



Foundation of Faith

Humility

A Biblical Key to Success

Clothed in Humility

Are You A Christian?

"Can You Please Forgive Me?"

The Way to Grace and Knowledge Through Humility

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Editorial

Dear Reader!

We have a beautiful song by Wilhelm Ebel:

*How tranquil the path of the humble,
A valley of calm, gentle streams;
There fountains of life-giving water
Are flowing so pure and serene.
There blossoms the sweet rose of Sharon,
The lilies of valley abound;
The Savior provides for His children,
And heavenly manna is found.
Lord, may I serve You with true humility!*

What is humility?—It shows itself in an honest and sincere recognition of our standing before God and His truth. It bows before the Lord; indeed, it bows under the mighty hand of God. Humility is revealed in four main ways:

1. Humility before God—“He has shown you, o man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

2. Humility before brothers and sisters in the congregation—“*Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself” (Philippians 2:3).

3. Humility before the world and fellow human beings—“Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth)” (Ephesians 5:8–9). True humility does not gloss over our failings; we place ourselves honestly under God’s Word, examine ourselves, and, where we have failed, openly confess such and make it right. This brings trust.

4. Humility in regard to ourselves—This means refraining from glorifying ourselves. An example is King David: “And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight” (2 Samuel 6:22). And the Psalmist acknowledges: “Before I was humbled I went astray” (Psalm 119:67, NRSVA).

Therefore, dear Reader: “Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility” (1 Peter 5:5).

H. D. Nimz

Light from God

Professor S. F. B. Morse, the inventor of the telegraph, was asked:

“Professor Morse, when you were making your experiments at the university, did you ever come to a stand, not knowing what to do next?”

“Oh, yes, more than once.”

“And at such times, what did you do next?”

“I may answer you in confidence, sir,” said the Professor, “but it is a matter of which the public knows nothing. Whenever I could not see my way clearly, I prayed for more light.”

“And the light generally came?”

“Yes, and may I tell you that when flattering honors come to me from America and Europe on account of the invention which bears my name, I never felt I deserved them. I had made a valuable application of electricity, not because I was superior to the other men, but solely because God, who meant it for mankind, must reveal it to someone, and was pleased to reveal it to me.” ■

Telegraph Age 1906 (abridged with language updated)

Me and Myself

A preacher was discussing an essay with a Bible student.

“My friend,” he said, “your essay is beautiful. But it would be good if you hadn’t mistook ‘me’ and ‘myself.’”

The candidate, who was confident of his language

skills, could not understand this rebuke. He asked what it meant.

The preacher said, “I am to preach Christ, not me. In your essay, however, I see nothing but the word ‘me’ from beginning to end. Such a sermon can convert the listeners to you but not to Christ.” ■

Just One Dot

A signature mark of Pippin III the King of the Franks (714-768), a kind of written seal, has been preserved in the state archives of the city of Marburg on the Lahn River. The document was marked by the king’s hand with a cross, under which a small dot was placed. This was how the king of the Franks signed his documents, charters, donation agreements, and decrees. Such documents were the means by which he spoke to his people.

The dot under the cross symbolizes how the king of the Franks understood his own position. Under the majestic splendor of Christ’s cross, the king saw himself as a tiny dot. The cross was his symbol, the symbol of Christianity. The tiny dot, on the other hand, was his personal confession: “This is me under the cross

of Christ.” The cross was large and alone important, whereas the king was small and humble.

This is exactly what the apostle Paul means when he speaks of the glory of the cross of Christ in Galatians (chapter 6:14). This message also applies to us. And something else is also true: The closer we, as God’s small but beloved people, are to the cross of Christ, the closer we are to God’s salvation and help. Since Golgotha, the cross has been a sign of this divine help and redemption for all time.

Writing to Dioscorus, the church father Augustine recommends as one remedy against pride, that he engage first in humility, second in humility, and third in humility. ■

“Can You Please Forgive Me?”

This important expression has meant, and still means, a great deal in our home. We owe it to the book “The Pfaffling Children” by Agnes Sapper. In this story, the father teaches his children to apologize as soon as they have done something wrong. This immediately takes the wind out of the sails of the angry or indignant person, upset about the wrong done to them. They calm down immediately, and tranquility returns when the barometer had just been on “storm.”

We have always encouraged our children to ask for an apology straight away. If the teacher at school is annoyed or displeased about something, they are quickly disarmed when the guilty child says: “Please forgive me.”

And if it is the father himself who is exasperated by a child’s disobedience, he will similarly be swayed when the child says: “Father, please forgive me.”

Isn’t that also a good word to use in a marriage? Perhaps the husband has said an unloving word to his wife. He was angered by something at work during the day, and now he takes his frustration out on his wife. Suddenly he sees his wife’s pained face, a tear in the corner of each eye, making their way down her cheek. He could start ranting: “Oh, stop your whining! You know I can’t stand that!” But that doesn’t take away the damage. On the contrary, such words are like a hammer blow that painfully drives the nail even deeper. But if he says briefly and honestly: “Forgive me.” the

rain clouds on his wife’s face disappear and the sun returns.

Maybe a superior reprimanded you, and you didn’t deserve it. You think you are in the right. But if you defend yourself and don’t accept the reprimand, or if you make a face so that the other person can see that you don’t acknowledge the reprimand, this small matter becomes bigger and more difficult. But if you briefly say: “Forgive me,” the anger will be gone immediately, and the other person will probably say: “Well, I didn’t mean anything bad.” And everything will be fine again.

Don’t you want to attempt it? I have tried out the advice of Father Pfaffling and found it to be good. That’s why I taught it to my children, and having followed it, the advice has served them well.

I advise you to teach your children these words. You will be providing them with a great gift which may make many a difficult situation easier for them. It can even appease enemies to always say straight away in critical situations: “Please forgive me!”

I am aware that many people find it very, very difficult to apologize. Some want to restore peace with a gift or kindness. But that is not enough. I encourage you to learn, and teach, how to ask for forgiveness, because in any conflict you will likely be at fault in some way! And I promise you: the burden will fall from your soul if you honestly say: “Can you please forgive me?”

Ernst Modersohn

Clothed in Humility

One of the most important virtues we can possibly have and pursue is something the Bible calls us to clothe ourselves in like a garment. Whether we are clothed in this virtue or not determines whether we can continually receive God's amazing grace, or whether He has to resist us! Given how totally dependent we are on the Lord, what could possibly be more important? Likewise, could anything be worse than having the Almighty God oppose us?

"Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:5-6).

What is this humility that God's Word calls us to embrace so emphatically? The truth is that many people have a completely wrong understanding of what it means to be humble, thinking that self-degradation or self-pity displays humility. *In fact, some of the most miserable, self-loathing people are actually the most proud, desperately lacking humility, because they are always focused on themselves.* "Self" is the keyword in determining whether someone is genuinely humble or, instead, given over to pride.

"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3-4).

A truly humble person thinks about themselves as little as possible, choosing instead to focus on others ahead of themselves. They do not crave personal glory or require recognition for their achievements and can even rejoice when someone else receives credit for their accomplishments. When we compare that to the obsessive focus on self that is emphasized in society today, with a constant craving to be considered beautiful, successful, or popular driving the majority of social media, true humility sticks out as radically different. Just considering the fact that the biggest category of all pictures taken in the world today are unashamedly called "selfies," it is evident just how rare genuine humility is.

A humble person does not need to get their own way in every choice, does not need the last word in every argument or get easily offended by every criticism but instead can happily submit to their peers and, most of all, submit to God. Rather than stubbornly insisting on their own will, the lowly person has, by God's grace, crucified the big "I," humbly submitting to the Lord's perfect will. When this happens, their desire for praise and attention completely shifts from themselves to instead longing for Christ to receive all glory and praise. Few people have ever captured the essence of humility more fully in fewer words than John the Baptist when he declared, "He [Jesus] must increase, but I *must* decrease" (John 3:30).

