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House to House Heart to Heart

VOLUME 19 NUMBER 1

A publication of the... Churches of Christ

Founder: Christ – Mt. 16:18
Place: Jerusalem – Isa. 2:1-3, Acts 2:5
Time: A.D. 33 – Dan. 2:44, Acts 2
Head: Christ – Eph. 1:22
Organization:

Christ as head – Eph. 5:23
Elders oversee local church –
Heb. 13:17, Titus 1:5
Deacons as servants –
Acts 6:1-6, 1 Tim. 3:8-13
Members compose body –
Col. 1:2

Name (group):
Church of God – Eph. 3:15
Body of Christ – Eph. 1:22-23
Churches of Christ – Rm. 16:16
Bride of Christ – Rm. 7:4

Name (individuals):
Disciples – John 15:8
Saints – Rm. 1:7
Brethren – Lk. 8:21
Children of God – Gal. 4:26
Christian – Acts 11:25-26

Creed: Jesus/Bible – Acts 8:37
Rule of Faith & Practice:
Word of God – 2 Tim. 3:16-17

Worship: Jn. 4:24
Sing – Eph. 5:19
Pray – Acts 2:42; 1 Thes. 5:17
Teach – Acts 5:42
Communion – 1 Cor. 1:23-26
Contribute – 1 Cor. 16:1-2

Mission: Save Souls – 1 Tim. 4:16
Warning: Be Faithful – 2 John 9

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Modern religion has attempted to make Christianity “user-friendly” by taking a marketing approach to recruiting new members. Popular TV preachers make it a matter of policy to never use the “S” word—*sin*. Churches openly trumpet a “come as you are” approach (and they mean both casual lifestyle and casual dress). Today’s pulpit mutes repentance and trumpets self-esteem. Hell is old-fashioned. Feel-good is in; life-change is out. God is remade in man’s image.

Jesus took a different approach. His religion is high stakes: Whoever “forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). We risk everything to gain everything.

Christ was up front with people. He put nothing in the fine print—hid no “gotcha clauses” to be discovered later. He said simply, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will

save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it” (Luke 9:23–24).

At the same time, He gives us an incredible offer. He promises to help us! We can do all things through Christ which strengthens us (Philippians 4:13). The good news is not that if we straighten ourselves up we will be saved—that would be bad news, since we cannot do it (Ephesians 2:9). The good news is that Jesus enables us to become like Him (Philippians 2:12-13). His power, manifested through His Word, works in us and gives strength to accomplish all He asks of us (Ephesians 3:14-19; 6:17).

In light of this, consider this passage.

IF ANY WILL COME AFTER ME

Jesus’ invitation is both voluntary and universal. He forces no one to be His follower. His is an all-volunteer army (Matthew 11:28–30).

The requirements are universal. No exceptions. No favors. No waivers. We

cannot stay where we are and go with God at the same time.

Noah could not continue life as usual and also build an ark (Genesis 6–9).

Abraham could not stay in Ur and father a nation in Canaan (Genesis 12:1–3).

Moses could not both enjoy the solitude of the desert and deliver God's people from Pharaoh (Exodus 3:10).

David had to leave the sheep to become the king (1 Samuel 16:11; 17:20).

Peter, Andrew, James, and John had to leave fishing to follow Jesus (Luke 5:11).

Even Jesus had to exit heaven to visit earth (2 Corinthians 8:9), and leave the carpenter shop to preach glad tidings.

What adjustments may be required?

We may have to change our thinking. If we were reared to hate those of another race, social standing, or political party, we must lay aside such thoughts and “judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24).

We may have to change careers. If we have a job inconsistent with Christian principles—drug dealer, false teacher, bartender, exotic dancer—we must look for new employment. If money—making, hoarding, spending—is too important to us, we must do as the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18–27).

We may have to change relationships. If a relative forbids true religion, we must choose Christ (1 Corinthians 7:15). If friends constantly tempt us to sin, we must find new friends (1 Corinthians 15:33; Mark 14:54–72). If we are in a sexual relationship that violates God's Word, we must cease it (Galatians 5:19–21). We must cut ties with business partners who have trouble seeing black and white (2 Corinthians 6:14).

We may have to change commitments. If we are spread too thin to worship God and to do our part in building His kingdom, we need to take irons from the fire (Ephesians 5:16; Hebrews 10:25).

