temptations of life, may you think honestly about yourself, not over-exaggerating a situation many have overcome. Have confidence in your faithful God and trust in His providence to limit the boundaries and scope of the temptation, strengthening you to overcome and find the way of escape.

** All passages quoted from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.*

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Learning Evangelism From The Master

WILLIAM STEWART | KINGSTON, ONTARIO

The salvation of souls and the growth of local congregations depend upon evangelistic work. Of the masses, Paul inquires, “...*how shall they hear without a preacher?*” (Romans 10:14). Paul is not talking about some clergy class who are distinct from the average believer. Such an idea is foreign to the New Testament. The word preacher is not an ecclesiastical title but describes an activity. The word means “*to herald ... proclaim, publish*” (Strong’s). In Acts 8, we find persecution against the church at Jerusalem caused the saints to scatter. We’re told “...*those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word*” (verse 4). It’s a different Greek word (lit. good messenger), but the result is the same – telling people about Jesus Christ. If you are a child of God, then you are called to preach. Your pulpit? Day-to-day life.

Let’s be candid here: most of us do not share our faith as we ought. I know I could do better. If you’re honest with yourself, you’ll likely come to the same conclusion. What holds us back from speaking as openly and often as we should about Jesus? I suspect the biggest obstacle to evangelism is the fear of rejection. Friends, we need to not let fear keep us from doing what is right. “...*God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind...*” (2 Timothy 1:7). In the next verse, Paul admonished young Timothy, “...*do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord ... but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God...*” (verse 8). We need to take courage and speak up. When rejection comes, people are rejecting God. Remember God’s message to Samuel, “...*they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them*” (1 Samuel 8:7).

There is no guaranteed evangelism system. Even Jesus experienced rejection – “*He came*



to His own, and His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11). However, there were also times of exceptional success when the Lord shared the message of salvation. Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman in John 4 is an outstanding example for us to consider when it comes to the work of evangelism.

Recognizing The Mission Field

Jesus was travelling from Judea to Galilee, and He took a break at a well outside the city of Sychar (John 4:3-6). He wasn’t there to preach, He was just passing through. Yet an opportunity arose to preach – a mission field with a water pot came upon the scene (John 4:7). Understand, the mission field is people – whomever they may be, wherever they are. We don’t need to be in some foreign country or go on an evangelism trip in order to find a mission field. The mission field is all around us – people we cross paths with each day at restaurants, in the doctor’s office, at the bus stop, in the grocery store, etc..

When we see people, do we just see the externals (business suits, tattoos, immodest dress, etc.)? We need to realize these are souls who need the message of Christ. Every person we meet is a mission field and an opportunity to share the gospel. Jesus didn’t just see a woman

with a water pot; He saw a soul needing salvation.

Overcoming Obstacles

Aside from our inhibition to speak up at times, there are other barriers to communication that need to be removed. This was as true in Jesus' day as it is today. In fact, John indicates talking with the Samaritan woman was considered taboo. John 4:27 says the disciples *"...marveled that He talked with a woman..."* and John 4:9 blatantly states, *"...Jews have no dealings with Samaritans."* If He had followed the rabbinical precepts of the day, the events of John 4 would never have happened. The rabbis taught, *"Let no man eat the bread of the Samaritans, for he who eats their bread is as he who eats swine's flesh."*¹ And again, *"Let no one talk with a woman in the street, no, not with his own wife."*² Jesus would not be bound by such barriers. He stopped in Samaria (John 4:5-6), He openly spoke with a Samaritan woman (John 4:7), and His disciples went into the city to buy Samaritan food (John 4:8).

When the gospel is shared and received, society's barriers fall (Galatians 3:28). The things people use to differentiate themselves from one another are temporal distinctions. Do not allow such things to keep us from sharing a message of eternal importance. It does not matter what colour an individual's skin is, whether they are rich or poor, whether they are male or female, or whether they are university educated or a high school dropout. We need to look past a person's disabilities, tattoos, piercings, weight, clothing, or any other external thing that might hinder us from sharing the message that can supply life for their soul. There may even be times when we are so repulsed by someone's sin we are tempted to pass them by. Yet the very mission of the gospel is to save people from their sins. We are called to be seed sowers, not judges of soil.

