

The Boys' Bugle

Calling all young men to the service of Christ

Vol. 9, Number 2

Summer/Fall 2009



Welcome to The Boys' Bugle

This issue's theme

“Reconciliation”

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Subscription Information:

Please let us know, at least every 4 years, that you want to continue to receive “The Boys' Bugle.” Back issues available. Donations appreciated. Donations include articles, stories, poems, pictures, ideas, letters, and etc. We reserve the right to print anything you send us, unless you specify otherwise. (Our cost per year for printing and postage for both *The Boys' Bugle* and *Heart and Home Harmony* is \$5.20.) Please make checks payable to The Boys' Bugle.

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Notice “TBB” is in Capitals.

The Boys' Bugle & Heart and Home Harmony

are a ministry of the Parishville Christian Church.

The magazine is managed mostly by the Martin family: Luke and Rachel. Our children are: Daniel & Mendy, Ellen & Mike Atnip, Timothy, Emily & Rob Hall, Dawn & Luke Rosenbarker, Joy & Charles Thonus, Melvin, Luray and Britany, Nathaniel (21), Larisa (19), Jonathan (in heaven) and 13 grandchildren.

The editors are: Luke, Rachel, and Melvin. Most of the time we publish 4 issues a year.

We live in the country and manage a number of projects such as: organic pro-

duce, honey, maple syrup, orchard, saw-mill, blacksmithing, sheep, dogs, cows, chickens, earth-moving, fryer-oil for diesel fuel, farm and garden supply store, carpentry, printing, always something to keep us busy! Our children were homeschooled.

TBB was started in 2001 to help fill the need for a Christian boys' magazine.

Any comments, suggestions, submissions, or ideas you may have are greatly appreciated.

If you are ever in the area, we would be delighted for you to stop in for a visit or to worship with us.

On the Cover:

The ducks Melvin raised this spring swimming in Daniel's pond.

Proverb 18:19

A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.

So that if any one is in Christ, that one is a new creature; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. And all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation; whereas God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and putting the word of reconciliation in us. Then we are ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as God exhorting through us, we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For He has made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 MKJV

Reconciliation?

Is it good? Should one get involved?

It is valuable if the parties involved know how to love.

It is trouble if it has greed and selfishness mixed in.

God still asks us to forgive and love.

By Daniel Martin

The only safe and sure way to destroy an enemy is to make him your friend.

Theme for next issue: Restitution

Definition:

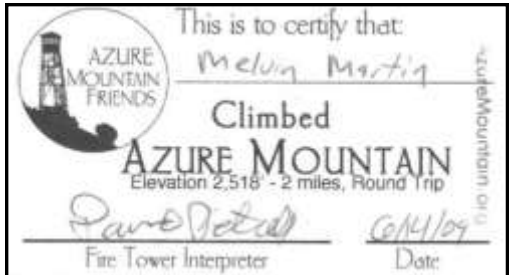
To restore to a former state or position.

Thoughts to ponder:

Is restitution necessary?

Please send us your ideas by
October 31, 2009.

Let your thoughts and writing be
in harmony with God's Word.



Six months after my accident, on June 14, I and a few friends climbed Azure Mountain in the Adirondacks. I didn't know if I'd make it to the top, but I did. A man was there and gave us certificates. In August, I climbed Lyon Mountain, a much harder and longer climb! I thank God I'm getting better. I try to swim in my pond every day. It seems to strengthen my abdominal muscles that were separated by the impact and cut in surgery.

—Melvin Martin

Reconciliation

-- A Brief Look at some Basics – Part I

by James C. Strickler

In the beginning God created man with a desire to enjoy fellowship with his Creator and with others. However, in order for humans to experience the fulfillment of that fellowship, we must follow the rules of the game plan originally set in place by the Creator. The Apostle John wrote, When we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.¹ We believe that the first Adam originally basked in the pleasure of fellowship with his Creator God and with Eve.

Not surprisingly, at many places and times man decided not to play by the rules. That original and glorious fellowship with God was horribly marred. Both the Biblical record and man's history prove that harmonious and full-of-life relationships with others are sometimes difficult to establish, occasionally troublesome to maintain, and frequently arduous to rebuild when broken or destroyed. Yet God set out to reconcile Himself to mankind and to provide a plan and program for humans to become reconciled to each other.

God ordained his people to engage in the ministry of reconciliation.² We are called to be peacemakers.³

As we ponder the need and methods for putting the pieces back together, many questions come to mind: Is it even possible for estranged people to become reconciled? From God's perspective, how important (spelled **t-i-m-e** and **e-n-e-r-g-y** and **c-o-m-p-a-s-s-i-o-n**) is it for us to become reconciled with others? What does the Biblical design for reconciliation entail? Has God shown us particular procedures for reconciling with others? Why do peo-

ple sometimes fail at reconciliation attempts? What helpful examples allow us to believe that people once at enmity with each other can become working partners in building the kingdom of God?

This article will focus on the practical side of God's call upon Christians to reconcile with each other.

How important is reconciliation?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commands, "First be reconciled, then..." worship.⁴ It is clear from His statement that reconciliation must become a priority. Reconciliation with those in the Church who have ground for complaint against us must take place before we attempt worship of God, and especially before we participate in communion service. In his epistle, John convincingly proves the disloyalty of those who pretend to love God while failing to persist at reconciliation attempts with their brethren. Love for another, practically lived out among church members is the convincing banner to the world that we are disciples of Jesus. Conclusion: The world will be convinced we are true believers when they see us reconciled and harmoniously working together. When people in our local communities observe our dysfunctional separations,⁵ they often conclude that we Christians are no different than they. Biblically reconciling is very important to our

¹ | John 1:7

² | I Corinthians 5:18-19

³ | Matthew 5:9

⁴ | Matthew 5:23-24

⁵ | Barna Research Group, www.barna.org

God and for validating the Gospel message to those in the community.

What is reconciliation?

In 1828 Noah Webster defined reconciliation as the renewal of friendship after disagreement or enmity. Conciliating anew; calling back into union and friendship the affections which have been alienated; restoring to friendship or favor after estrangement; as in, reconciling men or parties that have been at variance.

What principles does the Biblical design for reconciliation entail?

When the Creator designed humans to prosper in the joy and blessings of harmonious fellowship, He provided a maintenance plan in His Book. In a nutshell, the repair section of His maintenance plan is summarized in Matthew 18:15-17. Jesus concisely presents many of the important Biblical principles of reconciliation in these few verses. Several of these principles include: initially determining if the concern is sufficiently serious so as to pass the test of actually being a “sin”, yet refusing to connive;⁶ getting the facts - establishing an accurate understanding and an honest appreciation of what, if anything, actually happened or was done;⁷ learning who did what and who was responsible;⁸ discerning what was wrong about what was done or what unrighteous character qualities, if any, were demonstrated;⁹ carefully choosing what words to describe the wrong doing while cautiously avoiding any attack on the character of the individual (s) involved;¹⁰ starting at the lowest level and involving only those who are either involved in the problem or the solution;¹¹ exhibiting an humble attitude and using edifying words that convey the goal of helpful reconciliation

and not hurtful judgment.¹²

What particular procedures does the Bible provide for reconciling with others?

Based on the above mentioned principles, it would seem that a wise starting point is to gain a clear, precise and accurate understanding of what actually happened that initially caused the concern to be raised. Learn who did what when. Often it is important and helpful to establish a precise timeline so there is no confusion later as to what events came first and what came as a response to the initial occurrences.

The importance of getting a clear picture of the objective facts and observable events cannot be over emphasized. No judgments or conclusions should be arrived at before hearing all sides and by listening non-judgmentally to both or all parties involved. Ask such questions as, “What did you actually see so-and-so do?” or “What did you do?” or “What did you say?” or “What did you hear?” Ask more “What” questions than “Why” questions. This style of question tends to lead toward objectivity in the initial assessment.

After all the necessary and essential details are established and the order of events is clearly articulated, the process of establishing every word¹³ must be carried out. A combination of dialog and questions are helpful at this point. For example, a party may ask,

⁶ Matthew 18:15

⁷ Deuteronomy 13:14

⁸ Deut. 16:18-19; Pro. 18:13; Isaiah 11:3-4

⁹ Deuteronomy 1:16-17 and John 7:24

¹⁰ Matthew 18:16 and Luke 15:18-19

¹¹ Matthew 18:15-17

¹² Daniel 12:3; Galatians 6:1; Hebrews 12:13; and James 5:19-20

¹³ Matthew 18:16

did I hear you say, “such and such?” Repeat in your own words what you believe you heard so as to clarify your own comprehension and increase the precision of your discernment. If we are to be successful in asking questions, care must be taken to explore humbly, tenderly, and softly so as not to evoke fear or reaction in the person we are addressing. At all times, an attitude and atmosphere of “I wish to help” must be conveyed and maintained. The moment judgmental questioning begins, movement down the path toward reconciliation can be slowed, hindered and even blocked.