LET HIM DENY HIMSELF

Self is best defined as an individual's own welfare, interests, advancement, and agenda (1 Corinthians 10:24; Philippians 2:4). To deny self then is to refuse to fulfill personal interests ahead of others or manipulate others to our own advantage. We must sur-

render our will to Jesus' will (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34).

Denying self literally means “to turn one's self off.” When Peter denied Jesus, he said, “I know not the man” (Matthew 26:74). This is what denying self means. We say to self, “I don't know you.” Paul did this: “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (Philippians 3:7–8).

This is first tested by our willingness to submit to the gospel. This involves studying enough to learn of Jesus (John 6:44–45), coming to faith that He is God's Son (John 3:16), turning away from sin in repentance (Luke 13:3, 5), confessing faith in Christ before others (Matthew 10:32–33), and being baptized (Mark 16:16). Have you submitted your will to Christ's and been baptized for the remission of sins? (Acts 2:38).

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS

“Take up the cross” was a strange thing to say in Jesus' time. To update the language, we might say, “To follow Jesus, take a seat in the electric chair.” We think of a cross as an ornament to display or admire, but in that day a cross was something to die on.

Crucifixion was shameful. Before being crucified, a condemned prisoner had the upper beam of the cross tied to his shoulders and was shamefully paraded to the crucifixion site. As he passed, the crowd mocked him, spit on him, and threw things at him. Some today want to follow Jesus when others applaud, but we must be willing to go with Him even when others mock or persecute (Matthew 5:10–12).

Crucifixion was painful. Ken Kersten wrote about seeing an ad for a drive-in passion play. One could watch the story of Jesus without getting out of the car. Kersten said, “I'll never forget the ad. It said: ‘Come and experience the life of Christ all from the comfort of your own car.’” We cannot follow Christ without leaving our comfort zones. It can be painful to give up sin, but it is worth it (cf. 1 Peter 4:16). A dry-cleaning and dyeing business sign read:

WE DYE TO LIVE, WE LIVE TO
DYE; THE MORE WE DYE, THE
MORE WE LIVE; AND THE MORE
WE LIVE, THE MORE WE DYE.

So it is with a Christian—we die to live, and live to die.

AND FOLLOW ME

Jesus' statement “follow me” is recorded eighteen times in the Bible (e.g., Matthew 4:18–22). Henry Ward Beecher, a preacher who led the antislavery movement in the 1800s, commented, “The strength and the happiness of a man consists in finding out the way in which God is going, and going in that way too.” Jesus' way is found in the pages of the New Testament. By reading it, we can go that way too.

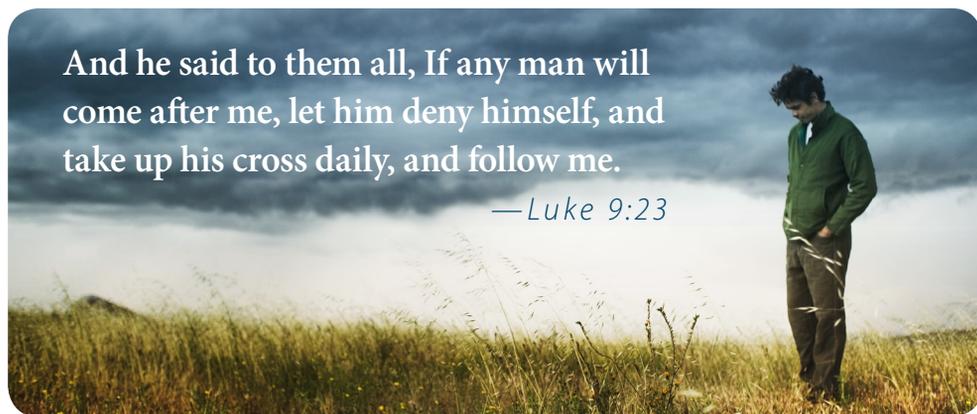
Some might venture that Jesus' approach will never work, but we might point out that it has worked for two thousand years for millions of people. It needs no improvement; it only needs teaching. It needs no marketing, only practicing.

A religion that costs nothing is worth nothing. A religion that costs everything is worth everything.

“Come and follow me” (Matthew 19:21).

