

# CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED!



# PRISONER

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

*"And you shall  
know the truth,  
and the truth shall  
make you free".*

John 8:32

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"Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!" Almost all Christian countries pronounce these exclamations annually on the holy day of Easter, which is a significant date of the Resurrection of Christ. On this day, not only believers, but also most non-believers, say these very words to each other instead of the usual greeting. And after all this, is it possible to refute the fact that our Lord's resurrection from the dead really took place?! What makes unbelievers say such affirmative words on this day, thereby confirming the truth of the Holy Gospel?!

I thought about this for a long time, but did not come to the truth immediately. At the beginning, I went through the Scriptures trying to find the answer to this question. However, I came across more and more passages that unambiguously emphasized the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, but nothing more. Then one day I was lucky to say these words to one unbeliever on Easter day: "Christ is risen!" The response came immediately: "He is risen indeed!" Of course, a smile immediately brightened my face and I asked him: "Do you believe that Christ has really risen?" The man, without hesitation, immediately answered "I believe, but I do not

*sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked — But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:3-12).*

## GOD'S ALL-FORGIVING LOVE

understand how this can be!" Then I asked: "So you still believe in the existence of God?!" And to my surprise he calmly answered me: "Of course I do, for even the demons believe and tremble, my grandmother told me about this in childhood".

I then spoke with him for a long time about why he still has not turned to God in repentance and has not accepted Jesus Christ into his heart as his personal Savior. Thank God, now this person is a believer and already quite consciously glorifies the Lord for his salvation and forgiveness of sins. But then, more than fifteen years ago when I asked the question: "Why don't you repent?" this man, and now a brother in Christ, shortly replied: "My sins won't allow me and God won't forgive me", and despite the fact that I tried to explain to him that the Lord forgives every sinner, his repentance happened much later. However, all these years while he was approaching Jesus Christ, his lips repeated in the affirmative: "He is risen indeed!" on the day of Easter.

And thank God that at least on this day, faith awakens in many hearts and we all around the world proclaim this greatest event that God showed us by raising His Son from the dead. Christ is risen! And there is no doubt about that. Moreover, His resurrection took place not only two thousand years ago. This event takes place every day, since with every born-again person, Christ is born again and again and is resurrected in such hearts. It does not matter at all that the day of Easter falls on a different date every year. For true Christians, Christ is resurrected literally every day in their lives, thereby giving even greater hope and faith in eternal life.

Therefore, there is no day in the year when it would be inappropriate for a Christian to say: "Christ is risen!"

When I think about how great God's love is for us sinners, I then clearly understand how insignificant our love is for God and towards our neighbor. With each step of spiritual growth, it becomes clear how far we are all from the perfection that was given to us initially at the creation of the world. **"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27).**

Since we were created in the image and likeness of God, it would seem that should prevail in us. But, unfortunately, our perfection still remains at a very low level. We talk a lot about love and the need to love our neighbor, but in fact our love is most often manifested only in words.

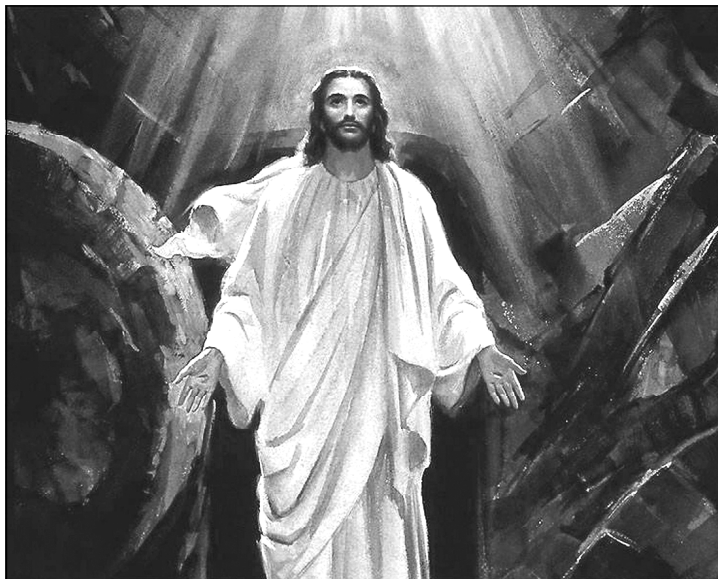
On the eve of the great event of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead — I would like to remember how perfect God's love is for us sinners; God did not spare even His only

begotten Son so that through His death our sins would be atoned for. **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).**

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ is not measurable by any quantity, invaluable and incomparable to anything. **"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21).**

Jesus Christ, having traversed His earthly path established by God the Father, completed His earthly mission to the end:

**"He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a**



And what kind of love did He need to have for us to endure all this humiliation and abuse of human hands. To die for those who, cannot or should not have been forgiven. A sinless person gave His life for sinners, so that everyone now has the opportunity for God's mercy and His forgiveness. All this is beyond any understanding, since only forgiving Love is capable of this. Christ died and rose from the dead for the sake of our justification, in order to become an intercessor for us before the Heavenly Father.

The Bright Resurrection of Christ, which is celebrated annually on Easter Day, should not be a reason for drunkenness and idleness, as is practiced in the world. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is, first of all, the remembrance and awareness of the human cruelty that humanity applied to the One who came to this sinful earth to save the lost. I really want everyone reading this article to answer the question: do I have such a love that, without condemnation I am able to give my life for others if necessary, as Christ did?! And if everyone really thinks about this, then perhaps we will then better realize how much we need to grow in our love towards our neighbors. For today there are too many words about love, which are practiced very little. But we can get a real assessment of our love for God by the love we have towards others. And if we are still so far from perfect love, then let us at least work on getting as close as possible to it. For our approach to perfect love brings us closer to God Himself, since God is love!

Christ did not impute sin to anyone. He voluntarily allowed Himself to be taken, cruelly tortured, abused, ridiculed, and died for the sins of all people to give us the opportunity for salvation. Christ is risen for our justification. His all-forgiving love has no boundaries.

Dear brothers and sisters, the editorial office of the publication "Prisoner", cordially congratulates you all on this significant and great event — the Resurrection of Christ! Let us allow our Savior Jesus Christ to be resurrected in our hearts yesterday, today, and every new day. For, proclaiming His holy resurrection in each new day, we destroy and annihilate those obstacles of the devil which he sets for people who have not yet been saved. One has only to think about the fact that when we all together proclaim the resurrection of Christ, then even with unbelieving people Satan cannot close their mouths from exclamatory and affirmative words: "Christ is risen!" And therefore, may these words always be alive and eternal, for they contain not only the Truth but also the mighty power of God, before which the devil trembles.

Christ is risen! Truly is risen!

I. GORIK.

## CHRISTIAN NEWS

### Irish nun honored for education services in Pakistan

Irish Catholic nun Berhmans Conway has devoted more than seventy years to education in Pakistan. Among her students are the ex-prime minister of Pakistan, as well as other celebrities of the country, writes UCA News.

To honor Sister Berhmans' ministry, on November 16, 2020, the Karachi District Authority opened a highway in her honor. They also presented the Berhmans Road official documents and thanked all the nuns for their educational services in Pakistan.

The opening was attended by District Commissioner Iftikhar Shallwani, Honorary Consul General, Sister Mary Lagan and other nuns, teachers and students.

Mariyam Kashif, a Catholic educator and social activist from Karachi, said Sister Berhmans has earned this honor throughout her life in Pakistan.

"She really is our pride. Among her students are former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, opposition leader Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Sharmin Obaid-Chinoy, Asma Jahangir and other politicians and show business figures", Kashif said.

"Her contribution to the field of education is enormous, and she will always be remembered. Sister Berhmans devoted nearly seventy-one years of her life to Lahore, Murri and Karachi teaching Muslim, Christian, Persian and Hindu children".

Sister Berhmans Conway was born in Ireland in 1930 and joined the monastery of Jesus and Mary in 1951 in Willesden (London), before moving to Pakistan at the age of twenty-four to devote her life to teaching in a Muslim country.

In 2012, she was awarded one of the country's highest civil awards, the Sitara-e-Quaid-e-Azam. The award recognized her "consistent commitment to duty for fifty-nine years, which made Sister Berhmans a living example to follow".

In July 2019, Sister Berhmans was awarded the Queen Mary University of London Benedict Medal at Westminster Cathedral. She has taught at the schools of Jesus and Mary Monastery in Karachi, Lahore and Murri.

<https://bog.news>

# CALVARY OFFERS SACRIFICE FOR OUR SIN

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming — not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, ‘Here I am — it is written about me in the scroll — I have come to do your will, my God’”. First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them” — though they were offered in accordance with the law. Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will”. He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy (**Hebrews 10:1–14, NIV**).

In the above passage of Scripture, two expressions should be noted: the sacrifice for sins and the sacrifices for sins. By consonance, these two expressions — sacrifice and sacrifices — can stand side by side, but in meaning they are infinitely far from each other. The sacrifices for sin are bulls, goats, and lambs, which are innumerable in the Old Testament period. The sacrifice for sin is Christ, who died on Calvary and by His



death atoned for the guilt of all mankind. The sin offering is the only sacrifice that brings salvation to every repentant sinner. The sacrifice for sin in the person of the crucified Christ is the greatest truth of Scripture. It stands at the center of all the truths of the Bible.

In our time, the teaching of this truth is not always made clear and distinct. Of course, to understand this greatest truth in its entirety is not an easy task, and maybe even impossible for our earthly mind. Nevertheless, our understanding of the sacrifice for sin in the person of the crucified Christ should be clear, and the sermon about it should sound very clear and unambiguous. Where the preaching about the sacrifice for sin in the person of the crucified Christ is heard vaguely, there cannot be expected a spiritual awakening. Where the word about the cross of Calvary is heard with all clarity, there it becomes the power of God for the salvation of every believer (**1 Cor. 1:18**). Churches and individual Christians die spiritually where the importance of Christ crucified is not acknowledge enough.

In what sense is Christ a sacrifice for sin? In the sense that He died for our sins! Patriots die for their homeland; Christian martyrs died for their faith; loving mothers give their lives for their children. And Christ died for our sins! What good news!

We know the purpose of Christ's coming to earth: He came with a glorious teaching about God as the Father of men; He came to reveal to us in Himself God and His boundless love; He came to give us an example — so that we live as He lived, and act as He did in this world. But the main purpose of His coming to earth is to become a sacrifice for our sin. For the forgiveness of our sins depends on the shedding of His Blood at Calvary.

The death of Christ for our sins is not an abstract philosophy, it is the most concrete fact: Christ died in a certain place — in Jerusalem, on Calvary, on the cross. He died in the midst of two villains. The villains died for their sins; they suffered for their crimes. They broke the law and were punished for it. And Christ crucified among them died for our sins! He suffered as they suffered, He died as they died, but the difference between their death and the death of Christ is enormous: they died for their sins, and Christ died for our sins.

For the wages of sin is death... (**Rom. 6:23**). And Christ took this retribution upon Himself: He died. He died physically, but He also went through a very mysterious spiritual death, through spiritual darkness, when the words known to all of us came out of His mouth: *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* (**Matt. 27:46**).

Christ died for our sins. This means that we all died in Him for our sins, that we are all punished for our sins in Christ crucified. If Christ did not die for our sins, then His death loses all salvific value and turns into an ordinary human death. And if His death is the wages of our sins, then it is of tremendous importance, for it fully satisfied the infinite justice of God.

In the name of the Blood shed by Christ on the cross, God now wants to forgive every repentant sinner. But there is only one way to receive forgiveness in the name of the Blood of Christ — faith. And there is no other way. ...*What must I do to be saved?* exclaimed the spiritually awakened prison guard. And the apostle Paul's answer was: *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household* (**Acts 16:30–31**). Through faith, Christ's sacrifice becomes our sacrifice; through faith His death becomes our death and the righteousness of Christ becomes our righteousness. We have peace with God!

Faith is the way to forgive all sinners who yearn for it. Every forgiven sinner goes through the same experiences: first, the awakening of our conscience and the thirst for forgiveness; then coming to Calvary to the crucified Christ, to His pierced feet with our sins. After that, the quiet, gentle voice of the Holy Spirit speaks, *Your sins are forgiven, go in peace*. They are forgiven, but only in the name of the Blood shed for you by Christ. Thus, and only in this way were all the innumerable sinners of the world forgiven and accepted by God.

We must all understand one very precious truth, namely: the cross of Calvary is not only a revelation of eternal Divine love, the cross of Golgotha is a revelation of eternal Divine justice. Therefore, forgiveness and salvation now depend on the sinner himself: if he wants, he can receive it today, now. The responsibility for destruction lies only with the sinner himself.

It all becomes a wonderful picture. The sinner cries out to God, *You can cleanse me!*

God responds, *Cleanse yourself in the Blood of Christ shed for your sins on the cross of Calvary!* This is how the Holy Spirit leads every repentant sinner into the arms of the crucified Christ!

A. KAREV, <https://mbchurch.ru>

(Continued.  
Beginning in No. 4 for 2020)

## III. WHAT WORDS TO SPEAK IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

Throughout life, each person has to face different difficulties. It can be minor things at work, a quarrel with a loved one, illness, or the loss of someone close. And in these difficult circumstances, it is so important to know that there is someone nearby who will not hold back warm words of support. After all, one spoken word can heal a bleeding wound or, conversely, cause even more harm.

Today, unfortunately, people underestimate the importance of the spoken words. But it is namely in them that a tremendous power is hidden, which is capable of both giving life to a person, and taking it away. The Bible says: *Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit* (**Prov. 18:21**). As we see, **tongue has power**. And despite the fact that this is a small member, it is they who control everything.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO SPEAK SUPPORTING WORDS IN A HARD TIME

The fact is that when a person is supported and told that together they will conquer any problem, that next to him are people who love him and will help, by this they reinforce the one who is in a difficult situation and give him strength. However, the lack of understanding and support can kill even the slightest hope that everything will be fine.

## WORDS OF SUPPORT TO THE SICK

Unfortunately, it happens in life that diseases come into our lives. Some of them are easily cured, others have more serious consequences, and still others lead to death. And when we find out about the illness of a person who is close to us, it plunges us into shock and bewilderment. However, what does the sick person himself feel at this moment? Of course, he suffers more than others. Different thoughts may arise in his head, and it is at this moment that words of support to the sick can help him feel not alone and that there is still hope.

Faced with a similar circumstance, everyone understands that something needs to be said, but most often people cannot find the right words, and begin to show pity. This is the last thing the patient needs. **Our participation and a kind word that's what a sick person needs.** This is precisely what will help him not worry so much knowing that he is still loved.

