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Exploitation of Workers and Social Justice In the Book of Amos

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One of the essential issues covered in the Bible is social justice. God created humanity to live in harmony while enjoying His creative works. It can therefore be seen that the life and happiness of all His people are vital to Him and form part of His deepest desires. The Bible continually brings to center stage those who are oppressed showing that God vehemently backs those groups of people who are vulnerable to suffering from social injustice. This is clearly seen in Exodus 22:21-24 (New American Standard Bible) which states:

> You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. If you afflict him at all, *and* if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry; and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.[1]

In the Torah, God gives a prescription for a social order among His people. These instructions build the framework for social justice in the Old Testament. The prophets lash out relentlessly against injustice and give strong indictments against those who victimize persons belonging to the vulnerable social groups. Isaiah, for example, makes a strong pronouncement against corruption:

> Woe to those who enact evil statutes and to those who constantly record unjust decisions, so as to deprive the needy of justice and rob the poor of My people of their rights, so that widows may be their spoil and that they may plunder the orphans (10:1-2).[2]

Social injustice violates the legal and moral framework of a society. Victimization and exploitation of the vulnerable are serious concerns that should be addressed with great urgency. This exegetical paper will analyze exploitation of workers and social justice in the book of Amos.

Overview of the Book of Amos

Amos was a native of the town of Tekoa who prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah king of Judah and Jeroboam king of Israel (1:1). He was a shepherd and one who grew sycamore figs (7:14). The book of Amos is

1 Ex 22:21-24. Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptures are taken from the New American Standard Bible (NASB).
2 Is 40:1-2.

basically a message of judgment and begins with indictments against several nations – Damascus (1:3-5); Gaza (1:6-8); Tyre (1:9-10); Edom (1:11-12); Ammon (1:13-15); Moab (2:1-3); Judah (2:4-5); and Israel (2:6-16). Each foreign nation is to be punished for specific offences against Israel or some other nation. This judgment on the nations shows that God is the universal Ruler. Therefore, all nations are under His control and must answer to Him for their mistreatment of other countries and peoples. Israel and Judah, however, will be punished because they have broken their covenant with God. As a result, God's punishment of their sin will be severe.

Amos develops Israel's lack of covenant loyalty, showing that her outward displays of worship failed to compensate for her lack of compassion and humanity that the Mosaic covenant demanded.[3] The nation of Israel outwardly was as its highpoint in territorial expansion and national prosperity, but inwardly it was rotten. Idolatry was rampant; the rich were living in luxury while the oppression of the poor was commonplace; there was widespread immorality; and the judicial system was corrupt. Israel's prosperity served only to deepen the corruption of the people. The nation's guilt has to do with the everyday oppressive behavior of its citizens toward one another. Its unethical and immoral actions signify the breaking of the covenant.[4] Amos courageously proclaimed God's message of justice, righteousness and divine retribution for sin to a people who did not want to hear what the Lord had to say to them. Punishment was inevitable unless they repented of their idolatry, immorality, and injustice.

> Thus says the Lord, "For three transgressions of Israel and for four I will not revoke its punishment, because they sell the righteous for money and the needy [*ebyôn*] for a pair of sandals. [7] These who pant after the very dust of the earth on the head of the helpless [*dal*] also turn aside the way of the humble [*'ănāwîm*]; and a man and his father resort to the same girl in order to profane My holy name. [8] "On garments taken as pledges they stretch out beside every altar, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined (Amos 2:6-8).[5]

There are a number of Hebrew words that the Old Testament employs to refer to the poor. Amos uses three prominent ones – *ebyôn* (אֶבְיוֹן), *dal* (דַּל), and *'ănāwîm* (עֲנָוִים).[6] The word *ebyôn* emphasizes need and therefore refers to someone who is poor in a material sense. The *ebyôn* may have lost his

3 Thomas J. Finley, *The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary: Joel, Amos, Obadiah* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), 114.

4 Shalom M. Paul, *Amos: A commentary on the Book of Amos* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 76.

5 Amos 2:6-8.

6 Robert Wafawanka, *Am I Still My Brother's Keeper? Biblical Perspectives on Poverty* (Maryland: University Press of America, Inc, 2012), 91.

ancestral land (Ex 23:11), reverted to borrowing (Deut 15:7-11), may be without clothing (Job 31:19) or lacking food (Ps 132:15), or may simply be one who has fallen on hard times (Job 30:25). *ebyôn* is also used in a social sense to refer to those needing financial protection (Deut 15:1-4) and to those who are oppressed by the wicked (Prov 30:14). Among the prophets, Amos is especially concerned for the rights of the *ebyôn* (2:6; 4:1; 5:12; 8:4, 6).[7] *dal* signifies one who is low or of a low social class who is often contrasted with the rich (Ex 30:15). Unlike *ebyôn*, *dal* does not primarily emphasize need but denotes the lack of material wealth (Prov 10:15) and social strength (Amos 2:7).[8] The term *dal* also refers to persons who are physically weak or sick (Ps 72:13). The word *'ănāwîm* (singular *'anaw*) occurs in the wisdom literature as well as Psalms and the prophetic books. It conveys the meaning of impoverishment and oppression.[9] The singular form, *'anaw*, stresses the moral and spiritual condition of the godly as the goal of affliction. In other words, *'anaw* expresses the intended outcome of affliction, which is humility or meekness. This attitude and position is extolled as blessed and to be desired.[10] Probably *'ănāwîm* can be best described as a term of "suffering." The poverty-stricken suffer because they are helpless and vulnerable.[11]

In 2:6, Amos condemns debt slavery. The term "righteous" is derived from the Hebrew word *tsaddiq* (צַדִּיק) which describes the legal status of the poor who are innocent of wrongdoing. In other words, they have not done anything to deserve the ill treatment of their oppressors. *tsaddiq* occurs only two times in Amos (2:6; 5:12) and stresses the poor as victims of injustice. The victim is seen here as innocent while the oppressor is guilty. The NASB translates *tsaddiq* to mean "righteous" in both occurrences in Amos even though it renders the same word as "innocent" in 2 Kings 10:9. The term "righteous" conveys more the idea of the victim's relationship with God but this is not of major concern in this context. The legal implications of "innocent" show the victimization of the poor by their oppressors. While *tsaddiq* is used to signify a "victim", *ebyôn* is used as a term to denote "need." The poor therefore needed money, power, and a legal source of help in the courts for justice.[12] According to Shalom Paul, the defenseless *'ebyôn* has no means whatsoever at their disposal to protect themselves from being sold into debt slavery.[13]

Shalom Paul states that there are two different ways in which Amos 2:6 can be interpreted. Based on the first interpretation: "They [the judges] have sold for silver (money) those whose cause was just." The judges are

7 Robert L. Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980, vol. 1), 4-5.
8 Ibid, 190.
9 Wafawanaka, 50-51.
10 Harris et al (vol. 2), 682.
11 Finley, 166.
12 Ibid, 162-164.
13 Paul, 77.

rebuked for accepting bribes from the guilty parties, as a result of which the *tsaddiq* or the innocent is sold. The legal system is corrupt and the innocent become the victims of a bribed verdict. This interpretation cannot hold true because the judges do not themselves sell the accused. The other interpretation holds that the *tsaddiq* who is either the "innocent guiltless party" or an honest person, has been sold in order to satisfy the creditors who are demanding their monetary compensation from the debtors who owe and could not pay. Furthermore, the innocent person has been sold into slavery for money to compensate a measly debt that is too insignificant to justify such an action.[14]

The "pair of sandals" represents the debt which, more than likely, represented a very small amount owed by the individual. The creditor demands that the poor person be sold into slavery in order to pay it off.[15] In simple terms, the debtors are sold into slavery for a very small debt. Therefore the indictment in Amos 2:6 boils down to "the lack of pity and contempt for human dignity."[16] Creditors had no regard for the sanctity and value of the lives of those who were poor and vulnerable and stopped at nothing to ensure that outstanding debts were settled regardless of the means employed. Financial compensation was more important to them than the life of the debtor who was unable to repay the debt because he or she was impoverished.

It should be noted that debt slavery was permitted in the law of Moses but only as a temporary condition (Ex 21:7-11; Lev 25:39-43; Deut 15:12-15). Additionally the master or slave owner was obligated to treat the slave or indebted person humanely and grant them some compensation when the time of release came.[17]

In verse 7, Amos further denounces the abuse and oppression of the poor *(dal)*, the denial of justice to the "afflicted" *(ʻănāwîm*, "humble" in the NASB*)*, and the improper treatment of a girl or young woman. The phrase "pant after" comes from the verb *šāʼap* (שָׁאַף) which can also be translated "trample upon."[18] Therefore the first accusation in this verse has to do with the oppression of the poor who are trampled upon as though they were the dust of the ground.[19] Finley explains that the "way of the afflicted" refers to their attempt to get relief from their suffering through the courts (cf. Isaiah 10:2 – "to turn aside the needy from justice"). The indictment here is that the needy are turned away when they seek justice.[20] Paul gives further insights by stating that the underprivileged class is bullied and oppressed by the wealthy, who deprive and block them from obtaining the privileges to which they are entitled. The "girl" may be viewed as another member of the defenseless and exploited group. Amos is probably indicating that the lack of shame and

14 Paul, 77.
15 Finley, 165.
16 Paul, 79.
17 Finley, 164.
18 Ibid, 165.
19 Paul, 79.
20 Finley, 166.

promiscuity involved when a father and son both go to the same girl violates her honor and is immoral. This moral infringement is an act of profaning of God's holy name.[21] Thus by dishonoring this young woman, the exploiter would be polluting the holy name of God. This of course is a serious offense and therefore a grave indictment.

The first part of verse 8 holds that wealthy creditors confiscate the clothing of the poor, taken as pledge, for unpaid debt. This is a clear violation of the law found in Exodus 22:25-27 and Deut. 24:17. Not only do these wealthy creditors violate a law that is intended to protect the poor, but they also take the confiscated garments and "stretch themselves out" or recline on them beside every altar. The rich are engaged in worship at the altar or "in the house of their god" and see no incongruity between their social action and their worship. This evil practice is denounced as being totally unacceptable. In the second part of verse 8, those in power were probably unjustly extorting money from the poor in legal cases and then using it to purchase wine. However, it was wrong for fines to be exacted from the poor in order to permit the wealthy to indulge their appetites, feasting and drinking.[22] Wafawanaka suggests that "wine" in this verse could represent payment of a debt in kind[23] but "wine bought with money received from exacting fines from the poor"[24] seems more plausible.

Analysis of the Rest of Amos

Amos 2:6-8 shows that the poor were being heavily oppressed and exploited by the wealthy and those with power. This theme of injustice and inequality against the poor continues in subsequent passages – 3:15; 4:1-3; 5:10-12; 8:4-6.

> "I will also smite the winter house together with the summer house; the houses of ivory will also perish and the great houses will come to an end," declares the Lord (Amos 3:15).[25]

In 3:15, the impending destruction resulting from the God's punishment would also include the wealthy Israelites living in Samaria who were able to enjoy a self-indulgent lifestyle of pleasure and prosperity. The summer and winter houses were "symbols of luxury at the expense of the poor" (cf. Jer. 36:22).[26] "Houses of ivory" refer to extravagant mansions that had walls and furniture decorated with expensive ivory (cf. 1 Kings 22:39). "Great houses" refer to the large estates owned by the upper class. Paul points

21 Paul, 81-83.
22 Paul, 85.
23 Wafawanaka, 92.
24 Paul, 86.
25 Amos 3:15
26 Wafawanaka, 92.

out that the destruction described here would be directed against the nobles and the wealthy elite residing in the city of Samaria and not against the general population. He further states that the translation of "and many houses shall be destroyed" provides a summary description of the destruction of all the houses in Samaria but that is not the case within this context.[27] God's intent was to punish those who were living lavishly from the exploitation of the poor and vulnerable.

> Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, "Bring now, that we may drink!" [2] The Lord God has sworn by His holiness, "Behold, the days are coming upon you when they will take you away with meat hooks, and the last of you with fish hooks. [3] "You will go out through breaches in the walls, each one straight before her, and you will be cast to Harmon," declares the Lord (Amos 4:1-3).[28]

Amos continues on the major theme of exploitation of the poor in 4:1-3 by specifically condemning the Israelite women who are relishing prestigious lifestyles that has been made possibly through the oppression of the poor. These upper class women are charged for exploiting the underprivileged classes. Amos vividly describes this female elite class by calling them "cows of Bashan." Bashan was a fertile plain with lush pastures that enable cattle to grow fat and strong there (cf. Jer. 50:19).[29] Amos is indicating that these "cows" are the well-fed, plump and pampered ladies of Samaria whose main purpose in life is to cater to their own self-indulgence, regardless of the cost especially to others. As these women drank their wine, they would urge their husbands to gain even more money by oppressing the poor so that they could drink all the more and bask in luxury even further. Their oppressive and exploitative actions constitute injustice against the poor and represent a morally evil situation.[30] These ladies and no doubt their husbands live well at the expense of the poor who are mercilessly crushed and treated harshly. However, divine punishment is inevitable for these opulent yet cruel women who will be taken away from their luxurious lifestyle or esteemed positions in complete disgrace (by use of "meat hooks" and "fish hooks"). These wealthy women of Samaria would be led in judgment like cattle.

> They hate him who reproves in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks with integrity. [11] Therefore because you impose heavy rent on the poor and exact a tribute of grain from them, though you have built houses of well-hewn stone, yet you will not live in them; you

27 Paul, 125-127.
28 Amos 4:1-3.
29 Finley, 198.
30 Paul, 128-129.

> have planted pleasant vineyards, yet you will not drink their wine.
> [12] For I know your transgressions are many and your sins are great, you who distress the righteous and accept bribes and turn aside the poor in the gate (Amos 5:10-12).[31]

Amos now communicates God's sorrow because of Israel's sin in 5:10-12. Prominent among the sins that Amos points out were the social sins of the people, that is, the rich taking advantage of the poor and exploiting them. An area just inside the city gates marked the place where much of the important business of a city was transacted. The elders and the judges would conduct official business there as well (cf. Deut. 21:19). It was at the city gate where public legal hearings were held and where justice was administered. The one who "reproves" or is in charge of dispensing justice is hated by the people because he recognizes and points out their perversion of justice. Similarly, the one "who speaks with integrity" is detested because he tells the truth about the dishonest actions of his fellow-citizens. Those sitting in judgment would abhor the witness of such a "speaker of the truth".[32] Amos accuses them of despising and abhorring those who both practice and dispense justice.

In verse 11, the prophet once again turns his attention to the theme of exploitation of the poor by those who are wealthy. In this case, the wealthy have profited from the imposition of heavy rent and the taxation of the agricultural produce of the poor. However, the affluent who have increased their wealth and possessions at the expense of the poor will not enjoy the fruits of their labor – they will neither dwell in the luxurious houses they built nor drink wine from the fruitful vineyards they planted. Amos continues his indictment of the wealthy Israelites for their devious and corrupt judicial practices in verse 12. The poor and defenseless are continually the victims of the local judiciary, who persecute them at the very place where justice should be dispensed.[33] In other words, the judges afflict the innocent and accept bribes, and the needy are denied justice in the gate of justice.[34]

> Hear this, you who trample the needy, to do away with the humble of the land, [5] saying, "When will the new moon be over, so that we may sell grain, and the sabbath, that we may open the wheat market, to make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger, and to cheat with dishonest scales, [6] so as to buy the helpless for money and the needy for a pair of sandals, and that we may sell the refuse of the wheat?" (Amos 8:4-6).[35]

31 Amos 5:10-12.
32 Finley, 236.
33 Paul, 171-174.
34 Wafawanaka, 94.
35 Amos 8:4-6.

This passage represents the final indictment of Israel by the prophet who uses similar language to that found in 2:6-7. Amos charges those who trample the needy and bring about the destruction of the innocent of the land. The new moon was a religious festival during which no work was done and trading ceased. The greedy merchants did not care much for worship that took place on the new moon and Sabbaths, and could not wait for these holidays to be over so that their commercial activities could resume.[36] The merchants were so materialistic that they were anxious to resume selling their merchandises.

Amos then further describes their unscrupulous business practices by highlighting their corrupt use of false weights and measures. Making the "ephah ("bushel" NASB) smaller and the shekel bigger", are both means of cheating the customer through dishonest weights. The ephah was a dry measurement for grain, and the shekel was a basic weight for payment. Therefore, a small ephah and a large shekel meant the customer received less and paid more. Scripture demand honest scales, weights, measures, and balances (Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-15; Prov. 16:11) and condemns fraudulent ones (Prov. 11:1, 20-23).[37]

Verse 6 further points out the corrupt business practices that are detrimental to the survival of the poor. Amos targets traders who engage in the buying of the "helpless for money" and the "needy for a pair of sandals." This form of debt slavery is the reversal of the expression found in 2:6, which deals with the selling and not the buying of the poor. In the final part of the verse, the prophet condemns yet another fraudulent business practice – the selling of poor quality wheat in order to further maximize the profitable gains of the merchants. Amos is very concerned about and denounces the injustices suffered by those who members of the lower socio-economic subgroup of Israel.[38]

Conclusion

Amos stresses that righteousness and justice, based on God's character, are essential to a healthy society. Amos is outraged at Israel's violation of God's standards of justice and righteousness for His people, thus vividly illustrating how abhorrent religion is to God when divorced from righteous conduct in daily living. Religion is more than observing feast days and holding sacred assemblies. True religion demands righteous living. The way a man treats is neighbor reveals his relationship with God. Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to love God and the second is to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39). This is the basic message of Amos. This is the message that is needed today. Like Israel, we are also living in a prosperous, materialistic society. Material prosperity often leads to religious

36 Finley, 300.
37 Paul, 258.
38 Wafawanaka, 95.

and moral corruption. Observation of external rites is just not enough. God demands our obedience which entails a heartfelt attitude that results in action to meet the needs of our fellow human beings.

