

# VISUABLES

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## Can a Smart Person Be a New Testament Christian?

If you know me, I study statistics. Unbiased polls and surveys reveal what people in America believe and hold as moral value. Over the decades there are two sources I have learned to trust. Barna Group ([www.barna.com](http://www.barna.com)) reveals the spiritual/social landscape from an evangelical perspective. Gallup Poll ([gallup.com](http://gallup.com)) is secular and politically neutral with many eye-opening religious surveys.

Over the past 50 years, the percentage of Americans who believe in God has never dropped below 90% and is currently at 94%. Here is another astonishing finding: a recent poll revealed that a whopping 85% of postgraduates holding advanced degrees believe in God. This is impressive considering they have attended a minimum of six years of higher learning in what is likely the most secular and adverse environment for a believer in God. In the USA, is there a more hostile place to be a Christian than on our college campuses? Nevertheless, the great majority of graduates are proving that one can be intelligent and also a believer.

There is a pervasive argument that those who believe in God are dumber than those who do not. Secular humanists voice quite loudly that they are smart, free-thinking realists and believers in Christ are dim-witted, superstitious sheep. They claim that one cannot be an enlightened, scientifically literate person in the twenty-first century and still believe the claims of the Bible. Therefore, they ask a myriad of skeptical questions: Isn't God obsolete? Wasn't Jesus Christ just a great teacher whose followers fabricated fables in order to create a religion? Why do they say Jesus was our savior from sin? Hasn't modern psychology proven that the concept of sin is another archaic invention of the church to control people?

Coming face-to-face with such bold atheism from a person holding impressive academic degrees can be intimidating no matter who you are. Imagine the pressure on a young adult Christian surrounded by academic arrogance coupled with student body debauchery? It's a rare person who is so rock solid in their confidence in God that even scientific and intellectual giants cannot slay their faith. This is the reason that the God's Not Dead movies are so popular ([godsnotdead.org](http://godsnotdead.org)). The young protagonist in those movies definitely had some wonderful training by family and his church.

Again the statistics reveal a truth: Only 6% of Church of Christ kids are actively attending church by time they are 25-years-old. Our children are slipping away into a culture that tells them the Bible isn't true, sin is no big deal, God isn't real, or there are many ways to get into heaven. It's obvious that parents today are struggling to disciple their teens in order to survive the hostile reality that awaits. Youth groups and education ministries provided by these teens' churches have also struggled to see their students hold on to their faith by time they leave home.

As the preacher of this wonderful congregation, who loves our teens and wants to see them remain faithful to Christ, I feel passionate about equipping parents and teens alike with answers to the question, "Can a Smart Person Believe the Bible?" We believe because there is evidence. Abundant and undeniable historical proof that the Word of God is exactly that. We freely admit that those of us who were raised to believe in the Bible have an unshakable faith in God based on the faith of our family and church. But it is not simply just religious sentiment that convinces us. It is that God has supplied ample evidence to the reliability of scripture.

So can a smart person be a New Testament Christian? Well, this disciple who has explored and tested the validity of Christianity for 40 years can assure you that the New Testament, when studied with a teachable mind, will definitely make you a smart person in all the right ways.

Blessings,  
John

## Design

Jim Putman leads a mega-church in Post Falls, Idaho that has an amazing history of growth and impact. Years ago, I went to a seminar at New Life Ministries on discipleship and part of the requirements for attending was to read beforehand Putman's book, Church Is A Team Sport. In it he shares a vivid "visuable".

"Imagine for a moment that you built a muscle car in your garage. You spent hours building, tinkering, sanding, and painting it until it was beautiful. Not only was it beautiful, you spared no expense to make the engine as powerful as they come; you built it to go 200 miles per hour. When it came time to bring it out for a test drive, you took it out to a safe country road, and you punched it — pedal to the metal!

To your surprise, you topped out at 45 miles per hour. All that expense, all that sacrifice of your time, working on your days off, in the evenings, at times even at the expense of your family time. You knew something was wrong. This car was not doing what you built it to do. As you drove down the road, 10 mph under the speed limit, you told yourself, 'Well, at least it's beautiful.' Does that sound right? No, I believe you would be filled with consternation and frustration. You would do whatever it took to figure out how to get it to do what you designed it to do.