**What words of support can you say to a sick person**

1. A loved one needs to be told that you love him and, no matter what happens, you will always be there.
2. Give compliments, praise for any merit, even the smallest. For a sick person, this merit can be a real feat.
3. There is no need to talk about the disease itself and how shocking news it became for you, it is better to distract the patient with some good news or, in extreme cases, a funny anecdote.

Any sick person needs words of support and attention. This is what will help them come to their senses faster and recover more quickly.

## WORDS OF CONDOLENCES

The loss of a loved one — is perhaps, the most powerful test for everyone. And in this difficult period, a person needs help and attention so that they can walk this path and start living a full life again. In this case, instead of words of support, words of condolence will be appropriate. However, condolences can be different. For example, let's compare two options.

1. *My condolences! Everything will be fine!* Such support seems completely indifferent and sounds more like a formality. How can

everything be good if everything is very bad?

2. Or: *Please accept my sincere condolences! Know that you can always count on my help. If you need something, I am always here!* Such words really can make someone feel better. After all, knowing that there are people who are ready to support in any situation helps cope with many difficulties.

## WHAT WORDS TO SPEAK IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES?

☀ First of all, these should be thoughtful through. From what we say, a person's life can change for the better or worse. After all, **every word we say will definitely bear fruit**.

☀ If a person is in a difficult situation himself, there is no need to get hung up on your condition and constantly tell everyone how bad everything is. These words also

the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live”. So Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him (**Mk. 5:22–24**).

**The Lord God always answers the need of a person.** Jesus followed the ruler of the synagogue. But an event occurred on the way that made Jesus stop. Time is precious. The daughter of the head of the synagogue dies while he is terribly worried. And Jesus at this time is talking with a woman who was healed by touching Him.

What happened next?  
*While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?” As soon as*

# THE INFLUENCE

will bear its fruit. We will at times face difficulties on our path, so we must learn even from the worst to extract something positive and kind, and that's what we should talk about.

The Bible says: *I said, “I will guard my ways, lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, while the wicked are before me”* (**Ps. 39:1**).

Our unbridled words can be a blessing or a curse to someone. Therefore, even expressing words of support to someone in difficult times, we should be controlling ourselves. Unfortunately, very often it turns out that you wanted the best but it comes out wrong. Therefore, sometimes it is better to remain silent than to say some kind of stupidity that will hurt a person to the depths of their soul.

## WORDS OF FAITH IN A DIFFICULT TIME

There are circumstances in which you cannot speak words of unbelief. Understand, when you are under pressure at work, when there is no money, when you have difficult relationships with loved ones, in no case should these words be proclaimed in your life. *Why?* you might ask. Because God created the entire universe with a word, and we are created in His image and likeness. And therefore, what we say in our life is what we have.

## Example 1. Business

When I was starting doing business, the first four months I had almost no orders. Only small ones or from relatives.

I remember my birthday. I have no orders already for forty-eight days, a warm March evening. A friend called me, congratulated me and then casually asked: *How's business?* How many things flashed through my head at that moment. But in response, I boldly replied: *Everything is fine!*

Instead of words of despair and despondency, I spoke what I believed in.

## Example 2. Relationships with a person

The principle here is very simple: to say not what the soul or mind feels (because it is always like on a roller coaster: sometimes good, sometimes bad), but **say what you believe in your spirit**. And soon **what you see will come to agreement with what you say**. This is exactly what Jesus did.

## EXAMPLE FROM GOD'S WORD

One day a man approached Jesus, the head of the synagogue, whose daughter was dying. Imagine his grief. The girl, whom he raised with love, lies with a disease for which this man had no medicine. He turned to God.

*And behold, one of the rulers of*

*Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not be afraid; only believe”. And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James* (**Mk. 5:35–37**).

See how important words are. The man still believed. But they came from the house and said that the daughter was dead. Jesus' first reaction were the words: **Don't be afraid, just believe**. And the head of the synagogue obeyed. He did not utter a single word of disbelief in the most difficult circumstances. He did not fight in hysterics, did not shout at subordinates and did not get angry. He gave the situation to Jesus. And when Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue: *Don't be afraid, just believe*, he fulfilled it. He did not succumb to fear. **He submitted to faith.**

What happened next?  
*Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. When He came in, He said to them, “Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping”. And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, “Talitha, cumi”, which is translated, “**Little girl, I say to you, arise**”. Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement. But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat* (**Mk. 5:38–43**).

There are some amazing things about this story. And the most interesting — is the way Jesus behaved.

In the East there is a profession called *mourner*. Such people are invited to mournful events. But Jesus sent them out, even though they laughed at Him. Then Jesus spoke words filled with faith, and what He proclaimed happened. He did not beg his daughter to get up. He proclaimed: *Little girl, I say to you, arise*. And it happened.

But most of all I want to draw your attention to this man, the head of the synagogue. Indeed, the situation is terrible. The beloved child is dying. Nothing can be done. And no money can help here, and the head of the synagogue was far from a poor man. He tried everything he could and nothing worked. However, notice his behavior when near the Lord. During all this time, he spoke only once. And these were the words of faith: *Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live*. He said this when he



came to Jesus. And when it was very difficult, he just kept silent.

During all the time next to Jesus, the head of the synagogue never uttered words of unbelief, words of fear or doubt. He did not lament: *Ah-ah-ah, Jesus, my daughter is already dead, lying in the house. How am I going to live now? You didn't come.* He was silent. And he believed.

Sometimes faith is expressed in words. But there are times when it's hard to even speak. Then keep quiet and keep believing. And this faith will materialize into the fact that you will see the result of faith.

A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR DIFFICULT TIMES

First. Your words of support are very important to your neighbor.

Secondly, in difficult circumstances, do not let your tongue speak words of doubt and disbelief

for example, and there is at least one child who swears, your child easily adopts this habit and begins to swear like a shoemaker himself. And adults are the same in fact: a man will work for a month among builders who use foul language, and he himself involuntarily begins to use obscene words.

Let's see where this contagious thing came from.

THE HISTORY OF THE ORIGIN OF SWEAR WORDS

There are several versions of the origin of the filthy language:

- 1) the influence of the Tatar-Mongol yoke,
- 2) the pagan roots of the Slavic peoples.

Some deny the former and agree with the latter, but both seem to have an impact. The first version has recently found less and less supporters among researchers. It is refuted by two facts.

use and without swear words, many people could not even express themselves.

The mystical origins of such a phenomenon as filthy language go back to the pagan past. To protect themselves from the attacks of the demonic world, people of the pre-Christian era had contact with it. This contact had two sides to it:

- ☉ on one hand, the pagans pleased the demonic world by making sacrifices to it,
- ☉ on the other hand, they drove it away, scared it away.

It was **by the name of the demon or by spells that people scared it away**. The demons were called on with the same words, thereby showing their readiness to merge with them.

The incantations that were directed to pagan idols were made up of their names. And just at that time the cult of fertility was widespread. Thus, **most of the**

volumes. Why does a completely paralyzed person speak out exclusively with filthy language? Does it really have a different nature than ordinary words?

3. How filthy language affects water. Science experiment

The sprouting technology has long been used both in biology and agriculture. Water is processed by some kind of influence, and wheat grains are processed with this water. Three kinds of words have been used:

- 1) prayer *Our Father*,
- 2) domestic filthy language, which is used for speech communication,
- 3) aggressive filthy language, with pronounced expression.

After a certain time, the number of germinated grains and the length of the shoots are checked.

Results on the second day:

- 1) 93% of the seeds germinated in the control batch,
- 2) in a batch of grains processed by prayer — 96% of grains (the batch had the longest sprout length, up to 1 cm),
- 3) in a batch treated with domestic filthy language — 58% of grains,
- 4) in the batch treated with aggressive filthy language — 49% of the grains (in addition, the length of the shoots was uneven and mold appeared).

Scientists believe that **the appearance of mold is the result of a strong negative effect of the filthy language on the water**.

After a while, under the influence of the domestic filthy language, only 40% of the germinated grains remained, and under the influence of the aggressive filthy language — only 15% of the germinated grains. Sprouts that are dipped in water processed with filthy language show that this environment is not suitable for them. And a person is composed of 80% water. Make a conclusion, friends.

**4. Swear words very often come out of people from whom demons are cast out**

This is recognized by all confessions: from Orthodox to Protestants. For example, an Orthodox priest, Father Sergius, writes: *The so-called filthy language is the language of communication with demonic forces. It is no coincidence that this phenomenon is called infernal vocabulary. Infernal means "hellish, from the pit".* It is very easy to be convinced that filthy language is a demonic phenomenon. Visit a Russian Orthodox church during the lecture.

And take a close look at the person who is being chastised with prayer. He will moan, scream, try to break free, growl and the like. And the worst thing is that they swear very hard... Thanks to science, it has been proven that not only a person's morality suffers because of a filthy language, but also their health! Ivan Belyavsky is one of the first scientists who put forward this theory. **He believes that each swear word — is an energy charge that negatively affects human health.** It has already been proven that filthy language originated from the sacred names of the gods and has a destructive power that affects human DNA (especially women and children) and destroys it from the inside.

**5. Swear words have a detrimental effect on women**

**Abusive and filthy language is detrimental to a woman's hormonal levels.** Her voice becomes low, testosterone is in excess, fertility declines, a disease called hirsutism appears...

**6. The influence of genital related swear words**

Another very interesting fact. In countries where there is no swearing indicating the genital organ, cerebral palsy and Down syndromes are not found. But in the CIS countries, these diseases exist, unfortunately...

HOW TO GET RID OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE FILTHY LANGUAGE?

We have already proven the origin of swear words. Considered

a scientific experiment. But our task is to encourage, to help overcome every chain that binds a person. We will give a recipe for getting rid of swear words, which has been tested on personal experience. It only takes five simple steps.

1. Recognize

It is very important to recognize that swear words are a bondage that destructively affects a person. It is necessary to recognize, and not resist.

2. Repent

Ardent repentance before God is very important. He is the Lord, He knows everything. And He will help. But first, just repent from this dirty abuse that used to come out of your lips.

3. Accept yourself as a new creation

If you have prayed the prayer of repentance, then you have become a new creation, a child of almighty God. And before that, every person is a sinner, a spawn of the devil.

Many people say: *Why reject filthy language? It's okay!* It's okay if you are a sinful person. And if you repented before God and asked for forgiveness of your sins, then you have already become a new creation. And you have to accept that.

God's Word says: *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new (2 Cor. 5:17).*

Start thinking of yourself well, as a beloved child of God, as one for whom the Lord gave His Son. Trust God. You have become different on the inside.

*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (Eph. 5:8).*

4. Believe that words are capsules filled with power

In fact, this entire series of articles is about this. What we say is what we have. But you, if you have already swore, you need to accept it again. Your filthy language has done one thing in your life. Now you need your words to bring good.

*Let your speech always be with grace (Col. 4:6).*

*Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers (Eph. 4:29).*

This means that every time you open your mouth, you need to ask God for wisdom so that your words will bring grace and benefit to those who listen.

5. Dedicate your mouth, your tongue to God

This is not just a decision: *Starting with the New Year, I stop using foul language.* It is a decision that your mouth belong to the Lord, the Creator of heaven and earth, and with your mouth you will only bless God and His creatures.

*With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so (Jas. 3:9–10).*

If you dedicate your mouth to God, it won't be easy. But even when you stumble, remember that the Word of God says: *these things ought not to be so*. God does not give impossible tasks. If it's written in His Word, then it's real. And that means it is possible to live in such a way as not to utter curses and swear words.

A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

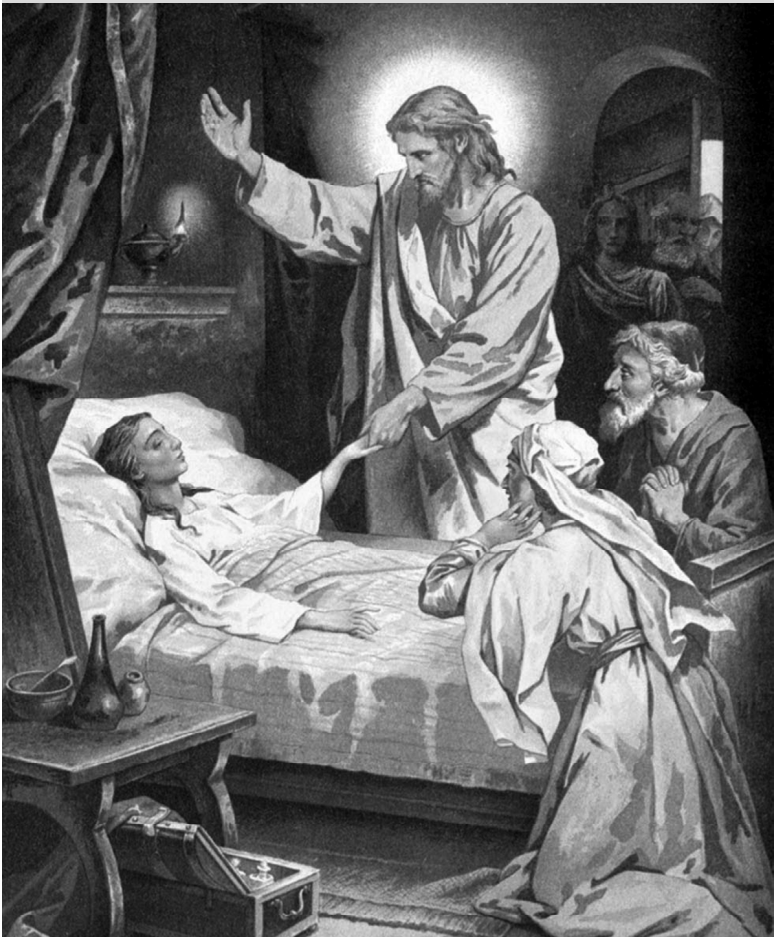
Remember that for every word you give an account. And if you say a lot of good things to your loved ones, bless your wife/husband, children, parents, co-workers — God will bring these words to judgment and from these words you will be justified. So says the Word of God.

*But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned (Mt. 12:36–37).*

Vladimir BAGNENKO, Anna POZDNYAKOVA, <http://obodrenie.info>

OF WORDS IN OUR LIVES

TOPIC FOR REFLECTION



because what you say surrounds you often ends up becoming reality.

IV. HISTORY, ORIGIN AND INFLUENCE OF FILTHY LANGUAGE ON HUMANS

To understand the issue of the effect of filthy language (such as curse words) on a person and on their health, we will pay attention to four aspects:

- 1) what is filthy language,
- 2) the history of filthy language,
- 3) what the swear words affect and what happens with the constant use of them,
- 4) how to get rid of the influence of swear words.

WHAT ARE SWEAR WORDS AND FILTHY LANGUAGE

Swear words have become so firmly embedded in our society that some consider that this is normal. I have even met people who say that filthy language allows you to relax.

