



Christian Ambassadors, Inc.

My Brother's Keeper

Volume 14, Number 2, April-June, 2009

GROWING on the WORD

A scripture study

The Word of God is the source of light, truth, and power, for those who seek it's 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.”*

Each issue of “My Brother’s Keeper” features a WORD study. This issue’s Word Study is from Sharon K. Griffee, Co-founder of Christian Ambassadors.

Jesus, Our Shining Example

By Sharon K. Griffee

As many of you know by now, my favorite subject is to proclaim Jesus Christ. As I was listening to a CD of the New Testament recently, I marveled once again just how high the standards of Jesus are. To mo-

tivate ourselves to stretch and grow spiritually we must keep the life of Jesus before us at all times.

Picturing Jesus as a young child growing up in Nazareth, he was anything but ordinary. I still get goose bumps when I think of Jesus at the age of twelve. He had gone with his parents to Jerusalem to attend the feast of the Passover. His parents and those in the company with them had traveled a day’s journey on their way home when suddenly they found Jesus missing. They immediately turned back to Jerusalem, anxiously looking for him. After three days they found him in the Temple, perfectly well, sitting among the rabbis. He was listening intently and asking them questions. As the scriptures state,

Luke 2:47 (KJV) – *And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.*

When his parents saw him they were amazed! They asked him why he had treated them that way. His answer was the most natural response for him,

Luke 2:49 – *And he said unto them, “How is it that ye sought me? wist [know] ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”*

His parents and those around him were caught off guard. At the young age of twelve, his heart was fixed on his Heavenly Father’s business. They may not have realized the significance of his actions, but Jesus’ life was never the same after that incident.

Though the scriptures speak little about his life as he grew into adulthood, I believe they were years of training for Jesus. He had responsibilities to meet, because the people in his hometown of Nazareth knew him as the carpenter’s son. It is easy for me to see Jesus working in the carpenter shop alongside his earthly father Joseph. On a daily basis, he would be learning what it meant to be a skilled craftsman. How it would require careful planning in the items he produced for the customers. Pride of workmanship is an important part of one’s life. Producing an excellent product, as well as treating his customers with excellence, was who Jesus would have been. His character, built upon a strong foundation of faith, prepared him for the leadership responsibility of the ministry he would be stepping into. His mission was to carry out His Heavenly Father’s work.

Watch Out World! From the moment Jesus arrived on the scene preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, his enemies made their hostile advances toward Him. No wonder, Jesus went around calling God his Father! They had to decide if he was really who he claimed to be or a blasphemer.

John 5:18 (KJV) - Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

Though Jesus spoke the truth, they were unwilling to listen. Their minds were already made up against him. They were intent upon killing him. Stoning was the normal punishment for the sin of blasphemes.

John 8:59 (KJV) - Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

Through supernatural means Jesus hid himself from the crowd, temporarily avoiding death at the hands of his enemies. Though his death on the cross was inevitable, Jesus needed to stay alive long enough to accomplish His Father's will. There was a purpose for him remaining alive. There was still much work to be done in His ministry. His disciples needed to be trained to take over Kingdom responsibilities when he was gone. And Jesus needed to preach the powerful message of the gospel throughout the land.

The Sin Which Killed Jesus!
Jesus knew when the time was

right, when he would offer himself up and let his enemies have their way.

John 12:23-26 (KJV) - And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour."

There was no other means in which his purposes might be accomplished. For in its final consequences, the sin, which killed Jesus on Calvary, would be seen for all time, for what it really is - in all its ugliness! What was done to Jesus had its roots in the **pride, self-will, and rebellion** of ordinary men and women.

We may not think about it that much, but our pride, self-will, and rebellion breaks God's heart. Why? For the simple reason that it kills God's finest hope for us; the abundant life he painstakingly planned for us. (**John 10:10**)

Through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, God's highest hope is to appeal to the *best* in men and women. Through the shed blood of Jesus, God reaches into the depth of our soul to move us by the language of sacrifice and pain.

John 3:16-17 (KJV) - For God so loved the world, that he gave

his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

Christ suffered as our example!

Anyone who humbly takes the time to listen to the message of the Cross, will find it taking hold of them - shaking them to the very core! Anyone who has hit bottom and found Christ, has experienced the truth of Paul's words.

Romans 5:6-8 (Amplified Bible) While we were yet in weakness [powerless to help ourselves], at the fitting time Christ died for (in behalf of) the ungodly. Now it is an extraordinary thing for one to give his life even for an upright man, though perhaps for a noble and lovable and generous benefactor someone might even dare to die. But God shows and clearly proves His [own] love for us by the fact that while we were still sinners, Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One) died for us.