In the same way, God designed the church to do certain things. It is supposed to look and drive a specific way. I believe God is frustrated when what He designed is not working as it should. Many pastors tell me stories about their churches, about the fights and the little progress they have made amongst the lost in the world—and they know there must be something more. They did not commit their lives to Christ and His work with this quagmire as their goal and dream. They knew they were in for a fight when they accepted the call to battle as one of God's team captains. They expected to come off the bench and get banged up—but the pain is worth it when you win. Many church leaders didn't expect to be trapped in a losing battle. . . I wonder if God is fine with how things are going. I wonder if the designer of the car, so to speak, is happy with how fast it is going and what road it is on."

Putman makes a powerful point. Since the church is God's team then He prefers that we win, amen? If we think winning is converting lost people to become church members we are nearly correct. Indeed, Jesus wants the lost to be saved and be added to the church in order to grow in His grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18). Exciting as it is to see people baptized let us keep in mind that baptism is not the end game. The end game according to the New Testament is when a person is transformed from a self-centered consumer of what God offers to a selfless disciple who goes forth to serve Christ, benefit the world and help people become disciples themselves (Col. 1:28).

More important than a church's seating capacity is its sending capacity. Congregations that have members going out beyond the church campus and leading others to Christ are the congregations that God would declare as winners. Satan seems to have lulled too many Christians into thinking that sitting and learning without going and serving is just fine and dandy with God. Don't get me wrong corporate worship, Bible class and fellowship are crucial to the process of preparing for performance. Yet, let us remember that working on a van in the garage will never replace getting out on the streets and hauling people to their destination.

Blessings,  
John

## God Confusion

In today's secular society where talk of God is viewed with distrust or disinterest it's no wonder most people (especially younger ones) don't know who God really is. Many theologians blame educators for this. They see an inept system teaching more obscurity than clarity. It's frustrating that the primary attributes of the God of the Bible cannot be taught in public K - 12 schools. I am equally annoyed that when a student goes to secular college they are finally allowed to study Christianity but often taught only the negative side of our history.

Part of the God confusion blame falls on the media. They are the product of our "finest schools" so naturally it comes as no surprise that most of America's reporters, writers and their editors lack biblical faith. When was the last time you said, "amen" to an article read or a program watched that dealt with the Christian faith? Serious Bible students often cringe at these portrayals of God and His people.

In fairness, though, I see most of the blame for America's misunderstanding of God falling square on the shoulders of the church. Our retreat from our culture combined with deafening silence allow the skeptic's words to go unchallenged. The church's fixation on morality and church growth crowd out times for teaching the basic tenets of the God we worship.

There is a tremendous difference between knowing about God and knowing God. Many of today's worshippers know about God. They know He is a spirit who is all-powerful, all-knowing and all-present. They know that God is holy and that there is nothing impossible for Him. They know that He sent His one and only Son to earth to show us the path to heaven.

Beyond that, let me ask you, what do you know of God? Do you understand Him? Do you know how He thinks or how He feels? One way of telling how close you are to the Lord is by looking at your life. When one is close to God they resemble God. They see things from His perspective and feel strongly about the same things He does. Another way of gauging your grasp is your obedience. Are you doing what God wills or are you merely doing what you want to do?

How important is it that we know God? If you don't, you will never know heaven, it's that simple (see **2 Thess. 1:7-9**). How can you get to know God better? Pray to Him and give Him your attention. Worship Him in spirit and in truth. And another thing — Read *the Book* where He beautifully reveals Himself. Today I begin a new sermon series called "Going Deeper with God." The opening messages will look at imperfect thoughts about a perfect God. To grow in our faith in God we would do well to separate the fiction from the fact. If you have loved ones or friends who may never have had a chance to know the real God, these sermons will enlighten. I believe they will bless you as well.

Here we go...  
John McCranie

## God During Chaos

Editors love sensational headlines. Whether it's on the cover of a magazine in a rack at the check out or it's a pop-up on a website, shocking headlines grab people's attention. Imagine if you saw the following headings:

“FAMILY FEUD LEAVES 69 BROTHERS DEAD!”

“POWERFUL GOVERNMENT LEADER CAUGHT IN ‘LOVE NEST.’”

“GANG RAPE LEADS TO VICTIM'S DEATH AND DISMEMBERMENT.”

“GIRLS AT PARTY KIDNAPED AND FORCED TO MARRY STRANGERS.”

“WOMAN JUDGE SAYS TRAVELERS NO LONGER SAFE ON HIGHWAYS.”

These headlines sound like they belong on the cover of supermarket tabloids, but the above headings actually describe some of the events narrated in the Book of Judges. This Old Testament book pictures Israel suffering from invasion, enslavement, poverty, and civil war. Which begs the question – what happened?

