

SPECIAL ISSUE

TIDINGS

Volume 84, Number 7, July/August 2021

COMING OF AGE IN CHRIST





Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON)

Great Horned Owl and Owlet, Devine Lake Park, Texas

In this park I enjoyed many peaceful and reflective mornings. It was a place to sit and share my life with the 'Divine' creator.

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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THE TIDINGS is pleased to introduce *“Coming of Age in Christ.”* This special issue for 2021 is dedicated to briefly examining several issues young people face. The Special Issue is largely authored by young writers for other young adults. They share their experiences and advice on how to implement spiritual principles in modern days—how to become sons and daughters of the light.

*When in the slippery paths of youth
With heedless steps I ran,
Thine arm unseen conveyed me safe,
And led me up to man.*

Considering that Hymn 133 was written in 1712 by English essayist Joseph Addison (1672-1719), it appears that some situations are universally applicable from generation to generation. While the temptations of an earlier generation are undoubtedly different from this present one, the same principles apply. And the time-honored resolution remains to *“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.”* (1 Cor 16:13 NKJV). But how to do it?

Young adulthood can indeed be a “slippery path” without a God-centered life. It’s a time of becoming more self-aware and independent. A time to develop critical thinking skills. A time to understand why you have come to a given belief. A time of distancing from parental influences. A time to step away from worldly influences. A time to implement life choices.

Each generation provides cherished contributions to our community. Young people today are faced with unprecedented challenges to faith, with the *“pollutions of the world”* (2 Pet 2:20) being stronger and more formidable

than ever. Yet, we see in this generation a fresh and encouraging spark of love for God and a desire to grow faith. This generation emerges into a community that is increasingly global, more connected, and yet still struggling with longstanding challenges.

This special issue is divided into three groupings. The first section deals with **Life Within the Ecclesia**. This section speaks to how we can serve each other during times of trouble, how we can be more effective with intergenerational dialog, ideas for transitioning after CYC, how to engage in open discussion of issues, and two examples of witnessing.

In the second section, **Making Important Life Decisions**, articles focus on selecting a college experience (including four testimonials from those who recently faced this decision), and choosing career paths.

Finally, the third section is about **Growing Spiritually**. This section shares counsel from young people about personal prayer, appreciating differences within our community, understanding the challenges and opportunities of single life, looking at how life can unfold very differently than expected, and effectively studying the Scriptures in the digital age to facilitate growth in the Lord.

Whether you are a young person in our community or more seasoned in life, we can all benefit from the wisdom of these writers in our walk and in our support of others in our community.

Special thanks to Sis. Melinda Flatley, Bro. Alan Markwith and Bro. Joe Hill for their leadership on this issue.

Dave Jennings

INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOG

By Sarah Hill

It can be difficult to effectively communicate across generations, which is unfortunate since the Christadelphian community is filled with individuals spanning five to six generations. It's important that as time marches forward and our community ages and grows, we learn to have intergenerational dialogs. There is so much we can gain from one another if we are able to communicate successfully and lovingly.

This article explores five conditions of dialog, as outlined in Catherine Cornille's "Conditions for Inter-Religious Dialogue," in the context of dialog across generations.¹

HUMILITY

The first condition of intergenerational dialog is humility, or the acknowledgment of the possibility of growth. Growth requires space. This space is created through the putting away of arrogance and the taking on of a humble attitude:

Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. (Rom 12:16).

In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. (Phil 2:3-4).

We are all constantly learning and growing as brothers and sisters within the body of Christ. Young generations are listening "to advice and accept[ing] instruction, that [they] may gain wisdom in the future." (Prov 19:20). This never stops. Even Abraham, at a hundred years old, still had to make room for new understanding when he was told that Sarai would have a child in her old age. When he was told this, he "fell upon his face, and laughed." (Gen 17:17). He still had so much to learn and endure even at a hundred years old. Our ability and need to grow

in faith, knowledge and love never ends. We must have humility to make space for that growth in others and within ourselves.

COMMITMENT

The second condition is commitment, or the recognition of one's own beliefs and opinions. Though we must have humility in dialogs, we also need some commitment to our own thoughts. To have a productive discussion, each party needs to have a healthy grasp of their own position to use as an anchor so they don't get lost in the sea of different arguments.

In Ephesians 4:14, Paul briefly mentions the need for an anchor of commitment—in this case Christ—lest beliefs float in the breeze: *“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.”*

The Bible often uses natural phenomena as metaphors for intangible concepts (e.g., milk and meat for superficial and in-depth knowledge (Heb 5:12-14)). Another example of this is the connection of wisdom with old age and ignorance with youth. This dichotomy can help obtain a basic understanding of the evolution of knowledge with time, but—like most dichotomies—it can be dangerous to lock these ideas into this metaphor alone, a mistake that can occur in intergenerational dialog. The assumption that older generations are wise and younger generations are ignorant can create a power imbalance during a discussion. It is easy for youth

to immediately accept elders' positions since they are “older and wiser,” but this hinders the youth's own commitment and contribution. They risk falling into the trap of being tossed to and fro in every wind of interpretation.

Elihu, for example, in Job 32, gave Job and his friends time to speak but was not persuaded by them. He states that he *“had waited till Job had spoken, because they were elder than he.”* (v. 4). He then answered and said, *“I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you mine opinion. I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom... Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment.”* (vv. 6-7, 9).

Elihu found that the positions of these elders were not in alignment with his understanding of God. He challenged them and the idea that old is inherently wise and young is inherently foolish. He had a sense of commitment to his position.²

INTERCONNECTION

The third condition is interconnection, or the recognition of commonalities between the parties of a dialog. In the most basic sense, we are all connected in that we are all human. We all bear the same nature. We are all growing brothers and sisters in Christ, no matter our age:

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is

To have a productive discussion, each party needs to have a healthy grasp of their own position to use as an anchor so they don't get lost in the sea of different arguments.

Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. (1 Cor 12:12-14).

Some of us are older eyes and some of us are younger hands. But we are all interconnected in the body of Christ.

EMPATHY

The fourth condition is empathy, or the effort to understand the other party and their ideas in a dialog.

Empathy means giving the other party's side the time of day, giving their arguments time to breathe and develop before making a judgment. Trying to understand the perspective of the other party in a dialog is crucial to constructive engagement. Omitting this condition can lead to strawman responses and other fallacies. To effectively meet the condition of empathy, it's important to identify and remove the barriers between generations in communication.

It is common today to speak about other generations as stereotypical monoliths. If you're a Baby Boomer, you're technologically inept; you're out of touch; **you're entitled**. If you're a Millennial, you waste money on avocados and plants; you're lazy; **you're entitled**. If you're Gen-Z, you don't know how to live outside your phone; you have too short of an attention span; **you're entitled**. Like it or not, generalized assumptions about one another based on age—even those as condescending as these—live in the back of many of our minds. We're constantly exposed to propaganda

categorizing others. We may even have assumptions about others based on the imagery and figurative language we are exposed to, as described above with the idea that the old are wise and the young are ignorant. This contrast between aged wisdom and youthful ignorance is a beautiful metaphor that Scripture uses in poetry and rhetorical letters to describe the growth of knowledge. But it can be turned into a universal truth upon which assumptions emerge.

Just as knowledge evolves over time, language is constantly developing. There are words and phrases used decades ago that some today wouldn't recognize. There are also words and phrases used decades ago that mean something completely different today. It's important to keep in mind the potential for these differences when communicating intergenerationally. If one party can't understand the other's position, perhaps there's a linguistic breakdown. Reflective listening—repeating back the other party's meaning—can aid in catching when this kind of miscommunication occurs.

There are too many specific assumption and communication barriers to detail in this article. It would be beneficial for each of us to take a step back and evaluate our assumptions of others, generationally and beyond.

HOSPITALITY

The fifth and final condition for intergenerational dialog is hospitality, or the consideration of the other party's position in dialog.

A physical aspect of hospitality is promoting positive body language and being conscious of gestures.

Constructive dialog can be instantly damaged by a simple movement such as rolling eyes, a shaking head or a grimace. Instead, nodding along shows interest and empathy, even if you disagree with the position of the other party. This creates a welcoming space that encourages dialog and honesty.

The shared understanding that one's opinions and interpretations won't necessarily be dismissed but heard and considered is critical to constructive, healthy dialog. Hospitality in dialog involves listening, understanding and processing each side. In meeting this condition, we hope to "*maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*" (Eph 4:16).

CONCLUSION

Intergenerational discussions are inevitable within the Christadelphian community, so it's beneficial to keep in mind ways to aid that communication:

- Having humility and acknowledging the potential for growth.

- Being committed to your beliefs enough to contribute and be heard.
- Recognizing each other's interconnection as brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Having empathy and trying to understand the other side's position.
- Having hospitality and welcoming other perspectives.

It's a balancing act to uphold these conditions during dialog. Hopefully, as we all try to replace negative or untrue assumptions about other generations with loving and honest efforts to understand each other, we can embrace the spirit of edification and help one another "*run with patience the race that is set before us.*" (Heb 12:1).

Sarah Hill, (Austin Leander, TX)

¹ Cornille, Catherine. "Conditions for Inter-Religious Dialogue." *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, 2013, pp. 20–33.

² Bro. Andrew Bramhill discusses this issue further in his articles in "An Appeal to the Older Generation" and "An Appeal to the Younger Generation", *The Christadelphian*, 2019, pp. 98-99, 146-147



RVA LIGHT

504 W. BROAD ST., RICHMOND, VA

COFFEE CONNECTING COMMUNITY

By Rachel Johnson

WHAT is RVA Light?

Our Heavenly Father created us to need healthy, supportive relationships and communities to thrive. Unfortunately, in our modern-day North American society, we often see brokenness. We live in a society in which many are lonely and lack healthy, supportive relationships. Many have suffered trauma from negative and broken relationships, often leading to unhealthy lifestyles and dysfunctional coping. Many lack the support they need to deal with mental illness. Worst of all, many are lacking a life-saving relationship with God and our Lord Jesus.

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to

proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners. (Isa 61:1 NIV).

Our Lord Jesus proclaimed that this was the work he was doing in the world 2,000 years ago. He hasn't stopped doing this work. He is working through his disciples today. "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt 28:20 ASV).

He also taught of the Good Samaritan, who did not turn away or walk by on the other side of the road when he saw a suffering neighbor. Jesus said, "Go and do likewise." (Luke 10:37).

RVA Light is a coffee house located in the heart of downtown Richmond, Virginia, and those who walk in the door are often suffering from homelessness, addiction, mental illness and poverty. A few years ago, a small group of believers saw an opportunity to set up

a space to serve our neighbors in a new way. With God's help and through the generosity of many brothers and sisters in North America, as well as help from The Christadelphian Meal-A-Day Fund of the Americas, RVA Light was established in August 2018.

This coffee shop is a welcoming place focused on cultivating a healthy and supportive community with Christ Jesus at its center. The mission of RVA Light is to connect with our neighbors in supportive friendships and to link those who lack resources to local organizations and services that help with practical needs. And most importantly, to connect our neighbors with God and Jesus Christ.

WHY A COFFEE SHOP?

Coffee shops are a less intimidating environment for those not used to walking into an ecclesial building or meeting hall. Everyone can feel welcome in this neutral environment, and a cup of coffee can bring a sense of normalcy to an otherwise chaotic life.

RVA Light, however, is so much more than just a coffee shop. It is a community center where staff and volunteers have an opportunity to show love to our neighbors who are dealing with issues that stem from abuse, neglect

and systemic loneliness. While we know we cannot fix all our neighbors' problems (nor do we try to do this), we can attempt to fill in a gap that many people experiencing homelessness, poverty and addiction have: a lack of healthy, supportive relationships. With the genuine care and support our neighbors find at RVA Light, our goal is to empower those we serve to make positive changes, get the help they need from local resources, feel belonging and much-needed dignity restored in their lives, and ultimately find hope in a stronger connection with God and Christ Jesus.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

RVA is a ministry of presence, of listening to and meeting people where they are, while also encouraging and providing opportunities for personal and spiritual growth.

