

# The Bible Meditator



LORD, please  
answer my prayer!

LORD, I don't care  
for your answer!

- ◆ **Meditating on Judges**
- ◆ **A Nation Without Understanding**
- ◆ **Meditation Tips: Meditating Before Obeying**



# LORD, please answer my prayer! LORD, I don't care for your answer!

By Nathan House

**Prayer.** What a blessing! The gift of communing with the One who created the beauty of the universe and the vastness of it; including the multitudes of galaxies; innumerable stars; the beauty of the beaches; the awesome power of nature! Communicating with the creator. Prayer—the ability to bring our desires, concerns, wants, and thanksgivings to the Creator who just happens to be our Father. Many of us fail to appreciate the magnitude of this gift. I know I often fail in this regard, becoming mechanical in my prayer life. Perhaps for some, one of the most difficult aspects of prayer is how God answers prayer. Often our prayers seem to go unanswered and then we feel as though He doesn't hear our petitions. Then there are other times where we just don't like how they were answered. Have you ever felt this way? The good news is you are not alone. Many great men and women have offered up prayers and did not care for the answer they got. In this article, we will briefly look at a few.

To my knowledge, in the whole Bible, there are only three prayers offered by righteous men who failed to have their prayers answered according to their request. The first was King David, who following his indiscretion with Bathsheba and the subsequent covering up of the sin, had an infant son on death's bed. We are told in Second Samuel chapter 12 that David sought the LORD on behalf of this child. The king fasted, went in, and lay all night on the ground, literally begging God to deliver his child; and, in spite of this heartfelt, broken man's prayer, the child would not live. This was an answer that would

seem hard to accept. The second occurrence is God Himself as He prayed in the Garden that the cup of suffering would pass from Him (Mat. 26:39–44). In fact, we are told that He prayed the same words three times. The agony He was going through was brought to the Father three times, nevertheless our Lord suffered the death of the cross. . . a grueling painful death, seemingly due to an unanswered prayer. The final example comes from Second Corinthians 12:7, 8 where the apostle Paul tells us that three times he prayed for removal of his “thorn in the flesh,” but the Lord told him that “my grace is sufficient for you.”

These two righteous men and our Lord and Savior Himself prayed, yet their prayers were not answered according to their request. Three prayers. Three extreme situations. Three difficult answers. How often are your prayers answered according to your request? In your time frame?

Imagine that we still spoke to God as the prophets of old. Noticing the corruption of this country, we beseech God to punish and discipline it and ask Him how long will He allow this evil to go unchecked. God responds, “I am going to punish the United States. Even right now I have a plan that you won't believe even though I am telling you. I am bringing up Saddam Hussein and Iraq—they will be my instrument of punishment.”

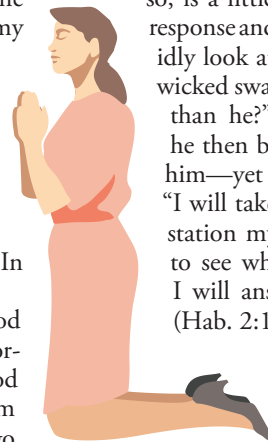
What would your response be? “Lord, they are immeasurably worse than us. They attack and kill the innocent, they fail to recognize Jesus as Lord, and they are themselves a murderous and evil nation. How could you do it God? How

could you use that evil nation to punish those more righteous than themselves?” How might God respond? What might He say to satisfy your complaint?

Years ago, and in a similar situation, a righteous man, the prophet Habakkuk, complained to God about the abounding evil in Judah and begged God to intervene. God reassured Habakkuk that He had not turned His back on the evil and that He had brought up a nation (Babylon) to punish them. Habakkuk, perhaps deservedly so, is a little intrigued and bothered by this response and asked the question, “Why do you idly look at traitors and are silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?” (Hab.1:13). In his complaint, he then begs God to come up and answer him—yet he is sure no answer will suffice. “I will take my stand at my watchpost and station myself on the tower, and look out to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint” (Hab. 2:1).

God, in the next few lines of Habakkuk chapter 2, gives us a glimpse at what is truly important in both our walk with God and our communication with Him. Let us briefly look at Habakkuk 2:3,

For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.



Continued on page 8

# Meditating on Scripture Daily

Based on the New King James Version

## Judges

By Don Ruhl

### Mar. 1 Jdg. 6:22, 23 God Will Not Destroy You

22 Now Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the LORD... Gideon knows that to see the face of God brings death. Therefore, Gideon wonders if he is going to die. However, would God do what we have seen in the text, only to “slip up” and do something that will cause the death of Gideon? While Gideon sees God, it is the same as when people saw Jesus, whose glory was veiled, and not as when Moses saw God in His glory. “In verse 13, Gideon was afraid because he didn’t see the hand of the Lord. Here in verse 22, he’s terrified because he did...” (Courson).

23 Then the LORD said to him, “Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die.” Peace is with the man or woman who does God’s bidding. There is no reason to fear harm from God when we are seeking His will and the welfare of His people. Instead of death, you shall discover true life when you fight the Lord’s battles.

### Mar. 2 Jdg. 6:24 – An Altar to the Lord

24 So Gideon built an altar there to the LORD, and called it The-LORD-Is-Peace. (Hebrew YHWH Shalom) To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. How appropriate that Gideon does not build an altar to himself, but to Yahweh. Gideon names the altar after the incident that he had with God. The Israelites are suffering at the hands of the Midianites. Now, Israel is going to have peace. Gideon feared that he would die after seeing God. Now, Gideon has assurance that he has peace with God. Have you turned away from God, and suffered for it, as Israel did? Turn to Him, and you shall have peace.

