

# The Church of the Damascus Road

# Echo!

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Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

## Faithful Christian

**F**aith, by definition, means reliance, loyalty, or complete trust in God. How about a Christian, what does it mean? A Christian, again by definition, means one who belongs to Christ. What many don't see is that being a Christian and living with faith have to be constant and relentless. Although no one is perfect in flesh, being a faithful Christian is more than going to a weekly service or study. It's more than a bedtime prayer or occasional glance at scripture. A faithful Christian is one who *completely* trusts and *completely* belongs to Christ in mind, body and soul.

It means standing up for what you think is right, even if it makes you look like you're weak or you don't fit in with the "in" crowd. We as Christians *have* to make that stand. If you think, "Why should I suffer that persecution and suffering?" then think about how much you will suffer in hell's eternal damnation. God loves you and wants you to prevail. Not only ourselves, but for us to share with others and spare them their eternal demise. Don't you want your family or friends to enjoy God's grace and love with you? So, make that stand for what you know in your heart is right, and become a faith-filled Christian.

—Paul Abbott



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## Pentecost's Power

**M**any call the Day of Pentecost the 'birthday of the church.' The mighty rushing wind and the little flames certainly caught the attention of the disciples and attracted a crowd of visitors who were in Jerusalem for a harvest festival that happened to take place 50 days after Jesus rose from the dead.

Peter, who had three times denied knowing Jesus before the crucifixion, was now a bold and brave speaker and told the crowd that he and the other disciples were not drunk, but were now filled with the Holy Spirit as the Prophet Joel had foretold. From that day forward the disciples were empowered by the Spirit of God to tell the good news, to heal, and to forgive sins. The rest of the book of acts unfolds the story of the formation of the church of Christ throughout the region surrounding the Mediterranean Sea.

The Christian Church was indeed born and has been a tremendous influence in the world, spreading rapidly throughout the region, especially through the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul. Today, in our Brothers in Blue we pray a prayer often that calls upon the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts and kindle in us the fire of God's love for all people so that the whole earth might be renewed.

The Day of Pentecost, observed by most denominations, marks the beginning of the Church's Half Year and the lessons that are read in worship instruct the hearts of the faithful to know more about Jesus' ministry.



**Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in us the fire of your love.**



from *The Joyful Noiseletter*  
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## Ultimate Peace

Let the words of my mouth overflow  
With the good news of God's grace.  
Let my tragedies speak to you  
And touch your soul.  
Let my transformation make you wonder —  
Is it real or just a mirage?  
Let my actions show you the truth:  
My happiness is real,  
My guilt is relieved.  
The ultimate peace is felt deep in my heart,  
Not even the ropes of my own death do I fear.  
For every day growing closer to heaven's grasp,  
And for all eternity with His presence I'll be.

—Paul Abbott

## The Unpardonable Sin

Jesus said the one unforgivable sin is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Blasphemy is to “curse the name of the Lord.” And the odds of you having committed this sin are about the same as they would be of you becoming a millionaire within the next 32 seconds.

What Jesus meant was, of course, impossible to know with 100% certainty. However, it is clear (at least it is to me) from the context surrounding Matthew 12.31,32 that he was referring only to those Pharisees who were claiming Jesus “forces out demons by the power of Beelzebub, the ruler of demons” (Mt 12.24).

Here the blasphemy is in attributing the works of the Holy Spirit, as accomplished through Jesus, to Satan. Only those alive during the ministry of Jesus could be guilty of this unpardonable sin. They alone were living witnesses to the miracles and the power that was God working through his only begotten Son. Therefore, their testimony denied the Holy Spirit and attributed to the chief of demons the praise and glory belonging to God. *Their testimony kept an entire nation from believing in their own Messiah.*

While some might maintain that such a view as this, in and of itself, is inadequate, we must bear in mind that even though Jesus stated this sin is unforgivable, he did not say it is a *sin unto death*. Indeed, the apostle John tells us that there is a *sin not unto death* (1 John 5.16,17). *Nothing more is really known about this sin, just as nothing more is really known about the unpardonable sin.*

Hebrew 10.26 and 1 John 5.16,17 are often used in regard to sermons on the unpardonable sin. However, a close look at the full context from which these two passages are taken reveal no obvious connection. Only John’s mention of a *sin not unto death* would seem to apply, given that Jesus said the unpardonable sin is not forgiven “in this age nor in the age to come.” (Of course, he could have meant the time of judgment, but I see that more as an event than as a period we can classify as an age.)

It is logical, then, that those who were attributing the works of the Holy Spirit to Satan were hard-hearted and incapable of being forgiven, having rejected God’s forgiveness by their own choices. We can see this in the reality of their witness. That is, these men were eyewitnesses to indisputable facts and yet cold-heartedly rejected the truth. And for that these men cannot be forgiven in this age or even in the next.

