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*Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things. (Philippians 4:8)*

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## QUESTIONS ABOUT DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

### Question

After reading Elmer Moore's article I have some concern regarding my own life. I divorced my husband, but there was no infidelity that I know about. He died 3 years later. Did I have the right to remarry? And since I did remarry, do I divorce my current husband because I am not scripturally married? I have studied and cannot get any peace. Can you help me?

### Answer

It is refreshing to hear from someone honest enough to apply the truth of the Scriptures to your own life. I will give you an answer from Scripture. If you do not understand or if you disagree, feel free to respond.

The Lord forbids divorce except for fornication (Matthew 5:32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11), and the only divorced person with a living former mate who may remarry is the one who divorced his/her spouse for fornication (Matthew 19:9). But death ends the marriage

for remarriage (Matthew 19:7). But death ends the marriage tie and the obligation to the spouse (Romans 7:2-3). Thus, your former husband's death freed you to be married to another man without the stigma of adultery. You sinned, however, when you divorced your husband, and you need to repent of that sin, confess it to the Lord and to the church, and ask the Lord to forgive you (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9; James 5:16). But, since your former husband is dead, it would be as wrong to divorce your present husband as it was the first.

### **Response**

Thanks for addressing my specific question.

The subject of remarriage has surfaced in my family because my nephew is going to marry a woman who was not scripturally divorced, and his parents are concerned that he will leave the church of Christ to join her denominational church. His sister, my niece, and her husband left their first spouses to marry each other forty-odd years ago. She also left the Church to join a denomination. If they are sorry can they stay married and live together? Our family is losing other young ones because of what appears to be harshness.

### **Reply**

I appreciate your good questions and your concern.

The Master faced the same skepticism when he first stated His law of divorce and remarriage (Matthew 19:9). His disciples thought it was too harsh (Matthew 19:10). The Lord acknowledged some lack the capacity to obey it and offered them an alternative - being a eunuch, in other words, celibacy (Matthew 19:11-12).

The capacity for people to rationalize sin is so great (Jeremiah 17:9), and the importance of a stable, righteous home so essential to raising godly children (Malachi 2:13-15), that the Lord hates divorce (Malachi 2:16).

If people have godly sorrow for their sin, they will repent (2 Corinthians 7:10). If they repent, they will give up the sin (Luke 3:8-14). Those who are unscripturally divorced and remarried are committing adultery (Matthew 19:9). They must turn from this sin.

The Lord would not relax His requirement even though His own disciples thought He was too harsh, and I certainly have no authority to relax the divine law.

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## **WHY I AM A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF THE LORD**

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

A dear lady who is a member of the congregation where I

preached two decades ago called and asked me to write on "Why I Am a Member of the Church of the Lord." I told her I would be delighted to do so. There's a long answer and a short answer.

### **Short Answer**

First, the short answer. I'm a member of the church of the Lord because the Lord added me to it at the same time He saved me (Acts 2:47). Everyone else who has been saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-10), by hearing the preaching of the gospel (Romans 1:16; 10:13), repenting of all sins (Acts 2:38), confessing faith in Christ (Romans 10:9-10), and being baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) has been added by the Lord to His church, which is the body of people saved through Christ (2 Timothy 2:10; Ephesians 1:3, 22-23; 5:23). There is only one such body (Ephesians 4:4; 1 Corinthians 12:20).

### **Long Answer**

But now, the longer answer. The word "church," when applied to the people of Christ as a group, is used in only three senses in the New Testament: the universal body of the saved (Matthew 16:18), the local congregation (1 Corinthians 1:2), and the public assembly of the local church (1 Corinthians 11:18). The term "church" is never used in Scripture to designate what we call a denomination.

### **Is It a Denomination?**

**Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary** defines "denomination" as "a religious organization uniting in a single legal and administrative body a number of local congregations." The unabridged dictionary partially defines the term "church" as "a body of Christian believers holding the same creed" (404). It recognizes a religious denomination as "a class or society of individuals called by the same name," i.e., denominated (602). Thus, the various denominations have three characteristics in common: ecclesiastical organization tying local churches together, sectarian creeds, and party names. Does the church of the Lord have these traits?

Christ is the only Head of His church (Colossians 1:18). Since He is in heaven, His church has neither head nor headquarters on this earth. The only earthly organization revealed for the church is the local congregation (1 Corinthians 1:2). Each local church is to be governed from within by its own shepherds (1 Peter 5:1-4); thus, each congregation is independent, separate from all other congregations, and is not a part of any ecclesiastical machinery such as a diocese, synod, conference, convention, association, society, or "sponsoring church," i.e., "overseeing eldership" organization (in which a number of local congregations do a common work through the

oversight of the eldership of one sponsoring congregation). The church the Lord built lacks the first characteristic of a denomination, ecclesiastical organization tying local churches together.

