TIDINGS

Volume 86, Number 8, September, 2023

ALWAYS READY TO LEARN

Life itself opens our minds and hearts to the Word.



Building faith in the Christadelphian community.



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EDITORIAL

ALWAYS READY TO EARN

By Dave Jennings

Intelligent people are always ready to learn. Their ears are open for knowledge.

(Prov 18:15 NLT)

NE of the most attractive aspects of our community is our lifelong commitment to learning. We begin as young children, soaking in the lessons from our dedicated and loving parents and Sunday School teachers. Throughout our teen and adult lives, we regularly gather to learn, an essential aspect of fellowship. Bible classes, Bible Schools, youth weekends, study weekends—all designed to supplement a strong personal pursuit of knowledge and spiritual wisdom. And we can't get enough! What we share in common is a desire to learn more about the unfathomable word of God. Even in our latter years, discovering a new Bible insight or principle can be just as exhilarating as when we first discovered one in our early teens. We must never stop learning.

If we look a bit more closely at Solomon's proverb, we see three behaviors that are associated with learning. First, "intelligent people are always ready." Readiness occurs when we attend a formal class or read independently; it also comes from the correction the LORD brings into our lives. We must always be ready to learn. Hebrews 12:11 tells us that chastening is a powerful way to learn, but only if it brings about the "peaceable fruit of righteousness" to those who have their minds "exercised thereby." If there's no exercise of the mind, no learning, then there is no peace in our lives.

Secondly, Solomon says intelligent people have "their ears open," always hearing and assessing. It demands that we have minds willing to be challenged. We want to hear the thoughts of others about Scripture. But, like the

Bereans, we are also responsible for assessing what we hear based on a sound investigation through Scripture. This discipline can be a challenge for all of us. Mental constructs and comfortable thinking may prevent us from transforming our minds.

But Solomon indicates an important dimension: а fundamental acceptance that we don't know everything, no matter how wise or experienced we are in the Scriptures. Let's never lose sight of this principle. No man or woman has come close to an exhaustive knowledge of Scripture, and none of us fully understand the wisdom and depth of our God. We are all in need of education. Beyond this, there is a progression in knowledge. For example, the Apostle Paul fully understood who Jesus was; in fact, he intimately met him. He deeply comprehended the resurrection and gave exquisite instructions about how it would occur. Yet, to the Philippians, Paul said, "I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death." (Phil 3:10 NLT). To the Corinthians, Paul commented that he knew "in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (1 Cor 13:12). Life in Christ is about a progressive "getting to know" our Lord. It is much more than book learning. It is the knowledge that comes from a lifelong relationship.

Learning readiness is an increasing challenge, as the world expects complexity delivered as sound bites. I am concerned that too often, brothers and sisters and young people listen to a class or exhortation exceptionally passively.

Readiness to learn is not compatible with Bibles lying nearby or closed on our laps. Our heavy use of presentation technologies (e.g., PowerPoint) may have fueled this scenario. The speaker presents a large selection of passages and has much to cover. It can take a lot of work to keep up. However, we must never approach Bible study as if it is similar to entertainment. The brother leading the class is doing just thatleading. We are walking along with him, examining the same references and developing the wisdom the passages provide. When verses are projected for all to see, It would be far better if the full audience were prompted to open their Bibles to this same passage consistently. I can't count the number of times that the speaker cited a couple of verses for proof-text, only for me to find even more impactful verses further down the page in my open Bible.

Solomon spoke frequently about the need to apply oneself to the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom.

My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my techn commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding. (Prov 2:1-2 ESV).

Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge. (Prov 22:17 ESV).

Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge. (Prov 23:12 ESV).

When I have spoken to young people about learning readiness, I encourage them to open their Bibles, look up the verses, and have a pencil (preferably a .5MM lead) and a handy notepad. If electronics are used instead, readiness is similar. One of the ways we can assess if we have been ready to learn is whether we have taken any notes, written down questions, or underlined any key passages. Peter wrote to "gird up the loins of your mind." (1 Pet 1:13). That's Passover language, indicating that our minds, like the feet of the children of Israel, needed to be ready to go-girded up, prepared deliverance. Whatever for preparation is for learning, commit to doing it consistently.

It is just as essential to be ready to learn from our life experiences. As I look back at my life, I can see in hindsight how the LORD and His angels

worked in my my family's life. The way my mother first heard of the Truth. The mentoring I received from my parents and godly brothers and sisters. How I led to my wife. How I have learned from disappointments tragedies. Yet this

is all clear to me now because it is hindsight. Readiness to learn is also about finding God in the present, the way He works in our lives right now. We come to recognize windows of service opportunity. We have a clearer view of our own behavior and motives when we are frustrated, upset, or even envious. We see more clearly what

Readiness to learn is not compatible with Bibles lying nearby or closed on our laps. Our heavy use of presentation technologies (e.g., PowerPoint) may have fueled this scenario.

Readiness to learn is having our eyes wide open to what God wants us to know from the events of our life.

God wants us to learn from those He puts in our life presently. We accept His loving rebuke in real-time, not by reflection decades later. Readiness to learn is having our eyes wide open to what God wants us to know from the events of our life. I want to take the same "readiness" approach for Bible study to see how God works in my life. The second part of the proverb deals with listening with open ears and assessing what is right. Of course, this has always been a challenge, and we read throughout the Scriptures about men like Hymenaeus and Philetus, who erred, "saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." (2 Tim 2:17-18). There would be "grievous wolves" that would be "speaking perverse things." (Acts 20:29-30). In our age, access to information has never been greater or easier. But, as we know, there is significant misinformation and disinformation. The Internet can offer some good ideas and expose us to poison. Peter spoke of the "pollutions of the world." (2 Pet 2:20). To judge the validity of internet information requires spiritual readiness to assess and learn.

When Solomon built the Temple, he

reached out to Hiram, king of Tyre. The men of Tyre had unique skills that the people of Israel did not possess. They knew how to cut and float timber down the Mediterranean to Joppa. The men of Tyre also had stone quarrying skills. One man, Huram, who lived in Tyre (as his father was a man of Tyre but was of the tribe of Naphtali), was especially skilled in all works of brass. (1 Kgs 7:13-14). But it is important to note that all these materials from Tyre: timber, and the workings of brass, were under the close supervision of Solomon. Solomon could use these external resources but was also personally responsible for using them correctly!

This example is a wise way for us to consider any resources at hand. Using resources and insights from outside the community can be good—but with caution. Our own hymn book is a good example. The compositions of many of our hymns are from several hundred years ago. Many original lyrics were written by men and women who held confused and incorrect doctrines. Our faithful brothers and sisters compiled our hymn book from these people but carefully ensured the verses we sing were corrected or adapted for our use.

When we want to access Bible information from sources outside the Scriptures, we must adopt a Berean commitment to see "whether those things were so." (Acts 17:11). Christadelphians have historically taken large portions of our spiritual insights from external sources. F. F. Bruce (1910-1990) and Richard Rackham (1863-1912) have been cited frequently in Christadelphian works and are among my favorite Biblical scholars. But you must use these sources carefully and cautiously; you are responsible for testing their conclusions, just as we do with all writers.

Any true Bible student is quick to confess that the more they learn, the more they know they need to learn. I have been blessed for the last three years to be part of a Bible reading group on Zoom that meets for 90 minutes each weekday to do the daily readings. This group has wonderful Bible students, varying daily from 20-30 brothers and sisters. We read from different versions, which almost always enhances our understanding of passages, and we share questions and observations. We all confess that we are humbled every day by the Word of God. There are unlimited details to study, which provide insights and wisdom. They share notes from our Bible margins (Yes, they had their pencils present in all those classes!), spanning often more than 50 years of regular attendance at Memorial meeting, Bible classes, and Bible Schools. They are priceless treasures! Beyond this, a member often shares a personal story or insight. These are

sometimes in the form of a painful personal experience coupled with the resulting learning. We are a learning organization! And I can't think of a more powerful Bible experience I have had.

I admire those who have a thirst to know the "why." Acceptance of a position or an understanding must be founded in careful examination of the Scriptures—not simply because we have always seen things a certain way or that a revered brother long ago had a particular opinion. I can't help feeling that faith based on identifying and applying Scriptural principles is a far firmer ground than relying on compliance with tradition.

I'd like to share one more principle about the value of lifelong learning. As our minds mature, we can become more receptive to certain types of learning as we age. Young children learn through being trained. (Prov 22:6). The Oxford KJV has a marginal note that a child's training means to "catechize." This activity encompasses telling or imparting the truth to a young child as we know it. But that cannot be the end of our learning. As our brains mature, we must have open hearts to allow the word to speak to us. When I was young, I was not naturally drawn to David. I couldn't really relate to his struggles, and it seemed that he was so depressing at times. I was drawn to courageous men like Elijah, Moses, Samson, and Daniel. However, as life has continued by the grace of God, I can now deeply identify with David. I know what it means to be betrayed. I know what it feels like to have my personal plans and strategies blow up. I know the feeling of losing loved ones and disappointment in relationships. I know the intensity of facing my own failures and craving to have God restore me. Aside from the Lord, David has soared to be my favorite Biblical character. Life itself opens our minds and hearts to the Word. The emotional psalms of David now speak directly to my soul.

Our experiences in life teach us the need for forgiveness and God's incredible mercy and grace. We learn to value forgiveness and edification because we need both. What I couldn't see as a young man is now immensely relevant and clear. That's why learning is lifelong. Later in this issue, Bro. David Levin will discuss how our salvation is not tied to how much we know. It is by grace and the bearing of fruit. Knowledge alone has never been the intent of our God. But we are also encouraged to savor the tasty morsels of wisdom in Scripture. How wonderful it is that we live in a day with so many ways to learn. Translations of the Bible in almost every language are readily available. We have access to study resources at the tips of our fingers. While we have breath, let us always be ready to learn. Have your pencil ready!

Dave Jennings

NEWS FROM THE CHRISTADELPHIAN MAGAZINE

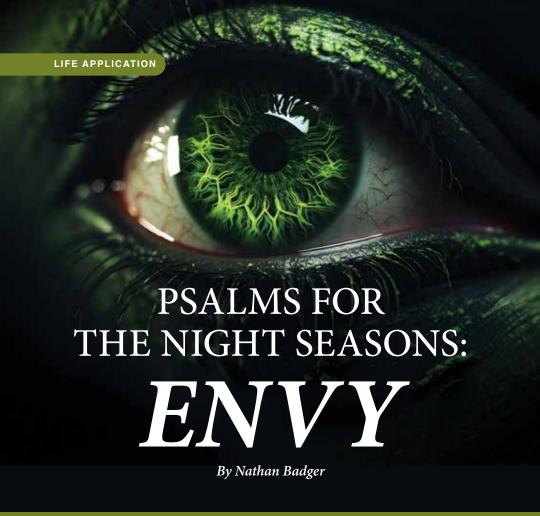
We acknowledge the recently announced personnel changes at *The Christadelphian Magazine*. In their June issue, it was noted that Bro. Tec Morgan, Chairman of the Christadelphian Magazine Publishing Association since 2014, is retiring. Bro. Andrew Bramhill, Editor since 2011, is also retiring.

The Tidings wishes to thank both brethren for their work in our community. We have valued their counsel and have had an extremely positive relationship together. In recent years, we have had quarterly Zoom calls to discuss pressing items in our community. Their wisdom and spiritual insights have been a blessing to us.

We are looking forward to working with the new Chairman, Bro. Andrew Walker, and the new Editor, Bro. Mark Vincent. We hope to meet Bro. Walker in the coming weeks. I had the distinct pleasure of meeting Bro. Mark Vincent at the Rocky Mountain Bible School in June, where he provided excellent classes on "What is the Law For?"

Our prayers are with the new staff as they continue the fine work of Bro. Tec and Bro. Andrew.

Editor



BEWARE the "green-eyed monster." Shakespeare coined this idiom to describe the illness and ferocity of envy and jealousy. Since the days of Cain's fatal envy towards Abel, this monster has triggered violence, destruction, greed, division, and hatred. It lurks in the locker room, the boardroom, the local mall, and even our ecclesias. Social media and the consumer economy are perniciously engineered to evoke the green-eyed monster in all of us.

Envy kept David up at night for two

reasons. Psalm 37 is all about envy and suggests that David wrestled with personal episodes of envy. These experiences led him to caution and conclude: "Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity." (Psa 37:1).\(^1\) Secondly, David also knew first-hand what it meant to be the subject of envy. After the people of Israel celebrated his victory over the Philistines, "Saul eyed David from that day forward." (1 Sam 18:9). The word "eyed" means to watch with envy and evil intent. For years, Saul plagued David's sleep with this

green-eyed monster. Saul hunted him through the wilderness and even tried to murder David and even his own son Jonathan.

Does envy keep you up at night? At times, I have caught myself lying in bed, my pulse racing and my mind fretting within a vortex of envy: Why isn't my life like this person's? How are they able to afford that? When is it my turn to ______? At other times I have sensed someone's envy towards me. The resulting rift has left me distraught and deeply saddened throughout the night.

In this second article on the Night Seasons, we want to explore envy as a cause for troubles and nights of turmoil. We also want to arm ourselves with some antidotes to help calm this monster, so it does not sow the seeds of discord, rob us of sleep, or disrupt God's purpose.

Envy or Jealousy?

We may assume envy and jealousy mean the same, but they are not synonymous in English. Depending on their context, the KJV translators have also used these words to convey their correct meanings.

Jealousy is a strong feeling or desire to keep for yourself what rightfully belongs to you. It involves a third party that has threatened something of value to you. God often describes himself as jealous. He commanded Israel: "You shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." (Exod 34:14). God zealously desires Israel and us for himself.