In the closing chapters of the Book of Joshua, you see a nation resting from war and conquest. The tribes of Israel are enjoying the riches God had given them in the Promised Land but now in Judges you see total pandemonium. The Jews are ignoring the Word of God and breaking the major commandments God gave them through Moses, specifically the ones forbidding idolatry and behaving like the condemnable Canaanites. They have abandoned the Lord and gone after other gods provoking God to anger. The result is chaos. Strong, godly leadership is replaced by compromised characters. This led to foolishness and oppression bringing years of suffering and anxiety.

Doesn't that sound familiar? Look at headlines today and you can't help but see that authority is being replaced with anarchy. Unity has been defeated by division. Those in other nations look at the USA and see a philosophical civil war. The offended go on the offense and become the oppressors suppressing those who differ from their world-view. The same thing that cursed Israel during the times of the Judges threatens us in our culture. The root of all of this can be found in the final verse of the Book of Judges. Go ahead and look it up.

*Father God, we are sorry that you have to witness so many of our countrymen violate your will and violate each other so violently. We grieve alongside you that far too many atrocities are being done at the hands of those claiming to be people of God. It is beyond understanding that so many women and young boys are being abused and that too often this occurs in the context of church. Please raise up good strong godly leadership to prevent the future from being calamitous. Amen!*

Blessings,  
John

## Grieving

In the Highlands of Scotland, sheep love to wander. A Scottish sheep will often stray off into the rocks and get into places from which they can't get out. They say the problem is that the grass on these mountains is very sweet and the sheep like it. They love it so much they will even jump down ten or twelve feet to reach some, but then they can't jump back up again. They may be there for days, and they won't even mind that much as long as there is grass to eat. But once it's all consumed they regret their actions. The shepherd then hears the sheep bleating in distress but will deliberately wait until they are so faint that they can barely stand. It is then he will go to them, put a rope around them, and pull that sheep up out of the jaws of death.

Why don't Highlander shepherds go and rescue their sheep when it first gets in that predicament? Why wait so long? Well, it's actually for long term survival. You see, sheep are dumb but have good memories. If the shepherds rescue them too soon, the sheep is so foolish it would dash right back over the precipice for the remaining sweet grass and possibly be killed in doing so. While they are strong, their appetite is stronger. That appetite can lead to death – something it won't forget. But it's insightful that the shepherd only intervenes when the animal is exhausted.

This is the way with our Great Shepherd. He knows the sinner won't go back to Him until they have no hunger for the things of the world. So, He waits until they have spent themselves in foolish living. He waits until they see their friends for what they truly are. He waits until the world's allure has lost its appeal. This shepherd will wait until He hears a bleat. God responds to stranded calls for help from depleted sheep. The Prodigal's father did not search him out. Instead he waited until the wanderer came home squandered.

We too are called to be shepherds. When we hear a lost lamb cry for help, the Chief Shepherd calls us to the rescue. Sometimes we must let others hit bottom and become wearied by their actions before spending our efforts in pulling them up. Far too many souls have broken free from the church only to dash over a precipice to their destruction.

*Father, are we so busy in our flocks that we cannot hear the cries for help of those stranded in sin? Attune our ears to the weeping of the worn-out. We must be urgent but not impetuous. The only way we can teach others is to have already learned the lesson ourselves. Remind us, Lord, of the fear and the tears of being stranded on our own cliff sides. Remind us that we are the rope in Your hands to rescue the grieving. Blessed are they who mourn for they shall be comforted. Amen.*

Blessings,  
John



## Lift Their Lives

When Jesus was risen from the grave it proved that everything Christ said about Himself was true because God would not resurrect a liar, right? It also proved that God is in the lifting business. During His three years of ministry on earth Jesus was busy lifting people who were down. He lifted paraplegics to walk, He lifted people from illness and from spiritual depression. I've had the concept of "lift" in mind lately. Let me share the lyrics of a song I composed. Hope you enjoy!

### "Lift Their Lives"

When I fall down and worship,  
The Lord of my life.  
Then I get up and follow,  
The life of my Lord.

Lifting up my eyes to gaze on Him  
He lifts up my hands  
and says "Let's begin."

When I've come and listened,  
to Him who is right.  
Then I pray to bring others,  
to this wonderful light.

Lifting up my eyes to gaze on Him  
He lifts up my hands  
and says "Let's begin"

When we go make disciples,  
baptizing them.  
And we teach His commandments,  
So they'll follow Him.

