

TIDINGS

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TRUTH *MATTERS*

Building faith in the
Christadelphian community.

TIDINGS

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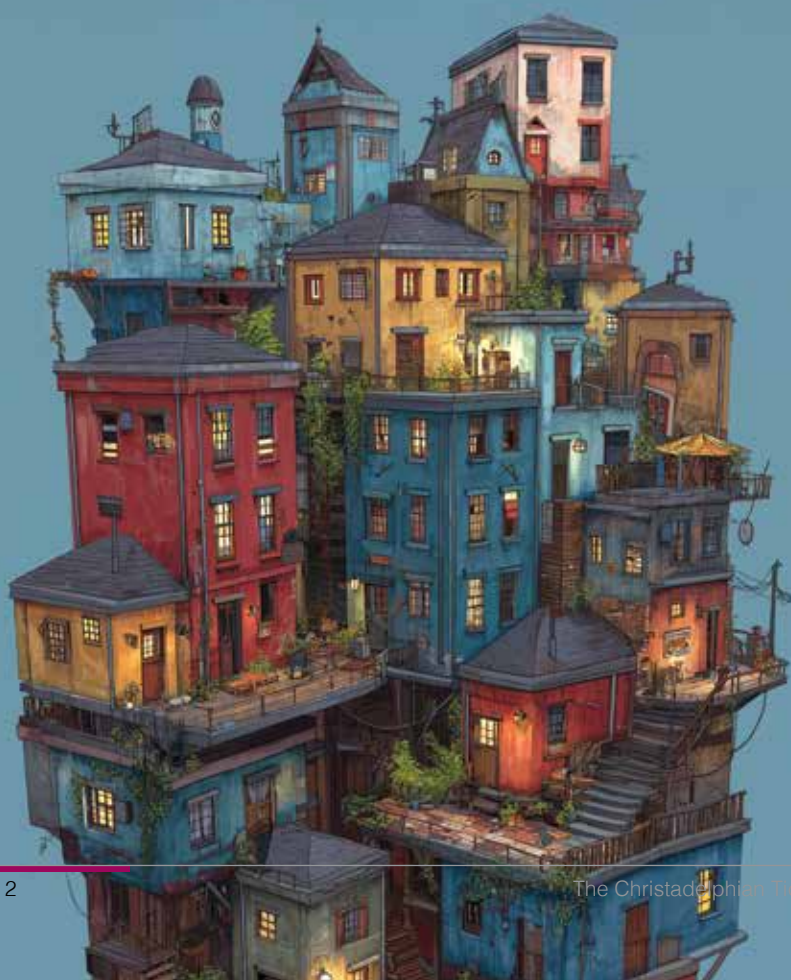
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E D I T O R I A L

WHY I'M A CHRISTADELPHIAN



HAVE you ever taken a moment to reflect on your journey of faith? Maybe that's something you do regularly, or perhaps that reflection is something that you're only just beginning. Either way, it's powerful to stop and ask yourself, "How did I end up here?" I don't mean "How did I come to exist?"—that's a question of creation, and clearly answered Scripturally. Instead, I mean, "How did I end up **here**?" In other words, how did God bring you to this point that you're at? How did you come to hear about this community, and how did you become connected with it?

Some of us may have a dramatic conversion story. I met someone recently who told me that, due to what had happened in his life, he stood outside and angrily waved his fist at God, saying, "If you really exist, then strike me with lightning!" When the lightning didn't come, he concluded that God was a myth. Years later, through a strange and "coincidental" set of circumstances, he found himself in a Christadelphian hall, having many of his questions about the Bible, questions that had plagued him for all those years, answered. At that moment, a thought flashed through his mind, "How's that for a bolt of lightning?" Or, perhaps you've heard the story of someone walking along the road, wondering about truth, when a leaflet blew into their hands. Or, maybe you've read some of the stories that we've published in previous issues, detailing the spread of the gospel throughout the world.

Others, though, may feel we have had a more ordinary conversion. We may simply say, "I'm a Christadelphian

because I was born into a Christadelphian family." However, that statement's really missing the bigger picture. Even though you were born into a Christadelphian family, some members of your family eventually came to hear this message and believed it. That belief was a process, and God was at work throughout it.

In 1964, Australian missionaries visited Hong Kong and distributed literature. For some reason, one of them, entitled "*God's Remedy*," caught my grandfather's eye. He began correspondence, longing to know more: "I was very regretful that I could not attend to your lecture of preaching gospel on 15th (Sunday) because I was under the bondage of my work, I am working on every Sunday and late in night everyday, therefore I have no chance to hear gospel on Sunday. My holiday is usually on Thursday of every week. Will you kindly arrange a place and time on Thursday to meet you and may I have a chance to hear your lessons from the Bible."¹ The note at the bottom of the letter reads, "Will meet Mr. Tsong next Thursday, 2:30 pm, March 26th." A further note then states, "Met Mr. Tsong 2:30... a business man who has studied the Bible in Japan & has come close to understanding the Truth. We talked about 1 ½ hours on resurrection & the Kingdom, & he will come again next Thursday, 2nd April." Two months later, at the age of 44, my grandfather became the second Christadelphian baptized in Hong Kong.²

Furthermore, those of us who grew up in this community not only have the stories of our ancestors, but we also have our own conversion story. Just as Christ spoke to Peter about Peter's

future conversion (Luke 22:31-32), we all know that moment when we realized that the Truth was personal and wasn't just our family's faith. Or, perhaps this "moment" was more of a process.

We all have a story, a series of decisions and circumstances that brought us here. We can look back and see the hand of God in our lives or our family members' lives, and we can say, "God brought me here."

However, there's more to it than just conversion. God doesn't just expose us to the gospel, guide us through conversion, and then leave us to our own devices. He finishes the process, "*bring[ing] it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*" (Philippians 1:6).³ So, this isn't just a consideration of history, but a consideration of what God has done **and** is doing still. Essentially, somehow you were exposed to the gospel, but what kept you in this community? I think it's beneficial to reflect on both, allowing us to see God's work, and also creating within us a recognition and acknowledgment of what we have in this community. I'm sure everyone has their own reasons, and I'd love to hear them (as well as any of your stories, if you're willing to share them! Email them to editor@tidings.org). The following are my motivations.

Truth Matters

This community loves Truth and wants to know it. We relentlessly pursue an understanding of the Bible and strive to share it with others. You'll notice this issue includes an article entitled "*Truth Matters*," by Matthew McCracken. In it, Matthew argues that beliefs and actions are inextricably linked. Doctrines affect our worldview, and therefore affect our

actions. That's not to say that those of other faiths can't be "good people," but rather to note that doctrines as a whole shape group behavior and choices.

Thus, as those who believe we understand the good news of the Kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ, we want to share it. This magazine issue therefore contains a few articles focusing on this sharing in various ways and circumstances: an article about silence speaking and the power of our example, an article on sharing Truth with our children even if our spouse may hold hostility to the Bible, an article on Bible Unlocked, an article about the search for missionaries in San Francisco and our need in North America to reemphasize preaching, and updates about Latin America and Jamaica. You'll note that the article about the Costa Rica Bible School specifically mentions that one of the elder brothers there told the history of the ecclesia, thus keeping the ecclesia involved in remembering its own history and story, much like we've discussed in this editorial.

Life Changes

I recently had a conversation with someone who told me he was a Christadelphian's landlord. He was at a Christadelphian event I was attending, and he explained to me that he had started reading the Bible for the first time, and was coming to Memorial Service and ecclesial events because his tenant's actions so moved him. He said he had never seen anyone carry themselves in such a humble and caring kind of way—he just had to know what it was that prompted this Christadelphian to be the kind of person he was.

Recognizing that the Bible isn't just an academic text, our community studies the Bible because we want to become more like the Lord Jesus. We want to know him. We want to change our lives. And so, in this issue, we also feature a few articles that focus on this personal transformation. James McCann writes about Christ's thankfulness and how we, too, can try to follow him. Andrew Weller continues his series on transformative grace in the Book of Titus. And Ben Brinkerhoff begins a series on Romans 7-8, examining the mind of the Spirit.

Israel

One of our unique doctrines is our appreciation of God's work with the people of Israel. We believe in "*the hope of Israel*." (Acts 28:20). We recognize that one day, "*Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD*." (Jeremiah 3:17). Because of this, many of us try to understand more of Jewish history. We openly declare we can see God's work in the restoration of the Jews to the land and the formation of the State of Israel in 1948. In this issue, we'll experience a little more of the Hebrew language as we break down Genesis 1:1 with David Pearce.

Community

The second greatest commandment is "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*." (Matthew 22:39). We need community. We cannot serve God on

our own. Thus, David Fraser begins a series on relationships and how our relationships with one another stem from our relationship with God and Christ.

To me, community is one of the most exciting things about being a Christadelphian. Even though we aren't perfect and sometimes we may feel more like a bickering family rather than one that is close-knit, we really do have something special. Our lay ministry helps ensure no one person has control, and our emphasis on the Bible continues to make that book our touchstone, rather than any individual person. We come to each other's aid, we volunteer our time and our money, and we are people who are really trying to change our lives and the lives of others.

There are more reasons, but for me, those are some of the main ones that explain why I'm a Christadelphian, and not just why, but why I'm **thankful** to be a Christadelphian, and look forward to sharing this faith with whoever I can. As you read through this issue, may you be reminded of some of these reasons, and may you too be inspired to share the gift that God has so graciously given to us.

Jason Hensley

¹ Richard Tsong to John Doble, March 16, 1964.

² Stanley Owen, *Into All the World* (Bearsden, UK: Self-Published, 1998), 274.

³ All quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the *English Standard Version*.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS GOD'S WAY

By David Fraser
Pinetown Ecclesia, South Africa



The Divine Relationship

“And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.” (Deuteronomy 6:5).

IN an age of fractured connections and digital isolation, we hunger for relationships that truly satisfy. We long for friendships that endure, marriages that flourish, and families bound together by more than obligation. Yet the secret to all meaningful human connection lies not in better communication techniques, relationship seminars, or therapy sessions. It begins with understanding and cultivating the most important relationship of all: **our relationship with God.** But

exactly why and how does this relationship underpin all others?

The Scriptures present a beautiful and consistent pattern of why it is so: every thriving human relationship finds its source and model in the divine. When Solomon wrote, “*A threefold cord is not quickly broken,*” (Ecclesiastes 4:12)¹ he captured a vital truth that extends far beyond practical wisdom

about partnerships. Solomon presents God Himself as the essential third strand in every relationship that endures—the binding that holds when storms of life rage. God is the essential third strand in every relationship that endures.

The Wonder of the Threefold Cord

Solomon’s wisdom about the threefold cord isn’t merely poetic; it reflects

a remarkable physical reality that ancient ropemakers discovered through centuries of experience. When natural fibers are twisted together into rope, something extraordinary happens. Rather than simply adding up, the strength **multiplies** in ways that illuminate why God’s presence transforms our relationships.

Consider this: when you twist two strands of rope together, the result is stronger than either strand alone—but not twice as strong, because the

twisting costs a little efficiency.

You might expect that adding a third strand would offer only modest further improvement. But here’s where it gets fascinating: ancient ropemakers discovered that three strands are the “magic number.” **A three-strand rope is roughly two and a half times stronger than a single strand,** and far more resistant to unraveling than a two-strand rope

could ever be. The third strand doesn’t merely add strength, it transforms the rope’s structure entirely.

Yet the most remarkable benefit of the third strand isn’t just its raw strength. A two-strand rope has a fundamental weakness: under tension, the strands tend to rotate around each other, creating a “corkscrew” effect that causes them to unravel and separate. If one

“A three-strand rope is roughly two and a half times stronger than a single strand, and far more resistant to unraveling than a two-strand rope could ever be. **The third strand doesn’t merely add strength, it transforms the rope’s structure entirely.**”

strand breaks, the other immediately loses all frictional support and the rope fails catastrophically. **However, a third strand transforms everything!** Three strands form a stable triangular shape where each strand is locked between the other two. Under tension, the strands compress inward, binding tighter in a self-strengthening system. Even if one strand breaks, the remaining two strands stay interlocked, reducing the risk of total failure. The third strand transforms a fragile pair into a self-reinforcing, nearly unbreakable bond! This transformation is why the three-strand rope became the universal standard in ancient maritime cultures. Egyptian tomb paintings from around

2500 BC depict this construction, and it remained largely unchanged through the Age of Sail. Sailors never used two-strand rope for critical applications—they clearly understood intuitively what physics confirms: the third strand doesn't just add strength; it fundamentally transforms the nature of the bond.

Do you see the spiritual parallel? A relationship between two people, whether marriage, friendship, or ecclesial fellowship, has the same structural vulnerability as a two-strand rope. Without God as the third strand, the relationship tends to “unravel” under stress. Each person rotates around their own axis of self-interest.



When crisis strikes, there's nothing to hold them together.

But when God enters the equation, everything changes. His presence creates the triangular stability that keeps both parties bound together even under trying circumstances. His authority provides the compression that strengthens the bond when tension increases. Even when one party fails or falters, the relationship doesn't immediately collapse, because the divine strand holds.