Envy, on the other hand, is a strong feeling or desire to have for yourself what rightfully belongs to another. Integral to this desire is sadness, resentment, and even ill will toward the other person. For example, you may envy someone's wealth and then slander them to others or even devise ways to steal from them.

Envy In Ourselves

Envy and jealousy can grow from a sour feeling to a full-blown obsession, ending in tragic circumstances if not harnessed. However, envy is the more toxic of these two powerful emotions. It is hard to imagine a situation where envy is ever right. God's Word portrays envy as formidable and self-destructive. Solomon accurately observes, "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?" (Prov 27:4 KJV). In other words, wrath and anger are easier to control than the monster of envy. Paul describes envy as being one of the "works of darkness" that we are to cast off: "Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy." (Rom 13:12-13). Later, he clarifies the ultimate reason we want to harness envy in our lives: "Envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like... Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal 5:21).

It is helpful to identify and label emotions we experience. This fundamental step helps us understand why we are feeling what we are feeling and determine how we can harness the

emotion. When do we feel envy? Why do we feel envy? What triggers our envy?

Write down five things that make you feel envious on paper. Take a moment and reflect on how you respond to this envy—is the response negative or positive? Are there ways you could avoid this envy? Perhaps it's as simple as not going someplace or avoiding certain people.

Consequences of Envy

God has tailored a special plan and purpose for each of us. Have you ever considered how envy is a barrier to what He has designed us to be and do? Think about the following five "Ds" or consequences of envy:

- 1. Denies Uniqueness: God has made us unique for a divine purpose and journey. David acknowledged, "You formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb... I am fearfully and wonderfully made." (Psa 139:13-14 ESV). Envy denies the exquisite uniqueness God has carefully crafted into each of us. It blinds us to our own special abilities and who we truly are. He has designed us to be us-not them. When we compare ourselves to others or wish we were different than what we are, we question God's creation of us and the unique circumstances He has woven into our life. Do we value and maximize our uniqueness, or wish we were someone else?
- 2. Divides Our Attention and Focus: In the Ten Commandments, God instructed, "You shall not covet... anything that is your neighbor's." (Exod 20:17). Why? God wants

- us to focus our lives and desires on Him and to devote our energy to developing His principles in our personal life. When we envy, we lose this focus and divert our attention from God. We develop a divided allegiance between what God wants and what we want. Our desires, comparisons, and strivings become focused on someone or something else rather than God. Jesus reminds us that "No one can serve two masters." (Matt 6:24) and instructs his disciples to "Follow Me." (Mat 4:19). What or who are we following?
- 3. Damages Relationships: Joseph's brothers were "moved with envy" and sold him into slavery (Acts 7:9 KJV). Ahab laid on his bed "sullen and displeased" while he envied Naboth's vineyard just before killing him (1 Kgs 21:4). Paul says the disunity of the Corinthian ecclesia was rooted in their carnal. or animal-like, "envy, strife, and divisions." (1 Cor 3:3). Evil men even delivered our Lord to death "because of envy." (Mark 15:10). God wants us to build positive relations with those around us, whether in the ecclesia or outside. When we envy someone else, it leads to resentment and negative feelings toward them. Grudges, anger, lies, toxic communication, and hurt are the fruits. Are we building bridges with others or burning them with envy?
- **4. Dissolves our Time and Energy:** Solomon observed, "that all toil and all achievement spring from one person's envy of another. This

too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind." (Eccl 4:4 NIV). In other words, we completely waste our time and energy when we envy others for their accomplishments, possessions, or abilities. God wants us to devote the resources He has blessed us with to develop ourselves, not chase the unique capabilities and circumstances in someone else's life. David reminds us: "Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers." (Psa 37:7 ESV). How much of our life and sleep do we lose to envy?

5. Destroys Joy, Love... Everything: Solomon also testified, "A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones." (Prov 14:30 NIV). Feeling peace, joy, or happiness is impossible when we are full of envy. Instead, we worry, are hypervigilant, and become depressed. Envy rots away joy. It also crushes love: "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy." (1 Cor 13:4). What remains in life when we allow the green-eyed monster to dominate the four "Ds" above? James summarizes it as "earthly, sensual, demonic" and warns, "For where envy and selfseeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there." (Jas 3:15-16). Envy is a corrosive acid that causes us to act in mind-bending ways. Is our life full of peace, or is our life in pieces because of our envy?

Did you notice how each of these consequences deeply affected Saul's

life? God chose Saul to be king because of his unique characteristics, but Saul did not leverage these. He consumed his energy and time envying David. While chasing David, he wasted opportunities to build up a strong nation (ecclesia) and a powerful relationship with God. His envy burned connections with his children Jonathan and Michal and distanced himself from Israel, whom God had asked him to shepherd. Saul's green-eyed monster ultimately ate him alive—he became ill and mentally unstable. He lost everything, including his own life to suicide (1 Sam 31:4).

Antidotes for Envy

As David fretted on his bed, he concluded that envy would lead to the same end as Saul. He states, "Do not fret—it only causes harm." (Psa 37:8). In this Psalm alone, he exclaims three times, "do not fret," (vv. 1, 7, 8) because that's exactly what envy makes us do. Can you see Saul's life in your life? Has envy become a barrier to your faith, and does it prevent God from developing and using your full potential? We all struggle with envy and need to find antidotes for this virus. Here are four solutions:

1. Don't Compare Ourselves to Others: We live in a comparison society where a five-star rating or thumbs-up compares everything and anything. If we are not careful, we can effortlessly do the same between ourselves. Do we have a personal radar that is finely tuned to compare ourselves when we show up for work, CYC, or Bible School? Am I as happy? As pretty? Am I

less than them? Comparison was a driving reason for divisions in the ecclesia at Corinth. Paul advised, "But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." (2 Cor 10:12). When we compare or rank ourselves, we set ourselves up for envy and disappointment. God wants us to embrace the unique identity He has blessed us with, not someone else's.

- 2. Celebrate God's Goodness to Others: If we are only happy when good things happen to us, we will be unhappy most of our life. God constantly blesses others around us and wants us to celebrate His goodness in everyone. Do we look for opportunities to "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep?" (Rom 12:15). It is a wonderful spiritual practice to say "yay!" and be genuinely happy when our friends and neighbors experience blessings. This mindset helps free us from envy and insecurity. Paul also encourages us to celebrate all the uniquely beautiful parts of Christ's body: "In [Christ's] body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function... having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them." (Rom 12:4, 6 ESV). How can we rejoice in our functions and gifts or show love or care to others if we harbor envy?
- 3. Be Grateful for Who We Are and What We Have: Envy encourages us to regret what we do have and pine for what we do not have. An attitude of gratitude can change

our perspective. When we practice gratitude, we look at what we have with greater appreciation. Gratitude is a conscious choice. We can choose to recognize that everything we have is a gift from God and that we have much more than we deserve, or we can always choose to want something more. Solomon says, "It is better to be content with what the eyes can see, than for one's heart always to crave more. This continual longing is futile—like chasing the wind." (Eccl 6:9 NET). David recognized, "A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked." (Psa 37:16). Gratitude helps build and maintain relationships with others, resulting in hope, contentment, and positive, proactive behaviors towards others.

4. Trust God When Life Seems Unfair: Have you ever blurted out, "Hey, that's not fair!"? It's easy to look at our lives, compare them to others, and conclude we have been ripped off. However, this is akin to accusing God of not knowing what He is doing. Isaiah says, "Surely you have things turned around! Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay... Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed it, 'He has no understanding?" (Isa 29:16). Envy does not express trust in God's unique plan or purpose with our life. In Psalm 37, David instructs us three times to "Trust in the Lord" (vv. 3, 5, 40) as an antidote to envious fretting. Envy also skews our perspective about fairness. The parable of the workers in the vineyard reminds us that only God can evaluate "fair." Several full-time workers grumbled when they saw part-time workers receive the same pay for fewer hours. The landowner, who represents God, responded: "I am not being unfair to you, friend... Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?" (Matt 20:15 NIV). How much do we trust God's plan even when we do not like it?

Social Media Envy

If Saul had Facebook, I could imagine him checking David's page several times daily. Let's be honest—despite some positives to these forums, Social Media Envy is a real thing. Thanks to Facebook, Instagram, and mobile devices, we are always a click away from evidence that somebody else is living a superb life, far better than our own messy reality.

Over the past decade, many studies have recognized a strong link between Facebook, envy, and depression. They admit that social media leads us to question our lives and friends. In a recent study on the effects of social media, "many shared achingly personal stories about grief, self-doubt, and frayed relationships." The report discovered that "social media has unleashed a deep, pervasive, negative emotional force—something that threatens to tear apart our most precious relationships, as well as the

day-to-day social fabric of casual friendship."

Does a virtual, green-eyed monster provoke us every day? If so, do we need to limit our social media consumption? Do our own posts provoke an envy spiral, where our envy causes us to post items that make us feel better about ourselves but thereby incite envy in others, and so on? In contrast, Paul encourages, "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." (Heb 10:24 KJV).

Summary

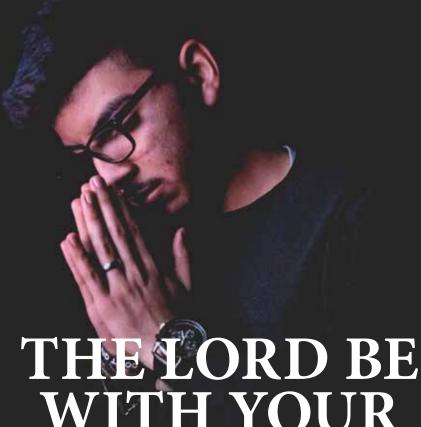
Does envy control us, or do we control envy? James declares "confusion and every vile deed" germinates in the soil of envy (Jas 3:16 RV). Fretting and the five "Ds" are the fruits of this monster. Instead, James counsels us to sow in the soil of peace, where we can harvest the fruit of righteousness: "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." (Jas 3:18). This is the same "righteous" fruit that David counsels us to cultivate eight times as an antidote to envy in Psalm 37!

Using "wisdom that comes down from above" (Jas 3:15 ESV), let us strive to be righteous by sowing in the soil of peace and not envy. This resolution will help us battle the green-eyed monster and sleep better at night.

Nathan Badger, Cambridge Ecclesia, ON

^{1.} All Scriptural citations are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Samuel, Alexandra. "Jealous of your Facebook friends? You're not alone." Experience Magazine. March 13, 2019. https://expmag.com/2019/03/jealous-of-your-facebook-friends-youre-not-alone/



WITH YOUR SPIRIT

By Darren Tappouras

ofar in our series, we have emphasized the following:

- 1. Prayer is real and powerful—God is at work in our lives today.
- The focus of God's activities in our lives is seen in the arena of the "Inner being."

We have deduced that answers to prayer requests in harmony with God's New Creation priority ("His will") of Inner Being transformation can be counted on confidently.

Paul's Prayers

Some time ago, I spent time carefully analyzing the prayer objectives of the Apostle Paul as narrated in his epistles or recorded of him in the Book of Acts. I created a spreadsheet with all the prayers of Paul I could identify and then classified them into two groups. The first group was about physical requests. The second was prayers for the "inner man." I then broke down each prayer and identified the different items Paul requested in columns.

From this, I could identify Paul's prayer priority and then extract a palette of divinely inspired prayer items.

The first thing I noticed was the disparity in size between the physical prayer requests and the Inner prayers. There were very few physical prayers at all, among them the prayer to remove his "thorn in the flesh." (2 Cor 12:7-8 KJV).¹ Other requests included a desire to visit certain ecclesias and regions, some of which appear not to have been answered.

His prayers, mainly on behalf of his brothers and sisters, were for spiritual blessings and insights about Inner Being transformation.

The "Palette of Prayer" items that I extracted did not focus on "food, raiment, and shelter," which, until then, had dominated my own prayers. Rather, I compiled this list of subjects, shown in the order of frequency:

- Grace
- Strength
- Peace
- Joy
- Endurance
- Comfort
- Sanctification
- Maturity
- Insight, understanding, and comprehension.

Some sample references include:

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. (Col 1:9-12).

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all

discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Phil 1:9-11).

In a previous article, we referenced another famous prayer request of Paul in Ephesians 3:16-19. This prayer included:

- To be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,
- That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.
- That you may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,
- To know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

And this prayer concludes with a confident assurance that God can and will answer such prayers generously. "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us." (Eph 3:20).

Does God Still Work in Us Today?

There can sometimes be some confusion when attempting to understand these prayer requests and applying them to our lives today. Some may feel uncomfortable talking about God directly helping us and think His help can only come from the Bible.

It is sensible to take care when applying these words. Since its inception, the Christadelphian movement has been (rightly) suspicious of those claiming divine guidance and has been seriously committed to the importance of freewill underlying faith. As Adam was told in Eden, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden." (Gen 2:16 NIV), so God has given all men the free will to choose Him and His ways.

The New Testament does not expressly state that it is all up to us. Nor does it say our understanding and the power to transform our lives come only from one's cognitive abilities when applying Biblical principles in our lives. On the contrary, the New Testament is full of offers of divine help. Consider James 1:5:

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

One Christadelphian writer who thoughtfully deals with this dilemma is Bro. Alfred Nicholls in his book *The Spirit of God.*² Nicholls was the editor of The Christadelphian Magazine for over 15 years and is the author of several seminal Christadelphian books. Here are some excerpts from the chapter on "The Divine Energy."

"For it is God that worketh in you:" the verb (energeo), here in its participial form (i.e., "God is the one working," and its related noun (energeia) refer most frequently in the New Testament to the effective working of God in the saints or in the church... "to do" is the carrying out of His will in the practical steps He has taken.