Never has there been a man or woman who God could continually use in His kingdom to be a blessing who wasn't truly humble. That is because the moment pride is allowed to enter into a heart and a person's desire shifts to personal glory, God in His love must oppose them. Because of how destructive pride is to the soul, our Lord cannot allow that pride to grow and flourish in our life and therefore must resist us. Let's remember this, especially when we go through a period of deep trials and tribulations and we feel like asking, "How could God let this happen?" It could be God's way of rescuing us from pride and guiding us back to humility, desiring to bless us more, and enabling us to be more of a blessing for others. That is what the apostle Paul came to conclude when, after having begged God three times to remove the "thorn in his flesh," God's answer was not to take it away but to instead comfort him by saying, "My grace is sufficient for you."

Our best example of true humility was, of course, our Lord Jesus Himself, as Paul describes in Philippians 2:7-9: "But [Jesus] made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name." When God finds someone with this Christ-like attitude of selfless humility, He will draw near to them, blessing them with the greatest blessing of all—intimacy with God—and using them in a mighty

way to bring glory for Himself. The evangelist D. L. Moody recognized this when he declared, “If we only get down low enough, God will use us to His glory.”

So how can we be clothed in humility? Evidently, there is a choice that we have to make, as Peter exhorts us to “humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.” Crucial to our remaining humble is making daily time alone with God a priority, getting to know Him more intimately as we worship Him in prayer and Bible study. When we grow in our understanding of His greatness and beauty and recognize more fully our total dependence on Him, our natural response will be to humble ourselves. John Flavel described this process like this: “*They that know God will be humble, and they that know themselves cannot be proud.*”

A simple acronym which helps us remember exactly what humility looks like is the word JOY: J – Jesus first – focus on Him above all! O – Others second – think of everyone around you as more important than yourself. Y – Yourself last – in fact, think of yourself as little as possible. When we do that, there will undoubtedly be true joy in our life as God draws us nearer to Himself in a deeper, more intimate relationship, continually pouring out His grace in our life. Let’s remember: “Be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble’” (1 Peter 5:5).

Ryan Henkelmann
Edmonton, AB

The Hidden Valley

Scripture states in 1 Peter 5:5 that God gives grace to the humble. Indeed, the valley of humility is glorious, where the peace of God flows like a deep river. The fruits that grow in this valley of humility are precious—the fruit of the Spirit: “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22). There, the sun of God’s love shines, warming and cultivating the soil of the human heart, allowing everything to bloom and thrive according to God’s good pleasure.

The generous, benevolent hand of God scatters heavenly seeds, and the rain of divine blessings falls upon us when we dwell in the valley of humility. No calamity can reach us there, for we find safe refuge in God’s great and loving heart, where the enemy cannot touch us. We do not dwell in this valley of humility alone, for He who came forth from the Father is with us. Though He is unseen, we are keenly aware of His royal presence. In this valley, we feel His reigning power and are content, experiencing His tender love which enables us to rejoice.

What eminence and honor it is to walk with the Son of God—guided by humility, filled with the joy of the Eternal! We eat of the heavenly manna and drink from the fountain of life, the well of water springing up into eternal life (see John 4: 14). “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22: 17).

What a marvelous invitation this is! Oh yes, it is a glorious fountain from which we may drink until our soul is fully satisfied and we thirst no more! The exalted way of holiness leads through this valley, and the redeemed of the Lord may walk upon it. Yes, all who have washed their robes and purified them in the blood of the Lamb will walk here. Let us press on, clothed in garments of righteousness, shod with the shoes of peace, adorned with the pearl of humility, and graced with a gentle and quiet spirit! Free from the chains of the world, on the highway of holiness and in the valley of humility, we must hasten forward until we reach the glorious goal.

C. E. Orr

The Way to Grace and Knowledge Through Humility

“*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*” (James 4:6)

Humility is a virtue, a spiritual ornament for God’s children. The more humble we can be, the more grace we possess. Humility can be recognized by certain characteristics.

One of them is obedience to the whole Word of God. A truly humble person will never knowingly disobey or refuse to follow any of God’s commands, even in small things.

Also, a humble person does not wish to be praised about his or her good qualities, nor do they want honor from people for what they have been able to accomplish through God’s help and grace. Only those who are humble, when honored by God, can receive praise without feeling great. God cannot entrust responsibility to those who become arrogant and proud.

Jesus was the most humble person to ever walk this earth. Jesus was meek and humble of heart, and yet He was great and exalted. He knew that He was God’s only Son and that judgment had been committed to Him, and yet He always gave glory to God the Father.

Paul wrote: “For in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles.” Yet, this realization was combined with humility on his part, because he adds: “though I am nothing” (2 Corinthians 12:11). If someone preaches with a special anointing and brings about much good through the message but becomes proud in the process, it could easily be that the next time this person must preach, God will not bless the message in order to teach them humility.

The greater the responsibility and the more gifts and talents a person has, the more humility they need. If they exalt themselves, God will find a way to humble them.

When the king of Babylon became haughty and proud, God humbled him so low that he had to live among the beasts in the field until he learned humility. (See Daniel 4). No person is so high and mighty that God cannot reach him and humble him.

Saul was anointed king when he was still humble and insignificant in his own eyes. But when he exalted himself, God rejected him. Likewise, a minister

who ceases to be humble will lose God’s anointing to preach, just as Saul lost his power and the godly right to rule over Israel.

One of the clearest signs of humility is a willingness to accept correction and constructive criticism, admit mistakes, and strive to overcome them without making excuses or justifying one’s behavior. If I am given good advice and do not heed it, but instead insist on my own way, that is a sign that I lack humility. Making derogatory remarks about others is also a sign of pride.

Humility will not cause us to say or do anything to get praise for ourselves and to receive honor from people. The humble person speaks of God’s blessings in order to give God the glory and honor. When God blesses our ministry, when sinners come to the Lord and are saved, when the sick are healed in answer to our prayers, then we should rejoice and we can relate what God has done to His glory. Paul told of how God worked through him, but he gave God the glory and credit for it. If we take the credit for something that God has done through us, then we lose God’s blessing.

“For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself” (Galatians 6:3). Humility frees the soul from thinking that we are people of importance and significance. “By the grace of God I am what I am, . . . not I, but the grace of God *which was with me*” (1 Corinthians 15:10).

God wants to exalt and honor the humble, but He will humiliate the proud and arrogant. That is why we should clothe ourselves with humility like a precious garment that adorns us gloriously. God has promised to richly bless the spiritually poor—and this includes the truly humble.

True humility is one of the most precious gifts of the Holy Spirit. A Christian possessing humility has the testimony that he or she is a child of God. The hallmarks are contentment, peace, and submission to the will of God. When we are aware of our weakness and inadequacy, effected by humility, this allows our soul to be in the right state to have faith in God. Humility helps us to seriously reflect on the things shown us in



Scripture. But it also helps us to avoid unnecessary debates about things that we cannot know.

1 Peter 5:5 tells us that “God gives grace to the humble.” Humility is necessary for all who want to enter God’s kingdom, for Jesus says, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3). To be converted, we need to have a humble mind and recognize our unworthiness. The gospel reveals our sinfulness and the wretchedness of human nature. It shows us that our righteousness is nothing and that we need Christ to save us.

In Jesus we have the perfect example of humility. He possessed both divine and human perfection. He humbled Himself and took on the form of a bondservant to save us and teach us to be meek and humble. Jesus says of Himself: “For I am gentle and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29).

