

# TIDINGS



Volume 84, Number 6, June 2021

## TRUST

Being able to trust  
is essential for  
our lives.



**Denis Therien** (Worcester, MA)

**Buttermilk Falls, Ludlow, VT**

Waterfalls always remind me of the consistent and unrelenting power of God.

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN  
**TIDINGS**  
OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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# TIDINGS

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# TRUST

*By Dave Jennings*

**B**EING able to trust is essential for our lives. When we are children, we have unequivocal trust in the loving care of our parents. Marriages are built on trust. When these bonds are broken, they shake the very foundation of our lives. Likewise, fellowship is based on trust. We may trust others, not always because we have empirical evidence to make that choice, but often because we have chosen to trust. We have confidence in the goodness of our brother or sister's heart because we fundamentally believe that the Lord is active in their lives. Even when trust is violated, we can choose to see it as an opportunity for growth, not condemnation.

God calls His children to a relationship of trust. Trust is core to our faith and required for us to be men and women who are defined by love and not fear. When our trust in God wavers, we

find ourselves depending on our own ingenuity and assessments. It is a pathway to anxiety, confusion and eventually ruin.

Bro. Anthony Higginson shared some helpful thoughts about trust. He wrote "Trust is the optimism of faith. Trust is a risk, a venture, an adventure. It has in it an element of inspiration. It is not blind, blundering chance. Faith, after all, is not an ignorant assumption—the right name for that is superstition. Faith is intelligent trust. Faith and trust in God are the true antidotes to fear. It lifts us out of the dust and places us by the side of God. It fills our soul with hope and peace."<sup>1</sup>

Trusting in God is one thing. We know we can count on the righteousness of God. He never forsakes those who love Him, and He always keeps His promises. But what about trusting our brother or sister?

What empowers trusting our brother or sister is a willingness to be vulnerable. When we are vulnerable, we assess that a trusting relationship with another person is of greater value than the risk. When Paul was writing to Corinth, he addressed the unsettling issue of brethren going to law against each other (1 Cor 6:1-7). They were encouraged to judge such matters themselves. But, if there was no resolution, it was better to suffer oneself to be defrauded than to take the matter before unbelievers for adjudication. Solomon had written, *"Say not I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he will save thee."* (Prov 20:22). This is the very essence of our Lord's mind when he was enduring the trials and pain of the cross. He *"committed himself to him that that judgeth righteously."* (1 Pet 2:23). Associated with being vulnerable is the recognition that all our interactions, and the outcomes of those interactions, are seen by our God. Nothing occurs that He does not allow to occur. The choice for trust is primarily about putting our confidence in God first. Based on this trust, we can *"know that all things work together for good."* (Rom 8:28).

The very essence of fellowship in the Wilderness required a commitment to godly relationships built on trust. Reading through Deuteronomy, for example, we are reminded how the community needed to trust in each person to uphold the Law. For instance, even if one who was intimately close

**The very essence of fellowship in the Wilderness required a commitment to godly relationships, built on trust.**

to you were to suggest worshipping other gods, you were required to not only stand up for holiness but for the community (Deut 13:6-11). The

essence of righteousness was not solely defined by the behaviors in the Tabernacle but by the common individual, whose actions were often invisible across the tents of Israel. To be a holy people, there needed to be a commitment that all Israelites were together on the same page. When just one family violated

God's commands in secret (e.g., Achan hiding the silver, gold and Babylonian garment in Joshua 7), there were consequences for the whole nation. God wanted holiness to be embraced by every man, woman and child. The camp of Israel depended on being able to have confidence that others would keep their commitment to follow God's commands. It represented high-stakes trust.

The core of trust is honesty and truth. Paul wrote, *"Lie not to another."* (Col 3:9). Solomon wrote of the seven abominations that the LORD hates, some of which included a lying tongue, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren (Prov 6:17, 19). To be trusted, we must make every effort to keep our word and jettison any secret agendas. Brothers and sisters will understand when we fail to meet expectations or when errors occur, but they will not soon forget the betrayal of trust. When we want others to trust us, we must begin by being transparent about what we are



committing to and then follow through with our behavior.

As Israel began to march into the Promised Land, three of the tribes found the land on the east side of the Jordan to be attractive to their families and suitable for raising cattle. They asked Moses if they could possess those lands and not cross over the Jordan with the rest of the tribes. The reaction of Moses was understandable.

*Shall your brethren go to war, and ye shall sit here? And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD hath given them? (Num 32:6-7).*

Could they trust that Reuben, Gad and Manasseh would fulfill their commitment to their brethren and not dishearten the other tribes from the work ahead? These three tribes made a pledge, and it is one of the most incredible in our Scriptures. They would build cities for their families,

but they would commit to leave their families and go into the land with their brethren and fight. They pledged not to return until their brethren had realized their possession. (vv. 16-19). This required Moses and the other tribes to trust and be vulnerable. Would these brethren faithfully fight alongside their brethren for territories that they themselves would not occupy? Would they send enough men to fight? We learn that these three tribes were faithful to their word. As many as 40,000 entered the land to support their brethren (Josh 4:13). Joshua later blessed and dismissed them as the work ended. These faithful brethren had done what they committed to.

Yet, as these three tribes departed to return to their families and possessions, they built an altar “*of imposing size*” (Josh 22:10 ESV) beside Jordan. When the report of this was heard by the other tribes, there was an immediate assumption that these men, who had



fought with them at great personal expense, were now rebelling against the LORD and turning to idolatry. The consequences for such behavior would be significant for all of Israel. They were convinced that they could not turn a blind eye to this action. Troops were assembled at Shiloh; Phinehas and ten clan leaders went forward to challenge Reuben, Gad and Manasseh.

Phinehas and the clan leaders stated their observation of what they believed to be an idolatrous altar and rebuked the Trans-Jordan tribes for putting all of Israel at risk. The three tribes listened, as their motives were being wrongly assessed by their brethren. Now it was their turn to speak. First, they acknowledged that God knew their hearts and they would put their fate in His hands. However, as they spoke to these representatives, they made it clear that the altar that these brethren had interpreted to mean one thing, had a vastly different meaning to them. It was not an altar for burnt offerings or sacrifices (v. 26), but rather a witness between them all for future generations of their commitment to “*do the service of the LORD.*” (v. 27).

Phinehas and the clan leaders accepted this explanation. The altar, to be called *Ed*, or *Witness* (v. 34), had a special meaning that hadn’t been fully understood by the ten tribes. It was a gesture made by willing and dedicated hearts. This unusual expression of commitment to fellowship meant something to them that had great value. This once feared altar was to become a

testimony for all that God was in their midst.

Let us, then, assume that the hearts of our brethren are committed to our God. If there is behavior that doesn’t seem to make sense, we should certainly confront the behavior, but let’s stop short of assessing the thoughts and intents of the heart. When we do this, it destroys the very trust required for brethren to live together in unity.

Some have said that no change is made unless the pain of not changing is greater than the pain to change. Is the desire for trust in our community sufficient for us to be willing to make ourselves vulnerable to be let down potentially? Will we fundamentally trust that the Lord and his angels are working in our community?

Let each of us trust that our God will see us through our difficulties. It is He who we can trust with all our hearts. Let us have “*the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*” (Phil 2:2-3).

May the Lord bless us all to be a community of trust in our faithful God and in the sincerity of the hearts of our brethren. Trust is a choice that we all make every day.

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assume that the  
hearts of our  
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committed to  
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Dave Jennings

1 Higginson, Anthony. “Blessed is the Man: Trust in God.” *The Christadelphian Magazine*, vol. 111 (1974): 442



# DEALING WITH CONFLICT IN THE WORKPLACE

*By Joe Badlu*

**C**ONFLICT at work is stressful and sometimes challenging to resolve. Such contentions may or may not include ourselves. Either way, they can present opportunities for us to display the spirit of Christ. And we may have occasion to pass on the good news to coworkers observing or participating in such entanglements.

As students of God's Word, we should equip ourselves to address conflict among our coworkers. In the face of mistreatment, we must demonstrate a Christ-like love and a willingness to forgive--as we hope to be forgiven. Realizing our need for God's grace can help us extend grace to others. Coworkers and supervisors will notice when we do not intensify minor disagreements. Over time, this evidence of a Christ-like character will likely make us more desirable

to work with. Additionally, being an employee who is reliable, useful and hard-working might also have us more in demand as a co-worker, "*whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord.*" (Col 3:23).

Unfortunately, conflict in the workplace can sometimes be prolonged. In these situations, we need to wait on the LORD and be prayerfully patient for circumstances to improve. Admittedly, it is difficult to patiently allow things to work out over time. But it's often necessary.

Some coworkers may realize it's beneficial for them to change their unhelpful behaviors, but overcoming bad habits is easier said than done. It may be helpful to give our struggling coworkers space, time and occasionally gentle reminders as they (hopefully) seek to improve their conduct.



## **SOLVING CONFLICT IN THE WORKPLACE**

A positive first step would be to meet privately, at a convenient time, with the other primary person involved in the conflict. Meet when and where you will not be interrupted. Focus on behavior and events, not on the personality of the individual.

Listen attentively to the other person and avoid interrupting. After the other person finishes speaking, summarize what was said to ensure mutual understanding. Ask questions to further clarify as needed. Identify points of agreement and disagreement. Summarize areas of agreement and disagreement. Ask the other person if they concur with your assessment. If necessary, modify your assessment until both parties agree.

Mutually discuss the more significant areas of conflict in need of resolution. Develop a plan to work on each. Start with the most important area. Multiple meetings may be desired or required.

Continue with the discussions until each area of conflict has been examined. Establish a solution-oriented approach. Look for opportunities to note progress. Compliment the other person's insights and achievements. Praise each other when progress is made, even if only a small step. Hopefully, small steps will add up and result in an ongoing friendly interaction.

## **OUR ROLE AS BELIEVERS IN CHRIST**

How do we deal with coworkers who annoy us? Being an example of godly character on the job is easy when people get along and everything is going well.

Unfortunately, this is not always the situation. Sometimes, getting along with coworkers can be quite difficult.

However, conflicts give us opportunity to faithfully turn to God and His word for help and to be a godly example to others while under duress. Although Scripture does not provide a checklist of self-help steps for dealing with workplace conflicts, there are helpful Biblical principles.

Praying is one of those helpful principles. Fervent prayer places responsibility for the situation in God's hands. We should not rely on our own devices to "fix" things, but we can entrust the outcome to God. Praying may help us see things through the other person's eyes. Sometimes God answers our prayers by changing our perspective to help us see our own error—leading to a shift in our attitude and behavior. Also, prayer can encourage us to forgive the other person. How can we come before God expecting forgiveness if we have an unforgiving attitude toward others? This principle is clearly endorsed in the Lord's Prayer, "*forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*" (Matt 6:12). Jesus and Stephen forgave those who put them to death (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60).

Jesus loved his enemies and commanded his followers to do likewise. Through prayer, we must love people who exhibit a difficult attitude in the workplace towards us. We are not to retaliate. Instead, let us demonstrate a Christ-like attitude with a pattern of loving behavior toward our coworkers. While our human inclination might be



to push back or lash out, such is not the way of the spirit. Jesus directs us to “*Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.*” (Matt 5:44).

Addressing conflict with the love of Christ and good conversation presents an ideal opportunity to demonstrate the hope we share. A hope we should be prepared to defend. The Apostle Peter exhorts us, “*Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.*” (1 Pet 3:16).

It is not easy to love our enemies. It goes against our fleshly nature. Paul anticipated our struggles calling for us to transform our lives from the natural to the spiritual and to live peaceably with all when possible.

*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 transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God... If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. (Rom 12:1-2,18).*

Our goal should be to avoid contributing to discord. This can mean staying clear of situations potentially

leading to confrontation. Other times it may entail not responding in kind to nasty comments or deceitful behavior. Turn the other cheek. It always means not holding a grudge for wrongs previously resolved.

Conflict in the workplace can be one of the more challenging circumstances we must deal with. Sometimes, the greatest challenge is getting along with people in normal, daily life. Broken relationships and difficult people are visible evidence of sin in the world.

Interpersonal conflict, though unpleasant, sometimes has a silver lining. It can provide us with opportunities to reveal the gospel message. God may use us as tools to overcome the sinful behaviors we encounter.

## RESPONDING WHEN CONFLICT IS UNAVOIDABLE

Paul explains how we should respond when conflict is unavoidable.

*Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom 12:19-21).*

Two commands can summarize our response to wrongs done to us:

**1. Do not avenge.** The response of the flesh when someone treats us unfairly is to push back in the same manner. If they discredit our work, we try to discredit theirs. However, Jesus told the crowd in the Sermon on the Mount not to resist evil, but to turn the other cheek (Matt 5:38-42). It is not our place to deal out retribution. It is for God to address such matters in a time, place and way of His choosing. Often waiting on God with patient endurance is the best option. However, when problems arise in the workplace, it may be necessary to address them through diplomatic confrontation or processes provided through a company's human resources department. Speaking up may help others who are not in a position to advocate for themselves (cf. Prov 31:8-9). We should pursue resolutions helpful and fair to all. As believers, we are not to seek revenge.

**2. Repay evil with kindness.**

Instead of returning evil for evil, we should return good for evil. Instead of exposing a person who is speaking ill of us, we ought to be kind. Sometimes this may take the form of helping someone the next time they ask, even if they never apologize for their previous offense. In some cases, kindness is gently and diplomatically addressing a co-worker's errors through appropriate channels, so they have an opportunity to improve.

