



Christian Ambassadors, Inc.

My Brother's Keeper

Volume 17, Number 1, January-March, 2012

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.”

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

Respond to the Prompting of the Holy Spirit

By Sharon K. Griffiee

Proverbs 3:5-6 (KJV) - *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; And lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways*

acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

God’s intention for His people is to be on alert and eagerly respond to the *prompting* of the Holy Spirit. The Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary defines the word **prompt** as: *to move to action; being ready and quick to action as occasion demands.*

Whenever we respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit we are allowing God to use our physical bodies to accomplish His work here on earth. If we are to earnestly follow through with God’s purpose for us, we must get into the habit of listening to the Holy Spirit to teach, train, and guide us throughout each day.

As our scripture from **Proverbs chapter 3:5-6** conveys, the first requirement is **trust**. We must have wholehearted trust in the Lord. No half-hearted trust will do. If we only trust in the Lord half way, we could end up leaning on our own understanding. And that is exactly where we get into trouble, when we respond to what our emotions and human logic tells us to do, rather than obeying the prompting of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean, however, that there is no place for intelligent

judgment about a situation. Of course God does not want us to abandon sound judgment. He simply does not want us to depend solely on human reasoning. Why?

Human reasoning can only go so far! Just take a look at our thought processes in how we deal with a problem. We can get so caught up in our own human reasoning, going round and around, *should I do this, should I do that*, until confusion sets in. At that point we should get the clue - we have gone too far without God! It is time to acknowledge the authority and the supremacy of God in our decision making.

Proverbs 3:6 (KJV) - “In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

It is time to pause, step back, humble ourselves before God, admit we don’t know everything and truly listen to the direction the Holy Spirit is leading.

What does the scripture mean; *in all thy ways acknowledge Him?*

To acknowledge God in all our ways means we are to honor Him in every thought, word, and deed; to absolutely and with grateful

hearts give God the well-deserved first place in our lives. Why?

Colossians 1:18b-20 (NIV) -

"...So that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."

Brothers and sisters, the Lord longs to be intimately involved in our lives. Instead of putting Him on a back burner in our lives - just in case we need Him, in every aspect of our lives God should have the preeminence. We must get to the place in our spiritual growth where we have the *right attitude* towards Him, as well as the *right actions* towards others.

The Lord desires to help us, by bringing our reasoning up to spiritual quality so we can begin thinking like Him. As He told the people in Isaiah's day, the same principle applies today,

Isaiah 1:18 (KJV) - *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD:*

As we consistently reason *together* with God, we can't help but to acknowledge that God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts.

Isaiah 55:7-8 (NIV) - *Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD.

We learn here that God has compassion for those who turn to Him, because His thoughts and ways are far superior to human thoughts and ways, which in fact are evil (**see: verse 7**). As we turn to the Lord and follow God's plan, being freely pardoned, we see how privileged we are and can be to live life in harmony with His superior ways.

Therefore, it is imperative that we put forth the effort to train our spirit to be sensitive to the *prompting* of the Holy Spirit.

Let me share a simple example of something that happened in my life years ago, that taught me more fully how God prompts people in everyday life, to become more sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. If we can learn to obey God in simple matters, we are much more prepared to obey God in weightier matters. The more familiar we are with God's way of doing things, the freer we are to readily respond to Him.

There was one particular summer when I was helping out with vacation church school. I was one of the women who were helping with the refreshments each day. We were trying to follow the theme of each day, so we were baking things from scratch, rather than buying ready made goods. This effort took a great deal of time and patience.

One evening during the serving of the refreshments the vacation

church school director asked me to bring in some firewood for the following day, so that we could have a mock camp fire in the church sanctuary. I told her I would and continued serving the refreshments. As I left that evening my mind was on planning the next day's refreshments, not on the firewood.

By the following evening I had forgotten all about the wood and I lived 35 minutes from the church, which was too far to drive back and get the firewood. As soon as she learned my mistake her voice became very intense. She was not pleased with me at all! While I was being verbally attacked, there were 3 women who were standing by listening and watching the whole scene. It was not until after the vacation church school director stomped off, leaving me with my mouth hanging open and feeling pretty rotten, that these 3 women sheepishly came up to me.

Each one of those women told me how they had felt the *prompting* of the spirit to call and remind me to bring the wood.

Bewildered I said, "Why didn't you call?"

One by one they told me how they had *reasoned* things out in their mind.

"Well, you are just so efficient Sharon; I figured it would be silly to call, because you would remember."

Another one said, "Sharon you are always on top of things, you are so organized I dismissed the feeling to call you."

After I got home that night the thought occurred to me, *the Holy Spirit was trying to get all three women to call me*. As I thought more about it, I realized those women had thought too highly of me. Thinking I could not make a simple mistake, in their own mind they had reasoned themselves out of obeying the Holy Spirit's *prompting*.

