



# **MM Outreach**

**News & Views in the Religious World**



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## **The View from Cheryl's Desk**

*Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus!*

Summer flew by this year. July was wall to wall company, yet we were still able to be productive. Our completely revamped, mobile-friendly website is finally available. It was a huge job and a big learning curve for me, but we are so blessed to have the resources to do the work. There are a lot of audio files that stopped working on the older website, and some of them were lost. I worked hard to reconstruct the files and the links. There are also new testimonies and teaching audio files online. The website is a work in progress, as it will grow with new articles, audio, and video to be added as I can carve out the time to do the work. Richard and I often comment that we are doing the work of 4 or 5 people with all the different areas of expertise that are required. We are just grateful that we can serve the body of Christ.

In this News & Views, I am featuring David Reed's testimony. David is a former JW elder and his testimony and teaching audio files are included on our updated website at [mmoutreach.org](http://mmoutreach.org).

I felt very convicted by the Lord to offer our "*Women in Ministry: Silenced or Set Free?*" video files on YouTube for free. YouTube is a platform that allows people to watch videos for free anywhere in the world. The DVDs are still for sale and priced very reasonably, but the 4-video set is now also available



online for the benefit of people all around the world who would not otherwise have access to this teaching. We pray that the Lord will bless our efforts and our sacrifice and cause many to be freed by the teaching of the Word.

In July my mother was hospitalized with serious health issues. My Mom, Lil Riegel has been a great prayer support for this ministry. She is now 96 years old and struggling with failing health. We pray for God's mercy, peace, and comfort for her as she goes through these health challenges. I am so blessed to have a godly heritage with a mother who prays daily for her family, this ministry, and the church family.

Before my Mom's illness, we were visiting her at her condo complex when we came across a Jehovah's Witness who was trying to proselytize inside the building. The complex, owned by a Christian organization, was picked by this JW for his mother because the suites had residents who are open to their "Bible" teaching. He said the last place where his mother lived was run by an "atheist" organization that forbade her from proselytizing. He told me that his mother regularly holds Watchtower "Bible" studies with residents and staff of my Mom's building. Also, he regularly does his witnessing to the residents gathered for coffee. JWs have been known to target the elderly who are more susceptible to their persuasion. We heard of a case where an elderly parent signed their estate over to the Watchtower, and the family did not find out until after the parent's death. Beware!

## MM Outreach Religious Tidbits

After the recent deaths of two apologists, Caryl Matrisciana and Ray Yungen, we were saddened to hear that another apologist had suffered a heart attack. Author Warren Smith, hospitalized on May 21, received several procedures before he was released on May 25th. (lighthouse trails.com)

In July, two fundamentalist Mormon leaders were found guilty of polygamy in a British Columbia, Canada, courtroom. The two leaders, Winston Blackmore and James Oler, remain free on bail until Black-



more's application to challenge the constitutionality of Canada's polygamy law is heard. The judge in the case accepted the evidence that 10 of Blackmore's 24 wives were under the age of 18 when they married, and 4 of them were 15. The ages of the wives were factors in getting a guilty verdict in the polygamy trial. Blackmore and his supporters frequently point out that Canada's age of sexual consent at the time of both Oler's and Blackmore's plural marriages was 14. The age of consent was raised to 16 in 2008. Blackmore characterizes himself as one who is unfairly persecuted for his beliefs.

For years, Winston Blackmore has all but dared legal authorities to prosecute him. Blackmore held a summit on polygamy in Creston, B.C., where he invited the attorneys general of BC, Utah, Arizona, and Idaho. At the summit, he openly admitted that he married "several under-aged girls" and that his son had married a 14-year-old. The Canadian verdict puts polygamists on notice that they will be prosecuted. (montrealgazette.com)

A baby in Canada was given a health card without a gender designation, supposedly making it the world's first gender-free baby. U.S.

evangelist Franklin Graham has denounced the parent's argument, writing, "This Canadian parent believes that assigning a child's sex at birth is a human rights violation—and they wanted their baby to be registered as 'gender unknown' so it can decide its own sex. That's nonsense." The baby, Searly

Atli Doty, born in British Columbia, was 8 months old at the time of Graham's comments. The parent is a "non-binary genderqueer trans person" who has decided to allow the child to "decide how they identify" and won't "foreclose their choices based on an arbitrary assignment of gender at birth based on an inspection of their genitals." The baby was born "outside of the medical system" and did not undergo a "genital inspection" at birth. The Campaign group *Gender Free I.D Coalition* has a goal to "remove all gender/sex designations from identity documents" in Canada. The parent is also peti-

tioning for the child to be issued a birth certificate without a gender designation. Last year, Alberta, Canada, introduced legislation that will allow people who don't identify as male or female to put an "X" on government documents, including birth certificates. (christianpost.com and vancouver.sun.com)

A private elementary school is moving to quell fears following media reports that convicted killer Karla Homolka had been doing volunteer work at the school. The school, operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, says it won't allow anyone with a criminal record to volunteer in any capacity on school grounds. They issued a brief statement in June that didn't mention Homolka by name. Homolka is a Canadian serial killer who with her first husband Paul Bernardo, raped and murdered at least three minors including her own sister. Homolka changed her name to Leanne Bodelais and is out of prison following a plea deal that she made with prosecutors before evidence of her active participation in the murders was fully known. (ca.news.yahoo.com)

Hank Hanegraaff has experienced a lot of fall-out since his conversion to Eastern Orthodoxy in April. Hanegraaff, known as the *Bible Answer Man*, is the controversial president of the Christian Research Institute (CRI), which was founded by Dr. Walter Martin. Many believe that Walter Martin did not intend for Hanegraaff to succeed him and that Martin would not have approved of

the direction in which Hanegraaff has taken over this ministry after Martin's death. Hanegraaff flabbergasted the discernment ministry community when he defended the "Local Church" movement back in 2006 in its lawsuit against Christian authors John Ankerberg and John Weldon, along with Harvest House, a Christian publisher. The Local Church, known to insiders as "The Lord's Recovery," is widely considered to be, theologically, a cult of Christianity. The lawsuit against the authors and Harvest House was dismissed by the Court of Appeals in Texas. After Hanegraaff's conversion to Eastern Orthodoxy, his radio show was dropped by the *Bott Radio Network*, which operates more than 100 broadcast signals reaching 51 million people in 15 states. The network's president severed ties with Hanegraaff after airing



his show for more than 25 years. The removal was "to make sure our listeners know that the programming...is thoroughly biblical." Hanegraaff was also dropped by *The Truth Network* and its 20 radio stations. Hanegraaff's website now lists just 40 radio stations plus 4 web only locations, including the Orthodox Christian Network, which still carry his program.

