

## Rely on Scripture, not "The Bible"

The answers to life's most difficult, probing questions are recorded. In a world where truth exists, it must be so. Otherwise, truth merely rolls and dips with human opinion, making it no longer truth. The nature of truth demands objectivity, a rising above human caprice. Besides this, truth must be investigable and understandable by the beings for whose sake it exists. And it must come from God, Who alone knows all truth.

I believe Scripture to be the touchstone of truth. I'm talking about *Scripture* now, not the many-versioned, faultily-translated thing we call "the Bible." I'm talking about what God wrote.



Whenever I mention my trust of God's Word, some folks are strangely tempted to shelve my opinion. "Oh, he's another religious hypocrite, a Bible-thumper." It is understandable. The Christian religion has so misrepresented God and His writing that many have chucked everything with Christian fingerprints upon it.

Yet I tell you this: you must believe in God, in spite of what the clergy say. Forget the clergy. If you want to know what GOD said, get yourself a copy of the Concordant Literal New Testament ([www.studyshef.com](http://www.studyshef.com).)

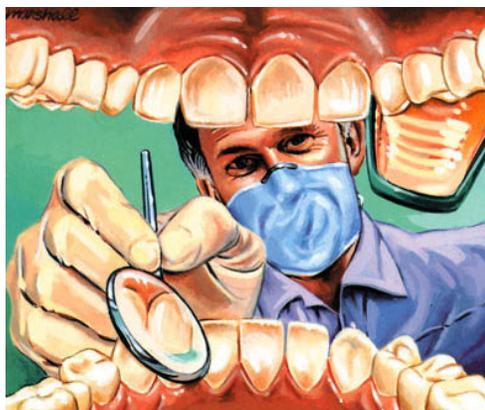
# Martin Zender's Clanging Gong News

"If I know all mysteries and all knowledge, but have no love, I am a clanging gong" --1 Cor. 13:1-2



Two out of three isn't bad.

## God gives evil to humble humanity Ecc. 1:13



Before I go to bed every night I have to brush my teeth. But I'm getting ahead of myself. First I have to take a plastic stick with a small brush attached to one end and poke it underneath my bridgework.

I needed bridgework because half of one of my molars rotted. I don't know how that happened. As a kid, I brushed twice a day with Crest. Crest is the toothpaste that's supposed to fight cavities. The Packers were also supposed to beat the Broncos in Super Bowl XXXII.

Thinking back now, my mom raised my sister and me on Kool-Aid, Captain Crunch, Oreos, Twinkies, Coca-Cola and Pop Tarts. She was trying to do her best for us. But then we found out that sugar caused cavities. This was a sobering discovery at my house. Naturally, we bought an electric toothbrush.

So my dentist decided he would cut the tooth in half, put a full crown over it, then join the crown to the tooth next to it, which also needed a crown. "I'll make a *double* crown!" crowed my dentist. His excitement was contagious, but I was immune to it.

But then my dentist remarked that I would no longer have a space between these two molars.

"You realize the implications of this," he said.

"Yes I do," I said importantly. "But I've forgotten them."

"You simply won't be able to floss in there," he said.

### —and something tells me it's working

"Oh yes," I lied, "I remember now."

I didn't have the heart to tell my dentist that I had forgotten to floss after my afternoon Subway sandwich, but judging from the way he and his hygienist were donning fire helmets with plastic face masks, I guessed that my secret was already out.

My dentist reached over to a small table covered with x-rays and folders from Manila and produced an instrument that looked like a plastic stick with a small brush attached to one end.

He drew himself to his full import. "*This*," he said, "is a plastic stick with a small brush attached to one end. This will be our number one weapon against the enemy. You *do* know what the enemy is, don't you?"

I was afraid to admit to him that I didn't know what the enemy was. But I had already let my stupidity slip once by forgetting the implications of not having a space between my molars, so I was not about to let it slip again.

### I drew myself to full import. "Yes," I said. "The enemy is Oreos."

Besides, now that I thought about it, I was pretty sure that I did know what the enemy was.

