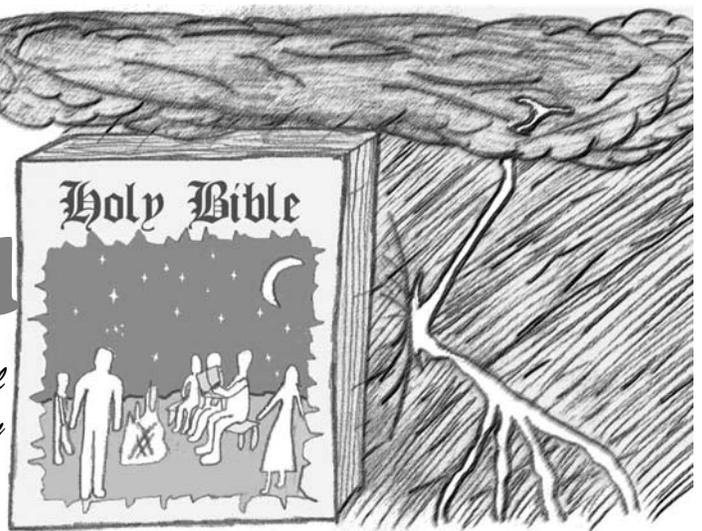


Shelter in the Word

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty... You are my refuge and shield: I have put my hope in your Word.

—Psalm 91:1, 119:114



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Helping you become self-sufficient in the Word—for a lasting relationship with the Almighty

March/April 1998

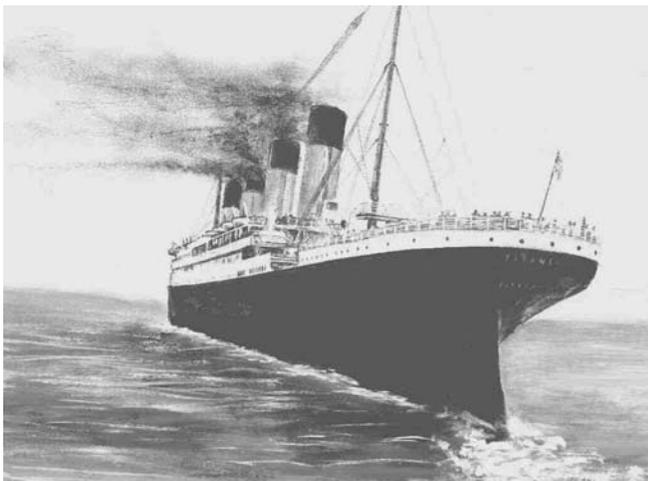
Titanic—

That Ship, Our Ship, My Ship

by Norman S. Edwards

James Cameron's film, *Titanic*, is in many ways the most successful film produced in history. It was successful for at least these three reasons:

1. It was about a true story.
2. It went to great lengths to research and accurately portray a real disaster.
3. It contained a "touching" romantic story that was well-acted by Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet.



Many people who have seen this film or read about the *Titanic* realize that it is a good example of how the best plans of men can end in ruin. The *Titanic* was, in general, a well-designed ship, but was not as maneuverable as it could have been. It was certainly traveling too fast for the iceberg field through which it was passing.

However, few people have studied the *Titanic* sinking from the perspective of: "Why is it so hard for people to take decisive action when their lives are so clearly in danger? Why do people seem to 'cling to what they are familiar with' even when it is certain to end in disaster?"

That Ship

Some of the designers of the *Titanic* were on board when the ship struck the iceberg. They were able to figure out the important facts and inform the captain within a few minutes:

1. The *Titanic* would sink within 2 to 3 hours.
2. The seas were calm and there was no great danger for people to be in lifeboats. Distant

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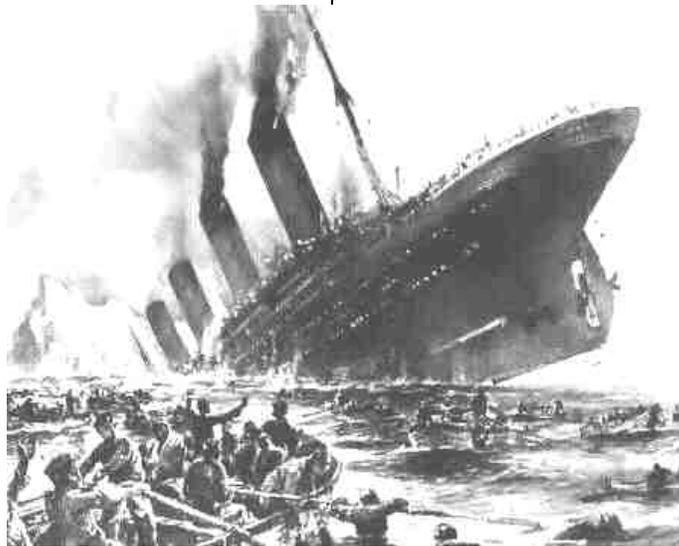
ships had been contacted by telegraph and would arrive in time to pick up people from lifeboats, but not in time to pick them up from the *Titanic*.

3. 2224 people were on board, and the combined lifeboats had a rated capacity of 1178.
4. There was no confirmed contact with any ship close enough to pick up survivors before the *Titanic* would sink.
5. The 28-degree water would freeze anyone who spent more than a few minutes in it. Survival of passengers and crew was dependent upon finding something—anything—that would keep them out of the cold water after the ship sunk.

As it turned out, only 711 of the 2224 passengers survived. Nearly all who survived were in the lifeboats. The captain was hesitant to tell the passengers that the ship was unquestionably going to sink—he was afraid that they might panic and nothing could be accomplished. But because the full truth was not known, many of the passengers were slow or hesitant to get into the boats. No one made sure that the boats launched were filled to capacity.

If the captain and his crew could have quickly accepted the magnitude of the disaster, and acted accordingly, what could have been done?

1. Many more people could have been put into the lifeboats. Because of the calm seas, they could have been



filled to **more than** their “rated” capacity—allowing 1300 to 1400 people to survive in them.

2. Every able-bodied man could have been put to work removing doors, furniture, trunks, barrels, large cooking vessels, and anything else that would float. These items could have been tied together to make rafts. (In reality, a few people did survive this way, but there was no organized effort to do it.)
3. Extreme measures could have been used to alert nearby ships. These ships could actually see the *Titanic* and the emergency flares she was launching, but they thought it was part of a celebration and did not realize she was in trouble until too late. The crew could have flashed a disaster signal with most of the ship’s lights; started a bonfire on the ship or in the water, removed a smoke-stack or some other part of the ship to indicate an extreme situation.

No one can say exactly how well the above three plans would have worked. But it is very likely that point #1 would have saved hundreds of lives, and point #2 dozens. The last point is the most uncertain, but if successful it might have saved everyone. The problem is a big ship looks so safe, even though it is sinking, it is hard for people to look to lifeboats, barrels, or other flimsy things, even though they are unquestionably better than a sinking ship.

Shelter in the Word is designed to help people become self-sufficient in their Bible study, so that they may be able to serve the Almighty Creator, and receive salvation through His Son. *Shelter* is not affiliated with any denomination, and teaches that eternal life is available to **individuals** who live by the Bible, regardless of their belonging to a church organization.

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Our Ship

It is too late to save anyone from the *Titanic* ship disaster. However, it is not too late to look at our own “ship’s” pending disasters—especially while we may have time to do something about them.

What do we depend on for our physical salvation? Do we depend on a job with a corporation? Do we depend on a bank for money or food from a grocery store every few days? Do we depend upon governments with “titanic” debts? Just because these institutions seem stable and have been in existence for a long time, does not mean that they always must be. If we can learn a lesson from the *Titanic*, it is that leaders do not always tell the truth or make the best decisions when disasters strike. Even after the *Titanic* sank, surviving officers of its crew told lies at the congressional investigation: The crew claimed that the ship remained in one piece when it sunk, while other eye-witness testimony insisted that the ship broke in half before sink-

ing—now proved beyond any doubt by recently discovered wreckage.

This article is too brief to go into the major difficulties with the above-mentioned institutions—future issues of *Shelter* will explore these topics. However, it might be good to do some investigation into the institutional “ships” that we are on. Questions that many people rarely ask are: How stable is my job? Is it financially solid, or is it about to “go under”? How secure are my bank or other investments? If there are major crop failures next year, will food be available in my city? Are all of our politicians really working for us or are some working toward a private agenda? How well am I prepared to deal with the problems likely to occur in many areas of society when some computers begin to fail because they were not properly designed to work into the year 2000?

This writer does not recommend that you stop your life and create a disaster in order to research these potential disasters, but these are issues that should not

What is different about this “religious publication”? Simple, Straight-forward and Free

When Jesus sent His apostles and disciples into the world to teach others, He did not give them handsome new clothes, He did not send them to public speaking school, He did not give them a budget, He did not tell them to build buildings, and He did not give them a human organizational structure. He gave them power to heal and to work other miracles, and he gave them a compelling message to which people would listen.

