

# LIGHT

## A Judgment Nightmare



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## PUZZLE ANSWERS FROM PAGE 47

Across:

2. Companies; 5. Jerusalem; 7. Abundant;  
10. Present; 11. Season; 13. Willing;  
16. Kindness; 20. Perform; 21. Disobedient;  
22. Burdensome

Down:

1. Meekness; 3. Invited; 4. Preach;  
6. Authorities; 8. Province; 9. Stammerers;  
12. Marriage; 14. Morning; 15. Bridegroom;  
17. Stringed; 18. Prophets; 19. Coming

*Practical Prerequisites—*

# DON'T STOP WORKING WITH WOOD

**W**oodworking is a rewarding hobby enjoyed by many people, including many people who are blind.

Billy Milburn of Charlotte, North Carolina was diagnosed with macular degeneration at age 43, much younger than is typical for the disease. Already an accomplished woodworker, he did not intend to let the onset of blindness bring his woodworking to a halt.

Milburn spent time at a North Carolina school for the blind to learn about techniques and technology that would assist him in his shop. This has allowed him to just keep on working in the shop in the shed behind his house.

Dennis Stapley of Salt Lake City, Utah is a master woodworker, making fine furniture



and also guitars. Stapley has been legally blind since 1985, and totally blind since 2001. At the woodshop of the Utah Division of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Stapley teaches woodworking to students who are blind, some of whom have also made their own guitars.

According to Stapley, woodworking can be more than a hobby; it can be a way of life. In his job, as a teacher of woodworking, he is glad for the opportunity to pass this way of life on to others. "Where else," he asks, "can you get paid to play with power tools?"

Gil Johnson graduated from the Minnesota Braille and Sight Saving School in Faribault, Minnesota in 1956. Moving to California, he went on to earn BA and MA degrees in psychology and counseling from San Francisco State University.

Johnson began woodworking in high school, and has continued to develop new manual skills ever since. He has re-roofed his house, replaced electrical wiring, and performed numerous home plumbing repairs. Books Johnson has written include *Gil's Guide to Woodworking* and *Gil's Guide to Home Repairs*. They are available through the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped at [www.loc.gov/nls](http://www.loc.gov/nls).

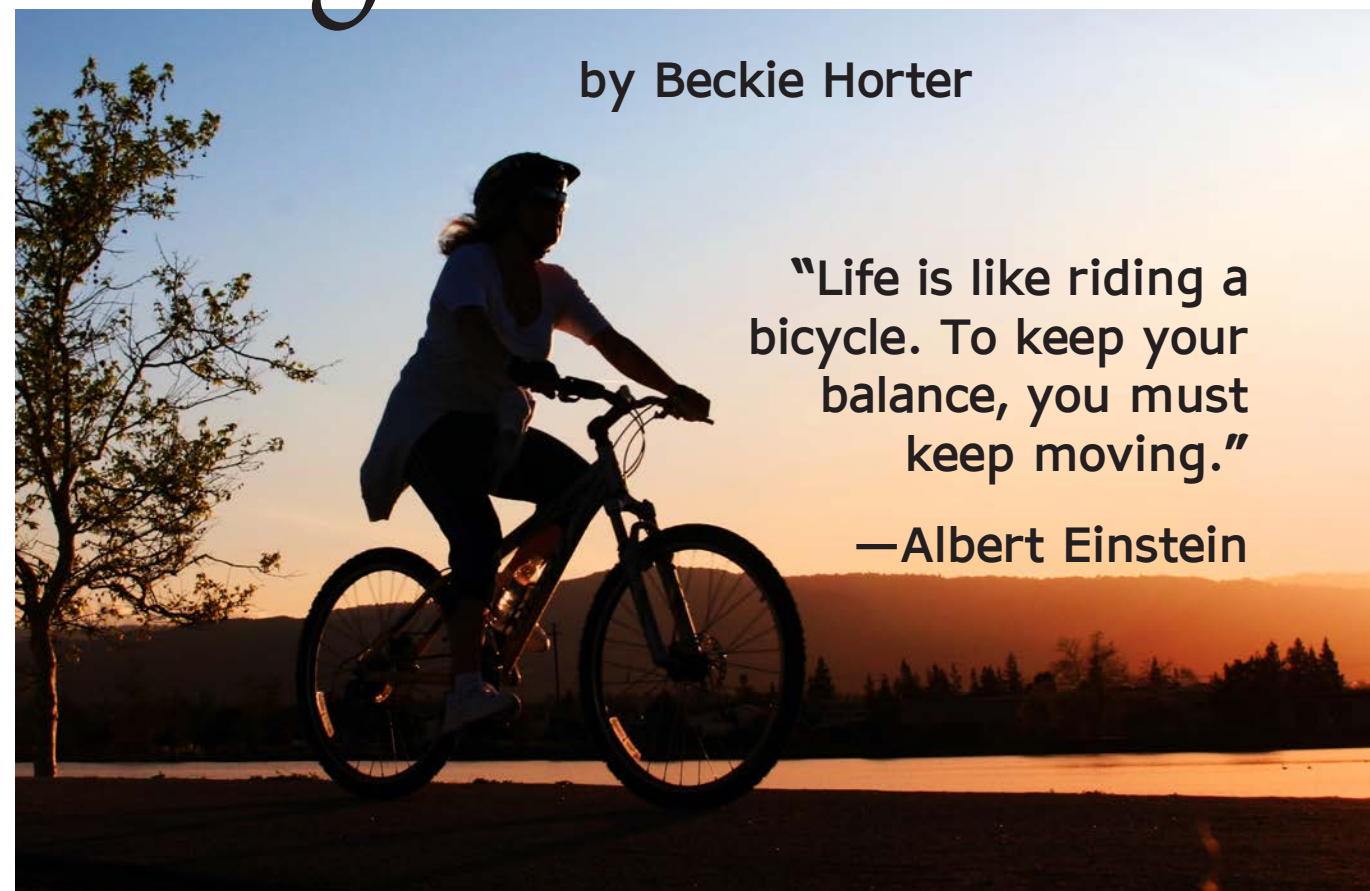
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# How to Keep Your Balance

by Beckie Horter

"Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving."

