

Choose Life

Practical Bible  
Study for the 21st  
Century Christian

Keep Yourself  
in the Love of God

The Samaritans and  
the *Other* Pentateuch

Never Take Someone  
for Granted

The Paradoxical  
Bipolarity of the  
Restoration Movement

Tabernacle Shadows

Seasoning Our Words

Jesus, the Cross, and  
Spiritual Death

Dealing with Life's  
Interruptions

Destruction of Tyre

Bearing the Marks  
of Jesus Christ

Lifted Up

# The Quarterly

Vol. 4, No. 1



***SHARING THE LIGHT***  
EVANGELISM IDEAS  
THAT WORK





**Pray4Ruby.com**

**Ruby Bradd**, 3 years old, is fighting neuroblastoma. Join the thousands of faithful Christians across the country praying for this sweet, little girl and her family. For information and updates, and to send encouragement, go to **Pray4Ruby.com**

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# The Quarterly

Volume 4 – Number 1

January 2020

## LOOKING AT EVANGELISM

If you're reading this, you know that evangelism is perhaps the biggest issue facing the church today—because we simply aren't doing it. At least, not much. This issue of *The Quarterly* aims to help in reversing that trend. We have several articles that give ideas *that work* if you will put them into practice. Some might not be anything you've considered before ("Enthusiasm Evangelism" for example), while others help reinforce the tried and true methods that have worked for generations. We highly recommend you take a look, and when you're done, let us know what you think. Are there other areas that you'd like to see articles on?

Last year, we had two writers submit articles dealing with abortion. Both were excellent, but due to space, we couldn't publish both of them in the same issue. So Travis Anderson's article "Choose Life" is in this one.

We are happy to welcome some new writers to the pages of *The Quarterly*: Daniel Richardson brings his years of military experience to the table as he discusses being "Fit for God's Army." Mark Bass (a dear friend who has been preaching almost as long as I've been alive) gives the numbers and importance of spreading the gospel in "Evangelism that Works." Jason Floyd shows the importance of congregational events and how they can be used to bring others to Christ in "Connection Ministry." Stephane Maillet (pronounced Stefan My-ay) shares his expertise in Digital Evangelism. These are all worth your time and consideration.

I would also ask that you take the time to check out Devin Self's article on the importance of examining what is taught, and "Never Take Someone for Granted."

Richard Mansel gives an interesting look at the prophecy and fulfillment of the destruction of Tyre. Gerald Cowan encourages us to bear the Marks of Christ in our lives.

I could say so much more, but I'm out of room—and the more I write, the longer it takes for you to get to the articles!

*The articles contained in each issue represent the research and conclusions of the authors, and may not reflect the views of the other authors (or even the editor). But they are presented for contemplation by Christians who are dedicated to living for the one true God of heaven*

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(AKA: The Contents of the Quarterly)

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# Real Thankfulness

*An Editorial by Bradley S. Cobb*

It's amazing how shallow and cheap thankfulness is today. As the person on the street, "What are you thankful for?" and they will likely rattle off several things. Maybe it's family, or job, housing, health, etc. It doesn't matter if that person is Christian or Atheist, Buddhist or Hindu—they can (and most likely will) give you at least a few ideas of what they are thankful for.

But the big question that never seems to be asked—or even considered—is this: "Okay, you're thankful for these things, which is great—but what are you thankful *to*?" Just that one word, that change of a small little preposition, changes the whole discussion. Why? Because it isn't *real* thankfulness until it is addressed and expressed.

Hear that again: It isn't *real* thankfulness until it is addressed and expressed.

Take a look with me at Luke 17:11-19.

## *The Setting*

Jesus is heading to Jerusalem (possibly for the last time), and He's got a strange crew of disciples (17:1), apostles (17:5), and Pharisees (17:20) following Him around.

As part of the journey, He walks near the border area of Samaria and Galilee—neither of which had the best reputation among the "real" followers of God. Remember the amazement of the Jews when *Galileans* began speaking in foreign languages, and preaching in the temple? (Acts 2:7). Remember the time when the Pharisees hurled the insulting epitaph, *You are a Samaritan*, at Him? (John 8:48). You can be sure that the Pharisees weren't too happy to be in this area—they usually made it a point to cross over a river (twice) and spend several more hours walking on the journey from Judea to Galilee, just to avoid walking through Samaria.

So, other than for Jesus, this wasn't a comfortable excursion.

Maybe some of you have a class of people, a type of people you don't want to reach, don't want to talk to, don't want to help. Maybe you've written them off as a Samaritan. Maybe it's because they've been on drugs (or still are), or maybe it's because they struggle financially and have needs they need help with. Maybe their clothes are tatty and worn, or they have tattoos, or they're black, or Latino, or Republican or Democrat, young or old, atheist or Pentecostal. And maybe you've convinced yourself that it's okay.

Jesse and a friend one time attended worship in Columbia, Missouri. The class discussed reaching people with problems (drugs and prison history), and one woman admitted, "I don't want to deal with them because I'm afraid they will need more of my time than I'm willing to give."

But Jesus worked hard, both in His teachings (the good Samaritan) and His actions (see the woman at the well in John 4) to humanize, to elevate the Samaritans as being worth reaching, worth the time it takes to engage them. In other words, Samaritan lives matter. Are there types of people you have written off as unworthy of the gospel? Jesus says their lives—and souls—matter too!

## *The Request*

If being that close to Samaria wasn't bad enough, things got even more uncomfortable. *Lepers! Ten of them!* Ten men with a flesh-eating disease, bodies gnarled and misshapen, faces unrecognizable, unable to interact with normal society, stood at a distance and called out in a harsh squeaky voice,<sup>1</sup> "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

These men felt the crushing weight of oppression. This disease mocked them. It said, "You aren't worthy to come to the city. You can't live near *real* people. You can't worship with the *real* followers of God." They felt this loss, this shame—brought on through no fault of their own—day after day after day after day after day... And instead of pity and help, they usually received a cold should of indifference from people they saw

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<sup>1</sup> "...the lepers' bronchial tubes are dry and the voice is high and squeaky." J.W. McGarvey, *Fourfold Gospel*, p. 530.

at a distance.

But then they saw Jesus. A crowd around Him, yes, but they saw Jesus. They cried out with that barely-human voice, “Master, have mercy on us!”<sup>2</sup>

Why didn’t they address the apostles? After all, these twelve men had been given the power to heal lepers (Matthew 10:8). So why not call for *their* help? Maybe they had heard that some of the apostles wanted Jesus to obliterate an entire Samaritan village with fire from heaven (Luke 9:51-56). That could really undermine their influence, right?

Maybe you’ve let your tongue get out of control and killed your influence and credibility with some people. Maybe it was a racist joke, a harsh attitude, or just a cold shoulder of indifference. What might it be that causes people to *not* want to talk to you about their hurts, problems, and needs?

See, Jesus was well known as someone who helped people. These lepers knew that if they were going to get mercy, sympathy, and help from anyone, it would be Jesus—He has proven it over and over again. He cared then and cares now for the marginalized, the oppressed, the forgotten, the ignored. He takes the time to show they are important to Him.

### ***The Answer***

Jesus responds to these hurting and ostracized men with compassion and a command. Now don’t let this fact get by you. Jesus told them to “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” *And when they acted in faith, God acted in love.* Hear it again, *When they acted in faith, God acted in love.*

They weren’t healed immediately—it was only when they started their obedience, started on their way to the priests, that they were cleansed. Had they stayed still, the leprosy would have stayed. Had they hobbled into the city, they would have kept on hobbling.

The principle, *When man acts in faith, God acts in love*, is seen all throughout the Scriptures. “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live” (Numbers 21:8-9). “By faith, Noah...built an ark to the saving of his family” (Hebrews 11:7). “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). Acting in faith is obeying what the Lord commands, trusting that He will keep His word (and He always does).

God never tells you to do something impossible. He loves you, and *wants* you to spend eternity with Him. But in order to do that, you have to *act in faith*, and trust Him that the rewards of faith are greater than anything you’ve ever experienced!

### ***The Thankfulness***

Now we get back around to where we started this lesson. One of those ten men, when he saw that he was cleansed (and remember that Jesus’ healings were complete—so his whole body would have changed: from gnarled to normal, from bent-over to upright, from hobbling to running)—when he saw that he was cleansed, he turned around and almost certainly ran to Jesus.

I love what Luke says next. “He praised God with a loud voice.” Leprosy would have destroyed his voice—it would be like permanent laryngitis.<sup>3</sup> But now he has a “loud voice,” and he uses it! The Greek here is awesome. The word “loud” is *mega*, and the word “voice” is *phone*. Mega-phone. This man was loud and proud—he wasn’t scared to let anyone and everyone know that HE HAD BEEN HEALED! And that it was THANKS TO GOD! Then he “threw himself down at Jesus’ feet” (NIV).

Remember what we said at the beginning, *It isn’t real thankfulness until it’s addressed and expressed.* There is no doubt that he was thanking God (not just “being thankful” in general) for his cleansing. And he clearly expressed it in his words and actions.

Those other nine were “thankful,” I’m sure, in the way our modern society uses the term. They were happy about it (they asked for it after all, so they obviously wanted it), but that’s about as far as it went. No smile and a wave at Jesus in recognition of this kindness. No hollering “Thanks Jesus” over their shoulders as they stand upright for the first time in months or years and walk away. No praising God for His great love

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<sup>2</sup> The word translated “Master” means a commander, overseer, or one who has authority. In the New Testament, it only appears in Luke.

<sup>3</sup> “An almost total failure of the voice is one of the symptoms of leprosy.” Burton Coffman, *Luke*, p. 376.



and mercy.

If a reporter from the Jerusalem News or the Samaritan Post had asked the nine ungrateful men, “Are you thankful you’re not a leper anymore?” I’m sure they’d say, “Yes.” But they didn’t show it. They got what they wanted from Jesus, and that’s all they needed Him for. That’s not gratitude. One writer said “...ingratitude was a worse leprosy than the physical disease.”<sup>4</sup>

Do we treat God the same way? We go to Him in prayer and ask for stuff, for outcomes, for guidance, and when we get them, we conveniently forget to even give lip-service thanks to Him.

### ***The Ingratitude***

If the story ended here, it would still be worthwhile by seeing the example of a truly grateful person. But it doesn’t. Luke adds a brief little sentence: “And he was a Samaritan.” Of all people, a Samaritan is the only one who was truly thankful. The one most looked down upon shines as the brightest example of the ten!

Jesus points this out when He asks the disciples, apostles, and Pharisees, “Weren’t there ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?” I know a guy who, when he was a teenager, got a card from a member of the church. His mom asked him if there was any money in it (because this member had a habit of doing that), and he said, “Yeah, but only \$20.” If *you* had given that money, and you heard that response, how would it make you feel? That gives you an small inkling of how Jesus felt at the complete ingratitude of people whose entire lives had just been changed.

Then He says, “Only this stranger [*allogenes*, literally *person from a different family*] returned to give glory to God. Most commentators agree that this means the other nine lepers were Jews. Zerr says, “The mere mention of this man’s nationality, in connection with his exceptional conduct of gratitude, was intended as a rebuke for the Jews.”<sup>5</sup>

The man could have said, “I’m thankful to be healed,” but that wouldn’t have been true, real, authentic gratitude—because gratitude, thankfulness, is directed *towards* someone or something. Why do we tell people “thank you”? Because we all realize, whether we act on it or not, that thanks is something given (“thanksgiving” anyone?), and if it is given, it must be given *to* someone. It isn’t real thankfulness until it is addressed and expressed.

### ***The Reward***

Jesus looks down at the incredibly grateful man and tells him to “Go your way. Your faith has made you whole.” Now I want you to take careful note here. He had already been cleansed of his leprosy, as had the ungrateful nine. So what Jesus gives him here is something *different*. The Greek word for “made whole” is *sozo*, which is usually translated “saved.” Young’s Literal Translation says, “Thy faith hath saved thee.”<sup>6</sup>

Faith—true, authentic faith—expresses itself in gratitude. If gratitude is missing, then how can you claim to have faith? (“In everything, give thanks” 1 Thessalonians 5:18.)

### ***The Questions***

Are you thankful for your home? Your family? Your friends? Yes? *Then to whom are you thankful? To whom is that thanks given?*

Are you thankful that God sent His only begotten Son so that we might be saved from sin? Yes? *Then how are you expressing that?*

Remember, *When man acts in faith, God acts in love.*

Show your thankfulness, your gratitude, by coming to Christ for healing of the sins that eat away at your soul.

When you act in faith, obeying His loving Word, then you can take the words of Luke 17:19 to heart: “Arise... your faith has saved you.”

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<sup>4</sup> *The Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. 8, p. 298.

<sup>5</sup> E.M. Zerr, *Commentary* Vol. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Smith’s Literal Translation does as well, and it appears in footnotes/marginal readings in several translations and study Bibles.



## LOOKING AHEAD WITH 20/20 VISION TO 2020 . . . AND BEYOND

*Jim Mitchell*

Anyone who wears glasses or contact lenses can relate to the need for regular eye exams to check changes in vision. The reception of new lenses which get one closer to 20/20 vision is always a blessing. Once the new glasses/contacts are in place, there is never a desire to return to old lenses through which the world is viewed with less precision.

Moving from the topic of physical sight to Spiritual sight, several things need to be stated. First, in procuring a more precise vision, the suggestion is not to change what one is seeing, but rather how clearly one sees. Improving our vision should always be the goal. Just as a sunrise remains a sunrise no matter how blurry or clear it appears to us, God's word remains God's word no matter how accurately or inaccurately we view it. The goal is to see it as clearly as possible. We need to continually improve our vision and application of God's word as we mature as Christians.

Second, while some may object to or try to delay a spiritual vision exam (thinking that their vision is perfectly fine), the fact remains that regular check-ups of our knowledge and understanding of God's word are a necessity rather than an option. That requires recognizing what has caused "blurred" or imprecise vision so that it can be corrected.

Third, while there may frequently be hesitancy for taking responsibility for success or setback in seeing things clearly, such hesitancy only serves to lengthen the time one remains in blurred vision. It is

vital, therefore, that we continually have both a renewed commitment to follow God's word as we endeavor to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and the realization that we all have more to learn and apply in that process.

I hope that every member of the body of Christ has not only begun this year with the resolve to grow in their knowledge and application of God's word, but also in their effectiveness in reaching the lost with the Gospel of Christ. To that end, may the beginning of 2020 be a time of REVIEW and REFLECTION as well as REFOCUS and RENEWAL of our response to God's word in our lives and its challenge to us to share that message.

### **REVIEW and REFLECTION**

Among the many lessons learned from every year of life, there are positive elements to embrace and continue as well as negative ones to learn from and move beyond. Typically, our review of the past year is rather vague. While we resolve to improve in several ways, we often do not take time to really analyze what specifically happened in the previous year and why. In the secular world, employees are expected to improve in both work ethic and results. Often, continuous education courses and seminars are involved as well as books to read and lessons to apply to work situations. When dealing with spiritual growth and maturity, constant assessment should be made of needed areas of strengthening and in-

structing the Christian to grow “in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). How much time have you spent so far in reviewing and reflecting on the past year and how has that review helped you set goals for this year? After we have assessed what worked well in 2019, and after all the excuses have been given for what did not work, we are still left with setting achievable goals for greater spiritual and numeric growth for 2020 and beyond.

### **REFOCUS and RENEWAL**

It has oft been stated that “*the definition of insanity is doing the same things over and over, but expecting different results.*” Neither change nor growth can be achieved by staying at the same level of knowledge and/or activity as in the past. When, then, can be done to improve? For Christians in leadership roles there are many available resources on improving leadership skills and working with people (such as workshops, seminars, lectureships, etc.) which should be utilized on a regular basis. When is the last time you heard of an eldership visiting other congregations to find out what makes those congregations successful in specific areas? For Christians who have been given the tremendous responsibility of teaching, there are also workshops, seminars, training classes, and a variety of other resources throughout the Lord’s church which are available to help us grow as teachers. Does the congregation you attend regularly utilize such resources for the teachers of your Bible classes? If not, why

not? Christians involved in areas of service can also find a variety of resources in those areas to become more effective and efficient. Christians who feel like they are just “ordinary” Christians and who aren’t actively involved in any of the above-mentioned areas need to realize that being saved by the blood of Christ makes you anything but ordinary. You are a child of God, an ambassador of the Creator to show the world the blessings and benefits of being a citizen of the kingdom of Heaven. As ambassadors, we need to immerse ourselves in deeper study of God’s word that we may become more effective for the cause of Christ (II Corinthians 5:17- 6:12).

### **RESOLVE**

A goal without a plan behind it or a date attached to it is just a pipe dream and a wish. Please prayerfully and thoughtfully plan some specific goals for both your growth as a Christian and your outreach to those who will be eternally lost. Search out and talk to Christians who are successful in the areas which you want to improve in your life as a Christian. Attach dates to the steps which need to be taken to achieve those goals and mark your progress. Resolve through this year to grow in both your knowledge and application of God’s word by making use of available tools and resources in leadership, service, teaching, and sharing the Gospel of Christ as you endeavor to follow the footsteps of Jesus more closely. Whatever you do this year, do not bury the talents, abilities, and opportunities God has provided. Work to multiply them to His glory!

## DEALING WITH LIFE’S INTERRUPTIONS

*Jim Mitchell*

Whether it’s an illness, an accident, or a sudden change to many facets of life – interruptions are inevitable. While some (perhaps even most) may be short in duration, others may last for years. Interruptions cannot be avoided, but they need not paralyze life’s endeavors. In 1957, Theodore F. Adams wrote a book titled *Making the Most of What Life Brings*. In the “To the Reader” section, he stated: “If you

would enrich the one life you have to live, never be content merely to “make the best of things.” To know the “life to the full” that Jesus promised, learn how to take whatever life may bring and then with God’s help use it creatively for yourself and others. That is one of the first lessons in living.” (p. ix) I would like to share a few of his comments from chapter five of the book, which is titled “*Making the*



### *Most of Life's Interruptions."*

"Interruptions are inevitable. How can you make the most of them? Obviously you cannot say, "Well, there is nothing I can do." Always there is something you can do, and often there is something you must do.

"The plans of St. Paul were often interrupted. He records that frequently after he had planned to go in one direction, he had to adjust to a new schedule. Stoning, imprisonments, and other difficulties beset him on all sides. But to the Philippians he wrote, "I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel."

"Though interruptions, hardships, and difficulties seemed to threaten and delay the progress of the Kingdom, he was able to transform them into occasions offering greater glory to God. Paul learned to make the most of life's interruptions." (p. 45)

"You can make the most of interruptions if you will recognize three simple principles. First, accept them as a part of your life. That is really the only thing you can do about them, for the phone is going to ring... accidents do occur, sickness does come." (p. 48)

"Second, remember that an interruption is only an interruption. God's plan and purpose for your life will go on. In all things you will see a working together for good, if you commit your life to his larger plan. When you see your life and its interruptions in a harmonious perspective, you may well thank God for them." (p. 49)

"Third, disappointment, change of plans, and interruptions are often the golden gates to a more glorious life of service to others and of service to those larger purposes which routine living may not bring. Through these interruptions—which are, after all, only interruptions—you learn to face life with a better spirit, with more wisdom, sympathy, and understanding, and through them you grow to a finer maturity." (p. 50)

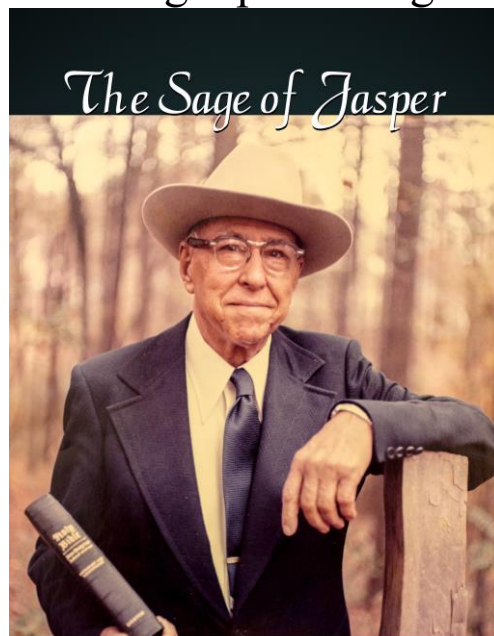
Give some thought to the recorded moments in the life of Jesus when He was interrupted. For example: an evening interrupted by a "teacher of Israel" (Nicodemus) who wanted to speak with Him

(John 3); the interruption of Jesus's teaching when four friends of a paralyzed man made a hole in the roof to get their friend close to Jesus (Mark 2); travel interrupted by two blind men on the side of the road who are healed by Jesus (Matt. 20:29-34); and an interruption of an interruption as Jesus stops to heal a woman with a blood disorder while He is on His way to heal the daughter of a ruler of a synagogue (Matt. 9; Mk. 5; Lk. 8).

Without a doubt you will have many interruptions this year to both the routines of the day and the plans you have made. Please do everything possible to minimize the feeling of frustration that those moments inevitably bring. Instead of thinking in negative terms, the next time your day is filled with the unexpected and you deal with one interruption after another, find time to pause and reflect on the lessons that were learned, the service which was given, and the example of Jesus which was followed. You may well find that your life was immeasurably enriched by interruptions. Have a very blessed new year as you read and share God's word with others.

"truly pleasurable"  
"thought provoking"

*The Sage of Jasper*



*Gus Nichols - A Biography*  
SCOTT HARP

*The Sage of Jasper*  
Available on Amazon.com

FROM THE DESK OF

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STEPHANE H. MAILLET

January 6, 2020

Brethren,

My name is Stephane H. Maillet. I am a 2019 graduate of the Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies in Karns TN. I came to SEIBS from the Riverview church of Christ in N.B. Canada. Upon my graduation, I had plans to preach the gospel at the Spencer church of Christ in Spencer WI. Unfortunately, because of bureaucratic issues beyond our control we must move back to Canada. It is my desire to take on the work of the Lord along with the Riverview church of Christ in that area of Canada.

The Riverview church of Christ was planted in 1976 and meets in a converted house in Riverview. Before I went to SEIBS, I was laboring there as a gospel preacher for 6 years. My family and I are excited to return to the work there and help the brethren in Riverview.

In order for us to minister in Riverview N.B. Canada, we must raise \$5,000/per month. So far we have \$500/per month. These funds would be sent to the church and overseen by the men in Riverview. This support would cover living expenses and expenses associated with the ministry itself. The work will begin in May of 2020 with our departure from Spencer, Wisconsin. Support raised prior to our departure in May will go towards our travel expenses.

There are millions of souls on this Coast without any trained gospel preacher. The area that the Riverview church serves has a similar socio political climate as the United States but is more advanced in moral degradation. This is a worthy work in need of support. If you are able to support this work, please contact me using the information provided below.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and prayers.

Sincerely yours,

Stephane H. Maillet

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8 am—4 pm

**Office Numbers:**

Church: 865.691.7411  
Southeast: 865.691.7444

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter on behalf of Stephane Maillet and his family, to encourage you to consider supporting him in his good work.

Due to immigration policies, Stephane and his family must return to their home country of Canada in May, 2020. They are going to return to the Riverview congregation in New Brunswick, Canada, where Stephane was preaching prior to coming to the Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies in Knoxville, TN.

I am familiar with the congregation Riverview, where Stephane will be working. I have visited the Riverview congregation three times to preach in gospel meetings. It's a good, sound congregation, planted in a very difficult area. The church needs to be there, and I am thankful that Stephane and his family are willing to undertake the challenges he knows are ahead of him there.

Prior to Stephane's arrival at the Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies, I knew that he was zealous for the gospel. However, after his arrival, I quickly learned his Bible knowledge matched his zeal. Stephane is a man who knows the truth and cannot contain it. He can strike up a conversation about Jesus with anyone, anywhere, and that is exactly what kind of man the church at Riverview needs.

I am aware that there are many deserving works; more than resources available, but I can assure you that your investment in Stephane and his family, and the church at Riverview will be money, encouragement, and prayers well spent.

If you have any questions about Stephane or the work in Riverview, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached at [higginbotham.steve@gmail.com](mailto:higginbotham.steve@gmail.com) or you can call me at 865-274-3479.

Sincerely,  
Steve Higginbotham  
Preaching Minister at the Karns church of Christ



# Never Take Someone for Granted

Devin Self

Over the years I've talked with many people about the Bible and heard many different ideas. Most commonly I've found that people tend to memorize or have certain verses that they can recall very quickly to defend their choices. For example, I've heard numerous times, "Jesus drank in the Bible," when someone is trying to defend a heavy drinking habit. Another one is "The Bible says, Eye for an eye!" It makes me sad to think that people use the Bible like this in order to justify their own actions. It also makes me wonder how this makes God feel that his inspired word is being manipulated in such a manner to make someone not feel guilty about their sin. This is certainly not what God intended. This is nothing but *play* church. We must help put an end to this misuse of the Bible when we hear it going on.

We need to be the ones that set out to inform the world that the Bible is to be taken as a whole and used for good, never evil. Also, if someone shouts out scripture at you, don't just take their word for it. Go and do the work and look it up, make sure you read the Bible as a whole. Let people know that they did not read the whole statement from Jesus (Matthew 5:38-39):

*Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*

Also share with them Ephesians 5:18:

*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.*

Don't let someone deceive you into thinking they really know the Bible when in fact they may know only the verses that they abuse to get their way in a situation. In some cases, those that are so quick to shout out scripture or things they have memorized may have never studied the Bible. They don't have to know the Bible, just the verses that always get

them off the hook.

Mark 13:22 says, "For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect." This happens far too often currently. There are many multi-millionaires in the world, wearing a guise of religion, that have gotten rich by preying on the weak. Saying things such as, 'You can guarantee yourself a place in heaven if you just mail me a monthly check,' or asking folks to donate to their cause because they need a new yacht in order to preach to people on the ocean, and you could go on and on. This goes along exactly with Matthew 7:15, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

In other words, never take someone for granted. Just because they may seem all good, don't let them take advantage of you. Make sure what they tell you is the truth. The easiest way to do this is to make sure it aligns with what the Bible says, for the Bible is all truth. Matthew 24:11 says, "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many." We must be careful not to follow when we hear about supposed prophets, like Muhammad the founder of Islam, who by the way is never mentioned in the Bible.

God will take care of those false prophets in the world, though in his own way. He did it with Barjesus in Acts 13:6-11.

*And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus: Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul (who also is called Paul), filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said,*

*O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand."*

See, Barjesus did not want the deputy to hear what Barnabas and Saul had to say, for he knew that it would expose his wrongdoing. Ultimately, though, God will set out the punishment for those false teachers in the world.

We must realize that even though there are many in the world that may seem like they are doing God's work, that is not always the case. We must keep our eyes clear of deception. Just because someone is of high status or plays the part does not mean that they are doing right in the eyes of God. A scripture that reminds us of that is Matthew 22:14-16:

*For many are called, but few are chosen. Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.*

This is where the Pharisees actually paid attention for once, when they said, "for thou regardest not the person of men." Status is valued by many here in the world, from an earthly point of view, but in God's eyes status matters not. It doesn't matter if you are the most powerful and richest person in the world, if you are not doing what is right in the eyes of God then you are lost and missing the mark completely.

Listen to what Paul says in Ephesians 4:1-6; it will show us how we should act as Christians.

*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one*

*faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

After reading this passage we should realize that God has chosen us to be Christ's representatives on earth. Considering this truth, Paul challenges us to live lives worthy of the calling we have received, the awesome privilege of being called Christ's very own. This includes being humble, gentle, patient, understanding, and peaceful. People are watching your life every day. Can they see Christ when they look at you? How well are you doing as his representative?

Paul says, "There is one body." Unity does not just happen; we must work at it. Often differences among people can lead to division, but this should not be true in the church. Instead of concentrating on what divides us, we should remember what unites us: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God! We need to learn to enjoy the way we members of Christ's body complement one another.

Another verse that is very similar to our discussion about false prophets is Luke 6:26.

*Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.*

Many false prophets lived during Old Testament times. They were praised by kings and crowds because their predictions of prosperity and victory in war were exactly what the people wanted to hear. But popularity is no guarantee of truth, and human flattery does not bring God's approval. Sadness lies ahead for those who chase after the crowd's praise rather than God's truth.

One last passage to consider is Isaiah 44:24-25, which also tells us what the Lord will do to liars and diviners.

*Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish.*

# TRAIL-BLAZERS, PATH-FINDERS, DESTINATION-POINTERS, TAG-ALONGS, DRAG-ALONGS, SOJOURNERS, PILGRIMS, AND FAITHFUL PATH-WALKERS.

Gerald Cowan

Story: a guide, a **trail-blazer and path-finder**, leading a group through a rain forest jungle, cutting his way through a place that showed no sign or marks of being a path. To the complaint that no pathway was evident he said: “In this place I am the path. I know the way and you do not. Follow me and do not go off on your own – you will be lost immediately; you cannot find the way on your own. I am the way. Just follow me. Stay with me and I will get you to our proper destination, where we want to be.”

In religious matters Jesus, because God was and is in him, is the only **Trail-Blazer**, the one true Way to God. Others – patriarchs and prophets, up to and including John the baptist – only prepared the way for him, pointed the way to him and helped to identify him who was coming. But when he came he was and remains The Way, the final and only way to God (John 14:6).

Apostles are **Path-Finders** and guides on the one true path, the narrow and restricted path (Mt. 7:13-14) which is, since Pentecost, the New Way – in the church of the Lord Jesus. The way in is marked, but is narrow and precise – it must be entered knowingly, willingly, and correctly. One will not stumble through the gate and into the way. One cannot climb over the fence to avoid the requirements of passing through the gate. One may follow blind guides and crooked or perverse leaders but they will not pass through the true gate. They may be told, and may think, they are in the true path, but they will not be. There are multitudes of false churches, false ways that do not lead to God or to His heaven, and careless souls will perish in what they have been led to believe is the kingdom of the Lord.

There is another kind of **path finder** too, who finds and follows the way already posted – the one who searches, studies, compares, and makes personal choices and commitments to the truth he finds

in the word of God, whether by hearing it (*He who has ears to hear; let him hear the words of the Lord, hear what the Spirit says* – Rev. 2:11, etc.), or by reading and studying the written word for himself (2 Tim. 2:15 and 3:16-17). One may stumble over and find by chance God’s pearl of great price or His treasure hidden from casual sight (Mt. 13:44-46), but how to acquire it for oneself may not become known unless one can find proper instructions. One may be aware of the optimum destination yet not know how to get there. When he finds the way he must then follow it carefully and assiduously. One must note and follow instructions carefully, paying close attention to all signs and markers in the path, not be deterred or detoured from it.

**Destination-Pointers and Planners** can help you determine where you want to go, often can tell you why you ought to go and maybe even how to get there. They have a useful function. But they do not accompany you, they are not fellow-travelers, they do not guide you and help you along the way – they tell you what to do but are not doing it themselves. You’ve met such persons whose mantra is: “Don’t do what I do, do what I tell you to do.”

Probably from the beginning the church has been burdened with **Tag-Alongs** – curiosityseekers, casual and occasional visitors, convenience-minded but never fully committed. They are the “I will go with you if you are going, but I’m not going on my own” group. There’s another group, even less likely to become effectively involved and committed to the church, the drag-alongs.

**Drag-Alongs** are just what the term implies. They won’t get in the path or stay in it except under duress; they must be forced into compliance. These often include children of Christian parents, but they only come until they can break free from parental authority and go their own chosen way. Spouses of members also fit in this group. They come only in order to have some kind of peace with the mate –



often these are husbands trying to “make nice” with a wife they don’t really want to lose. Christian parents and spouses usually hope that if they can keep the drag-alongs coming, they will be exposed to the truth of God and the benefits of Christian fellowship, and may actually become knowledgeable and interested and grow into committed members too.

**Sojourners** are persons who stay in one place temporarily, moving about from place to place, with no fixed long-term residence or commitment. Sojourner is not a bad word. There is a sense in which all Christians are sojourners (1 Peter 1:17). Work and other constraints often keep people on the move in current society. Faithful Christians will attend and be involved with the church wherever they are at any time. But the other kind of sojourners can be a burden to the church. They are church-hoppers, staying only as long as their desires and likes are met, but quick to move on when they aren’t. They are sometimes like sheep, nibbling their way along, changing direction according to the greenness of the grass in one place or another.

**Pilgrims** – every religion has them. Some of them want to make an occasional visit to some significant place or to the “homeland.” For example, some want to visit “the Holy Land” (that is a serious misnomer because there is no place on earth truly holy to God now, as the land of Israel once was), but there are places and relics of historical interest and meaning because of some biblical person or event. But such places do not enhance one’s faith and are not relevant to the Biblical religion except as historical or traditional (more often than not simply commercial) curiosities. The proper meaning of Christian pilgrims is this: our true homeland and only proper destination is heaven – to which we have never been and cannot go until we pass through death of the body, resurrection, and judgment and eventual reassignment as residents in God’s eternal dwelling place. That is our homeland (Phil. 3:20-21), the home of the soul to which we can go and are going, but only if we keep faith with God through The Way, Jesus Christ (John 14:1-6).

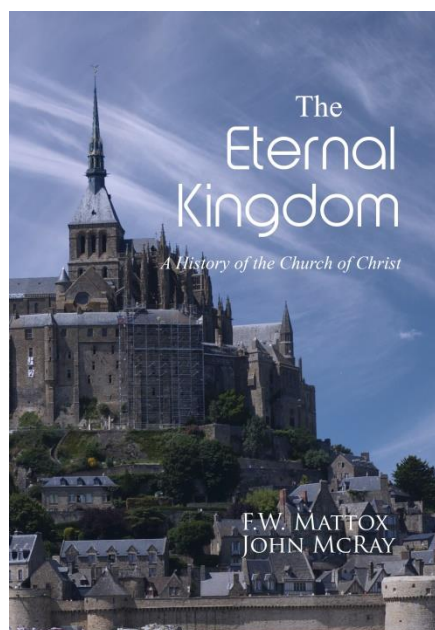
**Path-Walkers** is another self-explanatory term. If we walk with the Lord in the light of His word He keeps us clean (1 John 1:7-9). Of course there is more to it than just continuing to “be a Christian” and attend “services” of the church. Faithfulness in personal worship, service, and stewardship (1 Cor. 4:2), growth in knowledge and grace (2 Peter 3:18),

staying within the bounds that mark the path – all of this and more is expected of one who walks in the pathway of righteousness and duty. Path-walkers are not skin-deep Christians, not even bone-deep. Their relationship with God through Christ is soul-deep, all the way to the eternal spirit.

Are Christians to be trail-blazers? No. Are they path-finders, destination-pointers, tag-alongs, or drag-alongs? No, to each of those questions. Are Christians to be sojourners or pilgrims? Yes, when properly understood: the sojourning pilgrim is in or at a certain place or position but understands he is on a journey, not yet at his final destination – which may or may not be where he wants to end his journey. Actually no one is currently at his final destination. We are not meant to remain on earth forever, alive or dead. Even the dead in *hades* are still in transition, not yet at the end of their journey. Life in the body on earth has ended and their conviction as righteous or unrighteous has been settled forever – their ultimate destination has been set, but they are not there yet. The next step for them is final sentencing and assignment to their eternal place, to be announced at the return of Christ and the resurrection of all the dead.

Christians are to be path-walkers in and with Jesus Christ. We cannot walk with him if we do not agree with him (see Amos 3:3). We cannot arrive at the place he is preparing for us if we do not accompany him, walk with him in the light of his word and trust him to deliver us safely into God’s presence to occupy our eternal home (John 14:1-6).

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## The Eternal Kingdom

*A History of the Church of Christ*

F.W. Mattox & John McRay

\$14.99

Amazon.com

A photograph of a baby lying on its back on a thick, shaggy, light-colored rug. The baby has light skin, blue eyes, and is wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt. The baby's mouth is slightly open, and it is looking towards the camera. Overlaid on the image in a large, black, cursive font is the text "Choose Life".

# Choose Life

*Travis Anderson*

**Clement of Alexandria (150-180):**

“Our whole life can go on in observation of the laws of nature, if we gain dominion over our desires from the beginning and if we do not kill, by various means of a perverse art, the human offspring, born according to the designs of divine providence; for these women who, in order to hide their immorality, use abortive drugs which expel the child completely dead, abort at the same time their own human feelings.”

**Athenagoras (165):**

“We say that women who induce abortions are murderers, and will have to give account of it to God. For the same person would not regard the child in the womb as a living being and therefore an object of God’s care and then kill it.... But we are altogether consistent in our conduct. We obey reason and do not override it.”