The Law shows that justice included special provision and protection of the weakest in Israel – the widows, orphans, and aliens. In the Prophets we see that God's people were called to emulate God's character, which includes doing justice, mercy, and righteousness. These demands were not just for the Israelite society but applied to other nations as well. All human beings have a legitimate claim to resources that allows them to function fully in human society.[39] God was and is still very concerned with meeting the needs of all His people especially the poor who find it difficult to adequately take care of themselves and their families. Those who can offer assistance to the vulnerable groups should readily and heartily do so by utilizing the blessings and gifting that God has bestowed upon them.

The notion of justice appears frequently in Scripture but many persons simply assume that biblical endorsements of justice are divine commands to support economic redistribution. It is worthwhile to point out that a distinction can be drawn between practicing justice and promoting justice. Some kinds of justice can be practiced only by people who occupy certain positions or fill certain roles, for example a judge. However, all of us can do things that will promote the various kinds of justice.[40] For instance, we can promote better social justice by electing honest and competent judges who will condemn exploitation and uphold the dignity of the poor. We can also vehemently speak out against corporations and wealthy employers that are intentionally exploiting workers in order to increase their profit margin.

The biblical vision for society is rooted in a longing for a perfect community of love that facilitates the harmonious communion of all humanity with each other and with God. As Christians, we must live with a deep yearning for greater social justice. We should proclaim and represent a kingdom of righteousness, justice, and peace among the widows, orphans, sick, poor, exploited, and marginalized. Scripture shows that even in simple societies, individuals (Matt 25:31-46), families (1 Tim 5:8), and even governments (Dan 4:27) have responsibilities to take care of the poor.[41] We should endeavor to treat all persons humanely and justly while doing all we can to help the poor. If we cannot offer tangible assistance then we can pray.

The victimization of humanity remains serious aspects of social injustice that continues to plague our societies. There are countless cases of

39 Kent A. Van Til, *Less Than Two Dollars a Day: A Christian View of World Poverty and the Free Market* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2007), 83-84.
40 Ronald H. Nash, *Social Justice and the Christian Church* (Michigan: Mott Media, Inc. Publishers, 1983), 75-76.

41 Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor - and Yourself* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2013), 44.

children, women, and workers who are being exploited in order to increase the gains of the wealthy all over the world. Many of these instances are actually taking place right in the cities in which we reside. If we continue to keep silent and remain passive when we know that our brothers and sisters are being oppressed, are we any better than the "cows of Bashan" or the corrupt judges or the unscrupulous merchants that Amos condemns? Alleviation of social injustice and the exploitation of workers will not happen all at once but the little that we do today can help to remediate this inhumane situation in the future.

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An Exegetical Examination of Daniel 9:24-27

James Cater

The book of Daniel is both an Achilles heel and a glorious book, depending on what side you're on, namely, the liberal or conservative. Approaches or difficulties to how to understand or interpret Daniel can go even further than liberal versus conservative. For, even among Protestant denominations the book has caused a diversity of opinions. Notwithstanding the variegated voices, W. Graham Scroggie has called the book of Daniel "the greatest book in the Bible on godless kingdoms and the kingdom of God."[1] The scholar Gleason Archer has also added his encomium on the book by saying, "it is one of the most important pieces of OT prophetic literature and perhaps the most frequently studied of the sixteen Major and Minor prophets."[2] Thus, the book is a highly important book in the Bible. It should come as no surprise then that its passages, replete with prophetic and apocalyptic images, would stir so much commotion especially Daniel 9:24-27. This pericope and its brevity have been described by Stephen R. Miller in this way: "These are four of the most controversial verses in the Bible."[3]

Therefore, before we provide a brief synopsis of the different views both from a Christian and Jewish perspective, an adumbration of the book itself would be helpful in contextualizing Daniel 9:24-27. First, the book of Daniel is written in two languages. It is the shortest of the Major Prophets except for Lamentations. The book of Daniel is both a historical as well as a futuristic detailing of dealings with nations and Israel.

The two languages, as far as intent and literary purposes is concerned, are uniquely positioned. Aramaic, the *lingua franca* of the prophet's day, occupies chapters 2:4b-7:28; Hebrew occupies 1:1-24a and chapters 8-12. As far as this literary arrangement is concerned, it was fitting that Aramaic occupy the main emphasis for Gentile nations, while Hebrew is represented in the other parts.[4] A bird's eye view of the book can be organized this way: chapter one is the prologue; chapters 2-7 are a prophetic history of the Gentiles; chapters 8-12 are a prophetic history of Israel. Naturally then, from a broad perspective, chapter 9 and verses 24-27 in particular occupy strategically the section dealing with Israel during the "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24).[5] Thus, a corollary is that the basic emphasis of 9:24-27 is particularly the city of Jerusalem and Israel, as the context of 9:24-27 strongly suggests. The audience and recipients of the prophecies outlined in Daniel 9:24-27 are specifically the nation of Israel. Furthermore, within its immediate context of chapter nine, there is an intercessory prayer offered by Daniel on behalf of the city and the nation as they undergo the remaining 70 year captivity under the Babylonians.[6] The historical-grammatical and contextual interpretation seem to be the

primary place to start as some of the foregoing has helped to do. At this point Walter Kaiser has strongly recommended,

> "Although prophecy indeed uses far more figurative language, including symbols, figures of speech, allegories, and parables, than does narrative or didactic prose, this is not to say that the words or terms used are without real referents. One must assume the primacy of the grammatical, plain, straightforward, simple sense before one searches for what is "contained in" or "falls within" or is "beneath" or "based on" the literal sense. It is preferable, then, to take prophecy in its natural, straightforward sense as it was intended by the writer."[7]

Thus, this writer believes that the book of Daniel, Daniel 9, and Daniel 9:24-27 in particular, should be approached in this way,as the first step. Now, there seem to be two basic views or interpretations or approaches to 9:24-27. The two basic approaches, speaking in very broad strokes, are either symbolic or non-symbolic (either figurative or literal). All the variegated forms of views held, whether Christian or Jewish, land on one or the other pole represented by symbolic or non-symbolic. Stephen Miller provides four different views, two of which are literal and two which are symbolic, held by the majority of Christian scholars.[8] The Jewish views fall between either conservative-reform or orthodox (which also represent a coalescing of literal and figurative).[9] Thus, it is safe to assume that a history of interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27 has either been literal or figurative. The issues involved with the prophecy have involved several things: 1. Whether to take the seventy weeks in verse 24a as weeks of days, years, months, or periods of time. 2. Whether to take the phrase in verse 24c "for your people and your holy city" as symbolic or literal. 3. Whether to take "the Messiah" in verse 25 literal or symbolic. 4. Whether to take the "he" in verse 27 as referring to the "Messiah" or to "the prince who is to come." From the outset, these seem to be some of the important features of the prophecy which whether taken symbolic or non-symbolically will determine some of the conclusions derived. Before we briefly consider the abovementioned issues involved, any lengthy dissertation of this prophecy is beyond the scope of this paper, but this brief synopsis which follows should suffice:

> *"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.* [25] *So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.* [26] *Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince*

> *who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. [27] And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."*[10]

First, verse 24 provides a brief outline of the accomplishments of the prophecy. Second, the seventy weeks seem to be weeks of seven years (cf.vv.9:1-2). This is almost unanimously understood.[11] It is best to take the "seventy sevens" as years, as John Walvoord quotes Young, an amillenarian as agreeing: "The brief period of 490 days would not serve to meet the needs of the prophecy, upon any view."[12] Three, these weeks of seven years "have been decreed" (*determined*, KJV). The word refers to a chronology of time and events prescribed as fixed. Four, the direct recipients and place are clearly identified as "your people" and "your holy city" (Jews).

Daniel's prayer specifically involved them, their sin (vv.9:1-19), and their future (vv.9:20-27).

Verse 25 briefly outlines the contents and chronology of the first 69 weeks of seven years (483 years). Verse 26 states that two historical events fulfill the 69 weeks: the first is the decree issued to restore and rebuild Jerusalem "even in times of distress" (Nehemiah's time perhaps); the other, is when the "Messiah the Prince" comes and "will be cut off" (v. 26, an obvious foretelling of Christ's death). Six, verse 26 details the coming of another prince, "the prince who is to come," that accomplishes a predetermined desolation upon the sanctuary and destroys the city again (from the perspective of Daniel, this is yet another time in the future determined where the city would be in ruins and the sanctuary would be desolated!). Some have offered that Antiochus Epiphany would fill this bill as "the prince who is to come" ;however; if you take the 69 years literally, then chronologically this would be untenable, unless of course you take the years as symbolic. Then, you would still need to account for "Messiah the Prince" that "will be cut off?" Unless, the two princesses described are the same person, which would be highly unlikely and an unnatural way to view the verses.

Therefore, the desolations and war viewed in verse 26 seem best befitting Titus destruction of Jerusalem and his desolation of the temple that ensued after the Jewish wars of 66-69 A.D.[13] This chronology best fits the accomplishing of the literal 483 years determined (69 weeks of years). Seven, verse 27 begins with an "and," a coordinating conjunction, providing the continuative sequence from the completion of the 69 weeks to the commencement of the seventieth week.

Verse 27 also states that "he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week."

This "he" can only refer back to the "prince who is to come," for this is its natural antecedent. The "people of the prince who is to come" can only also refer to his own people and not the Messiah's people.[14] It does not follow either that the Messiah would make a covenant with his own people and then break it half way through the week as some contend.[15] This is highly unlikely and untenable. It would be very strenuous to the flow of the verses and history's development to see the seventieth week accomplished already in history (as some contend) and to the tenor of the whole book of Daniel dealing with God's sovereignty over the nations and their relationship with Israel. There is no evidence in the immediate years of Titus's siege that there was a covenant made between a Roman prince and the nation of Israel and that the covenant was broken in the midst of the week;[16] much less of a covenant made after Antiochus Epiphany and before the befalling of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Taking the weeks as symbolic or as an indefinite period of time only obscures the prophecy. Taking the people referred to in the prophecy, namely Jews, as symbolic of some other group only further complicates how this prophecy is to be fulfilled in history. It is best, then, to take the period between the 69th week and the commencement of the seventieth week, between verses 26 and 27, as an indefinite period of time---a gap of time, if you will. Verse 27 containing the seventieth week and its contents is yet future because it describes yet another set of details and events that do not seem to have any historical fulfillments, yet.

It does not follow, furthermore, that this "prince who is to come" in verse 27 would accomplish a stopping of the sacrifices and a desolation, but he does not affect the last three of the determined six items in verse 24: "to bring in an everlasting righteousness," "to seal up vision and prophecy," and" to anoint the most holy *place*." The "prince who is to come" only partially fulfills the prophecy, so one is still left wanting. These last three of the list of six, determined by God to be fulfilled yet in the future from the prospective of Daniel's captivity ending soon, are strongly indicative of a future resolution, at the end of the age (perhaps yet an intermediary reign where "Messiah the Prince" sets in motion the last three items).

Therefore, it is this writer's humble opinion and yet growing posture, that Daniel 9:24-27 is best handled in a literal hermeneutic. This writer believes that this approach, albeit, not without difficulties, seems to have the least obstacles and it is to be preferred over the symbolic or figurative approach. Even though this writer is not beyond the stronghold of certain presuppositions, the weighing out of the alternatives seem to push the evidence more to the non-symbolic interpretation of this prophecy since from the standpoint of Daniel's events (vv.9:1-2) it seems more likely that the seventy weeks are to be fulfilled in a literal way as the seventy year captivity was

being fulfilled before Daniel's eyes. In sum, I take the Seventy Weeks of Daniel's prophecy as literal weeks of years with the last seven years yet to be fulfilled in time and with the principal people of Israel as the main participants.

Endnotes:

1. As quoted in Irving L. Jensen, *"Ezekiel-Daniel, A Self-Study Guide,"* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1968) 48.
2. Archer L. Gleason, *"The Expositor's Bible Commentary,"* Frank Gaebelein, general editor, Volume 7, Daniel, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985) 3
3. Stephen R. Miller, "The New American Commentary, An Exegetical and theological Exposition of Holy Scripture," Daniel, Volume 18, (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 1994) 252.
4. J. Dwight Pentecost, *"The Bible Knowledge Commentary,"* Old Testament, General Editors John Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, (USA: Victor Books, 1985) 1324.
5. Jensen, *Ezekiel-Daniel*, p.48
6. Paul Benware, *"Understanding End Times Prophecy, A Comprehensive Approach,"* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995) 168-171
7. Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moises Silva, "Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics, The Search for Meaning," Revised and Expanded Edition, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2007) 193
8. Stephen R. Miller, "The New American Commentary, An Exegetical and theological Exposition of Holy Scripture," Daniel, Volume 18, (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 1994) 252.
9. Truthnet.org, "Answering Jewish Objections to the 70 (Seventy) Weeks of Daniel," http://www.truthnet.org/TheMessiah/10_Messiah_Objections_Daniels70weeks/accessed: July 16, 2015.
10. The Lockman Foundation, *"New American Standard Bible,"* (La Habra, CA: Zondervan, 1995)
11. John Walvoord, Daniel, "The Key to Prophetic Revelation, "(Chicago: Moody Press, 1971) 218
12. Ibid., 218
13. J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come, A Study in Biblical Eschatology, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958) 249
14. Ibid., 249
15. Ibid., 249
16. Ibid., 250

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Observations from Ephesians 1:3

Patrick Simon

> *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus-Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ.* (Ephesians 1:3).

In spite of doubts cast by modern scholarship upon authorship of the epistle to the Ephesians, strong evidence favors the apostle Paul as the author. In his exegetical commentary of Ephesians, H. Hoener mounts a vigorous defense of Pauline authorship by meticulously refuting numerous arguments put forward by a constellation of brilliant biblical scholars including Friedrich Schleiermacher, Rudolf Bultmann, and James D. G. Dunn.[1] In the epistle, Paul makes it clear that he it was written while he was incarcerated. The division among scholars on the location of the incarceration adds to the controversy over the circumstances leading to its writing. Some advocate for Paul's imprisonment at Caesarea as described in Acts 24:1- 26:32. Some others champion the Roman imprisonment reported in Acts 28 as the place of origin of the prison epistles. Since the overwhelming evidence points to Paul as the author, in the light of events chronicled in the book of Acts the epistle must have been penned during his first imprisonment in Rome.

Blessed be the God...

After a short greeting, Paul wrote the words that make up the third verse of the epistle. Under close examination this verse introduces and summarizes the next eleven verses. It describes what God has decreed for all eternity, as well as its realization through and in the church. Paul begins by blessing God the Father. In the past, instances are found where a blessing was used at the opening of a letter as in 2 Chr. 2:11-12.[2] The Hebrew word for blessing in the Old Testament is *"berakah"*. The first instance of blessings being pronounced in the Bible comes on the fifth day in the creation narrative. God blessed every living creature that moves in these words:" Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth". (Gen. 1:22). In verse 28 we find a repeat of that command. God's blessings in both instances point towards fecundity of the entire fauna and of Adam and Eve. Blessings in this sense implies that God empowered His creation with fertility. This might explain the sense of shame and rejection experienced by barren women in the Old Testament such as Sarai, Rachel, or Hannah. The feeding of the five

[1] Harold W. Hoehner. *Ephesians, An Exegetical Commentary.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics. 2002). 1-61.

[2] James L. Mays, General Editor. *Harper's Bible Commentary.* (San Francisco: Harper & Row 1988) 1213.

thousand, all four gospels report that Jesus blessed the five loaves of bread and the two fishes.

Paul using an imperative: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus-Christ". The term blessed used here is not the expression of a wish or an intercession on God's behalf. Rather, it conveys "the idea of someone deserving appreciation, honor and praise"[3]. In Exodus 18:10 God is blessed for delivering the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage. Throughout the Old Testament God is blessed for the His largesse on human beings in the form of provision, deliverance from enemies or from evil, or for answered prayers among other things. In Psalm 103:2 David wrote:" Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits". Further in that great hymn of praise he calls on angels and all creation to do the same.

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus-Christ...

Paul referring to God as "God and Father of our Lord Jesus-Christ" fits into the Old Testament understanding of the relationship between Yahweh and his chosen people Israel. In numerous passages (Deut. 32:6; Isa. 63:16; 64:6; Jer. 3:4; 3:19; 31:9; Mal 1:6) God is presented as the father of the nation of Israel. In others he is the father of specific individuals : Solomon in 2 Sam. 7:14 and 2 Chr. 17:13; David in Ps. 89:26; the fatherless in Ps. 68:5.[4] However, Paul's use of the word Father in Eph. 1:3 fits into the pattern established by Jesus-Christ that we find in the gospels. It is a closer relationship that is established on a personal level. The description of God being the Father of our Lord Jesus-Christ captures the essence of the Godhead while projecting a glimpse on the distinctiveness of its members. Christ lordship sets him apart in that special relation. God is not just to be revered in awe, he is revealed as a loving and affectionate Abba.

Here Christ is presented as "our Lord". The possessive adjective used by Paul here is of uttermost significance in the light of the fact that he was addressing a mixed audience of Jews and gentiles. Obviously, he wanted to emphasize the idea that Jews and gentiles must be united in blessing God since both have Jesus as Lord, an idea which will be clarified in Eph 2: 11-22. All believers have been adopted in the family of God through Christ according to God's sovereign decree. (Eph. 1:5). Therefore God is worthy of their praise, honor and worship.

[3] Harold W. Hoehner. *Ephesians, An Exegetical Commentary.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics. 2002). 162.

