

# PRESSING ON

the e-magazine for growing Christians

September 2014

## Israel Today – What Should Christians Think about the Nation of Israel?



*Interview with Shane Scott*

# **Pressing On**

*The Magazine for Growing Christians*

**Copyright 2012**

<http://www.pressingonmagazine.com/>

## Table of Contents

[Israel Today: What Should Christians Think about the Nation of Israel?](#) – Interview with Shane Scott

### Regular Columnists

[On the Mark](#) – Bible Study with Only a Bible? – *by Mark Roberts*

[Be Wise Small](#) – *by Dee Bowman*

[Be Strong and Courageous](#) – Depression – Emotional Super-Glue – *by Wilson Adams*

[Mind Your Faith](#) – Reflecting on the Death of Robin Williams – *by Doy Moyer*

[From the Pasture](#) – Preserving Peace – *by Rusty Miller*

[Now and Then](#) – Greenbacks and Blockheads – *by Chuck Durham*

[Truth Connection](#) – “You Have an Attitude” – *by Warren Berkley*

### Guest Columnist

[One too Many Trips to the Wishing Well](#) – *by Dene Ward*

### Additional Help

[Courageous Living Series](#) *by Wilson Adams*

[What’s on My Kindle?](#) – Navigating Study Bibles – *by Warren E. Berkley*

Spiritbuilding (<http://www.spiritbuilding.com/new/>) – *Carl McMurray*

## On the Mark

### Bible Study with Only a Bible?

*Mark Roberts*

Of late I have noticed people using social media to ask for book recommendations as they prepare to teach on a Bible topic or book of the Bible. Usually there are helpful responses and then someone says “I like to study with just the Bible ... give me a pad of paper, my Bible and a cup of coffee. That’s enough for me!” Whether the intent to sound superior is there or not, it does come across that sullyng one’s hands with commentaries and other books written by men somehow isn’t the way to *really* study God’s Word. Can I outline here why I think reading the Bible alone is *not* the best way to prepare to teach and preach God’s Word?

Let’s begin with the “fine print disclaimers.” First, I absolutely believe the Bible and the Bible alone is enough to equip us to serve God. I believe any responsible person can take just about any English translation of the Scriptures and figure out what God wants him to do so become a Christian and go to heaven. That is the promise of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:3 and many other passages. Secondly, I also believe there is a place for nothing but a Bible and a clean sheet of paper and a pen (always a fountain pen, of course) and coffee. As we sketch out an outline or a teaching plan pushing everything else away and looking just at the text and developing *our ideas and conclusions* about it is extremely important. I not only believe that I do that - a lot. Thirdly, and crucially, I believe it is essential that we read the text *before* we read anything written about the text. The beginning of Bible study is the Bible, not the works of men. Always, always, always read the Bible alone before reading anything else. Indeed, I would recommend getting in the habit of reading the Bible alone *several times* before picking up anything else.

But is reading and reflecting on the Bible alone, without ever consulting any commentaries or other books, really the best way to get ready to teach or preach God’s Word?

Notice that is the question we are dealing with: preparing to teach the Bible. How can I help men and women comprehend the message of this text and live it? To do that I, as the teacher who is first the student, need to understand the text in every way possible. For example, I will need to understand the basic facts of the passage. That is the who, what, where, and why stuff. More than that, I then need to look at the context of these verses. What are these verses doing here? How do they relate to the surrounding paragraphs and chapters? Then things need to get bigger: what is the overall theme of this chapter, these chapters, and of the book? What is this (divinely inspired) writer trying to do with this book? When did he write and why? Now, how do these verses fit into that plan? Then I need to consider the way the text is put together. Is this poetry or prose? Are their repeating terms or phrases that highlight the author’s intent and purposes? Is this material structured in a way that forces the reader’s attention to a key point or idea? What about original language considerations? Are there terms and ideas that need to be defined? Is there an emphasis from the grammar and syntax in the verse?

There is a lot to be discovered in a passage, isn't there? Now, the question: how much of that can I get answered on my own? If I am a Bible scholar I may well be able, from previous studies and research, to deal with the text adequately. As an aside, isn't it interesting that Bible scholars always have huge libraries? What does that tell us? Since I am not a scholar, I need the help of those who are. I need to turn to works and resources that can help me understand the text thoroughly so I can teach it accurately.

So, for example, I can read 2 Kings 23:29 by myself and never understand the world political conditions that caused Josiah to take on the Egyptians in battle. I can read Malachi 2:16 over and over by myself and never become acquainted with the issues in translating this difficult verse. I can read 1 Corinthians 8-10 but will that help me understand what sacrificial meat in first century Corinth was and why it was issue to those brethren? I can read Song of Solomon again and again on my own and never see that the marriage consummation scene takes place at the exact center of its 117 verses. I could read Proverbs 31:10-31 on my own and never realize that it is an acrostic (like Psalm 119). These are but a few examples that show if you read the Bible you will learn a lot, but if you read the Bible and then read and research what the Bible says we can learn even more. How is that a bad thing?

In fact, isn't it a little bit arrogant (or terribly naive) to imagine that all by myself I am capable of understanding and seeing everything in a text? Should I really believe that, on my own, I will see everything that all those scholars in all those encyclopedias, commentaries, journal articles, atlases and dictionaries have found in this passage?

