



# My Brother's Keeper

Volume 23, Number 3, Third Quarter, 2018

## 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 Alan W. Griffiee, Co-founder of Christian Ambassadors, Inc.

## Our Stewardship Response

By: Alan W. Griffiee

**Genesis 1:1 (NIV)** – In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

**Genesis 1:26 (NIV)** – Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

King David, in writing the 24<sup>th</sup> Psalm, clearly stated what he saw as God’s ownership:

**Psalm 24:1 (NIV)** – *The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.*”

The Apostle Peter, in writing to the people scattered throughout his ministry world, clearly stated the stewardship responsibility God gave us when He gave us dominion:

**1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)** – “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.”

What is our Stewardship response to the Lord and to ourselves? That is the subject of this quarter’s, “Growing on the Word” study.

Stewardship is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as: “the conducting, supervising, or managing of something; especially: the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care.”

God calls all people to be good stewards over all that He created, including our lives. We each, have a responsibility to manage our own life, and to manage it with care. Unfortunately, left to our own devices, we are often not the best stewards over our day to day choices.

As we respond to the life and ministry of God’s Son, we should want to be the best stewards we can possibly be. The Bible contains much about how to manage our lives and God’s creation. And, Jesus promised that His Holy Spirit would always be available as our guide and inspiration.

Many times, we think of Christian stewardship as paying tithing (ten percent) to the church; though we often try to find ways to make sure we don't pay more than is absolutely necessary: 10% of after-tax income, 10% of what we have left at the end of the week. But, stewardship is not ten percent. The stewardship God is calling us to is one hundred percent. It is, "careful and responsible management" of our life, which God has entrusted to our care. It is the careful management of our: circumstances, time, talents and money. God wants us to manage, with His help, every aspect of our lives; every hour and every day (24/7).

My stewardship response is not the same as your stewardship response. God created every person on this planet to be a unique individual, distinct from all others, with unique physical, spiritual, and mental abilities. No two of us are exactly the same, and no two of us will have the same stewardship response to God's call on us.

*Matthew 25:14-19 (NKJV) – For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them and made another five talents. And likewise, he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground and hid his lord's money. After a long time, the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.*

Each of those servants were entrusted with a different amount of their lord's money. Jesus was telling us that God is calling each of us, as unique individuals, to be good stewards over what He has entrusted to us. Your stewardship over your life, is your response to that call. As your circumstances change, your stewardship response will evolve. With the Holy Spirit's help, you can be a good and faithful steward.

*Luke 16:10-12 (NLT) – If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities. And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven? And if you are not faithful with other people's things, why should you be trusted with things of your own?*

Your life and what you do with it is entrusted to your care by God. He wants you to be a good steward and produce an increase over what He has given you. Whether you are a good steward, or a bad steward is your choice. Ultimately, you will give an accounting to God for your stewardship response, and the increase you produce.

**Circumstances:** Where and to whom you were born (loving home or not so loving home) made a big difference in how you started out in life. You had no control over that. Where you are today (good or bad) is the result of choices you made or someone else made for you. But, that is behind you now. Whatever your circumstance today, you have choices about how you will go forward. You can walk that path with faith and hope, or you can walk it with doubt and fear. You can make righteous choices, or you can make unrighteous choices. It is your choice; but the Holy Spirit is available to help you with the right choice for any circumstance, big or small.

**Time:** What you do with your time and how you manage your time is a critical aspect of your stewardship. You can waste it, or you can do something productive with it. The most important thing any Christian can do with their time is to live their life as an example for others; demonstrating how you have faith, hope and joy in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Another important thing a good steward can do with their time is to study: to establish a foundation in the Word of God, to earn a high school diploma or GED, and to learn what's required to get and keep a good job. It is far too common for people in today's culture to waste time; doing things that add little or no value. Please, use your time wisely.

**Talents:** We all have mental and physical abilities or handicaps with which we were born. What we do with those abilities, is up to us; we can waste them or enhance them. We should enhance them to benefit our life's work and service to others. Some say you can be anything or do anything you want in life if you work hard and apply yourself. However, it is far more difficult to be or do something that God hasn't blessed you with the talent to be or do. What you do with your talents, ability, training, and experience is your stewardship responsibility. God would like us to apply the talents He has blessed us with, to support ourselves, our family, and to be a blessing to others. Talents are like the tools (hammers, computers, musical instruments, weapons) that we use in life. They can be used for good or for evil; your choice. Even something like music and art can be used to influence others for good or evil.

