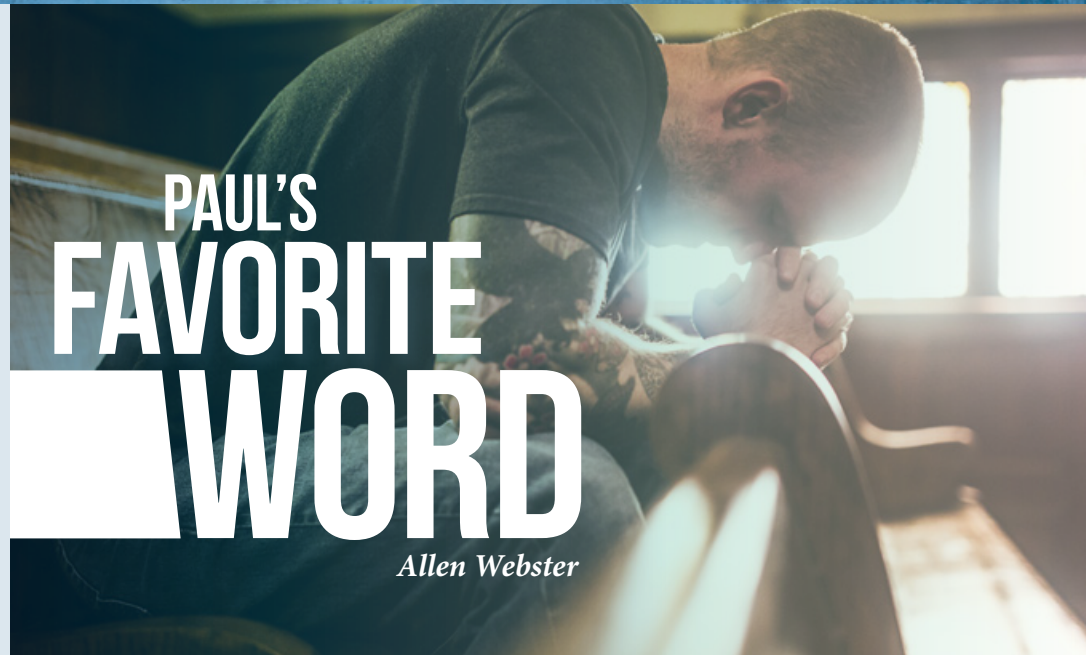


HOUSE to HOUSE
HEART to HEART

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House to House Heart to Heart

VOLUME 26 NUMBER 1



PAUL'S FAVORITE WORD

Allen Webster

The New Testament contains 50,190 words from Paul.¹

What was Paul's favorite word? A case could be made for *faith*, since Paul emphasized its importance (used 171 times in his epistles), or *love* (99 times),² since he wrote the Bible's "Love Chapter" (1 Corinthians 13), but a stronger case can be made for *grace*.

Paul wrote more New Testament books than any other writer; he also wrote more about grace than any other inspired writer. If he wrote Hebrews, then he used the word 99 of the 131 times it is found in the New Testament (if not, 91 times).³ He began and ended each of his signed epistles with references to grace.

PAUL TAUGHT FOUR GREAT TRUTHS ABOUT GRACE

There is abundant grace for flagrant sinners. More than twenty fouls are committed in an average basketball game. Once in a while, referees deem a foul sufficiently violent or dangerous to be called "flagrant." It may result in a player being ejected from the game.

Many sins are committed every day, but a few sins are deemed "flagrant" by society. Drug addicts, thieves/robbers, wife/child abusers, murderers, alcoholics, gamblers, fornicators, adulterers, prostitutes, and ex-cons definitely need the gospel. But is it available to such dyed-in-the-wool sinners?

There was no Las Vegas or San Francisco in the Roman Empire, but there was a Corinth. Its citizens were widely known for immorality and ungodliness. Evangelizing in that place struck fear into the seasoned heart of the veteran apostle Paul (Acts 18:9-10; 1 Corinthians 2:3). *Surely*, he must have thought, *I'm wasting my time here*. But the Lord knew what Paul did not. Those whose names were written on police records would soon be written in heaven (cf. Luke 10:20); those who were used to being featured in gossip columns would soon be listed in church bulletins. Paul later wrote the following about them:

"Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortion-

ers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 6:9–11).

