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# TIDINGS

Volume 87, Number 5, May, 2024

# MOTHERS IN ISRAEL



Building faith in the  
Christadelphian community.

# TIDINGS

Volume 87, Number 5 / May, 2024



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EDITORIAL

# A MOTHER IN ISRAEL

*The role of a mother has lately come under attack  
in secular society, and I suppose it makes sense.  
If we don't see the role of a mother as a unique  
manifestation of God's character,  
we probably don't appreciate  
the role as we should.*



**T**HE world has billions of moms. Our first experience of love is often our mother's gentle embrace and encouragement. Mothers sense what we need even before we know how to express it. They attend to our needs at all hours. There is an intense bond between a mother and her infant. As a son, father and grandfather, I have been blessed to witness this incredible human relationship. We dads have a crucial role too, but no one replaces mom.

But what makes a woman "*a mother in Israel*"? Do you even need to be a mom to be a mother in Israel? What are the characteristics of being a mother in Israel?

Let's begin by examining the character of our God. You won't be surprised to know that our LORD has characteristics we think of for both males and females. He is strong, a leader. A mighty warrior. Yet, He can be approached intimately as "*Abba, Father*." Yet we see multiple references in Scripture to characteristics that we often see manifested in mothers. In Isaiah 42:13-14, a striking balance is seen in God as a "*mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war*" who roars and prevails. Yet in the next verse, God describes Himself as crying over His people "*like a travailing woman*." God describes His love for the house of Jacob "*as an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttering over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings*." (Deuteronomy 32:11). In Isaiah 66:13, God states His love to Israel:

*As one whom his mother comforteth,  
so will I comfort you; and ye shall  
be comforted in Jerusalem.*

When we read about the unique loving, nurturing care of mothers, we are reminded that they manifest to us the character of our God. Jesus also, looking with compassion on Jerusalem, offered that he would have often "*gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings*." (Matthew 23:37).

The phrase "*a mother in Israel*" only occurs twice in Scripture. The first is part of the wonderful song of Deborah and Barak in Judges 5:7. The second is of a "*wise woman*" of Abel of Bethmaachah, (2 Samuel 20:15-22) who courageously stood before Joab and delivered the city from destruction by convincing the city to throw the rebel Shebna's head over the wall. We also know that at the time of Deborah, Jael was the one who acted faithfully by killing Sisera. She is called, "*Blessed shall she be above all women in the tent*." (Judges 5:24)<sup>1</sup>

Bro. Harry Tennant wrote poignantly of Deborah as "*a mother in Israel*."

Barak travelled south to his spiritual mother. She filled him with steel by a word of prophecy and a challenge of faith. She had no army and no personal prowess in the wielding of weapons of war. But Deborah had a quality which has moved many mothers in Israel, implicit trust in God and the urge to impart it to others. Many a great man has been made strong by the word of his mother; many a woman who has had no children of her own has sent out valiant sons of faith by her wise instruction in Sunday School and Youth Circle and by her shining

confidence in God. In the days of Barak God chose a woman to judge Israel and God had not made a mistake. Faith has no sex. Spiritual strength does not depend upon a powerful physical frame. Faith is infectious. Every woman called by God has the opportunity and ability, on these terms, to be a mother in Israel.<sup>2</sup>

My own mother was certainly one of the many mothers in Israel that I have experienced. I was deeply blessed to have her as my mother. She was the first one in her family to find the truth and embrace it at the early age of twelve. Her love of God and enthusiasm for the Kingdom was always on display. No human has had a more noteworthy influence on my spiritual life, except my dear wife. She was quick to teach and correct but always did so in a nurturing way that gave comfort and assurance. I never wondered if my mother loved me. Never. Even when she was pretty upset with me! She was fully committed to always looking for the best in me and others. She took the time to write notes and send cards to encourage others. I learned the first principles and Bible stories from her. Sunday School and other ecclesial meetings were only helpful supplements. My mom demonstrated what a life of faith looked like. She revealed the joy of Bible study as she enthusiastically shared her views on passages. I never doubted that I wanted to be part of her faith family as I grew up.

As I look back at my childhood, I now see that my mother was attempting to demonstrate Divine characteristics. She wasn't trying to teach me to think

like her but rather to appreciate how God thinks. This has stayed largely with me over the years. When in weakness, I rationalize classifying or labeling someone badly, I am reminded that it was my mom who first took me to the Apostle Paul's counsel in Ephesians 4:29:

*Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*

The role of a mother has lately come under attack in secular society, and I suppose it makes sense. If we don't see the role of a mother as a unique manifestation of God's character, we probably don't appreciate the role as we should. God's wisdom and design of men and women was to provide a theatre for demonstrating God's character. Together, both roles teach us about our Creator.

My experience is that women are absolutely as capable as men in most tasks. In the ecclesia, I have no doubt that sisters are among our top scholars. The roles assigned by God to husband and wife have nothing to do with qualifications or capabilities. Rather, they are all about submitting one to the other. Submitting teaches us love. It teaches us the very character of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was the Son of God, "took upon him the form of a servant." (Philippians 2:7). Submission to one another is the glue that holds marriages and families together.

We are so blessed to have many "mothers in Israel" in our community.

## The role of being a mother in Israel also has a broader application. **It helps our community understand gentleness, care, nurture, and love.**

Whether young or old, raising children or not, we are greatly enriched by their critical contributions to our children and community overall.

### Senior Mothers in Israel

When the years of child-rearing have ended, can one still be a mother in Israel? Absolutely! Studies have shown that grandchildren are deeply influenced by their grandparents. We can uniquely model a life-long commitment to Christ. They are often open to our teaching. My grandmother saw that I had been deeply moved by a class on Elijah at a Bible School in 1964. She recommended that I write a talk on Elijah and present it to her. There, on a hot, humid rural Arkansas evening, I gave my first exhortation at the age of nine! She was so encouraging to me.

However the role of being a mother in Israel also has a broader application. It helps our community understand gentleness, care, nurture, and love. These characteristics are demonstrated by the fruit of the lips, by the support of the weak and needy. The role of a mother in Israel is to be a committed Bible student. Such contributions are essential to the health of the ecclesia. Supporting

young moms, who are often isolated and faced with questions about parenting and marriage, is a clear admonition of the Apostle Paul.

### Moms Survey

Earlier this year, over 200 mothers responded to a Moms' Survey. In the following articles, we will share some of what we learned from the data collected and include a few thoughts by the two sisters who led this project on some of the needs that should be addressed.

The survey found that approximately forty percent of moms in our ecclesia work outside the home. This fact may be the reality of the day, as the cost of living in much of North America can often demand more than one income. But working outside the home is not new. The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 is quite active in society, willingly working, buying and selling. She also displays leadership, generosity and wisdom. However, what strikes me as I read Proverbs 31 is that much of what she does is in service of her household. Because of this, her children and husband praised her. Her mouth is filled *“with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.”* (Proverbs 31:26). How did her children benefit from her example? Surely, clothing and physical resources were important, but what



Solomon identified as unique was her character.

It would be well for our community to give particular care to the moms in our ecclesias. In the early days of child-rearing, moms can be overwhelmed with childcare. They often can go for years and not hear an exhortation or are distracted by their children during meeting. We can learn much about our God from their care. They are self-sacrificial, choosing willingly to care for their children while often missing the spiritual food of the day for which they are starving. There is little doubt that moms need our support. It is dangerous to go for years without the ability to engage in spiritual thinking in the ecclesia.

So, what is a modern “mother in Israel”? They are the wonderful women who demonstrate the character of our God in the family and across the community. It is a role that teaches us the intense need for care and nurturing in the ecclesia. They are committed to encouraging and leading others to trust in God. We are reminded that it was mothers in Israel who encouraged the military leaders, influenced their city to act and destroyed an enemy of Israel. Moms are faith warriors. They are beacons of faithfulness.

*Dave Jennings*

- 1 It might be noted that in both of these incidents, where a victory over an enemy of Israel occurred by a woman, it was through either the crushing or decapitating of the head of the enemy. Could this be reminding us of the great victory of the Woman's seed, who would crush the ultimate enemy, sin?
- 2 Tennant, Harry, *His Strength and Our Weakness*, The Christadelphian Magazine, Vol. 104, 1967.



# THE MOMS' SURVEY

By Nancy Brinkerhoff and Linda Beckerson



**W**HAT struggles do 21st-century moms face? How are they different from those of previous generations? And what can ecclesias and organizations do to help?

These are some of the questions that prompted the *Tidings* 2024 “Christadelphian Moms’ Survey.” Over 200 sisters currently raising children in Christadelphian ecclesias responded to the survey, which concluded on

February 15, 2024. This article will highlight key findings from the survey, who responded, what they are experiencing, and how they feel, and outline some steps that the *Tidings* hopes to take in response.

## Who Responded

Of the 200+ respondents to the survey, approximately 94% were from North America, Australia, or the UK. This result is unsurprising, as we wrote



the survey in English and publicized it on English-speaking social media accounts. Thus, the data mainly reflects the concerns of mothers in developed Western countries. Perhaps we could examine the needs of non-western moms in another effort. We have also discussed gathering data from fathers on common parenting challenges, though this survey focused exclusively on women. Several respondents did note concerns about their husbands' ecclesial service, indicating that fathers' struggles could also be a topic for future exploration.

Of the surveyed Christadelphian moms, approximately 87% reported being married to a Christadelphian husband, with 7% married to non-Christadelphians and 6% not currently married. These numbers perhaps indicate the typical ratio in Western ecclesias, though we do not have data in the broader community. Both single moms and sisters raising children without a Christadelphian husband face significant additional challenges, as noted below.

One data set that may surprise older brothers and sisters is the number of mothers with outside jobs. Among the respondents to our survey, 40% identified as full-time homemakers, 36% have a part-time job, and 24% have full-time paid employment. These data seem in line with more significant trends but may represent a change from what previous generations expected regarding stay-at-home moms in the ecclesia.

A few other demographic measures gave us a general picture of the moms who responded. First, a good balance

of ages was represented: 34% have pre-school-aged children, 57% have school-aged kids, and 46% have teens or young adults (respondents could choose more than one category). Of the moms with kids in school, 65% have children in public school, 8% in private school, 14% in Christadelphian schools, and 31% homeschool (again, note that some are in multiple categories). The percentage in Christadelphian schools seems high relative to the small number of such schools, perhaps indicating that this group is somewhat over-represented. In reported ecclesia size, 24% of moms were members of small ecclesias (less than 30 members), 28% in mid-sized ecclesias (30-60 members), and 45% in ecclesias with more than 60 members (approximately 3% had no local ecclesia). This split suggests that the data might be skewed toward the concerns of moms in larger ecclesias, though it is difficult to be certain.

### What They Experience

After the demographic information, we asked moms to agree or disagree with a series of statements about their lives. Some data indicated positive experiences for Christadelphian moms, others less so.

One rather pleasant surprise was the number of respondents who agreed (or somewhat agreed) with the statement: "I believe that my marriage is successful/thriving." We chose not to define these terms in detail, but 79% self-reported a successful, thriving marriage, and only 11% disagreed with the statement. ("Neither agree nor disagree" was also an option). This information was encouraging, as the child-raising years can be rough on a marriage. Of

course, this could also indicate we did not reach sisters in difficult marriages in our survey. Ecclesias should be especially aware of the 13% (or more) of couples struggling in their marriages and look for ways to provide support before difficult situations worsen.

Another encouraging finding was in response to the statement, “I feel that I have supportive people around me (people that I can talk to about my challenges as a mom).” A full 81% of moms agreed (or somewhat agreed) with this statement, with only 12% disagreeing and 7% unsure. If our ecclesias are fostering relationships where moms feel supported, that can go a long way toward obeying the command to “feed my sheep.” But, again, helping the minority who are not experiencing this is vital.

Related to this was the response to “I have at least one close mom-friend in my ecclesia.” An impressive 70% agreed with this statement, and 22% disagreed. Interestingly, 17% of respondents disagreed strongly (5% disagreed “somewhat”). Ecclesias should pay

attention to the fact that sisters who lack these relationships seem to feel it deeply. We also asked moms to consider the statement, “I have at least one mentor figure in my ecclesia.” Here only 59% agreed, 30% disagreed and 11% were unsure. This area seems to be one where older sisters could help fill a need. Please see “Leading Our Flock” included in this issue.

As the survey’s authors, we were especially curious about responses to two statements concerning ecclesial responsibilities. First, “I wish my ecclesia provided MORE opportunities for me, as a mom, to contribute.” Compare that with, “I wish my ecclesia expected LESS of me in terms of contributions right now.” However, the data around this issue was somewhat ambiguous (see table below). Some moms feel unfulfilled or unneeded in their ecclesias and want to participate more. Others are struggling with the opposite problem and think too much is asked of them. Wisdom and patience seem indicated for ecclesias to figure out where their members are on this spectrum and how to help them.

I wish my ecclesia provided <b>MORE</b> opportunities for me to be able to contribute.				
<b>15%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

I wish my ecclesia expected <b>LESS</b> of me in terms of contributions right now.				
<b>13%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

One other important set of responses concerned spiritual growth. Mothers were first asked to consider the statement, “I believe my children are growing spiritually (at a reasonable level for their age).” Happily, a full 86% of moms agreed. This result is quite a testimony to the efforts of so many brothers and sisters to maintain Sunday Schools, youth groups, and other activities for our young people. (Of course, the 14% who disagreed or were unsure represent an essential challenge for any ecclesia). However, the response was not so encouraging to the following statement: “I believe that I am growing spiritually in this stage of life.” Here, the rate of agreement fell to 59%. Anyone familiar with the child-raising years will not be surprised that many mothers are not finding spiritual nourishment. Moms often spend Sundays trapped in a cry room or hallway, preventing them from hearing

or feeling part of ecclesial services. And the unpredictable schedules and constant demands of children can make personal spiritual activities difficult during the week.

We had anticipated that many moms would be looking for opportunities for spiritual growth. So, the next series of questions concerned various possible activities that ecclesias (or other organizations) could offer. We asked Moms to consider whether each activity could be “Helpful” or “Unhelpful,” or they could indicate they were “Not sure.” A summary of responses to this section is below. Unfortunately, none of the activities stood out as sure to be successful. Moms considered some proposals more helpful than others, but none were considered beneficial by more than 80% of Christadelphian moms. (Recall that 86% were happy with the spiritual growth of their children.) So,

*Percentage of moms that would find each activity helpful:*

Activity	Helpful	Unhelpful	Unsure
Scheduled social activities with other moms / families	78%	3%	19%
Ecclesial Bible classes focused on parenting issues	77%	9%	14%
Activities to connect with older sisters in the ecclesia	68%	10%	22%
Streaming media focused on biblical parenting	68%	10%	22%
Weekend babysitting so I could connect with husband	66%	12%	22%
Reading material to grow as a Christadelphian mom	65%	12%	23%
In-person classes for moms with babysitting provided	64%	11%	25%
Online classes for moms that I could attend from home	55%	25%	20%
Ecclesial members to sit with my children during meeting	49%	26%	25%
Daytime babysitting so I can get chores done	45%	23%	32%
Visits from ecclesial members to help with chores	41%	27%	32%

any of these ideas have the potential to succeed in a given ecclesial situation, but each has a non-trivial likelihood of failure. Again, wisdom and patience seem required. Please see “*An Appeal to Ecclesial Elders*” on page 17.