[4]Walter A. Elwell. *"Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology".* Accessed November 4, 2015, http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/fatherhood-of-god.html

The entire expression "God and Father of our Lord Jesus-Christ " implies a sense of anticipation, suggesting the involvement of both in some undertaking. Verses 3-6 present the Father as the author of the plan of redemption. It is his sovereign initiative in eternity past that enables believers to partake into His family as sons and daughters. Verses 7-12 show the role of Jesus-Christ the Son as the executor of the plan.

Who hath blessed us...

God blessing the saints carries the idea that He is lavishing his people with good things. Receiving a blessing from God is a privilege for which the believer needs to show appreciation. He does not bless every human being, only the ones who are adopted in His family. In the verse, it is interesting to notice that Paul uses the past tense. Clearly, as stated before, the Father's blessings began in eternity past. However, those blessings are enacted on the church as the body of believers in present time. Ernest Best effectively summarizes this truth when he wrote:" God's blessings began prior to history, for in his love, and his will is governed by love, he chose and foreordained us that we should have a position before him as his children".[5] Thus, it can be said safely that God acted out of time in order to secure timely blessings to the church. Moreover, God did not bless his church under constraint or duress. It is a free act of his sovereign will, a demonstration of his eternal love, a further revelation of one of his moral attributes. Up to this point, blessings convey the idea of tangible benefits. Up to this point, blessings are mainly viewed in terms of provision, deliverance from enemies or from evil, or answered prayers. Now, Paul proceeds to define the nature of the blessings he writes about. What similarities do they bear to the known to the church at Ephesus? What are the differences?

With every spiritual blessing

Around the time when Paul wrote the epistle, the city of Ephesus was a thriving metropolis. It was a great educational center rivaling Alexandria. It was a great financial center as well, known especially for its money lenders. According to Hoehner, many imposing structures were found in the city: gymnasiums, baths, a stadium, open marketplaces and above all a theater and the legendary temple of Artemis.[6] In Acts 19 Paul's ministry caused much disruption in the city. As religion was tightly linked with economic activity in the city, miracles performed by Paul caused people to leave paganism for the

[5] Ernest Best. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*. (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark,1998) 110.

[6] Harold W. Hoehner. *Ephesians, An Exegetical Commentary.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics. 2002). 83.

church, therefore seriously affected the bottom line of booksellers, exorcists and craftsmen alike, resulting in an uproar against the apostle.

Against this backdrop of a city enjoying a comfortable level of material means Paul communicated that the blessings bestowed upon the church by God are of a spiritual nature. Nothing is mentioned about the economic make-up of the believers at Ephesus, but the actions of Demetrius clearly indicated that he had lost gentile customers to the church. Therefore, the growth of the church had a negative impact on the pagan craftsmen's pocketbook. By qualifying the blessings, there seems to be a deliberate move by Paul to steer his audience away from idolatrous affection for material possessions, and to shift the focus toward spiritual riches. These blessings as detailed in verses 4-14 comprise: election (v.4), adoption (v.5), grace (v.6), redemption and forgiveness (v.7), wisdom and understanding (v.8), knowledge (v.9), unity (v.10), inheritance (v.11), sealing (v. 13), belonging to God (v.14). This is in sharp contrast to the blessings encountered in the Old Testament. Only the born-again, spiritual man can appraise the value of spiritual blessings. (1 Cor. 2:14). These spiritual blessings are necessary to sustain the believer in his daily walk with the Lord.

In heavenly places

Defining "heavenly places" can prove to be a very challenging task. Because humans are three-dimensional beings, they necessarily use time, space and consciousness as frames of reference in the task of analyzing and organizing their thoughts and the world around them. In that sense, it is extremely difficult to understand "heavenly places" without assigning the idea of a certain location. Throughout the ages thinkers and theologians such as Chrysostom, Hugo Odeberg, J. B. Lightfoot, Wesley Carr, G. B. Caird, or Chrys Caragounis, among others, have grappled with the idea without coming to a consensus about heaven or heavenly places. Even the Bible does not give a definitive answer that could satisfy the inquiries of the rational mind. In Genesis, God created heavens, meaning He existed before there was a "place" called the heavens. In Genesis 28:17 Jacob saw the gate of heaven (compare with Acts 7:56). In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus begins with "Our Father who art in heaven" (compare with Exodus 20:22).

The term heavenly places occurred five times in the epistle with five different meanings. In Ephesians 4:10 Christ ascended above all the heavens. According to J. Curtis Vaughn:

> *In 1:20 it is the sphere to which the risen Christ has been exalted and enthroned; in 2:6 it is the region to which believers have been lifted in fellowship with Christ; in 3:10, it is where principalities and powers learn of the wisdom of God as exhibited through his people;*

> *in 6:12 it is the spiritual battleground where believers confront the forces of wickedness".*[7]

Just as the blessings were established since eternity past, they also transcend space because not only did they originate from God, also, they rest in his abode. These blessings are incorruptible since they are spiritual and supernatural unlike material things which are perishable. In Matthew 6:19, Jesus warned about accumulating earthly possession that can be corrupted or stolen. Spiritual blessings are secure. They are for the believer to enjoy now and in eternity future as he or she is already seated in heaven according to Ephesians 2:6.

In Christ

The blessings enjoyed by the believer are not a reward for his own righteousness or any meritorious deed. The entire bounty of the heavenly places belong to Christ and is in complete subjection to him (Eph. 1:19-23; Phil. 2:9-11; Rev. 5:12). Because the blood of Jesus-Christ on the cross achieved redemption of for all sinners, his righteousness has been imputed to the believer who becomes a full participant in the divine inheritance. The spiritual blessings in Christ are not based on race, circumcision, or any other performance-based criterion. Rather, Paul explains to his readers that the plain-field has been leveled for Jews and Gentiles, and both are equal partakers of God's blessings.

Conclusion

In Ephesians 1:3, Paul demonstrated that God is worthy of honor and praise. He is blessed not because of our initiative to declare Him blessed. Quite the opposite. When believers bless God, they are just reaffirming His goodness because He chose His elect and has not held anything back from them. In just a few words Paul summarizes the essence of the new position of the believer. In eternity past God the Father has sovereignly ordained to confer His blessings to believers. These blessings constitute of every spiritual blessing. Because the believer's blessings are of a spiritual nature, they are securely shielded in heavenly places. And since his fallen nature renders him undeserving, the only means of appropriation of such blessings is in Christ.

The Ephesians were living in a society where material wealth played a big role. In today's society, the pursuit of material wealth can hinder the walk of a believer, distracting him from his or her true spiritual blessings. That is one lesson that we can draw from Ephesians 1:3. Moreover, just as he plainly urge

[7] W. Curtis Vaughan. *The Letter to the Ephesians.* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1963). 11.

the Colossians, "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" (Col. 3:1-2).

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Wealth and Poverty in Matthew 6:25-36

Samantha Silva

Five Star dining, brand name clothing, and thousands of other choices are available in today's materialistic and capitalist world to those who have the means. Meanwhile there are people who are struggling, living paycheck to paycheck, and others who do not know where their next meal will come from. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus calls on the disciples to practice righteousness in a way that they surpass the scribes and the Pharisees.[1] During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus touches on many important topics that are still relevant today. Especially interesting is Matthew 6:25-34, where Jesus warns the disciples against being anxious. This project aims to provide an exegetical analysis of this passage in Matthew, beginning with how the passage fits in the context of the book of Matthew and the Sermon on the Mount, moving on to the analyses of the passage, and ending with an overview of how this passage can be applied today.

Context of wealth and poverty in Matthew

Throughout Matthew's gospel the disciples and the people who encounter Jesus are encouraged to commit to following Jesus completely and to seek God's kingdom as a priority in everything that they do. The Sermon on the Mount is one of the most important discourses where Jesus addresses several ways that righteousness and justice should be exemplified and lived out by his disciples. In the first half of Matthew chapter 6 (1-18) Jesus is describing the "private life" one should have in the "secret place" dealing with the three generally Jewish pious acts of giving, praying, and fasting.[2] Hypocrisy is admonished over those who give to the needy only to be seen as powerful in the society.[3] Giving to the poor is to be done in secret in order to receive a reward from the Father, who sees everything in secret. Prayer should also be done in secret and the disciples are taught to pray for their "daily bread" while also praying for God's will to be done.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus teaches on righteousness and advocating for the poor in many circumstances. Those who feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, and clothe the naked will all be rewarded in the final judgment[4]. Jesus equated caring for the poor and helpless as if we are caring for him.

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[1] Matthew 5:20

[2] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon On the Mount (Matthew 5-7): Christian Counter-Culture*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester Leicestershire: Inter-varsity Press, 1985), 153.

[3] Matthew 6:1-4

[4] Matthew 25:31-46

In Douglas R.A. Hare's study of Matthew, he makes a distinction in the Sermon on the Mount between two sections in chapter 6, verses 19-24 which consists of individual sayings and verses 25-34 where Jesus talks about anxiety in relation to the things of this world. Hare says that both of these sections are concerned with "a believer's relationship to the workaday world of gaining and spending money," the main point being that a believer's attitude toward money is another illustration of the "better righteousness" demanded by Jesus in Matthew 5:20.[5] John R W. Stott makes the case that in verses 19-34 of Matthew 6 Jesus is concerned with the "public business" such as questions of money, possessions, food, drink, clothing and ambition.[6] Although there is a separation between the private and the public spheres, Christians are to be countercultural in both circumstances in that they are not to practice hypocrisy and they are not to be as materialistic as those who are irreligious, or the Gentiles.

Immediately preceding the passage on anxiety, Jesus says that treasures should not be stored up in this material world but they should be gathered up in heaven where moth and rust cannot destroy them.[7] Seeking God's Kingdom and righteousness on this earth are more important than being ensnared by material pursuits. Jesus warns the disciples that they should not choose to serve "mammon" or money over serving God. One cannot have two masters, serving God and seeking the Kingdom of heaven should be the first priority for all believers.[8]

Analyses of the text: Matthew 6:25

> *" Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"*

Jesus begins this section of the Sermon on the Mount, with the word "therefore" clearly showing that this is a continuation of the point he was making in the previous section of Matthew 6.[9] John R W. Stott argues that Jesus is calling us to "thought before he calls us to action" by inviting us to think and weigh the alternatives carefully before making a choice.[10] The choice is between accumulating treasures here on earth instead of heaven, light

[5] Douglas R.A. Hare, *Matthew* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 71.

[6] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon On the Mount (Matthew 5-7): Christian Counter-Culture*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester Leicestershire: Inter-varsity Press, 1985), 153.

[7] Matthew 6:19-21

[8] Matthew 6:24

[9] Samuel Tobias Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary On the New Testament: the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing, 1987), 131.

[10] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon On the Mount*, 153.

over darkness, and choosing who is worthy of devotion, God or money. Once the correct choice is made, for heavenly treasure, for light, and for God—then we are eligible for what comes next, "*Therefore I tell you."* Jesus then gives us the instructions on how we are to behave: *"do not be anxious about your life…nor about your body…But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness* (25, 33).[11] By choosing to serve the correct master, the consequent attitude towards both masters is affected. The focus becomes on God's kingdom and not on the sustenance of our earthly bodies. Followers of Jesus are not to be anxious about their lives, what they will eat or drink, nor about their body because they have chosen to "*seek first*" the concerns of God.[12]

In verse 25 Jesus also poses the question, "*Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"* According to Eduard Schweizer, the word translated "life" actually means "soul" and it stands as a synonymous variant to "body."[13] This question along with verse 26 lead to the obvious conclusion that yes, human beings are more than the food required for survival and the clothing needed to protect their bodies. Jesus calls on the disciples to contemplate on another of God's creation, the birds, and how they are taken care of even when they are less than humans. Our body and our lives are given to us by God, the Father, and the creator. God as the creator is gracious and faithful to his creation.[14]

Matthew 6:26

> *"Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"*

Jesus tells his disciples to look and contemplate the birds of the air. He could, perhaps, have meant to say ravens instead of birds, possibly reflecting Psalm 147:9, "He gives to the beast its food, *and* to the young ravens which cry."[15] The birds "*neither sow nor reap, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them."* Sowing and reaping are two characteristic works of males.[16] This doesn't mean that God cares more for humans than for birds because they work, but because he is their Father.[17] The non-working birds serve as a witness of God's providence and not as a reason for humans to quit working. Paul says later in 2 Thessalonians 3:10, "If anyone will not work, let him not eat." God provides the food in nature for the birds to eat but they have

[11] Ibid, 160.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew* (Atlanta: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975), 164.
[14] Ibid, 164.
[15] Samuel Tobias Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary On the New Testament*, 132.
[16] Augustine Stock, *The Method and Message of Matthew* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1994), 108.
[17] Ibid.

to feed themselves, just as God will provide humans with food but we need to work. The rhetorical question, "*of more value than they*" is a form in Greek, which automatically requires the answer "Yes."[18] We are supposed to learn from contemplating the birds just as it is written in Job 35:11, "Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?" According to Schweizer, verse 26 shows that we are not supposed to be self-sufficient but we are summoned to trust God "with a whole and undivided heart."[19]

> *"And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" (Matthew 6:27).*

In verse 27, Jesus interrupts the context of proper attitude towards food and clothing to allude to the senselessness of worrying.[20] In his question, "a single hour" can also be translated as a "single cubit."[21] The Greek work "helikia" can mean "stature" as well as "span of life."[22] Scholars are divided in their preference but to add a cubit to one's stature is not something inconsequential and adding a cubit to one's span of life mixes the measure of space with measure of time.[23] Regardless of the choice of translation, worrying still cannot affect a person's height or length of life. Both of these situations are in God's control. Stott questions since adding more time to our lives or height to our stature is beyond our human capacity, is it not sensible to leave these things to God and to trust him with lesser things like food and clothes?[24]

> *"And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." (Matthew 6:28-29).*

Jesus again turns to nature as an example by telling his audience to consider the lilies of the field and how they do not "toil nor spin" as women do to make clothing and yet they are more beautifully clothed than Solomon in all his glory ever was. Scholars suggest that lilies of the field may be any one of several types of flowers, including an anemone, a poppy, a gladiolus, and "a rather inconspicuous type of daisy."[25] Without laboring as the women do, the lilies of the field surpass even Solomon, whose luxury is cited here for being legendary. [26] Man's worry over clothing becomes inconsequential when

[18] Ibid.
[19] Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, 164-165.
[20] Ibid, 165.
[21] Samuel Tobias Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary On the New Testament,* 132.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon On the Mount,* 164.
[25] Augustine Stock, *The Method and Message of Matthew*, 108-109.
[26] Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, 165.

compared to how God clothes even the flowers in the field more splendidly than the richest king of Israel.

> *"But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" (Matthew 6:30).*

Jesus labels those who worry over clothing as men "of little faith." His use of the expression "of little faith" is similar to the lack of faith or little faith that the Jews displayed when they left Egypt and God provided the daily manna for them to eat, and yet they doubted that there would be the provision for the next day and kept the manna overnight.[27] Moses told them that they were not supposed to "leave any of it until morning" and the people did not listen to him, and it became foul the next morning.[28]

Jesus uses *a fortiori* or "how much more" arguments in order to make his point that man should trust God for provision instead of being anxious.[29] If God provides for the grass of the field, surely he will take a lot more care of humans. In this verse Jesus argues from the sub-human experience (flowers) or from the lesser, to the greater (humans). According to Schweizer, the very weakness of the wild flowers or grass emphasizes their faith in that they "grow to beauty unfailingly despite tempests, sickle, and their inborn evanescence."[30] Yet man, "who grows stronger and lives longer" than the grass, "rattles out his life worrying over survival."[31] The grass may one day be alive and the next day burned in an oven, used to bake bread.[32] Human faith should be placed on God based on his faithfulness with nature.

> *"Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:31-32).*

In verse 31, Jesus uses the word "therefore" a second time in this section of Matthew 6 in order to once more prohibit his audience from being anxious or worried about food, drink, and clothing. This repetition serves to emphasize his point and to introduce verse 32 where he says, "*for the Gentiles seek after all these things."* According to Stott, this shows that "in the vocabulary of Jesus 'to seek' and 'to be anxious' are interchangeable."[33] The

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27 Samuel Tobias Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary On the New Testament,* 133.
28 Exodus 16:19-20
29 John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon On the Mount,* 163.
30 Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew,* 165.
31 Ibid.
32 Augustine Stock, *The Method and Message of Matthew,* 109.
33 John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon On the Mount,* 169.

Gentiles worry over the material things of this world because they have no other ambitions in this world, and Jesus is calling his disciples to have ambition for the kingdom of God, not for earthly things. This response echoes Matthew 6:7-8 where Jesus warns the disciples against not praying like the Gentiles, "Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." In these three verses, Jesus once again narrows down the choices for his audience between two alternatives. He urges his followers to "not be preoccupied with their own security (food, drink, and clothing), for that is the obsession of 'the Gentiles' who do not know him, but rather with God's rule and God's righteousness."[34]

Jesus continues by telling his disciples to pursue God's kingdom and righteousness above everything else. In using the expression, "seek first" Jesus is making it clear to the disciples what their priority should be. The God who takes care of the birds and the lilies is concerned specifically about his people, but they should seek to make it their ambition to serve him and seek him above all other things, especially the material things that he is able to provide for them. According to Augustine Stock, the "kingdom" mentioned in verse 33 is, just like other places in Matthew, "the coming reign of God, which the community hopes to enter through judgment."[35] "Righteousness" consists of the activities that humans are supposed to perform, or the actions that agree with God and his kingdom.[36] These verses can be seen as an elaboration of the teachings already taught through the Lord's Prayer, since we are to "recognize the needs of the body ('give us our daily bread'), although our priority concerns are with God's name, kingdom, and will."[37]

John R W. Stott explains that to "seek first" this kingdom is to "desire as of first importance the spread of the reign of Jesus Christ."[38]This "reign" will infiltrate every aspect of a believer's life with the goal of reaching the global community until the eventual coming of the consummation at the end of times, "when all King's enemies have become his footstool and his reign is undisputed."[39] God is a righteous ruler, and to seek his righteousness means to pursue justice and to exhibit a righteousness greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees as described in Matthew 5:20. Stott argues that God's Kingdom is for those who have acknowledged Jesus as their savior but God's righteousness is supposed to spread even to communities that have not been reached by Christianity yet.[40] The Hebrew prophets denounced injustice not exclusively in Israel and Judah, but also in the surrounding communities. By pursuing the kingdom of God and his righteousness, God will provide all other necessities for this earthly life.