The New Testament does not contain any record of church buildings being built, church membership lists, religious publications being started, or even a complete Christian doctrinal statement. Rather, it teaches a way of life, and shows many examples of how people lived and were led by the Holy Spirit.

We are not saying that it is wrong to do the things mentioned above just because they are not in the Bible—after all, we are starting a religious publication. We are saying that the essential message of the Bible is about a way of life and a person’s relationship with his or her Creator. All of these other things **can help** us obtain that goal—or they sometimes **can hurt** us in obtaining that goal. We have to put “first things first.”

The New Testament teaches that all mature believers were responsible for teaching the Gospel to their neighbors and others they met (1Pet 3:15; Col 4:6; Acts 8:1-4, Heb 5:12). This responsibility continues to this day. We believe that too many people make a mistake by trying to pay some other man or group to study and teach the bible for them. The Gospel was taken abroad by apostles and evangelists who traveled to many cities, teaching in the synagogues, market places, city gates, and other places where people would gather together to hear the latest news and ideas. Today, these local gathering places have largely been replaced by TV, radio, and printed publications which are produced by large, heavily-funded organizations. While the Gospel is certainly preached in these forums, the “simplicity that is in Christ” is often lost.

Shelter in the Word intends to remain a **simple** publication: simple in design, simple to print, simple to mail, simple to study, and simple to copy and send to someone else. It will remain **straight-forward**: no groups to join, nothing to sell, no advertising, no requests for money—just straight-forward teaching from the Bible and the Spirit of God. *Shelter in the Word* will remain free. If the Eternal wants it to be published, He will provide for it.

Although our understanding of some scriptures may differ from those of other Bible teachers, we do not oppose the teaching of others. As the apostle Paul said, “But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice” (Phil 1:18). We believe that the Holy Spirit will, in time, give believers the understanding that they need: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13, NRSV).

be ignored. Studying these problems may be more important than some things that now take up your time.

Another important “ship” that many of us share is a church organization or fellowship group. We do not know if your group is healthy or about to sink—but you should think about it. Is it a vibrant place full of love, learning, and the Spirit of God, or is it simply a place where people go because they have gone there for a long time? Are you actively seeking to learn and serve others, or are you just putting in your time? Do you participate in your group’s service projects? If you give significant amounts of money, do you know what it is used for and do you pray about its use? (This writer has known people who collectively gave millions of dollars to a religious group, but knew little about how the money was used.)

This writer believes that the only **passengers** on “God’s ships” (His congregations) are little children or the infirm—everyone else is called to be a member of the crew. If you attend with a group that is hopelessly dead, do not stay there until the ship sinks—it may be much better to abandon ship now, helping others into lifeboats if they are willing to go. But if you are attending with a functioning congregation (a floating ship), then you may need to simply pray and study to be able to help your ship stay on course.



My Ship

Our personal lives can also be compared to a “ship.” They have their warning signs that let us know whether they are functioning or sinking. How is your life? Are your sins and problems getting worse or better? Are there parts of your life that are simply out of control? Are there things that you know that you should not do—things that are not good for you—but you simply cannot stop them?

Do not ignore obvious warning signs. Just because your life is continuing on for now, and because others do not see the big problems in your life, do not think that they will simply go away by themselves. Do you hate someone? Are you unable to stop telling lies? Do you steal on a regular basis? Are you unable to stop

using tobacco, alcohol, drugs, or pornography? Are you addicted to gambling, profanity, sex, TV, video games or some other activity?

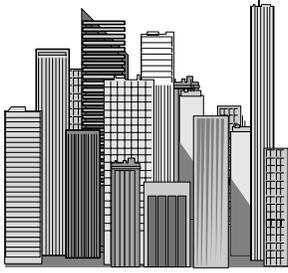
It is important to think about your life in the way that God sees it. Other ships saw the *Titanic* tilt in the water, but thought it was some kind of atmospheric distortion—not a real problem. God knew that the ship was going to sink. Similarly, other people may see hints of trouble in your life, but not believe that they are serious. They may admire or be in awe of you, just like so many people were in awe of the *Titanic*. But all of that awe did not stop the *Titanic* from sinking.

If your life has a major part that is out of control, your “ship” may be sinking. It is not pleasant to think about, but it would be a lot better to fix your ship or look for a lifeboat now, than it would be to try to survive after your ship sinks. So many people are afraid to deal with their sins and problems because they are afraid of what will happen if others find out. But who is our ultimate judge? God, or our friends and business associates? Furthermore, is it worse for our friends to see we are working on a problem, or for them to see that our life has “sunk” in disaster.



The Bible teaches several ways to recover from dangerous sins before it is too late: We must first repent of the sin and ask God for forgiveness. We can pray and ask for Jesus to live in us—and overcome our sin just as He overcame sin. If we are still having difficulty, we can fast—go without food and/or water for one or more days—to bring ourselves closer to our Savior.

If these methods do not work, it often works to write down a tangible goal to overcome the specific problem by a specific time. If that fails, then we should involve others in helping us. The Bible teaches us to confess our faults to other believers and ask them to pray for us so that we can be healed. Even though such confessions are embarrassing, it is often what we need to prevent a personal disaster. 



Outside The City

At the end of the book of Revelation in the Bible, the Apostle John sees a vision of the future promised to the true believer:

Rev 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

What a wonderful promise! This present world is so full of sadness and suffering for so many. Wouldn't **everyone** want to inherit what is promised here?

But there is also a warning at the end of Revelation. **Some** folks will not be in that City. Here is a list of who will be "Outside the City":

Rev 22:14 "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

15 **Outside** are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

No wonder such evil, despicable folks won't be allowed in the city! It would totally spoil the peace and beauty within.

But wait—there is **another** passage in Revelation that expands on the list of who will be "Outside the City."

Rev 21:8 But the _____, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (KJV)

Note that the name of one kind of such people has been ^{Pam Dewey} left blank in the quotation above. Can you guess who they might be? Well, they certainly must be pretty disgusting. Look at the company they keep! For instance, the old English word "monger" which we don't use much any more means "seller." Thus a whore monger is a person who "sells" the sexual favors of women--what we would today call a **pimp**! And the others listed are just as disgusting or worse.

So what despicable group belongs in the blank above?

The fearful.

What? How can that be! Just because someone is afraid of something, does that make them the equivalent of a **murderer**?!

And all those other labels describe people who **do** disgusting things. But fear is an **emotion**! How can it be the equivalent of these awful deeds?

Are you ever afraid of anything? If so, do you now need to worry that you will be—"Outside the City"?

In order to understand the warning in Revelation, we first need to consider more carefully the topic of **fear**.

Several Kinds of Fear

Not all fear is "created equal." There are several, quite different kinds of fear that people can experience.

#1. Fear of immediate physical danger—such as a rabid dog coming at you

Is **this** kind of fear a sin? No, as long as it does not lead to mindless panic. This fear is an instinct **built into you by God** for self-preservation!

#2. Fear of consequences of doing wrong—Either fear of God or fear of humans in authority (parents, police)

It is very clear from the scriptures that a **proper**

fear of God is a good thing:

Ps 112:1 Praise the LORD. Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who finds great delight in his commands.

In fact, such a fear of the LORD is even called wise:

Ps 111:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.

And the scriptures even indicate that a **proper** fear of the power of other authorities is a good thing:

Rom 13:3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you.

4 For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

These fears are right, wholesome, good, and will protect us from foolish acts. If those are the only kinds of fears you have, there is no condemnation.

But God says the fearful will be "Outside the City." So what kind of fear is He talking about?

Unhealthy and Unprofitable Fears

#3. **Phobias**—irrational fears of relatively harmless things or situations

It is one thing to be fearful of a rabid dog—and quite another to be so afraid of talking to strangers on the telephone that you cannot take care of a mix-up on your electric bill by calling the electric company! If you are afraid of something which the average, reasonable person is not afraid of, and if that fear is hindering you from living life to the full, then that fear is unhealthy and unprofitable.

#4. **Worry**—which is fear of the future

What did Jesus say about this kind of fear?

Matt 6:25 "Therefore I tell you, **do not worry** about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?

26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

The King James Version translation of the scripture above says to "take no thought" for tomorrow. This would almost seem to be saying you should never make any preparations for the future, such as budgeting your money! But the word translated "thought" actually implies "**anxious** thought," which is why the NIV translators chose the word "worry" to express this idea.

Even worse than worry is what is commonly referred to in modern times as:

#5 "Free-floating anxiety."

A "worry" is usually focused on something **specific**. It may be a bill that is due or a test you have to take tomorrow. "Anxiety," on the other hand often describes a nebulous fear of the future not necessarily tied to any one factor. An "anxious" person may not even be able to define what it is they fear!

Many modern folks seem to have worry down to an art. They don't even need a focal point. Unfortunately we may even joke about this tendency if we have it. We adopt cute names for our malady like "Worry Wart." We excuse ourselves by saying it's just a weakness: "I'm just a worrier—I can't help it."