Lift their lives to gaze,  
on the promise that He gave.  
Then He'll say, "I'll be with you,  
Until the end."

*Lord, we pray that You help us bring others to Your beautiful light so that You can lift their spirits. Grant us courage to invite people to worship with us. Thank You for the seeds You are planting in our neighbor's hearts. In the name of the Risen One. Amen.*

Blessings,  
John

## Next

In the 1990's, there was a popular TV program called “Unsolved Mysteries.” One episode was about two miners in the Arizona wilderness who claimed they found a large deposit of gold at the base of a waterfall. Tragically, they were both killed by Apaches and the treasure was never found. In the church today we have our own unsolved mystery – who is the Holy Spirit?

Why is the role of the Holy Spirit such a mystery? Two errors regarding the Holy Spirit have clouded the contemporary church's understanding of His person and ministry. On one hand, the charismatic movement is obsessed with the Holy Spirit. All focus and worship is centered on Him. The danger of this movement is elevating personal, mystical experience over objective truth of Scripture. On the other hand many non-pentecostals tend to ignore the Holy Spirit altogether. Perhaps weary from the confusion or controversy they simply avoid the Spirit in their teaching and study.

On top of that, Christendom in America as a whole has shifted from Spirit-focused, Bible-centered ministry to man-centered pragmatism. I call it “theistic humanism.” Churches are run like businesses and the gospel viewed as a product to be marketed. Spiritual problems dealt are with by secular psychology models.

Isn't it possible to be in love with the Holy Spirit without being Pentecostal? Isn't it time for an understanding of who the Holy Spirit is and what the Holy Spirit still does? Throughout my years of studying, I have had to change my theology to harmonize with deeper study of Scripture. My doctrine of the Holy Spirit is one I have had to change and change again as I gain more biblical insight (See James 3:17). Ironically change is what the Holy Spirit is all about.

Who is this mysterious third Person of the Trinity through whom God acts, reveals His will, empowers individuals, and discloses His personal presence? What does the New Testament mean that we have received the Spirit? What does it mean to walk in the Spirit? To be filled with the Spirit? To be led by the Spirit? How do I actually fulfill Galatians 5:16 and live by the Spirit?

The answers to these questions are important to our Lord. It is important to you and to me as your minister. I sense that many in the family here are asking, “Now what?” With this on my heart I realized it's time for the Turlock church to pray. It's time to ask God what *He* wants. Join the elders and me in continual prayer that God reveal what His Spirit wants to do in this church. I have never known God not to answer this kind of prayer. Amen?

Blessings,  
John

## A Grave Problem

There is a person in Hanover, Germany who has had a grave problem. On this grave were placed huge slabs of granite and marble cemented together and fastened with heavy steel clasps. It belongs to a woman who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Yet strangely, she directed in her will that her grave be made so secure that if there were a resurrection, it could not reach her. On the marker were inscribed these words: "This burial place must never be opened."

In time, a seed, under the stones, began to grow. Slowly it pushed its way through the soil and out from beneath them. As the trunk enlarged, the great slabs were gradually shifted so that the steel clasps were wrenched from their sockets. A tiny seed had become a tree that had pushed aside the stones.

The dynamic life force contained in that little seed is a faint reflection of the tremendous power of God's re-creative word that someday will call to life the bodies of all who are in their graves. He will also bring back every person drowned at sea, cremated, or destroyed in some other way. This is no problem to the One who created everything out of nothing when He spoke the universe into existence. Unbelief cannot deter the resurrection. But faith in the risen Christ opens the door to blessings that His resurrection guarantees -- a glorious new spiritual body and a home in heaven. In new bodies we will be reunited with saved loved ones to live with Jesus throughout all eternity. I can't wait!

What is it that gives a widow courage as she stands beside a fresh grave? What is the ultimate hope of the cripple, the amputee, the abused, the burn victim? How can the parents of brain-damaged or physically disabled children keep their hope alive? How could anyone who is blind, deaf or paralyzed not be encouraged when they think of the life beyond? How can we see past the martyrdom of some helpless hostage or devoted missionary? Where do the thoughts of a young couple go when they finally recover from the grief of losing their baby? When a family receives the tragic news that a child has been killed in war or their parent perished in an automobile accident, what single truth becomes their whole focus?

We do not have a grave problem because our Savior says we don't. "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." I especially like that "never die" part, don't you?