We can never overestimate the value of true humility, nor can we do too much in order to obtain this grace. But praise God we can come into possession of it. In fact, all God’s children must possess it. No one who is not willing to humble themselves can receive salvation. We must be willing to recognize our sinfulness, confess our sins, and leave them. If someone is too proud to do this, they will not become saved.

We also must be humble to continue in a state of grace. “As you therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (Colossians 2:6). Only by walking in joyful obedience to God and complying with His requirements from day to day will we remain faithful and not lose our salvation.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us not grow weary. Let us seek and practice humility. On one occasion

David said: “I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight” (2 Samuel 6:22). Let us have the attitude of John the Baptist and say: “He must increase, but I *must* decrease” (John 3:30).

If we want to be useful in the service of the Lord, then we must be humble. We must recognize our own weakness and our dependence on God. He cannot use any other type of people for His service. Even if we would be able to preach like Paul and say many great and profound things, but if we did not have the right attitude of heart, knowing it is not our doing but God’s grace that gives success, then everything is just as sounding brass and a clanging cymbal. God resists the proud. He is able to use people who think little of themselves, who recognize their inability without Him, in order to shame those who are proud and think they are so clever.

Humility is desperately needed by God’s children here on earth. We need an increase of this grace, which is rare. Let us humble ourselves even more by earnest prayer and supplication. Let us do as Daniel did, who turned to the Lord God with prayer, supplication, and fasting. If we want to see God’s Kingdom grow and if we want to be successful for God, then we must lead a consecrated, humble, and prayerful life. If we earnestly seek God’s favor, He will be with us, give us the strength we need, and help us. In this way, God will be glorified and receive the honor.

“Be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time” (1 Peter 5:5–6).

G. T.

Humility—In the Life of the Apostle John

“Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.” (John 13: 23)

These are the words of the apostle John. But who is he talking about? Who was lying at Jesus’ breast? It was John himself. What a wonderful display of his humility! He did not say: “I have lain at the breast of Jesus.” This would make it seem as if he wanted to show the reader that he was favored by the Lord above the others. But he had no such thoughts. He was trying to hide the fact that it was he who enjoyed the blessed privilege of lying at the breast of Jesus. Those who are truly humble will seek to hide their good deeds and themselves rather than make them known.

Let me illustrate how true humility behaves. Suppose you intend to do a good deed. You can do this in two different ways.

One way is to do the good deed and do it in such a way that others notice it and see who has done it. The other way is to do it in such a way that no one finds out who did it. Humility will choose this last way. This is precisely the principle that we see in the apostle John’s actions. He had to report the circumstances, but he put himself in the background.

Again, John says in chapter 20 verses 2–4: “Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the

other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, ‘They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.’ Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first.” We cannot help but admire

Many pray and desire to love God more. But it would be better if they would desire and pray to see more of God’s love.

the humility that is revealed here. He does not say “I” but rather “the other disciple.”

Some have not properly understood the expression “whom Jesus loved.” It seems to them as if John wanted to boast and say that Jesus loved him more than all the other disciples. But that is not his thought. He is only referring to Christ’s love for him. John had a deep insight into the love of Christ. And here again we see his true humility expressed. To the extent that

we are humble, we will be able to recognize Christ’s love for us. The proud cannot see the love of God. If we really think nothing of ourselves, then we will be able to see the love of Christ and be moved by it.

Many pray and desire to love God more. But it would be better if they would desire and pray to see more of God’s love. It will be easy for us to love God more if we would see more of His love for us. In 1 John 4:19, the apostle writes: “We love Him because He first loved us.” Let us recognize the love of God more. In order to do this, we must become more humble.

In John 21:20, we read: “Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following.” What a glorious confession of the love of Christ by which John was so deeply moved! He saw his unworthiness and could not marvel enough at the love of Christ.

In John 1:35, he states that John the Baptist stood with two of his disciples. In verse 40 he tells us who one of the two disciples was, but not the other one. We can draw our own conclusion.—John always sought to keep himself unknown and in the background. This is true humility. ■

Pride

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” (James 1: 22)

Pride has always been one of humanity’s greatest sins. It dragged the Jewish people down like a heavy millstone hanging from their necks, ultimately leading the whole nation to ruin when they rejected Christ as their Messiah. Why did they reject Him? Their proud hearts were looking for a Messiah in royal splendor and glory. Pride blinded their eyes to the truth of the prophecies about Christ, and when the humble Nazarene did not meet their expectations, they shouted, “Away with this man! Crucify Him! We do not want Him to rule over us.”

Pride was also the main cause of Christianity’s drift away from Christ. As long as the church remained humble, its preachers and shepherds lived modestly among their flock as equals. Eventually, however, some of them allowed arrogance to creep in and began to seek supremacy over others. One thing led to another, and soon, impressive church buildings became more important than sincere hearts, and services became form-driven and spiritually lifeless. Conditions deteriorated in this vein until a spiritual night fell over the Christian world. This

era lasted for around 1260 years, during which many of God’s humble children lost their lives because they obeyed God more than people.

Even today, pride is widespread in many of our so-called Christian communities, and its bitter fruits are everywhere. May God help us to keep pride out of our hearts!

Even today, pride is widespread in many of our so-called Christian communities, and its bitter fruits are everywhere.

The devil tries to spread his influence by any means and to undermine God’s truths. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, let us hold fast to what has been entrusted to us! Do not tire of inviting people to come to the Lord and to receive full salvation.

If we turn away from the full truth in order to attract as many people as possible, we will end up as so many already have: gathering large crowds of people with a strong profession of faith but no

experience of the heart—no salvation.

Someone once asked, “Shouldn’t we compromise and exchange some of the truth we know for the chance to attract more people?” I say, “No, never!” Let us instead proclaim the whole truth of the Gospel and gather the wheat; let us live in humility and be an example for coming generations!

We preachers should be especially concerned with setting a good example and ensuring that our families also follow this path. If there is no pride in our hearts, we will also live out 1 Peter 3: 3–4.

Scripture tells us that the Lord knows the proud from afar. It also says, “Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD” (Proverbs 16: 5).

Pride reveals itself in various ways. Whether it affects our clothes, our behavior, or any other facet of our lives, let us heed God’s warnings! His instructions are clear: “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1: 21–22).

E. Slacum

Humiliation and Exaltation

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

In Philippians 2, some very remarkable facts from the life of Jesus are emphasized. Paul clearly stresses the humiliation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus.

Jesus’ humiliation primarily brings to mind His incarnation, which Paul plainly refers to in verses 7 and 8. He says that Jesus “made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant *and* coming in the likeness of men; and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death, even the death of the cross.*” He did not exalt Himself; rather, it says explicitly: “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name” (verse 9).

Among people, we usually find it the other way around. People like to exalt themselves, but someone else has to humble them! This self-exaltation was and is not uncommon today.

In the Old Testament, we have an account of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. He had achieved an enormous position of power and had become dangerously overconfident. One day, in his megalomania, he was walking about the royal palace and proudly spoke the words: “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?” (Daniel 4:30). Shortly afterwards, he was rejected by his people, and the Bible says: “he ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven” (verse 33). But when he came to his senses, he confessed: “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works *are* truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down” (verse 37). Everyone should take this fact to heart. God says He “will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible” (Isaiah 13:11).

Self-exaltation is also possible among believers. In His parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector according to Luke 18, Jesus reports: “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I

give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’” And Jesus concluded by saying: “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (verses 11–14).

Referring to Jesus’ divine exaltation, Paul says in Philippians 2:10–11 “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess *that* Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Here, the apostle has in mind the universal bowing that will take place on the great and last day, at the Last Judgment, which no human being will avoid. On that day, all will certainly fall down before this great, eternal Lord and King. But for the vast majority, it will then be too late.