Paul called himself the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:14–15) who was saved by God’s abundant grace. If there was sufficient grace to save an immoral city and a murderer of Christians (Acts 7:58), then there is sufficient grace to save any sinner today.

There is necessary grace for ordinary sinners (Romans 3:9–12). You would think that crowds would flock to accept God’s wonderful grace. Why do not more people respond to God’s offer of salvation?

Many do not understand that they need grace. They say, “Bad sinners need grace, but I’m a good person. Not perfect, but not that bad.” Being a good moral person is not the same as being a Christian. In nearly every conversion recorded in Acts, those saved were religious and moral already.

Naturally, it is better to be a moral person, a good neighbor and citizen, and a decent husband and father than to be guilty of many sins, but any sinner is lost. Flagrant sinners are on one end of the spectrum and may believe that they are too bad for grace; ordinary sinners are on the other end and believe they are too good for grace.

James wrote, “Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10; cf. Isaiah 64:6). Paul gave his conclusion regarding man’s condition: all the world stands guilty before God (cf. Romans 3:23; 6:23). The heart of his argument speaks to our question:

“We have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written, ‘There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one’” (Romans 3:9–12).

Since we must all plead guilty to sin, we all need grace. To miss heaven is to be in hell. There is no middle ground.

When compared to God’s holiness, none of us fares well (cf. Matthew 18:24). A skyscraper is much taller than a church building. From ground level, there is a great contrast between their heights. But which

is closer to the moon? Sure, the top of one is closer to the moon than the other, but does it really matter 240,000 miles from the earth? There is no appreciable difference.

Spiritually speaking, even the best of us is still an infinite distance from God (Isaiah 59:1–2). If we forget this, it is because we overestimate our goodness and underestimate God’s holiness.

There is daily grace for sinning Christians. Christians who say they do not sin are lying, according to John (1 John 1:6–10). Sin requires grace. God’s children are privileged to have access to an unlimited, lifetime supply: “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

There is amazing grace for obedient sinners. There is no way to make salvation works-centered and man-centered. It is grace-centered and God-centered (Ephesians 2:8–9). The emphasis is on what God does for us, not what we do for God. The little wheels run by faith, and the big wheels by the grace of God.

However, some, such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, accuse Paul of teaching salvation by grace alone through faith only in passages like Ephesians 2:8–9 and Romans 4:1–8. They teach a kind of faith which is not required to do, obey, or work. They make grace a cure-all, catch-all basket that covers the presence and practice of sins.

Once a young man asked a preacher, “Sir, what can I do to be saved?” The preacher replied, “Son, you’re too late.” “What!” exclaimed the boy. “Too late to be saved?” “No,” said the preacher. “Too late to do anything. You see, son, Jesus already did it all two thousand years ago.”

If nothing is required of man, Peter missed a wonderful opportunity to say so when asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). He should have said, “Folks, you are too late. Jesus did it all fifty days ago on the cross. There is nothing for you to do.”

Instead, by inspiration, he said, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (2:38). And, “with

many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation’” (2:40). In what sense could they save themselves? Not in meriting God’s favor for salvation but in simply meeting God’s conditions of salvation.

What did Paul understand that salvation by grace involved in his conversion? When Saul (later, Paul) was on the way to Damascus, the Lord appeared to him. Recognizing his great sin of persecuting Christ, he asked, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” (Acts 9:6).

Surely Paul should not have used the word “do.” Jesus would surely put him straight. Jesus answered, “Go into the city, and you will be told what you must do” (Acts 9:6).

Maybe Saul misunderstood Jesus using the word “do.” Surely the inspired Ananias would clarify it. Ananias brought this command: “Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Paul understood that faith needed to act, and he “arose and was baptized” (Acts 9:18).

Did Paul later disavow what he did, admitting in shame that he tried to merit salvation? No, he wrote about faith that is “working through love” (Galatians 5:6) and linked grace with obedience (Titus 2:11–12). He urged Christians to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12).