### How They Feel

The final set of questions in the survey was open-ended, asking moms a series of questions: What are your biggest challenges as a Christadelphian mom? What is your ecclesia doing well in supporting moms and families? What resources have you found helpful in your spiritual growth as a mom? How could your ecclesia improve its support for moms and families? And what else would you like us to know about being a Christadelphian mom right now?

The answers we received were varied, fascinating, and sometimes heart-wrenching. That minority of moms in unhappy marriages are grieving and struggling. Those few who are not seeing spiritual growth in their children are deeply concerned. The subset of moms without close relationships is desperately lonely. And many simply feel overwhelmed by their responsibilities, conflicts in their ecclesias, and unmet needs they see around them.

Those moms who are especially struggling are those with specific and unique challenges. Mothers of special-needs kids, for example, not only face the daily difficulties of child-raising but also feel misunderstood by their ecclesias and utterly alone in their struggles. Much the same is true for

single moms (especially divorced moms), moms of kids with gender-identity issues, and moms living far away from an ecclesia. Our survey data shows that none of them are truly unique. Somewhere in the wider community, other Christadelphian mothers share each struggle. But, without anyone in their ecclesia who can relate to their unique challenges, they feel frustrated and disconnected.

Of course, not all the news is terrible. Many ecclesias already recognize the needs of moms and families and are attempting to meet those needs. So many moms are full of love for God and passion for their ecclesial family. Many have been proactive about finding resources, both from inside and outside the Christadelphian community. Our survey indicates much that is positive and hopeful for the future of Christadelphian families.

But it also indicates some significant areas for growth.

### Next Steps

The *Tidings* committee is prayerfully exploring potential avenues to assist local ecclesias in better supporting mothers and families.

The first, and perhaps most important, is personal. Please consider our “*Appeal to Ecclesial Elders*” on page 17 and our “*Appeal to Older Sisters*” on the next page. There is so much that ecclesias can do regarding ecclesial culture and individual relationships. These small changes can be lifesavers for moms.

Second, we hope to highlight narratives from individual Christadelphian

moms. There is an excellent opportunity to learn from each other about common challenges. Please be sure to see the moving account later in this issue about a mom dealing with children who walk away from faith. And watch for further articles on this theme in the coming months.

Third, the *Tidings* would like to raise awareness about our community's many resources already being produced. Brothers and sisters around the world have developed a variety of videos, podcasts, books and music. Some could help individual moms with spiritual growth or specific parenting challenges. Others could be the basis for ecclesial sisters' classes, parenting seminars, or other activities. Watch for more information about these resources on our website and social media accounts.

Finally, we would like to find a way to connect those moms who feel alone with their unique, God-given challenges. Other Christadelphian moms face these issues, and finding each other can be the first step to better support.

As sisters, we have felt honored and thankful for the opportunity to hear from so many moms doing their best in the tough world of 21st-century parenting. May we all seek ways to support each other better until our Lord returns.

*Nancy Brinkerhoff,  
Denver Ecclesia, CO,  
and Linda Beckerson,  
Ann Arbor Ecclesia, MI,  
Project Leaders*



# LEADING OUR FLOCK

*By Linda Beckerson*



**O**UR lives are imbued with many challenges that we have preconceived notions about. Our growing-up years are filled with ideas, images and ideals about what our adult lives will look like. What will it be like to leave home to be on our own? How will it feel to fall in love? Will our first job make us happy? Will marriage be smooth and easy and filled with joy? Am I prepared for parenting? I am sure we all felt that once the children began

filling our lives—whether one or eight, it would be an easy, gentle slide down the hill to the finish line. Maybe some of us had that experience, but I bet it was more of a roller coaster ride and sometimes a really big one for most of us.

We all know the African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child.” I believe this is true. The village looks different in our various households. Some of us had grandparents, aunts and uncles



to support us as we navigated our parental roles—babysitting, making meals, running errands, and helping with extracurricular activities like sports or school events. That is not the case for everyone, however. I did not have that kind of support. My parents were deceased at very early ages and never knew my children. My husband's parents did not engage in a supportive way and were much older, so they didn't have the energy to be there for us. When my mom fell asleep, my dad still had four children to raise in the home, and my role changed to be a helper to him as well as a wife to my husband.

Sunday mornings at meeting were always a challenge for me as well. We were blessed with our oldest daughter and then eleven years later with twin girls. Our experience at meeting with the oldest was much different than with the twins. Sitting in the nursery with the oldest was busy, and I wished I could have my mom take over once in a while so I could be "in person" for the exhortation. But that was a cakewalk compared to the twins. Raising multiples was and is quite a challenge. You can't understand unless you have been there. Still, watching another mom raise triplets made me appreciate only having two at once.

The issue for me was that, while I was in the middle of an ecclesial village, I felt alone. There were very few offers to take my place in the nursery, but when it did happen, I was ecstatic and uplifted. I think most were scared of having to take on two identical children. I felt as if my spiritual needs were diminishing every week. My husband was not

baptized then, and I felt very strongly he needed to be in the hall listening to the exhortation, Sunday School, and support our oldest daughter during meeting. This decision, difficult as it was, led to his baptism as well as his involvement in CYC with her while I remained home with the twins. But it left me spiritually down for a good while, not having a partner walking with me to the Kingdom.

Many of our moms' survey responses were very similar to my experience. The moms expressed feelings of loneliness, lack of support, a decrease in their spirituality, and exhaustion from being a single mom or, like myself, raising children without a father yet invested in God. And most of the responses asked for ways to find help in the ecclesia or elsewhere. That is where we come in now. To acknowledge their feelings and needs and to find ways to help.

I would like to turn to the Apostle Paul and see how we older moms, those whose children are grown and have moved on in their lives, can support our younger moms. And please know that I do understand that parenting never ends. My girls are grown and married with children of their own, and while my role has changed, I am still parenting on many levels.

Paul lays out the role of women in the ecclesia very beautifully in Titus and Timothy. Some feel this role is not important, but I disagree. The role of women in their households is one that God gave us, starting with Eve, and is reiterated time and again in Scripture as being one of the most important jobs any person could have. So what does Paul encourage us to

do as older sisters? To be teachers of good things, especially to the younger sisters. Such lessons as being sober or fresh (spiritually filled), how to love our husbands and our children while being discreet and as helpers to our husbands. What does all that mean? How do we apply that to helping our younger moms?

I think it is a wonderful exhortation for us to be encouraging to our younger moms. We should not be judgmental about them and how they raise their children, but supportive and share our experiences with children's behaviors. I assumed that since my twins were being raised at the same time with the same rules, they would listen and behave the same. Nope! Their personalities were polar opposites, so what worked for one did not work for the other. This situation happens in everyone's home. That can be very frustrating, but we must encourage the moms to be patient and share techniques that worked for us with our children. I wish someone had shared some of that with me, but we tend to just let the parents work it out for themselves. How much easier

it would be to offer suggestions gently and with love, "I remember when my child acted like that and how frustrating it was. We tried this response, and it really helped." And then let the parent talk it out with you.

We are meant to be examples, good examples, so that God is honored in our actions. To be open ears so we **can** be approached for assistance and advice. To offer our services regularly for babysitting, providing meals, sitting in the nursery to let a mom be with other adults for memorial or adult Sunday School. The older sisters could all come together to find possible ways to be of service in the ecclesia for families still raising their children at home, no matter their age. Meal trains for new moms, sick moms, or moms we know are just plain struggling. A list of who is available on Sunday morning to sit in the nursery with children when the mom arrives overwhelmed. Invitations for these families to come and share a meal and conversations with our family on a Sunday afternoon, especially those families who do not have immediate relatives in the area.



To make it our goal to interact with the children and teens in the ecclesia so they know who we are and that we are genuinely interested in them. Interest in their schooling, projects, Bible Class, Sunday school, friends, what Bible School they can't wait to attend this year, and their friends. The list is long, but it is so important for our kids of all ages to feel loved and special, not just by their parents. And when we connect with our young people, we can be and provide examples of godly behavior and direct them on God's paths.

Several characters in the Bible embody these loving examples for us to follow. Think of Naomi, whose story is all about guiding Ruth spiritually. Deborah guiding a tribe from under a palm tree and helping Barak regain his faith and trust in God to lead the nation into a time of peace. Hannah built her household in faith, having a son who became one of the greatest prophets, and David and Mary used her prayer in their own praise. The woman of Proverbs 31 gave every bit of herself for others in so many ways. Imagine the support she offered to everyone around her as she bore their burdens. Esther, Mary, Priscilla. The list is long, and these women were lovingly happy to be examples and provide Godly support to their families and communities. These are the examples we should look to and emulate to help our ecclesial village grow and prosper for the younger moms, giving them the food they need to be filled with and able to, in turn, fill their lives and children with God's love and grace.

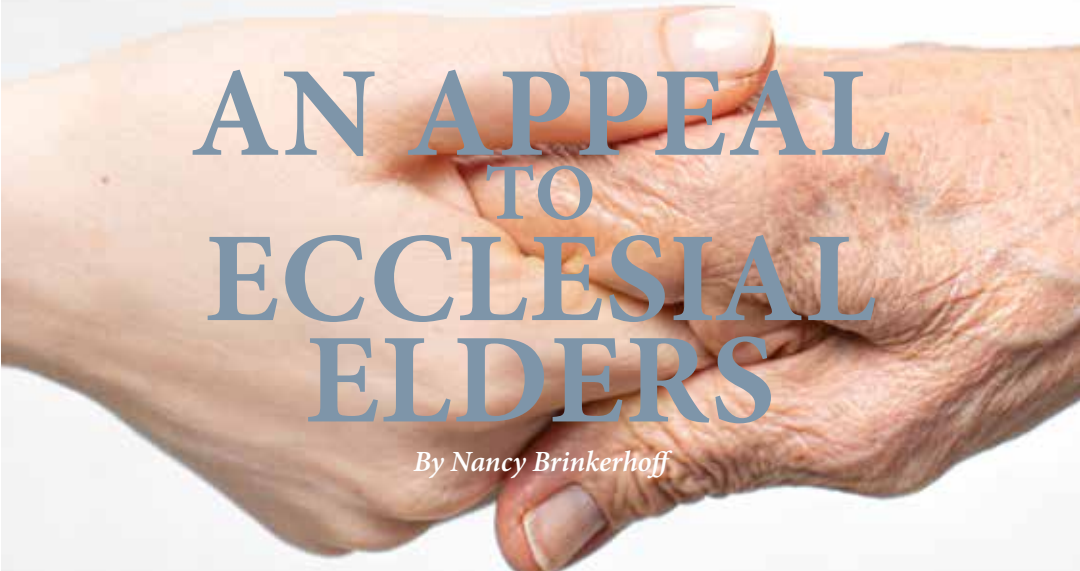
Paul teaches us in Galatians to "*bear one another's burdens*" as this will

*"fulfill the law of Christ."* (Galatians 6:2). We often look at Matthew 25 from the perspective of helping in the world, bearing another's burdens, but I would suggest that these verses are meant for us ecclesially, especially as older sisters. The survey results clearly indicate a need for improvement in our mentorship of moms and that they would very much like to connect with us. They are also looking for offers to help with babysitting and chores during the week and to occasionally take on the cry room duties. These things could help build them spiritually and, as Paul instructed, to "*bear one another's burdens.*"

Our task is to feed, give drink, be inclusive, clothe with the Word, help the sick, not just physically but emotionally, and visit those who feel imprisoned. And Jesus said that when we do that for others, we are doing it for and to him. What a beautiful mandate from him that we should be striving to fulfill.

So let us go forward, as older sisters in our ecclesias, to be helpers, examples of God's love, sharing our time, our experiences, our homes, our insights, and our love, to build up our younger moms and help them raise that most important next generation of God's family—to lead the flock God gave us, our families both personally, and just as importantly, ecclesially.

*Linda Beckerson,  
Ann Arbor Ecclesia, MI*



# AN APPEAL TO ECCLESIAL ELDERS

*By Nancy Brinkerhoff*

**E**STHER appealed to her king. Abigail appealed to David. Paul appealed to Caesar. However, Paul also appealed to many individuals and ecclesias to whom he wrote letters. We make an “earnest request” for things we can’t control or the authority to demand. And when it comes to matters in the ecclesia, none of us is in a position of power over others. We can only “entreat, petition or plea” for others to consider what we say. That is exactly what we would like to do here.

In early 2024, the *Tidings* magazine commissioned a survey of mothers raising their children in the Christadelphian community. Over 200 moms shared their opinions, concerns and struggles, some candidly and poignantly. We heard from working moms and full-time homemakers. Mothers in large ecclesias and mothers in small groups or in isolation. Moms of preschoolers and teenagers, moms with special needs children, moms with happy marriages and moms raising their children alone.

And what did all of these women want us to know?

Unsurprisingly, there was a wide variety of answers to this question. As noted in an earlier article, many sisters felt supported by their families and communities and appreciated what their ecclesias provided. But others were frustrated, depleted, and lonely, some quite distressingly so. Raising children is exhausting, often thankless work, and likely always has been. But a handful of common themes stood out, and these are the subjects of this appeal.

### Spiritual Growth for Moms

First, the moms in your ecclesia are looking for spiritual nourishment. When asked if they believed their children were growing spiritually, around 86% of respondents agreed (or somewhat agreed). Our ecclesias provide Sunday Schools, CYCs, and other activities for young people. And, according to parents, they are working! But, when asked the same question about their own spiritual growth, only about half of moms could say the same (59%). Young children are endlessly demanding, leaving little time in a busy week for personal Bible reading, reflection and prayer. And, rightly or wrongly, the pressure many parents feel to keep their children quiet during ecclesial events makes it difficult for them to benefit from memorial services or classes. These moms need support for their spiritual growth, both for their own sake and to better influence the spiritual development of the next generation.

Recognizing this need, the survey asked mothers what other activities might

help them grow spiritually through the parenting years. Virtual or in-person meetings with other moms? More Bible classes focused on parenting, marriage or family issues? How about offers to visit during the week for babysitting or help with chores? Would any of these ecclesial plans be welcomed or helpful? Unfortunately, the answer is yes and no. Every idea proposed in the survey was liked by some moms and disliked by others. The full data set is in the chart on page 10, but the bottom line is that different moms will find various activities helpful. Needs will vary, likely based on where these sisters are in motherhood, the support they get from family, and other factors. However, the vital need for support in their spiritual growth is consistent.

