

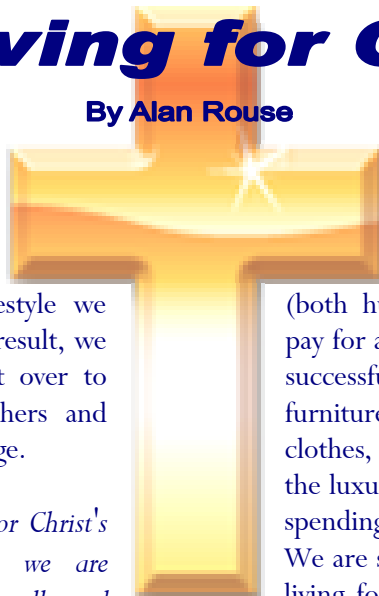
# The Messenger

## The Atlanta Church of Christ

*in Gwinnett*

### **Living for God**

**By Alan Rouse**



Many Christians live our lives serving ourselves. And many of us carry an additional burden - the costly addiction to a lifestyle we really cannot afford. As a result, we have little or nothing left over to serve God and our brothers and sisters. That needs to change.

*2 Corinthians 5:14-15 "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."*

The above passage is one that most Christians know, one that we love to sing. But many of us do not think about it in sufficient depth. It tells us that the cross compels us to live for Christ, and not for ourselves. Living for God is not just a good idea. It is not optional. We are compelled to live for Christ. Do we even know what it looks like to live for Christ? How are we doing at that?

I'm afraid that too many Christians are not doing so well at it. Most of our days are spent earning money (both husband and wife) so we can pay for all the things that make us feel successful -- the house, the cars, the furniture, the wide-screen TV, the clothes, the cell phones, the vacations, the luxuries for our children... We are spending our lives accumulating stuff. We are slaves to consumption. That is living for ourselves, not for him who died for us and was raised again.

In many cases, the standard of living we pursue is one that we can scarcely attain. The pursuit leaves us exhausted and stressed out at the end of the day, and leaves us broke at the end of each month. We are earning money as fast as we can, and are spending it faster than we earn it. Our habit of material consumption is an addiction every bit as enslaving as an addiction to drugs. And just like addiction to drugs, this addiction leads us to a miserable place. While seeking joy and fulfillment, we find instead anxiety and emptiness.

(continued on next page)

- Elders**  
Steve Galbreath  
Alan Rouse
- Evangelist**  
Richard Alawaye
- Teacher**  
Gary Roberson
- Women's Ministry & Welfare**  
Sarah Alawaye  
Roxanne Galbreath  
Sherry Rouse
- Teens**  
John and Marisabel Becker
- Deacons**  
Birt Anglin  
Peter Berry  
Steve Collier  
Danny Emmett  
Bill Francis  
Patrick Freeman  
Glenn Hayes  
Kendall Knight  
Karl Lynn  
Russ McGarr  
Jeff Mueller  
Todd Reynolds  
Todd Shultz  
Dan Stehr  
Ken Watson

#### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

Sun. 2/22: Guest Speaker: Craig Morgan, Atlanta Church of Christ at Cobb

Sat.-Sun. 3/14-15: 1st Qtr Teaching Weekend "The Disciplined Life"; Guest Speaker: Rick Maule from Charlotte, NC Harvest Community Church (tentative)

#### **INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

Hospitality ..... 3

God's Design and Beauty of Woman.... 4

# Living for God

(Continued)

Is this what God had in mind when he called us to live for him?

The early Christians had a different perspective on life, and particularly on material things:

*Acts 2:44-45 "All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need".*

*Acts 4:34-35 "There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need."*

The early Christians were expected to have a different attitude toward material possessions:

*1 Timothy. 6:6-10 "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."*

Are we content with food and clothing? Or do we really have to have that big house in the best school district?