And he said to them all, If any man will
come after me, let him deny himself, and
take up his cross daily, and follow me.

—Luke 9:23



Keep Your *Fork*



A young woman was diagnosed with a terminal illness and given a short time to live. As she was getting her things in order, she asked her preacher to drop by to discuss her funeral.

She mentioned the songs she wanted to be sung, scriptures to be read, and a few other details. As he prepared to leave, she had one more request.

“There is one more thing,” she said.

“What’s that?” the preacher replied.

“I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand.”

Puzzled, the preacher asked, “Please pardon me, but did you say you wish to be buried with a fork in your right hand?”

She explained. “Yes. In all my years of attending church dinners and potlucks, I remember that when the dishes were being cleared, someone would remark, ‘Don’t forget to keep your fork!’ This was a reminder that something wonderful was coming, such as chocolate cake, banana pudding, or deep-dish apple pie. So when people see me in my casket with fork in hand, you can tell them that I expect something far better to come.”

The preacher’s eyes welled up with tears as he hugged her, knowing that this might be the last time he would see her. He also realized that she had a profound grasp of heaven.

At her funeral, scores of people walked by the casket, noting the fork in her hand. Over and over, the preacher overheard the question, “Why the fork?” He smiled but said nothing.

During the eulogy, he told the audience about the fork and about what it meant to the woman. Although a few were crying prior to the preacher’s remarks, not a dry eye remained after he explained the meaning of the fork.

The next time you grab a fork at a fellowship meal, hold on to it a few extra moments and remember that for the faithful child of God, the best is yet to come!

Sin doesn’t give that kind of hope: “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). This is terrible news, since “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). But the good news (the gospel) is that God loves us so much that He gave His Son to die on the cross for our sins (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). Through Jesus, we can have the forgiveness of our sins, be reconciled to God, and rejoice in the hope of eternal life (2 Corinthians 5:17–21; Titus 1:2).

In order to accept God’s offer of salvation and eternal life, we must place our faith and trust in Christ (Acts 16:30–31), turn from sin in repentance (Acts 17:30–31), confess Jesus before men (Romans 10:9–10), and be baptized (immersed) into Christ for the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:38). Then, we can “rejoice in hope” as we continue to walk in the light of God’s Word (Romans 5:2; 1 John 1:7).

As a child of God, you can keep your fork, for the best is yet to come!

—David Sargent, Mobile, Alabama

Dare to Do the Difficult

It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that they are difficult. —Seneca



A Little More

- Do more than exist—Live!
- Do more than touch—Feel!
- Do more than look—Observe!
- Do more than read—Absorb!
- Do more than hear—Listen!
- Do more than listen—Understand!
- Do more than think—Ponder!
- Do more than talk—Say something!



Home PAGE

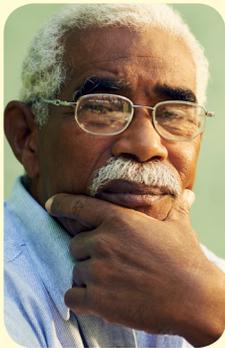


Wisdom Bytes

“Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.” —Henry Ford

“In the final analysis it is not what you do for your children but what you have taught them to do for themselves that will make them successful human beings.”

—Ann Landers



“What a child does not receive, he can seldom later give.”

—P. D. James

“Teach your child to hold his tongue; he’ll learn fast enough to speak.”

—Benjamin Franklin

“The work will wait while you show your child the rainbow, but the rainbow won’t wait while you do the work.”

—Patricia Clafford

“Heredity: An omnibus in which all our ancestors ride, and every now and then, one of them puts his head out and embarrasses us.” —Oliver Wendell Holmes

“Who of us is mature enough for offspring before the offspring themselves arrive? The value of marriage is not that adults produce children but that children produce adults.”

—Peter De Vries, *The Tunnel of Love*

“With all thy getting get understanding”

PROVERBS 4:7



For more material on the home and family, fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, grandparents, and family finances, go to www.housetohouse.com.

Smart Dad

My wife and I have reared two daughters through adolescence. We have two ground rules in regard to their dating. First, our daughters could not date before the age of 16. Second, I wanted to meet the prospective young man prior to the date.

