

# THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Volume 68, Number 01

Editor ~ Joshua Riggins

Publisher ~ Doug Twaddell

January, 2026

## EYES UP

Sam Woody

Satan thrives on fear, knowing a frightened heart falters, but God offers a path lit by reverence, strength, and unshakable peace. **2 Timothy 1:7** “*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*” This isn’t simply a nice sentiment - it’s a call to live boldly. Fear is a thief, sneaking in to rob us of peace and cloud our judgment. The Bible brims with tales of its destructive power.

Take the Israelites in Numbers, standing on the edge of the Promised Land. Giants loomed, and fear took root. Forgetting the God who parted seas, they rebelled, and a generation wandered lost in the wilderness. What could’ve been triumph turned to tragedy - all because fear ruled.

Then there’s Peter in **Matthew 14**, stepping out of the boat toward Jesus. For a fleeting moment, he walked on water, defying the impossible - until the wind roared, and his gaze drifted from the Savior to the storm. Fear pulled him under. The wind hadn’t changed; his focus had. It’s a stark reminder: when we fix our eyes on Jesus, fear loses its hold.

Consider King Saul, a man crowned by God yet crumbling under fear’s weight. Facing the Philistine army, he sought answers not from the Lord but from a medium at Endor. His dread drove him to the witch’s lair, bypassing the God who’d once anointed him. **1 Samuel 28:15** captures his desperation: “*I am deeply distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God has departed from me.*” Fear severed his lifeline to divine strength, plunging him into despair and disobedience. How often do we, like Saul, let panic push us toward shadows instead of the Light? His story pleads with us: fear distorts; faith restores.

Even the disciples, rugged fishermen, weren’t immune. In **Mark 4:35-41**, a tempest rocked their boat while Jesus slept. They panicked, crying out in terror. He stilled the sea and

asked, “*Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?*” Imagine if they’d trusted His presence instead of the chaos. Fear blinded them to the power at hand.

And Elijah - fresh from victory over Baal’s prophets in **1 Kings 19** - fled in terror from Jezebel’s threats, hiding in a cave. Even the boldest can buckle when fear overshadows faith. These aren’t only old stories; they’re mirrors of our own battles. Fear tempts us to forget who we are and WHOSE we are.

*REMEMBER: you’re not alone.*

*God is with you, for you, in you.*

*The world may roar, but you don’t have to cower. The God who stilled seas, parted waters, and conquered death dwells in you. Fear may tap at your door, but faith can fling it wide with defiance.*

Not every fear is an enemy, though. There’s a fear that breathes life: the fear of the Lord. This isn’t about trembling in dread - it’s a reverent awe, a recognition of God’s majesty and our place before Him. As **Proverbs 9:10** declares, “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*” This holy awe steadies us, aligning our

*continued on the next page...*

Continued from front page: "EYES UP"

hearts with His truth.

Jesus put it plainly in **Matthew 10:28**: "*And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*" Earthly threats fade; God's authority endures. When we hold Him in the highest regard, the world's fears shrink in comparison.

God's Word is our shield against worry, a wellspring of strength. In **Psalm 23:4**, David sings, "*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me.*" His presence chases away the dark. **Isaiah 41:10** echoes this promise: "*Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you.*"

God's power becomes our backbone. In **Romans 8:15**, we're reminded, "*For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption.*" We're not fear's captives; we're God's children. And **1 John 4:18** seals it: "*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear.*" His love builds an unbreakable fortress. Knowing these truths is the start; living them is the victory.

Fear's fiercest foe is peace - the deep, steady kind Jesus gives. In **John 14:27**, He says, "*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*" This isn't a shallow calm; it's an anchor for the soul. When fear looms - be it a headline, a hardship, or a whisper of doubt - remember: you're not alone. God is with you, for you, in you.

The world may roar, but you don't have to cower. The God who stilled seas, parted waters, and conquered death dwells in you. Fear may tap at your door, but faith can fling it wide with defiance. **Isaiah 26:3** assures, "*You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.*"

So, the next time fear creeps in - a storm, a struggle, a shadow... pause. Breathe. Speak His truth. Pray for strength. Stand tall, knowing the One who holds the stars holds you, too. Eyes up.

