

The FAITH BUILDER

HOPE
Community Church

Sep/Oct
2006



Christian Vision, Church News & Bible Reading Guide

Sixty Years of Miracles

Linda Jennings

Linda Jennings, the mother of Bill Jennings, writes this testimony about God's miraculous intervention in her life. She and her husband, Jerry, attend our Livonia services on Sunday evening. Linda is part of the Tuesday night Hope Group that meets at the Mewha home.

Pastor Paul asked me at Hope Group last Tuesday night if I would write a little about my walk with the Lord. For those of you who do not know me I am the mother of William Jennings. I was born and raised in Detroit, and life there in the Fifties and Sixties was great. I am one of the early so-called Baby Boomers.

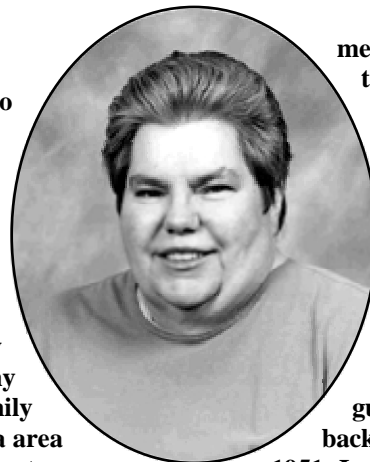
Like a lot of children born into this world I was not planned, but was a great surprise to both the doctors and my parents. My mother had been having all kinds of female problems and the doctors had thought that she may be pregnant, but all the tests showed that she was not. So in December, 1946, she had surgery. However, after the doctors had opened her up they found her to be almost six months pregnant. On March 25, 1947, I was born at the hospital in Highland Park, Michigan. This is the first miracle in my life.

LOVING GOD

My family would go to church, and like all children I loved going to Sunday School. I loved to sing to the Lord and hear all the stories from the Bible. I was able to do this for the first ten years of my life, but after that my sister and her family moved out to the Livonia area and (as my parents did not own a car) going to church on a Sunday was very hard. We were able to go sometimes when people would stop and pick us up.

However, my best friend who lived down the street would go every Sunday and as long as I was dressed and down at her house before the car left for church, I could go along. It was a Missouri Synod Lutheran Church and they were glad to have me in their Sunday school and loved every minute of the experience.

I enjoyed her family, and the best part was every night after dinner they would sit around the table and read the Bible and discuss what they had read. I know my friend would have enjoyed just going outside to play after dinner. But for



me, I ate my dinner, cleared the table and ran down to her house so I could sit in for the Bible study.

HOSPITAL

If you would ask me today why I felt so at peace when I was at Sunday school or at her house for Bible study, I guess I would need to take you back to a time in the winter of

1951. I was four and going to be five in about three months. It was a very cold winter night and I was very sick. The memory I have is the feeling of a child, which of course now as an adult I know are just the thoughts of a frightened child. However, I picture my uncle, who came to take me to the hospital, picking me up and throwing me on the sofa and wrapping me up in a blanket.

I was taken to Children's Hospital in Highland Park, I was very sick and they discovered that I had a kidney infection and that I also had only one kidney. It was felt by the doctors that when they did my mother's surgery back in 1946 they stopped the growth of one of my kidneys.

Back in those days, parents and all visitors were only able to come on the weekends. I was in the hospital for a long time. Sometimes I had a roommate. Often I didn't. I was very lonely. At this time, Jesus came to sit with me and helped me through those days. He would sit on my bed and hold my hand. I can't remember just what He said. However, I do know the words brought me peace. This was a blessing and another miracle in my life.

BLESSINGS

I had many blessing and miracles in my life as God brought my husband, Jerry, into my life in October of 1970, and we were married on March 20, 1971. I knew this man came into my life as a blessing from God. Then four and a half years later he blessed us with William. I had to watch my kidney and other things through the pregnancy, but God blessed us with a beautiful son and he has been a true blessing to both of us.

In 1967 my parents had moved out of Detroit to Westland, to the house that we now live in. The neighbor next door could see how much I missed going to church

and invited me to her church, Christ the King Lutheran on Farmington Road in Livonia. I became a member and immediately began to teach Sunday school, which I did until William was born, and then I took three years off, but returned when he was old enough to go.

CALLING

I taught until 1984, when the Lord called me to become the Sunday school superintendent. This was not a job I felt I could do, and on that first Sunday after church as I drove home and the Lord called to me to take the job. I said, "No, not me, Lord." The following Sunday, again on the way home, the Lord told me that I was to be the new superintendent. I knew I ought to talk this over with my husband, Jerry. However, we both knew I had no choice in the matter because the Lord had called me. I had the job until I had to retire because of my health in 2003. Another ministry I had at the church was one the Lord called me to, and one to this day I am not sure the congregation really knew it was the Lord who led me. I was called to write an article for the monthly newsletter to help

the church to understand what the Lord wanted for them. He had called me to help them in their walk with the Lord, to open their hearts and minds to the gospel, and to get a closer friendship with Christ.

The Lord still had another ministry for me with this church, and in 1992 I became the Lay Professional. I was to run the Tuesday night children's ministry and teach Children's Church two Sundays a month. I loved this ministry and even took on more than I was hired to do. On the two Sundays I had free, I took the children out during the sermon to work on a project called Children's Caring Ministry, in which the children made get well cards for those in the congregation who were on the Prayer List. This ministry grew to include family and friends of the congregation, and the children loved to make these cards for others.