So, first, the appeal is to consider activities specifically for parents to grow their own faith, not just educate their children. The mothers in your ecclesia need your support. Many of them cannot participate in or benefit from the excellent activities your ecclesia is already doing. Could some Bible class nights be focused on parenting issues, such as having non-parents volunteer to work with the children on those nights so parents could attend? Could classes for moms be worked into existing sisters' classes? Could a retired sister host a weekly Zoom call during preschoolers' nap times? The *Tidings* plans to begin highlighting parenting resources that are already available and in use in our community, so ecclesias do not have to start from nothing. We just have to start!

But remember, the survey data indicates that 25-50% of the ideas



you produce won't work. So don't get discouraged. Twenty-first century ecclesias include a wider variety of families and needs than ever before. This variety calls for wisdom, creativity, and persistence on the part of ecclesial leadership. And so, included in the appeal is an earnest request not to give up, not to be offended if the first idea gets no response, and to keep patiently and prayerfully trying until you find ways to help the unique families God put in your unique ecclesia.

And that leads directly to the second half of the appeal.

### **Listening to Moms**

Over 200 moms, busy, overwhelmed women with too much to do and not enough hours in the day to do it, took time to answer the survey questions. When asked, many of them went into great detail about their challenges. It was clear that, in many cases, no one is asking for these sisters' opinions and perspectives. In fact, a surprising number of sisters included in their survey responses a "thank-you" for even asking the questions.

Asking questions might seem like an easy thing to do. A typical Sunday



morning includes dozens of “How are you?” conversations. And this is definitely a good start. Older sisters, especially, may fill this vital role of making the time for discussions that can solicit feedback from the moms in your ecclesia.

However, it is the ecclesial elders who truly foster a climate of taking members’ opinions seriously, both the brothers and the sisters. There are environments where people feel safe sharing their concerns and environments where people know they will be ignored, shut down, or criticized. It is the group leadership that creates one of these two situations.

The *Tidings* survey asked moms a series of open-ended questions: “What are your biggest challenges as a Christadelphian mom? What is your ecclesia doing well in supporting moms and families, and how could it improve? What else would you like us to know about being a Christadelphian mom right now?” You can find the answers on page 11.

But think of your own ecclesia. Do you have any idea how your sisters might respond to these questions? Would your arranging board welcome this kind of feedback? Would these answers feel like a helpful tool or a threat? Questions like these could indicate whether moms and others feel

understood and supported by their ecclesial family.

We all know parents serve a vital role, as most ecclesias experience much of their growth through the Sunday School.

In many families, it is moms who not only bear most of the weight of daily child-raising but also set the tone for the family’s ecclesial involvement. How does your ecclesia communicate to sisters and moms that their work is noticed and appreciated? That their feedback is desired and thoughtfully considered? Is their own spiritual growth prioritized, separate from their children?

How does your ecclesia communicate to sisters and moms that their work is noticed and appreciated? That their feedback is desired and thoughtfully considered?

Our second appeal is for ecclesial leaders to become more aware of the needs of the moms in their communities by asking questions and creating a climate that welcomes the answers. These are challenging to take on. But an ecclesial arranging board willing to spend time considering them could benefit in many ways. In next month’s issue, we will address some of the opportunities for fathers to help support their wives, especially during the early childrearing years.

As noted earlier, the survey data indicated a wide range of opinions about which potential activities would be helpful. Asking this question could be a great place to start soliciting feedback in your unique

ecclesial situation. Perhaps a formal survey would encourage moms to share their ideas about spiritual growth. Or perhaps specific sisters or brothers could set about gleaning this information in more casual ways. Conversations about spiritual growth opportunities for moms could lead to both improved ecclesial programs and perhaps improved ecclesial culture as well.

In conclusion, we know ecclesias face many challenges and, with limited resources of time and energy, are pulled in too many directions. But, even with the other complex and pressing issues your ecclesia is facing, we appeal to you to consider how to support the moms in your ecclesia better. We ask you to find ways to help them grow in their own faith through the child-raising years, and we ask you to learn more about them.

This request does not mean your ecclesia has to create new programs from scratch. The *Tidings* plans to spotlight existing resources in the community that ecclesias could use or make available and generate some new opportunities as well.

But we do appeal to you to listen to the moms in your ecclesia. Find out how they are doing, what their challenges are. And we appeal to you to prayerfully consider how your ecclesia might create opportunities for spiritual nourishment for moms, separate from the activities for their children. By God's grace, we can find ways of better supporting the "mothers in Israel" who are raising the next generation of believers to His glory.

*Nancy Brinkerhoff,  
Denver Ecclesia, CO*



A close-up photograph of a hand reaching out towards a window frame. The hand is positioned on the left side of the frame, with fingers slightly spread. The window frame is dark and runs diagonally across the image. The background is a bright, hazy sky, suggesting a window looking out onto the outdoors. The lighting is soft and natural, highlighting the texture of the skin and the frame.

# REACHING OUT

*By Sister Ali*

*Help and understanding sometimes comes  
from the most unexpected people.*

**H**OW and where do I begin? How do you condense years of trauma and draw out the fitting lessons? Well, that's what I intend to try to do. This article is written with the prayerful hope that it will be of some benefit to someone else.

I have three amazingly wonderful sons; only one has accepted our Master's call and come into the Truth. The other two live their lives as happily as they can, and I live in hope for them. But what a long journey it has been.

As a toddler, my beautiful blonde-haired, blue-eyed baby was so good. I could take him anywhere without a problem, a fabulous young boy. But when he hit puberty, he turned into someone I didn't recognize. He was quite shy (I realize now) until he started drinking alcohol. Then, he was no longer a shy young boy; he came out of his shell in ways I couldn't believe. He misbehaved at school, becoming rude and aggressive to teachers. After many exclusions, they eventually expelled him. He then turned to drugs and became involved in petty crimes, fighting and more. Not a day went by when the police weren't on our doorstep until he was arrested. Then, going to court became a regular occurrence. Eventually, after the courts had worked their way through all the levels of Anti-Social Behavior Orders (ASBOs) and other minor punishments, the day came when he was sent to a young offender's prison. We visited him every week, praying he would learn his lesson, but sadly, he did not, and it took a few more prison stays.

I read an article recently about young people growing up in the Truth and

their home life's effect on them. One quote really struck me:

It became evident that the root of the problem and its cure lay largely in the homes of brothers and sisters themselves. Young people, in many cases, are only miming what they saw and faced in their own homes and the homes of others.

Wow. Although I understand what the writer was saying, it makes me feel terrible. Was I that bad a parent? How had I gone so utterly wrong?

So, where were our brothers and sisters in these desperate times? Well, they were there! Help and understanding sometimes came from the most unexpected people. Others were always in the wings with gentle words and encouraging hugs. Others were in your face, offering to have our son for a week to "sort him out." I had the same feeling then as when I read that article. Did my brothers and sisters really think they could do what we had been struggling for years to do? Were we really that useless? What did they think we had been doing? It hurt so much and made me angry. I already felt like a failure. I didn't need it rubbed in my face. Like a mother hen with her chicks, my maternal (but alas worldly) protection unwittingly jumped in. I couldn't help it; if someone ruffled my feathers, I would be more than likely to peck their eyes out, no matter who they were. I hated the mum, sister, person I was becoming.

By this time, my husband and I had stopped attending most of our ecclesial gatherings. We only went to the Breaking of Bread each week with

red eyes and heavy hearts. I felt so alone, desperate and in despair. And in that despair, I felt like a blot on the landscape, so ashamed, like the very scum of the ecclesia. I thought I had been brought so low that it was natural for me to feel in my heart that was how everyone in the meeting saw me.

After many other events and trials happening amid all this, we eventually decided to move out of that area, hoping to escape. Our son was a man now; we could do no more. We were deflated and exhausted. It was not plain sailing, and we still had obstacles to overcome, but with the move came growth. Strangely, our son, along with his partner and young son, followed us, as did our younger son. They have both grown steadily, with one having three children of his own and a long-term partner and the younger is married and expecting his first baby.

The majority of the growth came in myself—spiritually. I forgave my brothers and sisters. They had tried to do what was right but were either young or inexperienced and knew no better. One thing I realized was that without their unseen and unheard prayers, we

would never have gotten this far. I am in a better mind than I was then and learning more each day to put my love and trust in our heavenly Father.

You may be young and inexperienced, like I was, struggling to bring up a child bent on rebellion and destruction, or in another situation and struggling. It's okay. Reach out to our heavenly Father continually. He won't let go of you. Reach out to your ecclesial family. They will do their best, and they will pray for you. Sometimes, we get to that point where the saying goes: "Let go and let God." I've had to learn lessons the hard way, but I've learned to rejoice in my trials.

*All things work together for good to them that love GOD, to them who are called according to his purpose.*  
(Romans 8:28).

*Therefore encourage one another and build one another up.* (1 Thessalonians 5:11 NIV).

You are not alone.

*Sister Ali,  
Last name and ecclesia withheld*



# EXPLORING COMMUNICATION IN THE BIBLE

*By Cathy Badger*

**THE** idea of exploring communication in the Bible may seem like a broad topic to work on. Still, it stems from my personal desire to be a better and more effective communicator with others. We can look at ourselves or others and recognize we are not great communicators and that we need to improve. Around us, we can see rude, inappropriate, and even hostile attitudes. Healthy, positive, productive interaction is one of our goals.

As Bible believers, bound together by our common beliefs in God and His Son, we want to learn how God conveys His messages to us. Throughout the Bible, He gives us instruction. Let's see some examples of how this all

comes together for us in His Word. How does Jesus try to reach the crowd with His message? Or how does God communicate with Adam and Eve in the garden?

This theme seems like a pretty big task, but communication is an essential tool for understanding and connecting with one another, to work together as Christ's body. This short devotion will not give all the answers. Perhaps it will pique your interest in self-examination and exploring tools for improving your own ways of connecting and communicating with others. Let us make the ideas useful in our lives, enriching our spiritual relationships.



## How God Speaks to Us

God communicates to man in a few different ways. When I think about clear communication, I think of our God. He speaks His creation into being. In Genesis 1:3, *“And God said, Let there be light and there was light.”* Clear, concise, no beating around the bush with details. The Ten Commandments are very clear, too, although man has tried to elaborate on them. Exodus 20 gives them to us straight from the mouth of God. What can be clearer than verse 3, *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”*?

Man’s communication is not quite so straightforward. Adam and Eve tried to hide from God. The communication in the garden wasn’t “Yea, yea” or “Nay, nay,” it was blaming and hiding. Despite man’s disobedience, God worked with him. God knows our “frame.” God also communicates to man through his life experiences. Thorns will invade the gardens, pain will be part of man’s experience, and death will come. These experiences will be the means of growth.

The first way God spoke was through His creation. But He didn’t only speak it into being. It is there to speak to us, too. Psalm 19 is God’s simple message of how the creation declares His glory and goodness to everyone. His perfect laws warn man and also speak of great reward. *“Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.”* (v. 4 ESV). Everyone can witness this and seek after God. Some parts of creation speak to us in gentle ways: “the breezes and the sunshine and soft refreshing rain.” (Hymn 426,

Christadelphian Hymn Book, 2002). Other times, there are earthquakes and thunder. We think of Yahweh speaking at Sinai, and the people were afraid. They were terrified of such a great God. He displayed darkness, thunder, lightning and an earthquake when wicked men put Jesus to death on the cross. But when God reveals Himself to Moses while Moses hides in the cleft of the rock, He is in the still small voice. And He reveals Himself in simple words that all can understand: *“The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering [slow to anger], and abundant in goodness [steadfast love] and truth [faithfulness].”* (Exodus 34:6, ESV in brackets).

Looking at the whole of the Bible, God speaks to us through many different circumstances, events and characters, with Jesus being the perfect communicator. As Psalm 19 instructs us, we are to meditate on all of God’s ways. Psalm 19:11 states that we can be warned of error by knowing about Him and His ways.

Our amazing Father has provided us a way to speak to Him, to connect specially through words of prayer. He even wants our undivided attention, suggesting that *“when you pray, go into your room [closet KJV] and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret.”* (Matthew 6:6 ESV). We can disclose our hearts to Him, seek help from Him. He wants to hear us and is the greatest listener. And when we listen to God in His Word, He assures us of His love and direction. God wants to help His children.

### How We Speak to Each Other

We conclude that communication is a particularly important topic in the Bible. And we need to communicate effectively with one another. We must listen to our God, and if we desire to connect with our community, we must listen to one another.

The Bible says a lot about communicating to one another. Of course, we all recognize how much the tongue plays a part in our communication with others.

- Proverbs 18:21 *“Death and life are in the power of the tongue.”*
- Proverbs 12:18 *“There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.”*
- Proverbs 15:1-2 *“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. The tongue of the wise uses knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.”*
- Proverbs 16:23 (NKJV) *“The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips.”*

*“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,”* as Proverbs 1 says, and there are characters in the Bible who exemplify wisdom in communication. This wisdom stems from what they are truly thinking in their heart.

While in the car the other day, I listened to an Old Testament CD about the Genesis account of Joseph. We can all feel the power of his wise communication with his brothers. Don't be discouraged by thinking you can never be as wise, forgiving, and

kind-hearted as Joseph. Or not as wise in connecting with those who have wronged you. We can be encouraged as we think how his life, insight, and manner must have developed because of his trials. Effective communication takes time, skill, and practice. He was hated by his brothers, thrown in a pit, sold as a slave in Egypt, wrongfully accused and sentenced to years in prison! Time and effort are needed to change our pattern of communication. Insight from personal experience and seeing God's providential work in our lives is encouraging. None of us are experts.

How effective and compassionate was Joseph's communication with his brothers when he revealed himself in Genesis 45:4-5, “Come closer to me. Don't feel bad, don't blame yourselves for selling me. God was behind it... to save lives.” And the words move us to tears when his brothers come to him after burying their father: (Genesis 50:17-21), *“Joseph wept... Now therefore fear ye not, I will nourish you and your little ones. And he comforted them and spake kindly to them.”* Joseph **listened** to them. He **empathized** with their fears, and he showed **compassion**. In Joseph's suffering, he is like Christ, bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit. *“But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”* (Galatians 5:22-23). He **understands** them and can comfort them. A paraphrase of Luke 6:45: *“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good,”* is “What you say flows from what is in your heart.”

Other examples in the Bible help us in our everyday communication with others. We have the contrast of Mary and Martha. Mary sits and **listens** to Jesus. Martha is preoccupied with household duties and resents Mary (Luke 10:40-42). Even when she expresses the feeling that Jesus doesn't care, he assures her that he does care and validates the idea that there are many things to worry about. However, listening to the Words of the Master is what is needed. After Lazarus dies (John 11), it is Martha who questions Jesus as he is coming to them. It seems she didn't really stick around to find out what the Lord would do to help them. Mary waits for the Master to call her and then worships at his feet, where she had been before. Humility is essential with one another. We are all human and subject to *"like passions,"* but we can all listen to one another and to our Lord.

A surprise to me was in the Book of Philemon. Paul encourages Philemon, the master, to take back his runaway slave, Onesimus, without regard to payment. The word *"communicate"* is used in the KJV in verse 6. Paul writes to Philemon, *"That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus."* The Greek word is *"koinonia,"* which you will recognize as the word for "sharing."

