

GOD'S REVIVALIST

January-February 2025

and Bible Advocate



BEATITUDES

a new series



thinking out loud

POOR IN SPIRIT

I was reading Oswald Chambers' *My Utmost for His Highest*, and the entry for November 28 contained a statement that gave me pause. "He [God] can do nothing for us if we think we are sufficient of ourselves; we have to enter into His Kingdom by the door of destitution."

I have struggled with "being good enough," but the ultimate conclusion of Chambers' proclamation is that my personal attempts to be good are not what God is wanting. In fact, if they are an artifact of my own efforts, they are just "filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6). No compilation of good merits God's favor. If we, on our own, could pile up a stack of good reaching to the heavens, no spiritual benefit would be accrued. We have nothing in ourselves that is of merit. Chambers said it like this, God wants us to be "unconsciously dependent" on Him (Nov. 15). Think about that. It is saying that being dependent on God is so much a part of who we are that we don't have to think about it.

Now, does this mean that God does not want us to be good and go about doing good? No. He just wants our good deeds to be a natural outflowing of our lives when we are abandoned to Him—when we are totally dependent on Him. Again, Chambers puts it this way: "If the Spirit of God has transformed you within, you will exhibit Divine characteristics in your life, not good human characteristics" (Sept. 20). We should take care not to interfere with this process. This happens when "God has been at work, getting us into the shape of the ideal, and over and over we escape from His hand and try to batter ourselves into our own shape" (July 6). We are in grave danger when we become arbiters of what is good and strive to conform to our vision of good rather than God's.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). As Chambers reminds us: "Complete weakness and dependence will always be the opportunity for the Spirit of God to manifest His power" (May 5).

We trust you will enjoy the 2025 series on "The Beatitudes." Let me close with a final quote from Chambers. "The Sermon on the Mount is not an ideal, it is a statement of what will happen in me when Jesus Christ has altered my disposition and put in a disposition like His own. Jesus Christ is the only One Who can fulfill the Sermon on the Mount" (Sept. 25). —KF ■

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COVER: Sermon on the Mount windows at Herzogenbuchsee Reformed Church near Berne, Switzerland. Picture by Eugène Burnand, 1910; glass by Emil Gerster of Basel, Switzerland, 1911.

the president's page



TO SEEK AND TO SAVE

by Dr. Rodney S. Loper, President

Recently, I have been drawn again to the passage in Isaiah 55 (ESV): “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near” (v.6). In some ways, the invitation here is a bit of a paradox. We read again and again in Scripture that the initiative to restore man’s relationship with God is God-driven. It was God who, on the heels of man’s first sin, came seeking Adam and Eve in the cool of the day just as He did at other times. The description given to Jesus is that He came to seek and save that which was lost. The parable of the lost shekel, lost sheep, and lost son all point to God who is seeking that which was lost.

THE GIFT OF SALVATION IS FREE

In this passage, at least on the surface, it seems that it is man who should be seeking after God. But that is only true if you skip over the first verses; for in verse 1 we see that it is God who is taking the initiative. He is calling us to Himself. The gift of salvation is free. The benefits of salvation cannot be earned by effort or purchased with money. You can “buy” without money, and you can purchase without price. Jesus made the requirements for this free gift in the beatitudes—“blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” We must not overlook the universality of this verse. Every person is included in this invitation to come: “Ho, everyone that is thirsty....” This isn’t just true here in Isaiah, but it is also reaffirmed by our Lord in John 3:16 (“...that whosoever believeth...”) and in Revelation 22:17 (“Whoever will may come.”)

THE GIFT OF SALVATION IS FULL

Not only is the gift of salvation free, but it is also full. It satisfies the thirsty and fills the hun-

gry. Are you thirsty? Come to the waters! Are you destitute? No money? Come and eat! Commentators suggest that the use of the words water, milk, and wine is purposeful. Each word suggests that salvation is nourishing. Water is for satisfying our thirst (John 4:13-14). Milk is for strengthening and growth (1 Pet. 2:2). Wine is for happiness (Ecc. 9:7). In verse 2, there is a contrast between the emptiness that earthly resources give you versus the satisfaction of what God provides. Throughout the ages, man has tried to find happiness and satisfaction through earthly means. We have been lulled into believing that we can buy happiness—that we can, by some means, secure satisfaction. Isaiah reminds his readers, and you and me today, that God has something for us that money cannot buy.

THE GIFT OF SALVATION IS FINAL

Salvation is final. Remember, we started with the paradox that seems to exist between the call in verse 6 and other passages of Scripture. While verse 6 does call for us to seek God, notice that in verse 3 prior to that, God tells us that He has already taken the initiative. God says, “I will make an everlasting covenant with you.” Covenant language may be strange for us now, but not for the original hearers. They knew exactly what Isaiah was talking about. Again and again, throughout their existence as a people, God had been faithful to His covenant with the Israelites. They truly were the beneficiaries of the Divine covenant.

Let me remind you, however, that the covenant-keeping God of the Israelites is our covenant-keeping God today! He is not fickle—just looking for a reason to break off fellowship with us. We are not accidentally going to find ourselves under God’s wrath or judgment. God wants us more than we want Him. Relax into His covenant-keeping embrace!

CONCLUSION

Notice finally that the hinges that swing the door to salvation seem to be seasonal. Titus 2:11 reminds us that the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared unto all men. But basic observation will reveal that there seem to be seasons in people’s lives that lead them or draw them closer to God. The Sunday after the 9/11 attack on the United States, most churches saw an increase in attendance. When calamity strikes a home, spiritual matters rise in importance. When a death occurs, spiritual things are talked about in greater candor among family and friends. I believe these are providential circumstances that make it easier for folks to “find the Lord.” We must admit that there must be some kind of psychological openness to the things of God in order for a person to be drawn to God.

We all have heard stories of a person walking out of a church service, never to sense God’s presence again. These stories are alarming, but they highlight how a person can become desensitized to the things of God. It may not be a rebellious fist in God’s face; it may be simply ignoring the overtures of God’s grace that appear again and again in one’s life.

One thing is certain: God hasn’t changed! He hasn’t walked away! He doesn’t love less! He is right where He has always been with open arms! Albert Barr used to say, “If you wiggle in God’s direction, he will come running in your direction.” I like that, but honestly, I don’t even think you have to wiggle. The moment your mind entertains a thought of Him, He is already there!

All the provisions in Isaiah 55—all the promises of salvation—are given before the call to seek the Lord. This demonstrates to us that He, indeed, is the One taking the initiative. There is no paradox here at all. God has already been calling. He has been seeking. Will you respond to Him? ■



He is right where He has always been with open arms!
“If you wiggle in God’s direction, he will come running in your direction.”

—Albert Barr

introducing a new series

HOLY PREAMBLE: THE BEATITUDES

by Larry D. Smith

“We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

For generations, our boys and girls in high-school civics classes have been assigned by their teachers to memorize these solemn and impressive words. Certainly, our teenagers—and indeed, their parents and all Americans with any sense of patriotism—should recognize their significance. For these words spell out the “Preamble,” or introduction, to our federal Constitution, the document which serves as the foundation to our entire governmental structure. Presumably written by James Madison, it was first adopted by delegates in a special Constitutional Convention convened in Philadelphia, then ratified by the state legislatures.

Proclaimed our supreme law in 1779, it has served us nobly and has even been the pattern for other nations. England’s famous prime minister William Gladstone once declared that the Constitution of the United States “is the most wonderful work ever struck off at a given time by the hand and purpose of man.”¹

This “wonderful work”—this wonderful document—begins with its “We the people” Preamble, which explains in terse, though eloquent, words the Constitution’s central and overarching purpose, which is “to form a more perfect union.” It then tells us what specific issues will be addressed in order to produce this “more perfect union.” These include tranquility at home, safety from foreign intruders, wholesome regulation of our common life, and above all, the vigorous protection of our God-given civil liberties. The Preamble thus serves to introduce, direct, amplify, and explain our Constitution. For us as loyal Americans, it is noble for us to ponder all this soberly and gratefully.

