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- unless otherwise noted, answers to questions by Keith Sharp -

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Finally, brethren

# WHATEVER THINGS

are true  
are noble  
are just  
are pure  
are lovely  
are of good report

PHILIPPIANS  
4:8

IF THERE IS ANY VIRTUE AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –  
**meditate on these things.**

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at [christistheway.com](http://christistheway.com).

I apologize for missing two issues of "Meditate on These Things." I had a pacemaker installed in my chest in April, 2022. This spring I was continually very tired. An Xray determined a lead wire from the pacemaker to my heart had come loose. The lead was surgically reattached at the Arkansas Heart Hospital. After three weeks, the surgery site became infected. The pacemaker was surgically removed, leaving a large, open wound in my chest. I have had daily antibiotic infusions for four weeks. Now we're waiting for the wound to completely close, and the wound is being freshly cleaned and bandaged daily. When I'm completely healed, a new pacemaker will be installed on the other side of my chest. My strength is gradually returning. I appreciate your prayers. - Keith

"The Christian who neglects duties and shirks responsibilities will find himself unqualified for the honors and glories God has in reserve for his faithful servants" (David Lipscomb, **A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles**, 3:68)

"It is vain for any person to imagine that he loves Christ, if he does not love the brethren and is not liberal in relieving their needs" (David Lipscomb, **Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians**, 113)

## Children in the Worship Assembly

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Our children are precious. The psalmist of old observed:

*"Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD,  
The fruit of the womb is a reward"* (Psalm 127:3).

Parents have the obligation to train their children to serve the Lord. "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Notice it is primarily the father's responsibility to train the children. Of course, his wife is his helper (Genesis 2:18).

Our children need to learn the importance of coming together with the church to worship and learn.

*“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25).*

Thus, we need to have them there every time we are able to do so.

Our children need to learn to participate in the worship assemblies. We should teach them to worship “in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24). If the child is old enough to sit still and learn in school, he is old enough to sit still and learn in worship. If the child is not allowed to play with toys and electronic devices in school, he should not be allowed to do so in church. Before our children were old enough to read, my wife Sandy had them copying my charts while I preached.

When we come together as the church on the first day of the week we eat the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26), give a contribution to the church (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), sing (Ephesians 5:18-19), pray (Acts 2:42), and hear the Word of God preached (Acts 20:7). Our children should learn the importance of each of those activities by participating as much as possible. Our daughter Michelle distributes lesson sheets on the sermon which helps them pay attention and take notes. They can learn many of the songs and sing with us. Parents can give their children money to put in the collection box, or better, if the children have money of their own, they can put some of it in. They should be quiet during the prayers and Lord’s Supper and pay attention to what is said and done.

Children learn what is right and what is important by watching us, hearing us, and participating. Are the children learning the importance of worshiping the Lord in spirit and truth?

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## **Refuting Olan Hicks' Position On Divorce And Remarriage**

Patrick Donahue | Harvest, Alabama, USA

Like a lot of false teachers, Olan Hicks taught a person can divorce their scriptural spouse for a reason other than fornication and marry another, and stay in that second marriage with God’s approval. Mr. Hicks’ primary argument on Matthew 19:9a (“... Whosoever shall put away his wife, ... and shall marry another, committeth adultery ...”) can be seen in his book **“What The Bible Says About Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage.”** On page 177 he states the position he opposes this way – “The condition ‘shall marry another’ is seen as taking place in cohabitation, not at the point of the wedding ceremony.”

So Mr. Hicks is saying the adultery in this verse is divorcing and having a wedding ceremony (breaking the covenant by formalizing a second marriage contract), and has nothing to do with the sexual relations that follow the wedding ceremony. So according to Mr. Hicks, there is no ongoing sin, therefore a person can repent of the divorce and remarriage, and just stay in the second marriage he is in.

But consider 1 Corinthians 7:9b where Paul said “it is better to marry than to burn.” Does this verse mean having a “wedding ceremony” by itself will help stop lust? Or is Paul using the word “marry” to include the sexual relations led to and authorized by the wedding ceremony? Olan Hicks answers that question for us in his comments on 1 Corinthians 7:3-5,9 on pages 30,33,73 of the same book – “A marriage contract alone does not prevent fornication. ... A healthy and satisfying sexual relationship does. ... Thus the New Testament clearly pictures marriage as a deterrent to sexual temptation, ... because marriage is the only context in which sexual activity is permitted. ... But to those whose control of their natural passions depend on it, marriage is commanded on the basis ... that “it is better to marry than to burn.” ... This confirms the fact ... that a marriage license alone does not prevent temptation. “A healthy sex life does.” And again on page 141 of his debate with J.T. Smith – “I simply mean engage in all of the things that a marriage consists of, including sexual activity.”

