



# No Other Name

*Essays by Gene Shelburne*

**THE CHRISTIAN**  
**Appeal**



# No Other Name

“**W**hatever you do,” the Scriptures instruct us, “do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.” If we stop and ponder the impact of that command, we should see that obeying it will clean up our lives. After all, who can tell a lie in the name of Jesus? Or shout an angry insult? Or cheat on their spouse? Or indulge in pornography? Most of the sins that would later disrupt our lives and brand us with shame will never happen if all our words and actions are done in Jesus’ name.

Let’s go a step farther and embrace the truth that no other name can do this for us. Jesus is our only Savior, and the Bible boldly asserts that “there is no other name used or spoken by us on earth [that] can save us.” We hope you enjoy Senior Editor Gene Shelburne’s essays in this issue as he reflects on this truth.

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John Gulley

“**A**nd this is  
his **command**:  
to believe in  
the **name** of his  
his Son,  
**Jesus Christ...**”



1 John 3

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## When Convictions Erode

**G**eologists tell us that the magnificent, massive ditch we call Grand Canyon is the result of erosion. When nobody was watching, grain after grain of sand slipped off the slopes and washed down the Colorado River. Now look at it.

Soil is not the only seemingly solid base that erodes as the years slide by. Many of our most basic convictions have a way of vanishing without us noticing it at the time.


One of my brilliant grandsons got a scholarship to a century-old university that still wears the label “Christian” in its name. Repeatedly he called to ask me how he should respond to a philosophy professor who was trying to turn his students into agnostics. If anything, that school today is anti-Christian.

It’s not just that school, of course. America’s most prestigious universities were founded by Christians to strengthen and sustain the faith of generations to come. Two centuries later, however, in the name of diversity and free speech, many of these schools will demote or dismiss any teacher who takes a stand for Christian faith or morality. And the shift from belief to non-belief took place so gradually

that nobody noticed until it was too late to salvage even a modicum of faith on these campuses.

Gradual changes like this sneak up on us. Last year my gut told me that the tone of Fox News was changing somehow. I couldn’t put my finger on it, but it made me uncomfortable. In this rapidly shifting time, under its new generation of owners, even a conservative source like Fox News seems to be jettisoning its traditional stance.

Saddest of all to me, though, are the slow, subtle shifts in the basic convictions of so many of our major churches. Churches that for centuries taught their people to believe the Bible, to obey its instructions, and to trust in Jesus now have become some of our nation’s loudest voices in favor of immorality and disbelief.

Today some of the churches that founded America’s finest hospitals have become the most outspoken advocates of killing babies. And honored pastors who still wear the name of Jesus discount the biblical accounts of his birth and resurrection as made-up tales that didn’t really happen. The resulting chasm in the world of faith makes Grand Canyon look like a mere scratch on earth’s terrain. 

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## Flag Lovers

**S**ome of the most memorable moments in my 60-plus years of ministry have been the times when a squad of soldiers or military veterans expertly folded coffin-draping flags and presented them to a veteran’s survivors to honor their departed loved one. If bagpipes wailed or trumpets sounded, the graveside experience touched me even more deeply.

So, as I read Thomas Long’s book *The Christian Funeral*, I was surprised to learn that he has found coveys of Christians who object to placing flags on coffins. As they see it, covering a veteran’s casket with the stars and stripes implies allegiance to a kingdom besides the one ruled by our King.


Evidently these objectors have overlooked the apostle Peter’s instructions. In the same line in a single verse Peter tells all Christians both to “fear God” and to “honor the king” (1 Peter 2:17). Peter clearly thought it was possible for true believers to pay honor to both heavenly and earthly rulers without implying a lack of allegiance or respect to either.

Christians in every age have had to come to grips with the reality that they live in two kingdoms. Always have and always will. And

pledging allegiance to one implies no lack of respect for the other.

As I write this column, I expect it to be published in newspapers during the week before July 4. Only when I checked my calendar several months ahead did it dawn on me that in 2021 (the year I wrote these words), the Fourth of July fell on Sunday. I hoped all of my fellow-believers would join me in expressing loyalty and gratitude for our free nation.

