



Christian Ambassadors, Inc.

My Brother's Keeper

Volume 13, Number 3, July-September, 2008

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 Roy Roberts, Idaho State Correctional Institute, Boise, Idaho.

Awake!

By Roy Roberts

The text for this Word Study comes from the book of Romans.

Romans 13:11-14 (KJV) – *knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far*

spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.

Verse 11 says, “... *knowing the time...*” Knowing the time. Anyone who has been a Christian very long should know the time in which we live. We have been given signs throughout God’s Word to know the times. One such sign is found in the words of Christ,

Matthew 24:32-35 – *“Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”*

We are told two things here, (1) Jesus is coming soon, and is at the doors; and (2) that the fig tree is already leaved out. What do I mean? Israel has always been portrayed as the fig tree in the Bible. Israel became a

nation again in 1948. This generation shall not pass till all is fulfilled.

We are in the “Days of Noah” and the “Days of Sodom and Gomorrah”! As in those days people were too busy with their wickedness to listen to the prophets, who tried to tell them about a loving God. And today people are so caught up in violence, drugs, alcohol, sex, and other wickedness; they don't want to hear of God.

Some preachers teach that man will soon make a utopia on earth and all will be well. This is a lie!

II Timothy 3:13 – *But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.*

The only utopia we will see on earth is when Christ comes to reign on earth a thousand years.

A lot of people today surround themselves with teachers who will scratch their itching ears. In other words, these teachers will tell them what they want to hear instead of the truth. I don't know whether these teachers are afraid of the people, or they just don't care. They are hirelings, not shepherds. This too is a sign of the times. Hear and understand! Our Lord Jesus Christ is coming soon!

These signs are more relevant today than they have ever been. There is more wickedness, violence, drugs,

alcohol, sexual perversion, murder and much more than ever before. This world is full of darkness and is asleep to the ways of God. But to the righteous He says, "Awake"!

Ephesians 5:14 – *Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, ...*

Arise from the where? If we are walking in the world, in worldly ways, we are asleep to Christ. We are as if we are dead, the ones who know not Christ, or those who didn't want anything to do with Christ. As we awake and rise from the dead, verse 14 continues with the promise;

"and Christ shall give thee light."

We can depend on Jesus! Only He can fulfill our needs. When we are depending on the flesh, we are depending on the dead, and we'll get nowhere fast.

Isaiah 52:1 – *Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.*

In other words, by putting on Jesus, we'll walk no more in wickedness, or in worldly ways. This is how we'll know we are in Jesus and He in us, if our ways have changed from worldly ways to godly ways. When we no longer want to fulfill the lusts of our flesh, or the wicked things we used to do. When we surround ourselves with new and godly people, we no longer want to be in sin, but would rather be in the Spirit.

I Corinthians 15:34 – *Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.*

We are to awake to righteousness and turn away from sin. The Bible says if we know to do right, and do it not, it

is sin unto us. We are to turn away from every aspect of sin; not just the big ones, but all sin. You see, with God there are no big, small, or different degrees of sin. Sin is sin. Not only that, but it is up to us to let others know this same fact! If we don't, it is to our shame, especially if those souls are lost because no one told them of Jesus. As Christians, we sometimes become lazy. We become as it speaks of in Proverbs.

Proverbs 24:30-34 – *I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.*

This describes the lazy Christian. It is a perfect picture. "Now that I'm saved, I'll just sit back and coast till Jesus comes." This man is slothful and ignorant, and without courage or mental powers to make proper decisions about work (the work of God), or how to carry out this work.

This man in question has a vineyard and a farm capable of producing all his own food and to prosper. But look at the condition of his farm! The thorns and nettles have taken over the ground. The fences and walls are all broken and torn down. Through years of neglect the farm is in ruin. Why? He is too lazy to prune the vineyard, clean up, plow, or plant the fields. He's too lazy to repair the walls and fences, or even the place where he lives.

