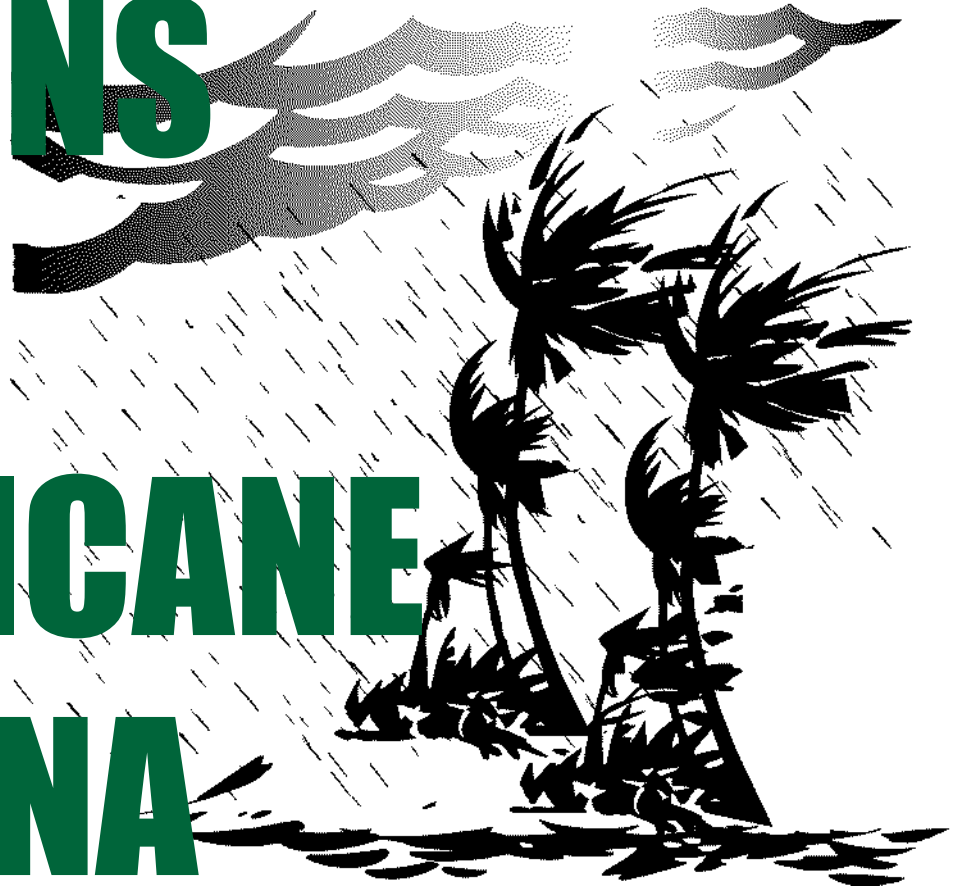


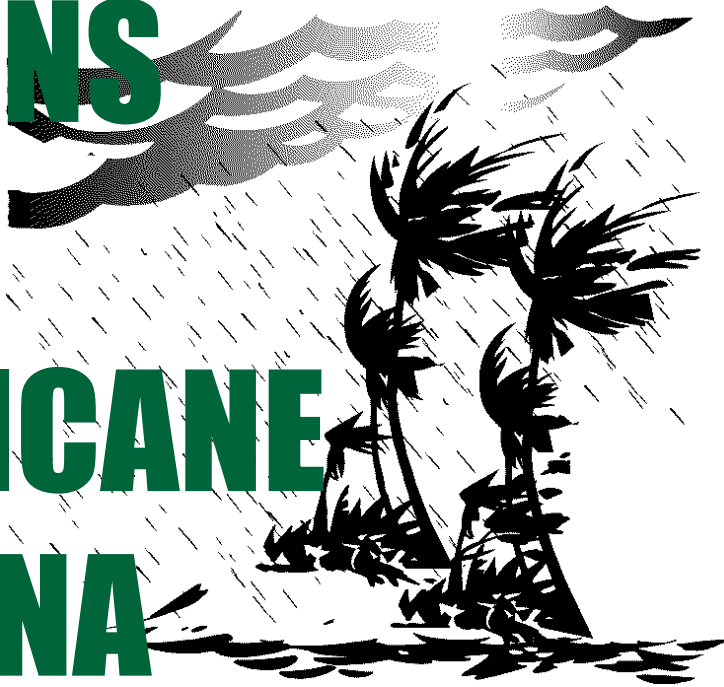
THE  
BIBLE MEDITATOR

LESSONS  
FROM  
HURRICANE  
KATRINA



- **Meditating on Mark**
- **Meditation Tips:** *Great Is the Power of the Reader and the Thinker*
- **Interesting Insights:** *Psychologists and Bad Ideas; What Is the Best Source of Help?*

# LESSONS FROM HURRICANE KATRINA



*There is  
a time to  
stay, and  
a time to  
flee*

**By Don Ruhl**

**H**urricane Katrina was different from other disasters in many ways, capturing the attention of our nation like no other natural disaster has in our lifetime. There are valuable lessons that we can learn from this experience. Hurricane Rita, and now, Hurricane Wilma, as this goes to press, only intensifies these lessons.

First, remember Israel in the wilderness. God took them from their homes in Egypt. The Israelites wanted a better life, but they did not like the way God, Moses, and Aaron went about it. Therefore, Israel complained endlessly about their circumstances. God was not happy with them, so, He killed hundreds of thousands of them. More than anything, He was offended by their murmuring, their false expectations of their leaders, their discontent, and their impatience with their leaders and their God.

Israel was not happy in Egypt, nor were they happy out of Egypt. First Corinthians 10 teaches that we should learn from the Israelites and not repeat their mistakes.

But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were

scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come (1 Cor. 10:5-11).

Even as the Lord wants us to learn from Israel when they were displaced from their homes both things that we should and should not do, so we can learn from the residents of New Orleans, and other cities of the area, when they were displaced from their homes what we should and should not do.