Paul did not contradict himself when he wrote of salvation by grace (Ephesians 2; Romans 4) and obedient faith (Romans 2; Romans 4) and obedient faith (Romans 1:5), obeying truth (Romans 2:8; Galatians 3:1), obeying the gospel (Romans 10:16), and obeying Christ (Hebrews 5:8–9). Both are part of God’s plan.

“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).

Endnotes:

¹ 43,293 if he did not write Hebrews.

² Including *charity*.

³ 91 without Hebrews.



HOW MUCH I OWE

One of the largest wildfires in California history was the Day Fire in Los Padres National Forest in 2006 measured by acreage. The Day Fire started on Labor Day. It took thousands of firefighters 39 days to contain the blaze. The fire destroyed more than 162,700 acres, including eleven structures. Eighteen people were injured in the fire, but thankfully, no one was killed.

Investigations revealed that the fire was inadvertently started by Steven Butcher at his campsite in Piru Canyon. John Schelbe reported that on November 17, 2008, “U.S. District Judge Valerie Baker Fairbank sentenced Butcher to 45 months in prison and ordered the self-described nature lover to pay the \$101.6 million that it cost to fight the Day Fire.”

Mark Windsor, who represented Butcher in his trial, stated that the \$101.6 million fine had to be “one of the biggest monetary amounts ever levied against a person.”

That is a lot of money, especially if you are homeless, mentally ill, and financially poor—as was Steven Butcher. Butcher’s only income was \$1,000 a month in Supplemental Security Income. He was ordered by Judge Fairbank to pay \$25 four times a year to Los Padres officials while in prison and \$50 a month after he is released. At this rate, Butcher will have to pay over two million years.

But Steven Butcher is not the only one with an unthinkable debt. Nor is Steven Butcher the only one who has made some terrible mistakes.

You and I have amassed an unthinkable debt due to our sins. Our debt is not due to mental illness but to all our wrong decisions (James 1:13–14).

Because of who God is and what He has, we owe Him our love, loyalty, and our very lives. When we sin, we fail to meet our obligation. Sin is an unpaid debt, and it is a debt that every one of us owes (Romans 3:23). The debt of sin is so great that none can be good enough or do enough to pay off the debt. We do not have enough resources to remove the debt we owe to God.

However, because of His love for us, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the debt for our sin. Peter reminded some Christians of the price of their redemption: “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18–19).

The blood of Jesus removes the debt of those who will: place faith and trust in God (Hebrews 11:6), repent of sin (2 Corinthians 7:9–10), confess Jesus before men (Romans 10:9–10), and be baptized (immersed) in Jesus’ name for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). Jesus’ blood continues to keep one’s record clean as he lives for the One who made redemption possible (1 John 1:7).

To have our debts paid, however, we must accept His offer on His terms.

Won’t you? —David A. Sargent



Two Buckets

There were two buckets in a well. They were both in the same well, but aside from that, they were different. One was very unhappy and often complained because no matter how full he came up, he always went down empty. The other bucket found cause for rejoicing because no matter how empty he went down, he always came up full.

“Think on these things.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

Three Pictures

A man in San Francisco blew through an intersection without realizing the traffic light had a camera. A week later he received a picture of his car and a ticket for \$40 in the mail. He decided to have a little fun. He wrote out a check, took a picture of it, and sent it to the police. Two days later, the police sent him a picture of handcuffs. He got the point, and they got their money. —Albert Memmi

“A merry heart does good.”

PROVERBS 17:22

God’s Plan for Saving Man

Divine Love: John 3:16

God’s Grace: Ephesians 2:8

Christ’s Blood: Romans 5:9

Holy Spirit’s Word: Romans 1:16

Sinner’s Faith: Acts 16:31

Sinner’s Repentance: Luke 13:3

Sinner’s Confession: Romans 10:10

Sinner’s Baptism: Acts 22:16

Christian’s Love: Matthew 22:37

Christian’s Work: James 2:24

Christian’s Hope: Romans 8:24

Christian’s Endurance: Revelation 2:10



Take the Bible

As her son left for college, a mother gave him a Bible. On the flyleaf she had penned these words, "This book will keep you from sin, and only sin will keep you from this book."

