



Christian Ambassadors, Inc.

# My Brother's Keeper

Volume 23, Number 4, Fourth 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.*”

### ***Pride – Our Deadly Enemy***

By: Sharon K. Griffiee

In Proverbs 6:16-19, *pride* is listed among the six things the Lord hates, and for good reason. Pride is from hell and is the nature of the devil.

Pride, in its conceit, says, “I have arrived; I am an important person,” all the while looking down on others for the error of their ways.

Pride displays itself with “haughty eyes”. Pride walks into a room with a condescending look.

**Proverbs 30:12-13 (NLT)** – They are pure in their own eyes, but they are filthy and

unwashed. They look proudly around, casting disdainful glances.

The fundamental evil of arrogant pride is life that has been turned in on itself, rather than being focused outward toward constructive, fruitful action.

**Proverbs 13:10 (KJV)** – Only by pride cometh contention: But with the well advised is wisdom.

As I was thinking about the subject of pride, I recalled a letter I received years ago from an inmate. Don (not his real name) had just been hand cuffed, stuffed into a van and sent to Ad-Seg (Administrative Segregation, Maximum Security). He was charged with inciting a riot and disobeying a lawful order. Why such serious charges?

Don had refused to sit and eat his lunch with a child molester. Repulsed, he reacted by tossing his food tray into the air. This was not the first time Don had been sent to Ad-Seg. It was in fact, the third time. Sitting in 23-hour lockdown once again, with time on his hands to think about what just went down, the Holy Spirit started to deal with him about his attitude. In his moment of clarity, he saw what had tripped him. He said,

*“It wasn’t gangs, or drugs, or violence that tripped me up this time. It was a **stiff neck! Pride!** When did I start thinking I was better than others?”*

The Word of God warns us that when we have an exaggerated opinion of ourselves, it causes us to look down on others and value them as *less* than we are.

**Romans 12:3 (Amplified Bible)** – For by the grace (unmerited favor of God) given to me I warn everyone among you not to estimate and think of himself more highly than he ought [not to have an exaggerated opinion of his own importance], but to rate his ability with sober judgment, each according to the degree of faith apportioned by God to him.

This revelation of truth, thinking he was *better than others*, exposed the *motive* for why Don refused to sit across the table from this inmate. It also exposed the sin that led to the riot.

**James 1:13-15 (NIV)** – When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

As Don listened, the Holy Spirit continued to shine the light on his situation. Don said,

*“The problem with living in here is the evil. It’s everywhere. You must breathe its stench day in and day out. And if you let your guard down for just one second, it gets into you. You begin to look at other people differently. You begin to judge others race, religion, culture, or crime. You will find fault if you want to. And so, begins the decline. You will find fault if you want to.”*

No truer statement could have been made. “You will find fault if you want to.” The evil that is prevalent in prisons across the country is very real. It is not a figment of the imagination,

nor is the mental and emotional pain associated with living in such an environment. There is an evil which accompanies the pain caused by sin, and it can get into you, *if you let it*. But it doesn’t have to be that way.

**I Corinthians 10:13 (NIV)** – No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Whether our pain succumbs (gives in) to the evil in our environment or not, depends solely on us, the choices we make. As we submit to God, He is faithful to provide a way out, so that *we can stand up* amid the pressure of evil. The lesson Don learned, through God’s wisdom, is this; faced with *the* choice, he did not have to fall into Satan’s trap, thinking that one sin (or one sinner) was better or worse than another.

### Put your trust in the Lord

**Proverbs 3:5-7 (NIV)** – Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil.

Do not be wise in your own eyes. Until we learn to trust God and lean on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, oppressive pain will have its way and loom too large in our life. The spirit of evil will take over our lives, *if we let it*. Over time it will consume our thoughts, making us self-centered, judgmental and critical of everyone and everything. It can literally darken our whole outlook on life.

**Proverbs 16:18 (NKJV)** – Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

The consequence of pride? Our relationship with God is jeopardized. Rather than obey God and love our neighbor as the Word teaches, we get caught up in following Satan's cues.