The ESV Study Bible comments that this word includes "the ideas of generosity, partnership and fellowship that result from the common faith and everyday life that believers have in Christ." Looking up the context of that word showed me it was the idea of Philemon communicating his faith in Christ by welcoming Onesimus back with kindness and forgiveness. Perhaps he will even now **understand** why Onesimus ran away! Paul appeals

to Philemon, not commanding him. We also want to reach out to our brothers and sisters with kindness and forgiveness. Of course, we don't know how Philemon responded to Paul's appeal, but we do know how Joseph's brothers responded to him.

### **The Perfect Example**

When we view the Lord, we see the perfect example of communication. He embodies the fruit of the Spirit, like the Father. He always knows the right approach for those he is in contact with. In the Gospel records, we see him trying to understand by asking questions, even of the rulers. We see him as a boy in the Temple, with the courage and humility to be there, *"sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions."* (Luke 2:46). He was trying to understand how they thought, and had many questions to ask. He developed a close relationship with his disciples, and in this group, he imparted his teaching so they could

Humility is essential with one another. We are all human and subject to "like passions," but we can all listen to one another and to our Lord.

teach others. *“He loved them unto the end.”* (John 13:1). Christ reached out to the multitudes with compassion and love, but he didn’t beat around the bush with those who called his work the works of Beelzebub. His communication was clear and concise as he cleansed the temple.

You will discover many passages about communication from the Bible yourself as you do your readings day by day. Underline them. There will be many tools to help you develop skills for effective communication. Perhaps we could diverge here and summarize some of the concepts we have discovered in the Bible. There is so much to communication, and it is complex, but we can narrow it down to a few thoughts worth remembering and try to practice these ideas in our relationships. Don’t forget the great challenge from Jesus: *“Love your enemy, do good to those who hate you.”* (Luke 6:27 ESV).

Using communication skills here can build bridges and forge peaceful relationships. And we can start right at home!

When I was younger, raising a family, I observed how other people communicated with their children and family. Sometimes, I wished I lived right beside them so I could learn from their daily interactions. The disciples must have loved being with Jesus like a family. They could see and talk with him face to face, watching him interact with people from all walks of life, asking questions and listening to his wise counsel.

### Practical Examples

Thankfully, our Father’s and Jesus’ counsel are right at hand. Perhaps we can add a few practical ideas that can help.

**LISTENING:** is to hear a person speaking, with attention. There are ways we can improve our listening



skills to be more attentive to others, especially within our family. Listening builds trust. Can you picture Jesus asking the little children to come to him? What would communicate His love for them?

Pay attention to what the person is saying. Lean toward them so that they know you are listening. Be present. You are there to listen and understand. You are not to think about what you want to say to them.

Observe the other person's body language, and let it tell you how they feel. Seek to understand the meaning of the words the person is saying. Do they convey thoughts that convey their emotions? Don't put words in their mouth. Accept without judgment the communication from the other person. Have compassion.

Reflect back to the speaker your understanding of what is said. Ask questions to clarify. This active listening contributes to respecting the other person's views and building a relationship. You can begin to understand the needs and emotions behind their words.

**COMPASSION:** can be defined as sympathy or concern for others. You want the other person to feel understood and cared for. Asking a pertinent question, not attacking, just learning to listen, and not giving advice unless asked. These are all helpful to keep in mind. Sometimes, all that a person needs is to be listened to. I remember the first experience I had with learning to listen. Sitting across from the person, I had to give my full attention and listen for five minutes without interruption. It was hard work to keep from voicing my own opinion or giving helpful comments for that long.

**EMPATHY:** is the ability to truly feel and understand the feelings of another. Empathy requires us to focus fully on the other person's message. No advice given. No reassurance. No, "I think you should... Why didn't you? ... Everything will be OK."

**HUMILITY:** is meekness in remembering who we are as part of God's creation. The person we interact with is one of God's creation, too. "When you are busy judging people, you have no time to love them." (Attributed to Mother Theresa).

**A SINCERE DESIRE:** is what we need to connect with others genuinely. Love guides our motives for communication.

**What's in it For Us?**

In summary, this is a very short list of ideas. In the Bible, both God and Jesus listened to the people. They understood their needs. Because we don't have the power to know what is going on in people's minds, we have to discover that through communication. By understanding each other's needs, we can help each other feel loved and cared for. By others understanding our needs, we can talk about these things and come to some understanding of what will encourage us both. We can seek reconciliation by exploring solutions or making requests that can be denied or fulfilled. But at least we can understand one another.

In learning positive ways of communicating with others, we learn about ourselves. We learn to listen to what others are feeling and what their

needs may be. We can better assess our own feelings and needs. Understanding ourselves and others strengthens relationships and builds trust among the body of Christ.

Let us learn to communicate more effectively and lovingly. We spend a lot of time interacting in many different ways. If we look around us, none of us are perfect at relationships and need skills to help us. It's also helpful to have true friends who can give us feedback so we can evaluate ourselves. The Father and the Son give us much to think about.

Perhaps we can take this as a little saying:

We are pilgrims on a journey  
And companions on the road  
We are here to help each other  
Walk the mile and bear the load.<sup>1</sup>

*Cathy Badger,  
Cambridge Ecclesia, ON*

<sup>1</sup> Hymn 16, *Praise The Lord*, Hoddesdon Christadelphian Services, 2000 Revised Edition





# YOUR LIFE STORY

*By Jeff Gelineau*



**O**NE of the reasons I enjoy reading different versions of the Bible is that they can shake me free of a stilted, unthinking, rote reading of Scripture. I may have read a chapter dozens of times in my life, but when I read it in a different version it can leap off the page to me.

Here is one that did that for me.

*You paid careful attention to the way we lived among you, and determined to live that way yourselves. In imitating us, you imitated the Master. Although great trouble accompanied the Word, you were able to take great joy from the Holy Spirit!—taking the trouble with the joy, the joy with the trouble. Do you know that all over the provinces of both Macedonia and Achaia believers look up to you? The word has gotten around. Your lives are echoing the Master's Word, not only in the provinces but all over the place. The news of your faith in God is out. We don't even have to say anything anymore—you're the message! (1 Thessalonians 1:5-10 Message Bible).*

As believers, we spend hours and hours teaching seminars. We print the most beautiful four-color pamphlets. We even save our money by buying newspaper ads. But there is nothing as powerful as your own personal testimony! The most effective preaching tool that our community has is your life story.

### **Your Mission**

Sharing the good news with those around you is an important mission for each one of us. Jesus gave us the Great

Commission in Matthew 28:

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20 NIV).*

Did you ever notice how Jesus says this to every one of his followers? Not just to missionaries. Therefore, this is your commission from Jesus, and it is not optional. Remember, it's called the Great Commission, not the Great Suggestion! It's up to you! You are the only Christadelphian that most people will ever meet. It is your mission to share God's message of hope and salvation with them. If your neighbor had cancer, and you knew the cure, it would be wrong of you to withhold that lifesaving information. If you know the way to forgiveness, grace, and eternal life and don't share that information with your neighbor, then it's even worse. You have the greatest news in the world, and sharing it with someone is the greatest love you can show them.

Giving someone a great gift and seeing their response is a wonderful feeling. How much more beautiful to share God's Kingdom with them!

What you say to someone can impact their lives for eternity. Nothing else you do will ever matter as much as helping people establish an eternal relationship with God. That is why we share our hope with others. There are people out there only you can reach— because of the person God has made you and where He has caused you to live.

Sure, your ecclesia is responsible for

This is the essence of witnessing:  
**simply sharing your personal experiences  
about God with someone else.**

trying to share this message with the community. But the absolute best way to reach people is by sharing your life story. God has given you a message about your life that He wants you to share with those around you. God wants to speak to the world through you.

You may think you don't have any story to tell, but that is not true.

*We accept human testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son (1 John 5:9-10 NIV).*

Everyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. That means you!

### **Your Life Story**

What is your life story? Your life story contains four main parts:

- Your testimony
- The godly things you are passionate about
- The lessons you have learned
- The gospel

### **Your Testimony**

Your testimony is the story of how God has made a difference in your life.

*But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you. (1 Peter 2:9 Message Bible).*

This is the essence of witnessing: simply sharing your personal experiences about God with someone else. In a courtroom, witnesses aren't expected to argue the case, quote the law, prove the point, or press for a verdict. Witnesses simply report what happened to them. But it's the witnesses that convince the jury! God calls us to be witnesses, not attorneys. He merely wants us to share our testimony with others.

Sharing your testimony is essential to your life story because it is unique. No other testimony is exactly like yours, so only you can share it. If you don't share it, then it will be lost forever. You may not be a Bible scholar, but you are an authority on your life. It's hard to argue with personal experience. Shared stories build bridges between people and allow relationships to grow. Through these relationships with others, the gospel spreads from your heart to theirs.

Many people are put off by the Bible and won't listen or talk about it. But people will listen to a humble, personal story. Personal stories capture our attention, and we remember them.

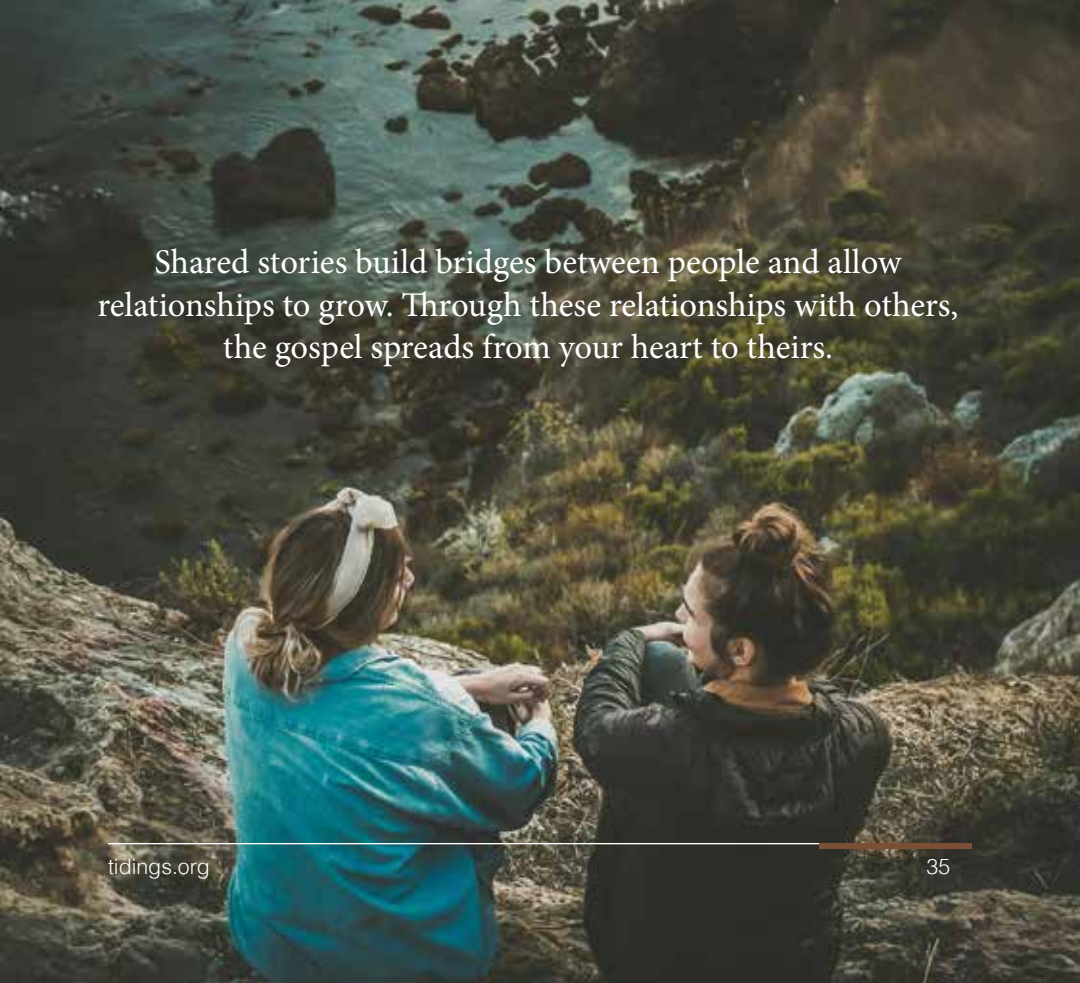
Consider the Apostle Paul. No one else in the Bible uses personal testimony as often as Paul. On several occasions, we have records of Paul sharing his life story instead of quoting Scripture. (Acts 22:3-21; Acts 26:4-18; Galatians 1:11-16).

Peter also writes of the importance of personal testimony: *“Be ready to speak up and tell anyone who asks why you’re living the way you are, and always with the utmost courtesy.”* (1 Peter 3:15 Message Bible).

Most testimonies are easily divided into four different parts:

- What your life was like before you came to the Truth
- What made you realize that you needed to be baptized
- How you went about committing your life to Christ
- The difference in your life since coming to God

Each person will probably want to focus on different parts of this message, as each of us has a distinct history with different important parts. You probably have a different story for every experience where God has helped you.



Shared stories build bridges between people and allow relationships to grow. Through these relationships with others, the gospel spreads from your heart to theirs.



Depending on who you are talking to, the context, and where they are in their life, you can custom-fit your story to your audience.

But the message is always the same. God has brought meaning and purpose to your life, and they can have it also if they simply turn to God. And you can show them how!

### **Your Passions**

Your life story contains the Godly things that you are passionate about. God is a passionate God! He passionately loves some things, and He passionately hates other things. As you grow closer to God, you begin to adopt this same characteristic. You become more passionate about the things that God cares about. Whether it's a problem, a purpose, a principle, or a group of people. You will feel compelled to speak up and do what you can to make a difference.

You'll find that you cannot keep yourself from talking about what you care about most. You sometimes find yourself in the same position as Jeremiah:

*If I say, "I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name," there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.* (Jeremiah 20:9 ESV).

Your passion is often related to something you have experienced yourself: abuse, addiction, depression, illness, infertility, joblessness, or a lack of faith. Your passion may be related to people who can't speak for themselves: the disadvantaged, the imprisoned, the poor, or the young—anyone who has been denied justice or who is

defenseless. Your passion might be for a purpose: encouraging the elderly, improving marriages, mentoring, promoting Bible study, starting a new ecclesia, strengthening families, or visiting the sick. Your passion may be to reach out to a group of people you feel close to—business people, ethnic nationalities, outsiders, teenagers, or young mothers and fathers.

God gives us all different passions so that everything He wants done will be done. Speak openly and freely about your passions to others because God is speaking through you to bring them to His Gospel.

### **Lessons**

Your life story contains the lessons that you have learned in life.

You know certain truths that God has taught you from your experiences with Him. You have learned lessons and insights about God, relationships, problems, temptations, and other aspects of life. These life lessons are precious to the people around you who are continually struggling with life's issues, temptations and relationships. Sadly, we often don't learn from what happens to us. While it is wise to learn from experience, it is even wiser to learn from the experiences of others.