I believe if we think clearly about this we will realize there is nothing unspiritual in researching and studying the Bible intensively. No one should apologize for putting together a good study library and wearing it out! The Bible is the primary way God makes Himself known to us today. There is nothing to be ashamed of one when says "I intend to learn everything I can about God's Word. I will read, I will study, I will pursue knowing the Scriptures deeply and thoroughly because I want to know God deeply and thoroughly!"



*Mark Roberts is the editor of Pressing On. He has been working with the Westside church in Irving for the last twenty-two years. This September marks the beginning of the school year, with Mark and Dena's daughter Sara beginning graduate school in Nashville and Becca beginning her career as a school teacher! All of this reminds Mark of how life changes and makes him feel very blessed.*

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

## **Be Wise Small**

*Dee Bowman*

### **Can We?**

Jesus was the friend of the poor, the help of the helpless, the bearer of the downtrodden. Can we be any less?

Jesus had time for the small, the insignificant, the ignorant, the un-informed, even the ill-informed. Can we do any less?

Jesus went about doing for those who couldn't do for themselves, lifting those who couldn't help themselves, teaching those who could not teach themselves. Can we do any less?

Jesus died for those who cursed Him, shed His blood for those who scourged Him, had mercy on those who were unmerciful, was nailed to a cross made of some of the wood He created; and after it was horribly done, He said "Father forgive them" Then He died for you and me. He could not do any less and save mankind. Can we not live for Him?

~

"You can give without loving, but you can't love without giving" – Amy Carmichael

~

### **My Prayer for Today**

Lord, give me eyes to see above the world.

Lord, give me ears to hear truth.

Lord, give me hands to help.

Lord, give me feet to go where I need to go.

Lord, make my heart want to be like Him.

~

"The present time has one advantage over every other—it is our own."—Charles Caleb Colton

~

### **From That's Life (p. 166)**

Four things to consider before you decide.

1. Will it inhibit my flight toward God?

2. Will it tend to tarnish my influence?
3. Will it edify or merely satisfy?
4. Will it stop there? And what if it doesn't?

~

### **Two Thoughts Worth Thinking**

“The beauty of woman must yield to the beauty of virtue.”

“The rebellion of the body, sweet at the moment, only leads to trouble.”—Alexander the Great

~

### **Sketches**

Life is not so much about what you get out of it, but what you give to it.

This life is not the end of matters. Man tends toward eternity. However, it is in this life and how it is lived that determines each man's eternal state. When this thing we call “life” is ended, man—each man—is propelled into eternity. Each man will spend eternity in one of two places—heaven, a place of unceasing bliss, or in hell, a place of horrible, never-ending torment. The joys of heaven are elegantly described in Scripture so as to entice us toward it. The horrors of hell are as sure as are the joys of heaven, and are graphically depicted in terms and figures intend to keep us far away for it. It thereby becomes an important question to ask: where will you spend eternity?

Change and the future are inseparably connected.

To be ignorant is sad. To be willfully ignorant is sadder yet.

To seek the elegant things in life is to get close to God.

Prayer is one of the first evidences of faith.

### **Seven Serious Excuses**

1. “I don't think.”
2. “I don't know.”
3. “I don't care.”
4. “I'm too busy.”
5. “I leave well enough alone.”
6. “I don't have time to read.”
7. “I'm not interested.”



*Dee Bowman has been preaching for about 50 years. He is the author of several books, was one of the editors of Christianity Magazine, and for several years was an adjunct professor at Florida College. He has been associated with the Southside congregation in Pasadena, Texas for over 35 years. His wife is Norma and his children are Russ and Denise.*

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

# Be Strong and Courageous

## Depression—Emotional Super-Glue

*Wilson Adams*

*He brought me up out of the pit of destruction; out of the mud of the mire... ” Psalm 40:2*

The recent suicide of comedian, Robin Williams, has put the focus back on the seriousness of depression. Depression is emotional super-glue. It is a pit of overwhelming hopelessness in which one feels himself sinking lower and lower. And when it is a Christian who finds himself in the muddy mire, we feel the additional weight of guilt. After all, Christians are supposed to be exempt from depression, aren't we?

### Over-The-Counter-Advice

First, grief is complicated. In fact, grief is as complicated as each of us is complicated. Those who think that grief can be reduced to a timeline of completion dates on a calendar (denial, anger, depression, etc.) have never ridden the roller coaster of emotional pain. And those who think it can be solved by simple over-the-counter-advice (“You need to get over it...” “Just snap out of it...” “Time heals all wounds...” “If it were me, I would...”) are often clueless as to the seriousness of the problem.

It's not that easy.

Depression is the unspoken issue among many Christians. It is real and wide-spread. I know preachers who struggle, and elders, and their wives, and many others.

### Does the Bible Address Depression?

**Yes!** Psalm 119:25 speak of one “cleaving to the dust.” Can you get any lower? Psalm 88 describes it all too well:

- “I have cried day and night...”
- “My soul has had enough troubles...”
- “My life has drawn near to Sheol” (the realm of the dead)...
- “I am like those who go down into the pit...”
- “I have become like a man without strength...”
- I feel “forsaken among the dead...”
- I feel like I am “in the lowest pit, in dark places, in the depths...”

Sound familiar?

And some of God's greatest servants did battle with the same. Elijah, God's great prophet, became so discouraged and depressed that he asked God to take his life. And while Job had his moments of great faith, he also struggled through the muddy mire to the point that he wished he had never been born. Truly, if the "greats" of the Bible had their days in the pit, why should we be surprised when we suffer the same? And sometimes there is no quick and easy fix.