I still felt the Lord calling me to a ministry of prayer, so E-Prayers was created, a ministry of about twenty people with email who once a week received an email from me with the names of three families in our church to pray for that week, along with the list of



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The FAITH BUILDER

"Dear friends, **BUILD** yourselves up in your most holy FAITH" (Jude 1:20)

PUBLISHER

The Faith Builder Magazine is published bi-monthly by: Hope Community Church

Address: P.O. Box 970941
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
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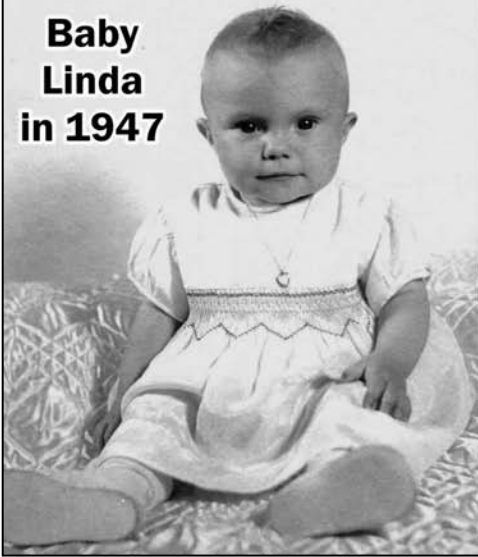
OTHER INFORMATION

Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version.

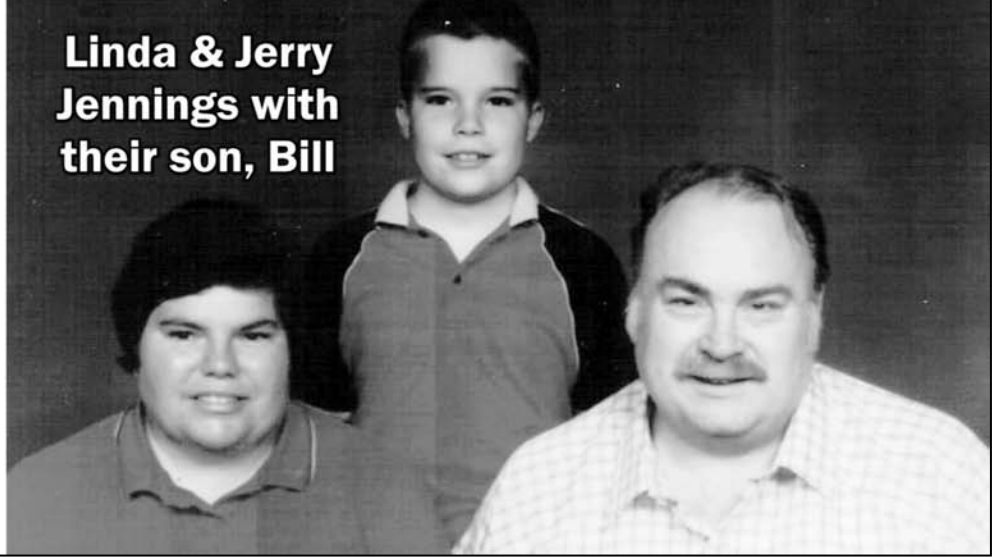
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**Baby
Linda
in 1947**



**Linda & Jerry
Jennings with
their son, Bill**



people in our congregation who were on the prayer list and all the family and friends of people who requested prayer. Of course sometimes we would need to send out special e-mails as prayers were needed.

There were times in my life at Christ the King when I would get fed up and want to leave and move on. However, the Lord would speak to me and tell me it was not time. I knew He knew best and, therefore, I stayed.

RAINBOW

I would like to tell you about something that happened to me back in March of 1985. It was the first Monday of March. We all awoke to six inches of snow, freezing rain and, most of the day, cold rain. Jerry, my husband, had been in California over the weekend to see his brother, and he was now stuck in Chicago until the next day. William was home from school, yet the house had a strange feeling this day – both like a place of warmth and cold, like a prison. After working to try to clean up the mess outside, the house became a place to warm up and dry out. After those times it just felt like a prison with the walls closing in around me. The past month had been a hard one for me as my Mother had died and I only wished things would begin looking up. Oh, I was fine when I kept busy, but, oh those quiet times....

Well, this day had been a really blue Monday when, all of a sudden around 5:30 p.m. out in the west the sun was trying to come out. I watched as it worked so hard. The more it came out, the more I began to feel funny inside. It was like I was helping it.

All at once I knew. I walked to the east side of the house and looked for the

rainbow, but couldn't find it. More of the sun came out and the trees became gold as the light hit them. Again my body took me to the east side of the house and I couldn't move. It was like my feet had been glued to the floor. And then it came, at first very faint. And as I stood there the colors became brighter and brighter. Two birds flew up into the rainbow, and as the sun hit their wings they became silver in the sunlight.

As I stood, unable to move, the Lord came and encircled me. He talked and I listened and then I thanked Him for all He had given me. I could feel the tears of joy and love flowing down my cheek and still I couldn't move. The colors of the rainbow were still becoming brighter.

Then I heard the phone. At first I couldn't move, but then I could and I went to answer it. What joy to hear my sister's voice on the other end. She just had to share her experience of the rainbow with someone. So we talked and watched together with tears running down both our faces. I could hear Jesus' words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

HOSPITAL AGAIN

Many people in life come to a place in time when they have what they call "one foot in the grave." I was there back in 2001 and I had much more than a foot in that dark place. I had even moved almost completely through the dark place to the other side.

In the beginning of my hospital experience, even though I was not well, I knew everything that was going on around me. However, things changed fast and I would almost wake up, but I have days that I have lost completely at least as far as being in the hospital. These were the

days that the Lord and I spent together. I could feel Jerry there but never really saw him as I was feeling so at peace and even joyful. I was so happy and at peace that I didn't want to come back. However, the Lord brought me back and sat on the side of my bed and told me that so many prayers were being said for me that I needed to go back; it was just not my time and I needed to accept and obey.

I am still just not sure why I am back here, but I do know that I still have a lot of living to do, and especially I have more work for the Lord to do before I take that final journey home. I also know that I am being called down a new road in my journey and you would think that at my age I would enjoy a new journey, but I find myself being more and more like my father and I don't like change. However, I have always done what the Lord has asked of me and so I slowly begin to prepare for this new journey.

Some things have been happening and I know the Lord is using me to help others, and that makes me happy as I love serving Him. I know He has a purpose for each of us and we need to be in prayer always, ready to hear and follow His directions. And if we fall He is there to pick us up and help us on the journey of a lifetime. I learned many years ago that when the Lord calls you the one and only thing that you can do is answer his call. I have no idea what the Lord has in mind for me, and just as in faith I stepped off the diving board as a child and was not sure if I would come back up out of the water or not, I had faith that God would make sure that I would come back up to the top of the water. I now take that step again knowing that the Lord will be right beside me all the way. ☩

The Fruit of Salvation

Mark Berry

SALVATION... THIS IS A CENTRAL ISSUE – THE CENTRAL ISSUE – IN THE CHRISTIAN WALK.

