

# THE PRODIGAL SON?

NUMBER 176

OCTOBER 2022

Luke 15:11-32 relates the parable we normally refer to as the “Prodigal Son.” Most everyone is aware of it, so the parable will not be repeated here. Because the title Prodigal Son implies that the parable is about the younger son who asks for his inheritance and leaves home. Also of the 22 verses the first 14 of tell the story of this son leaving only the last 8 verses to tell about the older son, and so it might seem the parable is about the prodigal son.



To many, this may be our least favorite parable; it doesn’t seem fair that the son who wasted his portion of his father’s wealth in reckless living and with prostitutes would have a party thrown for his return, when the older “obedient” son did not receive a party. The parable lacks a feeling of fairness. Parables are an earthly story to explain a heavenly concept, and so do not always fit our limited earthly rationale.

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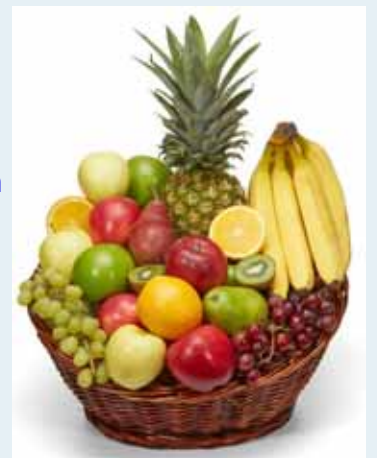
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## FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT - FAITHFULNESS

When referring to the Fruit of Faithfulness, it is important to break down and focus on the word “faith”. Faith is complete belief and confidence in God and all His promises. It is critically important for us to allow God and the teachings of Jesus to shape everything that we do.

The fruit of faithfulness speaks not only of faithfulness to God, but of being faithful to the people around us as well. When we are reliable, others can count on us. Sometimes when we think about faithfulness we think in terms of marriage, but God’s call to faithfulness applies in any type of relationship.

By putting your faith in God and letting the Holy Spirit guide you, you will prove your faithfulness to Him in everything that you do. Total faithfulness is more than just reliability. It is a total commitment to God that goes far beyond human reasoning. When others look at you, where do they see your level of faith? Do you shine with a “different” light? It is a good question to really work on.