While we were a sinful broken mess, powerless to help ourselves, Christ died for us! As horrible as his death was, Jesus doesn't want our pity, he wants our allegiance; because his death was not in vain! Praise God the victory has been won! **Jesus died for a purpose, so that we would have a purpose to live for!** People often wonder what their purpose in life is. Brothers and sisters, Christians have the greatest purpose on earth. The common purpose we all share is to follow Christ and to be like Him! That is our calling.

I Peter 2:21-24 (NIV) - *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." [Isaiah 53:9] When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

We are called for this purpose, to die to our sins and live for righteousness. How can we do it? Just as Jesus suffered for doing good, it is possible for Christians to follow his example in suffering for doing good. Jesus was the perfect example of patient submission to unjust suffering.

I Peter 2:23 (NIV) - *"When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly."*

Jesus didn't spend his time worrying about his critics. Instead, he entrusted himself to his Heavenly Father who judges justly. Jesus was on a mission! He knew who he was, and he knew by what authority he was sent. He had nothing to fear. That is the secret to how Jesus kept his peace in the midst of persecution. Following his example; that is how we are to keep peace in our own lives when persecution comes.

I Peter 2:19-20 (NIV) - *For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering*

because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.

We get no credit for the suffering we endure for doing wrong. But if we endure suffering for doing good, this is commendable before God. When persecution for doing good comes, we are to follow the example of Jesus, *we entrust ourselves to God, who judges justly.*

Take Up Your Cross Daily! Anyone who chooses to follow Jesus must sooner or later realize that the pleasing of men has to be put aside. Our purpose and calling is to please God.

Luke 9:22-24 (NIV) - *And he [Jesus] said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it."*

A few years ago an inmate whom I'll call Patricia, wrote and described what happened when she decided to step out to follow Jesus. She said,

"Sharon, I'm so ready to move on now and leave my past life of sin behind. But, there is one thing that makes it seem so hard. I keep telling my associates here in prison that I'm turning my life around for Jesus. But, when I

start to follow Jesus I keep falling back and doing things with them like cussing, gossiping, speaking on immoral things, and stuff like that. Then I start feeling guilty, so I tell them, 'Look, I'm changing again. I'm going to be spending more time alone in my cell studying my Bible.' Sharon, this has happened so often, it has gotten to the place where they don't believe me anymore, because I keep falling back into my old ways. So, this is what they say to me, 'Patricia you're just playing with God! You're only making up excuses, saying you're following Jesus, just to keep from talking to us.'

Patricia learned an important truth. Our decision to follow Jesus has to be more than lip service. Why? Because Satan will use every morally weak person around us, to eat up all our time, trying to get us to choose *them* over Jesus. But, if we are to fulfill our purpose and calling, we will be awakened as never before, to the need for sacrifice in His cause. May we be determined to follow Jesus, our shining example, so we might boldly proclaim with Paul,

Galatians 2:20 (KJV) - *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for 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: Marshall T.
Washington Dept of Corrections
Airway Heights, WA**

Christian Ambassadors, I enjoy so much your newsletter and I am encouraged by your ministry. Thank you and pray for us prisoners.

A brief testimony. I had come to a point in my life where I concluded that life had no meaning. No matter where I went – work, military, marriage, school, nothing seemed to bring fulfillment and stability in my life.

I grew up insecure, angry, lonely and depressed. A long story, but one of many you probably read every day. Being unstable and out of control, I finally arrived at this point in my life. Thanks be to the Lord, I, while alone in my 6x9 Condo, did some serious talking to God. A visiting Chaplain started telling me of a better life, and I am now earnestly and diligently seeking His Word. It is true and can be trusted. I now have a Father who loves me and I'm born again in the Holy Spirit.

It has been almost 5 years since my acceptance of the Lord and He continues to bless me every day! A continuous battle, but I am winning by allowing the Spirit to work in me – my freedom, my foundation, and

my faith. Praise Him who shed His blood to save and sanctify me! A servant in Christ, Marshall.

**From: Wendell E.
Desoto County Jail
Hernando, MS**

Dear Alan and Sharon, I would like to say that the recent letter I received brought tears down my face. And yes, I know without a doubt I will be put to the test when I return home soon. But, I have to tell you that I truly see my faith getting better, little by little. I ask our Lord daily to help me in that area.

I would not sign up for this part of my life again, but I would not ask our Lord Jesus to change one minute of it. I want to say that Alan and Sharon Griffiee and CA have a very special place in my heart. I look forward to staying in touch with CA. My prayers are with you both and everyone at CA. Again thank you for your [spiritual] help. Prayerfully, Wendell.