A month after his conversion, Hanegraaff was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer called mantle cell lymphoma. He is on an aggressive regimen that includes chemotherapy, a bone marrow transplant,

and blood transfusions. Hanegraaff said on Facebook that he had tumors throughout his entire body including his lungs. He also said his illness had fortified him in his Eastern Orthodox faith. He was attracted to Orthodoxy by the "sights, sounds, and smells" that drew him in. In a video posted in July, he said he is feeling well, and he used his air time to promote the veneration of Mary.

A majority of family members of Dr. Walter Martin, the founder of CRI and the original *Bible Answer Man*, have signed a statement asking Hanegraaff to step down from his position. Jill Martin Rische, the eldest daughter of Dr. Martin and co-leader of Walter Martin Ministries, said that she and many other Evangelicals were "shocked and surprised" by Hanegraaff's conversion. She notes he has since been teaching a blend of Orthodox and Evangelical theology on the *Bible Answer Man* show, which she says is "fundamentally dishonest." Despite calling for him to step down, Rische stated she continues to pray for Hanegraaff, especially as he battles cancer. ([charlotteobserver.com](http://charlotteobserver.com/apologeticsindex.org) [apologeticsindex.org](http://apologeticsindex.org) [facebook.com](http://facebook.com) and [orthochristian.com](http://orthochristian.com))

In July, Israeli archaeologists excavating the City of David in Jerusalem's Old City exposed evidence of the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians. Struc-

tures dating back more than 2,600 years were unearthed after having been covered by collapsed layers of stone. The row of structures exposed in the excavations is located outside the city wall and shows that Jerusalem had extended beyond the line of the city wall before its destruction. ([unitedwithisrael.org](http://unitedwithisrael.org))

The Mormon growth rate has fallen to its lowest level in 80 years, but ups and downs vary by region. Parts of the US, Europe, Mexico, and Brazil are down while Africa, the Philippines, and some of Central and South America are up. Mormon congregations near downtown Salt Lake

City are closing, while some of the Utah County wards are growing. The net growth of the Mormon church is just 1.59 percent. ([sltrib.com](http://sltrib.com))

Pawn shop workers helped nab polyga-

mous sect leader Lyle Jeffs. Jeffs, who had been on the run for a year, was captured near the South Dakota-Nebraska state line where he was living out of his truck. A pawn shop owner called police about a man who had come to his shop twice acting nervous and fidgety. When he had to provide his ID, a suspicious employee looked his name up online and realized that he was wanted by the FBI. A \$50,000 award has been paid by the FBI to the two pawn shop employees. ([sltrib.com](http://sltrib.com))





A life-sized Noah's Ark replica at *The Ark Encounter* biblical theme park in Williamstown, Kentucky that opened in July 2016 will now



be permanently lit at night with a rainbow, Ken Ham, president of Answers in Genesis, announced in July. Ham riled the LGBT advocates when he announced that they would be reclaiming the rainbow for God with permanent rainbow lights for their life-sized Noah's Ark replica. The rainbow, Ham states, is a "*reminder that God will never again judge the wickedness of man with a global flood — next time the world will be judged by fire.*" (christianpost.com)

Eugene Peterson, the author of *The Message* translation of the Bible, says that he would perform a same-sex marriage ceremony if asked. In an interview with Jonathan Merritt on *Religion News Service*, Peterson describes how his views on homosexuality have changed over his career. "I wouldn't have said this 20 years ago, but now I know a lot of people who are gay and lesbian, and they seem to have as good a spiritual life as I do...So we're in a transition, and I think it's a transition for the good. I don't think it's something that you can parade, but it's not a right or wrong thing as far as I'm concerned," Peterson said. In an about-face, after his views were widely spread and he experienced fallout from his statements, Peterson gave a contradictory statement the day after his *Religion News Service* interview. In a statement, Peter-

son said, "To clarify, I affirm a biblical view of marriage: one man to one woman. I affirm a biblical view of everything." Peterson "regrets" the

"confusion and bombast" in the fallout of his remarks. In a post about the retraction, Merritt, the reporter, explained that he asked Peterson about homosexuality after hearing privately that Peterson affirmed same-sex relationships. Merritt later posted links to comments made by Peterson at Western Seminary in 2014, where Peterson said he "started to change my mind" on the status of gays being "really bad." He also says that he "helped several families accept their children as gay," saying that "this can be a flourishing thing." Peterson also stated, that he told the reporter, "that there are gay and lesbian people who 'seem to have as good a spiritual life as I do,' (and) I meant it." He also stated "But then again the goodness of a spiritual life is functionally irrelevant in the grand scheme of things." Peterson's comments support the rewording of homosexuality that has worked its way into his "translation." It appears that Peterson was motivated to give a retraction when major book stores like LifeWay stated they could not carry a resource in their store by authors who support same-sex marriage. LifeWay currently lists 135 book titles by Peterson including dozens of versions of his *Message Bible*. (Christianitytoday.com)

*Until next time,*  
*Cheryl Schatz*

## A JW Elder Turns to the Bible—and Finds Jesus

The Testimony of David Reed

Figuring out what life is really all about, and coming to follow Jesus—the real Jesus—has been a long journey for me. My early religious training was in a big, white Unitarian church in rural New England, just south of Boston. I still remember the time when, in my boyish innocence, I expressed to the pastor my belief that God had actually parted the Red Sea to let Moses and the Israelites pass through; he turned to the assistant pastor and said, with a laugh, “This boy has a lot to learn.” As I grew older I did, in fact, learn what this church taught. Encountering their pamphlet, *What Unitarians Believe*, I read that “Some Unitarians believe in God, and some do not”—and quickly realized the ministers must have been among those who did not believe.

By the time I was 14 years old, I had reached my own conclusion that religion was “the opium of the people,” a convenient thought for an adolescent who preferred not to have God watching him all the time. And when I went on to Harvard University, I found that atheism and agnosticism flourished there, too. So, between the Unitarian Church and my Ivy League schooling, I seldom encountered any strong pressure to believe in God.

