



# TIDINGS

Volume 86, Number 1, January, 2023

## DO NOT WORRY ABOUT TOMORROW

God can and will take care of the things  
of this life if we worry about the things  
of the Kingdom.

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INCLUDES NEW SPECIAL SECTION ON **PRAYER** (Page 14)

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Building faith in the  
Christadelphian community.

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Volume 86, Number 1 / January, 2023



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EDITORIAL



# A CONVERSATION ABOUT PRIDE

*By Dave Jennings*

**P**RIDE has been man's enemy since the Garden of Eden. It was pride that responded to the temptation of the serpent. Pride is what replaces reverence for God with the worship of self. At the core of sin is pride. It entices us to promote ourselves and be right in our own eyes. It is the fuel that ignites and maintains strife and contentions. It is the converse of a heart at peace.

Furthermore, God strongly opposes the pride of man. Solomon wrote, *"Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD."* (Prov 16:5). Isaiah spoke of God's vengeance being *"against the proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up."* (Isa 2:12). Both James and the Apostle Peter stated that *"God resisteth the proud."* (Jas 4:6, 1 Pet 5:5). The concept of God resisting the proud compels us to think about pride in our lives. The very word, *"resisteth"* is a Greek military term, dealing with opposition in battle. No man would ever want to have God against us!

In fact, the beauty of our Lord's life was that he was the perfect example of one who eschewed pride. It had no place in his life. Despite his wisdom and mastery of Scripture being far beyond his contemporaries, he never gloated about this. He was filled with the Spirit, without measure, yet he never used these gifts to promote himself.

I've often wondered just how difficult it would be to possess the Holy Spirit gifts. There would be such a strong temptation to demonstrate to others the gift that had been bestowed, whether it was edifying or not. We

know that in some ecclesias in the First century, it became a source of pride and caused divisions and confusion. But our Lord never succumbed to such pride. He was instead the perfect reflection of his Father. For the greatest example we have of one who deserves all praise and glory is our Heavenly Father. Yet, it is He who inhabits eternity, and dwells in a *"holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit."* (Isa 57:15).

Scriptures teach us that real strength, real peace, can only be realized by a contrite and humble heart. As Peter wrote, *"humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."* (1 Pet 5:6-7).

But what does this really entail? Having a firm grasp on this question is critical for believers.

### **In Due Time**

The first point is that being exalted is something God does for us. We do not do this for ourselves. Any effort we might take to draw attention to ourselves, and get accolades from others, violates this vital principle. The Lord Jesus, as our Judge, will decide if we are to be exalted. Not us. Not any of those who we may have impressed or dazzled, for only our Lord truly knows our hearts. This principle defuses any need for us to exalt ourselves or our position, for only our Lord's acceptance of us matters.

Connected to this is *"that he may exalt you in due time."* Due time! The

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exaltation of the contrite may not happen at all during their mortal lives. If it does occur during their life, it may be after a very long and arduous journey where they felt rejected and abused. The exaltation of our Lord only occurred when he was exalted by his Father. (Phil 2:9). Though King David received incredible honor in his life, he spent much of it as a fugitive, living from one cave or wilderness to the next. Joseph rose to second in command to Pharaoh, but only after betrayals by his brethren and a prolonged time in prison. We are told, *“they bruised his feet with fetters and placed his neck in an iron collar. Until the time came to fulfill his dreams, the LORD tested Joseph’s character.”* (Psa 105:18-19 NLT).

Are we truly willing to wait for God’s time? Will we bear through the trials of our lives with such humility that we will trust the LORD to deliver us when He is ready? Again, this is the example of our Lord Jesus, *“Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”* (1 Pet 2:23). He endured such temptation and suffering because he knew that the only one he could ultimately trust was his Father. He knew that his Father would exalt him *“in due time.”*

### **Cast Your Burdens on the Lord**

But this brings us to the true apex of the lesson from the Apostle Peter. The way we can patiently bear through our trials and know that God is entirely in charge and will exalt us in due time, is for us to fully accept His care. Casting all our cares—not some of them—on Him, fully embracing that we are under the Great Shepherd’s care in all aspects of life.

This is where there is a collision between pride and faith. Egotism leads us to think we can handle life’s challenges on our own, or that there are categories where we do not need our Lord. We think we know what is best and the right path forward. Being recognized and exalted by others feeds the great need of the flesh to be honored, maybe even feared. But faith takes us down a very different roadway. It offers us the most powerful release we can achieve. Jesus said, *“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”* (John 14:27). The peace of Jesus, as we saw in 1 Peter 2, was that he fully trusted in his Father. While men were reviling him, mishandling him, he knew his Father was in control. That’s the peace we are offered. Trust in God, for *“he careth for you.”*

## Self-Reflection

Now, how do we apply this principle? Are there lessons for how pride can affect us? Is there a spiritual lesson for us to embrace if we want peace?

How we behave is a direct reflection of whether pride is the underlying motivation. James wrote, *“For where there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.”* (Jas 3:16 NLT). James does us a real favor here, for he has provided a diagnostic for ourselves and interactions between brothers and sisters. We are not called on to judge the motivation of hearts, but we can judge behavior. Combining various translations for this verse, we have apt descriptors for what to look for. The list includes *“confusion and every evil work”* (KJV), *“disorder and every vile practice”* (ESV), *“disharmony”* (JBP), *“insurrection”* (YLT). When we see these adjectives appearing in our behavior, or in the conduct of well-intentioned brothers or sisters, it is time to stop in our tracks. These are the products of pride and not of the Spirit of Christ.

During these battles, it is difficult to see within ourselves that our motivation has ceased to be about preserving truth or glorifying God. We are exceedingly skilled at deceiving ourselves about our motivation, but such behaviors only grow on the tree of pride.

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## The Need to be Right

I remember long ago engaging in a heated discussion with a brother during an Arranging Brethren’s meeting. The issue isn’t important now, but it had become personal and flared in this particular meeting. I felt determined to “win” the argument. While I was in the middle of this, I noted that only this brother and I were participating. All other heads were looking down. It was all about us—literally. A noble brother in the meeting interjected that we both needed to stop, and that our behavior was not in the Spirit of our Lord. Well, that really stung. After reflection, I found that my need to be right had overtaken the actual principle being argued. But this faithful brother’s rebuke was just what I needed. Afterwards, I thought about my poor behavior all that night, hardly sleeping. How could I have acted as I did? Sadly, it was my pride and conceit. A couple of years before this

noble brother’s passing, I had the opportunity to thank him for his loving counsel. His rebuke was a great gift to me.

American clergyman, Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887), wrote that “Pride slays thanksgiving, but a humble mind is the soil out of which thanks naturally grow. A proud man is seldom a grateful man, for he never thinks he gets as much as he deserves.” Beecher describes the



rocky, weed-infested soil that chokes us, that turns us from men and women of praise to creatures with an insatiable desire for self-justification.

### Watchmen

How should we react when we see discord and tumult, as identified by James, occur within our ecclesias and committees? Such tumult can last for decades if not checked. Each of us is tasked to be a watchman for these behaviors. Certainly, turning away or ignoring them is counter to being faithful watchmen. We need courageous brothers and sisters to step forward, as that brother did for me. Sometimes it may be wise to rebuke in the moment, or preferred in other cases to do so individually and in private. If a group or a committee has been tasked with some purpose, but their interactions have become a source of strain, unquietness, and disorder, faithful brothers and sisters must step forward to remind them of the spirit they must represent when laboring for our Lord. No one is permitted to sow discord in the ecclesias of our Lord. As Titus instructed, *“As for a person who stirs up division, after warning*

*him once and then twice, have nothing to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.”* (Titus 3:10-11 ESV).

The fact is that the organization of the ecclesia is designed for mutual accountability. Whatever the office or task, we are expected to behave as representatives of our Lord. When we depart from this standard, we must hear and humbly respond to rebuke. When we refuse to hear the rebuke, we are no longer fit for representation of our Lord.

### A Matter of Choice

Isn't it wonderful that Scripture not only helps us to identify unwanted behaviors and their root causes but also clearly describes the behaviors we must all commit to? These goals are valid in our personal lives, our ecclesias and our daily pursuits.

*But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.* (Jas 3:17-18 ESV).

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While vanity propagates discord and tumult, the wisdom from above sows and harvests peace. Every day, and in every interaction, we choose to pursue discord or peace. Can we diffuse our pride by accepting that the only recognition we seek is from the Lord? Will we push aside our agenda to cast

all our care upon him?

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Will we patiently wait for the Lord to deliver us, on His timetable?

Will we acknowledge that whatever the pursuit, we are fully accountable to our God and to one another to be sowers of peace? Will we choose to love every time over fear or discord?

In the end, there is such great comfort when we reject pride in our hearts. We can indeed observe the wonder of God's care for us.

*The humble will see their God at work and be glad. Let all who seek God's help be encouraged. For the*

*Lord hears the cries of the needy; he does not despise his imprisoned people. (Psa 69:32-33 NLT).*

We close here with the words of David, who systematically learned to put his trust in his God. Surely, he was confronted with evil men and "lying vanities." But he, like our Lord, committed to him that judgeth righteously.

*In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness. Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me. For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me. Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength. Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth. (Psa 31:1-5).*

Dave Jennings





# BALANCE

*By Jeremy Newth*

**A**LL things in moderation. Eat well-balanced meals. Live a balanced life. We're familiar with these common sayings about balance.

There's sense to these sayings and the principle of balance. After all, no one's interested in living an imbalanced life. When we are young, physical balance is a handy and underappreciated trait. A 6-year-old can lose her balance, fall over and spring back to her feet without consequence. Such a fall is not so straightforward for a 76-year-old.

Similarly, being emotionally and mentally balanced means that we don't rush from one perspective or reaction extreme to another. Instead, we thoughtfully consider alternative perspectives before pursuing a reasoned response. If only it were as easy to live that wise counsel as it is to write it!

At the same time, continuing this idea of balance leads to interesting questions.

Should we balance work and family? Sounds sensible. Too much work time will impact family time, and conversely, work would be affected if we decided to spend most of our days with our family rather than at the office. Admittedly, that is a fun problem to consider!

### Balanced Scales

What about balance from a Biblical perspective?

The word balance occurs around fifteen times in the King James Version of Scripture, and each time it's within the context of measuring with a fair and balanced scale. From a literal perspective, this means: *"Dishonest scales are an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is His delight."* (Prov 11:1 KJV). From an abstract perspective, this means weighing up multiple positions before making a decision: *"He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him."* (Prov 18:13).<sup>1</sup> It also means judging with impartiality: *"You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty."* (Lev 19:15).

In our world, whether it be a pair of balanced scales or the image of Lady Justice herself, honest scales are a powerful metaphor for impartial justice.

While recognizing that we all seek justice and truth in those matters of judgment affecting us, we are wise to remember that a balanced scale is not an effective metaphor from sin's perspective. If God placed us on a

balance scale with our righteousness on one pan and our sins on the other, the weight of our sins would crash that pan lopsidedly down. Despite our best efforts, our sins far outweigh our righteousness.

*"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* And yet, despite the weight of our sins, we are *"justified freely by [God's] grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."* (Rom 3:23-24). Thankfully, God does not judge us with a perfect balance, instead offering a gift we don't deserve: forgiveness.

From the context of balance, in considering the gracious reality that God forgives the sins of those who are *"in Christ Jesus"* (Rom 8:1), we are left with another question. If the balance in all things is a wise principle, can we find a balance between the two opposing forces of our world, good and evil? And can we find a balance between righteousness and sin?