### **Getting Help to Get Unstuck**

It's easy to become "stuck" in the mire of depression only to feel yourself sinking lower and lower. Add to that the guilt heaped upon us by others (knowingly or unknowingly), and we spiral downward at an even faster pace.

Here it is: some need medical help to conquer it. And that's okay! Christians often view physicians who treat the mind as somewhat suspect. In contrast, "You need to read your Bible and pray!" is the quick-and-easy-cure-all given for depression. Folks, it's not that simple.

Let's be clear. God's word to us *is* the cure-all to every life situation. However, sometimes the mind becomes so imbalanced that it requires medical attention. For example, we don't rush to the side of an accident victim lying in the street with a broken leg and say, "Hey fella, you need to read your Bible and pray!" Hopefully we have enough sense to dial 911 and get him some immediate medical help. Does the man need to read his Bible and pray? Absolutely. But let's first get him back into the shape where he can do that.

Bones are not the only part of the body that can break. Sometimes the mind can, too. And God has provided us with wonderful discoveries of science of medicine to use in order to lift us out of the "muddy mire." Instead of suspect criticism; let us praise Him for what He has allowed us to discover and use—to heal both our broken bodies and broken minds.

### **Reach Out to Help Another**

And when you finally are able to climb up from the pit of despair, how about throwing a line to a fellow brother or sister who may be suffering, too? Give them hope. Give them assurance. And urge them to get the help they need so they can come back to life and help someone else.

"There are 7000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal..." Translation: *Elijah, there are 7000 depending on you...* That was God's message to the beleaguered and depressed prophet. And that's God's message for you. Of course, I doubt you have 7000 people depending on you, but my guess is somebody is. Listen, how can you "love your neighbor as yourself" if you do not first love yourself? And...you can't love yourself as long as you are sinking in the quicksand of depression and self-pity?

With help (both medical and spiritual) you *can* climb out of the pit. When you do, throw a rope to someone else who is struggling.

Depression. It's more widespread than you know. Then, again, maybe you do know.

*Post Script... When we were working on the book, "A Life Lost and Found," we were amazed at how many people admitted they were "stuck." Whether overwhelmed by death, divorce, or disease, it was as if their life had come to a halt and they lived from that moment on in a perpetual time-warp. If you know someone suffering, please get them the book. It is written by Christians to help those who are struggling with depression and tragedy. You may order it via our website @ [www.courageouslivingbooks.com](http://www.courageouslivingbooks.com)*



***Wilson and Julie Adams** live in Murfreesboro, Tennessee where he works in a two-preacher arrangement with the Veterans Parkway church while devoting much of his time to meeting work. In addition to gospel meetings and lectureships, Wilson does several "Where Is God When I Hurt?" weekends based on the book, "A Life Lost and Found," which he co-authored. When home, he pursues a passion for writing and is on a two-year mission to produce twenty-four adult study books in the "Courageous Living" series. Seventeen are now available (see the advertisement in this issue of Pressing On) and several churches are using these books with great success.*

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

## **Courageous Living Series**

The *Courageous Living* series of workbooks by Wilson Adams includes a variety of textual and topical studies that are grounded in the Word of God. Well-written, fresh and relevant, they serve as great tools for individual study, small-group discussions or congregational Bible classes.

<http://www.courageouslivingbooks.com>

The Psalms: *Songs to Soothe the Soul* (Vol. 1)

The Psalms: *Songs to Soothe the Soul* (Vol. 2)

Fast Facts About False Teachings

From Pentecost to the Present Day: *The History of the Lord's Church*

Marriage Matters: *Keeping the "Holy" in Matrimony*

Co-Parenting with God: *Equipping Your Kids for Life*

The Beatitudes: *Life-Changing Essentials*

The Sermon on the Mount: *Dare to be Different* (Vol. 1)

The Sermon on the Mount: *Dare to be Different* (Vol. 2)

Romans I: *Finding a Fresh Start with God*

Romans II: *Finding a Fresh Start with God*

The Ten Commandments: *Our Character Crisis Revealed*

I and II Thessalonians – Rise and Shine

I Corinthians II - Calm Answers for Church Problems (chapters II – 16)

I Corinthians I – Calm Answers for Church Problems (Chapters 1-10)

12 Choices – Life-changing Decisions You Must Make

A Life Lost ...and Found

Around the House ... Again

Conversion – Getting Back to Basics

Ecclesiastes – in Search of the Good Life

GPS - God's Positioning System

New Testament Postcards – Tender Touches of Admonition

Philippians – Discovering Contagious Joy

Turning Point

Nehemiah – Let Us Arise and Build

Amazing Women of the Bible

...with more to come. Each workbook follows the same format and includes 12 lessons with both text and discussion questions. The next time you're looking for good material to supplement your study and application of the Bible, you would do well to consider the *Courageous Living* series.

To Order: Call 979-779-1234 or Email: [order@TopsPrinting.com](mailto:order@TopsPrinting.com)

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

# Mind Your Faith

## Reflecting on the Death of Robin Williams

*Doy Moyer*

I remained fairly silent in the immediate aftermath of the death of Robin Williams while I was trying to process it. Like most of us in the American culture, I grew up watching much of his work. I remember the first time I saw him appear on *Happy Days*. I recall, as a kid, watching *Mork and Mindy*. I saw him grow into a multi-talented comedian and actor. At the same time, as I was trying to grow spiritually, I was extremely disappointed in much of what he did. His vulgar language in movies and performances made it so that I couldn't watch much of his work (we need to be honest about this part of his career). When he was clean, I thought he was brilliant and hilarious. For the rest, I had to walk away or hit the mute button. Without question, however, he has been a significant influence in our culture across multiple generations.