**Money:** As we consider stewardship of money, we should think of money as being any currency, goods, or services that we use in exchange for something else. Having money is not wrong or evil. We will most often be blessed with an accumulation of money, if we are good stewards over our circumstances, time, and talents. What we do with the money we have (whether it be a little or a lot) is what is important to God. Do we use it as a blessing, or do we use it for selfish purposes? Paul said to Timothy:

*1 Timothy 6:10 (NLT) – For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.*

The unrighteous pursuit of wealth, hoarding of wealth, or spending more than we can afford can easily become an obsession that leads us away from God and His will for our life. It is our stewardship responsibility to choose how we are going to acquire money and what we are going to do with it. We should acquire and save it for: the reasonable support of our self and our family, and in service for the Lord's work.

**Giving Back:** What should we give back to the work of the Lord? The Mosaic Law, in Numbers 18:25-29, states that the Jewish people were to give the best 10% of their annual harvest to the temple priests, and the temple priests were to give the best 10% of what they received to the Lord as a burnt offering. That is Old Testament legalism, and today that law is often interpreted as giving 10% of your gross annual income to the church you attend.

Does God want us to legalistically give exactly 10% of our annual gross income? And, what about your accounting to the Lord for the other parts of your stewardship; how you managed your circumstances, your time, and your talents?

Based on my understanding of the spirit of the law that Jesus shared with us, I can, in truth, say that God is not interested in carefully measuring out 10% of our money to comply with a legal interpretation of the tithing law. He cares about our freely responding to the ministry of His Son, and the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

Our stewardship response to the ministry of Jesus Christ should include giving of our time, talent, and money to: 1) those ministries in which we are personally involved, 2) those ministries that we have received hope and inspiration from, 3) those ministries that are doing God's work in ways we can't do and to people we can't reach, and 4) doing what we can to help our neighbors who are in need of the temporal and spiritual hope of Christ's love through us.

Whatever you give to the work of the Lord, give it freely and in love.

*2 Corinthians 9:7 (NLT) – You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully."*



### *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: Lawrence M.  
River North Correctional, Independence, VA**

**Hello Friends,**

Peace to you, and all the faithful Christian Ambassadors. Thank you for another issue of your anointed ministry letter, and for the honor of being a tiny part of such a blessed opportunity to testify of the love in Jesus for us.

I have been in maximum security prison for 21 straight years now, so I know exactly how it is when I read the precious words of my brothers whom you send [“My Brother's Keeper”] to. There are all kinds of prisons, but Christian convicts share a unique bond; soldiers in a cell, on call 24/7. The darker the place, the brighter the light shines, no matter how small the light.

As a “convict”, you make a decision, and punishment is only a “lack of privilege”, minor possessions don't override principal. But, as a Christian, people will judge our faith by *the way we act*; (you know, a lot of people are not Christians, because of the so-called Christians). When our behavior fails to line up with our true identity in Christ, God will correct us, sometimes, even through the guards and “inmates”.

Prison is a *training ground*, to conform to the image of Christ, and if we “buck” discipline, well, it's just gonna take that much longer to fulfill God's purpose in our life. God's purpose is our holiness, and through the Holy Spirit, He uses everything to teach us.

So, don't be mad when the guards or staff or other prisoners seem more than disrespectful, because God is using even that to teach us to trust Him, and to be an example for those who are not as sure as us, that Jesus is the only true freedom! We must learn to look at our trials as, “God's chariots sent to carry our souls into the high places of spirituality”.

Society may never forget what we were convicted of, but always remember this – the secret behind every godly man and woman is the fact that they believe in the truth that they are forgiven! By the Blood of Jesus!

When the devil reminds you of your past, remind him of his future. Jesus is Lord! We cannot know the power of His Resurrection, without knowing the fellowship of His suffering. (Philippians 3:10).

Thanks again, and believe you are always in my prayers. Stay strong, and in all things, give thanks. God bless you.

Still, Lawrence

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**From: Willie S.  
TDCJ, Ramsey Unit, Rosharon, TX**

**Dear Sharon,**

Hello and I'm sorry I haven't written in years, but I enjoy all your letters. They have been finding me where ever I go. Whatever unit I go to, they follow me (smile). Well I'm here on the Ramsey unit now, so please send them here, okay.

I love you, sister. Your letters encourage me and lift me up. Thank you. Please do not ever take me off your mailing list.