To say that God worketh in us is far different from saying that we possess the power of God, in the sense of transference of that power.

[If] we are given courage, comfort, hope, we have nothing unless we **co-operate** in receiving it.

So, when we pray "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil," we seek help from our Father in heaven as positively as we pray "Thy will be done on Earth, as it is in heaven."

When we join with the Psalmist and say, "Teach me, O Lord, incline my heart" (Psalm 119:33-40) we believe that God hears us and works with us in the efforts we make.

Otherwise, Paul prayed in vain that God would... give the spirit of wisdom and revelation. (Eph 1:17-23). (Nicholls, 1976).

In my opinion, books that posit that we must consider all references to God's help in the New Testament as only from one's own Bible reading, or study are unconvincing. They do not adequately explain the very straightforward and specific wording of the passages, the sheer number of the passages, and the timeless appearance of the contexts in which they are found.

Cooperation With God

God's help does not override our free will, but accompanies and supports it in our frail attempt to faithfully live our lives in Christ and to be transformed in our Inner Being. Of course, the Scriptures are our only source of knowledge about God and His purpose, but as we have previously discussed, the New Creation is a miraculous act of God working in our Inner Being today.

Just as a wrong use of the nonscriptural expression 'Spirit-Word' can lead us to believe that God Himself is no longer active in the life of His people, individual and corporate, so we can be misled into attributing to written words of themselves a power which they do not possess. It is not the scripture which saves us: it is God who is our Saviour... The Word made flesh-he is the medium of our salvation; the Word made pen and ink on paper is the means by which we obtain our knowledge of these facts. (Nicholls, 1976)

The LORD Be with Your Spirit

I must say that praying for someone's "spirit" was not in my prayer vocabulary for many years. It is today. Paul prays for his reader's "spirit" on several occasions. (2 Tim 4:22, Gal 6:18, Phm 25).

God's help does not override our free will, but accompanies and supports it in our frail attempt to faithfully live our lives in Christ and to be transformed in our Inner Being.

In thinking about the existence of our "spirit," we may gain some insight into how God helps us in our lives without overriding our free will.

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thess 5:23).

Paul here describes the human believer as consisting of **body**, **soul**, and **spirit**. A similar schema is also categorically referred to in Hebrews 4:12 and alluded to in 1 Cor 14:14 and 2:14.

This article is not the place to discuss and evaluate the different theological theories³ relating to these components, nor are we commenting on whether they are literal, metaphysical components or metaphors. The point is the New Testament presents our human makeup (made in the image and likeness of God) specifically in this way.

Some see our "spirit" as a component possessed only by humans, inherited because we are God's "offspring" (Acts 17: 28, Greek genos) and activated by the gospel. At the same time, others see it as the higher attributes of a spiritually activated mind. Either way, the descriptive existence of such an entity is highly interesting.

If the **body** component contains the senses (touch, taste, smell, etc.), which are informed by and interface with the

physical world, it may well be that our **spirit** is that which interacts with the unseen world, the spiritual. Consider Romans 8:16, "The Spirit itself bears witness with **our spirit** that we are the children of God." (KJV)

If the **soul** component [Greek, *psyche*] refers to the normal human mind functions, such as intellect, will, and emotions, then God would not be expected to interfere directly with these functions. Doing so would affect free will.

However, if God were to provide His comfort, peace, courage, wisdom, strength, insight etc., to our **spirit**, and we then use our free will in meditation, fervent prayer, Bible reading and spiritual focus to access these **helps**, we have a possible solution as to how God can answer our Inner Being prayer without interfering with free will. Cooperation is the answer.

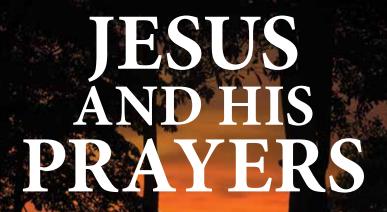
However, regardless of how this all occurs, we can be confident God has offered us His prayer guarantee that if we ask anything according to His will, He will answer that prayer. God is at work in His new creation, the "Inner Being," transforming His people, and supplying them with "all your needs, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Phil 4:19).

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^{1.} All Scriptural citations are taken from the English Standard Version, unless specifically noted.

^{2.} Nicholls, A. (1976). The Spirit of God. Birmingham: The Christadelphian—Pages 103-110.

^{3.} Theological Anthropology is divided between Trichotomy: Man has three components, Body, Mind & Spirit, and Dualism: Man has two components: Mind & Spirit are different expressions of the mind.



By Shane Kirkwood

N Mark 1, we see the eager crowd had waited until sundown at the end of the Sabbath, and now they were at the door of the house, desperately seeking healing for themselves or a loved one. We are told, "and he healed many." (v. 34).¹ But what of the others? For there were more; there would always be more! What to do?

Jesus took it to his Father! In Mark 1:35, we read, "It was dark, it was desolate." Just what Jesus needed. The challenges of the previous day had

depleted him. For a man with the compassion of our Lord, it was difficult not to heal them all, but there seemed to be competing priorities. Without the gospel message, people would remain lost, so he communed with his Father. The psalmist writes about our Lord,

I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in Your words. My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on Your promise. (Psa 119:147-148).

Jesus resolved this dilemma, as is seen in his response to his disciples in Mark 1:37-38,

And they found him and said to him. "Everyone is looking for you," and he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."

While the events of Mark 1 find no direct parallel in our lives, we often struggle over what to prioritize in our service to God. We can ask challenging

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and tearful? If so, you

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heartfelt prayer.

questions that are difficult to balance and resolve, such as "How do I help?" and "Who do I help first?" Our Lord knows we are trying to serve. Sometimes we don't know how best to do it. The example he gave us is the necessity of repeatedly seeking his Father in prayer.

We read in Luke 5:16, "He would withdraw to desolate places and pray." In John 6:15, the apostle records that Jesus perceived "that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain to be by himself."

On these occasions, our Lord not only spoke with his Father about everything, but he also listened as his Father spoke to him. In John 15:15, we read, "For all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you."

Such precious time spent alone praying and listening to his Father was at the very core of his life, and he wants our life to be the same. We are further exhorted in Luke 18:1 that disciples should pray and not lose heart.

Jesus never asks of us anything he didn't practice himself. He was constant in his prayers, the depth of which is revealed to us in the stark and confronting words of Hebrews 5:7,

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to Him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.

> Here, the prayer life of our savior is laid bare. This aspect is the key to his life! This verse concerns him healed the sick, stilled storms, and raised the dead! He had the spirit without bringing the intensity of challenge and temptation to a level

we may have never faced. Such was the burden he carried. Loud crying and tears were sometimes the only way he could express his feelings.

Perhaps you've also been here? Have you been exhausted, wrung out, and tearful? If so, you have shared in some small way fellowship with his sufferings in heartfelt prayer. You abandoned yourself to the Father who wants us to come to Him.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you. (1 Pet 5:6-7). This attitude was our Lord's **daily** experience.

Many of the Psalms are also a window into the soul of our Savior.

Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God. (Psa 69:1-3).

In Psalms 42:5-11, we are further instructed,

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise Him, my salvation and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me. By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night His song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life. I say to God, my rock: "Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me all the day long, "Where is your God?" Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

These are just two Psalms that find a link with this verse in Hebrews 5, as Jesus constantly battled the enemy within and without.

I am saddened that I can spend so little time in prayer and deep contemplation of my Savior, who gave himself in every way for my salvation.

Isaiah tells us our Lord was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (Isa 53:3).

There were, however, times of joy and rejoicing for him. Luke 10:21-22 records his prayer of joy at the return of his disciples and their response to his teachings.

In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father. Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to the little children; yes, Father, for such was Your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father and no one knows who the son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the son and anyone to whom the son chooses to reveal Him.

He is thankful, joyful, and exuberant in this spontaneous public prayer.

If we had been there, perhaps we would have considered Jesus' response an overreaction (as some of us in certain

Let's catch the Lord's spirit here in Luke 10 and share his enthusiasm for good news as we see and hear people responding with open hearts to the transformative message of the gospel.

cultures are wont to do when we think somebody gets too excited about spiritual things). Maybe the hardness and cynicism of this world have diluted or stolen our joy? If so, let's catch the Lord's spirit here and share his enthusiasm for good news as we see and hear people responding with open hearts to the transformative message of the gospel.

Jesus' prayer in John 11 is again a prayer of thanks, much like his prayer in Luke 10. A cave with a stone rolled against the mouth, creating a silent tomb, inside which lay Lazarus. Outside stood the Lord of Life. Surely in this event, Jesus saw his impending death and resurrection when the stone would be rolled away forever, not just for him but for all who would believe (the greatest healing).

Jesus' prayer on this occasion is short, beautiful, and instructive, just as he intended. He first lifted his eyes to heaven. The scene is captivating and redolent with meaning. The direct connection between Father and Son. No temple, no priesthood, no animal sacrifice required. He had already been heard and answered.

His prayer has no hubris—a contrast with the Scribes and Pharisees, who thought their long prayers of pretense demonstrated their righteousness and connection with God.

Jesus' words were instead an expression of his reverence, deep gratitude, and overflowing love for his Father. Incredibly, some of those who saw Lazarus raised and heard Jesus' prayer went straight to the Pharisees (John 11:46), the outcome of which was that the council made plans to put Jesus to death (v. 53).

Amazingly, they thought their power was greater than that of a man who could speak directly to God in praise and raise the dead! We are blessed to have immediate access to God through the same man who cried out, "Lazarus, come forth!"

We need no temple or priesthood. Through Jesus Christ, our mediator, our reverent heartfelt prayers of thanks are always heard.

Hebrews 5:7 is written about our Lord's prayers and experiences in Gethsemane. Having left his disciples with instructions to watch and pray (surely an exhortation to us all!), he goes a stone's throw away. The disciples slept, and so the Lord is again alone in prayer. This time though, he had wanted their companionship, which witnesses to his humanity and need. He was looking for comfort but found none. We are told in Psalm 69:20 that they slept while he battled with his will. "My Father." This address is intimate and personal but also so intense. Dare we intrude? And yet we must, from a distance, if we are to learn.

Jesus had told parables about counting the cost. Yes, he had counted the cost before he started, and here it was now confronting him. Looming over him was death, even death on a cross.

So, Jesus fell on his face—the natural position of surrender. Yet spiritually,

when surrendering to God, it becomes a position of strength. The strength to let go, to submit, to give your life to the will of One greater. "Nevertheless, not as I will but as you will." We can often ask for another way, but can we embrace "nevertheless"? For therein lies the true cost of discipleship.

Would his Father give them both another way? For surely the cost to his Father was enormous. No, there was no other way. God so loved. Let that sit with us.

Jesus did it—went beyond for our sake, as Hebrews 2:15 says, "and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to life long slavery."

Our prayer is for his return. How long, O Lord?

As we wait in this world of turmoil, trouble, and impatience, may our prayer life reflect his. May we find quiet places to commune with our Father and his Son—thereby learning to be more reverent, thankful, and joyous. For our Father's grand purpose is in His creation and in the lives of people who are being transformed by His Word and the sacrifice of His Son. Our progress may seem slow and our footsteps faltering, but great comfort comes from knowing the King is on our side.

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1. All Scriptural citations are taken from the English Standard Version, unless specifically noted.

JOY OF LIVING IN CHRIST

By Russell Patterson



"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." Phil. 4:4

THAT sounds pretty important, doesn't it? The Bible mentions joy, being joyous, and joyfulness at least 215 times, and there are other times when it is implied. Even when there is weeping, there is the promise of coming joy. David wrote, "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." (Psa 30:5).

In the Bible, God tells us His purpose in creating the earth. I will quote four verses to show this.

Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created. (Rev 4:11).

He created it [the earth], not in vain; He created it to be inhabited. (Isa 45:18).

As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD. (Num 14:21).

For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Hab 2:14).

He created the earth to bring pleasure and joy to Himself. It involved people. It involved the earth. It involved filling the earth with His glory. It involved people who knew His purpose. The Bible is a book of joy, telling us how we can share in that joy.

However, there is much in the Bible which is not joyful. That's because men were wicked and ignored God's promises of goodness and mercy. So He needed to apply His power of correction to fulfill His purpose. That's why He brought curses such as the Flood, wars, and other disciplinary measures to preserve His goal. Sadly this consumes much of the Bible. But His goodness is always there.

God desires joy in our service to Him. In Deuteronomy 28, we read that the Jews would receive curses. But the core reason is provided in verse 47, "Because thou servest not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart."

The nation thought they were pleasing the LORD when they performed sacrifices and observed the rituals of the Law. But they did these things as ends in themselves. They weren't serving out of joy and love in their heart. God's reaction to these joyless offerings is recorded in Isaiah 1:11,

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me.

God gives us guidance on how to serve Him. The scriptures teach us how we can grow to please Him and fulfill His ultimate purpose to bring joy and praise in honoring Him. We need to be faithful to God and His purpose to be joyful. We transform our minds by doing our service to God the right way (Rom 12:2).

The gospel is full of joy. Jesus lived a life that brought joy to thousands as he healed their bodies and souls. Picture the joy on the face of a blind man that Jesus healed. For the first time, he could see his family. The deaf could now hear the voice of their loved ones and laugh and hear sweet music. Jairus could hold his little daughter in his arms again. Think of all the miracles Jesus did and the joy that resulted. I am sure these healings must have also brought much joy to Jesus.

I have many reasons for immense joy as a result of knowing God. Since I am in Christ, I receive many blessings. First of all, I am filled with joy because of my family in the Lord. It is a real joy to have many brothers, sisters and friends like you in my life. Secondly, it is a blessing for me to know that God is always merciful and loving. The LORD God reveals Himself as "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and will by no means clear the guilty." (Exod 34:6-7) This idea is repeated in Micah 7:18, with one addition. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy."

