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Questions Youth Are Asking Today

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questions youth are asking today

mervyn maxwell

In one way, Christianity makes us feel more sad, because it teaches us to love people more. Jesus Himself wept about Lazarus, even when He knew He was going to raise him back to life in a few minutes. John 11:35.

If your brother had only gone away to college, you would miss him. But while you missed him, you would look forward to seeing him again, and this would help. You feel sad because he's dead, but even when you cry you don't shed tears of despair, because you remember that at the resurrection you'll cry again—tears of joy.

A TITHE OF OUR TIME?

Just now as I was studying my Bible this thought occurred to me. The Lord has asked us to tithe everything He gives us and promises to pour out a special blessing in return. What would happen if we tithed our time as well? Out of the 24 hours, we could devote 2 hours and 24 minutes to Bible study, prayer, and preparation for witnessing to others. I'm going to try it. What do you think?

It is a good idea—but, do you know, it's not a very new one!

When God created the world, He asked us to give Him not a tenth of our time, but a seventh of it! He set aside the seventh day (all 24 hours of it) each week as the Sabbath—holy time to be spent in communion with Him and in communicating about Him to others. And just as He has said that the tithe is "holy" unto the Lord (Leviticus 27:30), so He has also said that the Sabbath is "holy." Exodus 20:8-11.

In your full letter you speak of bringing to God tithes and offerings

of our time, just as we do of our money. Very good. Beyond the "seventh" God requires once a week, we should also reserve some time for Him every day, as you suggest. Certainly we would be blessed if we daily devoted more time to Him than most of us do.

ROUND KETTLES, SQUARE MOTHER

My mother is such a square! My girl friend's mother sells a fabulous kind of kettle by having "parties" in people's homes. Yesterday when she found she couldn't keep an appointment, she taught my girl friend and me how to lead the party and make the sales. Her plan was to drop us off at the hostess's house in the evening and then come back for us about 10:30. It would have been a real experience, and we could have made a mint. But do you think my mother would let me? No! She said I was altogether too young (I'm 15) to do any such thing in a strange person's house! I don't think she would trust the angel Gabriel. She makes me so mad.

Judging from your letter, you knew in advance that your mother would protest, so when you told her what you planned to do, I'll bet you had your panic button already pressed—and acted so hostile that in ten seconds your mother pressed her abort button. She couldn't be sure from the way you acted what you were really up to.

There's nothing more you can do about that mission. Forget it. But what you might do for the future is to ask your mother (pleasantly, eagerly) if she could go along with you next time. And if you know in advance that she'll say

she'll be too tired or something, promise (a) to do evening chores for her that day when you come home from school and (b) to let her get a free prize this first time.

After she sees you in action she may still not trust the angels, but may trust you!

HAPPINESS IS WHERE?

When I got my first job after college I thought I had it made. But soon everything turned sour. Nobody here seems to appreciate my efforts. I'm just not happy at all. I've prayed God to help me find something where I can be happier, but nothing has opened up—and I've been here three years now. Why doesn't God help me?

I've worked in enough places in my life to know that it is easier to be happy in some than in others—and yet I have also learned by experience that happiness is something inside you.

For instance, in India two months ago I watched a young "untouchable" Hindu couple making horseshoes by the roadside. About all they owned was a dirty pup tent, a crude bellows, and a baby. Millenniums of Indian tradition made them outcasts—yet the infectious smiles on their faces showed they were unbelievably happy!

If Hindus can do it, surely you can, with God's help, by deliberately choosing to live on the happy side and bring cheer to others around you.

You say your situation has turned sour. This weekend our pastor had the perfect word for you: "If you add sugar to lemon, you get lemonade."

You supply the sugar.

("... Not Alone" from page 19) cold and heavy, on my heart. By now the weather bureau was reporting that the wind had risen to 150 miles an hour and was growing stronger. Then, one by one, the radio stations went off the air. Frantically I tuned my small radio, seeking a human voice. When I found a broadcaster from a station fifty miles inland, his news gave me no encouragement at all. All of the radio stations in Corpus Christi, the large city 20 miles from me, had been wiped off the air and the city itself was thought to be demolished.

By now it was dark, much earlier than usual. A tremendous crash sent me running to look out the front door. A large hackberry tree in my front yard had blown down, miraculously falling not upon my house

but in the other direction, across the empty street.

I hurried back into the bedroom, which I had chosen as the safest place in the house, and fell to my knees in thanksgiving. If the tree had fallen the other way it would have crashed through the roof of the room I was in. My large collie lay on the floor beside me, sometimes whimpering softly and occasionally getting up to pace the floor. My cats lay on the bed, their eyes large and nervous and their ears flattened against their heads. The whole house trembled before the onslaught of the wind.

I cowered on the bed, listening to the shrill, tinny voice that piped its tale of destruction and death over the small radio. My hand shook holding a flashlight. The

wind howled like souls in torment and shrieked like demons. The house trembled again and again as flying boards and branches and other debris struck it from time to time.

How I regretted not going to stay with friends as I had always done before when a hurricane was upon us. I don't pretend to having been particularly brave during the half century I have lived, but I was surely more frightened that dreadful Monday evening than I had ever been before in my life.

For things just don't seem so bad when you have other people to help you be brave. You can talk to them, even draw courage from them. All this I knew in the bitter realization of my foolishness in staying alone.

For I was indeed all alone and scared. More terribly alone than I had ever been before in all my life.

I remember clenching the radio tightly and leaning close, barely able to hear the voice of that other human being, who so far as I was concerned was the only other person in the world.

