



Christian Ambassadors, Inc.

My Brother's Keeper

Volume 22, Number 1, First Quarter, 2017

GROWING on the WORD

A scripture study

The Word of God is the source of light, truth and power, for those who seek its meaning and apply it to their life. Jesus Christ is the word made flesh, and we seek to follow him.

John 8:12 (NIV) – “*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*”

John 12:46 (NIV) “*...No one who believes in me should stay in darkness.*”

Each issue of “My Brother’s Keeper” features a WORD study. This issue’s Word Study comes to us from Sharon K. Griffiee, Co-founder of Christian Ambassadors, Inc.

“My Thoughts Are Not Your Thoughts”

By: Sharon K. Griffiee

Early one morning as I was getting ready for the day, enjoying the quietness of the hour, the Lord suddenly spoke these words into my spirit, “*My thoughts are not your thoughts*”. I smiled, knowing immediately that was to be the focus of the *Word Study* God wanted me to share with our brothers and sisters, as we

begin the new year. For several days, I had been praying and thinking about various topics for the Word Study. But when *the still small voice* of the Holy Spirit came, His thoughts took precedence, bringing to me the precision, the illumination I needed to begin. It is always humbling, and incredibly awesome to hear God’s voice, His higher thoughts, so I was excited and looking forward to the personal time I would be spending with Him preparing the Word Study.

When God speaks, brothers and sisters, we need to listen closely, because God’s thoughts go deep. They far transcend our familiar, mundane way of thinking. God’s thoughts are poles apart from our thoughts, because God’s thoughts are entirely governed by *His righteousness*. Because of our imperfections, we all need to come up higher. God sends His Word to accomplish *His* moral purpose; the reclamation of sinners from the error and wickedness of their ways.

Isaiah 55:6-7 (NKJV) – “*Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.*”

An essential duty for anyone seeking the Lord, is to turn away from sin. Isaiah knew firsthand what he was speaking about. His prophetic call came to him through a very dramatic experience. Isaiah had a vision in

which he saw the holiness and purity of God. You can read about his vision in Isaiah 6:1-8. Through this unique encounter with God, Isaiah saw his own unworthiness and was moved to confess his sins.

Isaiah 6:5 (NKJV) – “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”

Isaiah received the cleansing he so desperately needed, when one of the seraphim flew to him and touched his mouth with a live coal.

Isaiah 6:7 (NKJV) – “Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged.”

Isaiah, having experienced the holiness of God, readily made himself available to go to a sinful, needy people with a message of warning and judgement, but also with a message of forgiveness and deliverance.

Isaiah 55:7 (NKJV) – “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD.”

Isaiah put his, *the Lord's message*, on the line, because there are, in reality, only two ways to think, *the righteous way or the unrighteous way*.

You are what you think.

You cannot live a righteous life and think unrighteous thoughts. Jesus said,

Matthew 7:18-20 (KJV) – *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

Jesus implores us to live *righteous* lives, bearing good fruit and fulfilling our God-given purpose for existence. The Apostle James repeats this truth in his teaching.

James 3:11-12 (NKJV) – *Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus, no spring yields both salt water and fresh.*

These scriptures say it like it is! From God's perspective, no one can live a righteous and unrighteous life at the same time. For example, a liar is a liar, because he thinks like a liar. A thief is a thief, because he thinks like a thief. An adulterer is an adulterer, because he thinks like an adulterer.

Proverbs 23:7 (NKJV) – *For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.*

As Isaiah, the prophet, stated in our opening scripture, *we can choose* to forsake our unrighteous thoughts and return to the Lord.

Isaiah 55:7 (NKJV) – *Let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.*

My thoughts are not your thoughts.

How can we bring our thoughts up higher? We can start by humbly remembering *Who God is*, by giving Him the honor and glory He deserves. He is so much greater than we are! God is holy and He is all powerful. He is to be exalted as our Creator and Sustainer, who has all authority in heaven and on earth. Nothing happens that goes beyond His notice. Consider that God brought everything into existence through the power of His Word.

John 1:1-5 (NIV) – *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that*

has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

These scriptures reveal that God is a God of order; His thoughts are purposeful. His thoughts are focused on *His saving work* being accomplished. Praise God, He offers us life! He wants us back and He does not depart from His established course. Whereas, our thoughts tend to wander and shift into human reasoning.