I'm blessed by your letters. Thanks, and God Bless you.  
In Christ, Willie

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**From: Andre A.  
Dade Correctional, Florida City, FL**

**Dear Mrs. Griffie,**

How are you and your family doing today? Fine, I pray. As for me, I'm too blessed to be stressed. I'm writing to let you know I have a change of address. I pray God is answering all your prayers, according to His will for your life; that He will continue to give you everything that you need in order to touch the lives of people like me. Thank you for allowing the Holy Ghost to use you to try and help nobodies like me. Please never forget that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, now lives in you! And that you can do all things through Christ Jesus that now strengthens you!

Love and respect,  
the prodigal son, Andre

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**From: Stacy P.**  
**Chilicothe Correctional, Chilicothe, MO**

**Dear Sharon,**

Thank you so much for your newsletter I read each month. It's so uplifting to receive it and know someone cares about me.

I really liked "*Grace – Our Season of Opportunity*" ["My Brother's Keeper", Second Quarter, 2018].

Also, I've been transferred, so here is my new address. Thank you and God Bless.

Stacy

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**From: Alexander G.**  
**former inmate, Houston, TX**

**Dear Alan and Sharon,**

It is my hope and prayer that this letter finds you all at Christian Ambassadors well and blessed in Jesus' name. As for me, I'm doing just fine thanks to God.

Just writing to express my appreciation to you for sending me "My Brother's Keeper", Volume 23, First Quarter issue. I love the lesson by Sharon, "*Value Your Life, God Does!*"

I value the life Jesus gave me to live. It was me who failed to stay on the right path God wanted me to live. We all make mistakes in life. This is why I'm grateful for what Jesus has done for me. Jesus died on the cross to save a sinner like me.

May God Bless you, Alan and Sharon. Keep up the good work you are doing in Jesus name.

Faithful reader, Alexander

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**From: Susan S.**  
**Folsom State Prison, Folsom, CA**

**Dear Christian Ambassadors,**

Hello, I've been receiving your quarterly newsletters for around four years now and I recently transferred to another prison. I'm writing for a change of address.

I look forward to receiving the next newsletter and thank you!

Forever, Susan

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**From: Geoffrey R.**  
**Maine State Prison, Warren, ME**

**Dear Mrs. Griffiee,**

Greetings sister! Praise God for your "*Take Care How You Treat Others*" lesson, which I found to enrich my spiritual growth and provoke thought. It is profoundly narrated in the Book of Esther the evil that arose when King Xerxes demeaned his wife, Queen Vashti. Your elaboration added much needed context and clarity. The reality that gender inequality remains/persists today is sad and unfair (e.g. the #me too movement).

When I asked myself and explored the answers to your several study questions, it affirmed your well-made point articulated in the lesson. This will act as a reminder in my future engagements with females, including my own companions/mates.

I am learning to have the discipline to control my "thoughts" and "eyes" and refrain from being lustful and giving into the temptation of carnal desires. Your teaching is empowering.

In closing, I appreciate your time and attention to this matter and am looking forward to future newsletters/lessons. Thank you and God Bless you and your staff in the continued service to myself and others.

Respectfully, Geoffrey

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**From: Roger C.**  
**Trinidad MR, Model, CO**

**Dear Sister Griffiee,**

Greetings and blessings upon you and Alan. I wanted to share with you that the last [Spiritual Growth Lesson], "*Take Care How You Treat Others*", was good. I shared it with a sister in Christ whom it really blessed and gave answers to her. So, your labor is touching people inside and outside, and I want to thank you and say, be encouraged. God Bless you.

In His Arms, Roger



## *Stepping into Tomorrow*

By: Larry A. Thompson,  
Buena Vista Correctional, Buena Vista, CO

Warriors of the Word, crusaders for Christ; brothers, sisters, and ambassadors in bonds; greetings and salutations. May this day find you with hope, and may it leave you filled to overflowing in, and with peace.

The stage has been set. Most of the instructions have been given, and now the time has come for you to make a decision with regards to what each and every one of you will choose to take with you and apply it in your daily lives as you step from today, into tomorrow.

Our lives tomorrow will be a direct reflection of what we've striven towards and have taken ownership of today. Yet, in order to keep the gifts that we've been given, we must be ready, willing, and able to freely give them away. Today is spent, but tomorrow holds the promise of ...

### HOPE

A hope that is deeply rooted in the promise of Christ, who has assured us that He has "overcome the world". Therefore, we need not fear, nor live in fear of the trials and tribulations which we shall surely encounter as we strive to live in "Christ-likeness" (John 16:33).