But as faithful Christians, there is another document, also introduced by a memorable preamble, that we should ponder gratefully and reverently. For both document and preamble are given us in the words of Our Savior Jesus Christ, and are recorded in Holy Scripture, which as the old English liturgy instructs us, we are to “hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest, that by patience and comfort of Thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which Thou hast given us in Jesus Christ.”²

This essential Christian document is Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, which is prefaced by its preamble, which consists





**As we abjure sin,
loving righteousness and hating
iniquity, as did
Our Blessed
Savior, we grow
in all the virtues
mentioned in
the Beatitudes.**

of eight Beatitudes, or “Blesseds,” that introduce, and explain all that follows. Recorded for us in chapters 5, 6, and 7 of Saint Matthew’s Gospel, this wonderful discourse given by Our Lord Jesus has been called the “Constitution of the Kingdom of God,” for in broad, sweeping terms He describes what it means to be a real follower of His, an exemplary citizen of His holy commonwealth, and an authentic “altogether Christian,” not just a lukewarm dabbler in religion.

Thus, His words describe the purposes, preferences, and priorities of the saints, whose utterly loving, unselfish, and winsome lives constantly reflect the image of the Lord Jesus who dwells within them by the Holy Spirit. How appropriate then that on All Saints Day, November 1, many churches around the world conduct special services, during which Matthew 5 is read again. For this passage of Holy Writ reminds us that the eight Beatitudes are the hallmarks of that winsome holiness which the saints so relentlessly pursue.

Moreover, their selfless example proves that Christianity is not just a bundle of pious but impossible advice, for the “Jesus life” it offers really can be lived in this shattered and sinful world. Calling “this discourse a program of the New Testament dispensation”—that is, a hallmark of the Christian Era—the highly respected 19th-century Methodist biblical scholar Dr. Daniel Whedon notes that the Beatitudes begin “with [an] emphasis on Christian piety,” and “consist of [eight] benedictions focused upon humility, penitence, aspirations after goodness, mercy, purity, peace-making, and holy suffering for righteousness sake.”³

Our attention is now directed to St. Matthew’s description of that day when Our Lord preached the greatest sermon that has ever fallen on human ears. “And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them” (Mat. 5:1-2). Jesus then pronounced His special blessings on those of His followers who gave evidence of certain holy qualities that adorned their

lives. These are the eight Beatitudes that constitute the preamble to the holy Gospel as it is so beautifully given us by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

In coming issues of this publication these “benedictions” will be carefully explored and explained by GBS personnel as aids for us in our walk with Christ. In preparation we now list these eight Beatitudes given us by Our Lord Jesus:

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
2. Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
3. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
4. Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.
5. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
6. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
7. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.
8. Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Dr. George Lyons, a well-known contemporary Bible scholar, writing in the Wesley Study Bible, explains that the Sermon on the Mount, including its preamble, the Beatitudes, “does not tell us how to become Jesus’ follower, but rather describes the ideal character of a disciple. Only Jesus will achieve this high ideal, which sets goals for every Christian to pursue. This sermon is not a prescription for salvation by works, but rather a description of the possibilities that it brings only those who surrender fully to the rule of God. Matthew collected and passed on Jesus’ characteristic teachings. Perhaps, each individual saying summarizes a longer message. Since they reflect God’s best plan, we would do well to meditate prayerfully on each one.”⁴

Certainly, these eight virtues beginning with poverty of spirit represent the qualities of true Christianity—qualities that to a greater or lesser extent are present in the life of every authentic follower of Jesus Christ. As we ab-

jure sin, loving righteousness and hating iniquity, as did Our Blessed Savior, fixing our attention increasingly on Him, using all the means of grace that He has appointed, relying increasingly by faith on His promised grace, we grow in that grace into stalwart loving saints, which also means that we grow in all the virtues mentioned by Our Lord in the Beatitudes in Matthew 5. Read the lives of the saints and you will find that this is pattern for their lives. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

"Let us observe who it is that is here speaking that we may take heed how we hear," writes John Wesley. "It is the Lord of heaven and earth, the Creator of all, who as such, has the right to dispose of all His creatures; the Lord our Governor whose kingdom is from everlasting, and ruleth over all, the great Lawgiver who can well enforce all His laws being able to save and destroy; yea, to punish with everlasting destruction from His presence and from the glory of His power.

"And what is it that which He is teaching? The Son of God who came from heaven is showing us here the way to heaven to the place He has prepared for us. He is teaching us the true way, the life everlasting, the royal way which leads to the Kingdom. Our Lord first lays down the sum of all true religion in eight particulars which He explains and guards against false glosses of men to the end of the first chapter."⁵

These "eight particulars" which constitute the "sum of all true religion," of course, are the Beatitudes which point our way to Heaven. This is most certainly true, and as Wesley adds, it always begins with poverty of spirit.

"The Beatitudes read like a Psalm," adds the erudite Lutheran commentator R.C.H. Lenski who adds that they recall Psalm 1:1: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." He further adds, The word blessed "intoned again and again, sounds like bells of heaven, ringing

down into this unblest world from the cathedral spires of the kingdom inviting all men to enter. The word, like its opposite 'woe,' is neither a wish regarding a coming condition, nor a description of a present condition, but a judgement pronounced upon the persons indicated, stating that they must be considered fortunate.... And it is Jesus who renders this judgment which is therefore absolutely true, although the world may disagree.

"Each of the eight judgments is at once established by revealing in what the blessedness actually consists; the eighth judgement is even doubled and its blessedness is unveiled in two strong statements. All this blessedness is spiritual, each part...with a glorious promise of still greater blessings. [This is] the very opposite of the world's happiness, with its poison already in the bud and soon [to be] blasted forever. 'Blessed' means joy for all those concerned, but this is the heavenly way [and] the great gifts of the kingdom are ours, ensuring a constant flow of joy, so that even for a moment we be sad or joyful, the joy will well up in our hearts."⁶

Thus, the Beatitudes, the "sacred preamble to the Constitution of the Kingdom of God," confront us with the fact that true happiness comes as a by-product of holiness, never by trying to be happy. "O how happy are the saints in this world and in the next."

"*Changed from glory into glory, till in Heav'n we take our place, till we cast our crowns before Thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise.*"⁷ ■

Dr. Larry D. Smith served as a GBS instructor and editor of God's Revivalist from 1995 until his retirement in 2016. He lives in Cincinnati, OH, with his wife, Carol (Wiseman) ('78 BA).

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2. *Book of Common Prayer*. Oxford University Press, 1928, p.92.
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4. *Wesley Study Bible*. Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1990, p.1418.
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7. Charles Wesley, "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling." Written in 1747 and published in 1865 hymnals.

