

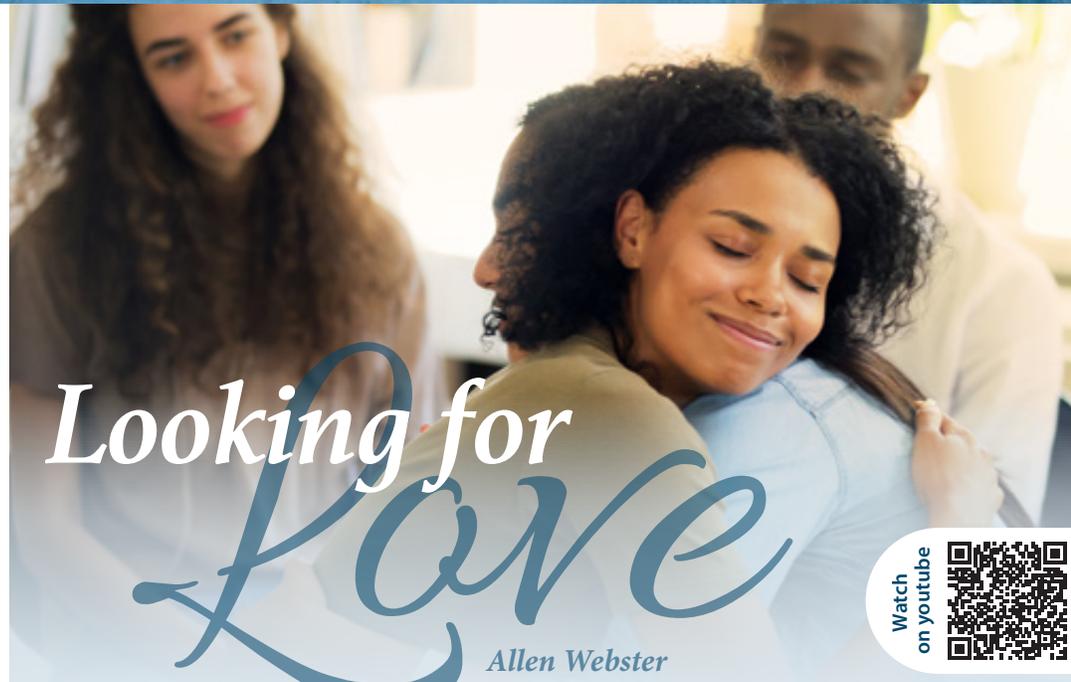


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VOLUME 29 NUMBER 9



Looking for *Love*

Allen Webster



People all over the world are looking for love.

According to Amazon.com, there are at least 32,507 books currently in print with the word *love* in the title (and over 145,000 that deal with the subject of love). There are more than 11,000 popular albums with *love* in the title. A Google search reveals that there are at least 121,000,000 websites that use the word *love* as one of their key words.¹

The Bible is a book about a love story. It is about God's love for humanity and His wooing of our affection through the mediator, His Son. The word *love* (in various forms) is found 419 times in the Bible. The book of 1 John has love for its theme. It tells us that "God is love" (1 John 4:8) and then shows us that God has demonstrated, or made manifest, His love (3:16; 4:9-10).

Love is not just something we feel. Love requires action; it is demonstrated through behavior. God's love is more than just talk. He demonstrated compassion so we would learn to be compassionate.

As Paul said, "He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24). John wrote, "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18; cf. James 2:15-16).

GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS LOVE FOR US BY GIFT-GIVING.

One of the five languages of love² is gift-giving. We enjoy surprising our mates with a little something we picked up on a trip. We take pleasure in giving presents to our children during the holidays. We celebrate graduations, weddings, and births with gift-giving.

God also uses this *love language* to express His sentiments to man. He "gave gifts to men" (Ephesians 4:8). He leaves no one out; even His avowed enemies get daily gifts from the Creator they deny. "The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works" (Psalm 145:9). He gives us sunshine and rain, fruitful seasons, and beautiful vistas. Paul and Barnabas explained that God "did not leave Himself



without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17; cf. Matthew 5:45).

GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS LOVE FOR US THROUGH THE LIFE OF HIS SON.