The result is this; he is in absolute poverty. He is like a man that goes on vacation and spends every cent he has and then has no funds to return home. He is also like a man who through war becomes so poor that he can't provide for himself. Not even his food. We as Christians, sometimes let our spiritual side go to sleep. We need to wake up and get our eyes back on the One who saved us. We need to get our spiritual life back in order and get rid of all the evil things that so easily beset us. We need to walk as unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 13:12 – *The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.*

I Thessalonians 5:5 – *Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.*

If we have been born again, washed in the blood of Jesus and walk in His Spirit, we are light. We have nothing to do with nor do we dwell in darkness. His Word is a lamp unto our feet. A lamp means there is no darkness, just light. We should not even have fellowship with darkness.

Ephesians 5:8 – *For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:*

Before we came to know Jesus as our Savior, we walked in darkness. That is where we dwelled. We were in our sins; we knew nothing else. But when we were saved, we went from darkness unto light. We went from death in our sins, to life in Christ Jesus.

Romans 13:12b – *...let us therefore cast off the works of*

darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

Who is the light and what is the armor of light? **I John 1:5** tells us that God is light. And **Ephesians 6:10-18** tells us what the armor of God (the light) is. Without this armor we are defenseless against the foe, and we wander in very dangerous territory. We try to fight, but have no protection. We are fighting in our own strength, and we can do nothing. But if we are in the light, being clothed with God's armor, we are a mighty army standing together in the name of the Lord!

Romans 13:13 – *Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.*

The word rioting here means causing and the word drunken means wasting. When we are spiritually causing and drunken, we are wasting our time as well as our lives. We are being lazy and coveting the things of the flesh, not the spirit. Are we living for Christ and redeeming our time by witnessing to others, or do we just exist? Are we so full of the world and worldly ways that that is all we can think about?

The word chambering in this verse signifies lewd and licentious conduct, especially illicit intercourse or sexual perversion. This could also include pornography and dirty jokes.

The word wantonness here signifies insolent luxury or lasciviousness; to squander; to be deliberate without motive; unprovoked; sexually unrestrained; done maliciously. Sometimes we hurt other people by what we say, or do. We do it without thinking of the outcome or sometimes we do it on purpose. In other words, we do it wantonly, deliberately. Some people do not know what

being in control of themselves means. They deliberately attack people or hurt people just because they like to do it. Others do all kinds of things, even sexual immorality because they need to fulfill their own selfish desires, without any thought how it will affect someone else.

The word strife in verse 13 means contention. We should never walk in contention. We often get into another's face and get angry with them instead of acting in love and talking to that person. We usually want to be blaming other people for our own faults.

The word envying in this verse is that malignant passion that sees in another qualities that we ourselves covet, often resulting in hate for the possessor. This is getting real close to jealousy. In plain talk, we hate life or other people because they have something we want and haven't got.

Romans 13:14 – *But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*

If we are in Christ, and Christ in us, then we must not give sin, self, or Satan even a foothold in our lives. To do that will lead us right into fulfilling the lust of the flesh.

Galatians 3:27 – *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

The Bible says that baptism is an example of being crucified, buried, and resurrected with Christ. When we are plunged under the water, we are dead to the sin of our lives at that time. We are putting off the old man. Then spiritually we are buried with Christ while under the water; then spiritually resurrected with Christ as we are lifted out of the water. At this point we should have a change of heart and desires. We should no

longer have a longing to do the old things we used to do. The things and desires of the world should be dead unto us. We should desire godly and spiritual things.

In Summary: If we will open our spiritual eyes and recognize the signs of the time, we will see that Jesus could come any second. We will see that the day is far spent and that all things are about done.

We should awake from our sleeping and become ready to meet our Savior. We need to put on our armor given to us by God and then walk in honesty toward Him; walking in the path He has chosen for us. We should walk in His wisdom and strength, by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, and putting down the things of the world.