Psalm 94:11 (AMP) – *The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vain (empty and futile—only a breath).*

I Corinthians 3:20 (AMP) – *And again, The Lord knows the thoughts and reasonings of the [humanly] wise and recognizes how futile they are.*

Brothers and sisters, we would all be in immense trouble if all we had to go on was our own human thoughts and reasonings. We would talk ourselves out of everything God offers us. Let's face it, God's offer of *mercy* to a lost, sinful world goes beyond human imagination. God's plans are marvelous to behold! We would never imagine such a glorious plan as God has for us.

Psalm 92:5-8 (NLT) – *O LORD, what great works you do! And how deep are your thoughts. Only a simpleton would not know, and only a fool would not understand this: Though the wicked sprout like weeds and evildoers flourish, they will be destroyed forever. But you, O Lord, will be exalted forever.*

The Lord's thoughts do not make sense to the simpleton or the fool. Still, God's wisdom continues to cry out, trying to get their attention, hoping to gain a positive response from them.

Proverbs 1:22-23 (NLT) – *How long, you simpletons, will you insist on being simpleminded? How long will you mockers relish your mocking? How long will you fools hate knowledge? Come and listen to my counsel. I'll share my heart with you and make you wise.*

Walk (live) every day in God's Wisdom.

Ephesians 5:15-17 (NLT) – *So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do.*

Since we live in a fallen, evil world filled with gross (uncivilized) darkness, we certainly do not want the Lord seeing us lying around, day after day, frittering away our time. We want Him to see us living our lives *on purpose* and making the most use of every opportunity we have been given. The bottom line, we want to understand the Lord's thoughts toward us, and what He wants us to do.

Brothers and sisters, there is much work to be done in this new year of 2017. We can be counted among the wise. We can *act thoughtfully* and assist God in seeing that *His saving work* is accomplished here on earth.

It is essential that we understand what pleases the Lord, so we can skillfully carry it out in our lives. We look to God's Word, and we trust the Holy Spirit to inspire our thoughts, that we might gain the wisdom we need!

Psalm 90:12 (NLT) – *Teach us to realize the brevity of life, so that we may grow in wisdom.*



Sharing the Good News

"We are therefore Christ's Ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

II Corinthians 5:20-21

**From: Clayton J.
Western Illinois Correctional
Mt. Sterling, Illinois**

Dear Sharon,

I would like to thank you and Alan for the blessings from "My Brother's Keeper" and the newsletters that are sent to prisoners. They are blessing many people as I pass them on to others.

I would also like to thank you for being obedient to our Lord Jesus Christ. He'll continue to ensure your work is blessed.

Please know I often pray for you in your ministry. May God continue to allow you to richly bless us with your Holy Spirit inspired writings.

Forever in Christ, Clayton

**From: Robert W.
Federal Correctional Complex
Forrest City, Arkansas**

Dear Sister Sharon,

God Bless you and brother Alan. I wanted to first off extend a warm embrace and brotherly hug to you both, for loving us (prisoners) and for never ceasing to fill our cups with a fresh anointing and increasing faith; that our God (The Father) and His Son Jesus (our High Priest) continues to extend His love for us, and His Grace is inexhaustible! Hallelujah!

I wanted to proclaim and declare, that this ministry will reach prisoners worldwide, and that the words of your sharing will change lives forever; solely for the love and opportunity to serve our Lord and personal Savior!

Your brother in Christ, Robert

**From: Alexander G.
TDCJ
Woodville, Texas**

Dear Alan,

As always, I hope and pray this letter finds you and Sharon in very good health, in Jesus Christ's name. The same goes with everyone at Christian Ambassadors, Inc. As for me, I'm doing just fine, thanks to God.

I'm writing to thank you for sending me your newsletter, "My Brother's Keeper" (fourth quarter 2016 issue). As always, your issue was wonderful to read. The prayer group that I'm in likes to read what other inmates have said of your newsletter, and the poems people send in.

The issue's Word Study, "Thank God" [by Alan W. Griffee] was very helpful. We often neglect to thank God for many things.

I thank God for giving me life. I thank God for Jesus Christ, for dying on the cross for a sinner like me. I thank the Holy Spirit for being my comforter and guide in life. I would also like to say thank you to Christian Ambassadors for your Christian services. May God bless you and Sharon. Keep up the good work you are doing in Jesus' name.