So practically, how do we develop this wonderful threefold relationship with God? He provides a beautiful pattern that resonates throughout His Word.

The Divine Pattern: Mental, Moral, Physical

Throughout Scripture, we find a consistent pattern in how God develops relationships—both with humanity and within the human sphere. This pattern moves progressively through three stages: the **mental** (understanding), the **moral** (conviction and commitment), and the **physical** (action and expression). This is the divine order that produces lasting fruit.

Far from being arbitrary, this progression mirrors how God Himself works. Consider James's reflection, which traces sin's development: "*Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*" (James 1:14-15). The pattern moves from mental (temptation in the mind), to moral (the conception of intent), to physical (the

act itself), to fruit (the consequence of death). When the same progression is applied constructively to righteousness, it produces life.

Consider Paul's appeal in Romans, which presents the positive application:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:1-2).

Notice the order. Transformation begins **mentally** with renewed thinking, proceeds **morally** through discernment of God's will, and manifests **physically** in consecrated action—the living sacrifice.

Mental → Moral → Physical → Fruit

This progression is God's pattern for lasting transformation. We also know this was how God established His relationship with Israel. He first revealed Himself through His Word, establishing mental comprehension of who He is and what He requires. Then came the call to moral commitment—the covenant at Sinai—where Israel pledged, "*All that the LORD has spoken we will do.*" (Exodus 19:8). Only then came the physical expressions: the tabernacle, the sacrifices, and the dwelling of God among His people. The fruit was to be a nation set apart, bearing witness to the world.

This same pattern governs our own

journey to God. We first encounter Him through His Word, developing a **mental** (“academic”) understanding of the Gospel. But to progress, this understanding must then deepen into **moral** conviction: a transformed heart that yields to His will. Finally comes the **physical** response of baptism, symbolizing the lifelong commitment to the process of change. As Jesus told Nicodemus, *“Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”* (John 3:5). This requires understanding with compliant change and committed conviction. And what is the fruit? It is a new creation, walking in newness of life, bearing the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

How, then, does this relationship with God intertwine with our relationships with others?

Walking Together: The Basis of True Unity

The prophet Amos poses a penetrating question: *“Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?”* (Amos 3:3). This simple inquiry contains the DNA of every successful relationship. Agreement is not merely the absence of conflict—it is the presence of shared vision, common purpose, and mutual submission to a higher authority.

Human relationships inevitably encounter disagreement. Our

backgrounds differ, our perspectives vary, and our natural inclinations may clash. What then enables unity? The answer lies in recognizing an authority higher than our personal preferences: the living God whose word provides the standard by which all disputes may be resolved.

When both parties in any relationship submit to God’s authority, they find a meeting point beyond themselves. The husband and wife who both bow before Scripture discover common ground even when their personalities diverge. Brothers and sisters in the ecclesia who share the same doctrinal foundation can navigate differences in judgment because they agree on first principles. This submission is the blessing of the threefold cord; God’s presence transforms a fragile partnership into an unbreakable bond.

Attributes of Our Relationship with God

What characterizes a thriving relationship with the Almighty? The Scriptures reveal several essential qualities that mirror the attributes of all healthy human connections:

1. Founded on Knowledge and Unity of Mind

Our relationship with God begins with knowing Him—not merely knowing **about** Him, but the intimate

“Human relationships inevitably encounter disagreement. Our backgrounds differ, our perspectives vary, and our natural inclinations may clash. What then enables unity? **The answer lies in recognizing an authority higher than our personal preferences...**”

knowledge that comes through sustained engagement with Him and with His Word. *“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”* (John 17:3). This is the **mental** foundation, knowledge that produces unity of mind and purpose, aligning our will with His.

2. Built on Respect, Love, and Trust

The fear of the LORD, that earnest reverence and respect, is *“the beginning of wisdom.”* (Proverbs 9:10). Yet this reverence blossoms into love as we experience His faithfulness. *“We love Him because He first loved us.”* (1 John 4:19). Trust grows as we observe His promises fulfilled and His character proven true across the testimony of Scripture and our own experience. This constitutes the **moral** dimension: the conviction that commits.

3. Expressed Through Service and Self-Sacrifice

A genuine relationship with God cannot remain passive. It compels action, service born of gratitude, sacrifice inspired by love. Paul appeals: *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”* (Romans 12:1). The life poured out for God reflects the life He poured out for us in Christ. This action is the **physical** expression—faith made visible.

4. Productive of Spiritual Fruit

Every healthy relationship produces **fruit**. Our relationship with God yields *“the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness,*

faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (Galatians 5:22-23). This fruit becomes the evidence of a genuine connection, validating the reality of our fellowship with the divine.

The Supreme Example: Christ and the Father

No relationship in Scripture illustrates these principles more perfectly than that between Jesus Christ and his Father. Here we witness the divine pattern in its fullest expression, a relationship so complete that Jesus could declare, *“I and My Father are one.”* (John 10:30).

Consider the unity of mind and purpose: *“The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.”* (John 5:19). Observe the love and trust: *“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.”* (John 10:17). Mark also the self-sacrifice: *“Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”* (Matthew 26:39). And note the intimate communion: Jesus rising early to pray, spending nights in fellowship with his Father.

This relationship between Father and Son becomes the template for all our relationships—both with God and with one another. As Jesus prayed, *“That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us.”* (John 17:21). The unity we seek in human relationships flows from and reflects the divine unity.

Building upon this divine template of unity and intimacy exemplified in Christ, Scripture reveals how ordinary



believers can be invited into a deep friendship with God Himself.

Becoming Friends of God

Scripture records a remarkable title given to certain individuals: “*friend of God.*” Abraham received this honor because “*he believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And he was called the friend of God.*” (James 2:23). David was described as “*a man after [God’s] own heart.*” (Acts 13:22).

What elevated these men to such intimacy? It was not perfection—both stumbled grievously. Rather, it was the quality of their response to God: faith that acted, genuine repentance, and hearts that remained oriented toward the divine despite their failures. Abraham demonstrated faith through obedience, even to the point of offering Isaac. David, when confronted with sin, responded with broken-hearted

confession: “*Against You, You only, have I sinned.*” (Psalm 51:4).

Jesus extended this same possibility to his disciples—and to us:

You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. (John 15:14-15).

Friendship with God is not reserved for spiritual giants; it is offered to all who hear and obey.

Cultivating the Divine Relationship

How do we nurture this great foundational relationship with God? The principles follow the same mental-moral-physical progression:

Daily engagement with Scripture (Mental). The Word of God is His

primary means of communication with us. Regular, thoughtful reading transforms our minds and draws us closer to His heart. *"Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You."* (Psalm 119:11).

Consistent prayer (Moral). Prayer is much more than petition. It is conversation, confession, thanksgiving, and worship. It is the discipline by which we maintain constant awareness of God's presence and submit our wills to His. Prayer deepens conviction and commitment and should be our response to His Word speaking to our hearts.

Fellowship with believers (Physical). God has placed us in a community of faith. Our relationship with Him grows through our connection with His people. *"Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together."* (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Obedience in daily life (Fruit). Love for God is demonstrated through action. *"If you love Me, keep My commandments."* (John 14:15). Every choice to obey strengthens our bond with Him; every act of faith deepens our trust. The fruit of obedience becomes the seed for deeper understanding, and the cycle continues.

The Foundation for All That Follows

The divine relationship isn't merely one among many—it is **the source** from which all others flow. When we are rightly connected to God, we discover the capacity for richer human connections. His love teaches us how

to love others. His forgiveness enables us to forgive. His patience with our failings cultivates patience with those around us.

In the following months, we will explore, God willing, how these divine principles apply to our ecclesial relationships, our marriages and courtships, and our family connections. In each sphere, we will find the same pattern: God at the center as the essential third strand, the progression from mental to moral to physical, and the fruit that follows faithful adherence to His design.

But it all begins here, with the fundamental relationship between Creator and creature, Father and child, Lord and servant—and, wonder of wonders, between God and those whom He calls His friends. *"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."* (James 4:8). This is both invitation and promise—the starting point for every relationship that truly satisfies!

*You will show me the path of life;
in Your presence is fullness of joy;
at Your right hand are pleasures
forevermore.* (Psalm 16:11).

David Fraser,
Pinetown Ecclesia, South Africa

¹ All Bible references are from the NKJV unless otherwise stated.

E X H O R T A T I O N

THANKFULNESS

*By James McCann
Riverwood Ecclesia, NSW*

EACH week, as we “*eat this bread and drink this cup*” (1 Corinthians 11:26 NKJV), we are taken back to the night when our Lord gathered with his disciples and memorialized the power of his life, death, and resurrection. Among the many lessons Christ demonstrated, one shines out. This lesson was the spirit that governed his whole life, a motivating force so simple we may overlook it. All accounts tell us that when Christ shared the emblems, he “*gave thanks*.” (Matthew 26:27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:17).

We, too, “give thanks” before eating or drinking. But routine can dull the significance. Christ’s words were anything but ordinary. He gave thanks for symbols that represented his body, soon to be tortured, crucified, and lifted up on a tree, and his blood poured out in complete surrender to God. They spoke of the greatest conflict ever fought: the battle with sin and death within himself. And he gave thanks, knowing this was the path “*for the remission of sins*,” and as Paul adds, “*for you*.” (1 Corinthians 11:24). Christ thanked his Father for what those emblems meant, for him and for us.

This thought reveals the remarkable power behind Christ’s example. Thankfulness was not merely an action; it was the spirit that governed his entire life. He lived with a deep appreciation for his Father’s love, wisdom, and purpose. Even as he approached his darkest hour, he did so with gratitude.

John’s Gospel opens a window into his mindset. “*Jesus knew that his hour was come*.” (John 13:1). Yet even then, although he was the greatest of them all, he could “*empty himself*” (Philippians 2:7-8 YLT), lay aside his garments, gird

himself with humility, and wash their feet. Yet how could Christ set aside his own needs at such a moment? John 13:3 gives the answer: “*Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God*.” Jesus knew that God was to be thanked for everything; he saw all things in the light of God’s will. He knew his Father’s plan was perfect, that every step, even suffering, was leading to the triumph of God’s righteousness and the salvation of the world. And so, he gave thanks.

This spirit is embedded throughout Scripture, but nowhere more beautifully than in Psalm 116. It begins with the words, “*I love the LORD*.” That love springs from thankfulness: “*because He has heard my voice and supplications*.” (v. 1 NKJV). The psalm also carries strong Messianic undertones, giving voice to the spirit of Christ (1 Peter 1:10-11). In Psalm 116:12, we hear the question Christ himself embodied: “*What shall I render unto the LORD for all His benefits toward me?*”

Psalm 116:13 draws us straight into the upper room: “*I will take the cup of salvation*.” Christ took that cup and **gave thanks for it**. Although he knew it signified the suffering ahead, he thanked God for the salvation it would achieve. The cup testified not only to what he must endure, but also to “*the glory that should follow*.” (1 Peter 1:11).

The second half of Psalm 116:13 leads us into Gethsemane, where he called “*upon the name of the LORD*.” As the agony intensified, his sweat falling as great drops of blood, he remained thankful for the angel sent to strengthen him and set before him the joy of being exalted to the Father’s

side. Here, the decisive battle was won. He “*kneeled down and prayed;*” (Luke 22:41). This is the same Greek word used in John 15:13, where he taught there was no greater love than for one to “*lay down*” his life for his friends. Although the disciples would soon forsake him, he was thankful that his Father never would.

From the garden, he rose to face trials before Jew and Gentile. Psalm 116:14 captures this moment as he paid his “*vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people.*” Amid false accusations, mocking, and scourging, the psalm continues to remind us that he remained thankful for the privilege of fulfilling his Father’s purpose and upholding divine righteousness before the world.

Verse 15 brings us to Golgotha: “*Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.*” Christ trusted his Father’s abiding love, and the Gospel records show how each prophecy was fulfilled with divine precision (compare Matthew 27 with Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53). Even in death, he saw the Father’s presence, a truth for which we too can be deeply thankful.

The psalm then reaches its climax in the resurrection, when God “*loosed my bonds.*” (v. 16). No wonder verse 17 describes the whole journey as a “*sacrifice of thanksgiving.*” Christ’s thankful spirit carried him through suffering and now, in verse 16, bursts forth in the glory of immortality and

the hope of the Kingdom.

If the spirit of thankfulness lies at the heart of the emblems and governs how we remember “*the Lord’s death till he come,*” (1 Corinthians 11:26) how much more should it govern our lives? This exhortation becomes increasingly urgent in our current age. Ours is a thankless generation, a world filled with voices that complain, resent, demand, and constantly compare. People measure life by what they lack rather than what they have. Even disciples can slowly slip into seeing life through the lens of absence rather than abundance.

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Paul describes the spirit of the world in Romans 1:21: They “*became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened,*” because they were not thankful. And to Timothy, he warns that in the last days, even within the household of faith, people would

be “*unthankful.*” (2 Timothy 3:2). The seriousness of this description is underscored by the phrases around it: “*unholy*” and “*lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.*” (2 Timothy 3:4). Unthankfulness is not a minor flaw; it is the opposite of the spirit of Christ.

