

CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

VOLUME 112, NUMBER 6

LORD, TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?

Cody Westbrook

How incredible it must have been to have witnessed the miracles of Jesus. To see the dead raised, lepers cleansed, and storms subdued must have produced unshakable faith within those who experienced it first hand. Or, at least it should have. Miracles were not an “end” in and of themselves but were rather a “means to an end.” Their purpose was not to “wow” the crowds into following Jesus, but to prove the veracity of His claims and point them to His Word (Mark 16:20). Sadly, many who saw His wonders were willing to follow Him until they were challenged by and stumbled at His words.

The events of John 6 illustrate this phenomenon perfectly. Jesus fed the multitude with 5 loaves and 2 fish, and the effect was so powerful that the crowd intended to force Him into kingship (John 6:15). The next day, He preached to them and challenged them, and many turned away. It was on this occasion that Peter expressed the truth which the multitude rejected—the words of Jesus are what really matter (John 6:68). Filling the people’s stomachs was remarkable but bread cannot give eternal life. Only the “words of eternal life” can accomplish that.

Thus, there should be within us a desire to seek and find the words of life. When the crowd discovered that Jesus had departed, they made their way to Capernaum to seek Him (John 6:25). Their desire to find Jesus was commendable but their reason was not (John 6:26). The people were not interested in what Jesus had to say, they were interested in what He had to give. They wanted to be fed physically, not spiritually. Thus Jesus admonished, “Do not labor for

the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life...” (John 6:27). “Labor” involves great effort, and thus the exhortation is to put forth a great deal of effort to obtain the spiritual nourishment our Lord provides.

This desire should be exclusive. The keynote of the context is John 6:35—“...I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.” The emphasis of the imagery is that Jesus, and

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FROM THE EDITOR:

THE LORD IS NOT SLACK CONCERNING HIS PROMISE

Ross Haffner

Wrong thinking about God leads to wrong attitudes and actions. If I imagine Jehovah as the “Grandfather in the sky” who will grant all my wishes because He loves me so much — I’ve created a new god by the same name. Similarly, if I think He is a hard Master just waiting to punish me, I’ll react in fear like the one-talent servant and hide instead of serve (Matt. 25:24-25). God has revealed Himself to be a loving and merciful Judge Who wants to save all, but will act in just ways in harmony with His holiness.

Peter wrote, “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). The title “Lord” emphasizes authority. Jesus is the One who can offer salvation. He is the Captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10). No other way can save (John 14:6).

He is not slack (slow), He is patient. Apparently some were either impatient for the 2nd coming of Jesus (2 Pet. 3:8) or falling prey to the false teachings about His coming (2 Pet. 3:4). Perhaps the false teachers were attempting to use God’s patience as an argument against God when instead it should have led them to repentance. Just because Jesus has not returned yet does not mean He’s not coming. His return has been promised (Acts 1:11). Some today live as if the Lord will not return, and they will ultimately pay the price (2 Thess. 1:8-9).

Our God is longsuffering toward us. The fact that we have been waiting for nearly 2000 years is a credit to His mercy. Everyone who has ever lived in the Christian age should be thankful that God has given them time to repent of their sins. God’s patience shows that He is not overthrowing man’s free will by irresistible grace. Rather, in His sovereignty, He grants us to choose Him and become a part of those who have been chosen in Christ (Eph. 1:4-12).

God is not willing that any should perish. He will not save all universally, though He wishes that all would be saved. Notice the implied admonition to choose to be holy because of the coming judgment (2 Pet. 3:11). This also eliminates the possibility that God is selecting some to be saved regardless of their manner of living. When the New Testament uses words like “predestined” and “elect” it means that the church has been chosen to be saved, not individual by individual. We can learn much about the character of God from this phrase. He has done so much to offer salvation to you. Won’t you take advantage of the offer?

Ultimately I will have to change my mind and my actions if I’m going to be spared. God wants all to come to repentance. I should be willing to admit that God is right about any issue of right and wrong, and that I have not always stood on the same side as Him. But if I will turn to follow Him, I can be forgiven of my sins at my baptism and be added to the saved (Acts 2:38, 47).

