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## The Christian Life

By Richard England

The word Christian means "belonging to Christ" and appears three times in the New Testament. Acts 11:26 says "the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." In Acts 26:28 "Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." The third passage is 1 Peter 4:16: "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." From these passages we see a number of important points. First notice that the word Christian was not just a designation for any and all good moral people. It was for "disciples" or followers of Jesus. The great commission as recorded in Matthew 28:18 says to "teach all nations." In the American Standard Version it says "make disciples of all nations." Literally it means to disciple them. That is what they were to do. How did they do it? "Baptizing them." (v. 19) Thus, we are talking about baptized believers when we speak of Christians. In that Agrippa said he was almost persuaded to be a Christian, it is obvious that this was a common name for the followers of Christ. To be a Christian has not always been popular. Many in the early church were put to death for being called a Christian. What a wonderful heritage and blessing to be associated with Jesus Christ and all the saints who have lived before us suffering for the name of Christ. (Why would so many in our day want to be called by all the various religious names that are so popular that do not even relate to "Christian"?)

The new convert, one who has experienced the new birth, is a "babe" in Christ. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." (1 Pet. 2:2) The first obligation for a Christian life is to GROW. Proper growth demands good environment. "Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners." (1 Cor. 15:33) Being around the right kind of people helps encourage one to do right. For growth there must be

good food. The milk and the meat of the Bible is the Word of God. Freedom from disease (or sin thinking spiritually) is necessary. This is why the text of 1 Peter 2:1,2 says to put aside all sin first, then desire the milk. As in the physical world growth demands exercise, so in the spiritual world. "Exercise thyself rather unto godliness." (1 Tim. 4:7)

The Christian life is a daily activity. It is how we worship, work, play and conduct ourselves at home. The principles are laid down throughout the New Testament. Here are a few verses that tell how to live. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." (Gal. 5:22,23) "...follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." (1 Tim. 6:11) "Flee youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (2 Tim. 2:22)

For most people, the Christian life is just a beginning of doing what they have known to be right all along. There are some things we do not fully know or understand, but what a wonderful world this would be if we all were living exactly by the standard we already know to be good! We're like the farmer who did not want to take advice of the county extension leader on how to improve his farm. He said: "I'm not farming half as good as I know how already." We must apply ourselves to being approved before God. This is the meaning of 2 Timothy 2:15. "Study (ASV: 'give diligence') to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Christian living is first becoming a Christian, then worshipping God as directed in the New Testament and living daily so the people around us can see Christ in us. (Gal. 2:20)

## Unity And How To Maintain It

By Bill Graddy

The unity of a congregation is a precious and priceless commodity. In Psalms 133:1, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" By contrast, there are seven things that the Lord hates, and the last one mentioned in Proverbs 6:17 is, "...he that soweth discord among brethren."

Let us look at some ways we can keep the unity of a congregation and prevent the sowing of discord.

1. Do not poll the elders. That is, do not seek out one elder at a time and ask him his opinion. In going from one elder to another, much may be missed and mistaken in translation. After all, if the idea is to be implemented, then, all the elders should act on it. In doing this, it is easy to pit one elder against another elder. This can cause confusion and divisiveness.
2. Do not politic the elders. That is, do not try to influence them one at a time in order to make a point. Playing favorites and showing a respect of persons is a lack of Christian insight.
3. Do not presume upon the elders. That is, do not try to speak for them. We may think we know how one would react in a certain situation, but remember Paul told Philemon, "But without thy mind would I do nothing." (Philemon 4).
4. Do not try to pressure the elders. That is, do not try to influence their decisions through our money, popularity, prestige or otherwise. If pressure must be exerted in order to get an elder or the elders to function, then, surely another look needs to be taken at whatever we desire to do.

(Continued on page two)

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**UNITY . . .**

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5. Do not be presumptuous. That is, do not assume the elders should do this or that, and then take it upon ourselves to do it. Trying to act in their failure to act, implies that we already know their minds, and they would have acted in this way.

Consider these positive things that will insure peace and harmony in a congregation.

1. Give the elders time for their wisdom to be effective.
2. Give them some room for their opinion and realize it might not agree with ours.
3. Make sure we give our ideas a thorough examination before we submit them to the elders.
4. Remember that God ordained that a local congregation should work through an eldership.
5. Encourage the elders in their work.
6. Pray for them.

Meditate earnestly upon these passages: Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:1-4.

If we will season our speech with salt and love one another with a pure heart fervently, we will keep the unity of the Spirit for which Christ Jesus our Lord prayed. (Colossians 4:6; 1 Peter 1:22; John 17:20-23).

