

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

*Pleading for a complete return to Christianity
as it was in the beginning*

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MERCY-NOT SACRIFICE

Those of us using the *Scripture Reading Cards*, of recommended Bible readings for Sunday worship, will know that we have reached the 6th chapter of Luke's gospel: the early verses of which deal with one of the many occasions on which Jesus, and His disciples, were accused of Sabbath-breaking: a serious charge attracting the death-penalty. Luke describes how Jesus, and the disciples, while walking through the cornfields; being hungry, plucked some ears of corn, rubbed them in their hands and ate the grains. Certain of the Pharisees (some always seemed to be around) demanded to know from Jesus why he allowed His disciples to **"do that which was unlawful on the sabbath day."** This, of course, was not the first, or last, time when Jesus was challenged upon His apparently 'casual' attitude to the sabbath but it gave Him the opportunity of an instructive and illuminating reply. The sabbath was, of course, one of the 'ten commandments' and its violation was a very serious matter: indeed in Num. 15 we read of a man being put to death solely for gathering sticks on that day. God, through Moses, had said, **"Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death, for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but on the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord; whosoever doeth any work on the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death."** (Ex. 31:14,15). From this we see that the prohibition was against any form of work, and the seventh day was described as the **"sabbath of rest."** Thus it was not so much a day of worship, but of rest, involving every form of life; even animals. Everybody (amongst the Jews that is, from Moses onwards) was to be allowed to have complete cessation from their burdens and labours every one day in seven, and this included family members, man-servants, maid-servants, visiting strangers and even beasts of burden such as an ox and ass (Deut. 5:14). Presumably God deemed that His people would profit greatly, certainly physically, and perhaps psychologically, from one complete day of rest every week. Physical rest was not the only object of the sabbath, of course, for it was a **sign** between God and the Jews and had other significance.

Those of us brought up in the countryside have, at one time or another, especially as children, walked through the corn-fields, like those disciples, winnowing the ears of corn in our hands, blowing away—the husks and eating the grains (usually with a tummy-ache to follow). An eye had always to be kept open in case we would be chased by the farmer for purloining his property: after all, to take a turnip from a turnip field has quite often led to a charge of theft. On this basis, I used to wonder why the Pharisees, obviously keen to bring Christ into disrepute, did not accuse Him of taking the farmer's property without permission, i.e. of theft. However I have since learned

that (in Deut. 23:24) there is a stipulation that the passer-by can enter a neighbour's vineyard and "eat his fill" of the grapes available, provided that he does not put any into a vessel and take them away: and likewise, a passer-by can enter a neighbour's corn-field and "**pluck the ears with his hand,**" provided that he never applies a sickle to the standing corn and takes any away. Thus what Jesus and the disciples did was quite legitimate and offended the Pharisees only insofar as they considered it "work" and a violation of the sabbath rules.

"WORK" DIFFICULT TO DEFINE

Those who draft Acts of Parliament and Statutory Instruments know very well how essential it is to choose words carefully, and how necessary (yet difficult) it is to define their words fully and accurately. This they must do not only to make themselves clearly understood, but also to forestall the clever lawyers who are in the business of finding loopholes in legislation. All that the Mosaic law said was that the people must not carry out any "**work**" on the "sabbath of rest," and so it would be left to Moses to make decisions on a myriad of questions which would arise amongst the people as to what, exactly, constituted "work". Indeed, when the man (previously mentioned) was found gathering sticks on the sabbath, the people brought him to Moses and Aaron because they were in doubt on the matter. It seems also that Moses was not too sure either, for he put the man in custody until it was decided what should be done in this case, and whether the sabbath had been broken. Only a few sabbath ground rules are mentioned in the O.T. — i.e. no fires could be kindled; food had to be prepared the day previously and nothing could be bought or sold. We can well imagine the controversial discussions and wrangling amongst the Jews as to whether this or that activity came within the prohibition, and referral to higher authority for decisions. Even today some Jews have very strict ideas on the subject and would not, on the sabbath, as much as switch a light on, or off, as it would constitute 'work.'

The Rabbis, whose duty it was to read and interpret the Mosaic Law, added to it until their traditions (The Traditions Of The Elders) became an intolerable burden. As to the definition of 'work' the Rabbis had 39 basic classifications, but also a great many sub-classifications with confusing results, some even comical if it were not so serious. Tying and untying knots were prohibited and led to a formal definition of 'knots' being produced. A camel-driver's knot or a boatman's knot might not be made unless it could be done with one hand. A woman was not allowed to look in a mirror in case she might see a grey hair and be tempted to pluck it out: an action which would be classified by the Rabbis as "reaping" and reaping was certainly prohibited on the sabbath. And so the Pharisees did not object to Jesus' disciples *taking* ears of corn, but to *rubbing* them in their hands. This, to them, would constitute reaping or winnowing. Johnson, in his *People's New Testament* says (Quote) "The Traditions Of The Elders had laid down thirty-nine principal prohibitions which were ascribed to the authority of The Great Synagogue and which were called **Abnoth** (main rules) from which stemmed a vast number of **Toldoth** (derivative rules). For instance, reaping and threshing were forbidden by the **Abnoth** and by the **Toldoth**. It was asserted that plucking ears of corn was a kind of reaping, and rubbing them was a kind of threshing. The vitality of these artificial notions among the Jews is extraordinary. Arbarbanel relates that when, in 1492, the Jews were expelled from Spain, and were forbidden to enter the city of Fez lest they should cause a famine, they lived on grass: yet even in this state '**they religiously avoided the violation of the sabbath caused through plucking the grass with their hands**'. To avoid this they took the much more laborious method of grovelling on their knees, and cropping the grass with their teeth. To give one further example of the foolishness of their sabbath requirements, they said that if a Jew put out a lamp from fear (fear of the Gentiles, or of robbers, or on account of an evil spirit) he is guiltless: but if it is to save oil, he is guilty." (Unquote).