With it, we have everything. Without it, we have nothing. Since everything hinges on our salvation, it is right for us to thoroughly examine the question: What must I do to be saved? This is the question that the jailer asks Paul and Silas in Acts 16. The answer is plain and simple: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household.”

According to God’s word, the answer to our salvation dilemma seems clear: It is **ONLY** through belief in God’s Son, Jesus Christ. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Is it as simple as that... belief? What about all of our good works – you know, the stuff that we **DO** to get right with God? Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – *not by works*, so that no one can boast.”

So we see that salvation is a free gift that we can’t earn. This concept, though, initially seems to be in complete contradiction with the 2nd part of Philippians 2:12, which says, “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” Work out my salvation? With fear and trembling? I thought that salvation was “not by works!” I thought I only needed to believe! Understandably, this verse has the potential to create confusion and misunderstanding. Let’s see if we can clarify some things.

We should rightly understand that salvation is through faith **ONLY**, but we should also understand that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26). If a man claims to have faith but it isn’t accompanied by any actions, then God’s word says that man has **DEAD** faith. James 2:14 asks, “Can such a faith save him?” This seems to be a rhetorical question with an obvious answer. James 2:24 says, “You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.” What?! I thought that salvation was “by grace ... through faith ... the gift

of God.” What’s this business about being justified by what I **DO**? More confusion! More layers of madness to unwrap! How can verses such as these fit together?

TREES AND WEEDS

I think that for us to believe **ALL** of what God’s Word says about salvation, we need to understand that real salvation begins with a real faith and naturally always results in good works. The biblical way to understand who someone is on the inside is to look at who they are on the outside. In Matthew 7, Jesus says, “By their fruit you will recognize them... Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.” An apple tree doesn’t try really hard to be a good apple tree and produce apples – it happens naturally (but it needs to be an apple tree in the first place).

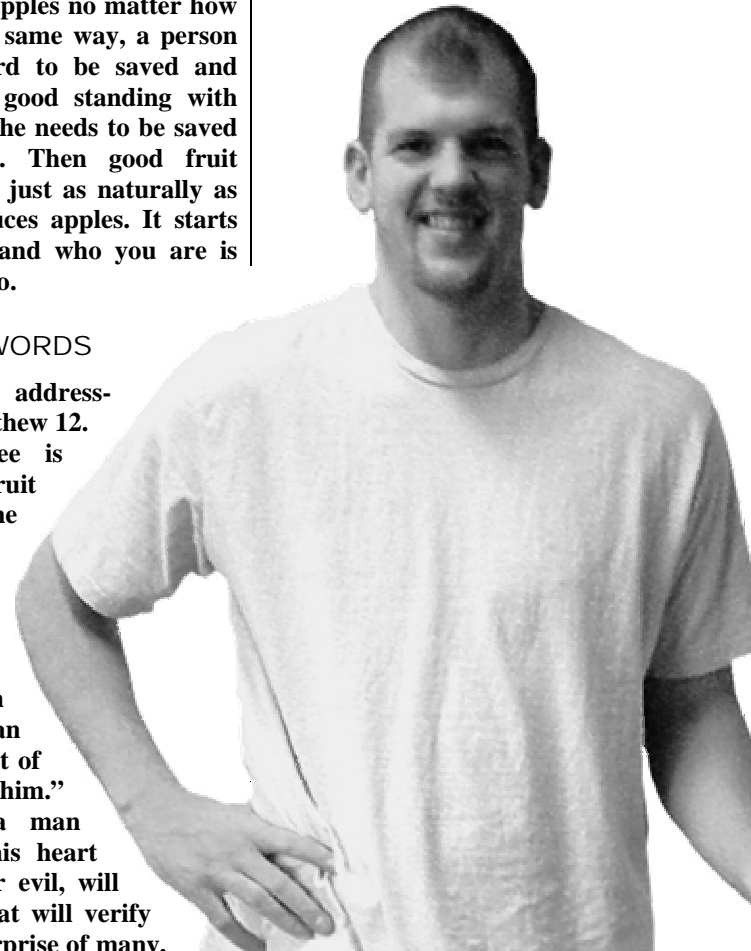
A big nasty weed can’t produce beautiful, delicious apples no matter how hard it tries. In the same way, a person can’t try really hard to be saved and successfully gain a good standing with God by his works – he needs to be saved through faith first. Then good fruit (works) will happen just as naturally as an apple tree produces apples. It starts with who you are, and who you are is shown in what you do.

FAITH AND WORDS

Jesus continues addressing this topic in Matthew 12. He says, “...a tree is recognizable by its fruit ... For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.” The things that a man brings up out of his heart and speaks, good or evil, will be the indicators that will verify who he is. To the surprise of many,

our words will provide adequate evidence to determine our eternal placement. In Matthew 12:37 Jesus says, “For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.” In this passage, Jesus himself says that he won’t be evaluating our faith or belief – instead, he will examine the evidence of our faith – our words. Wow. But once again, don’t be deceived into trying to justify yourself and gain salvation through your words or any of your other works. Isaiah 64:6 says, “All our righteous acts are like filthy rags.” Instead, let’s begin by being found in Christ, the One who has already won us a secure position. Then we, in Him, will be pleasing to God.

A beautiful biblical example of a sinner receiving salvation is found at the very end of Jesus’ life here on earth, in Luke 23. As Jesus hung on the cross dying, he was accompanied by two criminals who were also crucified. One hurled insults at Jesus, but the other defended the Savior. “Don’t you fear



God, since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”

The criminal recognized his need for a savior, and looked to Jesus in faith. He was saved! He didn't have the opportunity to get down off the cross and make right his wrongs. He didn't have time to get close to God by mowing his neighbor's lawn and hugging his kids. He believed, and Jesus received him. But was there NO work that he did? Look carefully at the text – he vehemently defended Jesus to the other criminal. He didn't have the opportunity to do much, but his mouth spoke out of the overflow of his heart and provided evidence of who he was inwardly. So was it this good work that saved him? No, I believe that his faith in Jesus saved him, and his “good work” was a natural outpouring of his saving faith. Referencing James chapter 2 again, “You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.”

