

August 2000

AMAZING *Inside Report* FACTS

Trees of
Life and Death

LETTERS

My Questions Were Answered

I had an opportunity to watch some of your sermons during the NET New York '99 satellite program, and I was blessed. Some of my greatest questions were answered during this seminar.

TC
Zimbabwe

It Will Not Be Forgotten

Thank you for creating the Amazing Facts Web site. It has enabled me to identify some things I need to work on in my marriage. I was able to find out about your Web site from your TV program entitled "Has Holy Wedlock Become Unholy Deadlock?" I was unable to sleep due to all the problems in my life and marriage. I think Someone above awakened me to see the Light above and to do more positive things with my marriage and life. It will not be forgotten.

MU
via e-mail



Sharing Jesus' Love

I would love to go to your College of Evangelism. I need to learn how to plant and grow the seeds of Jesus' love in people's hearts so they can be ready when He comes soon.

SM
Colorado

God Is Doing Wonders!

I am a chaplain at MCI Shirley. Recently the Southern New England Conference purchased a set of Doug Batchelor's *Millennium of Prophecy* videos for me to use at the prison. One of your Bible school graduates organizes groups of inmates three nights per week, shows them these videos, and then conducts a discussion of the presentations along with another inmate. By the help and grace of God, your studies and videos have been used to totally transform the life of this former drug addict.

Amazing Facts is a well-known ministry at this prison. Several of our men are graduates of your Bible course. Your *Millennium of Prophecy* videos are shown on the prison's internal TV system every week



and in chapel (in addition to the three times per week we show them to the groups). We are putting them to very good use! God is doing wonders through them. You have an open invitation to come visit and speak at this state prison for 1,200 male medium-level-security inmates.

PP
Massachusetts

Working With the Spirit

Thank you for your direct teaching. You have touched on a subject of God's Word that the Spirit has placed on my heart. I have changed my eating habits for the worse in the past five years, and I had thought I was justified by Acts 10:9-15.

RB
Pennsylvania



Right On

I can't express how much your teaching has made me grow in Christ. I watch your show on BET and I visit your Web site frequently. Pastor Doug, you are so informative. You get so much factual material across. Everything I've learned from you has been right on with Scripture. How you've managed to be so articulate in God's Word is just another one of God's wonderful creations.

AW
Indiana

Given Me New Hope

You hear this a lot, I'm sure. Your help with the concept of hell being eternal punishment [May 2000 issue] has given me new hope, and I now understand how God can be real. I always had a small part of unbelief in me because I couldn't see God going through with His plan if it meant most people burning in pain forever. Thanks for answering this question that has annoyed me for 15 years.

JR
via e-mail



Never Learned This Before

We are new Sabbathkeepers. An Internet friend sent us a tape series by one of your evangelists, Brian McMahon. We sat there as a couple and studied. My husband, Ed, commented, "How come we never learned this before?" With much opposition from our teens, we have acquired a healthier lifestyle and observe every Sabbath. It's great.

TB
Arizona

AMAZING FACTS

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DIRECTOR-SPEAKER
DOUG BATCHELOR

MANAGING EDITOR
DEBRA J. HICKS

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
KATIE LECHLER

PROOFREADERS
ARLENE CLARK
LU ANN CREWS

LAYOUT AND DESIGN
DEBRA J. HICKS

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P.O. Box 1058
ROSEVILLE, CA 95678-8058
(916) 434-3880 PHONE
(916) 434-3889 FAX
EDITOR@AMAZINGFACTS.ORG

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BY EDITOR
DEBRA J. HICKS

Why Go to Church?

In a nationwide poll of more than a thousand randomly selected American adults conducted by The Gallup Organization in March of this year, 68 percent said they are members of a church or synagogue, while only 36 percent said they attend services one or more times per week.

Quite frankly, I don't put a great deal of stock in the results of opinion polls; however, in this case I believe the sample reflects a general trend.

I know from personal experience that a lot of people who consider themselves Christians do not belong to a specific church, and many others are officially church members but do not attend on a regular basis.

If you belong in either of those categories, my guess is that you've never found a satisfactory answer to the question, "Why go to church?"

I asked this question as a teenager, not because I didn't enjoy my church family but because I was questioning my own motives for going. The disturbing reality was that I didn't attend church in order to spend time with God. I went to visit with my friends. I've always been a people person, so it was natural for me to focus on relationships and look forward to Sabbath as a time for warm fellowship and interactive Bible study.

Yet I couldn't shake the conviction that I was leaving God out of the equation. I wondered if I was truly keeping the Sabbath or if, instead, I was using His day for my own pleasure and missing the blessing He intended. After all, I reasoned, it was during my private Bible study (usually first thing in the morning or just before bedtime) that I regularly experienced meaningful interaction with God. "Would I be better off to skip church and use that time alone with the Lord at home or observing nature?" I questioned.

God didn't leave me perplexed for long. During my sophomore year of high school, I discovered two Bible texts that reassured me of God's will. The first was Jesus' promise that "if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:19-20). This passage told me that God grants special power and privilege to His believers when they meet together. Although we are saved individually and must think and study and pray for ourselves, God's Word indicates that there is something sacred about corporate worship. It was His method for uniting the church in the Old Testament,


and it remains His plan for us today.