The next morning when I got up I started thinking about it again. What I was actually doing was trying to *reason it out* in my own mind. But, as I said before, human reasoning can only go so far. I knew I needed the Lord's help. I needed to reason it out *with the Lord* in order to receive revelation.

So I asked the Spirit directly, *Lord, How come You didn't just come to me and tell me to take the wood to church? You could have saved me and the Church School Director a lot of embarrassment and she wouldn't have gotten so upset with me.*

The Holy Spirit answered me with a firm, but exceedingly kind reply;

"Yes, I could have told you, Sharon, but how would these women have learned the importance of obeying my counsel? There are consequences to putting off the prompting of my Spirit."

The bringing of the firewood wasn't that significant to God. It wasn't a matter of life and death if we had a mock campfire. However, learning to respond in obedience to the *prompting* of the

Holy Spirit, that is a matter of eternal significance. God uses such incidents as teaching tools to remind us that the Holy Spirit is always talking to us. It is only when we are out of tune with the Holy Spirit that we allow ourselves to become too spiritually dense to hear and obey Him.

What must we do to train our spirit to be sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit? It is helpful to recall what Jesus said to some disciples who later deserted Him. He put it on the line,

John 6:63b-64a (KJV) –
"...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not."

Jesus was clarifying to them that the words He speaks do not work automatically. On the contrary, the spiritual life Jesus gives must be *received by faith*. If we are to receive the life of God, there has to be a spiritual connection *with God*. For that spiritual connection to manifest itself, we must *believe* without any reservations.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (KJV) gives us the pattern to follow.

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; And lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.



Now Dawns Eternal Light

By: Gregory K. Ethridge,
 former inmate,
 Irmo, South Carolina

You hear the Word of Light
 Piercing the walls of your sin
 As the Holy Spirit convicts you
 Towards a new life to begin.

You were lost in perpetual darkness
 But the light begins to transform
 Now you are found in peace
 As Jesus calms your storm.

You no longer hide in the shadows
 Of the life you knew before
 As Christ took your sin upon the cross
 And saved you forevermore.

On your knees before Him,
 You call to Him this very night
 You are made new in His presence
 Your life now dawns eternal light.

"Soli Deo Gloria"
 ©2010 Gregory K. Ethridge

Soli Deo Gloria

By: Gregory K. Ethridge
 © January 21, 2010
 former inmate,
 Irmo, South Carolina

Throughout the Word of God, we are shown examples of many people giving glory to God. The heavenly host, which appears to the shepherds at the time of Jesus' birth and praises God, says "Glory to God in the highest." (**Luke 2:14**) They gave Him the glory

for the most significant birth this world has ever known: the birth of Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, God with us.

It is often hard to think that we could even give Him glory that could compare to the way God was glorified in the Bible. Yet, even so, we are commanded to give glory to God in anything we do.

I Corinthians 10:31 says,

"Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (NASB)

Even when we eat or drink? Yes! Each breath we take should glorify God. There is one problem though. We often get in the way of giving Him the glory. Our eyes tend to get in the way. We often want attention and praise for the things we do. I personally grew up singing and acting. I loved the attention brought by lead roles or solos. Yet, in taking the glory for myself, I was not satisfied. I was serving myself with the very gifts God gave me to worship Him.

At some point along the way, I realized these gifts belonged to God. I am fairly certain my desire to give God the glory was absent at times, but I have become more aware of the honor and glory He deserves. Like the Bible says,

"Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

One step I took in my writing life may help you live this out. I was reminded of a great musician and composer, known simply as, J.S. Bach. Bach created many sacred

and secular works in his lifetime. His music has been a part of my own life through bands and choirs. I don't ever recall, however, the modern day printings of his compositions ever having the letters, "S-D-G", written on the pages.

"SDG" was used by Bach on all of his works. He placed it on all of his music manuscripts, whether sacred or secular. It doesn't surprise many that he wrote these letters on his sacred works. The shock was that they appeared on his secular works too. "SDG" was a shorthand way he wrote a Latin phrase. It represented the words, "soli Deo gloria". The modern English translates this as, "To God alone be the glory". It was a practice that even some of Bach's peers copied. But the question remains, why did he use this marking on secular works that had no religious context at all?

Perhaps Bach shared my belief that music and words are the two most powerful man-made forces on the earth. They both have the ability to engage strong emotions, inspire, and heal. They also have the ability to destroy through their messages and uses. Bach's formal opinion was this; whether his musical compositions were sacred or secular, all his works were to bring honor and glory to God.

For this reason alone, I began writing out the whole phrase, "soli Deo gloria", at the end of all my writings. It was, and is, my never-ending reminder, that regardless of my poems being

faith-based or not, they all are to bring glory to God.