Many nonprofit and government organizations in our city offer focused, practical aid to those seeking help. When possible, we work to connect people with these organizations. As a result, we uniquely supply a level of friendship that our neighbors often do not receive from most social service resources.

Staff, volunteers and neighbors build each other up in prayer, conversation and fellowship around God's Word. We spend time worshiping and praising God together, and we focus on Christ-centered recovery programs for those dealing with addiction. We have held Bible-based budgeting/finance and work-readiness classes. We have visited our neighbors while they were hospitalized and in prison. We know their names and, in many cases, are a part of their daily lives. We have been

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supported in this work over the last two years by many brothers and sisters from local ecclesias, including individuals from the Richmond Chapel, the Hall and the Petersburg ecclesias.

Cultivating relationships with our neighbors requires us to remove expectations for change. Often, these kinds of relationships suffer from a power imbalance between the “helper” and the person being “helped.” Of course, we desire change, but all we can do is meet each other on common ground. Recognizing our own need for change, we love each other as our Lord commanded. We have learned a lot about human nature and the nature of addiction over the last few years, and we’ve experienced many challenges when it comes to influencing positive change.

Over the last year, we’ve learned of the deaths of a few of our neighbors due to

alcohol and substance abuse. Our most recent loss was a hard one for many in RVA Light’s community. Richard (Red) was a fiercely loyal friend and caretaker of many. He took pride in being a protector and a member of RVA Light’s community, and he directed many people experiencing homelessness through our doors for the first time. Many mornings he read our “Daily Bread” devotion in a deep, resounding voice. At the end of last year, he helped us record a video for social media in which he explained that RVA Light offers “friendship and family, [it offers] fellowship. A place to feel that you’re wanted. A place that you belong.” He went on, “I’ve been coming every day because I love it. I love the community of it.” We loved Red too, and we hope we enriched his life and drew him closer to our Lord Jesus in his last few years.



Thankfully, we've also celebrated victories and positive progress with our neighbors as well. For example, last year, one of our neighbors sent us this email with the subject line: *Finding Jesus*.

Hey thanks for your help in getting me closer to a good place to be. Not having the words of Jesus is the worst way to go about one's life. As I have made many mistakes and I blame not being close to Jesus as the reason. The bread & tea is super and the Bible as well, thanks RVA Light! Gee Wizz, where would I be if I had not walked through your door. Some dark corner of God's creation no doubt.

Though he continues to have many ups and downs, in the two years we have known this neighbor, he has gone from being unsheltered and heavily drinking each day to living in an apartment

and working on his recovery from alcoholism. We are so thankful to get to be a part of his support community and walk with him in his ongoing journey toward and with our Lord Jesus.

HOW CAN THE COMMUNITY HELP?

The potential for growth and healing that God is allowing us to be a part of is exciting. We are all in need of His love and care in our lives, and RVA Light has been a channel of this love for all who have been a part of this project.

For anyone who would like to be involved, please pray for us, for the people we serve and for God's hands to bless this mission. To support RVA Light financially, please go to rvalight.com and join the effort by becoming a monthly donor. Small gifts go a long way. Even \$10 per month will help us keep our door open and spend quality time serving our neighbors in

this edifying environment. We also have an opportunity presented to us by The Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation. They have offered to match up to \$15,000 of donations to us from brothers, sisters and ecclesias. If you think your ecclesia would be interested in supporting RVA Light financially, please share this article with your Arranging Board. Feel free to contact us with any questions at contact@rvalight.com, and if you are

visiting the Richmond area, drop by for some coffee and fellowship!

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. (Col 3:17).

*Rachel Johnson,
(Richmond Chapel, VA -
Unamended)*

To support RVA Light financially, please go to rvalight.com and join the effort by becoming a monthly donor. Small gifts go a long way. Even \$10 per month will help us keep our door open and spend quality time serving our neighbors



HELPING OTHERS IN TIMES OF TROUBLE

By Cassia and Joel Drywood

WITH the world in crisis, students of the Bible can only wonder, “Is this the time of trouble such as never was? Are we truly in the last days? What should I be doing to prepare?” It is from such contemplations that fear, anxiety and uncertainty about one’s future come. But by God’s mercy, He has provided us with every bit of information we need to successfully wait until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the question, “What should we be doing?” that we seek to explore here.

OUR ROLE IN FULFILLING GOD’S PURPOSE

God has one purpose: to fill the earth with those who will manifest His character and thereby glorify Him. His purpose never changes, nor does his character; it’s the same when the world is quiet or when it’s wavy like the sea during a storm. In both situations, our primary goal should be to manifest God’s character to the best of our ability. We learn of God’s character in

Exodus 34: 6-7, 14:

The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation... For thou shalt worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name (character) is Jealous, is a jealous God.

One of the ways we can manifest His character is by helping those in need. David, in his Psalms, illustrates this obligation to be like God quite clearly. In Psalm 40:17, it is expressed, “*I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.*” God says to help the poor and the needy, not just here but in all pages of Scripture. Take, for instance, James 1:27 which reads,

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” Or Romans 13:8, which reads, “He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.”

Therefore, we must do the same as is expressed in the next Psalm; *“Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.”* (Psa 41:1). If we desire deliverance in time of trouble, it is imperative that we help others when they are in trouble, for *“with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”* (Matt 7:2). This is God’s character; we cannot ignore it if we want to be counted worthy at the Lord’s return.

A CALL FOR ACTION BY THE YOUNG

As young people, it’s important to ensure we reach out to others in the ecclesia, no matter what age they may be. When we try to engage with those in the ecclesia, both young and old, we can better know each member of the body. That’s how we will know what their needs are. Let’s consider a few examples from the Bible where brothers and sisters actively sought out the knowledge of their brethren’s welfare and were ready to help when the need arose and some who did the opposite.

When we try to engage with those in the ecclesia, both young and old, we can better know each member of the body. That’s how we will know what their needs are.

The first, both a positive and negative example, is that of Cain and Abel. Cain murdered Abel and afterward asked God, *“Am I my brothers’ keeper?”* (Gen 4:9). This attitude is in strong contrast to Abel who was, by occupation, a keeper of sheep. Abel had devoted his time and effort to the care of his

sheep, just as we ought to do with our brethren.

Another example is Joseph who was sent by his father to *“see whether it be well with thy brethren.”* (Gen 37:14). Joseph was active in the affairs of his brethren and obedient to his father’s command. We also learn in Genesis 37:2 that Joseph, like Abel, was a shepherd. *“Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren.”* Here he was with them in the field, but he alone had learned the importance of shepherding, applying that principle in his life.

We then see a third shepherd, David. He was sent by his father to inquire about the state of his brothers.

And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren; and carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge. (1 Sam 17:17-18).



David then, understanding that the care of his brethren was more important than his sheep, left them in the hand of a keeper and went about his father's business.

THE GREATEST EXAMPLE

Finally, the greatest example we can look at is Jesus, the great shepherd, who declared, *"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."* (John 10:11). And not long after his death and resurrection, he said to Peter, *"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?... Feed my sheep."* (John 21:15-17). It is at this point where Jesus turned over the responsibility of feeding his sheep to his disciples, and subsequently to us as well. If we are to be a good shepherd, we must give our lives for our brothers and sisters, sacrificing our time and effort to assist those in need, just as Christ did.

So how can we help our brothers and sisters in a time of need? As it was mentioned before, it is important for

us to reach out and find out how our brothers and sisters are doing. Perhaps give a phone call or send an email. Whatever help they need, make it happen! It's one thing to just find out how someone is doing; it is another to aid them. James 2:16 says, *"And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"* We need to provide our fellow ecclesial members with the things needful to the body in a time of trouble when they need it the most. We will not always know when someone needs support, but if we are aware of someone who does need help, we should jump at the opportunity to heed our father's command. The time is short; Christ's return is close; *"Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."* (Jas 5:8).

*Cassia and Joel Drywood,
(Cambridge, ON)*

CULTURE OF CERTAINTY

By Levi Gelineau and Sam Taylor

WHEN CERTAINTY SLIPS INTO PRIDE, WE LOSE

I am from the first cell phone generation. My parents bought me a cell phone at age 16, which was about as fast as anyone could buy their children cell phones in the early 2000s. My parents were a part of the first generation of Christadelphian parents who had to ask themselves, “Should we get our child a cell phone?” They just didn’t have the frame of reference to understand the temptations we would eventually face. It would have been like explaining airplanes to the ancient Greeks. Today, I would suggest that cell phones were the true beginning of the information/disinformation age. Since cell phones became internet accessing devices in the mid-2000s, my generation and the following ones have grown up with exponential exposure to the sum of human knowledge in the palm of our hands. To say the least, it’s been an enormous leap in the human experience.

Smartphones and the internet have been a boon for the Christadelphian community by making our worldwide community more tightly knit together—not only through social media but through the abundance of information that helps us to affirm and share our beliefs with the world at large. It has been an inevitable leap for humankind. Although there are specific and obvious temptations that come with internet access, I would argue the most dangerous threat from the internet presented to our youth today is the free exchange of ideas. Generally speaking, the Christadelphian community has failed to fully respond.

PROBLEM

Young people today are growing up in a time of astonishingly rapid exchange of theories and world views. Just as the invention of the printing press led to the Protestant Reformation and the Age of Enlightenment that furthered the development of humanistic philosophies, the advent of the internet

has led to an Information Revolution in the 21st century at a more accelerated pace. Young adults coming of age in the world today need to find their position on a host of morally challenging questions—ones that challenge everyone in our community, no matter their age, experience or level of Biblical understanding. To say that this can be overwhelming to children and teenagers is putting it lightly.

While difficult questions on politics, science or sexuality can destroy a fledgling faith on their own, how they are addressed in our Sunday Schools, CYCs and families represents a hidden danger that can further erode a young person's trust in their family, community or even the Word of God itself. The Christadelphian community has an exemplary heritage of devout study, *"search[ing] the scriptures daily"* (Acts 17:11), and making *"our calling and election sure."* (2 Pet 1:10). While these are essential principles that help develop a godly character, they can feed our confirmation biases and promote echo chambers if not properly tamed. We can all likely think of a talk or point offered during Bible readings that, while presented as fact, turns out to be little more than conjecture beneath the surface. We must bear in mind that no matter how confidently a point is presented, nobody knows everything about the Bible.

While for some, an air of confidence can be encouraging, its certainty can also lead to many of our members—from the young to the aged—feeling belittled or marginalized for having a question that others present as if it's "already figured out" and "not worth asking." This method of presenting what we

claim to know doesn't invite people around the table for conversation but forces them away to find a place more welcoming—one that doesn't have their spiritual wellbeing at heart.

Dogma exudes pride. This pride can greatly compound the possible damage of these worldly ideas. When a person is struggling to reconcile a modern theory or lifestyle with Biblical teaching, and we don't have the well-



reasoned Biblical answer prepared in a humble way, we run the risk of isolating them from the wisdom the Bible offers, entrenching them in morally relativistic thinking. It takes vulnerability and bravery for someone

to raise questions that go against the grain. We do them (and ourselves) a disservice by responding to a plea for dialog with pontification and worn-out responses.

We must be better than this. Our brothers, sisters and those unbaptized in our ecclesias are looking to us to rise above only what we grew up hearing. What can we do?



SOLUTION

Our encouragement to each member of our community is to be open to discussing any topic with each other. We implore all members of our ecclesial family, from the youngest to the oldest,

to be vulnerable enough to ask and answer questions in a way that seeks genuine answers, rather than affirming our respective biases. Peter explained the correct attitude to embrace in 1 Pet 5:1-5 (ESV).

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock...Likewise you who are younger be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves all of you, with humility toward one another. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Although we should never compromise the truth, we must balance that uncompromising mentality with a desire to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:18) when difficult questions are raised. The teenager with doubts is no less a child of God than the elder who doesn’t have pressing questions. In many cases, there are unambiguous, Biblical answers and principles we can reach together. Yet, we can **not** effectively bring our young people there in a culture of absolute certainty.

It’s up to both the old and young to make the change they want to see in our community **together**. This situation is not about “us vs. them,” but rather “us and them vs. the problem.”