What can we conclude from Mr. Hicks' truthful statements? - that "marry" includes sexual relations in 1 Corinthians 7:9. And if in 1 Corinthians 7:9, why not the same in Matthew 19:9? In addition, consider three everyday illustrations: First Mr. Hicks states in his book – "If you can understand this: Whoever Aims Gun + Pulls Trigger = Commits Murder, Why can't you understand this?: Whoever Divorces + Remarries = Commits Adultery." Now notice from even his own illustration that a man is guilty of murder if he aims the gun and pulls the trigger, assuming what is implied - that the bullet strikes its target fatally. Likewise, a man commits adultery if he divorces and marries another, assuming what is implied – the sexual consummation of the new marriage, something that happens about 99% of the time. Another illustration: "I am going into the house to take a shower." Just because it is possible for a house not to have a bathroom, does that imply we don't normally mean to include a bathroom when we say the word "house"? Of course not. One more illustration: "He that eats food receives nourishment." Do we mean to exclude digesting the food, or is it included in the word eat? In the same way, the word "marry" includes the sex that follows under normal circumstances. Our brother Hicks says it does.

One final point: Luke 16:18b reads "... and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." If a person commits adultery by divorcing and having a wedding ceremony only, and it has nothing to do with the sexual relations that follow, then why does the woman of Luke 16:18b commit adultery? She hasn't divorced anyone. She was put away against her will. She hasn't done a solitary thing wrong according to our brother Hick's position. The truth is, the man and the woman in the 'b' part of these verses commit adultery when they have sexual relations with each other because the woman is still "bound" (not married, but obligated) to her first husband (Romans 7:2-3).

So what have we learned from Mr. Hicks' own admissions and other? That the second marriage of Matthew 19:9 is adulterous because of the involved sexual relations (Hebrews 13:4 - adultery is something done in "bed"), therefore when a person repents of violating Matthew 19:9, such person is going to have to get out of the censored marriage; those unlawful sexual relations must not continue (Romans 6:1ff).

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## Joseph - a Type of Christ

Jefferson David Tant | Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA

One of the interesting things about the Bible is that it is so full of different kinds of information and teaching. One particular matter has to do with Types and Anti-types. Those deal with particular facts about a certain person, which facts are similar to what we see in someone who lived many years or centuries earlier.

So, when we look at the story of Joseph in Genesis, and compare his life with the life of Jesus, we find many interesting similarities. The matter of prophecy is also involved in this. Following are passages referring to Joseph, and then passages referring to Christ.

**THE PLOT** – As Joseph was sent by his father to check on his brothers, "When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death" (Genesis 37:18).

"From then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus" (Matthew 26:16). "Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap Him in what He said" (Matthew 22:15).

**STRIPPED** – "So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him" (Genesis 37:23).

"They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him" (Matthew 27:28).

**TEMPTED** – "It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, 'Lie with me'" (Genesis 39:7).

“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15)

**UNJUSTLY ACCUSED** -- “Then she spoke to him with these words, ‘The Hebrew slave, whom you brought to us, came into me to make sport of me; and as I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled outside.’ Now when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, ‘This is what your slave did to me,’ his anger burned. So Joseph’s master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail” (Genesis 39:17-20).

“Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death. They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on, two came forward, and said, “This man stated, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days’” (Matthew 29:59-61).

**GIVEN HONOR** -- “Now the proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants. Then Pharaoh said to his servants, ‘Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?’ So Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you.’ Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt’” (Genesis 41:37-41).

“This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘**The Lord said to my Lord, “sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”**’” Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ--this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:32-36).

**BROUGHT SALVATION** -- “But Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for am I in God’s place? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive” (Genesis 50:19-20).

“For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him” (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10).

In conclusion, we remember that Joseph was able to save his people, as through his influence they were able to come to Egypt for food when there was a famine in their land. And in the spiritual sense, Christ saves His people today from the plague of sin that is in the world by providing us with spiritual food, as He is the “Bread of Life” (John 6:35).

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## Once Saved Always Saved

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

A few years ago, I participated in a gospel meeting with a good friend of mine and a fellow preacher. The meeting was held at a park under a covered pavilion with a question-and-answer session after each lesson. One of the lessons presented by my friend was on the false doctrine of once saved always saved. This meeting was very well advertised throughout the community and there was a good number from the local area who attended. One gentleman who was present was there specifically to hear this lesson. During the question-and-answer session, he spoke up about his belief in this doctrine. I asked him to give me what he thought was his strongest Bible verse to support his conclusion. His response was John 10:28.

*“And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:28).*

On the surface by pulling this verse from its context, I certainly could see how one might conclude the Lord is speaking of the eternal security for the believer. Yet not only would you need to neglect the context but also a host of other verses which warn of the possibility of apostasy. Christ assures the believer of eternal life, yet it also depends upon if one remains faithful to Him. Who does Jesus promise eternal life to in verse 28? Notice what He says in the previous verse. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27). It is His sheep, who hear His voice, and those who follow Him. If one will do this till his life on earth draws to a close, then this individual is promised eternal life.