Right about now, you have started vigorously shaking your head and mouthing, "No!" And you'd be right. This is the very argument that the Apostle Paul addressed in Romans 6:1-4. Balancing righteousness and sin are not possible. A body cannot be both dead and alive simultaneously. If we die to sin, we cannot also live to sin. We can only live as new men and new women in Christ Jesus.

Here, we come to the dichotomy of balance. Balance is a reasonable and thoughtful characteristic, but not a principle that can effectively guide decision-making in every scenario.

## Balancing Engagement

As few single words or definitions can encompass all aspects of a principle, it's time for another concept to enter our consideration of balance: engagement. Balancing work, home, and the Ecclesia is an imperfect exercise. All three aspects of life need attention and focus. We need to engage in each. None should consume the other. However, there are times when legitimate work/school deadlines, an upcoming family celebration, or preparing for a Bible School all require a few late nights. And this is ok. Investing more time in all three events and activities is periodically necessary and acceptable.

We must focus on doing our job effectively at work or school. Why? So that in our diligence and attitude, God's light might shine.

*That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing. (1 Thess 4:11-12).*

*And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Col 3:17).*

When we are at home, we need to strive to give our energy and enthusiasm to our family. Why? So that our home might be a place of godliness, safety, and pleasure.

*For I have known [Abraham], in order that he may command his*

*children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him. (Gen 18:19).*

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her. (Eph 5:25).*

When we are with our ecclesial brothers and sisters, we should engage and serve actively. Why? So that our ecclesial family might be a place of spiritual encouragement, love, and support.

**When we  
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*Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even*

*as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. (Col 3:12-14).*

Be present. Be engaged. In a world rife with distractions and metaphorical flashing lights actively seeking to distract and grab our attention, we need to be engaged. *"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men."* (Col 3:23).

With our desire to be actively engaged in the task at hand, you will rightly ask: How do we avoid overemphasizing one task over another? And here comes that word again: How do we **balance** life's needs?

## Balance and Hierarchies

When balancing and actively engaging in life's demands, it may be helpful to remember a simple Scriptural hierarchy: first God, then family, then ecclesia.

God is our priority (1 Tim 1:17; Matt 22:37-38). Serving and caring for the needs of our nuclear family comes second, and serving and caring for our spiritual family comes next.

By loving God and His principles with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30), we will not overemphasize our nuclear family at the expense of our spiritual family. At the same time, we will follow Christ's example and sanctify and cleanse our physical families with God's

word. We do the same with our spiritual family. With God as our ultimate guide, we will give our best effort to work or school without allowing it to consume our hearts or minds.

When we are at home, engage with home. Be present. There's little value in spending a vacation day worrying about work or school. Jesus' wise advice was to not worry about tomorrow but instead trust in God's care for us. The results are positive spiritual and mental health outcomes (Matt 6:25-34).

Surely Daniel was a notable example

of balance and engagement. With God's blessing, Daniel was a brilliant administrator and chief minister in the extensive kingdoms of Babylon, Media, and Persia. He was wise, thoughtful, and reliable in all-consuming roles filled with constant mental and emotional demands. When Daniel was at work, he was fully engaged. And yet, by keeping God as the priority, his engagement at work and faithful integrity drove all his decisions. God's light shone on Daniel at work and home, as we are commanded to do by our Lord (Matt 5:16). His adversaries could only observe that he had "*an excellent spirit within him.*" They could find "*none occasion nor fault*" in his daily work. (Dan 6:3-4 KJV).

To balance the many needs of life while actively staying engaged with priorities, we sometimes have to say "no." Sure, we generally want to be "yes" people, giving and sharing ourselves with others. However, it's quite okay and sometimes even necessary, to say "no."

Saying "no" to some things means we can devote our energy and time to things of consequence: God, our family, and our ecclesia.

## Imbalance

It takes a lifetime to develop balance and recognize imbalance. In his book



Principles and Proverbs, Bro. Islip Collyer (1876-1953) observes, with humor, that

“We all need a little introspective care in this matter [balance and imbalance]. If a man is not conscious of ever having been at all unbalanced, it is probable that he has never been anything else.”<sup>2</sup>

There are many ways we can become imbalanced in our lives: how we spend our time, where or with whom we expend our energy, what and how much food or other substance we may indulge in, emphasis we may place on certain aspects of Scripture (e.g., prophecy versus practical), pet peeves or scruples we may focus on at the expense of more important principles. Imbalance is a constant challenge in all aspects of our lives. God has placed sin, temptation, changing life circumstances and human nature into our lives to help us consider and monitor our imbalance and to develop skills that help us become more balanced.

The Book of Proverbs helps us identify a key source of imbalance in our lives. The writer observes, “*A just balance and scales are the Lord’s; all the weights of the bag are his work.*” (Prov 16:11 KJV). This verse tells us God is and must always be the standard by which we measure everything. He and His character are true balance. Therefore, our characters need to be balanced, like God’s. When our attributes do not closely match God’s character, we may be out of balance.

Moses learned that God’s character was incredibly balanced and that He wants us to mirror this balance. It was “*full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity... and that will by no means clear the guilty.*” (Exod 34:6-7). How does our persona match this description of God’s character? Is it as balanced as God’s character? At work, at home, in our ecclesia and in our individual lives? Do we show compassion, as Joseph did to his brothers? Can we be a “hot-head” and

Monitor our characters for imbalance and develop skills to balance them after the example of our Father.





quick to anger like Cain? Are we harsh, surly, and ungracious like Nabal, or more balanced like his wife, Abigail? Do we stand up for truth, but bolster and balance this with mercy and forgiveness like Christ?

The prophet Micah asks God what He requires as a sacrifice. God's answer draws on aspects of His character revealed to Moses. His reply is a heart-searching appeal and challenge to seek balance as part of our sacrifice to Him: *"And what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."* (Mic 6:8 ESV). We can easily become unbalanced by emphasizing one of these three characteristics over the other. If we are all about justice and being "right," we ignore love and humility. If we are totally focused on love, we can undervalue truth and justice. And if we forget the importance of humility in our characters, we may not be walking with God! God's appeal to Micah is a life-long challenge to develop our skills at being balanced.

And what are the consequences of being unbalanced? The propellers or turbo-fins of an airplane are an example. Each blade is precisely balanced to match the weight of the surrounding blades. When they rotate, they spin efficiently, quietly and without damage to the engine or plane. If the blades become even the slightest bit unbalanced,

their high speeds create a great deal of noise, and the vibration will transfer to bearings, seals, and other finely tuned instruments throughout the plane. Eventually, imbalances cause the engine to blow apart and lead to a deadly accident. In other words, if we counteract the imbalance in the various propellers of our lives, it can lead to dire consequences in our work, home, or ecclesia. Severe imbalance in our individual lives can be catastrophic to both us and our loved ones around us.

### Summary

Balance. Engagement. God first, our physical family second, and our spiritual family next. Simply put, when we are at work or school, we must do the job well. At home, we must focus on our physical and spiritual family. Love the brotherhood. Monitor our characters for imbalance and develop skills to balance them after the example of our Father. All the while living, moving and having our very being under the guidance of the LORD of heaven and earth (1 Pet 2:17; Acts 17:24, 28).

Jeremy Newth,  
Livonia Ecclesia, MI

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<sup>1</sup> All Scriptural citations taken from the New King James Version, unless specifically noted.

<sup>2</sup> Collyer, Islip, *Principles and Proverbs*, The Christadelphian, 4040 Shaftmoor Lane, Hall Green, Birmingham, UK, 1966, chapter 2, page 9.



## Lord, Teach Us to Pray

This is the first of a year-long series of articles attempting to take a fresh Scriptural look at prayer. Many helpful articles focus on prayer effectiveness and setting prayer as a priority. However, this series will take a more diagnostic look at prayer. How can we better understand the gracious opportunity for prayer in the life of a believer? How can we realize the opportunity for intimacy with our God? What can we do to make prayer a more powerful part of our personal and ecclesial lives? Our sincere thanks to the brethren who have agreed to write these articles. We would also value your contributions by sending an email to the Editor. We'd be pleased to include your thoughts in future issues.—Editor

# UNDISCIPLINED DISCIPLINED PRAYER

*By David Lloyd*

**D**ISCIPLINED is a word that could sound rigid, or worse, robotic and heartless. That can't be prayer! On the other hand, "undisciplined" sounds all over the place, and mostly not in a good place. That can't be prayer, either! This article suggests undisciplined disciplined prayer can be life changing. In fact, it has changed my life.

We get a good taste of disciplined prayer from other religious cultures. Some practices can be admired. The Muslim faith has five prayers daily, a ritual followed by approximately 1.5 billion people. Consult the Internet to find the time for prayer, as it changes with sunrise and sunset. Conversely, the Jewish culture has three prayer times in a day. The times are not as rigid, but overall, it's a rule, not a suggestion. Additionally, many Eastern

religions use a prayer mat to pray on. Sometimes the prayer mat must face a certain direction, such as Mecca for Muslims. It can also be a requirement to pray in a clean place.

Does this sound Biblical? Daniel is the example for three daily prayers (Dan 6:10). Let's learn from the words of Jesus and see the good in these prayer practices.

## **What Does Jesus Say?**

As usual, Jesus is our best example. His elegant teaching on the how-tos of prayer is in Matthew 6. It is in answer to a direct question from the disciples in Luke 11:1. But we will explore all of Matthew 6 because Jesus is teaching more than the actual "Lord's Prayer." Something special shows up first.

Here is my rephrasing of the first verses in Matthew 6:5-8. Remember that in

Luke 11, the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, prompting the giving of the Lord's Prayer. But Jesus gives them a lot more than a model prayer. Here we go:

**When you pray, here's how I want you to do it. Find a quiet personal sanctuary so you won't be in view of anyone. Simply be there with Him, you and Him alone. His rewards then come. The world is full of prayer advice about how to get something from God. Don't follow anyone else. God knows what is needed.**

So, here's excellent advice for prayer from Jesus: Show up! That's it; show up. Be there with Him. In this passage, Jesus assumes the true believer will pray. There's never a good reason to not pray! I often hear that many feel inadequate in their prayer life, and it becomes infrequent. They get tons of advice about prayer and examples in the Bible. But they end up feeling they don't measure up. Jesus says, don't get squashed by what other people do! He just wants you to **show up** with whatever you have. His teaching is the antidote for prayer inadequacy. You are

in a quiet place, and nobody is looking! This is the disciplined part. **SHOW UP!** Come with whatever you have, brilliant or not, lively or sleepy, eloquent or bumbling.

Here is my personal experience with disciplined prayer. I pray at certain times, and they are quite regular. But there are no rules. This routine started when I was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. Before cancer, I felt sleepy with God. From the wake-up call of my diagnosis, I began a morning and evening devotional practice. I now tell people that contracting cancer is the best thing that ever happened to me. Prayer is so important that I acutely feel a loss if something interrupts my alone time with God. It's nothing I am obligated to do, but I thrive on it. Strangely, though, I think if it were a rule I had to follow, as it is in the Muslim and Jewish traditions, it would ruin the whole experience for me. So, setting aside time to pray really can be helpful, but you need self-motivation to read a book or article like this and apply the principles in your life.

Also, there's the idea of a prayer place, on a mat or a quiet place. I like to call



it the sanctuary. Jesus says to find a closet. I know a brother who does use a closet! You see, I counsel men with addictions, and if someone is going to replace an addiction, it is best to replace it with a meaningful relationship with God and Jesus and with prayer as the center. For the disciplined part of this, I recommend these men find a place in their life to go when doing their devotional prayer. Other prayers are great in any setting, but this sanctuary is for your devotional—or disciplined—prayer time.