### Mar. 3 Jdg. 6:25–32 Gideon Gets a New Name

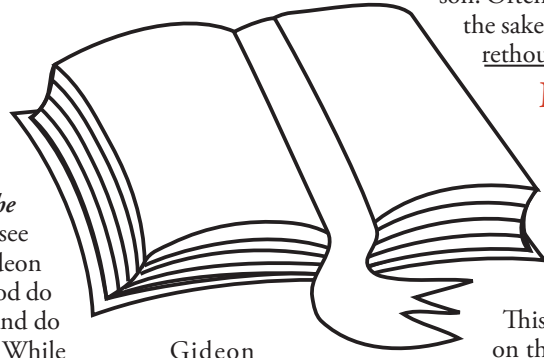
25, 26 Now it came to pass the same night that the LORD said to him, “Take your father’s young bull...” Gideon had already built an altar. It was simply in praise to God. This second altar not only praises God, it is an attack against the false god Israel is following. He who praises the one true God will fight against anything that challenges belief in the one true God. Gideon is to take his father’s young bull, tear down his father’s altar, cut down the wooden image his father put beside the altar and, make a sacrifice to God. “The Midianites had probably reduced the family herd; or, as Gideon’s father was addicted to idolatry, the best may have been fattened for the service of Baal; so that the second was the only remaining one fit for sacrifice to God” (Jamieson). Gideon is a strong believer in God, but Joash himself is not a believer at all! He is an idolater!

### Mar. 4 Jdg. 6:25–32 Gideon Gets a New Name

27–29 So Gideon took ten men from among his servants and did as the LORD had said to him... Gideon is a mighty man of valor, yet he still has fears. He does something that is life threatening, but he does it in the safest way possible. What is more amazing is how the men of the city react. They are Israelites! They are defending Baal. Yet, back in verse 6 they cried out to God for deliverance from Midian. It is as though they are holding on to both.

30 Then the men of the city said to Joash, “Bring out your son, that he may die...” When Gideon stands up for true belief in God, the men of his city persecute him. Likewise, do not be surprised when you are opposed for your belief in God. Often we cry about how it used to be years ago in America, but times have changed and we do no good by being bewildered at the unbelief today.

31, 32 But Joash said to all who stood against him, “Would you plead for Baal?...” Joash may not have said this if Gideon was someone else’s



Gideon

son. Often parents will compromise their religious beliefs for the sake of their children. Yet, in this case it is good. Joash rethought the validity of Baal.

### Mar. 5 Jdg. 6:33–35 The Armies Start to Form

33 Then all the Midianites and Amalekites, the people of the East, gathered together... If Gideon was afraid of the men of his city, and of the men of his father’s household, then here is a situation for greater fear. Yet, Gideon is changing.

This is not a football game where the team is lined up on the other side, and you know the guy opposite you wants to hit you hard. No, in this case, the men lined up in the valley of Jezreel are looking at you with the full intention of killing you. This is close to the area where Barak defeated Sisera.

34 But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon... Watch out when the Bible says that the Spirit of the Lord comes upon someone! The opposing army will have no chance. Isaiah 54:17 gives assurance that we cannot be defeated. Our battles are spiritual today, but what Isaiah says is still true. Read that verse. The Holy Spirit is with the church and with individual Christians. Therefore, all our enemies have no chance.

### Mar. 6 Jdg. 6:33–35 The Armies Start to Form

35 And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh... Zebulun and Naphtali had proven themselves during the campaign of Barak. Asher was learned. Chapter 7 reveals that the number of soldiers who gather to Gideon is 32,000! Previously they were believers in Baal. Now, they stand with Gideon and with God. The defining moment may have been when Gideon cut down the image of Baal that his father had. Remember that Gideon’s father challenged the men of the city who wanted to kill Gideon that if Baal is a god, he should contend against Gideon. That sounded good, so they left Gideon alone. Yet, Baal took no action against Gideon. Therefore, the men concluded that Baal was not a god and that Yahweh is.

### Mar. 7 Jdg. 6:36–40 More Assurance

36–40 So Gideon said to God, “If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said...” Only the One who created and controls the weather can do such a thing. If God can fulfill this request for Gideon, God can help Gideon defeat the Midianites. Which is easier to do: Control the weather? Or destroy an army? “Gideon had worshipped God intensely, and stood up to his entire society unashamedly. Now, as he is about to lead his countrymen in a battle in which the odds are heavily against them, he pauses to make sure he is hearing God right. All too often, believers look only at Gideon setting a fleece and ignore the worship and the tearing down of the altars which preceded it. Isolated in such a way, this passage loses all perspective and this practice becomes nothing more than an option for any who are too lazy to really seek God” (Courson).

### Reject Self-Glory (Part 1)

God stacks the odds against us that He might show His power

### Mar. 8 Jdg. 7

Do heroes seem unlike us common people? We know that Superman does not exist, but we read of people in history and people in the Bible who seem superhuman. Yet, the Bible shows repeatedly that ordinary people can do extraordinary things, if they have faith in God and do not fear. Gideon was a man like us. If a foreign power occupied our land and oppressed us, doing whatever they wanted to do with us, you can imagine the utter horror you would feel. Gideon had all those things. He was fearful. He wondered where God was. However, Gideon did believe in God. While he did not understand God, the man still believed in God, and this created a passion in his heart for God and His people. God would take that passion and belief and make Gideon a mighty man of valor.

## Mar. 9 Jdg. 7:1 Gideon's Army Prepares For Battle

1 *Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him...* Remember in the previous chapter that Gideon had taken ten men and they tore down the altar and image of Baal. The people of Gideon's hometown were ready to kill him for doing this. Gideon's father stepped in and challenged Baal that if he is a god let him contend for himself. Thus, Gideon acquired a new name, Jerubbaal, which means, "Let Baal contend." This is undoubtedly the Lord showing that Baal is nothing. Therefore, God is going to use a small army against the large armies of Baal. If Baal is a god, he should be able to defeat the army of Gideon or at least make the battle very difficult.