CW



“YOU ARE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD”

Scott Harp

Towering above the landscape at Israel’s northernmost border lie three summits, snowcapped for most of the year, and the streams from them serve as the headwaters of the Jordan River. In the shadow of Hermon’s lofty heights lies ancient Pnias, the pagan city devoted to the Greek god Pan, the goat deity of the wild, shepherds, and flocks. Today it is called Baniyas, but in Jesus’ day it was Caesarea Philippi. What He and His disciples would have witnessed upon visiting was a reddish limestone wall over 130 ft tall and over 230 ft wide. At the base was a cave from which a large spring issued, with a strong flow. To the side of the cave were the temples devoted to the ancient god. This place served as the backdrop for the question Jesus asked his disciples, “But, who do you say that I am?” In rapid response, Peter said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:15-16). Don’t miss the setting—this bedrock confession literally changed the world.

But how did Peter know this? Jesus said, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.” (Matt. 16:17). How had the Father revealed this to Peter? Peter had been with Jesus! He had watched Jesus heal the sick, cast out demons, turn water into wine, make the blind see, and raise the dead. He had walked, talked, and eaten with Jesus. He had heard Jesus’ teachings. Peter had witnessed Jesus’ interactions with the poor, the rich, the foolish, and the wise. The Holy Spirit could have inspired Peter to give the right answer, but that would not have been necessary. His witness would have been sufficient.

Jesus is the Son of the living God! Knowledge of this could be ascertained by being exposed to the Word of God. While the four Gospels of the New Testament are more than sufficient to instill faith in anyone, the Holy Spirit provided additional proof.

Consider the changes among the apostles. Before His death, Jesus foretold that they would be scattered because of Him (John 16:32). He knew Peter would deny Him and that Judas would betray Him. These things happened as He was being falsely tried. Only John was at the cross with His mother (John 19:24). Yet after Judas was replaced, Peter and the eleven stood before thousands and accused them of killing Jesus (Acts 2). When Peter and John stood before

the hate-filled leaders of the Jews, who warned them not to speak in Jesus’ name, they said, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20). Beyond the death of James (Acts 12), tradition holds that all the apostles, except John, died horrible deaths for the sake of Jesus. What caused them to change? Undoubtedly, the resurrection of Jesus led to a life of confessed commitment to Him. Thousands in the first century made similar confessions and stayed the course until their deaths.

The promises Jesus made to His disciples helped them maintain their confession. He promised He would always be with them (Matt. 28:20). He told them, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:18). He also promised a crown of life to those who remain faithful to the end (Rev. 2:10).

One’s eternal salvation is tied to the good confession of Peter. Paul wrote, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart, one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved” (Rom. 10:9-10).

The eyes of faith can see as clearly as the day that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The evidence compels this declaration. The life of Jesus, the changes in the lives of those affected, the promises, and the Scriptures of Jesus express undeniable truths that, taken individually or collectively, lead all rational people to acknowledge Him as Lord of their confession.

CW

BE READY ALWAYS TO GIVE AN ANSWER

Josh Moore

Hostility seems to be the default today. No matter the subject, there is an ever-present risk that contrasting views or conflicting data points will cause the discussion to devolve into HR reports, cancel culture, or outright violence. And that’s just talking about gardening practices. So how do we handle the fear of potential

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SWSBS Academic Calendar 2026-2027

FIRST QUARTER:

SWSBS Welcome Lunch	August 2, 2026
Quarter Begins	August 3, 2026
Ladies' Welcome Dinner	August 3, 2026
Orientation	August 3-4, 2026
Servants Academy	August 6-9, 2026
Labor Day	September 7, 2026
Student Lectures	September 18-20, 2026
Southwest Ladies Day	September 26, 2026
Neighborhood Canvassing	October 9, 2026
Lubbock Lectures	October 11-14, 2026
Quarter Ends	October 16, 2026
Break Week	October 19-23, 2026

SECOND QUARTER:

Quarter Begins	October 26, 2026
Financial Seminar (G. Goodpaster)	November 13, 2026
Thanksgiving Break	November 25-27, 2026
Blitz Week: James (A. Baker)	November 30-December 4, 2026
Winter Break	December 21, 2026-January 1, 2027
Winter Retreat	January 1-3, 2027
Classes Resume	January 4, 2027
Quarter Ends/Neighborhood Canvassing	January 15, 2027
Break Week	January 18-22, 2027