Man is therefore called upon to bow in repentance now. Scripture says: “Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). The Spirit says: “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts” (Hebrews 3:7–8). And Paul preached to the Athenians: “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained” (Acts 17:30–31).

In this sense, James says: “Therefore submit to God. . . . Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded. . . . Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up” (James 4:7–10). God also wants to exalt us. He wants to lift everyone up from their fallen state and make them children of the King!

Let us look again at the exemplary self-humiliation of Jesus. He humbled Himself to the lowest humanity and became the “Lord of lords and King of kings.” He renounced all rights and all honor, but

God exalted Him and gave Him a name that is above every name.

Dear Friend, will you not also bow in obedience to God? Will you not confess and forsake your guilt and sin? Will you not give up this corrupt way and humble

yourself under the will of God? Only Christ, who has done no sin, can save and exalt you. But without lowering yourself in humility, you cannot experience this exaltation!

Friedrich Krebs

Humility and Obedience

Of all the Christian virtues, humility is the most important if we desire to have successful lives and remain victorious in all circumstances. The Bible tells us that God gives grace to the humble. And that is what we need—grace from God. Humility and obedience go hand in hand; they cannot be separated from each other. A truly humble person is always obedient. And obedience to God and to those to whom we owe obedience in turn serves to keep us humble.

The Bible calls on us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God (1 Peter 5:6). This is also the first step in attaining salvation. The sinner must first become humble and submit to God. He must become willing to fulfill the divine demands before he can obtain anything from God. As long as a person does not humble himself, confess his sins, and ask God for forgiveness, he can never find redemption from his sins. He who wholeheartedly humbles himself will also be exalted in due time. God will hear his cry and give him what he seeks. Jesus tells us that the one who exalts himself will be humbled (Matthew 23:12).

Just as humility is necessary to be saved from sin, it is also necessary if we want to remain in grace. It is precisely in this area that the devil often triumphs over young souls who have once had a glorious experience of salvation. They do not remain humble and obedient and do not give God the glory for what He has done for them. Those who do not remain humble and obedient cannot be victorious, whether they are young or old.

Jesus Himself is our amazing example of humility and obedience. He invites us to learn from Him. He says: “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29). The apostle Paul tells us that Jesus was obedient to the point of death on the cross and that we should be like Him (Philippians 2:5–9). And Peter tells us: “Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God” (1 Peter 4:1–2). ■

ANNOUNCEMENTS

April 18 - 21, 2025

Easter Conference in Hamm, Germany

June 7 - 9, 2025

Pentecost Conference in Herford, Germany

June 22, 2025

100th Anniversary Celebration, Wetaskiwin, AB

July 18 - 20, 2025

50th Anniversary Celebration
Neustädt, Mexico

July 21 - 25, 2025

Bible Course
Neustädt, Mexico

Are You A Christian?

Sadly, it is an undeniable fact that many so-called Christians fall short of the biblical standard. Many live below their entitlement and responsibilities. Some possess only the name, and others lack even the appearance of godliness, while thousands may have the outward appearance but deny the power of God. Some even live in sin, devoid of godliness and holiness. The life of Jesus is nowhere to be found in them—not in their family life, their business dealings, their work, or even in their worship services. They generally know very little of what God’s Word teaches. Indeed, the state of so-called Christianity often looks bleak.

Dear Reader, do you know that there is only one path to true Christianity and that this path is a narrow one, with a small gate? Do you know that not everyone who says “Lord, Lord” will enter the kingdom of heaven? It is not a mere confession that matters but how one lives in deed and truth. God’s Word teaches us to examine ourselves to see whether we are in the faith. God’s Word is the standard of measure. Therefore, we must test ourselves and see where we truly stand.

According to God’s Word, there are only two groups of people: sinners and children of God. Each of us belongs to one of these two categories. To stand before God and His truth, we must have had an experience in our soul that is in complete harmony with the Bible. We must be born of God. Through this new birth, a person becomes a completely new creation, and this experience enables that person to live a life pleasing to God. “Whoever is born of God does not sin” (1 John 3:9). “Whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him” (1 John 5: 18).

This re-birth from God, which the Lord Himself works in the soul, is attained through genuine repentance and faith in Jesus. This is what makes one a true Christian. There is no other way. Accepting a Christian creed, being baptized or confirmed, taking communion and so on, cannot make one a Christian—only the new birth from God can!

You may claim to be converted or born of God, but it must be proven through your godly conduct so that your confession reflects the truth. You must demonstrate through your actions that you are a Christian. You must be a follower of Jesus Christ, who committed no sin and in whose mouth no deceit was found. You must become a doer of the Word.

It is good to examine your family life. Dear Husband, do you honor and love your wife as you should? “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her” (Ephesians 5:25). “Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* with understanding, giving honor to the wife as to the weaker vessel, and as *being* heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered” (1 Peter 3:7). When you come home and dinner is not ready, do you become irritable? If the food is not to your taste, do you find fault and complain? When the children are disobedient, can you admonish and discipline them in love and gentleness, without losing your temper? If things go wrong in business, can you still maintain the peace of God?

True Christians possess divine love, and “love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Corinthians 13:4–7).

Dear Wife, how is it with you? “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord” (Colossians 3:18). “The older women likewise . . . be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, *to be* discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed” (Titus 2: 3–5). You too should bear all things with love, patience, and gentleness.

A true Christian home is peaceful, friendly, and loving. Quarreling, strife, and discord have no place

there. Instead, the fruit of the Spirit must be evident with fervent prayers rising to God. Private prayer must be cherished, and Bible reading must not be neglected. Children should be taught from the Bible. Each one's conduct should be honorable and carried out with humility. The fear of God which fills each heart should always be evident.

Dear Reader, whoever and wherever you are, ask yourself: "Am I a Christian? Is my conduct truly holy,

and is my life pure? Do I have a clean heart so that my life is pleasing to God? Have I been delivered from all sin? Do I live for myself or for the Lord? Am I laying up treasures in heaven or only here on earth?"

May God help each of us to examine ourselves in the light of His Word and by the standard of His truth to determine whether we are truly Christians—children of God—on whom the Lord's favor can rest. ■

An Airplane No One Wants

"Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, and before honor is humility." (Proverbs 18:12)

The Airbus 380 was something of a pinnacle in the development of air transportation. Boeing, the rival company in the USA, did nothing to counter it. That made me think. It turned out that there were a lot of follow-up costs for the airports, and the airplanes were not so easy to fill with passengers. Many other aspects came into play, and last year two important airlines canceled their orders. The official end came a short time later.

So "bigger," "higher," "farther" is not the answer to everything after all. You can't help but get the impression that the quest to build the biggest plane, i.e., bigger than the Boeing 747 (the so-called jumbo jet), has sobered the developers. Have they become victims of their own ambition? However, this is a deeply human urge. According to what the Bible tells us about the Tower of Babel, the builders also gave a "reasonable" purpose for building the tower, namely to keep humanity from being "scattered

abroad over the face of the whole earth." However, the saying, "Let us make a name for ourselves" (Genesis 11:4) was probably the real motivation behind this undertaking. God now intervened and showed the people their limits—because otherwise disaster would have continued its course.

The history of the A380 also suggests the pushing of boundaries. Does progress always mean "bigger," "higher," "farther"? I rather believe that in many a "progressive" company, the whispering of the old serpent was effective: "You will be like God" (Genesis 3:5). The unredeemed are often all too ready to follow this impulse. They cannot let go of it. But without God, all human plans become a waste of time.

What do you think and act according to? Thinking small of yourself and big of God brings true progress.

*Karl-Otto Herhaus, *Leben ist mehr**



Giving Thanks and Confessing

Early this morning, Mom told Laura: “If you like, today you may have breakfast with Marie in kindergarten.” Laura was looking forward to it.