What if we could take that idea further? What if we applied the idea to more than music or writing? What if we took that phrase and lived it, say in "whatever you do"? Maybe we would actually be able to give our whole life to the glory of God. While I want to share my poetry with others, it is so that God can receive the glory, in the hopes that just one life is touched. I think that should be the aim of our whole life.

Of course this is not easy. I have struggled with this after my divorce was finalized last month. I didn't know how to give God the glory in a time of turmoil, anger, and loss. After much prayer, I found that God saved me from many things and set me on a path of healing. He brought me out of an emotionally abusive relationship that led me on a course of self-destruction. To give God the glory through all this, I must share with others what God has done, even in the midst of something He hates, such as divorce. God can be glorified, if we intentionally choose to respond to Him in praise.

I do not have any tattoos. But if I did, I would probably have "soli Deo gloria" written on my arm, or perhaps the letters, "SDG" on my wrist. It would be much like my poetry, declaring that they are for God's glory, not mine. As I place those words on my skin, I would be declaring that my life, my body, my thoughts, my works, my

behavior, and even my relationships would be to the glory of God. Whatever I do, it will all be to His glory!

That is how I intend to live out my life. A life that is marked: "SDG". I challenge any person who may read the words written here, to take them to heart. Place the words on your life. Ask yourself if what you are doing gives God alone the glory. Obey the command laid before us in His Word. Tattoo your heart with these words: "Soli Deo Gloria".
To God alone be the glory.



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: Eddie J.
Deuel Vocational Inst.
Tracy, California**

Dear Sister Sharon,

I pray these few lines find you in the best of our Father God's loving care and doing well. I came across a friend, Johnny, who had gotten a letter from you that per-

tained to the gospel of Christ. I was hoping and praying I can receive those things too, for I am a Christian now and want to learn all I can in Jesus Name. I do thank you for your time and help. God bless you sister.

Love in Christ, Eddie

**From: Keith S.
former inmate
Las Vegas, Nevada**

Christian Ambassadors,
I commend you and your staff on your faithful commitment to Christ Jesus. I thank God that I had the opportunity to receive "My Brother's Keeper". I encourage you and your staff to stay peaceful and full of the Lord's joy, because our reward in Heaven is great.

The thing that binds us together is our love for each other in Christ Jesus. The Bible tells us clearly in **Ephesians 2:19**, "We are members of God's Household". I love you all at Christian Ambassadors Inc. Thank you for the "encouragement". Please add my new address to your mailing list.

All praise, all honor, and all glory to Jesus Christ our Lord; the source of our living and our reason for going on! May God our Father and Jesus our Savior and Lord, continue to bless your family and ministry in abundance, with "No weapon formed against you shall prosper"! (**Isaiah 54:17**)

II Corinthians 4:6 (KJV) "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ".

Brother Keith, ambassador for Christ

**From: Mitchell B.
CCCCF
Olney Springs, Colorado**

Christian Ambassadors,
Too seldom said, but so often thought...you are very much appreciated!

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant..."
(Matthew 25:21 - KJV)

Thank you for your faithful service. Your brother in Christ,
Mitchell

**From: Brian M.
TDCJ, Kenedy, Texas**

Christian Ambassadors, Greetings and blessings in Christ Jesus' name. Today was the first time I had seen your newsletter "My Brother's Keeper". A fellow inmate had brought it out to the day room and gave it to me to read.

I feel it was a God send because your teaching was about peace. [*"Jesus - the Prince of Peace"*] I've been struggling really bad lately about keeping and focusing on God's peace "true peace" and as ya'll called it, "counterfeit peace." Everything I've been doing lately was measuring

everything up in worldly ways and not Godly.

I enjoyed the [Word] study/teaching, it was truly a help in overcoming my situation at hand. Thank God, for having ya'll publish this newsletter and to be able to share His precious Word with us. Please put my name on the distribution list. May God Bless ya'll and keep you safe. God Bless you, Brian

**From: Bart W.
Graceville Correctional,
Graceville, Florida**

**Sharon, Alan, friends of
Christian Ambassadors**

I am writing to thank you for your uplifting letter, and all of the love and support you have shown me since I have been incarcerated. I never want to ever lose fellowship with you or your ministry.

I have moved to a different facility...please keep me on your mailing list and note my new address. This new facility will take some getting used to, but I am slowly getting adjusted to it. We had revival services all week, so I'm off to a great start!

As long as I stay close to God, and continue to do His will, then it will not matter where I am, or where they send me. I will be reading God's Word, going to Chapel, and getting involved with as much Chaplain Programs and Bible classes I can handle...so I will stay busy and focused.

I will continue to pray for you. In God's love, Bart

**From: Henry P.
TDCJ, Connally Unit
Kenedy, Texas**

Christian Ambassadors,

I am in a Texas prison and I have been walking real strong with the Lord for over 3 years. I have been born again.