## Mar. 10 Jdg. 7:2-6 – 32,000 Versus 135,000

2 *And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many..."* This declaration of God's is fascinating. God says that 32,000 are too many to fight against 135,000! The Midianites outnumber the Israelites over four to one! God wants the Israelites outnumbered by even more! Moreover, follow the language of God carefully. He promises that He is going to give the Midianites to the Israelites. In God's mind, the battle is over and Israel has won, although the battle has not occurred. Yet, the Israelites will have to do something, they will have to fight. God's gift does not negate their action to receive the gift, but even necessitates it. While a gift is given, it cannot be enjoyed until it is received. Normally 32,000 are not going to defeat 135,000 on the open fields of battle. Yet, even with odds like those, Israel might be tempted to think that they had done it all. With an army, being outnumbered over four to one, it already seems obvious that God is the power. However, He wants to insure that the odds against Israel will be so great that there is no way they could ever conclude that they defeated Midian single-handedly. If Israel claims that they did it themselves, they would be glorying against God. Self-glory is a claim against God. That means it is a sin.

## Mar. 11 Jdg. 7:2-6 – 32,000 Versus 135,000

3 *"... Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead..."* There are two amazing facts here:

- That so many leave
- That 10,000 are brave enough to think that with their numbers reduced by over 68% they can still confront an army of 135,000

Now the Midianites outnumber the Israelites 13.5 to one! These former Baal worshipers have really turned their hearts back to Yahweh God. They may have heard the same teachings about God that Gideon had. Read Judges 6:13 again, when Gideon challenges the angel who told him to fight against the Midianites. What he believes is what the Israelites believe also. Initially the 22,000 are willing and ready to fight. They may even have had faith in God. However, once they saw the enemy fear dominated their hearts.

## Mar. 12 Jdg. 7:2-6 – 32,000 Versus 135,000

4 *But the LORD said to Gideon, "The people are still too many..."* God still does not like the odds. He wants Israel outnumbered by more than 13.5 to one! He is removing any chance for self-confidence. He is not destroying confidence; He is moving their confidence from self, their abilities, and their weapons and so on, to Him. He knows a way to get the numbers smaller. He knows something about each man that will reveal whether they should fight.

5, 6 *So he brought the people down to the water...* One group is more careful. They can see the condition of the water. They can see what is going on around them, such as an attack of the enemy. They know that they can never set aside their guard. The other group makes themselves completely vulnerable. Who knows what might be in the water? The enemy can launch a surprise attack at any time. It may have been more refreshing to put their faces in the water, enabling them to get more water quicker, but it is a foolish move.

## Mar. 13 Jdg. 7:7, 8 – 300 can defeat 135,000

7 *Then the LORD said to Gideon, "By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you..."* Now Midian outnumbers Israel 450 to one! Israel loses over 99% of its army even before fighting the Midianites! Perhaps there will be a Shamgar or two among them who can kill 600. However,

can they find 300 Shamgars? Yes, they can find that many and more also, because if a man lives by faith and does not fear, he will be mighty like Shamgar! Romans 8:31-39 is what guides me to stand against any foe. I invite you to have the same belief. God is going to do the saving, but Gideon and the 300 will still have to do something. Likewise, God saves us by grace, but He wants us involved in our salvation. You cannot forgive yourself of your sins. Only God can forgive your sins. However, you have to show Him that you want Him to forgive you. For the person who is not a Christian, you must believe in Jesus Christ. To be consistent with your belief you must repent. You are then ready for baptism. Grace does not remove our responsibility to obey, but demands that we obey. Grace is so demanding in this regard that if we do not obey, we will not receive the prize God promises. Gideon has a difficult job of telling the 9,700 to go back home. These men had volunteered. They were not fearful, but believed in the Lord. However, they are not fully capable of fighting. Moreover, having the desire does not automatically qualify someone for a job. I may desire and even believe that I can play professional sports. However, there are millions of fans who are glad that I do not.

## Mar. 14 Jdg. 7:7, 8 – 300 can defeat 135,000

8 *So the people took provisions and their trumpets in their hands...* It is fascinating that the 300 have not lost heart, but they take what is necessary for the battle and go. They know the odds. They know from the previous seven years how oppressive the Midianites can be. They destroyed Israel's crops. They killed Israel's livestock. However, Israel was not able to stop it because God made them weak militarily. These 300 men see their small army of 32,000 ready to fight 135,000, although most armies of that small size would have quit from the beginning. The 300 could have been disheartened when the first 22,000 left. The 300 could have become totally discouraged and depressed when an additional 9,700 leave. Then again, they know that the odds are not really 450 to one, but 450 to one plus God! If He is God, no army can stand before Him. For this battle, Baal has every numerical advantage. Baal should not even have to fight; just let his followers defeat the believers in Yahweh. Likewise, our enemies far outnumber us today. They have more money. They have everything that seems to put them at an incredible advantage. Yet, they will not win. You may think that they are winning, but it looked like Midian had been winning for seven years, and that the Midianites were going to win again. Interestingly, the 9,700 who were sent home do not grumble. They accept what is to be done. I do not believe that they are glad to go home, because they are fearless and they believe in God, which means that they know they are going to win. Yet, they are willing to step aside and let someone else get the glory, and allow God's will to be done over their will.

## Mar. 15 Jdg. 7:9 Victory Guaranteed!

9 *"... I have delivered it into your hand."* How would you like it if, as you are going into battle—the most frightening event in which humans engage—you know with absolute knowledge that you are going to win? Not just that your army is going to win, but that you are going to survive. If you read the Book of Revelation with this in mind, then you know the meaning of that Book. Do not fear the Book of Revelation and do not fear the world. We have what Gideon had. Hebrews 11:32-34 highlights the ingredient that made Gideon successful. This ingredient is not available only to the elite. First John 5:4 also assures us that we have the same ingredient. If you think about the promise of this verse, you will realize just how grand it is. The unbeliever hears it and scoffs. The believer accepts it as a natural part of being a follower of God. Therefore, if you are fearful the cure is to have faith in God. Let that faith move you to obedience. You do not have to fear the ultimate horrible event, which is Hell. Faith and obedience will keep you from that destiny.