As she sat at the table in the kindergarten class, Laura closed her eyes, folded her hands, and thanked God for the food. Suddenly it became very quiet, and everyone looked at her. Marie said: “At Laura’s house, they always pray before eating. I think that’s good.” Laura explained: “We believe in God, who loves everyone. And we thank Him for the food because it comes from Him.” “But this food comes from the kindergarten, not from God” said Timothy. Laura replied:

“God gives sun, rain, and wind so that the grain grows. That’s why the food initially comes from God.”

Her teacher, Mrs. Henkel, overheard the conversation and asked Laura: “Does your family go to church?” Laura said: “Yes, we go to church every Sunday. And we children are also allowed to go to Sunday school. There we sing, pray, and listen to Bible stories. Would you like to hear yesterday’s story?” When Mrs. Henkel nodded, Laura told the story.

“Once, Jesus was invited to dinner by an important man named Simon. While they were eating together, a woman went into the house and came to Jesus. She had done many bad things in the past and people did not like her. The woman wept, and her tears fell on Jesus’ feet. Then she wiped them away with her long hair. Simon thought, ‘If Jesus knew who she was, He wouldn’t let her do this.’ But Jesus knew how sorry the woman was. And He also knew what Simon was thinking. He said: ‘Simon, I have something to say to you. This woman has been forgiven many sins because she has shown much

love. Anyone who thinks they need little forgiveness also loves little.”

Mrs. Henkel listened and said: “I’ve noticed that you can sing beautifully. Did you learn that in Sunday school?” Laura said: “Yes, and we sing at home too. You can come and join us at church next Sunday!” Mrs. Henkel replied: “I’ll ask your mom for the address when she picks you up. And then I’ll be happy to come by.” Laura was glad that Jesus gave her the courage to thank Him for the food and to talk about Him.

Helene Rotfuss

Courageous like Esther

Have you ever been ashamed to confess Jesus? Perhaps you were afraid to say openly that you were not participating in something because it was sinful. Or you were ashamed to thank God for a meal when everyone around you immediately started eating.

In the Bible, in the Old Testament, there is the book of Esther. Esther was a woman from the people of Israel, from the people of God. She was chosen from many other women to become the queen of King Ahasuerus. However, the king was not aware that this woman was an Israelite.



There was a man in the royal court called Haman who hated the people of Israel. He wanted to wipe them out. He had come up with a cunning plan: He would speak ill of the Jews and get the king to give him his seal of approval. Haman then had letters written stating that the people of Israel could be killed on a certain day. These letters were provided with the king's seal and distributed to the various provinces. The Jews and Esther were in grave danger.

What should the queen do now? If someone came to the king without being called, they would be killed, according to the law. There was one exception: if the king extended his golden scepter, his ruling staff, toward them.

The queen's cousin, whose name was Mordecai, encouraged Esther to try and speak to the king on behalf of her people. Did Esther dare? Yes, even though she might die for her actions. What do you think the people of Israel did? That's right! They prayed for Esther, and God led in such a way that the king extended his scepter



towards her and listened to her. Esther's people and she herself remained alive.

What would have become of the people of Israel if Esther had not courageously stood up for her people? We don't know, but we want to learn from Esther, from her courage and her determination. Always stand on the side of the Lord Jesus, even if you are ridiculed for it. May the dear Savior give you the strength to do so!

Anja Mantek



*"Therefore whoever confesses
Me before men,
him I will also confess
before My Father
who is in heaven."
Matthew 10: 32*

Biblical AND Courtship MARRIAGE

In last month's edition, we looked at what marriage is according to Scripture. We want to continue this topic by considering how Christians should choose a marriage partner.

Though marriage was designed by God in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2: 24), and Scripture is filled with examples of people who met each other and eventually married, the Bible remains relatively quiet about how people are to find a marriage partner. This is understandable, since God's Word transcends cultures and times. We are not given a one-size-fits-all outline of how to choose a spouse, but we are given principles throughout Scripture that we can apply to this topic.

To help lead our thoughts, we want to consider the two main types of long-term romantic relationships that people may choose to have prior to marriage: dating and courting. Sometimes these words are used interchangeably, but they are quite different. An online Christian source explains, "Courtship is a relationship between a man and a woman in which they seek to determine if it is God's will for them to marry each other. Under the protection, guidance, and blessing of parents or mentors, the couple concentrates on developing a deep friendship that could lead to mar-

riage, as they discern their readiness for marriage and God's timing for their marriage."

One of the central components of courting is the couple's desire to discern God's will for them. Knowing that marriage is a covenant made before God that should last the duration of one's life (Matthew 19: 6), couples should be careful not to enter such a covenant too hastily. It should be noted that even a courting relationship should only be started when both people feel prepared to get married. Dating is different; "men and women who choose to date often have no commitment to consider marrying the other person. . . . Instead, couples usually date with the selfish goals of having fun and enjoying romantic attachments." We see such careless and selfish behavior from Samson who pursued passion over godly discernment (Judges 16: 1). The central goal of dating is to pursue one's own desires or perceived needs, whereas courting attempts to answer the question, "How can I honor God and discern His direction regarding my life partner?"

Romantic attachment can naturally lead to desires being kindled that God designed to be satisfied in marriage (Song 8: 4). "In a dating relationship, self-gratification is normally the basis of the relationship. Instead of focusing on

God's pleasure, the couple is often looking for personal pleasure. This oblivious self-centeredness can lead only to dissatisfaction, promoting an attitude of lust (taking what I want) rather than the Scriptural attitude of love (giving unselfishly to others)."

A couple in a courting relationship seeks to protect the hearts of both involved by seeking the "accountability of their parents or other mentors. As they establish guidelines for their relationship, they can more easily recognize that God also holds them responsible to honor one another. Receiving God's grace and the support of others strengthens them

to maintain their commitment to purity." Without guidelines or accountability, "the couple can foolishly and tragically give away both emotional and physical affections that should have been reserved for a life partner."

It should be noted that not every courting relationship ends in marriage. "If, during the courtship, one or both parties realize that marriage is not God's will and they end the relationship, the courtship has not failed. On the contrary, the courtship was successful, because God gave the direction that was sought through it." A successful courting relationship isn't necessarily one that

leads to marriage; it's one where both individuals have protected each other's heart and have grown in their knowledge of one another and their discernment of God's will (Proverbs 3: 5-7).

From this description, it is clear that courtship, rather than dating, is a safer and more biblical means of choosing a marriage partner.

To be continued

*David Knelsen
Hamilton, ON*

¹ "What Is Courtship? Understanding How Courtship Differs from Dating," Institute in Basic Life Principles, accessed December 6, 2024, <https://iblp.org/how-courtship-different-dating/>.
2-6 "What Is Courtship? Understanding How Courtship Differs from Dating."

CONCORDIA AVENUE CHURCH OF GOD
MAY CONFERENCE: MAY 15 - 18, 2025

Youth
CONNECT

17 | 9:30 AM
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with guest speaker
Pastor Knelsen
from Hamilton

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My God and I

God in His wisdom has created us in an amazingly multifaceted and complex way: strong yet vulnerable, fragile yet strong-willed, independent yet dependent, with a deep longing for God while prone to many temptations. He shows us His will in His Word while pointing out our inability to measure up to this standard in our own strength. He has placed us in this world and at the same time tells us: “Do not be conformed to this world” (Romans 12: 2).

As Christian parents, we have a deep desire not only to know God’s will for our family but also to live out His Word in our daily life. Perhaps as a mother or father you have paused and asked yourself: How does this Word apply to me and to our family? This question is of great significance—for ourselves, for our children, for our family, and also for our church. So, let’s contemplate this thought.

