



# Foundation of Faith

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

ACTIVE LOVE

WHAT IS IN YOUR HAND?

GOOD ADVICE FOR THE NEW YEAR

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

## Possibilities

JANUARY 2019

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## *Editorial*

*Dear Reader!*

*Wasted opportunities!—I will not forget this experience for the rest of my life!*

*It was in March of 1963 when a 28-year-old Mexican government worker led me into the biggest cathedral in Mexico City. At the entrance, he sprinkled himself with holy water that stood nearby, and at every picture of Mary and the saints he made the sign of the cross as he had been told to do since childhood. I silently followed him. But then he suddenly turned around, looked at me, and said, "Friend, where is the truth!" He said this with such a pleading, longing look, I still remember clearly today.*

*I was only a Christian in name back then, without assurance of salvation or inner peace. But his words pierced my soul like a sword. I knew we were both missing the greatest thing. In my distress, I left this poor soul standing and walked away, afraid of further questions.*

*That same year, I sought God and found peace for my soul with Jesus. Now I was able to write this man, "You can find truth in the Son of God!" That was the last contact I had with him. How often I have regretted not taking advantage of my opportunity!*

*But thanks be to God there are still those today who use the opportunities God gives them. In His Word, we learn of Andrew, who acknowledged Jesus as the Lamb of God and led his brother Simon to Him. Others saw opportunities and made use of them for themselves, such as blind Bartimaeus or Zacchaeus the tax collector.*

*Dear Reader, opportunities to be a light and witness also present themselves today, allowing you to do something for your Lord. Perhaps you could offer the Foundation of Faith to your neighbor, work colleague, or relative.*

*In this edition, you will find several testimonies of those who used the opportunities they had and were a blessing.*

*H. D. Nimz*

# When the Lord Sends

Once had a shocking experience. An elderly widow once lived in the city of Essen, Germany. Her husband had been a miner. When she became a Christian, this humble woman went about ministering to many through her testimony for Jesus.

One day, I heard she was discharged from the hospital, after her doctor had openly told her, “You have cancer, and it’s at a stage where I can no longer operate on it. Go home and put your house in order.”

Several days later, I met her in the city. I said, “Mother, what are you doing?”

And she answered, “I have to visit several people who are interested in Jesus but haven’t yet given their life to

Him. It’s so important to me that they would experience salvation through the blood of Jesus.”

Astonished, I looked at her—her face was white as snow—and said, “But Mother, you are very sick. You do realize how sick you are. You need to go home and lay down on your bed. You have cancer!”

Somewhat indignantly, she answered, “What does it matter if I have cancer when there are living souls hanging in the balance and the Lord sends me!”

I became very quiet. And I realized what kind of power the Lord Jesus has. Yes, when the Lord Jesus touches people and calls them into His service, then they must go and make use of every opportunity! Wilhelm Busch

# Always in Service

In order to recover from a serious illness, I was prescribed treatment at a health resort. There was much to arrange and pack. I included some religious tracts in my luggage. They were to be my steady companions on the journey.

Weary and exhausted I looked for an empty seat on the train. The beautiful countryside with all its small stations flew by. The silence was good for me. After I had rested for awhile, I felt prompted to share some of my tracts with my fellow travelers. “No,” I said to myself, “I need to rest now.” The evil one confirmed my thoughts—you do not always have to hand out tracts to be in the Lord’s service.

The time flew by and the train neared its destination. The nudge grew stronger and more frequent: “Go and do your duty.” There was a great battle within me. Finally I said, “Ok, I will go.”

There was a young lady sitting alone near me in my car with a sad expression on her face. I gave her something to read. After a short time she turned to me and asked, “May I speak with you?” She then shared her distress with me. “One year ago I ran away from my good

Christian home. I found the whole religious thing to be a nuisance. I wanted to live my own life. However, the world has only disappointed and deceived me; I would like to go home. What should I do? I am afraid. I asked God for guidance. You came at the right time. Do you think my parents will welcome me back? This train is heading towards home.”

With joy I could tell her, “The prayers of your parents have created this longing in you.”

After uniting in a prayer of thanksgiving, it was time to disembark, since my destination was in sight. Filled with joy and gratitude, she helped me with my luggage.

Who was happier now, this young lady or I? With tears of joy in her eyes, she waved to me from the moving train now bringing her home.

Once again I learned to obey when God assigns a task, despite any weakness. He does not *need* to use us; He *wants* to use us. The full blessing lies in obedience, I have experienced that in body and soul.

Dear reader, will you also be obedient and take advantage of every opportunity you are given?

M. Dittmann



# *Maria's Testimony*

**M**aria!” Mrs. Richter stood in the doorway leading into a garden that was quickly getting dark. “Mother, I’m coming!” was the answer. From within the garden, hidden by wild grape vines and other vegetation, came a blond-haired girl about 20 years old. Quickly finding her way under tree branches heavy with fruit, Maria hurried across the green grass to her waiting mother.

Tenderly, the glance of the mother focused on her youngest child, the joy of her heart and comfort of her years. God had given her many gifts with this dear child! She was a jewel inside and out, full of sunshine and life. Even though her son and heir was a hard, inconsiderate

man and her oldest daughter a lost child, she nevertheless had this one who was the light and consolation of her life as a widow. Maria’s love and faithfulness helped her deal with life’s struggles. That’s why Mrs. Richter was so good to her.

“We have visitors, Maria!”

“Visitors?” she asked and looked questioningly at her mother. “Who’s coming to visit so late today?”

“Come in!” The mother led the way and Maria followed her with anticipation. Once inside the simple home, the mystery was soon solved. People from the city, who had been visiting the Webers three days ago, met her at the door.

“Do you remember us?” asked an elderly lady with silvery white hair as she laughingly extended her hand to Maria. “Surely you still remember us,” she said in a lively manner as she saw Maria nod her head. “We came later today because we wanted to be sure you’d be at home. This afternoon we saw you walk by the home of our relatives. ‘Isn’t that the young girl who gave us that precious booklet to read?’ I asked my husband, who was lying on the sofa. He recognized her immediately. ‘Yes, it is her!’ he said happily. ‘My dear, we need to find her. We need to look into the warm eyes of this golden child who told us about so much happiness.’ Yes, that is what he said, and I agreed. So we are here now to thank you for that precious leaflet and to ask for others.”

“You said that correctly,” a man’s deep voice said. “My opinion also. That dear booklet told me about Jesus, and it was just what I needed. Yes, I need the blood that cleanses from all sin.”

Then the elderly Mr. Kirchfeld grasped Maria’s hand and squeezed it warmly as a tear quietly ran down his cheeks and fell onto her hand.

Maria thought this was a dream. What was all this? What did all this mean? Yes, now she slowly remembered. Once again, she relived the moments three days ago on the train.

Mrs. Kirchfeld had made herself comfortable on the sofa and began telling the story.

“For some time now, our son-in-law wished we would visit his parents, who live here. To this point, we had been unable to fulfill his wish during the years he has been married to our daughter, Hanna. I was often sick for longer time periods and over the last winter, my husband was bedridden for half a year. Eventually, he got better. After he felt stronger, we decided to follow up on our son-in-law’s request. We hope my husband is able to recover his health here with the fresh country air.”

While we were visiting, she slowly stroked the almost transparent hands of her husband and continued, “Because we live far from the train station, our son-in-law ordered a taxi to take us there. However, the taxi did not come. In a great hurry, we ordered another taxi. When we finally arrived at the train station, it was shortly before departure time. You can imagine how we had to hurry to get to the train. We had just gone through the gate when the conductor gave the signal for departure. I ran as fast as I could and didn’t notice my husband struggling to breathe and beginning to stagger. The conductor took him under the arm and led him into the car. I followed

with my suitcase. We had barely entered the train when it began to move. It was your daughter who got up and offered her place to my husband.”

“‘Walk slowly back and forth; otherwise you may have a heart attack,’ said one of the passengers. Again, it was your daughter who helped me hold my husband under the arms. Even now his legs shake occasionally and he often has trouble breathing. However, generally his health has improved.”

Mrs. Kirchfeld folded her hands, looked around, and then began speaking. “Yes, and then your daughter gave us that precious booklet shortly before we reached our destination. That is why we are here today, because we have been captivated by the message in this booklet, and we have been richly blessed through it.”

