

EXALTING CHRIST · EQUIPPING BELIEVERS · EVANGELIZING THE WORLD

CORNERSTONE

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2025



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New Testament
Fellowship

Approaching
Worship

...and more

...JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF **CORNERSTONE** · EPHESIANS 2:20

There is a well-known story of a Canadian missionary couple working with Indonesian tribal groups in the 1960's who became increasingly frustrated with the tribes' treacherous actions. When the missionaries threatened to leave unless the tribes stopped killing each other, the latter took a drastic step to prevent the missionaries' departure. Each village presented their enemy with an infant as a peace child and as long as the child was alive, the tribes would have peace. Whenever there was an infraction, someone could plead in defense of the peace child and hostilities would then cease. This opened up a way for the couple to share the truth about Christ "our Peace Child."

Consider Christ at His birth, when the angels announced peace on earth to the shepherds (Luke 2:14). Promised by God through the prophets, the angels proclaimed that the peacemaker had now arrived. Though born in time, He is the eternal Son, given to reconcile to God those who will receive Him as their Savior (Isa. 9:6; John 1:12).

Consider Christ at Calvary, when He "*made peace through the blood of His cross*" (Col. 1:20). His eternal purpose in coming was fulfilled when He died on the cross. We do not obtain peace with God by Christ's example or His righteous, sinless life. We are saved by believing in His substitutionary death at Calvary. Christ was a willing substitute, purposely coming and offering peace through His death.


Consider Christ after His resurrection, when He preached peace (Eph. 2:17; Luke 24:36; John 20:19, 21, 26). The peace barrier of sin having been removed by His substitutionary death, reconciliation with God could now be preached to the world. Whether Jew or Gentile, trusting Christ brings peace with God. Christ removed the middle wall of partition; both are now members of one body. God's peace brings together otherwise disparate people by our common bond in Christ. Whether rich or poor, male or female, slave or free, we are one in Him (1 Cor. 12:12-13).

Consider Christ after His ascension to heaven, delegating to us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18). We are His ambassadors, invested with His authority (Matt. 28:18-20) to proclaim the simple yet glorious terms of peace (John 3:16; 20:23). Normally, when two factions need to be reconciled there will be negotiations and compromise. God's terms are

different. He does not need to be reconciled to us. Rather, we need to be reconciled to Him on His terms. We proclaim a simple message – "Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 1:23) - pleading with others that their part is not to work (John 6:29) but instead to believe in the One who can remove their sin and bring peace to their hearts. We preach a glorious message because the infinite, holy, transcendent Creator offers peace to His lowly, fallen, finite creation.

Consider Christ's return in the air to take His bride to heaven. With the redemption of our bodies (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 5:23), our glorification (1 Cor. 15:51) will bring peace to our whole tripartite person – spirit, soul, and body. It is the peace that comes from being forever free from the presence of sin.

Consider Christ, the Prince of Peace returning to earth with us. In that day the One who is eternally righteous (1 John 2:1) and who loves righteousness (Heb. 1:9), will reign in righteousness (Isa. 9:6-7; Heb. 1:8). At that time, His peaceful reign (Isa. 2:4) will extend over the entire earth (Zech. 14:9); while righteousness and peace will kiss each other (Ps. 85:10) in the beauty of His Person. His righteousness and peace will truly bring lasting "joy to the world" (Rom. 14:17). After a perfect one thousand year reign the Son will deliver up the kingdom to His Father (1 Cor. 15:24). Then "*in the ages to come He will show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus*" (Eph. 2:7).

Indeed, let us consider Christ, the One who is alive forevermore, guaranteeing that the believer has everlasting peace with God. (Eph. 2:14; Rev. 1:18). 



by George T Ferrier

George lives in southern Ontario and fellowships at Bethel-Park Bible Chapel (Brantford, ON). Commended to the Lord's work in 2013 by Bridlewood Bible Chapel (Ottawa), he engages in an itinerant preaching and teaching ministry at North American assemblies, camps, and conferences. He is on the board of Cornerstone Magazine Inc. where he also serves as editor.



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Purpose: Cornerstone Magazine seeks to build up and encourage the Lord's people by publishing Bible teaching articles and reports of the Lord's work. Its aim is to present truth in words that are easy to understand in regard to the person of Christ, His church, and evangelism. Cornerstone Magazine does not intend to be the official voice of any group of churches. The editor takes responsibility for the content that is published. For any spiritual blessing, to God be all the glory.

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Donations: Cornerstone Magazine is jointly published by Cornerstone Magazine, Inc., an United States Internal Revenue Service 501(c)3 tax-exempt non-profit corporation, and Cornerstone Magazine Trust, a charitable trust registered with Canada Revenue Agency. Cornerstone Magazine is dependent upon the Lord to provide for its needs. It is freely sent upon request, as the Lord enables. No subscription fees are charged. Cornerstone Magazine is supported by those who appreciate the aims and the work of this ministry. All donations are tax deductible in accordance to law. All funds received are used towards the ministry of Cornerstone Magazine. We are thankful to all who practically support the work of Cornerstone Magazine.

All Scripture quotations are from the KJV or NKJV unless otherwise indicated.

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Part 1

ancestry.brethren



In its maturing development, the “Brethren Movement,” with which many of our readers identify, was Biblicist and dispensational in its theology. It took its cue from the Scriptures itself, as opposed to Calvinism or other such man-made systems. Its driving force was the unity or oneness of the Body of Christ¹ together with that of the priesthood of all believers.² It was born in an atmosphere of Romanticism,³ when looking to the past or the “old paths” as a model exercised a strong influence on the minds of men. In the following paragraphs and articles to follow, we will flesh out each of these distinctive features of the brethren DNA.

The nineteenth-century British Isles were awash with that romantic spirit that looked back with nostalgia to the good old days. Religion and the church were no exception. Roman Catholicism, existing in England long before its crushing defeat in the sixteenth century at the hands of Henry VIII, was on the rise again. The Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 had “removed the sacramental tests that barred Roman Catholics in the United Kingdom from Parliament and from higher offices of the judiciary and state. It was the culmination of a fifty-year process of Catholic emancipation which had offered Catholics successive measures of relief from civil and political disabilities...”⁴

Within the established Church of England, an increasing number of dissatisfied communicants were to be found, some of whom occupied leading ecclesiastical positions. Without a doubt, one of the most famous of these was the influential churchman and man of letters, John Henry Newman. From his position at the University of Oxford, he led what became known as the Oxford Movement for a reformation of the Church of England. Its adherents increasingly embraced Catholic beliefs and practices such as that of apostolic succession, to name but one. Newman himself ultimately went over to the Roman Catholic Church, eventually becoming one of its cardinals. Thus, he left the Church of England with its limited 300-year history in favor of the Roman Church which purported to trace its unbroken tradition all the way back to the apostle Peter himself.