There isn't enough time to learn everything by trial and error. We can learn by the life lessons of one another. I have found it helpful to keep a journal of the spiritual lessons I've learned. This exercise isn't intended to be a daily diary but a simple recording of the major lessons that I have learned. And the important part is to be then brave enough to share them with others.

Look at your life and see what lessons you can extract that will be helpful to others. Ask yourself what God has taught you from depression, disappointment, failure, illness, lack of money, pain, sorrow, or waiting. What has God taught you from your family, your ecclesia, or even your critics?

### The Gospel

Your life story also contains the gospel. This part might even be the most important element of your life story because it's a big component of why you are the way you are. This message is what we want to share with the people we meet.

*For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:19 NLT).*

The good news of the gospel is that we have learned we can have faith in God's grace to save us through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Our sins are forgiven. We have been given a place in God's Kingdom. We are compelled, inspired, and motivated to share this good news with as many people as we can.

*"This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, 'It*

*is through faith that a righteous person has life.'" (Romans 1:17 NLT).*

Our Life Story has to include this amazing and wonderful message. This news is the hope that carries us through the dark times. The knowledge of the grace that we have been given motivates us to serve God. *"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died."* (2 Corinthians 5:14 NIV).

Think about the fact that God loved the person sitting next to you so much that He allowed His only Son to die so that person might live. That has to motivate you to reach beyond your comfort zone and say something meaningful to that person. God wants everyone to be saved. He doesn't want anyone to be lost. As long as you know one person who hasn't come to the Truth, you must keep praying for them and sharing the good news with them.

Sometimes, you hear people complaining that their ecclesia doesn't have any good pamphlets to give to people who are interested.

God has prepared something much better: **Your life story!**

*Jeff Gelineau,  
Simi Hills Ecclesia, CA*

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**Note:** My thoughts on this topic were dramatically affected in 2002 when I read *The Purpose Driven Life*, by Rick Warren. I'm thankful for what I've learned from this book and most of the thoughts in this article are things I remember from that powerful and helpful book. I highly recommend it to you.

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# MY PURSUIT OF THE *TRUTH*

*By Phil Wong*



**I**T all began around 2005. We were a happy family of four, and our girls were five and three years of age. Since we now had little ones in tow, my wife Melissa had a parental yearning to find a church we could all attend. I remember vividly praying with her about this to God.

In 2006, Melissa bumped into an old high school friend, and he had two young children of his own. Well, we invited him and his family for dinner and reconnected. After dinner, as we were all chatting, the high school friend started telling us about their “new church” they’ve been attending in the San Fernando Valley and how very different it was from any other Christian churches. He shared with us how this church held seminars to teach you the Bible from the beginning in Genesis. However, he started saying that “Angels don’t have wings” and that “You don’t go to heaven when you die.” All I remember was saying to myself, “Uh-oh.” I started to tune myself out of the conversation. Melissa recalls that I got up and left the room.

Nonetheless, the friend sharing the Truth that night caught Melissa’s attention. She liked the fact that his church taught the Bible from the beginning, despite what we then considered to be all the other nonsense. She had grown up attending different churches in LA, and yet the Bible never made sense to her. She just figured she wasn’t smart enough to understand the Bible. So, she was intrigued by the seminar classes they offered.

Melissa very much wanted to attend the Bible seminars, but our kids were so

young that it was difficult to leave them and let Daddy take care of the children all on his own. Therefore, Melissa’s friend provided the next best thing. Rather than attending the Bible seminars, she listened to CDs entitled “Learn to Read the Bible Effectively,” which he gave her.

### **The Seminar Made Sense**

Everything she heard on the CDs made sense as if puzzle pieces were coming perfectly together. The man teaching in those CDs was Bro. Dennis Bevans. Later, in 2006, Melissa’s high school friend told her that a new seminar would begin. That’s when Melissa voiced to me that she wanted to go. Well, we made all the necessary arrangements so that she could attend the seminars. I remember her coming home at 10 pm and unloading everything she had learned. Everything would just go right over my sleepy head. Even though I may not have agreed or understood what she was learning, I supported her.

A year and a half later, in Oct 2008, she was baptized into the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ at the Reseda Ecclesia. The following year and a half after Melissa’s baptism, we had many debates about the Bible and her newfound beliefs. If you were to ask her, it was a trying time for us and especially for her. She prayed for me a lot.

### **Where’s Dad?**

She took the kids to Sunday School and Memorial Meeting, while I stayed home on Sundays watching football. One Sunday, when they all returned from the ecclesia, Issy, my firstborn, came up to me as I was sprawled out on the couch and asked, “Daddy, how come we don’t go to church as a family?”

Well, those words melted my heart, and that was all it took for me to get off of my behind, put on a suit and go to church with them on Sundays.

I recall on one particular Sunday, as we were getting ready for church, we had a heated debate about baptism and the wearing of a cross necklace. During our debate, Melissa blurted out to me, “Well, you know, the Christadelphians don’t believe in a supernatural devil or Satan that causes people to sin!” Those words caught my attention and stopped me dead in my tracks.

### **You Mean There’s No Devil?**

You see, from a very young age, I’ve always been afraid of the devil and Satan. As I got older, I tried to do my own research in the Bible on this subject. I went to all of the famous passages of Scriptures that Christianity quoted from, but I couldn’t find it. None of it made sense. None of it showed me how this supernatural devil came to be. I just resigned myself that I wasn’t smart enough to understand it.

I couldn’t believe that there was a Christian group out there that didn’t believe in a supernatural devil or Satan. I was so relieved because I knew I wasn’t crazy. I remember thinking that I no longer had to be afraid of a supernatural devil because there wasn’t one! From then on, I wanted to hear what else the Christadelphians had to say about their beliefs.

In the spring of 2010, I enrolled in the Beginning Bible seminars at Reseda, and ten months later, I was baptized in Feb 2011.

### **Pivotal Life Events**

The first is when Melissa’s old high school friend shared the Truth during dinner. The second is when Issy, my firstborn, asked me why I didn’t attend church with her, her sister, and her mom. The third event would be Melissa telling me that the Christadelphians didn’t believe in a supernatural devil that causes people to sin.

All three events played a huge part in my pursuit of the Truth.

I’d like to close by saying that you just never know what words, what topic, and what doctrine may cause a change in someone’s heart. All that matters is that we continue to share the good news about God’s Truth wherever and whenever possible.

We may turn a sinner from the error of their ways, save a soul from death, and cover a multitude of sins.

*Phil Wong,  
Reseda Ecclesia, CA*

# WHAT A GREAT THING THAT JESUS WAS RESURRECTED!

*By Ryan Carrick*

**A****FTER** the perfect man suffered on the cross and gave up his life, he was resurrected. This seed of Abraham did not deserve to be murdered like a criminal; however, the death of his mortal body was necessary so he may receive eternal life. His death and resurrection allowed anyone who would hear the word of God and live by his principles to be saved from mortality through baptism. He gives us the hope of the coming Kingdom that will be here on earth, where we will reign with Jesus to further God's

purpose with the earth, to fill it with His glory.

Jesus lived a perfect life, following God's commands at every moment. Yet, despite his holiness, he still suffered the consequences of a sinner. He was beaten and mocked on the cross, and immediately following his death, three remarkable events occurred. First, there was darkness in the land. Next, the veil to the Most Holy Place was torn. Lastly, there was an earthquake. But three days later, he was risen to eternal life. The miracle of Jesus'

resurrection and its significance for the world shows the glory of God and His merciful attributes.

Following Jesus' resurrection, a fourth event occurred. The graves that opened at the crucifixion now brought forth many saints who rose and entered Jerusalem. In Matthew 28, it is interesting how some people still doubted Jesus was raised from the dead. If the first three events happened, you might think that Jesus was someone important. But that fourth event, the resurrection of some of the saints, is different. How could they still not believe that resurrection was possible when they saw those people who used to be dead walk through the city? And so, in the conclusion of Matthew 28, Jesus commands the believers to preach to all the nations, baptizing into Christ's death until that last day.

After this brief summary of Christ's death and resurrection, we can ask, how does it affect the rest of the world? Why do we need the resurrection? In Genesis 3:19, we learn the consequences of sin, and as children of Adam, we also have that fleshly (sinful) nature. But through Jesus, God has provided a way to escape death and have eternal life in his Kingdom instead. Paul writes:

*Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then*

*Christ is not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is also in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:12-14).*

But Christ is risen! This fact gives us confidence that when we preach the Bible message, it is the Truth and gives us faith for the future Kingdom.

When we think about the resurrection, we usually reflect on Jesus, the foundation of this Bible principle. Whenever we talk about the resurrection and the Kingdom, it is necessary to show how they tie back to him. *"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, [demonstrated by our baptism and continually living by the commandments in the Bible] even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."* (1 Thessalonians 4:14).

Along with the living, the dead waiting for the Lord's return shall be raised to eternal life.

**Whenever we talk about the resurrection and the Kingdom, it is necessary to show how they tie back to him.**

### **Life In The Kingdom**

What do we know about our lives in the Kingdom of God? About physical transformation, Jesus said, *"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I, myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have."* (Luke 24:39). This

verse gives us a piece of a vision of what it might be like in the Kingdom. His body was made immortal, yet he had flesh and bones. He told the disciples to touch his hands and side to see that it was actually him. They even doubted for a moment. His body was seemingly brought back to its former image

because people recognized him. Jesus retained his memories from before he died, meaning that once resurrected, we will also have memories from before the Kingdom. This reality is vital for us to know because when those judged righteous are taught in the Kingdom, those memories from our past lives will allow us to have more experience to understand and instruct the people in the Kingdom.

The resurrection is commonly connected with the New Testament when discussed. In the whole Bible, the word resurrection is used forty-one times in the King James Version, all in the New Testament. Despite the literal use of the word, there are mentions of the resurrection in the Old Testament, and we will look at three examples. In Job 19:25-26, the phrase “*in my flesh*” is also translated as “body.” However, there is some uncertainty about the translation of this verse into English. The word used here is *bâsâr*, which means “bear tidings,” typically cheerful. An alternate translation in English could be, “And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet bearing glad tidings shall I see God.” He could also be referring to a spiritual or immortal body. We see Job understands and acknowledges there will be a Judgment Day and a resurrection “*at the latter day*.” He had that hope and was eagerly waiting for eternal life, even before Jesus came.

Isaiah also acknowledges these things:

*Thy dead men shall live, together  
with my dead body shall they arise.  
Awake and sing, ye that dwell in*

*dust: for thy dew is as the dew of  
herbs, and the earth shall cast out  
the dead.* (Isaiah 26:19).

When Isaiah says your dead men, talking to God, he understands that his followers, the saints, will rise again. He continues to show his great faith by adding himself to that list. He has faith even before Jesus came to preach the gospel that he would be raised with all the other saints. The third person in the Old Testament who acknowledged these things was Daniel. In Daniel 12:2, he proclaims that many people will rise to the Judgment Seat. We can see that people from the Old Testament knew about the resurrection and judgment to come. They knew from the covenants made in the Garden of Eden to Abraham and David that there would be a Kingdom established on earth. In Jesus’ parable about the rich man and Lazarus, Luke 16:29 says, “*Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them.*”

In Habakkuk 2:14, there is a clear expression of God’s plan with the earth, to fill it with “*the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*” A part of this plan involves humans, those who are chosen to be His saints by God’s righteous judgment. Therefore, if we, and the brothers and sisters who previously lived, are involved in the eternal plan of this earth, it is essential there be a resurrection. Paul wrote:

*For we died and were buried with  
Christ by baptism. And just as  
Christ was raised from the dead  
by the glorious power of the Father,  
now we also may live new lives.*



*Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. (Romans 6:4-5 NLT).*

This idea is why baptism is so necessary. It shows we died with Christ and represents our hope for the future: to be raised to eternal life. Along with a confession of our faith, it is a parable that we live to show our daily struggle with the tendencies of being human. Jesus said,

*And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day. For it is my Father's will that all who see*

*his Son and believe in him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day. (John 6:39-40 NLT).*

Not a single one of God's people will be left to the dust. So again, we read of the grand plan to come after we, the saints, are resurrected. The will of God is linked with the resurrection. Without it, His purpose cannot be fulfilled. So, when we read of the resurrection, we can often see it as an emphatic part of God's purpose.

*Ryan Carrick,  
Toronto West Ecclesia, ON*

*For it is my Father's will that all who see his Son  
and believe in him should have eternal life.*

*I will raise them up at the last day.*

# NOAH: SAVING YOUR FAMILY IN A DARK WORLD

## PART TWO: WALKED WITH GOD

*By Dennis Bevans*

**N**OAH is introduced to us in Genesis 5:29, and we get a short play on words with his name, which means “rest.” This concept immediately drives us back in time to the curse and Promise in the garden (Genesis 3). Let’s look at the curse first.

Genesis 3:17-19 details this new role, which, after sin would require hard labor to produce and provide food

for his family. This change resulted from Adam’s sin, specifically that he did not protect and guide his wife in the face of temptation, which was his responsibility. Before this curse, keeping the garden in the Edenic state (using Genesis 2:15 language, “*to dress it and to keep it*”) would have been a much easier task as there were no cigarette butts, paper cups, food

wrappers etc., to tarnish the grounds! The only pollutant in the garden was Man. We are not punished for our sins, but by them. The consequences of our sins remain, even when we are granted forgiveness. As a result of their choice, changes in the circumstances and environment were inevitable. After sin, thorns and thistles become a perpetual nuisance (Genesis 3:18-19) and become a metaphor for all sin. If not tended to, thorns and thistles will overtake a garden much like sin can overtake our life. We must contend earnestly and carefully maintain our lives lest the surrounding weeds overtake our minds and beings. This goal is only accomplished by continual Bible reading, study, meditation, and conversation with those of like precious faith. Like sin, the negative results are not immediate but eventual. We do not wake up one day and see a garden full of weeds and thorns any more than we wake up and notice a life of self-service and sin.

Now, let's look at the Promise. Genesis 3:7 tells us they covered their sin with fig leaves, yet God provided that the covering of sin requires the shedding of blood (v. 21). This is the primary lesson of this chapter in scripture. We can see the hope of redemption through the blood of Jesus prophetically here. In fact, at the crucifixion, what materials were used to make a mock crown for Jesus? Ties to Genesis 3 everywhere!

Fast forward to Noah and see the closing verse of chapter 5 (v. 32) for a significant clue to our topic, one that will clarify a dramatic detail in our story in the following few articles. We are given the note of 500 years, and

anytime we have a detail that doesn't seem to be that important to the flow of the story, the Bible student must always look for an answer to the question, "Why do we need to know that?"

Chapter 6 begins with "*And*," which tells us it is a continuing thought from the previous chapter. The Scriptural stages to get us to this point are creation (chapters 1 and 2), curse and Promise—the covering of sin requires the shedding of blood (chapter 3), the object lesson for this principle (Cain and Abel—chapter 4), and then the book of death (with repeated reference to the phrase "*and he died*" for emphasis in chapter 5). Read Genesis 6:1 carefully.