Swear words are unnatural rude words. No matter what they say, these words cause unpleasant sensations, shame and indignation inside.

What's worse, however, is that swear words are contagious. It has been noticed more than once that when a child is sent to kindergarten,

filthy language is associated with the male and female genitals.

Slavic people were also familiar with the filthy language. For example, an obscene word meaning the prostitute is found in Novgorod notes and birch bark letters of the XII century. It just meant something completely different. The word meant the name of a demon with whom only sorcerers communicated. According to ancient beliefs, this demon punished sinners by sending them a disease, which is now called uterine rabies.

The rest of the swear words are the names of pagan gods or demonic names. When a person swears, they call demons on themselves, their family, and their generation. **Thus, filthy language is an appeal to demons, only it consists of spells and the names of certain demons.** The history of the filthy language shows this. In other words, filthy language is the language of communicating with demons. It is no coincidence that lexicologists call this kind of vocabulary infernal, which means *hellish*.

Today filthy language is used for the following:

- 1) manifestations of emotions,
- 2) emotional relaxation,
- 3) insults, humiliation,
- 4) demonstration of fearlessness,
- 5) demonstration of belonging to their own,
- 6) demonstration of disregard for the system of bans,
- 7) demonstration of aggression and others.

EFFECTS OF FILTHY LANGUAGE ON HUMAN HEALTH

Let's just give six facts about the effect of filthy language.

1. The influence of the filthy language on DNA

Human words can be represented in the form of electromagnetic vibrations, which directly affect the properties and structure of DNA molecules responsible for heredity. If a person uses swear words on a day-to-day basis, *a negative program* begins to be generated in the DNA molecules and they change significantly. Scientists claim: **a dirty word causes a mutagenic effect, similar to radiation exposure.**

Abusive words have a negative effect on the genetic code of the swearing person, they become a curse for the person and their heirs.

2. Abusive words pass through different nerve endings than ordinary words

There is an observation by doctors that people suffering from paralysis, in the complete absence of speech, speak exclusively with a filthy language, although they are not able to say either *yes* or *no*. At first glance, the phenomenon, although very strange, speaks

***“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).***

Perhaps one of the most appalling and revolting things that people do is lie. It doesn’t matter how and for what reason it manifests itself. A lie will always remain a lie. This human sin cannot be justified in any way, even if as some believe, it was from good intentions such as not to upset a loved one with something negative or not to upset a child or parents.

Do all people lie? It would appear so. One way or another, people tend to remain silent and hide certain things even from those closest to them. And all for the same reason: so as not to upset them. You may be able to find people who do not lie but this percentage is quite small. Where did lies come from?

From a careful study of the Bible you can clearly see that the roots of lies stretch to us from the very Garden of Eden. God commanded Adam and Eve not to eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As it is said, ***“And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die’” (Gen. 2:16–17).***

God gave this warning and instruction to the first people for their own good but almost everyone knows what happened next.

***“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’ The woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die’”. ‘You will not certainly die’, the serpent said to the woman. ‘For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’” (Gen. 3:1–5).***

This is where the first lies on earth

began. Satan tempted the first people, and told her saying, “No, you will not die”. Since then, lies have become a part of the sinful nature of people for centuries. The Scripture says: ***“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12).***

Today the world is so filled with lies that it no longer surprises anyone. Few people notice their own lies. It is mostly noticed in others, especially



politicians since they do not hesitate to lie to all media (TV, radio, newspapers, social networks and so on). People are willing to spend hours discussing with indignation the lies of politicians while not noticing their own lies. If you analyze all areas of human activity, then there is hardly one where people would not lie. Unfortunately, even individuals who are believers often resort to lies, thereby upsetting God. Probably the worst thing is when people are not ashamed to lie before God without even considering the consequences. The Bible describes a very instructive story about what happens to those people who lie without being ashamed of God.

***“Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the***

***apostles’ feet. Then Peter said, ‘Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God’. When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened.***

***Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him. About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. Peter asked her, ‘Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?’ ‘Yes’, she said, ‘that is the price’. Peter said to her, ‘How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The***

***feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also’. At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events” (Acts 5:1–11).***

This sad story is a vivid illustration of how dangerous it is to lie before God. Many people, even when already in faith, still do not fully realize that God knows all our thoughts. Therefore, all of our secrets and any lies are always known in the eyes of God. David in his psalm, addressing God, says: ***“You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue***

***you, Lord, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me’, even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be” (Ps. 139:1–16).***

It is clearly seen from the psalm of David that God knows literally everything about each of us. If humans can lie to each other for a century without the truth coming out but for God there are no human secrets and He sees through all lies.

And now, knowing all this, can you count on God’s mercy in your lies? Definitely not. Any lie is a sin. It doesn’t matter under what circumstances this sin was committed. Even so-called harmless lies cannot be justified before God. God has no scales for sin. The Epistle of James clearly states: ***“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it” (James 2:10).*** Moreover, all lies to God are fraught with consequences. You can lie to a person, but you cannot lie to God.

In conclusion I would like to say: let’s look at Jesus and live in the truth which He teaches us all. For there is a reason it is said: ***“In the way of righteousness is life, And in its pathway there is no death” (Prov. 12:28).***

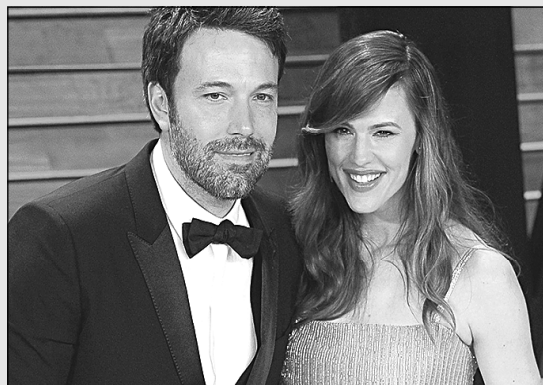
I. GORIK.

## Ben Affleck spoke about finding God and the repentance of his ex-wife

Hollywood actor Ben Affleck opened up about his Christian faith while promoting his new film, “The Way Back”.

“I go to the Methodist Church, my kids are baptized and I got introduced to Christianity a little bit later in life”, the Academy Award winner told Belief.net.

Affleck’s ex-wife, Jennifer Garner, returned to church four years ago after filming “Miracles from Heaven”, and shortly after invited Affleck to attend service with her and their children. He has since kept to the faith.



In “The Way Back”, Affleck plays Jack Cunningham, a man who is down and out and searching for hope. He finds that hope when offered a job

In the interview, a newly sobered Affleck reflected on the “beauty” he’s found in the Christian gifts of grace and forgiveness.

to coach basketball at his Catholic high school where he once excelled as a player. The movie is centered around his road to making amends with the people he hurt most by his destructive behavior as a result of alcohol.

“One of the things that I found most beautiful about it, and I struggle with my faith, I struggle with belief, but I do see there’s something enormously beautiful and elegant about the notion that we are all sinners, and that it’s our job to find our redemption, to find God’s love, to redeem ourselves, to live the best life that we can, to love one another, to not judge one another, and to forgive one another”, Affleck said.

The “Batman V. Superman” actor feels that Jesus’ instructions to forgive one another is a message the world currently needs.

“I think those are extremely powerful ideas and very, very relevant, probably more relevant today than ever. Because there’s a little bit more of an attitude of find something somebody did wrong once and get rid of them. And that to me feels unnecessarily judgmental. It’s that ‘he without sin cast the first stone’. I think that is a very wise proverb”.

The California native and Garner were wed in 2005 but announced their separation in a joint statement in 2015. In 2018, they filed for divorce. Despite their separation, Affleck is still spotted going to church with Garner and their children occasionally.

<https://www.christianpost.com>

## Federal court did not close the adoption agency in New York for its refusal to same-sex couples

A federal court has refused to close New York’s adoption agency New Hope due to its refusal to same-sex couples. New Hope’s policy is based on their religious beliefs and whenever a same-sex or unmarried couple visits them, they refer them to another agency.

According to Christian Post, officials wanted to close the agency because of their beliefs. New Hope filed a lawsuit

against government officials after being informed that its religious policy of placing children only in heterosexual households violates the state law of 2013.

Roger Brooks, a senior advisor of Alliance Defending Freedom, whose organization helped represent New Hope in court, celebrated the preliminary injunction.

“Today’s ruling signals that the governments attempt to shut down New Hope has

violated the fundamental rights protected by the First Amendment the freedom to say what you believe in and the freedom to practice the teachings of your faith. Fortunately, this ruling means New Hope can continue to provide the exceptional support it has provided for decades as the lawsuit continues challenging the state’s unconstitutional policies”, Brooks noted.

<https://bog.news>





A Delicious Pastry

A little boy is complaining to his grandmother about his difficult life: he has problems at school, with his parents, and with health. His grandmother is meanwhile preparing food. She asks the grandson if he is hungry and if he wants something to eat.

“Of course!” Replies the grandson.

Then the grandmother says: “Take this margarine”.

“Ewww!” replies the grandson.

“How about two raw eggs?” Offers the grandma

“Of course not!”

“How about some flour and baking soda?” Inquires the grandma.



“Grandmother, all of these are inedible”.

The grandmother replies:

“Correct, all of these items by themselves are not very tasty, but if they are combined in the proper manner, a delicious pastry can be made!”

The Lord acts in the same way. You often ask the question: “Why does He let me

suffer?” you need to simply trust Him and know that with His recipe something amazing will turn out.

Proverb About Trials

Once a king rolled a big stone into the middle of the road and hid himself in order to observe who would remove it from the road. Many went by on foot and by horse and were angry at the king for not upkeeping the roads, however, not one of them thought to move the stone.

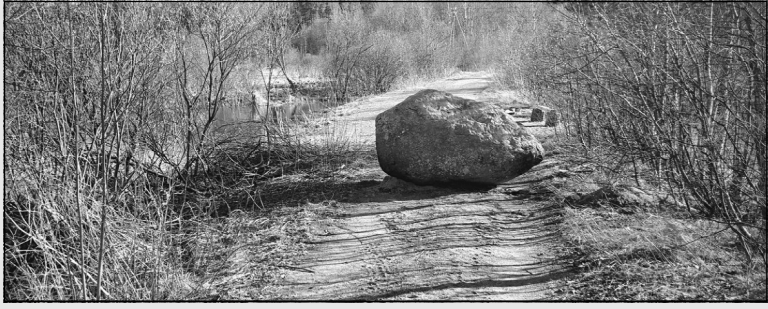
At last, a poor person stopped by the stone and rolled it off to the side of the road. Under the stone, the poor man discovered, to his great surprise, a bag full of gold

and a letter from the king which explained that this was the reward to the person who would remove the stone that was in everyone’s path.

Our Heavenly Father in the same way has placed under every trial His blessing. All barriers that we encounter are not accidental. With their help, God tests our loyalty, turns

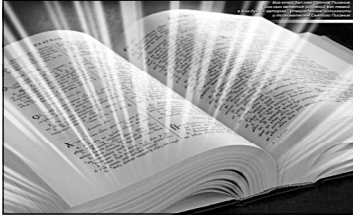
our gaze upon Himself, and gives us an opportunity to receive a spiritual reward. Under rocks of special trials, which have worn you out, there are hidden special blessings. Lets roll away the stone, give our burdens to God, and in due time we will find His mercy!

<http://bible-facts.ru>



**Why do Christians living lives devoted to God go through very difficult periods in their lives in which they feel God abandoned them? Their inner peace is gone, they feel an emptiness inside, reading the Bible does not lift them up, and it is difficult to pray... it is as if God does not hear them and does not react to them. What is going on? Is this normal? Or can we avoid this?**

I have personally came in contact with these problems in the beginning of my Spiritual path and I remember how much fear and tormenting I had to go through. I even had moments where I was sure that God had abandoned me forever... And even though I was in a church with Christian people, I could not receive the answer to the question: *What is going on with me? Do other people go through similar things?*



Jesus Christ himself experienced what it is like to be abandoned by his Heavenly Father. This was the darkest moment for Him in the whole process of redemption of humankind. The words that He cried out where: *God, my God, why has thou abandoned Me!* These words prove that the agony that He lived through because of the abandonment was very painful... A Holy God does not have anything to do with sin, but at that time Jesus took the sins of the entire world upon himself and was the biggest sinner in the universe.

**Isiah 53:5-6** — *But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned — every one — to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Being abandoned by his Heavenly Father was torture for Jesus Christ, this was torture that humankind had deserved. All of this punishment was fully laid upon Jesus Christ as we have read earlier: *...and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

**Why do Christ’s followers have to feel feelings of abandonment?**

There are several parables that are familiar to us; let us reflect upon them.

**So where do feelings of abandonment come from?**

**1. These feelings can be a testament of God’s disapproval** to something that we did and afterwards, we start to have these feelings. It is worthwhile for us to go back in our thoughts to the point when the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit started to leave us and we started to feel a spiritual darkness. If this was caused by our sinful actions, it is necessary to acknowledge them and repent of them. If this was the cause that was separating us from God, then the peace of God and joy will once again be restored in our hearts. Things that can often separate us from God are: our thoughts, words, and emotions. In order for these things to not destroy us or the people around us, this mechanism of God’s disapproval starts to work which leads us to feeling abandoned by God.

**2. As a method of disciple.** During times of continuing God’s blessing, we sometimes

think that this is a result of our righteousness and of our good deeds. In order for the pride that has crept in to not destroy us, God sometimes is forced to show us who we are without him. For this, He just has to depart from us for a short distance and wait... Although this period of abandonment is painful, it helps us see who we are on our own, apart from God. This helps us to then get rid of a self-inflated sense of worth and of our pride. During these periods we can see in ourselves: irritation, impatience, resentment and all sorts of remnants of our old nature. After our sight has been renewed — we can leave our pride, arrogance, self-dependence, and independence from God — and we are more likely to come with repentance to God and afterwards, live a life that is fruitful and dependent on God. In the end, the period of

to give and we are left only with the obedience to God that we have learned up to that point. Sometimes these periods can last a very long time.

**2 Chronicles 32:31** — *And so in the matter of the envoys of the princes of Babylon, who had been sent to him to inquire about the sign that had been done in the land, God left him to himself, in order to test him and to know all that was in his heart.*

**4. As a trial of what reward we are worthy of.** God highly prizes the faithfulness of his children and He rewards this faithfulness very generously. The proof of our faithfulness is shown in trials, one of which is the feeling of abandonment by God.

