

# The Good News

Newsletter - June 2014

A Publication of University Baptist Church, Hattiesburg, MS

The purpose of University Baptist Church is, through guidance of the Holy Spirit, to assemble and worship God, to love and encourage one another, to proclaim the gospel of Christ, to minister to all people, and to live in peace.

In a world where difficult issues remain, University Baptist Church continues its commitment to be a church where “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female, for (we) are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28)



## Pentecost- The Day That Transformed Us

If Acts 2:1 -47 were a movie, the director would have to be very creative to fill in parts to make the plot complete. The Story of Pentecost is a fast paced high action thriller. There is a lot that happens in the first two chapters: Jesus' ascension into Heaven, Judas' replacement and Peter's preachings to various peoples. All the ingredients of a great story are here. The story of Pentecost is full of plot twists that challenge our sensibilities. Therefore, we should not assume that this story has no significance to our own story because The Holy Spirit comes to all of us in unexpected ways.

Imagine if you will the disciples in the Upper Room having a boring everyday meeting when something out of the ordinary occurs; perhaps we see James and Peter turn in the direction of the sound of the wind bellowing through the room. Feast your eyes on the tongues of fire that engulfed the room and surrounded the Apostles. This event truly frightened them although Jesus had tried many times to tell them about the power of The Holy Spirit. Perhaps the disciples were more like us and did not fully understand until they experienced it. This entrance of The Holy Spirit filled their lives, strengthened their belief in God and served as a comforter, helper, and guide to them. The Apostles immediately went out to teach and preach the Gospel to all the peoples. We all have read stories about magic and fantasy as children but, the story of Pentecost is another matter entirely. This story is far beyond magic and fantasy. The beauty of it is the mystery that surrounds it. On June eight we celebrate Pentecost as a real event according to the church.

Pentecost is an active story that changes lives! We all have heard the phrase, "God works in mysterious ways". The Day of Pentecost can be classified as, a fitting example relating to the mystery of God. I think it's more than coincidence that Jesus' very presence is described as a flame burning in the hearts of his disciples (Luke 24:13-32). The Apostles immediately deliver the message of The Gospel. The real story of Pentecost is about people coming together regardless of race or background to hear The One story of a Man that can transform us all. The great love that is displayed at Pentecost breaks down the barriers of hate and intolerance. Francis Ford Coppola would love to have the honor of directing our final scene: here we are witnessing Peter's sermon to The World Audience. Peter tells them the greatest story they will ever hear about a remarkable man. Though the Apostles were from Galilee, The World Audience clearly heard them speaking to each of them in their own languages. The Story of Pentecost is the rebirth in our hearts by the arrival of The Holy Spirit. Peter's own rebirth would not have been possible if Jesus had not redeemed Peter in John 21:1-19. Pentecost gives us all hope and renewal. The Apostle Peter (Acts chapter 2) is vastly different from the Peter who denied Christ (John 18: 15-27).

