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WORDS FOR LIVING MINISTRIES

To Encourage... To Inform... To Teach

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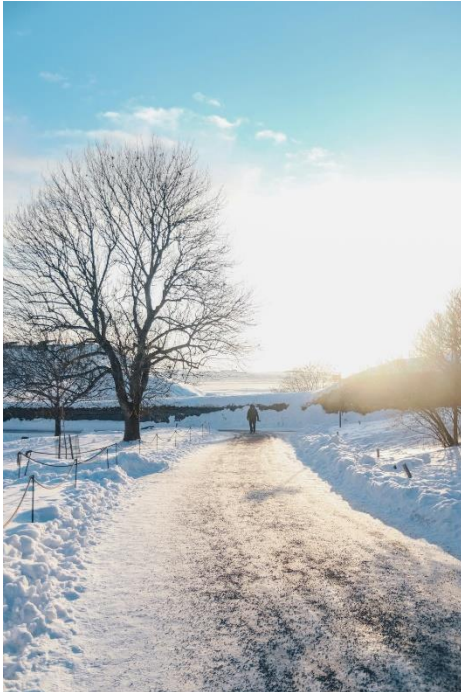
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December 2023, Final Issue

Dear Friends,

A Sad Farewell to Our Beloved Friends:

It is painful to realize that after this final edition of The Good Word we will no longer be able to share with you all the riches of God's Inspired Word in this format. It has been a wonderful blessing to have been able to do this for the past 40 years.



We love every one of you all, and always will.

By the end of January 2024, the 501©3 will cease to exist. The building where our office has been for so many years, next to the Post Office, has been sold by its former owners and will be put to other purposes.

However, Words for Living will go on through the website; some of the old teachings, plus the archived newsletters and other things, are on the website. If you need to reach us, send an email to Sally at (sumacsally@gmail.com) or to me (tomcmck@gmail.com) or write to the farm address at 1212 Bridwell Loop, Marion, KY 42064.

I can never express what each one of you means, and has always meant, to us. May God's limitless blessings be poured out on each one of you.

Our Biblical and Theological Reference Collection

Over the many years, I have accumulated a vast and valuable biblical and theological library. As the office closes, what could I do with it? It occurred to me to donate it to our excellent county library in Marion. Adding selected books to it daily now, it is

becoming a valuable memorial library within the existing library. With a specially made glass front book cabinet, and display case for rare books and a special table for study, it will be a vital source. Our excellent librarians will assist the users and protect the books.

I am excited!

--Tom

(Photo by [Ethan Hu](#) on [Unsplash](#))

Some Nuts and Bolts

This is Sally. This is just a reminder that because the office is closing we will not be able to receive any tax-deductible donations after December 31. In January 2024, we will send out the year-end tax-deductible receipts for 2023; and, after doing that, we will be closing the physical office in Marion. Please do pray for Daddy. He is dealing with congestive heart failure and with multiple changes as well. I know he'll be blessed by and through those prayers. As you know, "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

As Daddy mentioned, the website (www.wordsforlivingministries.weebly.com) will continue to exist for quite some time, and you can find a number of Daddy's teachings there, as well as Food for Thought, Christmas Plays, and other items. We will probably continue to send articles/teachings to the WFLM email list from time to time. If you are not on the email list and would like to be on it, you can contact me at wordsforliving7@gmail.com with a cc to sumacsally@gmail.com. You are also free to call or text me at 270 703 7484.

When Daddy's Bible Survey is in its final form and is available, we will send out another newsletter (both postal and email) to let you know it is finished and to tell you how to get a copy. Our family can send out such a newsletter at our own expense—and that is our plan. After all your years of encouragement and prayers, we definitely want you to be able to get his complete Study Guide to the Entire Bible.