~909 Crestridge Dr, Kearney, MO 64060  
samuelwardwoody@gmail.com

## SOUTHPAWS OF THE BIBLE

Flint Fenton

My daughter has two grandfathers who are left-handed. Every other member of the nuclear family on both the paternal and maternal sides is right-handed. It is generally believed that anywhere from 70-95 percent of humans have a right-hand preference, with the wide range in part due to no generally agreed-upon definition of handedness (Scientific American: Why are more people right-handed?). Some naturalists have suggested that hand preference agreement is beneficial for cooperation, while hand preference disagreement is good for competition. If you are left-handed and reading this article, you can no doubt appreciate the challenges wrought by using right-handed computer mice, sitting at student desks that support the right arm while allowing entrance and exit to the left, or learning from a little league coach who can only demonstrate a pitch from the right-hand side. Both our tools and shared knowledge skew to the right-hand. Competition, on the other hand, is an area of benefit for hand disagreement. In the 2025 season, 26.2% of pitchers throw with their left hand. This trend is mirrored in boxing, fencing, and even among US presidents, each showing a higher-than-average left-handed representation.

Given this background, it is probably unsurprising that the Bible has relatively little to say about lefthandedness, and that when it does mention a left-handed individual, it is always in a military context. For example, there is nothing in the generations or account of Adam that makes his hand preferences important to his story. It seems likely that other individuals in the Bible were left-handed, but this is only revealed to us when it is an important feature of their account. To tell the story of Ehud, his left-handed preference appears to be a key factor in the successful assassination of Eglon, the Moabite King (**Judges 3:15-31**). While not explicitly stated, there seems to be an implication that being able to secure his dagger on the right thigh and draw it across his body to his dominant hand aided his mission (along with divine favor), as guards would expect the weapon to be secured on the left hip or thigh. The next occurrence of left-handedness in the Bible comes from **Judges 20**. Here, rather than being oppressed by

outside forces, Israel finds itself in a civil war or skirmish of sorts. The men of Gibeah behaved vilely, that is all too reminiscent of the sins of Sodom, with the result being a dead concubine. Her body itself was divided and sent to the 12 tribes as a powerful message of sin. The tribe of Benjamin refused to give over the offenders for justice and instead went out to war against their brethren. Among the ranks of their army were 700 left-handed men who “*could sling a stone at a hair's breadth and not miss*”. Twice the Benjamites defeated the Israelites until finally God gave them into Israel's hands (**Judges 19 and 20**). Being outnumbered and lacking the moral high ground, we find that still the Benjamites defeat their brethren twice, destroying 40,000 Israelites. Here, the effectiveness of the Benjamite army is seen: against each of the other tribes, it appears only by the agency of God that Israel overcomes them. Perhaps this is some of what inspired Jacob to prophecy: “*Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; In the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil*” (**Genesis 49:27**). Related to this topic we find among David's mighty men, aiding him against Saul's ambidextrous warriors skilled in the bow and the sling from the tribe of Benjamin, *again* (**I Chronicles 12:7**).

Not only does each Biblical reference to left-handedness happen in a military context, but every reference specifically applies to members of the tribe of Benjamin. There are three possible answers for this anomaly, all of which could work in concert. First, it may be the result of simple sample bias. With only two references to true left-handedness and one reference to ambidextrous soldiers, each of them being from the same tribe, the results might be somewhat random. Another possibility for this anomaly is that the Benjamites might have had a genetic predisposition to left-hand preference. Identical twins share hand preference about 82% of the time, indicating genetics may contribute to this trait (National Library of Medicine: An Overview of Human Handedness in Twins). Although genetics certainly doesn't govern it solely. Finally, left-handedness might have been a military strategy employed by the Benjamite tribe. In a similar way, left-handed pitching has an advantage over right-handed pitching because most of the opponents a batter will face are right-handed. In battle, when the stakes are high, having an opponent with off-hand dominance may tilt the battle in your opponent's direction.