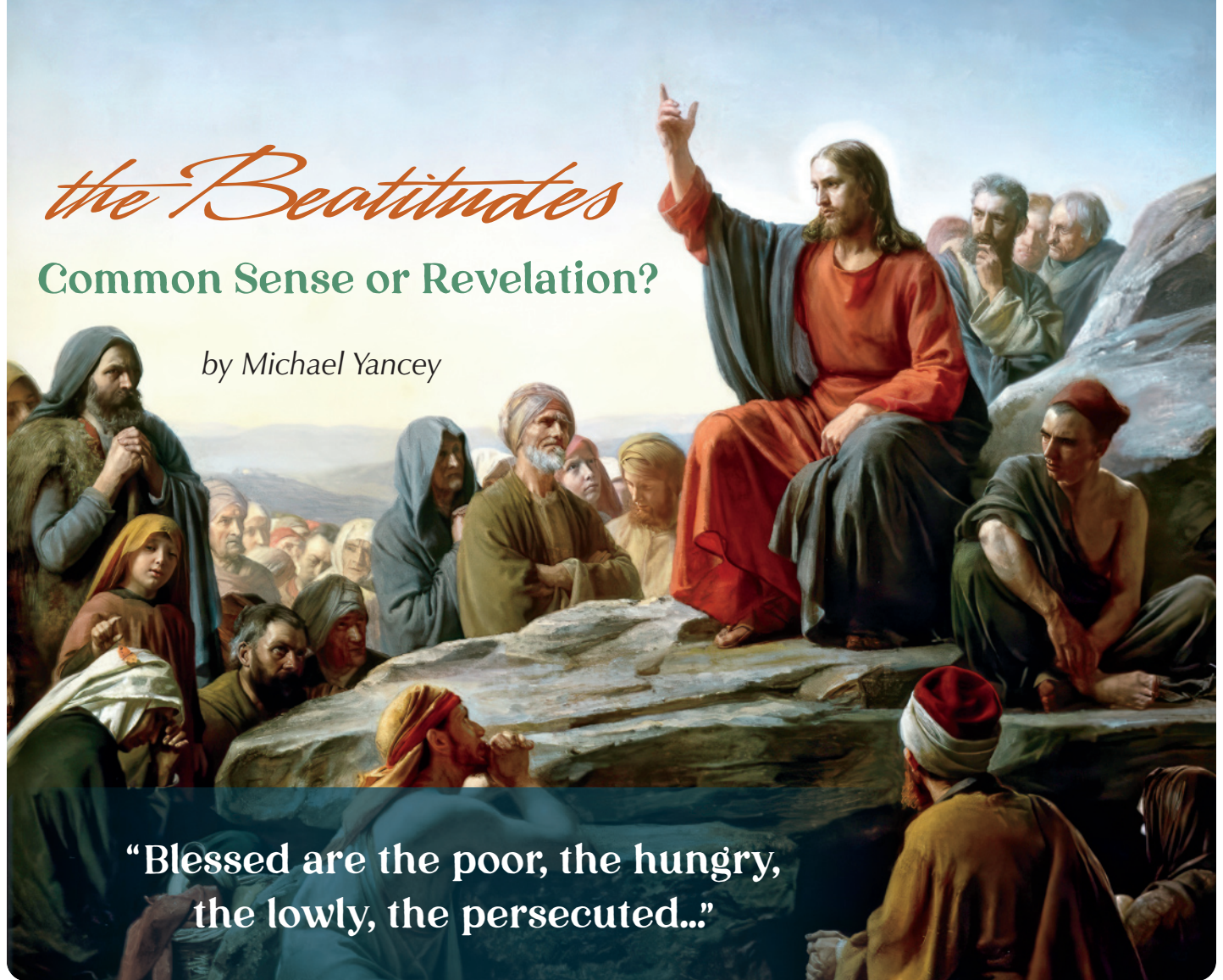
The Beatitudes confront us with the fact that true happiness comes as a by-product of holiness, never by trying to be happy.



the Beatitudes

Common Sense or Revelation?

by Michael Yancey



**"Blessed are the poor, the hungry,
the lowly, the persecuted..."**

I am sure the very opening words used in the Sermon on the Mount were strange words indeed to those who were listening. None of those declarations were common currency in the marketplace of ideas. They just didn't make sense—common sense, that is.

Christ started out by claiming that the blessed—or extremely happy—included those who were hungry, mourning, struggling with poverty, and enduring persecution. Those are not very appealing perspectives...in any day or culture.

Said for "Shock Value"?

Why did He begin this way, and continue on this path of upsetting the "apple carts" of commonly held beliefs? Was He into shock therapy? If He could jar them, perhaps they would really pay attention to what He was saying?

When trying to roll up my proverbial sleeves to get a fresh handle on the Sermon on the Mount a few years ago, out of curiosity I began to surf the Internet for sermons from today's preachers on this topic. A common theme emerged. Most immediately launched

into "explaining" the words of Jesus, usually by telling their audiences that their commonly held beliefs were wrong in the light of Christ's teachings. It seemed they rather enjoyed "surprising" their audiences with "uncommon wisdom."

I guess it could be sort of entertaining to approach people from the mainstream of life whose minds have been in the fast lane all week, pop up from behind some Scripture, and exclaim, "Surprise! What you have been thinking all week is wrong!" After receiving a new interpretive twist, these "newly informed" people might be seen wrinkling their faces, visibly straining to understand what you are saying, and then wandering back out the door wondering how to apply this new information to their everyday lives. I seriously doubt that Christ was simply trying to shock his listeners.

Keys for Successful Living?

Well then, was He trying to give them keys to success in every facet of life? Maybe, but not exactly. Years ago, I perused a prodigious amount of material on leadership,

sales, management, etc. Much of this was due to my being in the corporate environment and wanting to learn the “tricks of the trade.” Years later, I picked up a book on Spiritual Leadership from a very well-known author. Reading through the book, I was surprised to discover that many of the examples used in the book were from CEOs of major corporations. While reading further, I was convinced the author was not simply appealing to church leaders, but also to the CEOs of major corporations. He contended that both CEOs and pastors should practice the same laws of “spiritual leadership.” Being a natural critic and not very generous in my knee-jerk reactions to many scenarios, my assessment was that the author was endeavoring to play both sides—corporate and spiritual—to sell a book or to line up another interview or speaking engagement.

Honestly, I don’t think Christ was trying to sell books, teaching what He thought would have put Him in favor with the CEOs of His day. Christ’s words struck at worldly wisdom and challenged its assumptions, its laws of success, its foundations. I suspect that no successful man in his day would have considered Christ’s words to be common sense or very practical. In every culture today, people are trying to figure out how to be happy and not mourn; to win and not be trampled underfoot; to be rich and not poor—especially CEOs.

Faith Versus Common Sense

In his entry for October 30th in his devotional, *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers says, “Nothing Jesus Christ ever said is common sense, it is revelation sense.... Everything God has to say to man in his fallen condition is a contradiction of everything he intuitively, instinctively believes and embraces, which means that man at his basis is wrong, and God has a job on His hands.”

When God says something with which we disagree, intuitively we must in faith trust that He is right and we are wrong. Yes, EVEN if it doesn’t make sense to us. Chambers says, “Common sense is not faith, and faith is not common sense, but neither one must be disregarded.”

God has a way of bringing the two together in a fine balance. We must have common sense in that we cannot disregard such natural laws as gravity, sustenance for the body, hard work, and respect for others. On the other hand, we must never let “common sense” keep us from allowing God to work in our lives in ways which we never thought possible.

God will lead us spiritually with truths which, though not completely understood initially, will eventually begin to make “Kingdom sense.” He leads step-by-step on a higher path, slowly challenging what we have long thought to be true. And over time, He shows us, little by little, that His way is best. Faith in God’s ways is not to ignore common sense, but in reality to open doors to the spiritual world which are not accessible through “common sense.”

Intended for the Believer

This leads us to the greatest point: Christ’s sayings were not for the common, unregenerate man. They were not designed for us to become moralists, in our own pride trying to reach the goals which He set forth. Benjamin Franklin confessed that no matter how hard he tried to live the morals of Christianity, he could not keep all of the commandments all of the time. When he would get one area of his life under control, his general efforts to be “good” would derail in another area.

