

Our purpose is to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” and to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

# OLD PATHS ADVOCATE

“To continue speaking the truth in love,” “endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,” “keeping the ordinance as delivered.”

“Thus saith the Lord, ‘stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the Old Paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest of your souls.’ (Jer. 6:16) “And they that be of Thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Paths to Dwell in.” (Isa. 58:12).

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NO. 2

## JESUS PREACHED THE GOSPEL

By PAUL NICHOLS

Brethren NT Commentary “The kingdom of heaven. This phrase is used in several different senses; but here it should be understood in its simplest meaning, viz., as the assembly of God’s children on the earth. The ‘kingdom of heaven’ on earth is without territorial limits. It began with John the Baptist, who was sent from God. Mal 4:5; Jno 1:6. Through his preaching many repented, were baptized by him, and became his disciples. This he continued until he had baptized Christ, who should increase while himself should decrease. John 3:30. After Christ was baptized by John, he went out and called unto himself his twelve disciples, and began to teach them the laws of heaven John 12:40, by which they should be governed in this earthly kingdom. Thus was his kingdom established on the earth. In this sense the phrase, “kingdom of heaven,” should be understood here.” (Brethren NT Commentary)

“Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:14, 15).

“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17).

“And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent” (Luke 4:43).

“And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities” (Luke 11:1).

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised...” (Luke 4:18).

“And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him,

and that he might send them forth to preach...” (Mark 3:14).

“What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops” (Matt. 10:27).

“And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God...” (Luke 9:2).

“At one place the heathens would pay them homage, “Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, 15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:” (Acts 14:14-15)

“And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42).

“John did baptize in the wilderness, and did preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4).

“And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins...” (Luke 3:3).

“And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:15).

Evidently these 12 had been baptized with John’s baptism after Jesus had died and they had not believed I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” So even if they had

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Editorial

WHAT DO WE WANT OUT OF GOD?

By JOE NORTON

I'm not sure what your reaction to this question is. It could be that this is an inappropriate question about God. You might ask What do you mean what do I want out of God? After all, God is God; and I have no right to expect anything out of Him. In reality, though, people do have expectations of God and even we ourselves have expectations of Him; so the question is not as ridiculous as it might, at first, appear.

The Jews had expectations of God: In 1 Corinthians 1:23, Paul says Christ was a problem for the Jews. "but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness." What he meant by this statement was that the Jews rejected the idea that Jesus died, that He arose again, and that salvation was offered to everyone through Him. Actually, the doctrine of a crucified Savior was an obstacle for the Jews.

The Jews of the Old Testament expected the Messiah to come into the world in a grand and glorious way and remain on earth with them to reign as their earthly King. Since Jesus came in a different way from what they expected, they rejected Him. Peter refers to Jesus as "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense" (1 Peter 2:8).

Naaman, the commander of the army for the King of Syria, had leprosy during a time when no sure cure was available. When a hand maid in Naaman's house told him of a man in her home country who could heal him, he had expectations that the prophet would meet him and, through some grandiose and, no doubt, quite public ceremony, perform the healing (2 Kings 5:7-12). When the prophet sent a message telling him to dip himself seven times in a dirty river, Naaman was disappointed: his expectations were not met.

The Jews who had been converted to Jesus had expectations of God, according to the book of Hebrews. They expected their problems to be over after they came to Jesus in obedience to the gospel. When persecutions ensued, some were so disappointed they went back to Judaism and others seemed on the verge of going back. In Hebrews chapter 10, the writer speaks of the suffering they endured after they obeyed the gospel. Then in vs. 36, he says, "For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise."

Examples abound in both the Old and New Testaments of people who expected God to act in a certain way or to do certain things. So people have always had expectations of God. They fail to internalize a fact that

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## QUERIST COLUMN

By *RONNY F. WADE*

Question: Please explain what is meant by the phrase “if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven” Matthew 18:19.

Answer: This verse is part of a larger context dealing with church discipline. In verse 15 the Lord speaks concerning a brother who sins against another brother. In such cases Jesus makes it plain that it is the duty of the one against whom a sin has been committed to go to the sinning brother and tell him his fault “between you and him alone.” Even though this admonition is plain, it is often overlooked and disregarded. Instead of going to the brother who has sinned, often the person goes to anyone, with a sympathizing ear, and tells that person how they have been mistreated or sinned against instead of going to the person guilty of doing wrong. It would surprise all of us how easily many problems could be resolved if we only followed the instructions given by Jesus in this verse. Often minor problems grow into major ones simply because we fail to do what the bible teaches in this verse. There are times, however, when a sinning brother is obstinate and refuses to yield when approached. If this is the case, Jesus then instructs that one or two more brethren are to be taken to the sinning brother so that “every word may be established.” It is hoped that in such cases the brother who has sinned will realize his mistake and repent before further action is necessary. If, however, this action fails, then the matter is to be told to the church. The church had not been established at this time, but the instruction given by Jesus is understood to apply when the church became a reality. Those who claim that the four gospels belong under the Law of Moses are wrong in their contention. This instruction proves conclusively that some of the teaching during our Lord’s personal ministry applied directly to the church age, this being only one example. McGarvey correctly remarked “As the Saviour was giving preparatory instruction, he was compelled to thus speak of the church by anticipation before it actually existed.” The person who will not “hear the church” is to be regarded as an outsider i.e. a heathen and publican. The binding and loosing of verse 18 is limited to the context or subject under consideration that is matters of fellowship. The discipline of the church in such matters, scripturally carried out, should be honored and represents the final word in the matter.