“I have especially benefited from the message of the Lord, the peace it proclaimed and gave,” said Mr. Kirchfeld.

The mother looked at her daughter with sparkling eyes. What was she thinking?

Maria quietly arose and went to her room. Where to? To that place where she always went if unforeseen joy or sorrow confronted her. In her room, she fell to her knees. She uttered only short words, but her heart expressed her thoughts more clearly. On that day, she only had two Christian booklets with her, which she wanted to give to those whom God directed her to. One had been given to these two elderly people and had produced such peace! But where was the other leaflet? “Lord, You know where it is. Please bless it also,” her believing heart prayed.

After some time, Maria returned to the sitting room to find that the visitors had already left but had promised to visit again soon.

Almost a whole week had passed when Maria’s mother heard one morning that the elderly man staying at the Webers had died suddenly during the night from a heart attack.

“Thank God that he still found the Savior in time, like a soul rescued from the fire,” said Maria’s mother and went to tell Maria.

Maria was moved by the announcement of his death. However, she was joyful and thankful that she had followed the command of the Holy Spirit to give Mr. Kirchfeld the Christian booklet. She was able to prepare the way for the Lord. This experience was an encouragement to her to continue following the Lord Jesus in love and faithfulness and to continue working for Him.

# Why Are You Here?

In the midst of your daily routine, at work, at play or even when you are on holidays and having a good time, you might suddenly be confronted with the question, Why am I here and what is my purpose in life?

That is certainly a very important question. It's also imperative that we find the right answer to this question, since people have all sorts of different answers. Either they don't know or don't want to know why they're here. That is a pity and makes life empty and meaningless.

As members of the human race, we shouldn't just work hard every day, to spend a life full of worry and toil for 70 or 80 years and then die. Neither is the purpose of life to have as much fun as possible and to enjoy ourselves to the fullest.

When a person is confronted with illness and suffering, then the question becomes even more serious. It may become a self-reflecting inquiry that haunts day and night: What is my purpose on earth? Some may think they no longer have a meaningful role to fill, as they may not be able to take care of the necessities of life. They feel they are just a burden to others.

Some have made it their life goal to become rich and able to afford all sorts of luxuries. Others may think doing their duties and fulfilling the challenges of their profession is a much more noble ambition. Still others think they're here for their family or their country. These reasons, among others, may give life purpose, but they cannot satisfy the soul. The human soul reflects the image of God. To know God and to see God is a blessing for the soul. It is the duty of the soul to let the image of God unfold inside. To be far from God is anguish for the soul.

The true answer to the question, "Why am I here on earth?" can be found in the greatest of all books: "For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:7-8). To live for the Lord is the greatest purpose in life, and gives life real meaning. To live for the Lord and to serve Him will resolve everyone's unan-

swered questions in life. It is meant for the young, still in the prime of life, who may be seeking fulfillment in the vain pleasures of this world, yet remain unsatisfied. It is meant for the middle-aged who may be sighing under the burden of life in the heat of the day. Only one thing can satisfy, and that is to know you are living for the Lord. It is meant for the elderly, and for those who are ill and suffering. The only real comfort you have is, "Whether I live or die, I am the Lord's."

Why are you here? What is your purpose in life? You can live for the Lord now so that you can also die with Him. Until now, you might have been living for other things. Don't you want your soul to find real contentment? Make a new start. Leave the old life behind. Give yourself fully and totally to the Lord, your God. He will give your life new direction. He, Himself, will be your goal and the meaning of life.

Why was Jesus, our example, in this world? He did not live for Himself nor die for Himself. He lived and died for us. His life was a life of self-denial and sacrifice. He did the will of His Father in heaven. His total surrender, even to the point of death, crowned His life with a victorious finish. Should His example not inspire us to a full commitment? Looking back on His life, He said to His Father, "I have glorified You on the earth" (John 17:4). That was the purpose of His life. It is also our purpose to glorify the Father in heaven and to live for Him. Can there be a higher goal?

Whoever you are, reading these words, you too are called to this purpose: to live for the Lord. You have a purpose in God's plan for your life. Commit yourself to this plan. Live for the Lord. But don't try to do it by yourself, in your own strength. Come to Jesus; let Him give you a new heart and eternal life. Without asking Christ to come into your life, it will remain self-centered.

Do not deny your soul the answer to the question, "Why am I here?" When in the stillness your soul gently asks, then give it the true answer: "From now on, I will live for the Lord!" It is worth it!

O. Sommerfeld



POSSIBILITIES

## *Indispensable* Andrew

*In our age, we need guides showing the way to Jesus, as Andrew was.*

**A**ndrew was the first young man whom Jesus called to follow Him. What do we know about this disciple? He does not seem to have been an extraordinarily gifted or influential man, and we know that the Gospels do not mention much about him. Andrew must have been an average person like you and me. The church is probably made up mostly of average people, of unassuming characters who have no shining talents or extraordinary education, so it makes a lot of sense for us to delve a little deeper into Andrew's life. Although he never became famous, he still played a crucial role in the kingdom of God.

Sometimes he is referred to as Simon Peter's brother. Peter became famous. He was honored and developed into a well-respected missionary. Andrew stood in the

shadow of his big brother. Peter played the starring role, with Andrew quietly supporting. Taking second place, always following where others lead, doing the grunt work while others organize and reap the praise afterwards—that's not easy. That takes grace.

Others may have overlooked Andrew, but Jesus looked deeper. In this quiet man, He recognized a burning desire for spiritual wealth and a strong interest in the promised Kingdom of God. After all, He knew that Andrew had given up a lot to personally come hear the young prophet at the river Jordan. It had certainly been a big decision for Andrew to join his friend John on the long journey from their home of Bethsaida to Bethabara beyond the Jordan. The baptist's fiery sermons then pierced his heart to the core, moving him so deeply that he joined him without reservation. However, when the One appeared of Whom



his master said, “Behold, the Lamb of God,” he knew to whom his loyalty had to belong from that moment on. When Jesus later called him from his fishing nets with the promise of making him a fisher of men, his search for God was ended, his longing fulfilled, and his life put on the right path. Jesus knew what motivated Andrew. He looked deeper.

After the first meeting with Jesus, Andrew immediately felt a calling. “He first found his own brother Simon” (John 1:41) and introduced him to the Messiah. This is what John reports, and every time he mentions Andrew again, he appears as a friendly guide, directing others to Jesus. He was not only the first disciple but also the first to lead someone to the Lord.

As we follow Andrew’s example of witnessing, we should allow his method to inspire us as well. He began at home. This is often the hardest place to talk about the Lord: with unsaved parents or children, with the scoffing uncle or the critical aunt, with the self-righteous grandfather or the frivolous cousin—that’s where we need to start. Anyone who fails in this regard cannot expect success in the outside world. Our life and testimony at home provide the foundation on which fruitful evangelism among our neighbors at work, in public life, and among strangers is built. Andrew “first found his own brother Simon” (John 1:41).

Without Andrew, we would likely not have the Spirit-inspired Pentecost sermon. Peter later surpassed the one who led him to Jesus, and in a similar way, many an unknown soul has been the impetus for the salvation of one of the great servants in the kingdom of God. Are we also looking for new “Simon Peter’s” in our circle and leading them to their places in the kingdom of God?

On another occasion, we encounter Andrew on a sunny hill in Judea, where thousands had gathered to listen to the unparalleled sermons of Jesus. As the shadows grew longer, hunger pangs began to make themselves felt. How did Andrew know the boy had brought along some food? I imagine he had befriended him in the course of the long day. Andrew must have been someone whom adults and children alike instinctively trusted. Maybe he started a conversation with the boy, asking where he was from and whether his mother had wanted to let him go, or if he wanted to get to know the great prophet a little better. In any case, he soon knew of the bread and fish the boy’s mother had probably packed for him. Andrew brought the boy to Jesus, saying, “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish” (John 6:9), and

Jesus then used the boy’s scarce supplies to make a miracle happen.

Isn’t that the point of our children’s ministry within the family and at Sunday School? We want to lead our children, with their as-of-yet unrealized potential and dormant talents, to Jesus so that He can create beautiful and useful fruit from these promising seeds.