But anxiety and worry and debilitating phobias are not cute. And they are not just weaknesses.

We need to openly label them what they are—**sins!**

But how can that be, you may ask? Isn't a sin something against the commands of God? There isn't one of the Ten Commandments that says, "Thou shalt not worry" is there?

No, but there are many commands in the scripture beside the Ten given to Moses on Mt. Sinai! And one of them is in the passage from Matthew quoted

above—note that Jesus gave a direct command: **Don't worry**. Therefore to go against that command is sin.

So back to our original question. Exactly what is a “fearful” person?

A **fearful** person is **not** just one who fears a specific situation. It is one who is **full of fear**—fear of **everything**—or fear of **nothing specific!**

So what is the purpose of this article—giving you something **more** to fear? Will you now **worry** that if you **worry** you will miss out on God's Kingdom?!

No, the purpose of this article is to help you see that if you do have a problem with being full of worry or anxiety, you cannot **solve** that problem by **hiding** from the problem.

Luke 12:25 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

26 Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?

You don't need to fear your fears or worry about your worries. You need to be set free. If you are **fearful**, you are in bondage to Satan. You are giving him a foothold in your mind. Nothing immobilizes Christians more than worry and anxiety. One of Satan's tricks is to take our natural human emotions—such as fear—and intensify them to the point where they overwhelm us.

1 Jn 4:18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

2 Tim 1:7 For God did not give us a spirit of timidity [KJV: “fear”], but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

But what if you've read those scriptures, tried to apply them in your life—but it hasn't worked for you?

Then perhaps you are making the same mistake **many** Christians do—they pray for God to take away their **feeling** of fear. They say they will tackle a scary situation **when** they no longer feel fear.

They have totally misunderstood how God works. They **pray** for no fear—and then wait. The person fearful of public speaking will refuse to give a speech until God takes away the fear. The person fearful of learning to drive a car will refuse to take lessons until God takes away the fear.

But that is not how to get rid of unhealthy fear.

Part of the key to escaping from the bondage of fear, worry, anxiety is understanding:

The opposite of “fearful” is not “fearless.”

A person high on drugs can be **fearless**. We have another word for people who face dangerous situations without a healthy fear of the consequences. We call them:

“Foolhardy”

The rest of the key to escaping from the bondage of fear, worry, and anxiety is understanding:

The true opposite of “fearful” is “courageous.”

In Rev. 21, the KJV translators chose the word “fearful” to describe the Greek word for one of the groups of people who would be “Outside the City.” The NIV translators chose a word which may perhaps make the concept more clear to modern minds: the “cowardly.” A coward is someone who is “shamefully unable to control his fears and so shrinks from danger or trouble.” (Webster's New World Dictionary)

A hero isn't someone who has **no fear** when facing death to save another. A hero is someone with the **courage** to do the right thing **in spite of** natural fear!

God doesn't expect you to **feel** no fear. He expects you to **act** on His **word** in spite of your fear. **That is faith.**

God doesn't just take away the emotion of fear. That isn't how faith works!

If you fear something that is truly hindering your ability to live life to the full, you need to take your faith in God, no matter how **tiny** it is in this particular matter, and act on it. As you act, God will **add to your faith**. And you **will** be able to do the scary thing. And as you succeed, it will automatically increase your faith and your courage for the **next step**.

It is **not** a sin to fear. **It is** a sin to wallow in that fear until it becomes worry and immobilizes you! **In fact, that is exactly why it is a sin.** For wallowing in fear keeps you from accomplishing all that God has for you to do. And it gives evidence that you don't believe God will **keep His promises**.

Luke 12:32 Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

Rom 8:15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you re-

ceived the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”

16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.

17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

The word “Abba” in the original language implies an intimate relationship between father and child. In fact, it might be more accurately translated “Daddy” in modern English.

God is our Daddy, and we are his children. And Jesus said:

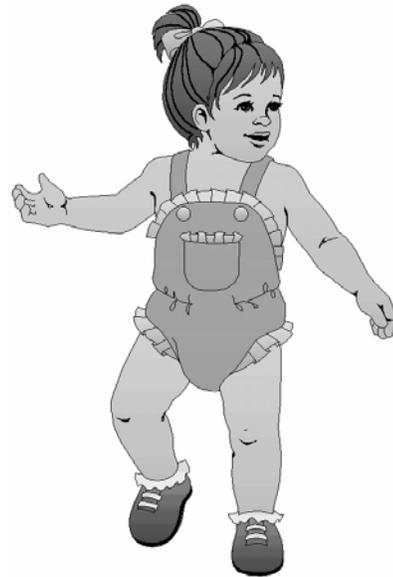
Matt 18:3 And he said: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like **little** children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Of course He did not intend that we take on **all** the qualities of little children. We are to be spiritually mature. But the one quality in particular we are to have like little children is absolute confidence in the ability of our Father to take care of us. For He has promised:

Rom 8:28 And we know that in **all things** God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Have you ever seen an older child at a swimming pool who is afraid of the water? No matter how much coaxing Dad does to get him to jump in, promising to be right next to him in the water and make sure he is not hurt, the child will continue to concentrate on the water—and his fear—instead of on Dad and his promise.

But have you ever seen a **little** child, a toddler, at the same pool with Daddy? Mommy will take her to the edge of the pool where Daddy is waiting, and Daddy will say, “Jump, Sweetie! Daddy will catch you.” And she will fling herself into his arms with abandon!



We speak of a “leap of faith.” Next time fear or worry wells up in you, make that **leap** of faith—into **your** Daddy’s arms. He **will** be there to catch you!

And when the Book of Revelation finally all comes to pass, you will find yourself...

Inside the City.





Its About Time

Biblical Chronol-

ogy Made Easy!

Try this simple quiz of how well you know American history. Give the date for the following events:

1. *The first successful flight of an airplane by the Wright Brothers*
2. *The Battle of Gettysburg*
3. *The dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima*
4. *D-Day, World War II*
5. *The “midnight ride of Paul Revere.”*

How did you do? Most folks, even college-educated, would likely be hard-put to give the exact date for more than one or two of these events. In fact, most would likely have trouble even giving the year of the events.

But consider those events again, and try this quiz:

Put the events in chronological order from earliest to most recent.

Now how did you do? Most adults, even with just a high school education, would likely be able to set all those events in order: 5, 2, 1, 4, 3.

Few people have the natural ability or the determination to remember numerous dates of history. But it certainly is **not necessary** to have such details in mind to *understand* the most important aspects of our country’s history. It is much more important to have at least a general sense of the *relative sequence* of important historical events.

The same is true for studying the events of the Bible! Many folks set out to try to “memorize” all sorts of dates and events in the Bible, but quickly get dis-

couraged. The history of the United States of America, from the Declaration of Independence to the present, covers less than three hundred years. But the recorded history in the Bible covers a period of over 4,000 years! Furthermore, the exact dates of some Bible events are in dispute—the thorough student would be required to remember several possible dates for each event. Thus, the project can seem overwhelming, and most people just “give up.”

But, just as in American history, you really *don’t* need to know “exact” dates in order to understand the basic important facts of Bible history. It is far more important to get in mind the *relative sequence* of events. In fact, the Bible seldom includes *exact* dates for the many events covered in its pages. We must often go to external historical records to try to determine, for instance, the years of David’s reign over Israel. But we *can* determine from the Biblical record the *order* of events.

In order to clearly understand much of what you read in the scriptures, you really *do* need to know that Abraham lived long before Daniel! And you really *do* need to know that Jesus’ ministry was over 1,000 years after the events of the Exodus. If you misunderstand the *sequence* of events, and the *general* time frame of the lives of various Bible characters, you can make all sorts of erroneous assumptions about the things you read in the Bible.

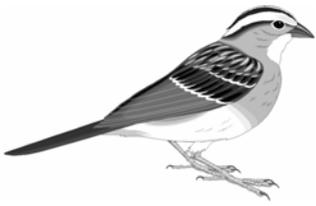
In this regular section of *Shelter*, we will be giving you simple tips on how to “set in order” in your mind the events and the lives of people in the Bible. You will thus be equipped to better understand the “cause and effect” of the interaction of those people and events in the Plan of God.

In our next issue, we will assist our readers to begin to construct a *simple* time line of Biblical history that they may use in their own independent Bible Study. It is our goal with *Shelter* to equip disciples of Jesus to take responsibility for their own growth in Biblical understanding. 

Bargain Bibles



Did You Know?
Today, you can buy a copy of the Bible for under \$10. But 600 years ago, the only way to make a copy of the Bible was by hand. In 1398 it would probably have cost the average person a whole year’s wages to pay a professional “scribe” to make such a copy for personal use. After Johannes Gutenberg invented the “movable type” printing press in about 1450, Bibles became **much** more affordable!



