

Zion's Advocate

"And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost...." 1 Nephi 3:187

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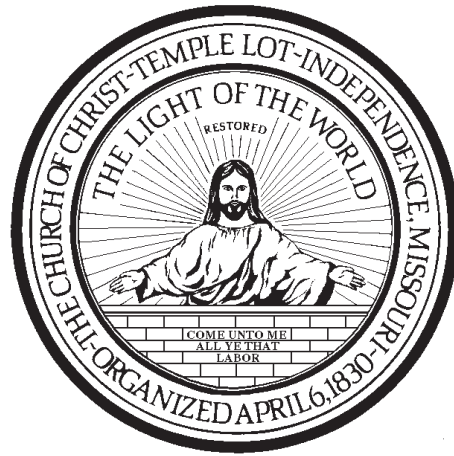
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NUMBER 1



Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. —Proverbs 3:5-6

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To be a voice of warning to His people; to be Zion's advocate.

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Good Works

GUIDELINES



Priest Aaron Moser

Several years ago my wife and I stopped at a gas station just around the corner from our church to grab a drink. As we exited the convenience store we were approached by a petite young lady. "Excuse me" she said. "Can you help me?" The look on her face was

one of fear and desperation. She then began to relate to me how she was from out of town and was about to start nursing school but had run out of money. She said all she needed was twelve dollars so she had enough money to stay in a hotel for the night. Tomorrow she would get paid and then everything would be okay for her.

Our hearts truly went out to this young woman. I took a twenty dollar bill out of my wallet and gave it to her. She began to cry and gave me a big hug. "Thank you so much!" My wife and I really felt like we had done a good work.

I smiled all the way back to church. I was so touched by the young woman and her reac-

tion I related the incident to a brother at church. The brother to whom I told the tale looked at me and asked, "Was she a young, small-statured woman who only needed twelve dollars for a hotel stay?" (details I had not given in my account to him). "Well, yeah." I said. "She got me last week with the same story" he said.

Instantly I felt like a fool. Instantly I became upset at being conned. Instantly all the good feelings I had were gone. Instantly my good work was turned into a criminal act where I was the victim. Instantly I became filled with regret. I can't tell you about the rest of the day; what songs were sung, who preached the evening service or what was said. I was consumed by what had happened. How could we be so willing to do a good work and have it turn against us?

Maybe it wasn't how it seemed. Perhaps she had an explanation. A few days later I saw her at the same gas station so I pulled in. When I got out of my car she looked towards me and very quickly moved in the opposite direction away from me as though I were her enemy about to strike. Proverbs 28:1: *The wicked flee when no man pursueth.* There I was in the parking lot faced with the fact I had been the victim of a con artist.

How do I know who is truly

in need? How do I keep from being conned again? How do I continue to live what the scriptures tell me in abundance? Mosiah 2:28-31:

"And also, ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; And ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish. Perhaps thou shalt say the man hath brought upon himself this misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance, that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just. But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this, the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done, he perisheth forever, and hath no interest in the kingdom of God. (emphasis added)"

Jesus confirms this commandment and consequence in one of his parables found in Matthew 25:31-46: The sheep are separated from the goats, with the sheep entering in to the kingdom of heaven and the goats entering the everlasting fire. What was the difference? The sheep fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, clothed the naked, visited the sick and took care of strangers, while the goats did not.

Clearly, as a follower of Christ, knowledge and grace are not the complete recipe for gaining entrance into eternal life. Actions are required as well. James 2:13-17:

"For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

So how do we follow the commandments and not be victimized? How do we not become jaded and in danger of staying our hand with wrongful justification? How? I believe part of the answer lies in putting off a modern way of operating. In today's world there is nothing we can't have quickly. We want food; we can have it fast. We want a new trinket, it can be shipped overnight. We want to go some place far, we jump in a car or plane and in a matter of minutes or hours we have gone great distances. There really isn't much we can't have in a matter of 24 hours or less. This

has had the effect of speeding up our lives to the point where convenience becomes a priority...and we treat the gospel commandments in the same way. Here is a soul in need; give them money. A quick easy way to show love and make it to my appointment on time. Is this wisdom? Is this what we are called to do? Let's take a look at what Jesus said and see if convenience plays a role.