Jesus helped us to get to know the God of love. Eighty-six occurrences of *love* are found in the eighty-nine chapters of Jesus’ biographies. When *compassion* is included, the total increases to one hundred times. Jesus told Philip, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). We see Jesus’ love demonstrated in feeding hungry people (John 6), healing hurting people (Matthew 4:24), directing lost people (Matthew 9:35–36), correcting wrong people (Matthew 23), accepting rejected people (Luke 19:1–10), and dying for lost people (Matthew 20:28).

Someone once wrote about a traveler who fell into a deep pit and couldn’t get out. Several persons came along and saw him struggling in the pit.

The sensitive person said, “I feel for you down there.”

The reflective person said, “It’s logical that someone would fall into the pit.”

The aesthetic person said, “I can give you ideas on how to decorate your pit.”

The judgmental person said, “Only bad people fall into pits.”

The curious person said, “Tell me how you fell into the pit.”

The perfectionist said, “I believe you deserve your pit.”

The evaluator asked, “Are you paying taxes on this pit?”

The self-pitying person said, “You should have seen my pit.”

The counselor said, “Just relax. Don’t think about the pit.”

The optimist said, “Cheer up! Things could be worse.”

The pessimist said, “Be prepared! Things will get worse.”

Jesus, seeing him, loved him, and lifted him out of the pit.³

A Christian can truthfully sing, “I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore” when “love lifted me!”

GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS LOVE FOR US THROUGH THE DEATH OF HIS SON.

God has an infallible track record. He can be trusted. He has proven beyond question that He loves us. The Bible says, “But God demonstrates⁴ His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

John Griffith lived in Oklahoma in 1929, and he lost all he had in the stock market crash. He moved to Mississippi, where he took a job tending a bridge for a railroad trestle. One day in 1937, his eight-year-old son, Greg, spent the day with his dad at work. He played in the office that morning and asked a thousand questions.

Then a ship came through and John opened the drawbridge. Suddenly, he realized his son wasn’t in the office. Frantically he looked around, and to his horror saw him climbing on the gears of the draw bridge. He hurried outside to rescue his son, but just then he heard what he knew was a fast-approaching passenger train, the *Memphis Express*, filled with four hundred people. He yelled to his son, but the noise of the clearing ship and the oncoming train made it impossible for the boy to hear him. John Griffith realized his horrible dilemma. If he took the time to rescue his son, the train would crash and kill all aboard. If he closed the bridge, he would sacrifice his son.

He made the decision he would relive ten thousand times and pulled the lever to close the bridge. As the train went by he could see some passengers’ faces. Some were reading, some waved, and all were oblivious to the sacrifice that had just been made on their behalf.

God once faced a similar dilemma. He could not save sinners and spare Jesus, too. How could He be “just” and “justifier” at the same time? (cf. Romans 3:26). God had to allow the jaws of death to close on His Son. He “did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all” (Romans 8:32). Millions go by oblivious and indifferent, even some who know the sacrifice.

Still, there is one tremendous difference between the two fathers. Unlike the *Memphis Express* that caught John Griffith by surprise, sending Jesus was not a panic move. It wasn’t a spontaneous decision. It was planned. Paul said, “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law” (Galatians 4:4). Jesus’ death was not the result of jealous Jews or hard-hearted Romans. It was the result of a loving God who saw there was no other way to save man. “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us” (1 John 3:16).

Since people are looking for love, and “God is love” (1 John 4:8),⁵ God is what people are looking for!

Endnotes:

¹ “*God Is Love.*” Scott R. Bayles, SermonCentral.com.

² According to Gary Chapmans best-selling book *The Five Languages of Love.*

³ Author unknown.

⁴ *simistao, sunistano, simistemi* “to set together, that is, (by implication) to *introduce* (favorably), or (figuratively) to *exhibit*; intransitively to *stand near*, or (figuratively) to *constitute.*”

⁵ For more, see “*The Scourging of Jesus.*” <http://www.housetohouse.com/hth/archives/scourging.htm>.

JOY!