SHEEP AND GOATS

The book of James is not the only area in the New Testament that explains the importance of deeds as they relate to our salvation. A particularly straightforward lesson that Jesus taught on this topic is found in Matthew Ch. 25. Jesus explained that when he returns to earth, he will judge the inhabitants and “he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” The “sheep” on His right will be invited to take their inheritance, the kingdom prepared for them since the creation of the world. This is the salvation that we are looking for! The “goats” on the left, however, will be removed from Jesus' presence and sent into the “eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Jesus says absolutely nothing about faith or belief in this passage. Instead, He emphasizes what the sheep and goats DID. He commends the sheep for caring for Him when He was in need. They don't quite remember helping Jesus in the ways that He describes, so Jesus says, “I tell you the truth, whatever you DID for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you DID for me.” On the contrary, Jesus

condemns the goats for neglecting to help Him when He was in need. They don't remember turning Him away, so Jesus explains their fault more clearly. “I tell you the truth, whatever you DID NOT DO for one of the least of these, you DID NOT DO for me.” Jesus doesn't congratulate the sheep for holding onto their faith. He doesn't pronounce judgment on the goats for not believing in Him. His explanation for their eternal destination revolves solely around what they did, or did not, DO. There is a clear emphasis on works.

So does this passage teach us that we had better focus on being “good people” if we want to be saved? It could easily be interpreted that way, but the answer is definitely NO. We already know that nothing we do, in and of itself, can gain us good standing with God. So how does this passage fit in with the rest of Scripture?

The difference between the sheep and the goats goes much deeper than their actions. The difference begins with their IDENTITY. Notice that Jesus isn't dividing sheep from sheep. The individuals are distinct creatures that can easily be placed in two separate camps. Sheep and goats. Sheep over here. Goats over there. The placement is determined by identity. Their actions that Jesus commends and condemns, I'll argue, are also determined by identity. The true Christian with a true saving faith has been made into a new creation. He has died with Christ and has been raised with Him, being born again. He has a new heart and God's spirit. He is God's child, seated in Christ at the right hand of the Father. This is who he is – this is his identity. And if he is indeed a new creation, then it will be evident in what he does. His actions will reflect his identity.

Good works from a true Christian will be as natural as apples from an apple tree. The sheep love Jesus and naturally have a heart to take care of Him. Likewise, one who has not been born again does not have an identity as God's child, no matter how much he wants to be or how hard he tries to act like it. He might fool us, but he won't fool God. A goat cannot be a sheep. A raspberry bush cannot be an apple tree. A non-believer cannot be a Christian, even if he calls himself one and practices many rituals. The goats don't love Jesus and don't have a heart to take care of him. The fact that they are not sheep is evident in their actions.

Once again, it starts with who you are, and who you are is shown in what you do. God is concerned with both our hearts and our actions. Regarding our salvation, let's make sure that we have first given our hearts to Christ and are, by faith, born again, because “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6). Only then, through faith in Christ, can our actions be pleasing to God, because we will be pleasing to Him. “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus ... let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith” (Hebrews 10:19,22).

HOT OR COLD

Once we have put our trust in the forgiving, cleansing power of the blood of Jesus, should we put the issue of our salvation behind us and move on, never to look back? Should we relax in a permanent state of complete confidence, fully assured of our right standing before God, fearlessly and boldly viewing our “stamp of approval” as a done deal? Some would say so, but we can't afford to ignore the command found in Philippians 2:12, which tells us to “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” This is not written to unbelievers who are searching for the truth, but to strong, established Christians. In Ch. 1 verse 1, Paul and Timothy refer to the Philippian believers that the letter is addressed to as “saints in Christ Jesus.” They are partners in the gospel (v. 5). Paul and Timothy are confident that God has saved the Philippian believers and that He will keep them in His salvation (v. 6). The believers share in God's grace (v. 7). And yet God doesn't want these believers to stay put spiritually. Paul prays “that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ...” Paul knows that the believers have some growing to do, and the purpose of their growth is that they be prepared – that they may be “pure and blameless” – at the imminent return of Jesus.

What if these believers don't push forward, but instead sit back and relax, lazily trusting in a faith that they once laid hold of? What if they maintain their claim as Christians while neglecting to work, having nothing to do with living an active Christian life? The text doesn't

directly say, but it seems to infer that it would be possible for them to be impure and full of blame on the day of Christ. What would this mean in regard to their standing before God? I don't know, and Paul doesn't seem to say, but he does warn them against this type of stagnant lifestyle.

Regarding this type of Christian, the resurrected Christ makes His feelings quite clear. "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:15,16). These words have produced fear and trembling in many of us, and should do so in the majority of today's comfortable western "Christians."

Earlier I made the point that a true saving faith will naturally result in good works. I hope that no one has the misconception, though, that the natural production of good works from a Christian is completely effortless. Good works are exactly that – work. An apple tree produces apples naturally, but that doesn't mean that it happens easily. The tree has to work in order to produce fruit. The roots work to take in water and nutrients from the soil. The leaves work to take in sunlight. The process of photosynthesis is work.

My biology-major wife could explain the science behind it much better than I, but I think my point is clear. The apple tree produces apples naturally because it has been made to do the work of producing apples. The tree is made with an ability to work, and its purpose is to work. An apple tree that doesn't work is unhealthy and will eventually be dead and useless. In the same way, a true Christian will naturally work towards the production of fruit. This is because of who he is and what he was made to do. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10). Just as an apple tree is made to produce fruit and naturally works toward this end, a true Christian is made (when he is born again) to produce fruit and to naturally work towards this end.

LOVE AND DISCIPLINE

If the owner of an orchard could give a pep-talk to his trees, he might say something like this: "Now you need to keep on working to produce that fruit.

