

The Courtland Call

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Get Back Up

When a giraffe is born, he tumbles ten feet to the ground, landing on his back. Within seconds, he rolls over and stands, struggling with those tall, untried legs. The mother giraffe positions herself directly over the newborn, swings her legs outward and kicks that baby, sending it sprawling! If it doesn't get up, she kicks it again. If it grows tired, she kicks it again to stimulate its efforts to stand. Each time the baby gets to its feet, she kicks it again.

Now, this may seem cruel to you, but there is a reason for the mother's behavior. She is

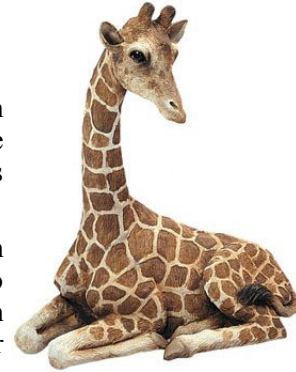
simply preparing the baby for survival, because that little giraffe must learn to get up quickly and run with the herd when danger comes—otherwise he will not survive.

As Christians, we need to learn the same lessons that baby giraffes learn, when life kicks you down, you must get back up! Our soul's survival depends on our ability to persevere. James says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath prom-

ised to them that love Him" (James 1:12).

When things go wrong, Satan would love for you to throw in the towel and give up on faith, God, Christ and the church. That's his goal to get you to quit short of the goal of salvation. He wants you to become so frustrated that you will simply quit. Don't let him get to you. When life knocks you down, get back up!

Anonymous



American Sign Language is offered on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month during the PM service and the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month during the AM service.

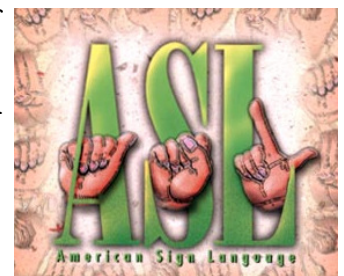
Study the Four Gospels in 90 Days

Beginning in January, all of our Bible classes will begin studying "The Life of Christ." Make it a new year's goal to read the four gospels in 90 days and gather with others to study and follow along at our Sunday morning and Wednesday evening Bible classes. We'll provide you with a class and reading schedule and questions to consider as you study at home. You simply must make time to study.

Our teaching program aims to make study easy for families. Every class studies the same Bible passages and reads the same texts prior to Bible class in our structured Bible class program. This allows you, as a family, to study and talk together *before* you arrive to class. Further, it means you can talk together about more of what you learned *after* the Bible class too. Most importantly, it devotes family time to God for reading His Word and making application on a *daily* basis.

God expects His church to be involved in teaching (1 Timothy 2:2). However, the main burden of teaching responsibility falls upon the parents of children. Moses once wrote of the laws, "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up..." (Deuteronomy 6:7). Our Bible class program intertwines both church and family Bible study into one complementary package. Hope you can come study with us.

Joshua Welch

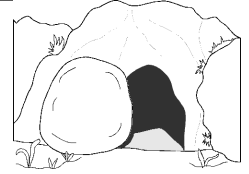


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The Resurrection of Jesus

The Conversion of Saul (7 of 12)



The apostle Paul lists the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in 1 Corinthians 15. Verses 8 and 9 indicate he was the last witness. “Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Corinthians 15:8-9).

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus is the most well-documented fact in the book of Acts. It is recorded three times (Acts 9, 22, 26). The apostleship of Paul—one qualification being an eyewitness of the resurrection—is confirmed by Peter (2 Peter 1:16; 3:15). It is cited by Ananias and Barnabas too in Luke’s book of Acts (Acts 9:7, 17, 27; 22:9,14; 26:14).

Not only is Paul a witness of Jesus Christ his change is an astonishing historic phenomenon. In Josh McDowell’s *More Than a Carpenter* he notes four major changes in the life of Paul. He writes,

“First, Paul’s character was drastically transformed...Second, Paul’s relationship with the followers of Jesus was transformed (Acts 9:19)...Third, Paul’s message was transformed. Though he still loved his Jewish heritage, he had changed from a bitter antagonist to a determined protagonist of the Christian faith...Fourth, Paul’s mission was transformed. He was changed from a Gentile-hater to a missionary to Gentiles” (pp. 83-85).