He delights in mercy. He wants to forgive me for my sins. He, the Almighty God, cares for me, forgives my sins, and wants to give me the Kingdom. When I fail, I am not lost because there is forgiveness with Him. His forgiveness is complete. "Like as a father pitieth [or loves] his children,

so the Lord pitieth or loves them that fear him." (Psa 103:13). Our God is a Father who loves His children, and God loves each one. Knowing that God is a merciful and long-suffering Father brings great joy to me. So I rejoice in all my serving, knowing that in all of God's commands, His purpose was to prepare me for the joy He has in store. He delights in mercy. Notice how He deals with our sins. "He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger for ever. He hath not dealt with [me] after [my] sins; nor rewarded me according to my iniquities." (Psa 103:9-10). If He kept His anger, I would have no hope. This idea is so important that it is repeated in Psalm 130:3, "If, thou, Lord shouldest mark iniquities, O LORD, who shall stand?" My sins are totally disposed of "as far as the east is from the west, so far

hath he removed my transgressions from

me." (Psa 103:12).

I am so glad He is a forgiving Father. He suffers when I suffer. He rejoices when I rejoice. In a recent article in the Tidings (Bereavement, May 2023), the author mentioned that when he lost his twenty-two-year-old daughter in an accident, God grieved along with him. I am beginning to appreciate this concept and realize He knows me and cares about me. He will be pleased when I do what is right and disappointed when I do what is wrong. I am joyful because God sent His Son, Jesus, who lived a life overcoming sin and giving his life on the cruel cross as a perfect sacrifice for my sins. I can only be counted as righteous because I am in Christ. It is not something I earned or deserved. Only through the undeserved love of God and His Son, Jesus, and by their

I rejoice in all my serving, knowing that in all of God's commands, His purpose was to prepare me for the joy He has in store.



grace, do I have hope for any future life. Thank you, Jesus!

God has given me many blessings which bring me joy and security. I think of David's words in Psalm 34:7, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." God sends His angels to watch over me. I am sure there were times in my life when God's angel delivered me from serious consequences. I am sure there were other times when I wasn't aware of the work of the angels, but their activity was certainly there. The LORD has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Heb 13:5). That assurance brings me great joy and a sense of security. He remembers I am dust. He knows how I struggle to overcome sin. He knows of tragedies in my life. He knew when our home burned to the ground. He knows, and He cares. Praise God!

I need to be joyful when it doesn't seem like I should be joyful. As James wrote, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of faith worketh patience." (Jas 1:2-3). Temptations and trials are not joyful, but when I remember what they do for me if I properly regard them, I realize how to react to trials and temptations. Trials give me patience or endurance, so I rejoice in my trials when I realize that they help to prepare me for the coming Kingdom and to grow in Christ. So trials are a blessing, and I can rejoice when they come. That's how I can understand how Paul and Silas could do what

they did. They were beaten with many stripes and their feet fastened in the stocks. Their backs were bleeding and sore. What did they do? They prayed and sang praises unto God. The jailer heard them, and good things happened after that. (Acts 16:25-27). Jesus's mind was so devoted to serving God that his trials were considered trivial. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb 12:2). He didn't even think about the shame he was going through hanging on that

that in many places. He doesn't have to do that, but He does because that's who He is. I am very joyful that I am secure in His love. He loved me before I loved Him. (1 John 4:19). That brings joy to me. I have the assurance that nothing can separate me from His love. (Rom 8:35-39). That certainly brings me joy. The very hope of the promised Kingdom is another great reason for joy. Excitement for that coming day gets increasingly exciting as I see the happenings happening today in Israel and other places in the world. The Kingdom surpasses any sense of joy we have had in our mortal lives. "Eye



cruel cross. There was joy set before him, the results of his ordeal. He would think that through his sacrifice, millions would be redeemed to their Creator, and the earth would be filled with people reflecting the glory of God. God loves me, and He reminds me of hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Cor 2:9, cited from Isa 64:4). I don't even know how wonderful it will be. We need to shout for joy for His unspeakable love.

To have God in

my life today in

the middle of all

the stress and

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a hope that is both

sure and steadfast.

Music is an expression of our joy. Remember the songs of joy in the Bible. Miriam, Hannah, Elizabeth Mary. We sing with joy, making melody in our hearts to the LORD. We

may sing songs unto the LORD in the Kingdom. Imagine the beauty of immortal voices in harmony. Picture the joy at that time. We read the songs in the Apocalypse,

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast

slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. (Rev 5:9-10).

What joy I will feel then!

I'll conclude by looking at two verses in the Book of Jude. The first is Jude 24-25. These words are familiar to us, as they are the lyrics of Hymn 106.

Now unto him that is able to keep [me] from falling, and to present [me] faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

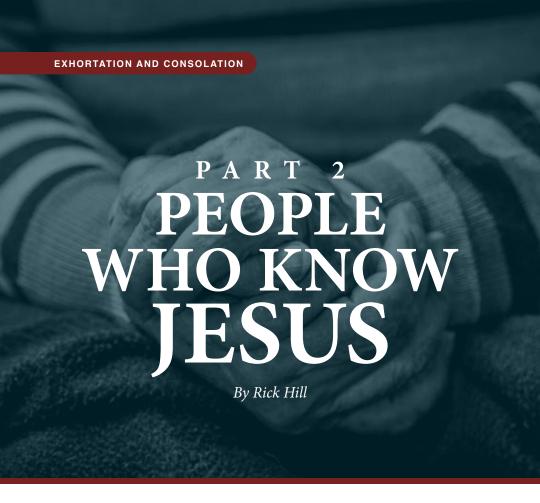
Look at this more carefully. God does three things. He sends His angels to keep me from falling. I'm not faultless, but He presents me as faultless, which must mean He forgives me and does it with **exceeding** joy. There is joy in heaven. Joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents. (Luke 15:10). Wouldn't there

be joy in heaven when I please Him? God loves me, and He is concerned for me. I am important to Him. That means a lot to me. It goes with Micah 7:18, where we are told He delights to show mercy and forgive.

You, too, can have the same joys as I have. What joy we have in these last

days as we wait for the coming of Jesus. Without this hope, things would be dreary. I am so thankful to have God in my life today in the middle of all the stress and wickedness, I have a hope that is both sure and steadfast. And as I project to the time of the Kingdom, my joy will be beyond my comprehension when, by the grace of God, Jesus says to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of your lord." (Matt 25:23). What greater joy could I ever have?

Russell Patterson, Verdugo Hills Ecclesia, CA



One who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will lodge in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!" For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and bulwark. (Psa 91:1-4 NASB)

THIS ia a story of great faith and courage—a story that will encourage you as it did for a small ecclesia in Ontario, Canada.

At the beginning, this dear sister was diagnosed with stage four terminal cancer in late December 2020. She was

given three weeks to live. It was quite a shock for everyone. She was always a source of spirituality for all in her ecclesial family, and through this great trial, she continued to be a bright light. She exemplified Christ being in her and her hope of glory. She touched the lives of many brothers, sisters, and friends. This regard extended to her workplace, Alzheimer's and Dementia Day Care, and the community. She cared deeply. She compassionately worked with her clients and their families. She was a devoted disciple of Jesus, always thinking of others first. She read her Scriptures daily and always stood up for what she believed.

Many prayers were offered for healing. My thoughts took me to the story of Dorcas.

Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. (Acts 9:36 ESV).

We know this story well. Peter was called, and he healed her.

Praise be to God. The sister in our story lived for another year, well past the original prognosis. She was a miracle! God did this for her own family and the ecclesial family. She was able to spend some quality time with her new granddaughter. Her mother, living in England then, could fly to Canada and spend the last few weeks caring for her beloved daughter. There was joy inexpressible for those answered prayers, and it encouraged everyone. We all continued to pray for complete

healing and for the strength to endure, all according to God's will.

When I asked her if she was okay with me writing this story, she said, "If it will help others."

The ecclesia rallied around the family and provided meals. We had a drive-by birthday party and planted a Hope Garden outside her window. Her daughter and her daughters' husband moved close by to care for her and be there for our sister's husband.

This family's story is an amazing one of love and devotion, faith and courage, and a strong belief in the promises of God.

But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. (1 Thess 5:8-11 KJV).

God be with you all as you remember the saints and their example.

Rick Hill, Picton Ecclesia, ON





TELL me a story!

Is there someone in your life who begs this of you? Over the years, I've played storyteller to my little brother, then the twin boys I babysat for. These days, my five-year-old daughter regularly asks my husband or me for a bedtime story. Sometimes I respond with, "What kind of story?" Often, she'll request a story based on actual events from our childhoods, or "injury stories"—we think she'll go into the medical field! However, her favorites are the imaginary tales we tell.

And there was about a three-week window in our home last fall when my husband (a hard-working and loving dad to our girls) started asking a robot to generate bedtime stories.

In his defense, our one-year-old was severely taxing us in the sleep department (as one-year-olds like to do), and by bedtime, it was growing more difficult for our tired brains to conjure up brand new stories in the way our older daughter would like. So, understandably, he decided to try the easy way out on this particular part of our nightly routine.

Let's establish a bit of background information. When I say "robot," I'm referring to a recently developed chatbot, ChatGPT. ChatGPT and similar types of artificial intelligence (AI) are becoming much more widely available and usable to the average person. When employing this software, you choose a topic; maybe a few parameters and a piece of writing can be instantly generated. For example, "Tell me a bedtime story that includes a princess named Amelia, a dragon named Draco, and teaches a lesson about kindness." Boom! You instantly delivered a block of text that you can read to your tucked-in child when you only want to crawl into bed yourself. It is actually quite interesting to play around with these chatbots, and certainly, there will be time saved and some good work accomplished as a result. But without talking much more here about the more significant implications of widely available AI technology, I will say the fact ChatGPT was telling my daughter bedtime stories irked me beyond reasonability.

As I've established, we are talking about a tired man who had worked hard all day. His daughter was a limitless sponge for original stories, and it was just a quick shortcut, right? No rule says every parent needs to tell bedtime stories to their children at night. So why did this feel so disturbing to me? What was the big deal? Why did this bother me so much?

Here are a few plausible reasons why I might have been anti-robots-atbedtime, and I'll discuss whether or not they held up as the source of my angst. Perhaps I was disgruntled with these stories' writing quality or even the subject matter. Or could it have been the lack of overt spiritual themes in the stories? Maybe I subconsciously thought the stories were a poor choice simply because they weren't Bible stories. Let's start by exploring the latter proposition.

The quality of writing exhibited by an AI source could be better. If I am being honest, though, many of the books my daughter has been interested in at the library are much more lacking in the departments of style and descriptive, rich language. Yet, I would not have been perturbed in the slightest if I discovered my husband reading library books aloud at bedtime. And as you can see from the excerpt below, a robot can perfectly insert enjoyable details (fiery eyes, delicious pastries) into its formulaic responses.

Taking a deep breath, Amelia approached Draco cautiously, her voice filled with compassion. "Mighty Draco, I have come not to slay you but to understand you," she said, her eyes sparkling with sincerity. Surprised by the princess's peaceful demeanor, the dragon regarded her with curiosity.

"I have brought some pastries," Amelia continued, holding a platter. "Would you care to share a meal with me? Perhaps we can find common ground."

Draco hesitated, his fiery eyes softening as he sniffed the

delicious pastries. Slowly, he extended a massive claw, accepting the offer of friendship. As they sat together, the princess and the dragon exchanged stories, fears, and dreams. Amelia discovered Draco's menacing behavior stemmed from years of loneliness and fear. In turn, Draco learned of the princess's unwavering kindness and genuine desire to understand him.²

Okay, my grounds for objection would not have held up if based only on the assumption of poor writing quality. Was it a lack of overt spirituality in the stories, then?

No—I don't think it was. Without taking away from my love for the most extraordinary story of all time, that Jesus told in the Bible, I have always considered forms of fictional literature and story to be something worth spending time on. As mentioned, I would spin elaborate yarns for my brother and young charges. I was a voracious reader and creative writer

in my childhood and teenage years, and I am still a lover of imagination. In the book *Habits of the Household*, the author says something about this topic that I wholeheartedly agree with.

Without a Christian imagination, what would we do with verses about mountains breaking into song and trees clapping? How can we imagine captives being set free or a rescuer of the world riding in on a white horse? We need big imaginations to handle the big visions of the Bible, lest they mean nothing to us.... A capacity for fiction is as important as a knowledge of history.³

I don't think it would be a stretch to say my love for God's story has been strengthened and aided—not subtracted from—in my encounters with storytelling and reading fictional and fantastical works.⁴ As a bottom line, I am perfectly okay with my daughter being told imaginary tales. I don't think this is what was troubling me on this occasion.



What troubled me was simply that the storyteller was not human.

I want the stories that my child hears to be infused with something more, something beyond a formula and pretty princess names. No matter how well-designed a robot is, it cannot speak from its heart; it doesn't have one. That's the difference. Robots, while undoubtedly cool and interesting, are created by women and men. But we women and men are created by God. We are keepers of a divine spark of creativity—even at our most end-of-the-day frazzled, tired selves.

Much later, after I had already worked through some of these thoughts, I read something that struck me on the ChatGPT web page. Under a column of limitations, the developers of the software note:

ChatGPT sometimes writes plausible sounding but incorrect or nonsensical answers. Fixing this issue is challenging, as... during RL [Reinforcement Learning] training, there's currently no source of truth.⁵

No source of truth, huh?