-David Woullard

## On Pentecost They Gathered

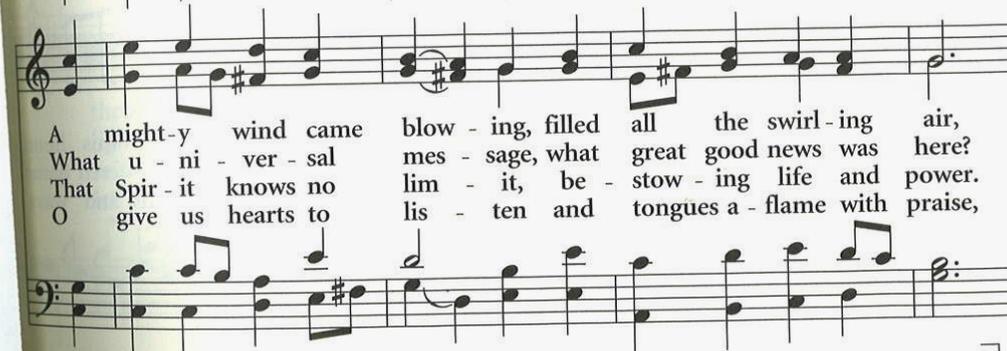
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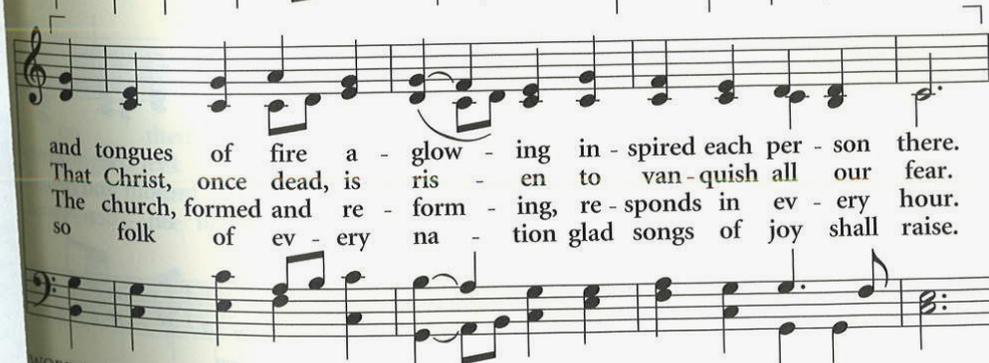
1. On Pen - te - cost they gath - ered quite ear - ly in the day,  
 2. The peo - ple all a - round them were star - tled and a - mazed  
 3. God pours the Ho - ly Spir - it on all those who be - lieve,  
 4. O Spir - it, sent from heav - en on that day long a - go,



a band of Christ's dis - ci - ples to wor - ship, sing, and pray.  
 to un - der - stand their lan - guage, as Christ the Lord they praised.  
 on wom - en, men, and chil - dren who would God's grace re - ceive.  
 re - kin - dle faith a - mong us in all life's ebb and flow.



A might - y wind came blow - ing, filled all the swirl - ing air,  
 What u - ni - ver - sal mes - sage, what great good news was here?  
 That Spir - it knows no lim - it, be - stow - ing life and power.  
 O give us hearts to lis - ten and tongues a - flame with praise,



and tongues of fire a - glow - ing in - spired each per - son there.  
 That Christ, once dead, is ris - en to van - quish all our fear.  
 The church, formed and re - form - ing, re - sponds in ev - ery hour.  
 so folk of ev - ery na - tion glad songs of joy shall raise.

WORDS: Jane Parker Huber, 1981 (Acts 2:1-12, 22-24)  
 MUSIC: Melchior Teschner, 1615  
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## Do Prayer and Faith Work?

In my last article, I talked about the fact that I would most likely be executed by the end of April. At the time I submitted that article, I firmly believed that was the case. I had spoken to, and/or written all of my family members and friends to try to prepare them for my death. My situation was such that I could not see a set of circumstances where I would not be executed. The state was asking that an execution date be set for me on March 26. I expected the court to set a date for me close to the time that the state was requesting.

What I thought was my last appeal was turned down by the US Supreme Court in late February. I knew that my attorney could file some “last minute” appeals, but they normally are denied. On February 26, my attorney filed an appeal in the Mississippi Supreme Court, but the court did not have to accept it. Similar appeals had been filed by other Death Row prisoners but were denied or rejected within two weeks of them being filed. My attorneys had waited until late in the process to file this appeal which made the chances of it being rejected even greater. So my situation was very dire. I had all but given up hope.

Prison ministers who visit me and other Death Row prisoners kept telling me not to give up hope, that God had the final say in my situation. Up until that point my prayers had all been about God giving my family and I the strength to face what was about to happen. But I began to pray that, if it was His will, God would intervene in my situation. My minister friends had already been praying for His intervention and I began getting letters from people from around the world who were praying for me and my situation. I turned my fate over to God and had faith that things would turn out according to His plans for me.

