
◆ THE EDIFIER ◆

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Faith in Action

A recent children's film set in "Far, Far Away" land, closes with a character named "donkey" singing, "I'm a believer... I believe. I believe. I believe. I believe..."

While the film is entertaining, and donkey's lyrics an apropos closing, belief is a powerful, motivating force that determines who we are and what really drives us.

So, what if I were to ask you, "Are you a believer?" How would you respond?

I suppose you might think that I could be asking, "Do you believe in God? – I mean, a God who is personally knowable, as Creator of the entire universe, and Sustainer of it, who knows every hair on your head – and wants you to be saved!

Talking about faith and belief, I've even been asked, "Are you saved?" That is, have I professed a belief in Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour?

Salvation, or being saved, and belief and faith are notions worth considering and are often discussed, I think, with the idea that a

profession of belief in Jesus equates to eternal salvation, that is living forever. Now while that's true to a certain extent, it only tells part of the story, because it is on this very point that Jesus challenges our thinking.

He said that, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does** the will of My Father in heaven." (Matthew 7:21)

Consider the implications of this. God wants us to be doers, and not just hearers or applauders. There is a difference. God wants us to respond to His will for us, in a tangible, outgoing way that is measurable.

In his letter written to the early Christians, James reminded them that, "Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness." (James 2:23)

FAITH

Perhaps you know the story. Abraham faithfully obeyed God's instructions in one of the most preposterous situations imaginable. At that time, God simply said, "Go and sacrifice

your only son whom you love...". Without the hindsight and benefits of history, I don't suppose we would know what to do with this. And to a certain extent, neither did Abraham, but he obeyed.

And his experience serves to help us today to understand the depths of God's love for us as fulfilled in our Father in heaven being prepared to allow His Son Jesus pay the death penalty in our stead. You see, this is what is at the very core of it all: Abraham's faith wasn't restricted to a verbal profession alone, saying, "God I love you," but a faith demonstrated by what he did. He simply obeyed God.

Belief expressed in action might be illustrated by an account where a young man told his beloved over the phone one wintry day that he loved her.

He said, "I would do anything for you."

"I'd climb the highest

A magazine dedicated to uplifting and transforming peoples lives through the uncompromised word of God.

mountain, swim the stormiest sea, fight the wildest of beasts just to be with you."

She paused for a moment, before pondering "Do you love me that much?" and then she asked, "Will you come over for dinner?"

"I can't," he lamented, "because it's raining tonight."

We get the point. Talk is cheap, isn't it!

James goes on to say "that a man is justified by works, [by what he does] and not by faith only." (James 2:24)

This was certainly the case with Abraham – no wonder scripture attests to him as being the "father of the faithful".

Now I know that salvation is by grace through faith alone. No amount of legalistic activity or being religious can earn "points" with God. It just doesn't work that way. Salvation is a free gift from God only dependent on our repentance; it's not something we can earn!

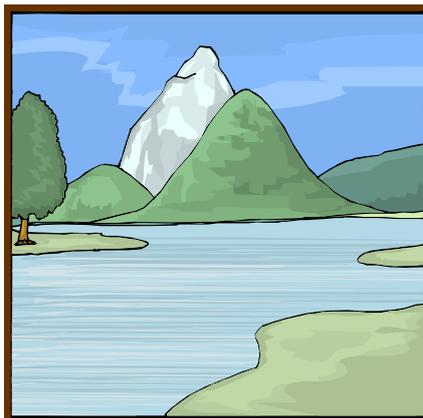
Having said that, however, once we have come to God, and experienced His unmerited grace in forgiving us our sins, we then move forward to live a new life in Jesus Christ, as James so aptly puts it: "I will show you my faith by my works." – by what I do, by how I live.

He doesn't mince words; James further confronts us with just how basic belief is: He said,

"You believe that there is **one** God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!" (James 2:19)

There's so much we can distil from that one observation – especially when you tie it in with some of the incidents Jesus experienced with the demon possessed of his day, about which you can read the witness accounts of this as recorded in the gospels!