CHRIST'S ATTITUDE TO SABBATH

Jesus was certainly no iconoclast and indeed stated that He came not to destroy the Mosaic Law but to fulfil. Accordingly, until the law was abrogated on Christ's cross, He kept the law and observed the sabbath. Luke says the "as His custom was" Jesus entered the synagogue on the sabbath day (Luke 4:16). However, although Jesus kept the sabbath day, His whole approach to it differed, as we can imagine, from the Jews in general and from the Pharisees in particular. When challenged on this occasion over the matter of eating the ears of corn, He gave a crushing reply by asking those doctors of the law if, in their regular studies of the law, they had never read what David did, when he and his company were hungry. He reminds them that on account of hunger, David did a most unlawful thing, by entering into the tabernacle and taking the twelve loaves from the Holy Place and eating them, sharing them with his companions. David did not deem it necessary to die of starvation when bread was available: albeit sacrilegiously obtained. Necessity had, apparently, a much higher claim than ceremonial, and if David could eat the shewbread because he was hungry, surely Christ's disciples could eat a few ears of corn on the same principle. Furthermore, Jesus asked those Pharisees if they had never read in the law how the Priests, by virtue of the very nature of their duties, broke the sabbath continually, yet were deemed to be blameless (Matt. 12:5). Jesus also postulated, in this context, the dilemma of the Rabbi who, required by the law to circumcise a child on the eighth day, finds that the eighth day falls on the sabbath. Is he to break the law by not circumcising the child the eighth day? or is he to violate the sabbath by doing so? In practice, the child was circumcised and the sabbath broken: thus demonstrating the ordinary common sense was not entirely redundant even when dealing with the ordinances and commandments of God.

Yes, until it was abolished, the sabbath had to be observed but certainly not in the miserable and ridiculous way required by the Scribes and Pharisees. Christ's revulsion at the burdensome traditions applied to the sabbath, and foisted upon the people by the religious leaders, is very evident: and their thinly veiled hypocrisy angered Him. They would pull their cow out of a pit on the sabbath but objected to Him healing a cripple on the same day. Such was the spiritual condition of the Jews at the time, and their stunted perception of the sabbath. Jesus reminded them that the sabbath had been made for man (for his well-being): man had not been made for the sabbath. Evidently this fact had been lost sight of. The sabbath was sacrosanct but **common humanity** took precedence. Standing there in the corn-field Jesus concluded His rebuff of the Pharisees by quoting to them the words of God through Hosea (6:6) "**For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice**", and telling them that the Jews had never understood the meaning of that statement, for if they had they would not have condemned the guiltless. (Matt. 12:7). This scripture was evidently regarded by Jesus as a **very important lesson** to learn, for He quoted it more than once (see Matt. 9:13). One wonders if, today, we are any nearer to knowing what God meant by these words?

THE WEIGHTIER MATTERS

You may be asking about the relevance of all this and wondering what it has to do with 20th Century Christians? On the face of it, the Pharisees must often have wondered why Jesus was mainly hostile towards them. After all, they were an elite religious group who, at a time of open religious laxity among fellow Jews, had separated and dedicated themselves to pursue a purification of Jewish religious life, and to seek a revival and strict observance of God's ordinance, as originally intended. (Sounds like the aims of our Restoration Movement)! They also insisted upon an unadulterated Jewish ceremonial and devoted every waking hour to a study of God's word, its interpretation and exposition. Doubtless they expected that Jesus would commend them for all that. They also prayed more vehemently than average; washed

(ritually) oftener, fasted oftener and longer and were the one sect which actively sought proselytes, or converts, to the Jewish faith. They were meticulous, even fanatical, in their exacting observance of the law, and would readily have died for their faith. All this would be regarded as extremely commendable in Church members today, were they to match such high standards; yet Jesus denounced and castigated the Pharisees.

Why did Jesus upbraid them? Was it just because they were hypocritical? Yes, they made long prayers at street corners to be seen of men; they gave alms ostentatiously; they revelled in greetings in the market-place; they disfigured their faces while fasting, to exaggerate the pain etc., but then surely there's a bit of hypocrisy in all of us; we all like the plaudits of men; and we employ double standards: we all demand a higher standard in others than we look for in ourselves. No; there was, perhaps, much more to it than hypocrisy: spiritual blindness was also involved, for they had never understood, (as Jesus said) the words of Hosea 6:6 **"I will have mercy and not sacrifice"**. In their quest for ceremonial accuracy, and their splitting-of-hairs over correct procedure, they had forgotten completely what their religion was all about. Their faith had been reduced to meetings, the observance of rules and small details, and was in reality an empty shell. Jesus said to them, **"Ye pay tithes of mint, anise and cummin (even the smallest tithes) and yet ye have omitted the weightier matters of the law, Judgement, Mercy and Faith."** (Matt. 23:23). They were punctilious in the smallest tithes yet had lost touch with the weightier matters. It's possible to be so pre-occupied with the letter that we lose the spirit. Jesus taught that true godliness consisted not in form but in substance; not in show but in heart: not in details but in the great rules of life; not in strictures on others but in love and understanding. Certainly we must study God's word, and **take every word of it very seriously indeed**, (so did the Pharisees), but when we apply our knowledge of His word we must do it with humility, patience, mercy, understanding, compassion and with a little bit of common-sense. Wise as serpents yet harmless as doves.

