

## ***DON'T BE A STUMBLING BLOCK***

By Joe Slater

“They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses on account of them, because they rebelled against His Spirit so that he spoke rashly with his lips.” (Psalm 106:32-33.)

The incident mentioned in the passage above took place in Numbers 20. By no means was this the first time the Israelites had complained. Even before leaving Egypt, they had told Moses to just leave them alone and let them serve the Egyptians. (Exodus 14:12.) Despite seeing God’s power in the ten plagues, and despite being released from centuries of cruel bondage, they had murmured and griped almost continuously for forty years. “We want water! We want food! We don’t like the food! We want new leadership! We want a god we can see!”

Now, after forty years, they were still moaning that they would have been better off had they stayed in Egypt! Is it any wonder that Moses blew a gasket? God told him to speak to the rock, and it would bring forth water for all the people. Instead, Moses spoke rashly: “Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?” Then, rather than speaking to the rock, he struck it twice with his rod. (Numbers 20:7-11.)

The Lord held Moses and Aaron accountable: “Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.” (20:12.) Truly, Moses and Aaron sinned – but the Israelites certainly were a stumbling block to them!

Do you realize that your sins can

be a stumbling block to others, inciting them to sin as well? “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.” (Mark 9:42.)

Don’t be a stumbling block!

— Justin, TX

“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16.)

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## ***KEEPING THE KNOT TIED***

By Danny Tunnell

Jesus said, “Have you not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’ So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Matthew 19:4-6.)

Despite Jesus’ clear words, it has been said that the divorce rate inside and outside the church is pretty much the same.

A preacher friend used to say, with some satisfaction, about a couple whose marriage ceremony he had performed decades earlier, “There’s one knot I tied that stayed tied.”

What makes a marriage work?

How can we keep the knot tied?

There are no perfect marriages because there are no perfect people. However we can have good marriages. Marriages should get better with time. After 40 or 50 years the marriage

partners should be more in love than they were on their wedding day.

Continue courting your spouse throughout your marriage. Don’t stop pursuing each other. Keep showing affection. Keep holding hands. To keep the flame burning, you need to keep the romance alive.

Support what your spouse enjoys. Marriage is give and take. If your husband likes sports, be supportive. If she wants to see a “chick flick,” it can be beneficial to watch it together.

Don’t leave the Christian part of you at church. After all, God is with us all the time. Your actions at home toward your spouse - including how you speak to each other - should line up with your public image.

Husbands are told four times in Ephesians 5:22-33 to love their wives! Both husbands and wives love to hear their partner say, “I love you. I’m so fortunate to have you.”

No marriage partner likes to be constantly reminded of their

shortcomings, faults, and weaknesses. Lift up your spouse, and be an encouragement. No one likes to be lectured.

Finally, if you have children, they are blessings from the Lord. “Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them.” (Psalm 127:4,5.) Enjoy your children, but make sure they don’t consume your entire life. Don’t focus your relationship around their activities. Don’t let your communication be only about them. The time will quickly come when they leave home, and it’s just the two of you. You will feel as though you are living with a stranger if you neglected to grow your relationship over the years. It’s good to get a babysitter and go out on a date, to intentionally set aside time to spend with each other.

Give it your best shot to help keep the knot tied!

— Miami, OK

# Old Paths

Vol. 43, No. 4 April 2019

“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

## ***WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR THE CHURCH?***

By Mark Lindley

People often wonder what the church can do for them. It seems that everyone wants to be part of a large congregation that has immaculate facilities, lots of activities for the young and old, children of all ages, and a large contribution. When someone is looking for a congregation to attend, these may be some of the criteria used to find the “right church.” Most do not look for a congregation where they are needed “to” serve. Rather, folks frequently look for a congregation where they can “be” served. This self-serving attitude seems to be at odds with the spirit of Christianity and the example of Christ, Himself.

Consider these words describing the ministry of Christ: “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matthew 16:26-28.) This passage shows that Jesus, the founder of Christianity, did not come to be served; He came to serve.

Christianity is built upon this principle of service and sacrifice. Paul wrote, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” (Philippians 2:5-8.) Notice that Jesus took upon Himself the “form of a bondservant.” As a servant, Jesus gave Himself for the sins of the world. (1 John 2:2.) There could be no greater example of sacrifice than the one made by Christ.

Yet, those seeking to be followers of Christ today, often do not seem to have this same selfless, sacrificial spirit. The question at the forefront seems to be, “What can the church do for me?” rather than asking, “What can I do for the church?”