In John 12:20-22, we see this side of Andrew again. Foreigners had come and wanted to speak to the Master. Why did Phillip approach Andrew with this matter? Maybe he was already so practiced in making introductions that the others just left this task to him without a second thought. Anyone could be entrusted to Andrew. He consistently showed himself to be an engaged and helpful friend. Surely, he would have been an excellent gate keeper for the church.

How did Andrew treat these Greeks? He could have tried to protect Jesus from the bothersome visitors, like the disciples did with the mothers who brought their children to Him. Maybe he could have put the men off until a more convenient time. Was caution not in order? After all, you can never know what hidden intentions these foreigners may have had. However, had Andrew done so, he would have committed the sin of silence. How often do we stay silent out of caution! We are frequently too shy to freely speak of what God inspires us to say. Andrew led the Greeks to Jesus. His primary concern was that the strangers hear something from the Master as well. Isn’t that the purpose of all mission work?

Andrew, the average man, was indispensable to the kingdom of God. What impact can a pastor have without the “Andrew’s” of the congregation? How successful can evangelization be if the “Andrew’s” do not bring people to the services?

There is a lot of hidden heroism in serving like Andrew. These heroes are not mentioned when the work and its leaders are honored, but the success of any undertaking and the yield of all work within the church are dependent on them. We cannot leave all of the work to the pastor and then hold him accountable for the meager harvest. Anyone can be an Andrew, a quiet guide to Christ, and all who have experienced the Master as Andrew did will also receive the same promise: “I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19).

Can you see how Andrew used every opportunity to lead people to Jesus? Keep an eye out for the opportunities God gives you as well.

E. W.

## What Is That in Your Hand?

It wasn't much a shepherd held in his hand many years ago when God spoke to him. It was just a staff. And when God asked him for this little tool, he gave it to Him (see Exodus 4).

We got to know the story of this staff very well after God used it to accomplish His purposes. Great miracles and signs occurred before a pagan king and his astonished subjects. Even the waters of the Red Sea parted, allowing a large crowd to pass through, escaping years of imprisonment.

What would have happened if Moses had said, "O Lord, you cannot use this staff! It is too insignificant to bring into the presence of this proud king!"? What if he had not let God use it? No doubt the world would never have heard of Moses' impressive leadership. But Moses did not remove his simple tool from God's hand.

We see here that God doesn't despise any simple tools dedicated to Him. Sometimes He uses them in a very special way. Not only did He ask Moses, the shepherd, long ago, this question, "What is that in your hand?" He asks us the same question today.

It is true, we are not called to such mighty deeds as Moses was. But each one of us has a job, and each one of us will one day give an account to God if we haven't done it properly.

How is it possible for us today to hinder the advancement of the kingdom of God? When we hold back from God what He has asked of us? "I have nothing in my hand God needs," we say. We don't see the burning bush God has lit, and we don't hear the voice of God calling out of the flame. In this way we continue to hinder the work of the Lord.

Human reason is no match for divine wisdom. Therefore, we should not resist what God is asking us to do. Our hands may seem almost empty to us; we only have one talent. But this is exactly what God wants. If we hand it over to Him completely, we'll be surprised at how He can develop this little gift. But if we keep it from Him, it will become smaller and may even be taken away from us.

How do we wish to respond to God's question for us?

E. E. Egermeier

## Whoever Confesses Me before Men

There was a large social gathering in an aristocratic home, where nobles, officers, ladies, and gentlemen were in attendance. They laughed and joked, and being in high spirits, made many blasphemous comments about faith and religion.

"Countess," a young gentleman said to his neighbor, "what do you say to all this? Are you still holding on to your foolish Christian faith? Surely that's no longer possible!"

How this dear countess came to be in this gathering, I don't know. It couldn't have been comfortable for her. Being confronted so directly, she realized that only a heartfelt confession would get her through. Therefore,

she folded her hands and spoke solemnly and audibly so all could hear:

*He who on the cross was defiled,  
by His people mocked and blamed;  
He who in His kingdom mild  
Crowns us with His shame,  
He is my Head and Guide  
in Whom my heart abides.*

The scoffers fell silent, and no one dared to say another word. The faithful confession of this Christian had judged them. True confession is greater than mere discussion.

# Practical Christianity

**P**ractical Christianity is not an outward form, but is the power of God through Jesus Christ working in us. When Christ lives in us, He empowers us to live a faithful, righteous, holy, and pleasing life for God. Many have only an outward form of Christianity. Perhaps a reason for this is that their religious leaders only possess this outward form as well. However, God's servants should be an example to the congregation "in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

What does true Christianity mean? To be able to live for Christ, we must first experience a genuine spiritual awakening and new birth. It will not be difficult for one who has been freed from sin to walk in the steps of Jesus. But anyone who tries without the true experience of salvation will never succeed.

Everyone who searches for God with their whole heart, in genuine sorrow and repentance, will experience salvation and become a child of God. Then God will equip them with strength every day, enabling them to please Him by living holy and righteously in this world. The condemnation, bad conscience, and sense of guilt a person once had will all be gone. God's peace will enter the heart. He is born again, and with this experience of salvation, true Christianity begins.

The apostle Paul writes in Romans 5:1, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." How wonderful it is to know that we have obtained peace with God after sinning against Him for such a long time. God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are now God's children. If we have truly experienced salvation and have peace in our hearts, then it will not be difficult to live a true Christian life.

Dear reader, if you are continuing to do things you know are sinful, then you must seriously seek God until you have the certainty that you are born again. Only then will you realize that practical Christianity exists. Our daily lives will prove we are true Christians.

The Word of God will become a new book for you. Your understanding of His Word will be opened, and you will see amazing things like never before. You will experience a hunger and thirst for God's righteousness. As you read the clear doctrine, your soul will be led by the working of the Holy Spirit to give yourself entirely to Him as an offering, thus experiencing sanctification.

If you were once saved and still profess to be a child of God, examine yourself. Do you lead a life that is pleasing to God? Are you still as eager to serve God as you were when you accepted Jesus into your heart as your Savior? Or have neglect, lukewarmness, and apathy slipped into your life? Do you have only an appearance or an empty form of godliness? Perhaps you still say your prayers, periodically read your Bible, and go to church if it suits you. But true Godly life is no longer there. Humility has been lost, and in pride and arrogance you cling to an outward appearance, an empty commitment. If this is your condition, it would be much better for you to confess and repent than to be found "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17) on the Judgment Day and be eternally lost.

Christ living within us will be outwardly evident through the works we do. Love will be shown to everyone, especially towards other Christians. There will be no sacrifice too hard, and we will not shy away from effort and work. We will hate all things that God hates and love what God loves. We will have no fellowship with darkness nor its works. Christ living within us means we will be clean from all that doesn't come from God. And as long as this holy, godly life is within us, no other force will be able to contaminate us.

Make your "call and election sure" (2 Petr 1:10), dear reader. Examine yourself in the light of God's Word and walk in the light of His precious Word illuminating your way. It is through God's Word that we either stand or fall. We cannot say, "We were taught this way." "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39). It is our duty to search the Scriptures with a sincere heart.

POSSIBILITIES

# Active Love

*“Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart . . .” (1 Timothy 1:5)*

**N**ow the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith . . .” (1 Timothy 1:5).

In this scripture, the Apostle clearly states what God expects from us: “love from a pure heart.” The first and greatest commandment is, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and ‘your neighbor as yourself’” (Luke 10:27). There was no greater commandment back then and there is none oth-

er today. Love is the Christian caliber of perfection. It is the source of true Christianity. If we had the faith to move mountains and to perform miracles, to speak with tongues of men and angels; if we had all knowledge and understanding of the deep hidden mysteries of the world, without God’s love we would still be nothing. Without true, Christian love we could not be counted among the righteous, for love is the fulfillment of the law.

This love is active. It achieves and works—not for itself, but for others. It does no evil, but is kind to others. If a person were drowning, love would not simply watch

that person's demise. Love would not stand by indifferently, but would make every effort to save his fellow man. Love would even go the extra mile. It would deny and sacrifice itself in order to save the other.

Herein God was the greatest role model. In John 3:16 we read, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." No sacrifice could have been greater. Only a godly, true, and pure love could accomplish that. Herein God demonstrated evidence of His love. And now He expects the same of us. "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).