We thought those things would bring us peace and happiness. But that hasn't been working out too well. Combining a career, household management, and parenting is producing stress, fatigue, and frustration in many households. How fulfilling is a life in which you are always frustrated and exhausted? Too many of us are at the end of our rope all the time, never really satisfied with the results on any of our various battlefields. For many, the ultimate frustration is that after all the sacrifice, instead of receiving gratitude at home, the children are rebellious and disrespectful, and the marriage is on the rocks. This was not how we envisioned it turning out.

Adding to the frustration is that these families tend to be getting deeper and deeper into the financial hole. Instead of being comfortably well off with a second income, the family has become addicted to every dollar the two parents can earn. There is no room for error. Every dollar is spoken for. Whenever an unexpected expense comes along, or when one of them loses a job, the stress skyrockets as they desperately seek some way to meet their obligations.

At the end of the workday, the parents struggle to catch up with household and parenting responsibilities. But there is neither time nor energy for it. Tempers are short. Relationships are strained. So the couples reap what they have sown. In too many cases that includes screaming fights with rebellious teenagers, strained relations with the spouse, and even divorces.

And, of course, there is no room in such a life to "live for God." Every nickel, every minute, and every ounce of energy is spent living for ourselves, trying in vain to deal with all the family issues that were caused by our choice of lifestyle. This is living for ourselves, not for God - and it is not working out very well! As Paul said, those who live like this are piercing themselves with many griefs.

There really is a better way.

If this describes your life, start taking steps to downsize your life! Simplify! That may mean selling the house and buying a smaller one. It may mean letting someone like Dave Ramsey help you get out of debt and gain control of your financial situation. It certainly means saying "No" to a lot of urges to buy, to consume, to possess. Peace and happiness really do follow from self-denial and serving others. You can map out a plan to get there, and spend your remaining blessed days serving the creator of the universe!"

*1 Peter 4:1-2 "Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God."*

How will you spend the rest of your earthly life?

In your old age, sitting in a rocking chair at the old folks' home, you won't be wishing you had worked longer hours in your job. You won't be wishing you had lived in a bigger house in a nicer neighborhood. You won't be wishing you had bought a bigger TV screen.

Instead, you might be wishing you were still on speaking terms with your children. Or your spouse. You might wish you had spent your time helping others instead of chasing the wind. You might wish you had stored your treasure in heaven.

Or maybe you will be glad you lived your life serving God. It's your choice. Make room for God in your life.

# Hospitality

By Glenn Hayes

*“Don’t forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it.”  
Hebrews 13:2 NLT*

During the summer of 1998, my wife and I had the opportunity to see one of our sisters perform in a stage play in Dayton, Ohio. The couple that disciplined us made all of the arrangements for our housing and travel. After our arrival in Dayton, Sheila and I had just enough time to get to the house where we were staying, change, and make it to the theater. But this is what struck me...there was a key in the mailbox for us along with a beautiful card welcoming us and letting us know where everything was. You see, we didn’t meet our host that evening. In fact we didn’t meet them until we were preparing to leave the next day. As young disciples only a few months old in God’s kingdom, this blew us away! A couple, whom we’d never met, opened their hearts and their home to us. It was an experience that we still talk about and the impact it had on our hearts.

We are reminded throughout the Scriptures to show hospitality to our family, neighbors, and even strangers. In fact, Romans 12:13 reminds us to “**practice hospitality.**” To practice, as defined by Webster, is “to do or perform frequently, customarily or habitually; to use or exercise any profession or art.” Hospitality is not something that is done sparingly or inconsistently, but is something that should be **practiced!** Hospitality cannot be mastered unless it is performed on a consistent basis.

Jesus was the great example of practicing hospitality. As we see throughout the Gospels, He welcomed people to be around Him. Whether healing the sick or feeding a multitude, He displayed the art of having people around Him and providing for them. Luke mentions how he and Paul were graciously welcomed into the home of a stranger (Publius) for three days and shown generous hospitality (Acts 28:7 TNIV).

