

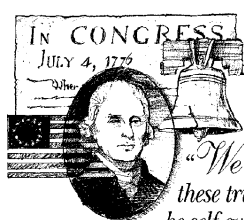
The Church of the Damascus Road

Echo!

Volume 5
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Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

Musings

It is this month that we celebrate the victory that was won by our ancestors. The victory over the British. We all have the God-given right to be free. To be who we



"We hold these truths to be self evident..."

are, no matter who we are or who we choose to be. A great many lives were given in this battle for our human rights and our freedom. We all, as Americans,

have the right to be free. Two thousand years ago another battle was fought. This battle was won, not by a countless number of lives, but only one life. Yet this life effects a great deal more lives. This life continues to claim the victory.

This victory was won for us through the grace and love that God has for us. This life was given so that we as children of the living God may have a more abundant and eternal future.



It is this victory that was won that day many years ago on Calvary. That victory won by one man. That precious victory over sin and evil. The blood of the lamb of God that washes away the sin of this world that day, now and forever.

He died so that we may have life. He came to earth to be an example of the Holiness of His Father. To show boundless love.

This victory should be celebrated every day. It was the blood of the innocent shed for the guilty. Join me in praising and exalting this man each and every minute every day. This man named Jesus!

Robert L. Johnson II

What Is an American?

The following was said to have been written by a dentist in Australia.

You probably missed it in the rush of news a few weeks ago, but there was actually a report that someone in Pakistan had published in a newspaper an offer of a reward to anyone who killed an American, any American. So I just thought I would write to let them know what an American is, so they would know when they found one.

An American is English, or French, or Italian, Irish, German, Spanish, Polish, Russian or Greek. An American may also be Mexican, African, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Australian, Iranian, Asian, or Arab, or Pakistani, or Afghan. An American may also be a Cherokee, Osage, Blackfoot, Navaho, Apache, or one of the many other tribes known as native Americans.

An American is Christian, or he could be Jewish, or Buddhist, or Muslim. In fact, there are more Muslims in America than in Afghanistan. The only difference is that in America they are free to worship as each of them chooses. An American is also free to believe in no religion. For that he will answer only to God, not to the government, or to armed thugs claiming to speak for the government and for God.

An American is from the most prosperous land in the history of the world. The root of that prosperity can be found in the Declaration of Independence, which recognizes the God given right of each man and woman to the pursuit of happiness.

An American is generous. Americans have helped out just about every other nation in the world in their time of need. When Afghanistan was overrun by the Soviet army 20 years ago, Americans came with arms and supplies to enable the people to win back their country. As of the morning of September 11, Americans had given more than any other nation to the poor in Afghanistan.

Americans welcome the best, the best products, the best books, the best music, the best food, the best athletes. But they also welcome the least. The national symbol of America, The Statue of Liberty, welcomes your tired and your poor, the wretched refuse of your teeming shores, the homeless, tempest tossed. These in fact are the people who built America. Some of them were working in the Twin Towers the morning of September 11, earning a better life for their families. [I've been told that the World Trade Center victims were from at least 30 other countries, cultures, and first languages, including those that aided and abetted the terrorists.]

So you can try to kill an American if you must. Hitler did. So did General Tojo, and Stalin, and Mao Tse-Tung, and every bloodthirsty tyrant in the history of the world. But, in doing so you would just be killing yourself. Because Americans are not a particular people from a particular place. They are the embodiment of the human spirit of freedom. Everyone who holds to that spirit, everywhere, is an American.

So look around you. You may find more Americans in your land than you thought were there. One day they will rise up and overthrow the old, ignorant, tired tyrants that trouble too many lands. Then those lands, too, will join the community of free and prosperous nations, And America will welcome them!"



Inside the Echo

- Page 2 - Who Will Take the Son?
- Page 2 - Making a Difference
- Page 3 - Where to find it in the Bible
- Page 3 - Puzzle: Bible Picnic
- Page 4 - Unfolding the Rose
- Page 4 - What Was God Thinking?
- Page 4 - Tears Welling
- Page 4 - Power in Prayer

Who will take the son?