*God, we celebrate today the fact that Your Son didn't stay dead. Since You vindicated Him, by raising Him from the tomb, then whatever He said must be true for we know You wouldn't raise a liar. Lord, what is the final answer to pain, mourning, senility, insanity, terminal diseases, sudden calamities, and fatal accidents? Lord, what one thing can give us hope when life has crushed us? The resurrection. Yes, the power of You raising the dead to life! In Christ's name. Amen!*

Blessings,  
John

## Perseverance

Oswald Chambers was virtually unheard of while he lived as a Bible instructor. He died at the age of forty-three in 1917 of complications following an emergency appendectomy. To honor her husband, Mrs. Chambers began compiling his teachings for publication of a daily devotional. My Utmost for His Highest was first published in 1934 and has never gone out of print. It remains in the top 5 all-time best selling Christian books. Millions turn to one of its 366 entries for inspiration and reflection. It seems fitting to share with you a powerful devotion from this amazing book. It can be found on page "May 8" or online at [www.utmost.org](http://www.utmost.org).

Perseverance means more than endurance—more than simply holding on until the end. A saint's life is in the hands of God like a bow and arrow in the hands of an archer. God is aiming at something the saint cannot see, but our Lord continues to stretch and strain, and every once in a while the saint says, "I can't take any more." Yet God pays no attention; He goes on stretching until His purpose is in sight, and then He lets the arrow fly. Entrust yourself to God's hands. Is there something in your life for which you need perseverance right now? Maintain your intimate relationship with Jesus Christ through the perseverance of intimate faith. Proclaim as Job did, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15).

Faith is not some weak and pitiful emotion, but is strong and vigorous confidence built on the fact that God is holy love. And even though you cannot see Him right now and cannot understand what He is doing, you know Him. Disaster occurs in your life when you lack the mental composure that comes from establishing yourself on the eternal truth that God is holy love. Faith is the supreme effort of your life--throwing yourself with abandon and total confidence upon God.

God ventured His all in Jesus Christ to save us, and now He wants us to venture our all with total abandoned confidence in Him. There are areas in our lives where that faith has not worked in us as yet--places still untouched by the life of God. There were none of those places in Jesus Christ's life, and there are to be none in ours. Jesus prayed, "This is eternal life, that they may know You..." (John 17:3). The real meaning of eternal life is a life that can face anything it has to face without wavering. If we will take this view, life will become one great romance--a glorious opportunity of seeing wonderful things all the time. God is disciplining us to get us into this central place of power.

*Lord in Heaven thank you for uniquely gifting Oswald Chambers and also for inspiring his widow to publish his devotionals. They have blessed millions and this preacher. Thank You for the reminder that we indeed can be confident we have eternal life through our personal knowledge of Jesus Christ. In His name. Amen.*

Blessings,  
John

## Statue

The majestic Statue of Liberty towers above Liberty Island near the entrance to New York Harbor. Titled by the French as "La Liberté éclairant le monde" ("Liberty enlightening the world"), the monumental gift from France is a symbol of the freedom enjoyed in America. The famous French sculptor, Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, gave 20 years of devoted effort to the work, personally superintending the raising of the subscription of four million dollars with which the French nation gave the statue to the United States. When the contribution lagged, Bartholdi pledged his own private fortune to defray the running expenses and practically impoverished himself over the work.

At the beginning, when Bartholdi looked for a model whose form and features he could produce as "liberty," he received much contradictory counsel. One of the leading art authorities advised him that the statue should depict "figures of thought which are grand in themselves." After examining outstanding heroes, whom did Bartholdi choose as a model for the face of the colossal masterpiece? It was rumored to be Charlotte Beysser Bartholdi . . . his own mother.

How tall does your mother stand in your eyes? Do you see her and feel grateful for the freedom she has provided you? A freedom birthed in you from her own faith and wisdom? To not have a deep abiding trust in God is an entrapped life. To not be wise is a prison most cruel. Mothers are God's gifts of life — real life. Thank You Father in heaven, for giving us mothers!

Mom, how tall do you stand in your children's eyes? Do you rise above the petty, hopeless vanity of the modern era? Do you take the higher ground of faith in Jesus Christ? Are you imparting to your children the truth you have gleaned from the Bible? No matter how old your kids are, they will always need God's counsel. Thank you mothers for allowing the Father to nurture us through you!

Blessings,  
John McCranie

## The Player

I really enjoy when congregations are devoted to the public reading of Scripture (1 Timothy 4:13). Last Sunday night, we read the latter half of Romans chapter one. When I heard verse twenty-two read it triggered a memory of a parabolic story that appeared in The London Observer about a family of mice who lived all their lives in a large piano. To them in their piano-world came the music of the instrument, filling all the dark spaces with sound and harmony. At first the mice were impressed by it. They drew comfort and wonder from the thought that there was an invisible Someone who made the music — above, yet close to them. They loved to think of the Great Player whom they could not see.