In verse 19, the verse in question, the Lord says “again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.”

The meaning cannot be that if two agree (regardless of what it might be) God will hear and answer their prayer. Hence, it must mean, that the persons requesting must be in Christ (John 15:7) and that the request is in keeping with the will of God (John 14:13, 14). Again the context limits the meaning to the matter under consideration and gives a solemnity to the procedure of withdrawal of fellowship. In a general way the passage also underscores the value and power of united prayer scripturally constructed and offered. In the view of this writer the teaching of verse 20 is often misunderstood. Jesus said “where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.” Well meaning brethren have used this verse to prove that if only two or three disciples gather to worship, the Lord will be with them in that worship. While I believe that two or three people can scripturally meet and worship, that is not the burden of this verse.

Contextually, church discipline is still under consideration. Hence Jesus merely affirms that he is in the midst of even two or three who are united in purpose concerning those matters addressed in the previous verses. (Send all questions to Ronny F. Wade P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814)

## YOUNG SPEAKERS’ MEETINGS: ARE THEY WISE?

By *NATHAN BATTEY*

Young Speakers’ Meetings are among the fastest growing trends in church activities today within our brotherhood. If congregations want to have a successful meeting, where people from area congregations and even surrounding states turn out in droves, a Young Speakers’ Meeting is sure to do the trick. People who normally will not travel across town to hear the gospel taught will travel half way across the country to attend such an event. It seems that each year a new congregation announces it is beginning an annual Young Speakers’ Meeting and in the first year of doing so meets with great success.

So, the questions arise: Why are Young Speakers’ Meetings becoming so popular? Why are they so successful? And, is it wise to have such meetings? Though these questions are rarely, if ever raised, they are worthy of our consideration.

## Preliminary Comments

Before launching headlong into a discussion of this topic, some preliminary statements need to be made:

First, the motives of leadership at any congregation that hosts a Young Speakers' Meeting are not being called into question. Congregations that conduct such meetings do so with only the purest and noblest of intents. They are trying to strengthen their youth and ground them in the most holy faith. The question, therefore, is not one of intent but of outcome. Many things, though done with good intentions, often fail in the mission they set forth to accomplish.

Second, it is recognized that not all Young Speakers' Meetings are designed and conducted in the same way. In fact, some meetings are rather termed Young People's Meetings, indicating the speakers may not be young, though the targeted audience is. The primary focus of this article is Young Speakers' Meetings, though some of the general principles may have application to Young People's Meetings as well.

Third, this article is written in generalities. Though all points may not be applicable to every Young Speakers' Meeting, they do represent the norm.

Fourth, though this article will likely be met with opposition because of the popularity of such meetings and the number of people involved in them, it is hoped that it will be received in the spirit of concern from which it was written. Please consider the article with this idea in mind: action never dictates truth. Just because congregations have done something for years does not mean wisdom has been employed or methods cannot be improved. The aim of this article is to identify some of the shortcomings of Young Speakers' Meetings and challenge brethren to reevaluate how they conduct these meetings.

Lastly, this article is based on first-hand experiences. This writer has hosted a number of Young Speakers' Meetings and participated in countless others. One year he participated in eight such meetings and acted as host in five or six of them. It is because of his direct involvement and experiences that he writes this article. These are not the words of a disconnected or disgruntled elderly person, but rather the concerns of a young man for whose benefit Young Speakers' Meetings were designed.

## Setting the Stage

The main goals of Young Speakers' Meetings are to encourage, motivate, and educate young people in the faith. The consensus of many church leaders is that young people either will not listen to or cannot relate to older brethren. Thus, in an attempt to reach

their young people, they call in younger speakers who can relate to them; and a Young Speakers' Meeting is formed. Church leaders usually select as speakers young men who gave a five-minute talk at one of the big meetings like the New Years Meeting or the Fourth of July Meeting. After choosing and assigning topics to the speakers, congregations announce the meeting across the brotherhood, and a large crowd from all over gathers to hear these young men teach the Word of God.

In deciding to have a Young Speakers' Meeting, there are several assumptions drawn that need to be questioned. Here are some questions leaders need to ask: Can young people not relate to older brethren or have they not been trained to relate to them? Are the topics that are chosen truly beneficial to young people? Are the young men who are being called to participate the most capable teachers for the occasion? Most importantly, do Young Speakers' Meetings live up to their goals of encouraging, motivating, and educating the youth?

## Positive Benefits

Certainly all who attend a Young Speakers' Meeting are encouraged. It is nearly impossible to spend a weekend with brethren of like precious faith, and with friends rarely seen, and not be encouraged. The Lord's people feed off one another and need opportunities to be together. The encouragement hereby gained is largely a result of social interaction. All who attended are saddened for a period after the meeting's conclusion because real life returns and friends are missed. Many young people refer to this feeling as Post-Meeting-Depression-Syndrome (PMDS).

For some period after a meeting, most are motivated to "do better" than they have in the past. They spring forth into action with great enthusiasm but are quickly cut down by the cares of this life (Matthew 13:19-21). Many fail to recognize zeal and Faith as two separate concepts. Our zeal can be fueled by our companionship (Hebrews 10:24), but our faith can be built only by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Every Christian needs the encouragement and motivation that comes through companionship, but encouragement and motivation cannot be mistaken for the building of faith.

