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# CHRISTIAN Odyssey

August/September 2008

Exploring Life and Faith



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# Letters to the Editor

## Making it larger

We often get letters from older readers telling us they would like to have our magazine with a bigger print. However, there is a limit to how big we can go and still have enough space for worthwhile articles. So we are offering this practical solution from a reader in Kentucky.

My mother-in-law loves the magazine, but her eyes are failing and she is finding it harder to read. We solved the problem by printing out the articles in a larger type. It is quite easy. Here's how you do it:

- Go to Christian Odyssey's web page: [www.ChristianOdyssey.org](http://www.ChristianOdyssey.org)
- Click on the article you want to enlarge.

- Left-click the mouse and drag it down the text. (Or just key in "Control-A," which will highlight the entire article.)
- Right-click and choose "copy." You can now exit the web site.
- Open a new Word document.
- Right click and choose "Paste." The document will now appear as a Word document.
- Using "Control-A," select all text.
- On the tool bar, select the font size you need. Sizes 16 and 18 are good.
- Print the document.

It doesn't take very long, and my mother-in-law can now once again enjoy the magazine.

**Christine Stewart, Pikeville, KY**



Letters for this section should be addressed to "Letters to the Editor." Send your letters to Worldwide Church of God, PO Box 5005, Glendora, CA 91740-0730, or by e-mail to [john.halford@wcg.org](mailto:john.halford@wcg.org).

The editor reserves the right to use letters so addressed in whole or in part, and to include your name and edit the letter for clarity and space. We welcome your comments.

## I've Been Reading...

### ***The Year of Living Biblically:***

*One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible*

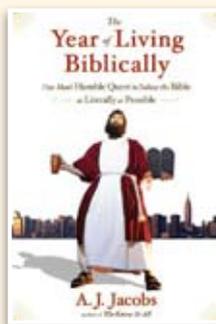
by A.J. Jacobs

Reviewed by John Halford

Who would have thought that legalism could be so much fun? In a previous book, *The Know-It-All*, this innovative author chronicled his attempt to read through the *Encyclopedia Britannica*—every word of it—in one year. What could he do as an encore? His answer: to not only read through the Bible in one year, but to try to put everything he discovered in its pages into action in his life.

Jacobs takes his self-imposed assignment—although not himself—very seriously. Much of what we read or write about the Bible is filtered through our theological perspective. Jacobs has no such restriction. He is not a religious man, and has little previous understanding of the Scriptures. As he discovers something, be it a major commandment or a minor statute, he tries to apply it. His question is not "does this apply today?" so much as "how can I do this today?" He makes efforts to love his neighbors, he employs an expert to search his wardrobe for clothes of mixed fibers, he learns to pray, to play on a ten-stringed harp and to blow a *shofar* trumpet. He also visits fundamental religious communities and travels to the Holy Land to experience firsthand the Bible environment.

The result is a fascinating, profound and often hilarious commentary, quite unlike anything I have ever read before. He is never disrespectful, although it is obvious that some of what he writes is with tongue very much in cheek. He exposes, perhaps more effec-



tively than any doctrinal argument, just why a fundamentalist legalistic approach just does not work. But he also begins to discover the value of prayer and worship.

At the end of his year, Jacobs shaves off his by now prodigious beard, goes back to his usual diet and resumes a normal life. But his experience has changed him. As he concludes: "I'll never live with so many restrictions. But a part of my biblical alter ego has carried over. If my Bible self had a foot-long beard, what remains is barely a five o'clock shadow, but it's there. I think it'll always be there."

I know that many readers of this magazine have rejected, or are in the process of rejecting, a legalistic approach to Christianity. Too often, the questions you must wrestle with along the way are presented in a confrontational style. I think you will find A. J. Jacob's gentle, humorous and yet profound account of his attempt to "live biblically" to be a delightful change of pace. In fact, as the dust jacket warns, "Thou shalt not be able to put it down."

**A.J. Jacobs, *The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible*, Simon and Schuster, 388 pages, \$25.**

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# Who's who?

By John Halford

With this issue we bring to an end our long-running column, Church History Corner. Its regular writer, Paul Kroll, is retiring. Paul has worked in various capacities for the Worldwide Church of God (publishers of *Christian Odyssey*) over a span of 40 some years.

Paul is also well known to many readers on a more personal basis, through his ministry of Personal Correspondence. Paul is a true professional, and treats a letter for one person with the same care and precision that he takes with an article that will be read by thousands.

Paul will not be retiring completely. He will still be a part of the team that edits *Christian Odyssey*. Paul is a very thorough and perceptive editor, even if I sometimes wince when he sends me back material that I thought was ready to publish, usually peppered with edits, comments and suggestions that the rest of us have missed. He is a great asset to any editorial team, and I am thankful that we can still have the benefit of his experience.

Why don't I take the rest of the page to introduce "the rest of us" who put this magazine together?

Executive Editor Mike Feazell, apart from writing major features, checks everything we publish for doctrinal integrity. We consider it very important that everything we publish is consistent with scriptural truth as we understand it. With a Doctor of Ministry degree from Azusa Pacific University and more than 20 years of editorial experience, Mike has both the professional qualifications and the natural talent for this, and little gets by him. Mike is also editor of the *Speaking of Life* video log and hosts the fascinating *You're Included* video interview series. Both can be accessed at [www.wcg.org/av/](http://www.wcg.org/av/).

Michael Morrison is Managing Editor, taking care of the many, many practical details, as well as proofreading all copy, and contributing the Bible Study and other features. Michael has a Ph.D. in New Testament from Fuller Theological Seminary. He also is webmaster for the church's web site, editor of our sister magazine, *Together*, a professor of theology at Grace Communion Seminary and an adjunct professor of theology at Azusa Pacific University.

I should also mention two other people, without whose efforts you would not be reading this magazine. Celestine Olive manages the circulation, adding new subscribers and directing the flow of correspondence. Cella brings a warm personal touch to what can become a routine task. She is also an ordained elder, a very talented singer and worship leader, but she probably wouldn't want me to mention that.

Scott Wertz coordinates the magazine's production with the printers and mailers. Terry Akers,



From the left: Mike Feazell, Scott Wertz, John Halford, Cella Olive, Paul Kroll, Michael Morrison and Terry Akers.

writer in the Personal Correspondence Department, works with Scott to send booklets and bulk shipments of *Odyssey* to the various congregations that want extra copies for distribution in their local communities.

You might be wondering what is left for me to do. Well, an editor is rather like a Master of Ceremonies, or talk show host. I select the articles and features, and do the initial editing. I also commission future articles, and work with our designer and generally guide each issue through the production process.

All the people I have listed above with the exception of myself, Mike Feazell, and now Paul, operate from our denominational headquarters office in Glendora, California. Most of us have several other responsibilities. I am impressed with how so much can be done by so few. But modern technology has made it possible to do with a few dedicated and talented people what would even 20 years ago have needed a much larger staff and facilities.

One of the most rewarding parts of this job is helping new writers get published. So if you have an idea or an article you think might fit in *Christian Odyssey*, don't be afraid to contact me ([john.halford@wcg.org](mailto:john.halford@wcg.org)). We can't publish everything, of course, but we are always on the lookout for good ideas. ☺



# Winning from the Start

## Reflections on a very Special Olympics

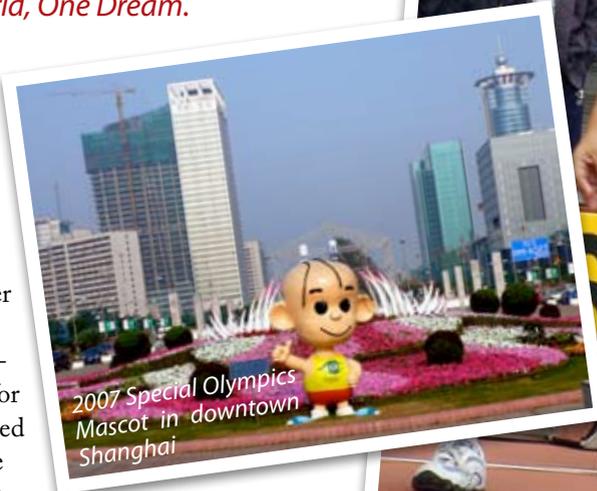
By Ned and Tina Graham

Once again, the Olympic spirit is about to capture the hearts and minds of the entire world. For a brief three weeks, through the venue of sports, humanity strives for an ideal of nations coming together in peace and harmony. This year's theme for the Summer XXIX Olympiad in Beijing is *One World, One Dream*.

For the past 12 months, China has been in the business of the Olympics. It is the first country that has had the honor, or courage you could say, to host all three Summer World Games in one year. After the Beijing Summer Olympiad this August, China will keep its magnificent facilities open to the Paralympics, for the world's physically challenged athletes. And last October, the Special Olympics Summer, for intellectually challenged athletes, took place in Shanghai.

We'd always wondered why the Special Olympics is called *special*. We found out why when we received tickets to attend the Special Olympics Summer World Games in Shanghai (October 2-11, 2007). It was a deeply moving experience.