## *America Cannot Stop the Power of Nature or the Power of God in Nature*

America is a great nation. In my opinion she is the third greatest nation ever. The church is first. Israel of old, especially under the good kings, is second. However, America bows before "the Laws of Nature and Nature's God," because, as our forefathers confessed, "the Laws of Nature and Nature's God" have entitled us to certain blessings, not that we have entitled Nature or God to blessings. From time to time either "the Laws of Nature" or "Nature's God" remind us from where we get our blessings. Yet, we are able to handle some devastating blows. Think of the hits that our nation has taken since July 4, 1776, but we still stand! September 2001 and September 2005 alone would have wiped out many other nations. We think that we have hard times, but most of the world would love to have our troubled times! Why is it that we can take huge hits, but still be strong? We have pledged our allegiance that we are "one nation under God," printed that, "In God We Trust," and declared our "firm reliance on the

Continued on page 7

# Meditating on Scripture Daily

Based on the New King James Version

## Mark

By Don Ruhl

Nov. 1 Mark 6:47–50a

### Is Jesus a Ghost?

47–50a *Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea...* Sometime between 3 and 6 in the morning they saw Jesus! He was the One who had sent them out on the sea. He knew that they would encounter this storm. Sometimes the Lord sends us into trouble, but He has a purpose, even as the Father sent Jesus into trouble by sending Him into this world, knowing that the world would crucify Him. The Father has a purpose in letting us meet the storms of life. Keep doing His word. You will see the purpose. Jesus did another miracle, this time walking on water. Moreover, the wind did not stop Him, even as gravity did not have an affect on Him. Amazingly, He was going to walk right on by them! They were not amazed initially, but they were terrified, thinking that He was a ghost! They had never seen a miracle like this, and they were already frightened during the storm in the dark, and who would expect to see a man walking on water? The wind threw water in their faces. They did not know what else to conclude.

### Nov. 2 Mark 6:47–50a Is Jesus a Ghost?

47–50a *...for they all saw Him and were troubled.* There were many opinions about Jesus. In 3:21, His friends thought that He was *a lunatic*. In 3:22, the scribes said that Jesus had *Beelzebub*. In 6:2, 3, Nazareth concluded that He was just a *man*. In 6:14, Herod just knew that Jesus was *John the Baptist*. In 6:15, the opinions going around were that Jesus was *Elijah, the Moses-like Prophet, or one of the other prophets*. Then His Disciples thought that He must be a *ghost*! It is fascinating that the ones who had it right, as far as the *identity* of Jesus and nothing else, were the demons! Remember Mark 1:24, “Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!” Also, Mark 3:11, “And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, ‘You are the Son of God.’” Mark 5:7 says, “And he cried out with a loud voice and said, ‘What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me.’”

### Nov. 3 Mark 6:50b–52 Jesus Is Amazing

50b–52 *...they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure...* Hear His words of comfort, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.” There is good cheer in knowing the identity of Jesus Christ. Whatever it is that troubles you, be of good cheer, Jesus is with you. Look again at the last sentence of verse 51. They had amazement that was great beyond measure, and they marveled. Perhaps this seemed greater than the other miracles. Then Mark adds that evidently the apostles did not yet realize that a miracle took place when they fed five loaves of bread and two fish to five thousand men! Once they understood what happened then, they would understand walking on water.

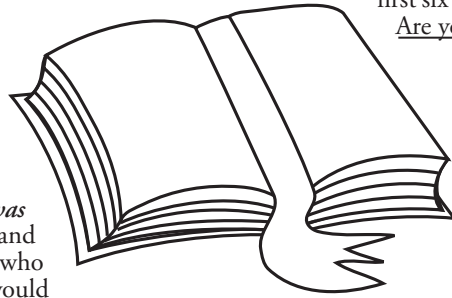
### Nov. 4 Mark 6:53–56 Hem of His Garment

53–56 *...And as many as touched Him were made well.* Picture in your mind countless people, very excited and running to be where He was. All community activity stopped. A woman in chapter 5, desired to touch the garment of Jesus, knowing that it would bring healing. Now the word has spread that a miraculous healing was that easy. This has a similar thought to that found earlier with the feeding of the five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fish, that is, even a little of Jesus in your life works wonders and even a little of you in His life works wonders.

How much do you have? Second Corinthians 9:6–10 reminds us that if you use what you have for the cause of Christ, it shall be enough, because He will multiply what you need. What is written in that passage applies to congregations also. Let us have faith that if we desire to do good things, He will supply whatever we need, although we start out with little.

Watch Jesus and learn to imitate Him. If we have faith in Jesus Christ, all things are possible. Faith is not only a confession before baptism. The

first six chapters of Mark show that faith is for everyday living. Are you living by faith?



## Why Do You Wash Your Hands?

Have you made a traditional practice a matter of spiritual law?

### Nov. 5 Mark 7

I have three questions for you. Why do you wash your hands? Are clean hands more important than a clean heart and clean living? What would you think if Jesus called you a little dog?

### Mark 7:1–5 Hand-washing Tradition

1–5 *...Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands...* The scribes and Pharisees went to Jesus in Gennesaret. Remember in Mark 3:6 that Mark showed us that the Pharisees had already started to plot against Jesus, “Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him” (Mark 3:6). We have not heard from the Pharisees since that reference, yet, all along they had been working, finding a way to trap Him. Now, they reappear, and immediately they found fault with Jesus. Having already condemned Him, they proceeded to find a way to justify their dastardly deed. They found fault with the manner in which His disciples ate bread, that is, with “unwashed hands,” or literally “common” hands. This violated their tradition, so they pounced on it like a cat on a mouse.

### Nov. 6 Mark 7:1–5 Hand-washing Tradition

1–5 *...“Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders...?”* In verses 3 and 4, Mark explained the Jewish tradition of washing hands. The Jews did not eat unless they washed their hands in a special way. The original Greek text is hard to understand. The NKJV has, “in a special way.” Various translations show this difficulty: KJV – “oft”; ASV – “diligently”; NASV – “carefully”; NIV – “ceremonial washing”; McCord – “hands to the elbows.” The Greek text reads literally, “if not fist they wash the hands not eat.” This was not hygiene that they observed, but the tradition of the elders. It may have begun as hygiene, but not at the time of Jesus, because they made it a tradition of the elders, that is, a spiritual law. Mark explained further in verse 4 that they did this when coming from the marketplace. Mingling with all those other people, and perhaps Gentiles, made the Jews think that they were dirty, whether literally or figuratively. The Jews had many other similar laws. Not seeing the difference between violating Scripture and their traditions, they questioned Jesus.

