



Christian Ambassadors, Inc.

My Brother's Keeper

Volume 12, Number 2, April-June, 2007

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 by Sharon K. Griffiee, Co-founder of CA, and Director of Spiritual Growth Ministries.

Take Up Your Cross

By Sharon K. Griffiee

As Jesus and his disciples were traveling to the villages around Caesarea Philippi, Jesus brought up a subject they would just as soon not discuss. Jesus, the Master, whom they loved dearly, began to predict His own death on the cross.

Mark 8:31-33 (NIV) - *He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan. You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”*

As difficult as it was for the disciples to hear, Jesus' words had been plainly spoken. His role as Messiah involved suffering, rejection, and death. But Peter refused to accept it, so he pulled Jesus aside and rebuked Him. He couldn't accept what Jesus was saying. A suffering Messiah? Unthinkable! All their lives Peter and the other disciples had thought of the Messiah as a symbol of strength, not weakness. They thought of the Messiah in terms of irresistible conquest, not as a lamb brought to the slaughter.

Not to be put off, Jesus disregarded Peter's comments. Turning around and looking at his disciples, Jesus rebuked Peter saying, “Get behind me, Satan!” Recognizing the voice of his ancient enemy, the one behind Peter's words, Jesus spoke directly to the source - Satan. At that moment Jesus was remembering the temptations Satan brought Him in the

wilderness at the beginning of His ministry (**Matthew 4:1; Mark 1:13**). Except this time, Jesus was being assaulted by the tempter for His plan to go to Jerusalem to face the cross.

As strange and terrible as it is, the tempter sometimes speaks to us in the voice of a well-meaning friend. We know in our heart that we have heard from God and that He has clearly set us on the right course. We understand the risks. To follow this course will unavoidably require some effort, sacrifice, and even persecution. Nevertheless, a friend may pull us off to the side to try and stop us by saying,

“Look at what you could lose. You have family and friends who care about you, who love you. You need to think about what this would do to them. You can't do this!”

Even though that friend may think they have our best interests at heart, what they are really doing is using the tempter's voice [reasoning] to try and convince us to avoid trouble at all costs, to play it safe. That is what happened to Jesus that day. Peter wanted Jesus to drop his vision of the cross, to save His earthly life. That is why Jesus rebuked Peter so sternly.

Jesus did not want to die. He knew he had powers He could use for conquest as a mighty warrior King. But, Jesus had heard clearly from His Father. He honored whatever His Father said, no matter what it cost. He was determined to make the

steady march to Calvary. Jesus was not about to let one man, Peter, who was minding the things of the flesh, keep Him from accomplishing His mission. He knew He could fulfill His mission as God's anointed, only by death on the cross for our sins (**See: Isaiah 53**). Neither man's voice nor Satan's voice, would silence the authoritative voice of God in His life. The entire focus of Jesus was exactly where it should be, on God's will for Him.

After Jesus rebuked Peter, He issued what amounts to a call to discipleship, along with a warning of its cost.

Mark 8:34-37 (NIV) - *Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life, will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel, will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

In these verses of scripture Jesus lays down the conditions of service for those who would follow Him. There are no false pretenses. Jesus never tried to bribe people to follow Him with the offer of an easy way, though some have foolishly imagined otherwise. Some, who have been newly introduced to Christ as their Savior, have been known to say,

"Now that I have found Jesus, I can kick back and just receive all the gifts God has for me."

Not so! Discipleship is not, I'm saved, I've got my sins forgiven; now I can let Jesus shower me with gifts. This is a deception brought from Satan, to keep us in bondage to this physical realm.

No - there is no such thing as *kicking back* for a disciple of Jesus Christ. Jesus was very specific.

Luke 9:23 (KJV) - *"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."*

To follow Jesus, a man must lose his own *cause* by taking up the *cause* of Christ daily (**Luke 9:23**). Following Jesus is a daily thing, not just when it is convenient or when we feel like it. If we fail to follow Him in daily obedience, by our actions we reveal that Christ is not Lord of our life.