Natural Faith

Ramona M. Leiter

Biblical Principles Seen In God's Creation



“Consider the lilies of the field...”
—Mat. 6:28



Taking the Bible Literally

There often is great debate over how literally to take the Bible. For some it is just a good book—part of the history of great literature. For some it is a symbolic way to look at life—the truths of life, the way things should be. References to the physical are merely easy ways to understand the spiritual principles. For others the Bible is a definitive blueprint—a guide book on how they and mankind should live life.

Well, regardless of where you are on this issue, there are some cases where I believe one should take heed and cover all the bases by taking the scripture both figuratively and literally. It could save headaches, save grief, save houses.

Matt 7:24 Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

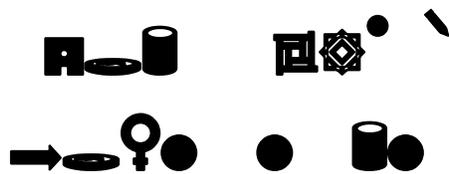
26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

During the winter of 1998 the full wrath of El Nino hit the California coastline. For weeks the relentless storms caused flooding, wind damage, erosion, mud slides. When I saw the images on TV of million-dollar mansions precariously perched on hills ready to collapse at any time, I felt sorry for the home owners.

But when I found out how these homes were often knowingly built on sand dunes, landfills, unstable cliffs, I can't help but wonder what would have happened if the contractors, or the homeowners would have at least **looked** at the above Biblical passage and taken it seriously. Maybe it is just symbolic. But the TV images don't lie.

Just as in your spiritual life, it does not pay to build your house on the sand! 



The TV is my shepherd, I shall not want,
It makes me lie down on the sofa,
It leads me away from the scriptures,
It damages my soul,

It leads me in the path of sex and violence for the sponsor's sake,
Yea, though I walk in the shadow of my Christian responsibilities, there will be no interruption, for the TV is with me,

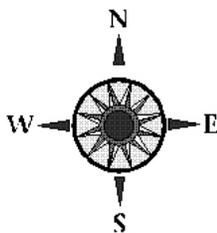
It's cable and remote control, they comfort me,

It prepares a commercial before me in the presence of my worldliness,

It anoints my head with humanism,
my coveting runneth over,
Surely laziness and ignorance shall follow me all the days of my life,
And, I shall dwell in my house watching TV forever, Amen.

(Author unknown, adapted from Psalm 23. For some really good advice, read the real Psalm 23 written by David from your own Bible!) 

Navigating the Bible



Finding Your Way Around

Most people are familiar with how to find information they need in an encyclopedia. The information is arranged in alphabetical order. There are key words at the top of each page to help find where you want to go.

Most people are also familiar with how to look up information in other books, such as instruction manuals or cookbooks. You can turn to the front of such volumes to find a “table of contents,” which lists the main sections of the book. And you can turn to the back of such volumes and find an “index” which lists topics in the volume by key words in alphabetical order.

But when it comes to the Bible, it is not that simple! Even having a bunch of college degrees may be no help to you if you’ve never studied the Bible for yourself. For the Bible is not “constructed” the way encyclopedias, cook books or instruction manuals are. If you wish to learn what the Bible has to say about the Way of Life God intended for His creation, you need to learn how to “get around” in this Book!

In each issue of *Shelter*, we plan to provide tips on “navigating” through the Bible—how you can use the Bible itself, along with Bible reference works, to **investigate for yourself** what God has had to say on topics of interest to you.

Book, Chapter and Verse

The Bible is not simply one book, although our modern Bibles look that way because they are bound in a cover that looks like one book. The Bible is actually a collection of 66 small books, written by a variety of authors, over an extended period of time. These books are grouped into two major “collections,” called, in most Bibles, the Old Testament and the New Testament. These two collections are then bound together under one cover and labeled “the Bible.”

If you look in the front of your Bible, you will likely find a “table of contents” that will list these 66 **books** and give the page number where each book

begins. If you turn to the beginning of one of these smaller books, such as Genesis, you will see that the book itself is divided into **chapters**, usually a page or more in length. Each of these chapters are divided into small bite-sized sections of a sentence or two, called **verses**.

Finding your way around in the Bible is much like finding your way to an apartment in your hometown. If you know the *street*, the *building* number, and the *apartment* number, you can quickly find a new friend’s apartment. In like manner, any small section of the Bible you wish to refer to can be described by telling the *book*, the *chapter*, and the *verse*. In *Shelter*, as in most Bible study materials, we use common abbreviations for the names of the books of the Bible. They should usually match the abbreviations used in your Bible. As an example, if we wish to refer to the second verse of the first chapter of Genesis, we use the following standard form:

Gen 1:2

Gen abbreviates the **Book** (Genesis)
1 is the **Chapter** (1)
2 is the **Verse** (2)

First comes the Bible book name, then the chapter number, then a colon, then the verse number.

You will almost never find a book refer to a “page number” in a Bible. Why? Because Bibles come in all shapes and sizes and with many sizes of print. Also, some bibles start the New Testament with page 1, where others continue the numbering from the Old Testament. Thus, the section you want to find may be on a greatly different page number in **your** Bible than in your friend’s Bible. But you can both quickly turn to the same section by knowing the *Book*, *Chapter*, and *Verse*.

When you first begin seriously studying the Bible, you will likely have to use the index in the front of your Bible to find the page where a *book* in your Bible begins. But most students quickly discover the value of “memorizing” the *order* of the books so that you can quickly skim to the part of the Bible you want. If you are new at Bible study, this may seem like a monumental task right now! But if you study the Bible regularly, you will find that it “comes naturally” after a time. And you will soon find that the “addresses” in the Bible become as familiar as the street addresses in your own neighborhood! 

A Closer Look



Common Misconceptions About Bible Topics

Research has shown that the majority of Americans who consider themselves “Christian,” including those who attend regular religious services every week, have never read the Bible all the way through. In spite of this, you would likely find that almost every such person has all sorts of concepts in their mind about Biblical topics that they have never studied **for themselves** in the Bible! Where do they get their ideas about such topics as heaven, hell, the Devil, angels, and sin?

Although you would no doubt find that some of these folks could point to religious education classes in their youth as the source of some of their concepts, you might be surprised to find that the **major sources** for such concepts in the minds of many are outside the walls of church buildings. For our very American “culture” is unexpectedly the main source of information on religious ideas for a large part of our citizenry. It is from movies, television shows, popular artwork, magazines, newspapers, novels—even mass-merchandising in stores—that many folks **absorb** information about religious topics.

If you doubt this, ask several people at random what picture **first** comes to their mind when you say the words “the Devil.” If they are honest, most folks will describe a fellow in what looks like a red suit of long underwear, with horns on his head like a goat, a pointy beard, perhaps feet like a goat, and holding a pitchfork. And where did they get that picture? Probably from a cartoon they saw, or Halloween costumes for sale in the local department store, or maybe even a famous painting from the Middle Ages. But if you asked them to find such a description in the Bible, they would be at a loss to know where to look.

In this regular feature of *Shelter*, “A Closer Look,” we will be taking a **closer look** at the common conceptions of some of these religious topics, to see what their sources might be in society. And then we will take a **closer look** at what the Bible **really** says about these topics.

In this installment, let’s take a look at one of the most popular religious topics on the American scene today:

Angels

Angels are so popular these days that there are shops everywhere that specialize totally in selling **only** gift items with an angel motif—everything from angel statues and paintings and inspirational plaques to angel-themed books, jewelry, and dolls. You can find these shops anywhere from small-town business districts to big city malls. The big chain bookstores such as *Walden Books* devote whole sections of their display shelves to books about angels. Movies and TV shows both have recurring angelic themes, such as the recent hit “Touched By an Angel.” The so-called “Angel on my Shoulder” jewelry pins have become an extremely common fashion accessory—highlighted on television during the O.J. Simpson trial when Nicole Simpson’s sisters showed up at the trial wearing these angel pins and urging others all across America to adopt wearing them as a memorial to their slain sister.

Most of these sources of information in our society reflect—and help perpetuate—one or both of the following **common conceptions** of angels:

1. Angels commonly look like delicate, beautiful women with billowing hair, pastel Victorian-style dresses, and huge white wings. They also either “wear” what looks like a golden circular metal ring on their head, or have a circular “glow” around their head—either of which is known as a “halo.”
2. Good people who die are transported to a place called “heaven” where they **become** angels (in this case, both male and female angels). They are given a set of wings, a harp, and a halo upon arrival in heaven. They may find that they are later given the “job” of returning to earth to interact with live humans in some way. This angel-human interaction might be with family members left behind (as in the musical “Carousel”), or strangers (as in the old 1950’s television series “Topper.”) Some literature portrays angels as just overlooking and secretly influencing the lives of their loved ones below from their observation perch on a heavenly cloud, such as is frequently shown in the comic strip “Family Circus,” where the dead

grandfather is a “guardian angel” for his grandchildren.