### Nov. 7 Mark 7:6–13 Traditions vs. Commands

6–13 *He answered and said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites...”* In verses 6–8, He informed them that Isaiah prophesied of them, but in this case, that was not a good thing. They were hypocrites for honoring Him with their lips, but not with their hearts; they worshiped Him in vain, because they elevated commandments of men to the status of divine doctrine. Therefore, Jesus accused them of laying aside the commandment of God to hold the tradition of men! The commandment Jesus had in mind, He revealed in verses 9–13. God had not commanded all their washings, but those things were the traditions of men. Then in verses 9–13, He explained that they elevated a tradition of man over the word of God. He said that helping your parents financially is part of the commandment of God to honor your parents. If the Jews were profited financially, it was Corban, that is, rather than giving it to their parents, it was given to the temple.

### Nov. 8 Mark 7:14–23 True Defilement

14–23 *“...There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him...”* He began with an exhortation to hear and understand because His words lead to freedom from sin, which He revealed in verses 21–23. The defilement with which we must be concerned does not happen from what we eat or from touching other people’s hands, but it is what comes out of a man, because what comes out is what is in his heart. The disciples

heard Jesus, but they did not understand Him. Starting at verse 18, He explained Himself, chiding them mildly for not understanding. They had heard Him teach repeatedly, the spiritual application of life, but they were locked into worldly thinking. Jesus knows eating the wrong thing can make us sick, but He did not come into this world to teach us bodily health, but spiritual health. What enters our stomachs is eliminated. Unclean food, germs, and other things of that nature do not enter the heart. What comes out of the heart is what defiles us, because it does not come from our mere bodies, but our hearts, that is, the real person on the inside, revealing what we are. “Unwashed hands is of small importance compared with *moral* uncleanness” (Vincent). Jesus gave examples of what comes out of the heart. Bruce points out, “An enumeration of the things which come out of the man, from the heart; first six plurals...then six singulars...” These things begin in our hearts; we cannot blame others. These are spiritual problems; not genetics. These are evil things; not diseases.

### Nov. 9 Mark 7:24–26 Persistence

24–26 ... *He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden...* He tried to hide Himself, but the Son of God cannot be hidden. Look and listen to the humility of this Gentile woman. She fell at the feet of Jesus. She is a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth. She was Greek in religion, Syrian in tongue, Phoenician in race. She begged the Lord to cast a demon out of her daughter. The verb is in the imperfect tense, showing that she was continuing to ask rather than one request. She kept asking because the Lord ignored her!

### Mark 7:27–30 She Was a Little Dog

27–30 ... *“Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children’s crumbs”...* Finally, the Lord answered her, but He told her that others, that is, the Jews had to have their needs met first rather than taking what should go to them and giving it to the little dogs! This woman was humble, wise, and not easily offended! She agreed that the children must come first before dogs or pets. She was a mother and understood. Nor did she want the whole loaf taken from the children, but she replied that the dogs at least get to eat the crumbs that the children drop under the table. She confessed that as a Gentile she was not originally one of the children, but like a dog. For her shrewd answer, *in absentia* the Lord cast the demon out. She went home, found her daughter without the demon, and lying on the bed. In other healings, a person gets up out of bed, but in the case of demon-possession, it was a relief to sit or lie down. Demons did not let people be at rest.

### Nov. 10 Mark 7:31–37 The Lord Sighs

31–37 ... *they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech...* The Lord traveled on, passing through Decapolis and arrived at the Sea of Galilee again. He kept traveling that others might benefit, and so He was not overwhelmed in one area. He avoided Jerusalem, because going there at that time would bring His death sooner than planned. The people brought to Jesus, one who was deaf and had a speech impediment. They begged Him to heal him. Jesus healed him, but watch what happened next. He took the person aside from the crowd. A public healing increased a problem that He wanted to avoid. He really did not want to do it, but it was a good work, so He did it. He healed differently this time. He put His fingers into the person’s ears, spits, probably on His own finger, and touched the person’s tongue with His saliva. He looked up to heaven and sighed. Why did the Lord sigh? Remember they had to beg Him to do this healing. He took the person aside privately.

### Nov. 11 Mark 7:31–37 The Lord Sighs

31–37 ... *Then He commanded them that they should tell no one...* Did Jesus really want to open ears and mouths of the flesh, or ears and mouths of the spirit? Remember verses 1–23, that Jesus was not concerned first with matters pertaining to the body, but the spirit of man. He came to save us from sin, not bodily problems. Finally, He spoke the healing, saying literally, “Ephphatha,” which is Aramaic for “Be opened.” A biblical miracle happened. It was immediate, without medicine, and no time lapse. The man could hear completely, and he could speak properly. Jesus did not want this news spread, which was also, why He sighed. Healings were diversions from preaching and teaching. Nevertheless, the more He commanded them to be quiet, the more widely they proclaimed it! Their astonishment could not be measured, because they saw Him as doing all things well, making the deaf to hear, and the mute to speak. However, what He was able to do in the body should make them hunger and thirst for what He does for the spirit. Why does God do all things well for us in this world? He wants us to focus on the Giver of the gifts, not the gifts.

Let us be more concerned with the salvation of our souls, than the health of our bodies. Focus on the spirit. When little dogs eat the crumbs, do they worship the crumbs or the giver? Remember why Jesus came to earth, to save us from our sins not ill health or poverty.

## Men Look Like Walking Trees

The miraculous power of Jesus Christ is all encompassing

### Nov. 12 Mark 8

What is leaven or yeast? It is a small, but necessary, ingredient to make bread rise. As Paul says in Galatians 5:9, “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” Leaven or yeast is a, “unicellular fungi of the genus *Saccharomyces*, especially *S. Cerevisiae* reproducing by budding and from ascospores and capable of fermenting carbohydrates” (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*). Now that was a spiritually uplifting experience! You had no idea that you read this publication to cogitate on unicellular profundities so that you could postulate on culinary extrapolations! Seriously, leaven is a living organism. Jesus used leaven to illustrate the kingdom of heaven, because it will start out small, but will spread through the entire earth. Jesus also used leaven to illustrate evil. Evil is a living organism, introduced into a person’s heart, taking over the whole person. In Mark 8, we will also watch a blind man healed, but he saw men like walking trees. Jesus did another miracle for the man and everything was okay. This will be explained further in the November 17 reading.