I cannot imagine Jesus, Paul, or Peter saying, “I am placing membership with congregation B because they have nicer facilities and greater financial resources than congregation A.” I cannot envision Christ or His apostles saying, “I am hoping to find a church that meets my needs.” I do not believe the Lord or any of His apostles would say, “I am choosing to attend the services of this congregation because they have more social gatherings.” I am persuaded that Jesus, Paul, and Peter were too busy serving to think about being served. I think they were too busy spreading the gospel and trying to save others to think about themselves. They were servants. We should be as well.”

— Ripley, MS

## ***“LET GEORGE DO IT”***

By Hershel Dyer

There is a legend of an ancient king who became weary of the complaints of his subjects. As always, there were many things to be done but each one seemed to feel that someone else should do them. Then, as now, they were always ready to say, “Let George do it!”

To cure his people of this bad tendency, the king had a huge stone placed in the midst of a main thoroughfare leading into the city. All of the travelers passed by, grumbling and complaining that someone should move the stone. After a time, the king called his subjects together and showed them a bag of gold which had been placed under the stone for anyone willing to have moved it.

In the perpetuation of a church or congregation in any place there are many things to be done. We can nearly always see some things which are needful but are being neglected. It is easy to complain about these and continue to say, “Somebody ought to do it!”

The building in which we meet must be opened and later closed by someone. There are floors to be mopped and carpets to be vacuumed. There are chairs to be set up in the classrooms, the baptistry to be filled and kept ready for use. There are classes to be taught, songs to be led, communion trays to be prepared, etc., etc. There are also the sick and shut-ins that need our loving ministries, the visitors to our services to be called upon, funerals that require singers and grieving families who need our sympathetic attention, etc., etc.

The foregoing along with other numerous good works require dedicated volunteers. There are generally too few for the many tasks. We can often see and even admit that “someone ought to do it.”

When the Lord said to Isaiah, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”, Isaiah immediately responded, “Here am I! Send me.” (Isaiah 6:8.)

The church can use a lot more like Isaiah!

“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” (Galatians 6:9,10.)

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 15:58.)

**TOO EXPENSIVE!**

By Dalton Key

King Pyrrhus, ruler of Epirus, once defeated the Romans in the battle of Asculun. Though winning the battle, Pyrrhus lost nearly all of his soldiers in the process. Sometime later, upon being congratulated on the victory, he lamented, "Another such victory and I shall be ruined!"

Many centuries have come and gone since so many soldiers fell at Asculun, yet we still use the term "Pyrrhic victory" to describe a victory achieved at excessive cost; a battle really won by no one.

The man or woman lifting a fist toward heaven, boasting of independence from God and freedom to live unrestrained by His will may temporarily appear to win the battle. God does not rule by force or coercion. But the victory is hollow and short-lived at best, a true "Pyrrhic victory." This same rebel will one day stand before the Judge of all men to answer for deeds done in the body. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." (2 Corinthians 5:10.)

In his Essay on Compensation, Emerson wrote, "Persons and events may stand for a time between you and justice, but it is only a postponement. You must at last pay your debt . . . you cannot do wrong without suffering wrong."

What a short-sighted victory, to waste a life and lose a soul in a foolish war waged against the God of heaven. Listen to the Lord: "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man, if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:25,26.)

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh, will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life." (Galatians 6:7,8.) As one wit once observed, "You can't sow wild oats and then pray for a crop failure."

Friend, don't fight against heaven. Some victories are just too expensive!

## EDITORIAL . . .

**HAVING TO SAY SOMETHING OR  
HAVING SOMETHING TO SAY**

By Dalton Key

The Bible encourages us to be "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath," and to "take heed how (we) hear." (James 1:19; Luke 8:18.)

A young Simon Peter often struggled in this area of speaking and hearing. He was usually the first among the apostles to speak up, on most any subject, at most every opportunity, but too often he spoke when he should have been listening.

When Peter, along with James and John, witnessed the remarkable Transfiguration of Christ, he should have felt content basking in the glory of the moment, with eyes and ears open and mouth firmly shut.

But, alas, this was not Peter's way of doing things! He just had to say something, even something glaringly wrong. His impetuous speech, demoting God's Son to the level of mere men, was so grievously in error that heaven's reproof came thundering forth from a cloud. Had the apostle been more interested in listening than in speaking, he not only would have avoided divine correction; he almost certainly would have learned something as well. (Matthew 17:1-6.)