Even before angels became the latest “craze” in American mass-marketing, the concept noted in number one above has been perpetuated for generations every Christmas, as millions of “tree topper” angel ornaments, usually of the Victorian-dressed woman variety, are placed on top of Christmas trees.



Biblical angel or old superstition?

But can this description be found in the Bible? Does the Bible describe such lovely winged visions showing up to talk to Biblical characters such as Daniel, and Mary, the mother of Jesus?

No. Although there are various kinds of “winged beings” described in the Bible as inhabiting heaven, in every contact described in the Bible between people and angelic messengers on earth, the angels are usually not described in any detail at all. In the few passages that contain any description there is no mention of wings, and although they may be described as unusually “glowing” or majestic, they have the facial and bodily appearance of a **man**. There is no mention of a halo on their head—and they certainly aren’t wearing Victorian dresses! It would appear that all of the common qualities given to angels in popular pictures and statues and all of the other merchandise for sale in angel shops is purely the product of **myth** and **superstition** and fanciful **fantasy** of artists’ minds.

To really understand what angels are like and what they do, you may want to read about them in the

Bible. Some Bible stories about angels can be found in the following passages:

Genesis 16; Judges 13; Daniel 10:1-19; Zechariah 1:7-12; Luke 1; Luke 2; Acts 12:1-11.

As for the other concept of angels, listed in number two above, it is very clear from the Bible that people—good or bad—do not somehow “become” angels at death. Angels are described in the Bible as being a totally separate creation by God from mankind, created long before Adam and Eve. The writer of the book of Hebrews says, “Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?” (Heb 1:14). The phrase “those who will inherit salvation” is speaking of those humans who are converted, faithful followers of God, who will be raised from death to have eternal life in fellowship with God as part of His family for all eternity. Thus Hebrews declares that the angels are sent to serve **people**.

In 1 Corinthians 6:1, the apostle Paul also makes it clear that humans and angels are two entirely different creations when he tells Christian believers: “Do you not know that we will judge angels?”

There are **no** Biblical passages which give even a hint that humans might somehow “become” angels. Thus, this popular concept of the nature of angels also seems to be built entirely on myth and superstition. It makes for interesting fantasy plots for writers of novels, motion pictures and television. But it is just that—complete fantasy. 

Did You Know?

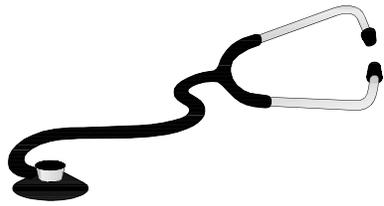


Angelic Words

The English word “angel” is used by the translators of most Bible versions as a translation of the Greek word *aggelos* in the New Testament. This Greek word **doesn’t** mean “heavenly being.” It simply means “messenger.”

In the original Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, the same word, *aggelos*, is sometimes used for normal, human “messengers” also. But by the time of the first English translations of the Bible, the English word “angel” had come to take on the specific meaning of “heavenly messenger.” So the translators decided to use the word “messenger” when referring to human messengers, and reserve “angel” specifically for “heavenly messengers.”

Listening



to the Heart

by Richard A. Weidenheft

Prov 18:13 He who answers a matter before listening—that is his folly and his shame.

Usually when we read this proverb, we think of getting both sides of a story before we come to a conclusion—and that is certainly a valid application. But there is another application which goes far beyond just getting all the facts. It has to do with communicating at the deepest level, with learning to listen from the heart.

Three Levels of Communication

The first level of communication is what might be called the *information* or *factual* level. It involves events and happenings. Here are some examples:

It sure is cold today.
My Aunt Betty just had an operation.
I got a raise last week.
The Yankees won last night.

Casual conversations with the clerk in a grocery store or with our associates at work are usually at this level and deal with the activity at hand (how much the potatoes cost, when the project will be completed, etc.). Very little is revealed about the speaker and there is very little risk of contradiction or embarrassment.

The second level of communication goes a little deeper; it is the *opinion* or *belief* level. For example, we might say:

I think washing dishes is women's work!
You should get married.



Abortion is murder.
All Republicans are pro-business.

On this level, we are revealing a little more about ourselves, about our values and opinions, our priorities and beliefs. We are taking a greater risk of being contradicted; therefore, we usually won't get into discussing deeply held beliefs with people we don't know fairly well. However, opinions can be quite academic. We reveal who we are and we learn who others really are only when our conversation goes to an even deeper level.

The third level of communication is the *feeling* level; it involves revealing our innermost thoughts, our emotions, who we really are at a given point in time. Examples of expressions that convey feelings are these:

I'm ready to explode.
Let's have a party, I'm in the mood for fun.
I'm ready to throw in the towel.
I feel like I'm carrying the weight of the world on my shoulders.

Feelings are frequently communicated along with facts and opinions by facial expressions, tone of voice, body language, even by silence. For example, we learn Jesus' feelings when He wept over Jerusalem, when He sweat in Gethsemane, when He threw the money changers out of the temple, and when He took little children into His arms and blessed them.

Feelings Are Unpopular

Unfortunately, we live in a culture that places very little value on people's feelings. We glorify accomplishments and activities, money and fame, beauty and brawn, productivity and creativity; but feelings get trampled in the dust. Jealousy, hurt, rage, insecurity, ambivalence, hope, joy, and aspirations—they just don't put anything into the pocket-book. Yet everywhere we turn we find people crying out for somebody to really care about how they feel—to the point that millions of people will pay someone to listen to and to help them deal with their feelings.

We all started out expressing our feelings very freely. As infants and toddlers we cried when we were wet or hungry, stamped our feet when we didn't get our way, and laughed when we were happy. But as we got older, we discovered the serious risks involved in expressing true feelings. Parents chastised, siblings laughed, and peers mocked. So we learned to keep feelings inside to avoid embarrassment. Boys, especially, learn to be cool and macho under all circumstances. To be sure, controlling emotions is an important part of maturity; but our culture tends to the extreme. We are not taught to express feelings; and we certainly don't learn to appreciate them in others. We seem to think that repressing feelings somehow takes care of the problems that cause them.

Nevertheless, whether expressed or not, whether understood or not, feelings remain as real as ever and most of us long to be able to reveal them; **we crave secure relationships that will allow us the freedom to express our deepest feelings.**



As Christians we are to love our neighbors as ourselves (Luke 10:27). We are encouraged to carry one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2). Many of those burdens are of the heart—loneliness, guilt, despair, fear; they are burdens which can only be lightened if we really get to know the one who bears them. It is through listening that we get to know and love others—by listening, not just to facts, but to feelings that accompany those facts.

Unfortunately, many people find it difficult to communicate anything except information—they learned their lesson well as children. Even in their closest relationships they can't get much beyond the "Pass the salt" stage. Even many spouses don't share opinions, much less feelings. Chances are that at the beginning of their relationship, one or both tried to reveal feelings, but they were cut off or turned off or laughed at. Eventually they stopped trying. The other spouse didn't know how to listen or wasn't able to cope with the feeling level of communication.

Reacting to Feelings

When others begin sharing their feelings with us, we can choose to respond in a number of different ways. For example, if they are upset, we can respond with facts or information:

Well, the sun always rises in the morning.
Time heals all wounds.

It's always darkest before the dawn.

If a person comes to us all excited about a new car, we can respond with information—a story about the last new car we bought. Responding to feelings with facts is usually a clear message to the speaker that we really don't care, or that we can't or won't handle their feelings. They'll probably back off and we'll never get to know them better. We may continue to be superficial friends—but we'll be emotional strangers.



A second way to react to feelings is with opinions. If someone comes to us all upset about a problem, we can answer with an opinion—before we've really heard the matter or been asked for advice. For example:

You shouldn't do that!
You shouldn't feel that way.

That's a terrible thing to say.
Don't take yourself so seriously.
Abortion is murder.

Our opinions may be valid; they may be the truth of God's Word; and they do have their place in a relationship. But before we share them, we must first make certain that we have really heard the matter fully—and that involves listening to feelings.

The third way we can respond to feelings is with empathy and understanding. We can try to find out how the person feels deep down inside. We can resist the urge to react with our own experiences and feelings—at least for a while. We can really get to know how the speaker feels, asking questions that will encourage him to continue sharing himself:

Would you like to talk about it?
How did you come to feel that way?
Have you ever felt this way before?
What bothers you most about the situation?

Once we begin hearing the feelings, we are really getting to know the person. When we feel like crying when he cries, when we feel like singing when he sings—then we know that we have really begun to hear the whole matter—and we will be in a much better position to help him.

As Christians we should be compassionately involved with one another. We should feel a deep sense of belonging and commitment. As Paul wrote, "If one part [of the body] suffers, every part suffers with it; if

one part is honored, every part rejoices with it (I Cor. 12:26).

This kind of empathy can be accomplished only if we know how to listen to others at the feeling level.

Being made privy to another's feelings is a great trust—and it's our responsibility not to betray that trust by sharing intimate information with third parties. Nothing destroys friendships sooner than a betrayal of the trust that intimate conversation implies.