THIRD QUARTER:

Quarter Begins	January 25, 2027
Southwest Ladies' Retreat	
Blitz Week: Song Leading (A. Baker)	March 1-4, 2027
Arise!	March 4-7, 2027
Lads-to-Leaders	March 26-28, 2027
Quarter Ends/Neighborhood Canvassing	April 2, 2027
Break Week	April 5-9, 2027

FOURTH QUARTER:

Quarter Begins	April 12, 2027
Blitz Week (C. Westbrook)	April 12-16, 2027
Memorial Day	May 31, 2027
Men's Development Conference	June 4, 2027
Hensel Memorial Camp	June 13-18, 2027
Quarter Ends	June 25, 2027
Graduation Banquet	June 25, 2027
Graduation	June 27, 2027

First quarter starts, 2027-2028 school year

August 2, 2027

persecution when we are called to share something far more impactful and controversial, the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20)?

The initial audience of Peter's first epistle found themselves asking the same question, though with much more violent implications on the horizon. In 1 Peter 3:13-15, we see the goal is to move someone from harming you (1 Pet. 3:13) to asking you about your faith (1 Pet. 3:15). In order to accomplish this, Peter gives two imperatives: to "have no fear" and "sanctify Christ" (1 Pet. 3:14-15). These commands equally empower and confine our approach to evangelism. As Jesus tells us in John 14:1, our faith rests in God. As a child who (without fear) leaps into their father's arms, so should our trust be in God. Why? Because those we fear in this life can do harm only to the body, but afterward are powerless in hell. (Luke 12:4-5). This absence of fear ignites our confidence as we begin to see the world as full of opportunity, rather than danger.

We have the temptation, at times, to take courage a step too far and become arrogant or bullish. This is the unbridled enthusiasm that led Peter to cut off Malchus's right ear (John 18:9). Jesus rebuked Peter's mishandling of the situation by healing Malchus (Luke 22:50) and telling him to put his sword away (Matt. 26:52). Peter learned a valuable lesson that day: the tools of man (swords) are not the tools of Christ. Christians ought to be prepared to give a defense with words and good conduct (1 Pet. 3:15-16). The approaches off advocated today typically focus on following trending bits or on attacking the opponent with false or unverifiable claims. Unfortunately, for some Christians, the Art of War ("All warfare is based on deception") or The Godfather ("It's not personal, it's strictly business") are more attractive than Peter's words. The very nature of Peter's expectation in 1 Peter 3:15 is that your actions should distinguish you from the immoral ethics of the world, not to mirror them. Instead, personal attacks, "as you wish others would do to you, do so to them." (Luke 6:31) Instead of deception, "the truth shall set you free." (John 8:32) Instead of viral trends, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matt. 5:16)

By not conforming to the world and by living a life of holy conduct, we create space and opportunity for our potential persecutors to become our engaged audience (1 Pet. 3:13-14). How incredible the experience to see someone who once threatened you, then turn meekly and

respectfully ask you about the hope that is within you. Paul's wisdom, both inspired by the Holy Spirit and personal experiences, teaches us to be ready without fear and with Christ being sanctified in our hearts. This is done through having no fear and sanctifying Jesus with gentleness and respect.

CW

HEROES OF FAITH

WEDNESDAYS | 7 PM

June 10: *Noah*—Steven Petrosky
 June 17: *Job*—Bill Siebert
 June 24: *Abraham and Sarah*—Alan Putnam
 July 1: *Moses*—Sam Hatchitt
 July 8: *Joshua*—Bobby Burris
 July 15: *Samuel*—Russell Speir
 July 22: *Daniel*—Winston Kinser
 July 29: Congregational Singing
 August 5: *Elijah*—Russell Haffner
 August 12: *Esther*—Ty McClellan
 August 19: *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego*—Adrian Coward
 August 26: *Abel*—Branyon May
 September 2: *David*—Ross Haffner

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I WILL NOT DENY YOU!

