

Shaping The Tree



by Dawn Reed
Eastern Ky. Columnist

It didn't look like much—all mashed down and squished into the box.

I had hoped, nay dreamed again of a new, fatter Christ-

mas tree this year. After measuring the Christmas tree area and scouring the internet, I selected a Dunhill Green Fir that was seven and a half feet tall. Its girth measured 60 inches. That sounded pleasingly plump! I ordered it online and anxiously awaited its arrival.

Our family's old tree was as big as a hippopotamus. After 20 years and many good memories, there were more fake needles on the floor than on the branches. It was a concern for my beloved. A newer, smaller tree took its place. I have continued to search for a larger, fatter replacement.

On my lunch break, my beloved informed me I had gotten a large package. Racing home after work, I pictured the new

tree in all its glory.

Opening the box, it didn't look like much. It had been squished almost flat to fit into the container.

I pulled out the parts and got to it. First, the foundation. The stand was locked into place. Assembly was easy: section A fit into B; section B fit into C. In seconds, it stood seven and a half feet tall.

It just needed some work.

As I bent and reshaped the branches, I realized how much we had in common.

When we accept Christ as our Savior, we don't suddenly have it all together and walk in perfection. We need an overhaul. Hearts, attitudes, and habits need to be completely reshaped. Our Father takes our lives-ones that don't look like much at first—and gently reshapes us into something

special. He uses His Word and His Spirit to accomplish the job.

The song "Have Thine Own Way, Lord" streamed through my mind. It was burned into my heart decades ago. Lyrics written by Adelaide A. Pollard in 1902 still ring true. "Have thine own way, Lord, Have thine own way. Thou art the potter, I am the clay. Mold me and make me, After thy will, while I am waiting, yielded and still." According to various sources, Adelaide was distressed over her unsuccessful attempts to serve as a missionary in Africa yet was seeking to be molded into God's perfect will. She was inspired by the prayer of an elderly woman at a prayer meeting and the story of the potter in Jeremiah 18. The words of the song poured from her heart to paper.

As a potter reshapes clay, my Father is reshaping me, too. My heart's desire is to be an instrument in His Hands. Sometimes the changes are not fun.

Has He changed/reshaped you, too? Through times when He was your only hope? Has He stretched you? Or are you the same as when you met Him?

He guides me through His Word. He leads me (sometimes shoves me) with His Spirit. He gives me opportunities to grow in my faith, knowing my strength comes from Him.

I put on gloves to protect my hands as I worked on the new tree. To get it into perfect form, it took some time. The same is true of our Heavenly Father. Though it takes time, He doesn't get frustrated. His Hands work tirelessly knowing it will be worth it.

Seeds of Hope



There are some religions in the Orient that follow practices that are condemned by Scripture and society. A member of one of them was jailed for robbery and murder which was part of his "faith." While imprisoned he was visited by a missionary who shared with him the message of salvation. After he accepted Christ, the missionary gave him a Bible which became his dearest possession.

When he appeared before the judge, he testified that he had been brought up to be a worshiper of Kali. As a young child he was taught that if he shed the blood of the victims he robbed he would please Kali - a Hindu goddess - and win her favor. He faithfully practiced his belief in this

goddess all of his life.

When the judge confronted him with his crime, he broke down and began to weep. After a few moments he was able to speak and with tears streaming down his face told the judge that he had committed many murders - more than he could remember.

"How could you be guilty of enormities like these?" asked the judge.

Taking his worn Bible from his pocket and holding it up for the judge to see, he replied, "Had I but received this Book as a child, this book of Jesus, my Savior whom I now worship, I would not have done such horrible things."

"Exalt the Lord, our God, and worship at His footstool; He is holy," proclaims the Psalmist. How sad it is that so many who have His Word in their homes never allow it to enter their hearts and change their lives.

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Choosing the Right Combination

by BOB CASEY, preacher
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Most of the banks in America have a lock to safeguard the valuables of its members. This lock is so-called because it takes a series of numbers when rightly applied to align themselves to obtain entry into the safe. This is called a combination lock. If the combination is not rightly combined together, the lock will not release the entry door, and the door will not open until this right combination is used.

