



**An undenominational publication  
devoted to the teachings of Jesus and  
His apostles and dedicated to those  
who seek the truth.**

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# 'SPIRITUAL' BUT NOT 'RELIGIOUS'?

According to *Barna Group* research a number of New England's cities no longer consider themselves to be "Christian." In some instances, up to 66% of the people say they have not attended "church" for a year, have not read the Bible or prayed to God in the last week, and are reluctant to even talk about religion. It's not that they no longer believe in God. In fact, many consider themselves to be "*spiritual*," just not "*religious*." What has happened to the once strong center for Christian belief and practice? Why have many New Englanders embraced a "Post-Christian Culture"?

One reason is that some think "*science*" has eliminated the need for "*religion*." However, some of the most profound discoveries in astronomy, biology, medicine and chemistry are being made by scientists with deep roots in Christianity, who continue to have confidence in the Bible and regularly attend church services. Recent research shows that 90 percent of Nobel Prize winners are people of faith. Only 10.5 percent of scientists are atheists, agnostics or freethinkers. In the words of Dr. Anthony Jack, associate professor of philosophy, *Case Western Reserve University*, "Those noted individuals were intellectually sophisticated enough to see that there is no need for religion and science to come into conflict." Reasons for believing in the inspiration of the Bible are readily available.

It is true that much "organized religion" amounts to little more than keeping traditions, going through meaningless ceremonies and rituals, listening to

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## “SPIRITUAL” BUT NOT “RELIGIOUS”?

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homilies that have little spiritual depth and that produce no spiritual growth.

It is also true that there are hypocrites in churches. Some religious leaders appear to be more interested in money and power than the pursuit of true godly living or teachings that conform with Scripture. Jesus condemned the hypocritical leaders of His day when He said: “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:8-9). People concerned about personal holiness, finding the best life and getting ready for what comes after death would do well to remember that God desires every follower of Christ to be sincere, honest, and growing in personal knowledge of truth. He does not want us to stumble over hypocrites and miss out on what he has in mind for us. Jesus said: “Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20). There are lots of good people, truth-seeking people, who have faith in the teachings of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures.

Here’s the good news: In the Northeast United States there are “pockets” of believers who will encourage you to grow in knowledge and grace of God. These groups of true disciples are not always large numerically, but what they lack in size they make up for in faith and compassion. They are lovers of truth; they do not follow man-made teachings. They are undenominational Christians; embracing all who obey the commandments of God. They are bound together in brotherly love for one another; they care for one another. They worship God together, read the Bible together, and reach out to others who are ready to learn more of the word of God. They desire to be simply “*Christians*”— nothing more, nothing less.

Some of these congregations are listed on page 11 of this booklet. Check them out; we think you will like what you see.

— David Tarbet, Editor  
Outreach Minister, Church of Christ  
New Milford, Connecticut



# SCIENCE MAKES THE CASE FOR GOD

In 1966 *Time* magazine ran a cover story asking: **Is God Dead? Many have accepted the cultural narrative — that as science progresses, there is less need for a “God” to explain the universe. Yet it turns out that the rumors of God’s death were premature. More amazing is that the relatively recent case for his existence comes from a surprising place — science itself.**

Here’s the story: The same year *Time* featured the now-famous headline, astronomer Carl Sagan announced that there were two important criteria for a planet to support life: the right kind of star, and a planet the right distance from that star. Given the roughly octillion—1 followed by 24 zeros--planets in the universe there should have been a out septillion — 1 followed by 24 zeros planets capable of supporting life.

The *Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SEIT)*, a large, expensive collection of private and publicly funded projects was sure to turn up something. Scientists listened with a vast radio telescopic network for signals that resembled coded intelligence. But the silence was deafening. Congress defunded SETI in 1993. As of 2014, researchers have discovered precisely bubkis — 0 followed by nothing.

What happened? As our knowledge of the universe increased, it became clear that there were far more factors necessary for life than Sagan supposed. The number of life-supporting planets decreased to a few thousand planets and kept on plummeting.

Even SETI proponents acknowledged the problem. Peter Schenkel wrote in *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine: “In light of new findings and insights, ... We should quietly admit that the early estimates ... may no longer be tenable.”

As factors continued to be discovered, odds turned against any planet in the universe supporting life, including this one. Probability said that even we shouldn’t be here.