I'm counting on you to come through for me, so let's keep it coming. If I see you not producing fruit, that'll be bad news for you. I'll probably see what I can do to help you out and get you going, but if you refuse to do what you were made to do, I'll have to assume that you're dead, cut you down and throw you in the rubbish pile to be burned. I can't have you just taking up space and wasting my time now."

Some of you are starting to get angry and defensive. "After all," you say, "God is a God of LOVE! He would never treat me like that! He loves me just the way I am and wouldn't place these types of expectations on me! And to think that he might discipline or punish me if I don't live up to these types of expectations – well, that's not the God that I worship!" In my experience, people who talk like this have a sense of confidence that surpasses their Bible knowledge.

Regarding the expectations that God places on us, the New Testament is full of exhortations to give "effort" (look the word up in a concordance). And regarding consequences, Jesus makes it clear that they are a product of his love: "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent" (Revelation 3:19). The orchard analogy is a concept directly from scripture. The Bible says, "The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3:10). If you have been born again, Jesus expects you to do what you were made to do and work, or else. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, with an understanding that being fruitless and lukewarm has consequences.

FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

Hopefully you have been convinced by God's word. So now the question you might ask is, how should I work? What should it look like, and what form should my work take? The simple answer is: obedience. Commit yourself to walking in obedience to Jesus Christ – to the truth of His Word and to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Let's look at our main verse



from Philippians 2 in a larger context. Verses 12 and 13 say, "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed – not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence – continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."

It seems clear that the working out of our salvation should be done through continued obedience to Jesus, who has called us friends, who was here in the flesh and is temporarily absent. Obedience to Christ is crucial. We shouldn't be content to walk in disobedience, "because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin" (1 Peter 4:1). We must not be discouraged, because we can do the work that He asks of us. For he is not expecting us to work out of our own failing strength, but instead, He is working in us to achieve the things that He desires. For Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:17) and He has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).

Therefore, God's desire is that "you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every good way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light" (Colossians 1:10-12).

"Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God" (1 Peter 4:1-2). †

PEOPLE OF HOPE Community Church

OVERSEAS MEMBERS:

THUEMMEL FAMILY

Karl and Jeanne Thuemmel will be returning from Central Asia on September 23. They and their girls (Hannah, Elisabeth, Rachel, and Sophia) will need a van for their family, and after they visit with relatives they will also need a home in this area.

SHONTAYA OVERALL

On September 1, Shontaya Overall starts three months of short term missionary service in the Central American country of Honduras. She will work in Choluteca, a city of about 120,000 residents, located in southern Honduras. Shontaya will especially make use of her skills as a nurse to serve Jesus.

When Shontaya arrives in Honduras, she will be working with an experienced missionary couple named Larry and Angie Overholt. Larry's work is in community development. Angie is a family nurse practitioner who is opening a community health clinic in collaboration with a local Honduran doctor. Angie is also developing kids programs in the local churches. The Overholts serve with a mission agency called World Gospel Mission. The missionaries collaborate with Honduran pastors in their focus on church planting, health care, economic needs, education and recreation. For more information and news about missions in Honduras, see www.hondurasfield.org. You may contact Shontaya at: shontatortot@aol.com.



LEAH RANSOM

Leah Ransom is a member of our church, serving with a Mission called Networks in Arad, Romania. Leah recently returned to Michigan for a short visit. She shared about her work during our church picnic.



Networks seeks to meet the needs of the poorest of the poor. To provide food, the mission delivers flour to many families and helps poor villagers plant gardens. To provide heat, the mission uses a sturdy old Land Rover to deliver wood. Leah says that almost all the homes and stores are heated with wood, and many of the poor cannot afford to buy wood. Since the weather in Romania is much like Michigan, the people endure some very cold winters. The mission also helps repair crumbling homes.

In the city, Leah and her team operate a home for needy moms and babies. The moms are taught to make crafts, such as greeting cards, that will help the women support themselves.



The mission runs a popular club for kids, as well as some computer clubs. Out in the countryside, the mission has a farm for training important life-skills to needy men. There is also a Bible camp, recently opened, that will be the site of a large Christian concert in a few weeks.

Leah does a lot of the administrative work for Networks Mission. She is the behind-the-scenes help for many of the ministries in Romania. †

NEW HOPE GROUP:

A new Hope Group has formed on Tuesday evenings, meeting at the home of Craig and Denise Hunt in Ypsilanti. Each week, Craig has been teaching what the Bible says about marriage. †

CAMPING TRIP:

Over eighty members of our church enjoyed a weekend of camping together on August 11-13. The location this year was Somerset Beach Christian Camp. Activities included boating, swimming, archery, hiking, cookouts, and worship and teaching on Cross Hill. As usual, Rob Rotz helped organize the camping trip. Pictures of the event are on page 9. †

CHURCH MEALS:

It has been the custom of our church to provide meals to church families after a baby is born. Denise Hunt wanted to share the following note with our church after the birth of baby Sarah:

Dear Hope Church family,

Thank you so much for all of the wonderful meals we received after the birth of our Sarah. We have a lot of good cooks in our church. We enjoyed every meal!

I wanted those who participate in the meals ministry to know that what they brought to our home was far more than just a meal. You see, Craig's parents were in town to see their new grandbaby. They got to see firsthand the church in action, loving and caring for us. Craig's mom was especially touched that you would take care in making meals with no MSG since she is the one with the allergy.

Many of you came in and said kind words or even sat at the table and ate with us, giving them a chance to know you. They kept commenting on how nice the people of our church are. This all meant so much to us because Craig's parents don't attend church and his father doesn't even claim to have faith in Jesus. They were amazed that people would go out of their way to serve us. It was really wonderful that, for these two people who aren't inclined to go to church, the church came to them and served them.

Thanks so much for serving my family. We were blessed.

