

Katoomba Baptist Church Bulletin

41 Waratah Street, Katoomba NSW 2780.

December 2019/January 2020.

Sunday service 10am.

Prayer meeting: Each Saturday, 9am.

Bible study: Second and fourth Wednesday of each month, 10-11am.

LIFT (Ladies In Fellowship Together): First Thursday of the month, 10am, in the church hall.

Prayer for Israel: Third Friday of each month, 1.30pm.

Church lunch: Fourth Sunday of each month after the service.

**** Please see note in Church Announcements for December/January changes and events****

From the editor

The birth of a child is a time of great celebration. All the months of preparation, of expectation, of hopes and dreams and then a little life is brought into the world. Parents look at the babe in their arms with a love they have never felt before. There is the hope that this child's life will be better than their own. Out of all the billions of people born since Adam and Eve, the baby boy in Bethlehem was unique. His life truly was perfect for He has been the only person to have lived a sinless life. By our faith through God's grace His life gives eternal life to us.

I confess that I get very tired of all the secular trappings of Christmas. But I never tire of the wonder of the Incarnation. It's almost impossible to comprehend that the baby in the manger was also the God Who not only created all things and but Who also sustains the entire creation (Hebrews 1:1-4). Skeptics always try to reduce God to an invention of the human mind. But the living God is Almighty, and "with God nothing is impossible" (Luke 1:37). Who but our God would so defy worldly wisdom and send His Son to live on earth in such a humble manner? The Son of God, born into poverty? No gilded palace for Him. He was born so lowly as to be a brother to all men. The Incarnation is a miracle of such magnitude that the angels of Heaven, despite always witnessing God's works, are constantly intrigued and fascinated by it! (1 Peter 1:12).

What could be more bold than the Christ born a vulnerable little human? Neither Satan and his demons, nor Herod and his soldiers could harm Him. Only at the right time in God's plan of redemption, on the dark and lonely hill of the crucifixion, did death take Him — and only then because He sacrificed His body. The Lord Jesus rose from the dead, His sacrifice accepted by God, and is forever victorious over Satan, sin, even death itself.

What better news is there than this at Christmas: God is with us! Through the grace and love of the Father we now have the Son as our Lord and Saviour and the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. Now we live with the ever-present hope of our Lord's return. If only mankind would accept these incomparable blessings with an open and contrite heart!

This Christmas may you be blessed with the love of family and friends. May you celebrate the joy of salvation and be truly thankful, praising and glorifying God the Father for the gift of His Son.

May we also share the hope we have and the love we have in Christ. There are many families whose Christmas Day could be a time of sorrow, loneliness, regret. Please pray for the broken and for those who have suffered tragedies, including loss of loved ones, loss of home. May the Lord's healing hand be upon them.

Your brother in Christ, Bill.

Please pray

- for the Lord to guide us as we seek His will for a new pastor at Katoomba Baptist Church.
- that the Lord will minister to those in our fellowship who are undergoing trials and suffering.
- for Israel, for the "Peace of Jerusalem" (Ps 122:6) and for the Gospel there "To the Jew first." (Rom 1:16).
- for our persecuted brothers and sisters in nations rich and poor and for those who persecute them.
- for all those afflicted by the drought, especially for farmers and rural communities.
- that the Lord will have mercy and send rain across Australia.
- for those communities devastated by fires; for the brave men and women who fight the fires.
- for revival in our community, state, nation, and throughout the world, and for our faith to increase.
- for the Church to wake up and be alert to the lateness of the hour and proclaim the Gospel to all.
- for the power of the Spirit in our lives, for discernment and wisdom as we live through these last days.
- that the Lord will help us to use our gifts for His glory and to share the Gospel with others.
- for missions, especially those we support as a church.
- for our community and nation, that many will turn to Christ, that our leaders will be led by Him.
- for people suffering from war, disaster, social unrest, oppression, persecution all over the world.
- that we continue to grow in Christian love as a church, serving the Lord and each other.
- Maranatha! ("Come, O Lord!")

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks:

for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Church announcements

- Changes to regular programs: Please note that the next issue of the KBC Bulletin will be in February and the last Bible study for the year will be on Wednesday December 11th and resume on Wednesday February 12th. Other announcements on holiday changes and events will be made from the pulpit.
- Special Christmas Day service, 9.30 am. Daniel Thomas will be preaching.
- Preaching roster: December - Andrew Hollier (1st), Steve Cooper (8th), Graeme Morgan (15th), Daniel Thomas (22nd), John Buckle (29th); January - Grahame McCraw (5th), Michael Woolley (12th), John Buckle (19th), and January 26th is yet to be confirmed.

- Prayer meeting reminder: please join the regulars who meet at the church 9am Saturdays. It is a special time of fellowship and blessing as we worship the Lord in prayer.
- If there is anyone who would like to help a refugee family by accommodating them in their home, please contact Wendy Woolley directly or through me at my email: hillbillyfewer@gmail.com.