Far too many find false comfort in this doctrine, thinking they can just live any way they want and then heaven is awaiting. Paul warned, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" (Romans 6:1-2). The end results of continuing in sin will be disastrous. This same apostle, in writing to the churches of Galatia, warned those who were living according to the works of the flesh, "...of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:21).

It is hard for me to understand how anyone could study the book of Hebrews and not grasp that the writer is warning over and over of the possibility of being guilty of apostasy. If I have drifted away from the Lord and His truth, the promise of eternal rest in heaven I'll come short of it (Hebrews 2:1-3; 4:1). It is not unbelievers the writer is warning about in this letter.

*"Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:12-13).*

Thayer defines the word "departing" as, "to fall away, become faithless" (**Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament**. 89). It is not that an individual stops believing that God is or that He exists; he simply stops doing what He tells them to do (Hebrews 3:14-19).

I have heard some contend through the years that the Lord has given them eternal life (John 10:28), and if He took it back, He would not be truthful to His word. Paul told Titus, "in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began" (Titus 1:2). He has given it in promise, one is not in possession of it yet, and it is conditioned upon whether one is faithful to Him (Revelation 2:10; Matthew 10:22; 24:13). The Father certainly wants to give each of us the eternal city, and He will, to all those who by faith diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6,16).

If we are honest with handling the word of God, this false doctrine is easy to expose. Yet I believe one of the great dangers which many Christians encounter, is not accepting this teaching, yet living as if they believe it. The Lord expects us once we have been saved by grace to walk in newness of life (Romans 4). We are to put off the old man of sin (Romans 6:6) and present our bodies to be used as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:13). Peter gives us a word picture of how repulsive it is when one has been set free from sin, and then they return to their former lifestyle. "But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Pet. 2:22). May the Lord help us to press forward, never allowing sin to reign in our bodies, and always put Him first in our day to day lives (Matt. 6:33). We must refuse to believe and practice such a doctrine.

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## When God Is Seen, Who Is It?

### CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

William Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

#### "...NO ONE HAS SEEN GOD..."

At the beginning of John's unique gospel account, he makes the monumental statement, "No one has seen God at any time" (John 1:18). Later, in the first epistle by the same writer, he repeats verbatim, "No one has seen God at any time" (1 John 4:12).

The Scriptures reveal that Jesus is God (John 1:1; 5:18; 20:20). When He came into the world, he became a man, taking on a body of flesh and blood (John 1:14; Romans 8:3; Philippians 2:7; Hebrews 2:14; 10:5) and was seen daily by people. He did not cease to be God, but was "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). Thus, it is obvious John's statement in John 1:18 (cf. 1 John 4:12) was not about the Lord Jesus.

The Scriptures reveal that the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4). Though He is described as a spirit, which has no physical form, Luke tells us at Jesus' baptism

*...the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him... (Luke 3:22)*

That being the case, the statement in John 1:18 (cf. 1 John 4:12) is not about the Holy Spirit.

Since it is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit that "no one has seen," we must conclude that it is the Father who is referred to. Jesus confirms this to be the case,

*...not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father... (John 6:46)*

If no one has seen the Father except the Son, then when God is seen, we can conclude that it is not the Father, but the Son. In the course of this series, we will look at a number of instances in the Old Testament where God appeared to and interacted with man. It is my affirmation that it is the pre-incarnate Christ who shows Himself.

### **"...AND I HAVE BEEN WORKING..."**

The Pharisees and scribes sought to kill Jesus after He healed a man on the Sabbath. They were offended by His work. Thus, He explained,

*My Father has been working until now, and I have been working. (John 5:17)*

This statement infuriated the Jews even further, for they perceived that in that calling God His Father, He made Himself equal to God. They were right. In a subsequent discussion, Jesus would bluntly declare,

*"I and My Father are one" (John 10:30)*

Do not let the significance of Jesus' words in John 5:17 slip by. He was not speaking about His earthly ministry. The duration of the Son's work is equal to the duration of the Father's work. In the beginning of John's gospel, we read:

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him, nothing was made that was made." (John 1:1-3)*

Jesus' work, as is recorded for us in the Scriptures, begins with creation. He and the Father worked in unison to create all things (Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2). Throughout the Genesis account of creation, we find the words, "God said" (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 29). It does not tell us whether this is the Father or the Son in the context, but as we consider this in light of what texts such as John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:16, and Hebrews 1:2 say, we begin to understand that creation was a joint effort, involving both the Father and the Son. It is interesting that as John introduces Jesus, he calls Him the "Word." [NOTE - the Spirit is also identified in the creation process, as He is described as "hovering over the face of the waters," Genesis 1:2].