Does the church of God have a human creed to bind on its members? Our word "creed" is derived from a Latin word, "credo," which means "I believe." A "creed" is "a brief authoritative doctrinal formula ... intended to define what is held by a Christian congregation, synod, or church to be true and essential and exclude what is held to be false belief" (Webster's unabridged. 533). If you just followed the Bible alone, would you join the Baptist church? Where do we read of the Baptist church in the Bible? One must follow a Baptist manual to become a Baptist. Furthermore, the Bible alone never made one a Catholic; it takes the catechism. It makes the Methodist Discipline to make a Methodist. The same principle is true of membership in every denomination. The Bible only and only the Bible produces Christians only and only Christians. One will simply harvest Christians (Acts 11:26) if he sows only the "incorruptible" seed, the word of God (1 Peter 1:23). The seed of the kingdom will no more produce the various denominations than seed corn will produce soy beans. Both in the natural and spiritual realms, each seed produces after its own kind (Genesis 1:11-12; 1 Peter 1:22-23; 4:16). We must neither add to nor subtract from the Bible as the authoritative guide for God's people (Revelation 22:18-19). The only creed we must accept is in the Bible. The church of Christ has no human creed.

Does the church we read of in the New Testament wear party names? The apostle Paul severely rebuked the Christians in Corinth for calling themselves by various names as a means of sectarian identification (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). The church of the New Testament may be called by such names as "church of Christ" (Romans 16:16), "church of God" (1 Corinthians 1:2), "temple of God" (1 Corinthians 3:16), "body of Christ" (Ephesians 1:22-23), "family of God" (Ephesians 3:14-15), "bride of Christ" (Ephesians 5:22-32), "house of God" (1 Timothy 3:14-15), "church of the firstborn" (Hebrews 12:23), and "kingdom" (Hebrews 12:28) or simply be called "the church" (Acts 8:3), or even "the Way" (Acts 24:14,22). These names describe the church from various aspects. But none of these names is used exclusively as a party designation. Rather, they describe the allegiance of all God's people. Individually we may be described as "members" (1 Corinthians 12:27), "disciples" (Acts 8:4; 9:1), or "saints" (Acts 9:13), and we should wear the proper name "Christian" (Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). But we should never identify ourselves religiously by sectarian or party names, such as Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Lutheran, Episcopal, Presbyterian,

Catholic, or even Conservative, for these names indicate party loyalty rather than undivided loyalty to Christ. The church of the Lord has no sectarian name.

If a congregation calling itself a “church of Christ” has any of these three characteristics, it is on the road to becoming part of a denomination or sect. Calling ourselves by scriptural names is important, but that alone does not make us right. I could wear a sign around my neck saying “Mack Truck,” but that wouldn’t make me a Mack truck. Having a good name alone is not enough (Revelation 3:1).

The church we read about in the New Testament has no ecclesiastical organization binding congregations to one another, no human creed, and no sectarian name. The church Jesus built is not a denomination.

### **Is It Composed of Denominations?**

The great religious historian Philip Schaff voiced the opinion of many when he penned, in his monumental eight volume **History of the Christian Church**, “Every denomination and sect has to furnish some stones for the building of the temple of God.” Billy Graham demonstrated the same attitude when he counseled those who respond to the “altar call” in his crusades, “Join the church of your choice.” Is the church of the New Testament composed of the various denominations which profess faith in Christ?

If any truth is clearly taught in the New Testament, it is that God wants believers in His Son to be one. Jesus prayed for the unity of those who believe in Him (John 17:20-21). Paul revealed to us a practical plan whereby we may “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1-6). In spite of these plain passages, denominational preachers tell us that the existence of some three thousand or so separate religious denominations in America, most of them claiming to be part of the body of Christ, is according to God’s will. They continue to thank God for their sinful divisions and to exhort trusting, misguided souls to help foster sectarianism.

Among the “works of the flesh,” of which the apostle Paul warns, “those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God,” are “dissensions” and “heresies” (Galatians 5:19-21). “Dissensions” are “a standing apart ... indicating division” (W.E. Vine, **An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**. 1:329), whereas “heresies” denotes:

*an opinion, especially a self-willed opinion, which is substituted for submission to the power of truth, and leads to division and the formation of sects...*  
(Ibid. 2:217)

Sectarianism is a sin which will cost one his soul. How then can denominationalism, the fruit of sectarianism, be considered acceptable to God?

The church Jesus built is not composed of denominations, nor is it sectarian in any way. We must turn away from all religious denominations, sects, and parties and have an undivided loyalty to Christ. Don't let loyalty to a denomination or sect stand between you and salvation in Christ.

### **One Church as Good as Another?**

Most people contend, "One church is just as good as another." But when they do so, they are misusing the Bible word "church." They are using it to mean "denomination." So far as salvation, it is true that one denomination begun simply by men is as good as any other denomination begun by mere men. But is membership in any human denomination as spiritually profitable as being added by the Lord to His church? The Master warned, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted" (Matthew 15:13).