Empathy Is Not Necessarily Approval

Listening from the heart does not necessarily mean approval of what someone else is doing or thinking. If a brother comes to you all discouraged and distraught—and he's drinking heavily—you should not approve of his sin. But before you "restore him gently" you should make sure you have heard the whole matter. Hear his feelings; try to identify and empathize with them. Follow the example of Jesus in the compassion He expressed for the woman taken in adultery. He apparently confronted her self-righteous accusers in such a way that they had to retire from the scene, leaving her unchastised. He really felt for this woman and lifted her up—but then He told her, "Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:11).

As Christians, we can disagree with what someone has done or is doing; we can witness to them and tell them that God's Word has the answers to their problems; we can tell them they are sinners and need a Savior. But a self-righteous Pharisee can do all those things too. If we really want to lift their burdens and lead them to the Way of life, we should hear their feelings and be able to identify with them.

The prophet Ezekiel referred to those who were "sighing and crying" for the sins of Israel (Eze 9:4). The implication of this phrase seems to be that these people really felt for the hurts and suffering of their countrymen—and that they detested and decried the sins that caused those hurts.

We should feel the same way for those around us. Feel for them; strive to listen to their feelings; encourage them to share their feelings with us; empathize with those feelings; then condemn and decry sin because it hurts people.

Community Among Believers

Of all people, Christians should have a genuine sense of community—of belonging to one another—of

being part of the same family. In order to have this deep sense of caring, we must learn to communicate deeply with one another. We must be able to share our feelings with the confidence that our brethren will listen with deep love and compassion, not with condemnation and lust for gossip.

Guidelines for Effective Listening

1. Listen to feelings, not just words. Think about the person—what is he feeling? What experiences from his past have gone into what he is saying?
2. Make a conscious effort to restrain your desire to talk about yourself and your own experiences. Concentrate on the speaker, not on how you can answer his sentences, or what you will say when he is finished speaking.



3. Try to express interest through eye contact and body language; if you disapprove or are impatient, don't show it in your facial expressions.
4. Ask questions that will encourage further expression of feelings.
5. Take "perception checks" from time to time to make sure you are understanding the speaker correctly. Ask questions such as, "Do I understand you to be saying..."; "In other words..."
6. Don't jump to conclusions or pass judgment until you have heard the whole matter.

Romans 12 lists a number of different gifts that Christians have; one of them involves listening. "If a man's gift is... encouraging, let him encourage... if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully" (Rom 12:6-8). What better way to minister to others than by listening from your heart to their heart? What better way to encourage others than to deeply feel what they are feeling—to be a friend who really understands! 

The Ministry of Parenthood

By the Gorrell Family

Anyone who has been blessed with the name of “father” or “mother” has been granted a precious place of honor and great responsibility in the eyes of **the Father of Heaven and Earth!** Indeed it is a job more important to Him than any other career or commission in the world! Do we as parents view this holy, ordained stewardship as serious as He? Or have we allowed the attitudes of this world to effect our view? For the world would have us believe our children are a burden; mere possessions we pass on to others to train and watch over as we tend to “more important things”, and this is perfectly fine, just as long as we make sure we squeeze in some “quality time” now and then in our hectic schedules.

How do you think the Creator of the Universe sees the typical, twentieth century family? How might He evaluate **your family?** Are you pleasing the Eternal in overseeing the children He has given you—the next generation of His family? These are questions we need to ask ourselves, if we are seeking His will in our lives as we make ready for the return of our Messiah. Perhaps the first question we should address is:

Just What Is a Stewardship?

A simple definition of a steward is “one who manages another’s property, finances, or other affairs” (Webster’s). To put it another way, a steward is an overseer or manager of something that does not belong to him. The specific responsibility or job that he has been given by his superior is called his stewardship. Likewise then, the Eternal actually assigns human beings with certain responsibilities that serve to maintain and advance His divine purposes. If you have not yet considered your parental role as a divine stewardship, hopefully after reading this article, you will.

Yes, most people would not have much difficulty viewing a minister in a church as this kind of steward, but a parent? First, let’s notice just how much emphasis our Creator places on parenthood in regard to the building and maintaining of the church. Paul was inspired to define the eligibility of those who serve in congregations by saying they must be “husbands of only one wife, **and good managers of their children**” (1Tim 3:12, NASB, emphasis ours throughout).

This says two important things. One, it was a **father** who was in charge of the well being of the children in his household, his wife being the helper, unlike the current Western custom where it’s the mother’s

sole job to rear the children. Of course, both parents should play an active role in their children’s upbringing, but the husband, being the head of the household, should not simply leave the children up to Mom. Actually, in

the past couple of decades our culture has moved further in the direction of the father playing a more active role, which is positive to see, so long as it is not because **mothers** are abandoning their family responsibilities in pursuit of careers.

But another point with Paul’s statement about “deaconship” is just how much credence the Eternal places on child-rearing as defining what kind of Christians were to serve the church. The Eternal placed such weight on family here that having a sound one was actually a prerequisite. Do modern day churches use **this yardstick** in determining the qualifications of those who serve in them? They should!

Now, let’s notice another qualifying Scripture from Paul in Titus 1:6-7. Here we have instruction on how the newly formed church at Crete was to appoint elders to oversee the brethren there. Paul explained that “**the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward.**” (v. 7) But again there was a prerequisite to first be a successful steward at home. He was to be “the husband of one wife, **having children who believe,** not accused of dissipation or rebellion.” (v. 6) Now, here is a new twist on the matter. Not only were the children to be well behaved, they were to be “believers.”

Is this verse saying that just because the Father chooses to call us, He will call our children too? Yes, it is!

Let’s take another look at a couple of familiar Scriptures and examine what our Heavenly Father promises to children of believers: Acts 2:38-39 explains how we receive the Holy Spirit. On the Holy Day of Pentecost, Peter explained to the new converts there that they must repent and be baptized in the name of the Savior. But notice the very next statement: “For the promise is **for you and your children.**” Is not the



Eternal saying here that as He called you, He will call your children also **through you**? It's all part of the package. True, just because our Heavenly Father calls someone, does not necessarily mean they will accept that calling. But that's why we as parents play such a critical role. For we are to lead them to their Heavenly Father, who will continue to lead them way after our role as parents has diminished or expired. Even if only one parent is a believer, his or her children are still considered holy:

1Cor 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.

Notice what the Eternal instructed the children of Israel immediately after giving them the commandments and statutes at Mt. Sinai, setting them apart as His chosen people. This is such an important passage for believing parents today, we are going to present it in its entirety:

Deut 6:1 Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded *me* to teach you, that you might do *them* in the land where you are going over to possess it,

2 **so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God**, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.

3 O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do *it*, that it may be well with you **and that you may multiply greatly**, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, *in* a land flowing with milk and honey.

4 Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!

5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

6 These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.

7 **You shall teach them diligently to your sons** and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.

9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.



This is the formula for the Eternal's chosen people. It is part of **our** commission. We are not only are to physically care for and train our children, we are also expected to **diligently** (a key word) teach them the ways of the Eternal, so that they will not depart from it when they grow up, for it will literally be ingrained in them (Prv 22:6). The Bible's repeated instruction reveals this doesn't just happen, it takes daily effort. The training of young

minds to understand the Bible and hear their Creator is what the Eternal has established as:

The Ministry of Parenthood

By putting our life's focus, our concentrated efforts into being effective parents to our children, we are actually accomplishing a ministry that can witness and further establish the work of the Almighty in a very powerful way. Consider this, if we successfully teach our children the Bible so that they follow it and accept their Savior when they reach sufficient maturity, they too most likely will have children. And if they pass their faith onto their children, this pyramid of growth builds onto and strengthens the church long after our life of service is spent.

Let's use a hypothetical example to display just how powerful this concept is in the long-term plan of salvation. Let's say we have a husband and wife who are devout believers, and say they have three children, who each grow up and give their lives in service to the Eternal. Then let's say those three eventually each have three children, who in turn grow up in a faithful environment that leads them to live a spiritual life as well. This would make two generations of believers, stemming from the two original believers. If these conditions continue for 5 generations, there will be hundreds of believers! That is not counting the many people outside this extended family that will have heard and seen the witness of their lives!

This concept is a profound one indeed. And we should not look at it as unreachable. Why? Because it's a principle that the Eternal Himself designed for His people in order to establish, perpetuate and preserve the church to which the Messiah will return at the end of this age. Read the following passages taken from the book of Psalms with this extended family concept in mind:

Ps 78:1 Listen, O my people, to my instruction; Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old,

3 Which we have heard and known, **And our fathers have told us.**

4 **We will not conceal them from their children, But tell to the generation to come** the praises of the LORD, And His strength and His wondrous works that He has done.

5 For He established a testimony in Jacob And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers **That they should teach them to their children,**

6 **That the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, That they may arise and tell them to their children,**

7 That they should put their confidence in God And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments,

How could it be stated more clearly? The Eternal not only **wants** this spiritual passing of the baton from parents to children, He commands it!