Paul, writing to a generation living on the brink of the AD 70 “*coming*” (*parousia*), drew heavily from the wilderness generation in Hebrews 3. They, too, stood on the edge of the Promised Land. They had seen God’s works for forty years, eaten manna from heaven, and drunk water from

the rock. Yet the exhortation was an urgent warning. Despite all they had experienced, they “fell short” through unbelief. Hence the repeated call: “*To day if ye will hear His voice.*” (Hebrews 3:7).

Psalm 95, quoted in Hebrews 3, draws attention to two specific incidents: Massah and Meribah (Exodus 17:7 and Numbers 20:13, 24). Both involved Israel complaining about water, focusing on what they lacked rather than what God had already provided for them. In their ingratitude, they became blind to the truth. Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 10:4 that the rock Israel struck was a symbol of Christ. Their unthankfulness meant they “struck Christ” again, failing to recognise the grace before them. The warning is unmistakable: when we stop being thankful, we stop seeing Christ.

Paul’s quotation of Psalm 95 is a masterstroke of divine inspiration, because the antidote lies in the first two verses of the psalm: “*O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving.*”

Thankfulness is the medicine for our age. It opens the door into God’s presence: “*Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,*” (Psalm 100:4), the very place, the courts of God’s house, where Psalm 116 ends (v. 19).

Here is the power of the emblems before us. The spirit of Christ is a spirit of thankfulness. Scripture repeatedly urges us to cultivate it: “*By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually... giving thanks to*

His name.” (Hebrews 13:15). “*Let the peace of God rule in your hearts... and be ye thankful.*” (Colossians 3:15). “*Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*” (1 Thessalonians 5:18 ESV). What power is behind Paul’s words, “*Give thanks in all circumstances*”? Thankfulness is not occasional; it is central to God’s work in us. It keeps Christ before our eyes and softens our hearts so the word can take root.

Scripture also reminds us to be thankful for one another. Paul repeatedly expresses thanks for ecclesias and individuals: “*We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord.*” (2 Thessalonians 2:13). Gratitude strengthens fellowship and promotes unity. When we thank God for our brethren, we see not their shortcomings but the grace at work within them.

Above all, gratitude flows from recognising God’s greatest gift: “*Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift.*” (2 Corinthians 9:15). We see that gift symbolised in the emblems before us. So, in the “*same manner,*” (1 Corinthians 11:25) the same **thankful** manner, let us eat this bread and drink this cup, remembering the one who gave thanks even as he gave his life.

“Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:57 NKJV).

“Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

James McCann,
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WHEN SILENCE SPEAKS

The morning air was fresh, sunlight stretching across the yard as I ambled, letting my thoughts drift where a trellis might finally stand. I could almost picture the climbing roses, the kind my grandmother tended in her garden, stretching upward across a wooden lattice—a shaded nook to sit and enjoy peace and quiet.

My neighbor was working in her garden, and because the spot I chose lay near the boundary we shared, I wanted, as a courtesy, to let her know my plan. But the quiet morning was shattered. Her finger stabbed the air as she unleashed a torrent of words—sharp, blistering, each one piercing like a thorn. The calm vanished. I tried to steady my voice, explaining that the trellis would remain within my property. But each word I offered only fanned her anger into greater intensity.

The peacefulness of the morning pressed down on me as a heavy burden. I kept asking myself, What if I had answered differently? Could a kind word have softened her anger, or would it have sounded hollow against her fury? In my grandmother's days, neighbors often lingered on porches to talk things through—but not this time.

I felt unsettled for the rest of the day. My neighbor's words cut deeper than I expected. For a moment, I just wanted to snap, to say everything I was feeling,





to make her see how wrong it felt. That tight knot in my chest reminded me how quickly anger can rise. Then I thought of Jesus before Pilate.

How did he do that? He endured relentless hostility. He didn't defend himself, didn't lash out; he just stood there in silence, trusting and submitting to his Father.

I remembered Jesus in Nazareth. One moment, the crowd admired him, and the next, they turned on him and drove him away. The disappointment, the rejection—it must have hurt him deeply. Visualizing that, I recognize my own feelings—being misunderstood, treated unfairly. I wanted to lash out, cry, even point my finger.

I didn't handle it perfectly, but by holding back and not returning with angry words, I managed to keep the situation from escalating. Jesus's example reminded me that spiritual and emotional strength can be quiet, and even when hurt, I could respond with care rather than letting anger take over.

James 1:19 urged me to be *"quick to listen and slow to speak,"* (CEV) while Ecclesiastes 3:7 reminded me there is *"a time to keep silence and a time to speak."* (ESV). Looking back, I can see how those words quietly shaped my response more than I realized in the moment.

With time, I saw more clearly. My neighbor's outburst was not about roses, trellises, or property lines—it was about control. But Romans 12 helped me: *"If possible, so far as it depends on you, live at peace with all."* (v. 18). I realized that my task was to govern my own words and actions, and leave the rest in God's hands, while gently guiding my heart.

My silence did not make me weak. It carved out a space for God to whisper, "Leave this with Me." And in that whisper, I discovered that silence can roar louder than words—for God's voice is clearest in the storms of everyday life.

Thank you, my dear LORD, for reminding me that silence with You is not weakness, but strength—and in that strength, I find peace.

A Sister

B A C K T O T H E O R I G I N A L

DECONSTRUCTING GENESIS 1:1

By David Pearce
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THE difficulties of translating text from one language to another are very complex and subject to many pitfalls; sometimes, discussion with others is the only way to find a logical solution. Many words may not have a direct equivalent, or a straight match may convey a completely different meaning to native speakers of the second language. Hebrew is a highly contextual language, in which a sentence may not give meaning until all the words are considered; unlike English, where the listener or reader can often grasp the intent before a sentence is complete.

The following article aims to demonstrate some of the peculiarities this highly contextual aspect presents, while giving a broader or more profound understanding of the original text. However, our analysis will not attempt to alter basic Scriptural teaching. Our goal is only to discover some hidden gems that may have been confusing or unnoticed when reading the Scriptural text in English.

We will demonstrate this idea by reviewing the very first verse of the Scriptures of Truth.

“In the beginning”

The word “*the*” is the standard translation in most versions of the English Old Testament. Yet it causes a conundrum because it suggests a starting point, “*the beginning*.” However, we are told quite specifically that God has always been and always will be. So, what was before? Only God, or something else? Interestingly, the original Hebrew gives a little more information. We could read the translated Hebrew words as “*In a beginning*.” The difference lies in a

single vowel in the Hebrew text with Masoretic pointing. Originally, the text contained no vowel markings and these markings were added by the Masoretes, a group of Jewish scribes who worked on this effort around AD 500-1000. To avoid the accusation that they had modified God’s original words and enable non-natural Hebrew speakers to learn and read the text, they added a system of dots and dashes that indicate vowel sounds for the consonantal text. Prior to the Masoretes, a vowel was only ever spoken, and the sound could be misheard; therefore, the vowels of the text are not themselves inspired. This difference in Genesis 1:1 between “*the*” and “*a*” is simply one vowel. If the correct rendition is “*In a beginning*,” it implies there was a starting point, but it was not necessarily the only beginning of things—angels were already there, for instance. We could, however, argue that “*in the beginning*” is the accurate translation if we consider that the whole of Scripture is essentially God’s interest in our planet and the people on it.

Ultimately, we cannot ignore the overall translators’ views that “*In the*” is appropriate, indicating that the actual interpretation of what follows it is left to the individual to determine.

“God created”

The word translated as “*God*” in English has often been misinterpreted. The Hebrew word is *elohim*—note the “*im*” ending, which generally denotes a masculine plural form (although there are exceptions). So we could imply it must refer to the angels—God’s helpers (v. 26). The words, “*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,*”¹ are often cited as justification

of this interpretation. However, *elohim* has a broad range of meanings. While this word occurs in many places within the O.T., it does not constantly refer to God, but can also be translated “*angels*” (Psalm 8:5), “*rulers*” (Psalm 82:1 NASB95), “*judges*” (Exodus 21:6), and “*gods*” (Exodus 12:12). Thus, it’s used in reference to Dagon (1 Samuel 5:7). There are similar instances in English. Consider the word “sheep.” Is it singular, plural, or just a metaphor (acting like sheep)? All words have ranges of meaning. The specific understanding comes from the preceding word in the Hebrew text—“*created*.” This Hebrew verb is third person masculine singular and literally, “He, God, created.” All Jewish scholars indicate this word signifies superiority, i.e., the Supreme God—masculine singular. “*The LORD our God [eloheinu] is one LORD*.” (Deuteronomy 6:4).

“et/ate”

There is a word that immediately follows, but it isn’t translatable. It is a “hidden” word. There is no English equivalent, yet it is the most common word in the Old Testament. If it were removed, it may not necessarily affect the meaning of the text either. Yet it has been the subject of immense debate since Judah returned from the Babylonian exile due to the need for the Septuagint translation. Greek also does not have an equivalent word. Just Google “*et*—Hebrew rabbinic opinion,” and you’ll see several different interpretations for this word. But why is it considered controversial if it has no real translatable value? The debate centers around its two letters: *aleph* and *tav*. These letters are significant because they are the first and last letters

of the Hebrew alphabet and perhaps find echoes in the following verses: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*.” (John 1:1). Indeed, the first thing created in Genesis 1:1 is *et*, or *aleph* to *tav*, the alphabet. Also, “*I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty*.” (Revelation 1:8 ESV). “*Alpha*” and “*omega*” are the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet. Later in Revelation, Jesus said, “*I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone’s work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end*.” (Revelation 22:12-13 NRSV). Since John’s Gospel refers to “*the word*,” some have sought to conflate this with Jesus’s words and state that “*et*” in Genesis 1:1 obviously refers to Jesus being present at the start, hence referring to “*the word*” as Jesus. Some Hebrew translations of the New Testament from the original Greek render the verses in Revelation as “*I am the Aleph and Tav*.” (Deilitzsch’s Hebrew NT).

Instead, debate amongst the rabbis for centuries suggests that God’s first creation was language, as John’s Gospel suggests. Grammatically, the Hebrew word “*et*” is referred to as a “direct object marker” and indicates that the word following it is the object of the action. It occurs twice in this verse, before “*the heavens*” and again before “*and the earth*,” showing that they are the objects of the verb “*created*.” Nevertheless, it’s intriguing to consider the possibly deeper meaning here: not only did God create the heavens and the earth, but He also created words first, and then used His words to create.

“the heaven”

The Hebrew word for “heaven” (*shamaim*) is similar to that already discussed for *elohim*. It ends in the plural *-im*. However, there is no singular variant of the word in this case, so it cannot be translated with any certainty as “Heaven” or “Heavens.” The translators of the KJV clearly could not be definitive, as we see in this verse, where it is translated as “Heaven,” but in chapter 2:1 as “Heavens,” and both clearly refer to the same event.

Hebrew scholars consider that not only is the message of the Scriptures God-given and cannot be altered, but also the order and choice of words. And so, the order here must be considered to have significance in itself. The suggestion that God made the heaven[s] first could thus indicate His dwelling place is there, albeit God is everywhere. Consider:

- Solomon said: “Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place.” (1 Kings 8:43).
- Jesus said: “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven.” (Matthew 6:9).

“the earth”

The word for earth, *eretz*, can have a wide usage and is dependent on context. For example, one of Israel’s leading newspapers is entitled *Haeretz* (*Ha-* is the definite article in Hebrew), with its principal focus being the people and politics of the land of Israel. However its usage in the Old Testament can refer to planet earth (Job 26:7), the surface of the earth (Genesis 1:26),

soil (Genesis 1:11), a country (Genesis 11:31), a people (Genesis 23:7), a region (Genesis 19:28), or even the grave (Job 10:21). Yet since the rest of creation had not occurred at this point, and as verse 2 indicates, the surface was covered with water, then the only possible translation must refer to planet earth itself. This interpretation is in line with the initial creation in a very general sense, as indicated by the discussion of the word “heaven[s]” and establishes God’s authority over his whole creation as Isaiah records: “*The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.*” (Isaiah 66:1).

The End Result

Let’s review a potential literal translation of this verse: “*In a [the] beginning, He, Supreme One God, created [language], the heaven[s], and the [planet] earth.*”

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¹ Scriptural references compare the Leningrad Codex (1008) with the King James Version (1769) unless otherwise stated.

S T U F F T H A T W O R K S

I N T R O D U C I N G



Bible Unlocked

By Sam Robinson

Okanagan Central Ecclesia, BC

BIBLE UNLOCKED is an online resource made up of weekly live webinars, professional explainer-style videos, and free Bible courses. Everything mentioned in this article, including webinars, videos, and courses, can be found on the website at bibleunlocked.com.

Why Bible Unlocked?

