

April 13, 2014

THE LOOKOUT®

www.lookoutmag.com

David Faust:
You Have the
Right to Give Up
Your Rights (p11) ✓

Jacqueline Holness:
Evaluating our
Spiritual Selfies (p14) ✓

Sam Stone:
The Third Day (p12) ✓

The Life of Christ

- ☉ Jesus' Storyline
- ☉ The Results of Jesus' Death
- ☉ The King of Kings Salvation Brings

The Growing Christian's Weekly Resource



My Favorite Parade

Do you enjoy parades? I don't consider myself a parade aficionado, but I do have one particular event that I annually watch on TV—the Rose Parade on New Year's Day.

What fascinates me about this California parade is the challenging requirement: every surface on each participating float has to be covered in living plants—flowers, grasses, seeds, etc. The television coverage shows the long process of volunteers gluing individual flower buds and other material onto the giant creations. It intrigues me to see how they make huge mosaics of color with a variety of vegetation.

Royalty

Today we annually recall another parade where plants were prominently featured. In fact, the plant itself gave Palm Sunday its nickname. Why was this public demonstration of branch-waving spectators so noteworthy?

At my home church, they often let the kids participate on Palm Sunday. They'd hand out branches to tiny hands, and kids got to wave them during "big church" (aka: the main worship service).

But I learned a new meaning about the branches that gave Palm Sunday a different perspective. During Jesus' time, waving palms was a declaration of a victorious king. Waving branches at a Jewish teacher while the Israelites were being ruled by the Romans was no small action. These people were declaring their allegiance to Jesus as their true leader, which would be seen as rebellion to the Roman government. Surely the branches were not handed out to small children that day—rather, defiant adults offered the Messiah this symbol of their loyalty.

Waving branches was no small action.

Humility

Juxtapose the branches proclaiming kingship and victory with the image of Jesus riding on a humble animal. He was not on a majestic steed but, instead, a lowly donkey—and not even a full-grown one. Where was the royal majesty?

His disciples may have wondered the same thing. Here was their chance to exalt their teacher among the crowds, but this likely wasn't what they imagined. John 12:16 tells us that later the disciples realized they had been helping Jesus participate in fulfilling prophecy:

"See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9).

Why was this prophecy so specific about the foal of a donkey? Why did he have to appear victorious but lowly? Perhaps it symbolized that Jesus would rule, not in tyranny, but as a servant leader, as his entire life demonstrated. And in a few days, his death would be lowly and degrading and painful, but his resurrection would be victorious for us all.

Victory

Jesus will one day appear in a different parade, and the whole world will understand his power and victory:

"I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. . . . His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. . . . He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. . . . On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 19:11-16). ✓

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

One year (Includes Postage): \$45.00 (plus sales tax in FL and WA; \$14.00 postage / handling per year for Canadian subscriptions; \$17.50 for Mexico and all other foreign subscriptions). For Visa or MasterCard, mail your order to this address, or phone 800-543-1353. Please provide change of service information six to eight weeks in advance.

To order The Lookout for your church, class, or group, phone 800-543-1353. To one address, per copy:

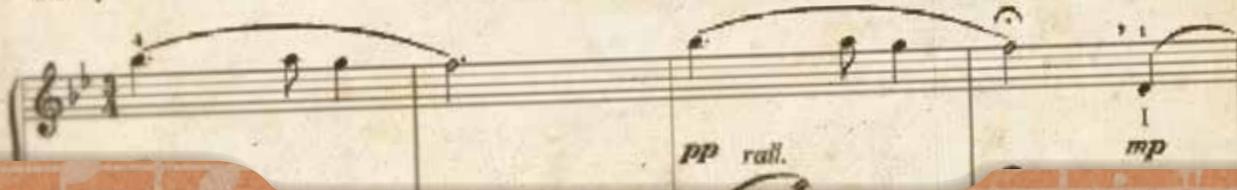
Qty.	Quarterly	Annually
1		\$45.00
2-34	\$5.99 ea.	\$21.99 ea.
35-49	\$5.74 ea.	\$20.99 ea.
50-99	\$5.49 ea.	\$19.99 ea.
100+	\$4.99 ea.	\$18.99 ea.

All prices include domestic postage. See Web site for quarterly Canadian and International postage charges.

The King of Kings Salvation Brings

By T. R. Robertson

Gently



*I wonder as I wander out under the sky,
How Jesus the Savior did come for to die.
For poor ornery people like you and like I.
I wonder as I wander out under the sky.*
(traditional Appalachian Christmas carol)

I sometimes wonder as I wander just what anguish Jesus went through as the final weeks and days of his life on earth came near. I've watched people struggle with the knowledge that their time in this life was short. But Jesus wasn't sick. The only terminal disease burdening him was the sinfulness of humankind and the death sentence we faced.

When someone dies young, no matter how noble the sacrifice, we talk about how a life was cut short, about the potential that will never be fulfilled, the accomplishments that remain unfinished.

Jesus' friends felt the same way in the hours surrounding his death. They had expected so much, had anticipated such greatness, only to watch his life be cut short. >>



» **Born that Man No More May Die**

Jesus himself, though, had no such regrets. He knew dying was the very purpose for his birth and for his life.

