

Katoomba Baptist Church Bulletin

41 Waratah Street, Katoomba NSW 2780.

July 2020.

Restricted church services are resuming in compliance with the NSW Government rules.

10am Sunday service is also streamed on Katoomba Baptist Church's YouTube channel.

KBC website <https://katoombabaptist.org.au/>.

Bible Study: Second and Fourth Wednesday of the month, on Zoom

(email: Grahame McCraw mowogmaca@gmail.com)

Prayer meeting: Each Saturday, 9am. Prayer for Israel: Third Friday of the month, 1.30pm.

From the editor

This is a happy announcement. Katoomba Baptist Church welcomes the Rev. Stephen Cooper as our new Pastor. Praise God for His goodness and mercy to our fellowship! We thank the Lord that He has called Steve to this church. We pray that Steve's ministry will be blessed with fruitfulness in the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. We pray that Steve will be blessed as we will, and for his wife Joy and their family, and Grace their friend.

Our years without a pastor have been a time of testing for KBC. While we may not have been wandering in the wilderness for forty years or enslaved in Egypt for four hundred, these past four years have challenged us as a fellowship. Again, we praise God, for through these circumstances He drew us closer to Him. He taught us in these trials to seek His will; to wait patiently on Him; to pray and keep on praying believing that He would answer in His perfect time and to His purposes; to work and use our abilities and gifts as the Spirit directed. In all things to faithfully bring glory to God, to magnify His Holy name, and honour our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

We give thanks that the Lord preserved us. There could have been divisions, rancor. There could have been a gradual drifting away and KBC become yet another empty building turned into a café or gift shop as has happened to many churches. But through this time the Holy Spirit blessed our fellowship with love and discipline and strength. Guided by Him we supported each other, giving encouragement where it was needed.

We were blessed by the visiting preachers (of whom Steve was one), and by Daniel and Stan and others in our fellowship who delivered messages. We continued to receive the Bible-teaching, Gospel-proclaiming, Christ-glorifying preaching that has been the standard for Katoomba Baptist Church throughout its long history. In this again, we praise and thank our God for His goodness and mercy. Indeed, how "great is Thy faithfulness"!

Steve is not a stranger to us, having been a guest preacher on twenty occasions, and we have the benefit of knowing him and his preaching style. I can also attest to his compassionate and Godly counseling as he helped me with a personal matter that was giving me much distress. Steve has a vision of ministry that extends beyond the walls of the church — a calling to bring the knowledge of Christ and the love of Christ to our community.

Steve has been a Christian since the age of eight. He is a very experienced, ordained Baptist Pastor, serving the Lord at Dee Why Baptist Church, Ipswich Baptist Church, Springwood Baptist Church and Eastwood Baptist Church (from where he retired from full-time pastoral work in 2017). Steve was a missionary with Campus Crusade for Christ in the Philippines and Australia; Police Chaplain with the NSW Police; and is currently Chair of the Divorce Sub-Committee with the Baptist Association of NSW & the ACT; teacher of *Training of Teachers* (TOT) classes for pastors in Zimbabwe and Zambia; and is an academic tutor and the librarian for Greater West for Christ. And, for the music lovers amongst us, Steve is also an accomplished ukulele player!

So these are exciting times and well may we rejoice. Let us welcome Steve and his family with Christian love into the KBC fellowship. We thank the Lord for the devoted service of our previous Pastors, Neville Davies and Stan Wright, and thank Him for the days ahead with Steve as our Pastor. May we faithfully support Steve by our actions and uphold him in our prayers. Please continually ask the Lord to guide and lead him.

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. [Hebrews 13:17]

To God be the glory. May our Saviour's name be exalted.

Your brother in Christ, Bill.

Please pray

- with thanks and praise that the Lord has called Stephen Cooper to be our Pastor.
- for the Lord to guide us through these times in which we live, and grant us strength and wisdom.
- for our leaders and authorities, for medical staff and indeed all those who are dealing with this crisis.
- that the Lord will minister to all who are undergoing trials and suffering, here and everywhere.
- for Judith and the Hansen family, that the Lord may comfort them on the passing of Ron.
- 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 the people whose livelihoods have been impacted by the Coronavirus, the drought and fires.
- for revival in our community, state, nation, and throughout the world, and for our faith to increase.
- that the Lord will help us to use our gifts for His glory and to share the Gospel with others.
- that the Lord will draw our unsaved loved ones and all for whom we have a burden.
- for missions to be fruitful, especially those we support as a church, and for the preservation of converts.
- 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

- KBC Sunday service is available online. Google “Katoomba Baptist Church YouTube”.
- KBC now has a website! (Thanks Daniel and Josh!). Visit <https://katoombabaptist.org.au>
- Please register on the website if you wish to continue to receive the KBC Bulletin by email.