Clearly, Paul was truly converted. But, why? Of course,

the skeptics must make up their reasons to try and deflect the fact a rabid, foaming at the mouth, persecuting Jew turned into a loving, persecuted Christian. Three common “scholarly” theories include...

The Psychological Meltdown Theory. Some skeptics argue Saul’s conversion was the result of a psychological meltdown. They believe the phrase “kick against the goads” in Acts 9:5 indicates Saul was conflicted and double-minded in his religious beliefs. Some even suggest his psychological instability led to a hallucination experience.

There are a few problems with this theory. First, what about all of the others who were witnesses to the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:5-8)? Did they all have a group hallucination? Second, Paul denies ever being psychologically conflicted (Acts 23:1; 26:9; 1 Timothy 1:12-13). Third, would someone who was unsure of his faith in Judaism go around asking for letters from the high priest so he could imprison Christians? This sounds like a man who was quite sure of himself (Acts 7:58-8:3; 9:1-2). Fourth, the reaction of the Jews to the conversion of Saul indicates they never viewed him as wishy-washy prior to his conversion (Acts 9:19-22). This theory fails as we really study the Scriptures.

The Selfish Motives Theory. Some ignorant Bible scholars may claim Saul converted out of selfish motives. After all, some may convert today for those very reasons—to better a family relationship, make friends, hope for money or fame. Yet, every selfish motive man could possibly have is denied Paul after conversion.

The following checklist

will force us to realize Paul was much better off pre-conversion than post-conversion with regard to...

- Personal safety (Acts 9:23-25)
- Wealth (Philippians 3:8; 4:12)
- Education (Acts 22:3)
- Family tradition (Phil 3:3-6)
- Reputation (2 Cor 11:23-28)

The “Resurrection of Love” Theory. Some modernists actually claim Jesus was “resurrected in the hearts” of men, but not literally and bodily. Saul of Tarsus throws a kink into any such theory. After all, Saul did not love Jesus he absolutely hated Him! How could his experience with the Lord been borne out of love when he was fully opposed?

Frank Morison writes in *Who Moved the Stone?*

“How can we account for this incident...why should a man of this tough breed and of this admittedly sane and virile mental caliber be uprooted in an instant from his cherished beliefs and swept like chaff before the wind into the dogmatic camp of his most hated enemies?...The facts that led to Saul’s conversion were the same facts that so profoundly modified the behavior of Peter and Matthias and James...when Saul was really convinced that he had seen the risen Jesus the immense and overpowering significance of the empty tomb swept for the first time into his mind” (pp. 142-145).

Will you honestly weigh the evidence of the risen Lord?

Joshua R Welch

Moral Issues

Honesty

We live in an age where a firm handshake is no longer considered a binding contract. Contracts must be signed. Documents must be notarized. Oaths must be recited with eyewitness proof. A person's "word" is about as firm as a wet noodle. This should not be the case for the Christian.

Strict judgment is placed upon the Christian who does not keep his word. Jesus stated, "...let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one" (Matthew 5:37). James writes, "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No,' lest you fall into judgment" (James 5:12). Though the world may laugh at the idea of one's "word" Jesus clearly takes it seriously. He demands unequivocal honesty. Consider the various areas of life we might improve if we would all subscribe to a policy of unwavering honesty.

Honesty in marriage.

Most marriages begin with a vow or oath of unwavering loyalty. Nearly every marriage begins with a promise to remain married "until death do us part." Yet, how many married couples go back on their word? Over half! It is no better on the second marriage either. The percentage of second marriages ending in divorce is even higher than first marriages. It makes sense, doesn't it? If you did not keep your word the first time you were married, why be trusted to keep your word the second time around? The prophet Malachi teaches "God hates divorce" (2:16). God does not just arbitrarily hate divorce without cause. He hates it because it violates His very nature. God is truth. The one who puts away their spouse without just cause makes their vows a lie!

Honesty in government.

It should be every Christian's desire to see a government act justly and honestly. It is every government ruler's job to be a "terror...to evil" (Romans 13:3). Unfortunately, some governing rulers have exchanged evil for good and good for evil. Some do so for the sake of bribes (see Acts 24:26-27). Others do so out of an ignorant disregard for God. As government's despise truth and endorse moral lies Christians are put at higher risk of persecution. For this reason, Paul encouraged all to pray "for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence" (1 Timothy 2:2). As government's exchange their God-ordained roles in favor of their self-serving ideals our risk is in peril. Thus, we need men and women in government who honestly perform their duties. Further, when we elect good men based on moral promises we should expect them to deliver.

