

"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 15:5-6

One in Christ. One in Love.

U1

The Unified

Winter 2011

Where It's At

U1

- Front Page
(U are here right now)

U2

-A Season of
Thanksgiving

U3

-The Feast 2011!!

-Joining God's Family at
the Feast

U4

-A Wintery Escape

U5

-From Me to You

-Triple Fit Part II

U6

-Word.

U7

-Media Moment

-Feeling Fantastic

U8

-Is the God of the Old
Testament Worth
Worshipping?

Feeling Fantastic!!!



Feeling Fantastic

MY F.O.T

Fellowship-full, fun, exciting, inspirational, encouraging, spiritual filling, uniting, relaxing, amped up, helping, worshipful, spiritually enlightening, soul searching, self reflecting, wonderful, God-filled. That is how my feast was this year. Amazing. Turn to page 3 as others open up about the highlights of their feast and as one man tells you about his journey to being baptized at the feast this year, 2011. Page 3.

By Kristen Girouard

"Life, I've found is better lived overly joyous because the hard times will come sooner or later, all by their selves. So, every day I wake up and I feel fantastic.. because.. why shouldn't I?" One of my Starbucks regulars told me this after I chose to befriend him out of curiosity. He is, by far, a man whom all of us employees find slightly obnoxious due to his extreme happy moods and booming voice. Beyond these distinct attributes though, his wisdom shone through in this statement. (cont. p.7)

Improving My Relationship With God One Day At a Time: My Testimony

By Marisa Gonzalo

This year at the Feast there were a variety of people that I spoke with about their relationship with God. Through that and the overall AWESOME spiritual feeling the Feast left in my heart, my desire to improve my relationship with God began to grow and is constantly continuing to grow daily. In an effort to start off my day with a positive attitude, I would like to consistently wake up every morning and pray before going to work, school, or before anything that I have planned for the day. During the day I want to strive to keep in contact with God; through little prayers and thanking Him for my life and the wonderful ways in which I have been blessed. As Ephesians 6:18 says, keep on praying, no matter what it is and with all kinds of prayer. I am striving to give God the praise and thank him as often as I can daily. (Continued on P. 5)

A Season of Thanksgiving

What a great day! Food, family, love, thankfulness. You have time to reflect on the things in life you really appreciate. See what others love about Thanksgiving and what they are thanking God for this year, on page 2.

Wake Up with God and Breakfast

By Heather Pereault

Breakfast has been said to be the most important meal of the day, but why? Food is the fuel and energy for our bodies. After the fast of the night our bodies need to be fueled and re-energized to prepare for the day to come. The brain's main fuel is glucose, which comes from food. Without providing our brains with this fuel in the morning/breakfast, we are making ourselves more vulnerable to the lack of concentration and application, and to lethargy and fatigue. Our metabolism is more efficient in the morning, hence why eating breakfast will improve our focus, energy, and determination. Not to mention, it is the best meal to NOT skip (for those counting their calories, for weight purposes). Waiting until noon to eat will put your body into starvation mode. This causes your body to hold on to the nutrients for a lengthier period of time, resulting in a slower metabolism. (cont. 5)

Winter Family Time

Have you ever been to The Winter Family Weekend?? Its my favorite way to spend my winter break!!! Find out more on p. 4 :)

A Season of Thanksgiving

It is so easy to get caught up in the busyness of our daily life and look past the blessings that we have. We all do it, even if isn't on purpose or because we want to be ungrateful. Our world moves at the speed of sound and we are constantly trying to keep up with it, but at Thanksgiving we are given a chance to slow down. I mean you eat that huge turkey and mashed potatoes and you slow way down, but that's not where I was going with that. One thing I really like about America, despite all complaints, is we have a holiday dedicated to giving thanks and family. There is a very obvious feeling of appreciation for the abundance of food and the hands that made it when you are sitting at a table in front of a Thanksgiving feast. Sitting there I know that God gave us this abundance, and my mom slaved over the stove out of love for her family, and her husband worked really hard to provide it. You appreciate family. I asked few people to share their favorite Thanksgiving traditions too. **Here's what they said:**

