

TIDINGS

Volume 88, Number 2, February, 2025

UNSINKABLE FAITH



Building faith in the
Christadelphian community.

TIDINGS

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EDITORIAL

In My Life, I Love You More, Dave Jennings..... 2

LIFE APPLICATION

Unsinkable Faith, Jessica Miller 8

EXHORTATION AND CONSOLATION

Patience, Brad Butts..... 13

Lost Causes, Peter Wisniowski 16

MOTHERS IN ISRAEL

Grandparents Helping to Shape Faith, Linda Beckerson 22

BIBLE STUDIES

A Fresh Look at Jonah (2), David Carroll..... 28

FIRST PRINCIPLES

Edenic Law and the Book of Romans (5), Richard Morgan 34

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Nicaragua, Debbie Goodwin 40

Israel and Her Foes, Gordon Dawes 41

PREACHING AND TEACHING

Kilcoy Vacation Bible School, Dinah Pillion..... 42

El Salvador Convivencia, Jim and Jean Hunter..... 45

E D I T O R I A L

IN MY LIFE, I LOVE YOU MORE



JOHNN Lennon and Paul McCartney wrote a popular song in 1965 called *In My Life*. It is still considered a classic ballad, played often by radio stations, now some sixty years later. As an eleven-year-old, I liked the music, but the words didn't have much meaning to me then.

Though I know I'll never
lose affection

For people and things
that went before

I know I'll often stop and
think about them

In my life, I love you more.¹

While Lennon and McCartney focused on romantic love, during the holiday season I found these words to be very insightful about the relationships of life. Throughout my life, I have made hundreds of friends and acquaintances. Some were schoolmates, others from work, and still others were neighbors. During those relationships, I gave little thought to their ending. But it turns out that they were mostly transient relationships, only existing for a brief time. When I changed jobs, friendships faded away. When I moved to a new neighborhood, the association ended. So many relationships we experience are based on short-term commonalities and interests.

During the holiday season, my wife hangs the holiday cards we receive on strings across a couple of windows. I stared at them as I drank my morning cup(s) of coffee. Many have generic artwork for the season, while others are photos of a family wishing loved ones a happy holiday season. We enjoy getting these.

As I started looking more closely at them, the lyrics of *In My Life* began to ring clear. One card was from an old neighbor, two from past work associates, and three from extended family members. All the rest, by far the majority, were brothers and sisters and their families. What was clear is that there may be “people and things that went before” that we occasionally call to mind. But our relationships in the Truth are eternal by God's grace. No matter how life changes, you are the people to whom I am always connected. As one line of the song says, “There is no one compares to you.”

As a community of believers, we undergo countless life changes. But the “*anchor of the soul*” (Hebrews 6:19) is the hope we share. It connects men and women from vastly different walks of life, cultures, and regions of the world. In most cases, we would never have met if it were not for our common hope. It's possible we wouldn't even be drawn to each other if we were co-workers or neighbors. The gospel trumps all differences. Distinctions the world makes to define and separate people are meaningless as we unite to worship our God.

What is it that is at the center of our community? What is the one constant in our lives through all of the decades? It is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the center of our hope and the love of God. He makes this all possible. This love facilitates us being “*knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding.*” (Colossians 2:2).

Much of the teaching of Jesus and the apostles centered around helping believers nurture these life-long relationships. In God's wisdom, a completely different approach was needed to unite men and women around the world in fellowship.

- Love one another, as Jesus loved us (John 13:34).
- Don't give up on the habit of meeting together (Hebrews 10:25).
- Bear with one another and forgive one another (Colossians 3:12-14).
- Let all things be done to edification (1 Corinthians 14:26).
- Prefer the needs of others over your own (Philippians 2:4).

When we neglect these behavioral principles, we experience strife and division, and the love that binds us

together waxes cold. If we want long-lasting and beneficial relationships, we can only achieve them through the bonds of the Spirit.

I've written before² that the *Commandments of Christ*, which accompany our *Statement of Faith* and *Doctrines to Be Rejected*, is an underused tool in ecclesias. It was designed to have one of the commandments read each week (that's why there were originally fifty-three commandments cited). During Memorial Service, the presider would read the commandment matching that week (e.g., the third Sunday in January corresponded to the third listed commandment). How often would pausing to consider one of these commandments have diffused a volatile situation we were experiencing? Here are just



a few of those direction-setting commandments.

- Agree with your adversary quickly, submitting even to wrong for the sake of peace.
- Bless them that curse you; let no cursing come out of your mouth.
- Pray for them that despitefully use you and afflict you.
- In everything, give thanks to God and recognize Him in all your ways.
- Let your light shine before men: hold forth the word of life. Do good to all men as ye have opportunity.

One of the reasons relationships endure in our community is our mutual commitment to embracing these Divine principles. The bedrock of our fellowship isn't tethered to temporary commonalities. Rather, it is centered on the timeless principles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Death Doesn't End Relationships

All of us mourn the loss of brothers and sisters in the truth. We loved them dearly. They inspired us. We walked together, often serving side by side. In the secular world, death ends all relationships. They become "people and things that went before." Yet, the joy we have is that death does not end fellowship. It is but a pause. The brother or sister who mentored us long ago now sleeps in Christ. But by God's grace, they will work again with us throughout eternity in the Father's Kingdom. We also have a fellowship with believers we've never met, some of whom take us back to the days of

the patriarchs. We stand beside Elijah in the cave. We rejoice with Solomon as he dedicated the temple. We mourn with Jacob as he loses Rachel in Ephrathah. We pour our souls alongside David as he feels guilty for his sin. Scripture is given to us so "*that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*" (Romans 15:4).

When we lose a dear one in the truth, Paul understood we would sorrow. The death of the righteous moves God Himself (Psalm 116:15). But Paul reminded us that we "*sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*" (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Sometimes this verse is used to "scold" those who are grieving. It should never be applied that way. Instead, these verses remind us of the unthinkable glory of serving our God. It lifts us up in our grief to know that while we deeply miss and mourn our loved one, far better days with that individual are yet to come. Outside of our hope, we experience sorrow, along with everyone else.

A City With Many Gates

We praise God for the fellowship we share. Our community is like a close family, one we have lived in for part or all of our lives. It is comfortable inside. We are familiar with the language, our shared first principles, and worship practices.

God has drawn all of us to our Lord so that we can serve Him together in fellowship. Jerusalem was the city of the great King. It was where men and women went for fellowship as they worshipped God. Yet the city was not a fortress with

carefully guarded entrances and limited access. It had a multitude of gates for men and women to enter. Wherever you came from, there was a convenient gate to allow access.

We enjoy the comfort and reassurance our community provides. But our gates must be open. Our ecclesias cannot become exclusive families that are not welcoming to new members. In 2025, may we all seek ways to open the gates to others in our communities.

I've listened carefully to those who have come to the community later in life. A newly baptized brother recently described his experience as being accepted and supported. Many others tell their unique experience of joining a family that genuinely cares for them. I know that not every person has a similar experience, as it can be challenging to understand and navigate becoming part of the community. But when I think of these brothers and sisters, I realize this is the story for all of us. We were all once on the outside. By God's grace, someone opened a gate and invited us to come in.

Fellowship to Come

With all the joys of fellowship today, we accept that it pales compared to what is yet to come. Immortal life, with the sorrows and limitations of the flesh stripped away, is a joy we have yet to experience. Have you worked with another brother or sister to preach the

gospel, often to small and unreceptive groups? Imagine that work in the Kingdom, where all will seek us to teach them the peace of the gospel! Paul looked for a passage in the Old Testament that sums up what lies ahead far supersedes anything we have experienced. He drew on Isaiah 64:4.

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (1 Corinthians 2:9).

In 2025, may we all seek ways to open the gates to others in our communities.

How This Influences Our Thinking Today

We must acknowledge that life in the community is not always easy. We don't always agree, and sometimes we can rub each other the wrong way. We don't always act as loving family members. We can do dysfunctional things. But that's because we are still flesh, needing to come closer to the spirit and mind of Jesus Christ. We are a work in progress. I enjoy our fellowship today, but what is yet to come is breathtaking. At the end of the day, "there is no one compares to you." You are my family today, tomorrow, and forever by God's grace. My love to you all.