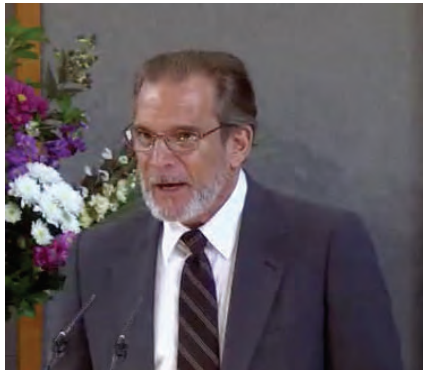
By the time I was 22, though, I had

thought through atheistic evolution to its ultimate end: a pointless existence, followed by death. After all, if humans were nothing more than the last in a series of chemical and biological accidents, then any ‘meaning’ or ‘purpose’ we might try to find in life would just be a self-deceptive fiction produced in our own minds.

It would have no real connection with the harsh, cold reality of a universe where nothing really mattered. So, I saw myself faced with two choices: God or suicide. Since suicide would be an easy way out for me—I believed there was nothing after death—but would leave those who cared about me to face the pain I would cause, I began to think about God.

Coincidentally (perhaps?), a Jehovah’s Witness was assigned to work alongside me at my job. Since God was on my mind, I began asking him questions about his beliefs. His answers amazed me. It was the first time that I had ever heard religious thoughts presented in a tight-knit logical framework. Everything that he said fit together. He had an answer for every question, and so I kept coming up with more questions. Before long, he was conducting a study with me twice a week in the Watchtower Society’s new (1968) book, *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*.

In no time, I became a very zealous Witness. After receiving my initial



indoctrination and getting baptized, I served as a full-time ‘pioneer minister.’ This required that I spend at least 100 hours each month preaching from house to house and conducting home Bible studies—actually a commitment of much more than a hundred hours, since travel time could not be included in my monthly ‘field service report.’ I kept on ‘pioneering’ until 1971, when I married Penni, who had been raised in the organization and who also ‘pioneered.’

My zeal for Jehovah and my proficiency in preaching were rewarded, after a few years, with appointment as an elder. In that capacity I taught the 150-odd people in my home congregation on a regular basis, and made frequent visits to other congregations as a Sunday morning speaker. Occasionally, I also received assignments to speak to audiences ranging in the thousands at Jehovah’s Witness assemblies. Other responsibilities I cared for included presiding over the other local elders, handling correspondence between the local congregation and the Society’s Brooklyn headquarters, and serving on judicial committees set up to deal with cases of wrongdoing in the congregation. (I can recall disfellowshipping people for such offenses as selling drugs at Kingdom Hall, smoking cigarettes, wife-swapping, and having a Christmas decoration in the home.)

Although we were not able to continue ‘pioneering’ after our marriage, Penni and I remained very zealous

for the preaching work. Between the two of us, we conducted ‘home Bible studies’ with dozens of people, and brought well over twenty of them into the organization as baptized Jehovah’s Witnesses. We also put ‘the Kingdom’ first in our personal lives by keeping our secular employment to a minimum and living in an inexpensive three-room apartment in order to be able to devote more time to the door-to-door preaching activity.

What interrupted this life of full dedication to the Watchtower organization, and caused us to enter a path that would lead us out? In one word, it was Jesus. Let me explain:

When Penni and I were at a large Witness convention, we saw a handful of opposers picketing outside. One of them carried a sign that said, “READ THE BIBLE, NOT THE



WATCHTOWER.” We had no sympathy for the picketers, but we did feel convicted by this sign, because we knew that we had been reading Watchtower publications to the exclusion of reading the Bible. (Later on, we actually counted up all of the material that the organization expected Witnesses to read. The books, magazines, lessons, etc. added up to over 3,000 pages each year, compared with less than 200 pages of Bible reading assigned—and most of that was in the Old Testament. The majority of Witnesses were so bogged down by the 3,000 pages of the organization’s literature that they never got around to doing the Bible reading.)



After seeing the picket sign Penni turned to me and said, "We should be reading the Bible and The Watchtower." I agreed; so, we began doing regular personal Bible reading. That's when we began to think about Jesus. Not that we began to question the Watchtower's teaching that Christ was just Michael the archangel in human flesh—it didn't even occur to us to question that. But we were really impressed with Jesus as a person: what he said and did, how he treated people. We wanted to be his followers. Especially, we were struck with how Jesus responded to the hypocritical religious leaders of the day, the Scribes and Pharisees. I remember reading, over and over again, the accounts relating how the Pharisees objected to Jesus' healing on the Sabbath, his disciples' eating with unwashed hands, and other details of behavior that violated their traditions. How I loved Jesus' response: "You hypocrites, Isaiah aptly prophesied about you, when he said, 'This people honors me with their lips, yet their heart is far removed from me. It is in vain that they keep worshipping me, because they teach commands of men as doctrines.'" (Matt. 15:7-9 the JW's New World Translation )

Commands of men as doctrines! That thought stuck in my mind. And I began to realize that, in fulfilling my role as an elder, I was acting more like a Pharisee than a follower of Jesus. I was teaching commands of men as doctrines. For example, the elders

were the enforcers of all sorts of petty rules about dress and grooming. We told 'sisters' how long they could wear their dresses, and we told 'brothers' how to comb their hair, how to trim their sideburns, and what sort of flare or taper they could wear in their pants. We actually told people that they could not please God unless they conformed. It reminded me of the Pharisees who condemned Jesus' disciples for eating with unwashed hands.

My own dress and grooming conformed to the letter. But I ran into problems with newly interested young men that I brought to Kingdom Hall. Instead of telling them to buy a white shirt and sport coat, and to cut their hair short, I now told them, "Don't be disturbed if people at Kingdom Hall dress and groom a little on the old-fashioned side. You can continue as you are. God doesn't judge people by their haircut or their clothing." But that didn't work. Someone else would tell them to get a haircut, or offer to give them



a white shirt—or they would simply feel so out of place that they left never to return. This upset me, because I believed their life depended on joining 'God's organization.' If we Witnesses acted like Pharisees to the point of driving young people away from the only way to salvation, their innocent blood would be on our hands. Talking to the other elders about it didn't help. They felt that the old styles were inherently righteous. But then Jesus' example came to mind: "*And he went on from there and*

*entered their synagogue. And behold, there was a man with a withered hand. And they asked him, 'Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath?' so that they might accuse him. He said to them, 'What man of you, if he has one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath. Then he said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.'"* (Matt. 12:9-13 RSV)

If I were truly to follow Jesus, instead of men, I saw only one course open to me. I personally violated the tradition of the elders by letting my hair grow a half inch over my ears. My reasoning was: How can they pressure a new-comer to get a haircut, now, with one of the elders wearing the same style?