It is the responsibility of the older to acknowledge the difficulty and bravery it takes to ask a question and to recognize the person asking is not the problem. Paul exhorted the ecclesia at Corinth in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (ESV):

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

The younger has a duty in this as well. It's important to understand that just because *"there is nothing new under the sun"* (Eccl 1:9 ESV), that doesn't mean older members have been confronted with these difficult questions directly before. It's important for those with questions to not ask from a place of defiance or contrarianism but rather from a place of genuine desire to understand. How difficult questions are approached is just as important as the questions themselves.

When asking or being asked difficult questions about faith, based on worldly theories and ideas, keep yourselves in the love of God above all. Make our ecclesias and our dining room tables safe places for these conversations, not an impenetrable fortress to keep hard questions out. God is a refuge to all those who want to draw near; faith-challenging questions aren't somehow separate from the people having them. Our Father's truth will not be misused or misrepresented; we must have faith

that He will see that to be true. Jeremiah 17:5-8 tells us as much:

Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD. He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit." (ESV).

Whether we admit it or not, heat and drought will come into our lives and the lives of those growing up in the Christadelphian community. Our role as God's children is to help His other children know we are all in His family and working on these human problems together. People will have to reconcile these seemingly conflicting ideas one way or another—with us or without us.

Let's help each other grow a community that waters and nourishes with the Word of God, rather than oppress and wither through the sin of flawed certainty. Let's truly embrace our role in a community that works out problems like those in Berea, searching the Scriptures to see if something is true. If we do this, then we could all be as mighty trees in the garden of God, receiving nourishment from His Word and offering shade to those seeking refuge from the oppression of this life.

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AFTER CYC, WHAT'S NEXT?

By James Robinson

FOR people who have been born into a Christadelphian family, your spiritual activities start off mostly consisting of whatever your parents bring you to. If you have highly active parents, that might mean a lot of Bible Schools and study weekends, while if you have less motivated ones, that might mostly mean Sunday and Memorial service only. However, as you become a teenager, that starts to change—you start to get a little more choice over which activities you can go to, and a whole host of new options show up. You're able to go to CYC, but not just CYC, also youth weekends, conferences and Bible Schools. At first, you're likely to only go to events in your local area—events your parents are willing to drive you to. But as you grow more independent, you begin getting rides from other people, later driving yourself, and eventually you may even fly to far-off conferences. Your world continues to grow. While you are likely

struggling with school, you may also secure a part-time job. While never having quite enough money, you may look forward to when you're out of school, with a full-time job, when you will be making enough money and have the free time to be able to make it to all the fun Christadelphian events you want to.

Except, strangely enough, right around that point when you think you “made it,” you suddenly start to find that the number of Christadelphian events that you want to go to decreases dramatically. While you may have been progressively ascending the ladder of Christadelphian events, from those designed for 6 to 12-year-olds (Little Disciples), then 13 to 18-year-olds (CYC), then 18 to 25-year-olds (Youth Conferences), there's basically nothing out there designed for 26 to 35-year-olds. Sure, you can go to large broad-based events designed for everyone,

like family Bible Schools, but even then, they don't really have events and activities designed for your age group, so it's easy to get lost. This is especially difficult for people who have come into the truth at this age, since at exactly the time when they are most interested in reaching out and forming connections, there seem to be very few age-appropriate ways of doing so. And if you do choose to keep going to events designed for young people, you find yourself hanging out with people quite a bit younger than you, and the adults start making comments about you being a little old for that now and needing to put in an age limit.

So, it starts to become a very real question: "Where do I go from here?" At the time of your life when you probably have the most freedom to do things, you have the smallest number of Christadelphian things to do. So, what's going on here? Why does this happen? And, most importantly, if I want to serve God and be part of the Christadelphian community, what should I be doing at this stage in my life?

WHO IS THIS ARTICLE FOR?

Now, there are a few groups of people who might not find this article particularly relevant. One of them is those who have, or are about to have, young children. For those people, it's clear that what they should be doing at this stage is taking care of their children. Children are hugely expensive in both time and money, and so you likely don't identify at all with the idea of having a lot of freedom during this period of your life. You may feel both busier and more tied down than you have been at any other time in your life. In that case,

stop reading this article and go raise your kids. It may be relevant to you in 20 to 30 years when they are grown, but until then, you've clearly got your job already laid out for you and should focus on that.

The other group of people who might not find this article relevant are those who see this as an opportunity to enjoy everything that the world has to offer. If you've always wanted to hike the Appalachian trail, or drive a fast car, or set a world record, well, this is your opportunity. I'll tell you right now though that you're going to find out that all those things are empty. But if you weren't willing to listen to Solomon, well, you probably won't listen to me either. Feel free to come back to this article, though, after you've discovered that the world doesn't really have much to offer and that you really do still need to figure out where to go from here.

But, if you're someone who really is looking for the best way to serve God with the opportunities you have in the flower of your life, but you're honestly confused about which way to go, well, keep reading. This article is for you.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

First, let's try to understand why, when you become an adult, suddenly the number of organized activities designed for you drops significantly. What has happened is that you are now done with your training and are expected to go out and use it. When you are a child, you are expected to be spending most of your time learning, but when you are an adult, while there are still opportunities for continued education, it's no longer the focus of your life. You're supposed to be out

there using what you've learned, not just learning more.

This switch from learning to doing between 20 to 30 years of age is not just an artifact of our modern-day educational systems but is also true Scripturally. A Levite would begin temple service at either 20, 25 or 30, depending on the period in Scripture. At 30 years old, it happens to be the age when Joseph becomes ruler over Egypt, David becomes king over Judah, and Jesus is baptized and anointed with the Holy Spirit. While there is certainly some variance in age—and you shouldn't think that just because you aren't 30 yet, you shouldn't get baptized or start serving God—there's clearly a Scriptural precedent for moving on to a new stage at this point.

In fact, upon reflection, you may realize that the real issue at this stage in life is not that there are no longer as many options, but that there are many more options. As an adult Christian, there are an immense variety of possible ways of serving God. Some examples would include:

- Doing missionary work in a foreign country,
- Starting a Bible study group at your work,
- Composing and performing spiritual music,
- Caring for the poor in your community,
- Organizing Bible schools,
- Writing spiritual literature,
- Creating uplifting spiritual artwork,
- Teaching Sunday School,
- Publicly debating non-believers,
- Raising children in the LORD,
- Organizing fun group activities,
- Visiting lonely members of your ecclesia, and
- Editing Christadelphian magazines.

These are all different ways of serving God as an adult that have been and are being done by our brothers and sisters in Christ. Not all of them are going to be applicable to your talents—that's expected. *"For the body is not one member, but many."* (I Cor 12:14).

But, just like God gave the Corinthian brethren a variety of different gifts, He has done the same in our day and age, so that we can learn to work with each other and value each other. We can't all contribute in the same way. One person may be exceptionally musically talented but lacking in attention to detail. Another may have excellent attention to detail, but no musical talent. The point is that we all can contribute. If God has given you a special talent or interest—perhaps you are an excellent dancer or enjoy writing novels—then there is almost certainly a way that you can use it to glorify him. Don't feel like you need to be constrained by what other people are already doing either. Perhaps God has called you to something new? There were certainly no people in the time of Jesus producing YouTube videos, and yet, thanks to the willingness of many brethren around the world to try something new, there are many Christadelphian videos currently available on the internet that have been immensely valuable to both those inside and outside the brotherhood. Perhaps God has given you your special mixture of talents and

experiences specifically because that is exactly what He needs in His service right now?

SEEKING GOD'S GUIDANCE

However, while we shouldn't be constrained by what has gone before, we do need to make sure we are constrained by God's will. When Nadab and Abihu tried to offer strange fire to God, it not only didn't please God, but they ended up dying for their temerity. So, while it's important to serve God with the talents He has given you, make sure you are serving God.

Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. (Psa 127:1)

So, the first recommendation I will make is, if you are wondering what to get involved in after CYC, pray about it. Ask God for guidance. And then, even more importantly when He gives an answer, listen.

Listening is, in my experience, far more difficult than asking. It's easy to ask God for help. It's much harder to listen to His answer, especially when it isn't what you want to hear. Just look at Jeremiah 42 for one example of many people asking for God's guidance, and then immediately rejecting it when they find out it wasn't what they wanted to hear. Don't be that person. If you're asking God for guidance, and what you're really hoping He's going to say is "go preach to that attractive person at work," and instead He says, "quit your job and move to India," you may not be happy with that answer. But I can guarantee you that things will go better for you if you follow God's directions rather than what looks more

attractive in the moment. If you're unsure, it's perfectly acceptable to ask for confirmation. Gideon certainly did. However, if you ask, be ready to accept the answer you're given, whether you like it or not.

When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. (Eccl 5:4-5).

WAITING FOR GOD'S DIRECTION

But sometimes you aren't given a clear answer. Sometimes, it seems like the answer is, at best, "wait," and you don't know what to do with yourself while you're waiting. In this case, one thing that I can highly recommend is to look for needs and fill them. Are they looking for Sunday School teachers? Volunteer. Is your ecclesial website a mess? Fix it. Are there a bunch of people in their 20s and 30s in your ecclesia looking for something to do? Organize something fun. There are always going to be things that can use a little more help. One thing I personally find extremely helpful whenever I start to complain about something, is to change the thought into "What can I do to help?" Not only will that help you find jobs to do, but it will also help get those little things that have annoyed you fixed.

Also, look for older members of your ecclesia who may have been doing important duties for many years but are starting to get tired. God has designed a world where one generation passes and another one needs to replace it. If the new generation is not trained

...sometimes you aren't given a clear answer. Sometimes, it seems like the answer is, at best, "wait," and you don't know what to do with yourself while you're waiting.



to properly replace the old one, we can end up with situations like that in Judges 2:7-10 where *"there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD."* You are part of the new generation. If the torch doesn't get passed on to you, it gets dropped. Make sure that you're learning what you can from your older brothers and sisters, while you still have them, because there will come a time, if our Lord remains away, when you will not. And they will often really appreciate the help. Looking for how you can learn from and support an older brother or sister is both a way to show love to them and for your ecclesia.

And finally, be patient. Our Western culture idolizes youth, and it can be easy to feel like something's gravely wrong if you're not living your best life now. God, on the other hand, isn't limited by either time or physical strength. Abraham had to wait until he was 100 years old before he had the promised seed. Moses had to wait until he was 80 before he led the children of Israel out of Egypt. Jesus didn't start his ministry until he was 30. Just because He hasn't given you a clear purpose and goal right now doesn't mean that God

doesn't care about you. If he's making you wait, it's because He has something planned for you that's worth waiting for.

Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. (Isa 40:30-31).

NOT LIMITING YOURSELF

Of course, you also need to make sure you're not just making up excuses to be lazy or fearful. It's perfectly legitimate to ask God, "If you want me to go to South Africa to do missionary work, give me a way to get there." But saying, "If God really wanted me to do missionary work, He'd make me a millionaire" is just making an excuse. God will give you everything you need, but He may not give you everything you want. Before you decide "God must be saying 'no,'" make sure that it's God's Spirit you're listening to, not your own spirit.

Also, it's important to realize that you don't have to do everything yourself.

In fact, you shouldn't do everything yourself. Certainly, being too proud to ask for help from God would be wrong, and the same goes for not asking for help from your brothers and sisters. If you feel called to teach Sunday School, but don't have the right craft supplies, ask for help. There are almost certainly going to be other people in your ecclesia with more than they can use who would love to help you. If you want to organize a hymn sing, but you can't play the piano, ask if there's someone who can play. And, maybe, even if you can't find someone who can play the piano, someone will volunteer to play the guitar. Sometimes when you start asking for help and involving other people, you'll find better ways to do it than you would have ever come up with on your own.

Along the same lines, remember that you are part of a worldwide body of believers, and you aren't limited to your local ecclesia or your local area. If you want to start a preaching effort, but there just aren't enough people in your ecclesia to handle it, try asking other ecclesias for help. Or, alternatively, if you feel like there's nothing to do in your current ecclesia, perhaps you can try joining the small one twenty minutes away that would absolutely love to have an enthusiastic young brother or sister to help. Again, you're an adult now, you don't have to stay in one place. What might be impossible for one person, or even one ecclesia, can be possible if an entire network of ecclesias work together.