“With the passage of time and increased maturity, our excitement regarding Christmas may change. ... the tree reminds us of the tree Jesus died on to pay for our sins. The lights testify that He is the Light of the World, and the gifts are a mere shadow of the greatest gift ever given - Jesus Christ.” [Charles Stanley]

December birthdays: Stan Wright 3rd, Rhonda O 19th, Elisabeth A 26th, Jemima W 31st.

January birthdays: Anne Payne 9th, Kristy D 11th.

May the Lord bless you abundantly on your special day and in the year ahead in your walk with Him.

From WEC Australia (<https://wec.com.au/stories/hope-of-a-life-shared-with-god>)

Hope of a Life Shared with God

Four year old Adama along with his twin sister Howa were always a vibrant, energetic and fiery duo. They are 2 of the most caring and protective siblings I've met. Howa was spared from HIV, while less fortunate Adama was infected at birth. AIDS has wrought devastation in their family, resulting in the death of their parents, leaving Adama and Howa orphaned and in the care of their poor and elderly grandmother. Their Mothers passing in March, left Adama in a state of depression, causing loss of appetite and significant weight loss. HIV coupled with severe malnutrition left Adama susceptible to opportunistic Infections, resulting in Tuberculosis, for the second time- as if he hadn't suffered enough!

Amongst the sadness, sickness and suffering there's a great joy that exists, and that's Hope! Hope of healing! Hope of tomorrow! Hope of a life shared with God! Seeing little Adama's bright smile after gaining 1kg and regaining his strength after a fortnights admission- reinforces why we are here. Raising awareness, doing what we can to prevent the transmission of HIV (and other sicknesses) and treating the sick, so that Adama's story of sickness and tragedy is not repeated – motivates us to keep going. Whether it be the preaching from the waiting hall, the singing on the ward, the projection of the Jesus movie, or the sharing and praying with patients in their homes- the Good News is being told, and that's the main reason we're here; to see people encounter God and to share their life with Him.

Spurgeon on “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given” (Isaiah 9:6)

If unto me a child is born then I have been born again; and, moreover, I am now in consequence of that new birth, a child. If, again, a Son has been given to me, then I am a son; and again I am given to that Son who is given to me. I have tried to put these tests in the way that the text would suggest them. I pray you carry them home with you. If you do not recollect the words, yet do recollect to search yourselves, and see, my hearers, whether you can say, "Unto me this Son is given." For, indeed, if Christ is not my Christ, He is of little worth to me. If I cannot say He loved me and gave Himself for me, of what avail is all the merit of His righteousness, or all the plenitude of His atonement? Bread in the shop is well enough, but if I am hungry and cannot get it, I starve although granaries be full. Water in the river is well enough but if I am in a desert and cannot reach the stream, if I can hear it in the distance and am yet lying down to die of thirst, the murmuring of the rill, or the flowing of the river, helps to tantalize me, while I die in dark despair. Better for you, my hearers to have perished as Hottentots, to have gone down to your graves as dwellers in some benighted land, than to live where the name of Christ is continually hymned and where His glory is extolled, and yet to go down to your tombs without an interest in Him, unblessed by His gospel, unwashed in His blood, unclothed of His robe of righteousness. God help you, that you may be blessed in Him, and may sing sweetly "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given."

[Charles Spurgeon, from the sermon 'A Christmas Question: Isaiah 9:6']

Friday December 20th, 1.30pm — Prayer for Israel at Katoomba Baptist Church

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”

[Micah 5:2]

Contributions welcome: Our church bulletin is available on the first Sunday service of the month. Contributions of a missionary or devotional nature can be made to the editor, Bill Fewer (email: hillbillyfewer@gmail.com). Please email Bill if you would prefer to receive the bulletin electronically.

**The people who walked in darkness
Have seen a great light;
Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death,
Upon them a light has shined.
[Isaiah 9:2]**

**Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world.
He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”
[John 8:12]**

Katoomba Baptist Church Online Extra

“Use of Time”

a poem by Jemima Woolley

As I lie here sick in bed,
And watch the clouds float by,
A restless wall of energy
Wells in me as I sigh.

This time is spent to no good end,
Just staring at the sky.
Perhaps though it is a God send,
Undoing knots I've tied.

We always move with reckless haste
Through life and love and home.
Maybe this space is not a waste,
Made here for us to grow.

Soli Deo Gloria.

From Got Questions website

Question: “Why do we celebrate Christmas?”

Answer: *Christians the world over celebrate Christmas in honour of the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. Various Christmas traditions have been associated with the celebration of Christmas, and different cultures celebrate different ways. The unifying factor is the historical fact that Jesus was born, c. 5 BC. The angel who appeared to the shepherds the night of Jesus’ birth said, “I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord” (Luke 2:10–11).*

We celebrate Christmas because, as the angel said, the birth of Jesus Christ is “good news.” Good news is meant to be celebrated. In fact, the angel said the news of Jesus’ birth would cause “great joy” and would be “for all the people”—the joyful celebration would be universal. People around the globe would be glad for this occasion.