Love, Denise Hunt †

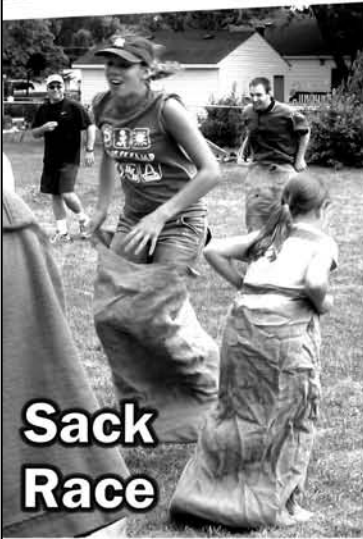
Church Picnic & Baptism



Kevin at the Grill



Egg Toss



Sack Race



Digging to China



Musical Chairs



Soccer Star



Eskimo Baseball



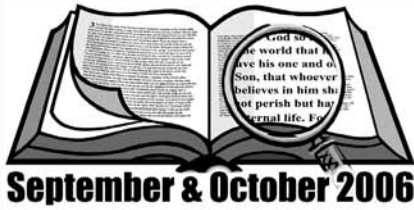
Shauna Sharing Testimony



Baptized!

2006 Camping Trip





BIBLE READING GUIDE

Leaders of Israel

Friday, September 1: Judges 1

How did the Israelites know which tribe should be the first to fight? This is a major key to success—we must ask God before we proceed. Did the tribes of Israel drive out all the enemy? What happens when a Christian has some success in driving sin from his life, but fails to dislodge certain strongholds of sin?

Saturday, September 2: Judges 2

Here we see a cycle of sin that will repeated over and over in the whole book of Judges. A) Forsaking God. B) God handing people over to enemies. C) People in distress. D) God raising up a judge to save them. E) Victory over enemy. E) Living for God during lifetime of Judge. F) Return to sin and forsaking God.

Sunday, September 3: Judges 3

What was the name of the first judge? Who was his brother? What was the name of the second judge? Give the name and a description of the king that he killed. What is the name of the third judge? What weapon did he use? God uses little-known people with small resources to prove that HE HIMSELF is the nation's deliverer.

Monday, September 4: Judges 4

Deborah is a judge who holds court in Israel. What prophetic word of direction does she have for Israel's military commander, Barak? Who is Jabin? Who is Sisera? Who is Jael? What does she do to ensure victory for Israel?

Tuesday, September 5: Judges 5

The story of the victory is told again in poetic form. Notice that the victory over Sisera's chariots was made possible when God fought for Israel, sending a downpour (verse 4) and causing a sudden flood (verses 19-21). Why is it good to sing of the mighty deeds of God?

Wednesday, September 6: Judges 6

Gideon is the next judge. What was he doing when the angel of God called him to serve in this way? Why was Gideon hesitant? How did he get his new name, "Jerub-Ball"? What test does Gideon make with a fleece?

Thursday, September 7: Judges 7

What is the first way that God reduces the number of fighting men? What is the second way? Why does God do this? What dream does Gideon overhear? How many men does Gideon have when he attacks the Midianites? What weapons do they have? How is the battle won?

Friday, September 8: Judges 8

In this chapter we see some of Gideon's weaknesses. He successfully finishes the fight against Zebah and Zalunna. But why would he make an ephod, which is a holy item for priests? What did his family and the rest of Israel do with the ephod?

Saturday, September 9: Judges 9

Who is Abimelech's father? What does he do to his brothers? Which brother escapes? What parable/curse does Jotham have for the people of Shechem? How is the curse fulfilled concerning Abimelech and Shechem? Where and how does Abimelech die?

Sunday, September 10: Judges 10

The next judges are Tola, Jair, and Jephthah. Which enemies does God allow to oppress the people in this chapter? Why do the people worship false gods when times are good, but cry out to God when times are bad? Does God want us to cry out to Him when times are bad? And when times are good?

Monday, September 11: Judges 11

God often chooses those who are little-known and rejected to be leaders for him. How was Jephthah initially rejected by men? Who does Jephthah say originally gave the nation of Israel her land? How does this apply to arguments about the land of Israel today? What foolish vow does Jephthah make before the battle?

Tuesday, September 12: Judges 12

The unity and spiritual condition of Israel is very low. Why do the men of Ephraim (from Israel) attack the men of Gilead (from Israel)? Who wins this needless battle? What word, which the Ephraimites find hard to pronounce, are they required to say? After Jephthah come three more judges: Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon.

Wednesday, September 13: Judges 13

What enemy oppresses Israel now? God gives a miracle baby to Manoah and his wife, who are childless. What does it mean to be a Nazirite? What rules are the child to follow all his life? What happens when Manoah offers a sacrifice? What is the name of the new baby?

Thursday, September 14: Judges 14

The spiritual condition of Israel is very low. Who does Samson choose to marry? Is she a good choice? What riddle does Samson give the groomsmen? How do they learn the answer? How

does Samson reward the men who solved the riddle? When the wedding is over, who ends up with Samson's wife?

Friday, September 15: Judges 15

How does Samson use foxes to take revenge on the Philistines? What did the Philistines do to Samson's wife? What weapon does Samson use to kill a thousand Philistines? When Samson is very thirsty, how does God save him? And so Samson begins twenty years as judge of Israel.

Saturday, September 16: Judges 16

Samson spends the night in the Philistine city of Gaza. How does he escape? Then he falls in love with another Philistine. What is her name? How does she deceive him? Samson becomes spiritually and then physically blind. How did Samson die?

Sunday, September 17: Judges 17

The spiritual condition of Israel is getting even lower. Verse 6 expresses the main problem. What does the verse say? Why does a mother have an idol made? Why does Micah have a shrine and idols in his home? Why does a Levite decide to be a priest of the idols in Micah's home?

Monday, September 18: Judges 18

The tribe of Dan is seeking a place to settle. Why do they want to steal Micah's idols? The tribe of Dan is seeking a place to settle. Why do they want to steal Micah's idols? Why does the Levite priest go along with them? Do the idols remain in use very long?

Tuesday, September 19: Judges 19

Where does the Levite man in this story try to spend the night? Who ends up dying before the night is over? What does the man do with the dead concubine's body? When people turn their backs on God, unspeakable evil results.

Wednesday, September 20: Judges 20

The tribes of Israel confront the tribe of Benjamin, but Benjamin defends the wicked men of Gibeah. How does Israel win the battle? What do the Israelites do to all the towns of Benjamin, including all the people and animals? How many men of Benjamin escape? (See verse 47).