Earning The Right To Be Heard

How do we begin a conversation about Christ with the people in the grocery store, in the park, or at their front door (door-to-door work)? Let's

follow Jesus' example in His conversation with the Samaritan woman. He didn't identify Himself as the Messiah. He didn't speak about the detestable nature of sin. In fact, He didn't start with anything spiritual – He asked for a drink of water (John 4:7). He asked a favour of her. Most people, when asked a simple favour, are glad to help, and it has the potential to open the door to further conversation.

Through years of door-to-door work, I've noted that conversations begun with a spiritual word tend to end almost as quickly as they began. Most people don't like cold call sales and that is how our attempt to share the gospel with a stranger is perceived. Often when someone comes to your door selling something, or stops you in the mall, your immediate reaction is, "not interested." Conversations that start with an attempt to build rapport (acknowledging a flower garden, showing interest in a pet, bringing a recycle box in from the curb, commenting on a t-shirt/necklace/door plaque, etc.) tend to earn an opportunity to speak. Do we need to earn a right to speak? No, our commission to proclaim the gospel is from God (Mark 16:15). That said, things will go a lot smoother if the hearer is of a mind to give us their time and hear what we are saying.

Jesus very capably transitioned to speak about living water. The woman at the well was focused on water, so He began there, but transitioned to eternal matters. We need to learn to transition physical conversations to spiritual subjects. Sometimes the transition will be obvious (water >> living water); other times it may be more difficult. No good will be accomplished if we compliment someone on their beautiful garden but fail to help them appreciate the God who created plants in the first place.

Begin Where They Are At

Not only should we learn the art of transitioning conversation from earthly things to spiritual

matters, it would be best to begin those spiritual discussions with where the prospect is at. It is possible when Philip met the Ethiopian eunuch he had a preferred approach when teaching someone the gospel. However, when Philip climbed into the chariot, the man was reading Isaiah and he had questions about the text (Acts 8:29-34). Philip didn't ignore the eunuch's concerns, but *"...opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him"* (Acts 8:35). As much as possible, we need to begin where folks are at. What message do we send people if we ignore or discount their questions or Biblical interest? Begin where they are and preach Jesus to them.

People will benefit from us addressing their questions. Their knowledge of God's word will increase; false ideas will possibly be refuted. And, in the process, we will build respect and trust with them. The Samaritan woman's perception of Jesus changed very quickly; He went from being some Jewish man who was talking to her (John 4:9), to being a prophet (verse 19), to being the Messiah (verse 25-26, 29).

Answering Questions And Teaching Truth

In the course of their conversation, the woman compared Samaritan worship with Jewish worship, particularly, where one ought to worship (John 4:20). Jesus responded to her inquiry. We must be ready to answer questions. Peter commands us to *"...always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you..."* (1 Peter 3:15). As Jesus responded, He likely went further than some of us might have gone. He said, *"...you worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews"* (John 4:22). Jesus was being straight with her. It does no good to hold back the truth from someone for fear it will hurt their feelings. Paul said, *"...I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you..."* and again, *"...I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God"* (Acts 20:20, 27). We need to speak truth with his people. Don't ignore

someone's sin or overlook their misinformed ideas. Ignoring sin will stand in their way of coming to a knowledge of truth and obeying God.

A City Turned To Christ

The woman believed Jesus to be the Christ. So, she sought to bring others to Jesus (John 4:29-30). The gospel is intended to be infectious. When someone realizes what is available in Christ Jesus, they will want to share it with others. In her case, the whole city came out to hear Jesus. As a result, they urged Him to stay two more days. Many Samaritans believed in Him, stating, *"...we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world"* (John 4:42).

Cornelius brought together his friends and family to hear Peter (Acts 10:24). He wanted others to listen to the good news. One individual has the potential to be the open door to a family, a neighbourhood, or a city. Encourage folks to share the opportunity, to invite friends and family.