When did men begin to multiply? This reference brings us back to Adam and Eve! This process, leading to the eventual judgment of the entire planet, started immediately! Sin creeps in wherever people are. In the Hebrew, the word translated as "men" is "*Adam*" (and it is singular), so the Hebrew supports this clearly, even if the English skews it slightly. Women in Scripture are often used to describe the state of spirituality. For example, we refer to the ecclesia as the "bride" of Christ. The example also holds true in the negative; idolatry is referred to in Scripture as adultery and prostitution, for they are seen as going after "*other Gods*." This wording describes the state of the Christian world at the time of our Lord's return in Revelation.

Verse 2 makes this spiritual point. This verse does not mean that all the boys were good, and all the girls were bad. There was evil on both sides of this gender coin. However, remembering

that the female represents the group's spirituality, we see that all was not pleasant in paradise from the very beginning. We know the story of Cain and Abel, so it should come as no surprise that the world began to stray from the God that created it immediately. This thought applies to us with the words of Jesus *"as it was"* setting up the days of Noah to describe these last days, so the clues of yesterday become the warnings of today. Remember the temptation of Eve; she saw, took, and chose. The same spiritual challenge plagues the world today.

So, if the daughters of men represent the spiritual state of the world, who were the sons of God? That is a good question. Let's go back to the beginning when men began to multiply. In chapter 4:26, after the birth of Enos, we read, *"Then began men to call upon the name of the LORD."* Romans 8:14 tells us: *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."* Take note of the reference to the spirit of God as it occurs in Genesis 6:3: *"My spirit shall not always strive with man."* This result is the divine inspection. God looked and decided to withdraw his spirit, destroy his creation, and terminate all flesh—very graphic words and painful to consider, given the parent-child relationship. This declaration was not a quick decision taken lightly but rather the inevitable result of children going wayward. To emphasize this point, what is the only one of the ten commandments stated in the positive? *"Honour thy*

*father and thy mother,"* which is #5 of the 10 (denoting grace). It is worth noting that the commandments were on two stone tablets. The first four are all to God, plus one to the family. The second tablet included five relating to individual behavior towards others. This depiction supports the theory that we need to put God first, our family second, and business or other obligations in this life third as we set our priority.

One last thought on the divine inspection aspect of this chapter. Consider Leviticus 14:33-45 and the leprous house, knowing that leprosy describes sin throughout Scripture. In short summary, if leprosy was in the house, empty the house. If found in the house's walls, shut the house for seven days and then re-inspect. If, upon re-inspection, it has spread to the walls, take away the stones and cast them outside the city, scrape and pour out the dust outside the city, then replace the stones. Essentially this is what God was doing to his leprous house in the days of Noah. We want to be part of the house built to the glory of God, not the house torn down and cast outside the city as unclean.

Back to Genesis 6. There are two camps on the planet at this time. One is following the spirit of God, and the other is not. The line of Enos (or rather Seth as Abel's replacement) is calling on the things of God and trying to live God's way, while the line of Cain is living in a way that is serving their own flesh and proud of it (read Genesis 4 for content). In time, these two

lines meet in marriage, which creates the downfall. All marriage requires compromise. Two people becoming one requires change, including give and take. However, determining what color the walls or furniture should be is not on the same level as choosing to serve God. When our service to God and the values of our God are open to compromise, we inevitably will get weaker spiritually and closer to the lust of our flesh as we devalue the commands of the Father and replace them with the thinking of men.

Something else is embedded in this third verse. Here, 120 years of warning are noted. I wonder if that number has anything to do with the prior math clue of 500? Hold the thought and continue to verse 4. The word “renown” is the Hebrew *shem* or the name (James 2:7). “Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?” We are all called to take on the name of our Lord in baptism and be one with the Son at the marriage supper. Living up to the name we are called to will be critical to that objective. Knowing is not enough. We must know **and** do!

The word giants in Hebrew is “*Nephilim*.” The only other usage of this word is twice in Numbers 13:33, clearly referring to men of war in the promised land. It does not necessarily mean they were big people, but that they were strong and mighty warriors. Giant is relative. I am a giant today in some countries at 6’4” and 250 lbs. On an NFL offensive line, I am puny. As an NBA center, I am a dwarf. The point is that they were bigger and stronger than the Israelites, which scared them. Moses wrote both Genesis and Numbers, so

we have continuity. More evidence that these were mighty warriors is found in Genesis 6:4. “*Sons of God*” or those following God’s way (line of Enos) vs the “*daughters of man*” (singular *Adam* again in the Hebrew) following the way of flesh (line of Cain). They get married and compromise doctrine and life choices, creating distance from God. Remember the phrase “*married and giving in marriage*” from our previous article? As they inter-married, they got farther and farther away from the Truth as given in the garden. And then they had kids! How many rocky marriages get better when kids come into the picture? Children are wonderful, but to suggest that having them does not add stress to a young family would be ridiculous. Along with a child’s cute and cuddly demands comes the additional benefit of lack of sleep and urgent attention required for survival. This situation will add stress to even the best relationships.

Pay particular attention to the timing. They get farther away from God and closer to the world around them and decide to have children. This development is a recipe for disaster! The Hebrew calls them mighty men of the name. This same designation is used in Numbers 16 to describe Korah, Dathan, and Abiram as they gathered together against Moses and Aaron, challenging the authority of God and his servants. These men, like those in Genesis 6, were proud men building their own name, not men of God. A great object lesson for this is the Tower of Babel, the next story after Noah.

Genesis 6:5 continues the divine inspection and commentary. God saw

this all along, and the time came for action. The majority of the population ignored his established order of things, preferring that which was “*right in their own eyes*.” Isn’t that what we all do? Who among us intentionally does that which is wrong in our own eyes? Recognizing this natural tendency allows us to combat it and make sure that the thinking of the Father is getting its proper, primary place in our hearts and minds.

We compare this to our day when we see the sordid news outlets and social media that appeal to our own personal bend, inflating the pride of our life rather than humbling ourselves before the Creator of heaven and earth. Verse 6 adds that “*the LORD was sorry*” (RSV) as the Father was disappointed in his children. His name has been disgraced. He created humankind to “*fill the earth with his glory*,” but now, it has become a testament to the glory of man. I wonder what he thinks about his children today.

What are we doing right now to represent his glory in our life? His objective was glory. What He saw was corruption and violence (chapter 6)—people following their own way on a broad path that leads to destruction. Verse 7 gives us the righteous judgment. “*Destroy*” in the RSV is “*blot out*.” The time for repentance is past! This verse is the reverse order of Genesis 1, essentially undoing creation.

This statement is God’s message to Noah to prepare him for the impending devastation, not unlike the signs of the times in these last days.

Hebrews 11:7 says that he was “*warned of God*.” What is his response? We have been warned the time is coming. What is our response? For a moment, put aside our plans and ideas; what are we doing to be numbered amongst the faithful? The time to act is now.

In contrast to the world’s mess, Genesis 6:8 states, “*But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD*.” What an epitaph! For the rest of our time together, we will primarily focus on what he did to find grace, something we all want for ourselves and our families.

Genesis 6:9 gives us the first snapshot as to why he found grace,

*“Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.”*

He was just (or balanced), and he was complete or upright (the Hebrew meaning for perfect). He was just and upright because he walked God’s way.

*And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. (Joshua 24:15).*

Dennis Bevans,  
Austin Leander Ecclesia, CA



# WHO IS CHRIST'S AVENGING ARMY? ANGELS OR SAINTS?

*By Al Hussey*

*Why would Jesus teach us to lay down  
the sword and to turn the other cheek, only to have us  
rise up in the bloodiest battle of history?*

**A**T times a comment made during a discussion with brethren will remain occupying my mind long after the discussion ends. One such case involves a segment from Psalm 149:

*Let the faithful exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their couches. Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, to wreak vengeance on the nations and chastisement on the peoples, to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron, to execute on them the judgment written! This is glory for all his faithful ones. Praise the LORD! (Psalm 149:5-9 RSV).*

The brethren concerned viewed the Psalmist's words as proof that the saints will engage in hand-to-hand combat to assist Christ in the slaying of the wicked hordes of the Gogian host. The thought of wielding a sword and taking vengeance upon the enemies of Israel seemed to be an exciting prospect to some participating in the discussion.

Reflection upon this thought was and remains disturbing to me. Why would Jesus teach us to lay down the sword and to turn the other cheek, only to have us rise up in the bloodiest battle of history? Why would the Master teach "*thou shalt not kill*" to be the letter of the Law but "*don't even be angry with your brother*" to be the true spirit of the Law, if we are to yet wreak vengeance on the nations?

There is no question that Almighty God is the judge of all the earth, and when His righteousness is rejected, His commands disobeyed and His worship ignored, He does require

men's lives as the penalty for their sin. Under his Divine rule, Israel was the arm of His judgment over the nations, and even David in obedience to God's commands, did slay his tens of thousands.

In Christ, however, warfare is not the conduct that the LORD originally ordained. Jesus as king of the coming Kingdom of God is to bring a restoration of peaceful Eden to a war-weary world. As his subjects we have been trained to be faithful servants exhibiting the fruits of the spirit and not vengeful warriors.

Naturally, brethren have asked me, "If the LORD God asked you to take up the sword for his sake, would you refuse?" Of course not!" was my reply, but it would be something that I would dread rather than relish. What is the truth, brothers and sisters? What does Jesus expect of us at his return? Will we be asked to become killers? Or will he expect us to act as he has taught us: to continue in gentle and meek service to him?

Does Psalm 149 really teach that in the Last Days, we will be joining a vast army to execute God's wrath? I don't think so. If we consider the passages from Psalm 138 onward, the words of David are being read. These verses are the refrain of that great King of Israel who was anointed by God to defeat the wicked nations round about him and to keep Israel obedient to the Almighty's laws. He was specifically charged by the command of God to execute judgment in the land and on the nations. There is nothing in this series of Psalms to suggest that Psalm 149 is at the time

of the end. Rather, Psalm 149 is a call to arms for the men of Israel to follow David and support him in battle. It is not a call for the saints in the Last Days to take up arms for Christ.

Turning next to Revelation, we find a chapter often used by brethren to demonstrate the belief that the saints shall accompany Christ into battle:

*Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself. He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed him on white horses. From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. (Revelation 19:7-15 RSV).*

This is a magnificent scene of the Lord Jesus Christ riding into battle on a white horse, followed by all the armies of heaven. Many brothers and sisters understand those arrayed in fine linen who slay the kings and captains of the

wicked nations to be the saints. My question brethren remains, “Is this really what is going to happen?”

Much of the Book of Revelation is symbol and allegory. That being the case, do we see the following depictions as literal or symbolic?

- Is Jesus’ robe actually dipped in blood?
- Are His eyes really a flame of fire?
- Is a sharp sword coming out of his mouth?
- Are we to actually tread the winepress of blood?

Clearly the imagery represents the destruction of evil and the victory of the righteous, but hardly in a literal war. In fact, the most powerful weapon that Jesus uses is that sharp sword in his mouth.

*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12 ESV).*

Without doubt, the sword that Jesus uses is the “word of God.” The “word of God” reveals truth and exposes error. It judges rightly and exposes evil. But the question remains, “Who are the armies of heaven? Are they the saints (the bride of Christ in verses 7 and 8) who are clothed in fine linen? Or are they the angels of God—his heavenly host?”

Throughout Scripture, angels are frequently described as being clothed with fine linen. Consider these three examples:

*And out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. (Revelation 15:6 ESV).*

*And someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, "How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?" (Daniel 12:6 ESV).*

*Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub on which it rested to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writing case at his waist. And the LORD said to him, "Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it." (Ezekiel 9:3-4 ESV).*

To my mind, the "armies of heaven" conveys a very different message than a multitude of saints. God's armies are, in fact, the heavenly host of angels that surround Him and are prepared to do His bidding, whether it be bringing judgment, delivering his commands, or warring against the nations. Jacob and Elisha were privileged to momentarily see this host:

*Jacob went on his way and the angels of God met him; and when Jacob saw them, he said, "This is God's army!" So, he called the name of that place Mahanaim." Genesis 32:1-2 RSV.*

*When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" He said, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire [angels] all around Elisha. (2 Kings 6:15-17 ESV).*

When Israel was in the wilderness, the LORD and His armies of angels came from Sinai:

*And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints [holy ones ESV]: from his right hand went a fiery law for them. (Deuteronomy 33:2 KJV).*

When God delivered the Law to the children of Israel from Sinai (which is what this verse is about) did He really bring "ten thousands of (immortalized) saints" with Him? Surely that is impossible, for all of the deceased saints were, at the time, still dead and buried. There had been no resurrection. The word "saints" must then mean something else and indeed, in most modern versions, "saints" is translated as "holy ones." Thus, the ten thousands of "holy ones" were God's

angels; his heavenly host come to do his bidding.

“Heavenly host” or “LORD of hosts” (Hebrew: “armies”) refers to the army of angels mentioned both in the Hebrew and Christian Bibles, as well as other Jewish and Christian texts. The account of the birth of Jesus by Luke serves as an example:

*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”* (Luke 2: 13-14 ESV).

The LORD of Hosts is a very common description of the Almighty because it assigns to Him the whole host of heaven as His army. The word for “hosts” has a military orientation. Strong makes the following entry regarding its meaning:

HOST—H6635 *tsâbâ' tsebâ'âh*

From H6633; a mass of persons (or figurative things), especially regularly organized for war (an army); by implication a campaign, literally or figuratively (specifically hardship, worship): - appointed time, (+) army, (+) battle, company, host, service, soldiers, waiting upon, war [-fare].<sup>1</sup>

This same Hebrew word (*tsâbâ*) is used in 1 Kings to describe how the LORD God is surrounded by His angels:

*And Micaiah said, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left. (1 Kings 22: 19 ESV).*

As we learn from the New Testament, our Lord Jesus taught that, while the Creator has the charge of His army of angels, the newborn children of God in Christ are blessed with an entirely new mission. While we are still to combat

evil and to defend the way of the LORD, our weapons are neither made of steel nor utilize arrows. He tells us, in fact, that we are to lay down the sword:

*Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that*

*I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?”* (Matthew 26: 52-53 ESV).

What then are the weapons of war that the saints will actually be using to overcome wickedness? They are none other than the armor of God which the Apostle Paul commended to the brethren of Ephesus:

*Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins*

What then are the weapons of war that the saints will actually be using to overcome wickedness? They are none other than the armor of God

*with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6: 13-17 RSV).*

This is our warfare. We take on the whole armor of God and with these spiritual weapons we defeat the enemy, which is sin in the flesh. Jesus was clad in this armor as well and used his sword; namely, the words of his mouth, to defeat sin and to punish evil.