*Regardless of which view a person adapts, one cannot escape this reality: The unpardonable sin was attainable only during the earthly life of Christ. We can know this by the fact that more is not said or taught on the subject. Surely, if this were to be a concern for future generations of the church, warnings would have been given in the books of the New Testament, especially by Paul. Yet nothing exists on this topic except what was spoken of by Jesus as recorded in Matthew 12 and repeated in Mark 3 and Luke 12.*

We need to keep sight of the fact that Jesus taught little about the Holy Spirit during the course of his ministry. This is because the Spirit was in him. We read of this in Matthew 3.16: *When he had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.* Notice how the heavens were open only to Jesus and only Jesus saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove.

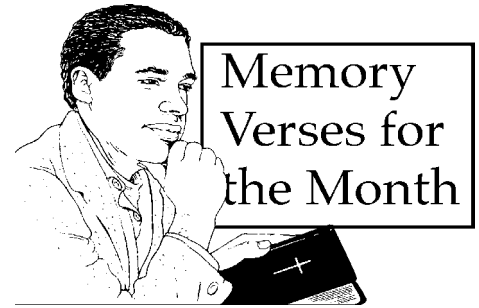
While the Spirit has been at work in the world since the very beginning (see Genesis 1.2), it was not until Pentecost that God poured His Spirit out upon all of mankind (see Joel 2.28-32; Acts 2.1-39). As we just saw, the Spirit came *down* to Jesus, which indicates that he was not already *in* the world. Again, the Spirit had been *at work* in the world but he was not yet *in* the world. That happened at Pentecost, just as the prophet Joel had predicted.

### Conclusion

When we begin to put together what we have reviewed here, it seems perfectly obvious to me that each of us need to worry about whether or not our sins have been forgiven and whether or not our salvation is real, rather than worrying about a sin that cannot be forgiven in this life nor in the next.

Since sin is a conviction of our separation from God, if we are guilty of any sin in our lives, we are going to know it. As it says in Hebrews 10.22, *let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience* (NIV). Therefore, if you question whether or not you have committed the unpardonable sin then that’s probably the one sin you are *not* guilty of.

*And now you know why.*



Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture (Psalm 37:3). And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins (Mark 11:25). Do not say, “I’ll pay you back for this wrong!” Wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you (Proverbs 20:22). And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and in depth of insight (Philippians 1:9).



## Story Tellers

Story Tellers is the third Friday of every month at FDCF and the third Saturday at NCCF unless a scheduling problem arises. You can read a book to your child on tape, and then send the book and audio cassette tape home for your child to listen to you read to them, and read along with you. The tape, and book are free to you. You just pay regular mail home to your child, or, at FDCF, you can send them out on a visit like regular property through R&D. Sign up with Pastor Stone, or at our regular worship service, or with any Inside Church Council member.

## The Three Rs

Follow the three Rs:  
 Respect for self;  
 Respect for others; and  
 Responsibility for your actions.

**The Church of the  
Damascus Road**  
*Beho!*

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 Rev. Paul E. Stone, Pastor  
 Rev. Carroll Lang, Editor

## Bible Quiz

(Answers are below - don't peek, now)

1. Who was thrown overboard to calm the stormy sea?
2. Which prophet anointed both Saul and David to be kings?
3. What did King David steal from Uriah?
4. What did Queen Jezebel steal from Naboth?
5. Which king's hair grew like eagle feathers and had nails like a bird's claws?
6. Jesus never wrote a book about himself - true or false?
7. What do a doctor, a tax collector and a fisherman have in common?



## Letters to God

A Nun asked her class to write a letter to GOD.....

Dear GOD: I think about you sometimes, even when I'm not praying.  
Elliott

Dear GOD: Of all the people who work for you, I like Noah and David the best.  
Rob

Dear GOD: My brother told me about being born, but it doesn't sound right. They're just kidding, aren't they?  
Marsha

Dear GOD: I would like to live 900 years like the guy in the Bible.  
Love, Chris

Dear GOD: We read Thomas Edison made light. But in Sunday school they said You did it. So I bet he stole your idea.  
Sincerely, Donna

Dear GOD: I didn't think orange went with purple until I saw the sunset You made on Tuesday. That was cool.  
Love, Sara

*Bible Quiz answers: 1. Jonah; 2. Samuel (1 Samuel 10 and 16); 3. His wife, Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11); 4. His vineyard (1 Kings 21); 5. King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:33); 6. True; 7. They wrote New Testament books, a doctor Luke wrote Luke and Acts, Tax Collector wrote Matthew, and Peter wrote two letters under his name.*

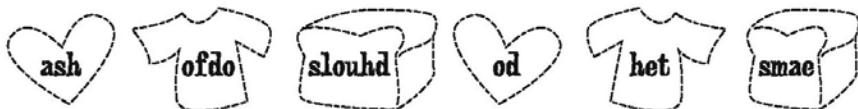
## Give to those in need

John the Baptist spoke to a crowd, telling them they should be fruitful. When the crowd asked how they could be fruitful, John the Baptist responded with some specific ideas.