Christ’s words were not ideals for the common man. The truth is that Christ was not only a teacher, but He was also a Savior. He laid out goals and standards impossible to reach by mere self will. No man can take up the words of Christ and effectively apply them to his life. He will be in for disappointment. There must be something more! Indeed there is.

At the end of the road of bitter failures in our attempt to try to be better, there, suspended between earth and heaven, shines a cross. Upon that cross is the Savior who gave these very uncommon words: “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you...for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).

Mark Guy Pearse, a Methodist preacher (1842-1930), tells how he once preached a sermon on this text. When the sermon was over, a man came to him and said: “I wish I had known what you were going to preach about. I could have told you something.... Do you know why His yoke is light, sir? If not, I think I can tell you.”

Pearse responded, “Well, because the good Lord helps us to carry it, I suppose.”

The man shook his head saying, “I think I know better than that. You see, when I was a boy at home, I used to drive the oxen in my father’s yoke. Father’s yokes were always made heavier on one side than the other. Then, you see, we would put a weak bullock in alongside of a strong bullock, and the light end would come on the weak bullock, because the stronger one had the heavy part of it on his shoulder.” Then his face lit up as he said, “That is why the yoke is easy and the burden is light—because the Lord’s yoke is made after the same pattern, and the heavy end is upon His shoulder.”

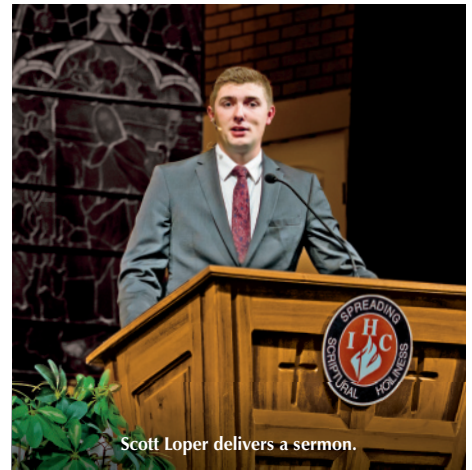
The Beatitudes were not common sense; they were revelation sense—Kingdom sense. They were truths which would be established in the heart of a man regenerated and filled with the Spirit—truths which only make sense to those who have a Helper—God Himself. ■

Michael Yancey is the Director of Donor Development at God’s Bible School. He pastored 28 years in Oklahoma, Texas, and Colorado, mostly bi-vocationally while also working in marketing and sales. Michael and his wife Regina have been married for 30 years and have four children and two grandchildren.



with a powerful message from recent GBS graduate and current staff member Scott Loper, which deeply resonated with attendees. The audience included youth from local churches as well as GBS students.

Following the service, the campus came alive with energy as the GBSC Enrollment Team organized an exciting array of activities for students and guests. The evening offered something for everyone, with volleyball and basket-



Scott Loper delivers a sermon.

IHC TRAVELING CONVENTION

On Friday, November 8, God's Bible School and College hosted the InterChurch Holiness Convention Cincinnati Area Traveling Convention, featuring a special evening service at 7:30 p.m. Organized by IHC's Time of Discovery Board, the preservice featured music by GBS Public Relations and a sermon by GBS ministerial student Stewart Quesenberry. The main service included inspiring music by GBS musicians and the Time of Discovery Quartet along

ball in the gym, pickleball and 9 Square on the main campus, and mini-basketball, air hockey, and foosball in the snack bar. Outside on the patio, attendees gathered around the fire to enjoy music, singing, and s'mores.

The snack bar was a favorite, serving specialty drinks, funnel cakes, and pizza. The event provided a mem-



GBS Covenant Trio sings in the pre-service.

REVIVALIST FAMILY

On these pages, we feature items about GBS alumni, significant events scheduled throughout the "Revivalist Family," and brief news notes from across the Holiness Movement.

BIRTHS



To **Renee (Albring) (BA '22)** and **Taylor Messner (BA '22)**, twin sons, **Ian Alexander** and **Emmett James**, born August 12, 2024, at the Brookwood Baptist Medical Center, Birmingham, AL. While students at GBS, both worked in the kitchen where each eventually were given management roles under the director, Debby Byer. Taylor now works as a sign special-

ist for Bell Company in Leeds, AL, and Renee is a stay-at-home mom. The Messners live in Pell City, AL.

DEATHS



Don Bradley Tillis, 64, Rutland, OH, passed away unexpectedly on November 3, 2024, while running a half marathon—something he loved doing. He was born on January 6, 1960, in Richmond, IN, to the Rev. Amos and Ruth (Awman) Tillis, the second of five children. He was the son of a preacher and missionary family, growing up in Meigs County, OH, but he also spent time in Africa. He graduated from Meigs High School in 1978, attended

orable evening of fellowship, fun, and refreshment for all who attended. —*Dr. Matt Hallam, V.P. for Enrollment Services*

HURRICANE RELIEF

Just before Thanksgiving, several faculty, staff, and students helped with hurricane relief in Valdosta, Georgia, which had been affected by three hurricanes in thirteen months, including Hurricane Helene. The hard-working team of eight included Lyle Witt, Phil Rehfeldt, Drew Rehfeldt, Bryan Witt,

Landon Witt, Timothy Hunter, Blake Dyal, and Howard Robinson.

After departing from campus on Friday evening, November 22nd, the team arrived in time for a day of service on Saturday with Samaritan's Purse, joining a larger group of volunteers. Samaritan's Purse provided lodging, meals, and logistical support for the hurricane relief efforts in Valdosta, having already connected nearly a thousand volunteers to hundreds of needy families in the region. Samaritan's Purse focuses not just on providing practical help, but also on



God's Bible College (1979-80), and graduated from Ohio University with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering in 1984. In 1985, Don married the love of his life, Gina Johnson, and they had four children.

Don was an incredibly intelligent man with many skills, interests, hobbies, and talents. He was a dedicated employee of Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), where he worked as a civil engineer for more than thirty years. He was a man of God who faithfully attended First Baptist Church, Gallipolis, OH. Don was also an avid farmer who enjoyed owning and raising various animals, baling hay, and managing his farm. He was a kind, generous man, who often privately donated money to local churches and notable causes.

Don is survived by his wife Gina; two children, Julie (Wesley) Thoene and Ben (Holly) Tillis; four grandchildren (with two more on the way); three sisters, Susan (Jerry) McVey, Barbara Williams, Rebecca Tillis; brother, Joseph (Faye) Tillis; and many cousins, nieces, nephews, and friends. Funeral services were held at the Anderson-McDaniel Funeral Home, Pomeroy, OH.

Don was a GBS donor and *God's Revivalist* subscriber. Several of Don's family were GBS alumni: his parents, Amos (HS '56, 1956-57) and Ruth (Awman) Tillis (ThB '56); his brother and sister-in-law, Joe (HS '88, 1988-92) and Faith (Duddek) Tillis (BA '92); and his nephew, Joseph Tillis (AA '22), who is the current GBS business manager.

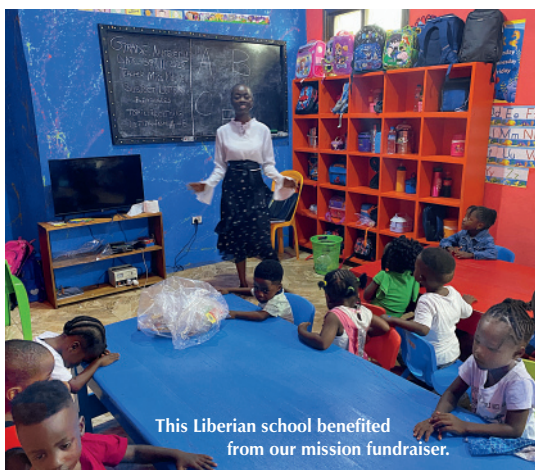
ministering to the emotional and spiritual needs of those served. Chaplains talked with residents affected by the disaster, and teams prayed with those served and gave each family a signed Bible.