So, consider calling a separate place your sanctuary and using that space exclusively for prayer. It doesn't have to be elegant or lofty. Maybe you can sit on a few special pillows in a corner, or a chair devoted for this, on your knees anywhere, or in your car at lunchtime by yourself. I'm smiling because I've prayed in all these spots over the years. Be creative! God loves being alone with us.

So, Jesus teaches discipline, but not in a way anyone would have guessed. He's not giving us a formula. Rather, he's telling us just to show up and connect quietly.

### **The Undisciplined Way of Prayer**

The undisciplined part comes next. Jesus tells us not to follow anyone else. It's **your** prayer to God!

If you are not rigid and yet able to pray, you will find disciplined prayer time undisciplined. It can change daily, and you can add and remove elements. I like what Jesus said; "*God knows what is needed.*" With that, it takes listening, which means there is no guarantee how

any single prayer moment will go.

My two points in this section are this: Be a good listener, and pray about things that resonate with you.

I can give examples. Lately, what resonates with me is I want to be kind. God's kindness comes up in all of Paul's letters. When I pray about being kind, it sends a little tingle up and down my spine. I say, if it resonates with you, pray that prayer! To add just a little color, consider the positive approach to asking for something you believe you already have. (Mark 11:24). So, affirm when you pray that "I am kind." These are called affirmations, and I include a bunch in my devotionals.

Since the programs and advice of others are not influencing us, you will have an ever-changing (hence undisciplined) program of devotional prayer. I have found that my devotionals go longer and longer. New thoughts, experiences, and awarenesses will breed new ideas, and if they resonate, it's got to go into your prayer!

After Jesus instructs us to not pray the way others tell us to, he follows with the Lord's Prayer. I believe he was preparing us for our own devotional prayers. The Lord's Prayer is a wonderful starting place for me. I pray it first every day in my devotions. Others, like my wife, prefer to end their devotionals with it. It fits anywhere! I also love the way Psalm 23 fits anywhere. Prayers like these are timeless. They can weave in and out of undisciplined prayer.

An undisciplined prayer can have so many more items. Besides the affirmations, the lyrics of hymns are a



huge part of mine. They come and go. I'm amazed at how a hymn will pop into my head. I call this being a good listener. So, if it moves you, add it in! I have a song that never grows old with me, and I love to say it with the tune in my head every day. As a good listener, I recommend being quiet. All sorts of things come when you are quiet. It is interesting to me that sometimes a thought of a person comes in the quiet parts of a devotional. Go with it!! That's your cue to pray for that person. A time of disciplined prayer can be quite undisciplined.

### Now the Pitfalls

Jesus tells us the pitfalls to avoid in this same teaching in Matthew 6.

Disciplined prayer can easily become a vain repetition. The dark side of discipline is that it becomes all too familiar. I'm sure many of us have once forgotten whether we had done the prayer for the meal or not. That meal prayer can be so easily a vain repetition. It's just that we give it so often. How many ways can we thank God for the food?

The lesson at the beginning was to **show up**. We may give the appearance that we showed up, but maybe we didn't. We see ourselves praying, but we aren't engaged.

So, it's time to go undisciplined. Shake it up!

Jesus gives us the Lord's Prayer, but it can be an easy destination for disengaging ourselves. It is short and all too familiar.

I visit a brother in prison, and he carefully ponders each individual

phrase of the Lord's Prayer. Each phrase is a devotional. That's his way of resonating. I have a technique I use with things that have a lot of elements for my devotional prayers. I take just one part of something and make that the theme of the day. For example, Philippians 4:8 has the idea of thinking about things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, of virtue, and of praise. So that is my list, but it is just too many things to hit me with at once. So today, as I am writing this, the theme for today is to think of pure things. I like to turn this into an affirmation of "I think pure thoughts."

This technique works equally well with the Lord's Prayer. The next theme for me is "*Thy will be done*." I have been thinking about this. But these are my thoughts—you may have something entirely different that resonates with you. Remember, don't follow me or anyone else. But follow God. He knows what you need in prayer.

If you are quiet, it will come. No pressure.

### Conclusion

I am thankful for the good examples other religions set and how they systematically prioritize prayer. Jesus' lovely teaching gives us a beautiful way to approach our Heavenly Father. So, we follow Jesus with discipline and undiscipline in going places unknown. God gives us what we need.

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# DO NOT WORRY ABOUT TOMORROW

*By James Robinson*

**M**Y grandpa, Bro. Bob Lloyd, had a class he gave at several different locations entitled, “Worry is a sin!” While that seems like a powerful statement, he would then go on to prove it. He said that worrying about something is not believing God will take care of it. Not believing God is a lack of faith, and “*whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*” (Rom 14:23). So, worry is a sin. And we need to stop worrying! My grandpa would go on to use Matthew 6:25-34 as a starting place to find strategies to stop worrying. He would say, “Since 50% of our worries

are about the future, and 40% of our worries are about the past, we can eliminate 90% of our worries by just thinking about what we have to deal with today.”

But being part of his family, we would always joke about how, if anyone needed to hear that class, it was grandpa because he worried a lot. He worried before getting on airplanes; he worried about preparing for his classes; he worried about what his grandchildren (like me!) were getting up to.

That's certainly not unique to him. The best points you'll hear in any of my classes are the ones I most need to hear, probably common to most speakers. That's why I'm saying them! If I harp on about how we need to listen to criticism, it's because I need to get better at listening to criticism. If I over-stress looking forward to the hope of the Kingdom, it's because I have learned through experience that looking forward to the Kingdom is the way not to get too discouraged by life. If I write an article for *The Tidings* on avoiding worry worrying, it might be because worrying runs in the family, and it's a problem for me, just like it was for my grandpa.

### **But Worry is Useful!**

However, despite having a lot of worrying experiences, I have difficulty saying that "Worry is a sin." I find it so useful. You see, there are certain things my flesh likes to do and certain things it doesn't like to do. My flesh likes to play computer games. It doesn't need any encouragement to do that. It can do that for hours at a stretch.

But my flesh doesn't like to work. The work involved depends on the day and the situation, but it includes things like my day job as an engineer, doing car maintenance or writing articles for *The Tidings*. Whatever the particular job, my flesh would prefer not to do it and will do its best to find something else to do instead.

Why, then, would Jesus say, "*Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*" (Matt 6:34)?

### **What Did Jesus Do?**

Whenever I have trouble understanding one of Jesus' teachings, I find it useful to follow a principle I call "WDJD." Not "What Would Jesus Do?" but "What **Did** Jesus Do?" In other words, I look for situations in Jesus' life where he applied the same teaching to help me understand how to apply it. For instance, I often wondered how exactly to apply the teaching in Matthew 5:39, "*Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*" Does that mean that if someone hurts me, I should ask him to hurt me more?

Well, fortunately, in John 18:19-23, we have an instance where Jesus was slapped, so we can find out what he did in that situation:

*The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? (John 18:19-23).*

In other words, Jesus did not say, "Strike me again!" He also didn't unleash twelve legions of angels to crush this person. Instead, he continued doing what he was doing.

He didn't fight back, but neither did he become intimidated. He stood his ground.

And so, clearly, that must be what it means to *"turn the other cheek."* It doesn't mean asking for punishment. It means to keep doing the right thing without fighting back. Do the right thing, regardless of the negative consequences. Don't let evil men keep you from doing good.

Which might not have been how you understood *"whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also."* Certainly, that wasn't how I understood it. But by applying "What Did Jesus Do," we learned how Jesus understood it and how we want to behave.

### Jesus and Worry

So, what did Jesus do when he had big, scary situations in front of him? Did he worry about them? The day before he was to be crucified, did he worry about tomorrow? What did he do?

Well, as I'm sure you all know, this is quite a famous scene that appears in all four gospels. Here's Mark's account:

*And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. (Mark 14:33-35).*

It sounds like he was very worried about tomorrow, then!

If worry is a sin, Jesus Christ was a sinner. Here he was, with a really tough thing to do the next day, and he was not just sailing through without a care in the world; he was on his knees, praying. This was a man who was very, very worried about the next day for understandable reasons. He had gathered his friends together to help him and was desperately praying to God for help and support.

If worry is a sin, Jesus Christ was both a hypocrite and a sinner.

There are many times when Jesus thought about things in the future and worried about them. He spent all night in prayer before he chose his twelve disciples. He wept over Jerusalem for the destruction that was coming upon it (Luke 19:41-44). And that was a tragedy that would not happen the next day; he was weeping about something that would happen about 40 years in the future!

Worry is also a major part of his teachings. Telling people something bad will happen to them in the future unless they change their ways is a core part of the gospel message. For example,

*And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilæans were sinners above all the Galilæans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. (Luke 13:2-3).*

Or, again, he criticized the people for being able to forecast the weather but not able to see the coming judgments

This concept of realizing a time of judgment is coming, worrying about the negative consequences of it, and preparing yourself accordingly, is pervasive in the messages of Jesus, John the Baptist, Paul, and Christians throughout history.

on their nation and prepare for them (Luke 12:54-59).

This concept of realizing a time of judgment is coming, worrying about the negative consequences of it, and preparing yourself accordingly, is pervasive in the messages of Jesus, John the Baptist, Paul, and Christians throughout history. Not to mention all of the prophets. Jeremiah wasn't persecuted because his message was, "Don't worry about tomorrow." He was persecuted because his message was, "You're going to be in big trouble tomorrow if you keep acting like this. You'd better change now!"

### **Breakdown of Matthew 6:19-34**

So, if this whole concept of "repent now, so you don't die tomorrow" is a major part of Jesus' message, what does he mean by "Do not worry about tomorrow"?

Well, let's take a closer look at the actual passage: I'm going to start at verse 19.

*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Matt 6:19-21).*

So, the basic idea here is that you should be storing up things for yourself

in heaven, not on earth—worrying about heavenly things, not earthly things. (See how we're already seeing a connection to worrying?)

Now, the next section is what usually throws people off:

*The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! (Matt 6:22-23).*

It seems, at first glance, to be a weird jump to talking about light and eyes. The missing piece here is that an "evil eye" was a Hebrew idiom for greed, as seen in things like Proverbs 28:22:

*He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him. (Prov 28:22).*

So, what Jesus is saying here is actually a continuation of the previous point. The person with the "clear eye" wants what is good ("treasure in heaven"), while the person with the "bad eye" wants what is bad ("treasure upon earth"). Again, the point is about worrying about doing the right thing, which the next verse makes more explicit:

*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye*



*cannot serve God and mammon.*  
(Matt 6:24).

Again, we have two paths here—earthly treasure, evil eye, darkness, serving wealth, and heavenly treasure, clear eye, light, serving God. You can only pick one.

And then we get to the bit you probably think about more as the “Do not worry” section:

*Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?* (Matt 6:25).

But notice that this is both explicitly a continuation of the previous argument, “*Therefore I say unto you,*” and also clearly a continuation of this idea of there being two paths—the earthly path, where you worry about this life, and the heavenly path, which is “*more than meat,*” and “*more than clothing.*”

Let’s then read the rest in that context:

*Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is,*

*and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* (Matt 6:26-33).

Notice again, Jesus isn’t saying, “Don’t worry about anything.” He’s saying, don’t worry about earthly things, like what you’re going to eat or what you’re going to wear. In fact, in verse 33, he’s saying, “*Seek ye first the kingdom of God.*” That’s just another way of saying, “**Do** worry about the Kingdom.” Again, the whole idea of two paths, two treasures, two eyes and two masters continue now with two worries. We’re supposed to be picking worrying about the Kingdom over worrying about this life.

Or, to say it even more plainly, Jesus is not saying, “Worry is a sin!” He’s saying, “Worrying about **this life** is a sin.” God can and will take care of the things of this life if we worry about the things of the Kingdom.