Then one day a daring mouse climbed up part of the piano and returned very thoughtful. He had found out how music was made. Wires were the secret; tightly stretched wires of graduated lengths that trembled and vibrated. They must revise all their old beliefs: none but the most conservative could any longer believe in the Unseen Player. Later, another explorer carried the explanation further. Hammers were now the secret, numbers of hammers dancing and leaping on the wires. This was a more complicated theory, but it all went to show that they lived in a purely mechanical world. The Unseen Player came to be thought of as a myth. Yet, though their limited vision kept them from seeing who he was, the Unseen Player continued to play.

Do you still hear the sounds the Player plays? When I hear His songs, they help everything make sense. Has the American mind become so educated that it has out-thought and distanced itself from *faith* in order to be *intelligent*? Must the two be mutually exclusive? It says in **Romans 1:22**, "**Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools.**" True atheists are only a minority, but they are by no means silent. They heavily influence presidents of universities and editors of the media. Biblically based Christian faith within our culture has been out of vogue for decades and our society is showing the consequences. In the Bible, a fool is someone who stubbornly refuses to comply with God's wisdom and directives. Fools satisfy their carnal impulses and refuse to exercise self-control. The Book of Proverbs declares that the end result of being a fool is ruinous (10:14).

Despite the claims of those with a PhD and regardless what the pundits may write, only a fool denies God's Word. The need for the Lord in our lives hammers on our heartstrings. And the Divine, Unseen Player continues to play ever so gracefully. Filling our needs with His music . . . a symphony of ministry. A duet of faith and hope. An orchestration of the fruit of the Spirit with His instruments of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

So, how are you and the Lord doing? Are you in harmony with Him? Is your life in tune with His will? May we, as a church, continue to read aloud the inspired Word and allow God to play His music through us.

Blessings,  
John

## Signs from God

In her book, The Story of My Life, Helen Keller tells of the dramatic moment when Annie Sullivan first broke through her dark, silent world with the illumination of language. “We walked down the path to the well house, attracted by the fragrance of the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Someone was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand, she spelled into the other the word water, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten -- a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that W-A-T-E-R meant: the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free!”

Just as that "living word" awakened the soul of Helen Keller, so the Lord can awaken your life through His living Word. He can give you light, hope, joy, and freedom like you've never known before. In order for that to happen certain steps must be taken. First, instead of stumbling along our own course, we must learn about the Lord's path. We must allow Him to be our guide and be willing to follow his leading. Next, we give Him our undivided attention by fixing our mind on what He wants us to know. It's at that moment that we can decipher that He is spelling out a word to us. The Word God wants us to know is J - E - S - U - S. “Jesus” is more than a word it is a divine name that means L - O - V - E. Let me illustrate my point with an encounter where I witnessed God signing a living word into a person's soul.

Dorsha (Door-shay) was the out-of-town sister of a recently baptized church member, Martina. Dorsha made a decision to walk away from the destructive and miserable situation she lived in and walk the path pleasing to the Lord. This move meant that she and her 15-year-old son would have to start all over with only a handful of household items. Martina called me and told me of Dorsha's situation and I asked permission let the church family know the following Sunday morning (just prior to Thanksgiving). The church's response was immediate and within the day we had in our foyer pots, pans, towels, rugs, blankets and money. In fact, a guest returned that night, thrust some cash in my hand, said, “Make sure the woman you told us of this morning gets this” and walked out to his car and drove off. I was choked up because I knew he was about to be a father for the first time. Martina's small group collected 100 dollars which she used to buy household goods. By the holiday a color TV and more monetary gifts were added.

The Friday after Thanksgiving Dorsha and Martina met me at the building to receive her “love gift.” After loading the boxes into her car I suggested we go to my office and chat. Dorsha was one of the most appreciative persons to whom I have ever given benevolence. She told me her heartache story and I counseled her to seek the Lord out in prayer, read of Jesus in the gospels and gave her the name of a church of Christ near her home. When Dorsha opened the envelope with the cash and gift cards she began to weep openly and shared that she had told God that she needed a signal from Him that He still loved her and would care for her. Then we all wept realizing that God was spelling in Dorsha's open hand, I L-O-V-E Y-O-U.

Blessings,  
John