I had been trying to pray. I had sincerely thanked God for saving my life when the tree fell away from the house; but suddenly as I listened to the small voice coming to me out through the radio, something happened. I turned off the radio and listened to my own thoughts. And as I listened, what I heard was not my own thoughts after all, nor the beating of my frightened heart, nor yet the plaintive whining of my dog, but a soft, still voice within me which seemed to whisper, "You are not alone."

A swift shaft of shame pierced through me. It was almost physical, it was so intense. I wondered where all of my years of belief in God had been that they had fled so quickly under this strain. Surely I could not have believed enough! But quickly that feeling of shame was followed by serenity, and I realized that after all I did have a store of faith and hope to draw upon. It was there, all right, even though deeply buried and temporarily forgotten under the stress of tonight's dark terror.

My heart steadied. The storm suddenly calmed. All was quiet and peaceful around me. Now I knew

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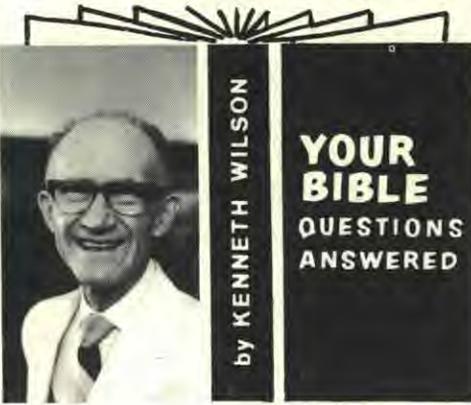


that the eye of the hurricane had arrived, but to me at that moment it seemed like a miracle, a quiet time so that I could hear God's voice. Now I know God's voice had been speaking to me all the time,

even during the greatest fury of the wind and rain, but I had not listened.

Now I listened—and heard. Strengthened and girded against the new onslaught that would

surely follow this temporary calm, I knew I would face the final hours without panic, for now I knew that the Christ who cares about people in trouble was right there beside me. I was not alone. □



IS HEAVEN A REWARD?

How can you say that heaven is a reward for those who keep God's commandments? Don't you know what the Bible says? "It is by His grace you are saved, through trusting Him; it is not your own doing. It is God's gift, not a reward for work done." Ephesians 2:8, 9, NEB. S. V. R.

Yes, we know about the glorious truth of righteousness by faith. Luther and other Reformers shattered the walls of medieval superstition with the power of this doctrine.

But—

Faith does not overlook the prospect of a reward. Look at Hebrews 11, the faith chapter, and notice some surprising facts. Like verse 6: "He [God] is a rewarder [giver of wages] of them that diligently seek Him." And just about all the faithful ones listed there seem to be included for what they *did*. Then, of course, Moses did a bit of cold calculating (verses 24-26) and came to the conclusion that God's way offered better wages (reward).

Those words "reward" and "rewarder" could make an interesting study. A good concordance shows that they appear dozens of times throughout the Bible, and in fascinating situations. God, the just employer, pays honest wages to His workmen.

Let us look at this whole matter carefully.

Salvation is God's free gift, and we accept it by faith. Ephesians

2:8, 9. We cannot earn one square foot of space in the new earth by working for it. But, on the other hand, if faith does not produce a transformation of life, it is dead and valueless. The new life brings forth the fruits of righteousness, the kind of fruit that gives the basis for judging the nature of the life. Matthew 3:8; 7:16; Philippians 1:10, 11. The true Christian brings forth these fruits, not to "earn" something, but to "prove" something—to prove his love for his Saviour. This is his way of putting into concrete form his gratitude: "Thank You, Lord, for saving my soul."

The Bible makes perfectly clear that eternal life in the sinless new earth is a reward—not *because of* our works, *but according to* them. Here are a few of many good texts on this point: Matthew 5:12; 25:31-46; Luke 6:35; 1 Corinthians 3:8, 14; Revelation 20:12; 22:11.

So accept by faith God's gracious gift. Then allow His Spirit to transform your life so that it will yield "the peaceable fruits of righteousness." Hebrews 12:11.

SON OF GOD—WHEN?

Some argue that Christ was not the Son of God before He was born in Bethlehem, fathered by the Holy Spirit. Are there texts to prove that He has always been the Son of God?

Mrs. C. D.

Yes, there are texts in both the Old Testament and the New that show His eternal coexistence with the Father.

Of prime importance in this connection are the words of Jesus Himself. He repeatedly claimed pre-existence and equality with God, particularly in His prayer of John 17. Frequent references also occur in chapters 14, 15, and 16. See also such texts as John 8:58; 10:30. If Jesus had not been the pre-existent, divine Son of God, it would have been nothing short of blasphemy for Him to make such claims; the

authorities would have been justified in executing Him.

Other parts of the New Testament abound with claims of Christ's equality with God, identifying Him as the Creator and the God who dealt directly with human affairs down through history. For example, see Philippians 2:5-12; Hebrews 1:1-3; 1 Corinthians 10:4.

Old Testament references are not so precise because one can argue that they were prophetic, pointing forward to the time when Christ would come. However, such passages as Isaiah 9:6, 7 and Psalm

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45:6, 7 sound altogether out of place for any being of less stature than total equality with God.

As other *Signs* writers and this column have stated repeatedly, attempts to downgrade Jesus Christ hardly befit so-called Christian theologians. If He was not what He claimed to be and what New Testament writers portray Him as being, then He was not Christ at all. To base our hope for salvation on a second-rate savior is to find ourselves without the only Saviour.

When we put Isaiah 43:10, 11