During the final week before his death, a group of curious Gentile proselytes approach Jesus, wanting to meet this up-and-coming prophet. Jesus, though, doesn't talk to them like a man building a movement, but like a martyr.

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds" (John 12:23, 24).

He confesses some uneasiness about the coming days, but he knows this has been the purpose of his life: "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say?

'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour" (John 12:27).

In his final days, Jesus steers the conversation back to his birth.

In Thy Dark Streets Shineth the Everlasting Light

As the hours and days crawl by in that final week, the crowds are drawn to him, expecting him to make his move, to stir them up toward some kind of action.

But instead he talks to them about the move *they* need to make, from a life stumbling in the darkness to walking in the light. "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness" (John 12:46).

He's echoing the prophecy of his second cousin, Zechariah: "The rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace" (Luke 1:78, 79).

He Rules the World with Truth and Grace

Later during Jesus' trial, Pilate is also curious about Jesus' true agenda and tries to elicit some sort of confession from him, only to find himself wading in some deep spiritual waters. Jesus says little but finally makes a clear statement about the reason he was born, one that Pilate finds incomprehensible.

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the

world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

"What is truth?" retorted Pilate" (John 18:36-38).

And God Sent Us Salvation that Blessed Christmas Morn

As Jesus talks to people during those final days, he continually steers the conversation back around to his birth, to the reasons why he came in the first place.

The angel had told Joseph, when the Holy Spirit had first planted the messianic seed in Mary's womb, "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Some 33 years later, Jesus affirms what the angel had foretold, telling the crowds, "I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12:47).

Even today, many people misunderstand Jesus' purpose in coming. His name has been used to justify inquisitions, rebellions, protests, and wars. And occasionally we remember to be about his business of salvation.

Gloria in Excelsis Deo

Jesus tries to get his disciples to understand these things too. Gathered together in the upper room for the Passover meal, he talks to them at length about what is going to happen over the next few hours and days. He could hardly speak more directly about this than what he says in John 16:28: "I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father."

After talking to the disciples, he prays to the Father: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you . . . I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began" (John 17:1, 4, 5).

He's not just talking about a choir of angels singing about his glory on the night of his birth. He, and the angels, are announcing something much greater: the day when God would glorify the Son by bringing him back from death and raising him to sit with the Father in glory in Heaven.

As the angels said, "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will

Jesus knew dying was the very purpose for his life.



John, at the beginning of his Gospel, spells it out: “No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known” (John 1:18).

Jesus talks about this relationship with the Father during his upper room prayer: “I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them” (John 17:26).

“Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”

With those words he unwraps the incredibly wonderful Christmas present he came to give us all. Not only did he come to be “God with us” for 33 years but to offer the indescribable gift of “God in us” for all who accept the offer.

And this is the ultimate gift that keeps on giving. The Immanuel purpose of Jesus’ birth and life, as well as his death and resurrection, continues in our daily lives. Through the Holy Spirit in his people, the Church, God is still with us.

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:20-23).

God is still revealing himself to the world at large, through the lives of each follower of Christ—in our unified efforts to shine his light, to live out his truth, and to hold his grace in our hands and offer it freely to everyone we encounter. ✱

T. R. Robertson is a freelance writer in Columbia, Missouri.

reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end” (Luke 1:32, 33).

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

The disciples were slow to understand. Only later, after his resurrection and ascension, did they put all the pieces together and comprehend what Jesus’ purpose had been among them.

Matthew explains, in his telling of the nativity story, “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ (which means ‘God with us’)” (Matthew 1:22, 23).

Christmas in April

Think about your favorite Christmas song lyric. How does it parallel, echo, or find fulfillment in the Easter story? How do the elements of both the Christmas and Easter stories manifest themselves in the work you see God doing in the world today?

Jesus' Storyline

When we purchase a highly anticipated novel, we would never read the introduction, skip to the end, and then claim to have thoroughly enjoyed the book. The story of Jesus is the same. As we consider Jesus' vast importance, most of us think immediately of his death and resurrection; and perhaps rightly so. Or at Christmas time we concentrate on his birth.

When we reduce Jesus' life to those bookend moments, we miss out on the lessons inherent in his magnificent storyline. It is a story of miracles and teachings—climaxes and resolutions—all given in the Gospels for a distinct purpose. These events crescendo to a climax of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, resolving with his ascension into Heaven.

What is it about the Lord's earthly ministry that brings meaning to our Christian walk? Though many lessons can be derived from Jesus' various teachings and tasks, we will consider three primary things he did: he mirrored the Father, he gave previews of the Father's kingdom, and he submitted to his Father.

Mirroring the Father

From the beginning of time, people have wondered what God is like. Their preconceived ideas led them to form gods to their preferences, resulting in deities such as those in the Roman pantheon, who often appeared as sinful as humans. Though our ideas of God may not stray quite that far, we still tend to desire control over our perception of him.

Jesus stated many times that he came to show us what the Father is like. During a conversation with his disciples, Jesus stated, "If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him" (John 14:7). Philip, who still didn't understand, asked Jesus to show them the Father, to which Jesus replied, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (v. 9).