## Reject Self-Glory (Part 2)

God stacks the odds against us that He might show His power

## Mar. 16 Jdg. 7

God allows the odds to be stacked against us that He might show His power. Therefore, there are going to be frightening times; there are going to be times when we just do not know what to do; there are going to be times when we discover that we do not have the answers. We will then have to learn to trust God. This is what God wants Gideon and Israel to

learn. Second Corinthians 12:7–10 shows the example of Paul. He learns to lean upon God. Watch Paul deal with the times when the odds are stacked against him. God tells Gideon to go down to the Midianites (Jdg. 7:9), God guarantees victory, but watch how the Lord works with Gideon.

### Mar. 17 Jdg. 7:10–14 Gideon Is Afraid

10, 11 *“But if you are afraid to go down...”* Wait a minute! Gideon is afraid? If Gideon is afraid, should he not have left with the 22,000? If Gideon is afraid, should he be going down into the camp of the Midianites with only one servant on a reconnaissance mission? Is there something wrong with Gideon? Gideon is not like Barak who refused to go to battle unless Deborah accompanied him. Gideon is ready to do what God commands. However, God knows the hearts of all men and women. He knows when our intentions are right, but He also knows if we are struggling with obedience. He will work with us. If we think we can argue with Him and put conditions on His commands, that is another matter. How many times do we have to hear God in the Scriptures, friends in conversations, preachers and teachers in lessons, telling us what we need to do before we do it? Purah is another great man in the Bible. He is a trusted man. He also has to be a valiant man. Gideon is the most valiant man in Israel. Purah is number two. This man can witness what God wants Gideon to hear and give assurance to the 300, of victory. As the Angel of the Lord had said in Judges 6:12, Gideon was a mighty man of valor, nevertheless, he is a man like us. He has things in which he believes. He has things for which he would die. He has things for which he lives. Moreover, he has weaknesses, struggles, and fears. In Gideon, we see that the bravest of the brave have fears, the strong have weaknesses, the passionate have apathy, the wise have foolishness, but in Gideon, we observe that these fears do not rule him. He does what God says to do and moves on. You do not have to be perfect for the Lord to use you, but you do have to be willing to be used by Him, and for Him to mold you and to make you into a mighty man or woman of valor in the Spirit and in the truth.

### Mar. 18 Jdg. 7:10–14 Gideon Is Afraid

11, 12 *Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outpost of the armed men...* Remember Gideon has some fear and he has one man with him. Now in stealth, he approaches armed men and sees their formidable numbers. We may be tempted to think that God did the wrong thing. First, God never does the wrong thing. Second, Gideon still desires to save Israel. Third, God is realistic with Gideon. Believing in God does not mean that He takes away the problems of life. It does not mean that everything is rosy and cheery all the time.

13, 14 *“...Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp.”* Gideon is now so close to the enemy that he infiltrates their camp, and he and Purah can hear two men talking. What man would have come up with a dream like this, especially in the enemy camp? The dream was not of the men, but God gave it to these men. Do these men have any idea what is going on or what they are saying? It is certainly possible that the Midianites know about Gideon and his belief in Yahweh. How astonished Gideon and Purah must be to hear this! This removes all doubts. Fear runs from their hearts faster than a bullet.

### Mar. 19 Jdg. 7:15 Gideon Worships God

15 *And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshiped...* This is why God wants to use Gideon. His first response is to worship God. Both Job and David did the same thing also. When Job learns of the loss of all his income, his servants, and his children, he worships God. David worships God after learning that his child had died. Men and women of God worship or think of God during times of prosperity and adversity. Do you remember what Judges 7:2 says? Read it again. Now, when Gideon worships God, rather than being puffed up with pride, the wish of God, as recorded in Judges 7:2, is fulfilled. Look carefully at verse 15 and hear what Gideon says to his men, “Arise, for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand.” Remember again, what Gideon had said to the Angel in Judges 6:13. Perhaps Gideon can now see, that he is about to become part of that magnificent history that he had remembered so well from the school lessons of his youth. He was thrilled by the stories of God’s miraculous powers in delivering Israel from Egypt and other oppressors. Gideon looks at his current situation.

God intentionally whittles down an outnumbered 32,000 men army to 300. God is about to do something wonderful! No wonder Gideon worships God. Gideon knows that God remembers His people. Gideon knows that God planned the whole thing from the beginning. Gideon knows that God knows of Gideon’s passion for Israel. No wonder Gideon commands his men to arise, promising that God had delivered the Midianites into the hands of Israel. Gideon knows that the Lord has not forsaken Israel, but is going to deliver Israel from Midian.

### Mar. 20 Jdg. 7:16–18 A Sword

16–18 *Then he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man’s hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers...* When you have 300 men going against 135,000 you need to have some creativity in your attack. Gideon has a plan and this gives assurance to his men, and insures him that his men will follow him. Sometimes leaders have a good idea about getting something done, but they either do not have any plans or do not know how to go about getting it done. Then when no one shows up or others are not as eager, the leader becomes very discouraged. Gideon must have been thinking for a while about how he would attack Midian.

### Mar. 21 Jdg. 7:19, 20 The Dream Is True

19, 20 *...they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that were in their hands...* What do those two Midianites, who told the dream and its interpretation; think when they hear the combined voices of 300 warriors shouting a war cry in the middle of the night, “The sword of the LORD and of Gideon”? They must know that they are goners. They know the dream is true. In ancient times, there were four watches. This watch is just after midnight. The guards are thinking of the changing procedures. All the soldiers are asleep. There is still plenty of darkness to fight against the surprised Midianites. The Midianites hear three sounds:

- The blowing of trumpets
- The breaking of the pitchers
- The yelling of the Israelites

Suddenly, the Midianites are frightened. They were used to having their way with the Israelites. Now, the Israelites gain the advantage, by out-smarting the Midianites.

### Mar. 22 Jdg. 7:19, 20 The Dream Is True

19, 20 *...they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing...* When the Midianites come out of their tents, they see 300 torches around the massive camp, running toward them. Each light could represent a company of 1,000 men, giving the appearance that 300,000 are attacking. Of course, the confused and frightened Midianites do not take a count, but the effect is still there. They think that an army that is three times their size overwhelms them. Gideon is still following the practice that the attacking army should out-number the defenders by 3 to 1. The Midianites do not know if the torches represent:

- Hundreds or thousands of soldiers each, or
- Attacking troops coming up behind the men with the torches, or
- Whether the Israelites are already in the camp and the torches are providing light for the fight

This is reminiscent of a tactic used on the coast of Kuwait during Operation Desert Storm. The Iraqis expected a coastal attack and America kept up that image. When the war started, the American troops had rigged explosives and other things to make it appear during the night that a full amphibious attack was occurring.