EDITOR.

MAN'S PART IN PRAYER

Jesus said, **"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them. for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him"** (Matt. 6:7,8). There are two statements here that should be noted with care, the first being the reason for the second: (1) Jesus prohibited *vain* repetitions. The vain repetitions are not simply repeating a pressing request. Elsewhere the Lord taught persistence in prayer (Luke 11:1-13). "Vain repetitions" are used to make prayer longer, more showy, and call attention to the one praying. It is the disposition to think that God hears for one's much speaking (2) But God knows what one needs even before he asks. There is therefore no need for pretence or a show of words, talent, or disposition when a Christian prays.

WHY PRAY?

The question is often raised, and it is certainly legitimate, "If God knows what we have need of before we ask him, what use is there to pray?" I would not presume to have all the answers, but we can be sure of one thing: there is power on both ends of prayer. The power to answer prayer is, of course, a prerogative of God - that is God's end of prayer. He rules and controls the universe. And there can be no question about his power and promise to answer prayer. He rules and controls. And the Bible clearly teaches that the hand which guides the world is swayed by prayer - that when man prays God responds. This is the aspect of prayer that is usually emphasised, and it must

be emphasised because the Bible emphasises it. Here are just a few of the many Scriptures that could be quoted:

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matt. 7:7,8). "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us: And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (1 John 5:14,15).

POWER AT BOTH ENDS

God does not need our puny efforts at prayer to know and supply our needs. But still he has taught us to pray, and one could not fully obey God without "continuing instant in prayer" (Rom. 12:12). But why, if He knows what we have need of before we ask Him? I believe that the answer lies, at least partially, in the fact that there is *power on both ends* of prayer. God commands man to pray because there is a great benefit to man when he prays. The following show some of the things in prayer, on man's end, that makes it powerful:

(1) Prayer brings one face to face with a problem or need. How could one pray about a matter that he does not know anything about? But when one is brought face to face with a problem, he must, at least to some extent, analyze it. When young Solomon became heir to the throne of Israel he clearly saw the problems confronting one who rules with justice and honour a great nation. When he faced and analyzed the problem, he prayed, "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this Thy so great a people?" (1 King 3:9). If one never comes to grapple with a problem or need he is most unlikely to seek a solution. That is to say a solution is seldom sought or found until the problem is squarely faced and analyzed. There is, therefore, power in facing a problem.

(2) Prayer leads one to the admission that he has a problem or need - that the problem or need is a personal one. As long as one has a problem but is unwilling to admit it, he cannot be helped. Take an alcoholic for example. He is a person who has become so addicted to alcohol that he has lost control of himself (the alcohol has so weakened his will power that he cannot control his drinking). But to make matters worse, he will not admit to himself or to anyone else that he has a drinking problem. As long as this is his attitude, it is highly unlikely that he can be delivered from his addiction. If one has no need, or if he is unwilling to admit a need that he does have, he could show no gratitude even if God did provide the solution. This is true of the whole sin problem. Thus there is power in admitting that we have a problem or need.

(3) Prayer enables one to recognize the fact that he has a problem or need that he cannot handle alone. Prayer is going to God for help - acknowledging that He is a greater power, that He can help, and that He is needed. Under ordinary circumstances, we do not seek for help until we are convinced that we cannot do the job alone. As in the case of the alcoholic, who cannot be helped until he recognizes the fact that this problem is beyond his own power to control - that a power greater than himself is needed, who admits his need and seeks help, when we go to God in prayer we are admitting that we need God's help.

LEAVE IT WITH GOD

When the early Christians prayed for Peter, who was in prison, they realized that

they needed God's help, that the deliverance of Peter was something beyond their own power (see Acts 12). They had a job they could not do alone. When they recognized this, they went to God in prayer. There is no power in recognizing the fact that we have a problem or need too big for us to handle alone - that God's help is needed in the solution.

Prayer enables one to go to God with his problems or needs, to leave them there in His hands (where they belong), and to trust Him to take care of them in His own time and in His own way. When we pray, "**Thy will be done,**" we are simply saying to God, "Here is a problem or need that I cannot handle alone. I bring it to you for help. Take it and bring about the results that will please you. When Thy will is done my prayer is answered."

The serenity of such trust is beautifully stated by Paul, an inspired man: "**For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether therefore, we live or die, we are the Lord's**" (Rom. 14:8). Prayer is taking our problems or needs to God and trusting Him to answer in the way that is best for us in our service to Him. And there is no doubt about it: there is power in taking a problem to the Lord, leaving it with Him, and trusting him to take care of the outcome.

When the Lord commanded us to pray, and yet informed us that He knew our needs even before we made our petitions known, He obviously wanted to emphasize that there is power on man's end of prayer as well as on God's end. That power is not in man's ability to answer his prayers (that power belongs to God alone), but in what prayer does for him. Prayer brings him face to face with his needs; it leads him to the admission that he has a need; it enables him to recognize the fact that he has a need he cannot handle alone; it makes it possible for him to take his need to God and in complete trust leave it for His solution. There is therefore power in man's end of prayer - it is for our own good that God commands us to pray.

H. WINTERS.

JOY

The experience of joy is highly sought after, consequently the joy the Christian should seek is the deep spiritual joy that God can give.

In living, we have all experienced the effect of joy in our lives. Even those outwith the Church may experience joy, albeit of no lasting effect.

Words may express joy. In the Hebrew language, I am told, up to ten different words express the word 'joy'. One writer states that the Israelites had more words for joy in their language than any other people of their day, yet strange as it may seem, they rarely experienced great joy of lasting consequence. Shunted about, persecuted, they suffered greatly: much brought upon themselves.