Luke 10:25-37: *“And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place,*

came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.”

The good Samaritan, as this story is known, is the template by which we should measure out all of our acts of love. First, he was traveling; he had a destination, some place he was going to. I am sure those plans did not include a side trip, but that did not stop him from taking notice and compassion. Second, he could see the actual needs of his fellow traveler; naked, wounded and unable to move. Third, he took care of those needs; bound his wounds, provided him his beast and transported him to safety where he provided further care. Fourth, he ensured

his continued recovery by paying the innkeeper. Let's break down each of these points and see if we can find out a better way to serve our fellow man.

I have often prayed for opportunity to serve God (something you all should do as well). God will hear your prayers and give you those opportunities. I doubt very much each opportunity you are presented with will be on your schedule of daily activities. It will not be placed in front of you when you are all of a sudden gifted with free time. This means a sacrifice on your part of what you have planned for; a deviation from what you had planned to take care of the needs of another. None of us have the time; we have to make the time.

Get to the root of the matter and find the needs a person has. We have all seen the homeless standing on the side of the road or at a parking lot with a sign asking for help, usually something to the effect of “Homeless, hungry. Anything helps.” So here is the beggar putting up his petition. Will it be in vain? The easy thing is to throw money at them, but is that what they need? Why don't we just ask? Are you hungry, what can I get you off the menu from that restaurant? Can you use a clean shirt or shoes? I can get them for you. I have found asking simple questions will

eliminate the simple lies and still take care of the needs a person has. If all they want is money, ask what they intend spending it on. If they tell you and it seems to fit a legitimate **need** then offer to purchase it for them. This will help eliminate you facilitating vice or sin.

Sometimes we are given skills or tools which can be put to use. I may not have the money to help everyone who comes across my path. Do I have the ability to change a tire? Can I make a phone call on my cell phone to get help? Could I provide a ride in my car? Do I happen to have an extra item I could provide instead of purchasing it new? Forward thinking can help us in this area. I once heard on the radio of a woman who would take old but usable pairs of socks, stuff them with things like tooth brushes, toothpaste, soap, deodorant and other basic care items. She would carry these things in her car and when she saw people on off ramps holding signs she would pass them out; needs addressed in a simple, easy and convenient package where she could still make it to her appointment on time.

Continued care in the parable of the Good Samaritan is accomplished by giving money to the inn keeper. While in today's world this could very easily outstrip the

means of the average worker, it does not absolve us from ensuring the help we give is healthy. I find it very interesting that the Good Samaritan never directly provided money to the victim. Money was involved, as he had to replace his oil, wine, bandages, lost time on the journey and payment to the innkeeper. But in it all, only the needs were addressed. I am not against giving money to people; however, when we give money it should be done with trust that it will be spent according to good biblical teachings.

A quick memory to illustrate my point: Early on in my law enforcement career I came across a homeless man who was wheelchair bound due to the loss of a leg below the knee. He truly was homeless, dirty, hungry and in need. We were frequently called to an intersection where he spent his days begging for money. Often he would block traffic trying to get to vehicles where people were handing him money, which is why police were often called. As officers so often do we gave him the nickname Wheel Chair Willie and, upon hearing the call, location and description we all knew what was happening. Willie would beg for money long enough until he was able to purchase a small quantity of his favorite street drug. He would then

take the illegal substance and find a prostitute to share it with as payment for her services. I am sure everyone who handed Willie money had no idea this was taking place. They simply saw his needs and threw money at him to ease their conscience; definitely not taking care of his needs, short or long term.

Mosiah 1:49-50: *“And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn when ye are in the service of your fellow beings, ye are only in the service of your God. Behold, ye have called me your king; and if I, whom ye call your king, do labor to serve you, then had not ye ought to labor to serve one another? (emphasis added)”*

To me this speaks to a level of commitment beyond a hand-out. Wisdom must be present in our endeavors to help those less fortunate than we. This requires time and effort on our part. Make the time to notice, find the real needs; address the actual needs and ensure no harm comes of it. Pray for wisdom, pray against our adversary, pray you find the truly needy, and God bless you in your efforts.

ARTICLE

THE PURPOSE OF THE PLATES



2nd Peter 1:21: *“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”*

The purpose of this study is to show the eternal value that the Lord placed with the written, or inscribed word, upon metal plates which remain within the Lord's promise, and power, and to be preserved for generations until the end of time.