A wealthy man and his son loved to collect rare works of art. They had everything in their collection, from Picasso to Raphael. They would often sit together and admire the great works of art. When the Viet Nam conflict broke out, the son went to war. He was very courageous and died in battle while rescuing another soldier. The father was notified and grieved deeply for his only son.

About a month later, just before Christmas, there was a knock at the door. A young man stood at the door with a large package in his hands. He said, Sir, you don't know me, but I am the soldier for whom your son gave his life. He saved many lives that day, and he was carrying me to safety when a bullet struck him in the heart and he died instantly. He often talked about you, and your love for art. The young man held out his package. I know this isn't much. I'm not really a great artist, but I think your son would have wanted you to have this. The father opened the package. It was a portrait of his son, painted by the young man. He stared in awe at the way the soldier had captured the personality of his son in the painting. The father was so drawn to the eyes that his own eyes welled up with tears. He thanked the young man and offered to pay him for the picture. Oh, no sir, I could never repay what your son did for me. It's a gift. The father hung the portrait over his mantle. Every time visitors came to his home he took them to see the portrait of his son before he showed them any of the other great works he had collected.

The man died a few months later. There was to be a great auction of his paintings. Many influential people gathered, excited over seeing the great paintings and having an opportunity to purchase one for their collection. On the platform sat the painting of the son. The auctioneer pounded his gavel. We will start the bidding with this picture of the son. Who will bid for this picture? A voice from the back of the room shouted, "We want to see the famous paintings. Skip this one."

But the auctioneer persisted, "Will someone bid for this painting? Who will start the bidding? \$100, \$200?"

Another voice shouted angrily, "We didn't come to see this painting. We came to see the Van Goghs, the Rembrandts. Get on with the real bids."

But still the auctioneer continued, "The son! The son! Who'll take the son?"

Finally, a voice came from the very back of the room. It was the longtime gardener of the man and his son. He raised his hand & shouted; "I'll give \$10 for the painting." Being a poor man, it was all he could afford.

"We have \$10, who will bid 20?"

"Give it to him for \$10. Let's see the masters."

"10 is the bid, won't someone bid \$20?"

The crowd was becoming angry. They didn't want the picture of the son. They wanted the more worthy investments for their collections. The auctioneer pounded the gavel. "Going once, twice, SOLD for \$10."

A man sitting on the second row shouted, "Now let's get on with the collection." The auctioneer laid down his gavel, "I'm sorry, the auction is over."

"What about the paintings?"

"I am sorry. When I was called to conduct this auction, I was told of a secret stipulation in the will. I was not allowed to reveal that stipulation until this time. Only the painting of the son would be auctioned. Whoever bought that painting would inherit the entire estate, including the paintings. The man who took the son gets everything."

God gave his Son 2,000 years ago to die on a cruel cross. Much like the auctioneer, His message today is, "The Son, the Son, who'll take the Son?" Because you see, whoever takes the Son gets everything.

— author unknown

Making a Difference

We can and do make a difference. The offering at our Wednesday and Thursday night worship services go into a fund. This fund is distributed at least twice a year by the inside church councils. We welcome you to help us decide where these funds will be distributed as well as offer suggestions as to which charity that we may send them to. The following is a partial list of charities that we have been blessed to help:

Children International (our foster child):	Youth Shelter Care of Fort Dodge
Stefani A. Hernandez	Church World Service (Crop Walk)
Domestic/Sexual Assault Outreach Center	Boy Scouts of Fort Dodge
Make-a-Wish Foundation	American Cancer Society
Ronald McDonald House	Mercy Home for Boys and Girls
Shriners Children's Hospital	National Kidney Foundation
Seminary in Russia	American Diabetes Association of Iowa
AIDs Foundation	Muscular Dystrophy Association

Just a Man

Just a tool
nothing more
here to serve You
Precious Lord
Only clay
in your hands
no one special
just a man
I live to glorify
to spread your word
freely given
the truth is heard
Only your will
I shall not rest
always with me
truly blessed
Ever watching
from above
praise you Jesus
gracious Love.
Amen

Robert L. Johnson II
12-3-2001

God's Training Plan

No matter what God gives you to do today, remember, he's preparing you for tomorrow. No matter how tough this day is for you to deal with, it's a part of God's training plan. It carries within it a precious lesson he wants you to learn about him, about his power, about his love for you, about his gentle, yet powerful, hand on your life. Even in the worst of circumstances, savor them. Seek God's hand in them. Look at what he's doing with you and for you today. And know that he is preparing you to serve him better tomorrow.