The second Bible verse I found made me think about our commission to be witnesses of Christ's power both inside our own circle of influence and also "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). It said, "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10). It made me think of the old adage "There's safety in numbers." I think this rightly applies to the church, because whenever members are isolated from the rest of the body, they some-

I couldn't shake the conviction that I was leaving God out of the equation. ... After all, I reasoned, it was during my private Bible study that I regularly experienced meaningful interaction with God.

times develop quirky ideas or doubtful doctrines. Wise King Solomon observed this phenomenon and wrote, "Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counselors they are established" (Proverbs 15:22, NKJV). By coming together each week and studying the Word of God in a group, church members are more likely to remain balanced in their thinking and well-rounded in their focus.

Let me hasten to add that God didn't just teach me why group worship is important. He also helped me learn how to tune into His voice at church despite the pleasant distractions of friends and family. Specifically requesting a blessing ahead of time helps me focus on Him, as does referring often to His written Word during Sabbath School discussions and the sermon. Now He never fails to give me a special Sabbath gem, no matter how "boring" the speaker or how unfamiliar the surroundings.

The Bible challenges us to "Draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, ... And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together*, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and *so much the more, as ye see the day approaching*" (Hebrews 10:22-25, emphasis added). 



BY DIRECTOR-SPEAKER
DOUG BATCHELOR

Trees of Life and Death



An Amazing Fact:

The coconut tree is sometimes called the tree of life because of its amazing versatility. My father, who was a World War II pilot, says that when planes went down in the Pacific Islands, the stranded pilots sometimes survived for many months on little more than coconuts. From coconuts we get food, milk, butter, clothing, baskets, oil, wax, and even soap. Their shells can be used to make a bowl and other utensils, and their husks can serve as fuel for a fire.

Trees are essential to the life and well-being of this planet. For instance, most of the medicine we have today is derived from trees—even more than from plants. Aspirin is made from salicylic acid, which is found in the bark of willow trees. Taxol, a drug used to treat ovarian cancer, is extracted from the bark of the rare Pacific yew tree. Hundreds of other medicines are derived from trees in the rainforests of Central and South America.

In addition to their pharmaceutical value, trees provide literally thousands of things we use today. They can be transformed to create paper, lumber, rubber, and clothes—to name just a few staples.

Much of the clean air we breathe each day is a result of trees, and they also help prevent land from

eroding into the sea. Our world would be in bad shape without trees.

Lessons From a Fruitless Fig Tree

Trees played an intricate role in a number of Bible stories. Sometimes they were associated with life, while at other times they were associated with sin and death.

It surprises some people to learn that just before His death, Christ deliberately cursed a fig tree. Mark 11:13 says, “And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever.”

I can think of only two things that ever died in Jesus’ presence: the demon-possessed pigs and this fig tree. Everything else that came in contact with Jesus was blessed and revived. But here He cursed this tree. Was the Lord having a tantrum because He didn’t get any breakfast? Or was there a spiritual lesson associated with this strange act?

It is significant that this fig tree had leaves, but no fruit. Figs, unlike other trees, begin to produce their fruit before the leaves. In fact, the fruit should be ripe when the leaves are fully developed. Although this specific tree outside of Jerusalem was out of season, it was advertising that it had fruit. And when Jesus came, He saw no fruit, only leaves.

Fig leaves are a symbol of self-righteousness, a form of religion without the power thereof. Adam and Eve had used fig leaves in an attempt to cover their nakedness after they sinned (Genesis 3:7), but God said that fig leaves would not work (verse 21). In the same way, the leaves on that fruitless fig tree were a symbol of Israel’s hypocrisy and self-righteousness. Jesus cursed the tree in order to illustrate what would happen to the Jewish nation and the apostate church if they remained fruitless.

Root and Branch

John 15:2 declares, “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch

that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." And Luke 3:9 says, "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Notice that the axe doesn't leave a stump, but cuts all the way down to the root.

Some trees are so tenacious of life that if even a little bit of root is left, they can revive and sprout again like the one in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 4:15). This is why God tells us that when He eradicates the wicked from the universe, He destroys them root and branch. "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (Malachi 4:1). "These are ... trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots" (Jude 1:12).

A Tree of Prophecy

In Luke 13:6-9, Jesus uses a parable about another fruitless fig tree in order to relate a time prophecy. He said: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then he said unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

The owner of the vineyard says that for three years he has found no fruit. The gardener pleads with the owner, saying, "Give it another year." This makes a total of four years. There are 360 days in a Jewish year, because it uses a lunar calendar. Four multiplied by 360 equals 1,440. That would make a total of 1,440 days in those four years.

Because a day equals a year in Bible prophecy (Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6), the prophetic time period would equal 1,440 years. Jesus said that the fig tree was planted in His vineyard. What does the vineyard symbolize? In Isaiah chapter 5, the Bible says that the vineyard is a symbol of Israel (verse 7). God planted the children of Israel in the Promised Land in about 1406 B.C., when Joshua first crossed over and the children then took possession of



Bruce Coleman

An Amazing Fact:

The giant saguaro of the Southwestern deserts spreads its roots laterally as much as 40 or 50 feet in its search for water. A birch tree, though less sturdy than others, has roots that can lift a boulder weighing 20 tons. An average large oak tree has several hundred miles of roots.

the Promised Land. If you add 1,440 years to 1406 B.C., you come to A.D. 34. (Or, if you don't want to start with 1406 B.C. and choose instead to make the starting point a few years later in 1370 B.C. when the Israelites subdued their enemies and settled down, it would reach to A.D. 70, when the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed.)

