

# The Good News

Newsletter—August 2015

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)**

## *Questions I Ask Myself: 1Peter 1:6-7; 4:12-19*

As I sit here in this one-man isolation cell in the Forrest Co. Jail, I find myself asking the same questions everyone housed in isolation has asked at one point or another, “Why am I here?” “When will I leave?” These questions deserve the most thought, but they are not the first questions we ask. “Are they serious about the food we are fed?” “Why are we fed like small farm animals?” Do they really have to call it chowtime?” These are the pressing questions as I sit here looking at this chow. Let me quickly answer them for the jail. They say, “This is jail! If you don’t like it, bond out or get used to it.” Don’t look for anyone to be easy here, believe me.

I know in my heart that God doesn’t want anyone to be here. He doesn’t want any of His children to be mistreated, yet here I am. If anyone reading this is feeling mistreated or abused, pray that you do not fall to anger, but to love, because you will become stronger with the experience. I know this to be true firsthand since I now hold the record for being on suicide watch the longest in Forrest Co. Jail history—2 months! I know the struggle against anger because at some point in that 2 months, I went from being monitored to being punished for having a mental health problem. Suicide watch at this jail is absolutely no joking matter. I was kept in a bare concrete room with only a paper hospital gown for clothing. I had no mat, no blanket, socks or even underwear. I had no toilet paper (I had to use parts of my gown) or even soap to wash my hands. I was denied a shower for weeks at a time and not allowed to contact anyone on the outside—by letter or phone call. The air conditioner was always on the freeze setting for the isolation cell, so I never knew warmth. The cold concrete sucked the heat out of my body through my bare feet as I would pace the cell and my bare bottom when I, in exhaustion, sat down to get a few hours of sleep. This is how Forrest Co. Jail punishes its prisoners. I struggled with anger through 2 months of the taunts of guards, nurses, and inmates alike.

So, how do we cope and avoid unrighteous anger? For me it took seeing my life and situation as a test sent by God. I know I was being shown the error of my ways. I was forced to ask myself, “Do I draw near to the only One that can help me, or do I continue to do things my way?” If you are facing trials, I hope you ask yourself the same thing. During my 60-day trial I met both God and Satan. It was during those meetings that I decided to better my relationship with God. It is only God that can set our feet on rock and keep us from anger. The devil only wants to hold us underwater. How long before you drown? Be aware. Oh, the first 2 questions? They are easy to answer. Why am I here? I’m right where God needed me to be to hear His voice. When will I leave? When I’m ready for the new tests to begin.

Shawn McClary—Forrest Co. Jail

*Revival From Katrina*

Day 1: August 31, 2005, I was prepared, left the house at 5pm. And proceeded towards town to pull logs out of the road. As I walked, I saw devastation all around me—homes torn off their foundation lay in the middle of the road in pieces. As we were making our way, we saw a couple on a roof and took them to a store that was still standing. Over the next weeks, we saw many devastated people. People still in shock and in need of help began making their way to the National Guard when a deacon from the Baptist church came to ask if anyone had a piano. The crowd laughed, but I tell you how God works. Only a few months before that a friend and I had cleaned out an old building packed with furniture. In all of the old furniture was an upright piano, solid black. I cleaned it up and found that it still had a good sound to it and put it in my living room. That day, I looked at the deacon and told him I had a piano, but it was 26 miles away. He opened his truck to show me six cans of gas—God had a plan. You see, all the gas stations on the coast were underwater and there was no access to fuel at the time. We headed to my home where we had a generator for power, food and showers, stayed the night and loaded the piano for the trip back the next morning. The deacon told us how his mother had trained him on the piano at a young age. He told us how he played piano for the troops when he was in the military and the many places he has played since then. When we got back, we set up chairs and the piano where people were gathered to get food, water, and assistance, and the deacon began playing. He played *Amazing Grace*, *Just As You Are*, *Victory in Jesus*, *In the Garden*, and many others. Several in the crowds began to sing—people came over to hear more—and he played for an hour. Then a woman named Dorothy stood up and began to tell her story of devastation from the storm.

I won't forget hearing the cheers from all the people as God had touched their lives that day. Two years later, I found myself in that same parking lot and saw that same deacon being taken away in an ambulance. I thought back to how many people he had helped after Katrina. I went to the hospital and found he had had a small heat stroke but was okay. When he was discharged, we went back to his church where he showed me around and told me how he still plays and gets requests for those hymns.

It's been 10 years now, and they are still building—new stores, restaurants, and schools. I still smile when I remember that piano-playing day, and the way that God reached out to the crowd in that parking lot with song. 10 years later, the coast is really beautiful again.