This then leads to that final concluding verse:

*Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* (Matt 6:34).

If we read that verse out of context, we miss the whole idea of there being two paths, and we can misunderstand it to mean we shouldn't worry about any possible thing that could happen tomorrow and just focus on today. But no, in context, Jesus is preaching that we shouldn't worry about tomorrow because tomorrow's things are only the things of this life, and God will take care of them. However, we definitely should be worrying about and preparing for eternity because that's what matters. Don't lose sleep over work, or the car, but do lose sleep over the promise you made to complete *The Tidings* article! Because that's worth worrying about.

### **Jesus Worried About the Kingdom**

And this is exactly what Jesus did. His disciples were astounded that he didn't worry about dying in a storm (Mark 4:38-40). He didn't worry about having enough to eat (Mark 8:17).

But he did worry about some things. He worried about the things of the Kingdom, like picking his disciples or dying on the cross. He instructed us to worry about those things too.

*And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*  
(Matt 10:28).

There are many things that can kill the body. Starvation is probably not a huge worry for some people reading this article, but cancer probably is. COVID-19 probably is. They all can kill the body. But they can't kill the soul.

And that's certainly not to say that God can't help us with the other challenges, too, that we sinfully still worry about—whether we'll have enough to eat, or drink, or wear, whether or not we'll die of disease, and whether our loved ones will be taken care of. He's promised that if we seek first His Kingdom, He'll take care of all the other things. And He will. Not always exactly how we would have chosen for Him to do so, but actually, often in a way that's better than we would have chosen. So, we shouldn't worry about the things in this life that may come up tomorrow. They're being taken care of by someone far smarter and more powerful than us.

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# HYMN 132

# TO GOD BE THE GLORY

*By Joan and Ken Curry*

*(Reprinted from March 2009)*

**W**ILLIAM Howard Doane composed hymn 132. Doane was born on February 3, 1832, in New London County, Connecticut. He was both a gifted student and a musician.

William Doane was extremely successful in business and accumulated substantial wealth as he grew older. Like Frances Crosby and her husband, Doane contributed large sums of

money to many worthwhile causes. He is known as an industrialist and a philanthropist.

During his life, Doane edited forty-three collections of hymns and wrote over 2,000 hymn tunes. One of his favorite hymn writers was Fanny Crosby. He died on December 23, 1915, at the age of eighty-three.



## Collaborators

Fanny Crosby and William Doane also combined their talents to write the hymn, not in the Christadelphian Hymn Book, titled, “*Will Jesus Find Us Watching?*” Doane wrote the music, and Fanny the hymn words. The lyrics express an expectation that Jesus will return, and some Biblical details about his return.

Verse 1 reads:

**When Jesus comes to reward His  
servants,  
Whether it be noon or night,  
Faithful to Him will He find us  
watching,  
With our lamps all trimmed and  
bright?**

These words capture Jesus’ words about the need for lamps filled with oil when he returns, representing preparedness and watchfulness for the Lord’s return. This has been a serious and solemn lesson to all Jesus’ followers throughout the ages since his ascension to heaven.

*Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, “Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.” “No,” they replied, “there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.” But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. “Sir! Sir!” they said, “Open the door for us!” But he*

*replied, “I tell you the truth I don’t know you.” Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour. (Matt 25:7-13).<sup>1</sup>*

Verse 2 of the hymn reads:

**If at the dawn of the early morning,  
He shall call us one by one,  
When to the Lord we restore our  
talents,  
Will He answer thee, “Well done?”**

This verse builds on the thoughts of the Parable of the Talents, in which our accountability to use the gifts God has entrusted to His servants in a wise and faithful way is described.

*The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. “Master,” he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’ His master replied, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness.” (Matt 25:20-21).*

Verse 3 of the hymn outlines the comfort of serving God in the best way we are able. Our daily service should be loving and willing. Doing our best requires our full commitment and attention throughout each day.

**Have we been true to the trust He  
left us?  
Do we seek to do our best?  
If in our hearts there is naught  
condemns us,  
We shall have a glorious rest.**

The concept of hearts void of condemnation is discussed in 1 John

3. We are very much aware of our inadequacies. We need to be equally aware of the love and mercy of our Heavenly Father and His Son:

*This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and He knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God. (1 John 3:19-20).*

Verse 4 of the hymn stresses the need to be watching daily for Christ's return:

**Blessed are those whom the Lord  
finds watching,  
In His glory they shall share;  
If He shall come at the dawn or  
midnight,  
Will He find us watching there?**

**Our daily  
service should  
be loving  
and willing.  
Doing our  
best requires  
our full  
commitment  
and attention  
throughout  
each day.**

Mark emphasizes the need for continuous and vigilant watching for Jesus' return. We can be so easily distracted and enticed by secular interests that lead to inattention to godly service and responsibilities:

*No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert!*

*You do not know when that time will come. Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: "Watch!" (Mark 13:32-33, 35-37).*

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<sup>1</sup> All Scriptural citations are taken from the New International Version.



A person stands in a field of tall grass, seen from behind with arms outstretched towards a bright, hazy sunset sky. The person is wearing a dark t-shirt and pants. The grass is golden-brown, and the sky is a mix of orange and yellow with some light clouds.

# ADAM AND CHRIST BY ONE MAN

*By James McCann*

**I**n each of the first four examples in our series on *Faithful Family Legacies*, we have seen how they all continually pointed forward to the work of Almighty God in our Lord Jesus Christ. This is not just because Christ is “*before all things*” (Col 1:17), the one around whom God framed the ages (Heb 1:2) and the word of God made flesh (John 1), but also because the legacy that Christ began is the most important of all.

To truly appreciate the legacy of Christ, we must build it in connection and

contrast to the work of another legacy, that of Adam, right back at the start of Scripture. This is not an obscure link but rather one carefully and definitively directed by God through His inspired word.

*For as by **one man's** disobedience **many** were made sinners, so by the obedience of **one [man]** shall **many** be made righteous.* (Rom 5:19, Compare v. 15).

*And so it is written, The **first man Adam** was made a living soul; the **last Adam** was made a quickening*

*spirit... the **first man** is of the earth, earthy: the **second man** is the Lord from heaven.* (1 Cor 15:45, 47).

Paul is showing us that to understand the power of the legacy of Christ, we must see how he came to reverse the consequences of another legacy begun in Adam. The Scriptures don't want us to miss this vital connection about how in both circumstances, the "*one man*"

brought consequences that impacted the "*many*" who come from them. This parallel is to show how God works His principles through a representative family head (federal head), and this method will bring amazing blessings to those who come to see God's ways as just and right.

Just note the key parallels and contrasts that scripture paints in this summary table:

Adam	Christ
<i>"the first man"</i> (1 Cor 15:45, 47)	<i>"firstborn from dead"</i> (Col 1:18, Acts 26:23)
<i>"the beginning"</i> (Matt 19:4)	<i>"who is the beginning"</i> (Col 1:18)
special creation from the dust (Gen 2:7)	Special creation (Luke 1:30-35)
made a <i>"living being"</i>	<i>"a life giving spirit"</i> (1 Cor 15:45 NIV)
<i>"made in God's image"</i> (Gen 1:26-27)	<i>"image of invisible God"</i> (Col 1:15)
<i>"a son of God"</i> (Luke 3:38)	God's <i>"only begotten"</i> and <i>"beloved son"</i> (Matt 3:17, John 3:16, 1 John 3:18, 1 John 4:9)
Father and head of the entire human race and Eve called "mother of all living" (Gen 3:20)	<i>"Head"</i> (Col 1:18) and <i>"father"</i> (Isaiah 9:6) of God's NEW spiritual creation

The Divine contrast between Adam and Christ is seen when we see the legacy that each brought. In both Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, we have the key exposition of these principles. To Adam, it is ascribed that "*by man came death,*" "*in Adam all die,*" "*first man Adam,*" and "*first man of the earth.*" To Christ, we have "*by Man also came the resurrection of the dead,*" "*in Christ all made alive,*" "*last Adam,*" and "*second man is the Lord from heaven.*" (1 Cor

15:21, 22, 45, 47). We must understand this is not just because Adam is a figure of Christ. Rather, Scripture is making us see the vital significance of how death came into the world, that it is related to why Jesus had to bear those consequences and how he overcame them!

To understand the legacy of Adam that Paul describes, we must go back to Genesis 1-3. When God first created, He looked upon His creation

and declared it to be “*very good*.” This means that each aspect of God’s creation was initially fit for the purpose for which He created it. For mankind, this meant they were created with the moral capacity and physical attributes to reflect God’s image and likeness. God wanted to develop these in man and for them to have dominion over creation (Gen 1:26-28), filling the earth with His glory.

Sin, however, entered the world and was to change all of that. The serpent, although “*very good*,” was not a creature God designed with the capacity for spiritual reasoning. Its “*subtle*,” perceptive or observant features (Gen 3:1) were not an evil characteristic (Matt 10:16), but it was still limited. The serpent did not have moral sentiments. When it spoke from its own resources, it became the father of a lie because there was no truth (moral capability) in him (John 8:44).

Adam and Eve, who did have the capacity for divine thinking, should have stayed true to their God’s word. Eve, being utterly deceived by the serpent’s logic (1 Tim 2:14), took the fruit God had commanded them not to eat (Gen 2:16-17). In Genesis 3:7, we see that only after adopting the serpent’s carnal thinking, Eve “saw” the tree in a way she had never seen before. It had awakened in her a desire for that which God had forbidden. Adam, although not deceived, stayed silent, failed to enact his God-given leadership, and also took the fruit and ate it. As such, sin entered the world “*by one man*,” for Adam was responsible.

Can we imagine how God felt about their betrayal? God’s word had been

dishonored, His glory reproached, and His creation marred (Psa 69:7). Their “*eyes being opened*,” they knew by experience “*good and evil*.” Trying to cover themselves (Gen 3:7), they felt the consequences of sin on their bodies. Many lusts had been awakened and orientated by sin, which continued to influence them. They were ashamed and conscious of the experience of evil and its effects on them. Sin had broken the relationship they had enjoyed with God (Isa 59:2). Furthermore, by divine judgment, they were now made subject to death (Gen 3:17-19). God’s sentence had made them mortal, dying creatures.

In Romans 5, Paul shows that if we understand how death came into the world, we can then see how Jesus will reverse the consequences of sin and share eternal life with us. Here the legacy of the first man, Adam, came to be overcome by a new legacy in Christ. Paul says in Romans 5:12, “*By one man came sin and death by sin, so death passed through to all men, for that all have sinned.*”

Paul’s point in 5:12 is that death only came from Adam’s sin. This idea is further expounded throughout the entire chapter: “*Death passed through to all*,” (v. 12) “*Death reigned from Adam*,” (v. 14) “*Through the offence of one the many be dead*,” (v. 15) “*Judgment by one to condemnation*,” (v. 16) “*By one man’s offence death reigned by one*,” (v. 17) “*sin hath reigned unto death*.” (v. 21).

The climax of this is found in Romans 6:9, where we are told that even Jesus came under the dominion of death, which was a consequence of sin. This is important because if we understand

how sin and death entered the world through the head of mankind's natural family, Adam, then we can see Paul's connection to how sin and death will be removed through the head of God's spiritual family, Jesus Christ, who bearing the legacy of Adam came to defeat it!

The fall in Eden has left mankind mortal and prone to sin. Death had become their enemy, and only God could and would save them from destruction. God displays His amazing wisdom and power in the method He chooses. God planned to enforce His just and necessary law against sin while providing a way of redemption through it. He is truly "*A just God and a Saviour.*" (Isa 45:21).