## Issues Raised

Though there are some great benefits to Young Speakers' Meetings, there are also some drawbacks. Stepping back to evaluate a situation fairly and recognize both the positive and negative aspects of a situation is a difficult task. While people dwell on the positives of Young Speakers' Meetings, few consider the negative issues that come with them. A failure to recognize and deal with the shortcomings of Young Speakers' Meetings will result in a failure to achieve optimum success. The remainder of this article is an attempt to identify and deal with some of the difficulties Young



Speakers' Meetings present.

First, the main purpose of a gospel meeting should be the preaching of the gospel and, through it, building faith (1 Corinthians 14:26), not socialization. Unfortunately, the social aspect of Young Speakers' Meetings has for some time outweighed the edification aspect. Young people are often more concerned about who is attending the meeting than they are about the speakers or the topics. The memorable parts of Young Speakers' Meetings are not the speakers or the topics, but rather what takes place after services. Simply put, the teaching does not currently match up with the socializing. As a result of the imbalance between teaching and socializing, brethren need to question whether or not Young Speakers' Meetings have turned into a form of the Social Gospel in which the emphasis is placed on what gets people in rather than what builds people up. The social benefits of meetings are great, unless they become the driving factor of a meeting. In John 6, Jesus emphasizes the fact that the teaching of the gospel must far outweigh any other motivation. In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul stresses that the Church must take heed how she builds lest she build with wood, hay, and stubble, and in the end her works be burnt up. The truth, actually, is the only way to strengthen and establish young people in the faith; thus, these meetings should emphasize the preaching of the truth.

Second, planners of these meetings should select topics of greater substance. Young Speakers' Meetings are supposed to emphasize the young people and topics they need to hear, though, in reality, most needed topics go untouched. Typical topics assigned to young men include the following: love, peace, gentleness, kindness, heroes of faith, mercy, goodness, and so on. One topic given to this writer was, "Meditate on Whatsoever Things Are Lovely." Now, while all of these topics are Biblical concepts, young speakers develop few of them beyond the point of a word study. As well, these topics do not really address issues that are troubling our young people and the Church in today's society, nor through them are young people being equipped to fight the good fight of faith. More critical and relevant topics for young people are Bible authority, scriptural worship, the scheme of redemption, how faith and works go together, how to combat Calvinism, why it is wrong to drink alcohol, how to overcome sexual temptation, etc. Not only do young people need to hear these topics taught, but older people do, too! Sadly, since young people are not being taught what they need to hear at these meetings, their faith is not being strengthened.

Third, planners should make better choices in selecting the young men who are asked to speak. Poor selection of speakers can result in the poor selection of topics because usually the young men asked to speak are not capable of handling the meat of the Word. They are not capable because they have not trained nor have they had

any experience in defending the truth, at least on some important subjects. Leaders want young men to speak but are afraid to give them topics of any substance for fear of what they might teach. Such fears are legitimized when young men embarrass themselves through lack of preparation or make terrible choices of content to include in "safe" topics.

2 Timothy 2:2 states: "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

As an evangelist, Timothy had to train men in the doctrine of Christ to the point where they could teach and train others. Paul's admonition to Timothy should raise the following question in regard to Young Speakers' Meetings: Have the young men been properly trained before they are asked to teach at meeting?

Congregations often ask young men to participate in their meetings knowing very little to nothing about them other than what they heard during a five-minute talk. It is assumed that since these young men are speaking they must be faithful and they must have received training. Often times these assumptions could not be farther from the truth.

Most young speakers have had little training (if any) and are being set up for failure. Failure? Yes, failure. Young men are given a concordance in one hand and a commentary in the other and expected to come up with a sermon on any topic found therein. After speaking a few times at home, they are asked to speak at a meeting, praised highly for an average job, and never critiqued or challenged to improve. They confuse speaking with teaching and encouraging with edification. They are left with a false sense of ability and end up developing the idea that they do not need any training when someone finally offers it to them. What begins with the good intentions of well meaning brethren often ends in the destruction of great potential.

The common practice of inviting young men to speak at a meeting is to call and ask them directly rather than calling and discussing the matter with leaders in their home congregation. There have been instances in which a young man was not allowed to speak at his home congregation, yet was asked to speak at many Young Speakers' Meetings. Such not only undermines the autonomy of individual congregations but also damages the spiritual development of young men.

Here is the bottom line: If a man has not trained (2 Timothy 2:2), he should not teach (James 3:1). Though this conclusion may seem cold and harsh, remember it comes from a young man who has been through the system and has seen the effects of a failure to train in many of his peers. Young men need correction and instruction (Proverbs 15:5). They need mentors in the

Lord as Timothy had with Paul (1 Corinthians 4:17). Though we claim young men should study, travel, and train with an older preacher as did Timothy and Titus, few actually do. Instead they are taught that if they will get up a couple sermons, they can get on a circuit and, in a short time, claim to be a preacher. Though they are not sent out by (Acts 13:3) nor accountable to a congregation (Acts 14:26), they are encouraged to keep up the “hard work” by congregations that are more than willing to let anyone teach for them. To make matters worse, these young men are trained to expect payment beyond gas money with the invitation to speak. Again, they are being set up for failure, and the church is being set up for trouble. The blame is to be shared by both young men who do not seek training and leaders who fail to give any.

Fourth, young men who have not established their faithfulness should not be asked to participate in Young Speakers’ Meetings. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul required that a man must be found faithful before he was even allowed to train; yet many young men who stand before our congregations have not proved their faithfulness, let alone received training. The principle of faithfulness has been taken too lightly and has affected the results of Young Speakers’ Meetings.