During their volunteer hours on Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday, the team served four households who had applied for help, tarping leaky roofs, trimming damaged trees, removing fallen debris, deconstructing a dilapidated shed, and removing water-damaged dry-wall. The team left early on Wednesday, November 27, to return to Cincinnati, arriving home in time to join family and friends for Thanksgiving.

—*Dr. Lyle Witt, chair, Division of Professional Studies*

FALL MISSIONS FUNDRAISER

Over the last few years, the students and employees of GBSC have participated in a fall fundraiser for missions. In the past, funds have been raised for a water well in Honduras and a church in Lesotho. This



This Liberian school benefited from our mission fundraiser.

year, the project's purpose was to provide funds toward an addition to a school in Liberia. The fundraiser was turned into a contest between the male and female members of the campus family. The gentlemen once again claimed the prize by reaching their goal the fastest. Contests are fun, but the best part of the project was raising over \$5,000 for missions!

—*Sonja Vernon, V.P. for Student Affairs*

THE ROSAS COME TO GBS

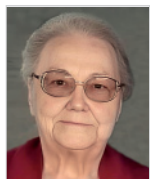
The Division of Professional Studies welcomed two additional



Rev. and Mrs. Adrian and Carol Rosa

faculty members to campus in January: Adrian and Carol Rosa. Both Rosas bring strong educational credentials. Rev. Adrian Rosa earned his MA in Literary Criticism from Florida Atlantic University and has an undergraduate background in classics, along with additional graduate work; Carol earned her MEd in educational foundations (multicultural education) from Florida Atlantic and has an undergraduate background in

REVIVALIST FAMILY continued



Thelma R. Cravens, 85, of Cincinnati, OH, formerly of Clarksville, IN, went home to be with her Lord and Savior on Monday morning, November 18, 2024. She was born on February 13, 1939, in Crawford County, IN, a daughter of Leonard and Vertie Jones. She married Robert E. Cravens, a former Navy veteran of World War II, who was a 1st class millwright with Colgate Palmolive Company.

Thelma was preceded in death by her husband, Robert E. Cravens, Sr., and a daughter, Jessica. Those left to cherish her memory include her children, Theresa (Joseph) Roberson, Robert E. (Carol) Cravens

Jr., Mark L. (Teresa) Cravens, and Christopher D. (Julie) Cravens; 16 grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren; and 2 siblings, Philo Jones and Tilden Jones. Funeral services were held at Christ's Community Church of the Nazarene, New Albany, IN, with Rev. Philo Jones officiating. Burial followed at Walnut Ridge Cemetery in Jeffersonville, IN.

Thelma was a *God's Revivalist* subscriber and many of her family attended GBS. Of her 16 grandchildren, 2 graduated from both the college and high school, 4 graduated from the college only, and 4 others attended only the college at GBS. Mark and Teresa Cravens, Thelma's son and daughter-in-law, are former GBS employees. ■

psychology, along with graduate hours in educational administration.

The Rosas have ministered in three Christian colleges, including one internationally. They have also served in the community college sector. Their work has included both teaching and administrative roles. Along with this, they have served three churches for nearly thirty years.

GBS is delighted to have the Rosas, who have taught as adjuncts in the past, joining the campus community! —*Dr. Aaron Profitt, V.P. for Academic Affairs*

EMPLOYEE CHRISTMAS DINNER

The annual Christmas Dinner for GBS employees and their families was held Thursday, December 12, in the Answers Center at the Ark Encounter in Williams-town, KY. This was a new venue and was very beautifully decorated by Kara Watters' creative lighted centerpieces on each table, which afterward were gifted to the person at the table whose birthday was closest to Christmas. After opening greetings and prayer by President Loper, dinner was served featuring beef tenderloin tips in a mushroom marsala sauce, grilled chicken with mango and avocado salsa, mixed green salad with garden vegetables and dressings, blended rice pilaf or buttered noodles, glazed baby carrots, brussel sprouts, crusted dinner rolls, and blueberry white chocolate cheesecake or decadent chocolate cake.

The entertainment included an auction of eight donated items: two Cheesecake Factory gift cards, a Cabela's gift card, two Ember mugs, two Apple watches, and a Williams Sonoma gift card. Each adult was given an envelope with \$25 of fake money. Everyone played "Rock, Paper, Scissors" to either lose or increase their holdings. Those who lost their money could guess what Christmas carol Melissa Loper played three notes of, and, if successful, received \$200 in fake money. After all this fun, the auction began. Everything sold for large amounts, with the paid fake money being redistributed to people who could guess the birthdays or anniversaries of people in attendance. So for every succeeding item, the auction went higher. The final item was bid by the longest tenured employee at

each table with the table's combined money. Dr. Allan Brown won that bid. Everyone had an enjoyable time, collaborating or competing for the auction items. At the end, Chancellor Mike Avery jokingly suggested pooling all the fake money to send the president's family on a lovely vacation!

The campus children were blessed with Christmas gifts presented by President and Mrs. Loper. A beautiful family picture on canvas was presented to the Loper family. President Loper led in several Christmas carols. There were 208 in attendance. Everyone enjoyed the Christmas lights at the Ark after the event concluded. —*Janet Albertson*



Winter gently arrives at the GBS campus.



Festive lights greet visitors to the Christmas program.

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

The GBS Christmas program was presented three times at two separate locations: the Adcock Chapel of God's Bible School and the Answers Center at The Ark Encounter in Williamstown, KY. Guests arriving for this year's campus productions, December 6 and 8, were welcomed by festive Christmas lights, main campus Christmas trees, and a free coffee, hot chocolate, and cookie bar, along with the opportunity to purchase specialty drinks from the new 1810 Coffee Shop in The Commons on Main Campus. Guests attending the production at the Answers Center enjoyed both the beautiful "ChristmasTime at the Ark Encounter" and the GBS Christmas production free of charge. Special thanks to Ken Ham and his team of amazing people for so graciously hosting the event.

Good News, a musical drama written by music faculty member Michael DeStefano and developed by the music faculty team, was a personal invitation to rejoice in the incarnate Christ. The audience followed the story of Margot, a young professional who was directing a Christmas program at her local church while juggling the sometimes chaotic demands of life at Christmastime. She again experienced the story of the Incarnation and realized that "God With Us" redeems all of life.

The performance group totaled approximately 166 people and included members of the College Choir, Christmas Choir, High School Choir, Symphonic Wind and String Ensemble, drama cast, and guest alumni.

Joining Producer Jana Pop were Michael DeStefano (also drama director) and Timothy Crater, music directors; and support staff: Rachelle DeStefano, Timothy Long, Martha Miller, Nicolae Pop, Jessica Smith, Nate Witt, and Lane Webb. Each performance was well received by those who packed the chapel on Friday and Sunday, those who joined via livestream, and by guests at the Ark Encounter. The campus family invited many friends, family, and acquaintances, including those in the community. We thank the many volunteers who helped make our Christmas celebration so special. We hope that you make plans to attend next year! —*Dr. Jana Pop, Music Division Chair* ■



In a scene from the GBS production of "Good News," Kevin (Josiah England) and Margot (Madalyn Cancio) have a directorial discussion while rehearsing their church Christmas program.



GBS Christmas production *Good News* curtain call at the Ark Encounter



Board of Trustees 2024 Highlights

The Board of Trustees of God's Bible School and College is comprised of a godly group of individuals who are tasked with the responsibility of protecting and strengthening the mission of GBSC. We have inherited a sacred trust from the men and women who birthed this institution in 1900 and the thousands who have sacrificed over the years to keep the light shining brightly from the Hilltop in Mount Auburn.

