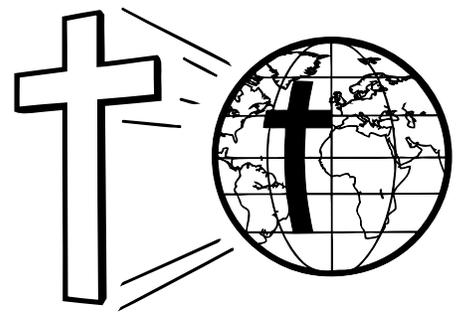


Foundation of Faith



Church Discipline



How to
Accept Criticism and Advice

Poisonous Arrows

What Does a
Christian Look Like?

The High Value of
Humility

What Do You
Request for Your Children?

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY





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FOUNDATION OF FAITH

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Dear Readers!

Practical Christianity! Practical church life!—Theory is good, but practice is better! Of what use is knowledge if it is not applied, if it does not lead to action? So we read: “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22).

The Lord also warned us: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). Mere words and quick promises are of no use to anyone if action does not follow.

The wise King Solomon explains: “When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed . . . Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands?” (Ecclesiastes 5:4-6).

I am reminded of an incident: A father, along with several employees, had over a few decades built up a large business from humble beginnings. However, when the father died, his well-educated son took charge. Although his education was far superior to that of his employees, he lacked humility and experience. After a short time, he laid off his highly experienced employees because they could not go along with his new ideas. The result was that everything the father, along with these loyal workers, had built up in over 40 years of labor, was run into the ground within 3 years. Our heavenly Master needs faithful and diligent servants, people who will lend a hand, who will take their place within God’s work and in His church. It is these to whom the heavenly King can say: “Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (Matthew 25:40), as well as: “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matthew 25:21).

H.D. Nimz

Church Discipline

A Christian in an east African congregation chose a second wife for himself. Therefore he had to undergo the appropriate church discipline. However, he would not submit to it and soon found himself neglecting worship services and returning to pagan practices. After more than a year, the missionary on the church board moved to erase this man's name from the membership registry. With displeasure, the brothers listened to his proposal. "Well, Sir, are you serious?"—"Certainly!"—"Do you truly mean that? We should simply remove him? He is one of us! Can you really cut off and throw away a body's limb?"

The missionary hesitated. But then he said, "Yes! A limb can be so sick that one must amputate it, in order to maintain life in the body."—"How do you know that this man is so sick that he needs to be cut off?" After a short pause, the speaker continued: "But it is good that you spoke of the matter. Thank you so much. You remind us of our own faults. We left this man alone. We did not pursue him."—"So what do you want to do?"—"We don't know yet. But first, we have to pray. We must ask God, as the elders of this church, to forgive us of our sins, and to enlighten us. Then we will know what to do in this situation." The church board dispersed.

After prayer, one of the elders stood up and said, "Every Sunday, after the worship service, one of us should be sent to visit the man and to send greetings along from the whole congregation, and to tell him, "We have missed you! You are our brother." One of the elders could go along in order to give an account of what we heard during the service. During the visitation, we, or rather the whole congregation, would stay in the chapel together and pray without ceasing that the Lord would bless the visit."

After some short discussion, the suggestion was agreed upon by everyone. Soon, they proceeded with the plan, Sunday after Sunday. This man, who had been carried by the prayers of the congregation, and had been sought out week after week, endured the onslaught of love for fourteen weeks. On the fourteenth Sunday, he said, "You no longer need to come; your love has become too much for me. I'm going back to church." He acknowledged his sin publicly before the church, and bowed in repentance before God. He released his wife (for whom this change meant neither unbearable disgrace nor serious threat to her existence), and was then greeted by the happy congregation during a joy-filled worship celebration, with songs of praise and thanksgiving.



The Blessed Church

“God’s blessing gained, all is obtained,” (Galatians 3:13-14). is a common saying. If we apply that principle to the life of the Christian church, we can see how dependent we are on God to fill our local congregation with His blessing. Since we don’t want to miss out on God’s blessing in the church, we must understand in what ways God gives His blessing.

God blesses in Jesus Christ

That is the first thing we must know. We cannot create a blessing in and of ourselves. Blessing is given to us by God through the Son. We also did not earn this blessing, for the “wage” we deserve is God’s curse. But Christ became a curse for us, that we might receive the promise or blessing

God blesses the humble

We can only meet with God in humility. Only those who come before God in sincere subjection can obtain blessing. Only those who remain before God in genuine humility keep this blessing. Without humility none of this blessing remains for us. “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5).

God blesses those who keep unity

Unity of members is a foundation for God’s blessing. We are given diverse abilities and talents and have different insights. But this diversity should not hinder our unity. All discord that mars

unity will hinder God’s blessing. But where the members of a congregation “dwell together in unity,” the Lord promises a blessing that lasts for eternity (Psalm 133).

God blesses those who give

This is another basic law in the kingdom of God: Whoever holds on to God’s blessings, whoever takes in without giving out, hinders these blessings. But all who give generously of what they have been given will experience God’s blessing poured out in such a way “that there will not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10).

EP

Church—Why Exactly?

We hear similar comments again and again: “God is in my heart! Running to church all the time doesn’t accomplish anything. Church? It’s just too confusing for me! I pray in my room! I don’t want to seem ‘holier-than-thou’! What is the point of church anyway?”

Why is church important anyway?—The Lord God planned it so. He did not want individuals all seeking in different directions. He wanted the believers to be a community. It clearly says so in the Bible, and that cannot be changed.

Someone who has received forgiveness of sin is placed in God’s church as a living stone, and is no longer an individual, but rather a member of the Body of Christ. Love for God and for the family of God is the link to the church. Love is only possible, however, for those who live and work within the church. “For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). The gathering of believers, in which the Lord Jesus is present, is emphasized once again. It is not speaking of any specific kind of church organization; it

is instead, about born-again believers gathering together with the Lord Jesus as their Head. Jesus Christ is the focus.

Church also means that all members fulfill their duty of working, praying, loving, and believing. It is a poor church where everything is left to the preacher and everyone only wants to be served; when one is supposed to provide and another is to be provided for. A church requires that the living stones allow themselves to be built into a spiritual house that is pleasing to God through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5). Church without a living connection to Christ and without responsibility is not possible. An effective, loving church occurs, however, when people gather who have received Jesus Christ as the Lord of their lives.

The death of any true church is self-sufficient, self-seeking individualism without connection to the Head.

Jesus Christ says, “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).—Do you belong to this church?

Fritz H. Friedrich

The Divine Architect's Plan

Everyone who wants to build a house today needs a plan. God created everything perfectly according to His divine plan.

God also created us with a plan and for a purpose: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 4:10).

Furthermore, we have God’s everlasting, inspired Word which reveals for us His plan of salvation, His thoughts for His church, His bride, and our eternal destiny. Our Heavenly Father has not left us in ignorance. He has presented us with His magnificent thoughts and His wonderful plans.

God’s plan of redemption for the people of Israel –

Exodus 19:1-7

The Lord commanded His faithful servant Moses: speak to the children of Israel and present them with My divine plan, that they may hear and understand My thoughts for their future:

1. You shall be My people.
2. You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests.
3. You shall be to Me a holy nation.

