

food for thought >>>

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
~ John 14:6



Volume Six Issue Six
April 2022



Proverbs 27:17 As Iron Sharpens Iron, So One Person Sharpens Another

Celebrate The Resurrection with Us!

The Growth Journal

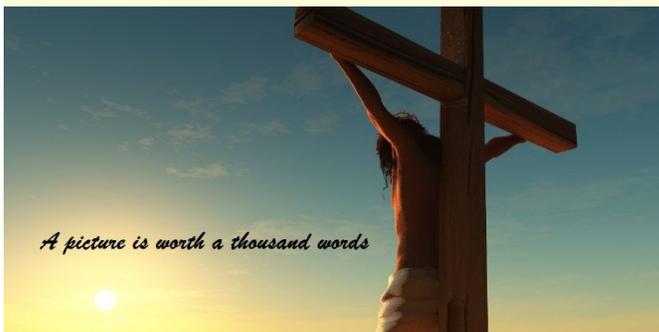
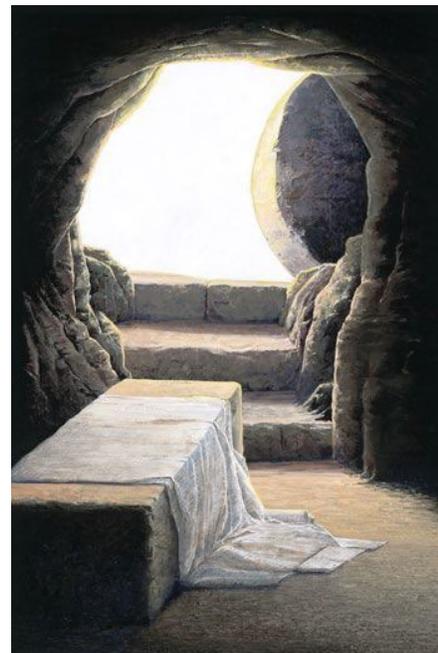


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Luke 24:5-6 ⁵ Then, as they were afraid and bowed *their* faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'"

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead has been at the heart of the gospel message from the beginning. The empty tomb tells us that the grave could not hold Jesus. That he bodily rose from the grave. Jesus demonstrated his mastery over death, and it holds promise for believers as well; that we also will have victory over death.



A picture is worth a thousand words

The Doctrine of The Atonement

by Alywin Mitchell



Atonement

April is the month that we celebrate Easter or Passover. Easter is also called “Pascha” (Greek, Latin) or Resurrection.

Resurrection Sunday, also known as Easter, marks the moment when Christ was raised from the dead after His crucifixion. We know that our hope of living in Heaven, spending eternity with Jesus Christ, is

embedded in our faith rather than our words and deeds.

Christ’s death on our behalf is the reason God can forgive us and still maintain His perfect righteousness. And Jesus Christ's death instills in us the seriousness we must have in our forgiveness of others.

Everyone must have the chance to hear and know that there is a God of marvelous love who sent His Son Jesus Christ into this world. And as a demonstration of His grace and mercy, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, our Redeemer, Lamb of God, and Lord of Lords, went to the cross to make a way for peace between God and mankind.

Atonement simply means “to cover”. The Old English word “atonement” means “to be made as one”.

The doctrine of Atonement includes the redemptive work of Christ, including His crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, exaltation, glorification, intercessory ministry, and His second coming. The perfect plan of atonement was made by the eternal Godhead before the creation and fall of man. Jesus, the eternal Son, was given work to do, the work of the Atonement.

Because God is absolutely holy, He can expect no less than holiness in His creatures. He hates sin with a perfect hatred and cannot and will not tolerate it. The righteousness of God demands that sin be exposed, judged, and punished. This is the necessity of the Atonement.

When God created human beings with free will, it required that they live within the boundaries of His will. “God’s will was His law, and His law was His will.” God gave Adam and Eve the law of obedience in Genesis 2:17. To disobey this law was a sin.

Man is sinful by nature and therefore sins in thought, word, and deed. He is not a sinner because he sins, he sins because he is a sinner.

When the holiness of God comes into battle with the sinfulness of man, God’s wrath is revealed. Wrath is simply the righteous anger of a Holy God against sin, and sin must be dealt with completely. Only when sin is dealt with will God’s character be vindicated, but sin is not always immediately dealt with. God sometimes restrains immediate judgement so that we may be brought to repentance!