The range of feelings related to joy in the Bible is varied. They included gladness, mirth, peace, contentment, good cheer and exuberance. The concept of "shining" and "springing about" are also included.

In study, we find most Bible references refer mainly to joy in the natural sense. The others, however, related to a deeper spiritual joy in the moral and spiritual sense. There are many wonderful spiritual truths to be found. The sincere Christian needs, as the Bereans, "**To search the scriptures.**"

THE FOUNTAIN OF JOY

Joy, Joy, my heart is full of joy,
 Joy, Joy, my heart is full of joy,
 My Saviour dear, is ever near,
 That's the reason why my heart is full of joy.

Brethren, can we sing these words sincerely from the heart? If not we are indeed missing out on so much. Jesus is the fountain of joy. He is the source. Let us be like the explorers of old and seek the source of the water of life.

Heaven is a place of joy; the scriptures confirm that it is the "wellspring" of all our rejoicing. The angelic response to *creation* was great joy.

"All the sons of God shouted for joy." Job 38:7. Heaven's response to *salvation* was great joy.

"Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." Luke 15:7. The angels sang at the great birth.

"Good tidings of great joy." Luke 2:10. Joy abounds to all who would seek the Lord Jesus.

In reality, however, our journey through life here on earth may not always be joyful. It may, and no doubt at times, be filled with tension and hardship. However, in faith, we may know that great joy awaits us in heaven.

Jesus stated. "Enter thou into the joy of the Lord." Matt. 25:21.

From Heaven real joy is the experience of those of the Kingdom. Brethren, we have much to be joyous about.

FULLNESS OF JOY

The fullness of joy comes from being attuned to the presence, power and word of the Lord. Do we follow Jesus? Oh yes, but how far behind in the footsteps? Or is it that we have fallen far behind with blessings few and far between, with joy on the wane? Loss of joy comes through loss of contact with God. This has happened to many. We remember the case of King David. Sin destroyed his happiness and peace, and he cried: "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation." Psalm 51:12.

Joy did return through confession, cleansing and forgiveness. Perhaps we need to recall this lesson today. God's word relates "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." John 25:11.

"In thy presence is fullness of joy." Psalm 16:11.

The Christian who is experiencing joy is that soul who is relying upon His word, who is resting in the confidence of God's strength.

FELLOWSHIP OF JOY

There should be a real sense of joy whenever Christians meet. Real joy resides in the community of believers. As I write, my mind relates to the joy of our own annual social at Newtongrange. The gathering of the saints creates real joy.

"Fulfil ye my joy that ye be likeminded." Phil. 2:2.

FUNCTION OF JOY

The practical lesson of scripture is that joy is related to trials, testing and tears. Trouble and joy, it seems, go hand in hand. Seed sown in trouble may end with a harvest of joy.

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into various trials." Jas. 1:2.

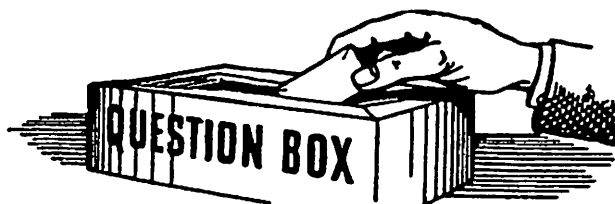
"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Psalm 126:5

Christian joy is not a fleeting emotion, it is an attitude to life. It is an inner strength and assurance that blessing awaits the individual who seeks aright the Kingdom.

The psalmist of old suggests that weeping endures for a night, but joy comes in the morning. Psalm 30:5. It may be that night refers to this life and morning the new ahead, eternal life in God's presence.

The function of joy is that we might be built up in faith, assurance, so that we in turn will indeed reach that heavenly home prepared by God himself.

A. P. SHARP,
Newtongrange.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

"What stance would the Church be likely to take in the light of the Bible, where a believer married an unbeliever? Or a Church of Christ member marries a non-member?"

I have quoted the question precisely as I received it, because it raises a number of issues, not all of which can be discussed in the space available to us.

What 'stance . . . ?'

The first part of the question arouses my curiosity because it raises its own question. "What stance would the Church be likely to take . . . ?" Are we looking at an event which has not yet occurred, but which is being considered? I wonder!

Furthermore, the question does not ask "What action, should - or would - the church be likely to take?", or "What *reponse* would the Church be likely to make?", but '*what stance*'. The Oxford dictionary states that the original definition of the word '*stance*' is, '*The position taken for a stroke*', and, of course, any golfer could tell you that! However, by common usage it has become a synonym for '*attitude*', or perhaps even '*reaction*'.

'Church'

Before we proceed any further, let us also think about the word '*church*'.

I am always uncomfortable with questions which ask '*What does the Church believe?*', or '*What should the church do?*', because no-one today is qualified or authorized to say what 'the church' believes, or to speak on behalf of 'the Church', using 'Church' in its wider sense. And I wish that certain brethren could understand this fact.

The most anyone can do is to show what the Word of God teaches on a particular subject, or, where there is no explicit scriptural teaching, express a considered personal opinion - always bearing in mind that it is *only* an opinion.

In the context of the question before us, therefore, the word '*church*' probably means the local congregation in which the questioner has membership.

'Attitude'

If we are to discuss the '*attitude*' which should be displayed by the local congregation, when a marital situation occurs such as that which has been described, we have no problem. The church's *attitude* should always be one of concern and care, and not merely one of carping, censorious criticism and condemnation.