**Tertullian (160-240):**

“For us [Christians] we may not destroy even the fetus in the womb, while as yet the human being derives blood from other parts of the body for its sustenance. To hinder a birth is merely a speedier man-killing; nor does it matter when you take away a life that is born, or destroy one that is coming to birth. That is a man which is going to be one: you have the fruit already in the seed.” -

**Hippolytus (170-236):**

“Reputed believers began to resort to drugs for producing sterility and to gird themselves round, so as to expel what was conceived on account of their not wanting to have a child either by a slave or by any paltry fellow, for the sake of their family and excessive wealth. Behold, into how great impiety that lawless one has proceeded by inculcating adultery and murder at the same time.”

**Basil the Great (330-379):**

“She who has deliberately destroyed a fetus has to pay the penalty of murder.... here it is not only the child to be born that is vindicated, but also the woman herself who made an attempt against her own life, because usually the women die in such attempts. Furthermore, added to this is the destruction of the child, another murder.”

**Jerome (342-420):**

“They drink potions to ensure sterility and are guilty of murdering a human being not yet conceived. Some, when they learn that they are with child through sin, practice abortion by the use of drugs. Frequently they die themselves and are brought before the rulers of the lower world guilty of three crimes: suicide, adultery against Christ, and murder of an unborn child.”

## INTRO:

In case you hadn't guessed it by the early church father quotes above, this article is about a tough subject—abortion.

But I hope to approach it in a way you haven't heard before, or at least a way that *I* haven't heard it preached or talked about in church setting.

First off, the numbers:

- 47 years ago, Roe V Wade decided babies in the womb were not human persons and therefore not covered under the constitution, and were not guaranteed life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness
- 50 million preborn babies have been killed since then (just in US).<sup>1</sup> This is more than 50 times all American wars put together.
- 3500 a day.

On the last anniversary of Roe V Wade, the state congress in New York passed the 'Reproductive Health Care Act,' allowing mothers to, in some cases, abort their children up until birth. To celebrate this *wonderful* event (please note my sarcasm), New York Governor Andrew Cuomo called for the World Trade Center to be lit up pink

As much as we may hate to think about it, our children are being told this not only okay, but something to celebrate! *This is about freedom, liberty, and women's reproductive rights*, they say

But just using this word in today's world, especially in public arenas, gets all kinds of reactions. People tend to get heated and nasty very quickly, no matter which side they're on.

Relationships can become ruined, and in the end, nothing is really accomplished except more anger and resentment and self-righteousness. Because if you believe a baby is a human being, the person yelling that it's *her* body and *her* choice is not going to convince you of anything. And if you believe abortion is okay, then someone saying something like 'You shouldn't do what causes a baby if you don't want to have a baby' won't do any good. Even if it's true, saying it to someone who doesn't believe it isn't going to get them closer to seeing it your way.

So one of the things I *won't* be talking about is the arguments both sides make. I *will* focus on what

the Bible says concerning the matter.

I also think it is important to learn how to talk about this topic without trying to offend people. Notice I said *trying*. Sometimes the truth is offensive (Gal 4:16 – “do I become your enemy...”). Paul offended people, but he didn't go looking for the most *offensive* way to share the truth. He looked for the most *effective* way to share the truth. (I fear we sometimes find ways to offend people so that when they become offended, we can puff out our chests and say we are standing for the truth.)

Finally, I want to assume there is someone reading this, who is considering having an abortion, will in the future consider having one, or may have already had one.

I'm sure some of you are thinking, 'there's no way someone reading *The Quarterly* would even consider this!' Hear me out: in 2014, 30% of the women who got abortions identified as Protestant, and 24% identified as Catholic, meaning that over half the women who get an abortion consider themselves God-fearing disciples.

If we knew, during a personal conversation with someone we loved, that they had had an abortion, we would probably talk about it differently than if we knew they hadn't, so that's how I plan to approach this topic.

## WHAT SCRIPTURE SAYS

The Bible never directly addresses what we would call an induced abortion. Intentionally ending the life of a baby in the womb is not spoken about specifically. The closest we get is in Exodus 21, where a woman is injured in a scuffle between two men and it results in a miscarriage.

The Bible never directly addresses where life begins. There are a handful of passages that refer to a child in the womb as being a life. Consider, for instance, Psalm 139:13-16.

*For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.*

*I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*

*Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.*

*My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.*

*Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/politics/reality-check/2015/03/06/million-abortions-claim-checks/24530159/>



*days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.*

While this is poetic, it shows that God is involved in the life of a person long before they are born.

Personal pronouns are used to describe unborn children (Jeremiah 1:5). The word used to describe a child in the womb (Luke 1:41, John in Elizabeth's womb) is the same word used to describe a child outside the womb (Luke 2:12, Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes).

What's interesting is that science actually tells us more about this than Scripture does

### **WHAT SCIENCE SAYS**

Doctor Hymie Gordon (former chairman of the Department of Medical Genetics at Mayo Clinic) said back in 1981 on a panel before a Senate Judiciary Subcommittee:

But now we can say, unequivocally, that the question of when life begins is no longer a question for the theological or the philosophical dispute. It is an established scientific fact. Theologians and Philosophers may go on to debate the meaning of life or the purpose of life, but it is an established fact that all life, including human life, begins at the moment of conception.<sup>2</sup>

How could he be so certain? It is because at the point of conception:

- all 46 chromosomes, necessary for every human being, are present.
- the embryo has its own unique strand of DNA that no one else in the world has.
- It has its own gender.

Then, within a few weeks of conception, the baby has:

- its own blood type, which can be different from its mother.
- its own fingerprints, unique from every other set of prints on the planet.

So from both a scientific and biblical standpoint, it seems pretty clear, at least to me, that life begins long before the baby leaves the womb.

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<sup>2</sup> *The Human Life Bill: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Separation of Powers of the Committee on the Judiciary United States Senate* (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982), p. 13.

But may I suggest that is not the most helpful way to look at this? Don't get me wrong, it's good to know what the Bible says about the subject of when life begins; and it's good to know what science says about when life begins.

But maybe the better approach is to...

### **VIEW LIFE AS A GIFT FROM GOD**

Job's view (Job 34:14-15) was that life was sustained by the spirit and breath of God, and without him, there could not be life. Genesis 1:27 shows that we are meant to be images of God—everything we do is in some way supposed to reflect back on God, the one who gave us life to begin with.

I think if we focus on when life does or doesn't begin, someone will always say 'well here (at this point) it isn't really a person' or 'that's just your opinion.'

But if we view life, no matter when or where it starts, as a gift, as a positive, as something to be cherished and nourished, we can begin to make headway and see it more as God sees it—and as He would have us to see it.

Theologian Stanley Hauerwas said:

In a world of such terrible injustice, in a world of such terrible misery, in a world that may well be about the killing of our children, having children is an extraordinary act of faith and hope. But as Christians we can have a hope in God that urges us to welcome children. When that happens, it is an extraordinary testimony of faith.<sup>3</sup>

With all that being said, maybe the most important question we should seek to answer is how we respond to or participate in discussion (and this includes online discussion) about abortion?

### **HOW DO WE TALK ABOUT ABORTION?**

We might believe all the Bible teaches and all that science shows, but how do we discuss it with those who believe different than us, or who might be considering having an abortion?

Avoid the terminology people try to limit us to. Be careful with "pro-life" and "pro-choice." It just sets us up for more division and less discussion.

Think about it for a moment.

If you see someone with a bumper sticker or t-shirt with the opposite label, does that invite discus-

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<sup>3</sup> Hauerwas, Stanley, *The Hauerwas Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 615.



sion, or disagreement?

I'm not saying try not to offend people, I am saying create discussion, not division. James tells us that no one can tame the tongue, and that it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. He isn't just talking about saying mean things, but also about how we use our words to divide.

That terminology isn't going anywhere anytime soon, but Christians are charged with being peacemakers, and choosing our words wisely can help.

Consider the mindset of the one considering abortion, according to a 2004 report on why women have abortions.

- 0.5% were victims of rape.
- 3% were due to fetal health problems.
- 4% were due to physical health problems of the mother.
- 4% were because it would interfere with education or career.
- 7% said they were not mature enough to raise a kid.
- 8% said they didn't want to be a single mother.
- 19% said they were done having children.
- 23% said that they couldn't afford a child.
- 25 % stated they were not ready for a child.
- 6.5% listed other reasons

Again, we could say, 'well don't do what causes babies if you don't want one.' However true that might be, what does it help?

St. Louis Cardinals manager, Mike Shildt, said he would offer this advice to his younger self:

Here's the bottom line: nothing you say is going to change how an individual got to where he is. It will only impact where he'll go. So why waste time judging what's past, when you can help set a positive course into the future?<sup>4</sup>

There's nothing a woman who has had an abortion can to undo it, so we should deal with where she is now.

If you look at those reasons, you can see that a majority of them involve fear of some sort. When we talk about abortions, we are talking about women who made a bad choice in the past, but are now

scared, worried, stressed out, and often alone through it all. Consider this in light of Jude 22-23.

*And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.*

This leads me to the next thing we need to discuss:

### **BE WILLING TO STEP UP**

Often Christians are really good at very loudly telling a woman how wrong it is to have an abortion and how they need to keep and raise that child; but when the child comes, they are nowhere to be found.

It is important for us to speak up against abortion, but I think it is even more important for us to make the church a place these mothers can find support and help they need. Maybe it's learning how to be a mother in the first place, maybe childcare while they work, maybe it's help with the grocery bill or buying diapers, or putting together a crib.

Another thing the church should be doing is being a place where someone can find healing and forgiveness. I once preached a sermon about dealing with temptation and being able to admit when something is particularly hard. I admitted that I had struggled in my early 20s with stealing (which had led to me being caught shoplifting), and speeding (which led to me getting a number of tickets that I got behind on and spent an afternoon in jail for). I was told people took issue with that, and that I shouldn't have said those things, even though the people who supposedly had an issue with it wouldn't talk to me directly.

Is that the type of atmosphere where someone who had an abortion would be willing to seek healing and understanding and forgiveness and support?

As I stated before, more than half the women who get abortions claim to be followers of Christ, and I am sure many of those realize their decision was at odds with God. That's how alone, scared, and without hope many of the women must feel to make such a choice. And when these women of faith make that unfortunate decision, and it haunts them, and they have nowhere to turn for healing, shouldn't God's people be the one place they should find forgiveness and love?

But some Christians have the attitude that abortion is the unforgivable sin. It's not. The only un-

<sup>4</sup> *Cardinals Gameday Magazine*. Note: though this quote was not specifically addressing abortion, it is a good reminder of how to help people move forward when their past might tend to haunt them or drag them down.

forgiveable sin is the one you don't repent of.

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).*

There is no exception here. Whatever you have done, God loves you and wants eternity with you. Whatever you sin is, even abortion, there is forgiveness available for you.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Like I said, this is a hard topic, a sad topic, but one I believe we need to address.

I have no clue what it is like to contemplate that sort of decision. But I have to imagine it's about the loneliest and saddest place one could be.

But if that is you, or if you have had one in the past, or if five years from now you find yourself contemplating this, I want you to know: Jesus loves

you, and so do I. If you need to talk, I am here to listen, and will do whatever I can to help.

My desire is not to chew you up or make you feel guilty, I am sure you have done that enough to yourself. Rather I would hope I could bring us both closer to God, because I know that is His wish.

I want you to choose life. Not just in the way we use that term concerning abortion, but in choosing Christ, because he is the way the truth, and the life. Choose life.

Maybe you need to choose life by putting on Christ in baptism. Maybe you need to choose life by coming back to Christ and his family.

Maybe you need to choose life by admitting that you have sinned and that you need a Savior who loves you and wants you died for you and wants to spend eternity with you.

Whatever it is, *choose life!*

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# The Samaritans and the "Other" Pentateuch

Dewayne Bryant

The field of biblical studies involves research into many different kinds of religious literature. This includes not only the biblical text but many other documents that have a bearing on our understanding of the Bible. One of these ancient texts is the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Bible of the Samaritan community, whose origins can be traced back into the depths of biblical history.

The Samaritan Pentateuch is the official religious text of the Samaritans, a small population of whom still exists today in Israel. It has some significant differences from the Hebrew Bible's version of the Torah. It is a recension, or a manuscript tradition whose textual history diverges from the one used as the basis for English translations of the Old Testament today. Although many people may not have heard of it, the Samaritan Pentateuch played a significant role in the history of ancient Israel through New Testament times and beyond.

## *The Samaritans in History*

Samaritan history can be traced back to the period of the divided monarchy in biblical times. According to 2 Kings 17-18, Shalmaneser V (727-722 BC) discovered that Hoshea of Israel had secretly contacted Osorkon IV of Egypt for aid. The Assyrian army marched against the capital city of Samaria and captured it after a three-year siege. Shalmaneser imprisoned Hoshea, sent some of its population into exile, and resettled the territory of the Northern Kingdom with people from other parts of the empire. His successor Sargon II (722-705 BC) claims to have done the same in an artifact known as the Nimrud Prism.

The available sources tell different stories, but it would appear that the schism between Jews and Samaritans was due to several factors. Part of this may be traced back to the ethnic differences between the two based on the Assyrian resettlement of Samaria with non-Jews. This led to a political separation

during the time of Ezra. A religious break came when the Samaritans constructed a rival temple complex on Mount Gerazim in the fourth century BC. However, Samaritans believe that the break was due to Eli's choice to move the sanctuary from Shechem to Shiloh.

By New Testament times, Jews and Samaritans had already developed an intense dislike for one another (cf. John 4:9). Incidents of violence between

the two groups were known to writers like Josephus, who recorded that Samaritans had harassed Jewish pilgrims and scattered bones in the Jerusalem sanctuary. At the same time, Jews retaliated by burning Samaritan villages. A Jewish rabbi named Eliezer taught that a man who ate bread baked by a Samaritan was defiled as much as if he had eaten pork (*m. Sheviit* 8:10). Jesus addressed these hostilities in his choice of a Samaritan as the hero of one of his most

famous parables (Luke 10:25-37), which no doubt left his Jewish hearers with more questions than answers.

The Samaritans may have numbered as many as one million during the Byzantine Empire, but only about 800 remain today. A little more than half live in the village of Kiryat Luza on Mount Gerazim near the city of Nablus. The rest live in the city of Holon on the coast south of Tel Aviv. They follow many of the ritual requirements of the Mosaic law, including the offering of animal sacrifices and observance of holidays such as Passover and Sukkot (but not Purim or Hanukkah). Sadly, the community—which consists of only four families—has a history of genetic disorders due to the small gene pool. To combat this, the community has agreed to permit Samaritan men to marry outsiders, but few are willing to accept the rigorous religious commitment required of women.

## *The Samaritan Bible*

The Samaritan canon consists exclusively of the





books of Moses. While Samaritans have accepted the Torah, they reject the rest of the Hebrew Bible. They consider themselves the true guardians of the Torah, a fact reflected in the name *Shamerim*, which derives from *shomer*, meaning “guardian” or “watchman.” Thus, the Samaritans are the “guardians of the law.” It is not uncommon to hear Samaritans stake a claim to having the most accurate and most ancient version of the biblical text. Samaritans today follow the Mosaic law, just as their ancestors have for many centuries.

The Samaritan Pentateuch is quite similar to the standard version found in the Hebrew Bible (the Masoretic Text or MT). Although they mostly agree, the two have some significant differences. Samaritan tradition maintains that they were the “true Israel” who broke away and that the Samaritan Pentateuch represents the version of the Torah faithfully preserved by their people for centuries dating back to the time of Abisha, the great-grandson of Aaron. Thus, Samaritans claim that their version of the Pentateuch is older and more authentic. Modern scholars cannot verify these assertions.

The Samaritan Pentateuch includes roughly 6,000 changes from the Masoretic Text. About half of these changes consist of spelling differences. The rest involve more substantial alterations. These include smaller changes that affect the flow of the text or make it read more smoothly. Others add entire conversations between individuals not found in the Hebrew Bible.

Among the most significant of these changes involves an addition to the Ten Commandments. It requires the construction of an altar on Mt. Gerazim, which the Samaritan community recognizes as the most important mountain in biblical history. It was here that the Samaritan Pentateuch also claims God commanded Abraham to offer Isaac rather than upon Mount Moriah. The Samaritan version of Deuteronomy 27:4 includes a command to build an altar on Mt. Gerazim while the traditional Hebrew text places it upon Mt. Ebal.

While Samaritans claim that their version is better because it reads more smoothly and provides material that helps the reader “fill in the gaps,” scholars generally see this as proof that scribes tampered with the text. Scholars involved in the area of textual criticism usually prefer the more difficult readings because a scribe would be more apt to smooth over a difficult text rather than making it

harder to understand intentionally. Historically, early writers knew of these alterations. The Talmud includes a condemnation of Samaritan scribes, while early Christian writers noted that words that seemed to be absent from the Hebrew Bible were present in the Samaritan Pentateuch.

### ***The Samaritan Pentateuch and the New Testament***

Although the Bible does not address the Samaritan Pentateuch directly, its influence can be felt in a story found in the Gospel of John. After Jesus leaves Judea and heads toward Galilee, he journeys through Samaria (John 4:3-4). He stops at the town of Sychar—which lay just east of Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerazim—where he encounters a Samaritan woman. She expresses surprise when Jesus asks her for a drink, because, “Jews do not associate with Samaritans” (John 4:9). Even the disciples are shocked to find Jesus speaking with the woman (v. 27). First-century Jewish readers would have been surprised as well.

During Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman, she discerns that he is a prophet. She says, “Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship” (v. 20). The woman’s confusion is understandable and can be explained by the differences in Jewish and Samaritan thought. The importance of this mountain lies directly behind the Samaritan woman’s question to Jesus, which leads him to indicate that a time would soon come where religious sites would become unimportant, and believers everywhere would worship “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23).

Samaritans taught the priority of Mount Gerazim and downplayed the importance of Jerusalem and the temple there. A large temple complex sat on top of the mountain but was destroyed sometime during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, probably by the Hasmonean ruler John Hyrcanus. Ancient coins dating to the middle of the second century depict this temple, accessible by a staircase connected to the city of Nablus. The ruins of this temple may have been visible to inhabitants in the area in the first century, although almost nothing remains today.

The Samaritan Pentateuch is more than a curiosity for biblical scholars. It is an important piece of evidence in the history of the development of the Hebrew Bible. It also provides valuable background information for understanding the New Testament.



# I Bear In My Body

## THE MARKS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

Gerald Cowan

### **INTRODUCTION: Galatians 6:14-18**

This essay aims to discuss *the marks of the Lord Jesus* and to determine whether or not they are apparent in us, as they were in Paul and should be in all Christians. Our task is complicated somewhat by the fact that words are not always understood alike by all people, especially in a fragmented and denominational Christendom. Examples would include grace, faith, love, law, discipleship, sanctification, baptism, and Christian or Christianity. There are many more. This is apparent in the often contradictory meanings and applications which are given to identical words by various groups or persons professing to be Christian. Each group develops its own theological jargon, a kind of in-house terminology, using the same words, but often with radically different meanings. But if each can assign his own meanings to words, how can we communicate with each other?

The Humpty Dumpty concept prevails in religion as in social discourse. Humpty Dumpty told Alice, "Words mean whatever I choose them to mean, nothing more and nothing less." That implies that the one who determines the meaning of a word is the master of all those who use it. And so, the question is, as Humpty said, "Who is to be master?"<sup>1</sup>

It will be necessary for us to do some word studies to determine biblical meanings and usage, otherwise we will never become true disciples of our true Master, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our particular aim in the present lesson is to learn what *the marks of the Lord Jesus* really are in Galatians 6:17 and then to use that information as a foundation and guide to some random but related studies about such individual marks as faithfulness to the gospel, dedication and personal commitment to the Lord, discipleship, spirituality, love, fellow-

ship, evangelism, repentance, and forgiveness.

Understanding the general theme of Paul's letter to the Galatian churches is essential if we are to understand and apply properly 6:14-18.

### **THE CENTRAL UNIFYING THEME OF THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS IS "THE BELIEVER'S IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST."**

All other themes in the epistle are related to this one. Of many examples that could be cited, we mention but a few.

- Christ, the source of the **new covenant and gospel**. 1:11-12
- Christ is the **end of the Old Law (of Moses for the Jews)**. 3:11-13, 23-25
- The **futility of trying to keep the Old Law**: Christ will be of no benefit. 3:10, 4:9, 5:1-4
- The **differing responses to the cross of Christ**.
  - Stumbling block, scandal to the Jew. 5:11, 3:13.
  - Glory, as the instrument of the believer's redemption and identification with Christ and not just a symbol of it. 6:14
- Contrast in motives. Those who tried to impose and adhere to the Old Law of Moses:
  - Perverted the gospel of Christ. 1:6-8;
  - Were marked by insincerity and dissimulation/divisiveness. 2:12-14;
  - Boasted about the number of Gentile Christians they convinced to receive circumcision and the Old Law and Covenant, and draw them away from Christ. 5:12, 6:12-13
- The Christian, as exemplified by Paul, will always:
  - Seek to be personally identified with Christ. 2:20-21.

<sup>1</sup> Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, chapter 6

- Try to set an example of following Christ for others to follow. 4:12, 4:19, compare 1 Cor. 11:1.
- Serve others in the name of Christ, and in the love of Christ. 6:1-2, 5:6 and 13.
- Seek no glory except that coming through the cross of Christ. 6:14.

Both the method and the results of becoming identified with Christ Jesus are set forth clearly.

- The method of salvation and identification. 3:26-27
  - *Faith in Christ Jesus.* 3:26
  - *Being baptized into Christ.* 3:27
  - By having *put on Christ.* Repentance is implied in conforming to the nature and character of Christ, and doing the will of Christ. 3:27
- The results: Christians, the disciples of Christ...
  - Receive grace and peace from God. 1:3
  - Are delivered from the world. 1:4
  - Receive life, spiritual life – true life. 2:20.
  - Receive the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ. 3:2, 4:6
  - Become sons/children of God. 3:26.
  - Become heirs (of the promises made to Abraham of whom Jesus Christ is the Messianic seed). 3:28-29
  - Have the fruit of the Spirit. 5:22
  - Receive everlasting life. 6:8
  - Know peace, mercy, and grace in their own lives. 6:16-18, compare 1:3.

Now we will proceed to Paul's remark in 6:17. Before we present the true meaning of these words we will examine two false concepts, both of which are very popular. Wide dispersion of a doctrine is not credible evidence of veracity.

### ***"I BEAR IN MY BODY THE MARKS OF THE LORD JESUS."***

Some suggest a "metaphysical or paranormal phenomenon" here. But this is an error, a false concept. The word for *marks* here is **STIGMATA** (the plural of **STIGMA**). It can mean a physical mark, brand, scar, etc. Figuratively, it can be a sign or mark of identification. The word stigma is generally

used in the negative sense today: suspicion, shame, reproach, etc. But trust naive or false religionists to turn it into a personal glorification, a "sure sign" of approval, salvation, and sanctification by God.

There is a supposedly well-documented phenomenon called "the divine stigmata" in which marks, scars, or wounds duplicating those of the crucified Jesus have appeared in the bodies of people – generally in the hands, feet, and side, but sometimes also on the head and back, and sometimes a bloody sweat. The phenomenon supposedly occurs when one becomes personally and intimately identified with the suffering and death of Christ, feeling burdened with the same zeal to save the lost by the sacrifice of oneself (seeing oneself as being literally *crucified with Christ*, 2:20). As a reward, a kind of "divine affliction," these *marks of Jesus* appear in one's body. The first on record is Francis of Assisi (called *Saint Francis* by the Catholic Church), then Catherine of Sienna, followed by a host of others (mostly monks and nuns of various orders. But none is recorded by the Catholic Church prior to the 13th century. (See the article "Stigmata," in **The Catholic Encyclopedia**).

Some believe that this is the kind of thing Paul experienced and to which he referred in his letter to the Galatians (not to be confused with his "thorn in the flesh," of 2 Corinthians 12:7-10). He certainly identified with Christ's death (Romans 6:3-11). He demonstrated a willingness to give himself – even to die – for others, if need be, for their salvation (Romans 9:3, 2 Corinthians 12:15, Colossians 1:24). He spoke of himself as having been *crucified with Christ* (Galatians 2:20, 6:14). It might seem natural to assume that Christ marked Paul as his own with the divine stigmata, giving him wounds like his own wounds of crucifixion, but there are some compelling reasons for rejecting this hypothesis.

First, if Paul had such marks he would not have displayed them or called attention to them as proof that he was a Christian. Such pride would be unbecoming to any Christian, and Paul would surely not be guilty of doing the very things he condemned in others (6:12-14, 5:26). Of all those named as recipients of "divine stigmata," not one can or could be identified as truly obedient to the gospel of the New Testament. All were part of a religious system which perpetrated religious improprieties, which propagated and perpetuated gross religious errors. We would not expect God to honor heretics by branding them

with a sign and seal of divine favor and approval. God would not identify Jesus with someone guilty of serious doctrinal or theological error. There is no scripture evidence that anyone ever received from God any badge of glory and honor in his own person.

How then can the stigmata be explained if they are not from God? Assuming that they are real, and not faked, they could be psychosomatic, self-induced (such things are documented in Abnormal Psychology). They could also be the work of Satan, who would like nothing better than to convince people that they were approved by God (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

The most common explanation offered in denominational commentaries is that Paul's body was marked with the evidence of his service to Christ. He was physically exhausted, worn out, spent in service for the Lord (Romans 6:2-13 and 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 12:15). There were no doubt many scars from the beating, stoning, and other abusive treatment he had endured (2 Corinthians 11:23-33). But there is sufficient reason to question this explanation too. It is too easy to take the obvious surface meaning and miss the deeper more significant meaning. In the epistle Paul stressed the unimportance of marks made in the flesh, in particular the mark of circumcision (5:2 and 6; compare Phil. 3:2). Paul would not be guilty of *making a show of (marks in) the flesh* for which he soundly condemned the Judaizers. Imagine him saying, "Do you want me to bear ritual gashes, cuts, and scars? Well let me tell you something: I have more scars than any of you. But they mark me as Christ's man, and not as a Jew."

If scars proved identification with Christ or showed some superior piety, then the one with the most scars would be the best or greatest Christian. And of course, the one with no scars at all would perhaps not be considered a Christian at all. You can understand, can't you, why those who accepted this premise would deliberately provoke others into persecuting and abusing them, and, failing that, would

practice self-mutilation? That is the term Paul applied to the Judaizers in Philippians 3:2, **KATATOMEN**, **concision** rather than **PERITOMEN**, **circumcision**. He makes a similar play on words in Galatians 5:11-12. There have always been those who abused their bodies in order to pretend piety, or to excite pity, respect and envy from others (1 Kings 18:28, Mt. 6:1-7; compare Hindu fakirs, Simeon Stylites, and others).

Again we say, (1) It is not fleshly signs or marks which identify one as a Christian (Compare Romans 2:27-28 and Philippians 3:3). (2) Persecution, even such as Paul received, is not necessarily a proof of righteousness. One can and perhaps should expect to suffer for his own misdeeds, his sins (2 Timothy 3:12, 1 Peter 4:12-16 and 2:19-20). Some may object that Paul's expression "*I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus*" [RSV has "*on my body*," but this is an interpretation and not a translation of the Greek **EN TO SOMATI MOU**, *in the body of me*] demands that we understand it as something physical, something in the literal flesh. But we shall soon see that this is not necessarily so.

*If scars proved identification with Christ or showed some superior piety, then the one with the most scars would be the best or greatest Christian. And of course, the one with no scars at all would perhaps not be considered a Christian at all.*

### **"MARKS OF JESUS" CAN MEAN THE CHARACTER OR NATURE OF JESUS – THE EVIDENCE OF IDENTIFICATION WITH JESUS.**

*In my body* means while I live, while I am in the body alive in the body. Other statements by Paul will help us understand his meaning of *in the body*. *Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord...* (2 Corinthians 4:10-11). *While we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. We are...willing to be absent from the body and present with the Lord* (2 Corinthians 5:6-9). *I know of a man in Christ...whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell...* (2 Corinthians 12:2-3). Understanding *in the body* to mean physically alive would certainly harmonize with Galatians 2:20, *I am crucified with*

*Christ, nevertheless I live.* The concept of identification with Christ in both one's life and death is presented in Philippians 1:20-21 *For me, to live is Christ* (Compare also Colossians 3:3-4).

It is not physical things – marks in or on the flesh – which are important. The essential thing is that one be *a new creature/creation* (Galatians 6:15). The new creation is a spiritual rather than physical entity (Romans 6:3-5 and 11, 2 Corinthians 5:17). One is re-created in the image of the holy and righteous Lord. (Colossians 3:10, Ephesians 4:23-24, Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:18). The new creature is of the spirit, and will bear the fruit of the Spirit in his life (Galatians 5:16, 18, 22, 25 and 6:8; compare also 3:2-3 and 14).

Paul is consistent in claiming to be identified with Christ, to be the Lord's man. 6:17

- 1:1 An apostle, not of men or by men, but of Jesus Christ.
- 1:4 Delivered from the world by the Lord Jesus.
- 1:10 The servant of Christ, not striving to please men.
- 1:11-12 Preached the gospel revealed to him by Christ.
- 1:16 God was *“pleased to reveal His Son in (through or by) me.”*
- 2:11-12 Publicly rebuked those who misapplied the gospel of Christ.
- 2:20-21 Claimed to have no life apart from Christ.
- 3:26 Was (along with others) a child of God by obedient faith and baptism into Christ.
- 3:29 Belonged to Christ. Compare 5:24a.
- 4:14 *“You received me as a messenger of God...as (you would have received) Christ.”*
- 4:19 Concerned that the character of Christ be formed in others, and not that they become disciples of Paul.
- 5:1 Free in Christ but in bondage and not free apart from Christ.
- 5:24-25 They that are Christ's put the flesh to death and walk in the Spirit and live by the Spirit.
- 6:1-2 Fulfilling the law of Christ, serving others in the name of Christ.
- 6:14 Glorifying in the cross of Christ.
- 6:15-16 Considered himself to be a new creature in Christ, walking according to the rule of

Christ.

- 6:18 *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ* was Paul's desire (for himself as well as) for others.

### **CONCLUSION:**

What is it today that marks one as belonging to Christ? His obedience to the gospel for initial salvation, when his faith has led him to repent and change his life and the direction of his life, and then to obey the Lord in baptism – when he has put on Christ by baptism into Christ (3:26-27). Not until then is he committed to and properly identified with the Lord Jesus Christ.

This new life reflects the character of Christ in such things as love, service, dedication to God, and zeal for the salvation of others that leads one to declare to them the truth of the gospel (6:15-16).

Paul's invitation is always, “Be as I am. Be what I am.” (Galatians 4:12, Philippians 3:15-17). He would still say, as he did to King Agrippa and Governor Festus: *“I would to God that all who hear me were not almost but altogether what I am – except for the chain”* (Acts 26:29).



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# The Marks of Christ

*A Poem by Gerald Cowan*

**(Galatians 2:20, 6:14)**

My living body now must bear  
The marks of Jesus Christ my Lord.  
Not cuts or markings in the flesh.  
Not jeweled cross or scripted word.  
I must in act and attitude  
Give evidence of my accord  
With him, to show the love of God,  
My life for him to be outpoured.

Not on a wooden cross with Christ  
But crucified with Him was Paul  
Who turned away from world and self,  
From privilege prepared to fall  
And, more than that, to suffer loss  
In answer to the Savior's call,  
To suffer with Him countless toils  
And pledge unto the Lord his all.

Crucified with Christ he said,  
Not wounded in his hands or feet  
But with Him made a foe to sin,  
Longing in Him to be complete,  
Ready to spend and to be spent  
To bring more to the Master's feet  
And be invited then to sit,  
With Him, upon the victor's seat.

What marks of Jesus should be found  
In all of us who want to claim  
A place in fellowship with Him,  
To spread abroad the Savior's fame?  
Goodness and kindness, mercy too.  
Self-giving love must be our aim  
To prove we are disciples true  
And have the right to wear His name.

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# Wilt Thou Be Made Whole?

Bill Howard

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At the time of this incident in John 5, Jesus was in Jerusalem. The account states there was a feast of the Jews at that time. While not stated specifically, it was most likely the feast of Passover which was the most celebrated of Jewish feasts. In Jerusalem, in close proximity to the sheep market, there was a pool called Bethesda that was said to have healing capabilities at certain times.

In the five porches at the pool was gathered a great multitude of impotent people; blind, halt, and withered waiting for the moving of the water. An angel, it was believed, at certain times, would stir the water, and whoever was the first to get into the water after would be cured of their ailment.

Jesus saw there a man who had suffered for thirty-eight years with an infirmity, and Jesus had compassion on him. The man evidently was badly crippled and in a pitiful condition, was in need of help, and Jesus was there to help. It was then that Jesus posed the question: *Wilt thou be made whole?*

Our first thought perhaps might be that the question was superfluous. Who, after thirty-eight years as a cripple, would not want to be healed of the malady? Surely anyone in this condition would choose to be healed. However, when we take time to consider the situation, we realize that the question was perfectly in order.

Jesus would not ask a question without reason. He had compassion for this fellow; he desired to help him but would not do so unless the man agreed that he wanted the help. At this point, he did not answer Jesus' question. Instead, he began to explain his situation. He was crippled, had been for thirty-eight years; he was poor—most likely reduced to begging for existence. He was not able to work and earn a living. *I have no man*, meaning there was no man servant or friend to be of help. Others at the pool undoubtedly would not help him because they sought healing for themselves. Having lived for thirty-

eight years with these conditions, perhaps he had grown accustomed to the life he was forced to live. Perhaps, he might think it easier to remain as he is and depend on the dole of others. In view of this, would he choose to accept the responsibilities of making his own way, taking care of his needs?

The account does not give us a record of his answer, but because Jesus asked the question, we know there was an answer. Obviously, he wished to be different, or he would not have been coming to the pool; so we know he indicated that he wanted to be made whole. Jesus had the power to heal the man and could have done so without asking, but he would not override the will of the individual. Jesus told him to rise, take up his bed and walk. The healing was immediate and the man took up his bed and went on his way. He had been made whole.

There are several lessons to be considered in this story, but for now, let us take a look at the analogy between that event and today's world. The world is represented by the cripple at the pool, and Jesus is still full of love and compassion and wants to be of help; he is still asking the question: *Wilt thou be made whole?* In almost every case in the New Testament, the use of the word "whole" as a verb had to do with being healed or being saved. Today the world is crippled in so many different ways; they are almost innumerable. We live in an increasingly immoral world that is sliding into the abyss of sin and ungodliness. Turbulence and unrest are rising to epidemic proportions as many countries are at war with one another. All around us, we see that greed, hatred, jealousy, and division are rampant, permeating the lives of our fellowman. More and more, we see the denial of the existence of God, and certain entities are trying to rule him out of our lives. Striving for worldly acclaim and achieving the finest of all things have, for many, become the most important endeavors of life: these become our idols.

Gambling, drugs, and liquor are responsible for divorce and the destruction of families. It is difficult to find a decent movie or book; for the most part, they promote violence and sexual immorality as the norm for today's world.

Since the time Adam and Eve sinned and were alienated from God, the world has not been what God wants it to be. Recorded history tells us over and over again that man has constantly and deliberately failed to do as God would have us do; failed to be what God would have us to be.

In recognition of all this, it is evident the greatest need for mankind today is to be made whole; to be healed/saved. Jesus' question is perhaps of greater importance today than when asked of the cripple. He was, at that time, dealing with a physical ailment that affected one person. Today the question is for multitudes of people in dire need of being made whole.

Jesus felt love and compassion for the cripple at Bethesda and made a way for him to be healed. God has love and compassion for his creature and has made a way for man to be healed. However, man is going to have to indicate by his obedience that he wishes to be healed. God will not override the will of man. We know He is not willing that anyone should perish by failing to be healed (2 Peter 3:9). He sent his Son Jesus to earth to give his life as a sacrifice so that man could be healed by his shed blood. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14). Jesus said,

*Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me (Revelation 3:20).*

He is willing to heal us, but will not override the God-given right to exercise our will. We will have to open the door to let Jesus into our life. It is in this way that we will be healed. Jesus said,

*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:6).*

John also tells us:

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).*

Jesus told the Apostles:

*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned.(Mark 16:15-16)*

This is how we come to Jesus for healing. When we have done this, then we must be diligent in our service to God and keep ourselves from the worldly things that can destroy our healing and separate us from God. We are warned of partaking of things that can and will cause us to fail.