For now, however, we understand that God has a plan for us through Jesus Christ, and this is important as it is exciting to explore. Through this, we learn that faith is a launching pad for a life-long journey of good fruit, of good works – a daily choice to live obediently "to every word that comes from the mouth of God."



"I'd climb the highest mountain, swim the stormiest sea, fight the wildest of beasts just to be with you."

So, the question remains, how do we do this? Faith and belief are lived out, for example, in Jesus' words, by keeping the commandments of God. Jesus also said that this translates into willingly giving the thirsty among us a glass of water, visiting the sick and incarcerated, caring for the elderly, and clothing the needy among us.

Life doesn't have to be like "donkey's" feel-good chorus of "I believe, I believe, I believe..." and that's it. Rather, let your faith take on a tangible, Godly form, that genuinely reflects the work of God in a desperately needy world.

**WRITTEN BY JOHN KLASSEK,
MESSAGE WEEK, PERTH, WA.**

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Continued from page five

What about you?

Over the last nine years, I've watched myself move from walking in the gay lifestyle to walking closely with Jesus. I have come to know the magnitude of God's love for me. It is far greater to be where I am now than where I was, filled with the darkness of wrong desires.

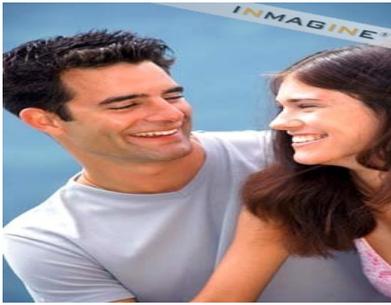
If you're experiencing what I went through, do not despair: God is *for* you, and He will be *with* you if you will invite Him into your life through trusting His Son Jesus. Do it now; He is waiting for you. Your life can bloom and grow in ways you never thought possible.

But be patient with the blooming and growing. As you learn to focus on the love of God and on His teaching, your old nature will gradually lose its grip, and God's strength will increase. A teacher or counselor can encourage and advise you, especially as you begin this commitment.

As time passes, the struggle will be less difficult, and victory will become more a way of life. Then you'll realize that your mind has changed its focus from the temptations of sin to the things of God and the Bible. And that's the best place to be.

Cheryl "C.J." Heidemann

This article was taken from Light for Life, a Bible Advocate Publication.



Purity

“13 ... Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the body for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ... 15. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! 16. Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For ‘the two’, He says, ‘shall become one flesh’. 17. But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. 18. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. 19. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20. For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” 1 Corinthians 6:13-20

Have you ever felt unclean, guilty, ashamed or cheapened because of a sexual act? Sexual sin can make us feel this way. God however has planned a purer and better path for us, a path that if followed, is sure to lead to less heartache and pain in our lives, and more joy.

The above passage provides much of the guidance we need in this area and there is no higher call to sexual purity than what we find in it. It provides three strong reasons why we must stay pure.

The first reason is because *our bodies are holy to the Lord*. This holiness is emphasized in three special ways. They are holy to him because they have a holy purpose. According to v13 they are ‘for the Lord’. This is reiterated in verses 19-20 which stresses how we are not our own, but rather our body and spirit are God’s. Let’s imagine that we were working in God’s kitchen and that He had a special wine glass that was specially designed for Him to use as a toasting glass to celebrate the angel’s achievements on important occasions. Would we take something of God’s that had a holy purpose, such as this glass, and use it to make ourselves drunk? We would not take something that was God’s and use it for an unholy purpose. Nor should we use our bodies in such ways, because they are holy to Him.

Our bodies are also holy to Him because they are ‘members of Christ’ (v15). Our bodies therefore are likened to the precious body of our Lord. The Lord Jesus Christ is God’s only begotten Son. How dare we then use our bodies, which actually are no longer ours, but Christ’s, in impure ways, such as in fornication.