Not long after a sixteenth birthday, the first suitor came along and I requested the obligatory interview. An appointment was arranged, and one evening the nervous lad came to our home. As we sat down in the study for a man-to-man chat, it was clear the boy was perplexed

by the necessity of this meeting. Then I posed this question, “If a stranger came to your door and asked to borrow your car for an evening, would you give him the keys?” “Well, no, of course not,” the young man replied.

“I feel the same way about you taking my daughter out on a date,” I said. “I don’t know you, and yet you are asking to escort one of the most precious people in my life. Before I let you take her out, I want to know more about you—what you believe, your intentions, and your character.” —Robert Wolgemuth

Save Yourself

Many dates are orchestrated for the simple purpose of fulfilling physical desire (cf. Galatians 5:19–21; 1 Corinthians 6:18–20).

This is not what God intended for dating. He intended it for marriage (Hebrews 13:4). God is not trying to keep sex from us; He is trying to keep us from the heartache that often comes from premature sexual relations.

- Did you know that 81 percent of abortions are for unmarried girls?
- Have you researched sexually transmitted diseases, and do you know that nearly half of unmarried sexually active individuals have one (and will give you one)?
- Have you thought of the “ghosts” that haunt future relationships? David wrote with regret of the sins of his youth (Psalm 25:7).



Don’t be naïve and assume that you will be with the person you are dating now for life. In a Midwestern school, sexually active couples were asked if they expected to marry their current boyfriend/girlfriend: 80 percent of girls answered, “Yes”; 12 percent of boys answered, “Yes.”

Don’t plan to give your future husband/wife a fancy watch for a wedding present; give him or her something really special.

—adapted from Glenn Colley, Huntsville, Alabama

“Blessed are the pure.”

MATTHEW 5:8

In the NEW TESTAMENT

Trustworthy?

No one questions the authenticity of Plato, Aristotle, or Homer, but the manuscript evidence for each of these is far less than that of the Bible. We can be assured that the Bible text we have today is the text of the first century.



The Iliad and The Odyssey

Written: around 900 B.C.
 Earliest available manuscript: 400 B.C. (500 years later)
 Total manuscripts: 643

Works of Plato

Written: 427–347 B.C.
 Earliest available manuscript: A.D. 900 (1200 years later)
 —There is one fragment from 3rd century B.C.
 Total manuscripts: 7

Works of Aristotle

Written: 384–322 B.C.
 Earliest available manuscript: A.D. 1100 (1400 years later)
 Total manuscripts: 49

Works of Julius Caesar

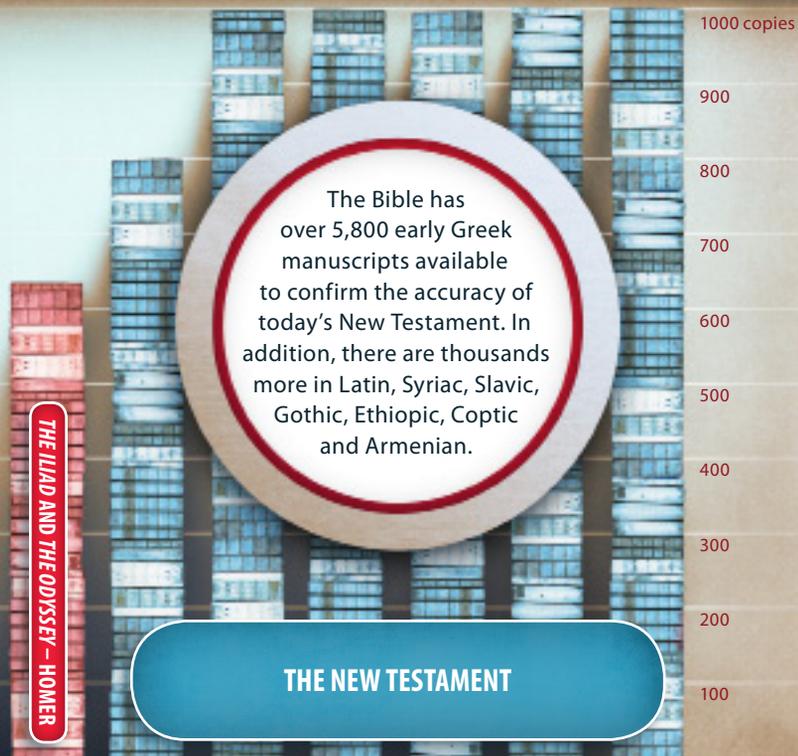
Written: 100–44 B.C.
 Earliest available manuscript: A.D. 900 (1000 years later)
 Total manuscripts: 10