Oh, what a wonderful message for them to hear! With a mighty hand, God had delivered them from slavery in Egypt. As on eagle’s wings, He bore them to the mountain of God and did signs and wonders. Now they were to keep His commandments, believe and obey His voice, and make a covenant with their Creator and Savior. They were to be His unique treasure, specially chosen and preferred above all nations. In addition, God desired fellowship with them, the closest relationship possible: “You shall serve Me as priests, representing a royal priesthood, yes, a kingdom of priests.”

For His plan, the eternal Lord wanted a fully consecrated, obedient, and committed people. They were to give Him first place, preference in all things, and serve Him alone.

God’s plan also had conditions and requirements:

1. Obedience: “if you will obey My voice”
2. Faith and faithfulness: “and keep My covenant”

Did Israel obey God’s voice? In Exodus 19:8 we read their response: “All that the Lord has spoken we will do.” Yes, they offered wonderful lip service! But—their heart, their deeds, their obedience? They were lacking! Yet God’s standard is for all time!

In the New Testament the Savior says: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me” (Matthew 15:8-9a).

Did the people of Israel obey God’s voice and keep His word?—No! No! No! They ignored God’s promise, broke His covenant, and trampled His commandments at Sinai! Of the first 603,550 men who were over 20 years old and had been freed from Egypt, according to God’s word, only two men came to Canaan: Caleb and Joshua! All others perished in the wilderness because of their unbelief and disobedience. Thus the children of Israel did not fulfill the Divine Architect’s plan.

But that which was impossible under the law, God accomplished through His Son Jesus Christ. Through Christ there was a new promise and a new covenant. Grace, saving grace, was manifested so that people could receive a new heart and a new spirit. In Jeremiah 31:33 the Lord promises: “This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” And again: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

The plan of the Divine Architect fulfilled in the New Testament:

Exodus 19:1-6 and 1 Peter 2:9-10

What God planned in the Old Testament was fulfilled in the New Testament. What the people of Israel, those of the flesh, could not do, was accomplished in the spiritual Israel, those redeemed by the love of God and the grace of Jesus Christ, and sustained by the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul tells us: “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God” (Romans 2:28-29).

In the New Testament all who have experienced redemption through the precious blood of Jesus Christ are children of God and the spiritual seed of Abraham. They are the Israel of God by the divine new birth. For “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:28-29).

My dear reader, do you recognize that the nation of Israel has lost its special status? Christ, by His suffering and death, has destroyed the fence (the difference) between Jews and Gentiles and made them one. He has reconciled all to God. And all who live in Christ by faith belong to the church of God, the people of God in the New Testament.

The Lord our God preached His divine plan of salvation through Moses, declaring that He will have a nation:

1. belonging to Him,
2. a kingdom of priests,
3. a holy nation unto Him.

And now we find that the apostle Peter writes: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people” (1 Peter 2:9a).

Who is referred to by “but you are . . .”? To whom did

Peter write this letter at the time? Who were these people who now fulfilled the plan of the Divine Architect?

1. They were chosen strangers, reborn through God’s great mercy.

The precious blood of the Lamb redeemed them.

They were obedient to the divine truth and lived in brotherly love.

They had personally experienced the Lord Jesus.

He was precious to them.

They were each living stones in the spiritual house of His church.

Through Christ they had become pleasing to Him.

2. To whom did Peter write this letter?

The address is: “to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia”; that is, to God’s children in present-day Turkey, or Asia Minor (1 Peter 1:1).

3. Who were they?

These were people who used to live in sin. Many of them were illiterate. Many of them had never heard of the true God. They were without Christ and without God in the world! Peter reminds them that they were those: “who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy” (1 Peter 2:10).

What a wonderful fulfillment of the divine plan: “You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”(1 Peter 2:9).

Yes, Jesus Christ is this light, the Light of the World. His everlasting gospel offers each of us the wonderful grace that allows us to belong to this chosen race. We can praise God everyday and follow Him faithfully. We once were lost sheep, but now we have returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. Praise God forever and ever!

H. D. Nimz

The High Value of Humility

How often do we hear the word “humility” in our time? It seems people are far more concerned about self-confidence and being able to push their way through than being humble. Everyone wants to be served and play the role of a master. What would happen if we didn’t have any servants to serve others in humility? We can only be useful in God’s Kingdom if we are truly humble.

A Bible school teacher told his students that they needed three virtues to be a blessing in the work of the congregation. These were: humility, humility, humility. Of course, it is not just those who are entering the ministry who need to take this exhortation to heart and live it out. The virtue of humility is so necessary for every one of us in a congregation. Peter writes in 1 Peter 5:5, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” If we wish to have this grace of God, to be a blessing in the congregation, we absolutely need humility.

Humility is an often misunderstood virtue.

We must first understand what humility is not. It is not the confession that one is a sinner. Sometimes we hear from or read about people who say things like, “I’m a poor sinner; I’m a worm; I’m dust.” In doing so, they want to appear humble. But to wrap oneself in the robes of a sinner and to believe that one can never take them off is not humility but ignorance. God’s Word says: “Put off the old man with his deeds, and . . . put on the new man” (Colossians 3:9-10)! The tax collector in the temple who beat on his breast and said, “God, be merciful to me a sinner” did not remain a sinner but left justified (Luke 18:9-14).

Although the way a person dresses can sometimes reveal pride, the wearing of old, patched, and even dirty clothing does not display humility in a person.

Humility also does not reveal itself in the use of phrases such as “my humble self,” “your humble brother”

or “your humble sister.” People who are truly humble do not need to emphasize their humility in words. In doing so, they only bring attention to themselves.

What is humility?

It is an attitude of the heart through which a person can take the lower road of humility without resisting. It is the opposite of pride, arrogance, and haughtiness. In the context of our bible text, the warning is given: “God resists the proud.” The Word of God shows us people who were ruined because of their pride. Please read what happened to the proud King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 5:18-21) and King Belshazzar (verse 22-30)! Pay attention to the reason for Haman’s fall (Esther 6:7-10; 7:8-10) and in the New Testament to King Herod’s shameful end (Acts 12:2-23). Peter exhorts us: “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God” (1.Peter 5:6). We should do this willingly.

Why does God give grace to the humble?

He gives him grace to repent. Jesus says, “narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life” (Matthew 7:14).

Can we also not infer that the gate is low? We have to bend in order to pass through it. An artist had made a figure of Christ out of plaster. He let it stand outside so that it would dry. But a light rain softened the figure so that its head was bowed. The artist decided to leave the figure like that, for he said that anyone who wanted

to look into the face of Christ would have to go onto his knees.

The humble are given God's grace to be a blessing wherever God has placed them. One person who lived out true humility of heart and surrender to God was the African man Samuel Morris. It is reported of him that while registering at Taylor University, he was asked which room he wished to take. His answer was: "If there is a room no one else wants, give it to me." God took pleasure in him, and his biography was appropriately titled: "A Spirit-filled life." God greatly used this humble-hearted man to be a blessing for the world around him!

The humble are given God's grace to win people for Christ. A vagrant who had received salvation from Christ gave the following witness: The pastor from the area searched him out in his poor state, gave him clean clothes, helped him put them on, polished his shoes, and told him about Jesus. Then he referred him to a housing mission that gave him accommodation. "I didn't want to know anything about your religion," he said to the pastor, "but the thought that you cared so much about my soul that you polished my shoes didn't leave me alone." How our Lord Jesus also humbled Himself to win those who had fallen on hard times! He says, "Learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29).