First, a little background is necessary in order to appreciate what the Special Olympics is all about. It's more than just the Summer and Winter World Games that alternate every two years. It's an international non-profit organization dedicated to empowering individuals with intellectual disabilities to become physically fit, productive and respected members of society through sports training and competition. It is a truly global movement, serving 2.5 million people with intellectual disabilities, with more than 200 programs in over 180 countries.



We'd always wondered why the Special Olympics is called special. We found out and it left an indelible impression on us.

## Alcino Pereira the runner

Young people and adults with intellectual disabilities who participate in the Special Olympics develop improved physical fitness, motor skills, greater self-confidence and a more positive self-image. As they grow mentally, socially and spiritually, they exhibit courage and enthusiasm, enjoy the rewards of deeper friendships and ultimately discover not only new abilities and talents but “their voices” as well. A perfect example is Alcino Pereira, a 38-year-old orphan from East Timor who runs with a limp, has a lame arm and is mute, but whose life speaks more than the few words he can mutter.

His father was killed in 1978 in one of the many uprisings in East Timor’s efforts to gain independence from Indonesia. His mother died that same year. He’s the sole Special Olympics representative from East Timor because, as his coach, Afranio Amaral, said, “There are many disabled people in East Timor, but the facilities, the human resources, the understanding is not there.” Discouraging as that may seem, Troy Griesen, head of the Special Olympics for the Asian Pacific region, said that Alcino caught the heart of

we see from Alcino’s life and others, these athletes are part of an organization that is an ongoing catalyst to change society and the world.

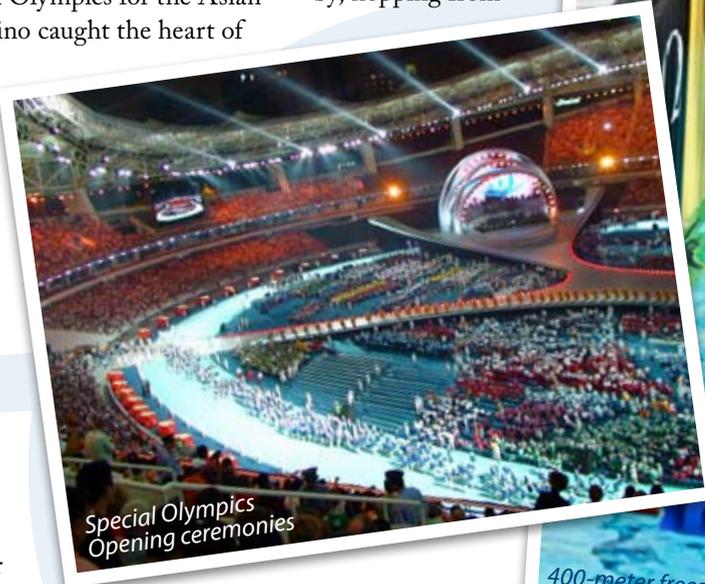
The Special Olympics, in its more quiet and humble way, showed us something that can be lost in the spectacular, politicized and commercialized events soon to begin in Beijing—not that the Special Olympics weren’t spectacular in their own right. How could they not have been, when China took five years to prepare for these Games, mobilizing 40,000 volunteers, opening homes to all 168 nations and their teams so they could experience home-grown Chinese hospitality, setting up for global forums on how families, communities and nations could better understand and facilitate the intellectually disabled. No, when the Special Olympics were over, China had changed, and so had everyone who attended.

As the days went by, hopping from

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**Special Olympics athletes came to the Games to participate, to encourage, help one another and to finish their events.**

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East Timor’s prime minister and other dignitaries. They see him as a “bright beacon” and message of hope in their world shrouded in darkness.

We had the privilege of seeing Alcino run the 10,000-meter run one overcast day. His arms were flailing left and right. He kept getting passed lap after lap, falling from his bum leg and then picking himself up with dignity and no shame. In time, we couldn’t help but stand up like all the other guests in the bleachers and cheer him on. “GO Alcino GO! Run Alcino Run!” He finished with a smile that could light up Shanghai.

What’s unique about the Special Olympics is that it doesn’t just come for three weeks and then go. As

event to event, we noticed how unlike at other World Games, the Special Olympics athletes represented every age, sex and nationality. What surprised us was that they did not come to these Games to compete. Rather, they were at the Games to participate, to encourage, help one another and to finish their events. It was a formula for some very special moments, like the start of the men’s 400 meter relay.

Standing on the track waiting for his event to start was a young Chinese boy who couldn’t have been more than 12 years of age. He stood no more than 4½ feet tall and weighed perhaps 60 to 70 pounds. Directly behind him in the next lane was a sprinter who must

have been in his late 20s. He stood more than six feet tall and weighed easily more than 180 pounds. The little boy looked at his fellow competitor like David must have looked at Goliath, but unlike the biblical story, there was no battle for supremacy between these two Special Olympians. Prior to the race, there were only pats on the back and expressions of support and respect for each other. Who would cross the finish line first wasn't of primary importance. What mattered most was taking part and being together.

We also noticed that the Special Olympics were not about the haves and have-nots. In the holding area before one race, we saw athletes sitting on benches waiting to be taken to their lanes. Some wore spiffy Nike track shoes and others had no shoes—just bare feet. Financial status or appearance didn't seem to matter. The sheer joy of being there, participating together, representing a



team and country and completing the event were far more important. By the way, several athletes won with bare feet.

### Dustin Cichon the power lifter

An especially memorable athlete was an American power lifter, 19-year-old Dustin Cichon. Dustin is a dwarf or “little person” as he terms it, with a 24/7 positive personality. He comes from Wann, Oklahoma, population 132, so he doesn't have a coach the year round. But because of his vision, self-discipline and family upbringing, his personal head powerlifting coach in Shanghai, Eddie Reinhardt, said, “Dustin will always be a winner. He's a natural leader.”

The Chinese loved Dustin and affectionately called him “Ding Ding” or “little strong man.” During a

Chinese TV interview one day, the journalist asked him, “So why are you happy all the time, Dustin?” He just chuckled and in a humble voice replied, “Umm, I guess I don't know any other way to be.”

Dustin went on to win three gold medals and one bronze in his weight division. During each awards ceremony, he was the first to reach out his hand and congratulate the other medal winners. On the last day of competition, he made a point of shaking hands with the Iraqi coach. The coach squatted down to Dustin's level and they started talking. When asked how his conversation went, Dustin unabatedly stated, “I just wanted to tell the Iraqi coach that I respected him and despite what our countries were going through, I was glad he was here and that he trained his three athletes well. I know they don't let girls compete in powerlifting like we do. The coach just smiled and said he respected me too and hoped that our countries would someday get along like in the spirit of these Games. We had a great conversation and I'll never forget it.”

Throughout the week, we witnessed athletes from many different countries encouraging and reaching out to each

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**It didn't matter what place athletes came in. What mattered was that they were making friends, encouraging their teammates and finishing well.**

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other. A beautiful African girl represented her country in the 400-meter freestyle swimming event. Immediately after she dove in, it was obvious she was not a fast swimmer. In fact, she finished her race almost two minutes after all the other swimmers touched the wall. But when she did finish, the whole stadium, including all the athletes, jumped up, applauded and cheered her great effort. She had no shame or sense of failure, only the joy of finishing well.

As we watched these special athletes, we were struck by the fact that there were no losers. Every single athlete, no matter how challenging the event, made it to the finish line. It didn't matter what place they came in. What mattered most was they were at the Special Olympics, making friends, helping and

encouraging their teammates and finishing well. In a real sense, these athletes won *when they crossed the starting line*.

Of course, it's important to remember that the Special Olympians do have special needs. All have some intellectual and perhaps physical disabilities, so there is a large contingent of coaches and other professionals on hand, ready to take care of any difficulties. They know these special athletes are vulnerable, and they never take their eyes off them, watching for any signs of distress. It can be demanding work, but as one American coach said, "I've been working with the Special Olympics for 15 years and it has changed me. After these Special Olympics, I'll never be the same. This is a profound experience. It does for me what church does for others."

Coaches and parents of Special Olympians will tell you, "There are days when you think, 'Hey, who is the one who is really intellectually disabled here, me or them?'" Comments like this made us reflect on the fact that as far as humanity goes, some people may be categorized as physically or intellectually disabled, but their heart may be far bigger than many who are "abled." And when it comes

to hearts, the fact is that we are all disabled *spiritually*.

But God has taken care of that. Some 2,000 years ago, God the Son or Word became the human being, Jesus (John 1:1, 14), to make us spiritually whole. In God's eyes, it's not what we achieve but what Jesus, our Head Coach, makes of us. In him, we are winners from the word "go." Be a part of God's team to truly bring about *One World, One Dream*. ☪

## East Gates International



*Ned and Christina Graham have a ministry called East Gates International, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that for 20 years has dedicated its time and resources to assisting and equipping the Body of Christ in China through legal distribution of Bibles, building of churches, training/discipleship of pastors and Christian leaders, relief work and many other services. Visit their web site at [www.eastgates.org](http://www.eastgates.org).*

# Speaking of Life...



with Joseph Tkach

**"E**lijah was a man just like us," we're told in James 5:17-18. "He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops."

