



# THE RESTORATION HERALD

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## 1 Timothy 2:12 – Woman OR Wife?

by Dr. Jack Cottrell

### QUESTION:

In my Bible (the NASB), in 1 Timothy 2:12 Paul says, “But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man.” But some folks are telling me that this should be translated, “But I do not allow a wife to teach or exercise authority over her husband.” What is this all about?

### ANSWER:

The internet site, Bible Gateway, shows 60 different English translations. I just looked up 1 Timothy 2:12. Of these 60 translations, 58 render this text as referring to women and men, not wives and husbands. (The two in the latter

category are the Common English Bible and the Orthodox Jewish Bible.) What this shows is that, overwhelmingly, Bible translators are convinced that Paul is here talking about a relationship between men and women in general, and not just husbands and wives.

Nevertheless, some Bible exegetes and theologians take the view that Paul is NOT talking about men and women in general, but only about husbands and wives. What difference does this make? Why is it an important issue? It is important because 1 Timothy 2:12 is the only Bible passage that specifically forbids women to teach Bible doctrine to Christian men and to exercise authority over Christian men. Thus, it is the only text that forbids women to preach to a mixed (male and female) congregation, to teach a mixed adult Bible class, and to be elders in a church congregation.

That is, it is the only such passage IF it is truly referring to women and men in general. Also, this is the way it has been understood almost universally down through Christian history and still today, as the above translation data show. But if somehow it can be shown that this text actually refers to wives and husbands *only*, this would open the door completely to the egalitarian (feminist) view of gender roles in the church, and allow us to have women preachers, elders, and teachers of men. Some who hold this latter view may not defend it for this reason, but I think it is fair to say that most who take this position do so for the very purpose of allowing women preachers and elders.

Over the last four or five decades, many women and men within the boundaries of Christendom have developed a determined desire to obliterate all gender barriers and distinctions within the home and the church. Some have rejected the absolute authority of the Bible, so they do not care whether Paul forbids it or not. Others still hold to Biblical authority, so their determination is to *reinterpret* key Bible texts that might otherwise forbid women preachers and elders. Finding a way to reinterpret 1 Timothy 2:12 so that it is compatible with egalitarianism has been a primary goal of these folks.

Many attempts to mute this text have been set forth. E.g., some have said that Paul is simply stating his opinion here, but not binding it on anyone else. This of course ignores what he has just said in verse 7 of this chapter. Others say he was just yielding to a cultural taboo; but this ignores verses 13 and 14, where he grounds his prohibition in Adam and Eve. Another main view is that in verse 12 Paul is forbidding women to teach *false* doctrines, a sin of which some recently-converted Ephesian women were sup-

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# Editor's Viewpoint

## "Want versus Need"

**M**y wife and I have a ten-year-old daughter, Madison. Madison is at the age where many of her sentences begin with, "I want..." Consequently, we spend a lot of time talking about what we want versus what we actually need.

It's very easy for a similar mentality to develop and exist in the life of the church and her people. It's very common these days for people to want first and foremost on Sunday mornings a dynamic, emotive worship experience. In addition, church goers want a robust, active children's program with many diverse and exciting activities for their kids.



John R. Mitchell

These in and of themselves are fine; we're certainly not opposed to uplifting worship services and engaging children's programs. What people **need**, however, is sound Bible doctrine. We **need** clear Bible teaching. Not just the Bible knowledge necessary to pass a potential Bible exam, but practical application of the truths presented.

The church is in the business of transforming lives. Jesus specifically charged Paul (Saul at the time) with this as seen in Acts 26:17-18, "... I now send you, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God..."

Paul develops this more fully in Ephesians 4:17-23, "This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (NKJV).

In this passage, Paul emphasizes the knowledge and subsequent application of said knowledge to the Christians at Ephesus. The transformation of life Paul desires in the disciples is a direct result of learning Christ, of having been taught by Him, as the truth is in Him.

We need preachers who are not so much concerned with presenting messages that are "seeker sensitive" or "unchurched appropriate," but rather messages that provide a steady diet of the solid food needed (see Hebrews 5:12). "Sanctify them by Your truth, Your word is truth" Jesus proclaimed in John 17:17.

So, what exactly do we **need**?

First, we need to **consume** the truth. We need an intellectual comprehension of the truth of God's word. In Colossians 2:6, Paul exhorts us to "walk in Him." He goes on to say, "rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught..." We are to be 'rooted;' that is, firm and constant in the faith. We are to be 'built up;' that is, to engage in a building process in the faith. We are to be 'established;' that is, to render constant and unwavering in the faith. Observe that all these are "as you have been taught." We need an unshakable, solid foundation for life forged through the consumption of God's word.

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Editor, John R. Mitchell

### OUR PLATFORM

- The Bible:** God's revelation to man, its authority and finality, man's only rule of faith and practice.
- The Christ:** The only begotten Son of God man's only Savior and Lord.
- The Church:** The true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.
- The Gospel:** The power of God unto salvation, its proclamation and defense.
- The Unity of Believers:** In the "unity of the faith" as prescribed in the New Testament.
- The Fellowship:** Of brethren of "like precious faith," in the furtherance of the gospel and the building of churches of Christ according to the Bible pattern.

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## 1 Timothy 2:12 - Woman OR Wife? (cont)

posedly guilty. I have shown the serious error of this view in my long essay, “1 Timothy and the Role of Women,” now published in volume 13 of my “Collected Writings,” i.e., *The Gender Roles Debate* (The CRA, pp. 61-131). Though it may not be the purpose of some who hold the “wives and husbands” view, this interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12 is just another way of dismissing the relevance of this text *for church practices*, while still accepting its binding authority for the home.

For a few names of scholars who defend this view, see the article by Thomas Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15,” in *Women in the Church*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger et al. (Baker, 2 ed., 2005), pp. 92ff., and especially footnote 54 (pp. 212-213). In the Restoration Movement, see books by Knofel Staton: *Jesus and Paul Agree: You Don't Have to Stay the Way You Are* (New Life Books, 1976, p. 90); and *Timothy—Philemon: Standard Bible Studies* (Standard Publishing, 1988). In the latter he says that this text is “referring to a wife’s relationship with her husband” (p. 59). See also Arthur Harrington, *What the Bible Says About Leadership* (College Press, 1985, pp. 261ff.). Others could be cited.

In his *Timothy—Philemon* book, Staton cites these five reasons for saying Paul is here talking about wives and husbands: (1) The Greek word *gunē* can mean either “woman” or “wife”; only the context can tell which meaning is intended. (2) “Anytime the apostle Paul used the words *woman* and *man* together and talked about submission, he was always referring to a wife’s relationship to her husband. And that is what he did here.” (3) The content here is “nearly identical” to 1 Peter 3:1-6. “There is no good, objective reason to say that Peter was talking about husband/wife relationships while Paul was not.” (4) The example given in verses 13-14—Adam and Eve—was a husband/wife pair. (5) The reference to childbearing in verse 15 shows Paul is speaking of wives, not women in general.

### I. The Context of 1 Timothy 2:12.

We now turn to an evaluation of this view. The main issue is how we should translate the Greek nouns in verse 12, *gunē* and *anēr*. The word *gunē* can mean either “woman” or “wife,” and the word *anēr* can mean either “man” or “husband”—depending on the context. So the question is whether the context of verse 12 is *the church* or *the home*. This is indeed an essential consideration; and as we shall see, the context is overwhelmingly in favor of the church rather than the home.

We can start with the *general* purpose of the letter (1 Timothy) as a whole. Paul tells us specifically in 3:14-15 that he is writing about church matters: “I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God [*en oikō theou*], which is the church [*ekklēsia*] of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.” In 1 Corinthians 11:18 Paul uses similar language when he begins discussing matters related to church services: “When you come together as a church [*en ekklēsia*].” He uses the same language in 1 Corinthians 14:19, 28 – *en ekklēsia*. In 14:34 he says, “Let the women in the churches be silent [*hai gunaikes en tais ekklēsiais sigatōsan*].” We cannot ignore

Paul’s purpose statement (relating this letter to church activities) in 1 Timothy 3:14-15 when interpreting 2:12.

Even more convincing is the *immediate* context of verse 12, namely, verses 8-14. Here the word *gunē* is used five times, and *anēr* is used twice. In verse 8, Paul describes how the *andres* (nominative plural of *anēr*) should pray, obviously *in church*: “Therefore I want the men [*andras*] in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.” Then in verses 9-11 he refers to things the *gunaikes* (nominative plural of *gunē*) should do, obviously *in church*: “Likewise, *I want* women [*gunaikas*] to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women [*gunaixin*] making a claim to godliness. A woman [*gunē*] must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.”

These are the verses that lead up to verse 12, and they simply CANNOT be taken as referring only to husbands and wives. Here Paul describes how *men and women* should act within the context of the church, whether they are married or not. He cannot be saying that only husbands should pray, nor that only wives should dress modestly and receive instruction in a quiet, submissive manner. As 3:14-15 reminds us, these are things that apply to all “in the household of God, which is the church of the living God.”

It is also important to notice that verse 12 is connected directly to verse 11, both by subject matter and grammatical form. Verse 12 begins with the word “but” (Greek, *de*), which is ignored by many translations, including the NIV and the ESV. It shows that verse 12 is a qualification or limitation of verse 11. Verse 11 says a woman must receive instruction (a major church activity), BUT (says verse 12) she must not use that instruction in teaching or having authority over men.

In other words, verse 12 is the continuation of verses 8-11, which are not talking about women as wives and men as husbands, but about the general categories of women and men in their church life.

While we are talking about the context of 1 Timothy 2:12, we can respond to Staton’s fourth reason for affirming that this verse is talking about wives and husbands, namely, that the two following verses require it, since they are talking about a married couple, Adam and Eve. Here is what 2:13-14 says: “For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve. And *it was* not Adam *who* was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.”

It is true that Adam and Eve were husband and wife, but it is *also* true that they were the first representatives of the general categories of *men* or males, and *women* or females. In fact, the first reference to them in the Bible (Genesis 1:27) identifies them not as husband and wife but as “male and female”: “God created man [*hā’ādām*, “the man”] in His own image, in the image of God He created him; **male and female** He created them.” The Hebrew words for “male” (*zākār*) and “female” (*nēqēbah*) are used for both human beings and animals and do not mean “husband” and “wife.” In Genesis 2:22-23 another set of words is used for the first pair: *īsh* and *īshshah*: “The LORD God fashioned into a woman [*īshshah*] the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the



## Faith or Fact?

When he was named Humanist of the Year in 1996, atheist Richard Dawkins said this in his acceptance speech:

“It is fashionable to wax apocalyptic about the threat to humanity posed by the AIDS virus, ‘mad cow’ disease, and many others, but

I think a case can be made that *faith* is one of the world’s great evils, comparable to the smallpox virus but harder to eradicate.