### **Conclusion**

I am a member of the church of the Lord because the Lord added me to it when He saved me. Why would anyone join a denomination begun by men when we can all be members of the church the Lord built? No only are there are no spiritual benefits to belonging to any denomination, it is sinful to join one. But all spiritual blessings are in Christ, in His body, the church. Why not simply believe in the Lord Jesus, repent of your sins, confess your faith in Christ, and be baptized into the one body, the church?

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## **QUESTION ABOUT HEBREWS FROM FLORIDA**

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

### **Question**

Is it safe to say that Paul was the writer of Hebrews?

### **Answer**

The author of the book of Hebrews chose not to identify himself. From the second century until the Protestant Reformation the overwhelming consensus of opinion was that Paul was its author. Since Martin Luther tentatively concluded that Apollos wrote Hebrews, scholars have increasingly agreed with his assessment. References to chains, Timothy, and prison seem to point to the apostle (10:34; 13:23). But scholars appeal to the elegant, polished Greek of Hebrews in contrast with the rough Greek of Paul's known letters as evidence that the evangelist known for being "eloquent" and "mighty in the Scriptures" (Acts 18:24)

penned Hebrews. I accept the fact the author chose to be anonymous.

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## QUESTION FROM ARKANSAS ABOUT A WOMAN MAKING A PUBLIC CONFESSION

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

### Question

Can a woman respond to the invitation during Church and openly confess her sins to the Congregation? We recently had response where she asked to address the Congregation, but the Preacher would not allow. She had to tell him and let him, very poorly, relay it.

### Answer

The permanent principle in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is clearly identified by Paul: "women ... are to be submissive, as the law also says." This is stated in Genesis 3:16. Thus, it has been true since the beginning of time and still is (1 Corinthians 11:3). The woman is to be submissive to the man. The New Testament applies this principle in the home (Ephesians 5:23-25) and the church (1 Timothy 2:11-12; 1 Corinthians 14:34-35). Therefore women are not forbidden to speak at all in the worship assembly, else they could not sing (Ephesians 5:18-19). They are forbidden to speak in such a way that their submission to the men is violated. She should not be allowed to take control of the assembly in her confession, but she would not violate 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, or any other New Testament passage, by a public confession of sin.

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## THE BEATITUDES (3)

Patrick Farish | Lancaster, Texas, USA

*"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5)*

Who are "the meek"? A dictionary defines "meek" as patient, submissive, spiritless, tame. This cannot be so, for we read of Moses who confronted Pharaoh seeking the release of his people, who then led that people, obstinate and carnal though they were, for forty years; and it is of this man that it was written, "Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people that were on the earth" (Numbers 12:3). Spiritless? Tame? Not Moses!

Jesus was meek. "The Word was God" and "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:1, 14). "He had to be made like his brothers in every respect" (Hebrews 2:7). He said, "I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29, ASV). As man, He

endured the nastiness of his fellow men when he was under arrest awaiting his trial and crucifixion; He bore up under the excruciating pain of the cross. As man, in the throes of His misery, He was able to say “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Jesus was meek.

Someone defined “meekness” as, “strength under control”; like the horse controlled by a bridle. James 1:21 instructs us to “receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your soul.” Meek men and women submit themselves to the Word of God with its direction. “Meek” does not equal “weak”, and I wish they did not even rhyme.

It is important to be meek, because the meek are going to inherit the earth. Psalm 37 gives some indication as to the meaning of this phrase, by saying in verse 9 that “the evil-doers shall be cut off; but those who wait for the Lord will inherit the land”; in verse 11, “But the meek shall inherit the earth and delight themselves in abundant peace”; in verse 22, “those blessed by the Lord shall inherit the land”; in verse 29, “The righteous shall inherit the land”; and finally, in verse 34, “Wait for the Lord and keep his way and he will exalt you to inherit the land.” To “inherit the earth” is simply to receive the blessings God has for the righteous.

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## JAMAICA PATOIS WISDOM (No. 13)

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

The Jamaican Patois dialect is colorful, unique and humorous. It is my desire to share some of the philosophy shown in this mix of colorful phrases that are witty as well as thought-provoking. I hope the readers both profit and enjoy. In my quarter-century plus of teaching there, I have come to appreciate some things about their culture. – Jefferson David Tant

**Patois:** When puss gone, rat tek charge.

**English:** When the pussy-cat is away, the rat takes charge.

**Meaning:** People will disobey the rules when they think no one is watching.

The real test of character is when a person does the right thing when no one is watching. I have read stories of people who found large sums of money lying on the sidewalk or street. There was no one around to observe their actions, so they could have taken the money and enriched themselves. But they did the honorable thing by doing what they could to find the owner.

But many people have a different nature. While they may put on a good face, their actions in secret or when away



from authority reveal their true character. We have all probably been guilty along this line at some time in our lives. I deal with hundreds of young people during the school year, and from time to time will hear one using foul language. On occasion I will stop the young person and ask, “Does your mother know you talk that way?” Maybe she does, but many of these young people act embarrassed when I call them out.