Satan's hatred gets in us, driving us to zero in on our neighbor's sin. Satan is, after all, the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10). He is the one who keeps bringing our sins up, day and night. This obsession with our brother's sin blinds us into a false sense of superiority.

How so? If our focus is on our *neighbor's sin*, we foolishly think we do not have to deal with our own sin. With this mindset, Satan has us where he wants us, drifting further and further away from God.

As we determine to seek the Word of God, we find Jesus asking an essential, life-saving question to bring us back to our senses.

**Matthew 7:3-5 (NIV)** – “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”

Heeding what Jesus says here can be the critical turning point in our spiritual growth. When the plank of *hatred* has been removed from our own eyes, we begin to see our brother the same way God sees him, through the eyes of *love and compassion*. It is then we see our brother's need to be brought back to God. We see clearly for the first time that under the mud, the muck, and the mire of sin, our brother is no different than we are.

**Romans 3:23 (KJV)** – “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

If all have sinned, we *all* need to repent; laying down the pride of our old sin nature, so we might return to God who graciously restores us to favor with Himself.

**II Corinthians 5:19 (Amplified Bible)** – It was God [personally present] in Christ, reconciling and restoring the world to favor with Himself, not counting up and holding against [men] their trespasses [but canceling them], and committing to us the message of reconciliation (of the restoration to favor).

If God, through Christ, is not holding our sins against us, then neither should we hold our brother's sins against him. The good news of the gospel is that we are currently living in the church age of God's Grace. Brothers and sisters this is an awesome blessing. If we are to make a positive response to God's Grace, we should do everything we can, in this time of God's favor, to clean up our own lives; then with *humility* and God's loving support, help a brother or sister clean up theirs!

**II Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV)** – For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

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### Questions for Personal Meditation

- 1) Don, the inmate in our Word Study, caused a riot when he refused to eat lunch with a sinner. Yet the Bible says that Jesus ate with “sinners” on many occasions. When the Pharisees asked Jesus' disciples why Jesus ate with sinners, what was Jesus' response? Matthew 9:10-13
- 2) What happens to our relationship with other people when we have an exaggerated opinion of ourselves, thinking we are better than others? How should we think about others and ourselves? See: Romans 12:3

3) The evil that is prevalent in prisons across the country is very real. This spirit of evil can get into an inmate's life, *if he lets it*. How can prisoners stand up under the pressure of evil?  
See: I Corinthians 10:13

4) Hatred, generated by pride, is the driving force that Satan uses to get us to zero in on our neighbor's sin. How does Revelation 12:10 describe Satan's character?

5) What is the underlying reason why we focus our attention on our neighbor's sin? How does it change our outlook?  
See: Proverbs 16:18

6) Jesus tells us we need to make some changes in our own life *first*, before we can see clearly how to help our brother. What do we need to remove?  
See: Matthew 7:3-5

7) The good news of the gospel is that we are currently living in the church age of God's Grace. How important is it to get the message of reconciliation to those in need of repentance?  
See: II Corinthians 5:19-21

8) As a Christian inmate, have you found yourself, at times, falling into the trap of finding fault with other inmates? If so, what lessons have the Holy Spirit taught you about the importance of reaching out to those in need of repentance?



### ***A Man Like Me***

By: Lawrence Medici  
River North Correctional  
Independence, Virginia

I didn't know when I began,  
about God's love and Master Plan,  
or filled with loneliness and rage,  
I'd spend my life inside a cage.

But when I look back, I clearly see,  
Jesus, looking straight at me.  
He knew my soul was chained and bound,  
I was once lost, but am now found!

Those were the days, I used to say,  
when all I knew was drugs and crime,  
but there's just no peace when we don't obey,  
He was there all the time.

I live my life inside a cell,  
and some may say I suffer well,  
the world to me I count as loss,  
just to know Jesus and the cross.