Let us remember the Biblical story of Job, the faithfulness of whom was left as an example to future generations. Besides losing his

consciously sinned. God continues to care for you and holds everything under His control but there are special effects on your emotions: fear, uneasiness, loneliness. You cannot understand why these feelings have come upon you or what are they the result of. They can be the result of demonic influence or of a physical weakness. Doctors say that these emotions could be a result of changes in the body on the hormonal level. A chemical disbalance in the body can also lead to similar emotions and feelings. If this is the case, then should we be under the influence or even worse, under the control of these feelings? Is it not better to go forth with faith, looking at our Lord? You might ask: *Does this mean that I can ignore the existing problem?* No, we should not just ignore it, but we should not think of it as a spiritual issue, unless it becomes so.

The wise Solomon says: *He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap (Ecclesiastes 11:4).* When sowing seeds by hand, it is impossible to do so in a strong, gusty wind; some spots will have many seeds that will crowd each other while other spots will be empty. When it is raining, wheat that has been harvested will become moist and will rot. This is why the absence of wind during the sowing of the seeds and the absence of rain during the harvest is so important. However, there can be a unexplainable, futile worrying that can leave the farmer without harvest. An overly cautious farmer cannot sow and reap not because the weather is wrong but because he expects the weather to turn bad at any moment. The work meanwhile does not get done and precious time goes by...

This is why Apostle Paul says to Timothy: *...preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching (2 Timothy 4:2).* In other translations it sounds like this: *...when it is popular and unpopular; in season and out-of-season, when it is convenient and inconvenient.*

Don’t we also have to take this advice to heart? It is important to seek God, pray, attend church, and read the Bible when our heart is in on fire and even when we don’t have any inkling of desire to do so; when we are inspired and when do it just out of force of habit; when our soul is joyful and when it weeps. This is the same as an employee who goes to work whether they have the desire to do so or not. May we always remember the Biblical phrase: with consistency (**Ephesians 6:18; Romans 2:7**).

A Christian should be stable, not under the control of different sometimes opposing feelings, the sources of which as we have spoken can be: medical problems, influences of our surroundings, or demonic influences.

**Ephesians 3:17-19** — *...that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

In the same way that we resist sinful desires and dirty thoughts in order to not be tainted with them, the same way we must resist slothfulness, bad moods, laziness, and being dejected without reason.

Finishing the discussion on this topic, I want to remind you of this text from the Bible: **Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).**

Aleksandr BORISENKO.

PASTOR’S WORD

ABANDONMENT



Illustration by I. OSOKIN, Russia

abandonment becomes a blessing to us.

**2 Corinthians 7:10** — *For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation.*

**Numbers 14:34** — *For forty years—one year for each of the forty days you explored the land — you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you.*

**3. As a test of our maturity.** Sooner or later, we all have to prove our love and faithfulness to our Lord by our actions. It is good and easy to serve the Lord when our hearts are filled with joy and we have the first love. All of this is the effect of the work of the Holy Spirit. But how likely are we love God by ourselves? To what degree are we willing to sacrifice ourselves for His principles? This is discovered when God’s presence is taken away from us, the sweetness of our spiritual thoughts also leaves us as well as our desire

children, possessions, and health, he was tried with the feeling of abandonment by God. This is how Job describes how he felt: *Why do you hide your face and count me as your enemy? (Job 13:24).* We know that his trial had a happy end.

Jesus Christ said: *...Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life (Luke 18:29-30).* James in his epistle summarizes Jesus’s thought: *...for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him (James 1:12).*

**5. As a result of demonic influence that is trying to destroy the soul of a Christian.**

The devil is the enemy of God and of everything that belongs to God. If you have been born again and the Kingdom of Heaven is in you, then God’s enemy will also be your enemy. The more that you will be sanctifying yourself, the more pressure you will be under from evil and darkness. If the devil is fighting for our souls, then they are very valuable; this should comfort us. **John 10:10** — *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*

**6. The influences on our emotions could be far from reality.** When you are healthy, you are able to easily do moderately difficult physical work. However, if you have a temperature and you are seriously sick, then completing this work becomes difficult. Sweat is dripping off of you, your body hurts, and you have a headache... you may feel as if at any minute you could lose consciousness. What changed? The work is still the same but you are not the same. Is it not so?

Something similar to this happens in your spiritual life. Your relationship with God remains the same and you have not

## TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

## Nikolay IGNATKIN: "When we serve... we thank the Lord"

The biggest Christmas service I think is to feed the hungry. In the West, caring for the homeless has even become a hallmark of Christmas. We often see in foreign films how a handsome millionaire puts on an apron, goes to the slums and distributes food and then saturated with spirituality and sacrifice, gets into a Bentley, and a chauffeur takes him back to his life in Beverley Hills.

This probably happens because even a cat, exhausted by steamed chicken cutlets, from time-to-time travels to the trash can and to the horror of the loving hostess enjoys crispy potato peelings.

The "Feed the Hungry" ministry in Novokuznetsk is headed by Nikolay Ignatkin. Who is Nikolay Ignatkin?

## Freedom to fall

He is not a millionaire; He has neither a Bentley nor even an old geo metro – he is nothing but an ordinary pedestrian.

I ask where he works. The answer was simple, "I paint the coffins. At the funeral firm I am a peasant, I do the dirty work both at work and here in the ministry".

So... obviously, he spends his time and he's very modest income on charity. In terms of living standards, Kolya (Nikolay) is not too distant from those he helps. After all, not only homeless people come for food. There are many quite decent people whom the fierce life has taken by the throats. Got sick, retired, gave birth to a third child or anything else could make you hit rock bottom! It is always possible.

Then what makes them, on their legal weekend collect food packages with volunteers and drag all this to the train station, or to the Children's Health Camp?

I got an answer to this question. Only it is not short and perhaps not clear to everyone.

"I was once a drug addict. We lived with my mother in Kemerovo. I started using it at school, in the nineties, when drugs were not as widespread yet. ...But I got hooked and realized this only after college. I injected every day for a total of twenty years. There was one break three years in – when I was in prison.

It destroyed everything. Apart from drugs, I did not need anything. What is addiction? You cannot eat without drugs, you cannot sleep, you cannot go to the toilet without them. Drugs are your whole existence. And when some people appear next to you, you are only using them. And it doesn't matter who is in front of you – your own mother or some kind of temporary friend.

I've always had the desire to quit. I was lying in a narcological clinic, and I myself tried to cope many times – it was useless. But when

my cousin called from Novokuznetsk (he went to the Novoilinsk church and offered for me go to the rehabilitation center), I refused.

Back in the nineties, when rehabilitation centers had just appeared, my mother took me to some. I remember a man there telling me something: 'I was also a drug addict...' It did not affect me at all: 'What does God have to do with it?! I need heroin – now! And

he says. Kuzedeevo was where my mother was born and relatives live, whom I once robbed.

Rehabilitation began. First in Kuzedeevo, then in Cheryomushki. Six months later, I packed my belongings and left.

I was tired of everything, I decided to go home. I found drugs in the city... I thought I was already a believer, and I saw a new life in the rehabilitation center – filled with joy, a world where you don't

They put me in a crowded hospital in the corridor. I could not walk. And here it began tests of loyalty to God.

They bring drug addicts and put them next to me. They are 'salty', completely helpless, insane. They wear diapers on them, and they lie like this all day in the corridor. Their conditions are horrible. They always drop something, carry a spoon past their mouths... And a person has a choice: either to help

One such a person sits like this by the trash cans. I tell him: 'Let's go to the rehabilitation center. It is good there: clean, warm, food, there is hope...' And he tells me: 'I was already there, in Cheryomushki. Did not like it!' 'What didn't you like?' 'They give porridge every day!' And how can I explain to him that porridge every day is good?! When I went to rehab, I didn't even think about what they feed there".

Kolya says: many believe that in freedom they are free – from obligations, lowly inclinations...

"Somehow a guy came. A fire had broken out in the heating main, all his belongings burned down. It would seem that he was at his lowest point. But he doesn't want to go to rehabilitation. There, according to him, is freedom. What freedom though? Sheer deception: you don't need anyone, but nobody needs you either. And so, he left. He found another heating main.

Here is a person who was persuaded to go to rehabilitation. Before that, he walked with a stick and was always dirty. Almost all of them have the same problem: their toes are frostbitten. And there he was already after sometime: freshened up, a meaningful and joyful look on his face. When you manage to bring someone back to normal life, it is a great joy. It's worth serving for that.

The message about Jesus Christ, about the Lord who loves and saves everyone in itself brings joy. And there is no need to agitate or force anyone.

Now we just serve people. We feed; we talk. Sometimes you read a psalm, talk about your life, pray for a person. Nobody refuses to be prayed for. In general, almost no one rejects God. For the whole time, only one was like this. He argued: 'What are you telling me?! I know that there is no God: I defended my dissertation at the university!' Younger than me, twenty-eight years old. He once had a wife, children... He disappeared: he suffocated in the basement during a fire.

Sometimes you say to a person: 'God loves you!' and they begin to argue: 'Is it possible to love everyone?! Here such bad people exist! Why love them?!' I tell them about God's love that Jesus paid for the atonement of our sins with His life and all that is needed is to accept His sacrifice.

And recently I met a person that was sleeping outside in the cold with just slippers. Nowadays there are not many of these undressed and barefoot. I took him to the market, where grandmothers sell all kinds of things, and bought him warm shoes. Sometimes actions are better than words..."

By Ivan ALTYNOV,  
<http://мояцерковь.рф>



you tell me about God! I didn't connect my life with any God at all. And now I see it on the streets: people do not think about Him at all. They believe that God is not now, He is not in our reality, He will appear sometime later, after death...

You still get used to such a life. It is deceiving: the addicted state seems to be absolute freedom.

I lived on the fifth floor on a forest landing next to the apartments. I slept in the same place, ate, injected drugs, took women... No one kicked me out. Here was 'absolute freedom' – do what you want, and here you did not have to follow the rules, maintain normal relations with your mother, go to work... In general, I chose 'freedom'.

But God still called me. The police had such a practice that if a person was hooked and needed by them, they called relatives and invited the drug addict for a conversation. The addicts were afraid of such conversations. After all, a drug addict always feels some kind of guilt. And when they called my mother with the words: 'Let him come, he will be better off' I rushed off.

As it is stated in the Bible: 'The wicked runs when no one is chasing him...' I contacted my brother in Novokuznetsk with the words: 'Meet me, I will be there in the morning. Take me to rehab...'.

## Grateful heart

"We met and drove out of town. I ask: 'Where are you taking me?' 'To Kuzedeevo, to Misha Kiryukhin',

need to run from anyone and catch up with anyone. But, in fact, I did not know God for I hated ministers. I told them: 'You speak nonsense!' in terms of discipline, some kind of personal relationship...

And now I stand in line at the ticket office at the station. And suddenly I have a desire to go to Kuzedeevo, which I didn't like... But I understand that I need to go to Misha Kiryukhin! And now it's night, and I'm walking along the highway to Kuzedeevo. Oh, and I walked for a long time! Then some bus gave me a ride. I came and began yelling at the fence: 'Misha! Misha!' and Misha Kiryukhin took me in. And only then God touched my heart".

How did this happen? Kolya says: not all at once. He knows one thing for sure: he himself would not have been able to change. Everything happened by the grace of God. First of all, he was distressed by what he had managed to do, and from the realization that an old life similar to death awaits him in Kemerovo, and after that he began to obey.

"The elder was there, Seryoga. I hated him! And I hated the servants in Cheryomushki. I said: 'You are wrong in life!' And then I began to love! Who would have told me before that this would be possible! So I obeyed those whom I hated before?! Yes, that is impossible! And through obedience I began to change.

But the old, drug-addicted life made itself known: I began to be very sick. It took treatment, which could only be provided at the place of residence, that is, in Kemerovo.

## How to feed the hungry

"You know, when I started serving, I first prepared sermons", says Kolya. "It seemed to me that everyone who comes to us to eat must either go to rehab or come to church (he smiles). What if they don't want to? Drive them away? It turned out that everything is not so simple. Abstract truths do not attract people. Many just use it, come, as they say, merely to eat. At the train station, such a contingent is constant. If you give them the Gospel, a brochure, they will take it and then throw it in the trash. We used to collect clothes for them among the believers. They willingly took everything – to sell.

## Church of Dr. David Yonggi Cho donated over \$ 87,000 to fight coronavirus

The world's largest church, Yoido, founded by Dr. David Yonggi Cho, has donated one hundred million yen (over eighty-seven thousand dollars) to a local hospital for coronavirus treatment, Christian-daily.co.kr reported.

The donation took place at the church building in September. The ceremony was attended by church representatives as well as hospital officials.

The current senior pastor of the congregation, Yong-Hong Lee, said: "The hospital provides us with great help, including medical examinations for missionaries and ministers".

"Prayer and support from Pastor Yong-Hong Lee and members of Yoido Church will be of great help to the medical staff. I will do my best to eradicate COVID-19", the

hospital chairman said.

According to Christian-daily.co.kr, Yoido Church cooperates with the hospital and makes financial donations every year.

Yoido Church, founded by Dr. Yonggi Cho, has more than five hundred thousand members and is one of the largest churches in the world.

<https://bog.news>





## TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

Linda Barkman was incarcerated after the man she lived with murdered her toddler. But she turned hardship into ministry.

The valedictorian of Fuller Theological Seminary's School of Intercultural Studies had been incarcerated longer than many of her fellow graduates had been alive.

"I got a standing ovation at graduation", said Linda Barkman, who graduated last year at the age of 65 and was imprisoned for 30 of those years. "I was shocked. It was not what I expected from my past".

In 1979, Barkman's live-in boyfriend murdered her two-year-old daughter. Barkman was found guilty of felony child endangerment — for living with her violent boyfriend — as well as second-degree murder. When the California Supreme Court set that verdict aside and she was retried, the prosecution successfully argued for "implied malice", meaning she should have known what the boyfriend could do to her toddler.

"There was no battered woman syndrome defense", said Barkman. "I was a 26-year-old, really confused, scared woman who made some really bad decisions. It cost my two-year-old her life".

Barkman lost custody of her other daughter and then began her decades' long sentence. While incarcerated, she rekindled her faith in Christ, began ministering to her fellow inmates, earned her undergraduate degree in psychology, and left prison just five credits short of a masters in the theology. Today, she has her PhD in intercultural studies. Her dissertation explores the gap in communication between women in prison and the volunteers who minister to them.

Barkman spoke recently with *Christianity Today* about the trauma of losing her daughter, what makes prison a "pretty good seminary", and the women who inspired her while she was incarcerated.

**Tell us about your faith background.**

I grew up unchurched. I came to Christ when my oldest daughter was a babe in arms, but it didn't work very well. I was going to a church where, when they found out that I was living with a man I wasn't married to, I was told by the associate pastor's wife that she could no longer teach Bible study in my home because she couldn't enter the home of a sinner. That pushed me away. I was already pregnant with my second child at that point. I ended up leaving him because he was an abusive alcoholic and drug abuser, but I found somebody worse than him.