## “SCIENCE MAKES THE CASE FOR GOD”

Today there are more than 200 known parameters necessary for a planet to support life-- every one of which must be perfectly met, or the whole thing falls apart. Without a massive planet like Jupiter nearby, whose gravity will draw away asteroids, a thousand times as many would hit Earth. The odds against life in the universe are simply astonishing. Doesn't assuming that an intelligence created these perfect conditions require less faith than believing that a life-sustaining Earth just happened to come into being?

Astrophysicists now know that the values of the four fundamental forces--gravity, the electromagnetic force, and the “strong” and “weak” nuclear forces--were determined less than one millionth of a second after the big bang. Alter any one value and the universe could not exist. If the ratio between the nuclear strong force and the electromagnetic force had been off by the tiniest fraction of the tiniest fraction no stars could have formed at all. Feel free to gulp.

The odds against the universe existing are so heart-stopping astronomical that the notion that it all “just happened” defies common sense. It would be like tossing a coin and having it come up heads 10 quintillion times in a row!

Fred Hoyle, the astronomer, said that his atheism was “greatly shaken” at these developments. He later wrote that “a common-sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super-intellect has monkeyed with the physics, as well as with chemistry and biology....The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question.”

Theoretical physicist Paul Davies has said that “the appearance of design is overwhelming,” and Oxford professor Dr. John Lennox has said “the more we get to know about our universe, the more the hypothesis that there is a Creator ... gains in credibility as the best explanation of why we are here.”

**The greatest miracle of all time is the universe. It is the miracle of all miracles, one that points with the combined brightness of every star to something--or Someone--beyond itself.**

--Eric Metaxas, “*Science Increasingly Makes the Case for God*”  
The Wall Street Journal, December 25, 2014. Copyright 2014 Dow Jones and Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted by permission.

# GOD CHANGED MY LIFE COMPLETELY



In the early nineties I did not believe in God. I was an atheist or, at least, an agnostic. My life revolved around self. It is troubling to think about how insensitive I was. I felt an emptiness that could not be described. How empty is the world without God!

I looked into the world's religions, the New Age movement, earth-worship concepts. I realized that they all were based on empty ideas invented by men with no factual, historical or intellectual basis.

In 1993 I was at a New Age meeting where a well-known spiritual leader was leading a meditation. He asked us to pray. The prayer was directed in the name of Jesus Christ. I said to my wife, I have to find out who this Jesus is! She bought me a Bible. My life began to be transformed through the words in the Bible.

I came to realize that the Bible is a book of history; that much of it has been validated through archaeology and historical writings. It is the word of God. I came to understand that Jesus is the Son of God, a real person. He completely changed my sinful life!

Today I am preaching the gospel which I once rejected. I was a lost sinner but Jesus took the sin and darkness from me. My transformation came by being open to hearing the word of God, for scripture states that faith comes by the word of Christ (Romans 10:17). I am encouraging everyone to no longer live in emptiness. Get a free Bible and read it for yourself by contacting "*Christ for Today*" (information on how to get a free Bible which will help you on your spiritual journey is on the back page of this publication.)

— Kirk Israel, minister  
Church of Christ, Castleton, Vermont



# BAPTISM IN THE BIBLE

## What is the purpose of Immersion?

“And Noah and his sons and his wife and his son’s wives went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood” (Genesis 7:7). It was the biggest disaster in the history of mankind. All living creatures died in the great flood. Noah knew that only by obeying God’s instructions to build and ark and enter it would he and his family be saved. “And the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered” (Genesis 7:19).

Ironically, the very element that destroyed everyone outside the ark was the same water that lifted the ark and its 8 passengers to safety. In 1 Peter 3, the Bible gives the parallel between the physical salvation of Noah and his family and the spiritual salvation the Lord has promised for us today. Just as Noah was rescued by the water of the flood, “baptism, which corresponds to this now saves you” (1 Peter 3:21). Originally written in Greek, the word translated “baptism” means to “dip, plunge or submerge.” Bible baptism is by immersion.

The apostle Peter wrote: “God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of

dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:20-21). The water has no power in and of itself. One does not earn his spiritual forgiveness by being immersed in baptism. Through baptism one comes in contact with the blood of Jesus and enters “into Christ.” The Bible says: “we were baptized into His death” (Romans 6:3-4). The blood of Jesus is the power which washes our sins away. That is why the Bible says: “Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38).

Have you been baptized according to the Scripture plan?