“Faith, being belief that isn’t based on evidence, is the principal vice of any religion.”<sup>1</sup>

Now, it is quite common for atheists to agree with Dawkins’ claim that religious faith has nothing to do with evidence or *facts*. This allows them to characterize religious faith as belief in *myth, fantasy, and superstition*, while science deals with *facts, hard evidence, and reason*. Thus,

religious faith is viewed as totally *subjective*, while science is *objective*. Dawkins explains:

But the evidence that makes me believe in evolution is not only overwhelmingly strong; it is freely available to anyone who takes the trouble to read up on it. Anyone can study the same evidence that I have and presumably come to the same conclusion. But if you have a belief that is based solely on faith, I can’t examine your reasons. You can retreat behind the private wall of faith where I can’t reach you.<sup>2</sup>

Many Christians are willing to accept those conditions. Maybe they can’t convince an unbeliever that the Christian faith is objectively true, but neither can the unbeliever disprove their private, subjective faith. There are, however, two serious problems with this tradeoff.

First, it disqualifies the Christian from the public arena. Secularists have long tried to limit the church’s influence on society. Christians are free to gather in their churches to pray and worship, but they should stay out of science, government, schools, and the arts and entertainment—all major influences on our culture. It is much easier for skeptics to make that argument if Christians agree that their faith is subjective—not something the unbeliever can examine for himself.

Second, the tradeoff presupposes that atheists are correct when they assert that Christianity has nothing to do with objective facts. After all, no rational person believes that mythology is actual history. However, this assertion contradicts the clear teaching of the New Testament. For example, at the beginning of his Gospel,

Luke makes the following statement:

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word have handed them down to us, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so *that you might know the exact truth* about the things you have been taught (Luke 1:1-4, NASB, emphasis added).

Thus, Luke declares that he is not simply telling a compelling *story*. Rather, he is reporting an *historical account* of the life of Jesus. Notice the factual claims that Luke makes: 1) He compiled a detailed, chronological account of Christ’s life and ministry (including details of numerous miracles), 2) He interviewed eyewitnesses of these events (since Luke was not present, himself), and 3) He did all this so that Theophilus would *know the exact truth* about the things he had been taught. These are not the assertions of someone who prefers the safety of subjective faith to the risks of objective truth claims.

Similarly, the Apostle Paul claims that an historical event, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, is of “first importance” to Christians (1 Corinthians 15:1). That is, this event is the fundamental basis of the Christian faith. Paul then goes on to acknowledge that they would be liars for making such a claim if it weren’t true: “Moreover we are even found *to be* false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised” (vs. 15). What objective evidence does Paul offer for this incredible claim? He cites 6 different post-resurrection appearances which Jesus made to a total of more than 500 eyewitnesses. Paul even points out that most of these eyewitnesses were still alive at the time he wrote 1 Corinthians, if someone wished to verify his claims (vs. 6). These passages demonstrate that, far from dealing in subjective faith, the New Testament writers were committed to presenting objective facts and eyewitness testimony to support the truth of Christianity.

Dawkins says the evidence for evolution is available for anyone to read up on and decide if the evolutionists’ arguments are valid. Then he complains, “But if you have a belief that is based solely on faith, I can’t examine your reasons.” That charge is both confused and false. Since the New Testament often uses the words “belief” and “faith” synonymously (compare John 3:16 and Ephesians 2:8), Dawkins appears to be suggesting that faith is based on faith, which is redundant nonsense. Besides, the New Testament writers never ask us to just believe; rather, they invite their readers to believe based on the evidence presented. Thus, John writes, “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of

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## 1 Timothy 2:12 - Woman OR Wife? (cont)

man. The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman [*īshshah*] because she was taken out of Man [*īsh*].’”

These latter two words (*īsh* and *īshshah*) are much like *anēr* and *gunē* in the sense that they can be used either in the sense of “man” and “woman,” or in the sense of “husband” and “wife,” as determined by the context. In Genesis 2:22-23, where the subject is how the woman was created, these words are echoing “male” and “female” in Genesis 1:27 and thus are properly translated as “man” and “woman.” Verses 24 and 25 move on to the subject of marriage, and thus *īshshah* is here properly translated as “wife”—or more precisely, as “*his* wife,” since it has the possessive attached to it. (Likewise, in Genesis 3:6, *īsh* with the attached possessive is properly translated as “her husband.”)

Now we must ask the question concerning 1 Timothy 2:13-14, namely: when Paul uses Adam and Eve as the *basis* for the prohibition in verse 12, is he thinking of them as *a man* and *a woman*, or as *husband and wife*? The answer is that in verse 13 the reference is specifically to the order of creation: first Adam, then Eve. “For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.” He is thinking of them specifically in terms of the order in which they were created—not in terms of their relation as husband and wife. This is consistent with Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:22-23. This is also consistent with Paul’s explanation of the fact that “the man is the head of a woman” (1 Corinthians 11:3), namely, “For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake” (1 Corinthians 11:8-9).

We will notice that 1 Timothy 2:13 begins with the Greek word *gar*, properly translated as “for,” in the sense of “because.” I.e., the reason why a woman is not allowed to teach and to have authority over a man is because God by His sovereign will established an order of authority between the sexes when He created Adam the male before He created Eve the female. This is the point of 1 Corinthians 11:3-10, and it is the point here in 1 Timothy 2. (The fact that Eve “the woman” (*hē gunē*) was the first to be deceived and to sin is added as a further reason why this order of authority has been established. In 1 Timothy 2:13-14, Adam and Eve’s identity as husband and wife is not relevant to either the order of creation or the order in which they sinned.)

Our conclusion is that the context within which 1 Timothy 2:12 is set strongly favors seeing it as referring to men and women in general. The purpose of the letter as a whole (3:14-15) and the immediate context (2:8-11) show that this is a reference to how things should be done in the church.

### II. The Meaning of *Gunē* and *Anēr*.

Those who argue that 1 Timothy 2:12 refers only to wives and husbands in their marriage relationship stress the fact that the Greek words used here—*gunē* and *anēr*—can mean either “woman” and “man,” or “wife” and “husband.” As Staton’s first argument says, only the context can tell which meaning is intended, i.e., we cannot simply assume that the words mean “woman” and “man.”

It is true that the context in which these terms appear is crucial. But as we have just seen in our first main point above, the actual context of this verse overwhelmingly supports the translation of “woman” and “man.”

But there is more to be said about how to translate these words, namely, this: in passages where these words mean “wife” or “husband,” the author usually makes this clear by adding specific qualifiers. For example, instead of just saying “the wife” or “the husband,” the writer sometimes adds a possessive pronoun, i.e., “**his** wife,” or “**your** husband.” See, for example, Matthew 27:19; John 4:16; Acts 5:1; and 1 Corinthians 7:39. Sometimes these are reflexive pronouns, such as “the wife **of himself**” (1 Corinthians 7:2). Also, the writer may attach the Greek word *idios* (meaning “one’s own”) to the noun, e.g., “her **own** husband” (1 Corinthians 7:2; 14:35; Ephesians 5:22; Titus 2:5) or “his **own** wife” (Acts 24:24).

The lack of such definite indicators in 1 Timothy 2:12 is strong evidence that Paul is not referring to husbands and wives here. If this were his intention, we would expect him to say something like this: “I do not allow a wife to teach or exercise authority over **her** husband,” or “**her own** husband.” But there is no such possessive; in fact, there is not even a definite article! It is simply “**a** man.” (We should also note that in the important related passage, 1 Corinthians 11:3-15, none of these possessive indicators is used with the words *anēr* and *gunē*, which occur frequently. This is evidence of the fact that this text is about the roles and relationships of males and females, not husbands and wives.)

While we are talking about the terms *anēr* and *gunē*, we can respond to Staton’s second argument, namely, that anytime Paul used these words together and talked about submission, he was always referring to a wife and her husband. This is simply not true. We should note first of all that this particular use happens very infrequently. Besides 1 Timothy 2:12, we find it in two parallel passages, Ephesians 5:22ff. and Colossians 3:18-19. Here the terms do refer to husband and wife, but we should remember that in Ephesians 5:22 Paul makes sure we know this by using the definite indicator, “your **own** husbands,” which does not occur in 1 Timothy 2:12. Another such text is 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, where he also specifies “their **own** husbands.” The only other passage that fits Staton’s description (*anēr* and *gunē* used where submission is involved) is 1 Corinthians 11:3-15, and we have already shown that the context here points to *creation* as the context, and not to the home or marriage relationship. When Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:3 that “the man is the head of a woman,” he is talking about men as such and women as such, as the rest of this passage shows. Also, just noted, there is a complete absence of any possessive indicators in this text that would justify interpreting this text as referring to husbands and wives. (The fact that around 18 of the 60 translations found on the Bible Gateway website translate 11:3 as referring to husbands and wives is a shameful concession to our feminist culture.)

Thus we must conclude that Staton’s claim in his second argument is simply false, as are all attempts to translate *anēr* and *gunē* as “husband” and “wife” in 1 Timothy 2:12.

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# RECYCLED RICHES

*(Editor's Note: Over the past several months, we have received numerous inquiries about our Recycled Riches program. We are indeed thankful for the interest being shown. The following article appeared in The Restoration Herald, Vol LXXXIX, April 2010, written by Lee Mason. Here Lee provides details about this wonderful program.)*

## THE PRINCIPLE

Recycled Riches is perhaps the greatest lending program ever devised by our people. Loans from Recycled Riches are interest free. Yes, interest free! In 1974 the Christian Restoration Association became the coordinating office for this plan—a voluntary effort of co-operation on the part of a number of Christian churches and churches of Christ. Over the years 518 churches and individuals have contributed to the program, and many congregations have received loans. At the present time we have 22 active loans. [Note: these numbers were updated and accurate as of March 2020].

The Recycled Riches concept is as old as the New Testament which tells of offerings being received by churches for sister congregations, even across cultural lines (2 Corinthians 8). Chapter 9 continues with directions for sharing, and contains a wonderful promise: *“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed”* (2 Corinthians 9:8). This suggests that if we lack money for the Lord’s work, it is because we do not exercise good stewardship. James further states, *“You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong- motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures”* (James 4:3, NIV). God’s storehouse is without measure to faithful stewards.

## THE PROGRAM

That is what Recycled Riches is about—congregations which have been blessed, helping congregations which have needs. When

needs are supplied to churches, they can begin to help others.