Observing Jesus' behaviors, particularly his interactions with others, makes the invisible God visible. Christ showed compassion and mercy to those who were sick and needy. He cried with those who mourned the death of a loved one. At times he revealed righteous anger, such as when he drove the illicit moneychangers from the temple (Matthew 21:12).

Through his miracles Jesus mirrored the Father in powerful and distinct ways. He fed crowds of people on two separate occasions, demonstrating God's provision (Mark 6:34-44; 8:1-9). When he healed a lame man, he said, "Your sins are forgiven," showing God's desire to forgive us (Matthew 9:2). His miracles revealed character qualities of God in a way that balanced his love and generosity with his holiness and uncompromising nature toward sin.

Previews of the Father's Kingdom

Beyond reflecting God, many of Jesus' teachings and miracles gave previews of God's kingdom. It is a kingdom with Christ as monarch, which was seen in Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem where the crowd threw down palm branches and hailed him as king (John 12:12, 13).

Jesus gave multiple parables, particularly in Matthew 13, which gave insights into God's kingdom. For instance, he compared the kingdom to a mustard seed (vv. 31, 32), which was known to be immensely tiny but had the potential to grow into a large plant. This was followed up

Observing Jesus' behaviors makes the invisible God visible.



by a similar analogy using yeast (v. 33). A parable given elsewhere saw a master going away and leaving 10 talents to one servant, five to another, and one to a third. When the master returned, the first two servants doubled their investments, while the third had hidden his away and gained nothing (Matthew 25:14-30).

The implied lesson in these parables is if we invest in the kingdom there will be growth greater than we expected. Many spiritual investments we make now, insignificant though they may seem at the time, will bear great dividends in Heaven. Small works for the kingdom today will bear greater fruit in our lives, as well as the lives of others.

Jesus' kingdom previews were more than tactics to increase our anticipation of Heaven, though they certainly do that. It was obvious from his teachings that the kingdom was seen as more than merely a distant event, but rather something impacting us today. God's kingdom cuts into our drab existence, as we recognize we are its citizens. We can reap some benefits now as an advance on the full deposit we will one day inherit.

Just as Jesus mirrored the Father, we are to mirror Christ.

Submitting to the Father

Jesus' life can be summarized simply as submission. From his baptism and miracles to his parables, his life was one of total surrender to the Lord. This is seen in the fact that he was called the Son of God, for a son takes a position below that of a father. Even though Jesus was part of the Godhead, he took upon himself the role of Son. His life was spent serving his Father, culminating with his sacrifice on the cross.

The cross and his prior miracles and deeds were not only in service to the Father but to people as well. When the disciples became angry with James and John for desiring special places in the kingdom, Jesus responded, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:43-45). More than empty words, Jesus lived out this submission creed.

Copies of Christ

Jesus' life is significant beyond giving us hope for the afterlife; he teaches us how we are to live today. Just as Jesus mirrored the Father, we are to be the greatest mirrors of Christ we can be. We do this by imitating how Jesus engaged others, from the destitute to the religious ruler. By mirroring Jesus, we will be living as kingdom citizens, advancing God's kingdom and allowing it to break into our present situations. We will also be living in absolute surrender to the Father as Christ did.

From Jesus' life we learn, above all, the importance of reading Scripture and maintaining a strong prayer life. When tempted in the wilderness by Satan, Jesus was readily able to quote Scripture. We likewise should not only read the Bible, but study it and put it into our minds through memorization. Christ also took time out when he needed to talk alone to his heavenly Father. "Jesus *often* withdrew to lonely places and prayed" (Luke 5:16, emphasis mine). We must similarly go to the Lord in prayer *often*, not only when we need something from him.

To copy Christ is to live out a great storyline. As the story of Jesus is more than his miraculous birth and resurrection, we are more than our origins and our future eternal state. We can make an impact for Christ today by being part of his story here on earth. ✨

Javan Rowe is a freelance writer in Columbus, Ohio.





The Results of Jesus' Death

By Candy Arrington

Following his death, Jesus' followers huddled together behind locked doors, fearing what would happen next. They were confused, shocked, and grieving. In the midst of their heartache and fear, they couldn't fully comprehend the results of his death. Even though Jesus tried to prepare them, those who remained didn't understand the full extent of the changes his death brought to their lives and to the world.

Often we're resistant to change. We cling to the familiar, even if it limits us, because we know what to expect. Change equals uncertainty. But Jesus' death paved the way for a different kind of existence for all those who believe. Let's examine the changes his death makes in our lives:



We Are Forgiven of Our Sin

From the time Adam and Eve chose disobedience until Jesus' death on the cross, people had to offer sacrifices to atone for sin and to maintain a right standing with God. Each sin required a sacrifice. Jesus' death, his self-sacrifice, paid for our sins—past and future—once and for all. “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7, *New King James Version*). With our redemption came freedom and grace. Confession and repentance replaced endless sacrifices.

**“In Him
we have
redemption
through His
blood.”**

Because we have the gift of forgiveness for sins, we are admonished to also offer grace and forgiveness to those in our lives who sin against us. Although difficult to do, we have a biblical mandate to forgive others as an extension of the grace God bestows on us. “Make

allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others" (Colossians 3:13, *New Living Translation*).