Bible Unlocked began in early 2020, just as COVID-19 became a worldwide phenomenon. Like many ecclesias around the world, the Brant County ecclesia was forced to take our weekly Memorial Service, Bible class, and CYC online. Naturally, we continued our public lectures online as well. These lectures have grown into what is now known as Bible Unlocked. Originally called “Bible Basics Webinar,” the project has always emphasized basics. There was a feeling among our peers that the typical Christadelphian lecture, though easily understood by a knowledgeable audience, could be difficult for an interested friend who was fairly new to the Bible, or at least to our way of understanding it. We decided that this new online format presented the perfect opportunity to try something a little different.



A billboard ad in the summer of 2020

That's when we developed our current webinar format. Each session was 30-35 minutes long, and broken up into three main parts:

Part 1: Typical Bible-based lecture format, explaining a first principle (15 minutes)

Part 2: Short pre-recorded video to break up the session and expand on a related topic (3 minutes)

Part 3: Question and answer style discussion to encourage participation and expand on core themes (10 minutes)

What we found was that these short sessions required the speaker to distill a topic down to its simplest form. We were forced to explain often complex concepts in such a way that made them simple, while still leaving the door open for deeper and more complex conversations.

The feedback to this point has been extremely positive, at least in relation to our typical in-person lectures! We're now in our sixth year of hosting weekly live webinars, and a typical session averages 15-20 logins and 2-3 new visitors. They'll generally run for 20-25 weeks of the year, and at the time of writing, we are currently working our way through 20 different reasons to believe the Bible.

All these live sessions are recorded and uploaded to YouTube for anyone to watch later.

After a couple of years of running these online sessions, we recognized an opportunity to expand the concept into explainer-style online videos. With the help of many volunteers,



we were able to script, film, illustrate, animate, and edit several professional videos that clearly explained first principles. Examples include:

- “What is the Bible?”
- “God Loves You, But What Does That Mean?”
- “What’s the Point of Baptism?”
- “The Resurrection of the Dead”

These videos are 5-10 minutes long, and continue the emphasis on simple explanations of typical lecture-style topics.

One video in particular, titled “What it Means to Take God’s Name in Vain,” has had over 200,000 organic views on YouTube and is one of the first results on Google for searches about the topic. There are hundreds of comments from people who are excited to have learned what the Bible really has to say about the subject! Needless to say, results like this really encourage us and show there is a thirst in the world for Bible teaching.

Another emphasis since the beginning has been the development of a recognizable style and brand. Of course, none of this would matter if it weren’t for the blessing of our Heavenly Father, but we believe that a professional image would only help the level of trust that people have in the content. The creative team has put

hundreds of hours into developing a look that is professional, recognizable, and trustworthy. We believe this brand demonstrates we aren’t just a group of individuals seeking to deepen our understanding of the Bible, but a group committed to the Bible’s teachings and sharing them with others.

Finally, we have recently spent time putting together first principle



Example illustration for a recent video

courses (and are still in the process of creating more). While these courses utilize videos, they delve deeper than individual videos and webinars. They allow students to watch videos, read transcripts, and work through the course material at their own pace. They’re similar to correspondence courses, but online and with the same emphasis on professionalism that has characterized the Bible Unlocked image.

How You Can Use the Resource

What makes Bible Unlocked so practical is that it isn’t tied down to

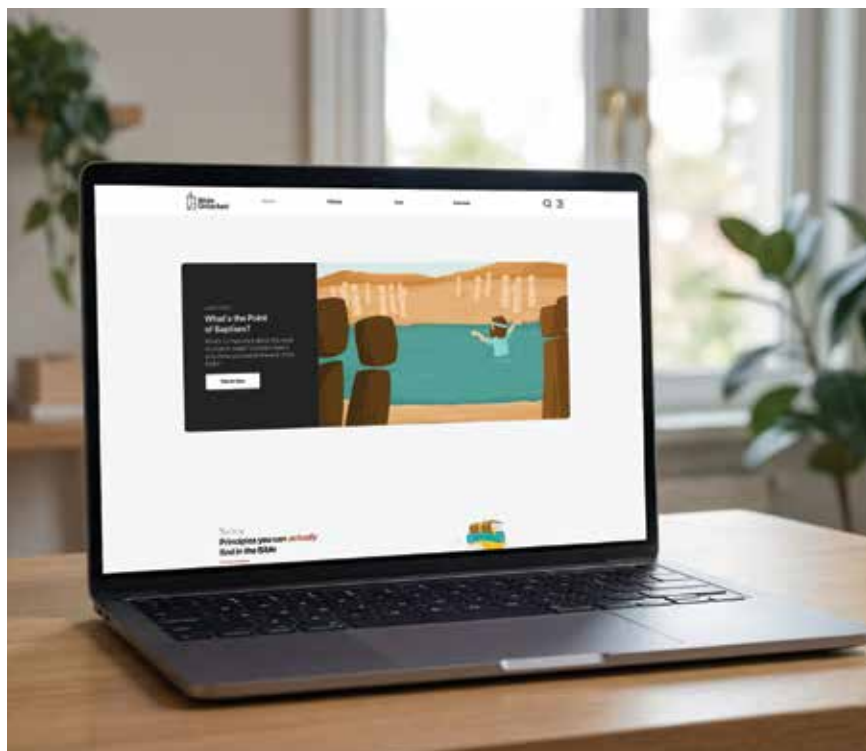
any specific region. People from all around the world can access and share its content at any time.

We've found it to be an excellent resource for sharing with family members, friends, coworkers, or clients who want to know what the Christadelphians believe and why. There are also various forms of content tailored for different stages of learning about the Bible. If people are new to the Bible and want to learn the basics, the online videos are a perfect way to visually learn what we believe. If people want to dig deeper into the concepts and understand the story of the Bible, they can take the online

courses. And if people want a place to learn and discuss in a live setting, there are the weekly live sessions.

We are very thankful to everyone who has contributed to the project thus far, and we are especially grateful to our Heavenly Father for this opportunity. We live in such a unique period of time where content can be shared and watched instantly, and we pray that Bible Unlocked will be a useful preaching tool now and moving forward.

*Sam Robinson,
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F I R S T P R I N C I P L E S

TRUTH *MATTERS*

*By Matthew McCracken
Milford Road Ecclesia, MI*

BUT *the just shall live by his faith.* (Habakkuk 2:4).¹ God speaking through His prophet, explains that the salvation of an individual hinges on their faith.

The Apostle John picks up this exact idea: *“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”* (1 John 5:4). It is our faith in our God that overcomes all challenges. Yet, sometimes we may find ourselves thinking that simply being a nice person with good intentions is all that God is looking for; that being kind and doing the works of charity without a proper **knowledge** and **belief** in the gospel is the same as being kind and doing these works with an understanding. God willing, together in this article, we’ll refresh our first principles and remember that, although a moral transformation is God’s ultimate purpose, this transformation must first be stimulated by true and refined knowledge.

Micah provides a beloved sentiment of God’s desire for said morality in verse 8 of chapter 6: *“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”* Peter says very unmistakably: *“And above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’”* (1 Peter 4:8).

In Acts, Peter once again states: *“In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.”* (Acts 10:34-35).

Examining these three isolated statements would certainly lead one to believe that love, humility, and good

works are solely what God wants—and one would be partially right in that conclusion. However, a potential danger may arise when these qualities of character are sought without proper knowledge of how God defines each attribute. In other words, to simply say “God wants you to be loving” is a fallacy, as God’s definition of love can differ significantly from modern philosophies.

Sticking with this example, if one were to lead a lifestyle of Godly love, they would first have to study the pages of the Scriptures and learn what Godly love looks like. They would soon notice that God’s love asks for a 130-year-old father to slay his son, whom he loves, as a test of his faith. God’s love strikes a blameless and upright man, who feared God and eschewed evil, with tragedy and bodily affliction. God’s love lifts His perfect Son on the cross to be brutally tortured, agonized, spat on, and mocked in public crucifixion. They’ll discover that Godly love is a “self-sacrificing” love, an “others-first” love, not a “me-first” love. They’ll learn that what they would have defined as love is leaps and bounds different from how God portrays it in His word. This is why it is so vital to **have knowledge and understanding of God** before setting out to enact His principles and way of life. Yes, the Father wants a specific character formed in us, but that character is so adverse to what we’d think proper and necessary that it is simply not possible to achieve the high calling of transformation without fully grasping who we are to transform into! So, no, our hypothetical friend can’t decide to just be a really nice person—they may be “being nice incorrectly,” as crazy as that sounds!

Now, all of that is a good brain exercise and perhaps a note or two in the margin, but it's more than that. It's also a vital exhortation that concerns our salvation and our role in relation to our brothers and sisters.

*Hear the word of the LORD, you children of Israel, For the LORD [brings] a charge against the inhabitants of the land: "There is no truth or mercy or **knowledge** of God in the land... My people are destroyed for lack of **knowledge**. Because you have rejected **knowledge**, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children."* (Hosea 4:1, 6).

The sentiment is unmistakable: a true understanding of the Almighty is of absolute life-saving necessity! And on that note, could God be saying that those who "know the most about the Bible" will be saved? Or is He instead saying that this life-saving knowledge is more akin to a personal and intimate understanding of Him? The root Hebrew word for "knowledge" in the Hosea passage is *yada* (H3045). It's used twice in Exodus 33:13 in Moses' powerful plea to see the Father's glory—just to give a sense of the strength of the word—

making this more than just knowing that our God exists and shows His hand in the outplaying of the nations. No, this is knowledge that seeks to discover and comprehend. This is knowledge that is not content with the inherited understanding; it must try to learn the ways of the Almighty for itself and nurture a personal faith unique to its context. This is why in the days of Hosea, God rejected those who rejected knowledge. Why would God want to add people to His family who have no interest in getting their hands dirty to learn about what He does, why

He does it, and to whom He does it? Perhaps you and I can incorporate the spirit of Moses in our prayers more: "*And now, if, I pray Thee, I have found grace in Thine eyes, **cause me to know.***" (Exodus 33:13 YLT).

There is now one more door to go through after the above has been founded in our minds: how this knowledge takes its form in outward manifestations.

*The law of truth was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, and turned many away from iniquity. "For the lips of a priest **should keep knowledge**, and [people] should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts."* (Malachi 2:6-7).

"Why would God want to add people to His family who have **no interest in getting their hands dirty** to learn about what He does, why He does it, and to whom He does it?"

If Hosea brought a warning to those unwilling to possess the knowledge of Yahweh, Malachi encourages those who've acquired it to store it and spread it like wildfire. Most of us reading this article probably fall into Malachi's audience; those who know the first principles inside and out. But what God wishes to impress upon us with these verses is the often-overlooked effect of the words we can impart. Just quickly re-read the last sentence of v. 6—the priests were able to bring people back on the straight and narrow and, in an eternal sense, save lives. And now all of a sudden, the ideas of possessing adequate knowledge or doing good works can be linked! Continuing with this example, the priest, through his curiosity to know (not “know about”) the God of heaven, led to a rich storehouse of the Divine teachings. The law of truth, now being his second nature, moved him to share and exclaim said truth, prompting many to not only turn from their wicked ways, but begin their own path of discovering their Creator.

So, no, there shouldn't be a separation between being exceptionally knowledgeable about the Bible and being exceptionally kind. We cannot possibly know how to behave rightly in God's eyes without exposure to the mold of the Christlike character. Subsequently, if knowing how we **should** behave doesn't align with our

actual everyday behavior, then our reading of God's inspired Word is in vain.

As we end our thoughts in this article, one thing that can appear from a discussion like this is unnecessary remorse. Those with a more detailed mind will naturally find joy in knowing obscure, intricate particulars in the Bible. And those with the passion to serve and feed others with kindness don't always enjoy reading the lists of genealogies. So while it's of no benefit to make anyone feel bad for their perspective, hopefully what this article has done is get us all to remember there is no “Team Knowledge” versus “Team Do-ers”—all disciples must soak in the Truth through the pages of Scripture, then *“put on the new [man] who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.”* (Colossians 3:10). We all work together and allow the word to transform us, knowing that all begins there, with that book.

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¹ All quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the *New King James Version*.

THE CHAPTERS THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

By Ben Brinkerhoff
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THE subject of this series of studies is Romans 7 and 8. Hopefully you think that's odd. I mean, why choose only two chapters out of the middle of a book to study? The answer is simple. They changed my life.

Let me explain.

Many years ago, my wife and I were doing missionary work in the Persian Gulf when things began to get difficult. The work was hard, which isn't too unusual for mission work. We found that the ecclesia in Dubai did not meet regularly, and some members were understandably cautious and worried about engaging in missionary work.

We mainly were self-funding, and the expenses started to add up. We lived in Qatar, and a local housing company had "borrowed" over \$40,000 from us. We did not know if, or how, we would get it back. In the middle of this, my wife became pregnant with our first child. This development would have otherwise been a joy, but at the time, we were living in an apartment with no hot water, a non-working stove, and no way to cook hot food.

So, things were hard, and within the depths of my body, I felt a rebellion begin to grow. I did not want to do the mission work. I did not want to spend every hour preparing classes, teaching,

or working to support myself. I felt tired, aggravated, and angry about the way things had turned on me. I felt that God owed me some breaks for the sacrifices I had made for Him.