Paul observed that the path to overcoming evil is through doing

good. Ultimately, only in the Kingdom of God will evil be fully overcome. But this should encourage us to live justly in this life, be gracious with others, and long for the complete restoration soon to come.

**THE GLAD TIDINGS AT WORK**

Our response to being wronged provides a way to advance the gospel. It helps preserve working relationships with those around us. Not retaliating or seeking retribution for every wrong will help create a better working environment and one more pleasing to our Heavenly Father.

The parable of the unforgiving servant (Matt 18:21-35) reminds us how we may need forgiveness for wrongs greater than those done against us. *"Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."* (Matt 18:21-22). There is no limitation on forgiveness.

Finally, forgiveness provides an opportunity for us to explain the message of Christ's atonement and to share our future hope with co-workers. This hope demonstrates a powerful faith in God's plan and goodness. Such faithfulness may lead to questions and opportunities to give a reason for our hope. As Peter said, *"be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."* (1 Pet 3:15).

Joe Badlu,  
(South Ozone Park, NY)

# CULTIVATING FAITH TOGETHER

By Mark Drabenstott

**T**HE late syndicated columnist Charles Krauthammer (1950-2018) entitled his last book: *Things that Matter*. It was a look back at life after more than 30 years as one of the nation's most influential news commentators. Charles was widely hailed for his pithy insights that invariably swept away the chaff to uncover nuggets worth pondering. His own struggles honed that perspective, not least his becoming quadriplegic after a diving accident as a young man.

Pondering the things that count is always a productive exercise, even more so when it's eternal things. Scripture is full of such things. Three stand out for me:

- *"This is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."* (John 17:3 RSV). To know God and His Son are transcendent things. If we want to gain eternal life, we must know who each being is, not just one or the other. God's characteristics

matter (such as revealed to Moses in Exodus 34), just as Jesus' do (such as foreshadowed in Isaiah 53). Yet, it is not enough just to compile knowledge. We must **know** God and His Son. The Good Shepherd puts it this way: *"I know my sheep and my sheep know me."* (John 10:14 NIV). This calls for walking with our Lord throughout life's journey. Above all, it calls for believing in him (a word John stresses throughout his writings).

- *"The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."* (Gal 5:6 NIV). This is a powerful reminder of what life is all about, one worthy of daily meditation—and weekly at the table of remembrance. It is the great prelude for the magnificent picture Paul paints a few verses later—the Fruit of the Spirit. To offer a quick connection between prelude and painting, Bro. Norm Zilmer suggested that Paul might well have intended a colon after love, the first

fruit in that wonderful list. In other words, love is the whole fruit that encompasses all the virtues that follow. Faith expressing itself in love surely is a life's work, one that yields a beautiful harvest.

- *“Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.”* (Heb 12:1-2 RSV). This true nugget is the capstone to the chapter on faith. Life is a long race, far longer than a marathon. Running well means not giving up. Put another way, perseverance is the crowning virtue of faith. When our knees and hearts do grow weak, the key is looking to Jesus—our champion. He **never** gave up.

From these and many other passages, the conclusion is powerfully simple: **faith matters**. It matters a lot. Without it, we simply cannot please God (Heb 11:6). If it's so important, how do we grow it across a lifetime?

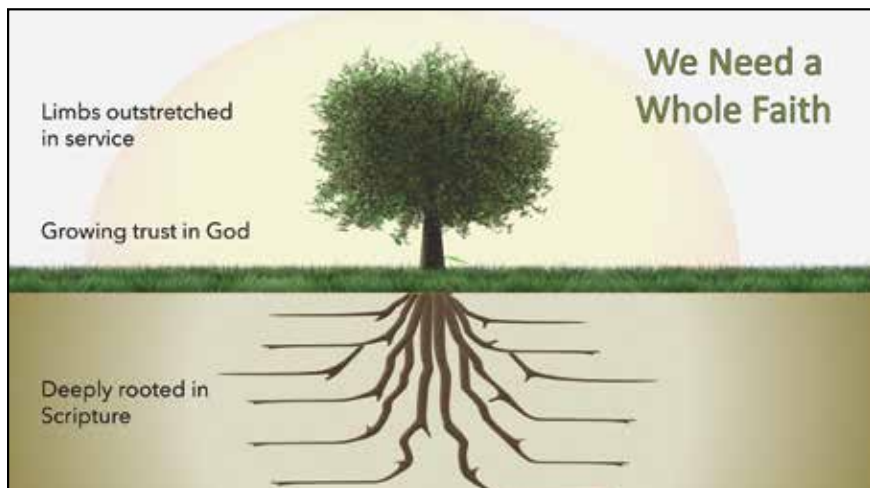
### WCF VISION AND MISSION

The Williamsburg Christadelphian

Foundation (WCF) has taken this question to heart. We want to help grow mighty trees of faith (as described in Psalm 1 and Isaiah 61), ones that bear a bountiful harvest of loving fruit.

WCF's vision is a community with a whole, vibrant faith. God seeks a complete faith—one of head, heart and hands. Even so, WCF aims to help disciples grow a faith that goes beyond knowledge alone. Faith is rooted in a deepening understanding of God through His Word, the Bible. This is the essential starting point. But our faith must also develop strong trust in Him—seeking His will, not our own, leaning on Him in trial and crisis. A sturdy trunk keeps the tree from breaking when the storms of life arrive. Finally, when we fully comprehend His grace toward us through His Son, we will naturally give back by showing love to others. When faith is whole, it far transcends reliance on Bible knowledge alone. Like a great tree, it bears the Fruit of the Spirit.

WCF's mission is cultivating faith together. God wants us to grow a





whole faith across a lifetime. WCF is committed to helping Jesus' disciples do that. Faith grows strongest and fastest when grown together. Our God has planted us in natural and spiritual families for good reason. Hence, WCF is committed to helping connect disciples in ways that encourage more growth.

### WCF ACTIVITIES

How best to grow faith? The Master Gardener alone knows this vital process. But Scripture provides some useful cultivating practices for us to adopt. After extensive review, we identified five that seem especially helpful. They provide a useful way to describe what WCF is doing to help realize our vision.

### TEACH

*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* (Rom 10:17 NKJV).

WCF helps teach God's Word and promote a faith rooted deeply in its wisdom. We have supported a broad range of efforts to introduce the Bible to those who seek its message. We have funded Read Your Bible seminars by ecclesias. We have worked with outreach partners to fund Bible Education Centers (BECs) in the Philippines, Cambodia and elsewhere. Sometimes our efforts literally start with a basic education, the first step in introducing the Word of God. In Kenya and South Africa, we have funded education scholarships and facilities that advance literacy and basic learning skills. In Cambodia, we have funded a dormitory that gives Cambodian students access to an education unavailable in their villages.

### GROW

*He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit... Herein is my Father glorified that you bear much fruit.* (John 15:5, 8 RSV).

We help disciples use the tools that grow a mature faith, one that guides decisions and overcomes trials. These tools include things like self-assessment, prayer and a network of fellow disciples. WCF is especially focused on helping our youth grow their faith. We see a generation buffeted by damaging currents in today's culture. In one response to this challenge, we started a major new program in 2020, called Faith Launch. The program was held virtually due to the pandemic, but that turned into a blessing. We now have more than 100 participants worldwide. The objective of Faith Launch is to equip young adults (ages 18-35) with the tools they need to grow faith. We drew inspiration from the 50-year anniversary of Apollo 11, and all the care and attention paid to equipping astronauts for a long, successful journey. Four phases of our faith journey are the central focus:

- (1) Day-to-day decisions;
- (2) Big life decisions;
- (3) Managing relationships; and
- (4) Overcoming crisis.

Another critical element of the program is connecting participants with Faith Mentors that can be a source of guidance and support in the future. Nearly 50 brothers and sisters are part of the mentor program. They have inspired everyone by sharing their faith lifelines, the lessons learned through all the twists and turns of life.



## ENCOURAGE

*Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works... encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Heb 10:24-25 RSV)*

We help faith grow faster and stronger through products that encourage one another—giving song to faith, telling faith stories, increasing prayerfulness and sharing burdens. WCF tries to create beneficial ways for disciples to share all elements of their faith. One of these is our Faith Talk video series. This is a new **Faith Commons**, where brothers and sisters can encourage others by sharing lessons from their own faith journey. We also have podcasts for all ages that aim for similar encouragement. Music is a vital avenue for inspiring faith in others. After the pandemic struck in 2020 and many asked for better ways to present music in virtual worship services, WCF moved quickly to launch our *Hymns*

for Sunday music series. We estimate that upwards of 400 ecclesias now use *Hymns for Sunday* in their services. WCF also sponsored a virtual choir in 2020 that brought together 128 voices and 35 instruments from around the world to perform “*Here at Last*,” a musical inspiration during a dark year.

## CONNECT

*The whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Eph 4:16 NIV).*

We help connect people of faith globally to create a greater sense of belonging and foster love and support among believers near and far. The past year offered a powerful reminder of just how vital connections are to growing faith. All the social distancing and isolation made virtual ties all the sweeter. With summer Bible Schools canceled, WCF took steps to facilitate these vital faith connections in virtual ways. We

partnered with several Bible Schools to host the Online Christadelphian Bible School. Spanning five weeks, OCBS attracted more than 1,200 participants from all corners of the globe. The school offered several classes each week along with a Saturday evening program that brought everyone together; the Mountain Top Café was an especially welcome feature, allowing everyone to connect with brothers and sisters from afar, often for the first time. WCF launched a Newcomers Program to help brethren immigrating to North America receive critical spiritual support. These refugees are often placed in communities far from any ecclesia. This program aims to fill that void.

WCF has been a service enabler in many ways, much of it coming under the heading of *Touch-to-Teach* (T2T). This work emulates our Lord's example of extending a loving hand to those in need, in the process opening a door for the Gospel to be shared. Our White Fields program has sponsored more than 160 people at mission hubs around the world, helping others and growing faith at once. WCF has also provided significant support to many mission hubs, spanning South Africa, India and Southeast Asia. With severe economic lockdowns accompanying the pandemic, in 2020 we shifted most of our T2T funding to family financial assistance.



## SERVE

*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace. (1 Pet 4:10 ESV).*

We help disciples give back to God for His grace by exercising a "Faith of the Hands" in service to others, especially to those with urgent physical needs.

In all, WCF distributed more than \$1.2 million in humanitarian aid in 13 countries in 2020. In one country alone, we supplied basic material needs for a few hundred Christadelphian families for six months. We reckon more than 90% of our humanitarian aid goes to Christadelphian families in the Central Fellowship.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

WCF sees an even greater need to grow faith in the coming year. The pandemic effects linger. Many North American ecclesias struggle with small and declining membership. And the cultural currents confronting our youth remain a huge challenge. Accordingly, WCF is giving special attention to four initiatives this year. There is more work than hands. We welcome you to join us in this work.

We're giving new focus to T2T. We are forming two key groups to advance this critical work. Our T2T Committee will identify the best projects to meet physical needs and to share the Gospel in all parts of the world. With light appearing at the end of the pandemic, they are also making plans to sponsor White Fields service workers again. Our T2T Roundtable will bring together leading practitioners from around the world to best harvest practices and form guidelines that help us make wiser decisions.

We're launching new efforts to teach faith fundamentals. This includes a new series of articles, videos and podcasts on the Biblical cornerstones of faith cited at the start of this article. Knowing God and His Son. Growing a faith rooted deeply in God's wisdom. Leaning on Him in crises and decisions big and small. Giving back for God's grace by serving others. We've also begun developing a Faith Toolkit with six tools (Self-Assessment, Scriptural Understanding, Prayer, Community, Cultural Influence Awareness, and Contemplation) that can be a daily help to disciples of all ages.

We're emphasizing more and better faith connections. This includes coordinating the Online Christadelphian Bible School (July 3-24) to benefit the global faith community. This school will feature videos from Africa, Asia and beyond, showing how brothers and sisters we rarely see practice their faith and offer praise day by day.

We're giving a new effort to supplying tools to help encourage growth in our ecclesias. Our youth remain a vital target. We will host **Faith Launch II**, starting in October. We're also looking at ways to help coordinate youth curricula, so there is continuity and seamless efficiency to equip our youth to grow faith for a lifetime.

One of God's first creative works was planting a garden (Gen 2:8). The garden had everything required for abundant life and bountiful glory. The Master Gardener had thought of everything—including the one thing he did not create, the one thing he left to us—**faith**. Salvation is the gift of God. But we are saved by grace through faith. Such faith is precious in God's eyes.

In the end, faith is what matters. Each of us must develop faith across the whole arc of life. We pray He will bless all efforts to grow faith into mighty trees that bear the fruit of the spirit. And we invite you to join us in **Cultivating Faith Together**.

Stay connected to our faith activities:  
[wcfoundation.org/subscribe](http://wcfoundation.org/subscribe)

*Mark Drabenstott,  
(Kansas City, MO, CGAF)  
WCF Chairman*

# DEALING WITH A DIFFICULT BROTHER OR SISTER - PAUL'S SEVEN STEP SOLUTION

By William Link, Jr.

**F**ROM time to time, we might meet up with a brother or sister who is just plain difficult to deal with. Maybe we feel they have too much to say; maybe they have some strange ideas that make us uncomfortable. Our personalities might be fundamentally different: one of us is loud and gregarious, the other proper and reserved. One of us is bookish, intellectual and introverted; the other is emotional and extroverted. A brother or sister might have the oddest ideas about what sort of ecclesial activities are best or what sort of preaching efforts we should try. Deep down, and we hate to admit it, they drive us crazy.