To be a true Christian who honors Jesus on this special Lord’s Day, we won’t have to join the NFL (Non-Flag Lovers) or the NBA (Not Behind America) players and refuse to show respect for our nation’s flag. We won’t have to mimic Nike and stop wearing red-white-and-blue sneakers. On this patriotic holiday, we can “fear God and honor the king.”

Or, as the apostle Paul instructed his converts, every Christian can “submit himself to the governing authorities.” We can do this because, as Paul wrote, “the authorities that exist have been established by God” (Romans 13:1). Being a loyal, honorable, respectful citizen in our nation in no way implies lack of allegiance to Jesus. In fact, it sends the opposite message. 

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## *Songs That Last*

One Bible writer admonishes Christians everywhere to “sing and make music in your hearts.” I wonder if he could see even back then that the church’s most cherished hymns would become our finest depository of truth and hope and faith.

Even more important may be the way the classic hymns break down walls and bind us together in Christ. We sing the same songs. In our part of the world, how many Christians could you find who don’t recognize the melody of “Amazing Grace”? Most of us can sing it by heart. When John Newton wrote those memorable words back in 1779, do you suppose he had any idea that believers would still be singing them two centuries after he died?

Every generation has to experiment with its own music. Always have. Probably always will. But most of it will be just a flash in the pan (or maybe a better metaphor would be a beep on the iPod). Here today, gone tomorrow.


When I was a kid, dozens of song books were being published, all of them full of songs nobody had heard before. We sang them in church services and in the Sunday afternoon gatherings we called

“singings.” Only a handful of them survived to appear in later hymnals.

During the virus days when worship for many of us took place on YouTube or TV, the recent proliferation of new hymns posed a unique problem (especially for those of us who have been singing the old ones for seven or eight decades). Younger music ministers (just like most of their predecessors) kept selecting songs nobody had heard before. Those of us who were sitting at home without a hymnal or a print-out of the musical score got left out. We couldn’t even try to sing along.

My guess is that most of those new songs will vanish, just like the new ones we sang in the 1940s and 50s. One or two of the best ones may take root and bless multiple generations to come, but the rest of them will get lost in a blessed silence, never to be heard again.

Even the biblical psalmist begged his contemporaries, “Sing to the Lord a new song.” I wonder what he would say today if he learned that his “new” song is still being used by worshipers three thousand years later.

Like the wine of Jesus’ day, the old almost always is better. 

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## *Replacements*

My lady and I are discovering that one unexpected challenge of living so long is having to train a host of new service providers.

Right when we had taught him to jump us through the hoops the way we wanted to, our family doctor got bad sick himself. We had to start over with a new sawbones, a novice at the time. It was frustrating, to say the least.


Once a month for two decades a group of my colleagues have met at the same restaurant for breakfast, and the same cheeky guy waited on us so many times that he knew all our personal menu twists. Then suddenly, without warning, he was gone. Those of us in that vanishing breakfast cluster probably won’t live long enough to train another waiter that well.

In the past year or two, both of my go-to plumbers have hung up their wrenches. Like me, they’re now too old and decrepit to hunker under lavatories or to dig pipeline ditches. For thirty-plus years I’ve enjoyed first-name friendship with those guys. The youngster who repaired one of our church furnaces last week was a stranger. He did

good work, but something was missing.

For more years than I can tally, I would go to a friend’s shop to get my car inspected or its oil changed. Then, without warning, that neat fellow had the audacity to sell his business. I’ve been to four places now to get the same service, but it’s not the same. They don’t know me from Adam, and it bothers me to have strangers tinkering with my car.

The folks we’ve counted on for years won’t quit retiring, moving away, or dying. I’m sure that most of the new hardware store owners, insurance agents, attorneys, painters, etc., will do a good job, but turning them into friends may take more time that we have left.

Can you tell from all this whining that I like to deal with people I know? And it’s not just people. When, like the psalmist, I meditate on the law of God day and night, or when I reflect daily on the words or deeds of Jesus, I get to know Them. And Jesus said that knowing God and his Son are the essence of eternal life. Unlike the vanishing helpers I just described, They will always be here to bless us. 