Here are highlights of events and changes to the GBSC Board in the past year:

- After serving with distinction on the board for 45 years, **Dr. Leonard Sankey** retired from active service in May 2023. In recognition of his significant contributions, he was given the title "Board Member Emeritus" upon his retirement. Out of a tremendous sense of loss to us, but also with a deep-felt celebration of his life, we acknowledge Dr. Sankey's Homegoing in July of this year. It is impossible to capture the impact that he had on this institution, but in a symbolic gesture of gratitude, the board participated in a moment of silence to honor the legacy of Dr. Sankey at our December meeting.
- **Monte Stetler, Jr.** began his service on the board in 2008 and ably contributed to the governance of this institution for 16 years. His business mind brought many insightful perspectives to the discussion around the table and his quick wit engendered humorous moments that aided in the building of our team. At the end of his 4th term in May 2024, he felt that it was time to move on, and, although we will miss his presence in the room, we wish him the best and pray that God will repay him abundantly for his labor of love to the ministry of GBSC.
- With a sense of gratitude and expectation, the board is pleased to announce the addition of a new member this year. **Amy Eavey** has joined the board with many years of experience in corporate leadership. She currently serves as the Vice President of Patient Access for Parkview Health, Fort Wayne, Indiana, and brings a valuable business-oriented perspective with a strong background in strategic planning, organizational development, and lean processes. She is the wife of pastor and GBSC alumnus Mike Eavey of the Wesleyan Redeemer Bible Methodist Church. She is looking forward to contributing to an organization that is shaping our future, and she is excited to help further the mission of GBSC. We are honored to welcome Amy to the board!

We are extremely grateful for the favor God has shown to His school, and our prayer is that He will give us wisdom to discern His plan as we face the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Robert England, Jr., Chair,
GBSC Board of Trustees





The first
BEATITUDE

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

by Stephen Oliver

Jesus spent the days of His earthly ministry traveling, healing and teaching. We have a record of only a small part of what Jesus did. With a touch of hyperbole, John tells us in 21:25 that “the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” if everything Jesus did was recorded in detail. Likewise, we have only a small portion of Jesus’ direct teaching—many times the Gospel writers tell us that Jesus taught the crowds, without recording exactly what Jesus taught them.

GOD’S REVIVALIST and BIBLE ADVOCATE



But while Scripture is not an exhaustive record of every historical detail, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit guarantees that what is recorded is completely sufficient for our spiritual life. There are no “lost” or “secret” teachings of Jesus waiting to be discovered. Furthermore, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit guarantees that Scripture is perfectly accurate regarding both doctrine and history. So when the Gospel accounts differ, they are recording different details or emphases of the narrative.

This is what is happening with the first beatitude: Matthew 5:3 records it as “blessed are the poor in spirit,” whereas Luke 6:20 reads “blessed are the poor.” Scholars disagree on whether Matthew and Luke record the same event or the same sermon given on different occasions; in either case, the basic teaching is the same. The two writers are emphasizing different aspects of the same truth, and understanding both of these different emphases helps us get a much deeper understanding of the teaching.

But did Jesus say “blessed are the poor,” or “blessed are the poor in spirit”? Actually, He would have said both! He travelled and preached, which meant that He likely gave the same sermon on multiple occasions, and the two phrases may well have come from different occasions. Also, His original sermon (or sermons, if Matthew and Luke are describing different occasions) was almost certainly longer than the version found in either Gospel: the Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew 5-7 would take about 10 minutes to recite, and Luke’s sermon is significantly shorter. Unless Jesus was remarkably short-winded, His actual sermon would have included more detail and explanation than is recorded, which means that He might well have used both phrases at different times in His explanation. So neither Matthew nor Luke are making anything up, they are simply recounting different details from the sermon.

THE FIRST
BEATITUDE IS NOT A
DESCRIPTION OF
HOW TO BECOME A
BELIEVER, BUT A
STATEMENT OF WHY
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APPLY TO ALL
BELIEVERS, BUT
THEY EACH FOCUS ON
A SPECIFIC
CIRCUMSTANCE OR
CHARACTER
QUALITY.

“BLESSED ARE . . .”

But what does “blessed are the poor (in spirit)” mean? In answering that question, we must first note that the beatitudes were directed to Jesus’ disciples—to those who were already committed to following Him and His teachings. Luke 6:20 reads, “Looking toward His disciples, He said...” while Matthew 5:1 specifies that “His disciples came to Him, and He taught them...” This means that the first beatitude is not a description of how to become a believer, but a statement of why believers are blessed. In fact, all beatitudes apply to all believers, but they each focus on a specific circumstance or character quality. It’s like saying, “If you are troubled, He is the Prince of Peace.” The fact is that He is the Prince of Peace whether you are troubled or not, but that specific role is most meaningful to those who are troubled. In the same way, the beatitudes are pointing out blessings that are most meaningful to or needed by specific believers, not limiting the blessings to only those believers.

As has often been noted, the meaning of the Greek word translated “blessed” (*makarios*), differs from the modern English “happy.” The basic idea of *makarios* is “free from the cares and worries of life.” The pagan Greek writers used the term to describe the gods, the dead who went to paradise, and even the living who had achieved a high level of wealth and success. Understanding this idea of “blessed” emphasizes the paradoxical nature of Luke’s first beatitude: rather than the powerful and wealthy, it is the poor who are free from the cares and worries of life.

“ . . . THE POOR (IN SPIRIT) . . . ”

When Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor,” He was drawing on the Old Testament idea of “poor,” which



often—but not always—referred to financial need. For example, in Psalm 40:17, King David wrote, “I am poor and needy.” While David may have experienced financial need at some points in his life, he certainly didn’t after he became king! So some versions render the phrase “afflicted and needy.” The basic idea of the word is to have an unmet need, which may or may not be financial; in Psalm 40, the two words together emphasize David’s utter dependence on God.

So in the first beatitude, “the poor” refers to anyone who is in need, whether financially or in some other way, while “poor in spirit” clarifies two aspects of the meaning of “poor.” First, the need is genuine, not just surface. Scripture’s use of “in spirit” typically means something like “deeply,” “genuinely,” “sincerely,” or “from the heart.” Hannah was “oppressed in spirit” because of her barrenness (1 Sam. 1:15); Jesus was “deeply moved in spirit” at Lazarus’ death (John 11:33); true worshippers worship God “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24). So “poor in spirit” indicates a deep, genuine need, not just an unfulfilled desire. To believers who are in poverty or face another genuine need, Jesus says, “You are blessed, because the kingdom of God belongs to you.”

But in reality, none of us actually own anything. Our possessions belong to us only in a very temporary, surface sort of way. Our ability to work and earn is a result of the strength that God provides. If we enjoy good health, it is a gift from God. The very breath in our lungs is His to bestow or withhold as He sees fit. In reality, every one of us is deeply, genuinely poor: this beatitude applies to every one of us.

If this is true physically (and it is!), it is even more true spiritually. And so the second emphasis of “poor in spirit” is that real poverty is spiritual, not just material. In ourselves, we have no ability or inclination toward spiritual things. The very desire and ability to respond to God is itself a result of God’s grace. Throughout the Christian life, it is only “by the grace of God that I am what I am” (1 Cor. 15:10). And the more we realize this, the more we live in light of this reality, the more we experience the blessing of God’s kingdom.