Case-In-Point: Many young men who have spoken at numerous Young Speakers’ Meetings over the past five to ten years are no longer in the Church. Though it is now evident that they are not faithful, through a little investigation it could have been discovered that they were not faithful then either. Young men who are drunkards, drug users, fornicators, or generally immoral have no business speaking at Young Speakers’ Meetings (James 3:1; 1 Corinthians 5).

Lastly, the theory of having young men relate to other young people and address topics that will help the young people is in itself half-baked at best and is not the pattern of scripture. The book of Proverbs stresses over and over again the necessity of the younger learning knowledge and gaining wisdom from the elderly. Young people would benefit exponentially more from leaders of the Church or preachers of the gospel than they would from young men who, at best, are still in training. Who has more knowledge and wisdom: a preacher of sixty years, or a sixteen-year-old? Why then do we assemble large audiences and travel half way across the country for a young man, yet not for a preacher?

Admitting that our young people are not listening to the elderly is a recognition of a problem, but the solution is not to abandon the Biblical principal. For further reading on this topic, “A Weed in the Church” by Scott Brown is highly recommended.

Young Speakers’ Meetings further serve to drive a wedge between the younger and the elderly. Young

people are trained to think that things are supposed to revolve around them while the elderly are left out of the picture. Older brethren frequently state, “Why don’t we have an Old People’s Meeting?” This statement is made in jest, yet truths are often found in jest. Can both the young and the old not be benefited at the same time?

In regulating the worship assembly and pointing out its purpose, the apostle Paul wrote the following:

1 Corinthians 14:26-31 “How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification 27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret 28 But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. 29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. 30 But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. (Emphasis mine).

From this scripture we draw the following points:

- 1- The purpose of the assembly is for the edification of all (vs. 31).
- 2- We are not to divide the assembly over age, race, or language but are to be all taught together so that all may be edified (vs. 26, 31).
- 3- If a man cannot edify, he has no business being placed in the role of a teacher (James 3:1) but should rather be in a training role (2 Timothy 2:2).

The brotherhood has defended this passage (and rightfully so) against the innovation of Bible classes through which the assembly is divided and all are not edified together. Yet when we call together a single assembly in which not all are included/invited have we not missed the point?

Here is an example: Roughly two years ago some brethren in Mexico decided they wanted to have a Young People’s Meeting in which the elderly were not allowed/invited to attend. Where is the Scriptural authority for such a meeting (1 Corinthians 14 and Colossians 3:17), and where is the wisdom? The fact is that one cannot read of such an assembly taking place in the New Testament. The tenor of Scripture indicates that when a preacher came to town, all were gathered together and learned together (Matthew 18:1-8, Acts 12:12-17, 20:7-12, 1 Corinthians 14:26).

Furthermore, why would these young people want to be separated from the elderly? Division does not take place over night, and thus the action taken by these young people was merely an attempt to promote an unspoken division. Such a mind set of distinguishing between young and old can ultimately lead to division.

Here is a question for consideration: Why do we use the terms “Young Speakers’ Meetings” and “Young People’s Meetings”? Should not the goal of all gospel meetings be the same: preaching the gospel to both young and old?

### Conclusion

The crux of this article is threefold:

First, brethren need to question the type of edification that takes place at Young Speakers’ Meetings and the reason for having them. Are they merely social events, or is the emphasis on edification? (1 Corinthians 14:26)

Second, brethren need to start communicating with leaders of congregations before asking young men to speak at meetings. Communication needs to take place for the sake of autonomy as well as making sure men are trained and qualified to teach. (2 Timothy 2:2)

Third, parents and leaders need to reflect on the separation that often exists between the younger and the elderly. Are we seeking wisdom and directing young people towards it? Or are we training them in the way of Rehoboam and teaching them to seek the counsel of their peers. (1 Kings 12)

Fourth, parents and leaders need to reconsider the Lord’s pattern for training and encouraging young people. (Proverbs 22:6/Titus 2:1-8)

May God continue to bless His Kingdom and raise up young men and women grounded in the faith (Colossians 1:21-23), equipped to do battle (2 Timothy 4:7), and able to pull down the strongholds of Satan (2 Corinthians 10:4). May the training of the young never be neglected, nor the respect and appreciation of the elderly lost. May they both learn to work together and utilize the abilities the other possesses (Proverbs 20:29). nathanbattey@gmail.com

### IS IT SINFUL TO ADDRESS JESUS IN PRAYER?

By ANDREW RICHARDSON

Should we pray to Jesus? That is, should we address our prayers to Him? “Jehovah’s Witnesses” and their Watchtower Bible and Tract Society say not so. In their publication, *Insight on the Scriptures*, they say: “Though some claim that prayer may properly be addressed to others, such as to God’s Son, the evidence is emphatically to the contrary...” (1988, V. II, pg. 667-668).

Their claim is false. We must understand that Jesus has been given “all power (authority) in heaven and earth” (Matt. 28:18) and has been made the “head over all

things to the church” (Eph. 1:22). In fact, when speaking of the time when He would leave the earth to be with the Father, Jesus said, “If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it” (John 14:14). Doing something “in the name” of someone else means doing it by that person’s authority (Acts 4:7); Jesus is saying that we pray with His authority. He also says, “I will do it”; thus, having authority to do so, Jesus actually takes the active role in granting the thing requested. Why on earth would God delegate to Jesus the authority to make decisions about something we ask, and also to “do it,” i.e., answer the petition, but, yet, not allow us to direct our questions to Him? What sense does that make?