—Albert Einstein



To keep moving is not always an easy thing for blind people to do. While we may want to stay active—may even seek it out—our eyesight often interferes and spoils our best-laid plans.

I discovered this firsthand after central vision loss left me legally blind in my mid-30s. Along with giving up driving a car, I also had to resign as proofreader for the local newspaper. Then I canceled my gym membership.

The result? Frustration and anger over my many losses.

## OUT OF BALANCE

I soon realized that not doing aerobics at the gym affected my emotional *and* physical health. Depression set in. I tried riding a stationary bike at home, but lost interest when I realized I was getting nowhere fast (or slow, for that matter).

Part of the joy of bike-riding, for me, involved taking in the surrounding sounds and smells, noticing the feel of bicycle tires on pavement and the wind in my face. It was the pleasure of movement, and experiencing different things.

I remembered the freedom that riding a bicycle afforded as a child. Our first bikes give us our first taste of independence. We get to decide important things: where to go, how to get there, when to pedal, when to stand up or sit down, and when to apply the brakes—maybe even when to let go of the handlebars. Why not?

“Oh, the places you'll go!” said Dr. Seuss.

Yes, bike-riding equaled freedom. But with low vision, I doubted that freedom could be mine again.

However, because my vision loss occurred gradually over a period of three years, I became used to adapting to less and less sight. For example, I drove a car on the strength of one eye still being 20/20. I read with that eye, then started experimenting with magnifiers.

But when the sight in my “good” eye began

to falter, adapting on a much larger scale became necessary.

## MOVING FORWARD

The first spring after I became legally blind, I tried riding my bike in a neighborhood park where there is little traffic. I had to be more cautious, to be sure, but it was doable, thanks to my remaining peripheral vision. I couldn't see far into the distance, but since I was not going fast, it didn't matter. I saw far *enough*.

The sweet gift of independence returned!

I could once again roll along on the pavement catching the smell of someone's dinner over a charcoal grill. I could hear doves calling to each other, or a train whistle off in the distance. And the wind playfully ruffled my hair.

Before I made this discovery, my husband mentioned getting a tandem bicycle—and someday we might—but for now, I can still master my own wheels. I simply must be careful *where* I ride.

I would never attempt a busy street. Paved bike trails, often found in state parks, work best for me. I don't have to worry about car traffic, and other traffic (from bikes or pedestrians) is usually light.

Sometimes my husband will wear a bright yellow shirt and go ahead of me on the trail. The color stands out and gives me a familiar “target” to follow. Then after I've been on the



trail a couple of times, I remember landmarks.

*Here comes a wooden bridge.*

*Beach up ahead.*

*There's a parking lot to my right.*

Thankfully, my sense of direction remains good despite loss of eyesight.

## A BALANCED WORKOUT

Riding a bike is more than just fun—it's healthy! While mind and spirit benefit from being outdoors, the body benefits as well. Cardiovascular systems get a workout as do muscles and bones. And bicycling is easy on joints while preserving cartilage. Throw in reduced body fat, and you have a balanced workout suitable for all ages. So take the kids along!

I sometimes wish I lived closer to the many bike trails our country offers. But for now, I'm content to get there when I can. My northern climate allows for bicycling about half the year, but I keep a walking schedule year-round. Taking the dogs outside, regardless of weather, makes everyone in the house behave better.

I have discovered over time that diminishing eyesight doesn't mean an end to activity. It simply means we need to adjust, experiment, and keep moving!

*Freelance writer Beckie Horter lives in western Pennsylvania. Find her website at [www.thisabidingwalk.com](http://www.thisabidingwalk.com)*

# Theodore Roosevelt

*A man of many talents  
and not a few contradictions*

by Teresa Thompson





**D**id you ever wonder why Theodore Roosevelt is memorialized on Mount Rushmore with George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln? Let's peer into Roosevelt's life and see why he makes the list of greats.

Some politicians in the state of New York encouraged Roosevelt's nomination to be the vice-presidential candidate to run alongside William McKinley, in McKinley's bid for a second term as president in 1900. This was seen by some as a ploy to deactivate Roosevelt's influence. He was a staunch opponent of corruption in government and a bold reformer at heart. As a result his fellow Republicans were quite happy to see him shuffled off to Washington D.C. to serve quietly as the vice president—which vice presidents a hundred years ago were expected to do.

However, President McKinley was assassinated on September 14, 1901, just 194 days into his second term, and Roosevelt suddenly became the nation's youngest president at only 42 years of age.

Roosevelt's progressive agenda over the next eight years created a domestic policy referred to as the "Square Deal," which included the breaking up of large corporate trusts, the regulation of railroads, and the beginning of consumer protections.

Roosevelt's interest in nature motivated him to promote conservation, despite opposition

from homesteaders, cattle ranchers, and the lumber industry. A visit to Yosemite with the famed naturalist John Muir inspired Roosevelt to establish five national parks, 18 national monuments, 55 national bird sanctuaries and wildlife refuges, and 150 national forests.