In this parable, the fig tree in a vineyard doesn't bear fruit, so the Lord says it should be cut down after 1,440 prophetic days. As direct fulfillment, Israel was cut down as God's special nation after 1,440 years. Notice that Israel was cut down, but its roots were not destroyed. Now the Gentiles have been grafted into the stump of Israel (Romans 11:16-24).



Ron Sanford

An Amazing Fact:

In the Mexican state of Oaxaca stands the stoutest living tree. This Montezuma Cypress is called the Santa Maria del Tule and boasts a girth of 113 feet at a point just five feet above the ground. Its total height is 141 feet, and its age is estimated at more than 4,000 years old. In 1770 a European chestnut tree known as "The Chestnut of a Hundred Horses" measured 204 feet in circumference. It was found on the edge of Mount Etna in Sicily. The most immense living thing on earth today is a tree. The General Sherman in Sequoia National Park weighs approximately 2,145 tons and has a true girth of 79 feet. Yet the seeds of all these massive trees are minuscule and weigh less than one-six thousandth of an ounce. Jesus referenced this amazing truth when He talked about the "grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it" (Mark 4:31-32).

God wants you and me to bear fruit as well. The Bible tells us that “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Galatians 5:22-23). The Lord wants to see these fruits ripening in our lives. If we do not have them, what does the Lord say He will do? He first does everything He can to make us fruitful. He prunes and grafts us. He cuts away the dead wood in an attempt to revitalize us. He also digs around to aerate the roots, fertilizes, irrigates, and does everything He can to help us bear fruit.

In the Midst of the Garden

The very first chapter of the Holy Writ tells that God filled the earth with trees on the third day of Creation (Genesis 1:11-13). The second chapter says that two trees stood out as unique from all of the others. Genesis 2:9 says, “And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.”

God gave Adam and Eve very clear instructions regarding the second tree. He said, “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17).

Some people think it was terrible for the Lord to place this glaring temptation in the middle of the Garden of Eden, right near the tree of life. But when you think about it in perspective, God had told them that they were free to eat from everything except one tree. This tree would be a small but important test of obedience.

It is often said that the tree of knowledge of good and evil was an apple tree. In fact, we get the term “Adam’s apple” because the legend goes that when our first father ate from the tree, he gagged and it stuck in his throat. The Bible, however, does not say that the fruit was an apple. This tradition came from the Old English, in which the word “apple” was a generic equivalent for “fruit,” just as the word “meat” meant “food.” Then, as time went by, the word “apple” came to be identified with a specific kind of fruit.

We don’t know exactly what the tree looked like. The Bible says it was pleasant to the eyes. It probably had a nice fragrance and beautiful flowers in the tree. Its fruit was “desired to make one wise” (Genesis 3:6).

Have you ever wondered why was it called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? First of all, keep in mind that not all knowl-

An Amazing Fact:

The oldest tree on record was a 4,950-year-old bristlecone pine in Wheeler Peak, Eastern California. It was cut down with a chainsaw in 1964 so researchers could measure its rings. The oldest living tree is a bristlecone pine called Methuselah. It is estimated at 4,766 years old and grows in the White Mountains of California.

edge is good. The Bible says that one of the characteristics of the last days is that knowledge will increase, but keep in mind wickedness will increase also. The devil far exceeds any human in knowledge, but it’s not a knowledge that saves him.

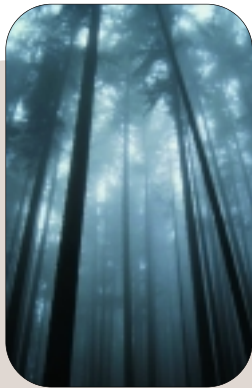
The mixing of good and evil is what makes the devil so insidious. He is most effective when using elements of truth to camouflage a little poison. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil became a “tree of death” because it represented the commingling of good and bad, the corruption of truth. God never intended for His children to experience evil. He wanted to save them from it, just as parents today want to protect their children from evil.

Choosing Life

The two trees in the Garden of Eden illustrate an important fact: God designed humans with the freedom of choice. He did not force Adam or Eve to eat from either tree. When they took of the tree of life and ate, they lived. God also warned them that if they were to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would die. They had a choice.

The Bible is very clear that God wants us to choose. In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses delivers a stirring appeal in what he knew would be the last sermon before his death. He said: “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days” (Deuteronomy 30:19-20). Moses urged God’s people to choose life—the same choice Adam and Eve had the opportunity to make in the Garden of Eden.

After Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s command, He barred them from the tree of life, evidently to protect them from living forever in the misery of sin (Genesis 3:22). The Bible says that God drove them from the Garden of Eden and “placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword



Alex L. Fradkin/PhotoDisc

An Amazing Fact:

In Victoria, Australia, in 1872, lumberjacks claimed they felled a mountain ash that was 500 feet tall. Others say the distinction of “tallest tree” should go to a Douglas fir that was felled in British Columbia in 1940 and measured 417 feet. The tallest redwood in the Pacific Northwest measures a little under 400 feet. The tallest non-Sequoia alive today is a Douglas fir in Como Lake Park Trail, Wash., that reaches 310 feet tall.



Rod Planck/Researchers Inc.

shall not be remembered nor come into mind” (Isaiah 65:17).