Fairness compels us to suggest we consider that maybe we are that difficult brother or sister.

## SHARED FAITH, INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITIES

We Christadelphians have a great deal in common with our shared faith, but

we are not identical in personality or outlook. There were 153 great fish in the net, and some were mighty strange fish indeed.

The Apostle Paul offers some wonderful advice on how to get along. It's in that well-known passage in Philippians 4:8, about "*whatsoever things*."<sup>1</sup> We all know it: whatever things are true, noble, just, pure, lovely—things of good report, of virtue and praiseworthy—these are the things we're to think about.

We have probably used that passage to guide our choice of entertainment: the books we read, the movies we watch, the conversations we engage in. It's a good screener for the sort of activity we take part in when we acknowledge the presence of our Master and friend.

But Philippians 4:8 has a context that signals its appropriateness for us in dealing with brothers and sisters. In verse 2, Paul says, "*I implore Euodia, and I implore Syntyche to be of the same*



*mind in the Lord.*” We know nothing of these two sisters other than what follows in verse 3. They had labored in the gospel with Paul. Their names, along with Paul’s other collaborators, *“are in the Book of Life.”*

Evidently, they were fine sisters, hard workers, both included in Paul’s sweeping description of *“beloved and longed-for brethren,”* his *“joy and crown,”* his *“beloved.”* (4:1). Yet there was some difference of mind, some friction, that was causing stress—enough that the Apostle had heard of it in his Roman jail.

## CONCLUSION OF PHILIPPIANS

So as Paul comes to the conclusion of his letter, he brings together its themes. In 1:27 he urges them to *“stand fast in one spirit.”* He repeats this in 4:1. In 2:2, he urges them to be *“likeminded”* and of *“one mind,”* and echoes this in 4:2. Then in 3:1, 3 he urges them to *“rejoice in the Lord.”* He repeats this in 4:4. One is tempted to think that perhaps the whole letter to the Philippians was written with this closing appeal to Euodia and Syntyche in mind.

If this reading is correct, then what follows in Philippians chapter 4 is not a set of disconnected, random exhortations but a seven-step solution to conflict.

## SEVEN STEPS TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- 1. Other brothers and sisters were to help** (4:3). They were not to take sides, nor were they to gossip, but to help.
- 2. Rejoice in the Lord** (v. 3). In Philippians 3:3, Paul contrasts *“rejoicing in the Lord”* with *“putting*

*confidence in the flesh.”*

It might come as a surprise to hear what Paul means by *“putting confidence in the flesh.”* He doesn’t mean money, education, physical strength or any of the things that might first spring to mind. Rather, he points to himself as one who had put confidence in the flesh, in having all the outward religious bona fides that won men’s approval. He had confidence in the flesh, as he details in Philippians 3:3-6. But now, how things have changed! He rejoices in the Lord, desiring only to *“know him, and the power of his resurrection.”* (v. 10).

Perhaps there was some excess of self-confidence in Euodia and Syntyche—and perhaps there is in us. If we could put it aside *“rejoicing in the Lord”* and becoming *“conformed to his death”* then our disagreements would seem trifling matters relative to the *“excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (3:8).

- 3. Be gentle** (v. 5a). It is worthwhile to consider the usage of the same word elsewhere in the New Testament, notably Titus 3:1-3:

*Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.*

Gentleness rules out conflict. Strive for a reputation as the gentlest of all people!

4. **Recognize that “*The Lord is at hand*”** (v. 5b). At the manifestation of our Lord, what rejoicing there will be, and how quickly our insignificant and petty conflicts will disappear. But he is even now “*at hand.*” Our Lord walks among the seven candlesticks. Could we be fighting with each other in his presence? Like Elisha’s servant, we need to have our eyes open to see the presence of the LORD. If “*The LORD is at hand,*” shall we be in conflict?

5. **“*Be anxious for nothing*”** (v. 6a). Here, Paul is not advocating a “don’t worry, be happy” indifference. Indeed, he uses the same word “*anxious*” in 2:20 to praise Timothy for his concern for the ecclesia! He uses the noun form of the same word in 2 Corinthians 11:28, of his own experience, regarding the “*care of all the ecclesias*” that was upon him.

But we can worry about things that don’t matter. And if we find ourselves fretting over whether things are being done right, the remedy is to cast our burden upon the Lord. So, Paul offers his sixth solution to quarrels:

6. **“*In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God*”** (v. 6b). It’s as if Paul is writing: “Euodia: put it in God’s hands if you’ve got worries. And Syntyche: don’t forget to be thankful for dear sister Euodia!”

The result will be that “*the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*” (v. 7). What an amazing

prospect! And, oh, how much better than to be in conflict.

7. ***Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things*** (v.8).

This sounds easy, doesn’t it? But our natural inclination is to focus on other things, things less praiseworthy. Maybe we do this to feel better about ourselves! “Well, at least I’m not... at least I don’t... and I would NEVER...” In 2 Corinthians 10:12, Paul writes of people “*measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves,*” concluding this mindset is lacking in true understanding.

### **WILL OUR LORD REMEMBER US FOR GOOD?**

Like Nehemiah, we hope our Lord will remember us for good (Neh 13:31). If we are to do unto others as we would have them do unto us, let us remember our brothers and sisters for good, focusing on their strengths and virtues.

So then, the next time we find ourselves feeling some discord with a brother or sister, let’s try to think of Paul’s seven-step solution. 1) Get help; 2) “Rejoice in the Lord”; 3) “Be gentle”; 4) Remember “*the Lord is at hand,*” 5) Don’t worry; 6) Pray, with supplication and thanksgiving; and 7) Think on praiseworthy things. It’s hard to be in conflict with someone we admire.

William Link, Jr.,  
(Baltimore, MD)

1 All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise noted.

# REFLECTIONS ON TREASURED HYMNS

*By Jessica Gelineau*

I have recently taken on the role of Music and Praise Section Editor for the *Tidings*. I'm so happy to be here! I am a member of the Simi Hills Ecclesia in Simi Valley, California and an honorary member of the Los Angeles Hispanic Ecclesia. I play piano and a little bit of guitar (8 chords, to be exact!). I grew up with a dad who made up funny little tunes to Bible verses on the spot, a grandfather who led Bible School choirs, and friends who quite literally showed me the way to God through powerful evenings of musical worship. Lately, one of my greatest joys is listening to my 2-year-old sing the Hallelujah descant of the song "Seek Ye First" (Hymn 356). I have offered worship and praise to God in other parts of the world, including India, Mexico, Jamaica and South Africa, at times not in my native language. I find it awe-inspiring that God hard-wired us to connect more deeply to Him and those around us through the medium of music. In my new role with the *Tidings*

magazine, I greatly look forward to collaborating with many of you, dear readers. Together we can cultivate a joy in and an appreciation of God's goodness, of which music is an ultimate expression. We are working toward a day when, as described in Revelation 5:13, every single creature—whether in heaven, on earth, under the earth or in the sea—will lift-up their voice in praise of our Father.

Apart from introducing myself, I also wish to offer a warm word of thanks and commendation to my predecessor, Sis. Kristin Atwood, for a year of diverse, interesting, practical and encouraging articles. Her May 2021 article about the Christadelphian Worship Books is a must-read for those interested in learning more songs written by brothers and sisters worldwide.

It is hard to know what the pandemic-related news will be like when this article is published, but as of April 2021, all my recent ecclesial worship has been via Zoom, to which I am sure

many will relate. Yet, I do not think any of us have forgotten the feeling of singing together in real-time in non-virtual spaces. Years or even decades spent singing sweet and familiar hymns have lodged them deep into our hearts. Although I appreciate musical praise in many forms, this year has led me back to some of the hymns I grew up with, particularly those I have very early memories of.

What songs do you return to when you are in need? What songs restore peace to your soul whenever you recall them? I reached out to several of our brothers and sisters—who for decades have sung our hymns—to ask them to share their stories. **Do you have a deep love for any particular hymn? I asked. Please share which hymn has profoundly impacted your life and in what way.** The responses began trickling back, brightening my email inbox. I am grateful to those who took the time to share stories from their heart depths with us. Before reading, if possible, I suggest you grab a copy of the 2002 “Green Book” and follow along. I suggest you read each hymn as a piece of poetry before reading the corresponding thoughts here.

Bro. Tom Ross noted when he replied to this prompt, “It’s interesting that at this time of the pandemic we have been using more recorded songs and for some reason, the words in these songs have more meaning now than ever before. I can’t wait to see what others have written.” I pray the reflections that follow bring you joy and peace.

**SIS. KAY COLLISTER, CA—HYMN 116**

“Praise my soul, The King of Heaven,  
To his feet thy tribute bring.” This

hymn has such a special meaning for me. It was the hymn that Jack (my late husband) and I chose for our wedding service so many years ago. I remember singing it with such enthusiasm and joy. How thankful I was at the prospect of marrying my best friend and brother. “Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven.” I was thankful for the blessing of praising the everlasting King! What a wonderful promise there is in the words “Father-like, He tends and spares us...In His hands He gently bears us!” Only with hindsight can I see that He has been with us all through



the years. And, finally, we come to the climax “Saints triumphant, bow before Him, Gathered in from every race;... Praise ye all the God of grace.” May we all, by God’s grace, be accounted worthy to sing to Him together in that glorious Kingdom.

**BRO. RUSS PATTERSON, CA—  
HYMNS 88 AND 102**

I never grew up with much music in my life, so I am still learning about the value of it. These are two hymns that give me peace and encouragement every day.

**Hymn 88**

As I sing, “Great is Thy faithfulness,” I am reminded that everything promised by God is certain because the giver, God, is faithful in all things. He is unchangeable. His compassion



does not change. If the one who gives promises is not faithful, all promises, no matter how great they may sound, are empty because the giver of the promises is unfaithful. Not so with our merciful LORD. His compassions are certain, His great mercy and love are

sure. Pardon for sins and assurance for peace endures. God has given me many blessings with thousands beside. I have absolute confidence that everything that I need will be abundantly provided because I worship a God who is faithful.

**Hymn 102**

When I sing this hymn, I think of the wonder and beauty of God. I am filled with awe at His power and might, how He merits our worship and hope. Yet, great as He is, He relates to us poor sinners and asks the love of our poor heart. What a wonderful God we serve.

**BRO. LES WILSON, VA  
(UNAMENDED)—HYMN 110  
AND THE TRADITIONAL SONG  
“SOON AND VERY SOON”**

During times in my life especially when I am feeling down, feeling like I have the world on my back, there are certain hymns I think about that help me. My wife, Sis. Sharron Hill-Wilson, had been involved in a long struggle with cancer. During this challenging time, I was trying to care for her to the best of my ability. She died on October 13, 2005, two weeks before I was told by my doctor that I, too, had cancer. I prayed that my Heavenly Father would help me to get through this sad and difficult period in my life. During this time, there were two hymns or songs I thought about and hummed. These songs were African American spirituals that brought me much comfort. I was raised as a Baptist and the congregational music from my childhood helped me as a grown man to deal with the most difficult trials of my life. One of my favorite spiritual songs was “Soon and Very Soon” by



composer and singer Andraé Crouch (1942-2015) in which he sang in part:

Soon and very soon  
we are going to see the king.  
Hallelujah, hallelujah,  
we're going to see the king.  
No more crying there,  
we are going to see the king.

This hymn was based in part on Revelation 21:4, *"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."*

I look forward to that day so much as expressed in one of our hymns "How Great Thou Art." (Hymn 110):

O Lord my God,  
When I in awesome wonder  
Consider all  
The works Thy Hand hath made.

These songs have helped me through much grief. I so look forward to that day when I will see the beautiful smile of Sharron once again for eternity.

### **SIS. LORRAINE MITCHELL, GUYANA—HYMN 208**

It has been a great privilege for me from the time I understood the Truth in 1951 to share this hymn with others.

When the gospel of the Kingdom of God on this earth with Jesus as King first burst upon me at the age of 28, I was so excited. I could not stop talking about it. I am still talking about it. Everywhere I go is an opportunity to speak, whether at the hairdresser, the dentist, standing in line at the bank, post office or wherever. I often recall our late brother Will Watkins telling

me that the world is like a sea of people drowning, and you have a lifeline. You may be the only one they ever met who knew the Truth. What would you do? Obviously, throw out the lifeline and speak to them.

The favorite hymn that immediately comes to mind is 208 in the 2002 Hymn Book. (Verses 1 and 5 are particularly relevant.) "O use me, Lord, use even me!"

### **BRO. RAY RILEY, CA—HYMN 2**

I came from a variety of churches each with their own hymn book. In 1962, I was taken to my first Christadelphian meeting where I expected to find familiar hymns—and did not! They were from the 1932 Christadelphian Hymn Book and most had a very Scottish ring to them. Dear Sis. Francis gave me a copy and it wasn't long before this Finnish-Irishman also sang with great gusto these hymns as a bona fide Christadelphian.

There ought always to be a hallmark in our hymns; something expressive of our peculiar beliefs. I believe this is important. The Oneness of God, the **true** nature of man, the Kingdom on earth, the promises given unto the fathers, the redemption of Israel, the Second Coming. They are unique to Christadelphia, and our hymns, our exhortations, our letters, our very conversations, need to express such thoughts.