Ethan Adams

The apostle Paul reminded the church of Christ at Rome about the patriarch Abraham and his strength concerning the promise of God. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom. 4:20). To the church at Corinth he would pen, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1Cor. 16:13). When writing to the church at Ephesus, he would exhort them to live worthy of

their calling by writing, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might (Eph. 6:10).

The Christian is commanded by God to be established and strong in the faith (Col. 1:23, 1Cor. 15:58) not to be moved or tossed to and fro (Eph. 4:14). However we learn that the amount of fortitude and zeal we have can fall short. The Holy Spirit provides the reader an example of someone professing great strength and zeal for the Lord but when that strength was tested, “the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41). Peter, stated “...Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee...” (Matt. 26:35). When the time came, Peter would reject the notion that he had any connection with Jesus three times. He failed to uphold his previous zealous statement. After the third denial, Peter would leave weeping bitterly (Luke 22:61-62). The weight of sin is heavy (Ps. 38:4) and at times we may reason with ourselves that there is no hope for forgiveness. However, we ought to remember the words of the Hebrews writer.

Hebrews 4:14-16 “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

There are times we do fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23) and commit iniquity (Isa. 59:1-2). The aim is to not sin (Rom. 6:1-2, 12; 1 John 2:1) and be holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16). However, if we do sin God is ready to forgive (Neh. 9:17; 1 John 2:1). God knew we would sin and created the way for all to access forgiveness, the blood of Jesus the Christ (Titus 1:2, Revelation 13:8, John 1:29; Jer. 31:31-34; Matt. 26:28; Acts 13:38; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:14; 22; 1 Pet. 1:18-19).

Before Peter’s denial, Jesus told Peter that Satan desired to have and sift him like wheat. Even with that statement, Jesus provided Peter with strength, “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32). Jesus knew he would be weak and deny him three times but prayed for Peter not to fail but to strengthen the brethren. The Apostle Peter, would later write in his first epistle, “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Pet. 5:10).

Christians should continue to walk in the light and confess their faults knowing they have an advocate and mediator with the Father (1 John 1:5-2:2, Tim. 2:5). Pick yourself up (Prov. 24:16) and keep pressing on to the prize (Phil. 3:14). Let us be reminded of Hebrews 7:25, “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

FROM NOW ON YOU WILL CATCH MEN

David Olmos

Before we consider Peter in Luke 5:10, I want us to travel back to 2 Kings 7 and consider how four desperate lepers learned a timeless truth that might help us understand the importance of evangelism. How good news was never meant to be kept to oneself.

In 2 Kings 7, we see Israel’s dramatic rescue from a brutal Syrian siege led by King Ben-Hadad. Determined to dominate the North Kingdom, Ben-Hadad failed to see that God was in control and was using His prophet Elisha to expose the enemy’s strategies. Frustrated, Ben-Hadad surrounded Samaria, creating a famine so horrific that people resorted to eating their own children (2 Kings 6:28-29). If anyone was to blame for everything, it was Israel. The nation had consistently rebelled against God. Later, 2 Kings 17:7-23 summarizes Israel’s history, pointing to their rejection of God’s covenant, idol worship, and refusal to heed prophetic warnings as the catalysts for their problems.

Yet 2 Kings 7 begins with a powerful statement of God’s grace through Elisha: “Hear the word of the Lord.” While Samaria was dealing with the famine, God was dealing with the Syrians. Sadly, sometimes the hope of salvation through God’s Word is ignored. This is where we meet our four lepers, who stood outside the gates of a starving city, rejected, with nothing to offer, nowhere to run, and nothing to lose, so they took their chances with the enemy. They stumbled upon an abandoned camp with treasure everywhere. Luckily, these four lepers had conviction (2 Kings 7:9). They understood that while Samaria was suffering, they had a moral obligation to speak about the good news they had found. Their choice brought hope to the hopeless and life to the dying.

Fast-forward a few hundred years, and we see a similar scenario, except it’s not four people entrusted with good news, but eleven. Matthew 28:16-20 records the Great

Commission given by Christ to his remaining disciples before his ascension to heaven. Jesus tells them to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...” (Matt. 28:19). Evangelism is one of those concepts that Christians consider important and necessary but don’t understand. What if I told you evangelism isn’t about saving people? The essence of evangelism is recognizing that we have received good news we do not deserve and have a moral responsibility to share it with those who are dying. Jesus approaches this idea in Luke 5:10, as he says, “Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.”