We should be an army for God, with our eyes on Him at all times. We need to stretch our borders by talking to the lost about Jesus, and bringing as many to the fold as we can reach. So, let's wake up and shake ourselves. Let's get ready to walk and talk Jesus in the little time we have left. Let's act and show ourselves worthy of the calling God has given to us, while it is still day!



A Plan For Happiness

By Eva Fry

Matthew 25:21 (NIV) - His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"

God has given us a plan for happiness. It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ and it is found in His Scriptures. If we follow His plan, we will have happiness in this life and we will be worthy to return to Him when we die. This is called eternal life, which will be the ultimate happiness.

His Gospel teaches us the commandments we must keep to find this happiness. He does not give us His commandments to put us in bondage or make our life difficult. On the contrary, obedience to Christ's teachings gives us freedom from the things that can destroy us, which take us away from the happiness He offers.

On the other hand, Satan knows who we are and what we can become. He also knows God and Jesus, and all they have to offer us. Satan will do everything he can to frustrate God's plan of happiness. We must be aware of Satan's plan of misery and not allow Him to take over our lives.

God's plan for happiness is plain and simple. We must be obedient to His teachings and not fall for Satan's temptations. When you are aware of Satan's enticing, you will have greater power to overcome it and follow God.

One of Satan's tools is to teach us to look at the negative things that come our way as punishment, or to believe that God doesn't care for us. A common thought when bad things happen is, "If there really is a God these things wouldn't happen." This kind of thinking is a lie and it is how Satan wants us to think. We must look at the negative things of life in a way that helps us make sense of them and so they don't destroy us. We must look for the lesson God wants to teach us.

The following ideas may help you understand this theory:

One. We must understand the purpose of negative things in our life, and realize that everything that happens can be used for our development and growth to direct us toward our life's purpose or mission. Though God doesn't cause the negative things to happen in our life, He allows us to experience things that we can learn from. When we understand this we will be happier.

Two. Once we look at the trials and tragedies of our life in a more positive and healthier way, we can do the work necessary to overcome them. When we do we can better see their purpose, and see how we can use them for motivation to a better life. This idea will also help you be happier.

Example: I had an alcoholic father who literally ruined my childhood and left me with scars that almost stopped my progress in life. I had to find a way to look at life differently and then discover the purpose for the hurts in my life. I discovered and now understand, that they were the stepping-stones toward discovering my life's purpose and mission. I have used what I learned from my childhood and my Dad's mistakes, to help young people look at their lives

in a more positive way; and help save them from the same pains I had as a child. I have spent years teaching young people at Juvenile Hall not to drink alcohol and to choose the right. Turning this negative into a positive has brought me great happiness.

Three. One of the ways to overcome past hurts is to move on. We must learn the principal of forgiveness. When we can fully forgive someone who has hurt us, it sets us free of hatred and anger and allows us freedom to get on with our life. This is a hard principal, but with God's help we can do it. A good way to get on with our life is to get our thoughts going in positive ways. We can do this by discovering our gifts and talents and developing them. When we are growing we are happy. When we are progressing we don't have time to dwell on the negative. Developing ourselves is what God expects of us. With accomplishments we will start feeling good about our life and ourselves. The people that hurt us don't matter as much. We start to like others more, because we like ourselves more. When we love ourselves and others we are happier.

Four. We must be aware and in control of our thoughts. When our negative thoughts try to take over our life, we must stop them. We must ask God to help us get rid of the negative, hurtful thoughts and we must find a way to replace them with positive thoughts. Our minds can't be negative and positive at the same time. We have the power to replace negative, damaging thoughts with positive, uplifting thoughts. We can't let the thoughts of our past destroy our future; or the thoughts or hurts others have caused, to bring us down. Our negative thoughts can destroy us if we allow them.

A man who taught in the prisons said, "We are what we think" (See: **Proverbs 23:7 - KJV**). This idea is powerfully true. If you are in control of your thoughts you'll be happier.

