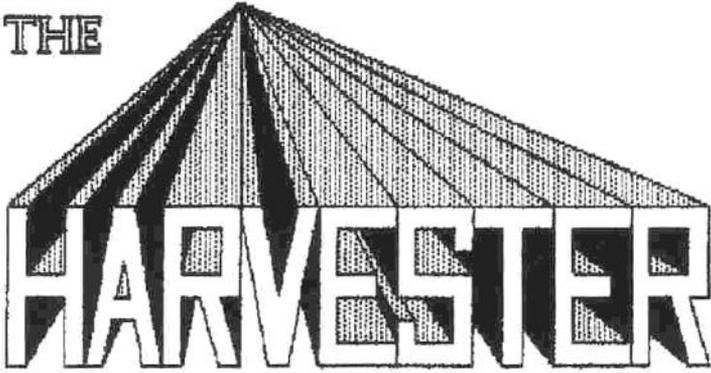


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*“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2)*

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## PEER PRESSURE

“Just say no to drugs and alcohol.” That’s the slogan that may come to mind when thinking about peer pressure. It is a good idea to resist pressures from those around us to indulge in sinful behaviors such as becoming drunk (Eph. 5:18) and taking harmful drugs (1 Cor. 3:16-17). In the scenarios presented by some anti-drug programs, we are told to “just say no” if anyone offers a harmful substance to us. This seems like a simple and natural response, but the fact is that peer pressure comes in many different forms that may not fit this scenario. Our minds can be trained to find things less repulsive as we spend more time around them and around people who indulge in

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them. Even if we are surrounding ourselves with those who enjoy drugs or alcohol, we might not ever be directly asked to participate in the drinking or the drug use. The pressure can come from our own perceptions of the items as cool, fun, and harmless based on our personal experience with friends and the fact that they have not had any physical harm brought on them due to drugs or alcohol so far. We can also feel pressure from some friends neglecting to invite us to certain events and outings based on our attitude toward alcohol. Ads and commercials on TV, online, and in publications may promote alcohol by showing people having a good time and glorifying the sensation of preparing and drinking a glass. These pressures can be faced without ever having the opportunity to outright say “no” to an offer of alcohol or drugs (1 Cor.15:33).

The fact is that any sinful activity must be resisted just as much as drugs or alcohol. Drugs and alcohol are at least somewhat presented as harmful in media and promotional programs in schools, but other sinful activities are presented in positive ways by worldly media. A message of abstinence may have been presented in the past concerning fornication, but now the message from the world is that it's more important to teach kids to practice safe sex and accept that the youth will participate in fornication anyway. Marriage is viewed as a “50-50 shot at success”, so people have in mind they could always just divorce and marry again if things don't work out. “Sex sells” is a common catchphrase for marketers that says it's useful to take advantage of the population's weakness to lust to sell products. The media draws distinctions between lies of different magnitudes and makes justifications for sins under certain circumstances.

We would never invite Satan into our homes and into our lives if he walked up to the door in the form of an ugly, repulsive creature and stated his identity as the devil. We don't see Satan approaching us in an obvious way because it would be easy to see that he was trying to deceive us. Satan uses the world to

appeal to our human lusts and desires and to convince us that we have made the decisions on our own without outside influences. We value reputations among our peers, and that puts pressure on us to act a certain way to uphold that reputation. We may avoid talking about Christ among friends because they have made it clear that their beliefs do not match up with ours or that they do not believe in God at all. We may be pressured into going to “nights out” and drinking parties because we don't want to look like a “stick in the mud” to our friends, families, or coworkers (2 Cor. 6:14). We may spend less time with our church family because of being viewed as uncool by those outside the Church, or we might stop going to Church services as much due to friends and family who don't want to come with us to Church because there are things they'd rather do instead.

Peer pressure isn't always bad though. We are advised to resist peer pressure because generally it is pressure to do things that are not in our best interest. However, our brothers and sisters in Christ can provide a very strong source of positive peer pressure. If we surround ourselves with people who don't participate in sinful recreational activities, we get much less pressure to sin, and we gain a positive pressure to do something that is enjoyable without being sinful. We also gain positive pressure to regularly attend Church services if our friends are all attending. We get more pressure to turn back to God if we ever have doubts, since Christian friends should provide reasons to persevere in the Church rather than worldly reasons to leave and abandon your faith.

As Christians, we should not only resist negative peer pressure, but we should also be providing positive peer pressure to those around us. We should be serving as a good influence for a friend, or at least that friend should be a good influence on us. If neither is true, we should probably consider why we aren't talking to the person about their faith or why we are still involved in the relationship if it is only negative for us spiritually.

