



GOOD NEWS GUIDE

REMEMBER: GOD LOVES YOU!

Brother Roland, PO Box 14, Fayetteville PA 17222

February, 2024

Would you like to receive an extra copy of each "Good News Guide" to share with a friend, neighbor, or family member? Let me know.

What Should We Do?

God loves us. Even sinners like you and me. He loves us, and He desires for *all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* (1 Timothy 2:4) His plan, the destiny He has planned for every one of us, is that we come to live with Him joyfully forever in Heaven, each one as His own adopted child. That includes you and me. We do not deserve it, and there is no way we can earn it (see Romans Chapter 8). Our salvation is God's gift to us, paid for by the blood of Jesus when He was crucified. We can receive the gift, or we can refuse it.

God gives us another gift, as well. We can also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, to comfort and encourage us, and to guide us and give us the help we need to live in agreement with God's will.

As God's children and followers of Jesus, there are things we absolutely should not do, and things we really should do.

We must always remember this, though: we are saved by *grace*, through *faith*. And this is not our own doing; *it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* (Ephesians 2:8-9) We can never earn God's gift of salvation; but by our actions we should honor that wonderful gift, and honor God, who gives it to us.

So what should we do? How should we act? I am not going to give you a list of rules to obey. What I will give you is a list of things to work on, to make you a stronger believer and a better follower of Jesus. Let the Holy Spirit guide you as you pick one of these to work on for a while. Remember, these are not so you can earn points; they are to help you grow. I need them as much as you do.

Here is my list of suggestions for you and for me.

Repent. All of the things we have been doing that we know are wrong—being selfish, being prideful and intolerant, hurting others—we don't have to be told these things are wrong; we already know it. We need to correct our behavior, with God's

help. Repenting does not mean feeling bad; it means totally turning away from sinful behavior to go in a new direction. It's the first thing Jesus said when He began to teach: "Repent!"

**BE PATIENT —
GOD ISN'T FINISHED
WITH US YET.**

Have Faith in God. Faith is not something we "build up" in our minds; it's a gift from God. Each of us is given a "measure of faith" (Romans 12:3) to help us think correctly. But, like a muscle, faith needs to be exercised.

In Hebrews Chapter 11 the "heroes of the faith" were not heroes just because they had faith; each of them, "by faith," did something that pleased God. They left their comfort zones and trusted God to make it happen. *Without faith it is impossible to please God.* (Hebrews 11:6a) God can prompt us to do something that is scary. When we trust Him and do it, our faith gets stronger.

Obey God. His word says that God values obedience more than any sacrifice. God always knows what He is doing, and His planning is infinitely better than any of ours. We need to trust Him completely (Proverbs 3:5-6), pay attention to what He has commanded in His Word, and pray for and follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Of course we always have to be careful not to follow any other spirit—the world, our flesh, and the devil are always trying to lead us astray.

Love God and love others. Jesus said that the two great commandments are these: *love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.* (Luke 10:27)

In order to do this, we need to know what love is. Here's my summary: Love gives. Love puts others above self. Love is a life style and a firm determination to put the loved one—God, or our neighbor—first when it comes to serving or

otherwise giving a blessing. Loving God and our neighbor is not easy; it takes work and often takes plain stubbornness. But we need to do it, and it is well worth the effort.

Part of loving God is wanting to be with Him, in prayer and praise. We pray in order to align our purposes with His. When we praise Him, we are also telling ourselves how wonderful and good He is.



Forgive. It's hard, sometimes.

When we have suffered serious harm, it's hard to let go of the anger and the urge to retaliate. But forgiving is important for two reasons: first, to allow God eventually to heal our hurting; and, secondly, to allow for the possibility of a new and better relationship with the offender.

I have read of many instances where God-inspired forgiveness has healed wounds and has dramatically changed lives.

Be baptized. Baptism is not magic, and it's not simply symbolic. It is a very important spiritual transaction that marks or "seals" the baptized one as belonging to God. A useful analogy is the "branding" of an animal with the mark of its owner. It doesn't keep the animal from straying or being stolen, but it helps get it back where it belongs. Baptism proclaims, "This person now belongs to God." And the amount of water is not significant; what matters is God's word and His touch.