A great example of this flexibility is with missionary work. If you feel called to do missionary work, but don't have the money to just quit your job and

live in a foreign country for a few years, ask for help. There are a variety of Christadelphian organizations which can leverage the resources of multiple ecclesias all pooled together to support expensive activities like that. Jesus told his disciples that there is a lot to do but not enough workers to do it (Luke 10:2). Mission workers today will tell you that the same is true now—that there is lots of work to do in the mission fields, and there is money to sponsor missionaries, but there just aren't enough people willing to go do it. If God is calling you to do something, but the task seems like it's impossible for you to do yourself, well, it probably is, but that's why you shouldn't do it yourself. Humble yourself, ask for help and watch as God makes a way.

For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. (Luke 11:10).

CONCLUSION

It may seem like you've been abandoned now that you're done with CYC and there isn't another specific activity to take its place. But, like when you graduate from college, this is now your time to take all the training you've been given and start using it in the real world. Find where God is calling you personally to serve and start doing it! Don't forget to use all the resources that are available to you—your ecclesial family, your worldwide family, and of course your Heavenly Father. This is truly the time to serve in our Father's vineyard.

*James Robinson
(San Francisco Peninsula, CA)*

A COLLEGE ADVISORY FOR CHRISTADELPHIAN YOUNG PEOPLE

By Bill and Carol Link

A number of years ago we compiled a college advisory list to inform Christadelphian young people about the location of colleges and universities in proximity to ecclesias in the United States. Although not updated recently, the idea was and is to encourage those choosing to go to college to choose active ecclesial involvement as well. Fellowship deprivation at any stage of life is spiritually harmful and especially so at the crossroads of youth.

Young adulthood is a time of great potential. The college years can be a time of profound personal development, propelling one into a lifetime of service to Christ. It can be a time when minds are sharpened and skills are honed, equipping them to present the gospel to others with confidence. It can also be a time of crippling personal struggle, when hope falters and the fire of faith burns low.... [I]f at all possible, choose a college where there are other Christadelphians,

either staff or students. Some of the greatest joys possible in your spiritual life will be to associate with others who are like-minded in this most exciting and stimulating period of your life....

Parents plan for their child's future from birth. For a Christadelphian family, preparation is made with the Kingdom in view. Our distinctive Scriptural values give our children the foundation for their future. Spiritual preparedness helps them in every way, including academic preparedness. Youth seminars and... websites have been developed to help young people face the challenge of living in a godless society. Transitioning from home to the potentially toxic environment of college and the larger world is a significant watershed in a young person's life....

If you have been raised in a Christ-centered home, you have the foundation and framework from which to build a solid life. From a child you

have been taught to love God, to pray and to have J-O-Y by putting Jesus first, others next and yourself last. You have learned the first principles of faith: *“Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”* (Rom 12:2). It is time to prove the worth of all you’ve learned. And if you have had a troubled family life, now is the time for God-guided change so that you can move forward. *“Acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.”* (Prov 3:6). Be honest with yourself. Have you had a good education in the Truth? What can you do to up the ante in your spiritual life?...

We often hear our inner voice saying, *“God has forgotten, He’s not looking and He will never see.”* (Psa 10:11). There will be times and circumstances, often influenced by the people we’re with, when this inner voice is loudest. What does it take to shout down the voice of doubt?

- **Holding yourself accountable** is the first step.
- **Talk to close friends** in the Truth and your parents.
- **Seek fellowship** in the ecclesia so that you remember the one who is *“the way, the truth and the life.”*
- If you have not been baptized, this needs to be the subject of your most honest inner dialogue. **Baptism is the anchor decision.** We have *“a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place.”* (Heb 6:19 ESV).
- **Choose to be an ambassador for Christ**, the greatest career choice

possible. Hundreds of people have come into the truth because a classmate spoke up! The message of the gospel is powerful. Speak about it and you will be blessed with stronger faith! Make college the time when your mind is sharpened, and your skills honed to preach the word with confidence in season and out of season. (2 Tim 4:2).

- **Be part of the ecclesia.** The ecclesia will welcome you when you relocate for school. You’ll get invitations to lunch after meeting and rides, maybe even the offer of room and board. Let this receptiveness and generosity flow in both directions. You have decided that a college near an ecclesia is your number one priority; take the plunge and be involved....
- **Develop your gifts.** College is about increasing your ability to serve God and your neighbor. True? Can developing the power to reason give glory to God? Yes, when developed with humility! *“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God...that God in all things may be glorified.”* (1 Pet 4:10-11).
- Encountering different viewpoints is not to be feared. **Critical thinking** can train us to *“rightly divide the word of truth.”* (2 Tim 2:15).

You are equipped to do what is right, to be valiant for the Truth!

Bill and Carol Link,
(Baltimore, MD)



MAKING IMPORTANT LIFE DECISIONS

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

By Laura de Caussin

“I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.”¹

My experience with university has changed wildly over the last four years. Currently, I am entering my fifth year of university to finish my bachelor's degree. Originally, I started my schooling by living at home with my family; I did this for two years while I commuted to our local university. Then, during my second year in school, I entered a long-distance relationship, one thing led to another, and I transferred to a new university and moved across the country when I was 19 years old. That's where I live right now!

When I first transferred, I was adamant that I didn't want to live in on-campus housing. So, I searched and found a one-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment that would suit my needs. I lived in that cozy little apartment for almost two years! This past month I moved into a house with three other roommates. I chose to move into a house because I was painfully lonely. Living alone was

great at first! But through the pandemic, homesickness and isolation, it all got to be too much, so living in a house with other people was the best solution for me. I don't live with Christadelphians because that isn't an option due to the lack of young people near where I live. My roommates know my faith and they know our house rules, so I'm confident I will be just fine here.

Even though I've been going to school, that doesn't mean that I put my ecclesial life on hold. I attend an in-person Memorial Service every Sunday, teach Sunday School and try to organize and attend CYC. Overall, I encourage you to find a way you can remain separate from the temptations of the world by reflecting on your living situation. What are you constantly surrounded by? Is it things that reflect your faith? Or does it all reflect the world?

Laura de Caussin,
(Verdugo Hills, CA)

¹ Robert Frost, “The Road not Taken,” *Atlantic Monthly*, August 1915.

A DECISION TO STAY HOME FOR COLLEGE

By Kate Russell

I'M a senior in university, with one year left for my BA and another for my teaching credential. I spent my first two years at a local community college and then transferred to my current university, which is within an hour's drive from my home and thirty minutes from my ecclesial hall. When deciding where I wanted to attend university, there were a few spiritual factors that were important to my choice.

The first of these was a desire to minimize my debt; in my specific situation, I would have incurred more debt attending a private school than a local state-funded institution. I also chose to attend a community college before transferring to my current university for the same reason. Community colleges can often be treated as "lesser" than universities, but this was not my experience. We had professors who taught at both local private and state-run universities, teaching the exact same classes at the community college to a smaller class for a fraction of the price. My entire 2 years at this school cost less than

a single semester at the university I transferred to—and it allowed me to continue to live at home and save more. While this might not initially seem like a spiritual consideration, I was concerned that starting my adult life with more debt than necessary would impact my spiritual health. I wanted to have more freedom to attend ecclesial events and to not have to worry so much about repaying those loans. Debt is a distraction I wanted to live without as much as possible. For me personally, staying local and choosing schools that were less expensive but still well respected in my field was very beneficial.

The second spiritual consideration that I kept in mind when deciding whether to stay local for university or go farther away was ecclesial proximity. My parents always modeled service and connection, and I feel (and felt) very involved in my faith. I immediately ruled out any universities that were not within a reasonable commuting distance, no matter how appealing the school was. A two-hour commute to

meeting and CYC looks okay when it's on paper, but it's a lot harder to stick to when it's finals season and you have work on Monday, and you could just stay home instead. I did not want to be tempted to lessen my involvement with the ecclesia.

The final spiritual factor for my decision to stay local was proximity to my family and my "spiritual support network." I would say that this was the most important factor in my decision. My family, friends and ecclesia have been the biggest source of comfort and encouragement in my time in higher education. In the classroom, school and worldly views can become all-consuming, all-important, and attractive. I decided to dedicate my life to following Christ, and that should always take precedence over my academic career and should impact all my choices. It can be hard to remember that when you're in school, and I have found that a good spiritual support network is crucial to keeping my priorities in check. Staying local kept me with that established spiritual support.

My advice to young people trying to make this decision for themselves:

- 1) Be honest with yourself. If you know deep down that you will likely be tempted by certain things, or struggle to make that extra-long commute to an ecclesia, or be entirely away from an ecclesia, be honest about it and make decisions accordingly.
- 2) Remember that school is not as important as your spiritual health. It is four to eight years of your life, and no matter how fun or challenging or even career-shaping academia is, it is not the eternity promised through God's Word.
- 3) Whatever you do, wherever you choose, choose somewhere where you will have a strong spiritual support system and you will grow in your faith. For some, that's local—for others, it's away from home. It may be different for all of us, but never underestimate the power of fellowship with like-minded people.

Kate Russell,
(Verdugo Hills, CA)

I have found that a good spiritual support network is crucial to keeping my priorities in check...



MY COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

By Simon de Caussin

WHEN I was finishing high school, I grappled with the idea of where I wanted to go to college for a long time. My whole view of choosing where to go was shaped by others in high school—mostly students and teachers—as well as by my older siblings. I ultimately decided on what turned out to be the right decision for me, which was staying home and continuing to live with my parents.

In my experience, choosing to stay home was the best possible scenario for several reasons. I look back on my thought process during my senior year, the struggles of choosing where I would spend the next few years of my life, and I am glad that I settled on the

decision that I did. The university that I ended up attending was very local; I am blessed that it was within a reasonable walking distance and an even shorter drive. I am happy with the quality of education I received there, and I feel that it has set me up for a good career in the future.

So why did I struggle to make that decision for so long? Unfortunately, a lot of people look at education from a statistical point of view. It seems that everything in the world—academia, the workplace, sports, hobbies, **everything**—can be viewed competitively. From this perspective, it's all about being the best. It's about getting the best grades, making the

Statistically speaking, not everyone can be the best, and it can be harmful pushing that thought process onto a bunch of teenagers at a critical point in their lives.

most money, and in this case, getting into the best school. This is the type of thinking that was indoctrinated into me at my high school, and it was a very unhealthy way of looking at my future. Statistically speaking, not everyone can be the best, and it can be harmful pushing that thought process onto a bunch of teenagers at a critical point in their lives. The way I look at it now, anywhere you choose to go will set you up for a successful career if you study and apply yourself diligently.

I had considered moving away from home to go to school, but I realized that it would be harmful for me to be so far from my home ecclesia. At the time, I would have liked to think that I was strong enough to drive a few hours

home every weekend to go to meeting, but as I look back on it, I don't think I would have been as good about it as I'd thought. There are times in college that you feel very busy and overwhelmed with school. Now that I have experienced that I don't think I would have done well spiritually with both school stress and being far away from home. I am happy with my decision to stay home, even if the school that I ended up going to supposedly had a lesser reputation than others. I would recommend staying home to any young Christadelphian, if the option is available to you.

*Simon de Caussin,
(Verdugo Hills, CA)*



STAYING CONNECTED

By Dalton Henley

I chose to stay at home with my parents and go to a local university. It was the better place for me to be spiritually. Staying home and keeping my ecclesial and family life unchanged served as an anchor for me as I navigated the choppy waters of college life. Just because I stayed at home for college does not mean it is impossible to move away to college and stay spiritually strong, but in general, I believe that moving away to an out-of-town school will be more challenging for a young person to stay

If a student is going to move away to go to school somewhere new, it is critical to choose somewhere that has an ecclesia that they will remain active in.

strong in their faith. The college years are an intense time of discovery where young adults come of age and learn a great deal about themselves and the world; adding in a new home away from family and the home ecclesia, surrounded by fellow

college students who do not share their religious convictions and the strong spirit of humanism that pervades university life, increases the likelihood that they will lose faith. When looking at Christadelphians I grew up with (I'm 27), it seems clear that those that moved away to college had a higher rate of leaving our community. The lure of the world pulled strong during their formative years in college.