I drew myself to my full import. "Yes," I said. "The enemy is Oreos."

My dentist and his hygienist laughed so hard that they had to clean out the insides of their fire masks with paper towels.

"No, silly!" This was my dentist. He giggled while saying "silly," then tossed his balled-up towel across the room where it bounced off the metallic lid of a foot-activated waste can. "The enemy isn't Oreos. It's *bacteria*."

I looked him straight in the nose hairs. "You're *kidding*," I said importantly.

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“No, sir, I am *not* kidding. Bacteria will grow there, as sure as you’re lying here on your back with your hands folded tensely over your belt buckle. Bacteria will *love* the situation that is about to develop between your two molars. You see, Martin, by the time I’m finished with you, there will be a dark, wet area in your mouth that will be unreachable by floss.”

“Do women like that sort of thing?”

This question irritated my dentist, and I was sorry I’d asked it. “Are you even listening to what I’m saying? You’re going to need this special brush to get under that bridge and disturb things. You can’t let the bacteria get in there and set up shop.”



“Is the special brush free, or do I have to pay for it?”

My dentist and his assistant sighed so hard into their plastic face masks that they had to engage three room vents, just to see.

I submitted to the procedure a week later and went home with my little brush. I was determined to get in there and disturb things so that the bacteria couldn’t set up shop. So when the bacteria started setting up shop, that’s just what I did. I got in there with my little bristle-coated wrecking ball. I wrecked everything the bacteria strove for, including their shop. I nipped them in their buds. And bacteria do have buds; I saw them on my dentist’s wall poster.

Now that I’ve poked my black hole, *now* can I go to bed? Not a chance. Now I have to floss.

The hygienist was the one who demonstrated flossing for me. She stood over me and snapped on her la-

tex gloves. Her gloves were very tight in that they hugged her hand flesh so that her nails showed through them. “The better to floss you with!” she said ominously.

Now came three football fields worth of dental floss whizzing from a dispenser. The hygienist whacked off the final yard with a flourish that made the end of the floss crack like a whip.

“Turn toward me and stare at my make-up!” she commanded.

I did it, believe me.

The hygienist shoved both of her gloved hands into my mouth. I don’t understand how she did this, but neither do I understand how pythons swallow pigs. At this time, the hygienist asked me about my summer vacation. I tried to talk, but it sounded like, “AHH-Yaa-Kwuuf.” Her hands were wedged so tightly into my mouth that my dentist chuckled later (giggled, actually): “I could see the outlines of her knuckles on your cheeks. And I never did hear where you went on vacation. *Aruba*, did you say?”

“The Cincinnati Zoo.”

I lost some blood, and there was so much food on the hygienist’s plastic face mask that I asked for a doggie bag. But, by God, I learned how to floss.

Now can I go to bed? No. I still haven’t *brushed* my teeth.

“What kind of bristles do you use?” my dentist asked.

“Long ones.”

There was an uncomfortable silence, serenaded by an instrumental version of *Volaré* and the sigh of my dentist.

“No,” he said, “I mean, hard or soft?”

“Hard.”

My dentist reacted as though I had just set fire to his Porsche.

“Great God!” He reached over to a small table covered with x-rays and folders from Manila and produced an instrument that looked like a toothbrush with soft bristles.

“Try this, King Kong. You’ve got to be *gentle* with your teeth. You treat them right, they’ll treat you right. Fair deal? After all, they’re the only teeth you’ll ever have.”

I wanted to say, “Thank God!” I wanted to say, “Yank them all out, and let me go home.” That’s what I *wanted* to say. Instead I said, “Thank you, Doctor,”



and immediately submitted to three minutes of brushing instruction from the woman I now addressed as “Miss Sheila.”

Now I can go to bed? On some other planet, yes. But I’m stuck on Earth. Now I have to gargle.

“You must use *Listerine*,” Miss Sheila had instructed me. In her grandness (which was unquestionably due her), Miss Sheila imagined that everyone could afford name-brand mouthwash.

“And do *not*,” Miss Sheila warned, “let me catch you using one of those Listerine imitation gargles!”