Thursday, September 21: Judges 21

If the 600 men from Benjamin had not escaped, the tribe would have been annihilated. What vow had the men of Israel made concerning their daughters? How did they find wives for 400 of the

Benjaminite survivors? How did they find wives for the remaining 200? What does the final verse of Judges say?

Friday, September 22: Ruth 1

Who is Elimelech? Who is Naomi? Why did they leave the promised Land, choosing to move into Moab and live among the ungodly? Who are Mahlon and Kilion? Who is Orpah, and why did she return to her parent's home? Who is Ruth, and why did she decide not to return to her parent's home?

Saturday, September 23: Ruth 2

Ruth goes out to glean in the fields. Whose field does she glean in? What kindnesses does he show her? As it turns out, Boaz is closely related to Naomi's family; he is a kinsman-redeemer. Who does Naomi think is arranging the events in Ruth's life? (See Verse 20). Who is arranging the events in the lives of those who love Him today?

Sunday, September 24: Ruth 3

What advice does Naomi give Ruth at the beginning of the chapter? What does Ruth ask Boaz to do? Why is he unable to meet her request right away? In what ways is Boaz like our great redeemer, Jesus? In what ways is he not like Jesus?

Monday, September 25: Ruth 4

Boaz invites the closer relative to sit with him. What does Boaz ask the man to do? Why is the man unwilling to do it? Boaz publicly states that he will do it. Ruth and Boaz have a son. What is his name? What is Ruth's relationship to King David? To Jesus? Why do you think God includes this story of Ruth in the Bible?

Tuesday, September 26: I Samuel 1

This begins the story of the life of Samuel. Who is Elkanah? Who is Peninnah? Who is Hannah? Why was Hannah bitterly sad? What did Peninnah do to increase Hannah's sadness? Whenever the Bible tells us a man has multiple wives, there is sure to be some trouble. Who is Eli? What did Hannah pray for, and what did she promise to the Lord?

Wednesday, September 27: I Samuel 2

Hannah gave her son Samuel to the Lord. And then she worshipped the Lord! How did God reward her? But God is not please with Eli's adult sons, Hophni and Phinehas. Why? What can we learn from this story about the importance of a father training and disciplining his children? And about children obeying their parents?

Thursday, September 28: I Samuel 3

What message did God have for Samuel? It is important to notice that Samuel and Eli's sons live in exactly the same environment, but they chose to serve different masters. As Samuel grew, he was careful to only speak God's words. None of his words fell to the ground (v. 19). How does this set a standard for our own speaking habits?

Friday, September 29: I Samuel 4

Why do the Israelites want to bring the Ark of the Covenant into battle? Why doesn't the Ark help bring them victory? What happened to the Ark? How do Hophni and Phinehas die? How does Eli die? How does Phinehas's wife die? What does the name "Ichabod" mean? How awful it is today when the Glory of God has departed from a person, a family, or a church.

Saturday, September 30: I Samuel 5

Who is Dagon? Why does he keep falling on his face? What do the Philistine leaders decide to do with the Ark of the Covenant? God is Holy, and the things of God are Holy. What might happen today if people try to group God together with other gods?

Sunday, October 1: I Samuel 6

The Philistines send the Ark back to Israel. What guilt offerings did they decide to send along with the Ark? The Israelites were glad to receive the ark again. But why did God strike seventy of them dead? What do we learn from this about the holiness of God?

Monday, October 2: I Samuel 7

What are Baals and Ashtoreths? If the people want to be in fellowship with God, they must put away their false gods. Why do the Philistines attack the Israelites? How does the Lord rescue his people from the Philistines? Remember that Satan often attacks those who choose to return to God.

Tuesday, October 3: I Samuel 8

What do the people want instead of a judge? Who are the people really rejecting as king? Samuel warns the people. What does he say a king will do to their sons? Their daughters? Their fields and grain? Their flocks? Why do the people still insist they want a king (v. 20)? In what ways are God's people today tempted to be just like the other people of the world?

Wednesday, October 4: I Samuel 9

Who is Saul? What did Saul's father ask him to do? Notice that Saul was simply obeying his father in ordinary responsibilities when God called him to be king of Israel. God reveals His will to people who are faithfully doing ordinary things. What does Samuel tell Saul about the donkeys? What does he tell Saul about the feast that has been prepared?

Thursday, October 5: I Samuel 10

Samuel anoints Saul as God's choice to be king. What three signs does Samuel give Saul? In this way God prepares Saul for the day when he will be crowned. Has God ever prepared you for some big thing ahead of time? When all the people assemble and God's choice is made known by lot, is everyone happy with God's choice? Are people always happy with God's choices today?

Friday, October 6: I Samuel 11

What trouble has come to the Israelite men of Jabesh Gilead? What does Saul do when he hears of it? How does the Israelite army surprise the enemy? After the victory, some of Saul's people want to kill those who spoke against the choice of Saul as king. But what does Saul say about it? What is the best way for us to respond when we are criticized today?

Saturday, October 7: I Samuel 12

Samuel settles things with the people. Has his leadership been corrupt in any way? Then he reviews the history of the people. Why was it an "evil thing in the eyes of the Lord" for the people to ask for a king? What warnings does Samuel give the people? What promises does he give?

Sunday, October 8: I Samuel 13

How many soldiers does Saul start with? How many Philistine soldiers oppose him? The men are afraid, so Saul made an offering to the Lord. Why was this wrong? What does Samuel tell him? How many men are left in Saul and Jonathan's army? Why do these men lack weapons like swords and spears?

Monday, October 9: I Samuel 14

Jonathan decides to approach the enemy. What words from the enemy does he take as a signal that he should climb up a cliff and fight them? What foolish command does King Saul make? How does Jonathan unknowingly break that command? How does Saul's army protect Jonathan from execution?

Tuesday, October 10: I Samuel 15

What command does God give Saul concerning the Amalekites? How does Saul disobey? What excuses does Saul give for his actions? Fill in the words: "To _____ is better than sacrifice. For _____ is like the sin of divination." Since Saul has rejected the word of the Lord, who has the Lord rejected?