The humble are given God's grace to contribute to the unity of the congregation. In the Hebrew language, there are specific symbols that separate and connect words. The separating symbols are named "Domini" (lords), the connecting symbols "Servi" (servants). Likewise, there may be people in a congregation who would like to be lords but who do not contribute to unity. The connecting members are the servants. Let us remember this: The waters that flow towards the deep flow together. How hard it is to lead water uphill!

The humble are given God's grace to take on more responsibility in the work of the Lord. God can entrust a higher position to one who is willing to do a lesser job. There was once a man who felt called to go to the Congo region of Africa as a missionary. He went but was first enlisted to grind knives. For nearly ten years, he did this job faithfully. It was a time of learning for him, and later he would become the leader of that mission. James

exhorts: "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (James 4:10).

This true humility of heart especially reveals itself in the congregation.

A humble person is not jealous of another whom God uses in the forefront, like a golden vessel (2 Timothy 2:20-21). In fact, he can rejoice about it.

The humble person is willing to take the way of humility by apologizing to a member of the congregation or even the entire congregation when necessary. I have experienced that you don't lose anything if you choose this road. Quite the opposite, you only win with God and those around you. A humble person does not seek his own desires but puts the work of God first, even at the cost of his own reputation.

A humble person demonstrates his humility of heart by his actions.

A humble person demonstrates his humility of heart by his actions. Let me give one last example. A preacher brought a good sermon. So he thought if he went to the door, many people would shake his hand and say, "Brother, that was a good sermon!" To avoid this, he went out through a side exit. The

question was asked: "Did the preacher show humility?" No, he demonstrated that humility was lacking. Otherwise he would have tolerated the praise. He had missed the opportunity to give God the glory. Paul says of himself: "I have learned . . . I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (Philippians 4:11-12).

Hold fast to humility!

If God has given you grace to have a humble heart, dear reader, then hold fast to humility. Remember: Not the beginning but the end will be crowned. Hold fast to humility! When things are going well, that's precisely when we need to hold fast, for on heights we can easily lose our balance. Persevere in your humility. Keep our text in mind: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble!"

Reinhard Roesler,
Toronto CA

Poisonous Arrows

Only a harmless little flesh wound! Not worth mentioning! How could the pitiful projectiles of primitive natives have such serious effects? But during the night the effect becomes apparent: the powerful body of the wounded writhes with terrible convulsions. And in the morning the poison has claimed its victim.

Our words are often similar to these arrows: a weapon that works gradually, but all the more surely, regardless of whether others have first placed them.

Somewhere in a larger circle of discussion someone expresses a thought which his friend, who is sitting a little distance away, disagrees with. The idea is not so important that it has to be contradicted. The friend mutters quietly to himself with a slight shake of his head and says: “Wow, that’s crazy!” A loving third party has intercepted these remarks which were not intended for his ears, and does not know better than to pass on these “ugly” remarks to the first chap. He turns the muttered thought into an arrow that carries a small trace of poison.

Two people are having a discussion: “Nice guy, that Fred!”—“Um . . .”—“Or do you not like him?”—The other person shrugs his shoulders: “What’s to like? I’ve heard a few things.—But I don’t really want to talk about it!”—“Well, of course that is something different. I wasn’t completely taken with him either. Now I know why. I am thankful to you for the clarification!”

What clarification? In any case, the “nice guy” is finished. There is something against him. We do not know what, but experience shows that something is wrong and we are thankful that we “know.” The poison is working!

A brother who has long since gone on to be with the Lord once said: “How careful we should be with our comments about others! Somebody may want to know my opinion about someone else. I shrug my shoulders. That in itself can suffice to destroy the reputation of the other one for the questioner.”

Someone who was not well disposed towards a particular speaker was sitting in his audience. What did

this person do? He went and told others, “This brother said, ‘If I just shrug my shoulders about someone, then he’s finished.’” So the well-meant word that the speaker brought was poisoned. Is that not shocking? And does this not happen all too often among believers?

We do not suspect the often monstrous effect of our words. A word can have wings. You only have control over it when it is yet unspoken. A tiny little word can have the effect of a burning match that was carelessly thrown into a full granary. Rarely do words remain without effect, be it for good or for evil. In Judges 12 we read of the terrible war between brothers that followed on the heels of the harsh words of the men of Ephraim.

Fortunately, words can have a positive effect as well, and these also can be vast. Certainly a lot depends on who speaks the good word. But even the most insignificant has at least one or two that would listen to him.

To learn the right words, we must listen to God’s word, which reads: “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29). Our words should also serve to give grace, benefit, and help. With them, we can serve our Lord Jesus Christ. Are we doing it? Or do we rather talk about neighbors and friends, about brothers and sisters, about things that we are not even able to judge partially? In short, about everything which just adds a topic of conversation? And then how do we talk about it? Do we lovingly look everywhere for the good or do we rather keep to the “spicier” side, the bad? We must each answer for ourselves.

What has not all been spoiled and divided by talking! Friendships and marriages are flogged to death! Families, even entire communities, are adversely affected by words, if not destroyed! Afterwards it was said, perhaps: “But it was not meant that way!”

Let us ask God to help us keep watch over our words, so that we might use them wisely!

EP

What We Need

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”
Matthew 6:33

This verse gives us the first requirement for following Jesus. Today, Christians need to revive the command to seek first the kingdom of God, and it is vital that this truth be written on the hearts of all who want to follow Him.

Is it not true that people who want to be committed Christians often seek their own interests first, and then if they have some extra time, they add the kingdom of God to the bottom of their schedules? There are many Christians who go about their daily work whether it rains, snows, or storms. However, when it is time to go to church, these same people use the weather as an excuse to stay home from services. They pay their bills on time and meet all of their obligations, but they fail to support God's work.

Many women profess to be Christians, and they work from dawn to dusk taking care of their families and cleaning their homes, but they neglect to attend worship services and prayer meetings because they are too tired. If we are giving God's kingdom the last place in our lives, then a revival of committed Christianity is essential.

Let us look at how the early church, as described in the book of Acts, faithfully carried out God's work. Jesus took the first place in their lives. All personal interests, no matter how important they seemed at the time, came second. Indeed, they often sustained heavy losses in their pursuit of the kingdom of God. They used all their energy to build His kingdom, and they knew that they needed to spread the news about the cross around the world.

Today, there are many people who want to give Jesus a prominent place in their lives, but they do not want to

give Him the first place. They run many risks to promote their own interests, but do they risk everything for the kingdom of God? If they need something to maintain their way of life or to enhance their comfort, but have no money, they borrow the necessary funds. Would they do the same if someone asked them to contribute toward the kingdom of God? They have time for rest, but no time to attend prayer meetings. Let us ask God for a revival!

When we experience such a revival, we will see Christians coming to worship services with the same commitment and zeal that they use to fulfill their daily duties. Such a revival will fill our churches with people who desire that sinners find Jesus. And as a matter of course, miracles will happen in the hearts of the lost because such faith creates in people the desire to hear the message of the cross.

People who think only of themselves and attend services simply to hear a good sermon must be shaken awake to realize what God requires of His followers. A faithful and zealous congregation exerts the same influence on newcomers as excellent speakers do. Therefore, all Christians have an important role to play in their local churches.

