

HOUSE to HOUSE
HEART to HEART

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House to House Heart to Heart

VOLUME 26 NUMBER 4



SIN'S FISH STORY

Allen Webster

This one is true. True, but sad.

The prodigal boy's itinerary listed "far country" and maybe under that, "beaches, bars, and brothels." He probably never read the very fine print that had "pig farm" (Luke 15:11-32). His "summer trip" took him farther than he intended to go. Once you board sin's boat, it can be awfully hard to disembark.

Ask Jonah.

God told Jonah to go east to preach in Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire (Jonah 1:1-2). Jonah went west to hide in Tarshish, a city in southwestern Spain (1:3). When he got on that boat, he had no idea how far sin was going to take him. God sent a storm and nearly sank the ship. The mariners discovered that Jonah was running from God and threw him overboard. Stop and think. What was that like? Jonah described it, "For You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me" (2:3). Drowning

is a horrible way to die; to nearly drown is one of the most frightening experiences one can have. Why is Jonah in the water? Sin is taking him farther than he wanted to go.

Instead of drowning, though, the Lord sent a great fish to swallow Jonah (1:17). Imagine what it felt like to be eaten by a fish! Why are you in the fish, Jonah? Sin. For seventy-two hours, Jonah was in a fish's digestive system! What did it feel like? What did it smell like? "The waters surrounded me, even to the soul; the deep closed around me; weeds were wrapped around my head" (2:5).

Finally, God decided class was over and had the fish vomit (God's word, 2:10) Jonah out onto land. What did it feel like to be human vomit? What made Jonah the only person ever to find out? Sin. What did Jonah learn? Sin will take you farther than you want to go.

What does Jonah teach us about taking a trip into sin? *First, it is easy to book*

passage. Jonah didn't have to wait for a ship going to Tarshish—the devil had it ready for him (1:3). Satan keeps “boats at the dock” for anybody wanting to sail to “Tarshish” (cf. 2 Corinthians 2:11; 1 Peter 5:8). Sin always lies “at the door” (Genesis 4:7). It is a wide gate that opens onto the broad road (Matthew 7:13). If you remain true to God, it won't be because you lacked opportunities to sin; it will be because you had the backbone to say “no” to sin and had faith to say “yes” to God—frequently.

What “boats” does Satan keep ready?

- Teens heading to “Tarshish” find that being underage is no real hindrance to buying beer or cigarettes—an older friend will get these items for them, or an unscrupulous businessman will sell them “under the table” (Proverbs 1:19).
- If they want to tell dirty jokes, there are plenty of people who will laugh (cf. Romans 1:32).
- If they want to go places and do things their parents forbid, they find friends who will lie to their parents for them (cf. Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 3:2).
- If they want to do drugs, it is not hard to find someone who can get whatever they want (for a price). It's so easy to

find drugs that about twenty-five teens start using every hour of every day of every year.

- If teens want to start a sexual relationship, most don't have to look far to find a willing partner (Proverbs 9:13–17).

Second, sin is progressive. It's a slide down a slippery slope that goes down, down, down. We are told to “live it up”—that's a lie. The road into the “far country” is always downhill. Jonah went “down” to Joppa, “down” into the ship (Jonah 1:3), “down” into the sea, “down” into the fish's mouth, and “down” to the sea bottom. Think of sin's downward progression:

- Walking with the ungodly leads to standing with sinners; standing with sinners leads to sitting with the scornful (Psalm 1:1; Matthew 26:58, 69–75).
- Anger leads to violence; wrath leads to hatred; hatred leads to murder (Genesis 4:6, 8; Proverbs 27:3; Daniel 2:12; 1 John 3:12).
- Jealousy and envy lead to cruelty, slander, and vengeance (Proverbs 6:34; 27:4; Song of Solomon 8:6; Judges 19:29–30).
- Disobedience to parents leads to lying to parents (Romans 1:30; Ephesians 4:15; cf. Genesis 26:7; Colossians 3:9).
- One lie leads to more lies (cf. John 8:44).

- Covetousness leads to stealing and violence (Joshua 7:21; 1 Kings 21:1, 15; Micah 2:1–2; Mark 7:22; Ephesians 4:28; 2 Peter 2:3).
- R-rated movies lead to X-rated movies; soft-core porn leads to hard-core (Matthew 5:28; 1 Peter 2:11); pornography leads to rape and child molestation.
- Immodest dress and behavior lead to lust, which leads to fornication (Matthew 5:28); dancing and petting lead to sexual sins (cf. Galatians 5:19–21).
- Unnatural thoughts lead to homosexuality (Romans 1:26–27; cf. Genesis 19:5; Leviticus 18:22; Judges 19:22; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10; Jude 1:7, 10); homosexuality may lead to pedophilia (child rape/molestation).
- Smoking cigarettes often leads to smoking marijuana (1 Corinthians 6:19–20); smoking marijuana leads to harder drugs (Romans 6:13).