An abridgement was commanded to be made by the Lord to come to us in our time, or the last days, by the hand of a man by the name Mormon, who lived approximately A.D. 230-321. Divinely selected texts were used to be an added testimony for the gospel of Jesus Christ and plan of salva-

tion. This abridgement would then be called the Book of Mormon.

Throughout the record of Mormon we read of the importance that the writers placed to be ever so careful about what they were writing about due to the amount of work to even make the plates. First, they would have to find the ore, then smelt or purify it, and then melt into an alloy or mixture of metals that would be hard enough to support the inscribing of characters. Finally, the inscribed plates would have to be able to stand the test of time for others to handle, read, transport across a country and to be legible for translation.

Through these pictures we get a glimpse of their struggles to bring forth the words commanded them by the Almighty God to benefit mankind, speaking of eternal life through the Christ.

We find through world archeology and history that for thousands of years there is left behind evidence of ancient



uses of metals which were used for religious rites, including inscriptions for instruction.

An early recording in Genesis 4:22, Cain's son from his wife, Zillah:

“And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubal Cain was Naamah.”

He was gifted with metal craftsmanship. From the record of King Solomon we also get glimpseS of the need for metals, as he was instructed to

build the temple and all the instruments for sacrifice and communion with the Lord, by the Lord's plans:

In II Chronicles 9:21: *"For the king's ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Hiram: every three years once came the ships of Tarshish bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks."*

We need to now turn our thoughts upon the purpose of these sacred texts of the Book of Mormon which were preserved for us. As recorded in the beginning of the record of Mormon: *"The prophet Nephi records the prophesies of his father Lehi, also a prophet, along with his own given of the Lord, and the history of their travels beginning in Jerusalem."*

1st Nephi 1:1-2: *"I Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore, I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days—nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore, I make a record of my proceedings in my days; yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of*

the Egyptians. And I know that the record which I make is true; and I make it with mine own hand; and I make it according to my knowledge."

This sacred work covered a span of approximately 2300 years of history, yet speaks of the creation account and its meaning, the fall and plan of redemption for mankind, and also of the coming of Jesus Christ in the clouds and the end of time as we know it.

1st Nephi 1:17: *"Behold I make an abridgment of the record of my father, upon plates which I have made with mine own hands; wherefore, after that I have abridged the record of my father, then will I make an account of mine own life."*

1st Nephi 2:3-6: *"And it mattereth not to me that I am particular to give a full account of all the things of my father, for they cannot be written upon these plates, for I desire the room that I may write of the things of God. For the fullness of mine intent is that I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved."*

Wherefore, the things which are pleasing unto the world, I do not write, but the things which are pleasing unto God and unto them which are not of the world. Wherefore, I shall give commandment unto my seed that they shall not occupy these plates with things which are not of worth unto the children of men."

1st Nephi 5:226: *"And now this I have done, and commanded my people that they should do, after that I was gone, and that these plates should be handed down from one generation to another, or from one prophet to another, until further commandments of the Lord. And an account of my making these plates shall be given hereafter; And then, behold, I proceed according to that which I have spoken; and this I do, that the more sacred things may be kept for the knowledge of my people. Nevertheless, I do not write anything upon plates, save it be that I think it be sacred."*

We realize that besides the fact that they had to make whatever plates they wrote upon, they also had to have the knowledge to develop languages, and actually be able to write on metal. Most importantly, the writers needed the appropriate amount of humility to be able to receive of the Lord as to what



they should write about that would be left behind for us, for our salvation's sake.

The prophet Lehi reads from the plates of brass that were obtained from the treasury at Jerusalem by Nephi and his brothers: in 1st Nephi 1:157-160:

“And it came to pass that they did rejoice exceedingly, and did offer sacrifice and burnt offerings unto the Lord; and they gave thanks unto the God of Israel. And after that they had given thanks unto the God of Israel, my father Lehi took the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, and he did search them from the beginning. And he beheld that they did contain the five books of Moses, which gave an account of the creation of the world. And also of Adam and Eve, which were our first parents.”