Another dissatisfied member of the established Church was John Nelson Darby. As of 1826 he was an ordained clergyman, serving as curate in the Irish parish of Powerscourt in County Wicklow, to the south of Dublin. The following year, Ireland’s Archbishop William Magee required that “all converts from Roman Catholicism take the oath of allegiance and supremacy.”⁵ This was grounded in the erroneous view that the civil ruler is in a position to choose the best religion for his subjects and to establish it, with its ministers thus becoming instruments of the state.⁶ To some evangelicals this requirement was an intolerable confusion of the claims of Church and State. Following

his protest addressed to the archbishop, “for at least one of the Irish founders of the Brethren, J. N. Darby, it provided the crisis-point of departure from the established church.”⁷ Where, now, could he turn?

In the brief interim between the circulation of his written protest and the withdrawal from his curacy, God saw fit to set J.N.D. aside due to an injury sustained in a riding accident. During this time, he experienced an increasing sense of the authority of the Scriptures as God’s perfect revelation. From this flowed quite naturally the concept of the New Testament alone providing a model for the church.

Comparing these two men, Newman and Darby, both looked to the past, the one to ecclesiastical tradition, the other to the Word of God. It was Darby that would go on to become a leading figure in the beginnings and development of the brethren movement along New Testament lines. Of course, he was not alone. Men like Anthony Norris Groves, George Müller, and Benjamin Wills Newton, among others, all played significant roles. That the Spirit of God was “moving upon the face of the waters,” so to speak, there can be no doubt.

Closely linked with the action of the Holy Spirit was that of the Word of God, molding the minds and consciences of the early brethren leaders. Many of these, having left the Church of England, brought with them the Calvinism which marked that religious community. Not surprisingly, therefore, at the outset some form of Calvinistic teaching seems to have been generally accepted among them.⁸ This being said, while the movement as a whole remained true to Calvinist orthodoxy⁹, as time progressed, Biblicism gained the ascendancy and the brethren increasingly distinguished themselves from that theological position. When pushed to the wall, the movement has often been characterized as being “moderately Calvinistic.”¹⁰

Stevenson says of the evangelicals of that time, that they tended to eschew systematic theology, which they believed imposed an artificial structure on the Bible. The systems of Calvinism and Arminianism were often the victims of this attitude. Specifically, moderate Calvinists had little appetite for speculation ... they preferred to take their doctrine directly from the Bible.¹¹ Grass notes, “For most Brethren, Scripture was not merely the supreme authority, but the sole authority . . . they rarely accorded authority to creeds and confessions and sat lightly to the Protestant tradition of biblical interpretation.”¹²

That the brethren were prominent among the evangelicals of their time soon became evident. By taking the stance of the sole authority of Scripture, one could argue that they were true sons of the Reformation. Believing as they did in the clarity of the Word of God, they became “earnest students of the Bible,”¹³ to come to an understanding of its teaching (see 1 John 2:27). It has been said of the brethren, especially concerning those of a past generation, “every man a theologian.” Would to God that the same might still be said today!

To be continued. 

“It has been said of the brethren, especially concerning those of a past generation, ‘every man a theologian.’”

ENDNOTES

¹⁴“The principle that created the Assemblies was the oneness of the people of God at a time when there was general deadness, and when a sectarian spirit marked the denominations.” G. C. D. Howley, *The Church and Its Members in A New Testament Church in 1955*, p.26.

²“Two of the key distinctives that emerged throughout the movement arose out of a desire of brethren to testify to their Christian unity: The Lord’s Supper – the one loaf, the uniting ordinance ... and the elimination of the distinction between clergy and laity.” Donald Tinder, *The Brethren Movement in the World Today in The Journal of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship*, #25, 1973, p.10.

³Mark Stevenson, *The Doctrines of Grace in an Unexpected Place*, Pickwick Publications, 2017, p.2.

⁴Wikipedia.

⁵F. Roy Coad, *A History of the Brethren Movement*, Eerdmans, 1968, p.27.

⁶Tim Grass, *Gathering to His Name*, Brethren Archivists and Historians Network, Glasgow, 2021, p. 17.

⁷Peter L. Embley, *The Origins and Early Development of the Plymouth Brethren*, p.17.

⁸Stevenson, p.3.

⁹Embley, p.94.

¹⁰W. Blair Neatby, *A History of the Plymouth Brethren*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1901, p.230.

¹¹Stevenson, p.49.

¹²Grass, p.84.

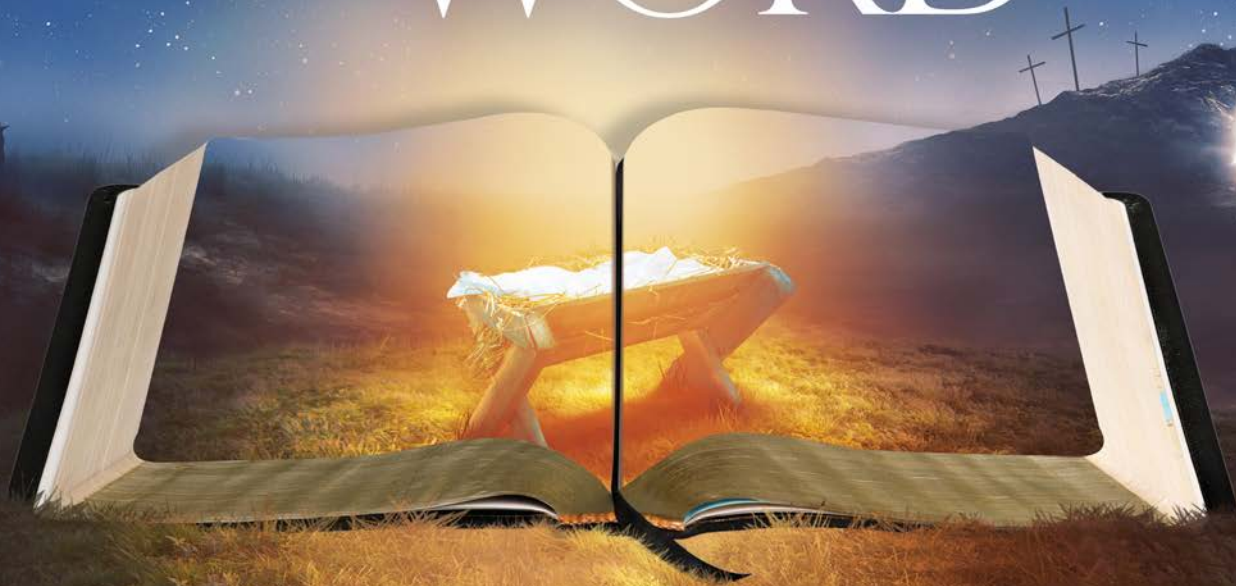
¹³Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church*, Zondervan, 1954, p.437.



by Richard Strout

Richard Strout and his wife Virginia are commended by Community Gospel Chapel in Voorhees, New Jersey. They reside in Hudson, Florida, where they recently relocated following five decades of ministry among French Canadians in Quebec. They are in active fellowship at Carrollwood Bible Chapel in the greater Tampa area. The couple have four children, 14 grands, and 4 great-grandchildren.

INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION, *and the* WORD



“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.” (John 1:1-2)

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

If you have ever struggled to get your point across in a conversation, trying over and over again to explain something, rewording it this way and that way, always in the face of a blank stare, then you understand the difference between information and communication. What was in your head was the information, and in this example, you failed in your communication. The result was that the information in your head was not adequately transferred and your listener never got it. The better scenario is when, in the course of your struggle to communicate, you see the proverbial “light bulb” flash on your listener’s face. At that

moment you know they got it and you have successfully communicated your information.

The opening chapter of the Bible records God creating: “Then God said, ‘let there be light;’ and there was light” (Gen. 1:3). “Then God said, ‘Let there be a firmament ...’” (Gen. 1:6). “Then God said, ‘Let the waters ...’” (Gen. 1:9). And so on. There is great truth revealed here beyond the basic fact that God created things from nothing. The manner in which He created is absolutely wonderful!

Consider it this way. If it were instead recorded, “God stretched out His arm and there was light,” it would reveal

something very different. It would still mean that God created things from nothing, but it would convey an emphasis on His eternal and infinite might, that through an outstretched arm He brought everything into existence (exactly the point of Jeremiah 27:5). Instead, we are told over and over in the creation account, “*And God said ...*” It is through this detail that He reveals a desire to communicate. God spoke creation into existence. Speaking is for communication. God had information to convey so He spoke. He is mighty, holy, righteous, great, and perfect. He is far beyond all we can ever imagine. Yet in creation itself, God wants us to know He was communicating. “*And God said, ‘let there be light.’*”

So then, what does creation tell us? David puts it this way:

“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech; they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world...” (Ps. 19:14, NIV).

Despite man’s continuing rebellion against God’s authority, even denying He exists, all man needs to do is look into the night sky with an “*ear to hear*” and he will know there is a mighty and glorious God. “*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse*” (Rom. 1:20).


God very effectively communicates an enormous amount of information through His creation. But He does not communicate everything through creation. There remained something far greater that God always intended to communicate to mankind; creation itself was only a means to that end. “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*” (John 1:1). We generally use words written on a page or words uttered in our speech to communicate our ideas. But in this verse, “*Word*” comes from the Greek, “*Logos*,” which here refers not to the communication, but to the information.¹

In that earlier example where you were struggling to get your thought across to someone else, your *logos* would be the thought or idea you had in your head that you wanted to communicate but could not. The *logos* is the information. We learn from John 1:1 that the Lord Jesus Christ is Himself the *Logos* of God: “*In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God.*”

Many like to think of Jesus as some great teacher or even a great prophet – and so He was. But John is teaching us right from the start of his Gospel that the Lord Jesus is not just the bringer of God’s message. He is God’s message! He is the very information itself that God had been preparing to communicate to mankind from the very beginning. Creation speaks its volumes, but creation is not God’s ultimate message to us. Creation is not the *Logos* God sought to communicate

throughout the ages. “*And the Logos became flesh and dwelt among us ...*” (John 1:14). He is what (or rather, who) God wants us to know. All of God’s written Word is there to communicate to us God’s *Logos*, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God’s intent from the beginning has been to bring us to know Himself. After the Lord Jesus rose from the dead He met two of His disciples on the road. They did not recognize Him at first as they expressed their discouragement about the recent events surrounding the cross. “*...we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel...*” they said (Luke 24:21). Then the Lord Jesus spoke to them, saying, “*‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself*” (Luke 24:25-27).²

Everything we study in this written Word of God (the Bible) is there to guide us in our understanding of God’s *Logos*, the Lord Jesus Christ. What He communicates in His written Word is not simply the intricacies of creation, or end-times prophecy, or the Old Testament animal offerings, or Israel’s history, or ethics, or any other specific thing recorded in the Scriptures. God has given us all these things with all their detail to communicate to us His Son. Certainly, we need to be diligent in studying all the specifics. But let us understand that whenever we properly study those specifics, a “light bulb” is going to flash in our minds as we get it and gain further knowledge and insight into the very person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son and *Logos* of God. 

ENDNOTES

¹Λόγος (*Logos*) – “I. Of that by which the inward thought is expressed ... 1. a word, not in the grammatical sense of a mere name (ἔπος, ὄνομα, ῥῆμα), but a word as embodying a conception or idea ...” (Abbott-Smith, G. (1922) *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons.)

²See also Heb 1:1-2 – “*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son ...*” Note, literally this is “... *by Son*” where NKJV translators added the word, “His.” NASB reads, “*in His Son*”. The meaning is that God had spoken in the past through prophets but now His Son *is* the message. The book of Hebrews then expounds to us who the Son is rather than the things He spoke.



by Joe Wilbur

Joe Wilbur is in fellowship with the saints in Nokesville Gospel Chapel in Nokesville, VA. In recent years, the Lord has given Joe increasing opportunities to teach God’s Word at several assemblies in PA and VA.

THE GOSPEL HERALD



“Sing to the LORD, all the earth; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.”

I Chronicles 16:23

A Fool Saved By God

THE TESTIMONY OF KENNETH BICKFORD

Psalm 14:1 says: *“The fool has said in his heart, ‘there is no God.’ They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, There is none who does good.”* As I was waiting for sentencing to go up state for my heinous felony, the chaplain at the county prison told me, “You can fool others and me, but you can’t fool God.” Then I asked him if I could fool myself and he said, “Yes.” Hebrews 4:13 says, *“And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”*

For thirty-eight years I had been fooling others and myself that I was a Christian, but God was not fooled. My parents made sure I heard the gospel from childhood (2 Tim. 3:15) and kept praying for me and entrusting me to the Lord.

I had always attended church while growing up; at age five I raised my hand for salvation in Sunday School. I went forward for salvation at Bible camp, and once prayed with my mom to ask Jesus into my heart, but I never had assurance of salvation. I did not believe I was a bad sinner and even tried to follow the golden rule. I participated in every position of leadership in church. I attended Bible college

for a year, memorized many Scriptures and evangelized, giving out hundreds of gospel tracts. Later, while in prison, I did Emmaus Bible Correspondence courses and even led someone to Christ while awaiting sentencing. Yet I was not saved because being from a Christian home or doing good works does not save you. It is only through faith in Christ.