### Nov. 13 Mark 8:1–10

#### How Much Do You Have?

Have we not asked this before?

1–10 *In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat...* Jesus had compassion on the multitude. Do not worry about the necessities of life, if we are seeking His things, which are the higher spiritual things in life, He will make sure that we have the lower things in life. Supplying us with food and clothing is a small matter. He even does it for people who do not care for Him. If we do care for Him and His things, do we not think that He will have compassion on us as we learn from Him and toil in His kingdom? It is getting us to see spiritual truths, and living them that is the more trying thing. He does not have to persuade us to eat and be clothed, because we tend to go overboard on these things. What do we see in the Gospel According to Mark? Coming back to Mark 8, the disciples could not see how feeding this large group was possible in a wilderness. Since He feeds billions daily through nature, was feeding four or five thousand miraculously difficult for Him? Did He not create all things from the power of His spoken word? Did He not create the process that gives us bread? Had He not already fed five thousand miraculously? Had He not already healed the blind and the deaf, walked on water, and raised the dead? Did not God satisfy Israel with bread in the wilderness, when they numbered more than four thousand, but probably four million?

### Nov. 14 Mark 8:1–10

#### How Much Do You Have?

Have we not asked this before?

1–10 ... *So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments...* As with feeding the five thousand, the Lord asked the disciples how much they bread had. Jesus proceeded to feed the crowd. Watch what He did. He made them sit down, gave thanks, broke the loaves, had the disciples pass out the bread, and the same with the fish. Is there any question about what He was able to do? The disciples follow the easy instructions of the Lord and He took care of it from there. Again, the multitude was filled, leftovers were taken up, and this time there were seven *large* baskets. These were not crumbs, but leftovers. The Lord opened the windows of heaven and poured out a blessing so that they could not eat it all. Their cups were running over. Do you see what He was able to do? The problem is not whether the Lord is able to provide for us, but whether we believe He can.

### Nov. 15 Mark 8:11–13

#### Why Do People Seek a Sign?

11–13 *Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign...* The Pharisees showed up, disputing with Jesus. Imagine puny men disputing with the Lord of lords! They wanted to see a sign from Him that He was from heaven. Why was the healing of the

paralytic back in chapter 2, that they witnessed, not enough? Why was the restoration of the man's withered hand in chapter 3, that they witnessed, not enough? No miracles that He had done were enough, because their motive was not to believe, but to test Him. Listen to His response. He *sighs deeply* in His spirit. He grew impatient and frustrated because they were seeking the wrong thing. He wondered why that generation was seeking a sign. Therefore, they would not receive a sign.

---

## Nov. 16 Mark 8:14–21 Beware of False Leaven

14–21 ... *"How is it you do not understand?" (Mar. 8:14–21, NKJV).* Again they lacked bread, and again the Lord directed His disciples into spiritual thinking, but they thought that Jesus spoke of literal bread. They could only think in terms of this world. Listen to the Lord carefully as He responded. He wondered why they reasoned about having no bread. He feeds millions daily. They saw Him feed five thousand in a desert. They just saw Him feed four thousand in a wilderness. However, it must be too much for Him to feed 12 in a boat on a lake! He marveled at their lack of understanding, and He revealed the problem of not being able to understand. It comes from a hard heart that refuses to put away material thinking and refuses to believe the Lord. It comes from not seeing with our eyes and hearing with our ears, that is, truly thinking on what is going on around us, and truly thinking on what the Lord teaches in His word. It comes from not remembering that He supplies us with all of our needs and that He promises to continue to do so. Then He reminded them of the two incidences when He fed the people miraculously. They should understand, but they did not.

---

## Nov. 17 Mark 8:22–26 Walking Trees

22–26 *Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him...* They begged Him to heal a blind man, but you can see His reluctance, especially that He did not want this to spread. Observe the healing and its two stages. Jesus spit on the man's eyes and puts His hands on the man. Why did the Lord ask the man if he saw anything? Jesus had not done this before. He did not ask the deaf if they could hear. The man said that he saw men like trees, walking. Again, Jesus put His hands on the man's eyes, made the man look up, then he saw properly. What was going on? Why did Jesus heal the man in two parts? First, it was still a miracle. Jesus bypassed the laws of nature, using no medicine or surgery, such as a cornea transplant. Second, Jesus healed in the manner that He wanted to do it. In 7:32, the people begged Jesus to heal a man by touching him. Here again they begged for a healing by having the Lord touch that person. The Lord showed that it was not by mere touching; but He was the power and He chose the method. He could touch, speak, or spit, or do it in two stages. Sometimes we get like Naaman with our preconceived ideas on how the Lord should operate. Therefore, in Mark 7:32, 33 the Lord did not do it in the way the people told Him to do it, but He put His fingers into the man's ears, spit, and touched his tongue. This is what is happening in our text of Mark 8:22–26. Again, the people told Jesus to touch the blind man, but Jesus did it differently. Third, Jesus showed the genuineness of the miracle 1900 years before we even truly knew what was going on.

---

## Nov. 18 Mark 8:22–26 Walking Trees

22–26 ... *And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything...* Anyone can write a story of a miracle-worker, but to plant scientific knowledge or medical information into the text before it was understood showed that a true miracle took place. For example, there is a movie, "At First Sight," based on a true story of a 50 year-old man whose sight was restored surgically after he lost it early in life. Regaining his sight was not joyful, because he did not understand what he saw. When the doctor held a can of soda before the man, asking him what he saw, as Jesus did, the man did not know until he touched it. This man and the man in Mark 8 were no longer perceptually blind, but they were conceptually blind. The man in Mark 8 could see, but he could not make sense of what he saw. Then, in the second stage of the miracle Jesus gave the man's brain the instant ability to recognize what he saw, something that we continue to learn constantly.

