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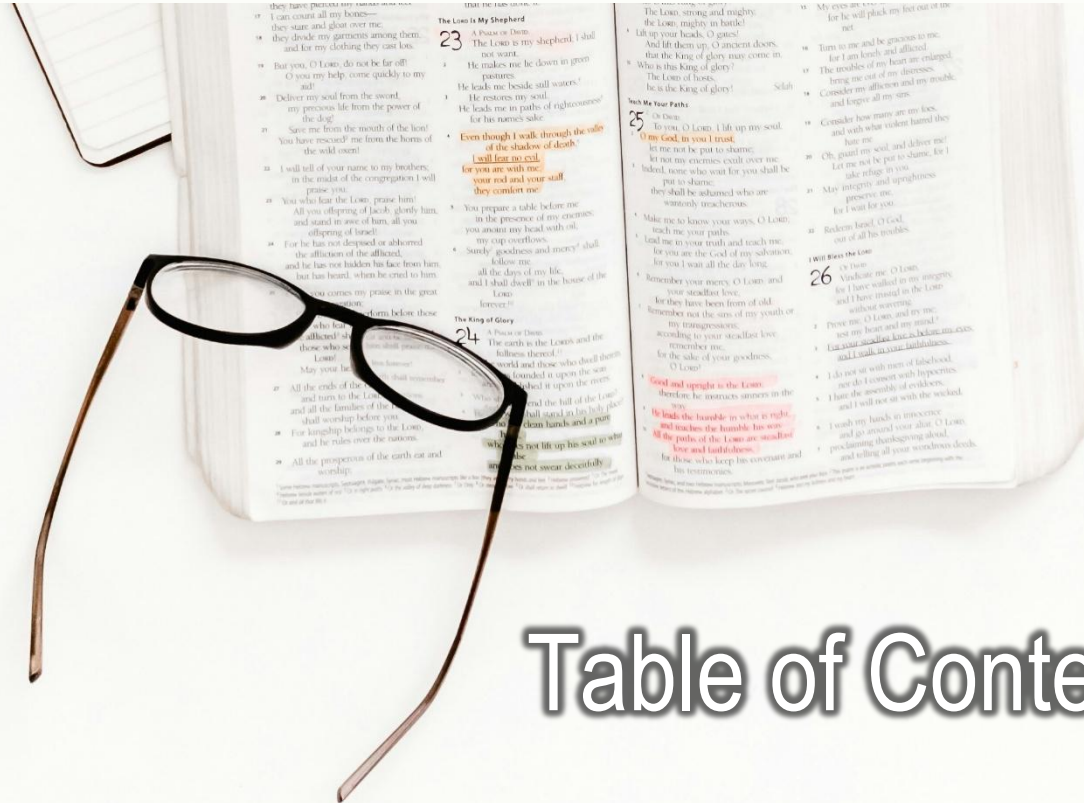
Godliness. Reverence. Obedience. Worship.

**GR**  **W**  
magazine

a quarterly e-magazine designed to promote  
growth in faith and service to God



– in memory of Sean Cavender –



# Table of Contents

- 5 | **EXPOSITORY ARTICLE | Jeffrey Smith**  
[The Hall of Faith: Samuel](#)
  
- 8 | **CHURCH ARTICLE | Brian V. Sullivan**  
[The Church at Sardis: Seven Churches of Asia](#)
  
- 12 | **WORSHIP ARTICLE | Kyle Boyd**  
[Worship in the Midst of Suffering](#)
  
- 16 | **APPLICATION ARTICLE | John Maddocks**  
[Becoming Like Jesus: Selflessness](#)
  
- 19 | **EVANGELISM ARTICLE | Shawn Chancellor**  
[Loving the Lost](#)
  
- 22 | **BEYOND THE BASICS ARTICLE | Jeff Asher**  
[The Truth Matters in a “My Truth Culture”](#)



# From the Editor...

Spring is a season that naturally turns our thoughts toward growth. After the stillness of winter, the earth awakens again with new life. Trees bud, fields green, and flowers bloom. It is a reminder that growth and renewal are part of God's design in the world around us.

Scripture often uses this imagery to describe faith. Just as a plant must be rooted, nourished, and tended in order to grow, our spiritual lives require care and attention. Growth does not happen accidentally – it happens intentionally. Perhaps three simple words can guide us this season: plant, cultivate, and flourish.

**Plant** – growth begins with what is placed in the soil. The word of God is described as seed (Luke 8:11). If we desire spiritual growth, we must plant the right things in our hearts through time spent in Scripture, prayer, and reflection.

**Cultivate** – a garden does not thrive simply because seeds were planted once. It requires

continued care. In the same way, our spiritual lives need ongoing attention as we remove influences that hinder faith and strengthen habits that nourish it.