The Greek word for “rejoicing” is used in the New Testament 72 times. This word is variously translated by these words: “rejoicing,” “joy,” “hail,” “glad,” “greeting,” and “farewell.” It is a word that induces an intense emotional response from those who hear or see the word. Either they are so joyful that they respond to the word in a positive way, or they are so down and discouraged (but wish they were joyful) that they respond in a negative way.

Joy is a word of depth. It speaks about the inner person and what is going on inside the heart and mind. Joy is the ability to remain upbeat and positive under the extreme weight of pain and discouragement and trouble. Acts 5:41 says that the apostles rejoiced even under severe persecution.

Joy is a word of width. It remains with an individual no matter how wide the temptations of life may be. Every day is a battle as we face temptations from sources far and wide. James admonishes, “Count it all joy when you fall into various trials” (James 1:2).

Joy is a word of height. It lifts the soul from the pits into which the world controlled by the devil and his forces attempts every day to shove all of us. Joy makes the heart soar above the troubles

of the world. Philippians 4:4 reminds us that we can “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”

Joy is a word of length. It stays with the Christian for as long as there is breath in his life. It does not grow old and wear out. It will never be replaced by something better. Jesus told His disciples that the joy He provided them has no expiration date. “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:11).

Joy certainly is the vehicle that allows us to endure to the end without becoming cynical or discouraged. Joy helps us defeat life instead of allowing life to defeat us. We need to be joyful people because of its value for our lives. —Mike Johnson¹

Endnote:

¹ Johnson, Mike. *Consider This: Joy!!!* (26 May 2023). Retrieved from <https://www.richmondcc.org/consider-this/joy>.



An Unanswerable Question

At the beginning of his sermon, a minister leaned over the pulpit and said, “Friends, I have a question to ask. I cannot answer it. You cannot answer it. If an angel from heaven were here, he could not answer it. If the devil from hell were here, he could not answer it. The question is found in Hebrews 2:3: ‘How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?’”

Are you a saved person? If not, you need to obey the gospel by believing (John 3:16), repenting (Luke 13:3), confessing Christ (Romans 10:9–10), and being baptized (Acts 2:38). If you’ve been unfaithful, you need to repent and pray for forgiveness.



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:** 1 Corinthians 2:12–13
- 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

Watch on youtube



A Shakespeare Who Couldn't Read?

William Shakespeare is regarded as the greatest writer in the English language. Although four hundred years have passed since his death, every school student studies the life and works of Shakespeare. However, there is a startling fact about Shakespeare that few know. When Shakespeare's daughter, Judith, married, she signed her marriage license with a mark (the equivalent of an "X"). In other words, she was illiterate!

Here's my question: "How is it possible for the greatest writer in the English language to allow his daughter to be illiterate?" You would think that, to a man like Shakespeare, reading and writing would have meant everything. Surely, he would have taken the time to teach his daughter to read and write, but the stark reality is he did not. Let this soak in, "The greatest writer in the English language had a child who could not read or write."

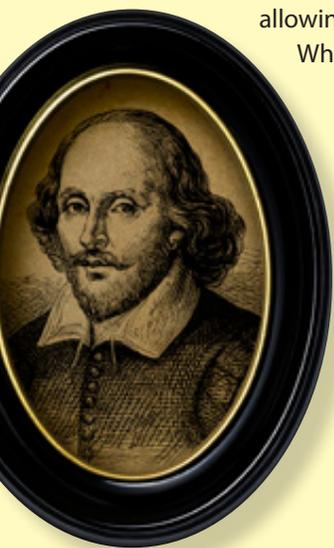
As unimaginable as this fact is, how much more unimaginable is it that Christian parents would not pass on the knowledge of God to their children? In the days of the judges, a generation was allowed to grow up without knowing the Lord or the works He had done for them (Judges 2:10).

I am afraid many parents are allowing this to happen.

What are we to think of parents who do not teach the Bible to their children, nor do they think it is a priority to allow others to teach them in Bible class?

"Train up a child in the way he should go."

PROVERBS 22:6



To watch videos, read articles, answer Bible questions, and more, go to house-to-house.com.