*Now the works of the flesh are manifest which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in the past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:19-21).*

The Apostle Paul, to the Romans, said:

*I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:1-2)*

Jesus said: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10b). That crown will go to those who have been made whole and live the life that honors and glorifies the living God.

# FIT FOR GOD'S ARMY

Daniel Richardson



Being fit in the military comprises many different components, including, but not limited to: physical fitness, mental fitness, and even emotional well-being. It is vitally important for the men and women in the various military branches to be fit and prepared for their battles. They go through a lot of training to be ready, to be prepared, to be able to execute on the battlefield when the time comes for them to be in combat.

As important as it is for our military to be prepared for battle, it is even more imperative for Christians to be fit for God's Army. We are in a war against evil, against Satan, against everything or everyone that is not on God's side. We need to be prepared, ready, and fit for the war that lays before us on a continual basis—we must be constantly ready for battle.

Our text comes from Judges 7 and 8. Let's start by reading 7:1-7.

*Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley.*

*And the Lord said to Gideon, "The people*

*who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.' Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.'" And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained.*

*But the Lord said to Gideon, "The people are still too many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, that of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' the same shall not go."*

*So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, "Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink."*

*And the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water.*



*Then the Lord said to Gideon, "By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the other people go, every man to his place."*

From chapter 8 verse 10, we learn that the Midianite army consisted of 135,000 men. Gideon started out with 32,000 men. In my book, the odds are really good for the Midianites: 1 Israelite for every 4¼ Midianites. God says nope, not going to happen that way. God did not want Gideon or his men to think that they won on their own and claim glory for themselves (verse 2). Gideon was instructed to purify the ranks, find those truly committed to God, those that could be counted on in any circumstance.

### ***The Courageous***

The first thing Gideon needed to do was send back those that were afraid. Twenty-two thousand went home, 68.75%; nearly 70% were afraid. An overwhelming majority were chicken, scared, and afraid. There is no room in God's Army for those that do not have the courage to carry out God's will. If we are afraid, we have two options: back down and fail or get over it and go forth with God's help.

In Numbers 13, we read about God instructing the 12 spies to check out the land of Canaan. As we all know, 10 of the spies came back with bad reports. Verses 31-33 tell us that the children of Anak were stronger and bigger (they were giants) than the Israelites, so it is no surprise that they were afraid. Many of us would have had the same response. The 10 spies lacked the courage to trust that God would protect them to take the land He had already promised to give to them (Numbers 13:2). They lacked the courage to do God's will. They lacked the courage to be fit for God's Army.

Not following God's will has its price. The spies' cowardice cost a large portion of the Israelites their inheritance of the Promised Land. All the Israelites had to wander for 40 years because of the spies' fearfulness and all those 20 and older when they left Egypt, died during those 40 years (Numbers 32:9-

13).

In chapters 3 and 4 of Exodus, Moses is afraid to face Pharaoh. He comes up with excuse after excuse of why God should choose someone else. Isn't that how we are sometimes today? *Can't you find someone else to teach? I'm not comfortable leading public prayer, isn't there someone else? I don't like door knocking, I may not have all the answers if they ask questions. Isn't that the preacher's job?* The fact is God chose Moses. The fact is God has chosen each of one of us. Moses was afraid to confront Pharaoh, but he found the courage to do it anyway. Moses led the Israelites out of Egyptian captivity. Do we have the courage to confront wrongs? Do we have the

courage to lead others to the truth? If not, who will? We need the courage of Moses to be fit for God's Army.

### ***The Vigilant***

After Gideon sent the fearful home, there were still too many for God's purpose. By now, we have 10,000 left or 1 Israelite for

every 13½ Midianites. It is time for the second test of fitness for God's Army. Gideon leads the remaining 10,000 to the river to watch them drink. Those who stuck their face in the water were set aside from those that cupped their hands and brought them to their face. Those that stuck their face in the water were careless, they were not watchful and vigilant. Those that brought the water to their face using their hands could still watch for the enemy. Those sent home were 9700 or 30.3125% of Gideon's original 32,000. This left Gideon with 300 men, less than 1% of what he started with. He now has 1 Israelite for every 450 Midianites. This battle will certainly require faith on the part of the remaining soldiers.

Too many times it seems we get careless about doing God's will. We let the cares of the world get in the way.

In Luke 12:16-21, we read a parable about the rich fool.

*Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, say-*

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*Not all that is legal is right,  
moral, or acceptable in the  
sight of God.*

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*ing, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry."'*

*But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'*

*"So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."*

He was so concerned with his own possessions and well-being that he had no thoughts toward anyone else or even toward God. It cost him his life and his soul. There is no higher price we can pay than to lose our own soul.

In 2 Samuel 11, we find King David letting the cares of the world get in the way of his service to God. Unlike the rich fool, money was not David's downfall in this account. David wants, desires, and lusts for a married woman, a woman he has no rights to. Not only does he manage to commit the sin of adultery with Bathsheba, he gets her pregnant and decides to attempt a cover-up. After his initial cover-up scheme fails, he sends her husband Uriah to the front of the battle and has the troops around him withdraw so it appears he was killed in the normal course of war. David is then free to marry Bathsheba.

People today are still trying to cover up sinful sexual relations, only now they legally kill the unwanted, accidentally conceived baby. Not all that is legal, though, is right, moral, or acceptable in the sight of God.

David became careless and shirked his responsibility as a man, as a leader, and as a follower of God. Fortunately, that is not the end of David's life. In chapter 12, David repents and is forgiven of his sins. Forgiveness is amazing but it does not alleviate consequences. He still had many consequences to face for his sins, including the death of the child whose conception he tried to cover up. We will all face consequences in this world for our sins. Luke 21:34 warns us of letting the cares of the world keep us from our duty to God.

### ***The Persevering***

The final attribute of fitness for God's Army that we will look at is determination, endurance, or per-

severance.

Let's look at Judges 7:16-21.

*Then he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers.*

*And he said to them, "Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do. When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!'"*

*So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that were in their hands.*

*Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers—they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing—and they cried, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"*

*And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled.*

Now let's read Judges 8:10-11.

*Now Zebah and Zalmunna were at Karkor, and their armies with them, about fifteen thousand, all who were left of all the army of the people of the East; for one hundred and twenty thousand men who drew the sword had fallen.*

*Then Gideon went up by the road of those who dwell in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah; and he attacked the army while the camp felt secure.*

The Midianites numbered 135,000 but Gideon and his men only killed 120,000 of them in the valley of Moreh during the initial battle. Fifteen thousand Midianites fled during the fighting but they didn't get away. Gideon and his men gave chase, overtook, and slew all of those that fled. They stuck with their mission. They had determination. They endured. They persevered. They had the fortitude it took to do God's will. Verse 28 tells us that Midian was subdued.

The apostle Paul stuck with it. He endured. He had determination. He had resolve. He had will power. Second Timothy 4:7 tells us that he finished

his race. He didn't get halfway through and get too tired. He didn't get halfway through and decide to quit. He didn't get halfway through and decide it wasn't worth it. He stuck with it. What did he stick with? What did he go through? Second Corinthians 11:23-28 tells us:

*[I]n labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.*

Most of us cannot even imagine going through a small percentage of what Paul went through. We live in the land of the free, full of opportunities, conveniences, and comforts. The things Paul went through would be considered cruel and even inhumane by today's standards, yet he never gave up. Paul stuck with God and has his reward for it.

In contrast we find Judas in Matthew 27:3-5.

*Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood."*

*And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.*

Judas was an apostle of Christ. He was a follower but then betrayed the Lord for 30 pieces of silver. What I find interesting about Judas, is that he seems to repent but then gives up. He hanged himself. God would have forgiven him but he apparently couldn't forgive himself. He did not stick with it. He gave up on God. When we give up on God, it is up to us to come back. He cannot come get us. We have to go to Him on His terms.

The remaining 300 soldiers in Gideon's army

were courageous, careful and vigilant, and determined to carry out God's will regardless of the cost.

Which of the soldiers are you like? Do you lack the courage to carry out God's will? Do you lack the courage to talk to others about Jesus? Or do you let the cares of this world come between you and your duty to God? Do you persevere? Are you committed to Christ and His church? Are you determined that you are going to follow Christ whatever the cost?

Just as fewer than 1% were fit for Gideon's army, few will be fit for God's army today. Matthew 7:13-14 tells us that many will go in at the wide gate that leads to destruction and few will enter in at the narrow gate that leads to life eternal. It may not be less than 1%, but whatever the number is, we need to make sure we are part of it.

The good news is there is no physical like in the US Army. Illnesses will not keep us from following God. You don't have to go through basic training. There are no age cutoffs. Jesus will take everyone with our strengths and with our weaknesses. Our weaknesses are made strong in Christ (2 Corinthians 12:10).

God's requirements are easy. We have all heard the Word proclaimed numerous times. You must simply repent of your past sins. Have a resolve to no longer live the sinful life. Confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Be buried with Christ in baptism, having your sins washed away, rise again a new creature with a new name, Christian. This is all it takes to get into God's Army. We may fall from time to time but as long as we repent and come back to God as David did and as Peter did after he denied our Lord, we can be restored to our once whole state.

*Soldiers of Christ,  
ARISE!  
And put your armor on!*

# The Destruction of Tyre

Richard Mansel

## Introduction

God's abilities exceed ours in such astounding ways. When we study the power of prophecy, we really see its efficacy. We're unable to know what will happen tomorrow with any accuracy. Yet, God knows perfectly what will occur in a thousand years.

Empires dominate history and studies of their exploits stir the hearts and minds of men even to this day. Their power inspires awe and amazement. Yet, the time comes when their majesty begins to wane and their iron grip tarnishes and weakens.

To be certain, those who rise against God will find destruction (Acts 5:39). Old Testament prophecy is littered with the destruction of great empires and Tyre is one of the more stunning.

## Tyre

Tyre was a powerful and aged city. Scripture says its "antiquity is from ancient days" (Isaiah 23:7).<sup>1</sup> "Strabo adds that Tyre is 'the largest and oldest city of the Phoenicians.' Herodotus was told by local priests when he visited the city some four centuries before the birth of Christ that the city was founded some 2,300 years prior to his visit."<sup>2</sup>

She endured, in part, because she resisted empire-building and was often able to live in peace with mighty powers who lived in the region.<sup>3</sup> She kept to herself and became a master of commerce. Many in the ancient world attributed to Tyre the invention of "navigation, the origin of writing, glass-making, embroidery, and purple-dyeing."<sup>4</sup>

Tyre's plan to be left alone was usually successful unless a country was warlike and intent on destroying everyone with power or wealth. They would eagerly pay tribute rather than have their city

attacked or their trade hindered. And for centuries that was a sustainable system of existence.

Tyre consisted of two parts. Mainland Tyre, also called Ushu, and coastal Tyre, which was an impregnable fortress.<sup>5</sup> "Walls for the island city rose 150 feet skyward. Menacing battlements jutted from the walls at regular intervals. The island's bedrock foundations also made possible the construction of tall buildings" which rose above the fortifications.<sup>6</sup>

"The city on the mainland was the secondary part of the city and principally served to supply the island with water and supplies. One might think of the mainland portion of the city as being the 'suburbs' while the island was the home of the wealthy and those of noble birth. The island also served as the city's religious center and the principal location for trade and commerce."<sup>7</sup>

In time the island became more populated and prosperous than Ushu.<sup>8</sup>

"The happy situation of Tyre, at the upper end of the Mediterranean; the conveniency of its ports, which were both safe and capacious; and the character of its inhabitants, who were industrious, laborious, patient, and extremely courteous to strangers, invited thither merchants from all parts of the globe; so that it might be considered, not so much a city belonging to any particular nation, as the common city of all nations and the center of their commerce."<sup>9</sup>

They were Canaanite and spoke a variation of their language and worshiped their gods. "The particular Baal deity worshiped in Tyre was named

<sup>1</sup> All Scripture citations are from the New King James Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> Kenny Barfield, *The Prophet Motive* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1995), 85.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 87.

<sup>7</sup> <https://biblereadingarcheology.com/2017/09/13/what-happened-to-tyre/comment-page-1/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ancient.eu/Tyre/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.padfield.com/1994/destruction-of-tyre.html>



Melkart (or Melqart). The Greeks saw Melkart as a variation of their own demigod Heracles (or Hercules to the Romans). This connection to the Greek divine hero of myth would play a role in the city's downfall."<sup>10</sup>

Ezekiel outlines the splendor of the city (Ezekiel 27:3-33). But the moral and spiritual aspect of the city was very poor.

Among Tyre's list of despicable activities, the city's slave trade ranked as one of the most profitable. The prophet Joel noted that Tyre had taken the people from Judah and Jerusalem and sold them to the Greeks so that the Tyrians could "remove them far from their borders" (Joel 3:6).

Tyre saw Jerusalem as an economic rival and subsequently wanted them removed.<sup>11</sup> Yet, God would have His say in prophecy (Ezekiel 26:2).

### ***Prophecy***

In Ezekiel 26, God pours out ruin against Tyre and is quite specific in his prophecy. Nebuchadnezzar will besiege the city of Tyre (26:8) and "many nations" will come against them (26:3). Moreover the city will be "laid waste" (26:2), become "plunder for the nations" (26:5), and it will be scraped like a rock (26:4).

Their wealth will be destroyed (26:12) and the city will be made "desolate" (26:19). Ultimately, Tyre will "become a horror, and be no more forever" (27:36).

God says that Nebuchadnezzar will lay siege to Tyre and many nations will assail her.

Ezekiel 26:3 says "many nations" will attack Tyre and 26:7 specifically mentions Nebuchadnezzar. In 26:7-11 in the discussion of Nebuchadnezzar the text always says "he." Then when Ezekiel comes to 26:12, he switches back to "they," which refers back to the plural "many nations." Nothing is really said about Nebuchadnezzar plundering the wealth of Tyre. That is left to the "many nations" in 26:12.<sup>12</sup>

### ***The Siege of Nebuchadnezzar***

It's notable to remind the reader that Tyre consisted of two parts. One part on the mainland called Ushu and a heavily fortified city on the ocean. That

factors very strongly in the details of the prophecy.

We know Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Tyre for thirteen years, thanks to the ancient record.

"I will now add the records of the Phoenicians; for it will not be superfluous to give the reader demonstrations more than enough on this occasion. In them we have this enumeration of the times of their several kings: Nabuchodonosor besieged Tyre for thirteen years in the days of Ithobal, their king; after him reigned Baal, ten years;" (Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1.21)<sup>13</sup>

Nebuchadnezzar was successful in destroying the mainland city of Tyre (Ushu) but didn't have the navy to conquer the island fortress. It's believed that the king of Tyre may have died during the siege and his son, Baal, took over. He may have become a puppet-ruler and he may have negotiated an end to the stalemate with Nebuchadnezzar. "The theory is supported by an ancient list of foreign kings residing in Babylon who like Judean King Jehoiachin were prisoners dependent on the Babylonian monarch for their lives. At the top of this list is an unnamed king of Tyre."<sup>14</sup>

The archaeological record agrees with the Bible.

"A broken cuneiform tablet first published in 1926 by German archaeologist Eckhard Unger refers to provisions of food for 'the king and his soldiers for their march against Tyre.' Other cuneiform tablets show that at some point Tyre was in the hands of the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar."<sup>15</sup>

### ***The Siege of Alexander the Great***

It would take more than a century for Tyre to fully recover from the attack from Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>16</sup> But more trouble was on the horizon. "In 332 BCE, Alexander the Great arrived at the city, fresh from the subjugation of Sidon, and demanded Tyre's surrender."<sup>17</sup>

"Ancient historian Diodorus Siculus, who lived from approximately 80-20 B.C., wrote extensively of the young Greek conqueror's dealing with Tyre. It is from his original work that much of the follow-

<sup>10</sup> <https://biblereadingarcheology.com/2017/09/13/what-happened-to-tyre/comment-page-1/>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>

<http://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=13&article=1790>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.padfield.com/1994/destruction-of-tyre.html>

<sup>14</sup> <https://biblereadingarcheology.com/2017/09/13/what-happened-to-tyre/comment-page-1/>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Barfield, 90.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.ancient.eu/Tyre/>

ing information on Tyre's destruction derives."<sup>18</sup>

Alexander's reputation reached Tyre before his army. Tyrian King Azemilk sent emissaries bearing lavish gifts for Alexander and their subjugation to his authority. Once again, they hoped to avoid the destruction of their city and commerce. Yet, Alexander had a request.

Alexander saw himself as a descendant of the god Heracles, the equivalent of the Tyrian god Melqart. "On statues and images created of Alexander he is depicted wearing or carrying items associated with Heracles. On his coins he is depicted as a youthful and powerful Heracles."<sup>19</sup> So Alexander wanted to come to Tyre and worship at the temple of Melqart.

"The Tyrians could not allow this as it would be sacrilegious for a foreigner to present a sacrifice in the holy home of their god and even more so as the ceremony of the egersis<sup>20</sup> was close at hand. The historian Worthington presents what followed: 'Azemilk, King of Tyre, proposed a compromise. Tyre would become Alexander's ally, but he should sacrifice on the mainland at Old Tyre, opposite the island. An angry Alexander sent envoys to say this was unacceptable and that the Tyrians had to surrender. They murdered the envoys and threw them off their walls'."<sup>21</sup>

Alexander became furious and decided to at-

tack.<sup>22</sup> He quickly dismantled the mainland city of Ushu or the suburbs of Tyre. He then had to figure out how to attack the island fortress. Alexander decided to utilize the wreckage of the mainland city to construct a mole (causeway) to the island fortress.

As his forces began to build, opposition from the Tyrians arose.<sup>23</sup> They used everything from mockery to snipers.



The Island of Tyre in 1943. Note the sand and sediment resulting from Alexander's "Mole"

"Alexander countered by building two of the tallest siege towers in ancient history and then had them moved to the end of causeway. These wooden towers were covered in rawhide to protect the frame from burning arrows. These towers sheltered Alexander's workers from enemy fire and allowed them to continue working. Further, the towers also served as artillery platforms. Catapults and archers at the top of the siege towers

were able to return fire at the soldiers on the walls of Tyre."<sup>24</sup>

Finally, the Tyrians took their sabotage to an entirely new level.

"They outfitted a large merchant ship as a firebomb. Highly flammable materials, possibly naphtha, filled the hold while two masts, serving as a giant spearhead, juttied from the bow. Cauldrons of bitumen, sulfur, and other combustibles hung from the masts. When all was ready and the currents were flowing toward the mole, two triremes manned by the city's finest sailors, towed the floating bomb into position and began their run toward the target. At the last moment, the

<sup>18</sup> <http://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=13&article=1790>

<sup>19</sup> <https://biblereadingarcheology.com/2017/09/13/what-happened-to-tyre/comment-page-1/>

<sup>20</sup> "Each spring, in a carefully choreographed festival called the egersis, an effigy of the god was placed on a giant raft before being ritually burnt as it drifted out to sea while hymns were sung by the assembled crowds. To emphasize the importance of the egersis in maintaining the internal cohesion of the Tyrian people, all foreigners had to leave the city for the duration of the ceremony. " <https://www.ancient.eu/Tyre/>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> "Alexander was furious and immediately threatened to lay siege saying, "You indeed, relying on your situation, because you live on an island, despise this army of foot-soldiers, but I will soon show you that you are on the mainland. Therefore I want you to know that I will either enter your city or besiege it."

<https://biblereadingarcheology.com/2017/09/13/what-happened-to-tyre/comment-page-1/>

<sup>23</sup> Barfield, 92.

<sup>24</sup> <https://biblereadingarcheology.com/2017/09/13/what-happened-to-tyre/comment-page-1/>

two triremes veered to the sides and released the cargo ship in a collision course with the mole. Sailors on board the vessel ignited the fire and jumped overboard to await rescue by other Tyrian ships.”<sup>25</sup>

“The mole ignited and Tyrian marksmen fired at the soldiers who tried to put out the fires.”<sup>26</sup>

After the mole burned, Alexander’s anger solidified his resolve. Tyre would be destroyed. He went back and took everything that remained of Ushu and threw it into the waters and built the mole 200 feet wide.<sup>27</sup>

In time, it reached the island fortress. He had built protective towers to keep snipers and attacks at bay.

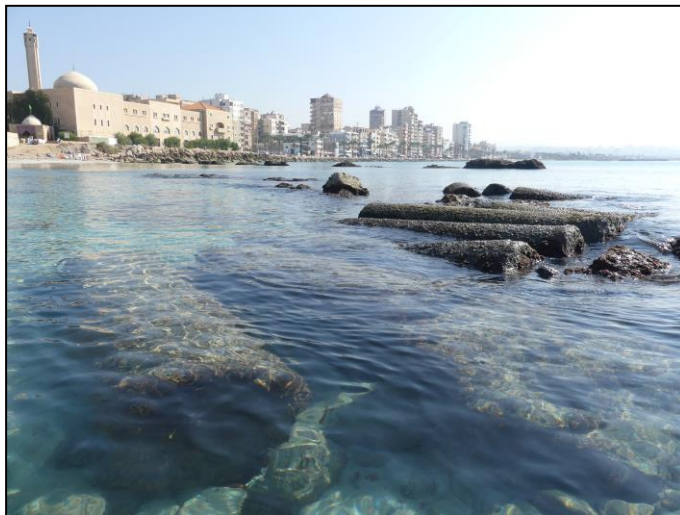
“Alexander was able to obtain ships from Sidon, Greek allies and Cyprus to form a blockade around Tyre.”<sup>28</sup> When the mole was within artillery range of Tyre, Alexander brought up stone throwers and light catapults, reinforced by archers and slingers, for a saturation barrage.”<sup>29</sup>

“Alexander ordered that it be widened further and the siege towers rebuilt. As the causeway was being completed, his new navy tested the city’s defences [sic] at various points and attacked the entrances to the harbours [sic]. Many ships were sunk at the mouths of the harbor but the defenders were able to keep Alexander’s ships at bay. Some of Alexander’s ships were mounted with battering rams and they tested the city walls in a number of locations. Other ships were strapped together so they could support a siege tower tall enough to reach the top of the city walls. Finally, one of the battering ram

equipped ships succeeded in punching a small breach through the walls.”<sup>30</sup>

“To split the Tyrian’s attention, the Greek forces launched a number of diversionary attacks on various points of the islands walls and the navy bombarded the city from all sides with projectiles. With Tyre’s forces fighting on all sides, two ships approached the breached wall.”<sup>31</sup>

Alexander led an elite force into Tyre and panic ensued among the Tyrians.<sup>32</sup>



“Six thousand of the Tyrian defenders died in battle while reportedly, only 400 of Alexander’s men died in the final fight for Tyre. Even if those numbers are exaggerated the disparity was surely great. 30,000 of the citizens of Tyre were subsequently sold into slavery while 2,000 soldiers who had sur-

vived the downfall were forced onto the beaches of Tyre and hung or nailed by the hands onto trees, posts, and rudimentary frames until they were dead. The Roman empire would later famously employ this form of slow public execution called in Latin, ‘crucifixion.’”<sup>33</sup>

“The seven-month siege, from January to July 332 B.C., was over.”<sup>34</sup> The king and several leading citizens were hiding in the temple and were saved.

“Then Alexander went up into the temple, ripped the golden cords from the image of the god (now to be renamed, by decree, Apollo Philalexander), and made his long-delayed sacrifice: the most costly blood-offering even Melkart had ever received.”<sup>35</sup>

The prophecy was true to the letter. One final

<sup>25</sup> Barfield, 93.

<sup>26</sup> Barfield, 93

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.padfield.com/1994/destruction-of-tyre.html>

<sup>28</sup> “Despite this setback, Alexander endeavored to complete the mole though he became increasingly convinced that he would need a formidable navy to capture the city. In this, he benefited from the arrival of 120 ships from Cyprus as well as another 80 or so that defected from the Persians.”

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.ancient.eu/Tyre/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://biblereadingarcheology.com/2017/09/13/what-happened-to-tyre/comment-page-1/>

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

<sup>33</sup> <https://biblereadingarcheology.com/2017/09/13/what-happened-to-tyre/comment-page-1/>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.ancient.eu/Tyre/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://biblereadingarcheology.com/2017/09/13/what-happened-to-tyre/comment-page-1/>



note of interest. Tyre means “rock” and the prophecy said the city would become a “bare rock” (Ezekiel 26:4).

### ***After Destruction***

The last piece of the puzzle involves the desolation of the city for perpetuity. Ezekiel said the city would be “desolate” (26:9) and “would be no more forever” (27:36). Did this happen? Naturally there’s some controversy from those who wish to take away the validity of the prophecy.

Ezekiel foretold that “many nations” (26:3) would assault the city. We’ve read about Babylon and Macedonia. “Eighteen years after Alexander captured the city it was again besieged, this time by Antigonos, one of Alexander’s generals.”<sup>36</sup>

Later, Antiochus III conquered and subjugated Tyre. Rome conquered and partially rebuilt Tyre.<sup>37</sup> Finally, the Saracens in the 14th century AD obliterated the city of Tyre.<sup>38</sup>

“The principal ruins of the city today are those of buildings erected by the Crusaders. There are some Greco-Roman remains, but any left by the Phoenicians lie underneath the present town.”<sup>39</sup>

Today there’s a simple fishing town called Tyre or Sur where over 100,000 people live.<sup>40</sup> But it’s Lebanese Tyre, not Phoenician Tyre. Nothing exists of the original city.

“Looking down into the water one can see a mass of granite columns and stone blocks strewn over the sea bottom. Until recently the ruins of Tyre above water were few. How was the ancient metropolis of Phoenicia so utterly demolished? Devastated by drawn-out sieges and earthquakes throughout her long history, Tyre from the 18th century onward has served as a “quarry” for the whole coast. Her stones may be found as far away as Acre and Beirut.”<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/ezekiel-26/>

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.aboutbibleprophecy.com/tyre.htm>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.padfield.com/1994/destruction-of-tyre.html>

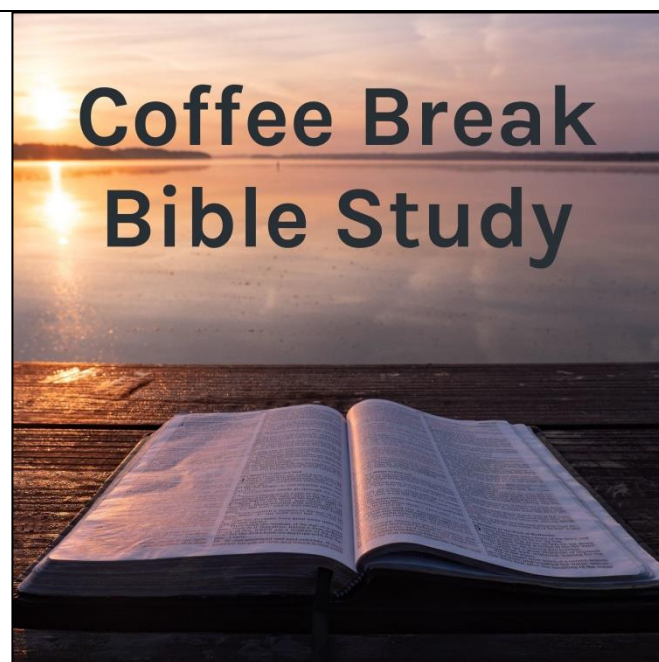
<sup>41</sup> <https://biblearchaeology.org/research/divided-kingdom/3304-ezekiel-26114-a-proof-text-for-inerrancy-or-fallibility-of-the-old-testament>

### ***Conclusion***

The destruction of Tyre is an exciting and fascinating story. It’s full of intrigue, adventure and bravery. Yet, God’s will would be fulfilled. But that doesn’t diminish the thrilling nature of the narrative.

We have to be impressed that Tyre could hold out thirteen years against Babylon and seven months against Alexander.

Tyre went from the heart of world commerce and staggering wealth to a place for fishermen to spread their nets. Rising against God always has a price that has to be paid.



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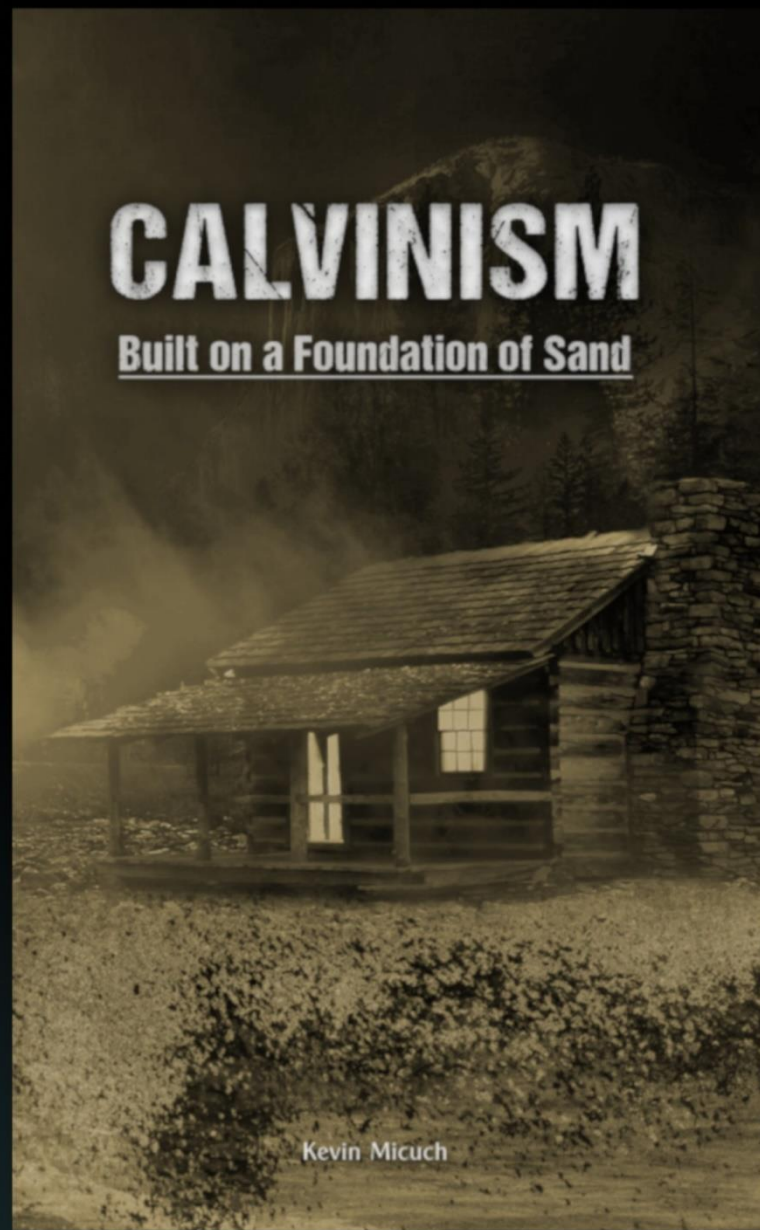
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# LIFTED UP

John Krivak

*“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself,”* declares Jesus in John 12:32. **What a bold claim! Jesus will have drawing power that is universal, but that claim is conditional—only if Jesus is lifted up.** In this passage, that can mean only one thing. By the end of the fourth Gospel, Jesus will be lifted up to hang upon the Cross and die in brutal, barbaric fashion. We know this is what John is pointing at because, in the very next verse, we are told that Jesus said this to indicate the sort of death by which He was going to die.

That’s the claim: if Jesus is lifted up to be crucified, everyone will be drawn to Him. Yet, I dare say before proceeding, we are easily tempted to lift up ourselves in the attempt to draw people. If others can just see US as we are—nice human beings, decent, and welcoming—and in many important ways already like those we hope to attract—then they will find US attractive and we will draw at least some of them to ourselves. **Look at the promotional material on church websites that is designed to attract seekers our way. What do you see: happy Christians at picnic? or Jesus in agony?** Yet Jesus declares that He, from the Cross, can be the only real attraction.

**But exactly who is it that will be lifted up? The Gospel of John declares that Jesus is an absolutely unique being who comes to us from a totally different realm, a realm of undiminished glory.** Not just a different planet or galaxy—because any

other planet or galaxy is still part of this realm. No, Jesus is from a place of such glory that it would overwhelm us with *“unapproachable light”* (1 Tim. 6:16). But Jesus came from there to here, as light into a place of darkness (John 1:6-9). He brought glory with Him, but it was usually dimmed down. **If you saw Jesus at night in a crowd, He would not glow. But sometimes He would SAY something, or DO something—and the glory would burst forth!** After such incidents people would know, inside themselves, that they had just experienced something extraordinary. As John put it in 1:14, *“and we beheld His glory.”*

But of all that Jesus said or did, nothing—save for the Cross—had enough glory to draw all people. The Sermon on the Mount would not do it, nor the parables. Nor healing a blind man, or bringing a little girl who had died back to life, or feeding 5,000 people miraculously in the desert—those “little glories” might draw a crowd, maybe even a large crowd. But the only way to draw all people was for Jesus to be lifted up on the Cross! **John sees the glory of God shining nowhere more brightly and intensely than while Jesus hangs there, lifted up on the Cross to which He has been nailed, hand and feet.** Nowhere else is the love of God more on display; nowhere does God’s grace run deeper; nowhere more does the power of salvation more overwhelm than when Jesus mounts the Cross: *“and we beheld His glory!”*

However, the grand claim regarding Jesus' drawing power must be tempered by realism. **There is no illusion about achieving triumphant universalism.** Just two chapters previous (10:1-18), John declared Jesus to be the Good Shepherd. Yet there were/are other shepherds who were imposters with bad motivations—and they also would attract sheep in a following. But the ones Jesus identified as “my sheep” would not only disregard the voices of the other shepherds, they would run the other way! These sheep knew the voice of Jesus and followed only Him: *“I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me”* (John 10:14, NASB). So when Jesus makes claim to draw “all men” to himself, He referred only to those who knew Jesus as their shepherd. That is an astonishing claim nonetheless!

I am recovering the claim that Jesus is not merely the “dead hero of the church.” And I can make that claim because Jesus is not dead; He is alive forever more! Jesus is not lying entombed in some grave; He is exalted and reigns in Heaven at the right hand of the throne of God! Sometimes our people talk of Jesus only in the past tense. **We remember Him in the past for what He did and how He got the church started. And we appreciate Jesus for that and keep His memory alive.** But now our Hero is long gone, and has left us in the church to carry on in His place. He got the ball rolling, but it's now up to us to get it across the finish line because Jesus has left us alone. **But what you often aren't told is that the power and the presence of Jesus are experienced right now in His church! Jesus is not dead; He is alive!** And He is not merely a hero located in history; Jesus is the reigning Lord whose power and presence fill the church!

Why then don't we experience that? Why does our religion get so dry and dusty? It's because Jesus has to be “lifted up,” not just on the Cross but also in your heart! **You say, well how do I lift up Jesus in my heart? Listen, you take your place before the Cross and take it all in—and you simply let your heart respond. It will happen automatically, unless your heart has some kind of blockage (a**

*... He is not merely a hero located in history; Jesus is the reigning Lord whose power and presence fill the church!*

pride issue or a sin issue, or some inner hurt or pain that has never healed). Let yourself see **WHAT** Jesus suffered and consider in your heart **WHY** He went through all of that. You will then know that Jesus is lifted up when three things happen:

1. You will know Jesus is lifted up when there remains nothing above Jesus in your heart. Jesus is the one treasure that makes you give up anything else, or anyone else. Once you understand the Cross, everything else becomes secondary. Everything else is less important and less of a priority. **Jesus sits at the very top, lifted up in heart.**
2. You will know Jesus is lifted up in your heart when seeing His death brings you to die yourself. When Paul wrote about baptism in Romans 6, he declared in v. 6: *“that our old self was crucified with Him.”* **What about you? In your conversion to Jesus, did you actually die? Like Paul (Gal. 2:20), were you crucified with the Christ?** One part of that experience is dying to sin, and the other part is dying to self. Because of Jesus, you say “No!” to sin and you say “No!” to yourself. **Death for Jesus, on the Cross, meant total sacrifice given for you; when you answer with total sacrifice of your own life for Jesus, that is your cross-death (2 Cor. 5:14-15)! You will experience that if you have lifted up Jesus in your heart.**

3. **You will know Jesus is lifted up when glory fills your heart. And when we say that, we are in the territory that we call “relationship,” right?** Now think back—isn't it true that every time your heart has been absolutely lit up, that happened because of special relationship with somebody, right? It just works that way: before hearts are lit up, they are folded into relationships of rare quality. Jesus will light up your heart if He is “lifted up” inside your heart, and for that to happen there has to be a lively give-and-take between you and Jesus, right? The Bible describes that in a lot of ways:

- Two disciples walking to Emmaus, after the Resurrection, spent time with the risen Jesus. After Jesus had left them, they reminisced

together how they had **felt their hearts burning within them** (Luke 24:32). That was an experience of glory!