Dave Jennings

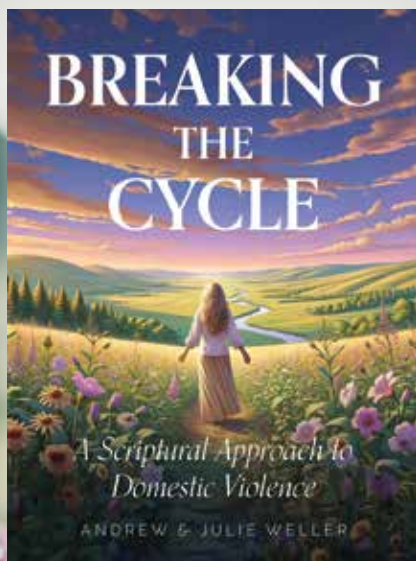
¹ "In My Life" by the Beatles, *Rubber Soul*, Capitol Records, 1965

² Roberts, Robert, *A Guide to the Formation and Conduct of Christadelphian Ecclesias*, The Christadelphian, 404 Shaftmoor Lane, Hall Green, Birmingham, UK, 1883, 1982 edition.

THE TIDINGS is pleased to announce the launch of an important new book, entitled ***Breaking the Cycle: A Scriptural Approach to Domestic Violence.***

We believe that this book offers important insights for helping to ensure our community is free of domestic violence. *Breaking the Cycle* was written by Bro. Andrew and Sis. Julie Weller, of the Cumberland Ecclesia in Australia. It is available in both a North American edition, as well as one that specifically identifies resources for ecclesias in Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom.

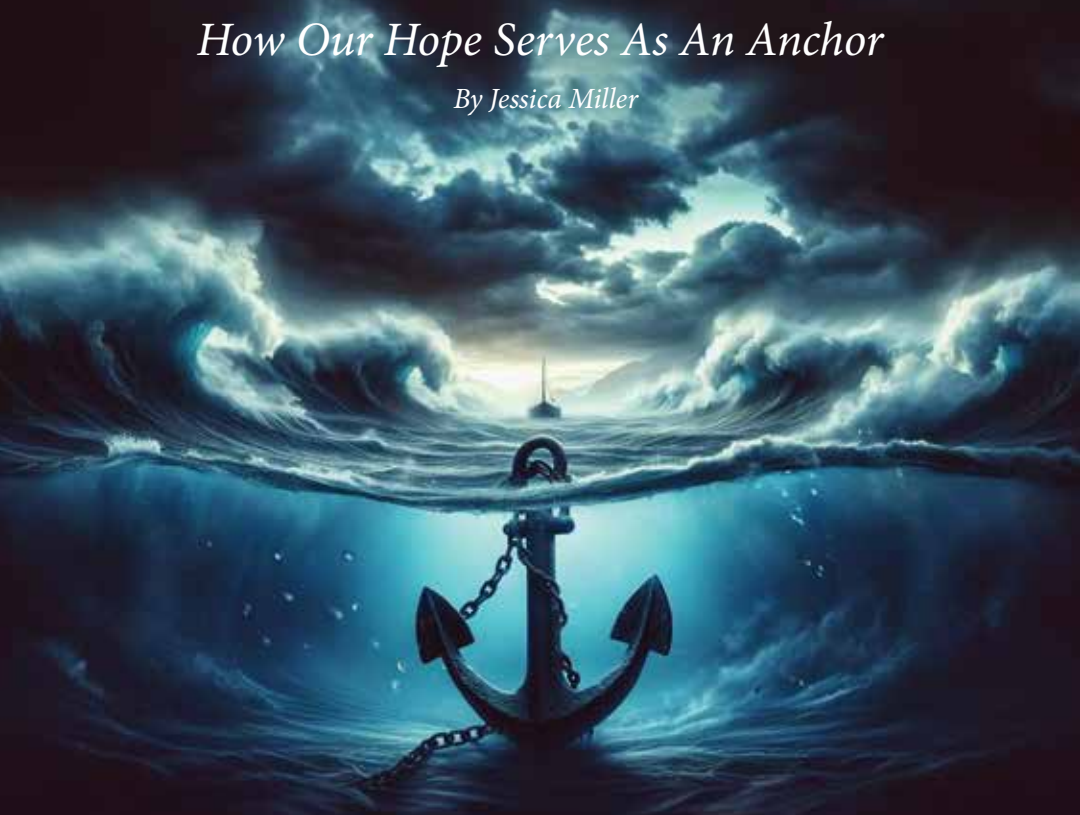
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UNSINKABLE FAITH

How Our Hope Serves As An Anchor

By Jessica Miller



THE book of Hebrews is one of the most theologically dense books of the Bible. We may not often think of looking there for direct life application. However, scattered among such complex concepts as the priesthood of Melchizedek and the contrast between the old and new covenants, we also find deeply encouraging messages to inspire our daily walk.

Chapter Four comforts us with the knowledge that our high priest can sympathize with our weaknesses and is full of grace and mercy for us (vv. 14-16). Chapter 10 offers assurance to those with a sincere heart and the admonition to “*hold fast*” to that assurance based on the righteousness of Christ (vv. 22-23). Toward the end of the book, Chapters 11-12 recount the struggles and triumphs of those whose faith led them to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles, to be highlighted in “the faith chapter” and referred to as “*a great cloud of witnesses*” for the rest of us (Hebrews 12:1). The author to the Hebrews is building to a climax, a conclusion so firmly established that by the end, we should not doubt that we too, can overcome any challenge and stand accounted worthy in Christ.

Near the middle of the book, there’s a verse that I never paid much attention to until a few years ago. Now, it’s one of my favorites. Hebrews 6:19 says, “*This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil.*” We want to explore this soul-anchoring hope by looking at some spiritual lessons we can take from literal anchors.

In Hebrews 6:13-18, the author uses God’s faithfulness to Abraham as evidence for why we should believe He will fulfill His promises to us. Although we know the ultimate fulfillment of the promises to Abraham will be in the future Kingdom on earth, this passage speaks specifically of the promise to give Abraham a child. If God has been faithful in the past, the author reasons that we can have confidence He will be in the future. Because of that demonstration of God’s faithfulness, we should be encouraged to grasp this soul-anchoring hope discussed in verse 19 fully.

Let’s explore the word “*hope*” briefly to make sure we grasp its full meaning. We often use this word in a different way than the Biblical writers. The way we most commonly use the word “*hope*” is more akin to wishful thinking. A seven-year-old might say, “I hope I get an iPhone for my birthday,” even after being assured this will not happen. Biblically, “*hope*” usually means an expectation, something you have every reason to believe **will** happen.

In the Old Testament, many Hebrew words for “*hope*” are often used to indicate an expectation or something one is waiting for with assurance. Psalm 37:9 says, “*For evildoers will be cut off: but those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land.*”¹ The word “*wait*” in that verse is sometimes translated as “*hope*” or “*expect*.” That presents quite a different image, doesn’t it? We might say, “I hope it doesn’t rain,” or “I hope there’s no traffic this morning.” However, these are situations in which we would not be surprised by either outcome. Biblical hope isn’t like that.



Biblical hope is waiting for something we have evidence of will happen. We probably would not say, “I hope the sun rises this morning,” but Scripturally, that word usage would be much more accurate. It’s something **we fully believe** will happen.

In the New Testament, hope is also often seen as an expectation. Most of us are familiar with the Greek word *elpis*. Let’s look at a few verses that use this word, which help illustrate that biblical hope is more than just wishful thinking.

For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (Romans 15:4).

Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (Ephesians 2:12).

There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one

hope of your calling. (Ephesians 4:4).

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope. (1 Timothy 1:1).

This last verse calls Jesus “*our hope*.” This hope is said to be “*both sure and steadfast*.” (Hebrews 6:19). A sure hope can be relied on. A hope that is steadfast, firm, and stable. The sureness of that hope is what the author to the Hebrews uses as the foundation to inspire his audience to overcome obstacles both great and small, mundane, and extraordinary.

In Hebrews 6, we are told that this hope is an anchor for our souls. Natural anchors serve just one purpose, but we can draw a number of lessons from their use. The purpose of an anchor is to prevent a vessel of some sort from moving very far. So, if our hope is an anchor, it will keep us from moving away. Let’s expand on that by looking at different movement types an anchor can prevent:

- **An anchor helps keep a vessel from blowing over or being destroyed in rough waters.** In Acts 27, Paul was sailing as a prisoner on a ship bound for Rome. The ship got into trouble in a storm, and for several days, they couldn't see where they were going because the skies were dark and the waters were rough. They had tossed their supplies overboard and hadn't eaten in several days. They were in crisis. We've all had times like this in our lives—times of rough, stormy waters when we're in danger of being hammered against the rocks somehow. But Paul had been told by an angel that they would be delivered. After fourteen nights, they were approaching land, so they dropped their anchors to avoid running aground on the rocks. These anchors held them steady through the storm for a while. Eventually, they were told to jump ship and escape on the boards and other wreckage, but only after the anchors had served their purpose.
- **Another type of movement an anchor can prevent is slow drifting in calm times.** Have you ever floated for a long time in the ocean and then looked up to discover you drifted farther than you realized? Drifting off course is easy, even when the waters are calm and peaceful. An anchor helps prevent this slow, imperceptible drifting that vessels—whether nautical or human—are prone to. Hebrews 2:1 says that we can drift away if we aren't paying attention. This drifting

might be due to our complacency, as when we stop paying attention to maintaining our spiritual habits, such as attendance at meeting, prayer, acts of service, or Bible reading. Or it may be due to the currents or waves caused by others. In Ephesians 4:14, Paul talks about those who are immature being *“tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.”* We all need a solid anchor to prevent drifting, but the spiritually immature may be especially prone. This tendency should be a warning to us to continue intentional growth in our spirituality and also an indication that we may need to keep a watchful eye on those who are immature in the faith so we can help them stay their course.