While Steven was being stoned in Acts 7:59, he cried out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” The “Witnesses” claim that this was not a “prayer” since Steven could “see” Jesus (v. 55), and thus was no different than when someone talked directly to Jesus while He was on earth, but the point remains that the reception of our spirit at death falls within the realm of Jesus’ authority; thus Steven’s supplication was justified whether he could “see” Jesus or not. It’s noteworthy that the revised 1984 edition of the Watchtower’s own Bible translation, the New World Translation, includes a footnote designating Steven’s appeal to Jesus as a “prayer.”

There are other prayers to Christ in scripture. In the latter portion of Acts 1, after Christ’ ascension, the apostles prayed to the “Lord” seeking someone to replace the position of Judas who had died (v. 24). Evidence that Jesus is the “Lord” to Whom they prayed is:

- 1) Jesus is explicitly mentioned as the “Lord” in the immediate context (vv. 6, 21).
- 2) As stated earlier, Jesus has “all authority in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18), so He is authorized to make the decision in the matter. Also, He is the “head over all things to the church,” so once again, this being a church matter, it is fitting that He is the “Lord” Whom they ask.
- 3) Jesus chose the apostles in the first place during His earthly ministry (Luke 16:13); thus it is sensible that the eleven would ask Him concerning a replacement.
- 4) Not only during His earthly ministry, but we have an explicit case of Jesus choosing an apostle after His ascension to heaven in the case of Paul. Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). Jesus later says about Paul: “...he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake” (vv. 15-16). But to avoid their readers even questioning it, the Watchtower Society has changed the word “Lord,” in Acts 1:24, to “Jehovah” in their New World Translation. This is inaccurate. The Greek word translated “Lord” (the New Testament was originally written in Greek) is Kurios,

which is a generic title of authority. “Lord” is the correct rendering; not “Jehovah.” This fraudulent translation of “Lord” to “Jehovah” happens often in the NWT.

Again, concerning prayer, the Watchtower says,

There is nothing to indicate that Christian disciples so expressed themselves under other circumstances to Jesus after his ascension to heaven. Thus the apostle Paul writes: ‘In everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God.’ - Php. 4:6” (1988, pg. 667-668).

Their reasoning is that since Paul says to pray “to God,” then this excludes us from praying to God’s Son. The error here is one commonly made in the religious world -not including all that the Bible has to say about a subject. The Bible seldom provides in one verse all the information there is on a subject. It is sinful and dishonest to isolate a verse and conclude that the entire truth on the matter is contained therein, ignoring other scriptures that provide additional truth.

For example, in Isaiah 43:11, we read: “I, even I, am Jehovah; and besides me there is no saviour” (ASV).

If we were to read only this verse, we might conclude that Jesus could not properly be called a savior. However, other scriptures do just that. For example:

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). The truth is that both God and Jesus are the Saviour for the same reason that praying “to God” permits us to pray to Jesus-They are unified. Jesus is actually called God (Isa. 9:6).

Also, in Isaiah 48:12, Jehovah calls Himself the “First” and the “Last.” So according to the Watchtower’s logic, we couldn’t accept Jesus as the same, yet this is exactly how He identifies Himself in Revelation 2:8.

Read another instance of the Watchtower using this flawed approach:

“Jesus taught his followers to pray to ‘our Father in the heavens.’ (Matthew 6:9) Our prayers, then, must be directed only to Jehovah God . . .For our prayers to be heard, we must pray only to Jehovah through his Son” (What Does the Bible Really Teach 2005, pg. 167-168).

Again, their thinking is that since Jesus says to pray to our “Father,” then this forbids prayer to the Son. However, in the same model prayer, Jesus says that God’s name is to be “hallowed” (to set apart as holy), but, unquestionably, Jesus’ name is also holy (Acts 4:12; 1 Cor. 1:2; Acts 19:17; 1 Cor. 6:11, etc.). So, we can understand that Jesus is not intending to exclude

Himself from what He says about the Father here. Using their method of interpretation, we could literally pervert every verse in scripture and throw the entire Bible into a heaping mess.

Another biblical example of prayer directed to Christ is when the apostle Paul prayed to Him for the removal of a “thorn in the flesh” (infirmity):

“For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor. 12:8-9).

We know the “Lord,” to whom Paul “besought,” was Jesus because the “strength” of the “Lord” is said by Paul to be the “power of Christ.” In fact, the Watchtower’s New World Translation (translated by “anonymous” people) confirms the same:

“In this behalf I three times entreated the Lord that it might depart from me; and yet he really said to me: ‘My undeserved kindness is sufficient for you; for [my] power is being made perfect in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, will I rather boast as respects my weaknesses, that the power of the Christ may like a tent remain over me” (Revised, 1984 Edition).

More can be said on the matter, but this is sufficient to prove that not only should our prayers be through the Son, but they may also be to the Son. It is a wicked thing to deny Jesus what He rightfully deserves as our Savior; our King; our Head; our Advocate; our Creator, and our High Priest! Let us therefore “come boldly unto the throne of grace” and offer our “sweet savors” to Him who bought us and redeemed us with His blood. Glory, honor, and thanks to Jesus Christ.



*EDITORIAL . . . continued from page two*

God communicated through the prophet Isaiah: “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8).

It is no different in our day-people have expectations of God: The problem is that, many times, people expect to find God on their own terms and they look for Him in all the wrong places.

Some expect to find God in mega-churches, filled with emotionalism, entertainment, spine-tingling experiences that will transport them into a world of what they call spirituality for a short period of time. People



in the modern religious world generally want a religion that makes them feel good based on their emotions at a given time. Then they can feel they have satisfied the true and living God.