"My favorite Thanksgiving tradition...well I have 2. Couldn't choose between them. Hope its okay. I Like the fact that our family gets together. With us all living so far apart its nice to have dinner once a year together. And probably my most favorite tradition is playing football with the whole family! Lol"
-Hannah Chesney

"My favorite Thanksgiving tradition would have to be my mom's sweet potatoes, we only get them around Thanksgiving and they are treated almost as a dessert! Soooo good!!!"
-Sebastian Baker

"This may be odd, but my favorite Thanksgiving tradition is most definitely making green bean casserole. I loveee green bean casserole and for some reason, I never think to make it any other time of the year. It's what I was looking forward to the most this Thanksgiving."
-Carrie Wiesman

"Give *thanks* to the **Lord** for He is good.
His *love* endures **forever**." Psalm 136:1

"Thanks" is a lovely thing, because when we appreciate what God blesses us with and take time to give Him credit and glory, it changes our daily life. We feel grateful and blessed; it changes our attitude and outlook on life. Ever feel in a funk and a crummy mood you can't get out of? Yes (I will answer that for you) You have! We all have! Giving thanks helps put us in perspective in these moments and it glorifies God. I am thankful for Thanksgiving, Family and an amazing loving God.

Here is what others were thanking God for this Thanksgiving:

"God's blessings have really overflowed my life these past couple years. I am very thankful for my loving church family, and extended church family (Feast family). God placed all of you in my life at the very time He knew that I would need you. Praise God from whom all blessings flow! :)"
-Heather Pereault

"Specifically for the God-given perspective to see benefits and positive things amidst a stormy trial (my health).. Still working on it, but it's a blessing"
-Corbin Rose

"I'm thankful that the hardships and struggles I have endured so far have not only helped my faith grow but that they make me want to try harder. Yes I still struggle sometimes but lately I've been able to pick out the positive more than the negatives. But I have a long way to go. One of my favorite sayings is "If God brings you to it He will bring you through it" That is so true because He always does. He always has for me. And He always will."
-Tricia Willett

The FEAST 2011!!!



What inspired you this year at the Feast?

"Something particularly inspiring for me this feast was when a group of people at the Independent Family Feast got together and sang songs for the elderly who were in nursing homes. (Pictured left) There was such a positive energy that flowed throughout the entire room and elderly men and women were singing and dancing and tapping their feet to the music. Having a chance to speak with these people, it was clear that having the opportunity to have some company was all it took to make their day and it really just struck a chord (pun intended!) with me to see these people smiling and singing and having a good time. I hope that someday I could find a way to do something like this on my own for the elderly in my neighborhood!"

-Kayla Snyder

"The variety of ages :) So many generations of people coming together for something like thankfulness; that was my favorite thing. But it was my dad's message the following Sabbath that inspired me. He spoke on how he noticed the same variety in generations but was sad to see our lack of respect for the grandparents. The bible speaks so strongly of how the 'elderly' or the grandparents are respected because they ask for and EARN that respect. They choose to live righteously and become 'that old guy that everyone would rather sit and hear stories and opinions from than hit a ball around the yard!' (Our family tradition on Thanksgiving is croquet). There are few young people who think of what type of an old person they wanna be when they grow up. The question in bright lights has always been for me "what will I be when I'm all-grown-up!?".... Now my daddy and church has inspired me to ask "What type of a grown-up will I be when I'm a grandma?"

-Kristen Girouard

"My favorite thing this Feast would be the service project and the progressive dinner ☺... and all the services were very inspiring, especially the worship. The special prayer services and the anointing had to be my number one for the Feast."

-Jessica Caswell



Joining God's Family at the Feast



"Growing up I was blessed with the freedom to decide when to become a part of our Heavenly Father's spiritual family, and it was a gift that I cherish now and forever. I always thought of baptism like a marriage in a sense with Christ. For the longest time I was afraid that if I went too fast that I would fail in my commitment; however, if I went to slow I would miss it completely. But then I realized a truth. Baptism is more than just a commitment, it is an investment where we say, "Father I wish to be like you and be with you and even though I will be unsteady at times I know that you will always be there to catch me and pick me up when I have fallen."