The right hand in the Bible has a number of connotations, but appears to be used primarily symbolically. In connection with the idea that hand preference agreement is beneficial for collaboration, the right hand can symbolize fellowship. Paul and Barnabas received the “*right hand of fellowship*” from James, Peter, and John (**Galatians 2:9**). This would be supported by the idea that hand agreement is beneficial for cooperation and, therefore, symbolic of unity. The right hand is associated with divine aid and comfort “*For I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you'*” (**Isaiah 41:13**) and “*I have set the LORD always before me; Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved*” (**Psalm 16:8**). The right hand of God is associated with power “*Why do You withdraw Your hand, even Your right hand? Take it out of Your bosom and destroy them*” (**Psalm 74:11**). The right hand being the hand preferred for most human actions, is anthropomorphized in the divine as the will and ability to intervene in the life of mortals. The right hand can be used to show a favored position. Jacob blessed Ephraim using his right hand and only blessed Manasseh with his left to the consternation of Joseph (**Genesis 48:13-17**). Likewise, the position of Jesus Christ is the favored right hand of God, “*The LORD said to my Lord, 'sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool'*” (**Psalm 110:1**). This is where Stephen, a deacon and first martyr saw Jesus standing in glory at the right hand of God (**Acts 7:55-56**).

God is fully able to use all varieties of people in his kingdom. God used the socialite Jesus, and his reclusive cousin, (**Luke 7:33-35**) to bring the message “*repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*”. Jesus called apostles from opposite sides of the so-called political aisle in Levi, the tax collector, and Simon the Zealot. Jesus was even able to unite Jews and Gentiles into the same household of God. Each of these distinctions is far greater than hand preference. God has a use for you in his kingdom.

P.O. Box 43, Lone Jack, MO 64070  
~fentonflint76@gmail.com

---

“*Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.*” (**Colossians 3:11**)

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE  
1700 S. Ann Ct.  
Independence, MO 64057

Periodicals Postage Paid  
at Independence, MO



*Please check your expiration date!*

## Glory to God!

On November 4, 2025 the angels and brethren in Oklahoma rejoiced when **Sunny Pyle** obeyed the gospel through submission to the Lord in baptism.

The brethren in **Norwalk, CA** praised God when **Cameron Oakes** was immersed for the remission of sins on November 30, 2025.

## Here and There

The congregation meeting on **Murray Rd** in **Lee's Summitt, MO** share the good news that **Jeremy Morris** was appointed to the eldership on November 23, 2025. Praise be to God for men willing and ready to serve the kingdom in this good work.

The **Kendellville, IN** congregation has determined it is no longer feasible for them to meet together. We pray for the dear sisters who remain faithful members here as they seek new opportunities to serve their Lord.

Dates have been set for the **Riverside Rd, Ozark, MO** one-week meeting. The meeting will take place the week of **July 26 - 31**. Additional details will follow in the coming months.

## 2025 Special Meetings

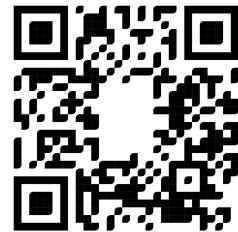
December 29-31.....Winter Youth Rally, Raytown, MO  
December 29-31.....Winter College Rally, Lone Jack, MO

## 2026 Special Meetings

March 22.....Gardner, KS  
June 29-July 3.....Midwest Bible Campout  
July 26-31.....One-Week Meeting, Riverside Rd, Ozark, MO

## Special Meetings

Use the QR Code to the right to see a listing of meetings for 2026.



## The Gospel Message

To renew a subscription, add a new subscription, inquire about a subscription, or cancel a subscription, please contact **your publisher**:

**The Gospel Message, % Doug Twaddell, 1700 S. Ann Ct.  
Independence, MO 64057 twadsquad@earthlink.net**

To renew on The Gospel Message website, use your phone or tablet camera to click the QR code to the left. The print version is available for \$10 per year. An email version is available for \$5 per year.



If you would like to announce baptisms, new members, deaths, or special meetings in **The Gospel Message**, please contact **your editor**:

**Joshua Riggins, 401 Douglas Dr, Bloomfield, IN 47424  
jrgiggins@gmail.com**

If you have any questions or concerns about the content of this paper, please either contact **the author** of the article or **your editor**.

**THE GOSPEL MESSAGE (USPS:576-040) (ISSN:1054-7991)**  
is published monthly for \$10 per year by **THE GOSPEL MESSAGE**, 1700 S. Ann Ct., Independence, MO 64057.  
Periodicals Postage Paid at Independence, MO. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **THE GOSPEL MESSAGE**, 1700 S. Ann Ct., Independence, MO 64057