- **An anchor does allow for a certain amount of movement.** The anchor doesn't move, but the attached vessel has some freedom. The anchor provides boundaries within which free movement can occur, just as our freedom in Christ provides boundaries within which we are at liberty to move about in various ways. In Galatians 5:13, Paul warned the Galatians not to let their freedom in Christ become an opportunity for the flesh. Without an anchor, we can go overboard with our new freedom, but when we're anchored solidly to Christ and our future hope, we are free to serve the spirit and not the flesh.

In addition to looking at the purpose of an anchor, there are spiritual lessons we can learn from natural anchoring errors:

- **Having an inadequate anchor**—Not every natural anchor will work in every situation. Similarly, if we put our faith in the wrong anchor (anything other than Christ as revealed in the gospel), our anchor can't protect us because it's not the right one. We can't rely on our own strength as our anchor or on any other person or belief system to save us. Only the steadfast anchor of Christ can save. This hope we have is an anchor for our souls. A specific hope.
- **Not setting or using the anchor properly**—Anchors aren't just tossed over the side of the boat and forgotten. Specific procedures must be followed for the anchor to do its job. In a natural sense, this includes letting the anchor down slowly and adjusting it until it's in the right place. Obviously, we don't do this with our spiritual anchor. Rather, we must recalibrate ourselves to align with our anchor continually. We should do this throughout each day and every week when we remember Jesus in the memorial service. The overall lesson of this common mistake is that if you don't use your anchor correctly, it won't be effective. We must believe that our anchor is something tangible that we can rely on. It does no good to have the anchor, but never have used it practically. We can't just know about God; we must rely on Him. We need to take God's principles seriously and use the tools we find

in Scripture to order our walk. If we don't use our anchor properly, it can just weigh us down. We might try to follow the commands that work for us but dismiss others that are more difficult. In this case, the weight of that anchor is working against us.

- **Not being connected to the anchor**—We must stay connected to our anchor for it to work. If we throw the anchor over the side of the boat and then realize we didn't secure it on our end, the anchor is of no help. We have to stay yoked to Christ, abiding in him, to fully experience that anchor of hope in our lives (Matthew 11:30; John 15:4). We are assured that when we seek God, He will be found (James 4:8). We must do this continually, through prayer, meditation, reading, and discussing our beliefs with those around us.

In summary, our anchor of hope is sure and steadfast, not wishful thinking. Our anchor keeps us from being destroyed in rough waters, prevents drifting in calm times, and ensures we won't be carried away by subtle currents of error while allowing for a certain amount of freedom of movement. We must have the correct anchor, use it properly, and stay connected. The author wants his audience to know the great lengths God has gone to convince us His promises are sure. Because of this surety, we can take hold of the anchor of hope God has provided and never let go.

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¹ Scriptural citations are taken from the New American Standard Bible.

PATIENCE

By Brad Butts



A few weeks back, I called a local auto glass repair shop to make an appointment to fix my car windshield. A nice-sounding young lady answered the phone and proceeded to ask me a series of questions that went well beyond just asking for my name and phone number.

She asked about me, the car, and my insurance company. I felt myself getting increasingly frustrated and impatient. I am sure she was doing what the company required of her, but I was not in a place to be patient with this unexpected process. Perhaps

it had something to do with the fact that the breakfast burrito I had just warmed was getting cold! Despite my aggravation, she eventually scheduled the appointment.

This incident occurred about a week before I was to exhort for our ecclesia. I had been wondering what a good topic would be. Right after that phone call, it became clear what the exhortation should be. I needed a strong reminder of the importance of patience!

The definition of patience in Greek refers to a cheerful or hopeful endurance, a steadfast waiting for

something. Paul uses this to commend and exhort the brothers and sisters. He prays that they “*may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy.*” (Colossians 1:10-11).¹ So, Paul reminds us to be cheerful and joyful while waiting patiently for something. He also adds longsuffering to the prayer. While we can employ patience when we wait for something or endure a momentary inconvenience, like waiting to eat my burrito, longsuffering is needed when we endure a longer-term and much more serious hardship. Certainly, our Heavenly Father demonstrated patience and longsuffering when he endured the disobedience of the children of Israel. The same could be said for His patience with you and me! Scripture is filled with examples of patient disciples. Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Rebekah had to wait decades for their promised sons to be born. For those blessed to have children, did we have to wait twenty years or more for our first child to be born?

Also, the apostles and the rest of the first-century faithful disciples had

gotten their hopes up while they witnessed Christ’s miracles and heard Him teach about the Kingdom—which they thought would soon be established. However, when he ascended to Heaven, they had to replace their disappointment with hopeful, even cheerful patience, waiting for His return. They would all fall asleep holding fast to the hope of resurrection and the blessings the Kingdom would bring. We sometimes get impatient when we observe the decline of the world around us and wonder why our Father has not yet sent our Lord back to earth. The faithful of the first century had to wait for the rest of their mortal lives for the Kingdom to become a reality. So may we.

Christ taught us to be patient. In the parable of the Sower, he ends the lesson with a description of those who would make up fruitful, good ground. These “*are those who, having heard the Word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.*” (Luke 8:15). The Apostle Paul exhorted Timothy to avoid the desire to be rich and the love of money: “*But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.*” Furthermore,



Paul encourages: *“I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus... that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing.”* (1 Timothy 6:11-14). To Titus, Paul writes that the elders should not be *“quick-tempered,”* but *“self-controlled”* (Titus 1:7, 8), which clearly implies the need for patience. Later, he adds that the older men should *“be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in **patience**”* (Titus 2:2). Who do you think he might be addressing here? I am one of those older men!

So, we know we should be self-controlled and patient. It is a command. How do we go about practicing this? One solution is the age-old approach of counting to ten when an unexpected and frustrating event occurs. Some years back, people wore WWJD bracelets to remind them of “What Would Jesus Do?” And what did Jesus do when his patience was tested, especially in the wilderness? He responded with instruction from God’s Word. Of course, for this to be an effective approach, we must have our vessels full of God’s Word.

Our Lord was the epitome of patience throughout his ministry. The development of His patience started with his trials in the wilderness. It continued when he had to live a nomadic lifestyle with no place to lay his head when he endured the apostles’ lack of understanding of the complete picture of his mission, and when the people wanted to make him

king prematurely. Then, finally, in the garden when he faced his greatest test of patience. The Lord wrapped up all these moments in a resolute belief that his Heavenly Father’s will should *“be done”*—not his! (Luke 22:42).

If our Lord Jesus had not repeatedly shown the self-control, patience, perseverance, and endurance that showed his complete faith in his Father’s will—we would not be here today! If it were not for our Heavenly Father’s longsuffering, forbearance, and mercy when his people let him down, we would not be here today! If our Father had not provided the offering of His Son to cover our sins—we would not be here today!

So, remembering the Almighty and His son’s loving patience with us as often as possible should help us develop our patience with those in our family, our ecclesia, and beyond. Just as God will not forgive us if we do not forgive others, God will not treat us with patience if we are not patient with others. Paul’s reminder to the brothers and sisters at Rome was: *“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of **patience** and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus.”* (Romans 15:4-5).

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¹ All Scriptural citations are taken from the New King James Version.

LOST CAUSES

By Peter Wisniowski



LONG ago, a man witnessed the death of someone convicted of blasphemy and treason. He waited until capital punishment exacted its last ounce of blood, and soon after, he risked his life in claiming the corpse from a hardened governor. Alone, he sought the right to prevent the desecration of this special body from being cast into an open incineration pit known by the locals as “Gehenna.” In this act, what was anonymous and unseen by most, the pious man from

Arimathea did good to this dead man, now all but forgotten by most. His effort seemed to them a pathetic “**lost cause.**”

Our lives in Christ have been compared to a battle, a spiritual warfare not against flesh and blood, nor one where many of us in our own experience have seen a striving unto blood. But as we’ve seen in the Old Testament readings, there were battles upon battles that the faithful of old were frequently engaged

in. If we were living in that era, we'd often have no choice but to put our armor on and fight the enemy. This was a duty expected throughout all generations by kings, presidents, and tyrants from their subjects. "For king and country" was often the motto of an army, often including, "For God, who is on our side!" Every leader believed military service to him was justified.