### DISCOVERY

It's a day of anticipation, not expectation. It's a day of new opportunities to challenge ourselves to become better stewards and servants than we were yesterday. A day to seek out His face, and to be more willing to open the eyes and ears of our hearts, so that His glory is not only seen, but that His voice is also heard and echoed in our lives. Tomorrow is a day in which the high calling of God should be clearly heard, recognized, and responded to in order that we can be known, seen, and accepted as the sons and daughters of God, which by His Grace, we are.

### HOPES and DREAMS

Tomorrow is all about the "hopes and dreams" that we have for our future. It's all about the reflections of our pasts, and it's all about daring ourselves to be free from the chains of self-oppression, and free from the bondage of selfishness and sin. There is only one "sin" that a person can ever commit in their life, and that is "to know better, yet refuse to do better". The truth of that statement was established long before I ever knew it and can be found in the Book of James.

*James 4:17 (NKJV) – "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."*

### SHIPS

If, we are blessed with tomorrow, it will be another day to shun "self", and to live for the Lord. It will be another day to courageously finish our courses with hungry and humbled hearts. It will be another day to reach out to our loved ones in need of spiritual support and extend to them the free hand of "fellowship". It will be another day to strengthen those "relationships", and another day to rejoice as we recognize our "kinship" as "heirs of salvation".

### ACTION

Ultimately, tomorrow is a day of action. It's a day to put into practice the lessons which were taught yesterday, tested today, and readied for replanting tomorrow. It's going to be a day in which the strength of our spiritual resolve will be tried and tested by the perceptions of others; and the value of today's experiences will truly be revealed.

### REVELATION

As you step from today into tomorrow, know for certain that it is truly a day of *revelation*. I hope, and I pray that what you reveal to the world will reflect kindly on what you've gained within this small community known as "*The Church*".

Tomorrow is *your* day to shine!

*Matthew 5:14,16 (KJV) – "Ye are the light of the world ... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."*

Written June 26th, 2007

***Behind the Scenes***

By: Merissa Lee Kelley

January 20, 2017

The Bible says to cast our cares...but we often don't comply  
Instead we muddle through each day...in a desert bare and dry  
Or we're focused on the minefield that we're trying to tip toe through  
And looking back at past mistakes that clutter up our view

So why not take a seat for now and relax our weary souls  
And trust that God is still at work and completely in control  
Behind the scenes is often where He orchestrates the best  
Gently guiding from backstage towards a place of peace and rest

But human nature wants a script with each scene described in full  
Then trying to sneak up on the stage to give the curtain a pull  
We hear the sounds of rearranging...but that's not good enough  
We'd rather see what's going on...when the going's getting tough

Sometimes a front row seat is open...but often it is taken  
And that's where trust comes into play, so our faith will not be shaken  
For many times we're in a row that's not our choice at all  
And feeling like we're too far back for God to hear us call

"When will things begin to change?!"...we cry out in frustration  
It seems as if we're living life in suspended animation  
But behind the scenes it's very lively...and God is far from through  
Bringing all the pieces together as a priceless gift for you

So walk by faith and not by sight...He won't let you walk alone  
He never fails to bring a harvest from the seeds that you have sown  
Behind the scenes is a place of action and although it's out of view  
Amazing grace is God's provision...an ovation just for you!

Scripture Reference: Daniel 10:1-21

### *Ministry of Reconciliation*

Sharon and I are concerned about all the anger and hostility we see in the country today over differences of opinion that should be resolved peacefully. People are shouting down speakers they don't want to hear, refusing service to people who have views they don't agree with, and even using violence to express their anger. The anger and hostility are dividing people through-out the country into opposing factions. In prisons across the country, inmates divide themselves into opposing, often hostile, factions over race and territory. Inmates and prison staff often find themselves divided by an attitude of us against them. Jesus knows about divisions:

*Matthew 12:25 (NIV) – Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand.”*

Genuine differences exist in our country, our cities, and our households, but God does not want us to be divided in hate and distrust over those differences. He wants us to resolve our differences through peaceful reconciliation. Most of us are not able to resolve the big issues that are tearing the nation apart. But, each of us can resolve issues we have in our relationship with God, and we can each be an ambassador for Christ, resolving issues we have with our neighbor.

*2 Corinthians 5: 18-20 (NIV) – All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 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.*

In Christ's Love, Alan & Sharon Griffee

## **My Brother's Keeper**

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**Alan W. Griffee**, Production Manager

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Inspirational articles, testimonies, 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>