The early Christians did not love their earthly lives, and therein lies the secret of the early church's growth. If all of God's children give His kingdom first place in their lives, then the lost will find Him. When we observe today's churches, we find that a few people do most of the work. This state of affairs must end. All Christians must realize that they have a responsibility toward their Lord and Savior. Let us in all humility ask God for a revival of faithful service in His people. He will give us what we need.

What Does a Christian Look Like?

1. A Christian is diligent

“Be . . . not lagging in diligence” (Romans 12:11). In other words, a Christian will not be lazy. On the contrary, an exemplary follower of Christ, whose behavior is a good influence on others, is careful and meticulous in all that he does. If he borrows something, that item will be returned to the owner in good condition and without delay. If he owes someone something, he will be prepared to repay it in a timely manner. Nobody should make idle promises, but if a Christian has made a promise, he keeps it. He treats all people as he himself wishes to be treated. In other words, he follows the golden rule: “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12). People who take promises lightly or neglect their duties and obligations will lose the trust of their family and coworkers. Therefore, if anyone seeks to honor God in all they do, they will strive for diligence in their daily lives.

2. A Christian is fervent in spirit.

Romans 12:11 also tells us that we are to be “fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” Fervent is not a word that is commonly used anymore, but to be fervent means to be passionate or earnest. A Christian who does not serve His Lord with passion and enthusiasm is not worthy of the name. God’s kingdom deserves enthusiastic participation! When a Christian sees a need in God’s kingdom, he will not delay, postpone, or hesitate, but will do what is in his power to contribute to God’s work. Our enthusiasm for God should be visible, and

is only possible and sustainable when we are filled with the Holy Spirit. The life of a Christian is not an idle one, but is driven to action by the love of Christ.

3. A Christian is joyful

“Be joyful in hope” (Romans 12:12). A true Christian will radiate joy as the sun sends out warmth through its rays. He will be quick to share a warm smile or a word of encouragement. Even when circumstances are less than ideal, a true Christian is capable of joy, because his joy is rooted in Christ. He is happy in the knowledge that God looks down benevolently on His children. His joy and his longing are that nothing comes between him and His Lord to harm their relationship. Most of all, our joy lies in the hope of an eternity with the Lord, and the knowledge that Jesus has prepared a place in heaven for His children.

4. A Christian is patient

“Patient in tribulation” (Romans 12:12). A true Christian learns to be patient amid the trials, hardships, and problems that come to every person on this earth. This patience gives him endurance. He won’t complain when things are rough and he momentarily cannot understand God’s ways. Waiting on God requires trust. Patience is the trust that is visible to the world.

5. A Christian can forgive

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse” (Romans 12:14). A true Christian does not hold grudges, even when he is slandered and persecuted by others. He will learn to bless even his enemies.



6. A Christian has compassion

“Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn” (Romans 12:15). This is perhaps one mark of a Christian that every person will look for. A Christian empathizes and sympathizes when his neighbor is hurting. He has compassion, and their sorrow will touch him. Likewise, a Christian can celebrate and rejoice with others when good comes to them.

7. A Christian doesn't play favorites

“Live in harmony with one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble” (Romans 12:16). An important earmark of a true Christian is that he will be just as willing to associate with and show kindness to someone who cannot repay that favor as to others. He is just as concerned about the well-being and happiness of the poor and needy as he is the people who can help him move up in society. In the NIV translation this verse reads: “Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.”

8. A Christian is humble

“Do not be conceited” (Romans 12:17). “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you (Romans 12:3). Every Christian should be concerned that he not have an inflated opinion of himself. God does not like pride. And neither do others.

9. A Christian is honorable.

“Be careful to do what is right in the sight of everyone” (Romans 12:17). A Christian can only hope to be a blessing and accomplish something for God if others are 100% convinced of his honesty and integrity.

10. A Christian is a peacemaker

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:18). Some people seem to relish arguments and clashes, and look to stir up conflict on a regular basis. Even if a Christian comes into a conflict with someone like that, he will strive to resolve or avoid battles with others. Whenever it is possible, he will aim for peace with everyone.

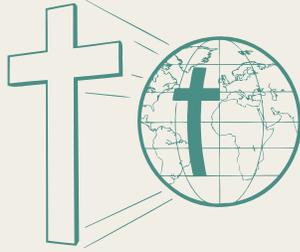
11. A Christian does not look for revenge.

“Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord. On the contrary: If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this you will heap burning coals on his head” (Romans 12:17, 19-21).

A true Christian considers it a victory to be able to heap the burning coals of love and patience in places where revenge and anger would bring grief. He will seek to have an abundance of these coals ready to warm the hearts of his enemies and gain victory over the efforts of Satan to break relationships and create chaos.

In this 12th chapter of Romans, the apostle Paul sets up a standard for Christian behavior that will shine in the world and show what a true Christian looks like.

M. H.



Radio Broadcast

The Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, Ontario

The Biblical Path for The Church

God's Word shows us the right path for our life. The prophet Isaiah pointed out this path when he said: "A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray" (Isaiah 35:8). This prophetic word already spoke unmistakably about the godly path of the New Testament church. God wants this path of life for everyone who belongs to His church.

Because the church had its beginning in the New Testament, we need to turn to the New Testament to find out exactly what its path looked like. The foundation of the church was established there. Paul writes: "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11). Paul continues to describe the church: "being fitted together, grows into a holy temple of the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:21-22). Could anything that is contrary to the character and nature of Christ still call itself the "Church of God"?

Let's look at another fact. Earnest readers of the Bible know that the New Testament church is described as the "bride of Christ." This "bride" came from God. She was given to her bridegroom, Jesus Christ, as a reward for His suffering and sacrifice on the cross. Heavenly glory is her adornment. Revelation 12:1 describes her as: "a woman clothed with the sun." What a pertinent reference to Jesus Christ, who is described as the "Sun of Righteousness." John testifies in Revelation 21:2: "Then I, John, saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." John is then told in

Revelation 21:9-10: "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.' And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." In Revelation 19:8 we read about the adornment of the "bride": "And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." What a clear image from our God!

John the Baptist understood this concept when, seeing Jesus, he exclaimed: "Behold! The Lamb of God" (John 1:29). John also stated: "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:29-30). When we look at this statement, the question arises: Does not a bride want to walk next to her bridegroom and walk the same path together with him?

The bride of Christ willingly allows herself to be led on this biblical path and is prepared to walk this way of God with her Bridegroom. Wherever people accept Jesus and His gospel, He issues a clear call: "Follow me!" This call of Jesus is mentioned numerous times in the scriptures and will always remain the biblical path for His church. Those who belong need to be prepared to follow it. Jesus told His disciples: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I will give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand" (John 10: 27-28). This is the blessing of being faithful!

The New Testament church does not have a human founder. It was never the task of a mere mortal and fallible



human being to institute or organize the church. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the founder of His church because she belongs to Him! By the Holy Spirit, He is her ruler, her strength, her life, and her light. The pure Word of God is her statement of faith, her guiding principle, her compass, and her trustworthy pathfinder. Through the inspired Word of God, errors are exposed and we are obligated to fulfill all righteousness before God and man. This godly path is illustrated by two harmonious parts: first in the foundational truths of the Word of God, and second in the exemplary life and conduct of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this manner, it is possible for all of us to maintain unity and community on this godly path.