God Bless Everyone,  
Timothy Evans

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*Our Urgent Appeal for God's Help: Matthew 14:30*

“But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid and beginning to sink, he cried out saying, ‘Lord, save me!’”

For Jesus showed us just how He will come to our speedy rescue when we are faced with trials and troubles and cry out to Him the way Peter did when he was sinking. He also shows us the rescue of all the people throughout the Bible and He is willing to do the same thing to each and every one of us, as well. We as believers need to have the same passion as our Lord has for our brothers and sisters who are faced with trials and troubles and cry out for someone to help and rescue them. We as believers need to wake up and look and listen through our eyes, our hearts, our souls, and our minds of Christ for the cries of the poor and the needy people in this world. We need to help them through their troubles. But there are also those who are trying to fill us with lies and trying to get us not to believe that the Lord loves us and will help us. But as long as we keep our faith and put our trust in Jesus, He will save us from our troubles when we cry out to Him. Let's remember in our hearts, souls, and minds how He rescued Peter and others in the Bible. He will do the same thing for you and for me. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Brother in Christ,  
Stephen Powers

\* The following was written by Stephen Powers in 2001. He had two strokes since and currently has a brain aneurysm.

## *My Story of Discouragement*

I wrote a few pieces about achieving spiritual growth, discipleship, and soul searching a few months for the Good News. These pieces made me feel good about myself. The encouragement came from the Quran, the Bible, and this book I read by Pastor Tony Evan. The things I read made me see something in myself and others that he talks about in his book, and it has inspired me to write about what he was teaching and talking about. That really made me feel good inside, so I wanted to tell others about it and what I was going through as far as soul searching myself. Then, one day, out of the blue, I get an anonymous letter from someone who really tried to discourage me by talking down on me and what I wrote about. I have to admit, they had me hotter than a six-shooter, but I couldn't let him get to me. He said I wasn't living the life I write about because he could see something different. After thinking about what this person had said, I came to the point of saying that he doesn't know what I feel in my heart. Only God knows, and that is all that matters.

I'm not out to prove anything to him or live my life the way he or the world want me to! I can truly say that I am trying my best because I am searching and seeking knowledge to try and understand the Bible, the Quran, and other books that help me achieve my spiritual growth and bring me closer to Him. We as people of all faiths are always trying to tell others how to live their lives or what is best for them when we are not living our own life according to God's word. We are so quick to point out what someone else is doing, but we can't see what we are doing wrong! Everything we talk about or read in a book is coming from someone else, and it is left up to us to take it in, understand it, and pass it on to others. It is up to us to encourage, not discourage.

Sherwood B.

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Since the beginning of time, man has found a way to shift blame. Human beings have needed a *scapegoat*. I've just never understood why it had to be me. Every so often I think the world likes to remind me of its narcissistic, inconsiderate, and ignorantly narrow-minded inhabitants—people who relieve their inner turmoil by projecting their personality flaws onto others. Today was one of those reminders. My character was unduly criticized and my intelligence depreciated. The more I was attacked, the more I sat, silently infuriated—no defense, no offense. I nodded, and issued unwarranted apologies: “Yes ma'am, No ma'am, Ok, I understand.” Completely immobilized by unwanted restraint. Why? Where was my fight? Why must I voluntarily forfeit my dignity and lay down my pride? Why isn't the outward expression of rage and disdain as easily exemplified through my words and actions the way others so carelessly cast theirs on me? A beautiful *whipping boy*.

Luckily for me, the imbecilic reprimand ended just before my psychological lacerations became physically visible. I got up, made my way to the restroom, took a deep breath, and allowed myself to decompress for approximately 60 seconds (that's usually the time allotted before the words of my father disrupt my grief process. His way of attempting to alleviate the discomfort of his baby was less than nurturing). I can see his face now. Weed and alcohol permanently painted his sleep-stained eyes, blood shot red. With a Marlboro dangling from either corner of his mouth he'd ask, “What'chu cryin' fo?” So, what was I crying for? Well I wasn't crying because I was sad, or afraid, or intimidated. And I certainly wasn't crying because the ludicrous accusation against me hurt my feelings. No, I cried for all of those reasons and none of them. I was livid. I was so utterly disgusted with carrying around the crushing weight of the *bigger person*. I was tired of imploding and trying to salvage the remains once the damage was done. Still, to cry too long would suggest that I wasn't in control of myself—that I'd loaned my biological control panel to another person in order to manipulate my feelings and toggle my tear ducts on and off. Self-induced affliction is one thing, but assisted emotional suicide is another, and I refuse to hand the bullet to the person aiming at me.