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34 Ibid. 161
35 Augustine Stock, *The Method and Message of Matthew*, 109.
36 Ibid.
37 John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon On the Mount,* 170.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid, 171.
40 Ibid.

> *"Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." (Matthew 6:34).*

Jesus concludes his sayings on worry and anxiety with another "therefore," again reiterating his argument all worry is in vain. This is very similar to a wisdom saying. Jesus is summoning his disciples to live with the freedom that comes from trusting in God and living by faith even when the outcome is not visible yet. Jesus mentions both "today" and "tomorrow," even though all worrying being about "tomorrow" is experienced "today."[41] He wisely tells his audience to not be anxious about tomorrow since each day has enough trouble as it is. Worrying about something that hasn't happened yet is a complete waste of time, thought, and energy since many worries actually never materialize.[42]Augustine Stock says that this verse can be understood optimistically as opening up "the possibility to live for today" but the pessimistic interpretation is more likely.[43] The pessimistic interpretation takes the view that "all planning is in vain" and that "it is enough to bear the burden of today."[44]Stock continues by saying that the appearance of this verse shows how, in early Christianity, "the hope of the Kingdom of God by no means determined life throughout, but eschatological hope and pessimistic realism could stand immediately side by side."[45]

Relevant Application

Matthew 6:25-34 is still as relevant today as it was when Jesus taught it. In our modern society we often need the reminder to not be anxious over things we cannot control, "tomorrow," and to have faith in God's provision since he cares for us more than the flowers of the field or the birds in the sky. Douglas R.A. Hare sees this passage as applicable for everyone when it is read as poetry instead of prose.[46] The "birds of the heaven" and the "lilies of the field" become larger than life as powerful symbols of God's providential care. It is "irrelevant" that some birds starve and some lilies fail to mature. The rhetorical development of these symbols transfers our attention from the worries of life and pursuit of material things to a "calmer vision of God's bountiful care in the natural world."[47]

Hare highlights different readings of the passage, specifically an ecological reading and a social justice reading. An ecological perspective of the passage allows us to contemplate the intricacies of nature and the grandness of God's design and provision. In the obsession humans have with

41 Ibid, 168.
42 Ibid, 169.
43 Augustine Stock, *The Method and Message of Matthew*, 110.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Douglas R.A. Hare, *Matthew*, 74.
47 Ibid.

material objects and our daily necessities, we can often overlook the damage that our material pursuits have caused on nature. We interfere with God's care for the birds and lilies with our pesticides and acid rain.[48]By reflecting on the greatness of nature in this passage and on God's concern for both nature and humans we can try to apply this passage in our everyday life by taking steps to respect nature while also curbing our excessive worrying by relying on God.

A social justice reading of this text is the most probable in that it is interwoven with the other teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. We are taught to practice a righteousness greater than the scribes and Pharisees, to give alms to the poor in secret, to pray for daily sustenance, and to trust God in all of these things because he knows what we need even before we ask him. This text is relevant to the disciples who left everything behind to follow Jesus and to the involuntarily poor. It is still relevant to the poor today. Like the birds, the poor do not sow or gather into barns but "are dependent on their uncertain wages as day laborers (Matthew 20:6-7) and on charity."[49] The passage reassures the poor that they are more valuable to God then the birds and the lilies and that God will take care of them just as he cares for nature. This passage isn't advocating that humans should simply not work and think that God will take care of them. We still need to do our part and work but with the certainty that even when things are difficult, God sees us and he will take care of us because he knows our needs. We just need to seek his Kingdom first and his righteousness.

It is in seeking God's righteousness that this passage continues to be relevant today. We are to seek God's righteousness by taking care of the poor who are relying on God for their provision. We are God's instruments here on Earth and in seeking his kingdom we need to advocate and act in favor of those who are in need. To become preoccupied with material things in a way that they encompass our complete attention is not compatible with our Christian faith. It shows a distrustful attitude towards God, our heavenly Father, and it is what the unbelievers do. We cannot add as single hour to our lives by worrying. God is in control. We need to trust him, have faith, and seek him first. Just as God has called us to a greater righteousness, a broader love, and a deeper piety, he calls us to trust in his provision by seeking him first in faith.[50]

[48] Ibid, 75.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

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What is the Church? Comparing Ecclesiology across Christian Traditions

Kevin James Kemp

"Church." It is a word that brings a wide variety of feelings for each person that hears it. Some people hear it mentioned and feel joy. Others hear it and feel disgust. Depending on each person's relation to "Church", it will affect them differently. But what is the Church? Is there such a thing as the Church? Or are there just churches? Today there is a greater variety of churches than there has ever been in the history of the Christian faith, especially in the United States of America. There are Baptist churches, Roman Catholic churches, Pentecostal churches, Methodist churches, and more recently "non-denominational" churches, which is ironically a denomination in and of itself. The list goes on and on and so the question is: which one has got it right? Each one varies in its traditions. The music they sing, how they sing it, the way that they preach, how often they take communion or if they even take communion at all. In America there are thousands of churches all saying different things about different theological matters, but which one has got it right? The religious landscape of America can be overwhelming, especially for someone who comes to faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and is looking for a church to join. To bring clarity to this subject, one needs to study the subject of ecclesiology. What is ecclesiology one might ask? To put simply, it is the study of the Church, and with the gargantuan amount of churches today it is an extremely important subject to understand for those who consider themselves Christians. To do so, one needs to take a look at the three major branches of Christianity: Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, and decide which of these branches of Christianity has preserved what it means to be the Church since its start nearly two thousand years ago. Before going into what each of them teaches, it is important to first get a basic understanding of ecclesiology.

As mentioned before, ecclesiology is the study of the Church. As with every aspect of Christian theology, one must understand theological concepts using the bible as the primary source for understanding and explaining them. "In the New Testament, the word church has two senses. On the one hand, it denotes all believers in Christ at all times and places. This universal sense is found in Matthew 16:18, where Jesus promises that he will build his church, and in Paul's image of the church as the body of Christ."[1] Matthew 16:18 reads, "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Why did Jesus

[1] Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids/ Baker Academic, 2001), 340.

say this to Peter? What is the rock? And which church is His? The answers to these questions will vary depending on who you ask. If one were to ask a Roman Catholic priest these questions and then ask a pastor of a Protestant evangelical church, their answers would be completely different although both are professing Christians. Something that can be seen from this though is that depending on which Christian tradition one belongs to, it will strongly influence how they view the Bible and what it teaches. To answer the questions about what Matthew 16:18 means, it is always helpful to read commentaries, especially from writers of the early Church, since they lived in the time when the New Testament was still "new." One of these early commentators of the New Testament was John Chrysostom who was the archbishop of Constantinople in the fourth century A.D.[2] According to Chrysostom, the rock refers not to Peter per se, but to the faith of his confession. The true rock is Christ Himself, and the Church is built on the faithful confession of Christ.[3]

The second sense in which the word "church" is used in the New Testament is as the body of Christ which can be found in St. Paul's writings as previously mentioned. In the letter to the Ephesians St. Paul wrote, "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." (Ephesians 1:22-23) Paul also describes the Church as the body in Ephesians 4:4 and 5:23. Paul rightly states that Jesus is the head of the Church for it is Him who Christians serve and follow. Unfortunately today there are many who claim to be Christians but have nothing to do with the Church. Many have felt rejected or have been mistreated in churches and so it is understandable that they would reject the fact that part of being a Christian is being involved in the Church. According to *The Orthodox Study Bible*, "The Church, then, is that place established by Christ where we each may become what we are created to be, maturing and being perfected, while the Church receives what it needs from each of us, so that it too is being perfected. The Church as the body of Christ carries us beyond our petty and worldly personal concerns, stretching our vision to the eternal and heavenly as we ascend together to worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."[4] The Church then is an essential place for the Christian to grow and mature into the person God created them to be, but the problem still remains, what church is the Church?

From the Eastern Orthodox perspective, the Orthodox Church is the Church. It is the "One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church" that is mentioned in the Nicene Creed. For those that are not familiar with this creed, it is of great value to learn about it. The Nicene Creed was written at the Council of Nicaea in 325 and finished at the Council of Constantinople in 381 to clear up doctrine about the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. The word

[2] "John Chrysostom", orthodoxwiki.org/John_Chrysostom.

[3] *The Orthodox Study Bible* (United States/ Thomas Nelson, 2008), 1299.

[4] *The Orthodox Study Bible*, 1604.

"creed" comes from the Latin word *credo* which means "I believe."[5] So the Nicene Creed is a belief statement. It includes belief in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but those who wrote this creed also thought it important to confess one's belief in the Church. It clearly shows that Christianity has never been an individualistic "just me and Jesus" sort of faith which many people claim to have today, but it has always been thought of as a faith within a community and that community is the Church. "The thing that first strikes a stranger encountering Orthodoxy is usually its air of antiquity, its apparent changelessness."[6] This is something that sets the Orthodox Church apart from all other churches, its faithfulness to tradition. Now for many Protestant Christians, this is absurd. Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for keeping the traditions of men. Jesus said, "For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." (Mark 7:8) So if Jesus rebuked keeping tradition, why would a church affirm keeping it? When quoting any passage of Scripture it is of utmost importance that one not take it out of context. Although Jesus rebukes the traditions that the scribes and Pharisees were keeping, in the writings of the Apostle Paul, he tells Christians to keep traditions. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle." (2 Thessalonians 2:15) Did Paul not read what Jesus said concerning tradition? Why would he tell the Thessalonians to keep traditions when Jesus clearly told the scribes and Pharisees not to? The answer is that they are two different traditions.

The Orthodox Church refers to the good tradition that Paul tells us to keep as "Holy Tradition". What is tradition anyway? "A tradition, says the Oxford Dictionary, is an opinion, belief, or custom handed down from ancestors to posterity. Christian Tradition, in that case, is the faith which Jesus Christ imparted to the Apostles, and which since the Apostles' time has been handed down from generation to generation in the Church. But to an Orthodox Christian, Tradition means something more concrete and specific than this. It means the books of the Bible; it means the Creed; it means the decrees of the Ecumenical Councils and the writings of the Fathers; it means the Canons, the Service Books, the Holy Icons – in fact, the whole system of doctrine, Church government, worship, and art which Orthodoxy has articulated over the ages."[7]

Many of the things just mentioned such as the Creed, the Ecumenical councils and Church Canons, are completely unknown to many Christians today. Many Christians stick with what they were brought up with whether it be Catholic, Baptist, or Presbyterian, but with the wide variety of churches today, many have converted to other Christian faiths. There are Baptist becoming Anglicans, Roman Catholics becoming evangelical, and many

[5] *Nicene Creed*, https://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/doctrine/the-symbol-of-faith/nicene-creed.

[6] Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (London/ Penguin Books, 1964), 203.

[7] Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 204.

evangelicals who have become Orthodox. But why? To get an understanding of why someone would join the Orthodox Church, one needs simply to find the testimony of someone who did. Nick Trakakis published an article in which he said, "Many people criticize the Orthodox Church as being archaic and out of step with the times. However, this faithfulness to tradition is actually a major reason why I am Orthodox, because I do not subscribe to the idea that everything modern is automatically superior to the past. Authentic religion should not be subject to contemporary fads, fashions and biases, but should be based on unchanging, eternal, saving truths. If a religion is not brave or strong enough to swim against the current of the times, then it becomes a merely man-made institution and forfeits all claim to divine inspiration."[8] So while some Christians reject the notion of keeping traditions such as reciting the Nicene Creed at Church every Sunday or lighting candles when praying in Church, there are some who believe that it is a sure sign that the Orthodox Church is the "One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church" that has been preserved by God now for the last two thousand years.

From a Protestant Christian perspective, there is no one Church. The church is thought of more in a spiritual sense than an actual sense as in the other two branches of Christianity. From a Protestant Evangelical perspective, "no one church constitutes the whole church. Just as there are many parts to Christ's body, so there are many churches that form the one true church."[9] Both the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Church teach otherwise. They each teach that they are the one true Church. Since Protestant Christianity has so many denominations within it, it's not really possible to have such a strict ecclesiology as do the Orthodox and Roman Catholics. Considering the fact that Protestantism came to be as a protest from the Roman Catholic Church, how could it have a ecclesiology that claims the there is One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church? There was a Protestant Evangelical pastor named Bob Coy who would often call different denominations within Protestantism the "different flavors of the faith." That is to say they all believe fundamentally in the same thing, they just vary in style of worship and tradition. Some of the different "flavors" of the Protestant Christian faith include Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostals, Lutherans, Episcopalians, and Anglicans.

From the different denominations just mentioned, the last three stand out as "high churches," since their style of worship is much more sacramental than the rest of Protestant denominations and resemble Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy much more. Nevertheless, they still fall under the Protestant branch of Christianity. With all the denominations within Protestantism, there are a few different views about how they are all united. "Some Christians regard church unity as essentially spiritual in nature. They find unity in the fact

[8] Nick Trakakis, *Why I Am Orthodox*, http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/87529.htm.

[9] Brad Harper, Paul Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology: An Evangelical and Ecumenical Introduction* (Grand Rapids/ Brazos Press, 2009), 12.

that all believers serve and love the same Lord."[10] That is to say, all churches are a part of the one true Church so long as they confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. "A second view focuses on mutual recognition and fellowship. This approach emphasizes that although congregations and denominations are separate from one another, they are basically the same faith."[11] In this view of unity, many churches of different denominations will work together and even have a pastor from a different church preach a sermon. "A third view promotes conciliar unity. While retaining their individual identity, denominations bind themselves together in a formal association or council."[12] An example of this sort of church unity can be seen in the organization of the World Council of Churches, which includes Christians of several different denominations working together. "Finally, there is the view that church unity means organic unity. Here congregations unite in one large denomination, combining their traditions."[13] Since there are so many denominations, it makes sense that these sorts of concepts of church unity exist, but does it really work?

It works so long as the persons in each denomination are willing to make it work. The last view of church unity mentioned where denominations which combine churches works within Protestantism but in the grand scheme of things, it would be nearly impossible to unite the three major branches of Christianity. Within Protestantism there is a mutual understanding about many doctrines and the way that theology is done, but since Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism is committed to their respective traditions, they view church unity in a very different way. Bishop Kallistos Ware of the Greek Orthodox Church makes light of this. He wrote, "In the west it is usual to think of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism as opposite extremes; but to an Orthodox they appear as two sides of the same coin."[14] Orthodox Christianity stands apart from both since it is not a part of western Christianity. As mentioned before, Protestantism came to be as a protest against the Roman Catholic Church, not the Eastern Orthodox Church. That's why Bishop Kallistos groups the two branches together. Although they are very different from each other, some would even say that they are two different faiths all together, Protestant Christianity and Roman Catholicism share a lot in common. For instance, both believe and teach the doctrine of original sin, whereas Orthodoxy views that matter differently. Another thing held in common is their theory of atonement. Both Roman Catholics and Protestants stick with the atonement theory known as the Penal Substitution Theory, whereas the Orthodox Church holds to the

[10] Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 341.
[11] Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 341.
[12] Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 341.
[13] Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 341.
[14] Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 10.

Recapitulation Theory.[15] Despite their similarities, they seem to be at odds with one another.

In Protestant church bookstores one can easily find a book about how to witness to a Roman Catholic. Many Roman Catholics have produced literature to defend their faith against Protestantism as well. It is clear from these efforts that there isn't much unity between Protestant and Catholics, and even less so with Orthodoxy.

Last but not least, this discussion of ecclesiology would not be complete without looking into what the Church is from the perspective of Roman Catholicism. Like the other two branches of Christianity, Catholicism has its own understanding of ecclesiology. Like the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church believes itself to be the one true Church. If one were to study Church history, it is clear why both make this claim. Both the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church date back to the very beginning of the Church. In fact, both branches of Christianity were in communion with one another for the first millennium of the Church. Then, in 1054, the two churches split in an event known as the Great Schism. The division happened primarily because of two things. The first was the Easter Orthodox Churches' rejection of the pope as being above all other bishops. Throughout the history of the Church there was an understanding of first among equals and that the bishop of Rome was indeed of great importance, but he was in no way considered superior than all the other bishops. Secondly, the Eastern Orthodox Church rejected the addition to the creed from the Roman Catholics known as the filoque. The filoque refers to the three additional words that made its way into the Nicene Creed in the Roman Catholic Church. The three words added are "and the Son." They were added to the part of the Creed concerning the Holy Spirit. In the original Creed, the Holy Spirit is confessed as proceeding from the Father. In the Roman Catholic version of the Creed, they confess, "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, *and the Son*." This was a big controversy in the Church and the Eastern Church strongly rejected it.