Much in Common

A boy sat beside his aged grandfather. The boy said, "Sometimes I drop my spoon." "I do too," replied the old man. "I cry sometimes," continued the boy. The old man nodded, "So do I." "Worst of all," said the boy, "It seems grownups don't pay any attention to me."

"I know what you mean," said the old man.



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For more material on the home and family, fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, grandparents, and family finances, go to www.housetohouse.com.

Parenting in the Preteen Years

During this period, learning respect is important. Learning to obey parents at this stage will have much to do with success later in life.

A child is awake 60,000 hours by the time he is twelve. Of these he spends about

- 5,000 in school,
- 2,500 in Bible class and worship (if he never missed a service in his life) and
- 53,000 hours in the home.

It is obvious that parents, rather than other children or teachers, have a great opportunity and much responsibility for seeing that children are obedient during this period, rather than children or teachers. The finest schools and best-organized playgrounds can never take the place of the family. When the home becomes merely a dormitory in which children bed down at night, they suffer.

In the early years, children learn to respect authority and to honor superiors. It is said that

- from 1 to 6 a child forms attitudes;
- from 6–12 he forms habits; and
- from 12 to 18 he forms character.

How well they learn to respect and obey parents is generally how well they will respect and obey God later in life. Honoring parents prepares them to hon-

or God. Children look to parents to supply needs, just as Christians look to God to supply needs. God cannot use a child or an adult who has not learned to obey. There are four concentric rings describing the situations in which all should learn discipline and obedience:

- the home,
- school,
- society, and
- church.

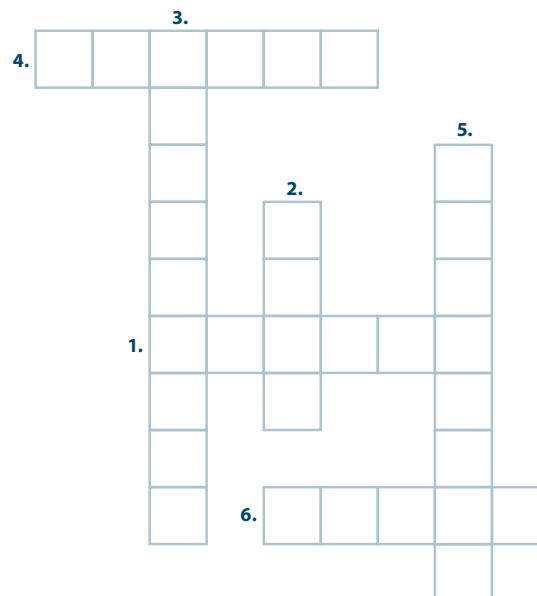
If one does not learn obedience at home, he becomes a troublemaker in school; from there he graduates to the police court, and eventually will hear terrible words at Judgment Day.

*I saw tomorrow look at me,
From little children's eyes,
And thought how carefully we would
teach if we were really wise.*

Good parents thoughtfully teach and carefully discipline in love (Deuteronomy 6:6–7; Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; 23:13–14; 29:15).



Just for Fun Acts 2 Crossword



1. Acts 2:36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

2. Acts 2:3 "Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them."

3. Acts 2:1 "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place."

4. Acts 2:38 "Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"

5. Acts 2:41 "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them."

6. Acts 2:21 "And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Did Jesus Make a Big Mistake About a Little Seed?

Jesus used a mustard seed to illustrate the kingdom's growth (Matthew 13:31–32) and faith (17:14–20). He called it the “least of all seeds” (13:32) and “is smaller than all the seeds on earth” (Mark 4:31).

Critics say begonias, petunias, wormwoods, and orchids have smaller seeds. The smallest, the epiphytic jewel orchid seed found in tropical rainforests (*Anoectochilus imitans*), measures 0.05 mm. Black mustard seeds (*Brassica nigra*), the species found in Israel, measure 1.0 mm.