The essence

“Do not be conformed to this world” (Romans 12: 2a). If we take these words out of context and apply them only to the outward appearance of a Christian life, we resemble a child who covers the mess in his closet with a pretty blanket. An inner shortcoming is merely concealed by an outward action. But even the second part of this verse makes it clear that it’s primarily about our attitude: “but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12: 2).

With respect to the family, this truth takes on special meaning. A blessed family life only comes from the personal relationship each individual has with God. Deep within us, amid the clamor of this world, we, as children of God, face decisions: not to conform to the standards of the world but to align ourselves with God’s Word and allow the Holy Spirit to change and lead us. Even a healthy church consists of individual families living by biblical values, as well as

individual people who maintain a profound, intimate relationship with God—like living stones built into a spiritual house (1 Peter 2: 5).

The Gospel always targets the heart first—the center of thought and will. Jesus Christ died on the cross at Golgotha to reconcile us with God (Romans 5:10) and to give us life and abundant fullness (John 10:10). This is precisely what the devil tries to prevent; he does everything to stop people from truly knowing the God of the Bible. Even if they have become children of God, he wants to render their spiritual life powerless, having only an outward appearance. Even if they have found Him, the fountain of life, Satan wants them to return as quickly as possible to the cracked cisterns that hold no water (Jeremiah 2:13).

Our almighty God, full of grace, truth, and infinite love, has the unrestricted right to us for two explicit reasons. Firstly, because He created us. And secondly, because we were redeemed, not with perishable gold or silver, but with His own blood from the slavery of sin, which leads to eternal death (1 Peter 1:18–19; Romans 6:23).

Nevertheless, God did not create us as robots who must obey Him at the press of a button. That He created us in His own image (Genesis 1:27), gave us a living soul and a free will, reveals His special love for us. It is almost incomprehensible that this almighty God stands at the door of our hearts, knocking patiently until we open (Revelation 3:20).

United with Him

Are you aware of the modern “as well as” idea? It’s a trend to be a Christian while at the same time pursuing self-actualization. There are many who, despite a strong profession of faith, hardly deny themselves anything this world offers. Even worship can become a cracked cistern if we allow ourselves or ministry to take center stage and our motive is not Jesus Christ and the glory of God.



How can we fully experience the beauty and richness of a relationship if we, like butterflies, flit from one flower to another? God spoke of man and woman becoming one in their relationship. This unity, which excludes all others, is the gateway to a deep, heavenly pure love where each is for the other. And this bond is given to us by God as an example of the relationship He wants to have with us. The more complete our surrender to this divine love, the more we will recognize and understand Him. Any other type of worship will not have eternal merit. This is what Paul was talking about in Romans 12:1.

This life in the intimate presence of God, and in surrender to Him, shapes and transforms our character. It makes you a mother and a father who without fanfare daily live the mindset of Christ. While we struggle with the storms of adolescence or the enticement of today's media, our hearts remain calm in the presence of the Master. My God and I.

From His strength

Yes, with our own strength and will, it will be impossible to meet the high standard of Romans 12:2. Failure and feelings of guilt need not take place. The price, however, is very high—like many other things pertaining to our spiritual walk.

God's undeserved grace is bestowed upon us. Yet it is anything but cheap or without cost—the cost to the Son of God is indescribable. Its effect in our lives is so powerful and radical that the Bible compares it to death and resurrection (Romans 6:8).

Only this formula, “my God and I,” provides the possibility of a dynamic life in the fullness of God. Jesus is enough. Then *He* is our strength, our wisdom, and our wellspring. Our problems are His opportunities. He wants to make our family life a little piece of paradise.

The standard

Is a false standard for a successful Christian life the reason we have difficulty with Romans 12:2? Is the problem a value system shaped by the tenor of the times, one that thrives on the applause of men or our own ideas? If the benchmark of our standard lies in the world or in our own self, our bias will also be in that direction. Why is that? Does the fleeting seem so alluring because the glories of divine treasures remained hidden from us until now?

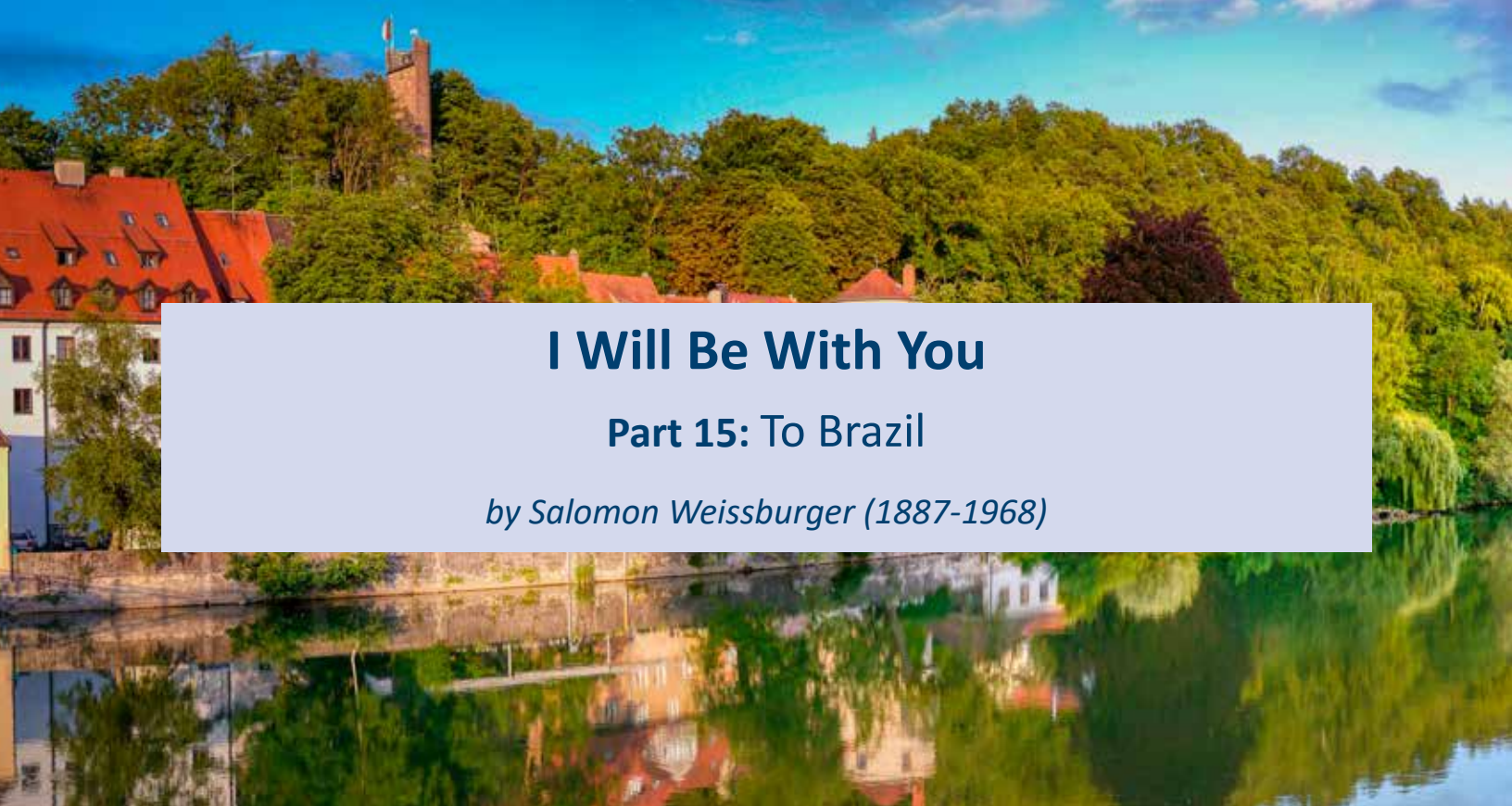
Our world needs courageous people! Our world needs heroes who . . .