### Mar. 23 Jdg. 7:21–23 Fighting Each Other

21–23 *And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled...* The formerly well-organized and war-experienced Midianites are confused. They start fleeing, but in their fright in the night, they see other soldiers and do not know if they are Israelites or Midianites. Therefore, they just start fighting each other.

### Jdg. 7:24, 25 Other Israelites Join the Battle

24, 25 *Then Gideon sent messengers throughout all the mountains of Ephraim, saying, “Come down against the Midianites, and seize from them the watering places...”* God keeps His promises. With the water places captured, Israel can grow crops again; water their livestock; and

have water for personal use. Israel kills the princes of Midian in the places that they once possessed.

The odds are always stacked against God's people, however, the following passages of Scripture show that God's people always win:

- Second Chronicles 14:11
- Second Chronicles 32:8
- Isaiah 41:10
- Jeremiah 17:5–8
- First John 4:4

---

## Do Not Forget Who Is Your Ruler (Part 1) Israel has a hard time remembering her Ruler

### Mar. 24 Jdg. 8:1–32

What do you want to do for someone who is working or fighting for the Lord? Some people want to be included in the work. Others want no part of it. As Gideon fought the Midianites, he encountered both attitudes. How do you deal with these two groups of people? Gideon in wisdom did the right thing with both.

---

### Mar. 25 Jdg. 8:1–3 Ephraim

1 ...*And they reprimanded him sharply.* Back in Judges 6:34, 35, when Gideon blew the battle trumpet, the Abiezrites gathered to him. This is his clan in the tribe of Manasseh. Then he sent messengers throughout the rest of the tribe to get more warriors. He also summoned the tribes of Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. Gideon did not exclude Ephraim. Judges 7:24, 25 shows what Gideon did after the battle was started. He called for the tribe of Ephraim to recapture the watering places, and they captured two princes of Midian. This was an honor to be able to capture and defeat the leaders of the oppressors. Ephraim may have considered this a small thing. However, to the credit of the tribe of Ephraim they wanted to be engaged in the entire battle. Imagine that, people complaining because they were not able to do more for the Lord!

---

### Mar. 26 Jdg. 8:1–3 Ephraim

2, 3 *So he said to them, "What have I done now in comparison with you..."* Gideon is not only a wise military commander; he is a wise political leader. He learned to expand his people skills. Wise military commanders are not necessarily wise in other areas of life. Even as successful actors are not necessarily wise in political opinions; and successful athletes are not necessarily wise discerners of the best products to own. However, if a leader is wise in more than one area of leadership, his people are doubly blessed. Some leaders are one talent leaders, others are two talent, fewer are five talent, and rarely is one a ten talent leader. King David was at least a seven-talent leader, excelling:

- As a warrior;
- In knowledge and wisdom;
- In literary skills;
- In music (lyrics and instruments);
- In political leadership;
- In spirituality; and
- As a father

Gideon had leadership skill in at least:

- The military,
- Politics, and
- Judicial matters.

---

### Mar. 27 Jdg. 8:1–3 Ephraim

3 ... *Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that.* Practice Proverbs 15:1 and you will find results like Gideon did, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Gideon does not need to be fighting his own people. We will discover shortly that he does have to fight some Israelites. However, there is a great difference between those Israelites and Ephraim. "Ronald Reagan wisely said, 'There's no limit to what a man can accomplish if he doesn't care who gets the credit.' So too, there's no limit to what the Body of Christ can accomplish if we don't care who gets the credit—just that Jesus gets the glory" (Courson). Gideon is not looking for personal credit. He is zealous for the name of God, and Gideon cares for the condition of God's people.

---

### Mar. 28 Jdg. 8:4–9 Succoth and Penuel

4 *When Gideon came to the Jordan, he and the three hundred men who were with him crossed over, exhausted but still in pursuit.* Gideon still has 300 men! None are lost in any of the fighting. Fighting with odds of one against 450, we expect Israel to experience losses. Yet, when God is fighting your battle with you, you cannot lose. Gideon and his men are exhausted, but they do not quit, still pursuing the enemy. The exploits of the men of Gideon are like the men of David. Second Samuel 23:8–12, 18 reveals the mighty deeds of his men. Keep in mind that these mighty men of David are not using modern explosives to kill many enemy soldiers simultaneously. The heroic acts of the men of Gideon and David are not remarkable, if we remember that it is God and these men against the enemy. This is why the church is superior to anything on earth. It is not that we are great, because we are no different from the rest of men, except that we have something the world does not have. We have faith. What does the world have that can go against the people who operate by faith?

---

### Mar. 29 Jdg. 8:4–9 Succoth and Penuel

5 *Then he said to the men of Succoth, "Please give loaves of bread to the people who follow me..."* Gideon makes a friendly request. True, bread may have been scarce because of the Midianites, but if Succoth can make a little extra sacrifice for fighting men, there will no longer be a problem of scarcity of bread. Then they will have abundance. When you find someone doing the Lord's work, make sure that he has whatever he needs. Read Paul's argument in First Corinthians 9:7–11. While what he says is true for preachers, whenever you find someone teaching a class, working on the building, taking care of old people, teaching people in the community, or whatever, make sure that they can concentrate on their work. Gideon and Paul had a work to do. Spending their time trying to get their needs together would only take away from the Lord's work. Would we expect American soldiers to pay their own way? Would we expect the farmer to go without food? So why should the Lord's workers and fighters go without support?