One day, I asked God to do whatever he needed to do to make things right in my life, because I just knew how wrong everything was and how miserable I was. At the end of that day, the man I was living with beat my two-year-old daughter to death.

**Not only did you lose your daughter, but you were also suddenly going to prison. How did you handle all of the trauma hitting you at the same time?**

I wanted to die, and God said, "No, you're not allowed to die". I was so angry at God. I remember screaming out to him, "You say you can make a new creation out of me, so you have to turn me into somebody I can live with. I don't know what part is good, what part is not. All I know is everybody who has ever loved me or been loved by me is now hurt, and I just don't know what to do".

After that, God started showing me that he could use me if I would let him, if I would stop fighting. It took a long time. I began to see Jesus and his love and mercy in the day-by-day things. Not long after I got to prison, I started helping with church services in the psychiatric unit. For 28 of the 30 years I was incarcerated, I was the lay pastor for that prison unit.

Prison is a pretty good seminary in a lot of ways. One of the women I interviewed for my dissertation told me, "I had a 27-year retreat. People don't understand it, but you do. Jesus was with me every single day of those 27 years".

## Linda BARKMAN: "Prison was my first pulpit"

**How did you find your first Christian community while incarcerated?**

The very first time you go to church, it might be just to get out of your cell. But oh my gosh, it is the place where you're accepted. At the California Institute for Women, or CIW, if you want to spend your life in the prison's church, if you're new and vulnerable, the old-timers that have been there will take you under their wing and disciple you. I've met women who were released on parole but then came back to CIW. They weren't happy to come back to prison, but they were so excited to come back to our church. There's a strong sense of community, a sisterhood.



In prison church, services are seven days a week, two or three times a day. There's always someone within 100 feet who understands all of your issues and problems and is willing to pray with you.

**Tell me about some of the transformative relationships you made while incarcerated.**

In my early years, I met Marge. She and I were best friends and ministry partners for 20 years before she died in prison, basically from poor medical care. When she died, we had a service for her that was so big they had to use the auditorium.

Then there was Martina from Oaxaca, Mexico — an indigenous person. I tutored her in English, and when my roommate paroled, I asked permission for Martina to move into my room. We were roommates for 13 years. By the time I paroled, she had a high school diploma in English with an "A" average.

While she was in prison, she was one of the matriarchs of the Spanish-speaking Christian community. Now that she's [out of prison and living] in Tijuana, she is involved in two different churches. My husband and I go to visit her once a month. The last two months that we went, we were guest preachers in churches that she's affiliated with. She does things like take burritos to the poor people living under the bridge at the border.

**Who first gave you your first leadership experience?**

Gerald Fortier was an amazing African American Baptist chaplain who had this habit of bursting into song and expecting me to figure out what key he was singing in, so that I could play music for him [on the guitar]. He helped grow me up in the Lord and made me an elder in that church. I had credibility with all of the chaplains after that.

Prison church is really run by outside volunteers. The chaplain's job is more to take care of death notices and emergencies and also to do the paperwork that brings in the volunteers. So during the years when there were no volunteers for the

psychiatric unit, I did all the preaching.

**Matthew 25:36 reads, "I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me". Why did you write an essay arguing this verse was an incomplete theology for prison ministry?**

In Christ's day, prisons were full of political prisoners and paupers. If you committed a crime, you were either flogged or executed but you weren't imprisoned. So Jesus is saying this for John the Baptist and others like him. Showing hospitality to those people is important, but in today's context, hospitality is not what a guilty criminal needs. Hospitality means that I come to your table as a guest and I am always a guest. By contrast, *integration* means that I come to your family as a guest and I become family.

You're not going to offer integration to prisoners unless you really believe in redemption — that Jesus died for every single person. It doesn't mean that everybody accepts redemption and becomes redeemed, but you have to believe that it is a possibility for each and every person in prison.

I can say this because I had a co-defendant. The man who killed my daughter died in prison in 2009. I am the mother of the victim, and I had to come to grips with how I felt about him. People ask, "What if you meet him in heaven? How will you feel?" Well, I pray that he is redeemed. If I meet him in heaven, it means that he is a new creation transformed into the image of Christ and not what Satan and the world and evil turned him into.

**Battered woman syndrome was not recognized when you first went to jail. How did you wrestle with that?**

When I got to prison, I was labeled a baby killer. I bought the jury's decision, saying that I was Amy's mother and I did not protect her. How was I not guilty?

The first person who ever told me I was a battered woman was a woman in a death penalty case who, after 17 years, was totally exonerated. But I didn't believe her. I still wrestle with it. When Fuller President Mark Labberton introduced me to the 4,000 people at commencement as somebody who unjustly spent 30 years in prison, I didn't know how to cope.

I struggle. I'm in therapy. I have post-traumatic stress disorder from prison issues. I don't know if I can believe in redemption for myself. But David was a murderer, and Saul consented to Stephen's stoning, and Joseph spent a lot of time in prison. God has a special place for prisoners and can use us because of our brokenness.

**How do you pray for the people that you minister to in prison?**

We know that knowing Christ in prison makes us freer than many people walking the streets who don't know Jesus. So I pray for the strength to know that, every moment that he allows me to minister in prison is an opportunity to love to those that he loves.

**How did you meet your husband?**

I met him in a seminary classroom. He's a Mennonite, a pacifist. He's just a marvel. He once answered a pastor's question, "What do you really want to be in life?" with the answer, "a pastor's husband". He says his ministry is to drive the car. That means he drives the car in Tijuana traffic and takes me where I need to go and puts me back together. He is an amazing, brilliant, kind, caring man who sees his calling as having waited 'til he was 62 to meet the woman of his life. We both recently got our PhDs, so now we are both Dr. Barkman.

*From Christianity Today.*

Benjamin Plyaskin was born into an ordinary Novokuznetsk family. His father worked all his life at the West Siberian Metallurgical Plant, and his mother was a saleswoman. The young man grew up in the most unlucky years [for the Soviet Union] — the late eighties and early nineties. On the one hand, there was the lack of faith to which the people have been indoctrinated into for decades, and on the other, the permissiveness that came to our country along with perestroika [the restructuring of former USSR]. It is not surprising that Benjamin turned to the path that many boys of that time were on.

"From the age of fifteen I was in a gang. It was fashionable in those years. We walked around the local area together and played sports. In my room, there hung posters of Schwarzenegger and Stallone", recalls Benjamin.

"We also got involved in criminal acts. As a result, almost all the guys ended up behind bars. I, along with two of my friends, was also taken in for robbery. Before the trial, I spent about a year in a pre-trial detention

**Benjamin PLYASKIN:**

## "I was no longer a drug addict. I felt happy!"

center. I was sentenced on probation, but my comrades were given a real term".

Benjamin received such a mild punishment because of the favors his father pulled on his behalf. The young man was only twenty-one years old. Life was just beginning, but it was already rapidly spiraling downward. In the mid-nineties, for the young people of Novokuznetsk, there appeared another fashion — drugs. According to Benjamin, all of his acquaintances used "khanka" (homemade opium): some rarely, while others were already firmly on the needle [addicted].

"Once, I was suffering from a hangover and my friends offered to inject me saying I will feel better right away. So I tried the khanka", admits Benjamin.

"It looked disgusting: muddy brown, like dirt, which is what all drugs are in fact.

It was easy to buy it. Many became addicted after the first injection. I have heard from everywhere that drugs are evil and that they kill. But I just didn't believe that this could happen to me".

Like most drug addicts, the young man believed that he could quit drugs at any time. At first, he took injections only occasionally, about once a month, according to his mood. But the periods between injections became shorter and shorter. A year later, Benjamin realized with horror that he was a drug addict.

"At that time, my father left the factory and was engaged in a business with a friend", says Benjamin. "I was taken into their company to monitor the sanitary conditions and communicate with representatives of the sanitary and epidemiological group. Even though I was getting decent money, soon there was not enough money for drugs. But I did have free access to the firm's money".

Money began to disappear from the cash register, Benjamin himself behaved inadequately, and coworkers began to whisper that he was a drug addict who was stealing for a dose. He was asked to leave the firm. His father was ashamed to look his friend in the eye. And most of all, he worried for his son, not knowing where to run for help and how to save him.

"My family life also went downhill. By that time, my wife and I had lived together for two years. She began to notice the injection marks on my veins and find syringes in our apartment. I swore to her that I would quit using and that we would go together to the country house, where I would go through my withdrawal and beat the addiction. But I only lasted there three days. I told my wife that I was no longer addicted and we returned home. But when she saw that I had injected myself again, she silently packed her things and left.

There was nothing human left in me. Respect, love, normal feelings — all this is absent in a person who has become addicted to drugs", says Benjamin. "There was nothing that I was aware of or felt. I only stole everything, lied and angered my relatives".

*(Continued on page 8)*

## TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

(Continued from page 7)

"My father did everything in his power to help me! He even took me to see sorcerers, but all this did not have any positive results and I continued to use drugs. In my sixth year of addiction, my father was driven to utter despair. He even wanted to drown me in a lake".

Benjamin's mother and father divorced a long time ago, the sons of the family grew up with their father. Growing up, Benjamin occasionally got a job, but didn't stay anywhere for long. After another scandal with his father, the young man began to live with his mother, who also suffered a lot of grief from him. But she did not lose hope and often prayed for him.

"When I thought about my life as a drug addict and about drugs, I perceived it all as an abomination", Benjamin admits. "There is no longer a road to that life for me. I felt happy, I literally flew. At that time, I was working in a stoker, carrying coal to heat our center and it seemed to me that I could easily drag mountains of coal!"

Benjamin lived in the rehabilitation center for a year and a half, and when he completed his recovery period in 2007, he stayed there to work as a teacher/counselor. For more than ten years now, he has been trying to do for the participants of the rehab center, what they once did for him: show the way to a completely different life — a life without drugs, with God in their hearts.

On New Year's Eve in 2011, Benjamin

## Benjamin PLYASKIN: "I was no longer a drug addict. I felt happy!"



"I never believed in God, I did not know how to pray and, in general believed as was taught in school, that man descended from a monkey. One day something happened. As usual, I left the house to get a dose, and suddenly a tearful cry burst out from somewhere inside me: 'Lord, if You exist, help me quit drugs!' This was my first prayer!"

After this incident, half a month passed. It was November 2005. As always, Benjamin lied to his mother and took fifty rubles from her, telling her it was to go look for work. Benjamin went out and saw an acquaintance whom he did not recognize at first. This acquaintance was also a drug addict, but no one saw him for a long time. People said that he had been in a rehabilitation center for a year.

"This was a completely different person, tells Benjamin. Well dressed, smiling. In general, he looked great. He came up and asked me: 'Are you still injecting?' Of course, I answered no, although everything was clear from my appearance. He invited me to go to a Christian rehabilitation center. I thought: 'I'll go, live there until the New Year, get better, get some rest, and come home by the holidays [Christmas is January 7th in Russia]?"

My first ten days in a new place, I practically did not sleep. My body, accustomed to ten years of drug, alcohol, and tobacco use, did not want to accept and live in a new way.

But as soon as I got to the rehabilitation center, I immediately had a long-forgotten feeling that I was actually needed by someone, shared Benjamin. Here I was accepted the way I was, surrounded by love and care that I felt from the guys who also were drug addicts once, but now freed from addiction and helping other people who got into difficult situations".

And in less than a month, Benjamin felt much better, he recovered physically. And most importantly, he realized that he did not want to go back. There were many true believers around him, and Benjamin reached out to them. And when he repented before God and felt Him in his heart, he realized that he would no longer be the same. It was real happiness.

met his future wife. He says: "We usually celebrate this holiday in the church. I asked God to give me a wife who loves the Lord very much, and God answered my prayer! I met my wife Larisa".

As it turned out, Larisa had previously prayed that the Lord would give her a believing husband. She was a ballerina, who taught classical ballet at the Krupskaya Palace of Creativity. When the two met, Larisa already had two sons: Daniel and Konstantin. She did not immediately agree to marry Benjamin; she was afraid of disappointment and betrayal, which she had already faced in her life.

But they soon realized that marriage was given to them by God. The young couple was eager to be blessed by the pastor of the church. However, he soon had to go on a business trip, and all the dates for registering marriage at the registry office before his departure were booked out. But by the will of the Lord they unexpectedly found free time for them! The young couple was just so happy!

Benjamin and Larisa have been together for nine years, the eldest son has already served in the army, the second is finishing school. They had two more children. The girl is now seven years old, and the boy is six. The son is named David, and the daughter is named Anna. Benjamin liked this name. It was worn by the biblical Anna, who prayed diligently all the time, in anticipation of the Lord. And only then the happy father found out that the daughter's name means "mercy". He and his wife were finally convinced that God blessed their family with mercy.

"Like any husband and wife, we also have disagreements, and even disputes", admits Benjamin. "But when God is leading the family, all issues can be easily resolved by mutual respect and obedience. We spend evenings with the children, reading and playing. And Saturday is our traditional family day, when we arrange walks and trips to nature, take out our favorite board games and thank God for every day of our lives".

**Material prepared  
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## Casey DIAZ: "I Marked People for Death. Jesus Marked Me for Life"

### How a gang leader found salvation in prison

In prison, I was a shot caller. Shot callers have an elevated rank in the gang world. They are the power-brokers who determine who gets hurt (or killed) and who doesn't. They command respect.

I started down this path as a teenager in South-Central Los Angeles, as a leader in the Rockwood Street Locos. I led the way when we invaded homes, broke into cars, ransacked convenience stores, and stabbed rival gang members. It didn't take me long to figure out that the streets were bloody. Most of the time, it was kill or be killed.

Eventually, the LAPD caught up with me. I was sentenced to nearly 13 years for second-degree murder — along with 52 counts of armed robbery. I actually breathed a sigh of relief that those were the only charges the cops could pin on me.

While awaiting transfer to New Folsom State Prison — a Level IV maximum security prison near Sacramento, California — I was housed with 120 murderers and violent criminals inside Pitchess Detention Center, north of Los Angeles.

At Pitchess, we segregated ourselves: blacks aligning with blacks, whites with whites, and Latinos with Latinos. Several dudes from two long-established gangs, 18th Street and Florencia 13, approached me about becoming a shot caller there.

One of my responsibilities was the control and distribution of shanks, the crude homemade knives used for stabbing another prisoner. I slept with all 13 of them under my mattress. When a riot went off, I made sure the right people got shanks. There were many violent upheavals at Pitchess, and inmates got stabbed and killed all the time. All it took was a wrong look at the wrong person, and you were done for. Life was very cheap.