As we read, they used special characters to most likely tell the story or passage to save space upon the plates. They also altered language and confused it so as to be extremely difficult to interpret, only by the power of God's spirit and the use of interpret-



ers or special glasses which the Lord made and provided. They needed to be guided by the Holy Spirit because of the sacred nature of the work:

Jacob 3:1 (the brother to Nephi): *“Now behold, it came to pass, that I, Jacob, having ministered much unto my people, in word (and I cannot write but little of my words, because of the difficulty of engraving our words upon plates), and we know that the things which we write upon plates must remain.”*

Book of Mormon 4:98-100: *“And now behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge in the characters, which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech. And if our plates had been sufficiently large, we should have written in the Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in the Hebrew, behold, ye would have had none imperfection in our record. But the Lord knoweth the things which we have written, and also that none other people knoweth our language, and because that none other people knoweth our language, therefore he hath prepared means for the interpretation thereof.”*

Nephi is shown the record of the Jews, or the Bible, to come forth to the Gentiles, then to Israel and the world:

1st Nephi 3:161-163:

“And he saith unto me, The book which thou beholdest is a record of the Jews, which contains the covenants of the Lord which he hath made unto the house of Israel. And it also containeth many of the prophecies of the holy prophets. And it is a record like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, save there are not so many; nevertheless, they contain the covenants of the Lord which he hath made unto the house of Israel.”

This record will be instrumental to help restore knowledge to Israel. In 2nd Nephi 2:19-22:

“Wherefore, the fruit of my loins shall write; and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; And that which shall be written by the fruit of my loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together. Unto the confounding of false doctrines, and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins. And bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days.”



We cannot hope to have the space to write the importance of the content of the plates, suffice it to say they are of eternal worth declaring the plan of redemption to the house of Israel and the world. 1st Nephi 4:19-23:

“Wherefore, they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer, and the very points of his doctrine, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved. And then at that day, will they not rejoice and give praise unto their everlasting God, their rock and their salvation? Yea, at that day, will they not receive the strength and nourishment from the true vine? Yea, will they not come unto the true fold of God? Behold, I say unto you, Yea: they shall be remembered again among the house of Israel.”

We live in the extreme last days where we are viewing the words of the prophets coming to pass through a sequence of world events.

There are also over 53,000 different Christian denomina-

tions teaching different doctrines. The necessity of God’s true words are so needed in a world of confusion, to declare the plan of salvation to the children of men as spoken by Jesus Christ, His Father, and witnessed by the Holy Spirit, bringing joy to mankind:

Matthew 24:14: *“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”*

Through the coming together of the Book of Mormon and the Bible we are assured of His true Gospel and its fullness. We are given knowledge, instruction and purpose for the plan of redemption through the Christ Jesus, the Son of the Father. We read of the structure of His church, the Church of Christ, divine revelation, His called servants, miracles and blessings.

2nd Nephi 11:155 and Isaiah 29:18: *“And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book; and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and*

out of darkness.”

For those that seek out this prophecy realize that this is being fulfilled even today as the fullness of the gospel is revealed through the Bible and the Book of Mormon. As the Lord instructed, the last keeper of the plates, Moroni, the son of Mormon, buried the plates that contained the abridged records to be found in the future according to the Lord’s plan.

According to prophetic timing of the scriptures and history, a young man in his early teens by the name Joseph Smith, was visited by an angel with specific instructions upon where to find these plates. He was to be used of the Lord to translate the ancient language using the interpreters by the gift of the Holy Spirit:

2nd Nephi 11:25: *“And it shall come to pass, that the Lord God shall bring forth unto you the words of a book, and they shall be the words of them which have slumbered.”* Mormon 4:21: *“Yea, it shall be brought out of the earth, and it*





shall shine forth out of darkness, and come unto the knowledge of the people; and it shall be done by the power of God; and if there be faults, they be faults of a man." Mormon 4:33: "And no one need say, They shall not come, for they surely shall, for the Lord hath spoken it; for out of the earth shall they come, by the hand of the Lord, and none can stay it."

The record contained upon these metal plates was now in the hands of the world in the year of our Lord 1829, to receive the pure gospel of Jesus Christ, and His salvation to be declared in its fullness. This was all done to reveal the will of the Father concerning the restoration of many precious and sacred covenants, and to establish the Church of Christ once again for the last time for the world to embrace:

Isaiah 29:24: "They also that

erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine." In 2nd Nephi 11:130: "For the book shall be sealed by the power of God, and the revelation which was sealed, shall be kept in the book until the own due time of the Lord, that they may come forth: for behold, they reveal all things from the foundation of the world unto the end thereof."