— Jason Floyd, Minister  
Church of Christ  
Bennington, Vermont

# “I FOUND A CHURCH THAT TEACHES ONLY THE BIBLE”

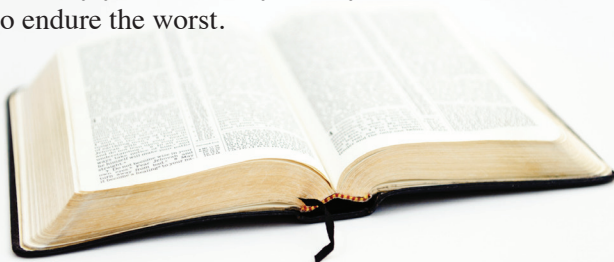
I remember reading the assembly instructions as a kid for something my dad was putting together and was told that we didn't need them. The product did not work like it should.

The Manufacturer of mankind has left us a manual, the Bible. So, it would make sense to follow the guidelines set forth by the One who designed us, created every cell, and breathed life into us (Ephesians 2:10). Jesus came to give us abundant life (John 10:10). Underscoring its importance, Jesus asked: “*Have you not read ...?*” He was bringing listeners *back to the Bible*.

I know that each of us can point to neighbors and friends who have lived the precepts of the Bible in a randomized way, picking and choosing; like dishes on a buffet. Even though I ministered to others from the Bible, I realized that I had a compromised version of Christianity early in my wife's ongoing eight-year battle with cancer. My foundation of faith was not as solid as it needed to be to endure the trials that forced us to live separately and unable to help each other with the battle front.

Just as Moses was told to build everything according to the pattern shown to him on the mountain (Hebrews 8:5), I dug deep to return to the Bible to build up my prayer life and trust in Him. I reasoned that God who loved us was working for our good (Romans 8:28). He was entirely in control of the circumstances, I have flourished in my faith where many believed I should have floundered.

I found a church which teaches only what I can read in my Bible. ‘*Back to the Bible*’ is a deep and determined commitment to delve into truths that save and enrich life. It will fortify your faith so you may function well in the best of times and be prepared to endure the worst.





# A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

Growing up I had a relationship with Jesus Christ, or at least that's what I thought. Like millions of misguided believers, I thought a relationship with Christ consisted of knowing *about* Him, being able to recite John 3:16 and attending church for weddings, funerals, Easter or Christmas services. It was more like the distant relationship you have with cousins who live far away, and you hardly ever see. You “kinda” love them and see them at a family reunion every few years, but they have no real impact on your life. But having that kind of half-hearted relationship with Christ is futile and quite frankly, dangerous.

Entrance into the everlasting kingdom of God is not just difficult, but impossible for those who think a passing knowledge of Christ and inconsistent, flippant tokens of appeasement constitute a deep relationship with Him. An authentic, personal relationship is much more! It requires effort on the part of both parties. Christ did His part on the cross to pay the price for our sins (Romans 5:8). He continues as a mediator on our behalf (1 Timothy 2:5). Our part, by contrast, is much easier because our death to sin through faith, repentance and immersion is symbolized in baptism, and it is critical to our spiritual and eternal lives. “We were buried with Him by baptism ... (so) we might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4).

A personal relationship means we must follow the pattern of the Bible and requires putting on Christ in baptism after careful study of God's Word. We realize are not children of God but under the control of the evil one (1 John 5:19) and on a path to certain doom. Only then can we take the necessary steps to ensure the relationship Jesus promises (Romans 6:23). What follows is the peace that comes from knowing we can do all things through Him (Philippians 4:13). No matter the size of the challenges that face us, we are never alone (Hebrews 13:5).

The best part about a personal relationship with Jesus our Savior is the certain knowledge that obedience to God's Word in this life results in receiving “... the crown of life which God has promised to those who love Him” (James 1:12).

— Cleve Stafford, Minister  
Berkshire County Church of Christ  
Pittsfield, Massachusetts





# GOING BACK TO THE SOURCE

The Housatonic River rises from four pure sources in Western Massachusetts and flows 149 miles southeast through Western Connecticut to empty into Long Island Sound. Its waters cascade over rocks and meander through the valley of the Berkshire Mountains. Mohican, Algonquian and Schaghticoke tribes once fished its ideal waters and built wigwam villages along its shores. Today New Englanders admire the beauty of white water rapids, skulling teams in quiet places, and fall foliage in the hills that surround it. It is the destination for trout fly-fishermen. Villages, towns, farmlands and forrests are favored spots for tourists and photographers. Three covered bridges still span across it, two of which are used by automobiles.