Continued on page 3

## THE PRODIGAL SON?, P. 2

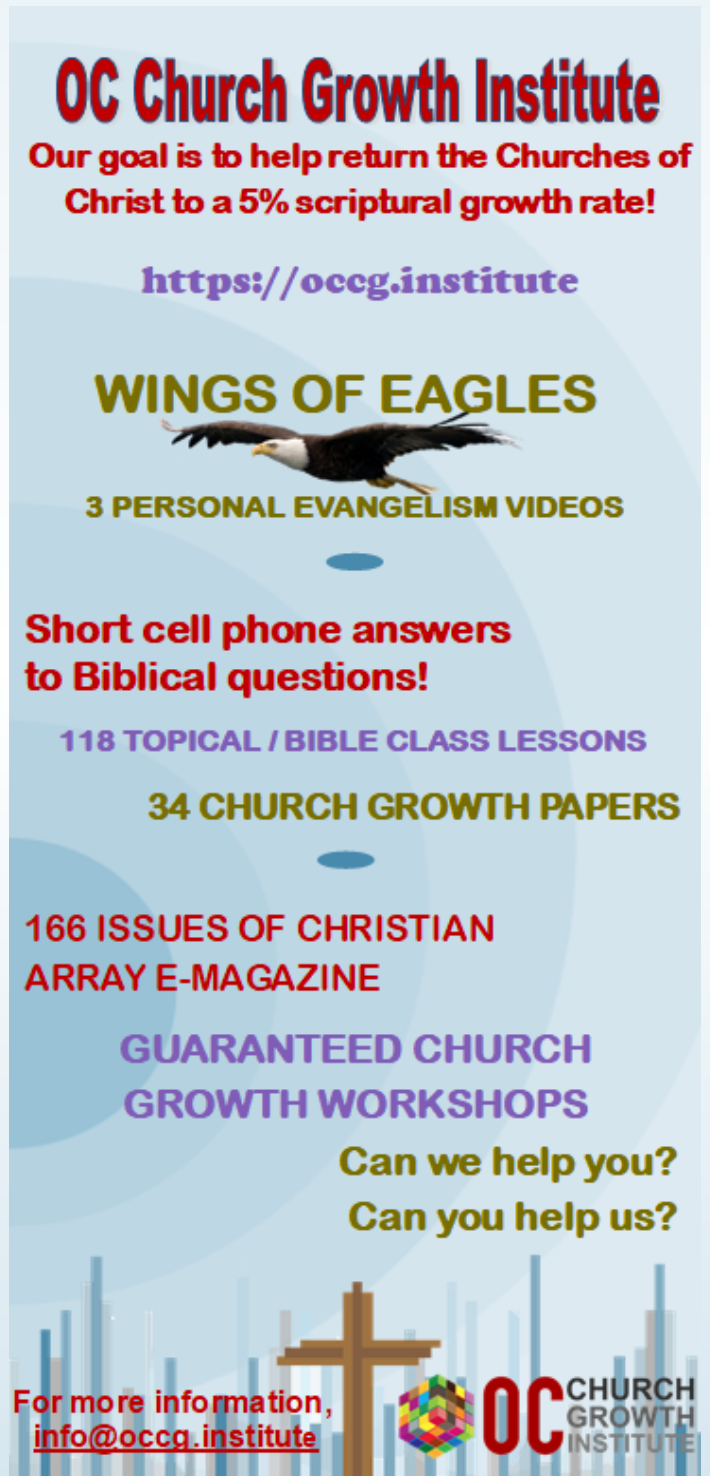
Continue from page 1

In a recent sermon by Wayne Roberts, he contends that the parable of the prodigal son was not about the prodigal son at all; it was actually about the older son. Whoever first (non-inspired writer) named this parable should have called it something else; possibly the Parable of the Older Son. The prodigal, wandering son merely sets the stage for the older son.

What Jesus is teaching is that the Jewish Nation is the older son, and the Gentiles are represented by the prodigal son. The Father represents God, who is about to welcome the Gentiles into full fellowship after centuries living in foolishness and wickedness. This seemingly unfair treatment was about to be as much as a shock to the Jewish people as killing the fatted calf for the prodigal son was to the older son.

Jesus reinforces this in the parable of the laborers in Matthew 20, where the landowner hired laborers early in the morning, on the third hour, on the sixth hour, on the ninth hour, and on the eleventh hour; and all were paid the exact same wage. Basically, the landowner (God) says it is his money to do with as he pleases.

We have a similar situation today when someone can be a faithful Christian all their lives but will receive the same reward as someone who becomes a Christian later in life after decades of sinful living. Jesus, in this parable, is instructing us to make sure we do not act like the older son, but instead have a Christian attitude of joy for those who find Him at any stage of life, or who return after they have fallen away.



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## FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: FAITHFULNESS

Continued from page 1

Most churches regularly sing songs of God's faithfulness. But what is faithfulness as a "fruit of the Spirit"? The word faithfulness means trusting in something. When we look at faithfulness as a fruit of the Spirit, we apply that to trust and belief in God. If we are faithful to Him, we share His love with others, and will act in accordance with His principles. Reading God's Word is important to faithfulness to Him. Unless we know His precepts, we can't be faithful to them.

