

DON'T MAKE A PLAN?

NUMBER 167

DECEMBER 2021

The following are direct quotes from a new book *At The Blue Hole* by Jack R. Reese. To post sentences from a 242 page book is clearly to take things out of context, but we tried to be fair. It is a quality book with a lot of good historical information about the Restoration Movement, and one that everyone should read. It is likely to have a major influence on Churches of Christ in the coming years, good or bad depending on your point of view.

P. 21 "Our church is dying, hallelujah!"

Continued on page 2

WHY DECIDE TO FOLLOW JESUS?

The power of God's love is eternally directed to mankind and was made perfect in the birth, life, death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ and the gift of The Holy Spirit to guide all believers in the footsteps of Jesus – to live in the presence of God forever.

Continued on page 4

WE ARE OVERCOMERS

To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." (Rev. 2:7b)

Seven times, once in each of the letters to the churches Jesus assures heavenly access to the

overcomers. Not to the righteous or perfect Christians, but to the overcomers. "He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death." (Rev. 2:11)

Continued on page 4

CONTRIBUTION EPIPHANY



The inability to pass contribution plates in our Covid environment has been a little strange and has led to putting contribution boxes at the door of some congregations. This appears to be closer to what Jesus saw when the widow put her mite in the contribution. This means some of us are even closer to the first century church methods while others of us go digital.

Memorial in Houston has taken advantage of the situation. They are putting boxes at the front of the congregation and invites the small children to participate by dropping coins in the box. The children are happy to do it, as well as at least one grandfather. That has to be a great example of mentoring. If you have new ideas like this, let us know.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Don't Make a Plan	1
Why Decide to Follow Jesus - Grubbs	1
We are Overcomers - Brown	1
Contribution Epiphany	1
Impossible for Evolution	6
Defined by the Positive	10

DON'T MAKE A PLAN?, P. 2

P. 23 “But there’s another kind of death, a death on God’s terms. This sort of death grows out of what seem like God’s weakness – part of the surprising, hidden, upside-down, the-first-shall-be-last, the-humble-shall-be-exalted nature of God. Death occurs when a church relinquishes control rather than seizing it, as an act of congregational discipleship, the whole church choosing to take up a cross rather than seeking its own way.”

P. 17 “Churches have been given a wakeup call. It may already be too late. But this is no time to throw up our hands in despair **or, worse yet, try to construct an elaborate plan to turn things around.** Truth be told, the numerical decline of Churches of Christ in America may be the best thing that could happen. As the dire state of these churches begins to sink in, it will become increasingly apparent that we can’t fix ourselves. But here is the good news. God can.”

P. 213 “Scripture simply does not teach a God-said-it-believe-it-that-settles-it-theology.”

P. 222 “God is raining down up us a roaring, restoring, extravagant, glorious, lifegiving, peace-pursuing, future-changing, blood-drenched, Spirit-soaked cloudburst of grace.”

The 242 pages cover a lot of history of the Restoration movement with a lot of focus on the Holy Spirit and whether we should be a restoration movement or a unity movement. There can be many discussions regarding this book, but what this article will focus on is the “**worse yet, try to construct an elaborate plan to turn things around**’.

What he seems to be suggesting is that if you are leading a typical Church of Christ with 200

members and you are dying, you should not make a plan to stop it from dying. God will take care of it if you will just believe in the Holy Spirit. God will rain down up us a roaring, restoring, extravagant, glorious, lifegiving, peace-pursuing, future-changing, blood-drenched, Spirit-soaked cloudburst of grace.

Somehow if you stop planning and believe in the active participation of the Holy Spirit, you will have a cloudburst of grace and your church will begin to do its part of the Great Commission.

Oddly enough on page 78 he says “Today, the memory is dim of a time these churches ever denied the present work of the Holy Spirit.” He would seem to disprove his own point. If most members believe in the active participation of the Holy Spirit and tend not to be judgmental of others (as also seems to be true today), wouldn’t we be seeing a cloudburst of grace any day now instead of dying congregations?

As you are probably aware, in large part we understand that God has a plan for us and it is in the Bible and we believe in NT:OA or God-said-it-believe-it-that-settles-it-theology. We also believe that all religious teachings are in the New Testament and some specific organizational teachings and restrictions are given in the New Testament. God did not provide complete organizational instructions to work 2000 years ago, in the Middle Ages, and today. A lot of organizational procedures and methods required today simply would not have made sense to a reader 2000 years ago.

Continued on page 3

DON'T MAKE A PLAN?, P. 3

Further, organizational requirements for a 20-person congregation are different and simplistic in comparison to a 200 or 500 member congregation. The religious aspects will be the same, but not the organizational requirements.