As Christians, we are “to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15). The Sermon on the Mount has similar words: “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lamp-stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

Our character is not revealed when we are with fellow Christians as much as it is when we are out in the world—in school, at work, out shopping, or wherever. Our behavior in the world should never be such that one would be surprised to learn that we profess to be a Christian. Job 24:15 describes one wanting to keep his behavior a secret: “The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, Saying, ‘No eye will see me.’ And he disguises his face.”

Remember that God sees when we think no one is watching. Moses said: “You have placed our iniquities before You, Our secret sins in the light of Your presence” (90:8). Solomon’s search for life’s meaning brought this conclusion: “The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

An old gospel song reminds us that “There’s an all-seeing eye watching you.” God even hears our words. “But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36). Do not think that God doesn’t notice all that we say or do. The wicked “says to himself, ‘God has forgotten; He has hidden His face; He will never see it’” (Psa. 10:11). The kitty-cat may be away, but God is always there.

*“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ...” (2 Corinthians 5:10).*

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## ROMANS THE EIGHTH CHAPTER (No. 8)

This series of articles by the late Elmer Moore is reprinted from **Truth Magazine** by permission of the editor.

In Romans 8:12, the writer introduces his thought with the expression, "so then" or "therefore" (**KJV**). This expression tells us that he is going to reach a conclusion based on something previously written. In the immediate context, beginning in Chapter Six, the writer is discussing the obligation of the baptized to live right (Romans 6:1). In pursuing this theme in the eighth chapter he presents a contrast. In this contrast he describes two directors. One director is described as "flesh" and the other as "Spirit." I believe that we have successfully shown, in lesson five of these articles, that the one who is walking after the flesh, minding the things of the flesh, is insubordinate to the Spirit's law (8:7). He is allowing his fleshly desires to direct him. The one who is walking after the Spirit is allowing the Spirit's law to direct him and the Spirit of God dwells in him because he is being subordinate to the Spirit's law, the law of God (8:7). The force of the contrast being used by Paul demands this conclusion.

In verse 12 the writer declares that they were not debtors to the flesh "to live after the flesh." To "live after the flesh" and to "walk after the flesh" (verse 4) are expressions that describe the same conduct. Such a one allows his fleshly desires to determine what he does. In verse 13 we read, "for if you live after the flesh, you must die." This is not talking about physical death, for man will die physically whether he lives after the flesh or not. The dying of this passage is a result of "living after the flesh." I am convinced that this is talking about spiritual death. In Ephesians 2:1-3 the Apostle Paul wrote that the Ephesians were dead because of "trespasses and sins" (verse 1) because they were doing the "desires of the flesh and of the mind" (verse 3). In precisely the same way those of Romans 8:13 are said to die.

The one who is living after the flesh is the one who is insubordinate to the law of God, (Romans 8:7). The one who is living after the flesh is dead spiritually. It follows that the one who is insubordinate to God's law is dead spiritually.

In verse 13 Paul writes, "but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you shall live." In view of the contrast in this chapter, the passage is describing the man who is "walking after the Spirit" (verse 4). He is minding the things of the Spirit, being subordinate to the Spirit's law, the law of God. The Spirit of God dwells in him through his obedience to the law of God (Romans 8:7-9). This man is the one whose body is dead to (separated from) sin and whose spirit lives (see article 7).

Paul writes that this man “puts to death the deeds of the body.” Man consists of more than mere flesh and bone for there is the inner man and the outer man (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). The outer man is flesh or body and the inner man is spirit or soul. Paul in describing man wrote, “While we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen” (2 Corinthians 4:18). One can see the outer man, which is the flesh or the body, but he cannot see the inner man, which is the spirit or the soul. Paul writes in Romans 8:13 that the spirit of man, the inner man, in harmony with the Spirit’s law must control the outer man. Brother Whiteside wrote, “In the life of a Christian, the mind- the inner man dominates the flesh; in the sinners life the flesh dominates the mind. But in either case the mind does the planning and the willing. In the sinful life the mind yields to the appetites and passions of the flesh, and plans for their gratification; in the Christian life the mind keeps the body under control, and uses it in acts of service to God”, (Whiteside's Commentary page 164).

Paul is continuing his discussion of the obligation of the one who has been baptized into Christ to live a godly life. Man is indebted to God and obligated to His service, not to his own body and its gratification. Man has the right of choice. He can choose to live after the flesh; however, if he does he will be separated from God and be in a state of spiritual death. Or he can choose to put to death the deeds of the body and be in a saved relationship with God.

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## FEELINGS AND SALVATION

Mike Thomas | Beaver Dam, Kentucky, USA

The people were in frenzy as they jumped around in worship. They were convinced that the energy and emotionalism they felt were signs that a divine being was working through them. They were waiting for a miracle. The prophet Elijah told them, 'Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is mediating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened" (1 Kings 18:27). He was speaking to the prophets of Baal who were misleading the Israelites (v 20-21). Unfortunately, this scene is similar to those who rely on their emotions in defining their relationship with God.