Moroni 10:3-6: "Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam, even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts. And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; And if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, and he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost; and by the power of the Holy Ghost, ye may know the truth of all things. And whatsoever thing is good, is just and true; wherefore, nothing that is good denieth the Christ, but acknowledgeth that he is."

We believe that there are many more plates with sacred records in the world that we may see someday. Many say



that it would be so wonderful to have the rest of the plates, the sealed portion, more of the words of Jesus. We may, if the Lord finds us faithful with what we have, and in His time. One thing to say is that one among us must be a seer, to be truly called by the Lord, and to be commanded to look into the seer stones to read them, because they are in a language that cannot be read. This is the reason the Lord had prepared the stones. We must pray the Lord will restore this gift as well, only to the Glory of God the Father and His Son, Jesus the Christ our Savior.

May God richly bless you,
Elder Adam Porter

ARTICLE



WHAT do we have to offer to those broken souls in this broken world?



I was sitting on the couch helping my son with his school when I saw the flash of a person on a bike go past my front window. While this may not be unusual to some people, as I live on a dead end this is not a normal occurrence. Recent thefts in the neighborhood and my own experience as a police officer led me to believe that (after a reasonable amount of time had passed for this person to have realized that the brick wall at the end of the street signified a dead end) this person may be intending to help themselves to something from my not-so-organized front and side yard.

Armed with the righteous zeal to stop this theft, I walked to the front of my house, looking down the

street to see a woman on a bike, who abruptly stopped riding and was now helping herself to some oranges from my uncle's tree a few doors down. Standing in the street I quietly watched, as seeing her get back on her bike I was content to let her simply leave our quiet corner of this changing city...but as she sampled her newly acquired citrus she spit it out (finding it unripe), and then threw it on the ground.

Now my ire was full. You see, in this neighborhood many people have their citrus trees planted in their front yards and, as a result, many have returned home to find their trees picked bare of either ripe fruit, or picked bare and the unripe fruit left on the ground to rot. In truth, many trees

have fruit that is never eaten, but it still doesn't stop the frustration when a tree you have faithfully watered and fertilized is stripped of its fruit and you haven't eaten even a single one!

So, what did I do, full of indignation for this offense? Well, of course I yelled at her, 'Hey, what makes you think you can steal fruit and throw it away!?!' I mean, can you believe the gall? Frightened, I'm sure, by the unexpected voice and seeing the equally unexpected large man in the roadway hollering, this young woman began to ride away. I felt justified, satisfied, for while I had not been able to save those two unripened oranges, I certainly let her know this neighborhood (occupied by a significant

amount of Church of Christ members, incidentally) was no place to get a quick meal....

Now before I go on, I am not meaning to say that those things we work for should be free for anyone to walk off with. I'm not saying that we should be okay with people stealing or taking advantage of us. But, I am hopeful that we consider some other things which I know are simply a reminder to those of us who claim the name of Jesus Christ.

Now, where was I? Oh yes, my righteous indignation for a pair of unripe oranges. Well, having felt I had done my part I watched this young woman ride off, when I felt the tug at my heart of the Lord. I heard no voice but there was something interjected specifically into my mind—I felt a sudden compassion for this young woman and the Lord asked me, "That's it?"

Convicted, I called out even louder, 'If you are hungry I am willing to give you some food; you don't have to steal from people!' She slowed the turning of her pedals and the front wheel of her bike wavered its direction from the path before her (away from the angry fruit guardian), and turning to take me up on my offer. Slowly, she turned and rode toward me, and as I

approached her I could see her crying. No doubt this was for several reasons, which I understood without a word being spoken. I'm certain there was some shame; shame for stealing, shame for being called out in the act, shame for having a need. Surely she was hungry, for if she was simply looking to take something of value she would never have reversed her course. There was likely shame for having to come back to the person who, in her mind, had already passed a judgment on her as a thief (and certainly I had passed a judgment on her action, and such a minor thing at that).