To increase the effectiveness of the program, the trustees of the Christian Restoration Association established a Recycled Riches Fund. The fund is built by the contributions of churches and individuals. The two principal purposes—keeping the Lord’s money in the Lord’s work through interest-free loans, and recycling the funds—have been enhanced by the creation of this fund. The borrowing church will repay the principal of the loan through monthly payments to the fund. Thus, these repayments will be ready for immediate recycling in a loan to another church.

If a church borrows \$100,000 for 15 years at 7%, they will repay the loan plus \$61,789.40 in interest over the period of the loan. With Recycled Riches, a church may borrow \$100,000 and at the end of the 10 years they have paid back \$100,000 and spent no money on costly interest.

The Recycled Riches Fund is held and managed by the trustees of the Christian Restoration Association. The CRA has been managing funds since the early 1920’s. It was called into existence to manage an evangelistic fund left by the late Sidney Clarke. Others wanted to share in this way, so the Clarke Fund, later called the CRA, was set up. Through the years other bequests and funds have been submitted to the CRA to manage. These revolving-funds are still intact today, and are still working for the Lord. These trustees have a good track record in fund management.

Churches and individuals can make regular contributions to the fund as long as they desire to do so. As soon as the funds are available and a borrowing church has been certified as a valid recipient of a loan, the loan is made, and payments are returned monthly to the fund. The funds for the next loan are gathered from church and individual contributions as well as the loan repayments.

## THE PROBLEM

There are more churches needing help than there are churches who are willing to help. Some well-established churches call us and want a Recycled Riches loan just to lower their interest rates. It would be nice if we could do that, but we can’t. Some churches

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## 1 Timothy 2:12 - Woman OR Wife? (cont)

### III. The Reference to Childbearing in 1 Timothy 2:15.

Staton's fifth argument that 1 Timothy 2:12 refers to spouses comes from verse 15, where the reference to childbearing is said to prove that Paul must be talking about wives in this context. The subject in verse 15 is drawn from *hē gunē* in verse 14 and rendered thus: "But [the woman] will be saved through the childbearing, if they remain in faith and love and holiness with self-control."

This verse is very difficult to interpret, no matter what viewpoint one takes on gender roles. I will not attempt to go into all the details here but will refer my readers to two treatments of this verse. They take a slightly different view of what is meant by "saved" in this verse, but they agree on how this applies to womanhood in general. The first essay is by Andreas Köstenberger, titled "Saved Through Childbearing? A Fresh Look at 1 Timothy 2:15 Points to Protection from Satan's Deception." It appeared in the *CBMW NEWS*, 2:4 (September 1997), pp. 1-6, and is a summary of a much longer study in *Bulletin of Biblical Research* 7 (1997), pp. 107-144. Online, see the following: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/5mt.bf.org/2017/10/12-Saved-Through-Childbearing.pdf>.

The other reference is from Thomas Schreiner's essay cited above, "An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15," in *Women in the Church*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger et al. Schreiner discusses this verse on pp. 115-120 of this chapter. His point is that Paul uses childbearing to represent "the woman's domestic role as a mother in distinction from the man," i.e., "as representing the appropriate role for women." This relates to the rest of the passage "because a woman should not violate her role by teaching or exercising authority over a man; instead, she should take her proper role as a mother of children." Thus "Paul saw in the woman's function of giving birth a divinely intended and ongoing difference of function between men and women" (p. 118). It is important to see that childbearing is mentioned because it is the most exemplary characteristic of the God-given role for women in general. Paul "selects childbearing because it is the most notable example of the divinely intended difference in role between men and women .... Thus, Paul generalizes from the experience of women in using a representative example of women maintaining their proper role." Schreiner adds, "When Paul says that a woman will be saved by childbearing, he means ... that they will be saved by adhering to their ordained role" (ibid.). He goes on to explain what is meant by "saved" (pp. 118-119).

The bottom line for us is that verse 15 does not mean that verse 12 has to be talking about wives as such. It is talking about the role for which God created women as women, as distinct from men. It falls within the general subject of the creation order as established by God from the beginning.

### IV. The Connection with 1 Peter 3:1-7.

Finally, we must respond to Staton's third argument, namely, that 1 Timothy 2:9-15 is "nearly identical" to 1 Peter 3:1-6, which is obviously talking about husbands and wives. "Thus there is no good, objective reason to say that Peter was talking about hus-

band/wife relationships while Paul was not." I confess that when I first read this, I almost laughed out loud. "Nearly identical"? That conclusion is about as far from "objective" as one could get. The main similarity is that each text emphasizes the necessity for women to dress modestly while focusing on spiritual beauty rather than outward looks. Peter says nothing about women learning and teaching, which is one of the main points in 1 Timothy 2.

In fact, it is much easier to show how very different these two texts are from one another, than to find similarities between them. For one thing, 1 Peter 3 is clearly and unambiguously about wives, since verse 1 specifies that "you wives" will be dealing with "your own [*idios*] husbands" (repeated in verse 5). Here is the possessive indicator, screamingly absent in 1 Timothy 2. Also, the subject matter in 1 Peter 3 is evangelism within the family, again starkly different from the church context of 1 Timothy 2. For another contrast, Peter uses Sarah's submissive relationship with Abraham as a model for wives, while Paul uses the original creation order between Adam and Eve as the model for men and women in general. One last item is the fact that Peter adds the complementary way the husband should act toward his wife (verse 7), while Paul is silent on the man's role. (In my teaching on gender roles I usually call attention to the parallel that DOES exist between 1 Peter 3:1-7 and *Ephesians 5:21-33*. Here there are clear similarities, while very few appear between 1 Peter 3 and 1 Timothy 2.)

### V. Conclusion.

Through my many decades of focusing on the study of and the teaching of Bible doctrine, I have noticed this characteristic among Biblical and theological scholars in general: the *will* (what they *want* to believe) often dominates the *intellect* (what reason and evidence show to be true). As Paul puts it in Romans 1:18, ungodly and unrighteous inclinations cause us to "suppress the truth in unrighteousness." I have found this to be especially true over the last 40 or 50 years regarding the subject of gender roles.

In this essay I believe that I have shown why 1 Timothy 2:12 cannot be taken as referring just to wives and husbands, an approach that would leave us with no restrictions or distinctions regarding gender roles in church practices. However, this is only one of many ploys that have been used to suppress the truth of this verse, as indicated in my introduction near the beginning above. The two-fold task that God has assigned to church elders (and to all Bible teachers, I believe) is that we must "exhort in sound doctrine" and also "refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9). Thus we must be aware of (and beware of) all attempts to suppress the sound teaching of 1 Timothy 2:12, and do our best to speak the truth about it in love (*Ephesians 4:15*). But mostly, we must do our best to make the church of Jesus Christ as close to the ideal set forth in the New Testament as we possibly can. RH

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(Editor's Note: Volume XIII of The Collected Writings of Jack Cottrell, *The Gender Roles Debate* was released in February of this year. For those interested in additional study on the Biblical teaching about gender roles, this volume is highly recommended. You can order your copy from the CRA online bookstore at [thecra.org](http://thecra.org).)

## Recycled Riches (cont)

want to borrow, but are not willing to put mission money into Recycled Riches to help others. That isn't the way our Lord would want us to live. The "Golden Rule" comes to mind at this point. We do not understand why every congregation in our brotherhood doesn't send a gift each month to Recycled Riches.

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# A Page from the Book

## Be Kind and Tenderhearted to One Another

*“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you”—  
Ephesians 4:32*

I saw a quote on Facebook a few months ago that read like this, “You seriously have no idea what people are dealing with in their personal life. So just be nice, it’s that simple.” How hard is it to be kind to everyone? Yes, everyone, even people we have disagreements with or differences of opinion. My fear is that for many who call themselves disciples of Christ, they have allowed themselves to become very vitriolic and have used their influence to malign those with whom they disagree.



Jim Book

The reality is Paul didn’t say be kind to those who can do good to you and who can further your personal cause. He didn’t say be kind only to those whom you agree with or whom you personally like. No, he places no conditions on kindness. Be kind to everyone. He didn’t say we had to agree with everyone. He didn’t say we had to applaud or

affirm the behavior of everyone. Quite the contrary. Paul made a lot of enemies when he preached. He made a lot of enemies when he wrote his letters to the many churches in Asia Minor. But he never lost his ability to be kind and considerate of those whom he agreed with or disagreed with.

Paul admonishes the church at Corinth in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1 Corinthians, “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up. Love does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil.” Even when Paul exercised discipline in the church, he commanded we do it with the intent of salvaging the wayward soul, not killing it. As he exhorted in 1 Corinthians 5:4-5, “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” Paul is not shirking his responsibility to bring discipline within the body, but his motivation to discipline the backslider is not just for the sake of repentance but also for the sake of renewal.

Paul knew that his witness and testimony were at stake. I think a lot of Christians forget that a very skeptical world looks long and hard as to how believers speak and react to each other. That is why Jesus commands us to practice “brotherly kindness” throughout scriptures. Our testimony through actions is very much in the spotlight. When believers take it upon themselves to castigate and openly ridicule others, either on social media or in print, it allows Satan to get a foothold. This is why Paul warns in Ephesians 4:27,

“nor give place to the devil.” Kenneth Boles writes, “When emotions are out of control, the devil steps in to exploit the situation. Whether in an action taken in the heat of passion, or in a smoldering resentment, the devil is given room to operate.” When this takes place, our anger, even though justified, leads to sin (Ephesians 4:26). What happens then to the believer who permits his heart to become calcified is bitterness sets in and what ultimately happens is the Holy Spirit say, “I’m outta here!” (Ephesians 4:30).

Now we tend to justify our childlike actions by pretending to be the consciences of the brotherhood. “If I don’t call this person out, or if I don’t unmask the hypocrite, why the world will collapse under the weight of its own ignorance. Therefore, I will be as critical and nasty as I can be as I run this spiritual wolf in sheep’s clothing right into the ground.” Meanwhile facts usually get ignored and within just a few minutes or sentences the entire debate becomes extremely personal and the war of words begin.

When the Apostle Paul uses the term “kind” he is referring to more than just using a word of encouragement to others. He is suggesting that we allow ourselves, and permit ourselves, to provide a service to others. In the words of John, “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” Yes, we are commanded to speak the truth even when it hurts or causes emotional pain. But words of truth spoken in hate carry no weight!!

The fact of the matter is this: it takes very little courage and effort to be hateful. It seems that gossip comes a lot easier than to offer up a kind word. It takes so little effort to rant and ridicule. It is almost a natural reaction to fire off on folks in whom we disagree. It seems almost second nature to get on Facebook and blow someone up publicly... and we claim to do all of this in the name of Jesus.