- Paul described **the sensation of having the love of God poured out in his heart through the Holy Spirit** (Romans 5:5). The power and presence of the church's Lord are mediated by the indwelling Spirit, and the heart experiences this as glory.
- The apostle Peter describes the sensation in the heart as **"inexpressible and glorious joy"** (1 Pet. 1:8) and he told us the secret of that in 3:15. It's when you *"sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord"*; you mark out a place in your heart where holiness is set aside for Jesus, you keep a clean place in your heart because that is where you will keep Jesus. That is where you will keep Him as Lord. And that place in your heart has to be a "lifted up" place. You don't give Jesus a place in the basement, or a tiny out-of-the-way closet, you lift Him up to the highest place in your heart—and when you do that, the glory of Jesus will fill your heart with inexpressible and glorious joy!

**Finally, to draw all people—Jesus also has to be lifted up to the place of absolute authority.** In one sense that has already happened. After the Resurrection, Jesus walked about on the earth. He spent about 40 days teaching His disciples about the Kingdom of God. Then one day, as He stood with them, Jesus was lifted up into the clouds, into heaven, until they could see Him no longer. Where did He go? He returned to the place we call Heaven—the realm of glory and unapproachable light that we all hope to reach. The Bible says that when Jesus ascended to Heaven, He sat down upon a throne—as King over the Kingdom of God. The Word, who in the beginning was with God, is now again with God forever more. God lifted Him up to the highest place, and strange as it seems, Jesus was exalted so high precisely because Jesus had lowered himself to the lowest place—and you know what I'm talking about, don't you! When Jesus was "lifted up" on the Cross, He was brought so low that the only way to go, from there, was up! The lowly Cross lifted up Jesus to highest authority.

**But Jesus will have drawing power only when He is lifted up in absolute authority over individual hearts!** God raised Jesus in authority over the

universe; but only you can lift up Jesus over your heart. His right to rule has to be acknowledged and honored. Salvation belongs to those who "confess" the Lordship of Jesus (Romans 10:9-10). This is akin to the disciple-making instruction of the Great Commission demanding consent *"to observe all that I commanded you"* (Matt. 28:20). **In each case, Jesus is lifted up "as Lord" when individual hearts bend the knee in willingly rendered submission and obedience.** Jesus will not "lord it over" you with coercive, domineering force. What Jesus did on the Cross convinced the Father that He is worthy of absolute authority over all creation. Does the Crucifixion convince you that He is worthy of authority as Lord over your heart?

**Have you heard about the "great reversal"?** It is coming and it will be a total shock! The polarization of humanity is to be absolutely reversed. The Bible says that God is going to take everything that is "up" and bring it down. At the same time, God is going to gently lift up what is lowly and debased, raising it to the top. The exalted will forcibly be humbled, and the humble will take their places. Those rich now will be impoverished then, and the poor now will take possession on that day. The great reversal appears all through the Bible (Job 5:11-13; Ezek. 17:24, 21:26; Luke 1:46-53; Matt. 23:10-12; 2 Thess. 1:5-12; James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6). The time is coming—take it to the bank!—when everything will change places.

But actually, the great reversal has already started and has already been set in motion. When Jesus took the Cross, He called ALL PEOPLE to position themselves with Him. They will lift Him up when they abase and humble themselves. With reversal coming, the desired position in society to be sought at the present time is poverty, shame, dishonor, disempowerment, and humiliation. You take your place at the bottom because Jesus went there by being "lifted up." That is the drawing power that draws "all people" to Jesus.



BIBLICAL BIOGRAPHY:

# Thaddaeus

Bradley S. Cobb

This apostle is known by three different names; in fact, Jerome later called him “trinomius” (“three names”),<sup>1</sup> but we are told very little else about him. His name, according to Matthew, was “Lebbaeus,”<sup>2</sup> the meaning of which is not certain,<sup>3</sup> though some say it means “courageous”<sup>4</sup> or “man of heart,”<sup>5</sup> while others say it means “beloved child.”<sup>6</sup> This same inspired writer says that his surname was “Thaddaeus,” which is also of unknown origin, but some dictionaries have said it means the same: “man of heart” or “courageous.”<sup>7</sup>

But, taking the list as Luke gives it, we find that this disciple had another name: Judas.

## *The Other “Judas”*

In the place where Matthew and Mark place “Thaddaeus,” Luke puts “Judas of James.” Almost all translations insert either “the son of” or “the brother of” in this description.<sup>8</sup> So, which one is it

<sup>1</sup> See J.G. Tasker’s article on “Judas” in James Hasting’s *Dictionary of Christ in the Gospels*.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 10:3. There is a debate as to the validity of this reading, as a very small minority of manuscripts are missing the name “Lebbaeus.” For more information about these variants, see Nestle’s article in James Hasting’s *Dictionary of Christ in the Gospels*, “Lebbaeus.”

<sup>3</sup> See Nestle’s article in Hasting’s *Dictionary of Christ in the Gospels*, “Lebbaeus.” Also, McClintock and Strong’s *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Vol. 5, page 315, gives several possibilities that have been argued for the meaning.

<sup>4</sup> *Easton’s Bible Dictionary*, “Lebbaeus.”

<sup>5</sup> *Smith’s Bible Dictionary*, “Lebbaeus.”

<sup>6</sup> *Vincent’s Word Studies*, note on Mark 3:18.

<sup>7</sup> See Thayer’s dictionary, “Lebbaeus” (G2280). However, *Easton’s Bible Dictionary* (“Thaddaeus”) says that the name means “Breast,” and Nestle (Hasting’s *Dictionary of Christ in the Gospels*, “Lebbaeus”) records the theory that a scribe made a slight alteration (the extra “b,” apparently) so as to not give the apostle an “undignified” name that meant “mamma” (as in “mammogram”).

<sup>8</sup> Compare the King James’ Version with most modern translations in Acts 1:13.



supposed to be?

Some translations read “Judas, the brother of James” because the author of Jude (also named “Judas”) calls himself “the brother of James.” As such, the translators assumed that they must be the same person, laboring under the idea that only the apostles were inspired.<sup>9</sup> If this were the case, then Thaddaeus was the brother of James and Matthew, and was also a son of Alphaeus.<sup>10</sup> There are those who, because they insist that James the son of Alphaeus

<sup>9</sup> N.T. Caton, in his *Commentary on the Minor Epistles*, took the position that only the apostles were inspired, and that Luke and Mark received their information from apostles (primarily Paul and Peter, respectively).

<sup>10</sup> See chapters on Matthew and James, the son of Alphaeus, for more discussion on their relationship.

must also be the “brother of Jesus,” believe that Thaddaeus is also Jesus’ brother, Judas, mentioned in Matthew 13:55.<sup>11</sup>

Most translations, however, read “Judas, the son of James.” This is because it is the same Greek structure as “James, the son of Zebedee,” and “James, the son of Alphaeus.”<sup>12</sup> This presents no theological problems, no contradictions with the biblical text. It does, however, show that the author of Jude was not one of the apostles.

### ***Why the Different Names?***

It has been suggested by at least one writer that Matthew and Mark were trying to make certain there was no confusion between the faithful Judas and the wicked Judas Iscariot,<sup>13</sup> while Luke, being the historian, gave his actual name.<sup>14</sup> John used the name “Judas,” but followed it immediately with “not Iscariot.”<sup>15</sup> Another said that Thaddaeus was chosen to be an apostle, but that he died during Jesus’ ministry and was replaced by Judas, the son of James.<sup>16</sup> Obviously, that can’t be the case, for Luke and Mark record the same event—the choosing of the apostles—and one lists “Thaddaeus” while the other lists “Judas, the son of James.”<sup>17</sup>

The first of these two suggestions seems most likely.<sup>18</sup>

### ***The Recorded Words of Thaddaeus***

The only specific action of Thaddaeus, apart from the other apostles, is recorded in John 14:22. The Lord’s Supper has concluded, Jesus has an-

nounced His departure, but told the apostles that He would not leave them comfortless. He tells the apostles that He will manifest Himself to them, even though the world will not see Him. This is when Thaddaeus (a.k.a., Judas, the son of James) speaks:

*He, Judas (not the Iscariot), speaks to Him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, but not to the world?”*

Literally, he asked Jesus, “what has happened that you are about to manifest yourself to us, and not the world?”<sup>19</sup> Thaddaeus didn’t understand what Jesus was talking about, but the Lord had reference to the sending of the Holy Spirit.<sup>20</sup> This is something that would not be given to the world, but only to those who kept Jesus’ commandments.

### ***Traditions about Thaddaeus***

The apocryphal *Genealogies of the Apostles* says that Thaddaeus was of the house of Joseph (thus of Ephraim or Manasseh),<sup>21</sup> while a 13<sup>th</sup> century collection of biblical legends, called *The Book of the Bee*, says he was from the tribe of Judah.<sup>22</sup>

There was once a work entitled *The Gospel of Thaddaeus*, but no surviving copies exist. A third or fourth century work, called the *Constitutions of the Apostles*, which falsely claims to be a joint-effort of the twelve, has Thaddaeus teaching that a widow who recently lost her mate is not to be taken in by the church until she had proven that she was going to stay godly. The same writing claims that Thaddaeus said exorcists were not ordained (given that role by the church), but anyone who could prove they were truly an exorcist was to be ordained as a bishop, presbyter, or deacon.<sup>23</sup>

The *Acts of Thaddaeus* says that the apostle was born in Edessa, northwest of Asia Minor, and that he returned there after the ascension of Jesus to teach the king, Abgar, and the other inhabitants of the city, about the Lord. He had a very successful mission trip, and the king helped to destroy the idol temples in the area. Afterwards, it is said that he went south

<sup>11</sup> Most Catholics seem to take this position, though the New American Bible (which is a Catholic production) translates Acts 1:13 as “Judas, son of James,” which opposes their traditional view.

<sup>12</sup> See Matthew 10:2-4 in Greek. Young’s Literal Translation says “James of Zebedee” and “James of Alphaeus.”

<sup>13</sup> Nestle, “Lebbaeus” in James Hasting’s *Dictionary of Christ in the Gospels*.

<sup>14</sup> I could find no sources that stated this part of the theory, but it seems to be the best explanation as to why Luke would differ from the other two lists.

<sup>15</sup> John 14:22

<sup>16</sup> See *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, “Judas of James.”

<sup>17</sup> Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16.

<sup>18</sup> In addition to this name confusion, there are also several manuscripts of Latin and Syrian origin that read “Judas Zealot” or “Judas Thomas” in place of “Thaddaeus” in Matthew and Mark’s accounts. These most likely stem from traditions about the apostles that were assumed to be true, and thus placed in the text itself. See James Hasting’s *Dictionary of Christ in the Gospels*, “Lebbaeus.”

<sup>19</sup> Modern Literal Version. See also *Vincent’s Word Studies* at this passage.

<sup>20</sup> John 14:17.

<sup>21</sup> See Budge, *Contendings of the Apostles*, Vol. 2, page 50.

<sup>22</sup> See *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, “Thaddaeus.”

<sup>23</sup> *Apostolic Constitutions*, Book 8, chapters 25-26. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 7, page 493. Since the Bible describes bishops and presbyters (elders) as the same people, this later work cannot be considered authoritative at all.

into Syria and preached there for five years before dying a natural death.<sup>24</sup>

Other traditions, however, include Arabia, Mesopotamia, and Persia among Thaddaeus' mission fields. One early church historian says that Thaddaeus was martyred in Syria.<sup>25</sup>

Assadour Antreassian, in his book *Jerusalem and the Armenians*, states:

*[A]ll Christian Churches accept the tradi-*



<sup>24</sup> *The Acts of the Holy Apostle Thaddaeus, One of the Twelve*. See *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 8, pages 558-559. The legend regarding King Abgar (or Abgarus) is fascinating. Abgar wrote to Jesus after hearing about the miracles He had done, inviting Him to come to Edessa to escape the horrible Jews. Jesus sent word back that after He ascended, He would send Thaddaeus to Edessa to preach. There are some documents which have a variation on this legend, making Thomas the missionary instead of Thaddaeus, or which have Thomas sending Thaddaeus. Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*, Book 1, chapter 13) claims to have seen the original documents and translated them himself, including a response from Jesus.

<sup>25</sup> See McBirnie, *The Search for the Twelve Apostles*, page 198. The church historian is Nicephorus Callistus.

*tion that Christianity was preached in Armenia by the Apostles Thaddaeus and Bartholomew in the first half of the first century... Armenia was among the first to respond to the call of Christ so early. Thus, the above mentioned Apostles became the first illuminators of Armenia. The generally accepted chronology gives a period of eight years to the mission of St. Thaddaeus (35-43 AD) and sixteen years to that to St. Bartholomew (44-60 AD), both of whom suffered martyrdom in Armenia (Thaddaeus at Ardaze in 50 AD and Bartholomew at [Derbend] in 68 AD).<sup>26</sup>*

Roman Catholic tradition says that in Persia, Thaddaeus was "martyred with a javelin or with arrows or by being tied to a cross."<sup>27</sup> Some claim that traditions have him murdered and buried in Egypt or Beirut.<sup>28</sup> The most specific record of his death says that he was killed with arrows on Mt. Ararat.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Assadour Antreassian, *Jerusalem and the Armenians*, page 20, as quoted in McBirnie, *The Search for the Twelve Apostles*, page 199. McBirnie goes on to relate that other traditions date Thaddaeus' missionary work in Armenia from 43-66.

<sup>27</sup> Mary Sharp, *Traveler's Guide to Saints in Europe*, as quoted by McBirnie, *The Search for the Twelve Apostles*, page 202.

<sup>28</sup> *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, "Thaddaeus." McBirnie, however, investigated these supposed traditions and discovered that the various religious groups in those areas had never heard of those traditions. See his *The Search for the Twelve Apostles*, pages 202-203.

<sup>29</sup> McBirnie, *The Search for the Twelve Apostles*, page 204.

He carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain, great and high, and showed me the sacred city, Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven... Its wall, great and high, has twelve gates. At the gates are twelve angels, inscribed with the names of Israel's twelve tribes... The wall of the city has twelve foundations, on which are inscribed the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (Revelation 21:10-14)



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# EVANGELISM THAT WORKS

Mark E. Bass

I have been preaching the gospel for almost 49 years (where have the years gone?). In that time I have seen all kinds of programs, gimmicks and ideas promoted in the name of evangelism and church growth. I suppose that most of these met with some degree of success. Invariably these ideas would be used and promoted until something “newer and better” came along. But in spite of these efforts, we must admit that we have done a dismal job of evangelizing the world over the past five decades or so.

According to an article in the *Christian Chronicle*, membership in the Lord’s Church has decreased approximately 5% over the last three years. I know from personal observation that many congregations have shut their doors in the past decade. Scores of others are only hanging on by a thread. My question is this: How many others will be “gone” in the next decade? We have all seen it time and time again: The young people grow up and often times leave the church; the older members die off. Not enough babies are being born to replace the dead and the congregation gets smaller and smaller. Why? Because they are failing to evangelize!

You would be hard pressed to find anyone who takes issue with the premise that the Lord’s Church faces an uphill battle if we are to carry out the great commission. You will find a variety of ideas as to why we have failed. The purpose of this article is not to establish the fact that we have failed in carrying out the great commission; rather it is to consider some of the reasons for this failure (many other reasons could be given in addition to these).

## ***Not My Job***

In many cases, we have failed to carry out the Great Commission because we think that evangelism is primarily the preacher’s job. “After all, isn’t that what we pay him for?” Sadly, many Christians/Congregations have adopted the “Pastor System” of the denominational world. In other words, we pay the preacher to do the work of the church. We expect him to visit the sick and the shut-ins, welcome new-comers to the community, be the

church’s public relations representative and most anything else that needs to be done. If there are those who need to be taught the gospel, that’s the preacher’s job too.

Not only is this idea unscriptural, it is self-defeating! Think of the growth we would experience if *every* member took soul winning seriously. Let’s assume that the average congregation has fifty adult members. If each of these members would conduct Bible studies with their friends, family and co-workers and would convert one person in the next twelve months; they could double their adult membership. If they would do this for the next five years, think of the results we would see. The following numbers bear this out.

Year	Membership	New Converts
Year 1	50	50
Year 2	100	100
Year 3	200	200
Year 4	400	400
Year 5	800	800

At the end of year 5, that congregation would have gone from 50 adult members to 1,600!

I realize that these numbers do not reflect births, deaths or new members moving into the community; but they do illustrate what could happen if every member accepted his/her responsibility to evangelize. But, until every member takes soul winning seriously, the church is not going to grow as the Lord intended.

The great commission was not given exclusively to preachers. Look closely at the words of Matthew 28:18-20: the apostles were to teach the gospel to others (i.e., make converts). Those new converts then had the responsibility to teach others. It was an ongoing process of teaching and growth.

This fact explains the tremendous growth of the early church. Every Christian was a soul winner. Re-read the book of Acts and look at all the verses that talk about church growth. Acts 16:5 says that the church...“increased in number daily.” Frankly, I have never heard of a congregation in our genera-

tion that had daily baptisms.

### ***Getting Away From Basics***

Many congregations are failing to evangelize (effectively) because they have gotten away from the basics. Things that have worked for years have been discarded by many brethren. Tens of thousands have been taught and baptized using the old Jule Miller film strips/videos, the Open Bible Study, and Bible Correspondence Courses. These methods have proven effective across the country. However, in recent years some have decided that they need something new or something “flashy.”

There is nothing wrong with using technology to spread the gospel. But simply having a web-page is not effective evangelism. Mass mailings (digital or paper) are fine, but they can never replace the human factor. Until we get back to friends studying with friends and neighbors inviting neighbors we are not going to be effective in reaching the lost!

### ***Excuses***

Perhaps another reason we have not had much success in evangelism is due to the fact that we make excuses for our failure.

How many times have we excused our lack of growth by saying, “People around here just aren’t interested in the gospel.” “This is strong \_\_\_\_\_ country.” (Fill in the name of the denomination.) Often times there is an underlying reason (s) for this lack of interest. In many places our neighbors have seen the hypocrisy and lack of commitment on the part of some church members and this has soured them on the Lord’s Church. When the world sees true New Testament Christianity in the lives of church members, they are more likely to be interested! But as long as they see bickering, back-biting and worldliness they are going to be turned off to the gospel (and rightfully so).

Others excuse themselves by saying, “I don’t know how to do personal evangelism” or “I don’t know enough to teach someone else.” Perhaps such excuses from new converts can be overlooked (for a time). However, when folks have been Christians for years and still claim ignorance, something is wrong. If you don’t know enough to teach others, shame on you; it’s time you were learning. If nothing else, you can set up a study and then have the preacher, an elder, or someone else help you.

Today, we are blessed with all sorts of teaching aids: correspondence courses (electronic and print-

ed), tracts, videos, and other things. One of the keys to personal evangelism is desire—we must desire to teach the gospel to others. When we have the desire, we will learn how to do it!

### ***Failure to Look for Opportunities***

Perhaps one of the greatest reasons we have failed to evangelize is the fact that many Christians fail to look for opportunities to teach. We must never forget that everyone we meet is a prospect. What about the waitress who serves us at lunch? Have you ever invited her to worship? Have you ever left her a tract? What about the plumber who comes to repair our leaky sink? Have you ever invited him to attend a gospel meeting or asked if he would like to study the Bible? What about the new guy or gal at work? Have you ever told them about *Muscle and A Shovel* and offered to let them read it? It’s a great way to open the door of evangelism. We never know who is interested until we approach them. I know that many people will respond, “I’m not interested,” or “I have my own church.” However, there are many who are searching for the truth.

Perhaps many Christians have not stopped to consider the eternal consequences of our failure to teach others. Ask yourself, “How many people will be lost because I made no effort to reach them?” If that doesn’t make you stop and think, I don’t know what would! We would never dream of allowing our neighbors to remain asleep while their house burned down around them. We would bang on the door or even break it down in order to save them. What about their souls? Are we as concerned about their eternal salvation as we are about their physical lives?

Let’s make up our minds that we are going to be more evangelistic in the new year. Let’s look for opportunities to teach others the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

*“I am not ashamed  
of the Gospel of  
Jesus Christ”  
-Paul*

# ENTHUSIASM EVANGELISM

*Bradley S. Cobb*

One of the biggest problems facing members of Christ's church is a fear of evangelism. Many won't bring up Christianity because they feel unprepared to answer hard questions that might come up. Others won't bring it up because they don't remember the exact Bible references to give to people.

But there is something that we can all do to evangelize which is (1) easy, and (2) effective when done sincerely. And what is that? I'm glad you asked.

## **Speak positively about the church and its activities.**

Excitement is contagious. That's been proven over and over again in both scientific studies and real-life experience. Thus, when you are excited about the church and the things the church is doing, you can get others excited about it too.

### ***Why is this effective?***

#### ***Here are some reasons:***

- It doesn't involve debating theological issues or hard questions.
- It allows you to simply share something you're excited about—and most people are happy to listen to that kind of approach.
- It allows you to talk about the church in a way

that makes it attractive to people—because almost everyone wants to be part of something worth talking about.

- An invitation of “You ought to come with me next week” is a lot more appealing when you're excited about going in the first place.

In order for you to do this, though, you need to (1) actually like spending time with the church, and (2) know about the things the church is doing and involved in. Such as:

- Share about the native preachers that are trained in Africa (including names, if you can) because of your support.
- Share what the youth group is doing.
- Share the joy that you have with other Christians at the potlucks, or the ladies' classes or get-togethers, or the family game nights, or other activities shared with other congregations.
- Share about a sermon series, or a Bible class topic.

Try it. You just might find that you like it, and that other people are looking for a place to be excited about as well.

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## *Connection Ministry:*

### **How to Plan a Successful and Scriptural Church Event**

*Jason Floyd*

I didn't go to Christian camps very much as a kid. It wasn't until I was a young adult that I signed up to become a counselor at a week-long camp during the dog days of summer. I had heard good things about these camps, but it was not until I experienced them for myself that I realized their great value. They are a mission field in which the people come

to you; you don't have to search for those in need.

While their peers back home might have been drinking and partying, dozens of youth at Christian camps were singing four-part harmony or were giving lessons they had prepared themselves. The backgrounds of the children were as diverse as the activities, and I came to realize what a beautiful

thing this was. With the help of the counselors, those who were stronger in the faith were able to show the love of God to those who needed spiritual encouragement, while those who were weak or were not yet Christians saw other young people able to have a good time while still committed to their God. It was the first time in my life that I witnessed a third of the people in attendance respond to the invitation after the lesson. I saw many people baptized over the course of the week, and although the number paled compared to the 3000 baptisms on the day of Pentecost, I felt I had caught a glimpse of what it would have felt like to have been there.

So many of the events at camp were not necessarily “church activities.” There were softball games, shaving cream fights, and silly songs about birds and a shark family that will now be in your heads the rest of the day (you’re welcome). It seemed almost everyone was having an amazing time enjoying all the planned activities as well the simple, unscheduled time together.

As I watched these events unfold, I thought of how good it would be for the youth of my own congregation to be a part of this experience, and how much camp could affect their walks with God. It was at this point that I began to fall in love with what I call Connection Ministry—that is, connecting people to others that you know will have profound influences on their lives. Obviously, this can never replace the personal responsibility that we all have for evangelism, and each Christian has their own set of talents that they must utilize in order to be faithful to God. But we each have *different* talents. You may be able to say or do something or help someone in a way I couldn’t, as well as vice versa. 1 Corinthians 12 lists several types of abilities among Christians. This passage doesn’t say one talent is better than another; on the contrary, it says,

*For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, “Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, “Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? (vv. 14-17).*

We all have certain gifts and skill sets that are valuable for the kingdom, and that is why we must make connections with our brothers and sisters in

Christ. I know I can connect others who have abilities much greater than my own! Planning and organizing brotherhood events is one of the best ways to practice Connection Ministry. I’m so thankful for lectureships, gospel meetings, etc., where I was able to hear lessons from different viewpoints than in my home congregation, simply because they were from a different person, with different experiences and a different skill set.

While I don’t claim to be an expert on the topic of planning brotherhood activities, I’ve developed philosophies over the years for how to conduct successful (and still scriptural) events. As long as an event doesn’t contradict Scripture, there is no right or wrong way to organize it, but I have compiled a few personal guidelines that have been helpful for me and the congregations I’ve attended.

### **1. Make it Biblical.**

A house is only as strong as the foundation it is built upon. The same is true for any event your congregation plans. Whatever we plan must be done in the name of the Lord (Col. 3:17), and therefore must meet His approval. If it is an event with scheduled Bible speakers, we must be sure that they are strong in the faith (2 Tim. 1:13). Likewise, if it is an event where Bible classes will be taught, such as a VBS, teachers need to be rooted in the truth. We are undermining our efforts if those in charge are teaching false doctrine. Can you imagine the sadness many people will feel on the last day when they find out their “wonderful works” were not accepted by God (Matt. 7:22)? It is truly painful to imagine being so uplifted only to find what we were doing was in vain. We certainly do not want to be like the Pharisees in Matt. 15:7-9 that were drawing near to God with their mouths, but were worshiping in vain. At the same time, however, it’s important to remember a similar flaw in the Pharisees, who were condemning those who were not keeping the letter of the law, while missing the bigger picture of Christ’s love (Matt. 12:1-7).

It is critical to remember that not everyone is at the same level of spiritual maturity and that our newer brothers and sisters should not be excluded from helping with church events. In fact, it is the ‘baby’ Christians that most need to be actively engaged in the planning and execution of events. A new brother might say or do something that we don’t feel perfectly lines up with a Christian’s walk, but we must be willing to extend grace and still ac-



cept those who are weak in the faith (Rom 14:1). If we feel that someone needs correction, the greatest of care should be taken to ensure we recognize the value they bring to the event and the Kingdom as a whole. These should be learning opportunities, not times for people to feel discouraged! Having strong, faithful leadership to oversee this process is the most important key to carrying out successful but Biblical events.

## ***2. Make it meaningful.***

As important as it is for events to be sound in doctrine, it is also essential to do our best to encourage and convict those in attendance. Sadly, some churches have worked so hard to ensure that every event is truthful but have left emotion out of the equation. While our emotions can never dictate what is right or wrong, we should be deeply emotionally invested in whatever we have decided to do (Eccl. 9:10) and should make every effort to help everyone in attendance feel the same passion.

In order to do that, we must step back and examine our target audience. If the event is geared toward children, such as a VBS, does the building look bright, cheerful, and welcoming? Does the one leading the singing relate well with children and bring out the meaning of the special songs we sing with them? Are the classes well-balanced between spiritual nuggets and age-appropriate entertainment? Are the lessons relevant? Too fluffy? Too hard-core? When we step back and look at a VBS from a child's perspective, we will find that their mindsets might be a little different from our own. For many young people, summer is a time of freedom after having been cooped up in a classroom all year. It might not be appealing to a nine-year-old to sit at a desk and read an exegesis of the Levitical law for an hour.

Perhaps you have a large youth group that has been saturated in God's Word since they were babies, so the focus of activities for them might be on complex moral issues and peer pressure. Perhaps you expect your event to host a few children from the community that have never had a stable home life, so your focus is on introducing them to good Christian people and the love of God, because, like the apostle Paul, we must be careful to teach to the maturity level of our audience (Hebrews 5:12). When songs and lessons are delivered with appropriate love and enthusiasm, children will often remember them for a lifetime, which will strengthen

the church in the present day as well as build a legacy for eternity!

The same basic concepts apply if the audience is predominately adult. If a church is hosting a singing, for example, this author has found it valuable to start with a song that has an upbeat tempo, which often sets the stage for the rest of the event. It should be a song that everyone is familiar enough with to be able to sing, but not sung so much that people are tired of it. If you are able to bring out strong emotions of happiness in your opening songs, don't be surprised if deeper convicting emotions might occur in more meditative hymns later on, such as "Did You Repent, Fully Repent?" Along that same train of thought, it is usually wise to use a variety of songs in a congregational singing. It might serve you well to ask the song leaders to pay attention to the songs that were sung before them. If there were a lot of complicated songs in a row, perhaps it's time to slow things down for a song or two. If there were several slow songs in a row, find something more lively. Too many new songs with difficult arrangements might lead some to feel left out or even miss the messages that some of our wonderful new songs have to offer. Take the time to ponder an event beforehand and to execute it thoughtfully. Don't fall into the trap of doing things "the way they've always been done" and allow yourself to go through the motions on auto-pilot!

## ***3. Get everyone involved – own it!***

If we all have talents, it only stands to reason that we should all be involved. In Matt. 25:14-30, the Master wasn't happy unless everyone was working and growing their talents. We must never fall into the "if you want something done right, you have to do it yourself" attitude. While sometimes we must step up to do the work, we should be extremely careful to include everyone, and most importantly, to make everyone feel part of the team. It's been said one of the best ways to garner support for something is to make people feel like it was their idea. Everyone involved in a church event should feel like they own it and are personally responsible for making sure things go well. Our members must realize that one person cannot hold a successful event alone. In the story of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem in Nehemiah 4, no one thought the Jews would be able to complete such a massive task in such a short amount of time, but it is absolutely remarkable what God's people can accom-

plish when they are working together. Get up, get to it, and own it!

#### **4. Advertise!**

If people don't know, they can't go! Modern technology makes it quick and easy to disperse information about your event. Utilize social media, but don't underestimate the power of old-fashioned snail-mail delivery! When I was in college studying meteorology, I remember taking a class that discussed how people interpret severe weather warnings. I learned that people often don't take something seriously unless they hear the information from at least two different sources. I try to apply this process when advertising for church events as well to help to prevent the "Oh, was that today?" syndrome. The more personal you are with invitations, the more likely it is that people will attend.

#### **5. Have the watering can ready!**

The Bible frequently uses the analogy of seeds to discuss the Word being planted in the heart of man. We are expected to be sowers of the Gospel (Matt 13:3; 28:19), and a thoughtful and organized event can plant seeds in people that might never have been reached otherwise. When someone who has not yet obeyed the gospel walks into a gathering of Christians, the process of seed germination has begun. Paul was one of the extraordinary sowers of his day, but it is interesting to note that he didn't always stay with his seeds until the point of baptism (1 Cor. 1:14). However, he always followed up with his contacts, often writing them multiple times and ensuring that they made connections with other teachers. He said "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (1 Cor. 3:6). While the end of that verse makes it clear that it is God who gives the increase and creates growth, it's obvious that God expects His children to not only plant seeds, but also to water them.

We must find a way to contact our visitors in the future so we can better ascertain their needs. Do they have questions? Do they have physical needs the church can meet? What can we do to bring them closer to a life with God and a home in heaven? When the church event is over, the grounds have been cleaned, and everybody has scattered, don't just have faith that the visitors will be back again—work to make it happen! James 2:18 says that we are to show our faith by our works, so designate a church member to water the freshly-planted seeds,

with phone calls, home Bible studies, or cards in the mail. Don't let the connections stop when everyone goes home. When we follow the simple Biblical plan for growth, we shouldn't be surprised when we see God give the increase!

#### **6. Apply it personally – grow from it!**

Here's a quick word of caution. Frequently, leaders of church events barely have time to breathe because they are so busy creating beneficial experiences for everyone else. Take a moment to soak in the Christian fellowship or take notes from a lecture. Keep growing yourself and don't become burned out. Fellowship with your sister congregations and attend events you did not plan or help organize too, so you can feel refreshed and gain ideas for the future.

#### **7. Pray!**

The most important guideline for planning a successful church event is also the easiest: take some time to pray about it, both as a congregation and personally. The King James Version translates James 5:16 as "The effectual *fervent* prayer of a righteous man availeth much." We must be *fervent* in our prayers! Let the Lord know how much you care, and be specific with how you seek His blessing for these efforts.

#### **8. Be Enthusiastic!**

In conclusion, whatever you do, have enthusiasm! We are God's people, and we have good reason to rejoice! Enthusiasm is very contagious, and we should all try to spread it. Brainstorm with your congregation for ideas for activities (Gospel meetings, lock-ins, singings, summer series, fellowship meals, themed lectureships, board game or movie nights, VBS, youth service days, youth rallies, banquets for teens or widows or the elderly, camps, retreats, Ladies Days, give-aways, etc.). Our ultimate goal for all church events should be for them to bring us closer to each other, to God, and to heaven. Don't let the Discourager hinder you.

With that goal always in mind, let's get up, get together, get to work, and watch our seeds grow as we practice Connection Ministry.

I'm looking forward to coming to your events. See you there!

REACHING A

# NEW GENERATION

WITH AN

# Old Gospel

*Perry Hall*

Thought Question: The gospel never changes, but can how we present the gospel change?

### **Illustration: The Generation Gap**

A father told his child the age-old story, “When I was your age, I had to walk 5 miles to school uphill both ways.” The grandfather one upped his son and said, “Oh yeah, “When I was your age, I had to walk 5 miles to school uphill both ways and we didn’t even have a school.”

Nowadays we old folks can say to our children, “When I was your age, I had to walk clear across the room the change channels.”

There have always been generation gaps. This is seen even in the “wisdom” of Rehoboam’s young and old advisers (1 Kings 12). Not always is the older generation right; but it is important to understand there are differences, especially in experiences and communication. How many older people prefer texting over verbal communication? Generational changes mean generational preferences.

The following suggestions help us connect to a new generation; but these are not “tricks.” They are sincere (a word I will emphasize throughout this lesson) methods used by sincere people to preach and teach the gospel.

Before going through the methods to reach a new generation, let’s look at some statistics dealing with the generations around us:

- 41% of Millennials believe it is wrong to evangelize.

- 71% of non-religious Millennials are not interested in “religion.”
- 23% of Millennials are “unaffiliated.”

Looking at those numbers are numbing, so we also need to mentally reverse them:

- 59% of Millennials believe it is right to evangelize.
- 29% of non-religious Millennials are interested in “religion.”
- 77% of Millennials are not “unaffiliated.”

As we go through the following list, keep asking yourself which ones you are good at and conversely which ones you have trouble with.

### **1. Don’t Assume They Will Accept “Your” Definition of Truth**

First, notice that I put “your” in quotes; not that we have our own definition of truth, but rather that is how they will look at “your” truth.

A newer generation (and an older generation influenced by a different way of thinking) have been “baptized” by a new definition of truth found within a post-modern culture:

- “What is true for you may not be true for me.”
- “Speak your truth into power.”
- We even see it creeping into the church in ways that seem innocent: “What does that passage mean to you?”

A post-modern generation can accept there are multiple “truths,” even contradictory “truths.” This is one of the distinct differences between Eastern religions and Judeo-Christian religion. Simply quoting scripture may not be enough, or even the place to start. This is because they do not accept scripture even if they’re familiar with it; or might not even know enough about scripture to trust it.

Thankfully Scripture gives us help in assisting those who have this type of thinking. Compare, or more accurately contrast, Paul’s approaches in Acts 17:10-15 and 17:16-34. In the first Paul goes into a synagogue and the Bereans examined the Scriptures daily. Yet Paul preaching in Athens, on the Aeropagus, to Greek Philosophers who loved to hear something new is very different. So, Paul preached to them Jesus without using scripture, but instead using three things they are familiar with:

- Acknowledgement of something they had very little information on – the altar to the Unknown God
- Nature
- Poets (authorities they accept)

Looking for ways to find “truth” that you both can agree on is important.

## **2. Listen to Their Story**

Do this by listening more than talking. Ask questions. This is not an interview, but a way to show genuine interest in them. Notice I said “genuine.” Faking sincerity is unfortunately sincerely easy! As you talk to them, you will find what makes them tick, what their interests are. One way to do this is to pay attention.

One day doing campus evangelism, I saw a young man with a Tardis key chain. Dr. Who was my path to starting a discussion. That led to other forms of science fiction. Which finally led to a conversation of moral subjectivity and God.

Again, the Bible helps in this. Paul saw the idol to “The Unknown God.” Jesus used the woman at the well’s story, although he didn’t have to listen to her to discover it. In Mark 7:24-30 and Luke 18:35-43 we find Jesus doing something He often did – He listened to people.

## **3. Don’t Be (Or At Least Don’t Act) Shocked by Their Stories**

The key word today is “tolerance.” Immediately being considered as “intolerant” will close down the

conversation.