“...FOR YOURS IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

Instead of offering a future-oriented promise as He does in some of the other beatitudes, here Jesus points to a present reality: “yours is the kingdom of God.” But as we delve a little deeper into this statement, we find that it’s not as simple as it seems on the surface. The English term “kingdom” primarily refers to a geographical area ruled by a king; the Greek term primarily refers to the authority of the king. So the “kingdom of God” isn’t a specific area or set of possessions; it’s God’s authority over creation, and especially over those who willingly em-

brace His lordship. It’s even sometimes used as a synonym for salvation (Matt. 18:3). So “yours is the kingdom of God” isn’t directly referring to owning something—How could we own God’s authority?

Jesus is engaging in a slight play on words here. Usually, poverty means that you don’t own enough “stuff,” but in place of stuff, believers possess a relationship with God that more than fulfills their physical and spiritual needs. As members of God’s kingdom, we have access in Christ to everything we will ever need. In this world, we may be financially impoverished; in ourselves, we are certainly spiritually impoverished; in Christ, we have “everything pertaining to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3).

This beatitude is a paradigm shift, a call to a new recognition of reality: we possess nothing, and material poverty can be a reminder of this fact. Yet as we accept the rule of God in our hearts and lives, we find our needs supplied. The blessed life, the life above common cares and trials, is a life which looks to Christ for every need and is lived moment-by-moment in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul discovered this secret, and he explained it in Philippians 4:12-13, “In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” Brother Lawrence, the medieval monk and author of *The Practice of the Presence of God*, wrote, “Ask of GOD, not deliverance from your pains, but strength to bear resolutely, for the love of Him, all that He should please, and as long as He shall please.” Without formal support, George Muller established 117 schools and cared for more than 10,000 orphans, saying, “Through faith my eyes do not look at the meager supplies and the empty purse, but to the riches of the Lord.” Millard Fuller, co-founder of Habitat for Humanity, understood that his wealth was not his own, declaring, “My responsibility is to use what God has given me to help His people in need.” In their own times and ways, in a wide variety of financial conditions, facing many challenging circumstances, all of these and countless other believers have lived out the truth of this first beatitude. Believers who acknowledge their personal need and fully submit to God’s sovereignty find that His riches do indeed enable them to live the blessed life, free from common cares and troubles. ■

All Scripture quotes are from the NASB.

Dr. Stephen Oliver has taught full-time in the GBS Ministerial Education Division since 2022. Previously he served in a variety of pastoral roles, including Family Life Pastor in Thomasville, NC, and Lead Pastor in Troy, MO, as well as teaching part-time for the GBS Aldersgate Distance Education Program. He lives in Cincinnati with his wife Angie and three children, Cameron, Adrianna, and Will.

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Dear Phil



MEN'S HAIR AND GOD'S GLORY

You argue that man's status as the glory of God remains unchanged since creation. Why isn't it inconsistent for God to require men to cut their hair because they are the glory of God (1 Cor. 11:7, 14) and then require men not to cut their hair in the Nazirite vow (Num. 6)? —Ryan

Dear Ryan,

Good question. Two principles inform my answer: (1) Only commands required by God's unchanging character must be unchanging. (2) God is free to modify meanings He assigns to human actions. Let me explain.

First, Scripture tells us God does not change in his essential character (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8), and some laws flow from His unchanging character (e.g., be holy, judge justly—Lev. 19:2, 15). But, not all commands are required by His character. Some commands express His sovereign will in creation (e.g., heterosexual marriage). Others express His desire for human well-being culturally (e.g., roof walls—Deut. 22:8). Others are a function of a particular covenantal relationship (e.g., circumcision in the Abrahamic covenant—Gen. 17:10). Still others are a function of placing limits upon the effects of human sinfulness (e.g., divorce permitted due to hardness of heart—Deut. 24:1-4; Matt. 19:8). Since God's commands do not all have the same basis, some may be cancelled or have exceptions without God being inconsistent.

Consider marriage. God's creation plan is that humans marry and

procreate (Gen. 1:28), and Paul teaches that marriage symbolizes Christ's relationship with the Church (Eph. 5:32). Yet God permits individuals to choose a celibate life to serve him (1 Cor. 7). Since marriage is not required by God's character, the celibacy exception doesn't make God inconsistent. Further, Jesus teaches us that there will be no "marrying or giving in marriage" after the Resurrection. Apparently, there will be no sexual multiplication in the new heavens and new earth (Luke 20:35). The future cessation of getting married will be a complete change of God's will regarding marriage. From this we learn that commands rooted in creation may have God-ordained exceptions or be revoked. Since the command is not a function of God's character, neither the exceptions nor the change involve God in inconsistency.

Second, God is free to suspend or change meanings He assigns to human actions because the meanings are not inherent in the actions themselves. For instance, God made circumcision the sign of the Mosaic covenant. But circumcision does not inherently signal a spiritual cov-

enant. God simply assigned it that meaning. In the New Covenant, that meaning is removed, and circumcision isn't required.

At creation God designated man as His glory (Psa. 8:5; 1 Cor. 11:7-9), a status that continues unchanged (Gen. 1:26-27; James 3:9). This created status is the basis of Paul's prohibition against men being "covered" when praying or prophesying (1 Cor. 11:7). A covered man—which I argue elsewhere refers to a man with uncut hair—shames Christ who is his Head (1 Cor. 11:3-4). It appears, then, that God assigned the meaning of "reflecting man's status as the glory of God" to men having cut hair.

The Nazirite vow was given to Israel within the context of the Mosaic covenant (Num. 6). It permitted people to voluntarily consecrate themselves to God in a special way for a limited period of time (Num. 6:2, 13). God did not require anyone to take the vow. The male Nazirite was set apart by, among other things, allowing his hair to grow uncut for the duration of the vow.

In this case, God makes an exception to the normal meaning He assigned to men's hair. For the Nazirite, uncut hair temporarily signified dedication to God. That this was an exception to God's normal design is evident in the requirement to cut one's hair when the vow ended (Num. 6:18). Like God's permission for some to remain unmarried, this temporary suspension of the normal meaning assigned to men's hair does not compromise His consistency. Both cases exemplify God's freedom to make exceptions to created norms that are not rooted in His unchanging character.

Blessings,
Philip

Dr. A. Philip Brown II is the Graduate Program director and a member of the ministerial faculty at God's Bible School and College.



student focus

AUSTRALIA BARS UNDER 16 FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

A new law passed in Australia, sets a minimum age of 16 for users of platforms such as Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram, and X. This social media ban was signed into law in December by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese who has said that the law puts Australia at the vanguard of efforts to protect the mental health and well-being of children from detrimental effects of social media, such as online hate or bullying. Although there are no specific details of which other platforms will be included and how the law will be enforced, corporations could be fined the equivalent of about 32 million U.S. dollars for “systemic” failures to implement age requirements.

WEB DESIGNER AND CAKE MAKER UPDATES

When Lorie Smith, a Christian web designer, refused to violate her religious beliefs by creating websites for same-sex couples, Colorado’s Civil Rights Division tried to force her to do so. What followed was an eight-year legal battle that resulted in the U.S. Supreme Court taking up the case and deciding in favor of Smith. That state organization is now a party to the settlement and has agreed to pay \$1.5 million to Smith’s attorneys.

Many will remember the case of Jack Phillips of Masterpiece

Cakeshop, also in Colorado. For over 10 years, he fought multiple lawsuits from the state for refusing to bake cakes which celebrated gay marriage or gender transitions. The result is that the Colorado Supreme Court dismissed the lawsuit against Jack Phillips.

Precedent has been set, and these decisions have already been cited in many court decisions and other legal publications. Let us pray that religious freedoms will continue to prevail.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SAID TO BE TARGETING CHRISTIANS

The American Principles Project (APP) released a report in November 2024 showing that over the previous four years, about 70% of the enforcement actions taken by the U.S. Education Department dealt with faith-based and career schools, even though such schools represent less than 10% of students in the U.S. Jon Schweppe, APP Policy Director, said this shows that parts of the federal government were being “weaponized” to target the opponents of the past administration.