Interesting that when Paul starts off the fifth chapter of Ephesians he challenges the brethren at Ephesus to “Be imitators of God, and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.” Did you get that? How can one demean a brother or sister in Christ and imitate God at the same time? Folks, it simply cannot be done.

Let’s try to imitate Christ when we converse with our neighbors and colleagues at work. Let us all try to season our speech with those brothers and sisters we share faith with. Let’s disagree without being disagreeable. Let’s find ways we can share our thoughts and beliefs with those in and out of the faith all the while reflecting on John’s words in 1 John 1:10 “He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.”

One famous preacher once wrote, “I believe the single most significant decision I can make on a day-to-day basis is my choice of attitude. It is more important than my past, my education, my bankroll, my successes or failures, fame or pain, what the people think of me or say about me, my circumstances, or my position. Attitude is that single string that keeps me going or cripples my progress.” RH

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## Fanned into Flames

**P**aul to Timothy: “For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace” 2 Timothy 1:6-9a (NIV).



Jennifer Bullard

Reflecting upon Paul’s initial union with Timothy in Lystra (Acts 16), it is apparent he was impressed by Timothy’s reputation and potential. Timothy’s travels with Paul shored up the certainty that he was an earnest and reliable ally in sharing the gospel and training the church. By the time Timothy received the second letter from an imprisoned Paul, the tenor was personal and passionate.

Paul said he was reminded of Timothy’s sincere faith that he was persuaded lives in him.

Even so, Paul advocated to Timothy to “fan *into* flame” the gift of God. This is an interesting charge given that there is no mystery as to the confidence Paul had in him. You mean Timothy’s gift from God living inside him wasn’t flaming? Paul, in his classically zealous manner, continues to turn up the heat. God did not give us a spirit of timidity. God gave us a spirit of power. God gave us a spirit of love. God gave us a spirit of self-discipline. Don’t be ashamed to testify. Suffer for the gospel.

Now, we’re getting somewhere. Timothy had it together, I’m sure. Paul, who gave it all to the cause for Christ, is encouraging Timothy that there’s more inside him. Much more! The “much more” was critical to the expansion of the kingdom. Paul wasn’t going to be around much longer and the encouragement for Timothy was to stir like never before. It’s our turn to be fanning into flame the gift of God. We, the church, contend with a temptation to be idle by relying on the testimony of good behavior and faithful practices. We hold the knowledge and experience of a Savior who is little known to so many, yet to change lives requires words. Brave, powerful, loving, and disciplined words. Words of testimony and words of truth and words of prayer. This “much more” is often stored up and

not aflame. It is so easy to love Jesus. What is more challenging is becoming more fascinated with His story than our own.

A few years ago, I was traveling when a gentleman shared with me about a woman his family once knew. There is no reference of her in an encyclopedia or, in this technical age, Wikipedia. Outside of her immediate stomping grounds, I’ve yet to meet someone who has heard of her, though she was relevant enough to be featured on Ralph Edwards’ *This Is Your Life* television program on October 29, 1958. She also has a mountain in these United States named for her.

Ogla Schaaf was born in Germany in the 1880s. She came to the United States as a toddler, along with her family, homesteading in a sod house in northeastern Colorado. After several years of crushing hardship, the family relocated to Chama, New Mexico, and eventually to southwestern Colorado. It was in the Durango area that Olga, as a young teen, began breaking horses to help make ends meet. Before long, she had a string of burros packing supplies into the mines throughout the La Platas on narrow trails rising 10,000 feet and higher. At 5’4”, she heaved seventy-pound bags onto the sides and backs of her jacks, hauling essentials to the miners ranging from food to coal to TNT. She worked alone with a team of burros doing a man’s job, wearing men’s clothes, and did so without reservation. After unloading her burros at the mines, she packed up her team with ore and hauled it out for the mining companies and remained dedicated to this occupation for 40 years.

There are a number of stories about Olga, including the time she broke her leg en route to the mines, remounting her horse nonetheless and guiding the burros onward and upward. She was known for her loving care of her stock, naming them and personalizing their saddles. There were the occasions she transported the sick and the dead from the mines back down the mountain. Have you heard of her? Google Olga Schaaf Little and read up. There are some great photographs to check out as well.

In the winter of 1912, the La Platas were hit with 10 feet of snow and the temperatures plunged to 30 degrees below 0. Seventeen men, along with Olga, were snowed in at the Neglected Mine with no food. She strung her team of burros and assigned the men to grip the line between the pack animals in order to trudge them out to safety. It was seven miles to Transfer Camp. They headed out at 7:30 a.m. and arrived at Transfer at 11:00 p.m. Some suffered frostbite, but all lived. These men credit Olga Schaaf Little with saving their lives. She was about 27 years old.

*continued on page 18*

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

## Wonderful Grace

The last few weeks I have been preaching about grace. I remembered a lesson I had in doctrine class while at Atlanta Christian College. The lesson was about the Three Graces of God. I remembered the outline that I was given and took those three points and added some meat to the outline. I wanted to share this with you this month.

We all know about God's Saving Grace. Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."



Tony Sullivan

We are saved by God's grace. If it weren't for the grace of God, we would all be lost. There would be no hope. God's grace allows us to receive a gift we do not deserve. God, in grace, does for us what we can't do for ourselves. God's grace does for us what we would not do for ourselves. God's grace saves us.

We can all rejoice because of God's saving grace.

There is also God's Universal Grace. That's the favor that he shows even to those who are still living in sin. He allows it to rain on the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45). There are blessings God gives to all men. It doesn't matter if they are Christians or pagans, they still benefit from His favor.

Why would God do this? Because one of the ways God leads men to repentance is through His kindness. In Romans 2:4 Paul writes, "Or do you presume on the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?"

The sad part is most of the world doesn't see the love and hope God holds out to them. God doesn't receive pleasure in banishing men into an eternal hell. He gets no enjoyment in raining down His wrath of the lost.

He desires all men to be saved (2 Peter 3:9). We can see in Scripture how He seeks to reach out to man. He sent the flood yet allowed Noah 120 years to preach (2 Peter 2:5). He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with brimstone, but He let Lot preach (2 Peter 2:7). The New Testament tells us He is coming again in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who don't know God and who have not obeyed the gospel. Yet He allows men to preach today (2 Thessalonians 1:8). God is giving all men an opportunity to hear

the gospel, He wants all men to be saved. This is grace.

Then there is God's Sustaining Grace. This is the grace He gives us when we are going through troubling times.

We need to know that this grace does not mean that our suffering and heartache will be gone in a short time. It only means that God, through His word, and through His Comforter, will be there with us.

Paul knew this. He was suffering a thorn in the flesh. He asked God three times to remove this thorn. Each time God gave him the same answer. "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

This grace from God helps in times of stress. We've all been through times in our lives when we thought we would break. David said, "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Psalms 73:26).

Many times, after we go through this period of sorrow and trouble, we look back and wonder, "How did I get through that?" The answer is the grace that God gave us.

The Psalmist wrote in Psalms 56:3, "Even when I am afraid I keep trusting you."

God's grace covers more than our sins. It blesses us each day with the gifts of God and it carries us through hard times. It really is, Amazing Grace.

**God's grace covers more than our sins. It blesses us each day with the gifts of God and it carries us through hard times.**

Before I close out this month, I would like to make you aware of a book I've just read and really enjoyed. I had the pleasure of working with Reggie Thomas on more than one occasion. He taught me at Atlanta Christian College. He had invited me to travel overseas with him, and in the last couple of years I had the honor of being on programs with him in Ohio and Oklahoma. Reggie was one of the most dedicated men of God I knew. He will be missed.

Reggie traveled for 72 years carrying the gospel to 82 different nations. God had used him in many wonderful ways.

Reggie had recently completed his third book. It is a book of memoirs concerning his life and 72 years of preaching. You will enjoy this book. If you would like to have your own copy you can order it on Amazon. Just copy this link <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1791673392>.

See You Next Month!

Quote of the Month: Always go to other people's funerals, otherwise they won't come to yours. RH

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## Here's an Idea

The congregation of the church I attend has one staff member who leads the mission thrust of the church. He has many good ideas and the world missions outreach of our church is growing. However, as I view his ideas and programs, it becomes very evident that prayer comes before everything else. He is successful at getting people to pray for our missionary effort. I'll give you a recent illustration of his success in this area.

My wife and I teach a Senior Bible Study on Thursdays, both morning and evening. The attendees answer previously prepared questions at home, then come together to discuss them, followed by our lecture over the subject. They know the meaning of commitment.



Ben Merold

He asks for three minutes either before or after the lecture. He never goes over time! He uses those three minutes to introduce a visiting missionary or to tell of some interesting thing that is happening in an area that we serve. He has a simple program to remind our seniors to pray daily for our missionaries and for world evangelism. It works! I know when I see him standing at the back of our chapel waiting for his three minutes that he is prepared to say something interesting before he asks for a daily prayer commitment.

To grab attention to, and as a reminder of, this commitment, he gets postcard-sized pictures of the missionaries or of some of their particular converts doing some evangelistic work. On the back of the picture is a list of things to be prayed for, both personal and for the effort – more listeners, another convert, money for a particular project, etc. There is space for the senior who prays for the missionary or his work to write a note to the recipient. These get mailed to the missions to bless and encourage them. Imagine how this makes the missionary feel! To know someone back home actually cares enough to pray diligently for his effort.

Now here's my idea for you. Your congregation may not be large enough to have a staff position for a missions minister. But, you can do this with a volunteer committee. You have to start with a right-to-the-point person who will use his time wisely. He will make a few remarks of interest to the classes or groups and then ask them to commit to pray daily for your church missions program. The constant emphasis on prayer will make the missions program grow, but it will also make the congregation grow because of this spiritual law.

The leadership of the church must endeavor to place the congregation in a situation that is conducive to receiving the blessing of God. The constant, purposeful concern of world outreach is a long step into the realm of God's blessing for a local church. RH

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## Churches Seeking Ministers

\* **Winchester, KY** — Christview Christian Church is searching for a senior minister. The current minister is leaving after a successful 22-year ministry with the church. Christview is located just outside Winchester, KY, approximately 20 miles west of Lexington, KY, and serves a county population of approximately 35,000. Our 2019 average attendance was 177.

Additional information can be obtained by contacting Doug Christopher by email at [wclsc@att.net](mailto:wclsc@att.net). Resumes may be sent to that email address or to postal address 500 Calloway White Road, Winchester, KY 40391.

\* **Myrtle Beach, SC** — Surfside Christian Church, located just south of Myrtle Beach, SC, is looking for a minister. They are a small church with excellent growth potential. Candidates should be doctrinally sound, committed to Restoration Movement principles, and preferably a graduate of one of our Bible colleges. A parsonage, salary, and benefits are all negotiable.