From that point on, the two churches continued down separate paths. Today, Roman Catholicism is the largest branch of Christianity making up about half of the Christians in the world. With that being said, it's no wonder the church teaches that it is the one true Church. According to Fr. Dwight Longenecker, there are twelve traits of authority that prove the Roman Catholic Church to be the one true Church. Those traits of authority are that it is rooted in history, it is adaptable, objective, and flexible, universal, local, intellectually challenging, accessible to the uneducated, visible, but also

[15] *What Is The Eastern Orthodox View of the Atonement*, http://www.toughquestionsanswered.org/2011/11/09/the-recapitulation-theory/.

invisible, both human and divine, and it is built upon the Rock.[16] Both the Orthodox Christians and Protestants would most definitely say otherwise, but it is interesting to point out that Fr. Dwight was not always Roman Catholic. He actually grew up as a Protestant Evangelical and after much study became an Anglican priest. Then, when the issue came up in the Anglican Church about allowing women to be ordained as priest, he went on a journey that led him to be converted to Roman Catholicism. Many other Christians have had a similar experience and there are several testimonies of people who in their search for the true Church have become Roman Catholic.

Whether the Roman Catholic Church is the one true Church or not is debatable, in fact there are often debates and arguments amongst Christians about this topic. It's understandable that there are such arguments, but it is wise to stay away from such things. St. Paul wrote in his epistle to the Philippians, "Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world." (Philippians 2:14-15) Despite the differences amongst all the Christian denominations and the three major branches of Christianity, they all confess to believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. One can argue or make a case for their church as being correct and the others not, but one thing they should not do is deny Christians of different traditions is the title of being Christian.

Many Christians become extreme and hostile towards other branches of Christianity and all together deny that someone of another branch is Christian because they do not belong to the right church. This is foolish and absurd. It is one thing to say that they are not a part of the one true Church if such a thing exists, but to say they aren't Christian at all is not right. Many Protestants deny that Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians are really Christians and vice versa. All this is a distraction from what all Christians are to be doing to serve God and make Him known in the world. Jesus tells us to "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16) Instead of arguing about who is right, it is essential that Christians, no matter what branch or denomination of Christianity they belong to, follow the two greatest commandments which Christ told us are to love God, and to love others. Christianity is not about being right or wrong, it is about love. All Christians should take heed to what St. Paul said when he wrote, "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) By doing this, the sincere believer in Christ becomes humble, not concerned with being right or wrong, but with serving the Lord and the others around him.

[16] Fr. Dwight Logenecker, *How Do We Know It's The True Church*, http://www.catholic.com/magazine/articles/how-do-we-know-it%E2%80%99s-the-true-church.

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Counseling In the Continuum: A Model for Discipleship

Richard A. Lewis

There is an online article in Counseling Today called "Connecting with Clients" written by author Laurie Meyers, senior writer of Counseling Today. And in the article, Meyers begins to discuss the variety and diversity of modern counseling methods and techniques such as being genuine, having unconditional regards for client and communicating clearly. She explains that the effectiveness depends on how well counselors and clients apply them. She also explains the reality and authenticity of the potential outcome of how a counselor can build a relationship with his or her client (Meyers, 2014).

A big part of Meyer's focus in the article was learning to be adaptive to your client. Listening and being very patient when a client has a lot to say, and learning how to apply counseling skills and techniques when a client doesn't have much to say. What I found very interesting in the midst of learning how to connect with clients is when Meyers explains that the emotional bond between the counselor and client must be genuine. This means putting aside pre-conceived notions of the client regardless of their background or culture as well as whatever theoretical stereotypes counselors and others may draw up based on what their clients say. A counselor must listen carefully to what a client is saying as well as to what they want from the counselor, or what they are expecting out of counseling sessions. Furthermore, they must determine how to articulate their distress and their expectations, or somehow help fulfill their hopes back into the client (Meyers, 2014).

Meyers explains a story about Jeffrey Guterman, a member of the American Counseling Association (ACA), and one of his counseling sessions with a 71 year-old man with alcohol abuse who resisted efforts to be helped by health professionals. He insisted that he did not need help and didn't believe in a higher power. His previous counselors stated that the issue did not have to be religious but rather spiritual. Others referred him to Alcohol Anonymous (AA). Rather than quoting scriptures, or talking psychiatric or psychological help, or even dismissing this man to an AA treatment, Guterman takes the time to understand where the man is coming from; to meet him where he was. This man attempted treatment programs according to the AA model but ended up drinking again. Guterman assessed that the man was an atheist and that this was the defining worldview of his life, and was the main barrier to entering into treatment. Guterman referred him to a program that took a more secular approach towards treatment. The man felt validated, understood, and was willing to accept the open referral by Guterman after just a few sessions.

Guterman was not known to be a Christian, however we as future Christian counselors must be just as understanding as Guterman when he referred this 71 year-old man. Our intentions must be genuine and authentic, and we must take the necessary time to truly understand where the client is coming from. The counselor must allow space for the client to take the session where he or she may need it to go and at the pace with which he or she feels comfortable. This requires counselors to challenge their automatic tendency to want to direct the session and instead, approach certain topics only when the client opens that door, says ACA member Olga Gonithellis, an LMHC in New York City. This means we need to meet people where they are before we can expect them to meet us where we are. We have to understand that some people are not there yet, and instead of leading with the expectations of them following, we need to be able to walk beside them every step of the way. If we wish to reach lost souls and win them over for Christ, we have to be able to connect with them first.

The counselor's interest in clients has to be sincere, especially with clients who may not want to be in counseling in the first place. Clayton Martin, ACA member states, "If you fake it, they will smell it, and they will hate you more than ever." At the end of the day, a counselor's authentic desire and determination to connect may be at the heart of the therapeutic treatment. But as reiterated, it takes time; one of the most effective yet intangible and indefinite concepts known to mankind.

When we as counselors do our part, time does the rest, or vice versa. For example, if you were cut severely by a sharp object, it requires 2 things; treatment and then time. You can apply ointments, herbs, drugs or any other medical or chemical substance and then bandage the wound. But from that point going forward, it requires time. The wound doesn't heal overnight. This is the same simple concept that is applied in counseling. When a client is distressed, he or she requires the same 2 things; treatment and time. Proper counseling skills, techniques and the genuine, authentic, sincerity of the counselor all play a crucial role in the healing, restoration and growth process, but the process itself is incorporating time itself.

Lynne Shallcross write about the most essential and fundamental principle that every counselor should internalize within their practice; you can't change anyone else, you can only change yourself. This gave me an idea of a quote that would say something like "we're here, not to change you, but here for you to help us change the world…" Well, maybe not in that same wording, or in that interpretation, but something to that nature. We as counselors and future counselors can never really change a person's mind set or the way they think, feel, act or behave. We can never compel them to speak or express themselves in any form of way. But we can learn and understand

from the way they express themselves and then apply ourselves accordingly (Shallcross, 2014).

As an undergraduate student of South Florida Bible College & Theological Seminary, I have taken several courses on counseling such as counseling in group dynamics, elderly, children, adolescences, multicultural populations, psychology, theology and spirituality in Christian counseling and one of my favorites, counseling skills and techniques. In all these different variety of counseling courses, we learn the different aspects of counseling to the different forms and even the history, but in every course, we retain the realization that regardless of whether we're counseling someone individually or in groups, whether of the common ethnic group or of a completely different lifestyle, that we as counselors have to learn how to adapt and apply ourselves to the client or individual. There are no techniques or methods in any counseling books or classes that I know of, that teaches you how to physically, mentally, or spiritually change someone for the better. We have to learn to apply and attend observation skills, focus on the individual's interaction, how they respond or how they do not respond, and do our best to apply the best or most convenient approach and how we apply ourselves to them.

Many counselors are very experienced and trained on how to distinctively approach and apply themselves to clients, but very few have had extensive training in dealing with resistant clients says Clifton Mitchell, a professor and coordinator of the community agency concentration in the counseling program at East Tennessee State University. It's crucial that we apply logical, reasonable and wise approach when working with a client, especially when he or she is resistant, but just as crucial, if not, even more critical carrying out what stems from our approach throughout the entire session involving the client. The fundamentals in counseling inquire trust in the relationship between the counselor and client, to build and have that chemistry. If the approach in the beginning of the session becomes and possibly remains problematic, this impression can determine the entire session and possibly throughout every other session afterwards if the tension is not dealt with or if a relationship is not established. It's like the old saying, "the first impression is the best impression" or something of that nature (Shallcross, 2014).

Mitchell goes on to explain that the blame for resistance has moved from the client or individual to the responsibility of the counselor. He states that resistance does not exist or occur until a counselor attempts to have a conversation with a client in which you can then assess resistance in the session. Furthermore, we can't always necessarily make a notion that the client or individual is being resistant but that the counselor hasn't applied the correct or most convenient approach for the client to respond accordingly. Remember, almost every client we will encounter are pretty much like any 2 individuals

meeting up for the first time; kind of like a blind date with the hopes of something good coming out of each other in order to change oneself or each other long-term. They meet for the first time and neither one of them know what to expect out of the other, yet they both have some degree of hope in each other.

Just like a blind date, these sessions take time. You never rush into anything because you don't know each other well enough just yet, although this is the goal. So in order to achieve this, the right approach must be applied. This responsibility falls on the counselor. Just as a gentleman would try to say all the right things on the date in order to gain his date's interest, the counselor would apply the right methods and techniques to gain his client's trust. Once an interest has been gained, a receptive bridge is established between them. It's important to maintain this establishment as you would on the date. Some women for example prefer not to be kissed at the end of a first date as it shows gentleman-ship, a sign of moral respect or patience with a means and interest to pursue the individual more. So in this case, we as counselors cannot be too assertive and persistent towards the client with means to close out in a session. We care about the client's interest and want them to know that we care so we must be gentle and remain within certain ethical boundaries. So although time takes its rightful place, all the right methods and principles must also be applied concurrently.

This is how we not only establish as connection, but maintain is as well. Sharing our testimony, preaching the gospel or simply sharing our faith with someone doesn't just happen randomly as you would think it does. In most cases, we apply the same strategy similar to Paul when he built tents. He studied the environment he was in, adapted to his surroundings, connected with people through his trade and gradually implemented the gospel into ministry. It was done slowly, gently and strategically yet it was powerful and effective.

Going too fast in the way we apply ourselves can cause or increase resistance or tension. But we as counselors would benefit greatly if we approach clients from a different perspective, letting change occur organically as a natural result of the client; sometimes that means them exploring their own world. Regardless of what the client says, how he or she says it or what he or she doesn't say, we need to respect it. As Christian counselors, we are to be constantly considerate and understanding. Besides, remember clients have a reason for why they behave or express themselves the way they do. It wouldn't be our job or our place to judge them accordingly or even suggest that they change their attitude, unless it is of course a legitimate reason according to certain ethical codes or depends on certain legal reasons. Ultimately, the point is that we cannot change our clients; we can only change how we interact with our clients and hope that change results.

Learning this opened a whole new window on my perspective and how I saw certain things. I personally had a portion of a mind-set to some degree, that we as counselors would be affirmed as successful if our clients leave our sessions changed by their actions or their demeanor, even if a little. But I believe that's because some counselors may desire to see that change with their own eyes. Many people go to therapy to be restored. The problem with some counselors is that they want to be the one to do the changing or at least see for themselves the restoration in their clients. But just as Christians, we are not the ones who give salvation and save lives. We are the tools and vessels used by God and His Holy Spirit in which He saves lives. The Holy Spirit is The Counselor in whom we are led as counselors in counseling sessions to help guide those who are in need of counseling. The results are not up to us but up to the client by their choices just as a non-believer chooses whether he or she wishes to accept Christ. Just as we are to bear fruits of the Spirit, we must bear certain attending skills and establish a relationship with our clients in order to figuratively walk with them in their journey and guide them, but ultimately the decision is theirs.

Counseling in the continuum does not necessarily have to mean that the counselor is continuously counseling the individual, however the counselee is getting continuous counseling. These concepts and principles should not only help us and encourage us when counseling individuals on a continual bases, but should also be the perfect model when discipling others. Discipleship is something that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ initialized and has passed down from generation to generation, and we as His followers should continue to pass it down to all generations to come. The skills and techniques in counseling along with the fundamentals and principles are perfect tools that can be used to continue His legacy.

Many are called, but only a few are chosen. In the same way, many counsel others, encouraging and uplifting, but afterwards, that is it. Once the job is done, it is on to the next one. But there are a few who continue to do this outside of the profession and in love to others, establishing a discipleship. This is counseling in the continuum. It involves all the counseling skills, techniques, traits and characteristics required to connect and to transform but why should it stop there? We are called to go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. But the Bible never specifies or explains when the job is done. It's an ongoing relationship just as we have an ongoing relationship with Christ. Once we have accepted Him as our Lord and Savior, He doesn't just leave us alone. He continues to lead us, guide us, counsel us and we begin to establish an ongoing deep and committed relationship with Him. And even afterwards, we continue to pray to Him, we still work out our faith, we realize more and more how inadequate we are and how much we truly need Him and depend on Him. It's counseling in the continuum at its finest.

This is the prime example we should be setting, not as counselors, but as Christians, ambassadors, and children of God. And this is why I believe that this would be a perfect model for discipleship.

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The Fall of Man: Genesis 3:1-7

Scott Schuleit

> Genesis 3:1-7: Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" [2] And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, [3] but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" [4] But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. [5] For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." [6] So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. [7] Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

Sun Tzu in his book *The Art of War* said "Know your enemy." Discerning the mind of one's enemy prepares one to be more effective at anticipating his strategies and, thus, overthrowing them before they begin, as well as preparing oneself to respond wisely if the strategies of an enemy are implemented. In 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, Paul told the church at Corinth to forgive a brother who caused offense lest division occur in the church. In verse 11, after telling them to forgive this man, he states this: "*so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs*." Part of the purpose for this sermon involves dispelling ignorance regarding the schemes of the devil that we might more effectively resist him.

The Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:8-10); it was planted by God Himself containing "*every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food*." (Gen. 2:9). Adam and Eve lived there in perfect harmony, not only with each other but nature, including the animals. Evil thoughts, words, and deeds were foreign to them; they only did that which was good. Love, light, and happiness reigned in that place. Adam's work was easy and deeply satisfying. How difficult could it be to tend an unfallen garden?

Imagine the lushness of that unblemished region, the flitting about of colorful birds, flourishing of flowers, the flowing of a river sparkling by day, and at night reflecting countless stars above, its sound lulling Adam and Eve down into a peaceful, unbroken sleep. These were just some of the beauties they would have been used to, not to mention the greatest joy therein; they walked with God, they were at peace with their Creator. Within this context—

this paradise—the music of this glorious symphony, there emerges the tone of an ominous note in the background, a discordant sound.

3:1a. Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. A fallen intruder appears in that gorgeous, unfallen realm. Satan often (if not always), disguises himself in attractive appearances to deceive, appearing as "*an angel of light*," (2 Cor. 11:14) and this narrative recounts the first time this technique is used against humans. In this case, a physical serpent, one of God's good creatures (Gen. 1:25), becomes the embodiment (or incarnation) of "*that ancient serpent*," (Rev. 12:9, 20:2) that is, the devil, or Satan. This appearance of Satan is after his fall (Lk. 10:18; Rev. 12:3-4) yet before the fall of Adam and Eve.

There are two main fall narratives in Scripture; the first is of Lucifer (Isa. 14:12-14; Ezk. 28:12-19) who persuaded a third of the angels to rebel with him and the second is the fall of man. The first fall helped to precipitate the second as we will see. In this counterfeit incarnation, the devil veils himself within a beast, a serpent, to deceive and destroy (Jn. 10:10), to devour (1 Pet. 5:8). Some may think otherwise, but snakes are gorgeous creatures, and preceding the fall, the serpent must have been bedazzling, the colorful pattern of its scales mesmerizing, probably even more beautiful to behold than the serpents we see today.

3:1b. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" Satan directs the poison of his temptation towards Eve. Adam, who is right there (Gen. 3:6), allows it, failing to lead and protect her, casting aside his role and responsibility (Gen. 2:23; 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22-33; Titus 2:3-5 and 1 Pet. 3:5-6). Adam failed in vigilance; he never should have let the spiritual serpent in the garden in the first place or, at the very least, chased it out before it reached Eve. Adam's inaction was, perhaps, his first sin. This is, possibly, where the fall began and, practically speaking, set in motion the inevitable (Jas. 1:13-15).

With subtlety, Satan asks a question, deliberately misquoting what God had told the man (Gen. 2:16-17), partly as a means to draw her into a discussion. Adam (who would have certainly communicated the command from God to Eve) was not told that they may not eat from "*any*" tree, but only one. The first time Satan speaks to mankind in Scripture takes the form of a question and not for the purpose of inquiry, but trickery. With his very first sentence, Satan maligns God's word, he distorts it. Temptations will always, in some form and to some extent, add to or take away, distort or dismiss the truth of God's word.

In light of this, know God's word; study the truth (2 Tim. 2:15), embrace the truth, live it out and expose the lie, this pleases and honors God. Know the genuine so well that you can spot the counterfeit when it emerges. Ignorance regarding the truth makes us prey to lies. Seeking God involves learning more about Him through His word. Becoming more aware of God

and the truth of His word helps us to resist the dark stratagems of not only the devil (Eph. 6:11), but the world and the deceitful desires of the flesh. During the temptation in the wilderness episode, Satan cited Scripture, but used it for evil purposes; Jesus responded by quoting and using Scripture in the right way.

3:2-3. And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" The intentional misquote from the serpent prompts Eve to correct it, luring her into a discussion which she never should have entered into. It was a very, very clever trick which would have also bypassed, to some degree, her alarm at hearing a snake speak. Some of this sense of alarm may have also been diminished by the fact that Adam, her protector, who was right there, had allowed the spiritual serpent to stay in the garden, causing her to be less vigilant. Beyond misquoting the word of God, the subtle question from the serpent is framed and asked in such a manner to cause Eve to doubt the goodness of God.