There may be one more layer here. We may possess creativity by virtue of being human. We may impart truth by knowing and befriending him, who is called "the way, the truth, and the life." We can tell stories about anything. But I think for those of us who are Christ's, living a new life and telling the story of death and resurrection in our everyday lives, we can't help but infuse the story of Jesus in every story we tell in some small way.

For those of you who love to craft stories, who write creatively for fun, whose imaginations have not been dulled in the years since childhood, what a blessing you possess! To be childlike is one of the best ways to have your great imagination sanctified and taken captive to Christ! I'll share one more quote from the *Habits of the Household* chapter on "Play."

Our fallen world has a way of dulling our imaginations and training us to accept much less than the glory of the kingdom God is building through Jesus and his church. Therefore, we must see that training and exercising the imagination are as righteous as training and exercising the body or the mind. The primary means of this exercise is the story. Especially imaginative stories.⁶

Dear friends who are storytellers: please, keep telling stories—to kids and to your fellow adults. Tell us stories that will make us wonder and delight us with hidden gems of beauty and truth. Consider storytelling (if you haven't before!) to be what it truly is: a spiritual gift capable of uplifting, encouraging, and truth-telling. Just think about the stories of Jesus.

Was there a man with two sons, one of whom went to a far country?

Was there a woman who lost a coin and did the most extreme tidying up her house had ever seen while trying to find it?

Was there a treasure hidden in a field that caused someone to sell all they

owned to raise the necessary funds to purchase it?

Trick questions? Perhaps. My understanding is that they are fictional stories with real power.

Let's wrap up our conversation about the robot bedtime stories. As you have seen, I couldn't put my finger on the reason for my annoyance at first. I understand the appeal of a shortcut. At the end of a long day of changing diapers, preparing five (usually more if I'm being honest) snack or meal times, trying to put things back where they belong, maybe folding some laundry so that my baby can pull it off the couch and play with it in a pile on the floor, my creative juices aren't flowing as much as I would love for them to be. But, deep down, I believe I should still be trying.

"Can you tell me a story I've never heard before?" Yes, it's a challenge. But is it impossible? Not usually.

Here are the things that come out for my husband and me when we try.

- Stories about Millie the Mouse and her family, who (allegedly) live in my daughter's door and closet in secret places that are impossible to find, and come out to have mischievous interactions with my baby daughter, to the delight and uproarious laughter of her older sister.
- Stories about Peter, Beatrix, and other friends with magic powers who go on journeys and overcome obstacles together.
- Stories about princesses Cora, Rayna, and Emeralda, who learn about nature, butterflies, flowers, and trees from the older members of their royal families.

I want to be my child's storyteller. And not just me, but my village. I want her to hear stories from the hearts of people. People with a source of truth.

> Jessica Gelineau, Simi Hills Ecclesia, CA

- 1. In the time between when I started writing this article and when I finished it, Google Documents (where I typically create my written drafts) offered me a new tool called Workspace Labs and now asks me if I want help writing and offers me prompts similar to the model used by ChatGPT.
- Excerpts taken from a ChatGPT generation, using the parameters described on the first page of this article.
- 3. Earley, Justin Whitmel (2021). Habits of the Household. Avodah, LLC. Page 166.
- 4. Ibid., page 166.
- 5. Of course, there's a point at which anything can become a distraction and a detraction from our discipleship, but that's an aside and doesn't take away from my point here.
- 6. Ibid., Habits of the Household, pages 165-166.

Music and Praise section editor, Sis. Jessica Gelineau would love to engage with you and dive into conversations around the intersection of inspiration, creativity, music, and praise. Please reach out if you have a thought to share or to further a conversation you've seen started in this installment of "On Creating."

You can send an email to jessica.r.gelineau@gmail.com.





WORDS I HOPE I NEVER HEAR AGAIN

By David Levin

Christadelphian Cliches, Misquotes, Pat Phrases, Wrested Scriptures, and Legalistic Formulas



Editor's note: This begins a multi-part series by Bro. David Levin. He challenges us, rightly, to consider some of the phrases and cliches we often hear in our community, especially those that may lead to unscriptural or unhealthy conclusions.

7ORDS, like actions, have consequences. Words spoken to a group, such as a Bible class or Sunday worship service, convey the speaker's intent and also have the consequence of contributing to and maintaining the cultural norms of that group. The repeated use of any expression implies that the use of that locution is part of what it means to exhort, give announcements, pray, teach, or preside. People repeat what they hear; young people raised on a steady diet of standard pulpit speech and Sunday School aphorisms will no doubt come to use those same terms when they assume teaching, presiding and speaking roles. Thus the repeated phrases eventually develop into stock phrases that have been implicitly taught as the proper speech and mannerisms when exhorting, giving announcements, praying, teaching, or presiding.

The result is the perpetuation of certain stock phrases—even when they're clearly unsound. These are the "words" to which the title of this series refers: phrases that have become entrenched in our vocabulary but upon inspection or reflection, are shown to be wrested Scriptures, misquotes, or some other form of unspiritual wordings.

Cultural perfusion can only explain how these various phrases and formulations became standard and accepted in our community. **Uncritical repetition** also plays a large role. True, people repeat what they hear, and if they don't think about what they say, it just goes in and comes right back out again. Some of our jargon is not obviously wrong, but upon inspection, the unscriptural and/or spiritually unhealthy meaning comes to light.

Besides cultural perfusion and uncritical repetition, a third factor is a legalistic bent to express religious life in terms of behavioral strictures and Bible knowledge. That's no surprise, seeing how the tendency to live by rules and procedures rather than faith is always a significant challenge for believers.

Because these sayings are so prevalent, calling for their elimination might seem draconian and pretentious, but that is exactly my purpose. The more they are used, the harder it is to see that they're misbegotten formulations. Some of these phrases are worse than overused and stale; they are detrimental to a life of faith and have no place in our teaching, worship, and spiritual development.

My main goal, however, is not so much to retire certain phrases but to raise awareness of the responsibility each teacher, speaker, and presider has to evaluate the words that he or she uses carefully.

The format for each phrase this series investigates is framed by three questions: What's wrong with it? What's at stake? How can it be repaired or improved? A discussion follows, expanding on key issues and addressing related phrases or themes.

First up:

"Wise unto salvation."

I chose this one for the primary example because it is so obviously wrong, so much is at stake, and it's easily corrected. This phrase often arises in prayers, in writing, or in classes.

What's wrong with it? "Wise unto salvation" is a textbook example of wrested Scripture. It is an incomplete phrase that omits the real basis of salvation. The Bible teaches us that salvation is a matter of faith, not our wisdom or book knowledge. Paul reminded Timothy (2 Tim 3:15-17) that from his youth Timothy had known the holy Scriptures, which are "able to make you wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" is an unconscionable misspeak.

This situation is exactly the sort of biblical misuse that any of us pounces on when we hear it in support of erroneous teaching.

What's at stake? A lot. The truncated phrase, "wise unto salvation," plays into a Christadelphian tradition that emphasizes an academic approach (Bible knowledge) as the principal goal of religion. "The Truth" (a phrase to be dealt with later) becomes a matter of "knowing the right things" and "combatting error," rather than developing a trusting relationship with God and Jesus.

In at least one critical way, "wise unto salvation" opposes faith in that the focus becomes you and your dedication to Bible study rather than your trust in God.

How can it be stated better? Use the whole verse, emphasizing "through faith in Christ Jesus."

Discussion: Bible schools, Bible classes, study days, and lectures dominate our religious life. "Faith" is supposed to grow incidentally as a result of learning about the Bible. Exposition is indeed valuable when it's in service to a spiritual lesson, but all too often, the exposition is the entrée, with just a side of spiritual application.

Paul warned the Corinthians about reliance on academic knowledge.

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,. but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (1 Cor 1:18-25 ESV).

"For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." (1 Cor 2:2 ESV). Paul knew a lot more than that, obviously, but

what he meant was that the wisdom of God was manifested in a life of selflessness and trust in God, and God's power over death, proven in the resurrection. There is less cultural difference between us and what led to Paul's admonishing the Corinthians than vou might want acknowledge. The core of the problem is the same: creating academic arguments and wanting to appear knowledgeable becomes the currency of

religion and faith. In our day, it's more likely to be a deep understanding of the atonement, prophetic matters, or the writings of revered authors than it is to be Greek philosophy, but the principle is exactly the same.

Also, 2 Timothy 2:15 belongs in this discussion: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God." Ironically, if you study the word "study," you will find that it doesn't mean "study," but rather "be studious," in the sense of "be diligent," which was the meaning of "study" at the time of the KJV translation. All the main current versions (ASV, NIV, RSV, NASB, ESV, NKJV) have "be diligent" or "do your best." Unfortunately, this verse is still misused to propagate the "salvation by knowledge" agenda.

I do not denigrate Bible study. I like to delve deeply into the forms and structure of Biblical Hebrew. I have no cavil with the desire to learn about

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God's word. That's not the point of this article. What the point is that far too often, the emphasis on Bible exposition, for the sake of Bible exposition, is worse than putting the cart ahead of the horse. It loses the cart entirely. Only the horse matters, not what it is there to do. Moreover, the "Bible knowledge faith" = perspective contributes greatly to, if not directly causes. divisions and strife. The Bible is not a source for debate.

winning arguments, or flouting your knowledge of Scripture.

No amount of Bible knowledge will make you wise unto salvation. Wisdom is knowing that salvation is a matter of your living faith, and that faith is not reducible to how much you know about the Bible or how well-marked your Bible is.

The misquote "wise unto salvation" reflects and maintains an abhorrent perspective.

David Levin, Denver Ecclesia, CO

CONCLUSION THE RIGHTEOUS SHALLLIVE BY FAITH

By Richard Morgan

WHAT does righteousness look like? We can make the mistake of thinking that if only I attend enough ecclesial functions, eat bread and drink wine every Sunday morning, read the Bible every day, and be a "good Christadelphian," this makes me righteous.

However, when talking about spiritual growth, the Apostle Paul wrote, "Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, suffering knowing that produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope." (Rom 5:3-4).1 What God is looking for are people of character. You can read the Bible, pray, and go to meeting until you're blue in the face, but unless it comes from a character of compassion, grace, patience, love, faithfulness, forgiveness, and justice, it is for nothing. When we look at the righteousness of God throughout Scripture, we see a God who does things because He is all these characteristics.

So, when it comes to living by faith, we might ask, "What are we meant to be doing?" Hebrews 11 gives us insight into the answer. We commonly call it the faith chapter, but really, it's the by faith chapter, a list of people who lived by faith. What is notable about Abel, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Rahab, and others is they did acts of righteousness either before or outside the Law of Moses. Their faithful acts of righteousness weren't born from adherence to law or ritual, but because they had a relationship with God, they were people of character and had faith in God.

With that in mind, let's look at the context of the last time Habakkuk 2:4—"the righteous shall live by his faith"—is quoted in the New Testament, in Hebrews 10.

The words that lead into the "by faith" chapter first recall "the former days" when the Hebrews "endured a hard struggle with sufferings." (Heb. 10:32). But it seems their initial desire to endure through trials was waning because the apostle then goes on to say "Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised." (v. 35-36).

To read this warning, it is clear something had gone awry with their faithfulness in God amid suffering. The exhortation to endure becomes the climax of the apostle's list of faithful men, culminating in Christ himself, who "endured the cross." (12:2). Jesus "endured from sinners such hostility against himself" (12:3), but the writer then goes on to say concerning his readers "In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood." (12:4). They were missing something key in their walk.

So it is, back in chapter 10, that the apostle reminds his readers of Habakkuk 2:

For,

Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him. (Heb 10:37-38).



These words aren't just from Habakkuk. They are a composite quotation that also includes the words "a little while" from Isaiah 26:20:

Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the fury has passed by.

It seems the writer to the Hebrews is correcting a misapplication with this quotation. The context in Hebrews has shown us they were enduring something like "fury" in their suffering. It would be easy to use a verse like Isaiah 26:20 to justify hiding away from that fury, just for a little while, until the threat had passed. However, look at the latter half of the quote from Habakkuk with the warning, "if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." The exhortation message is one of endurance under trial, not shrinking back, even if just for a little while.

What does it mean to shrink back?

The apostle uses an unusual Greek word, once used by the Apostle Paul, and another time by the Apostle Peter. Looking at these two uses, we can see the contrast between enduring under trial and hiding away for a little while.

In Acts 20, we find Paul on his way to Jerusalem, where he is bound to suffer many things. Paul called the elders of the ecclesia in Ephesus and reminded them he "did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house." (v. 20). There was no hiding away for a little while—Paul spoke boldly in public. Later he uses the same phrase when he says, "for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God." (v. 27).

On the other hand, Paul uses the same word about Peter in Galatians 2. He writes, "For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party." (v. 12). Here was

Peter hiding away for a little time from the threat of persecution.

Why do we sometimes shrink back when threatened with trials? The children of Israel were guilty of it continually when faced with the rigors of the wilderness. They wanted to go back to Egypt and did so in their hearts, repeatedly. Why would anyone want to go back to slavery in Egypt?

Because it felt safe, they knew their boundaries in Egypt, but here they were in a big, vast desert, which was scary. And, for their lack of faith, they all died in the wilderness, as the writer outlines in Hebrews 3.

The honor roll of the Faithful is about men and women who got out of their comfort zone and chose to endure their wilderness sojourn. They understood the principle from Romans 5 that we started with—suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character.

And yet, we find it so easy to shrink from exposing our belief in God to the world and risk suffering. We prefer to hide away for a little while and establish our righteousness through the ritualism of our religion. The Hebrews were guilty of that by going back to the ceremonial aspects of the Law of Moses. At the beginning of chapter 10, the writer urges them to understand that ritualistic offering of sacrifices does not work.