Just as my favorite verse in the Bible has changed, so have my favorite hymns. When I was young, I liked the martial air of "Zion's King Shall Reign Victorious" (309). Now I'm more subdued, reflective and I am moved more by those such as hymn 2, based on Psalm 5: "Give ear to my words, O

During times in my life especially when I am feeling down,  
feeling like I have the world on my back, there are certain  
hymns I think about that help me.

LORD, consider my meditation, my King and my God. Harken unto the voice of my cry” composed by dear Sis. Marie McCrone, now asleep in the Lord. I have written on the page in my hymn book, “encapsulated in so few words lies our salvation.” Also written on the page “A beautiful hymn, a beautiful person,” [regarding Sis. Marie].

### **BRO. TOM ROSS, OH (CGAF)— HYMN 388**

About 30 years ago on a Sunday morning, a sister sang hymn 388 (it was 292 then), and I remember it was a beautiful piece of music and the more I looked at the words, the more I had a hard time believing so much about God and Jesus could be put into one song. The words “We Shall Be Like Him” give a vision of how much God loves His creation of man and has made a way that those who love and obey Him can live forever. Our Heavenly Father proved the strength of His promise by raising Jesus from the grave, never more to die. Truly, “We Shall Be Like Him.”

My wife, Judy, and I were married almost 59 years, and wanting to be in the Kingdom was the focus of our lives. Along the way, our parents, grandparents and so many of our loved ones fell asleep, but we rejoice that we can be reunited with them,

forever, with no more sin, sickness or death. Every time I sing this hymn I am strengthened and encouraged to keep my faith strong. I think of this hymn even more now that my wife has fallen asleep. She had a great desire to wake up and be like him. No more pain or sorrow; even death will be no more. The words in this hymn tell the story of God’s love, and I want to be a part of that.

### **CONCLUSION**

These responses and others we will share in coming issues, beautifully demonstrate the way our traditional hymns can support, strengthen and buoy us up through life’s hills and valleys. We look forward to sharing several more reflections on treasured hymns in upcoming issues of the *Tidings*. And let’s keep the conversation going! This week, ask someone if they have a favorite hymn, and be prepared to share back yours. This is a great way to hear each other’s stories and be encouraged ourselves. Perhaps we’ll even learn a new hymn or two in the process!

*Jessica Gelineau,  
(Simi Hills, CA)*

# TEXTUAL CRITICISM AND THE STORY OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE (2)

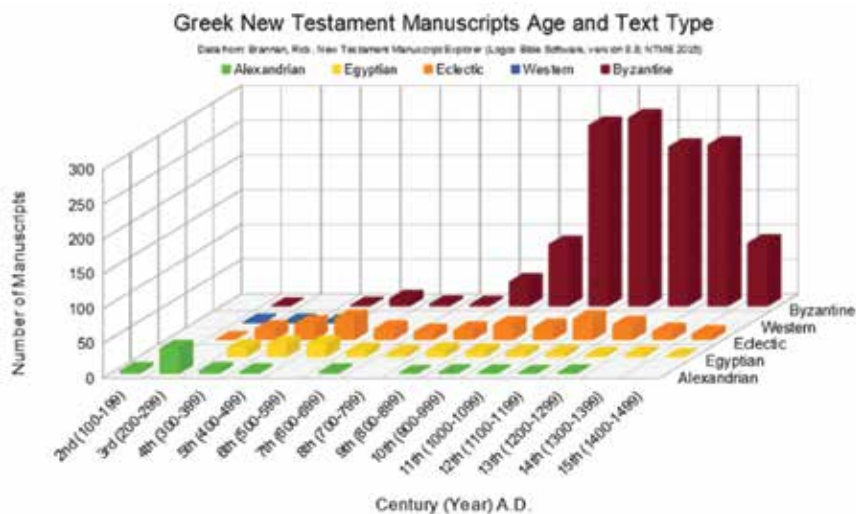
By Richard Morgan

OUR story begins with the humanist scholar and theologian, Desiderius Erasmus, whose motto was *ad fontes*—to the sources. Basing his translation on the seven Greek New Testament manuscripts he had in his possession, in 1516, the year before the Protestant Reformation’s official start, he printed the first New Testament in Greek, the *Novum Instrumentum omne*. Thus began, albeit in a very modest initial stage, the modern discipline of textual criticism. Except for the book of Revelation, Erasmus compared three or four of the manuscripts for each section of the New Testament—the Gospel records and Acts and the epistles. He only had one manuscript for Revelation, and it was missing the last six verses, so he had to finish his translation from the Latin Vulgate.

Erasmus’s translation went through five editions in all, two of which Luther and Tyndale used to translate their New

Testaments into German and English, respectively. The source manuscripts themselves were relatively modern, dating from between the 12th and 15th centuries, but became the basis for all New Testament translations until the end of the 19th century. Other manuscripts were added by those who built on Erasmus’s work during the time of the Reformation. That collection of manuscripts became known as the *Textus Receptus*—the Received Text.

It’s important at this juncture to talk a little more about the range of New Testament manuscripts textual criticism scholars have access to. Scholars catalog manuscripts according to two basic features—their age and their **text type**. A text type is usually based on the general geographic area where the manuscript was found. Usually, those found in similar geographic regions share a similar age, and the copies share common features.



In the chart above, you can see that the Byzantine text-type has by far the majority of manuscripts available for scholars. The various manuscripts Erasmus used, and those later included in the *Textus Receptus*, all come from the Byzantine text-type. However, you will also notice that these manuscripts tend to be much newer than most other text types.

With all these manuscripts dating hundreds of years apart and the hundreds of thousands of variations between them, how can we have confidence that what we have in our various translations is God's original message?

A good analogy is to look at the manuscripts as a grouping of trees in a forest, with all the trees being of the same species, say the California Redwood. While there will be differences between each tree—the number of branches, height, age, etc.—each tree will only have the characteristics of a Redwood. You won't find apples growing on a

Redwood tree. The same can be said of the thousands of New Testament manuscripts at our disposal. The variations among them are plain to see, but they all reflect the original gospel message; they are all the Word of God. The textual critic's task is to determine why the variations exist and trace them back to what was most likely recorded in the original text.

While Erasmus and others were developing the principles of textual criticism and translating the Bible into other languages, it coincided with a dramatic period in England. The Protestant Reformation, orchestrated by men such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, had taken off in Europe. But in England, as is usual in Europe's outlier, the Reformation was going to take off in a very different way.

The English Reformation took place at the time when the Tudors sat on the throne. Henry Tudor, a Welshman, took the crown after overcoming Richard III in the War of the Roses that ended in

1487. But it was to be his famous son, Henry VIII, who was at the center of the English Reformation.

King Henry VIII was very much a Roman Catholic when he took the throne and even wrote a pamphlet directed against Martin Luther. For his efforts, in 1521, Pope Leo X gave the title Defender of the Faith to Henry, a title used by British monarchs from that time forward. However, things were going to take a much different course after Henry sought to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon because she failed to provide a male heir. (She did, however, produce one of Henry's children, who later would take the throne—Mary I.)

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, moved to invalidate Henry's marriage in 1533, bringing about the split between England and Rome. Following his divorce, Henry married

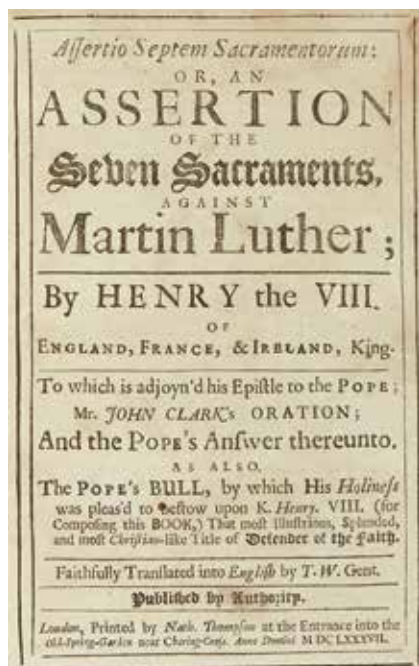
Anne Boleyn and pushed through Parliament the 1534 Act of Succession in which Mary (his first wife's daughter) right to the throne was declared null, to be replaced with an heir Henry hoped Anne would produce. However, despite the fact she also produced a future queen of England—Elizabeth I—Anne failed to conceive a male heir, and Henry had her executed.

Determined to have a future son to put on the throne, Henry made a new Act of Succession in 1536, removing Elizabeth and making sure that the child of his third wife, Jane Seymour, would succeed him. And so, it was, in 1537, that Henry finally had his male heir, the future king Edward VI.

Having split from the Roman Church, Henry had enacted another law in 1534, the Act of Supremacy, that recognized Henry as the supreme head of the Church of England. To further distance himself from the Papacy, Henry went about dissolving Catholic monasteries in 1538, which had the additional benefit of adding to the crown's coffers.

In the meantime, while these changes were occurring in England, a man named William Tyndale, having gained access to Erasmus's Greek text, set about translating the Bible into English. Next month we will consider the work of Tyndale and those who followed him.

*Richard Morgan,  
(Simi Hills, CA)*





# EVERYONE DID THAT WHICH WAS RIGHT IN HIS OWN EYES <sup>(5)</sup>

*By Neil Robin*

**JUDGES** 21 opens with the eleven victorious tribes having realized the full implications of their victory. The tribe of Benjamin had been almost entirely wiped out. Had it not been for the survival skills of six hundred men who had fled and taken refuge in the wilderness, Benjamin would indeed have ceased to exist.

What had begun as the pursuit of justice against one city on behalf of a murdered woman had escalated into the near annihilation of one whole tribe.

It appears that once the madness and the bloodlust had subsided and the thirst for vengeance quenched, the tribes began to take stock of their situation in a calmer, more rational manner. Now that they presumably felt justice had been done, they had no desire to see Benjamin destroyed.

And yet, how could this almost-dead tribe, comprised of six hundred men but no women or children, be revived when the other eleven tribes had collectively sworn an oath not to marry

their daughters to Benjamites? There is a tragic irony here in that, while the book of Judges repeatedly depicts the Israelites failing in their divine commission to destroy the Canaanites and ignoring the restrictions on intermarrying with them, they did not appear to have a problem with disregarding either of these where Benjamin was concerned.

Is there a lesson here for us? Do you find it far easier to cut yourself off from brothers and sisters in Christ whose doctrinal positions or lifestyles offend you than you do to keep yourself separate from the ideas and practices promoted by the godless world around you?

In verse 2, we're told they wept, clearly greatly moved by the perilous situation in which Benjamin now found itself. Was this out of compassion and empathy, or was it out of a more pragmatic concern that if the tribe of Benjamin could not recover, the lands it currently held might have been lost to non-Israelite people groups?

When, as Christians, we decide to act in a certain way, we should examine our motivations just as much as our actions. Are you, for example, genuinely motivated by love and compassion, by a desire to serve others and help them reach the Kingdom? Or are you more interested in trying to make yourself look good in the eyes of others? Or do you perhaps only help those who you expect will be able to return the favor in the future?

Whether it was compassion or pragmatism that moved them, their concern was only to lift Benjamin out of their position of near extinction. They were not weeping for the sins committed by the Benjamites or by themselves. As we shall see, none of their actions described in this chapter did anything to solve Benjamin's (or their own) real problem, that of Canaanization. They dealt effectively with the immediate crisis while leaving the root cause (sin) completely untouched.

When we find ourselves moved by the plight of others, are we concerned only for their immediate physical needs—something we should certainly help with—or are we also moved to care for their spiritual welfare?

What may seem astonishing in verse 3 is that, even as they pleaded with God for help in this crisis, they almost seemed to be blaming Him for what happened (see also v. 15). Did they think they had faithfully obeyed God throughout the events of chapter 20, only for it to lead to this?

From what we read in chapter 20, God at most only sanctioned them going to

war against Benjamin to seek justice against Gibeah. There is no record of Him being consulted about the slaughter of non-combatants in the towns afterward. Had they somehow convinced themselves that this was God's will?

Note that there is no record of any response from God to their plea. Was this because they had asked with entirely the wrong attitude? Was it because, given everything that had happened up until now, God knew they would never have listened to him anyway?

The truth, and it can be a hard truth to accept, is that God is not obliged to rescue us from our mistakes. If we truly repent, He will always be ready to forgive us, but that does not mean He will take away the negative consequences of our sins. David still lost his baby even after God forgave

him for what he did to Uriah and Bathsheba.

**The truth, and it can be a hard truth to accept, is that God is not obliged to rescue us from our mistakes.**

The tribes built an altar and made various offerings to get God's attention or secure His favor. This approach of giving a deity something he wanted, to get something back in exchange, was common in the Ancient

Near East and only shows how little they understood the unique kind of worship Yahweh truly wanted. It made no difference. God still didn't answer.

Instead of considering that perhaps they needed to engage in some self-examination before approaching again, they gave up. They looked for their own solution to the problem, a decision which led only to even more murder and suffering.

While the tribal elders desired to see Benjamin revived and re-attached to the family tree, they had sworn an oath not to give any of their daughters to Benjamin in marriage. This should remind us of the need to be extremely careful what we say and do in moments of great emotional stress. Hasty words and actions could come back to seriously trouble us at a later time.

It's also highly ironic that, despite one of the major themes of Judges 17-21 being the lack of any centralized authority in Israel, here the tribal elders now claimed the authority to impose the death penalty on an entire town for failing to take part in the civil war (v. 10).

Despite their apparent urgency to rescue Benjamin from this crisis, we should note two things. First, they were not prepared to accept the blame for their part in causing it. Second, they were not prepared to sacrifice anything themselves to reach a solution. However, as we can see, they were quite prepared to sacrifice the lives of those in Jabesh Gilead and the freedom of the daughters of Shiloh.