“NONES” FLATLINE

In its latest release from the “2024 State of the Bible,” the American Bible Society said that the percentage of U.S. adults not affiliated with a religion has flatlined at 26% since 2022 after decades of growth. ■

ASHLEY GOING, from Greenfield, IN, grew up in a Christian home and attended public school through high school. She knew about GBS because her brother and sister attended. She couldn’t wait for it finally to be “her turn!” Her decision was solidified with the Christian Worldview Scholarship she received in her freshman year. She reports that GBS changed her perspective to a better biblical worldview. Ashley loves the classes that teach her how to be a teacher. “I also love the staff and faculty who make me feel welcome and valuable on campus.” Living on campus has taught her “responsibility, independence, and patience.”

Ashley is pursuing a BA in elementary education with plans to graduate in 2026. She feels called to work with children, possibly as an elementary school teacher, daycare provider, Sunday school teacher, or even a stay-at-home mom. After graduation, Ashley will explore openings for an elementary classroom position. ■

Seventy-five percent of our students receive some form of financial aid which enables them to attend GBS. If you would like to support students with financial needs, you may send a gift to:

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God’s Bible School and College
1810 Young Street
Cincinnati, OH 45202

or give online anytime at
www.gbs.edu/givenow



on the Road again
 WITH GBS PUBLIC RELATIONS

TEAM HOLDS REVIVAL SERVICES IN ALASKA

by Duane Quesenberry

What began with a September Facebook invitation from a pastor in North Pole, Alaska, resulted in an extended ministry trip for the Quesenberrys and Covenant Trio who were invited to provide revival services at the North Pole Missionary Chapel, pastored by Rev. Randy Huff.

On Monday evening, November 18th, the team departed from Cincinnati and landed in Fairbanks on the afternoon of Tuesday, November 19th.

The services began on Tuesday and concluded on Sunday evening with the trio singing and Duane Quesenberry preaching each night. The ministry team consisted of Bradley Thomas, Eliana Wilson, Jaelyn Hatfield, Royal Grubbs,

Stewart Quesenberry (Public Relations representative) and Duane and Valorie Quesenberry. In addition to the nightly services, the team was also privileged to participate in additional ministry opportunities for the church community. After a bit of sightseeing on Thursday morning with Pastor Huff, the sponsors and students accompanied him for home visits and provided a cappella music and prayer for individuals who weren't able to attend revival services. After the Thursday evening service, the guys in the group joined with Pastor Huff in a work night on the remodel project of the church's Family Life Center, working until midnight on framing and installing insulation. On Friday morning, the group participated in a chapel service at the Far

North Christian School with the trio singing and Royal Grubbs preaching.

Following the Friday evening service, the GBS group joined with the church youth ministry staff in providing a time of food and fun at the parsonage for the church teens. And finally, on Saturday morning, the trio went to radio station KJNP 1170, a 50,000 watt AM station that



BOTTOM LEFT: Singing at North Pole Missionary Chapel.
 BELOW: North Pole Missionary Chapel.
 RIGHT: Helping remodel the Family Life Center.
 NEXT PAGE TOP: Live singing on KJNP 1170 AM.
 NEXT PAGE BOTTOM: Rev. Randy Huff (left) and the GBS team.



GOD'S REVIVALIST and BIBLE ADVOCATE

reaches into Russia, to sing on air before Stewart Quesenberry introduced the listening audience to God's Bible School and College.

Sunday was a full day of regularly scheduled services, including a noon meal with about twenty GBS alumni in attendance. The revival services ended on Sunday evening. On Monday the group enjoyed a little more sightseeing in beautiful Alaska and then led the Monday night youth ministry at the church before heading to the Fairbanks airport for the long flight back to Cincinnati. It was a great week of worship and fellowship with old friends as well as with new acquaintances in the congregation.

The GBS team enjoyed this memorable trip and are grateful to Pastor Randy Huff and his wife Jane for their wonderful hospitality and for the opportunity to minister to the congregation. The group arrived safely back in Cincinnati on Tuesday evening, and though exhausted, most departed within hours to travel to be with family for Thanksgiving. ■

Duane Quesenberry (BRE '94) is the GBS Director of Public Relations. He is married to Valorie (Bender) (BSM '94), GBS Director of Financial Aid. The two have four adult children and one grandchild.



by Sonja Vernon

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.... I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." —John 10:11, 14-15 ESV

Over the last several months, I have been thinking about the implications of Christ as my Good Shepherd. I've been reminded that the Good Shepherd is committed to the well-being of His sheep. John 10 goes so far as to say that He "lays down his life for the sheep." He sacrificially gives of Himself for the good of His flock. Because He is committed to their well-being, the Good Shepherd also provides for their needs. A sheep never worries about its next meal or drink of water. It doesn't think about where it will sleep or if it will have adequate shelter from the coming storm. Those concerns belong to the shepherd. The Good Shepherd knows His sheep, and they know Him. A sheep can easily distinguish its master's voice by simply spending time with its shepherd. The job of a sheep is astonishingly simple: stay with the shepherd.

The metaphor of the Good Shepherd has reminded me of the simplicity of life in and with Christ. He is knowable, and He knows me. I learn His voice by time spent in His presence, by feeding on His Word. My only concern is to stay with the Shepherd. It is His job to provide for everything else. Direction, protection, provision—anything good for me—is His obligation. Worry is unnecessary. Striving is foolish. In this new year, my goal is simple. I plan to stay with the Shepherd. ■

Sonja Vernon is Vice President for Student Affairs at God's Bible School.

COLLEGE CHOIR WINTER TOUR 2025

Wednesday, February 19 | 7:00 PM
Haven of Rest Bible Church
1100 Edmonds Rd., Galax, VA 24333
Pastor David Spivey
Info: (276) 237-3007

Thursday, February 20 | 7:00 PM
Faith Community Chapel
345 Faith Chapel Rd.
Thomasville, NC 27360
Pastor Jonathan Heath
Info: (336) 472-6881

Friday, February 21 | 7:00 PM
Easley Bible Methodist Church
855 Gentry Memorial Hwy.
Easley, SC 29640
Pastor Jonathan Slagenweit
Info: (864) 395-7247

Saturday, February 22 — Travel Day

Sunday, February 23 | 10:00 AM
Light and Life Free Methodist Church
5730 Deeson Rd., Lakeland, FL 33810
Pastor Jeff Bellinger
Info: (863) 858-6361

Sunday, February 23 | 6:00 PM
Florida Holiness Camp
100 Year Anniversary Celebration
3335 S. Florida Ave.
Lakeland, FL 33803
Dr. Ted Lee, Pres. | Info: (863) 646-5152

Monday, February 24 | 7:00 PM
Avon Park Holiness Camp
1001 W. Lake Isis Ave.
Avon Park, FL 33825
Dr. Tom Hermis, President
Info: (863) 453-6831

Tuesday, February 25 | 7:00 PM
Ada Chapel Bible Methodist Church
12540 N. Scottsville Rd.
West Blocton, AL 35184
Pastor Cale Manley
Info: (513) 254-8241

Wednesday, February 26 | 7:00 PM
Mackey Church of the Nazarene
9612 E. Main St.
Mackey, IN 47654
Pastor Jared Henry
Info: (812) 795-2708

For updates on tour information, go to <https://www.gbs.edu/news-events/musictours/>

— GOD'S BIBLE SCHOOL & COLLEGE —

COLLEGE CHOIR