It's for our sins He bled and died,  
and He's felt every tear we cried.  
Sometimes I ask, how this could be,  
that God would love a man like me.

Yes, there are those that think it strange,  
that a man like me can change,  
but that's a fact they have to face,  
because I know God's Love and Grace.

I was what I was, and I know one thing,  
I may die in prison, but death has no sting,  
cause I'm going to Heaven, my Savior to see,  
only Jesus could save a man like me.

### *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: Marvin H.  
Potosi CF, Mineral Point, MO**

**Dear Alan and Sharon,**

I want to thank you for your newsletters. They have good lessons in them and the letters from other inmates is an encouragement to me in my walk with Christ in prison.

I praise God for sending you and other ministries to me to teach me His ways. Every effort you make on behalf of Jesus Christ shines more light into this dark world, so that others can be drawn to the light and find God and His gospel and purpose for them.

Every light that shines helps others to find Christ. If you light one candle in a dark room, it sheds a little light in a small area. But, if you light many candles, they will light up the entire room for all to see their way past obstacles, and to eliminate all darkness from their lives.

Just as cold is the absence of heat, and dark is the absence of light, evil is only the absence of God.

Just like the Israelites complained to God and Moses, "*Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!*" (Numbers 21:5) Many of us in prison complain about everything around them.

But, if they would give themselves to God, He can "*turn them back from the pit, that the light of life may shine on them.*" (Job 33:30 - NIV)

*"I will give thanks to the Lord because of His righteousness; I will sing the praises of the name of the Lord Most High."*

(Psalm 7:17 - NIV)

In Brotherly Love, Marvin

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**From: Manuel R.  
CA Health Care, Stockton, CA**

**Hello Sharon,**

I've recently moved to a new prison. Please update my info on your computer data mailing list.

I really enjoy "My Brother's Keeper". It has very strong messages that help me immensely. Please keep me in prayer for God's will to be done in my physical and spiritual life.

Blessings to all. I keep you and CA in my daily prayers. Thank you all for all you do for us.

In Christ, Manuel

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**From: Demont H.  
Norfolk City Jail, Norfolk, VA**

**Dear Christian Ambassadors,**

I am trying to get on your mailing list, so I can get "My Brother's Keeper". I read one of your [publications] Volume 22, Number 3, Third Quarter, 2017.

My brother Daniel J. gave me a copy to read and now I am hooked. I am a Christian who wants more good news to read that is God's News. I hope I make your mailing list.

God Bless you, Demont

**From: Darby P.  
River North CF, Independence, VA**

**Dear Sharon,**

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! I hope this letter reaches you well.

I received your address from my last cellmate. He left me your June 2018 newsletter [speaking] about "real love and pretend love", as well as your lesson "*Take Care How You Treat Others*". I loved them both.

I'd like to be added to the mailing list if I can. I also enjoy receiving and sharing with others, good solid biblical teaching. So, I look forward to all future correspondence.

May the Lord Bless you and keep you, and make His face shine upon this ministry, and be gracious to you! In Jesus' name. Amen.

God Bless you and thank you for all you do.

In Christ, Darby

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**From: Jason L.  
Wabash Valley CF, Carlisle, IN**

**Dear Sister Sharon,**

I have been getting your newsletters for a long time now. This is the first letter I have sent you. I would like to say thank you for your spiritual help.

I have been in prison since 2007. A lot of things have changed in the world since I have been gone. All the shootings...it is sad when kids can't go to school or church without getting shot at. If you would, please pray for their families and friends. All the stuff Jesus has done for us and we still act this way.

I went to a good Christian church, but I still lived for the world, when I should have been living for God. But the past is the past, and I

have asked for forgiveness. I try my best to do right; sometimes it is hard. But, I try. I read my Bible and I pray. I know the Holy Spirit will help me. God Bless.

Your friend in Christ, Jason

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**From: John T.  
CSP LA County, Lancaster, CA**

**Dear Sharon Griffie,**

Thank you so much for leading me down the right road. I now know that Jesus is and can only be the Christ! So now I am saved!