His suicide is disturbing to all of us. This is true culturally because of his status, but it is also true because it reminds us of others, loved ones, who have taken the same path and shows us that people who appear happy outwardly may be deeply hurting inside. I am in no position to judge his mindset at the time he did this. I know he was suffering. He was depressed. He was in the early stages of Parkinson's. He was worried about his career. I understand.

Yet what I want to get across here is this: *suicide is never a good answer to our problems*. Never. I say this with no intent to judge the heart or mindset of Robin Williams, but I don't believe that because he was so well loved that this makes his action one to lift up as good or desirable. Whatever the state of his mind and thinking at the time, we must never imply or indicate that suicide can be an acceptable way to deal with this world's woes.

I know what people say. "You don't know what it's like." "You have no right to say that because you haven't been in his shoes." "You are not in a position to judge." "You just don't understand."

First, let me just tell you this without getting into unnecessary details: I am not totally ignorant here. I'm just going to leave it at that because it won't do me or anyone else any good to go into details. But sometimes people say, "You don't understand," when they themselves don't understand what the person to whom they are speaking has been through. We live in a fallen world, and we all endure our own measures of suffering and hardships. Some have it more severely than others. Yet we are in this together, and we need to pull together to help each other understand that something much greater and better awaits if we will learn to look at these matters properly.

Second, when we support suicide as plausible, regardless of the situation, what message are we sending to others who are presently suffering from severe depression? That suicide is inevitable or a viable option? What are we telling those who are fighting their own battles and their own

diseases? Give up? It's okay to end yourself? Then, what message are we sending to those who have fought these and even more severe battles, but have overcome? I cannot tell you how encouraged I am by godly people who suffer from depression, cancer, brain tumors, and other debilitating illnesses and who, in the face of such personal tragedies, maintain a godly spirit and encouraging attitude! Many are those who have suffered severely and triumphed. They can teach us great lessons about dealing with the fallen nature of this world.

Third, the message we need to be sending is one of compassion and love. We know that those who would kill themselves aren't thinking properly. They believe that there is no hope left. There is nowhere else to turn. We need to present that message of hope with a sense of compassion and mercy. If we know they are struggling so deeply, we need to do what is necessary to get them help. Perhaps every Christian should be acquainted with someone who can provide professional help when such is needed. We cannot just say, "get over it," and walk away. We need those conversations about how to help the distressed, especially those with clinical depression, and we need to know where we can turn. Never ignore the signs, and never give up the fight. Further, let's never forget that we need to do all of this within a context of a biblical worldview and a robust prayer life. We must never set aside God's truth to deal with hard and dangerous circumstances, no matter the depth of difficulty. If anyone does understand, it is our Lord! Go to Him in all matters.

Fourth, this is exactly why we need to be preaching the message of Christ more broadly and more overtly. God has dealt with this fallen world through Christ, and His actions lead to the hope of life (1 Peter 1:3-5). This message needs to be proclaimed loud and clear. We have no idea what problems people are going through. We don't know but that the person we give that message of hope to was feeling lost, lonely, and hopeless. "Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances" (Proverbs 25:11).

Those who have passed on are in the hands of a just and merciful God. We are not the ones who judge. Even so, God has left us a revelation of His will, and when we teach that, we aren't being judges; we are being faithful to His message.

I pray that God would comfort the family of Robin Williams. I pray that God would comfort all those who lost loved ones like this. Even more, I pray that they find renewed reason to seek the Lord while He may be found. Please know this: It is not in death that one is free, but in life (2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10). "For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life."

Debating the fate of Robin Williams or others who have committed suicide does no one any good. They are in God's hands. Let us focus on the ones with whom we may share Christ and the good news of hope. There is, after all, only one hope (Eph 4:4), and if we don't share it, who will?



*Doy Moyer brings his clear thinking and concise assessment of the issues of our day to our pages. Doy is a Bible professor at Florida College and as such is well connected to young people and what they are thinking. He also is an avid reader and is well aware of the attacks against our faith that the enemy mounts. Read him and you will find that you are thinking more clearly on key matters that affect your faith. You can read more of his good work at his blog, located at [www.mindyourfaith.com](http://www.mindyourfaith.com)*

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

## **An Interview with Shane Scott**

### **Israel Today: What Should Christians Think about the Nation of Israel?**

The recent flare-up and continued tensions with Israel, Hamas, the West Bank and all that goes on with that once again directs our attention to the Middle East. Once again we are being told by many that the physical nation of Israel is God's chosen people and all who love the Lord and His Word will support them. Is this true?

*Pressing On* turned to Shane Scott for some insight into this issue. Shane is a gospel preacher for the church of Christ in Valrico, Florida. He has studied and written extensively on God's plan for Israel, premillennial theory and what the church is today. *Pressing On* interviewed Shane to learn better how to think and act biblically regarding Israel and the ongoing conflicts there.

**Q:** Let's get right to it. Do you believe the Bible teaches that the physical nation of Israel is God's chosen people?

**Shane:** I believe that the Bible teaches that God's chosen people are no longer defined in terms of national identity, but rather are defined in terms of being in the "Chosen One," Jesus Christ (Luke 9:35). God did choose the family of Abraham to be blessed and to be a blessing (Genesis 12:1-3). That choice was *exclusive* in the sense that it was *Abraham's* family who would be blessed, but it was also *inclusive* in the sense that God's ultimate purpose in choosing Abraham's family was to bless "all the families of the earth" (Genesis 12:3).