For me the time came when I felt a feeling like butterflies inside trying desperately to get out and when my heart raced so fast that I felt like it would beat out of my very chest. At that moment everything was the way it was meant to be. It's just like the feeling that a future husband gets while watching as his future wife walks down the aisle. Even though I have always felt close to God, it was as if I had fallen in love with Him in a whole new way. I know that tough times are ahead but as long as I have God, Christ and now my bigger than ever spiritual family, I know that I can take on any and every challenge that lays ahead of me."

- Bronc Dvkstra, 19, IA

* * * A wintery escape* * *

Fun, Family,
Fellowship and
Friendship

The Winter Family Weekend :)

Every year it is an absolute must for me to get myself to The Winter Family Tournament in Lexington, KY and a lot of other young adults and families feel the same way as I do! It is so refreshing to get together with like believers and spend time relaxing and playing. The people I have met in Lexington come from all over the States and are genuine good people. I actually met my husband at a Winter Family weekend, the winter of 2008, and grew many other friendships that have changed my life in wonderful ways. I know that I am not the only person who thoroughly enjoys it so I asked a few people to tell me what they are looking forward to!

Here is what others are looking forward to this year at The Winter Family Weekend:

"I'm really looking forward to the worship service this year at Lexington!! It's going to be so powerful! I go because I get to be apart of organizing that and the Friday night service. Also the dance is going to be so sick... as well as the soccer tournament, basketball, volleyball, and family fun night!!! It's all so good..."

-Jesse Edwards



"I am looking forward to the sports, volleyball of course, and the people! Also, just fellowship in general and teaching a kids' class."

-Marisa Gonzalo

The Lexington Winter Family Tournament is one of my absolute favorite events of the year! Reuniting and fellowshiping with friends, having great seminars, countless social activities, sports, a fancy hotel, and fantastic food, and being with your brothers and sisters in Christ... what's not to love?! The environment is joyful, grateful, and enthusiastic which makes for such an uplifting weekend! Praising God is amazing, but it's so much more amazing worshipping and glorifying God with so many others! The Winter Family Tournament always leaves me feeling encouraged, inspired, and blessed to be a part of such a wonderful Church family.



-Rachel Burkhart

Silver 101

By Marissa White

I recently found this devotional, and it was something that spoke to me. I would like to share it with all of you in the hopes that it touches your hearts as it touched mine. The story is based on the scripture Malachi 3:3 --



"He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."

This verse puzzled some women in a Bible study, and they wondered what this statement meant about the character and nature of God. One of the women offered to find out the process of refining silver and get back to the group at their next Bible study. That week, the woman called a silversmith and made an appointment to watch him at work. She didn't mention anything about the reason for her interest beyond her curiosity about the process of refining silver.

As she watched the silversmith, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire, where the flames were hottest, so as to burn away all the impurities. She asked "Is it true that you have to sit there in front of the fire the whole time the silver is being refined?" The silversmith answered that yes, he must not only sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it was in the fire. If the silver was left for a moment too long in the flames, it would be ruined. The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked, "How do you know when the silver is fully refined?" He smiled at her and answered, "Oh, that's easy -- when I see my image in it."

Improving My Relationship with God

By Marisa Gonzalo



(cont. from FRONT PAGE)... Another way in which I would like to improve my relationship with God is through praising Him with

song. In the last few months, I have begun to feel more and more comfortable singing around and in front of people and I believe singing a song that helps me feel God's touch and helps me praise Him with sincerity will truly improve my relationship with Him.

Triple Fit Part II: Wake Up with God and Breakfast

By Heather Pereault



(Cont. from FRONT PAGE) The number one reason people give for not eating breakfast in the morning is... NOT HAVING ENOUGH TIME. Do we really not have enough time to take care of ourselves? Are our lives so hectic and busy that we go throughout our day with a lack of energy rather than set aside five minutes for a quick bite? Or is not having enough time not even the real issue? Perhaps the problem is the lack of understanding how important a healthy breakfast really is. Maybe if we understood the significance of starting our day this way, we would make it a higher priority in our [hectic] life. Anything that is high priority to us, we choose to make time for. So maybe if we come to the realization that this, indeed, should be a superior priority, we *would* have enough time.