God removed all that I had pride in, my marriage, family, job, home and reputation. That is because of my crime which sent me to state prison for ten years, followed by five years’ probation. It was only when my dad died during my first year in state prison that God got through to me that I was a sinner. God’s goodness led me to repentance (Rom. 2:4). My sister had sent me a tract called “Missing Heaven By Eighteen Inches, From My Head To My Heart.” I discovered that I had many Bible facts in my head, yet I did not truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ from my heart. Romans 10:9-10 says, *“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”*

I knelt in my prison cell by my bunk, arguing with myself that I was already saved and what would others now think. God showed me through His Word that the only way to be saved was by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and that faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). John 14:6 reads, “Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth and the life, No one come to the Father except through Me.” Acts 16:31 says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved...”

On November 29, 1992, I acknowledged that I was a sinner, repented of my sin, and admitted that I had never really trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”


There in prison, my new life in Christ began. John 10:10 says, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” I asked the Lord to give me assurance from His Word that I was eternally secure and He answered my prayer. John 3:36 says, “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” John 10: 28-29 says, “And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.” First Corinthians 1:8 says, “who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Philippians 1:6 says, “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.” Finally, the Lord Jesus told the criminal on the cross next to Him, “Today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). Along with many other promises, God has kept assuring me of His salvation.

God then gave me an opportunity to share the gospel with someone in the next cell who was in the Jehovah’s Witness cult. I asked the Lord to show me in His Word that Jesus was God and he did from both the Old and New Testaments. Hebrews 1:8-9 says, “But to the Son He says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness more than your companions.’” John 14:9 says, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.”

Then on November 24, 1996, the Lord made it possible for me to be baptized by the prison chaplain. I publicly

declared that Christ had saved me and quoted John 1:12-13: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Hebrews 13:5 says, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” The Lord Jesus Christ never left me during incarceration, giving me good fellowship with Himself in His Word and with other Christians both inside and out of prison. He protected me and gave me strength while in prison and was with me even after my release when I had to return twice to county prison for technical violations of my probation. Having divorced my wife and failed to provide support for my children, at times not respecting my Christian employers, the Lord began disciplining and changing my heart. I praise and thank my Savior the Lord Jesus Christ for saving me, keeping me, and changing me. Second Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

God loved us and gave His One and Only Son to die in our place. “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:18-19). “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). He saved me and He will save you if you trust in Him alone for salvation. 

“And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”



by Kenneth Bickford

The Lord Jesus Christ graciously brought Ken to Oxford Bible Chapel, Oxford, PA where he is in happy fellowship. He cleans the chapel every week and helps out wherever needed.

THE FRONT LINES

RIPE FIELDS, PLENTIFUL HARVESTS

Few ministries provide such unique opportunities to preach the gospel and intimately minister to individuals as a prison ministry.

Permission was given for New Life Prison Ministries to begin a ministry at the Ottawa Carleton Detention Centre (Ontario, Canada) in the late 1980's and soon after that I joined the group. In the early days we invited up to 20 inmates from the minimum-security dorms. We showed a Christian video and provided a sign-up sheet for those interested in a personal, one-hour follow-up visit in a small 6' by 6' cubicle. Many signed up.

On one occasion a memorable incident occurred during the movie. An inmate with an angry look paced up and down behind us the whole time. Needless to say, this was quite unnerving. Then he signed up for a personal visit, and the lot fell to me. What a kind and friendly gentleman he turned out to be. He had been in an automobile accident and had a portion of his skull removed. He complained that unfriendly inmates kept trying to poke his unprotected brain. He experienced great trouble sleeping and often became very irritable. Our visit was a pleasant surprise to say the least. We had an enjoyable time in the Scriptures and in prayer and parted as friends. This incident taught me not to prejudge.

Another, frightful meeting was most memorable, but the eventual outcome affected the remainder of my 30-year ministry. I was warned by the guard that a man had aids (then a fearful disease). I prayed fervently for protection and decided to stay as safe as possible in the tiny cubicle.

Once he had left after a tense hour, I felt that I was safe. Not so! I slapped a bloody mosquito on my arm and realized that my efforts at staying safe were futile. As time passed, I learned I was disease free. I thanked the Lord for His protection and completely lost my fear of the many diseases which could be contracted in prison, especially Hepatitis C whose germs can survive on surfaces for days. In all my years I never contracted one prison-related disease.



In 2001, I was asked to take over the ministry leadership. At that time things began to change significantly. Construction was progressing on a unit of "PODS", a new concept for the Ottawa Carleton Detention Centre. These PODs consisted of six units of 32

cells each. PODs A to F housed inmates of various levels of security.

In 2005, the chaplain inquired whether the New Life group of volunteers would be interested in taking on a new area of ministry to the POD inmates. He explained that this would be a higher level of security where we could only host six inmates at a time. Inmates would sign up in advance and the chaplain would supply us with a weekly list, rotating through PODs A to F. We never lacked names on that list of inmates, now called "clients," wanting to attend a one-hour open gospel discussion session. We would be locked in together in a small meeting room. Like Paul in the book of Acts, we "*received all who came*" (Acts 28:30).

Across the twenty years of ministry to the POD clients, we had access to literally thousands of men. The chaplain had also made arrangements for us to use a large laundry tub for prison baptisms for interested clients. In all, two

hundred plus men from a number of Christian groups were baptized publicly, for staff and other inmates to see.

We experienced a dizzying variety of men and events over the years. The following is a brief summary of outstanding memories:

We had a convicted terrorist attend one of our sessions. He came across as a most kind and friendly young man. When another inmate complained about slow replies from the chaplain, this man spoke up, defending the busy chaplain trying to deal with over 300 men.

We had a number of famous murderers. A man in a refugee camp in Kenya had heard the gospel from one of our volunteers and had ignored it. He then came to Canada, married and ended up stabbing his wife 38 times. He came to our session and ended up kneeling, weeping at the foot of one of our volunteers, praying for salvation.

Another man had killed three people. In our session he displayed an extensive Bible knowledge. He told us that he had repented and was forgiven. He seemed quite glib, but who were we to question? The next week we were given additional information that he was happily signing autographs as a hero to other men.

We witnessed to pedophiles who were well known and hated throughout the institution. On one occasion, men passing by in the corridor were yelling, “there is no forgiveness for pedophiles!” This was for the benefit of a clean-cut, innocent looking young man who had a degree in psychology. He had been charged with distributing online child pornography. Our focus always had to be on the gospel, not the crime. No crime is beyond the forgiveness of the Lord Jesus, our loving Savior, who died to “*take away the sins of the world.*”

A Muslim from Somalia who had recently converted to Christianity, told us that he had 9 brothers who were seeking to kill him for leaving Islam.

An American marine who had been stationed in Somalia told us of young Somalis who had captured hyenas and led them around muzzled. They also carried bags of blood which they would throw on the marines, then unmuzzle their hyenas.

During one session, two men began to argue and stood up to fight. One of our volunteers said, “let’s pray,” and the men promptly sat down and bowed their heads.