Most of us find it a little hard to believe that Elijah was really just a man like us or that God would hear our prayers just as readily as he did Elijah's. After all, Elijah was one of the most renowned prophets of antiquity and instrumental in some of the greatest and most well-known miracles in the entire Bible! Elijah called down fire from heaven, was fed by ravens, multiplied oil and flour, and even raised the dead.

How could our prayers possibly match up to those of a powerful man of God like Elijah?

The truth is that in between some of those astounding miracles Elijah could also be frustrated, lonely, depressed, angry, plagued with self-doubt and wishing he were dead.

Notice how this great prophet felt the very day after the great miracle of fire from heaven.

He had just received a death threat from the wicked Queen Jezebel, and we're told in 1 Kings 19:3-4: "Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might

die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."

Indeed, Elijah was a man just like us.

This episode in Elijah's life ended on Mount Horeb, where God presented Elijah with a powerful wind, a mighty earthquake and a roaring fire. But God didn't meet Elijah in any of those. God met him instead in a still, small, voice.

We often think that God is not with us unless we're doing so-called "great" things for God. But here's what we need to remember—we are closer to God when we're listening to his gentle whisper than when we're caught up in doing what we think are great things in his name.

Windstorms, earthquakes and fires are easy to hear, but gentle whispers require devoted attention. On the strength of that gentle whisper, Elijah carried on with the work God had for him to do.

Yes, Elijah was a man like us, having the same kinds of fears, worries, concerns and challenges as we have, and if God heard his prayers, he'll hear ours too. ☪

*This article is derived from Speaking of Life, a weekly video program presented by Joseph Tkach on the Worldwide Church of God website. You can watch it online, listen online, or download the video, audio, or text. For all these options, go to [www.wcg.org/av/spol.htm](http://www.wcg.org/av/spol.htm).*

# The Scarred Frog Blanket

By Shiela Carmel Miller

**M**y 4-year-old son stomped into the kitchen and announced, “Mommy, I was playing, and a hole ripped in my frog blanket. Would you please sew it up now?”

“Sweetie, I’ll be happy to mend it for you, but I won’t be able to get to it until later tonight when you’re in bed. You’ll be able to have it again when you wake up tomorrow.”

“Please, Mommy, won’t you do it for me now?” he begged.

I firmly responded, “No, Bryson, I promise you I will take care of it, but now is not the time.” It was difficult for Bryson to part with his precious blanket overnight, but he reluctantly turned it over into my custody.

Reflecting back on the situation, I really wonder how many times I’ve approached God and announced that I needed him to immediately “sew up” a predicament of mine. He didn’t create my crisis; I did a grand job of that on my own when I was “playing” around with my life.

God heals our troubled lives in his time, not ours. Sometimes that seems to require that we wait an agonizingly long while, and I daresay it’s not much easier for us adults than it is for my son.

Bryson’s chief concerns are certainly not identical to mine. While his top priorities (toys and sippy cups, for example) are crucial in his little cosmos, mine are more complicated (like gas and grocery prices). Our immediate dilemmas seem so colossal to us in our own miniature worlds, but God is looking at the overall picture, knowing what is best for us. The Lord declares, “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9).

Well, I’m no master seamstress, and the hole in the poor frog’s green face looked like it had been stitched up by Dr. Frankenstein. When Bryson bounded out to get his blanket the next morning, I said, “Your blanket doesn’t look quite the same now, it has a scar.”

We’re given one physical life to live, and being imperfect humans, we mess things up occasionally. And when we make holes in our blanket of life, he’s

not necessarily going to restore it back to the way it was originally. God will certainly help us when we seek him, but the outcome may not look quite the way we were thinking it should. Just as sewing stitches over holes may resemble scars, our healed lives may also retain scars from the restoration process.

Our scars serve as reminders that God has intervened in our lives and that we cannot “do it all” by ourselves. They are proof of his healing power.

Bryson cheerfully responded, “That’s okay. I love my frog blanket.” He was so happy that I had mended it that he gave me a big hug and exclaimed, “Thank you so much, Mommy, for fixing my frog blanket!”

Few things are more rewarding than having your



Our scars serve as reminders of God’s loving intervention and healing power in our lives.

child spontaneously give you a heartfelt expression of gratitude. God must enjoy our thanksgiving even more. King David wrote, “O Lord my God, I called to you for help and you healed me.... O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever” (Psalm 30:2, 12b).

Do I always remember to gratefully accept what God gives me in my life and be thankful for it, even when it’s not as pretty as I would like it to be? The Almighty gave me the gift of scars—in other words, he helped me by working out things in my life after I had originally messed them up.

We’ve all heard the old adage, “Mother knows best.” Well, that’s not quite accurate. Only God knows best, and we can be content in knowing that he’s the One who is ultimately in control of our lives, scars and all. ☪



**Shiela Miller** lives in Greenville, S.C. with her husband and two children. She works part-time as a massage therapist and is a worship leader and Sunday School teacher at Way of the Cross Fellowship.

# Mission Bound

In a few weeks, a group of young Christians led by *Christian Odyssey's* Managing Editor, Michael Morrison, and his wife, Janet, will be heading for the Philippines for a short-term mission trip. Even a short mission trip can be a life-changing experience. We interviewed four of the participants as they prepare for their evangelistic odyssey, and we plan a follow-up interview when they return.

*Christian Odyssey: What made you decide to go on this short-term mission trip?*

**Kyle:** I've been on a couple other mission trips to New Orleans before and I absolutely loved them. I was a little uncertain at first when asked if I would join the Pasadena church on a mission trip to the Philippines. But after a few phone calls to my friend, Steven, we talked ourselves into going, deciding it would be a great experience.

**Steven:** My friend Kyle is going, so at least I would know someone else while I am there. And I thought it would be an interesting experience.

**Alex:** A lot of my friends had talked about going to the Philippines on the first mission trip [2006] and how much fun it was and how they got to impact other people's lives. So I decided it would be a good thing to do and that I wanted to go with those particular people.

**Deanna:** I knew I wanted to go on a mission trip

**Deanna:** "I hope this trip allows me to let my light shine and plant seeds among the people in the Philippines."

this summer to experience God's love in a whole new way—the love he has for all his people around the world. Honestly, I felt my heart tugging towards Thailand rather than the Philippines at first. Especially because I have a friend who is teaching the young refugee kids there this summer, and she has

also told me about her experiences of sharing Jesus' love with the girls who are sold into trafficking in Thailand. For about a month I prayed and asked God where he wanted me to go—and if the Philippines was the place for me. I prayed that God would give me a heart for those people. I believe he is doing just that!

*CO: What do you expect to achieve by going?*

**Kyle:** I'm not exactly sure what to expect. I just know that I'm going to be coming home with a lot more than when I left.

**Deanna:** I hope this trip allows me to let my light shine and plant seeds among the people in the Philippines. I hope the Holy Spirit is poured out in the hearts of all the people we meet—both young and old. I hope that our youth group gets to start a fire of worship and passion for the God who made us and loves us.

**Alex:** "I expect to learn a lot about another culture, try new things and change people's lives."



**Steven:** I hope to learn about the culture and to bring someone to Christ, because that is what we are called to do.

**Alex:** I expect to learn a lot about another culture, try new things, meet lots of new people and change people's lives.

*CO: Have you ever done anything like this before?*

**Steven:** Going to New Orleans after Katrina is the closest thing I've done to this.

**Kyle:** No, not exactly. I've been to a couple mission trips to New Orleans, but I've never even traveled this far in my life before.

**Alex:** No, I have not. This is going to be my first mission trip, and I'm very excited.

**Deanna:** I have been on two short missions trips to Indian reservations within the U.S. and I went to Mexico to help build houses and share the gospel, but I have never been anywhere this far from home.

*CO: Of course you are looking forward to doing this. But are there any aspects of it that worry or even scare you?*



**Kyle:** Well yes, the Philippines are a long way away. I think the thing I'm afraid of most is the new culture and experiencing the everyday life of a Third World country.

**Deanna:** Of course! If it weren't scary, where would be the excitement? Or the growth? It can be scary to leave your comfort zone, but I think this is where God refines us. And it may sound stupid, but I'm a little scared of just messing up. I don't want my own fear or hesitation to get

**Steven:** "Getting my family, peers, and church to pray with me, helped me prepare spiritually for this trip."

in the way of God's plans. But I know this is God's trip, God's work, and there is nothing I can do to mess it up.

**Steven:** Just being able to communicate the message effectively is going to be a challenge in itself, and I think that will be the most difficult task. But anything about the area itself, no.

**Alex:** No, everything seems to be perfectly safe, and I think the outcome of the trip will partly be whatever we put into it. The rest is God's part.