We celebrate Christmas because, as the angel said, “A Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.” The three titles the angel applies to Jesus are important. Jesus is the Saviour who delivers us from sin and death (Matthew 1:21). He is the human Messiah (or Christ) who fulfills the Law and the Prophets, showing that God is faithful (see Matthew 5:17). And He is the divine Lord who has entered our world: the Almighty has taken on human flesh; God and man have been fused together in an indivisible, eternal bond; God is truly with us (see Matthew 1:23).

In celebrating Christmas, we celebrate the Saviour, because we needed deliverance. We celebrate the Christ in whom all of God’s promises are “Yes” and “Amen” (2 Corinthians 1:20). We celebrate the Lord who in humility took on “the very nature of a servant” for our sakes (see Philippians 2:6–8).

We celebrate Christmas with gift-giving because of the “indefinable gift” that God gave to us (2 Corinthians 9:15). We celebrate Christmas by stringing lights because the Light of the world has come to us (John 1:4; Isaiah 9:2). We celebrate Christmas with carols and choirs because they are expressive of joy and follow the examples of Mary and Zacharias and Simeon and the angels, all of whom extolled the Lord in poetry (Luke 1–2). We celebrate Christmas by decorating evergreen trees with stars and angels and tinsel because of the eternal life Jesus brings (John 4:14)—and stars and angels and beauty were all associated with Jesus’ birth.

In celebrating Christmas we celebrate the love and condescension of God. In Texas in 1987, a toddler by the name of Jessica McClure fell into an eight-inch well casing. Down she went, becoming stuck twenty-two feet below ground. Once people discovered that “Baby Jessica” was in the well, they took immediate action. They didn’t tell her to find a way to climb back up, and they didn’t just shout happy thoughts to encourage her. No, they went down to where she was and got her. They did whatever it took. Rescuers worked nonstop for fifty-eight hours to free her.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve fell. Down they went, dragging all humanity with them into the darkness and death of sin. And what did God do? He did not tell us to find our own way out of the mess we were in, and He did more than shout down happy thoughts to us from heaven. No, He came down to where we were and got us. That’s what Christmas is all about—God’s coming down to rescue us, to do whatever it took to deliver us from sure death.

When even one person is in a life-threatening situation, we understand what has to be done. When God looked down at our sinful planet, He saw a whole world of people in mortal danger. We celebrate Christmas because it was at Christmastime that the Rescuer of all mankind came to save us from the hopeless situation we were in. God did not stay in heaven; He came down to where we are.

[<https://www.gotquestions.org/why-celebrate-Christmas.html>]

“World Gone Crazy”

by Michael Woolley

(If the links doesn't open, click on them while holding down the Control key on a PC or the Command key on a Mac)

Thank God - that He is in control!

It is disturbing [confirmation from the songwriter of "In Christ Alone"](#) that the Church in the West is weakened - at best - by the Hillsong-variety worship and music. Too little sound biblical teaching has lead even to the language of modern "church-ianity" veering significantly from historical and biblical norms. Isaac Watts will suit me fine.

Europe is on the path to being cursed - a [quarter of their populace hold anti-Semitic views](#), yet France is [taking action \(finally\) on Political Islam](#). Yet read the article again... the line "We fight against political Islamism that suggests that the law of God is superior to that of the republic" gives away their 'game'. I reject their conflating of the Islamic god with the God of the bible, but the issue of the State having superiority over Biblical truth and biblical laws (that constrain Christian consciences) is [the very battle](#) we in Australia have just entered... but that [our brethren in Europe are in the thick of](#) - but we are already at risk from opinions, [Overton windows](#) and attitudes being manipulated - due to the rise of [Tech Totalitarianism](#).

Back to being cursed ... [Syrian rockets rained down on their own country](#) in recent military engagements - whether via Israeli technology, or the hand of God... And has [the announcement on the Settlements](#) this week become a blessing to Trump? Lebanon is imploding socially - but also, (as is the West [the collapse of Europe's banks](#) is just warming up) ... which although on a larger scale and with a lot more Government intervention, is not too dissimilar to [China's Banks](#) - or for that matter the Chinese economy [and the impact on The West](#). At this point [not doing anything is not a viable option](#) - as late as it is to ['disengage' from China](#) (easier for the USA than here!) there are [strong values-based reasons](#) that will determine our future - if action is not immediate and comprehensive - and which will only become more painful - and difficult - as time progresses. [Recent revelations](#) make this all-the-more imperative.

Europe has a similar existential threat [at it's borders](#) (or is that inside - depending on whether one uses NATO or the EU as the definition), with [the geopolitics of their energy/oil](#) to also consider! Two fund managers that I've avoided for years - both large on the global stage - have been implicated (along with the Obama administration) with [Billion-dollar money laundering](#) in the Ukraine. "A fish rots from it's head" as the saying goes, and the odour that followed these two investment houses gave me cause-enough-for-concern several years ago that led me to walk away from both Blackrock and Franklin-Templeton.