One scruffy young man came in the next week clean-cut and beaming. He told of how he had asked the Lord into his heart after the session. He was so changed that we hardly recognized him. A 30-year cocaine addict came to the Lord and was baptized. A young man with obvious leadership skills started a Bible study in his POD with 7-8 men. We also met a young man who had been saved at a Bible study in Gaza.

Over the years, the Lord also provided a wide variety of volunteers: a retired businessman, a former atheist who had seen a sign, “Jesus saves” and had inquired, “saves from what?,” a former marijuana addict, a former member of the “Jehovah Witness” cult, a vice president of sales for a national cleaning supply company, a home builder, and a former prisoner in Kenya.

The Lord Jesus, “*knowing all things,*” knew well the future of those who approached Him. We can only look forward with anticipation and great joy to meeting the men we knew only as criminals before their conversion, like that of the thief on the cross.

The Lord blessed and carried us through in spite of our feeble attempts to faithfully preach the gospel in ways the prisoners could relate to. Many men went on to complete a large number of New Life Ministry Bible correspondence courses.

As I look back, I realize that we were blissfully ignorant of how minutely the Lord orchestrated all that was taking place around us. Prison ministry certainly has its share of difficulties, but the joy of sharing the gospel with those special, incarcerated inmates far outweighs the problems faced. We thank God for the prison guards who were so very helpful and played such an important role in making our visits worthwhile.

“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57). 

“Prison ministry certainly has its share of difficulties, but the joy of sharing the gospel with those special, incarcerated inmates far outweighs the problems faced.”

by Dwight Sabourin



Dwight was saved in 1984. He and his wife Trish attend Bridlewood Bible Chapel in Ottawa, Ontario, and have two grown sons and eight grandchildren. He is actively involved with door to door ministry, prison evangelism, and other ministries as the Lord leads. Though diagnosed with liver cancer fourteen months ago, his liver remains stable without treatment. Dwight thanks the saints for their prayers.

FOUNDATIONS *of the* FAITH



The Truth And Necessity of Christ's Virgin Birth



Mankind's history is the tale of two men: the first Adam and the last Adam. The former linked humanity with sin, condemnation, and death. The latter links them with righteousness, purity, and immortality (Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:46-57). This second man was not merely a man but was also God "*manifested in the flesh*" (1 Tim. 3:16)¹. Deity and humanity were perfectly united in the incarnate Christ.

Teaching regarding the Lord Jesus' person frequently oscillates between extremes: people either overemphasize His humanity or His deity. To be our kinsman-redeemer, He needed to be both God and man (Heb. 2:9-18). As man, Christ could assume our debt of sin; as God, He could sacrificially offer an infinitely valuable life. Fully God and fully man, His virginal conception was the means of His incarnation: "*The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us*" (John 1:14, FWG).

A Glorious Entrance

Both Matthew and Luke make it clear that Christ's coming was supernaturally accomplished by divine power. The human father was set aside

in favor of the Holy Spirit accomplishing the eternal Son's coming into Mary's virgin womb.² "*And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God'*" (Luke 1:35). Similarly, Gabriel told Joseph: "*... do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit*" (Matt. 1:20). Horlock explains: "The holiness of the child was secured by 'the Holy Ghost' . . . He shared our human nature but not our sinful nature."³ God was clearly separating Messiah from the common descent of fallen Adam. Our Lord was a true man in every sense; yet He was "*sin apart*" (Heb. 4:15, JND). Another remarks: "Virgin-born, he did not inherit the guilty twist called original sin: his manhood was untainted, and his acts, attitudes, motives, and desires were consequently faultless."⁴

The Long-Promised Seed of the Woman

Although He looked just like other men (Phil. 2:7-8; Rom. 8:3), He was uniquely the only begotten, incarnate Son of God. In Galatians, Paul describes His incarnation in specific terminology that implies something distinct from normal conception and birth: "*But when the*

fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law” (Gal. 4:4). D. F. and J. S. Wright point out the difference in the words for birth: “... ‘God sent forth his Son, coming (*genomenon*) from a woman.’ By contrast, in 4:23 Ishmael ‘was born,’ *gegennētai* (from *gennaō*).”⁵ The terminology alludes to the virgin birth that is detailed in the Gospels. Darby emphasizes this teaching’s importance: “It shows how completely Christ met the whole case. The woman brought in sin, and the law brought in transgression, and Christ meets both: come of a woman, and made under the law.”⁶ Satan appeared to triumph by inciting man to sin, but the last Adam crushed the serpent’s head at the cross.


The Lord Jesus’ entrance into the world was different from any other human being. He fulfilled two great salvation promises in becoming “seed” of the woman (Gen. 3:15) and in being “born of the seed of David” (Rom. 1:3).

Behold, A Virgin Will Conceive And Bear A Son

Throughout history, unbelieving people have vigorously opposed the virgin birth out of a naturalistic skepticism that rejects miracles. The noted apologist, Norman Geisler, explains this doctrine’s momentous testimony in these words: “...if true, the virgin birth establishes beyond question the life of Jesus as a supernatural intervention of God. If anti-supernaturalists concede at this point, they have no case left.”⁷ Even during Christ’s ministry, adversaries inferred that His paternity was illegitimate (John 8:39-41). In the second century, Justin Martyr and Trypho had an intense debate over it, with the latter propounding the slander that Jesus was actually the offspring of a Roman soldier, named Pantera. But well before the actual event, Isaiah 7:14 foretold the virgin birth, saying: “*Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel*” (Isa. 7:14). Critics correctly counter that the Hebrew word for “*virgin*” could also be rendered “young woman.”⁸ But Orr reminds us: “But . . . if the word does not necessarily bear this meaning of ‘virgin,’ it may, and indeed usually does, bear it. In fact, in all the six places in which, besides this passage, the word occurs in the Old Testament, it may be contended that this is its meaning . . .”⁹

Moreover, the ancient Jewish Septuagint translation of Isaiah 7:14 used the Greek word “*parthenos*,” which means “virgin.” Matthew 1:23 uses that same word in quoting Isaiah’s prophecy; therefore, the Scriptures’ commentary on itself upholds the Lord’s virginal conception.

Enter The New Man

Just as Christ entered the world miraculously, so He also exited by the supernatural means of the resurrection and ascension. Through His work, God’s image in the first Adam - fallen, defaced, and corrupted by sin - has been replaced by God’s image in Christ, the last Adam. Christ’s virginal conception assures us that He is impeccable and incorruptible. He is not more of the same type of human. Rather, He is the paradigm of the new humanity. Through His saving work, believers are new creatures in Him (2 Cor. 5:17), “*and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him*” (Col. 3:10). Accordingly, humanity’s future is bright. The purity that Christ exhibited from His miraculous birth through His ascension to heaven is now the birthright and destiny of the many sons that He is bringing to glory. At His coming, we will meet Him in the air and live forever with Him in the Father’s house (John 14:1-3). 