We would suggest that if you want your larger congregation to do its part of the Great Commission, you specifically need an "elaborate" plan for it happen.

When you suggest that you cannot do it but that God can do it. Have you considered that you are part of God's plan to do it. That is a testable suggestion. (1) Do nothing, believe in the Holy Spirit, and pray to God for your congregation to grow and reach your community and see what happens. That is what a lot of dying congregations are doing right now so it is being tested daily. Then (2) believe in the Holy Spirit, pray to God to bless your leadership, and use your God given talents to engage your congregation in making a plan and working together to reach your community--and see what happens. This is much more likely to work, and God will have done it through one of his resources – you.

One resource you can have to help with your God given talents is to use an objective advisor and/or consultants to give you a fresh point of view as was discussed in the publication last month. There are questionnaires, reports, and papers on the occg.institute website designed to help congregations from a free outside point of view.

If you are a Shepherd, remember you are a Shepherd because you are talented at shepherding, not necessarily in being a great organizational manager. Whether you are a business

manager, blue collar worker, a homemaker or any other role, you recognize that there are others whom you can help from time to time. For the homemaker it may be a dishwasher repairman who may not be nearly as smart as the homemaker, the repairman just has the right experience to fix a problem.

Again, it is our understand that to avoid planning in anticipation that God is going to do it for you is exactly the wrong thing to do. If you do not have a plan, organization, procedures, and methods commensurate with the size of your congregation, you are likely to fail at your part of the Great Commission.

Benton F. Baugh

BENEFITS OF A GOOD VOCABULARY!

I recently called an old Engineering buddy of mine and asked what he was working on these days.

He replied that he was working on "Aqua-thermal treatment of ceramics, aluminum and steel under a constrained environment."

I was impressed until, upon further inquiry, I learned that he was washing dishes with hot water under his wife's supervision.

WHY DECIDE TO FOLLOW JESUS? P.2

WE ARE OVERCOMERS P.2

Jesus invites us to look for ourselves, to test His Spirit, use the keys of belief, trust and grace to enter the Kingdom – your pass to overcome death and enjoy the goodness of the new world planned for us. Beginning today anyone can experience the joy of reconciling to God, serving Him and sharing the wonderful blessings he has reserved for His children.

Do not hesitate, do not doubt, do not waste another moment! Be born into His Spirit and overcome the world with Him at your side.

Ask yourself “who in my life has been my model – my guide – my inspiration for lifestyle and helped to pursue my expectations and achieve my dreams? What is the status of your dreams today? Who will you turn to for help as you look forward to the next chapters of your life?

This writer, in reflection, remembers many “mentors” – each flawed in their own ways – but several who looked to God as they contended with daily challenges, temptations, pain of mistakes and sorrows so common to us all. God seems so distant at times, but only because He is Holy and cannot partner with us when we choose temptation to sin rather than honor Him. However; He never allows sin to compromise His love. He offers the perfect alternative- He knows us and is so determined to snatch us back that Jesus paid the price on a cross to forgive us **in advance** and is patiently waiting for us to acknowledge, repent and follow Him as His disciple -our teacher, mentor, friend, brother, and redeemer so that we may receive the inheritance reserved from the beginning.

In the “Light” of personal discovery and humility bestowed by mercy and grace

as the result of my choice to commit my life to Jesus, I pray this same blessing upon others with whom I am allowed to share my witness to the power of God.

Larry S. Grubbs, Harrison, Ohio

WE ARE OVERCOMERS

What do we have to overcome? There are some patient, hard-working saints who simply tolerate evil. Others have lost their enthusiasm; they don't love like they used to. There will be afflictions, poverty, testing and trials. It will take perseverance, enduring hardships, faithful service and repentance to overcome all that the world throws at us.

Have you fallen on your face, missed the mark, and disappointed yourself and others? Remember that though Jesus we have the power to rise above, to triumph over all that the world throws our way.

Overcoming is a daily process. Things will go wrong, and we will fail at times; but get up, dust yourself off and get busy about overcoming all that hinders. You are not alone, every living soul has something to overcome. How can we build resilience and strength?

Keep your mind alert and strengthen your prayer muscles day by day. Ask for wisdom, insight and understanding as you study. Stand your ground, build your faith and pray for courage as you encourage others. Focus on eternal things. Exercise godliness daily to build up your strength.