Every lie, every false doctrine, to some degree, involves a denial or diminishment of who God really is. You see it today, such as the denial of the wrath of God because, they say, God is a God of love, as if there is some kind of antithesis, a conflict between these two attributes in the nature of God, that you can only have one or the other, not both in the fullness of who God is. Another example can be seen in overly stressing God's transcendence to the neglect of His immanence or vice versa.

Getting back to the narrative, Eve is now cast into the role of an instructor by Satan, which may have flattered her, stirred her to pride, and she unwisely engages in conversation with the serpent. With respect to the phrase "*neither shall you touch it*," which is not expressly stated in the account of the command originally given to Adam by God (Gen. 2:16-17), it is possible that the injunction given to Adam is partial rather than full and Eve's recollection serves to offer more information regarding the original injunction. Another possibility sees this phrase as an addition by Eve that was not part of the original command. Though I may be wrong, I think the latter view fits the context better and the following paragraph will proceed along this line of interpretation.

Eve explains their freedom and the one restriction and then adds another prohibition about *touching* what is forbidden. God had never said this; God had never said that they may not touch the fruit and, therefore, Eve is perverting the purity of God's word. In response to Satan's temptation, Eve distorts God's word, adding to it, revealing a heart that had already gone astray with a kind of complaint about the restriction. Satan's strategy proved successful; she has now sinned by uttering a complaint against God, thinking His one prohibition too restrictive and doubting the veracity of His word.

3:4. But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. Encouraged by the willingness of Eve to listen and engage in conversation and sensing that the time was right, Satan, the "*father of lies*," (Jn. 8:44) now delivers a brazen, straightforward lie. Can you hear the hiss in his statement? After they ate of the fruit, they did die; spiritually at first (1 Cor. 15:21-22; Eph. 2:1-3), and then, in time, physically (Gen. 5:5). Their souls died, not literally, because then they would have died physically as well, but they died in the sense that they became completely dead to the things of God. In His mercy, God allowed them to live for a while. Technically, God could have judged them and sent them straight to hell right after they had sinned but, instead of meting out immediate justice, rendered mercy, giving them some space to repent.

3:5. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Satan makes it sound like God is unreasonably withholding something good. It is also interesting to note that Satan's ploy involves, in part, enticing her to acquire forbidden knowledge through the sin of envy. Every sin involves, to some degree, a sinful, rebellious, blasphemous attempt to exalt oneself over God, to cast aside all authority except that of oneself, to seek autonomy, towards the end of fulfilling the dictates, the desires of one's own will. The world, through a diversity of means and forms, crass and subtle, expresses basically this: if you do your will you will find *freedom* (as defined by them), but if not, slavery.

This is, of course, a resounding lie, it's simply bondage and leads to eternal damnation. True freedom is found only in Christ, in obeying the will of the Lord (Mt. 10:38-39; 11:28-30) as revealed in His word. Satan makes it appear like he is offering benefits for giving in to his temptations. It is true that, in some sense and to some degree, their eyes would be opened in awareness to good and evil but, of course, he failed to disclose the fact that they would, along with their descendants (1 Cor. 15:21-22), become slaves to sin (Rom. 6:16; 2 Pet. 2:19). Also, as creatures, their knowledge would never be like God's perfect knowledge who sees all things exhaustively and with perfect purity. Nothing can escape His holy, penetrating gaze.

3:6. So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Eve was deceived (2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14), and having already sinned in her heart, adds to her sin through the external action of taking the fruit, eating, and giving some to Adam who had already entangled himself in sin by permitting his wife to take the role of leadership ascribed to the husband (Eph. 5:22-24). She should not have sought this role and he should have prevented it if she did. You could say Adam and Eve were the first, for a brief season, radical feminists.

Imagine the scene; Eve stepping towards that tree, walking across the shadow-dappled grass, reaching out to take of the fruit (though paintings tend to depict it as such, it probably wasn't an apple). A sudden breeze rustles the leaves of the tree and the grass around her feet as she grasps the fruit; it yields easily, falling into her hand; now watch as she completes the rupturing of an entire world by rupturing the fruit with a single bite. In a certain sense, every time a person sins he enacts, to some degree, and on a much smaller scale, the pattern of the fall of mankind. The consequences are far less, but still great; the fall has led to innumerable smaller falls following after it. The consequences of sin are far more extensive than we can imagine and so are the effects of a truly good deed. Whenever we sin it never merely affects just us.

Adam, observing the proceedings, sinfully, failed to lead and protect them both; having already fallen through compromise, he willfully eats of the fruit. The temptations they embraced correspond to the general, three-fold pattern for sin believers are warned against in 1 John 2:15-17. The things desired: food, aesthetic pleasures, and wisdom, are not evil in and of themselves, but good things. Pursuit of them should only be conducted in accordance with the will of God as revealed through Holy Scripture. In this case, they were forbidden to do one thing; therefore they should never have contemplated pursuing it. There are, of course, some experiences or forms of "knowledge" we should never pursue and are not good, such as pornography, drugs, sexual immorality, and the occult.

3:7. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. The innocence and intimacy Adam and Eve had enjoyed in the garden is now fractured, broken, and in its place, guilt and shame is experienced. As God's representative, mankind is made in His image and given the authority to take dominion over the beasts of the earth (Gen. 1:26-30), but in the fall the wild beast of a spiritual serpent embodied in the wild beast of a physical serpent, deceived them and, in a tragic reversal, took dominion over them, subduing them. Through the fall we entered into the death of an unregenerate state, becoming enslaved to sin, death, and the wild beast of a spiritual serpent, Satan.

After the successful temptation of Adam and Eve through a counterfeit incarnation, we find ourselves in anticipation, desiring to see what was stolen taken back; it leaves us yearning for another incarnation, a true and righteous one. This was fulfilled, of course, when Christ veiled Himself in humanity (Gal. 4:4-5; Phil. 2:6-8; Col. 1:19) "*to seek and to save the lost*" (Lk. 19:10) and destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8b).

In an attempt to cover their physical nakedness as well as their newfound guilt and shame, they wove together fig leaves, the first instance of clothing in Scripture. These fig leaves are symbolic of all of mans strivings to arrogantly try and atone for their own sins and merit heaven through *works*. Every attempt to appear righteous before a holy, sovereign God through one's

own efforts (to the glory of oneself) is merely fig leaves. Atheism: fig leaves; Buddhism: fig leaves; Neo-Paganism: fig leaves; Hinduism: fig leaves; Islam: fig leaves; Jehovah's Witnesses: fig leaves; Mormonism: fig leaves. They all violate essential Christian doctrines; they all propagate some form of a salvation through works—through my own personal efforts type of mentality—which is a false gospel. Salvation is only by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone as revealed in Scripture alone to the glory of God alone.

God clothes Adam and Eve in the skin of an animal which, of course, required the death of that animal (maybe it was a lamb), the shedding of its blood. Instead of killing Adam and Eve for their sin, He provides a substitute, which foreshadows the redemption Christ provides for an elect body of people; Christ will redeem for Himself a pure, spotless bride, clothing her in the white bridal garments of salvation, of righteousness (Isa. 61:10; Rev. 3:4-5; 21:2).

Scripture contains two main temptation narratives. The first is the one we've just explored; the second is found in the New Testament where Christ is tempted in the wilderness (Mt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12-13; Lk. 4:1-13). The two accounts, when compared (and we are indeed invited to make the comparison), offer many interesting similarities and differences, revealing much, namely, the supremacy of Christ, who is called the last (or second) Adam (1 Cor. 15:45). I will mention just a couple of the differences; Adam and Eve were tempted in a garden, Christ in the wilderness. Adam and Eve were not hungry and thirsty, Jesus was, yet still He resisted every temptation.

In conclusion, the fall offers the truth regarding why the world is the way it is with all of its wickedness in thought, word, and deed; its violence, immorality, wars, hatred, disease, toil, bloodshed, striving, and death. It explains things, not just the larger realities mentioned, but even the smaller circumstances such as a mosquito bite, a dead animal on the side of the road or a rotten piece of fruit, the fall explains these things with remarkable clarity. If I pick up a mango, anticipating a ripe, sweet, and creamy experience and then cut into it, only to find it's rotten inside, after my initial whimper of what I've missed, I understand that the big reason for this little circumstance is the fall; it is because of sin, our sin.

Many attempts by various non-Christian thinkers to understand the existence of evil and offer solutions towards its eradication have been given. There have even been denials that evil actually exists, which is one way of trying to solve the problem. Most (not all) of these non-Christian theories locate the cause of these problems as something exterior to mankind rather than internal. Here's some of the proposed solutions: lack of education (we simply need more of it); or there's too much civilization (let's get back to nature); or how about this one; the government is too small (we need bigger and better management), or how about the following lie, which will become increasingly popular as we near the end: we all need to become one, let us simply obliterate religious (and certain other distinctions) that we may all be

unified, leading to an unending reign of harmony and peace throughout the universe.

These external solutions do not deal with the internal reality of sin. Certainly education, within its proper place and if it is based on truth, is a good thing, but a false diagnosis of the problem leads to false proposals and misguided efforts towards a solution. All of these efforts to remove various evils cannot replace or improve upon the truth, which is contained in God's word. Having stated that, the two external factors of the Devil and the world system must be included within the dark matrix of wickedness plaguing the universe, but the main problem is the fall; the main problem is that we are sinners. The problem is primarily *in us*, the exterior manifestation of corruption is primarily due to the interior fact of sin, which we incurred when we fell in that garden so long ago. We are all fallen, we fell; Adam represented us and we fell with him (Rom. 5:14-19). We all sin and do so every single day. This is the chief reason why we see the chaos of wars, immorality and division erupting all around us.

The narrative of the fall in Scripture is incredibly instructive; it offers clarity regarding many topics, including facts regarding who we are, how far we've fallen, why the world is the way it is, and why Christ, the second Person in the Holy Trinity, had to live a life of perfect righteousness and die on the cross for us, purchasing for Himself an elect body of people to the great praise of His name. The wrong diagnosis leads to the wrong solution, but the right diagnosis of the sin problem reveals the right solution; we need Jesus; He is the answer.

We are sick, dead in our transgressions and sins; we need the Great Physician. If one denies one is sick, one will naturally deny the need for the Medicine. We are all sick, but not all recognize it. Christians have, by the sole grace of God, been healed, there is still some residual sickness in our system that is slowly going away, but we have been healed and will, eventually, be made completely whole. Jesus is reversing the curse; the effects of the fall are fading away for believers, but not for unbelievers. For believers the tragedy of the fall has turned into a joyful comedy. Glory to God! "*Come, Lord Jesus!*" (Rev. 22:20). Amen.

Healing as Jesus Did

Melanie Crowe Van Sertima

At the age of 43 and being diagnosed with stage 1V breast cancer that had spread throughout my body, I knew in my heart that God did not need an ailment to get me to heaven. I knew that God loved me so much, and as a Father to a child, would do anything to take this sickness from me. Then I started thinking… isn't that what He hung on the cross for?

It was now time for me to spend every possible awakening moment and take the Bible, and the Bible alone, not man's doctrine or even the way I was raised, to dig in, and chew on every single word. I was now going to become a doer of the word and not just a hearer; my very life was dependent on it. This was a conscious choice and effort on my part; I needed to really "know" God as no other time.

If He loved me the way His word says He does there is no logical or even spiritual explanation why He would remain passive, if I called out to Him and pressed in. As the woman with the issue of blood, pressing in to touch the tassels of Yeshua's prayer shawl I laid on my carpet face down with many tears shed over the scriptures. The very words of my Bible become life to my spirit, and to my surprise, my tears were no longer tears of pain, fear and doubt, but that of love, peace and joy.

I focused on the love God had for me, what He did so that I may live a wholesome life, I felt warmth, no judgment or questions, just love. I knew at the moment I had entered in to His presence; it was only by me calling out and recognizing everything had already been accomplished, and cancer had been what His lashes were for. When I called upon Him, it was my finite mind that had to catch up to my perfect spirit that was now complete with His.

I began to discover many instructions that would result in vitality to my health and lengthen my days on earth, I began to mull over the promises and examine ALL of the people healed in scripture and what they had done. I found that nowhere in the Bible did God refuse anyone of healing, nor did He say anything about one needing to carry a disease for His sake.

The words became fresh air and life to me, that's when I knew that God that had written these words, this was not the same God everyone had conformed to their own image and theology, "My son attend to my words, keep them in the midst of your heart, for they are life to those who find it." I also found that God said "I will not alter the words that come out of my mouth" (Prov. 4:20). I hung onto "by His stripes I was and am healed" (Is.53: 5) I said them as I breathed, as though they were oxygen in my lungs. Something in me, knew as I drew closer to the Lord, day and night, that God was not a Jeanie, and all of the healings in the Bible not only required faith, but pressing in and doing their part, it was now time to do my part.

I pursued with passion this Yeshua Raphi that walked along healing, I had to remove my sense knowledge and remember there was no time in

eternity. Yeshua was resurrected and had healed me, my spiritual world and God's words penned in scripture had to be more of a reality than my diagnosis. I began to write and post scriptures all over my house, and isolated myself. I knew that life and death were in the power of the tongue (Pr. 18:21) and I didn't want to hear or surround myself with anyone contradicting God's word. If His spirit was living in me, it was now time to align my physical body and soul to His Holy Spirit that my body encased. I knew God wasn't a respecter of persons and what He had done for many of His children He would do for me. I had to change my way of thinking in a lot of areas, by undoing the false religiosity I had been taught. I didn't listen to anything from the outside world, television, radio, social media etc.; my eye and ear gate became as fresh snow fallen without a trace or impression, I separated myself from toxic people and thoughts even those that were an active part of my daily life.

After reading Dr. Caroline leaf's book a couple of years ago, I realized it was definitely time to do a complete "brain sweep." This meant distancing myself from certain people whose words were not only idle chatter, but also seeds of death. "A healthy thought and toxic thought can both be built with mental rehearsal. But we can literally tear toxic strongholds down by choosing to bring the thought into conscious awareness for analysis, and then changing it through repentance and forgiveness (causing protein synthesis) and replacing it with the correct information" (pg. 62). This would require moment by moment renewing my mind and standing on God's truth and not my symptoms or emotions. I had the revelation that is was my physical body that had a diagnosis not my spirit, and that according to the word I was already healed, I just had to bring that into manifestation.

My husband and I came into agreement daily, first cursing cancer and then thanking Jesus for His perfect atonement for healing me, (past tense) and hung on the cross. I didn't profess or take ownership of any disease, through the renewing of my mind (Rom 12:2), I kept standing on God's truth and not my feelings.

I began to realize that people who didn't even profess to know Yeshua as their Savior and His promises, seemed to have more faith in a good God wanting them to be well and to co-ordinate with one's way of thinking. Several even had faith to believe they could heal themselves through positive thinking, many Christians frown upon this, labeling it as New age, yet they fail to read in the word of God that "as a man thinkith in His heart so is he" (Prov 23:7) and we are to "take are thoughts captive" (2 Corin 10:5).

In the book Mind as Healer, author Kenneth R. Pelletier writes, "in the western world people do not sit and listen or reflect upon oneself, but continually act external, visualization and imagery have proven to reduce and on some instances heal certain ailments" (Pg.262). Scripture is full of such instructions, but seem to get overlooked, "Meditate on those things pure and lovely," (Phil 4:8) also "be still and know that I am God, (Psalm 46:10) for I will tell you things to come." And so, to the present day, I stand, actively pursuing the healer, lover of my soul and redeemer, professing that I was, and

am healed. "They were overcome by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony" (Rev 12:11).

Salvation (encompassing healing)

The word Salvation comes from the Greek word "Sozo" which is an all-inclusive active present word. This word signifies wholeness, well being, healing, prosperous, delivered and saved. Anytime this word is read in scripture, these words can be substituted/interchanged. An example of this is,"With long life I shall satisfy you and show you my "salvation", healing, prosperity and deliverance" (Psalm 91:16).

As Sanford so poignantly described wholeness, "becoming whole does not mean being perfect, but completed. It does not necessarily mean happiness, but growth. It is often painful, but fortunately it is never boring. It is not getting out of life what we think we want, but it is the development and purification of the soul" (Pg. 20).

Salvation is accepted by faith, with the words spoken and the faith exercised. It is with one's mouth spoken and actions exercised that bring this into the physical realm. One doesn't except Christ and then continually say, "well I don't know if I am saved or not, maybe it's not God's will." The reason being is because, all Christians accept one's salvation by faith, even if their actions and mouths are not lining up, we try to give one the benefit off the doubt, but would never question God and His willingness to save that individual. So why is this the case with Divine healing? Doesn't scripture read/equate the two together several times, "Bless the Lord oh my soul and forget not His benefits, who forgives all or our sins and heals all of our disease" (Psalm 103) or what about, "which is it easier to believe, that one's sins have been forgiven or to pick up your bed and walk?"(Mark 2:9).

Sadly, as so many Christians state, and perhaps it's easier, to just say that God decided not to heal, thus happening when we don't see the physical manifestation. This must grieve the Lord. Why wouldn't we look at the human element and see if His instruction manual of scriptures was followed. Every command, blessing, and love demonstrated by God has an instruction/action on our part. Somewhere along the way, we have cherry picked doctrines and gift-wrapped them as God can do what He wants and when, however He cannot contradict His word.

Fortunately, God does not set the reset button and laws are already set into motion. Blood was not shed for those that God chooses to heal or save. The term "it is finished!" (John 19:30) as author of Blood Covenant describes, "Is not the last gasp of a defeated man"(pg. 86).
"This was also written across the Greek accounts in ancient times, signifying 'Paid in full' ".

There wasn't a partial crucifixion; on God's part everything has already been completed; we in our fallen state have the ability to overcome death. We cannot be contained with Christ living in us. "Faith disregards feelings and acts as if God's word is true" (pg. 228).