The Cross, a Tree of Life

The cross of Calvary is perhaps the most commonly portrayed tree throughout Christendom. Erase from your mind all the hundreds of images you’ve seen in which the cross was a finely hewn piece of 6x6 timber. The Romans did not waste good lumber on crucifixion victims. Instead, they’d chop down the nearest available tree. The Jewish historian Josephus tells us that after Rome squelched the Jewish rebellion in A.D. 70, crosses were so profuse that it was impossible to find a mature living tree for miles around Jerusalem. The Romans had cut them all down.

In Galatians 3:13, Paul wrote, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” The cross was, of course, an instrument of death and torture. However, in the sense that Jesus on this tree defeated “him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14), what was intended for death became the vehicle to life through our Saviour.


Christ told His disciples, “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34). It is when we choose to be crucified with Christ that we finally begin to live. Galatians 2:20 says, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (verse 24).

In the very last chapter of the Bible, we find that the tree of life is now in heaven. Revelation 22:1-2 says that the tree of life stands in the very center of the city of God, and Revelation 21:2 says that when the New Jerusalem is brought down to the new earth, it comes down from God out of heaven. The apostle John wrote: “And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month” (Revelation 22:1-2).

Just as there are several fruits of the Spirit, there are also several kinds of fruit on the tree of life. The same verse says, “And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” A parallel text is Ezekiel 47:12, NKJV, which says: “Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine.”

In the new earth we will be able to choose to go to that tree of life, which spans the river of life flowing from the heavenly sanctuary. The fruit provides the food we need to perpetuate life forever and the fragrance from the leaves and flowers will serve to heal every memory of sin. “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former

Christ’s sacrifice at Calvary makes it possible for the saints to one day eat fruit from the magnificent tree of life. You must choose now whether to die *in* sin or *to* sin. Be crucified with Christ so that you might live a new life—an eternal life. 



StockTrek/Photodisc

An Amazing Fact:

The famous saman tree in Venezuela is the biggest shade tree in the world. Although not unusual in height or girth, it has an enormous branch spread that yields shade for a circumference of 614 feet. The largest shade tree in North America is a sycamore in Indiana; it has a height of 150 feet with a girth of 42 feet. The Bible tells us, “The LORD is thy keeper: The LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand” (Psalm 121:5).

From the Inside

Evangelist John Quade Develops Special Web Site for Seminar Guests

People who want to find out more about Evangelist John Quade or his evangelism seminars can now get more information at his personal Web site. Among the features at www.AmericaInProphecy.com are

online versions of the first five Amazing Facts Study Guides, a list of seminar topics, details about John's future seminar locations, and an online survey.

Visitors to the site can also browse a section on current events that demonstrate fulfillment of the signs of Christ's soon coming. Those who like what they see can set up links from other Web sites or download their choice of two different banners to use in directing other people to the AmericaInProphecy site.

If you have Internet access, check out John's site and watch for continuing improvements. His ideas for the future include creating a separate page for each night

of the seminar that contains additional material and includes a quiz of the lesson just covered.

Network Administrator Cory Miller Joins Computer Department

Cory Miller's life has been very exciting lately. Not only is he father to a newborn, but he also just



moved from Connecticut to California to become the network administrator for Amazing Facts. Working in the computer department with Andrew Taylor, Cory's job is to keep the computer systems up and running and to fix communication bugs.

His wife, Monique, is a dietician, homeschooler, and "mom" to Rachel, Laura, Cavan, and little Sophia. The Millers have been married 12 and a half years.

Cory's first contact with Amazing Facts was during the NET New York '99 series. A few months ago he saw an advertisement for the job, and soon every-

thing worked out for him and his family to join Amazing Facts. As first-time visitors to California, the Millers immediately liked the climate and interesting regional sights such as Lake Tahoe and Yosemite National Park. They look forward to settling into a new church family.

Cheridah Walters Joins Ministry to Head Media Department

Amazing Facts welcomes Cheridah Walters as its new media director. Coming from New York with a



stellar background of experience in the industry, she will be responsible for producing all television and radio programs affiliated with Amazing Facts. She will also be in charge of getting the *Millennium of Prophecy* series ready for broadcast.

Cheridah was born in Jamaica but was raised in England by her mother. She became interested in communications when she came to New York as a teenager to live with her father.

For the past three years Cheridah has been a freelance producer for several media clients. In New York City she has been a full-time pool producer for the United Nations, a freelance producer for Reuters Television, and the producer/writer for Children's Choice Awards, an annual two-hour live program. She has also served as a consultant and as director of productions and broadcast operations for Ghana Broadcasting in Africa. For 10 years she was a producer for Fox Television, working the majority of that time in New York City but also serving for one year as its Washington, D.C., bureau chief.

Her husband of seven years, Wilfred Greenland, is a financial controller for six different companies throughout Jamaica and North America. They have a 3-year-old son, Nouvel Quaison Walters Greenland.

Cheridah's first opportunity to work with Amazing Facts was during NET New York '99, during which she recruited and coordinated crew members and also served as stage manager. "I was doing three jobs at one time and working around the clock," she recalls, "but it was exciting and I wanted to do it."

Although living and working near California's state capital will represent a huge change from the lime-light of New York City, Cheridah says she can hardly wait to begin. "When the opportunity came, I grabbed it!" she exclaimed. "Now I can do the same thing for the Lord, with a focus on winning souls."



Bible Answers

With Pastor Doug Batchelor



In Matthew 4:6, did Satan tempt Christ to commit suicide?