- look away from the vanity of our time and from themselves.
- steadfastly focus on the almighty, holy, and unchanging God.
- search Him for guidance.
- ask Him for wisdom, strength, and grace for daily living and the next challenge.
- love Him so much that they rest in His hands of grace.
- ask Him to untangle knots, unravel questions, and guide hearts.

You may rest in Him. And because the fountain of life never runs dry, you may constantly draw from it and generously share it with others. For “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22–23).

May the Lord bless you!

*Helene Rotfuss
Pforzheim, Germany*



I Will Be With You

Part 15: To Brazil

by Salomon Weissburger (1887-1968)

As a preacher of Jewish descent, the political developments in the 1930s represented a great danger for Brother Weissburger. However, God opened a timely door for him by ensuring that he received a call to serve in Brazil.

While I was still in Germany, the thought of moving to Brazil would sometimes make my heart heavy. However, in those moments, the Lord would speak to me with the comforting thought that Heaven is as near to Brazil as to Germany. Besides, if our Savior was able to leave heaven and its glory out of love for us, all the while knowing exactly what awaited Him on earth, then I could certainly go to Brazil out of love for Him and His work.

Thanks to reports, books, and photos, I had some idea of what to expect from life in the jungle—a relevant topic, seeing as the settler communities we were supposed to serve in Brazil had begun in the jungle. As we set out toward this new challenge in Brazil, I once again put my life fully in God's hands. The results of this decision did not disappoint, and I want to thank the Lord for everything, including the grace to endure such a change.

In particular, I would like to honor my wife. She, too, was completely devoted to God's service. I never saw her dissatisfied, not even here in Brazil, where so much hardship awaited her. She remained devoted until her death on August 3, 1963; just imagine how a mother must feel, separating from her children and never seeing them again.

Before our departure, the German branch of the Church of God issued me a document attesting that we were following this path in mutual trust and that they supported us with their prayers. From the church in Switzerland, I received a general power of attorney that authorized me to conduct business on its behalf, and we also had a trusting relationship with all our congregations in the other European countries.

Beginning in Brazil

As already mentioned, Brother Doebert had taken part in a camp meeting in Chernyakhiv near Zhytomyr, Ukraine, in 1908. After this camp meeting, Brother Doebert went to Romanovka, in the Terek region of the Caucasus, where Church of God congregations had formed; these brothers and sisters in Christ were also visited by Brother Ebel.



Toward the end of World War I, our sisters and brothers left the Caucasus and eventually arrived in eastern Germany, albeit after some detours through Latvia. Some of them came into contact with the Church of God through our 1921 camp meeting in Essen, whereas others already knew us from Russia.

In 1922, these families emigrated to Brazil, settling in the state of Santa Catarina, where they founded the community of Neu-Hoffnung (Nova Esperança in Portuguese, both meaning “new hope”). Being in the jungle made for an understandably difficult start, but they reported that they were doing well despite the hardship, especially as they increasingly turned to prayer.

In December 1935, Brother David Meier came from the USA to Brazil to help, and my wife and I arrived a few months later, in April 1936, together with our daughter Else. At the end of the same year, my son Heinrich accepted an invitation from the Church to come to Brazil for missionary service. He and Klara, a daughter of Brother Josef Krebs, joined us in December 1936. In April 1939, Brother Josef Krebs came to Brazil too, along with his daughter Frieda.

At the request of the church, we first settled in Neu-Hoffnung. In addition to Neu-Hoffnung and Serra Pinhal, there were four congregations of the Church of God in

Brazil: in Rio das Antas, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in Lettonia, and in Wenzeslau in the state of Sao Paulo. The congregants were all colonists, most of whom had come from abroad to make a new start here as farmers.

In Neu-Hoffnung, as in the other congregations, poverty was great. It was not easy to eke out a livelihood from the jungle, and the agricultural market was very weak at the time, meaning there was little money to be earned. Although impoverished, the colonists tried to support us from the very beginning, but we quickly realized that it would not be enough and so started working the land to earn a living for ourselves.

The congregation in Neu-Hoffnung owned a piece of land purchased from Brother Friedrich Hinz and his wife. It was a few hectares in size, and we eventually bought some more land as well. In addition to working on the farm, we served the members of the local congregation, traveled around the country, and visited other congregations to hold services there, including in Argentina.

After serving in Brazil for a short time, Brother Krebs moved to Argentina with his daughter Frieda. In the following years, he served mainly in that country, working with Brother Adolf Weidmann, who had already moved to Argentina in early 1937. ■

“A Man from the Land of the Christians!”

Going ashore in Fiji was a difficult thing to do. It could cost your life. Captain Bertram wouldn't have done it if he didn't have to. But when the water supply ran out or food became scarce, the sailor had to go ashore.

Captain Bertram knew the character of the Fiji islanders from experience. He knew that the beautiful coral islands were home to cruel cannibals who had already caused many a stranger a gruesome death. He was therefore in a very cautious mood when he boarded the boat from his ship with a few armed companions and headed for the island.

The natives quickly spotted the boat. A large crowd gathered on the shore.

Now the boat made landfall. Captain Bertram climbed ashore. A strange figure rushed towards him, a tall South Sea islander, half dressed in European clothes. It was the chief of the island people. The captain was amazed when the man held out his hands and called out to him in English: “Welcome, my brother!”

The captain was so overwhelmed by the friendly welcome that he couldn't get a word out at first. But the chief turned to his men and, beaming with joy, said: “A man from the land of the Christians!”

Now Captain Bertram began to understand. So they had become Christians, these once so-feared South Sea islanders. And their faith was so dear to them that “a man from the land of the Christians” was welcome as a brother.

“It is the hour when we hold evening worship on our island,” the chief continued. “Gather round, all you people! Today, our brother from the Christian land will hold the service for us.”

The captain was startled by these words. “I can't do that,” he replied. The chief looked at him in astonishment. “Are you afraid that my people won't understand you?” he asked after a long silence. “You're right, they don't understand English, but I'll translate.”

The captain was embarrassed. He knew his way around the sea but not in his Bible. He had not studied the Word of God since he was a boy. How was he supposed to be able to hold a service for this large assembly? Ashamed, he stood before the chief, who could not understand why he was still hesitating. He could not tell an untruth to this good, loyal man. There was no other way out than an open confession.

“My mother prayed with me when I was a little boy,” he said. “Then she died, and I went to sea. That's when I forgot God's Word.”

“Forgot God's Word?” the chief repeated incredulously. Was it possible to possess such a treasure and forget it?

“But you believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, don't you?” the islander continued, looking sternly at the sailor.

The captain felt as if he were standing before the judgment seat of the divine Judge. For the first time, he felt the emptiness of a life without faith. He was ashamed in front of the South Sea islanders. So he shook his head and said a quiet, deeply ashamed “No.”

The chief's brown face twitched with restrained pain, and deep pity sounded in his voice as he said: “A man from the Christian land—and he does not believe in our Lord Jesus!”

Then he signaled to his men, and they all followed him to an elevated place, shaded by beautiful



palm trees, from where they could see far out to sea. There, as he did every evening, the chief held evening prayers—only today, for the sake of the foreign guest, he prayed in English. Never in his life had Captain Bertram experienced such a moving celebration. He couldn't take his eyes off the brown men who were confidently entrusting themselves to God's protection for the night.

How devoutly the chief prayed—with the strength of a man—with the confidence of a child! He spoke as if to a present friend. He asked for God's protection and blessing for the whole island people. Then he begged God to help the poor brother who had grown up in the Christian land and yet did not believe in the Lord Jesus.

“Lord Jesus, don't let him leave our island again without having found You!” This concluded the chief's evening prayer, and it became quiet, very quiet under the palm trees. They were probably all still praying in silence, the simple-minded South Sea islanders, and the ship's captain joined in—for the first time in a long time.