Although eating breakfast is considerably imperative, this does not mean that we discontinue the consumption of nutrients throughout the rest of the day. BUT let's not stop here. While starting your day off right with a healthy breakfast, we must not forget that... "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Deut. 8:3)

Now that we understand the right way to start out our day in a physical sense, let's talk about the perfect way to start it out in a spiritual sense. As our physical body needs to be re-energized in the morning, in the same way, our spiritual strength needs to be renewed every morning. (Isa. 40:29-31) How do we do that? The Word of God is the fuel for our hearts. "And he said to *them* all, if any *man* will come after me, let him *denv* himself, and

take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23, KJV) Every morning it is vital to our spiritual walk that we choose to die to ourselves. Every morning when we awake, we should be praying and meditating on God's Word. The importance of doing this in the morning is that it will assist in setting our mood/attitude for the remainder of the day. Romans 12: 1-2 says, "I I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God— what is is good and acceptable and perfect."

I love these lyrics of a song that say, "Every morning when I awake, give me Jesus." I believe that in order to keep ourselves from conforming to this world we must invite Jesus into our hearts every single morning. In doing this, we are more likely to carry Him in our hearts throughout our entire day. Just as in a physical way, eating breakfast is vital to our health; Prayer and meditation are essential to our daily spiritual walk with God.

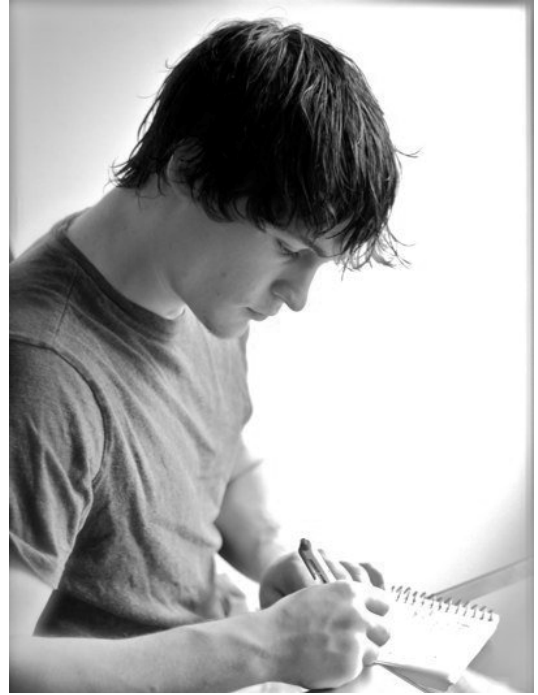
I challenge you now, to set aside some time every morning for God and for breakfast. Perceive how it changes your awareness, attitudes, and hearts. You will surely be rewarded!

*Here are a few verses that I like to wake up with: Isaiah 50:4, Psalm 118:24, Psalm 59:16, Galatians 2:20

Word.

"There are definite benefits [to reading The WORD]. Some of those for me are straight up encouragement. Reassurance of God's love of the commitment He has made to His people. Also the encouragement of reading how other people have acted out of faith and made God their everything gives me incredible inspiration to do the same in my life. There are just so many benefits to bible reading: Not to mention the wisdom of the proverbs and Jesus parables. There are ridiculous lessons in the stories of the Old Testament too. It all comes together so wonderfully in the form of a 66 book love letter from God to us. Beautiful."

-Josh Edwards



How THE WORD is inspiring others:

"God's word was, is, and always will be. All of His word is valuable and edifying even when we don't understand it. Satan is constantly trying to deceive us through the word. 2000 years in the past or the future it and it's original intent is the same."

-Aaron Baker

Scriptural Reference:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." Rev. 1:8

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Tim 3:16-17

"I read Anne Rice's book 'Christ The Lord: Out of Egypt' over the holiday. It's a historically accurate but fictional account of Jesus' life as a child. In it, his family recites the 1st commandment every morning and evening like a prayer. 'Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is one, you shall love Him with all your heart and mind and soul and strength.' I've kind of adopted that as a meditative practice this week, adding at the end of it the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself."