“You contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary.” [Jonathan Edwards]

From Australian Indigenous Ministries (AIM) <https://australianindigenousministries.org.au/vision>
OUR VISION

AIM is a servant organisation whose vision is to: plant the Gospel of God's grace in remote as well as rural and urban centres; partner in ministry within Aboriginal communities and with Aboriginal believers; participate within churches with an Indigenous Australian demographic in cross-cultural co-operation.

As opportunity or need arises, holistic ministry programs in education, training, community development, relief or care may be supported to this end. We are privileged to take part in the laying of a firm foundation for a sound Indigenous Church for God's glory.

HOW?

Full time AIM workers promote this end in several ways: Teaching a clear redemptive Gospel centred upon Jesus Christ; Partnering in the equipping and support of Indigenous leaders as they serve their people; Encouraging the 'gracious application of a practical Christianity' in local churches; Promoting the development of good living skills, better health and education; Cultivating personal strategies to cope with life's challenges and temptation; Emphasizing the believer's uncondemned standing before God as the basis for mutual forgiveness and interpersonal reconciliation within family and community.

AIM also places appropriately gifted TEAM Partners [Tentmakers Encouraging Aboriginal Ministry] to undertake paid secular work within cities, towns and Aboriginal communities with the mission of encouraging and supporting local Christian leaders and workers in their witness and worship.

AIM workers are dependant on the prayerful and financial support of the broader Christian community for the necessary resources to help them carry on their local ministries.

July birthdays: Wendy G 15th.

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

Spurgeon on resting in the word of God

... Many among us are perpetually seeking to reconcile truths which probably never can be reconciled except in the divine mind. I thank God that I believe many things which I do not even wish to understand. I am weary and sick of arguing, and understanding, and misunderstanding. I find it true rest and joy, like a little child, to believe what God has revealed, and to let others do the puzzling and the reasoning. If I could comprehend the whole of revelation I could scarcely believe it to be divine; but inasmuch as many of its doctrines are too deep for me, and the whole scheme is too vast to be reduced to a system, I thank and bless God that he has deigned to display before me a revelation far exceeding my poor limited abilities. I believe that every man who has Jesus, has him as a matter of his own choice; it is true it is caused by grace, but it is there — it is there. Ask any man whether he is a Christian against his will, and he will tell you certainly not, for he loves the Lord, and delights in his law after the inward. Thy people are not led unwillingly to thee in chains, O Jesus, but thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power. We willingly choose Christ, because he has from of old chosen us.

[Charles Spurgeon, from the sermon, “Messengers Wanted”, Isaiah 6:8.]

Friday July 17th — Prayer for Israel at Katoomba Baptist Church

“I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘This is My people’; and each one will say, ‘The Lord is my God.’” [Zechariah 13:9]

Our brother, Ron Hansen

Ron recently passed into glory. Please pray for Judith, for all the Hansen family. There is sadness and joy at such times: sadness for the absence of the beloved; joy for the hope we have in the Lord Jesus Christ — that He will lose none that God the Father has given Him and raise “him up at the last day” [John 6:39-40]. May we be comforted by the knowledge that Ron is now with his Saviour, seeing His glory, in the company of all the redeemed. May we rejoice for Ron's life on earth was a faithful testimony and witness to his Saviour. A Godly husband, father, brother in Christ. A warm, humble man with a quiet strength. Gifted with spiritual insight and counsel. And an unforgettable rich, deep voice: a blessing always to hear Ron sing hymns or read the scriptures. Let's pray that Ron has heard, “Well done, good and faithful servant... Enter into the joy of your lord” [Mt. 25:23].

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).

Jesus said to them, “But who do you say that I, the Son of Man, am?” Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.” [Mt. 16:15-17]

Katoomba Baptist Church Bulletin Online Extra

** Please note that to access websites referred to in the Bulletin, please copy and paste the link into the address bar of your web browser.**

A reminder that KBC now has a website <https://katoombabaptist.org.au>

A big thank you to the Thomas brothers, Daniel and Joshua, who have spent many, many hours developing the church's website. It is very professionally done, with a clearly set out statement of our beliefs, and with a mass of well-chosen resources, sermons, Bulletins, and so on. It is also very easy to find your way around, even for the most timid of internet users.

A reminder too that if you want to continue to receive the church Bulletin by email then you need to register on the KBC website: <https://katoombabaptist.org.au/library/bulletins/>

Let's pray that with this new online presence that the Lord will draw people to Him through our church. In all our ministries, individually and as a fellowship, may the Lord be blessed and glory be to Him.

Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT website

In response to the Covid-19 crisis, the Baptist Union has put together a very helpful page on their website which is an excellent guide for local churches and their fellowships:
<https://nswactbaptists.org.au/covid19/>

Plus, there is a national call to daily prayer at 7pm to seek the Lord about the crisis:
<https://www.baptist.org.au/covid-19-national-call-to-prayer/>

And there is also the previous disaster which is still affecting many people:
Bushfire Relief and Recovery Campaign
<https://nswactbaptists.org.au/bushfire-relief-and-recovery/>

And, finally, you can contact the Baptist Union website and request to be added to the prayer mailing list.