The Anchor at the End

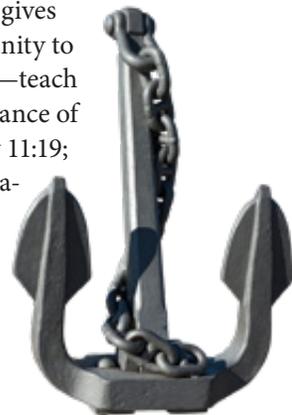
The Navy's *USS Dwight D. Eisenhower* weighs 95,000 tons, carries more than 6,000 sailors, and serves 18,000 meals a day. It has two anchors. Each anchor weighs 60,000 pounds and is attached to a chain that weighs 665,000 pounds. Each solitary link in that chain weighs 365 pounds.

Every ship has an anchor that is at the end of a very long series of individual links. If you trace those links one by one, you will eventually get to the anchor. It is the anchor that keeps the ship from drifting.

That is the way families are. Each family member is one link in a long chain that stretches out for hundreds of years. God knows each link, but He is most concerned

with one link—you. You may be the link that holds your family to Christ for the next 100 years (cf. Deuteronomy 6:1-2).

Ralph W. Sockman said, "What makes greatness is starting something that will live after you." God gives parents the opportunity to do something great—teach children the importance of Him (Deuteronomy 11:19; Psalm 44:1; 71:18; Isaiah 38:19).



Just for Fun Beatitudes Matching Game

Match each half of the beatitudes from Matthew 5:1-12.

- | | |
|--|--|
| Blessed are the meek | For they shall inherit the earth. |
| Blessed are the merciful | For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. |
| Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake | For they shall obtain mercy. |
| Blessed are the poor in spirit | For they shall be called sons of God. |
| Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad | For they shall be comforted. |
| Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness | For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. |
| Blessed are the pure in heart | For they shall see God. |
| Blessed are those who mourn | For great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. |
| Blessed are the peacemakers | For they shall be filled. |

A Proven Contradiction or Mere Assumption?

Matthew's and Luke's accounts of Satan tempting Jesus in the wilderness certainly are different (Matthew 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13): The second and third temptations recorded by Matthew are “flip-flopped” in Luke's account. Matthew recorded that, in his second temptation, Satan tried to persuade Jesus to throw Himself off the pinnacle of the temple. For the third temptation, Matthew listed Satan's attempt to get Jesus to worship him. Even though Luke mentioned the same two events, he listed them in the reverse order. How are these accounts not contradictory?

In short, this question is based upon an assumption. Those who claim that the “disorder” of temptations is a contradiction assume that events are always written (or spoken) chronologically. However, that simply is not the case. Open almost

any world history textbook, and you will see that, even though most events are recorded chronologically, some are arranged topically. For example, in one chapter, you may read about the European civilization in the late Middle Ages (AD 1000–1300). Yet, in the very next chapter, you might learn about Medieval India (150 BC–AD 1400). Authors arrange world history textbooks thematically in order to reduce the confusion that would arise if they tried to record every event chronologically.

Even when we tell life experiences to friends and family, we often speak climactically rather than chronologically. A teenager may return home from an amusement park and tell his father about all of the roller coasters he rode. Rather than mentioning all of them in the exact order he rode them, he may start with the

most exciting ones and end with the less thrilling ones, or vice versa.

Had both Matthew and Luke claimed to have arranged the temptations of Jesus chronologically, skeptics would have a legitimate criticism. The fact is that at least one of the gospel writers could have written topically and never intended for readers to assume a strict, sequential ordering of the events.

Although the Bible writers often are accused of having written contradictory statements, an honest, in-depth study actually shows the so-called “contradictions” are merely accusations of contradictions and not valid, proven discrepancies. Remember, assumptions are not contradictions! —Eric Lyons



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

Bible Quiz

VOLUME 29:9

Send us your answers to receive a free Bible bookmark. We will grade and return your questions and enclose the bookmark “God's Emergency Numbers” 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. 29:7 Soaking Up Living Water: 1. Jesus (John 4:1); 2. Jacob (John 4:5–6); 3. Give; drink (John 4:6–7); 4. Jews; Samaritans (John 4:9); 5. Living (John 4:10); 6. Greater than (John 4:12); 7. Everlasting (John 4:13–14); 8. Draw (John 4:15); 9. Five (John 4:18); 10. Prophet (John 4:19); 11. Place (John 4:20); 12. The Father (John 4:21); 13. True (John 4:23); 14. Spirit (John 4:24); 15. Spirit; truth (John 4:24); 16. Christ (John 4:25); 17. Am He (John 4:26); 18. Waterpot (John 4:28); 19. Many; word (John 4:39–41); 20. Christ; Savior (John 4:42).

