

It is wonderful to have such positive, supportive relationships in your life.

The challenge for many of us, though, is to name something we do for *strangers*. People who will never pay us back. People of a different ethnic group or religion. People whose politics we don't like. An enemy.

If those of us who say we are disciples of Jesus don't grow in our ability to care about others in very concrete, self-sacrificing ways, we are only fooling ourselves. Poverty, sickness, loneliness, hunger, fear—no individual or family, local church or civic group can tackle all these problems. But there is *one* situation, *one* family, or *one* person you can help. And "help" isn't warm feelings or kind thoughts. It's time. Putting money down. Having somebody into your home or going to theirs. Making a lonely person feel cared for. Tutoring a child.

Religious rituals are no substitute for compassionate actions. If the Marines are looking for "*a few good men*," Jesus is searching for a few *real disciples*—people whose religion is

Christ-imitating love and not mere church blather.

"Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works" (James 2.26 NLT).

How are you putting your faith in action?

Jack

ENCOURAGEMENT

Joel Manby is the CEO of Herschend Family Entertainment, a company that operates theme parks, aquariums and other family attractions. Manby was featured in the TV hit, "Undercover Boss." In the show, he mentioned that he took a job with Herchend because of their Christian values.

While working undercover, Joel discovered what most of the bosses discover. Their employees work hard, have overcome many challenges and have good ideas. At the end of the show, when the workers find out they're working with the boss, Manby seemed genuinely touched when people wept at the words, "Well done," from him. In a later interview, Joel said he has come to the conclusion that CEO ought to stand for Chief Encouragement Officer.



FAITH IN ACTION?

"Religion is as religion does—all the rest is talk," writes Irving Greenberg. A Jewish theologian, Greenberg had the Holocaust in view with his statement. It was not enough to say a prayer for Jews in the time of Hitler. It didn't help to feel sad or to wish that someone would come to the aid of people being murdered. It was a time that called for very specific and practical behaviors.

A European Jew in 1943 needed something as specific as a Gentile home or shop where she could hide. Money. Food. Spiritng across a border. *"But that would involve risk to the person providing it!"* someone cries. Of course, it would. But that's the point. Faith, godly living, justice, compassion—until they are actions

instead of mere moral conversation, they don't have meaning.

It is pretty easy to see that now. We are more than a half-century away from Hitler's gas chambers and crematoria. It's even possible to watch a movie or TV documentary and tell ourselves we would have done something back then. We can hope so. But there are good reasons to wonder.

Where *does* a stranger fit into your life? All of us do kind things for our family and close friends. I insist on buying lunch this time. You go to the hospital to cheer her up. You take care of his yard for six weeks while his ankle heals. You babysit their kids when they need to run an errand or just see a movie. But you'll get all those kindnesses back. You may even be repaying things they've already done.

**HOW I STOPPED STRIVING AND STARTED
RESTING IN HIM
By Kay Arthur**

In the midst of a heartbreaking trial, God clearly gave me the verse from Psalm 46: "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). As I meditated on this verse, I saw that "be still" could be translated "cease striving" or "let go, relax."

I had been doing everything I knew to do, everything I could do, in order to fix this painful situation - and then came the Word of God: "Be still, Kay... cease striving... know that I am God."

God's Word was clear. I couldn't fix it, and I needed to stop trying. I had wept. I had prayed. I had tried to make things right. I had searched my heart, rehearsed all my failings, and experienced the grief of them all. Yet nothing had worked. The situation hadn't changed; the incredible pain had not gone away.

Now it was clear. If I were to walk in faith, if I were to live by faith, I had to cease striving. I was to shut my mouth and quit trying to teach, to instruct, to straighten out, and I was to know God. He sits as sovereign on His throne; He hasn't moved. And I hadn't seen "the rest of the story." My part in this situation was simply "to be" rather than "to do."

O my friend, God has taught me so much. I stand in awe as I have seen God do the most incredible things—things I had longed for but couldn't dream of—and I know that He, and He alone, has done them.

He has done them apart from my planning, my orchestrating, my manipulating. My part was simply to allow the unconditional love of God to flow through me.

As I walked in obedience to Psalm 46:10, I began to see God move. It was so unexpected and it came in a way only our Sovereign Father could have designed. When it happened, all I could do was weep. It was the most precious of gifts, and I knew it had come straight from my Father's throne of mercy.

I had ceased striving. I had let go and relaxed. And He had shown Himself to be God! The sweetness of that one incident of divine intervention was a precious salve for my pain - the pain which had become a welcomed friend, for without it I would not have seen how very clearly He is God.

Whatever happens, I do know that I am to continue to rest, to relax and to remember that He is God. I am to walk by faith and remember that I am not God, that I cannot fix the situation. My responsibility is simply to trust and obey and to be what He wants me to be. I am

to embrace truth and to live by it. I can't live by my emotions, by dwelling upon my past, by focusing on my inadequacies, my weaknesses, my failures, or my impotence, and I can't trust in anything of my own flesh or strength. I am not to fear whatever the future holds, for the future is God's.