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## *Bible Names*

I don't know if anybody requires them anymore, but during my younger years some of my friends grew up in faiths or cultures that required parents to give their offspring Bible names. This may explain why in every American town back then we had a jillion Johns and Jameses and Peters and Thomases.


Today biblical names for modern kids obviously is a dying custom. In even the most devout families, new parents now seem to stay up late trying to dream up names nobody on earth has ever heard or spelled before. Pity those poor kids. For the rest of their lives they will have to spell their names multiple times every day in any transaction that requires their identity. Most of them will assure you that Bob or Jane would have made life a lot easier for them.

I got started down this path when I ran across a Bible name while I was reading the news this morning. For the first time ever (I think), I saw in a "Most Wanted" notice that a female criminal the cops are looking for grew up with the Bible name Vashti. I wonder if this had anything to do with her bad behavior. (Do you remember that Vashti in the Bible was

the upstart queen King Ahasuerus dumped before he married Esther?)

This got me to thinking about previous times when I chuckled in amazement to see that somebody had named their child Judas, or Delilah, or Jonah, or Jezebel. Bible names? Yes. But it seems obvious that the parents who chose them did not know those Bible stories. Who would intentionally name their son or daughter after an infamous miscreant or doofus?

Names matter. Maybe more than we know. Some interesting studies have been done to see what effect the actual sounds of names may have on our personalities. After all, we hear those same tones and inflections hundreds of times even before we know one word from another, and then we hear them thousands of times for the rest of our days. Do these often repeated sounds change the way we react to the world around us? I don't know.

But I do know that God changed the names of people like Abraham and Sarah and Jacob and Paul to fit the visions he had for them. What does your name say about God's goals for you? 

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## *Pious Patriots*

Patriotism and piety are not mutually exclusive traits. Not if the apostle Peter was right. In the same sentence (as we noted in a previous essay) he told early followers of Jesus both to "fear God" and to "honor the king" (1 Peter 2:17). So I feel no need to apologize to my faithful readers for telling them what most of them already know—that I am a proud American. I stand during our national anthem and pledge allegiance to our flag with hand over heart without feeling that I am compromising my Christian faith one whit.


Dozens of times in my six decades of pastoral ministry I have stood beside a grave and watched as honor guards folded the flag that had draped a veteran's coffin and presented it to that man's grieving family. Often I had to fight back tears. I cannot imagine how any loyal American can think it noble to disrespect that flag.

So it pleased me no end when I learned that Mark Cuban had reversed his decision not to allow our national anthem to be played at the start of home games for his Dallas Mavericks. But, even more, I cheered when I heard that his change of heart was triggered by a ruling of the NBA that all of their

games would start with the anthem.

Already, after enjoying Dallas Cowboy games for decades, I had lost pro football from my life, thanks to their support of the Kaepernick capers. No longer do I watch any of the games (or news about the games) of the NFL. Then I switched off the Olympics. For a brief moment early this year, it looked like the NBA was about to vanish from my world as well. It warmed my heart when they stood up to those who would put down America.

Our latest anthem-squelchers may have some legitimate concerns, but they are expressing them the wrong way. A nation's policies never have to be perfect (are they ever?) before its citizens can express loyalty to that country. Not any more than a family must be flawless before we can embrace parents and proudly wear their name.

Peter's real King was Jesus, but still he instructed his Christian converts to show respect for Emperor Nero, the same tyrant who soon would crucify Peter upside down. Keep that in mind the next time somebody tells you how honorable it is for us to dishonor our country's flag. 

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## *I Just Woke Up*

If you don't know that I'm a gray-haired old coot, what I'm about to tell you will confirm how ancient I am.

All of my life when I wanted to tell somebody what time I opened my eyes and climbed out of bed, I'd tell them, "I woke up at 7 (or 8, or—now that I'm retired—at 9 or 10)." That's the only way I used the word "woke." So I must confess that I got confused when I started hearing that common term used as an adjective (as in, the woke generation).

Just reading the news convinced me that "woke" no longer means someone is not asleep. So I began to dig to explore how in the world I'm supposed to interpret this age-old word in this modern age.