*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)*

SCOTT CARPENTER  
(Huntsville, AL)

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## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What is the name of Jesus' cousin, born six months before him?
2. Of what, specifically, was man not allowed to eat in the Garden of Eden?
3. Why shouldn't we give anyone the title of "Father"?
4. Which prophet anointed David as king?
5. What did Paul do to the soothsayer which made her masters unhappy?

...and remember last month's questions?

1. What did God tell the people not to eat after the flood?  
BLOOD (Genesis 9:4)
  2. With what object did Jael kill Sisera?     A NAIL OF THE TENT (Judges 4:21)
  3. Who sat down under a tree and asked the Lord to take away his life?     ELIJAH (1 Kings 19:4)
  4. Many of the chief rulers privately believed in Jesus. Why did they not confess this belief publicly?     THEY WERE AFRAID THE PHARISEES WOULD PUT THEM OUT OF THE SYNAGOGUE (John 12:42)
  5. In Revelation, how many people from each tribe were "sealed"?     12,000 (Revelation 7:5-8)
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## THE JOY OF LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Who among us hasn't had the unpleasant experience of asking an acquaintance, out of customary politeness, "How are you?" Then, just as soon as these words have left our lips, we cringe and think within ourselves, "Why did I ask that question of him - because I know I'm about to be told how terrible he feels and

how bad things are?” Some folk NEVER feel good. Some folk ALWAYS have a complaint. With some folk, gloom and disaster lurks just ahead.

But the Lord expects his people to be joyful! He doesn't want them to be sad, in despair, or looking for the dark side of possibilities.

*Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but BE OF GOOD CHEER; I have overcome the world. (John 16:32-33)*

*And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle. And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, BE OF GOOD CHEER, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome. (Acts 23:10-11)*

### **Observations Which Might Help**

-Don't place too much importance upon earthly accomplishments.

There is a story of American tourist who visited a famous Polish rabbi, Hofetz Chaim. He found the rabbi's house to consist of only a simple room having many books, a table, and a chair. The tourist asked about the rabbi's lack of furniture. In answer the rabbi asked the tourist, "Where is your furniture?" The American tourist replied, "Mine? Why, I'm just passing through." The rabbi then stated, "So am I."

*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. (Hebrews 11:13)*

*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*  
(Luke 12:34)

-Be bigger than your problems and failures.

Consider Joseph and God's use of adversity in his life.

*And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them. (Gen. 50:18-21)*

A little girl accidentally splashed a drop of ink on a picture she was drawing. She thought the picture was ruined! But her father suggested that she draw a dog around the ink spot and make it a part of the picture. Her teacher was very pleased.

Make God a part of your answer - a real important part! And with God's presence, be an important part of the ANSWER; don't contribute to the problem. Some folks can never see the sunshine, they seem to prefer the dull and the dreary.

-Make sure that you really are what you profess to be.

*And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD'S anointed is before him. But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth;*

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*for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.* (1 Sam. 16:6-7)

-Quit feeling sorry for yourself!

There was a crowd and people were darting in and out hurrying along. But there was also a man in wheelchair pushing himself along with his hands on the large wheels of his chair - and he was singing. Someone stopped him and commented about his singing as he rolled by. He explained that when he stopped looking at what he had lost and began to look at what he had left, then he could sing!

### **The Attitude to Have**

*Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.* (Luke 6:22-23)

Where were the nine (Luke 17:11-19)? “*And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God*” (Luke 17:15).

Thanksgiving expresses a genuine inward quality. Paul and Silas sang in prison (Acts 16:25). They possessed this quality.

The inward quality that really matters and which God's word so beautifully pictures is that of:

-Praise: “*Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God*” (Php. 1:11).

-Thanksgiving: “*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God*” (Php. 4:6).

-Gladness: “*And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart*” (Acts 2:46).

## GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
June 30 - July 2	Antioch Douglasville, GA	Ron Scott (Bloomington, IN)
June 30 - July 2	Willow Oaks Russell Springs, KY	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
July 7 - 9	Hokes Bluff Hokes Bluff, AL	Joe Hill (Hagerhill, KY)
July 16 - 21	Oak Grove Woodland, AL	Ricky Murphy (Woodland, AL)
July 21 - 23	Owen's Road Prattville, AL	Joe Hill (Hagerhill, KY)
July 23 - 28	Napoleon Woodland, AL	Bill Prince, Jr. (Oxford, AL)

-Joy: *“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full”* (John 15:11).

### “Be of Good Cheer”

*But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to BE OF GOOD CHEER: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, BE OF GOOD CHEER: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. (Acts 27:21-25)*

Based on a sermon by HARRY COBB  
(Deceased)