But are there many just causes? Even Israel and Judah fought each other in decades-long civil wars. Who was in the right? Often neither. For God does not love war, yet has used it often as a means to an end. His battles against evil **were** justified in Israel conquering the land of Canaan and defending His people. Yet we see so many times how their falling away brought strife and bloodshed, either mercilessly being slaughtered or cruelly doing the same, even when God wasn't on their side.

So many times, God uses one evil nation to destroy the more evil nation, and that includes Israel and Judah itself. As centuries have seen, powers-that-be have sent young men off to war as so much cannon fodder: "My country, right or wrong" was the acceptable adage, and only upon returning did the surviving wounded and otherwise PTSD-afflicted veterans question the eternal soldier's creed: "Ours is not to question why, ours is but to do or die."¹ Even those faithful in Israel would find themselves on the battlefield, fighting for an evil king. Most causes were not just. Men were often sent into battle with poor training, poor equipment, poor tactics, and, sadly,

useless objectives. Often, the pride of military commanders forfeited many young lives, mistakes costing hundreds of thousands of lives in casualties and collateral damage, not to mention the horror of countless civilian deaths.

But we must take lessons from history, even if it is in spiritual terms, to apply man's experiences to our lives as we, like Paul told Timothy:

This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience. (1 Timothy 1:18-19).

A great lesson from this was that victory was not guaranteed, but that courage was needed to fight the good fight. Jonathan loyally died fighting alongside his father, Saul. At their darkest hour, the king and his sons showed courage even though they were privy to the ominous warning from Samuel's vision the night before. The cause was lost even before the battle had begun. Imagine the bravery mustered by a soldier, knowing ahead of time his entire army would be wiped out! All of those soldiers died with great courage, and some died with great faith in their God.

Even pagan soldiers throughout history have been known to battle on until the end, when all seemed hopeless. Yet courage is such a major aspect of faith that God even gave the Philistines a victory when they claimed the Ark of the Covenant in

a battle of almost certain doom for them. God indeed respects courage from His followers. He is displeased with cowardice.

Someone once said that the **greatest causes** were the lost ones. In them, courage **was** the standard bearer that could purchase survival against overwhelming odds and snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. (Hebrews 11:33-34).

Yet again, not all “just causes” are guaranteed, at least not in this life.

Some of the greatest and most important victories in secular military history were the apparent “lost causes.” In WWI, the supreme Allied commander Ferdinand Foch knew he was in dire circumstances in the Battle of the Marne. He said, “My center is giving way, my right is in retreat, situation excellent. I shall attack.” The Allies went on to win the battle and the war.

Courage and quick thinking in WWII came through in what can only be described as Divine Intervention, as Prime Minister Churchill devised a plan to rescue the nearly one million soldiers stranded, defenseless on a beach in France, only days away from capture or annihilation. This probably would have led to the unconditional surrender of the Allies.

An armada of yachts, fishing boats, and other vessels were quickly called into action, crossing the English Channel several times to bring their boys back home. I wonder how many times God was given credit for bringing the thick, darkening fog over the water, which blinded the Nazi warplanes, saving the allies who would go on to escape and live to fight another day?

But not all heroic acts of bravery ended successfully, as during the Crimean War, the British forces, due to a communication breakdown, charged their Light Cavalry up a hill against the Russians in a suicide run, which ended in death or capture for many of them.¹ Yet their courage (or foolishness) was so inspiring to the British and such a false sense of success to the enemy that it yielded the fervor and boldness for the British and her French allies to carry on and win the war.

These stories to us, at least as conscientious objectors, are not to condone war, for too many atrocities have been committed throughout history in the name of the “just cause.” Our cause is not one of heroism against warriors or violence against the enemy. We are encouraged to draw examples from their courage, discipline, and self-sacrifice, as Paul taught.

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs



of this life; that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier. (2 Timothy 2:1-4).

But is it always a fight we are guaranteed to win? No, not always, at least not in this life. The banner we take up, brethren and sisters, is the one of “lost causes.” In Hebrews 11, we see the dark side often associated with many battles, including the spiritual battles: the defeat in a **lost cause**. We read in Hebrews:

Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the

sword: they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) They wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. (Hebrews 11:35-40).

What courage these deprived, destitute, and ultimately murdered saints had in their faith. Make no mistake; many prophets came before us to declare God’s prophetic warning: Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel suffered greatly, and all the prophets spoke of the **lost cause**, where only God knew the ultimate outcome.

Sometimes, what looks like lost causes in Scripture to men are victories for God. Examples include Gideon and his 300. The four people with leprosy had nothing to lose by going into the Syrian encampment by night and finding enough food to save their people. Or the woman caught in adultery, who had no hope of being rescued until a certain man came to her defense. Or the man beaten and robbed, left for dead at the side of the road in the well-known parable, who was looked upon as a **lost cause** by all but one.

And what of the many that pass our way? What about the destitute, the lonely, those in darkness, and those without hope in this world that sees them all as **lost causes**? God sees them as people with potential. What if there was someone once in our midst, long ago gone and considered not worth the cost of retrieval—the **lost cause**? Every time we put our necks on the line for anyone with a reputation that our help could backfire, we take up a **lost cause**. Every time we give to charity, seeking to help the refugees, when our donation appears as only a drop in the bucket—we have taken up a **lost cause**. When nurses comfort and succor those in palliative care who are effectually passed off by so many others as a **lost cause**, these caregivers know that not every patient will be a success story. Still, they carry on tirelessly to comfort the next case.

There's a story of a man whose conscience eventually got the better of him and turned from his materialistic ways during WWII and began to save hundreds of Jews, giving them jobs in his factory to keep them from the death camps. Hope for most of them had become a lost cause, but the intervention of one man, whose heart God had touched, saved over 1,000. Just after WWII ended, he received a gold ring donated by his employees. Engraved upon that ring was a quote from the Talmud: "Whoever saves a life saves the entire world."

As long as we hold life dear, we cannot withhold our desire to fight until the end so that just one more can be saved and kept alive. In Scripture and our own experience, we find that such worthy causes, or even apparently, a **lost cause**, must often be fought alone. Yet, we are never truly alone.

There's an old poem called *Heroes*, written sometime after the American War of Independence. It was written by Enos Franklin Hayward (1866-1927).

The bravest heroes in the world,
are those who fight alone;
Heroically, they win or lose,
nor let their names be known;
They crave not the wreath of laurel,
nor give thought to fame,
Though they fight a losing battle,
they are heroes just the same;
Their hearts may break with sorrow,

What about the
destitute, the
lonely, those in
darkness, and
those without
hope in this world
that sees them
all as lost causes?
God sees them
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potential.

and their eyes be dim with tears,
They weep alone in silence,
so that no one overhears;
The only help they ever call,
is from their God above,—
Their battles are within their hearts,
between despair and love;
Sometimes they win, sometimes they
lose, the World may never know,
For should they win, you'd never hear
a bugler's trumpet blow;
And if they lose, they only smile in
listless sort of way,
And never tell the "World"
about their silent bitter fray.

There is a phrase that has crept back into our vernacular, with the origins being from wartimes. The phrase is, "Is this the hill you are willing to die on?" It is a reference that strikes at the core of every conflicted heart beyond the battlefield. People use it to refer to a fight we may not win, probably will not win, and might not even be worth it.

In war, winning or losing a hill is a battle deemed of major importance as it is the higher ground, strategically the best vantage point, and one of bringing victory closer. Sadly, plots of ground have been fought over for centuries, often to no ultimate advantage. Many lives are lost on both sides, which highlights the absolute horror and futility of war.

Sometimes, we choose not to fight for something worthy, as it is too strenuous an exertion, not worth the pain, an inconvenience, or requires

too much time and sacrifice. Maybe we've been too scared, too lazy, or too selfish. Lost causes aren't always taken up in our lives for one another, for our faith, and for our Lord—to go out of our way to defend someone and vouch for those who've gone astray. We think, "I could get in trouble standing up for someone who's not an appropriate defendant." Sometimes, taking a stand when all around agree against it, even those close to you, seems a **lost cause**. "I'll just remain silent and live to fight another day." "I may deny Jesus this time, but I'll defend him next time. It's not a hill I want to die on." Yes, we choose our battles, it is said, but aren't there a few we wish we could have back and do over? We know we **all** have let our Lord down at one time or another.

We were all **lost causes** once, or so the world would have us believe. For truly, what hope had we? But we were found, fought for, and redeemed. Our **cause** was taken up.