The Mississippi Supreme Court not only accepted the appeal that my attorney filed, they also accepted an “amend petition” that I filed. The state has made attempts to have this appeal dismissed without the court even considering it, but two months after it was filed, the court still has not denied my appeal. In fact, they have made some decisions that will prevent them from setting an execution date for me until at least August 2014. These decisions have opened up doors that make it possible for me to at least have the opportunity to have my death sentence overturned. I also still have the opportunity to have my conviction overturned and be granted a new trial. Will that happen? I don’t know what God has in store for me! I do know that all things are possible through Him. Right now I am just appreciative of the extra time that He has given me and for the prayers and support from my family and friends.

So, does prayer and faith work? I have no doubt that it does. I firmly believe that is the only reason that I am able to submit this article today. God has shown me mercy and this ability to influence our lives if we have faith. Hopefully, if someone who reads this is struggling with a problem, no matter how great or small, you will pray for God’s help and have faith that you will receive it. Because prayer and faith work!

-Charles C.

## Letter From The Free World

Hi, my name is Kath and I'm an avid letter writer, getting my first penfriend at school when I was 10 years old. My letter writing grew as I went to college and work and found myself being the one who did "keep in touch" - even though this was something people usually just said. After college I continued to write to friends who moved abroad to work, marry or married into the military.

As a child I was taken to church by my mom and at 11 years old I was confirmed. Somewhere along the line my faith became stronger and I tried to influence others with regard to "thou shalt not kill." At this time I found myself at odds with most of my friends who, when the subject arose justified their beliefs with the phrase "we need justice", but in the form of death.

Many times I consciously didn't give my opinion when the topic of the death penalty arose as I was seen as an "odd ball." Years later I watched 14 Days in May and I know that I had to be involved. It was at this time that Lifelines was formed and I was one of the first to join. 25 years and Lifeline continues to grow.

In the beginning technology wasn't as it is now and after you were allocated friend you got to know them slowly with each letter that came and was replied to. Now you can find every detail online regarding your penfriend before their first letter even arrives.

My first friend was Daniel in Florida. After a year of friendship his defense team asked me to go to Florida and appear at Daniel's retrial as a character reference for all of the English lessons Daniel and I had been doing, plus our discussion on religion. When I met Daniel's family and friends (all 57 of them) they were especially kind to me while I was there. Each evening before we left town, some of his family and I would go where he was being held and shout up to the window where he was. And each evening his family would hold hands and pray for him. It was very emotional and I felt blessed to be part of this ritual. Sadly, all of Daniel's appeals ended this year so now I pray for him even more.

My second penfriend was Ron from Georgia. He was a member of MENSA, so I thought we'd have little in common, plus he was an atheist and challenged my beliefs at every turn. Strangely enough we got on terrifically and while I prayed, he hoped, wished, believed things could or would happen so we jogged along on parallel tracks. He had numerous attempts on his life resulting in some serious injuries, all because he didn't fit into the role others thought he should fit into. Over the 18 years we wrote, we never "fell out", but frequently agreed to disagree. Life went on for the remainder of his life - fun, frustrating, challenging, but never dull. My last letter him was written as he awaited execution and arrived five days after his death. The hardest thing for me to accept was that he wasn't there any longer to give me advice, his opinion and criticism if he thought I needed it. To this day I miss his input into my life.

At one time I was coordinator for Mississippi as part of Lifelines and had some truly wonderful years. Back in 2004, my life changed and I found it necessary to resign from my position at Lifelines, but Mississippi will always be the state I cherish most.

My faith in God has helped me to get through some heavy situations and executions. I pray I live long enough to see all executions stopped. I want to end my story with a reference from Sam Johnson. "The true measure of a man is how he treats someone who can do absolutely nothing for him."

Kath, Texas/U.K.