Be active in a church. Being a "loner" is not good. We need the love, encouragement, and guidance of other Christians—and we need to help the others as well. Hebrews urges, ... *let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another* (Hebrews 10:24-25a)

My friend Al, who served as a jail chaplain for many years, loves to tell of a group of inmates in a cell block who formed themselves into a church, with regular services and prayer meetings, and the kind of helpful fellowship one finds in a good church. Maybe some who read this can help that happen elsewhere. We need each other.

Serve others. A good thing to ask yourself whenever you see any need is, "How can I help?" Jesus pointed out many ways that we can serve others: "*Then the King will say to those on his*

right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'" (Matthew 25: 34-36)

God intends for us to serve, *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* (Ephesians 2:10)

Jesus said, "Do to others what you would have them do to you." (Matthew 7:12) We need to be alert for opportunities to help or serve others, and do it.

Be a Witness for Jesus. The best thing we can do for anyone is to share God's Good News with them. When we meet someone, we should begin establishing a relationship. We do this mainly by being interested, and listening. Then, when the opportunity comes up, we can tell them about God's love and what our Savior, Jesus, has done and is doing for us. I'm not saying we should beat people over the head with the Bible; I'm saying, if we can help someone enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, we should be willing, prepared, and ready, even eager, to do it. And we should not neglect our families and our neighbors.

Well, that's plenty for you and me to work on for a while. I also think that we should take a few minutes each week, maybe on Sunday mornings when we worship God and confess our sins, to consider if we have made any progress. And, whether we have had a productive week or not, we should remember this: *And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.* (Galatians 6:9)

Finally, let me give you a phrase that sums up everything I have said:

Let God be God. God is God, and we can't change that. But is He Lord of your life and my life? That's our goal—to please Him by trusting Him and obeying Him, letting Him be in control. And when we mess up, and try to take over again, we need to confess, and repent, and ask again for His help.

Blessings to you, my brothers and sisters.

Brother Roland

Not by Works

by Al Smith

Based on dozens of TV commercials, it looks like most of the world's problems can be solved for as little as a \$19 a month donation. Some of the organizations who are asking for that are probably legitimate. But when I look at both the persistence and social impact of the COVID pandemic, the wars going on in Europe and the Middle East, the deep political divisions in our country, the large number of once-in-a-century storms, the out-of-control financial picture for so many, the fragility of the Medicare system, and the deep spiritual malaise — I don't think making a \$19 per month donation is the right form of the solution. I think instead I should pray for America.

I was praying for America several days ago when this sarcastic big-city thought popped into my head: Forget the NIV and the NLT; the hot new Bible translation is the CAT — the "corrected, Culturally Adjusted Translation" of the old King James. In the CAT, Ephesians 2:8-9 now reads: *"For it is by grace ye are saved, through being a regular guy, which is of yourselves; not of works, lest any man should boast."* And that's for sure, because we all agree about those works.

Some 70% of Americans do not believe in hell; or if they do believe in the possibility of hell, they believe that only the most heinous criminals will end up there. If there is no downside, what's the problem? Of course heaven and hell are not fully understood by us, with our "chimpanzee-plus" brains. Nonetheless, hell is certainly nobody's first choice — thank God for His promises that we are saved by grace through faith, and that He will never leave us nor forsake us.

As far as works go, Tim, in our men's Bible study, says, "Yes, God wants all to be saved, and we all have a role in that effort; but extremes like going to Nepal or passing out tracts on street corners are not for most people. But," he adds, "we all have family, friends, and neighbors we can pray for, or invite to something."

So I invited one of my adult grandsons to the monthly men's Pancake Breakfast. Okay, so I'm not exactly a missionary; but, amazingly enough, even an old guy who no longer has a driver's license can actually do something.

[Al was Chaplain at the Washington County Detention Center in Hagerstown, MD for several years.]