Someone took their stand 2,000 years ago, on a lonely hill when they all forsook him. No one else could see that his cause was worth all that suffering. The price was too steep. The cost is too precious. Yet, though alone, this was the hill he was willing to die on, giving his all in what seemed to be the most **lost cause**. Yet only those following him will find where that cause will lead.

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¹ Tennyson, Alfred Lord, "The Charge of the Light Brigade." 1854.

GRANDPARENTS HELPING TO SHAPE FAITH

You might think your parenting ends when you become a grandparent, but it does not. It just takes on another facet, a different role.

By Linda Beckerson



ABOUT a year ago, *Tidings* magazine surveyed moms and their parenting challenges. The results were fascinating and inspiring, and we have run several articles trying to address some of the highlights and concerns noted in the survey.

As an older woman with three daughters, sons-in-law, and six grandchildren, I began thinking about how my role as a parent has changed. I still “do” parenting, but it is a different mindset now. While my daughters and their husbands do consider my advice, they are developing their own style of parenting based on their experiences of growing up, both the good and the not-so-great. The way my husband, Phil, and I may have parented was not necessarily the same as in the homes of my daughters and sons-in-law. We all have different methods that work for us, and we need to find the best way for our individual families. On the funny side, occasionally, I have been heard to tell my girls, “You weren’t raised like that!” But it doesn’t mean that everything we did was absolutely correct!

The “parenting” by my adult children as adults is quite different. They sometimes come to me for advice or ask me why we did things the way we did. We are all raised in diverse ways, and we were extremely happy to continue enforcing some of the tactics our parents utilized in their home with our own parenting approach. We rejected some things about how we would bring up our kids. Also, we needed to work out the parenting style that Phil and I were happy to live with. Most important was creating a set of

Scriptural rules, values, and guidelines for our family. The Apostle Paul tells us in Titus 2:7 to “*Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned.*” (Titus 2:7-8 ESV). This is an important verse for us to think about as we raise our children, but also for our grandchildren. We need to be that model the same way for them.

You might think your parenting ends when you become a grandparent, but it does not. It just takes on another facet, a different role. Speaking to many other older brothers and sisters, we all agree that it is a delightful time in our lives. We can enjoy our grandchildren on a level different from when our kids were young. We are still responsible for these kids but in a different way. They run us ragged all day, but then they go home at night.

They are the dots that connect us as families from generation to generation. We can become friends with them at a much earlier age than we did with our children. We can have fun with them on a different level than our kids. We can be teachers and, to a degree, parents to them as well. We abide by the rules of our children’s parents. We are also one of the most fun “toys” the kids can have.

The Scriptures provided us with a lot of guidance about our roles as grandparents. The most important responsibility we have is to guide our children and grandchildren to a love for God while we show them the path to the Kingdom. We hold their hands when we take them for walks, shopping, or to amusement parks. But

we must also hold their hands on the way to the Kingdom. Helping to keep them on that road and cultivating a delight in heading there with us. Pulling them back to the path when they veer off. Explaining why a certain direction might be dangerous or lead them to a place they really should not want to go to.

Psalm 92:14 says, *“They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green.”*¹ We are not still “having” children, but we help our grandkids mature and learn to develop a deep love for God. We want to keep them fresh and green as fruit to be harvested by our Lord. Our experiences over the years are valuable assets to assist them when they face similar trials to us and the decisions we made. It’s important for us to keep an open and honest communication channel with them so they feel free to ask for our advice and guidance. We especially want to model how we, even in our senior years, still turn to our heavenly Father for help.

Psalm 103:17 says, *“But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord’s love is with those who fear Him, and His righteousness with their children’s children.”* We need to manifest our love for God by showing our faith as a strong spiritual foundation for our grandchildren. We want them to be aware that our beliefs are solid and to develop the same confidence that what we believe is true. We want to give them security and build a deep connection with God. Deuteronomy 4:6 (ESV) reinforces this, *“Observe them [God’s laws] carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding.”* Then, in verse 9, we are told to *“make them known*

[God’s commands] to your children and children’s children.” Our Father is truly clear here with His instructions for us, giving us a tremendous mandate to live in faith as we display to them why God’s word is so important to us. Let them see how we always put God first in our everyday lives. We truly do want them to have a spiritual inheritance as well!

In His book, God has recorded many examples of grandparents that we can study to determine right and wrong steps. These models give us direction and help us to see the possible outcomes of our actions in raising our families.

One example that stands out for me is Rahab, who became Boaz’s grandmother. Her faith must have been a wonderful example as she shared her story with him about the spies coming to her city and how they helped save her and her family. She would have spoken of how she had heard about this great and powerful God who brought His children out of Egypt and their journey to her land. Her voice on this was recorded for us in Joshua 2:9 (ESV):

I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you.

She would describe how the spies brought her and her family out from Jericho, how she married a man named Salmon, and had Boaz as a son. Boaz then married gentile Ruth, who, in turn, is a model of faithfulness for her grandson David. Imagine her stories of how Naomi demonstrated a love and belief in God that impacted her so

deeply that she left her native land as well. These are the faith stories passed down to David! We can turn to both these women as grandmothers, seeing their lives and the standards they upheld and passed down. We need to utilize their examples as we train our little ones.

Another illustration is In 2 Timothy 1:5, where Paul is speaking to his spiritual son Timothy and also to us.

I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your

mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

Would we not want our name recorded like this in the Book of Remembrance, that we had passed on our faith to our children and then to our grandchildren? Lois must have been quite a faithful woman to have that kind of influence on her family. I hope my grandchildren can see me in that way as well.

In Psalm 145:4 (ASV) we read. “One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.” As grandparents, we can share



the stories of the Bible with our grandchildren in various ways. When they are young, we can read kids' Bible books and teach them the basic lessons from these characters. We can sit with them at meeting, God willing, or help with their Sunday School lessons. As they grow, we may be able to do the Bible readings with them in person or on FaceTime and have chats with them about what they may have learned from the chapters. As they mature from teens into young adults, we can share the deeper lessons from the Bible and have some great discussions with them. Going to Bible schools and gatherings with them so they can see how important we believe that is to our spiritual walks. The key, however, is to be a conduit for sharing God's word and lessons with our grandchildren as we support our children with raising the next generation. When they see us love the Lord, it will encourage them to do the same. They really do need to watch us model lives that are consistent with God's directions.

Another contribution is to share lessons from our own lives. These are the ways that God has provided for us during our experiences and challenges. Showing them His support and blessings to us—one of those blessings being them! When they face difficult trials and don't understand why they are going through this challenge, we can help them work through it and build trust that God has the answers. We can show them the trials he brings on us are to refine us for Him. We will understand the reasons, maybe in this lifetime or not till the Kingdom. But we need to describe His love for us with

examples from Bible characters. There is always a model for us to turn to for encouragement, trust, and direction. God was always there to help Bible characters make important decisions to keep them on God's path.

Studies have shown that some of the best ways to be a positive role model are by spending quality time together and listening with love and affection. We should set limits and be consistent in our enforcement while being willing to adjust our parenting/grandparenting skills when they are not responding positively. Helping them express their feelings and always making them feel necessary and loved. Be honest with them so they can share an experience with us and trust we will give them a realistic response or direction. All these reflect our Lord's instructions to us from His word.

In 3 John 1:4 (NRSV), we read, "*I have no greater joy than this, to hear that my children are walking in the truth.*" This joy is unparalleled for us as parents and grandmothers when we experience our loved ones living Godly lives and devoting themselves and their families to our Lord. We can tremendously impact our children's and grandchildren's faith journeys. We need to run with it, to make it a focus in our lives!

The experience in our lifetime gives us such a unique position in the hierarchy of our families. We have acquired wisdom, love, and godly traditions and can pass these on to provide encouragement in building faith, love, and reverence for God within our families. We can open our "*mouth with*

wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.” (Proverbs 31:26 ESV).

The good leave an inheritance to their children’s children, but the sinner’s wealth is laid up for the righteous. (Proverbs 13:22 NRSV).

We all feel we should leave a monetary inheritance for our children and grandchildren, but the most essential legacy we can leave them is spiritual and moral. That should be our primary focus, and we would be left with the wonderful blessing of Genesis 17:7 (ESV):

I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

When Phil was in the last couple of weeks of his life, his testimony to everyone was the same, whether they called, texted, or visited him. “Concentrate on your children and grandchildren. Help them get to the Kingdom. It is the most important thing you can do.” In looking at God’s

words and wisdom, he was right. It needs to be a primary life focus to get ourselves and our heritage of children to the Kingdom! Is there any other joy that could be even remotely as significant as spending eternity with our families? Not just fifty years, but forever!