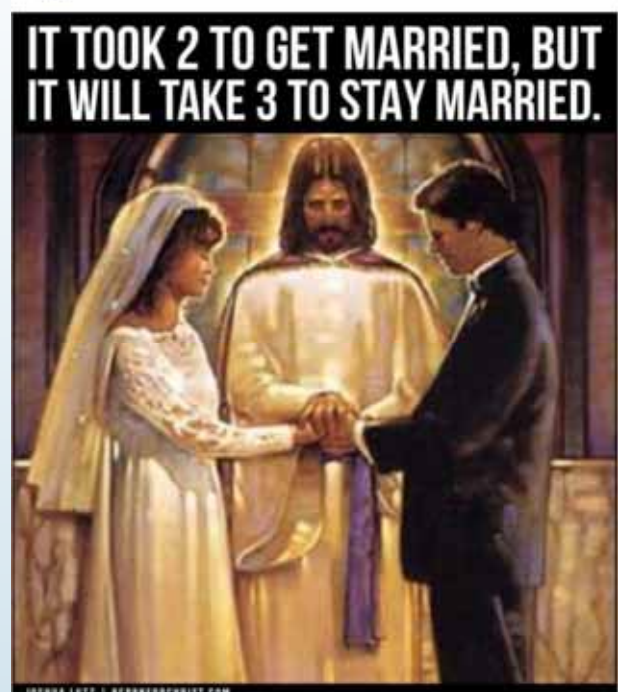
Unless we are filled with and practice this fruit of the Spirit, faithfulness, we may wander away from following God's laws. Faithfulness is knowing and obeying God, keeping on keeping on. Faithfulness means continuing to show through our lives the other fruits of the Spirit. Trusting in all the attributes of God allows us to live out our faithfulness to Him for others to see.

Faithfulness is demonstrated through loyalty to friends, duties performed, promises kept, commitments fulfilled, contracts completed, vows observed and being true to one's word, living our lives as servants to God and to our neighbors: the first and second, and greatest, commandments.

Galatians 6:7-9 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

### DEEDS OF THE FLESH: ADVENTURE

The opposite of faithfulness is unfaithfulness. Unfaithfulness is what Satan wants to tempt you to do, but he doesn't say it that way. He would lead you to believe that faithfulness is a slow, boring lifestyle which dampens the adventure of life. Imagine being devoted to one mate for the rest of your life, especially when that woman or man may not be all that you thought they were when you married them. Perhaps they are sexually inhibited, prone to drink, want to spend nights out with others, or can't control their spending. Isn't it reasonable to spend a little time with someone else of the opposite sex who understands you better? Isn't the God of the Bible overcontrolling with 2000 year old rules which don't fit the social mores of today? Wouldn't a personal god we can control fit our lives better today? Don't we deserve a little more adventure in our lives? Satan's temptations, couched in such alluring terms, but are meant to draw you away from your faithfulness to God.



## WISDOM'S STASH

Quilters have a little motto, "The one who dies with the most fabric wins." It's all about collecting the perfect stash so they can put together a quilt design when inspiration strikes. Quilters usually have more fabric than they can ever use.

We are like that at times with our Bible study habits. The more knowledge we collect the better. Random bits of Bible knowledge from here and there, seems like the goal. Then we can have a vast stash of knowledge for anything that life throws at us.

But, much like a quilters stash, we have to do something with our knowledge to make it practical and useful. Learning is far more complex than simply acquiring knowledge. We need to acquire skills of interpretation and experience in applying knowledge. We can never have too much knowledge of God's Word. Will you develop a passion for acquiring more?

"My child, listen to what I say, and treasure my commands. Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding. Cry out for insight, and ask for understanding. Search for them as you would for silver, seek them like hidden treasures. Then you will understand what it means to fear the Lord, and you will gain knowledge of God." (Proverbs 2:1-5 NLT)

Knowledge of God and his Word are meant to equip us with wisdom, insight and understanding so that we can avoid the treacherous and live in integrity. Our

lives will unfold into beautiful patterns and colors as we comfort, encourage, built up and strengthen each other.

By all means be a collector of Bible knowledge. Will you shine the light of God's love on every passage and treasure all he is adding to your stash? Consider all the beautiful possibilities.

Elizabeth Brown



## IMPOSSIBLE FOR EVOLUTION #132 - CAPILLARY SPHINCTERS

My blood pressure medicine was recently changed and my feet became so swollen that I couldn't get any of my shoes on. Swelling feet clearly means that liquid is accumulating in your feet, but what is there about a medicine which would cause liquid to accumulate in your feet?

In our issue 110 we discussed that flow through your capillaries is very restricted due to their small size. The pressure near the supplying artery is high and causes the plasma to flow out into the muscle tissue. The pressure near the receiving vein is low. This causes the blood plasma to flow out into the muscle tissue to feed the muscle and then flow back into the capillary near the end. When the blood plasma is in the muscles it is called interstitial fluid.