---

## Nov. 19 Mark 8:22–26 Walking Trees

22–26 ... *And he was restored and saw everyone clearly...* From a morning show, I believe it was *Good Morning, America*, and from a web site, I learned about Michael May.

After 43 years of blindness, Michael May can see again... But May can't recognize his sons, Carson, 11, and Wyndham, 9, by their faces alone. The same goes for identifying Jennifer, his wife

of 15 years... Three years after surgery restored sight to May's right eye, researchers say May's case shows how vision is more than just eye function. Blindness has long-term effects on how the brain processes information and constructs one's view of the world. May lost his sight to a chemical explosion when he was 3 1/2 years old. He eventually lost his left eye and remained blind in his right until the surgery in 2000. But testing since that surgery has showed that May's ability to interpret what he sees through his good eye is decidedly mixed... May can identify simple shapes and colors. He can interpret objects in motion. He can spy faraway peaks. He marvels at the vibrancy of plants and flowers unseen since he lost his vision. But three-dimensional perception and the ability to recognize complex objects such as the faces of family and friends remain severely impaired. He strains to tell the difference between a man and a woman. He describes a cube as a square with extra lines... "There has always been this question: What would happen if a blind man got his vision back? Is it something innate or is it something we learn from first principles?" Fine asked. "Is it something that happens or is it something we learn, like language?" Repeatedly, the researchers combined vision tests with scans of May's brain activity to study how blindness had affected him. When asked to identify a cube illustrated on a two-dimensional computer screen, for example, May failed. But once Fine commanded the cube to rotate, simulating motion in three dimensions, he immediately recognized it.

The disciples had this problem in verse 18, but in a spiritual sense, and so did the general population in 4:12 and so does the world today. How many people see what is in Scripture, but it does not connect with the heart?

---

## Nov. 20 Mark 8:27–30 Who Is Jesus?

27–30 ... *"Who do men say that I am?"...* Who did men say that Jesus was? There were varying opinions ranging from John the Baptist to Elijah to one of the other prophets. Judaism says that He is a great teacher. Islam says He is a mighty prophet. The Watchtower Society says He is a created angel, specifically Michael the archangel. Mormonism says He is a man who became a god. The Moonies say He is another Messiah. Theological liberals say He is another wise man. Who do *you* say that Jesus is? Peter answered that Jesus is the Christ. If you agree with Peter, think on what Jesus taught next. Are we seeking the things of God or the things of men? He commanded them to remain silent about His identity, because the time of His crucifixion is coming rapidly, and there was no need to hasten the day.

---

## Nov. 21 Mark 8:31–33 God vs. Men

31–33 *And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things...* Things were going so well. Then He taught that things were going to change. He would suffer many things, be rejected by the leaders, and be killed. However, three days later He would rise again. This was the part that Peter did not hear or let sink into his thinking. It should have alerted Peter to the fact that Jesus would willingly submit to the suffering and to the killing; that death would not stop Jesus; that three days later, He would be alive again! The Lord turned, looked at the disciples, and rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan!" One moment, the Father influences Peter to confess that Jesus is the Christ, seconds later Peter was following Satan! Peter was minding the things of men, not the things of God. What are the things of God? We saw earlier in Mark 8 that God is concerned with matters of the spirit. He wants to save us from sin, not necessarily from the dangers of the world. The dangers of the world are temporary, but the dangers of the spirit are eternal.

---

## Nov. 22 Mark 8:34–38 Take Up Your Cross

34–38 ... *"Whoever desires to come after Me..."* There are three conditions for following Christ: deny yourself; take up your cross; follow the Lord. This is living a life willing to suffer for Him. If we suffer for Him now, we will not suffer later. If we avoid suffering for Him now, we will suffer later. If we gain everything, but lose our souls, what have we gained? What is more valuable to us than our souls? Let us not be ashamed of Jesus and His words. This generation is adulterous and sinful. There is the temptation to be ashamed or embarrassed by our belief in Jesus and our belief in His words. If we are ashamed of Jesus, He will be ashamed of us when He returns in the glory of His Father and the holy angels. The only way to overcome this temptation is to believe with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ, then deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Him. This all begins with repentance and baptism.

---

# Can Jesus Do Anything?

That is the wrong question, so what is the right question?

## Nov. 23 Mark 9:1–32

Can Jesus do anything? The gist of Scripture is this is the wrong question. The right question is do *you believe* that He can do anything? What is your belief about Jesus?

### Mark 9:1 The Kingdom of God

1 “...*who will not taste death...*” Some of those hearing Jesus would not taste death until they saw the kingdom of God present with power. This left one of two options. Either the kingdom of God has not come and there are some people living today who are approaching 2,000 years old or the kingdom of God did come during the lifetimes of some of those standing there. The kingdom came and it is still with us, because the kingdom is the church.

## Nov. 24 Mark 9:2–4 Jesus Is Transfigured

2–4 *Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John...* Jesus was transfigured. Only Peter, James, and John witnessed this awesome event. Jesus’ clothes became glorious, showing His true nature, that He is divine. Moses and Elijah did not appear glorious, at least not in the same way as Christ, although they were Moses the lawgiver, and Elijah the prophet. The two men symbolized the essence of the Old Testament. These two men left this earth in unusual ways. God ordered Moses to go Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, and after having viewed the land of Canaan, he died, God took his body, and buried it. God took Elijah in a chariot and horses of fire into heaven. Likewise, the death of Jesus was going to be different (and, by the way, that is what the three were talking about according to Luke 9:30, 31).

## Nov. 25 Mark 9:5–8 Listen to Jesus

5–8 *Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here...”* Peter thought that he had to say something, but it got him into trouble. He said that it was good for the three apostles to be present. It was truly a blessed experience as the three saw two men whom they had known through the Scriptures all their lives. How will we react when we finally meet the Lord face to face and all the saints of the Bible? Peter wanted to make three tabernacles to honor three men whom he saw as the greatest of men and as equally great. All three of the disciples were afraid, for this was grander than all the miracles they had witnessed. Did Moses and Elijah know of the disciples, and what they would do? The three apostles would do even greater works than Moses and Elijah ever did. What would Peter think if we made tabernacles to him and his fellow-apostles? He would stop it, even as he stopped Cornelius when he tried to worship Peter. From a cloud, the Father declared that His Beloved Son was the One to be heard. We listen to Moses and Elijah, but they are not the authority. The Law that Moses delivered, and to which Elijah was reminding the people, is no longer the active Law.