If you have been involved in “street evangelism,” you probably have heard pretty much everything. For me I have heard stories of murder, bestiality, drugs, homosexuality, molestation (both victims and perpetrators), and others. Remember “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

The calling of Matthew and Zacchaeus works well here because both were pariahs in the eyes of others. Luke 7:36-50 is another time we see Jesus having a different reaction than the religious around him. In fact, His host was shocked – “This man, if he were a prophet, would know who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him – she’s a sinner!” (7:39).

## **4. Tell Them Your Story**

They might want to argue against scripture as true, but they can’t – by their own philosophy of truth – argue against your story. Share your “testimony” (John 1:7-8).

Tell them of your struggles, how your life has changed in finding Jesus, what a difference Jesus makes in your life *right now*. Share what you have been willing – and thankfully so – to give up to follow Jesus. Your beliefs must be interwoven with the gospel story. The danger is giving emphasis to your story over the gospel, making it more about you than the God who is helping you.

As someone who has “been raised in the church” and been a “good Jewish boy” as they say, I don’t have the interesting story that others have whether they have been “raised in the church” or “raised in the wild by wolves!” Many Christians have “better” stories than I do, and by better I mean... “worse.” Drugs, sex, abuse, addiction, and so on.

I have used my own story to sincerely – and again I emphasize “sincerely” – make connections. I spoke to an addict of the time I accidentally got addicted to pain meds following a surgery. I’ve used my ill health such as waking up one morning and not being to walk – at age 5. I’ve used the times of doubt in my life: 1) Bell’s Palsy and wondering out loud to God how He could let this happen if He wanted me to preach; 2) How in college I was willing to give up Christianity all together because I thought I found the real truth and thinking Christianity was built upon a lie; 3) How in college another time I struggled in my belief whether or not God even existed.



I can also use “I am a recovering Pharisee” where I remember thinking about what I just said, “That’s not a good argument but it’s our argument.” Who had a more difficult time with Jesus: Tax collectors and sinners; or Pharisees and Sadducees?

Once again, the Bible helps us here. Paul, in Acts 22, 26, and again in Galatians, “witnesses” or tells his story.

### **5. Find Common Ground**

The Incarnation is about finding “common ground” (Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:16). We must continue by living an “incarnational life” (a 2<sup>nd</sup> incarnation, although not literal), wherein the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit dwell in us (Jn.14:23-26).

Finding common ground is connected to allowing them to tell you their story. As with the above example of the student who loved Dr. Who, I was able to engage in an exchange of views. This was not faking it, this was connecting with them. The common ground might be family or tragedy. When telling the story of Jesus, you can interweave your shared story.

Paul does this twice by using two different languages that he spoke (Acts 21:37-22:5). He calls them “brothers” which identifies himself with them (22:1). He also says to the Jews, “I was zealous for God, just as all of you are today” (22:3)

### **6. Take Time to Build a Real Relationship**

Consider this (what I consider a fact): “What objective truth is to the older generation; relationships are to the newer generation.” Why might this be true? Because relationships are something “true” to them since it is based upon experienced reality. Relationships are significant to the younger generation, maybe more so than in other generations. For example, the divorce rate among millennials is lower than the national average. Millennials also value volunteering and serving more than older generations. This easily moves into the gospel message since we are all to minister or serve.

Young people are flooded with sales pitches. The gospel is not a sales pitch wherein you profit from their buying. This takes a sincere effort. The more time spent together, the more they see in “real time” your character, your story, and THE truth.

This must be done before and after a conversion, the latter of which we see in Paul’s relationship with the Ephesian church (Acts 20:17-38). Jesus is the prime example being “the friend of sinners and tax

collectors.” Read all the parables in Luke 15 under the guise of Jesus being accused of eating with “undesirables.”

### **7. Be Real, Yet Adapt**

All though this lesson I have emphasized being sincere. When encountering the world to share Jesus’s story with them, be real. Don’t feign interest in something, although you can share the experience with them due to your interest in them. Your openness and integrity are important to them. If you are not their age, don’t act their age. They need adults in their lives whether they admit it or know it.

Consider the real application of what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 9:19-27. Did Paul engage in activities that some Jews would consider sinful (but were not) in order to save others? Recast this into today. What would that look like for you? This is something “we” are not very good at because of the misinterpreted charge of “Stay away from the appearance of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

Caution: This takes wisdom and self-awareness of one’s own weaknesses. Also, there is a difference in trying to fit in to benefit yourself versus trying to fit in to benefit Jesus.

### **8. Avoid or Explain Churchy Language**

There is not a “one right way” to express the ideas in the Bible, which is why many translations can differ in word choice and still teach the one right way.

Mark 7:11 explains a religious word – Corban. What many don’t realize is that the religious words of today were not religious words of “yesterday.” Recently I read of someone who complained that “congregation” was used instead of the good old fashioned word “church.” Also, there are probably some “big” or obsolete words we sing and read in our Bibles we don’t understand: Ebenezer, “night with ebon pinion,” propitiation vs. expiation, and more.

If the main purpose of this exercise is to connect with a generation that is not familiar with the Bible and Biblical language, it includes the words we use:

#### **Instead of Saying – You Could Say Something Like**

- “church” – “congregation” or “family”
- “Receive Jesus” (John 1:12) – “I had Jesus take control of my life”
- Believe – “I believed what I heard and

committed my life to following that truth”

- Faith – “I trust and know it to be true”
- Forgiven – “Jesus removed the guilt of all the wrong I had done”
- Lost – “Without hope”
- Christ – “God’s Chosen One to bring us to Him”
- Pray – “Just talk to God”
- Redeemed/Saved – “Jesus set me free from the way I have been living”
- Sacrifice/Atonement for sins – “Jesus paid the price for all the wrong I have done”
- Sin – Wrong actions, wrong thoughts, rebellious attitude,

### **9. All Along Look for When and How to Tell the Story of Jesus**

What you accept as a given, has to be proved to those for whom the Bible is a foreign (to their culture) experience. Whatever world-view someone has, there are some commonalities with the Christ Event (which ultimately is the entire Bible):

1. WHO is God if there is a god?
2. WHAT am I? (Are we different from animals? Are we immaterial in some sense?)
3. WHEN did everything begin? (I am a Young Earth advocate but getting into a debate about when everything began is probably useless and counterproductive. The honest answer is “I don’t know.”)
4. WHERE did we come from and where are we going?
5. WHY are we here? (Millennials are very much about service to others)
6. HOW did the world get the way it is?

Use the Bible in answering these questions so that they understand your story is because of God’s story.

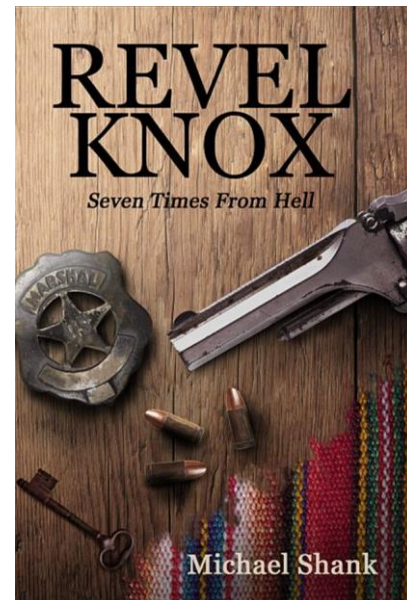
Jesus found a way in John 4 to bring the discussion around. There is one gospel, but there is not one right way to present that gospel. Mold the story to the benefit of your audience while being sincere in every way. Even in our methods, we must make sure the gospel is being taught. Just to review and reiterate, notice how each of the points above is illustrated in the gospel and evangelizing of and by Jesus. The gospel is not found in certain religious

words, but in a certain Person – Jesus Christ.

1. Jesus is the definition of truth.
2. Jesus listened to their stories, which is part of His success.
3. Jesus loved the socially outcast.
4. Jesus’s story must be take precedent over your story.
5. Jesus found common ground, so let’s not make excuses.
6. Jesus loved sinful people, and most amazing to me is, sinful people loved Jesus.
7. Jesus freely adapted to others because His purpose demanded it and He loved people.
8. Parables, or stories, are probably the least “churchy” communication one can use.
9. Jesus came to seek and save the lost and worked his goal into His daily life.

[Adapted from and added to “Reaching Students with the Gospel” by Lynn H. Pryor (HCSB; The Minister’s Bible)]

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# CULTIVATING BIBLE STUDIES *VIA DIGITAL ÉVANGELISM*

*Stephane Maillet*

*I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some (1 Corinthians 9:22b).*

We see a powerful principle in this inspired text, revealing to Christians that sacrifice must take place in order to accumulate the ability to help further the growth of His kingdom. And this most certainly would apply to the “online” world we currently live in. For if Paul were alive this day, certain am I that he would utilize the internet for His Master. For God Himself created tools to advance His gospel cause. Through providence He had the Jews with law, Greeks with language, and Romans with roads. All of which furnished the right time, dialect, and path for the good news of His Son to prosper. And so, today we occupy the “tech era.” And we are to use it for His Majesty. To farm Bible studies.

But how? Just as our brethren of the past, knowing gospel potential behind such innovations as radio & television.

In this stewardship of existence, my “connected” evangelistic experience (which is but a decade) has garnered wisdom toward becoming effective for our King. I’ve learned a few points which have helped

me a great deal to focus on and structure the mission at hand, which is “save some.”

Please allow me to translate this digital language into a practical approach.

## ***First and foremost we establish our ministry***

### **1. Reach the Faithless –**

*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost – Luke 19:10*

People are spiritually lost, headed towards eternal punishment. They need to know the love and forgiveness of Christ. They need the gospel. We must bring this good news to them.

### **2. Renew the Fallen**

*I will set out and go back to my father. – Luke 15:11-32*

Christians have fallen from grace, they’ve allowed discouragement and sinful practices separate them from the love and forgiveness of Christ. We must seek to renew them.

### **3. Reinforce the Faithful**

*Wherefore comfort one another with these words. – 1 Thess. 4:18*

Faithful followers are bombarded with all sorts of challenges each day. We suffer persecution, deteriorating health conditions, loss of loved ones (both in, and outside of Christ). We need to know the promise of hope, that once this life is over, eternal peace with our Master will be granted.

(If at anytime you find yourself sharing things that no longer fit into one of these three branches. Turn around, regroup, pray, focus, and start again. These will help keep you on the beaten path, not falling off left or right side ditch.)

### ***Secondly, we prove the hands-on formula,***

#### **1. Eat their food**

Sharing a meal has been a tool bringing mankind together in peace for ages. When you see your fellow man posting images of their culinary preferences, it is wise and welcoming to “like” (“thumbs up,” a sign of approval). This allows them to identify your commonality and makes it easier to establish a friendship. You’d be willing to sit down with them and eat what they have taken time to prepare. We all know the sense of justification that comes when those we are hospitable with enjoy the nourishment we display.

#### **2. Sleep in their lodgings**

We have a great deal of respect for those willing to sit in our homes with us. Even those who might have many more blessings in lodging than we. It gives us a location of communication demanding personal fellowship. And so, when you see them post images of their inner home decor and lifestyle, it is an opportunity to once again “like” their posts. In so doing you are transmitting your willingness to feel at ease in their “comfort zones.”

#### **3. Speak their language**

There can be a chasm between the monitors. It is difficult to read tone from comments on a screen. And so it takes time to establish the context. Time to understand personalities. A way into this form of liaison is the ability to identify their interest in various topics (i.e. occupation, habits, traditions, culture, careers, hobbies). It is a very good idea to learn, engage and interact with their interest. This will allow them to grow trust in your care for their spiritual wellbeing. If you can speak their “lingo,”

you’re worthy of sharing something that might spiritually challenge them.

The true essence of selflessness is becoming all things to all men. If people are online, go to them. And do so by employing these steps. It will help move things closer for studies.

### ***Thirdly, we utilize our evangelistic caliber***

#### **1. Be a spiritual ninja – a cold transfer**

Make available “watermarks” on the various social venues you may interact with on any daily moment (i.e. website, email address, phone #). This will allow people who might “check your profile,” to see a way they can access gospel content or material.

Randomly deposit gospel links on various groups, pages, threads. For example, sometimes I’ll chime in on a community group (or page) with a comment on a thread, and include my website.

#### **2. Gather personal connections – a warm transfer**

Communicate via PM (private message), email, video chat, phone call. With the [AddedSouls.com](http://AddedSouls.com) ministry we have numerous studies taking place on a private and personal level.

#### **3. Express your faith publicly – an open transfer**

Bible verses, Study memes, articles, sermons, videos, podcasts, interaction, debates, comments, threads, pages, groups, websites, live streaming, Q&A’s. Make all of these public, so that all the world can see. It’s out there and has the potential to go “viral.”

Challenge. Show Bible knowledge. Couple everything with love. Always give invitation and contact information. Learn to discern good soil from rotten soil. Don’t waste time on delinquents at this volume of daily evangelistic stature. Remain self-controlled. Don’t take things personal (I know, that can be very difficult). Continue to be sincere. Genuine. Honest. Straight forward. Direct. Courageous. Patient. Kind. Respectful. Never attack the person, only the falsehood.

These are designed to amplify your evangelistic reach, once again, resulting in studies. Some of us may have more talent in one section over the other, nevertheless we should try to use all of these when applicable.

If you practice these simple instructions, with



time you will produce fruit. Practice forbearance. You'll soon find yourself collecting studies which lead people to Christ. Sometimes that can be guiding said person towards a faithful church in their area, or to a trustworthy contact. In numerous cases we've experienced folks approaching us privately after following our content for years. Never give up. Persevere.

There is an ocean of examples recorded in the Bible regarding men of God openly, publicly declaring the gospel. Ultimately this is what will attract study. The purpose of Christ. The uniqueness of His kingdom, the church. The plan of salvation. The spirit and truth of worship. Exposing sin. Calling all to repent. All public and courageous. And this indeed will push rebellious souls away, but it creates and accumulates the right soil.

If we grow to learn and utilize this tactical strategy to its maximum reach, we shall produce a sizable crop for our Lord.

### ***Bible studies.***

Moment of caution. Do not allow yourself to get snared in the leftist weeds of Pharisaical criticism towards our fellow saints regarding talents/opportunities they have which may surpass ours. Our jealousy and divisive behavior will be cut down and thrown into the fire. It is idle. Vain. Useless. A stumbling block of discouragement. Illegal.

May we strive to be sincere, honest, and genuine with our evangelism. It does not need to be perfect, but it most certainly needs to be loving and courageous. The minute I knew what Mark 16:16 really meant, I was sharing through all these tools. I may not have known how to defend anything else, but I was proclaiming Jesus to people nonetheless. And it brought Bible studies. Now throughout the years I've grown to season my efforts. And I know you can also if you try. This will most certainly **cultivate Bible studies.**

### ***\*BONUS\****

Similar patterns inhabit Bible studies via the **PHYSICAL LANGUAGE** (as opposed to digital interaction) approach, set once again in three dy-

namic categories,

1. **“Ninja”** = leaving gospel material and contact info in various places (i.e. cards, mailboxes, restaurants, with a tip, pinboards all over the community, washrooms, hotels/motels, anywhere and everywhere).

The “ninja” method will be known as a cold transfer to the gospel.

The Ethiopian had gospel material, a scroll with the words of the prophet Isaiah. He had acquired inspired content through some cold transfer, since he did not yet receive the personal preaching of the meaning of the text he was reading.

2. **“Personal”** = one-on-one Bible studies with people, either through building a friendship first or not. This personal approach may have come as a result of your “ninja” efforts, perhaps invitation to worship.

The “personal” method will be known as a warm

transfer to the gospel.

Once Philip the evangelist embarked on the chariot with the eunuch, he was able to make a warm transfer. Philip preached Jesus Christ to this religious man seeking to please God. Philip properly interpreted the Bible so as to reveal Christ through the Old Testament writ.

3. **“Public”** = this is the open proclamation of the gospel in areas where people congregate (i.e. religious establishments, social media, colleges, universities, shopping centers, markets, festivals, parades, etc.)

The “public” method will be known as an open transfer to the gospel.

Once the Ethiopian understood the gospel, he further urged Philip to immerse him into Christ through the water he could see. This was a very public display of gospel obedience. It produced a Christian that day, one who went on his way rejoicing.

I pray this information will help in your faith.  
God bless.



# Respecting the Burden

Keith Stonehart

The worst enemy of enthusiasm is time.

Human beings have a remarkable and sad capacity for getting tired of wonderful things. Almost every one of you can think of something you were enthusiastic about recently, but now the joy is faded. Your first day of vacation on the coast the sunset was breathtaking and made you so happy you could sing. But by the end of your stay you hardly noticed it anymore.

Vacationers get tired of sunsets, millionaire celebrities get tired of money, kids get tired of toys, and Christians get tired of doing good- They get tired of “being the church.”

At first, the excitement of teaching that Sunday Bible class was strong, but now you may have grown a little weary ... The thrill is gone.

At first you felt strong in the Spirit as you studied, maybe even taught, led a study in your home, visited sick or shut in, Maybe even volunteered for some other good and charitable cause ... but now you have grown weary in this well-doing.

The inner power and joy have seeped away.

It's a chore. You've lost Heart.

*And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:9-10)*

If we focus on the context of what Paul says concerning “not growing weary in our well doing,” We can then learn how to get excited, stay excited, and get others excited about being the church!

2 Peter 1, and in particular the phrase “with all diligence” from verses 5, 10 and 15, stress the importance of strengthening our faith with the supplemental graces of virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection and love. For if we do, Peter says

*“We will never fail,” “Our calling and election will be sure, “ and “there will be rich-*

*ly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.- (2 Peter 1:10-11)*

And while that is absolutely true – there are times when our love for Christ grows weak, aren't there? Times when you just wonder why even bother?

Why continue?

It's compassion fatigue...

It's well doer's burnout....

It happens sometimes when a very dedicated, committed disciple of Jesus “suddenly” wakes up and realizes that he or she is tired.

Tired of giving,  
Tired of doing,  
Tired of serving.

He or she finds that the joy of service is gone. But I will suggest to you that there is nothing “Sudden” about it... And it happens to all of us.

## ***So who are the weary?***

### **Any worker in the Lord's kingdom can get weary.**

This passage in Galatians wasn't addressed to a select few. It went out to multiple churches in Galatia. I assume then, that preachers, teachers, missionaries, those that labor in the Lord, and others are susceptible to this. Perhaps the pop-psychology term “burnout” is relevant here.

It happens to all kinds of people concerned for the work of the Lord.

### **Those who have served a long time get tired.**

Length of service doesn't always make us more faithful. Just as we are seeing more and more husbands/wives desert their mates in their 50's and 60's, it happens in the faith, too.

### **Those who have seen few results can feel the weariness of well-doing.**

We are a result-oriented society. When you fish, you produce the stringer of trophies. When you

hunt, you save the antlers. When you golf, you have your scorecards.

Service to the Lord isn't always that easy to measure as far as results. I have learned that when one sows for God, the reaping is both sure and blessed! – but not always immediate, if at all...

It can happen when we grow weary, thinking that non-visible results mean no results.

### **Those affected by the cynicism of others are candidates for this problem of weariness.**

Cynicism is a danger to those who work next to people who don't see the real issues and/or don't care. Cynicism says, "Things are *never* going to work out. It will *always* be like this," etc.

### **Those experiencing temporary failures can feel weary.**

I think of Elijah under the Juniper tree. "*Lord, just kill me!*" – 1 Kings 19:5

Even though the great victory on Mt. Carmel was a decisive blow to the idolatry in Elijah's day, when Jezebel didn't cow to it, Elijah melted in discouragement. The failure was only temporary, but for a while Elijah couldn't be persuaded of it.

### **Those who are rejected by others sometimes want to quit.**

Rejection hurts! When you plow your life and time into someone and they turn, not only against what you teach, but against you personally, the temptation is to say, "*Never again will I put that much into another human being!*"

Samuel the prophet got this way. The Israelites rejected his clear, right teaching and clamored for a king. He got down, but God finally told him that they hadn't rejected him (Samuel) but they had rejected Him (God.)

It's hard not to get the two tied up together, though.

### **Those who are lonely can begin to become weary of well-doing.**

When God came to Elijah under the Juniper, he asked him what was wrong. He said,

*"I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, torn down Thine altars and killed Thy prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."* (1 Kings 19:14)

### **Doing God's work can have some lonely times.**

In a recent NCAA cross-country championship held in Riverside, California, 123 of the 128 runners missed a turn. One competitor, Mike Delcavo, stayed on the 10,000-meter course and began waving for fellow runners to follow him. Only four other runners went with him.

Sometimes, in order to follow Christ, you must do it alone. It hurts to think that you're going the right way, yet everyone else thinks you're crazy!

### **The criticized – after a while, can become weary.**

Personal criticism always hurts. Sometimes it is good for us, but sometimes it is unmerited and wrong. In 1923, as Russian-born engineer Vladimir Zworykin worked on his latest invention, he was told to "spend your time on something more useful."

But Zworykin didn't -- and in 1929 he obtained the first patent for his invention, color television.

Among his many achievements, Zworykin also helped perfect the electron microscope and other devices that greatly advanced medical and biological research. He retired as director of electronic research for RCA in 1954, and in 1966 was awarded the National Medal of Science. Yet criticism marked almost all the milestones of his path.

He was quoted saying, "Where there's light, there's bugs." I believe that.

### **Those who are bored feel the weariness as well.**

What I refer to here is the-same-old-same-old, day after day, week after week, year after year.

Steps need to be taken to prevent boredom, especially as the shadows lengthen on the workday of life.

### **Those experiencing poor health.**

As we grow older, we must adjust to ailments that limit our capacity. In the process, we must also adjust our expectations of ourselves.

### **So, what do we do?**

How do we get the church excited and then help keep them excited about being the church?

### **(1.) Rest**

Matthew 11:28-30 says (NASB)

*Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-*

*laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is <sup>l</sup>easy and My burden is light.*

We often use this passage, better known as the Lords invitation, to persuade the lost to come to Jesus, in an appeal to unload the weight of guilt; and we are right in doing so.

But this passage is not limited to just the lost... Notice, Jesus says come to me – ALL.

ALL who are weary.

When we begin to lose heart, Jesus says come to him and he will give us rest.

Psalm 55:22 says

*Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.*

To truly run the race with endurance, sometimes we must stop and breathe... Be still and know he is God... Acknowledge him and pray.... Rest for a weary soul, will be given.

## **(2.) Reflect**

It's amazing how much clearer the mind is, when we have had a little rest.

So often, the troubles of the day seem so much bigger the night before than they do the morning after. Once we have begun to rest, we then need to reflect. We are admonished often in scripture to look inward with an honest eye and do the necessary pruning of the heart. We then discover sometimes that there is sin present that we hadn't recognized.

What we may have believed to be righteous indignation was nothing more than selfish anger. Or what we thought might have been venting to a friend about a situation to keep us from confrontation, was really nothing more than gossip at its heart.

Jealousy... Envy.... Contempt.

These are the silent killers that will absolutely wear on the soul and hinder our pursuit of God.

*Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? —unless indeed you fail to meet the test! (2 Corinthians 13:5)*

*Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and my mind (Psalm 26:2).*

*The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out (Proverbs 20:5).*

When Reflection draws out the baggage, the baggage must be shed. Repent and begin afresh.

## **(3.) Revive**

With rest comes clarity, and with clarity comes reflection. Reflection then provides a renewed perspective. We, like many people, love to watch Chip and Joanna Gaines show, "Fixer Upper," because they take old, worn and weary homes and breathe new life into them.

Many times, their clients can't picture the plan that Chip and Joanna have due to the clutter and haggard state of many of the homes...But once demolition is done, and walls are removed, spaces are opened up and *you can begin to see this old space in a brand new way.*

With perspective comes a revival and renewal of purpose—a renewed spirit. *A fresh outlook and a full tank ready to continue doing the hard things of the Christian walk.*

*Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? (Psalm 85:6)*

*Restore us, O Lord God of hosts! Let your face shine, that we may be saved! (Psalm 80:19)*

*If my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:14).*

*Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded (James 4:8).*

Paul said:

*...Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have laid hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize of God's heavenly calling in Christ Jesus*



(Philippians 3:14)

And so must we.

The Bible never promises an easy life. In fact, the current cultural climate is such that almost ensures that living the life of a Christian will absolutely be difficult at times as we go against the grain. While the works of a Christian are good and fulfilling, over time, the pursuit to live Godly can take its toll.

In these times, the Apostle Paul said:

*And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

You see, good intentions will never change anything. The rut you are in will only get deeper.

Paul says not to give up and to keep doing good as we have opportunity – in other words – KEEP MOVING.

Christ said “his burden was light,” but it is a burden none the less. A burden that *we have exchanged for the former* burden of sin, and it is then a BURDEN that must be respected.

So, in our pursuit of God, let us indeed *run the race before us with endurance*, casting *aside every weight and strain ahead*... And when needed, stop to breathe... But then START AGAIN.

Rest, Reflect, and Revive.

Renew your spirit and Respect the Burden.

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A close-up photograph of a person's hands and arms as they kneel in a field, planting seeds into the soil. The person is wearing blue jeans and a plaid shirt. The soil is dark brown and appears to be recently tilled. Several small green seedlings are visible in the background, growing in rows.

# ARE YOU PLANTING?

*Michael Shank*

One summer, a wealthy landowner purchased a large quantity of a very powerful seed, that was to be planted over 20,000 acres. He commissioned his twelve sons to plant the seed, and explained that he would be out of the country for a year, but that he would be returning the following summer. He instructed them to plant the seed, water and weed as necessary, and continue having their weekly meeting with their hired hands to discuss management of the operations. The man expected a good harvest.

The following summer, the landowner returned, as promised, and upon arriving at his fields, he saw that it was virtually barren. The only corn that he saw standing was residual plantings from the previous season.

He went directly to the barn, finding his twelve sons, as well as most of the seed still in the sacks. The man was upset. “Why did you not plant the seeds?” he shouted.

The sons responded, “Father, shortly after you left the country, wise and seemingly successful farmers from all over the area heard about your plans here, and they came here to inquire about our seeds and our plans for planting the crop. The wise

farmers said we should re-think our planting methods, because our methods were old, out-dated, and even damaging. They told us that we should not plant the seed deep into the soil as you’ve shown us to do, because it disturbs the soil, it disrupts the soil’s life, and it offends the soil, to the point that the soil will disappear. They said that we should, instead, casually scatter a little seed across the top of the soil, just here and there; and that we should focus more on loving the soil; showing the dirt that we don’t want to disturb it, nor offend it in any way.”

The father looked on with utter bewilderment at the actions of his sons. They then continued: “We took their advice, mostly out of fear. We didn’t want to be offensive, and we didn’t want to seem unintelligent. But Father, there’s no increase, there’s no growth, there’s no harvest, didn’t you say that this was the most powerful seed that ever existed? Didn’t you promise us an increase?”

Now reader, I know you’re honest and intelligent, so I’m sure that you probably understand the parable that I’ve just put forth.



God has provided the most powerful seed ever known to man (Mark 4:14): the Holy Scriptures. Jesus said, “for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39).

Our job is to **plant** that powerful, soul-saving seed deep into the dirt, the human heart. The power is in the seed, the word of God. But when we hold back, when we scatter seed on the top of the dirt rather than to plant it deep into the dirt, we circumvent God’s great commission outlined in Mark 16:15, and there’s little to harvest.

Paul believed in the seed, saying,

*“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16).*

He didn’t shun to declare the full counsel of God (Acts 20:27). He knew that it’s “quick, and powerful, and sharper than any double-edged sword.” Paul knew that it cuts so deep that it’s able to divide, to separate widely, the soul and spirit, and the joints and marrow. He knew that it’s a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).

The question is, do we believe it? I believe that we do! Then, why do we hold back? Why do we substitute inviting for planting?

### ***The Past***

I want to show you something interesting. The following is an excerpt from the book, *Why I Left*, a series of lectures given in Fort Worth, TX, in 1948:

Have you ever stopped to think that under God’s arrangement the church of the Lord Jesus Christ grew faster in thirty years’ time than any religious movement that has been known before or since? Even in our time, the church is growing faster proportionately than any religious group on earth. Now if you doubt that you can ask your

friend and my friend, Jeff D. Ray, a scholarly man. (Fort Worth Star-Telegram Newspaper Writer of Religious Articles, an aged Baptist preacher). He wrote an article last year concerning this very thing in which he said that

the church of Christ is growing faster than any religious group of our time. He gives as the reason the fact that we are not at all reluctant to teach what we believe, and we constantly teach it.

We believe in indoctrinating the members. We believe in bringing the truth to light.<sup>1</sup>

In 1948, we were not at all reluctant to teach what we believed, and we taught it constantly, ceasing *not* to warn everyone night and day (see Acts 20:31). They planted everywhere they went with everyone that would listen.

### ***Satan Deceives Us***

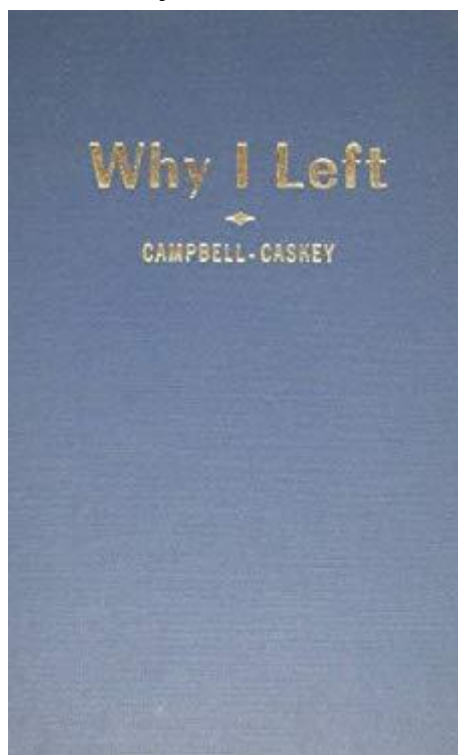
What do we now fear, that our brethren didn’t fear 50 years ago? Why are we reluctant to teach what we believe, everywhere we go, with everyone we meet?

We all know that something has changed dramatically over this past 50 years; something that’s caused us “pause” in planting the seed; I know what it is.

In the early 70’s, Satan somehow convinced many in our brotherhood across this great nation to stop confronting the lost with simple truth, to stop aggressively teaching the truth to our denominational family, friends, and neighbors, to stop planting the seed deep into the dirt, because, we were told, planting the seed deeply into the soil would offend the soil, it would be too disturbing to the soil, it would be un-Christian like.

So, our brotherhood all over this nation bought into that mess; then

## *Why do we substitute inviting for planting?*



<sup>1</sup> We highly recommend this book to all Christians. It is full of great information about understanding denominational doctrine and how to help people out of it. This book can be read for free online at

<http://gravelhillchurchofchrist.com/ebooks.htm>

we wake up nearly 50 years later in a great state of decline, liberal progressivism devouring the Lord's church like a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8), losing our children to the world like a runaway train, and sound/faithful congregations like ours are just trying to tread water in the wake of the likes of the Pat Boones, the Max Lucados, and the Rubel Shellys of this world!

And here's the residual effect of buying into that mess, that propaganda of the 70's—that "don't be offensive" approach has clung to our psyche; it's stuck to the deep recesses of our minds. We say to ourselves, "*maybe there's some truth to it, maybe if I confront my friend with the truth I will run them off,*" so we hold back from planting the seed deep into the soil of the heart; we keep the seed in our pocket; we're "selfish" with the gospel.

We don't want to risk offense, we want to show the dirt that we love it, so we don't plant the seed into the heart. And look at what happens! Look at the great results.

Oh, that's right. There aren't any.

When we stop planting the seed into the soil, do we really love the lost? No we don't. What we love is being "loved and accepted" by men; we desire to be popular and accepted, and the only way to do that is to be "non-offensive."

That's what's happened to our brotherhood.

Stating the truth and standing for the truth is sometimes offensive to those who twist the scriptures to their own destruction. And some in our brotherhood, who wanted to become rich and famous, realized that they couldn't become rich and famous by standing on the truth, because preaching the truth offends the denominational word, along with our liberal brethren. So they abandoned the scriptures in pursuit of their own selfish ambitions, and now they defend their erroneous positions by degrading and belittling the faithful brethren, saying that we must stop planting the seed because planting the seed deep into a man's heart is an offensive tactic.

So, we shouldn't sit around and marvel as to "why" the Lord's church isn't growing today; we

have simply become a brotherhood that loves the praises of men more than the praise of God (John 12:43).

### ***The Challenge***

Mike, that's harsh, why are you being so harsh today? Because we can't remain in this state. Because identifying the problem is half the battle; Because if we walk in lock step with this problem we might be found guilty before the judgment seat of Christ in the last day. Because my hope is that God will build a fire under you to plant His soul-saving seed into the hearts of lost men and women all over your community so that souls would be saved—not so you can brag about attendance or build a big fancy building, but so that souls can be saved. That is the increase of God, amen?

Here's the beautiful silver lining in this story; if we can shake off that paralyzing doctrine of the 70's, if we will

begin to plant the seed into the heart of men, right there, everywhere we go, with everyone who will listen, following God's design and his instructions for carrying out the great commission, not inviting but planting, God will give the increase because the seed will have been planted!

But if we don't...if we don't...may God have mercy on our pitiful wretched souls.

I'm gonna be a planter – how 'bout you?

*Something has  
changed dramatically  
over this past 50  
years; something  
that's caused us  
"pause" in planting  
the seed...*

*I have planted,  
Apollos watered, but  
God gave the increase  
(1 Corinthians 3:6).*



# WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY – PART 2G

## ALLOCATE OUR GIFTS – A STUDY OF EPHESIANS 4:7-16

Jake Schotter

### INTRODUCTION

A walk through the church section at a religious bookstore will most likely give you the sense that a congregation's leadership should have a heavy emphasis and focus on church growth. Getting people into the church is a noble goal and one we should work towards to. However, we must understand the purpose of why we want to grow and how we are going about that growth. We cannot sacrifice the Scriptures for powerful propaganda and pragmatic technique just to be a growing church!

Pragmatism is when the worth of something is determined by its consequences. In other words, if it gives us what we want (i.e. church growth), then it must be good. For the multitude of churches that have focused on pragmatism, they have become too focused on being attractive to the world by becoming like the world. There are several reasons why pragmatism is problematic and four will be briefly listed. Pragmatism is not a reliable test for church growth because (1) Truth is not determined by testing what works and what does not. The gospel often does not produce a positive response (1 Corinthians 1:22-23; 2:14); (2) Satanic lies and deception can be very effective (Matthew 24:23-24; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4); (3) Following the majority's action is not necessarily validating (Matthew 7:13-14) and (4) Prosperity and doing well is not a measure of truthfulness (Job 12:6). Pragmatism, brought to its purest practice, makes methodology king while leaving theology to its own devices.

Therefore, when we are analyzing a program for church growth, we must pay attention with careful discernment,<sup>1</sup> and with discernment, we must have wisdom and understanding.<sup>2</sup> All of this is built on the solid foundation of God's special revelation (Titus 1:2, 9; 2:1; 1 Timothy 6:3-4; 4:6; 2 Timothy 4:2-3).

### CONTEXTUAL MATTERS

Paul wrote on the role of special revelation and

church growth in Ephesians 4:12-16. Before we can get there, we must review Paul's argument until that point. Chapter 4 opens with a natural division marker from a section on doctrine (chapters 1-3) with the "therefore" (a very important marker of transition in his writings<sup>3</sup>). The first chapter deals with God's role in our salvation (1:3-14) and our sanctification (1:15-23). The second chapter revolves around the reality of what was once the case, but now is not. We were once dead in our sins (2:1-10) and divided as Jews and Gentiles (2:11-22). Chapter 3 tells us the mystery of salvation has been revealed to all, not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles (3:1-13). These first few chapters are highlighted with two powerful prayers (1:15-23; 3:14-21), and deal with topics regarding spiritual blessings, election, predestination, the Holy Spirit, knowledge and wisdom regarding spiritual matters, sin, sovereignty of Christ, grace, mercy, faith, reconciliation, mystery, eternal plan and purpose, prayer, and many more.

Then, Paul transitions from doctrine to duty, from position and principles to practice with the word "therefore" at the beginning of chapter four. This is important to note, as suggested earlier, in not only showing a transition of thought, but the practicality of theology in our daily lives. We must first have knowledge of why we do things before we are able to fully incorporate them into our lives. We should not overlook the importance of a single word in the Scriptures. This word shows the importance of studying the Scriptures in their context, being able to see the clear meaning of a passage. This word leads us and points us to the life we are to live in light of the doctrines mentioned in the first few chapters. Additionally, it is a reminder that the life which we are to live is a life which always results from the application of doctrine. Finally, it is through our understanding of this concept (the application of doctrine) that we are sanctified.