**Q:** How would you characterize God's plan for Israel today?

**Shane:** God's plan for Israel today is the same as His plan for everyone else, and that plan is Jesus. Paul makes this point beautifully in Romans 10:1-13, when he says that the great promise of the restoration of Israel made in Deuteronomy 30:1-14 is now fulfilled in Jesus Christ – and that this plan is open to all. "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved'" (Rom. 10:12-13).

**Q:** Some think God has rejected Israel and replaced them with the church. What are your thoughts on Israel's rejection?

**Shane:** This was the question Paul asked at the start of Romans 11 – "I ask, then has God rejected his people?" And his answer was emphatic – "By no means!" (Romans 11:1a). In the remainder of that verse Paul offered himself as an example of an Israelite who was not rejected by God. So it is not accurate to say that God has replaced Israel with the church. I think a better way to express the matter is that God has *redefined and expanded* Israel. "Know then that it is

those of faith who are the sons of Abraham” (Galatians 3:7). God has redefined what it truly means to belong to Israel, or to be a son of Abraham. And that definition depends on grace rather than race. It includes “a remnant, chosen by grace” from the physical nation of Israel (Romans 11:6), as well as those who cannot trace their physical family tree back to Abraham but who share in his faith (Romans 4:11-12). And according to Paul, this is not a novel reinterpretation of the promise to Abraham, but what God all along intended in His promise to bless all nations through Abraham. “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed. So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith” (Galatians 3:8-9).

**Q:** So you do not believe the events happening in Israel and the West Bank represent any kind of harbinger of the end of time or the Second Coming of Jesus?

**Shane:** No. The passage often appealed to for such “signs of the times” is Matthew 24/Mark 13/Luke 21, a passage that actually has to do with the signs of the destruction of the temple at the hands of the Romans in AD 70. Jesus made this clear with the time frame He gave His listeners – the events He described would happen within that contemporary generation (Matthew 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32).

**Q:** Without getting into a lot of politics, the thinking that Israel today is still God’s chosen people does affect policy decisions in the United States. Can you comment on that?

**Shane:** Sure. First, it should be pointed out that a significant driving force in the refusal of some Israelis to cede the Occupied Territories of Gaza and the West Bank to a Palestinian state is the belief that all of the land promised to Abraham belongs to the modern state of Israel. In 1995 Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by an Israeli ultranationalist named Yigal Amir for precisely this reason. Here in the States, the influence of premillennial theology has certainly had an impact on the foreign policy views of some in the government, which can be easily illustrated by the list of dignitaries who attend and speak at the “Christians United for Israel” events produced by John Hagee. Just a few weeks ago, Senator James Inhofe of Oklahoma spoke to reaffirm his commitment to Israel for biblical reasons. This was the latest in a long line of statements by Inhofe, such as a speech delivered on the Senate floor in 2002 in which he said, “This is not a political battle at all. It is a contest over whether or not the word of God is true.” (You can read the entire speech at his official website - <http://www.inhofe.senate.gov/newsroom/speech/peace-in-the-middle-east-speech>).

**Q:** What would you say to a non-Christian who doesn’t understand many of the biblical principles you’ve covered here?

**Shane:** I would say that Jesus came to be the Savior of the world in fulfillment of promises God made long ago to Abraham, and that you can belong to Him regardless of racial identity, ethnic heritage, or social standing. “For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek,

there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise” (Galatians 3:26-29).

**Q:** Can you point our readers to the sermon you recently preached on this issue?

**Shane:** The webmaster for Valrico Bill Warren does a great job posting lessons on our site. This one can be found at <http://www.valricococ.org/media2/sermons/2014/08/10/israel-the-bible-and-the-chosen-people>.

**Q:** Is there anything else you would like to say to our readers?

**Shane:** We Gentiles need to remember what a great debt we owe the people of Israel. In Paul’s analogy of the olive tree in Romans 11, it is the people of Israel who are the “natural branches” and we Gentiles who are the “wild olive shoot” grafted in by God. Tragically, some of the natural branches have been broken off in unbelief, but this does not reduce the profound debt we owe to the Jewish people. After all, “from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ” (Romans 9:5). So we should show love to our Jewish friends, look for opportunities to share the gospel, and pray as Paul did for their salvation.

*Pressing On* thanks Shane Scott for his help with this current, and crucial, matter. You can read more from Shane at his blog at [www.shanescottonline.com](http://www.shanescottonline.com).

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

## Now and Then

### Greenbacks and Blockheads

*Chuck Durham*

Alexander the Great besieged Tyre for six months in 332 B.C. As his causeway neared the island's defenses, Carthage sent word to Tyre that they would not come to their aid with any reinforcements. The news caused great alarm. "One man was rash enough to announce that he had had a dream in which he saw a god departing Tyre and it was at once assumed that he had made up this tale in order to curry favor with Alexander. Some actually tried to stone him, and he was forced to seek sanctuary in the temple of Melkart. Others, more superstitious, reserved their anger for the god, and tied his image down securely with golden cords to prevent him deserting to the enemy." —Peter Green, *Alexander of Macedon*, 259

Imagine serving a god you can't count on to aid and abet you in times of trouble. At best, he's undependable and capricious. He's as likely to be for you as against you. In such a world you are left to your own resources—utterly and completely without hope.