While in Chicago, we set a goal to have everyone in our region in our home. In a six-year span we fell 57 short of serving 351 in our local congregation but the numbers did include many visitors and friends of others in the church. One goal this year is to have guests in our home that have never been. Not only are we going after our brothers and sisters in our congregation but also our neighbors in our community. We have already had the privilege of serving our spiritual family who visit from different states as well as different countries. **It warms the heart to serve!!!**

God has placed us all in our own little “Jerusalems” where we have the opportunity to reach out to our neighbors. One of the greatest ways to reach out is to invite them into our homes. To offer a cup of coffee or some freshly baked cookies to a stranger still works in this day and age. I find that firing up the ol’ grill in the backyard brings the neighbors running. It is a great way to strike up a conversation and invite them over for a meal.

1 Peter 4:9 (NLT) says: “Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay.” The NIV says: “Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.” There are two keys here:

1. We are told to offer hospitality cheerfully and without grumbling or complaining. This is a heart condition. We are to make our guests happy and comfortable showing them that they are welcome.
2. These instructions are not to be administered only to those that we know but also, and especially, to strangers; those who we don’t know.

We have found that those brothers and sisters whom we’ve served, but never met before, greatly appreciate the warmth and generosity that is extended to them just as we did during that trip to Dayton. We encourage you to open your doors and extend a welcome to someone whom you’ve never had in your home. Who knows, by doing so you may entertain an angel!

## God's Design and Beauty of Woman

By Chandra Dew



*"I made you grow like a plant of the field. You grew up and developed and became the most beautiful jewels. Your breasts were formed and your hair grew, you were naked and bare." (Ezekiel 16:7)*

God is expressing the beauty that he sees in us as we mature through the obedience of His word. God looks at our hearts to define our beauty (1 Samuel 16:7). We look at our outward appearance and status in life to define us because the world exacerbates our thinking of who we are as women. If we are not careful, we can shape our hearts to the worldly ideal of womanhood that is found in a magazine, newspaper, the Internet, or television. The world's value of importance isn't a woman who simply wants to please God. Christian women have to be on guard and not let the world design our meaning of life.

God created woman to be a helper to man. To some this may not seem an important position or self-satisfying, but we only feel that way because of what we have been taught by the world. David says in Psalm 144:11-12, *"Deliver me and rescue me from the hands of foreigners whose mouths are full of lies, whose right hands are deceitful."* Let's not get deceived by foreigners (those who do not follow God). Let God form our hearts, not the world.

Do we use Jesus to shape ourselves? Do we desire to be what God created us to be? How do we react to teachings, such as, the husband will rule over the wife (Genesis 3:16), or how we live our lives is more important than what we wear (1 Timothy 2:9). A woman should learn in quietness and full submission, not to teach or have authority over man (even if we may believe we are more intelligent, greater teachers or speakers (1 Timothy 2:10-11). God expects us to help our husbands, manage our homes, raise and teach our children, and show hospitality (Genesis 2:18; 1 Timothy 5:10,14; Proverbs 1:8, 6:20). Do we let our ambitions and careers interrupt or interfere with our mission as Godly women?

I believe we all agree that Jesus' role while he was on earth was very important. He was a helper, servant and teacher. Jesus emphasized servitude throughout His life. *"He made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness"* (Philippians 2:7-8). Jesus said *"If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all"* (Mark 9:35). That we must consider others to be better than we are (Philippians 2:3). This is the same attitude we must take into our hearts to accomplish what God has planned for us while we are still on this earth.

Our role as women is important and beautiful. God designed us to continue Jesus' purpose as a helper, servant and teacher. We must embrace what God says is good and fall in love with his laws.

Psalm 119:10-16 *"I seek you with all my heart that I might not sin against you. Praise be to you, O Lord; teach me your decrees. With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word."*

Let's guard what has been entrusted to our care and turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge (1 Timothy 6:20) and believe that the one who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

Let our minds take in what is true. Beauty and our importance are shaped through our obedience to God.