After about six months, I was transferred to New Folsom State Prison. When the bus dropped us off at the main building, I saw guards pacing on catwalks, their arms cradling Mini-14s — small, lightweight semi-automatic rifles.

The warden, standing next to a phalanx of serious-looking guards in riot gear, cleared his throat. "I want you to look at the sign to your right", he said. My eyes alighted on a white sign with red lettering that read, "No Warning Shots Fired". "In case of a riot", the warden continued, "we will not be aiming at your feet, we will not be aiming at your legs, and we will not be aiming at your torso. We will be aiming directly at your head to kill you".

When the warden was gone, a guard approached me with a manila file in hand. "Diaz, follow me", he ordered. I was led inside the prison to an interview room, where the guard introduced himself as a gang coordinator. "Listen closely, Diaz", he said. "We know that you're a banger and a shot caller, so we're putting you in solitary".

I would be cooped up in an eight-by-ten-foot windowless box, with all my meals slipped in through a slot in the steel door (or "gate"). Social interactions with other inmates (and guards) would be nearly nonexistent.

The only source of illumination in my cell was a heavy Plexiglas light that couldn't be turned off, which made it difficult to get any sleep. And without a clock or wristwatch to consult, I had trouble distinguishing whether it was day or night. There was nothing to do — no TV, no radio, no books. Only the meals broke the monotony.

I had been told by prisoners in Pitchess that if you're not strong-willed, then solitary confinement could absolutely break you. There were times when I wondered if I would keep my sanity.

After about a year at New Folsom, I heard the guards come by my cell with an announcement: "Protestant service. Any inmate wanting to go, stand by your gate".

I had heard the same announcement for Catholics. Religion wasn't something I was interested in. I knew next to nothing about Jesus, only that he was the one on all those crucifixes.

One time I was lying on my bed, listening to the voices outside. I heard an older woman say, "Is there someone in that cell?" She sounded Southern and spoke with a syrupy drawl. "Yes, ma'am", the guard said, "but you don't want to deal with Diaz. You're wasting your time".

"Well", she answered, "Jesus came for him, too".

She approached the cell: "Young man, can I speak with you?" Looking through the open slot in my gate, I couldn't see anything except for the guard's boots and a pair of spindly legs.

"How are you doing?" she asked. "I couldn't be better", came my sarcastic reply. "Young man", she said, "I'm going to pray for you. But there's something else I want to tell you: Jesus is going to use you".

By now, I was certain she was crazy. Couldn't she see I was locked away in solitary confinement? "I don't think that's going to happen", I said. But she persisted: "Young man, every time I'm here, I'm going to come by and remind you that Jesus is going to use you".

A year or so later, I was lying down in my cell, daydreaming, when I turned toward the wall opposite my bed. On that wall, something strange was happening. A movie was playing, a movie about my life. I saw myself as a young child, walking the old neighborhood at 9th and Kenmore. I witnessed incidents from my early days with the gang — everything in picture-perfect detail.

Then I saw a bearded man with long hair carrying a cross. As he trudged along, a mob of angry people shouted at him. When he arrived on top of a knoll, rough-looking men nailed his hands and feet to the wooden beams and raised the cross so it stood between two other men on crosses.

What got to me most was when this man looked at me and said, "Darwin, I'm doing this for you". I shuddered. Apart from the guards and my family, no one knew my real name. Everyone called me Casey — my nickname for as long as I could remember.

Then I heard the sound of breath leaving him. At that moment, I knew he had died.

That's when I hit the floor in the middle of the cell. I started weeping because I knew, somehow, that this was Almighty God, even though I didn't understand what he had done for me. After hitting the floor, I knew I had to get on my knees. I started confessing my sins: "God, I'm sorry for stabbing so many people. God, I'm sorry I robbed so many families".

With each new confession, I felt another weight come off my shoulders. When I finished, I knew something major had happened.

I asked to see a chaplain, who opened his Bible and explained who Jesus was and told me that what I experienced in that cell was salvation. He handed me a Bible and urged me to start reading.

I'd spend five or six hours reading that Bible, then fall asleep, wake up, and do some push-ups and calisthenics before picking up where I had left off. I didn't understand half of what I was reading, but that didn't bother me.

That was the start of my journey of faith. Eventually, I was released from solitary confinement and returned to the mainline prison population, where I was beaten for being a Christian and turning my back on my fellow gang members. But I was okay with that, because I was no longer a shot caller. I had found a new calling: telling other inmates about Jesus.

Casey Diaz is the author of "The Shot Caller: A Latino Gangbanger's Miraculous Escape from a Life of Violence to a New Life in Christ". He lives in Los Angeles, where he is a pastor.

**From Christianity Today.**





# CHRIST AROSE FROM THE DEAD

What would happen if Christ were not resurrected from the dead? What would happen if the women carrying the myrrh to embalm him in the tomb early in the morning, would discover the massive stone still blocking the entrance? Would Christianity still be formed? Would this religion still have a chance?

History shows us that the religious system does not require a resurrected founder in order to exist. For instance, Buddhism began its existence after the death of Buddha. Taoism or Daoism started despite Lao Tsu's death. Islam's origin was the death of Muhammad. We could say that the disciples' faith would falter without Christ's resurrection. Yet, would that truly be the case?

The gospel of Mark has a significant passage regarding this view. Three of Jesus's closest disciples Peter, John, and James descend from the mountain with Jesus after the Transfiguration. *And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean (Mark 9:9-10).*

They could not grasp the Messianic idea that their Teacher would get killed and then get resurrected from the dead. When we read the Gospel passages, we see that this is what concerned them from the time Christ died and the time he revealed himself to them after his resurrection. None of them expected Jesus to actually rise from the dead.

Over time, they would get over their shock and sorrows and form a religious group that would make their teacher's sacrifice timeless. After all, that is what happened to Socrates...

Christianity, without belief in the resurrection, exists in its emasculative strange form today. Rudolf Bultmann, a popular German theologian of the 20th century, wrote, "But the resurrection of Christ is it not just a mythical event? In any case, this is, of course, not a historical event, the significance of which is to be pondered". A scholarly man, a man with a theological degree, but alien to pure joy of Easter. I do not know how Bultmann answered the greeting cry, "Christ is risen!" "Hmm, He is risen indeed! In an existential, eschatological sense".

Bultmann is trying to justify his position by stating that it's impossible for a modern person to believe in the resurrection. However, this problem is not quite modern.

Paul preached in the Athenian Areopagus and encountered a Bultmann's misunderstanding. *Now they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this" (Acts 17:32).* Everything could have been attributed to the Greek mind, sophisticated by the philosophy of the Epicureans and Stoics.

But Bultmann would find like-minded thinkers not only among the Greeks. We think that Judaism was inextricably linked with faith in the resurrection, yet the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. Is it not ironic that they were the most influential people in their society? They were the ones who were close to the Roman authorities. They were the ones who came from the priestly families and controlled the temple service. They made up the majority of the council. The Sadducees are a perfect example of

how a religion can exist without the idea of a resurrection. But what kind of religion is it? One close to power and calculating...

What would become of Christianity without faith in resurrection. What did this faith in resurrection give Christianity?

Apostle Paul writes to the believers in Corinth. *But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ, we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied... (1 Corinthians 15:13-19).*

The New Testament Christians saw the resurrection as a realistic and historical fact, as we understand from Paul's letter, nevertheless it is important to note that they acknowledged this fact. For them this meant victory over hell and death. *Oh death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? (1 Corinthians 15:55).*

Faith in resurrection gives the life of a Christian an entirely different perspective. Death is no longer to be feared. God's

kingdom awaits us, and life is viewed from an eternal perspective.

However, this perspective does not come about on its own. It is a result of a particularly meditative practice. It is the outcome of a prayerful Bible reading and the mutual comfort that is attained in Christian fellowship (Hebrews 10:25).

What does it mean to have hope in Christ in this life only? It means to live without hope of resurrection from the dead. But what kind of Christian life is one without the joy of Easter? Without it, Christianity loses its main purpose.

How can we understand the Sermon on the Mount if there is no resurrection? It sounds like nonsense. In reality, the sermon is built on faith in a new world and faith in a resurrection. This eschatological pressure is felt from the first few lines. Almost everything is written in future tense: *they shall be comforted, they shall inherit, they shall be satisfied* and so forth.

If someone attempts to follow the "beatitude commandments" they will become entirely miserable if they do so



without faith in resurrection. If they do not have that internal acknowledgment of the resurrection's truth, they will never attain the supreme blessedness-beatitudes.

There are completely different "recipes" to have happiness in this world. If we change the "beatitude commandments", we can come up with the following list:

*Blessed are the confident and wealthy in all aspects — they have built their own kingdom.*

*Blessed are those entertaining themselves and those having fun because they do not need comfort.*

*Blessed are the impudent and arrogant for they will get what they want and take over lands.*

*Blessed are those who do not stress over making the right decision for they will always be full.*

*Blessed are they who could pay back their enemies with revenge for they will not get payback.*

*Blessed are they who are not afraid to get dirty for they will always stay at the palace and see the king.*

*Blessed are they who know how to weave stories and bad talk their enemies, for they shall be called farseeing politicians.*

*Blessed are those who know how to strike a deal with their conscience, for they will climb up the corporate ladder.*

These are the "beatitude command-

The most famous founder of the Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) fast food chain, Colonel David Sanders, better known as Colonel Sanders, was born on September 9, 1890 in Henryville, Indiana, USA.

After his father's death, when he was only six years old, his mother had to work and Sanders became an independent child who looked after his younger brother and sister.

As a matter of fact, this determined his fate since he now had to prepare a lot of food and it turned out quite tasty. All of his relatives started noticing that the little boy has excellent skills in the kitchen. However, he was only able to make money with his skills thirty years later.

## Colonel Sander's Secret Ingredient

After some time, his mother remarried and Sanders started working.

### MULTIPLE PROFESSIONS IN THE SEARCH OF ONE

It's important to note that none of his jobs were his favorite and he had plenty of different jobs. Was there anything the future millionaire did not do? He was a farmer, tram conductor, U.S. Army Private, blacksmith assistant, steam locomotive fireman, legal trainee in court, insurance agent, furniture loader, ferry captain, tire salesman, and car mechanic.

Perhaps, one of his favorite jobs was when he worked as a steam locomotive fireman. This was the time when he decided to propose to his beloved Claudia who supported him throughout his entire life. She always believed in her beloved Harland. But his most fateful job was as an auto mechanic.

By that time, a good chunk of his life passed by and he was still an average person who did not achieve anything. He did not have a lot of money to live for himself. He was disappointed with life. Obviously, he wanted to change something.

### FIRST SUCCESSFUL JOB

Yes, Harland was already 40 years old when he started his first successful job. He opened his auto repair shop off Route 25 where many Americans passed through to get to the southern states. His shop started to bring in a lot of money.

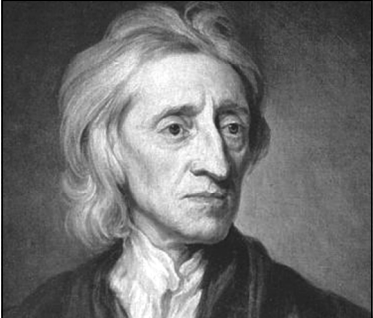
Sanders showed himself not only as a practical but also an insightful businessman. He noticed the hungry tourists who would often stop by his shop. He decided to open his own diner where he would fry exceptional chicken with his very own unique spices!

His chicken became extremely popular. It brought in a lot of profit. One of Sanders's milestones was in 1935 when the governor of Kentucky awarded Harland with the title of Kentucky's Colonel for his services for the state. Truly, his services were great since everyone was talking about the state's national dish made by Colonel Sanders.

(Continued on page 10)

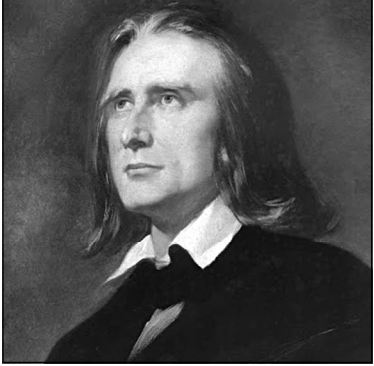
## QUOTES FROM FAMOUS PEOPLE ABOUT GOD AND THE BIBLE

**John LOCKE**  
(1632–1704),  
English academic  
and philosopher



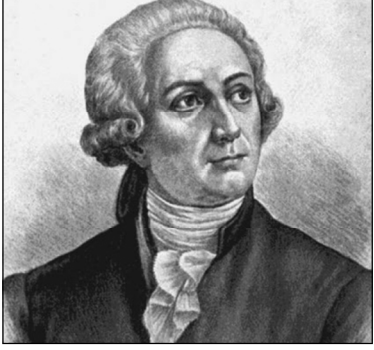
"The Bible is one of the greatest blessings bestowed by God on the children of men. It has God for its Author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture for its matter. It is all pure, all sincere; nothing too much; nothing wanting!"

**Heinrich HEINE**  
(1797–1856),  
German poet




"The Bible. It is just to call it the Holy Scriptures. Whoever lost their God can find Him in the Bible. Those who never knew Him will have the breath of God's Word pour out on them".

**Antoine Laurent LAVOISIER**  
(1743–1794),  
the founder  
of modern chemistry




"You are doing a wonderful job", he wrote to a certain King who published a treatise in defense of religion, "as a defender of Revelation and the authenticity of the scriptures".

**Frederick William HERSHEY**  
(1738–1822),  
English astronomer



Frederick William Herschel, a German-born British astronomer said, "All human discoveries seem to be made only for the purpose of confirming more strongly the truths that come from on high and contained in the Sacred Writings".

**Andre-Marie AMPERE**  
(1775–1836),  
physicist  
and mathematician



The year Ampere died he wrote, "I would like to remember the words of Paul, 'Those who use the world should be like people who aren't preoccupied with it'".

<http://blago.dp.ua>

# Colonel Sander's Secret Ingredient

(Continued from page 9)

## FAILURE AS A WAY TO TRUE SUCCESS

But soon life took a turn for the worst: the construction of a new highway was completed, onto which the traffic which had previously passed by Harland's auto repair shop was rerouted.

It seemed like another failure, and he wasn't young anymore — sixty-two years old. Harland almost gave up.

And then... fried chicken came to his rescue! Yes, that's right, Harland packed his suitcase and went to drive around the nearby restaurants with only one phrase: "I can cook fried chicken better than you". And he was denied again and again. An excellent chef who was getting along in years was suspiciously scrutinized from head to toe and was often not allowed through the doors. In total, he was refused one thousand and nine times.