V. 29:8 Starts with the Letter “S”: 1. Shepherd (Psalm 23:1); 2. Sabbath (Exodus 16:23, 26); 3. Samson (Judges 16:9); 4. Samuel (1 Samuel 1:20); 5. Sapphira (Acts 5:1); 6. Sarah (Genesis 17:15, 19); 7. Satan (Matthew 4:10); 8. Saul (1 Samuel 15:1); 9. Seth (Genesis 4:25); 10. Shamgar (Judges 3:31); 11. Shem (Genesis 5:32); 12. Sabachthani (Matthew 27:46); 13. Sihon (Numbers 21:21); 14. Silas (Acts 15:40); 15. Sin (1 John 3:4); 16. Sodom (Genesis 19:24); 17. Solomon (1 Kings 1:17); 18. Stephen (Acts 7:58–60); 19. Shield (Ephesians 6:16); 20. Sheep (Psalm 100:3); 21. Salt (Genesis 19:26); 22. Sadducees (Matthew 16:6); 23. Scripture (1 Timothy 3:16); 24. Spider (Proverbs 30:28); 25. Snow (Isaiah 1:18).

One “Killer” Sermon

Find answers in Acts 7. Questions are taken from the New King James Version.

- Who appeared to Abraham saying, “Get out of your country”? _____
- God promised Abraham and his descendants a possession when “Abraham had _____.”
- On which day of Isaac's life did Abraham perform the covenant act of circumcision? _____
- Envious brothers sold Joseph as a slave into what land? _____
- What was drawing near during the reign of a ruler who did not know Joseph? “The _____ of the _____.”
- When Moses was born, a ruler forced God's people to “_____ their babies, so that they might not _____.”
- When Moses struck down an Egyptian, he supposed his people would recognize that God would use him “to _____ them.”
- Who appeared at Mount Sinai in a “flame of fire?” “An _____ of the _____.”
- On “holy” ground, the heavenly spokesman stated, “_____ the God of your fathers.”
- Mighty wonders and signs were performed “in the land of _____, and in the _____, and in the wilderness.”
- Moses promised that God would raise “a _____ me” for the children of Israel to hear.
- When the Israelites refused to obey God, they “turned back to Egypt” in “their _____.”
- Aaron helped the people make an idol in the form of what animal? _____
- Because of idolatry, “God _____ and _____ them up to worship the host of heaven.”
- God's people built the tabernacle “_____ to the _____” Moses received.
- The Most High does not dwell in “_____ with _____.”
- As their forefathers mistreated past prophets, Stephen's audience became “_____ and _____” of the “Just One.”
- Stephen miraculously viewed Jesus in what posture at God's right hand? _____
- The enraged mob took Stephen out of the city where “they _____” him.
- With Stephen's final breaths, he petitioned the Lord to “receive my _____” and to “not _____ them with this sin.”



The Seven Fingers of the Crucifixion

1. One Savior (John 4:42; Acts 4:12; Ephesians 4:4).

2. Two Thieves (Mark 15:27; John 19:18). His companions in death were two thieves. Such added disgrace to our Lord's death. A remarkable conversation took place between the two thieves, as is recorded in Luke 23:39–41.