The New Testament

Written: 1st Century
 Earliest available manuscript: 1st Century (within 30–40 years)
 Total manuscripts: 5,800

Works of Pliny

Written: A.D. 61–113
 Earliest available manuscript: A.D. 850 (750 years later)
 Total manuscripts: 7



Bible QUIZ

Send us your answers (address on front). We'll grade and return your questions and enclose a free "Jesus by the Numbers" bookmark as a way of saying thanks for spending time in the Word (quantities may be limited).



Name: _____
 Address: _____
 Phone: _____

Questions Taken from the King James Version

Answers to Last Issue: *The Judgment:* 1. F (5 of 10) (Matthew 25:2); 2. T (Matthew 25:6); 3. Watch, day (Matthew 25:13); 4. F (Matthew 25:15); 5. T (Matthew 25:16); 6. Faithful, faithful, joy (Matthew 25:21); 7. Darkness, weeping, teeth (Matthew 25:30); 8. T (Matthew 25:31); 9. All, separate, shepherd (Matthew 25:32); 10. F (Matthew 25:33); 11. Not, not (Matthew 25:45); 12. T (Matthew 25:41); 13. F (Matthew 25:46); 14. F (white) (Revelation 20:11); 15. Small, great, books, life, works (Revelation 20:12); 16. T (Revelation 20:14); 17. Written, life (Revelation 20:15).

Bible Places

Directions: Find your answers in Deuteronomy 5:6; 6:3; 1 Samuel 5:1–2, 8–9; 24:3–4; 28:7; 1 Kings 5:6; 2 Kings 5:14; Jeremiah 19:6; Lamentations 2:4; Matthew 2:1; Mark 1:9; Acts 1:12, 19; 3:2; 9:3; 11:25; 14:8–19; 16:6; Romans 1:10.

- At what gate of the temple did Peter heal the lame man? _____
- Where was David hiding when he cut the skirt from Saul's robe? _____
- In which river did Naaman wash away his leprosy? _____
- Where was Paul stoned? _____
- Moses led the Israelites out of bondage from _____.
- The land God gave the Israelites was flowing with what? _____
- What is the Lord's fury toward the sinful Jerusalem like? _____
- John baptized Jesus in the River ____.
- Paul hoped for a prosperous journey to where? _____
- The valley of the son of Hinnom would henceforth be known as ____.
- When Solomon gathered materials for the temple, what trees did he desire from Lebanon? _____
- When the Philistines brought the ark of God to Ashdod, where did they put it? _____
- When the ark was brought to Gath and Ekron, how were the men of the cities smitten? _____
- In 1 Samuel 28, in which town did Saul find a witch? _____
- How far was the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem? _____
- Aceldama* is the Aramaic name of what place? _____
- To what city did Saul journey when the Lord first spoke to him? _____
- Jesus was born in ____.
- Where did Barnabas go to find Saul? _____
- Paul was forbidden to preach in ____.

—adapted from <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/>



The World's Most Important Book

What was billed as the world's most expensive new book went on display in 2008 at the New York Public Library. There are more expensive old books, but this is a new book produced by the Italian publisher Marilena Ferrari. Its cost: over \$100,000!

The book depicts the life and work of Michelangelo, including photographs of his drawings and sculptures, creations from the Sistine Chapel, and his personal poetry.

It weighs sixty-two pounds, has a front cover of white marble, and is covered with red silk velvet. Its paper is from one of Italy's oldest paper mills—the mill where Picasso bought his art paper.

Each copy takes six months to make, and comes with a 500-year warranty! More than 20 of the books have been sold to buyers around the world.

These books are valuable because of the craft, quality of materials, and time that goes into their production. But there is another that is much more valuable. It is the most important book ever printed—and the most valuable book—because it is God's revelation of Himself to man. Have you read the Bible?

Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front of *House to House / Heart to Heart*

Recommended Resources



With hundreds of study topics, you can request CDs to enjoy in your vehicle as you go to work or take a trip, or you can download files to listen at your convenience on your computer. Check them out at www.audioevangelism.com.