## The Nameless Church

By Dennis Gullede

We must know that the church of the New Testament is neither denominational, nor sectarian. We must also know that there is no single, exclusive name in the New Testament identifying the church. This is a part of its uniqueness. In this connection brother Hugo McCord wrote:

The New Testament church is unique in that it has no proper name. Denominations have proper names. The word "denominate" means to "name" something. But the New Testament church is nameless. Though it is called the house of the Lord, the family of God, the body of Christ, and the kingdom of Christ . . . yet it has no proper name (*These Things Speak*, p. 121).

Denominations and denominational names originated in religious differences which sprang up after the New Testament was written. The divisive principles always suggested the party names, whether those principles had to do with ordinances, particular church theories, methods of work and worship or personal preference as to distinguished leaders. One writer put it this way: "Soon they began to differ among themselves, and it was necessary that some terms be used to express these differences. In this way different designations arose." Thus we have the many different denominational names that we all hear and know. The justification for such seems to be this: How are you going to distinguish one Smith from another, without some sort of given name to express these differences? It seems not to have occurred to many people that distinguishing one Smith from another is the one thing we do not want to do. Rather, in keeping with the Lord's prayer in John 17 all the Smith's should be one! For this reason all these "given names" not found in the New Testament should be abandoned. The Lord's church today knows nothing of them because it is nameless.

Exactly what do we mean by the "nameless church"? We simply mean that the church which Jesus promised (Matt. 16:18) and built (Acts 2:37-7) had no given name. The denominational names which exist today have no root in Scripture. But, the church was known by various designations, and some of these we will give attention to here.

word which Jesus used and which is translated "church" in this passage has no religious meaning in and of itself. The word in the Greek is *ekklesia*, and means "a called out group." In the New Testament this word was employed to describe an angry mob (Acts 19:32,1, "assembly"), and a "lawful assembly" (Acts 19:39). It is translated in Matthew 16:18 by the word "church" and refers to those people whom Jesus called out of the world to live for him (Matt. 11:26-28, 2 Thess. 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9).

2. "Churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16). In this passage Paul is speaking of a collection of local congregations each of which is a church of Christ. This term shows ownership. Those congregations (churches) were his by right of ownership as they belong to him.

To use the designation "church of Christ" is entirely proper and scriptural, but it is not a proper name. To speak of "Church of Christ" congregation, "Church of Christ" preachers, etc., is to take a scriptural designation and use it in a way entirely wrong. As Hugh Fulford has so well noted, "Christians no more constitute a 'Church of Christ' congregation than they constitute a 'Church of God' congregation or a 'House of God' congregation or a 'Kingdom of Heaven' congregation or a 'Body of Christ' congregation! All of these terms carry equal weight and equal meaning in the New Testament" (*Gospel Advocate* 10/7/82, p. 596).

3. "The Churches of God" (1 Thess. 2:13-1). This designation also shows ownership. They are congregations (assemblies, churches) of God who is owner of all things. These are the same as "churches of Christ." They are not a different group of Smiths! (That is, those mentioned in the above passage).

It is worthy of note here that just because a church somewhere may wear this or any other scriptural designation, that does not mean it is the Lord's church. A scriptural designation is fine and a step in the right direction, but if a congregation is unscriptural in its organization, work, worship, purpose or doctrine, it is not the Lord's church.

4. "The Kingdom of God" (1 Thess. 1:3-5). This is one of the most frequently employed designations of the church in the New Testament (some 68 times). The church is called a kingdom, and we must think of God's people as citizens in that kingdom, (John 3:5; Col. 1:13), with Jesus Christ as King (1 Tim. 6:15).

5. "The House of God" (1 Tim 3:14-15). This house is God's family - "the

1. "The Church" (Matt. 16:18). The

church of the living God" Christians are "of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19). They are "children of God" (II Cor. 6:17-18) and brethren of Christ (Heb. 2:11-12). No one is able to "join" the church of our Lord, rather he is "born again" (John 3:5) by his obedience to the truth (I Peter 1:22-23), being baptized for the remission of his sins (Gal. 3:26-27; Acts 2:38), and the Lord then "adds" him to the church (Acts 2:47). Such is the way a person becomes a member of the church of Christ today.

Do not think the New Testament church deprived in any way simply because the Lord has chose to leave it nameless. God has not given his church a proper name, and neither should any man presume to do so. As churches of Christ we wear the name of our owner to show whom we represent. Whom or what do you represent by the religious name you wear? You may be interested to know the origin of the religious name you have taken. Check it out!