“No, Miss Sheila!”

“I know how tempting it will be to reach for the generic product,” she hissed. “But you must resist the temptation! Mr. Lister worked very, very hard on the formula of Listerine, and those ingredients are there for a reason. *Aren’t* they!”

“Yes, Miss Sheila!”

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# Rants & Stuff

The Apostle Paul says we should not murmur (Philippians 2:14). Therefore, I shall rant.



## “Minor” irritants work major evil

A psychologist once noted that human beings more readily cope with major disasters than with the hundreds of thousand of everyday irritants that conspire en masse to crush them. When your house burns down, or when you’re stuck in a hospital, there is great stress. But family and friends rally around you. They send you cards, bring you food and hug you. Normally, something deep within the human fights back and the human spirit conquers.

But who hugs you when you can’t find your checkbook? When you can’t find your car keys for the third time in one day, who touches your back softly? Who sends you a card when you can’t undo the twist-tie on the bread wrapper? Who brings you food when you have to clean your teeth for the sixteen-thousandth time, just to stay even with seven strains of bacteria? No one. Even if they did, the food would probably contain sugar. Since most of the irritants in life are minor, the mind underestimates them. No alarm goes off, as would happen with major trauma. So the mind just takes it. Jesus said in Matthew 6:34—“**Sufficient for the day is its own evil.**”

Obviously, Jesus wasn’t talking about major disasters. Why? Because these don’t hit us by the day. He was talking about the little things that gang up on us. He was talking about everything with a pull-start. Are you going crazy? You deserve to. The “little” things in this life that pummel you are legitimate evils, and Jesus recognized them as “sufficient.” Don’t downplay them! Give them all to God, and realize that even the little experiences of evil (or perhaps *especially* them), are given you by God to humble you (Eccl. 1:13). It works! ■

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But Jesus help me, I disobeyed her. I went to K-Mart and gasped at the price of Listerine. I gasped so loudly that children shopping nearby for bubble-gum-flavored toothpaste ran with alarmed expressions toward their mothers. Then I saw a product called American Fare® Antiseptic Mouth Rinse. It was green, just like Listerine. Better yet, at the bottom of the two-liter jug were reader-friendly instructions that said, “Compare to active ingredients of Listerine®.”

Thank you, Jesus. Finally, here were orders I was eager to obey.

I now list the ingredients of American Fare® Antiseptic Mouth Rinse:



“Thymol 0.064%, Eucalyptol 0.092%, Methyl Salicylate 0.060% and Menthol 0.042%. Also contains: Water, Alcohol 21.6%, Sorbitol Solution, Poloxamer 407, Benzoic Acid, Flavoring, Sodium Saccharin, Sodium Citrate, Citric Acid, D&C Yellow #10 and FD&C Green #3.”

Compare these ingredients to Listerine® for yourself. You will find that they are precisely the same ingredients. And I mean, *precisely*, right down to FD&C Green #3. I couldn’t believe it. Best of all, the generic product was about three dollars cheaper than the name-brand one. I knew that Mistress Sheila would understand. (But just in case she wouldn’t, I never told her.)

Now my oral hygiene is complete. I have 1) run my bristled poker in and out

of my bridge, 2) flossed with such intensity that I have hurt myself, 3) brushed my teeth with kinder, gentler bristles, and 4) have now rinsed my mouth with so much American Fare® Antiseptic Mouth Rinse (compare to active ingredients of Listerine®), that all my taste buds are floating down the Vermilion River toward Fitchville.

Finally, it is time for romance. I saunter into the bedroom, my mouth literally aglow with minty desire. My long absence has heightened my wife’s anticipation for a kiss, no doubt. I move toward her for such an enterprise, but notice that a small puddle of drool has collected on the girl’s chin.

My wife, tired of waiting on my dental dilly-dallying, has fallen asleep.

I return to the bathroom. There is a 1-800 number on the back of my American Fare® Antiseptic Mouth Rinse bottle. The number is for those who are “not satisfied.”

But what do you say to a stranger in Troy, Michigan at 12:17 a.m. when you’re tired of living? ■