Possibilities: (1) This is hyperbole and not to be taken literally (cf. Matthew

6:3; 7:3–5; 17:20; 18:9; 19:24; Mark 1:4–5; 11:22–24). Paul claimed the gospel “was preached to every creature under heaven” (Colossians 1:23). Did he mean every animal or every infant? We use exaggeration: I’m hungry enough to eat a cow; it is raining cats and dogs; he has tons of money; she is older than the hills; my feet are killing me; I am freezing to death.

(2) Mustard seeds could have been the smallest in Jesus’ day. Many more species exist now than two thousand years ago. Jewel orchids, for instance, might not have branched by AD 30 from the origi-

nal Day 3 orchid (Genesis 1:11–13). Other orchids are larger. A study found it took a maximum of 60 generations to create a new sunflower species. Based on plant life cycles, this could be ten to sixty years.

(3) Jesus was talking about cultivated plants. He qualified it: “sowed in his field” (Matthew 13:31). Orchids were not. Mustard was the smallest garden-variety seed common to Palestine. It grew into a shrub eight to ten feet tall. —Allen Webster

“Come and see”

JOHN 1:39

Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.



Bible Quiz

VOLUME 26:1

Send us your answers to receive a free Bible bookmark! We will grade and return your questions and enclose the bookmark “Seven Churches of Asia” as a way of saying thanks for spending time in the Word (quantities may be limited).

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City/State: _____
 Phone: _____

Answers to Previous Quizzes

Questions are taken from the New King James Version.

V. 25:11 *Getting to Know the Minor Prophets:* 1. 12; 2. Justly, humbly (Micah 6:8); 3. Hosea (Hosea 1:3–4); 4. Joel (Joel 1:4–7); 5. Zechariah (Zechariah 9:9); 6. Chaldeans (Babylonians) (Habakkuk 1:6); 7. Hosea (Hosea 1:1–2); 8. Amos (Amos 5:24); 9. Joel (Joel 2:28); 10. Good, live (Amos 5:14); 11. House, many, up (Micah 4:1–3); 12. Temple, silence (Habakkuk 2:20).

Questions are taken from the King James Version.

V. 25:12 *Starts with the Letter Q:* 1. Quail (Exodus 16:12–13); 2. Quartus (Romans 16:23); 3. Quaternions (Acts 12:4); 4. Queen (1 Kings 10:1); 5. Quarrel (Mark 6:19); 6. Quench (Ephesians 6:16); 7. Quick (Hebrews 4:12); 8. Quiet (1 Peter 3:4); 9. Quietness (Ecclesiastes 4:6); 10. Quiver (Psalm 127:5); 11. Quickly (John 13:27–28); 12. Quake (Matthew 27:51).

Kings and Things: 1. Solomon (1 Kings 3:3); 2. Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1); 3. Hiram (1 Kings 7:13–14); 4. Hiram king of Tyre (1 Kings 5:1); 5. Ahijah (1 Kings 14:1–2).

A Big Hairy Deal

Directions: Find answers in the following passages: Exodus 26:7; Leviticus 13:3; Numbers 6:1–6; Judges 16:10–17; 20:14–16; 2 Samuel 14:25–26; Song of Solomon 6:5; Isaiah 3:24; Jeremiah 7:29; Daniel 3:26–27; Matthew 5:36; Mark 1:6; 1 Corinthians 11:15; 1 Peter 3:3. Questions are taken from the New King James Version.

- This animal’s hair was used to make a covering for the tabernacle. _____
- A plague that turned hair white. _____
- Whose strength was said to be related to his hair? _____
- The type of hair that clothed John. _____
- The vow an Israelite made when he separated himself to the Lord. _____
- Whose hair was so heavy he polled (weighed) it every year? _____
- Who compared his beloved’s hair to a flock of goats that appear from Gilead? _____
- Isaiah prophesied these things would happen to Jerusalem and Judah related to hair. _____
- Seven hundred men of this tribe could throw a stone at a hair and not miss. _____
- Jeremiah told the people of Judah to cut their _____ and take up lamentation for God had forsaken them because of their wickedness.
- What was the condition of Shadrach’s, Meshach’s, and Abednego’s hair when Nebuchadnezzar called them to come out from the fiery furnace? _____
- “Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair _____ or _____.”
- “If a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a _____.”
- “Do not let your adornment be merely outward—_____ the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel.”