The "Good News Guide" is a monthly newsletter that is free, and freely available to anyone who wants it. I love to get a note from someone who has seen a copy, saying, "Please put me on the mailing list." If you'd like a second copy to share, let me know. If there's someone else who wants to be on the mailing list, let me know. For inmates I need first and last name, DOC number, usually their SID number, and address.

This newsletter is intended primarily for jail and prison inmates, but it is truly a joy for me when an inmate is released and still wants to receive it. All I need is a change of address. Keep telling me where you are each time you move, and I'll keep sending you the "Good News Guide."

If you have a question about Bible truth or the Christian life, I'll be glad to share my thoughts with you, and maybe with the other readers of the "Good News Guide." Write to me. **Note:** I do not have Bible studies or other materials to send you.

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The Holy Spirit

The Bible tells us of many individuals who had faith in God, and who exercised that faith in various ways. Are you familiar with all of these names, and their stories? Enjoy the puzzle.

Puzzle:

D W S P D H B D N P Y S K E A Z L C B E T O C T V M O I A E
A H L M A T J P H D M K W E O E L H S Q W D G A E K U L M W
P A Q S B J W B M V H Z J N V J T T N J Y J W W B X U T A R
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F M J O R E O L I I I H S A S E T C C E G H T D X N J Z T D
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N A O E O T D K R E P C H N D G A A E H H Z E R R O S B W U
L W C A Z O S E H D R W I R Q L H N M D C B G Y M L T Z T S
P O H Q A H X V O S P E T E R F I N U U O A Q K T O F H S Z
R A I T Y U Z T U N L N M K P G C A S R X K H T L S S U Y K
H F U S M A T O L O E G Q I A A Q H A X B D B S M E A E W D
E D J L S E B B U V F P Z N A Q O H N K G B O J E N B B S M
P Y F E Y D A R R W O U A S K H Z C O U I P A U O M E A N W
R G M N W B W Z V H K B I F N U L A A Q H Q Z H B F D T Q G
I A K C O Z G H D E R G X Z X S K L H J X B D Q A D N M X M
J R L X T S S A T A L I A G I B A E J E S U S L T R E G I Z
K O U B A C M R H C V K O S C A C B Q X H Y D Y D B G E W X
A S X Q B H B A Q Q K I A I C V K F A F A P R E G C O Q X C
U O E S P Q M S S G E M D E S N A C J N D Q W E D U M X M Q
D L U F V A X R V O O J N P X A K T I H R X S F Z H A F W M
X L M R C D F W W H Q T K U E O I B N Q A A D M I Y E N P D
D O L E U M A S T Z U D I Z Z H C A U E C H B K V S C N M Y
M P V L Z C J P Y R C R X J E P H T H A H S I L E G I N R R
H A U J Q Z N O I G P Y D X Z O D Z R A C E Z V P O N A O Z
T E R C U K B O M N Y K O I P S O F J F J A M M B M U Y P B
N W N K D A N Y D M D A N I E L W I X D A A T I R O E H J A
U Q D D R V I R G I N M A R Y F L M Y Y C J S N A T H A N B
B N O A M M L W H U Z J J N M E Y S X B O R R U T H P P R P
O N K J Y J V P T K H Y Y C J Q U B S R B L A N X B U H C P

Words:

A CENTURION
ABEDNEGO
ABEL
ABIGAIL
ABRAHAM
ANDREW
APOLLOS
BARAK
BARNABAS
BOAZ
CALEB
DANIEL
DAVID
DEBORAH

ELIJAH
ELISHA
ENOCH
ESTHER
EUNICE
EZRA
GIDEON
HANNAH
ISAAC
ISAIAH
JACOB
JAMES
JEPHTHAH
JEREMIAH

JESUS
JOHN
JOSEPH
JOSHUA
LOIS
LUKE
MARK
MATTHEW
MESHACH
MORDECAI
MOSES
NATHAN
NATHANIEL
NEHEMIAH

NICODEMUS
NOAH
PAUL
PETER
RAHAB
RUTH
SAMSON
SAMUEL
SARAH
SHADRACH
SOLOMON
THOMAS
TIMOTHY
VIRGIN MARY