This is exactly the "*good news*" God promised in Genesis 3:15. Although "*enmity*" would now exist between the two, and their seed, God would ultimately crush the serpent and its sting. This prophecy shows how important it was for them to see God's words' relevance to them personally and their posterity. Here spoken to the serpent is the promise that God would provide one from Adam's race ("*in Adam*"), born of a woman (the "*seed of the woman*") who would come bearing Adam's legacy, to battle and crush sin, to reverse its effects. Jesus was going to be "*made a curse for us*" (Galatians

3:13), and so "*bore our sins in his own body on the tree.*" (1 Peter 2:24). In so doing, he created a new life-giving legacy.

Here is why death became an "*enemy*" and why Jesus had to go through it to bring salvation. The death that came by sin could only be conquered by one who would first submit to it (Heb 2:14). Jesus came with the very same fallen nature that bore sin's consequences, and being strengthened by God, he could "*crush*" sin in the very nature it had "*reigned unto death.*" (Rom 5:21). And although he would suffer a wound in "*his heel*," it would only be temporary, for he would rise out of death. Therefore, this is why Jesus had to come under the dominion of death. Romans 6:9 was the result of sin that entered the world by man!

We can truly appreciate the power of God's victory in Jesus Christ and the legacy he must have on our life. Adam was the head of the human race, and the disabilities that came from him as a result of the fall were shared with his posterity. This situation is their misfortune, not crime. Even Christ was in Adam (Luke 3:38) to share sin's consequences. But Jesus was to become a new head, in contrast, of a family who could share the blessings he won over sin and death. This amazing hope is expounded in Romans 5:15-18 and 21:

The amazing victory over sin was not just in his death but also his life. He died to represent all who had sinned and could not offer the perfect sacrifice.

*“By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous,” “even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (v. 21).

Paul’s point is that we innocently partake of the consequences of Adam’s sin, having not committed his crime (or are guilty of his crime). In the same way, we share and partake of the victory Christ’s obedience has gained, even though we have not or can achieve Christ’s perfect righteousness! God is right to deal with us according to these federal heads.

In Christ’s life and ultimately in his death, sin was conquered, and the body of sin destroyed. (Rom 6:6). Jesus could not have destroyed sin in himself if our nature did not bear sin’s consequences. In a figure, God made Jesus, *“who knew no sin to be sin for us.”* (2 Cor 5:21) in the sense that he came in the *“likeness of sinful flesh”* (Rom 8:3) or the flesh that sin came to have dominion over. This did not mean Jesus was a sinner; he was sinless, *“made sin for us who knew no sin.”* (2 Cor 5:21). It is the figure of a tyrant who came to rule, as sin did over man. But Jesus bore that same nature to break its power.

The amazing victory over sin was not just in his death but also his life. He died to represent all who had sinned and could not offer the perfect sacrifice. As our representative, he died a death of condemnation of men (Luke 23:40-41), the *“just for the unjust.”* (1 Pet 3:18).

Such a moral victory had won over sin. Jesus *“loved righteousness and hated iniquity”* (Heb 1:9), so his perfect life was honoring to God. Because Jesus was God’s Son, he could be sinless,

for he was uniquely strengthened (Psa 80:17, Rom 1:3-4). For this reason, Scripture records how God is the victor and savior. *“I [God] will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.”* (Hos 13:14). Paul says, *“Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (1 Cor 15:57, compare 2 Cor 5:19).

It was Jesus’ sinless life that meant the grave could not hold him (Acts 2:24, Heb 4:15). Adam’s sin had brought death, but now the events in Eden were undone. For if the *“sting of death is sin,”* and Jesus was sinless, then *“O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is your victory?”* (1 Cor 15:55). Jesus’ death had conquered sin, breaking its reign, and a hope of resurrection made possible to be shared with us all. How amazing our hope of resurrection is! How wonderful is this new legacy in Christ!

In studying these two legacies, we see that Christ’s is not only the most amazing but our hope, comfort and strength. Christ bought a legacy of forgiveness, redemption, and resurrection. To be a part of this, we do so by faith, baptism, and a life lived by the power of Christ’s life in us (Gal 2:20). May we always stay connected to Christ’s legacy as we faithfully await his return. *“Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”* (Rev 22:20).

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# PART 3 A TEMPLE FILLED WITH UNSEARCHABLE RICHES

By George Booker

## God's New Temple, Under Construction

*This grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles  
the unsearchable riches of Christ. (Eph 3:8).*

**G**OD established Jerusalem as the seat of His throne and His temple for the Jews. But when God appointed His Son as the vessel of "grace and truth"—the fullness and perfection of grace, including forgiveness of sins—He established a new, fuller worship.

This new worship, embodied in Jesus Christ, was not confined to Jerusalem but was offered throughout the world to Samaritans and other Gentiles. It would be a religion of "true spirit" which matches that which God created

in His unique Son, and a religion not bounded or confined in one place or one temple service: "*either on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.*" (John 4:21).

### God Has Built His true Temple

God made His Word into flesh when He "*tabernacled*" in the person of His Son (John 1:14). When the Temple-body of Jesus was crucified by his enemies, his Father "*built*" it again in three days. (John 2:19, Acts 2:32).

The tabernacle of Moses and the temple of Solomon had been erected at the LORD's commands, and following the patterns which He gave to men.

But when it came time to establish the final and perfect tabernacle/temple in the person of Jesus Christ, the LORD God Himself did not entrust that project to humans. He **"built"** His only begotten Son Himself. Thus, our Lord Jesus became:

*the sanctuary* [Greek *"hagios"*: holy place], *the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being.* (Heb 8:2).

"True" here is the Greek word *"alethinous,"* which signifies that which is real and substantial, in contrast to that which is only representative and a "shadow."

When the Romans overthrew Jerusalem, they destroyed Herod's temple—which, like Moses' tabernacle and Solomon's temple, will never be rebuilt. But the true tabernacle, pitched by God—the true Temple of Christ rebuilt in glory by God—will never be destroyed or supplanted. He who is built by God will truly last forever!

Does it not seem an insult to the LORD God Himself that we should believe and teach that such a "Temple" which God built in the person of His only-begotten Son—a human "Temple" filled with *"unsearchable riches"*—also needs a massive temple such as men might build, and herds

of sacrificial animals, to complement God's most extraordinary creation?

Or to put it another way, would not all these unnecessary trappings detract from the exquisite beauty of the perfect, eternal "Temple" of God, which is His only begotten Son?

### What kind of "riches" are found in God's holy places?

The original tabernacle in the wilderness was filled with the riches of Egypt: silver and gold given by Egyptians to the children of Israel as they left the land of their captivity (Exod 3:21-22; 11:2-3; 12:35). Much of this wealth was essentially paid by Egyptians to Jews as reparations for their centuries of slavery. Later these same riches were thankfully contributed by the Israelites as freewill offerings to the LORD God who had set them free—*"gold jewelry of all kinds: brooches, earrings, rings and ornaments."* (Exod 35:21-22). Thus, Egypt enriched the tabernacle.

The original temple of Solomon was, in a similar fashion, built with materials provided by others, and furnished with riches taken from the Gentiles. King

David *"made extensive preparations before his death"* (1Chron 22:5), gathering together building materials and wealth with which to finance the temple's construction (1Chron 18:1-13; 22:1-5; 29:10-16).

His son Solomon continued this accumulation of wealth through taxes and tribute from the conquered nations roundabout. By this means,



and by trade on an enormous scale, Solomon also gathered much gold (1 Kgs 9:28; 22:48; 2 Chr 8:17-18), fine wood, and precious stones (1 Kgs 10:11; 2 Chr 9:10) from more distant lands. Much of this bounty would find its way into the great temple which Solomon built.

Yet, when all was said and done, how much was this great treasure really worth? After all, Moses himself gave up the *"treasures of Egypt"* *"for the sake of Christ."* Though as yet unseen in Moses' day, the coming Messiah was known to be of far *"greater value"* than any material wealth (Heb 11:26). And Solomon knew that no house built by men—no matter how grand and ostentatious—could truly contain the LORD God, nor be a place of comfort and rest for Him:

*But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! (1 Kgs 8:27).*

*But who is able to build a temple for [God], since the heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain him? Who then am I to build a temple for him, except as a place to burn sacrifices before him? (2 Chr 2:6).*

*But will God really dwell on earth with men? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! (2 Chr 6:18).*

Isaiah has testified to this same effect:

*This is what the LORD says:*

*"Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD. "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word." (Isa 66:1-2; compare Isa 57:15).*

Great houses built by men, even God's houses built at His bidding, have been destroyed—never to be rebuilt. The wealth acquired by men from Egypt and other nations, even as an offering to God, has long since been decimated—never to be regathered. But we know now that the only eternal building of God's dwelling is to be seen in His resurrected and glorified Son, and the only true riches of God are to be found in the *"unsearchable riches of Christ,"* grace leading to eternal life in him. (Eph 3:8 KJV).

Such a grace can never be housed in a man-made structure, and such a grace can never be bought with any amount of money:

*For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. (1 Pet 1:18-19).*

### **Yet God is continually building His spiritual Temple**

God is still working to "create," even today, individual believers who will

God is still working to "create," even today, individual believers who will make up His eternal spiritual Temple, of which Jesus Christ is the cornerstone.

make up His eternal spiritual Temple, of which Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. The plan of the Divine Architect calls for a wonderful "building" to be erected around that one cornerstone:

*As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Pet 2:4-5).*

From one perspective, we may say that God's new Temple has already **been** built. When Christ rose from the dead on the third day, as he had prophesied, the Temple of God had been formed again:

*Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken. (John 2:19-22).*

However, from another perspective, this new Temple is still under construction.

As the Jews pointed out, Herod's great Temple had been, at the time they spoke, 46 years in building and still not

complete. And only 40 years later, the Romans leveled the whole complex, burned and eventually swept it away, except for its foundation. By contrast to Herod's temple, Jesus' Temple has been under construction for almost 2,000 years—and it is not finished yet:

*You [Gentile believers] are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built [being built: continuous action] on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together [being joined together: continuous] and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together [again, continuous] to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (Eph 2:19-22).*

As the "building" was **under construction** in Paul's day, so it continues to this day. Every believer is adding his or her part to the great structure, to the glory of God.

This is the true Temple that will exist through all eternity, and in my opinion, it needs—even demands—greater attention than we, as a brotherhood of believers, have given it to this point.

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# PART 4

# A BIBLICAL DEMONOLOGY

By Richard Morgan

**W**HY did Paul intertwine Biblical allusions with quotations from Greek philosophers in his speech to the Stoics and Epicureans? He's not performing a religious syncretism; he has no desire to mix the gospel with the great philosophical thinkers of the day. However, he **does** want to find some common ground with his hearers, and he does that by using his knowledge of Greek writings.

Having alluded to Jewish Scripture, he then finds common ground with the Stoics' writings. He also introduces the quotations in verse 27 with the words *"that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us"*<sup>1</sup>—something alien to the deistic philosophy of the Epicureans but accessible to the Stoic mindset.