Wednesday, October 11: I Samuel 16

Why does God send Samuel to Bethlehem? Why did Samuel think Eliab, the oldest brother, was surely the one to anoint? God corrects Samuel. Fill in the blank: "Man looks at the _____, but the Lord looks at the _____." What was David doing when he was called to meet Samuel? Why did King Saul call for David to come and serve in his royal household?

Thursday, October 12: I Samuel 17

How tall is Goliath? What defiant challenge does Goliath shout every morning and evening? Why does David go to the battlefield? Why does David believe he can successfully face Goliath? What weapons does David choose to use? What spiritual weapons are Christians to rely on today? (See Ephesians 6:10-18).

Friday, October 13: I Samuel 18

David and Jonathan have the same spirit; they both are filled with faith in God, and they instantly become friends. But King Saul is clearly of a different spirit. Why is Saul jealous of David? How does he try to kill David with his spear? How does Saul try to kill David, indirectly, with his daughter, Michal?

Saturday, October 14: I Samuel 19

Saul is unstable. First he wants to kill David. Who warns David and talks to the king on David's behalf? Then Saul says he won't kill David, but he throws his spear at David. When David escapes, Saul sends men to Ramah. Why are Saul's men, and finally Saul himself, unable to capture David?

Sunday, October 15: I Samuel 20

What plan do David and Jonathan make to test King Saul? Is Saul still angry and determined to kill David? Who does he throw his spear at this time? What signal does Jonathan use to warn David? Before parting, David and Jonathan make a covenant, swearing friendship between one another and their descendants forever.

Monday, October 16: I Samuel 21

David is on the run. What food does he get from Ahimelech, the priest? What weapon does he get? David flees to Gath, which is a Philistine town. Why does he pretend to be insane?

Tuesday, October 17: I Samuel 22

David is an outlaw. His brothers and parents are forced to go into hiding (vv 1,3). What "helpful" information does Doeg have for King Saul? How many priests does Doeg kill? Which of the priests escapes and joins David's band of outlaws?

Wednesday, October 18: I Samuel 23

David defends the Israelites at Kieilah from the Philistines. Do the men of that town plan to be loyal to David (see v 12)? What does Jonathan do to encourage David? How do the men of Ziph try to help King Saul? How does God arrange circumstances so that Saul does not capture David?

Thursday, October 19: I Samuel 24

Where is David hiding, and how does he get an opportunity to kill King Saul? What does David do instead? Why is he "conscience-stricken" (v. 5)? Does David plan to harm Saul next time he gets a chance? What does David's example teach us about taking vengeance on others? Does Saul believe that David will someday be king?

Friday, October 20: I Samuel 25

Notice that Samuel dies and is buried. Who is Nabal? Who is Abigail? Why is David angry with Nabal? How does Abigail wisely intervene to prevent sin or bloodshed? How does Nabal die? So the Lord brought judgment without David taking revenge. What does David do with Abigail?

Saturday, October 21: I Samuel 26

David spares Saul's life again. Who is Abishai? Who is Abner? What items does David take from near where King Saul is sleeping? Why does David say he will not lay one hand on Saul? How does King Saul respond to David? Why does God tell us, in detail, about two separate times when David could harm the king, but chooses not to?

Sunday, October 22: I Samuel 27

Does David ask God if he should go to live with the Philistines again? What seems to motivate David? What town does Achish, king of Gath, give to David and his men to live in? What sort of places does David raid and destroy? What story does David give Achish about the raids?

Monday, October 23: I Samuel 28

Achish wants David to join in a fight against the Israelites. What interestingly ambiguous answer does David give? Why is Saul frightened? This story shows how far Saul has spiritually fallen. He turns to witchcraft. Who does Saul try to summon from the dead? What message does Saul receive?

Tuesday, October 24: I Samuel 29

David marches with the Philistines toward a battle against King Saul! Why does Achish want David to be involved in the battle? Why do the Philistine commanders oppose David's involvement? David says, "Why can't I go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?" What do you think David means?

Wednesday, October 25: I Samuel 30

When they get home, what big trouble do David's men find? How does David recover his family and possessions? Some of David's men do not want to share the reward with those who stayed back and guarded the baggage. What statute does David establish (vv 23-25). What application might this statute have for Christians today?

Thursday, October 26: I Samuel 31

Saul's final battle. How is he wounded? How does Saul die? What do the Philistines do to Saul's armor and Saul's body? What do the brave men

of Jabesh Gilead do? It is sad to reflect on the life of Saul. What are some of the factors that led to his spiritual poverty, mental confusion, divided family, and military defeat?

Friday, October 27: 2 Samuel 1

An Amalekite runs from the battle to tell David that Saul and Jonathan are dead. Why did David have him killed? David writes a song lamenting Saul and Jonathan's death. Who sings this song? Why do you think David mourns Saul's death when Saul had acted as David's enemy for so long?

Saturday, October 28: 2 Samuel 2

The transition from King Saul to King David is not a smooth one. Who is fighting in this chapter? Who is Abner? Who is Joab? Who is Asahel? What kind of fight did twenty four of the men have at the pool of Gibeon? There are two kings now. Who are they?

Sunday, October 29: 2 Samuel 3

Abner decides to switch sides and help David become king of all Israel. Why does he do this? Why is Joab angry at Abner? How does he kill Abner? David writes another song to lament the death of Abner. What is it that the people saw in David that made them pleased with everything David did?

Monday, October 30: 2 Samuel 4

More treachery. Who are Baanah and Recab? What do they do? They think that David will be happy with them for helping him defeat his enemy. Why isn't he? What does David do to these two murderers? What does this say about David's heart? Who is Mephibosheth? Who is his father? How did he become crippled?

Tuesday, October 31: 2 Samuel 5

How old was David when he became king of Israel? What other king of Israel was 30 years old when he began his ministry? How does David capture the city of Jerusalem? What does he name it?

Send to a Friend

**The FAITH
BUILDER**

Hope Community Church
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Sept/Oct 2006

Stick
With
Jesus!

TO:

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