At the point when both and all parties agree on the facts, it is appropriate to discern both the degree and type of “trespass.” Were the actions unintentional and therefore demonstrate no more than careless irresponsibility? Was there a misunderstanding on the part of one party? Were there acts of unkindness committed? Were hasty judgments made before learning all the facts resulting in false accusations? Were inaccurate judgments made because not all the facts were considered? Were gross sins committed that need to be confessed publically? Were the sins of a private nature (unkind thoughts) that can be dealt with privately? At this point, diligence in accuracy is foundational to success. A wrong diagnosis or careless analysis impedes progress toward reconciliation and may even offend one of the parties.

A few thoughts regarding written notes: Taking notes may sometimes prove beneficial; however, remember that the goal is to resolve differences, not to document sins. It should be done discretely and with caution. Therefore, be guarded about what you commit to writing. The intention is that any note-taking should ultimately

lead to helpful remedies and not crushing judgments. After reconciliation is achieved, notes should be destroyed.

When both parties agree on the judgments, both the degree and the accuracy of the judgments, attention usually turns toward the final stages of reconciliation. There are three final elements vital to reconciliation: confessing, repenting, and committing.

Confessing is acknowledging a fault, trespass or sin while admitting responsibility in having committed the act. Confessing is saying it as it really is.

Repenting is demonstrating real penitence and sorrow or deep contrition for sin, offence, or wrong-doing.

Committing involves promising not to do it again.

Here is an example of how the final stages coupled together might actually look in a real life situation.

Alfred: “I now realize that when I said, ‘_____’ I was inaccurate, unkind, careless, and hurtful. I was wrong for making those statements. I realize that Jesus would not have said what I said. I now commit to never saying that kind of statement about you in the future. I don’t ever want to cause you to feel the way my actions and words have caused you to feel in the past.

Will you pray with me that God would give me the grace to treat you kindly and carefully in the future?

Who are God’s examples of reconciliation?

Job and his three friends come to mind immediately. Beyond the pain of losing family, possessions, and the support and respect of his wife, Job bore the scorn of many unjustified, false, and painful accusations. Accusa-

tions from friends. Accusations so snarled, even a good lawyer would have had trouble defending against. Yet Job had no advocate – no mediating “daysman.”¹⁴ Scripture gives no evidence that Job’s three friends edified or treated him in such a way that Job was built up or encouraged. Rather their statements caused Job to feel as if his friends were “miserable comforters.” Certainly the relationships between Job and his three friends were strained nearly to the point of estrangement.

What turned the situation around? Job confesses and repents. God speaks definitively giving clear instructions about who is to do what. Job is commanded to pray for his friends. God promises to accept Job’s prayer before he prays. His friends are told to offer sacrifices. God promises not to recompense the friends according to their deeds. It appears that Job and his friends have reestablished friendship and favor.

And it came to pass that Joseph, the dreamer boy, and his brethren, the practical herdsmen, are not enjoying each other’s company. Narrowly escaping murder by his alienated brethren, Joseph is providentially protected by God and brought safely into Egypt. Years later, the consciences of the brethren are reactivated and softened as God directs Joseph to take them through a series of curious but purposeful experiences. Imagine being held responsible and accountable for stealing the silver cup -- the silver cup you didn’t steal!

At the mercy of Joseph they come to their senses and begin moving toward an attitude of penitence. The pressure increases! Gradually and astonishingly they find themselves prepared to confess that “God had found

them out.”¹⁵ To suggest that their confession accurately portrays their past actions is at best a far stretch. Their confession is a forced and “legal” confession, not an “evangelical” one. Nevertheless, it is a confession.

Deep down inside, the brethren are scared! Could it be that their apparent penitence is motivated by fear¹⁶ rather than by Godly sorrow?¹⁷ Sadly Scripture is silent concerning any repentance by the brethren and any commitment to future comradeship with Joseph.

One can only imagine what a legacy and vision this family might have left future generations if, on that day, inside the walls of Joseph’s house in Egypt, confessions had been complete, repentance had been sincere, and commitments to band together harmoniously as brethren had been solemnized. Historians have long since marveled at the amazing accuracy of the prophetic words spoken by dying Jacob in Genesis chapter 49. Could we say that while reconciliation between Joseph and his brethren was evident a little bit, it was not as glorious as it might have been?

We certainly cannot overlook Hosea and his wife. What a story! Have you read the prophet Hosea recently searching diligently for principles leading to reconciliation?

As one ponders the story of Hosea and Gomer, we become overwhelmed by the pain of alienation and the aching sting of estrangement suffered by both husband and wife. Will they ever get it together in a lasting way? Why all the wasted years of unremorseful and unrepentant stonewall-

¹⁴ Job 9:33

¹⁵ Genesis 44:16

¹⁶ Genesis 50:15-21

¹⁷ II Corinthians 7:10

ing? God cries instructively: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.”¹⁸

OUCH!

Here we see the offended party initiating reconciliation. WOW! What amazing love must have motivated Hosea?

The story of Hosea and Gomer inspires us to faithfully persist in our sometimes apparently futile attempts at reconciliation. Never, never, never give up! –despite the pain of failure and rejection by those we are commanded to love and respect. May our God grant us the grace and persistence seen in Hosea’s courtship and wooing of Gomer!

What issues sometimes prohibit people from succeeding when attempting reconciliation?

As is often the case, our seemingly best efforts sometimes are frustrated. Reconciliation is difficult and requires hard work.¹⁹ Yet Jesus gives a title of commendation to those who are able to obtain a favorable outcome when trying to resolve conflicts.²⁰ What follows is a partial list of factors that sometimes hinder successful reconciliation.

1. Inaccurately characterizing the circumstances
2. Making erroneous judgment(s) about the circumstances
3. Jumping to a conclusion before considering the perspectives from both or all sides
4. Not starting at the lowest level of the Matthew 18 process
5. Focusing on describing an individual(s) rather than concen-

trating on actions, words, or attitudes

6. Not carefully listening or “hearing” by either party
7. Repenting of the outward actions and not the sin or attitude of the heart
8. Unwillingness to make amends in the life of the offended person
9. Advancing prematurely up the steps of Matthew 18
10. Failing to provide an advocate for either party

In summary...

God calls us to bless others and to be reconcilers. We should be motivated by the awareness that God is reconciling the world to Himself. He is our example. We need to be reconciled with those closest to us: spouses, children, parents, and those in the church. As we work at reconciliation with those around us, our example will encourage others. We will hone and sharpen our skills as we learn and improve from our mistakes. We will indeed encourage others as we help them to reconcile with others.

To be continued—Part 2: An account of a church reconciliation.

James C. Strickler lives at Mountville, Pennsylvania where his wife Fern and he continue to home school their children. The principles and practices discussed in this article became evident to the author as he raised his ten children and as he served as principal at Shalom Christian Academy in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania.

¹⁸ Hosea 4:6

¹⁹ Proverbs 18:19

²⁰ Matthew 5:9

The Road Travelled from Death to Life

by Irvin Redcay

We notice how groundhogs dig holes and little do we know that we do the same thing. Those holes can get awfully deep, and dark. I dug myself in with my pride, selfishness, and living my life my way. I was running, always running – but God caught up with me. Please take a few minutes and let me tell you my story:

I was raised in a conservative Mennonite family, the oldest of 12. We lived on a farm, near Terre Hill, and at the age of 7 moved to Lebanon. I didn't like school, and quit at age 14. I got a permit to do farming, and shared in the financial responsibility of my family.

We went to church (at Fair View or Mt. Zion, part of Weaverland conference) most every Sunday and were considered "ok" if we went to church regularly. But since the services were in "Dutch," (Pennsylvania Dutch or Plattdeutsch, a German dialect) they meant little to me. My mom really knew the Lord and would often read the Bible and witness to me. At age 16, I started attending Shirksville Mennonite Church in Lebanon, was baptized and joined the church. I knew I had to join a Mennonite church in order to get a car. Cars became important to me and I owned several. When I started to date, Mother wanted me to go with girls from church, but I chose girls elsewhere.

I started in the carpentry business early, working with Dad. We had worked full time together in farming. In 1958 when I was about 18 years old, I had an accident at Hinkletown Sensenig Mill. I was doing construction work, and was on top of a dust collector, when suddenly I tumbled 20 feet down landing on my head. My frac-

tured skull kept me several days in the Ephrata hospital.

One day Nelson Hoover officially introduced his sister, Shirlene, to me and we began dating. We were married on April 28, 1962 in Carpenter Mennonite Church (which was Shirlene's Church) by Mahlin Witmer. After we were married, I joined Carpenter Church. We set up housekeeping near Morgantown in a small apartment upstairs from a spring house. The rent was \$35 a month in exchange for help with the milking.