Ps 102:28 The children of Thy servant **will** continue, and their descendants **will** be established before Thee.

No question marks or "ifs" in that verse! Just a solid affirmation from the Father Himself that His people will be sustained **through His servants' children.** Are we going to be the ones who fulfill this prophecy? It is laid out before us for the taking.

Living by the Bible Bears Fruit

The ministry of parenthood can produce wonderful fruit—tangible benefit for the entire family. When parents are in control and use their authority for the benefit of all, and when children are obedient and content, there is a harmonious, peaceful cooperation and respect for every member. This is a family that shines in a world where chaos, rebellion, and disre-

spect is common within the family unit. Nearly all parents want to have the type of family first mentioned, but so often they cannot seem to achieve it. Yet, if our Creator's laws are applied on a consistent basis, this type of home will be experienced.

Our Savior admonished in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." **If we let our light shine by the way we manage our family, this perhaps more than any other area of life, will catch peoples' attention.** They will ask, "What are they doing that I'm not?" This may very well be a first step that our Heavenly Father could use to lead others to His truth.

Sound too simple? Well, no amount of intellectual proclaiming of the gospel will affect a person who is struggling in life and lacking in wisdom as much as providing some practical answers to their problems. Then the intellectual and spiritual truths that are in the Bible will follow. If we look at the example of the Messiah's ministry on earth, that is exactly how He dealt with many of those with whom He came in contact. **He addressed their needs first, then that opened the door for spiritual understanding.** He fed the hungry, healed the sick, and used common life situations to reveal deeper spiritual realities. Really, if we just think about it, everything about this physical existence can be used as a spiritual lesson. Certainly one of the best places we can learn the Eternal's ways and grow in His grace and knowledge is through the family.

But in order for our families to be holy in the sight of the Eternal, we must diligently work to instill His love—and His Word—in our children. Sometimes this may seem like a monumental task, with all the negative pulls and influences our children are bombarded with on a regular basis. Many parents have also learned the hard way that "cramming it down their throats" only drives them further away.

The natural tendency of parents is to turn to a church group with Bible School classes and numerous social activities. We all realize that such groups are not perfect, but we hope that some of the teaching and "good influence" will rub off on our children. These groups vary greatly. Sometimes they have the desired positive effect. Other times they turn out to be a social club with little spiritual preparation.

The important issue is that parents are responsible for teaching their children. Delegating this responsibility to a church group is not delegating it to the Eternal; it is delegating it to a human church group. If parents do decide to let a church group be part of their children's teaching, it should not replace their role as

spiritual educators. Parents cannot know what is being taught or done in a group unless they are actively involved. The effectiveness of any teaching process is ultimately controlled by two issues:

Does the teaching actually work?

Do teachers practice what they preach?

If we teach out of the Bible with the Eternal's understanding, we cannot fail with the first issue—we have truth. The second issue is where we usually have trouble. Do we, as parents actually live by the Bible? Do we study the Bible ourselves? Do we include our children in studying the Bible and are these times that are set aside treated as a burden or a joy? Even more importantly, **do our children see us use Bible teaching and principles in every-day decisions?**

Good classroom and social programs can have a place, but we must realize that the ultimate teaching job rests on the parents. We must take upon ourselves the responsibility to teach our children. We can begin by using...

The Bible as Our Teacher's Guide

Teaching young minds about the ways of the Eternal should be a challenging, yet exciting and uplifting endeavor for the entire family. Although every family is unique, the Eternal has given some very specific patterns in His Word that we may use as a guide. We must look to the Bible, not to find specific answers to situations that occur in the family, but to **search out the principles that are given** that will enable us to make wise parental decisions. This takes diligence and prayerful dedication, for it is very easy to allow human nature to react in a negative or counterproductive way.

This article cannot begin to discuss all of the possible materials for teaching the Bible to children. We recommend that you pray and ask the Eternal to

show you what plan is best for you. But there is one practical suggestion that can work for almost everyone: get a modern translation of the Bible, and **take turns reading through it out loud**, allotting time for questions and discussion.

We must realize that our children are also our Heavenly Father's children. In this "now generation" many of us have become shortsighted. Certainly all of us have become victims of the modern society to one degree or another. One thing for sure, we all have room for growth. Our heavenly Father considers our children a most precious treasure. If we focus only on doing His work ourselves, excluding our children from the formula, we, at best, can only serve Him for the brief time we have been given on earth. But He wants more from us than that. Consider the vision given in this Psalm:

Ps 103:15 As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.

16 When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, And its place acknowledges it no longer.

17 But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, **And His righteousness to children's children,**

18 To those who keep His covenant And remember His precepts to do them. 



Which Church Did People in the Bible Attend?

by Norman Edwards

Have you ever found yourself desiring to seek God? Did that desire prompt you to look for a church to join—or at least to attend? Does the Bible tell you which Church that Jesus attended? Does it tell what church his parents, Mary and Joseph attended? What about the apostle Paul, or Moses, or Abraham, or Noah and his family? Does the Bible say which Church they attended?

The answer to this may be astounding to you.

As far as this writer can see from the Bible, none of these people attended anything that would look like a modern day church. Does that mean that it is a mistake for us to go to a church building today? No! But it does mean that worshipping God is something more than going to church! It also means that God has worked with people differently throughout history. Understanding how God has worked with people throughout history will help you better understand what He expects of you today.

Mankind's First 2000 Years

Let us start at the beginning. Most people have heard the story of Adam and Eve. Were they real people or is that just a story? Luke, the person who wrote the Gospel of Luke, certainly believed they were real people! He lists a complete genealogy (who was the parent of whom) all the way from Jesus back to Adam! (Luke 3:23-38.)

The story of Adam and Eve is in Genesis, chapters 2 through 5. God did not tell them to build a church or to have a service. He simply told them some things to do (maintain the garden, have children, etc.), and some things not to do (eat of the “forbidden fruit”). The only type of worship activity that we see was the bringing of offerings to God. These offerings were agricultural in nature. Abel gave his offering as God had instructed, and Cain did not.

It would have been impossible for Adam and Eve and their family to have forgotten God—just as it would be impossible for you to forget your parents (or the people who raised you). They were living memori-

als to the Creator God—they were the man and woman who simply did not have a human father or a “childhood.” Adam lived 930 years, and he and Eve had many sons and daughters (Gen 5:4-5). Their grandchildren would have known that their “great-grandfather” was not a human, but the Eternal.



Furthermore, it appears that direct communication with God was available at that time. Those who sought God could talk with Him. Yet the only people who seemed to be interested in God were Abel, Enoch and Noah (Heb 11:4-7). The others became so wicked that God had to destroy them all with a flood (Gen 6:5-7). Only eight people were chosen to go into the ark to survive the flood: Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives. Only Noah was listed as a "righteous man." He was not righteous because he "went to church." The only "religious" thing we have recorded about him was that he offered animal sacrifices to God. He was righteous because he dealt fairly with other people.

When they came out after spending a year in the ark, Noah and his wife must have felt like they were the second Adam and Eve—starting the human race all over again. Seeing the entire world destroyed, and realizing that everyone they had previously known was dead, must have made a great impression on them. The wreckage from the flood would have been visible for many years. Noah's children lived for hundreds of years after the flood and probably told the story thousands of times. But did the people who heard these stories seek to obey God and avoid the wickedness that caused the flood?

Maybe we should put this question on a personal level. When you have been tempted to do something wrong, do you think about the punishments for sin that God has brought upon others you know or have read about? Does this memory stop you from doing the wrong thing? Or does the temptation seem so real, and the stories of others seem like such a distant blur, that the temptation wins in your life? If you are like this writer, you have probably learned from other's mistakes some times, and given in at other times. Notice what God says:

Eccl 8:11 When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong.

Even though Noah was a righteous man, it appears that his offspring quickly began to do evil. They started by disobeying God and trying to form a single,

centrally-administrated political system (Gen 11) rather than spreading out and filling up the earth as God commanded (Gen 1:28). The Bible says nothing about the kind of worship service they should or did have. God faulted them for not following simple commands—for mistreating one another.

The information we have discussed so far comes from the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis—only a small part of the Bible. Some Bible students believe that the Book of Job was written during this time. If so, it confirms the stories of Genesis: Job strove for righteousness and tried to avoid evil (Job 1:1). He never mentions any religious service, but gives burnt offerings (Job 1:5).

We will summarize the first 2000 years of mankind's existence like this:

1. Knowledge of God's existence was generally available through the knowledge of Adam, and later through Noah.
2. God apparently did not give the people any extensive form of worship, other than occasional animal sacrifices.
3. Very few people were interested in a relationship with God or obeying the simple commands that He gave them.