Roosevelt also initiated the construction of the Panama Canal, while expanding the U.S. Navy to make its impact felt around the world. The Panama negotiation was no small feat, considering the tempestuous political climate in Central America at the time.

## **BACK TO BEGINNINGS**

In order to understand this man, it is necessary to go back to his early life. We won't find much to predict his later rise to fame, but Roosevelt's childhood adversities only made him stronger in character.

Although the Roosevelt family was well-off, financially, young Theodore was tormented with bouts of asthma, a condition that snuffed out the life of many people, both young and old, in that era. Theodore's nighttime attacks made him feel like he was being suffocated, terrifying him and his parents.

Since Theodore was not able to participate in many activities other children enjoyed, he became an avid reader. Eventually, however, his early frailty propelled him to become an exercise enthusiast and to pursue many outdoor sports.

## BLUSTER AS A WEAPON

Roosevelt sometimes rubbed people the wrong way. He was given to hyperbole in his public speeches, and was said not always to practice what he preached. Roosevelt biographer Louis Auchincloss summarized Roosevelt's paradoxical qualities:

"[He was] the asthmatic aristocrat who turned himself into the hardiest of cowboys, the passionate conservationist whose greatest joy was in killing big game, the lover of glorious war who won the Nobel Peace Prize, the loyal Republican who endorsed a presidential candidate he detested but who later split his party in two, . . . the greatest political idealist who yet could work efficiently with the most brazen city bosses. . . . It was his nature to be heartily emphatic, to make his points sometimes by gross overstatement. . . . He had wealths of reserve and was not above using bluster as a weapon."

## A DIFFERENT TIME

Our present-day culture is at odds with some of the treasured stands Roosevelt championed. He was an unapologetic soldier of the Wild West era—the bold Rough Rider who charged up San Juan Hill, and the blustering proponent of shaking a “big stick” at foreign countries who dared oppose the United States of America.

He was also a devout Christian, which may seem at odds with both his violent side, on the one hand, and with the culture of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, on the other.

A story from Roosevelt's White House years, provides a window into the man's personal priorities, and also his sense of humor. On June 2, 1902, he summoned a group of military advisers to the Oval Office. When they arrived, the men found Roosevelt pouring over a well-worn Bible and an exhaustive concordance to the Scriptures.

An extended silence ensued, during which time Roosevelt seemed not to have noticed that the men had arrived. Finally, one of them cleared his throat.

"You asked for us, sir?" he said hesitantly.

Without looking up from the books in front of him, Roosevelt snapped, "Well, don't just stand there, men, I need help. I can't remember why I hold to the Monroe Doctrine. I know it's got to be in here somewhere."

Roosevelt wrote or dictated 150,000 letters during his lifetime. They provide significant insights about the man, including his dedicated spirituality. Roosevelt's favorite hymn was said to have been "How Firm a Foundation," that foundation being the Bible.

In addition to his letters, Roosevelt's speeches and other writings have been preserved. A sampling of them reveals more of the man.

## CHARACTER AND SUCCESS

For *The Outlook* magazine, a journal of social and political analysis, Roosevelt wrote an article titled "Character and Success" in 1900. At the time, Roosevelt was an associate editor of *The Outlook*.

In the article, he discusses whether intellect or physical prowess is most likely to lead to great achievements. Looking at Roosevelt's own experience, one sees both sides of his development vying for dominance. At times, he was studious, probably making him our most well-read president, but he also reveled in athletics, hunting, fishing, and other outdoor pursuits.

Roosevelt concluded, in this article, that both pursuits in life are worthwhile, especially if balanced in a way that promotes strength of character. He notes that character is the component most needed if one's life is to produce lasting benefit.

Roosevelt noted the contrast between the ancient Greek civilization, which emphasized mental development, and the Roman Empire, which appealed to physical prowess. Both societies, Roosevelt observed, often produced people who lacked virtuous characters. This highlighted the need, he insisted, for placing a priority on building character. He identified perseverance as among the most important human qualities. His own life story undergirded his observations.

## THE BIBLE AND CHARACTER

Roosevelt often promoted the Bible as a great character-building agent. In an address to members of the American Bible Society, Roosevelt said, "The Bible does not teach us to shirk difficulties, but to overcome them." He urged parents to remember that they were duty-bound to teach their children how to learn from the Scriptures. Upon the Bible, he insisted, mighty and great men have based their lives.

In conclusion, Roosevelt urged "a closer and wider and deeper study of the Bible, so that our people may be, in fact as well in theory, 'doers of the word and not hearers only.' "

## THE BIBLE AND THE PEOPLE

In an address to the Pacific Theological Seminary, Roosevelt urged Bible reading, not just for "the beautiful English and for the history it teaches," but also for "the grasp it gives you upon the proper purpose of mankind."

Our success in helping others, Roosevelt stressed, depends on our ability to "live in accordance with the great ethical principles laid down in the life of Christ." Roosevelt insisted, though, that we cannot let church-going and Bible-reading be substitutes for "leading a higher and better and more useful life." He said, "We must strive each of us so to conduct



our own lives as to be, to a certain extent at least, our brother's keeper."

## BULL MOOSE AND TEDDY BEAR

Although Roosevelt was often caricatured as the "bull moose," it was also after him that the "Teddy Bear" was named. Though Roosevelt hated hypocrisy and deceit, he also understood that only through compromise could the legislative process work to enact his ideals of social and military progress.