I know of a man who was taught to wait for a "better felt than told" experience to confirm his salvation. He waited but nothing happened, and for years he wondered what he was doing wrong. Fortunately, in time, someone taught him the gospel, and he believed and obeyed it. The only way we can know if we are approved of God is through the teachings of the Bible. It was given "for doctrine, for reproof, for

correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Everything He wants us to believe and practice is contained in it. Those who rely on their emotions to determine their relationship with God will always be deceived in religion (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

God's will is that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17), which is why Jesus wants the gospel taught (Mark 16:15-16). Salvation is the product of faith, not feelings (Acts 2:36-40; 18:8). Jesus said, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign" to guide them in religion (Matthew 16:4). This is true for worshipers of Baal as well as of God.

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## MARRIAGE WITHOUT MAINTENANCE

**David & Michal | 1 Samuel 18-19, 25; 2 Samuel 3, 6**

from the e-book, "...And They Shall Become One Flesh..."

William J. Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

*Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David... / ...Michal, Saul's daughter looked through a window and saw King David leaping and whirling before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart. (1 Samuel 18:20; 2 Samuel 6:16)*

### Dealing With External Pressures

Saul had originally intended to give Merab, his older daughter to David as wife, but instead gave her to Adriel. We're given no indication whether David and Merab liked one another or not. However, we know that Michal loved David (1 Samuel 18:20, 28), and it appears that David loved Michal, as he paid double the dowry which Saul imposed (1 Samuel 18:25-27).

Of course, Saul's desire was not for David and Michael to be married and live happily every after. In fact, it was not Saul's intention to have them wed at all. He sought to use the marriage to his daughter as a means to destroy David by the hand of the Philistines (1 Samuel 18:25).

Their union placed both David and Michal in a difficult position. David was despised in the eyes of his father-in-law even prior to their marriage (1 Samuel 18:8-9, 11). Michal would now face the perpetual challenge of whether to honour her husband or her father. Due to the conflict between them, she could not do both.

In 1 Samuel 19, Saul's anger was again kindled against David, and he sought to kill him. Michal proved faithful to her husband, aiding his escape from her father (1 Samuel 19:11-13). However, she did herself, her husband, her father, and the Lord a disservice when she lied to the messengers, and then to Saul (1 Samuel 19:14-17). Who knows if things may have worked out differently for their marriage had Michal stood up

to her father that day.

### **Maintaining Faithfulness**

There are times when the circumstances of life may require spouses to be apart. The threat of death against David was serious; and thus the couple parted for safety sake.

However, being apart from one's spouse comes with its own challenges and difficulties. God's plan for a husband and wife is that they be together (Genesis 2:24) and that they render due affection to one another (1 Corinthians 7:3-5). It appears to be years between David's departure through the window that night and the next time he would be with Michal.

While apart from one another, David and Michal both married others. 1 Samuel 25:42-43 speaks of David marrying Abigail and Ahinoam. A verse later, we read:

*"...Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish..."* (1 Samuel 25:44)

Was David's action in response to Saul's, or Saul's in response to David's? We do not know. Does it matter? No. Either way, David and Michal's marriage would never be the same. In all, David ended up with eight wives (Michal, Ahinoam, Abigail, Maacah, Haggith, Abital, Eglah, Bathsheba). We don't know when he married most of them, but we do know that his marriage to Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:27) took place AFTER he was reunited with Michal (2 Samuel 3:13-14).

An old adage states that "distance makes the heart grow fonder." That is only the case when faithfulness is maintained. However, if desire for the other dwindles, if eyes begin to wander or the heart finds passion for another, there is trouble on the horizon.

### **Love Turned To Loathing**

The love which existed in the beginning between David and Michal fell under the attack of her father, their separation, and unfaithfulness. It appears that David was still interested in Michal, as he demanded that Ishbosheth return her to him (2 Samuel 3:13-14). Perhaps he thought the fire could be rekindled, perhaps he simply felt an obligation to care for her. What we know is that the relationship was not the same as before - it couldn't be - for she was no longer the only woman whom he had affection for.

On the day when the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal looked out the window "...and saw king David leaping and whirling before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart" (2 Samuel 6:16). What was the trouble? When he came to his house she confronted him,

*"How glorious was the king of Israel today,  
uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids*

*of his servants, as one of the base fellows  
shamelessly uncovers himself!" (2 Samuel 6:20)*

The disdain of 2 Samuel 6:16, coupled with this statement, perhaps show the stored up frustration and anger which she had towards David and his new wives. The writer links the fact that Michal had no children by David to the events and conversation of that day (2 Samuel 6:23; cf. 21:8). It may be that the LORD closed her womb, but it is more likely that David never again went in to her.

When Jonathan, Michal's brother, died in battle, there was a statement made by David that reveals the disorder of his married life. He said,

*"I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; you  
have been very pleasant to me; your love to me was  
wonderful, surpassing the love of women." (2  
Samuel 1:26)*

His marriages were unfulfilling. None of his wives loved him as one might expect, nor did he love any of them with his whole heart. His affections were divided, and they were made to be competitors for him. With Jonathan, he shared a closer relationship (not romantic or sexual) than with any of his wives. Two's company, nine's a crowd!