Third, a sinful life is a turbulent life. Jonah found himself in a storm. It usually doesn't take long for teens who forsake Christ to find turmoil (Proverbs 4:19; 15:10; Jeremiah 2:19; Romans 6:21).

The Bible's fish story is true—just as true now as it was twenty-seven centuries ago.



Three Steps to Heaven

Hell was not prepared for us (Matthew 25:41); rather heaven was (John 14:2–3)! Anyone who does the will of the Father can go there (Revelation 22:14). A journey to heaven really takes only three steps.

As we set our sights on the heavenly city, the first step we must make is the step “out of self.” Jesus told His disciples that if they would follow Him, it would require self-denial: “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matthew 16:24). Once a person has taken this step, God will be placed at the top of his or her priority list (Matthew 6:33).

The next step for one to take toward heaven is the step “into Christ.” He is “the

way” to heaven (John 14:6), our only access to the Father (Romans 5:2). After the first step, this one is natural, but it is not completed until one has heard the gospel (Romans 10:17), believed in Jesus (John 8:24), repented of all sin (Luke 13:3, 5), confessed Christ’s name (Romans 10:10), and been baptized to have all sin washed away (Acts 22:16). Then, one must remain faithful to God until death (Revelation 2:10) to be ready to take the final step.

The last step on the journey to heaven is the step “into glory.” Paul said that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption” (1 Corinthians 15:50). In this step, we will be transformed from physical beings into spiritual ones. This will happen either upon our physical death or the return of Christ. Then there will be a judgment (Hebrews 9:27). What a scene it will be! All nations will be gathered together and then separated. The righteous will be set on the Shepherd’s right hand, and the unrighteous on His left hand. For the disobedient, it will be a terrible day. They will be sent away to everlasting punishment. For those who have taken the correct steps, it will be a great day! They shall inherit the kingdom that was prepared for them (Matthew 25:31–46).

If you want to go to heaven, then remember the three steps that will get you there. —adapted from Darrell Powell

Who Is Jesus?

In chemistry, He turned H₂O to wine.

In biology, He was born without the normal conception.

In physics, He disapproved the law of gravity when He ascended into heaven.

In economics, He disapproved the law of diminishing return by feeding 5000 men with two fishes.

In medicine, He cured the sick and the blind without administering a single dose of drugs,

In history, He is the beginning and the end.

In government, He said that He shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace.

In religion, He said no one comes to the Father except through Him.

So, Who is He? He is Jesus! Let us celebrate Him; He is worthy.