Despite Roosevelt's personal faults and less-than-perfect record, it is for good reason that he is memorialized on Mount Rushmore.

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*Teresa Thompson is a freelance writer living in Lincoln, Nebraska.*

# A Judgement Nightmare

by Thure Martinsen



**I**t's been a hard day. You come home discouraged—bordering on despair, really. You are hurt, frustrated, and angry. You are also feeling some guilt—both from what you have done and said, and what you have not done.

After supper, you sit down and turn on the TV. You switch to “Treehouse Masters” on Animal Planet. You always dreamed of having a treehouse, so you check this one out. It's a bit weird watching Pete hug the trees and talk to them, but the treehouse design is intriguing. Not too far into the episode you realize that you will never be able to afford a treehouse like this. It's another bummer but you keep watching. The furniture and decorations are just arriving as you drift off into troubled sleep; the day's events pushing themselves into your mind.

## THE DREAM

Suddenly, you feel wide awake. You even pinch yourself. There is a beautiful city a couple of miles away set against a majestic mountain. The light seems to come from inside the city itself. There is a clear, lazy river flowing right out from the city meandering through the meadows. It passes by just in front of you. There is a charming bridge spanning the river and a path following the river's edge right up to an impressive gate, which looks like a pearl, leading into the city.

Along the path are hundreds—maybe thousands—of brightly colored flowers. There are trees of all types—their leaves reflecting rainbows of color that change with the breeze. Across the river to the south, you see a bountiful orchard, full of fruit. And between the orchard and the city is the most beautiful vineyard you have ever seen. The grapes look like small plums.

As you look around, you realize you are in a line. Behind you, the line stretches several hundred feet and then disappears down the hill. In front of you a few yards, you see a regal, older gentleman standing by the bridge. His hair and beard are white, his face is full of smile lines, and his skin is olive-toned. As you inch closer you can sense that he is full of wisdom, as though he has lived for a long time, but he appears to carry himself with the vigor of a man in his prime. He almost seems ageless.

He talks with each person as they come to the head of the line and then directs them either across the bridge toward the city or to the path that stays on this side of the river and appears to head down into a canyon. As your eyes follow that path, it appears to get darker the further down it goes until it disappears over a ledge, beyond which it appears dark and foreboding.

And then you find yourself at the head of the line facing the man. As his hand comes up to



your shoulder, you see the scars, and suddenly you realize: This man is Jesus.

## THE CONVERSATION

He says your name. He says it like He knows you and everything about you. He says it like He loves you and wants to be with you. Shivers run up and down your spine as you realize His voice is familiar; you have heard it often, even though you didn't pay all that much attention to it most of the time. He is silent now and seems almost overcome with grief.

Finally, you can't take it anymore and blurt out: "Lord, I'm sorry. I'm sorry I didn't do all that much for you. I'm sorry I didn't listen that well. But I was so burdened, so concerned, so restless, so exhausted."

He answers softly, "Burdened? Hadn't you received my promise: 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest'?" (Matthew 11:28 NLT).

"You were worried? But doesn't it say: 'Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you'?" (1 Peter 5:7 NLT).

"Didn't you read in the Bible where I said, 'I am the LORD your God. I am holding your hand, so don't be afraid. I am here to help you'?" (Isaiah 41:13 CEV).

"Hadn't you read my promise to you as recorded by the Apostle Paul, 'Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about

everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus'?" (Philippians 4:6-7 NLT).

Again, there is silence.

And then you mutter: "I couldn't forgive, I was so bitter; I couldn't forget the sins of others. I couldn't love my enemies; the effort was beyond me."

Sadly, He replies: "Didn't you read: '[God] has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love'? (Romans 5:5 NLT). Didn't you read my promise to you, when I said, 'I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations'? (Ezekiel 36:26-27 NLT). Wasn't there an ocean of God's love for your personal use, every minute of the day and the night?"

Silence again.

Finally, you whisper: "My sins trouble me so much, I am so selfish. There is no way I can ever be good enough. I can't even forgive myself!"

With tears in His voice, Jesus softly says: "Didn't you have a Bible? Hadn't you read that 'God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made

right with God through Christ'? (2 Corinthians 5:21 NLT). It's true that 'The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord' (Romans 6:23 NLT). Didn't you believe what the Apostle John wrote, where he said, 'If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness'? (1 John 1:9 NLT). What David wrote about me in the Psalm is true: 'For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west'" (Psalm 103:11-12 NLT).

There is more silence as you stare at the ground. Then, as you start to look up you notice His scars again. Finally, you look up and see the tears rolling down His face into His beard. He opens His mouth to speak.

## THE WAKING

Suddenly you wake with a start as Pete, the Treehouse Man, is counting: "One, Two, Three—ta da!" and the TV scene cuts to the completed tree house. It is a beautiful place, like something out of a fairy tale. Behind it, there is a majestic mountain with a stream running right under the expansive deck. There are spring flowers everywhere and a beautiful swinging bridge leading over to the treehouse.

As you hear Pete say: "Let's go check it out!" Your mind goes back to your dream. Was it really a dream? It seemed so real. In your mind, the treehouse fades into a city set against a majestic mountain with a river flowing out from it.

It is then you realize that, much more than a treehouse, you want a home in that city—and that Jesus has already paid for it!

Again, you see Jesus standing there, tears running down His face into His beard, about to speak. Perhaps it's not too late to influence His words; to make sure you hear what you really want to hear: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world" (Matthew 25:34 NLT). "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. . . . I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, 'Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever'" (Revelation 21:1-4 NLT).