Googling "woke" took me to *Wikipedia*, which told me it "is a term that originated in the United States, referring to a perceived awareness of issues that concern social justice and racial justice." They went on to explain that "woke," as it is used nowadays, is derived from an African-American vernacular expression and now refers to continuing awareness of these issues.

*Merriam-Webster* says that

"woke" now means "aware of and actively attentive to important facts and issues (especially issues of racial and social justice)." But they went on to warn that the word often may be "used as a stick with which to beat people who aspire to such values."

So the gist of my research on "woke" woke me up to the fact that left-wingers use this word as a compliment but extremists on the right have "weaponized" it, using it as a put-down or an insult to liberal activists they disagree with. To know which meaning is intended, you have to know the views of the person using it.

Not surprising. The bulk of our vocabulary is like that. Even our most benevolent words such as mother, or son, or even God, can become curse words or filthy slang. It depends on who says them and why.

"No man can tame the tongue," James warns us (3:8), but Jesus urges all of us to try to. He warns us that our tongues can get us into lots of trouble, whether we use them to pray long, pretentious prayers or to call somebody a dirty name. The Word tells us to be careful with our words. 

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## *What I Didn't Get*

"We had baseball-sized hail last night," the young man told me as he chauffeured me home from the Glass Doc shop where my cracked windshield was being replaced.

"Really?" I replied. I had heard weather reports of hail damage on the east side of town, and I was grateful that the brief wave of hail that chattered on our roof was just marble-sized. My last RAV4 got pummeled and battered in a hailstorm. I'd like to keep the present one looking at least sort of new.


How often do you remember to thank the good Lord for the woes that do not park on your doorstep? This Thanksgiving most of us will bow down to recite a long list of blessings we appreciate, and it's great that we do this. But how many of us will also tell God "Thank You" for the bullets we dodged during the year just past?

My mother endured half a year of indescribable misery caused by the malignant brain tumor that killed her. I'm thankful that at least so far I've dodged cancer of any kind. Several of my best friends have buried their mates in the year just past. Thank God,

my wife and I are still side by side. So far in our little world we've avoided that kind of upheaval.

My lady and I are delighted to claim fifteen grandchildren (and now that they're getting married, that number is doubling). Often we thank God for each of them. But how often do we tell him how thankful we are that not one of them has been hooked on drugs or opted for a shameful lifestyle?

As I began to ponder all of the hurt and harm and heartbreak that I haven't had to suffer, I became freshly aware of just how blessed I am. During my six decades of ministry, I've tried to comfort hundreds of dear people who have been devastated by an incredible assortment of misfortunes. In every case I have prayed with and for them. But it has seldom occurred to me to thank the Lord that my loved ones and I have been spared that kind of agony.

Whenever I try to obey the biblical command, "Be thankful," my inventory of blessings should contain a host of things I didn't get, as well as all the things I did. 

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## Grandmother's Journal

In the piles of family lore that pack his garage, my oldest brother recently discovered a priceless journal. Its first entries were from 1943—mid-WWII, written by our mother's mother, our Grandmother Key. It was not a daily diary but a record of thoughts and feelings she jotted down every few days for more than thirty years.

On some of the pages Grandmother told about neighbors or church friends she had been involved with in some way. Often she wrote about "her girls"—dozens of local lasses who spent time in Grandmother's kitchen learning to cook or sew or to read the Bible and pray.

In some of her most precious notes, however, she was looking back at family members and events, sometimes even before she was born. In other places she reflected on her own childhood or her courtship and her own brood when the kids were still youngsters.

During the last bi-annual Key Place retreat with my brothers, I spent ten or twelve almost non-stop hours reading Grandmother's distinctive cursive notes in that journal, sitting beside the same table where she wrote them. Those were golden hours.

I loved the memories she recorded about her own wedding. Driving a mule-drawn wagon, she and my grandfather-to-be rolled up to the front door of the preacher's two-room country shanty. He came out onto his front porch with his wedding book in hand. They stood up in front of the driver's seat in their wagon, said their vows, and drove away, never setting foot out of the wagon.

Evidently that inexpensive, informal wedding worked. They didn't need to spend a fortune or put on an elegant performance for their family and friends. Without flowers or tuxes or high-dollar photos, the knot they tied that day lasted only sixty-three years.