---

### Mar. 30 Jdg. 8:4–9 Succoth and Penuel

6 *And the leaders of Succoth said, "Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give bread to your army?"* That is a bad response. Do the leaders of Succoth not know how the battle is going? You do not talk that way to a man leading 300 fighters who, according to verse 10, have already defeated 120,000. There is obviously something special about Gideon and his 300 men. Do the leaders of Succoth not see that they do not need to fear the kings of Midian anymore?

7–9 *So Gideon said, "For this cause, when the LORD has delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand..."* Gideon gives a two-part answer:

- The Lord will deliver the Kings of Midian into his hand.
- He will punish the leaders of Succoth and Penuel for their refusal to help.

With the same confidence he has toward God in delivering the enemy, he promises to punish those who do not want to get involved. Gideon has to think and act in these two ways to insure righteousness in Israel. Do not be tempted to criticize Gideon. He is in the heat of battle. He is fighting for Succoth and Penuel! He is not even asking them to join the battle and risk their lives.

---

### Mar. 31 Jdg. 8:10–12 They Defeat Midian

10 ... *about fifteen thousand, all who were left of all the army of the people of the East...* One hundred twenty thousand Midianites have fallen already, leaving only the 2 kings and 15,000 warriors. The Lord keeps His word. He promised to deliver Midian into the hand of Gideon. If there are any doubters in Israel, they can now believe in the Lord.

11, 12 ... *he attacked the army while the camp felt secure...* Again, Gideon attacks the army when it feels secure. He does not let up, because they must destroy the enemy, or in the case of the church, we must continue to fight the good fight of the faith until we convert the enemy. Remember Gideon's army is exhausted. The Midianites are also exhausted. However, Isaiah 40:27–31 may explain what is happening with Gideon and his army. Gideon at first questions where God is. Once convinced of God's promise to deliver, Gideon finds strength. The enemy grows weary and Israel grows weary, but something happens to Israel. Read the passage in Isaiah and discover the key to their success. †

By Russ McKee

On December 17, 2003 America celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wright Brothers' first flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. They took a rickety, awkward-looking contraption and got it airborne for about fifteen seconds. Thankfully they were able to make their experiment work and in the one hundred years since then, man has truly taken aviation to new heights! Think of the supersonic fighter jets, the giant transport and passenger planes, and the space shuttles that go into outer space and return to earth once again. The technological strides that have been made in aviation are astounding!

Consider also, the tremendous advances made in so many other fields in the past hundred years such as science, medicine, communications, and computer technology, just to name a few. One could be tempted to say that we are a nation and a people of great understanding. But are we? Perhaps we are in man's eyes, but what about in God's eyes? Consider the following questions from First Corinthians 1:20, "Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?"

The Bible gives three criteria that define men of understanding. First, in Proverbs 9:10 the Bible says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Second, in Psalm 111:10 the Bible says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments..." And third, in Job 28:28 the Bible says, "And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.'" These three things, *knowledge of God, obeying His commandments, and turning away from evil* define men of understanding in God's eyes. In Jeremiah 4:22 God described the people of Judah as men without understanding. He said, "For My people are foolish, they know Me not; They are stupid children, and they have no understanding. They are shrewd to do evil, but to do good they do not know." The people of Judah were without understanding because they failed in each of the three criteria that define it!

What about our nation today? Would it pass the test? What about each of us as individuals? Can you truly say that you are a person of understanding in God's eyes? Our purpose is to examine each of these criteria and to test ourselves (2 Cor. 13:5) to see if we are indeed people of understanding.

## Knowledge of God

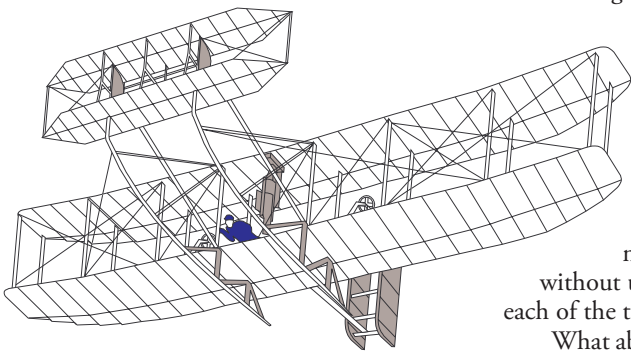
The first step in achieving understanding is to have knowledge of God (Pro. 9:10). This

is not merely a superficial knowledge of the existence of God, for all men have at least some knowledge that there is a God. The apostle Paul declared, "We...preach the gospel to you in order that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them. And in the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." (Act. 14:15-17). Whether men choose to acknowledge God or not is up to them. In Romans 1:19-22 the Bible says, "...that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools." Knowledge of God that leads to understanding goes much deeper than acknowledging the obvious fact that He exists. It is the intimate knowledge that Moses described in Exodus 33:13 when he said, "Now therefore I pray Thee, if I have found favor in Thy sight, let me know Thy ways, that I may know Thee, so that I may find favor in Thy sight..." To know God is to know His ways. Notice what God told the people of Judah in Jeremiah 9:24, "But let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD." The problem with Judah was that they did not know the ways of God. In Jeremiah 8:6-9, "...Everyone turned to his own course...My people do not know the ordinance of the Lord. How can you say we are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us?...Behold they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what kind of wisdom do they have?" True understanding only comes from knowing the ways of God, that He does indeed exercise lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth.

How can one learn the ways of God? Simply by opening the Bible and studying God's word. Paul told Timothy, "You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 3:14, 15) It is the Bible, God's word (His ways) revealed to man, that gives men the wisdom and knowledge needed to gain understanding, and so men are challenged to study it diligently and daily (2 Tim. 2:15; Acts 17:11). The psalmist wrote, "O how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day. Thy commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever

Continued on page 8

# A Nation Without Understanding



## “I work in My time!”

In verse 3, God reminds Habakkuk of a lesson that many of us need to hear. God does not work according to our time line. If the answer seems delayed in coming...wait for it, for it will yet come! God has His time! How many times have we offered up prayers on behalf of someone and eventually, thinking this must not be the plan of God, have given up on that request only to see it come to pass years later? A loved one we thought was lost returns to God. An illness we thought could not be overcome is destroyed in the mighty hand of Jehovah. Not in our time, but in His. Not according to our will, but through His purpose. Surely this is not always easy. We may become discouraged, attempt to take matters into our own hands, or worse yet we divorce ourselves from God, blaming Him for what we see as His failure. Waiting—it sounds so easy—yet it can be devastatingly hard. Failing to grasp the plan of God. This can surely shake the very foundation of man. “Why did I loose the one I loved so much?” “How come he flourishes in evil and I struggle in righteousness?” With this type of struggle in mind, Jehovah reaches to the very pinnacle of godly living. Notice what He says in verse 4.

“Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.”



## Trust in Me!

With these types of questions, God encourages Habakkuk to do one thing—keep the faith! You can almost hear the words of God, “Habakkuk, you may not understand what I am doing. It may seem unfathomable to you. Don’t give up. Focus on one thing—keep the faith, for this is what the righteous will live by. Evil may come; prayers may seemingly go unanswered; but the righteous shall live by faith. Habakkuk, do not be discouraged. I know of your zeal and your love for Me. I know you are vexed daily with the evil around you. Do not give up! Wait on Me...I will renew your strength. Habakkuk, focus on what is right. Keep Me always in your sight and remember—the righteous shall live by faith.”

What would God tell us today? Would His words of encouragement during our times of doubt and hardship be different? The words that He spoke to Habakkuk have been echoed through the ages by the apostle Paul and the writer of Hebrews, and we should still live by them today. When hardships come, and your struggles increase, do not lose sight of what really matters. Keep your faith in Him and your eyes on the Lord. God Bless!

...looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2).



## Continued from page 7

mine. I have more insight than all my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, because I have observed Thy precepts. I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Thy word. I have not turned aside from Thine ordinances, for Thou Thyself hast taught me. How sweet are Thy words to my taste! *Yes, sweeter* than honey to my mouth! From Thy precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.” (Psa. 119:97–104). At this present time when so much effort is placed on trying to remove the only true and living God from every aspect of public life, America needs people who know God and are willing to stand and defend His ways. Do you know the ways of God and therefore know Him?

## Obeying His Commandments

The second step in achieving understanding is to obey His commandments (Psa. 111:10). This naturally follows the first step as one cannot obey God’s commandments without first knowing what they are. Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and

yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall” (Mat. 7:24–27). Understanding is defined by knowing the ways of God and then acting on that knowledge. In James 1:22–24 the Bible says, “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.” Obedience demonstrates not only wisdom, but faith in God (Joh. 3:36) and love for Him as well (Joh. 14:15; 1 Joh. 2:5). Having knowledge of the ways of God and yet refusing to obey them is like a man drowning in the sea, seeing the lifeline floating beside him but refusing to take hold of it. Jesus is the source of eternal salvation only to those that obey Him (Heb. 5:9). Again, at this present time in America, when sin is so rampant and seems to be gaining ground daily, the need for people to know the ways of God and obey them has never been greater. In Romans 16:19, Paul commended the church in Rome for their obedience. He said, “For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing

over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil.” Could the same be said of America today? Not hardly! But what about you individually; are you living a life of obedience to God’s commandments, thereby demonstrating your understanding?

## Turning Away from Evil

The third step in achieving understanding is to turn away from evil (Job 28:28). This naturally follows the second step because obedience to God’s commandments causes one to turn away from evil. Unfortunately, many who seem to want to obey God still want to toy around with sin just a little. The Bible is filled with warnings for men to turn away from sin. “Hate evil, love good...” (Amo. 5:15; Rom. 12:9) Be “...innocent in what is evil” (Rom. 16:19). “Do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints” (Eph. 5:3). “Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever” (1 Joh. 2:15–17). Some would play with

Continued on page 10



# Meditation Tips

Edited By Don Ruhl

## Meditating Before Obeying

The Scriptures are of such a nature that a one-time reading is insufficient. The Scriptures speak to our spirits. Therefore, to understand the Scriptures and to reap the full impact of the word of God, repeated readings must be done, and reflection on what was read is absolutely necessary.

A reading schedule will make your time with the writings of God most beneficial. A schedule insures that you will read *all* of the word of God, instead of using a haphazard method, which in the long run will cause you to miss valuable parts of the will of God for your life.

### Enhancing Your Meditation

**1.** Ask yourself what is the meaning of the text. When you discover the meaning, then meditate on that meaning, as Psalm 119:130 says,

The entrance of Your words gives light;  
It gives understanding to the simple.

**2.** Literally see the picture of the Scripture. See it happening, especially if figures of speech are being used, such as in Proverbs 2:3-5,

Yes, if you cry out for discernment,  
And lift up your voice for understanding,  
If you seek her as silver,  
And search for her as for hidden treasures;  
Then you will understand the fear of the LORD,  
And find the knowledge of God.

Imagine a man crying out, begging for discernment. See and hear him getting louder.

Imagine a treasure hunt, like a man seeking silver, but it is discernment and understanding for which he is digging.