3. Three Crosses (Luke 23:33; John 19:18). The cross of rejection (Luke 23:39); the cross of repentance (23:40–43); the cross of redemption (Ephesians 1:7). We must guard our hearts from becoming irreversibly hardened, as was the case with the impenitent thief (Luke 23:39–43). He experienced excruciating agony, he knew that the one dying next to him was the Son

of God, and he knew he was about to draw his last breath. Still, he died blaspheming God! How can we explain such? The answer: It is possible for man to irretrievably harden his heart and conscience (Ephesians 4:18–19; 1 Timothy 4:2; Romans 1:24, 26, 28). The penitent thief on the cross is not an example for our conversion. It is often affirmed, "The thief never was baptized, and he was saved; therefore, I do not need to be baptized in order to be saved." First, no man can prove that the thief was not baptized. It is altogether possible, even probable, that he had been baptized with John's baptism; then he fell away (Acts 13:23–24; Matthew 3:5–6; Mark 1:4–5; Luke 3:7, 21; John 4:1). He knew of the kingdom (Luke 23:42) and the preaching of the kingdom attached to John's bap-

tism (Matthew 3:1–6). Further, when Jesus made His promise to the thief, the New Testament was not in force (Hebrews 9:15–17) as it is today. Also, why would anyone want to ignore all of the conversions in the book of Acts and go back to the thief on the cross as an example of conversion?

4. Four Parts to His Garments (John 19:23–24).

5. Five Wounds (Luke 24:39–40; John 19:34; 20:25–27).

6. Six Hours (Mark 15:25, 33, 37).

7. Seven Sayings (Luke 23:34, 43; Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34; John 19:26–28; Luke 23:46; John 19:30).

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Recommended Resource



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First Sweethearts



Playing Hide-n-Seek with God



What the Disciples Learned about Giving on a Field Trip



The Five Sacrifices of Calvary



Why Not Be a Prodigal Part 1



Why Not Be a Prodigal Part 2



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VOLUME 29:9



Benefits of Prayer

Praying to God is one of the best activities we can do. We are told to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17), meaning our first go-to throughout the day should be turning to God. He should be foremost on our mind. When we pray, it . . .

Brings us closer to God

“But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” —MATTHEW 6:6

Increases mindfulness

“Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.” —COLOSSIANS 3:2

Changes things

“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”

—JAMES 5:16

Makes us happy

“Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” —JOHN 16:24

Gives hope

“Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.” —MARK 11:24

Defeats selfishness

“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

—2 CHRONICLES 7:14

Helps guide us

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

—JAMES 1:5

Gives strength

“But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

—ISAIAH 40:31

Provides peace

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” —PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