Latest marriage stats tell us that almost half the people in the U.S. are not married. And the legal link of those who do vow, "'Til death do us part," will actually last just an average of seven years.

Being single is not wrong. But, in far too many instances, it's not healthy. From the very beginning God could see that "it is not good" for a person to be alone. If you doubt this, just consult with any single mom whose budget and calendar are stretched to the limit as she struggles to fill a two-person role alone.



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## Mint and Dill

"You tithe from your mint and dill plants," Jesus told the nitpicking religious leaders, "but somehow you ignore the issues of faith and life that really matter."

Do we grow dill in West Texas? I grew up in a gardening family. In my early, barely-paid preaching days, I raised lots of vegetables to feed my growing family. But if we do plant and raise dill in our part of the world, I've managed to be oblivious to it for eight decades.

*Wikipedia* describes dill as a plant in the celery family, commonly grown in Eurasia and harvested to season food. Processed dill is probably available on your grocery store shelf next to salt and pepper and spices of all kinds. But I don't think I've ever seen it growing in a garden.

Mint is another matter. I was about ten years old the summer when my mother planted a sprig of mint in the rose bed between our two back porches. She wanted to be able to step out her kitchen door and pick mint leaves to flavor our iced tea. I remember that just a year or two later our roses were almost lost in a sea of mint. It had taken over.

In all the years I have heard

(and thought I understood) our Lord's famous words about "mint and dill and cummin," I have been missing one important point in his rebuke to those religious moguls. Not until I read a blog by *Touchstone* magazine's former senior editor James Kushiner (a grower of both mint and dill) did I factor in Christ's total message.

When I heard Jesus scolding his critics because they tithed mint and dill, I could see those pompous buffoons picking every tenth leaf off their mint plants. That part of the metaphor was clear to me. But Kushiner's reflections opened my eyes to the equally important fact that those dudes were tithing plants that invade and take over gardens, plants that all gardeners have to prune and discard by the bushel. They put far more mint and dill into the trash heap than into the offering plate.

Of course, Jesus wasn't really worried about mint and dill leaves. His message was aimed at all of us who so punctiliously obey even the most minor rules of our religions while we blindly violate the most obvious principles of justice and mercy and faith.



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## *Goodbye, Grackles*

**A**t my advanced age my deaf ears can't hear most of their high-pitched chirps and calls anymore, but I still miss the song birds that used to entertain us every morning at the Key Place. Our bird-feeders used to draw clusters of robins, redbirds, mockingbirds, wrens, and doves. Today I put seed in the bird-feeders, but so far I haven't seen or heard a single bird.

I have no solid evidence, but think I know why these much-loved birds vanished. Several years ago the densely-wooded creek bed between us and our neighbor got infested with a swarm of filthy, noisy grackles. Hundreds of them. Then, as suddenly as those raucous creatures invaded our territory, they vanished.


Why? I don't know for sure. But I do know that the shrill shrieks and defiling habits of those vile invaders drove me nuts during my retreats at our mother's homeplace. What if I had to live fifty-two weeks a year with that cacophony and bird crap? I'm fairly certain that one of my good neighbors decided to put an end to that mess by poisoning the always-hungry grackles.

If I'm right, this also explains why all the lovely song birds

we've loved and fed for decades are suddenly gone. They ate the same poisoned seed as the grackles.

Can we learn anything from this about how careful we need to be when we're fixing things? Sensible legislators in Texas passed a simple law to control religious zealots who were using Bible courses in public high schools to illegally preach and proselytize. The lawmakers fixed that problem, but in doing so they also killed a 90-year-old public high school Bible program that had been stringently legal and richly educational from its first day. They shot at grackles and hit robins as well.

It's frustrating, isn't it, when our brilliant solutions create problems we didn't foresee? Who ever dreamed, for example, that laws requiring car seats for children would result in a generation of parents who can't get to their screaming kids in the car, so, unlike those of us who used to hush our noisy brats, a lot of them develop the habit of letting their toddlers shriek and wail regardless of where they are? Nobody foresaw that.

So be careful when you're fixing things. The new mess you create without knowing it may turn out to be worse than the one you cleaned up. 