During this troubled time, I began to read Romans, and I naturally gravitated to Chapter 7, where Paul speaks so honestly about human nature. As Paul wrote about the conflict within him, I began to understand better the conflict within me. As I finished reading chapter 7, I moved on to chapter 8. It was in reading chapter 8 that my eyes

were opened to see the power of a few simple spirit-guided words (which, if you could hear me read this article, I would be saying both slowly and deliberately): "Set thy mind."

At the time, I was reading out of the RSV, so I'll quote here from that version:

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the

Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. (Romans 8:5).¹

Hopefully, in these articles, we'll see the power in these words, and I will be able to impart to you the incredible spiritual lessons that God's word opened up to me. However, I'll admit that this will be difficult.

"I felt a rebellion begin to grow. I did not want to do the mission work. I did not want to spend every hour preparing classes, teaching, or working to support myself... I felt that God owed me some breaks for the sacrifices I had made for Him."

Why the pessimism?

Well, for this reason, I, like Paul, learned these lessons during a time of deep emotional turmoil, when God was disciplining me. When I knew them, I was ready to learn. I needed to understand them! When I drank in the Scripture, I was changed. If you are enduring a time of internal difficulty and hardship, you too may see the power of Paul's exhortation and exposition found in Hebrews 12:11:

Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

God willing, you are not at one of those moments. So, my actual goal for these articles is simpler. I would like to introduce you to two amazing chapters so that when you go through a season of discipline, hardship, pain, anxiety, or struggle, you will know that you are not alone; others have gone before you, and God has written words to guide and strengthen you. and if you are willing, change you, during that difficult time.

Introduction to Romans

Even though our studies, of course, concentrate on Romans 7 and 8, simply starting in Romans 7 is like starting

arithmetic with algebra. Let me give you an example. Look at Romans 7:7,

What shall we say then? Is the law sin?

Clearly, Paul is in the middle of an argument here. I mean, you don't begin too many conversations by saying, "Is the law sin?" Somehow, in the context of what Paul has previously written, someone might get the impression that the Law is sin. Where would that idea come from?

To help us answer that question, let's trace the line of Paul's argument in Romans up to chapter 5. We'll revisit Chapter 6 in a future article.

Romans is a fascinating book because Paul sent it even before he visited. It was written from Corinth (almost certainly during the time described by Acts 20:3) in anticipation of his future arrival in Rome. That's unique. Paul wrote 1 and 2 Corinthians after visiting Corinth, and wrote Galatians after visiting Lystra, Iconium, and Derbe. Paul writes in anticipation of visiting Rome (Romans 1:13). But why?

At heart, he was dealing with a city that included a mix of believing Jews and Gentiles. He may have heard from his good friends Aquila and Priscilla (they had moved back to Rome as Romans 16:3 proves) regarding the trouble of

“Romans is a fascinating book because Paul sent it even before he visited. It was written from Corinth (almost certainly during the time described by Acts 20:3) in anticipation of his future arrival in Rome. That's unique.”



unity in the ecclesia between Jews and Gentiles. Questions were being asked: “Were both Jews and Gentiles now equal in Christ?” “Is there any difference between them in Christ?” Below are a few of the many questions Paul poses in Romans, which demonstrate that the subject of Jews versus Gentiles was the primary question he was addressing. For example:

- *“What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?”* (Romans 3:1).
- *“What then? Are we better than they?”* (Romans 3:9).
- *“Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles?”* (Romans 3:29).
- *“Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also?”* (Romans 4:9).

To answer those questions, Paul will address the problem that all humanity, both Jew and Gentile, shares: the fact that they have a common ancestor in Adam. Both Jew and Gentile need salvation from the “Adam problem,” and

Jesus is the means of salvation for both.

To explain this, Paul must also address the benefits and failings of the Law entrusted to the Jews. Understandably, in the minds of the Jews, the Law is what sets them apart. Keeping its statutes made them holy, and failing to keep its laws showed how the Gentiles were profane.

So, briefly, how does Paul in Romans deal with the questions, *“What advantage does the Jew have?”* and *“Are we [the Jews] better than they [the Gentiles]?”*

Let’s quickly sketch Paul’s argument in the first few chapters of Romans. In Chapter 1, Paul makes several allusions back to Genesis 3 to show that all humanity is accountable before God and essentially repeats the mistakes of their first parents.

Just as it would have been evident to our first parents that God exists, we too are accountable because creation itself clearly shows that there must be an eternal, creative God.

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God

hath shewed [it] unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, [even] his eternal power and Godhead. (Romans 1:19-20 KJV).

Because God's existence is evident through the witness of creation, we are "without excuse" (Romans 1:20) if we do not seek to know the mind of the Creator.

But, like their first parents, men don't seek to know His mind. Instead, they "[profess] *themselves to be wise*" (v. 22 KJV) and ignore the righteousness of God. Since they were seeking after their own wisdom and the vanity of their imaginations, God gave them over to debauched and sinful lifestyles "*filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit.*" (v. 29 KJV).

Of course, a pious Jew hearing this critique (but perhaps forgetting he too descended from Adam) would likely applaud Paul's argument. He would likewise conclude that Gentiles, without knowledge of God's wisdom, persistently show themselves to be flagrant sinners, following the prideful example of their first parents.

In Chapter 2, Paul turns his attention to the Jews. Were they in any better position? In Chapter 2, Paul shows firstly that God is consistent. If the Jew sins and does evil, he will perish like a Gentile, naturally. Therefore, if the Gentile patiently continues doing good and seeks glory, honor, and immortality (Romans 2:7), God will bless him by the same consistent standard.

But the question remains, are the Jews better off? They should be, because they have God's wisdom, as evidenced in the Law. But Paul says that the Law shows them to be sinners because they regularly break it. Look at Romans 2:17, 23:

Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God... You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?

So, chapter 2 concludes that Jews are also guilty before God because they break the Law.

Now that Paul has shown that the Gentiles are guilty without the Law and the Jews are guilty by the Law, in chapter 3, he concludes that all have sinned. Note Romans 3:23, "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*"

You see, the Law serves a very important purpose. It defines right from wrong. It draws a line in the sand and makes clear that law-keeping is approved, and law-breaking is not. In a court of justice, the judge uses the law to determine guilt vs. innocence.

According to the Law, we are guilty or unjust. Chapter 3 emphasizes this point when it says:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:19-20 NKJV).

By the deeds of the Law, no flesh

will be justified. Why not? The Law cannot make a sinner right. Imagine if someone committed murder. Does it matter if the murderer never ran a red light? No, he's still guilty of murder. What if the murderer never stole anything? Would any criminal justice system just brush the murder charge under the rug if he didn't commit any other crime? No. Once you are guilty, the law can't do anything else for you.

While it's natural to think that our good works put God in our debt, what does God truly want? Chapter 4 explains that if we are all truly unrighteous, on what basis God is willing to impute righteousness to sinners. Paul shows that Abraham was right with God because of faith. If that was God's criteria for saying Abraham was right or just, then it applies to those who come after Abraham, for we are all Abraham's children by faith.

The key verse is Romans chapter 4:16,

Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. (NKJV).

In Chapter 5, Paul then addresses the critical question. If we are guilty, the Law and works cannot save us, but only condemn us, and God truly imputes righteousness based on faith. What must we have faith in?

We must have faith that God can choose to forgive us and change us from being

in Adam, in which we inherited sinful flesh and its deathly consequences, to being in Christ, who destroyed sinful flesh in obedience, and through which we are made righteous.

In Christ, we are renewed as children of God, leaving direct descent from Adam behind. We do not deserve this gift; it's available based on faith in Christ. Unfortunately, there's no single verse in Chapter 5 that summarizes all these thoughts, but the closest is Romans 5:19,

By one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

Chapter 6 begins this way:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

Human nature's reaction to the free gift of salvation is to abuse the privilege, and perhaps even blame the Law for making me sinful. Hence, our opening question, "Is the law sin?" Rather than blame the Law, Paul will squarely point the finger at human nature. This characteristic is the real issue and the source of our wretchedness, and this is what Jesus overcame.

Paul explains all this in Chapters 7 and 8. In our next article, we'll look more deeply at the question of whether the Law is sin, why that was such a relevant question, and how Paul will use it to teach us about ourselves.

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¹ All quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the *New King James Version*.

B I B L E S T U D Y

P A R T 7

TITUS: TRANSFORMED BY GRACE

*Ready For Every Good Work:
Living the Gospel in Public*

*By Andrew Weller
Cumberland Ecclesia, SA*



BY the time we reach Titus 3, Paul has already shown us what grace does in the life of the ecclesia. It teaches, it trains, it transforms. Now, he turns our focus outward. What does grace look like in public? In society? Among unbelievers?

This chapter reminds us that the gospel is not only personal—it's public. Not only internal—it's relational. Paul wants Titus to teach believers how to live out their faith in a world that doesn't share it. And that begins with a call to good works.

Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work. (Titus 3:1).¹

The gospel is not just about what we avoid. It's about what we pursue. Believers are to be ready—not reluctant, not reactive—but **ready** for every good work. This requirement means being alert to opportunities. Willing. Eager. We are not saved by good works, but we are saved **for** them (Ephesians 2:10). And those good works are often public. This article explores Paul's instruction in Titus 3:1-8 on how to live gospel-shaped lives in the public square. He addresses:

- 1. Our posture toward society** (verses 1-2)
- 2. Our memory of who we were** (verse 3)
- 3. God's mercy and salvation** (verses 4-7)
- 4. Why good works still matter** (verse 8)

Let's begin where Paul does: with our posture toward the world.

Our Posture Toward Society

Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarrelling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. (Titus 3:1-2).

These verses are deeply countercultural—then and now. In a Roman world marked by injustice and brutality, Paul calls for a respectful public demeanor. And in our modern context of political outrage and constant friction, the challenge is just as relevant.

Christ's followers are not to be anarchists or agitators. We're not to be the loudest critics or the most cynical voices. We're to be submissive and obedient—not because authorities are always good, but because God has appointed them (Romans 13:1). Our calling is not rebellion, but readiness—for every good work.

And this readiness shows up in our speech. "*Speak evil of no one.*" "*Avoid quarrelling.*" Imagine what our witness would look like if we simply obeyed that one verse. No character assassination. No slander. No gossip. No social media tirades. Just gentleness and courtesy.

The word Paul uses for "*courtesy*" is powerful. It speaks of humility, consideration, and kindness. And it's not just for those who agree with us—it's for "*all people.*" That's the shape of gospel citizenship. We don't blend in, but we don't attack either. We reflect the grace we've received by extending it to others. We live with conviction **and** compassion. And we're always ready for good.

This posture doesn't mean we abandon discernment or stop standing for what is true. But it changes how we engage. It reminds us that the goal is not to win culture wars, but to win hearts for Christ. Gentleness doesn't mean weakness; it means strength under control. It's the fruit of someone who knows they are held by grace and doesn't need to prove their worth.

Our Memory of Who We Were

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. (Titus 3:3).

- **Slaves to passions and pleasures:** not in control, but controlled
- **Living in malice and envy:** resenting others' success, plotting their downfall
- **Hated by others:** breaking relationships
- **Hating one another:** mutually destructive, relationally toxic

These characteristics are what sin does. It disorients. It isolates. It corrupts. And Paul's point is simple: remember this. Remember who you were. Don't look down on unbelievers. Don't withdraw in fear. Don't lash out in frustration. Remember that without God's mercy, we'd still be there too.

“Paul's point is simple: **remember this. Remember who you were.** Don't look down on unbelievers. Don't withdraw in fear. Don't lash out in frustration. Remember that without God's mercy, we'd still be there too... We are not saved because we are good, or try hard, or have turned our lives around. We are saved because God is merciful. ”

Paul doesn't let us stand in superiority over others. He brings us back to our own story. Before grace, we were no different. He lists seven descriptions—not to shame us, but to humble us:

- **Foolish:** spiritually blind, unable to see clearly
- **Disobedient:** unwilling to submit to God's authority
- **Led astray:** deceived by sin, culture, and our own hearts

This memory creates mercy. It produces patience. It softens our tone. When we know what we've been saved from, we treat others not with judgment, but with longing—for them to know the same grace. And this remembrance builds solidarity. It helps us connect rather than retreat. Instead of seeing the world as “us versus them,” we recognise a shared need. Grace isn't a trophy for the righteous. It's rescue for the wrecked.

God's Mercy and Salvation

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us. (Titus 3:4-5).

Here's the turning point. Into our foolishness and hatred, God intervened—not with condemnation, but with kindness. His salvation is not a reward. It's a rescue. Paul piles up words for God's love: **goodness, loving kindness, mercy**. These are not abstract virtues. They are embodied in Christ. When Jesus appeared, grace appeared (Titus 2:11). And now Paul says kindness appeared too.

Not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy. (Titus 3:5).

This thought is the heart of the gospel. We are not saved because we are good, or try hard, or have turned our lives around. We are saved because God is merciful. Our righteousness had nothing to do with it. Grace is not God helping those who help themselves. It's God saving those who could never help themselves.

By the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. (Titus 3:5-6).