**CO:** *How have you prepared for the experience—physically—mentally—and spiritually?*

**Kyle:** The group has had mission training, and we all came up with a speech that we are going to share with students there, and we've gone over vacation Bible school lessons to share with the children, too. Physically we've all had to have the standard immunizations and medicine for the trip.

**Steven:** Most definitely. Mentally, I'm just focusing on the work I'll be doing and seeing how I can be the best of help. Spiritually—prayer is the only thing. Getting my family, peers, and church all to pray, including myself of

course, is the best way to prepare. The battle is won on our knees.

**Alex:** Physically, I have gotten shots and have taken pills. We have also been working on learning music together as a band.

Mentally, I have learned about the Philippines and the culture and customs as well as learning the curriculum for Vacation Bible School that we are going to use with the kids there.

Spiritually, we've been perfecting

**Kyle:** "I hope to learn about the culture and to bring someone to Christ, because that's what we're called to do."

speeches that we'll give to the kids on various spiritual topics so we've been preparing and praying about the speeches.

I've been trying to keep in contact with my generous sponsors and asking them to help pray for the mission trip in general. [Editor's note: All participants were required to get sponsors for prayer and financial support.]

**Deanna:** Prayer and lots of it. Our church members have also been very supportive in praying for us young missionaries. We have done a lot of preparing for the trip. We are learning about Philippine culture, and we are learning how to best share the gospel with the youth there. Physically, we have to take typhoid and anti-malarial medication just to be safe.

**CO:** *Can we interview you again when you return, to see how it all went?*

**Alex:** Yes, I think that would be marvelous.

**Kyle:** Certainly.

**Steven:** Absolutely! I'm sure I'll be excited to talk about it.

**Deanna:** Certainly! It is an honor. I would also like to ask for the prayers of all your readers that this trip would be fruitful and drenched in the Holy Spirit. ☪



# Who's Afraid of the Schizophrenic God?

By Neil Earle

Imagine a courtroom scene. It's you who are convicted, facing charges. Problem is, you know you are guilty. But as you walk in, you notice the judge gives you a reassuring nod of recognition, as if he had known you all your life.

He summons you to the bench. "Don't worry about a thing," he tells you with a warm fatherly smile. "I know all about this case. In fact, I'm going to be your defense attorney." The late theologian Shirley C. Guthrie would explain that this is the way we should picture what the Bible calls the Judgment. "Must we talk about the wrath of God?" Guthrie asked. "Yes," he answers. "But God's wrath is not like that of the gods. It is the wrath of the God who was in Christ reconciling the world to God's self" (*Christian Doctrine*, pages 261-262).

Through Jesus Christ, the disconnect between the world and God has been removed once and for all.



## Theological strait-jackets

Unfortunately, instead of allowing Jesus' love, compassion and kindness to shape their understanding of God, many Christians gravitate toward what we might call a "forensic" model of salvation. The word "forensic" seems like a penal or legal term, which it is. This forensic model sees God the Father as stern and vengeful, a frightening God from whom we need Jesus to save us. It assumes that the starting place for

understanding God is not Jesus Christ, but "the law," by which is meant the Old Testament legal system. This model sees the law as so important that even God is subject to it. Since God is concerned first about the penalty demands of his law and only secondly about the well-being of humans, he will punish them for lawbreaking in the same way that the State and human courts and legal systems do—through a straightforward proving of guilt followed by a guilty verdict.

Front and center in the forensic model is God's anger against sinning humanity. God is offended, and someone must pay. Jesus steps forward and takes the full force of God's wrath against human sin. That means we have had our penalty paid for us, but it does nothing for a restored relationship of love and trust. This "offended deity" picture forgets that first and foremost, God is love (1 John 4:16), that God is joyously working to bring "many sons to glory," and that our salvation was in his mind "before the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8, King James Version).

This forensic model also forgets something even more basic—that Jesus Christ and the Father along with the Holy Spirit are the three Persons of the one God, and that the Son or Word made Incarnate in Jesus was the perfect revelation of the Father in human form. The Father is not some angry, vengeful deity that we need protection from; he is just like Jesus. Jesus, remember, is "the exact representation" of the being of God (Hebrews 1:3). The Father is full of compassion and mercy, a God who "desires mercy and not sacrifice," just like Jesus. Jesus is the starting place for understanding God; the law is not.

God is not schizophrenic. He does not have a split personality. There is not one "good God," Jesus, and one "bad God," the Father. There is one God—Father, Son and Spirit—who loves us unconditionally and has in Jesus made full provision not only for our sins to be forgiven and removed, but also for our full inclusion in the love relationship that the Son has shared with the Father from eternity.

## Adoption

God is not in the business of training obedient

## The Sword

By Joyce Catherwood

**Luke 2:25-39; 4:16-30; 8:19**

**Mark 3:20-21; 31-35; 15:42-47**

valets, but in building a family. The apostle Paul used the word “adoption” in describing the kind of relationship that God has created for humanity in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:4-5). Through the Incarnation of the Son—by Jesus becoming one of us and taking up our cause as his own—God has drawn us into and made us part of the intimate relationship that Jesus has with the Father.

We see the power of this intimate love that God has for humanity in the parable of the Prodigal Son. The repentant son is welcomed home by the Father and restored to full rights of sonship (Luke 15:11-24). This depicts the God who was in Christ reconciling the world to himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). The death of Christ was not a vindictive act of divine child abuse, as some hostile critics of Christianity have charged. It was a divine rescue springing from God’s love for us (John 3:16), an intervention designed to restore a purpose of which we were oblivious in our ignorance and darkness (verses 19-20).

Set against this majestic purpose, God’s wrath can be seen for what it is—his anger—not at the humanity he sent Jesus to save, but at sin, that which destroys the relationship he has always intended for us in Christ. God is not some resentful, selfish parent in an emotional stew because we have not played by his rules. God is Father, Son and Spirit, loving, faithful and unconditionally committed to bringing humanity into the joy of knowing him for who he really is.

### Mercy vs. judgment

God, however, will never be at peace with sin. The great human tragedy is that we have been totally unaware of the pardon and reconciliation the Father has brought about through Jesus Christ. We have loved darkness rather than light and have chosen to ignore what the Father offers us through the Son.

Through Christ, the disconnect between the world and God has been removed once and for all. The great majority of unbelievers are simply those who through weakness or ignorance are resisting the influence of the life-giving Holy Spirit of Christ, the Person of the Godhead who beckons to us to abandon our addiction to darkness and sin—who testifies in our hearts to God’s saving, atoning and reconciling work in Jesus on our behalf (John 14:25-27; 15:26).

Jesus did not just *bring* good news, he *was* good news. The overwhelming emphasis of his teaching was mercy, not vengeance. His hallmark sayings reflect the God who is love, in whose mind mercy rejoices against judgment (James 2:13). Thus, what was hinted at in parts of the Old Testament becomes the major theme in the Gospels—“I will have mercy and not sacrifice.” Jesus’ word pictures show us a forgiving father, a Good Samaritan, seeking shepherds and splendidly generous employers, healings, exorcisms, a Great Physician who pleaded “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). ☪

Tears of relief flooded my eyes when Joseph of Arimathea was allowed to remove my son, Jesus, from his execution cross. How gently Joseph and a friend, Nicodemus, handled his torn and tortured body—such a contrast to the violent and cruel treatment he had just suffered. I had ached to comfort him in his agony, and when I was finally able to touch his lifeless form, I didn’t know what to do. He was unrecognizable, his entire body bruised, covered with blood and dirt, his wounds deep and swollen. The grief and pain that welled up inside me exploded in groans of mourning I did not know were possible. This was the dreaded sword that was to pierce my soul that had been prophesied by old Simeon when Jesus was a newborn. Never, ever, had I imagined it could be so devastating, so cruel, so unjustified.

Kneeling beside Jesus’ body, I caressed his wounded hands, remembering how I had kissed those tiny fingers when he was a child. I remembered his laughter as he played with his younger brothers and sisters, his sunny disposition and bright inquisitive mind. Everyone loved him and wanted to be around him, even when he was an adult. He was a generous, engaging young man, destined to become the Messiah, the salvation of all people, the light to the Gentiles, a glory to Israel.

Jesus’ ministry reflected him. It was filled with hope, forgiveness and healing. But at times, my heart pounded with fear for him. His merciful approach was unorthodox, and it angered some. In our own hometown, people were initially amazed at his gracious words. But in the end he was run out of the synagogue and a mob tried to kill him.

Bewildered by these malicious outbursts against him, we, his human family, became protective of him. It made me wish he had never left home. Once, when he was overwhelmed by the needs of the multitude and had no time to eat, we tried to rescue him and take charge of things. We thought he might have gone off the deep end from hunger and exhaustion. Another time his brothers and I found him, wanting to talk to him, but he was again surrounded by a great crowd. We were worried sick and didn’t understand why he would not take refuge more often with his family he loved so much.