Love, John

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**From: Albert R.  
TDCJ, LeBlanc Unit, Beaumont, TX**

**Dear Christian Ambassadors,**

After being given the privilege of reading your paper, "My Brother's Keeper", offered by a friend, I am urged to ask you to put me on your distribution list, so I can further be gifted by your works.

Thanks, Bert

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**From: James B.  
SCI-Phoenix, Collegeville, PA**

**Dear Christian Ambassadors,**

I praise God for your newsletters and your Bible studies. Every time I get them, I always find something that will edify me. I do send the studies on to a friend who enjoys them also. But, the main reason for this letter is an address change.

Thank you for sending me everything. Your ministry is in my prayers. God Bless.

Sincerely, James

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**From: Ann R.  
Frederick, Maryland**

**Dear Alan and Sharon,**

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus. All is well here in Maryland.

I've thought many times, "How could Adam and Eve – in the perfect setting of the garden – disobey God?" I've concluded that it involved a series of small steps away from God, that eventually lead to disobedience; and none of us can say we are free from behaving as Adam and Eve did. We read the Genesis story of the fall and might think that Eve and Satan had one conversation and BAM she ate the fruit and gave it to Adam (who was *with* her, I might add). Honestly, I don't believe it was like that. Satan can't get us to commit sin immediately – nope, I believe it is a series of small steps away from what we know to do right, and before you

know it, we have sinned. Satan leaves – we suffer the consequences. Every time I read the comments from my incarcerated brothers and sisters, I'm so encouraged! Their testimonies give me strength and courage to fight the good fight and not take those steps that lead to disobedience. If they can remain faithful, so can I. Their stories are of people living in difficult conditions, yet their faith is strong. It leads me to pray for them and take a "faith check" on myself. They are truly an inspiration to me.

Thank you so much for your ministry. God is using you in ways that we may never know until we get to heaven.

Be blessed. Annie



### ***You've Gone Ahead of Me***

By: Merissa Lee Kelley, Newport News, Virginia  
April 14, 2017 (Inspired by Psalm 23)

I want to keep a Joseph attitude in the midst of every trial  
To gather strength from God above...when I can't walk another mile  
To see with eyes of trust and hope in spite of what appears  
To take a stand when I'm afraid and surrender all my fears  
Guide my steps and give me courage to walk when I can't see  
To trust no matter where I step...You've gone ahead of me  
Help me praise as mercy flows and saturates my heart  
Grateful for the promised joy, I know you will impart  
Grant me wisdom in my words to ensure they travel well  
Help me choose forgiveness...for You forgive me when I fail  
If I must wait for change to happen...help me wait in perfect peace  
For only in Your calming presence will the turmoil finally cease  
So if the change I'm longing for is something yet to be  
I can wait because I know...You've gone ahead of me

### ***Remember to Give Thanks***

Thanksgiving Day is a special time of celebration in which we each can remember God's blessings in our lives. It reminds us that God can show us direction even in our darkest hour. Apostle Paul who suffered so much for Christ, often urged us to thank God for everything.

**I Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NLT)** – Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

The "First Thanksgiving" was celebrated by the Pilgrims after their first harvest in the New World, with a three-day celebration, in October 1621. While people today follow the Pilgrims example of feasting at Thanksgiving, we must not overlook the real reason they set aside that special day. It was to give thanks to Almighty God and acknowledge their total dependence upon Him for existence. The Pilgrims relied upon God in their hardships and thanked Him in their abundance. The Pilgrims taught us the value of Christian Character. God had prepared these Pilgrims, of humble beginnings, to be a light of liberty to an entire nation. Praise God!

On October 3, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a National Day of "*Thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens,*" to be celebrated on the last Thursday in November. As a nation may we give wholehearted praise and thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father, for all our blessings, during this special time of celebration.

In Christ's Love, Sharon & Alan Griffiee

## **My Brother's Keeper**

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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>