And if Christ is not Lord of our life, who is? This is a key question, because who or what we obey is our master. Paul challenges our thinking,

Romans 6:16 (Amplified Bible) - *Do you not know that if you continually surrender yourselves to anyone to do his will, you are the slaves of him whom you obey, whether that be to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience which leads to righteousness (right doing and right standing with God)?*

Whose *cause* are we surrendering ourselves to; the *cause* of sin, or the *cause* of righteousness? Who are we obeying on a daily basis? Based on the condition of our present life, can we truly say that Jesus is our Master?

As Jesus continued laying down the conditions of service required to be a disciple of His, He asks the question,

Mark 8:36 (KJV) - *"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"*

It is possible in one sense, for a man to make a huge success of life; but in another sense be living a life that is not profiting his soul. The real question Jesus is asking is this; where do you put your values in life? Is it on the temporal or the eternal? Jesus is

so concerned about our soul; he gives us an urgent warning. In so many words, He pleads with us night and day; do not sacrifice eternal life by living only in the moment!

Mark 8:37 (NIV) - *"Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

The worth of souls (that which survives human death) is precious to Jesus. So precious, that once a soul has been forfeited (surrendered to sin and disobedience); Jesus says even the whole world cannot buy back eternal life.

The bottom line, the gates of hell are open wide, inviting us to step in. But Jesus tells us; we don't have to go there! He has provided a way of escape for those who will take up their cross daily and follow Him. Brothers and sisters, what a privilege it is to bear the cross of Christ; to take up His *cause* daily. What a blessing awaits those who follow Jesus through the narrow gate that leads to eternal life. What a bold statement to make to enemies of the cross in this day and age!

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: Gary Waskul,
Avenal State Prison
Avenal, California**

Dear Sister Sharon, I hope you and yours are very well and blessed at this time. I'm writing to thank you for using my testimony [in the Jan.-Mar. issue of “My Brother's Keeper”].

I sure hope that some will find their faith, or will remember a personal victory that the enemy has done his best to make them forget. I've been there also, [I experienced] a wondrous divine situation that was soon forgotten. I guess it's real important that he [the enemy] destroys testimonies, so his ways of deceit can still exist.

However, we shall be diligent in our efforts to thwart his deceits by our testimonies, actions, newsletters, influences, prayers, lives, etc.

My newsflash – “God is Real”, “God is an awesome God”, “God is good”, and finally “God is really awesome and good”!

I've recently discovered that we get so bogged down with our own doctrinal beliefs that we some-

times must keep it simple. I really mean, just the very bare basics. Because, if the new ones in Christ believe that they must be scholars of the Bible just to pray, or that they aren't experienced enough for Jesus - we are losing the fight. And this fight is between the saved and the lost. And every poor soul who doesn't know or believe what's going on, never had or has a chance.

Thank you for what you do! It's about making a big difference in Christ. You do - you do it very well. Always in His Hands, Gary.

**From: Gerald Agnew,
Gowanda Correctional,
Gowanda, NY**

Dear Sister Sharon, I greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. My hope and prayer is that when this letter reaches you that it will find you in victory.

I got your address from Brother Hosea Davis. Glory be to God, he is a wonderful brother and a blessing to me. God always has a way of bringing people together that love the Lord, to share His Word. I had asked [Brother Hosea] if it was okay for me to write to you and he said sure. But, I had to ask God, to let me know if it was okay to write and God always lets us know through his Holy Spirit what we should and should not do. All we have to do is take the time to pray and listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I'd like to say that I enjoyed the story you told about Brother Don

Vickery in your [December, 2006 Spiritual Growth Lesson, “*The Wondrous Things God Has Done*”]. It is good to hear that you, as an ambassador of Christ, are reaching out to us that are in places like this one. Glory be to our Father! Keep up the good work.

I can honestly tell you that I love God. One thing about being in this place, is that it has given me the opportunity to give myself to God; to read His Word, study it, and most important, to put it into practice. So, I can see the new one who is now doing the will of God.

Well, sister, this is all for now. May our Lord's light and blessings continue to shine upon your life. Your Brother in Christ, Gerald Agnew.

**From: Ira Butt,
Smithfield State Correctional,
Huntingdon, Pennsylvania**

Dear Family in Christ, I want to take a few minutes to tell you that God is alive and well in PA. Approximately 4 years ago, as a matter of desperation, I asked Jesus into my life. After 9 months and 7 suicide attempts in prison, I had no desire and, I thought, no future. Once I called on Jesus, He gave me peace and hope for the future.