With this transition, Paul has unity on his mind. We see this in the bringing together of all those who have listened "*to the message of truth, the gospel of*

<sup>1</sup> Acts 20:29-32; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14; Hebrews 13:17

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 51:6; 111:10; 119:66; Proverbs 2:2-6; 4:7; Colossians 1:9; 2:3; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

<sup>3</sup> cf. Romans 12:1; Galatians 5:1; Philippians 2:1; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:1

[our] *salvation*” (1:13) and have personally experienced “*the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe*” (1:19). This includes the uniting of the Jews and Gentiles, which would not have happened unless it was through the powerful blood of Jesus (2:13), “*for He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall... so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross*” (2:14-16). The question for us to ask, then, is “how?” For the answer, we turn to the fourth chapter of this book.

## CHAPTER FOUR

In chapter four, Paul calls us to give attention to how we “walk” (4:1). An outline, using “walk” as an acronym, acknowledges the focus of this chapter in a helpful way. For this chapter, I suggest the following outline<sup>4</sup>:

- “Walk” in a manner worthy (4:1-6)
- “Allocate” your gifts (4:7-16)
- “Lay aside” the old self for the new man by
- “Killing” off the mannerisms of the old man (4:17-32)

Additionally, as we approach this chapter, we should notice Paul’s narrowing focus. As one reads through the chapter, Paul gets more personal. In verses 1-6, Paul is addressing the congregation as a whole. Everyone is expected to live in such a way that would promote unity among the body of Christ. We see, then, a shift in verses 7-16, when he addresses the gifts various members have. In other words, these are groups based on common gifts. Verse 7 really marks the shift when Paul wrote, “*but to each one of us...*” Not everyone has the same gift or gifts, so we are grouped into what our specialties are. Finally, we have the individual Christian addressed in the remaining verses. In this section, the personal pronoun “*you*” is mentioned 12 times.

In verse one, we see the call to walk in a manner worthy. Verses two and three contain six characteristics we are to have in order to accomplish the expectation to walk worthy. Doing so is a major contributor to the unity Paul desires the Jews and Greeks to have, now that they are Christians. However, there must be a purpose in having those characteristics. If that were the case, these people in

Ephesus would have been part of the strangest non-conformist group. The reason is that they believe the same things and are united in Christ; they are the church and doctrine is involved (chapters 1-3; 4:4-6, 11-16).

The church is the only “*man*” who will be saved. Frequently, Paul mentions the “*one new man*” (i.e., 2:15-16) and the Jews and Gentiles becoming that new man “*in Christ*” (2:15) as “*one body*” (2:16) because they have been “*brought near by the blood of Christ*” (2:13). This gives the idea of this new man, containing all saved people, as the church. This body has a head – that is Christ (1:22), and the body is the church (1:22-23). Various Christians are the various parts of the body (3:6; 4:25; 5:30). Thus, the health of the individual members affects the whole body.

For this reason, Paul discusses spiritual gifts and the roles of individual members, in verses 7-16 of Ephesians four. How does the church maintain unity and grow? Three features can be noted in this section:

(1) the grace that has been given by Christ (4:7-10). Paul uses the rich imagery of Psalm 68:18 as an allusion to Christ being victorious over the Devil and death to be able to provide gifts to Christians.

This is elaborated in (2) the gifts that have been given to the church (4:11) where we see five teaching roles in the church. Two have ceased: apostles and prophets and the rest continue to this day: evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Pastors and teachers are grammatically linked in the Greek because of their closely connected nature but are still separate entities.

There is, finally, (3) the growth that is to occur among Christians (4:12-16). How can we measure the effect of the teachers Christ has given the church to see if they are doing what they are supposed to do? Paul answers that for us.

## CHURCH GROWTH (4:12-16)

*“for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men,*

<sup>4</sup> Schotter, *The Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Oct. 2017), p. 68.

*by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love”*

## The Purpose (4:12)

Verse 12 begins with a prepositional phrase expressing the purpose of having Christ give the church teachers in the form of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (4:11). We see, in this verse, three statements of purpose.

The amount of purposes has had considerable discussion. James Montgomery Boice gave a simple yet solid overview of this. He wrote,

In older versions of the English Bible there was a small but serious error that may have contributed to the church’s blindness at this point, or, to state the matter another way, may have resulted from its prejudice. It involves a comma. In the original King James Version (there has been a change in more recent editions), Ephesians 4:11-12 said, ‘And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, [that is the comma] for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.’

In this version of the text God is said to have given the teaching gifts, which we normally associate with ministers, so that the ministers may do three things: (1) perfect the saints, (2) do the ministry, and (3) edify or build up the body of Christ. That is, the professionals do it all. They have the gifts, and they are to use them to do all the church’s work. The members of the church have no other duty than (to quote the 1906 Papal Encyclical *Vehementer Nos*) ‘[of] letting themselves be led, and of following their pastors as a docile flock.’

But that translation was wrong! Armitage Robinson was probably the first commentator to notice it and insist that it was a mistake. He argued – and virtually all commentators since have agreed with him – that the comma should be eliminated. Without that comma,

the passage says something entirely different. Instead of giving three tasks to ‘ministers,’ it gives one task to the clergy (‘equip the saints’) and another to the laity (‘do the ministry’). As a result of both fulfilling their proper, God-given function, ‘the body of Christ may be built up.’

Here is the real sequence:

1. Those who have been given the gifts of teaching are to use those gifts to equip or ‘prepare’ the saints, so that, as a first objective,

2. Believers may do the work of ‘ministry’ or ‘service,’ and that, as an ultimate objective,

3. The church may be ‘built up,’ ‘reach unity in the faith,’ and ‘become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.’

This translation (the correct one) gives an immediate purpose to God’s giving of the teaching gifts: to equip the saints. It gives an ultimate purpose to God’s giving of these gifts: to build up the church. But it preserves the essential intermediate step which is an ‘every-member ministry.’ It follows that where this intermediate step is not taken, where the clergy try to do the whole work, there the church stagnates and divisions occur.<sup>5</sup>

The first purpose: “the equipping of the saints for service.” The idea of “equipping the saints” (NASB, NKJV, ESV, NIV) is also translated as “perfecting” (KJV, ASV). Interestingly, Harold W. Hoehner put it as “preparation of the saints” in his exegetical commentary.<sup>6</sup> “Equipping” comes from the Greek term καταρτισμος. “It is found only in this verse in the NT. However, the verb καταρτιζω is found frequently and means ‘to adjust, put in order, restore, mend,’... as well as ‘to furnish, equip’ or ‘to be instructed, trained.’”<sup>7</sup> Because of the teaching received from those gifted to teach, saints (lit. *Christians*, cf. 1:3-14) are able to serve. This term was primarily used as an expression of development.

<sup>5</sup> Boice, pp. 140-141.

<sup>6</sup> Hoehner, p. 547.

<sup>7</sup> Hoehner, pp. 549-550.

The question then becomes, how is one “equipped?” The first and primary means of our development is through the word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; John 15:3; Acts 6:4), prayer (Acts 6:4; Colossians 4:12-13), and testing and suffering (James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 5:10; Philippians 3:10; 2 Corinthians 1:4-5). The evangelists, pastors, and teachers are needed so that the saints can become restored to the best condition possible (Colossians 4:12; 1 Timothy 4:6, 11, 13). Becoming equipped is not necessarily learning something new, but applying what we already know (2 Peter 1:12-13, 15). “The Christian ministry is designed to mature the saints, to bring them nearer the Divine law in obedience, and the Lord’s example in conformity.”<sup>8</sup>

The second reason saints are equipped is for the purpose of “service.” If the teachers of the congregation teach the Bible effectively, the imperative to be servants would quickly become evident (4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:58; 1 Peter 2:5, 9; 4:10-11; contrast 2 Thessalonians 3:11). “For clearly the way the whole body grows is for all its members to use their God-given gifts. These gifts are so beneficial both to those who exercise their ministry faithfully and to those who receive it that the church becomes steadily more healthy and mature.”<sup>9</sup> Additionally, unity takes an intense effort and concern for one another (that leads to helping one another; c.f. 4:3; Philippians 2:3-4).

Finally, this leads to the ultimate purpose of “the building up of the body of Christ.” When the saints are properly prepared, the members of the church body will be built up. “To build up translates the Greek noun for ‘building’ (see 2.21; 4.16), and for the body of Christ see 1.23 (also 2.6; 4.4).”<sup>10</sup> In other words, this “building up” is, by nature, edifying to the saints (by the word of God; Acts 20:32; 1 Peter 2:2) and evangelizing lost sinners (Acts 2:39, 47; 5:14). John Eadie comments,

The spiritual advancement of the church is the ultimate design of the Christian pastorate. It labours to increase the members of the

church, and to prompt and confirm their spiritual progress. The ministry preaches and rules to secure this, which is at the same time the purpose of Him who appointed and who blesses it. So that the more the knowledge of the saints grows and their piety ripens; the more vigorous their faith, the more ardent their love, and the more serene and heavenly their temperament; the more of such perfecting they gather to them and enjoy under the ordinances of grace – then the more do they contribute in their personal holiness and influence to the extension and revival of the church of Christ.<sup>11</sup>

This is the last purpose given because it inevitably leads to Paul explaining and describing what a unified body looks like. What are we building up to? How can one know that what they are constructing is what is prescribed by Paul?

The clause ‘in order to build up the body of Christ’ contains a type of mixed metaphor, since ‘building up’ would refer primarily to construction, while the body of Christ is a group of people. The verbal phrase ‘to build up’ can be translated in some languages by ‘caused to

grow’ or ‘caused to grow strong.’ The whole purpose clause can be translated ‘in order to strengthen the body of Christ’ or ‘in order to strengthen the believers as the body of Christ.’<sup>12</sup>

### The Progression (4:13-15a)

“Until” literally means “to attain or arrive at a particular state.”<sup>13</sup> Quickly note three facts about this growth: (1) it is progressive (“until”), (2) pervasive (“all”), and (3) pointed, in that there are five results that will be seen if the church is educated and edified by the teaching.

Progress will be seen by reaching “the unity of the faith” and “knowledge of the Son of God.” These are the two primary objectives which then flow into natural consequences, as we will see.<sup>14</sup> The

*Becoming equipped is not necessarily learning something new, but applying what we already know.*

<sup>8</sup> Eadie, p. 308

<sup>9</sup> Stott, p. 168

<sup>10</sup> Bratcher and Nida, p. 102

<sup>11</sup> Eadie, p. 309

<sup>12</sup> Bratcher and Nida, p. 102-103

<sup>13</sup> Merkle, p. 130

<sup>14</sup> Merkle, p. 130 writes, “This and the following two prep.



“faith” in view here is not a personal faith, but the objective body of doctrine (4:3, 5; Jude 3). Doctrinal ignorance hinders unity, which is based on “knowledge of the Son of God” (c.f. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Charles Hodge insightfully wrote,

“The genitive υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ belongs equally to πιστις and ἐγγνωσις. The Son of God is the object of both the faith and of the knowledge here spoken of. Many commentators understand knowledge and faith as equivalent, and therefore make the latter member of the clause explanatory of the former: ‘to the unity of the faith, that is, the knowledge of the Son of God.’ But this overlooks the καί. The apostle says, ‘faith and knowledge.’ Thus distinguishing the one from the other. And they are in fact different, however intimately related, and however often the one term may be used for the other. Faith is a form of knowledge, and therefore may be expressed by that word. But knowledge is not a form of faith, and therefore cannot be expressed by it. Knowledge is an element of faith; but faith, in its distinctive sense, is not an element of knowledge.”<sup>15</sup>

Paul admitted he had this knowledge personally (Philippians 3:8-10, 12) and prayed for others to have it in their own lives as well (1:17; Philippians 1:4; Colossians 1:9-10; 2:2). Having this intimate knowledge and relationship with Jesus is what is alluded to when He said, “the sheep follow him because they know his voice. A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers” (John 10:4-5).

As we continue to grow in “the faith” and our “knowledge of the Son of God,” we should experience spiritual maturity. Unlike the combination of the goal of “to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God,” a new goal is given with a separate εἰς – “to a mature man.” “Man” is translated from the specific ἀνὴρ instead of the generic ἀνθρώπος indicating a focus on age and growth. “Thielman maintains that the reason for this usage ‘may be the result of Paul’s desire to contrast human maturity with immaturity, since in the next

v[erse] he will say that once all believers have arrived at the goal of maturity, they will no longer be “infants.”” (282; cf. 1 Cor 13:11).”<sup>16</sup> As Christians, we are striving to reach maturity, literally to the “fullness of Christ.” Maturity, then, is having the character and conduct of Christ as our own character and conduct (Romans 8:29; 1 John 2:6; Colossians 4:12; 2 Corinthians 3:18). This happens in our progressive sanctification and recognizing that we will not attain this during our earthly lives but will culminate in eternal glory (Colossians 1:28-29; Philippians 3:14-15; 1 Corinthians 13:11; 1 Corinthians 3:1-2).

If the church is following a true biblical pattern of growth, there will be an emphasis on the unity of the faith, a knowledge of Christ, spiritual maturity, and sound doctrine. In contrast to the spiritually immature man (4:13), a person who is dedicated to the teaching of God’s Word faithfully and avoids error, is a mature man in contrast to “children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind...” Children are naïve and will essentially believe anything they are told because they do not have the ability to discern what is propagated by false teachers (cf. Hebrews 13:9; James 1:6). Immature believers are inclined to accept every sort of doctrinal error and false interpretation of Scripture because they have not learned to be critical. These believers are warned in Scripture of such a dangerous opportunity and the necessity of learning discernment (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22; Acts 20:30-31; Romans 16:17-18; Galatians 1:6-7; 1 Timothy 4:1-7; 2 Timothy 2:15-18; 2 Peter 2:1-3). These Christians must not be like a small boat in a large storm, unable to hold its direction, and carried by winds that carry them away from the truth of the gospel.

The spiritually young need to be wary of these false teachers for they are described in two very sinister ways. False teachers are full of “trickery,” “craftiness,” and “deceitful scheming.” The word for “trickery” is a very rare word in ancient literature, but it refers to the game of dice where men gamble and use deception to win and gain other personal advantages. These types of teachers are also crafty and deceitful schemers (Luke 20:23; 1 Corinthians 3:19; 2 Corinthians 12:16), in that they are involved in premeditated manipulation, led by none other than the devil himself (6:11).

phrases all beginning with □□□□ are coordinate and convey the ultimate goal (contra NIV which indicates by punctuation that the third phrase describes the second phrase)...

<sup>15</sup> Hodge, p. 231

<sup>16</sup> Merkle, p. 130

The final sign of progression is seen when Christians lovingly proclaim the truth. Not only does this assume these men are mature and thoroughly equipped with sound doctrine (unlike children), they are able to reach others with their message and do so in a convincing manner. That manner, specifically, is preaching the truth with an authentic Christian life to those who need to be loved with the Gospel. The verb here for “speaking the truth” is used only one other time (Galatians 4:16) and Paul emphasizes preaching gospel truth, even if he is to become an enemy. Having the truth and reaching maturity in it should compel us to share it with others and not be stagnant and lazy with the truth. We do this because “we are to grow up in all aspects into Him,” thus providing us the ability to grow in the church. This points us back to the very beginning of our pericope: “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” (4:12).

#### **The Power (4:15b-16)**

Christians are to be completely submissive to the Lord’s will, especially in His methods for spiritual and church growth. As we become more Christ-like (Philippians 1:21; Galatians 2:20), others will take notice of us. They will see a dynamic power as it grows through each individual Christian, impacting the whole church, who is the body of Christ. It is our connection to Christ that allows for growth: “from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.” As we see in 4:7-11; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Romans 12:4-8; Colossians 2:19, growth occurs because Christ gives us the necessary gifts to do such. “Christ is the source of the life and power and growth of the church, which He facilitates through each believer’s gifts and mutual ministry in joints touching other believers. The power in the church flows from the Lord through individual believers and relationships between believers.”<sup>17</sup>

The stimulus for growth is love because it is how we are connected in our relationship to the head, in

our relationship to each other, and to those who are lost (John 13:34-35). Unity in the church cannot come by any other way than what the inspired Apostle Paul wrote here. This is how the Lord has blessed, is blessing, and will bless the church to grow.

#### **CONCLUSION**

In Jesus’ prayer shortly before He died, He prayed for Himself, His disciples, and ultimately for all believers (John 17). In that final section where He prays for all believers of all time, He pleads, on our behalf, that we will be unified. Unified!

In that prayer, we can notice that He gave the process for unity, the pattern for unity, and the purpose of unity. The process is through the word of God. Frequently, He mentioned the primary role His word must have. John records for us, in verse 20, “I do not ask on behalf of these [apostles] alone, but

for those also who believe in Me through their [apostles’] word.” If we take time to read through passages such as Ephesians 4 and John 17, we will find out how the church can be unified!

*Immature believers are inclined to accept every sort of doctrinal error and false interpretation of Scripture because they have not learned to be critical.*

fied!

What’s the pattern for unity? How do we do it? What does the Word demonstrate to us? John continues the prayer of Jesus in verse 21: “that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in Us” (cf. John 17:22, 23). God the Father and Jesus the Son are the same, never dividing and disagreeing. They are always in one accord with each other. We, too, must do the same... and it is possible because the Bible is God’s mind written down for us (2 Timothy 3:16-17)!

So what? Why should we work towards unity? Jesus answered that when He said in verses 21 and 23, saying, “so that the world may believe that You sent Me... so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them...” Why did Christ come to earth? Luke 19:10 records it very simply: “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Unity is possible, and in Christ “blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love!”

<sup>17</sup> MacArthur, p. 161.

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# PRACTICAL BIBLE STUDY

FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CHRISTIAN

*John Ratliff*

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Bible study is important and necessary, while at the same time a seemingly daunting task. Where to begin, how to do it, and making application usually stops many from even making an attempt. It is often stated that when studying the Bible ask these questions: who, what, when, and so on. These are certainly questions that need to be asked and do help in ascertaining pertinent information. Nevertheless, a problem arises when asking these questions, because 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians approach the Bible with their 21<sup>st</sup> century reading glasses, and in the end miss the intended purposes or point of the writer. In this article, it is the author's intent to set forth some ideas for practical Bible study. These ideas will incorporate who, what, when, and so forth; but also hopefully challenge the reader to dig deeper.

## **WHERE TO BEGIN**

As one approaches the Bible for study, where to begin is probably the hardest to nail down. One can begin by studying a book, a chapter, or just a few verses, or even a particular topic or character. However, when studying a particular topic, carefulness must be exercised, because there is a great risk of taking verses out of their context. While topical studies can be and are beneficial they should not be the sole method of study. As it pertains to practical Bible study, it is best to use a variety of methods and approaches. This writer suggests to begin by studying a book.

## **STUDY BY BOOK**

Before in-depth study of a chapter, a few verses, or even a topic, study the whole book. That is, take one book of the Bible and study it. It is here that the questions mentioned earlier need to be addressed

(who, what, when...). These questions will help in setting the context of the book and assist in *keeping* the book in context. Ask who is writing, what is the purpose of the writer, and when is he writing. The "when" it was written is not nearly as critical as the "what or why" it was written. In order to study a book in depth, read it with purpose. Do not sit down and casually read the words or scan the verses. There is a difference between reading and studying. One "reads" to gain general knowledge, one "studies" to actually retain the information and gain deeper insight. Read with purpose and diligence, read slowly, read the book several times through.

Look for key words; these are words that the writer incorporates a number of times. For instance, in the book of Philippians, Paul (the author) speaks about joy in some form in all four chapters, approximately fourteen times throughout the book.

Look for the key verse or theme of the book. This is a verse that ties the whole book together and sums up the purpose of the writer. For example, in Hebrews 8:1, the Bible reads, "Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."<sup>1</sup> Here is the key verse or theme of Hebrews. Here is the purpose of the writer. He wants his audience to understand the book is all about Jesus as High Priest, and thus, is superior to any earthly High Priest or religious system (i.e., Judaism, Law of Moses).

Look for time stamps. Such as, "the time is near," "the time is at hand," and so on. This will help in keeping the book in context, because the book was

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<sup>1</sup> All references are NKJV unless noted otherwise

written to someone, and it meant something to them at that time.

### ***STUDY BY CHAPTER***

Once a book has been examined thoroughly, it is now time to break it down a little. Here is a critical piece of information to remember when studying by chapter. The chapters and verses were added for ease of reading and finding information quickly. Do not depend on the chapter and verse breaks for the context. Rather, attempt to locate paragraphs; find where a thought begins and ends. It may be helpful to have a Bible that has been divided into paragraphs instead of verse by verse. But again, do not rely completely on the divisions placed there by man.

For example, in Matthew 16, Jesus is asked for a sign by the Pharisees and Sadducees in verses 1-4. Then in verse 5-12, He and His disciples leave and go somewhere else. Jesus then says, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees" (Matthew 16:6). The disciples immediately think that he is speaking about physical bread, because they did not bring any. Therefore, Jesus has to explain what He means. The whole paragraph is verses 1-12 before a change of thought. After this, Jesus goes into the region of Caesarea Philippi where He asks His disciples who He is, and Peter declares "you are the son of God." He then speaks about His church, His kingdom, His death, and His reward to those who follow Him. Then at the end of chapter 16, Jesus declares, "For the son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (Matthew 16:27-28).

Here is why it is important to pay attention to the paragraphs and keep them in context. Matthew 16:13-20 are a continuous thought; verses 21-28 also provided a continuous thought. However, some take verse 27 and isolate it from the immediate and remote context. They say that verse 27 applies to Christ's second coming and the end of the world. This cannot be the case, because verse 28 is in the same context, both immediate and remotely. He has spoken about His kingdom, His death, His reward, and then His coming. Jesus says, that "there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (Matthew 16:28).

### ***STUDY BY VERSE(S)***

After an in-depth study of a book, a thorough examination of the chapters (paragraphs), it is now time to take on a study of the verses. This is a slow systematic look verse by verse. One way to make this exciting and make the Bible come alive is word studies on key words in each verse. One does not have to be a Greek scholar to make this work, one only needs a decent Bible Software Program or access to the internet where there are many free of charge. One can even do a Google search for words and their meaning in the Greek.

Here is an example: in Ephesians 3:20 Paul declares, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we are or think, according to the power that works in us." This verse is powerful as it stands in our English translations. The NASB translates this verse, "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to all the fullness of God." (On a side note, utilize multiple translations when studying; it will help in clarification at times.) Now, back to our verse, as is seen, the NKJV and the NASB translate this verse differently, and make the verse come alive. A quick search on the words, "exceeding, abundantly, and above" will make this verse jump off the page. The NASB says, "do far more abundantly beyond all." The words from the original carry the idea that God is able (has the ability) to go beyond out of and beyond anything we can think. This means that God has the power to do things that we cannot even imagine.

Someone may be thinking, how can *I* do a verse-by-verse study of a book? It actually is very simple; for instance, the gospel account of John contains eight hundred seventy-nine verses. There are three hundred sixty-five days in a year. This breaks down to studying approximately 2.4 verses a day. That means in one year's time a person could do an exhaustive study of the book of John verse by verse, and only have to study two to three verses a day. There are about two hundred and sixty work days (Monday-Friday) in a year, there are eight hundred seventy-nine verses in John. This averages out to be about 3.3 verses per day. The point is this, practical systematic Bible study is not hard, but it does require diligence.

### ***MAKING APPLICATION***

After studying a book, a chapter, or a few verses, it is time to make application. Every word of the



Bible was written to people living during the time of its writing. This must be kept in mind as one approaches the time for application. Again, the reason this is important is because the writing meant something to the people to whom it was written. If one comes to the Bible with his 21<sup>st</sup> century spectacles, he will miss the big picture and likely misapply the text. Do not attempt to make application until a proper examination of the context has been accomplished.

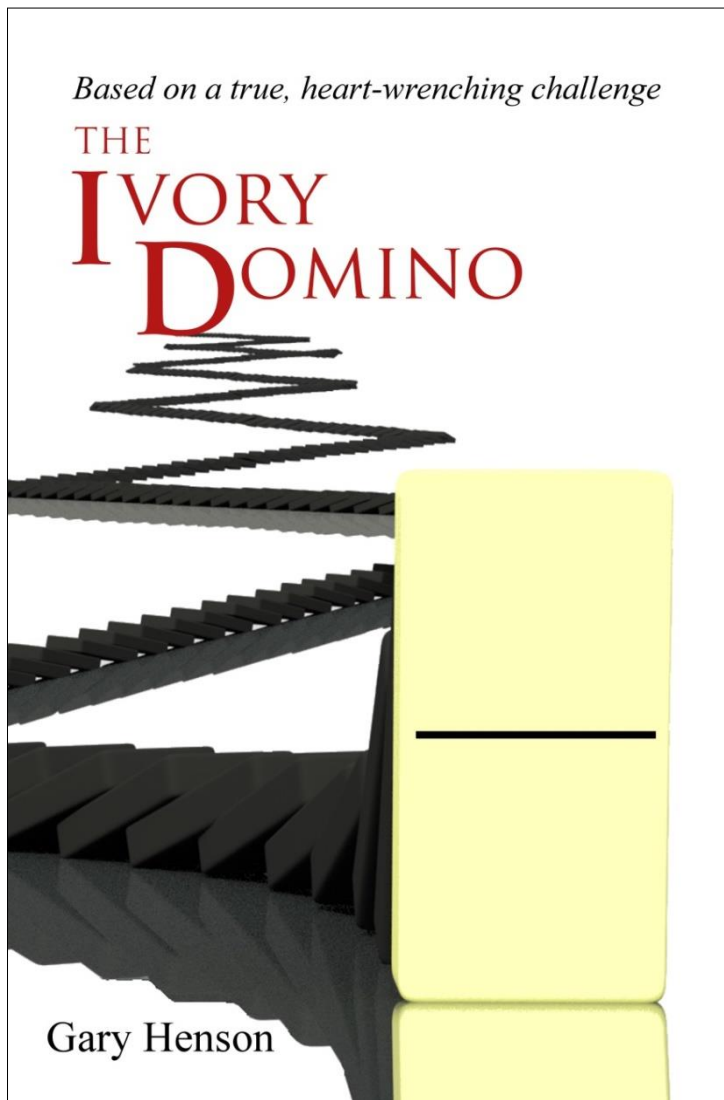
When making application, strive to determine how it applied to the audience in the first century, before making application in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. When one does this, it will keep the verses in their context and hopefully will negate a wrongful conclusion.

One last thought when it comes to making application, never force an interpretation or an application into a text that contradicts another text. If one verse seemingly contradicts another verse, then

one's understanding of that verse or maybe both verses is incorrect. Also, when making application from various texts, always apply from simplest to hardest. What this means is, do not start in Revelation and then go somewhere else. Always begin with verses that are easiest to understand and then move on to harder verses.

### **CONCLUSION**

It is the hope and prayer of the author that all of God's children would implement a practical Bible study method into their daily lives, whether it be study of a book, chapter, or verse by verse. There is no such thing as a cookie-cutter mold when it comes to studying the Bible. However this is certain, if one spends time in the Word; it will enrich their soul, ground their faith, and help them progress in becoming more like Jesus.



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# JESUS, THE CROSS, AND SPIRITUAL DEATH

Tom Baxley

The atonement is a deep subject that I am not going to pretend to fully understand or otherwise be an expert in. Over the years I have come to learn that there are multiple ways to look at and speak of the atonement, but none of them, by themselves, give a full explanation or picture of what happened at the cross. The purpose of this article is not to examine all of the theories, but one: penal substitutionary atonement (PSA). In particular, this article will examine what I believe to be a necessary implication that is very often neglected, and sometimes outrightly rejected by those who claim to subscribe to PSA. Here is the proposition this article seeks to prove: that Jesus experienced separation from the Father at some point on the cross since the penalty of sin is spiritual death.

Before we delve into the main point of the article, let me say a few words about PSA and give a quick Biblical defense. As stated above, I do believe that it is not the only way to interpret what happened at the cross, but it is very Biblical. Perhaps no passage is more clear than one of the more famous passages in the Bible, Isaiah 53.

*Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty*

*That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.*

*Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.*

*All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living, For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due?*

*His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there*

any deceit in His mouth. **But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering,** He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, **As He will bear their iniquities.** Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; **Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,** And interceded for the transgressors.<sup>1</sup> (emp. added)

Notice the portions in bold. What is clear from these passages is that Jesus paid a price for us by taking not just our punishment, but our guilt as well. Many who oppose PSA do so on the charge that PSA makes Jesus guilty of sin, making Him a sinner. Once again, I will not pretend to be an expert and attempt to explain the intricacies of the atonement, but this much is clear: Jesus was not a sinner (Heb. 4:15). Indeed, this is one of the qualities that qualified Him to be our sacrifice since Passover lambs and guilt offerings had to be “unblemished/without blemish” (Exo. 12:5; Lev. 6:6).

Consider, also, some of what the New Testament says about PSA. Peter encourages his readers, which includes us, to endure harsh treatment with patience when we have done nothing deserving of it. The encouragement comes from following the example of Jesus, who was so cruelly treated at Calvary while deserving none of it. Peter writes,

*For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting*

*Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls. 1 Peter 2:20-25*

Notice several things here. First, in no particular order, notice that Peter is drawing from Is 53. Second, he affirms that Christ was without sin. Third, Peter, by inspiration, plainly states that Jesus “bore our sins in His body on the cross.”

One other passage to consider before we leave PSA is 2 Cor 5:21, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Paul, like Peter, affirms that Jesus, 1) knew no sin; and 2) Jesus was made to be sin for us. I have heard it said that Paul here is referring to the sin offering, not that he was intending to say that Jesus became sin. It really seems to me to be the same thing. Lev 8 is the chapter that explains the rites of the sin offering, and in those rites Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the offering (v. 14), but the purpose was not specified. However, in Lev 16, we find the rites for the Day of Atonement and it also includes laying hands on the head of an animal. Two goats were to be presented before the Lord: one for a sin offering and the other as a scapegoat that would be presented alive before the Lord, “to make atonement upon it” (7-10). More detail is given in verses 20-22, “20 “When he finishes atoning for the holy place, and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall offer the live goat. 21 Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel, and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. 22 And the goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.” What we see, then, is that the guilt is passed from the one making the offering to the thing being offered, bearing the sins in its body. Thus, any way you slice it, Jesus, by becoming our guilt offering, took our sins upon Himself and with those sins He took the punishment, too.

As previously noted, PSA is not the only explanation for what happened at the cross. You might

<sup>1</sup> All passages taken from NASB unless otherwise stated.

NOTE: Image used with permission from cpggrey.com/

like other theories better, and that is fine. You might rather choose to focus on other characteristics of God, choosing to see the cross as the love of God magnified rather than the wrath of God satisfied.<sup>2</sup> Whatever course you choose, I do not see how PSA can be Biblically denied. That being said, let's talk about the implications of what this really means. I fear this is where I will lose many readers. I beg that you continue reading with an open mind and thoughtfully consider the remainder of the article and measure it to what the Bible says. If in the end you still disagree, at least let that be after the thoughtful consideration and not at outright indignation over a scandalous, maybe even seemingly blasphemous thought.

PSA is about Jesus taking our punishment. Many, if not most, who subscribe to PSA seem to believe that the wages of sin is physical death. I don't believe that is the case. I don't believe the Bible presents physical, biological death as the enemy of humanity; at least it doesn't have to be, and it is most certainly not the enemy of the Christian. The real enemy of humanity is spiritual death, separation from God. This is the wage of sin, and this is what Jesus came so save us from. My plan is to demonstrate this with two proofs. The first is to show that physical death existed in the garden, at the very least it existed as a possibility. Second, I will show problems the New Testament presents to the idea of physical death being the wage of sin, and also the emphasis placed on spiritual life.

### ***Physical Death in the Garden?***

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and it was good (Gen 1). God then planted a garden and then planted mankind, His crowning creation made in His own image, in that garden and gave him charge over it to take care of it. In this charge God gave man freedom to eat of any tree in the garden save one: the tree of knowledge of good and evil. If the man God created were to put forth his hand and eat of this tree he would die (Gen 2:16-17). We know how the story goes. The serpent convinced Eve to eat, and she convinced Adam to eat.

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2 The popular song, "In Christ Alone," met some controversy over this very idea. The original lyrics have been changed by some to emphasize the love of God, but the authors have stood by their original wording "the wrath of God was satisfied."

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/keith-getty-on-what-makes-in-christ-alone-beloved-and-contested/>

There are at least two things to think about here. First of all, they did not die physically that day. In fact, it would be 900+ years before Adam would return to the dust from whence he came. Second, what makes this all the more interesting is that the devil was right. The serpent told Eve that she would not die, and she didn't, at least not in that very day like God had told Adam. The best-case scenario is that they would have but God gave them a sacrifice to cover their sin (Gen 3:21); worst-case scenario is that God did not uphold his word and the devil was right. This is the situation you are faced with if you believe that this is the point when physical, biological death entered the world. However, there is another explanation that fits better. What is the purpose of a tree of life to an immortal being? Remember that after the eating of the fruit they were banished from the garden, but the text notes specifically that they were barred from the tree of life, lest they eat and live forever (Gen 3:22). Adam and Eve's immortality was contingent upon their eating of the tree of life; it was not an inherent, necessary quality. Thus, man was not created immortal, and mortal creatures will eventually die. Thus while man had the potential to live forever, he was created mortal and thus would be subject to death. Death existed in the garden as a reality<sup>3</sup>; it was a part of the original creation, and it was good. The alternate explanation, then, is that man did die the day he ate just like God said he would, but that death was spiritual. Prior to the eating of the fruit man dwelt with God, but afterwards he was expelled from His presence. The arrival of sin did not bring physical death, but a sting (separation) that only God can remove.

### ***New Testament Problems?***

Now let's look at the problems the New Testament presents if the wages of sin is physical death. First of all, if the wages of sin is physical death and our sins are forgiven in Christ, why do Christians still die? This makes us no better than the Old Testament faithful, since we too are looking for a time when full relationship to God is restored. This really means that this New Covenant really isn't better

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3 It is also worth mentioning that death is a necessity for plants to grow (1 Cor. 15:36). Also, while we know that in the Antediluvian world man was vegetarian, there is nothing specified about animals [Unless Gen. 6:21 shows animals were all herbivores—Editor]; thus it is possible, if not probable, that some animals were carnivorous in the garden, meaning that physical death was a reality in the garden.



than the Old Covenant at all. Not only this, but another problem, equally as troubling, is the death of the innocent. How do we account for infant mortality? Simply chalking it up to the fact that sin is present in the world will not do. I answer for my own sins, not those of anyone else; similarly no one else is responsible for my sin. Deut. 24:16 and Ezek. 18 both emphatically state individuals are put to death for their own sin. Thus if the wages of sin is physical death, infant mortality necessarily leads to total hereditary depravity [i.e., babies born in sin], which is very much counter-Scripture.

If physical death is really the enemy of man, including the Christian, why did Paul not view it as such? Not only did he not view his impending physical death as evil, he welcomed it and said he really didn't know what to hope for or choose (Phil 1:21-24). Paul, by inspiration, called death "much better" (not the death itself, but what it would lead to) and he also, by inspiration, called death "gain." Paul was not the only one to view death in such a way. Rev 14:13 is a pertinent passage for this discussion: "And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, 'Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them." Whatever you think about the date or interpretation of Revelation, this passage states that after the fall of Babylon those who die in Christ are blessed. They are not blessed because they're dead, but rather their blessing comes from having rest from their labors.

Finally, to help us see that Jesus came to save us from spiritual death and not physical death, we need to stop pretending that the Bible is only concerned with physical death. The Israelites were dead while in captivity but would be raised when they returned home (Ezek. 37). The Prodigal Son was dead while he was in the far country but was made alive when he came back to his father's house (Luke 15:24, 32). The Ephesians were dead in their trespasses and sins before submitting to Jesus (Eph. 2:1, 5). If we are in Christ we have died to sin and to self (Gal. 2-3). Physical, biological death is a fate no one can escape. It is but a door, one through which we all must pass. A fate that we can avoid, however, is the second death (Rev. 2:11). This is what Jesus went to the cross for. He came to die in our place and take our punishment, our separation, so that we could have the hope of eternity with the Father in Para-

dise.