For peers of mine that did move away for school, those that have stayed part of our Christadelphian community had one common factor: they chose schools in places with a local ecclesia they could be connected to. If a student is going to move away to go to school somewhere new, it is critical to choose somewhere that has an ecclesia that they will remain active in. They need that anchor in their life, especially when being immersed in what can be such a godless environment. But I've sadly observed that many who moved away to a school with wonderful local

ecclesias slowly became less active and stopped attending altogether during their college years, so it does seem that for most this path is more fraught with temptations of the world than remaining at home. It should also be pointed out that not everyone has a good spiritual environment at home, and for those people uprooting to a new place may be beneficial. For instance, my wife left behind a spiritually challenging home life and moved to a school with a great local ecclesia and an active youth group which helped her commit to Christ.

The most important factor in choosing a school should not be the academic excellence or other attributes of a college, **but rather where will the student best thrive in their walk in Christ.**

From an academic point of view, my college education certainly was not anything impressive: I went to a local community college, followed by a local state university. Many young people strive to attend a prestigious university with a stellar academic reputation, and while that is not necessarily a bad thing, there are more important factors in what school one chooses to attend than academic superiority. In fact, from my research, the relationship between how elite one's school is and career/financial success is ambiguous, especially when considering the typically higher cost of attendance. The most important factor in choosing a school should not be the academic excellence or other attributes of a college, but rather where will the student best thrive in their walk in Christ. For many people, the college years will be the most important years of their life in determining who they become as adults.

Choosing a local school that allowed me to stay at home was a great decision for me. I believe it will be the best decision for most young people. But regardless of whether the choice is made to stay at home or relocate, the most important factor should be the spiritual well-being of the college student. Choosing to either stay at home or attend a school that has a local ecclesia that will be an anchor to the young person is critical. Don't just consider the academic ramifications of what college to attend. Consider the spiritual impact as well.

*Dalton Henley,
(Sacramento, CA)*

CAREERS AND SERVICE IN THE LORD

By Jenni de Caussin

THE topic of work and careers is a major focus of young adulthood. Becoming financially independent is a goal that can be daunting, especially in our modern economy, where pressure is high and the cost of living even higher. Though work may seem like a “necessary evil,” it is much more than that. Time is a precious commodity. And the goal is to spend our limited time doing work that puts food on the table and allows time for family life and in the Lord’s service.

THE FALL AND THE CURSE

What does the Bible have to say about work? Adam and Eve’s circumstance in the garden was unique, but after Adam and Eve sinned, God told them they had to leave the garden of Eden, and death was now inevitable. Adam was told he would have to work hard to grow food to eat and provide for his family all the days of his life. It would

require labor and the sweat of his brow to bring forth fruit out of the ground. Eve was told she would bear children, something she hadn’t done before. She, too, would labor and bring forth fruit in the form of children. And it would be painful.

We are given a clear purpose to work hard and bring up families in the Lord.

We call this decree from our Heavenly Father “the curse.”

It was the consequence of their disobedience and striving for things in direct opposition to God’s will and authority. So, it only makes sense that the road to resolving this breach

involves working in harmony with God’s ways. We are given a clear purpose to work hard and bring up families in the Lord. God is good, and there are many blessings and much satisfaction found in the work God has put before us.

Interestingly, both Adam and Eve are told that they will labor and bear fruit,

each in their own way. And each of these roles has its blessings. Of course, we would never say that this new role of bearing children was purely a curse. Many verses speak of children as a blessing from the LORD. Likewise, work is not all bad either.

Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. (Psa 127:3).

When a woman gives birth, she has distress because her time has come, but when her child is born, she no longer remembers the suffering because of her joy that a human being has been born into the world. (John 16:21 NET).

Regarding work, in the Book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon searches to find the best that human life has to offer and, as a man of great power, riches and fame, he concludes that a simple life is the best, most satisfying life humanly possible:

I have concluded that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to enjoy themselves as long as they live, and also that everyone should eat and drink, and find enjoyment in all his toil, for these things are a gift from God. (Eccl 3:12-13 NET).

Of course, this is only part of the picture. There is much more to life and hope when God is in the picture. Solomon concludes:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. (Eccl 12:13).

REGARDING WOMEN AND WORK

In today's world, it is quite common for women to work outside the home, in addition to bearing and caring for children (when God chooses to give them children). In most cases, this is just a fact of the financial demands of modern life. We also know that the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 did many kinds of work to support the needs of her family. We also have the examples of women like Deborah, Lydia, and Dorcas (Tabitha), working and making contributions to the community.

NEW TESTAMENT MESSAGES ABOUT WORK

In the Gospels, a spiritual theme around life and work starts to develop. Jesus says:

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matt 11:28).

Do not work for the food that disappears, but for the food that remains to eternal life—the food which the Son of Man will give to you. (John 6:27 NET).

Do not accumulate for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and devouring insect destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But accumulate for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and devouring insect do not destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matt 6:19-21 NET)

But above all pursue his kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So then, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Today has enough trouble of its own. (Matt 6: 33-34 NET).

He tells us not to worry about what we will eat or drink or what we will wear. Clearly, we need to eat and drink, and eating requires work, as designed by God. But we are instructed not to worry about whether we will have enough. If we pursue God's Kingdom and his righteousness, he will take care of the rest.

Paul, in 2 Thessalonians 3:10, reiterated the importance of work when he said, "If anyone is not willing to work, neither should he eat." Later in Colossians, we are told to:

Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. (Col 1:10).

Whatever you are doing, work at it with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not for people. (Col 3:23 NET).

Perhaps Paul's use of the present tense to say that even though the Christian converts had found new meaning in life through the gospel, it didn't mean that they had to find a new line of work, if it didn't prevent them from keeping God's commandments and they did it "as unto the Lord." Even Paul, first a Pharisee and later a Christian missionary, was also a tentmaker.

So, we have found that God ordained work and that, while it could be fulfilling, it could also be burdensome. Most of all, we see that the real meaning of life isn't in our work but in following Jesus, seeking the Kingdom of God and being fruitful in godly service.

WORK, THEN AND NOW

In Bible times, most people didn't have a choice about what kind of work they did. Some were nomadic shepherds by birth. Others were born into temple service, or like Jesus, followed in their earthly fathers' footsteps and learned the family trade. Today, most people must choose and train for a career since few people are born into a family profession.

Unskilled jobs involve long and exhausting work hours, and while they are still good, honest work, they don't leave much time or energy



What are your gifts and how might you develop them in a way you can contribute to the service of the Lord, as a member of the body, in ecclesial life?

(physical or mental) for service and learning in the ecclesia. Though any kind of honest work that puts food on the table and a roof over the head (by God's grace) is acceptable, some jobs are more desirable than others.

For those seeking more of a vocation than just a job that pays the bills (and for those who have opportunity and choices), we can find some food for thought in the parable of the talents (Matt 25: 14-30). In this parable, the good and faithful servants developed and multiplied the gifts that had been given to them. Some were more well-endowed than others, but all were called to develop their natural gifts.

Romans talks about the various gifts present in the body of Christ. All are members of the body, and all work together in the Lord's service, but all do not have the same gifts and purpose. *"And we have different gifts according to the grace given to us."* (Rom 6:12 NET). Some examples of gifts at that time were prophecy, faith, service, teaching, exhorting, contributing with sincerity, leading with diligence, and showing mercy with cheerfulness.

What are your gifts and how might you develop them in a way you can contribute to the service of the Lord, as a member of the body, in ecclesial life?

And how might your choice of career help you develop such gifts?

FINAL THOUGHTS

The LORD will remember us for our work and service. Here are a few verses.

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father. (1 Thess 1:3 WEB).

For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love you have demonstrated for his name, in having served and continuing to serve the saints. But we passionately want each of you to demonstrate the same eagerness for the fulfillment of your hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and perseverance inherit the promises. (Heb 6:10-12 NET).

How beautiful it is that in the beginning work was tied up in death, but in the New Testament, it is God's gift through Jesus that if we labor in the work of the spirit, we can be freed from the bonds of sin and death?!

Jenni de Caussin,
(Verdugo Hills, CA)

CAREER ADVICE FROM A RETIRED EMPLOYER

By Dave Jennings



FOR nearly 45 years of my life, I was employed in Human Resources with four global companies. During that time, I interviewed and hired thousands of employees. I'd like to share with you an important lesson I learned about making career decisions when you are a believer.

Most people do a poor job of determining what their boundaries are for their work and personal life. The primary reason for this is a lack of clarity about what they truly value. Many allow others to influence their perception of what is important—better pay, an advanced title or work content. Few I met had taken the time to assess whether those pursuits actually fit with

who they wanted to be and whether the position being considered increased their satisfaction of what they valued. This was not merely an issue for the new hire but a dilemma faced by more seasoned workers, who were now facing big decisions.

Some allow “fate” to determine their career path. They delegate to the organization they work for to chart their career path, or they allow a competing employer to seduce them into a role in another organization. Let me be clear, no companies have your personal values in mind when they present opportunities. How could they? They are simply maximizing the value of their employees to meet

Most people do a poor job of determining what their boundaries are for their work and personal life. The primary reason for this is a lack of clarity about what they truly value.

organizational needs. There is nothing sinister about this. The real issue is that most employees have little clarity about what they truly value in life. Even if an employer were to ask them if this present opportunity meets their personal needs, most wouldn't know how to answer the question.

This often leads to knee-jerk decisions, which appear to satisfy one need, but bankrupt true happiness and contentment. I often saw this when employees would decide to relocate to another geographic area for a promotion. It was seen as accelerating their career or boosting their income. However, the benefits of the new job sometimes paled in comparison to the steep price often paid by uprooting their family and the loss of important support structures in life. In other cases, high performing employees, who were content in their role and the balance of their personal life, felt compelled to take on new responsibilities which they were either unprepared to assume, or compromised the happiness that they had in their home. Unfortunately, over the years I saw the damaging toll these poor decisions led to for many employees.

Frankly, it is extremely easy to fall into the trap of making compromises to satisfy certain variables of one's life. I did this myself and I am sure many others have too. We work more hours than we want. We take on assignments to prove our value to the company.

Here's my simple advice. Know what is important to you. If you have a family, work with them to make a list. Pray for God's guidance. Put God

first and never compromise His place on the list. When you are faced with a new job opportunity, a promotion, new responsibilities in your current position, make sure that you carefully weigh in your decision what is most important to you as a son or daughter of the Living God. These decisions are critical challenges to who we are and what we aspire to be.

Taking a promotion that involves relocation might be acceptable and even valuable if it is to an area where there is an ecclesia that could use your help. Taking a promotion is certainly not wrong, assuming it does not compromise what you feel is needed for you to meet family and ecclesial responsibilities.

We need to see career decisions for what they are. They are much more than about compensation, a title or an office. These decisions involve our ability to manage life within boundaries that we have set based on what we truly value. Make sure you know those boundaries.

As I have moved to a later chapter in life, I can see many things more clearly now than I did when I was a young worker. Life isn't measured by the things we possess, our business card, or the accolades we reach in our job (Luke 12:15). If these things come to us by God's grace, then we should be thankful for them—they are a gift. But don't compromise who you are to obtain them. Our God knows us and will bountifully supply our needs. Ultimately, He will reward us when we put Him first.

Dave Jennings

ON BEING SINGLE

By Larynette Ndah-Link

To everything, there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up. (Eccl 3:1-3).

AND yes, a time to be **single**. The world provides conflicting views on singlehood. People's perspectives and the camp they ultimately rally around are based on their experiences and circumstances. In the age of swiping left or right, where the world is at our fingertips, the possibilities are endless and yet feel impossible. Singlehood is not one-size-fits-all; thus, this article will focus on young people who are single and have never been married, but not exclusively on them. Most people experience being single at some point in their lives. Being

single is part of God's plan in life's journey; thus, it should be regarded as a time to plant.

With the help of their parents or guardians, children spend their formative years learning, growing and planting, hoping to build a life that is fulfilling and rewarding. The process continues into adulthood. The difference is that as adults, we have to make all the choices and follow through with our actions. Figuring out life on our own requires intentionality—Welcome to Singlehood 101.