Further, ‘our’ bodies are holy to God because they are described as the ‘temple of the Holy Spirit’ (v19). We are usually on our best behaviour when we just enter a church, let alone the holy temple of God. Many people would be appalled to see sexual immorality in the public streets, let alone in the temple of God. A temple is to be a great house of prayer, praise, obedience, worship and sacrifice. Our bodies are to be the same for our holy God.

The second strong reason provided by the text for why we must stay pure is because if we don’t, *we degrade God*. We degrade Jesus and we degrade the Holy Spirit, and hence we degrade God. “Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!”

Would you like to associate God with sin – with a harlot? Such is unthinkable. What a terrible thing to do. Yet Satan and the flesh conspire to deceive many Christians into doing so. Many Christians are deceived into thinking that this kind of sexual sin is no worse than sins such as lying or coveting. True, all sins are serious enough to merit the wrath of God and eternal punishment, but perhaps this passage indicates that the sin of fornication for Christians is especially frowned upon by God. To show the gravity of sexual sin the passage even makes a comparison with other sins by stating in v18 that “every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body”.

The third strong reason stressed in the passage why we must stay pure is because if we don’t, *we hurt ourselves* – we sin against our own body. Millions of people in fact have died because of sexual sin. AIDS has been, and continues to be, a devastating disease. Millions have had unwanted children because of sexual sin and then have arranged for the killing of the children of their own body through abortion. And many of those who had the courage to have the children have felt the pain, struggle and inadequacy of raising the children without a spouse and in turn many of the children have suffered. Countless millions more have suffered terribly from sexual disease. The harm sexual sin has done to our selves, our children and our world is far more than the world would like to admit. Add to the above the terrible lives many prostitutes, deserted spouses and abused children have had to live, the pain those who committed abortion have felt, the family breakdowns and personal heartache because of adultery or other forms of sexual betrayal, and the medical cost to society of sexual disease and psychological problems resulting from all kinds of sexual sin. Indisputably the world would be a far, far happier if sexual activity was

preserved for only the sacred union of a man and a woman in marriage. God knows best. His ways are higher and purer than our ways.

1 Corinthians 6:13-20 not only gives us three compelling reasons for being sexually pure, but it also provides us with a very high call to sexual purity by instructing us to ‘flee fornication’, or ‘sexual immorality’. How far do we want to take this word ‘flee’. How far should we take it? Plainly we all understand ‘to flee’ to mean ‘to run away from’. Does this mean we run away from any person we are attracted to? Obviously not, as they are not fornication or sexual immorality, and how would we get to know them well enough to marry them if we are always running away from them? Sexual immorality is an act, so to flee from an act, we’d have to flee from the circumstances that could encourage or promote the act. God has not given us a detailed thesis on what these circumstances are, so I won’t detail the circumstances that I think could promote sexual immorality in us. The Holy Spirit, and even the unconverted mind and conscience of man, should be sufficient to point out to us when we are crossing the line from fleeing to flirting with fornication. If we as Christians do not feel comfortable with our own actions, this should be a sufficient indicator. If our conscience is telling us that something is wrong, we should always obey it. If we are having doubt or hesitation about something we are doing, or about to do, then remember the scripture in Romans 14:23 that emphasizes that what ever is not of faith is sin. James 4:17 also says, “to him who knows to do good

and does not do it, to him it is sin”.

God sets a very high road for Christians with regard to sexual purity, and as we have seen, He does so for very good reasons. It might seem too high, or too hard for us in this permissive age. Nevertheless, even many who are not religious are waking up to the many problems associated with free sexual behaviour. You will find many women, for example, who are more cautious of intimacy before commitment as they are wary of men who only seek to use them. The fact that the world we live in is generally lacking in scruples as regards sexual conduct does not mean however that Christians are allowed to compromise on God’s standards which seem harder to maintain.