Faithful Reader, Alexander

**From: William F.
Federal Correctional Institution
Anthony, New Mexico**

Dear Christian Ambassadors,

Joy, peace, and love – what wonderful reasons to celebrate this most special of seasons. A

thought of thankfulness for your tireless efforts in bringing the Word to the prisons.

I wish to give you all a heartfelt thanks. If it was not for your efforts, there would be no rehabilitation nor educational [opportunities] in the Federal Prison System. (See: Matthew 25:34-46) I will keep you in my prayers.

Brother, William

**From: Louis M.
Otisville Correctional
Otisville, New York**

Dear Alan and Sharon,

I want to thank you always for keeping me in your prayers and on the mailing list.

And I really loved the recent Spiritual Growth Lesson, "Check Your Spirit" [by Sharon K. Griffie]. It was really on time and on point for what's going on in the world. Because when we end the day and begin the next day, it is about how God has improved our spirits in having love for one another, not hate. Money and power is not important, love is...bottom line!

In Christ's love, Louis

**From: Andre A.
Santa Rosa Correctional
Milton, Florida**

Dear Ms. Sharon,

How are you and your family doing today? Fine I pray. As for me I am "too blessed" to be stressed! As always, because any day above ground is a blessed day for me.

Now Ms. Sharon, I agree with your December, 2016 letter 100%. I am a black man myself, and I disagree with the way my people and the so called black leaders have been dealing with the problems that have now arisen between the black and white community.

As for the black community, we need to do as Luke 6:42 says; we need to focus on our own

problems in our community. Because, we as a people, hate to take a look at the man in the mirror, and [instead] we look for people and ways to not focus on ourselves, and how black on black crime is the true and real problem – as we are trying to Genocide ourselves day and night!

And no one wants to focus on the true problem, as tens of thousands of blacks die a year due to the hands of someone black, not white! And this so called "black lives matter" is bull! Because my Bible tells me that all lives matter. That Jesus came and died for the world, not just for blacks or whites, etc. And if you believe any different, then you are a liar!

It's time for some real leaders in our community and not just TV leaders looking for their five minutes of fame! It's a shame how my people act like the savages, that we have been labeled as for years, and not like the One whose image we were created in.

Sharing His Love!
The Prodigal son, Andre

**From: Francisco P.
California Correctional
Tehachapi, California**

Dear Sharon,

Thank you for sharing your thoughts [in your December 2016 letter] about the United States of America. Yes, we all have different opinions about this United States of America, but let's always keep in mind that it's not our land or place to judge others, but yes, it's God's land and He'll judge everyone in the Government. All we got to do is pray for them all today.

What you wrote [in your letter] from *Matthew 5:43-45 (KJV)* – is what we need to do as strong believers in Christ.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them

that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven:

We need to follow and do for God's honor and glory. We all need to keep everyone in high positions in prayer, and pray for our new President of the United States of America.

Respectfully, In Christ, Francisco



Unconditional Love

An Essay By: Ellis A. Chen,
California Medical Facility,
Vacaville, California

Unconditional Love

Love is either conditional or unconditional... there is no other possibility. Either I attach conditions to my love or I do not. To the extent that I do attach conditions to my love, I do not really love you. Absolute love has no conditions!

In Jesus' time, a pan scale was the tool of measurement. The store proprietor put a known weight equal to the weight of what the customer wanted to buy on one side of the scale. He'd fill the other with whatever was being purchased. When the two scales were equal, it was done. Nowadays, we don't use pan scales except when we love. You do this for me...and then I do this for you. Sound familiar? This is conditional love, one act weighed against the other.

Conditional love is an exchange that says I love you as long as or until. As long as you never lie to me, as long as I get what I want out of this relationship. Conditional love says, if you stop doing this...I stop. If you don't call me...I

won't call you. If you forget to send me a card on my birthday...I'll forget yours. If I don't get a Holiday card from you, I'll take you off my list. Pan scale love isn't real love.

Only unconditional love is real love.

Unconditional...that is, true love, is always a gift, not an exchange. It means going all out all the time...not just 50% but 150%.

Unconditional love has no pan scales.

Unconditional love means there are no conditions or strings attached. You don't have to do anything or say anything or be anything. There is no small print in the contract.

Unconditional love says, I am giving you a gift; the gift of my love and I'll never take it back. It's yours. My love for you is not conditioned on your response. You can't earn it. I choose to give it to you.