Imagine serving a god who is so weak he cannot loose man-made cords that imprison him! Where would be your confidence in such a god to vanquish those who seek your life? His impotence would be matched only by your disdain for him.

Time and again the Old Testament prophets sarcastically made fun of these "gods." The classic account is Elijah on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:27), "Maybe he's on a journey and he doesn't know you need help? Maybe he's asleep and you need to shout louder to wake him?" What self-respecting god would be a god if these things were true of him? Isaiah 44:9ff describes the craftsman fashioning a god out of wood—half of a tree he uses for the god's image and the other half he burns in the fire to bake bread! With dripping sarcasm he asks, "Shall I fall down before a block of wood and pray to it saying, 'Deliver me, for you are my god!'" With biting truth he declares: "No one considers in his heart, nor is there knowledge nor understanding." They were blockheads kneeling before woodblocks.

But we are wiser aren't we? We would never be so dull and unthinking. We smirk at the prophets of Baal dancing around their calf calling for fire from their god to consume it. We gloat with pride as we stand with Elijah before a water-logged beef and a soaking wet altar, knowing the certain outcome of believing in the True and Living God!

We would never make the mistake of inventing our own god and depending upon it to deliver us, would we? We know that "all of them are useless" (Isaiah 44:9). "Who would form a god or mold an image that profits him nothing?" we ask (Isaiah 44:10). Idols? "An ancient problem with no modern relevance," we say.

Then why did Paul command the Colossians to put to death “covetousness, which is idolatry” (3:5)? He told Timothy to command those who are rich not “to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God” (1 Timothy 6:17); “for the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (6:10). We couldn’t possibly love our money more than we love God, could we? It’s not possible that we could be akin to the rich young ruler in Mark 10:21-22, right?

A friend who preaches the gospel told me that the building where they meet burned to the ground. A deacon there (no man of means) contributed his life savings (\$100,000!) to the church because he wanted to see them move forward and not go backwards. It so moved an elder among the shepherds, that he, too, contributed \$100,000 from his funds. Another man in the church moved by the generosity of his brothers, also donated the same amount. The church hearing of these three men and their devotion raised among all the rest of their number, \$80,000 and gave it to the Lord’s work there. All because one man cast in all that he had.

What a fool’s errand to trust our riches in the least. We place them for safe-keeping in vaults, in FDIC insured accounts, in coffee cans, in trust accounts, in savings bonds backed by the full faith and credit of the United States Government. We lean on them. We think we’re secure. We trust they’ll be there five, ten, fifteen years from now. We hoard and multiply them. And the terrifying thought is how easy it is to make the leap from common sense to bowing before them.

Who in their right mind would carve a god from a piece of wood and put the leftover shavings into the fireplace? What sane person would ever do such a thing? Not me. Not you. I’m content with only food and clothing (1 Timothy 6:8), right? I know you are, too.

But, just in case, I’ll place some greenbacks in a water-tight container and bury it in the back yard. Then I can breathe more easily. All is well. I’ll say to myself, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry” (Luke 12:19). And all I’d be is a blockhead bowing before his woodblock.



*Chuck Durham preaches for the Twin City church of Christ in College Station, Texas. He is an amateur history buff who loves working with college kids building their faith. Chuck writes "I owe what I am to the grace of Jesus Christ and the loving work of my wife, Wilna. I am the proud father of a great young man, Jonathan." In his spare time Chuck enjoys reading history, gardening, beekeeping, and walking "Suzy" the dog. You can reach him at [durhamchuk@aol.com](mailto:durhamchuk@aol.com)*

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

## **From the Pasture**

### **Preserving Peace**

*Rusty Miller*

“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:18).

That is one of the simplest statements to read in all of the New Testament. It is also one of the most difficult to carry out.

Over and over in the epistles, Christians are instructed to live together peacefully (see Romans 14:19, 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 2 Corinthians 13:11, Ephesians 4:1-3, 2 Timothy 2:22, Hebrews 12:14). In fact, if you include Paul’s prayers for peace, which are found within the first seven verses of every letter he writes, it is astonishing how often the New Testament Scriptures speak of the need for peace in the churches.

Since that is such an important part of God’s word, it is reasonable to conclude one of the important responsibilities of shepherds is to maintain peace. How do we go about accomplishing that essential goal?

First, we must make certain truth is taught. While there can be unity with one another without truth, we would not then be united with God, so in a very real sense, there can be no unity without the truth of His word. This is the primary problem with those who seek to form bonds with denominations; to unite with those who are not in unity with God is to take ourselves out of unity with Him. Peace that comes through compromising the Scriptures is no peace.

When error is taught, it must be confronted and dealt with, but even in such a case, there is room for wisdom. If a brother is simply in error and can be corrected privately, we should see the wisdom in not offering a public rebuke (Acts 18:26). If a public rebuke is necessary, it should be done, but still with wisdom and with love.

Sometimes, shepherd may need to step into a dispute between brethren (see Philippians 4:2-3). Again, this should be handled delicately and with love, even if rebuke becomes necessary. We should always seek to avoid a situation where half the church lines up with “Euodia” and half with “Syntyche.” At all times, shepherds need to guide Christians to remember we all belong to Christ.

Perhaps the most important passage for shepherds to remember in regard to maintaining peace is found in Titus 3:9. “But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.”

Sadly, there have been many “foolish controversies” among brethren through the years. Here are three important questions to ask before dealing with such a controversy.