At the wish of my family, I have had no communication with them since 7/12/02, the day of my arrest. Then, just two days after Christmas, I received a letter from

my ex-wife. My oldest son Scott, 28, was in the hospital with a "terminal" liver problem stemming from a bicycle accident 16 years ago.

I had a good cry, then I realized all the contacts I had made in God's family. I began writing every support group I had encountered asking them to pray with me for Scott. Because I failed my family by not making God the center of our home, we prayed even harder for his soul.

I wrote to Scott and included a tract, telling of an inmate who turned to Christ and changed his life. Then, this week, I received a letter from Scott! He told me he had emergency exploratory surgery on February 2nd. The surgeon found a small benign tumor, tucked behind scar tissue from his accident. The tumor was removed. His prognosis was changed from terminal to excellent. In three weeks, his liver function increased from 45% before surgery to 90% last week.

Along with this came another note from my ex-wife. Scott received my letter the day after his surgery. After he found out he would be okay. Barb said as he read the letter and tract, Scott began to cry and asked his mother to find the hospital chaplain. Right there in his hospital bed, Scott asked Jesus into his heart. Almighty God gave me my son back and gave us a new brother [in Christ].

Last Tuesday I was granted parole, at least 2 years before anyone expected. I wanted to take this time to tell you of the

wonders God is working in my life. He is truly a powerful, loving, and forgiving God. In His love, Ira Butt.



**From: Louis McCray,
Mid-State Correctional,
Marcy, New York**

Dear Sharon, I must say I loved the Spiritual Growth Lesson 36, "Fear The One Who Hates Evil". I have already read it and studied the verses you included. And I'm in agreement with the message. I also was proud of how God guided you in handling the situation with the young man who

wanted money to pay his habit. You handled it in love perfectly. Amen. God Bless you. Christ rises up wise and intelligent people, who care in love. Peace.

I have nothing but high regards and respect for what you all do at Christian Ambassadors, Inc. ministry. Until next time, you and all under your care are in my prayers. Love in Christ, Louis.

**From: Ernesto Flores,
Calipatria State Prison
Calipatria, California**

**Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Ambassadors of Christ,** the reason for writing this letter is to give a testimony on Carla Angelica Elorza's condition. The latest news I received from her uncle is that she is improving!

In her last brain study there was no tumor activity found. Although she has not stopped using the artificial respirator, compared to the past news, that she could breathe 15 minutes without the help of the respirator, the latest news is that she can now breathe about two hours on her own. She is slowly getting better and her family is very happy and blessed with this last results on Carla's blessings. Please keep Carla in your prayers.

And thank you also for the latest Lesson 36, "Fear The One Who Hates Evil". I love it and share it with my Christian brothers. God Bless, Ernesto Flores, an ambassador for Christ, too! :)

From: Miguel Zamora,
Arkansas Valley Correctional,
Crowley, Colorado

Dear Sharon, Just a few lines to let you know that I received your most welcome letters. Sharon, since I started to write to you and started receiving your letters and "My Brother's Keeper", I have become a better person. Now I can listen to people and have started to believe in people again, thanks to you.

Sharon, I know that God sent you to help people like me and I know that God will share with you all of the coming New Year, and will keep you in peace. God will give you all you ask for today.

John 6:51a (KJV) - I am the living bread, which came down from heaven: if any man eats of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

Remember Sharon, your Letters/Lessons and "My Brother's Keeper" really lift my spirits. I enjoyed all of Lesson 36, "Fear The One Who Hates Evil".

Psalms 27:1-4 (KJV) - The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this

will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

Take care of yourself and God bless you and Mr. Griffiee. With much respect and love, Miguel.

From: Paulie Johnson,
Ohio State Correctional,
Caldwell, Ohio

Hello Brothers and Sisters, I've read Lesson 36, "Fear The One Who Hates Evil", and I really did enjoy it.

I am waiting to go to another higher security prison, which isn't so bad. I have been in high security before. While in segregation the only things you can have that are personal are T-shirts, socks, underwear and a Bible.