Another sign of a global slowdown is seen from the ongoing reduction in electricity demand from industry - anecdotally from Asia, but clearly [evidenced in India](#)... On a positive note: [thanks to Trump Iran's Mullah's are going bankrupt!](#) Remember the suffering - but growing - Iranian church. They give with their lives, not money.

“A Christmas Story”

by Anon

This true story happened many years ago in Brooklyn USA. A pastor sent it to a TV preacher.

In October, a pastor and his wife decided to work on a small rundown church building with the hopes of inviting folks in the small town to a Christmas Eve service. They felt the people may come to church if they aimed for that date. Everything was in order by December 18th. They were thrilled with the result of their hard work. invitations had been sent for the candlelight service for Christmas Eve. However, on the 19th torrential rain hit the area and it lasted for two days. On the 21st, the pastor went over to the church. His heart sank as he saw the roof had leaked causing a large area about 8' x 6' to fall off the front wall of the sanctuary just behind the pulpit. The pastor cleaned the mess up from the floor, and not knowing what else to do but postpone the Christmas Eve service, he headed home. On the way, he noticed that a local business was having a flea market type sale for charity, so he stopped by. One of the items was a beautifully handmade, ivory coloured, crocheted tablecloth with exquisite work. It was just the right size to cover up the hole in the front wall. He bought the cloth and headed back to the church.

By this time it had started to snow. An old woman running from the opposite direction was trying to catch a bus. She missed it. The pastor stopped to tell her it would be 45 minutes before another bus came along and he invited her to wait in the warm church. She sat in the back watching him as he got a ladder, hammer and nails and began hanging up the tablecloth. There was a cross embroidered in the centre of the cloth. The pastor could hardly believe how beautiful it looked and covered up the entire problem area. Then he noticed the woman walking down the aisle. Her face was white like a sheet.

“Pastor,” she asked, “where did you get that tablecloth?” The pastor explained. The woman asked him to check the lower right corner to see if the initials “EBG” were crocheted into it. They were! These were the initials of the woman. She had made this tablecloth in Austria 35 years ago. She explained that before the war she and her husband were wealthy in Austria. When the Nazis came she was forced to leave. Her husband was going to follow her the next week. She was captured, sent to prison and never saw her husband or her home again.

The pastor wanted to give her the tablecloth but she wanted him to keep it for the church. He insisted on driving her home; that was the least he could do for her. She lived on the other side of Staten island and was only in Brooklyn for the day for a house-cleaning job.

What a wonderful service they had on Christmas Eve. The church was almost full. At the end, one older man whom the pastor recognised from the neighbourhood, continued to sit in one of the pews and stare. The pastor wondered why he was not leaving. The man asked him where he got the tablecloth on the front wall. He went on to say that the tablecloth was identical to one his wife had made many years ago when they lived in Austria. He told the pastor how the Nazis came and that he had forced his wife to flee for her safety. He was supposed to follow but was arrested and put in prison. He never saw his wife or his home again. He then asked if he could see any initials on the corner of the cloth. They both said “EBG” together!

They drove to Staten Island, to the same house where the pastor had taken the woman 3 days earlier. He helped the man climb the rickety 3 flights of stairs to the woman’s apartment. They knocked on the door and experienced the greatest Christmas reunion they could ever imagine. The pastor said, “That’s the most beautiful Christmas Eve I think I will ever see.”

[Thank you Elaine for this contribution]

“C. H. Spurgeon on Prayer Meetings”

by Davy Ellison

There are myriads of collections of C. H. Spurgeon’s addresses. Recently, I read through one of those collections, a collection of forty addresses at prayer meetings gathered together into a volume entitled ‘Only a Prayer Meeting! The title is taken from the first address in which Spurgeon lambastes those who sometimes ‘wickedly’ refer to prayer meetings as ‘only a prayer-meeting’. However, he is not guilty of viewing prayer meetings through rose-tinted glasses. In another address he highlights some problems and some remedies for prayer meetings. He is acutely aware of the dangers and difficulties of a prayer meeting, and yet deeply desires that the church remain committed to them.

Problems

Here are four of the problems Spurgeon identifies:

Excessively Long Prayers

I assume that Spurgeon is speaking with tongue-in-cheek when he mentions that some brothers would ‘fix’ themselves against a pew before praying for 20/30 minutes. He then jibes, after they have prayed, they ‘conclude by asking forgiveness for [their] shortcomings, – a petition which was hardly sanctioned by those who has undergone the penance of endeavouring to join in his long-winded discourse.’ (pg. 23)

Nothing kills a prayer meeting better than an excessively long prayer, Spurgeon recognised that and for those of us who have been at any type of prayer meeting we have likely experienced it.

Meaningless Phrases

Spurgeon offers three examples which are most likely outdated by now, but we all know the kinds of things he is speaking about: praying for people on a bed of sickness; entering the presence of God; speaking of bowing or standing whenever we are sitting; and so on.