When it all ended so brutally, it did indeed feel as though a sword had pierced my very being. Only later, when Jesus was raised in glory, was my wounded soul healed. And you can imagine, what a jubilant family reunion we had with our beloved Jesus, the risen Son of God! Humbled and grateful to be able to express how deeply sorry we were that we had not been more supportive of his earthly mission, we very quickly became his ardent and faithful servants. ☪

# Talking With Paul Y

I'm the most accidental author you'll ever meet. I've never published anything before.

I didn't intend to write a great book on the Trinity. I wanted to communicate to my children the fact that the very nature of relationship has to be embedded in the character and nature of God.

I think that for a lot of us who grew up inside religious kinds of environments, *The Shack* allows God to become accessible and understandable in a way that hasn't been out there in the same kind of form.

A lot of us grew up with an idea that everything was based on our performance. And so instead of a new covenant understanding of union with Christ, we still function as if we lived in the old covenant, separated from God. And we think that separation is our problem. It's our fault and it's our sin. And now it is up to us through behavior to get across that separation to wherever God is—to enter his holiness.

trusted.

*"But I always liked Jesus better than you. He seemed so gracious and you seemed so..."*

*"Mean? Sad, isn't it? He came to show people who I am and most folks only believe it about him. They still play us off like good cop/bad cop most of the time, especially the religious folk. When they want people to do what they think is right, they need a stern God. When they need forgiveness, they run to Jesus" (*The Shack*, p. 186).*

What's the main question in legalism? It's "How much is enough?" And the answer is always, "More." How much is enough prayer? How much is enough reading Scripture? How much is enough giving? How much is enough? And legalism says, "More."

We have the idea of a still angry God, who has calmed down, but you can never be sure when his anger will break loose again. So we fall back on performance, thinking that our behavior is the basis for his mood. We have to maintain at least an adequate amount of behavior so that he feels good about himself and doesn't take it out on us.

In the book, Jesus says,

*"Remember, the people who know me are the ones who are free to live and love without any agenda."*

And Mack says, "Is that what it means to be a Christian?"...

*"Who said anything about being a Christian? I'm not a Christian," Jesus said.*

*"The idea struck Mack as odd and unexpected.... 'No, I suppose you aren't.'"*

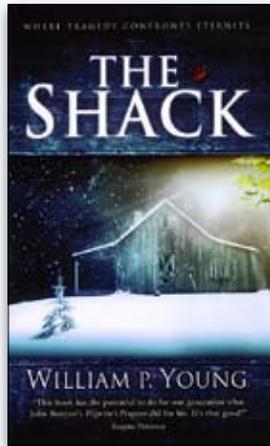
*And then Jesus says, "Those who love me come from every system that exists. They were Buddhist or Mormons, Baptists or Muslims, Democrats, Republicans and many who don't vote or are not part of any Sunday morning or religious institutions. I have followers who were murderers and many who were self-righteous. Some are bankers and bookies, Americans and Iraqis, Jews and Palestinians. I have no desire to make them Christian, but I do want to join them in their transformation into sons and daughters of my Papa, into my brothers and sisters, into my Beloved."*

*"Does that mean," asked Mack, "that all roads will lead to you?"*

*"Not at all," smiled Jesus.... "Most roads don't lead anywhere. What it does mean is that I will travel any road to find you" (*The Shack*, pp. 181-182).*

When somebody asks me if I'm a Christian, I'll say, "Would you please tell me what one is, and I'll

The "shack" is a metaphor. It's the place where we got hurt. It's the place where we got damaged, and we don't want to go back there.



The "shack" is a metaphor. It's the place where we got hurt. It's the place where we got damaged, and we don't want to go back there. We want God to come in and just yank us from where we are, to somewhere where we think we ought to be. And he says, "No, we're going to actually begin to heal the emotions, and heal the thinking, and heal the heart, and do all these things. But to do that, we've got to go back there. For me, it took 38 years to get to the shack; it took 11 years to get through the shack. I condense that 11 years to a weekend for Mackenzie Allen Phillips, the main character.

So, the characterization of God in the book is just an attempt, in fiction, to try to describe that solidity of character [of God] that I think a lot of us have not

## Young

The author of *The Shack* shares his thoughts about his best selling novel



What's the main question in legalism? "How much is enough?" And the answer is always, "More." How much is enough prayer? How much is enough reading Scripture? How much is enough giving? How much is enough? And legalism says, "More."

tell you if I'm one of those. If we're on the same page, I don't have any problem identifying myself as a Christian." But I want some agreement about what we are talking about. I don't want to be identified with what some people think is a Christian.

There are folks who are saying, "There's just not enough wrath in this book," because there's wrath in Scripture. Of course, there is. To me the wrath of God is God's very character against everything that is wrong. The fact that a doctor wants to perform surgery to cut a piece of your body out because it's got cancer doesn't mean that he hates you. In fact, he's after that which is destroying you. And when you look in his face and you see that anger, you might misunderstand that he is making a value statement about you. But he's not. He is coming after everything that keeps us from being free and being whole.

*"Mack allowed his oar to turn in his hands as he let it play in the water's movements. 'It feels like living out of relationship—you know, trusting and talking to you—is a bit more complicated than just following rules.'*

*"What rules are those, Mackenzie?"*

*"You know, all the things the Scriptures tell us we should do."*

*"Okay...," she said with some hesitation. 'And what might those be?'*

*"You know," he answered sarcastically. 'About doing good things and avoiding evil, being kind to the poor, reading your Bible, praying, and going to church. Things like that.'*

*"I see. And how is that working for you?"*

*"He laughed. 'Well, I've never done it very well. I have moments that aren't too bad, but there's always something I'm struggling with, or feeling guilty about. I just figured I needed to try harder, but I find it difficult to sustain that motivation.'"*

*"Mackenzie!" she chided, her words flowing with affection. 'The Bible doesn't teach you to follow rules. It is a picture of Jesus. While words may tell you what God is like and even what he may want from you, you cannot do any of it on your own. Life and living is in him and in no other. My goodness,*

*you didn't think you could live the righteousness of God on your own, did you?'*

*"Well, I thought so, sorta..." he said sheepishly' (The Shack, pp. 197-198)*

If we see it [the Bible] as behavioral without the illumination of the Spirit, those words are dead to us. They don't produce life. We are absolutely dependent, even in the words of Scripture, for the presence and life and illumination of the power of the Holy Spirit. All of us are. We all know folks who know the words very well but have no life in them. Remember that incident where Jesus met some disciples on the Emmaus Road? Starting with Moses, he showed them *himself* throughout all of Scripture. It's a story; it's a story of his love for us.

I love Scripture, you know. But I'm not at all convinced that Scripture is the sole and only place through which God speaks. In my life, it's been through movies, music, creation, relationships, conversation, art, architecture. The Spirit is very able to speak through whatever the Spirit has available, or what we've given the Spirit to be available.

We don't have any guarantees we'll be here tomorrow. So I want to spend this day in the present, in the presence of the one who loves me best. I don't want to project it into what's going to happen into the future and be freaked out. This is where he lives with me, and it goes back to the prayer I prayed at the beginning of 2005, when I came out of the shack: "I will never ask you again, Papa, I'll never ask you again to bless anything that I do, but if you have something that you're blessing that I could hang around, I would love that."

We live our lives, and that happens today. Today is the day of salvation. Today, enter my rest, today. This is where eternity intersects my life—today. **co**

These comments are excerpted from three interviews with Paul Young for the *You're Included* program. To see the complete interviews or read full transcripts, go to [www.wcg.org/av/YI.htm](http://www.wcg.org/av/YI.htm).

# Urge Protection

By John Halford

**T**he first intimation I had that something was wrong was when my wife came down to the barn where I was working and announced calmly, "Something weird is going on with the electricity."

I ran up to the house. Something weird certainly was happening. Some of the lights were glowing extraordinarily brightly, and others had burned out. Some appliances had stopped working, and others were working and running at double speed. We shut down everything electrical and called the power company.

It turned out that a passing truck had snagged a low-hanging telephone line, which had recoiled and dislodged the power cable that ran from the trans-

Although most of the time electricity flows at a steady even rate, it is subject to occasional surges and spikes. Like floodwater, electricity has to go somewhere, which is why our homes are equipped with circuit breakers or fuse boxes. But a power surge usually lasts just a few billionths of a second, faster than most breakers can react. If not checked, it will rip through delicate electronic circuits like a tsunami. Those few billionths of a second can cause hundreds of hours of lost work and thousands of dollars of expense.

The surge protector provides an alternate path for the current surge. It destroys itself in the process, but better that, than an expensive apparatus and priceless data going up in smoke. If you don't have a surge protector, may I suggest you get one?

And while we are on the subject, what about urge protection?

## Surges and spikes of life

Like computers, we human beings prefer to operate in calm and predictable conditions. But life is not always like that. It has a way of putting us in situations where our equilibrium is suddenly and unpredictably thrown off balance. We are driving along minding our own business when someone cuts in front, setting us up for a possible flash of anger and perhaps a deletable expletive. Or a lie offers the opportunity for an

escape route from an awkward situation. Sometimes surfing the internet or channel hopping with the TV remote, we may be unexpectedly confronted with some gratuitous pornography. You don't have to go looking for these temptation-creating situations—life is full of unexpected situation-induced urges to cheat, to steal, to covet, to lust—let's call them what they are—urges to sin.