Lifeline is an organization that supports and befriends prisoners on death row in the United States, through letter writing. Lifelines' website: [www.lifelines-uk.org.uk](http://www.lifelines-uk.org.uk)

It's an unfortunate tragedy that so many promising lives end in imprisonment. I know that when we were kids that our parents and our teachers took pride in the fact that they were molding the future of a generation to come. What happened to that opportunity to be or not to be is answered by the mistakes we've made and the warnings we didn't heed. There are many in prison who are innocent of the crimes to which a conviction was given but are we all innocent of crimes? Whether innocent or guilty, we shouldn't let such tragedies decide our fate or succumb to the deprivation of life. I see so many people around me who've accepted their position in this world and are quick to blame their demise on the legal system. I'll admit that I was one of those people before I came to the realization that my life has only just begun and that I'm worth more than an empty shell behind these prison walls. My everyday is an opportunity to better myself and to be an example to others that you're always somebody in this world if you have faith and believe in your worth. Our heavenly Father thought so and gave His only begotten son that we may believe on Him and not perish but have everlasting life – John 3:16. We have to take the first step and become accountable for our mistakes and correct them within ourselves. As long as your heart is willing, He'll give you the inner strength to turn the page on a new chapter in your life.

What awaits you in the near future is determined by you and your willingness to be or not to be. You can turn the unfortunate tragedy into a triumph and make life worthy of living. I pray for you all and I hope that together we can all become worthy of the sacrifice that was given to save our poor souls. If our Heavenly Father sacrificed to save our souls, then why can't we sacrifice to save our own souls?

God Bless Every man, woman, and child!

Justin U.

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“From Triumph to Triumph”

I'm taken aback by the many obstacles  
that I face,  
Struggling to get a grip in this dark  
and cold place.

For many years I've bowed down to such  
a gruesome fight,  
Too unwilling to stand up and stand tall  
against my plight.

Buried behind my shadows but very aware  
of His light,  
I feel His warmth and the embrace of His  
everlasting might.

With my heart beating rapidly, I'm eager to  
take His hand,  
To lead me on a journey to that heavenly  
and promised land.

No longer living a tragedy, I triumph 'cause  
I feel I'm worthy,  
balancing on a tight-rope, I'm now very  
focused and sturdy.

By: Justin U.

### “The Seeking Life”

I've known about the Seeking Life for almost 12 years now. I was excited about it from the beginning and as I've grown older I've gotten smarter. The Seeking Life is the Blessed Life. It's the kind of life that opens the door to God's highest and best will for us. The Seeking Life, not only offers the health, prosperity and success, it also provides us with peace, joy and every other good thing over the years. I've discovered that the more I seek God the happier and more wonderful my life becomes.

However, there is a twist to it. When people see you trying to do right, by following God's word or anything that's dealing with good, they will try their best to disrupt that flow. It's like the storm, if you let it rock you then you will lose. Remember the Greater One lives within one's self, so you have the power to fight. I've also learned that it is much better to cultivate a God-seeking lifestyle than it is to just coast along until I get in trouble and then look to Him or the way out. Even though He's merciful to us anytime we sincerely call on Him, we can avoid a lot of upset and pain by sticking close to Him everyday.

The Seeking Life isn't just a once a week event. If you really want to be blessed, you need to go after the things of God every day. You need to keep the word of God in front of your eyes, in your ears and in the center of your 'Heart,' all the time, that's what it takes to keep your thinking straight. The Devil is constantly using every means available to confuse us and darken our minds. If you don't want to miss out on anything God has for you, I encourage you to make prayer a priority in your life. Don't just coast along expecting others to do your seeking and praying for you. Don't hit the snooze button and think if I get in trouble, I'll just call the prayer warriors at church. Those prayer warriors may be praying for themselves when you call.

He said, “Keep on asking and it will be given to you. Keep on seeking and you will find. Keep on knocking and the door will be opened.” —Matthew 7:7

By: Sherwood B. and friend A.D.

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### **GPS (God's Perfect System)**

The GPS is one of the best inventions of the twentieth century. Nowadays you can find a GPS in most cars, trucks and even boats. The GPS can also be downloaded to your cell phone. So whether you're driving, fishing or walking the GPS can help you find almost any destination in which you seek. The GPS is not perfect tho. It doesn't always provide the easiest or safest way to travel. Because of this, and maybe a little pride, a lot of people, mostly men, choose not to use the GPS. As a result of this they sometimes get lost and end up being late getting to the person, place or thing they were going to. Getting lost is something we all can relate to. This is why the GPS was created. Getting lost isn't limited to the streets, sidewalks and seas tho. Often in life we are faced with directions that just don't seem right. I'm so grateful that as a Christian, God has created me a GPS. My GPS, or God's Perfect System, is far more advanced than any GPS man could make.