It is of great importance for the church and its workers to keep the huge responsibility, in regard to preaching the Word, in mind. We know that the apostles preached Jesus Christ and the Word without compromise. They concerned themselves with the church's godly path! Maintaining obedience in the faith was also important. Whenever a church showed the tendency to veer off the right path, they were immediately confronted in a helpful manner and sometimes with a severe rebuke. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2).

When false influences threatened the church in Galatia, Paul wrote: "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another" (Galatians 1:6-7). The danger of confusion and error were present, but so was the zeal and sense of responsibility the apostles had to keep the Church on a biblical path.

God only has one people and for them there is just one way and one truth to become saved. Based on this fact, God's people need Spirit-filled teachers and ministers who can say with complete conviction: "This is the way, walk in it . . ."

The Big End of Trouble

I once saw in a paper some verses which were something like the following:

*“Trouble has a way of coming
Big end first;
And when seen at its appearing,
Looks its very worst.”*

Many people are always seeing trouble. They are “troubled on every side” (2 Corinthians 7:5). When they talk, it is generally to tell of their trouble. There are others who, though they have troubles, seem able to put them in the background, and say but little about them. They talk of victory, of the Lord’s help, and of the joys of salvation. We all have our troubles; for man is “of few days and full of trouble” (Job 14:1), but the greatest troubles any of us have, I think, are the ones that never come. How truly the poet has spoken in the above-quoted lines! Just as he says, trouble comes big end first and fills us with forebodings.

How easy it is to worry over the troubles that loom up in the future. “Oh, how shall we approach them!” we exclaim. “Oh, I do not know what I shall do!” and we fear and tremble before them. Nearly all the joy is excluded from some people’s lives by the shadow of coming troubles; but when those troubles come upon us, we somehow, somehow, pass through them. Many of them, and sometimes even very threatening ones, disappear entirely before we reach them; and the others, when they do come, are usually not nearly so bad as we had thought they were going to be. We always find a way through

them. Many times we are surprised at the ease with which we overcome them. One brother who had been troubled all his life was finally enabled to see that the Lord always made a way through for him, and in speaking of it he said, “Things nearly always turn out better than I think they are going to.”

A young brother and I once had an experience that well illustrates how trouble works. We were going to a meeting one night. There was such a heavy fog that we could see only a few feet ahead of us. Suddenly there loomed before us what appeared to be a great giant. He came striding toward us through the fog with legs twenty feet long and

The more you look at your troubles, the worse they will appear, the more you will be troubled, and the less you will see of God and his help.

body towering up out of sight. It was an awe-inspiring spectacle and at first startled us. There it was, coming right toward us in a most threatening manner. If we had been frightened and had run away, we might have had a great story to tell, but we continued walking on toward it, when suddenly we came face to face with one of our neighbors. He

was only an ordinary-sized man, and there was nothing terrible about him; but he was carrying a lantern, which swung partly behind him, and as he walked threw that gigantic shadow forward into the fog. The giant that we saw was not the real man, it was only his shadow.

That is just the way trouble comes. The thing we see is not really the approaching trouble in its true size and shape, it is only the shadow of it that we see. Our imagination pictures it as something terrible, and we worry and live in its shadow for days and weeks, only to find at last that we have been scared by a shadow and that the real trouble is only a fraction of what we supposed it would be.



When Alexander the Great was a youth, his father had a war-horse that no one could ride. The youthful prince made up his mind to conquer the animal. When he tried it, he discovered that the horse was afraid of its shadow, so he turned its head toward the sun and soon had it conquered. Let us learn a lesson from this, and when we become afraid of the shadows of trouble, let us turn our faces toward the Sun of Righteousness, thus leaving the shadows behind us. The Scripture says: "The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; For You, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You" (Psalm 9:9-10).

David said: "Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear; For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock. And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me" (Psalms 27:3, 5-6).

O troubled soul, instead of looking at your troubles, look to Jesus. The more you look at your troubles, the worse they will appear, the more you will be troubled, and the less you will see of God and His help. Do you not know that God loves you? Do you not know that He sees the trouble? Do you not know that He knows the best way to meet it, and just exactly how much grace you will need? Instead of worrying, try trusting; you will find it works much better. Cultivate the habit of casting your care upon Jesus. Face your troubles boldly. Assert in your soul: "The Lord will make a way. The Lord will help me through."

Continue repeating it until it becomes real to you, and you will be surprised at how simple trust will take you through to victory.

Living Faith that is Enduring

Nahum 1:7 The LORD is good,
A stronghold in the day of trouble;
And He knows those who trust in Him.

Living faith that is enduring

God alone can give to us,

Banish fear and doubts alluring

Since his Spirit lives in us.

He is always at our side now

All alone we need not go.

Even in the darkest night, how

Wonderful his love will glow.

For our feet a firm foundation,

For our hearts a fount of peace,

Home beyond all expectation,

Ours in God. What sweet release!

How to accept Criticism and Advice

In the Bible we read that all born-again Christians are part of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 4:15-16). This body is similar to a physical body in that each believer is different than the next, varying in their strengths, weaknesses, spiritual gifts and opportunities. The body of believers is also referred to as the family of God, with God as the Father, and Jesus as the only legitimate Son; all other Christians are adopted into the family through new-birth in Christ (Ephesians 1:5; John 1:12-13). This family is made up of seasoned Christians, new converts, and a multitude of stages in-between. Whether God's people are seen as parts of one body that vary in gifts and abilities, or as family members varying in spiritual understanding and experiences, one thing is clear, Christians differ from one another. Our differences allow us to learn from each other.

We can learn from other Christians by observing their conduct, words, and attitude. We can also grow by asking questions, or sharing our concerns with other believers, as we desire to learn from their wisdom, knowledge, and experiences. Yet there are times when opportunities for learning come to us in the form of advice or criticism. Unfortunately, criticism and advice is often undesired and poorly received. Such feedback tends to generate negative emotions in us. Perhaps we feel as though we are being attacked or targeted.

As children of God there are a number of things to consider when we receive advice or criticism from others. Though often unwanted, advice and criticism can help us become more like Christ. Before we examine these considerations, let us look at what criticism and advice are,

and how they differ. Merriam-Webster defines criticism as “a remark or comment that expresses disapproval of someone or something.” Criticism is usually expressed by those who feel the need to comment on one's areas of weakness or mistakes committed. Criticism is not as punitive as rebuke, but both aim at addressing negative actions or attributes. Criticism and rebuke can be useful when expressed properly. The Bible tells us to admonish and rebuke those who are falling away from the teachings of Christ in order to save them from spiritual death (see Matthew 18:15). However, this should be done in a “spirit of gentleness” (Galatians 6:1).

Advice is defined as “a recommendation regarding a decision or course of conduct” (Merriam-Webster). Unlike criticism, advice tends to focus on how one might improve something that is already heading in the right direction. Sometimes it is referred to as “constructive criticism.”

It is important to remember that offering your advice or criticism to someone who has not asked for it can be destructive and hurtful. Yet there are times when we receive unsolicited criticism or advice. How can we respond positively in such instances? What are some considerations to remember when we receive advice or criticism from others?