**From: Michael H.
Lovellok Correctional
Lovellok, NV**

Christian Ambassadors, I sincerely would like to take this chance to thank you for newsletters and studies you send to me. I've been receiving them for many years now and I still read, study, and enjoy each issue.

For the past 41 years as long as I've been alive, my mother and father have taken care of me, such as always being there when I'm down and out, buying me cars, helping with rent, etc. And since being an inmate in the Nevada Dept of Corrections, my parents have sent funds.

When I last spoke to them I requested one last money order. I did this for a

few reasons. It is not their job anymore to take care of me. Times are getting tight for everyone and it is time for me to step up and be a man and take care of myself. The state provides everything I need to survive. I might not enjoy all the meals, but sometimes we as inmates forget that we are in prison and not at Club Med.

With the Lord's help I know I will be just fine. I wanted to share this with you since I really do think your newsletters and studies have helped me change to be a better person. God Bless you all at Christian Ambassadors. Sincerely, Michael.

**From: Mario R.
Kit Carson Correctional
Burlington, CO**

Sister Sharon & Family, Praise the Lord! I pray this letter finds you all in our sweet Lord's best care. I take this time to "thank you" for all you do for this brother. My road has been a somewhat crazy one. Your guiding hand has in many ways helped me.

At this time I am in the faith pod here in Kit Carson Correctional Center. We study "The Basic Life Principles"! The public out there says this program helps a person stay out of prison. I have been in since 1984 and pray that now is my year.

May our Lord Bless you all in your work, now and always. You sure have blessed this wayward brother. For that I thank you and praise the Lord for you and yours all the time. In Christ, Mario.



God has a variety of ways to get our attention. The most recent way for me, was a dream. That one dream will be enough to last me a lifetime! **Matthew 6:14-15 (KJV)** says, "*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*" Pretty straightforward, huh? But somehow, even knowing this truth from the Bible, we still struggle with unforgiveness. Because, let's face it, there are some things that are done to us that are just plain wrong, even evil. Nevertheless, let go and forgive! This is what I prayed, "*Ok, I am making a conscious choice to forgive, so I am allowing God to undo the control that someone else's actions have had over me. What they've done will not dictate my life anymore and I will not allow them to have that kind of hold over me any longer. I release it and I will walk in freedom and I take my hands off and allow God to handle the situation.*" And He will, for He is Jehovah Jireh, our Provider. He will provide the strength and grace to let go and forgive. *Merissa Lee Kelley*

The Freedom Of Letting Go

By: Merissa Lee Kelley, January 13, 2009

I wore some chains for quite awhile...the kind you couldn't see
I still could move and walk around, but I really wasn't free
My chains were not "one size fits all" or purchased off a rack
They were custom made to fit across my aching back

Altho' the chains were out of sight, I knew that they were there
And pretty much convinced myself that they were "wash & wear"
As time went on, I'd grown accustomed to the burden of their weight
Until the night God sent a dream before it was too late

Why a dream? So I'd be still long enough for Him to sow
Some seeds of truth wrapped in grace, with time enough to grow
Why a train? Because I was on an unforgiving track
And in His mercy He was willing, to say the words to pull me back

Why the vapor and the inability to rise up on my own?
To show me that I'm incomplete when it's just my strength alone
Why the silence? The most chilling silence that I have ever heard
So I would hear...I mean REALLY hear...the warning in the words

IF YOU DO NOT FORGIVE...YOU WILL NOT MAKE IT

They were only spoken that one time, but that was all it took
For me to understand my plight and take a deeper look
I asked my Mom to pray with me for the strength to break the chains
And dropped them on "deception's track" and derailed that wayward train

Oh, the freedom of letting go...it's the only way to live
Peace that goes beyond all measure is yours when you forgive
Make the choice to break the chains that unforgiveness brings
Then freedom's song will always be a melody you can sing

My Brother's Keeper

Submission Guidelines

Christian Ambassadors, Inc. welcomes original (with permission to publish from the author), inspirational poems or articles for publication in "*My Brother's Keeper*", especially from current or former prison inmates. Submitted articles, which meet the following guidelines, will be prayerfully considered for publication. If you wish to have your manuscript returned, please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for that purpose (or consider making a copy prior to submission). If published, your submission may be edited for space and clarity.