First, is it a problem here? Too often churches have been dragged into dispute over something that concerned no one. If it is not a problem for your flock, leave it alone!

Second, can it be handled privately? Perhaps one of your members is concerned about the latest “brotherhood controversy.” If he can be taught privately, without involving others, we should see the wisdom in keeping the problem small while we deal with it.

Finally, suppose it does become an issue for a larger portion of the church. The question then is how is the best way to handle it? Sometimes, a single sermon may suffice, while in extreme cases, it may take a longer, more focused Bible class. Whatever the case, love should dominate our discussion, avoiding the name-calling that too often accompanies disagreement.

There is one other important aspect of maintaining peace, and it is a difficult one. Some brethren are predisposed to arguing. They enjoy “stirring things up.” They may make an outrageous statement simply to see the reaction it provokes. It is important in such cases to practice self-control, recognizing that “taking the bait” is exactly what is desired by the one doing the provoking, and it is also exactly the wrong response. There is nothing wrong with saying, “That’s outside the scope of this class, and I’m not going to deal with it at this time.”

We should also see that Jesus did not see the need to answer every question when He recognized the question as an attempt to provoke (Matthew 21:23-27). Staying out of a discussion designed to provoke an argument can sometimes be the best way to preserve peace.

Shepherds should take seriously the challenge of maintaining peace, for it is when the church has peace that it has its best opportunity to grow. Pursuing peace then is a noble and important goal for all of us.



*Rusty Miller has served the Westside church in Irving, Texas as one of her shepherds for thirteen years. One of his great joys is that he got to serve with his earthly father for almost ten of those years. He enjoys writing, having blogged through Westside’s daily Bible reading for several years, and he hopes this new column will have an impact on fellow shepherds.*

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

## One Too Many Trips to the Wishing Well

*Dene Ward*

Here in north Florida we don't look at the calendar to tell the season. We generally have about five months of summer, nearly three months each of spring and fall, and four to six weeks of winter.

Since I moved to the country I have noticed that each season has its own feel and smell. About the first week of October the morning air becomes crisp and dry, for Florida anyway, and I know fall has arrived. It may leave a week later, but we know that by the first of November it is generally here to stay.

Then shortly before the holiday season I will be greeted by the smell of wood fires and a damp cold that seeps into your bones. I lived in Illinois for two years so I know what below zero weather is like, but even up there you could quickly run the trash out in your shirtsleeves at 45 degrees. Down here that same temperature will set your teeth chattering in just a few short minutes. It's winter!

Sometime around Valentine's Day the warm sunshine on your back spreads like a soothing ointment, and soon the air is heavy with the perfume of azaleas, dogwoods, gardenias, wisteria and the first roses of the year. Rakes scratch the ground and black plastic bags stack up in every yard. The acrid smell of burning leaves fills the air and the spring green of new leaves lights up the sky. Jack Frost may paint your garden one more time in March, but spring has definitely sprung!

By the first of May a wet morning fog drips on until about 10:00, and the flower smells have mellowed into the watermelon smell of new-mown grass. Just standing outside for ten minutes will leave your hair damp with both humidity and perspiration. The long, hot summer has begun.

It has taken awhile but now I relish every change of season. I used to wish away the long, humid summers precisely because they were that way. Then when my children started school, I wished away the rest of the year because the summer was the only time I had them to myself. But I spent the first part of my life wishing it away as well. I couldn't wait to start school. Then I couldn't wait for college. Then I couldn't wait to get married. Then I couldn't wait to have children. And now what? I have an empty nest and my life is well over half over. Is that why we say that middle age brings wisdom? Why did it take so long for me to figure this out?

God wants us to enjoy our lives. Yes, we suffer trials and even some minor persecution. But as much as is possible he expects us to live well and laugh well. 1 Peter 3:10 ...*love life and see good days*. Psalm 118:24, *This is the day which Jehovah has made; rejoice and be glad in it*. Ecclesiastes 3:11, *He has made everything beautiful in its time, also he has set eternity in their hearts*. Ecclesiastes 5:18, *Behold that which I have seen to be good and comely is for one to eat*

*and to drink and to enjoy good in all his labor wherein he labors under the sun, all the days of his life which God has given him, for this is his portion.* Finally, I have learned to take joy in every day.

If you are still young, don't wish your life away. It may seem that your children will never grow up, that you will never have time for yourself and your spouse again, that everything you really want is somewhere out there in the future. Take a minute and look around. God wants you to enjoy the present. If you cannot learn that now, then when those future things come along, you won't know how to enjoy them either. I have seen so many who are never satisfied with what they have, and who ruin the time they have left looking for something better. Learn to be happy and content because one of these days you may find yourself wishing you had back all those days you wished away in the first place.

*He that would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears unto their supplication. But the face of the Lord is upon those who do evil,* 1 Peter 3:10-12.



***Dene Ward** has been a farm wife, a law enforcement officer's wife, a preacher's wife, and a music teacher recognized for excellence and elected to state office. As a young woman she became concerned with the lack of depth in women's Bible class literature and developed *Born of a Woman* and its companion teacher's manual, which has become a classic. When encroaching blindness took her music career away, she turned to writing devotionals and eventually created the blog, [www.flightpaths.weekly.com](http://www.flightpaths.weekly.com). Dene also speaks at women's retreats and lectureships. She lives in Lake Butler, Florida with her husband of 40 years, Keith. She is the mother of two sons, Lucas and Nathan, and grandmother of two grandsons, Silas and Judah.*

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

## Truth Connection

### “You Have An Attitude!”

*Warren E. Berkley*

Each one of us has an attitude. I'm not talking about having “an attitude” in the popular, critical sense. The subject here is more basic. **Everybody has an inner disposition that governs us.** It is inner – at the core of who we are – but is reflected externally in how we behave (Proverbs 23:7).