It is all too easy, at such a time, for brethren to speak reproachfully and unhelpfully. But perhaps it should also be seen as a time for reflection and self-examination, when those who occupy positions of leadership in the congregation ask themselves to what extent they may have been guilty of failing to give sound guidance to their unmarried brothers and sisters.

If there is one skill in which we have become experts, it is at closing the stable door after the horse had bolted.

'In the light of the Bible'

However, I appreciate the fact that our questioner asks for guidance '*in the light of the Bible*', for this is the phrase which indicates the direction we need to take.

As I see it, the question presents us with two quite different scenarios. We are to consider the case of:-

1. 'A believer marrying an unbeliever', and,
2. 'A Church of Christ member marrying a non-member'.

I wonder if the questioner recognizes that the two are not the same? I rather think that he/she does!

If, then, we are to consider the problem from a scriptural standpoint, we must first appreciate the fact that, whilst we have clear teaching concerning a believer's relationship with an unbeliever, so such clear teaching can be quoted with respect to a 'Church of Christ member' marrying a 'non-member'.

Situation number 1 appears to involve one who holds *'the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ'* as James 2:1 describes it, and one who is *without faith*. In other words, one who does *not* believe; an 'un-religious' person.

Situation number 2, unless I am mistaken, relates to church membership.

It concerns marriage of one who is a member of the Lord's Church, to one who is a member of a religious body which is not named in the scriptures, but which is popularly regarded as 'Christian'; in other words, a member of a denomination.

With the first situation, involving the believer and the non-believer, we can deal confidently, because we have scripture to guide us. With the second situation this is not so. There exists no biblical reference to marriage between a member of the new Testament Church and a member of a denominational body, for the simple reason that the situation itself did not arise in New Testament times. 'Christian denominations', so called, such as we know today, did not then exist.

In a sense, the issue was much simpler and clearer. Reading the New Testament scriptures we find ourselves in a Roman world in which there were Christians - (that is, members of the Church) - Jews, and Pagans.

Today, we must add to these, in our 'multi-cultural society' as it is called, not only an estimated 4 to 500 'Christian' denominations, sects and parties, but a variety of faiths which include the Muslim, Hindu and Sikh religions. And whilst these latter religions can be dismissed immediately from our consideration, as 'non-Christian', and perhaps even 'anti-Christian', we may not be so readily dismissive of others, who claim to believe in the Bible, the God of the Bible and the Lord Jesus.

Certainly, they may be 'non-members', but who is prepared to say they are 'non-believers'?

Yes! I am aware of the fact that what they believe about God and Christ is not sufficient to make them 'Christians' in the New Testament sense, *and that what they believe about the Gospel falls short of obedience to the Gospel*. Nevertheless, they are not 'unbelievers' in the sense in which that word is used in the New Testament.

So how are we to deal with the two situations?

1. 'Believer and Unbeliever'

Where one who *holds the faith* contemplates marriage to one who is *without faith*, 2nd Cor. 6:14 supplies the answer. In the A.V., writing to the church at Corinth, Paul states, "*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers*". Later versions will say, "*Do not be mismatched with unbelievers*".

I still feel that the older version presents the picture more vividly, since it depicts pairs of oxen working side by side, under the same yoke. For them to work effectively they must be of similar or equal strength. There must be no imbalance to cause strain. This is why, in New Testament times no farmer would dream of attempting to plough his field with unmatched animals.

Of course, it has often been pointed out, quite correctly, that this verse applies to other relationships, such as business associations, besides the relationship of marriage. *But it undeniably applies to marriage.*

The kind of problems which inevitably arise when a believer marries an unbeliever

are too numerous to deal with in this article, but it must be obvious that the believer cannot make a real commitment to the Lord, when the marriage partner is not fully supportive. In such a relationship the believer is faced with the need to make unhappy compromises, out of consideration for the unbelieving partner.

2. A member of the Lord's Church to a Denominational member

When a member of the Lord's Church marries a member of a denomination, the problem may not be quite so acute, but there will still be difficulties to be faced and compromises to be made. Although a partnership may be compatible in other respects, socially, intellectually, emotionally and physically, it lacks the most important element which is the source of strength and stability: that of *spiritual* harmony is absent.

The reason why, in these days, so many marriages fail, is that this dimension is missing. In marriage at its highest and best, husband and wife should be able to present themselves *together* before the Lord in worship, and it is sad when one of the partners goes to worship with brothers and sisters in Christ, whilst the other either goes elsewhere, or even remains at home.

Understanding Needed!

To return to a point I made earlier in this article; leaders in local congregations will, I feel sure, recognize the difficulties which face young, unmarried members of the Church today, as they seek for life-partners. In these days, there do not appear to be so many Christian prospects around - as any eligible young Christian will readily tell you. And, therefore, church-leaders will, I hope, show sympathy and understanding.

Writing as one who has been happily married for 55 years and who has seen the difficulties which have beset the lives of many Christians who have become 'unequally yoked', I am very well aware of the seriousness of the problem.

But the situation is not helped by excommunicating those brothers and sisters who are involved in it. I have yet to see anything positive result from that course of action. Such brethren need help so that they may remain faithful. Better to keep them in the fold than to cast them out. They should not be abandoned and forgotten.

Our younger brothers and sisters want to do what is right and what pleases the Lord, Of this we may be sure. But they need to be told what is right; and if church-leaders fail in their duty in this respect, it is quite reprehensible to criticize when things go wrong.

A final thought

When Paul, in 1 Cor. 7:39, writes about Christian widows on the subject of re-marriage, he says that they are free to marry. '*But only in the Lord*'. Let us think seriously about these words. If they mean anything at all, they surely mean that 'Christians should marry Christians'.