Some expect to find God in the spectacular: that's what the prophet Elijah did after Jezebel threatened to kill him following his slaughter of the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 19:1-4). Hiding in a cave far from his declared enemy, he expected to find God in the strong wind, in an earthquake, and in the fire, but God wasn't there. Rather, he found God in a still, small voice. His expectations were misguided.

Some expect the church to cure all the ills of our society; and, of course, the church was never intended to cure all of those ills. God gave the church to take care of the spiritual and eternal needs of mankind.

Many expect to fit God into their current lifestyles. They want to live as they want to and work God into a little segment of their lives without making many changes or without being inconvenienced. The God in the scriptures is not like that. God deliberately chose the things that are nothing to confound those who trust in the wisdom of men: "the preaching of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

A good point to remember is that what appears to be religious-is not always of God-that is, it is not always according to His will as given in scripture. Many times what the Bible says runs counter to what people think religion is supposed to be.

Paul gives this solid instruction in the Colossian letter: "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him (Colossians 3:17)." Faith does not stand in the wisdom of men. We could glory in human thinking-God deliberately didn't go that direction to keep us faithful to the word.

Conclusively, then, people in every age have had expectations of God, but those expectations have not always been met. The reason is not that God could not meet them but it is that man's expectations have usually been the result of human reasoning or selfish ambition-or perhaps just dreams that have no depth or idle thoughts that make our spines tingle.

To be meaningful, our expectations must be based on a true understanding of who God is and of what God wants us to be as His people. It is easy to say we want God in our lives, and most are sincere in making this statement; however, we must reach an understanding of what it's going to take to make God a part of our lives. Then we can achieve a level of spirituality that will put us where He wants us to be. JLN

*JESUS PREACHED THE GOSPEL . . . continued from page one*  
on Jesus. But Jesus said, "... for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." So even if they had been baptized for the remission of sins, they still had those sins. The baptism that Jesus told the apostles to preach after He was crucified and rose again, was, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." In order for one to receive remission of sins he is to confess that he believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, otherwise the baptism does no good. So all the preaching that Jesus and the apostles did concerning the kingdom of God, as well as John's baptism was in anticipation of the death of the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" John, the baptist, recognized this. Notice what we read in John 1:29, "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. Again, "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. So these twelve had to be rebaptized for the remission of sins after they had learned about Jesus who had died for their sins. John's baptism was valid before Jesus died on the cross, but that same baptism was not valid for the forgiveness of sin if done after the crucifixion.

After Jesus died on the cross, the message of the Gospel is what Paul wrote about in 1 Corinthians 15. The Corinthians were heathens before they learned that they were lost and undone and without hope in the world, and they had to hear that Jesus had died on the cross for the forgiveness of lost sinners (paid the price for sin), that He was buried, but that He rose from the grave by the power of God and is now our Savior and is alive in Heaven. Remember the Pharisees heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (John 4:1). This was in anticipation of the crucifixion. But Jesus did not preach to them the death, burial, and resurrection as if it had already taken place like Paul and other apostles did to sinners after the fact, and as we do today. Yes, Jesus preached the Gospel, but not the death, burial, and resurrection as past, but in anticipation and was preparing citizens for the coming kingdom.

During the personal ministry of Christ, He would remind the Jews of the teaching of the Old Testament because it was still in force until it was "nailed to the cross." They were still under the law. However, that was not primarily what He came to do. The Bible says, He came "to seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). He said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). He informed those who believed on Him, "if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free... If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:32, 36). Again, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:45,46).

When Jesus was teaching people, there were times when He would refer to some teaching of the Old Testament and then say, "But I say unto you" and tell them something that would be a part of the New Testament and apply after His death. "But" is a disjunctive conjunction; a word or thought that suggests something opposite or different. I understand that this is the reason He told them before returning to Heaven that after His departure that He would send them the Holy Ghost and He would remind them of His teaching and guide them into all truth. Notice, "These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:25, 26). He had been preparing them for the coming kingdom. In John 16:12, 13, He says, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: (what they heard Christ teach publicly and privately) for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." With this thought in mind, it reminds me of what Paul wrote to Timothy, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth".

## Our Departed

**TURNER:** Pansy May Turner was born September 23, 1916 and departed this life December 16, 2015 just one month short of her one hundredth birthday. She married Worley Turner in August of 1939 and to this union three children were born. She obeyed the gospel in 1931 at the Lee Summit Church of Christ at the age of fifteen and remained faithful until her death. Pansy was a joy to know. Her attitude and outlook were always positive. She wore a smile and enjoyed a hearty laugh as she visited with friends and family. There was never a dull moment when in her presence. She was a member of the Hayes street church in Lebanon where she worshipped on a regular basis as her health permitted it. She spent the greater part of her life teaching in the schools of Laclede County and the Lebanon Public Schools. She touched the lives of countless children, many of whom still remember the valuable lessons they learned from her. A large crowd of family and friends gathered at the Holman-Howe funeral home in Lebanon to pay their respects to her memory. This writer and brother Jim Franklin conducted the memorial service. Ronny Wade

**NICHOLS:** Carl Nelson Nichols Jr. was born February 2, 1928 in El Paso, Texas and departed this life December 2, 2015 at the Freeman Hospital in Neosho,