Format:

- Maximum of 1800 words, clearly printed or typed (equal to two typewritten pages).
- Easy to understand (6th-8th grade reading level); average level in the USA is 8th grade
- Poems should clearly show where verse (single line) breaks and stanza (group of verses) breaks are to occur.
- Personal testimonies must include your name, but may use alias' for other people.
- Mail to: Christian Ambassadors, Inc., PO Box 62876, Colorado Springs, CO 80962-2876

Content:

- The purpose of *My Brother's Keeper* is to bring spiritually uplifting, non-denominational messages of hope to prison inmates. The focus of all submissions should be on Jesus Christ and how His gospel message brings meaning and hope to prison inmates.
- Focus on the positive and avoid the negative. While it is at times necessary to contrast good and evil, positive and negative, submissions should leave the reader feeling there is hope in the gospel, not feeling lost in the conflicts of the world. Avoid mocking people and institutions, including the prison system, the justice system, and the government.
- Focus on God's righteous path to be followed, avoiding condemnation or judgment. Satan is our enemy, not other people or religious denominations. Avoid passing judgment or condemnation on individuals, groups, religions or religious beliefs.
- Focus on the spiritual and avoid the secular. While there are many good articles and subjects dealing with social, economic, and political change, "*My Brother's Keeper*" is not a forum for those topics.
- Remember that a humble servant is pleasing to God (John 13:14-17). Speak to your reader with respect and honor, avoiding high-mindedness or a patronizing tone.

“God's Shank”
A Devotional Study

For the word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are. Hebrews 4:12

In many prison lobbies there are displays exhibiting different types of shanks. Confiscated during shakedowns, they were fashioned from every imaginable material. A piece of metal bed frame was polished to a razor's edge. A toothbrush was melted and molded into a long shank capable of piercing a kidney or heart. Even a hardcover book was carefully crafted into a deadly shank.

Most convicts caught with a shank argue that it's for self-defense. But that's mostly untrue. Shanks are fashioned to attack someone else. They're made to retaliate and inflict revenge on someone who has disrespected one gang or another. It might be payback to someone for something that happened outside before both of you went to prison. Whatever the reason, shanks cut, expose, and inflict pain on another person.

The Bible is God's shank. It's a sharp knife and cuts us deep. It tells us fearlessly that we all have sinned and all fall short of God's glorious standard (see Romans 3:23). If we live in defiance about our sinful behavior, God's shank slashes our denial with these words, *"If we say we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and refusing to accept the truth" (1 John 1:8)*. God's Word sticks us where we are living in sin. It pulls no punches in exposing our wrong behavior. Look at the list. It

includes sexual immorality, eagerness for sexual pleasure, hostility, anger, and jealousy (see Galatians 5:16-21).

God's Word cuts us to expose our sin. Exposure makes us aware of our sin so we will seek forgiveness, just as when we are aware of an illness, we go to find a doctor. Once we know and own up to our sin, we recognize we need God.

Making it personal: Dare to pick up and read God's shank. Allow it to penetrate your heart.

Prayer: God, cut me and remove the sin so I can heal and live for You. Amen.

Read Galatians 5:19-26 to become aware of how to become free from specific sins.

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“Doing His Time, Meditations and Prayers for Men and Women in Prison”, by James C. Vogelzang, with Lynn Vanderzalm, Doing His Time Prison Ministry, PO Box 91509,

Fishers Of Men

Song By: Israel Cooper
Red Onion State Prison,
Pound Virginia

Cast your nets into the water – for they are full and you must reap,
Have faith in Him, don't fear or falter – you must wake them from their sleep.
There are people that will hate you – there are some who never wake,
For God appoints to those salvation – yet all will see the judgment day.

Chorus

Fishers of men, follow me and do what's right, my sheep are lost
and hurting in the night. So go your way, be strong, I'm coming again;
A crown awaits for those in Christ my fishers of men.

For those that hear the great commission – As it's burning in your chest,
Just come to Him in sweet submission – put their fruits up to the test.
And no matter where your journeys – even to a distant land,
He's the Father of the Nations – and you're safe within His hand.

Repeat Chorus

Listen to the Holy Spirit – His words will guide you straight and true,
His voice is still and small but hear it – for He loves you through and through.
Make a calling to the altar – for every woman, child, and man.
When you're thirsty He's the water – all other ground is sinking sand.

Repeat Chorus x 2

Then: “Cast your nets into the wa-ter...” Fade.

Santa Barbara, CA 93190

Attitude

Submitted By Gregory S. Rideau,
Calipatria, CA

A winner says I'm good, but not as good as I ought to be.

A loser says I'm not as bad as a lot of other people.

A winner listens.

A loser just waits his turn to talk.

A winner is sensitive to the atmosphere around him.

A loser is sensitive only to his own feelings.

A winner respects those who are superior to him,
and tries to learn something from them.

A loser resents those who are superior to him,
and tries to find chinks in their armor.

A winner works harder than a loser and has more time.

A loser is always too busy to do what is necessary.

My Brother's Keeper

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Inspirational articles, 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, any 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>.