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## *Quadruple Greats*

**O**ur fifth great-grandchild, John Benjamin Shelburne, took his first breath on September 26, 2021. When his great-grandma and I heard his name for the first time, it dawned on me that this baby's great-great-great-great-grandfather was also named Benjamin. Benjamin Shropshire, a West Texas rancher and former Texas Ranger, was my Grandmother Key's father.

I doubt that the parents of our new Benjamin had a clue that the former one existed, but I remember him well. Especially the times (when he thought nobody was watching) when he would interrupt his Bible reading to pull out his glass eye, polish it with his handkerchief, and pop it back into the socket. He lost that eye when a longhorn steer gouged him with a horn.


My lady and I got a text celebrating the arrival of our new great-grandson while we were vacationing in eastern Tennessee, roosting in what used to be the quiet country town of Sevierville, just a few miles north of the Smoky Mountains. We could see them from the patio of our condo.

Years ago, the first time we visited Sevierville, my friend DJ Stubben heard me talking about

it and shocked me by telling me that the town was named for John Sevier, her four-greats-grandfather, who was the first governor of Tennessee. DJ says she never met him. What a coincidence that we were in that town and also were contemplating a quadruple-great forefather.

When I was a kid, I had no idea how blessed I was to get to know four of my eight great-grandparents. After we got married, my lady adopted all of my grandparents because she knew none of her own. How many of yours have you known?

In the generations before Moses, the Israelites had lived in a land that worshiped a menagerie of gods. So when God sent Moses to rally Israel for their famous escape from Egypt, he instructed his reluctant novice leader to identify him as "the God of your fathers." In other words, not one of their Egyptian neighbors' mythical deities, but the one true God known and worshiped by their ancestors as far back as they could trace them.

Few things bless us more than godly ancestors who showed us how to be faithful to the Lord and to serve him in good times and bad. Is that how your great-grandchildren will remember you? 



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## *The Spanish Flu*

What was meant to be a wacky Christmas gift from some of my granddaughters years ago got me hooked on Jeff Kacirk's "Forgotten English" desk calendars. Now Santa has to bring me one every year or I will pout.

At least a year before anybody but some Chinese doctors knew anything about COVID-19, Kacirk wrote his incredibly prescient December 3, 2020, calendar blurb about a much earlier pandemic that came to be known erroneously as the Spanish Flu.


During World War I years (over a century ago), this pandemic killed millions of people—some say as many as 100 million, including 670,000 Americans—at a time when our total population was tiny compared to today.

In those early-1900 days, long-distance travel was becoming quicker and easier, so even people not caught up in the global war activities had begun to roam the planet. Wherever they went, they coughed and sneezed and spread deadly flu germs. So, as Kacirk put it, this little-known pandemic exacted a toll in lands "from the Arctic to Polynesian Islands," not unlike the better-known plagues in medieval times.

You and I got daily updates on the

number of active cases and deaths attributed to COVID-19. Famous patients such as President Trump and the Pope made headlines. Now, a century after the Spanish Flu swept the globe, we learn belatedly that its highly visible victims included Franklin Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, and people like Walt Disney and Georgia O'Keefe.

So the virus disruptions we've just experienced are nothing new. We have heard lots of writers and reporters and preachers saying that we had never gone through anything like the upheavals of recent months. Maybe "we" had not, but history verifies that deadly worldwide pandemics are nothing new. And paying attention to this history lesson may bless us, for it shows that after these disasters were over (and they always did end), life went on and flourished for those who survived. Just as it will for us.

What Jesus taught us about how we should handle anxiety concerning food and clothing and health is just as true for how we should cope with a major crisis like the current virus. He tells us to live life one day at a time. Today's worries are enough for today, Jesus stressed. After all, he asked, which of us can change one iota of our troubles by worrying about them? 

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## *MLK's Dream*

After Martin Luther King Day this year, I found myself pondering a troublesome question. In his most-often-quoted line, Dr. King said, "I have a dream." I kept wondering if a lot that we see today is what he dreamed of?

"Yes!" someone might reply, and then point out that because of protests led by MLK, our nation has had a black President and Vice-president, something unheard of before MLK.

