



## THE NAME OF OUR NEWSLETTER

Once a person has died without believing Christ's message of life, it is too late. An electrocardiogram depicts the beating heart as a lifeline. We superimpose such a lifeline over the title: Lifeline. This is a reminder that our lost and dying world needs the message of life while their hearts are beating. This is the first meaning of Lifeline.

What is the second meaning? A rope with a life-

preserver can prevent someone who goes overboard from drowning. Such a device could be called a Lifeline. John's Gospel is designed to prevent the unbeliever from dying eternally. It is a Lifeline for a lost and dying world.

The title Lifeline is a reminder that we cannot wait an eternity to share the one message that truly saves lives. We must share the life-saving message with people while their hearts are beating. Anything else is too little and too late.

## MARTHA IN JOHN 11

On March 29, I spoke on John 11 at Victor Street Bible Chapel in Dallas, TX. Geography clarifies Martha's discussion with Jesus after Lazarus died. Many view Martha complaining about Jesus not arriving until four days after Lazarus' burial. Under the traditional view of the geography, Jesus was only one day's travel away, so a complaint would be understandable. If the traditional view is wrong, Martha's words take on a new meaning.

Although both the Majority Text and Critical Text of John 1:28 read Bethany (versus Bethabara in the Textus Receptus), most interpreters assume that Bethany beyond the Jordan equals Bethabara. No archaeological evidence supports the assumption.

Bethabara is so close to Jerusalem that it creates

a chronological problem in John 10–11 (John 10:40 says Jesus returned to the place where John first baptized (Bethany beyond the Jordan). Similarly, Bethabara is so far from Cana of Galilee that it also creates a chronological problem in John 1–2. A location further north solves both problems.



*Dinner Fellowship with People from Victor Street Bible Chapel*

Scholarly research has yielded a much better solution than equating Bethany beyond the Jordan with Bethabara. It is to regard that Bethany as equivalent to Batanea (a region east of the Jordan near the Sea of Galilee). Using phonetic Aramaic, Lazarus lived in *Bētania*, while Jesus was in *Batania*. The semblance is striking.

If Jesus were in Batanea (John 10:40), He received word in John 11:3 that Lazarus was sick, but remained two days before leaving (11:6).

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He arrived four days after the burial of Lazarus (11:39). Batanea to Bethany (near Jerusalem) is a three-day trip.

Even if Jesus had left immediately, he still would reach Bethany after Lazarus died. Jesus sent word ahead (11:4), but it was after Lazarus died that His message reached the sisters: *This sickness will not end in death, but is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.* They must have wondered, *Does Jesus plan to raise our dead brother?* Jesus refers to 11:4 in verse 40, *Didn't I tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?* His message that the sickness would not end in death predicted the raising of Lazarus.

John 11:20 says that Martha hurried to meet Jesus, not waiting for Him to come into town. When she said (verse 21), *Lord, if You had been here, my brother wouldn't have died,* she was not complaining that He shouldn't have delayed. (Even if He had left immediately, Lazarus would have died before Jesus arrived). Rather, she is affirming her belief that Jesus has power of life over death. In verse 22, she affirms that God will answer Jesus' prayer (to raise Lazarus). This is not a complaint. In verse 24, she affirms that she knows that Lazarus will rise again. What a travesty to see her words as complaint, rather than as affirming her faith! How wonderful is her simple faith that Jesus the Christ is the resurrector and grantor of everlasting life!



## MINISTRY IN SAN DIEGO

On February 2, Dr. Brian Moulton, a classmate from Dallas who teaches at San Diego Christian College, invited me to address honors students there at the Honors Forum. My paper was: "Is John's Gospel Anti-Semitic?" Of course, John is not, even though many interpreters seek to portray him in such a light.

Brian is also Vice President of the Far West Region of ETS (Evangelical Theological Society). He asked me to present the same paper at the April 17 ETS regional meeting at SDCC.

God is definitely pro-Israel. This does not mean that Israel can do no wrong. To imagine that would be to ignore God rebuking the nation throughout Scripture. At the same time, though, God made eternal and irrevocable promises to Abram in Genesis (We are considering these promises in the Genesis series).

John's Gospel presents Jesus as God's Son, Israel's life-giving Messiah, the Savior of the world, and the crucified Lamb of God. In the course of time, God will fulfill all the promises to Israel when Jesus sits on His Millennial throne. John's Gospel must be understood as a book that is definitely pro-Israel.

God promises to bless those who bless Abraham (and his people), but to curse the one who curses him (Genesis 12:3). Israel has few friends in this world and they live in a rough neighborhood. Some who live in its neighborhood are willing to use any weapons they might acquire to push Israel into the sea. In the Middle East, Theodore Roosevelt's words describe the type of friend America has been and should be. Such a friend would "speak softly and carry a big stick." It is dangerous to over-emphasize the speaking and to de-emphasize the size of the stick. Israel can use some strong friends with big sticks and she especially needs the Lord.