Prior to these words, Peter and the disciples had experienced Christ's grace and power. They saw the One who could truly save and were now being commanded to give to others what had been given to them. When Jesus called Peter in Luke 5, Peter had just seen a miracle. After a night of failed fishing, Christ provided an overwhelming catch. The miracle was meant to show Peter and all Christians that, when it comes to salvation, it isn’t about us or how skilled we are, but about our dependence on God.

I believe the reason people are afraid of evangelism is the pressure to perform. We think about knocking on doors and become afraid that our efforts won’t work. What we need to remember about salvation and evangelism is that only God can save someone. 1 Corinthians 3:6 reminds us, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.” That’s why Paul said in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also the Greek.”

The lepers did not defeat the Syrian army. God did. The lepers discovered what good God had done and shared it. Peter did not catch the fish. God did. Peter was commanded to share that good news with others. Our role in evangelism is to proclaim the good news of what God has done. We share the Gospel not merely because we are commanded to do so, but because we have seen what God’s good news can do, and others need to see it too. When you know who the Savior is, what good are we doing if we keep that treasure to ourselves?

CW

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Jesus alone, has the ability to fulfill man’s greatest need—life. Moses may have provided manna in the wilderness but that was physical and temporary. What Jesus provides is spiritual and eternal and thus He deserves our exclusive attention.

Peter’s question “Lord, to whom shall we go?” implies that there is nowhere else to go to be fed, to be led, and to be given life.

Our desire must also be enduring. Ultimately the crowds could not abide the teaching of Jesus. His teaching was “hard” (John 6:60) which literally means “harsh” or “offensive.” He challenged their thinking, rebuked their misplaced priorities, and corrected their false concept of the Messiah. So they were offended and “went back and walked with Him no more.” How easy it is to embrace the words of Jesus when we find them easily agreeable and encouraging but how shall we react when they challenge and correct us?

So, what will we do with the life giving words of Jesus? We should give ourselves entirely to learning and living them. But will we? Will we be like the multitudes who were happy to hear Him as long as He coalesced with our opinions and desires? Or will we be like Peter who recognized that there is nothing in this world more important than “the words of eternal life?”

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“To Know Jesus and...make Him known”

From the Director's Desk

Practical Preaching Experience at SWSBS

Sometimes people wonder about the balance between classroom education and “outside” education at Southwest. Just today, during our final exams, I was reminded of how SWSBS blends classroom instruction with practical experience. Each graduating student has already preached their final “student sermon” without the aid of notes. Then, for a final exam, each student had to present Wednesday night devotional thoughts, a Lord’s Supper “table talk,” and a youth devotional. Each of these brief lessons was to be delivered on various topics, to various audiences, and within a short time frame. Each graduating student was to deliver these talks without notes as well.

Students have taught Bible classes, conducted mock personal studies, and presented chapel lessons and full-length sermons for critique. These opportunities bring practical aspects of preaching into the classroom. However, because SWSBS works so closely with the congregation and other local congregations, our students have far more opportunities outside the classroom.

For our four students who are about to graduate, Daniel Baker, Samuel Dill, Andy Reyes, and Jimmy Xie, these opportunities have been everywhere. These men have knocked doors, delivered care packages, written cards, conducted personal Bible studies, taught online Bible classes (in multiple languages), preached dozens (if not a hundred!) of sermons, given Bible classes, spoken on Wednesday nights, given youth devotionals, hosted people in their homes, attended funerals, and much more.

Our classroom instruction is important. As such, it is recognized by various universities as college-level instruction. However, often what happens outside the classroom is what makes the experience at SWSBS so unique and beneficial. We glory in the work that has been accomplished by these four men and which will be celebrated formally on June 28, 2026. We know that when they graduate, they will not have all the answers and may not even know all the questions. That is okay. But we rest assured that the instruction and experience they have received, inside and outside the classroom, have prepared them to take the next step to service in the Kingdom.



Trent Kennedy
Director
SWSBS

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