The verse reads, “And [the devil] saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone” (Matthew 4:6).

The three temptations Jesus faced encompass every temptation that any of us face. We find in 1 John 2:16 that there are three basic temptations: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life. Eve and Adam fell in those three areas; Christ overcame in those same three areas. We’re all tempted by those three things.

The devil tempts each of us with self-destruction, which is the temptation described in Matthew 4:6. Before I was a Christian, I toyed with suicide quite a bit. Without God, life has no purpose. Suicide, for the non-Christian, is logical thinking. If there’s no God, no purpose, no eternity, and if people are unhappy most of the time, then what’s the sense in living?

The Christian, on the other hand, realizes that suicide does not usher anyone into a better dimension, but instead permanently seals any bad circumstances.

If you’re struggling, suicide doesn’t make it better. Suicide seals it forever. There’s no reversing those bad circumstances.

Generally speaking, suicide is the last resort of a person who is in a faithless and hopeless condition. When such a person kills himself, all he has to look forward to is the resurrection of the damned. His next conscious thought is not a better one, but a worse one. The biggest lie of all is that suicide is going to be an escape. The Bible says sin is a transgression of God’s law, and one of those commandments says, “Thou shalt not kill [murder]” (Exodus 20:13). That would include killing yourself.

Having said this, let me hasten to add that we must be careful not to automatically assume that all persons who have committed suicide will be lost. We may be surprised to find some in the kingdom who ended their own lives when they were not in their right minds due to unusual circumstances such as mental illness, chemical imbalance, or excruciating physical pain. We can trust God, who looks on the heart, to judge fairly in these cases.

Our lives are a sacred gift from God. The devil is using a lot of methods today to tempt people to self-destruction. Sometimes people commit suicide quickly; some do it by degrees through drugs, self-abuse, or cigarettes.

As long as you’re a Christian, you’ve got hope—of new life, a new body, and eternal life. Just read your Bible and keep claiming God’s promises. He’ll get you through it.

Isn’t praying for something once enough?

Prayer is not merely informing God; it draws us up to God. It increases our intensity by wrapping us around God.

The Lord wants us to pray to Him for our benefit, not because He doesn’t know what’s going on. It binds us to God. The Lord lays certain burdens on our heart, and as long as those burdens are there, we should keep praying for them.

Will this planet be the new earth after Jesus’ second coming?

God had an original plan for this earth before He ever created it. His plan has been corrupted, perverted, and polluted by the devil. However, the devil is not going to be able to ultimately confound God’s plan. The Lord is going to create a new heaven (a new atmosphere!) and a new earth (Revelation 21:1).

He’s going to take this same earth and recreate it, because the Bible says that “the meek . . . shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). And furthermore, Christ says, “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2-3). The righteous will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Then they will spend a millennium in heaven, living and reigning with Christ (Revelation 20:4). Finally, the apostle John says, “I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven” (Revelation 21:2). The New Jerusalem is the city of God, and its new home will be this planet. There will be no ozone depletion or greenhouse effect, though. It will be this earth, made new.

Tune in to Pastor Batchelor’s live nationwide call-in radio program, *Bible Answers Live*, on Sunday evenings. Send for a free program guide or visit the Amazing Facts Web site to get detailed information about the station(s) nearest you.



BY RICHARD CALDERON

Never a Dull Moment

Calderons Hold Seminar in Small Village of Prathipadu

Richard and Michelle Calderon have spent the last year coordinating the Amazing Facts work in India. Although Satan worked overtime to disrupt their recent meetings, God poured out His Spirit and blessed.

The Jeep Saga

My driver, Joseph, brought the P.A. systems and other equipment to Prathipadu four days before our meetings were scheduled to start. He was driving my Jeep, which was loaded both inside and up on top. At a vehicle checkpoint, inspectors stopped him and asked to see his commercial business license.

Attempting to explain that the equipment was not for sale, Joseph told them that it was to be used for 16 church meetings. The inspector wanted to see the sales bill for the equipment, but Joseph didn't have it. After a couple of hours and some threats to confiscate the equipment and tear up Joseph's driver's license, the police told Joseph he would have to pay an import tax in order to take the equipment from one state to another. It came to \$50, which is a lot of money here. When Joseph had the guts to ask for a receipt, the officer fired back, "Had I charged you the full amount of \$150, then I would have given you a receipt. Now get going!" Praise God that we were able to get all the equipment here safely.

Three days later, Joseph was out late one night delivering the equipment to individual churches

when the police arrested him on suspicions that he was a political extremist. Circumstantial evidence was against him. The license on the Jeep was from a state that is known for its political extremists. In addition, Joseph had inside the Jeep a roll of wire—for setting up the P.A. speakers—that is much like the wire extremists use to make explosives.

One of the district pastors went down and was finally able to get both Joseph and the Jeep released. In the end, the police admitted that they had just wanted to use our vehicle to do some "social service." They needed Joseph to drive them, in our vehicle, to raid a brothel. Since our Jeep is from out of state, the police figured it would not be detected as a police vehicle. Sure enough, they ended up arresting several people and transporting them to jail. Now I wonder ... is there any sort of purification ceremony I can perform for my Christian Jeep?

Temperamental Generator

Our generator had given us fits throughout the previous seminar. It would work before and after each meeting, but not during my talks. Last night it was working well until I got to the part of my sermon in which I identify the beast and his mark. When the generator went off, my translator said, "Now you made the devil mad!" I kept preaching.