We Are Freed from Legalism

Prior to Jesus' death, people were bound to the law, which was intricate and burdensome. Life was a series of hoop jumps and striving for religious perfection that no human could ever achieve. When Jesus died on the cross, the dividing wall between humanity and God crumbled, and the chasm between holy God and sinful people was spanned. "For the law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

But sometimes we forget the freedom we have in Christ and impose "laws" on ourselves and others that are unnecessary and contrary to the concept of grace. The church at Colosse struggled with this, and Paul addressed it in his letter to them: "You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as, 'Don't handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!?' Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them" (Colossians 2:20-22).

The attitudes and teachings of the world rub off on us, even when we make an effort not to conform to them. And often we buy into the idea that we have to constantly be doing something to earn forgiveness. But Paul reminds us that our righteousness comes through faith. "I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith" (Philippians 3:9). The heroes of the Bible were commended not for accomplishments, but for their faith.

When Jesus died on the cross, the dividing wall between humanity and God crumbled.

We Have Direct Access to the Father

Jesus' death made it possible for us to have a relationship with God. Before Jesus, priests were the only ones who could enter the holy of holies and live. But John 1:51 refers to Jesus as the stairway between Heaven and earth. Jesus' death for our sins restored the type of relationship God had with Adam and Eve in the garden, allowing us direct access to the Father.

"Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spirit. At that moment, the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom" (Matthew 27:50, 51).

Once the separation between people and God was bridged through Jesus, we gained the ability to come into God's presence any time, praise him, make our requests known to him, and have fellowship with him. But often we miss out on this privilege, dashing through life as a servant to the urgent and forgetting that God is ready and willing to help us with daily challenges, fears, and frustrations.

God desires intimate relationships with us. Yet sometimes we feel we have to reach some sort of spiritual perfection before we can approach him. Instead, he wants us to come to him with problems and concerns, with our praise and thanksgiving, and in acknowledgment of our sin. We miss out on wisdom, encouragement, and guidance when we exclude God from the details of our lives.

We Receive the Holy Spirit

Jesus promised the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, would come once he returned to his Father (John 16:7). His Spirit is that inner voice that guides, convicts, teaches, sustains, comforts, and reminds us we aren't abandoned to figure things out on our own. The Spirit is one of God's greatest gifts to us, providing power from Heaven (Luke 24:49).



We Gain Eternal Life

Have you ever received a wonderful gift, one you didn't request, expect, or deserve? Or perhaps someone offered to pay a debt you owed, one you knew you'd have to work for years to fulfill. Jesus is the ultimate gift. His sacrifice on the cross marked our sin debt "paid in full" and secured our future in Heaven.

For some, that is a difficult concept to grasp because they are unwilling to accept a reward they didn't earn. But Scripture records Jesus' promise: "I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins,

but they have already passed from death into life" (John 5:24). What an amazing promise! Our existence here on earth doesn't end with death. Our eternity in Heaven is secure because of God's great love for us in sending his Son, Jesus, to die for our sins (John 3:16).

No other death in history has had the impact of Jesus' death. Through his death he gave abundant life. *

Ruthanne N. Arrington (Candy) is a freelance writer from Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Our adoption gives us the right to approach our heavenly Father as we would an earthly father.

» Attuning ourselves to the Holy Spirit is like recharging our spiritual batteries, but often we don't tap into that power. We allow the noise of worldly expectations, selfishness, fears, and relationships to drown out the still, small voice within. And because the Holy Spirit doesn't shout, we often miss or ignore the guidance and peace the Spirit affords. Like trying to decipher a distant melody, we have to listen with spiritual ears and block out distractions.

We Are Adopted

Heritage is an important part of our existence. It lends a sense of belonging and connection. God graciously extends all the rights and privileges of sons and daughters to *all* of us when we believe and accept Jesus Christ. "God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure" (Ephesians 1:5).

Our adoption into the family of God gives us the right to approach our heavenly Father as we would an earthly father for advice, comfort, and support. Adoption also guarantees that we are joint heirs with Christ as we anticipate Heaven.

Living in Victory

If you're a follower of Jesus, the six results of Christ's death (listed in the article and listed below) are true in your life—no matter what. But your attitudes, actions, and beliefs can get in the way of these gifts fully coming to fruition in your life.

Which of these is most evident in your day-to-day life—in the way you relate to God, yourself, and others? Which is least evident? Repent and ask God to help you open yourself more fully to the results of Christ's victory in your life.

1. Forgiveness of sin
2. Freedom from legalism
3. Direct access to the Father
4. The Holy Spirit
5. Adoption
6. Eternal life



You Have the Right to Give Up Your Rights

1 CORINTHIANS 6

Common wisdom says the higher you climb on the organizational ladder, the more rights and privileges you enjoy. But according to Jesus, wise leaders do exactly the opposite. He insisted, “The greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves” (Luke 22:26). In Jesus’ leadership model, the boss doesn’t demand his rights; he gives them up for the sake of the cause. True leaders are servants, not prima donnas.

John Maxwell wrote, “Instead of pretending to be in control, leaders must model being under control.”