-Sara Boyer

Scriptural Reference:

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Deut. 6:4-5

"Actually, there are a couple scriptures on my mind. Lately I've been thinking a lot about Matthew 6:25-34 and Luke 12:22-34. Both passages talk about how we should not stress ourselves with worrying.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "So I tell you to stop worrying about what you will eat or wear. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothes. Consider the crows. They don't plant or harvest. They don't even have a storeroom or a barn. Yet, God feeds them. You are worth much more than birds.

"Can any of you add an hour to your life by worrying? If you can't do a small thing like that, why worry about other things? Consider how the flowers grow. They never work or spin yarn for clothes. But I say that not even Solomon in all his majesty was dressed like one of these flowers. That's the way God clothes the grass in the field. Today it's alive, and tomorrow it's thrown into an incinerator. So how much more will he clothe you people who have so little faith?

"Don't concern yourself about what you will eat or drink, and quit worrying about these things. Everyone in the world is concerned about these things, but your Father knows you need them. Rather, be concerned about his kingdom. Then these things will be provided for you. Don't be afraid, little flock. Your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom.

"Sell your material possessions, and give the money to the poor. Make yourselves wallets that don't wear out! Make a treasure for yourselves in heaven that never loses its value! In heaven thieves and moths can't get close enough to destroy your treasure. Your heart will be where your treasure is. (Luke 12:22-34 GWT)

To sum it all up, here's a quote I like to think about when I find myself worrying too much over something:

"If something can't be fixed, then there is no need to stress ourselves over it. Get over it and move on. If something can be fixed, then why stress over it in the first place?"

God will take care of everything if we put our trust and faith in him."

-Clay Baker

Media Moment

Sometimes music is the best way for me to hear something. Through a song I can understand certain things much better than they could be explained to me in words. Certain songs really build me up and make want to get out there and do something (Until the Whole World Hears - Casting Crowns), some songs bring me to a place of Worship (The Stand- Hillsong), and some comfort/inspire me through loss (Blessed be Your Name). I used to often listen to a radio station we have here in Michigan called Smile FM. Every now and then they would run this ad about "taking the Smile FM challenge", basically this means listening only to their station for 30 days. Yeah, this seems weird. They say it will "transform your mood, heart and attitude". The funny thing is this really works. I mean you don't have to just listen to *this* radio station, but surrounding yourself with a Godly pick me-up really changes you. I challenge you all to try just listening to Christian music for 30 days and see how you feel.

"Brandon Heath's music is really encouraging to me. Your Love, Don't Get Comfortable and Give Me Your Eyes are some of my favorites. I know that the song by Armin Van Buuren called Youtopia is not technically "Christian" but if you listen to it in that context, it is SOO Beautiful. The singer on that is the guy from Owl City and I know that he is a Christian. So I think that is what he was going for with the lyrics and it really touched me today when I heard it! :)"

-Josh Edwards

"I am always moved by the songs of Brandon Grissom, an artist originally from Willow Creek Church in Chicago. His song 'Arms of Mercy' explains the struggle of seeking God and failing, and God always wanting you back. I also love the song 'You Remain', and his new album 'Exhale' is fantastic. I really enjoy the song 'Rise and Sing' by Fee, I think a lot of worship needs more energy and that song does it right. David Crowder and Chris Tomlin both do great work but my favorite worship song by far is David Crowder's 'O' For A Thousand Tongues'. I have to mention a couple other songs; 'Lifted' by Mat Zo and 'You Got To Go' by Above & Beyond. The message "I want a love that's Lifted!" just clicks in my head, and the entire concept of 'You Got To Go' is important for any young adult setting out to achieve their goals." I believe that songs can move you positively, whether 'Christian' or not, can be a good influence. But remember nothing can replace pure worship!"