It is possible the first quotation in verse 28—*"In him we live and move and have our being"*—is attributable to Epimenides, a nod to the legend of the unknown god. The context of Epimenides' poem is what Paul quoted in Titus:

A grave has been fashioned  
for thee,  
O holy and high One,  
The lying Cretans, who are all the  
time liars, evil beasts, idle bellies;  
But thou diest not, for to eternity  
thou livest and standest,  
For in thee **we live and move  
and have our being**<sup>2</sup>

However, Paul may also be alluding to a hymn penned by the Stoic philosopher Cleanthes, the successor in Athens to Zeno, the founder of the Stoics:



Most glorious of the immortals,  
invoked by many names,  
ever all-powerful,  
Zeus, the First Cause of Nature,  
who rules all things with Law,  
Hail! It is right for mortals to  
call upon you,  
since from you  
**we have our being,**  
we whose lot it is to be  
God's image,  
we alone of all mortal creatures  
that **live and move**  
upon the earth.<sup>3</sup>


The second half of verse 18—“*For we are indeed his offspring*”—is commonly attributed to another Stoic philosopher, Aratus, a disciple of Praxiphanes, an Aristotelean philosopher and himself a pupil of Theophrastus who wrote *Characters* which we referred to earlier. While a disciple of Praxiphanes, Aratus met Zeno while visiting Athens.

Paul's eruditeness would have appealed to the ears of the philosophers listening. Here is the excerpt from Aratus's work:

From Zeus let us begin; him do  
we mortals never leave unnamed;  
full of Zeus are all the streets and  
all the market-places of men; full  
is the sea and the havens thereof;

always we all have need of Zeus.  
**For we are also his offspring;** and  
he in his kindness unto men giveth  
favourable signs and wakeneth the  
people to work, reminding them  
of livelihood. He tells what time  
the soil is best for the labour of the  
ox and for the mattock, and what  
time the seasons are favourable  
both for the planting of trees and  
for casting all manner of seeds.  
For himself it was who set the  
signs in heaven, and marked out  
the constellations, and for the  
year devised what stars chiefly  
should give to men right signs  
of the seasons, to the end that all  
things might grow unfailingly.  
Wherefore him do men ever  
worship first and last. Hail, O  
Father, mighty marvel, mighty  
blessing unto men.<sup>4</sup>

The context of these words, quoted by Paul in Acts 17:28, helps us understand things from the perspectives of both Paul and the philosophers who were listening. If the other quotation was from Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*, which I suggested may be the case, then the further mention of Zeus in this context is even more significant.



*For himself it was who set the signs in heaven, and  
marked out the constellations...*

Zeus was the main god of the Stoic belief system. They identified him with the universe itself; however, not as a transcendent being, but immanent, immersed in nature itself.<sup>5</sup> The other gods of their pantheon were manifestations or agencies of the one divine substance. However, if you read the excerpt above and insert “Yahweh” for “Zeus,” it’s not far from a good description of the God of Israel.

Paul had already said, *“Therefore, what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.”* (Acts 17:23 NASB). There was a semblance of understanding in the Stoics’ religion. They worshiped a god who presided over Creation but were ignorant of who that one true God was. It wasn’t Zeus, but it was someone like Zeus, only better, not immanent but transcendent and sovereign over all things, Jew and Gentile alike.

The *probatio* portion of Paul’s speech having ended, he now comes to his final appeal, the *peroratio*, beginning in verse 29. Paul’s closing argument is brilliant in its succinctness—*“Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.”* (Acts 17:29). The central point of common ground with the Athenians is *“we are indeed his offspring,”* and therefore why do men insist on making gods out of metal and stone?

In saying this, Paul, as do the prophets of the Old Testament, subtly dismisses the idea that their gods had any real existence. While the Athenians may have considered there were invisible

powers behind their idols, Paul reduces them to exactly what they’re made of—created matter and nothing more. The wider lesson for the Athenians was that their gods were immanent, part of Creation and constrained by it.

Paul hearkens back to his charge of ignorance (v. 23) in verse 30—*“The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.”* For two thousand years, Yahweh, God of Israel, concentrated His purpose in the Jewish people, but *“we are also his offspring,”* and now that call has gone out to the Gentiles. God wants all His children to know who He is and the gods they had been worshiping were figments of the imagination.

Paul’s final appeal after he was questioned about Jesus and the Resurrection forms a bookend with the beginning of his speech:

*Because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.* (v. 31).

Paul ended his speech there with an intriguing invitation for the Athenians to find out more; some did (vv. 32-34).

While Paul did not explicitly quote from any Jewish writings, as opposed to the Greek poetry he directly referenced, the words *“he will judge the world in righteousness”* are found twice in the Old Testament Scriptures. Psalm 9:8 may have been in Paul’s mind (for instance, he is doing what

it says in verse 11—“*Tell among the peoples his deeds!*”), but it is more likely that Psalm 96 was the basis of his statement. The word “*He will judge the world in righteousness*” appears in verse 13, but the whole psalm is relevant.

For instance, verse 2 says, “*Tell of his salvation from day to day*” which is what Paul was doing in Athens. He also followed verse 3—“*Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!*” The key verses, however, are verses 4-5. Before we look at those, consider the balance of the psalm. Verses 11-12, for instance, state the following:

*Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy.*

These words express the transcendent sovereignty of Yahweh. All created things, in heaven and earth, give glory to God. So, even if the nations believed there was immanent supernatural power in the elements of creation, they ought to worship Yahweh instead. The thrust of Paul’s message is summarized by verses 4-5:

*For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.*

Last month we looked at the word *deisidaimonesteros*, which Paul uses in verse 22—“*I perceive that in every way you are very religious.*” The word literally means “fear of demons” and expresses the Stoic religiosity and

their devotion to the small gods of their pantheon. Here in Psalm 96, Yahweh is to be “*feared above all gods.*” Then, in verse 5, the psalm says those gods are “*worthless idols.*” However, the word used in the Septuagint (LXX) is *daimonion*—the plural for demons.

What are the implications regarding demons from this brief survey of Paul’s speech in Athens? To answer that question, let’s return to Deuteronomy 32, which formed a large basis of his remarks.

Just like in Psalm 96, this chapter alludes to the sovereignty of Yahweh throughout, beginning with the words “*Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak, and let the earth hear the words of my mouth.*” (v. 1) The heavens and earth are personified as if they are sentient beings, but, once again, subservient to the transcendent Creator. Verse 2 continues the theme, using elements of creation to express God’s control of all things.

The section Paul was probably thinking of in Athens includes the words, “*They sacrificed to demons that were no gods*” (v. 17). Here the term “*demon*” (Heb. *shed*, LXX *daimonion*) and “*god*” are put together, showing their intimate connection. After the children of Israel came out of Egypt, they “*mixed with the nations,*” “*served their idols,*” and “*sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons*” (Heb. *shed*, LXX *daimonion*)” (Psa. 106:35-37)—again, serving idols, or gods, and sacrificing to demons are put together as the same thing. So, in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32 with these words:

*Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? (1 Cor 10:18-22).*

With the words *“they offer to demons and not to God,”* we see the allusion to Deuteronomy 32:17—*“They sacrificed to demons that were no gods.”* Paul demotes demons to the realm of idolatry, and since an idol is nothing (v. 19), they have no real existence outside the figments of the imaginations of the superstitious.

Also, by asking, *“Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy?”* (v. 22), Paul alludes to Deuteronomy 32:16—*“They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods.”* The connection with Paul’s speech in Athens is clear: biblically speaking, demons are nothing more than the made-up gods of the Gentiles.

There’s a further intriguing lesson from Deuteronomy 32 seen in the judgments poured out by Yahweh on those who worshiped false gods/demons. Verses 23-25 list those judgments, but when we

dig a little deeper into the Hebrew, we see something remarkable. For instance, the Hebrew word for “*plague*” in the judgment “*devoured by plague*” (v. 24) is *reseph*. Now it just so happens that Resheph was the name of a demon in the ancient world. He was a Canaanite deity of plague and war. The word translated as “*pestilence*” (Heb. *qeteb*) in verse 23 is also the name of a pagan deity.

So, what’s going on here? This is not the only time that this phenomenon occurs in the Bible. Psalm 91 contains a list of things that might make one scared—*“the terror of the night,” “the deadly pestilence,”* and so on, and here too, the Hebrew words employed were also the names of ancient pagan deities. The pagans of the day had gods of plague and pestilence, but what Yahweh does is use those very things they ascribed to their deities against them! He says, *“I created these things; I am in control of these things; there is only one God!”*

At the very least, the people would learn to put their trust in Yahweh instead of these other gods, understanding that He was mightier than all other gods. This was also the method used by Jesus when he cast out demons: showing the people that the Holy Spirit of Yahweh was more powerful than demons.

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<sup>1</sup> All Scriptural citations are taken from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Lawlor H.J. *St. Paul’s Quotations from Epimenides* in *The Irish Church Quarterly* Vol.9, No.35. p. 180. 1916.

<sup>3</sup> Thom J. Cleanthes’ *Hymn to Zeus*. 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Aratus *Phaenomena*, translated by G.R. Mair.

<sup>5</sup> Frede, D. (2003), *Stoic Determinism*, Cambridge University Press. pp. 201-202.

# LEADING LADIES

By John Pople

Our second and final preview of Bro. John Pople's new book, "*Leading Ladies*," which is being planned for publication in early 2023, Lord willing.

## THE DAUGHTER OF THE VOW: JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER'S STORY (Part 2)

*"My father, you have given your word to the Lord.  
Do to me just as you promised."* (Judg 11:36).<sup>1</sup>

**I**N the previous article, part 1 of Jephthah's daughter's story, we solved many mysteries. We solved the mystery of what Jephthah meant by "a burnt offering"—he intended of his free will to give the LORD a male without blemish, for life, in keeping with what the law insisted a burnt offering had to be. However, it was a highly flawed offering because it was made of grudge-born bitterness. He intended to force one of his brothers, whose legitimate births made them purer than him, into lifelong Temple service, thus terminating their genealogical line. He has been harboring a simmering fury against them for years because they evicted him from the house, family, and inheritance, since he was born of a prostitute. This development also solved the mystery of why he made them swear an oath before

the LORD at Mizpah that, if he returned from the war victorious, he would have full authority over them. Otherwise, they could simply refuse his commands. He has now returned to his parent's house at Mizpah, where his brothers reside. Believing his daughter is safely ensconced at home in Tob many miles away, he eagerly awaits who will come out of the house first and thus be the victim of the vow.

*Then Jephthah came to his home at Mizpah. And behold, his daughter came out to meet him with tambourines and with dances. She was his only child; besides her, he had neither son nor daughter. And as soon as he saw her, he tore his clothes and said, "Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low, and you have become the*



*cause of great trouble to me. For I have opened my mouth to the LORD, and I cannot take back my vow.” (Judg 11:34-35).*

### **It’s his daughter.**

This story is a constant stream of mysteries; as soon as one is solved, another appears. How is it that Jephthah’s daughter is in the family home in Mizpah when she should have been in Tob?

We’re not told, so we can only speculate. Have the brothers found out about the vow and lured Jephthah’s daughter to the family home to defeat his plan? Almost certainly not because Jephthah’s response to seeing his daughter is despair, not rage. If Jephthah had learned his brothers had tricked his daughter into being there and were thus responsible for ruining her life, he would’ve been incandescently furious, and I doubt a single one of them would’ve lived out the day. His anguish shows he knows they aren’t responsible for ruining her life; he is.

I suggest she decides to be there to meet her father; she has acted entirely with her own agency. We have one clue to work with—she leads a victory dance with tambourines, which triggers an ancient memory. Many years before, a Leading Lady coordinated the celebration of God’s victory over an enemy, in that case, Egypt, a comparison that other expositors also see.<sup>2</sup>

*Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing. (Exod 15:20).*

*Then Jephthah came to his home at Mizpah. And behold, his daughter came out to meet him with tambourines and with dances. (Judg 11:34).*

Jephthah’s daughter knows the history of the children of Israel. She knows about Miriam leading Israel in celebration of God’s victory. Miriam knew this wasn’t a circumstance that needed deference to a male leader and Jephthah’s daughter knew likewise, taking her cue from Miriam’s age-old precedent. Jephthah’s

daughter led Israel in a triumphant celebration of the victory the LORD gave over Ammon, dancing with tambourines as Miriam had centuries before, providing the crowning glory to Israel’s triumphant day. Better still, she knows of her father’s continuing bitterness against his brothers. What better way to heal an ancient rift than celebrating a victory for God and country as a

**What better way to heal an ancient rift than celebrating a victory for God and country as a family together? It’s a glorious idea.**

family together? It’s a glorious idea.

