



IS IT A GIFT OR NOT?



“I believe in Christianity,” commented Vivek, our waiter, as he served my salad. He knew that we were part of a church group on this cruise and was trying to assure us that he too was religious. “Oh yes,” he continued. “I attend mass every Saturday night.” But I also believe in Buddha and since I am from India I believe in Hinduism. But I like the Muslims too and I read their holy book, the Koran.”

“So, you’re confused!” I interjected.

Vivek was a little surprised and responded, “No, I am not confused, I just believe in all religions.”

“Do you know what the main difference is between Christianity and all other religions?” I asked. When I saw that I had captured his curiosity, I went on. “In Christianity, heaven is a free gift through faith in Jesus Christ. In every other religion, a person has to work and be good and do good works and hope enough good is done to get to heaven. But heaven is either a free gift or it is something you work for and earn. It cannot be both. That means that either Christianity is true and every other religion is false or that one or all of the other religions is true and Christianity is false. It cannot be both ways.

“Ooh!” commented Vivek. “That is deep. You have given me something to think about.”

Perhaps I have given you something to think about, too. Would you be able to identify the uniqueness of Christianity? Or do you think that all religions are basically the same?

In the state college I attended, the professor of my comparative religions class assigned a paper on the purpose of religion. His definition of religion was “man’s search for God.” I agreed with his definition, “Religion is man’s search for God.” Then I wrote, “Christianity is God’s search for man.” I elaborated on that and explained why that was true: God sent His Son into the world so that those who believe in Him would have eternal life. Christianity was definitely unique from all the other religions.

Do you know why Christianity is different from all other religions? The other religions center around what man does. He searches for God. He does good things to earn a place in the afterlife. But in Biblical Christianity man is never good enough to make it to heaven. He has sinned and that sin will eternally separate him from heaven. But God steps in and reaches out to man. He gives His innocent Son to pay for mankind’s sins. Through Jesus, heaven is a free gift.

So, heaven is a free gift or it isn’t. Either Christianity is true or it isn’t. If Christianity is true, then all the other religions are false because they teach that one must earn his way to heaven.

Later I gave Vivek a Bible and challenged him to read the Gospel of John. In it he will discover that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will have everlasting life. He will also discover exactly what Jesus said about other religions: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man comes unto the Father but by Me” (Jn. 14:6).

Ephesians Study

The Ephesians Study will continue in September. Come join us at 6:30 p.m. Sunday night and see what God is doing!

Labor Day Outdoor Fellowship



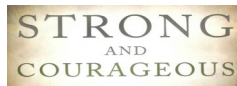
September 3rd, from 4-8 p.m.

Hamburgers and hotdogs will be provided. Please bring a side dish, enough for you and another family to enjoy. A water slide will be available for kids to enjoy @ 4:00 p.m. and the Youth will have a dessert auction before the meal. We hope you will join us!



Great Commission Women

Will meet for food and fellowship on September 19th @ 6:30 p.m. @ the Church! Sign up on the sheet on the foyer table if you plan to come.



Our Men's Meeting for August will be September 19th @ 6:30 p.m. @ the church. Sign up on the foyer table at church.

Adopting Unreached People Groups

September 1st, 7pm at Heritage Bible

Despite the sometimes overwhelming needs in the world, we can make a difference through prayer! Come hear Carolyn share the strategic vision of how you can partner with people around the world with your Sunday School or other small group by praying on a monthly basis for a people group without gospel access.



Will meet on Sundays, September 10th & 24th

"YOUNG AT HEART"

For September will have a luncheon at Heritage Bible on September, 29th @ 11:30 a.m. Katy Vanderhoef will be sharing with us about her trip to Ireland. Meat will be provided, please bring side dishes. Don't miss it!



Great Commission Women's Retreat

Speaker: Hannah Hwang, Taiwan

November 3-5, 2017

Place: Springville Camp and Conference Center, Odenville AL

Theme: 'More'



Hannah, husband Soo and their children

This is a beautiful setting and a wonderful time to get to know our Alliance sisters. A sign-up sheet will be in the foyer and the more, the merrier! You will be blessed by music, worship and great fellowship.

Cost: Single room is \$118.00; 2-4 (or more) in a room is \$105.00 adults; \$80.00 teens
The prices include all meals.

A donation this year will include the opportunity for giving to furnish new mattresses for the dorm in Dakar.

See Cynthia or Jennifer if you have any questions.

Facts & Figures

Finances for August

For Aug 1 through Aug 29

General Operating Fund (GOF) Monthly Budget:	\$ 18,655.00
GOF Tithes & Offering Received (4 Sundays):	\$ 18,699.80
General Operating Fund Weekly Budget:	\$ 4,305.00
GOF Avg. Weekly Tithes & Offerings (4 Sundays):	\$ 4,674.95

For Year to Date 2017, (based on 8 months and 35 Sundays):

GOF Year to Date (YTD) Tithes and Offerings Budget (monthly basis):	\$ 149,240.00
GOF Funds YTD Tithes and Offerings Budget (weekly basis):	\$ 150,675.00
GOF Year to Date Tithes and Offerings Received:	\$ 165,935.18
GOF Year to Date Budgeted, & Non Budgeted Disbursements (\$5,995 for new printer/copier) and Transfers to Other Funds:	\$(152,538.46)
GOF Receipts vs GOF Disbursements and Transfers to Other Funds:	\$ 13,396.72
GOF Balance as of Aug 29 (236% of monthly budget):	\$ 44,134.80
Average Weekly Tithes and Offerings Received (35 Sundays):	\$ 4,741.01
YTD Avg Weekly GOF Budgeted & Non Budgeted Disbursements & Transfers:	\$ (4,358.24)
Missions YTD Income: Receipts (\$7,271) & 24% of Tithes and Offerings (\$39,824.44)	\$ 47,095.44
Missions Fund YTD Disbursements:	\$ (39,485.08)
Missions Fund Balance:	\$ 11,338.02
Building Fund YTD Receipts including \$2,950 In Memory Of Gifts:	\$ 3,886.56
Building Fund YTD Disbursements: New telephone switch system	\$ (2,243.60)
Building Fund Balance:	\$ 5,028.45
Associate Pastor Fund YTD Receipts:	\$ 8,969.00
Associate Pastor Fund YTD Disbursements: Compensations out of Assoc Past Fund:	\$ (24,000.00)
Associate Pastor Fund Balance:	\$ 10,736.51