“The Lord Jesus’ entrance into the world was different from any other human being.”

ENDNOTES:

¹Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are from the New King James Version.

²“It is irrelevant, and indeed impossible, to give any explanation of the virgin birth in terms of biological parthenogenesis; it cannot be brought within the framework of any natural process. Here God is supremely at work, and the only human agency was that of the submissive maiden of Nazareth who said; ‘Behold, the handmaid Precious Seed 12:6 (1961); accessed here: <https://www.preciousseed.org/articles/our-lords-incarnation-and-virgin-birth/> [Boldface mine].

³Malcolm Horlock, *Day by Day through the New Testament*, ed. Denis Clapham and John Heading. (PSP, 1979), p. 8. [Italics original].

⁴J. I. Packer, *Growing in Christ*. (Crossway, 1994), pp. 47-48.

⁵D. F. Wright and J. S. Wright, *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. R. W. Wood et al. (IVP, 1996), p. 1226. [Italics original].

⁶J. N. Darby, *Food for the Flock* 5 (1878), p. 234. [Italics original].

⁷Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*. (Baker, 1999), p. 759.

⁸Hebrew scholars like J. A. Motyer ably answer this objection in their exposition of Isaiah 7. See J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*. (IVP, 1996), pp. 84-86.

⁹James Orr, *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1907), 133. [Italics original].



by Keith Keyser

Keith Keyser has served the Lord full-time in Bible teaching and preaching throughout the USA, Canada, and other countries. Keith and his wife Naomi were commended to the Lord’s work in 1999 and fellowship with the saints who meet in the Lord’s name at Grace Gospel Chapel, Gilbertsville, PA.



Fellowship

IN 2018, the US National Spelling Bee was won by Karthik Nemmani, an eighth grader from McKinney, Texas, who correctly spelled “*koinonia*.” *Koinonia* is a word that has been transliterated into our English language from the original Greek. It means fellowship and appears nineteen times in the New Testament. Karthik carefully spelled out k-o-i-n-o-n-i-a. We, for our part, might spell out f-e-l-l-o-w-s-h-i-p as follows...

F-aithfully – The first mention of “*koinonia*” is in Acts 2:42. Faith is seen in Acts 2:41 where we read that they “*gladly received his word*.” To receive is to believe. That is what faith is —taking God at His Word. Faith is required to come into fellowship with God. Two verses come to mind in the initial call to fellowship. First, John opens his epistle with wonderful words of life in 1 John 1:1-3, “...*that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ*.” Then, 1 John 1:7 tells us, “*If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*.” What a fellowship is ours with life and light when we walk faithfully with Him.

E-njoying – Did you notice how they listened to the message in Acts 2:41? “*Then those who gladly received his word*.” The Lord Jesus offers us His joy. He said, “*These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full*” (John 15:11). The joy that He gives is not based on outside circumstances, but it is within. That is why we can enjoy the Lord by His Word that we treasure in our hearts.

L-iving – Fellowship is a life-changer. To this unique body of believers, living this life was brand new. Acts 2:41 also tells us that to demonstrate their new life, they obediently followed the Lord in baptism. Baptism is the dramatic form of expressing that as Christ died, we died; as He was buried, we were buried; as He was raised, we too have been raised to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4).

L-oving – Love is the grand motivation for all we do in Christ. This was apparent in the fellowship of the early church, and we are exhorted throughout the New Testament

to walk in love. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, wrote in 1 John 3:18, “*My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth*.” James 2:15-16 reminds us to show our love and faith by noticing and meeting the needs of fellow believers. Acts 2:44-47 pictures for us the model church and it is love in action. They cared and shared all things in common, which was anything but common in their day and ours. Jesus said, “*By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*” (John 13:35).

O-ne Another – This is a favorite phrase found in conjunction with fellowship. It is used in about twenty different ways in the New Testament. Unlike the similar expression, “each other,” which would apply to only two people, “one another” looks at all fellow believers on the larger scale of the whole Body of Christ. This fellowship is made up of a variety of people groups, with different cultural backgrounds, personalities, and physical characteristics. This is the beauty of the Body of Christ. We are going to spend eternity together with people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (Rev. 5:9). In light of this eternal viewpoint, God calls us into this fellowship where we should receive, love, comfort, forgive, and pray for one another. The books of Romans, Galatians and James all tell us that how we treat one another as brothers and sisters in Christ fulfills the law and love of Christ.

W-hile – The book of Hebrews also reminds us, “*For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry*” (Heb. 10:37). What should we be doing while we wait for Him? While away the time? Not at all. Beginning in Hebrews 3:7, there is an exhortation given by the Holy Spirit saying, “*exhort one another daily while it is called “Today”*” (Heb. 3:13). We should fellowship together and encourage one another while we wait for Him.

S-erving – This is one of those “one another’s” and is a major part of our fellowship. We are not here to live as individuals and think only of me, myself, and mine. That is the very lifestyle we have been saved from. Paul writes to our hearts saying, “*for the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and*

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APPROACHING WORSHIP

Each Lord's Day, assemblies of Christians all around the world will be gathered together unto the Lord Jesus Christ, to remember Him in His death and to worship both Father and Son for their unspeakable Gift. In so doing, the New Testament pattern for the gatherings of saints is observed to the best of our understanding.

Religious orthodoxy and hypocrisy were rampant among Israel's religious elite when our Lord Jesus walked this earth. His scathing descriptions of them in Matthew 13 exposed their self-serving focus on outward detail, and their lack of inward devotion of heart. He summarized His view of them in saying: *"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me."* (Matt. 15:8).

The feasts of Jehovah in Leviticus 23 laid out Israel's devotional calendar. Each feast held rich meaning, and each one gave graphic foresight into our Lord's substitutionary death at Calvary. It is noteworthy that Leviticus 22 deals extensively with the requisite attitude of each worshipper *before* describing the actual feasts in the following chapter. These are things to which we also should give due consideration in our worship and remembrance.

The Uncommon Approach (1-2)

We must never view worship as a commonplace activity, on par with other activities in which we are engaged. To profane anything is to treat it as ordinary. When we come together unto the Lord Jesus Christ, this is a profoundly unique engagement which deserves to occupy a lofty place in our hearts.

The Unclean Approach (3-8)

The injunction *"let a man examine himself"* (1 Cor. 11:28) requires our solemn reflection. Before leaving our homes for the meetings, conscientious reflection and repentance must be our priority. Bringing our own unconfessed sin to the assembly meetings can have a Spirit-quenching effect.

When we come into the holiest of all – the Lord's Presence – we must come cleansed.

The Uncaring Approach (9)

Indifference and apathy are sweeping through Christendom like an evil tide. Far too many of God's own people consider their heavenly citizenship as mundane. They give little time, consideration, or care to cultivating and embracing their spiritual blessings in Christ. We may never express these sentiments aloud, but it is sadly observed that they are more common among us than they should be.