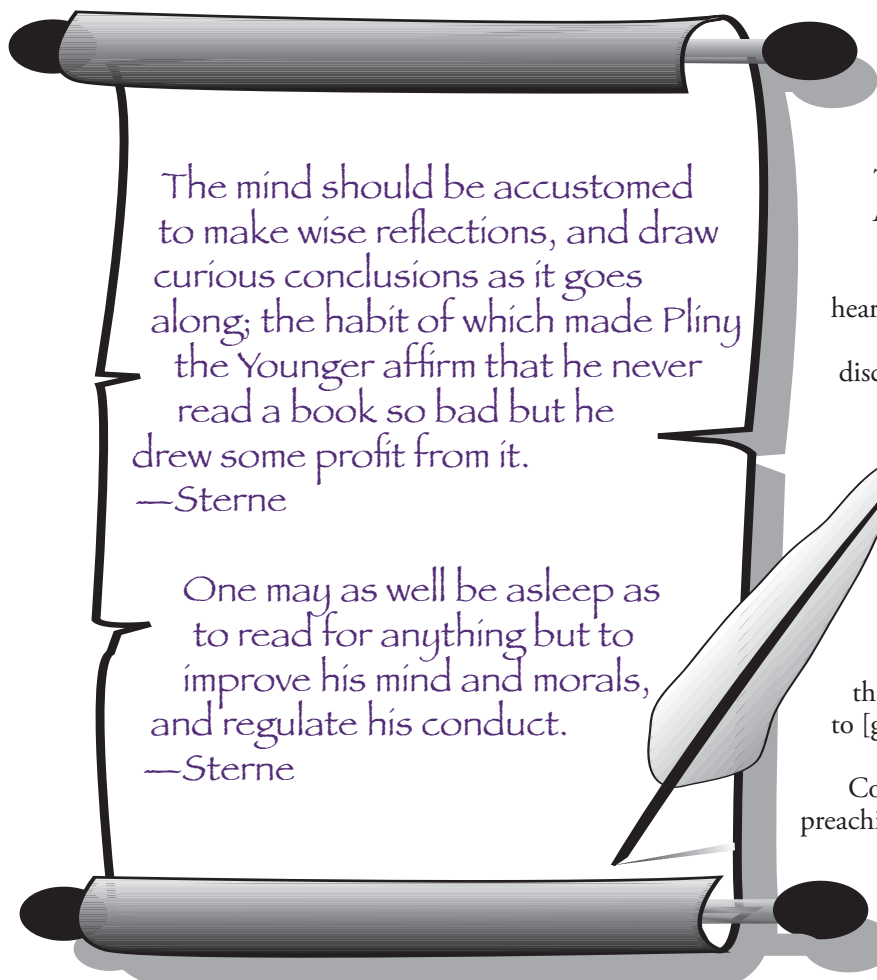
That Scripture and what you are to do will have more meaning to you.

Personalize the Scripture. For example, in Romans chapter 6 replace the word "sin" with the sin that you are trying to overcome. And change the pronouns. For example, if your sin is gossip, here is how you will read the first two verses of Romans chapter 6,

What shall [I] say then? Shall [I] continue in [gossip] that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall [I] who died to [gossip] live any longer in it?

Continue reading the chapter in this manner and you will be preaching to yourself in a powerful way.

This form of meditating on the Scriptures will lead you to full and sincere obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, saving your soul, and making you a stronger disciple of Christ. †



The mind should be accustomed to make wise reflections, and draw curious conclusions as it goes along; the habit of which made Pliny the Younger affirm that he never read a book so bad but he drew some profit from it.

—Sterne

One may as well be asleep as to read for anything but to improve his mind and morals, and regulate his conduct.

—Sterne

the fire of sin, even while knowing that those who play with fire will eventually get burned. In James 1:14–16 the Bible says, “But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.” Again, at this present time in America, it seems as though many, rather than turning away from evil, are running toward it. The rush to promote homosexuality, especially in marriage, is a perfect example of this. One could also point to the exponential growth and acceptance of pornography and its defense as “free speech” as an example. It is amazing how the name of God and the goodness of His ways can be so vehemently attacked, while at the same time defending and promoting such debauchery. Men must not be deceived. Embracing evil will surely lead to death, not only to the nation but to each individual as well. What about you? Do you demonstrate your understanding by turning away from evil each day and embracing the ways of God?

## Conclusion

The three steps to achieving understanding

as defined by God are:

1. Knowledge of God;
2. Obeying His commandments; and
3. Turning away from evil.

These three steps, however, are built upon the foundation of the fear of God. Notice that each of the three verses that defined the criteria for great understanding in God’s eyes started by saying, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” There are two aspects of fear to consider. One is the “reverential respect” that is often mentioned. One should revere and respect God and His word above all else. But there is another aspect of fear that many would rather not think about and that is terror. Jesus told His apostles, “And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mat. 10:28). Jesus was not talking about respecting those who would kill them; He was talking about terror. In that context He was saying that men should be afraid (terrified) of the One who could not only kill them; but also destroy their souls in hell. That is why the Hebrew writer declared, “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb.10:31). When men fail

to fear God, that is, they are not terrified of Him, wickedness and ungodliness are certain to reign in their lives. In Psalm 36:1, the Bible says, “Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; there is no fear of God before his eyes.” That was the problem that the people of Judah had in Jeremiah’s day, for he writes, “Your own wickedness will correct you, And your apostasies will reprove you; Know therefore and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the LORD your God, and the dread of Me is not in you,” declares the Lord GOD of hosts” (Jer. 2:19). Knowing that, although His love and mercy are great, God will by no means leave the guilty unpunished (Nah. 1:3), should create a certain amount of fear in men and serve as a strong incentive for them to truly seek Him. It is obvious that much of America no longer has a fear of God as in times past. This is evidenced by the increasingly open attacks upon Christianity and the righteous ways of God. Pray, therefore, that God would instill the appropriate fear of Him in the hearts of men, and that they may truly seek to know Him, obey Him, and turn away from evil. In doing so, they will demonstrate that they indeed have great understanding. †

**The Bible Mediator**  
is published monthly by the  
**Nile Street**  
**Church of Christ**  
**Klamath Falls, Oregon**

and the  
**Savage Street**  
**Church of Christ**  
**Grants Pass, Oregon**

**Editor: Don Ruhl**

**Subscriptions are \$8**

Make check payable to: **The Bible Mediator**, 2521 Nile Street, Klamath Falls, Oregon 97603-6913, USA

**Phone:** (541) 882-5894 or (541) 476-3100

**E-mail:** [Rdruhl@aol.com](mailto:Rdruhl@aol.com)

**A free PDF version**  
is available.

Send a request to  
**SSteinless@aol.com**. Simply ask  
for the **PDF version of TBM**.  
A PDF Reader is necessary.

**CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**2521 NILE STREET**  
**KLAMATH FALLS OR 97603-6913**

To receive e-mail devotionals, send an e-mail to  
[emaildevotionals-subscribe@associate.com](mailto:emaildevotionals-subscribe@associate.com)