We were happy, but I was restless and had several different jobs on the side. I worked as a stone mason for a while and then went back to carpentry. After only 9 months of marriage, we bought a new house on Chestnut Hill in Berks County. We lived there for 8 years. Our daughter, Sandy was born there.

In 1968, I bought land from the Zerbe Sister's Nursing Home in Narvon and built a new house. Later, I started my own business as a general contractor, called Irvin Z. Redcay, Builder. Douglas and Rodney were born while we lived there in a small development. I built about 7 houses, sometimes selling the house we lived in and moving to another house built by me in the development.

My business started to fail in 1975. I wanted to be both a playboy and a business man, but it did not work. I wanted to run away from my responsibilities, but I still went to church. I was trying to serve two masters. We went to Goodville church for a while, and there were several times that Pastor Harold Reed paid a visit to our home. I made several commitments,

but they were not true commitments. My twisted way of thinking was like a shrew. I thought, “No one will know what I’m really like. As long as no one sees me, and I look OK, it’ll be OK.” But that was a lie from the pit of hell.

In 1979 I filed bankruptcy and in 1980 I lost everything. Then I thought, “Well, I want to do better.” So, I chose to move on a farm in Manheim. We got our meat, milk and free rent in exchange for milking cows. That suited me, but it still wasn’t the answer. I started running with other guys, and then with other women. Once, I went out west for 2 weeks snowmobiling. I didn’t want to be on the farm anymore, and finally Shirlene said that she was sick and tired—I had to make a choice. “You choose me or her,” she said. I thought, “I’ll go, but she’ll be begging me to come back.” But she didn’t and we were separated for 8 ½ years. The pastor team from Goodville Mennonite Church came and gave me a choice: either repent or be excommunicated. I chose excommunication. Then, it was like the devil took charge. I packed my stuff and left home April 1982. The 3 children were 10, 11 and 18.

My wife moved in with her dad in the very house I had built 4 years earlier. Since Shirlene’s mother had died in January 1982, it was meeting a mutual need as she cared for her “Pop” in exchange for having a place to live. It was a miserable time for her and the children as Pop was difficult to live with. The boys, 10 and 11, had a trying time, especially as Pop tried to be “Dad” and disciplined them. Peace was lacking in the home. Shirlene stayed in that hard situation for three years, and then in 1985, her dad had a stroke and was moved to a nursing home.

I had moved off the farm in Manheim because I refused to milk and lost

my job. I moved to Morgantown, bought a new truck, but couldn’t make the payments. The bank came looking for it, and I almost lost my only wheels.

Since I now had no family financial responsibilities, I thought I would get out of debt. During the next several years, I moved from place to place and buried myself in gambling, car shows, drink, and loose living. I worked in numerous stores repairing vacuum cleaners, but even as a store manager, I lied and continued to live in sin, going my own way. In 1988, I ended up in a small one room cottage or summer house in Goggelsville.

I would call home every now and then, but my boys didn’t relate to me when I called. They were hurting, but I could not understand why they wouldn’t talk with me. Shirlene said that the house was always open, full of other kids. There was no drinking or smoking, but the house was open for the youth to play games, watch TV, and have snacks.

The boys could have gone out and rebelled, but they didn’t. They saw where their dad was and they didn’t want to be like their Dad. They stayed in the church and all of them accepted the Lord as Savior and were baptized.

My wife, Shirlene was cleaning houses during the day in addition to jobs on Tuesday and Friday evenings, and all day Saturday. She could not be home with the boys, and her brother, Lloyd often helped to watch over them. Sandy got married in September, at all but 19.

In 1988 I started working for myself again. I got a job here and there but I was still fuming on the inside. In 1989 Shirlene took me to court for back support. My lawyer asked, “Why don’t you get a divorce?” I was sepa-

rated for over 5 years and figured that it was time, so I paid him for the divorce. He told me to sign the papers, and then he would serve them. I put those papers in back of my truck seat, where they stayed for 3 years. I couldn't sign them. I figured, "The papers don't mean anything, I'm already living a divorced life."

On November 19, 1990, while at work on the job below Morgantown, my nose started to bleed. This had never happened before, and after a time, it finally stopped. I went home, and had a dinner date at Yoder's, but felt miserable and dropped her off early. That night I didn't sleep well. In the morning, it started bleeding again, but when I laid down it would stop. I decided to go to my sister's place, but on the way, it started to really bleed. Since no one was around, I called the doctor from her house. He said I was to hold my nose and put my head back. When I did this however, I started choking. The doctor could hear this over the phone, and ordered me to the hospital immediately.

As I drove myself to the West Reading hospital, I used an entire roll of paper towels which I had unexplainably put into my truck the day before. Racing down the highway, the speedometer was buried and cars swerved out of my way. They looked at me in horror as the complete roll of paper held to my nose was dripping with blood. I nearly blacked out 2 times.

At the hospital, a specialist was waiting. Not finding where the bleeding was originating, he packed my nose with 7 ft. of gauze. The pain was excruciating. Finally in my room, I called my sister Ruth and told her that I was admitted, then called Shirlene and my daughter Sandy. Later, Sandy called

me back. My buddy answered the phone because I was coughing up blood at the time. She could hear me gagging, as my buddy said, "He can't talk now, he's bringing up blood."

Sandy became extremely upset as she remembered a dream she had two years earlier. In the dream, I had died, and at my funeral, no one was crying or cared. Now, she called her brother Rodney and broke down crying, "We have to get to Dad before it is too late!"

Earlier that same day was the first time that Rodney had prayed for my salvation. During the recent spiritual Renewal Meetings at Carpenter Church, Rodney was convicted when he saw God's heart of love for me. Rod had been bitter up to this time.

While in the hospital, I was in a lot of pain. My whole side of my face was swollen and black and blue. Two of my sisters came in to see me on Thursday evening (Thanksgiving), and asked if they could pray for me, and I said "yes." They couldn't believe it, because when Shirlene and Sandy were in to see me that morning, I was still hard in my spirit.

A lot of people came in to see me on Friday evening. I was uneasy with some of my "friends" and was relieved of some of my guilt when Shirlene went home early.

Saturday morning the doctors took the packing out - all 7 feet in one big yank. Such pain, I never experienced before! It was horrible! Saturday afternoon, pastors Glenn Hoover and Don Himmelright came in to see me, and asked if they could pray. I said "Yes," then they asked if I was ready to change my life style, and again I said, "Yes." "OK," they replied, "Repeat the sinners' prayer." I then confessed my sin and asked Jesus Christ to forgive me - and he did! While they were

praying, all of a sudden, off to the left side of my bed, I saw angels. I said, "Glenn, things are going to be different!" and I knew it would be.

Saturday evening I called Shirlene and asked, "Did you hear what I did? I'm coming home. Things are going to be different." Between Saturday and Monday I received my healing. I actually had a brain aneurism and they had prepared me for surgery, but the bleeding stopped. The reason that it did not kill me was that the blood seeped out of my brain cavity through the skull fracture I had received in my fall at age 18.

Sandy told me later that as she prayed, she had received peace. The thought, "He's going to make a very powerful commitment," flooded her being.

I was released Sunday at noon. Shirlene picked me up, took me to Sandy's for lunch, and then took me to her home, which has become our home.

I got the divorce papers from behind the seat of my truck. I went to church and before the congregation I confessed, testified that Christ saved me, and tore up the divorce papers. I

am thankful God spared me from going through with it.

God has a way of bringing us to him. I thought I had everything but I lost my family, my working men, my house and my business, and almost my life. It has now been 5 years since Jesus gave me new life. Let me tell you some of what the Lord has done for me:

He has given me peace with my adversaries;

He has delivered me from cursing, gambling, drink, etc.;

He has restored my marriage and family relationships, and given me new friends.

If you are like the ground hog that dug a hole 'till he was up against a stone and had no place to go, you can turn to Jesus. He will set you free. He will forgive your sin. Jesus loves you and cares about you. He alone can give you real joy and peace.

If you have any questions, you may call me: Irvin Redcay, 717-656-9575

Irvin and Shirlene Redcay live in Leola, Pa. He is my cousin. Thanks, Irvin, for sharing your story. —RM

Different Meanings of the Word Israel

1. First, it is the name given to Jacob.

2. Second it denotes his fleshly descendants, that is the Jewish nation.

3. It is employed of the ten tribes, the northern kingdom, also called Samaria or Ephraim in contradiction from the Southern Kingdom, the tribe of Judah.

4. Fourth it is applied to the whole of God's people spiritually.

(Gal, 6:16) Also in Romans chapters nine and ten it states that fleshly Israel does not count any longer as the people of God. Also Rom. 2:28-29 states he is not a Jew which is one outwardly but inwardly. You have to be born again to be a spiritual Jew.

5. In Isa. 49:3 it is applied to Christ himself, as identified with his people.



The Story of Joseph

(Based on Genesis 37-46)

By Melvin Martin

Joseph had 10 half-brothers – Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Gad, Asher, Dan and Naphtali. He had one full brother, Benjamin, but his mom died at his birth. Joseph was his father’s favorite son because he was born when his father was old.