But how can a wrathful God show His love for sinful mankind? The answer is obtained in the atonement. The atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. God deals in holiness with sin, and in love with the sinner in the work of the cross. In the work of the cross, holiness and love are in perfect unity and balance. Our Holy God is judging sin and providing for the sinner's salvation.

The Doctrine of The Atonement cont.

It is important to understand that the death of Jesus Christ is unique. His death is an atoning death. The foundation and structure of Christianity are established on this death. However, it is not His ethics, His life, or His example, but His death that saves man. It is His risen life that saves men. His saving death (wrath) and then His saving life (love).

Jesus' soul was made a sin offering for us. The facts of His death are unique. The death of Christ was foretold under the Law, Psalms, and the prophets.

The death of Christ is essential to Christianity.

The death of Christ is essential to our salvation.

The death of Christ was a necessary penalty for sin.

The death of Christ was unique, incomparable, immeasurable, and of everlasting worth. Mankind will never forget the cost of their eternal salvation.

Jesus tasted death for everyone. He experienced this death so that we might have eternal life.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day is one of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. There are over 100 references to the resurrection in the New Testament. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is absolutely necessary to complete the redemptive work of Christ. If Jesus is not raised from the dead, then we are all still in our sin. His death alone does not save men. It is His death and resurrection that brings salvation to mankind.

The ascension of Jesus is the next important action in His redemptive work. After Jesus ascended to heaven and was seated at the right hand of God the Father, the son of God became the Son of Man in the incarnation. He left heaven, took upon Himself a body of flesh and blood, and then returned to heaven with the identical virgin-born, crucified, resurrected, and glorified body. In descending from heaven in the incarnation he did not cease to be God and ascending to heaven in the ascension, He did not cease to be man. The bodily ascension of Jesus is another essential article of faith because it is foundational to his bodily return in the second coming.

It is essential that we understand that Jesus Christ is the *only* human mediator between God and man. This is the intercessory responsibility He currently fulfills for those who belong to Him. No one, no one else has the power to intercede for us before the throne of the Almighty God. Jesus is always pleading our case before the Father, like a defense lawyer on our behalf. He never loses!

Jesus, our sacrificial lamb, our Savior, our God, our Redeemer, laid down his life as our sacrificial lamb to pay for our sins. When he rose from the dead, he gave victory over eternal separation from God to all who put their faith and trust in him. That is the new covenant, everlasting life spent with God through faith in all that Jesus Christ has done and continues to do.



Several years back, after being in a bible study group that talked about having a ‘Word of the Year’, I started asking my friends what their ‘Word of the Year’ was and got them bracelets with their word as a daily reminder. One of my friend’s ‘Word of the Year’ was “intentional”.

In this season of my life, “intentional” has become more significant. I am being “intentional” with reading the bible in a year (which isn’t always easy in the verses where everything gets repeated multiple times and I wonder what the significance is). I have also been reminded about walking through relationships with “intention” of long-term goals in mind.

GOD wants you to be “intentional” with him. The more “intentional” you are in developing a strong relationship with HIM, the easier it gets to recognize negativity and fear, and dispel of it quickly. Knowledge that GOD is with you and guiding your every step is comforting. When you have a good relationship with GOD, he orders your steps and puts the right thoughts on your heart for a successful future.

We all struggle with things such as fear, cravings, sexual immorality, patience, perseverance, trust, grace, mercy, and forgiveness. We turn to vices that we think will make us temporarily feel better about where we are at in the moment, only to feel guilt shortly thereafter. GOD wants you to recognize your weaknesses and proclaim them to him, asking for his strength and direction to grow in those areas.

If you are a father, you most likely desire obedience, respect, honor, and safety for your children. Your Heavenly Father also desires those things for you as he is the ultimate father. He wants to have a relationship with you that is healthy, in all ways, and he wants to see you make the right choices. He puts people into your life to influence and assist with your journey. He also puts people in your life to create crisis and havoc, so you learn how to handle such behavior when it is encountered in the future.

GOD will give you everything you need, in his timing, if you just have faith. No matter what you are struggling with, if you ask HIM for help, HE is going to put you in situations so the aspect you are struggling with can be exercised and tested. When you successfully overcome the test, you can look back and feel good about progress.