Permissible but not Beneficial

Self-centeredness bedeviled the Christians in Corinth. Jealousy and quarreling marred their fellowship. Brothers and sisters divided over loyalties to different leaders. Flagrant, unchecked sexual sin brought shame on the church. Believers sued each other over matters that shouldn’t have been decided in a secular court. Sloppy worshippers corrupted the Lord’s Supper and flaunted their spiritual gifts instead of using them humbly to build up the body.

Paul wrote the church a letter to correct these problems. In the heart of the letter he focused on sacrificial devotion to others and reminded his

friends that love “is not self-seeking” (1 Corinthians 13:5). Frankly, most of us are very self-seeking! We seek recognition. We seek comfort. We prefer to have our own way. We cling to our rights—even demand them. But just because we have the right to do something, that doesn’t

The pursuit of a higher calling requires us to let things go.

mean it’s best to do it. Some things are permissible but not advisable.

Paul quoted what apparently was a statement the Corinthians used to justify their misuse of freedom: “I have the right to do anything,’ you say.” The apostle pointed out, “But not everything is beneficial” (1 Corinthians 6:12).

The Creator endowed us with the right to life and liberty, but our ultimate purpose isn’t the pursuit of personal happiness; it’s the pursuit of God’s kingdom. In that pursuit Christ comes first, not our own desires. Paul had the right to receive pay for his work as a preacher, but when necessary he didn’t exercise that right (9:1-12). He willingly subjugated his personal and cultural preferences for the sake of the

gospel (vv. 19-23) and even gave up the right to eat or drink something he enjoyed if it created a stumbling block to others (10:23-33).

All-Powerful but Sacrificial

God’s divine abilities include the power of self-control. He rightfully could throw every rebel swiftly into Hell, but instead he patiently waits for sinners to repent (2 Peter 3:9). He could answer every prayer immediately, but often he waits a while before answering, allowing us to grow through the process. The same biblical chapter that says prayers are “powerful and effective” exhorts us to “be patient” like a farmer who waits patiently for rain to fall (James 5:7-16).

Jesus showed self-control in the wilderness when he refused to eat for 40 days. He could have called an army of angels to rescue him from the cross, but he chose not to exercise that right. Jesus demonstrated amazing restraint at his trial. Pilate probed, false accusations flew, nails pierced, darkness fell—but Christ stayed strong, surrendering body and soul to a higher purpose. “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us” (1 John 3:16).

The Lamb of God gave up his rights to accomplish something supremely right—to make us right with God. ✓

David Faust is president of Cincinnati Christian University, Cincinnati, Ohio, and past executive editor of *The Lookout*.

Use this guide to read through the Bible in 12 months. Follow David Faust’s comments on the highlighted text in every issue of *The Lookout*.

THELOOKOUT’s Bible Reading Plan for April 13, 2014

DAY 1 Mark 2:18–28
1 Corinthians 6:1–11
Psalm 78:1–39
Joshua 15–17

DAY 3 Mark 3:20–35
1 Corinthians 7:1–16
Psalm 79
Joshua 20, 21

DAY 5 Mark 4:21–41
1 Corinthians 8
Psalm 81
Joshua 24

DAY 2 Mark 3:1–19
1 Corinthians 6:12–20
Psalm 78:40–72
Joshua 18, 19

DAY 4 Mark 4:1–20
1 Corinthians 7:17–40
Psalm 80
Joshua 22, 23

DAY 6 Mark 5:1–20
1 Corinthians 9:1–12
Psalm 82
Judges 1–3

CONSIDER:

1. What does Philippians 2:5-11 say about Jesus’ willingness to give up his rights?
2. What rights and privileges have you surrendered lately as an act of love?



The Third Day

THE UNIFORM LESSON FOR APRIL 20

Hosea prophesied during the eighth century BC, speaking to the people in the Northern Kingdom—Israel. In today's text he calls them again to repentance, including words that remind us of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The passage from Luke provides many details about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, showing the events alluded to in Hosea's message.

Revived on the Third Day

Hosea 6:1-3

Hosea compared the sinful disobedience of Israel to the behavior of a prostitute (5:3, 4). He urged the people, "Let us return to the LORD." If they truly repented, there was hope for them yet. If not, the coming destruction by the Assyrians would bring them low (9:3). Change could come, however. The first day showed the nation dead; the second pictured the beginning of revival; and the third showed the nation returned to life. Hosea's words about the *third day* remind us of the resurrection of Jesus.

"Hosea assured his people that Yahweh would 'revive us' after two days," noted James E. Smith. "This is a Hebrew idiom to express 'after a short while.' The reference is to the moral and spiritual restoration of Israel. Ezekiel (37:1-19) used a similar figure." Although this may not be a direct allusion to the death of Jesus, he was the second Israel, as Hosea himself foreshadowed (Hosea 11:1).

Surprised on the Third Day

Luke 24:1-8

The first day of the week as the Jews count time is Sunday. Their "day" actually began at sundown the previous evening. Luke reported that *very early in the morning* several women went to the tomb where Jesus had been buried. John added that they left home "while it was still dark" (John 20:1). Mark noted that they bought spices after the Sabbath was over (Mark 16:1), besides those which they already had (Luke 23:56).