In conclusion, let’s hold the words from Psalm 78:4-7 (ESV) close to our hearts.

We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.

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1 All Scriptural citations are taken from the New International Version, unless specifically noted.

Editor’s Note: Sis. Linda has provided an excellent summary of the opportunities grandparents may have when blessed with children and grandchildren who are faithful members of our community. But what unique challenges are there when that’s not the case? We hope to provide articles from other grandparents who have experienced the challenges of children who are not engaged or who are even opposed to the Truth. How can one be a positive influence on grandchildren in those situations? We welcome your comments and experiences. Please share them with us at editor@tidings.org.

The background of the cover is a detailed woodcut-style illustration. In the foreground on the left, a large, bearded man in a robe is shown in profile, looking towards the right. Behind him is a coastal town with a harbor, featuring several buildings, a church with a steeple, and a harbor with several boats. In the upper right corner, a figure is shown in a cloud, appearing to be speaking or gesturing. The overall style is reminiscent of 19th-century religious art.

A FRESH LOOK AT JONAH (PART 2)

By David Carroll

JONAH acknowledges the problem of lying vanities (idolatry) in his prayer in Chapter 2. In fact, it seems like a pivotal point. He remembers just as he is about to lose consciousness, and his prayer is accepted just in time! (Jonah 2:7) As a prophet of Israel, he is responsible to his people. He should not be running away from his responsibilities. A prophet's role is to warn and educate.

Idolatry Features In Jonah's Prayer

In his awakened sense of responsibility, Jonah observes in his prayer (Jonah 2:8) that to “*observe lying vanities*”¹ is to forsake mercy. The sense of this thought is here in the International Standard Version (ISV):

Those who cling to vain idols leave behind the gracious love [mercy] that could have been theirs. (Jonah 2:8 ISV).

The word “*forsake*” (AV) means to “*relinquish*” or “*leave behind*,” as it is in the ISV above. “*Mercy*” is the word *chesed*, which specifically relates to the mercy Yahweh shows only to those in **covenant** with him. Mercy is specifically related to salvation. The closing statement of Jonah's prayer, “*Salvation is of Yahweh*,” in the following verse is now given connection and context. “*Which keeps covenant and mercy with those that love him and keep his commandments.*” (Deuteronomy 7:9). Note that in the Tabernacle and temple, the mercy seat is carefully and significantly placed on the Ark of the Covenant. Covenant and mercy go together in the Father's scheme. But it depends on loving and keeping his commandments.

Note also that Paul says, “*You in time past have not believed God, but have now obtained mercy.*” (Romans 11:31). The “*mercy*” of salvation is obtained in response to belief.

If his covenant people fall out of love and turn their devotion to other deities (idolatry) even though those idols are not real, He becomes jealous. (Deuteronomy 4:24, 5:9, 6:15). The mercy of salvation is ultimately withdrawn. Thus, we can understand Jonah 2:8 as “*Those that observe lying vanities [idolatry] relinquish the salvation that had been graciously extended to them.*” Consider in the context of Jonah why “*lying vanities*” might feature in his prayer and why the recognition of such seems to be a pivotal point in the prophecy.

Poetically, Jonah ceases sinking, and the great fish rises to the surface and vomits him on the land (Jonah 2:10). Interestingly, Leviticus 18:28 speaks of the land spewing out the people because of the inhabitants' abominations (idolatry). This is the Hebrew word *ko kayaw*, which may, in fact, be onomatopoeic (pronounced in a guttural, gagging Hebrew way).

Idolatry In God's People Is Sickening To Him

To continue the theme of “*vomiting*,” or what is nauseous to Yahweh, the gourd plant which “*grows up in a night and perishes in a night*” (Jonah 4:10) is the related Hebrew word *qi qayon*, a nauseous plant. The plant represents Nineveh. It is a transient, useless, nausea-inducing city-state. A violent, idolatrous people that only serve a temporary purpose, just like the gourd

gave temporary relief to Jonah. It served a purpose, but ingesting it would cause Yahweh nausea. So, worms struck and it withered and perished within twenty-four hours of it sprouting from the ground.

The Gourd Represents Nineveh

The fact that the transient gourd represents Nineveh is clear. *“Thou hast had pity on the gourd... should not I have pity on Nineveh.”* (Jonah 4:10-11). *“For which thou hast not labored, neither made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night!”* God prepared a vine and made it come up, then God prepared a worm the next day, and the vine perished. That is his sovereign prerogative. Jonah was having problems accepting God’s sovereign will and probably misunderstanding his purpose.

In contrast, Israel is the cultivated vine (Isaiah 5:7):

Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou cast out the heathen and planted it. (Psalm 80:8).

You cleared the ground for it; it took deep root and filled the land. The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches. (Psalm 80:9, 10 ISV).

Grapevines can live up to 120 years and produce fruit for most of that time. Psalm 80 describes Israel as a vine with deep roots. In stark contrast, a vine of the gourd family lasts just one season. It has a straw-like stem that breaks off easily. After it produces fruit, it then dies off. That is if it produces fruit at all! Note what the Parable of the Sower says.

Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose, they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. (Matthew 13:5-6 ESV).

In Matthew 13, the immediate springing up is due to the shallowness of the soil. The withering away is due to

Grapevines can live up to 120 years and produce fruit for most of that time... In stark contrast, a vine of the gourd family lasts just one season



the sun and, again, the shallow soil. So, in the parable, it is a transient plant that sprang to life quickly but never had any ability or opportunity to produce fruit.

John the Baptist told the Pharisees, “*Bring forth fruit consistent with repentance.*” (Matthew 3:8 ISV). So, repentance is a start, but then fruit needs to follow. A way of life consistent with the intention of reformation is required to bring pleasure to the Creator.

In the same way, Jesus cursed the fig tree that was not fruiting. It was useless, an encumbrance to the ground, so it was cursed and withered away. When the disciples saw it, they were amazed at how soon the fig tree had withered away.

Nineveh is the gourd. A nauseous plant that sprung up quickly (speedy repentance). But the ground was shallow, unprepared, and stony. The soil did not produce any fruits worthy

of that remarkable repentance. In the Father’s purpose, it plays no further part. No lightstand of the truth exists in Nineveh, and there is no ecclesia in isolation. It served its purpose, and ultimately it perished in ignorance. This picture enigmatically (even sarcastically) hinted at in the concluding words of the prophecy.

Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than sixscore thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle? (Jonah 4:11).

So, Israel is the cultivated vine, but in her current state, she had become nauseous and vile to him.

Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up [Hebrew “withered”], they shall bear no fruit. (Hosea 9:16).

Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself. (Hosea 10:1).

Note the precise language regarding the gourd vine “*which came up in a night and perished in a night.*” In fact, the armies of Assyria later perished remarkably in a single night.

That night, the angel of the LORD went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000. And when they arose early in the morning behold they were all dead corpses. (Isaiah 37:36; 2 Kings 19:35).

Furthermore, the city of Nineveh later perished under Yahweh's command, as is the subject of Nahum's prophecy. The final words of the prophecy, “*That cannot discern between their right hand and their left,*” are like an epitaph for the people of Nineveh.

To Discern Between Left and Right

The record in Jonah Chapter 4 leaves the prophet apparently still sulking on the city's outskirts. Either still waiting for the divine catastrophe to strike Nineveh or unable to cope with Yahweh's pity (as he saw it) toward Israel's enemies. The record in Jonah does not tell us if he went back to his people or even if the people back home in Israel were provoked to jealousy by the amazing events in Nineveh. However, the brief record in Kings (2 Kings 14:25-27) shows a restoration in Israel. The northern coasts of Israel were restored

as far as the areas of Hamath (modern Syria). This achievement was “*by the hand of the prophet Jonah.*” A potential scenario is that Yahweh relented and did not blot out Israel then. Destruction was imminent but was averted. In that way, Nineveh represented Israel. Jonah was instrumental in this. Piecing the puzzle together, Israel heard of the remarkable repentance of their enemies, the Assyrian Ninevites. This news provoked their own repentance for a time, and under the guiding hand of the prophet Jonah, their fortunes were restored, and they experienced a prosperous time under Jeroboam, son of Joash.²

The repentance of Nineveh was surprising in so many ways.

1. The probability that it would even happen.
2. The depth and extent of repentance throughout the entire city.
3. The speed of repentance and emotional sincerity.
4. Acceptance by a Gentile nation with no experience of the God of Israel.
5. The preacher was prejudiced and reluctant.

The Lord himself gives the most significant indication of the reason and purpose of the prophecy.