— Bonnie Ricks

The Church of the
Damascus Road
Echo!

Volume 5.4a

July, 2002

The official publication of The Church of the Damascus Road, a Christian Community of Reconciliation, serving the inmate population of the medium security units at Rockwell City and Fort Dodge, Iowa.

Robert Johnson II, Editor,
If you are reading a copy of this letter that is not yours, you can subscribe and receive your own copy by writing to:
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Where to Find it

In the New Living Translation Bible:

Respect—1 Peter 2:17

“Show respect for everyone. Love your Christian brothers and sisters. Fear God. Show respect for the King.”

Strength—Psalm 73:26

“My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever.”

Worship—Luke 4:8

“Jesus replied, ‘The scriptures say, You must worship the Lord your God; serve only him.’”

Friendship—Proverbs 17:17

“A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need.”

Forgiveness—Matthew 5:24

“Leave your sacrifice there by the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.”

Honesty—Romans 12:17

“Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Do things in such a way that everyone can see that you are honorable.”

Hope—Colossians 1:5

“You do this because you are looking forward to the joys of heaven — as you have been ever since you first heard of the truth of the Goo News.”

Obedience—Leviticus 26:3

“If you keep my laws and are careful to obey my commands.”

Faith—Hebrews 11:1

“What is faith? It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see.”

Joy—Psalm 43:4

“There I will go to the altar of God, to God—the source of all my joy. I will praise him with my harp, O God, my God!”

Love—Leviticus 19:18

“Never seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”

Courage—Psalm 27:14

“Wait patiently for the Lord. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the Lord.”



A Biblical Picnic

In the warm weather months we like to go on picnics. What do you pack in your picnic basket? If you lived in Bible times, what do you think you might have packed?

Below are the names of some people in the Bible. Use the code to find out what each person may have taken on a picnic. Look up the verses to read more about each person.

Code:

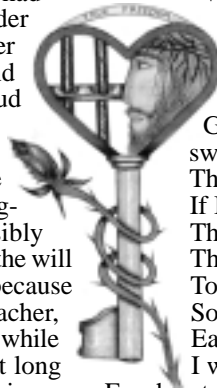
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z										
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26										

- Saul $\overline{16} \overline{15} \overline{13} \overline{5} \overline{7} \overline{18} \overline{1} \overline{14} \overline{1} \overline{20} \overline{5} \overline{19}$ (1 Samuel 14:2)
- Jonathan $\overline{8} \overline{15} \overline{14} \overline{5} \overline{25}$ (1 Samuel 14:29)
- Eve $\overline{6} \overline{18} \overline{21} \overline{9} \overline{20}$ (Genesis 3:6)
- Daniel and friends $\overline{22} \overline{5} \overline{7} \overline{5} \overline{20} \overline{1} \overline{2} \overline{12} \overline{5} \overline{19}$ (Daniel 1:12-16)
- John the Baptist $\overline{12} \overline{15} \overline{3} \overline{21} \overline{19} \overline{20} \overline{19}$ (Matthew 3:4)
- The 5,000 people $\overline{12} \overline{15} \overline{1} \overline{22} \overline{5} \overline{19} \& \overline{6} \overline{9} \overline{19} \overline{8}$ (Matthew 14:17)
- Israelites in Egypt $\overline{3} \overline{21} \overline{3} \overline{21} \overline{13} \overline{2} \overline{5} \overline{18} \overline{19}$ (Numbers 11:5)
- Esau $\overline{19} \overline{20} \overline{5} \overline{23}$ (Genesis 25:34)
- Isaac $\overline{23} \overline{9} \overline{12} \overline{4} \overline{7} \overline{1} \overline{13} \overline{5}$ (Genesis 25:28)
- Ruth $\overline{7} \overline{18} \overline{1} \overline{9} \overline{14}$ (Ruth 2:1-4)