Joseph of Arimathea's tomb was something like a cave cut in the rock (Luke 23:53), not a hole dug in the ground. The stone that had been placed in front of the entrance had been *rolled away*. It is hard for us to imagine all the thoughts that raced through their minds at the sight. The body of Jesus was gone! They first thought someone had moved it (John 20:13-15).

Suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. As when others saw an angel in Bible times, the women were terrified. The angelic messengers told them, "He is not here; he has risen!" Lewis Foster wrote, "This was not an announcement based on wishful thinking or even introduced from deductions gained from circumstantial evidence. This was an announcement by one who knew that Jesus was no longer dead but alive." The angels reminded the women that Jesus had predicted this very event when he was with them up in Galilee (Luke 9:22; compare 24:46). *Then they remembered his words.*

Amazed on the Third Day

Luke 24:9-12

The women returned to the place where other disciples were gathered in Jerusalem. Some scholars suggest that they may have been at the house of Mary, John Mark's mother (Acts 12:12). Others guess it could have been in nearby Bethany at the home of Lazarus (John 12:1). The group included *the Eleven* (the original twelve disciples, less Judas who had committed suicide). The phrase *all the others* makes it clear that additional disciples were present, probably many of the 120 who were together on Pentecost (Acts 1:12-15; 2:1). While the women named in verses 10 and 11 were well-known to the disciples, even their testimony that Jesus was raised was not enough to convince them at first *because their words seemed to them like nonsense*.

Later when they saw Jesus firsthand, all of the apostles became witnesses to the resurrection. Seth Wilson wrote, "The testimony of Jesus' resurrection is the kind that all experience proves to be reliable—the kind that is acceptable to establish the truth in any court or in any matter of history." He noted that the witnesses are sufficient in number (more than 500 at one time [1 Corinthians 15:6]), competent (intelligent and mentally balanced), and honest.

After the women's report, Peter *got up and ran to the tomb*. He saw the interior of the tomb, with the linen cloths neatly folded, and wondered *what had happened*. When he saw Jesus face-to-face a short time later, he became convinced as well (Luke 24:33, 34). ✓

Sam E. Stone is the former editor of Christian Standard. He continues his writing and speaking ministry from his home in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Background Scripture:
Hosea 6:1-3; Luke 24:1-12

Printed Text:
Hosea 6:1-3; Luke 24:1-12

THE LESSON AND LIFE

By Keith Short



- 1 "Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.
- 2 After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.
- 3 Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth."
- 4 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.
- 5 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb,
- 6 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.
- 7 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.
- 8 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?"
- 9 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee:
- 10 "The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again."
- 11 Then they remembered his words.
- 12 When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others.
- 13 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles.
- 14 But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.
- 15 Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

Sometimes we just do not understand what has happened or even why. These feelings come especially when someone dies. It has happened many times, for many years, and it never gets any easier.

Activity at our local airport paused one morning as family and friends gathered around the casket of a devoted father and soldier. The body of a staff sergeant arrived on a tarmac surrounded by members of the Patriot Guard and a military honor unit. The 47-year-old soldier lost his life from an improvised explosive device while serving in Afghanistan.

Loved His Country

"He always loved his country," said a childhood friend. "He felt like he had to give something back, and that's what he did." As the casket was lowered from the plane, members of the soldier's family gathered around. His two sons knelt and prayed. Others stood arm in arm, not saying a word.

He first joined the army in 1984. He retired from the military and worked in the private sector, only to return to the army in 2009 at the age of 44. He served two tours in Iraq before his

fateful trip to Afghanistan. A friend who went to school with the staff sergeant from kindergarten all the way through high school placed his hand on his friend's casket and prayed.

A Different Perspective

Sadly most of us have experienced losing a family member or friend to death. Death is so final. Hopes, dreams, and future dreams stop. *I do not understand! What are we going to do now?* These thoughts ring through our minds. Death has that effect on us.

This must have been the thinking of the followers of Jesus when he died. Then Jesus' body was missing from the tomb, and the angels said he had risen! "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" the angels asked the women. The angels then explained to them that these things had happened according to what Jesus had already told them. Matter of fact, these things had to happen in order for salvation to be a reality. "Then they remembered his words."

What hope now! They could wipe away the tears that began just days ago. Because it was a new day. It was the third day. ✓

Keith Short is the preaching minister of Community Christian Church in London, Kentucky. He and his wife, Aleta, have been married for 44 years and have two married sons and one granddaughter.

WHERE YOU LIVE Questions & Activities for Small Groups

By Dan Lentz

1. What life experiences do you wish you had known more about before you found yourself immersed in them?

Read Hosea 6:1-3; Luke 24:1-12.

2. Think about what the women knew about Jesus at different times in the Luke passage. What would you say they knew about Jesus:

- as they were getting ready to go to the tomb?
- as they entered the tomb?
- after the angels spoke to them?

3. Now think about what you have known about Jesus at different times in your life. What did you know and think about Jesus:

- before you became his follower?
- when you were first introduced to him?
- after choosing to serve him?