Honesty in business.

Have you ever been quoted one rate or price and find out later the quoted price was raised? Has anyone ever tried to sell something to you on the phone that was "free" only to find out it was "free for thirty days?" Businesses are famous for jacking up rates, using the bait-and-switch and excluding the "fine print" from the original deal. These are dishonest practices. God expects more out of Christians. Though we may make more money with dishonest business tactics, we will also have to live with a guilty conscience for ripping off others (Hebrews 13:18). Further, our reputation will suffer as a result of our evil.

Honesty in the church.

It would be nice if all churches taught the same true doctrines. However, churches often teach and practice different doctrines. We need to be careful our preachers and teachers "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). Jesus warned of the reality of false teachers (Matthew 7:15). Peter warned of the past, present and future reality of false teachers (1 Peter 2:1-2). Paul commanded, "...brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them" (Romans 16:17). A teacher or preacher who is dishonest with the truth should not be embraced, but avoided.

Honesty in everyday affairs.

If we are known as honorable people it will slowly impress the watching world. Peter wrote, "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Peter 2:11-12). Hypocrites will turn people off. Honorable Christians will draw them toward the religion of Christ. Do you keep your word, even in the smallest of matters? Jesus once stated, "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10).

Failing to be honest in the relationships of life ruins our reputation. In marriage it makes us an adulterer. In government it makes us a terror. In business it makes us a cheater. In the church it makes us a liar. In life it makes us a hypocrite. Keep your word!

Joshua R. Welch

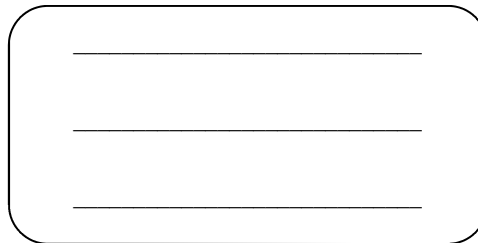
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***Philippians 4:8,
“Finally, brethren,
whatever things are
true, whatever things
are noble, whatever
things are just, whatever
things are pure,
whatever things are
lovely, whatever things
are of good report, if
there is any virtue and if
there is anything
praiseworthy—meditate
on these things.”***



God's Plan of Salvation

- ⇒ Hear the word of God (Romans 10:17).
- ⇒ Believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 8:24).
- ⇒ Repent of your sins (Acts 2:38; 17:30).
- ⇒ Confess Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37).
- ⇒ Be baptized (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3,4).

Think About It

My wife and I like to buy our children clothes with a little room to grow. My four-year-old wears a size twelve shoe, but we bought her a size 13 for the holidays. Before you know it, she'll have to curl those toes under her foot to put on her shoe. Our six-year-old wears a size 7 in pants, but we got him some size eights. Soon, he'll be flooding like a kid out of the 1980's.

As Zoe tried her new shoes on for the first time, she said to me, "Dad, something's wrong. My foot can move in here!" Samuel tried on his jeans and immediately ran to his room to get a belt because his pants were falling down (Thankfully, he hasn't caught on to "sagging" yet). Poor Haddie just gets Zoe's hand-me-downs—a size too big!

It is okay for a maturing child to have a little bit of breathing room. We know they will grow into

those clothes soon. However, mature adults usually do not buy clothes with "room to grow." Hopefully, we're done growing and can buy our shoes and pants to fit.

Within this illustration we might find an interesting parallel to our relationship with Christ. Galatians 3:27 says, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." In other words, we are "dressed in Christ" or "wear Christ in our lives." As we compare our lives to Jesus Christ, we might notice we have plenty of room to grow if we plan to duplicate His blueprint (1 Peter 2:21). This is especially true for new Christians. Paul said we must speak "the truth in love" so we "may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ..." (Ephesians 4:15). The apostle Paul must have known the Christians in Ephesus had "room to grow" or he would not have encouraged growth!

As we continue to develop our faith, our goal is to conform "to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29). Some people never get to the point when they conform to Christ's image. Instead, they remain in a state of spiritual infancy and Christ seems an over-sized outfit.

Hebrews 5:13-14 says, "For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

God expects us to grow—daily, weekly, yearly. Would you be worried if your baby never grew? Would you be worried if they never were weaned off of milk? Would you say they need to "grow up?" Amen!

Think about it.

Joshua R. Welch