Recommended Resources for Covid-19 information

Please refer to the following websites for official information and guidelines:

NSW Ministry of Health:

- COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Homepage
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>
- COVID-19 – Frequently Asked Questions
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/alerts/Pages/coronavirus-faqs.aspx>

Australian Government Department of Health:

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) Health Alert
<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert#how-to-protect-yourself-and-others>
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resources
<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-resources>

World Health Organisation:

- Q&A on Coronaviruses (COVID-19)
<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>
- Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) – Advise for the Public
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

John Hopkins University, USA:

- Coronavirus COVID-19 Global Database
<https://gisanddata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>

[Thank you Daniel for preparing this information]

The Priestly Blessing [Numbers 6:22-26]

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them:
"The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.'"

A Poem by Jemima Woolley

"Foundation"

*I know my foundations
Are based on the truth,
For the Bible is clear,
Don't sneer at my youth.*

*Clear thought and intention,
Of nature and mind
Are set out in Scripture,
We find them in time.*

*Each learn at their own pace,
Some quickly or slow,
For God has great wisdom,
In all that He shows.*

*Don't hurry or hesitate
When lessons approach,
Nor pity another,
Or sneer at their hope.*

*Our place is to nurture,
To heal and help,
For that is what Truth does —
Do we do it well?*

Soli Deo Gloria!

Jonathan Edwards

That same year (1741), Edwards was invited to preach at Enfield, Connecticut, and on July 8, he preached "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," perhaps the most famous sermon ever preached in America.

The text was Deuteronomy 32:25: "Their foot shall slide in due time." There is no question that Edwards had one purpose in mind: to shake the people out of their religious complacency and into the saving arms of the Lord. Edwards was always quiet in his delivery; he read from a manuscript and rarely looked at the people. He did not pound the pulpit or shout. He simply opened up the Scriptures and warned lost sinners to flee from the wrath to come.

The Spirit of God broke into the meeting, and many people came under conviction. Some cried out in fear. A minister sitting on the platform pulled at the preacher's coattails and said, "Mr. Edwards! Mr. Edwards! Is not God also a God of mercy!" Edwards had to stop preaching and wait for the congregation to become quiet. He concluded the sermon, led in prayer, and closed the meeting. Those who remained afterward to talk to the preacher were not necessarily upset or afraid. In fact, people were impressed with the cheerfulness and pleasantness of the expressions on others' faces.

Concerned with the salvation of the lost, Jonathan Edwards could not continue to live with the compromising situation that he had inherited at Northampton [Edwards pastored the Congregational Church at Northampton, Massachusetts]. In 1748 he informed the church that he would receive as new members persons who had not given evidence of salvation, nor would he permit unconverted people to come to the Lord's table. Even

though ministers in that day had far more authority and respect than they do today, this step was daring and was violently opposed by most of the other church leaders.

There followed nearly two years of debate and discussion, and the result was the dismissal of the pastor. Edwards preached his farewell sermon on July 1, 1750, a pastoral message that showed no animosity or bitterness, although certainly the preacher was a man with a broken heart. His text was 2 Corinthians 1:14, and his emphasis was on what would happen when ministers meet their congregations at the future judgment.

History has proven that Edwards was right and his congregation wrong. The colonial churches [of America] that rejected the working of God and refused to examine people as to their spiritual experience eventually turned from the faith and became liberal. The churches that followed Whitefield and Edwards continued to win the lost, send out missionaries, and train ministers who were true to the faith. An unconverted ministry and an unconverted membership are the devil's chief weapons in opposing the work of God.

Jonathan Edwards moved his wife and large family to Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where he ministered as a missionary to the Indians. His income was greatly reduced, of course, and yet God provided all their needs. Freed from pastoral duties and church problems, Edwards now had more time to study and write; during those Stockbridge years (1751-58) he wrote several of his most important works, some of which were published after his death. In 1757 he was named president of Princeton College, an office that his son-in-law Aaron Burr later held. He took office in 1758 when a smallpox epidemic was invading the area; he caught the infection through an inoculation that backfired, and on March 22 he died.

We have had more than two hundred years to evaluate the life and ministry of Jonathan Edwards. He was perhaps the greatest thinker that America has ever produced, and yet he had the heart of a child. He was a great theologian, and yet his books and sermons touch life and reach into the heart. He was a rare blend of biblical scholar and revivalist. He had a longing to see people know God personally, but he refused to accommodate his theology just to get results. He was also a man concerned about missions. Even the Encyclopaedia Britannica admits, "By his writings and example, he gave impetus to the infant evangelical missionary movement."

Edwards was not afraid to give his people solid doctrine. His Resolution 28 reads: "Resolved to study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly, and frequently, so that I may find, and plainly perceive myself to grow in the knowledge of the same." Some preachers today seem to have time for everything else but Bible study and the preparation of spiritual nourishment for their people. It is easy to borrow a sermon from a book or listen to a recording of another preacher's message.