Spurgeon writes:

“Very many other perversions of Scripture, uncouth similes, and ridiculous metaphors, will recall themselves to the reader; we have neither time nor patience to recapitulate them; they are a sort of spiritual slang, the offspring of unholy ignorance, unmanly imitation, or graceless hypocrisy; they are at once a dishonour to those who constantly repeat them, and an intolerable nuisance to those whose ears are jaded with them.” (pg. 24-25)

We could hardly sum it up better.

Mistaking Preaching for Prayer

Again allow Spurgeon to speak for himself:

“The friends who were reputed to be ‘gifted’ indulged themselves in public prayer with a review of their own experience, a recapitulation of their creed, an occasional running commentary upon a chapter or Psalm, or even a criticism upon the Pastor and his sermons. It was too often quite forgotten that the brother was addressing the Divine Majesty, before whose wisdom a display of our knowledge is impertinence, and before whose glory an attempt at swelling words and pompous periods is little short of profanity; the harangue was evidently intended for men rather than God, and on some occasions did not contain a single petition from beginning to end.” (pg. 25)

No more needs to be said.

Monotonous Repetition

Spurgeon’s tradition, and my own, was filled with Christian men who objected to forms of prayer – cold, heartless, repetitive liturgy is an anathema to them. However, these same men each time they pray use the same words, phrases, addresses and conclusions in each of their prayers. In fact, Spurgeon admits, ‘We have known some brethren’s prayers by heart, so that we could calculate within a few seconds when they would conclude.’ (pg. 26)

The issue is that these four problems are very often the excuses offered by those who stay away from the prayer meeting. And while Spurgeon tackles these problems sharply, and with a degree of humour, he is not content to just complain. Therefore, he proposes some remedies.

Remedies

Here are four of the remedies that Spurgeon offers:

Set an Example

In setting the example Spurgeon lays the responsibility on the Pastor. Very often it is easy for the pastor to get fed-up, discouraged and cynical about a limping prayer meeting. But, Spurgeon will not allow a Pastor to just complain about it – they must then work to remedy the situation.

Among the suggestions and exhortations offered are the following: speak of the prayer meeting with warmth, joy and eagerness; pray with passion and vigour; be seldom absent from the prayer meeting; make the meeting interesting; give a warm-hearted ten-minute address. Doing these things, Spurgeon suggests, will ‘foster a love for the prayer-meeting’ (pg. 27).

Labour for Brevity

Strive to make prayers short. Whether you lead the meeting or pray in the meeting you should exemplify, encourage and commend brief prayers. For those attending the prayer meeting Spurgeon instructs that each individual pray for one petition on their heart, drive that petition home and then end your prayer. He writes:

“Let as many as possible take part...the change of voice will prevent weariness, and the variety of subjects will excite attention...As a general rule, meetings in which no prayer exceeds ten minutes, and the most are under five, will exhibit the most fervour and life”. (pg. 27-28)

Persuade Audible Prayers

This is perhaps the best way to prevent the problems noted above. This may be difficult, but the more people that can be convinced to pray audibly the more a prayer meeting will bounce from one individual to another, from one petition to another, from one voice to another. It may even mean that you have to ‘plant’ prayers, asking particular people to pray for particular requests. However, the result of persuading audible prayers is that, ‘Every man, feeling that he is to take part in the meeting at some time or other, will become at once interested, and from interest may advance to love.’ (pg. 29)

Seek Specific Requests

One way in which we may be able to foster a spirit of brief, audible prayers may be by way of prayer requests. Encourage your congregation to submit requests and then disseminate these requests among those gathered at your prayer meeting. Ask a variety of individuals to pray for some one request at some point in the meeting.

None of this is groundbreaking – but it is simple and when used to good effect could possibly transform the atmosphere in your prayer meetings. In Philippians 1:4 Paul states that he makes his prayers for the Philippians with joy. Listening to Spurgeon on prayer meetings and implementing some of these practical tips may mean we make our prayers in our prayer meetings with joy.

[<https://gospelconvergence.wordpress.com/2015/11/09/c-h-spurgeon-on-prayer-meetings>]

From the Gideons International in Australia website

Stories of Lives Changed: Joan

I'd like to share with you how this little book (Gideons New Testament) gave me new life.

My entire life has been spent 'moving' it seems! My dad was in the Royal Air Force and he was stationed at different places for most of his service. So the family would "up stakes" and transfer to a different RAF base quite frequently.

One of the earliest photos I have of myself is sitting in a carry-cot, six months old, on the docks at Southampton waiting to depart to a far off overseas posting in Central Africa. Then, within a few years, we'd be transferred again!

This 'rolling stone' had no time to gather 'moss'—no time to feel 'at home' or settle in at a new school—no time to make lasting friends. In fact I spent most of my life just 'not belonging' anywhere. Everywhere was like a transit camp!!

We went back and forth until my Dada's service time was up...which just meant we were going to move again!!!...but this time, migrate for life!! (or so we thought!).