Answers: pomegranates, honey, fruit, vegetables, locusts, loaves & fish, cucumbers, stew, wild game, grain

Unfolding the Rose

A young, new preacher was walking with an older, more seasoned preacher in the garden one day. Feeling a bit insecure about what God had for him to do, he was asking the older preacher for some advice. The older preacher walked up to a rosebush and handed the young preacher a rosebud and told him to open it without tearing off any petals. The young preacher looked in disbelief at the older preacher and was trying to figure out what a rosebud could possibly have to do with his wanting to know the will of God for his life and ministry. But because of his great respect for the older preacher, he proceeded to try to unfold the rose, while keeping every petal intact...It wasn't long before he realized how impossible this was to do. Noticing the younger preacher's inability to unfold the rosebud without tearing it, the older preacher began to recite the following poem...



It is only a tiny rosebud,
A flower of God's design;
But I cannot unfold the petals
With these clumsy hands of mine.
The secret of unfolding flowers
Is not known to such as I.
GOD opens this flower so sweetly,
Then in my hands they die.
If I cannot unfold a rosebud,
This flower of God's design,
Then how can I have the wisdom
To unfold this life of mine?
So I'll trust in Him for leading
Each moment of my day.
I will look to him for His guidance
Each step of the pilgrim way.
The pathway that lies before me,
Only my Heavenly Father knows.
I'll trust Him to unfold the moments,
Just as He unfolds the rose.

Tears Welling

*Tears welling
in my eyes
painful emotions
I can not deny
Feeling lost
all alone
way to far
from my home
Eyes wide open
yet I can not see
all that is
special to me
All caught up
deep in sin
when Jesus spoke
I answered Him
Listen my son
there is a way
so I opened my heart
and began to pray
Comfort and guidance
given to me
through the grace of God
my soul is set free
Robert L. Johnson II*

What Was God Thinking?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31: But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.

Worth Dying For

What was God thinking?

The newborn Jesus was placed in an animal trough. The angels first announced the news of Jesus' birth to the lowest of Jewish society, the shepherds. Jesus, God's Son and himself God, died as a criminal on a cross. What on earth was God thinking?



If I were to create a plan to save the world from sin and death, I would not begin with a manger or end with a cross. My King of Kings and Lord of Lords would not be a homeless teacher who spent his time with fishermen, tax collectors, and lepers. What was God thinking?



Consider your own call, brothers and sisters. Not many of you are wise by human standards; not many are powerful; not many are of noble birth. What is God thinking?

God calls us to be his body, his church here on earth. God calls the young child, the elderly, the unemployed, the handicapped, the shy, the depressed, the high school dropout, along with the CEO, the thirty-something, the doctoral student, the pastor. Together we are Christ's hands and feet and voice in the world. What is God thinking?



The source of our life is Jesus Christ, who became for us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

In the eyes of the world we may not look like much, but in God's eyes we are worth dying for. Believing in a God who would die on a cross is foolishness. But God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom. It is God's foolishness in Jesus Christ that gives us life.

What was God thinking? He was thinking of you.

O, Loving God, we don't always understand that your ways are so different from those of the world. Help us to be fools for Christ in a world that values its own wisdom. Amen.

— Deaconess Doreen Scheurman
2002 Lenten Devotionals
Reformation Lutheran Church, Wichita, KS



Power in Prayer

The CoDR prayer team welcomes your requests for prayer. They meet at 6:30pm every Friday night in the chapel. We would also enjoy having you join us in prayer as well as our Bible study immediately following our prayer team at 7pm. We have a prayer box located in the back at our Wednesday night services.

Robert L. Johnson II, Editor

Contributions invited

The editor of this newsletter is inviting **ALL READERS** to contribute articles, poetry, art work, and opinions for the newsletter. So don't be bashful.

Worship & Bible Study

FDCF Fort Dodge

7:00pm Wednesdays Holy Communion
7:00pm Fridays Bible Study

NCCF Rockwell City

6:30pm Tuesdays Bible Study
6:30pm Thursdays Holy Communion