Edwards used imagination in his preaching. Like every good teacher and preacher, he turned the ear into an eye and helped people to see spiritual truth. He knew that the mind is not a debating chamber — it is a picture gallery.

He was a courageous man who held to his biblical convictions even though they cost him his church and the loss of many friends. He stood with George Whitefield when many were opposing him. Edwards encouraged spiritual awakening even though he knew there would be excesses and abuses. He would have enjoyed Billy Sunday's reply to the critic who said that revivals did not last: "Neither does a bath," said Sunday, "but it's good to have one once in a while!" Edwards preached for decisions in an era when ministers were not supposed to disturb the congregation.

... Our nation is desperately in need of spiritual awakening. But our emphasis on evangelism apart from doctrine will certainly not do it. The Great Awakening was the result of solid doctrinal preaching that addressed itself to both the heart and the mind. It was preaching that dared to expose sin in the church. And God used it to sweep thousands into his family.

Perhaps it is time that we dug again these old wells and learned why their waters flowed with life so fruitfully and so bountifully.

[Sourced from Warren W. Wiersbe, *50 People Every Christian Should Know: learning from the spiritual giants of the faith*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Books, 2017, pp. 34-7]

"Sinners in the hands of an Angry God"

The full text of the sermon by Jonathan Edwards is available at:

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1053&context=etas>

From the Australian Indigenous Ministries website:

"Road to Dialysis" by Miriam Charlie

The road to dialysis is one that leads us away from our home, our country, family, friends, and church. It can be a very sad and lonely road.

Some of us get on this road because of our choices. That's my story anyway. I remember the nurses and doctors telling me over many years about what I should eat and not eat and drink, telling me I should get more exercise and look after myself when I got diabetes. I didn't listen to them. They tried to tell us about not having scabies and not letting sores get infected. I heard these stories and read the papers, but I didn't take notice. I just kept going my own way and doing what I wanted to do, eating and drinking what I wanted. I didn't really look after myself properly like they tried to help me to do.

And now, I've had to take that road to dialysis. It has taken me away from my family, church and country of Borroloola and I now live in Darwin. It was very sad not to be with my family at Christmas time, and to know I will miss out on a lot of things. I think about when the bush tucker will be ready and I can't go out hunting for it or enjoy fresh fish, turtle or kangaroo when family bring it back from hunting. I can go home sometimes, but it is hard to fit in a visit and not miss my treatments which I have to have 3 times a week. Borroloola is over 900 kms from Darwin mind you.

But as a Christian, I am trying to look on the bright side. I do have some family and friends here in Darwin. It is good to have fellowship with my Christian friends. Some people from home are on dialysis like me, so I try to encourage them and the other patients.

Lots of people are sent into Darwin hospital from Borroloola for medical reasons. It is good now because I can go visit them myself and talk to them about Lord Jesus, pray for them, and give them Christian things to read. I used to always ring Rhonda (Coats) and Simon (McKee) or Alan (Rogers with SIL) to do that but I can serve my Lord by doing this myself now. That part is really good.

If there were renal nurses willing and available, I and many others could return home and do dialysis there. They would be a great job for Christians to do! They could also give us Christians encouragement as we lead our churches and do God's work in and around our communities too.

Please pray for all us dialysis patients who have had to leave home and now live in places like Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek or Alice Springs in the Territory. Pray that we will keep going strong for Lord Jesus and find ways to work for Him where we are. Pray that I can talk a really good way to family and friends to take notice to look after themselves properly. I don't want them to end up on the road to dialysis too.

**[Sourced from Australian Indigenous Ministries,
<https://australianindigenousministries.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Mar-May-2020-Australian-Indigenous-Ministries-1.pdf>, viewed 24/6/20]**

“World Gone Crazy: A Controlled Demolition” by Michael Woolley

*** Please note that to access websites please copy and paste the link into the address bar of your web browser.***

Is there an increase of deliberate intention to undermine/[destroy the history](https://www.zerohedge.com/political/when-everyone-kneels-who-will-stand-western-history-and-culture) (<https://www.zerohedge.com/political/when-everyone-kneels-who-will-stand-western-history-and-culture>)

and [the Judeo-Christian Values and Culture](https://www.zerohedge.com/political/conservative-journalist-jack-posobiec-assaulted-dc-antifa) (<https://www.zerohedge.com/political/conservative-journalist-jack-posobiec-assaulted-dc-antifa>) of The West, that has permitted prosperity over the last four centuries? There are seemingly forces of [Lawlessness](https://www.zerohedge.com/political/nyc-sees-400-jump-shootings-week-nypd-disbanded-undercover-unit) (<https://www.zerohedge.com/political/nyc-sees-400-jump-shootings-week-nypd-disbanded-undercover-unit>)

and [wickedness](https://jonathanturley.org/2020/06/24/wheres-the-police-when-you-need-them-d-c-delegate-asks-the-right-question-after-bizarre-incident-near-white-house/) (<https://jonathanturley.org/2020/06/24/wheres-the-police-when-you-need-them-d-c-delegate-asks-the-right-question-after-bizarre-incident-near-white-house/>)

who, repressed in the past (<https://www.zerohedge.com/political/brief-history-antifa-part-i>), are now making a concerted effort

to overturn/silence Christian values (<https://www.zerohedge.com/political/gab-ceo-warns-visa-helping-bring-chinas-social-credit-score-america>) - and society-as-we-knew-it.