I have been reading a lot of my Bible and learning so much I even laugh, because it seems like it's talking to me or about me. Well I am proud to say that I have asked Jesus into my heart and even though I don't always feel like I thought I would, I do know that all things take time and time is all I have.

I want to say thank you for sending your letters in the past and when I get to where I'm going, I would still like to get them. I hope and pray to make it day by day until the day comes that I meet the Father.

II Timothy 2:22-26 (KJV) are six of those verses that are so, so true when it comes to me and my walk,

"Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

In Jesus' love, Paulie

From: Robert Staggs,
CCA,
Mineral Wells, Texas

Dear Sharon, Hello. Just a short note to let you know I moved to a new facility so you can correct the address for "My Brother's Keeper" newsletters.

I really enjoyed the section by Pastor Sheilah Rollins in your last newsletter [Jan-Mar 2007 issue].

I hope you had a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Take care and God Bless. Sincerely Robert.



Are You Hearing From God

By David Kinlock

God calls those who are committed to excellence to a place of salvation and aloneness.

The Holy Ghost is saying: "Detach yourself from things that blind you from seeing my mysteries and deafens you from hearing my language".

Why aren't more believers hearing from God? Many are not walking in obedience and do not have the fullness of the Holy Ghost. Jesus only reveals His secrets to those who are trustworthy and have intimate fellowship with Him.

Many are not hearing His voice because tradition has left them content with only the first glimpse of His Glory. The Glory of Christ far exceeds any glory ever known by man.

Many are not hearing His voice because they are living ungodly lifestyles and entertaining in all sorts of ungodly things that do not glorify God. And they cannot hear His voice because their ears are cluttered with carnal things.

The Bible says,

Romans 8:5-6 (KJV) - For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to

be spiritually minded is life and peace.

The Bible says,

II Corinthians 6:17-18 (KJV) - Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

The Bible says,

Hebrews 3:15 (KJV) - To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

Are you hearing from God?

When you pray, ask God to anoint your ears, so that you may hear His voice. Ask Him to anoint your nose that you might have judgment and sensitivity to what is right before the Lord. In the midst of criticism, He tells you who you are in Christ, and you cannot hear those who do not speak for Him.

Church, God is definitely speaking to His people. The question is: Can you hear Him?

The Bible says,

Revelation 3:6 (KJV) - He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

The Holy Ghost is speaking right now. He is speaking words of truth and guidance. He speaks what He hears from Heaven. Wherever the Holy Ghost speaks, He testifies that He has been in the Board Room of hearing.

Hearing from Him causes us to lift our head. Just when Satan thought he had us, to his amazement we began to shout!

He doesn't know it, but we heard a word!

You've been going through hell and it doesn't feel right. But the Holy Ghost told you that if God be for you, who can be against you. Folk may be talking bad about you, but the Holy Ghost told you that no weapon formed against you shall prosper. (**Isaiah 54:17**)

You may be going through a famine in your life and ministry, but you heard a word that said:

Hebrews 13:5b - "Trust me, I will never leave you nor forsake you."

You may be facing an insurmountable trial, but you heard a word that said:

Exodus 14:13 (KJV) - "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see them again no more."

What are the Egyptians? The Egyptians are things that have been holding you in bondage.

But I heard a word and God told me that everything is going to be alright!

David Kinlock is an inmate at Gowanda Correctional Facility, Gowanda, New York



Broken, Redeemed, and Restored

by Larry A. Thompson

I have long understood that the cause of my discomfort, of my dis-ease, has been because of my disobedience to the fulfillment of God's will in, and for my life.

Such an understanding has brought me to the conclusion that I have indeed been broken, so that by His Grace, and His Mercy, I could be redeemed, and restored.

The "Psalmist" David wrote,

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Psalm 51:17)

He wrote that acknowledgement in his prayer and confession because he, just as I, at this very moment, was seeking not only the hand of God, but also seeking His face, and His heart. He realized, just as I, that because of *self-will* we have been broken, and we long to be redeemed, and restored.

Our prayer shall forever be,

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit." (Psalm 51:10-12)

This very day, before the Lord, my God, I confess my sin, which has caused Him so much pain. I have

known to do good, yet, I refused to do that which was right.

