



Christian Ambassadors, Inc.

# My Brother's Keeper

Volume 16, Number 3, July-September, 2011

## 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 Romie Miller, Central Utah Correctional, Gunnison, Utah.

### **Personal Freedom**

By Romie Miller

I am in the Utah State Prison and I have a correspondence ministry with many people on the outside. One person wrote, “In some ways you are freer than I am.” That

might be true. The physical restrictions and rules [of prison] have little to do with true freedom.

Freedom is personal and those things that keep us from bring free are also personal; it is the things we do, in spite of our best interest that keep us in bondage. We will never do all we can do, if we are not freed from our personal prisons.

Personal bondage comes from our sinful nature that is inherited from the first man, Adam’s willful disobedience to God. All mankind has inherited Adam’s fallen nature (Genesis 3:1-7, 14-19; Romans 8:20-22). God gave us a free will, which allows us to make contradictory choices. Free will is necessary for understanding and applying moral responsibility. That is why God empowered us to make decisions contrary to His will, even though His commandments are for our benefit. Sin, therefore, is the misapplication of free will. Satan tries to fool us into believing it is our choice to do the things we know are self-destructive. Let’s be honest here, these are not choices. They are compulsions coming from a force that compels us to do wrong. That

force is our sinful nature. We are not free as long as we are controlled by our human drives.

However, Jesus tells us,

*“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*  
**(John 8:31-32)**

God has provided a free release from our sin-caused problems that keep us in bondage to ourselves, and separated from God. We can be restored into fellowship with God only by believing that Jesus paid the penalty for our sin when He died in our place on the cross **(John 3:16)**. It is being born again as a new person in Christ, with a new God-given nature that sets us free **(John 3:3-8)**.

Freedom is grounded on the security that comes from being in God’s will **(Matthew 6:25-34)**. Security does not come from other persons, ourselves, or from our possessions. We do not possess anything except in our minds; in a practical sense our possessions own us **(Luke 12:15-21)**.

We cannot come to God on our terms. To be free from Satan’s grasp we must be willing to accept Christ and *voluntarily*

follow His commandments. The human conflict is our wanting to be a Christian while continuing with the same old sins. Somehow we feel we are giving up power and we will lose something if we accept Christ. We have to let go of the "I have to win" mind set. A good example is the rich young ruler (**Mark 10:17-22**) who asked Jesus what He needed to do to be saved. Jesus answered,

*"Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me."* (**Mark 10:21b**)

Jesus' point was that we must not have anything in our lives that is more important to us than God. We cannot serve both God and money, or property, or anything else, "For where your treasure is there will your heart be also" (**Luke 12:34; 16:13**). Put Jesus first, and He will add to you whatever you need (**Matthew 6:33**).

The hardest part of being a Christian is being separate from worldly temptations. Even Paul who wrote over half of the New Testament, had trouble with separation: "The good that I would I do not: But the evil which I would not, that I do." (**See: Romans 7:19-24**) Jesus delivered Paul from sin, He delivered me, and He can deliver you: "For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin" (**I Peter 4:1b**). In the original Greek, "ceased" is the passive form meaning Christians have been acted upon by Christ, but have done nothing themselves. Those who take up the cross and

follow Jesus cease *from* sin, not cease making mistakes. All people sin. But as Christians our sins are not charged to our account. Our past, present, and future sin was blotted out from our record before the world began, just as if we never sinned. (**II Corinthians 5:16-19**)

Being free of our sin does not mean we may go on in our old ways. People who sin deliberately have never been Christians (**Luke 13:24-27**). The maxim, "To be rather than seem to be" applies here. We build false images of ourselves not only to deceive others, but also to deceive ourselves. We are not what we think we are, but we are what we think. And what we think eventually comes out in our actions; it is what we do in private that determines who we are.

Take stock of yourself. Look critically at your private thoughts and how you act when alone. That is who you really are. If you can be honest with yourself you will realize your true self is not the same as how you see yourself to be, who you want to become, and how you act around others. If you are not happy with what you are, deep down you know that is because you are not happy with who you are.

Love is the main thing we should strive to give and to get. We are not free to love others if we do not first love ourselves. Only in Christ can we find the sense of self worth that empowers us to; first love God, then yourself as an imperfect child of God striving to

grow in grace and truth, and to love others as you love yourself. (**See: Matthew 19:19, 22:36-40; John 13:13-14; compare with Romans 8:38-39**)

Forgiveness precedes love. We cannot love that which we hate, including ourselves (**II Corinthians 2:10-11**). Forgiving is not the human act of withholding punishment. Forgive means to give, gratify, to do a kindness, and *deliver*. It is the same sense in which God gave us freedom from the penalty and guilt of our sin by giving His only begotten Son to die on the cross, so He could welcome us back into fellowship with Him (**Romans 5:10-11**). We need to find Biblical solutions for resolving conflicts within ourselves and with others.