Israel heard of the remarkable repentance of their enemies, the Assyrian Ninevites. This news provoked their own repentance for a time, and under the guiding hand of the prophet Jonah, their fortunes were restored

The Remarkable Repentance of Nineveh

They were a remarkable example to Israel because of their repentance—just like the Queen of the South was an example because she traveled such a distance. (Luke 11:30-32). In Nineveh's case, it was an unexpected but wholesale repentance in circumstances where repentance would not normally happen. This repentance was a witness to Israel both in the days of the Lord and in the days of Jonah.

In the days of the Lord, it was said they would rise up and condemn the men of that generation in judgment. What type of “*rising up and condemning*” is the subject of the second part of this consideration? In the days of Jonah, it was intended to provoke Israel to their own wholesale repentance.

The Apostle Paul in Romans 9-11 cites Deuteronomy 32 to discuss why Yahweh turns to the Gentiles. Is it solely for the benefit of Gentiles? “*God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them [Israel] to jealousy.*” (Romans 11:11).

“*Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people and by a foolish nation I will anger you.*” (Romans 10:19). Also, “*If by any means I might provoke to emulation [jealousy] those that are my flesh.*” (Romans 11:14).

In summary, the reason for recording this unusual narrative prophecy is to show the extent to which Yahweh will go to reclaim and provoke the repentance of His covenant people. It is not about Jonah or about saving the people of Nineveh. The people of Nineveh were a tool in the hands of the divine artisan. The entire city showed remarkable, speedy, and wholesale repentance in unexpected circumstances. This development is the repentance that Yahweh needed to see in his own people. This feature is one the Lord himself distills from the prophecy in the gospel records.

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¹ All Scriptural citations are taken from the Authorized King James Version, unless specifically noted.

² The contemporary prophet Hosea puts the appeal in words what is an enacted parable in Jonah. “*O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him.*” (Hosea 14:1-8).

PART 5
EDENIC
LAW
AND THE
BOOK OF
ROMANS

By Richard Morgan

PAUL'S use of the term "law" in Romans can be confusing. For instance, Romans 8:2 mentions "*the law of the Spirit of life*" and "*the law of sin and death.*"¹ Sometimes, it is obvious Paul is talking about the Law of Moses, but in instances like these, it is helpful to think of a law as being a **principle**. For instance, earlier in Romans, Paul writes, "*Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.*" (Romans 3:27). If we translate "law" as "principle," things become a little clearer: "*Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of principle? By a principle of works? No, but by the principle of faith.*" In other words, the way faith works precludes boasting, while the way works "work" encourages boasting.

Understanding "law" in this way helps us understand what Paul says when describing what causes us to sin. He writes in Romans 7, "*So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.*" (Romans 7:21). Here, Paul talks about a principle at work in his flesh before talking about a collision of principles in the next couple of verses—"*For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.*" (v. 22-23). Paul delights in the principles of God (which are, for instance, outlined in the Law of Moses) but finds that the way the flesh works—"*another law*"—wages war against that principle.

Paul's point is that we experience a battle between the principles of God and the way the flesh operates. Think of it as having the desire to fly but encountering the law of gravity. However, Paul speaks here of those who are no longer under the Law of Moses in the sense that the Jews were in the Old Covenant. You can see how Paul divides Romans 7 into two halves by using the past tense in the first half before moving to the present tense in the latter, including verses about the ongoing battle. Paul's point is that this battle commences once one is free from the constraints of the Law of Moses.

In other words, under the Law of Moses, people who demonstrated Old Covenant thinking didn't encounter that battle. Paul himself is a classic example. Elsewhere, he gives us his resume as a Pharisee under the Law—"*as to righteousness under the law, blameless.*" (Philippians 3:6). Saul of Tarsus was most certainly not blameless, evidenced by him persecuting followers of Jesus of Nazareth. However, such was Pharisaical thinking that one could appear righteous, and it is not until you meet Christ that the conscience is pricked, and the battle begins.

The Principles in Eden

To summarize, we can return to Eden, where the two principles are on display. The "*law of the Spirit of life*" (Romans 8:2) is the principle by which we accept the provision of animal skins, walk in the newness of life and live. The "*law of sin and death*" (Romans 8:2) is the principle by which we continue to wear fig leaves, sin, and die.

Paul then writes about the incapability of the Law to save sinners— *“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.”* (Romans 8:3). We can think of the “law” here as either the Law of Moses or the commandment in Eden. In both cases, the law did not work. Adam and Eve sinned despite the clarity of the commandment. People like Saul of Tarsus sinned despite their (supposed) adherence to the law.

The only thing that works is God sending His Son. In other words, fig leaves do not work. Instead, the solution is found in God providing us with animal skins.

Fulfilling the Law

Paul then continues: *“In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”* (Romans 8:4).

What is the “righteous requirement of the law”? One view is that the Law of Moses demanded judgment upon sinners and that when the sacrifice of Christ covers our sins, which Paul just mentioned in verse 3, and we share in Christ’s sacrifice, then God is satisfied there has been a death—sin is atoned for.

However, there is a more satisfactory way of looking at the righteous requirement of the law. Paul used the same word *dikaioma*, translated “righteous requirement,” in Chapter 2, where he speaks of someone who *“keeps the precepts of the law”* despite not being under the Law. The same

word is used in Revelation 19:8 for the *“righteous deeds”* of the saints—again, people who are not under the Law of Moses. Both passages speak of how we can keep the spirit of the Law of Moses. Paul explains what that looks like later in Romans saying, *“The one who loves another has fulfilled the law.”* (Romans 13:8). In other words, the righteous requirement of the Law is to love one another.

It is the principle of **love** that works to save people and fulfill the purpose of God. God sending his Son (Romans 8:3) was an act of love, as is our response to accepting the animal skins of God’s provision. Rote adherence to the law does not work in this way. Someone like Saul of Tarsus could consider himself blameless under the Law of Moses. Still, his lack of love, and hence the fact that he did not keep the righteous requirement of the law when he persecuted believers in Christ, shows us that the principle of salvation by law does not work.



A Change of Mindset

When it comes down to it, the difference between the two principles Paul talks about in Romans is how we **think**. Paul calls the two mindsets connected with the principles to “*set the mind on the flesh*” and “*to set the mind on the spirit*.” (Romans 8:5-6). In the context of Romans, setting the mind on the flesh is not being a pagan devoid of any knowledge of God and indulging in the desires of the flesh. What he’s talking about is being under the Law of Moses and **thinking** one can be saved by keeping it according to the letter. That mindset only results in death, as Paul says— “*to set the mind on the flesh is death*.” (Romans 8:6). This is the fig leaf religion of Eden.

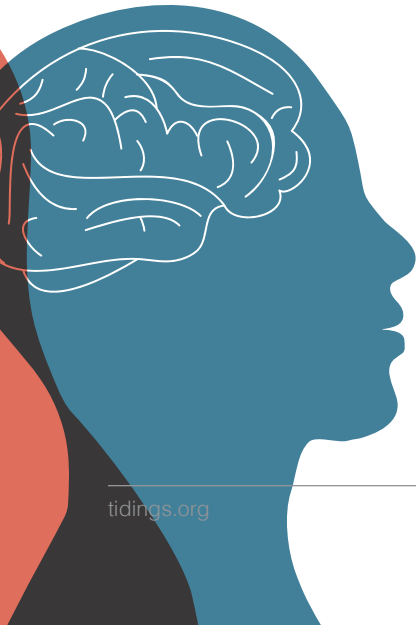
On the other hand, Paul describes the animal skins religion of Eden with the words, “*to set the mind on the spirit is life and peace*.” (Romans 8:6). This mindset is the antidote to the problem in Eden. Consider, first, an echo with

Proverbs. Paul tells us the mind of the spirit brings “*life and peace*” and the wise man similarly says, “*Let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you*.” (Proverbs 3:1-2). The mind of the spirit is to have the law of God on the heart, and in the next few verses, the wise man gives us the solution to the desires of the flesh, eyes, and pride of life:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine. (Proverbs 3:5-10).

In these three couplets of verses (5-6, 7-8, 9-10), we’re told how the mind of the spirit works. Instead of giving in to the lust of the flesh, “*Trust in the LORD with all your heart*.” Instead of giving into the lust of the eyes, “*Be not wise in your own eyes*.” Instead of giving in to the pride of life, “*Honor the LORD with your wealth*.” Of course, those same three natural desires caused Eve to give in to the serpent.

Paul goes on to say, regarding the mind of the spirit, “*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God*.”



(Romans 8:14). Here, Paul echoes Jesus' experience when, after the voice of God said at his baptism "*This is my beloved Son.*" (Matthew 3:17). He was "*led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.*" (Matthew 4:1). Jesus overcame the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and pride of life in his three temptations, and thus fulfilled the wise man's words "*Let your heart keep my commandments.*" In fact, each time Jesus quoted Scripture, he did so from the very context that Proverbs 3 builds on from Deuteronomy 6-8. There, in Deuteronomy 6:5-6, we read about the key to being spiritually minded: "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.*" Love fulfills the Law, and having God's commandments on the heart is the mind of the spirit.