Swelling feet would mean that an excess amount of plasma was flowing out of the capillaries (too much pressure in the capillaries near the artery) or too little plasma was flowing back into the capillaries (too much pressure in the capillaries near the vein). What mechanism is there which would cause either of these? This was not a long term situation to develop, the new blood pressure medicine did it quickly. See graphic to the right.

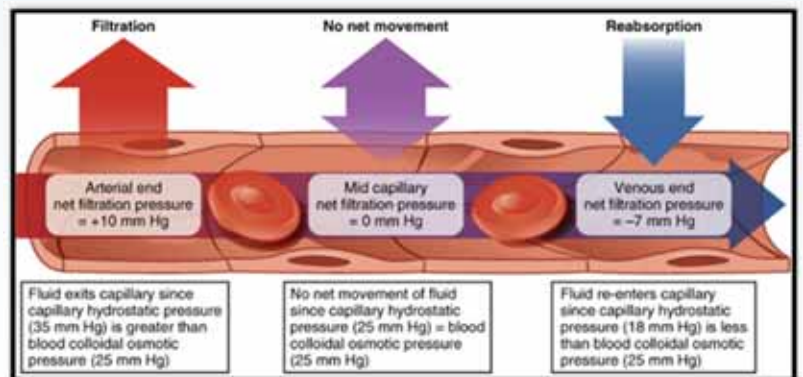
Last month we discussed sphincters which are muscles around an opening which contract to control flow. **We made an incidental remark that your millions of capillaries have a tiny sphincter at the beginning of each of them to control the pressure in them.**

The existence of the tiny sphincters is not surprising, but what is interesting is the ability to control pressure. To control pressure, you need to measure it in some way. After you measure it, you must send a signal to the sphincter to adjust to cause the pressure in the capillary to be regulated in the right pressure range. Then you must monitor and adjust it continuously.

How in the world would you accidentally come up with a means for measuring the pressure in capillaries, much less control tiny sphincters to regulate it. This has to be a mas-

sive and massively complex system for millions of capillaries. Surely this is a job for a really intelligent designer.

Now back to my feet swelling. If the new blood pressure medicine dampened the signals to the sphincters causing them to relax too much, they



would allow too much blood pressure in the capillaries or the capillary bed as shown in the illustration below. This could cause more plasma to flow into the surrounding tissue than would flow back into the capillaries near the vein end. Too much interstitial fluid (plasma) in the muscle tissue equals swelling.

That this works this way is a personal conclusion. If anyone has a better explanation, let us know and we will print it.