## Nov. 26 Mark 9:9, 10

### Keep the Transfiguration Quiet

9, 10 *...He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen...* Jesus commanded them to keep quiet until after the resurrection. Unlike people whom Jesus healed, the three did keep it to themselves until the appointed time. How difficult that must have been, for they had seen Moses and Elijah, and seen Jesus glorified! Could you keep it to yourself? They also wondered what the rising from the dead meant. His words seem plain enough in verse 9. However, sometimes a truth is so plain and simple that we figure there is another interpretation.

## Nov. 27 Mark 9:11–13 The Prophesied Elijah

11–13 *And they asked Him, saying, “Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”...* Having just seen Elijah, they remembered that he was supposed to come before the Messiah or Christ, but the Christ was right there with them. What went wrong; why had Elijah not come? This prophecy is in Malachi 4:5, 6, the two last verses of the Old Testament. The last time God had spoken in Scripture it was about Elijah, so the people waited eagerly for him. A man would announce the arrival of the Lord. This man was to be so much like Elijah that the Lord wanted the people to know this fact. Rather than saying that he would be *like* Elijah, the forerunner was *called* Elijah. The scribes were right. Elijah was coming first. He would restore all things, reuniting fathers and children, and bringing people back to the Law. In connection with Elijah’s coming, the

Son of Man would suffer and be treated with contempt.

## Nov. 28 Mark 9:11–13 The Prophesied Elijah

11–13 *“...I say to you that Elijah has also come...”* The suffering, persecution, and death of Jesus become the primary theme in His teaching. He rarely mentioned it at first, now it comes up all the time. In 2:20, He gave a *clue* when He spoke of the bridegroom being taken away. He *hinted* at it in 6:4, when He said that He would not find honor among his own family and townspeople. Then in 8:31, 32, Mark told us that Jesus spoke about it openly. Then Jesus declared that the prophecy about Elijah had already been fulfilled. He came in the form of John the Baptist. Gabriel, in Luke 1:16, 17 appeared to Zacharias, the father-to-be of John, and Gabriel prophesied of John, saying that he would go before the Lord “in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.” Elijah and John even looked similar, or at least dressed similarly (Mark 1:6; 2 Kings 1:8). “They,” Jesus said, did whatever they wanted to John, referring to his imprisonment, and how he was used to fulfill the desires of a wicked woman, when she requested his beheading. It was prophesied that this would happen, that is, John would suffer like Elijah. Elijah was persecuted by Jezebel, a wicked woman (who was a queen), and John suffered at the hands of a wicked woman (who was also a queen).

## Nov. 29 Mark 9:14–18 Casting Out a Demon

14–18 *And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them...* How would you like it, when you are in a dispute with someone, if the Lord arrives and takes over? The father of a boy spoke up and revealed that a demon possessed his son, and that the disciples could not cast it out.

### Mark 9:19 Jesus Chided the People

19 *He answered him and said, “O faithless generation...”* The problem of that generation, including the disciples, was a lack of faith. He wondered aloud how long He would be with them and bear with them. He not only said this in front of them, but to them. He then commanded that the child be brought to Him.

## Nov. 30 Mark 9:20–24

### Can Jesus Do Anything?

20–24 *“...But if You can do anything...”* The evil spirit reacted to the presence of Jesus. Whenever a demon-possessed person met the Lord there was some kind of reaction, for he knew that Jesus was the Holy One of God. This demon knew what was about to happen, so it reacted violently. As the father described the length of this problem, he said that if Jesus could do anything, then help! If Jesus could do anything! Did this man not know whom he approached? If he was not sure that Jesus could do anything, why approach Him? Why bring his son to Jesus? The question is not whether Jesus can do anything, but whether *we* believe He can. Most translations have a stronger rebuke from Jesus in verse 23 than the NKJV. Most have, “If you can?” Jesus did not address what had been happening to the boy, but immediately focused on a greater problem. The faithless generation included this father. God has no desire to help us, if we are not sure that He is able to help us. If we seek His help, but do not believe that He can help, it turns into a test of Him. If we are not sure that He is able to help, when He does help, how will it be known for sure that He is the One who helped? We might attribute it to an idol or circumstances. The man’s desperation showed through and he cried out for help for his unbelief. He saw his problem, realizing that he was hindering the healing of his boy. Jesus asked the father a question, and the father should have only answered the question and not added the plea that got him into trouble. †

Protection of Divine Providence.” The Psalms show that the God of heaven loves to hear such trust in Him. “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, The people He has chosen as His own inheritance” (Psa. 33:12). Another psalmist declared, “Happy are the people who are in such a state; Happy are the people whose God is the LORD!” (Psa. 144:15). The psalmist drew this conclusion, because earlier in Psalm 144, he used a storm and flood to symbolize troubles, “Stretch out Your hand from above; Rescue me and deliver me out of great waters, From the hand of foreigners...” (Psa. 144:7). God answers such a prayer because the psalmist put his trust in the Lord.

### *Murmuring Is Evil*

Have we in modern times heard more public murmuring than during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina? Remember the quote from First Corinthians 10. Israel complained about their food, their water, their leaders, their living conditions, their homelessness, and other things, all of which brought on God’s displeasure. Remember Jesus Christ on the cross. Yet, no words of murmuring slipped from His mouth. Remembering Jesus crucified helps in every circumstance of life.

### *God Will Punish the Oppressors of the Poor*

Unfortunately, there were those who took advantage of the vulnerable immediately after the storm cleared. Those who harm or take advantage of the poor in such conditions, or gouge people with high prices, or commit crimes against the vulnerable will not escape God’s justice. Proverbs 22 warns us against such behavior, and then explains why. “Do not rob the poor because he is poor, Nor oppress the afflicted at the gate; For the LORD will plead their cause, And plunder the soul of those who plunder them” (Pro. 22:22, 23).