After I finished my message with no P.A. system and only one gas lamp, I went to see why the men had not been able to get the generator restarted. The frame on which the gas engine and electric motor rest had completely broken in half! Oddly enough, I'd just had the electric motor go out several days before when I was to present the truth about the law of God and the Sabbath. I'm getting the impression that the devil doesn't want these people to understand God's truth for these last days. Fortunately, the majority of the people stayed, and with God's help, the presentation went very well.

Without Opposition

Praise God, not all of our experiences here have been bad! We have about 100 adults and 50 children attending our crusade each night. The people seem to be very attentive. A good percentage of men are attending our meetings, but they are reluctant to respond to my appeals each night. It is my prayer that God will show them their need for Jesus' atoning blood and power.

Photos by Richard Calderon



Members of the Gospel Trumpet Church in India show off the new sign that designates their building as a meeting place for Sabbathkeeping Christians.



Baptismal services were held in May for candidates from meetings held by Richard Calderon and Roger Stone (left) and by Pastor Muthyala (right), a new Sabbathkeeping minister in Prathipadu, India.

As I have visited some of the other sites where our newly baptized pastors are holding seminars, I am excited by the positive response of the people who are attending. At one village, where the people are all Hindu, we have 20 adults attending. There is no opposition at all. The pastor shared with me that he had presented the truth of the Sabbath. As he visited the people afterward, they said, "I guess we'll be keeping the Sabbath from now on."

The village health talks presented by my wife, Michelle, have been very good. One night she spoke about how to avoid getting worms. Her pictures were really graphic!

Usually Michelle is very calm in her presentations, but that night she seemed to really get into her message. She was constantly moving. I found out later that a grasshopper had gotten under her dress and was crawling its way up her body. I was really proud that she didn't scream!

In India, women wear a nose jewel, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, ankle chains, and toe rings. One Sabbath, after I presented the Bible teaching on the Christian and the use of jewelry, the congregation seemed very solemn. Several hours after the service, some of the leading ladies of the church came to see their pastor and said that they wanted to follow all of God's teachings and be rebaptized. Many of these women's husbands are Muslims who don't want their wives to remove their jewelry. Their husbands have told them, "If you take off your jewels, we won't let you attend church." I pray for God to lead in this situation.

My greatest joy came near the end of meetings when I received word from the pastor for whom I am conducting these meetings that the resistance of some of his church members to join our church was breaking down. I praise God!

When I preached on the subject of the cross, it was awesome to see so many people raise their hands to accept Christ's death for their sins. The people of this

area have lived for centuries in spiritual darkness. My heart goes out to them. I pray that the miraculous power of the gospel will free them from this darkness and bring them into the glorious light of Christ's kingdom.


Grand Finale

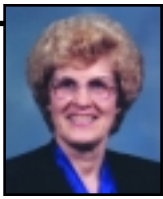
We finally finished our 10 crusades. And just like the 4th of July, it ended with a bang! The good news is that 88 precious souls were baptized and 37 others will be baptized soon. If all goes well, when we meet with the North Andhra Section Leadership tomorrow, there should be 10 new Sabbathkeeping congregations joining the Church. Hallelujah!

The independent pastor we were working with shared his appreciation to both of us and also wanted to praise God for having taken care of us. He told us that on April 20 after Michelle shared the harmful effects of alcohol on the person, the family, and the village, three intoxicated men became very angry. They vowed to kill me, Michelle, and the local independent pastor so that there would be no additional meetings.

This news spread all around the village. Ladies from the church began to pray for God's protection to surround us. They also shared their concerns with their non-Christian husbands, who said that they would not let anyone hurt us.

The next day, Michelle was asked by a villager to give his wife an injection. The hospital had handed the couple a needle and some medicine, telling them to do it themselves. She agreed to give the injection, and the man was so grateful that he told everyone of our kindness and concern for their well-being. This story got to the village leaders, who rebuked the three angry men and told them that they better not do anything to stop our meetings.

This is all in a day's work for a missionary overseas. Thank you for your prayers for Michelle and me as we work for God's kingdom. 



BY ANITA C.
SILVESTRI

Sowing the Word Report

Large Groups Gather in Roseburg and Portland

Church growth specialists John and Anita Silvestri have traveled throughout the country for Amazing Facts, teaching church members how to be winsome representatives of their King. Read about how God blessed during their two recent seminars in western Oregon.

On Easter weekend in April, the Roseburg Church in Oregon hosted a condensed version of the *Sowing the Word* seminar. We had been there two years previously, and there were many newly baptized members who were eager to learn how to share the gospel.

We met for a couple hours after the fellowship dinner on Sabbath, then the ladies of the church prepared a delicious assorted fruit and fruit breads supper so we could continue until we finished around 8 p.m.

We appreciated the support of Pastor Barry Taylor and Associate Pastor Les Zollbrecht as well as Pastor Peter Handke from the Myrtle Creek Church, located just south of Roseburg.

Valoa Schneider and her sister, Fawn Miller, were baptized with Fawn's mother-in-law, Retha Russell, at the conclusion of an evangelistic series in February. They were on the front row during each *Sowing the Word* seminar. They sat with Dr. Joe and Nell Williams, who made them feel warmly welcomed into the church. These three ladies are excited about

everything they have learned and are eager to share their new-found faith with families and friends. Please remember them in your prayers.