Psalm 48:14 Says “He will be our guide forever” The Bible is God's Perfect System, our go to whenever we need direction on where to go or help in deciding what to do. The devil is always creating new roads in this world that only lead to destruction and damnation. Before we decide to travel down a new road we should first log into our GPS and make sure we are going the right way. In Matthew 4:10-11 we learn that the easiest way is not always the best way. The best way, the only way, is to follow the coordinates provided by the GPS, God's Perfect System. Do you rely on the GPS He has designed for us, or are you still trying to find your own way? If you are tired of being lost...

GPS: “What is your destination please?”

You: “The Kingdom”

The GPS is now locked in to the Kingdom and the cruise control is on God speed.

For all those still lost the lights are on high beam,  
The flesh and the law are in the rearview,  
His mercy and grace are riding shotgun,  
Faithful and true under the hood and the tanks filled with Christ's love,  
On the road of redemption up ahead lies salvation ...

GPS: “40 more feet till the Kingdom your final destination”

Song of Month: Lecrae, “Walk With Me”

By: Devin B.

## Chained Yet Free

In Your hand, O Lord, I lie, trusting in the grace You give.  
I sing my song of love to You, since through Your love bestowed on me, I live.  
From prison walls, across the bars, Your grace echoes salvation's tones  
Sounding in a circle of love: peace to my flesh, peace to my bones.  
Barbed wire encloses me trying to imprint hell's grief upon my soul,  
But soon captivity will be no more. On heaven's street of gold I'll stroll.  
I sing of joy, Your promise and unending glory told.  
The Word of God in Jesus comes, and death will lose its hold.  
The day of the Kingdom, both young and old delight  
To see the vision, the Lord's blessing in one's sight;  
To hear the promise that will come to be:  
"Come O blessed of My Father; come to Me."

Song I shall sing, it's in my heart;  
Song I shall sing, it's in my bones;  
Song I shall sing, it's bound in my flesh and blood;  
Yet, my soul is free; my captors capture only what they see of me.  
My chains are heavy; my yoke burdens me with same,  
But I am free with Jesus; prison walls cannot contain.  
At the sound of the trumpet and the heavenly choir's refrains  
I'll claim my crown and throw away my chains.  
I'll shed my yoke of what one was, and see  
Myself from prison walls and bars set free.

O, Lord, guard me and guide me with Your help,  
Lest I lose my way, relying on myself.  
Whatever load of blame I bear upon my back,  
Let not my love for You grow weak or slack.  
Back to the house of bondage, I will not go.  
I desire to be where milk and honey flow.  
Help me, Lord, forgetfulness to shun,  
To know Your work upon the Cross is done.  
May Your glory shine forever in my soul,  
Blazing more brightly than precious gems or gold.  
I look to You and pray that I may be  
Your mirror image to find Your life in me.  
Behind these bars, I'll praise You with my songs.  
Praise to Jesus Who took upon Himself our wrongs.  
Our life on earth is chaos, pain and strife,  
But Jesus grants His children eternal life.  
The precious treasure of His love, I'll guard  
So that I may receive Him as my reward.  
My heart shall be Your throne, Your mercy seat.  
I'll sing the name of Jesus with each heartbeat.

By: David C.

Dear Good News Readers,

“Whatever you do, you need courage. Whatever course you decide upon, there is always difficulties arising that tempt you to believe your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires some of this courage that a soldier needs...” (We read in Mark 12:34 – You are not far from the Kingdom of God.) Jesus is saying something similar to us today. We know who he is, and we are trying to follow Him, but He is calling us further. He's asking us to persevere in running the race that lies before us. (Hebrews 12:1) Its a long race that calls for patience, endurance, and fortitude. We don't want to stop for then we miss the next opportunity for grace and growth that God has in store for us. And if there is one thing we can say for certain about our Heavenly Father, its that He always has more for us. Perhaps the most important thing to realize is that Jesus is pleased with you right now. Like a good coach. He sees how much you've already done, and He is proud of you! He is committed to the same things you are. He wants to see you overcome that next hurdle, hit that next goal, and get that much closer to the finish line. He is committed to taking you there ...