Conclusion

John 4 stands as the ultimate example of evangelism. Jesus turns a request for a drink of water into an opportunity to speak to an entire city; after two days, that city was filled with believers. Recognize there are lost souls everywhere and let us bring forth a harvest for the Lord. Let's create opportunities to speak with people. When we are engaged in Bible discussion, start where they are at and facilitate growth for them. Be ready to answer questions, even the difficult ones. Let us take the city for Christ.

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1. M. Shebhiith, viii 10., via **ICC New Testament Commentary**.
 2. Lightfoot, Hor. Hebr. lii. 287, via **Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament**.

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Grow In Grace

BRIAN SULLIVAN | BANCROFT, ONTARIO

Grace is a very popular topic in today's religious world. Often it is expressed as some vague, indefinable freedom or liberty. Some see it as a cloud-like substance that can be packaged and repackaged to suit the needs of the moment. The child of God is more interested in what the Bible has to say about it, and how the Bible defines it.

Grace Has A Long History Of Expression

The very first mention of grace in the Bible is found in the midst of a world filled with turmoil, corruption, and rampant sin – as in the days of Noah (Genesis 6:1-5). After describing the reaction of our Creator God to the level of degradation where every notion was associated with sin (and sinfulness) and His intention to “*destroy man*” (Genesis 6:6-7), we read: “*But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord*” (verse 8). There are two things we might observe from this setting: our gracious God acknowledged Noah was different than the rest of mankind (see verse 9), so he “*found grace in the eyes of the Lord.*” The second point we can draw is, it is possible to serve God faithfully even in the midst of a world on the slippery slope of sin. Noah found grace because he chose to walk in harmony with God and His will, rather than go with the flow. As my late mother-in-law often stated in her life, “*Any dead fish can go with the current, but it takes a live one to swim upstream.*”

The next reference to someone finding grace in God's sight comes in the days of Moses. Following Moses' reception of the Law and returning to find the golden calf (Exodus 32-33), he went outside the camp to pitch his tent, and the people “*who sought the Lord*” came out of the camp to that site. When Moses entered the tabernacle, the presence of God came in the “*pillar of cloud*” and conversed with Moses. Moses asked for God's reassurance, and we find these words: “*Now therefore, I pray, if I*



have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people” (Exodus 33:13). Notice the preparedness on the part of Moses to follow God, as he declared, “*show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight.*”

Before we move on to the New Testament we want to include portions of two more Old Testament texts. “*For the Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly*” (Psalm 84:11). The other text indicates that God is prepared to bestow His grace on all men including the wicked, but they won't receive it. Here is how it is put by Isaiah, “*Let grace be shown to the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he will deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord*” (Isaiah 26:10).

Grace In The New Testament

If we explore further, we see that grace is very present in the life of Jesus Christ. Luke 2:40 records, “*And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God*

was upon Him.” John 1:14 speaks of the fleshly entrance of the Word (Christ) into this world and declares Him as *“the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”* That opens the door for the most significant statement regarding Christ and grace, found in John 1:17, *“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”* As we are aware, there was a presence of “grace” and “truth” during the days of the Old Covenant, but the fullest measure or expression of these came through Christ Jesus. Notice, the Holy Spirit (through John) did not suggest that “grace” is the absence of truth; rather, “grace and truth” came through Christ.

Some Of Paul’s Declarations About “Grace” And Its Role

Aside from his use of grace in the salutations of his epistles, we can learn other important things about grace through the inspired writings of Paul. Grace is something we must continue in (Acts 13:43). The Lord was *“bearing witness to the word of His grace”* with signs and wonders (Acts 14:3). God has *“justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is Christ Jesus”* (Romans 3:23-26). Paul, after stating that grace is available and sufficient to remove our sins through Jesus Christ (Romans 5:20-21) dismisses the notion that we ought to sin more to receive more grace (Romans 6:1-4). Grace calls for a transformed life – from slave of sin to slave of righteousness (see Romans 6:12-23; 12:1-2).