To remove all doubt about Jesus' involvement in the creation process, we are given a glimpse into the mutual work of the Father and Son in Genesis 1:26. It reads:

*"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...'"*

Jesus was there in the beginning, involved in creation. We will see in the course of our series that He was working throughout the Old Testament.

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## Why Should I Attend?

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

I firmly believe that Christians who intentionally and willfully miss the assemblies and classes they could attend are sinning and need to repent. When I said “intentionally and willfully miss the assemblies and classes,” I meant to address those who have no valid reason to miss but simply choose not to be there. I am very aware that we each have God given obligations which can cause conflicts in application. We have the responsibilities to earn a living (Ephesians 4:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12; 1 Timothy 5:8), and we have the responsibilities to care for family members who may be ill or disabled (Ephesians 6:2; 1 Timothy 5:4,8). We also have the obligation to assemble with the church (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Usually when I make such a statement, some incensed soul retorts, “Just give me one good reason I should be here every time the church assembles!” Well, would you settle for a dozen?

You and I should be in every assembly of the saints and in every Bible class the church makes available to us in order to grow spiritually. Are you so strong that you could not use some spiritual growth and strengthening? We assemble “in order to stir up” one another to “love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24-25). Everything done in the assembly should be “for edification” (1 Corinthians 14:26). The tragic fact is that those who miss the assemblies and classes the most are the weakest members of the congregation.

We should attend regularly in order to obey Christ. We are as plainly commanded to assemble regularly for worship as we are to be baptized (Hebrews 10:24-25). If alien sinners cannot be saved without obeying Christ in baptism, and they cannot (Hebrews. 5:8-9), what makes us think we can be saved without obeying Him in faithful attendance?

We should be with the Christians at every worship period in order to avoid falling away. The primary purpose of our coming together, other than to glorify God, is to strengthen each other so we do not fall away (Hebrews 10:24-31).

We should be in every assembly of the saints because Christ is there. He has never missed a scriptural worship assembly of His people (Matthew 18:20). Should we not follow His example (1 Peter 2:21) and be honored with His presence?

We should come together to worship on a regular basis in order to follow the example of first century Christians (Philippians 3:17). They did indeed assemble on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). But they also assembled, at least for a time, on a daily basis (Acts 2:46). We, as they, should come together “with one accord” as often as the congregation decides to assemble.

Christians should be in every assembly and class to prove their love and gratitude for Christ. He demonstrated His boundless love for us in dying for us. That love “compels us” to “live no longer for” ourselves, “but for Him who died for” us (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). No one who truly appreciates what Christ has done for us could ask, “Is it really necessary to be there every time?” Because they indeed love Christ, they ardently desire to be in every worship assembly.

We should attend regularly in order to show our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are to love one another (1 John 4:20-21). We assemble for the express purpose of stirring each other up to love (Hebrews 10:24-25). If your fleshly family gets together, do you want to be there? Do you love your spiritual family enough to want to enjoy their fellowship in worship?

We should be in every assembly and class in order to abound “in the work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58). Are the assemblies and classes good works? Then we should be there (Titus 3:1).

We should be there in order to put first things first (Matthew 6:33). What will you be doing Sunday

afternoon and Wednesday night that is more important than worshipping God and learning more about His Word?

Disciples ought to be in all the assemblies and classes in order to set the right kind of example for others (Matthew 5:16). Would you want babes in Christ to follow your example in attendance? How can you consistently invite those who are lost to attend that they might learn the truth, if you are not sufficiently interested to attend yourself?

We ought to attend every assembly and class because it is a wonderful privilege (cf. Psalm 122:1). Christians of old assembled to worship God despite horrible persecution and danger. Not even the fear of death prevented their expressions of devotion to the Lord. Many Christians today, particularly in foreign lands, experience similar hardships. What a wonderful privilege it is to worship God without fear of government oppression or the persecution of men, in the ease and comfort of a nice meeting house with the convenience of automobile travel. What an ingrate one is who fails to appreciate the privilege of worshipping God enough to assemble with such safety, ease, and comfort!

Every Christian should be in every assembly of the saints and in every class in order to be ready to meet Christ when He returns (Matthew 24:44). Is there any place you had rather be when He comes? What if He were to return at a time when you were willfully absent from an assembly? What would you say to Him? Do you think He would accept the excuse you gave the last time you missed?

There they are, dear Christian, one dozen reasons each of us should attend every time the church assembles. By the way, I could have given more. Having considered these scriptural reasons to assemble faithfully, do you really want to offer an excuse for not attending? Where will you be this afternoon? Wednesday night? Next Sunday morning during classes and assembly? Ladies, what about Ladies Class? Can the Lord count on you?



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