There are no rules of engagement—we make our own and learn the hard way that some choices have grievous consequences. We must get good at making the right choices and learning from our mistakes fast. Thankfully, the Bible is full of guidance to help us navigate this path.

The Bible has many examples of faithful

Singlehood 101 - There are no rules of engagement—we make our own and learn the hard way that some choices have grievous consequences. We must get good at making the right choices and learning from our mistakes fast.

men and women who dedicated their lives to the service of the Kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is the epitome of a life lived in service to God, and his example is our standard. However, Jesus did not become who he is overnight—it took preparation and a clear choice to be about his father's business even at the age of 12 (Luke 2:49). We need to decide early which path we want to follow. Singlehood is a time to put first things first—securing our shot at eternity by defining/redefining our values and aligning ourselves with God's purpose.

Redefining our values to align with God's principles takes learning. This process brings change that is difficult but rewarding if we choose to stick with it. The world does not make good on its promise—only God does. Doing this stage the right way is critical to ensuring that we reap the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith (Gal 5:22). These are essential for our journey to the Kingdom. There is a right way to live life as a believer in Christ. The Bible provides lampposts to guide us. We are not perfect, we will fail, but the grace of our Heavenly Father abounds abundantly.

We must constantly place our values against God's standards to see how we measure up—and make changes accordingly. Our values and principles

guide every decision we make in life, the paths we choose, how we live our lives and select our tribe.

Being single does not mean being alone. However, friendship and partnership are different in 2021, compared to what older generations may have experienced. The ties that bind us continue to be loose and feeble; it takes effort to maintain and grow our friendships and partnerships. Let us do the work to find our tribes—at work, ecclesia and communities. This is also a time for us to be clear about our principles and values. As believers, we cannot be unequally yoked (2 Cor 6:14). Thus, we must pay attention to the people in our circle of life; they should encourage us and help us live a life that leads us to the Kingdom of God. Being single is a time to build new bonds with friends, family and those in the community of believers and a time to strengthen old bonds. It is hard to live a fulfilling life if we do not already have things in place to ground us and people in our corner to support, encourage, correct us, or provide what we need to serve God's purpose and wait on Him.

Waiting is hard. Waiting in singleness is harder. We all have different plans for our lives and waiting to fulfill our desires is more difficult as we age. This is partly because of the world's expectations, and partly because of the

expectations we place on ourselves. Waiting sometimes brings a lot of confusion into our lives, especially if we have our hearts set on a particular outcome. We must understand who God is and the role He plays in our lives. Too often, we sit and wait and expect God to sort the confusion for us. God is not a God of confusion; He has given us the power to bring clarity into our lives—the power of choice.

Waiting well involves action. Everything will not go according to plan because God's ways are not our ways, neither is His timing. However, sometimes God requires us to act. This does not always mean traveling the world or to different cities to serve. Traveling to minister where we are needed is a blessing. However, we get paralyzed by inaction if we believe there are no opportunities around us or that "all the good ones are taken" if we are searching for a partner. Mary and Martha served in their city of Bethany, where Jesus met them (Luke 10:38); Rebekah served in her City of Mesopotamia, and God brought

Abraham's servant who was in search of a wife for Isaac right where Rebekah drew water (Gen 24). God has the power to use us where we are. Know when to move and when to be still.

Being single comes with blessings and challenges. But the life we have now is the one God has blessed us with. God did not put us on the planet without a plan to give us what we want and need. If Christ remains away, threescore and ten years is all we have to make the right choice (Psa 90:10). Thus, we must number our days; we must choose to remember the LORD in our youth; we must choose to surround ourselves with people who will help us serve God's purpose; we must wait on the LORD. We must decide to trust God to do right. Because God cares about what we want and need. God has a plan for our plans.

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LIFE NOT AS PLANNED: FROM THE INSIDE LOOKING OUT

By Alisa Jennings

IT is good to think about and plan for our future, and I believe most people would consider it responsible and conscientious to consider some of the following:

- What kind of job will I have, and will I need to provide for a family someday?
- Do I want to get married, and what kind of qualities am I looking for in a future spouse?
- Would I like to have children, and if so, how many?
- Where might I live, and is there an ecclesia nearby?

These are all questions I think most young people ask themselves as they start to enter adulthood (and maybe even many years before). And it is appropriate to do this. It's a good thing to plan. But, with all the planning that we do, we need to keep in mind that things may not go according to OUR plan. As much work as we may invest into planning our futures, we don't

have full control over what happens.

I had a plan for my life. When I was 15, I thought I would be married by 20 and have kids by 21. I already had their names picked out (even though I didn't yet know who my husband would be, or whether he would even like the names I picked for our children). I didn't need to worry about getting my degree because I would be a stay-at-home mom and my husband would be providing for our family. This is what my 15-year-old self thought. And maybe for some who had a similar plan, things worked out just as they thought. This wasn't the case for me, as I'm sure is more likely the case for most.

I didn't end up with the person I would marry until I was 24. I was married at 26. A year later, we started trying for kids. Over the next four years, we would have five pregnancies, see five heartbeats, get our hopes up five times that we would be bringing a baby home in nine months. But this was not the plan. At 30 years old, I still had an

empty nursery, and we were starting to lose hope.

Eventually, after we had tried everything and exhausted all options, we were told we wouldn't be able to have biological children—and it was absolutely crushing news. We mourned the loss of the future we had planned, and we thought it would never happen. But God hadn't given up on us yet.

“God Willing” or “if the LORD wills” are common phrases we hear from our brothers and sisters regarding the future. Sometimes it feels like just a tagline thrown on the beginning or end of a sentence—but think about the impact of that saying. It's an acknowledgment that God is the one in control, not us. It is God who will determine whether our plans happen or not. When we say and acknowledge this, we are giving up our control—which at first may sound like a scary thing to do, but I've found it to be quite the opposite. When we give up control, we can let go and really put our trust in Him. And this doesn't mean that things are going to turn out the way **we** want them to, but if we have **faith** that God is working in our life and the lives of those around us, then maybe we can learn to accept better the way things are at their present time.

We really don't know what direction our lives will take, so as much as we may plan out our lives, we need to be equally prepared for plans to change. We need to have a strong foundation in our Faith that can carry us through if or

when that happens. If we put too much emphasis on the plans we have for this life, rather than keep our eyes focused on what is to come, we could miss out on the joy of something eternal, which is far greater than anything we could even plan for our life right now.

Eventually, by the grace of God, we were blessed with our first little miracle boy who is now three, and another who is now one. God's timing certainly was different than ours.

Looking back, I can see the wisdom of God guiding me even when I didn't know where I was going. Before I was

married, I had gone to college, but I dropped out because I didn't see the point in finishing if I was going to be a stay-at-home mom. What was the point of wasting all the time and money finishing school if I wasn't even going to have the chance to use my degree?

Thankfully, my parents encouraged me to pursue my interest in architecture and finish the college program I started. They told me that things don't always go according to plan and getting a higher education would be a smart thing to do just in case things didn't pan out the way I thought they might. And thankfully, I listened to them: I was able to have a successful career after college up until we had our first son. God provided me with the ability to save more money, which allowed us to move to an area with several ecclesias nearby and so many brothers and sisters that live close to us, as well as family.

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I know personally, it was in my darkest and most painful times of life that I wanted the Kingdom most. It was the one thing that I knew would bring relief to the things I was dealing with.



I know there are many who are not seeing the answer to their prayers yet, and still wonder where their lives are headed. Will they ever find a spouse? Will they ever be able to have children? Will they be able to get a job that will bring financial security to their family? Will their health problems ever go away, or are they going to be dealing with them for the rest of their mortal lives?

When we live for our hopes in this life rather than our hope for the coming Kingdom, it's so easy to get stuck in a feeling of despair. I know personally, it was in my darkest and most painful times of life that I wanted the Kingdom most. It was the one thing that I knew would bring relief to the things I was dealing with. *"So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough*

for today." (Matt 6:34). And, most importantly, *"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God."* (Matt 6:33).

There's a popular saying that goes "The only certain things in life are death and taxes." I'm going to add three things to that list: The resurrection, the return of Christ our King, and the Kingdom of God on earth. These things are for sure.

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Col. 3:1-4).

Alisa Jennings,
(Simi Hills, CA)

LIFE NOT AS PLANNED: FROM THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

By Alan Markwith

JOSEPH woke up one day, and his father asked him to find his brothers. Life up to that point had gone well for him. Yes, he most likely knew that his brothers were aware he was their father's favorite, something a parent should never even give the appearance of. Despite this, it was a good life for Joseph. His expectation would have been for a relatively normal life: grow up, get married, raise a family. He would eventually have some flocks of his own to raise, generally a nice, normal life.

But then the day came when he caught up to his brothers, and their jealousy overtook them, and they cast him into a pit. Maybe Joseph overheard them saying they intended to kill him and tell their father that a wild animal did it. Joseph's life, as planned, had just taken a dramatic turn. He probably

didn't know Rueben had had a change of heart and planned to rescue him. However, before Rueben could enact his rescue plan, his other brothers saw a caravan of Midianites, so instead of killing him, they sold him off as a slave. We know about his roller-coaster life from then on.

In Potiphar's house, as a servant, he became highly trusted with good reason. He was a faithful young man; he trusted God and worked as "unto the Lord." The next twist in Joseph's life plan was being falsely accused by Potiphar's wife of attacking her when she was the guilty one. The sad part is that he was deceitfully charged because he refused to sin. He was then thrown into prison. The Genesis record doesn't give us the full sense of what prison life was like for Joseph. However, Psalm 105:17-19 gives us a better appreciation for his

misery: *“Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron.”* Prisons then were cold, dark and dirty places.

We know the end of the story of Joseph, how God eventually lifted him out of that prison and raised him to become second unto Pharaoh. From this position, he helped save his father and the brothers who had betrayed him from a deadly famine. Joseph's faith in God was so strong, so deep, that no matter what came at him, he kept trusting God. He didn't know from day to day what would come next but took each day as it came, waiting on the LORD for deliverance. *“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”* (Matt 6:34 ESV).

So, what about your life plan? Do you, like Joseph, expect a normal life? Are you ready for it to be turned upside down? What do you do when it is? Joseph is just one example. Solomon tells us, *“It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart.”* (Eccl 7:2 NIV)

No one wants to dwell on the negative and the what-ifs in life that may never happen, but consider these scenarios:

- What if you cannot find a spouse in the faith? (See article: “On Being Single.”)
- What if life dealt you several miscarriages with uncertainty if

So, what about your life plan? Do you, like Joseph, expect a normal life? Are you ready for it to be turned upside down? What do you do when it is?

you would ever have children. (See article: “Life Not Planned: From the Inside Looking Out.”)

- What about the brother or sister whose spouse dies suddenly due to illness or accident?
- Or the sudden loss of your job in a tight job market with a young family to provide for?
- Or an act of infidelity on the part of a spouse?
- What if you are in a serious car accident and most of what you hoped for could no longer be realized because of your injuries?
- What if someone you loved, a parent, child or spouse, walked away from the Truth?
- What if an illness comes upon you and you are so overcome that all your life plans just stop?
- What if some of these trials happen to members of your family?

What if your situation were like Joseph's, with multiple events happening in sequence? Could your faith sustain you through such incidents? All the items from the list above are real-life events that have happened and are happening to young, baptized brothers and sisters today. For each one of these, there is heartbreaking pain that shakes you at your core. What is one to do?

Any one of the example events above can truly be overwhelming. It is important first to realize it is not a sin to be overwhelmed.

The Psalmist wrote:

Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. (Psa 55:5 KJV).

My spirit is overwhelmed within me: my heart within me is desolate... Hear me speedily, O Lord my spirit faileth; hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. (Psa 143:4, 7 KJV).