When he then shook hands with the brown chief, he was able to say with a moved heart: “Your faith is now my faith too!”

For decades, Captain Bertram had lived among the Christians like a heathen, and no one had helped him to find Jesus! Only in Fiji did he find Him, and a converted pagan was his guide.

Source: Samenkörner

A Christian's Revenge

Dawn was breaking. The sun was starting to rise over the soaring ridges of the Himalayas, covered with eternal snow, which closed off the distant northern and eastern horizon like a wall. High up in the air, the eagle's piercing cry rang out, harsh and sharp.

Sandjar looked up into the sky. Wearing hunting clothes with his double-barreled rifle slung over his shoulder, he strode along with firm, swift steps, keeping a sharp eye out to see if he could track down a tiger.

Sandjar was a Christian. Six months ago, a stranger, a white man, came from afar to the village where Sandjar's parents lived. This stranger proclaimed a wonderful message about the Son of the eternal God, who had come to earth as a man a long time ago, and died in order to reconcile sinful people with God through His death.

He brought a Book in which everything he said was written, and Sandjar bought it because he could read.

But the other villagers, with a few exceptions, did not understand this nor believe it. They lived in blind superstition, and when the stranger spoke to them, they mocked him and said, "We have no need of your message, for great is our god Brahma."

But Sandjar did not scoff or laugh.

Eventually the Sirdar, the head of the village, chased the stranger away. No one took pity on the poor man except Sandjar, for the words spoken by the white man had penetrated his soul, just as the sprouting seed falls onto fertile farmland. He followed the stranger into the wilderness, bringing him food for his hunger and balm for his sore feet. Finally, he led him to a distant city. When he returned, the priests of Brahma spread the news that Sandjar had become a Christian.

The excitement caused by this announcement was phenomenal. Sandjar was a man of many talents in the village. He had been a blessing to his fellow villagers, and their hero, for he had killed the cattle robber, the big tiger who stole a sheep or a cow from the village herds every evening.

There was no bolder hunter, nor a better guard of the herds, than he in the entire area. He shot the bird in flight with his rifle, and when hunting the wild elephant, his second bullet drove the first more deeply into the flesh of the giant of the forest.

Now Sandjar had become a Christian. He abandoned the faith of his fathers, calling the belief of transmigration of souls a lie. Instead, he testified that man's salvation was not dependent on his good deeds and penance, but that grace alone could save him.

The Sirdar had loved Sandjar nearly as one loves a brother, but the day he realized that Sandjar was praying to the God of the Christians, his love turned to bitter hatred. This hatred became even greater when he heard that Sandjar had jumped into the holy river to save a poor outcast, a member of the despised lowest caste, from the floods.

Sandjar was well aware of what he had brought upon himself with this act of love, which he had been urged to do by Christian compassion. After all, he was now considered defiled. The caste had been disgraced by him.

The village was furious and saddened when all this became known. The Sirdar himself went to Sandjar's parents and threatened them with the most terrible plagues if they did not succeed in bringing the rebel back to the faith of his fathers.

The poor parents! Both were elderly people, and Sandjar was the pillar of their old age. With quivering lips, they told him about the threats of Sirdar. Their hearts were trembling, fearing that their efforts to deprive their son of his new faith would arouse his anger, for Sandjar had been violent and fierce in the past. If anything got in his way, he could flare up like the mountain stream of his homeland, which, thundering down from a dizzying height, smashes to the ground all that dares to stand in its way.

However, Sandjar did not get angry this time because he had read the words of Christ, his Savior, in

the Bible: “Learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart.”

He did not even get angry when the Sirdar carried out his threats. Sandjar’s parents’ small flock was stolen, their field was destroyed, and, eventually, even their home, in which they had lived together for forty years, went up in flames.

No one could say who was the instigator of all these evil things. However, the Sirdar knew, and Sandjar, the hunter, knew as well.

On his morning foray, Sandjar reached a palm forest. The aromatic scent of flowers wafted towards him, and blood-red orchids opened up towards his pathway.

Yet he had no eye for the splendor surrounding him. He stopped for a moment. His figure seemed to grow; his hawk eyes sought to penetrate the dark foliage.

He knew every corner here. Fifty steps ahead were the ruins of a former temple, a place where priests still made sacrifices on special occasions. In general, however, the area was deserted and was frequented more by the wild animals of the forest than by people. Sandjar was aware of this. He had often come here for this reason.

Slowly he continued walking, with a quiet, almost inaudible step. Suddenly, his dark eyes lit up. He spotted the trail of a tiger. The track was fresh. It led to the back of the temple. Without further ado, he turned to the front of the ancient, impressive building, because if all was not deceptive, this is where the tiger would reappear.

He selected a spot from which he could overlook the entire square in front of the temple, while he himself was hidden behind a dense thicket of lush plants.

Quietly, he took the rifle from his shoulder and analyzed his attack. Yet why did his hands, in which the good weapon usually rested as if in a vice, suddenly begin to tremble, and why did his brown complexion suddenly turn pale? Was it because instead of the one expected tiger, two were visible between the pillars?

No, that couldn’t be the reason. This heart had never trembled at the sight of a tiger.

“The Sirdar!” whispered his lips.

Yes, the Sirdar was standing there near the entrance to the temple. This was the man who had destroyed Sandjar’s small herd and their field, and who set fire to their home. Here he was, the thief and arsonist, to worship in this place at such an unusual hour as proof of his piety.

The Sirdar had also spotted the approaching tigers. His hand was clutching the dagger as he stared fixedly at the ruins. What were you thinking, Sirdar? How did you intend to face the kings of the forest with your puny weapon?

Sandjar stared wide-eyed at the image before him. His heart beat impetuously. Only seconds separated his enemy from a horrible death. His enemy? He flinched. The image of his Savior appeared before his soul. What did He say? “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you.”

His inner battle was over. Sandjar had regained his peace. For the sake of Christ, he wanted to forgive Sirdar. He stood there like a block of granite, his rifle on his shoulder. A short, sharp bang, then another. A hoarse cry of rage—both tigers fell to the ground as if struck by lightning.

The Sirdar trembled in every limb. A mist lay before his eyes, but through the mist he saw Sandjar plunge his hunting knife into the heart of the one tiger that had not been fatally hit.

Then he stepped towards the hunter. “Sandjar!” he cried. “You have overcome me. I will rebuild the home of your parents, I will give them a larger herd than they had, and I will repay them fourfold for what I have taken from them. If it is the God of the Christians who taught you this love, then help me to get to know Him.”

Wordlessly, Sandjar offered his hand to the pleading man. By obeying the commandment of his Lord and Master, he had found a friend again; not only a friend, but a brother. ■

Humility

Humility's valley is precious and sweet
If humbly I sit there at my master's feet.
My master is Jesus, who guards me with care;
The enemy's darts, they will not reach me there.

There's joy in the valley of humility;
Through my Savior's blood I am happy and free.
If Satan will roar and hell's taunting I face,
I know for the humble the Lord provides grace.

There's no night in the valley, no darkness is there;
The light of the gospel shines brightly and fair.
My Savior has opened up all the right doors;
If only I would have been humble before.

Oh, heavenly virtue, my refuge and rock.
In joy and in trouble my guide as I walk.
I look up to heaven; my Lord lets me know
I'm safe from the hustle and noise here below.

For God grants the humble His virtue and love;
No foe can withstand when there's help from above.
The heart remains pure and its love won't grow cold;
This virtue is better than silver and gold.

Humility helps us, though things may be tough,
To be more like Jesus, perfected in love.
If you want God's blessing and do what is right,
Then always be humble and walk in the light.

Peter Penner