Jesus once said to His disciples, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34). Do we measure up? Do we love each other as Jesus loved us? Just as He loved us, we should love one another. This is powerful! He gave His life for us. Therefore we should also be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren. Christ's commandment is this: "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; . . ." (John 14:23).

Jesus gave His life for us. He left His Father's dwelling place of blessing, glory, honor, and majesty, to come down to this sinful world. "[T]hough He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). He suffered deprivation, mockery, scorn, and humiliation so that you and I might be saved. He had no place to even "lay his head." He became poor for our sake and left everything behind so that we might inherit it all. Oh, such wondrous love!

And us? Are we able to sacrifice our lives for others if necessary? Didn't our Master lead the way in personal sacrifice? Is the servant greater than his master? The Apostle John writes, "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17). No one who treats his brother in this manner has the love of God in him.

I am reminded of one person's selfless love many years ago, that gave me the opportunity to hear the full, true Gospel and thereby enabled me to become free. In humility and thankfulness I appreciate this act of love. If Jesus had not prompted and filled this person's heart with love, I would have remained a slave to sin and heresies. Truly, it was the sacrificial love and faith of a per-

son sold out to God that led me to Jesus to be saved from sin.

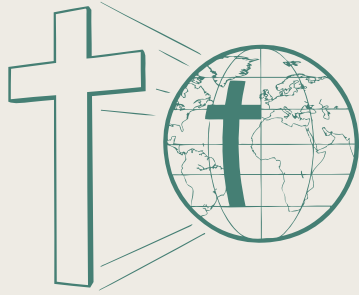
Dear children of God, if we were called to God's judgment seat right now, could we say with a clear conscience that we are "innocent of the blood of all men" (Acts 20:26)? It is true that some of the seeds we sow will be lost. Won't the loss be far greater though if souls remain in utter darkness because we have neglected to sow the good seed?

When God calls and equips His messengers to spread the eternal gospel to all nations, we expect them to be true to Him and to the precious souls they serve. They deny themselves and many are deprived of their families and loved ones. It's not uncommon or unusual that many of them live a very frugal lifestyle. Finally, the burden for lost souls is cause for many tears and many hours of earnest and fervent prayer.

Without a doubt, such a vision of consecration and faithfulness is beautiful. Yet is it too much when the pastor asks you to help carry this burden, or to expect that you help spread the Gospel and win souls for Christ? God did so much for you and me!

The 13th chapter of the 1st letter to the Corinthians is one of the most recognized of the Holy Scriptures. It addresses the wonderful love of God and its impact in the hearts of mankind. Love is a safeguard against selfishness, greed, indifference, spiritual apathy, and all other offenses. If your life is filled with love, you cannot do less than give your best to Christ. To love the Lord with all your heart signifies that His love is poured into your heart by the Holy Spirit. To love Him with all your soul conveys that every fiber of your being is drenched with godly love. To love Him with all your mind portrays that your thoughts are fixed on God, your inclinations undividedly consecrated to Him, and that no earthly resource may distract you from your focus on Him. To love the Lord with all your strength indicates that you devote all your strength and talents to promote the matters of God and His honor.

When we realize the huge responsibility that rests on us, we will zealously become active for the Lord, as the Apostle Paul did. We will not look for a comfortable spot in God's church and possibly neglect our obligation. The same love that sent God down from heaven will draw us away from selfish desires and redirect a passive condition to a fervent service for God. Love for the lost will burden us to be tirelessly engaged. But someday, eternal joy and peace in heaven will be our reward. J. F.



# Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs, Kitchener (ON)

## Good Advice for the New Year

**H**einrich Wichern once made a remarkable statement at the beginning of a new year: “Whoever allows his Bible to start gathering dust as of January 1, will find that by December 31, his soul will be covered in dust. But whoever starts searching his Bible for words of strength and life on January 1, will have radiant eyes and a joyful heart on December 31.”

Philippians 3:13-14 gives us three important pieces of advice to help us have radiant eyes and a joyful heart.

### **We must forget certain things.**

Paul says to forget “those things which are behind.” Unquestionably, this concerns itself with that which is vain, worthless, and useless. It makes no sense to hang onto things that only burden our heart and cannot be changed. We must stay clear of that which weighs us down and holds us back. There are things in life that simply must be disposed. These are things that are worthless, things that have served their purpose and are of no use anymore. We avoid these things because they take away time and space and bring disorder. Then there are other things that we should eliminate from our lives.

For example, let’s think about the anger we sometimes carry against others, the prejudices and assumptions we often have, and the injustices and injuries we have suffered. We must certainly realize it’s completely pointless and meaningless to hang onto these things. They don’t benefit us in the least but damage us instead.

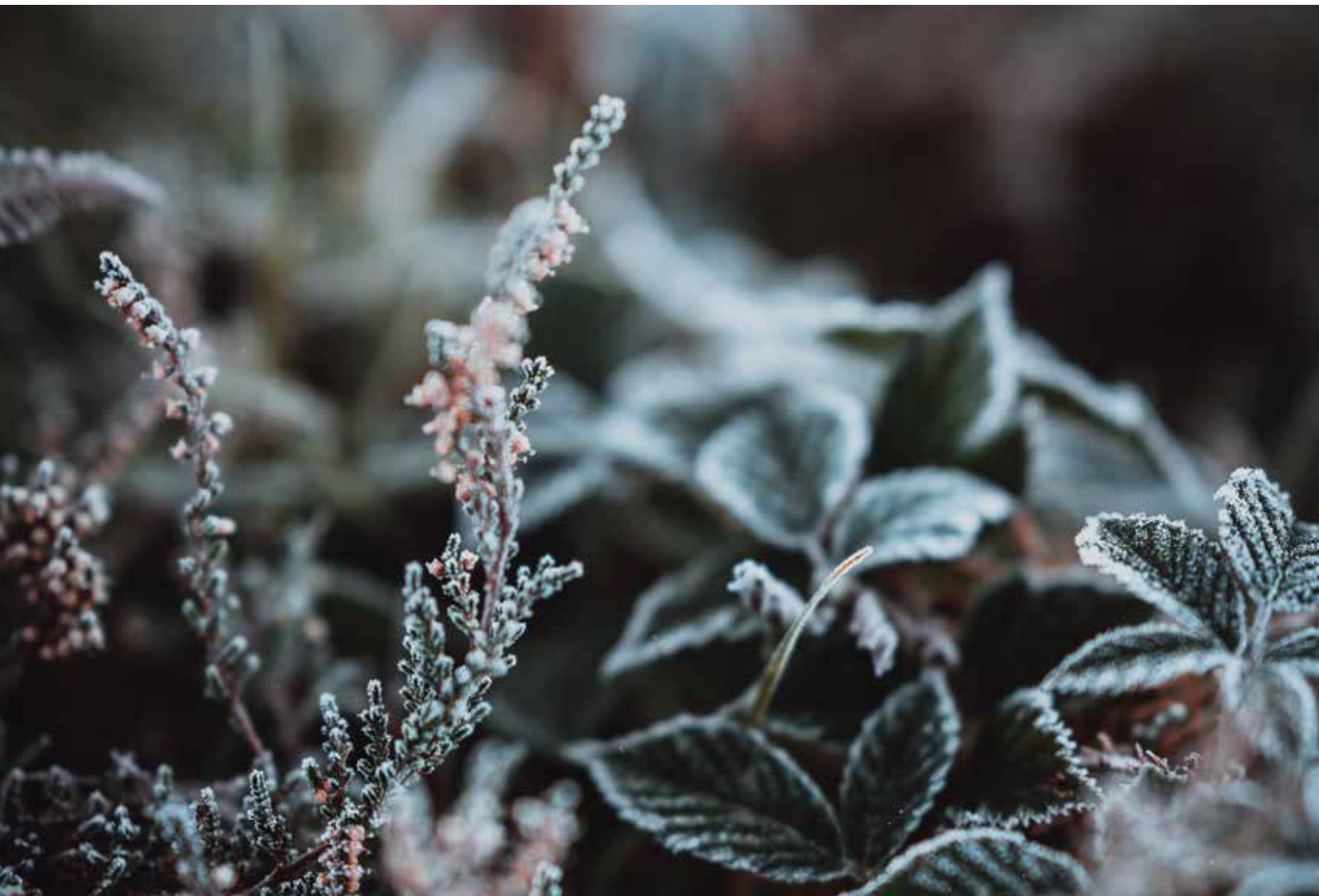
Don’t remain despondent about your mistakes, nor burden yourself with unintended failures or unsuccessful intentions you couldn’t fulfill. In everyone’s life there are obstacles that often stand in the way of our good intentions. There are many things we cannot change, and it is best to forget them. We need to throw away our excessive sensitivities, our burdensome thoughts and assumptions. If we continue to think on these things, we can become gloomy and despondent, and so we must let these worthless, useless things go and forget them.