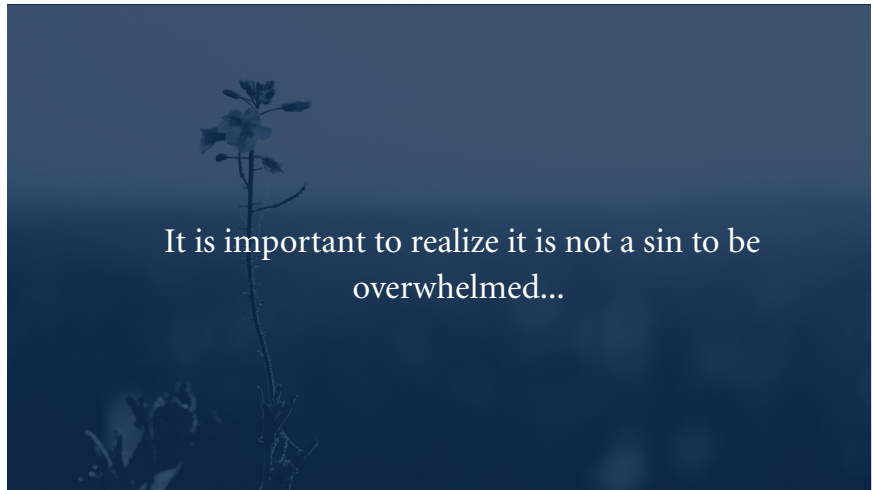
These are tangible feelings and emotions in the face of real-life events. What is also true is that when you are going through events that change your life plan, it is likely that most of those around you, even some close to you, may not really understand the depth of the pain you are experiencing. I know I cannot fully appreciate what Joseph went through in his young life. I could, however, see and feel the heartache in my daughter as she wanted so desperately to understand “Why?” after each miscarriage, as she wrote in her article. Neither was this in the life plan that Nancy-Jean and I saw for Alisa. Her pain was our pain. Her sorrow was our sorrow. No one had control, just as

nothing was in Joseph’s control as he went from being a favored child to a slave, with no rights, no freedom. But we are told, “*The Lord was with Joseph.*” (Gen 39:2). And he will be with you and all those who suffer.

As I try to picture his situation, I tend to think that, although written years later in the time of David, the message of this verse would have been a part of Joseph’s cry: “*Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk: for I lift up my soul unto thee.*” (Psa 143:8).

Some may know of Sis. Diane Grandchamp, who fell asleep in the Lord in 2015 at age 73. For those who knew her, I need to say no more than her name. Sis. Diane was born with Muscular Dystrophy and by about 33 years old, she became homebound. For the next 40 years of her life, she was on a ventilator.

This was not the life she would have planned for herself. However, despite her situation, she was an inspiration to all who knew her. She enjoyed life to the



It is important to realize it is not a sin to be
overwhelmed...



fullest. “How can this be?” you might ask. I only met Sis. Diane once, but that occasion genuinely changed how I look at life. I was attending the Eastern Bible School and Bro. Peter King, who was speaking that year, asked if I would like to go with him to see a friend. I did not know anything about this sister or her condition or situation until I walked into her room.

It is hard to put into words my feelings at that moment. Bro. Peter broke the

I want each of you
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direction than
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God hears.

ice as he went
in and sat
beside her
bed, and they
began to chat.
This sister, as
she lay there,
where she
had been for
years, began

encouraging Bro. Peter to stay strong in the faith. She then welcomed me, and I began to see, not a bedridden invalid, but a sister sharp of mind and particularly strong in her faith. She wanted the Kingdom in a way that, up until that point, I did not really appreciate. What I came to find out was that she shared her faith almost daily with many young and old visitors, encouraging them to trust God. This is not to say she didn't have her own times of darkness in her moments alone. This was certainly not the life she planned, but she understood more than most people that it was not her plan that was important, but rather God's plan. What a marvelous example she is to all of us!

I want each of you to know you are not alone when life goes in a different direction than planned. God sees. God hears. God sent his only begotten son who died for you and for me so we can be part of his plan, the plan that has no deviations. Stay strong. *“Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”* (Phil 4:6-7 NLT).

Alan Markwith,
(Hamilton Greenaway, ON)

THE SPECTRUM OF THE SAINTS

By Sam Taylor

HAVE you ever noticed a rainbow through a wall when light shines through a window? What causes that to happen? Light consists of microscopic particles called photons that travel at a constant speed—the speed of light, yet each carries different amounts of energy. The more energy a photon carries, the higher the frequency of its wavelength. In a vacuum, light travels at the same speed no matter its wavelength. But something fascinating happens when that light enters a different medium, such as a window. Light changes speed in the new material, which causes it to change direction and enter at a new angle. The more energetic photons slow down to a greater extent than less energetic ones, resulting in the separation of colors in the spectrum. Once the light gets separated, each color leaves the window at a different angle, and that's when we see that rainbow on the wall.

After reading this scientific explanation, you may conclude that light passing

through a medium creates colors. Yet, that's not the case. In 1666, Sir Isaac Newton conducted an experiment where he passed red light from one prism through a second prism to determine if more colors branched from it. However, the color didn't change. Prisms or other materials that refract (change the direction) of light don't create new colors, but rather the separate colors are already present. To prove this, Newton used a lens and another prism to recompose the color spectrum back into white light successfully.

White light does not create all the colors; it already contains them. If you only keep one thought from everything you just read, hang on to that one.

Light isn't just featured in the Bible; it's an ever-present symbol of God's character (1 John 1:5). To see light is to see God's handiwork (Psa 20)—not only in the heavens but within ourselves. Reading that the law is but a “*shadow of good things to come*” (Heb

10:1 ESV) implies the presence of light shining backward through time—from the Kingdom to the wilderness wanderings but prevented from being seen due to the limitations of the flesh. After many years of men and women seeking for God's light to shine upon them in full, the true Light was sent into the world in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. John spoke of the Light's appearing into the world:

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:9-13 ESV).

The Lord himself explained it this way in John 8:12:

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (ESV)

Did you know you are a light in this world, too? If you received the Lord Jesus into your life and were baptized in his name, then you are lights shining in the world. The Apostle Paul encourages believers of this truth in Philipppians:

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,

for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. (Phil 2:12-16 ESV).

When you read that, do you see yourself as a mirror reflecting an existing light? Or do you picture a lighthouse on the coast, guiding wayward ships to safety? Admittedly there's a mixture of both in our discipleship, as we seek to emulate the Lord's example. Yet, the Bible doesn't lie. You have been called to shine as a light in the world. Yes, you, despite your youth and with your insecurities, shortcomings and fear of inadequacy. The Lord has called you—individually—to be a light among many to proclaim the good news of God's Kingdom through your words and your behavior.

If you read stories of righteous people in Scripture, you'll often read of them being a "type" of Christ. This simply means they foreshadowed his life and work somehow—whether through sacrifice, overcoming sin, or through leadership. You'll probably notice, however, that no one person by themselves in Scripture can fit the bill of fully foreshadowing Christ. It makes sense, considering how massive the scope of his redeeming work was and continues to be. The best and brightest examples in the Bible, aside from the

The Lord has called you—individually—to be a light among many to proclaim the good news of God’s Kingdom through your words and your behavior.

Lord himself, only make up one facet of the fullness of the Lord’s character. It’s almost as if each of them is but one color on the visible light spectrum, which all combined can create white light.

White light does not create all the colors; it already contains them. The body of Christ is not meant to be incomplete, but whole. Just as we wouldn’t picture Christ’s body as maimed, we should not envision the spectrum of the saints as existing without all the colors represented. For without all the colors present, you can’t reassemble them to get white light again.

There are often expectations for young people in our community (usually unintentional, but not always) to conform to a certain lifestyle or accomplish predetermined goals to be perceived as a contributing member of the local and worldwide community of believers. How often have you felt pressed to be in a committed relationship while you’re still getting your life together? How often have you been asked if you’re planning to get married or when you’re going to have kids, only to hear the tone of disappointment when you explain how it’s not in the cards? How often do you hear about people going on mission trips and showing their zeal for the Lord, yet nobody congratulates you for preaching the gospel through concerted efforts to control your temper? Does one outshine the other?

These are just a few examples of questions implying how one needs to conform, but I imagine you get the picture. The pressures which all members, but especially young people, face to measure up to someone else’s version of the “good Christadelphian” are overpowering. But to hear your best efforts to live the gospel are somehow inferior to someone else’s is like hearing that one color of the spectrum is somehow less valuable than another—even though both are equal components of white light.

As members of the Lord’s body, we need to be more mindful and respectful of those who strive to manifest God’s character differently than we do. Rather than coerce others to conform, we need to affirm their intrinsic worth to God for who they are—not what we want them to be. It’s only together, from all different walks of life, that we can better appreciate the different components of God’s character and strive to glorify Him until the return of His Son.

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matt 5:14-16 ESV).

Sam Taylor,
(Paris Avenue, OH)

PERSONAL PRAYER CAN BE HARD... WHY?

By Joshua Budney

HAVE you ever been asked: “Are you praying often?” My friends and I were recently asked this question during a Bible class. Most of us responded: “Not as much as we would like to.”

Prayer is not always easy. Everyone goes through rough patches in their prayer life with God. But why is that the case? On paper, prayer should be the easiest thing in the world. It should be our go-to action when we are happy about something or when we are thankful! The only thing prayer requires of us is that we turn our attention and focus on God and communicate with Him.

A prayer doesn't have to be long or planned. It does not even have to be spoken. *“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances;*

for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thess 5:16-18).

The Bible tells us *“to pray without ceasing.”* I understand this means prayer should be an ongoing conversation with God throughout our day. Think of this type of praying as a dialog connecting us to God as things come along during the day. Instead of prayer requiring an opening, a body and a closing, this type of prayer has us keeping God in our consciousness. In other words, it means to go about our days in a continuous presence with God. This is a beautiful thought. How wonderful is it to serve a God who wants to be with us, guiding and comforting us always? And yet, despite this, prayer can still be something that we neglect. But why?

I've come up with three primary

reasons why prayer can be difficult. Of course, this is not an exhaustive list and descriptive of everyone's prayer life; relationships with God and mental hurdles are different. Recognizing what challenges we face in our prayer lives will allow us to strengthen our relationship with God and make prayer a more constant part of our lives.

PRAYER AND OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

I believe the first reason our prayer life can go through low points is that the quantity and quality of our prayers are synonymous with our overall relationship with God. If we become distracted in our lives and put God to the side, our prayers become less frequent and less meaningful. Conversely, if we are praying consistently and with purpose, our connection with God is likely stronger. The two go hand-in-hand.

Think of our relationship with God as the same as one with a friend who lives far away. Long-distance friendships take a fair amount of work and effort to maintain. You must be deliberate to stay in touch, make time for each other and find time to talk. Periodically we can get busy and fall out of touch with people we love. Have you ever found it hard to text or call someone you haven't spoken to in a while?

Well, the same is true of our relationship with God. If we don't intentionally make time to talk, we can lose touch. Additionally, it is essential we read His word consistently to find guidance

and responses to the things we pray for. Always remember that even if we lose touch, God is never far away. And while it can be challenging to rekindle a friendship, with God it is always worth it!

UNCOMFORTABLE SUBJECTS AND SITUATIONS

Have you ever not wanted to pray for something or someone? Situations can arise that we don't want to discuss with God or feel too ashamed to pray about.

First, let's consider difficult prayers made for others. We can sometimes find it challenging to pray for others if they've wronged us. A Biblical example of this is how the prophet Jonah burned with hatred for the people of Nineveh. God called on Jonah to preach to the Ninevites and lead them to repentance. But Jonah severely resisted this calling because he did not want to see God's salvation reach Israel's enemies. The Assyrians were notoriously cruel and committed all sorts of gruesome atrocities.

Nonetheless, they were still children of God and needed a chance to repent. We can feel the same as Jonah did. If somebody, especially a member of the ecclesia, hurts us, it can be all-too easy to hold a grudge and develop resentment.

In his teaching, Jesus makes it clear that we are to extend compassion, prayer and love to those we may instinctively want to despise.

*But I say to you, love your enemies
and pray for those who persecute*

Think of our relationship with God as the same as one with a friend who lives far away. Long-distance friendships take a fair amount of work and effort to maintain...

you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matt 5:44-45).