God's ways are at odds with how we have learned to succeed in this world. Learning to follow God's will is difficult until it becomes habit. The prophet Joel wrote how we need to turn to the Lord with prayer and fasting, and "*Rend your heart, and not your garments*" (**Joel 2:12-13**). In Joel's time, tearing one's clothes, beyond being an expensive custom, was a sign of extreme anger or frustration. Joel was saying that it is difficult for us to exchange our worldly core values, motivations, and frame or reference for those of God. As Christians our position in and perspective on life, and our relationship to the world changes. To walk with God we must agree with God (**Amos 3:3**). That is why Paul strove to know Jesus, not just to know about Him

**(Philippians 3:7-10).** We should strive to know Jesus well enough that He becomes our best friend who brings out the best in us.

Ultimately, freedom is allowing Jesus to release us from our personal idols, hate, greed, and other Satan-imposed psycho-baggage that keep us from living the way we should live. Once we allow Jesus to come into our lives we are numbered among the "children of the free".

*So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free (Galatians 4:31-KJV).*

Prisoners can be freer than many people on the outside. Paul wrote three New Testament Books while in a Roman prison. Corrie Ten Boom kept her faith while suffering the abuses of a Nazi concentration camp. She was freed when her name was accidentally put on a release order. Later, her story was made into the movie "The Hiding Place", which has been an inspiration to thousands of people. You are reading my words now. I am not comparing myself to Paul or Ms. Ten Boom. It is only that I have chosen to ask Christ into my life, and He has enabled me to reach out to you from prison.

If you permit Christ to free you, then you will live with Him by the power of God toward you.  
**(II Corinthians 12:9, 13:4).**

*For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you. (II Corinthians 13:4 - KJV)*

God's power brought the Universe into existence and maintains it today **(Genesis 1:1-3; John 1:1-3; Hebrews 1:1-3).**

*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right*

*hand of the Majesty on high. (Hebrews 1:1-3 - KJV)*

Clearly God can deal with our problems! "If God is for us, who can be against us?"  
**(Romans 8:31b)**

If you have not been reborn as a child of the free, I urge you to say a personal, heartfelt prayer in your own words right now, asking Jesus to come into your life and set you free from Satan's bondage.

Please make the choice to be free now.



### ***My Everything***

By: James Brewer  
Bayou Dorcheat Correctional, Minden, Louisiana

You are my friend,  
Who stays with me through thick and thin.

You are my life,  
That will lead me away from strife.

You are my peace,  
That I know will never cease.

You are my Brother,  
That is like no other.

You are my Way, my Truth, and my Light,  
Who will always make things right.

You are my Strength, my Joy, my Love,  
And much more than all the above.

You are my King,  
For whom my heart will sing.

You are my Everything!

## 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: Aaron S.  
TDCJ, Abilene, Texas**

**Christian Ambassadors,** Your newsletter, Oct-Dec, 2010 issue, "My Brother's Keeper", fell into my hands over the weekend. I read just a line or two and knew immediately that I was not just going to lay it down, like I have so many other publications.

Amazingly enough, I feel that something we all love to experience, is our confirmations of certain things that happen to us in our spiritual walk. Well the day I read your Newsletter, there were three different verses in it that were a part of my morning devotionals. **Philippians 2:14-16; II Corinthians 5:20-21; and Acts 5:14-16.**

Thank you!

*"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days."* **Ecclesiastes 11:1**

Please add me to your mailing list! Aaron

**From: Aaron M.  
High Desert State Prison  
Indian Springs, Nevada**

**Dear Sharon Griffiee,** Thank you so much for your letters and mood lifting material. I have asked for your lesson called, "The Cure For Backsliding" because, for as long as I can remember I've been "sliding" away from God. I was raised in a Christian home...but as I got into my teenage years the influences of the world distracted me. Although I regret it and suffering the consequences, I'm trying to follow where it says in the Bible,

*"... We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope... because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."* **(Romans 5:3-5)**

And with your lesson I am hoping that by studying it, and meditating on it, it will help me get back on track and into God's loving embrace. That being said, along with your other lesson, "The Path That Leads To Life", that it will open the eyes of my heart to understand that it's not about games anymore; instead, it's about – to not get distracted and rapidly knowing when [I'm] straying off the path.