It took a long time before he found the first customer. Under the terms of the contract, Sanders received only five cents in each restaurant for each piece of chicken. Not bad when you consider that the volume of orders was constantly growing. Needless to say, already in his early sixties, Harland Sanders' clients were several hundred restaurants in the United States.

And then Harland Sanders' wish came true: he appreciated himself one hundred percent. He found his favorite job, completely surrendering to his talent. He made others believe in him!

## RECOGNITION AT... 70 YEARS OF AGE

When Sanders was seventy years old, Kentucky Fried Chicken reached its peak of fame and the old colonel decided to sell the company to private investors for two million dollars and a position as the company representative (the face of the brand), for which he was paid about two hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year.

He only needed to meet with the press, clients, employees — in general, continue marketing, which he wasn't in charge of anymore. He didn't even need it.

In 1980, at the age of ninety, Harland Sanders passed away.

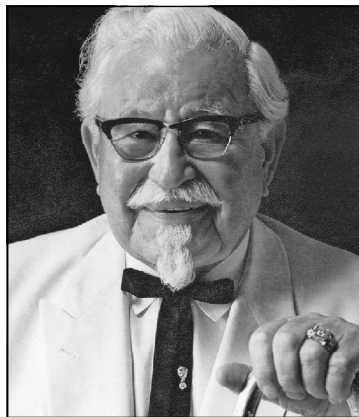
In his last years, he devoted quite a lot of time to himself: traveling, playing golf, running his own restaurant, Claudia Sanders' Dinner House, with his wife.

Colonel Harland Sanders was able to make his life complete.

## COLONEL SANDERS' SECRET INGREDIENT

The above part of the biography of David Harland Sanders may be known to many, but there is a less known part of his life story. An American preacher and writer did his best to change this.

Dr. Bob Rogers, whose father Waymon Rogers was the pastor of Colonel Sanders, has written a book about the legendary fried chicken entrepreneur. In this book, he reveals amazing



facts about the founder of the KFC restaurant chain. In it, Bob tells the story of how his father baptized this famous billionaire in the Jordan River in 1967, shortly after Harland became a Christian.

Rogers writes, "My dad knelt down next to him and asked, 'Colonel, would you like to be born again?' The old Colonel said with tears in his eyes: 'I really want to. Do you think that Jesus can really save me and set me free from the fact that I curse?' Then Dad said, 'Colonel, God will save you tonight and you will never swear again'."

That night, Sanders truly accepted Christ into his heart. He was truly born again and became a new creature in Christ Jesus. Since then, he has never used the Lord's name in vain.

A few days after his repentance, Harland donated fifteen thousand dollars to Pastor Rogers' Church in Louisville, Kentucky. It was a very large amount at that time.

Colonel Sanders told the pastor: "After I said the prayer of a sinner, it completely changed my life. It really made a difference in me... I am ready to donate a large amount of money, I want to give tithes to the church."

Dr. Rogers' book also tells how Harland Sanders experienced supernatural healing when a colon surgery was planned to stop the disease from progressing. He was waiting for his surgery in the hospital when Pastor Rogers came to pray for him. A day later, Sanders wrote: "I don't need the surgery anymore. My pastor came and prayed for me, and God healed me!" The doctor said, "Colonel, when I examined you again, there were no polyps!"

The founder of KFC has given generous donations to the church for many years. He later said, "My prayers have always been out of gratitude. God has been so merciful to me. I've always believed in tithing."

"The Bible says that you have to give ten percent to God. I believe that even if you are a fraud, you are still obligated to give ten percent to the Lord, at least for the fact that you are breathing. Tithing is a great inspiration in my life."

Harland SANDERS.

Shortly before his death, at the age of ninety in 1980, he added: "I have always understood that it makes no sense to be the richest person in the cemetery. You cannot govern from there."

"People don't know that I donate most of my money and most of it goes to church".

<https://svetoch.online>

## I. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Before answering this question, it is necessary to define the following terms: born-again, Christian, believer, possessed.

### 1. Christian

A Christian is a born-again person. There is no such thing as a non-born again Christian. A person is either Christian or not. A Christian translated from Greek literally means little Christ and is translated as follower of Christ.

### 2. Born-again

The expression to be born again means that the Spirit of Christ lives in a person. That is why a person is not just called a Christian, but lives and behaves with a Christlike attitude.

**Romans 8:9** — ...And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.

# CAN A CHRISTIAN BE POSSESSED?

### 3. Believer

A believer is a person who believes in something. Aren't Buddhists, Krishnas and other idolaters' believers? Aren't the communists who worship the ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin believers? To be fully honest, there is not a single unbeliever on earth. Every person believes in something or someone. Only some believe in a living and holy God who came to earth in the flesh, died on the cross for our sins and was resurrected on the third day (**1 Timothy 3:16**), while others believe either in themselves or in other people, or in worthless idols.

We must not forget that not every believer is a Christian. And you can even call yourself the Pope, but that will not change anything. The Bible says the following about such believers who are disciples of Christ only in words: **Matthew 7:21-23** — Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord", will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and, in your name, perform many miracles?" Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!"

### 4. Possessed

A possessed person is a person in whom an unclean (demonic) spirit lives. And not just lives, but reigns, and suppresses their will and consciousness.

## II. ANSWER TO THE QUESTION

Now that we know the definition of all the terms we need, let's answer the question: Can a Christian be possessed?

So, can an unclean spirit and the Holy Spirit live in a person at the same time? This is the same as asking: Can holiness coexist with sin? Or: Can God coexist with Satan? Or: Is light compatible with darkness?

The Bible answers this question unambiguously: **2 Corinthians 6:14-16** — Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

# JESUS IS OUR FATE

(Selected pages from the book)

Recently I read an interesting report about the times of the Second World War, when the last German airplane entered Stalingrad and was surrounded on all sides by Russian armies. This airplane was loaded with wounded people. Both lightly wounded and frostbitten soldiers who also wanted to fly away approached the airplane. But the airplane was already loaded to the limit. Then they clung to the airplane wherever they could hold onto: the outer door handles, the landing gear... and the airplane departed. When the airplane landed, none of the passengers were still holding on, they were blown away by the wind. Only those who were inside were saved.

Then I had a thought: the Gospel of the Son of God, Jesus, who died for us and rose again, is similar to that airplane. On this airplane you can fly out of the disastrous environment. There is enough space in it for everyone. But how many of those who have not yet entered, but only hang onto the outside: who go to church only at Christmas; are baptized, but believers in whatever. And when they die, the pastor must confirm that they were kind, decent people. Do you understand what I mean? Many are just hanging

outside. They will all be blown away! Only those that are inside will be saved! Are you inside?

Hell will be filled with people who knew about Jesus, but did not open the doors to Him. Do you understand? To believe in Jesus is to let Him enter your heart. Do it! He is the only one with whom you can entrust your life without hesitation.

In conclusion, I want to once again look at the cross of Jesus. Ascend mentally with me to the Calvary, to the hill before the gates of Jerusalem. There, on the cross, hangs the Son of God. This cross is the only place in the whole world where a person can find forgiveness of sins, where everything can change!

## How can you acquire a life with God?

How often have people said to me: "Pastor Bush, you are a lucky man! You have something that I do not have". And I answer them: "Don't be silly! You can have the same! Jesus exists for you too!" Usually they ask: "But how can I acquire a life with God?" The Bible gives a clear answer to this in a short verse: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!"

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



The answer is obvious: unclean spirits and the Holy Spirit of God cannot coexist in a person at the same time!

Speaking of possession, Jesus said the following in **Mark 3:27**: In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man's house.

Can an unclean (demonic) spirit overcome and bind God's Spirit? Never! The Bible teaches that God is stronger than Satan and his demons: **1 John 4:4** —

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. Based on the above verse, we can conclude that the possessed person does not have the Holy Spirit of God. Otherwise, the unclean spirit would not prevail over the personality and consciousness of a person, enslaving his will and making him possessed.

Jesus Christ said the following two things about possession and the casting out of demons.

### 1. A Christian cannot be possessed.

**Luke 11:21-23** — When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up his plunder. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

**2. If after the expulsion of the demon a person does not give a place to the Holy Spirit in his soul, then the demons will return in even greater numbers.**

**Luke 11:24-26** — When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, "I will return to the house I left". When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first.

## CONCLUSION

Do not be confused when you see demons being cast out of believers. This is just evidence that these believers are not yet Christians, because a Christian cannot be possessed.

It must be remembered that after the expulsion of unclean spirits from the possessed, that person needs to understand that if he does not ask God to enter his heart, that is, if he does not devote his heart and life to the Lord, then the unclean spirits can return, and his condition will become even worse than before.

To be filled with the Holy Spirit, such a person must first invite the Lord Jesus Christ into his heart, and secondly, he must begin to read and study God's Word (the Bible) on a regular basis. The Lord will do the rest. Rely on Him!

<http://www.cogmtl.net/q.htm>

Oh, if I could lead you to this faith! To do this, I must explain what it means "to believe". Many people have complete misconceptions about faith.

Once I had to give lectures in the Norwegian capital, Oslo. On Saturday morning I was planning to fly back, as I had to preach to a large congregation in Wuppertal the next day. But from the very beginning I had bad luck, due to the fog, the airplane was delayed for an hour. Finally, our airplane headed for Copenhagen, where it was necessary to make a connecting flight. When we were already over Copenhagen, the pilot suddenly turned and flew towards Sweden. Through the loudspeaker, he informed us that Copenhagen is completely in fog, so it is impossible to land there. We flew to Malmö. I didn't need to go to Malmö, Sweden. I had nothing to do there. I needed to go to Dusseldorf! I had to preach in Wuppertal! Finally, we landed in Malmö and we saw that the entire airport is packed with passengers. And the airplanes were still landing one after another. It turned out that Malmö was one of the only airports that was free of fog. All the airplanes flew here. It was a small airport, in the building of which there wasn't a single open spot place to rest. I met an Austrian businessman. We were interested in the same thing: what will happen next?

(Continued on page 11)



**(Ending.  
Beginning on page 10)**

We may have to stand like this until morning. After all, legs can fail! Everyone scolded, questioned, grumbled, and expressed their dissatisfaction, as was the case in situations like these. Suddenly, the radio announces: An airplane is taking off in a southerly direction! The landing place is still unknown: Hamburg, Dusseldorf, or Frankfurt. Those who wish to fly can board. "It was very indefinite". A woman next to us immediately stated: "I will not get on this plane! I'm afraid!" I said, "Dear! You don't have to fly, but calmly stay here!" And my Austrian friend said: "Flying in this weather would be suicide! Especially, since the landing site is not known!" While the screaming woman and the Austrian made me hesitate, a pilot in a blue uniform walked past us. I noticed that his face was very serious and focused. His whole appearance spoke of the responsibility that he has to bear. And I said to my Austrian friend: "We can trust this pilot, let's board the plane! This is not a frivolous person!" And we went aboard the plane. From the moment we entered the plane, when the ground ceased to be our support and the plane door closed, we were at the mercy of this man. But we trusted him. I trusted him with my life. The plane landed in Frankfurt. It took me all night to get home, but I achieved my goal. That's what it means to believe! To believe is to put your trust in someone.

How to achieve life with God? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!" I would say, "Come to Jesus!" Do you understand me? When boarding the plane, I noticed that the Austrian wanted to stay at the airport with one foot and board the plane with the other. But obviously, that wouldn't work. He needed to either stay at the airport or trust the pilot completely! It's the same thing with Jesus. You cannot live outside of Jesus with one foot and come to Him with the other! It's impossible! To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, to live, devoting yourself to God, is possible only by completely trusting Him. I must say to Him: "Lord, take my life: it is all dedicated to You".

Let me ask you: who, if not the Son of God, can best be trusted? No one in the world has done as much for me and you like Jesus! He loved me so much that he died for me. And for you! Nobody loved us as He did. He rose from the dead. Can't I trust my life to the One who is resurrected? You have to be crazy not to do this! The moment I commit my life to Jesus, I begin a life dedicated to God. The words from one hymn are very dear to me:

*Who, if not you,  
To devote myself.  
O King, You died on the cross  
For me.  
I put everything on your altar  
Myself and my life.  
I want to be faithful to the end  
I am Your warrior  
and Your servant.  
Oh, if only you could  
Say it!*

I must add something else. Listen, if you want to devote your life to Jesus, to trust Him, then talk to Him about it! He is close to you! He hears you! Tell Him: "Lord Jesus, I give my life to You!" When I, a godless, lost young man, turned to Jesus and accepted Him, I began to pray like this: "Lord Jesus!

Now I commit my life to You. I cannot promise You that I will become kind. For this you must give me another heart! I have a contentious nature, but I come to you as I am. Do with me as you please!" It was at that moment that I walked into Jesus with both feet and let my life be ruled by the One who redeemed me with His blood.

But to flourish in such a life, three conditions must be fulfilled: read the Word of God, pray, and have fellowship with the children of God.

You see, you cannot belong to Jesus without reading or hearing about Him. Read the Bible or the

belonged to Jesus for a long time. Finally I was told about a shoemaker who reads the Bible". And so this elegant young man comes down the steps to the shoemaker's workshop and asks him: "Do you know Jesus?" The shoemaker's eyes began to shine with joy in response. The young man asked: "May I come to you every morning for us to pray together?" So important for him was the third condition — communication with those who seriously want to be Christians.

Thus, first of all, I wanted to explain to you that since Jesus

courage to go to the podium when thousands of people are sitting and applauding?! Yet one hand went up. An old woman appeared in the background, a kind of true East Prussian old woman in a black cap, of which there are many in the Ruhr region. The chairman asked: "Grandma, did you want to say something?" "Yes", she replied, "I wanted to say something!" "Then you have to go ahead!" "Please", she said, "I'm not afraid!" Brave woman! This was around 1925. She walked forward to the podium and, standing in the pulpit, began: "Mr. Speaker, you have just been

dedicated to Jesus? I want to tell you about this from personal experience.

My life would be unbearable if I did not have peace with God through Jesus! Sometimes my heart was ready to break. Today I heard that here, in the neighborhood, a great misfortune happened that plunged two families into mourning. And any misfortune can suddenly fall upon us, so that magnificent phrases will turn out to be unnecessary and we will only stretch our hands into the darkness, as if asking: is there no one who could help me? You know, during the painful hours of your life, what you have in Jesus is manifested. When we got married, I said to my wife: "Wife, I want to have six sons and have them all play the trombone". I thought it was wonderful to have my brass band in the house. And we did have six children: four lovely daughters and two sons. But both sons are gone. God took both of them from me in a terrible way, first one, and then the other. I still cannot understand this. All my life I dealt with young guys, as I was a youth pastor, and my own boys... I still remember how, when I received a message about the death of my second son, I rushed about with such a feeling as if there was a knife in my heart. People came with words of consolation that did not reach the heart and did not have any effect on me. But I was a youth pastor and knew that tonight I had to go to the youth club, where I should joyfully preach the Word of God to one hundred and fifty young men. And my heart was bleeding! Then I locked myself, fell on my knees, and cried out: "Lord Jesus, you are alive, have mercy on me, poor pastor!" I opened my New Testament and read: "Jesus says, 'I give you my peace'". I knew that what He said, He would fulfill. And I asked Him: "Lord Jesus, now I cannot understand why You allowed this, but give me Your peace! Fill my heart with Your peace!" And He did it! He did it! I am testifying this to you here.