As much as I would like to wallow in my thoughts and embody the role of misery, perhaps invite you to share in my company while we complain over a cold cup of bitter tea, this pity party must be short lived. Why? Because I understand that from the same one who allows me the restraining grace to hold my tongue, comes the same liberty that won't let me hold my peace. God met me in the midst of my woe to remind me of who He is—and subsequently of who I am in Him. Comfort and contentment is not the goal—maturity is. God requires growth, and growth is a sacrifice. There is nothing more sacrificially uncomfortable than maturity.

I know that I'm human and my senses don't always subject me to the most pleasant circumstances, but I also have to remember that I am a spiritual being. And I dare not reject the perfect peace my Lord died for—for me to have in place of the chaos of my present situation (Philippians 4:7, Colossians 3:3-4). So no matter how heavy the blow, I'll remember it's a fixed fight (Romans 8:38-39). I'll choose to acknowledge the liberty that allows me to walk in a peace that goes beyond carnal understanding (Colossians 3:15). The dust from these light afflictions I will continue to knock from my feet (Romans 5:3-4). And even if I have to do it through gritted teeth, I'll pray for those who spitefully misuse me (Matthew 5:44-45).

This is my destiny. The Bible says that we were created in His likeness (Genesis 1:26), therefore the ultimate goal is to be like Christ. And considering that Jesus allowed Himself to serve as the world's *whipping boy*, and humanity's *scapegoat*, I'll count it all a joy that God would consider me worthy to be even remotely utilized in the same way (James 1:2; 12).

God Bless,  
L.T.  
Jackson, MS

*Recall God's Mercies*

“This I call to mind and therefore I have hope the steadfast love of the lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning, great is your faithfulness.” Lamentations 3:21-23

God is faithful. He's full of compassion. His mercies are new every morning. As a believer, you know all that. But simply knowing is not enough. For it to do any good, you have to recall it. You have to remember it again and again to rekindle your hope and stir up your faith. So, make it a point every morning to remind yourself of God's faithfulness. Remind yourself of the benefits that are yours in Jesus. What are those benefits? Psalm 103 spells them out: God forgives all our sins, heals disease, redeems our lives, crowns us with loving kindness and tender mercies, satisfies our mouths with good things so that we are renewed, executes righteousness and judgment against oppression, sets us free. God makes known his ways to us and gives us grace and mercy in times of need.

Make it a point every morning to say those things out loud to the Lord. Stand before Him in prayer and recall His mercies to you. Keep it up and you'll be stronger in faith and more confident of God's love than you've ever been before. Don't just settle for knowing God's blessings. Remember them everyday and watch them come alive in you. Psalm 103:1-17

Jason K.

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*My Future is Secure*

I don't know what my future hold, but Lord, I trust in you.  
So often I don't understand, but oh your Word is true! (Proverbs 3:5, Psalm 56:11, Romans 15:4).

You said your own should not beg bread and told us not to fear.  
You promised never to forsake, So Lord I know you're here. (Psalm 23:4, Deuteronomy 31:8).

Uncertainty has tempted me to wonder and to fret,  
but in those hours my heart cried out, "My God does not forget!" (Philippians 4:6, Psalm 147:3).

I know in whom I have believed! Storms bow at your command.  
The fire can't singe—I'm cradled by the strength of Your great hand. (Mark 4:35-41, 1Peter 4:11).

Your eyes are ever over me; Your ears hear every prayer.  
You know when hurts afflict and wound, and best of all, You care! (2Chronicles 16:9, Proverbs 15:29, 1Peter 5:7).

I don't know what my future holds, but Lord in You it's sure.  
And even when the path seems dim, my future is secure! (Colossians 3:3-4, John 3:16)

Mary

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*The Smell of Roses*

Everyone has heard the timeworn phrase, "Take the time to stop and smell the roses," but how often has anyone actually done that? We are so caught up in the busyness of life that we fail to actually see the world in which we live, and we then completely miss God in this world.

When was the last time you took a second to close your eyes and turn your face toward a breeze for the pleasure of it? The breeze is always there, so why not enjoy it? When was the last time you simply sat and watched the movement outside of your window? When was the last time you spoke to a stranger about Christ or small-talked about *their* day? Have you sat in a park with the sun on your face, listened to the birds, squirrels, and children playing and making noise together this year? Have you noticed the flowers or tasted the watermelon yet? Have you just stopped what you are doing and taken a deep breath? If you haven't taken a minute, then you have missed seeing God in His love as reflected by His creation.