Now with the help of your awe-inspiring newsletter, which is filled with encouraging words, wisdom, and truth – not only written by yourself, but also by others who are in the same situation as I am in. I would like to ex-

press my support and love for our Brother Brad H. for his article titled, "What Makes Us A Believer"? It truly helped me understand another meaning of what it is to be a Christian – a believer *and* follower of Jesus Christ and His Father.

Thank you, again; and may you be blessed abundantly forever. Love,  
Aaron M.

**From: Jeffrey M.  
Wallensridge State Prison  
Big Stone Gap, Virginia**

**Dear Brother Alan and Sister Sharon,** My fellow ambassadors for Christ! ☺ I'm sure you see the enclosed postage stamps; please accept them as a donation that can be placed right into your ministry, straight on out-going mail to prisoners!

Your heart for us in prison moves me to tears. I'll be 40 years old this year, and I have been locked up since I was 21 - pulling triple life without parole here in Virginia. This is a hopeless situation for most fellas! I don't know how anyone can do this kind of time without **Jesus**, and the comfort only He can bring (hope for the future).

I tell people about your ministry; thank you so much for your faithfulness! I pray for your ministry in these tough economic times, that God will continue to meet your growing needs, as your outreach continues to expand.

I was just recently able to get another job here, and I will be able

to afford a few small offerings every year. I would really feel honored if I could donate this money with your ministry because, Christian Ambassadors has been such a huge blessing and encouragement for me over the years that y'all have mailed your Lessons, and "My Brother's Keeper" to me. Until next time, God Bless you! Jeffro

**From: Dewayne C.  
TDCJ, Gatesville, Texas**

**Sister Sharon K. Griffiee**, I'm still smiling at your Spiritual Growth Lesson, "The Great Exchange". I have read it, re-read it, and pondered it in my heart. It is always encouraging to hear from a fellow believer in Christ Jesus our Lord. How awesome is He?

He turned my night to day. He opened my mind and heart, and gave me hope and life. As I study "The Great Exchange", I can't help but to reflect back to February of 2010. I was blind, lost, and hopeless. I was so weak. I became broken and I got down on my knees and asked God if He would carry the spirit that had me bound, then I would walk with Him.

God took my weakness and in exchange He gave me His strength, and ever since that day I have been walking in newness of life. Talk about the Great Exchange! I'm so glad that He was there for me. Oh, thank you Jesus! Love and Peace, Dewayne.

**From: Bart W.  
Wakuiia Correctional  
Crawfordville, Florida**

**Dear Friends of Christian Ambassadors**, Thank you again for the kind letter, along with the spiritual material that you have been sending me. You just don't realize how much getting your newsletters, and spiritual material helps me, and blesses me. It seems like when I feel the lowest, and I am about to give up, here comes a letter from you, which always has something that lifts up

my spirits. So thank you very much for expressing your love and concern. I love you all in the Lord. Even though every day is a struggle in here, it's always good to know that God, along with God's people, is out there loving us.

Please do not stop sending me encouraging words and newsletters. I will be praying for you, and please pray a special prayer for Jake. He is in the hospital diagnosed with Leukemia. In God's Love, Bart

### *Our Love*

By: Johnny Villines, former inmate, Navasota, Texas

Even though these bars separate us  
I just want you to know, I'm free  
A vision about this man last night  
He said His name is Jesus, from Galilee

Telling me He died on this wooden cross  
For the sins of me and you  
Saying He would do it again  
Only if He really had to

He said, My love is deeper than the ocean  
As the earth to the heavens above  
That nothing could separate us  
From His eternal and everlasting love

I will never leave or forsake you, He said  
Telling Him, I believed Him with all my heart  
And I got down on my knees and cried  
Thanking Him that His love would never part

He gave me a hug, oh so tight  
As the vision slowly faded away  
Tell everyone I'm coming back  
Keep my commands and be sure to pray.

**From: Frank M.  
TDCJ  
Abilene, Texas**

**Dear Christian Ambassadors,**  
Thank you so very much for the encouraging letters and [spiritual growth] studies. I really enjoy receiving each and every one of the [My Brother's Keeper] newsletters. I enjoy reading them and then passing them around my cell. I have been able to break the ice with a few new guys with the newsletters.

We all enjoy reading the articles from all other prisoners. Their stories encourage me, because I know that they are going through the same things that I am.

Thank you again for the time and effort that you put into putting together each quarterly newsletter. I pray that you will always continue to do so. Thank you and God Bless, Frank M.