Well, the other elders reacted the same way the Pharisees did when Jesus told the man to stretch out his hand. Scripture says they "went out and took counsel against him, how to destroy him." (Matt. 12:14 RSV) It took them a while to react, but the elders actually put me on trial, called in witnesses to testify, and spent dozens of hours discussing half an inch of hair. Grooming was not the real issue, however. For me it was a question of whose disciple I was. Was I a follower of Jesus, or an obedient servant to a human hierarchy? The elders who put me on trial knew that that was the real issue,

too. They kept asking, "Do you believe that the Watchtower Society is God's organization? Do you believe that the Society speaks as Jehovah's mouthpiece?" At that time I answered "Yes" because I still did believe it was God's organization—but that it had become corrupt, like the Jewish religious system at the time when Jesus was opposed by the Pharisees.

It was what I said at the congregation meetings that got me into real trouble, though. I was still an elder, so, when I was assigned to give a 15-minute talk on the book of Zechariah at the Thursday night 'Theocratic Ministry School' meeting, I took advantage of the opportunity to encourage the audience to read the Bible. In fact, I told them that, if their time was limited and they had to choose between reading the Bible and reading *The Watchtower* magazine, they should choose

the Bible, because it was inspired by God, while *The Watchtower* was not inspired and often taught errors that had to be corrected later.

Not surprisingly, that was the last time they allowed me to give a talk. But I could still speak from my seat during question-and-answer periods at the meetings. Everyone was expected to answer in their own words, but not in their own thoughts. You were to give the thought found in the paragraph of the lesson being discussed. But, after I said a few things they didn't like, they stopped giving me the microphone.



With the new perspective that I was gaining from Bible reading, it upset me to see the organization elevate itself above Scripture, as it did when the December 1, 1981, Watchtower said: *“Jehovah God has also provided his visible organization . . . Unless we are in touch with this channel of communication that God is using, we will not progress along the road to life, no matter how much Bible reading we do.”* (page 27, ¶ 4) It really disturbed me to see those men elevate themselves above God’s Word. Since I could not speak out at the meetings, I decided to try writing. That’s when I started publishing the newsletter Comments from the Friends. I wrote articles questioning what the organization was teaching, and signed them with the pen name

name ‘Bill Tyndale, Jr.’—a reference to sixteenth century English Bible translator William Tyndale, who was burned at the stake for what he wrote. To avoid getting caught, Penni and I drove across the state line at night to an out-of-state post office and mailed the articles in unmarked envelopes. We sent them to local Witnesses and also to hundreds of Kingdom Halls all across the country, whose addresses we had obtained from telephone books at the town library.

Penni and I knew that we had to leave the Jehovah’s Witnesses. But, to us, it was similar to the question of what to do in a burning apartment building. Do you escape through the nearest exit? Or, do you bang on doors

first, waking the neighbors and helping them escape, too? We felt an obligation to help others get out—especially our families and our ‘students’ that we had brought into the organization. If we had just walked out, our families left behind would have been forbidden to associate with us. But, after a few weeks a friend discovered that I was the publisher of the newsletter and turned me in. So, one night when Penni and I were returning home from conducting a Bible study, two elders stepped out of a parked car, accosted us in the street, and questioned us about the newsletter. They wanted to put us on trial for publishing it, but we simply stopped going to the Kingdom Hall. By that time most of our former friends there had become quite hostile toward us. One young man called on the phone and threatened to “come over and take care of” me if he got another one



of our newsletters. And another Witness actually left a couple of death threats on our answering machine. The elders went ahead and tried us in absentia, and disfellowshipped us. This meant that other JW’s—including our close friends—were now forbidden to speak to us, even to say hello if they passed us on the street. If they chose to associate with us, they too would face disfellowshipping. It was as if everyone we knew had died. This was an especially painful time for Penni. But we had our new friend Jesus. We identified with Paul, who wrote,

*"I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ."* (Phil. 3:8 NASB)

It was a great relief to be out from under the oppressive yoke of that organization. But, we now had to face the immediate challenge of where to go and what to believe. It takes some time to re-think your entire religious outlook on life. Before leaving the Watchtower, we had rejected the claims that the organization was God's 'channel of communication,' that Christ returned invisibly in the year 1914, and that the 'great crowd' of believers since 1935 should not partake of the communion loaf and cup. But, we were only beginning to re-examine other doctrines. And we had not yet come into fellowship with Christians outside the JW organization.

All Penni and I knew was that we wanted to follow Jesus, and that the Bible contained all the information we needed. So, we really devoted ourselves to reading the Bible, and to prayer. We also invited our families and remaining friends to meet in our apartment on Sunday mornings. While the Witnesses gathered at Kingdom Hall to hear a lecture and study The Watchtower, we met to read the Bible. As many as 15 attended—mostly family, but some friends also.



We were just amazed at what we found in prayerfully reading the New Testament over and over again—things that we had never appreciated before, like the closeness that the early disciples had with the risen Lord, the activity of the Holy Spirit in the early church, and Jesus' words about being 'born again.' All those years as Jehovah's Witnesses, the Watchtower had taken us on a guided tour through the Bible. We gained a lot of knowledge about the Old Testament, and we could quote a lot of Scripture, but we never heard the Gospel of salvation in Christ. We never learned to depend on Jesus for our salvation and to look to him personally as our Lord. Everything centered around the Watchtower's works

program, and people were expected to come to Jehovah God through the organization.

When I realized from reading Romans, chapter 8, and John, chapter 3, that I needed to be 'born of the Spirit,' I was afraid at first. Je-

hovah's Witnesses believe that some 'born again' people, who claim to have the Holy Spirit, are actually possessed by demons. And so I feared that, if I prayed out loud to turn my life over to Jesus Christ, some demon might be listening; and the demon might jump in and possess me, pretending to be the Holy Spirit. (Many Jehovah's Witnesses live in

constant fear of the demons. Some of our friends would even throw out second-hand furniture and clothing, fearing that demons could enter their homes through such articles.) But, then I read Jesus' words at Luke 11:9-13. In a context where he was teaching about prayer and casting out unclean spirits, Jesus said: *"And I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any of you who is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"* (NKJV)

I knew, after reading those words, that I could safely ask for Christ's Spirit (Rom. 8:9), without fearing that I would receive a demon. So, in the early

morning privacy of our kitchen, I proceeded to confess my need for salvation and to commit my life to Christ.