Members from five other churches were present, and one lady from the nearby town of Glide shared a divine appointment she'd had recently. One night she had to stay overnight at the local hospital, and she just could not sleep. After getting up, she noticed a nurse sitting outside her door. They talked for awhile, then the conversation turned to religion. The nurse said that she had recently worked with a male nurse who was a Sabbathkeeping Christian. She was so impressed by his Christian life and the information he shared that she gave him \$100 to purchase some books for her to read. She had completed the entire *Conflict of the Ages* series, which includes *The Great Controversy* and several other inspiring volumes.

This lady, who is an alumna from one of our previous seminars, offered to bring the nurse another special book she was confident she would enjoy reading. We encouraged her to also take a lesson or two from either the Amazing Facts Study Guide series or the new Storacles of Prophecy series so she could introduce her to Christ in a more complete way. Please pray for these two ladies as they build a relationship and study together.

Ronnie Rowton, from the Myrtle Creek Church, told the group how the Lord had opened the door recently for him to share in a mighty way with a lady who is a labor union representative. She is out of town a lot, so he gave her five of the Amazing Facts *Millennium of Prophecy* videos to view while she is gone. She told him she is watching them and learning a lot. Please pray that this contact will bear fruit.

Scott Lyman, one of Ronnie's co-workers at Roseburg Lumber, accepted his invitation to begin a Bible study and is now a baptized Sabbathkeeping Christian. Scott attended the *Sowing the Word* seminar with his wife, Allisha; their extremely well-behaved and attentive 1-year-old son; and Ronnie's wife, Billie. Both families sat on the front row and encouraged us during our time in Roseburg.

During the month of May we were invited by Pastor Phil Shultz to hold our *Sowing the Word* seminar at the Stone Tower Church in Portland, Ore. At the first class we told about the acronym P.U.S.H., which stands for "Pray Until Something Happens." When we met the second week, one lady told us how this acronym had helped her through a very stressful

Photos courtesy of Anita Silvestri



Fawn Miller (left) was baptized in February with her sister, Valoa Schneider, and her mother-in-law, Retha Russell. Eager to share their faith, these three ladies sat on the front row throughout the recent *Sowing the Word* seminar.

day. She had been praying for God to lead her to someone who had a desire for Bible study, and she felt that continual prayer had given her the strength she needed to get through her day. We know that prayer changes both things and people.


When Roberta, the secretary for the Stone Tower Church, joined her husband at the senior center one day some months ago, he introduced her to Eva. She told Roberta that her doctor had advised her to find another church where she could find some peace and strength in her life. Roberta volunteered to begin Bible studies with her, and Eva has since been baptized into the Stone Tower church family. Roberta is continuing to study with Eva weekly, using videos this time, and now Eva's husband has joined in viewing them! He recently commented that Pastor Phil Shultz would soon be "dunking him." Pastor Phil replied, "Anytime you're ready."

Another one of Roberta's contacts was a lady named Jolane who called the church looking for a prayer meeting. She came that very evening, and Roberta began weekly studies with her. As Jolane's knowledge of the Bible grew, so did their friendship, and it wasn't many months until she was baptized. At an Oregon camp meeting, Roberta introduced her friend to the congregation. Six months later Jolane died. When Jesus returns someday soon, Roberta will see her friend again. Isn't God's timing good?

John and I had two wonderful providential encounters during this seminar, which we were able to share with the group. While shopping in Kelso, Wash., the clerk in the men's department was so helpful and kind as we purchased some things. We enjoyed visiting with her.

After we paid for our purchases, another lady whose husband is a pastor in the area told us that this clerk is an inactive church member and that she stops by regularly just to say "hello."

After lunch we went to the women's department to make some purchases and found another kind and very courteous clerk. As I was trying on some clothes, John talked to her and I joined the conversation as I went in and out of the dressing room. She told us of her life, her adopted grandchild, etc. She also asked questions about our family. As we went to pay for our merchandise, she gave us her name and address so we could send her a Bible study. She also told us that she lives just a few short blocks from a Sabbathkeeping church in her area. We have already sent this lady three of the Amazing Facts Storacles of Prophecy Bible lessons and look forward to seeing her again soon.

Someone told us that these two clerks have been talking about "the couple" who visited their store that day in May. What a wonderful privilege we have to share God's Word and His love within our daily "circle of influence!" 



Ronnie Rowton (left) told the *Sowing the Word* seminar group how God had opened doors for him to witness at his workplace. One of his co-workers, Scott Lyman, was baptized after they studied the Bible together.



Eva Batchelor (center) met Don and Roberta Minck at Milwaukie Center. Eva's doctor had advised her to seek a source of peace and strength, so she began Bible studies with Roberta and was recently baptized.



When Jolane Tull (right) called the Stone Tower Church looking for a prayer meeting, she spoke with church secretary Roberta Minck. The two ladies became Bible study partners and formed a close friendship. Not many months passed before Jolane decided to be baptized.

Meet Amazing Facts

You are invited to meet the members of our Amazing Facts team at any one of the following locations. This schedule is subject to change without notice, so please call Amazing Facts to confirm appointments or get more information.