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

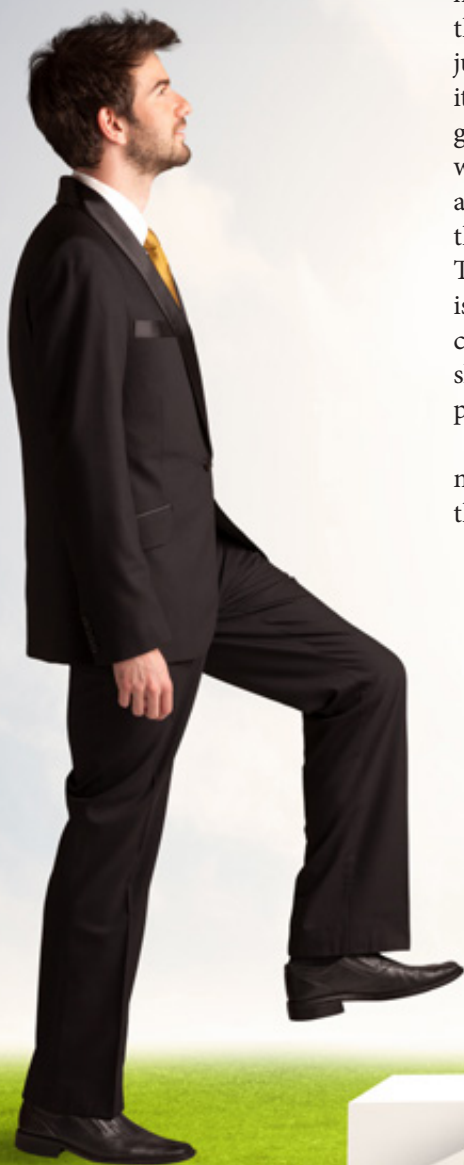
Sinner’s Baptism: Acts 22:16

Christian’s Love: Matthew 22:37

Christian’s Work: James 2:24

Christian’s Hope: Romans 8:24

Christian’s Endurance: Revelation 2:10





The Needle and the Thread

The Bible uses some interesting figures to represent Christians and their relationship to God: Vine and branches, clay and Sculptor, sheep and Shepherd. Another interesting metaphor came not from the Bible, but from an African convert. This young man prayed one evening, "O, Lord, you are the needle, and I am the thread." He had just visited a school where girls were learning to sew. He watched intently and noticed a simple principle: wherever the needle went, the thread followed. That, he decided, represented his relationship to God. If he would stay close to the Lord, praying, reading His Word, depending entirely upon Him and following Him, God would always lead him where he needed to go. He simply was the thread following the needle. God will guide if we will follow. We often sing the song, "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

—Albert Memmi

"Lord, I will follow You wherever You go..."

LUKE 9:57



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

THE POWER OF OUR Late-Night Thoughts



What we think at any time is important (Proverbs 23:7), but it seems to me that our late-night thoughts are fraught with particular significance because they set our course for the next day. If a person drifts off into sleep with prayerful thoughts about God, heaven, and serving the Lord, it cannot help but impact him for good come morning. On the other hand, if one fills her head at late night with evil thoughts, it can only be productive of wicked pursuits in her daylight activities.

First, let us note the blessings of good late-night thoughts: "Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. *Selah*. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord" (Psalm 4:4–5). Again, "My soul shall be satisfied . . . when I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches" (Psalm 63:5–6). Yes, "The thoughts of the righteous are right" (Proverbs 12:5).

On the other hand, how spiritually destructive are the wrong kind of late-night

thoughts. Observe this warning from a prophet of old, "Woe to those who devise iniquity, and work evil on their beds! At morning light, they practice it" (Micah 2:1). The wicked man "devises wickedness on his bed; he sets himself in a way that is not good" (Psalm 36:4). No wonder the Bible tells us "the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 15:26).

The way we live our lives is determined by what we think. Solomon stated that what one "thinks in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). Thus, we cannot over emphasize the importance of thinking good things, and especially at night upon our beds.

"Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things."

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

Just for Fun 6 Days of Creation

Read Genesis 1. Can you put the days in order?



God created fish and birds.

Day _____



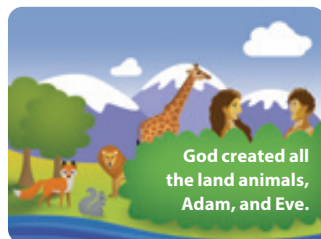
God created the sun, moon, and stars.

Day _____



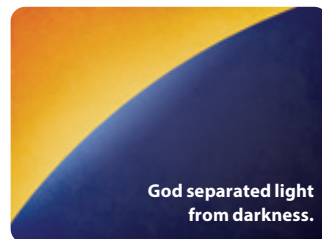
God created dry land, trees, grass, and seed-bearing vegetation.

Day _____



God created all the land animals, Adam, and Eve.

Day _____



God separated light from darkness.

Day _____



God made clouds and separated the waters above and below.

Day _____

Father, Forgive Them

The greatest sinners may, through Christ, hope to find mercy. Even for His persecutors and murderers, He prayed, "Father, forgive them." On the Day of Pentecost some of these very people were forgiven by this very God (Acts 2:22, 37, 38, 41).

Jesus' words of forgiveness were directed toward the Roman soldiers who had beaten Him so badly that He could not carry His own cross to Calvary. Jesus had the power to stop those who beat, tortured, and crucified Him (John 10:17-19). Surely this Jesus who, with just the sound of His voice, took a dead man and made him alive, could take a live man and make him dead. But He did not punish them nor stop the proceedings. He allowed the soldiers to mock Him with a scarlet robe and a reed and a crown of thorns (Matthew 27:28-30). He let them strike Him on the face while He was blindfolded and ask Him, "Prophesy! Who is the one who struck you?" (Luke 22:64).

Little did they know that He could tell them who hit Him. They beat Him; He blessed them. There was no blindfold when they nailed Him to the cross. Jesus did not respond as others they had crucified. Others responded to crucifixion by either spewing vile profanity or weeping for pity. The soldiers thought Jesus' life was in their hands; they did not know He held their lives in His hands.

Jesus illustrated Mark Twain's definition of forgiveness: "Forgiveness is the fragrance that the flower leaves on the heels of the one who crushed it."