Five. We must recognize the spiritual truths of life. There is good and bad in life. We must look for the good in life, others and ourselves, but we must also be aware that there is a negative force in life that wants to destroy us, depress us and stop us. This is Satan. This force is always there, if we allow it. The reality is that God has a plan of happiness for us and Satan knows the plan and will do everything he can to stop it. We must be aware of this and live our life accordingly. Outsmarting Satan can bring you happiness. God is more powerful than Satan!

Happiness and fulfillment come from developing the gifts and talents God has blessed us with; and striving to reach our potential and overcoming the negative parts of our life – moving past them and learning from them. We must then use our gifts in the service of others to discover our life's mission. By giving help, joy and pleasure to others, through the gifts and talents we have been blessed with, we bring personal joy and happiness to ourselves. We then realize that all that happens in our life, good and bad, is given us for experience, so we can reach our own potential and help others. If we think properly we can be in the service of our God and we will find happiness. This is God's plan for happiness.



The Well Of Grace

By Larry A. Thompson
Sterling Correctional, Colorado

Compassion and forgiveness, generosity and kindness, are all terms that are used to describe the ways that we feel, and the things that we do, one towards another – when we humble ourselves to be loving to our brothers and sisters and our fellow man. In most cases these terms and actions are employed without the full appreciation of what "unconditional love" is – which to me is, "love without expectation". It's the kind of love with which God loves each and every one of His sons and daughters. For it is written,

Ephesians 2:8 (KJV) – *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:"*

After man's disobedience in the garden, God gave mankind a choice; live by faith and accept the gift of grace by which we are saved or, perish in the darkness of disobedience by living to fulfill the selfish lusts of one's own flesh. Grace is not forced upon us, neither is it expected that we accept it. Never-the-less, it is freely offered with the hope that we will drink of it, as it flows from it's well. Consider the words of Christ to the woman of Samaria,

John 4:10 (KJV) - *Jesus answered and said unto her, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."*

Jesus goes on to say,

John 4:14 (KJV) – *"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."*

Some would say that compassion and forgiveness, generosity and kindness, are all inherent traits that come freely out of the human heart. But, I say that all these things are sips of the "living water", which flows forth from the heart of God, where the well of grace runs deep.



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: Gary W.
Avenal State Prison
Avenal, California**

Dear Sister Sharon, “My Brother's Keeper” is always such a blessing to everyone, including myself. It's so very important for us to be fed positive and encouraging messages.

Psalm 1:1-3 (KJV) – Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

This is so very special to us who are in prison. When we return to our lives we must plant ourselves by the rivers of water. We must live with faith, love, and forgiveness. And towards others, we must show understanding.

Jesus said in *Matthew 19:30 (KJV) – But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first.*

I ask that you take these words from our Lord to keep you close to Him in your times of need and uncertainty. We can live in victory always, if we are willing to be last and do our works for the Glory of our living God. May God Bless you all, for we are in His loving hands. Thank you again! Brother Gary.

**From: Jeffery C.
Bibb County Correctional
Brent, Alabama**

Dear Sister Sharon, Thank you for sending me the Lesson for my class. I especially appreciate the newsletter “My Brother's Keeper.” The letters of inspiration from other inmates, and your teachings of the Word of God have influenced me a lot.

God has made a tremendous difference in my every day life. I thank God every day for the blessings He has given me. He wakes me every morning and protects me every day. I hope that ya'll will hold me in your prayers. I will continue to pray for everyone involved with Christian Ambassadors and their families. I hold all the inmates in my prayers and wish them and their families a positive and godly future. Thank you! Jeffery

**From: Bernard L.
MSCF,
Wrightstown, New Jersey**

Dear Alan and Sharon, Thank you so very much for your letter and information. I was so happy to get your response. First, I was surprised when they called my name for mail. It was the first time in over a year since I got mail (I knew, I knew, but it was exciting for me!)