### **Safeguard pure, joyful memories.**

If there are things in our past that need to be disposed of, then there are probably many things that need to be kept as treasured memories.

For example, we can remember the good things others have done for us. In the past year, each of us has most likely experienced something good from our neighbors, from someone in the church, or from our family. Parents, did one of your children delight you with something special? Children, did your parents do many good things for you? Did someone invite and lovingly care for us? Did someone visit and encourage us when we were sick? Did we receive a comforting letter or encouraging message from a dear friend? Did we receive a helping hand to ease our burdens? Do we forget these many kindnesses too quickly?

Paul writes, “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 . . . meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8). A poet wrote, “Count your many blessings, see what God has done.” There are many valuable things that we should store in our memory. Let’s list the many blessings by name. Think of God’s benefits in your personal life and the blessings you receive through church or from people in your neighborhood. Keep in mind the privilege of communing with spiritually-minded people, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Bible, and “remember Jesus Christ.” These are but a few of the most precious treasures we have received and should never forget.

**Strive for what lies before you.**

What lies before us? The end, the return of Christ and eternity, heaven, and our awaited inheritance. This is the goal God has placed before us. Paul says, “But one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. I press toward

the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14). Isn’t that wise and rewarding?

This new year could be the last year for you and me. It could also be the year of Jesus’ return and the great final judgment. It could be the year of great mercy and high spiritual gain for us. Therefore, we want to reflect on the new opportunities and possibilities that will be given to us in this new year. Above all, take the opportunity to have an encounter with God. Seek grace and healing for your soul and experience wonderful salvation through Jesus Christ.

May this year be a year of special blessings for you. May it be a year of strengthening your faith, delving deeper spiritually, and having special experiences with God as His child. May it be a year that brings us all closer to our Lord and connects us more intimately with Him. Recognize the wonderful treasures that may be won this year. Seek them out, because they can be yours too.

Friedrich Krebs

# Carried

In China, in a place called Xuzhou, lives a young man named Zhang. He is 22 years old and suffers from muscular dystrophy, a disease which makes walking for him almost impossible. He is too weak to carry his own weight. A few years ago, his condition deteriorated to the point where it became impossible for him to leave the house, and he could no longer go to school. But this poor young man has a very special friend. He is one year younger than Zhang, and his name is Xie. He could not come to terms with the fact that his best friend was so helpless and could no longer go to school. So he decided to take his friend wherever he needed to go, carrying him on his back to school, to the cafeteria, and home again. He has been doing this for many years already to the present day.

When I heard about this, I was deeply moved. It really touched me that someone would take it upon himself to help a friend to the point of carrying him on his back for several miles to and from school. Inevitably, the thought came to me whether we too, especially as Christians, should not also be prepared to carry one another. When you think about your friends, you know each one of them has their strengths but also their weaknesses. The better you get to know them, the more you become aware of this. But if you continue along this line of thought, you have to realize that you also have your weaknesses. We are not perfect or flawless. Serving God and following Him does not erase our weaknesses. We are and will remain human. When our weaknesses burden us, it can comfort us to read in the Word of God of people who were great role models yet had their weaknesses. Truly, every one of us has shortcomings. That's why it's important to carry one another, and it starts by forgiving one another's weaknesses, and continues by pointing out their errors with a gentle spirit, thereby helping them to place them aside. And it doesn't end in lifting our friends up to God in prayer. Carry your friends—no matter what flaws or weaknesses they may have. It can be physical restrictions like Zhang's. It can be weaknesses in character. It may even be that your friend has not spiritually progressed to the point that you may have. Spiritual development depends on so many things. One learns faster, the oth-

er slower. One searches and studies more than the other. One seeks the nearness of God more than the other. We are exposed to different external influences. Everyone has had a different upbringing. We also have different habits. All this and much more is affecting our spiritual growth.

The Apostle Paul writes to the believers in Rome, "We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me'" (Romans 15:1-3). Paul writes of the great danger of looking at others and only seeing their faults and weaknesses, while at the same time seeing ourselves as better. Allow yourself to be cautioned by this passage not to become complacent, but to be ready to carry the other. In Galatians 6:2, we find the advice to, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." We are not only to bear the friend, but also his burden. Zhang has a serious illness, but Xie does not let his friend down. He carries the disease with his friend by supporting, helping, and carrying him. Carrying your friend's burden means being there for him, supporting him, and helping him. He is your friend. And if he feels bad, then it would be quite strange if you did not care. It burdens you too, so you will pray with him and for him. Support him in prayer and bring him before the throne of God.

Be gracious and patient with your friend. You too experience much grace and patience every day. You too are being carried. God had great patience with you when you still lived in sin because He did not want you to be lost (2 Peter 3:9). And now, when you follow Him, He carries you because He knows you through and through. He knows your zeal, He knows your will, He knows your desire. But He also knows your weaknesses, your mistakes, your struggles. He wants you to become a master of the Scriptures, to be firmly rooted in Him, and for you to stand firm and immovable in battle. But He may see you don't have the power and depth yet, and that you are lacking here and there. In His great love for you, because He is your friend, your best friend, He carries you. He is the best friend you could ever have



and knows the proper advice to help you overcome your weaknesses. Yes, with God's help and grace, this is possible!

I do not know if Zhang will ever walk again. But God wants you to be able to walk and stand and come to the point where you don't always have to be carried. You shouldn't stand alone; you couldn't make it. You shouldn't and you don't need to. But next to your friend, at His side, holding His hand, you can stand.

Yet there will always be times when you won't know how to continue and where God will again be carrying you through struggles, dangers, and storms. What a wonderful Friend you and I have, on Whom we can always rely and Who is always there for us! He holds you by the hand and carries you.

Markus Schmelzle  
Pforzheim, Germany

## Lessons From School (1)

"And your father is a minister?" The doctor looked at me curiously. I said yes. Recently, a nurse had interrogated me amiably. My father's profession had aroused particular interest and now the news seemed to have spread in the hospital. While preparing a patient for a major operation, he said to me, "Good that you have a direct line to the very top."—"You know, if something goes wrong," he added.

"I don't think you should report up there just in case of trouble; that's not a service company," I replied.

He looked at me a bit dumbfounded. "You could be right," he confessed.

The view that we can have a "pop-up" God and faith in times of need seems to be deeply rooted in the hospital. If it is a routine operation, the success is celebrated as the triumph of science. When there are difficulties, one looks for someone with a good connection to the "very top" and if all goes well, you were just "lucky." The fact that success comes from the Lord is forgotten. Doctors have often confessed to me when they were on the verge of losing their patients, and especially when it came to having made a mistake: "And then I prayed that everything would go well." Of course they did, especially because nobody else could help anymore! That they thank God afterwards, however, is much less common. It should also be a warning to us. The need to pray is undisputed, but how close do we feel to God when we do not need immediate help? God grant that our daily fellowship with Him would prepare us for the storms of life, and that we can be sure of the promise from Jeremiah 15:19: "If you return, then I will bring you back; you shall stand before Me."

Corinna Kowalski  
Hamm, Germany

### VERSE OF THE MONTH

*"You are the light of the world."  
(Matthew 5:14)*

**A dark room cannot become bright by itself. But as soon as a light shines, the darkness automatically disappears. The brighter and bigger the light, the brighter the room is. Likewise among people. If we as young people let our lights shine brightly in our surroundings—in our families, among friends, at school or university, or at work—then we often don't even notice how we warm up our surroundings and influence them in a good way. If we are personally ignited by Jesus Christ, Who is the Light, then we can shine brightly no matter how dark it may be around us.**

# The Sure Way to God

A pastor told of an experience he had while traveling. “During the summer, I took the express train. The train car was filling up; the only empty seat remaining was beside me. Shortly before departure a young man got on, looked around for a seat and sat down beside me. At first glance I could tell he was an Israeli.