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## A CHURCH'S PROFILE : ANTIOCH

Sean P. Cavennder | Bradley, Arkansas, USA

Sometimes the concept of profiling is met with resistance and controversy, yet it is something that is done all the time. We may examine the behaviors, opinions, statements, and dress of a person and arrive at some conclusions based upon our keen observations. Sometimes we are correct, while other times we are incorrect.

In the Bible we have a number of examples that have been preserved for us. We may read and understand what people did, why they chose to do what they did, and the results of their choices. In other words, we profile them. We may accurately arrive at an understanding of the kind of character they had. This is true for individuals or groups of people.

For congregations of God's people it would be wise if we would closely examine the character of New Testament churches. If we begin to understand what early local churches did then we may learn from their examples. We may learn what we ought to do, or things that we should not do. Perhaps the most effective local church that we can read of in the pages of the New Testament was the church in Antioch of Syria.

### **They Preached To Those Who Needed The Gospel**

After the death of Stephen and the persecution from Saul of Tarsus, the Jerusalem church was dispersed (Acts 8:1-4). However, the dispersion did not silence the preaching of the gospel. Instead, it actually carried the gospel to places it had not yet been. The one problem that was quickly evident was that the Jews were only preaching the gospel to other Jews and not to Gentiles (Acts 11:19).

Then some of the dispersed Christians arrived in Antioch and they began to do something that had never been done by any local church – they preached to the Grecians (Acts 11:20). The Lord blessed them in this work and “a great number believed and turned unto the Lord” (Acts 11:21).

When we abandon our prejudices and simply allow the word of God to be proclaimed, then the truth will be quite effective. The first century Christians were limiting the scope of the gospel to those that were just like them: people with the same ethnicity, members of the same socio-economic class, or those of the same race. These are still the issues that limit the work of local churches today.

What might be the effect of abandoning our prejudice and just go into a town, preaching the gospel to anyone and everyone that might hear us? Would the hand of the Lord be with us (Acts 11:21)? Would a number of people turn to the Lord (Acts 11:21)? The gospel is designed to unify all people by faith in Jesus Christ. Thus, there are no distinctions between people in the church (Galatians 3:28).

It was the church in Antioch that then began to make it its mission to further the gospel throughout the world. They sent Paul and Barnabas on a preaching trip (Acts 13:1-3; 14:26-28). The apostle Paul continued to preach the gospel on other trips, being sent by the disciples in Antioch (Acts 18:22). This church understood the importance of going into all the world, preaching the gospel unto every creature (Mark 16:15).

Due to Antioch’s dedication to sending the gospel into the world, a great testimony is recorded for us. In Acts 19:20 the Scripture states, “so mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed.” By a dedicated group of Christians in Antioch, they had a mighty impact upon the expansion of the Lord’s kingdom. Just consider what you can do in your local town!

### **They Sent Relief To Needy Brethren**

The church in Antioch, being filled with Jews and Gentiles, heard of the needy disciples in Jerusalem and acted to help those needy saints (Acts 11:27-30). They gave as they were able and in proportion to their income (Acts 11:29; 1

Corinthians 16:1, 2). They gave cheerfully and out of love for their brethren; they were not forced nor compelled to provide for these brethren (cf. 2 Corinthians 9:7).

Churches should be concerned about the welfare of their brethren in other locations. It becomes our duty to look after physical needs (not luxuries) during times of hardship (Romans 15:27). When disasters may strike and affect faithful members of the Lord's church, local churches should be willing to help. Out of love, we should look to see that needs are met. When we share with one another, help one another, and give to those in need, it reinforces our bond of fellowship. We are made "partakers" of one another (Romans 15:27). The church in its infancy, shared with others (Acts 2:41-47). Churches should not be stingy with their money, but should be willing to help Christians as they are found to be lacking in the things that they need.

### **They Developed Teachers For Themselves**

Many churches fall into the trap of depending upon the preacher to do everything for the church. Churches seem to expect the preacher to make gospel meeting fliers, pass those fliers out, design visitors cards, fix the leaky sink, teach Sunday morning Bible class, teach Wednesday night Bible class, preach two sermons on Sunday, study in his office all week, and have Bible studies with non-Christians. Just imagine what churches might expect of a great preacher and teacher like the apostle Paul, if he were in churches today. He might be expected to do all of the items mentioned above, plus a whole lot more!

The church in Antioch was not solely dependent upon the apostle Paul. They used Paul and Barnabas for several things. When the church collected funds to send to Jerusalem, they sent Paul and Barnabas. When they wanted the gospel to be preached in other locations, they sent Paul and Barnabas. Antioch had apparently developed for themselves their own capable teachers (Acts 13:1).