We need to believe that the high road can be walked. I hope you can agree that God would not command us to do something if He didn’t believe that through Christ we can do it. Scripture also says that God is faithful and will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear. It says He will provide a way of escape so we can bear it. Of course we have to use God’s way of escape. We have to call upon Him for the strength and not shut Him out. He will strengthen us and we will be blessed if we turn to Him in times of temptation.

We were bought with a great price – the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Therefore let us glorify God in our bodies and spirits, which are God’s.



By David Kidd

OUT OF THE CLOSET



Hope for Homosexuals

I grew up with the struggle of being different. As a female, I was attracted to other girls.

In the strong Christian home of my youth, such things were never spoken of. When I began to learn about homosexuality, I recognized the symptoms in myself and realized I was headed directly toward that lifestyle. Obviously the church wouldn’t approve of my “difference,” and that meant I’d struggle even more.

The truth is, it didn’t really matter what the church thought. What mattered was how God felt about my homosexuality. I had convinced myself that He approved, but in time I learned that homosexuality is not a godly lifestyle and that God does not condone it. I also came to see that God loved me then just as He does now, though He did not love my choices.

God did not design anyone to live in the delusion of homosexuality. He has a good plan of promise and not demise — of prosperity in spirit, soul, and body, a plan that requires us to turn from the selfish desires of our flesh.

Are you struggling with an attraction for others of your gender? Are you held captive by thoughts and emotions you

don't know how to deal with? Perhaps you recognize some of the thoughts I had:

- No one cares about me.
- I'm imprisoned by my choices
- I was born this way
- I'm consumed with sexual thoughts.
- I feel trapped.

You might think these tendencies are normal, but conscience tells you that they're wrong. If so, there is hope to help you sort out your feelings, to know that you are loved and can love, that you can be a whole person. You can begin your journey of hope and wholeness by examining three important questions:

- Where do I stand with God?
- What does the Bible say about homosexuality?
- What do I do with my homosexual feelings and behaviours?

Where do I stand with God?

The good news is that God values you. He loves you now, just the way you are. He loves you so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to die for you so that you might receive forgiveness and healing from sin and live with Him forever. Though you, like all human beings, were born in a fallen state, God did not create you to be a homosexual. Rather, He gave you a heart that seeks personal healing through a relationship with Him.

God knows what is best for you and wants to lead you into the lifestyle he chooses — not to make it hard for you but to bless you. As He promised the ancient Israelites, "I know the plans I have for you . . . plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29 : 11).

What does the Bible say about homosexuality?

Some people mistakenly think that the relationship between certain Bible characters were homosexual in nature. Jonathan and David, for example (1 Samuel 18:1-4; 19:1; 20:1ff; 2 Samuel 1:26), had a deep friendship, fought side by side in battle, and defended each other to the death. Being this tightly knit is certainly a deep love, but it need not be viewed as sexual. David's moral downfall, in fact, stemmed from adultery with another man's wife. When the Bible refers to sexual acts between persons of the same gender, it always does so in a negative way (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26,27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11). This may seem like bad news to a practicing homosexual, but it is actually good news over the long haul.

The last of these four texts, for instance, groups homosexuals with those who commit other serious sins: "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves . . . will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were." But this is immediately followed by a wonderful declaration of hope for those who turn and go God's way: "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (6:11).

Your choice to end a lifestyle of immoral sexual activity can give you things you never thought possible — in a personal relationship with Jesus.

What do I do with my homosexual feelings and behaviors?

The same question could be asked about any type of sinful feeling or desire: greed, lust, anger, jealousy. Temptations are not just sexual in nature. Sin is always looking for an opportunity to seize the moment and gain the victory.

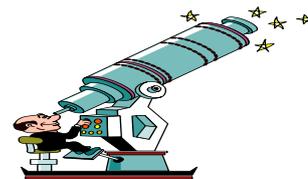
Sexual feelings and attractions are natural and normal. God did not create us to be unfeeling, unemotional robots but to be human beings full of love for each other. We can properly express this in many ways, but in His wisdom God has limited sexual relations to the state of marriage between one man and one woman.