At last!...carving out a new life of some permanence—attending a junior school to completion—and attending senior school with new found friends.

It was at this senior school that pupils received a Gideons New Testament. Because it was given to me personally I kept it as a sort of 'souvenir' of my status as a permanent pupil at this senior school.

The stability was not to last and due to world and political events I was once more on the move, migrating again!

Even though this 'rolling stone' gathered no 'moss' I still held on to the little New Testament given to me at school. It was too small to even bother throwing away and it seemed easy enough to carry, fitting in any small bag. So it travelled with me—a small treasure, a reminder of my sojourn with stability!!

I didn't actually read it—I just treasured it as a symbol of 'belonging'!! Little did I know how this New Testament was truly the story of belonging!!

More than 30 years were to pass since receiving the little book. For 30 years I carried it with me on yet another migration, through many more moves and through a few broken relationships and a couple of broken marriages. I still had not read it.

It seemed my life was in a mess. I still did not belong anywhere!! I got to a point of physical and emotional exhaustion, practically crippled with a lower back condition that brought me to the floor...literally!!

Suffering severe back pain I had an entire regime of exercises prescribed.

One day I was lying flat on my stomach (as prescribed) trying to read a book...and the only book small enough to focus on right in front of my nose was the New Testament given to me at the school by the Gideons more than 30 years before and which I had not even read up until then.

I was reading Ephesians chapter 5 and I got to verse 14 "Awake, O sleeper and Christ will give you light".

Well! It took more than 30 years but when I finally did get to read that little book Jesus' words jumped right out at me.

As I read those words it was as if I had literally been jerked to attention! It was as if Jesus Himself was standing close by and speaking directly to me.

After this experience it was as if I had literally been shaken 'awake'! I came to see that after all there is a purpose to life. God is in control. He has a plan of salvation. His plan includes me!

I've been given new life, I'm getting disciplined in a local church and I'm looking forward to seeing Jesus one day face to face!

Thank you, Gideons!

[<https://www.gideons.org.au/about-us/stories-of-lives-changed/31-joan>]

Spurgeon Documentary on YouTube

"Through the Eyes of Spurgeon - Official Biography
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4a6R96XhPaA>

A beautifully filmed and produced biography of C.H. Spurgeon. I highly recommend that you watch it. Delightful!

CS Lewis Doodles on YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCw-kYN6wWXWDyp_IB0wnlxw

Fascinating, quirky, edifying. Chapters from CS Lewis' "Mere Christianity" are narrated while the text is animated in a series of charming illustrations. Give it a try!

"The Timing of the (First) Coming of the Messiah in Daniel 9" (One for Israel on YouTube)

One for Israel ministry have an incisive 12 minute presentation on this famous prophecy. It is addressed to Jewish people as an evangelistic outreach. Did you know that rabbis, quoting from passages in the Mishna, actually discourage Jews from reading the book of Daniel? Not only that, they try to discredit Daniel's God-given prophecy about the timing of what we refer to as the Incarnation.

Daniel's prophecies are astonishing and those that have come to pass have been so historically accurate that it isn't surprising that Jews have been warned off from reading them — and that skeptics of all persuasions have argued that the book of Daniel must have been written *after* many of the prophecies that it details. Why? Because they are so accurate that it would be humanly impossible to predict them and thus Daniel must be fraudulent! As believers, we are not surprised. Only God knows the future and has revealed it to His prophets (see Isaiah 44:6-8).

On the same link as the video is also an excellent article on the topic by Eitan Bar from One for Israel:

<https://www.oneforisrael.org/bible-based-teaching-from-israel/video/daniel-9-when-will-the-messiah-come/>

"The Day of the Lord : 2 Thessalonians 2"

by Pastor Andy Hollier

*In 2Thessalonians 2, the apostle Paul arrives at the heart of his letter, with his explanation about the future **Day of the Lord** and the Antichrist called the **Man of Sin**.*

*These early Christians were "troubled" and all "shaken up" instead of being established and encouraged (1Thessalonians 3:2, 13), because they had been told (falsely) that the **Day of the Lord** was already here (v.2). Paul explains that certain events must first take place before this day of God's wrath and judgment can come to the world.*

What is the Day of the Lord? *It is a Biblical term used mostly to describe the events of the 7 year Tribulation time that is yet to take place on earth. It also covers the return of the Lord, His kingdom on earth, and the events at the close of Christ's 1000 year reign on earth.*

However, predominantly the phrase is used throughout the Old and New Testaments to clearly define the coming Antichrist, his powerful rule, the catastrophic natural disasters and the judgements of God upon this world. It culminates with the return of Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who will save his people; deliver Israel in the battle of Armageddon; destroy the Antichrist; bind Satan and his power and establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Then Jesus the Messiah, will be enthroned as the true King over his kingdom of love and peace on earth.