I could see that she was weathered, thin as a rail and dirty. I knew if I were to guess her age based on what I saw, I would guess her to be much older than she actually was, as the lifestyle I felt certain she was living ages a body significantly. With all my years as a police officer as foundation, I knew most of her life story without her speaking. Working backwards I knew that she was homeless, most likely on account of some drug addiction. This isn't a fast process, as most addicts find themselves homeless over the course of time, having slowly burned bridges; first with family, then friends,

then institutions, so I could surmise she had been using drugs for a while. She likely had no father in the picture from a young age. She probably had a child or children who are now wards of the state due to drugs or homelessness. As is the story with many women I have encountered over my many years as a cop, she had probably been the victim of some sexual incidents throughout her childhood. As I found later in our conversation, I was right on all accounts. This story is nothing new, it seems to come from a template and over my years as a police officer I've found we are surrounded by souls affected by these very things, heavy and destructive.

As she neared me I asked the Lord to give me charity. We are often going to lack sufficient charity as we interact with this world, yet it must form our actions and conversations, even (and especially) when the conversation may have some negative aspects, or with those who we may rather stay on the other side of the street from. I'm sure most of you are no different than I; we often choose to keep our head and eyes down so as not to have to address some of those broken souls in this broken world...but that's not

Christ or His gospel.

Her name was Sarah and she was 26 years old. She had grown up in Kentucky and her mother lives outside of Phoenix but will no longer assist her. She had a blonde-haired daughter who was 9, whose father had custody of her after he was released from prison. She had been homeless for 8 months, although that was just her most recent stint. She had been using heroin for many years; this had been to cope with having been a victim of sexual assaults through the consent and direction of her mother when she was a teenager. She was indeed hungry, eating from garbage cans and trying to find some new clothing which had been discarded by others.

She told me she is tired of living like she has been. She is scared living on the street, as she has been further victimized while there. She doesn't like using drugs but it helps her to handle this life that she is overwhelmed by. She knows that the path she is on isn't sustainable but she feels like she cannot change. She is too far gone, she is unintelligent, she has no hope.

It would be hard to give a cause for one to believe and have hope in Christ without acknowledging some tough things:

First, tragedy happens, victims exist and these things have lasting scars. There is nothing that can be done to take these events away. But can you give a good reason why evil exists, why bad things happen to innocent people? Can you explain the blessing and curse of freewill (everyone can choose, good or bad)? Can you explain the importance of there being an opposition in all things? Can you explain the importance of hope for something that is beyond what we experience here?

Second, life isn't doled out fairly. There is not true equality on this earth. Can you explain why some people have lives that seem to be without trouble and others do not? Can you give the hope of your confidence that in spite of all this, the fair and unfair, that our loving God is present and able to help us overcome?

Third, we have a choice in how we act, react and feel about the circumstances we face. We may not choose everything that happens to us, but we do choose how we feel and how we respond. There are many things that help form how we respond to life, but ultimately it is up to us. Can you speak with experience about how making the difficult, yet correct and Godly decisions in

times of trial led you to blessing? Can you speak about times when God helped you to see or react differently to difficult situations in your life?

Fourth, we believe in a God who helps but doesn't force. For Him to force would remove our freewill. He doesn't force us to change, doesn't make us change, but He helps us if we can even summon a small particle of faith. Can you explain how He interacts in situations, bringing people into and taking them out of lives, opening and closing doors, offering direction, peace, comfort and joy?

So how did our conversation go? Well, it's hard to say. She was receptive as I spoke to her about having hope in Christ, making tough decisions and some personal testimonies. I listened to her as she poured out her heart to me and I tried to simply listen. We probably spoke for a half hour and she left with some cans of food, and hopefully, hope. I'm confident she left with a different opinion of me, that angry bearded guy yelling at someone over a few dumb oranges. She left knowing where our church was and when we meet, with the invitation to come.

I'm finishing this article several months after this in-

cident. To date, I have not seen this young lady again. It would be easy to think that the time spent was worthless, and yet that would simply be a temptation to doubt the power of the Lord, and to doubt His direction for how we are to interact with this world.

We don't follow God's word, share the love of Christ and the hope of the Gospel, then judge its effectiveness by whether someone shows up to church or not. We don't follow God's word, share the love of Christ and the hope of the Gospel, then judge its effectiveness by whether the person who is rude or mistreating us at work ever changes. We don't follow God's word, share the love of Christ and the hope of the Gospel, then judge its effectiveness by whether one or one thousand conversations, or monetary donations, or minutes spent in the service of others result in changes we can see or quantify.