When you express sexual love toward someone of the same sex or someone to whom you are not married, you are outside God's plan for your life. You sin — that is, you "miss the mark" — and need God's forgiveness. God gave Jesus Christ to pay for your pardon with His blood and make forgiveness available. Once you confess your sin to God, He will forgive you and draw you into a relationship with Him — one of wholeness and hope.

Receiving God's forgiveness doesn't instantly remove your homosexual feelings, however. You don't get over being gay in a hurry. You must be committed to change, to take responsibility over your flesh. This requires God's supernatural power — the same power that raised Jesus from the dead (Ephesians 1 : 19, 20). With your commitment to change and dependence on His power, God will help you conquer temptation and be who He wants you to be.

Continued on page two

“TENS REASONS WHY I NEVER WASH”



THE ONE

*The One who placed the stars in space
Makes snowflakes like soft spun lace.*

*The One who puts the sun to bed
Counts the hairs upon our heads.*

*The One who carved the awesome Alps
Sat the small child on His lap.
The One who fragrances the flowers
Keeps the world by His power.*

*The One who is called Judah's lion
Took on Himself a servant's mind.
The One whose strength knows no defeat
Stooped to wash His servant's feet.*

*The One who is the first and last
Pled that the cruel cup might pass.
The One who is the great I Am
Became the sacrificial lamb.*

*The One whose days are without end
Bled and died for sinful men.
The One who formed men from His breath
Rose from the grave...conquered death.*

*The One who keeps us in His care
Knows our thoughts and hears our prayers.*

*The One to whom our hearts must sing
Jesus our Lord, our God, our King!*

**Deanna Malawy
Okawville, Illinois**

While ministering in Dublin Ireland, Sidney Laing wrote a satirical piece in response to the various excuses he heard for not attending church. His work is entitled, 'Ten Reasons Why I Never Wash'. Included on this list are the following:

"I was made to wash as a child. ... People who wash are hypocrites. ... Those who wash think they are cleaner than other people. ... There are so many different kinds of soap, I could never decide which one was right I used to wash but it got boring so I stopped. ... I still wash on special occasions like Christmas and Easter. ... None of my friends wash. ... I'm still young, when I'm older and a bit dirtier I might start washing. ... People who make soap are only after your money."

It's amazing how ridiculous these excuses seem when thinking about a bath, but when it comes to church, some folks believe these excuses are nothing more than legitimate reasons.

(From McHenry's Stories for the Soul p99, based on article from Houston Chronicle, April 1 1989, p. E-2)



The Youth Section

The Good Fight

Fill the words in the list into the diagram below reading forward, backward, up, down, diagonally, always in a straight line.



N	I	A	R	T	S	T	S	H	S	W	O	R	D	E
L	O	N	O	P	A	E	W	N	T	E	M	L	E	H
R	F	R	O	M	R	A	A	D	I	D	S	M	T	V
Y	W	O	B	V	Y	R	S	K	E	E	T	G	R	A
E	R	U	E	N	E	M	Y	C	W	F	N	N	G	L
T	S	O	L	D	I	E	R	A	P	E	R	P	T	O
H	H	Y	T	U	D	O	R	T	R	N	E	A	W	R
G	A	M	T	C	F	R	N	T	D	D	H	X	R	I
I	U	R	A	A	I	M	S	A	B	R	C	E	E	N
F	O	A	B	O	E	V	H	W	Y	E	R	G	S	V
F	M	A	R	C	H	F	I	L	O	C	A	S	T	A
H	I	E	N	D	U	R	E	V	A	R	B	T	L	D
E	R	A	E	P	S	A	L	D	U	U	R	N	E	E
S	L	I	N	G	D	L	D	O	D	I	P	A	I	N
T	C	I	L	F	N	O	C	A	P	T	A	I	N	W

AMBUSH, ARCHER, ARMOR, ARMY, ARROWS, ATTACK, AXE, BATTLE, BEAT, BOW, BRAVE, CAPTAIN, CONFLICT, COURAGE, DEFEAT, DEFEND, DUTY, ENDURE, ENEMY, FIGHT, FOE, FORCE, FORT, GUARD, HELMET, INVADE, LANCE, LEAD, MARCH, PAIN, PREPARE, RECRUIT, SERVE, SHIELD, SLING, SNARE, SOLDIER, SPEAR, STRENGTH, SWORD, TRAIN, TROOPS, VALOR, VICTORY, WAR, WARRIOR, WEAPON, WIN, WRESTLE.

