

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Volume 67, Number 11

Editor ~ Joshua Riggins

Publisher ~ Doug Twaddell

November, 2025

ABANDONED HOUSES

Dan Huff

While visiting with brethren, we watched a show on television where people explore abandoned homes and film what they find inside. I don't know the story or background of these homes, or of the families who left them, but many of these homes had the appearance that they had been beautiful, with many amenities, and much potential. For example, one had many large rooms, large oak beams holding up the roof, and a large, indoor swimming pool. Some families had even left behind photos. A sister in Christ made a comment about how these abandoned homes caused her to think about the souls who have abandoned their spiritual lives. I don't know why these homes were abandoned, but I believe there is a warning and a lesson for us.

Why do spiritual houses/homes get abandoned? Sometimes it's from a lack of planning and preparation. Sometimes it's a lack of maintenance, upkeep, of our spiritual home and relationship with the LORD – the source of all good things—including our salvation, rescuing us from our sins. Without consistently seeking to enrich, strengthen, fortify, and protect our special relationship with the LORD, we can lose sight of what is truly important. If we're not careful, we can take the LORD and His goodness for granted. Jesus spoke about the parable of the four kinds of hearts, or, we might say, houses, that received the word of God (**Luke 8:11 ff**). He warned about the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life choking out the desire and joy, eventually the life itself, leaving an empty shell that did not bring any fruit to maturity.

Often, we can be like cats. Something shiny, new, flashy, or colorful grabs our attention, and off we go after it. As the old saying goes, grass is greener on the other side ... until you get to the other side; then it doesn't always turn out the way we imagined it. Paul warned the brethren at Corinth about someone preaching another Jesus, whom the Apostles of

Christ had not proclaimed or taught (**2 Corinthians 11:4**). They had been hoodwinked, and didn't even know it. Our source of fellowship, safety, and a solid foundation lies in the Apostles and their teachings (**1 John 1:1-4; Ephesians 2:19-22**).

Solomon wrote, "*A satisfied soul loathes the honeycomb, But to a hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet*" (**Proverbs 27:7**). When a soul is full, or satisfied, apathy can creep in. Jesus said it is better to hunger and thirst for righteousness (**Matthew 5:6**).

We must have intentional purpose as we seek to serve God and His people. Get involved with the local body of Christ, actively participating, with your mind, spirit, and body all engaged. To the degree you are actively involved, you will spiritually grow and develop, resulting in a higher degree of joy and contentment.

Jesus spoke of the unclean spirit who leaves his house in a man. He wanders, returns to his former house, and finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then that unclean spirit goes and finds seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they dwell in that man. The last state of that man was worse than the first (**Matthew 12:43-45**).

continued on the next page...

One might say, look: the man's house, his life, was swept out, clean. But was it filled? Was it filled with sustenance? Jesus says it was "empty." It was barren of things that matter. An earthly house that is left empty, uninhabited, deteriorates. Satan is always ready and willing to fill a vacuum or a void. He is constantly offering attractions and distractions to take our eyes and minds off Jesus and His Kingdom.

Consider, we fill our physical houses with things that we deem are valuable, useful, important, and precious to us. How much more our spiritual houses? What do we treasure? Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (**Matthew 6:19-21**). Don't be like the man who emptied his house, cleaned it, but left it abandoned.

Fill your house, your life, with the word of God, which is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb—it satisfies the soul; and in keeping it there is great reward (**Psalms 19:10-11**)! Seek and apply the wisdom from above (**James 3:13-18**). Worship God appropriately, in spirit and truth (**John 4:24**). Don't just put your armor on display, but put on and train to use the whole armor of God (**Ephesians 6:12-18**).

Paul commanded and encouraged the brethren at Thessalonica to "comfort and edify one another; just as [they] were doing," to, "be at peace among [themselves]," to, "warn the unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all," and to, "pursue what is good for all." (**1 Thessalonians 5:11 – 15**). We must have intentional purpose as we seek to serve God and His people. Get involved with the local body of Christ, actively participating, with your mind, spirit, and body all engaged. To the degree you are actively involved, you will spiritually grow and develop, resulting in a higher degree of joy and contentment. There will be less time and energy for complaining and apathy.

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ

(2 Peter 1:5-8).

You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen

(2 Peter 3:17-18).

~ 7 Ross Rd., Eldon, MO 65026-4416
werhuffs@proton.me

Coming to him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

(1 Peter 2:4-5)

JESUS AS FRIEND

Kevin Crittenden

Have you ever felt at a loss to know what to do for a good friend? Perhaps our friend seems anxious about something. And we are troubled because our friend is troubled. We want, somehow, to "fix it." But it isn't clear HOW to fix it. Where do we begin? What is the right thing to say? Should we just monitor the situation until our friend reaches out to us?

But this is what friends do. We know each other well enough to sense when something is wrong, and we want to help. Why? Because none of us wants to see the people we care about suffering. Good friends both celebrate and commiserate with each other as called for. But how can we best support our friend?

Some of us might offer advice, like Job's friends. They heard that Job was suffering terribly and wanted to help. So, they came. But they didn't fully understand the situation. Having limited knowledge, the friends were convinced that Job had done something to offend God. So, they tried to reason with Job. The innocent don't suffer, they said. God rewards the good, they said. If Job would only admit his sin, then God would restore him, they said. Job's friends were trying to be helpful, but the way to help wasn't clear to them, nor is it always clear to us.