The first thing we should do when we receive advice or criticism is consider the person who is giving us this feedback. Is that person a professing Christian with a good testimony? If yes, then there is a good chance that this person loves you and wants the best for you. If the critic wants the best for you, then he must think it is important



for you to hear his comments of concern. Try to put yourself in his place. Would you have acted differently? If yes, how so? On the other hand, if the critic is known for being a harsh and mean-spirited person who often shares uncalled-for comments with others, then perhaps his comment is ill intended and unjustified. In such a case we can share that person's criticism with people we trust and ask them if it is warranted. The apostle Paul wrote many letters throughout his ministry. He was very concerned about the well being of other believers and the spiritual health of the early churches. It is quite common for his letters to contain admonishment or advice. Yet Paul always displayed his great love for the person or people he wrote to. For example, Paul opened his first letter to the Corinthians with the words, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus" (1 Corinthians 1:3-4). The readers knew that Paul's letter was motivated by love, and thus the advice or criticism they received was seen as justified and important.

After considering the critic, a second point to look at is the criticism or advice itself. Would accepting and implementing the criticism/advice improve your Christian walk? Or, does the feedback simply attack and tear down a part of who you are or what you have done? If we go back to the letters of Paul we will notice that he consistently cemented his authority in the teachings of Christ, and shared his concerns because he wanted them to return to, or remain in, Christ's teachings. To the Galatians he wrote, "Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the

Father who raised Him from the dead) . . . I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:1, 6-7). Paul's criticism and advice were always meant to ground his audience in the truths of God's Word. His intention was not to hurt or tear down, but to build up and refine.

Now that we have briefly reflected on the critic and the intent of the criticism/advice we receive, it is time to look inward and examine ourselves. Do we have a desire within ourselves to grow in our relationship with God? Do we want to become more like Jesus, and reflect His attributes in our lives? If so, we need the humility of Christ to face our shortcomings and accept the criticism and advice of others. Though we serve the Lord with our whole hearts, it is possible to overlook some aspect of our lives that negatively reflects on Christ or His Church. I am reminded of the apostle Peter, who was sternly rebuked by Paul for favoring the Jewish-Christians over the Gentile-Christians in certain situations (Galatians 2:11-14). Paul's admonition was quite direct and severe, but Peter accepted his criticism and saw the error of his ways.

Do we have a humble desire to "grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ" (Ephesians 4:15)? If so, it is important that we not only speak the "truth in love," but receive it in love as well. Advice and criticism offered and received in love can help us grow closer to God and be further molded into the image of Christ.

David Knelsen
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The Empty Place

God's Word admonishes us not to forsake assembly. Many are likely not aware of the repercussions when their seat in the church is vacant on Sunday or Wednesday night.

Several years ago, I read a very interesting short story. It is most certainly beneficial for everyone:

A brother was not in the church service one Sunday morning. Instead of gathering together with his fellow believers and praying to God, he chose to sleep in. Then he went fishing and afterwards on a hike. There are certain things people do when they ignore Hebrews 10:25.

The pastor met with the brother on the street the next day and the following conversation took place:

"Well Pastor, my place was empty again yesterday!"—"No Brother, your place was not empty yesterday!"—"What? Who was sitting in my spot?"—"Satan himself. He sat in your spot, kept on looking at me and said: 'I have him again, I have him again!'"

In the Old Testament there is a passage that says: "Tomorrow is the New Moon; and you will be missed, because your seat will be empty" (1 Samuel 20:18). Yes, if you have a place in the congregation and if this place is empty then you will be missed and they will ask about you. Without good reason you should never stay away from the congregation. It is detrimental for an individual and the others as well.

Who was sitting in your place in the congregation last Sunday? If you could have been in your place, but chose to be somewhere else instead, then your place was not empty. A ruler was there, the ruler of the world. He was there where you should have been. And from your place, he misled others by his deceitful spirit.

He tempted the preacher. To others he whispered: "See, others don't always have to come and are still good Christians (but that's a lie). You don't always have to come to church. You could sometimes stay at home or go somewhere else too."

And so, because your place was left empty, due to lack of dedication, you have become a bad example for others. In this manner you have contributed to others being tempted to transgress Hebrews 10:25. God will one day hold you accountable for your deeds and your poor example.

Therefore make every effort in the future to ensure that your place is never left empty without a good reason. Where it is possible, make sure you are always in your place. You are the one who will be rewarded for it and consequently you will be a good example for others.

One day your place will always be empty. That will be the day when the Lord calls you out of this life. And if you have dutifully filled your place in the congregation and have done whatever you were called to do, then they will look on your empty spot with sadness and pray to God that He might fill it with another faithful individual like you.

You still have the opportunity to fill your own place. God alone knows how much longer that will be. Make use of every opportunity and take to heart the words that are written in Hebrews 10:25: "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."

Otto Sommerfeld

A Tiny Act of Love

Rdungawani was an evangelist in India. He had wanted to bring the good news of Jesus to others from the time he was a young boy. Although he grew up in a village that knew nothing of Christ, he became a follower of Jesus at a young age. This is his story:

“My sister and I were young children. Our father asked us to go with him to a neighboring town. Father wanted to sell peanuts. Several families joined us on this rather lengthy journey. We left early in the morning, before the sun got hot. We were in good spirits, and walked along the narrow path with light steps. Around noon we crossed a river, and waited for one another on the other side until everyone had crossed safely.

Someone lit a small fire, roasted some peanuts, and we drank water and rested there. Then it was time to move on. But we were tired, and gradually that fatigue got the better of us. My sister and I could barely walk anymore. It was as though invisible hands were holding us back. And then we had the extra misfortune that a thorn bush ripped open the sack I was carrying, and I lost many valuable peanuts. This was actually quite terrible. We were already the last ones, and now on top of that we had to stop and mend the sack. We were in the middle of the wilderness, exhausted, discouraged, alone, and very hungry. And our father was no longer with us! We were alone!

And suddenly we heard a rustling. We were not sure whether this was an animal or a person, but soon we heard footsteps. They came closer and closer, and then a man emerged out of the woods. Was he a friend or an enemy? He could see our situation immediately—he saw our torn sack, our unhappy faces, and our fear. Without a word he sat down and began to mend the sack.

He was skilled, even in the wilderness. When he was finished, he picked up the two sacks full of peanuts, hoisted them on his shoulders, and told us to follow him. We walked for a long time, following him, until we could see light in the distance. Our helper pointed across the valley to where a large fire was burning brightly and said, “Your people are there.” Then he put our peanut sacks back onto my shoulders and my sister’s, and disappeared into the dark woods from which he had come.

We were so happy to see our folks! We told them what had happened to us, and before we even finished our story, someone said, “That was almost certainly Manal, the Christian man.”

In that hour I decided I was also going to become such a man. I wanted to be just like him. I went to the mission where I came to know Jesus as my personal Savior, and now I follow and serve Him too.”

What Do You Request for Your Children?

Parents only want what is best for their children. Yet, in light of eternity, what is best for their lives?

Many loyal Christians have difficulties raising their children, often despite being good examples for them. They attend church regularly and pray earnestly for them. Perhaps they have given their children over to God. Why then do things still seem to go off course? When Abraham offered his son Isaac to God, there were consequences. The Bible says in Genesis 22 that God tested Abraham. He said to him:

“Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

A burnt offering!

Many sacrifices are described in the Old Testament. For example, an animal was sacrificed and the people would eat a certain part of it. This was to be a symbol of their relationship with God. Other sacrifices were not to be eaten, neither by the one bringing the offering nor the priest. Everything belonged to God. This sacrifice was the burnt offering (Leviticus 6:1–6).