(Questions to Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfebank Way, Houston, Renfrewshire, Scotland, PA6 7NZ.)

WORSHIPPING FROM THE HEART

Two facts concerning worship are continuously impressed upon us from the scriptures. One is that man has always worshipped. From Cain and Abel of the Old Testament to this day, man has always sought to reach out in some way to a higher being. The first act of Noah after coming from the ark, was an act of worship. The Patriarchs worshipped God, and the Jews followed the dictates of Moses' law in worship. Wherever man is found today, he is found worshipping someone or something.

The second fact is, that man has not always worshipped, as God would have him to. Cain's sacrifice of farm produce was not accepted by God, and he was told to change. Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, were burned up by God because of false

worship. The Jews continually practised idol worship, and worship of the gods of the nations that surrounded them. The early Church soon fell into problems connected with worship, and the apostasy brought many erroneous practices into the worship of the Church. Millions today worship false gods, or falsely worship the true God.

Our Lord Jesus expressed His will on this matter of worship to the woman at the well in Samaria, as recorded in John 4:1-26. There Jesus revealed that God is seeking those who worship Him in spirit and in truth (verse 23). Worship, therefore, to be pleasing to God must be according to truth. God does not accept just any worship, or worship that to men appears right and acceptable. God wants worship that involves both the mind and the emotions.

CHARACTERISTICS

Three things characterize such worship. These three things concern God himself, others, and our own-selves.

First, we worship to please God, not man. Jesus often condemned worship of his day that was done "to be seen of men." Matthew 6:1-18 and 23:5-7 record such statements. Christ stressed that true worship was directed to God, to please Him (Matt. 6:4,9,18). When we assemble to worship we come together to praise God. We do this in the way He has directed. Our mind is thus centred on God and His Word, and our emotions are allowed to flow freely to express our love to Him. God is the object of our worship.

Secondly, we edify one another in public worship. The early Church began immediately to come together to worship God (Acts 2:42,46). Paul's epistles speak often of different acts of Christian worship. Prayer was to be offered in spirit and with understanding (I Cor. 14:12-19). Singing was to be done "with your heart" (Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16). The Lord's supper was to be a communion, or "joint participation" in the body of Christ to remember Him (I Cor. 10:16,17). It was to be observed in a spiritual manner (I Cor. 11:27-29). Giving was to be done cheerfully, as one has purposed in his own heart (II Cor. 9:7). Preaching was to be true to the word, and done in love (II Tim. 4:1-4; Eph. 4:15).

An emphasis of Christian worship is the interaction of the worship experiences upon one another, as the acts of worship originate from the heart of sincere individuals praising God according to His will. Heartfelt worship not only pleases God, but teaches, inspires, and lifts up those who are present as well.

A **third aspect** of our worship is that it serves to purify our own hearts. Jesus condemned the Pharisees in His day for practising the forms of worship, and leaving out the matters of the heart - justice, mercy, and faith (Matt. 23:23). He did not say forms were unimportant ("these," he said, "ye ought to have done"), but he indicated forms are a means to an end. We must worship with the right forms, but we must also be sure that we practise the "weightier matters."

Spiritual growth should be enhanced by heartfelt worship. Paul indicates that those who fail to understand what they are doing in worship can become sleepy, ill, or even dead spiritually (I Cor, 11:27-30). True worship draws us closer to God, and makes us more deeply aware of His presence. This leads to deeper commitment and consecration in our lives. Proper worship will leave its mark on our daily lives, and help us to live right during the week.

David said of worship, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord" (Psalm 122:1). Christian worship should be an enriching and joyous experience, and looked forward to by all. When seeking honest, sincere, truth-seeking individuals assemble to worship and praise God from the heart, in the ways He has directed us, the result can only be an uplifting and spiritually beneficial to all present. May we worship God in spirit and in truth.

LEARNING THE HARD WAY

A parent comes to the stark realization that his teenage child does not have a viable faith - and in the soul-searching that results the parent sees that God has not been first in his own life. After her marriage has painfully disintegrated, a divorcee realizes that a lasting relationship requires self-denial - but it is too late. A four-year-old child who has been warned of the dangers of fire receives a second-degree burn because he had to see for himself if what he had been told was true. Learning the hard way - why do most of us choose this method to learn life's most important lessons?

EXPERIENCE

It often seems to do little good to tell young Christians or young parents all about the need for wisdom, maturity, and sensitivity, when they have had little experience of the real world. Without it the advice just does not stick. Experience, which comes in two forms, must be the teacher. One learns through *personal experience* by the trial-and-error method, which, in view of the havoc it usually leaves behind, is not the most efficient or healthful. One can also learn vicariously through *the experience of others*, which enables one to avoid many mistakes and pitfalls common to men without first being hurt by them.

Sadly, most people do most of their learning *the hard way*, through personal experience; few men bother to learn the lessons of history. Through agony and through suffering many of us make what we think is a great discovery about the way to live and relate to others, when the principle could have been learned easily, without pain, from a record of the past.

The aphorism of Eric Hoffer is all too true. "The wisdom of others," he writes, "remains dull till it is writ over with our own blood. We are essentially apart from the world; it bursts into our consciousness only when it sinks its teeth and nails into us" (*The Passionate State of Mind*, p. 106). That means we usually have to be hurt by our mistakes before we ever learn the truth about how to live and that God's way is the best. The past, with its endless tales of blunders and foolish suffering, should have warned us. Instead, it lies silent, its wisdom ignored. The suffering continues. Each generation repeats the mistakes of the one before it, and to show its creativity, usually adds a few new ones.