About a half hour later, I was on my way to work, and I was about to pray again. It had been my custom for many years to start out my

prayers by saying, 'Jehovah God, . . .' But, this time when I opened my mouth to pray, I started out by saying, 'Father, . . .' It was not because I had reasoned on the subject and reached the conclusion that I should address God differently; the word Father just came out, without my even thinking about it. Immediately, I understood why: 'God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"' (Galatians 4:6 NKJV) I wept with joy at God's confirmation of this new, more intimate relationship with him.

When I returned home that evening and sat down at the dinner table, it occurred to me as I was about to pray before our meal that I had always been in the habit of beginning my prayer by addressing "Jehovah God," as the Watchtower Society had taught us. How

would I explain to Penni that I now addressed God as "Father"? But, to my surprise, just as I opened my mouth to pray, Penni interrupted me and said, "You know, David, we should really be calling God 'Father'

when we pray."

Penni and I soon developed the desire to worship and praise the Lord in a congregation of believers, and to benefit from the wisdom of mature Christians. Since the small group of ex-JWs was still meeting in our apartment on Sunday





mornings for Bible reading, and most of them were not yet ready to venture into a church, we began visiting churches that had evening services. One church we attended was so legalistic that we almost felt as though we were back in the Kingdom Hall. Another was so liberal that the sermon always seemed to be on philosophy or politics—instead of Jesus. Finally, though, the Lord led us to a congregation where we felt comfortable, and where the focus was on Jesus Christ and his Gospel, rather than on side issues. And, desiring to be obedient to Jesus' command to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," (Matthew 28:19 NIV), Penni and I received Christian baptism.

Penni went on to teach Fifth Grade in a Christian school that had students from about seventeen different churches. She really enjoyed it, because she could tie in the Scriptures with all sorts of subjects. For some eighteen years I continued publishing *Comments from the Friends* as a quarterly newsletter aimed at reaching Jehovah's Witnesses with the Gospel, and helping Christians interested in talking to JW's. It also contained articles of special interest to ex-Witnesses. Subscribers were found in a dozen foreign countries, as well as all across the United States and Canada. Many back issues are still available in web format at: an-

swerjw.com/cftf

I have also written a number of books on Jehovah's Witnesses, on Mormonism (with an ex-Mormon co-author), on end-times prophecies, and on other Bible topics. My web sites encourage Bible reading and belief in the Bible as God's unfailing inspired Word. Besides continuing to write, I speak occasionally to church groups on these matters.

The thrust of my outreach ministry is to help people break free from deception and put faith in the original Gospel of Christ as it is presented in the Bible. The most important lesson Penni and I learned since leaving the Jehovah's Witnesses is that Jesus is not just a historical figure that we

read about. He is alive and is actively involved with Christians today, just as he was back in the first century. He personally saves us, teaches us, and leads us. This personal relationship with God through his Son Jesus Christ is so wonderful! The individual who knows Jesus and follows him will not even think about

following anyone else: "A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers. . . . My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:5, 27-28 RSV)

### Comments from the Friends

Vol. LXXII, No. 1 • P.O. Box 517, Acorn, Massachusetts 02702 • Jan./Mar. 1999

#### Watchtower reneges on Human Rights blood agreement

MARCH 1998 AGREEMENT  
"... on blood transfusions ... that readers should have free choice as to the source for themselves and their children, without any control or sanction on the part of the association." — Watchtower magazine of Human Rights Committee



AUGUST 1999 LETTER  
The phrasing that is to be incorporated into the statutes of the Christian Association of Jehovah's Witnesses in Bulgaria describes the manner in which Jehovah's Witnesses have traditionally handled these matters.  
"... misuse of blood, then this may at times lead to the Scriptural action of disfellowshipping."

"a disapproved mental state...false to agreements"

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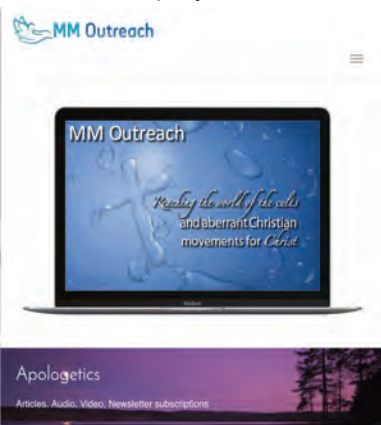
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## SDA Soul Sleep or Now “Present” With the Lord?

By Cheryl Schatz

Seventh-day Adventism teaches that death is an unconscious state for all people. They also teach that even Jesus Himself was unconscious and unable to help anyone until He was resurrected.

*“A dead man can't save us—even if that dead Man was Jesus Christ Himself...Jesus came to save people from sin, evil and death. He lived and died, and then He rose from the grave because dead men cannot save others.”*

Seventh-day Adventism is wrong in saying Jesus had no power to save people from death when He was dead. The dead Jesus had no less power than the living Jesus, or He could not have resurrected Himself from the dead. (John 2:19-21)

The Bible's testimony of the death of Jesus and its teaching about the dead is a powerful witness against the error of “soul sleep”. The SDA teaching of “soul sleep” is that death is a “peaceful unconscious waiting for resurrection”, a “blissful state of nonexistence”. So, when Jesus died, according to SDA doctrine, as a man He was unconscious waiting for resurrection. Let's see how this is refuted by the Bible.

## The Resurrection of Jesus

Jesus prophesied that He would raise His own body, an act that an unconscious, non-existent man could not do. (John 2:19-21). Adventism takes this passage to mean that Jesus was merely talking about raising up

the Jewish temple, a temple that took 46 years to build, but John writes that Jesus was speaking of the temple of His body (John 2:21). Jesus' disciples believed His testimony after He raised Himself as He prophesied (verse 22). If Jesus didn't raise Himself from the dead, He would have been a liar and disqualified from being the perfect lamb that was slain for our sin. Only His death and the act of His raising His own body from the dead could fulfill all the requirements for our salvation. A liar cannot be our Savior and an unconscious, blissfully non-existent Jesus, who was unable to raise Himself, would be a documented liar.

## The State of the Dead—What Can the dead do?

—The dead can hear

*John 5:28-29*

*28 Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, 29 and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.*



In John 5, Jesus says that all the dead will hear His voice while their bodies are in the tombs. It is **after** they hear His voice that they will be resurrected to eternal life or to judgment. The dead will be able to hear His voice, according to the Scripture. They are not unconscious.