A Comprehensive Picture Of Grace (Titus 2:11-14)

- (1) *“The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men”* (Titus 2:11). We have access to it every time we hear God’s word faithfully preached, or read and study God’s inspired book (the Bible).
- (2) God’s grace teaches us (Titus 2:12). We would immediately learn grace is part of a message, which Paul revealed, was profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- (3) God’s grace sets before us some essential

changes required in our life. *“Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, [we] should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age”* (Titus 2:12; see also 2 Corinthians 1:12-14).

Ungodliness (a lack of reverence toward God and/or His word) is to be denied. The worldly lusts that dominated our lives before we learn of God’s grace are to be harnessed, subdued and no longer the controlling influence in our lives (1 John 2:15; 1 Peter 4:1-5; Romans 6:16-18). Through God’s grace we learn how to live soberly (clear in thought and action); righteously (right in the sight of God, 1 John 3:7; Romans 6:16-18; Romans 1:16-17) and godly (with due reverence and respect for God and His will) in this present age.

- (4) God’s grace has us looking beyond the present soul-making vale (this early realm) to *“the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ”* (Hebrews 9:28; Titus 2:13; see also 1 John 3:1-3; 1 Peter 1:5-9; 2 Peter 1:5-11; Romans 8:18-25).

Grace Is Found Through Christ And The Gospel

When Paul, in Romans 6:14, declared, *“For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace,”* he was contrasting the old covenant and its inability to remove sin (Hebrews 10:3-4), and the new covenant where sin can be removed and is forgiven by God (Hebrews 8:12). Paul never believed that the Christian was without law to Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21). In Acts 11:23, Barnabas met people who had responded to the gospel (the grace of God) and commanded *“with purpose of heart they continue with the Lord.”* That same *“grace of the Lord Jesus”* was equated with being saved, whether one was a Jew or a Gentile (Acts 15:11). In Romans 11:4-6, Paul stated, *“And if by grace, then it is no longer of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise*

work is no longer work.” Paul is not suggesting obedience to Christ is not required in order to access grace, but reminding us no measure of works under the Law of Moses could do what God has done through the offering of His Son and the salvation through Him. There are works of God we must engage in (John 6:28-29; Romans 1:5; 6:16-18; 6:3-4, and Romans 16:25-27). Paul saw any step to add to the gospel, or to diminish it, was to lose what we had gained through it (see Galatians 1:6-10). Judaizing teachers were trying to convince others they needed to practice faithfully the Old Law in addition to the gospel in order to find God’s pleasure, but Paul clearly argues that is contrary to God’s intention (Galatians 2:21; 5:3-6). What we have and enjoy through Christ is *“according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace”* (Ephesians 1:5-12; 2:4-10; 3:1-8).

Conclusion

God’s grace is descriptive of all God has made available through His eternal plan (Ephesians 3:8-11; Romans 8:28-30). It is not to be construed as something without dimensions, without restrictions or without elements to obey. Apollos, after some further teaching on *“the way of God”* from Aquila and Priscilla, *“greatly helped those who had believed through grace”* (Acts 18:26-28). Knowing it might be the last time that he would see the brethren from Ephesus, Paul declared his intent was *“to testify to the gospel of the grace of God”* (Acts 20:24), then he made the following statement: *“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified”* (Acts 20:32).

** All passages quoted from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.*

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OCTOBER 2017 PREVIEW

EXPOSITORY ARTICLE

Sean Cavender will give us a detailed look at issues dealing with faith and the law from Romans 4.

CHURCH ARTICLE

Sean Cavender will present a profile of the Lord's church in Antioch.

WORSHIP ARTICLE

William Stewart will identify the distinction between worship and service, and why such is important.