In recent years as the waters flow southeast, they have become polluted by mercury and PCB discharges from major industries. Fish have significant levels of PCBs. According to the *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*, fish caught in the river should not be consumed by humans. Fishing is strictly “catch and release.”

The Housatonic reminds us of what has happened to the flow of Christianity from the 1<sup>st</sup> century to the present time. The religion of Jesus existed in its purest form during the life of Christ’s apostles, but through the centuries man-made traditions and ceremonies polluted it. The scriptures foretold this tragic apostasy: “The time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions” (2 Timothy 4:3). Again, “the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the Faith . . . (they will) forbid marriage and require abstinence of foods that God created” (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

Those who love God and His holy word need to return to the source of faith Jesus brought to our world 2,000 years ago. Spiritually-speaking, getting back to the Bible is going “up-stream” where the waters are purer. The Bible is the only pure source for Christian faith and practice. This is the challenge that will strengthen our families, heal our nation, and bring blessings to our hearts.

— David Tarbet, editor  
Outreach Minister, Church of Christ  
New Milford, Connecticut

# GROW SPIRITUALLY

## READ THE BIBLE

As a student of the Bible I have learned I will never grasp all the richness of God's word in a lifetime of reading. But can we have assurance that we are understanding it correctly? Although some passages are harder to understand than others, the vast portion of God's word is easily understood. A wise person once said: "It is not the part of the Bible I *do not understand* that bothers me, but the part that is so plain I *cannot misunderstand!*"

In the book of *Acts* (the 5<sup>th</sup> book in the New Testament) we learn about a man who was reading the Old Testament book of *Isaiah*. He did not understand what he was reading. God sent Philip, a Christian evangelist, to explain that *Isaiah* was speaking about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:26-40). Sometimes each of us can use a little help to understand the Bible.

It is important that we understand the *Old Testament* was a record of God's dealings with His people, the Jewish nation. The *New Testament* is God's revelation to people of today. It is God's word for both Jews and Gentiles, and has replaced the laws and commands of the Old Testament. When we recognize the difference between the Old and New Testaments it will help us avoid being confused.

The Lord's word can be understood by common people. It is not a puzzle; it is not a book only the highly educated can grasp. It is a book all of us need to absorb. Jesus taught that we can "know the truth" (John 8:32). His words are "truth," by which our eternal destiny will be determined. "The words that I speak will be your judge on the last day" (John 12:48). Reading and obeying the words of the Bible will help us discover God's will for our lives.

Bible reading will be a constant source of encouragement. It will provide a wealth of knowledge which brings joy, peace, stability and hope. Start now; read the Bible every day and see for yourself.



— Alvin Jennings, retired minister  
of the Church of Christ  
South Barre, Vermont.

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 Tom Beyer, Minister  
 Web: southroadchurch.com



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 Tim Tarbet, David Tarbet, Ministers  
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 Web: info@churchofchristbpt.com



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48 Love Lane. Tel: 207-439-0720  
 Nathaniel Hios, Minister  
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 Web: kitterycoc.com



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#### FARMINGTON FALLS

122 Croswell Rd; Zip: 04940; Tel: 207-578-2629  
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 Telephone: 413.464.9872  
 Cleve Stafford, Minister  
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 Web: berkshirecountycoc.org



Berkshire Cnty

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63 Coolidge Street, Phone: 978-685-6995  
 John Kurpiel, George Hajali, Ministers  
 Sun: 10 AM (Bible Class); 11 AM & 6 PM (Worship)  
 Web: lawrencechurchofchrist.com



LAWRENCE MA

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89 Beaver Brook Prkwy. Tel: 508-754-8625  
 John Nat Kissi, Minister  
 Sun: 9:30 AM (Bible Class), 10:30 AM (Worship)  
 Web: worcestercoc.org



worcestercoc.org

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#### POUGHKEEPSIE

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 43 Vassar Rd. (Tel: 645-214-0811)  
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 Contact: Scott Genco (Tel: 845-234-4815);  
 Ron Ward (845-494-0452)  
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 Sun: 9:30 AM (Bible Class), 10:30 AM (Worship)  
 Contact: Tim Bonzagni (Tel: 401-742-3948)  
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522 Route 4a. CASTLETON  
 Kirk Israel, Minister Tel: 802-683-4970  
 Sun: 9:30 AM (Bible Class), 10:30 AM (Worship)  
 Web: vermontchurchofchrist.com



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330 Dorset St. Tel: 802-864-7939  
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 Mark Newton, Minister (E-mail: jamesc@comcast.net)  
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