Heb 4:12 – “For the word of GOD is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

If you respect GOD’S living and active word, listen to how you are being guided, and follow his will, no matter what comes across your path, you will overcome and persevere. Life is hard; relationships are hard. Your relationship with GOD is not exempt from being challenging and hard. I believe if you are intentional about your relationship with HIM, you will succeed.

Luke 14:28-33 – “For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish it, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying “This man began to build and was not able to finish” or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So then, none of you can be My disciples who does not give up all his own possessions.”

Being intentional takes time and effort. Many steps need to be taken to achieve the goal. Thankfully GOD has given us the limitless ability to set new goals and intentions. Many blessings will come to you if you decide to be intentional with developing your relationship with GOD. HE will provide more than you can ever imagine possible. GOD bless you and keep you.

Save Me!

by Anthony J. Butler from the Forthcoming Book



A POETIC COLLAGE...DIFFERENT FABRICS, SLICES, AND PARTS OF LIFE INTRICATELY CONNECTED
PIECE BY PIECE THROUGH POETRY © 2022

God has a purpose. Yes... you are worth it!

Do you want peace? Then pursue him.

No more separation....

Your good deeds, good works, your own strength, and religion will get you facing a life that will be lost.

God's solution... THE CROSS!!!

It bridges the gap.

Perhaps you haven't met Jesus who frees us from all our sins.

He is a true friend that sticks closer than all your kinfolks put together.

His yoke is easy, and his burden is lighter than a feather.

Go ahead and pray...

I am a sinner. I turn from my old ways, I repent. I believe you were sent ...for me.

I ask you to come into my heart and lead me...please... I know that you can.

I receive you as my Lord and savior. Amen!

Thank you for saving me!!!

JESUS SAVES

*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save
that which was lost.*

Luke 19:10

No Condemnation

by Pastor Mike Hernandez



As we head into this Easter Season, I have been thinking about the victory Jesus gave us on the cross. When I consider the price that He paid, that He died for our sins, I smile as I know I need His forgiveness and His payment for my sins.

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” – Romans 3:23

We all have sinned and that means we all deserve to be punished. As a human being, I fall short of the glory of God. I have sinned. You have sinned. Mother Theresa sinned. Think of the best person you know, maybe your mom or your praying grandma...yes, even they have sinned.

What is the punishment for sin? It is separation from God. How can a perfectly Holy God have relationship with a sinful man? He can't, unless the sin of man has been dealt with. That is why Jesus, who was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on the cross to pay the price for man's sin. If you have experienced salvation, then you understand the victory Jesus gave on the cross.

However, I have met many people who have received the forgiveness that Jesus gives yet continue to live with guilt and shame. I do not believe that is what God wants from us.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. – Romans 8:1-2

If the Scriptures say that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, why do people still live with condemnation? What is condemnation?

Dictionary.com defines condemnation as “the state of being condemned”. So, what is condemned?

Dictionary.com defines condemned as “to express an unfavorable or adverse judgment on; indicate strong disapproval of; to pronounce to be guilty; sentence to punishment”.



There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:1-2

The Scriptures says there is no condemnation or unfavorable judgment, strong disapproval or guilty sentence to those who are in Christ Jesus. That is really good news! We no longer have unfavorable judgment with God. We no longer have disapproval from God. We no longer have a guilty sentence hanging over our heads!

No Condemnation Cont.

So why do we still feel guilty? Why do we still feel shame? Let's go back to the very first sin when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit.

So, when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. – Genesis 3:6-8

The first thing Adam and Eve did when they sinned was cover themselves (sewed fig leaves together). Then they hid from God. We have been doing the same thing ever since. When we sin, one of our first responses is to cover ourselves, or blame our sin on something other than us. We make excuses, we blame other people, we do not take responsibility. Then when God comes looking for us, we hide from God. We stay away from church or people who may keep us accountable for our sin. We do exactly what Adam and Eve did.

However, there is a better way!

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. – 1 John 1:7-9

When we sin (and these verses say we all will sin), instead of not taking responsibility and hiding, we can confess our sins to God, and He will forgive us. In fact, He will cleanse us from all unrighteousness! This seems so easy, so why do we still blame and hide?

One reason we may blame and hide is that we do not want to stop the sin. We enjoy our sin and want to keep sinning. Let's be honest, sin can be pleasurable...even the Bible says so in Hebrews 11:25. As long as we want to keep sinning, we won't confess and ask God to forgive us. We will hold on to the sin and hide from God.