Abraham loved his son very much, and as we can imagine, this was a very difficult request. Although He asked this of Abraham, God is not a capricious or bloodthirsty dictator. He loved the world so much that He gave us His only begotten Son. This God asked Abraham to surrender his son fully to Him. Abraham had already gone through many tests, but this request was the climax.

Perhaps our attitude towards our children will be our greatest test. It is here that we show where we really stand with God. Who is on the throne of our life?

God or our children?

We read in Genesis 22:3 how Abraham reacted to God’s command: he rose early, saddled his donkey, and took two servants, Isaac, and the wood for the burnt offering with him. Then he went to the place that God had shown him. He would certainly have had a distressing night behind him. He thought only of God’s request.

After three days, he saw from afar the place of which God had spoken. Then he said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.” Here we see how much it could cost to lay our children on God’s altar. First: it took three days until they came to their destination. With today’s transportation we could get anywhere in three days. If we want to offer our children entirely to God, part of that means to say: “Lord, you can send my child anywhere—on the mission field where they will have to struggle with danger, difficulties, and poverty. You sent your Son to this earth to die for me, and I am prepared to have my child never return home again, if that is Your will. If You want to use my children, I will not hold them back.”

Isobel Kuhn, the great missionary among the Lisus, related that when her mother heard of Isobel’s calling, she had said, “the only way she will become a missionary is over my dead body.” Although this mother was the president of the Women’s Missionary Society of their church, she did not want her daughter to waste her many gifts and talents in a primitive culture. She died suddenly and unexpectedly while Isobel was still in Bible school.



Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on his son Isaac. Like Jesus, he had to carry his own cross. Are we prepared to lay burdens on our children? “It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth” (Lamentations 3:27). Parents must be willing to familiarize their children with the true significance of the cross. They often forget that it is not enough for their children to become Christians. They must fully surrender their lives to Him, and become acquainted with the fellowship of His suffering. Jesus says, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Luke 9:23).

Isaac suddenly asked his father, “We have the fire and the wood, where is the lamb for the burnt offering?—“God will provide it,” came the answer. Abraham built the altar where God had specified. Then he bound his son Isaac and laid him on top. Today it seems as if we have gone from one extreme to the other: instead of parents raising their children, the children are raising their parents. Do we sometimes allow our children too much freedom? We should not let them decide whether they want to go to Sunday school or youth meeting or take part in family devotions.

Abraham’s upbringing was different. In Genesis 18:19, it says, “For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.” Abraham did not stop in the middle of his task—he did not leave Isaac lying on the altar to allow him to starve to death. He also did not leave him for the wild animals to eat. God’s command was that Abraham do the execution himself. No one else can lay our children on the altar. No one can bring them to God for us. The knife must be in our hands. And we must also make the decisive push to lead our children to Christ.

Abraham reached out his hand—he took his knife and was about to sacrifice his son. If we want to place our

child on God’s altar, it is not done by praying for them, sending them to Sunday school, or being a good example. Our one desire should be that they bring honor to God, whatever the cost may be.

The son of a believing mother wanted nothing to do with Christ. Finally the mother prayed, “Lord, I want my child to accept you, no matter the cost. If you need to break his bones, I will mend him back to health. I am ready to care for a languishing cripple for the rest of my life. Just let him find his way to you, Lord. If you must destroy his body to save his soul, then do so.” She laid her son entirely on the altar. Through God’s grace, he accepted the Lord without his body being broken.

What do you request for your children? Happiness, riches, health? They may receive all this, but what about the salvation of their souls? It is better to pray, “The thing I want most is that my children find You.”

Then God will also attend to the other things. What happens when we lay our children on God’s altar? What happened in Abraham’s life? Later in the Scriptures it says, “But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ So he said, ‘Here I am.’ And He said, ‘Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.’”

His obedience brought honor to God and blessings for his son Isaac. Scriptures do not say that Abraham did not protect his son from death, rather that he did not withhold his son from God. Through this event, Isaac obtained a deeper relationship with God. And through the resurrection, Abraham received his son again—not only as a physical son, but also as a spiritual one. He glorified God in letting himself be used to portray the sacrifice of His only Son Jesus Christ. What more could we want for our children than that they become more like Jesus through their surrender.

D. Schäfer

Building a House of Worship in Chilliwack

By God's grace, the congregation of the Church of God in Chilliwack celebrated the ground breaking for their new House of Worship on Pentecost Sunday, May 24, 2015. As Pentecost was the inauguration of the New Testament Church, we had double reason to give thanks to God.

We began the day rejoicing that the promise of the Father was fulfilled with the coming of the Holy Spirit. Based on God's Word, we were reminded of how the Holy Spirit deepens and transforms our relationship with God, and that a chief characteristic of the Spirit-filled life is LOVE—love for God, love for the Church, love for everyone! The indwelling of God's Spirit also gives us a desire to obey our Lord in all things out of love for Him who loved us first. We prayed that the fullness of God's Spirit would be evident in our lives and that we would have a sensitive ear and heart to His leading.

Following the worship service, we congregated on the construction site. Here, our text was 2 Chronicles 3:1-3:

“Now Solomon began to build the House of the LORD at

Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. And he began to build on the second day of the second month in the fourth year of his reign. This is the foundation which Solomon laid for building the House of God: The length was sixty cubits and the width twenty cubits.”

We learned the following from this Scripture:

We are building the Lord's House.

“Solomon began to build the House of the LORD”. So too, the House we are building is the Lord's House. This House is to be built for His glory; it is a House of prayer; a House where we worship Him in truth and spirit.

This House is a meeting place with God

The Bible reports that Solomon built the Lord's House on Mount Moriah—where the Lord appeared to his father





David. This thought was the impetus to the insight that this House of the Lord is a meeting place with God. It is a place where our hearts are moved by the Holy Spirit, where we are encouraged and admonished as we sit at Christ's feet, learning of Him, and we also pray that it will be a place where those who are lost meet the Savior!

Jesus is the foundation of God's Church

Scripture states that Solomon laid a foundation for the building of the House of God. We are beginning to work on laying the physical foundation for this building, but thanks be to God: the spiritual foundation for God's church has already been laid. "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11).