“Step By Step”

He does not lead me year by year, nor even day by day; But step by step my path unfolds. My Lord directs my way ... Tomorrows plans I do not know; I only know this minute. But He will say, “This is the way, by faith now walk ye in it ... And I am glad that it is so, Today's enough to bear; And when tomorrow comes – His grace shall far exceed its care ... What need to worry then, or fret? The God who gave His Son, holds all my moments in His hand – And gives them one by one!!!!

-Author Unknown

Prayers God Blesses  
and  
Keeps Always In Him  
Loving Care,  
Roger T.

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K.I.S.S.

No, I am not writing an essay about the band with that name. I am not writing about the old “Sally and Johnny sitting in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G” either. I am using these letters to reinforce something an old drill sergeant in the army tried to pound into our heads: “Keep It Simple Stupid”

In our spiritual life, we would do well to keep this advice in mind. Our Savior was a simple man while on earth. He lived simply, spoke simply, and chose simple people as His disciples. He did not build ornate temples to gather His followers in nor did He choose to travel in the most luxurious manner available in His time. His clothing was not of the finest material or latest fad. Too often, many people seeking more understanding of His message get totally distracted by minutiae. We read all the commentary and analysis of scribes over the centuries. We get hung up on how we should pray, when we should pray, how often to take communion, what we should wear, and what we should eat. I was recently asked a question about the period between the rapture and final judgment. Frankly, I have never done any concentrated study on the subject and told my questioner so. But, I also told him that if you follow the simple plan of salvation by accepting Jesus and repenting of your sins, that if you make every good-faith effort to live the simple life He did while amongst us, then we would not be left behind when the rapture comes. We would have no reason to get into esoteric discussions – which we as humans could never understand anyway – About what happens between the rapture and final judgment. I once told someone that the law (mans law) was common sense put into uncommon language. Our salvation is much the same. Jesus put it simply, “Believe in me and you shall have everlasting life.” Man too often tries to complicate, or put the plan into uncommon practices, what our Lord told us, K.I.S.S

-Richard J.

## OUR ENEMIES ARE ON THE PROWL

1 Peter 5:8 “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

We as believers know that our enemies, the devil and his demons, are going around causing trouble for everyone in this world today. We know that he and his followers were thrown out of heaven for causing trouble. We also can read in the Bible how he caused Adam and Eve to be thrown out of the garden of Eden and how by that he is still causing trouble for us today by trying to lead us away from our Heavenly Father and His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and He is also trying to keep us out of Heaven as well. We as believers need to tell everyone we meet that the devil and his demons are out to destroy our journey to reach our home that Jesus has gone to prepare for us. We need to watch out for these tricks the devil will use to hurt our walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. Here are a few of them: sex, greed, seduction, and grumbling. The devil also uses people to hurt one another and keep hatred for one another as well. We as believers need to tell everyone that we meet to put their hand in Jesus hand and He will see them through no matter what comes their way. Just as the devil and his demons are on the prowl to keep us away from Jesus, we as Christians need to be on the prowl to find others and help them in accepting Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. In Jesus name we pray Amen and Amen.

Brother In Christ,  
Stephen P.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

BOBBY B

There was an old widow--very poor--that lived next door to an atheist. She needed groceries really bad but had no money to pay for them. So every evening about sundown, she'd step out on her front porch and pray aloud, "Lord, please send me some groceries." She did this for 6 days. On the seventh day, as she was about to pray again, she noticed four bags of groceries on her porch. So she screamed, "Thank you, Jesus!" About that time, the ole atheist jumped out from behind a bush and replied, "Ah-Ha! God didn't buy you those groceries--I did. I've watched you everyday ask your Lord to send you some groceries and nothing happened. So, feeling sorry for you, I went to the grocery store and got you some myself. So now what do you have to say about that?" The ole widow said, "Praise the Lord--God brought me my groceries and made the devil pay the bill!"