*Thure Martinsen is a church pastor in Bellevue, Nebraska.*



# *The Impossible Possibility*

by Ellen G. White

**T**he condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been—just what it was in Paradise before the fall of our first parents—perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness. If eternal life were granted on any condition short of this, then the happiness of the whole universe would be imperiled. The way would be open for sin, with all its train of woe and misery, to be immortalized.

## **POSSIBLE, BUT NO LONGER**

It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God's law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us.

He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Savior, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.

## **MORE**

More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. So you may say, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

*Christian author Ellen G. White lived a little more than a hundred years ago, having died in 1915. This is an excerpt from her book Steps to Christ. If you would like to receive a large-print version of Steps to Christ, free of charge, call 402-488-0981 to request your copy.*

# Faith and Unfaith

*What is a doubter to do?*

by Bert Williams



Sometimes I wonder about doubt. What is a person to do about it? I have sometimes thought that I was filled with doubt but I am tending, now, to doubt that thought.

When I went looking, I was surprised to discover that Scripture includes the word doubt surprisingly few times. Of course, depending on how you define the idea, there is doubting to be found throughout the Old Testament—going as far back as when Eve doubted God’s words, choosing instead to be enticed by the serpent. Moses had his doubts, as did Elijah, Jeremiah, and others; and those are among the good guys of the Old Testament. There were many others not so good.

## INTRIGUING AND TROUBLING

The actual word “doubt” doesn’t appear in the Old Testament, unless you count “doubtless” in Job 12:2. In the New Testament there are just twelve texts that include the word. Only twelve. I was surprised. I thought there would be more.\*

Doubt is a subject that on good days intrigues me, and on less-good days has troubled me. Does doubt trouble you? If it never does—if you are a person unfailingly blessed with abundant, unshakable faith—you may not want to bother reading further. This simply may not scratch your brain where it



itches. But thinking that some readers may have an itch in that particular part of their brain, as I sometimes do, I shall continue.

## THE CLASSIC CASE

One person in Jesus' time achieved the distinction of being forever saddled with a two-word nickname that isn't so complimentary. You probably already know who I'm referring to. That's right, it's Thomas—Doubting Thomas—one of Jesus' twelve disciples (so if you or I find ourselves with some doubts, at least we're in pretty good company).

Thomas was the last of the eleven remaining disciples to believe that Jesus had come back to life after being crucified. To the others who had already seen the walking, talking, resurrected Jesus, Thomas said, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it" (John 20:25).

It appears that Thomas must have struggled with those thoughts for a full week after he uttered those doubting words. Imagine that struggle. It must've been tough. Just stop and think about that week Thomas lived through. Then he finally met Jesus, and Jesus said to him, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe" (verse 27). And Thomas did believe.

Jesus does not directly criticize Thomas for his unbelief but He does say, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (verse 29).

## MORE CRITICAL

James is more critical than Jesus—and this is the Scripture on this subject that has troubled me most:

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does (James 1:5-8).

Ouch! I just don't like that text. But if we are to think about this subject, and be honest with the Bible, we cannot ignore it. Before giving that text more thought, however, let us consider other events involving Jesus and His disciples.

Let us, in fact, consider that experience of being on the sea, "blown and tossed by the wind," as James wrote. Perhaps you are already thinking of the Sea of Galilee, where the disciples found themselves out in a small boat in a terrifying storm.

## SOMETHING . . . WALKING

Even more terrifying, an apparition appears. At first it's just a light in the distance, but eventually the light takes shape and is obviously a living . . . something . . . walking across the waves in their direction. It's crazy! No one has ever seen anything like this!

Well, the apparition turns out to be Jesus, live and in the flesh, and apparently somehow lit up so they can see Him through the gloom of the stormy night. Peter, being the brash one who speaks now and thinks later, says, "Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water" (Matthew 14:28).

"OK," Jesus says, "come."

So Peter clambers over gunwale into—no, onto—the water.

And then, finally, his brain catches up with his mouth.

*"What was I thinking?"* he thinks as he trips over a ripple. *"What am I doing? This is insane! This cannot possibly end well."* And so, of course, it does not end well.

Actually, it does end pretty well, but not before Peter gets drenched and humbled.

"Lord, save me!" the sinking Peter screams into the teeth of the storm, and Jesus does save him—and then follows up with these words:

"You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Well, on the one hand, the answer to that question could not be more obvious. A wild

storm was raking the surface of the sea! It was the sort of storm that has the power to end the lives of strong men in small boats. But Jesus' words are less biting than those of James. The closest Jesus comes to uttering a rebuke is that probing question to Peter: "Why did you doubt?"

In the context, the point seems to be: *Have you really not gotten to know me yet, Peter? Did you not think I could handle the situation?* It's not criticism so much as disappointment.

## MORE ABOUT THE SEA

Two companion texts don't trouble me so much as they make Me curious. You can twist your mind in a tight knot thinking about Mark 11:23 and Matthew 21:21. Here is Mark's recounting of Jesus' words: "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.'"

So all right, has anyone, in the history of the planet, ever successfully commanded a mountain—an actual, literal mountain—to move to a different spot? I don't know of that happening.

Now, mountains do, on occasion, move.

For a while I lived not far from a mountain that had moved. It's in western Canada, in southern British Columbia. On January 9,



1965 the largest landslide ever recorded in Canada occurred. An entire mountainside in the Cascade Range gave way, filling the Nicolum Valley with an estimated 47 million cubic meters of rock. Four people died as a significant chunk of that mountain moved from one place to another. The highway now winds up and over the rocky rubble in a series of tortured twists and turns far above where the road used to meander through the peaceful valley.