4. What promises do you cling to from the Hosea verses you just read?

5. Pray and thank the Lord for his resurrection power and love. ✓

Dan Lentz works for the Small Group Network in Whitestown, Indiana.

For more small group ministry resources, visit www.smallgroups.com.

Lesson based on International Sunday School Lesson, © 2009, by the Lesson Committee.



Evaluating our Spiritual Selfies

When Oxford Dictionaries announced that their word of 2013 winner was *selfie*, the Facebook fanatic within me thought it was the appropriate choice, given the selfies that friends incessantly post on their profile pages. If this is your first time learning about the word, a *selfie* is “a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and uploaded to a social media website.”

I love it when friends post selfies after working out because they inspire me to work out. I feel like I am traveling with my friends when they post selfies on vacation. However, I’m always grateful I’m not driving anywhere near my friends when they post selfies en route in their vehicles!

As lighthearted as the word *selfie* seems, its dictionary addition is yet another example within our culture that we are in the “last days.” In 2 Timothy 3:1-4 we are told, “There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves . . . rather than lovers God.” Here are a few examples of how our culture has become lovers of ourselves rather than lovers of God:

False Doctrine

Some people flock to leaders, ministers, and teachers who say what they want them to say rather than striving to hear what God has said. In 2 Timothy 4:3 it is stated, “For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.”

I have noticed that some religious

leaders have no problem speaking about Heaven—but speaking about Hell seems taboo. In fact, Brian Jones, who wrote the book *Hell is Real (But I Hate to Admit It)* confessed that while he was the minister of Northern Hills Christian Church in Dayton, Ohio, he didn’t believe in Hell. In a *Christian Post* article, reporter Michelle A. Vu asked Jones how he avoided speaking on Hell. He responded, “I always assumed the concept of Hell was a concept not referenced that often. That it was in the periphery of Christian doctrine and so I view it in my mind and reasoned, ‘I am just never going to preach it,’ which I didn’t.”

Self-Help

Another example is that many find it easier to rely on themselves rather than God. In the *New York* magazine article “The Self in Self-

Do you show signs of loving yourself more than loving God?

Help,” Kathryn Schulz noted that the self-help industry is worth \$11 billion! She referenced fourth century “self-help guru” Saint Augustine who observed in his work *Confessions* that “the mind gives an order to the body and is at once obeyed, but when it gives an order to itself, it is resisted.” Schulz rightfully asked, “Can self-help work if we have no idea how a self works?”

In John 15:5 we are told, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from

me you can do nothing.” Don’t get me wrong—I am a huge supporter of the self-help industry, but I also know it is only God who empowers me to apply what I learn from any self-help guru.

Vain Words

One of the most insidious signs that we are elevating ourselves over God is the increasing acceptance of using his name in vain. OMG stands for “Oh My God,” and people casually use this term to express anything from delight to disdain.

In fact, the use of the term has become so widespread that John Donovan on *Nightline* interviewed teenagers about the use of OMG in texting. The students were from the Washington Hebrew Congregation youth group in Bethesda, Maryland. One student said, “If you say something like ‘Oh my God,’ then you’re using his name in vain, but if you’re saying something like OMG, it’s not really using the Lord’s name in vain because you’re not saying ‘Oh my God.’ It’s more like ‘Wow. Really?’”

It seems that we are forgetting that we are clearly instructed to “not misuse the name of the Lord your God” in Exodus 20:7.

Shifting Awareness

It is tempting to see shifts in language, attitude, or beliefs as innocuous. However, as Christians we must consult the Word, using our discernment to be ready for Christ’s return. May this also give us pause to consider what kind of selfies we are publicizing to the world. Are they sending the messages we truly want to say? 

Jacqueline J. Holness, a member of Central Christian Church in Atlanta, Georgia, is a correspondent for Courthouse News Service, an online, national news service for attorneys. Contact Jacqueline at afterthealtarcall.com.



Animal Rights Activists Petition Pope to Stop Releasing Doves

A new petition is calling for the head of the Roman Catholic Church to stop releasing doves as part of official ceremonies at the Vatican.

The petition was created after a recent event where birds of prey attacked the doves upon release in St. Peter's Square.

Care2, an animal rights activist group, said that domesticated doves are easy targets for other birds and therefore the practice needs to be ended.

Releasing the doves is meant to be a symbol of peace. But at the recent event called the Caravan of Peace, tens of thousands of people witnessed the doves being attacked by a sea gull and a crow. Videos and photos of the attack went viral.

"Nobody saw the dove release as a symbol of peace," said petition creator Chris Wolverton. "It was a scene of violence."

He suggested using paper cranes or white poppy flowers instead.



Pro-Life Bill Passed by House

The U.S. House has passed a new bill that would prevent taxpayer funding for abortions. Known as HR 7, the House voted 227 to 188 in favor of the legislation.

The bill would prohibit insurance plans sold in the new health care exchanges from covering abortions and would eliminate tax benefits for small businesses that purchase insurance plans covering abortions.

The "No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act" was introduced by New York Republican Representative Chris Smith, who said he'd like to see this kind of abortion provision become permanent instead of in need of annual renewal by lawmakers.