Why do Some People get Healed and Others Don't?

Only God knows the heart and what He sees in secret He will reward openly, (Matt 6:6) He is willing that no one perish, but we do for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6) The Lord says, "according to your faith let it be done unto you,"(Matt 9:29). Is this to say that if someone wasn't healed than they didn't have enough faith? That is like saying, why is "so and so" toned and muscular and another flabby and overweight. What has the person been doing to achieve these results? The bible is full of instructions of how to maintain one's healing, which was already accomplished two thousand years ago. Some of these obstacles/hindrances from healing may be: unforgiveness, not departing from evil, pride, not honoring one's parents, not treating one's body as the temple, taming the tongue, backbiting etc. Any area that is not aligned in the likeness of a pure Holy God leaves allowance for imperfection and room for the flesh to seep in. The enemy loves the flesh, that is why death to self, on the alter and Christ living in us, leaves us in a constant state of renewing the mind and glorifying Him.

All of the healings that took place in scriptures involved the action and consent of the individual. So why does one question God with no results of healing manifestation, if nil action was done on the part of the believer. The ignorance of many is said that God can do what He wants and He heals one and not others, this is inconsistent theology.

Much documentation is being confirmed that the Lord does heal today (for those with the gifting of intellectualism). Time does not exist in eternity, that is why "Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb 13:8). This had to be communicated through scripture to confirm in the physical property of time and to our finite brains, that our Father is constant, precise, and personable demonstrating all of His word to be attainable for the believer and stand in His victory, in the now, the present.

Any healing manifestations that do not come to pass is on the part of the believer, God not "choosing" to heal, would mean His son died in vain and one's ailment is more important than the blood shed, what blasphemous theology.

Ms. Dodie Osteen had a diagnosis of terminal metastatic cancer in 1981, but fought the fight of faith. Today she continues to stand on her healing and has written a little handbook guide of how she feels the Lord healed her through obeying the word and lining up her soul with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. She writes, "The word became my very life, I read it and confessed it every moment possible, despite how I felt, I acted healed." She also reminds the reader of this scripture, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for He who promised is faithful" (Heb. 10:23).

Disease is From the Enemy Who Comes to Kill, Steal and Destroy

We do not serve a schizophrenic God, His word states, and "Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in good health just as your

soul prospers" (3 John 1:2). God is a perfect holy loving just God; all diseases were lashed upon the flesh of Yeshua.

Throughout the scriptures, repeatedly, the Lord is giving Christian instructions of how to add days to one's life, and that it be well. So those individuals who believe God "wills" them to be sick, why even go to the Doctor? Just stay in His will and suffer. This is not biblical, and God doesn't cherry pick who is to be healed or not. His heart is waiting to breath with us, and for us to fellowship with Him and aligns our soul to our recreated spirit and His indwelling spirit meshing as one. Our soul must die so He can live in us; we have the authority through Him to do as He did.

As Oral Roberts wrote in the chapter *In your illness (Dis-ease) you can get Healing*, "the only way to begin your journey to making you whole is to begin in your spirit-which God created in His spiritual and moral likeness. The likeness or image is God's essence, the essence of His own being. To be born of God in your spirit today is a restoration of God's own essence or nature to yourself. You take on this spiritually reality in your being. Through it you can learn to respond to every situation you face by using your spirit-your inner self-then let this response flow up through your mind and body until your response is the whole-person response. You can face dis-ease or dis-harmony but God made you to respond-from your spirit, which is God's own way of doing it" (pg. 73).

Once we have this spirit revelation of "walking by the spirit and not in the flesh" (Gal 5:16), it is revolutionary. We then become more bold knowing who we have living on the inside of us.

Why Does God Allow Sickness to Happen?

This is a rhetorical question that doesn't make much sense to those who have not studied chemistry and physiology. Why does God allow one to get overweight? Well the answer is simple, passivity and spiritual ignorance and blindness. Many individuals think God is a Spirit that just controls by His yes and no's, while we live in a cosmic world that is governed by laws of cause and effect, prime example acid rain. God allows acid rain and doesn't stop it, because it is already set in motion due to the pollutants of this world.

Similarly to genetic mutations, poverty etc., It has already been set in motion and is played out, we have are just living in a resulted effect of the sum of laws. It is up to our free will, just as we have been given (which is the ultimate display of love-Christ willingly went through the crucifixion) to pursue our creator and know His heart and our purposed destiny.

Let us know forget that man handed over the authority of the earth by his own free will of tasting the knowledge of good and evil. Now we live in a world that is ruled by the prince of the earth, Satan (who often present himself as an angel of light and knows the scriptures well).

However, we have Christ living in us, going back to the analogy of an overweight person, anyone can have a membership at a gym, but until one actually works out and exercises their knowledge of physical fitness and diet,

the weight will not change. Similarly to Christianity, anyone can say they are a Christian, but the Lord will say there will be some He never knew (Matt 7:21-23).

The Bible is full of instructions on healing, deliverance, salvation and to remain and be prosperous. Unfortunately, we have Salvation down to a little prayer that is good for life, nor are we supposed to have a lot of money to advance the kingdom and enjoy life. We are supposed to be ill in our body if it happens, as it's from God and He is teaching us a lesson, because He so needs that illustration to be glorified. How warped and deceived; It's really a wonder anyone would even aspire to know the love of this man made ideology of God.

There are numerous horrific Chinese restaurants that have altered the recipes, added MSG and cook the nutrients away leaving one continually hungry. However the authentic Chinese cuisine that hasn't been tampered, satiates and studies the history and regions of the specific dishes and spices added, this can be profound. But how many people go through life living off of bad and quick Chinese food? Similarly we have a lot of *China buffet* Christians walking around.

Christians are snared by the words of one's mouths, and this will be justified by, so why complain and murmur about the way our soul (mind, will and emotions) feels rather than speaking truths. Even with Job, who had the spirit of fear, said, "The things I fear most have come upon me" (Job 3:25). God did not send the devil; the devil had a portal through Job's speech.

A question to ponder, plane crashes happen, but we don't question the law of gravity? We check the mechanics of the plane and the black box. When will Christians take Christ's words to heart and check *their chatterbox* and do their part of exercising His word. As Dr. MK Strydom shares, "offense is the snare of the devil and he will use it to rob you of your healing"(pg. 37).

We have the victory if we reach out and take it by faith, as scripture states "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). As T.G. Lake explains in his book on Healing, that many people are oblivious to, "Sin, sickness and death are doomed, doomed to death by the decree of Christ Jesus. Sin, sickness and death are the devil's triumvirate-the triple curse. Heaven is the absence of this triple curse; heaven is sinless, sick less and deathless. The ultimate of Christ's redemption"(Pg.61).

Our identity in Christ

The number one tactic of the enemy is to deceive and steal our identity, unfortunately who we are as joint heirs with Christ, is seldom taught from the pulpit. We have to speak and act by faith FROM a place of victory not attempting to achieve. Curry Blake makes a good point,

> "God does not have to get up every morning and tell the earth, moon etc. to go around the sun again. He spoke it once and it is still happening. The principle here is that God only has to

> say something once for it to come to pass. God does not have to decree that any human being be healed. He has already said it and it is a fact. Now it is up to Christians to establish God's word on the earth, by removing the enemy's works from the bodies of humans. It is up to us to enforce the defeat that God has already won over His enemy. God does not have to do anything to effect healing of any person, He has already decreed it" (Pg.5).

The enemy doesn't want the believer to recognize one's authority because He has already been defeated and knows that we have power over him. "I have given you power to trample…" (Luke 10:19).

The devil is always up to the same tactics, and has studied his prey for years; he knows the habits of individuals and the portals of entry, which assist in missing perfection and misalignment. But the last laugh is on Him because he was made a public spectacle of and has already been defeated (Col. 2:15).

We win; the battle is over, we just have to exercise our knowledge, power (according to that which is in us) and faith.

> "But if the same Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you. And God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you" (Romans 8:11).

Throughout my diagnosis and continually today, as I exercise my faith and stand on my healing, I have been immensely blessed by the profound teachings and literature of Andrew Wommack. There are numerous healing stories and miracles witnessed in his ministry and I knew these teaching were going to radically encourage and change my life. In his book

You've already Got it, he writes, "Faith is simply your positive response to what God has already provided by Grace. If what you are calling 'faith' is not a response to what God has already done, then it's not true faith. Faith doesn't try to get God to positively respond to you. True faith is your positive response to what God has already done by His grace" (pg.48).

Once I had these revelations implanted in my spirit the words of scripture changed and became food to my parched spirit. Sadly I have been raised through religion to think of a poor sinner saved by grace, rather than being the righteousness of Christ seated at the right hand of the Father, (Eph 2:6)) ready for victorious living.

With the Holy Spirit and speaking these truths boldness, confidence, assurance, joy and peace are all experienced. Partaking of the Lord's Supper (daily communion) is vital and has become so precious to me; "We will overcome by the blood of the lamb and the word of His testimony" (Rev.12: 11). Worshiping and entering the Holy of Holies in my prayer closet has radically changed my spirit as I kneel in His presence, for the Lord hears the

worshipers (John 9:31). Unfortunately it took this diagnosis, to realize that my Dad loves me and longs to commune with me, more than I could have ever fathomed. I continue to live a healed, adventuresome life proclaiming His Glory and truths. What the devil meant for evil, the Lord has redeemed (Gen 50:20).

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Grief to Hope
A Plan for Transformational Grief Counseling

Ollie Williams

"Although the experience of loss is a universal experience, every person's grief process is unique," consequently practitioners are wise to leave behind a one-size-fits-all approach to grief work (Shallcross, 2012). During a 2012 interview with Lynne Shallcross, Vincent Vigilione, an adjunct professor at Kean University in New Jersey stated that this is one of the most important things for counselors to unserstand about grief and loss.

In her June 1, 2012 cover story, Shallcross presented a scenario of a counselor with two clients. They are the same age, gender, and both experienced the death of a partner at the same period in life. The question is whether the counselor can reasonably expect that both will have similar reactions to their loss and if both will benefit from similar counseling techniques to deal with their residual grief. "Not likely," Shallcross declared.

I have had the opportunity to experience grief through loss of a loved one as well as personal loss, but I do not recall any of the times being similar. When my niece died from cancer, I was totally focused on making sure my sister did not have to worry about making funeral arrangements. I believed she needed to grieve the loss of her daughter, as she was so torn by her sudden loss. Our family hadn't been aware of my niece's illness. It's hard to believe that even after eight years of her passing, I hadn't shed one tear. It definitely wasn't because I didn't care. I loved my niece dearly. We grew up together and experienced childhood sicknesses at the same time. I don't believe anyone could truthfully say that I didn't have a moment of grieving.

Three years after my niece's death, my mother died. Even though she suffered with Alzheimers and lived a full life, it was an unexpected death as well. I was extremely hurt, empty, lonely, and felt abandoned. Still, I'm not sure if I fully grieved my mother's death. My older siblings depended upon me to make sure the funeral arrangements and her homegoing service. It seemed as if I was that "strong" person to get the job done. Although my siblings deferred to me, they actually didn't want me to take all the responsiblities upon myself, but that was my choice. When I was busy, it took the hurt away. Once at the burial site however, I was overcome with emotions and could not stop crying. I cried for two days, and now, over ten years later, I still begin to cry when I think of my mother.

Three years after my mother's death, my father died with prostate cancer. He too had lived a full life but his death was also unexpected. Since I was my father's only child, it became my responsiblity to make all the arrangements while trying to identify and locate my paternal family. I was able

to shed some tears at the burial site, but I don't know if I was grieving or was merely overwhelmed from the previous few days.

During my studies for the past four years, I'd learned to understand grief, or so I believed. My understanding was put to the test, just as I was writing this paper. We know that death is part of life, nevertheless, the death of my only brother was certainly a shock. Despite the loss of others so dear to me, this time I was able to truly understand how grieving works. There is no playbook on how to grieve. Each time is different and however a person grieves is okay.

I've observed people around me, including my family, and how they all react to the loss of loved ones, a relationship, a job, or even their homes. Each loss had a different effect on them. I got so angry with two of my siblings after our mother died because I didn't see them shed a tear (at least I had never seen them do so). I felt they didn't care that our mother was no longer with us and that they didn't feel the same loss I felt. In retrospect, the more I study and research on grief, I comprehend that we all handle our grief differently. At times, I believed that I was being selfish, mainly due to being the youngest of the siblings. I felt abandoned. My feeling of being abandoned was not rooted in reality. Plus, it never crossed my mind at the time that I was judging my siblings' apparent lack of outward signs of grieving as a sign that they didn't love our mother like I did. Yet, years before she died, I resented being accused of not loving my niece just because my sorrow was kept inside.

I strongly agree with Horn's theory that in many situations of loss, the process of "getting over it" doesn't happen quickly, if ever. I do believe that I have "closure" as Horn mentions. With this knowledge, when I begin to counsel others I will be more aware of how each individual copes with loss and grief, and will not try to treat each client the same.

I can truly appreciate the fact that when dealing with grief and loss, that stage in life has come for me in that I'm now prepared to step out and begin to counsel someone else. According to "A Loss Like No Other," counselors aren't immune to experiencing loss and grief. Although not immune, I'm able to handle it a lot better than I have in the past. Continuing to research and study about grief will enable me to raise awareness of my own loss history and share my thought surrounding loss and grief. It's my earnest belief that this is what God has been preparing me for. My clients will benefit from this heightened awareness as I provide them lead way into what may or may not happen with them, their family, or their friends.

What is Grief?

According to *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, it is:

- deep sadness caused especially by someone's death
- heaviness, grave
- trouble, annoyance

Grief is utilized in two ways: 1) A collection of emotions usually associated with loss 2) A process or journey that follows a significant loss. Grief is a collection of feelings related to some notable distress and while grieving a person may experience a combination of different feelings and emotions. Grief follows no time line. Everyone experience grief differently, but everyone needs support during the grieving process, whether or not they believe they do (Floyd, 2008). While grieving some people feel like talking but there are those who prefer not to say anything until they are ready. When dealing with those who are grieving, counselors must have excellent communication and listening skills.

We might talk about a person grieving or in the grief process, using the terms interchangeably with the word *mourning*. Alan D. Wolfelt distinguishes between grief and mourning, defining grief as, "the internal experiencing of thoughts and feelings following a death," and mourning as a person's "external shared social response to the loss" (Wolfelt, 2004). H. Norman Wright differentiates between grief and mourning noting that mourning "is the process where grief is expressed. It's a natural, God-given process of recovery. It's His gift to us to help us get through the pain. Everyone has grief, but mourning is a choice" (Wright, 2004).

Grief is an emotion common to the human experience, and we witness the process of grief throughout the biblical narrative. Multiple Bible characters experienced deep loss and sadness, including Job, Naomi, Hannah, and David. Even Jesus mourned (John 11:35; Matthew 23:37-39). After Lazarus died, Jesus went to the village of Bethany, where Lazarus was buried. When Jesus saw Martha and the other mourners weeping, He also wept. He was moved by their grief and also by the fact of Lazarus' death. The astounding thing was that even though Jesus knew He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, He chose to partake of the grief of the situation. Hebrews 4:15 assures us that Jesus truly is a high priest who can "sympathize with our weaknesses" (Wright, 2014).

Grief also has different reactions at different times, and those reactions may change as time goes on. As an example, Debra Holland illustrates that in the beginning you may feel shaky and agitated. Your thoughts are chaotic. You have no appetite and can't sleep. You cry often (Holland, 2011). During these stages and at various times, grief can feel unending because you are living with the continuous loss of someone or something. You must understand that there are times you will not be able to forget because there will be reminders day-by-day, week-by-week, and year-by-year. It is a journey, and a person must take that journey with courage, grace and dignity. But know that there is Hope for the grieving.

Hope

> *"Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be unimformed abouth those who sleep in death, so that you do*

> *not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope"* (1 Thessalonians 4:13,NIV).

There is comfort for those who die in the Lord. Christianity does not forbid, and grace does not do away with our natural affections. We must not be carried away in our sorrows as the scripture tells us this is too much like those who have no hope. We should support one another in times of sorrow; not deaden one another's spirits, or weaken their desire for hope.

When my brother died, a few days later I received a call from a sister within our ministry. She was so pleasant with her words of comfort, as well as offering herself in regards lending an ear to sincerely listen. While she spoke I could feel an assurance of hope flowing through me. At the end of our conversation, she acknowledged that she had to go because she too was in the process of finalizing burial services for her loved one. She gave of herself in spite of her own situation. Her unselfishness gave me hope in the midst of what I was going through, that Hope is in helping those who are or have gone through some type of loss. Sharing your loss makes the burden of grief easier to carry. Wherever the support comes from, accept it and do not grieve alone. Connecting with others will help you heal.

How to Find Support after a Loss

- Turn to friends and family members—This is the time when you can lean on the people who care about you. During your time of loss you may have come across distant family. Use this time to rekindle that bond.
- Draw comfort from your faith—Talk to a clergy member or others within your religious community.
- Join a support group—Most people do not believe that this is necessary, but there are others who are just like you. Take this time to seek out those individuals most like you.

When you are grieving, it is more important than ever to take care of yourself. The stress of dealing with a loss can quickly deplete your energy and emotions. Seeking help does not mean there is something wrong with you. Seeking help assists in you getting closer to finding the hope you need to get through your loss.

When a person is in ordinary trouble and is in need of hope, does he not seek out someone who has more of whatever it takes to help them overcome their situation? If they are in trouble, they seek guidance. They may need legal help, so they contact a lawyer. If the need is medical, seeing a doctor would be wise. They would consult an auto mechanic if the issue is car trouble. We have all sought the power of others when we needed help. When you are dealing with grief, your emotions race and your thoughts are scattered. In the midst of this confusing time, you need to remember a few simple truths from the Bible.