I want to learn more about the Bible!

Name: _____

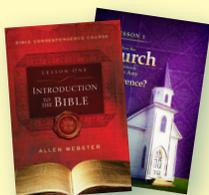
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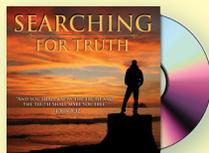
Email: _____

Prayer requests or comments: _____

I want to have



A Bible Correspondence Course



DVD Bible Study



An in-home visualized Bible study

New tracts!



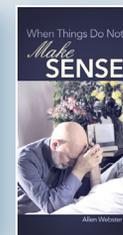
A War of Worldviews: Evolution Versus Christianity



Is the End Near?



What Does Church Have to Offer Me?



When Things Do Not Make Sense



Sprinkling, Pouring, or Immersion

More subjects:



A New Look at the Old Rugged Cross



A Man with a Wait Problem



Church, Why Bother?



Does Heaven Have a Smoking Section?



Don't Bet on It



A Baptism in the New Testament



A Christian TV Guide



A Decent Devil?



A Thief Who Has Robbed Us All

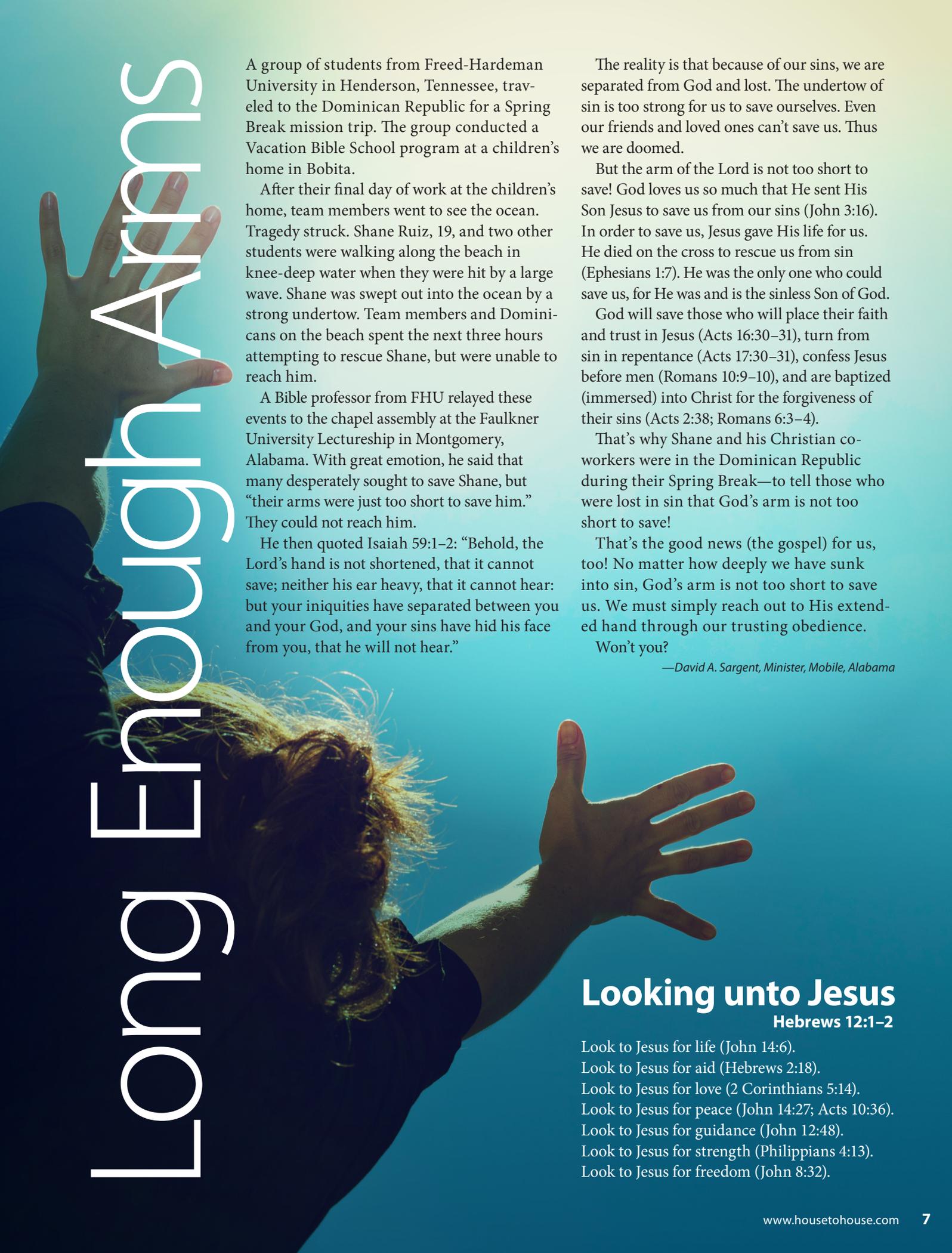


Can a Christian Fall From Grace?

Check the box and send to us for a free copy. Don't see the topic you need? Visit www.housetohouse.com for more subjects.

VOLUME 19:1





Long Enough Arms

A group of students from Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, traveled to the Dominican Republic for a Spring Break mission trip. The group conducted a Vacation Bible School program at a children's home in Bobita.

After their final day of work at the children's home, team members went to see the ocean. Tragedy struck. Shane Ruiz, 19, and two other students were walking along the beach in knee-deep water when they were hit by a large wave. Shane was swept out into the ocean by a strong undertow. Team members and Dominicans on the beach spent the next three hours attempting to rescue Shane, but were unable to reach him.

A Bible professor from FHU relayed these events to the chapel assembly at the Faulkner University Lectureship in Montgomery, Alabama. With great emotion, he said that many desperately sought to save Shane, but "their arms were just too short to save him." They could not reach him.

He then quoted Isaiah 59:1–2: "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."

The reality is that because of our sins, we are separated from God and lost. The undertow of sin is too strong for us to save ourselves. Even our friends and loved ones can't save us. Thus we are doomed.

But the arm of the Lord is not too short to save! God loves us so much that He sent His Son Jesus to save us from our sins (John 3:16). In order to save us, Jesus gave His life for us. He died on the cross to rescue us from sin (Ephesians 1:7). He was the only one who could save us, for He was and is the sinless Son of God.