Unscramble John the Baptist's reply from Luke 3:11 (NIV), and write the words in the blanks below.

### ★ WORD BANK ★

with food him who should with man share do the should  
two tunics has the who none and one the same has



Answer: "The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same." (Luke 3:11, NIV)

## Your Artwork Could be Here

We welcome art work, just turn it in to Pastor Stone. It will be returned after scanning.

### Inmate Artwork



### Last Chance

I count the days  
Till I will be free.  
Where my future lays  
Will be up to me.

This is my last chance.  
I cannot foul up.  
I don't think of romance,  
So I sip my cup.

Salute to this life  
Given back to me.  
Get past my strife  
To a certain degree.

This time I will do my best;  
Never veer from the path.  
Life is just a test —  
You do the math.

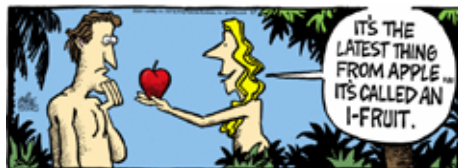
When all life is through,  
Possessions are nothing.  
I know this is true.  
All you keep are your blessings.  
—Joshua Vasa CCF 2008



### Adam and Eve

Adam & Eve  
Ate of the tree afraid,  
All shall believe.  
Afraid and alone,  
Ab'ba, Are you home?  
Adam's Eve ate of the tree alone,  
All shall believe.  
Eve, Adam's own, naked and alone.  
Adam & Eve, the snake she believed,  
Ate of the tree.  
Afraid and alone, Ab'ba, are you home?  
Adam, believing in Eve,  
she brought an apple,  
An apple from the tree.  
Adam & Eve, naked and alone.  
Ab'ba, are you home?  
Afraid and alone, Adam & Eve.  
Ab'ba asked, "Are you home,  
naked and alone?"  
An apple from the tree,  
All shall believe,  
Amen  
*Cowboy, NCCF*

Genesis 1 — God created this earth and its heaven and all forms of life in six days. Created acts of each day set forth. God created man, both male and female, in his own image. Man given domination over all things and commanded to multiply and fill the earth.



### Sin

Sin is deceitful. It promises pleasure, it gives pain; it offers life, and gives death. It opens out as bright as the morning; it closes as dark as night. It is a beast of prey: under a velvet paw it conceals a claw with which it wounds and lacerates those who would stroke it.

In every sin there is a seed of another sin. It is self-propagating. It roots itself in the soul of the sinner until it has used up every bit of good soil in the soul. It corrupts his nature, perverts his tastes, weakens his will and scars his conscience.

And with each evil deed, inclinations towards evil become stronger and stronger, until "he cannot cease from sin," and the sinner is "consumed by his own lusts." Sin is a very promising employer- and a terrible paymaster.

—Charles Jeffries



### Worship & Bible Study

#### FDCF Fort Dodge

6:30pm Wednesdays .....Holy Communion  
6:30pm Fridays ..... Prayer & Bible Study

#### Pastor Contact Hours

2:00pm - Count Wednesday  
2:00pm - Count Friday

#### NCCF Rockwell City

6:30pm Tuesdays .... Prayer & Bible Study  
6:30pm Thursdays .....Holy Communion

#### Pastor Contact Hours

2:00pm - Count Tuesday  
2:00pm - Count Thursday

### Just a Thought

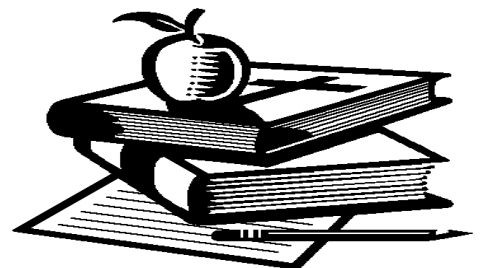
I don't know why some people change churches; what difference does it make which one you stay home from?

People are funny; they want the front of the bus, the middle of the road, and the back of the church.



### Articles 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. Give all your newsletter submissions to Pastor Stone.



### Check Them Out!

The Church of the Damascus Road Librarians are inviting you to come to the chapel (MPR 23 in FDCF H Building; Treatment Center Room A in NCCF), and "check out" the books, tapes and compact discs in our library! There are many genres of books to choose from! We hope to see you there!