Interested candidates should send a resume to Surfside Christian Church, 340 N. Azalea Drive, Surfside Beach, SC 29575; phone 843-238-4779; email: [surfsidechristian@frontier.com](mailto:surfsidechristian@frontier.com).



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### About Our Lesson Writer



E.L. Jones is one of the preaching ministers at Compass Christian Church in Mechanicsville, VA. He and his wife, Christie, are local to the area and both share a passion to reach their community and direct them towards Jesus Christ. They have two children, Aaron (9) and Hailey (7), who bring much joy to their lives.

Their vision as a family is to make an impact in others' lives by living for Jesus in theirs. E.L.'s goal in ministry is to introduce people to a life of hope found in Jesus Christ and a life of community found with other believers.

# The Return of Joy

Note: New International Version (1984) used as text

Uniform Lesson

May 3, 2020

Zephaniah 3:14-20

## Background of Text

The message of Zephaniah is a simple one: judgment is coming, but blessings will follow for those who listen to the warning to repent.

This message perhaps had an initial fulfillment following their restoration under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. But the ultimate fulfillment relates to the age of the Messiah, which began when the church was established. When Christ started His spiritual kingdom, we see throughout the New Testament that those who repented and were baptized for the forgiveness of

sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit were added to His church. We see in 1 Thessalonians 2:12 “God calls you into His kingdom and glory,” so God is “gathering” His people. In this gathering we, Christians, enjoy the presence of God and His blessings. When Christ returns and comes again, our joy shall be made complete.

In this lesson I hope to encourage you that our joy is in Christ, and He will come one day to deliver on His promises, but let’s take a deeper look at the passage.

## Understanding God’s Word

Verses 14-15: Tells the people of Israel that there will be joy in Jerusalem. The call to sing and the reason to be glad and rejoice is because the Lord has taken away their punishment and has removed their enemies.

In life we make mistakes and we don’t always do what is best for God and for others. Just like the people of Israel had made mistakes, God shows them mercy. In our Christian walk we experience consequences of our actions. Those consequences don’t only affect us, but they affect those around us, such as: our families, our friends, our church, and those who observe our walk with Christ. We can be encouraged by this text that there is hope for a better future.

Verses 16-17: Tells them not to be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord will be with them and will provide them with gladness, love, and singing.

There are times where we experience loss, but something we learn from this text is that God provides restoration and wants to save His people by providing salvation. When life gets

difficult because of the consequences of our mistakes, God in His mercy and in His grace provides a way for us to be restored in Him; not just to be restored, but to the point where we can experience true joy and love. We experience this when we clothe ourselves in Christ in baptism and we are raised to a new life in Christ. Paul says in Galatians 3:27, “for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” He also provides us with these words in Romans 6:3-4, “Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

Verses 18-20: Shares with us that the Lord has given them great assurance! God will gather those who sorrow over the reproach of His people, God will deal with those who afflicted His people, and God will gather those who have been scattered and give them praise and honor. We want justice and peace, and

we expect to be treated with fairness and honesty. God the Father has done so by giving us His son, Jesus Christ.

The message of the apostles is not really much different today. The “day of the Lord” is coming (2 Peter 3:7-10). God’s people, the church, are instructed to remain faithful (2 Peter 3:11-14). Are we listening to their message? Peter also had this to say to those who do listen.

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that He may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. Heaven must receive Him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as He promised long ago through His holy prophets” (Acts 3:19-21).

Be converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ by obeying Him and being faithful to His commands (Mark 16:15-16) and (Acts 2:38). If we can, then we can look beyond the coming judgment because the Lord’s blessings are sure to follow!

# A New Day Is Coming!

Note: New International Version (1984) used as text

Uniform Lesson

May 10, 2020

Zechariah 8:1-8, 11-17

## Background of Text

Israel was finally allowed to return home after 70 years of Babylonian exile. This happened by the decree of Cyrus and they returned to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-5). We see in Ezra 2, that Zerubbabel led the first group of exiles, and while they were quick to build the altar and the foundation of the temple, their adversaries resisted which led to a long delay. Just as we all need encouragement, God decided to send two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to encourage Zerubbabel. Concerning the man, Zechariah, his name means “whom Jehovah remembers.” He was of priestly decent, who was called to be a prophet to gather up the people in building the temple.

He prophesied around 520-518 B.C., and out of all the minor prophets, his book is the longest. It is considered to be one of the most difficult books in the Old Testament: apocalyptic in nature and filled with symbolic visions, like the book of Daniel and Ezekiel. This book should be approached with humility.

The basic message and the theme are very clear, “I am zealous for Zion.” When reading through this book, one must keep in mind that the primary purpose of Zechariah’s preaching was to encourage the people in building the temple, which leads us into this lesson, that a new day is coming!

In life we tend to always look toward the future and what it might have in store for us. Almost all of us hope for a better future, and the thought of things not getting better can lead to fear. We try as best as we can to create peaceful conditions in our everyday life that will hopefully help set us up for a better future. As we do our very best to live God-fearing lives, we do have a sense that some things are wrong in the world, and it easily can lead to us feeling powerless to fix it. We see lots of brokenness and injustice in the world, and sometimes it can simply be overwhelming. Israel was overwhelmed and needed encouragement, just like you and I do. So let’s dig a little deeper into our text.

## Understanding God’s Word

Verses 1-2: “The Lord Almighty” is zealous for Zion with great zeal. The reference to God’s jealousy is one of zeal, strong emotion in this case seen as the wrath of a warrior. Throughout this book the divine name “the Lord Almighty” is used 36 times and in this chapter alone it is used 15 times. Because the Lord’s people were disobedient, they deserved the wrath of God. We see here that the Lord Almighty still cares for His people and wants to restore them and bring them salvation.

Verse 3: So, Yahweh makes a proclamation “I am very jealous for Zion” and now the messenger says here that He will make a promise “I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem.” Here we see that Jerusalem will be called “the City of Truth,” “The Mountain of the Lord of Hosts,” and “The Holy Mountain.” The city’s new name reflects the character of the God whose people they are (Zechariah 8:8). Zechariah is not the only prophet who speaks about the Holy Mountain. Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel also make references to the “Holy Mountain.”

Verses 4-6: The Lord Almighty’s future for Jerusalem: it will be a place of peace for the elderly and the young.

Verses 7-8: The Lord will bring His remnant back, and He will be their God. This is a very encouraging message to the Lord’s people, to know that their God is still their God.

Verses 9-13: Those building the temple should take heart, for the Lord will make them a blessing. The Lord promised Abram that his ancestors would be a blessing to the world (Genesis 12:3). Disobedience turned that to a curse, but Zechariah promised that the ability to bless the world would be restored.

Verses 14-15: Just as God once sought their punishment, now He is determined to do good for them. The message of hope is for them to know that their God is making a way for them.

Verses 16-17: The Lord’s desire for Jerusalem is for the people to speak truth, show justice and peace, not evil. Basically, to do what should have been done before the exile!

The theme verse for this lesson is found in verse 15, it says, “so now I have determined to do good again to Jerusalem and Judah. Do not be afraid.” I have to say how

comforting and exciting this must have been to those in Zechariah’s day. It certainly should have encouraged the people to continue with rebuilding the temple. But more importantly, it should have encouraged them to look forward to the future. While there may have been a partial fulfillment of these prophecies with the rebuilding of the temple and walls of Jerusalem, it is likely that there are Messianic elements as well, with fulfillment beginning with the establishment of the church in Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-3; Acts 2:1-47; Hebrews 12:12).

Also, with fulfillment culminating with the ushering in of the “New Jerusalem” in the “new heavens and new earth” following the Lord’s second coming (Hebrews 11:16; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1-22:5). Let us learn from those before us to honor God above all, and to not follow our own self-imposed religion. What the Lord preferred was for them to have listened to His Word in the beginning. Jesus taught in Matthew 15:8-9 that man-made traditions lead to vain worship. If we desire to truly be citizens in the “New Jerusalem,” then let us concentrate on doing the will of the Father, not on making up new ways to worship Him.

# Just Rewards

Note: New International Version (1984) used as text

Uniform Lesson

May 17, 2020

Jeremiah 21:8-14

## Background of Text

In this text we see that Zedekiah has a request and Jeremiah's reply. Zedekiah, who was weak-willed and indecisive, came to the throne of Judah in 597 B.C. at the pleasure of the Babylonian monarch, Nebuchadnezzar. Throughout his reign, Zedekiah was pressured to revolt against his Babylonian overlord and give allegiance to the Pharaoh of Egypt. This was strongly opposed by Jeremiah in chapter 27 verses 12-15. So eventually Zedekiah yielded to pressures, both internal and external, and revolted against Babylon in late 589 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar promptly marched his army westward and upon reaching Judah, soon eliminated her fortified cities. By next year, 588 B.C.,

Jerusalem was under siege. Zedekiah, distraught by the enemy's advance, seeks advice from the prophet. His reply back was startling. There is only one possible means of escape – submission to the enemy. The words of Jeremiah would have been seen as seditious to the King. Zedekiah was hoping for a message of deliverance. Jeremiah gave a message of surrender! This chapter continues the running battle between Jeremiah and Pashhur (Jeremiah 20:1-2; 21:1). King Zedekiah was really hoping for a message of deliverance which is not what he received. This is shown when Jeremiah renamed Pashhur (liberation) to "terror-all-around" (20:3).

## Understanding God's Word

Verses 8-9: Here we see the Lord's advice. He tells the prophet to tell the people He is setting before them a way of life and a way of death. The prophet's message to the king was that whoever surrenders to the Babylonian army will live, but whoever stays in the city will die by the sword, famine, or plague. This was by far not at all what the King wanted to hear and was hoping for, but this was the message from the Lord. In these verses we see that the Lord gives a clear message for the people to follow, and we learn that sometimes that message isn't always what we would like to receive or follow.

Verse 10: This verse gives us the explanation, that there is no longer any hope for this city. The Lord has determined to do this city harm. He said it will be given into the hands of the Babylonian king, and he will destroy it.

Verses 11-12: The day of reckoning has come to the royal house of Judah. This final part of the message still calls for justice and righteousness. Jeremiah addresses the whole house of David relative to the responsibilities of all good kings. He insists that justice is to be executed as a daily practice (in the morning) and that the king is to deliver from the hand

of the oppressor those who are weak and helpless. The royal house of Judah is warned that God's wrath will come upon them as an unquenchable fire if they fail to rule with justice and equity. Verse 12 suggests that punishment might still be averted, but that is very unlikely, given the inevitability of destruction that has been given by Jeremiah's prophecies for the past several years. However you see it, the certainty of punishment resumes in verse 13.