Saving us was not a legal transaction—it was personal. We have been washed. We have been made new. The Spirit through His word renews us from the inside out. This reform is not a judicial pronouncement. It's a spiritual rebirth. And it's not stingy. Paul says God

poured out the Spirit richly. This act is the generosity of grace. God doesn't hold back. He gives Himself. He gives new life.

So that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:7).

We are justified—declared righteous—by grace. And more than that, we are adopted. Heirs. Brought into God's family with a guaranteed future. Eternal life is not just an abstract hope. It's an inheritance we now possess. This reminder is essential. If we forget that our salvation is entirely a gift, we will lose our joy and flatten our witness. But when we live with the awareness of God's mercy, our lives become both grateful and gracious.

Why Good Works Still Matter

The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. (Titus 3:8).

Grace doesn't produce laziness. It produces zeal. Once again, Paul ties belief to behavior. Those who have believed must be devoted to good works, not as a way of earning salvation, but as the fruit of it. And notice the word Paul uses: **devote**. This word is not passive. It's intentional. We plan. We prepare. We commit ourselves to doing good. To be devoted is to arrange your life around something or someone. It's not about random acts of kindness when convenient—it's about a lifestyle. A pattern. A mindset that looks for ways to bless others, build up

the body, and reflect God's character in tangible ways.

Good works matter because they're a visible outworking of an invisible grace. They become the evidence that grace has taken root. They beautify the gospel. As Paul wrote earlier: *"So that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour."* (Titus 2:10).

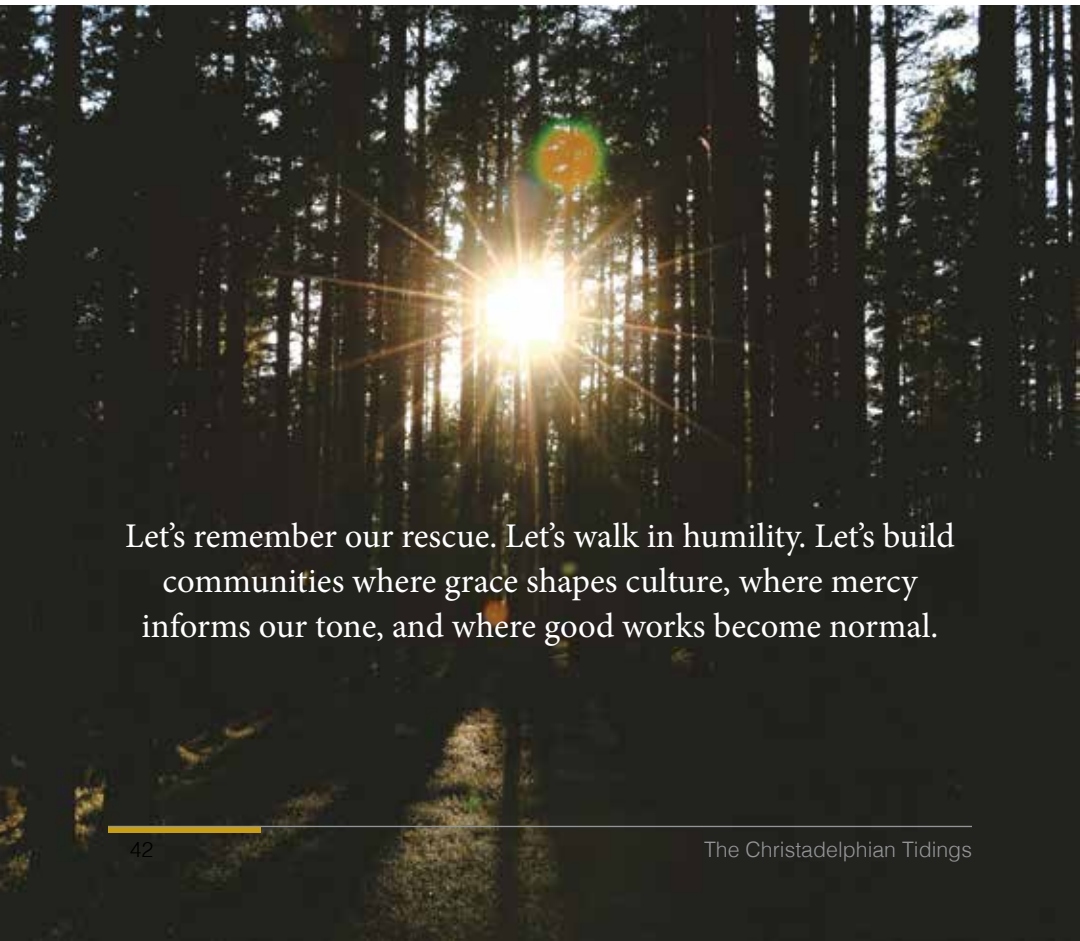
"These things are excellent and profitable for people." (Titus 3:8). Good works are not just pious extras. They are favorable for the world. They're a blessing to others. They show the goodness of God in tangible form. This disposition describes what it means to live the gospel in public. We are humble

citizens. We are merciful neighbors. We are eager servants. And through it all, we are living proof that grace not only saves—it transforms.

So let's be ready. Let's remember our rescue. Let's walk in humility. Let's build communities where grace shapes culture, where mercy informs our tone, and where good works become normal—not for applause, but for witness. And let's devote ourselves—not just occasionally, but constantly—to lives that speak clearly of the One who saved us.

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¹ All quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the *English Standard Version*.



Let's remember our rescue. Let's walk in humility. Let's build communities where grace shapes culture, where mercy informs our tone, and where good works become normal.

I now put the question to all—How much Faith is needed to see and understand how the Lord God works in our lives to direct our steps in His Way, even changing the pattern of our lives to bring us into the Truth and then to guide our lives in the Truth?

I am myself utterly and completely convinced of the truth of Paul's words that, 'All things work together for good to those that love God and are called according to His purpose.'

Mervyn Ruffle, in Colin and Valerie Edwards, *"The Truth"—Discovered* (Newbury, UK: Self-Published, 1990), 35.

**Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven,
To His feet thy tribute bring;
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Evermore His praises sing:
Praise Him, praise Him, praise Him, praise Him,
Praise the everlasting King.**

**Praise Him for His grace and favour
To our fathers in distress;
Praise Him still the same as ever,
Slow to childe and swift to bless;
Praise Him, praise Him, praise Him, praise Him,
Glorious in His faithfulness.**

**Father-like, He tends and spares us;
Well our feeble frame He knows;
In His hands He gently bears us,
Rescues us from all our foes.
Praise Him, praise Him, praise Him, praise Him.
Widely as His mercy flows.**

**Angels in your hosts, adore Him;
Ye behold Him face to face;
Saints triumphant, bow before Him,
Gathered in from ev'ry race;
Praise Him, praise Him, praise Him, praise Him,
Praise ye all the God of grace.**

Henry Francis Lyte, "Hymn 116,"
Christadelphian Hymn Book (Birmingham, UK: CMPA, 2003)

Part 2

SHEPHERDING OUR CHILDREN IN CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES

Within our community, some are raising children in a home without both parents being “believers.”

*By Linda Beckerson
Ann Arbor Ecclesia, MI*



PREVIOUSLY, we addressed raising our children with a spouse who was not interested in God and the Bible, maybe had walked away from the Truth, but was not adverse to our shepherding our children towards God. This month, I would like to tackle a much more challenging task: the situation where the spouse not only has no interest in God but also does not want Him mentioned in the home. This is the kind of situation where the spouse rejects prayers, Bible readings, and attending church with the children. Some of us have experienced this trial and heartache, and I can only imagine the struggle this would be for the believing brother or sister. There is no greater desire for a man or a woman of God than to see their spouse and their children come to know God and His truth in the Bible.

Some Key Ideas

So, the obvious first thing we do is pray to our Heavenly Father to help us find ways to bring Him to the children, our homes, and, God willing, to our spouses. We also need to pray that He will open our spouses' minds to learning about Him, and that our children's hearts, along with their parents' hearts, will be softened towards Him.

Second, in 1 Peter 3:1-2 (ESV), Peter writes, *"Likewise, wives be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives when they see your respectful and pure conduct."* He doesn't say that you will definitely win them over, but what an opportunity to use your example to live out the gospel in your home before your spouse and your children! If we are living with this challenge in our

home, then Peter has excellent advice for us to develop a positive relationship with our spouse. We are also being a great example to our children about the importance of having a loving relationship with our partners.

The third step is to have an open discussion with our partner about our desire to incorporate God into the home and teach the children. This conversation may be tough, depending on their attitude towards God, but it needs to be attempted with a gentle, loving spirit. Perhaps you know someone who has had to deal with this. Reach out to them for their advice and suggestions as to what did or did not work. We also need to look at the individual's personality and adjust our approach accordingly. There may also have been issues during their upbringing that turned them away from God. I know my husband, who at age 12 lost his only brother due to a lightning strike, struggled with belief in God for many years. How could a loving God do this to him? It took years for him to accept God and His plans for our lives.

How?

Perhaps the person was raised in a home where there was no belief in God—a home where there was never mention of Him, and if someone did bring God up, the response was one of total disbelief and disregard. Or, as is often the case in these times, perhaps their family didn't attend church very frequently, maybe just for special occasions, such as Christmas or Easter, christenings, or funerals, but not every Sunday. Church-going just isn't important to many nowadays, and people genuinely believe that if they



live a good and decent life, they will be rewarded at their death.

Nor do most people read their Bibles. But if our spouse and our children see us doing that—without our acting righteous about it—questions may arise that we can gently and lovingly respond to. Without pontificating, giving simple, to-the-point, and straightforward answers may instigate more conversation. As Peter stated, our conduct can have a positive impact. Perhaps like the story of a sister who had a husband who did not allow his wife to bring their children to Memorial Service or Sunday School for years. She quietly came every Sunday, and eventually, when the children were in their teens, he relented and allowed them to join her. She did not push him to read the Bible or discuss it with him at home. He did not want that. Then,

several years later, he started attending with the family and was eventually baptized. What an example of quiet perseverance and answers to her prayers!

These instances will take time and gentle patience to overcome when the spouse does not want God to be a part of the teaching in the home. We would also not wish our children to see and hear their negative attitude and remarks about God because it could affect their ability to accept Him. “If my dad or mom doesn’t believe, then maybe I shouldn’t either,” would be a tough attitude for us to deal with. We should also avoid belittling our spouse in front of them.

Listen first, speak second. Ask your spouse about their own views, thoughts, and spiritual experiences. Listen

without judgment or defensiveness to truly understand their perspective. People feel more valued and heard when they know they are being listened to. Think about what they have shared with you and take time to reflect on those feelings before answering. A feeling is a feeling and is neither good nor bad, but needs to be respected and understood before we react to it.

Our lives also need to reflect the fruit of the Spirit as Paul tells us in Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV). *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”* If we reflect Christ’s character, we may encourage our spouse. If we act like the world, why would they think there is anything special about knowing God?

Ask engaging questions. Instead of making declarative statements, ask open-ended questions like, “What do you think happens after we die?” or “What do you think gives life?” Quietly listen and don’t debate the Bible answer unless they ask what the Bible says.

We are blessed to have many ecclesial activities that are more socially oriented, such as picnics, sports, hikes, and attending a baseball/basketball game. Invitations to join us on these types of outings might be a great way for them to meet and interact with all of us. It would be a way for them to see that we are just regular people who enjoy getting together for events and genuinely care about each other. We want them to see the value in our community and to want that same kind of connection. We are a very

welcoming group, especially to those who are interested in knowing more about us. Experiences like this could lead them to join us for a Memorial Service, a Bible study, or perhaps listen to a faith-based podcast in our home.

Make it clear that if we extend an invitation to attend Memorial Service or a class with us, it is not a demand, and we respect their boundaries if they decline. If or when they ask what the class or exhortation was about, then answer simply and lovingly without preaching. Guide them gently to God’s love and plan to have all mankind be part of His Kingdom.

There are ways to introduce our children to God gently, without coming across as overly pointed. For instance, if we are reading a book with them and there is a loving part, we could say things like, “This is how the Bible teaches us to act.” Or, “This reminds me of a story about...” any Bible character we can think of. We don’t have to say, “In Genesis 37, we read about a young man named Joseph.” Perhaps say, “I know this story about a young man named Joseph.” Children love stories, and the Bible is full of fascinating ones. When we do that, we are instilling God’s words and stories in their minds, and if we are eventually able to bring them to Memorial Service or Sunday School, they will remember those stories. I know this process sounds difficult, but we also have to respect our partners in our homes. Even people in the world acknowledge that much of the Bible contains powerful and useful advice for life—we can use that to our advantage.

We can discuss this kind of thing with our spouse. “Would you object to me telling them about Joseph? He experienced a similar situation, and I think the story could help our son.”