—The dead can weep

*Matthew 8:12 but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

—The dead can have eternal life

*John 11:25–26*

*25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,  
26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

Believers have eternal life even while they are dead. Jesus used a double negative in the Greek. (Translations such as the Holman Christian Standard Bible and the New Living Bible use "never ever" to bring out the double negative found in the Greek.) The one who believes in Jesus will NEVER NEVER die, and Jesus said in John 6:47, that the one who believes already **has** eternal life. If a believer dies, his body will live again, but the believer is still alive and can NEVER die. If this is not so, then Jesus is a liar, and He cannot be our Savior.

—The dead can experience gain.

Paul believed that he would experience gain after his death.

*Philippians 1:21–24*

*21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is **gain**. 22 But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. 23 But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with*

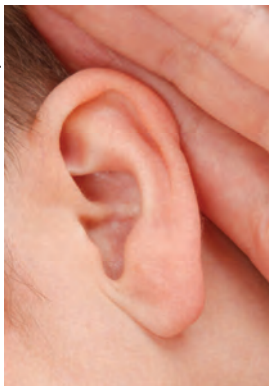
*Christ, for that is **very much better**; 24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.*

For Paul, his death was both "gain" and "very much better". The Greek term for gain means an advantage or profit. "Very much better" means a greater

degree, more advantageous, and in a more excellent manner. How is non-existence a gain? It isn't. Paul also connects his "departing" with the desired "being with Christ". "And" is a logical connective that connects the two parts together so that you cannot have "the departing" without also the "being with Christ". The being with Christ IS the gain that comes with his death. For Paul, being with Christ is a goal. Paul had no goal of being non-existent for that is not an advantage. Paul believed that dying is gain because he knew he would be at home with the Lord.

*2 Corinthians 5:6–8*

*Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.*



Paul knew that eternal life exists in Christ alone just as John wrote:

1 John 5:10–12

10 The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. 11 And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.



Why is it that those who believe in Jesus will never die? It is because Jesus holds eternal life. It exists IN Him. The one who places their faith in Jesus has Jesus living in him. With the source of eternal life living in him, the believer can never die even though his body dies (John 11:26). However, Amazing Facts, an Adventist outreach denies Jesus' words. Regarding John 11:26 they write:

*Can you explain John 11:26, which says, "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die"? This refers not to the first death, which all people die (Hebrews 9:27), but to the second death, which only the wicked die and from which there is no resurrection (Revelation 2:11; 21:8).*

Jesus didn't say that the believer will never die only after the resurrection. He said that the living believer will never, ever die. Paul believed that promise, and he was looking forward to being immediately in the presence of Christ.

Continuing to speak for Adventism, Amazing Facts warns that, "Those who believe the dead are alive, in any form, will most assuredly be deceived." And, "God insisted that wizards and others with "familiar spirits" (who claimed to be able to contact the dead) should be stoned to death. This shows how God regards the false teaching that the dead are alive."

There is no precedent for equating the belief that the spirit/soul still exists after death with the unlawful attempt to contact these spirits. The Bible never states such a connection. Instead, the Bible states that the dead are not to be consulted on behalf of the living.

*Isaiah 8:19 When they say to you, "Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter," should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?*

God is the only One who is to be sought for knowledge of the future. The dead do not have that knowledge. This Scripture does not deny that the spirit of a person exists after death, only that such a spirit must not be consulted. God has forbidden communication with the dead.

### The dead return

The testimony of God is that the spirit leaves the body at death and returns when a person is resurrected.

*Luke 8:55 And her spirit returned, and she got up immediately; and He gave orders for something to be given her to eat.*

The term “return” means to go or come back to a place, condition, or activity where one has been before. It is a personal action. The “breath” of Lazarus who died 4 days before did not gather itself up from the wind. The very life, the spirit of Lazarus, returned just as the spirit of the young girl that Jesus raised from the dead did. Far from condemning the belief that the soul/spirit exists after death, the Bible encourages us with the hope that there is a conscious existence with our Lord and Savior to be enjoyed after our departure from this earth.

Seventh-Day Adventism says that the believer’s spirit/soul cannot exist after death because only God has immortality and they reference 1 Timothy 6:16.

*1 Timothy 6:16 who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.*

However, this verse is about God’s possession of immortality by nature. It is not a refutation of our own conscious existence after death, but a declaration of God as immortal by nature, a characteristic of God alone.

Black’s New Testament Commentary explains Paul’s wording:

...the statement here, with its more elaborate wording, is not intended to deny immortality to other beings, but to bring out that it belongs inherently and by right only

to God, as the very source of life.

## The Power of the Dead Jesus

Finally, not only did Jesus raise up His own body from the dead but He showed that He was not a dead man “unconscious waiting for resurrection” as Adventism claims, but the powerful Lord of the resurrection as He raised the dead after His own death. While Adventism says that the dead Jesus could not save anyone from death, He showed them in error. Matthew gives an order of the events at the death of Jesus. Matthew uses the Greek logical connective placing the tearing of the temple veil at Jesus’ death, not His resurrection. In the same way Matthew shows that the earthquake, the splitting of the rocks and the resurrection of the saints are connected to the same event—the death of Jesus. Only the resurrected saints coming out of the tombs is said to be after Jesus’ resurrection.

Matthew 27:52–53

52 The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53 and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.

Seventh-day Adventism is wrong about the dead man Jesus. This dead man can save others! He raised people from the dead as a dead man and He raised Himself from the dead as a dead man. Resurrection comes through a man (1 Cor 15:21).

Be encouraged that our “hope” exists for life after death because of the resurrected Lord and Savior. And He has never lied!



## Is Christmas a Matter of Respect for Jesus?

The Watchtower's Dilemma

By Cheryl Schatz

The Watchtower got it right back in 1904. The December 1, 1904, issue, page 364, stated, *"...since the celebration of our Lord's birth is not a matter of divine appointment or injunction, but merely a tribute of respect to him, it is not necessary for us to quibble particularly about the date. We may as well join with the civilized world in celebrating the grand event on the day which the majority celebrate-- 'Christmas day.'"*

### What happened to the respect for Jesus?

The Watchtower's recent history book called *God's Kingdom Rules!* explained that Christmas was not an honor to Jesus. This revelation came from a sermon presented in 1928 by Richard H. Barber and later published in the Golden Age magazine. The Golden Age magazine was the forerunner of the Awake! magazine. On

page 102 of *God's Kingdom Rules!* is a 1926 picture of the last Christmas celebrated at Brooklyn Bethel, with R. H. Barber's face circled. In his discourse, he stated, "Satan...has taught the people to give more prominence to the *birth* of the *babe* Jesus than to the *death* of the *man* Jesus, in order to hide the importance of the *ransom*." How-

ever, the December 1, 1904 Watchtower also said, *"Even though Christmas day is not the real anniversary of Our Lord's birth, but more properly annunciation day or the date of his human begetting (Luke 1:28)..."*

So, Christmas is the coming of Jesus from heaven to earth into the womb of Mary. This event was announced by an angel to Mary as the powerful work of the Most High God. May we honor and respect God for sending the Light and honor Jesus for coming into the world? Of course! But the Watchtower has removed more than the praise for Jesus' coming into the world.