Perhaps this should serve as a general principle for us. If a problem was even partly caused by something you did, does not that give you the responsibility to sacrifice something to reach a solution?

The thinking of the tribal elders was very much along the lines of “the ends justify the means.” Jabesh Gilead’s absence from the civil war wasn’t considered important until the tribal elders needed a source of unmarried girls. There appear to have been no depths to which they would not have sunk to achieve their goal of reviving Benjamin without breaking their oath.

Doing what’s right in our own eyes can so often become “ends justify the means” thinking. When we make decisions based on how to achieve particular goals rather than on following moral principles, we may find ourselves justifying almost anything for the sake of achieving those goals. For a Christian, how we achieve an end should matter just as much as the end itself. In God’s eyes, only the right means can produce the desired ends of our transformation and salvation.



The entire episode regarding Jabesh Gilead shows the tribal elders looking for one loophole after another to solve their problem without needing to make any personal sacrifice or admit wrong on their part. They found a town that did not participate in the civil war and applied the letter of their law (v5) in the strictest sense, condemning Jabesh Gilead to death.

Of course, they needed the unmarried girls to survive, so they may have looked for an Old Testament precedent (such as Numbers 31:13-20) in which only the unmarried girls were left alive from a people group devoted to destruction. There doesn't seem to be any real reason why that example would have relevance to their situation, but all they needed was an excuse.

That can be a temptation for us too, namely when we wish to do something which would contravene one of God's laws or principles. So, we look into the Biblical record or our own community's history for events that have elements in common, which we then apply to our situation to justify the action we desire to take.

The newly orphaned daughters of Jabesh Gilead were taken to Shiloh to be handed over to the Benjamites. The record doesn't state why they were taken there specifically, but Shiloh was the location of the tabernacle at that time, so perhaps the elders thought that bringing these girls to the vicinity of God's house would in some way "sanctify" these new marriage unions.

Verse 12 describes Shiloh as being "*in the land of Canaan*." It's not clear why this remark was included; perhaps the

writer of Judges was trying to make the point that even the location of God's own house had now been corrupted by Canaanization. While the tribal elders may have thought God's house would "sanctify" their sordid machinations, the opposite had taken place. They had contaminated the site of God's house to the extent that God now saw it (and them) as just another part of Canaan.

Note the stark contrast between how this situation might have appeared to God's eyes as opposed to their own!

Even after all this, it transpired that there still weren't enough girls to go around. By this point, the tribal elders

were committed to doing whatever it took to revive Benjamin, and so there was no turning back from their grisly path.

Notice that in verse 16, they spoke only of the women of Benjamin having been destroyed in the passive sense. They did not admit that they were the ones responsible.

Coupled with verse 15, this looks very much as if they were trying to pin the blame on God rather than themselves for the slaughter of chapter 20:48.

Do we ever fall into the same trap of appointing ourselves the saviors of a situation while deliberately or subconsciously playing down our part in causing it in the first place?

The elders then formed the next stage of their plan, namely, to allow the remaining Benjamite bachelors to snatch away girls from the town of Shiloh during a festival to God. We are not told which festival this was, and it's possible the writer was intentionally vague to make the point that even the

For a  
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end itself.

elders had only a hazy understanding of how true Yahweh worship should have been carried out.

The fathers and brothers of the kidnapped girls were reassured that by “allowing” their daughters and sisters to be snatched away, they hadn’t broken their oath, which was unlikely to have been the first thing on their minds at that moment! This is a further demonstration of the legalistic, loophole-seeking attitude of the elders. They seemingly cared more about the technical keeping of the oath than the distress caused to these families.

Legalism is an easy trap to fall into when we are only doing what’s right in our own eyes. We naturally want to find a way to justify doing the things we desire most while maintaining our self-identity as servants of God. So, we carefully craft and develop a set of rules which will accommodate both.

Verses 23 and 24 are a remarkably casual and matter-of-fact summary of what must have been a traumatic experience for the young girls snatched at Shiloh and the families left behind. Perhaps again, the writer implies the lack of concern the tribal elders felt for anything other than holding to their own legalistic set of oaths and standards.

The account ends by summing up the five chapters with the same phrase which opened them: *“there was no king in Israel, and everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”* (v. 25).

Notice how the tribal elders, who at the beginning of chapter 20 were full of “righteous” fury at the conduct of Gibeah towards a defenseless woman,

by the end of chapter 21 have willingly ordered the slaughter of an innocent town and the abduction of even more defenseless women, and appear to be fully convinced that they have done the right thing.

Here is one of the very great dangers of doing what’s right in our own eyes, one that is particularly prevalent in the US and beyond at present, where societies are increasingly divided between two extreme socio-political viewpoints (e.g., “far-left” vs. “alt-right”).

When we label ourselves and the group we identify with as “good” and the group at the opposite extreme as “evil,” we may find ourselves justifying virtually any action taken to further our side’s aims, regardless of the principles involved, even if the actions taken by our side are all but identical to the actions taken by those on the other side whom we consider being “evil.”

Just as the tribal elders of Israel ended up sanctioning actions no better than those for which they had initially condemned Benjamin, we can easily fall into the trap of condoning in ourselves behavior and attitudes that we would immediately condemn if we saw it in our socio-political enemies.

As Jesus said, we must take the log out of our eye before we can see clearly to remove the speck from somebody else’s eye. It’s only when we learn to look at ourselves through the eyes of Jesus that we will even realize the log is there, blinding ourselves to our faults and our own desperate need for submission and repentance before God.

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# EVE

## THE DELIVERER

*By Becky Lewis*

**A**T a time in history when your identity and value as a person were based on which tribe you belonged to and who your ancestors were, a startling message appeared in early Jewish scriptures. That message was this: everyone is descended from one human pair, and anyone can become part of God's spiritual family. A short poem in Genesis 1:27 presents all of humanity as one collective image of God:

*God created humanity  
in God's own image,  
in the divine image  
God created them,  
male and female God created them.<sup>1</sup>*

The narrative could then have moved on to the placement of a human pair in a beautiful garden and introduced us to the trees and the serpent. But, as if to hammer home this idea of a collective image, we are told in chapter 2 that the humans were not simply created

separately and then placed together. Instead, one human was split into two parts before being made whole again.<sup>2</sup> And then, something else leaps from the page—the narrator's reference to a man leaving his natural family to start his own new one. Someone else, later in the same Book, was asked to leave his own father's house. So, this is not merely an account of where we all came from, but also of where we are headed—what we are called to become: a connected, united family of faith, through which all nations will be blessed. (Gen 12:1-3).

### THE DELIVERER

Genesis 2 states that the woman is created to be an *ezer* —a “deliverer.” Hebrew scholar, Richard Alter (1935-), professor of Hebrew and comparative literature at the University of California, Berkeley, states that “help” is too weak a term to use for *ezer* when we consider that it usually suggests active intervention on someone's behalf, especially in military contexts.<sup>3</sup> The

word *ezer* is most often used in the Old Testament to describe God Himself bringing aid and support (e.g., Exod 18:4; Deut 33:7; Psa 33:20; 70:5; 115:9; 121:2). The other Hebrew word in the phrase translated “*help meet*” in the KJV is *kenegdo*, which many Bible versions translate as “*suitable*” or “*fitting*.” Bro. David Levin suggests “mirror image” is what is being conveyed here.<sup>4</sup>

We readers of the story, who know what will happen next, may wonder why the text introduces the woman in this way. Surely it is the woman who causes the need for humans to be delivered, as it is her actions that begin the chain of events leading to Adam and Eve’s exile from the garden. So why is she referred to as a deliverer?

Perhaps part of the answer lies in God’s declarations. Throughout Genesis 1, acts of creation are evaluated and declared “*good*” and then “*very good*” once the humans are made. In Genesis 2, one human is placed in a beautiful, fertile garden. Everything seems wonderful. But God declares that the situation is “*not good*.” Why? Because the human is alone. But the human is not **entirely** alone—God is there and so are the angels and the animals. So why does he need anyone else? Well, there are a few reasons implied in the surrounding verses and in later Bible passages that reflect on this text:

1. In Genesis 1, the poem in verse 27 declares that humanity was made in God’s image. This image is commanded in verse 28 to “*Be fruitful and multiply*.” Humans needed to reproduce and then spread across the land, exploring and expanding, filling the earth

with God’s glory to have dominion over the earth. The man could not fulfill this assigned role on his own. Therefore, without the woman, he had been set an impossible task.

2. As we know from later passages in the Bible, being an image of God is not about looking like God but about reflecting His character. Part of that character is to be merciful, patient and forgiving. This spiritual fruit cannot grow if you are not around other human beings. How could the man learn to be forgiving if his daily experience was of immortal beings who never made mistakes, needed help or grew tired? And how could he learn the humility to accept help himself if he was only ever supported by beings more powerful than him? We cannot love God without also showing love to our neighbor; the two commands are inextricably linked.
3. The narrator has the benefit of hindsight here—as do we. We all know that Adam and Eve are going to give in to temptation and eat the fruit. The result of this is a broken relationship between each other and between them and God. God declares that the solution to this brokenness will come through a child—the promised seed of the woman (Gen 3:15). Therefore, the woman is going to be the source of this hope for the future, which is probably why it is at this moment that Adam names his wife Eve: “Breath” or “Life.”

These possibilities highlight why we have a mixed picture of Eve in Genesis

Even though Jesus is the most complete image of God, overflowing with grace and truth, he cannot fulfill the assigned task given at the first creation if he is acting alone.

He needs a family.

3. She is both the first to head towards death and the source of life and hope—simultaneously a figure of failure and promise.

### THE TEMPTATION AND THE CONSEQUENCES

Looking at the temptation itself, we know that later passages in Genesis, and indeed the rest of the Bible, deliberately echo this account to teach us all about sin—male and female alike. (For example, see the many references pointing back to Eden in Genesis 9, where Noah is presented as the new Adam.) We know Christ himself was tempted in the same way: *“The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.”* (1 John 2:16).

The text compares the beautiful harmony of life in the garden before this event with the division that is present afterward. Before, they were naked and comfortable with that openness and vulnerability. They did not view one another with mistrust. Afterward, they hid from one another and from God. Before, they walked with God. Afterward, they were afraid of God. Before, they were equal counterparts. Afterward, one would dominate the other.

Imagine the pressure—the burden—for Eve. Her pride has led to exile from the garden, and the only way forward, the only hope, is for her to bear children in pain. Many women in the Bible carried a similar burden to this—women like Sarah, Elisabeth, and of course, most

of all, Mary—all chosen by God to bear significant children. Imagine the weight of responsibility, already high enough for any mother, of bearing, nurturing and teaching these children. Knowing that if this were **the** child of promise, a sword would pierce her soul. It is likely then, when the child finally comes, that Eve is overwhelmed with relief and joy and cries out, *“I have given life to a man.”* (Gen 4:1).<sup>5</sup> Perhaps she took too much of the burden upon herself. The text seems to have a similar tone to Moses’ words, when he blurts out, *“Listen, you rebels! Should **we** produce water from the rock for you?”* (Num 20:10). It is interesting to see how different her response is when Seth is born—*“God has **given** me another child.”* (Gen 4:25).

### THE NEW EVE

Now we turn to look at the spiritual lessons about Eve brought out in the New Testament. The opening of John’s Gospel presents to us a new Beginning—a new special human has been created to image God. Even though Jesus is the most complete image of God, overflowing with grace and truth, he cannot fulfill the assigned task given at the first creation if he is acting alone. He needs a family. It is not good for him to be alone. Jesus could have led a blameless life as a hermit in the middle of nowhere. But in that life, he would not have been the express image of God. The character of God can only be demonstrated through our

interactions with others. So, where is this new Adam's bride who will work with him to fill the earth and subdue it, to be fruitful and multiply?

Well, in the great story of humanity, the hope contained in God's word is that we are all becoming Eve, being built and molded from the pierced side of the new Adam (John 19:34; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 4:12-13). This bride aims to be perfectly one by mirroring the groom (Col 3:10-11). Together, Christ and the Bride spread out into the whole world to be fruitful and multiply, to bring many children to glory. Collectively, they form the one image of God—a cloud of witnesses taken from all nations, languages and peoples.