Churches need to be busying themselves to push their men to become teachers and preachers. This will only benefit the kingdom of Christ. When churches are committed to developing the talents of others then think about how much more opportunities will be opened. Perhaps what might be even more amazing was that there were only five men mentioned in Acts 13:1. Out of those five, two of them (Paul and Barnabas) were sent away to preach the gospel in other places. The church in Antioch was committed to doing the work of Christ in Antioch without Paul and Barnabas. They had three capable men left in Antioch.

How many men do churches have available today? Probably at least three! Men need to step up, take initiative, study, learn, and grow in knowledge. They need to develop



themselves so that they may teach. However, men will not do that unless churches encourage and admonish men to become that ideal. Churches should provide opportunities for men to grow and learn. The church in Antioch opened their pulpit to several of the men that were capable of preaching and teaching Paul and Barnabas taught with many others in Antioch (Acts 15:35). Just imagine the possibilities and opportunities if churches had three, four, or five capable men to preach or teach God's word.

### **Conclusion**

The church in Antioch leaves a grand example for churches today. Their example of faith, commitment, growth, and diligence is something that church of the 21st century should strive to follow. If more churches were like the church in Antioch, just think of what the world might be like due to the effectiveness of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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## **CONTEMPLATIONS OF JESUS AND HOUSES**

Tanner Campbell | Piggott, Arkansas, USA

It seems evident from the gospel accounts that Jesus enjoyed going to the homes of certain people. The home of Zacchaeus, for example, is a place where Jesus invited Himself as He told Zacchaeus, "today I must stay at your house" (Luke 19:5). Why Zacchaeus' house? Because it was the house of a man who was diligently seeking Him. We find Jesus, in Matthew 9:10, at the house of Matthew, where He had occasion to teach many individuals who did not have a relationship with God. Consider how Jesus enjoyed coming to the house of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38), but why? Jesus tells us that the "one thing that is needed" happened in that house: Mary "sat at Jesus feet and heard His word." This, friends, is the one thing needed in every house. In John 12:2, we find Jesus in a house with Mary and Martha once again. Here we see that this is a house that not only heard Jesus, but served Jesus. In the account we are shown how Mary took very costly oil and "anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair."

The examples of these homes demonstrate where Jesus chooses to abide. He abides in the homes of those who diligently seek Him and want Him desperately in their home. He is found in the homes of those who understand that "one thing is needed:" to open up the scriptures and sit at Jesus feet each and every day. He is found abiding in the homes of those who give up whatever things are of value on this earth in order to serve Him.

Paul uses an interesting word in Ephesians 3:17, when he writes "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."

The Greek word for “dwell” is katoikeo, and Strong defines the word this way: “to house permanently, that is, reside.” Have we given Jesus a permanent and prominent residence in our hearts and homes? Do we sit at His feet day by day gleaning from His instruction? Or have we even invited Him into our house? Have we allowed Him even a breath to speak to our families?

Jesus told His disciples, in Matthew 10:12-14, “And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet.” Consider how the disciples were told to only spend their time in homes that were worthy, that is, homes that would receive them and hear their teachings of Jesus. I fear that many Christians have not built worthy homes. Remember when Jesus preached on building a house? In Matthew 7:24, Jesus said “whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.” Some Christians are failing to be wise. Jesus’ words do not abide in their house, nor have they structured their lives by them. The Christian family is far too spent on sports, social networking, entertainment, politics, friends, careers, and good grades, that no one is paying any attention to the “one thing that is needed.” Where does Jesus fit in to the schedule? Where is the spiritual instruction? How much time is spent on that? On Sundays they say. Thou fool, you who are building your house on the sand. The structure of your life will not hold up to the force of Satan! You will fall, your spouse will be crushed under your house, and as for your children, you will have committed spiritual abortion to their precious souls.

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## DIVINE AND HUMAN FORGIVENESS : PARABLE OF THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT (The Parables of the Master)

MATTHEW 18:21-35

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

### **Introduction**

The story of the unmerciful servant is truly remarkable. The Master had just finished teaching His disciples - and us - what to do if a brother sinned against them and how to do it (Matthew 18:15-17). Peter’s quick tongue provided the setting for this incredible parable. He inquired, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” “Rabbi Jose ben Hanina said, ‘He who begs forgiveness from his neighbour must not do so more than

three times" (Barclay, 2:213).

*There is probably little doubt that Peter felt his proposal to be remarkably generous. Rabbinical tradition said three times (based erroneously on Job 33.29-30 and Amos 1.3 - 2.6), but sometimes never made that. The Talmud tells the story of a Rabbi who would not forgive a very small slight to his dignity though asked by the offender thirteen years in succession and that on the Day of Atonement! (Earnhart, 82).*

The apostle was so generous with his forgiveness that he doubled the Talmudic standard and added one for good measure! And seven was the perfect number (Psalm 12:6).

But Peter was trying to quantify mercy, to set a limit on how many times we should forgive. Christ replied, "'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven"(verse 22). The number represents infinity. Mercy cannot be quantified. We must always be ready to forgive.