Now Joseph lived in the land of Canaan with his father and brothers and sisters. When he was 17 years old, he spent some time with his brothers feeding the flocks of cattle and he reported to his father the evil things they were doing. Being he was his father’s favorite son, his father made him a coat of many colors. Then his brothers hated him and couldn’t speak peacefully to him.

Then Joseph dreamed that they were binding sheaves in the field and his sheaf stood upright and all his brother’s sheaves gathered around and made obeisance to his sheaf. He told his brothers of the dream and they hated him all the more and said, “Will you indeed reign over us? Or will you indeed have dominion over us?”

Then Joseph dreamed another dream. He dreamed that the sun, the moon, and eleven stars made obeisance to him. And he told his father and brothers. His father said to him, “What is this dream that you have dreamed? Will I, your mother, and your brothers indeed come to bow down to you to the earth?” His brothers envied him, but his father observed the saying.

Later his brothers took the flocks of cattle to another place to feed them. Joseph’s father sent him to his brothers

to find out how things were going. When his brothers saw him coming, they conspired against him and made plans to kill him. They were going to throw his body in a pit and tell his father an evil beast ate him. Then see what will become of his dreams. But Reuben convinced them to not kill him but to throw him into a pit because he wanted to go back later and save him. When Joseph got there, they took his coat off and threw him into an empty pit. Then they sat down to eat. While they were eating, some traders on their way to Egypt came by. So they sold him for a slave. They took Joseph’s coat of many colors, dipped it in blood, and sent it to their father and told him they found it. His father concluded an evil beast ate him. He mourned for a long time and wouldn’t be comforted.

The traders sold Joseph as a slave in Egypt to a captain of the guard. Everything Joseph did prospered because God was with him, so his master made him overseer of his whole house. As time went on, God blessed the Egyptian’s house because of Joseph. Joseph was a goodly person and well-favored.

As time went on, his master’s wife had a ‘crush’ on him and wanted him to lay with her, but Joseph refused because he knew it was a great sin. His master’s wife persisted day by day, but Joseph did not heed. It is one thing to refuse a temptation one time, but to refuse day by day is another. Then one day she got forceful and caught him by his coat. He ran off, leaving his coat in her hand. Then she made up a story. She turned the thing around and made it look like Joseph was the bad guy.

She used the coat as evidence. When her husband heard the story, he got angry, and cast Joseph into prison. It happens too often that the person in the wrong turns the truth around and makes the righteous person look bad. Or at least they want it to look like both sides did something wrong. I think sometimes the person in the wrong even believes their own lie about the righteous person.

God was merciful and was with Joseph in the prison. God gave him favor in the sight of the prison keeper and the prison keeper committed all the prisoners into Joseph's hand.

As time went on, Pharaoh got angry with the chief of the butlers and with the chief of the bakers and threw them into the prison where Joseph was. Sometime later they both had dreams. And they were sad because they didn't know what the dreams meant. When Joseph heard of it he said, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me them, I pray you." In the butler's dream there was a vine with 3 branches, and the branches gave grapes, and he pressed them into a cup and gave the cup to Pharaoh. Joseph gave the interpretation of the dream; 3 branches are 3 days, in 3 days Pharaoh will return you to your former job. Joseph asked the butler to remember him and ask Pharaoh to get him out of the prison, for he is a stranger in the land and didn't do anything wrong to be in prison. When the baker saw the interpretation of the dream was good for the butler, he told Joseph his dream. In his dream, he had 3 white baskets on his head. In the top basket were baked goods for Pharaoh and the birds ate the baked goods out of the basket. Joseph interpreted his dream too and said that in 3 days Pharaoh will hang him in a tree and the birds

will eat his flesh. In 3 days Pharaoh had a birthday feast and restored the butler to his job and hung the baker, as Joseph interpreted. But the butler forgot about Joseph.

Two years later Pharaoh dreamed two dreams. In the first one, 7 fat cows came up out of the river and ate grass in a meadow. Then 7 skinny cows came out of the river and ate the fat cows. The skinny cows were still just as skinny afterwards as before. In the second dream 7 heads of grain, fat and good, grew up on one stalk. Then 7 thin ears, blasted with the wind, grew up after them. Then the 7 thin heads of grain ate the 7 fat heads. In the morning, Pharaoh was troubled because of the dreams. And none of the wise men or magicians could interpret the dream.

Then the butler remembered Joseph and they called him out of prison, and Pharaoh told the dreams to Joseph. God told Joseph what the interpretation of the dreams was. Both dreams meant the same thing. There were going to be 7 good years of harvest and then 7 very bad years. So he told Pharaoh to find a wise man to gather together food during the 7 good years so there is food to eat during the bad years. Pharaoh thought Joseph was very wise, so he set him over his house and people; only in the throne was Pharaoh greater. Also Pharaoh gave him a wife and great honor. Imagine the extreme change in such a short time. Joseph probably had forgotten what good times were like. Joseph was 30 years old by this time.

Joseph gathered together huge amounts of grain in the 7 years of plenty. Then during the 7 years of famine, everyone came to him for food—even all other countries came.

Now back in the land of Canaan Joseph's family got hungry. They

heard there was food in Egypt. So the brothers went down to Egypt to buy food. Joseph's father wouldn't let Benjamin come along for fear that mischief could happen to him. When Joseph saw his brothers, he pretended he didn't know them and spoke roughly to them. Joseph remembered his dreams and accused them of being spies and coming to cause trouble. They ended up telling Joseph some about their family. So Joseph gave them a test to see if they were true men – he gave orders for one of them to go fetch their youngest brother and the rest to stay in prison until they return. Then he threw them all in prison. After 3 days, Joseph changed his orders, and kept Simeon in prison, and sent the rest home with food for their families, with orders to bring the youngest the next time they come. The brothers realized they were being punished for the way they treated Joseph and wouldn't heed when he begged them to have mercy on him, even though they saw the deep grief they were causing him. They didn't realize that Joseph understood their language, for Joseph talked to them through an interpreter. Joseph wept. When they filled their bags with grain, he restored them all their money in their bags. At the same time that Joseph was being very rough with his brothers, he also showed love in that he sent them home with food and their money. He wasn't taking a chance of them not having enough money to come back to buy more grain. Joseph truly cared about his brothers.

When the grain was all eaten, they had to go back to Egypt. The father refused to let Benjamin go along, but the brothers wouldn't go without him because they were given strict orders to bring him or else they would be

taken as spies. When Judah said he will take the blame if mischief happens, and when they really needed food, the father told them to take gifts, double money for the grain, plus the original money that was in their bags, and Benjamin, and they left to go buy more food.

When Joseph saw Benjamin, he called them in to eat. They were afraid Joseph was setting a trap for them, so they told him about the money they found in their sacks. Joseph said he had their money, that God gave it to them. Then he brought Simeon out of prison to them. They gave him their gifts and bowed down to him. When Joseph saw Benjamin, he went to a secret place to weep. Joseph set them all in order of age at the table and gave Benjamin 5 times as much to eat as the rest.

By this time, Joseph had good reason to know that his brothers were different than they were, yet, as the story goes along, we see that he was not satisfied and roughly tested them more. I know of people today that would angrily and condemningly mark a man like Joseph as unforgiving and evil, rather than humbly confess their own sins that brought the situation about.

Joseph commanded the steward to fill their sacks with grain and put every man's money in the sacks and he put his silver cup in Benjamin's sack. When they were not very far away, Joseph sent his steward after them, and he found the silver cup in Benjamin's sack. Then they tore their clothes and returned to the city. They fell to the ground in front of Joseph and offered to be his servants. But Joseph said only the one with the silver cup will be a servant and the rest shall return in peace. Then Judah explained the situa-

tion to Joseph and how he became surety for Benjamin and that he would like to be the servant and let Benjamin free.

Then Joseph wept and told them that he was Joseph and asked again if his father was still alive. They were speechless. Joseph explained to them that God had sent him to Egypt to preserve life and they shouldn't be angry with themselves. That Joseph was Lord of all Egypt and there still were 5 years of famine left, so they shall bring his father and families down to Egypt to live. Then they wept and kissed and talked to each other. Then Joseph sent them with wagons and good things to go get their father. Their father hardly believed them until he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent. So the whole family moved to Egypt. When Joseph met his father, he wept on his neck a good while.

After their father's death, the brothers were fearful that Joseph would get even with them for the evil they had done to him. They asked for forgiveness for the wrong they had done and said they were his servants. Joseph re-assured them that God meant it for good and forgave them. We have no record that they asked for forgiveness before their father's death. It amazes me how someone with a caring and upright heart can do great evil to someone and never say they are sorry. They will put great effort into making havoc of relationships when they are angry, and then assume all will be fine if they do nothing for long enough.