MO. He was the son of Carl Nelson Nichols Sr. and Henrietta Louise (Oliver) Nichols. The Nichols family, well known in our brotherhood, have been dedicated children of God for many years. Nelson was preceded in death by his first wife, Carlene Nichols. He later was married to Earlene Nichols who became his companion and in later years his caretaker until his death. Nelson preached the gospel for many years traveling and living in various places throughout the United States. During part of this time he became well known for his involvement in helping young men deal with draft boards during the war years. His wise counsel and help kept many of them out of difficult circumstances that could have landed them in prison. In 1974 he moved to Anderson, MO where he furthered his education and eventually began teaching in the public schools and serving in administrative positions. The last few years of his life were plagued with sickness and poor health that eventually caused his death. He is survived by his wife Earlene, five sons, three daughters, twenty three grandchildten, four great-grandchildren, two brothers, one sister, and a host of other family and friends. On a cold winter day scores of people gathered to pay their respects to the memory of this good man. The funeral home was filled with those who had known and respected him for years. This writer and Carl Johnson conducted the memorial service. Ronny Wade

**RENNER:** R.H. Renner was born April 16, 1931 and departed this life January 7, 2016. Originally from Kentucky, he moved to the Cincinnati, Ohio area early in his life where he studied to become a barber. He later opened and operated his own shop. Here, he met people who would become lifelong friends. He was greatly respected as a business man by the other people and businesses that were close to his place of operation. As a Christian he touched the lives of hundreds of people. At the visitation people stood in line for two hours as they filed by his coffin and viewed his earthly remains. Many of them had been his customers for years. Others were his brothers and sisters in Christ from the Cincinnati area and far away as distant States. He was known as a sharp dresser with an imposing personality. To know him was to love him and come to appreciate his distinctiveness as a human being and brother in Christ. R.H. often traveled back to Kentucky where he preached for some of the churches in the area where he grew up. At West Chester he worshipped for years with friends and relatives as he taught the scriptures and encouraged others to grow and develop as children of God. After the West Chester church ceased meeting, R.H. became a member of the Hamilton Church of Christ where he worshipped until his untimely death. A large crowd gathered at the Sharonville church building where the memorial service was held. Christians from the Goshen congregation provided the singing and brother Richard Bunner and this writer conducted the service. His earthly remains were laid to rest beside those of Leora his wife on a bleak bitterly cold January

day at the West Chester cemetery. We regret that brother Don King was unable to attend and conduct the memorial service. Don and R.H. had been close friends for many years. He leaves to mourn his passing two sons, a daughter, several grandchildren, two brothers and one sister, and a host of friends and brothers and sisters in Christ. Ronny Wade

WHIGHAM - Evelyn (Ezell) Whigham was born December 13, 1928 and forded the rolling river of death on November 20, 2015 at the age of 86. Evelyn was a life-long resident of rural southern Alabama and a member of the Lowery church of Christ near Kinston, AL. She was a gracious woman who lived a quiet and simple life devoted to Christ and godly living. Her passing leaves a conspicuous empty place in her home and in the pew. Evelyn could always be depended upon to assemble with the saints for weekly worship and any other gospel service she was able to attend. She was preceded in death by her devoted husband, Roland Whigham, a long-time leader of the church at Lowery. Sister Whigham was an example to all of a Christian wife, mother, and grandmother. Her life bespoke piety, patience, and good works. She leaves a loving family and a host of brothers and sisters in the Lord to mourn her passing including her daughters Patti Whigham; Linda (Larry) Russell; and Melody (Steve) Hawthorne; a son, Dean Whigham and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren. It was the privilege of this writer to speak to a large crowd who gathered to remember this good woman. She was laid to rest in the Lowery cemetery where so many saints of God await the resurrection of the blessed. - Kevin W. Presley

## Field Reports

Rick Martin 300 Clubview Terrace Woodstock, GA 30189 The New Year meetings that took place in various parts of the country are now over. I trust that you had the opportunity to attend one of the meetings. If you were not able to attend one, you missed a real spiritual treat. Start making your plans to attend one this year, if the Lord wills, you won't regret it. It was a privilege for me to attend the meeting in Dothan AL. I would like to give a special thanks to the Hartford Hwy. congregation for hosting this meeting. Clint DeFrance did a superb job conducting the meeting and Kevin Presley put together an excellent songbook; the songs were the kind of songs that were good for congregational singing. If you are not aware, we have a page on the Old Paths Advocate website to advertise meetings: [www.oldpathsadvocate.org](http://www.oldpathsadvocate.org). I urge preachers and leaders of congregations to let me know about their future meetings so I can advertise them. My meeting schedule so far, for the year is; Sharonville, OH-April 20-24, Walterboro, SC- May 12-15, Turlock, CA-October 19-23. Please pray for me and the congregation here in Marietta, GA.

Kevin W. Presley, 108 Mulberry Court, Dothan, AL 36303 - January 9, 2016: The new year brings new goals and new hopes in the work of the Lord. The Alabama New Year's Meeting was a great success. Bro. Clint DeFrance did a commendable job conducting the meeting and preachers brought some of their very best to the pulpit. Our theme was "Sacred Shadows", focusing on the types and shadows of the Old Testament pointing to Christ and it was some of the finest preaching we have ever had at the meeting. We hope you'll make plans, the Lord willing, to join us next December. I am looking forward to focusing a great deal of my time on television preaching this year. Our broadcast is being seen in two markets and continues to generate consistent interest. The programs are also available on our website [letthebiblespeak.tv](http://letthebiblespeak.tv). A man in Laredo, TX recently contacted me after watching a sermon on "The Sinner's Prayer", concerned about his salvation. We studied by phone and then Bro. Juan Rodriguez offered to travel to Laredo and meet him. After studying the scriptures with Bro. Juan, the man was baptized into Christ. If your congregation would like to use our broadcasts in your own market or use them on your website and social media platforms, please contact me. I also continue to work at home with the Earlytown congregation and beginning this year, I will be working among the Dothan brethren focusing on developing leadership and personal work skills. My gospel meeting schedule for the first few months of 2016 takes me to West Point, GA (Jan 29-31); Brookside, FL (Feb 19-21); Edmond, OK (March 6-13); Ada, OK (April 10-17); Napoleon, AL (May 1-8); and Joplin, MO (May 18-22). I hope to see many of you along the way. We covet your prayers in the work.