But the heart of man is deceitful, above all things (Jer. 17:9-10). We fool ourselves

(<https://brucewilds.blogspot.com/2020/06/starry-starry-night-ode-to-idealist-we.html>) ...and we fool others - but we cannot fool God.

From Wealth (<https://justthenews.com/accountability/russia-and-ukraine-scandals/ukraine-official-implicated-6-million-burisma-bribe>), to Status,

to the UN and the Environment (<https://www.zerohedge.com/geopolitical/how-we-arrived-globalist-calls-great-reset>),

to Power (<https://www.armstrongeconomics.com/world-news/corruption/faucis-wife-control-approval-of-gates-vaccines/>),

to Race, and Religion - there are shibboleths,

narratives (<https://www.zerohedge.com/political/disturbing-parallel-hiv-covid-19-can-cause-depletion-important-immune-cells-ny-times>)

and mantra's that must not be challenged (<https://www.zerohedge.com/political/canadian-college-exec-apologizes-resigns-after-liking-conservative-tweets>)...

...or criticized (<https://taibbi.substack.com/p/the-news-media-is-destroying-itself>) ...in public.

These are but man-made idols (<https://www.chesterton.org/ceases-to-worship/>).

The media promotes them, society endorses them - and **the church has silently acquiesced and approved them.**

They all alike seek to frighten the Christian into acceding that majority opinion must be accepted and approved,

supported and endorsed.

But who speaks for God (Job 32:1-20) - when His reputation and His glory (Isaiah 45:5-7) are at stake?

These things are not the true-and living God.

They are fakes, holograms, deceits - merely parts of His creation (that He rules over) - and hollow, when held up to critical analysis.

To every their argument and defence the church is equipped (2 Corinthians 10:3-5) with divine weapons to demolish the pretence and falsity these beliefs and assumptions assert.

Truth!

God's intention is that all thought - and every argument and 'pretension' that sets itself up 'against the knowledge of God' ...be torn down.

Not the statues (<https://justthenews.com/nation/culture/bet-founder-robert-johnson-says-black-people-laugh-white-people-toppling-statues>).

All the wrong-headed thinking, all the Humanist Post-Modern philosophy, all that is opposed to us explaining the Gospel clearly and simply ...needs demolishing.

But has it? Has the church fulfilled her divinely-appointed role of being salt and light to an unbelieving and morally necrotic society?

It has failed miserably in addressing those issues that would fortify those of weak faith, of encouraging the righteous - or of calling for repentance.

The rank-and-file lay-people - you and I - are the ones that need to pick up this mantle. We should attend to this weekly (Hebrews 10:24-25).

We need to build relationships so that others are willing to openly discuss their ideas - and to engage the media and our society when it is clearly and Godlessly wrong.

Wrong about everything that worships or gives honour to anything other than God ...and His Christ.

We need to challenge and demolish the thinking that sets itself up to deny that God Hath Spoken, showing that He has revealing Himself and that He can be known.

If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you always got.

The times, they are a'changing - and these are the signs of the times... (2Tim 3)

...but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand. Daniel 12:10

From GotQuestions.org website

Question: "What does it mean to be saved by grace?"

Answer: Amazing grace—how sweet the sound—

That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost but now am found,

Was blind but now I see.

The words of this famous hymn by John Newton seem to resonate with people of all theological persuasions: it is performed in churches of all kinds, from evangelical Christian, to Roman Catholic, to mainline liberal, to Mormon. It has been recorded by countless artists from Johnny Cash and Elvis Presley, to the Three Tenors, to Rascal Flatts and Alan Jackson. The concept of (or at least the word) grace is firmly planted in our culture.

The concept of [grace](#) as found in the Bible is multifaceted, but it can be summed up in the definition "undeserved favour." The Bible says that we are saved by grace. The grace of God is expressed by God's forgiveness of our sins, and His blessings to us include peace and fulfilment in this life and, in the life to come, unencumbered fellowship with Him for all eternity. Just as the song "Amazing Grace" has gained almost universal acceptance, it is difficult to find any religious expression with roots in Christianity that does not extoll the virtues of grace. No one with even minimal exposure to Christianity would be so crass as to claim that he has lived a life of such sterling character that God owes him eternal life. The vast majority will admit that they have shortcomings and are in need of God's grace in some form.