A second reason we may blame and hide is that we feel so ashamed of our sin that we do not believe God will forgive us. We believe that what we have done is so egregious that God couldn't possibly forgive us or wouldn't want to forgive us. This is one of the biggest lies the enemy tells us. Jesus came to destroy the works of sin so that we can be free! Remember, ALL have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Sometimes we feel like some sins are worse than others, but to a Holy God, any sin, no matter what it is, causes us to be separated from God. Jesus came so that all sin can be forgiven! Yes, we still live with the human consequences of our sin, but we can be forgiven from God, if we will ask.

My prayer for you this Easter season is that you will experience the true freedom that comes with Jesus forgiving you of your sins!



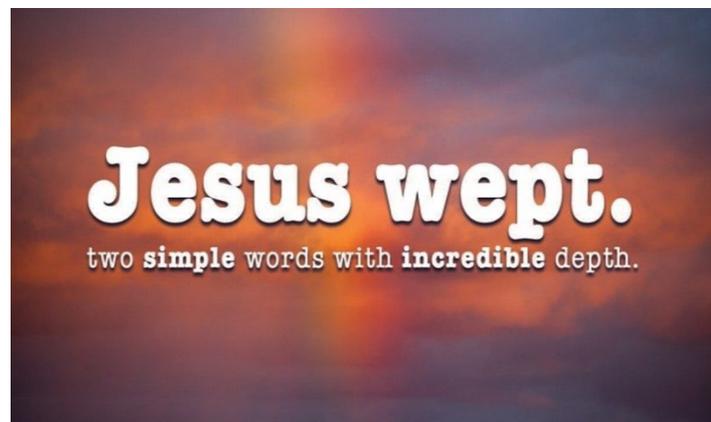
The shortest verse in the KJV of the bible is John 11:35 'Jesus Wept'. The backstory is the death of Lazarus and Jesus raising him from the dead. Studying that one simple verse could yield volumes of commentary. One could build a sermon involving many themes and characters on those two simple words.

Read the entire chapter of John 11 and then close your eyes and image the scene. Would we feel the sadness and helplessness of Mary and Martha? Would we be afraid to support our friends Mary and Martha because of our own circumstance like Thomas felt? Would we weep like Jesus when we finally arrived to greet Mary and Martha?

Many of us know the feeling of helplessness. We know someone that was sick, in pain, suffering and/or the loss of someone close. Weeping simply shows the human side of Jesus (Jesus was unique in being 100% human and 100% divinity).

Jesus wept with Mary all the while knowing that God was going to resuscitate Lazarus. Do we not do the same? We all know that we are saved by the perfect sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, yet we still weep at tragic events in our lives. We know people that are saved and going to be with Jesus, but we still weep at the news of their passing.

Would we weep if Lazarus was our friend? Would we weep if we didn't know Lazarus? God made us in his own image (Genesis 1:27) and we should see God in everyone. Jesus teaches us in his sermon on the mount to love our enemies (Matthew 5:43-44). Can we see the image of God in our enemies? Can we see the image of God in a stranger? Can we see the image of God in a friend?



We are children of God. God wants us to be happy (Psalm 34:4) just like parents want happiness for their own children. Ideally, if the parents buy the child a toy, it will bring everyone together in a closer relationship. It would be bad if the child spends all their time and attention on the toy and neglects the relationship with the parents. It would be bad if someone takes or breaks the toy, and the child is filled with negative feelings toward that person.

If you had the power of God, how would you use it? Would you make yourself rich and powerful and fill your life with earthly treasures? Would you make your enemies suffer for the pain that they inflicted on you? To right past wrongs? Could you restrain yourself to only use that power at the direction of God and for the benefit of others and not yourself? Could you be a humble servant of ungrateful people and be scourged, humiliated or killed for their benefit?

God knows we are human and need divine help and guidance. He gave us the holy spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19 NIV) 'Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.' The Holy Spirit dwells in everyone that belongs to Christ (Romans 8:9). In that way we are connected by the Spirit. We are made in the image of God, and we have the Spirit of God dwelling within us, within our friends, within complete strangers and within our enemies. How do we treat others around us? Would we weep with them when they are suffering? Would we weep with them when a friend dies? Would we weep with a friend that is weeping?