I look at the parable of the sower as an answer to this problem. The sower did his job; he walked about spreading the seed. Some of it grew, some didn't. Any of us who have planted gardens from seed know that some seeds germinate and grow, and some never do. But there is another thing that sometimes happens;

some seeds take longer than others to grow. I've had times as I've gardened that some seed which must have been lacking some essential thing when I planted it (at the same time I planted others) suddenly sprouted weeks or months later, sometimes outside of what I would consider the normal season, and become quite productive.

I feel the account of Alma, the son of Alma, in the Book of Mormon is a prime example of this. Raised by a man of God from childhood, hearing the word, seeing its effect in the lives of others, yet Alma (Jr) wasn't interested. Something was missing which was provided later in life and suddenly the seed which had been planted so many years (and so many heartaches) ago sprouted.

We follow God's word because we love Him. We love Him for His mercy, His patience, His faithfulness. We love Him for His Son, who gave His life so we could have forgiveness, so we could have hope, so we could receive His Spirit. We love God for His Son, who sits on His throne and petitions the Father for us, prays for us. We love God because He is faithful and we are not. We fail, we sin, we doubt, we second-guess; we are faced with challenges and do not

step up. But in spite of all these things, God is faithful. We are asked to share these things. To share hope. To have and give love. To be quick to speak on His behalf.

You'll notice I've written all this yet have not referenced a single scripture. I hope as you've read this you've had several come to mind. I will give you this scripture to consider:

Matthew 22:37-38:
"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."

I hope this is you, that you love the Lord as Christ directed us. And because of that love for the Lord—

39-40: *"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."*

It is a new year full of new opportunities. Or, perhaps old opportunities we have neglected. I hope and pray that the Lord is able to work with and through each of us in this new year.

*God bless,
Aadam Yates*

GENERAL SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

GENERAL SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

The General Sunday School Association (GSSA) is providing portions of lessons for several age groups on a common topic. Please visit the Church of Christ's Audio Visual Aid (AVA) committee website at www.cocsermons.net and click on the "Resources" tab to view all complete lessons and studies for children and adults. Contact Susan Porter at: porter_susan@sbcglobal.net, or 9 Market Street, Middleville, MI 49333, for more information. The GSSA has a private Facebook group for all members; if you would like to be added contact Betsy Trudgen at trucooking@yahoo.com.

God is Love

My dear God in Heaven above,
Is a God of unending love.
Daily loving me, He teaches me charity;
Desiring me to love Him in return,
Until my soul with zeal for Him does burn.
He gave His life so I may live, no greater gift can any give.
So my all to Him I wish to give, Each and every day I live.
I'm going to spiritually study every day,
learning more of my God's loving ways.
At school I'll work and play hard, love my fellow student that
shares my school yard.
I'll exercise my mind **and** body every day,
So they will grow stronger in every way.
I want to give my all to Jesus,
He gave His all for me;
My dear Jesus died to set me free.

1st John 4:7-21

God is Love

Poem by Janeen
Addie.

Try to write your
own.

TESTIMONY

The Marvelous Grace of God



Testimony of Lovita M. Seibel

On Sunday, December 9th, 2018, I reached death's door, and through the grace of God was brought back to normality.

On Saturday evening, December 8, I received my first TIA, a small stroke. My mother had many so I knew what it was. It caused numbness and a weakness in my right hand and right cheek that impaired my ability to smile. It all passed away shortly and I felt normal again. What I didn't realize was that a TIA could be advertising the advent of a large stroke.

Sunday I felt as always, got

ready for church, fixed and ate breakfast, talked with Ruth and her mother, Irene, when they came for breakfast, and said goodbye to young Harvey, Ruth and Irene when they left to attend a Christmas program in another town. Then I sat down in my easy chair to wait for my brother Harvey to pick me up for church.

At one point I opened my eyes (after possibly having blacked out) and looked around, noticing that I couldn't see out the windows; they were a white glaze. Then I apparently blacked out again because I knew nothing of what happened next.