However, there is much misunderstanding about being saved by grace. A great many who call themselves Christians assume that the grace of God has established a system whereby the sinner can mitigate his deserved punishment by his own efforts. For some this may be a formal system of [sacraments](#) that infuse the soul with the grace of God. For others the system is less formal but still includes various religious activities, such as church attendance, baptism, contributing to the offering, and doing good deeds. While most agree that "nobody's perfect," many say that God in His "grace" will overlook our sins if He sees that we have made a genuine effort to do the right thing, mend our ways, and avail ourselves of the help He offers through the church—if He sees that the trajectory of our lives is headed in the right direction, then in His "grace" He will forgive our sins and grant us eternal life. In this view of "grace," the sinner does not earn eternal life in an absolute sense, but his penitent response and genuine effort does trigger a gracious response from the Father. This belief, although widespread, contradicts the true meaning of grace ("unmerited favour").

This example may help illustrate the above view of grace: a teenager works hard all summer to save money to buy a car. He works a regular job and does yard work and odd jobs on the side. He saves his money and does not spend it frivolously. Nevertheless, at the end of the summer, he simply does not have enough money to buy a car that will meet his needs. His father, seeing his diligence and frugality, graciously steps in and not only makes up the difference

but also adds more money to the car fund so that his son can buy a car that is better than he thought he could ever afford. The son's best effort was not good enough, but the father's grace makes up the difference. No one would claim that the father was obligated to make up the difference, so, when he does, it is an act of grace. If the son had been fired from his job for showing up late, had lazed around at the pool every day instead of working, or had spent what money he had on fast food and video games, then the father would not have stepped in to make up the difference. It would be incorrect to say that the son "earned" the car, for he did not, but his effort did trigger a gracious response from his father.

According to the Bible, is this really grace? The answer is NO! Grace is undeserved favour; it is God's blessing on the unworthy. In the example above, the father bestowed his favour because he felt his son's efforts should be rewarded—the father's gift was based on a genuine effort by the son and was therefore not true grace. Jesus illustrated true grace with the [story](#) of a father who received his runaway son with celebratory joy—a totally unworthy individual who brought nothing to his father except dishonour and shame was lavished with undeserved blessings ([Luke 15:11–24](#)).

We are saved by grace, not by a mixture of God's grace and our meritorious works. According to Scripture, we can do nothing to earn salvation, nor are our best efforts good enough to elicit a gracious response from God so that He will make up the difference. All of our righteous deeds are as filthy rags ([Isaiah 64:6](#)). Even considering our best efforts, we have fallen short of God's standard of righteousness ([Romans 3:23](#)), and we deserve death ([Romans 6:23](#)). We are not commanded to "do our best" for God but to love Him perfectly and completely ([Matthew 22:37](#)). We fail in that. The command is not to "try" to love our neighbours but to actually succeed in loving our neighbours as we love ourselves ([Matthew 22:39](#)). In spite of our "best efforts," we fail—and who can honestly claim they gave it their "best effort" anyway?

People will often try to comfort those who realize their shortcomings by saying something like, "Don't be afraid—God knows your heart," as if that should be a comfort. If God knows our hearts, we are doomed indeed—there is no place left to hide! Our only hope is to place our faith in Jesus Christ who lived a perfect life, died on the cross to pay for our sins, and rose again. Our sin is imputed to Him, and His righteousness is [imputed](#) to us when we trust Him ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#)). We are justified not by our works ([Romans 3:20](#)) but by Jesus' resurrection ([Romans 4:25](#)). Faith itself is not a "good work" that causes God to take notice of us. [Faith](#) is repenting of our sin, admitting that we are hopelessly and helplessly lost and unable to do anything to gain God's favour, then simply accepting the salvation that He offers freely.

We are saved by grace; the work is God's, not ours. "Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness" ([Romans 4:4–5](#)). Here we see two great truths. First, God justifies the ungodly—not people who have done their best and somehow elicited a gracious response from God. God justifies those who do not deserve it. Second, God justifies people who receive [salvation by faith](#)—not people who give it their best effort. If they are justified in any part based on what they do, they are receiving wages, not a gift. If grace is based on works to any degree, then it is not grace ([Romans 11:6](#)).

We are saved by grace from beginning to end. Once a person has come to faith in Christ, he will undoubtedly realize that the only reason he was able to have faith is that God was drawing him even before he knew it (see [John 6:44](#)). Left to himself, the sinner would have continued to rebel and flee from God. Even before we believe, the very desire to come to God is God's grace at work to save us. "Salvation belongs to the LORD" ([Psalm 3:8, ESV](#); cf. [Revelation 7:10](#)).

Salvation by grace means that, from first to last, it is undeserved. Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith ([Hebrews 12:2](#)). Grace is not God doing 95 or even 99.9 per cent, with us making up the difference. Grace is God doing 100 per cent and our humble acceptance of it, recognizing that we are unworthy and have nothing to contribute.