Benton F. Baugh

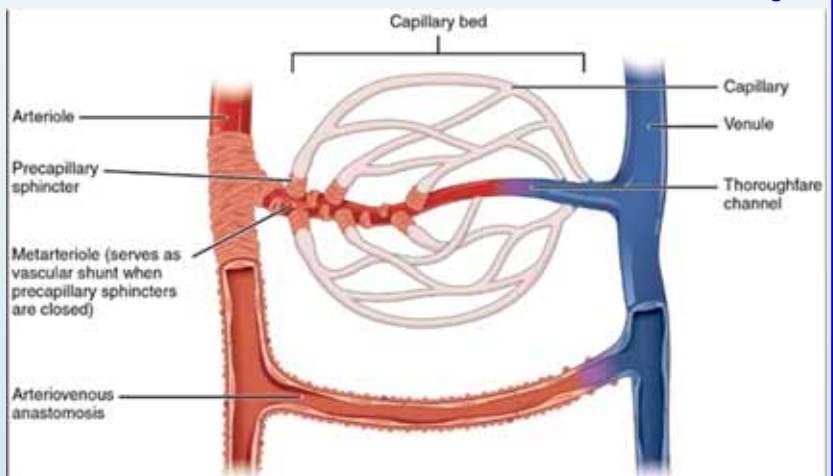


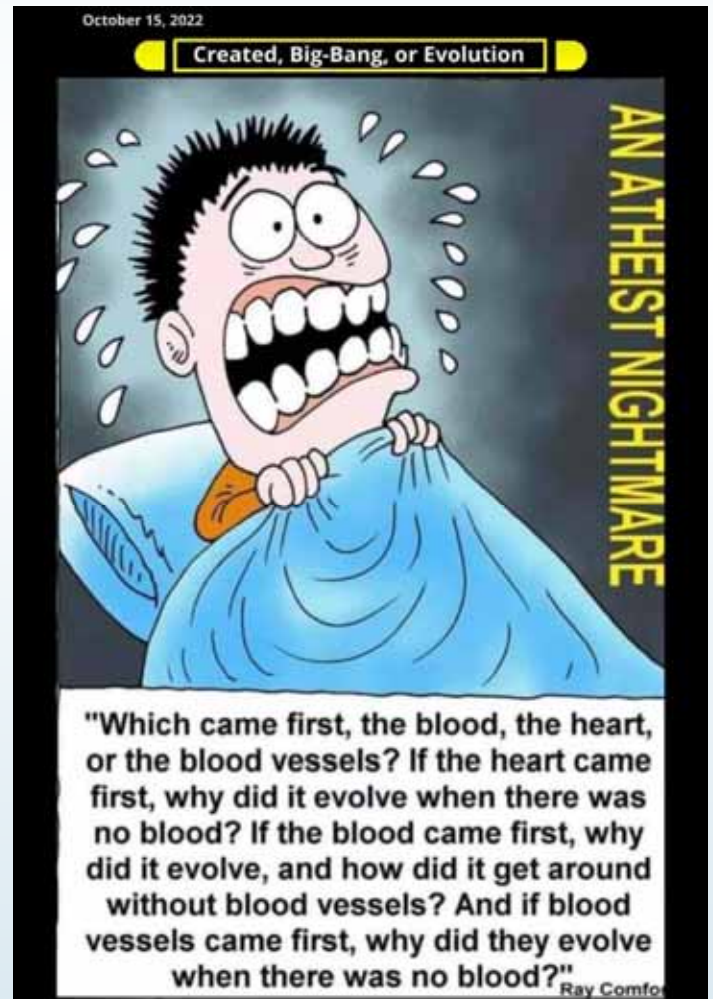
Illustration from Anatomy & Physiology, Connexions Web site. <http://cnx.org/content/col11496/1.6/>, Jun 19, 2013.

## Meant To Be Transformed

It does not matter where I have been,  
 But where I am going  
 Not what I have done,  
 But what I am doing  
 Not what I have said,  
 But what I am saying.  
 Not what I have seen,  
 But what I am seeing  
 Not when I have been sad,  
 But when I have been happy  
 Not what I have thought,  
 But what I am thinking  
 Not that I have been alone,  
 But that now I have a constant companion,  
 Counselor, Teacher, Guide,  
 Coach and Motivator  
 Who inspires  
 Love for the unlovable  
 Joy above gloom  
 Peaceful amid strife  
 Patience in suffering  
 Kindness to the unkind  
 Goodness where there is evil  
 Faithfulness when others are hopeless  
 Gentleness when others are rash,  
 and self-control  
 when there is temptation.  
 I have a Friend  
 Who always lifts my spirit,  
 Saying Live, Live, Live!  
 Live forever together  
 From now to eternity  
 In fraternity with The Trinity!  
 Share in the power  
 Of love, knowledge, wisdom  
 More than all the sages of the ages!  
 Rejoice together in the victory won  
 By The Son of the Father  
**LORD GOD**  
 This is why I declare  
 That nothing matters but that I care,  
 This is my prayer.  
 Let everyone pray together  
 That we may see what no eye has seen,  
 Hear what no ear has heard,

Conceive that which no mind has conceived,  
 What God had prepared for those who love  
 Him.  
 “but [which] God has revealed by His Spirit”  
 1 Corinthians 2.