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The man who is forever trying to protect his reputation is often the man who has not spent much time in protecting his character. The best way to keep a good name is to keep a good life. Righteousness is a breastplate, said Paul.



There is no moral value in sorrow. Sorrow is of value only when it works repentance - a change - in your heart and life.



Know Your Bible

By Russell Bell

Many times people ask Bible questions and are amazed that I can open my Bible to a verse that gives the answer immediately. Some say, "I wish I were that smart." But friends, I am not as smart as many of you. In fact, to say I am of average intelligence would much closer fit my description. The key to having Bible answers to Bible questions is to know your Bible. And this demands time spent studying the Bible. Not books about the Bible, but study the Bible itself which is a product of God himself.

Now to the serious Bible student, here are some helps:

1. THERE ARE 66 BOOKS IN THE BIBLE WRITTEN BY ABOUT 40 DIFFERENT MEN (GUIDED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT) OVER A PERIOD OF ABOUT 1600 YEARS.

2. THE OLD TESTAMENT CONTAINS 39 BOOKS, AND THE NEW TESTAMENT CONTAINS 27 BOOKS.

3. SO ACTUALLY THE BIBLE, RATHER THAN BEING ONE BOOK, IS A LIBRARY OF 66 BOOKS.

4. May be one of the most amazing things of all about the Bible is that even though the Bible contains 66 books written by different authors over a period of about 1600 years, there are no real contradictions; and a continuous story of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, is told from the beginning in Genesis to the end in Revelation.

Read this book and study it; it is worthy of your consideration.

God's Minority

Some people are uncomfortable about being in the minority. But did you ever stop to realize that only two times in the history of the human race have God's people been in the majority? Before sin came, Adam and Eve - God's people - were in the majority. That's one exception. When the flood came, and no one was left but Noah and his family, God's people were in the majority. That is the other exception. Outside of those two exceptions, God's people have always been in the minority.

During the time Noah was building the ark, wasn't he very much in the minority? But he won! When Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brothers, he was in a decided minority - but he won!

When Gideon and his 300 followers, with their broken pitchers and lamps, put the Midianites to flight, they were in a insignificant minority - but they won!

When Elijah prayed down fire from heaven and put the prophet Baal to shame, he was in a notable minority - but he won! When David, ridiculed by his brothers, went out to meet Goliath, in size he was in a decided minority - but he won!

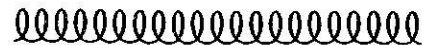
When Jesus was crucified by the Roman soldiers, wasn't he a conspicuous minority? But he won!

We must remember, however, that there is no particular merit in being in the minority, unless that minority happens to be on the Lord's side. When you are sure you are on the Lord's side, don't worry about being in the minority!

- Selected



You never really learn to love a person until you do him a good deed, or render him a loving service. Our appreciation for a person increases as we seek to save him, to serve him, to lend him a helping hand along life's way. Warmth of heart comes through exercise.



In all labor there is profit; But the talk of lips tendeth only to penury.



## Water Under The Bridge

By Steve Williams

"One thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14).

"Do not worry about water under the bridge." "Do not cry over spilled milk." Expressions like these tell us not to become paralyzed in inactivity because of undue anxiety over past mistakes. We need to learn from our mistakes and try to avoid stumbling in the same way in the future, but undue attention on our failures will do us more harm than good. When we slip and stumble in living the Christian life, we need to pick ourselves up and advance forward once again, always looking toward the final goal and our forerunner, Jesus Christ.

As Fenelon put it, "What would you think of the traveller who, instead of advancing on his way, was always considering the accidents which he might meet with and, after any accident, returned to contemplate the scene thereof? Would you not urge him rather to go forward? Even so I say to you, go on without looking back, so that, pleasing God, you may abound more and more. The abundance of His love will do more to correct you than all you anxious self-contemplation."

We can do this by learning to forgive ourselves when we have done all that is necessary to apply to God for his forgiveness. We can do this by emphasizing future opportunities of service rather than past failures and mistakes. Paul had plenty of past mistakes to contemplate. He learned from them and regretted them. Although Paul occasionally spoke of his failing in he past, he only did so in accompaniment with thankfulness for the grace of God and dedication toward doing better in the future. Christians today need to imitate Paul in this way. Let us "press on" as Paul did.

### CHARACTER

It is not what we EAT but what we DIGEST that make us strong; not what we GAIN but what we SAVE that makes us rich; not what we READ but what we REMEMBER that makes us learned; and not what we PROFESS but what we PRACTICE that makes us Christians.

## THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

## GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

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