Our Relationship with God

Paul sums up the mind of the spirit with the words, "*For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'*" (Romans 8:15). What does it mean to "*receive the spirit*"? Think of it as the attitude with which we accept the commandments of God and how we view God. If we look at God as a hard taskmaster, demanding obedience and threatening us with punishment if we disobey, then when we read his commandments, they will be received in the wrong spirit – the "*spirit of slavery*"—and produce in us the mind of the flesh. On the other hand, if we understand that God is teaching us to be loving Fathers, then

we receive "*the spirit of adoption*" and develop the mind of the spirit.

It's all about understanding the principles governing how God works in our lives. Earlier in Romans, Paul wrote, "*God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*" (Romans 5:5). How exactly does that happen? Does God simply zap us with his spirit, and we experience love? Again, it's about the attitude with which we experience God. Before those words, Paul wrote, "*We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame.*" (v. 3-5). In other words, how we receive the spirit is an understanding that when we go through suffering and experiencing difficulties in our lives, God is working with us to produce the mind of the spirit.

Elsewhere, Paul writes:

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:3-7.)



To receive the spirit of God is to experience his goodness and loving kindness as we relate to him as our kind, compassionate, and loving heavenly Father.

In verse 5, where Paul says “*renewal of the Holy Spirit*,” the only other occurrence of the word for “*renewal*” is found in Romans, where Paul writes, “*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*” (Romans 12:2).

Once again, we have reference here to the way God works in our lives— “*by testing.*” Through that process, whereby God puts us through experiences out of love, we receive the spirit, our minds are renewed, and we develop the mind of the spirit.

In an earlier article in this series, we looked at how Paul uses the example of David in the first few chapters of Romans. In Psalm 51, as a response to his sin, David pleaded with God, “*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*” (Psalm 51:10). How did God do that for David? In the same way God works in all our lives by experiencing His love, or, as Paul puts it in Romans, “*God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance.*” (Romans 2:4).

*Richard Morgan,
Simi Hills Ecclesia, CA*

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I thoroughly enjoy *The Tidings* magazine with the variety of articles it presents. I recently finished reading the November 2024 edition. I would like to submit the following comments relating to the Nicaragua article.

I was amazed to read that Bro. Kevin was in Nicaragua in July of 2024, a matter of weeks before I was there. My daughters and I supported a "working mission," or "build," as it is called, organized by Christadelphian Meal A Day of Americas (CMAD). This build is collaborated with a company called Blue Energy in Bluefields, Nicaragua. This project was at least the second year it has been organized.

The trip was purely a "hands to the work" mission without any formal Bible studies or preaching. I suppose some may have an issue with this. However, the many conversations and prayers shared have already created a relationship and laid some groundwork for future direction by the Word. The people we met are generous and loving and are keen to talk about the Creator of the heavens and earth. The ground is fertile and certainly prepared!

There were at least fifteen of us, from four different countries, who donated our time for the week and worked hard physically. The larger percentage of the team were thirty years and younger, with four "seniors." It was a great team of disciples who were keen to assist the local communities create healthy and sustainable living environments. Wouldn't it be wonderful to add to this good work already started by adding the Word of Life?

My daughters and I were blessed to be able to participate, and grew from our service to our Lord with this experience. I would lovingly encourage those involved with the CBMA and the CMAD to collaborate and put their hands together toward this good work in Nicaragua.

*Debbie Goodwin,
Sussex Ecclesia, NB*

*"The many conversations and prayers shared
have already created a relationship and laid some
groundwork for future direction by the Word."*

THANKS to both you and Bro. Bill Link, in particular, for your articles in the latest edition of *The Tidings*.

I am so grateful for these articles addressing our typical attitude toward Israel and the temptation to deify everything that the secular nation does. It does us no credit in terms of witness. Too often, I hear words and prayers from brethren that appear to praise everything Israel does in its own military might.

My one "ponder" in your own article is how we can better understand the dynamic that God causes other nations to fight against Israel, yet then He punishes them for doing so. There is a human capriciousness here that surely cannot be of God, and I feel there is a lesson here for us yet to fully grasp. I am trying to understand what must be a nuance of Scripture, perhaps born of the same discussion as to whether God Himself causes suffering.

So far, my own thoughts have centered around the degree to which God exercises control in our own lives. The constant cliché "God is in control" that I often hear seems to leave no room for human self-will.

Gordon Dawes,
Ware Ecclesia, UK

***Editor:** Thank you, Bro. Dawes, for this question. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the minor prophets provide a handful of reasons for the destruction of the nations that were used by God to humble and conquer Israel. In some cases, such as Babylon, it was due to their pride, exalting themselves as having accomplished the victory by themselves. In Jeremiah 51:11, we are also told that it was in vengeance for what they did to the temple. Others were condemned because of their excessive cruelty to Israel, which went beyond the bounds of conquest. God often used these nations to accomplish His will, but this did not give them license to abuse His people. Even as they were being corrected in due measure, God was faithfully correcting them and had not abandoned them. He heard their groanings.*



KILCOY VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

By Dinah Pillion



The teen class at the Vacation Bible School

THIS past July 2024, Bro. John and I, along with our three children (Boaz, Phinehas, and Hezekiah), traveled to Guyana for a few weeks to help support some of the preaching efforts in Guyana. Bro.

Rafeek, Sis. Rose Soolaman and our nephew Zarath also traveled with us. One of the main projects for this trip was to run a Vacation Bible School (VBS) and outreach in the village of Kilcoy.



The canvassing team passed out hundreds of invitations to the VBS

Additionally, we intended to spend some focused time with a group of young people from the local community, with whom we have been having virtual CYC classes for the last four years. We are happy to share that five young ladies from this group asked us for baptism classes on this trip and have been taking baptismal preparation studies with us for the past few months! We expect a few members to be added to Kilcoy ecclesia shortly, God-willing. The VBS was a humbling experience that exceeded our expectations in ways

words cannot express. With over 100 attendees, God truly blessed this effort, and the response was so overwhelming that the hall was bursting at the seams with children. The unexpected success of VBS was a delightful surprise for all of us.

Please look for the February CBMA/CBMC Newsletter to see the whole story and many more photos of the amazing experience.

*Dinah Pillion,
Maple Ridge Ecclesia, BC*



It's object lesson time!

EL SALVADOR CONVIVENCIA

By Jim and Jean Hunter

AT the end of each year, there are two Bible schools in Central America: one in Costa Rica and one in El Salvador. Each year, alternately, one of the two countries hosts a larger international school, inviting brothers and sisters from neighboring countries to participate. In comparison, the other has a smaller school, mainly for the members of that country. This year, it was El Salvador's turn to host the smaller Bible School.

It was once again a joy to be at the school with the brothers, sisters, and young people. A few visitors came from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Bolivia, and the US, so including the Salvadorans, there were more than eighty of us in attendance.

Bre. Cristian Mamani and Sami Borja from La Paz, Bolivia, led the young people's classes. Bro. Sami has a Palestinian father, while his sister, Dalia, attended her university in



The 2025 group photo

Jerusalem and is fluent in Hebrew. Their topic was “Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God,” dealing with themes such as social media, career choices, appropriate friendships, and the importance of finding partners in the Truth. As one might imagine, there was plenty of interaction during these sessions! The young people were in discussion groups. Afterward, each group chose someone to report on what they talked about.

The younger children studied the life of Joseph, immersing themselves wholeheartedly in the drama of the story. Salvadoran brethren gave the main adult classes on “Not losing our first love.” The men’s class was on the importance of the family in the ecclesial structure, while the women focused on the passage in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus tells us, *“Leave your gift before the altar, and go: first be reconciled to your brother.”*



Children's crafts

Other activities included sports for the young folk and Bible bingo for the less agile. In the evenings, there were daily readings, traditional Bible quizzes, and skits by the children and young people. One of the skits was a modern rendition of the Prodigal Son. A group of girls entertained us with Jewish dancing, and later, everyone gathered around the traditional bonfire until midnight.

For our members and young people scattered around Latin America, gatherings such as this play a critical role in establishing and maintaining a similar experience of widespread fellowship and friendship to that which we have in North America. We are all very grateful to the CBMA for making these events possible.

*Jim and Jean Hunter,
CBMA Links for El Salvador*



Teen group photo



Sister's class

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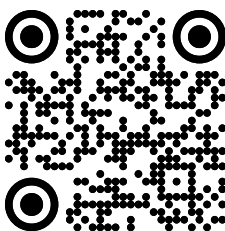
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