During the years when I lived in British Columbia, I never heard anyone suggest that a person of great faith had commanded this mountain to move. It was gravity, perhaps helped along by a small earthquake (the Cascades are known for their seismic activity) that caused an unstable mountainside to give way.

But these words of Jesus actually create the perfect setting for a self-fulfilling prophecy. If a person has amazingly strong faith, a mountain might possibly move on command. Maybe. However, if the mountain does not move when a person gives the command, that doesn't prove the promise wrong. It is simply evidence that the person had at least a little doubt in his heart. Either way, the words of Jesus prove true.

And who wouldn't doubt—at least a little—that a mountain would move on the command of a human being. I know I can't get over that mental hurdle, so it is clear that I will have no

chance of success in the mountain-commanding business.

## FUNDAMENTAL

Which leads to a fundamental question: Is faith a thing that you can successfully try to have more of simply by willing it to be so? If you can't be sure you believe something, can you just decide to go ahead and be sure anyway? Is that possible?

For some people, maybe.

For others, probably not.

And what if you are one of those others?

There is a hymn, written by Lucy A. Bennett, titled "Trust Him When Thy Wants Are Many."

The fifth verse of the hymn reads:

Trust Him when dark doubts assail thee,

Trust Him when thy strength is small,

Trust Him when to simply trust Him

Seems the hardest thing of all.

It seems to me that this is where many of us sometimes find ourselves. We don't actually want to be in the mountain-moving business. But we do hope to hang on to the faith we have. We are like that father who sought out Jesus, hoping that Jesus might heal his dying son. "Lord, I believe," he said. "Help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

## WHY DO DOUBTS ASSAIL?

So, why do doubts assail us? Near the end of Luke's gospel is a story that seems to be a

different version of the post-resurrection story we already considered from John chapter 20. Though Thomas is not specifically mentioned in Luke's version, this story addresses the question of doubt.

"Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?" Jesus asks, and then He urges, "Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have" (Luke 24:38).

Luke goes on to say that the disciples "still did not believe it because of joy and amazement" (verse 41), so Jesus took a piece of broiled fish and ate it, giving evidence of His solid physical reality.

Then—and I do wish there was a video of this conversation available on YouTube—"He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures" (verse 45).

## BACK TO JAMES

But since we don't have that video, let's return, again, to those difficult words in James' letter. Here they are: "He must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord" (James 1:6-7).

Here's the thing. James is not contrasting strong faith with weak faith. He is not addressing a person who finds faith a struggle.

He is addressing a *doubter*—a person who is the opposite of a person of faith. This is a person who has unfaith. Remember, Jesus said faith as small as a mustard seed is enough faith (Matthew 17:20). Apparently a lot of faith is not necessary. But there are people who simply *do not want to believe*. And that's the difference between faith and unfaith.

This is something a person actually *can* decide: Sometimes the difference between a person of faith and a person of doubt is simple desire. If you read Scripture, and in your mind what you have read is something you truly desire, that is faith. It may not feel strong. It may seem frail. Maybe it leaves you wondering about some things. That's all right. It is faith. It is not doubt.

Consider the words James wrote just before those we already read: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:2-4).

That is an experience not achieved in one giant leap. It is experienced in small steps, day by day, through many decisions involving mustard-seed-sized faith. According to James, this faith "develops." It is a work that takes time, eventually resulting in a person who is



“mature and complete.” That is all part of the package James presents to us.

And if you are still struggling with the difficult words of James as you seek to grow in faith, consider the gentler words of Jude (verse 22): “Keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt.”

*\*Four of the texts seem to me to be mere asides, not offering significant insight on the subject of doubt, so they are not directly considered in this article. These texts are Acts 12:11; Romans 14:23; 1 Corinthians 11:19; and Hebrews 7:7.*

“There lives more faith in honest doubt, believe me, than in half the creeds.”

—Alfred Lord Tennyson

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# Grudges

## Part 3: The Research

by Ginger Ketting-Weller



In the previous installment of this series, I reviewed five stories in which the Bible writers highlight the negative outcomes of grudge-holding. In this part I’d like to look at current research.

Psychology has recently turned its attention to some of the “softer inquiries” that researchers used to scorn: happiness, forgiveness, even spirituality. Grudges fit right in with these newer areas of intellectual curiosity. Considering the damage done by grudge-holding, it’s no surprise that there is a specific line of inquiry into the effects of hanging on to a grudge. It’s related to the forgiveness research, but I think it carves out its own little niche.

## STEEPER

Researchers in Singapore conducted a fascinating study in which they asked people to recall a situation for which they still held a grudge against their offender. Then they were asked to estimate the angle of slopes depicted in various photographs. The idea was to bring to mind the task of climbing a steep hill. The people who had not let go of grudges estimated the slopes to be steeper than those who had let go of grudges. Researchers described it as similar to wearing “emotional backpacks,” like real-life backpacks that make an upward trail seem steeper. The researchers went further in their exploration: despite controlling for other factors such as fitness, they found that people who thought about their grudges could not jump as high as those who had forgiven their offenders. The Singapore researchers concluded that holding a grudge is actually physically taxing to a person, limiting their abilities.

Medical researchers have also found indications of the chemical effects of grudge-holding. Recent findings are well represented in a 2012 study by McCulloch and Tabak which indicates that holding a grudge increases the production of the “stress hormone” cortisol, and inhibits the production of oxytocin, the “love hormone.” Well, of course! But those hormones also affect our health. Too much cortisol has a negative effect on a person’s weight, causes inflammation, depresses the immune function, and raises the risk of chronic

disease. Additionally, grudge-holding has been linked to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, pain disorders, and stomach ulcers.