I was impressed with Joseph's strength, wisdom, and cleverness. He did not 'forgive and forget' as the so-called Christians of today say you should do. He clearly remembered the

evil he received from them many years before and in a very wise and clever way tested them to see if they were any different. He didn't just test them once and call it good enough. He tested them over and over, even after they showed signs of being trustworthy. I think we 'good Christians' of today are a bunch of fools in that we are quick to trust people who are not trustworthy, forgive people that don't show signs of repentance, and in general don't use wisdom and honesty. At the same time, we 'good Christians' are hard-hearted, unloving, and uncaring to those who mistreated us and those who we don't want to trust. We aren't thinking of the best interest of our enemies. Oh, to be as firm and loving as Joseph is not easy.

God used Joseph's evil brothers to do the job of getting Joseph to Egypt. Joseph knew that it was God, at least after it all happened. Yet we see that Joseph did not excuse his brother's actions just because God had used them. Joseph was wise enough to recognize what God did, yet still act according to reality. Just because God is leading you doesn't mean you can throw wisdom to the wind.

God treats us sometimes like Joseph treated his brothers to see if He can trust us. Our sins against God have caused Him a lot of grief. God can't trust someone who disobeys Him or someone who has their heart set against Him. Not only does God's roughness toward us tell God if we are trustworthy or not, but I think it also has the effect of making us trustworthy. Pain and suffering here on earth because of our sin is really a great blessing in the long run. If God is real with us, let us be real with each other.

It also takes two to make up after a quarrel.



Father Plato

Timothy Z. Martin

Father Plato? Father of what? Of all things – modern Christianity! Wait a minute! I thought “Christian” means “Follower of Christ.” Well, yes, but did you ever hear the rhyme, “Engine, engine, #9, going down Chicago line, if the train runs off the track, do you want your money back?” Let’s take a ride through history and see if you’ll want to take a different train as there is no getting your investment back!

Plato was a pagan Greek philosopher who was born about 428 B.C. He was the second of the three great Greek philosophers. The other two were Socrates and Aristotle.

Plato had a theory of Forms; that beyond the physical world, outside time and space is a spiritual realm of Forms or Ideas. This realm is arranged in order with the highest level being the Form of the Good. The things of the physical world are imperfect, less real copies of the perfect, eternal Forms. The Forms can only be perceived by the mind. For example, a wheel is patterned after the idea or form of a circle. There can be many different wheels but all patterned after the unchanging circle. Now if the wheel performs its function (goes around in a circular motion), it beats me how that is less perfect and less real than the form of a circle. I think a rubber-tired wheel is more perfect for my bicycle than a hula hoop is! Yes, I know I wouldn’t make a good philosopher!

Plato believed that the soul is eternal and existed before this life. The soul has three parts: reason, appetite, and spirit (or will). Because the soul is a higher form it wants to return to it’s

higher estate. The appetites and passions of the (imperfect) body continually interfere with the soul’s pursuit of wisdom and goodness.

Virtue cannot be taught -- it is a divine gift. Virtue is knowledge. Learning is only recollection of truths that the immortal soul learned long ago (in a previous existence).

Plato borrowed some ideas from the Pythagorean mystery cult. The Pythagorean brotherhood was based on the Orphic creeds. The Orphics believed that the divine part of man – his soul – was trapped in the body and could be liberated by living an Orphic life which included abstinence from meat, wine, and sexual intercourse. After death the soul would be judged. If a man lived a righteous life he could be liberated from the cycle of reincarnation.

The Pythagoreans believed, as did Plato, that the soul originated in the stars and fell to earth where it became associated with the body. Thus man needs to strive to liberate himself from the flesh and return to the celestial home. In later generations it was believed that as the soul fell through the spheres of the planets it acquired the qualities of the planets. In many ancient religions the stars and planets are important determiners of fate. The Pythagoreans may also have had some Hindu influence.

Philo of Alexandria (15 B.C. – after A.D.45) was the first Jew to make extensive use of Greek philosophy (Middle Platonism) in his writings. Also like Philo, the Christian Platonists regarded Platonic philosophy as the

best tool for understanding and defending the Scriptures and church tradition. They believed that truth would not conflict with truth and were confident that Platonic speculation would prove to be in perfect accordance with the Bible. This was the result of their unscholarly approach to reading both Christian and pagan writings.

Some well-known Christian Platonists include Justin Martyr (martyred A.D. 165), Clement of Alexandria (150-215), and Origen (185-254). The Trinitarian controversies about the persons of the Godhead, settled at the councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381), owed much to Origen on both sides, orthodox and heretical. The most important representatives on the orthodox side were three Platonist theologians: Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa.

Platonism in the 3rd century AD, called Neoplatonism was developed by the pagan Plotinus (205-270). He was a pupil at Alexandria of the same philosopher that taught Origen.

In Neoplatonism there are different levels of being with each level derived from the next higher level. The lowest level is the physical universe which exists in time and space and is perceptible to the senses. The highest level may be called the One or the Good though Plotinus insisted that it is beyond the reach of thought or language and cannot be described or defined. It can be known only if it raises the mind to a union with itself, the experience of which, of course, cannot be imagined or described.

Even though Plotinus was opposed to Gnosticism his thought had a Gnostic tone (as relating to intuitive knowledge acquired by privileged individuals and immune to verification). Platonism was often a large element in

Gnostic systems then current.

Plotinus believed in the goodness and harmoniousness of the material universe and that evil and suffering are necessary elements in the great dance of the universe. Evil and suffering cannot affect men's true, higher selves (except in the thoroughly depraved) and so cannot interfere with the real well-being of the philosopher.

Porphyry (234-305) was a disciple of Plotinus. He was known for his extreme spiritualism, an insistence on the flight from the body, and his 15 books entitled "Against the Christians."

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) is generally recognized as having been the greatest thinker of early Christianity. He was the first to completely fuse Platonism with the religion of the (already apostate) Roman Church. His Christian Platonism was unique enough to be called Augustinianism. He was influenced by his reading of the mystics Plotinus and Porphyry.

Augustine's mystical experience that converted him to Christianity began as an emotional crisis prompted by his learning of the heroic achievements of Christian ascetics contrasted with his own weakness. (An ascetic is one who is unnecessarily strict in disciplining or restraining one's self for religious reasons.) Neoplatonism had reinforced the idea that the way to return to God must be through escape from the body, so he turned inward and found God -- the changeless light.

Augustine believed the soul is made in the image of God. (Philo of Alexandria also believed the Gnostic idea that the soul is made in the image of God but the body is not.) Therefore the way to know and understand God is the interior way -- through the changeless truths within the soul.

Like Plato, Augustine believed

that the mind cannot be taught from outside but only prompted to see what it already knew without being aware of it. Augustine believed that the body cannot act on the soul because the soul is higher in the hierarchy of reality and the inferior cannot act on the superior. (He did believe that men and higher spiritual beings can fall.) Therefore God illuminates the mind directly rather than as a result of reasoning from sense experience. He believed that sense experience, though informative on its own level, cannot be the basis for religious thinking.

His ideas on the Trinitarian Godhead were influenced by Plotinus. Augustine tried to understand the Trinity by looking into the three-part soul.

Augustine believed that man has, by an act of the will, followed the love of self and has fallen from the love of God. Man cannot by an act of the will reverse the consequences of the fall. He believed that because the spirit is slave to the flesh the perverted will has no power to deliver itself. Only the free gift of divine love and grace can cause men to delight in God and the persons to whom that gift would be given was predetermined by God before the world began.

Augustine believed that man cannot achieve righteousness by his own effort but that God is the giver of all good. He believed that everyone is born guilty of Adam's sin and this takes effect through the dependence of human procreation on the sexual passion which is evidence of the spirit's inability to control flesh. Apparently he had a personal struggle with a weakness in controlling his sexual nature.

Augustinianism was taught in almost original form by the influential 13th century mystic St Thomas Aquinas and the 16th century reformer John Cal-

vin. St Thomas Aquinas believed that man in a perfect state could have a direct awareness of God on a level deeper than the mind's normal thinking activity. To do so the mind must be free of the distorting effects of imagery. God is pure spirit and cannot be described in the language of sense-experience. This explains why the mystic invariably cannot explain his mystical experience. This reminds me of the story of the emperor's invisible clothes. It took the simple, undistorted mind of a child to say, "Look, this is all fake!"

Augustinianism has been studied, quoted, and modified extensively and is still alive and well today. I encounter it frequently. I even noticed two hymns written by Augustine in our songbook (Zion's Praises #649 and #661).

In some ways similar to Neoplatonism is the ancient Chinese mystical religion called Taoism (dou' iz em or tou' iz em). Taoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism all influenced each other. Indian and Greek religions influenced each other through the conquest of India by Alexander the great in 326 B.C.

Taoism emphasizes living out man's original nature before it was tampered with by knowledge and restricted by morality. Any willful human intervention is believed to ruin the spontaneous harmony of nature. Man should renounce all concepts of measure, law, and virtue.