The Unworthy Approach (10)

Here is where assembly oversight needs to exercise godly discernment. The sad extreme of erecting man-made barriers to fellowship is to be avoided, as is the opposite laxity in the name of "love." The assembly is where the Lord meets with His people. Imposters may be difficult to identify, but the Holy Spirit knows whom He indwells and will guide us when we seek His leadership.

The Unwitting Approach (14-16)

When new believers are being received into the fellowship of the local assembly, it is needful to teach them about why we gather as we do. This is to address any possible ignorance which could hinder their growth, and which might hinder their full entrance into and enjoyment of the privileges and responsibilities of the local assembly.

The Unacceptable Approach (19-25)

What we bring to our Lord on the Lord's Day is typically a reflection of our daily intimacy with Him. The sacrifices of Israel were to be pure and without blemish, as they were typifying the very Son of God in His future sacrifice for sinners. By the Holy Spirit's leading and enabling, what we bring to each meeting should essentially be all that we can bring. Our hands should be full (Lev. 16:12).

The Unwilling Approach (29)

Many of the Psalms were sung with joy as the Israelites went up to Jerusalem for Jehovah's feasts.

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He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

In Philippians 2:1-4 he pleads with us as he expresses the very heart of fellowship. *“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Phil. 2:1-2).* Then, he adds, *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil. 2:3-4).* We are saved, not to serve ourselves, but to serve others.

H-im – It’s all about Him! *“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9).* What love God has shown to us through the Son of His love. Everything we consider in our fellowship is because of Him. He is the very ground of our fellowship which connects us together in an eternal bond. By Him we have fellowship with one another (1 John 1:7).


I-n – We were in sin. Now we are in Him, saved out of this world. The only true fellowship that we can have is in Christ. We are warned not to have fellowship with that which is outside of Christ, such as idols (1 Cor. 10:14-16), darkness, or demons (2 Cor. 6:14-16). What kind of fellowship is that?

P-artnership – Fellowship is defined as partnership. As often humorously stated, fellowship is three fellows in a ship. That is not far off. We are fellow workers together with God (1 Cor. 3:9), fellow citizens and fellow members with the saints (Eph. 2:19), and fellow heirs of the same body (Eph.

3:6). James, Cephas, and John met with Paul and Barnabas and extended the right hand of fellowship to acknowledge both men and their ministry to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:9).

In our partnership, we share in the work financially. About one fourth of the references to New Testament fellowship have to do with sharing in financial help (Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13). In Hebrews 13:16 we are told, *“But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”* The word “share” is from the same Greek word “*koinonia*” and refers to our giving. The KJV translates the word for fellowship as communicate. Our giving communicates well the truth of our partnership in the Lord and thus our fellowship includes working together to meet practical needs as the Lord provides.

So, how do you spell fellowship? Not f-o-o-d! There is so much more to fellowship than just sharing a meal. The Scriptures spell out for us what New Testament fellowship is all about.

Now may *“the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion (fellowship) of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen” (2 Cor. 13:14).* 




by Rex Trogdon

Rex Trogdon and his wife Nancy were commended in 1983 and attend Believers Bible Chapel in NC. They served ten years in the DR Congo. Nancy has an email ministry called, Manna in the Morning. Rex is an elder, conference speaker, contributor to Choice Gleanings, and serves with Everyday Publications in an exciting new video ministry called, Feed My Sheep.

May it never be that we attend the assembly meetings with little more than a cold sense of obligation. Our Lord loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7) and this should apply to everything that we bring to Him. *“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the LORD” (Ps. 122:1).* May His joy be our joy, as we gather together to remember and worship our Lord and Savior.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is intensely invested and interested in each one of us. Each moment of each day, He watches over us with His omniscient and omnipotent care and leads us in ways of which we are often unaware. O how He loves us! When we come together with our brothers and sisters in Christ for the assembly

meetings – and especially for the Lord’s Supper – may we be genuinely excited at the prospect of being in the place where the Lord is in the midst of His people. How we approach Him matters a great deal to Him, as it should to each of us. 



by Rick Morse

Rick lives in Berwick, Nova Scotia with Janie, his beloved wife for over 40 years. They are in fellowship with the saints at Bethany Gospel Chapel in Dartmouth, NS. Saved at age 21, Rick is active in his home assembly, and has ministered at a number of assemblies in Atlantic Canada. He contributes to Choice Gleanings calendar and has authored several books, with his speaking and written ministry centering on a love for apologetics and expository teaching.

ISSUES & ANSWERS

“SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES...”

JOHN 5:39

Why is the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, called the Everlasting Father in Isaiah 9:6?

Isaiah 9:6-7 says: “For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

Seemingly, the question presents a quandary – how can the Lord Jesus be both Father and Son? There are those who hold to a Unitarian point of view who would use this verse as an argument against the truth of the Trinity, that there is one God, existing in three Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. However, the Bible clearly teaches the Doctrine of the Trinity. Therefore, the verse cannot be suggesting that the Son is the Father.


There are two possible answers to the above. There are those who say the phrase should be translated “the Father of Eternity.” This is how J.N. Darby renders it in his translation as does F.C. Jennings, in his “Studies in Isaiah.” Rendered this way, the phrase is a figure of speech that refers to His relationship to time. The Septuagint omits the title altogether, but the marginal note gives the line from the Alexandrian Text as “the Father of the age to come.”

Being God, the Son has all the attributes of deity, equality with the Father (John 1:1-3). Having no beginning, He is eternal, existing outside of time. Furthermore, He is the One who governs time. This is confirmed in Hebrews 1:2 where it is said of Him that He has made the ages (YLT). Moreover, Isaiah 9:7 speaks of the future reign of Christ being the fulfillment of this truth that He governs the ages. Yet again, in Revelation 21:5 He is the One seated on the throne who says, “Behold I make all things new.”

The other view is that the phrase translated “*Everlasting Father*” (KJV, NKJV, and NIV) speaks of the Son’s tenderness and care. The care and concern that Israel lacked from its leaders according to Ezekiel 34, is supplied in the loving care of the Savior to His people. David in Psalm 68:5 refers to God as “a father to the fatherless” speaking of God’s care for His own. Meditating upon the Savior’s fatherly character (Cf. Mark 10:16), we can be comforted and rest securely in His eternal care for His people. We can cast our cares upon Him for we know He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7).

This thought is also expressed in Romans 8:37–39: “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Attached to either view is the eternal existence of the Lord Jesus which He affirmed during His ministry on earth (John 8:58). As to His substance, He could say: “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30). He could also say to Philip: “He who has seen Me has seen the Father (John 14:9, e.g. Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3).