**From: Roger C.  
Kit Carson Correctional  
Burlington, Colorado**

**Dear Sister Sharon,** Blessed is the heart of God, Jesus. Blessings and joy be yours in His name. I trust this finds you healthy and doing great things for the Lord.

I can share several testimonies. We are having more and more men testifying of how family members are accepting Christ on the phone, as they are sharing Christ with them. Some of the testimonies are very moving. Family members who had given

up on the inmate, is now seeing real change; and the Holy Spirit is reconciling the family and bringing salvation. All this on phone calls. It is amazing stuff.

My son is working full time and is doing well. This is the Lord's mercy and I am thankful for it. My mom is well. I am concerned for her [however], as Greece is in an upheaval over their economy and politics. Please keep this in prayer.

I trust your family is well and the ministry is producing. Thank you for the [spiritual growth] studies and I always pass them on to others in our Bible studies. You are in my prayers and I trust God to bless your endeavors and family. In His care, Roger



### *What I Am*

By: Steven Clemson, CNYPC, Marcy, New York

Because I'm the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13)

I'm filled with love and mirth

Because I'm a member of Christ's body (Eph. 5:30, I Cor. 12:27)

I myself, believing it, am godly.

Because I'm a fellow citizen with the rest of God's family (Eph. 2:19)

I've grown up, become mature, and more manly

Because I'm not a child of darkness now, but light (I Thes. 5:5)

I'm brave and mighty day and night

Because I'm a partaker of Christ and I share in His life (Heb. 3:14)

All I need for protection is His Word, no gun or knife.

Because I'm an heir of God, because I am His child (Gal. 4:6,7)

I have settled down and become meek and mild

Because I am a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17)

I don't need drugs and alcohol, not even for recreation

Because I am a saint (Eph. 1:1; I Cor. 1:2; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2)

I cannot faint

Because I am righteous and holy (Eph. 4:24)

It doesn't hurt to give and be lowly

Because I am an enemy of the devil (I Pet. 5:8)

My life isn't so hectic, I'm more level.

However, I am not the great "I Am" (Exod. 3:14)

But, by the grace of God, I am what I am (I Cor. 15:10)

## Making Peace with the Past (Letting Go...Looking Forward)

We all have regrets or have done some things, we wish we could take back  
But dwelling on our past mistakes, will get us off God's track  
He doesn't sit upon His throne, with a clipboard in His hands  
Keeping an account of all the times, we've ignored His perfect plans

Condemnation comes from the enemy; it's a weapon he just loves!  
That, along with the chains of guilt, doesn't come from God above  
Your mind is where the enemy likes to imbed his darts of guilt  
He delights in chipping away at the foundation you have built

If he can keep you mired down and focused on your past  
Then he won't worry about your future, cause you're going nowhere fast  
Living with the heavy burden of the past will steal today  
Always guilty, always condemned, wishing your life away

God doesn't keep your sins in a box, sitting up on a shelf  
He forgives you long before you ever forgive yourself  
Dragging your past around is a cumbersome load to bear  
It won't let you enjoy the freedom that the Father wants to share

Another tool the enemy uses, that will choke your very soul  
Is a legalistic outlook that always wants control  
A legalistic lifestyle is full of deadly pride  
Its only concern is the outward appearance and not the heart inside

The "list of do's and don'ts" is long and when you fail to keep them all  
The pressure builds to measure up, but all you do is fall  
Then the grace of God will lift you up and its well is never dry  
God receives a contrite heart that sincerely wants to try

God will show you when you're wrong, but His correction comes in love  
He is faithful to complete His work, and He watches from above  
Trusting Him with all your heart, is finally letting go  
And keeping the past where it belongs, will allow your joy to flow

Merissa Lee Kelley  
February 7, 2002

*"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."  
**Romans 8:1-2***

### *Without Worry*

by: Terrance White, former inmate, Riverside, California

Worry is the enemy...with all its tiresome ways.

Worry steals the hours...that make up all of our days.

What will I eat and where will I sleep?

Worry is a wolf among the sheep.

Worry is a kind of faith...this, my friend is no lie.

A faith not in our Lord Jesus...but in the other guy.

Worry forces us to concentrate on and fret about...things we cannot change.

It voids our belief in God's promises...and their boundless range.

A robber of the Christian faith...it kills our peace and trust,

To heed the words of Philippians 4:6-7.

For you and I, it's a must worry no more about the things...

worldly people do.

Seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness...

And all will be added to you.

## My Brother's Keeper

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**Sharon K. Griffee**, Senior Editor

**Alan W. Griffee**, Production Manager

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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>.