FOR OUR LEARNING

The Bible is history at its best. By recording the tragic errors of Biblical heroes, God is telling us how to avoid the same blunders in our own lives. There is Noah's drunkenness, David's adultery and murder, Eli's lack of parental discipline, Solomon's idolatry, Peter's cowardice, the covetousness of Judas, and more. Their mistakes do not have to be repeated - but they are. Fools will find out for themselves and suffer for it; wise men will find out from others and avoid the pain.

Paul urges us to learn the lessons of history. After rehearsing the sins of God's people as they travelled to the Promised Land, he said: "Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction" (1 Cor. 10:11). In Romans 15:4 he said, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope."

Through the Bible God says that we do not have to learn the hard way. We should take his advice, study the word, and as we read its pages relive the sins of old - then avoid them.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

March 7	1 Kings 17:7-24	Luke 8:40-56
March 14	Exodus 16:9-36	Luke 9:1-17
March 21	Deuteronomy 34	Luke 9:18-36
March 28	Proverbs 16:1-19	Luke 9:37-50

A DEAD GIRL AND A SICK WOMAN

John wrote: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name" (John 20:30,31). The object for recording the miracles in God's revelation must be firmly kept in mind. It is to lead one to a belief in Jesus and to the obtaining of eternal life through Him. To attack the miracles of Jesus is to be on very dangerous ground. In fact, such action is to place oneself in the camp of the enemy - Satan himself.

There are true miracles and there are false miracles. As one writer has pointed out: "To defeat the purpose of God, Satan also engaged in the performance of fake miracles". Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: ". . . even Him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved" (2 Thessalonians 2:9,10). Satan is the greatest counterfeiter the world has seen.

What wonderful miracles Jesus performed here! He healed the woman suffering from the issue of blood and He raised the only daughter of Jairus from the dead. Clearly, Jesus had power over disease and death. Only THE Messenger of God could perform such deeds. Why then did so many not see the miracles for what they were? - true demonstrations of the power of God through His

beloved Son.

JESUS SENDS OUT THE TWELVE

The word "apostle" is from the Greek work *apostolos* and means, literally, one sent forth (*apo*, from, *stello*, to send). The twelve were sent forth "to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick" (9:2). The power they possessed was given by Jesus Himself (9:1). In this vitally-important work, they were to rely on the providential care of God. The record says: "And they departed and went through the towns, preaching and healing everywhere" (9:6). We should not underestimate the impact they must have had on the various communities.

Herod the tetrarch (Herod Antipas) was now hearing about all the works of Jesus and was perplexed (9:7). He said "John have I beheaded: but who is this of whom I hear such things?" (9:9). No wonder he wanted to see the person in question. He would get his wish sometime later (Luke 23:7-12). The circumstances could not have been more tragic. He treated the Master shamefully. One day, like everyone else, he will stand before the judgement seat of Christ. The tables will be turned, but he will receive nothing but righteous judgement.

JESUS FEEDS THE FIVE THOUSAND

This miracle is recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke, which is a reflection of its importance. The number five thousand refers to the number of men, besides women and children (Matthew 14:21). To produce all that food from five loaves and two fish was miraculous indeed. A significant statement is found in verse 17: "And they did eat and were all filled . . ." The left-overs were gathered up and they filled twelve baskets (9:17). This proves that God is a Divine economist.

PETER'S CONFESSION OF CHRIST

Many could not work out who Jesus was. He was such an influential figure

that He had to be accounted for somehow. Some said He was John the Baptist and others that He was Elijah or one of the prophets risen again (9:19). But Peter knew exactly who He was: "The Christ of God" (9:20). The title "Christ" is the Greek form of the Hebrew "Messiah", which means anointed. The Messiah was, and is, the central figure of all Jewish thought. As one commentator has put it: "The Messiah was the Anointed King of God who would bring in the reign of God, and in whom the history of God's people would be consummated and all God's promises fulfilled". Jesus measured up to all the qualifications of true Messiahship. No wonder that men like Walter Scott, the evangelist, thought it was so important a subject that he wrote a whole book on it. In it he stated: "The great doctrine taught in Christianity is that Jesus is the Christ . . . It being there proved that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, it is consequently assumed that nothing He teaches can possibly be false".

The Master charged His apostles not to make Him known at that particular time (9:21). He went on to predict His suffering, death and resurrection (9:22). He also emphasised the conditions of discipleship (9:23-26): God's kingdom would be established in the days of that generation. On that Jesus was very clear (9:27).

THE TRANSFIGURATION

The importance of this event is also seen in the fact that it is found in all three of the synoptic gospels. Moses and Elijah appeared on the mount with Jesus. Jesus was transfigured. The word in the Greek is *metamorphoo*, which means to change into another form. This is how we get our English word metamorphose. I wish to quote Walter Scott again: "Such is the tableau of the transfiguration - a glorious miracle wrought in the person of our Lord Jesus, to evince to all men that he is king Messiah. Again the miracle was designed to

confirm the faith and exalt the hopes of the apostles, and after them the faith and hope of all Christians. The transfiguration should therefore be the theme of our most devout devotion. It should be studied by every disciple who desires to possess a bright and animated hope of the glory to be revealed".

HEALING A BOY WITH AN EVIL SPIRIT

Jesus, during His ministry, had power over demons or evil spirits. These were the fallen angels cast out of heaven after their defeat by Michael and his angels (Revelation chapter 12). They knew Jesus because they had been with Him in heaven, but, remember, their cry to Jesus was always one of knowledge and not of faith. Their rightful place is Tartarus (2 Peter 2:4). I believe that that is where they are today. Jesus triumphed over them all.