Take an extra second and consider what it means to pray for our enemies. These are people who may have hurt us intentionally. Our enemies include those we cannot stand to be around. They may be people who make us frustrated and angry.

In Jonah's case, God called on him to preach and pray for a group of people known for bone-chilling brutality. However, Jonah's mission was to preach repentance to a nation that had shocking and disgusting sins. God held a compassionate and merciful attitude towards the Ninevites, and we must show this same love and care towards those we don't get along with.

Now, let's consider another sinner that we should not hesitate to pray for: **ourselves**. Praying for forgiveness or help for ourselves can be difficult! I find it hard to ask God for forgiveness for a repetitive sin. It's challenging to make a mistake over and over and then ask for forgiveness again... and again. Nevertheless, the Bible gives us complete confidence that God wants to forgive us and will not forsake us!

David writes:

I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. (Psa 32:5).

As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. (Psa 103:12-13).

If you ever are in doubt about God's love and forgiveness toward us, I cannot recommend that you read Psalm 103 too many times! Even though we may be exhausted by our own sins and feel ashamed to confess them to God, I promise He is ready and willing to forgive us. If we confess our sins and strive to do better, He has promised to be with us no matter how much we fail.

IS GOD LISTENING?

Have you ever felt discouraged because it feels like God is not listening to you? That your prayer conversation feels one-sided? Well, you are not alone. Almost everyone has experienced frustration and doubt when we feel God is not listening to our prayers.

I have experienced times like this.



Times when I just felt so disconnected, and I stopped seeing God's hand in my life. I'm going to be honest; I don't have a magic answer for you, and I don't believe anyone really does. However, if you are experiencing doubt and frustration right now, I promise you it gets better! Scripture gives us wonderful reassurance that God hears our prayers, even if his responses are not on our timetable.

When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. (Psa 34:17-18).

We can trust that God hears our prayers and that He knows what is best for us.

And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him. (1 John 5:14-15).

These verses affirm we can be confident that God hears us when we ask anything according to His will. To understand what this means, I think we must ask ourselves some questions. What are we asking from God? More importantly, why are we asking God for it? We need to reflect and determine if we are asking for something for the right reasons.

One practical thing that has genuinely helped me see the power of prayer in my life is writing down what I pray for. This is a valuable practice because we can look back and clearly see the things that He has answered and the things that worked out differently than we expected!

Additionally, we must always remember to be thankful to God! It is quite easy to ask for something in a time of need and then forget all about it. Instead, we should share the beautiful sentiments of David when he wrote:

I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds. I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High. (Psa 9:1-2).

CONCLUSION

To summarize: prayer can be difficult at times for various reasons. Sometimes it's because we are getting distracted and becoming distanced from God. Sometimes prayer is difficult because we are too ashamed or angry to pray for what we know we need to. Finally, we may be discouraged at times because we feel that God may not be listening, or we may not understand why we're not getting the answer we're looking for. If you are struggling with any of the things mentioned or something else, I hope you're able to work through it and find the answers you're looking for! I heard something once that has been an incredible source of encouragement during times of uncertainty:

If we hold on to the things that we know to be true, despite the things we don't understand, God will grow our faith!

I wholeheartedly believe this is true. God Bless.

*Joshua Budney,
(Meriden, CT)*

LISTENING TO GOD

By Caleb Osborn

INVESTING IN PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

IMAGINE a relationship where you never listened to the other person. You talk to them all the time, you are always asking them for help and guidance, but never give them a chance to respond to your requests for guidance. You spend a lot of time and energy doing things for them, and frequently talk about how much they mean to you. You even try to introduce other people to them. But you never actually take the time to listen to what they say to you. You don't feel you need to listen because your connection with them is so deep that you already know what they are like, what they value, and how they feel about any given situation.

Most would agree that such a relationship would not thrive for long—but sometimes, this dysfunctional picture doesn't look much different than the relationships that we have with God. We claim that God is our Father, our friend. We reach out to Him in prayers and praise, we talk about Him, we put a lot of time into working for Him, we fill our lives with His service, but do we ever actually listen to Him? We say that we know God, but how much time and energy do we spend listening to what He says to us?

The relationship we have with God should be the most important in our lives. Open, honest, attentive communication is the lifeblood of any relationship. But how does communication with the creator and sustainer of the universe work? We

speak to Him by prayer, meditation, and praise, but where can we go to hear God's voice? What is the medium through which He speaks to us? We can observe His sovereign power and creative might in the world around us, and we might feel His providence at work in our lives—but since there is no open vision in this era, there is only way to hear God—through His word. The Bible is the only source we can access to hear God's thoughts.

The Bible is proof that God wants us to listen to Him—He has given us hundreds of pages that describe, illustrate, and declare His character, His plan, His thoughts, His feelings, and His wisdom. This is why the Christadelphian community has repeatedly emphasized the importance of personal Bible study. Bible study is not an optional activity for those who are academically inclined. It's not just for those who are tasked with teaching within the ecclesia. It's for everyone who wants to have a deeper, more tangible, more transformative, more enduring relationship with God.

Perhaps we should define what we mean by "Bible study." Bible study is not about reference books and research or Hebrew and Greek words. It's not about deciphering complex symbols and matching them up with obscure historical events. Bible study, in its simplest form, is reading the Bible to understand what God is telling us. This doesn't require a degree in theology; it simply requires some curiosity and some commitment. We are Bible students, not Bible experts. Even the most experienced and knowledgeable Bible student has only scratched the surface of the wonders of God's word.

Bible study cannot be the mere accumulation of Bible knowledge—it must be the pursuit of Biblical thinking. After all, mere knowledge has a strong tendency to puff up its possessor's pride, and unapplied knowledge has no more value than a tinkling cymbal (1 Cor 8:1; 13:1-2). It's only when we apply what we know that we can bear fruit. But you can't apply knowledge you don't have. Knowledge is not an end in itself, but it is an essential starting point.

Without knowledge, we have no foundation for our worship. When we no longer pursue Biblical knowledge, spiritual shipwreck is sure to follow. God said of the Jews in Hosea 4:6, "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge... and since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.*" In the New Testament, Jesus takes up the same theme, condemning the religious leaders for abandoning their responsibility to teach God's law: "*Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering.*" (Luke 11:51).

Bible study is not (and should not be) the only focus of our spiritual lives, but it is impossible to have a robust relationship with God without listening to Him. Consider a Bible character whose relationship with God we all admire: David, the man after God's own heart. David was someone who saw beyond the letter of the Law to understand the spirit of God's commandments, championed mercy instead of judgement, and accomplished astonishing things for God by his faith. But David was only able to have this kind of vibrant faith

because he was an eager and committed student of the Bible. The clear proof for this is found in just about any verse of Psalm 119. David's longest Psalm exudes its author's passion for the word of God—and it contains a comprehensive description of the effect that careful attention to God's law can have on someone's life. According to David in Psalm 119, the Bible guards us against sin, resists temptation, allows us to understand God, reminds us to keep his commandments, comforts us in trial, preserves our faith in affliction, provides direction in uncertainty, gives reason for praise and bestows profound peace.

We live in an age of unprecedented access to the word of God. Unparalleled literacy rates worldwide, combined with the abundance of free or highly affordable copies of the Bible in a multiplicity of translations allow humanity greater opportunity than ever before to discover and dig into God's revealed will. But familiarity all too easily breeds contempt, and that which is easily accessible is too often viewed with complacency. All scripture is profitable for every aspect of our spiritual lives, so it behooves us to do all we can to take full advantage of the Bible's power to reveal the mind of God.

TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

If we want to prioritize listening for the still, small voice, we must be prepared to intentionally invest in personal Bible study. Knowing how to approach personal Bible study can be a daunting task, but thankfully, there are a variety of useful practices and valuable

resources that can help you get started.

Commit to reading the Bible every day: From a young age, Jesus himself made time to listen to God in his daily schedule (Isa 50:4). Daily intake of the word of God is fundamental for us to maintain a healthy relationship with Him. Whatever reading schedule you choose to follow, make sure that you are engaged in what you are reading. Keep a notebook with you to jot down notes, questions, and themes you encounter. As time goes on, you'll have a growing pile of potential topics and questions to kickstart a more in-depth study.

Choose a topic: A limited section of Scripture is often the most straightforward type of study to navigate: consider a minor prophet or epistle; one chapter or psalm; or a character you find intriguing and relatable. Read the relevant sections several times in different translations, taking detailed notes. Try to brainstorm questions about each verse in your section. Those questions will become an invaluable roadmap for your study. Endeavoring to find answers will get you well on your way to developing a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of your topic.

Utilize Resources: If starting your own study from scratch seems too intimidating, there are several great resources available in the Christadelphian community which you can use to guide your way through the study process:

- **Youth Conference Workbooks:** There are dozens of workbooks available for free download on most youth conference websites.

Most youth conference workbooks guide you through a study of a manageable topic by providing a framework of key questions to answer. Pay attention to the kind of questions asked, and the methods of finding answers that are provided in the book, so you can use those same strategies when you embark on your own personal studies.

- **Audio Resources:** Listen to a series of classes from christadelphianbibletalks.com if you are more of an auditory learner. Some series have accompanying notes or slides you can download for reference. There are also several very useful and engaging Christadelphian produced podcasts available on most podcast streaming applications. These audio resources are a great way of digesting spiritual content when you are occupied with busy tasks that don't require too much mental space.
- **Print Resources:** There are hundreds of books written by Christadelphians that carefully lead you through a given Biblical topic. Many of these books provide profoundly helpful insights as you work through a topic. In addition to books, our community contains a rich library of more digestible, short-form articles published in our various magazines published for the past century and a half.

Develop Consistent Bible Marking Practices: Bible marking has several benefits:

- The space constraints of your margins force you to be succinct, which helps to ensure that you fully understand and can clearly explain

the point you are making.

- Recording your findings in your Bible will help preserve your discoveries. Even years later, a well-placed note can help jog your memory about an exciting connection or Biblical gem you discovered.
- The more time you spend writing and highlighting in the pages of your Bible, the more comfortable and familiar you'll be navigating God's word.

The final two tips have the most potential to tangibly improve the consistency, quality, and fruitfulness of your own Bible study:

Create a personal study schedule:

Once you've chosen your topic and gathered some resources, the most important thing you can do to make sure your study is effective is to make a plan for working through your study. Decide on a time, length, and frequency for your personal study sessions that you can realistically commit to. Take the time to block out in advance what you want to cover in each session to avoid distractions and to make sure you get the most out of your time with the Word. Once you've made your study plan, make sure you follow through! It will take a while to build up the habit but stick it out—as time goes on you will find that your time alone with God's word can be truly life-changing.

Build accountability through community:

One of the best ways to stay committed to your study goals is by sharing them with others. This may mean finding a Bible study accountability partner or building a

wider group of friends and mentors with whom you discuss your studies. Make a point of sharing with them what you've been learning whenever you see them and ask what they are working on. Consistently updating each other on your study progress helps to keep you accountable to your study plan and helps to build a bigger community of people who are united by their shared commitment to and love for God's word.

One of the most effective ways to build a community around listening to God is to organize a consistent group of people who will study together. In the two ecclesias I've been a member of, I've had the privilege of being part of a group of peers who would meet fairly consistently at someone's house on a free evening of the week for personal Bible study, food, and fellowship. It's inspiring to be surrounded by others

who are actively engaging in their personal relationship with God, and the discussions that ensue afterward can become an amazing source of encouragement as everyone shares what they have been learning.

God is looking for people with whom he can nurture relationships. His invitation to join his family is open to anyone who will take the time to listen to him. By investing in personal study of the scriptures, we are investing in a relationship that will last for eternity.

Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. (Isa 55:2-3).

*Caleb Osborn,
(Thousand Oaks, CA)*

His invitation to join his family is open to anyone who will take the time to listen to him. By investing in personal study of the scriptures, we are investing in a relationship **that will last for eternity.**





The Meal-a-Day Mission

In Matthew 25, our Lord states clearly that it is our responsibility to care for the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, and prisoner. The people and organizations that Meal-a-Day partners with abide by our Lord's words. They work to meet the needs of the poorest of the poor in the Americas through the provision of resources that enable self-sufficiency.

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