### *Always Practice Christianity*

Immediately after the storm, many people

throughout America and the world, opened their homes to the victims of Katrina, and gave millions of dollars, and offered other forms of help.

While the news focused on the bad things going on after Hurricane Katrina, many people let them Christianity shine.

Therefore, regardless of what happens in life, whether extreme good or evil, the Bible teaches us to have the Spirit of Christ. When He hung on the cross, suffering unbearable bodily pain, unthinkable emotional pain, and excruciating spiritual pain, He looked after His mother’s needs, He looked after His friend’s needs, He looked after His enemy’s needs, but He never complained, and only spoke of His needs at the last. If He can do that, can we not do the same? First Peter 2 shows that not only can we, but we are commanded to do so. “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving



### *People Survived on Stone Age Skills*

I read an article about the survivors of Katrina that described them without their modern conveniences surviving. I read this quotation, “Say goodbye to the Jetsons,’ Aaron Broussard, president of...Jeferson Parish, told residents on the all-night radio station and news lifeline. ‘We’re back to the Flintstones.’” We think that we need money in the bank and all the material possessions we can store, but we forget the words of our Teacher in Luke 12 when He warned against the materialistic mindset, that life is not what we possess in goods, but who possesses us. “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things

he possesses” (Luke 12:15). Rather we must be rich toward God (v. 21). We are able to survive on less than we think. In First Timothy 6, Paul stated the level of our contentment. “And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content” (1 Tim. 6:8). Yet, in Matthew 6, Jesus explains that even with food and clothing we have to be careful, because life is more than these essentials. “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?” (Mat. 6:25).

us an example, that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth’; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Pet. 2:21–23).

### *Have Patience*

Many people expected immediate help as though the roads were still opened and the lines of communication were clear.

Shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, First Lady Laura Bush spoke to the nation of what we must do as Americans. As she spoke about what the government was going to do, she urged patience on the part of the American

## *Ask For God*

Once Hurricane Katrina had passed through, people demanded, “Where is FEMA?” or where is the government or where is the federal government or where is the president? They should have been asking, “Where is the Lord?” even if it had been in a challenging way. At least then, they would still be thinking of Him. But they do not even know that they should be asking for God. Secularists are succeeding in removing God from people’s thinking. Isaiah 8 denounces the mentality that looks to other sources and does not even consider God. “And when they say to you, ‘Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,’ should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:19, 20). When I read Jeremiah 2 and think of Israel’s beginning, it sounds almost like America’s beginning. It also sounds a lot like America has forgotten God as Israel did.

“Thus says the LORD: ‘What injustice have your fathers found in Me, That they have gone far from Me, Have followed idols, And have become idolaters? Neither did they say, “Where is the LORD, Who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, Who led us through the wilderness, Through a land of deserts and pits, Through a land of drought and the shadow of death, Through a land that no one crossed And where no one dwelt?” I brought you into a bountiful country, To eat its fruit and its goodness. But when you entered, you defiled My land And made My heritage an abomination. The priests did not say, “Where is the LORD?” And those who handle the law did not know Me; The rulers also transgressed against Me; The prophets prophesied by Baal, And walked after things that do not profit.”’ (Jer. 2:5–8).

This reminds me of the movie “Cast Away” with Tom Hanks. In the movie, his character, stranded on a island for four years, never even considers God, not even to curse Him, as though He is not there to curse.

## *Stealing Food Is Understandable, But Wrong*

Shortly after the storm was gone, many people started looting. Some were coveting the

goods of the businesses. Some were hungry and just wanted to eat.

In Proverbs 6, one of the ways that Solomon explained the foolishness of adultery is to say this, “People do not despise a thief If he steals to satisfy himself when he is starving. Yet when he is found, he must restore sevenfold; He may have to give up all the substance of his house. Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; He who does so destroys his own soul” (Pro. 6:30–32). Stealing food or money to buy food when starving is understandable, but still punishable. If such a thief is punished, then what about the one who commits adultery, which no one understands under any circumstances?

## *People Want Scripture*

A nationally known newswoman interviewed Franklin Graham. She said that in the Super Dome people were asking for food, water, and the Bible. She could not understand how the Bible could help these people. Perhaps that is her belief or perhaps she asked for the benefit of the audience, which is something reporters must do.

Why did people want Bibles right along with food and water?

Did you know that the Pony Express riders did everything possible to conserve weight on their rides, yet, they were given Bibles? The people in the Super Dome wanted Bibles, and the Pony Express riders took Bibles because they knew that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

## *The Blame Game Is Profitless*

It seems that most people wanted to blame someone for the disaster of New Orleans. Genesis 3 shows that since the Garden of Eden we have done this. Adam blamed Eve and God. Eve blamed the serpent. Amazingly, the serpent blamed no one. Each should have accepted responsibility. Each should have asked God what he could or should do now. Blaming and complaining offers no hope, no solutions, and gets nothing done.

## *Do Not Shoot the Savior When He Arrives*

There was an illustration floating around the Internet a couple of years ago, which I wish now that I had kept. There was a man who was in need of rescue. When the helicopter showed up, he rejected the help, saying that he had asked God for help. Next came a boat to rescue him, but he rejected that help too, saying that he had asked God for help. Then the man died and he confronted God, wanting to know why God did

not rescue him. God said that He sent a helicopter and a boat. The rescue efforts in New Orleans were hampered when literally people shot at helicopters and boats. Centuries ago, God sent a Savior into the world, but what did they do to Him? Sometimes we do not like our means of rescue, but you better take it when it arrives, because wrath is on the way. Go to the Savior. Even as people fled the wrath of Katrina, so, flee the wrath to come by running to Jesus.

## *Repent*

It has been said that New Orleans was a very wicked place. Perhaps that is the case, but were they worse sinners and that is why this happened? Luke 13 gives the answer. “There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish’” (Luke 13:1–5). We do not know that God sent Katrina because of the sin of New Orleans, but what we do know is that we must repent lest we likewise perish.

## *Therefore, Be Prepared*

Life can change quickly. Sometimes it is for the worse. Sometimes it is for the better. Be prepared by being a follower of Jesus Christ. There is a time to stay, and a time to flee. Now is the time to flee the coming wrath of God by believing in Jesus and submitting to baptism. †



# Meditation Tips

Edited By Don Ruhl

## Great Is the Power of

What the human mind can conceive and believe, it can accomplish.