I know how scandalous this probably sounds to some, but remember that everything about Christianity is scandalous: God becoming flesh, the Creator dying for the created, the righteous dying for the unrighteous, the first shall be last and the last shall be first, the greatest shall be the least and the least the greatest, the master must be the servant, serve others over self, etc...Why should we be so surprised and shocked over this particular scandal? I know it raises a lot of questions, questions to which I don't have good answers at this time, nor may I ever have them. I am a finite being and cannot fully explain Deity, nor is it my job to fully explain the mysteries, or the "secret things" (Deut. 29:29); I walk by faith, not by sight. We know that when Jesus came to this earth He did not cease to be Deity, yet somehow there were things He gave up, maybe even permanently. After all, some 30 years after the cross Paul tells Timothy that the mediator of the new covenant is the **man** Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5; emp. mine). If it be the case that Jesus did give up something permanently in order to save us, it further highlights the deep love He has for us, a love that really does surpass knowledge (Eph. 3:19).

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# ISRAEL

## A TIME OF KINGS

*David Dean*

“Now make us a king to judge us like all the other nations” (1 Samuel 8:5). With these words Israel fully embraced the nations around them. Already have they disobeyed God repeatedly; first, in not removing the threat posed by these nations, and second by being drawn into their idol worship. Additionally, despite the hope we embrace with the story of Ruth, we find ourselves plunged right back into the cycle of failure and darkness that can be attributed to the age of Judges. Now, as Samuel grows old, the people look at the corruption seen in his family, and instead of turning to God for a solution, they look outward—a pattern that has been seen repeatedly in the book of Judges and that will sadly be continued in the book of 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel, God shows Himself to be listening to His people and working in their lives. The book begins with a heartfelt plea from a young mother eager to have children. That child will be Samuel, the last great judge of the people. Samuel as judge and prophet is both a spiritual and civil leader, and he helps to guide the people for many years. In particular, he helps usher in (though with much disgust) the age of kings for the Israelite nation, establishing a scene that reminds us of the book of Judges where “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). The first choice for King is a young man named Saul. The Bible describes him as “higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward,” and Samuel proudly declares, “See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people” (1 Sam. 10:23-24). God has heard the desires of his people and granted them exactly what they demanded.

Saul appears to be an ideal king, one even capable of breaking the chain of failures started during the time of Joshua. Whereas the Israelites failed to complete the removal of the Canaanites during the

conquest, Saul fights for God. He immediately gets to work serving God. He wages war against the enemies of God to the point that the Bible records, “there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul” (1 Sam. 14:52). At some point in his reign he even removes those who practice witchcraft (28:3). However, when tasked with destroying the Amalekites God gives clear instructions, “Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not. But slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass” (15:3). Instead of following what is a clear and rather simple set of instructions, Saul holds back and takes spoils of war instead. In a twist of fortunes, Saul is told his failure has caused God to take the kingdom from him and give it to another (15:22-23). Samuel is told to go and anoint another to be King, a young man by the name of David, the great-grandson of Boaz and Ruth.

Ruth was a light in the time of darkness. We saw that light through her actions towards Naomi and her interaction with Boaz. That light, it appears, was passed down through her line to a young sheep herder by the name of David. God would declare, “I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will” (Acts 13:22). The description paints a stark contrast between Saul and the future King. The reader might well remember the difficult journey David underwent before becoming king. Saul slowly became obsessed with killing David, hurling a spear not only at him (1 Sam. 18:11; 19:10), but even at his own son (20:33). David spent the next several years fleeing from Saul because of his faith in and obedience to God. His trust in God is so great that he forbids his men from harming Saul on two different occasions when the opportunity presents itself. Finally, David takes the throne, but only after the tragic

death of Saul and his sons, (1 Sam. 31).

Of course, before David could be named king, a long civil war broke out between the houses of Saul and David (2 Sam. 3). Eventually, David was victorious, and he starts his rule with the same trust in God that he held during the years of roaming. David continued to wage war against the various enemies of God. He brings the ark of God back to Jerusalem and even seeks to build a house for God, a task ultimately left for his son. During this point in David's life, God reveals the next part of His plan for mankind. The seventh chapter of 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel is truly significance. David approaches Nathan the prophet, concerned about a lack of respect towards God. He asks how he can, "dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within curtains" (2 Sam. 7:2). God reveals through the prophet that instead of David building Him a physical house God will establish an eternal kingdom through the line of David:

*And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David (2 Sam. 7:12-17).*

However, the cycle of corruption that plagued the Israelite people finds its way even into the heart of David. At a time when he should have been at war, fighting with his people, David stays home. The 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of 2 Samuel records the beginning of the collapse of the United Kingdom of Israel. David spies for himself the beautiful Bathsheba and uses his considerable influence to summon her and sleep with her. Once it is determined she is with child, David uses deception and murder to attempt to hide his sins. It is only when confronted with his sins by the prophet Nathan that David realizes his faults. Sadly, at this point it is too late. The immediate consequence is the death of David's son, and the long-

term result is that the kingdom David has worked so hard to build is ripped in two by his actions. We find that David, like all those before him, has failed.

Often when we consider the nation of Israel, we view it with rose-tinted glasses. The Israelites are God's chosen people from whom such great heroes rose up. Yet, when we take a moment to actually consider the history, we see a very different picture. They struggled, failed, repented, and then struggled some more. In short, they are us. Beautiful stories, such as the faithfulness of Ruth, weave through the pages of the Bible, giving us hope and helping to soften the blows of failure in our heroes. Ultimately, we see that God is with us. He is guiding and shaping the world to accomplish His will. After all, "there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom 13:1). For this reason, God is working to ensure that soon (in our study) Israel will face "A Break in the Kingdom."

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# SEASONING OUR WORDS

Bill Howard

*Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man. (Colossians 4:6)*

The Psalmist left with us a beautiful thought in Psalm 19:14:

*Let the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.*

Children of God will do well to dwell on the impact this plea can have on our lives. If we were to recite these words to ourselves each morning, they will help guard our speech and our actions for the day. It would protect us from uttering any word or words that would be hurtful to our wellbeing or the feelings of others. This would rule out slander, fault-finding, profanity, untruths, judgment, and meanness. The Psalmist also says that the words of the wicked are iniquity and deceit (Psalm 36:1-3). Christians must be truly circumspect about the language we use. James tells us:

*Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be (James 3:10).*

Jesus left no doubt as to what he desired in the speech of those who would follow him.

*O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of Judgment (Matthew 12:34-36).*

The question we must deal with then is: How tasteful are our words?

*For the ear trieth words as the mouth tasteth meat. Let us choose to us judgment; let us know among ourselves what is good (Job*



34:3-4).

Are our words kind, gracious, pleasing, honest? Or are they crude, hurtful, or dishonest? Are we diligent about the seasoning of the words others hear coming from our mouth?

Again, the plea of David:

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart; be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.*

In this passage, David asks that God approve his words and thoughts as though they were offerings brought to the altar.

*An evil man is trapped by his sinful talk, but a righteous man escapes trouble. (Proverbs 12:13, NIV)*

Does it stand to reason, then, that we can intermittently be evil and choose to use foul language, and at certain times be righteous and use only those words that are like offerings brought to the altar? As Paul would say: “God forbid.” It is not and cannot be in the spirit of righteousness to use vile and profane language. We do not have one set of words for Sunday when we worship and praise God and another set for everyday use. It just doesn’t work that way. To allow repulsive and obnoxious speech to be a part of our life is to be dishonest with ourselves and our fellowman, and disrespectful to God. We show that we are not what we claim to be.

God despises dishonesty in any form; it will bring nothing other than shame and degradation. God has warned that each of us will be held to account for the words we have uttered. Solomon said: “The evil man is trapped by his sinful talk.” So many scriptures in the Bible tell us God despises all forms of dishonesty. It works against us. People distrust people who lie. “A righteous person escapes trouble,” Solomon said. What does the word *righteous* mean? Proverbs 4:23 tells us “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” Our heart dictates to a great extent how we live, the things we do and say. Keeping our heart with all diligence precludes the use of bad language, untruths, and hurtful statements. Solomon tells us to guard our heart to make sure we concentrate on those desires that will keep us on the right path. Make sure our affections propel us in the right direction. Put boundaries on our desires and keep our eyes on the goal—Jesus and Heaven. Example: As long as Peter

kept his eyes on Jesus, he walked on the water. Look straight ahead; keep your eyes fixed on the goal. Don’t become sidetracked on detours that lead to sin. Psalm 37:4 says: “Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.” Also Matthew 6:33: “but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

*The heart of the godly thinks carefully before speaking; the mouth of the wicked overflows with evil words. (Proverbs 15:28, NLT)*

Think before we speak!! Proverbs 15:1 “A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare.” Be careful!!

Proverbs 16:23 states: “The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.” Also Proverbs 10:19 tells us “he who holds his tongue is wise.” Proverbs 23:7 says it best, I think: “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

*Do not ye yet understand that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly and is cast out into the draught? But those things that proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man (Matthew 15:17-20a).*

Whether we are praising and glorifying our God or dealing with our fellowman, our language should be above reproach. Christians are different people.

*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).*

More than fifty times in the New Testament Christians are called saints. As a royal priesthood, as saints, how dare we not choose our words carefully? We cannot escape the fact that what comes from our mouth, we are.

# Where will you go?

"How shall they hear without a preacher?" Romans 10:14



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## Whom will you send?

"How shall they preach unless they are sent?" Romans 10:15

## QUOTES TO CONTEMPLATE

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### ***On the Army of God***

We have, I think, to find this martial note again, for we have all but lost it. We sing our martial songs, and the sanctuary rings with brave words. But we are not a very soldierly people. We are parade-ground troops reluctant to dirty our uniforms; we are soldiers who refuse orders, sleep on duty, serve when convenient, and often enough traitors to the cause. God's military levy? We are a ragtag, bobtailed militia, of no use in the eschatological battle—save that God, in his grace, has deigned to use us anyhow. Indeed, this talk of the life of faith as combat embarrasses us. It seems scarcely in good taste. We do not like to think of the church as militant at all, but rather caught up in a stream of steady fraternal progress. We are men of tolerance and good will who find it hard to believe that the God of the Bible (though infinitely more loving) is not necessarily as tolerant as we. Feeling no animus toward the enemies of God, we fraternize with them till we no longer recognize them as enemies and are ready to make almost any compromise with them in the interests of peace. When the Bible talks of their total destruction, we vaguely feel this to be unworthy. Yet we expect the promise of Christ's victory on earth to be made good to us and through us, his most unmilitant church.

John Bright

*The Authority of the Old Testament*

Churches are never stronger than their membership, and a membership of worldly, careless, negligent, stunted Christians will prevent a church from accomplishing much for the Lord.

Joe T. Odle

*Church Member's Handbook*

### ***On Preachers and Preaching***

Though no preacher is perfect, there is a difference between one who is giving his utmost to being a man of God and one who is wallowing in the mire of sin and spraying himself with cologne on Sunday morning. ...

[P]reachers who lose their vision of God and place it on money, sacrifice the souls of many in their congregation. These thirsty souls desire the life-giving word of God, not the continual dribble of the things of this material world. How many people

have left the rank and file to return to their homes to get away from the nonsense of church? Such preaching has turned the sweetness of the word of God into the taste of vomit. Thus people leave in droves only to lose their souls to the unsaved world.

Such drumming of the material gong needs to stop and the true word of God needs to ring out once more. It's not about the money, it's about souls.

Roy Knight

*There is a River*

### ***On Baptism***

In baptism we are initiated, crowned, chosen, embraced, washed, adopted, gifted, reborn, killed, and thereby sent forth and redeemed. We are identified as one of God's own, then assigned our place and our job within the kingdom of God.

William Willimon

### ***On the Ten Commandments***

There is probably no other moral code in the Western world better known or more widely recognized than the Ten Commandments. It represents a remarkably comprehensive and even more remarkably brief statement of the religious and ethical obligations of human beings. Although many of them are common to most religions and are included in most systems of morality, it is their being brought together in such a creative synthesis, concise and yet evocative, limited in language but unlimited in application, which has made them so influential upon the lives of untold millions of people during the more than three thousand years since they were first carved into stone.

Robert I. Kahn

*The Ten Commandments for Today*

### ***On Prayer***

To pray well is the better half of study.

Martin Luther

### ***On Attitude***

Happy, successful, functional individuals and families all have problems. Some people simply choose to view their problems differently, and that makes all the difference.

Rusty Bolton

*It Depends on How You Look at It*





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# LISTEN

*Tom Baxley*

“What do \_\_\_\_\_ believe about \_\_\_\_\_?”  
Fill in the first blank with any denomination (or non-denomination) and fill in the second blank with a theological subject, and you will have a question that has been asked by a multitude of people, myself included.

We like to organize things, people, and ideas into neat little boxes and categories. Over the years, as I have studied the Bible with people from various backgrounds, I have found that this can be a very difficult thing to do. And with the rise of ‘non-denominationalism,’ it is becoming a harder task to accomplish.

I have seen a rise in the restoration mentality—people studying for themselves, having their own opinions, and not having a loyalty to a particular denomination. I’d like to illustrate this with a personal example.

For over a year I have had a weekly Bible study with a group of men who, for the most part, worship with a local Baptist church. The focus of the study is discipleship, and there is a program that we have been following that will eventually take us all the way through the New Testament. We have had some great meetings with great discussions. Since we came from different backgrounds, we did not always agree on things, as you can imagine. The disagreements were kept very civil and all of us grew through our time together.

Over the course of our meetings I made some very startling discoveries. Since these men either had Baptist backgrounds or worshiped with the Baptist church, I assumed they followed Baptist doctrines, including once saved, always saved, and salvation before baptism. I can’t speak for all of the men who met with us (our numbers would vary week by week), but I can confidently say that three of the men in particular, all who were current members of the Baptist church, denied those two previously specified doctrines. I knew these topics would come up and wondered what would happen with these discussions, but to my pleasant surprise I found that their beliefs line up exactly with what

Scripture taught! Had I gone into those meetings with my guns drawn, ready to start unloading my theological ammunition on my prey, it could have turned ugly and could have killed the meetings.

Someone reading this may immediately comment that they are still meeting with the Baptist church. They have their reasons why, but they are not theological. These three men claim no loyalty to the Baptist church, only to Jesus. For them, they just happen to worship at a building that has the name “\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church.” This is very interesting to me. People claiming no loyalty to a denomination and who want to be Christians only and do what the Bible says and teach what the Bible teaches...where have I heard that before???

The importance of listening to those outside of the churches of Christ cannot be overstated, but let’s be honest for a minute and look inward. This might be a little painful, so I will be as gentle as possible. For all of our claims about not being a denomination, the churches of Christ can be a very sectarian group. We have divided (denominated) over instrumental music, the use of building funds, the number of cups in the Lord’s Supper, and a number of other ideas and practices. I’m not going to comment on the rightness or wrongness of the division (some right, others wrong), but only on how we treat those who do not agree with us.

To a very large degree we treat those who do not agree with us as we would a denomination: we withhold fellowship and don’t believe they are saved because their practice or teaching is sinful. Here is what makes matters worse: we don’t even try to listen to each other. We make assumptions and build strawmen that are easily knocked down. When we do happen to engage those who disagree on certain subjects we frequently enter into faux discussions or mock debates. I don’t mean mock as in “set up,” but rather as in meaningless. We are more interested in proving ourselves right than getting at truth because we believe we have a monopoly on the truth.

I personally witnessed on a social media forum a

preacher be removed from a group because he published something that was inaccurate and when it was brought to his attention he refused to fix the mistake. I cannot tell you how many debates I've watched, books and articles I've read, sermons I heard, or conversations I've heard where someone uses a strawman argument that they know is a strawman argument. Brethren, we need to do better. We have to do better.

How? Listen. I mean *really* listen.

Don't listen to respond; listen to understand. There is a reason God gave us two ears and one mouth: we should listen twice as much as we speak. We need to swallow our pride and accept the fact that we don't know everything and we might learn something from anyone. For instance, I recently heard a denominational preacher comment on salvation that it's not the prayer that saves, but Jesus that does. We understand that he is speaking of the sinners prayer and we also understand that there is no salvation whatsoever in the sinner's prayer, but he is 100 percent correct that it's Jesus that saves.

One thing that I have discovered in my studies is that many people reject baptism because they believe it is a work and they (rightly) reject a works-based salvation. What is interesting is that the way baptism is presented in many sermons and studies is as a work. That is not the intention of the presenter, but that is often how it comes across to the one to whom it's being presented. We can benefit greatly by listening to a denominational preacher and focus on Jesus and what He did for us and less on how we save ourselves.

I've given personal anecdotes, so what about Scripture?

*Proverbs 22:17, "Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your mind to my knowledge..."*

It's difficult to incline your ear while you speak, which is said in a host of other passages.

*James 2:19, "But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak..."*

*Matthew 7:12, "Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."*

How can we expect people to listen to us if we won't return the favor?

*Mark 12:31, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

We very often seem to forget that our relationship with our fellow man is as important as our relationship with God. John even says that it is impossible to love God, who we haven't seen, if we don't love our brother, who we have seen (1 Jn 4:20). God has always expected His people to love and take care of people, and I submit that includes listening to them and not passing judgment on them because we disagree with them (Rom 14).

*Matthew 7:2, "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you."*

This does not bode well for many. If we misrepresent people and assume the worst about them, what is going to happen to us when we stand before God? Didn't Jesus tell a parable of a slave who was shown mercy and then withheld mercy from another? How did that story end up (Matthew 18:21-35)?

Before I close I want to make sure I'm not misunderstood in what I'm writing here. I am not at all suggesting that we need to listen to and follow everyone, or agree with what they are saying, or even accept their belief as valid. The same God who told us "Take care what you listen to," (Mark 4:24) also said, "But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21), and also, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God..." (1 John 4:1). We can't examine all things if we won't listen to all things. We can't test the spirits if we don't listen to them. We should never be afraid to be challenged in what we think or believe if we are interested in the truth. God has nothing to hide and the truth is not afraid of questions.

The importance of listening cannot be overstated. I'm not suggesting this would solve all of our problems, but it is a great start. If we would take time to listen to others, who knows what we could accomplish? If we listened to our brethren of different backgrounds and tried to really understand their questions, we could take real, meaningful steps towards true unity. If we would listen to those outside the church we can see that there is a great thing happening where people really are searching for truth and we can help lead them. God bless.

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# TABERNACLE SHADOWS

*Mark McWhorter*

When the priest walked past the Brazen Altar he came to the Laver. When he walked past the Laver he went through the Door and entered the Holy Place. This was the first chamber of the Tent. Several pieces of furniture were in the Holy Place. There is a large amount of information one can garner from the Holy Place. As well as a great amount of symbolism for Christ and the Church.

The Holy Place was 20 cubits long by 10 cubits broad by 10 cubits high. There were 100 silver sockets, 48 boards, 15 bars, 10 curtains, 50 taches, and 100 blue loops.

In Hebrews 9:2 it was called the ‘first tabernacle.’ This was to emphasize that each section of the Tabernacle was a separate entity and that it was temporary. Hebrews 9:8-9, we read, “The Holy Ghost signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing; which was a figure for the time then present...” In Hebrews 9:2, the King James Version has ‘sanctuary.’ The Greek is ‘holy’ with no definite article. It is simply called Holy.

The High Priest served daily in the Holy Place. Christ became High Priest. He daily serves the church as High Priest. Until he returned to heaven at his ascension there had never been a High Priest in heaven. He could not serve until purified with the blood of the Lamb. Jesus was his own sacrificial lamb. All things had been designed and directed toward his High Priesthood. Remember, it was planned he would be the Lamb slain “from the foundation of the world,” (Revelation 13:8). Even “before the foundation of the world,” (1 Peter 1:20); before “times eternal” (American Standard Version 2 Timothy 1:9).

It was through the Mosaical Law that a man be-

came High Priest at the time Christ lived. Christ became High Priest according to the oath of the Father, (Hebrews 7:28; 5:6, 10).

## ***The Door***

The Door to the Holy Place was 10 cubits wide and 10 cubits high. The Gate to the Tabernacle was 20 cubits wide and 5 cubits high. Thus, they had the same area in size. The Door was the entrance for those desiring to learn and know the ‘higher’ things. Entrance brought higher spiritual attainment. It is narrower than the Gate because not all who enter the Gate will enter the Door. The Door is higher and narrower because fewer will make the decision to “go on unto perfection,” (Hebrews 6:1).

It was made of fine linen with blue, scarlet and purple threads woven in. (Refer to previous discussion of the coverings for what the colors represent.)

There were no Cherubim because the entrance was not guarded from allowing priests to enter. Only those who have placed themselves on the Altar and then washed at the Laver can go through the Door. John 10:1, 9, “He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber .... Verily, verily I say unto you, I am the Door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” Notice the man that enters shall be saved. Thus, this does not refer to the Gate. Those entering the Gate can, and might, be saved. Not everyone entering the Gate is a Christian. They had to continue to take the steps to become a Christian. The Christian must be constant and diligent in the Holy Place.

## ***Five Pillars of the Door***

Five pillars of shittim (acacia) were overlaid with gold. These pillars supported the Door. These repre-



sent Jesus' deity and his humanity bound together.

Notice five designations given to him in Isaiah 9:6, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." 'Child' is his humanity. 'Son' is his deity. These titles could be represented by the pillars in the Door.

Five other designations are given in Hebrews 7:26, "For such an High Priest became us who is Holy, Harmless, Undeified, Separate from Sinners, and Made Higher than the Heavens."

It is of note that there are 9 fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. The five pillars of the Door and the four pillars of the Gate equal nine pillars. Thus those in the Church are daily reminded of the fruits of the Spirit as they go about life activities and worship.

Five pillars give four panels. Four panels showing us the number for Grace. It is only by God's grace that we can go through the Door. Romans 3:24, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." It is interesting that the Greek word for "freely" in Romans 3:24 is translated in John 15:25 as "without a cause." There is no debt that God owed man to give him grace. God's action was solely from love for man.

Christ is High Priest of the New Covenant. Christians are the priests who serve under his High Priesthood. Christians enter into worship through the Door, Jesus, our High Priest. Hebrews 10:19, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter the holist (ASV – holy place) by the blood of Jesus." Jesus is the Altar where washing takes place. This is where the blood of Jesus is contacted in baptism by the non-Christian becoming a Christian. Christians are constantly washed by the blood. This is necessary to be able to walk through the Door into the Holy Place for worship.

Notice in John 10:9 that the Christian can go in and out of the Door and find pasture, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." There is a special intimate worship relationship with God and fellow Christians inside the Door. Outside the Door, in the Court, there is a relationship but not everything done in the Court is worship. There is a special rest inside the Door. Just as the Promised Land was promised as a place of rest, the Tabernacle and

Temple Holy Place were the place of a special rest.

In Ezekiel 9:3, God is shown leaving the Mercy Seat and moving to the Door. From there he speaks to men at the Brazen Altar. (Thus this is not the Veil between the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place. Nor was it the Gate of entrance into the Tabernacle.) These men are to mark out the righteous and kill the unrighteous. The main emphasis in 9:1-11 is unmerciful judgment. It shows that those killed were not fulfilling the requirements at the Brazen Altar and the Holy Place in order to be found righteous. They therefore were given no mercy.

### ***Sockets of Brass***

The brass sockets supporting the pillars of the Door speak of his perseverance and strength through trials. Jesus withstood every trial which Satan threw at him. Christians must also persevere. Only be persevering may Christians enter into the Holy Place time after time.

### ***Silver Sockets of the Holy Place***

The Silver Sockets are discussed in Exodus 30:11-16; and 38:27. These held the boards of the Tent. These were made from the half shekel paid by all men, 20 years old and older, as a ransom for their souls. It was given that there would not be a 'plague among them.' Within the confines of those who worship God, whether in the Holy Place (church in worship) or in the Holy of Holies (Heaven) there is no spiritual disease. As a point of interest, silver is a natural antibiotic. Bacteria cannot grow on silver. Silver is pure, white and precious. It is pure worship. It also gives a message that those in the Holy Place are preserved from spiritual infection as long as they maintain themselves in the Holy Place.

The atonement/ransom money was the same for the rich and the poor. The only atonement for all Christians is Jesus, the Christ. It does not matter how rich a person is or how poor a person is, Jesus paid the same atonement for all, his life.

There were 96 sockets for the boards and 4 for the pillars of the veil. Each board sat on 2 sockets. Each socket was solid silver estimated to be between 100 and 125 pounds. This makes almost 5 tons of silver in the sockets. At \$30 per ounce this would be almost \$4,800,000 in U.S. money. This much silver would make a firm and solid foundation. Christ is the foundation (see the Capstones of the Wall). Christ is both the foundation and the topping, or head, of the Christian.

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is, which is Jesus Christ,” (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Future ransom money was used in the Tabernacle service. Christ has paid all ransom for the rest of time. And all of it is used in the Heavenly Tabernacle, the Church.

The boards were at one time connected to the earth (as part of the tree). But now they are held above and on the earth. Christ separates them from the earth.

### ***The Boards of the Tent***

There were 48 boards in the Tent. Each board was 10 cubits (15 feet) high and 1.5 cubits (2 feet and 3 inches) high. There were 20 boards on each side and 8 on the end. These were made of shittim (acacia) wood overlaid with gold.

Each Christian has his humanity overlaid with the royalty of gold. Christ's deity covers them as they worship God. “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust,” 2 Peter 1:4.

The gold overlay may also be representative of the Shekina of God. Job 23:10 tells us that after God tried him, he would come forth as gold.

Colossians 3:3 says that the Christian is hid with Christ. The shittim wood overlaid with gold.

God does not see male, female, Jew or Gentile, but Christian. Again, the wood overlaid with gold makes all look the same.

Paul states in Ephesians 4:13, the Christian and the Church are to be in unity of faith, knowledge of the Son of God, as a perfect man, “unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Christians as the boards have come to the stature of Christ.

The boards are Christians held together by God and the foundation of Christ. Ephesians 2:21 tells us Christians are fitly framed together growing unto a holy temple. The same held true in the Tabernacle.

Ephesians 4:16, says we are fitly joined together and compacted [ASV says framed and knit together]. Although this passage is talking about the human body, it also holds true for the building.

1 Corinthians 12:12, “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body.” The boards are tied together and make one building.

Each board had two tenons (Hebrew – hands). In Scripture, God is said several times to have put

things ‘in the hands’ of followers. He put Christ within reach of the hands of Christians.

Psalms 98:1, “O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvelous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.” This hand and arm is a reference to the Christ. He is on the Father's right hand. Through Jesus comes mankind's spiritual victory.

Hebrews 6:18, “...we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” A person must want to hold the hand of God to be saved. (Laying hold on the hope is also related to the horn of the Altar.) The hope set before us is the socket. The hand of the board must fit snugly into the socket.

In Ephesians 4:14, it is stated that being in the fullness of Christ meant that there would be a solid faith without being “carried about with every wind of doctrine.”

Standing in Christ, being clothed with Christ, and being bound by Christ prevents the board from falling.

### ***All the faithful***

The 144,000 is a multiple of 48, the number of boards. The message is that all the faithful are in the Holy Place and then eventually in the Holy of Holies.

### ***Corner Boards***

The corner boards were doubled. Exodus 26:24, says they were coupled together. This was to give extra strength and stability to the corners. These represent Christ. Isaiah 28:16, “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation...”

Ephesians 2:20-22 tells us that Jesus is the chief corner of the Temple, the habitation of God.

The corners show how Christ became one of us, a board, so that the true Tabernacle could be built.

We are joint heirs with him, (Romans 8:17). He stabilizes us and is tied to us. Therefore if he is an heir, those tied to him are heirs.

### ***Five Bars***

There were five bars of shittim (acacia) wood overlaid with gold which held the boards together.

The middle bar passed through all 20 boards on a side. Ephesians 4:6, “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all and in you all.” Jesus said if you have seen him you have seen the Father, (John 14:9). Jesus said he and his Father

were One, that he was in the Father and the Father was in him, (John 16:21).

So, the wood far overlaid with gold is Christ represented as ONE with the Father.

The other four bars may be the arms of God around us. "O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble," (Isaiah 33:2). "Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him," (Isaiah 40: 10). John 12:38, "That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed."

The four bars could be Ephesians 4:4-5, "... ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism." With this view, Christ is again subordinating himself to the Father, Ephesians 4:6, as seen earlier.

### ***Christi an Board in Safety***

The Christian Board finds refuge and safety in the Tent. David wrote concerning it in Psalm 27:4-5, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the day of my life, and to enquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pa-

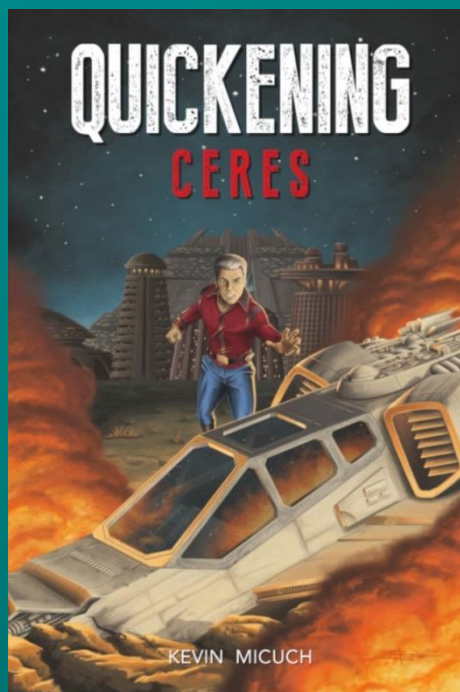
vilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock." The boards are not seen from the outside of the Holy Place. Plus, the boards are held up by the sockets, Christ. Christ is our Rock; he is our socket.

### ***Height of Boards***

The height of the boards was 10 cubits (15 feet). This was double that of the Court Wall (5 cubits; 7.5 feet). So the top of the Tent could be seen by those outside the Wall. They would see the Badger (dolphin) covering. This represented the human Jesus, specifically his beat up body. There was no beauty to it. His humanity peering from behind the purity of his holiness in the linen wall. His human sacrifice seen in the tent and the smoke rising from the Brazen Altar. The holiness and acceptance by the Father seen through the Cloud and Fire Pillar rising above the Tent. The importance of Jesus seen above everything else because they are hidden within the Court and Tent.

### ***Conclusion***

The Holy Place was a significant message from God. And the Holy Place is a significant reality for Christians. God gave marvelous symbolism in the specifics of the Coverings, Sockets, and Boards. God gave amazing pictures of Christ and his Church.



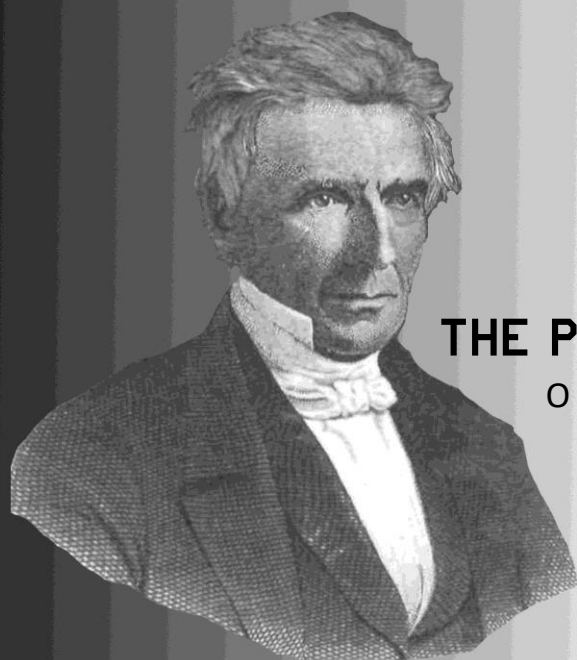
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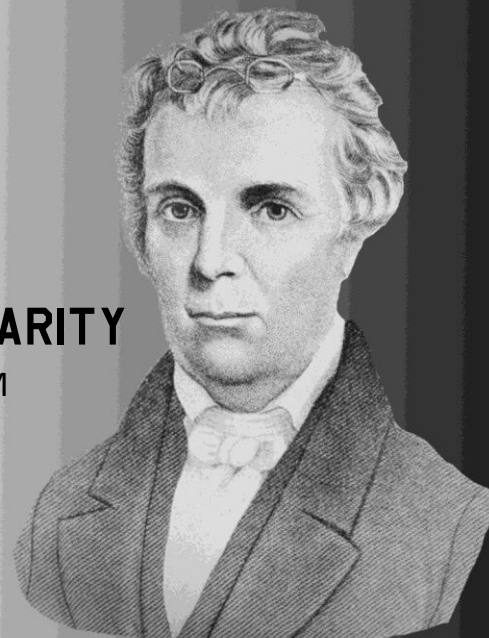
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## THE PARADOXICAL BIPOLARITY OF RESTORATIONISM

John Krivak



Restoration, as I understand it, means restoring the pre-denominational unity of the church, i.e. of Christianity—for there should be only a single, united church. It is doing away with “us and them” until there is only “us,” joyously sharing undivided fellowship in Christ Jesus.

Restoration obviously has Christian unity as its objective. We hear our Lord praying for oneness in John 17, and He steals away our hearts! We pray the same prayer. We take Ephesians 4:2-3 as our mandate: “...with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Even receiving gifts from the Holy Spirit has torn Christians apart, prompting an apostle to urge: “...that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another” (1 Corinthians 12:25, NASB). **Unity among Christian brothers and sisters is so vital to our cause that pioneer Restorationist Barton W. Stone was stirred at heart to rally others: “Let unity be our polar star.”**

However, as paradoxical as it may seem, Restorationism also requires separation or division from others—both unity and division are equally essential! What prevents an outright contradiction is the necessity of differentiating true Christians from all others (non-Christians, false Christians, apostates, heretics, cultists, idolaters. etc.). Unity is to be pursued only with other Christians. Separation is required for all others. Recognizing this, a Restora-

tionist with the *bona fides* of Alexander Campbell would declare:

“I have no idea of seeing, nor wish to see, the sects unite in one grand army. This would be dangerous to our liberties and laws. For this the Saviour did not pray. It is only the disciples dispersed among them that reason and benevolence would call out of them...”<sup>1</sup>

The hope of undenominational Christians is that the resulting collective will be not only unified—it also will be free from corruption in belief and practice, true to Bible truth. **Thus unity, instead of sweeping indiscriminately over vast swaths, will flow only into those select channels that achieve oneness over the pure foundations of shared truth.** The goal at the start would be total, universal unity. But achievement of this grand aim is sabotaged by every false Christian. True believers may join in heart and spirit; it would be self-defeating folly to couple true with false:

*Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I*

<sup>1</sup> Millennial Harbinger, Vol. II, p. 85.



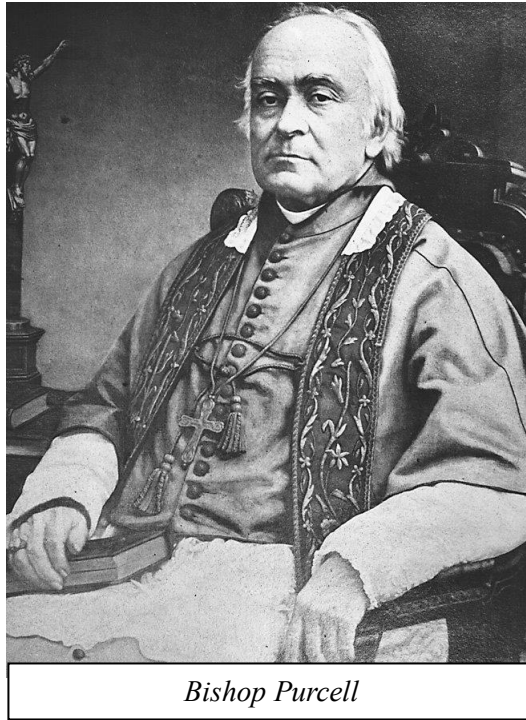
*WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE” (2 Corinthians 6:14-17).*

Imagine launching the laudable goal of unifying citizens in the body politic. We hope, work, and pray for unity. Yet, among the citizenry would be activists pro and con over issues such as abortion. Would anyone consider it plausible to unify without first finding agreement? Of course not. **Yet Restorationists are routinely pilloried when they alone, on grounds of fundamental disagreement, forestall the advancement of unity.** Sometimes separation is more appropriate! Those on the opposite side of truth may actually be agreeable to unifying. However, as “old paths” preaching popularly had it, quoting the KJV: “*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*” (Amos 3:3).