Words to Grow By – Linda Lewis

He Is Risen

Matthew 28

May you have
The gladness of Easter,
Which is Hope
The promise of Easter,
Which is Peace
The spirit of Easter,
Which is Love.
May the renewal of life at Easter
Bring new blessings of love, hope, peace,
Good health and happiness
To you and your loved ones.
Happy Easter!

Women Empowering Women – Linda Lewis

Easter

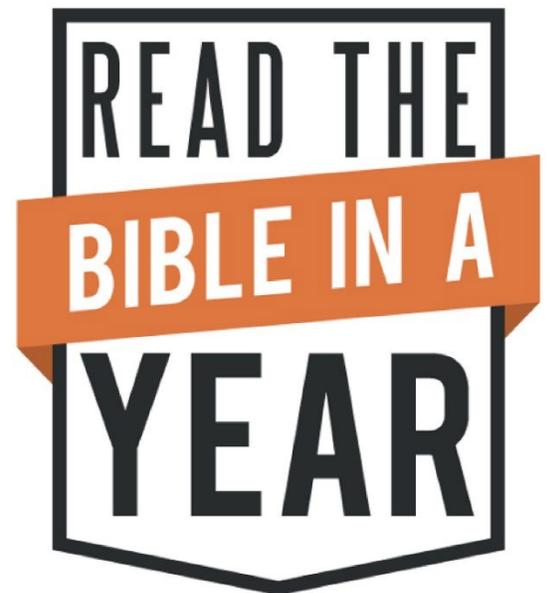
Is a beautiful reminder that
No matter what seems dead
In your life, God can bring
New life to it!
Easter/Resurrection Day is why we don't give
up!
Remember
That if God brings you to it...
He'll definitely bring you through it.
Blessed are those who have
Not seen and have yet believed.
John 20:29

READ YOUR BIBLE IN A YEAR

Growth Ministries will be releasing a “Read the Bible in a Year” reading plan. This plan will have daily chapters for you to read with commentary each day from our very own Pastor Mike Hernandez. If you want to set a goal to read the entire bible in a year, then write us and let us know you want to be on the list to receive this reading plan.

Send your request to:

Growth Ministries, Inc.
Attn: Yearly Bible Reading Plan
P.O. Box 4375
Olathe, KS 66063





Easter Story

Word Search

S C B M N E J E S U S C H R I S T
K A A P O D V G V A R E J O I C E
J R V M S P R A Y E R W C B V F S
Y N O I X I F I C U R C T R M L E
L A P C O I E B Q O X B B N O O L
I R E S U R R E C T I O N R E S T
T R E P P U S T S A L Y E M B L S
S H L U P V Y T K V F D M T E K O
O C A R N E P A X R E S I H M R P
C R M E P E N L D M A N A O I E A
E U B I K G A A P I J R R R R V V
T H X C H Y N T N H R S M N A O X
N C N C A M I E O C T F Y S C S J
E K E R K O S E W N E I D A L S U
P U T O N I R N W R P Y A O E A D
L E Z W R W M D R Q I T Y F O P A
B S M N D I S C I P L E S C X G S