## WRITING

An article of mine appeared in a newsletter of Grace Evangelical Society (*Grace in Focus*) November–December 2008. The title is: "Who Is Able to Guarantee Everlasting Life?" Much controversy has arisen over the degree to which a person must believingly

comprehend the deity of Jesus Christ in order to receive everlasting life. This article makes explicit an assumption underlying my previous writings on John. The clarification has prompted a positive response. Some refreshingly productive dialog has opened up as a result. May God receive the glory.

Now that the series on John's Gospel at Grace

Chapel is complete, we are in preliminary stages for making a brief commentary on the Gospel of John. The standpoint of this will be a guide to the exposition of the book. The idea is to make believers comfortable with John, so they will use the book to acquaint people

with Jesus Christ, God's Son, who grants everlasting life to those who believe in Him for everlasting life.

The project to publish my doctoral dissertation is temporarily on the back burner. Another writing project has taken priority. Details will follow.



## THE GES NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND A FAMILY MILESTONE

This spring was busy. I spoke twice at Victor Street Bible Chapel on March 29 and presented a main session and two workshops at GES. Each message was well received. It was a wonderful time to meet up with long-time friends and to make new ones.

While in Texas, I went to Longview and LeTourneau University. Seeing Dale Hardy is normally part of any trip to Longview, but he was on a missions trip to Nome, Alaska. While there, he did two things that warm my heart (as a southerner, he was freezing up there). 1. He passed out Living Waters and gave a



*Dale Hardy on right*

quantity to a local church up there. 2. He took pictures of the LeTourneau Snow Train, a one-of-a-kind machine. It is wonderful to see believers sharing the message of life.



## A FAMILY PROJECT

All four members of our household are getting into better shape. Years behind a desk or in the college classroom have caused each of us to put on weight. We all embarked on this journey at the end of December 2008 and are still making progress. Next week Diane and I begin our July road trip. Maintaining

an exercise program and watching what we eat is always harder when traveling, but we will seek to make wise decisions on the trip. The regimen will begin anew when we arrive home again. We feel great and are ready to spread the message of life throughout the land. 2009 may be a tough time for many, but it is also a golden opportunity for God and His word. May God give us the strength to proclaim His grace far and wide.

### Lifeline

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Lifeline is Message of Life Ministries' free newsletter. To subscribe, contact us through our e-mail address ([john@mol316.com](mailto:john@mol316.com)) or send your contact information to: 8111 Stanford Ave #97 Garden Grove, CA 92841



For more information on Message of Life Ministries, visit our website at [www.mol316.com](http://www.mol316.com). Our website archives John Niemelä's sermons and publications.

## OUR TRAVEL ITINERARY

Details are pending on some other speaking engagements. We will post updates and additions on our website as they become available.

**July 12:** Grace Christian Church, Kendallville, IN

**July 16:** Thursday evening home Bible class, Faith Bible Church, Sterling, VA

**July 23:** Thursday evening, Tabernacle Baptist Church, George, IA

**July 24–25:** GES regional conference, Omaha, NE

**July 26:** Believers' Bible Church, Omaha, NE

**August 10–21:** Rocky Mountain Bible College and Seminary

**Module:** Critical Issues in John's Gospel

**August 16:** Northeast Bible Chapel, Colorado Springs, CO (morning & evening)

**August 24:** Denver Rescue Mission (with the staff)

**October 11:** Lakeland Bible Church, Auburn, WA

**October 12–14:** Spokane Bible Church fall conference, Spokane, WA

**October 18:** Bremerton Evangelical Covenant Church, Bremerton, WA

**November 15:** Coast Bible Church, San Juan Capistrano, CA

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*“Let the wicked forsake his way,  
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
Let him return to the LORD,  
And He will have mercy on him;  
And to our God,  
For He will abundantly pardon.  
For My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
Nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD.  
“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are My ways higher than your ways,  
And My thoughts than your thoughts.  
For as the rain comes down,  
and the snow from heaven,  
And do not return there,  
But water the earth,  
And make it bring forth and bud,  
That it may give seed to the sower  
And bread to the eater,  
So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth;  
It shall not return to Me void,  
But it shall accomplish what I please,  
And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”*

— Isaiah 55:7–11 (NKJV)

**G**reetings from the Desk of Dr. Niemelä:

Imagine that Jesus Christ stopped today at a publisher to obtain a pocket-sized book. Further, imagine with me that He planned to give it to someone who does not yet believe in Him. Out of the millions of published booklets, which would He choose?

Certainly He would favor inspired Scripture over any tract, no matter how fine some might be. But, which biblical book would He choose? It would certainly be John's Gospel, because John 20:31 tells us that it was written to people who did not yet believe and who did not yet have everlasting life: *These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.* It is the book designed for unbelievers.

Our objective at Message of Life Ministries is to equip believers to share Jesus' message of life (John's Gospel) with a lost and dying world. We seek to give them the very best.

*By His Grace,  
John Niemelä, Researcher  
Message of Life Ministries*