Larry S. Grubbs, Harrison, Ohio



## MANAGEMENT BY COMMITTEE

In some small businesses, decisions are often made by top-tier management. In really small companies, everyone may be encouraged to offer their opinion. It's called decision by committee, in which decisions are made based on input from a group of people – people who tend not to agree. Over the years, decision by committee has been considered a time-waster. Sure, every committee member has the right to an opinion, but not all opinions are of equal veracity and validity; in fact, many uninformed opinions are dead wrong.

So what are the negatives and positives of making decisions by committee? It's not ALL bad when used judiciously.

### **The Positives of Business Decisions by Committee**

Not all committee decisions are wrong-headed. There are some excellent reasons to encourage decision by committee.

Avoiding extremes is often a benefit of decision by committee. As the stakeholders discuss options, the voices of reason discard the most extreme positions. Too risky. Too sketchy. Too many variables. Too much or too little something.

Decision by committee delivers numerous opinions from many different points of view. A committee can put on the brakes if it looks like a critical decision is going to take the company over the cliff. Moderate voices become louder and more influential as the risks of change are discussed and analyzed.

Decision by committee encourages input. Sure, you may own the company, or manage it. You're the boss, the decision-maker. However, you may not be the best one to make a specific decision, especially one that involves something highly technical. It's usually best to get feedback from people in your company who are most familiar with the issue and/or will be most affected by it.

Example? "Should we invest \$50,000 in proprietary software designed for our company?" The employees who'll feel the impact of the new software are likely to be the most vocal. Get all the input you need and make the decision based on your team's expertise. Chances are, you'll take a moderate course forward and avoid unforeseen mistakes before they're even made.

The key is to control participation, to set the rules for discussion, to direct the conversation to avoid going off on a tangent. The boss will usually make the final decision based on the expert advice from the staff.

You're more likely to get buy-in for the decision if it comes from a group affected by that decision. Decisions reached after discussions and input from many different areas are more likely to be accepted than decisions that come down from "on high" without a vetting process. Those who were involved in the decision-making process can become advocates to support the decision that was reached.

Continued on page 8

## MANAGEMENT BY COMMITTEE, P. 2

### The Negatives of Decision by Committee

There are a lot of them.

First, employees are more likely to suggest outrageous, reckless solutions because the responsibility for the decision is spread across the entire committee. This dilution of individual responsibility can generate some very bad decisions without fear of retribution.

Missing the best advice. If opinions are flying around the conference table, you and the team may miss the one suggestion that makes absolute, unqualified sense, lost in the discussion babble. Often, there will be a lone voice of reason willing to stand up and say what should be done. If the other 15 attendees disagree, that suggestion dries up and blows away.

Decision by committee can be a waste of time. It's easy to get bogged down when committee factions take opposing views and attempt to convince the other side of the table of the wisdom of their position. This can suck up time like a vacuum cleaner if you don't manage committee meetings.

Peer pressure comes into play quite frequently. At least some members of the decision committee are likely to go along with the consensus to avoid standing out, or worse, looking like a trouble maker.

Competing positions may lead to disharmony. There's a tendency for committee members to take positions and hold on to those decisions and defend them no matter how bad that decision is. Getting these hard-liners to budge

can waste time and create ill-will. You hear both sides, make your choice, and annoy the heck out the committee members who felt the other "way" was better.

### It's Up to You

Gather information from committee members. Listen to how each manager is impacted. Ultimately, it's your decision as the business owner. Don't let decision by committee bog down business operations. Used properly, decision by committee may prevent costly mistakes and lead to a moderate solution to the topic of discussion. Make the choice based on sound, impartial advice from your staff, consultants, even your business bank specialist. Take ideas from everyone. Then, make the best decision for the company.

<https://nevadasmallbusiness.com/decision-by-committee/>

**YARD BY YARD LIFE IS  
HARD, INCH BY INCH  
LIFE IS A CINCH.  
JOYCE SCHUSTER**



## PERSONAL EVANGELISM TENT CARDS



Tent cards are business card size and are folded into a small tent. You can hand them to someone or when you go to lunch, you can simply leave it on the table. The purpose is to try to start a discussion, or at least to give an invitation.

They can provide a message like these samples or can say anything you like.

Imagine you equip your members with 1000 of these and consider the impact it can have on your congregation.