How could anyone reject such a Savior?

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

MATTHEW 11:28



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



Bible Quiz

VOLUME 26:4

Send us your answers to receive a free Bible bookmark! We'll grade and return your questions and enclose the bookmark "The Plan of Salvation" as a way of saying thanks for spending time in the Word (quantities may be limited).

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State: _____

Phone: _____

Questions are taken from the New King James Version.

Answers to Previous Quizzes

V. 26:2 Starts with the Letter "H": 1. Hair (2 Samuel 14:26); 2. Happy (Proverbs 16:20); 3. Hard (Proverbs 13:15); 4. Harlot (James 2:25); 5. Haughty (Proverbs 16:18); 6. Head (Ephesians 1:22); 7. Hearing (Romans 10:17); 8. Heart (Proverbs 4:23); 9. Heaven (1 Peter 1:4); 10. Hell (Psalm 9:17); 11. Helmet (Ephesians 6:17); 12. Help (Psalm 46:1); 13. Holy (1 Peter 1:16); 14. Homemakers (Titus 2:4-5); 15. Honey (Psalm 19:10); 16. Honor (Exodus 20:12); 17. Hope (Hebrews 6:11); 18. Hour (Matthew 24:36); 19. House (John 14:2); 20. Humble (James 4:10); 21. Hunger (Matthew 5:6); 22. Husband (Ephesians 5:25-28).

V. 26:3 The Minor Prophets: 1. Hosea (Hosea 1:2); 2. Build the Lord's house (Haggai 1:12-14); 3. Sheepbreeder (Amos 1:1); 4. "The just shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4); 5. Nineveh (Jonah 1:2); 6. Zechariah (Zechariah 9:9); 7. Joel (Joel 2:28-32); 8. Micah (Micah 6:6-8); 9. Malachi (Malachi 3:8); 10. Joel (Joel 1:1-4); 11. Joshua (Zechariah 3:8); 12. Leopards (Habakkuk 1:8); 13. Silent (Habakkuk 2:20); 14. Knowledge (Hosea 4:6); 15. Josiah (Zephaniah 1:1); 16. Darius (Haggai 1:1); 17. House of the Lord (Haggai 1:12-14); 18. Red (Zechariah 1:8).

Starts with the Letter "F"

Directions: Find answers in the following passages: Genesis 1:6; Proverbs 2:16; 9:10; 16:18; Isaiah 38:21; Matthew 2:11; 4:2; 4:18-21; 7:5; 7:15; John 13:5; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Acts 24:25; Galatians 6:8; Ephesians 6:4; Hebrews 11:1; 1 Peter 5:2; 1 John 1:7 (answers not in order). Questions are taken from the New King James Version.

- _____ is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
- Beware of _____ prophets.
- Jesus _____ for forty days and nights during His temptation.
- A haughty spirit goes before a _____.
- According to 1 Corinthians 3:11, Jesus is the _____ of the church.
- _____ must not provoke children to wrath.
- The _____ of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.
- Jesus washed the disciples' _____.
- _____ was afraid at Paul's preaching but did not obey.
- If we walk in the light, we have _____ with one another.
- Isaiah used a lump of _____ to heal Hezekiah.
- _____ was presented to the baby Jesus.
- God created a _____ in the midst of the waters.
- We are to _____ remove the plank out of our own eyes.
- Some disciples were _____ before Christ called them.
- The immoral woman " _____ with her words."
- If we sow to the _____ we reap corruption.
- "Shepherd (feed) the _____ of God, serving as overseers."



Teri's Find

Teri Horton stopped in Dot's Thrift Shop to browse around. During her junket, she stumbled across a bright abstract painting and decided that it might make a good gag gift for a disheartened friend. Teri shelled out \$5.00 for the 66-inch by 48-inch canvas and then lugged it home. Teri's friend, Theresa, got a big laugh out of the hideous present, but turned it down because it barely fit through her front door. Teri took it home again, but after a year decided it was taking up too much space, and so she offered it to yet another friend who was an art professor.

The work turned out to be an authentic Jackson Pollock worth millions! Pollock (1912–1957) was a leader in the American expressionist movement of the 1940s. He

employed large canvases and “painted” by pouring liquid pigment out of a can and dripping color with a brush.

No one knows for sure how the masterpiece ended up at the thrift store. Some think it may have been purchased at an estate sale in Southern California; others believe it may have simply been given away to Pollock's brother following his untimely death. In either case, “Untitled 1948” found its way to the little store near San Bernardino where it sat for years until Teri Horton happened along.