The Bible calls this *temptation*, but the temptation, *of itself*, is not sin. The letter of James makes that clear: "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed" (James 1:13-14).

God provides us with the ultimate *urge* protection when temptation suddenly surges into our lives.



former to our home. This shorted itself out, and put a surge of 220 volts through our system, blowing some circuits and causing others to operate at double power.

It didn't take long to fix. A few appliances were damaged and needed to be replaced, but we are insured for that. My main concern was that our computers—including the one I use to produce this magazine—might not work. Had they been zapped into oblivion?

No, they had not. The vital components containing the data had been protected because the surge protectors had done their job.

As you probably know (you do have one, don't you?), a surge protector is a device that you connect between a power outlet and electronic equipment.

The temptations we face in life stem from the fact that our nature is hard-wired to provide a ready path for sin. James continues: “Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”

Paul, a man who took his spiritual health very seriously, was forced to admit that he was “sold as a slave to sin” (Romans 7:14). “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it” (Romans 7:18-20).

Yes, sin may do it, but it is still our doing because it is *we* who are doing the sinful deeds. Thankfully, we are protected from the ultimate consequences of sin. Jesus took care of that. But there are the secondary consequences to the sudden urges to sin.

“A man reaps what he sows,” Paul wrote in Galatians 5:7. Proverbs 6:27 puts it like this: “Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned?” That flash of anger, the moment of lust, a sudden outbreak of envy or pride—these can produce effects that last a lifetime, and even beyond.

“I tell you the truth,” said Jesus, “everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever” (John 8:34-36). As

brothers and sisters of Jesus, we belong to God’s family. And we are not alone. “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.... The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:18, 26).

Through the Holy Spirit, God provides us with the ultimate urge protection when temptation suddenly surges into our lives. “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). A heart guided by the Holy Spirit is insulated by the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Each of these offer protection, providing a safe alternative path to potentially destructive waves of temptation. But the Spirit guides—he does not demand or insist, any more than a surge protector will plug itself in. Whether to listen to his prompting, whether to follow his lead, is your decision. We are free to simply let temptation have its way with us, and sadly, we often give in.

I don’t know exactly how long a person has, to either nip temptation in the bud or let it blossom into sin. Scientists who have studied our brain’s neural networks tell us that the speed of thought is less than that of electricity. So we may have a bit more than a few billionths of a second. Whatever it is, it is long enough for us to be able to hear God remind us, “That is not the way we do things in this family.” And to let those urge protectors do their job. **co**

## In Other Words

# “Mbio za sakafuni huishia ukingoni!”

By Kalengule Kaoma

Recently I visited Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, and spoke to a number of people about what happened in late 2007 and early 2008 when the country endured disgraceful violence that dampened the spirits, hopes, and aspirations of much of the population. Many people lost their properties. Others were severely injured and many lost loved ones.

Despite the prevailing despair, I noticed something wonderful in several of the citizens I spoke to. They agreed that while they faced severe challenges, problems, difficulties, hardships and trials, they were determined to find lasting solutions.

The coastal people of Kenya have a saying: “Mbio za sakafuni huishia ukingoni,” The translation is, “A race to the sea will end at the seashore,” and the idea behind it is that even the worst things eventually come to an end.



Other people have experienced very hard times. One of them, an ancient author, Paul of Tarsus, wrote:

*“We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us.”*

At the end of every dark night will finally come the dawn. Kenyans who confidently say, “Mbio za sakafuni huishia ukingoni!” know that, no matter how bad things may seem, there is always hope. **co**

# The Council of Chalcedon and the “Two Natures” Controversy

By Paul Kroll

In A.D. 381 the Council of Constantinople rejected the teaching of an elderly bishop from Syria, named Apollinaris. Apollinaris had theorized that Jesus Christ’s divine nature displaced Jesus’ human mind and will. To him, Jesus possessed only a divine nature, and therefore did not truly take on the fallen nature of humanity.

Controversy about the relationship between the divine and human natures of Jesus continued with Nestorius of Antioch, who was appointed bishop of Constantinople in 428. Nestorius concluded that Jesus had two separate natures and two wills, making him two persons—a double being—one divine and the other human, sharing one body. Nestorius’ teaching was condemned by a church council at Ephesus in 431, but the controversy did not end.

In the 440s, a respected monk from Constantinople, Eutyches, denied that Jesus was truly human. He taught that Jesus did not exist in two natures because his human nature was absorbed or swallowed up by his divine nature. Flavian, bishop of Constantinople, convened a synod in 448, condemning Eutyches’ position, but Eutyches appealed the decision.

The fight took a nasty turn when Dioscorus, Patriarch of Alexandria, became determined to reinstate Eutyches and his views. Eastern emperor Theodosius II, also favoring Eutyches’ position, called another church-wide council to meet at Ephesus in August 449. He appointed Dioscorus to chair the proceedings and to silence any dissent.

Leo I, bishop of Rome, sent delegates to the synod with his *Tome*, an exposition of how the two natures, divine and human, are joined in Christ. Dioscorus prevented the reading of Leo’s letter and rejected his position. Eutyches’ teaching was declared orthodox. Bishops who refused to accept the council’s decision were deposed.

## Council of Chalcedon

An unexpected event dramatically changed the situation. On July 28, 450, while out riding, Theodosius’ horse bolted. The emperor fell, broke his neck and died. His sister Pulcheria became empress with her husband, Marcian, as co-emperor. They were opposed to Eutyches’ teaching and eager to redress the wrongs perpetrated by Dioscorus.

Emperor Marcian called for a church council to

meet at Chalcedon, on the outskirts of Constantinople. More than 500 bishops attended—the largest church council gathering to that time. All delegates were from the Eastern Church, except the few papal representatives from Rome and two from Africa. Deliberations lasted from October 8 to November 1, 451.

Leo again sent representatives with his *Tome*, which was read and approved by the council. Chalcedon reversed the “Robbers’ Council” decision and condemned Eutyches’ teaching. It anathematized those who taught that Christ had only a single, divine nature and those “who imagine a mixture or confusion between the two natures of Christ.”

## Definition of Faith

Marcian urged the council to write a statement of faith to provide unity and understanding for the Church. In response, the council produced the “Chalcedonian Definition.”

The Definition affirms that Christ is “complete in Godhead and complete in humanness, truly God and truly human.” He is “of one substance (*homoousios*) with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his humanity.”

Jesus Christ is to be “recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.” The “distinction of natures” is “in no way annulled by the union.” “The characteristics of each nature” are to be considered as “preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence.” They are not to be “separated into two persons.”

In summary, the Definition confesses Jesus Christ is “one person, who is *both* divine *and* human.” Though its wording has been criticized as inadequate, it has helped the Church in “setting the limits beyond which error lies” in speaking of the human and divine union in Christ.

The Definition confesses the gospel message that Jesus Christ assumed our fallen humanity in order to save us, for as early church father, Gregory of Nazianzus (329–389), said, “That which he [Christ] has not assumed he has not healed; but that which is united to his Godhead is also saved.”

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”* (John 1:1, 14). **co**



# Jesus Loves *Them*, This I Know

By Jeb Egbert

*People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Luke 18:15-16).*

In Luke's story of Jesus blessing the little children, what always catches my eye is that Jesus actively *called* little children to come to him. Interestingly, his own disciples are opposed to the idea. They "hindered them." Perhaps they believed that following Jesus was not kids' stuff.

But Jesus loves children. In fact, perhaps one of the most comforting things that parents and grandparents can ever know is that Jesus loves our children and grandchildren more than we *ever* could. Jesus himself said, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). And Jesus laid down his life for the whole world...including children.

No parent I have met has ever conveyed to me that they felt they did "the perfect job" as a parent. My wife and I certainly didn't. We have three children and we are often amazed how the three can be so different and require such different skills in terms of parenting. It would be easier if they could respond to a one-size-fits-all approach to child rearing. But we have learned that an approach that seems to work well with one of our children may not work at all with the next.

Thankfully, Jesus knows our children, and he knows yours. And he loves them completely and unconditionally. He wants them to come to him. In Mark's Gospel, we read that Jesus took little children into his arms and blessed them (Mark 10:16).

No matter how much we fall short in our efforts to be perfect parents, it is a relief to know that Jesus' love and grace constantly overflows and washes over our children. But both Luke and Mark mention something else—people were *bringing* their children to him. That's an important role, one that *we* can play in the lives of our children. It's a question worth asking: Do we bring our children to Jesus? Or might we, like Jesus' disciples did, "hinder them"?

When I read through the Gospel accounts of parents bringing their children to Jesus, I am struck

by their eagerness to have their children in the arms of Jesus. They want their children in his presence. Perhaps they recognize their own lack of parental competence and are seeking the blessing and help of one who loves their children more than they ever could.

How might we hinder our children from entering the presence of Jesus?