Unconditional love is the way Jesus loved all with whom he came into contact. Jesus has no need of pan scales. He chose to love his disciples even though they didn't get his message (of love), even though they deserted him. He loved his disciples without expectation of a response. He proved that it is not what we get out of a relationship that is important, it is what we give. He gave the gift of his love to all he encountered and kept on giving it.

The good news is: God loves us the same way. We don't earn God's love, we don't deserve it, we don't win it. God gives us the gift of His unconditional love. His love is a free gift with no strings attached, no rules to follow, no obligations to keep.

How do you learn to love unconditionally?

You start by loving God unconditionally. No matter the circumstances, remember who God is and who you are. Love God without conditions, not because He needs your love, but because it is who you are.

We've all spent the greater part of our lives loving God conditionally. How many times have we said, "Lord, if you just get me out of this particular jam...I'll go to church every

Sunday.” When we are in trouble, we take out the pan scales and begin to barter for God’s love.

Bartering doesn’t work, because God couldn’t possibly love us more. In fact, there is nothing we could do that would make Him love us more or less. God gives us the gift of His unconditional love. It is not conditioned on our response. We have it whether we want it, think we need it, or don’t believe it.

After you learn to love God unconditionally, start to love yourself unconditionally, too. Now is the time to make your self-talk positive, nurturing, and supportive, instead of negative, badgering, and relentless. Let a new era of unconditional love begin. Stop battering yourself with your failures and reminding yourself of your shortcomings. It is ok to make a mistake. It is ok to make a lot of mistakes. You are not condemned. God forgives the worst thing you’ve done. Forgive yourself. Love yourself without conditions and you’ll find negative habits and behaviors will no longer be acceptable, because you love yourself way too much.

Finally, start to love others without conditions. Can you imagine what your relationships would be like, if based on the foundation of unconditional love; a love freely given, not conditioned on a response? Imagine a relationship that says I give you wings to fly, not chains to be tied down. Imagine a relationship that hopes for the best in all your endeavors; a relationship which says you have my support always, I freely give you my greatest gift and there are no strings attached to it.

But, please remember, unconditional love does not give license to someone to walk all over you. You are not a doormat. Unconditional love says, I love God first, then myself and I love myself so much, I will not tolerate any abuse. Unconditional love says, I recognize even though I’ve given you the gift of my love, you have chosen not to reciprocate it, and that is

fine. You’ll always have my gift, but I move on. I let you go.

Unconditional love is not new.

Jesus displayed it! Apostle Paul defined it;

***1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIV)** – Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

You love unconditionally when:

- You choose to be patient.
- You choose to be kind at all times.
- You don’t lift yourself up, without lifting up all those around you.
- You are prone to compassion.
- You let go of pan scale conditional love, and give love as a free gift, with no strings attached.
- You forgive and set proper boundaries so you do not become a doormat. You don’t cling. You let go.
- You know your love is more powerful than rejection, more powerful than death...there is no limit to it.

When you love unconditionally you are free of all limits, and love is no longer a pan scale experience. You are full of patience, trust, hope, and have the power to endure all things knowing you are not alone.

How do you love?

There is only one way. Love unconditionally, not because others need it, because it is who you are...and you’ll never be the same again.



I Know You Can Save

By John Willie Sellars, Polk Correctional, Butner, NC

Jesus, I know you can save.
Now, if it's in your will, open up this grave,
and come and get me out.
See, I read in your Word, that's what You're about.
Savin souls at all cost,
Jesus, I need you, I'm lost.
Can I ever be found,
and will you go underground,
to get what's rightfully yours,
even behind these doors,
of Hell even on this earth,
to save me and give a new Birth,
that only You can provide,
everlasting life to this soul who died?
Now come and open up this body I call a grave,
because that's the only way me, the soul can be save.

My Brother's Keeper

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Sharon K. Griffee, Senior Editor

Alan W. Griffee, Production Manager

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Inspirational articles and poems, especially from current or former prison inmates, are invited and will be prayerfully considered for publication. **Please request a copy of the publication guidelines before submitting an article for consideration.**

Vision Statement – Christian Ambassadors exists to bring the ministry of Jesus Christ into the lives of people, demonstrating how the gospel teachings can help a person live a more abundant life, filled with joy, hope, and purpose.

If you, a member of your family, or a friend, are imprisoned, wanting to find new hope, purpose and direction in life, please contact us at Christian Ambassadors. Our website can be visited at:

<http://www.christian-ambassadors.org>