(Some years ago we were accused of being legalistic because we believe in holy living, so I asked a few folks not involved in the discussion for a definition of legalism. One friend's prompt answer was "Anything deliberate." He explained that anything deliberate is of yourself, is self-righteousness and is as filthy rags. He said the Christian life is spontaneous. It

seems to me that some spontaneous behavior is grossly wicked and self-willed!)

According to Taoist teaching only those who are free from earthly passions can apprehend the spiritual essence of Tao. (How can you love your neighbor if you eliminate passion?) The achievement of virtue is not a self-conscious effort, but man becomes the unresisting vehicle of Tao, so that he can rise above the limitations of matter and is no longer subject to the laws of the physical universe. In the pages of the Chuang-tzu is a description of a special class of immortal spiritualized beings that flutter upward, dine on air, sip the dew, have the smooth untroubled face of children, and are immune to the elements.

Alchemy was practiced by ancient Chinese Taoists, Greeks, Indians, and others. The goal was to produce an elixir that would confer physical immortality. The ultimate elixir was drinkable gold. Mercury and sulfur were crucial ingredients. Mercury combined well with most other metals and colors were formed when sulfur was added. It is believed that a series of Chinese emperors died as a result of their longevity experts. I suppose the mercury helped give their mystical religious experience a silver lining!

In the 1920's the Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung, a contemporary of Sigmund Freud, noticed something intriguing about the human mind. He noticed the similarities between the bizarre symbolic illustrations in the literature on alchemy and the dreams and fantasies of his patients. Were those ancient sages spiritual experts or inspired madmen? Yesterday's nut is tomorrow's mighty oak!

Many religions, ancient and modern, emphasize the depravity of man, that God is the only source of good, and that humanness is equal to wickedness. They also often idealize irrationality as piety or as the "leading of the Spirit." I broadly categorize such thinking as depravity-based faith. I don't know if anyone else has used that term but I think it makes a good handle for this pattern of thinking.

Depravity-based faith gains its soul-crippling power through the mistaken notion that natural man does not have the ability to love and obey God unless God gives him special divine power. (That power is often perceived to be an unverifiable, intuitive force.) *Therefore man cannot be held responsible for that which he has no power over.* I guess you can imagine what happens when people are not held responsible for their actions!

Sin has a demoralizing and paralyzing effect on its own; when coupled with depravity-based faith you have a recipe for disaster. I believe this is a factor in why so many "Christians" do not live by Christian principles.

I have never met anyone who was totally consistent in following the principles of depravity-based faith. No one wants to be a total failure -- its unnatural. They always have to resort to some other mode for success.

It is a disturbing thought to realize that depravity-based faith was a major element in the "Christian" founding of American society and language. How much has it distorted the minds of the people who wrote our dictionaries and concordances and translated our Bibles? Please read my article, "Holy Love?" on the next page.



May you live all the days of your life.

Holy Love?

Timothy Z. Martin

As I was editing the article “Turn It Over” by Cherie Whitten (Fall 2008/ Winter 2009) I became aware of an error perpetrated by Bible experts.

Based on her research Cherie had written, “Prior to His coming there was no word for Agape Love in Hebrew or Greek. Agape love is an unconditional Godly love, invoked by the Spirit, and probably not completely understood by the human mind.”

Hmmm, New word? New concept? Hard to understand? I doubt it. This smells like the mysterious spirituality of depravity – based faith. The alarm had sounded and I was off on a hunt!

How could I verify my suspicion that agape love was not a new idea? *I know.* In the Hebrew Old Testament God commanded, “And you shall love Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” Deuteronomy 6:5

Jesus quotes that scripture in the Greek New Testament, “and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment.” Mark 12:30

So I looked in Strong’s Concordance to see which Greek word is used for love in Mark 12:30 and, sure enough, it is agapao (the verb form of agape). God had commanded the agape kind of love a long time before Jesus was born!

Next I looked up love in Vine’s Bible Dictionary. Ah-hah! A smoking gun! There agape and agapao are described as being used in the New Testament to express ideas “previously un-

known” and as having a “distinctive meaning”.

Can unbelievers understand God’s command to love? If agape love is a special, godly love that has a different meaning than the natural man understands, how will God communicate with him? There needs to be a commonly understood reference point. Either you need to first understand this godly love so you know what this God of love is like or you need to know what God is like so you can understand what this godly love is like. It would seem strange if God’s concepts are foreign to a world made in His own image!

I changed Cherie’s article to read, “Agape love is an unconditional love, as opposed to affection for someone or something you like. Agape love will sacrifice self for something greater.” I notified Cherie of the change. The next time I saw her she had done more research and she had another stack of papers for me. Now it was getting more interesting!

The Greek language has several words for love. Supposedly agape is the godly love, phileo is friendly love, and eros is erotic (sexual) love. Eros is not used in the Bible.

There is a myth out there that agape is distinct from the other words for love and that the New Testament authors coined the word to avoid associations with the sensual and egocentric word eros.

Agape was a somewhat rare word but it is used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament used in Jesus’ day) for every

shade and variety of love. It was also found on a 5th century B.C. earthenware pot as an erotic pet-name of a naked woman!

Vine's Bible Dictionary says that *agapao* and *phileo* are never used indiscriminately in the same passage. Look at this:

"Then when they broke fast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love (*agapao*) Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love (*phileo*) You. He said to him, Feed My lambs. He said to him the second time, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love (*agapao*) Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love (*phileo*) You. He said to him, Feed My sheep. He said to him the third time, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love (*phileo*) Me? Peter was grieved because He said to him a **third*** time, Do you love (*phileo*) Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things, You know that I love (*phileo*) You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep." John 21:15-17 *Emphasis mine.

"For if you love (*agapao*) those who love (*agapao*) you, what thanks do you have? For sinners also love (*agapao*) those who love (*agapao*) them." Luke 6:32 Do sinners have godly love?!

"And this is the condemnation, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved (*agapao*) darkness rather than the Light, because their deeds were evil." John 3:19

"Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, (*phileo*)..." John 20:2

"Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved (*agapao*)..." John 21:20

"Woe to you, Pharisees! For you love (*agapao*) the chief seats in the synagogues and greetings in the mar-

kets." Luke 11:43

"Beware of the scribes who desire to walk in long robes, and love (*phileo*) greetings in the markets, and the first seats in the synagogues, and the chief places at the feasts;" Luke 20:46

In the Archaic King James Version of the Bible the word "charity" is always translated from *agapao*. How many non-church people know that charity in the AKJV (Authorized King James Version) means "love" but does not mean "alms-giving to the poor or to some other good cause"? There is a different Greek word which is translated "alms". The King James Only experts tell us that the AKJV is the best and most accurate translation of the Bible. A few brazen ones would even dare to say it is more accurate than the original manuscripts! Even though I grew up reading the AKJV, I find it easier to read the Bible in my own language.

Think about it. People go to school to learn to read. But when they come in contact with the Bible and Christianity they have to learn an archaic language plus learn the religious jargon where words such as love have a different meaning than in the normal world!

I say there is only one kind of real love. (The word love is also used for sexual desire but you wouldn't say that a rapist loves his victim nor that sexual desire produces love would you?) Here it is from the Bible:

People naturally love themselves. "For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as also the Lord does the church." Ephesians 5:29 This verse tells me that everyone has the natural instinct to love. If man does not have the natural ability to obey God then God is a monster for being angry with those who do not obey (or cannot obey) Him.

A man should love his wife the same way. "So men ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself." Ephesians 5:28

Marital love should be the same as Christ's love for us. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;" Ephesians 5:25

Christ's love for us is the same as the Father's love for Jesus. "As the Father has loved Me, so I have loved you; continue in My love." John 15:9

We can live in that same love. "If you keep My commandments you will continue in My love, as I have kept My Father's commandments and continue in His love. I have spoken these things to you that My joy may abide in you, and your joy may be full." John 15:10-11

We should love others with that same love. "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." John 15:12-14 Notice that He did not say "his enemies." Even though Christ died for us while we were yet enemies, He had hope for a friendship. If we prove to be enemies to the very end we can expect to see hellfire.

Naturally, Christ loves himself. "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Ephesians 5:30

One love can be directed in two directions (but not at the same time). "No one can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." Matthew 6:24 "Do not love the world, nor the things

in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1 John 2:15-16 It is not love in every direction, it is love in the right direction.

Frequently in the Bible God's people are called His bride or wife. Does God love us with a sexual love? I say there is no such thing as sexual love. There is sex and there is love; both run very deep in human relationships. There is sex without love and there is love without sex. Naturally the sexes are attracted to each other yet God commands the husband to love his wife and the wife to love her husband.