You have an attitude toward God, toward His Word, toward all the people in your life, toward events or absence of events. You have an attitude about yourself.

Bad attitude may be masked over a period of time (hypocrisy), but with rare exceptions it slips through the mask and becomes apparent (1 Timothy 5:25). All attitude, however, no matter how well hidden to men is totally known by God (Hebrews 4:12).

In view of this core role of attitude, in self-examination and individual discipline of thought **I should pay special attention to those sections of Scripture that describe a healthy attitude.** And, I should give good attention to the One who perfectly exemplifies what my attitude should be.

**Truth Connection:** “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:1-11 ESV)



*Warren Berkley is widely known as an excellent student of God's Word, and as a faithful preacher of that Word. He is an assistant editor for Pressing On. He and his wife Paula work with the church in McAllen, Texas which is just across the border from Mexico. You can follow Warren on Facebook - which will brighten your day and amuse you considerably - and read more from his pen at Expository Files ([www.warrenberkley.com](http://www.warrenberkley.com)).*

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

# What's On My Kindle

## Navigating Study Bibles

*Warren E. Berkley*

Study Bibles may not play a major role in your efforts to know God's Word better, but on Kindles and Kindle apps, they may serve a "quick reference" function. For example, when I'm in a doctor's waiting room and reading the Bible (without the other resources I have in my office) I may want to quickly check a Study Bible to spark some thought, or refresh my knowledge of context. Mark's editorial in this issue reminds us that help in our study is legitimate.

In "the pews" I see all kinds of study Bibles. Virtually any brick-and-mortar bookstore will carry study Bibles. They can become impulse purchases. Now, on the Kindle and other E-readers, the market is flooded with study Bibles, and the impulse is even easier to fulfill.

In the purchase and use of Kindle Study Bibles, here are some pointers:

**(1) Decide what you want the study Bible to do.** Are you looking for practical application ideas, word studies, context, cross references, introductions, outlines, etc.? If you are looking for in-depth commentary, that's not what study Bibles do. In fact, the history of study Bibles shows, their emergence came in an effort to "take the text from the tight grip of academics and clerics and put it in the language of the people," <sup>(A)</sup>.

**(2) Do a little research into who produced the study Bible.** If you are shopping in a literal store, check the front matter to see who was involved. Look for any hints as to their agenda, theology, denominational connection. The [Wesley Study Bible](#), for example, will certainly favor Methodist doctrine. This awareness may not rule out the purchase, but can be a part of your choice. Other examples: [Max Lucado's Study Bible](#), [Scofield Reference Bible](#). **The Word Study Bible** (Harrison House publisher) teaches the prosperity, health-wealth message. Be aware of the publisher/commentator's point of view.

**(3) Navigation.** We talk a lot about navigation in his column because with digital reading, you can't turn physical pages. It is essential to have the equivalent to page turning in the book you have loaded into your device. Every non-fiction work should have a clickable table of contents (like we have in *Pressing On*). In a study Bible, the TOC (table of contents) should show, not only the books of the Bible but any maps, articles, resources and supplements. Ease of navigation is important. (Remember, you can purchase a Kindle book from Amazon, check it out and return it if the navigation isn't what you want. You can return the book within seven days of purchase. When you buy a study Bible, use that seven day period to check navigation.)

**(4) How easy can I get to the comments?** In most study Bibles, to the right of the verse, there will be a cross – sometimes within brackets. You click on that cross to read the notes or comments. Then, after you read the comments, you can click on the chapter and verse notation to

go back to the text. Make certain this works well. Remember that in study Bibles, the commentator may write on several verses in one section. So, for example, in the ESV MacArthur Study Bible, he comments on Phil. 2:1-11. You will not find the next *cross* until you get to verse twelve.

**(5) Cluttered Tiny Hyperlinks.** In some study Bibles, there are so many hyperlinks (sometimes very small and close together), you can get lost and have trouble trying to get back to the text. There may be a hyperlink for references, another for key words, another that will take you to maps, resources or tables, cross references. You may or may not like this feature, but check it well during your seven day trial period.

**(6) Don't give up a reliable translation just to have a neat study Bible.** Your preferred reliable translation may not have an equivalent study Bible. Just be aware, having a neat looking study Bible is not sufficient reason to change translations.

On my Kindle App (for Ipad) I have the ESV MacArthur Study Bible, the ESV Study Bible (Crossway), the HCSB Study Bible and the Archaeological Study Bible. Check Amazon for others. Remember that navigation and hyperlinks in the study Bible can be a deal breaker, one way or the other, depending on your preferences.

Examples -

**MacArthur Study Bible:**

**ESV Study Bible (Crossway):**

**Holman Study Bible:**

**NET Study Bible:**

**Archaeological Study Bible (NIV), PRICE ALERT, Over \$30:**

**Life Application Study Bible (NIV):**

**Quest Study Bible (NIV):**

**Maxwell Leadership Bible:**

\* (A) AN ANALYSIS OF STUDY BIBLES: <http://www.equip.org/PDF/DB135.pdf>

*Pressing On is not recommending these works, only reporting to you what is available. Please apply the cautions and discernment you always use with the works of men.*

[Back to Table of Contents](#)