I have been in prison for over 10 years now and I have a life sentence. I came across your newsletter. One of my new Christian brothers gave it to me to read and it really touched me with the scriptures and testimonies.

I was a very bad person out in the world, but it is in the past now. I live for our Lord and Savior and His love each and every day.

I would love to receive your newsletter. May God Bless you always and forever. Amen.
Henry

**From: Jakob H.
Salinas Valley Prison
Soledad, California**

Mr. and Mrs. Griffee, Hi! I would like to thank you for the newsletter and for the submission guidelines.

Well, before the age of 17 (before I pled guilty to be specific) I never believed in God, or thought if there was one; what did I do to Him to mess my life up so much? Among indulging in consciousnessless debauchery, that I was self-effacing by blaming a god, I was severely unhappy. I struggled

with depression, frequently contemplated suicide.

Some said, "Ask God for help, He'll help." So I did, and surprisingly, one prayer is all it took for me to realize life is not bad *with* Jesus! The prayer I asked that day was for Him to help me get through the rest of my life, whatever may become of it or may happen to it. I'm 19 years old now and I am happy.

Because of God, I went from callous to feeling another's pain as if my own, and sympathy to that I never knew was possible.

Sometimes it makes me wonder how Jesus could possibly feel after seeing, experiencing all the sin His people do and did against Him and still love us.

Matthew 5:3-4 (NIV) - gives me relief and reassurance when I feel I can't take any more of all the evil that surrounds me and my loved ones at home, and everybody to begin with.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted"

God Bless us all. And thank you again. Sincerely, Respectfully,
Jakob



A New Beginning

By: Dewayne Choice,
TDCJ, Hughes Unit, Gatesville, Texas

Out with the old, in with the new
More of better days, my sad days are few.
Day by day I am growing stronger
The weak me no longer exists.

Step by step I must take
Bad luck in my life I will overcome.
The right choices in life I choose to make
Putting all trust and faith in the Lord
Is all it takes.

I know now that I can't do it alone
But with the Lord on my side,
I have the strength and courage to carry on.

There's nothing that Satan can put in my way
On this straight and narrow path I shall stay,
As long as the Lord is guiding my feet,
I have a new beginning.

And forever the Lord will be my portion
I can see another bright and sunshiny day
A new beginning; things that I done wrong,
I will make right, I know that I can,
With Jesus leading the way.

I once was blind, but now I see
He has given me blessed hope
With a glorious future.

He has visited with me
And He has spoken to my heart
I have a better understanding
I am no longer a loser.

And if I died before I wake
Room in heaven for me, He has prepared
He has made me stronger, wiser
No longer do I want to give up.

I want to run on, and see what the end can be
I want to fight the good fight of faith
Finish the race that has been set before me.

Leaving the pain of my life, in the dust behind
And it feels so good, I am finally winning.
I have a fresh and promising start
In Christ Jesus; A new beginning!

Truth of God

By: Jakob Helleis
Salinas Valley Prison, Soledad, California

For all the wonders of mankind,

*Truth about God,
constantly meets the eye.*

*In Words to explain, obscure,
I shall try:*

Same as God in our mind,

Both misery and glee He finds,

*Yet deep within His heart, forgiveness
reminds,*

Patience, altruism, He binds.

Sows a love so warm and kind.

*His wrath, to cleanse filth from
sinners past,*

*However dilapidated life is,
His reassurance in every task,*

*We all know love, reason,
discard that veneer mask.*

*Obscure the anachronistic reasonless
hate, at last!*

*Actions abased to the mind,
stay sharp as a tack.*

Understand all, elude impasse.

Perfection is in the Word,

Beauty meets the eye.

*Woe to the adamant agnostic,
don't lie,*

*Don't self-decept what converges
the eye!*

“You Asked” - Questions and Answers

“What can I do to control my tongue? I’m trying very hard not to be impulsive...in opening my mouth and getting into trouble. I’ve caught myself not listening...opening my mouth.”

The best way to control what comes out of your mouth is to work diligently on what goes into your heart. Jesus said:

Luke 6:45 (NIV) - The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.

Store up the good things of God in your heart. Don’t store up the evil things (of prison life) in your heart. If your heart is full of anger, words of anger is what will come out of your mouth. If your heart is full of the peace of God, words of peace will come out of your mouth.

Proverbs 12:18 (NIV) - Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Psalm 37:30-31 (NIV) - The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks what is just. The law of his God is in his heart; his feet do not slip.

As long as you think before you speak, the Holy Spirit will remind you what the righteous thing to say is.

Proverbs 4:20-24 (NIV) - My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body. Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. [Underlined emphasis mine]

Guard your heart by allowing the Spirit of God to live inside you. When people around you try your patience, just let their words roll off. Listen closely to the words of God and you will be able to hold your peace.

God Bless each one of you! In Christ, Sharon K. Griffiee

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, 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>