We would also like to offer to go ahead and send a printed-out version of the Study Guide to Matthew to anyone who wants one. In the newsletters, we've sent you the Introductions (written by Daddy) to some 18 books of the Bible, but in the Study Guide, there is not only an Introduction to each book, but there are also Highlights for each book. If you'd like to have a copy of the Study Guide to Matthew (introduction & highlights),

my sister Susan (McKenney Jarvis) has volunteered to send one to you. Just contact her and let her know; be sure to include your name & postal address (or email address if you prefer the electronic form). You can call or text her at 228 235-3552 or email her at smckjarvis@yahoo.com. If you ask for Matthew and enjoy it, you can contact Susan about the possibility of getting the Study Guide to another book.

What about Daddy's already existing books? Even after December 2023, you will still be able to request and receive Tom's books (while supplies last)--*Come and Live, Live Free, Holy Spirit Baptism, So You're Going to Haiti, Trouble at the Glory Barn*, and *33 Degrees of Deception*, and the booklet *Holidays and Holy Days* (the material in the booklet also appears as a chapter in *Live Free*, by the way). And on behalf of all of us, I want to again thank **Joe McCormick**, whose artwork appears in practically all of Tom's books. To obtain Tom's books from January 2024 onward, contact WFLM board member John Lambert. You can reach John by email at tlamb316@aol.com or by phone at 731-217-9289. For these books you'll only need to pay the postage.

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For this final newsletter, I thought we'd include Daddy's Introduction to the book of Hosea.

Introduction to Hosea



The Book of Hosea is the first of the 12 books commonly referred to as the Minor

Prophets. As we have already seen, they are not called "minor" because they are less important, but because they are relatively short books. Although Hosea's book has 14 chapters, as opposed to only 12 in the Book of Daniel, a Major Prophet, Daniel's chapters are much longer. Daniel contains almost twice as many verses as Hosea, and more than twice the number of words. And, as we have just seen in the study of the Book of Daniel, his words are, to use an excellent chemistry/physics term, super-saturated with meaning.

There is poetry in the writings of all of the books of prophecy; but Hosea is unusually rich in beautiful poetic expression.

Hosea, the Last Prophet to the Northern Kingdom. Hosea, a native of the Northern Kingdom, Israel, was a prophet to that wicked kingdom; in fact, he was its last prophet. His ministry to the Northern Kingdom was

contemporary with that of Jonah, but Jonah was sent to Nineveh, where his reluctant preaching brought great revival (after his disobedience was corrected by his amazing experience with the great fish). Jonah apparently spent the rest of his life in Nineveh and was buried there, in what is today the city of Mosul in Iraq.

Portions of Hosea's prophecies were also messages to the Southern Kingdom, Judah. And, as we shall see in Chapter 2, he even had a message for us today. His ministry covered a period of about 40 years, approximately 780 - 740 BC. In Israel, his ministry was contemporary with the latter part of the ministry of Amos (who was older); and, in Judah, his ministry was contemporary with the ministries of Isaiah and Micah (who were younger). Very little is known about Hosea except for what he wrote in his book.

Hosea ministered during the reign of King Jeroboam II, when Israel was prosperous, but wicked. After Hosea's time, God sent no more prophets to the Northern Kingdom; for the next 40-50 years that kingdom steadily declined under the six wicked successors of Jeroboam II, until its final destruction and the carrying away of the people into Assyrian Captivity, about 700 BC.

God's Gracious Dealing with the Northern Kingdom. Nearly 200 years before Hosea's time, the united kingdom of Israel had been divided by the secession of the 10 northern tribes. They had made two golden calves as idols, one in the south at Bethel, and one in the north at Dan; under the leadership of Jeroboam, their first king, they had officially rejected the LORD, and established pagan worship in the new kingdom. God had sent this rebellious kingdom **an all-star lineup** of prophets: Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Amos and, finally, Hosea. In spite of this, at no time in its history did the Northern Kingdom repent and forsake its paganism. Hosea ministered to as wretched a mess of sinfulness and degradation as ever existed; yet his consistent message to the people was that God loved them still and wanted them restored to a covenant relationship with Him.