(cp. **Day of the Lord** – Isaiah 2:10-21; 13:6-13; Hebrews 12:25-29; Joel 2; 3:12-18; Zephaniah 1; Amos 5:18-20; Matthew 24:3-30; 2Thessalonians 2:1-12; Revelation 6:12-17).

1. The Apostasy Must Take Place (2:1-3)

The word “apostasy” means “a falling away.” Here it refers to a falling away from the truth of the Word of God. While there were certainly false teachers in Paul’s day, the church at large was united on the truths of the Word of God. If you met another Christian, you knew he believed in the Word of God, the deity of Christ and salvation by faith in Christ. This is certainly not true today! We live in a day of “Christian unbelief”. People say they are Christians, yet deny the deity of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, and so on.

This apostasy, or falling away from the truth, was foretold by Paul in 1Timothy 4 and 2Timothy 3. We are living in apostate days right now, which indicates that the coming of the Lord is near. Much of the professing church (Christendom) has departed from the faith.

2. The Temple Must Be Rebuilt (2:4-5)

Paul foretells the rise of a world dictator, the “man of sin... son of perdition” (v.3). He is not talking about a world system, but a person who will head up a ‘world system’. This “man of sin” contrasts with Christ, the Saviour from sin. He is the son of perdition; Christ is the Son of God. He is the liar; Christ is the Truth.

This man is called “the Antichrist,” which means both “against Christ” as well as “in place of Christ.” This world dictator will be energised by the devil (2Thessalonians 2: 9) and will unite the nations behind him as a much needed world ruler (Revelation 13:8,12; 17:17).

According to Revelation 17, the Antichrist will cooperate with the apostate world church in his rise to power and then he will destroy this religious system when he doesn’t need it anymore.

Both the OT and NT predict the return of the Jews to Palestine and the rebuilding of the Jewish temple (Daniel 9:27). Jesus taught in Matthew 24:15 - that the Antichrist will set himself up in the (rebuilt) temple in Jerusalem at a future date (cp. Revelation 11:1-2). Jesus refers to this “abomination of desolation”, spoken of by Daniel (Daniel 11:31). One ‘major reason’ this did not happen in AD 70 or AD 100, is because the Antichrist will be occupying the new Temple in Jerusalem, when Christ physically returns to destroy him—see (2Thessalonians 2:8).

3. The Restrainer Must Be Removed (2:6-12)

Satan’s mystery of iniquity is already working in the world (v.7) and we can see its godless activities increasing rapidly. But what is holding back Satan’s evil program and the rise of the Antichrist?

God has a “restrainer” in the world, which we believe is the Holy Spirit working in and through the Church. ‘The One’ who hinders is the Holy Spirit, (v.7) and he will continue to hinder Satan’s activities until he is “taken out of the way” when the Church is Raptured.

Of course, the Spirit will still work on earth, since people will believe in Christ the Messiah and be saved after the Rapture; but his hindering ministry through the Body of Christ will end. This will give Satan free course to fill the cup of iniquity to the full.

Satan will work through the Antichrist in miraculous powers (vv.9-10), just as the magicians in Egypt imitated Moses’ miracles. He will imitate Christ’s powers (Acts 2:22) and get the world to accept and worship him. Men would rather believe a lie than the truth!

Of course, true believers who are saved after the Rapture will not be deceived; it is the lost who will be deluded and ultimately end up in hell. They will believe the lie (2Thessalonians 2:10-11), which is worshiping and serving the Antichrist and Satan instead of the God (cp. Romans 1:25).

4. The Church Must Be Completed (2:13-17)

The Day of the Lord relates to the Jews and the World, but not to the Church. It is a day of God’s wrath upon mankind, and the Church is not destined for wrath (1Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9). The purpose of the Tribulation is the punishment of the unbelieving Gentile world and also the purification of the Jewish nation, which by this time has fully returned to its own land in unbelief.

But Antichrist cannot begin his rise to power until Christ has taken the Church from the earth. What a contrast between the Church and the followers of Antichrist! We have been saved by believing the Truth (1:10); they will be damned because they believe a lie (v.10 –11). We have believed the good news of the Gospel; they believe the false promises of the devil. We who believe in Christ have been chosen for heaven; they are destined for hell.

A Summary of the events is as follows:

(1) The Church will be 'Raptured' to heaven before the Antichrist (1Thessalonians 4:17).

(2) The Antichrist will begin his rise to power in a peaceful way (1Thessalonians 5:1-2).

(3) The Antichrist (Beast) will unite Europe (Revelation 17:17) and make a seven year covenant with Israel to protect it (Daniel 9:27).

(4) The Antichrist will break that covenant after three and a half years, invade Israel and take over the world (Daniel 9:27; 12:11).

(5) The Antichrist will abolish all religion and set himself up to be worshiped (Daniel 11:31; 2Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:4).

(6) Christ will return to earth at the end of the seven-year tribulation period and destroy the Antichrist and his system and set up his throne in the Temple in Jerusalem and reign for 1,000 years on earth. (Matthew 24; 2Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 19:19-20).