### **The Parable**

The Master illustrated the principle with the story of The Unmerciful Servant. The kingdom of heaven is like a king settling accounts with his servants. In the parable the servant of a king owed his lord ten thousand talents. We are not told why the royal servant owed his sovereign such a sum, but the amount is staggering. A talent equaled in value 6,000 denarii (Vine, 617). Ten thousand talents was sixty million denarii or sixty million days' wages for a day laborer (Matthew 20:1-2). "That was a sum 50 times larger than the annual taxes which Herod Antipas collected from Galilee and Perea (200 talents) and more than 10 times the annual revenue of the whole of Palestine (Josephus, *Antiquities*, xi, 4)" (Earnhart, 82). No servant could ever even begin to repay such an incredible debt.

Very justly the ruler reacted with indignation, commanding that the man and all his family be sold into slavery and that all his property be sold in order to pay the debt. "So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything" (verse 26, **NASB**). Give me a break! Of course no servant could every hope to repay such a debt regardless of the grace period granted. The debt was too enormous to ever be payable.

But amazingly, the ruler had compassion on his miscreant servant and forgave him the entire debt. "Compassion" is the emotion of pity which one feels for those who suffer (cf. Luke 15:20; 1 Peter 3:8-9). The debtor asked for patience and received forgiveness. Patience would put off until later the settling of accounts. When forgiveness takes place the

debt is released, and the creditor takes the loss. By forgiving the debt the king suffered a huge loss he could never regain.

Leaving the scene of unparalleled mercy the forgiven servant found a fellow servant who owed him one hundred denarii. That was not a trifling sum. It was the amount a common worker would earn for one hundred days' labor. It was a serious but manageable debt that was a drop of rain in the ocean compared to the ten thousand talent debt.

But the servant learned nothing from the compassion and mercy of his king. He grabbed the other slave by the throat and demanded immediate payment. After all, honest people pay their debts! This is mine by right! I demand justice!

The other servant made precisely the same desperate request the first servant had made to the king. Only, he might really have repaid it if given leniency. But, no, the first servant threw his poor fellow into debtors prison until the entire sum could be paid.

His fellow servants were saddened by the lack of mercy and informed the king. Now the merciful king was enraged by the lack of mercy in his servant. The king addressed him as "You wicked servant." His refusal to forgive was wickedness.

The **English Standard Version** correctly translates verse 33, "And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" Whereas "compassion" is the feeling of pity for the one who suffers, mercy is the action that compassion prompts. It is the actual help of the helpless.

The unmerciful servant should have learned mercy from the example of his king (verse 33) and acted as the king had done toward him. He demanded justice from his fellow servant, so the king gave him justice. "And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him" (verse 34).

**"So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart"** (Matthew 18:35, **ESV**).

### **Application**

Of course, the king of the parable is God. The ten thousand talent debt illustrates our debt of sin we owe him. We can never repay it. It is so enormous that it took the death of the Son of God to square the account (Romans 3:21-26). His great mercy was and is manifested in the forgiveness of our own enormous debt of sin (Titus 3:3-7). The Father Himself took the incredibly huge loss by giving His only Son to die on the cross so our debt to Him might be forgiven.

The one hundred denarii debt pictures the sins others have committed against us. They are significant but are as nothing compared to our debt to God. Forgiveness manifests compassion and mercy (verses 27,33, **NASB, ESV**). If we appreciate as we should how much the Lord has forgiven us, How much He sacrificed so He could forgive us, we will be longsuffering and forgiving toward those who wrong us (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12-13). Asking for and receiving forgiveness from God obligates us to forgive our fellow servants. We cannot live under grace with God while we live under law with others. "... how many Christians rise from the Lord's Supper to go out and live with merciless hardness in daily life?" (Earnhart. 85)

Citizens of the kingdom of heaven are and must be merciful (Matthew 5:7). Thus we must forgive those who sin against us in the same manner God forgives our sins against Him (Matthew 6:12, 14-15; Luke 11:4). God does not overlook our sins but calls us to repentance (Acts 2:36-38; 8:22-23). We should not overlook a brother's sins against us, for they are also sins against God and separate him from God (Isaiah 59:1-2). We should in love rebuke him, and if he repents forgive him, even if the sin is repeated seven times in one day! (Luke 17:3-4)

Have you turned away from Christ and remain the object of divine wrath because you have been wronged by a brother and refuse to forgive him? How foolish! Are that brother's sins against you as great as your sins against the Lord? Is the Lord willing to forgive you? Rebuke your erring brother for his sin. If he repents, forgive him - even if he does it seven times in one day!

### **Conclusion**

If my Lord could pray, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34) for those who crucified Him, if Stephen could cry, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin" (Acts 7:60) for those who stoned him, I think I can forgive those who sin against me. If God has forgiven my unpayable debt, I can forgive my brother's much smaller bill. "With our Father we want mercy but with others we want justice. We can't have it both ways, and when we try we are truly 'wicked'" (Earnhart. 85).

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