Helps with difficult relationships

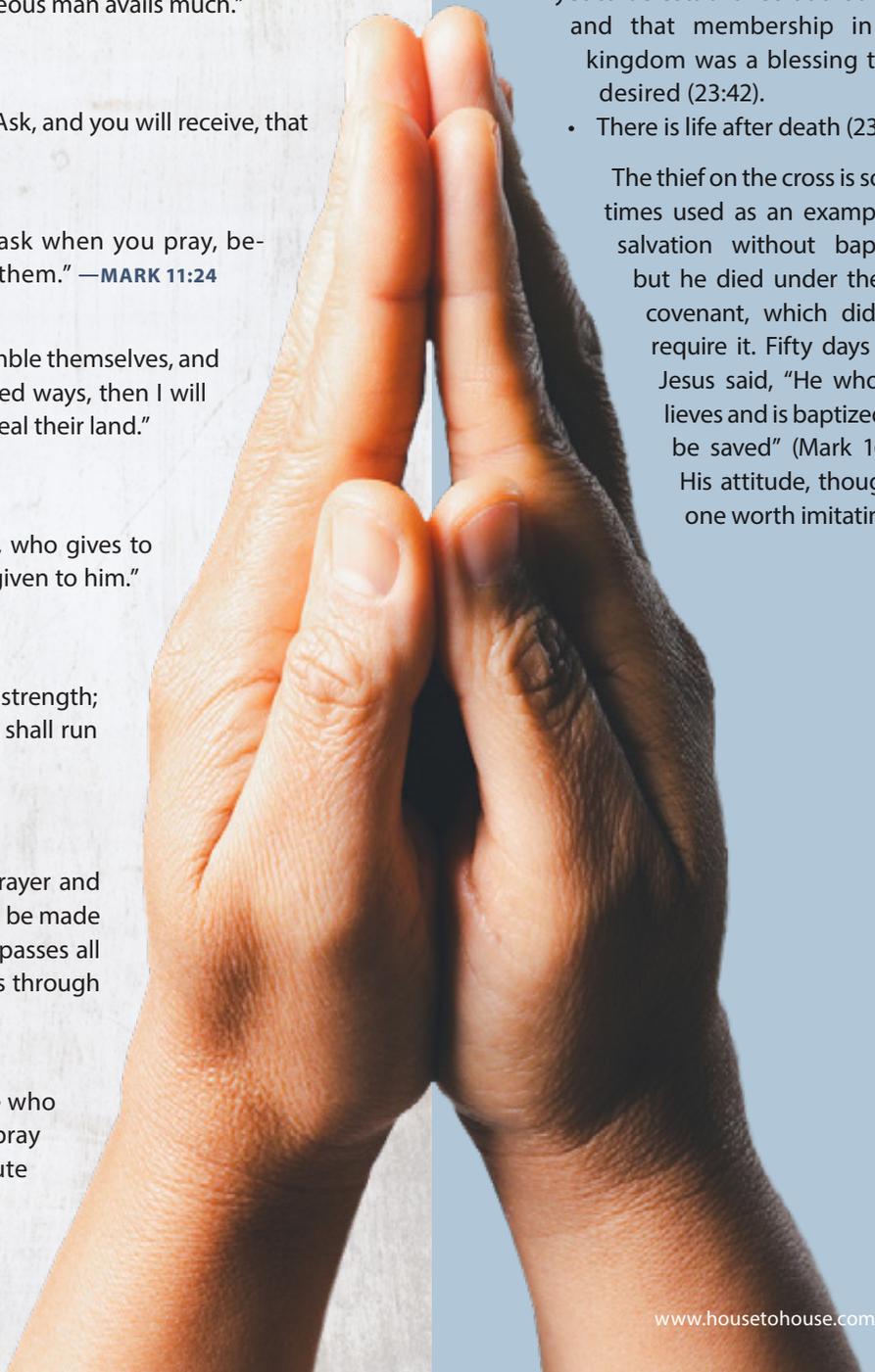
“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.” —MATTHEW 5:44

That Thief Knew a Lot

The thief on the cross (Luke 23:39–42) appears to have met Jesus before. In the conversation between the thieves crucified with Christ, the penitent one gave utterance to seven salient truths. He declared the following:

- There is a God we must fear (Luke 23:40).
- You cannot sin with impunity (23:41).
- Christ’s unqualified perfection (23:41).
- The Lordship of Jesus; he had personal needs that only Jesus could supply (23:42).
- There are vital facts concerning the kingdom: that the kingdom belongs to the Lord, that the kingdom was yet to be established at that time, and that membership in the kingdom was a blessing to be desired (23:42).
- There is life after death (23:42).

The thief on the cross is sometimes used as an example of salvation without baptism, but he died under the old covenant, which did not require it. Fifty days later Jesus said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16). His attitude, though, is one worth imitating.





Are We in the Last Days?

When discussing the Bible with friends and family, it is common to hear the phrase, “We are in the last days!” The person who says this usually means that we are near the end of time. Ideas like rapture, war, and tribulation are used, and people point to the “signs of the times” for proof that these events are at hand.

What does the Bible have to say about this phrase? Are we in the last days, or are they still to come? What exactly will happen in the last days?

Hebrews 1:1 tells us that God used to speak in a lot of ways by a lot of people. Verse 2 tells us that God now speaks by His Son Jesus, “in these last days.” When the church started in Acts 2, Peter said that these are the “last days” spoken of by the prophet Joel (Acts 2:16–17). James rebuked his readers for heaping up treasure for themselves by mistreating their fellow Christians “in the last days” (James 5:3).

When discussing the Old Testament Scriptures, Romans 15:4 says that “whatever things were written before were written for our learning.” The Old Testament period is the former days. The New Testament period, where we are now, is the “last days.”

Are we in the last days? Yes. We have been for 2000 years, and we will be until Jesus returns. Jesus’ final return will be sudden, without any warning (Matthew 24:36–39; 2 Peter 3:10). Are you ready for that return?

Scan the QR code to learn more about end times.



—Matt Wallin



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