Therefore, it is intriguing that the first illustration of living by faith is Abel's. His example is that he "offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended

as righteous." (11:4). So, it's not the rituals themselves that are the problem, but the attitude with which they are performed. It is still good for us to go to meeting, read the Bible, and pray.

contrast, Cain's offering was unacceptable, and there's a hint as to why that was the case in the record from Genesis. In Genesis 3:23, God told mankind "to work the ground," and Cain was "a worker of the ground" (4:2) and brought "an offering of the fruit of the ground." (4:3). So, it seems as if Cain was following God's instructions, but it was Abel who was righteous by faith. Likewise, by following the rituals of the Law, it seems as if that should make someone righteous. But, as the example of Cain and Abel shows, there has to be more to it.

Another clue is in the description of Abel's offering as "a more acceptable sacrifice." The same phrase translated "more acceptable" is used in Matthew 5. In the context of Jesus saying, "I have not come to abolish them [the Law and Prophets] but to fulfill them." (v. 17). Jesus adds, "unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (v. 20). Despite all appearances, looking as if they were following God's instructions (like Cain), the righteousness of the Pharisees was one of rote ritualism and devoid of character. Their religion was their comfort zone, and they hid from the threat of persecution. Our righteousness must exceed that, despite the threat of those like Cain and how he treated Abel.

There is one other sacrifice worth mentioning which helps round out the issue when Abraham offered his son Isaac on the altar, mentioned in Hebrews 11. But before we get to that, consider the conundrum of the seeming contradiction between Paul and James. In Romans 4:6, Paul says, "God counts righteousness apart from works," but James writes, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?" (Jas 2:21).

However, note what Paul said earlier in Romans. In 2:6, he said, "He will render to each one according to his work," and in verse 13 of the same chapter, "For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified," which accords perfectly with James's message that we should "be doers of the word, and not hearers only." (Jas 1:22).

So, why do we read in one place we are justified apart from works and in another that works are important for our justification, or as the word means, being counted righteous?

The answer is throughout Hebrews 11. Despite the divine record telling us "He believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness." (Gen 15:6), in Hebrews, we learn that Abraham expressed his faith by works. His sacrifice of Isaac is a classic example of how he lived—or acted, did work—by faith. When the writer to the Hebrews says, "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac" (Heb 11:17), he illustrates faith in action—works of faith. Abraham didn't simply have a passive belief in God; his faith

provoked him into action by obeying God's command. Yes, he followed God's instructions, just like Cain, but his motivation was completely different. Whereas Cain acted by rote obedience to the law, Abraham was motivated by his faith that God can bring life out of death.

James explains the principle beautifully by writing the following:

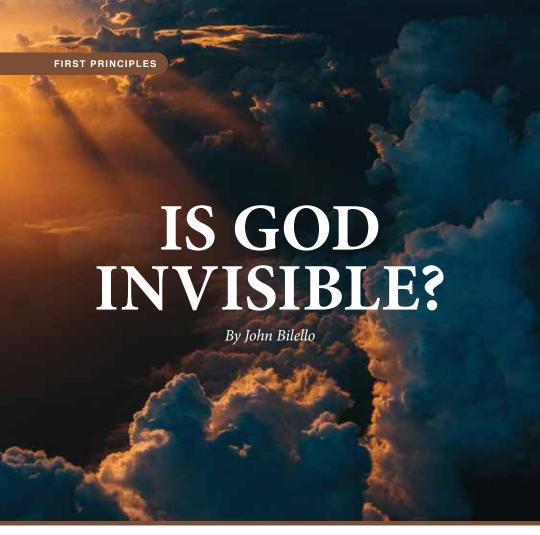
Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." (Jas 2:21-23).

Abraham's works—the way he lived—illustrated his faith. And where James says, "the Scripture was fulfilled," he means that the declaration of his faith in Genesis 15 wasn't fulfilled until it was demonstrated in Genesis 22.

The righteous shall **live** by faith. The example of Abraham teaches us about faithful endurance. For many years Abraham kept the promise of a son in his heart, and then God tried him by asking him to sacrifice Isaac. Through life's experiences, we too, if we don't shrink back into the comfort zone of ritualistic religion, can live by faith and develop the character God wants in those with whom he wishes to share eternity.

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^{1.} All Scriptural citations are taken from the English Standard Version, unless specifically noted.



Is God invisible? One might think that the answer is a no-brainer. Doesn't the Apostle Paul distinctly write to Timothy using "invisible" as an exact description of our LORD (1 Tim 1:17)? While most Bible translations have adopted similar language, we should not accept this as conclusive. What follows will explain why!

There is an overwhelming need for most humans to visualize objects of worship. Around AD 64, the Apostle Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to govern that ecclesia. Paul was aware of the strong pagan traditions in Ephesus, and of the famous temple to the goddess Artemis, from his previous missionary adventures there.

The new religion of the followers of our Lord Jesus Christ had no image of his likeness to worship nor of the God that he said was his Father. It is possible that this raised questions in further preaching efforts in that city and maybe even concerns among the new converts. Hence, the letter from

Paul clarifies that there could not be any image of the LORD because it was impossible for mortal humans to see Him. While the King James Bible (and many other translations) uses the word "invisible," as stated above, I suggest this is an unfortunate translation because a thorough study of Scripture has convinced me the LORD is not invisible!

To appreciate what the Apostle Paul was trying to convey to Timothy and what an alternative way of looking at that verse would imply, let's delve deeper into the seemingly human need to visualize their god(s). The most famous incident in Scripture occurred when the Israelites grew tired waiting for Moses' return from his ascent of Mount Sinai to converse with the LORD. The Israelites had been living for 400 years in Goshen, surrounded by Egyptian worship idols. While they had witnessed many miracles to free them from their bondage, they had never directly seen any likeness of the LORD. They could not visualize what He might look like in comparison to the idols representing the gods of Egypt. Sometimes I felt we have been very critical of the Israelites for this behavior. but I wonder how we would act under challenging circumstances. similar We recall what Aaron did to assuage the doubts of the Israelites-as he explained to his brother Moses when he returned from the mountain and heard the tumult in the camp:

"So I said to them, 'Let any who have gold take it off.' So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf." (Exod 32:24).1

Most of us have heard outrageous excuses in our lifetimes, but I doubt if any we have experienced can top this one! However, Christianity has generally followed this same path, i.e., a road with no Scriptural foundation. Organized Christianity is replete with images and statues that supposedly depict the apostles, Jesus, and other so-called saints. Only a small fraction of professing Christians rejects such (including, portrayals thankfully, Christadelphians). However, I know of no Christian community anywhere that has tried to make a statue, painting, or image of any kind of the LORD (with only one exception).2 In that sense, the writing of the Apostle Paul has been successful. Given this, I would still insist that it doesn't make the LORD God "invisible."

To consider whether God is invisible, a prominent, well-known preacher, the late Billy Graham (1918-2018), offered the following reasoning.

The Bible doesn't tell us what God looks like—because He is invisible. And the reason we can't see Him is because He is a spiritual being—that is, He has no body or face or other physical form.³

Now this cannot be correct for several reasons. First, the Bible clearly says that spiritual bodies are visible. To cite several examples:

And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost (spirit in the BBE⁴)!" and they cried out in fear. (Matt 14:25).



Obviously, the Apostles recognized Christ even though they thought he was a spirit.

A second conclusive illustration occurred on Mount Sinai when Moses asked to see God's glory. It's worth quoting the whole of this magnificent passage:

Moses said, "Please show me your glory." And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." And the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will

put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen." (Exod 33:18-23).

This passage shows that the LORD has a face, hand, and back, indicating clearly a physical being and not in any way invisible.

Finally, there is evidence of our Lord Jesus Christ's own testimony in the Beatitudes. This verse is quoted in my favorite Hymn, number 199.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (Matt 5:8).

The important thing to note here is that Jesus is using the future tense. As sinning mortal creatures, we cannot see God even though He is not invisible.

The LORD's own words explain the reasons for this: "Man shall not see me and live." As the Apostle Paul explained further to Timothy:

[God] who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. (1 Tim.6:16).

This picture may be complex for us to grasp, but I can give an illustration in a way that is personal to me and might help you understand the reasons why God is not invisible, yet at the same time, cannot be seen. I have had multiple operations on the retina of my left eye, which has left me with excessive scar tissue and a partial retina. If I try to drive at night, the headlights of an oncoming vehicle register on that eye as an explosion of blinding flashes. This situation prevents me from seeing anything ahead of me, and even though I know there is an oncoming vehicle, it might as well be invisible to me!

A better word than "invisible" might be "unseen," and that is precisely an alternative translation, according to Strong's (G517). As far as I know, the translation known as the Bible in Basic English (BBE)⁴ is the only one that I have readily available that has chosen to use "unseen" instead of "invisible."

Another modern translation known as the *Easy English Bible* (EEB) uses phrases such as "cannot see him."

In our present mortal, sinful state, if we were in the presence of the LORD and tried to see Him, we would instantly perish from the radiation He emanates (that is what I suggest is meant by the Apostle Paul using the term "unapproachable light," since light is pure energy). The situation will be different for the redeemed. We should rejoice in this, knowing that if we are faithful, there will be a day when we will not only hear the LORD face-to-face as Jacob⁶ and Moses⁷ did but will see his full glory!

No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever... He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! (Rev 22:3-5, 20).

John C. Bilello, Ann Arbor Ecclesia, MI

- 1. All Scriptural citations are taken from the English Standard Version unless specifically noted.
- 2. The only exception that I am aware of is the painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Vatican City, Italy by Michelangelo of his version of the LORD creating Adam.
- 3. Quoted on https://guideposts.org/.
- **4.** BBE is the *Bible in Basic English* translation.
- 5. For non-scientists: light is radiation that encompasses a wide range of wavelengths beyond the visible. Short wavelengths, such as X-rays are very energetic, and if one were even briefly exposed to the most powerful X-ray sources, such as synchrotron radiation, one would perish.
- 6. Gen 32:30.
- 7. Exod 33:11.

BOOK REVIEW

"SHOW ME THY GLORY"

Written by Richard Mellowes

Reviewed by Geoff Henstock

Those called to be sons and daughters of God must cultivate in their lives the character of their heavenly Father. That character is revealed to us in God's word, very succinctly in Exodus 34, and in our Lord Jesus Christ, the word made flesh. By studying the Bible and our Lord's life and ministry, we can develop our appreciation of God's character and marvel at the wonder of His grace and mercy.

In Exodus 33, Moses implored God to reveal His glory and how he should lead Israel. In response, God revealed to Moses His name:

The LORD descended in cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, the LORD, a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin: and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation. (Exod 34:5-7).

It is axiomatic from this passage that God's glory is encapsulated in His name and reflected in His character. Also implicit in these words are how Moses should lead the Israelites and the way by which spiritual Israelites should pursue their pilgrimage to the Promised Land. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." (Psa 9:10).

Christ in all the Scriptures

Exodus 34:5-7 is a seminal passage. Its language is redolent in the description of our Lord: "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." (John 1:14). It not surprising, therefore, that there are allusions to this seminal passage throughout the Bible.

Bro. Richard Mellowes' book, Show Me Thy Glory, is subtitled "An exposition of the use of Exodus 34:5-7 in all the Scriptures." He commences by setting the declaration in Exodus 34 in its historical context. After an insightful discussion of the significance of God speaking to Moses face-to-face, Bro. Mellowes goes on to consider the term "the name." A detailed exposition of the language of Exodus 34:5-7 follows. Each characteristic of God revealed in the passage is expounded, as are many of the words used to illustrate God's character. He places emphasis on how these characteristics are seen in the nature and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. As he says on page 58: "This revelation to Moses of Yahweh's Name

and glory anticipates the manifestation of the same glory in God's only begotten son."

Having examined in detail the text of Exodus 34:5-7, the author proceeds to consider a range of passages in both the Old and New Testament that quote or draw heavily upon that revelation of God's name. While verbal links tie these passages to Exodus, they are expounded with due regard to their immediate linguistic and historical context. Bro. Richard also draws out relevant links to other parts of Scripture. Intriguing examples of this are the links he sees between the words used in Psalm 145 and the ministry of Elijah and between Hezekiah and the Hallel Psalms (Psalms 111 to 118), Most importantly, he demonstrates how the passages build upon Exodus 34 and points forward (or back in the case of the New Testament) to the Lord Jesus Christ as the ultimate manifestation of God's character.

This analysis of how specific passages draw upon the language of Exodus 33-34 reaches a pinnacle in the book's last two chapters. Here, the author demonstrates how themes from the revelation of God's name suffuse the epistle to the Hebrews and focus our thinking upon our Lord Jesus Christ.

Theory and Practice

By its nature, this is a work of detailed exposition solidly underpinned by linguistic analysis and the historical context of each passage. It would be wrong, however, to think of it as purely an academic tome. Bro. Mellowes frequently refers to the need for God's servants to develop the character

of their God in their lives. On page 51, in the context of discussing the graciousness of God, he writes:

This is God manifestation in practice, and is an important lesson to us, lest we think that God manifestation is merely an academic study. It is certainly profound, but is also practical. God's character is for us to imitate too.

Later, on page 189, when discussing the significance of John 1 and the need for the saints to walk in the truth, Bro Mellowes observes that:

God manifestation is ultimately not an academic subject, but one that is essentially practical, and that bears on the daily manner of life of each individual believer.