We then sought God's face in prayer and closed the ceremony by joyfully singing the chorus "This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!" After a

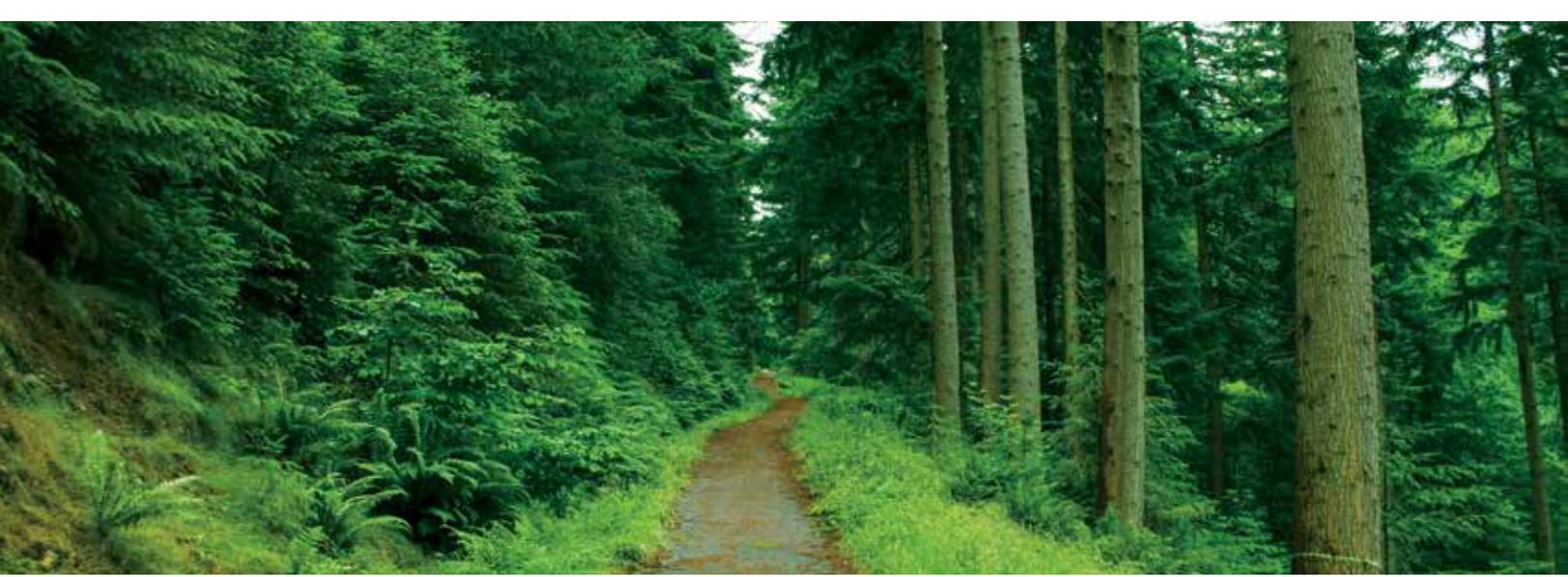
group photo, we enjoyed each other's fellowship with a BBQ luncheon.

The magnitude of this project can seem overwhelming, but we are resolved to trust the Lord for His guidance, strength, and protection for each step of the way.

We thank the Lord for the many who have prayed for us during our planning stage. Please continue to pray! We would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks for the encouragement we have received from dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ from many places, both in word and in financial gifts. May the Lord bless you for your love to us and His Church! It is our prayer that the gracious Hand of God be upon us as we build the Lord's House!

G. Krebs
Chilliwack, BC





Disciple or Fan

Strong personalities who are active in their communities always find followers. There are, however, two types of followers: disciples and fans. Disciples are completely committed to their leader and his ideas. Fans, on the other hand, admire their leader and his ideas, but they seek only personal gain in following. Although fans claim that they are devoted to a noble cause, they always put themselves first. When all goes well, it is difficult to distinguish between disciples and fans, but when following requires sacrifice, the difference is easy to spot.

In Capernaum, Jesus attracted a large following. The people followed Him in droves, and they did not want to leave His side. Such large crowds gathered around Jesus by the lake, that He had to get into a boat in order to preach. Thousands ran after Him into the desert.

And yet, Jesus foretold that great woe would come to Capernaum. He rebuked the crowd and denounced their religious fervor because it lacked commitment: “You did not repent!” Such is the judgment for insincere followers. Even the crowd’s recognition of Jesus did not help them. They praised Him, and they called Him a prophet. But they were just paying Him lip service; their praise was based only on knowledge and was not accompanied by heartfelt devotion.

The people in Capernaum did not want to change the way they lived. They simply wanted Jesus to enhance the lives they were already living. Their acknowledgment of Jesus was not accompanied by a change in lifestyle

or a break in their previous habits. They wanted Jesus to bring joy to their lives, but they found the call for repentance and change too demanding.

True discipleship requires people to give up their own goals and to adopt the beliefs of their leader. Through their unquestioning obedience, followers become like the one they follow.

Fans, however, are quite different. They seek to feed their own egos by taking their leader’s glory for themselves. When the time comes to commit, they hold back. When danger threatens, they run for cover. Fans are the people who shout “Hosanna!” one day and cry “Crucify Him!” the next. And their “Crucify Him!” is always more genuine than their “Hosanna!”

Jesus was never deceived by the admiration of the masses. He knew that, in the end, they would choose Barabbas. He knows what is in people’s hearts. From the beginning, the father of lies and murder has stirred up the changeable and reckless mob. Faithful followers never participate in mob activity.

Every strong personality and all great philosophies have disciples and fans. Those who have fixed their eyes on Jesus can distinguish between discipleship and fanfare, and they will always condemn insincere fanfare. Externally, it is difficult to distinguish between these two classes of followers, but at heart, they are irreconcilable opposites.

Discipleship demands sacrifice. Fanfare is self-seeking, and fans seek to bask in the glory of their leader while only paying lip service to his teachings.

Who Will Go First?

One of us is going to be the first to leave,
And the one remaining will sorrowfully grieve.
Teary-eyed, the casket will be prepared for one
The other filled with sorrow, that the hour has come.

One will see the other and glance just one last time,
The heart overcome with sorrow for yesterday will pine.
One will cross the threshold to eternity,
The other will be grappling with death's reality.

Going through the house and craving hopelessly
Just to hear that voice or footstep silently.
No one knows for certain, who the first will be,
Is it you or I? There is no guarantee.

Perhaps you hope in secret that you will be the first
Being left behind, alone—oh how it hurts!
Blessed is the one who reaches gloryland,
Blessed if one's life is in the Savior's hand.

Even if you must remain behind and suffer grief,
Comfort from our God will put your heart at ease.
For the time will come when as the Lord has planned
You will follow too and reach the better land.

Special Services 2015 in Canada, Mexico, Argentina, and USA

Dedication Services in Steinbach

SEPTEMBER 5-7, 2015

Dedication Service of Christian Unity Press, Flint

SEPTEMBER 27, 2015

in the Swartz Creek Church of God

40th Anniversary of the Church of God in Mexico

SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2015

Special Services in J.L. Suarez & Buenos Aires

OCTOBER 6-11, 2015

Special Services in Oberá & Misiones

OCTOBER 14-18, 2015

Special Services in Edmonton

OCTOBER 10-12, 2015

The Hardest Task

What is the hardest thing to master?
To keep one's calm, despite disaster,
To be content, when life's not vibrant,
Though you are right, to still be silent.

To bear one's cross, without complaining,
To still keep hope, when not attaining,
To rest, when you desire pursuing,
But haven't got the strength for doing.

To be content when you need others
Since you've grown frail, and it's a bother
To do the things you once found easy.
Your step is slow, no longer speedy.

Weighed down with years, instead of sighing,
O, be content and keep relying
On Christ and trust in His salvation
To help you conquer your temptations.

Fix not your heart on earth's possessions,
Let it be free and make concessions.
When circumstances change around you,
Let peace and gentleness surround you.

Accept the things you cannot alter
And let your faith in no way falter.
And as the days keep on progressing
The Lord will not withhold his blessing.

You may not have the strength to labor;
Continue to live in God's own favor,
And fold your hands in humble prayer,
And pray for others, since you care.

And when your time on earth is finished,
Your joy, it will not be diminished.
Rejoice, the best is yet to come,
When Jesus says, my child, well done.