APOSTLES
BETRAYAL
CAVE
CHURCH
CROSS
CROWN
CRUCIFIXION
DISCIPLES
FAITH
GOOD FRIDAY

JESUS CHRIST
JUDAS
LAMB
LAST SUPPER
LENT
MARY
MIRACLE
PASSEOVER
PENANCE
PENTECOST

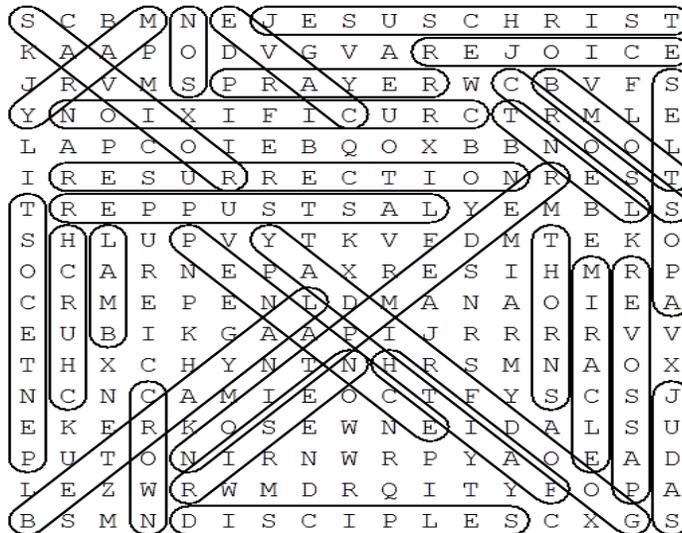
PRAYER
REDEMPTION
REJOICE
RESURRECTION
RISEN
SAVIOR
SON
THORNS
TOMB



Easter Story

Word Search

SOLUTION



Just for Laughs

Q. What do you get when you cross Winnie the Pooh with the Easter Bunny?

A. Honey Bunny

Q. How many Easter eggs can you put into an empty Easter basket?

A. Only one because after you put one in then it is no longer empty.

Q. Why shouldn't you tell an Easter egg a joke?

A. It might crack up!

Q. What happened to the Easter Bunny when he misbehaved in school?

A. He was egg-spelled.

Q. What is the Easter Bunny's favorite kind of music?

A. Hip-Hop.

A parishioner was in front of me coming out of church one day, and the preacher was standing at the door as he always is to shake hands. He grabbed the parishioner by the hand and pulled him aside. The Pastor said to him, "You need to join the Army of the Lord!" The parishioner replied, "I'm already in the Army of the Lord, Pastor." Pastor questioned, "How come I don't see you except at Christmas and Easter?" He whispered back, "I'm in the secret service."

Q. How does the Easter Bunny dry off?

A. With a hare dryer!

Q. What do you call a line of Easter Bunnies jumping backwards?

A. A receding hare line.

Q. What do you call an Easter Bunny with fleas?

A. Bugs Bunny.

closing words...

A Second Life!

3 ... Our desires were controlled by sin. We tried to satisfy what they wanted us to do. We followed our desires and thoughts. God was angry with us like he was with everyone else. That's because of the kind of people we all were. 4 But God loves us deeply. He is full of mercy. 5 So he gave us new life because of what Christ has done. He gave us life even when we were dead in sin. God's grace has saved you.



Lonnie Johnson
GMI Executive Director



Eventually our bodies will cease to function, and we will be no more a part of this world. We call that death. I know, that's a pretty morbid start to an article. Hang with me though. When we die our spirit will separate from this body. When that happens, one of two things will be next. We will either be with the Father eternally which we call everlasting life, or we will be condemned to eternal damnation which we call everlasting death. Why is this damnation called death if we've already died? That is because this death is when our spirit is eternally separated from God. Remember the 1st death is when our spirit is separated from our body.

Even before that first death, you can be dead to God by living in sin. Many people say ignorant things like "God knows my heart..." and "God is working on me..." but they have not made a conscious decision to make Christ their personal savior. No matter how many celebrities say, "Give honor to God..." before they get an award, if they have not accepted Christ as their personal savior, they are dead in their sins and when they physically die, they are going to experience that second death of being eternally separated from God in eternal damnation.

Many people love and enjoy the things of life that God doesn't agree with. They live in their sins making excuses for obeying their flesh instead of obeying God.

Ok, let's lighten the mood. The good news is that God loves us so much, He is so patient, He is so full of mercy, and He is so full of forgiveness. Jesus Christ Himself sits at God's right hand advocating for us. He is always telling God that He understands our struggles and temptations because He walked the earth as one of us. Not only does He understand, but He took it a step further. He dealt with all of our sins, past, present and future. He sacrificed himself and shed his blood for each of us. He paid a price we could not pay. So, when we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior, God no longer sees "The Old Sinful Us". He sees His Son's blood covering us. He gives us the ultimate grace and forgives us for all we have done.

We are literally **born again** (2nd Corinthians 5:17). This new life gives us a ticket to that eternal and everlasting life with the Father. I am so grateful for what Christ did on the cross, and I am even more grateful that He rose again and ascended to heaven where he sits beside God constantly pleading my case. Even if I slip, I can confess to Him that I was wrong and I will still be in good standing because of two powerful scriptures, 1 John 1:9 (*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*) then Romans 8:1 (*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*).

Now don't get it twisted, you just can't willingly go on sinning and expect to take God's kindness for weakness. There is scripture for that too. Galatians 6:7-8 (*Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows⁸ Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*)

We want a second life, not a second death!


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Changing the World One Life at a Time