Another person might confirm the fulfillment of King's dream by showing us all the closed doors that opened for his people—doors of previously whites-only schools and hospitals and restaurants and other places where segregation barred anyone with African ancestry.


But my troubling question on MLK Day was triggered by the other side of the coin. Today we are indeed a racially mixed culture. Surely that was part of "the dream." But in far too many ways, that famous dream has morphed into a nightmare.

Had Dr. King survived, how do you think he would feel today about the widespread disintegration of the black family? Surely he would be heartsick to learn that in many urban neighborhoods, 70 percent of

the black children have no idea who their father is. Or that in too many of our big-city schools only a handful of black students can spell or do simple arithmetic. Black family structure and schools often were far better before the King dream.

Being a Baptist pastor, what would Dr. King say today about the shift of so many of his constituents from faith to secularism, from church involvement and Bible morality to lives devoted to pleasure and indulgence? Surely this is not what he dreamed of.

In a time when society was splintered by racial and economic divisions, the apostle Paul also had a dream: that all humanity could be one in Jesus. "It doesn't matter if you are a Greek or a Jew," he told the church. "Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us" (Colossians 3:11 CEV).

When we are baptized into Christ, all racial and social barriers should vanish. "Faith in Christ Jesus is what makes each of you equal with each other, whether you are a Jew or a Greek, a slave or a free person, a man or a woman," Paul wrote (Galatians 3:28 CEV). "All of you are God's children because of your faith in Christ Jesus." That is heaven's dream. 

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## *The Power of a Name*

I wouldn't call him my idol or my hero, but from the first time I saw him as Hawkeye Pierce in *M\*A\*S\*H* back in the 1970s, Alan Alda hit the top of my list of talented actors. Little did I know how many other television shows and movies he would show up in or how many top awards he would be nominated for. Suffice it to say, he's been one of the best.

I remind you of all of this, realizing that many of my younger readers right now probably are saying, "Alan Who?" just as the brat on a recent TV comedy responded to his father's mention of John Wayne by blurting out, "Who?"

Alda's performances had entertained me so much that, unlike many Hollywood stars whose names turn me off, his moniker became a sort of magic for me.

Early in the 1990s my lady and I enjoyed a lazy week roaming around London. Somehow we learned that cheap folks like us could purchase last-minute half-price stage show tickets from a broker in Leicester Square. The only catch was that you had to buy leftover tickets for seats that were still empty right before a show began.

At first glance, none of the show names piqued my interest. Then I spotted the listing of Alan Alda in the leading role in *Our Town*. Snatching up two tickets for good seats, Nita and I hurried to see Alda perform on the stage at Shaftesbury Theater. He was just as good as I remembered and even more winsome face-to-face than he was on TV. That day he provided us a grand afternoon.

Just seeing Alda's name several months ago in DJ Stubben's daily happy birthday list triggered all these memories. Of course, his name isn't the only one that does this. If you're like most of us in our final decades, you spend half of every day trying to remember somebody's name. But, despite our lagging recall faculties, just hearing the name of an old coach, a long-ago boss, a former pastor, or a childhood friend can unleash floods of memories.