—Patsy Pollard

HE READ THE BIBLE 4 TIMES

William McPherson had a charge of dynamite go off in his face. He lost his eyes and hands and the feeling in parts of his face.

He realized how much the Bible meant to him, and he needed its strength more than ever.

He could not read it in Braille because of his artificial hands. He tried to place his lips on the dots, but they were numb.

He found he could use his tongue to decipher the Moon Type system of dashes. The metal left his lips and tongue bleeding and sore, but he prayed for God to help him continue to learn just one letter of the alphabet.

In the 65 years that followed, he read the Bible through four times with his tongue.

Would I study the Bible if I had to read it with my tongue? Would I have that much desire to know God's will?

Perhaps there are better questions: Would I study the Bible if I had to get up an hour earlier each day to work it into my busy schedule? Would I miss my favorite TV program to read the Bible? Do I have the desire to read the Bible now with two good hands and two good eyes?

—Anonymous

"Blessed is he who reads."

REVELATION 1:3

Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.

Recommended Resource



The WVBS Online Bible School provides students with a free, comprehensive, in-depth Bible study. The lessons are non-denominational teaching based simply on the Bible. These classes are for anyone who wants a focused, organized, and thorough study of the Bible. school.wvbs.org

I want to learn more **about the Bible!**

If you knew for sure that the religious path you are on would not get you to heaven, would you change? If there was the possibility of a doubt, would you investigate? Why not request a personal Bible study today?

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Prayer requests or comments: _____

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A DVD Bible Study



An In-Home Bible Study

New Tracts!

- Solomon's 12 Reasons Not to Drink
- The Art of Listening to a Sermon
- An Empty Cross
- Crisis Truth



More subjects:



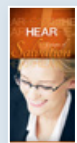
Lust



How to Rebuild Trust in a Marriage



Believe (5 steps of Salvation)



Hear (5 steps of Salvation)



What Should I Teach My Child about Baptism



Distracted Driving on the Straight & Narrow Way



Is the End Near?



What Does the Church Have to Offer Me?

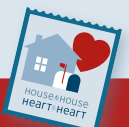


Helping Children Make Good Entertainment Choices

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VOLUME 26:1



Herod's Family Tree Infographic coming soon

What Jesus Never Did

In infancy He startled a king; in boyhood He puzzled the doctors; in manhood He ruled the seas.

He healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charges for His services.

He never wrote a book, yet many thousands of books have been written about Him.

He never wrote a song, yet He has furnished more song themes than all the songwriters combined.

He never founded a college, yet all the schools together cannot boast of as many students as He has. He never practiced medicine, yet He has healed more broken hearts than doctors have broken bodies.

He never marshalled an army, drafted a soldier, or fired a gun, yet no leader ever commanded so great a multitude of volunteers.

Great men have come and gone, yet He lives on. Herod could not kill Him, Satan could not seduce Him, and the grave could not hold Him.

Many have faltered, failed, and faded away, but not Jesus. He is the friend of sinners (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34).

—Anonymous

*"I saw the dead, small and great,
standing before God."*

REVELATION 20:12





There Is Coming A DAY

A converted Japanese man was explaining the atonement and used a touching illustration.

A woman was crossing the great plain. She carried a child on her back. When about half way across, she looked suddenly behind her and saw that the plain was afire. She had but a moment to think. She laid the child down and desperately scooped a hole in the earth with her hands. With trembling haste, she laid the child in it and covered her with her own body.

There they found the two. The poor mother was dead, but the child was saved. "So Jesus died for me," said the humble convert. "That I might live, He put His body between me and everlasting fire."

—Anonymous

"It was the third hour, and they crucified Him."

MARK 15:25



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ASK A BIBLE QUESTION

Do you have something you always wanted to know about the Bible? Go to housetohouse.com/questions or send your question to us at the address on the front. We will answer as quickly as we can.