You can get products like these at your local printer or online by searching for tent cards.

If you like contact us at [info@occg.institute](mailto:info@occg.institute) and we will assist you.



OUTSIDE OF CARD



INSIDE OF CARD

## 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.

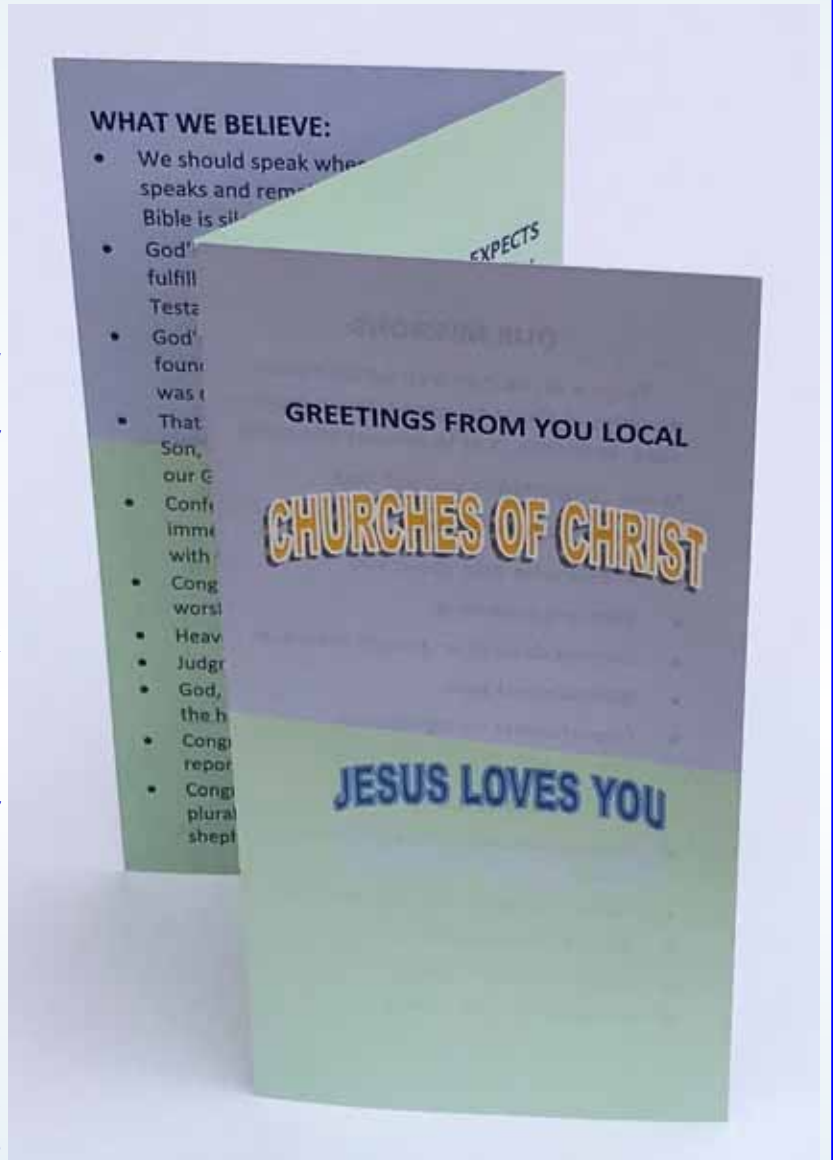
Cards similar to this can be obtained from a number of printers, with Uprint.com being the one we have used. In the example shown we used a 5.5" x 8.5" Z-Fold printed on the outside and inside in full color. It is found under brochures.

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 for Luther Community Church of Christ. 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](mailto: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 - THE GOLDEN RULE

This tract is a study in how to say enough to pique someone's interest without offending them. We sometimes try to hard at not offending people that we water our messages down to platitudes. This tract promotes actually saying something and the Wednesday Service Night concept. The Wednesday Service Night concept is generally that most members do not need to sit in class #3001 but rather that it is time to start being of service.

The Golden Rule looks at it from the opposite side from how we normally look at it.