Biblical Examples

Looking to the examples we do have of children who learned about God and turned their lives to Him over time can be helpful. We know the stories of the Kings of Judah who were evil but had faithful sons. Good kings in the Bible who had wicked fathers include Hezekiah, whose father, King Ahaz, was exceptionally evil, and Josiah, the son of King Amon, who inherited his father’s wicked ways before Josiah’s reign. Both Hezekiah and Josiah made radical choices to follow God’s path rather than their fathers’ destructive ones, demonstrating that individuals are not necessarily destined to follow their ancestors’ examples. I am not saying our spouse is an evil, destructive person like them, but the fact that these kings and others had children who did come to accept God can be a comforting example to us. We can bring our children to God, and since He would want that, He will help provide a way for them.

Conclusion

Ultimately, that brings us back to our first point. Pray. Remember that He who has promised will deliver:

For I am the LORD your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you. (Isaiah 41:13 NIV).

Regarding Abraham’s faith:

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was

strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. (Romans 4:20-21 KJV).

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16 KJV).

We are blessed to know that God hears us. His answer may not come as quickly as we would like. It may take years—or it may not be the answer we expected or hoped for; however, we must have faith that He is with us in all ways, and we must trust Him in this as well.

Finally, these loving words from Paul remind us that even in difficult circumstances like this, we can still answer gently, knowing that God is the one who grants repentance:

And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will. (2 Timothy 2:24-26 NKJV).

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WHEN THE LORD HAD OTHER PLANS

*By Levi Gelineau
Simi Hills Ecclesia, CA*

THERE have been Christadelphians in San Francisco since shortly after our denomination was formally named Christadelphians. In 1898, Brother Robert Roberts died while visiting the brethren in San Francisco on his trip back to England from Australia. For decades after, Christadelphians have continued to have a presence in the area. But there is a question as to whether or not that would continue. In December 2022, my family and I visited the San Francisco Peninsula (SFP) ecclesia,

and their Outreach Committee expressed a desire for a domestic missionary couple and wondered if I could help.

The SFP ecclesia, like many in North America, had experienced a decline in membership for several years, and the global pandemic did not improve the situation. They had lost members due to moving, deaths, and disengagement. As a result of the smaller size, the remaining members felt burnt out. It's a story I'd heard from many corners of the community on our continent; the

difference in this case was that **SFP members wanted to act drastically to reverse the course.** They had received a sizable donation from the estate of a deceased member and wanted to explore whether domestic missionaries were a viable solution.

It was not random for the SFP Outreach committee to ask us for help. Jessica and I are former missionaries; we spent five months in India in 2010, and one or both of us have visited many ecclesias outside the United States, including in Jamaica, Bolivia, Mexico, Costa Rica, and Chile. We also had the wonderful experience of attending the Los Angeles Hispanic ecclesia regularly for four years, an ecclesia with many connections to the mission field. I currently volunteer as the Team Lead for WCF's White Fields program, which funds missionaries and missionary projects in South Africa, the Philippines, Cambodia, and Vietnam; therefore, I regularly connect with people interested in mission work.

Thus, my confidence going into the search was high. Covering the expenses for a couple to spend a year in beautiful San Francisco, California, while supporting an established ecclesia would surely be a relatively easy task, I thought, in comparison to finding placements in our other active mission fields.

The Lord had other plans.

The search took over two years.

After 27 months of phone calls, emails, Zoom meetings, and many, many prayers, Gideon and Shoshanna Hewitson from the Baltimore,

Maryland, ecclesia agreed to come. They were on my first short-list of contacts, but the initial ask of an arrival in the summer of 2023 didn't work for them. God's plan was for our search to continue through 2024 and conclude with a successful arrival in 2025. We went through dozens of candidates, starting with young married couples, then expanding to retirees, and subsequently to Canadians (immigration issues had previously ruled them out). Multiple interviews were also conducted with a couple from Africa; however, several obstacles ultimately prevented us from bringing that family into the SFP position.

Initially, it wasn't a public search. We had decided to target a pre-determined list of brothers and sisters. As previously mentioned, I assumed this would be an opportunity that many would jump at. After the first 12-month phase left us feeling no closer to finding our missionaries, we expanded our search to a public one, which involved contacting the entire Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) mailing list and posting on their social media channels. This initiative is how we received an international response. At first, this was exciting and intriguing, but the realities of visa complications and increased budget meant we pared the search back down to North America, where the search floundered until the Hewitsons agreed.

Gideon and Shoshanna arrived in San Francisco in September of 2025. Please keep this effort in your prayers.

Paul gives us multiple examples of calling on the ecclesias to pray (Ephesians 6:19-20; Galatians 4:3-4; 2 Thessalonians 3:10). I hope that is the impact of this article. Praying is one of the most practical things that we can do for others in our community.

By the time you're reading this, the Hewitsons will have been working in San Francisco for 6 months, but the effort would still greatly benefit from your prayers. They plan to stay through July 2026, so they will be approximately halfway through their time. Pray for strength for them, and for the lampstand in San Francisco to rekindle and be a witness for many more years, if the Lord remains away.

I am excited to see what impact a couple can have on an existing ecclesia for a relatively short time. The SFP Ecclesia has clear plans for what they want help with, including young mothers' gatherings, bolstering the speaking schedule, and coordinating a Vacation Bible School, among other initiatives. We established a few metrics to track and polled the ecclesia before their arrival. So, I will write a follow-up article after they leave with those results. If we can prove that this

"works," my prayer also is that it can be repeated in other North American ecclesias.

We have larger questions to ask as a community about why we are producing so few missionaries.

According to reports from CBMA and WCF, North America has only produced one long-term missionary couple or individual in the last 10 years. Something has changed in our youth education or culture as a whole, that there are so few who look to devote substantial time out of our lives to the direct expansion of the Christadelphian message in other parts of the world. We know that preaching is important and commanded, as seen in Matthew 28:19-20, "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations;*"¹ Mark 16:15, "*Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation;*" and Acts 1:8, "*You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" But, as a North American community, we haven't been showing that in practice.²

The Barna Group, a Christian polling company, has a report that blames a change in thinking of the entire



Millennial generation:

Almost all practicing Christians believe that part of their faith means being a witness about Jesus (ranging from 95% to 97% among all generational groups), and that the best thing that could ever happen to someone is for them to know Jesus (94% to 97%). Millennials in particular feel equipped to share their faith with others. For instance, almost three-quarters say they know how to respond when someone raises questions about faith (73%), and that they are gifted at sharing their faith with other people (73%). This is higher than any other generational group: Gen X (66%), Boomers (59%) and Elders (56%).

Despite this, many Millennials are unsure about the actual practice of evangelism. Almost half of Millennials (47%) agree at least somewhat that it is wrong to share one's personal beliefs with someone of a different faith in hopes that they will one day share the same faith. This is compared to a little over one-quarter of Gen X (27%), and one in five Boomers (19%) and Elders (20%).³

It seems that generationally, many feel able to preach, but simply don't want to. Perhaps we need help in

changing our thinking toward this issue—and so I'd like to ask for prayer again. This call for prayer is now the third in this article. Please pray for our young people and our ecclesias to increase their confidence and interest in supporting the mission fields, including those in our own backyards. We need to support programs like Truth Corps and try to visit our mission fields. I would be happy to speak to any reader to develop a plan for their ecclesia (or themselves) to get more directly involved in the existing preaching work our community is doing. But the most important thing we can do is pray.

Levi Gelineau,
Simi Hills Ecclesia, CA



¹ All quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the *English Standard Version*.

² Editorial note: it isn't an accident that this article appears in the same issue as an article about Bible Unlocked. If we feel as though our personal preaching has gone stale, we have new and exciting opportunities for sharing our hope.

³ David Kinnaman, Roxy Stone, & Brooke Hempell, "Almost Half of Practicing Christian Millennials Say Evangelism Is Wrong," *Barna Group*, February 5, 2019, <https://www.barna.com/research/millennials-oppose-evange>

FAITH, FELLOWSHIP, AND FORWARD MOTION

*By Dennis Paggi
CBMA Chairman*

DEAR Brothers and Sisters,
Warm greetings in our Master's name.

Though COVID is still around, our ecclesias in Latin America have returned to more normal functioning. We are pleased to report that four convivencias were held in 2025, with Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ecuador, and Panama sponsoring events. There was broad international participation from Latin America, and most of

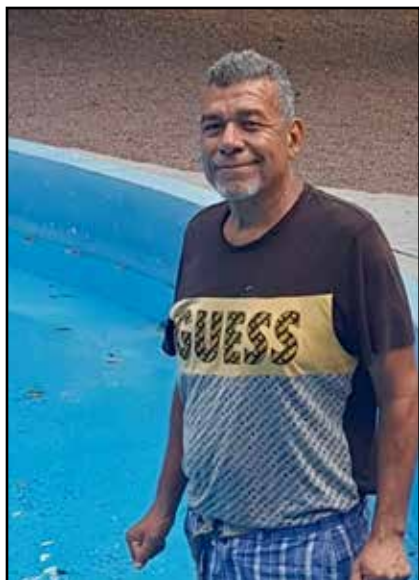
our teachers and leaders were local brothers and sisters. Much like our Bible Schools in North America, these events serve several purposes: spiritual instruction, fellowship, friendship, and a place where our young people can meet each other. With the emergence of the internet, many of the relationships (between younger and older individuals) that begin at a convivencia continue afterwards through regular communication.



A Bible Study in Chile in August, 2025



Baptism of Bro. Warner Miranda Alfaro



Bro. Angel Carillo's Baptism

Along with the activities in local ecclesias, there is a surprising number of Zoom, Skype, and WhatsApp classes which emanate from both ecclesias and individuals every week. Baptismal, postbaptismal, Sisters' and general Bible classes are given all over Latin America, both in areas where ecclesias are established and in others where Bible truth is just beginning to be established. We are thankful to report eight baptisms, with another four or five who are nearing readiness for baptism.

We continue to make improvements on our labiblia site, with increased capabilities on the publicity/website traffic side of things. We have over 50 tutors in the system, at various stages of activity and engagement. As reported earlier, the system supports tutors of either language. One goal for 2026 is to reconnect with our more than 50,000 registrants and to consolidate the 10,000 students generated by Bro. Jim and Sis. Jean Hunter over the years of their work into a single database. The challenge, as always in correspondence work, is to convert a "registrant" to an active and engaged "student."

What can you do?

- Prayer support is always essential to the work of the Lord.
- Financial support is needed and appreciated, helping all of our activities to take place.
- If you would like to volunteer as a tutor or offer your talents in other areas, contact me.

Thank you for your support during 2025. May next year see us in the Kingdom as part of that promised fulfillment of our Father's plan for the world.

*Con amor en Cristo,
Hermano Dennis*

*Dennis Paggi,
CBMA Chairman*



TRUSTING THE LORD TOGETHER

By Dave Collister
CBMA Link to Costa Rica

AS I left home to make my way to the airport, leaving for Costa Rica to participate in their yearly Bible School, I thought about the many times I had done this before. This year marks 40 years since I first met the original members of the Costa Rica Ecclesia in Santa Barbara, and had the blessing of working with them to help them come to a full knowledge of the truth of the Scriptures. The Word of God took hold quickly in Santa Barbara, a small town in the province of Heredia, Costa Rica, and Santa Barbara soon became the location of the second Costa Rican ecclesia, the first being the ecclesia in San Jose. (The two ecclesias continued for a while, and eventually combined, leaving just the Santa Barbara Ecclesia.) This year, the Bible School would be mostly Costa Ricans, with a few from outside the country. In total,

approximately 60 participants attended, including baptized members and young people. There were about eight of us from outside the country: five Costa Ricans who now live in the US and were visiting, a sister and her grandson from Ecuador, and myself. The theme chosen for the Bible School was Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV), “*Trust in the LORD with all your heart,*” a very timely topic in today’s world, where trust is often placed in everything but God.

Most years, a campground is rented where most of us stay. However, this year, it was decided to use a meeting place called Rancho La Fiesta, which has facilities for day use, but no sleeping quarters. Rancho La Fiesta is situated very close to Santa Barbara, where most of the members reside, making it convenient to drive back to their homes in the evening to sleep. This



This year, I was asked to do the five main classes and the exhortation, and so I decided to base four classes on one of each of the four phrases from Proverbs 3:5-6, with one additional class as a conclusion to the weekend.

arrangement also helped to keep the cost of the Bible School down, making it easier for families to attend.

On Thursday evening, there was an introductory activity at the ecclesial hall to welcome us all to the weekend. During this event, Brother Juan Diego Vargas gave a talk on the weekend's theme and had us break into groups to answer questions he had prepared. These questions helped orient everyone and prepare us for the upcoming Bible School. Afterwards, we enjoyed a delicious supper of tamales, a tradition at this time of year in Costa Rica and other Latin American countries.

There were two main classes on Friday and Saturday each. There was also a brothers' class and a sisters' class on Saturday afternoon given by members of the ecclesia. On Sunday, we had the exhortation and the final main class. There were also many planned activities, such as a team Bible trivia competition and team games, all of which were fun and a great way to enjoy time together. There was also plenty of time for fellowship and recreation built into the schedule. The meals were catered and served buffet-style, and were very tasty. The Costa Rican brothers and sisters took turns serving the food, a nice



A Choral Program was enjoyed by all.