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## WHY GOD? THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Since the beginning of time people have asked “why” in the midst of suffering. A national survey asked, “if you could ask God one question and knew he would answer, what would it be?” The top response was “why is there pain and suffering in the world?” Skeptics often cite the reality of suffering as evidence against the biblical view of God. After all, if God is loving but does not stop evil and suffering, then he must not be all-powerful. Some people say the only alternative is that god is able to prevent evil and suffering and does not do so, which means he does not love. The bible assures us God is both loving and all-powerful despite the suffering and evil that are a part of life. Although we cannot always answer the “why” question, in general we can know that God loves us. All people experience suffering. Commitment to God and consistency of character don't exempt anyone from pain in this life. Our suffering is not always the direct result of our personal sin. Suffering is a by-product of living in a world corrupted by sin. Sometimes the evil we experience is the result of other's sins. Why does God grant satan even limited power to inflict pain and suffering on his servants? While we don't know all the answers to such questions, we can make inferences. One is that God's power and sufficiency are highlighted against the back drop of our weakness and suffering (2 Cor 12:7-10). When you comprehend how far we've fallen short of God's desire of us, the ultimate question may change from “why do we suffer” to “why don't we suffer more.” We have a God who comprehends our pain because he has experienced every kind of hardship we encounter. Jesus Christ understands what it is like to be betrayed by a friend, misunderstood by family members, falsely accused by enemies and even to feel forsaken by our heavenly father. That is why we can talk confidently to God when we are suffering. Certain that he empathizes with our situation. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tested in every way as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time (Heb. 4:15-16). Suffering can and should be a catalyst that drives us deeper into the strong and loving arms of the father who loved us enough to sacrifice his one and only son, Jesus Christ.

The grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God and the sharing of the Holy Spirit be with all of you,

Jason K.

## The Price of Unforgiveness

The time, September, 1964. I came home from school and I noticed my Dad's hunting dogs and kennel are gone. I ran inside and asked my mom, where is Rocky? I then saw his office empty, weather radio, specifically set-up so he could plan flights, even back then you had to file flight plans. He was a Korean war veteran pilot from the Air Force. Even as a young boy, I could name the different small planes, as I sat listening to my Dad. I was told that dad and mom were divorcing. I took it hard. I stopped talking and wouldn't do school. Finally, after a visit with my dad, my mom told him that he must take us. As dad drove from Minnesota to Michigan, he told me that sometimes people just fall out. I was glad to be with dad.

I was 14 when in 1969, Detroit, Michigan Federal Justice Department charged my grandfather and dad with the RICO Statute. It was brand new at the time and at that point in my life it was front page headlines. The car business, restaurant, bars, all had to be sold. My grandfather died one month later. My dad called mom and I understood at that time that he was sending us to Florida. I was hurt and then had to go live down there with her after no contact for eight years. I had just turned 15 when mom picked us up at the airport at West Palm Beach, Florida. I didn't know her. My mom was going out at night, my half brother Doug, dealt drugs and I didn't know how to react. I didn't have trust or the dynamics of family structure instilled. I still remember the first Sunday after my parents split up, the Catholic Church closed its doors, excommunicated the whole family. My mother wanted me to go to church, I told her no, since they embarrassed our whole family. I really thought God hated me. So when I got married, I wouldn't go I took them to a church that said non-denominational. I didn't want them to be labeled or be like me. When my daughters were finished with high school, I took them on a one-month camping trip. I wanted to share with them why I had not been there every night, who I really was and how I turned to a life of crime. I told them that I loved them so much. I wanted to tell them so they would understand. I was so glad to talk to them. They, in turn, told me about their best friend, Jesus. I didn't know that I had broken the bondage chain that burdens families through generations. I spoke to them about my dad and mom, how I kept them away from them and the reasons.

