

# THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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Editor ~ Wade Stanley

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## Bowling for Turkeys

Kevin Crittenden

When I was going to college (some years ago), I was a rather introverted, socially-awkward, young and callow fellow. So to push my boundaries, I joined a bowling league. This experience helped me to become the introverted, socially-awkward, old and callous fellow I am today.

In the league, I learned that it was absolutely necessary to change your shoes to knock down some inoffensive pins with a massive ball. I also learned that if you are somehow able to knock down all ten pins in three consecutive turns, then that is called bowling a turkey (just like three goals scored by one player in ice hockey is a hat trick).

As you are aware, the number three crops up everywhere in the Bible, more than you can shake three sticks at.

The major one is the Trinity – the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The doctrine of the Trinity holds that God is one essence but three Persons. God has one nature but three centers of consciousness. God is only one What, but three Whos. The doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery revealed by God in His Word.

Another example of three is the witnesses that John mentions:

*This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree (1 John 5:6-8).*

How many times did Satan tempt Jesus in the wilderness? That's right – three (see **Matthew 4:1-11**).

And how many items were in the Ark of the Covenant? "...the Ark of the Covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant" (**Hebrews 9:4**).

The number three also appears in terms of time. Moses and

Aaron petitioned Pharaoh, "Then they said, 'The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword'" (**Exodus 5:3**).

Jesus would later tell the Jews, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (**John 2:19**).

Three-month periods also occur.

- Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth and stayed for three months (**Luke 1:56**).
- Paul spoke boldly in Ephesus for three months (**Acts 19:8**).
- He then stayed three months in Greece (**Acts 20:3**).

Also appearing are three-year intervals. Instructions were given to the Hebrews when they entered the Promised Land, "When you come into the land and plant any kind of tree for food, then you shall regard its fruit as forbidden. Three years it shall be forbidden to you; it must not be eaten" (**Leviticus 19:23**).

We also remember the barren fig tree from Luke:

*And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?'" (**Luke 13:6-7**).*

It would seem evident from these and many other examples that the number three is special. A great many things were certainly said to have happened when the number three was utilized, be it three days, three months, or years. Is this mere coincidence?

The number three is also found as a literary pattern in the Bible. For example, Hosea lists three products of ancient Israel that were not only important to its economy but were signs of God's blessing: grain, new wine, and oil (**Hosea 2:22, Joel 1:10**).

Another significance of the number three is of expectations or implications, "And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (**Ecclesiastes 4:12**).

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Of course, a process has a beginning, a middle, and an end. So the number three suggests the idea of completeness, a process coming to a successful conclusion. Sometimes three things are mentioned that point to a fourth. The third thing alerts the reader that something special is about to happen. For example, on Mount Carmel, Elijah had the sacrifice doused with water three times to demonstrate that there was no human chance that the sacrifice could be consumed. Nevertheless, in answer to his prayer, the Lord sent the fire, which "*fell and burnt up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, and the soil, and licked up the water in the trench*" (**1 Kings 18:38**).

Balaam beat his donkey three times after which he was reprimanded by both his donkey and an angel of the Lord (**Numbers 22:21-35**).

Again, in **Acts 10**, Peter's vision showed the blanket being lowered three times before he went to talk to the three men looking for him.

There are many, many other examples of the number three in Scripture, but one of the most important is the one that we commemorate every Lord's Day – the fact that Jesus died and arose again in the flesh on the third day, having been born as a man to serve as the only perfect sacrifice to pay the debt of our sins.

*...and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" (**Revelation 4:8**).*

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## Advice to My Younger Self

Dan Huff

Recently, I was reading an article about giving advice to one's younger self. If I could go back and give advice to my younger self, one of the most valuable nuggets of advice I would give is, "Dan, turn off the tv, put down the video games, and stop focusing on your car; it will rust away. Prayerfully read, study, put to memory your Bible, and with the Lord's help, apply these precious truths to your life, allowing them to permeate every fiber of your being. They are more precious

than gold!"

*More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward (**Psalms 19:10-11**).*

The Bible: the Book of all books! Why? Because it originates from the mind and Spirit of our Creator (**2 Peter 1:20-21**). It contains more adventure and action than an Indiana Jones movie. It spans three continents, heaven and earth, the seas, and below. It reveals our origins and purpose, "*That they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us*" (**Acts 17:27**; see also **Genesis 1** and **Isaiah 45:18-19**).

It contains the greatest love story ever told by the Author of love. It details the deepest love, the most wonderful Giver, and the costliest gift (see **John 3:16-17**). We would not know what true love is if it weren't for Love demonstrating His love for us and recording it (see **1 John 4:8, 16**).