Verses 13-14: The people are speaking with great confidence on how they have defended themselves against all of their oppressors. "Who can come against us?", they ask. This confidence comes from the belief that the Lord is with them, just as He always has been. The Lord has been there for His people and He has always provided a way for them to overcome, but this time it is different. For the Lord Almighty is now against them, and He will make sure they are punished. He says, "I will punish you as your deeds deserve." We have all heard our parents say, "I have had enough, that's it." The Lord has finally shared through His prophet Jeremiah, "I have had enough."

The key verse from this passage comes from Jeremiah 21:12a, which says, "This

is what the Lord says: administer justice every morning; rescue from the hand of his oppressor the one who has been robbed." As we live our Christian life, we experience justice and injustice, and for the latter we like to see things be corrected. We can learn a great lesson on how to deal with our choices and the way we live by making sure we live by God's standards. There is a lot of evil in this world, and that means we face daily choices on how to live and act. We who are saved by the blood of Christ have been rewarded with this amazing gift of grace, but we also should be wise and careful that we do not take it for granted.

Paul warned the church and he wrote in Romans 6 that we should certainly not keep on sinning so that grace may increase, but we should die to sin. He told us in Colossians to put to death whatever belongs to our sinful nature. You see, God expects His children to live for Him and by Him. When we start changing the rules, or bending to the pressures around us, we should realize that God's judgement will be cast upon us. Let me encourage you all to do exactly what Paul has admonished us to do, which is to keep running the race, and stay focused on Christ.

# Do the Right Thing

Note: New International Version (1984) used as text

Uniform Lesson

May 24, 2020

Jeremiah 22:1-10

## Background of Text

In Jeremiah 22 we see a continuation of the Lord addressing the king's household as we saw in Jeremiah 21. This chapter is directed to each individual king from Jeremiah's career, except Zedekiah. It tells of the judgment against evil kings. This oracle (Jeremiah 22:1-9) is divided into three parts, each part begins with "This is what the Lord says" (vv. 1,3,6). Again going back to our last lesson, this is not a message King Zedekiah was hoping to hear. He was hoping for

the Lord to once again show His mercy to His people, and to bring deliverance to them once again, and to conquer their enemies.

This chapter continues to show why the Lord will not deliver them, but just the opposite will happen—their enemies will triumph over them and punish them. Let's take a closer look at the text before moving on to how this applies to us as Christians.

## Understanding God's Word

Verses 1-2: This chapter begins with a message to the House of David from the Lord. It is a message that gives an urgent call to repent. In these verses we see clear instructions to whom this message should be proclaimed. It is for the one who sits on the throne of David, the king's officials, and the people of Judah who enter through the gates. This was a word specifically for the king. He should take sober care to listen because he sat on the throne of David.

Verses 3-5: The message is to execute judgment and righteousness. Jeremiah's first message to the king was very much like the message begun in the previous chapter (Jeremiah 22:11-12). Speaking for God, he called upon him to perform his responsibilities as king in a godly and righteous way. This command assumes there was great corruption and injustice at the highest levels of the kingdom. Jeremiah starts off verse 4 with this, "For if you are careful to carry out these commands," and he starts verse 5 like this, "But if you do not obey these commands." I find this very interesting and worth noting, Jeremiah warned the king that repentance and the doing of justice would be rewarded. He follows that with rejection he would be punished. The choice was again set before Judah and her rulers. We also see in verse 5 that the Lord swears by Himself. Other places where the Lord swears by Himself

include Jeremiah 49:13, 51:14. There is no stronger affirmation than this.

Verses 6-7: These verses speak of the coming judgement. Where it says, "you are like Gilead to me, like the summit of Lebanon," these were choice regions in or near the Promised Land. God used the valued places to show how valued the house of David was to Him. Then the Lord says, "I will send destroyers against you," God emphasized the point that He would not fight for them against the Babylonians. Instead, what the Lord does say is that He will fight against them, preparing the soldiers Himself. The coming judgment has been set and soon the house of Judah is going to have to answer for their wicked ways.

Verses 8-9: We see in these verses that nations will ask why. They will ask "Why has the Lord done such a thing to this great city?" Jeremiah pictured the people of the nations seeing all of the destruction of Jerusalem and wondering why. They would probably wonder, were these not the people of God? Was the God of Israel weaker than the god of the Babylonians? The answer to the question of the nations was simple. It was because Judah departed from the Lord, forsaking their covenant with Him. Their idolatry led to this destruction.

Verse 10: Tells them not to weep for the dead king or even to mourn his loss.

It does say to weep bitterly for those who were exiled, for they will never return to their homes or land again. The dead king for whom the people were not to weep was godly King Josiah, who had been killed in battle in 609 B.C.; rather, the people were to weep for his evil son, Jehoahaz, in exile.

The key verse from this passage is found in Jeremiah 22:3b, where it says, "Act with justice and righteousness." We experience the consequences of our actions and our inactions; we can learn from history that God is a jealous God who wants our full devotion and allegiance. It would do us well to act with justice and righteousness, especially if we are in any type of leadership position within the church. We see here that an entire nation was punished because of the actions and inactions of a king. We still see today around our world how innocent civilians suffer oppression because of the mistakes and mishandling of power through evil leaders. Jerusalem, the house of Judah, was punished for their mistakes and forsaking the Lord almighty. The physical desolation that is predicted here in Jeremiah 22 parallels the city's spiritual desolation decried by Jesus in Matthew 23:37-39. Let everyone proclaim the name of Jesus, and let us know that He alone has come and brought salvation for all people.



# Measure Up!

Uniform Lesson

May 31, 2020

Note: New International Version (1984) used as text

Hosea 11:1-2, 7-10; 12:1-2, 6-14

## Background of Text

Hosea is a very interesting book; it is widely seen in terms of two major divisions: chapters 1-3 and 4-14, the latter including prophetic oracles against northern Israel for covenant infidelity prior to that nation's exile by Assyria in 722 B.C. The historical context is that of the material prosperity of northern Israel (Hosea 12:8), which went hand in hand with economic injustice (Hosea 12:7). The theme of this book could be proposed as "God's redeeming love." Now when you read through Hosea, this theme might come across as strange, as you see God's indictment of Israel in chapters 4-7 and God's punishment for Israel in chapters 8-10. But the first three chapters, Hosea's experience with Gomer, serves

as an analogy of God's experience with Israel. After the adultery there was a period of separation, and after the separation there was the ultimate restoration.

What we learn from this is that Israel would eventually be restored, but only after a period of separation. Another way to summarize chapters 4-14: God is holy (Hosea 4-7), God is Just (Hosea 8-10), and lastly God is love (Hosea 11-14). Having already declared the holiness and justice of God, Hosea now proclaims His great love for Israel. Through this book we see disloyalty, a change of behavior, pursuit for prosperity, demands for justice, and a desperation to love and be loved. Let's take a closer look at this text for today's lesson.

## Understanding God's Word

Hosea 11:1-2: The Lord loved Israel despite their rebellion. We see in these verses that the Lord loved Israel since the beginning. God brought Israel out of Egypt, yet they worshipped the Baals. We see in the Old Testament that the more God called Israel, the farther away they went. Israel's disobedience is what led them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years, and finally after obtaining the Promised Land, we see a nation who in return is unfaithful and begins to worship other gods, like we see in verse 2b, the worshipping of Baals.

Verses 7-10: No matter if they appeal to the Most High, their heart is so set on following the Baals that the Lord says He will not exalt them, that their cry for mercy will be rejected. Something interesting to point out in verse 7 is that the Lord continues to call Israel "My people" just -like a father would continue to call his child who has rebelled, his son. The Lord still cares for His people, but by their unfaithfulness we see in verse 5, that God will send them to Assyria because of their backsliding. Beginning with verse 8 and going through to verse 10, we see that God will return them to their homes. In the College Press Commentary, it says, "Whether a parent decides to let the child face the consequences of his deeds or to exact some punishment, there comes a

time when the parent questions his or her own judgment. Devotion wrestles with duty. God openly expresses this kind of wrestling to Israel. Just as Abraham debated with God about the future of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:16-33) and Moses challenged God's decision to destroy His people because of their response to the negative report of the 10 spies (Numbers 13:25-14:38), Israel's actions make the Lord question the punishment he has predicted for the past 10 chapters" (Shank).

Hosea 12:1-2: Ephraim (Israel) is full of sin, and while Judah still walks with God to a degree, God has a complaint against Judah as well. The charge against Judah we see in verse 2, that Jacob will receive punishment according to his ways, and he will be repaid according to his deeds.

Verses 6-14: The peoples' pride is being compared to that of Jacob's and God's prophets. Ephraim (Israel) is cunning and boastful, and we see here in this text that God will bring His reproach upon him. Shank says in the College Press Commentary that, "In this section, the people's pride is compared to that of Jacob and God's prophets. Ephraim's sin led to pride, not allegiance. Devotion was illustrated by the prophets' loyalty to God's word and by

Jacob's devoted work for his wife."

The key verse in today's lesson is found in Hosea 12:6, which says, "But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice and wait for your God always." Personally, Hosea has always been a favorite of mine when looking at the minor prophet books. There are so many valuable lessons we can learn on how to truly love even when it's not easy to or when we would much rather just turn our back. In life we will face disloyalty and, in those moments, we should reflect and learn how the Lord brought redemption to His people. There are those in the church who scream for justice when others do them wrong, but we must always teach that we serve a God who loves and is willing to redeem those who truly repent and change their ways. All of us seek after love and devotion; we have most certainly received that from God through His son Jesus.

My prayer is that we will make every effort to share that love with those that we come in contact with, even to those who do us wrong or oppose our ways. God bless, and even though I am WAY out of my league when it comes to writing, I hope these lessons will bring a little more understanding to the text that we went through.

## Ready to Make a Defense (cont.)

God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30, 31, NASB). In other words, we should believe in Jesus based on the historical evidence of His miracles (signs).

In A.D. 79, a Roman teenager named Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus (better known as Pliny the Younger) witnessed the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, which totally destroyed the towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Pliny watched the natural disaster occur from the safety of his uncle’s home in Misenum, across the Bay of Naples from Vesuvius. Twenty-five years later, Pliny wrote an eyewitness account of the eruption in several letters intended for the Roman historian, Tacitus. The letters, written in Latin, were lost until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. They are the only such account of the event which has survived to our time. Modern historians and volcanologists have verified many, but not all, of the details in Pliny’s account. They consider his work *a reliable primary source of information*, but allow that Pliny might have forgotten or confused some details in the years between the eruption and his written account. Also, some of Pliny’s information was apparently supplied to him by his uncle, Pliny the Elder, who died in the eruption trying to rescue survivors by sailing across the bay. That raises the problem of how Pliny’s uncle shared the information with him if the uncle died in the disaster.