God will use these truths to help you understand what you are experiencing and give you assurances on which to hold to your emotions. You will need someone to aid you in seeking for hope when it makes no sense. We know that we cannot prepare for the death of a loved one, whether it results from a sudden accident or long illness. It always catches us unaware.

Psalm 62 instructs us that the supreme power in all creation is God. In verse 1, David begins to express this fact by saying that from God comes salvation, that He is our Deliverer from trouble. David is clearly implying that it should be to Him we run in our time of distress. In verse 2, God is our rock. He is our foundation and source of stability, who keeps us grounded and free from unreasonable anxieties. He is also our defense. He can deflect attacks in ways humans cannot provide.

In verses 5-7, David turns his attention back to himself, trying to encourage himself by resolving to wait patiently upon God as his only trustworthy hope. In verse 7, he reminds us that God is our glory: We take pride in Him for all that He is. He can give us favor even before those who may be against us. He is our refuge, an unqualified place of safety in any circumstance. In verse 8, he exhorts others—friends, companions, and supporters, urging them to pray because God is a solid place of refuge in our times of trouble.

There is joy as well as a pleasure in being able to pour into someone's life who feels that they are broken and in the need of help. I believe being a counselfor will give me that joy and pleasure, especially if after the client has left my care they live a productive and happy life.

Grief counselors need to be able to truly tune in to their clients' needs. Empathy and compassion are two skills that are closely intertwined. All grief counselors must be able to display empathy and compassion for their clients' suffering and feelings while they grieve. Empathy is the ablility to "feel with" another person—you experience the emotions of your clients almost as though they were your own. Compassion means to have feelings of concern for the person who is grieving.

"Grief is an inevitable experience and so much of life is about loss" (Wong, 2008). Loss of a loved one, loss of a job, loss of a child, loss of health or even loss of something personal to us. Going through life is to endure some type of loss. We know that there will be death for oursleves as well as our loved ones, therefore we all will someday experience grief.

"C.S. Lewis documents the transformation from overwhelming grief and anger at God to a new understanding of God and life. Such transformation can happen to anyone who is open to the spiritural reality beyond the physical realm" (Wong, 2008). In grieving the loss of his wife, Lewis wrote about his struggles with God and the emptiness her absence caused (Lewis, 1961). There is nothing logical to forfeit the affliction of grief, but there is hope to transform and give a feeling of relief. Life has not ended. You must go on with the hope of seeing that loved one again or whatever else you've lost. Be relieved that you will gather something else of greater value. When everything

is taken away from us, we can rest assured that there is a Comforter who will give us a peace that surpasses all our understanding. We should all take great comfort in the promise of Jesus. “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4 NIV).

Hope and Healing is a gift from above. Dr. P.T Wong states that, “Grieving is the pain of letting go of love. Grieving is also the pain of seaching for what has been lost. In the process, we discover something more precious than what we could ever imagine” (Wong, 2008). We’re reminded again in Matthew’s Gospel, blessed are the brokenhearted, for they will find healing, hope and transformation.

We all have areas of our lives where we have had to grieve, but God promises to bring healing. Ask Him to cover you with His wings of Healing and to bring restoration and wholeness to your life.

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From Wedlock to Deadlock
1 Corinthians 7:10-16

John T. Stevenson

The wedding was something out of a fairy tale. The beautiful bride walked down the aisle and was met by the young man who had won her heart. Before all of their friends and family, they exchanged their vows, pledging themselves to one another for life. The celebration that followed and was joyous and only ended when the newly married couple departed upon a romantic honeymoon.

As the months passed and the couple settled down in their new life together, the problems began. Little things about her began to annoy him and she began to complain that they didn't talk as much as they used to. She started sharing her problems with her best friend who listened sympathetically and he began going out with the boys on a regular basis. The evenings that they did have together were spent in front of the television set. Before long, the arguments began to escalate as their communication with each other grew correspondingly less and less. Finally one night during a particularly heated confrontation, he said that he wanted a divorce.

Different variations of this story have been repeated many thousands of times. Divorce has reached epidemic proportions in America today. While the common claim that fully half of all marriages end in divorce can be disputed, it is nevertheless true that divorce statistics continue to be on the rise (Kennedy & Ruggles, 587-598) and that Christians have not been immune to this increase.

The problem of divorce is not unique to today. It was also a problem in the first century. Seneca, the Roman writer, said that women in the Empire counted their age, not by the number of consuls they had seen, but by how many husband they had been through (1928).

The same thing was true for Jewish society. All that was required in Israel to divorce one's wife was to write on a sheet of papyrus the words, "I am no longer married," and hand it to the wife. From that moment on, they were legally considered to be divorced. The Mosaic Law had provided for the possibility of divorce in Deuteronomy 24. It was a passage that regulated divorce and remarriage.

> *When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, 2 and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife, 3 and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who*

took her to be his wife, 4 then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance. (Deuteronomy 24:1-4).

The Jews in Christ's day read this passage and came up with two possible interpretations.

- There were those who understood this passage to teach that it was acceptable to divorce your wife if she had committed some immoral act. This would be the "indecency in her" for which she could be divorced. This was the teaching of the Jewish teacher Shammai.

- The second interpretation, held by the followers of Hillel, said that anything of which a husband did not approve could constitute uncleanness. Therefore if your wife burnt the toast and you did not like it, you could divorce her. If your wife did not clean the house to your specifications, you could divorce her. If you found another woman to be more attractive than your wife, you could divorce her.

The interpretation of Hillel was much more popular, especially among those who wanted to get a divorce. The gospels tell of how a group of Pharisees approached Jesus and asked Him which school of thought was the correct one.

And some Pharisees came to Him, testing Him, and saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?" (Matthew 19:3).

The questioning of the Pharisees is said by Matthew to involve a test. They wanted Jesus to choose sides. They wanted Him to say that either the school of Shammai was right or else the school of Hillel was right. They had already assumed that it was acceptable for a man to divorce his wife. The only question was which were the legitimate terms of such a divorce. Can you divorce for any cause at all? Or must immorality be involved before a divorce can take place? Let's look at the answer of Jesus.

And He answered and said, "Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." (Matthew 19:4-6).

Jesus did not choose between the school of Shammai and the school of Hillel. Instead He turned to a higher authority. He turned to the Bible. He quoted Genesis 2:24. This verse says that marriage involves two people becoming "one flesh." Do you see what Jesus is saying? He says that there is no place for divorce within God's pattern for marriage. He does not say that it is okay to divorce for any reason and He does not say that it is okay to divorce for immoral impurity. He simply says that there should be no divorce.

The Pharisees understood what Jesus was saying. They understood He was saying that divorce is not good for any reasons. They understood Him to be declaring that marriage is permanent. This brought forth a problem in that the Old Testament had allowed for divorce:

> *They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?" (Matthew 19:7).*

If it is true that marriage is supposed to be permanent, then why did Moses tell people to get divorced? The Pharisees had missed one major point. It is that Moses did not tell people to get divorced. The question of the Pharisees was a loaded question. It was like asking someone, "Do you still beat your wife?" They asked, "Why did Moses command people to be divorced?" But Moses did not command divorce. He did not advocate divorce. Instead he regulated remarriage after a divorce had taken place. He said, "If a divorce takes place an a remarriage follows, the original couple are never permitted to marry each other again. Jesus points this out in verses 8-9.

> *He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. 9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." (Matthew 19:8-9).*

Jesus says that Moses allowed for divorce because of the hardness of men's hearts. When, because of such hardness, there is immorality, then Moses permitted a divorce to take place. Outside of such a case, there was to be no divorce.

As Paul writes his first epistle to the Corinthians, a number of years have passed since Jesus had that conversation with the Pharisees. Churches have been planted throughout the Roman Empire and Christianity has come to Corinth. Within this new church are people from all sorts of social and moral backgrounds. There are Greeks who have previously worshiped at the Temple of Aphrodite atop the Acrocorinth. There are Jews who believed that it was alright to divorce one's wife at the drop of a hat. There are married people who are having problems and who are looking for a way out. There are those who are married to pagans who aren't sure what they ought to do. Paul writes to set the record straight on the

issue of marriage and divorce.

CASE #1 - TWO MARRIED BELIEVERS

> *But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband 11 (but if she does leave, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not send his wife away. (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).*

The first case with which Paul deals is that of two believers who are married and who are not getting along. This tells me something about Christians. It tells me that being a Christian is no guarantee that you won't have problems. Christians have problems just like anyone else. We do harm to one another when we pretend that this isn't so. The church ought not to turn its back on the reality of marital problems. Rather the church ought to be a place of healing that can put broken people and broken marriages back together again. Paul has some very real things to say about some very real people. He gives some very specific instructions:

1. Instructions from the Lord: *But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord (7:10).*

   Paul does not have to give the instructions any new teachings about divorce. The Lord Jesus has already said all that needs be said on this subject. That teaching continues to stand firm. It is the simple statement that there is to be no divorce.

2. Commanded to Stay: *But to the married I give instructions... that the wife should not leave her husband (7:10).*

   This is very clear. The wife is told that she is not to leave her husband. The word "leave" (χοριζω) is the same word that Jesus used when He said, *"What therefore God has joined together, let no man **separate**" (Matthew 19:6).* This is a reference to divorce.

3. Commanded to Remain Unmarried: *But if she does leave, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband (7:11).*

   Paul realizes that divorce might be unavoidable for a Christian. We are fallen people who live in a fallen world. This does not change just because we are Christians. There are instances in which a Christian might be married to another Christian and still be forced into a divorce. In such an instance, Paul has one command. It is that there be no remarriage unless it is a reunion of the broken marriage. The principle is one of restoration. It

is that the Christian woman is to do all in her power to rebuild the broken marriage. To this end, she is to do one of two things:

- Remain unmarried.
- Be reconciled to her husband.

Does that sound harsh? Does that sound as though Paul is being unreasonable to women? He is not. To the husband of a Christian marriage, Paul has an even stricter injunction in the second part of the verse. Husbands are told to avoid divorce.

4. A Command to Husbands: *And that the husband should not send his wife away (7:11)*.

The Christian husband is told in no uncertain terms, "Don't divorce your wife!" This flew in the teeth of all common practice. Secular society told people, "You don't need to stay married to your wife if you are incompatible. You owe it to yourself to find someone with whom you can be happy." Both Jews and Romans made a regular practice of divorce. This tells me something about Biblical morality. We are to be unaffected by the moral standards of the world. What was true in Paul's day is also true today. Divorce is still as wrong today as it was then.

CASE #2 - MARRIAGE TO A SATISFIED UNBELIEVER

But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, let him not send her away. 13 And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, let her not send her husband away. 14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. (1 Corinthians 7:12-14).

The second case with which Paul deals is that of a mixed marriage. One of the partners is a believer and the other is not. The Bible warns against Christians marrying non-Christians.

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? (1 Corinthians 6:14-15).

We are not to marry unbelievers because we have nothing in common with

them. We operate on a different frame of reference. It is unseemly that we should become one with someone who does not share our identity in Christ. However, there were those in Corinth who were already married to an unbeliever when they came to Christ.

A man goes to the marketplace and meets a Jew named Aquila who shares with him the message that Jesus died and rose again from the dead. He hears the gospel and he believes its message. He comes home all excited and tells his wife of what he has done. She listens patiently and then replies that she isn't interested in fairytales.

What is to be his reaction? He is joined in marriage to an unbeliever. He is a child of God and he is united with one who is a child of Satan. Should he seek a divorce? He knows that Jesus spoke against divorce, but Jesus never dealt with the subject of a mixed marriage like his. Certainly these are different circumstances.

Back in Old Testament times, Ezra had commanded those who had married pagan wives to divorce those wives and abandon the children by those marriages (Ezra 10). Are believers today called to follow that same example?

1. A Command from Paul: *But to the rest I say, not the Lord (7:12).*

   Some commentators have tried to take this to mean that Paul is now giving his own opinions instead of speaking to God's word. This is not the case. He makes the point that this is an addition to the teaching of Jesus. Jesus did not deal with the situation of the believer who is married to an unbeliever. Paul has already cited the teachings of Jesus and now he says, "Here is something that Jesus didn't cover, so I am giving you some further instructions." Paul cannot quote the words of Jesus in dealing with this issue because Jesus had never given any teaching on this issue. Thus Paul gives new instructions that had not formerly been presented.

2. A Command to Remain: *If any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, let him not send her away. 13 And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, let her not send her husband away (7:12-13).*

   To the man who has a wife who is an unbeliever and yet who desires to continue living with her husband, Paul's command is, "Do not seek to be divorced." What is true for the Christian man is also true for the Christian woman. The principle is clear. The Christian is not to initiate a divorce. This does not mean that there can never be a legitimate reason for a Christian to seek a divorce, but this ought not to be normative and such cases where this does take place ought to be for extreme situations.

3. Reason for the Command: *For the unbelieving husband is sanctified*

through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband (7:14).

Being a Christian who is married to an unbeliever is difficult in the best of circumstances. But it need not make that Christian defiled. Quite to the contrary, the very opposite ought to be true. The unbelieving partner is sanctified by this union to a believer. Does this mean that you can be saved by being married to a Christian? No. But it does mean that God has set apart the family of a Christian for some special blessings. This is not a new teaching. God has often blessed unbelievers because of their association with believers.

The case of Joseph in the land of Egypt illustrates this point. Joseph was sold as a slave to Potiphar. As a result of this union, we read that *the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph* (Genesis 39:5).

The same thing is seen in the relationship of Jacob with his uncle Laban. After Jacob had worked for Laban for 14 years, Laban bore witness, saying, *"The Lord has blessed me on your account"* (Genesis 30:25).

God offered to reprieve the destruction of the wicked city of Sodom if there were only ten righteous people in the city. The presence of ten of God's people within the city would have saved it from destruction (Genesis 18:32). In the same way, the presence of a believer within a marriage is able to bring God's blessings upon that union.

4. The Effect upon Children: *For otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy (7:14).*

A child is not saved just because he has a Christian parent. But he is set apart for some special blessings. He is set apart for prayer. He is set apart to witness a Christian life up close. He is set apart to hear the message of the gospel.

CASE #3 - MARRIAGE TO AN UNBELIEVER WHO WISHES TO DIVORCE

Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. 16 For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? (1 Corinthians 7:15-16).

The third case with which Paul deals is also that of a mixed marriage between a believer and an unbeliever. This is the case in which the unbelieving partner initiates the divorce proceedings.

Case #1	Case #2	Case #3
Two married believers	A believer who is married to an unbeliever	
	The unbeliever remains	The unbeliever leaves
Stay Married!	Stay Married!	Allow them to leave!

1. The Principle of Peace: *Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace (7:15)*.

   I have seen situations where a person comes to Christ and the unbelieving partner is so antagonistic toward this conversion that he seeks a divorce. In such a case, the Christian is instructed not to fight it. The principle is that *God has called us to peace*. If we can peaceably live with that unbelieving partner, then we are to do so. But if that unbelieving partner wants to bail out of the marriage, we are to let him do so and we are not to fight him in his quest for a divorce.

2. The Principle of Freedom: *The brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases (7:15)*.

   In such a case where the unbelieving partner has initiated the divorce, the believer is not under bondage to the marriage vows that were taken. I take this to mean that he or she is now free to remarry. If this were not the case, then it seems that Paul would have repeated his injunction that "if she does leave, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband" (7:11).

Situation	Her desire	Action	Result
When a Christian has an unbelieving wife	She wants to go	Let her go	He is not bound
	She wants to stay	Let her stay	He is bound

3. The Possibility of Conversion: *For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? (7:16)*.

   The Christian who has an unbelieving spouse who wants out of the

marriage might be tempted to argue, "If I permit this divorce, then who will be there to witness to my partner and bring him to the Lord?" Such a question is valid, especially if the unbelieving spouse is inclined to be positive toward the situation.

On the other hand, this is not a reason to attempt to force an unbelieving partner to remain in a marriage for which they have no desire to continue. In such a case, that spouse's evangelism and conversion might be out of your hands. It is now in God's hands. It always way, whether you realized it or not.

These have been difficult teachings. It is one thing to say that marriage is to be permanent, but sometimes it is another thing to live up to such a standard when you are "in the trenches." The world certainly does not live up to such stringent standards, but Christians are called to be different. We are to be like Jesus Christ. This includes the honoring of God's institution of marriage.

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ABSTRACTS OF RECENT SFBC&TS THESES & DISSERTATIONS

The Apostle John's Unique Christology

Michael J. Rivers
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This paper will provide a detailed description of Christ in his divine status in the Apostle John's Gospel account for other seminary students. Much of it is derived from my analysis of credited scholar's research in the academic field. This analysis also enabled me to draw my own personal conclusions about the Apostle John's unique Christology. It begins with a description of Christ's preexistence, deity, and incarnation. This paper describes ways in which the Apostle John's description of Christ differed from the Synoptic Gospel's description. The Apostle John's description of Christ includes Christ's glory, submission to the Father, and Christ's role as Revealer of God as Father.

It will demonstrate Christ's preexistence and divine status by means of my exegetical examination of three Biblical texts from John's Gospel. Christ, having existed with God before creation, is the very nature of God. Christ is also the only begotten and unique Son of God who came to describe God to mankind. This paper will also describe the ways John's Gospel compares and contrasts to the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew presents Christ as the Son of David and his role as Teacher. For Matthew, Christ came to fulfill Old Testament prophecy. In contrast, the Apostle John emphasizes Christ's triumphant victory at Calvary's cross. The main theme all throughout John's Gospel account is Christ's glorious divinity. This paper will describe the numerous ways the Apostle John wrote a unique Christology.