When laying out his case, Smith said, "HR 7 will help save lives and will reduce abortions."

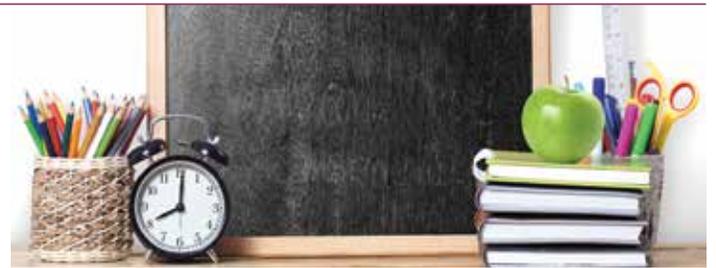
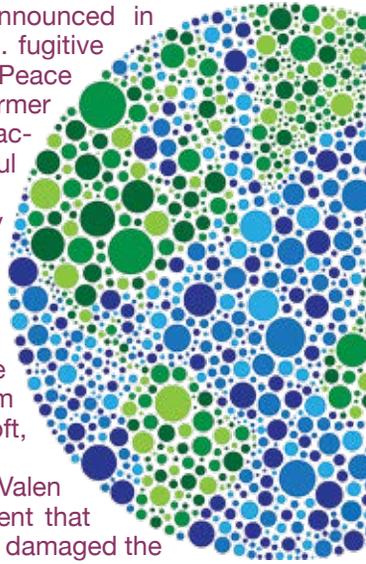
Despite this win in the House, the Senate is not expected to pass the bill. Should the legislation be approved, President Obama has expressed intentions to veto it.

Edward Snowden Nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

Two Norwegian lawmakers announced in January that they nominated U.S. fugitive Edward Snowden for the Nobel Peace Prize. They claim that the former National Security Agency contractor contributed to a "more peaceful and stable world."

Snowden has been charged by the U.S. with three felonies. He leaked information about secret U.S. programs that collect data on all phone calls made on the Verizon network as well as the Internet data of internationals from major companies such as Microsoft, Google, and Apple.

Baard Vegar Solhjell and Snorre Valen of Norway said in a joint statement that Snowden's revelations "may have damaged the security interests of several nations in the short term" and that they didn't support all of his actions. They also said that they're convinced that the public debate on the policy changes that followed have benefited the world.



Increased Hostility Toward Christians in Public Schools

A legal organization based out of California is claiming that there's a notable increase in hostility and harassment directed at Christian students attending public schools.

Advocates for Faith and Freedom said that the complaints generally involve teachers and administrators who are restricting the students' free speech rights simply because they're Christians.

Bob Tyler, general counsel for the firm, told the Christian News Network that AFF is seeing a major increase in requests for help from parents of kids who are encountering hostility while in school.

"The more that our kids are being told that there is no God, and the more hostile that these teachers are allowed to be, and the more disapproval that they have the ability to show toward Christ, the greater impact it will have on future generations and whether they believe in God," he said.

He's committed to fight for Christian students' free speech rights in the courts.

Christy Barritt is an award-winning author, freelance writer, and speaker living in Chesapeake, Virginia. She and her husband, Scott, have two sons.
www.christybarritt.com



Shape Hearts. Encounter God.



HeartShaper® Toddler—PreTeen



Help kids love God and His Word—and live it out. HeartShaper is the only Sunday school curriculum that promotes biblical literacy by taking kids through the Bible five times by the time they reach sixth grade.

- ♥ **Toddlers & 2s**—begin to understand that the Bible is God's special book
- ♥ **Preschool**—point to and repeat simple Bible words
- ♥ **Pre-K & K**—begin to sequence events in main Bible stories
- ♥ **Early Elementary**—know how to find Bible verses
- ♥ **Middle Elementary**—grasp why it's important to read and study the Bible
- ♥ **PreTeen**—see the Bible as God's Word and accept its absolute truth

Request a free sampler

www.heartshaper.com

ENCOUNTER™

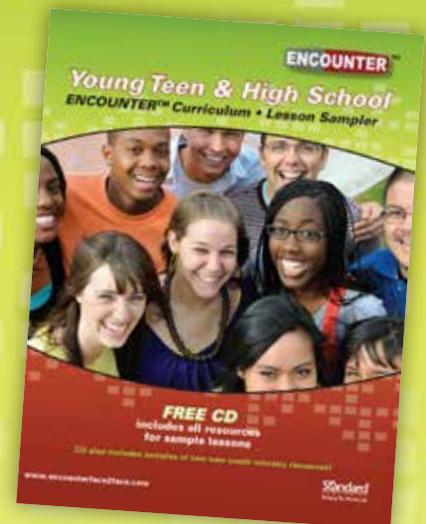
ENCOUNTER™ Teen Junior High—High School

Bible-based, culturally relevant, and personally challenging teen Sunday school curriculum for junior high and high school.

Teens need to experience God actively, firsthand—in a way that relates to their lifestyle and how they communicate. ENCOUNTER brings teens the message of the Bible and relates spiritual truths to the world around them.

Request a free sampler

www.encounterface2face.com



For more information, call 800-543-1353 or visit www.standardpub.com

Standard
PUBLISHING