If we compare Pliny’s account to the New Testament evidence for Jesus’ life and miracles, we find four extensive biographies of Jesus (the gospels) plus over 100 shorter accounts, such as 1 Corinthians 15, outside the gospels. Most of these sources were written between 25-35 years after Christ’s resurrection, similar to Pliny’s letters. However, because we have multiple accounts of the same information concerning Jesus, that information should be much more reliable than Pliny’s singular account. New Testament scholar N. T. Wright summarizes the views of many fellow scholars when he writes, “I simply record it as my conviction that the four canonical gospels, broadly speaking, present a portrait of Jesus of Nazareth which is firmly grounded in real history.”<sup>3</sup>

Still, atheists consistently reject the New Testament as unreliable history, primarily because of the presence of miracles. For example, Christopher Hitchens dismissed all Biblical accounts of miracles as fabrications, or the unreliable testimony of people who are mistaken or biased.<sup>4</sup> In future columns, we will examine the issues of reliable evidence and the possibility of miracles. RH

### (Endnotes)

1 Richard Dawkins, “Is Science a Religion?” (*The Humanist*, January/February, 1997).

2 Dawkins, “Is Science a Religion?”

3 N. T. Wright, “Can We Trust the Gospels?” Beliefnet.com (Accessed February 1, 2020)

4 Rogine Buchholz. *Restructuring Capitalism: Materialism and Spiritualism in Business* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 133.

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## Winnowing the Heart (cont.)

Olga died in 1970 and her grave marker is both handsome and humble. Some years after her death, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names paid tribute by naming an 11,426-foot peak east of Kennebec Pass the Olga Little Mountain. It is surrounded by a host of other peaks and has no direct access to its summit. I pause over a comment from a local Professor and Historian, Andrew Gilliland, who said, “What did she do to become famous? She was a muscular, resourceful woman who excelled in a man’s vocation. Undaunted by deep snow or cold, she kept to her schedule as a burro packer and she could always be relied upon.” Today, the Rio Grande Southern railroad no longer makes stops in Mayday to unload coal for Olga, and the mines she hauled to and from are hauntingly still. It is difficult to think Olga famous when her relevance is held predominantly in the hearts of those closest to her contributions.

There were 17 men and their families who were able to carry Olga’s story forward. It was a big deal for a while. Today, there is a coffee can at the summit of Olga Little Mountain with a notebook inside it for people to sign who find their way to the top through wild terrain. Professor Gilliland was able to leave his name in the journal and noted it had been several years since a last entry. People have stopped talking about Olga and that’s a shame.

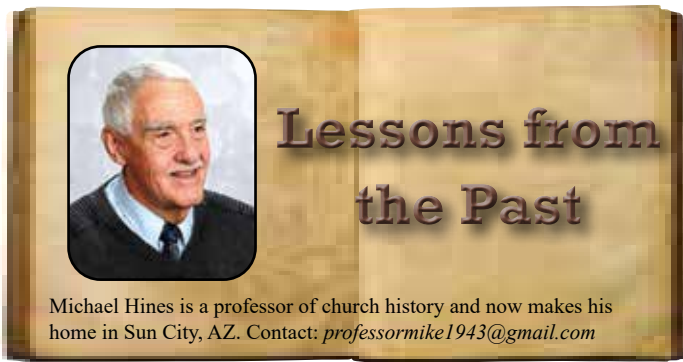
Surely Olga’s story, however, should not flow with more ease and enthusiasm than the story of the One who saved not just 17 men, but who came to save all mankind. While the name of Jesus is more broadly recognized, the story of who He is and what He’s done risks obscurity if not for fanning into flame the gift of God that is in us. For all the lives Jesus has transformed—all the lives He’s saved—there is much to be talked about here, and Paul makes a passionate plea to stir. Our spirit is not timid but brave. Our spirit is powerful, loving, and self-disciplined. Our spirit has something to say to those who are unfamiliar with Christ and His remarkable story and the remarkable story He authored in our own lives. Those paying homage have their names recorded, not in a notebook atop a neglected summit but in the Book of Life.

I genuinely don’t want Olga to be forgotten. I hope to sign that notebook someday. More important would be to “fan into flame” the gift of God and share generously the story of Jesus Christ, our rescue and more. RH

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## AVOIDING THE LANGUAGE OF ASHDOD

After writing three essays on “creeds,” Alexander Campbell’s next essay in his series, “A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things” was titled “Nomenclature.” Nomenclature is “the devising or choosing of names for things, especially in a science or other discipline.” After stressing the importance of biblical language in his three articles on creeds, Campbell insists a desire to restore biblical authority requires the proper use of biblical language.

He writes:

There must be, and there shall be, an abandonment of the new and corrupt nomenclature, and a restoration of the inspired one. In other words, there must be an abandonment of the Babylonish or corrupt phraseology of the dark ages *and of modern discoveries*, in the fixed style of Christian vocabulary.

In other words, he insists Christians should “speak where the Scriptures speak...” I might add that he demands Christians “speak *as* the Scriptures speak.”

In his articles on creeds, Campbell said the use of human language obscured or warped truth. In “Nomenclature,” Campbell recapitulates saying only biblical terminology adequately expresses the Holy Spirit’s supernatural truths. Using humanly devised terms simply expresses ideas originating in the mind of man rather than in the Word of God. Thus, those expressions will be as imperfect as the individual who devised them. For Campbell, then, using biblical terminology was the means to restore “pure speech.”

Later Restoration leaders found scriptural support in an Old Testament account found in Nehemiah. Toward the end of the Babylonian captivity, Persian King Cyrus permitted the captive people to return to Jerusalem. Estimates suggest somewhere between 10,000 and 50,000 returned. A century later, about 400 B.C., Artaxerxes appointed Nehemiah governor of Judah. Later, Nehemiah went away on official business. In his lengthy absence the people abandoned the temple and corrupted and profaned the temple rites. Upon Nehemiah’s return, his anger led him to purify the nation. Since the Jews married pagan women, Nehemiah prohibited marriage with foreign and pagan women (Nehemiah 13:24-27).

Nehemiah’s rationale for this action is seen in Nehemiah 13:24,

“As for their children, half spoke in the language of Ashdod, and none of them was able to speak the language of Judah, but the language of his own people.”

Why did this fact concern Nehemiah? It is because there were spiritual words and terms within the Jews’ language that had no counterpart in the language of Ashdod. There were certain spiritual concepts about the true and living God that *just could not be communicated* without knowing the Jews’ language. In fact, substituting religious terms might communicate the very opposite of that intended.

Language is central to any culture. Words convey thoughts. Language reflects how a person thinks. By losing the ability to speak in the language of the Jews, the offspring of mixed marriages in Jerusalem lost what it meant to be Jews. They were becoming assimilated into the culture of the habitual enemies of Israel, the Philistines. They were becoming something *other* than God’s people! When Christians adopt unbiblical terminology, or use biblical terms in unscriptural ways, they assimilate thought patterns found in denominational systems.

Impure speech is communicated today in two ways:

1) We use biblical language to convey unscriptural ideas, and

2) we convey unbiblical terms in Scriptural language.

Both things result from habitually absorbing ideas from the denominational world around us. It is far too easy to read uncritically authors who write from unscriptural theological systems. How popular are N.T. Wright, John Piper, and Tim Keller?<sup>1</sup> These three are all “new Calvinists.” How many read the *Purpose Driven Church* and failed to identify Rick Warren’s Baptist theology?<sup>2</sup> How popular is the *Left Behind* series without realizing that, while it is possibly good fiction, it is horrible theology?

When Peter spoke to the early church about how to live in the “last days” (which is often misused), he wrote, “Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God” (1 Peter 4:11a). Peter is saying *if a man speaks, he is to speak as God has spoken*; he is to use the words that God uses.

Paul told the Corinthian church, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things *we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words*” (1 Corinthians 2:11, 12, emphasis added). In other words, Paul spoke with words God wanted used to convey His will. Words are significant, and every word in the original text is there for a reason. It is important that words used to convey spiritual truth link “spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.”

For many in today’s version of the Restoration Movement, the use of the “language of Ashdod” is so prevalent it is unrecognizable. Today’s Christians have so assimilated popular Evangelical language that they honestly believe they speak biblically. The subject

*continued on page 20*

## Lessons from the Past (cont.)

of “pure speech” is largely ignored in our pulpits and classrooms. The result is the uncritical adoption of Evangelical terms which change the way thought is processed.

Many examples pepper contemporary speech. One of the most flagrant is the word *pastor*. First, the word “pastor” (ποιμενας)<sup>3</sup> is found once in the New Testament at Ephesians 4:11. It is a plural word appearing in a list of leadership functions. It is usually translated “shepherd.” Biblical scholars almost universally agree that the term is synonymous with elder (older in the faith) and bishop (overseer). The use of the term “pastor” to identify one who preaches for a congregation arises from Evangelicalism. In many Evangelical assemblies, *the* pastor is the church’s only bishop or elder: singular! In the church described in Scripture, pastors/elders/bishops are *always* plural. New Testament pastors may devote themselves to Christ’s work full-time (1 Timothy 5:17) and deserve support. *If* one serves as an elder in a full-time capacity, which could include speaking, then he can properly use the term “pastor.”

A doctoral thesis could be written on leadership functions in the New Testament. For example, there are no references in Scripture to church boards or trustees. References to deacons portrays them as individuals who fill a service function. Furthermore, the Bible portrays the elder function as far more important than merely sitting in chambers determining how much to pay the staff or what color to paint the bathroom walls.

Another example is the phrase “last days.” Those who speculate about the coming of Christ repeatedly ask if we are in the “last days.” In doing so, they mean “are we in the period *immediately* preceding the Lord’s return?” An inductive study of Scripture reveals the term “last days” or “last times” is used only seven times (Acts 2:17; 1 Peter 1:17-21; Hebrews 1:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-19; 2 Peter 3:1-9; James 5:1-6, and Jude 17-19). In each case it is clear the “last days” began at Pentecost and continue to this day.

Still another example is the word “Trinity.” This term is not found in the Old or New Testaments. Tertullian (ca. A.D. 150)

was the first to use the Latin term *trinitas* to describe the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Also well-known is the fact the early church argued about the relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, at least through the Fourth century.<sup>4</sup> Since this issue persists, and is important when discussing the nature of God with Muslims, it is my conviction you can defend the deity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit without using the word “Trinity.”