Ronny F. Wade P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814 or [ronnywade36@gmail.com](mailto:ronnywade36@gmail.com) We spent the last few minutes of 2015 in Oklahoma City at the annual New Year meeting conducted by the 21st church. It had been several years since I had the privilege of being present at one of these meetings. In 1950 I attended my first such meeting at Sentinel, OK. That year Johnny Elmore, Wayne Fussell, James Orten, myself and a few others were present. The crowd did not exceed 100. This year both Johnny and Wayne were also present. Our largest crowd exceeded 875. This meeting has grown through the years and continues to be an encouragement to young men who aspire to preach the gospel. It was good to see so many fellow Christians with whom I have labored over the years. Currently we are at home in MO enjoying time with the people we have grown to love and admire over the past fifty-five years. Of late we have been touched with the departure of several brethren who have been called to cross the great divide. It isn't easy to say "good bye" but at times we must. Such moments make us all remember that soon we all shall be called to cross that river that stands between us and our eternal home. May God bless those who today grieve and lament their departed loved ones.



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## THE BACK PAGE...

### IT IS TIME TO GROW UP

By *CARL M. JOHNSON*

Everybody loves babies. We love to hold them, play with them, and listen to their gibber-jabber as they try to learn to speak. Chubby little babies drink milk out of bottles, are cute in diapers, and they have an aura of innocence because their little minds are clueless about right and wrong. These same characteristics, however, are not cute when you observe them in adults. We are alarmed if our children do not grow properly in body and in mind. This point is made very clear by the writer of Hebrews who uses this analogy to point out that there were many Christians in the first century that were not maturing properly in their spiritual lives (Heb. 5:11-6:3). These early Christians were still speaking spiritual baby talk long after the time when they should have outgrown it. They were still drinking spiritual milk out of bottles when they should have matured enough to be eating spiritual steak. They still needed someone to feed them when they should have been able to feed themselves. The writer of Hebrews tells these people that it is time for them to grow up spiritually, and that a failure to grow and mature would result in their being condemned by God.

In view of the spiritual stagnation that is so evident in churches throughout our brotherhood, we desperately need to take heed to the above warning. Does God expect less of us than He expected of the people who originally received this epistle to the Hebrews? If he expected spiritual progress from them, do we seriously believe He will accept a lack of maturity from us? Who can be so naive? God is no respecter of persons and He will not permit in us what He censures in others.

I recently ran across an advertisement on the Internet for a video that makes the Disney story of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," a colorful allegory of the church. Michael Brown argues that we have stunted our growth, have not reached our spiritual potential, and that we must grow from our spiritual dwarfism into purity and maturity. He observes that while God desires to see our lives beautifully transformed into the "snow white" bride of Christ (Rev. 21:9), many of us come closer to resembling one of the seven dwarfs. Brown may be on to something here. I have seen Grumpy and Sleepy in many audiences myself. Is it possible your church is suffering from "spiritual dwarfism?" The questions that follow may give you the answer:

Do you worship in spirit and truth in your assemblies? Are you truly exhorted and edified? (Jn. 4:24; 1 Cor. 14:26; Heb. 11:24-25). Jimmy Allen confesses in *The Need for Revival*, that public worship in many congregations in his brotherhood has become artificial and ritualistic. He says:

We yell like Comanches at athletic events and sit like wooden Indians at worship. We meet on the Lord's Day and it looks as though we are mourning a defeat rather than celebrating a victory. Sunday morning dignity has taken the place of supernatural delight. We are more interested in being citified than sanctified. The saintly have given way to the sanctimonious. Churches begun in revival fires are sitting in the smoke (21).

How many people were baptized within the last year of your congregation, excluding children of members? (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16).

Does your congregation receive regular teaching that is truly edifying? A lack of regular, edifying teaching may be the greatest crisis in our brotherhood today (1 Cor. 14:26; 2 Tim. 2:15).

How often do you associate with brothers and sisters of the local congregation outside of the assembly? (Gal. 5:13; 6:2; Heb. 10:25; 1 Thess. 4:18).

Are members of your congregation actively involved in serving those who are in need? (1 Pet. 4:10; Mt. 20:25-28)

Are you training younger members to succeed the current leaders of the church? (Eph. 4:11-12; 2 Tim. 2:2).

Do you have elders and deacons shepherding and serving your congregation? (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-10).

Obviously, the growth of the local congregation is the key to the growth of the universal church. According to the New Testament pattern, the local congregation is the organization for evangelism, edification, benevolence, and worship. The universal church has no function above the level of independent local congregations, so obviously when we speak of building a mature church, we are speaking of building a mature, local congregation. Whether we want to believe it or not, congregational immaturity has reached epidemic proportions in some parts of our American brotherhood. We would do well, therefore, to consider carefully the above questions and the Scriptures upon which the questions are based, and then put the principles involved into practical use for building a mature church. As the inspired Hebrews writer said centuries ago, it is time to grow up. [cmjthebackpage@gmail.com](mailto:cmjthebackpage@gmail.com)