James 4:17 (KJV) - Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

Father, forgive me. My sin has caused me to be broken; my brokenness compels me to be restored; and my need for restoration leads me to the cross of Christ, where, by the shedding of

His precious, precious blood, I have been redeemed. By your grace I have been restored, and by your mercy, Lord, my brokenness is no more. In the name of Jesus, Thank You, Father. Amen.

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Jesus!

by Gary H. Fugate

***Because He loved us He came,
Salvation is found in His Name!***

***He was beaten and bruised,
For our Salvation, He was abused!
His flesh ripped from His back,
In His love, there was no lack!***

***Blood had to be shed,
For our Salvation, He bled!
By Jesus' blood, our sins are forgiven,
To save God's children, He was driven!***

***God loved us so much, He gave His only Son,
That by His love, our souls may be won!
By His stripes we were healed,
With His love, we are filled!***



*Gary Fugate is an inmate at,
Limon Correctional Facility,
Limon, Colorado*

This poem, "Jesus" was inspired by Olga Ramirez

The King, And His Kingdom

By Louis McCray

For many years the people looked with longing for an earthly king to come. Hoping on hope for someone to give them the victory over their enemies, freedom from oppression, and power and glory in this world.

But, the King and His Kingdom are not of this world. And the stone you have destroyed, did not come to be king of this sinful world. He came to save sinners and free them from the bondage of this world, created from the first Adam.

Jesus Christ knew from the beginning of the world that His Kingdom would be a spiritual kingdom with no limits of time, or place or race; because all are one in the Body of Christ Jesus (His seeds).

The King and His Kingdom would rule in the hearts of those who love and serve Him through faithful hearts, minds, body, and soul.

The King and His Kingdom would bring forgiveness for our sins, a light to shine peace in our hearts, and everyone would put their trust in His Word.

The King and His Kingdom would bring blessings that no one else could give or ever will. He would remove the old behavior and wash His people with the

blood of the Word, which became flesh.

Yet, the people still did not understand who was in the world. That the Master, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, gave His life for our sins; so that we may have life and life eternal.

Faith, grace, love, and glory, He gives as a gift to those who believe in The King and His Kingdom.

Louis McCray is an inmate at Mid-State Correctional, Marcy, New York

Victory

By Earlily Aganon

***The sky darkened
His followers wept
Unbelievers trembled
Jesus hangs still on the cross.***

***Laid in a tomb
Guards kept watch
Not one can stop Him
Rising from the dead.***

***"It is finished".
Sin defeated, evil conquered
Tears turned into dancing
Jesus Christ rose from the dead.***

***His might and power
Won the victory for all
That men may live and hope
There is life in resurrection.***

***My sin crucified Him, yet
He gave me life forevermore.***

Earlily Aganon is an inmate at Women's Community Correction Center, Kailua, Hawaii

"...And Still He Calls Your Name"

By Merissa Lee Kelley

*The hourglass is growing empty...and still He calls your name
You've turned away so many times...yet His love remains the same
Nothing that this world can offer will ever take the place
Of God's eternal love for you and His redemptive grace*

*The hourglass is running out...and still He longs to see
A humble heart that hears His call and yearns to be made free
He'll run to you when you're too weak to make it on your own
The kind of strength He'll give to you...comes from Him alone*

*The turning of the hourglass is very nearly done
And so many souls are still without the gift of Christ the Son
Over and over He sends His message of hope for life anew
...And still He calls your name each day...because His heart is true*

*He'll call your name till the sands of time no longer run their course
For the love of God is mightier than any earthly, natural force
He knew your name before your birth and put a plan in motion
To lead you down the road of life with Fatherly devotion*

*Perhaps you feel you've gone too far...so you just don't even try
Thinking it's too late for you...well, that's nothing but a lie
The simple words..."For God so loved..." explains the Father's will
And why He's called so many times and why He's calling still*

*For the sand within the hourglass is quickly getting low
And the urgency is very real...for it's almost time to go
He truly knows your name by heart and His love for you is real
Please answer Him this very day...before the hourglass grows still*

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*"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with
power and glory." **Luke 21:27***