APPLICATION ARTICLE

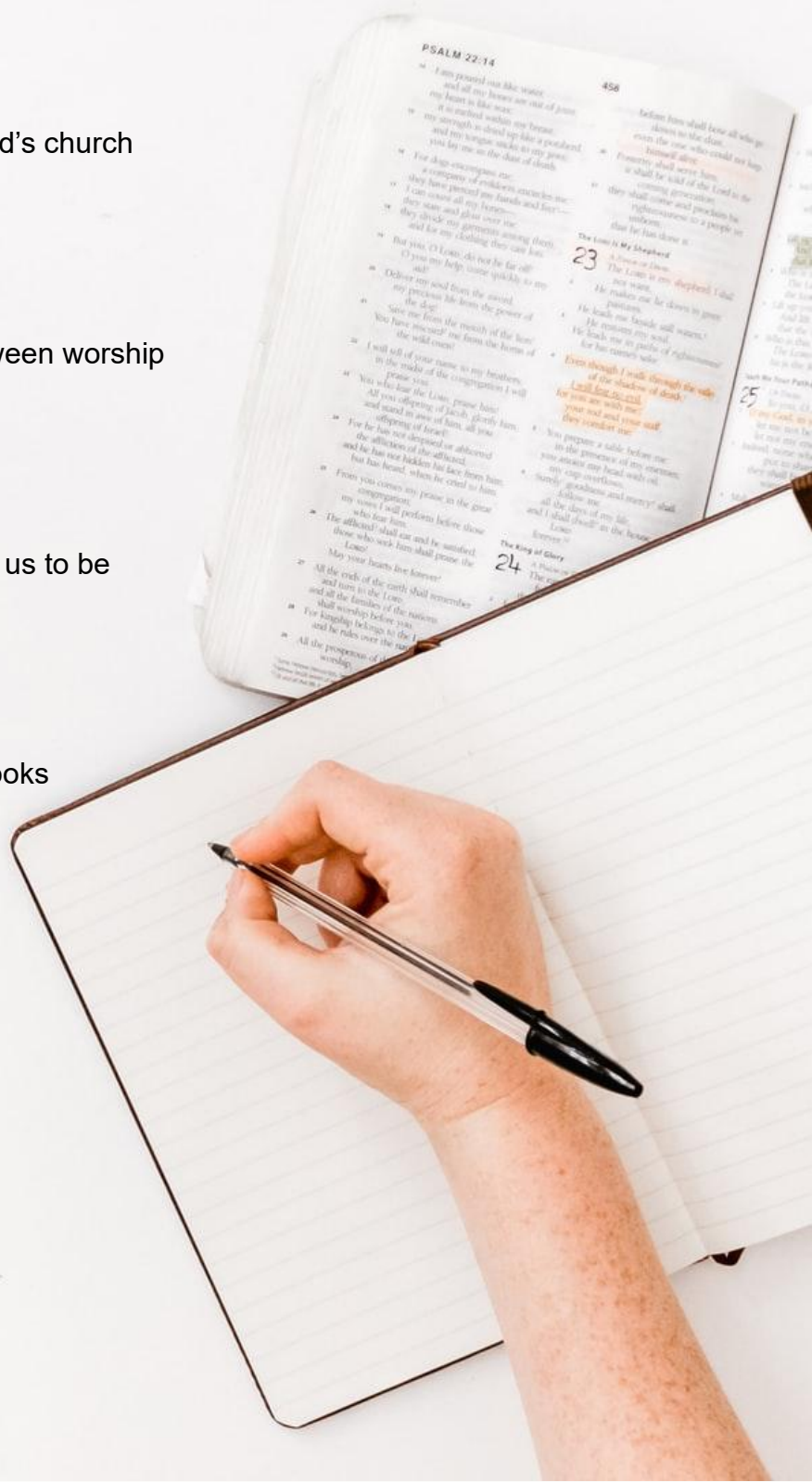
Shane Carrington will focus on and encourage us to be imitators of the faith of Abraham.

EVANGELISM ARTICLE

Ken McDaniel will consider what evangelism looks like in the 21st century.

BEYOND THE BASICS ARTICLE

John Maddocks will urge us to not get distracted from what is important.





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