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STILL RELEVANT

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As a child, maybe even as a teen, I thought the Bible had limited application because it was written so many generations ago. Now, however, I totally reject that thinking. It is very much still relevant. This week my 29-week study of Acts, Hebrews, Timothy, Thessalonians, and James through Bible Study Fellowship was complete. Additionally this week, the number of cases of Covid-19 reached and surpassed 1 million and the number of deaths surpassed 65,000. This has been heavy on my heart. As I reflected on the Bible study in conjunction with our current situation, I have decided to share three points of relevance.



Photo by Rachel Lynette French on Unsplash

In the sixth and seventh chapter of Acts, we read about Stephen, who was not one of the original disciples, but was chosen to help spread the Gospel because he was “full of the Spirit and wisdom.” (6:3) As he was sharing the Good News, opposition arose. Stephen was taken to give testimony to the governing body, the Sanhedrin. “All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.” (6:15) The story continues with Stephen’s testimony and their anger intensified.

⁵⁴ When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

⁵⁶ “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” (Acts 7:54-56)

While at home, I've watched a few episodes of, "Touched By An Angel." In this show, the main characters are angels sent to earth to lovingly perform various duties. In a recent episode, they were sent to be the camp counselors at a camp for teen girls who were born HIV-Positive. The girls' biggest fear was that they would die alone. The angels assured them that no one dies alone, there are always angels present.

Some years ago, I was at the bedside of a relative in hospice care. Periodically, she would smile and reach her arms out as if to embrace. This was so odd to me, that I asked one of the nurses why she might be doing this. She said my relative was probably seeing angels and reaching out to them. About two hours later she passed away.

The human race is at opposition with Covid-19, it is stirring up dissension in the respiratory system, as well as among families, friends, government, etc. Many thousands of people have recovered, but thousands of others have not. In most hospitals, family and friends are not allowed to visit because of the highly contagious nature of the virus. From what I hear, with exception of some extremely kind-hearted medical professionals, many people die in the absence of loved ones. The absence of loved ones does not mean they were alone, however. God sends angels to provide comfort and peace, I believe this because of what the hospice nurse said, what I heard on Touched By an Angel, and what scripture tells us about Stephen's death.

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The second thing I wanted to share was a story from the twelfth chapter of Acts. In this chapter, the apostle Peter was imprisoned and was likely to be killed. A large group of people were gathered at the home of Mary (John's mother) to pray for him. I won't share all of the details of the story, but God sent an angel to aid in his escape. Once he was out of the danger zone, the angel left and Peter was on his own. He decided to go to Mary's house. At her door, he knocked. A servant recognized his voice and went to tell the others. They didn't believe her!

¹⁴ When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"

¹⁵ "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

¹⁶ But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. (Acts 12:14-16)

The people were gathered together to pray for Peter, but when God answered their prayer, they couldn't believe it! This made me laugh out loud! Do we actually believe that God will answer our prayers? Will we recognize the answer to our prayers when they are answered? As I wrote last week, are we set on the answer that we want, and unwilling to accept God's answer?

⁷ "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds;

and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹ “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! (Matthew 7:7-11)

It's easy to say, “God is good all the time,” but we really must believe this. We must recognize His sovereignty, His mighty power, and His amazing love for His children. We must stop holding God accountable to human limitations. God is the Creator of the universe, He made the earth, the sun, the moon, day, and night. We read in Joshua 10, how Joshua asked for the sun to stand still and God answered his prayer!

Right now, during this pandemic, our prayers are many. Our prayers shouldn't be empty wishes. Our prayers are to the Most High God, the only One who can, and we must believe that He will. Reports indicate that the stress of isolation, the stress of job losses, and the stress of just not knowing, is causing some people to lose hope. We have to pray and believe God will answer our prayers. Yes, it's a tough time right now, but everything is not bad. We must look for positives and celebrate them as mini victories towards the full revelation of God. We must find others to pray with us and for us, and we must believe that God will answer.

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The third part of our study I wanted to share is from James 3: 3-6, 9-10.

³ When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴ Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. ⁵ Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶ The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

⁹ With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness.

¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.

The words we say can be helpful or hurtful. We have seen in recent weeks how one person can make a comment that ignites a firestorm of activity. We must be very cautious of our words and how they are perceived. James is right, we praise the Lord, and curse our neighbor with the same tongue. With our current situation, people are going through trials and there is great suffering. We have friends who have lost loved ones and friends who are sick, but haven't decided to share that information. At this time, it is of particular importance to be cognizant of our words. Our social media is an extension of our tongue, and we must also be careful about that which we post! We would never want our boasting, our comments, our shared attitude to be the final blow that made someone decide life was no longer worth living. Author, Lisa

TyrKeurst advises that before we speak (or post) we should ask ourselves, *Are my words kind? Are my words true? Are my words necessary?* If they meet these criteria, they have passed the test, but should still be used with Godly wisdom and discretion. People are on edge right now, and it is up to the people of God to be the soldiers on the ground who listen and offer words of comfort, love and peace. AMEN.

Is the Bible still relevant? Absolutely YES! If you would like to learn to study your Bible in a more meaningful way, consider joining [Bible Study Fellowship](#). It is an international Bible study and I am sure there are groups meeting near you. We will begin in September 2020 and our next study is Genesis. You will not be disappointed.

Thank you for reading!

I apologize for the length of this post, but sometimes it just can't be short and sweet. Amen. Have a wonderful week.

Kim