Restoration Movement leaders generally avoided developing theological systems precisely because of their recognition of impure speech. In his essay on nomenclature, Campbell said impure speech contributed to division within Christendom. I conclude with two observations on this matter: First, developing a solid biblical theological framework does not necessarily require the invention and use of human terminology. In fact, couching theological truth in biblical terminology confirms “sound doctrine.” Second, agreeing to “speak as Scripture speaks” when discussing differences in a spirit of love and forbearance contributes to unity.

Let us, as a movement, commit to once again searching Scripture to once again emphasize speaking where Scripture speaks and speaking as it speaks! RH

### Endnotes

1 Should Christians avoid reading works by authors with denominational backgrounds? Not at all. I am suggesting such material must be read critically using care to evaluate what is written.

2 In his book, *Purpose Driven Church*, Warren says baptism has to do with local church membership and is not related to what it takes to be saved.

3 This is the form found in Ephesians 4:11.

4 The controversy still exists as seen in the existence of the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Unity Church. There are also those who question the orthodoxy of Barton W. Stone, an early Restoration Movement leader, who held questions about the relationship of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Campbell’s opponents charged him with heretical teaching about the relationship Deity’s three persons, labeling him a Socinian. Campbell never denied the Trinity, however, he generally avoided using the term.

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# Strangeness of the Month Club

\*Kent B. True

What can be done at a church that is stagnant? The answer is “church growth principles”—or something like that. What is the main principle of these principles? That is simple: get rid of those pesky old people. If you think that sounds a little harsh or that this is some kind of Babylon Bee article, think again, as we consider . . .

## Find the Ice-Flow and Set ‘Em Afloat!

**“Cottage Grove church to usher out gray-haired members in effort to attract more young parishioners”**

Bob Shaw, *Twin Cities Pioneer Press*

January 18, 2020

Up in the twin cities area of Minnesota, at the Grove United Methodist Church of Cottage Grove, they have big plans. A bit of history sets the context here:

“Thirty years ago, the Peaceful Grove Church was founded by pastor Jim Baker in an elementary school. It moved into its own building, then merged with a larger church in Woodbury in 2008. Today, the churches are the Woodbury and Cottage Grove branches of the Grove United Methodist Church.”



Kent B. True a.k.a.  
Harold N. Orndorff

But, at what appears to be a small multi-site church, things haven’t gone well at the Cottage Grove branch. This branch has struggled with membership and finances. Seven years ago, the Cottage Grove branch switched to “lay” ministry. With these changes, the church’s attendance and finances stabilized in a congregation of around twenty-five people.

But that did not sit well with Dan Wetterstrom, the head honcho of this two-location church. According to Wetterstrom, Cottage Grove is underserved by churches. He said that the benchmark is one church for every 1,000 residents. So, Cottage Grove, with 37,000 people, would be expected to have 37 churches. But it only has 13.

Wetterstrom decided that the answer was to appeal to younger families. As he put it, “Jesus said we are called to reach new people.” The Methodist Annual Conference is putting up a quarter of a million U.S. bucks to “restart” that branch. Some of this is being used to hire a “specialist in starting new churches” named Jeremy Peters. Peters has moved with his family to Cottage Grove and is

making big plans. The Cottage Grove location will close in June and expects to re-open in November.

So far this might not sound like a horrible thing. But wait, there is more.

Head honcho Wetterstrom and specialist in starting new churches Peters have a key idea for this. The people who currently attend Grove United Methodist church are mostly old people. By this I mean that they appear from the pictures provided to be even older than I am, and I am no spring chicken these days.

Here is the plan. When the church closes in June, its members are invited to attend the Woodbury location. But when the Cottage Grove location reopens, they are “invited” NOT to come back. As head honcho Wetterstrom puts it, “15-18 months after weekly worship is launched at the Cottage Grove campus—those members of the current campus who are interested in migrating back . . . connect with (Peters) about how to best make that transition.” Sounds a bit like they will need permission to come back to their own church, doesn’t it?

Yes, it does. As new church expert Peters puts it, the current members *could* be welcomed back *if* they supported the youthful new identity of the church. “If they are on board with that, they are welcome to attend and engage.” To Wetterstrom and Peters, it appears “reach new people” means only *younger* new people. So, the plan is now in place.

Having seen similar things at Christian churches and knowing what it usually *really* means, I can imagine what it might mean at a United Methodist Church . . . or maybe I can’t.

Meanwhile, the old crew have been asked to maintain the church until it reopens—without them. Nice, very nice. As one current member put it, “We are supposed to be silent partners, and still give money” or as another said, “They want us to mow the lawn and shovel the snow . . . This whole plan makes me sick.”

The church currently has one young family with children. As the young mother in this family put it, “If it happened, I wouldn’t come here anymore.”

Old people at church—who needs them? Young families who attend your church—who cares what they think? The church experts know best. Find demographic patterns. Study sociology. Devise plans based on statistics of questionable relevance. Devise some great plans and implement them from the top down.

A trip to the Grove United Methodist Church (<https://thegrovmn.church/>) found an opening page with this:

“Come as you are - you’ll be welcomed. We strive to reflect God’s love to all.” Well, maybe, unless you are those current members of the Cottage Grove branch, especially those of the more senior variety.

“Be who you are - you’ll be celebrated” (followed by every category of people the inclusiveness crowd could imagine). Except, of course, for those undesirables who are current members of the Cottage Grove branch.

Sad to say, things like this have probably happened often in the last couple of decades. Even more sadly, it hasn’t always been in just the United Methodists. Sometimes it has been closer to home.

*continued on page 23*

# Two Great Men Go Home

**Fort Worth, TX** — Marshall Leggett passed away on March 2, 2020, at the age of 90. He was graduated from Milligan College



in 1951 and continued his education at Christian Theological Seminary, earning a Master of Divinity degree, followed by a Master of Arts degree from Butler University, all with honors.

Marshall served 34 years in ministry in Tennessee, Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky. He also played a major role in the establishment of the Emmanuel School of Religion in Milligan, Tennessee, and

Sayre Christian Village in Lexington, Kentucky. In addition, he served on the North American Christian Convention executive committee for 13 terms in various capacities, including president of the convention.

In 1982, he became the 13th president of Milligan College, a position he held until his retirement in 1997, when he was granted the honorary title of Chancellor.

In 2006, he was presented the Sword and Trowel award from the CRA.

He is survived by his wife Jean, to whom he was married 66 wonderful years.

**Joplin, MO** — Reginald ‘Reggie’ Thomas passed away on March 2, 2020 at the age of 91. Reggie was graduated from Cincinnati Bible Seminary in 1951.



Following graduation, he served located ministries in Illinois, Georgia, and Tennessee.

In 1983 he organized White Fields Overseas Evangelism, an evangelistic work that took him to many parts of the world. As a full-time evangelist, Reggie traveled to 83 nations, established over 700 churches, and performed over 400,000 baptisms.

In 2012, he was presented the Sword and Trowel award from the CRA.

He is survived by this wife Esther, to whom he was married 43 years.

## Editor's Viewpoint (cont.)

Next, we need **confidence** in the truth. We need trust, faith, belief in the truth—an unwavering confidence in God’s truth. The kind of trust demonstrated by the blind man in John 9, who, as you recall, was told to go, wash in the pool of Siloam. John simply records, “So he went and washed, and came back seeing.” The blind man’s childlike trust is beautiful to behold.

In addition, we need a **compassion** for the truth. Our people need to develop a genuine love and thirst for truth. In 2 Thessalonians 2:10, Paul speaks of “the love of the truth.” David, in Psalm 119:47 proclaims, “And I will delight myself in Your commandments, which I love.” We need a love for the truth modeled after David’s attitude for truth seen in Psalm 19:10, “More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.”

Finally, we need to **conform** to the truth. We need to exhort people to practice truth, not just recite truth, just as James warns us to “be doers of the word, and not hearers only.” In the end, we’re not trying to prepare people for a final exam in Bible, but rather to mold and shape disciples into Christlikeness. The goal of preaching and teaching is to develop mature followers of Jesus who will reflect His glory and mercy in a sin filled world.

Jack Cottrell has written about a fascinating concept he calls “practical liberalism.” In general, liberalism (Biblical, not political) is a denial of the full and absolute truth of the Bible and the inerrancy of Scripture. Very, very few, if any, *Restoration Herald* readers would subscribe to such false theology. What Dr. Cottrell speaks of are those who, sadly, do not use the Bible in any practical, meaningful way as they daily strive to live the Christian life. Those who for all intents and purposes affirm the full and absolute truth of God’s word but fail to put the word into actual practice.

God warned Old Testament Israel through the prophet Hosea in Hosea 4:6, “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.” Without sound Bible doctrine from our pulpits and in our Bible classes/studies, we face the same problem.

Preachers, “**Preach the word!**” Elders, insist on this—that those who fill our pulpits are indeed preaching the whole counsel of God. Saints, encourage preachers to preach the word and nothing but the word. Then we will most certainly “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” so that we can “shine as lights in the world.”

Pray for the preachers and elders in our churches.

*“Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, made me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me”—*

*Psalm 119:97-98*

## Strangeness of the Month Club (cont.)

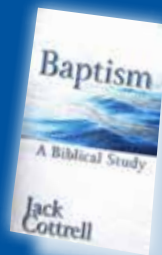
It doesn't take a big organization like the United Methodists or a multi-site church to pull this sort of thing off. All it takes is the "big man" with a grand plan, that he thinks is God's will to impose on a poor group of dupes who don't know any better. Because, and don't question this, the head honcho always knows "God's will" about such things. The rest of you don't, so just shut up and do what you are told! (RH)

*\* Kent B. True is the alter ego of Harold N. Orndorff, Jr., a retired campus minister who has taught college and seminary courses in the fields of apologetics, philosophy, ethics, and logic. Lately he enjoys studying his grandchildren, who are very interesting one and all. Contact him, if you must, at hnoii@hotmail.com.*

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## Calendar of Events

Events are added to this calendar as they are provided and at the editor's discretion. Please keep us informed.

### 2020

Rock Lake Family Camp Meeting..... May 14-16  
Vestaburg, MI

Contact: Terry Strickler: (517) 282-9653

Discipleship Week..... June 8-11  
London, KY

Contact: [threestrandministries.com](http://threestrandministries.com)

Delmarva Family Camp..... July 11-17  
Laurel, DE

Contact: Mike Mitchell (302) 344-0974

Hillsboro Family Camp..... July 27-30  
Hillsboro, OH

Contact: [p2pm\\_office@yahoo.com](mailto:p2pm_office@yahoo.com)

Winning at Winchester..... September 4-6  
Winchester, VA

Contact: [ccmv4thebible@gmail.com](mailto:ccmv4thebible@gmail.com)

CRA Bible Conference..... October 22-23  
Mason, OH

Contact: [thecra@thecra.org](mailto:thecra@thecra.org)

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