## EVEN DEMENTIA

Somewhere in the past year I spotted a study saying that people who held grudges were more likely to experience dementia in old age, but I can’t find that study now. Nevertheless, that concept intrigues me greatly. Could choosing to forgive and let go improve your chances for preserving mental functions? Well, let’s follow the logic: If holding grudges raises cortisol, and higher cortisol levels are related to weight problems and cardiovascular disease, and those are both correlated with an increased risk of dementia, it seems to all connect. But short of finding a direct link in the research, I can’t reference a study in which a connection between grudge-holding and dementia has been indicated—yet.

The point is, holding a grudge is not only destructive in human relationships. Holding a grudge is not only seen by Bible writers as a dynamic that leads to no good whatsoever. It is also clearly indicated in scientific research as having a significant negative effect on both your physical and your mental health.

*Ginger Ketting-Weller is Dean of the School of Education at La Sierra University in Riverside, California.*



# Defeating Hate

by Ray McAllister



It seems that society is filled with more and more hate. If it's not another racist attack in the news, it's vulgar remarks on social media. The truth is that hate is not a new enemy. The best discussion of the problem, as well as the most effective answers, were written in the Bible millennia ago.

Let's spend a few moments looking at the story of Esther. This biblical book is filled with complex irony and intrigue, and there isn't the space to discuss all that here. I shall simply summarize some main points and invite you to read the book of Esther on your own time.

## THE VILLAIN

In chapter three, Haman, the villain, is promoted to the office that we would refer to as prime minister of the Persian empire. A righteous Jew named Mordecai refuses to bow down before Haman, most likely because of the idea that one should only bow down before God Almighty.

Haman becomes so bothered by this apparent show of insubordination that he makes plans to kill Mordecai. However, Haman realizes that most Jews would behave as Mordecai, so he goes further, and makes plans to annihilate every Jew in the empire.

In chapter four, we find the response to these threats. First, Mordecai and the Jews mourn and fast. This type of fasting was done for one purpose, repentance.



Consider Jonah chapter three, in which the Ninevites fasted as they repented from evil. Daniel, in chapter nine, also fasted as a sign of repentance. While Haman's actions might not necessarily be a direct punishment for any sins the Jews had committed, they knew the importance of being right with God in order to be available to receive His power.

## **EXERCISING SHREWDNESS**

Then, after getting on firm footing with God, the next step was to exercise shrewdness. In chapter five, Queen Esther, Mordecai's uncle's daughter, begins preparing the king to receive the request to help the Jews. The king does not know she's a Jew or that she's related to Mordecai. She shrewdly invites the king to a series of banquets. In the second banquet (chapter seven), with the king thoroughly delighted with the wonderful food, she asks for her people to be spared. Only then does she reveal her nationality. The king honors her request, and an amusing comedy of errors ensues, at the end of which Haman is hanged. The Jews are, soon, given the right to defend themselves when attacked. In the end, the Jews gain the victory over all who would hate them.

So what does this story teach us about hatred? First, hate can grow in any of us. There are not many steps between saying an unkind

word and seeking to annihilate an entire group of people. Haman harbored resentment against Mordecai until it blossomed into full-blown hatred of the Jews. Haman's hatred, though, didn't appear out of nowhere.

It seems, in Scripture, that hatred often comes from selfish covetousness that goes unchecked. Haman wanted Mordecai's worship, and Mordecai wouldn't give it. The resentment only grew.

In the Garden of Eden, according to Genesis 3, Adam and Eve wanted the forbidden fruit, and that desire led to their blaming each other and God (Genesis 3:12-13).

## **ARRESTING COVETOUSNESS**

So the first step to stopping hate from even forming is the arresting of covetousness. When we want something that is not ours, that selfishness will only destroy us, and eventually, much more than that.

To respond positively to the hatred of others, the steps are also clear. First, it is necessary to get right with God, which involves fasting only if one is healthy enough and feels impressed by God to do so. Any unconfessed sin in our lives will block us from God's power.

Then, we must pray for shrewdness. Of course, love is the greatest weapon against hate, but God must often show us how to shrewdly use that love so we can be most



effective. Violence and more hate only make the situation worse. God may direct us to take action, but He must lead us in that action. As the book of Esther shows, such action often involves working with the established powers to achieve noble goals.

Many of us encounter different forms of hatred and prejudice. If it's not racial prejudice, it's prejudice against a disability, or some other unchangeable reality. We must, at all times, refuse to covet revenge. Instead, we must be sure that God is in control of our lives. Only then can He overcome hate with the grace and majesty of His perfect love.

*Ray McAllister is a regular columnist for Light magazine.*

# LIGHT

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Executive Editor: Bert Williams

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# Be Ready

*A crossword puzzle by Richard Clark Jr.  
(Answers from the NKJV)*

## Across

2. Prepare yourself and be ready, you and all your \_\_\_\_\_. Ezekiel 38:7

5. I am ready . . . to die at \_\_\_\_\_ for the name of the Lord Jesus. Acts 21:13

7. You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and \_\_\_\_\_ in mercy . . . Psalm 86:5

10. Then they made the \_\_\_\_\_ ready for Joseph's coming at noon. Genesis 43:25

11. Preach the word! Be ready in \_\_\_\_\_ and out of \_\_\_\_\_. 2 Timothy 4:2

13. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, \_\_\_\_\_ to share.