Therefore, the two direct mentions of Eve in the New Testament naturally draw out lessons for the whole ecclesia, as the Bride of Christ. Both references are to do with false teaching:

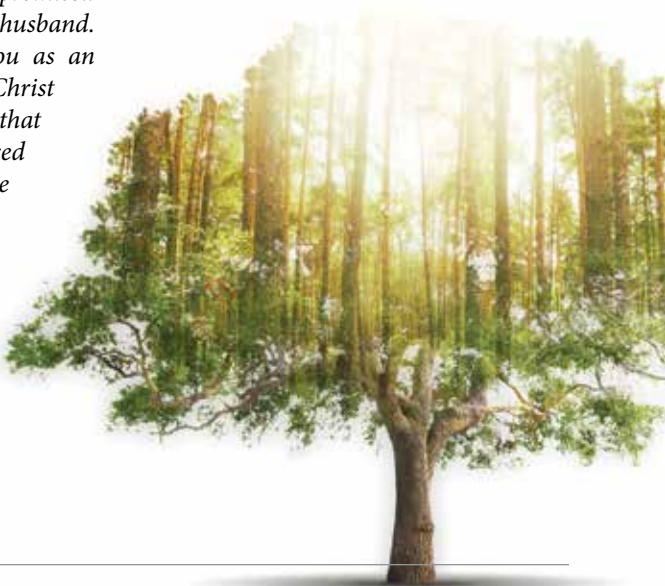
*I'm deeply concerned about you with the same concern that God has. As your father, I promised you in marriage to one husband. I promised to present you as an innocent virgin to Christ himself. But I'm afraid that your minds might be seduced in the same way as the snake deceived Eve with his devious tricks. (2 Cor 11:2-3).*

*Adam wasn't deceived, but rather his wife became the one who stepped over the line because she was completely deceived. (1 Tim 2:14).*

## PRACTICAL ADVICE

In Corinthians, Paul urges believers to remain faithful to Christ and his gospel. 1 Timothy as well is full of practical advice on how to overcome the deception of false teaching:

1. **Be humble.** Do not be puffed up with the idea of being a clever teacher of influence. Do not intimidate others by power-dressing or raising fists to fight. Instead, dress modestly and raise hands in prayer. Behave towards one another as members of the new creation, not the old, by removing the competition to be the best, or the wisest, or the richest. In submitting to one another, we remove perhaps the largest barrier between ourselves and between us and God—that of pride.
2. **Test your teachers.** Paul says that although Eve was deceived, she was responsible—a “*transgressor*.” (1 Tim 2:14, ESV). So, it is vital to



assess our teachers. Christ's advice about teachers was to know them by their fruits. Thus, if the ecclesia is breaking into factions, then beware—we are not to be of Paul or Apollos. We are of Christ and should be one body. This was a serious concern of Paul's—that the body would be destroyed by competing factions, by unnecessary arguments and by the addition of burdens too heavy for believers to bear.

3. **Remain faithful.** If you find your loyalties tested by tempting, flattering ideas, then reassess. You need to remain faithful to your espoused husband. This was the trap the church fell into when Christianity became a state religion. To maintain security and popularity, the church compromised its beliefs and message and no longer matched the values, life and message of Jesus, endangering many and causing the name of God to be blasphemed. So, test your motives—be honest with yourself. Often the way of Christ is uncomfortable to hear about and requires sacrifice to live out. If what you're hearing is easy on the ear and doesn't require

change or reform in yourself or your community, then be very wary.

The joyful message of the New Covenant is that we are all part of the same family. We are all parents of our community's children and the adults born again in baptism. And it is not a burden we have to carry with fear or anxiety. We do not need to act alone, as Eve and Moses thought they must. We have each other and the support of our husband, Jesus

*The joyful message of the New Covenant is that we are all part of the same family. We are all parents of our community's children and the adults born again in baptism.*

Christ. In him, God has provided all we need. He is our example, our Lord, our redeemer, our strength.

It is surely not a coincidence that the end of John's gospel brings together a man and a woman in a garden. This time it is the new Adam—a “gardener”—who approaches a woman, Mary Magdalene, and invites her to join him in spreading the good news, to help plant a spiritual garden of fruit. What a joyful reversal of the sadness of Eden. What a glorious new creation stands side by side in this garden! This time, there has been obedience, patience and humility. This time, God's glory really can cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

*Becky Lewis,  
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1 CEB marginal note: “Hebrew is singular ‘him,’” which can cover male and female. All quotes are from CEB, unless otherwise noted.

2 For more detail on “image,” “dominion,” and one being made of two halves, see *In the Image of God*, Michael Edgcombe, pages 10-13, published by *The Christadelphian*, 2011.

3 Quoted in David Levin, *Creation Text*, published by *Tidings*, 2011, p.195.

4 David Levin, op cit, p.195. This phrase/translation is also discussed at length in The Bible Project podcast, episode 2 of the Family of God series: [bibleproject.com/podcast/our-collective-identity](http://bibleproject.com/podcast/our-collective-identity).

5 The Hebrew does not have “with the help of,” meaning there is confusion over how to interpret this phrase. See Levin p.306.



# THE BIBLE AND FOOD

## PART 3

# “Take and Eat”

*By Lorna Dean*

**W**E have an opportunity to show our love for God, for Jesus and our brothers and sisters every week at the one table that matters more than all others—the fellowship meal, the Breaking of Bread, the Memorial Service. It is the most wonderful table we can ever sit around. We need to feel safe and secure and confident sitting there. To feel the love and trust and welcome of everyone to join in this act of eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of the one who gave his life for us. He is the bread that came down from heaven, John 6 tells us in a whole chapter explained and illustrated in words about food. If we eat of this bread, we will live forever. We leave all our pride at the door to eat together as those who know we need forgiveness at this level playing field table. We are willing to be open about our sins with our brothers and sisters, laying our hearts before God, asking for His help to be more like His beloved Son.

“Our weekly gathering is fellowship with a community of

believers. But it should also be more than that. We must try to break through our pride to have fellowship as a community of sinners; otherwise, we are doomed to eat alone, each concealing our sin from the other.”<sup>1</sup>

### THE LORD’S SUPPER

We want to eat together and not alone. How might we make this happen in the very best way? The early meals recorded in the New Testament, where the newly formed groups of believers met to remember Jesus, were exactly that—meals. Not a small piece of bread and a sip of wine. They were a provision of food for everyone, regardless of status or position in the world.

Believing slaves and believing masters ate together to thank God for His grace, and then both returned to work. Men and women ate together to share in fellowship with Jesus as his brothers and sisters. Teachers and illiterate farmers ate together to witness that everyone has a gift to bring to the community. When diverse groups eat

together, they are more likely to have an equitable and fair relationship after they get up from the table. We cannot underestimate how new and groundbreaking these meals were. We love to throw the word “radical” around, but it genuinely is the right adjective here. These communal meals were a practical measure to make sure everyone had enough to eat and to remind the whole church they were one body in Christ Jesus. When 3,000 new believers were added to the church in Acts 2, it says *“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers... And all who believed were together and had all things in common.”* (Acts 2:42, 44 ESV). We want that.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11 that it isn’t always an easy meal to digest. How do we keep the focus on what is at the heart of the meal rather than on the meal itself? Early believers were asked to make sure they were in the right mindset when they arrived, to see it as special and distinct and of worth and value and not ever to be treated lightly. They were told to be repentant and forgiving and to commit to addressing the sin in their own lives **before** they came to the meal. That way the Breaking of Bread meal would be full of joy and thankfulness. The meals at the church in Corinth were clearly going off the rails. Paul says he can hardly believe what he is hearing about

their behavior. But he doesn’t tell them to stop holding the meals. He re-tells them the beautiful details of the Lord Jesus’ own supper and says to fear God, follow Jesus’ example, be genuine, be kind, be patient, be holy and treat each other as beloved brothers and sisters. And then these meals would be of worth and value again.

### A MEMORIAL MEAL

How can **we** make this happen? Perhaps we might try, once in a while, to change our traditional formal meeting to an actual meal together. Try the concept just once at your meeting if you’re not already doing it. Instead of sitting in rows, formal and staring at someone’s back, sit around a table. Use Sunday morning to read scripture, to pray, to sing songs, to eat a meal together, and as part of that, break a loaf of bread and pass it around and drink wine and pass it around. To see ourselves back in a dining room with Jesus, the first fruit from the dead. “First fruit” is an agricultural term that speaks of the first sample of a crop. It indicates the nature and quality of the rest of the crop. Exodus 23 describes Jesus in type as the best of the first fruits of the ground, brought into the house of the Lord. He is our beginning, the firstborn from the dead. And James tells us that the Father of lights will make us a kind of first fruits too (Jas 1:17-18).

We want to know that we are all one in Jesus, and we all want to share in that

one body. Together ask for help to be obedient to Jesus, to honor him, to love his Father, to love our neighbor as ourselves. Together resolve to be holy in the week ahead, to be kind, to be upright, to be honest, to be thoughtful, to be more reliant on grace. Perhaps we might find that this corporate act of worship will help us—all pledging our commitment aloud over a meal to work together, to be there for each other, to look after each other and to reach out together. And it might give us the confidence to take the actions of our Sunday and keep them real in our lives as the week rolls out. Otherwise, “How can we worship a homeless man on Sunday and ignore one on Monday?”<sup>2</sup> Right now, we may still be meeting on Zoom or Skype, but it is perfectly possible, even exciting and wonderful, to hold such a meal together, virtually, to eat and drink and talk and worship. Don’t wait until our halls are back in use.

### BANQUET FOR THE LOST

We could also perhaps try holding a different kind of dinner, just for the lost and the lonely. We all may have sometimes found ourselves anxious when we’ve lost our way or lost something precious or felt isolated and misunderstood. We don’t need to make judgments about who are the lost. God brings us people. We can follow Matthew, who gets up from his tax desk and calls up everybody on his WhatsApp list, every crook and scoundrel he’s ever worked with, and invites them home to eat and meet this new person, Jesus. We could find a place next to us at the table for a friend, a colleague, someone who used to come to the meeting but whose life

is far from that place and who has no idea how to ever get back. Use the ecclesial kitchen table as a starting point in what might be a long journey to the table with bread and wine. Let them see welcome and friendship and kindness as the road back. Often the drift away from the meeting is not that they doubted Jesus loved them, it is the uncertainty that we loved them. We can begin to repair that notion one meal at a time.

Don’t be discouraged when these dinners might not work. What happens when we put in so much effort, but no-one shows up? What happens when those on the edge of our community who we are appealing to don’t engage and only the faithful regulars sit down to eat? What if someone turns up every time, wolfs down the food, doesn’t even say thanks and shows zero interest in any talk about faith? Lots of Bible meals are set in fraught times, in failure and rejection. Jesus and the disciples finish the Last Supper and head off to the Mount of Olives, where first off Peter vehemently says he’ll never deny his Lord. Then the disciples can’t keep awake for five minutes. To finish the evening off, the chief priest and the elders of the city come with swords and clubs to seize Jesus under cover of that murky night. Not the best end to a dinner if we don’t see ahead to the resurrection on a clear, bright morning. We may be entertaining angels unawares, and that should fill us with wonder that we could be serving dinner to someone sent from God. Every failure will be made holy and wonderful by Jesus being at the table with us.

## EARNESTLY DESIRE TO EAT THIS PASSOVER

Let's finish by seeing how Jesus says we will benefit personally as the Lord of life himself welcomes us. From the accounts of that last Passover meal, we see again that Jesus knew the value of eating and drinking around a table. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples to go ahead and find a room to hold the Passover meal in, and when they arrived, they went ahead and prepared the meal.

But just think, we are in the world that is the other side of that dinner—we are in the world of the risen Jesus, the world where all things have been accomplished. We have been asked to sit at a meal where everything is prepared by Jesus himself. All is done for us; all is given for us. Grace is overwhelmingly present at this table. His body and blood in bread and wine is already laid out for us. We can bring nothing but our thankfulness. We sometimes hear it said that we come with sad hearts or burdens to the emblems on the table, but Jesus says no, leave all these fears behind when you sit down at my table. All your worries can be dealt with. Be full of joy and be lifted up so that every time we sit at this table with him, we start afresh, confident and thankful that he has done all this for us. About all the things we cannot do: the forgiving of others, the forgetting of past hurts, the inability to move on, Jesus says I will be with you this coming week to help you. I know what you need. The text says Jesus gave them the bread; Jesus gave them the wine. He has set the table with the most precious things in existence, his body and blood, and

he asks us to see his example and serve and love one another as he loves us.

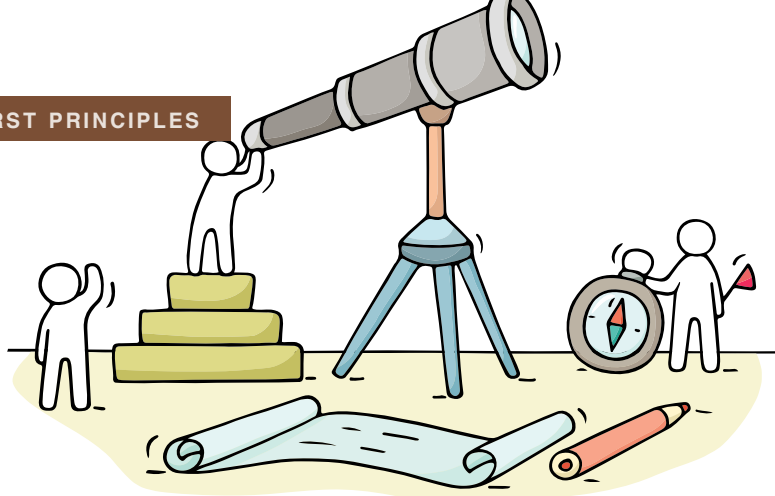
We hear his voice in the room at the table with us, whether it is together in our halls or solitarily in our own homes these past months. He assures us he is alive and that we have life through his death. He asks us to remember him and use this table to learn to rely more on him for help and guidance and strength and courage. He is with us always. As the Last Supper ends, he tells us to love one another and that this will show the world that we are his disciples.

Let's respond to the call to show love, to try to be a part of that movement to make everyone welcome that Jesus started so long ago. For some of us these acts don't come naturally or easily. We are awkward and we stumble and fall. We are thoughtless and watch chances to witness sail right by. But that doesn't always have to be the case. Make a prayerful plan each morning to be in tune with his generous spirit, his words of kindness and comfort, his acts of grace and mercy poured out in our own lives. We can practice everyday hospitality because we know we do it for Jesus. We know that the Lord of life is at our table each day. He is indeed that "unseen guest" at every meal. Because he has blessed us with seats in the heavenly places, we want to bring others to sit with him. If we truly believe Jesus' own words that every deed of kindness you do for the least, then we have such powerful motivation to rise up and act.