Could my tears forever flow,
Could my zeal no languor know,
These for sin could not atone—
Thou must save, and Thou alone:
In my hand no price I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling.
(Augustus Toplady)

George Whitefield — some quotes

“We can preach the Gospel of Christ no further than we have experienced the power of it in our own hearts.”

“When you hear of a notorious sinner, instead of thinking you do well to be angry, beg of Jesus Christ to convert, and make him a monument of His free grace.”

“True conversion means turning not only from sin but also from depending on self-made righteousness. Those who trust in their own righteousness for conversion hide behind their own good works. This is the reason that self-righteous people are so angry with gospel preachers, because the gospel does not spare those who will not submit to the righteousness of Jesus Christ!”

“True repentance will entirely change you; the bias of your souls will be changed, then you will delight in God, in Christ, in His Law, and in His people.”

“If we are not inwardly wrought upon, and changed by the powerful operations of the Holy Spirit, and our moral actions proceed from a principle of a new nature, however we may call ourselves Christians, we shall be found naked at the great day.”

“Believers keep up and maintain their walk with God by secret prayer. The spirit of grace is always accompanied with the spirit of supplication. It is the very breath of the new creature, the fan of the divine life, whereby the spark of holy fire, kindled in the soul by God, is not only kept in, but raised into a flame.”

“I was honoured today with having a few stones, dirt, rotten eggs, and pieces of dead cat thrown at me.”

“The Luther Family and the Reformation of Marriage” by Jeff Robinson [From The Gospel Coalition website]

The five guests who attended the wedding in a small house didn't know that it would shake the world.

On the evening of June 13, 1525 in Wittenburg, Katharina von Bora became Katharina Luther, wife of Martin Luther. That evening, the Protestant Reformation bore one of its sweetest—and most underappreciated—fruits: the transformation of marriage and family.

It was a seismic event precisely because it rescued marriage.

Marriage had fallen on hard times during the medieval age, particularly within Christendom. Advice given to Christian men ran along the lines of “Don't marry; serve God.” The church had dug a profound fault line between the sacred and the secular.

But the union of Martin and Katie Luther declared that Scripture knows no such dichotomy. Just as the Reformation didn't create the gospel (it simply brought it out of eclipse), the Reformation didn't alter marriage; it merely went back to the Bible.

It Happened—Barely

As Michelle DeRusha shows in [Katharina and Martin Luther: The Radical Marriage of a Runaway Nun and a Renegade Monk](#), it nearly didn't happen. Luther wasn't particularly drawn to Katie, and feared he'd soon be a martyr for the Reformation cause, thereby leaving behind a new wife. But “to spite the Pope and the Devil,” Luther wed Katie, entering “marriage as a [school of character](#).”

Luther eventually fell in love with his bride, and they had six children together. The Luther home was, to say the least, lively—a joyful reality that DeRusha demonstrates well.

Luther's story is well known. He was an Augustinian monk who challenged the Roman Catholic Church and papal authority by hammering 95 arguments to the Castle Church door in Wittenberg, an act that unleashed a tsunami within Christendom. He was the bold figure who stood before the imperial diet at Worms in 1521, refusing to recant his writings or stop defending the pure, biblical gospel.

He helped rebuild the church's foundation—[justification by faith](#). He boldly reasserted the authority of the Bible and gave Germany God's Word in her vernacular. Luther was a brassy man, with staggering strengths and [baffling weaknesses](#), but he was a gift to the church. DeRusha retells his story in lively prose.

But Katharina and Martin also tells a story that's not as familiar to us—a thrilling tale of a nun who escaped from her convent under cloak of darkness to join the burgeoning Reformation in Wittenberg. DeRusha brings Katie Luther to life and paints her in stark hues, telling us about her daring escape from a convent life she never chose, her

rigorous work in the home, her deep concern for Luther during his dangerous travels, and her tenacious battle to provide financially for the family following his death. DeRusha captures the drama of Katie's marriage and day-to-day life.

Underappreciated Jewels

Why is the Luthers' marriage so important for Christians nearly 500 years later? For one, it transformed marriage in ways we take for granted. It also provides us with an important model for marriage and family. Here are three ways it has shaped our understanding:

1. Marriage done God's way is a pathway to abundant joy.

DeRusha characterizes the Luther home as one of intensity and frenetic work, balanced by raucous humour and abundant energy. Katharina and Martin were doting parents to their six children, and Martin was by no means an absentee father. In *The Estate of Marriage*, Luther spoke of [changing diapers](#) with customary wit: "God, with all his angels and creatures, is smiling—not because that father is washing diapers, but because he is doing so in Christian faith."

In contemporary society, the first attraction between a man and woman is often physical, and the relationship is expected to germinate from there. That's not necessarily wrong, but Martin and Katie didn't begin that way. Luther failed to see physical beauty in his wife-to-be at first, but he married her anyway because of her godliness. Their marriage was built on a foundation of growth in holiness, though Luther did correct the church's notion that sex within marriage is intended only for conception. Sex between husband and wife glorifies God when seen as a gift intended for pleasure.