### The Watchtower's original worship of Jesus

The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society amended their own charter on Feb 15, 1945, to **include** the purposes of the Society to: "...preach the

gospel of God's kingdom under Christ Jesus...and for public Christian worship of Almighty God and Christ Jesus;..." (Article II.) We have a certified copy of

the 1945 charter that we received from the County Clerk's Office in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. Our copy was sent April 25, 1995, and is the current charter of the Society. Even though the Society's respect of Jesus through their worship of Him is still in their current Charter, they publicly deny that they worship Jesus in their FAQ section on their website.



The last time Christmas was celebrated at Brooklyn Bethel, 1926

## Questions from Our Readers

By Cheryl Schatz

### Question:

Can you explain what is Christian Hedonism?

### Answer:

Hedonism is defined as the doctrine that pleasure or happiness is the highest good so that one becomes devoted to pleasure as a way of life. "Christian" hedonism has been popularized by John Piper from his 1986 book *Desiring God*.

John Piper tries to redefine the term hedonism by saying that our satisfaction *in* God brings the greatest glory *to* God. John Piper records it this way: *God is the most glorified in us when we are the most satisfied in Him*. This sounds good, but is it biblical? Piper admits that the term is catchy, controversial and not in the Bible. He also says that it is "massive and pervasive biblical truth" and he loves to call his belief, *Christian Hedonism*, as it "changes everything in your life."

The "change" seems to focus not on *who* God is, but on *what* we get out of our pursuit of God. There is no doubt that God is good and that He has made many wonderful promises to those who will give themselves to Him. However, **God** is the beginning and the "end" of all things. Eternal pleasure is not the "end". There is no more blatant example of Piper's "Christian hedonism" than his view of worship. Piper says that corpo-

rate worship brings the act of glorifying God **when people are satisfied** in Him so that the worship leaders, musicians, and preachers have a primary task of bringing worshipers to drink and eat and say a satisfied "Ahhh." Why? *"Because God is most glorified in those worshipers when they are most satisfied in him."* But worship is not described at all like this in the Bible. In fact, on the contrary, worship is described as a sacrifice.



In David's Psalm 103, David commands his soul to bless the Lord, and he focuses on the compassion and character of God, not on his own feelings. The focus is not on David's satisfaction with God, but God's greatness that deserves our praise. Job understood this concept as seen in Job 1:20. Job had just lost all things including his possessions and his own children.

### Job 1:20-22

*20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped.*

*21 He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD."*

*22 Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.*

Job went into mourning by tearing his robe, shaving his head, and falling on the ground as he worshiped God. Was Job fulfilling God's glory

by his own feelings of being deeply “satisfied”? Or did Job give worship to God as a sacrifice through his deep pain—a sacrifice of praise that God deserves? The New Testament concurs that worship and service involves “sacrifice” rather than “pleasure” and “satisfaction”.

*Hebrews 13:15–16*

*15 Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.*

*16 And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

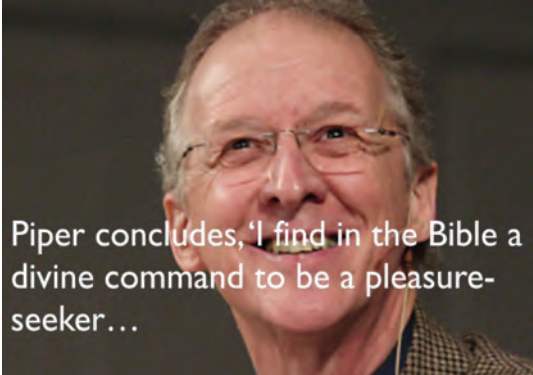
The problem with “Christian Hedonism” is that it takes the name of a selfish, sinful lifestyle and attaches it to the name of Jesus. It also

leads people to pursue satisfaction in this life. Additionally, it attributes our level of satisfaction as a part of bringing God glory raising our feelings as key to worship. This idea is not new to John Piper. There are many new worship leaders who lift up worship as a way to get a spiritual buzz, and people flock for the “high” that they get in a worship service. There is nothing wrong with feelings, but when the level of “satisfaction” through one’s own feelings during worship determines the level of worship given to God, the emphasis shifts away

from worship as biblical sacrifice.

The use of the term “hedonism” and attaching it to the name of Christ is against the teaching of the Scriptures. We are called to put to death the old man, spiritually participate in the death and burial of Jesus, and to put on the new man who is empowered by Christ to go through times of trial and persecution. To tell new Christians that our daily life is to be filled with “satisfaction” and “pleasure” is to mislead them. Our goal is Jesus and Jesus alone. Paul is the perfect example against hedonism.

Paul said he would rather go to damnation if by doing so he could save his fellow Israelites.



Piper concludes, ‘I find in the Bible a divine command to be a pleasure-seeker...

*Romans 9:1–3*  
*1 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my*

*conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit,*

*2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.*

*3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,*

If “eternal pleasure” is the end goal, then Paul was deceived by wishing that he could be accursed for the sake of others. Yet, Paul testified that he wrote the truth. “Eternal pleasure” was not his goal. Instead, the salvation of his brethren for God’s glory was his passion.

Whenever we hear a brand new concept such as “Christian hedonism” we need to check it out by the Scriptures. Test all things and hold fast to what is true. Test in context and through the experience of biblical authors who were given to us as an example. Paul, David, Job—none of them were “hedonists” and neither should we be.

**Question:**

What is Shambhala?

**Answer:**

Shambhala is a Buddhist spiritual “pure land” that is embraced by Buddhist and non-Buddhist spiritual seekers. Richard and I live in a very spiritually dark area of British Columbia where there is a yearly multi-day music festival called Shambhala that attracts people world-wide.