“I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God...” (Rev. 3:11, 12)

Elizabeth Brown

**IT IS SAID BY ELITIST THAT RELIGION IS THE OPIATE OF THE MASSES.
IT IS MORE LIKELY THAT EVOLUTION IS THE ELIXIR OF THE ELITIST!**

DEAR BUBBA

Dear Bubba,

This is your Mama. I'm writing this letter slow because I know you can't read fast. We don't live where we did when you left home. Your dad read in the newspaper that most accidents happen within 20 miles from your home, so we moved. I won't be able to send you the address because the last family that lived here took the house numbers when they moved so that they wouldn't have to change their address. This place is really nice. It even has a washing machine. I'm not sure it works so well though: last week I put a load in and pulled the chain and haven't seen them since. The weather isn't bad here. It only rained twice last week; the first time for three days and the second time for four days.

About that coat you wanted me to send you, your Uncle Stanley said it would be too heavy to send in the mail with the buttons on, so we cut them off and put them in the pockets. John locked his keys in the car yesterday. We were really worried because it took him two hours to get me and your father out. Your sister had a baby this morning; but I haven't found out what it is yet so I don't know if you're an aunt or uncle. The baby looks just like your brother....

Uncle Ted fell in a whiskey vat last week. Some men tried to pull him out, but he fought them off playfully and drowned. We had him cremated and he burned for three days. Three of your friends went off a bridge in a pick-up truck. Ralph was driving. He rolled down the window and swam to safety. Your other two friends were in back. They drowned because they couldn't get the tailgate down. There isn't much more news at this time. Nothing much has happened.

Love,
Mama

P.S. I was going to send you some money but the envelope was already sealed.



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IMPOSSIBLE FOR EVOLUTION #123 - CLOACAL RESPIRATION

Turtles look more like tanks than fish, so it would not be obvious how one would decide to go off into the water and swim. Although they have a slow respiration, they have a large lung capacity to assist in flotation. That in itself would be hard to imagine coming together by evolution. Over millions of years the shell becomes a little thicker shell and the turtle gets little more lung capacity to support the shell. Of course an atheist would say that, what else can an atheist say. As much as an intelligent design as floating turtles are, that is not the topic of this article.

Air breathing turtles can actually survive long times underwater, and even survive under ice all winter. That makes a very interesting trick. If you are inventive, figure out how to do that before you continue reading this article.

The answer is cloacal respiration. This is breathing water in and out of their butts into a cloacal bursa. The Cloacal bursae are pouches with internal linings made of long fimbriae or fibers which extract oxygen from the water. Fish do this with their gills.

Frogs and salamanders are also "butt breathers." Not all turtles are.

Cloacal respiration normally only supplements the normal air breathing of turtles so they will need to surface for air breathing occasionally.

As turtles are cold blooded (in other words do not need to provide oxygen to maintain a high temperature like humans), the need for breathing and oxygen is reduced. Further, in the winter they can enter a state of brumation which is similar to hibernation. A cold-blooded species in brumation has an extremely low oxygen need, so cloacal respiration is completely sufficient to stay underwater or under ice for the winter.

If a turtle gets trapped under ice it doesn't get a million years to develop a secondary respiration system to keep it alive. It has it immediately or it dies.



The cloacal organ system illustrates the invention and DNA programming of an intelligent designer, not a long series of accidental mutations. Clearly that intelligent designer is Jehovah.

Benton F. Baugh

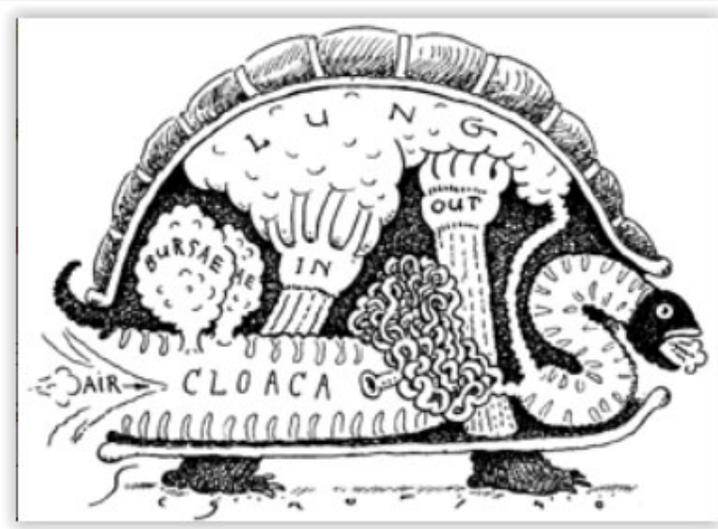


Photo and information collected from Wikipedia

PERSONAL EVANGELISM TRI-FOLDS

Personalized personal evangelism tri-folds are a tool which has proven to be an effective way to begin conversations similarly to the Tent Cards discussed last month.