In conclusion, Isaiah is expressing the greatness and future reign of the Messiah. He is the One who designed and created the ages and has a fatherly character demonstrated in His love and care for us. 



by Gary McBride

Gary and his wife Gloria were commended in 1980 to the Lord’s work. They spent two years in Zambia followed by 27 years in Northern Ontario ministering in the north and working at Northland Bible Camp. After time in Southern Ontario, they moved back to Kirkland Lake, ON for six years. Recently they have moved to Pembroke, ON.

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Southeastern Workers Conference

► February 13-15, 2025

Wilmington Bible Chapel, Wilmington, NC

In the will of the Lord, the 72nd annual Southeastern Workers Conference will begin at 6:00 PM Thursday evening, February 13, 2025, and conclude at noon on Saturday, February 15, 2025. The host assembly will be Wilmington Bible Chapel in Wilmington, North Carolina. The topic this year will be "Contending for the Faith - A More Sure Word of Prophecy." The scheduled keynote speakers are Mike Attwood and Mark Beebe. For more information visit sewc.info or contact Matt Bowman at sewcinfo@gmail.com or 336-339-0784.

Shepherding Conference

► Saturday March 15, 2025

Dr. Sam Mikhael and Dr. Steve Price will be the speakers for an area wide Shepherding Conference. It will be held at Woodside Chapel in Fanwood, NJ and will run from 9:30 AM – 3:30 PM. This conference will focus on the ministry of shepherding, prayer, and discipleship and is open to both men and women. It will be hosted by Know the Word Ministries in partnership with area assemblies. For more information, visit <https://knowtheword.com/events/conferences/> or email knowtheword@gmail.com.

Feeding the Flock Conference

► March 17-20, 2025

Know the Word Ministries will be hosting its annual Feeding the Flock Conference at the renowned America's Keswick Conference Center in Whiting, NJ. Brothers Lee Brainard (ND), Sam Mikhael (Bahamas), and Steve Price (MO) will be sharing in the ministry of the Word throughout the week. Messages will be based on the theme: "Fervent in Spirit, Serving the Lord." Cost is \$350 pp and includes all meals, activities, and deluxe accommodations. This conference is open to both men and women. For more information, visit <https://knowtheword.com/events/conferences/> or email knowtheword@gmail.com.

Note on Tax-deductible Receipts

A 2024 tax-deductible receipt will be issued for gifts received or postmarked on or before December 31, 2024. A 2025 tax-deductible receipt will be issued for gifts received or postmarked after December 31, 2024. The Cornerstone Magazine committee wishes to express their heart-felt appreciation to all who have had a part in prayer or have financially participated in the work of this ministry. God is able.

Discipleship Opportunity for Young Women

► June 5-14, 2025 | Grand Rapids, MI

"InTents Discipleship" is a nine-day discipleship training program for women ages 16 and up who desire to serve the Lord. Our vision is to inspire and equip young women to serve the Lord in their homes, churches, communities, and circles of influence using the skills and spiritual gifts that He has given them. The program focuses on five Biblical disciplines - Scripture, Hospitality, Evangelism, Discipleship, and Spiritual Gifts. These disciplines are first taught and then put into practice in a variety of hands-on experiences during the course of the program. There are opportunities to learn from women of different ages, in different seasons of life, who are serving the Lord in a variety of ways. Please visit their Facebook page, InTents Discipleship, for more information, a video introducing the program, and photos from previous years. You may also email Becky at rbwagner3@yahoo.com.

What God Has Done

A new book on the life of Jack Wagner, entitled "What God Has Done" by Karen Sparks has been published. He was the founder of Camp Sunrise in Fairmount, Georgia. Jack and his wife Ruth stepped out in faith to begin this Christian camp ministry over 50 years ago. Read the fascinating story to see how Jack used his talents to serve his Savior. Enjoy over 50 color photos as you learn the story of the camp, including its planetarium, science museum, and narrow-gauge railroad. See how God worked, equipped, provided, and blessed as the Wagners prayed and trusted Him! The book is available on Amazon in both paperback and Kindle format.

Looking for Full-time Camp Director

Camp Sunrise is looking for a full-time camp director. A couple is preferred but not necessary. Please note that this is a non-paid, volunteer ministry position. Responsibilities would primarily be administrative, as well as being involved in camp direction and other responsibilities. If this sounds like something you would be interested in please call or text the camp at 706-3387-3394, or email info@campsunrise.com

The Best Gift Of All

The poem on this issue's back page has been published on card stock with a Christmas picture background under the poem, and related Bible verses on the back of the card. It can be used as a gospel tract, handed out around the Christmas season, or enclosed with Christmas cards. To purchase large quantities, visit "Moments With the Book" at mwtb.org. Then on the home page type "Karen Sparks" in the search box. For more information contact Karen Sparks at marksparks@outlook.com.



NORTH AMERICAN

Week of Prayer

Follow Me

“If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me...” John 12:26

A Call to Prayer in 2025

April 7-11, 2025

**Boulevard Bible Chapel
Pembroke Pines, FL**

We urge you to prayerfully consider participating in the Week of Prayer.

**For more information visit
www.NAWeekofPrayer.com**

In April 2024, the North American Week of Prayer theme ("Launch Out") was taken from Luke 5, where Christ tells His disciples to "launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." The astonished fishermen forsake all and follow Jesus as redeployed fishers of men!

This year we pick up where we ended last year...prayerfully considering what it means to follow Christ. In John 12:26 the Lord taught His disciples: "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me." Join us as we prayerfully follow our Savior through His earthly ministry!



GMI SUPPORTS EVANGELISTS & MINISTRIES THROUGH MISSIONARY FUNDS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN INDIA



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CHURCH BUILDINGS
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CONTACT US ON HOW YOU CAN BE PART OF THIS MISSION

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GMI IDENTIFIES AND AUTHENTICATES NEEDS IN INDIA FOR SUPPORT

THE BEST *Gift* of ALL

*The very best gift you can ever receive
Isn't wrapped in bright paper, tucked under a tree.
It's not jewelry, electronics, or some other treasure;
It's a gift with a price that's too great to measure.*

*Who is it that offers this gift of such cost?
It comes from the One who loves us the most—
Who desires that we join Him in heaven someday,
And who willingly gave to provide us the way.*

*What was this invaluable gift that God gave—
That from penalty of sin, we each can be saved?
This most special gift was His own perfect Son—
Who came to be punished for wrong we have done.*

*When did God give us this gift for all men?
It's when Jesus was born—and when He died for our sin.
After torture and death, in a grave He was laid;
But He rose from the dead—showing power to save!*

*Without the gift of God's Son, we can't enter heaven;
But He died in our place, so we can be forgiven.
Our efforts won't help—sin's debt we can't pay;
It's only through Jesus—there's no other way.*

*God surely has given us the best gift of all—
It's available to any who on Jesus will call.
God offers it freely to those who believe;
Will you turn from your sin and the best gift receive?*