Five wonderful applications (vv.13-17)

1. Relax in God's Purposes (v.13). We have been chosen to be delivered – 'Raptured' - before the Day of the Lord comes.

2. Rest in Christ (v.14). You are eternally secure through the Gospel and will soon share in the glory of Jesus Christ in heaven.

3. Stand fast! (v.15). Don't be moved by world convulsions, political upheavals, financial crises or religious apostasy. All these things must take place, but God is still on the throne. As the end of the age draws near, it will be more and more difficult to live for Christ and serve Him, but stand firm (Revelation 3:11).

4. Hold on to the Word of God (v. 16). Don't listen to the lies of the devil—the teachings of the cults, the sugar-coated promises of false teachers. Hold to the Word of God! We have in Christ and His Word eternal encouragement and good hope.

5. Keep on working (v.17). Keep "Doing every good word and work" (v.17). Keep on giving out the Word; keep on working for Christ. As we win others to Christ, we are building up Christ's Church and when it is completed, it will be caught away to glory. As long as the Church is in the world, Satan's program of wickedness is held back. These are great and challenging days. May we be found faithful when Jesus comes! If you are not sure if you will be included in the Rapture, then please speak to me as soon as possible.

[© Notes by Dr. Warren Wiersbe and Rev. Andy Hollier.]

Another Pertinent Question from Got Questions

[<https://www.gotquestions.org/tolerance-vs-convictions.html>]

Question: "What should a Christian do when convictions violate a tolerant society?"

Answer: Many in society today want to view themselves as "tolerant." By that they usually mean "I accept people for who they are without passing judgment on any action or lifestyle choice." But the biblically informed Christian cannot, in good conscience, approve of all actions or lifestyle choices; the Bible clearly delineates some lifestyles as sinful and displeasing to God. When a Christian's convictions clash with the standard of tolerance set by society, the Christian is often labelled as "intolerant," "bigoted," or worse. Ironically, those who claim to be the most tolerant are the least tolerant of the Christian worldview.

Sometimes the conflict between Christian convictions and secular standards of tolerance involves a Christian business being forced to photograph gay engagements, bake cakes or provide flowers for gay weddings, or rent rooms to gay couples. Other times, the conflict is not as public, involving personal acquaintances who disagree with a Christian's conviction against getting drunk at a party, for example, or cohabitation before marriage.

A general principle that covers many issues was expressed by Peter before the Sanhedrin: "We must obey God rather than human beings!" (Acts 5:29). Whatever pressure society brings to bear, the follower of Christ knows who his Lord is and chooses to obey Him. In a sinful world that hated Christ, this will naturally lead to some conflict. The "tolerance" espoused by the world leaves no room for Christian convictions, but, for the redeemed who walk in the Spirit, Christian convictions are indispensable. The Bible says there is a right and a wrong, and no amount of sensitivity training or encounter group sessions can change that.

If we define tolerate as "to put up with something one does not like," then we could say that tolerance does not require approval or support. In this sense, Christians ought to be as tolerant as possible, in order for our loving character to be visible to all (Matthew 5:16). We should be able to "put up with" a lot. In most cases, we should be able to control our impulse to resent something we find distasteful. The problem comes when tolerate is defined in a manner that implies an acceptance or even approval of what one finds offensive. A Christian with Bible-based convictions can accept the fact that people sin, but he must still call it "sin." A Christian's convictions do not allow approval of sin whatsoever.

No matter how it's defined, tolerance has its limits: what message would be sent by a church holding "interactive" services with a witch coven? What if a judge decided to "tolerate" perjury—he allowed it in his courtroom, even though he personally disliked it? How much disrespect should a teacher "tolerate" in her classroom? What if a surgeon began to "tolerate" septic conditions in his operating room?

When a believer finds that his Christian convictions are in conflict with someone's take on tolerance, he should immediately do the following things: 1) Pray for wisdom and for courage. 2) Examine his convictions to make sure they are based on what the Bible actually says, rather than personal preferences. Taking a stand against having a joint Hindu-Christian worship service is biblically supportable; taking a stand against serving ethnically diverse food at the church potluck is not. 3) Commit himself to loving his enemies and doing good to them (Matthew 5:38-48). 4) Purpose in his heart to engage the conflict "with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" (Colossians 3:12). 5) If legal issues come into play, explore his rights under the law (see Acts 16:37-38; 21:39).

Even in the midst of a conflict between godly convictions and secular tolerance, Christians must demonstrate Christ's love and righteousness, exemplifying how truth and love can coexist. In every situation, we should exhibit "deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom" (James 3:13). Our conduct should be such "that those who speak maliciously against [our] good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander" (1 Peter 3:16).

[Editor's note: I just had to include this extra article from Got Questions. 'Tolerance' is such a pressing issue for Christians today. Society is applying a lot of pressure on the Church to be tolerant. Ironically, secular Western society is increasing intolerant of the beliefs and practices of the true Church of the Lord Jesus Christ!]

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'"

And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

[John 1: 1-18]