One way might be to avoid opportunities to engage them in activities or functions where the worship of Jesus is likely to occur. This may include church-related activities such as worship services or Christian camps or retreats.

Another way we might hinder our children is by not showing them our own love of Jesus. Is it clear to them that building an abiding relationship with him is paramount to us? Do we spend time in prayer with and for our children?

A final way that we might hinder our children from coming into Jesus' presence is by living a double standard. As children grow, they easily spot hypocrisy. The apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:5 about having "a *form* of godliness but denying its power." If we compartmentalize our lives, being "Christian" only while at church, our children will pick up on it.

Jesus loves our children, this I know. And he loves them more than we ever could. Ephesians 3:20 summarizes it well: "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us." That's the work of Jesus, and he can do more, immeasurably more, in the lives of our children than we could ever imagine. So let's bring them into his presence! ☪

**Jeb Egbert** has focused on youth ministry and education for 30 years. He has spent considerable time working in camp ministry and has taught at the secondary and post-secondary levels. He earned his Masters in Business Administration from the University of Texas in Tyler and his Doctorate in Education from Texas A & M. He is currently the Vice President of Academic Affairs for Argosy University in Southern California.

Do we bring our children to Jesus? Or might we, like Jesus' disciples did, "hinder them"?



# Kitchen-Bin Guidance

By Kerry Gubb

**A**s I keyboard these words, I can hear the faint sounds of my little granddaughter learning from her mother that she doesn't really need to climb into the kitchen garbage bin. This is but one of many *déjà vu* moments my wife and I have savored during our delightful visit to see our family.

I say *déjà vu* because her daddy—my son—also had to learn the same thing about kitchen garbage bins. So did I. We all had to learn not to climb into the bins, so they had the same allure for all of us. Only the outsides of the bins looked different because home décor has evolved over 50 years.

In my day (that's a phrase grandfathers use!) the bin was yucky green, with a fascinating pedal that made the lid pop open. When my son was a little boy, he was smitten by the bright colors of cartoon-painted

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**Chances are good that much of the garbage that will sully our lives will be wrapped in a professional presentation.**

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fruit on the can. His own little girl is, at this very moment, enchanted with a bright, shiny, stainless-steel bin that's bigger than she is, in which she can see her own comically-distorted reflection. A truly wonderful experience!

Three generations of us were lured into kitchen garbage cans by a fascinating, alluring exterior. We were all anxious to climb in, explore and play joyously in what is, in the final analysis, garbage.

Of course, we were all toddlers when we unthinkingly climbed into the kitchen garbage cans. By the time we're old enough to have joined the workforce, we've outgrown yucky green, cartoon-painted fruit and stainless steel. We understand that toddlers speak, understand and think as toddlers. Then they grow up. They "put away childish things."

Don't they? Didn't we? Yes and yes. But, curiously, kitchen garbage bins have their grown-up echoes from

time to time. And sometimes we are as fooled by our fascinations when we are adults every bit as much as we were as toddlers.

Not surprising, really. A spiritually blind world deploys some of its most clever minds to package the garbage of ruinous living in the most alluring ways.

Parents come to know the pressure of designer labels, up-market birthday parties and personal cell-phones early in the life of their children.

This is no mystery. Everywhere their kids look and listen, the advertising industry creates dissatisfaction with whatsoever state they're in, enticing them to spend, spend, spend in the hope of fulfillment in material acquisition.

## **Garbage, cleverly made plausible.**

By the time they're in the workforce, that urge is by no means abated, craving updated sublimation in luxury cars, best entertainment equipment or living in the "right neighborhood."

The content and philosophy of our entertainment has all but eradicated the likelihood that our children will be able to discern right from wrong. Today's promiscuity, desire for instant gratification and completely egocentric thinking are simply the cumulative effect of garbage—cleverly dressed in media magic, airbrushing and great music.

Garbage, cleverly made plausible.

As for spirituality—we're living in a world that does not like to retain God in its knowledge. As a result, as Eugene Peterson puts it, "*a culture as thoroughly secularized as ours can hardly be expected to come up with its own medicine. For the most part, [we] come up with a secularized spirituality, which is no spirituality at all.*"

Garbage, cleverly made plausible.

If the ads we're watching, the magazines and books we're reading, the lectures we're attending and the values in which we're immersing ourselves are consistent with the sound biblical teaching, all well and good.

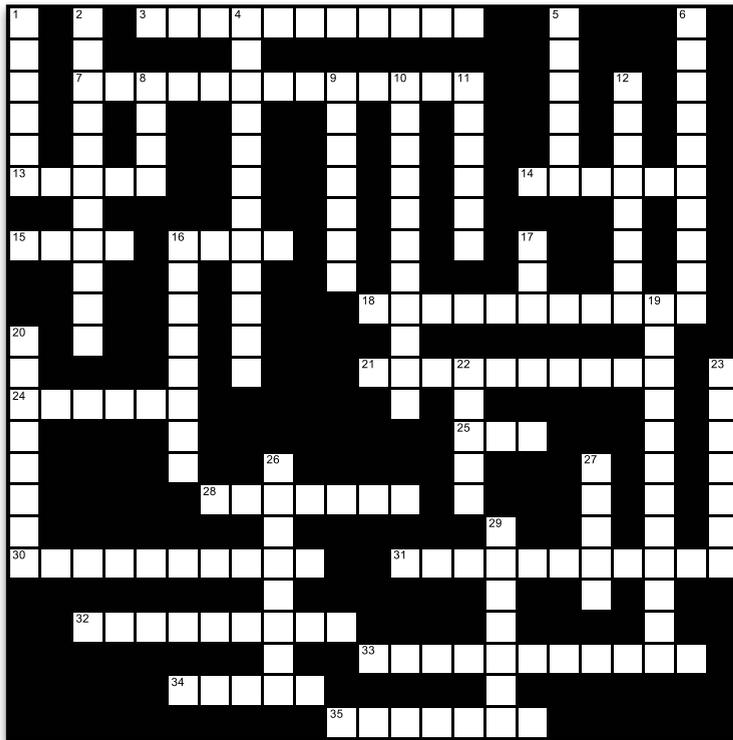
That's a big "IF," though, these days, isn't it?

Peterson continues: "*We ransack exotic cultures and esoteric groups in a search for wholeness; but being new at this and without experience, [we] have no way of discriminating between the true and the false.*"

And, not by accident, chances are fair to good that much of the garbage that will sully our lives is going to be wrapped in professional presentation using plausible, intellectually stimulating language...yet having originated in the minds and morés of a society that has functionally rejected God.

# Christian Word Crossword Puzzle

**How to play:** Solve the crossword puzzle by first looking at the clues. The answers are in the articles in this edition of *Christian Odyssey*.



Designed by Christopher Sealey

By the time my little granddaughter encounters this array of grown-up “kitchen-bins,” I hope she will have also acquired the adult Christian skill of “proving all things.” (Pondering this stuff is what grandfathers do!)

In a world that is ignorant of God’s love and flounders without a moral and spiritual rudder, is there reason to hope that she’ll be able to hold fast to the good and reject what is, in the final analysis, garbage?

On reflection, despite the many fascinations of yucky green, cartoon fruit and stainless steel, I think there *is* reason to hope. Although she’ll certainly encounter these, she will not be completely at their mercy.

At this very moment, her mother is helping her out lovingly in the matter of the kitchen bin. There’s a lot more, though. Day by day, thanks to her Mom and Dad, she’s also learning about Jesus Christ, the perfect reflection of the God who loves her and will always be with her to help her see through the false allure of life’s garbage.

Grandparents everywhere have their apprehensions about what lies ahead for their precious little toddlers.

That’s why we’re teaching our little one about the great God whose goodness, faithfulness and unceasing love will never leave her, no matter how alluringly life’s moral and spiritual dangers may present themselves. [co](#)

**Across Clues:**

3. the Holy Spirit speaks to us by allowing us to exert control over self
7. God can speak to us through connections with other people
13. spike in electricity
14. award given to 3rd place winner at the Olympics
15. without illumination by the Holy Spirit, the words of the Bible are...
16. award given to 1st place winner at the Olympics
18. Olympic events for physically challenged athletes
21. urge to sin (James 1:13-14)
24. God can speak to us through the natural world
25. God can speak to us through its beauty
28. God can speak directly to our mental processes
30. God can speak to us through the Bible
31. Olympic weightlifting which includes the squat, the bench press, and the deadlift
32. other coaches are subordinate to him, Jesus is our...
33. we achieve this by abiding in Christ
34. God’s character against everything that is wrong
35. spiritual waste can be made plausible by the devil

**Down Clues:**

1. one of the roles that a coach performs for an athlete
2. our salvation is based on our union with Christ and not on our \_\_\_\_\_ or works.
4. being faithful, a fruit of the Holy Spirit that insulates the heart from evil
5. someone who runs at the Olympics
6. being gentle, a fruit of the Spirit that insulates the heart from evil
8. defines the character of God (1 John 4:8)
9. Olympics for intellectually challenged athletes
10. the Holy Spirit sheds light on the Bible
11. award given to 2nd place winner at the Olympics
12. October 2007 Special Olympics was held in this city in China
16. being good, a fruit of the Spirit that insulates the heart from evil
17. great happiness, a fruit of the Spirit that insulates heart from evil
19. God can speak to us while communicating with other living people
20. being kind, a fruit of the Spirit that insulates the heart from evil
22. absence of hostility, a fruit of the Spirit that insulates the heart from evil
23. length of time we should spend giving thanks to God (Psalm 30:2, 12b)
26. symbolizes our union with Jesus (Heb. 7:22)
27. God can speak to us through its sounds and notes
29. Summer 2008 Olympiad will be held in this city in China

See the solution on page 24.