This wasn't the first time the apostle had created such a problem for himself. Just a few days earlier, Peter had actually rebuked the Lord, resulting in this curt and cutting correction: "Get behind me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." (Matthew 16:23.)

And yes, this was the same Peter who would later rebuff his Master by blurting out, "You will never wash my feet!" (John 13:8.) And shortly after making that misstep, Peter foolishly dismissed the words of Jesus, brashly boasting, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble . . . Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" (Matthew 26:33,35.)

The good news? Peter changed. Peter grew. He became a tremendous force for good in the early New Testament church. Whose inspired words reached the hearts of obedient souls on the day of Pentecost? Were they not Peter's? (Acts 2:14-41.) Who stood boldly before the council, defying orders to desist in preaching Christ and proclaiming, "We ought to obey God rather than men." Was it not Peter? (Acts 5:29.)

Peter had learned a valuable lesson: there is a huge difference between having something to say and having to say something.

Peter changed. Peter grew. And so can we.

(EDITORIAL NOTE: Make a note and remember the date: May 30-June 1. This will be the time for our Old Paths Family Encampment held at the site of Flint Hills Bible Camp, just outside Sedan, KS. Our theme: "That You May Believe (Studies in John)." For more information, write in care of this paper or call (918) 587-4023 or (620) 506-6155.

**TEACHING THE NEXT GENERATION**

By Milton Smith

The Psalmist has written, "Now also when I am old and gray headed, O God do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, your power to everyone who is to come." (Psalm 71:18.) We quickly note the concern that the inspired writer had for the generations that would follow him. He wanted to show God's strength and power to "this generation" and "everyone who is to come."

Our attitude should be the same. It was not so many years ago that I was young, and the older generation was there to teach me the strength, power, and ways of God. I will always be indebted to that "older" generation for doing so.

May we never forget that God's truth must be taught and re-taught to each generation. The aged apostle Peter wrote to the young and old alike,

"I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me." (2 Peter 1:12-14.) In this passage, Peter strongly emphasizes the need to always remind people of divine truth, even though they may already know these things.

I belong to a generation that has witnessed a change in direction within the church. Beginning several decades ago, attitudes started to change. Less emphasis was given to what the Bible calls "first principles." (Hebrews 5:12.) The Hebrew writer lamented the fact that such "first principles" had to be taught over and over again to some

in the church who should have been "teachers" themselves. This tells us that we do not need to teach only first principles - especially to those who know and honor such simple truths. But if first principles are not being followed and respected, it becomes necessary to teach and re-teach them.

We will always owe the next generation the knowledge of fundamental divine truths. Failure to do so today will bring nothing but trouble tomorrow.

— Tulsa, OK

"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4.)

**WHICH CHURCH DID THE EUNUCH JOIN?**

By Bobby Key

Acts 8 records the conversion of the eunuch. The record says that Philip "preached unto him Jesus." He believed, made the confession, and was baptized. Jesus had said, "He that believes, and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16.) So the eunuch was saved. But what about his church membership? There is nothing said about him joining a church. No church voted to receive him. What was the eunuch religiously after baptism? All will admit that the eunuch was a Christian and thus a church member.

Of which church was he a member? It is obvious he did not belong to any current denomination, as such did not exist then. Also, he would have failed in meeting their entrance requirements.

Notice these simple facts: The Lord, Himself, has a church. (Matthew 16:18.) This church was in existence when the eunuch was converted. (Acts 2.) The Lord added the saved to His church. (Acts 2:47.) Since the

Lord had been adding the saved to the church, don't you suppose he added the "saved eunuch" likewise?

A saved person cannot possibly bypass the Lord's church. The very same thing that saves one from past sins makes one a member of the Lord's church.

The eunuch obeyed the gospel and was added by the Lord to His church. He was not voted into it, by man, nor did he subscribe to any man-made creed.

Kind reader, you, too, can become a New Testament Christian, and be added to Christ's church. Just do the same things the eunuch did.

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Ephesians 4:4-6.)

"For as the body is one and has

many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." (1 Corinthians 12:12,13.)

**Old Paths**829 S. Rockford Ave.,  
Tulsa, OK. 74120

On a nonprofit basis.  
Published monthly and  
supported by Churches of Christ  
and individuals.

Dalton Key Editor  
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