God and His people are everywhere but are hard to see if you don't take a second to look at the people and things you "see" everyday. So do yourself a favor and take the time to stop and smell the roses. I think they smell like God. Have a great month.

In Christ's Love,  
Roger Gillett  
Forrest Co. Jail

Our walk with the Lord always leads us to a moment of crisis requiring an exercise of faith. This means that our New Life experience requires belief and action. It is important then that we expect moments where we come to realize our complete lack of power; moments where our attention is directed toward the supernatural power of God to perform what only He can do. Herein He is to be glorified.

Do we actively trust the Lord to fulfill His promises or do we trust our own abilities to accomplish God's plan for our lives? This is the chief question we see the Israelites confronted with in our text. There's no doubt that God is a God of purpose and is more than able to perform His purposes. He is ever faithful to bring to pass that which He has spoken. It is true that every child of grace readily confesses these truths, but genuine faith—that which is born of God—requires the active reliance upon the Lord as our strength. It requires our coming to a position of rest in Him. It is about what He can do, not what we cannot. Who we trust when faces with giant-sized obstacles, trials, or situations is in accordance with our perspectives.

God had long ago promised to give the land of Canaan to the descendants of Abraham as an everlasting possession (Gen.12:7). This promise was later confirmed to the children of Israel when God delivered them from Egyptian bondage (Ex. 6:8). God had brought them out of every trial, through every storm, had set their feet upon a solid rock. God had given them everything they needed to live in victory as they walked in obedience, and He had promised to do even more. We watch the Israelites as they come to the bank of the Jordan with nothing to separate them from the promises of God but a river. Had not the Lord been gracious? Had He not shown Himself to be all-powerful, even doing supernatural things in delivering them from Egypt? So where is the trust that such acts should inspire? Why didn't the Israelites believe that God was able and willing to do exceedingly more than all they could ask for or think of? Because the Israelites had the wrong perspective.

In our text, we hear the Israelites assessment of the land, "Surely it floweth with milk and honey" (v. 27). But then they begin to number the many reasons they could not have the blessing that God had promised to them: the people are too strong; the city is too well defended; it's too hard; we can't do it. The only thing the children of Israel could see was the negative. Their knowledge of their human weaknesses and the downward pull of human nature caused them to see defeat alone. Even as Caleb tried to encourage them (v. 30), they began to scorn the land itself (v. 32)! An important thing about the Israelites' perspective is revealed here, "and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."

The problem we see here is that the Israelites had a knowledge of God's promise and His power, but that they were not looking for Him to make the necessary provisions. Thinking that God was relying on them to fulfill His promises, they only looked at the situation from their perspective. This is clear from their report, "we were in our own sight as grasshoppers." Accordingly, they could not see themselves as victors.

Child of God, when we find ourselves facing our own giant-sized difficulties, do we actively rely upon God to give us the victory He has promised? Are we looking at the problem and ignoring the solution? Are we judging the situation from our own powerlessness, or are we looking to God as the all-powerful sovereign that God is? Whether or not we experience the victory that Christ has so graciously provided, is a choice we have to make. Your choice will depend upon your perspective.

Christopher Lee

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*Why I Call on Jesus*

I call on Jesus because He is my air to breathe, my food and water. He allows my heart to beat. He wakes me up and puts me to sleep. He never leaves me alone. His love never fails. He knows me better than I know myself. He watches over my friends and family because He never sleeps. He is the way, the truth, and the life, the beginning and the end, the author and the finisher, my rock, my refuge, my friend, my brother, my shepherd, my king, my Lord, my God, my salvation, my hope, my first love. I can keep on going, but instead, I ask you this, why do you call on Jesus?

Psalm 51:16-17/9:9-10

John 14:12-14

Philippians 2:9-11



Brother in Christ,

Joseph King

## Today

Today I woke up just another ordinary person with some signs of glee but also with signs of despair. I looked up at the Heavens and back down on the earth. I ask myself the same questions everyday because I'm only human. What is to become of me? When will things change? I sit here away from my family. I sit here away from my friends. I sit here distant from the world that I was born to be a part of but raised to see higher than. To see the Heavens and all that's beautifully created by Him. But here I sit with time to search my thoughts and try to figure out the best way to make the best of today. Every day is the same but my choices are very limited because I'm imprisoned.

