

Ministers:  
the congregation

Kenny Chumbley  
217.493.8905

Sunday:  
8:00 AM: WGCY  
9:00 AM: Worship

Wednesday:  
7:00 PM: Bible Study

[gibsoncitychurchof  
Christ.com](http://gibsoncitychurchofchrist.com)

**This Past Week:**  
Worship—32  
Wednesday—14  
Contribution—\$1255

**For meditation:**  
Proverbs 24.21–25  
What does this  
passage teach  
about a believer's  
political obligation?

**Radio program:**  
WGCY FM, 106.3  
Sundays at 8 AM

## *The Giant of Despair*

John Bunyan (1628–1688) was a tinker turned preacher who spent twelve years in prison for preaching without the permission of the Church of England. During this time he wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*, which is considered the greatest allegory ever penned. (An *allegory* is a story with a moral, wherein the characters are often personifications of qualities.) The hero of the story is a fellow named Christian, who faces many dangers and adventures on his way to the Celestial City. One of his more memorable encounters was with a villain called Giant Despair.

Unknowingly, Christian and his companion, Hopeful, spent a night sleeping on the property of Doubting Castle, which was owned by Giant Despair. When the giant went out for his morning stroll, he came upon Christian and Hopeful and threw them in the dungeon for trespassing. Every morning, the giant would go to the dungeon and beat the two intruders without mercy. After being beaten, Christian and Hopeful would spend the rest of the day sighing and lamenting their misery.

One morning, Christian realized he had on him a key that could unlock the dungeon door and allow him and Hopeful to escape. The key was called "Promise," and sure enough, it unlocked every door that stood between the two pilgrims and freedom.

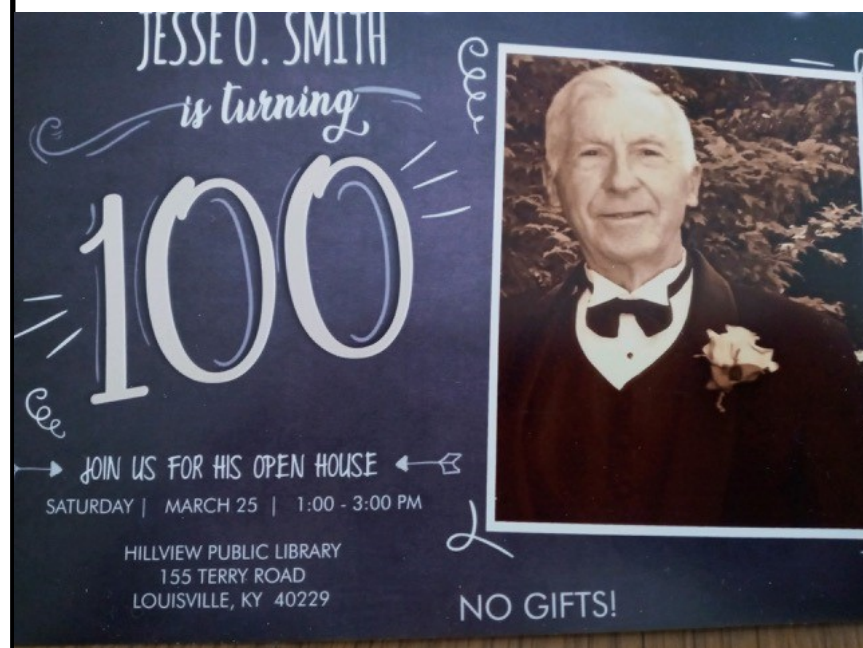
Do you see yourself in this story? Is despair beating you mercilessly? If so, remember *the exceedingly great and precious promises of God* (2 Pet. 1.4) for it is by these that you defeat despair and anxiety. Standing on the promises of God sets us free. "Why are you cast down, O my soul? . . . Hope in God" (Ps. 42.11).

kenny

# Gibson City church of Christ

Highway 47 South, Gibson City, IL

## J.O. Smith Fern Creek, Kentucky



I've known some great men in my life, and one of the greatest is J.O. Smith of Fern Creek (Louisville), Kentucky. When I began preaching at the Oak Grove church in 1974, J.O. was a pillar of the church, and still is. We lived near each other, and I saw him and his wife, Geneva, regularly. They don't make them like J.O. anymore. God enabling, I'll watch him blow out 100 candles come March.