-James Edwards

You've Got Mail! (Response Letter!):

I've been thinking a lot about your section called "Media Moment." Here are some thoughts I have:

Our media, especially TV and Movies, are slowly and carefully working to change how we think about God and His values. The scary part is that so many who are Christians are allowing this by tuning into on a regular basis. There is a story about how a frog, placed in a pan of cool water will stay in the pan as it is heated slowly. He never seems to notice that the heat is being slowly turned up and will stay there until he is boiled. My cry to our people is to "WAKE UP!" "JUMP OUT!" Become alert to how our minds are slowly being processed away from the solid values and lifestyles that God has ordained for us. They bring us the greatest riches and can not compare to an entertainment we might find in the world.

Martha Rohrbaugh

Feeling Fantastic



By Kristen Girouard
(Continued from FRONT PAGE)

Everyone goes through struggles. Some struggles are greater and more infinite than others, while many are the simple struggles of a stressful life style. I've always been told it is attitude that makes or breaks the stress of life. That it's what you're looking at that will tone the attitude you address life with. Which is why I love Psalms 25:15: "Mine eyes are continually toward the LORD, For He will pluck my feet out of the net." If we

focus on Him instead of that sour relationship or the long day ahead on 2 hours of sleep, we can trust Him to not stumble or fall and to carry us through the web that we often weave. This verse carries me through mostly in the hardest of times because it's when I can't rationalize the situation, when my emotions are too strong to know right from wrong, that I remember to gaze continually toward him in my prayer, thoughts, actions, and words. For when we give Him our full attention, why would He not do the same for us?

Is the God of the Old Testament Worth Worshiping?

By Jeff Ledy

Recently I was given an email string where a young person was questioning what kind of God there was in the Old Testament compared to the loving Jesus that is portrayed in the New Testament. How would you answer someone who says they can't believe in a loving God after reading through the Old Testament? Looking at examples that seem harsh and cruel – to the extent that God commanded Israel to wipe out (kill) every man, woman, child and animal in the lands Israel was to inhabit. (Joshua 6:21 for example) How could you even consider worshiping or trusting a God like that? What is the explanation?!

In looking at the questions and reading between the lines (and many feel this way) what kind of God is it that we are to serve, a blood thirsty vengeful God (Old Testament) or a loving compassionate Jesus?

Let's look at three key issues involved in these questions as well as the line of thinking that typically is behind these thoughts about God.

1. Who/what determines definitions? What are we basing the authority of our definitions on? What we feel? What we know from society? What culture dictates? What a dictionary says? What the Bible says? Where is the authority coming from?

If the authority is coming from us, then everyone is right in whatever they think. There is no wrong because people are equal. There is no one standard to measure behavior against. Everything is relative if it's based on what people say – one person's word against another. No one can be right or wrong then. Society is just a group of people. If authority is based on society, then what society is right? Certainly none can be wrong! Everything is reduced to relativity. It can't be wrong for the Chinese government to have forced abortions for their one child policy because that's what their society says is OK and normal. But....we know it IS wrong. How can that be? There must be some higher standard, some standard that has more authority than what individuals think.

So, is the Bible the Word of God? If it isn't, then it has no more authority than we do because it's just like other men. If it isn't, then it's just another opinion. But, if it is the Word of God, then that changes everything!

Many in today's world think love equals tolerance. Society has been infected with, deceived by, the misconception that Love means Tolerance. So they look at the OT and say, "Look how unloving God is! Look how cruel and mean!" when they read accounts of God choosing not to tolerate or accept people that were practicing abominations against Him. His priority IS love – and holiness and righteousness are aspects of true godly love.

This current twisted understanding of love undermines the legitimacy of right and wrong. It reduces the gospel to do what you want as long as you're nice to others and use the name of Jesus. Society says that if you love your neighbor as yourself you will tolerate their behaviors, morals, desires, standards because, well, who are we to pass judgment? Therefore, the new way of thinking and acting is that tolerance equals love. Truth or standards become relative. We look at standards based upon where society is, it's all relative because as society changes so does our view of standards of behavior. There is no benchmark to compare behavior against – unless of course someone uses the Bible. How often does society acknowledge the Bible?