Until it was ruined. Ruined by her father’s petty, decades-long vendetta against his own family.

Some might argue, “Why would God honor a vow born of such an ungodly spirit?” He doesn’t—God forbids it, in

fact. He answers the prayer of Jephthah to deliver him victorious from the Ammonite battle, even rewarding the courageous warrior with His Spirit to prevail. But God does not honor Jephthah's vow; rather, He confounds it. He does not permit Jephthah to visit grudge-born vengeance on his brothers; instead, God intervenes to transform the vow into something authentic, and Jephthah has to make a sacrifice of enormous value, almost beyond what he could bear.

Jephthah's anguish seems genuine, and he sees the depth of the destruction his bitter grudge has finally caused. Now his daughter is dispatched to Temple service. She will never marry and raise children. He has terminated her lineage and in so doing, his own. There are even broader impacts. God's victory celebration is completely deflated, at least for the two most important participants: the commander and the choreographer. Jephthah must've seen how pathetic his age-old grudge was in the broader scheme of God's people's survival against Ammon, how self-serving his catastrophic vow was. But Jephthah's moment of clarity provides only that: a clear vision of the wreckage he's wrought. After the glorious victory God has just granted him because of his faith and courage, Jephthah is, ironically, defeated and speechless.

The Daughter of the Vow takes charge.

*"My father," she replied, "you have given your word to the LORD. Do to me just as you promised, now that the LORD has avenged you of your enemies, the Ammonites. But grant me this one request," she said. "Give me two months to roam*

*the hills and weep with my friends, because I will never marry."* (Judg 11:36-37 NIV).

A Leading Lady indeed! She sounds like a mature mother instructing a wayward child, yet it's a daughter respecting her father, who has behaved disastrously arrogantly by placing his grudge above all. She has saved her father, even though he has destroyed her. If she had resisted him then he, not her, would be guilty of vow-breaking. This is her selfless sacrifice. Sadly, some unwisely misinterpret her selflessness as active support for an abusively patriarchal system.<sup>3</sup> That is just foolishness. She rescues and protects her father, the very man who should have been dedicated to protecting her. She takes the position of power to save him from violating God's law:

*"Do to me just as you promised." After the two months... he did to her as he had vowed. (Judg 11:36, 39 NIV).*

This language is notably obscure. Whether she was killed (we have shown that she wasn't) or sent to the Temple, it would be easier to say so than use the clumsy language above. I can only conclude the obfuscation is deliberate. I see this as a test of faith for the reader. For those prepared to do the detective work, there are enough clues to confidently conclude she was not killed. Yet the Biblical record forbears from spoon-feeding the reader the truth in a direct statement. So, for those determined to find an evil God whom they can curse, the ambiguity permits enough latitude to satisfy them as well.

We have so little information about her. She speaks with maturity yet is

unmarried: Hebraists confirm that the word “virgin/maiden” specifies an unwed state.<sup>4</sup> Given the culture, that suggests she is approximately teenaged. Her calling for two months to mourn that she would never marry independently demonstrates she would never have been killed as a result of the vow; otherwise, her concerns would be for her life, not her virginity. And in the phrase: “*The daughters of Israel went year by year to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in the year*” (Judg 11:40), the Hebrew word is “*letannôt*,” which is poorly translated as “*lament*,”<sup>5</sup> but better rendered “*chant*,”<sup>6</sup> or “*celebrate*,”<sup>7</sup> as it appears in Deborah’s Song:

*To the sound of musicians at the watering places, there they repeat the righteous triumphs of the LORD, the righteous triumphs of his villagers in Israel.* (Judg 5:11).

No-one “*laments*” the righteous triumphs of the LORD: they rejoice. Bal dispenses with the word “*lament*” altogether, and translates the sentence: “the daughters of Israel went yearly to recount the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year,”<sup>8</sup> giving the sense that the young ladies celebrated Jephthah’s Daughter’s story at the Temple with the woman herself: perhaps not to lament the end of her lineage, but to rejoice in her strength in shouldering the burden of The Vow.



## Good and Bad Fathers

### Human Fathers: Serving Self

Here, then, is the point of Jephthah’s daughter’s story: Don’t bear grudges. For one thing, grudges are arrogant; the grudge-holder necessarily rates the importance of their personal grievance above all, rendering them deaf and blind to the needs of those around them. Grudges can be woefully destructive, as we have seen. Above all, studying the subject of grudges is relevant to your life and mine. If this Bible chapter taught nothing more than “Don’t set fire to your children,” the story is pointless since it applies to practically no one. But grudges are real and common in every era, and as damaging now as they were for Jephthah’s daughter, making Judges 11 one of the most supremely relevant Bible chapters to modern life.

In Jephthah’s case, his grudge led to many disasters. He planned to terminate the lineage of one of his brothers, which, culturally, is an extremely heavy blow (c.f. 2 Sam 14:1-7). But would God have ever accepted his offering? It looks good on the outside; the victorious warrior who has risked his life for God and country in battle has extended his sacrifice further by dedicating a family member to

Temple service—a heroic gesture!

But this is a damaged offering! It’s not motivated by a desire to serve God but by a desire to wreak vengeance (which

belongs to God, Deut 32:35) on a family member for an old injustice. For all Jephthah knows God's laws so well, he's overlooked an important one—that God hates ingenuine offerings.

*"When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice lame or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?" says the Lord Almighty. (Mal 1:8 NIV, from Deut 15:21).*

Jephthah's sacrificial vow is utterly diseased in conception. Thus, God does not accept it; but rather intervenes in the plot so that Jephthah ends up dedicating something truly valuable, indeed something much greater than he was willing to give.

How, then, does Jephthah earn his place in the list of the faithful (Heb 11:32)? Perhaps because, for all the disaster the selfish vow caused, he was faithful enough to keep it (which required his brave daughter's cooperation), even though it hurt.

*LORD, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? The one whose walk is blameless... who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind. (Psa 15:1-4, NIV).*

There's more. Selfish parenting, like any form of abuse, can be cyclical. Jephthah's father, Gilead, fathered Jephthah via a prostitute. Even disregarding moral objections to prostitution, this is a very selfish act. Jephthah's (half-) brothers could never have rejected him

without this parentage; this entire cycle of disaster would not have occurred without Gilead's selfish indulgence.

- Gilead, father, abused his power. His child paid the price.
- Jephthah, father, abused his power. His child paid the price.

Both fathers abused their authority for the same reason: to indulge their agenda at the expense of all else. Both times, these "heads of house," whose responsibility was to nurture and protect their family, ended up breaking their families apart.

### **Divine Father: Serving His Children**

One might still ask: where's God in all this? Is He merely sitting back with an air of indifferent disdain, watching Gilead's selfishness wreck his family and, a generation later, watching Jephthah's selfishness wreck his? Some analysts entirely give up on the idea that God cared; Frymer-Kensky simultaneously throws in the towel and indicts God with these words:

"It will do no good to ask where God is or why God does not answer. The book of Judges takes place in the real world... in which God will no longer intervene to save individuals... In the absence of God's intervention, human beings and their social system must prevent such horrors."<sup>9</sup>

Fortunately, this hapless exposition is miles off the mark. Where human fathers fail and families are scattered abroad, God is gathering together, quietly, in the background. Consider:

- Jephthah devotes his (teenage?) daughter to the Temple.
- Hannah devotes her weaned son

### Samuel to the Temple.

It's difficult to date either event, but the various timelines suggest Hannah's event follows Jephthah's by only a few decades.

Samuel grew up to respect the LORD (1 Sam 2:26). Yet Eli the High Priest, Samuel's default "father," is renowned as a terrible father; so bad that the scriptures name him responsible for the evil characters of his sons (1 Sam 2:12, 30-36). Samuel didn't learn to respect the LORD at Eli's hand. So what godly person was ministering at the Temple to act as a nurturing parent to Samuel?

There is no doubt in my mind that Jephthah's daughter raised Samuel.

Jephthah's daughter has been consigned to Temple service. We know she wanted to have a family because she spent two months in the hills mourning the loss of this chance through her father's selfish, grudge-born vow. She finds herself at the Temple instead, but she's wise enough and godly enough to know her God is generous, and so doubtless continues fervently praying that one day she might be a mother. She knows the history of the matriarch Sarah who was finally granted this opportunity. Yet, as the years pass, this window of opportunity slowly but irrevocably

closes, and she passes child-bearing age. God Says "No," or so it seems.

Out of nowhere, Samuel arrives, a small boy also consigned to Temple service without his knowledge or approval; in a way, Samuel is the victim of a similar fate as Jephthah's daughter. The Temple now houses a woman desperately desiring a child and a child in desperate need of a mother. Can there be any doubt they would have come together (probably on day one)?

Best of all—what a result this produces! Samuel becomes Israel's last and greatest Judge, which reflects in praise on his character and the character of the Leading Lady who raised him.

This is the story of the Daughter of the Vow. It reveals the character of a God so powerful, yet so typically subtle. His actions, one might say, are told in a still, small voice. A casual read suggests a repulsive tale where God approves of a man who burned his daughter to death. But a deeper examination reveals the beauty of a God who powerfully, if ever so quietly, puts families together, even while self-indulgent humans are tearing them apart. And I find that beautiful.

*John Pople,  
San Francisco Peninsula Ecclesia, CA*

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<sup>1</sup> All Scriptural quotations are taken from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible*, 2002, p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> Susan Niditch, *The Old Testament Library: Judges*, 2008, p. 135.

<sup>4</sup> Neal H. Walls, *The Goddess Anat in Ugaritic Myth*, 1992, pp. 77-79.

<sup>5</sup> Mary A. Beavis, *A Daughter in Israel: Celebrating Bat Jephthah* (Judg 11.39d-40), *Feminist Theology* 2004, 13.1, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Op. cit.*, p. 113.

<sup>7</sup> Beth Gerstein, *A Ritual Processed Look at Judges 11:40, in Anti-Covenant: Counter-Reading Women's Lives in the Hebrew Bible*, Mieke Bal, 1989, pp. 175-191.

<sup>8</sup> Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges*, 1988, pp. 66-688.

<sup>9</sup> Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Op. cit.*, p. 11.



# JAMAICA ON HEROES' DAY

*By Antonia Giordano*

**OUR** first visit to Jamaica in three years was all about renewal, both of relationships and our own familiarity with the island. We were also reminded of tasty goat curry, ackee and salt fish, fried plantain and juicy papaya. Bro. Nathan and I were joined by his brother, Bro. Dave—who along with his wife, Sis Cassie, spent two years living in Jamaica as full-time missionaries, finishing their time there just as the pandemic was getting started.

Our major purpose for the trip was to attend the All-Island Heroes' Day Fraternal (October) in Broughton. This is the first large in-person event the brothers and sisters in Jamaica have been able to hold since early 2020. Broughton is a rural farming community fairly close to the resort town of Negril, so we spent a few nights at Bro. Ray Arthur's small hotel on Seven Mile Beach. It's always a joy to spend time with Bro. Ray, as conversations with him overflow with



Sis. Antonia Giordano along with Sisters Sandra, Alissa and Shauna from the Port Maria Ecclesia in Jamaica

his love for God, for the Scriptures, and for the welfare of the community of believers in Jamaica. A stay at Bro. Ray's also demands a walk over the road to the beach with its soft, white sand and clear, turquoise waters. Sting rays, sea stars, crabs, little fish and big fish all play in the water close to shore. We had great fun exploring this microcosm of God's incredible creation inside the cordon in front of the somewhat optimistically named restaurant, Alfred's Ocean Palace.