Martin and Katie's marriage illustrates God's infinite wisdom in uniting one man to one woman for one lifetime.

2. The home is a little church and parenting is a holy vocation.

The Luthers didn't think children were "best seen and not heard." The household, as Luther expressed it, is to operate as "an earthly kingdom" where parents train children in the commandments of God. The fundamental purpose of marriage is to raise godly offspring. Wrote a single Luther in 1522:

The greatest good in married life, that which makes all suffering and labour worthwhile, is that God grants offspring and commands that they be brought up to worship and serve him.

As DeRusha shows, Luther believed the parent should be apostle, bishop, and priest to his children; he considered no nobler earthly authority than that of parents over children. He developed a robust vision for Christian training in the household, calling parents to disciple their children. The Puritans in England and America cultivated this vision and brought it to full flower in the form of consistent family worship and discipleship—but Martin and Katie sowed the seeds.

Many spiritual saplings were planted in the Luther home, but all were watered by a deep well of exuberance. DeRusha writes:

Luther and Katharina had fun with their kids and enjoyed spending time with them. They delighted in their children's antics and their innocent comments and expressions. Love and joy were obviously abundant in the Luther household.

3. A faithful [Proverbs 31](#) woman is not a passive, demurring wife.

DeRusha's Katie is a full-throated woman of her times. Martin firmly believed in traditional complementary roles for men and women, of which his home was a fulsome model. Katharina was in every way a [Proverbs 31](#) woman, tender as silk when husband and children needed encouragement and tough as rawhide when both got out of line.

Childbearing in the 16th century was a frightening enterprise—children died in infancy as often as they lived to adulthood, and delivering mothers suffered terribly and frequently died. Yet Katie gave birth to six children without any extraordinary challenges. She planted and harvested a large garden annually, and tended and even butchered the family's livestock. And she helped Martin walk the line, matching him quip-for-quip. No doubt Luther wasn't an easy man to live with, but Katie was more than up to the task.

As DeRusha notes, a 1530s painting of the Luther family speaks volumes about the arrangements at home and beyond:

Katharina is not depicted in the background, sewing or knitting, but is seated front and centre in the foreground. And while her maternal qualities are highlighted, with one child on her lap and another standing nearby, she also appears to be discussing or perhaps even arguing a point with her husband. Katharina is speaking, and Luther is listening. . . . Katharina was not a mere bystander; she was an engaged and devoted partner to Luther and an active participant in the Reformation.

I'm Grateful

As with all good marriages, the Luthers' was filled with both difficulties and delights. They buried two daughters—Elizabeth at eight months and Magdalena at 13. Katie was often anxiety-ridden thinking the Reformation's enemies might eliminate her husband. Along with their six children, their home was perennially filled with guests, from Martin's students to famous friends such as Philip Melancthon.

Katie finally bade her love goodbye on February 18, 1546. Perhaps Luther's wry but earnest affirmation of marriage fitly summarizes what this particular union did for the institution in general:

Ah, dear God, marriage is not a thing of nature but a gift of God—the sweetest, the dearest, and the purest life above all celibacy and singleness, when it turns out well, though the very devil if it does not. . . . If then these three remain—fidelity and faith, children and progeny, and the sacrament—it is to be considered to be a wholly divine and blessed estate. . . . One should not regard any estate as better in the sight of God than the estate of marriage.

I'm a pastor. And thanks largely to the Luthers and the reformation of marriage, I'm a husband and a father. I'm grateful for the profound gift of this theology, brought out of eclipse 500 years ago.

[Sourced from The Gospel Coalition, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/katharina-and-martin-luther-radical-marriage>, viewed 29/6/20]

YouTube videos — musical blessings!

While wandering around cyberspace one night I came across (was led to?) some wonderful videos made by Christians coming together in different countries to send forth a blessing across the world via YouTube. Very uplifting to see so many brothers and sisters in Christ singing and worshipping the Lord, reaching out to the church and to all the nations.

The first was “The Irish Blessing”, a glorious rendition of “Be Thou My Vision” by my distant relatives which moved me to tears:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TascswZPj8U&t=2s>

And then, not to be outdone, there is our very own “The Blessing Australia”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00t7baaVSbE>

And lastly, what else but “The Blessing in Hebrew” — the Aaronic Blessing sung in Hebrew:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzqrWae5lK4>

But there are lots more versions from Christians from nations around the world. A rich blessing indeed! Praise God!

Job trusts in his Redeemer

[Job 19:23-27]

**“Oh, that my words were written!
Oh, that they were inscribed in a book!
That they were engraved on a rock
With an iron pen and lead, forever!
For I know that my Redeemer lives,
And He shall stand at last on the earth;
And after my skin is destroyed, this I know,
That in my flesh I shall see God,
Whom I shall see for myself,
And my eyes shall behold, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!”**