Many people try to assign their society based standards to God. God is loving, but He isn't tolerant when it comes to sin. He might be patient, longsuffering, merciful and loving, but He does not, nor will ever, tolerate sin (which of course society says we must if we are to be loving – which is defined as tolerance).

When it came to Ancient Israel and the nations that occupied the land that God had given to Israel, He gave instructions to help Israel become what He wanted them to become, His people, in the land He gave them. He promised He would make a great nation out of them if they would just love Him, obey Him, and be holy like Him. God would not tolerate the sin of the people who lived in the land if it was going to affect His people.

Let me go on to the next point.

2. What is our physical life about? What is the actual value of life? Again, where are we determining the value of life from? Society says life must be preserved at all costs. Jesus, who has conquered death, who holds the power of life and death in His hands, sees things differently. Death doesn't concern Him as it does us. If we're going the relativity route, look at Buddha or Mohammed – did they come back to life? Did they conquer the grave?

Hebrews says that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. (Hebrews 13:8) Jesus was the God of the Old Testament. (John 1: 1-3, 10 & I Cor. 10:4) HE is the God of the OT and as such He dealt with people in a strictly physical way because their spirits were dead – there was no spiritual access to God because of sin. That's why things changed after Jesus' death – men had spiritual access. The Holy Spirit could now dwell in Christians because we have been cleansed by perfect blood and could come into the holy presence of God under that covering.

Christ (God) is the creator of all living things. We get all bent out of shape and we judge him as mean, spiteful, petty, etc because He doesn't value life as we do. In Him is life. He can give it, He can take it away. He can restore the dead to life again. Resurrection of the dead is not a hard thing for Him. He looks at life very differently than we do because He has total power over death. He also has a plan for all mankind. (John 3:16). He loved those people too. He just plans to teach them who He is in the future because He will bring them back to life.

3. What were the actual circumstances of the Israelites? They were a country-bumpkin bunch of slaves. They had no technology, no sophistication, no money, no tools, no land, no commerce, no arts, no science, and no weapons. They had nothing. Read what we call the civil statutes in Leviticus. A lot of those laws and statutes were for basic sanitation and basic instruction on interactions and acceptable behavior – BECAUSE they didn't know!!

Mysteriously God chose them to be special! Their promised land was occupied by people who actively worshiped Pagan deities, peoples who engaged in vile and abhorrent things like child sacrifice, temple prostitution, idolatry, great immorality, unbiblical slavery, perversions and the list goes on. These were not "good people" in God's eyes. Everything they did was sinful and God does not tolerate sin.

They also had wealth, knowledge, beautiful ornate temples and cities, arts, sophistication, thriving commerce and industry, well established government and systems, and great standing armies with advanced weapons for their time. They were incredibly impressive to the lowly Israelites. God did not want the Israelites to be enticed into thinking that they could have all that if they only followed the Pagan ways and practices. God calls us to Holiness and He wanted Israel to be Holy, which means separate, distinct, set apart for Godly use. He mercifully said to eliminate the stumbling blocks which the Pagan nations would become, so that Israel would have an opportunity for greatness based upon following God and not the ways of the nations around them.

So to summarize, all too often we want to have God live down to our morals, our thinking, our standards, our view of how things ought to be.

If we equate love with tolerance then God must be a monster because He is not as tolerant as we are. If we believe this physical life is of the utmost value and is worth preserving at all costs then we can't accept God's view of life and resurrection. If we believe that Jesus' message is just about love, that it is a current social message of acceptance, and that you can do whatever you want, as long as you are a consenting adult, then we are never going to be Holy which is what He called Ancient Israel to be and what He wants us to be today. This life is not the priority – it's about the FUTURE. The future that says that Christ will come back as the Conquering King. The book of Revelation says end time conflicts will be beyond anything we can even imagine. Christ will wipe out evil so that His way, His people, His government can be established. Christ is True and Faithful and is constant and purposeful. If you accept Christ you must accept Him as the God of the Old Testament, the Lamb who brought Salvation to mankind and as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah who is coming to establish by force His Kingdom of which there will be no end.