The heroes of Jamaica didn't get much of a mention at the Heroes' Day Fraternal—or any mention at all if I'm honest. The focus was on being back together after such a long time. It took a little longer for the members from the other side of the island to join the rest of us after their bus was canceled at the last

minute, but they eventually made it just in time for lunch, and the Broughton Hall was filled to the brim with believers once more. Bro. Dave led classes on John 14:2, *"In my father's house are many mansions."* This community of brothers and sisters on the island is one such mansion, and to see everyone's joy at being together again is just a small glimpse of what we'll all share in being united in the Kingdom.

After the fraternal, we traveled on from Negril, first to visit old Bro. Matthew of the Harvey River Ecclesia. With no way to contact him beforehand, we just had to hope for the best—and unfortunately, after journeying up the long, potholed mountain road, we discovered he'd gone into town for the day. The same town that, of course, we'd passed through on our way up. So, we

spent some time with Bro. Matthew's granddaughter, who takes care of him, and Sis. Murna, who'd come with us for the visit. We enjoyed the peace and quiet of the family's mountain-top compound, watching chickens roam and eating starfruit fresh from the tree. When it was clear Bro. Matthew wouldn't be arriving home before the threatened rain started, we bumped our way back down the mountain and dropped Sis. Murna at home.

From there we turned northeast, towards Port Maria, and the small cluster of sisters who live in that area. It's hard for them to meet as a group, and they love it when visitors come through and can help facilitate meeting. A special joy for them is to visit Sis. Enid, who lives over an hour

away in Port Antonio, so along with Sisters Shauna, Alissa and Sandra, we did just that.

The natural beauty of Port Antonio, and the surrounding parish of Portland, have long been popular with the rich and famous, but the real treasure is to be found in a small wooden house on a hillside and an old sister in the last days of her pilgrimage. Though Sis. Enid's eyes can no longer see, and her body can't get out of bed, her vision of the Kingdom is clear, and her walk towards it just as eager as it has ever been. Encouraged by our time with these faithful sisters, we can't wait to see the day when Sis. Enid will leap like a calf from the stall, her youth renewed.



The Broughton Ecclesia in Jamaica



On the island's south side, we spent some time with Bro. Leroy and Sis. Loraine, and started to put together plans for 2023's Easter Youth Camp. It's hard to believe that when we waved goodbye at the end of camp in 2019, it would be another four years before the next one. The youth have grown a lot in those four years! Some have turned from kids into full-fledged teenagers, and others are nearly at the end of their university days and are about to embark on careers. Before the pandemic, we visited Jamaica two or three times a year. The world turning upside down like it did teaches us to not take anything for granted, to really, truly understand the meaning of James's words:

*Come now, you who say "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring... Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." (James 4:13-14).*

So, we pray that if it is the Lord's will, the Jamaican young people will be able to come together in April for fellowship and mediation around God's word and that we will be with them.

*Antonia Giordano,  
CBMA Link Person for Jamaica*



Sis. Lorraine Mitchell, of the Georgetown, Guyana Ecclesia, fell asleep in the Lord on December 11, 2022. Sis. Lorraine passed away after a relatively short battle with cancer.

Sis. Lorraine was a long-time member of the Georgetown Ecclesia and a staple at all of their services. She is pictured here in the Georgetown Ecclesial Hall.

She had just recently celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

May her rest be short and our Lord return quickly.

# OPENING THE CURTAINS BOLIVIA AND CHILE

*By Robert Alderson*

**C**HANGES are more noticeable after a period of absence, especially with children. The incremental changes from day to day often compound into a dramatic difference. The last three years have had their share of change, some of which has been by no means incremental. So, a return to Chile and Bolivia after such an absence bluntly revealed the effects of recent global upheaval.

In Santiago, Chile, the once elegant pedestrian malls are now open street markets. Prices are spiraling upwards,

borders are becoming irrelevant, and urban art has reached the cathedral's walls.

In Bolivia, the streets are clogged with protesting miners. The city blocks, previously dedicated to shops for tourists, have been reduced to a single quiet street. There are no tourists.

Travel that previously was smooth and routine has become an itinerary with cancellations and lost days, as airlines struggle to staff their flights.

There is a tangible sense of agitation in the air.



## Bolivia

Although the scenery around La Paz is breathtaking, the gasp on arrival is generally a result of the shortage of oxygen at 14,000 above sea level. The ecclesia in La Paz is in the city with the highest altitude on earth. The seven brethren in La Paz had been meeting online, and this visit provided an opportunity to dust off the little hall and recommence a regular meeting.

The experience of meeting again, after a period of online interaction, seemed to universally endorse the inadequacy of the latter, despite its utility during the difficult time we have passed through. It provides new energy and impetus, evident among all the brothers and sisters who visited on this trip.

In La Paz, this first meeting was augmented by the occasion of the baptism of Cristian Mamani. Bro. Cristian had studied for some years, most recently online from various parts of the world. He gave a tremendous confession of faith, and his baptism brought the two sisters who live outside La Paz and Cristian's parents and relatives together with the ecclesia. In keeping with the age, the baptism was also transmitted via Zoom.

The ecclesia in La Paz has now reinitiated its regular program. This visit was the first to La Paz since Bro. Isaiah and Sis. Rosie Tunnell returned to New Zealand, having weathered nearly two years in Bolivia while the pandemic raged. The ecclesia here is well and in good spirits while waiting for the Lord's return.



The La Paz, Boliva Ecclesia

## Chile

A similar situation to Bolivia, existed in Santiago, Chile. A small office previously used for meetings lay semi-abandoned after months of online meetings. At some stage, the window had blown ajar, and everything was covered in dust of lunar proportions.

Emerging from their isolation came two brothers and two friends with renewed energy for the gospel. In the case of our friend, there was a renewed desire to be baptized soon.

to the Gospel truth. It firms up one's commitment and makes it clearer than ever that there are no alternatives. When this happens, we know we have found the spirit of Peter,

*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. (John 6:68).*

*Robert Alderson,  
CBMC Link Person for Bolivia*



Breaking Bread near Lake Villarrica in Chile

Further south, near the city of Temuco, the ecclesia of four got together on the small farm belonging to the family of one of our sisters. Near the lake, Villarrica, and under the shadow of its volcano, the opportunity to broaden fellowship, break bread, and study God's word reached levels of beauty matching the natural backdrop.

We encounter examples where adversity is no match for a commitment

After a final baptism interview with Bro. Robert Alderson and Bro. Sami from La Paz, **CRISTIAN MAMANI AGUIREE** was baptized on Sunday, October 30, 2022. Cristian is a young brother, thirty years old, very thoughtful, studious, and capable, with a great grasp of the Scriptures. We anticipate he will be a very beneficial addition to the ecclesia in La Paz.

# *Thoughts on the Way*

## **An Exhortation for Presiders**

**P**RESIDING is perhaps the most important duty on Sunday morning—even more important to the memorial meeting, as a whole, than exhorting. The presider's voice is the first one to be heard. It is their duty to set and maintain the tone of the meeting. The one who presides will bring unity and continuity to the whole service through a reverent attitude and well-chosen words. Their duty is also to introduce and handle the central features of the whole worship service, that is, the Breaking of Bread, with the emblems or symbols—of the body and the blood of Christ. This should require preparation (and prayer) at home, even before coming to the meeting.

### **Words of Advice**

As a presider, it is a good idea to make your assignments for Bible readings and prayers well ahead of

time, and to organize the hymns also—perhaps even a day or two before Sunday. Rushing around just before the meeting starts, trying to line up people to do this or that, is not helpful in achieving the right tone. Furthermore, it will distract you from your own necessary meditation and preparation.

There should be standard presiding forms available from someone, possibly the Recording Brother. Get one and use it. Or better yet, keep a supply for yourself. There is no need to reinvent the program each week or ever to have to guess what is supposed to come next.

If you have organized your program in advance, then you may turn to your own personal preparation. As the person who oversees the meeting, it is a good idea to sit down, five or ten minutes before the service starts.



This will accomplish two things:

- First, it will encourage others to also take their seats, and begin their meditation as well.
- And secondly, it will allow you, as the presider, to concentrate on preparing for what you have to do.

Remember to take a deep breath or two, and remind yourself to take your time. There is absolutely no need to rush any part of the service.

You are not a clerk in a grocery store, or a waiter in a restaurant, passing food and drink quickly and efficiently to the customers. Your objective is **not** to finish quickly but to give every aspect of the meeting—and especially the bread and the wine—its proper sense and meaning. Remind yourself that, in a symbolic fashion, you are handling the “body” and “blood” of our Lord and Savior.

Prepare a few **very brief** comments ahead of time to open the meeting. Examples would include a psalm of praise to the LORD, or perhaps Isaiah 53, or a few of the first verses of Psalm 22. There are many good introductory passages if you keep in mind the purpose of the memorial meeting.

Then you should have other comments to introduce the Breaking of Bread at the appropriate time. If possible, try to make this introduction start just where the exhorter left off, by calling special attention to the emblems themselves.

When the speaker has done the job of reminding us of the purpose of the meeting, then you don't need to do much more. Simply read a few verses by which the bread and wine are introduced in the Scriptures (Matt 26:26-29; Luke 22:19,20; or 1 Cor 11:23-26). But read them slowly and carefully. Three verses read slowly, and with reverence, are much, much better than six verses that are rushed through!

Another suggestion: While the Memorial hymn is being sung, just before the Breaking of Bread, take a moment to remove the cloth from the bread and the wine (if your ecclesia uses one). This allows you to move slowly and carefully, and avoid knocking emblems over. It also means that, as soon as

the hymn is finished, the emblems are on display for everyone—which also helps everyone to focus on the right things.

Before and after partaking of the bread, as well as the partaking of the wine, sit down for a minute or two. This is a time for reflection and meditation, not just for yourself but for everyone else. It is a silent time to think, **“Stop. Why are we here? What are we doing? Think about this sacrifice.”** During this time, we all can remember that first Memorial Meeting in the upper room in Jerusalem and perhaps think about the absolute love and devotion that preceded the suffering of our Master, *“the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”*

Three verses  
read slowly, and  
with reverence,  
are much, much  
better than six  
verses that are  
rushed through!



As the host, Jesus was the first to officiate over a Memorial Service. He did it by conveying a pervasive calm and confidence to his disciples. By this means, he demonstrated God's presence and God's love to them. The presider can do nothing more important than to help everyone in the meeting to shut out the thoughts and worries of the ever-present world and to focus on the eternal spiritual truths—the only things that really matter in this world of sin and death.

### **Being with Jesus**

If the presider has done the job well, with dignity and reverence, then the congregation will be able to see Jesus. Wherever our thoughts and words take us as we contemplate God's message, there we will find Christ. He is the central character in the Bible and the centerpiece of our world—as well as the world to come.

If the service has been conducted carefully and in the right spirit, then the presider will have successfully conducted a rewarding meeting. This will mean that all of us who attended will leave the Memorial Service feeling and acting as though we have been changed for the better:

*When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. (Acts 4:13).*

*George Booker,  
(Austin Leander Ecclesia, TX)*

"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who  
promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may  
**spur one another on toward love  
and good deeds,**  
not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but  
**encouraging one another**  
—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Hebrews 10:23-25



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