# Paul's Concern for the Thessalonians

## A study of 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

By Mike Morrison

**P**aul, Silas and Timothy had been chased out of Macedonia, but they did not abandon the infant churches they left behind. Indeed, they were worried because the new believers in Thessalonica were being persecuted. Paul did not know how they would cope.

### Paul's desire to see the Thessalonians (2:17-20)

Paul reviews the history of his relationship with the people: **But, brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you.** Paul does not say *how* he tried to return to Thessalonica, but the person who carried the letter could explain the details.

**For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan stopped us.** Again, the letter carrier would fill in the details that we lack. It might have been risky to put them in writ-

ing, in case the letter was intercepted.

Paul explains that he takes pride in the Thessa-

Paul was as gentle as a woman nursing a baby. He supplied their needs, but did not ask them to supply his.

lonians: **For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.** When Christ returns and assesses Paul's ministry, he will praise work that had lasting results (1 Cor. 3:10-15). If all of his converts fell away, what would it say about his ministry?

This is emotion-laden rhetoric, not a statement about the way eternal rewards are given. Paul wants to assure the Thessalonians that they are important to him. If they are skeptical that Paul is motivated by love, then Paul explains another reason: This is what the Lord wants Paul to do, and Paul wants to do it for him.

### Sending Timothy to help (3:1-5)

**So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens.** Paul's stay

in Athens is described by Luke in Acts 17—Paul went there after he was forced to leave Berea. Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea for a time, but soon rejoined Paul (Acts 17:15).

**We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith.** Timothy has already been there, so why is Paul telling them things they already know? The details remind them that their relationship with Paul has some historical depth—it is evidence that Paul cares for them and has not abandoned them.

Why was it necessary to send Timothy? **...so that no one would be unsettled by these trials.** Paul is vague on these trials—the details do not serve his purpose. Unbelievers might say that trials show that Christianity is false, but Paul reverses the idea: these trials *confirm* the message, because they were predicted. **You know quite well that we were destined for them. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know.**

So Paul tells them again: **For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless.** Timothy's trip was not just to encourage them—it was also to find out if they were still faithful.

Was it really possible for Paul's efforts to have been useless? He later wrote, "You know your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:15). If he could say this to the Corinthians, despite their spiritual immaturity, it seems safe to say that efforts to serve Christ are *never* in vain, never useless. Paul is exaggerating his fears to highlight the relief he felt when he learned of the Thessalonians' faithfulness.

Since Paul sometimes exaggerates (see 1 Thess. 1:8), we have to be cautious when interpreting some of his comments. Sometimes he writes as if believers can never fall away. Here, he implies that they *can* lose their faith. His expressions of confidence encourage the readers, but his actions (sending Timothy to strengthen them) suggest that Paul knew the importance of encouragement and personal contact in



helping Christians endure trying times and overcome the temptation to give up.

### Timothy brings good news (3:6-10)

Paul completes the history by summarizing Timothy's report: **But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you.** The desire for face-to-face meeting was frequently included in Greek letters of friendship. By putting this in the letter, Paul encourages the Thessalonians to continue what they are doing.

He reminds them that he endures persecution, too, and that their faithfulness has helped him: **Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith.** He adds, with some exaggeration, **For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord.** Good news like that really lifted our spirits, we might say. It makes our work feel worthwhile again.

Paul thanks God for their continuing faithfulness: **How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?**

Paul has finished recounting his history with the readers, but the relationship is not finished. It continues by means of this letter, but Paul also hopes that it continues with personal contact.

### Paul's prayer (3:10-13)

Just as Paul turned his joy toward God in thanks, he also turns his hopes for the future toward God in prayer: **Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.**

What was lacking in their faith? Perhaps Paul means that he wants to tell them more about the *content* of their

faith—faith in the sense of “the Christian faith.” Judging by this letter, they lack very little; Paul does not criticize what they are doing.

He prays that he will be able to visit them: **Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you.**

And he prays for their spiritual growth: **May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.**

Does “blameless” mean that Paul expects them to be morally perfect by the time Christ returns? Paul's prayer here means about the same thing as “I hope that you achieve everything that God wants you to achieve.” It is a sentiment, not a prophecy, and not a formula for salvation.

First Thessalonians is a letter of encouragement, not a letter of doctrinal instruction, and we should not try to squeeze doctrine out of passages in which Paul is not trying to explain a doctrine. Some parts of the Bible are doctrinal, but other parts are more like a story, and some are motivational. God inspired every type, and we need to receive it the way it is, not try to force it into something else.

Paul will have more to say about love, blameless conduct, and the coming of Christ in the next chapter. ☪

#### Taking it personally

- Is my hope and joy for the future centered on other people? (2:19)
- Have I ever felt that my work in the church was useless? (3:5)
- When have I felt “really alive”? (3:8)
- Who can supply what is lacking in my faith? (3:10)

## The Greeks Had a Word for It

### “Περιχώρησις”

Actually, they didn't have a word for it, so they had to make one up. It was in the 7th century, and John of Damascus wanted a word to describe relationships within the Trinity: the Father in the Son and Spirit, the Son in the Father and Spirit, and the Spirit in the Father and Son.

So John used the word *perichōrēsis*, which comes from the Greek word *peri*, meaning “around,” and *chōreō*, meaning to “contain,” “hold,” or “make space.” The idea seems to be that the members of the Trinity contain each other, or penetrate or permeate each other.

Interestingly, a similar Greek word, *choreuō*, means “to dance,” and some people have therefore thought that *perichōrēsis* means literally “to dance around.” It doesn't. The connection is more of a

pun, not a literal definition. However, although the real meaning is mutual indwelling, not dancing, Christian writer Paul Fiddes points out, “The play on words does illustrate well the dynamic sense of *perichōrēsis*...” (*Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* [Westminster John Knox, 2001], 72; see also the *Journal of Theological Studies*, 1928, pages 242-254).

It is into this dynamic, loving Trinitarian life of the Father, the Son and the Spirit that the Father's beloved Son Jesus has brought all humanity. As one of us, and as our perfect representative, Jesus presents us to the Father fully redeemed and reconciled in his perfect humanity on our behalf. In Jesus, we dwell with him and the Father and the Spirit in *perichōrēsis*, mutual indwelling—God in us and we in God. ☪

## Hmm...

Teach me, and I will forget. Ask me, and I will remember. Involve me, and I will understand.

### Chinese proverb

The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotion, spends himself in a worthy cause; who at best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who have never tasted victory or defeat.

### Theodore Roosevelt

We must remind ourselves yet once more that all Christian language about the future is a set of signposts pointing into a mist. Signposts don't normally provide you with advance photographs of what you will find at the end of the road, but that does not mean they are not pointing in the right direction. They are telling you the truth, the particular sort of truth that can be told about the future.

### N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, p. 132

The line between good and evil is never simply between "us" and "them." The line between good and evil runs through each one of us.

### N. T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, p. 38

The point of the cross isn't forgiveness. Forgiveness leads to something much bigger: restoration. God isn't just interested in the covering over of our sins; God wants to make us into the people we were originally created

to be. It is not just the removal of what's being held against us; it is God pulling us into the people he originally had in mind when he made us.

### Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis*, p. 108

The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.

### Winston Churchill

Our sins interrupt the reception and distribution of God's gifts, bringing suffering and death in their train; but these effects are not God's punishment of us, an interruption of God's good favor, in response to our failings. They are merely the natural consequences of turning away from God's bounty.

### Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity, and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology*, p. 86

Consult not your fears but your hopes and your dreams. Think not about your frustrations, but about your unfulfilled potential. Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed in, but with what it is still possible for you to do.

### Pope John XXIII

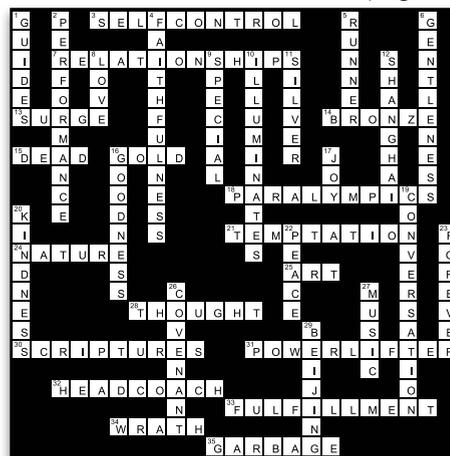
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### Crossword Solution from page 21



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