It is a book of miracles to witness the validity of Jesus and for those with open and willing minds to produce belief, conviction, and life (read **John 20:30-31**). It is a book of promises from the One Who is Faithful and True (**Revelation 19:11**; **1 Corinthians 10:13**).

It is a spiritual fitness book.

- "*For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things*" (**1 Timothy 4:8**).
- "*...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...*" (**Hebrews 12:1-2**).
- Please read **1 Corinthians 9:24-27**; **2 Timothy 4:7**; **1 Timothy 6:12**.

The Bible contains wisdom from above (**James 3:17**) to enrich one to be wise in the ways of the Lord. It gives wisdom deeper than that of Confucius and all the great worldly philosophers and sages that have ever lived. It gives wisdom concerning how to live (**2 Peter 1:3-4**; **2 Timothy 3:16-17**). I am firmly convinced that there is in it a principle of wisdom to guide us through any problem, temptation, or difficulty that we may encounter in this life, so that we can overcome and work through bearing our cross to His glory (**Luke 9:23**).

The word of God never changes because God never changes, but our circumstances and life are always in flux. Therefore, something you may have read in the Scriptures a month or a year ago may not have made an impact then; but now, when you go back and read it, a light bulb turns on! Or, since you have read another Scripture or two you can put those with the one you didn't understand and can see a bigger picture. It is like a jigsaw puzzle with thousands of pieces. The more you study, learn, and apply the various Scriptures—putting them beside other Scriptures—the more of the puzzle of life comes into view. The Bible describes this as “*precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little there a little*” (Isaiah 28:13).

In the Lord's prayer, Jesus said, “**Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth**” (John 17:17). God's word is the source of truth, and when appropriately applied, it has the power to purify and set us apart for the Lord's service.

For those who do not have a love for the truth, there is the danger of being deceived (2 Thessalonians 2:10). God has given us His word, truth, so that we may not be deceived. Jesus said, if His words abide in you (by which He means obedient faithful living), then you are His disciples. You can know the truth, and the truth will set you free (John 8:31-32). Free from the bondage of sin! Free from the deception of falsehoods and any other thing that might try to bring God's people into bondage!

“Dan, you should always begin any Bible study with prayer, an open mind, and willingness to follow wherever the Scriptures lead.” I was reminded of Saul. As a Jew, he had everything going for him (see Philippians 3): the right lineage, the right party, etc. He was “*a Hebrew of Hebrews,*” and yet he counted all that “*but dung, that I may win Christ. That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death*” (3:5, 8-10)

It's in the book if you'll just take a look! Read the Bible as if your life depended upon it because it does. Read the words of our Lord.

*And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is*

*everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak (John 12:47-50).*

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## The Digital Gospel Message

Wade Stanley

After many months of planning, building, and testing, your editor and publisher are glad to announce that the digital edition of *The Gospel Message* is now available. For \$5 per year, subscribers will receive the monthly edition of *The Gospel Message* in their email inbox. Subscribers will need either a debit or credit card to complete the online transaction. Your editor will email the next month's issue by the 20th day of the preceding month (e.g., the December issue will arrive in subscribers' inboxes by November 20).

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Your editor and publisher owe a special thanks to **Richard Garbi**, a member of the **Blue Springs Church of Christ**. Richard designed and built the online subscription application. We are indebted to him for lending us his expertise, sacrificing his time, and providing the server infrastructure to make this endeavor possible.

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Finally, a special thanks to our group of "beta testers" who subscribed last month and received the October issue over email. You helped us reconfirm that the architecture was functional and easy to use.

## *Blessed Are the Dead*

James Robert Yamry, 79, of Eldon, MO passed away October 9. Brother Jim was born February 16, 1943, in Miller County, MO. On September 17, 1977, in St. Louis, MO he was united in marriage to **Mary Adeline (Huff) Yamry** who survives of the home. Others survivors include five children, fifteen grandchildren, twelve great-grandchildren plus two on the way. Brother Jim was a member of the **Church of Christ on 9th St. & Kraus Ave in Eldon, MO**. He was an avid hunter and fisherman. Jim loved his family and friends dearly and will be missed by all. On a personal note, your editor knew Brother Jim well and, in his experience, few people loved being around the church more than Jim Yamry. He was a special man.

*"Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead*

*who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them"" (Revelation 14:12-13).*

## *Special Meetings*

As 2022 turns to 2023, please contact your editor about any special meeting your congregation plans in the upcoming year. In addition to the dates, you may email flyers or write up a brief description of the meeting to be included in future issues of *The Gospel Message*.

### **2022 Meetings**

December 27-29.....Winter Youth Rally, Gregory Blvd.

December 27-29.....College Rally, Lone Jack, MO

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