The train started moving. My neighbor started reading a book, but only for a few moments. He glanced at me, closed his book and started a conversation with me. I soon told him I was a pastor. That did not frighten him. On the contrary, he now told me what was on his heart. He called himself an agnostic, someone who does not know if there is a God or not. Not an atheist; he did not want to deny God. He not only thought God was possible, he was searching for Him. He was currently trying to find a way to God through occultism. However, he freely admitted that so far, this had been futile. He asked whether I knew of a sure way to God.

I gladly answered, “Yes, I know a sure way to God.” A conversation followed. I immediately recognized I was dealing with a sharp mind. Therefore I was careful with my claims.

“Can we reach God with our thoughts?” he asked. I answered, “Thanks be to God, no!” The young man paused. He had already despaired of finding God with his mind. But he was amazed that I didn’t see the mind as a sure way to reach God. I explained, “With my mind I can only attain what is smaller than me. A god I could mentally master would be no God. No, God is much too great. He goes way beyond our thoughts. We have no proof that God exists, however there is even less proof that He

does not exist. Atheism is foolishness, but trying to measure God is also foolishness.”

“Is our emotion then the way to God?” the young man asked. “There is a way,” I answered, “a sure way.” And I directed him to the words of the Lord Jesus, “If anyone wills to do His [God’s] will, he shall know” (John 7:17). I immediately added, “Whoever does God’s will, will be certain God is there.” He of course immediately countered with, “How can I do God’s will if I do not even know if there is a God?”

“But,” I said, “you do know God’s will even if you do not know if there is a God.” That seemed absurd to him. So I said, “Let’s say there is a God. His will would surely be for us to practice love and mercy.” That made sense to him.

“Yes,” he said, “I also have a conscience. I don’t have to do everything I am driven to do.” There was very little argument. He agreed with me, “If there is a God, it is surely His will for us to practice love and mercy.” He gladly accepted it when I assured him that God will reveal Himself to a person who sincerely tries to practice love and mercy, and will convince him that He exists. The surest way to the goal is the practical way.

I had reached my destination. I took my leave of my fellow traveler and reached for my suitcase. It was very heavy. My young friend immediately took my suitcase and carried it not only to the platform, but also to the subway. He clearly wanted to go the way I had shown him.

It is written with resounding clarity on the heart of everyone, that God’s will is love. It is also the unmistakable proof that God exists.

## *A Home Missionary*

**T**im dashed into the house, his face all aglow. “Mother,” he called, “the new family is moving in next door, and do you know what?”

“No, what?” asked Mother.

“They have two boys and a little girl. Isn’t that great?”

Mother was not sure until she knew a little more about them, but she smiled and Tim ran out again to watch the moving men.

After a while he came in again, and following him were three children. One was older than Tim, the other younger, and the girl just a tiny two-year-old.

“May we have something to eat?” asked Tim, wistfully. “These folks didn’t have any lunch and they are hungry.”

His mother looked surprised, and laying aside her work, she said cheerily, “Why, of course. We can’t have anyone hungry around here,” and she poured milk and set a plate of cookies on the table.

“Sit down,” said Tim, trying to act grown up. “Here’s your place. “Say grace,” and he nodded to the other boy.

“Say what?” asked the boy.

“Say the blessing,” answered Tim, a little surprised.

“What’s that?” questioned the boy.

“Don’t you say a blessing at your house when you eat?” asked Tim wonderingly.

“Naw,” answered the other.

“Well, all right, then I’ll say it: ‘We thank you, Father, for this food, for everything we have that’s good. May we serve you from day to day. In Jesus’ name. Amen.’”

“Now you can eat,” and Tim passed the cookies.

“What did you do that for?” asked Bill.

“Well, you see,” explained Tim, “God made everything, and He gives us all our food, our home and our fathers and mothers, and oh, just everything; so we ought to thank Him for them. Don’t you thank your mother for things she gives you?”

“Yes,” answered Bill, “but we can see her.”

“Well, God gives us things even if we can’t see Him.”

Jerry looked questioning, “What?”

“He makes the sun to shine and the rain fall, doesn’t He?” The others nodded. “Well, if it wasn’t for that, nothing would grow and we wouldn’t have anything to eat.” The boys nodded again.

“Don’t you go to Sunday school?” asked Tim.

“Oh, we used to a long time ago, but now Mom says there are too many of us to get ready and we don’t get up in time.”

“I wish you would go with me Sunday.”

“I’ll ask Mom,” said Bill. “Maybe she’ll let us.”

Mother came in with another plate of cookies.

“Why, I’m sure you could help get the others ready, couldn’t you, Bill?” Bill grinned and helped himself to more cookies.

“Spouse I could,” he said. “What time does it begin?”

“At 9:30,” answered Mother. “We will stop for you. It isn’t far. We will be glad to have your father and mother go too. So you be sure to tell them about it.”

“All right,” said Bill, and then his mother called and they ran home. And that is the way five new people started coming to Tim’s Sunday School.

The Beautiful Way

# Opportunities in the Family

*In our family lives, we choose what is important to us from among a number of opportunities. Let us take advantage of the opportunity to leave behind a rich, spiritual heritage for our children.*

America was described by many Europeans as the land of unlimited opportunities. Today, through prosperity and technical advances, most people have opportunities that rulers and kings could not have dreamed of before. The world seems so small to us, since we can economically travel almost anywhere by plane. We can have conversations that transmit live images across the greatest distances at nearly no cost. And not last is the unprecedented access to education and knowledge. Nearly every question can be answered in minutes—with the help of the little smartphone.

These changes have reached our families with positive and negative effects. Do we approach opportunities with a sense of responsibility? How do we set our priorities? What do we spend precious time on in our families? Jesus' words give us clear direction: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:34). Take a few minutes to think about various opportunities that you have in your family.

## **The opportunity to form character and habits**

"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Again and again, we observe with astonishment how early children comprehend our attitude about obedience. They conform themselves according to our conduct. The consequences we give them shape them and allow them to learn obedience or disobedience. Years ago, I heard an interview with a prison warden in the USA that touched me deeply: "You young people, learn to submit and to follow at home. For

if you don't learn it, then you will end up in prison and will have to learn it here!"

Parents influence their children—always. We shape the fear of God and love towards God, the Word of God, and church services in the lives of the next generation. What we live out is the template of the concept of life for our children. Some people want to make Sunday School teachers or youth leaders responsible for the spiritual upbringing of their children. But what can they accomplish in one hour a week if we don't use the rest of the hours at home to teach children the Word of God? It is indeed our task as parents. In the Old Testament, God admonished parents to use all opportunities to talk to their children: "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). As parents, we can take advantage of the many opportunities to inspire our children for God. They watch what we live out and are attracted to what we are inspired about.

## **Opportunities through modern technology**

In a family, there are many occasions to use new technological advances in a sensible way and to receive a blessing from them. Aren't many mothers and grandmothers happy to receive a video call from their children and grandchildren who live far away? Yes, even the many different ways to always have God's Word with us and to read it in many translations is a gift. With minimal effort, we can send an encouraging message, a Bible verse filled with hope, to weary hearts.

But modern technology also has its share of dangers, temptations, and traps. A few examples:

- We can easily be so preoccupied that uninterrupted time with our children becomes rare.
- A quick text message can never replace spoken words and the feel of a handshake.
- The sound of a new incoming message interrupts everywhere—perhaps even during family devotion time? Even if we don't read it, knowing there is a new message can unsettle us.

Time is a gift from God. But in which direction do these possibilities entice us?

- As fathers, is it possible for our work, hobbies, and interests to take so much of our time and energy that our children are short-changed?
- As mothers, can we become so distracted by all the information (even good information!) on the various social media platforms that we are no longer in tune to the needs of our daughters?
- How strongly does the media we come into contact with daily, influence our system of values, that should be aligned with the Word of God and the mind of Christ?
- Is sin still sin for us? Can we recognize the moral decline in our society?