These cards not only tell the basics about Churches of Christ, but also can give location details and service times about your specific congregation. They can be edited to give whatever information you think to be beneficial for you're area and circumstance.

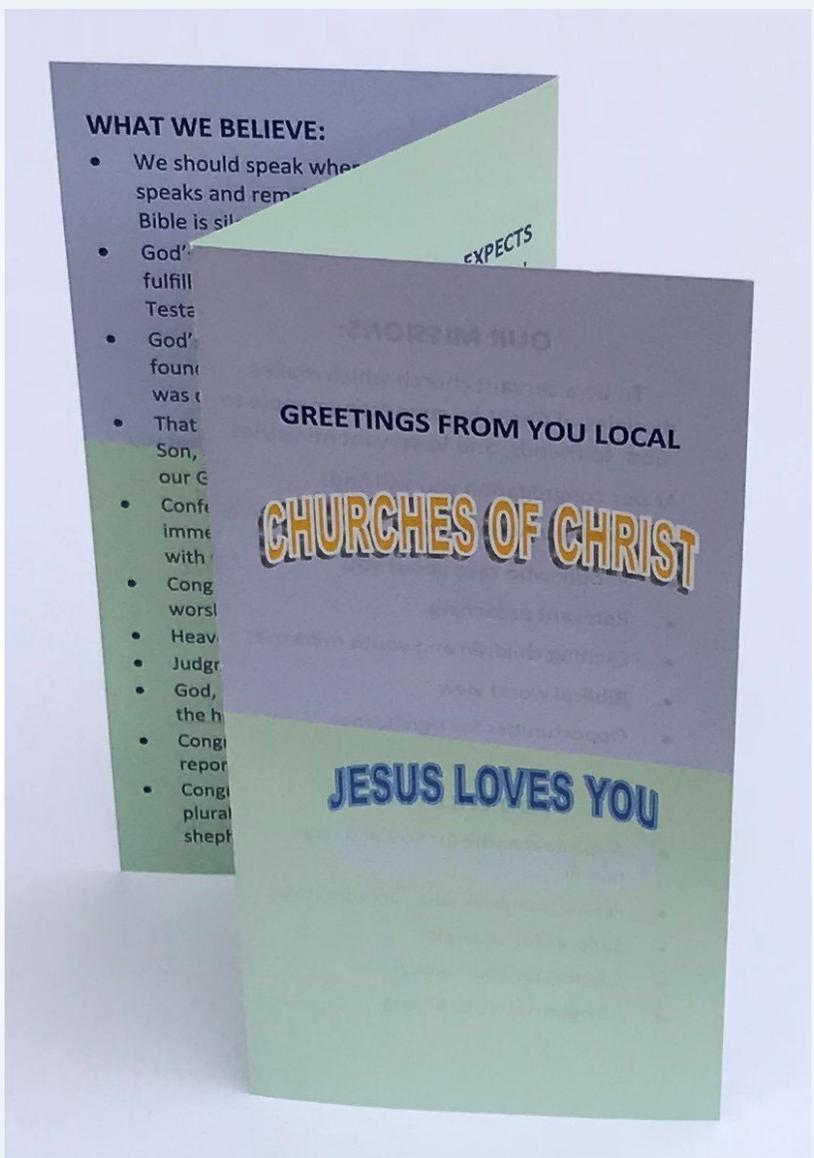
Cards similar to this can be obtained from a number of printers, with Uprint.com being the one we have used. In the example shown we used a 5.5" x 8.5" Z-Fold printed on the outside and inside in full color. It is found under brochures.

The following will give the base costs for the tri-folds, with shipping being extra.

100	\$37.19	\$0.38 ea.
250	\$106.31	\$0.43 ea.
1000	\$238.49	\$0.24 ea.
10000	\$1,074.46	\$0.11 ea.

You can go online and design any style tri-fold or other brochure you prefer. As an alternative, if you like the wording and style on the example shown, we will have them printed for you.

The following page shows the wording which was used for Memorial in Houston. If you want us to coordinate them for you, print the next page, mark it up as you like, and email it to bbaugh@occg.institute. Our part of the process will be a free service. You will pay only for Uprint's printing costs.



If you deal with them directly, they will send a free sample of your printing. As we have dealt with them before, they will not send us a free sample for you. We will send you a free sample which looks like the following page before anything is printed.