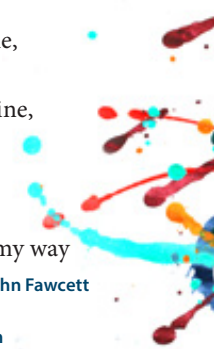
Imagine. A multi-million dollar design sold for only five bucks. The store owner had no idea what she possessed.

Maybe you've never thought about it before, but like Teri Horton, you have an in-

credible treasure in your home. It is bound in genuine calf skin, printed on thin rice paper, and written in black Indian ink. It is the holy (Jeremiah 23:9), inspired (2 Timothy 3:16–17), and perfect (Psalm 19:7) Word of the Lord (Psalm 33:4). Splashed across its pages are the thoughts of the greatest author in the universe.

How precious is the Book divine,
by inspiration giv'n!
Bright as a lamp its precepts shine,
to guide my soul to heav'n.
Holy Book divine!
Precious treasure mine!
Lamp to my feet and a light to my way
to guide me safely home. —John Fawcett

Have you read it? —Mike Benson



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

Recommended Resource



The Gospel Broadcasting Network is unique in the world of religious TV—commercial free, and they never ask for money! Sponsored by the churches of Christ, GBN is available on many cable systems, as well as through their smartphone apps, the Roku device, and at gbntv.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: _____

I would like:



A Bible Correspondence Course



A DVD Bible Study



An In-Home Bible Study

Featured Tracts!

- Does God Really Care about instruments
- Why Do Bad Things Happen
- I Have This Nagging Fear that I Am Not Saved. How Can I Know for Sure?
- The God of Second Chances



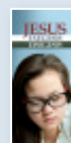
More subjects:



The Age of Accountability



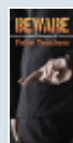
The Element of Baptism



Jesus Exegesis Eisegesis



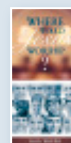
What Does God Expect From Me, Anyway?



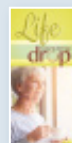
Beware the Dangers of False Teachers



Don't Lose Your Bible In Church



Where Would Jesus Worship?



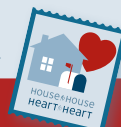
Life: Good to the Last Drop



Why Did Jesus Come to Earth?

Don't see the topic you need?

Visit www.housetohouse.com for more subjects.



INFOGRAPHIC COMING SOON

The Benefits of Kissing

Here's a bit of interesting news. An insurance company's study showed that husbands who received a good morning kiss from their wives are often happier and more successful.

- Husbands who kiss their wives each morning before work usually live five years longer than those who do not..
- A kissing husband has fewer automobile accidents, loses up to fifty percent less time from work because of illness, and earns twenty to thirty percent more.

This study should remind us of Paul's exhortation, "Husbands, love your wives" (Ephesians 5:25). Expressing our love for our spouses, whether by a good morning kiss or by other kindnesses, will result in a happier marriage and a better life. Following God's instruction for marriage can make a bad marriage good and a good marriage better. —Tom Keener

"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—for your love is better than wine."

SONG OF SOLOMON 1:2



Lincoln Said...

"We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God.

"We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to God that made us!"

—Abraham Lincoln's Proclamation of 1863



Made Like His Brethren

Joseph Damien was a nineteenth-century missionary who ministered to people with leprosy on the island of Molokia, Hawaii.

Those suffering grew to love him and revered the sacrificial life he lived out before them. One morning before Damien was to lead daily worship, he was pouring some hot water into a cup when the water swirled out and fell onto his bare foot. It took him a moment to realize that he had not felt any sensation. Gripped by the sudden fear of what this could mean, he poured more hot water on the same spot. Again, there was no feeling whatsoever. Damien immediately knew what had happened. As he walked to deliver his sermon, no one at first noticed the difference in his opening line. He normally began every sermon with, "My fellow believers," but this morning he began with . . . "My fellow lepers."

Damien could fully relate to the lepers because he became a leper. He knew personally the struggles that they faced. He could actually feel their pain. Jesus was made like us and therefore understands the hurts we experience.

"Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted."

HEBREWS 2:17-18



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What Do You Look for in a Church?

Are you looking for a church home? With a church building on every corner, how do we decide where to attend?

Some pick a church based on how close by it is, the programs it has for families, or where their friends go. Is there a better way—a more biblical way? Can we find a church that looks like the one in the New Testament?

Do you want help choosing a church? Do you have questions about what is taught and practiced where you attend?

**Here is a test you can give a church before placing membership:
www.housetohouse.com/church**