Ephraim: a Synonym for Israel. Ephraim was the largest, and most central, of the 10 northern tribes. Hosea sometimes uses the word, "Ephraim" as a synonym for the entire Northern Kingdom, Israel.

The Prophet of Grace. The message of Hosea is that God loves His people, in spite of hating their sins and their rejection of His love, and that He is ready to forgive and restore them to a covenant relationship with Him, if they will just repent and return to Him. For this reason, Hosea is sometimes called "the prophet of grace."

Hosea Lived His Message. Several of the Old Testament prophets were required by God to illustrate their messages by their symbolic actions--sometimes for long periods of time, in order to make God's point. In this way Hosea was also required by God to illustrate his

message with his actions; unlike the others, however, he seems actually to have had to make these illustrations a central part of his ongoing life. To illustrate God's relationship with unfaithful Israel, Hosea was required to marry a promiscuous woman, Gomer, experience her infidelity, pursue her, buy her back from the one to whom she had prostituted herself, and forgive her.

Symbolic or Real? Some authorities believe the marriage to Gomer and the birth of their children to be a symbolic story; others believe that it is a literal recounting of events in Hosea's life. I believe that it is both. Although the book is rich with symbolic speech, I believe that it is also something Hosea had lived; an unknown (and excellent) writer has observed that "his sentences fall like the throbs of a broken heart."

A. Author. The human author was the prophet Hosea, son of Beeri. Even most critical scholars, who tend to doubt and attack the ancient authorship and validity of many things in the Bible, generally concede this.

B. Place and Date. The book was probably written in Samaria, Israel's capitol. It was probably compiled during Hosea's ministry, and finalized at the end of his life, around 750-725 BC.

C. Theme. The theme is the grace of God, especially His willingness to forgive those of us who sin, but repent and return to a right relationship with Him.

(Hosea Photo by [Ethan Hu](#) on [Unsplash](#))

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The Critical Difference

This is Sally again. I thought that in this final newsletter, it might be nice to include a reprint of one of Daddy's classics. His short piece, *The Critical Difference*, originally appearing as a one sheet tract, is in some ways like reading a microcosm of Daddy's testimony as well as a foundational teaching. Also, if you have any friends or acquaintances who might benefit from this little mini-teaching, send it on to them. And with it, I'll include a recent picture of Daddy (with his children), still blessed by his coming to know the Lord.



The Critical Difference

Religion vs. Reality For most of my life, I knew religion—but not reality. I knew that I should be rightly related to the church, and I always was; but somehow I failed to learn that I should be (or could be) rightly related to the Lord of the Church—personally—and so I wasn't. I hit the church right in the bulls-eye, and missed Jesus completely. I didn't miss Him by much, but I missed Him.

The Critical Difference All those years I knew *about* Jesus, but I didn't *know* Jesus. And the difference is critical—the difference is, I believe, infinite. For to know Him is to live: "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the son of God hath not life" (1 Jn 5:11-12). I knew confirmation, I knew the sacraments, I knew religious activity; and I took it all seriously. I read and studied the Bible; I taught the Bible. I knew church involvement. But I didn't know Jesus—personally. I didn't have that personal relationship. I had received the church, but I had not received Him. And "...as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God..." (Jn. 1:12).

The Ultimate Encounter And then one day, at the uttermost end of myself, I cried out to Him in desperation. Church was no longer enough; I needed Jesus. Religion no longer sustained me. I had to have reality. And He was there. He had been there all along, but I hadn't known it. I came to Him—not to religious commitment or to theological concepts. I came to Him—personally—and gave *Him* what was left of me and what was left of my life. I gave Him all the pain, the hopelessness and the insoluble problems; and He gave me life—everlasting spiritual life—and the peace that passes understanding. And this personal coming to Him, this ultimate encounter, opened up for me my full inheritance as a child of God. Now there is available to me all God's provision for all my needs; the Jesus of the Bible is now wonderful reality in my life.