Hopefully this will be a method which will be of assistance to some congregations. If you have another idea we can publish in a future issue,

PERSONAL EVANGELISM TRI-FOLDS

WHAT WE BELIEVE:

- We should speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent
- God's word in the Old Testament was fulfilled; and we now live by New Testament teachings
- God's complete plan for us today is found in the New Testament, which was completed in the first century
- That Jehovah the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit together are our God
- Confession of sins and baptism by immersion brings us into relationship with God as His adopted children
- Congregational singing is part of the worship of God
- Heaven and hell are real
- Judgment day will come for everyone
- God, the Intelligent Designer, created the heavens and the earth
- Congregations are autonomous, reporting only to Jesus
- Congregations are overseen by a plurality of scripturally qualified shepherds

WHAT WE DO NOT BELIEVE:

- Salvation by faith only
- The inability to fall from grace
- Substitution for the scriptural baptism by immersion (sprinkling, pouring, infant baptism)
- Purification in purgatory
- Divorce and remarriage of Christians other than for adultery
- Approval of extra-marital or homosexual conduct
- Judgment on the eternal destiny of others
- Updating the New Testament to match contemporary teachings

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- Opportunities for significance

YOU WILL FIND:

- A spiritual home for you and your family
- Fellow members who care about you
- Support for yourself
- Support for your family
- An opportunity to belong

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We honor Christ's sacrifice by:

- Attending weekly worship services regularly.
- Learning His word and making friends in Bible classes
- Spending time daily with God, reading His word and praying
- Finding ministries where we can serve Him by serving our fellow man
- Sharing our faith.
- Financially supporting the work of the church.
- Growing in faith and love for God and each other

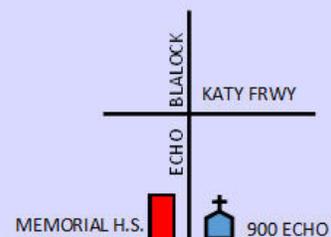
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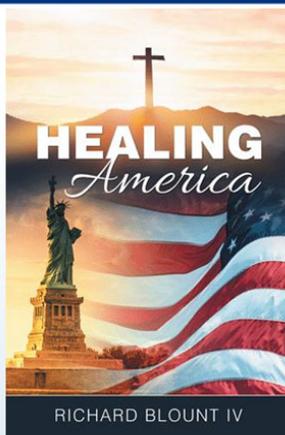
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DEFINED BY THE POS- ITIVE

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- 22 - My mechanic told me, "I couldn't repair your brakes, so I made your horn louder."
- 23 - Why do psychics have to ask you for your name?
- 24 - If at first you don't succeed, destroy all evidence that you tried.

Steven Wright

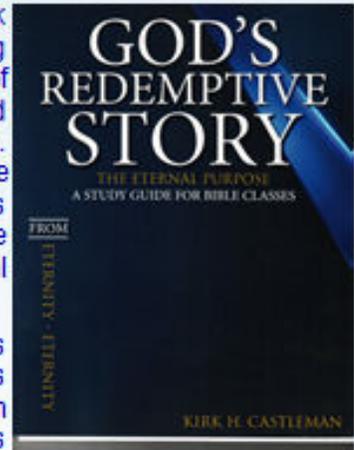
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Most Bible class study books on this subject begin with Genesis 3. This study however, lays

the foundation by beginning with a basic study-outline of Biblical History, which is sorely lacking among many Christians today. Then after laying this foundation, it seeks to present a "Synthesis of Scripture" by asserting that the theme of all the Bible is Jesus, His Death, Burial, and Resurrection! The Eternal Purpose of God for Redemption is then presented with an in-depth study of Ephesians 1, and other New Testament passages which describe God's redemptive plan.

It is not until the fourth lesson that God's Eternal Purpose in Genesis 3 is presented. Then other Promises, Pictures, Prophecy, and Prep-

"AN EXCITING STUDY OF GOD'S POWER AND REVELATION IN HUMAN HISTORY"

aration, are fully described. This study includes a description of the Davidic Covenant, as well as a helpful approach to Old Testament Prophecy.

This guide is helpful for all Christians, but especially new Christians who need an understanding of God's eternal desire for all the world!

This book can be bought on Amazon for \$10.



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See <https://occg.institute/services/refocus/> for more specific information.

For more information,
contact:
info@occg.institute



Pride must happen in the Summer as pride cometh before the Fall.

Barry & Ace

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

HOUSTON PREACHERS AND LEADERS LUNCHEON Every **second Tuesday** except **December**, For information contact David Wardrup - cell: (281)635-3135; davidwardrup@gmail.com or Cruz Hernandez - cell: (713)560-9080; cruzalbertohdz2017@gmail.com. In January it will be at Spring Creek Church of Christ, 14847 Brown Road, Tomball, TX 77377, 281-351-1234.

To post your event: info@occg.institute

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