The unforgiveness in my family took a toll. The days before my dad died with cancer, he finally sat up in bed. All my brothers were there. Everyone was talking; my dad asked me what I wanted. Dad, Why don't you make a will and give the money to all the grandchildren, the cost of college is astronomical. When my twins walked in, it broke my heart because my dad started crying, the girls did, so did my wife because they had never met. From that day forward, all my brothers and sisters have never talked to me. My dad's attorney drew up papers and dispensed everything so that no one would stop him. I got him to set up a trust fund for all the grandchildren. All the grandchildren went to college, all successful. Afterwards, my daughters asked me why they never got to meet. I told them my dad and mom thought I was crazy to marry a Seminole Indian girl so they did not come to the wedding. Both daughters asked why are they so stuck up. I laughed because my daughters never went without. When I left my wife after the girls went to college, I really went off the deep end.

I wrote this to say, if you have anyone in your family or church family, don't assume the kids are OK. I blamed myself until I was 14 and my dad told me the truth about the marriage. Because of the lost years, I put up barriers so people couldn't get in. Spend time with them, take them places with you. The biggest harm done in a divorce is the hurt of the children. I didn't learn about Jesus truly until 2005. I had heard all about Jesus, yet I couldn't surrender. I didn't have a complete concept, nor did I want to or need to until I went through Hurricane Katrina. That was the day that I really saw first-hand God was there that day. I do not mitigate what I did to put me here. I made some really bad choices, yet I see now where it all adds up. I hope that if you read this you will reach out and also realize that Jesus was betrayed, beaten, and crucified. Who am I to not forgive anyone. My life so changed the day I surrendered. It was like taking a 100 pound weight off my back. I see where I was unable to cope brought on by a life of deceit. Praise God and enjoy your summer too.

## Essential Beauty

I am lost within the confinements of other's opinion of "me".  
But with the hopes of expression through the eyes of one's self I strive to be acknowledged.  
Polished with imperfections ascertained by flawed perceptions of true beauty.  
I scream out, "I am uniquely defined as essential beauty."  
Through the constant search for acceptance I am neglected. Forced to lay dormant, I pray for the day I am no longer rejected.

Subjected to the majority desire for correction to "my perfection.  
Not knowing that from my perspective, "I am the definition of Essential Beauty."  
You pursue me, when truly you only seek to destroy me. If I am in the eyes of the beholder, then why, Beholder, do you choose to ignore me?  
Through your persistent search for that of which is not lost, nor stolen,  
many of you will never have the privilege of truly getting to know me.

For I am the essence of Essential Beauty: Here to convey my divine reverence of true beauty uniquely defined through a substance much older than you, yet younger than me.  
I'm the stars in the sky sent to quick your way. From the breath of life to every breath you take,  
I'm the passing thought for every thought that's made. To the social desire from which you were made.  
And the flaws in perfection is the stain I leave. For without my flaws there would be nothing to see.  
I'm the uh-ohs in life across valleys and seas  
To a point of true regret in many lives I've seen.  
Different times, different places, and oh yes, even I have dreams.

Of one day being accepted not for what you see. For I'm the core of compassion and love for all things. But in all things, there's me. Therefore I am what you'll need if you truly desire to one day see me.  
For in your perfect imperfections my profession is perfected as the essence of your beauty most have yet to see,

\*As the Essential Beauty you were meant to be\*

- Terry P.

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### **Some suggested topics for the Newsletter**

Thank you for the continued letters, thoughts, and poems you send in to us each month. We want to know more about who you all are. Story seems to be one of the best ways to get to know who someone really is and so we encourage you all to look at some of these suggested topics to see if any inspiration comes as we seek community with one another. Please know that these are not to restrict your writing; you are certainly welcome to choose to write on another topic or in another form. They are simply some ideas as all writers need somewhere to start. Thank you for your continued contributions to this piece and happy writing!

- Choose a story or a character from the Bible and tell us how it speaks to your life or how you connect to it.
- Make up a short story
- Tell us about a character you've read in a book or watched in a movie that inspires you and why.
- Tell us your favorite song. What is it about this song that draws you to it?
- Write a song or send in a piece of original artwork.