Do You Know Him? What about you, dear one? Do you know Him? Is it possible that, like me, you know about Him but don't really know Him? Have you ever come humbly, like a child, and asked Him to give you the gift of life in the Spirit? Have you ever come to Him *personally* and established that all-important personal relationship? Is He reality in your life, or only a historical figure, or a lovely religious concept? Do you only know about Him, or do you know Him? Do you have a relationship only with the church, or do you have a relationship with the Head and Lord of the Church?

Come to Him Now. If you're not sure that you have done so, come to Jesus now. Come to Him simply and honestly, like a child, and acknowledge your need of Him—your desire to really know Him—personally. Toward the end of his life, Paul, the great apostle to the

Gentiles, looked back over a lifetime of exceptional accomplishments. He had the very best education (under the very best teachers), social position, political power and religious honor. He was at the top of the heap; people stood up when he walked into the room. But he said all that was nothing but loss, worthless; it was dung compared with the one thing that mattered in his life. And that one thing was that he knew Jesus (Phil. 3:7-10). Do *you* know Him? If not, or if you just aren't sure, get it settled now. Don't wait—the stakes are too high. Forever is a long time to be wrong. Confess Him now as Lord, believe that God raised Him from the dead (if He isn't alive, He can't help you anyway, and this whole thing is a waste of time). Ask Him to come into your heart, your human spirit, the innermost part of you, and live. Give Him control of your life and allow Him to live His life out through you. He will (Rom. 10:8-13; Rev. 3:20).

He will take you personally into God's family, write your name in His book, and you will never again have to wonder. You won't just know about Him; you will know Him. Get it settled now. He loves you...just like you are; so come to Him...just like you are. That's the only way you *can* come. Come to Him personally, and live.

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A Word of Appreciation



(Photo by [Sergey Shmidt](#) on [Unsplash](#))

I wanted to include in this last newsletter a very small note of appreciation for what I've been blessed to learn from Daddy over the course of his walk with the Lord, which began when I was still very young. My favorite spiritual lesson from Daddy, and Mom too, is probably simply their obvious belief that what you believe should affect the way you live. I'm also glad that Daddy put me in the practice of daily reading the Bible, for there is no substitute for familiarity with the scriptures. I thank him for being the first person to teach that we needed to rely on the whole counsel of the word of God, not just on one isolated verse or on anything taken out of context. He also taught us that it was OK to find passages in the Bible that make us scratch our heads and say "I don't know what to make of this—I may just have to wait for the Lord to explain that one in heaven" and move on with the things which the scripture does make very clear

indeed. Also very valuable to me, Daddy often pointed out that while some Christian groups or denominations believe something at one end of the spectrum and others believe something at the other end, that the truth is often somewhere in the middle. He taught that if we notice there is something in our lives which we are more consistently excited about than we are about Jesus—whether it's our business, our possessions, or our favorite doctrine—then something is wrong, and we need to start spending more time with the Lord. Daddy was the first person I heard teach that words can wound and words can heal, and the first (perhaps only one) to talk about the "ministry of encouragement." He was the first person who taught me that praise (praising and thanking God) is a game changer in our attitudes, demeanor, and spiritual health. He taught the valuable truth that unforgiveness (on our part) can block God's ability to bless us and our ability to walk in the spirit and bear the fruit of the spirit. He taught about the "rest that remains for the people of God" in Hebrews and our need to trust in Jesus's finished work (and not our own selves for salvation) but at the same time also reminded us to be doers of the word and not just hearers (James 1, Matt 7, Matt 25). I have been very blessed, and I know many of you have too.

—Sally

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Milestones:

In this newsletter we note the passing of these dear ones below. Please pray for their families.

John LaBella of San Dimas, Calif.; 6 October 2023

Yvonne Armstrong of Princeton, Ky; 28 October 2023

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A FINAL WORD

Treasure and use each day as if it were your last, and never give up hope: God has a limitless supply of new beginnings, and He makes beautiful things out of broken pieces.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Sally'.



Photo by [Mr. Great Heart](#) on [Unsplash](#)