What about when a man and a woman "fall in love" with each other? "Three things are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I do not know: the way of an eagle in the air; the way of a snake on a rock; the way of a ship in the middle of the sea; and the way of a man with a maiden." Proverbs 30:18-19 "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself: and the wife see that she reverence her husband." Ephesians 5:30-33

If there is a special, distinctive kind of love I say it is Plato's mystical eros. To him eros meant: the ambiguous, ethereal love found in the union with the Form of Beauty; a reaching out of the soul to a hoped-for good, to eternal beauty, which is the object of transcendent emotion and mystical contemplation directly enjoyed by the

disembodied soul. Eros in its lowest form is falling in love with a beautiful person which is really a passion for immortality through offspring from that person. The irrationalness of the lover means that his soul is beginning to take flight in the first step of returning to the soul's high estate. A more spiritual form is to engage in philosophy that culminates in a vision of the supreme Form, The Good.

Contrasted with the real thing: affection and caring for another based on an enduring desire for the success and wellbeing of others. It is a practical, down-to-earth love that takes action and accomplishes things come-what-may. Love obeys the laws of good relationships. When someone loves you it makes you feel good. It makes you feel special, like someone of worth. This produces faith in that person's goodness. Love is something you can do!

On the other hand, mystical erotic love is selfish. It is concerned with how I feel. Its about dreamily floating around in the realm of the gods while your body remains on earth. It is only attained to by a few elite saints.

Many mystics, in an attempt to liberate themselves from defilement by the body and to enter into communion with the divine being(s), will separate themselves from society and live an ascetic lifestyle, sometimes in a monastery. Asceticism involves various forms of self-denial such as voluntary poverty, simple living, community service, fasting, long hours of prayer and meditation, martyrdom, forbidding eating meat, forbidding marriage, and other forms of suffering.

God didn't command us to love Him with half our mind and torture the rest of ourselves! He said to love him with all our parts including this prob-

lematic body.

In some situations celibacy is an option and it is recommended. At the same time any religious system that forbids marriage or allows the break-up of a legitimate marriage is not representative of Christ and the church (of one flesh).

Marriage is not merely the legitimation of sexual pleasure neither is it simply a rationale for procreation. Marriage involves a life-long commitment to the rules of social order and is a tribute to the Author of faith.

Did Apostle Paul mean normal people when he said, "For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as also the Lord does the church."? Ephesians 5:29

What is wrong when the spiritual experts engage in ascetic practices that cause unnecessary suffering to themselves and others? What about when people use poisons or drugs (including alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine) or a cell phone or other harmful technology? Naturally people would fight tooth and nail if someone else tried to poison them or nuke their brains!

Don't they care about life? Maybe they are in denial of reality and the real world is not real enough to them? **THAT IS WHAT PAIN IS FOR!** Pain compels the mind to action, normally.

Love causes us to feel another's pain not just our own. How can you have compassion for others and protect them from danger "just as the Lord does the church" if you are in denial of reality and jamb your pain signals or if you believe that the pains and emotions of the body are inherently evil?

Can love be taught? Can it be legislated? Can you decide to obey or disobey God's command to love? Obviously, yes; that is why He revealed His commands to us!

Is love a new concept specific only to Christians and the New Testament? Apostle Paul said “Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves another has fulfilled the Law.” Romans 13:8 That law was given to Moses many years before Paul’s time. Jesus said “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but

to fulfill.” Matthew 5:17

“If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us.” 1 John 4:12b

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.” Galatians 5:6

That is love-based faith!



Sin

Destroys Faith (trust), Hope, and Love.

And builds fear (harmful fear), doubt, and more sin.

And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. Matthew 24:12

Walking with God

Destroys fear (harmful fear), doubt, and sin.

And builds Faith (trust), Hope, and Love.

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. Galatians 5:16

The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion. Proverbs 28:1

It’s up to you.

One song can spark a moment,
One flower can wake the dream.
One tree can start a forest,
One bird can herald spring.

One smile begins a friendship,
One handclasp lifts a soul.
One star can guide a ship at sea,
One word can frame a goal.

One vote can change a nation,
One sunbeam lights a room.
One candle wipes out darkness,
One laugh will conquer gloom.

One step must start each journey.
One word must start each prayer.
One hope will raise our spirits,
One touch can show you care.

One voice can speak with wisdom,
One heart can know what’s true.
One life can make a difference,
You see, IT’S UP TO YOU!

Author unknown

Answers to Reconciliations in the Bible on page 31

1. Joseph, brothers – Genesis 37 & 45
2. Younger son or prodigal son, father – Luke 15:11-32
3. Jacob, Esau – Genesis 27 & 33
4. Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, Job – Job 2:11, 42:8-10

Question:

What is the greatest commandment?

Tip: You can find the answer in Matthew 22:35-40.

Heart and Home Harmony

Aiming for hearts, homes, and lives in harmony with:
God and His Church, and the rest of His creation through the Holy Spirit.

THE HEART OF RECONCILIATION

By the Martins

The need for reconciliation comes from wrong doings, which are the fruit of imaginations of human hearts. Reconciliation comes from God's heart of Love. If we want to learn this art of reconciliation, let us look to the perfect example of God's Son, the Prince of Peace, who came to make crooked things straight. ^{Isa. 42:16, Luke 3:5} He calls us to be like Him.

True reconciliation occurs when hearts are turned toward each other, when we love and value one another enough to honestly face the pain and work of resolving differences and conflicts. Communication is necessary to find the truth of the other side. However, our communication can be almost as dangerous as not communicating.

Satan has many ploys to hinder us from communicating effectively and making peace. Here are some pitfalls to avoid and some things we can do to help bring peace:

◆ Sometimes we overpress loved ones to communicate. After all, God commands that we relate in a bond of love to a family member, neighbor, friend, and even enemy. But if their heart is not toward you, they will back off further.

◆ If their heart is lusting after sin or more popularity than you offer, or something else, they will not seek reconciliation with you. If they feel inferior to you, they may want to lower

you. Whatever the reason may be, if they want you to be the bad one, the guilty one, they will find a reason to put you off, slander you, or something worse. Any effort on your part to communicate, to reconcile, to set the record straight, will be futile. You must set out to win their heart by love and respect.

◆ When someone doesn't want to communicate, is it because they have given up because you were obnoxious or not listening, only concerned about yourself?

◆ If we are going in different directions or have different worldviews, we may not be able to reconcile, however... **If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.** Romans 12:18.

◆ God may thwart you if you are seeking reconciliation in an adulterous relationship, in a cult, or idolatry, or any kind of pact to do evil. **Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?** Ecclesiastes 7:13. God did not want the Tower of Babel to be built, so He scattered the builders.

◆ The hardest part may be to see that we have done wrong. When we see that we have done wrong, even if our part was a tiny sliver of the wrong that was done, we need to repent and apologize. One small apology may open the way for more effective com-

munication.

◆ To apologize, some say, “I was wrong.” Others say, “I am sorry.” It is best to say both. If you only say, “I was wrong” they might wonder if you are sorry, especially if the admission may be only because you were proven wrong. If you only say, “I am sorry” they may wonder if you realize you were wrong. The exact words are not important; be sure to state what you did wrong, and be sure they, all who are involved, understand that you are sorry, you intend to not do it again, and that you value them.

◆ If you say you are sorry but do not act like it, don’t expect them to believe it. On the other side, accept any sincere apology, no matter how faltering and imperfect. And don’t be too quick to judge another as insincere—even if they fail again.

◆ It is not necessary to ask for forgiveness. It is their business to offer it. They may not be ready.

◆ Just what is the problem? If you think about it, you may be surprised to find that it boils down to the fact that you are unhappy with them because you think they are unhappy with you. Likewise, they may be unhappy with you because you are unhappy with them. Ones who lack confidence in who they are or have a deep seated unhappiness with themselves are quicker to imagine others are unhappy with them and will worry more about what appears negative toward them.

◆ Human imagination and surmisings disturb a lot of peace. The truth will set us free. Talk. Listen. Listen. Listen patiently. Some have a hard time communicating their thoughts and feelings. Double check to be sure you understand each other.

◆ A wise, sensitive, and caring peacemaker is invaluable in helping

struggling parties to see the other’s viewpoint. As a third party, he can tell you what you need to hear, but wouldn’t hear from the one who is a “problem.”

◆ There is value in everyone you meet and have to deal with. Each one wants to be appreciated. Each one wants you to be happy with him.

False reconciliation

We can be deceived into thinking reconciliation has taken place:

◆ We may claim it doesn’t matter, we are not angry, we have forgiven... when actually we have only denied our feelings.

◆ To release another by offering forgiveness, is a release for us. If the forgiveness is not received, there may not be much more we can do toward reconciliation. However, if we use our “forgiveness” for an excuse to avoid working through the problem in honest communication, seeking renewed fellowship and trust, it is not forgiveness or reconciliation. It is just more alienation.

◆ True reconciliation does not put the offended party one-up. If you “forgive” but, ever after, you maintain a sanctimonious, superior place, it isn’t reconciliation; it is sweet, saintly revenge.