Doug Batchelor



John Bradshaw

Doug Batchelor

August 2-5
National ASI Convention
Amway Grand Plaza Hotel
187 Monroe NW
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Ray House

July 22 - August 26
Hilo Church
162 Kapiolani Street
Big Island, Hawaii



Rich Cavaness



Byron Corbett

John Bradshaw

July 22 - August 6
Scranton Church
1407 Wyoming Avenue
Scranton, Pennsylvania

Jaime Jorge

July 28-29
Central California Camp Meeting
Camp Soquel
1931 Old San Jose Road
Soquel, California



Steve DeLong



Gary Gibbs

Rich Cavaness

July 28 - August 26
Coudersport Church
1004 S. Main Street
Coudersport, Pennsylvania

Brian McMahon

August 4 - September 7
Milwaukee Citywide Meetings
Waukesha County Exposition Center
1000 Northview Road
Waukesha, Wisconsin



Lowell Hargreaves



Ray House

Steve DeLong

July 29 - August 28
Hereford Church
711 W. Park Avenue
Hereford, Texas

Jack Pefley

July 28 - August 25
Cedar City Church
1840 W. Harding Avenue
Cedar City, Utah



Jaime Jorge



Kim Kjaer

Gary Gibbs

August 2-5
National ASI Convention
Amway Grand Plaza Hotel
187 Monroe NW
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Dennis Priebe

July 29
Linthicum Heights Brooklyn Churches
901 Andover Road
Baltimore, Maryland



Brian McMahon



Jack Pefley

Lowell Hargreaves

July 29 - August 27
Clarksville Church
782 N. 2nd Street
Clarksville, Tennessee

August 11-12
Indianapolis Junior Academy
2910 E. 62nd Street
Indianapolis, Indiana

August 18-19
Jackson Church
1901 W. Franklin
Jackson, Michigan



Dennis Priebe



John Quade



John Silvestri



Verne Snow

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Dr. Merlin Anderson by Margie J. Cole
John Baerg by Alice Baerg, his wife
Dr. Calvin Baker by David Miller
Hope Banner by Mr. & Mrs. Jennings Music
Joe Barber by Mr. & Mrs. George Cacic
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Virginia Bell by Velda R. Tikker
Pastor William Brown by Stanley H. Reesman
George Bucknam by Zella & Dave Ahlers
Gary Buczkowski by Margaret & Carlos Scheller
Bruce Bush by William & Agnes Garrison
John P. Cameron by Anne Cameron, his wife
John & Pearl Campbell by William & Agnes Garrison
Derwood Chappell by Jean Chappell, his wife
Dr. Everett Coleman by Margie J. Cole
Dr. & Mrs. L.E. Coolidge by Faustina Purdie
Ellen Coppock by Stanley H. Reesman
Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence Crandall by Stanley H. Reesman
Joe Crews by Lu Ann Crews, his wife; by Matthew Kabson; by Mr. & Mrs. William Lowe
Herb Davis by Stanley H. Reesman
Leah Davis by Stanley H. Reesman
Marjorie Dickinson by Kent & Dee Dickinson
Jess Dittberner by Clark & Ada Willison
Carroll O. Dockery by Mildred Dockery, his wife
Ruby & Leland Dubois by Stanley H. Reesman
Sadie E. Erickson by Arthur Torland
Edna Evrard by Clark & Ada Willison
Mildred Feldbauer by Stanley H. Reesman
Harry Flechtner by Lemmie Flechtner
Stanley Folkenberg by Ruth & Frank Waxter
Frank Foote by Stanley H. Reesman
McVernon Fullbright by Maryetta J. Fullbright, his wife
Sandra M. Gerke by Dieter Gerke, her husband
Lloyd Gore by Kent & Dee Dickinson
David E. Haines by Ollie Haines, his wife
Pastor Alex R. Hall by Alyce F. Hall, his wife
Anne Y. Harding by Edward Harding, her son
Vryl Hayford by Patricia L. Jones
Roma R. Hays by Ruth Hays, his wife
Irene Herber by Eva Lee Hunter, her sister
Joseph Herzberg by Thelma Herzberg, his wife; by Mr. & Mrs. Michael Fechik, his son-in-law & daughter
Stella C. Hess by Ralph A. Hess, her son
Stanley Hill by Stanley H. Reesman
Pastor Gideon Hochstetter by John & Una Mae Bender
Mr. & Mrs. Ted Hoffman by Steve, Donna, Matt & Stephenie Dickie
Vernon Hurst by Helen Hurst, his wife; by Margie J. Cole
Dorothy Hynum by Bertrand P. Hynum, her husband
Benton Johnson by Steve, Donna, Matt & Stephenie Dickie
Howard F. Johnston by Maryetta J. Fullbright
Carl Jorgensen by Richard & Mary Durkin
Elizabeth Kabson by Matthew Kabson, her husband
Julie Ann Greenfield Karstedt by Charles & Marlys Greenfield, her parents
Burton Ketland by Velma Libby
Glen Kingery by Velda R. Tikker
Bonnie Kramer by Donald & Beverly Hoover
Clarence Kuhnke by Phyllis C. Bailey, his daughter
Louise Larmen by Vera & Don Antisdal
Maxine Laursen by Richard & Mary Durkin
Mr. & Mrs. Paul Leatherman by Stanley H. Reesman
Mr. & Mrs. S.K. Leatherman by Stanley H. Reesman
Mary Louise Lilley by Bert Lilley, her husband
Dorothy Little by the Greeneville Seventh-day Adventist Church
Alan Dean Long by Pauline B. Long, his mother

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