Second 2000 Years: Abraham to John the Baptist

The Eternal called Abraham to be the father of many nations (Gen 17:4). However, he promised a special relationship with the nations that descended through his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob—whose name was later changed to Israel. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were like the “bridge” between the first 2000 years and the second. Their relationship with God appeared straightforward—they had direct communication with God, and the only mention of a religious activity was the occasional offering of animal sacrifices. The Bible does not mention any kind of religious service. However, God made several **covenants** with these men. He promised them wealth and prosperity if they would obey Him.

The children of Jacob (Israel) became the Israelites. They eventually moved to Egypt to escape a famine. The Israelites prospered greatly in Egypt, but were later made slaves by the Egyptians. God eventually used Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. It is at this time that the concept of a tabernacle (later a temple), a priesthood, and regular worship services were first introduced. Indeed, most Bible translations frequently refer to the Israelites as “**the congregation of Israel.**”

The Israelite services were quite different from the church or synagogue services that most people are familiar with today. First of all, there was only one tabernacle for the entire nation. Later, about 1000 BC, Solomon built a permanent Temple to replace the tabernacle. Still, there was only one for the nation. As the nation grew, it was simply not possible for most of the people in the nation to go to the service every Sabbath. People were commanded to attend three times per year—during the three annual holy day times (Ex 23:14; Deut 16:16).

The Temple services contained praise to the Eternal—something that we would recognize today. However, most of the Bible instruction for these ancient services is about animal sacrifices. There was much to be learned from these animal sacrifices about sin, its consequences, and the need for an ultimate sacrifice by Christ for our sin. But there is no Bible command for animal sacrifices in services today. (And it is this writer's guess that most readers would not be excited at the idea of slaughtering a bull at the next worship service they attend!)

Did these ancient Israelite services have sermons, or testimonies, or individual prayers? There are some examples of reading the scriptures and teaching (Deut 31:10-11; Neh 8:8) at the ancient Israelite services, but there is no command for it to be done at every service. (Parents were responsible for teaching children—see article on page 14.) In general, Temple services were too large of a production for much personal interaction.

People expressed their devotion to the Eternal by the way they lived, worked, ate, dressed, and interacted with their neighbors. All of these things were expounded in the Old Testament.

Because most of the Israelites did not do what the Scriptures asked of them, the Eternal eventually caused other nations to defeat them and to take them out of their land as captives. The Northern Kingdom of Israel was taken captive about 720 BC, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah was taken captive about 585 BC. A fraction of the people returned 70 years later. Leaders such as Ezra and Nehemiah had to teach the people all over again. During this time of captivity, and during the return to Israel, the Jews wanted to implement a system that would prevent future generations from forsaking the Eternal and prevent them from being punished again. It was at this time that the Jewish system of synagogues was established.

Synagogues were used for weekly Sabbath services in addition to the Temple services. The synagogue service was patterned after the Temple service, but it did not include sacrifices. The service consisted

of prayers, songs, reading the Torah (first five books of the Bible), and some preaching and teaching. The synagogue buildings were also used for teaching at other times as well. It is important to realize that the Bible does not contain commands to form or attend synagogues, but the practice is obviously accepted by Jesus and his disciples in the New Testament.

Third 2000 Years: Christ to Today

We have been through 4000 years of history, and nobody has been to church yet! Jesus and his disciples also taught in open fields and public meeting places. However, most of the references in the New Testament show that Jesus and the apostles, during the beginning of their ministry, met and taught in the Temple and in synagogues. (Some of the verses are: Matt 13:54; 21:33; 26:55; Mark 1:21; Luke 6:6; 19:47; John 6:59; 7:14; 18:20; Acts 5:21,42; 18:6,19; 19.)

Even as much as 30 years after Christ's death, some groups of believers were still meeting in synagogues. James 2:2 states, "For if there may come into your synagogue a man with a gold ring..." (*Young's Literal Translation*). Other translations may say "assembly" instead of "synagogue," but the original Greek manuscripts say *sunagoge*, which is always translated "synagogue" everywhere else. Nevertheless, this was not the rule, "for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue" (John 9:22). As time went on, the animosity became worse. Notice Christ's prediction:

John 16:2 They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God.

Those who were cast out of the synagogues continued to meet with other believers. They formed churches! Notice, they **formed, not built** churches! There is actually no record in the New Testament of any person or group building a church building. Most often, the believers seemed to meet in houses (Rom 16:5, 1Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phm 1:2). Some of them met in a school (Acts 19:9), and certainly some met in other places. The Bible does not condemn the building of meeting places, but it does not require it either. It makes it clear that the "church" is the assembly of believers—the people. Sometimes the word "church" refers to all of the believers, and sometimes to the believers in a specific city, such as the "church of the Thessalonians" (1Thes 1:1).

The church was not a place where some people went to meet.

The church was the people who went someplace to meet.

In 70 AD, after nearly all of the New Testament was written, the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed by warring Romans and Jews. Nearly all of the Jews went into captivity again. The Temple has never been rebuilt—not to this very day (though preparations to rebuild it have been made for the past 20 years). For over 1900 years, the two main types of worship services that claim to be based on the Bible are the Jewish synagogue and the Christian church service.

Conclusion

All of the people of the Old Testament, as well as Jesus, John the Baptist and other people early in the New Testament never went to a "church service." But the apostles and disciples that Jesus taught (Peter, Paul, James, John and others) **did start many churches**—groups of people who believed the writings of the Old Testament and that Jesus was their Savior. Furthermore they commanded us to meet together:

Heb 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

From this article, you can see that God has worked with people in many different ways throughout history. In some ways we have an advantage, because we have knowledge of about 6000 years of history—including the knowledge of the Savior of the world. On the other hand, few if any of us have had direct talks with God as did Adam, Abraham and Moses. Probably much of their knowledge has been lost through history.

If there is anything that we can learn from the Bible, it is that we should do what the Eternal tells us to do. He has told us to "not give up meeting together," so we should make an effort to meet with like-minded believers as often as practical for our situation. We encourage you to do that, whether it be in a big church building or in someone's home! 

Shelter in the Word—Where Is It Going?

This loose-leaf magazine is produced by a variety of people with a variety of backgrounds. The final layout and printing takes place in Michigan, but contributing writers and editors live all over the USA (and a few in other countries). Some are older, some are younger. Most are either raising or have raised a family. They have a variety of jobs and personal interests. Some attend larger church groups, some attend with small home fellowships. Some have served as pastors of congregations and some have college theology degrees. But we feel none of this is as important as the fact that these people have studied the Bible for many years and tried to live by its teachings.

We hope to serve our readers with practical lessons, primarily from the Bible and partly from our own varied experience. We will occasionally give a biblical perspective on the major news events of our day, but will not attempt to be a “news magazine” by covering all of the major stories.

In reading over the New Testament, we see that Christ instructed his followers to live His way of life, and to teach His way to others. The New Testament teaches those who practice **that way** to regularly meet together, and it teaches that their leaders should be chosen from people who have an upstanding personal and family life (1Tim 3, Titus 1). However, the New Testament says nothing about forming or joining church denominations, about establishing seminaries, or about building church buildings. Rather, the New Testament places a great emphasis on letting Christ **live in us** so that we can live as he lived.

We believe that the Eternal has led us to share this knowledge and experience with others. If that is so, then we believe that He will provide the means for us to do it. If He does not, then we know that it is time to stop. We always encourage our readers to study their Bible directly, and to also seek other sources of study information in addition to ours. The Bible specifically warns us not to “align” ourselves with a specific Bible preacher (1Cor 3).

Send Us Your Bible Questions

One of the other ways that we hope to serve you is by answering letters, especially those containing Bible questions. If we do not know the answer, we will try to do some research and find the answer. If we cannot find the answer, we are not afraid to say that we do not know. We believe that Christ teaches each person directly, but that is a process that takes time. No one

learns everything all at once, and it is far better that we admit when we do not know than it is to pretend that we know everything.

We will have a regular section of letters and answers in each issue. We did not have the section in this issue because we do not have any letters about this publication yet!

More to Come

We have chosen this loose-leaf format because it is easy to copy, easy to keep together in a study notebook, and relatively easy to produce. We encourage you to obtain whatever kind of three-ring binder that will work best for you.

On the back of future issues, we will offer additional study materials about specific topics. We also have a 16-lesson correspondence course in the final stages of editing. All of this literature will be available free of charge. You will be able to copy it as much as you want, and give it to whomever you want.

We always appreciate comments from our readers. Please send them to the address, below.

—*Shelter in the Word* staff

Share Your Shelter

Our Savior never argued or tried to force someone to believe in Him. We should not do that either. But if *Shelter in the Word* has helped you, you can share it with others who might be interested in it or helped by it. One of these methods might work for you.

1. Talk to them about what you have learned and encourage them to study the Bible themselves.
2. Copy your *Shelter* and give it to them (almost any office or copy store will do this for \$1 to \$2).
3. Give them your *Shelter* (we will send you a replacement issue if you write or call).
4. Copy just this page or write down the address or phone so they can request their own subscription.

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