Sermon: John 1.14

## We beheld His glory, part 2

5 February 2023

## *There are times to have a good time*

Mark 2.18–22

One of the problems the Jews had with Jesus was that He didn't act like a religious person should. An example of this involved fasting. In the Law of Moses, God ordained one fast a year on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23.27); in the time of Christ, the Pharisees were noted for fasting twice a week (Lk. 18.12).

There's no evidence Christ observed this tradition. This was scandalous to the Jews and proved a difficulty for some disciples of John the Baptist (Matt. 9.14). "Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" In answer, Jesus gave some illustrations involving weddings, patches, and wineskins that justified His practice, without condemning the practice of John's disciples or the Pharisees.

This incident with deals with—what I'm going to call—*individual worship*. God mandated one fast each year, and any fasting beyond that was left to the individual to determine within certain guidelines. I'll try to call attention to some of these parameters.

### **INDIVIDUAL WORSHIP SHOULD BE CONGRUENT**

It should fit the occasion. "Why don't you fast?" Christ was asked. "Because I'm here for a wedding!" He answered; weddings are times for feasting not fasting (Matt. 22.4)! "I don't fast for the same reason unshrunk cloth isn't used to patch shrunken bluejeans and fresh grape juice isn't put into skins with residue from previous juice that could precipitate fermentation. There are some things you just don't do." There are times when fasting isn't religious but ridiculous.

### **INDIVIDUAL WORSHIP SHOULD BE GENUINE**

Valentine's Day is the time to give valentines, but women only want them if they are heartfelt. Similarly, an act of worship should be the expression of a worshipful spirit; a worshipful act should express a worshipful attitude. "Saying your prayers" is not the same as praying (Jas. 5.17). Fasting helps the soul focus on spiritual concerns, and it's probably a virtue that could stand more emphasis in our lives, but an act of consecration should flow from a consecrated heart. "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises" (Jas. 5.13). "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord" (Ps. 19.14).

### **INDIVIDUAL WORSHIP SHOULD BE WITHOUT HYPOCRISY**

When an act of worship becomes routine, it lends itself to showing off (Matt. 6.16–18) and self-promotion. "The bottom line on your 'fast days' is profit. You drive your employees much too hard. You fast, but at the same time you bicker and fight. You fast, but you swing a mean fist. The kind of fasting you do won't get your prayers off the ground. Do you think this is the kind of fast day I'm after: a day to show off humility? To put on a pious long face and parade around solemnly in black? Do you call *that* fasting, a fast day that I, GOD, would like?" (Isa. 58.3–5, Peterson). The kind of fasting God looks for is that which leads to justice, forgiveness, and mercy (Isa. 58.6–9).

When it's time to have a good time, have a good time; when your heart feels deep emotion, express it and never allow hypocrisy to take advantage of the liberty God allows in individual worship (Rom. 14).

kenny

## *Silent prayer banned in England*

Back in December, Isabel Vaughan Spruce, Birmingham, England, was arrested for silently praying across the street from an abortion clinic, underscoring the fact that pro-life supporters in the United Kingdom are regularly vilified and attacked. This is what happens when God is removed from society: life becomes incredibly cheap.

In a papyrus found by archaeologists was this letter from a husband to his wife: "Hilarian to Alis: Greetings. Know that we are still even now in Alexandria. I beseech you, take care of the little child, and as soon as we have our wages I will send you something. When you are delivered, if it is a male let it live, *if a female cast it out*." Child exposure, infanticide, and euthanasia (killing the elderly when they became a burden) were common practices among the pagans; these practices have become common among us.

What's happened in England is coming here; before long, we can be guilty of committing a crime just for praying in our heads.

Herod the Great had nothing on our evil secularists (Matt. 2.16).

### *News about us*

- Please pay attention to the announcements when we mention all in the congregation dealing with health issues who are in special need of prayer.