1 Timothy 6:18

16. But You are God, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in \_\_\_\_\_, and did not forsake them. Nehemiah 9:17

20. The LORD said to me, ". . . I am ready to \_\_\_\_\_ My word." Jeremiah 1:12

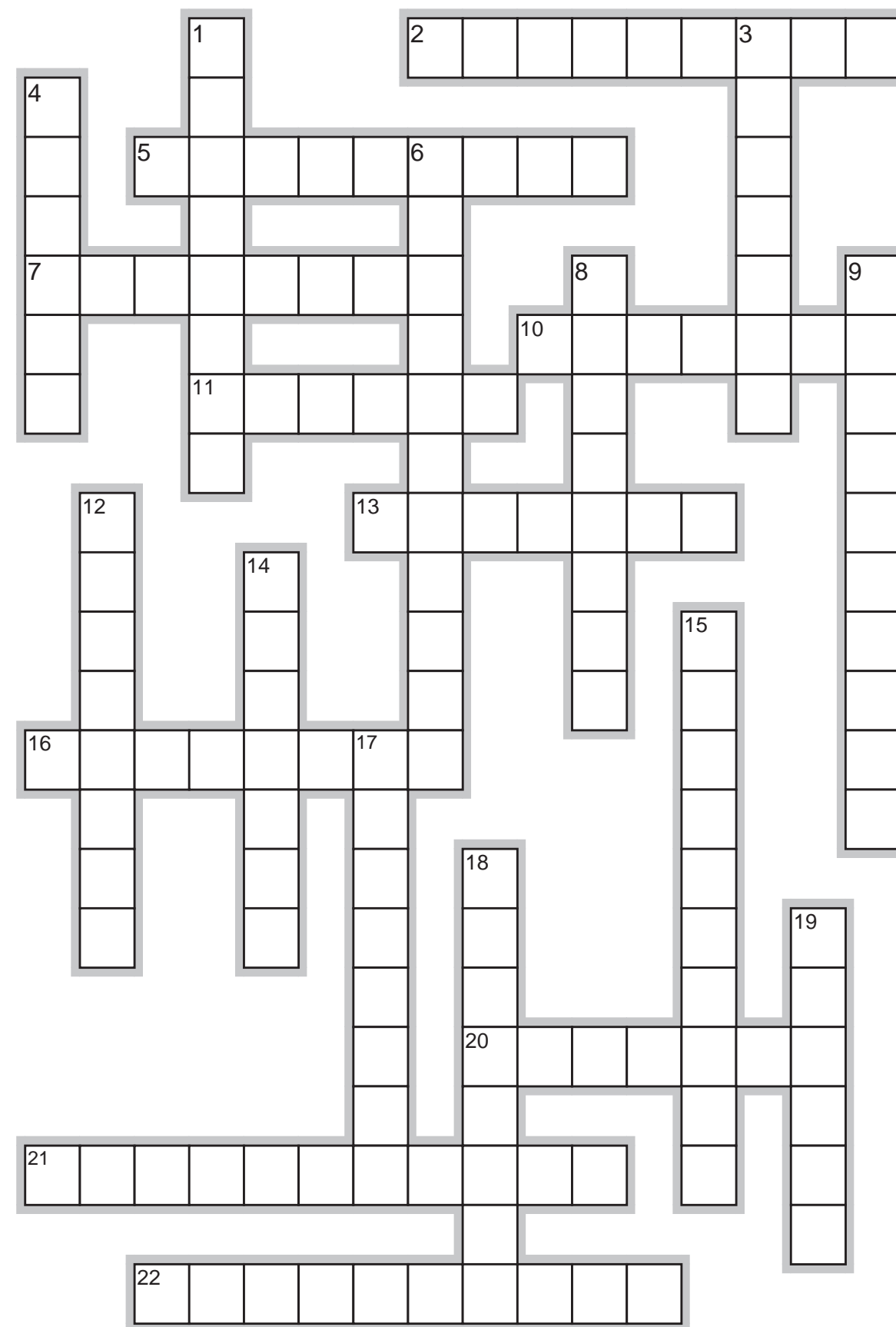
21. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children," and the \_\_\_\_\_ to the wisdom of the just . . . Luke 1:17

22. Now for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be \_\_\_\_\_ to you.

2 Corinthians 12:14

## Down

1. Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with \_\_\_ and fear. 1 Peter 3:15
3. Tell those who are \_\_\_, "See, I have prepared my dinner . . . and all things are ready. Come to the wedding." Matthew 22:4
4. I am ready to \_\_\_ the gospel to you who are in Rome also. Romans 1:15
6. Remind them to be subject to rulers and \_\_\_, to obey, to be ready for every good work. Titus 3:1
8. A copy of the document was to be issued as law in every \_\_\_, . . . Esther 3:14
9. The tongue of the \_\_\_ will be ready to speak plainly. Isaiah 32:4
12. Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the \_\_\_ of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. Revelation 19:7
14. Be ready in the \_\_\_. Exodus 34:2
15. While they went to buy, the \_\_\_ came, and those who were ready went in with him . . . ; and the door was shut. Matthew 25:10
17. The LORD was ready to save me; therefore we will sing my songs with \_\_\_ instruments all the days of our life. Isaiah 38:20
18. Elisha the prophet called one of the sons of the \_\_\_, and said to him, "Get yourself ready, take this flask of oil in your hand, and go to Ramoth Gilead." 2 Kings 9:1
19. You also be ready, for the Son of Man is \_\_\_ at an hour you do not expect. Matthew 24:44



Answers on page 2





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