For example, Alexander Campbell is eminently praiseworthy as a champion for Christian unity. After reading *The Ivory Domino* by Gary Henson (Charleston, AR: Cobb Publishing, 2018), I gravitated to Campbell’s debate against Catholic Bishop Purcell (January of 1837 in Cincinnati). In the Preface to the print version, Purcell relishes at portraying Campbell as hypocritical—the champion for Christian unity whose best efforts only fan the flames of division:

There is one Alexander Campbell, of considerable notoriety in this country, of no mean capacity—learned, self-confident, and indefatigable. This gentleman, as we have under his own hand, in Saturday’s *Gazette*, took upon himself many years ago, ‘to unite all Protestant Christians as one great bond of union, as Catholic, as Protestantism.’ Such an undertaking is abundant proof of the undertaker’s self-confidence. It is well known that Mr. Campbell labored in this great work with assiduity. He himself was the operative manufacturer. He knew his tools, kept them in ex-

cellent order and in constant use—but he produced no such ‘union’ as he was seeking to manufacture. On the contrary, his efforts very soon manufactured disunion in the Baptist church, of which he was a member. His fancy that he was to become the great ‘MILLENNIAL HARBINGER,’ for effecting his contemplated Protestant ‘grand bond of union,’ remained apparently as vivid and as sanguine as it was when he commenced his work. But dissatisfaction arose in the minds of others. His works were judged by their fruits, and these were esteemed bitter, sowing *discords* among Protestant churches, instead of producing the *healings* of union.



*Bishop Purcell*

Ouch! Are you a Restorationist? Get used to this, because we are frequently lanced by critics who are ignorant of our “paradoxical bipolarity.” We are accused of thwarting unity when we claim to advocate it.

I once read a borrowed copy of *The Stone-Campbell Movement: The Story of the American Restoration Movement* by Leroy Garrett. This Restoration history stands in contrast with that of Earl Irvin West, *The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the*

Restoration Movement. Forgive me for relying on general memory rather than on precise citation here. **West’s editorial strategy would critique the unfolding turns of our inspirational history in bipolar fashion—pointing out failures to honor and to uphold either Bible truth or Christian unity.** Both were upheld as Restoration essentials. **However, Garrett’s editorial perspective was unipolar—he marked with failure any separation of Christians, even if the cause was false doctrine or heresy.** Such issues resulted in the major three-way split that divided the Disciples of Christ (who are in “full fellowship” with the single most liberal denomination, the United Church of Christ)<sup>2</sup> from the Conservative Christian Churches, and from the nonde-

<sup>2</sup> [www.ucc.org/ecumenical\\_ucc-disciples-ecumenical](http://www.ucc.org/ecumenical_ucc-disciples-ecumenical)

nominal churches of Christ. Though we could wish that events of our history had enabled God-honoring unity, Restorationists would understand the splits to be absolutely justified.

Over the years I have heard the terrible ridicule of our “unity movement” in the face of a history in which we have divided over and over again. One wag joked of a Rabbi, a Priest, and two preachers from churches of Christ. Stranded on an island, the Rabbi commenced to build a stunning synagogue and the Priest a grand cathedral. The preachers built the Eastside and Westside Churches of Christ! Ouch! **We can’t deny that our history includes the shame of divisions driven by cantankerous spirits.** Now, the actual issues may seem (or may be made to seem) trivial and hardly worthy of causing divisions (music in worship, communion cups, collective benevolent efforts between churches, etc.). However, vital principles had to be hammered out in debate and conflict over these issues. For example, introducing instrumental music was not simply a fight over a guitar! It forced a choice between giving God the authority to determine forms of our worship, or implementing human determinations: “BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN” (Matthew 15:9, NASB).

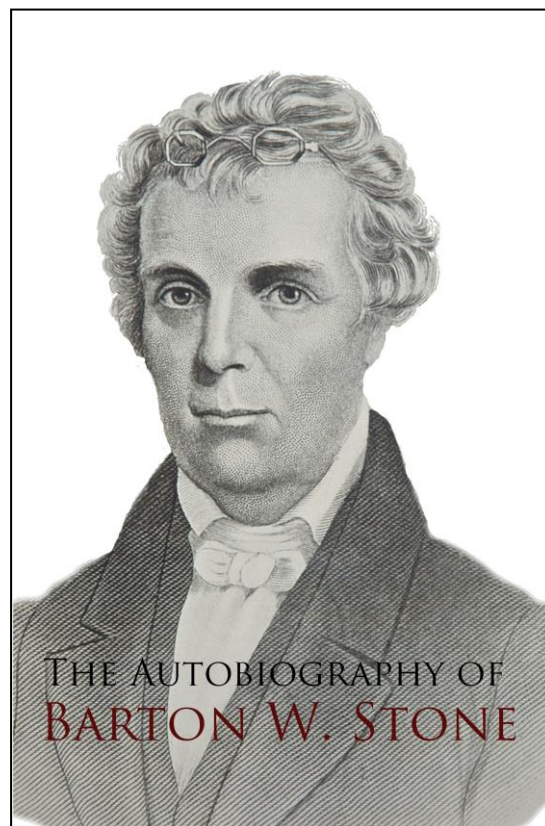
Beyond this, I like to view each of our historic divisions—both the valid and invalid—as learning experiences that have left the cause of Restoration bettered and improved. As popular wisdom has it: “*Experience is the name everyone gives to his mistakes!*” From hard experience, we have learned to differentiate between lesser differences, over which fellowship may be preserved intact, and differences over essentials that rightly divide. We may recognize “matters of opinion” while brooking no compromise over “salvation issues.” Even Paul (another champion of Christian unity) regarded some division as valid and necessary: “*For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you*” (1 Corinthians 11:18-19). We share his bipolarity.

Our bipolarity has its roots in the paradoxical Biblical commitments to “truth” and to “love.” They are not easily held together, but they must be. I compare this challenge to canoeing. The first time

Becky and I tried this, we kept spinning in circles—obviously because we were only paddling on one side! To get somewhere requires paddling on both sides. Truth and love are like that. Yet while love fosters unity, truth often drives separation!

*As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking **the truth in love**, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. (Ephesians 4:14-16).*

Restorationism should keep Christian unity as its polar star. Yet we have long recognized that good navigation—which keeps our vessel safe and brings us successfully into our port of destiny—such navigation requires additional coordinates to be properly aligned together. Unity is vital, yet so is truth—orthodoxy and orthopraxy bought together under true Biblical theology. We need to be good at uniting and good at dividing in paradoxical bipolarity.



## KEEP YOURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD

Kyle D. Frank

*Jude 1:21 keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*

Our relationship with our Heavenly father is a result of several things. Hopefully we can look at these to see the blessings that we enjoy in relationship like this.

First of all, Jude gives a straight forward command that WE are to keep OURSELVES in the love of God. There is something for us to do. If we look to verse 20 we see:

*But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.*

How are we to build our self up? Well, it says on our most holy faith. The faith is the vehicle that does the work. We know a great deal about our faith. The first thing that pops up is from the gospel song “Faith is the victory, that overcomes the world.” Looking on in this we see that:

*Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you: abide ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. John 15:9-10*

Keeping God’s commandments has something to do as far as keeping ourselves in the love of God. Next: 1 John 4:16

*And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth does in him.*

We are to abide in God’s love. Then we are in him and he in us. This is a powerful part of building ourselves up-by abiding in Him.

Next, we look into the term “abide.” It is found throughout the scriptures.

*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you. John 15:7*

*If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; John 8:31*

*As for you, let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning. If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son, and in the Father. 1 John 2:24*

There is a great deal said about abiding-ultimately abiding in God. What more could we do than to abide in God? This is the ultimate way of building our self up.

Next, we are told that we must be looking for the mercy of our Lord. It is everything that we really need. I look back at my life-especially the 29 years since my baptism and know that the only hope that I have is that my Lord is merciful and kind. I make mistakes-just like you do-each and every day of our lives. We must always be looking to his mercy in all that we do.

Mercy is another word that we should seek to know. The Greek word for the noun form is *ELEOS* which defined: “is the outward manifestation of pity; it assumes need on the part of him who receives it, and resources adequate to meet the need on the part of him who shows it.” If that doesn’t fit, then I don’t know what does. Let us always be seeking God’s mercy and compassion.

Rom 9:15 tells us that:

*For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.*

Eph 2:4 says:

*but God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.*

And: Heb 4:16

*Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy.*

These passages show that God is merciful and is willing to bestow that mercy upon us, provided we manifest the proper attitude towards Him-repentance. Repentance is the key which opens many locks that we each face. If we maintain this attitude we will overcome trials designed to ensnare many

## A REVIEW OF “ONE LOAF, ONE CUP: A SCRIPTURAL AND HISTORICAL SURVEY”

*By Samuel Stinson*

A great many words have been written on the restoration of the church of Christ in the past several hundred years. Restoring the church, like restoring a classic car, requires an eye toward both original parts and original patterns. The question of using one loaf and one cup in the communion was re-introduced recently in the July 22, 2016 issue of the *Christian Chronicle*, something which placed the issue front and center for many members of the church who had never or not recently considered the topic. With this in mind, I have recently devoured and imbibed *One Loaf and One Cup: A Scriptural and Historical Survey* by our brother Clinton De France with great appetite. While the communion method I take is multiple cups, I do appreciate De France’s brotherly courage and willingness to put forward a view of communion that is not frequently reviewed or received within broader institutional or non-institutional settings among churches of Christ. The book thus serves a valuable purpose, providing careful explanation and rationale for one cup/ one loaf approaches to communion and would be a meaningful addition to the personal libraries of the greater fellowship, an aid to better reaching out to one loaf/one cup brethren from a more informed perspective.

From the perspective of history, our one cup/ one loaf brethren are certainly following an ancient and well-attested practice. As is well-known, historically, our contemporary society differs in marked ways from ancient cultures: earlier societies were for a long time largely agrarian, frequently with workers earning their wages at the end of each day, and with little widespread dissemination of scientific knowledge of what happens at the micro-level of life. This all changed, of course, leading to a change of practice in communion, with churches abandoning the long-standing use of a single cup for the use of multiple cups in communion, as can be attested by De France’s historical sources. Overall, and moreover, De France in the OCOL book offers a narrative that presents the one loaf/one cup position as not just an ancient, abandoned practice but a practice that is the natural and necessary scriptural

communion practice taught within the New Testament texts, and that it is based on the historical reading from New Testament times up through the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and that the practice was altered through the introduction of American multiple-cup change agents in the churches who were armed with emergent scientific knowledge, against almost universal condemnation in churches around the world, even many denominational churches, outside of the United States. De France closes his narrative with an appeal for American brethren to restudy the issue and return to the one loaf/one cup practice, or at least to embrace brethren of difference in communion practice with charity.

### **Summary**

Here and below I will provide a summary of the OLOC book, along with a brief response to issues the book raises. The OLOC book is divided into three sections: History, The Texts and Rationale, and an invitation for further dialogue titled Where Do We Go from Here? Within the History section, there are nine chapters beginning with a review of scriptural history (chapter 1), the Apostolic Era (chapter 2), the Protestant Reformation (chapter 3), and the American Restoration Movement (chapter 4). The topic of individual cups is introduced (chapter 5) and traced through the Disciples of Christ (chapter 6) and churches of Christ (chapter 7). Chapters 8 and 9 reveal the features of division that categorize multiple fellowships framed according to the practice of using one cup/ one loaf for communion or diverging from that practice.

Section two of the book introduces a textual reading of 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 and 10:16-17 that highlights the one loaf/one cup perspective (chapters 10 & 11) and points to the symbolism emphasized by brethren who practice communion with one cup/one loaf. Chapter 13 then dovetails this reading with the previous history detailed in the first section of the book.

Included also are extensive appendices that themselves could have, and perhaps should have, served as an additional topical chapter devoted to



evidences and arguments related to the one loaf/ one cup position instead of appendices. Here is where the real meat of the issue emerges, since the reception and rejection of the one loaf/one cup position is historically situated at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as advances in science centered in the U.S. caused a rethinking of common practices of sharing eating and drinking vessels for sanitary reasons. These materials are amassed to counter what De France calls positions raised against the one loaf/one cup position that are “born out of debate tactics, not Bible study” (107). Overall, these appendices include material focused on reading the multiple cups issue of Luke 22:17-20 as thematic instead of strictly chronological (Appendix A); a brief statement arguing that the four cups of later Jewish Passover service were an innovation not used in the first century (Appendix B); another statement denying that the command to “divide it” meant using multiple cups (Appendix C);

Continued: a statement denying that the Jerusalem church was a single body that partook of communion, denying the argument of metonymy, denying the strawman analogy of one cup requiring a single copy of the New Testament per church, denying the analogy of the cup to Jacob’s well, denying the analogous binding of worship in an upper room, time of worship, and reclining at table instead of seating in chairs, denying the necessity of drinking from the same cup Jesus used (Harrison Ford notwithstanding), denying the overly literal reading of the metaphorical cup in 1 Corinthians 10:21, and denying the “one kind of cup” argument (Appendix D); included also is a statement of scholars defining the Greek term *poterion* (“cup”) as meaning a cup (Appendix E); a 1901 diagram of the Thomas “Communion Set” from the U.S. patent office demonstrating the innovative system for organizing individual cups for communion (Appendix F); a restatement of J.W. McGarvey’s approval of using one loaf/one cup in service and arguing against emergent scientific research on microbes and germ theory as dissuading the multiple cups practice, ca. 1900 (Appendix G); a review and response to David Lipscomb’s endorsement of the one loaf/one cup position (Appendix H); a reprint of Dr. James Orton’s treatment of the sanitation counter-argument for sharing the same cup (Appendix I); and, finally, a statement of the use of multiple cups in international context (Appendix J).

## Response

Before I provide a response, I must concede that the OLOC book cannot be easily separated from De France’s recent public relations activities include the positioning of himself in online discussions, study, worship, and meeting with brethren from the broader fellowship who do not practice one cup/one loaf, and in casual, encouraging conversations with them. Indeed, De France has demonstrated diligence and courtesousness in these engagements from all reports, explaining that his lack of willingness to directly engage brethren on this topic in smaller online settings on occasion was not due to any misgivings on his part but instead on a willingness to provide an extensive documentation that would support his views more clearly.<sup>1</sup>

That said, this is my initial response: the OLOC book provides a workable discussion for framing how brethren, as a result of our restoration and reformation heritage, read and apply scripture in our various discourse communities—differently from one another—and how we may read and apply scripture in our twenty-first-century context in a general sense in ways to create constructive dialogue among our various groups. The OLOC book is helpful for drawing out these conversations that need to happen but may be neglected. Much of the argument of De France hinges on protecting the symbolic view of scripture inherent in keeping the practice of communion as close to the gospel account in detail. Of course, such an attitude is to be commended. Moreover, the elephant in the room is that the gospel accounts, while written to the church, recount historical events that themselves require framing from the apostles in order to parse out, meaning that some details are not for later practice, leading to discussions as to which details should be focused on and kept, and how.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I applaud this approach, though it proved somewhat frustrating to me while I waited for this book. Yet that is forgivable—brethren do at times have an unfortunate tendency to swarm at times. Having an extensive resource such as the OLOC book provides such documentation for those who are patient and willing to consider multiple perspectives of practice. I will concede here that my response here is limited, due to the constraints of space. Perhaps I will at some point write a more thorough response in longer form, if this proves expedient.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, the positioning of practices matters in the gospels: while debating those in the religious world who argue for salvation “like the thief on the cross,” those of our greater fellowship in the churches of Christ would be quick to point

However, this specific view in the OLOC book privileges symbolism, perhaps, at the expense of expediency of practice and even arguably good hygiene, per modern standards. I will discuss this in two points below. Firstly, I submit that while symbolism within scripture is important, symbolism alone is not a necessary heuristic for application when viewed apart from substance. Symbolism must flow from expedient substance, and symbolism exists even where scientific advancements have informed contemporary thought and practice. While it is advantageous to read scripture as one would have in the first century, one cannot fully read scripture apart from or outside of one's historical context, including scientific and cultural knowledge. The genie is out, to so speak.

That is not to endorse every scientific advancement *prima facie* but to acknowledge that while McGarvey and Lipscomb are fine advocates for a position in theory, I am not at all certain how much experience either man had in the realm of scientific research or with the microscopes of that era in speaking with knowledge about the scientific subject matter they wrote about. Further, our knowledge of the micro-level has advanced considerably in the 20<sup>th</sup> century through newer tools, electron microscopy and research. De France's inclusion of Orton's discussion regarding sanitation in Appendix I is helpful, though limited.<sup>3</sup>

out that we are under the gospel dispensation preached after the cross that requires baptism for the remission of sins (Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:16). This view means also that later revelation from the apostles in their letters and in Acts demonstrates that we ought to read the gospels through the lens of more clear statements from the apostles, in letters such as 1 Corinthians, as the more direct teachings contextualize the more ambiguous pericopes of the gospels. This is also true in the case of marriage, divorce, and remarriage (MDR), as the related passages of Matthew 19, Mark 10, and Luke 16 are later framed through Paul's teaching on marriage in later revelation such as 1 Corinthians 7 and Romans 7, contra those who claim the gospels are all Old Testament documents and deny the gospels' application today. This is why De France's reading is so important here: 1 Corinthians indeed helps Christians today better understand how to apply the teachings given to the church from the gospels. In this way, De France's appeal for correct practice is in keeping with a common approach to reading scripture that exists among us.

<sup>3</sup> Orton cites the 1988 meta-analysis by Gill in the *Journal of Infection* (though curiously, Orton cites this study as 1987—perhaps a typographical error in publishing). Given the AIDS epidemic and representation in the media in the early 1980s, the risk of transmission of diseases such as HIV through human saliva has been rigorously studied by the CDC

The dissemination of scientific knowledge at the micro-level impacts much of what we moderns know about how the world operates. I might add, a 2019 study of restaurant touchscreens in locations at a certain fast-food restaurant chain demonstrated the presence of fecal bacteria on each screen reviewed, without exception. Clearly, handwashing can prevent the spread of such bacteria, but this requires folks to actively wash their hands, something that we simply cannot assume happens frequently enough among restaurant patrons.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, standards of hygiene have changed since ancient times. Jesus in John 13:10 replied to Peter that "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean," against Peter's insistence that Jesus wash not only Peter's feet but his hands and

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and other researchers, such as those mentioned by Gill. But more recent work has been published on this topic that deserves attention and would have been good for inclusion in De France's materials.

For those interested, a follow-up article from the October 1998 issue of the *American Journal of Infection Control* (Volume 26, Number 5) notes that "bacteria and viruses can contaminate a common communion cup and survive despite the alcohol content of the wine." The article continues by noting that the risk is somewhat marginal and can be reduced simply by wiping off the place of contact between folks drinking from the same cup. With respect to bacteria, as a parent, I'm also vitally aware that according to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD), sharing utensils with adults and young children can transfer bacteria from the mouths of adults over to the children, leading to childhood cavities. In addition, in November 2013, research of James Pellerin in the *International Journal of Infectious Diseases* (Volume 17, Issue 11) focused on religious practices and associated medical risks, including neonatal herpes simplex infection following Jewish circumcision, cutaneous larva migrans following Hindu practice, and amoebic meningoencephalitis following Muslim cleansing of the sinuses. Within that discussion, the 1993 Furlow and Dougherty research suggests "that individual cups (chalices) should be used to eliminate infection risk." This was based on the researchers collecting *staphylococcus aureus* among other micro-lifeforms from "silver and pottery chalices before and after eight services." The Pellerin research citing Burrows also suggests that "wiping the rim with the linen cloth decreased bacterial counts by 90%." Clearly, knowledge of science is not entirely an impediment to the one loaf/one cup practice, though caution is advised.

<sup>4</sup> Sharing vessels in communion is much less risky, of course. We know the value of handwashing, yet I will point out that Jesus used handwashing before meals to illustrate in Mark 7 the issue of religious leaders and submission to the tradition of the elders. Of course, that is something completely different—we are not talking about being ceremonially clean but actively trying to prevent disease or infection by good hygiene.

head. While our bathing customs in the modern world are different, the symbolism of Jesus's instruction to wash one another's feet still is as poignant, though we each today typically wash more than our feet.

Secondly, it is important to consider that communion and baptism are not identical practices and do not accomplish identical purposes. Baptism, on one hand, as is established, is for the remission of sins. Communion, on the other hand, is for the remembrance of the Lord's death. Far from being sacramental or only symbolic, giving participants an opportunity as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11 to examine ourselves, judge ourselves rightly, wait for one another, and eat the communion in a worthy matter.<sup>5</sup>

Sticking closely to the scriptural example causes a need to diverge from the details of the example, for larger groups of Christians. For instance, De France introduces the testimony of church historian Paul Bradshaw, who notes that as the size of the churches historically increased "multiple loafs would have been required, and the common cup would need to have been refilled or more cups used" (16). Not giving into the belief that one must use the exact cup Jesus used, using a large chalice cannot in any way be inferred as the historical or scriptural practice of communion in the first century church. De France's statement that he took part in communion among 300 brethren without refilling the chalice (107) respectfully misses the issue: a cup large enough to serve 300 brethren without a refill was not present at the Last Supper.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The efficacy of each practice is different. One cannot deny that the denominational groups outside of the United States have been historically impacted by the sacramental view of communion, as De France's research observes. Therefore, the interreligious unity of practice in using one loaf/one cup among denominational practioners rests, perhaps, more on the surface and less on unity of hermeneutic. What we ought to stress, as it were, is not merely the external ritual but the purpose behind the ritual, and the function of the practice when done rightly. And this requires not only focus on external, but focus on internal self-examination and self-judgment. Ultimately, communion is both collective and individual in action, as collectives are comprised of individuals and individuals are members of their group.

<sup>6</sup> While it certainly would have been possible for Jesus to perform a miracle that would, as in the case of the fishes and loaves, multiply the wine for any additional members of the dinner, what we observe in the New Testament at the Last Supper is enough wine for thirteen people from the same cup. To keep this level of detail, communion must not transcend

Some expediency would be necessary, even with communion at the level of the church in Jerusalem. Yet De France anticipates this argument (perhaps as a result of our brief discussions, I will note) by claiming ignorance on what actually comprised the Jerusalem church. If the Jerusalem church was comprised of thousands, as is recorded in Acts (cf. Ac. 2:47; 2:41; 4:4), then a single body of 5,000 men (4:4) would complicate using a single, ordinary-sized cup from serving such a gathering without refill. De France denies this is a problem without dealing with the implication: this scriptural example does not support a one loaf, one cup arrangement.<sup>7</sup>

### Conclusion

Again, in closing, I fully accept Clinton De France as a beloved brother and invite the reader to purchase his book for their consideration. The *One Loaf, One Cup* text offers many historical insights, much evidence to support De France's claim, and initiates a vibrant discussion that our brother has curated now for several years in patience and good faith. I have been blessed by our interactions, and I do consider this book, its production and dissemination, to be a blessing for the brotherhood.

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thirteen in the local body. This, of course, is absurd. If one may transcend the example to involve a larger cup than was present at the Last Supper, may one not instead dispense the contents of that cup into multiple containers with approval?

<sup>7</sup> Already, the Jerusalem church, if they had stuck with the example of the gospels, would have had to come up with an additional expediency for serving so many brethren. For De France, this point means by necessity claiming ignorance to how the Jerusalem church was organized, saying "the Bible gives no clear answer," and "this discussion is entirely based on assumptions" (108). Yet Biblical scholars such as Daniel Wallace assert that clearly in the ancient church of the first century, the pattern we see revealed is a single, unified body of believers under the same polity. In the article "Who Should Run the Church? A Case for the Plurality of Elders," Wallace notes "The early church had but one church in each city or town. Hence, Paul's instruction to Titus is to appoint elders in every church," and "Recall that 'elder' = 'bishop' and that each town had but one church." My point is not to start comparing one's scholarly references with another's, but to present information that can help us better understand the New Testament evidence in light of context, as De France is doing. Albeit, scripture records that the gift of benevolence Paul collected for the Jerusalem church was sent to the elders of the single group.

# About the Authors

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**Travis Anderson** grew up in Southwest Missouri, attended Brown Trail School of Preaching, and now preaches in East Peoria, IL. loves being the father of his two children, the husband of his wife, playing softball/baseball, and doing the work of a minister.

**Mark Bass** holds the distinction of being the only person to cut the editor's hair with a pocket knife. (When asked why he cut off part of the editor's hair—when he was thirteen—Mark replied, “Because it looked stupid.”) In addition to his barbering, Mark has been a gospel preacher for four decades, in Illinois, Ohio, and Kentucky.

**Tom Baxley** is presently the minister for the Highway 9 church of Christ, but has high hopes of one day venturing to Middle-earth, hoping to rebuild and minister to the great city of Osgiliath, and finally teach them the greatness of ultimate frisbee and disc golf. Until that time he will remain in Alabama with his wife and three children.

**Dewayne Bryant** is the minister for the New York Ave. church of Christ in Arlington, TX. He has served as a professor of Bible for four different schools and works as both a minister and as a Christian apologist for Apologetics Press and the Apologia Institute. He is also the host of the “Light From the Past” podcast (which your editor enjoys).

**Gerald Cowan** earned degrees from Freed-Hardeman College, Lambuth Univesity, and Harding Graduate School of Religion. He has preached the gospel to which he is committed for a bit more than 60 years. He is also committed to short-term missions, focusing for the past 22 years on the European country of Albania (Biblical Illyricum). He and his wife Neda have produced children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Though he was a late comer to the gospel and a late bloomer as well, an underachieving writer, and is considered a lame duck by many, he steadfastly resists retirement, is still a student, and glad to be called a preacher.

**David Dean** serves the church of Christ in Fouke Arkansas. He divides his time between studying God's Word, preparing for sermons and Bible classes, and spending as much time as he can with his wife and two children. In whatever time is left David can be found with a book in his hand and a cup of coffee!

**Jason Floyd** is one of the few people in this world for whom “talking about the weather” is actually an important topic. His role as a weather-watcher at the Albany, NY, airport requires it. He and his wife, Sarah, homeschool their two sons. Jason preaches for the church in Bennington, Vermont. They are quite adept at making elderberry syrup (which, I hear, is great for fighting off sickness).

**Kyle Frank** is a disabled workaholic whose idea of fun is spending twelve hours a day reading the American Standard Version (of 1901), Restoration Movement biographies, sermons, and seeing how many writing projects he can keep going at once. He also runs So and So Publishing.

**Perry Hall** would love to be doing backflips and riding motorcycles, but until his back is fully healed, he will just have to content him-self with reading about himself in the pages of *the Quarterly*.

**Bill Howard** is a former elder, preacher, and restaurateur who spends his “retired” time writing detective novels and study books for new Christians, as well as encouraging others and supporting the new elders where he attends in Dale, Oklahoma.

**John Krivak** is a constant student of the Bible and church history, especially the Restoration Movement and Alexander Campbell. He studied Bible and Biblical Languages at Harding University. He can be contacted via email by using [jkrivak@zoominternet.net](mailto:jkrivak@zoominternet.net).

**Stephane Maillet** is the coolest Canadian your editor has ever met. He is the driving force behind AddedSouls.com and the Added Souls Podcast. As



you will see early on in this issue, after two years of intense schooling, he is returning to Canada to work with the Riverview church of Christ near Moncton, New Brunswick. He and his family could really use your support to spread the gospel in an area that is very liberal.

**Richard Mansel** is a preacher, writer, book-lover (whose passion lately is histories focused on World War II), and former editor of *Forthright Magazine*.

**Mark McWhorter** is an overachiever, a finder of treasure, explorer of old and significant houses, occasional dumpster-diver, and an expert in everything from open-heart surgery to Russian politics. (And you think I'm making this stuff up...)

**Jim Mitchell** recently purchased the copyrights to Ivan Stewart's Open Bible Study program, and has been using it to great success. He and his wife Jennifer live in Oklahoma City, where he works with the Cherokee Hills congregation.

**John Ratliff** was born on a cold and snowy night...who are we kidding? He was born in Mesquite, TX, where it is summer most of the year. Since April 2014, he has been the evangelist for the church in Prescott, AR. Prior to that he worked with church in Alba, TX. He and his wife, Ashley, have been married 12 years (time flies when you're having fun), and have two children: Isaiah (who loves Legos and playing Minecraft) and Haniah (pronounced Hannah) who loves animals of all sorts and aggravating her brother. He holds a Journeyman electrician's license, is a 2011 graduate of the Brown Trail School of Preaching, and holds an Associates of Science Degree from Paris Junior College.

**Daniel Richardson** has enough kids to field a hockey team with subs (though some of them aren't big enough to hold a hockey stick yet) with his wife, Sarah. He once threatened to drop someone (I won't say who) off a balcony, and still wonders from time to time if it was a good idea to let him live. He and his sweet family live in a weird place called Eclectic in Alabama.

**Jake Schotter** loves studying the Bible, reading books, preaching (since 2009), and writing about the Truth. He has been very fortunate to grow his library to over 2,500 books and loves ordering them cheaply. He is a sophomore Bible major at Freed-Hardeman University.

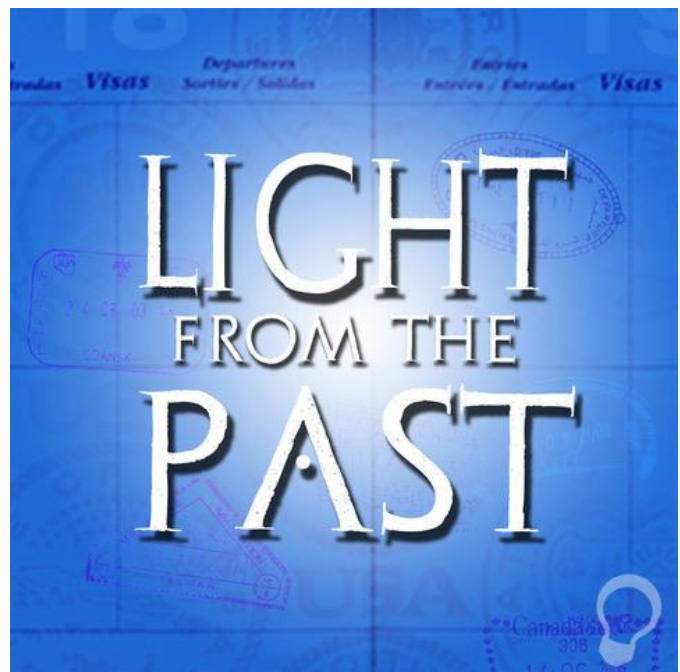
**Devin Self** is a proud husband and father (whose wife just gave birth to baby #2!), who attends the Gravel Hill church of Christ, outside of Dover, AR. He enjoys preaching when given the opportunity.

**Michael Shank** is a former electrician who wrote a book called *Muscle and a Shovel*, describing his conversion to the Lord, and another, *When Shovels Break*, that shows that Christians who fell away can come back to the Christ. He is currently getting acclimated to the higher elevations since moving to Colorado.

**Keith Stonehart** has been married to Kelly for 20 years. They have 2 children, Kiah and Kole and a "son born out of due time," Carlos, who is 30. Keith was the lead singer and guitarist in a touring rock band until 2001 when he was taught the truth. Keith is the full time Evangelist at the Fultondale church of Christ in Fultondale Alabama just north of Birmingham.

**Samuel Stinson** began preaching shortly after he obeyed the gospel in Kentucky in 2004. He has preached in Florida, Kansas, West Virginia, and Nevada and is currently teaching college English.

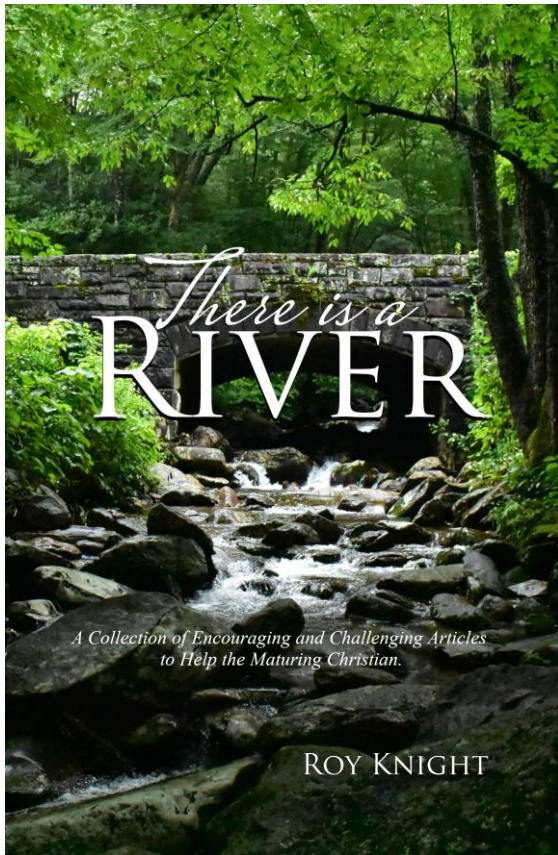
**Bradley S. Cobb** apparently has "plenty of time" to do all the jobs that weren't really in his job description. He is currently doing well on his goals for 2020, and expects to get over his current sickness by the time you read these words.



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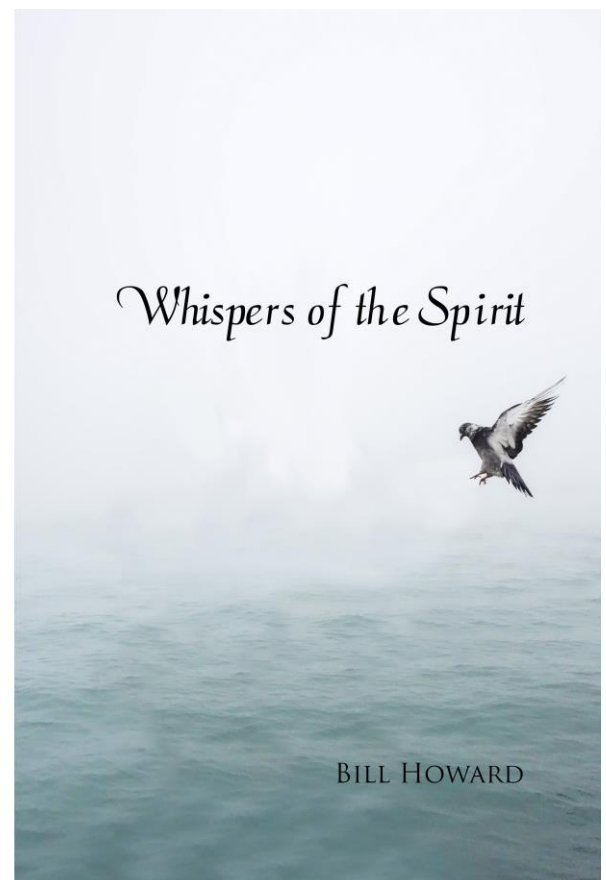
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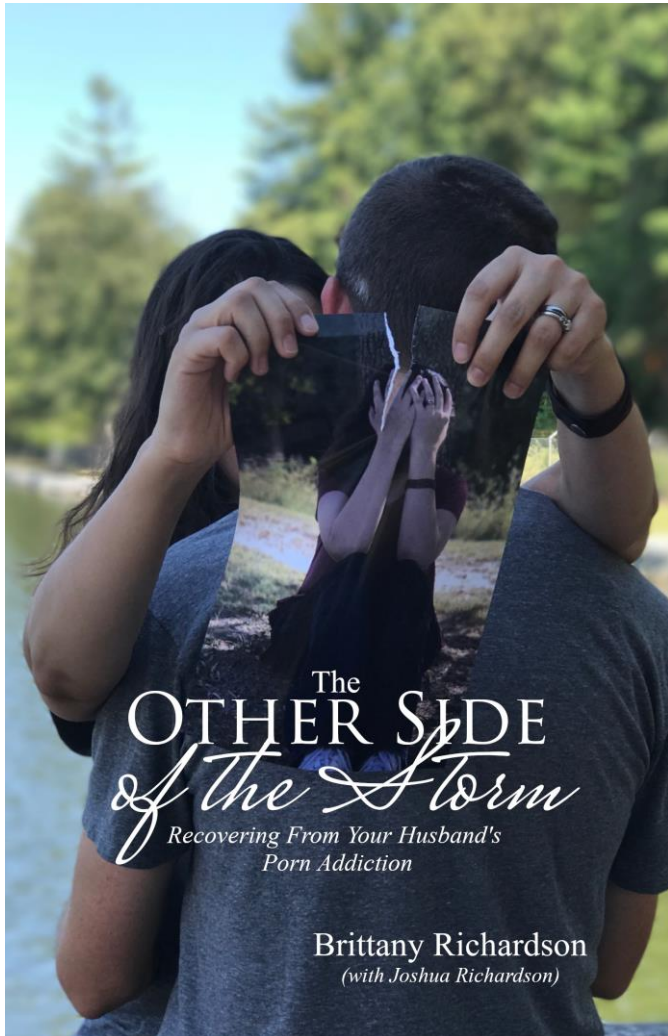
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