Let's make use of opportunities to sharpen the views and consciences of our sons and daughters through biblical truth! We want to strengthen their moral resolve and direct them to the godly source of strength in order to overcome the corrupt world and be victorious.

### **Opportunities through prosperity**

There is hardly anything that reveals our inner condition clearer than our stance towards money. What takes priority for us? In previous eras, only rulers and very rich people could afford a relaxing vacation, but today it has become the standard. Today, we can travel across distant, previously unknown countries, admire nature and cultures, and enjoy relaxation in a different climate. However, we have not been released from our responsibility towards God for our financial means. God still pays attention to how we use the money He has entrusted us with. Do we sense a responsibility to financially support God's kingdom? It is good to show our children the blessing that comes from God when we cheerfully give our tithes. They will experience joy themselves when they too give a tenth of their spending money.

Today, it is a normal and societal requirement that children receive the best education and are preferably involved in various organizations. Children's schedules are so full that they hardly have time for recreation and relaxation. Yes, hardly time to simply be children. As parents we want the best for our children and want to see them succeed. However, we may need to examine our motives. Is it love towards our children that motivates us, or the need to bask proudly in their successes?

What does Jesus teach us? What example did He show us? His Word is unconditionally valid for our time: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). What is truly important to us? The healthy spiritual condition of our sons—or their careers? The usefulness of our daughters in God's hands—or their egotistical self-fulfillment? A proverb says, "Our actions speak louder than our words."

### **Opportunities to build the kingdom of God**

It's wonderful to observe an entire family being a blessing in God's kingdom together! We have so many opportunities as a family to be fellow workers of God, certainly first of all in our local congregations and in the worship services. But it goes even further than that, as the Word of God teaches us: "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). This Scripture encourages us to find opportunities to be a blessing as a family. We can prepare food and bring it to the sick. When the children are old enough, they can help us in this, teaching them to think of others and not just of themselves. We can invite others who live alone, or who are going through difficult times and need comfort, and have fellowship with them and encourage them. There are so many opportunities to participate in God's kingdom work! We want to ask God to show us where and how we can be a blessing. It requires effort, but it is very valuable!

The family is the main school for the lives of our children where they learn what is really important in life. As parents, we have innumerable opportunities to teach our children important lessons, but also to learn and grow ourselves. God can help us to recognize our opportunities within the family, and to use them well so they will have eternal value.

John Reimer, Mexico  
Herman Vogt, Germany



JOURNEY TO SALVATION - PART 1

# Encountering God

*The Plan of Salvation in the Story of Israel*

**H**ow awesome is God, in that He had an amazing, glorious plan of salvation prepared for mankind before He ever created the universe! And since man's fall into sin, God, in His great mercy and compassion, gives His utmost to seek and redeem His lost creation. This can clearly be seen in many foreshadowings in the Old Testament and especially in the story of Israel's great journey from Egypt to Canaan. In God's dealings with Israel, the whole plan of salvation is beautifully and wonderfully foreshadowed. In this series we want to consider several elements of the plan of salvation in Israel's story.

## **How does the journey to salvation begin? In an encounter with God.**

"Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. Then Moses said, 'I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn.' So when the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then He said, 'Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground'" (Exodus 3:1-5).

## **How do we encounter God?**

Actually, God first encounters us. In Moses' case, God caused a bush to burn in order to attract his attention.

God will speak to many people through events in their lives. At some point, He will put a halt to their busyness and they will suddenly realize He is speaking to them. This fact illuminates an earnest truth: if God doesn't seek us, we cannot receive God's redemption. And therefore, "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion" (Hebrews 3:15).

In order to encounter God, we must become still. Here, Moses was all alone in the desert. If you desire to encounter God, turn off the noise in your life: your cell phone, the entertainment system in your car or at home. Withdraw to a quiet place or to solitude in nature and begin meditating on God. Of course, Satan will bring all his devices to bear to prevent that from happening, for God speaks in stillness.

We must recognize with Whom we are dealing. "Moreover He said, 'I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God" (Exodus 3:6). Moses knew instantly Whom he was dealing with. This wasn't some random encounter, as when two people happen to meet on the street. He was in the presence of almighty God! The thrice holy God . . . and He is speaking directly to me! And therefore, "Do not draw near this place, [Moses]. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). During such a significant encounter with God, God's holiness will be strongly discernible, and holiness will define every aspect of that event.

In order to bring about an encounter with God, we must open ourselves to God. When Moses was confronted with the burning bush, he didn't turn away, but cried,

“Here I am.” In other words, “I am all yours, o God. I’m listening to what you have to say. Speak to me, my God. Do with me what You desire.” A person who wishes to encounter God must have a deep longing to do so.

### **The Effects of an Encounter with God**

When we encounter God, we will always be changed by that experience.

1. We will see ourselves from God’s perspective. When we see God, when we come to a real knowledge of His greatness and are gripped by His holiness, we will instantly recognize ourselves in contrast to Him. Suddenly the guilt of sin will seem overwhelmingly great. The foulness of sin will be realized. What didn’t seem so bad in the hour of temptation, especially compared to what others do, will suddenly be recognized as terrible in the eyes of God. The person encountering God will ask himself, “How could I ever think to evade God with such actions and attitudes?” Moses hid his face when God introduced Himself to him; he just couldn’t bear to look at Him. When Peter, the fisherman, had his first great catch at the command of Jesus and realized that he was in the presence of God, he cried, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” (Luke 5:8) What great grace is offered us if we can see ourselves in the eyes of God!

2. In an encounter with God, God will always concentrate on the things in our lives that need to be changed. It is God’s goal to enable fellowship between us and Himself. It is His great desire to have His child walk through life in a loving relationship with his Creator. But when sin, rebellion, or disobedience are present, God in His holiness is prevented from doing so until these elements are expunged by the blood of Jesus. The same applies for unwillingness to forgive or make restitution for wrongs committed. All sin and guilt must be purged, for we are to approach God on “holy ground.”

3. God will show us a way out of our difficulties, be it repentance, restitution, or cleaning up our lives. This is a good indicator if it is the Holy Spirit who is convicting us, or if Satan is trying to rob our assurance of salvation. The Holy Spirit will show us specifically where the sin was and what needs to be done to make amends with God and others. Satan, on the other hand, will accuse us of being a complete failure, will make our situation appear dark and hopeless, and do his best to rob us of all hope ever to be free and at peace again. When God confronts us, it is always with the intent of helping, healing, and saving us.

4. When we encounter God, God will call us into His service, just as He did with Moses. Moses had to leave his sheep and fulfill God’s assignment to save souls in Egypt. It was no different for Peter: “Forsake all, follow Me, and I will make you a fisher of men!” Jesus consistently required exactly this of people who encountered Him. When people have such an experience with God, their whole lives are turned upside down. Yet many millions answered this call, gave up everything they had and followed their Savior for the rest of their lives, even into death! Has this been your experience?

5. God doesn’t just call into His service, He also equips us for that service. Sometimes this will be very simple and almost unnoticeable, yet powerful and effective. For Moses, it was simply a question: “What do you have in your hand?” “A staff.” “Throw it on the ground.” In front of Moses a hissing snake threatened him. “Now grab it by the tail!” “But Lord, I’m fearful! What if . . . ?” “Grab it! Don’t be afraid.” And when he obeyed, it was his staff again. And then, “Put your hand in your bosom.” It instantly became leprous, and then healthy again. For His disciples, Jesus gave them authority to heal the sick and drive out demons. We need not fear, He will also equip us with exactly what we need to serve Him and to fulfill the tasks He assigns us.

6. When we encounter God we will be completely changed by that encounter. We will never be the same. In Ephesians 4:22-30 we read about some of those changes: “[P]ut off, concerning your former conduct, the old man . . . be renewed . . . put on the new man . . . putting away lying, let each one of you speak truth . . . Be angry and do not sin . . . steal no longer, but rather let him labor . . . working . . . that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth . . . do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.” A radical change of character, a “new birth,” has occurred.

7. God leads us to His sanctuary. He makes us holy, righteous, pure, and brings us into His presence. Moses repeatedly came into God’s presence, and how his face shone as a result! Where could we have it better than in the presence of God?

An encounter with God! Have you had one? Have you experienced God in this manner? How glorious were the lives of Moses, the apostles, and all who encountered God in this manner! Meet Him as your God—on the journey to salvation!