When we turn our attention to Revelation 1 and 2, we will see how the imagery and many symbols are used to convey this message:

*And in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast; his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters; in his right hand he held seven stars, from his [Jesus'] mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. (Revelation 1: 13-16 RSV).*

*And to the angel of the church in Per'gamum write: "The words of him [Jesus] who has the sharp two-edged sword... But I have a*

*few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice immorality. So you also have some who hold the teaching of the Nicola'itans. Repent then. If not, I [Jesus] will come to you soon and war [spiritually] against them with the sword of my mouth." (Revelation 2:12, 14-16 RSV).*

Jesus tells his ecclesias to repent. If they fail to do so, he will make war against those who bring in false teachings with the sword of his mouth; that is the word of God.

I reference two more passages that I have heard used by some Bible students to imply the saints will join Christ in the latter-day warfare. The first was spoken to the brethren at Thessalonica:

*And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men, as we do to you, so that he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints [Holy Ones-Gk. Hagios just means holy]. (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 RSV).*

"Increasing and abounding in love" and being "unblameable in holiness" does not sound like a call to arms. In the NIV, verse 13 is translated as "holy ones," which in the Old Testament is frequently the term denoting the angels.



The second verse I have heard used to defend the saints' participation in war is from Zechariah:

*Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints [holy ones, Heb. qadosh] with thee. (Zechariah 14:3-5 KJV).*

In regard to the term “saints,” Strong has the following notation:

saints—H6918 (holy ones ESV)

qâdôsh qâdôsh

From H6942; sacred (ceremonially or morally); (as noun) God (by eminence), an angel, a saint, a sanctuary: —holy (One), saint.<sup>2</sup>

Again, in the ESV and the NIV, the last line of verse 5 reads “*holy ones*,” not “*saints*.” Interestingly, in both Hebrew and Greek, the root words for “*saints*” simply means “*holy*,” and being an adjective, it is always translated to describe something. For example, holy things, Holy Spirit, holy people and holy angels.

I suggest therefore that in the two passages examined, the term “*holy ones*” refers to God’s holy angels who will accompany Jesus when he returns.

Now, let’s see what the rest of Scripture says about the coming of Jesus. The Scriptures do seem to bear out the belief that it is the angels who accompany Christ at his return. Repeatedly, we read of their involvement in the events of the advent:

*Then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Matthew 24: 30-31 RSV).*

*He answered, "He who sows the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world, and the good seed means the sons of the kingdom; the weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. The Son of man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers [judgment]. (Matthew 13: 37-41 RSV).*

*For the Son of man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay every man for what he has done [judgment]. (Matthew 16: 27 RSV).*

We are to spend our lifetime in training for the Kingdom, not in preparing for war, but in loving our enemies and reaching out to all who do not see the light of the gospel.

*When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats [judgment]. (Matthew 25: 31-32 RSV).*

*For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels [judgment]. (Mark 8: 38 RSV).*

*This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be made worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering--since indeed God deems it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant rest with us to you who are afflicted, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven*

*with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus [judgment]. (2 Thessalonians 1:5-8 RSV).*

The angels are tasked with executing God's judgments upon the nations. We are to spend our lifetime in training for the Kingdom, not in preparing for war, but in loving our enemies and reaching out to all who do not see the light of the gospel. Our lives are to be examples of the mind of Christ Jesus as evidenced in us by the fruits of the Spirit:

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23 RSV).*

May this mission constantly occupy our minds.

*Al Hussey,  
Niagara Ecclesia, ON*

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<sup>1</sup> Strong, James. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*. (New York, New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1890).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

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**This article is an excerpt from a book Bro. Hussey has published, called "*Bible Studies on the Book of Revelation and the Last Days*." It is currently available on Amazon as a paperback, and as a Kindle eBook.**

# THE DEVIL AND DEMONS IN JUDAISM

*By Jason Hensley*

**I**F the belief in a supernatural devil and Satan did not derive from the Old Testament, then where did it originate? Did someone make it up and somehow find its way into Christianity? Did Christians just misread their own Scriptures and thus think the idea was taught there? Part of the struggle in understanding the development of this doctrine is the need for more historical knowledge regarding the time between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Numerous centuries passed between the completion of the former and the beginning of the latter, and yet, this period and the doctrines that developed within it are rarely considered. Thus, in attempting to understand the belief in a supernatural devil, this article will first consider the changes in the time between the testaments, then examine the development of demons and the devil, and finally suggest some sources for that development.

## The Time Between the Testaments

After the exiles returned to Judah, the curtain closed on the Old Testament. Malachi or Nehemiah, books about that period of the exile, were likely the last books written. From that point, the community of exiles in Judah underwent a major change. Though Persian society was relatively stable, aside from the episode with Haman and the Samaritans who sought to stop Jerusalem's restoration, it appears to have been relatively hands-off with the exiles. Eventually, in the late 300s, Alexander the Great came through the area, conquering Jerusalem and bringing the Jewish community into his empire. At that point, Hellenization began.

After Alexander's death, his empire split. Jerusalem and Judah found themselves between two warring kings, the Ptolemys and the Seleucids. In the middle of the second century, Antiochus IV, the king of the Seleucid empire, sought to invade Egypt and conquer the Ptolemaic empire—yet while in Egypt, he was repulsed by a new, rising empire: Rome. Frustrated with his defeat, Antiochus (also known as Antiochus Epiphanes) stopped by Jerusalem, defiling the altar of the Second Temple by sacrificing a pig and then declaring circumcision illegal. He sought to destroy Judaism and to Hellenize everyone. What followed was the story of Hanukkah and the subsequent Talmudic tale of the jar of oil that lasted eight days.

Throughout this time, Judaism underwent significant changes. Though the original language of the Jewish community was Hebrew, it eventually

transitioned during this period from Hebrew to Aramaic and Greek (Aramaic for those who lived in Judea and Greek for those in the diaspora). This transition meant translations of the Hebrew Scriptures were necessary, resulting in the Septuagint (Greek) and the Targums (Aramaic). These translations greatly impacted the community because rather than reading and hearing the Scriptures in their original language, they could form their own opinion about the meaning of the words and listened to a translation's interpretation. These translations were somewhat fluid and, thus, sought to capture the meaning of the text rather than an equivalence of words.

Not only did the Jewish community approach their religion with a new language of Scripture, but they also split into various ideological groups. The Pharisees and the Sadducees developed during this period, with the Pharisees placing a significant emphasis on their traditions (what they called the Oral Torah) while the Sadducees following solely the written Torah. A third group, the Essenes, lived in the wilderness of Judea by the Dead Sea and spurned the organized worship in the Temple. All of these sects were considered Jewish groups; thus, the Judaism that developed between the two testaments was varied and in a state of flux.

This flux was further indicated by the writings these Jewish groups created. Many are familiar with the Biblical documents within the Dead Sea Scrolls. These, such as the great Isaiah scroll, have affirmed our trust in the reliability of Scripture's transmission,

showing very few differences between the ancient manuscripts and the manuscripts we have today. But, outside of these Biblical manuscripts, the Dead Sea Scroll collection also contained numerous documents from the Essene community. These give an insight into how the Essenes understood the world and their religion.

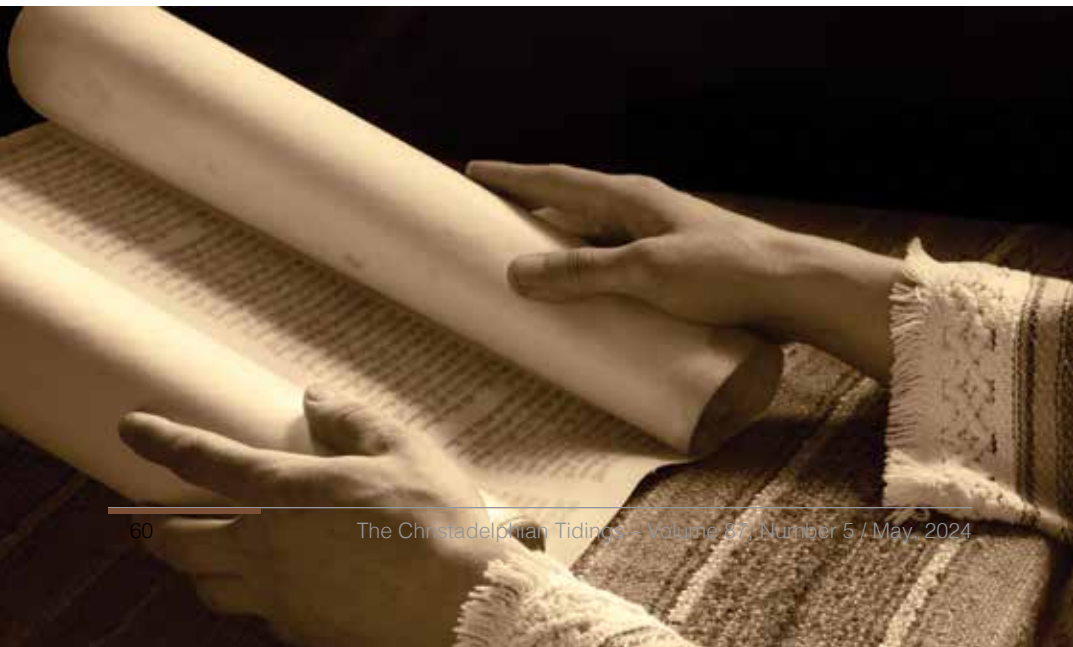
Further, during this time, the Jewish community produced the books of the Apocrypha. Some Christian groups, such as the Catholic Church, read the Apocrypha as though it is sacred Scripture (even though Jews do not), and most Protestant groups do not, and thus, many of us are unfamiliar with its contents. In addition to the Apocrypha, two other Jewish books, *The Book of Enoch* and *The Book of Jubilees*, were written during this period. These books are not considered canonical by anyone. Nevertheless, they provide an insight into the world of intertestamental Judaism.

In sum, the time between the Testaments was a significant era of change for Judaism. Not only were

external changes putting pressure on Judaism, and not only were Jews accessing the Bible via translations, but the religion itself fragmented into various sects. Non-Scriptural books also appeared, influencing the community's worldview and pushing it further away from the foundation of the Old Testament.

### **Demons and the Devil**

With that background, we're ready to see how the doctrine of a supernatural devil developed within Judaism. However, considering the development of the supernatural devil also requires another study; we must consider the origin of demons, as the devil is the supposed leader of this supernatural group. Demons are almost entirely nonexistent in the Old Testament. They appear three times, all of which demonstrate them to be inanimate idols (Leviticus 17:7; Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalm 106:37). Though there are occasionally evil spirits, these spirits are clearly under God's control (Judges 9:23; 1 Samuel 16:14; 1 Kings 22:23).





Yet, this changes when one comes to the Septuagint. The Septuagint has six extra references to demons not in the Hebrew Old Testament. Some still refer to inanimate idols (Psalm 95:5; Isaiah 65:3, 11). Yet, the other three are clearly about supernatural beings:

*From the deed carried out in darkness, from mishap and demon at midday. (Psalm 90:6 LXX).*

*And wild animals will rest there, and the houses will be filled with sound; and Sirens will rest there, and divine beings will dance there. (Isaiah 13:21 LXX).<sup>1</sup>*

*And demons will meet donkey-centaurs, and one will cry out to the other. There donkey-centaurs will rest, since they have found a rest for themselves. (Isaiah 34:14 LXX).*

The Hebrew here doesn't convey any sense of something supernatural. The reference in Psalm 90 is about pestilence, while the latter two are about desert animals. Nevertheless, this idea of demons has crept into this inter-testamental Bible translation--why? Perhaps because the idea of demons has entered into the community's consciousness.

Indeed, extra-biblical sources also demonstrate this newfound focus on demons. *The Book of Enoch* describes the flood story. Yet, instead of beginning with the sons of God seeing that the daughters of men were beautiful, it creates an elaborate story about a fallen angel who persuades many of his angel colleagues to sin:

And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto them beautiful and comely daughters. And the angels, the children of the heaven, saw and lusted after them, and said to one another: "Come, let us choose us wives from among the children of men and beget us children." And Semjâzâ, who was their leader, said unto them: "I fear ye will not indeed agree to do this deed, and I alone shall have to pay the penalty of a great sin. And they all answered him and said: Let us all swear an oath, and all bind ourselves by mutual imprecations not to abandon this plan but to do this thing. Then sware they all together and bound themselves by mutual imprecations upon it."<sup>2</sup>

This angel, Semjâzâ, is essentially a supernatural devil. He leads his group of demon angels until God's angels catch them. Eventually, the angel Michael binds him and his followers and condemns them to fire and torment in the middle of the earth.<sup>3</sup> *The Book of Jubilees* is similar. It, too, tells the stories of Genesis but with a twist. In one instance, it describes the sufferings of Noah's family:

"And in the third week of this jubilee the unclean demons began to lead astray the children of the sons of Noah; and to make to err and destroy them. And the sons of Noah came to Noah, their father, and they told him concerning the demons, which were leading astray and blinding and slaying his sons' sons."<sup>4</sup>



As a result, Noah prays to God for help from the demons; God answers his prayer, and the demons are bound. Then, however, the lead demon approaches God and pleads for the ability to continue to afflict humanity (but just to a lesser extent):

And the chief of the spirits, Mastêmâ, came and said: “Lord, Creator, let some of them remain before me, and let them hearken to my voice, and do all that I shall say unto them; for if some of them are not left to me, I shall not be able to execute the power of my will on the sons of men; for these are for corruption and leading astray before my judgment, for great is the wickedness of the sons of men.”<sup>5</sup>

His plea convinces God, who gives him the ability to continue to deceive. Yet, the way that *Jubilees* describes this event is key:

“And we did according to all His words: all the malignant evil ones we bound in the place of condemnation, and a tenth part of them we left that they might be subject before Satan on the earth.”<sup>6</sup>

Do you see the key idea there? This demon is Satan! We have here a precise instance of Satan as a supernatural being—yet not in the Bible. Instead, it is in an extra-biblical book written after Israel returned from the Babylonian exile and while it was experiencing a profound time of change. The idea of a supernatural devil (as well as demons) seems to originate from this period.

Thus, considering some of the sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls, we see the same thing. Not only is there a supernatural

devil, but the devil has demon minions. One of these documents, known as *The War Scroll*, names the devil as Belial and discusses his angels of destruction:

“You appointed [the Prince of light] to assist us, and in his hand are all the angels of justice, and all the spirits of truth are under his dominion...You made [Belial for the pit, angel of enmity; in darkness is his domain, his counsel is to bring about wickedness and guilt. All the spirits of his lot are] angels of des[truction, they walk in the laws of darkness...]”<sup>7</sup>

Eventually, according to this document, God will defeat Belial and bring destruction upon his angels.<sup>8</sup> Another document, called *The Song of the Sage*, provides an incantation that the leader of the community can recite to keep the demons and Lilith (one of the main Satanic characters) away:

Bless[ings to the Ki]ng of glory. Words of thanksgiving in psalms of [splendour] to the God of knowledge, the glory of the po[werful] ones, God of gods, Lord of all the holy ones. [His] rea[lm] is above the powerful mighty, and before the might of his powe[r] all are terrified and scatter; they flee before the radiance of his glorious majestic strong[hold]. Blank And I, a Sage, declare the splendor of his radiance in order to frighten and terry[ify] all the spirits of the ravaging angels and the bastard spirits, demons, Lilith, owls and [jackals ...] and those who strike unexpectedly to lead astray the spirit of knowledge, to make their hearts forlorn.<sup>9</sup>

This same development of demonology and a supernatural devil appears in the Apocrypha. The whole *Book of Tobit* is about the problems caused by a demon named Asmodeus, the king of demons. *The Book of Wisdom* states that through the devil's envy, death entered the world (*Wisdom* 2:23–24). The idea of a supernatural devil did not originate in the Old Testament. It developed during the time between the testaments, explaining why the New Testament stories are flooded with demons, whereas the stories are lacking in the Old.