Then I read your letter and brochure and I ran around the tier making everyone read it. I was blessed by the spiritual literature and lesson.

I have been through many horrible things in my life. The only reason I am able to even stand each morning is because of Jesus Christ! I am here praying and staying in the Word and I need your prayers. I will also pray for both of you and your ministry. Thank you again! Peace and love, Bernard.

**From: Luis M.
Green Haven Correctional
Stormville, New York**

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Greetings in the name of Jesus! I just want to thank you for the monthly lesson of Spiritual Growth, and to inform you that I moved to a different facility. Please send my lessons there. Thank you and God Bless you in Jesus' name. Amen! Sincerely, Brother Luis.

**From: Samantha R.
Levy Forestry Camp
Bronson, Florida**

Dear Christian Ambassadors,
Please change my address in your system. I appreciate all you send to me. May God continue to bless you and your ministry. I pass around the material you send me to allow others to read. Thank you and God Bless!

**From: Louis M.
Mid State Correctional
Marcy, New York**

Dear Mrs. Griffie, Praise God for your magazine's creativity. The print and style makes one want to see your work; and it is a pleasure to share thoughts and feelings. And, to read the spiritual insights from the many wonderful brothers and sisters across the states. Knowing there are many things that keep us all apart from our families and friends draws us closer in the Body of Jesus Christ.

And thanks also to you and your husband Alan, for it is your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in Jesus Christ which helps to keep the spiritual connection alive. Praise God! I know like many of "My Brother's Keeper" readers, we love you all at Christian Ambassadors.

With delight and a peaceful heart, it is both a pleasure and joy to pray for each and every soul that reads and have had the pleasure to touch base with "My Brother's Keeper."

Dear Lord, the Easter celebration has come and gone, but the love and respect we share in each other shall continue to grow and rise because of you Lord. I do hope and continue to pray that each of our families, and ourselves, focus on being in good health, mentally and of course spiritually, knowing that you focus on the whole person, Lord.

Our mental, emotional, physical, social, and spiritual self must be

balanced. Anyone out of balance leads us (our mind) in a downhill spin of stress and depression, and we all know Lord those unhealthy ways open the door to sin.

Help us to continue to feed on the Word and truly open our mind, body, and soul so that we can be supportive to one another every day. In Jesus Christ's name, we pray. Amen.



My Foundation

By Israel Cooper, Red Onion State Prison
Pound, Virginia

Christ is my foundation; it's on the solid Rock I stand,
He is my inspiration; He's everything I am.
I stumble in the dark at times; I never will give in,
His love and grace is what defines, the nature that is Him.
I ask for only one more day, to start afresh and new,
My spirit seeks to know your way, the path that stays in you.

Chorus:

Jesus, prince of peace, wash my stains and make me clean.
Jesus, Hold my hand, pick me up and help me stand,
Jesus, Jesus, I proclaim.
Jesus, Jesus the power of your precious name.

Christ is my direction, my compass and my source,
His word is my reflection, to keep me on my course.
His love is all defining, the strength to help withstand.
The mountain I am climbing, is aided by His Hand.
I ask for only one more day, to clean my soul within.
I kneel upon my knees and pray, my heart to be like Him.

Inter:

I ask that you will mend my soul; you are the half that makes me whole,
You are the very air I breathe; you put the gift of life in me.
There is no greater name on earth; your blood has given me new birth,
I thank you for the joy you bring, all praises to the King of Kings.

(Repeat Chorus X 2, fade...)

NOTICE

The poem, "The Dash" has been removed from this Newsletter, as it was submitted by a former inmate with no acknowledgement of it's true author.

We express our regrets that this occurred, as we try to assure that all material published in this newsletter are properly credited to their author, and done so with permission.

The poem, "The Dash" was written by Linda Ellis and is copy protected by her.

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 write to 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>.