Ron Taron



SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

# Are You a Soul-Winner?

**T**he evangelist Moody once made a New Year's resolution that he would not let a single day pass in the course of the year where he did not speak with at least one person about the well-being of their soul. Before going to bed, he wanted to pray for the soul with whom he had spoken.

One day, it was cold and rainy, and the streets were icy. Moody decided to stay in his room that day to take

care of his mail, study and pray. Before going to bed, as he started to pray, he realized that he had not spoken with someone about what really matters. He thought about his New Year's resolution, got dressed and went out into the street to find someone he could witness to.

It was late and slippery, and he saw no one. He walked to the next intersection and looked in every direction but found no one. Then he continued on to the next street.



And there he saw a man. He approached the man as quickly as he could and to his dismay, he discovered he was drunk.

Still, he asked him a question about the well-being of his soul and received the answer, "That doesn't concern you!" Moody replied, "Yes it does concern me." Then, the man asked who he was, and Moody presented him with his card. A few days later, that man came to Moody and repented of his sins.

We would do well to make a similar resolution. But we must truly understand the worth of a soul and its need for salvation. Jesus said, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

While the blind singer, Fanny Crosby, was preaching at a city mission in New York one evening, she suddenly felt led to say, "If there is a homeless or motherless young person in this congregation who would like to receive some motherly love, then I say to you, come to me, so I may give you a hug!"

Then a young man came forward. She hugged him and said, "My son, remember that I will pray for you daily and will hold you in warm regard." He answered, "This is the first time that anyone has ever shown motherly love toward me." His soul was saved, and this experience led Fanny Crosby to write the following song:

Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,  
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;  
Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen,  
Tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save.

Though they are slighting Him, still He is waiting,  
Waiting the penitent child to receive;  
Plead with them earnestly, plead with them gently;  
He will forgive if they only believe.

Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,  
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;  
Touched by a loving heart, wakened by kindness,  
Chords that were broken will vibrate once more.

Rescue the perishing, duty demands it;  
Strength for thy labor the Lord will provide;  
Back to the narrow way patiently win them;  
Tell the poor wand'rers a Savior has died.

Refrain:

Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,  
Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save.

We must have a burden for lost souls. Paul said: "For the love of Christ compels us" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

A devout woman, who was used by the Lord to reach many lost souls, came to a place to hold revival services. However, everything was so cold and dead, that it seemed to her nothing could be accomplished there.

Then she announced that she would come to the church the next day at 3 pm to pray for lost souls. She requested that anyone who has an interest in souls should join her in prayer.

Nobody came except a small girl. "Why did you come, Marie?" the sister asked. "I came to pray for my grandfather. You said that anyone who dies in sins will be lost. And my grandpa lives in sin and does not know the Lord," was her simple response. They knelt together and prayed.

Afterwards Marie went home and told her grandfather what she had done. He argued, "That was useless. I don't believe any of that stuff."

The next day they had another prayer meeting. But again, no one came except Marie. She reported what her grandfather had said. The sister replied, "Don't let it discourage you. It will help, for Jesus says, 'Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them' (Mark 11:24)."

The child returned home and told her grandfather that it would make a difference since the Bible said so. But he remained adamant that it would be useless.

On the third day, they prayed once again. God's Spirit caused the old man to become so unsettled as he was driving in his car that he stopped, got out of the vehicle and fell on his knees and cried out to God for mercy. He received forgiveness for his sins, came to the service that evening and shared a testimony about what God had done for him. All were impacted by this and a great revival broke out.

One of the greatest needs of our time is the need for a genuine burden for souls and more love for lost souls. A preacher once said "The greatest problem we should be concerned with is how we can lead more souls to God. How long will it take before we win the world for God, if more is not done than was done in the past? Only when we begin to properly sense this burden will souls be led to God. Let us pray that God will give us this burden!"

## Obituary



### Pastor Reinhard Berndt

*“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.” (Revelation 14:13)*

Brother Reinhard Berndt was born on June 30, 1932, to his parents Emil and Augusta (nee Litke) in Gelanka, Wolhynia, and died on October 26, 2018 at his home in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

In 1939, his family, like many other Wolhynian Germans, had to obey the order to relocate to Warthegau. In 1945, they needed to flee from the eastern front in the direction of Germany. The Lord helped them to travel safely by horse and cart to Wildenhain, Saxony. Although they were under Russian occupation, Brother Berndt was allowed to finish school there and start an apprenticeship.

Even as a child while they were in Wolhynia, his parents took him to the worship services in Amelin. By na-

ture he had the tendency to believe and fear God. At the age of 15 he gave his life to the Lord and was baptized in the eastern zone of Germany. Since I also lived in the eastern zone of Germany at the time, we occasionally met at some of the fest services of the church of God under the sermons of Brother August Link. Blessings of this kind usually remain unforgettable and still inspire gratitude today.

The mother of the deceased had a brother in Canada, who was willing to sponsor the entire Berndt family so they could immigrate to this country. However, this immigration could only be processed from the western zone of Germany. This meant that the Berndts had to flee to West Germany. The Lord again gave them success, so they could cross the border to West Germany without any border control. They came to a refugee camp in Ülzen and were allowed to enter Canada after only three



### **Pastors in attendance at the Memorial Service**

months, in August 1950. For a short time, they initially stayed with the uncle who had sponsored them.

However, because there were already Church of God meetings in Winnipeg at the time, they also went there to attend worship services regularly and to have fellowship with children of God. Brother Berndt participated willingly in the church, and soon became youth leader, served on the church board and also began to preach the word of God on occasion as a substitute.

In 1959, the deceased married Edeltraut Stelter. The Lord blessed their marriage with two sons, Marvin and Glen. The young couple was ready to serve God with all their devotion. In 1964, the brother visited the newly-opened Bible School in Edmonton, Alberta. In 1965 they moved to Edmonton, where Brother Berndt became an assistant pastor in the growing church, which at the time was under the leadership of Brother and Sister Gustav and Wanda Sonnenberg.

In 1967 Brother Berndt followed the Lord's call to Kitchener, Ontario, and served this church until 1971. Then the Brother and Sister moved back to Edmonton and served there faithfully for 17 years. Finally, a call came to them from Aylmer, Ontario, where they were also able to serve this relatively young congregation for

15 years. After these many years of service, the Brother and Sister moved back to Winnipeg and retired there.

After such a long time of sacrificial service, there often still follows a difficult period of suffering. Unfortunately, that was the situation for dear Brother Berndt. Loyally and conscientiously, he had been able to carry out the work of the Lord. Thanks to his ministry, he was able to show many souls the clear path to the Lord and to eternal salvation. Now his life, his work, and his time of suffering are forever ended.

We wish our dear Sister Berndt, her two sons and all other family members and friends the consolation of God.

We all want to remember the fact that Brother Berndt was a truly useful tool in God's hand. Through his teaching and participation in the Bible courses, he will certainly remain in the memory of many young people for a long time. Likewise, even the older people in the various congregations will certainly remember him for a long time. Remarkable and comforting at the same time is the fact that he left a good legacy among God's people at home and abroad. The work he did speaks to the visible and healing grace of God in his life.

Friedrich Krebs

## *Don't Ignore the Pain You See*

*Don't just ignore all the pain you see;  
Stretch out your hand, help willingly.  
Don't close your eyes and just walk away,  
But be an angel and help today.*

*Don't just ignore all the pain you see;  
Can't you hear souls earnestly plea?  
Can't you see their tears, how bad they feel?  
Let God use you to comfort and heal.*

*Don't just ignore all the pain you see,  
Sorrow and hurt as deep as the sea.  
Many are drowning in dark waves of sin;  
Throw out the lifeline and pull them in.*

*Don't just ignore all the pain you see;  
You pass this way once, you will agree.  
So do not delay, help those in need;  
Don't miss the chance to do a good deed.*

*Don't just ignore all the pain you see;  
God sends His angels, holy and free;  
Angels of light from heaven on high,  
And angels from earth, those who comply.*

*You be an angel in human form;  
Light up the cold world and make it warm.  
Shine out God's love so bountifully free;  
Don't just ignore all the pain you see.*

*Eva von Tiele-Winkler*