There is a lot more for us to learn about the art of reconciliation. God gave the Bible for our manual. Study it carefully. Get to the heart.

If we become like Jesus, meek and lowly in heart, ^{Matt. 11:29} there is hope of regaining peaceful relationships. Live so that God is happy with you instead of worrying too much whether or not others are happy with you. If you look for the value in them, there is hope that you will win their heart. —————>

Don't Forget the Little Ones

Reread the preceding article, with the little ones in mind. Most of it can be applied to the children and babies that are in our care. Have you angered a little person? Have you turned his heart away? How can I know? How can I communicate much with one so small? How much can they understand? They may be bigger inside than you think.

Those of us who have been made responsible for children, know how much we want to succeed in impacting them for good. We know they will in turn impact the world. Probably all of us have failed a little one. Innocent, vulnerable, soft, and impressionable, they are put in the hands of ones who have been guilty and hardened, easily offending and hardly reconciling.

In Scripture, God especially warns fathers. **And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.** Ephesians 6:4 Web.

Reconciliation between fathers and children seems to be emphasized in Malachi 4:6 and Luke 1:17. **And he** (John the Baptist) ^{Mat. 11:14, 17:10-13, Luke 1:17} **shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.** Malachi 4:6 Webster

Is our heart toward the children in our care? If selfishness or our work, play, or some other addiction has captivated our hearts, we will, by default, turn our children's hearts away from us. Have we ignorantly angered them? Are we trying to break their will? To whip them into our selfish mold? Have they been a handy object to take our frustrations out on? Do they understand why we are punishing them? Do

they understand what we want out of them? Is it possible for them to do what we want? Years later with heavy hearts, we may wonder what went wrong.

Consider and pray. If you need to make reconciliation, the sooner the better. Apologize; make restitution, hopefully before it ripples into a need for many more reconciliations, before the child has grown enough to take it out on others, before the earth is smitten with yet another curse.

Your child wants to please you. He (or she) wants you to be happy with him. If you are too hard to please, he will be discouraged from trying and will eventually look for someone else to please. If you let him always do as he pleases and set no boundaries, besides not being safe, he will not be anchored by having an authority above him that is pleased with him. There is security in knowing that one who knows more than you do is pleased with you.

If you want to keep your child's heart, give him the attention of your mind and heart. Talk and listen, listen, listen to his cry, his thoughts, his reasons, his questions. You need to find the truth about him. Tune in to the yearnings of his heart. He wants you to be pleased with him. Reconciliation can mend the frays before the heart-strings break.

Reconciliation is easy for children. They quarrel but will make up quickly. They are quick to forgive us.

At the same time came the disciples to Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child to him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say to you, Except

ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. But whoever shall cause one of these little ones who believe in me, to sin, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that of-

fenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh! Matthew 18:1-7 Webster

Much of this article can be applied to us big ones. At times, we are little, scared, lost children, much smaller inside than we let on. But thank God! We have a perfect Father who has brought reconciliation and waits to rebirth us into a child that will reconcile easily! Experiencing the security of being a child of our merciful Heavenly Father will show us how to relate to our children. The Father/child relationship is important. ☩

A TRUE STORY

In my younger days there lived in Omaha, Nebraska, a gentle man and his wife who were enjoying a happy married life but sin over-came the husband, he proved untrue to his wife, and she found it out. She loved him dearly and he had loved her, but now sin separated them. When she learned of this she said to him “Leave, and don’t ever let me see you again. I never want to see you.”

He was man enough to deed his property over to her, reserving enough only to enable him to start a small business in Des Moines, Iowa, and then he left her. They had one little girl, Marie and frequently she would ask her mother, “Where is daddy? When will Daddy come home? Why doesn’t he come home?” She must have surmised something which her mother never told her. Then she became very ill. Her rosy cheeks paled from day to day. The physician was called in.

Finally he said to the mother: “Madam your little girl suffers from something that no human skill can remedy. Neither I nor any other doctor can do anything for her. She suffers from

what we call a broken heart. She has a deep gnawing at her heart and medicine cannot help that. She will leave you. Do all you can for her and give her anything she wants for nothing you may give her will harm her and neither will anything help.”

The mother was grief-stricken, but in an attempt to be cheerful she went to her little girl and said, “Marie, do you know what the doctor said? He said you could have anything you want. Just say the word and I will give you anything you wish.” “Anything I wish?” she asked. “Yes, anything you may wish,” responded her mother. “Anything at all?” further questioned Marie. “Yes anything at all.” “Then I want Daddy.”

Oh, that was unexpected. There was a tug of war between the mothers love for her daughter and her sense of the injustice she had suffered. But what mother can deny the wish to a dying darling? So a wire was sent to Des Moines. The husband received it, and at noon the next day he sat in a west-bound Rock Island train. He arrived in Omaha that evening. He knew the way

to the house very well, for he had trod those streets many times. As he rang the doorbell, after having been away for two years, the maid answered. He said, "I am Mr. _____." "Oh yes," said the maid, "you are expected." He was ushered in, and the nurse said, "I will get Marie ready." A minute or so later he was invited into Marie's bedroom, where the little girl was spending her last peaceful moments. As he walked in one door, his wife went out the other. She did not want to meet him. Bending over the bed, the frail little arms slipped around his neck as she said, "O Daddy I am so glad that you came! I have waited and waited for you," and then he kissed those ashen cheeks and whispered his love into her ear.

Then suddenly, she looked around in surprise and said, "Where is Mother? Bring mother in." The nurse replied, "I will tell your mother, Marie."

She stepped out and approached the Mother saying, "Marie is calling for her mother."

Again there was a tug at her heart. Should she appear in his sight? She could not deny the little girls wish and so, without speaking to him, she came in and knelt by the bed, saying "What is it Marie?"

The little hand fumbled around until it got hold of Mother's hand and pulled it down over the place where the little heart was beating. Then the other hand reached out and got hold of Daddy's hand and pulled that right down over the Mother's hand. Marie did not say a word, but she placed her

little hand on top of theirs and held them tightly.

The husband found his voice first and said, "Wife, I understand what our darling means. She is asking us to be reunited. I know I deserve to be cast off forever, but for Marie's sake can't you take me back and give her joy?"

After a few moments his wife answered, "Yes, husband, you are my husband for Marie's sake. We will forget the past."

With that he leaned over and kissed his wife. The doctor had said, "Marie must not be subjected to any excitement, for she cannot stand it." But that had been forgotten at this crucial moment of reunion. The mother whose hand was nearest to Marie's heart, suddenly said, "I don't feel her heart beating." It had stopped forever. The joy of reuniting father and mother had been too much for the little girl; it had cost her life. She had brought them together and then passed away.

But listen friends, a greater reconciliation than this was effected nearly 2000 years ago at Calvary. As he hung there on the cross—the sinless one: Son of God and Son of Man, and as his heart ceased beating, He joined forever the hand of God with that of sinful mankind.

And so the hand of God is still extended today, across that sacrifice of Calvary, and the heart of God is yearning for you—Offending Sinner—to put your hand in his. ❧

Taken from *Scrapbook of Ideas #1 for Christian Workers* by Vera Over-

Effective Cleaning Solution

Clean soap scum off porcelain with very little effort by dipping a wet rag into wood ashes. Rub the scum, rinse your rag, and wipe clean. Rinse well. It is probably a good idea to wear gloves to avoid lye burns. —Dawn Rosenbarker

The Children's Challenge

DAWN USES KINDNESS

Once there was a little girl named Dawn. Every year she looked forward to going to vacation Bible school. One summer it wasn't as much fun. Another little girl in her class was mean and snobby toward her. What would you do, if you were in Dawn's place?

Well, Dawn didn't know what to do so she told her parents about what was happening. They were very wise and suggested that Dawn do something nice to the girl who was being mean. The Bible says we should overcome evil with good.

We should be kind towards those who mistreat us. Dawn thought about what she could do for the other girl to be kind and friendly toward her. She finally decided to give her some stickers.

The next evening that is what Dawn did, even though it was a bit scary. Dawn felt very happy about what she did and can you guess what happened? No, they didn't become best friends, but the other girl was never again mean toward Dawn. ✕

Reconciliations in the Bible

Fill in the blanks with those who were reconciled. Answers on page 25

1. _____ was sold into Egypt by his _____. Years later they came to Egypt and found that he was still alive. He forgave them.
2. The _____ left his _____'s house and wasted his living. He repented and came back. His _____ forgave him.
3. _____ stole his brother's birthright and blessing. He was afraid _____ would kill him so he left the area. Years later he came back and they were reconciled.
4. _____ lost all his wealth and health. _____, _____, and _____ spoke unkindly to him. God told them to offer a sacrifice. God told _____ to pray for them.

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“And all things are of God,
who has reconciled us to
Himself through Jesus
Christ, and has given to us
the ministry of
reconciliation;”

2 Corinthians 5:18