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If we can pray for you, let us know at phone ☎ or email.

**WEDNESDAY SERVICE NIGHT**

We meet at 6:00 p.m. for a common meal and a devotional service, and then break into groups to do Christian service projects. Times will vary, but we are generally finished by 8:00 p.m.

Come find your role with us.



THE  
GOLDEN  
RULE

Jesus said in his golden rule: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 7:12

This means that if you come to a clarity about a truth impacting your salvation in Heaven with Jesus, I would hope you to tell me about it.

I have come to such a clarity about our salvation in Heaven with Jesus, and I understand I should tell you about it.



I believe God is the creator and sustainer of the universe.

I believe God's word for us is communicated to us in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

I believe only the New Testament is applicable to us today as the Old Testament is completed (Gal. 3:23-25)



I believe that we are not authorized to add to or take away from what the New Testament says (Rev.22:18-19)

In other words, all revelation from God to us was given in the first century.

I understand that if the Bible teaches something and you teach something else, you are in rebellion to God's word.

Whereas we would not question anyone's sincerity:

For the past 1500 years the Catholic church has been adding to and taking away from the teachings of the Bible by their rulings.



Protestant denominations are distinguished by the Catholic doctrines they **protested** and the Catholic doctrines they follow.

Most independent community churches at the least abandon the congregation organization as given in Jesus' New Testament. What they actually teach otherwise is sometimes hard to determine.

The Churches of Christ make every effort to speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent.

TITLW



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\*\*\*\*\*

If you know of someone else who is thinking about closing and selling their church, we would appreciate your telling us.

\*\*\*\*\*

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## HEALING AMERICA

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He provides an intentional approach for the country's healing process and aims at healthy relationships and spiritual maturity as the ultimate goal.

This book can be purchased for \$19.95 at: Amazon, Barnes & Nobles, and Westbow Publishing

17. *Get rid of anything that isn't useful, beautiful or joyful.*

18. *Whatever doesn't kill you really does make you stronger.*

Source unknown.

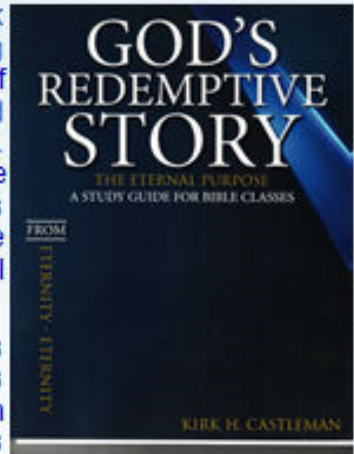
Need a hand with your student ministry? Here to help! Teaching, training, support and care for your ministers and volunteers. Twenty years in the trenches. Been there and done that. Let me know how I can serve and support your congregation.

Dave Blanchard

[daveblanchard@fuller.edu](mailto:daveblanchard@fuller.edu)

734-516-6008

A 13 lesson book written by a long time Church of Christ minister and servant of Jesus. Intended for Bible Class studies, this book can also be used for personal evangelism.



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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Located at [occg.institute](http://occg.institute), TOPICAL LESSONS , 02 WINGS OF EAGLES

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**A REFOCUS WEEKEND IS:**

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- (2) Saturday 8:00 - 2:00: Church growth consultation
- (3) Saturday or Sunday afternoon: Dream Session
- (4) Sunday Bible Class: A church growth lesson
- (5) Sunday morning worship: A church growth sermon

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

For more information, contact:  
[info@occg.institute](mailto:info@occg.institute)



BE THE BEST YOU CAN BE!

**A preacher comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable.**

**Barry & Ace**

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**HOUSTON PREACHERS AND LEADERS LUNCHEON** Every second Tuesday except December, For information contact David Wardrup - cell: (281)635-3135; [davidcwardrup@gmail.com](mailto:davidcwardrup@gmail.com) or Cruz Hernandez - cell: (713) 560-9080; [cruzalbertohdz2017@gmail.com](mailto:cruzalbertohdz2017@gmail.com)

To post your event: [info@occg.institute](mailto:info@occg.institute)

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