God's sons and daughters must be compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in mercy and truth, merciful and forgiving. At the same time, they must be implacably opposed to sin and all that is contrary to God's ways. Contemplation of God's character as revealed in Exodus 34 and other passages will foster the development of such attitudes. On page 232, under the subheading "Knowledge brings the responsibility to transform character," and in the context of looking at 2 Corinthians 3, 4, the author says:

Since the saints have been shown that priceless glory, they have a solemn responsibility to manifest that glory and Divine character in Godly living.

Throughout the book, Bro. Mellowes shows that the passages under consideration emphasize that, while God has a special covenant relationship with Israel, His plan of redemption is directed at individuals and that each man and woman is responsible for how they respond to the grace of God. This was, he argues, the primary objective of the revelation in Exodus 34:

In revealing His glory and character to Moses, Yahweh was teaching that salvation was not to be on the basis of natural descent or the Law of Moses. Rather, it was to be based on individual faith. (page 259).

The themes addressed in this book are profound. Still, they also are eminently practical in that they foster an appreciation of the way of life and the salvation available to all men and women through the sacrifice of our Lord.

Prove All Things

Being a detailed work of exposition, Bro. Richard sets out the evidence on which he drew his conclusions. A feature of his style is his effort to indicate when a point made is speculative. For example, an interesting case is made for the revelation in Exodus 34 on the Day of Atonement. Similarly, he makes a case for the Mount of Transfiguration being Horeb. In each case, he acknowledges that we cannot prove these intriguing suggestions beyond all doubt.

On pages 158 to 162, Bro. Mellowes discusses the enigmatic seven shepherds and eight principal men of Micah 5:5, in which "somewhat speculatively, with the motive of stimulating further thought, some possible identities of the seven shepherds and the eight principal men are suggested." Having

put forward who he believes the seven shepherds might be, Bro. Richard acknowledges, "It has to be admitted that the case is not proven beyond doubt." He then suggests identities for the eight principal men but again acknowledges there may be weaknesses in his case and that the names are "only suggestions."

Bro. Mellowes wants his readers to be critical students. In the context of expounding John 1, he offers three possible interpretations of the phrase "grace for grace" in verse 16 without indicating which he prefers. It is up to the reader to decide which is most compelling-or, indeed, to suggest another alternative. Also, some of the author's speculations may not strike a chord with all readers. For example, on page 90, his comments about David's mother and other women who may have influenced him early in his life may not be considered as convincing as some of his other speculations. Having said that, he is to be commended for putting forward such ideas to benefit readers. willing to weigh up the evidence and draw their own conclusions. If we are to grow spiritually, we must progress beyond being spoon-fed.

Conclusion

Show Me Thy Glory is a detailed exposition of a profound topic, but it is accessible, and its subject ensures that it is uplifting and implicitly exhortational. It does require close attention, but the diligent reader's effort will be well repaid.

Geoff Henstock, Adelaide Ecclesia, SA

Show Me Thy Glory, An exposition of the use of Exodus 34:5-7 in all the Scriptures.

Bro. Richard B. Mellowes

Meli Publications, 2016. ISBN 987-0-9550991-7-5 298 pages. Paperback.

Available from the author at 88 Heol Trecastell, Caerphilly, CF83 1AF, UK. Email: richardmellowes@btinternet.com Telephone: +44 (0)292 0869 9398 Price: £8:00 including UK P&P. Ov erseas postage extra. Electronic edition (PDF only) £6:50.

In North America, this book is available through the Detroit Christadelphian Library (christadelphianlibrary.com)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE HALIFAX PROJECT AN APPEAL

In 2001, our young family moved Nova Scotia. With Christadelphians in such a beautiful province, we initiated "The Halifax Project" to encourage brothers and sisters to relocate to this part of the Canadian Maritimes. We are thankful to God that we enjoyed a good deal of success, with several coming to help and staying for many years. We have hosted Truth Corps and have run preaching campaigns and Bible seminars. After reaching a peak in membership of nineteen about a decade ago, due to retirements, relocations, and members falling asleep in Christ, the Halifax Ecclesia is now at seven members.

Therefore, at this time, we would like to renew our appeal and are thinking especially of those who might be willing to commit to one or two years as self-sufficient, part-time domestic missionaries, including those who can work remotely. Most of all, we need those willing to be pioneers and to assist a small ecclesia in terms of helping with our regular meetings and taking part in outreach, including inperson and online Bible seminars. Real estate prices in Halifax and even more so outside the city are below average for Canada. The metropolitan area is economically vibrant and rapidly growing, with a population now more than 430,000. We have much beautiful scenery and are surrounded by the ocean. We are well served by hospitals and medical professionals. Please also consider Halifax and Nova Scotia in your holiday plans (and do get in touch if you are coming through). There are also two other ecclesias in Atlantic Canada with which we interact:



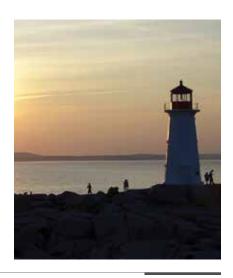
Sussex, New Brunswick and St John's, Newfoundland. Members of both of these ecclesias also enjoy visits.

John Thomas preached in Halifax in October 1851 to crowds numbering as many as 1,000. There was an ecclesia here in the days of Robert Roberts. Right through the twentieth century, there were always at least a small number of brothers and sisters in Nova Scotia, mostly in and around Halifax. We are keen to see a Christadelphian presence continue in Nova Scotia as we await the return of our Savior.

Anyone interested in coming to Halifax either to visit or stay is encouraged to explore our dedicated website on visiting or relocating to Nova Scotia, which will answer many questions about the area, including those related to work and immigration: http://christadelphians.ns.ca/relocate/index.html. For our ecclesial website, see http://www.christadelphians.ns.ca. We are also more than happy to receive direct inquiries from anyone considering visiting or moving to Nova Scotia at our ecclesial e-mail address:

nschristadelphians@gmail.com. We are grateful for any kind of help and support, whether short-term or long-term, as we endeavor to keep a light stand shining brightly in this part of the world.

Stephen and Julie Snobelen, Halifax Ecclesia, NS



A TEMPLE FILLED WITH UNSEARCHABLE RICHES

In the June issue, Brother Peter Wisniowski makes a detailed argument for Ezekiel's temple being built in the future. This passage of Scripture is indeed hard to interpret, but there is one view Peter did not mention and which deserves thought.

First, it helps to have some idea of Ezekiel's situation. He was a priest, except that he was taken away to Babylon before he could serve in the temple. He prophesied for seven years before the temple's destruction in 586 BC and for a year afterward—that takes us up to chapter 39. Then there is a 13-year gap before he sees his vision of the temple in chapters 40-48. So it is wrong to think that chapters 34 to 48 form a continuous sequence—the temple vision is quite separate.

As a priest, Ezekiel was distressed at the temple's destruction, and was naturally concerned about when it would be restored. So in 572 BC, he saw this vision—it was now 33 years before the return under Zerubbabel and the start of the rebuilding. So it seems possible that Ezekiel's vision was to encourage and inspire the returning exiles.

In fact, God tells Ezekiel that the vision is for the people of his own time: "Son of man, describe the temple to the people of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their sins.... Write these down before them so that they may be faithful to its design and follow all its regulations." (43:10-11).

The details of the vision fit better with the time of Zerubbabel than with a future age. For example, the priests are the family of Zadok (40:46, etc.), which was the case under Zerubbabel. There is a character called "the prince" (44:3 etc.), who would seem to be the ruler of the people. Earlier in the book, Ezekiel refers to Zedekiah as a prince (12:10-12); so the prince would be Zerubbabel after the exile. This prince is a normal human being and certainly not the Messiah: he is to enter the sanctuary no further than the gate of the court of the priests-so he's not a priest (46:2); he offers a sin offering for himself (45:22, 46:10-12); he has sons and assumedly a wife (46:16); he is warned against exercising oppression (45:8-9, 46:18); and a succession of princes is implied (45:8-9).

The idea that Ezekiel's temple will be built in the future is hard to believe. How can it be those sacrifices, including sin offerings, will be made in the Kingdom? The New Testament is clear that no more sacrifices are needed now that Christ has offered the perfect sacrifice: "But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God." (Heb 10:12, also 10:18). It is also very clear that "The Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands." (Acts 7:48), but rather the church is God's temple: "You are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord." (Eph 2:19-21). Surely there will be no need for a physical temple in the Kingdom: "I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." (Rev 21:22).

> David Dunstan, Reading Ecclesia, UK

SOUTH AFRICAN CHRISTADELPHIAN SUMMER BIBLE SCHOOL FUNDING APPEAL

Since 1982, the Pinetown Ecclesia has been organizing a Summer Bible School in South Africa, held at the end of December. We have been fortunate in the past to secure overseas speakers, adding tremendous value to those attending. They are able to appreciate the greater picture that we are a worldwide community. These speakers also ensure exposure to studies that are of a high standard.

We have secured a new venue for the school, which is nestled in a very picturesque part of Kwa Zulu-Natal. The venue is ideal for our purposes, with conference rooms, a dining hall and accommodation. It also has all the sporting facilities for energetic young people.

Over the past few years, we have enjoyed wonderful studies by Bre. Matt Davies, Jonathan Bowen, Carl Pary, Roger Lewis, Steve Hornhardt, and Kitson Reid, whose family accompanied him. God Willing, Bro. Kitson will be with us this year. We also conduct various sessions where brethren are asked to lead a discussion on a particular subject.

During the years of running the Summer Bible School, the demographics of South Africa have changed with the abolishment of Apartheid. As a result, the gospel can now be freely preached all over South Africa. With our Heavenly Father's blessing, the truth has seen much growth in previously disadvantaged areas.

The Summer Bible School now attracts attendees from these previously disadvantaged areas, and we have witnessed significant growth in attendance from our brothers and sisters in the greater Johannesburg area. We also have visitors from as far afield as Botswana and Zimbabwe. Attendance at the school has come from fifteen ecclesias around Southern Africa.



This circumstance has brought with it funding issues. The current unemployment rate in South Africa is at 32.9% (42.4% if you include discouraged work seekers), which unfortunately impacts many of our brothers and sisters. Therefore, almost two-thirds of those attending the Bible School rely on funding to do so, including the added cost of transport. Many would like to attend the school but are unable due to financial constraints. We believe we have a responsibility to ensure that we can continue to run the school and not turn any away who desire to be at the Bible School. It is always a humbling experience to witness the warmth of fellowship and the growth of friendships between brothers and sisters at the school. The real meaning is found: "In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3:28).

To meet the ongoing funding demands, we have implemented a sponsorship program, where for \$158 USD, one person can be sponsored for a week. We are now seeking involvement from brothers and sisters from further afield.

our website christadelphianbibleschoolsa.co.za we have opened up a page where donations can be made easily via debit or credit card.

bibleschool.shop.netcash.co.za.

Alternatively, you submit can earmarked donations to:

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas, c/o Ieff Gelineau, Treasurer 567 Astorian Drive

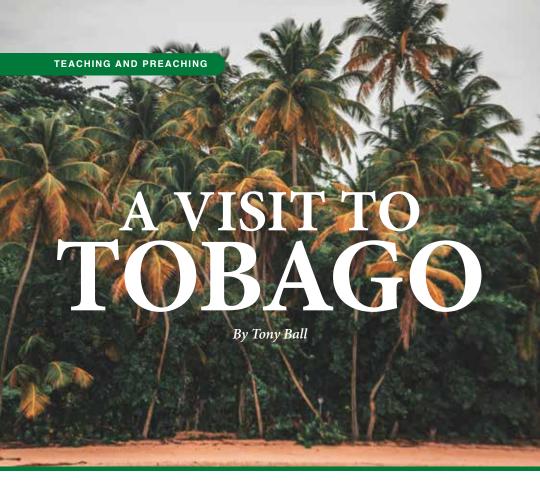
Simi Valley, CA 93065.

We prayerfully ask for brothers and sisters to visit our website. Even the smallest donation, such as the cost of a coffee, helps in the greater scheme of things. Please feel free to contact the committee members, whose details are on the website, for further information or any questions you may have. We are praying for our Heavenly Father's blessing on the community in these last days so that when our Lord returns, he may find a people ready and waiting to welcome him with joy and gladness.

Please direct questions to Bro Travis Sinclair at trenosinclair@gmail.com

> South African Christadelphian Summer Bible School Committee





URING the first week of May, my wife Amy and I were blessed to visit the beautiful island of Tobago. While we were there, we visited the Mt. Grace Ecclesia. I called ahead earlier in the week only to hear that Bro. Collin Campbell had fallen asleep rather suddenly, so it was a sad time for the ecclesia. Bro. Collin was the Recording Brother and a hardworking, faithful worker in the ecclesia with a large family of children and grandchildren, most of whom also attend the Mt. Grace Ecclesia. He was loved dearly and will be sorely missed. He was laid to rest Friday morning before we arrived at the ecclesia the following Sunday. I

had chosen an exhortation that focused on our vision of the Kingdom, looking at the work of the Lord and the first disciples at his first coming, bringing the Kingdom of God to the masses in Judea-healing the sick and preaching the gospel. I think it's likely we'll be doing similar work at his second coming during the Kingdom age.

We received a warm welcome from the brothers and sisters, and despite the loss of Bro. Collin, the memorial service resounded with hymns of praise and beautiful prayers from humble and contrite brethren and sisters. The ecclesia has lost some young people who have not returned since the Covid

pandemic. One or two dialed in via Zoom, so the ecclesia was not yet back to the pre-pandemic normal. The pandemic hit Tobago sometime after it hit the USA, and it's similarly taking them a little longer to normalize, but love and enthusiasm for the Truth is apparent.

After the memorial service, Bro. Clement Williams asked me to say a few words. I was not sure what he meant at first, but with further enquiry I learned he wanted to hear about the brotherhood in the Pacific Northwest. I gave the ecclesia an impromptu

overview of how the Truth has grown in the area since the Seattle ecclesia began in 1959, the same year the Mt Grace ecclesia started. They seemed to enjoy it.