God will save those who will place their faith and trust in Jesus (Acts 16:30–31), turn from sin in repentance (Acts 17:30–31), confess Jesus before men (Romans 10:9–10), and are baptized (immersed) into Christ for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–4).

That's why Shane and his Christian co-workers were in the Dominican Republic during their Spring Break—to tell those who were lost in sin that God's arm is not too short to save!

That's the good news (the gospel) for us, too! No matter how deeply we have sunk into sin, God's arm is not too short to save us. We must simply reach out to His extended hand through our trusting obedience.

Won't you?

—David A. Sargent, Minister, Mobile, Alabama

Looking unto Jesus

Hebrews 12:1–2

Look to Jesus for life (John 14:6).

Look to Jesus for aid (Hebrews 2:18).

Look to Jesus for love (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Look to Jesus for peace (John 14:27; Acts 10:36).

Look to Jesus for guidance (John 12:48).

Look to Jesus for strength (Philippians 4:13).

Look to Jesus for freedom (John 8:32).

Thoughts from the HEART



That's Why I Never Eat

Everybody has an excuse for not attending worship services. If we take those excuses and apply them to something else we do or don't do, they might look like this list:

I don't eat anymore because . . .

I was forced to eat as a child.

People who eat all the time are

hypocrites; they aren't really hungry.

There are so many different kinds of food, I can't decide what to eat.

I used to eat, but I got bored.

None of my friends will eat with me.

I only eat on special occasions, like Christmas and Easter.

I'll start eating when I get older.

I'm too busy working.

I don't really have the time.

I don't believe that eating does any good.

It's just a crutch.

Restaurants and grocery stores are only after your money.

Laughable, isn't it? Regular attendance for worship to God is vital for a healthy soul (Hebrews 10:25). Our relationship with God is far more important than regular, balanced meals. Without spiritual food, we will die (1 Peter 2:2).

You are invited to come and worship with us at the church of Christ. In fact, we'll save you a seat!

—Unknown



Please recycle House to House by giving this copy to your family or friends.



Ask any Bible! question!

Do you have something you always wanted to know about the Bible? Go to www.housetohouse.com/askaquestion.aspx or send your question to us at the address on the front. We will answer as quickly as we can.