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(Ware, UK)

1 Crawford, David. *Jesus Eats with Sinners*, Pepperdine edu, 1995.

2 Claiborne, Shane. *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical.*, 2010.



# TRUE PRINCIPLES & UNCERTAIN DETAILS ABOUT PROPHECY

## PART 4

*By Joe Hill*

**BASF Clause #23**—That the governing body of the Kingdom so established will be the brethren of Christ, of all generations, developed by resurrection and change, and constituting, with Christ as their head, the collective “Seed of Abraham,” in whom all nations will be blessed, and comprising “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets,” and all in their age of like faithfulness.<sup>1</sup>

**BASF Clause #24**—That at the appearing of Christ prior to the establishment of the Kingdom, the responsible (namely, those who know the revealed will of God, and have been called upon to submit to it), dead and living -- obedient and disobedient -- will be summoned before his judgment seat “to be judged according to their works,” and “receive in body according to what they have done, whether it be good or bad.”<sup>2</sup>

**BASF Clause #25**—That the unfaithful will be consigned to shame and “the second death,” and the faithful, invested with immortality, and exalted to reign with Jesus as joint heirs of the Kingdom, co-possessors of the earth, and joint administrators of God’s authority among men in everything.<sup>3</sup>

**Doctrine to be Rejected #9**—That the wicked will suffer eternal torture in hell.

**Doctrine to be Rejected #10**—That the righteous will ascend to the kingdoms beyond the skies when they die.

**Doctrine to be Rejected #14**—That the tribunal of Christ, when he comes, is not for judgment of saints, but merely to divide among them different degrees of reward.

**Doctrine to be Rejected #15**—That the resurrection is confined to the faithful.

**Doctrine to be Rejected #16**—That the dead rise in an immortal state.



**M**OST of this article is a selection of Bro. Roberts's comments related to these first principles. They are taken directly from his May 1898 article, *True Principles and Uncertain Details: Or, The Dangers of Going Too Far in Our Demands on Fellow-Believers*. In particular, I quote his thoughts on reigning with Christ, our summons to Christ at his appearing, immortality, the judgment seat, and his thoughts on responsibility. For each of these topics, he identifies the general principle, which we must all agree to, then he discusses the related uncertain details about which we must allow varying opinions. Some of these are no longer debated today, but others are still quite relevant.

### REIGNING WITH CHRIST

“GENERAL PRINCIPLE—That the glorified brethren of Christ will reign with him as kings and priests with Christ, when he has set up the Kingdom of God at his return.

“UNCERTAIN DETAIL—Will they be scattered over the surface of the earth in palaces of their own, with definitely allotted districts which they will individually administer; or, will they be collected as one body always resident in Jerusalem near the person of Christ? There are good reasons for believing the former of these views to be correct, but as an uncertain detail, we dare not insist upon a particular opinion, as a condition of fellowship. It is sufficient if a brother [or sister] believes that we shall reign with Christ, whatever dim ideas he may have as to details that do

not interfere with the general principle.”

### OUR SUMMONS TO CHRIST AT HIS APPEARING

“GENERAL PRINCIPLE—That we shall be gathered to meet Christ at his coming, whether living or dead, when that great event occurs.

“UNCERTAIN DETAIL—How shall we be gathered? Shall we be carried off as Elijah was, or Philip, or Christ himself—by the prehensile energy of the Spirit of God? Or shall we be conveyed by natural means, such as railways and steamboats? Who can be quite sure? It matters not. When the time comes, there will be no mistake about it. There is a strong probability that it will be by the power of the Spirit of God, and not by human locomotion. But are we to reject a brother [or sister] because he strongly thinks it will be by natural means? So long as he believes in “the coming of our Lord Jesus and our gathering together unto him,” he may form his own ideas as to the particular method by which we are to be gathered. No opinion on that point is inconsistent with the general principle.”

### IMMORTALITY

“GENERAL PRINCIPLE—That God will bestow immortality of nature on His accepted servants at the coming of Christ.

“UNCERTAIN DETAIL—At what particular moment will this be done? Will it be done individually as we appear one by one before the

judgment seat of Christ? Or will it be done en masse when we have all been judged? If the latter, will it be done immediately the judgment is finished, or will it be deferred to the time when the whole earth has been subjugated by the war of the great day of God Almighty in which the saints take part? Who can tell? We may have our opinions, but we must not insist on our opinions as a condition of fellowship, unless opinions trench [encroach, JRH] on general truth. An opinion to the effect that we are immortal already would clearly destroy the truth that we are to become so only when Christ comes and at his hands. In that case, we would be under the painful necessity of objecting. But provided the general truth is received, we dare not insist on a particular view as to the moment that general truth will be carried into effect."

### THE JUDGMENT SEAT

"GENERAL PRINCIPLE—That Christ will call the living and the dead before his judgment seat at his coming.

"UNCERTAIN DETAIL—Where will he set it up? Will it be in Palestine, or in Egypt, or in the Arabian Peninsula, in the solitudes of Sinai?<sup>4</sup> We cannot be sure. All available evidence seems to point in the direction of the last-mentioned; but an uncertain detail must not be made a basis of fellowship. We must not insist upon a man believing

the judgment seat will be set up at Sinai or any particular place so long as he believes that 'Jesus Christ will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his Kingdom.'"

### RESPONSIBILITY

"GENERAL PRINCIPLE—That men are responsible to the resurrection of condemnation who refuse subjection to the will of God when their circumstances are such as to leave them no excuse for such refusal."

Bro. Roberts spent over half his article discussing this topic; it was clearly one of the primary reasons he wrote it in the first place. He began by explaining the sufficiency of the general principle on resurrectional responsibility:

"Are we to insist upon a precise shade of opinion on a point which no judicious man be absolutely clear about?"

"UNCERTAIN DETAIL—But when, in our age, are men in such circumstances? Who can tell but God alone? Some think it is enough if a man have a Bible. Some think that is not enough unless the Bible is explained to him (as in a lecture or book). Some think that is not enough unless the man have capacity to understand the explanation. Some think even that is not enough unless the hand of God is openly shown in certification of the divinity of the Bible, as in the apostolic age, when

'the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word with signs following.' What are we to do? Are we to insist upon a precise shade of opinion on a point which no judicious man be absolutely clear about? All we can be sure about is that when men are 'without excuse' knowing the judgment of God (Rom. 1:20, 32; 2:1); when they have 'no cloak for their sin' like the men who saw the miracles of Christ, and yet both 'saw and hated both him and his Father' (John 15:22, 24), that they will come forth at the resurrection to receive punishment according to the righteous judgment of God. When men admit this, they admit enough for purposes of fellowship as regards this particular point. To insist on more than this is to go too far, and to inflict needless distress and cause unnecessary division."

Then he explored the error that arises when we require agreement about related but uncertain details (emphasis added):

"A mistake is made in contending for precise views on a matter that cannot be made precise. **Where men admit that rebels and unbelievers who deserve punishment will rise at the resurrection to receive that punishment without reference to the question whether they are baptised or not, they admit all that can righteously be exacted from them. It is impossible for any man to say, who are so**

**"A mistake is made in contending for precise views on a matter that cannot be made precise..."**

**deserving. We know that God is just, and will do no unrighteousness.**

When men admit that He will resurrectionally punish the men who are deserving of it, whether baptised or not, it is inadmissible that we should withdraw from them because they are

unable to say who are and who are not so deserving."

Next, he pointed out that those who hold the erroneous view are in the habit of separating from those who do not agree with them, which should reduce our concerns (emphasis added):

"There is the less need for the extreme demands of some on this head, since those who have espoused the extraordinary doctrine that a man must obey God a little before he is punishable, have separated themselves from those who will not receive their doctrine. 'But this has not brought peace,' say they. Do they imagine that this other movement is going to bring peace? Behold how much the reverse. **They are separating men who ought to remain united because holding the same truth, though made by an artificial contention to appear as if they did not. They are sowing division and bitterness and strife on the plea of producing harmony and peace. They are refusing the friends of Christ because of uncertainties as to how much Christ will punish a certain class of his enemies. And compassing sea and land to make proselytes**

**to this most unenlightened proceeding.”**

Later, he argued against the idea that we are responsible for all the errors of those we associate with in fellowship (emphasis added):

“This ‘doctrine of fellowship’ (as it is called) is also carried to an excess never contemplated in apostolic prescription... Fellowship is friendly association for the promotion of a common object-with more or less of the imperfection belonging to all mortal life. **To say that every man in that fellowship is responsible for every infirmity of judgment that may exist in the association is an extreme to which no man of sound judgment can lend himself.** There will be flawless fellowship in the perfect state. Perhaps it is the admiration of this in prospect that leads some to insist upon it now. But it is none the less a mistake. This is a mixed and preparatory state in which much has to be put up with when true principles are professed.”

topics. It is perfectly appropriate and expected that we insist our brothers and sisters agree with and teach the general principles of the gospel, but to demand more than this is to go too far. We must avoid causing unnecessary divisions over exactly how the saints will reign with Christ in the Kingdom, the precise means the responsible will be transported to the judgment seat, the details of how immortality will be conferred on the faithful, the location of the judgment seat, and the identification of specific individuals as being responsible to the judgment. We must admit that all of these are uncertain details which require us to be flexible rather than insisting on our own views. Our consciences may be eased a little by the fact that those who insist on their particular opinions on these topics often withdraw from those of us who refuse to follow their practice. Lastly, we must remember that there is no transitive guilt by association.

*Joe Hill,  
(Austin Leander, TX)*

## CONCLUSION

We all need to heed these words of wisdom from Bro. Roberts on these

**1** Dan 12:2; Luke 13:28; Rev 11:18; 1 Thess 4:15-17; John 5:28-29; 6:39-40; Luke 14:14; Matt 25:34, 26; Rev 5:9-10; Dan 7:27.

**2** 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 4:1; Rom 2:5-6, 16; 14:10-12; 1 Cor 4:5; Rev 11:18.

**3** Matt 7:26; 8:12; 25:20-30; Dan 12:2; Gal 6:8; 5:21; 2 Thess 1:8; Heb 10:26-31; 2 Pet 2:12; Rev 21:8; Mal 4:1; Psalms 37:30-38; Prov 10:25-29; 1 Cor 15:51-55; 2 Cor 5:1-4; James 1:12; Rom 2:7; John 10:28; Matt 5:5; Psalms 37:9, 22, 29; Rev 5:9; Dan 7:27; 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Pet 1:11; Rev 3:21; 2 Tim 2:12; Rev 5:10; Psalms 49:7-9; Luke 22:29-30.

**4** The traditional view that the judgment seat will be at Mount Sinai is based on Deut 33:2; Psalms 68:15-17, and Hab 3:3. A case has been made more recently for it being at Jerusalem by Harry Whittaker, *The Last Days*, Chapter 10 Judgement at Sinai ([christadelphianbooks.org/haw/lastdays/ch11.html](http://christadelphianbooks.org/haw/lastdays/ch11.html)) and George Booker ([christadelphianbooks.org/agora/art\\_less/j47.html](http://christadelphianbooks.org/agora/art_less/j47.html)).

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Bro. David,

Thank you for your article on "Speaking Well of Other Christians." I wish it had been written in the 1980s and 1990s when as a child, then teenager and on to my college years I endured so many Sunday evening lectures that "bashed" other churches.

When I reflect back on those times, I believe I was rather selective about finding out who was speaking before I invited a friend or a coworker along. As a young person I felt incredibly awkward yet didn't feel like I had any status to voice my concerns and be heard.

1 Pet 3:15 is very clear about how we should behave towards anyone we interact with or speak of: *"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."*

Growing up in the UK, I feel very privileged to have been educated in an environment where debates and formal discussions were commonplace. And as an English teacher speaking and listening assessments were an essential part of the curriculum. Likewise, as followers of the Lord Jesus, we must equip ourselves with the skills of speaking and listening. As believers, we should have the maturity to listen to another; to ask questions and understand someone else's perspective with gentleness and respect. I'm very glad you are raising this issue.

*Helen Roberts,  
(Schooley's Mountain, NJ)*

Bro. Dave,

I totally agree with your editorial in the May 2021 issue of the Tidings magazine. Let me explain why.

We must remember that it is God who chooses and calls those who are His. It is God who sees into human hearts and the intentions of their minds, NOT us.