The “pure land” of Shambhala is said to be ruled over by a future Buddha called Maitreya, an enlightened spiritual leader. The Buddhist teachings about the future coming of Maitreya sounds ominously like the coming of the anti-Christ. The Buddhist prophecy states that when the world has declined into a state of war and greed and all appears to be lost, then Maitreya, the 25th Kalki king, will emerge from Shambhala. His arrival will be at a crucial time, and he comes with a huge army to vanquish the dark forces and

usher in a Golden Age of peace, harmony, stability, and prosperity. The Bible says that when the world says peace and security, then sudden destruction will come upon them.

Most non-Buddhist groups teach that Maitreya will unify all religions through his teachings and rescue humanity from economic and other crises by teaching a universal brotherhood. When spiritual seekers are looking for Shambhala the “pure land”, they are looking for the one who brings peace out of that land. Other names given to Maitreya, the ruler of the land of Shambhala, are the Christ, the Messiah, Krishna (a Hindu god), and Teacher. Some Muslims believe that Maitreya has already arrived as Mohammed and some Bahai’s believe he arrived as their prophet, Baha’u’lah.

**Question:**



Why did Jesus use Mud and Saliva in some of his miracles? Weird...

**Answer:**

Jesus created a mud (or clay) which is a direct reference back to the creative

miracle of the creation of man. Man was created from the dust of the earth, and Jesus used this dust to produce a creative miracle for the blind man. The fact that the man was so different afterwards that some claimed it was not the

blind man himself, alludes to a creative miracle that created eyes that were not there before.

The early church fathers frequently compared the way Jesus did this miracle with the creation of man. In fact, Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* states that God omitted to form eyes in the man as a baby so that Jesus could supply the eyes publicly:

*Now the work of God is the fashioning of man. For, as the Scripture says, He made [man] by a kind of process: "And the Lord took clay from the earth, and formed man."<sup>5</sup> Wherefore also the Lord spat on the ground and made clay, and smeared it upon the eyes, pointing out the original fashioning [of man], how it was effected, and manifesting the hand of God to those who can understand by what [hand] man was formed out of the dust. For that which the artificer, the Word, had omitted to form in the womb, [viz., the blind man's eyes], He then supplied in public, that the works of God might be manifested in him, in order that we might not be seeking out another hand by which man was fashioned, nor another Father; knowing that this hand of God which formed us at the beginning...*

*The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus (Vol. 1, p. 543).*

The clay (or dust) that was used not only links back to the creation of man, but the spittle (life-giving) water from Jesus shows a personal act of creation, not just a spoken word.

It also gives a reference to spiritual life as Jesus tells the man to go and wash.

When Jesus later goes to the man who has been healed (but who has never seen Jesus), Jesus reveals who He is and the man who is physically washed comes to faith in Jesus as the Lord who also spiritually washes him clean. It is a beautiful story of not just a healing, but a creative act of God and the resultant spiritual birth of the one who had been born blind.

### Question:

What is the one thing that the rich young ruler lacked in Luke 18:22? Is poverty required?

### Answer:

Jesus mentioned two things, but only one thing was required. The rich young

ruler came to Jesus to ask what he must do to inherit eternal life. (Luke 18:18) Jesus turns the question around to a matter of goodness and God. The young ruler called Jesus "good", yet Jesus asked him "why" was it he called Jesus "good". Goodness only resides **in** God. Then Jesus took the man through part of the 10 commandments—the ones that deal with human relationships. Don't commit adultery, murder, steal, bear false witness, and the positive one of honoring your father and mother. The rich young





ruler says that he has kept these commandments since he was a youth. Jesus then tells him that there is one thing that he lacks. It is one thing, not two.

It is interesting to note that Jesus had not asked the young man about his relationship with God. The entire law is summed up in two commands in Matthew 22:37-40.

*Matthew 22:37-40*

*37 And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND."*

*38 This is the great and foremost commandment.*

*39 The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'*

*40 On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."*

Jesus had only mentioned the commands on loving your neighbor as yourself, and the young man stated that he had kept all of these commands from his youth. Jesus' response is to say there is ONE thing that he lacked. Jesus said, "follow Me". Following Jesus is the ONE necessary thing for salvation. However, telling him to sell all that he had exposed the reason why he could not follow Jesus. The young man had another god. The very first command deals with our relationship with God before it deals with our relationship with others. God said, "You shall have no other gods before Me." (Exodus 20:3) The rich young ruler's wealth prevented him from following Jesus. It was his god

that stopped him from doing the ONE thing that he needed. He needed to follow Jesus as his Lord and his God. "Why do you call Me good?" Jesus asked him. Jesus was showing him the answer. The part of the 10 commandments that the young man had **not** followed concerned his relationship with God. Following Jesus would bring him a relationship with God that would give him the eternal life that he sought after. Following Jesus would also identify Jesus as the One who is Lord and Savior—the only One who is good.

But instead of following Jesus, the young ruler turned his back and walked away.

*Luke 18:23-24*

*23 But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.*

*24 And Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!"*

A very different result happened with two blind men who identified Jesus as the "Son of David" (a messianic title). When they were healed, they FOLLOWED Jesus! (Matthew 20:30.) They were persistent, they identified Jesus as the Messiah, and they believed He could heal them. Those who were disadvantaged by their physical blindness, put their faith in Jesus, yet the one who had great wealth, walked away from God and His kingdom.

### **Question:**

In Mormonism who are the sons of God?

**Answer:**

In Mormonism, only the exalted gods and goddesses are considered the sons of God (through adoption) and they arrive at the "station of a god". Concerning the righteous who have died, Mormonism says this blasphemy: *"...they shall be heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. What is it? To inherit the same power, the same glory and the same exaltation, until you arrive at the station of a god, and ascend the throne of eternal power, the same as those who have gone before."*

**Question:**

Must we be silent when charged with evil? Jesus refused to answer those who charged Him.

**Answer:**

Jesus remained silent because it was destined that He would go to the cross as an innocent Lamb. He did not defend Himself because He was giving Himself up for us. However, we are not told that we cannot provide a defense before those who charge us with evil. Paul and Stephen gave answers to the accusations, and in their defense they gave a strong witness for Jesus. In Ephesians chapter 6, God's armor given to us is God's power to resist evil and overcome it. Jesus also said this to his disciples who would experience arrest for their faith:

*Mark 13:11 "When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit."*

It is a comfort to know that we can trust God.

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Editors: Marlene Mercado, Melanie Ryzuk, Research, Layout & Graphics:  
Cheryl Schatz, Production Editor: Richard Schatz

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