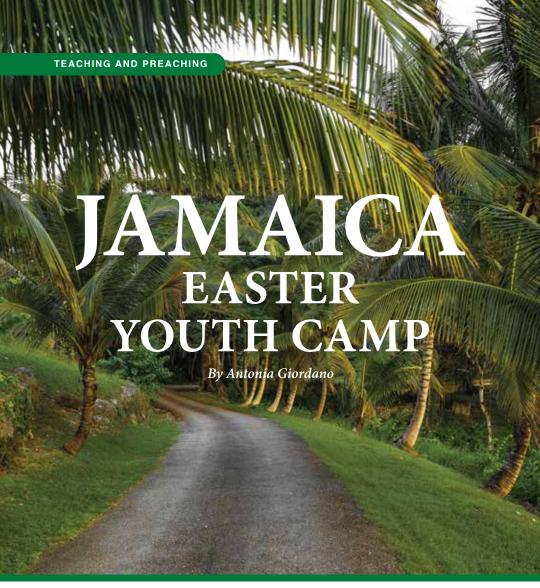
Amy and I look forward to the possibility of future visits to the brethren and sisters in Tobago, God willing, and pray that the Father continue to bless them until the Lord comes.

Tony Ball, Monroe Ecclesia, WA



The Mt. Grace Ecclesia in Tobago





IN April, eleven young (and youngish) North American brothers and sisters from Virginia visited the brethren in Jamaica for the first time and witnessed life in the Truth in another place. The purpose was to attend, help lead, teach at, and generally support the Jamaica Easter Youth Camp. Bro. Matt Tuckson taught the main classes, and the other brothers led additional sessions

throughout the day. There were also classes for younger children in which the visitors took a large role.

The Jamaica Easter Youth Camp was wonderful! Over fifty brothers, sisters, young people and kids from Jamaica and Virginia gathered together in the relative cool of Mandeville for a weekend of fun, fellowship, and fabulous food. We're going to hear from three of them.

Sabrina is a Jamaican teen growing up in the very small ecclesia of Argyle Mountain:

My experience at Easter Camp 2023 was really, really fun! I met a lot of new people from different ecclesias and from abroad... and going to different places and meeting different people is really nice. Bro's Matt's classes were very interesting. He taught about Christ and anxiety and insecurities. I'm not really an insecure person, but I still ended up learning about how to control it in different ways. And I loved the food! The chefs worked really hard day and night just to prepare a meal on the table for each and everyone that was on campus, and I truly appreciate that. My experience overall was awesome, and I look forward to the next camp in 2024.

Sis. Shauna from Port Maria last attended camp in the 1990s when she was a teen herself!

Easter Bible Camp 2023 was like a breath of fresh air after not getting to meet face to face for so long at an All-Island Bible meeting to study and share the Word of God.

The talks from our brothers were food for the soul. The words we receive and understand will definitely motivate us to overcome the trials that so often face us in our daily lives. The humanism talks really got me thinking and researching even after I returned home. The organizers and team could not have done a better job. Thanks be to God!

This was Sis Sydney Pittman's first trip to Jamaica from Virginia:

Our trip to Jamaica for the Easter Camp was, to put it plainly, an experience. In some ways it was strange and fascinating foreign—I've never seen crowded streets, or watched a coastline transition so suddenly to a mountain, or been anywhere that the temperature is nearly the same every day. But once we were among the Jamaican brethren, I felt as though I were simply stepping into another home: it was just another Bible camp among brethren who are so much like us in their great love for God that the fact that we were in a foreign country with a different culture didn't matter. We all shared the same purpose: to join in fellowship around God's word.

I can't adequately describe the comfort I took in seeing all the enthusiastic young people genuinely interested in the classes, taking notes, and asking questions. Still, I can at least describe the things that fixed themselves in my head throughout the week.

I was especially impressed with the music. Not because the singing was in tune or in perfect unison (often it was neither; most of it was sung in the acapella style at a cue from a brother or sister), but because of the joy and enthusiasm with which it was sung. These were songs the brethren had memorized—songs I didn't know—that seemed to fully convey the fervent belief the Jamaican believers have in their faith and their love for God.

And perhaps I'm exaggerating, overwhelmed as I was by the sheer magnificence of it, but music is one of those things that will strike you wherever you go. As we're encouraged to sing hymns of praise and spiritual songs to our Father in heaven, I commend those who pour themselves into it as our brothers and sisters in Jamaica do.

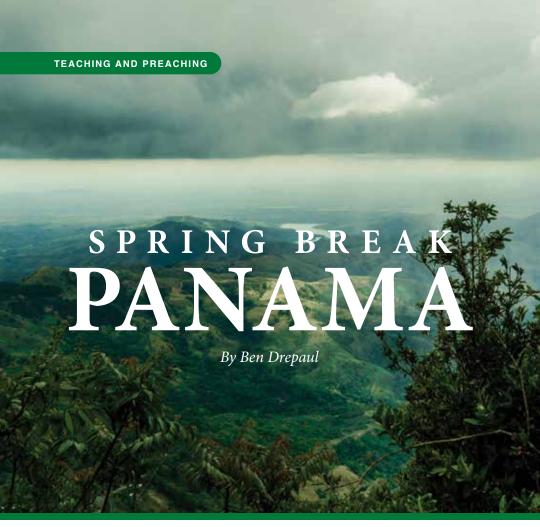
Another thing that struck me was the continuity of the whole thing. Everyone worked together to help the camp run smoothly. Whatever the obstacle,

the brethren worked together to overcome it or do something When classes new. didn't start on time or bled too far into the afternoon activity, we did a different activity. When there was a torrential downpour just as the camp's sports day was about to begin, the sports day was moved inside. The fellowship experienced during group activities was spectacular, and the willingness to help where help was needed (or more—apparently, the day everyone decided to help bring the bread down to the kitchen resulted in people being sent to put the extra bread back!) was very encouraging.

I can only hope that everyone else got as much out of the experience as I did. It was a truly uplifting experience amongst people who love and dedicate their lives to serving God, and it cemented in my mind that there is a worldwide body of Christ, and we are all members of it.

Antonia Giordano, (Co-Link for Jamaica with Nathan)





Spring Break 2023 in warm sunny Panama, where the lowest temperature in October is 85 degrees! The Colon Ecclesia connects each week with the Panama City Ecclesia from each of their respective meeting rooms, and on occasion, a bus is rented, and they have an in-person joint fellowship. Such was the case on April 9, and it was a delight to see so many faces we have been hearing about for quite some time. Bro. Jose introduced us to his wife, Sis. Lilana, who a few years ago,

was given three months to live by the doctors since she was diagnosed with brain cancer. Today by God's grace, there is no sign of any such illness, a living miracle indeed. Bro. Frank's generation continues to grow with two grand babies, Brittany and Joseph. The lunch in between the two sessions was quite a treat, put together by the sisters of both meetings.

On Monday, we were privileged to visit and break bread with Sis. Joann who is confined to a wheelchair. Over the years, she has lost her siblings and



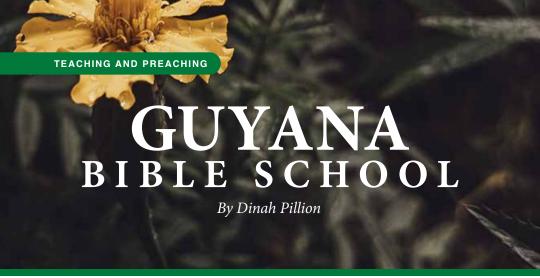
is left alone in her home. We traveled via the Autopista to the Colon Bible Class on Wednesday. The building reminded us of our own meeting place in Brooklyn, an apartment building in the middle of the city. After finding a spot on the street to park near the building, a guy sitting by the door said to me in Spanish, "Don't worry, I watch the cars out here!" at least I think that is what he said! It is a good thing I could understand a few words as very few English speakers are around. After the Bible class, there was no bus to take Bro. Frank and family home; apparently after 5:00 pm, there is no such service. So a taxi was summoned to the tune of \$60 for a half-hour ride.

In addition to assisting us with translating the various talks, Bro. Luis and Bro. William, who have both since retired from employment on the famous Panama Canal, each took us to visit their side of the man-made wonder. Amazingly, 40 vessels pass through the canal every 24 hours, and each ship passing through the locks pays a fee, the largest of which can

be USD \$450,000. With an annual revenue of around \$2 Billion in tolls, the country should be overflowing with capital; however, the current human ruler's wealth is not always evident on the streets. The subway, however, only costs 35 cents to get on and 50 to exit; the buses are 25 cents, so at least there is some government subsidy. With the massive construction underway of the third subway line extending to the outskirts by 2025, Bro. Frank and Sis. Regina will be more easily accessible. Visiting Sis. Joan would also be much easier.

Also similar to New York is the fact that many of the businesses are owned by Jews, including the airline Copa and since it was also Passover season, quite a few of them were closed. I was glad the airline, however, was open for business. The support from many members and friends from both meetings was truly encouraging.

Ben Drepaul, CBMC Link for Trinidad & Tobago



THIS year the Kilcoy Berbice Ecclesia hosted the 51st Guyana Bible School, the first in-person Bible school in Guyana since the pandemic. Attendees came from the six ecclesias in Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago, Barbados, Canada, the US, and as far away as Australia. The theme of the Bible School was "As children of light, let not the day of the Lord overtake you as a thief," and the speakers were Bro. Rafeek Soolaman (BC) and Bro. John Pillion (WA).

The Kilcoy Ecclesia is a small ecclesia with only two brothers and a handful of sisters. Still, it had the monumental task of planning the school, finding accommodations, and cooking for close to 100 attendees as well as 30+ children who were invited from the village to participate in the Sunday School program. The Bible School's schedule was well-packed. As customary for Guyana Bible Schools, a lively questionand-answer period followed each class session. It was also the first opportunity since the pandemic for many members to join their voices together in singing with thanks to Sis. Alina, who lent her

talents as a violinist to accompany the piano.

The Sunday School program in Kilcoy is a testament that even though the laborers are few, the harvest is plentiful. Preaching to the community through providing an open Sunday School and encouraging the children from the community to attend has always been an effective preaching tool in this area. Kilcoy was once the largest and most active ecclesia in Guyana, with nearly 100 Sunday school Children—many of whom are now brothers and sisters living in various parts of the world.

100 Sunday school Children—many of whom are now brothers and sisters living in various parts of the world. However, over the last few decades, a massive exodus of brothers and sisters from Guyana has left the ecclesia with its few members today. Still, the work continues today to spread God's message of salvation to the children in the area.

The dozens of children invited to the Bible School this year did not come from Christadelphian parents but rather from a variety of religious backgrounds and levels of poverty, and some of them without access to a full education. The children were so eager for classes each day that many arrived an hour early and would sit patiently, wide-eyed, and keen to learn with us under the sweltering heat of the canopy for 3-4 hours at a time. They enjoyed engaging in singing, crafts, and lessons. Sis. Sharon and Sis. Carmel Glumac from the US helped with the teaching and activities.

Starting in 2022, Bro. John and I have been working closely with a group of young people that make up the Kilcoy CYC, giving weekly classes over Zoom while they attend in person at the Hall. We have about ten committed and consistent attendees, ages 13-22 years old. The work and zeal of our Kilcoy brethren brought these contacts into their hall, and they continue to encourage and support this group of young people. This once shy group now asks challenging and thoughtprovoking questions as we teach first principle topics. We have forged a strong relationship with each of the young people, and it was extraordinary to meet them in person for the first

time and spend several days getting to know each other better. We hope and pray they consider a commitment to Christ through baptism.

While visiting Guyana, we had the opportunity to hold a CYC in the New Amsterdam area, which was the first CYC since the pandemic and was attended by some of the young people in that area. We look forward to continuing to engage with this new group in learning about God's word.

Please pray that God will prosper the work in this area and grant the increase. The Guyanese brethren have a special place in our hearts, and we remain committed to continuing the LORD's work with the youth in this area. The ongoing work in the Kilcoy area filled us with hope and was reminiscent of the zeal and efforts of a time bygone when the ecclesia was first established. Many left the Bible School with their spirits revived and energized for the work of the Truth.

Dinah Pillion, Monroe Ecclesia, WA





is published monthly, except bimonthly in July-August, by The **Christadelphian Tidings**,

567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941.

FIRST CLASS POSTAGE PAID at Simi Valley, CA and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Christadelphian Tidings, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065.

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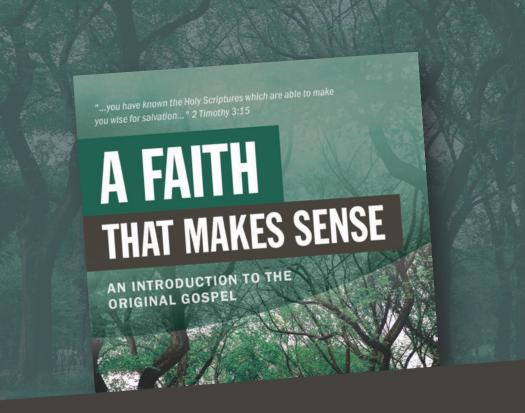
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The Christadelphian Tidings is published on the 15th of the month for the month following. Items for publication must be received by the 1st of the month. Correspondence to the editor, Dave Jennings at editor@tidings.org. Publication of articles does not presume editorial endorsement except on matters of fundamental doctrine as set forth in the BASF. Letters should be sent via e-mail to letters@tidings.org. Please include your name, address and phone number. The magazine reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and clarity.

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