Insights From the Past

Terminating History

Just how much longer the present trend of world affairs can continue, only God knows. He has not let man know the extent of patience and longsuffering that He has toward mankind. But there is a breaking point. There will come a time when violence has prevailed long enough. Then is when the great voice shall peal out from heaven, "It is done" (Revelation 16:17).

God was long suffering with rebellious mankind in Noah's day — so much that He gave an added period of grace. But there came a day when the clouds poured out their contents and the springs of the earth broke loose, causing the great deluge. The means of escape were sealed away from the world. Only destruction awaited the wicked.

In the closing days of this decade, the world is in a whirl. The pendulum keeps marking time; the calendar keeps turning pages; the years keep rushing by. And with each advance in time, the culmination of this sinful world approaches at rapid speed. World events today are only curtain lifters of the climactic scene of Christ's return.

December, 1959, marks the end of a progressive decade; progressive, that is, in automation, science, industry — practically everything that pertains to this world and its system. It also marks the end of a decade of world-wide fear and tension. What do the 60's hold?

The curtain raiser is almost finished. The great Director of events is ready to give the signal for the greatest of all displays. The closing of another year poses threats of war — that will be concluded by fire and brimstone.

The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,
(Zephaniah 1 : 14, 15).

This month signifies the end of a prosperous decade in monetary values. Capital investment is at an all-time high. But the ancient admonition was: "Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath" (Zephaniah 1 : 18).

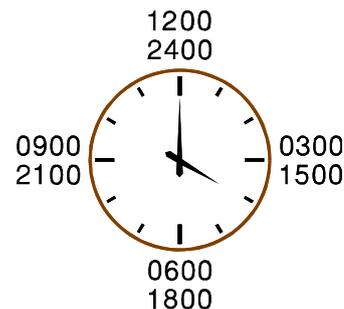
Nations of the world seemingly are unable to stir up enough strife to satisfy them. While diplomats talk peace, rebels plan insurrection. While negotiations are being made to end hostilities, budgets are exceeded in production of implements of nuclear warfare. Peace seems to be pending, but sudden destruction lurks in the shadows. Current events surely point to a termination in history.

To view 1959 in retrospect produces a feeling of awe and amazement. Viewing the decade just ending makes one tremble. The tension is mounting. Surely it must be about time for the curtain to rise on the most dramatic event known to the world. It promises to be a tragedy, a comedy, and a mystery all in one: a tragedy because of its unhappy ending for the wicked; a comedy because of its joyous climax for the righteous; a mystery because its scenes are shrouded in obscurity and arouse curiosity.

The annals of worldly history are about to be closed. The millennial age is very near.

A preview has been given of the wonders of coming events, but present conditions demonstrate their terminating nature. The closing shadows are pressing in upon December, 1959, but a golden dawning awaits.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This article was written by Max Morrow which first appeared as an editorial in the December 21, 1959, issue of the Bible Advocate and Herald of the Coming Kingdom.*



Signs of These Times

Daniel prophesied about the time of the end.

"many shall want to know the end, and knowledge shall be increased." (Daniel 12:4)

The Lamsa Translation

This would suggest that end times events would be the focus of increased knowledge, or knowing the "outcome of all this" the "end results" would be the focus of attention.

Of millions of books that have been published, there is only one in which these answers are found. This Book is the Holy Bible - the Word of the living God.

The Bible has the answers.

*Please send for the free booklet
' Signs of These Times*