When I was living and working in Lancaster

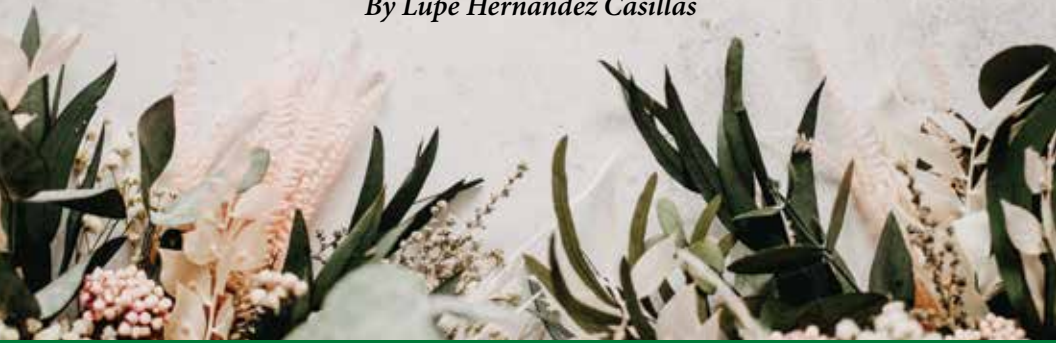
Pennsylvania I worked with a group of rather rough, crude men on a landscape crew. There was a rather high turnover of employees but a core that remained through the two years I worked there. One man, Kent, who joined this group stood out for he, like me, did not use crude language or trade filthy jokes and was teased about that, like I was. We began to talk with each other and learned we were both Bible students. I was very pleasantly surprised by how much we shared a common understanding of what the Bible teaches. First principles such as man is mortal (no immortal soul), Jesus is human, the Son of God (not God the Son), the devil/satan is our flesh (not an immortal evil being) and so forth. I invited Kent to the Lancaster Ecclesia's Bible classes, and he came to several of them, and I went to several of his Church's Bible Classes. What I remember from those classes is that Kent was very much in agreement with our Bible class and surprised by the active participation and Bible knowledge of the group. When I visited Kent's Church's Bible class it was led by their preacher and for the most part people just listened, except Kent. One time the preacher cautioned about being tempted by "the Devil" and Kent spoke up to point out that the source of temptation was ourselves and quoted James 1:14. At another class the preacher mentioned going to heaven when we die, and Kent spoke up and pointed out that our hope is in the resurrection and the Kingdom of God on earth. I forget what verses Kent used but he told me he also quoted the Bible for the preacher would not argue with the Bible. When I asked Kent if he would join the Christadelphians because we shared a common understanding. Kent agreed that we did share a common faith and understanding but if he left his church "Who would teach my friends the truth?"

*John Laben,  
(Norfolk, VA)*



# REMEMBERING A LOVELY YOUNG BROTHER VICTOR GERARDO CORTEZ HERNANDEZ

*By Lupe Hernandez Casillas*



**I**T is with sorrow that we announce the passing of **Victor Gerardo Cortez Hernandez**, or Bro. Gera. Gera was always an active child growing up. He later got married and had a son, but unfortunately, when he was 22, he was in a car accident where he was almost completely paralyzed. He never stopped fighting and was a warrior. Even with his limitations, he put out 100% into what he could do. At times, he was almost overwhelmed with pain, anger, and feelings of impotence. He had limited upper body movement and communication was difficult. But his eyes and mind were bright and intelligent.

We thank God greatly for the brethren who taught us in the studies from God's word and removed the lies that we had been taught. We studied for

a year, and then we were baptized on March 30, 2016. The Catholic community continued to visit us after Gera's accident, offering communion. Gera told them that he would no longer participate in communion with them. They called me and asked why Gera was refusing communion and would no longer confess or submit to Catholic sacraments. I had to help speak for him because he was difficult to understand for most people. The person who came to bring the communion (who is my cousin) got angry and said, "Then you don't want God!" Gera said: "That is not God, nor Jesus!" She got terribly angry! Gera continued to tell her that he would not participate anymore in the Catholic teachings or sacraments, and she never returned.



*Bro. Gera is seated in the center. His mother, Sis. Lupe, is seated to his left.*

Gera continued in his studies daily with a tablet so he could read the Christadelphian studies Sis. Cynthia Paiva de Lopez had created in PDF format. He also searched the Internet for whatever Christadelphian works he could find in Spanish. He could manage to push the buttons and maneuver the tablet with his one partially useful arm and hand. He was so pleased when Bro. Gabriel Lopez Munoz and Sis. Cynthia Paiva de Lopez began to put more material on YouTube.

Gera never ceased to learn from the word of God. His faith was firm in the promises of our Father in Heaven, and he was an inspiration to the whole ecclesia. He always asked about the brethren he had met from other areas and other countries. He knew that in the Last Days Jesus would resurrect him with an incorruptible body. Meanwhile, he would sleep in Christ Jesus. Gera fell asleep in the Lord at the age of 33, on November 17, 2020.

It is a Catholic custom in Mexico to have nine days of masses and prayers for the deceased. We had a viewing and nine days of Bible study. We gave out pamphlets and Bible studies for the family and friends who came. Sis. Cynthia Alvarez and I prepared doctrinally correct music, which played continuously. The brethren from the Jalisco Sur Ecclesia were on hand to support and answer people's questions. Bro. Victorino Ramirez Martinez from the Guadalajara Ecclesia presided over a beautiful memorial service for Bro. Gera.

Our prayer is that our brother's sleep will be short. We are so thankful to have had him as part of our lives.

*Lupe Hernandez Casillas,  
(Jalisco Sur, MX)  
Bro. Gera's Mother*

# THISISYOURBIBLE.COM

*By Mike LeDuke*

**thisisyourbible.com** (TIYB) is the online preaching application and contact-management system funded by the Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas/Caribbean, Asia-Pacific Christadelphian Bible Mission and the Christadelphian Bible Mission (UK). Its purpose is to encourage those seeking the Truth to access literature, enroll in Bible courses, and engage with Christadelphian tutors. Over its 15 years of operation, the site has attracted well over a million visitors and items of literature have been accessed many thousands of times. In that period, there have been close to 100 baptisms we know of, and probably many more, due to students' interactions with the site.

Since TIYB's inception, more than 40,000 of our visitors have registered for course work on the site and over 26% of those registered are currently active. Over 500 Christadelphian tutors from Ecclesias all over the world manage these students.

The site allows visitors to submit Bible-related questions (answered within 24 hours by TIYB staff), download related

preaching materials, view videos and webinars, obtain an e-mail address of a Christadelphian they can write to directly, locate any ecclesia in the world, register for Bible courses either online or by regular mail, and read a wide variety of literature on first-principles subjects.

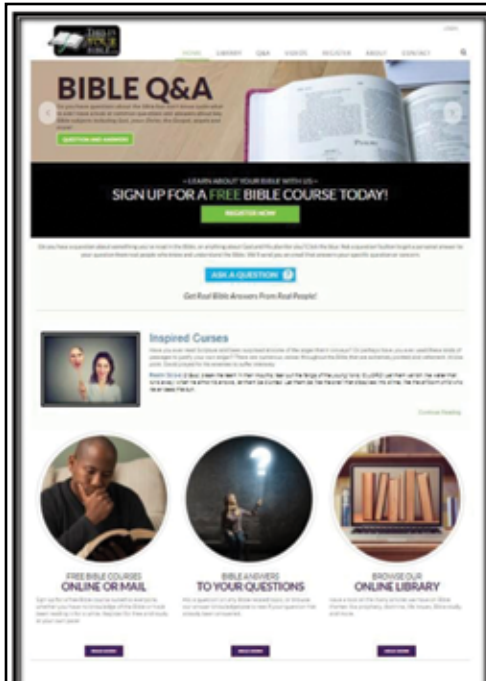
The site provides a secure login for tutors, giving them the tools to manage lessons and facilitate easy communication with their students. It can serve as an ecclesia's overall contact management system. There is ample support provided on the site with tutor training videos and one-on-one support from the System Administrator (Bro. Mike LeDuke).

Why not schedule some time with me on Zoom for your ecclesia to take a tour of TIYB? This is an effective tool to preach the Truth in this age of trouble and darkness.

(Please see the advertisement on the next page for contact info.)

*Written by Mike LeDuke,  
thisisyourbible.com Administrator*

*Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau,  
CBMA/C Publicity*



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# NEWS & UPDATES

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## Sarasota, FL

*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. (Psa 116:15).*

The Sarasota Ecclesia announces the falling asleep in Christ of Sis. Ruth Buckheit, age 98. Our sister endured a great many trials in her later years, and now rests from her tribulations, awaiting the great day when she and all those who have fallen asleep in Christ Jesus shall arise in the day of resurrection.

Sis. Ruth was baptized into Christ on August 31, 1939, the very eve of the outbreak of World War II in Europe. That war would drive the Jewish people to seek a homeland. They would have it in 1948. She was twenty-six at that time. Over the next seven decades, our sister would see further proof of God's prophecies being worked out, including the capture of East Jerusalem by the Israelis in 1967. Ruth lived long enough to see Jerusalem recognized as the capital of Israel by the President of the United States.

It should not be long now until we are together with our sister and all our loved ones who have fallen asleep in Christ Jesus. We take great comfort from the words of the Apostle Paul who wrote: *"Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him."* (Rom 6:8).

*James Wilkinson*

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## Los Angeles, CA

We have a large accumulation of old Christadelphian cassette tapes. We have had no requests for any of these tapes for many years and they take up valuable space. We have contacted Bro. Reuben Washington (Echo Lake, NJ), and found him to be similarly overrun with more tapes than he can use.

God willing, our current plans are to begin disposing of these tapes on July 1st. Should you, for any reason, have a desire for any particular tape(s), please let us know as soon as possible, and we'll do our best to look for them. Contact Bruce Andrews; 323-819-8921 or [tiybandy@gmail.com](mailto:tiybandy@gmail.com).

*Bruce Andrews*



# Thoughts on the Way

## Love is as Strong as Death

*Place me like a seal over your heart,  
like a seal on your arm;  
for love is as strong as death,  
its jealousy unyielding as the grave.*

*It burns like blazing fire,  
like a mighty flame.*

*Many waters cannot quench love;  
rivers cannot wash it away.*

*If one were to give all the wealth  
of his house for love,  
it would be utterly scorned.*

(Song 8:6-7)<sup>1</sup>

**T**HESE verses are the climax of the Song of Songs. They express, in the most eloquent language, the primacy of love in all of God's dealings with us. Love is the motivating force in His actions toward us. Love is the motivating force in all of Christ's life. And love is the tenderest quality aroused in the heart of every believer, and directed toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16).*

*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom 5:8).*

*Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made*

*us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. (Eph 2:4, 5).*

*Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him... We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4:11-19).*

*"Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm." (Song 8:6). In the Song of Songs, the young woman, Christ's bride, asks to be sealed figuratively. As a seal was rolled on wet clay in order to leave its impression, so she wanted to be impressed on Christ's heart. Second, just as a seal might be worn around one's neck or tied to one's arm to keep it safe, she was asking the Good Shepherd to keep her close to himself, so that she would never be lost.*

*In the New Testament, the tomb that was "sealed" shut by Pilate's men (Matt 27:66) was "sealed" open by the angel when he rolled the great stone away from the entrance and sat upon it (Matt 28:2). The open tomb is the seal of our salvation, and the seal of our Savior's love for us! The wounds which our Savior received, in hands and feet*

and side, may serve him also—even now in heaven—as the seals by which he remembers us, whom he has loved even unto death.

In the words of Isaiah the prophet, Jerusalem said about her God: *"The Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me."* (Isa 49:14). But the LORD responded,

*Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.* (Isa 49:15, 16).

In such prophecies as this, the glorified Son of God speaks to us, for we constitute the "New Jerusalem", in words we can imagine quite well:

Never think that I have forgotten you. I have indelible seals—the wounds upon my hands and in my side. Though healed now, they are ever with me—and it is as though your names, each and every one of you, are engraved upon my very person. My love for you is stronger than death, my passion more unyielding than the grave. Never fear: you are mine. I will remember you! For love is as strong as death.

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.'* (Psa 44:22).

*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that*

*neither death nor life... neither the present nor the future, nor any powers... will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Rom 8:35-39).

Not even death can separate us from the love of God in Christ. Love, divine love, stands as the only creative and constructive force which takes up Death's challenge and defies all destructive and degenerative forces.

*"If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned":* As such love cannot be extinguished, neither can it be bought. No price tag can be put on love! It is not for sale, at any price (cp. Psa 49:7, 8; Isa 55:1, 2; 1 Pet 1:18, 19). Not even a blank check from a Bill Gates or a Warren Buffett can buy love.

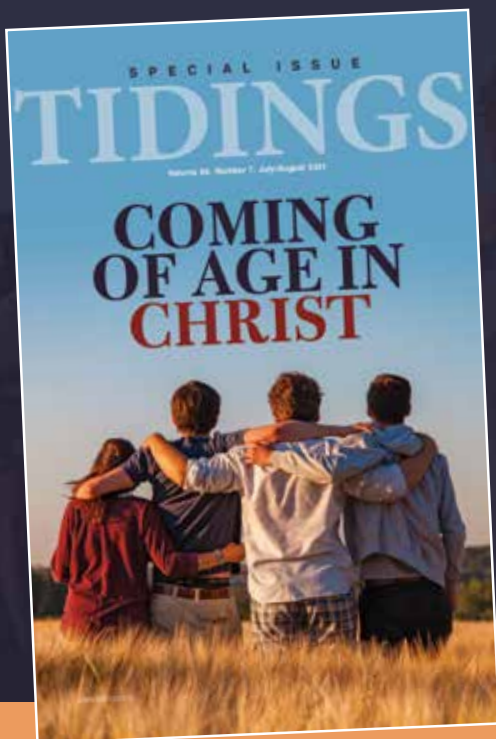
Such absolute and priceless love is likewise the spiritual ideal which God shares with His people. We are urged not to serve two masters (Matt 6:24) but to love the Lord our God *"with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength."* (Mark 12:30). The surpassing greatness of knowing Christ is worth so much more than all of this world's prosperity and power and prestige and pomp, which Paul the apostle considered nothing but "rubbish" (Phil 3:8).

George Booker,  
(Austin Leander, TX)

COMING SOON

# SPECIAL YOUNG PEOPLE'S ISSUE

## "COMING OF AGE IN CHRIST"



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- Culture of Certainty
- After CYC, What Next?
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