The children performed Bible skits.

way to involve everyone. On Saturday evening, the young people put on a very clever skit before we went out to enjoy a bonfire and have snacks and hot chocolate. On Sunday afternoon, the children performed a series of skits in which they acted out a Bible story, and we had to guess what the story was. They all did a great job! We finished the day out with a choral presentation, followed by prizes for the young ones.

As mentioned, there were several visitors from other countries, including a sister from Ecuador and her grandson, a family of three originally from Costa Rica but now living in North Carolina, and a dear sister and her daughter who were in Costa Rica when the Santa Barbara Ecclesia began, but who have lived in the United States for about 20 years. It was wonderful to share time with all these visitors, as well as with all the beloved brothers and sisters I have known for so many years. We also had the opportunity to again hear the story of how the ecclesia began in Santa

Barbara. Brother Francisco Ramirez, one of the original brothers from the area, is a wonderful storyteller, and we always enjoy his account of the amazing beginnings of the Santa Barbara Ecclesia. It is always a great reminder of how God reaches those who are searching and finds a way to reveal the truth to them.

As always, all was well planned and there were many working to make the weekend an uplifting spiritual experience. We all left the Bible School spiritually refreshed.

The Costa Rica Ecclesia maintains a presence on Facebook and YouTube, where they preach and post talks and information. If you are interested, you may search “Iglesia Cristadelfiana Costa Rica” on either of those platforms.

*Dave Collister,
CBMA Link to Costa Rica*

WHAT THE STORM LEFT BEHIND

*By Nathan, Antonia, and Dave Giordano
CBMC Links for Jamaica*

WHAT we noticed most during our first visit to Jamaica after Hurricane Melissa was actually what was missing. The eye of the Category 5 storm cut a path south to north across the island, leaving breathtaking damage behind. Everywhere we looked, there was empty space where some normal, everyday thing used to be. Gaping steel frames that had once held billboard posters. Utility poles, jutting out at odd angles, lacked power lines. Whole hillsides of trees stripped

in their entirety of leaves. Bare tree limbs—a common enough sight in a temperate climate—are truly jarring in the tropics. Instead of leaves, trees bore pieces of zinc sheet roofing wrapped around their trunk by the wind. Other majestic trees lay sprawled on the ground, felled by the storm's power. It took roofs and destroyed houses and furniture along with it. Our travels took us through Black River, where the storm made landfall. We could barely believe the devastation we saw—nor

the strength of the people who have picked up and carried on with their lives in its midst simply because they have no other choice.

Life is hard enough in Jamaica. Now, so many are living under tarps, jammed with multiple family members into a section of their house they're fortunate is still standing. In many areas, power has not yet been restored, so they've already spent months without refrigeration, fans for cooling, or light in the dark nights. In isolated areas, it may take several more months before the lights are restored. Depending on who you talk to, the government either doesn't care and is doing a terrible job of providing aid and restoration, or it does care and is taking time to conduct a methodical assessment. Either way, the people of Jamaica have a long road ahead of them to recovery.

The purpose of our trip was to visit believers in the areas most directly impacted by the storm to assess the damage they sustained and determine how to assist them going forward. We also delivered a care package to each one of them to assure them of the love of their worldwide community. They're all safe and well, praise God, though the same cannot be said for all of their homes. We started with a trip to Argyle Mountain, exclaiming all the way there about the damage, the lack of giant bamboo, the massive house on the hill no one knew existed before Melissa tore away all the thick foliage surrounding it. Our first stop was to see Sis. Maxine, who lost half of her home when a palm tree crashed through her children's bedrooms. Many houses in Jamaica are built from a combination of concrete block and



Destruction in Argyle Mountain



Sis. Maxine's house

wooden boards, and it was invariably the wooden rooms and zinc sheet roofs that suffered the worst damage. This result was the case for Maxine. Two daughters and a granddaughter now share a room with Maxine and her husband, while their adult son sleeps on a mattress in an unfinished bathroom. Her older daughter is now unemployed as the hotel where she worked remains closed due to storm damage. They have no power, school is closed for the foreseeable future for the little granddaughter, and water is brought into the community by tanker, which they then carry by the bucket load up to their home. Life is very much on hold for this family.

We then stopped to see elderly Sis. Janetta, who also lost part of her home. Her roof was ripped away during the storm, leaving her praying desperately,

huddled in a corner, exposed to the lashing rain and fearsome winds. As we traveled, everyone was keen to talk about the horrific event they'd lived through. Despite hurricanes being a frequent occurrence in Jamaica, no one had seen anything like Melissa, and the trauma of it will stay with them for a long time to come.

Our journey also took us to Broughton and Round Hill, rural communities where Christadelphians have long resided. Half of the home of our Sis. Jennifer in Broughton was destroyed, but thankfully, the damage in both places was far less than we had feared, given their proximity to the eye of the storm. We've returned home with a solid picture of who needs help with rebuilding, and we're working on the next steps to move forward with this.



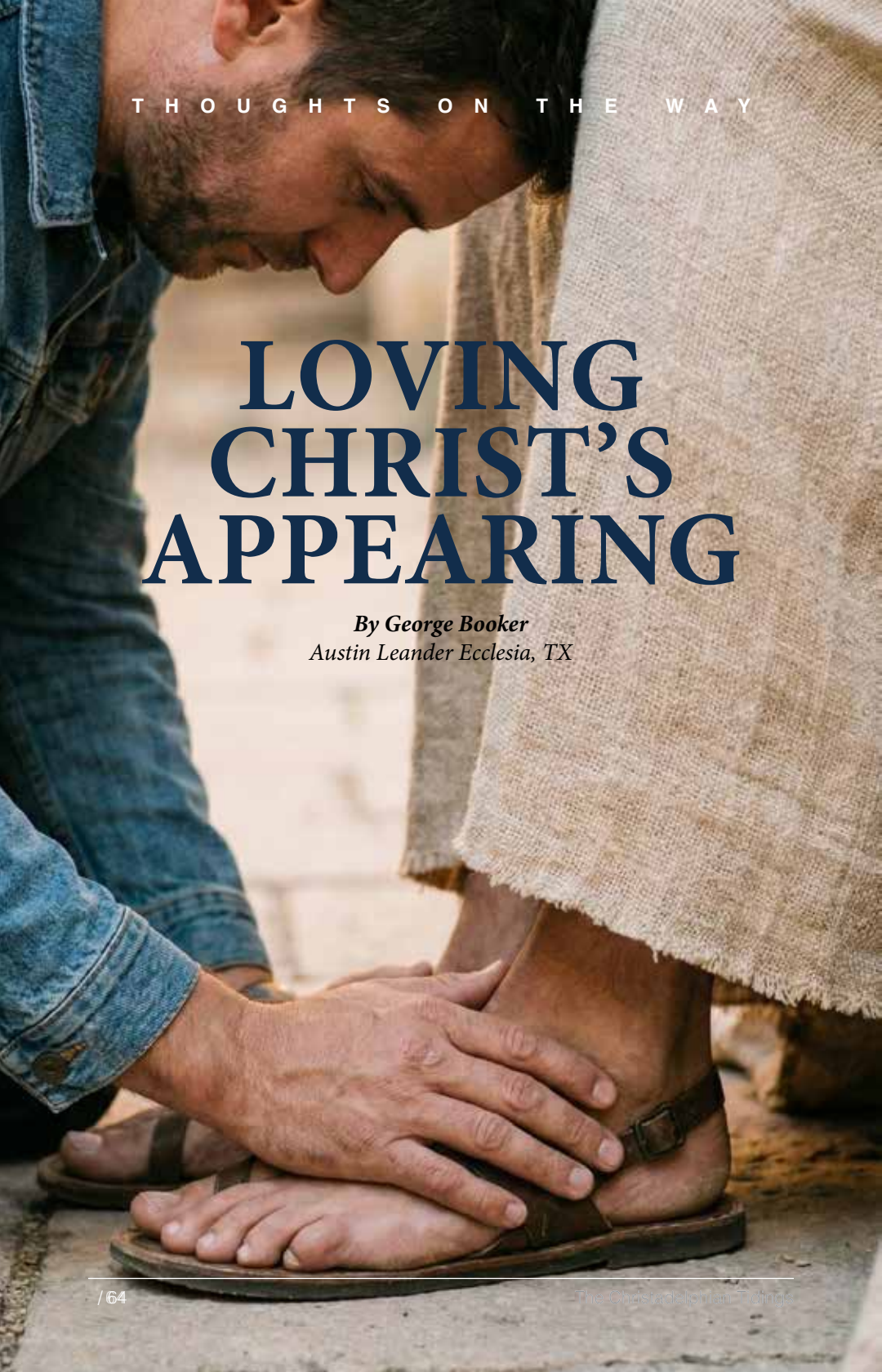
Sis. Jennifer in front of her house

If you've donated since the storm, thank you. Even the brothers and sisters who sustained only minimal damage are finding that food, in particular, is considerably more expensive now. With your help, CBMC can work with CBMJ to support the individual brothers and sisters with their basic needs while things slowly return to normal.

You can donate at the CBMA/C website if you are moved to do so. The believers in Jamaica are thankful for all your love, care, and prayers, and for the good hand of our God upon them. They truly believe he preserved their lives during this storm.

*Nathan, Antonia and Dave Giordano,
CBMC Links for Jamaica*



A close-up photograph of a man with a beard, wearing a blue denim shirt, kneeling and washing the foot of a person wearing a white, frayed robe and a brown leather sandal. The man's hands are gently cupping the foot, and water is visible on the sandal. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

T H O U G H T S O N T H E W A Y

LOVING CHRIST'S APPEARING

*By George Booker
Austin Leander Ecclesia, TX*

IN earlier times, people often sat at the feet of their superiors. Small children might sit and play at the feet of their parents. Students might gather around their respected teacher and sit on the ground while they listened to their lectures. Grown men or women might kneel at the feet of their rulers, especially if they were asking for a favor.

The Apostle Paul said that he had sat at the feet of Gamaliel—a scholar and teacher of great renown—while he learned the Law of Moses.

When he lived on earth and walked among men and women, Jesus was a great “rabbi,” or teacher, more famous than even Gamaliel. Jesus taught his followers with stories and parables, while quoting from his Father’s Holy Scriptures.

Jesus also went about Israel and its surrounding regions to heal people. Many other people fell down before him and begged for his hands of healing. Let us see what we can learn by sitting at the feet of Jesus.

Luke 8:26-35¹

Jesus and his disciples were sailing to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town.

For a long time, this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived among the tombs. Many times the “demons”—the thoughts of his addled mind—had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the “demon” of his mind into solitary places.

When the man saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, “*What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don’t torture me!*” At this point, Jesus asked him, “*What is your name?*” “*Legion,*” he replied, because “*many demons*” resided in his mind. A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. Legion’s “*demons*” begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. As the demons came out of Legion’s mind, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned. In this way, Jesus healed Legion, while he also showed the crazed man that the “spirit demons” would no longer plague him.

When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When “*they came to Jesus, they found the man who had been afflicted by the demons, now sitting at Jesus’s feet, dressed and in his right mind. And they were afraid.*”

Jesus’ feet were a place of rest. Legion, the man whom Jesus healed, had a mind that was so confused that he didn’t know where to go or what to do. But Jesus, with a brief command, removed the terrible madness from Legion’s mind, while showing the poor fellow he was healed when he saw the pigs run down the cliff into the sea.

No matter what angers or fears or bad thoughts may “possess” us, Jesus can remove them from our troubled minds if we only kneel at his feet.

Luke 17:11-19

While Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, he was passing through the regions of Samaria and Galilee. As he entered one of the villages, ten lepers met him. They stood at a distance and raised their voices, shouting, “*Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!*” (ESV).

When Jesus saw them, he said, “*Go, show yourselves to the priests.*” And as they were on their way, they were cleansed.

When one of them, a Samaritan, saw that he was healed, he came back, praising God in a loud voice. He fell facedown at Jesus’s feet in thanksgiving to him.

Jesus asked: “*Were not all ten cleansed? Where then are the other nine? Was no one found except this foreigner to return and give glory to God?*” Then Jesus said to him, “*Rise and go; your faith has made you well!*”

The feet of Jesus were a place of healing. No matter how bad the illness, if a man or woman has faith, Jesus can heal them—whether it be in this world or even in the world to come.

Luke 10:38-42

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said.

But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “*Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!*”

“*Martha, Martha,*” Jesus answered, “*you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.*”

A note to the reader: As you read through the Gospels, notice that many other men, women and children who found their way to Jesus, and sat down or knelt down or even fell down at his feet. Under his loving care, each of them took the first steps to become a follower of the Son of God.

Symbolically, the feet of Jesus are a place of teaching, healing, learning, and—yes—a place of love and worship too.

Stop, sit down, kneel down, or fall down, if it suits you, at the feet of Jesus. Then listen to him—and you will learn all you ever need to know.

Finally, when you understand the faith, do all you can to share that knowledge, and that love, with others.

When you do that, the blind will find a way to receive sight, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, and the sick to be healed.

And, in one way or another, the good news will be preached.

*George Booker,
Austin Leander Ecclesia, TX*

¹ All quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the *New International Version*.



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