Jesus healed the child for the disciples were unable to drive the demon out (9:38-42). It appears they needed greater faith and more fervent prayer (9:41; Mark 9:29). All in all, the father must have been overjoyed by the outcome. Imagine the scene when he returned home with the boy.

WHO WILL BE THE GREATEST?

Jesus used the perfect illustration to get home the message of humility - a little child (9:47,48). An argument had arisen among the apostles over which of them was the greatest (9:46). They still had a lot to learn about the kingdom of God! Humility should be a mark of discipleship because Jesus Himself was humility in perfection. Paul wrote: ". . . He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death on the cross" (Philippians 2:8). A modern song says: "It is hard to be humble". Brethren and friends, in the strength of Jesus, pride can be overcome and a humble spirit can take its place. And, after all, humility leads to exaltation (Luke 14:11; 18:14).

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. A tower in Shinar was also known as what?
2. To what place did Abraham give the name "Jehovah-jireh"?
3. Give the meaning of "Jehovah-jireh".
4. What did Joseph cause to be put in Benjamin's sack of corn?
5. Name the son of Ruth and Boaz.
6. Name the two rivers mentioned in the book of Daniel.
7. Who was Julius?
8. This island was the scene of Paul's shipwreck.
9. The redeemed in heaven carry the branches of this tree.
10. The province where Jesus began His ministry.

THANKS

(And Update on Ruth Coles)

I would like to express my grateful thanks for all the cards, telephone calls and visits received during my 6-week stay in hospital in Dunfermline. I came home on 13/1/99 and have been diagnosed as having Myeloma, a cancerous tumour of the bone marrow in my back. Treatment has started already; with chemotherapy and blood transfusions, and I return to hospital next Tuesday for treatment as a day patient. It is really wonderful to know that so many of my brothers and sisters are praying for me.

My son-in-law, Andy Scott, daughter Catherine and grand-daughter Celina, have moved from Papua New Guinea where they have been working as missionaries. This was Andy's twenty-sixth year of serving the Lord in the Highlands of New Guinea. They felt very strongly that they should move to Scotland to take care of me. Catherine is my only child. The Lord has been good to us and we have been able to get a Council House where we can all live together. Our address is now as follows:

30 Lismore Court, Pitcoudie,
Glenrothes, Fife, KY7 6RB.
Tel: (01592) 743911

In Christian love, Ruth Coles.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Bodwesango, Ghana: We are pleased to hear that the above congregation has four new members. Sara Atla, Joyce Anin, Lucy Trueneboah and Kwame Ampongsem were baptised into Christ in November last year. We commend all of our brethren in Ghana for the hard work they do in spreading the gospel and rejoice as more souls are won for the Lord.

JOHN KNELLER.

Kentish Town, London: We are most happy to report the baptism of Dennis Parsons, on November 15th, 1998, and pray that he will remain faithful in his new life with Christ.

DOROTHY PROUD, (Sec.)

COMING EVENTS

BUCKIE SOCIAL

SATURDAY, 1st MAY, 1999

Details later.

TRANENT SOCIAL

Venue: Loch Centre, Tranent.

Date: 27th MARCH, 1999

Speakers: Bro. John Morgan,
Bro. Robert Marsden.

OBITUARY

Kentish Town, London: We record with sadness the passing of two of our faithful members: Bro. Ray Doyle in August, 1998, and Sister Ruby DeCairos, who died on December 25th, 1998. Bro. Doyle came to Christ late in life and was a sincere and devoted Christian.

Sister Ruby had been sick for a long

time but attended the meetings as often as possible. She bore her suffering quietly - never complaining but always ready with a quiet word and a smile.

We extend our sympathies and prayers to their families and friends.

DOROTHY PROUD, (Sec).

APPEAL FROM NIGERIA

Since my previous appeal in the "S.S." last October, we are still hoping that some brother, or church, will notice our appeal and kindly come to our aid. I continue preaching at Owode-Apa, Badagry, a border town some 32 kilometres away. Five precious souls were saved last May and now we are eight. I also hold weekly Bible Studies striving to plant a growing church there. We have managed to buy a small piece of ground and hope to erect some small structure so that we can meet there early in 1999. Given some help we are optimistic that we can save many souls and that the Church can grow rapidly. Our efforts would be greatly enhanced if we had a public address system for our outdoor preaching work, and although prices are not stable here, £200 would probably be enough to secure one. Any assistance, no matter how small, would be greatly valued. Please contact Brother Emmanuel E. Hokon, P.O. Box 159, Badagry, Lagos State, Nigeria, W. Africa.

GHANA APPEAL

This month we have some medical cases before us which require money for hospital treatment. If anyone can help us, it would be greatly appreciated.

We have purchased and sent 20 copies of "Where Women have no Doctor" books in January we are just over half way achieving our target of giving every congregation a copy.

If anyone would like to help with any of these projects, cheques should be made out to "Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal)", and be sent to - Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife. KY12 0DU.

Thank you IMB for cheque for £100, receipt No. 1106 received 7th Jan. 1999.

1. Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:2,9).
2. The place where he went to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22:14).
3. The Lord will provide (Genesis 22:14).
4. His own silver cup (Genesis 44:2).
5. Obed (Ruth 4:13-17).
6. Uriah and Hittite (Daniel 8:2 and 10:4).
7. The centurion in charge of Paul and his fellow prisoners, on their voyage to Rome (Acts 27:1).
8. Melita or Malta (Acts 28:1).
9. Palm (Revelation 7:9).
10. Galilee (Mark 1:14).

ANSWERS

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