—David Sarnoff

Nurture your mind with great thoughts.

—Benjamin Disraeli

Peace rules the day, where reason rules the mind.

—Collins

Nothing can bring you peace but yourself; nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles.

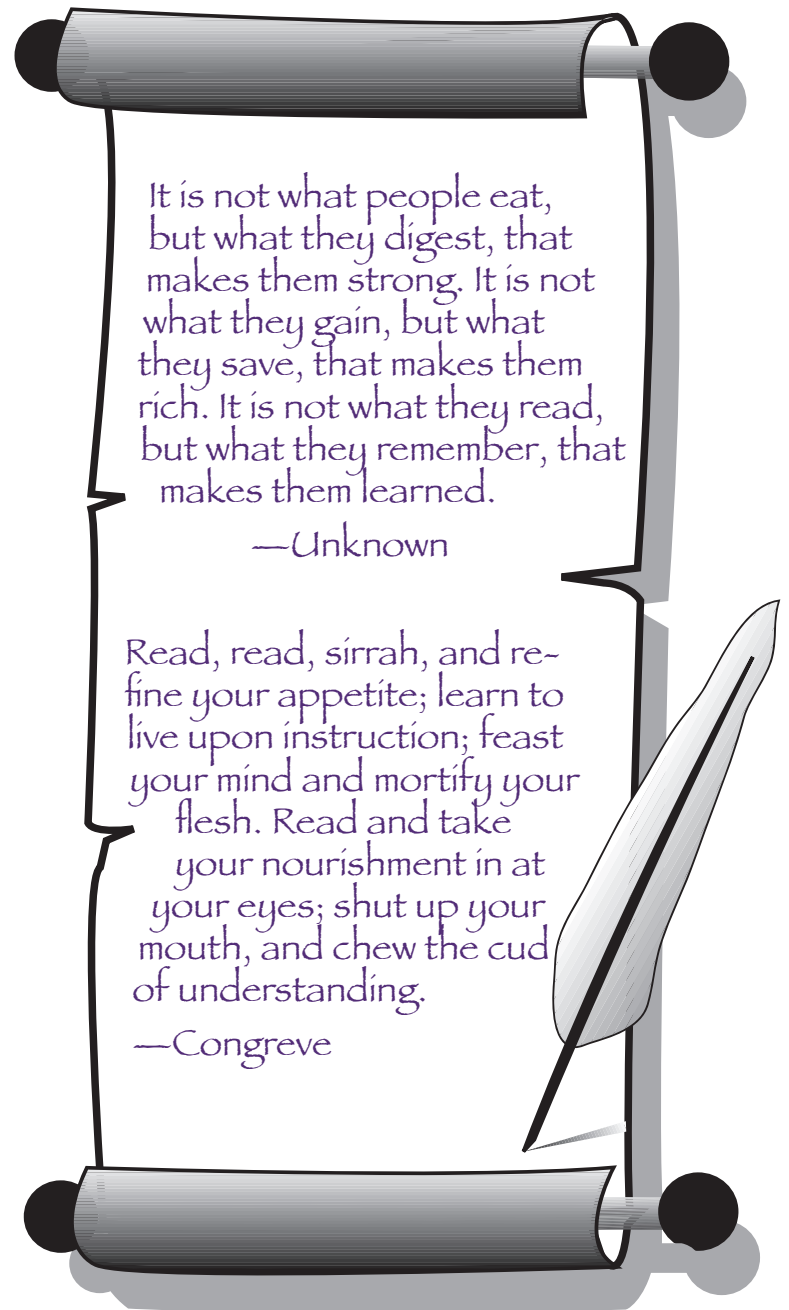
—Emerson

A man of meditation is happy, not for an hour or a day, but quite round the circle of all his years.

—Isaac Taylor

No soul can preserve the bloom and delicacy of its existence without lonely musings and silent prayer, and the greatness of this necessity is in proportion to the greatness of evil.

—Farrar



It is not what people eat, but what they digest, that makes them strong. It is not what they gain, but what they save, that makes them rich. It is not what they read, but what they remember, that makes them learned.

—Unknown

Read, read, sirrah, and refine your appetite; learn to live upon instruction; feast your mind and mortify your flesh. Read and take your nourishment in at your eyes; shut up your mouth, and chew the cud of understanding.

—Congreve

## the Reader and the Thinker

# Interesting Insights

## Psychologists and Bad Ideas

Before you accept the declarations of psychologists as Law and Gospel, read the following from *Scientific American*,

Although scientists agree that negative results are valuable, few want to report their own negative results. To compensate for publication bias in the field of psychology, Stephen Reysen started the *Journal of Articles in Support of the Null Hypothesis*. "I originally anticipated a high volume of submissions, but manuscripts have only trickled in," he says. Writing up results takes time that could be spent on more promising studies, Reysen explains, and some psychologists may be afraid to admit they had a "bad" idea. "A few psychologists actually believe, consciously or unconsciously," he adds, "every study they conduct will be statistically significant. Psychologists are not above the better-than-average effect" ("When Bad News Is No News," *Scientific American*, December 2004, p. 20).

## What Is the Best Source of Help?

Dr. Andrew Weil, well-known health guru, has interesting insights in the following, but is blind to the true cure,

Your thoughts, emotions and attitudes are key determinants of how you age. The most common forms of emotional imbalance—depression and anxiety—are so prevalent that they can properly be called epidemic. They affect people of all ages, including a large percentage of the elderly. Doctors manage them with antidepressants and anti-anxiety agents—the key word here being "manage." These drugs suppress depression and anxiety; they do not cure them or get to their roots.

Conventional psychotherapy can make people aware of the thought patterns that give rise to emotional problems, but it rarely helps people change them. Changing habits of thought requires conscious effort and practice and often outside help. The best sources of help I have found are innovative forms of psychotherapy and Buddhist psychology ("Aging Naturally," *Time*, October 17, 2005, p. 70).

Consider the words of Peter when he answered the Lord's question of whether he and his fellow-disciples wanted to leave Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!" (John 6:68). †

**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)