Now, some may be asking themselves at this time, where is this preacher headed with this? Since this is attempted to be a Bible lesson, let me see if there is a message for us here. First of all, there is a door set in Heaven, see John 10:1-9. Jesus is that door, so he alone holds the keys of hell and death, Revelation 1:18 says so. So also, our Lord alone has the combination that allows entrance into the door of Heaven. It is called the Bible, the Word of Life. So, one must apply themselves to learn and know the combination of commands that will allow entry into this place called Heaven (the eternal vault of God). I wish to add that series of combinations are not all found in one page, verse, or paragraph alone. A certain preacher said one time, "If all I had to preach from was John 3:16, this would be enough to secure me a place in Heaven! Bro. Austin Mobley, who has preached here several times, wrote a commentary based upon the Gospel of John. I remember still today his remarks on **John 3:16**, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Then Mobley said, "John 3:16 is the truth, but it is not all of the truth." Then, he went on describing the series of commands given by our Lord and his chosen Apostles that are co-joined to John 3:16.

So, in **John 5:24-25**, we see the beginning of the combination or series of verses that make up all the truth., saying "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed

from death unto life. ²⁵Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."

Secondly, John 3:16 does not mention "repentance." I ask, can one even be saved without repenting? The first things that John the Baptist preached were repentance. "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." ^{Mark 1:4} and also the Apostles whom Jesus sent out. "And they went out, and preached that men should repent." ^{Mark 6:2} Then our Lord himself preached repentance in **Luke 5:32**, saying, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Then in **Luke 13:3** Jesus says, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" **and also in 5**, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Thirdly, John 3:16 does not mention a confession with the mouth before men that "Jesus is the Christ." But, in **Matthew 10:32**, it is written, "Who-soever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." Also, Luke 12:5-9 gives validation to this command. A good example of this is found in **Acts 8:37**, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So again, John 3:16 does not mention this.

Fourthly, John 3:16 does not mention baptism for the forgiveness of sins. But our Lord set the plan in motion in **Matthew 3:13-17**, saying to John the Baptist, "it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." ^{Matthew 3:15} Then the Lord commissioned his Apostles to go and preach the Gospel to all the world and those that believed it and were baptized would be saved. And in Acts 2:14-47, the Apostles preached the same message and baptized all who obeyed it, about 3,000 on that very day. I ask, "Did they misunderstand?" I think not!

So, in conclusion, when the series of commands are rightly preached, believed and obeyed, the right combination to the door of Heaven will be opened. But when a series of wrong commands are used, then the door of Heaven will remain closed.

In closing, what have you heard? What have you obeyed? Can they be found in the Bible? Call us for any further discussion, 1-859 (Waco) 369-4165.

Sincerely, Bob Casey

BIBLE TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of 1 Thesalonians in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. To keep Adam and Eve away after the Fall, what did God place around the tree of life? Smoking pits, Deep moat, Cherubims with a flaming sword, Walking vipers

3. Who is the only daughter of Jacob speci-

cally named in the Bible (KJV)? Dinah, Junias, No-adiah, Orpah

4. From 2 Samuel 12, what personality did God name Jedidiah? David, Amos, Solomon, Joab

5. What type water did Jesus offer the Samaritan woman at the well? Fresh, Cool, Living, Clean

6. From John 10, to what type of animals are Christians compared? Camels, Sheep, Lions, Serpents

Answers on bottom of Page 12

"Test Your Bible Knowledge," with 1,206 multiple-choice questions by columnist Wilson Casey, is available in

Americanisms



"It is the set of the sails, not the direction of the wind that determines which way we will go."
— Jim Rohn

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Stickeler's Puzzle



Bill's brother was telling him how good he was at math. Bill thought he would give his brother a puzzle in order to find out. Bill said, "I have several coins in my pocket. All but three are pennies. All but three are nickels. All but three are dimes, and all but three are quarters. How many coins do I have?"

His brother answered within 10 seconds, convincing Bill that he was good at math. How many coins did Bill have in his pocket?

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Stickeler's Answer on Page 12



THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

You have set all the borders of the earth;
You have made summer and winter.

PSALM 74:17



Detail of "Winter in Volkovskoe" by Vitaliy Gubarev (1985)

BIBLE WORD SEARCH

by Elie's Spiritual Treasures

1 Thessalonians 5:10-11

Our Lord Jesus Christ died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

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Find the **bolded/underlined** words in the diagram. They run in all directions — forward, backward, up, down and diagonally.

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Bible Word Search Answer on Page 12