And you will need Him when no one can comfort you. Oh, how wonderful it is to know Jesus, who redeemed us on the cross with His blood and rose again, when no one can help you! We can say to Him: "Lord! Give me Your peace!" The peace that He gives rushes into the heart with a powerful stream. This also applies to the most difficult hours of our life, when death is approaching. What will your death be like? Then no one will help you either. Even your most beloved hand you will have to let go one day. And you will stand before God! Do you want to appear before God with all your sins? Oh, if you hold on to the strong hand of the Savior and know that He redeemed you with His precious blood and forgave all the guilt, then you can die peacefully.

What do we still get from a life dedicated to God? I want to recite this list: peace with God, peace in your heart, love for God and your neighbor, and such that you can even love enemies and everyone who gets on your nerves, consolation in misfortune so that every day you can see the radiance of the clear sun, firm hope for eternal life, Holy Spirit, the forgiveness of sins, patience... Oh, I can go on for a long time!

It is worth being the property of the Savior! I wish you such wealth and such happiness!

**William BUSH,**  
<http://www.blagovestnik.org>

## JESUS IS OUR FATE

*(Selected pages from the book)*

New Testament every day for a quarter of an hour, with prayerful concentration. Don't worry about incomprehensible places. The more you read, the more wonderful truths will be revealed to you. My heart is filled with joy at the thought that I belong to this wonderful Savior and can proclaim Him. One can not only have a life dedicated to God but can also share it.

The second condition is prayer. Jesus hears you. You don't need to speak to Him with a beautiful speech. It is enough for you to pray simply, like one housewife: "Lord Jesus, today is a hard day: my husband is in a bad mood, the children are not listening, and today is the day of washing, for all this, we need ten marks. Lord Jesus, at Your feet I lay all my misery. Give my heart joy, because my life is dedicated to You! Help me move everything! Lord Jesus, thank You that I can fully trust You!" You see, I can tell Jesus everything that is in my heart! I can also ask: "Lord Jesus, let me know You better so that I can belong to You even more!"

The third condition for living with God is fellowship. This means that you need to join those who also belong to Jesus. Someone recently complained that he could not grow in faith. I advised him to associate with Christians. But he objected that he did not like them at all. Then I answered him: "Nothing can be done, if you want to be with them in heaven, then you need to learn to have fellowship with them here on earth! God cannot create special Christians for you!"

When I was young, I knew a banker. He was an elderly gentleman who told me a lot from his youth. When he finished his studies, his father gave him a certain amount of money and allowed him to travel to all the capitals of Europe. Imagine an eighteen-year-old boy who has this opportunity. Anyone would be jealous! And this elderly gentleman said: "I knew that nowadays in such large cities there are many temptations and temptations, I could easily fall into sin. But I wanted to belong to Jesus, so I took the New Testament with me. Every time I left the hotel, I wanted to hear the voice of Jesus and talk to Him. Wherever I went, I looked everywhere for Christians. I found Jesus' disciples everywhere: in Lisbon, in Madrid, in London... The hardest part was in Paris. There I had to search for someone who

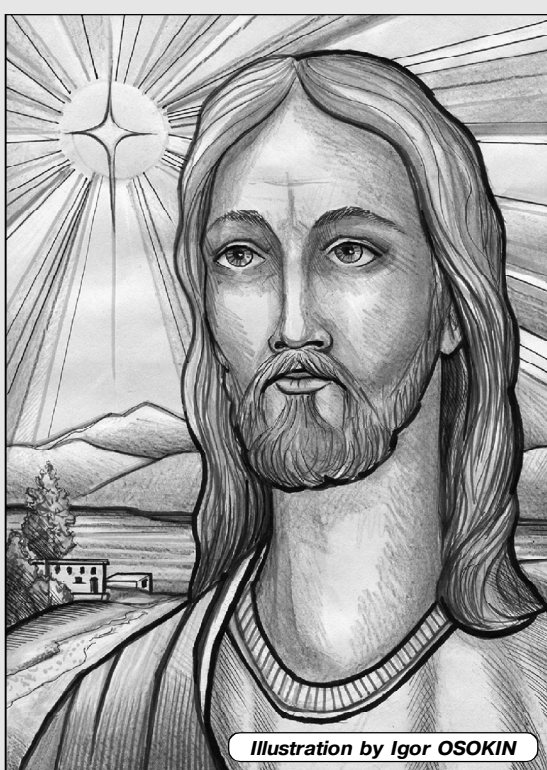


Illustration by Igor OSOKIN

came, a life dedicated to God is not an illusion. Second, in order to gain life with God, you need to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, I come to the main question.

### What do we get from living with God?

Dear friends! If I wanted to tell you about everything that we have from life with God, and about fellowship with Jesus, then I would not have enough time. It contains so much. I will never forget what my fifty-three-year-old father said on his deathbed: "William, tell all my friends and relatives how happy Jesus made me in life and death!" You know, when a person is in his death throes, he has no time for beautiful words and no time for magnificent phrases. And if at such a time he testifies that Jesus made him happy in life and death, then these words pierce to the marrow of the bones. What will your death be like?

When I was still a young pastor, an interesting story happened in the Ruhr area. In a large gathering of people, one scientist argued for two hours that there is no God. For this, he applied all his knowledge. The ovation did not stop: "Hurray! There is no god! We can do what we want!" When the speaker finished two hours later, the chairman of the meeting stood up and announced, "Now let's start the discussion. Who has a question, let him raise his hand!" Of course, no one had that much courage. Everyone thought: "Who can object to such a learned person?" Naturally, many did not agree with him. But who would have the

amazing to listen to this woman talking!) In the evening, I often did not know where to get money to feed the children the next day. And about this, I told my Savior: 'Lord, you know that I am in great difficulty. Help me!'. Then this old woman, turning to the speaker, said: "He never left me, never! Sometimes dark times came into my life, but even then He did not leave me. He did even more for me: He sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for me and washed me from all my sins with His blood! Yes, I'm an old woman now. I will die soon. But listen, He gave me a firm hope for eternal life. And if my eyes closed here, then I will wake up in heaven, as I belong to Jesus. He did all this for me! And now I ask you, Mr. Speaker, what has your unbelief done for you?" The speaker stood up, patted the old woman on the shoulder, and said: "Oh, we don't want to take away the faith from such an old woman! It is quite suitable for old people!" You should have seen this old grandmother then! She brushed it off energetically and said: "No, no, you can't get rid of me so easily! I asked you a question, Mr. Speaker, and you must answer me! What my Lord did for me, I told you. Now tell me what did your unbelief do for you?" An awkward silence followed. The old grandma was a smart woman...

And if now in the world the Gospel is being attacked from all sides, then I also have a question: "What do you actually get from your unbelief?" At least I don't get the impression that people's hearts are filled with peace from him and that they are happy. No, my friends! What do we still get from a life

## The Bible Gets Translated into Its 700th Language

The number of full Bible translations hit 700 in recent weeks, although due to the speed at which translations have been released, no one is sure which one was the first to reach the mark.

Wycliffe Bible Translations and the American Bible Society both celebrated the news, saying it's a major milestone in advancing the gospel. The 700 total involves complete Bibles with all 66 books translated. Partial translations (such as New Testaments) are not included.

James Poole, executive director of Wycliffe Bible Translators, said the milestone "represents the tremendous work that Bible translators are doing across the world".

"Every time we hear of the Bible being translated into another language, we know that means that for the first time the people in that language group can fully access the complete picture of God's story", Poole said. "It's good to take a step back and realize what this 700th Bible means: 5.7 billion people who speak 700 languages now have the Bible in the language that speaks to them best. That is a remarkable figure and continues to grow".

Wycliffe said it's "impossible" to know which one was the 700th because there were "several launches of physical Bibles" and "several being made available online and via apps, all at about the same time".



An American Bible Society blog quoted data saying the number of languages with the full Bible has doubled in the past 30 years, from 351 in 1990 to 700 in 2020.

Bible translation has accelerated in the past few decades due to "advances in translation technology" and an "unprecedented level of partnership among Bible translation agencies", the American Bible Society said.

"We are grateful to God, our ministry partners, and the financial partners whose generosity makes this Kingdom work possible", American Bible Society CEO Robert Briggs said.

Wycliffe listed three recent Bible translations that could have been the 700th translation:

- the Huichol (Wixaritari) Bible, which is used by an indigenous people of Mexico.
- the Ellomwe Bible, which is read by a people group in Malawi and Mozambique.
- the Igede Bible, which is used by a Nigerian ethnic group.

Despite the milestone, about 1.5 billion people — or one in five people in the world — still don't have a Bible in their language, Wycliffe said.

"That's an injustice that Bible translation teams worldwide continue to work to put right", Poole said.

[www.christianheadlines.com](http://www.christianheadlines.com)

## Can Dead Christians Be Cremated?

Some churches today teach that you cannot cremate the body because it is contrary to Christian teaching. Such people claim that God will bring our old body back to life and therefore it cannot be cremated. Interesting logic. Those who adhere to this doctrine forget that in **2 Peter 3:10** it is written: *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens*

*will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both*

*the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up* (NKJV).

The earth with everything on it will burn, including human remains. In other words, the Lord Himself will cremate everything that remains on the earth on the day of His second coming.

Usually those who forbid cremating the dead refer to the example of Jesus, because He did not receive a new body, but quite the opposite: when He was resurrected, His former body, crucified on the cross, was resurrected. Yes, indeed, the Lord Jesus was resurrected in His former body. But, dear friends, let's think, why didn't

the Lord rise in a new body?

The answer is obvious. First, if He was resurrected in another body, then people could say that His soul was relocated or that He was buried, and now someone pretends to be Him, but in a different body. Second, if Jesus were resurrected in another body and His body remained in the tomb, then none of the disciples would have believed

that He was resurrected. And thirdly, if Jesus after the resurrection had a different

body, how would He say to the unbelieving Thomas, *...reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing* (John 20:27, NKJV). When we are resurrected, we will have new bodies, as it is written in **1 Corinthians 15:42-44**: *So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body* (NKJV).

### QUESTION AND ANSWER



## Does the Lord God like it when we address Him as "Lord" and "God"?

Does God like the way we address Him? And if not, how then would He want us to address or call Him?

The fact is that the Holy Scriptures, while revealing the personality and character of God, also reveals His names to us. And there are so many of them that there is enough for all occasions of life. For example, referring to God as the Creator, we can call him Elohim; as a Healer — Jehovah Rafa; as the giver of peace — Jehovah Shalom, and so on.

In addition, the Bible contains an amazing verse: **Hosea 2:16-17** — *"And it shall be, in that day", says the LORD, "that you will call Me 'My Husband', and no longer call Me 'My Master', for I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, and they shall be remembered by their name no more".*

The word *baal* is translated as lord

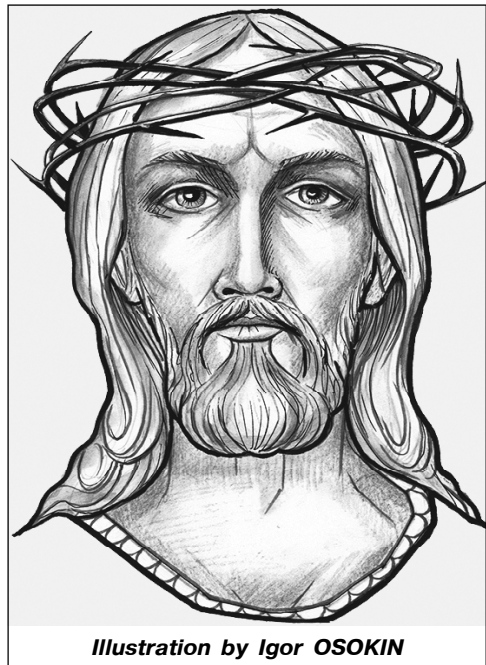


Illustration by Igor OSOKIN

or master. This is how we most often turn to God in our prayers. But it says here that the time will come when the people of God will no longer turn to their Creator with the word *Lord*, but will call Him *my Husband* or *my Spouse*. What wonderful words! What a wonderful promise fulfilled in Christ! Jesus Christ is the head of the church. **He is called her Bridegroom, and she is His bride.**

John the Baptist testified about Jesus in **John 3:29**: *He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled* (NKJV). The apostle Paul speaks of this also in **Ephesians 5:22-32**.

But that's not all. **We (the children of God) can approach Him as our Father.**

**Romans 8:15** — *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father"* (NKJV).

**Galatians 4:6** — *And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"* (NKJV).

Jesus taught us to pray. Remember "The Lord's Prayer"? It begins with an appeal to God: *"Our Father who art in heaven"*. Jesus Himself turned to Heavenly Father in prayer: **Mark 14:36** — *And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will"* (NKJV).

Choose how you will approach Heavenly Father. And always remember that you can, like Abraham and Moses, personally turn to the Lord and ask Him how He wants you to turn to Him.

<http://www.cogmtl.net/q.htm>

## Dear readers of "Prisoner"!

The publication office requests that you enclose your postal address with your material (testimonies, sermons, articles, etc.) for publication in "Prisoner". If you enclose photos with your material, we will be glad to publish them.

And for those of you just on the way to God, it's time to turn to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with a short prayer:

**"Lord Jesus, I believe you are God's Son; You died for my sins and rose again for my salvation. I accept you as my personal Lord and Savior. Please forgive all my sins and grant me eternal life. Amen!"**



## PRISONER

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## ATTENTION!

Dear readers, today the newspaper "Prisoner" has the status of the two languages: Russian and English. "Prisoner" is printed in the Ukraine and in America. However, it is published and distributed exclusively by voluntary donations. For all those wishing to contribute to the success of "Prisoner" all the requisites are indicated in the last column of the newspaper. For those in America who wish to donate to the newspaper "Prisoner" and support the prison ministry, there is a tear off form, where you can donate and specify what you want the donation to go for. God bless you!

Our main focus is ministering to inmates in jails and prisons.

**Hope of Freedom**  
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*That you may say to the prisoners, "Go forth", To those who are in darkness, "Show yourselves" (Is. 49:9).*

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