Harvey arrived. The front door was open and he could see me in the chair through the locked glass storm door. He banged on the door for five minutes and hollered at me, but got no response. Finally he drove to church and called me on the telephone, but still got no response. He then contacted his daughter Irene and she called 911. She also called Ammon at the East Local and she, Ammon, Ruby and my brother Harvey ended up at young Harvey's house. The rescue crew was already there. They had to crowbar the storm door open.

Irene said I was sitting there, eyes wide open, but

with no soul in them. They could get no response, and the medic team knew I had had a stroke.

They got me out to the ambulance and Bro. Wratt, who had come with Harvey, administered to me. Somewhere about the same time Irene got in touch with Ruth and told her what was going on. They were at the church where the Christmas program was being heard, and Ruth started praying fervently for me; amazingly, God heard that prayer and took care of every part. She prayed that God would reverse every bad thing that had happened to me and that there would be no record of it at the hospital.

It was after Bro. Wratt administered to me that God began reversing things. It had to have been His power for I am sure without His intervention I was on my way out....

After the administration I became aware of myself and surroundings. I was in something and looking out, but I didn't know what I was in. Outside I could see a bunch of people. The next time I became aware I was moving and I could see buildings, trees and streets passing. So I asked where I was, and the

nicest young man answered that I was in an ambulance. I asked where we were going. He said, "To the hospital." I didn't know why we were going. He asked my name, date of birth, today's date and who the President was. I heard him talking on the phone with someone at the hospital, telling them I was a little confused.

Then I became nauseated and was attacked with a series of violent vomiting. Irene was at the ER, listening to the nurses who were monitoring our trip, say that the vomiting indicated I had massive brain bleeding and there was no hope. But they didn't know about Ruth's prayer: God was reversing my condition. I should have been comatose when I got to the hospital, but I was very much alive.

The nurses got me cleaned up and into a hospital gown, and I was rushed into a room and given a CT scan of my brain. What they expected was a blood-soaked brain. But God paid attention to Ruth's request that there would be no record of the bad things that had happened to me. And there wasn't.

By the time the day was done I was myself again. I

could have gone home except for the puzzle I was presenting to the hospital. They knew the state I had been found in. I was told very firmly that I had had a stroke, even after all their tests: another CT scan, a diagnostic test of the brain, an echo test of the heart (my arteries were all free, no blockages), and the big MRI test. All of them showed no record of a bad stroke, but they knew when they picked me up that I had had one.

I was there three days before they gave up looking. All they found was high blood pressure and a urinary tract infection.

God's hand was in this from beginning to end. A lot of people were praying for me. It wasn't my faith that saved me; I was totally unaware of any need. And I believe that God inspired the words of Ruth's prayer, since every word came to pass.

Praise God and His loving grace for an unworthy child like myself!



TESTIMONY

A Testimony from the Philippines



In February and March of 2018, Apostle Michael McGhee and I were in the Philippines traveling to the various missions and locals preaching and serving the Sacrament. On March 1st I had opportunity to travel to Eden Bayabas, which is a mission that Teacher Rogelio Villa oversees under the direction of Elder Serafin (Raffy) Vivas. After the services there were seven individuals who requested administration for various reasons; thus, Elder Raffy and I cared for these requests.

One of the individuals who requested administration was a young woman, Roselyn Pamplona, who was concerned about her unborn child she was carrying. Her mother and Roselyn said that she had been to a doctor who told her that they may have to deliver the baby by "C" section due to the complications. Elder Raffy and I held Roselyn's concerns up to the Lord in prayer, seeking a blessing from our loving Father in the name of His Son Jesus Christ on behalf of Roselyn and her baby. Our earnest prayer was that Roselyn would have a normal delivery and that her baby would be born healthy.

In November of 2018, Elder Steve McGhee and I had opportunity to return to the Philippines. Our first mission trip was to Eden Bayabas on November 4th. After the services a young mother came up to me very excited to show me her beautiful little five month old baby, Sofia Pamplona. Roselyn told me that she was blessed by God following the admin-



istration; she had no more complications and baby Sofia was born naturally. What a powerful testimony of the love of God and the blessings He gives to His children when they put their trust in His Son Jesus Christ!

May this testimony help to strengthen your faith in Jesus Christ and cause you to praise the God that we worship.

Elder Gordon McCann



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