I am to live by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God whether or not my reasoning or emotions agree. Truth, the truth of God's Word, is to be the plumb line by which I evaluate every situation, every decision, every response, every feeling.

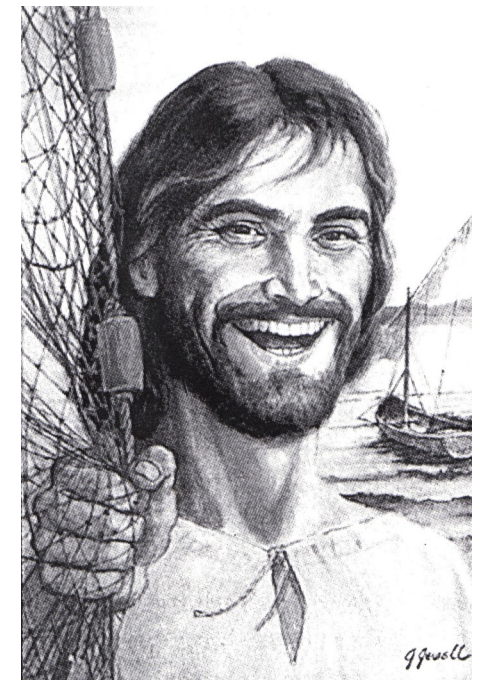
Our Savior is God, and He sits as the Son of Man at the right hand of God - above every power of the evil one, above every name in heaven and on earth. He is God, your Savior and your High Priest, who lives to make intercession for you—you as an individual.

He loves you with an everlasting love. He will never leave you nor forsake you, even when you fail to be and to do what is less than perfect. He is absolutely committed to you and in His time and in His way, He is going to perfect, to complete, everything which concerns you.

So... be still... and know... that He is God.

Jesus is coming...to reign on earth as King of kings, Lord of lords, and that's the rest of the story which the book of Revelation so vividly paints. Ask Him now to reign in your life as King of kings, Lord of lords, as God, and rest, knowing that He will complete the rest of the story. And as Psalm 23 says, when you look back, you will see that goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life (Psalms 23.6).

Rest, my friend, rest in Him.



**THE BIBLE IS GOOD FOR ME . . .
AND FOR YOU!**
By Dave Stone

Since I was fairly young, I've had a favorite Bible verse that has stuck with me through every phase of my life: Acts 4.13. Yes, I get the same look from everybody when I reveal the verse because it really isn't a common passage; most people are like, "Uh . . . really?" and they don't know whether to act like they know it.

It's such a cool passage because the disciples are being intensely persecuted but continue to preach about Jesus Christ being resurrected, and this is the observation the Jewish people have as they look at the disciples: "*When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.*"

When I feel inadequate and ordinary, I love to remind myself that Christ is extraordinary, Christ is all-sufficient, and he can use my service to impact others.

And yet there are times I still try to hide that I am ordinary. And there are times I believe I should be something special in order to be a preacher of God's Word. So another verse that has been a life-changer for me is Acts 2.46, which describes the believers in the first church as having "*sincere hearts.*" Of all the things that could be noted, attention is given to their sincere hearts. When your spiritual life is motivated by the approval of others, you will have big-time problems when no one is around. This is a struggle for many, and it certainly is a category I fall into as well.

Do you know what I sometimes like to do in the spring? I go to a drugstore and just look at

the chocolate Easter bunnies. Sometimes I choose one and say, "This will provide an awesome snack for three to four nights."

But if I pick up the wrong one, when I take a bite out of his ear I discover it's hollow! There's nothing inside! It was more for show than for substance. The thin glaze of chocolate must barely have covered the mold. I don't know how it held together.

Acts 2.46 helps me when I wonder if people outside the church sometimes get disillusioned when they get to know Christians. Is there substance there? Is there a distinctive life? Too often when life takes a bite out of our career or our dreams or our health, do others see solid consistency or a hollow habit of pretending?

I could go on and on about how the Bible continues to be practical and applicable to our daily lives. The Bible is the Word of God—true, active, and living. It works in our lives today. And Christ is seen throughout the entire fabric of the entire Bible.

John Wesley said: "I want to know one thing: the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it; here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be a man of one book."

Dave Stone is senior minister with Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, and a member of the Standard Publishing Publishing Committee.



The Word of Truth

February 7	THE LAST WORD <i>The Last Word On Evil</i>	<i>Revelation 6 & 7</i>
February 14	THE LAST WORD <i>The Last Word On Prayer</i>	<i>Revelation 8 & 9</i>
February 21	THE LAST WORD <i>The Last Word On Witness</i>	<i>Revelation 10 & 11</i>
February 28	THE LAST WORD <i>The Last Word On Politics</i>	<i>Revelation 12-14</i>
March 7	THE LAST WORD <i>The Last Word On Judgment</i>	<i>Revelation 15-18</i>
March 14	THE LAST WORD <i>The Last Word On Salvation</i>	<i>Revelation 19-20</i>
March 21	THE LAST WORD <i>The Last Word On Heaven</i>	<i>Revelation 21.1-22.5</i>
March 28	THE LAST WORD <i>The Last Words</i>	<i>Revelation 22.6-21</i>

**Revelation:
The Last Word**