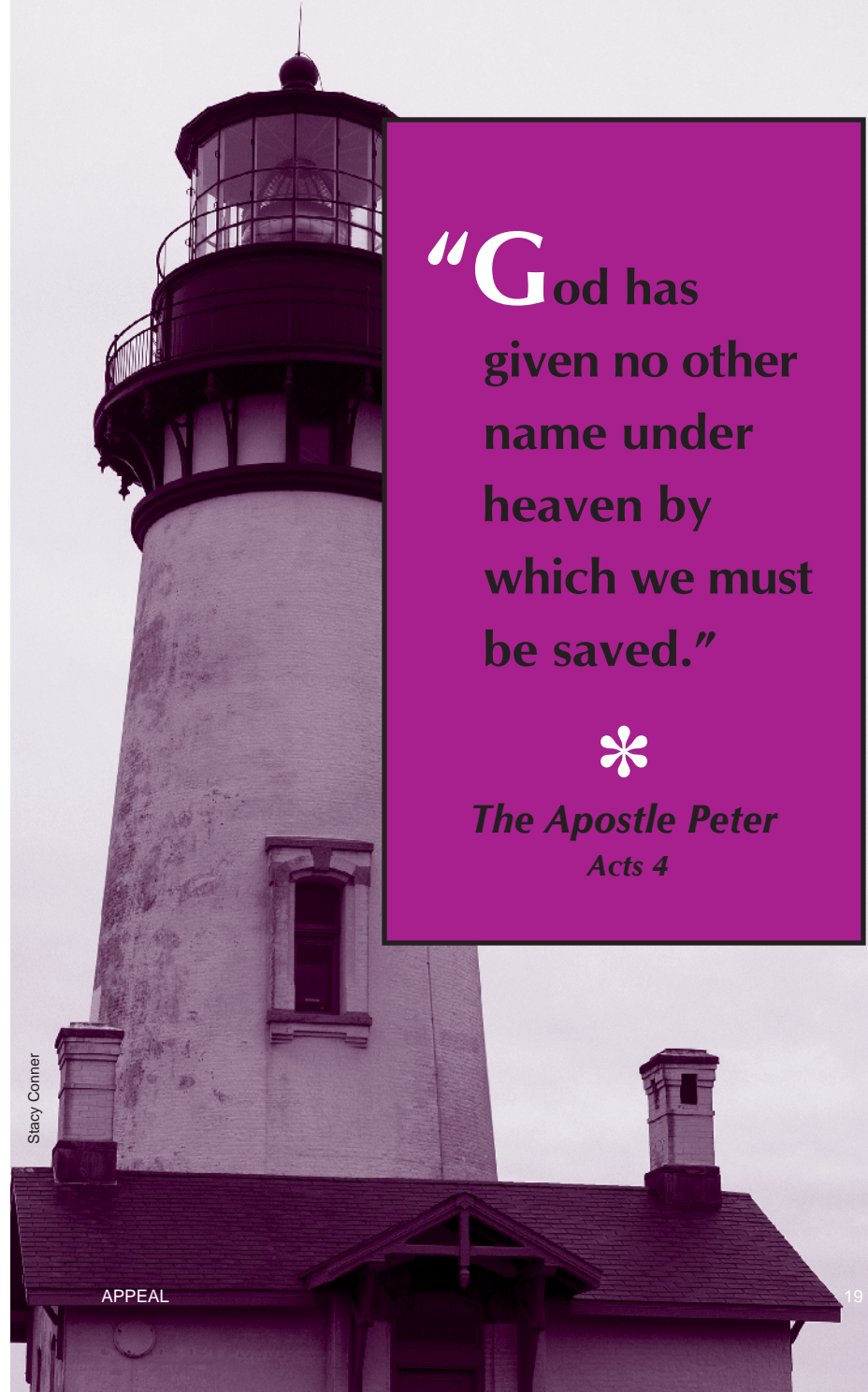
Names from the past can do that to us, but none of them can touch our hearts and bless our souls more than the simple name of Jesus. As the Bible tells us, "There is no other name by which we can be saved."

CA

**"God has  
given no other  
name under  
heaven by  
which we must  
be saved."**



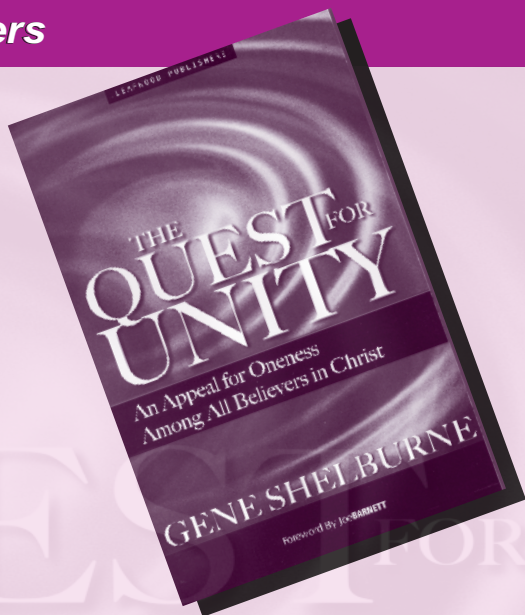
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