For us, friendships are deep relationships in which we can commiserate with one another in our common humanity. With good friends, we feel comforted by knowing that we are not alone. With a trusted friend, we can talk openly about our troubles. We also create a safe space as they talk about their troubles. It's a reciprocal relationship.

We were created as social beings. We need the companionship of others. It really is our nature to be social, to have friends, to both support and be supported by those we love, and, in general, to love one another. It was asked in the Bible, "Who is our neighbor?" We might also ask, "Who is our friend?"

Well, Jesus is our friend. What a friend we have in Jesus! Certainly, He comforts us and cares for us. He knows our innermost thoughts. He sits by our side in our hour of need. He provides for us and always knows the best way forward. He takes our hand and leads us through the Valley of Death. He cradles us in His everlasting arms. And, He is always on call, night or day.

Earlier, I said that good friendships are reciprocal relationships. So, when and how do we support Jesus? Does he ever need anything from us? Certainly, He too has emotions. When Lazarus died and Mary came out to meet Him, Jesus wept. Did he need comforting from Mary? I wonder, is our friendship with Jesus really a "friendship" or is it a one-sided relationship? What is it that He wants from us? A portion of the answer lies in Matthew 25:34-40, which ends with: "*The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'*" (Matthew 25:40)

Jesus tells us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. He says, "*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*" Fortunately, God does not demand that we be perfect. None of us can measure up to that, and that is why Jesus came to earth to die on the cross for us.

But what does God want in return for the friendship He offers us? Well, what God wants when it comes to us is simple. He wants us. Period. C.S. Lewis said, "God doesn't want something from us, He simply wants us." He wants a loving relationship with His children.

As we read the Bible, we quickly conclude that love is the foundation of everything God does. **1 John 4:8** says it outright: "*Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*" He created us so that He could love us and we might love Him. He wants our love.

One of my favorite verses is **Micah 6:8**, which pretty clearly outlines what God is looking for in us:

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly with your God.

God is looking for the person who longs to know, understand, and be close to God. Someone who knows that God is the Lord, the omniscient, omnipresent, and sovereign God. Someone who knows that God is the God of steadfast love, justice, and righteousness on earth. Someone who knows that God is good and great and that it is a privilege to know Him. To know God is more life-giving than anything else. To know God is our purpose, our mission, and our life.

The end goal of the Christian life is to become the person God wants us to be. God longs to use us because He loves us. He's not selfish. He doesn't need our help. He wants to work with us. He wants our lives to matter. He wants us to have an eternal reward for what we do here on earth because He's a good Father who wants an intimate relationship with His children.

In conclusion, God wants us to be filled with the fullness of life that comes from having a lifelong friendship with Him.

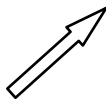
~ 19130 Meiggs Ln, Cupertino, CA 95014
kcritt2@aol.com

Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are my friends if you do whatever I command you.

(John 15:13-14)

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

(James 4:4)



Please check your expiration date!

Glory to God!

The brethren meeting on Prince Rd in Alton, IL rejoiced when Alan Shook returned and placed membership on July 6, 2025. They again rejoiced when Jeff and Laura Cloninger placed membership with the congregation on July 9, 2025.

There was joy before the angels of God and amongst the brethren when Maci Lloyd was baptized into Christ on September 21, 2025 and joined the Prince Rd congregation.

There was much rejoicing among the brethren at Smart Road in Greenwood, MO when Nick Page was immersed for the remission of sins and joined the congregation on September 13, 2025.

Agapae Fry was baptized into Christ in Bakersfield, CA on September 21, 2025 and welcomed with joyful celebration into the church family.

Joy resounded among the brethren at Crawford St in Martinsville, IN when Julian Tielking Johnson submitted to her Lord through the waters of baptism on September 13, 2025.

Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection...

(Romans 6:4-5)

Special Meetings



2025 Special Meetings

October 18-19...Weekend Meeting, Riverside Rd, Ozark, MO

December 29-31.....Winter Youth Rally, Raytown, MO

December 29-31.....Winter College Rally, Lone Jack, MO

The Gospel Message

To renew a subscription, add a new subscription, inquire about a subscription, or cancel a subscription, please contact **your publisher:**

**The Gospel Message, % Doug Twaddell, 1700 S. Ann Ct.
Independence, MO 64057 twadsquad@earthlink.net**

To renew on The Gospel Message website, use your phone or tablet camera to click the QR code to the left. The print version is available for \$10 per year. An email version is available for \$5 per year.



If you would like to announce baptisms, new members, deaths, or special meetings in **The Gospel Message**, please contact **your editor:**

**Joshua Riggins, 401 Douglas Dr, Bloomfield, IN 47424
jgriggins@gmail.com**

If you have any questions or concerns about the content of this paper, please either contact **the author** of the article or **your editor**.

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE (USPS:576-040) (ISSN:1054-7991) is published monthly for \$10 per year by **THE GOSPEL MESSAGE**, 1700 S. Ann Ct., Independence, MO 64057. Periodicals Postage Paid at Independence, MO. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **THE GOSPEL MESSAGE**, 1700 S. Ann Ct., Independence, MO 64057