Today I'm just another ordinary person, but nothing about my circumstances or situation is ordinary. Many people around the world face death but in different ways. Some may be even more severe than others, but to fight for life everyday without living life is very hard to accept and to admit. So here I sit today, just like yesterday, trying to stay afloat from the despair that comes with being on death row. It doesn't get any easier, but each day I have God to hold my hand and bring me some peace. I have God to hold my hand... today. (Read 2Corinthians 1:3-12).

\*I'm just sitting here...  
Thinking about stuff—  
Early in the morning...  
With nothing but stillness—  
Heavy thoughts on my mind...  
The night was rough.

\*Some days just are...  
I've got to keep pushing—  
I'm leaning on the Lord...  
He's carrying my weight—  
His strength enables me...  
Enables me to be more trusting.

\*I hold my head up...  
With burdens big and small—  
Sometimes it's hard to see...  
Steadily I keep on moving—  
I've given my everything...  
He's given me His all.

\*Time keeps on ticking...  
Tomorrow is no more—  
He's waiting patiently...  
I hear him calling—  
The bell is ringing...  
I meet Him at the door.

\*Hello, my God...  
Welcome to my humble soul—  
You've been a welcomed presence...  
A presence in my life—  
Through good and bad days...  
You've walked me down the road.

\*I'm so grateful...  
I thank you profusely—  
I never would have made it...  
Without you by my side—  
To see you smiling...  
Means everything to me.

Justin Underwood  
DR Parchman

Gospel Games  
Ten Words Trivia

Instructions: Look up the verses below and match the correct summary to the verse it describes. Each summary has a secret word next to it. Write that word in the blank next to the verse it belongs to.

<u>Verses</u>	<u>Summaries</u>
1. Exodus 20:3 _____	*my neighbor's right to life (words)
2. Exodus 20:4-6 _____	*my neighbor's right to secure existence in community (love)
3. Exodus 20:7 _____	* God's right to exclusive allegiance (Decalogue)
4. Exodus 20:8-11 _____	* my parents' right to respect (ten)
5. Exodus 20:12 _____	* God's right to people's time (the)
6. Exodus 20:13 _____	* my neighbor's right to secure marriage (decalogos)
7. Exodus 20:14 _____	* my neighbor's right to personal property (covenant)
8. Exodus 20:15 _____	* God's right to self definition (aseret)
9. Exodus 20:16 _____	* God's right to proper representation by God's people(haddebarim)
10. Exodus 20:17 _____	* my neighbor's right to an honest court hearing(10 commandments)

*Faith Facts*

Now that you have connected the summaries with the verses they belong to, you know where the secret words go. Write the ten secret words in the blanks below.

Although many refer to the 1. \_\_\_\_\_ as the Ten Commandments, this is unfortunate for several reasons. First, it obscures the fact that this is not what the Old Testament calls them. Whenever it is referred to by title, it is identified as 2. \_\_\_\_\_, 3. \_\_\_\_\_, 4. \_\_\_\_\_, 5. \_\_\_\_\_, 6. \_\_\_\_\_, (Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13). This sense is captured precisely in the Greek word 7. \_\_\_\_\_.

Second, in both the original context in which the Decalogue was given and Moses' remembrance of the event in Deut. 4:12, the Decalogue is presented as a set of spoken words rather than a written set of laws. Third, 8. \_\_\_\_\_ obscures the fact that the Decalogue is a 9. \_\_\_\_\_ document, whose form follows ancient Near Eastern treaty tradition. Fourth, as a code of laws, the Decalogue is virtually unenforceable. For all these reasons, although the ten statements are in the form of commands, we should follow the lead of the Biblical text and refer to them as the "Ten Words/ Declarations," the ten fundamental principals of covenant relationship. The stipulations revealed in the "Book of the Covenant", "the Holiness Code", and other parts of the Pentateuch represent clarifications and applications of these principles. The Decalogue may legitimately be interpreted as a Bill of Rights, perhaps the world's first Bill of Rights. Yet, unlike modern bills of rights, this document seeks not to secure my rights but to protect the rights of others, most notably the Lord's. The first four statements protect the rights of →



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the covenant with the Lord; the last six statements protect the rights of the people, the covenant community. The Decalogue calls on the redeemed to respond to the grace they have experienced in salvation with covenant commitment—first to God—and then to others. This is the essence of 10. \_\_\_\_\_ as understood in both the Old and New Testaments. Matthew 22:37-40.

It is my constant prayer that through the studying of the Word, you will be encouraged and renewed by the Lord. God Bless you all. Romans 10:17.

With Love in Christ,

Kingdom Kid

Song of the month: “Glory Up” - Jonathan McReynolds