### Sources

Greek Hellenism led to this proliferation of demons and the supernatural devil. Nevertheless, even though demon is a Greek word, Greek demons are very different than the fallen angel kind seen in Jewish extra-Biblical texts. Even the underworld god, Hades, doesn't resemble the devil. Instead, many of these ideas are similar to the dualism of Zoroastrianism. This Persian religion teaches there is one good god, Ahura Mazda, who created all things. In contrast to Ahura Mazda, Angra Mainyu is a destructive and evil spirit that attempts to undermine Ahura Mazda's work. He does this with an army of demons called *daevas* and

inhabits a place similar to a torturous hell.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps, then, the reason these ideas developed when they did was because this was the time when Zoroastrianism most influenced Judaism. Though the Jewish community was to return to the land in Cyrus's first year, many didn't come. This time of dwelling amongst the Persians allowed them to imbibe some of these ideas about the evil deity and, in turn, create a devil or Satan character supported by his demonic followers.

### Conclusion

The history recorded here confirms the previous Old Testament exposition. Satan is not a fallen angel. Nor is the devil. Demons do not exist. Instead, these ideas developed over time as Judaism changed and was influenced by other cultures and religions. Zoroastrianism left its mark--not only on Judaism but also on subsequent Christianity, which would continue to preach the concepts of a devil and demons, even though neither exists in the Jewish Scriptures.

Jason Hensley,  
Simi Hills Ecclesia, CA

1 The word here for "divine beings" is *demon* in the Greek.

2 1 *Enoch* 6:1–5, trans. R.H. Charles, 1917.

3 1 *Enoch* 10:11–14, trans. R.H. Charles, 1917.

4 *Jubilees* 10:1–2, trans. R.H. Charles, 1917.

5 *Jubilees* 10:11–13, trans. R.H. Charles, 1917.

6 *Jubilees* 10:16, trans. R.H. Charles, 1917.

7 4Q495 1–4, Martinez and Tigchelaar.

8 4Q496 4–9, Martinez and Tigchelaar.

9 4Q510 1–6, Martinez and Tigchelaar.

10 *The Srosh Yasht* 12:30.

# A TRIBUTE TO BRO. REUBEN WASHINGTON

Brother Reuben Washington (Echo Lake Ecclesia, NJ) fell asleep in our Lord Jesus Christ on February 27, 2024, just a few weeks short of his 94th birthday. He joins his wife, Sis. Marie, who fell asleep in 2022, awaiting the day of the resurrection. He is survived by his two daughters, Sis. Yvonne Prater, and Mrs. Lori Jones. Bro. Reuben was baptized on August 19, 1948, at the Metuchen Ecclesia in New Jersey and was instrumental in forming the Echo Lake Ecclesia, New Jersey, in 1968.



He spent a lifetime of service to our community, conceiving and managing the Christadelphian Tape Library. With the support of Sis. Marie, recorded lectures, Bible Schools, Study Weekends, and Camp meetings were distributed worldwide to interested Christadelphians and friends. He also was an active participant in directly recording the proceedings and providing the audio-visual equipment and expertise at many of these venues.

Bro. Reuben was a founding member of the Christadelphian *Tidings* Publishing Committee, joining at the initial meeting in 1993 and serving with dedication until his retirement in 2005. By 1990, The *Tidings* magazine

had expanded, both in page count and circulation, from 950 to 3,400 copies. It was increasingly evident that to continue at this level, *Tidings* needed broader support to ensure the long-term

stability of the enterprise. Having known Bro. Reuben since I was a young man, he was the first person on the list I phoned. I called him and told him what we were trying to accomplish. Before I could say even one of the ideas on my “persuasion outline,” he quickly responded, “Here I am, send me” (echoing Isaiah). That was Bro. Reuben. He was at every Publishing Committee meeting, and his gentle, sage advice helped make the magazine flourish.

What truly endeared us to Bro. Reuben went beyond intellect. Instead, it was his willingness to serve others. He was generous and sincere, and he deeply felt concern for the well-being of our Christadelphian community. He will be missed but not forgotten. May the spirit of love and dedication he brought to our Committee serve as an inspiration for the future!

*John C. Bilello,  
Ann Arbor Ecclesia, MI*

# GUYANA

## FEBRUARY 2024

*By Clive Drepaul*

**S**OME months ago, an idea occurred to follow up the outreach of 2022 at Kilcoy with another over the February holiday in 2024. Given the green light from the two link brethren, Rafeek Soolaman and Mark Carr, the Kilcoy Ecclesia proceeded with the following outline:

- Fri, Feb 23—Talk on "The Gospel is for All"
- Sat, Feb 24—Talk on "Courtship/Marriage"
- Sun, Feb 25—Joint Breaking of Bread; Workshop on "Ecclesial Servants"

The Kilcoy Ecclesia distributed flyers in the vicinity a few days prior, and the two link brethren heralded the program by a visit, during which we purchased a vehicle to facilitate CYC attendance and support at joint meetings across Berbice. A volleyball court, donated by a former Kilcoy brother who now resides in Canada, was set up on the spacious lawn. The response was very encouraging.

Friday's talk on "Gospel for All," was led by Bro. Ben Drepaul and followed by a BBQ with attendance of over 25. Saturday's Joint CYC event drew over

20 New Amsterdam members, who rode in the new vehicle driven by Bro. Abedi. Sunday's Workshop saw over thirty attendees, as they shared thoughts on all aspects of ecclesial duties by brothers and sisters.

Material distributed included; "Guidelines for a Happy Marriage," "Servants of the Lord," and "The Ecclesial Guide." We also handed out a special folder with valuable tips for exhorting brothers. Travel arrangements allowed some extra time for ministration at New Amsterdam and Demerara.

Bro. Rafeek's "Origin of Nations" at the online Thursday 7:00 pm Kilcoy Bible Class was a useful introduction

to the weekend program, along with the in-person Bible Class at 5:00 pm on Wednesday at New Amsterdam on Exodus 34 by Bro Ben.

We pray for God's continual blessings on the CYCers and the devoted brothers and sisters as they remain focused on weekly activities and upcoming special events in Guyana. The Eccles Ecclesia will host the Guyana Bible School in April. In July, the Caricom Fraternal Gathering at New Amsterdam will be held, and the Triennial Caribbean Camp in Trinidad & Tobago.

*Clive Drepaul,  
Brooklyn Ecclesia, NY*





# ST. LUCIA

## JANUARY 2024

*By Martin and Lois Webster*

**W**E no sooner arrived at the Mission Apartment than we were met by our landlady's helpers, telling us she had just died. Doris Bailey was 97 and had been failing for some weeks. This news was not surprising since she'd been ill for a while.

Our main activities consisted of the Sunday meetings and events at the apartment during the week with the various members and contacts. Bro. Martin exhorted each Sunday with Bre. Benji, Gabriel and Julian helping with readings and prayers. We used the Northern Christadelphian Choir recording as the basis for our singing. Everyone sings along with the choir, especially when we have favorites such as "Great is thy Faithfulness" and "To God be the Glory."

After lunch together, we would have an afternoon program, usually a topic

from the readings, and, one time, a visual presentation by Bro. Andy Walton on the current Middle East War. Some Sundays, a long-term contact, Stan Drapin, would sit at the back.

A very interested contact, Nasha Louis, comes every Tuesday after dropping her children off at school. She is keen to learn the first principles and has nearly completed a course of lessons (on [thisisyourbible.com](http://thisisyourbible.com)) with Bro. Mike. So he came on Zoom, and we joined the discussion as well. Following the session with Nasha, at about 11:30, other ecclesia members arrived for a Bible Class. Bro. Mike had already started a series on the Epistle to the Philippians. Nasha stayed for this as well. After this, we would have lunch together, and whoever could stay would do the Bible readings with us. Julian Jackson (baptized a year



ago) would come in for Bible readings and discussion on other days. Julian is a good student of the Bible and enjoyed doing the readings with us and discussing them, sometimes at length!

Julie attends on Sundays and requires help because she is deaf. It is necessary to sit by her and write notes of all the speaking. She reads her Bible and likes to sing the hymns (as best she can) with gusto! Sis. Dawn Hutchison has a key to the apartment. When there isn't a visiting brother, she opens the apartment on Sundays and organizes the Zoom connection with the Kitchener, Ontario ecclesia. On Tuesdays, Sis. Dawn and other members come to the apartment for the Zoom class with Bro Mike.

On the last Wednesday of our visit, we attended the funeral of our former landlady Doris at the Methodist Church in Castries. It was a long service with the niece Ruth and her brother giving eulogies and then the minister giving a long sermon and five hymns. He didn't talk about heaven much, although the others referred to it. He tied in the three Bible readings delivered by members of the family quite nicely. They were the death of

Moses, Matthew 25, the parable of the Ten Virgins, and two verses from Revelation, "Blessed are they that die in the Lord."

Since the funeral, Bro. Mike has been in touch with Ruth, the new landlady, and an interesting proposition has arisen. She doesn't intend to sell the property and has asked if the Christadelphians would like to rent the apartment and the house. It should be clarified that they are separate buildings on the same piece of land but linked with a short, covered walkway.

By renting the three-bedroom house (with a secure space for a vehicle), there is the potential for a missionary family to come for an extended stay to promote the gospel, start and run a Sunday School, and have one-on-one classes with contacts. This is an exciting prospect! Long-term missionaries in such places make a significant difference in spreading the gospel and baptizing people. The entire facility can conveniently house two couples at one time. This opportunity is worthy of serious consideration and support.

*Martin and Lois Webster,  
Kitchener-Waterloo Ecclesia, ON*



## *Thoughts on the Way*

# *A Mother in Israel*

## *She Loved Little Children*

**I** first met Sis. Juanez (aged 18) and Bro. Kenneth Bearden (aged 20) when they arrived at my parents' motel in San Saba, Texas. It was early April 1953, and they had just been married. They were on their honeymoon, and our motel was a convenient stop along the way where they might have a room for the night and, at the same time, visit with some other Christadelphians.

After dinner, the four adults all sat in the living room to chat and catch up with the latest news from here and there. Once the conversation slowed, I decided it was my time to help entertain our visitors. Being a precocious five-year-old, I began pulling out all my books and reading each for our visitors' entertainment. My parents told me I went through half a dozen children's books, ensuring they saw the illustrations, too.

Finally, Dad, bless his heart, stepped in: "George, I think it's time for you to put up your books and go to bed. Uncle Ken and Aunt Juanez have driven a long way, and they need to get some rest." So, my parents sent me to bed while an appreciative young couple made their getaway.

After all, it was their honeymoon!

During the last 70 years, Sis. Juanez and Bro. Ken have become part of all



our lives. In that long time, we have all learned so many things from them, at Bible classes, and certainly by their personal examples, but also from just sitting around and reminiscing about the old days. They have played a significant role in the life of our ecclesia and all our lives individually.

This February 2024, Sis. Juanez died at 88, being survived by her beloved husband, Bro. Ken, along with an extraordinary family of several generations and all those who became a part of their family along the way.

Sis. Juanez was a great organizer of all sorts of activities: Bible camps, gatherings, and Bible Schools, to mention a few. This activity may account for her children, Fred and Cyndee, following in her footsteps in so many ways.

When I think of Juanez, I remember the Bible passage:

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters. It is the Lord Jesus Christ you are serving.*  
(Colossians 3:23-24).<sup>1</sup>

In the words of Proverbs 31, Juanez has been “a virtuous woman” (KJV), in the NIV, “a wife of noble character.” It is “worth far more than rubies.”

Juanez and Ken always opened their home to numerous guests and ecclesial family from near and far. Over the years, her home hosted Bible classes, New Year’s Eve events, baptisms and CYC picnics. I can think of no better description for Juanez than these words at the end of Proverbs: “*She provided food for her family*”—and for many others. Many meals were prepared in her kitchen and shared in her dining room. Many birthdays were celebrated, with many candles blown out.

The virtuous woman “*opens her arms to the poor, and extends her hands to the needy.*” (Proverbs 31:20). Juanez was gracious, generous, and supportive. How many people benefited over the years and decades from her love and dedication, her handiwork and hospitality? The numbers are countless. From hosting weddings and baby showers, many generations can count themselves blessed to have had

Juanez involved in the most important moments of their lives.

Solomon writes, “*Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.*” (Proverbs 31:30). Juanez was at every meeting, every ecclesial function, every gathering, every Bible School, for generations, as long as her health permitted. We all have memories of many special events, including Juanez.

“*Her children arise and call her blessed.*” Not just her children but also her grandchildren, her great-grandchildren, and now her great-great-grandchildren, Charlotte and Julian. And how many others who were not even a part of Juanez’s immediate family would still call her “Mee-maw”?

A few familiar verses from the Gospel of Mark will help to explain the character of Juanez:

*People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these’... And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.* (Mark 10:13-16).

Jesus took little children in his arms and blessed them whenever he could. They embodied the hope of the future and the hope of the Kingdom, which he embraced and for which he longed. I feel certain he hugged the little children and kissed them, too. It is an example that we all would do well to follow at every opportunity.

Juanez was a mother. That is not an “occupation” easily undertaken. She had the most wonderful gift of love for children, for everyone, frankly, and she showed it. If you spent time with Juanez, you also saw it on display with older “children.” Even later in life, with her health issues, Juanez would always make time for all of us, even the older ones, with a whispered “I love you” and a hug or a kiss on the cheek.

Juanez was a “*mother in Israel*,” like Deborah of old. And that too is an important job, and a serious job too. She always cared for her family, her friends, and strangers alike. Everyone who came to know Juanez, came to know her care and compassion. Also, like Deborah, she led by example. She provided comfort when needed, guidance when necessary, and correction when appropriate. Throughout the years, Juanez supported the ecclesia in good times and challenging times. Good “leaders” are few and far between, but she was more than that: she was a good “leader” who led with a mother’s love.

We pray to our Father in heaven that, one day, our beloved Sis. Juanez shall bloom like the rose, and sing songs of everlasting joy in God’s Kingdom.

Weeping may endure for a night, but joy **will come** in the morning for Sis. Juanez, and for all of us.

*George Booker,  
Austin Leander Ecclesia, TX*

<sup>1</sup> All quotations are from the NIV



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