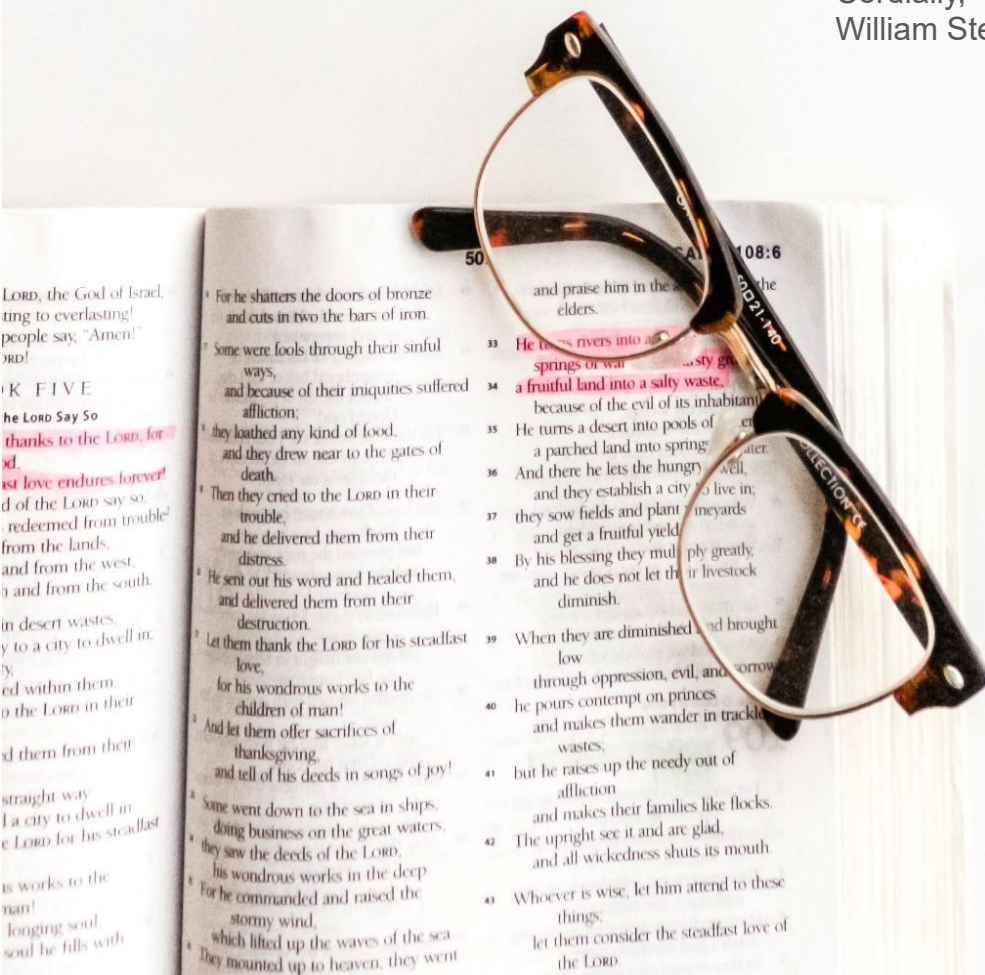
**Flourish** – when conditions are right, growth becomes visible. God desires that our faith bear fruit – love, faithfulness, kindness, and devotion to His will.

The purpose of GROW magazine has always been simple: to encourage thoughtful study, faithful living, and steady spiritual maturity. I am grateful for the writers in this issue who have invested their time to provide material designed to help us do exactly that.

I am also thankful for you, our readers. Your interest in GROW magazine is cherished. If you find the material helpful, I encourage you to share it with others – whether by forwarding this email, sharing a link on social media, or passing along the PDF copy of the magazine.

Now, let's GROW together.

Cordially,  
William Stewart



# The Hall of Faith: Samuel

JEFFREY SMITH | MELBOURNE, FLORIDA

## A Life Given to God Before It Began

Few figures in the Bible bridge two great eras of Israel's history the way Samuel does. He was the last of the judges and the first of the great prophets, a man who anointed kings, confronted sinners, and served God with unwavering faithfulness for roughly eighty years. And it all began before he was born.

## A Mother's Vow, A Nation's Gift

Samuel's story opens not with his own words or deeds, but with the tears of his mother. Hannah was a woman of deep faith and deep sorrow – barren in a culture that measured a woman's worth by her children. Year after year, she and her husband Elkanah traveled to Shiloh to worship, and year after year, Hannah wept and prayed. Her prayer was not merely personal. She promised God that if He would give her a son, she would give that son back. God heard her, and Samuel was born (1 Samuel 1:1-20).

True to her word, once Samuel was weaned, Hannah brought him to the tabernacle at Shiloh and presented him to the elderly priest Eli. "For this child I prayed," she told him, "and the Lord has granted me my petition." Samuel was dedicated to God before he could have understood what that meant (1:21-28).

## Growing Up in God's House

Samuel grew up ministering in the tabernacle, wearing the linen ephod of priestly service while still a boy (2:18). The writer of 1 Samuel offers a remarkable



parallel when he notes that Samuel "grew in favor with God and man" – the same language Luke uses centuries later to describe the boy Jesus (2:26; Luke 2:52). It is a quiet but powerful comparison, suggesting that even in his youth, Samuel was set apart in character as well as calling.

Those were spiritually dark days in Israel. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were corrupt and contemptible, and the word of the Lord was rare. Into that darkness came a voice in the night. Samuel, still a young boy, heard his name called and thought it was Eli. Three times this happened, before Eli understood what was occurring and instructed Samuel to answer, "Speak Lord, for Your servant hears." The message God gave Samuel that night was a word of severe judgment against the house of Eli – a heavy burden for a child to carry to an old man. But Samuel told Eli everything, hiding nothing. It was his first act of prophetic courage, and it would not be his last (3:1-18).

From that night forward, Samuel's reputation was established. All Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, recognized that Samuel had been appointed as a prophet of the Lord, and God continued to reveal Himself through Samuel at Shiloh (3:19-21).

## Judge, Prophet, and Spiritual Reformer

Samuel beholds a unique distinction in Israel's

history. Only two individuals in the entire Bible served as both judge and prophet – Deborah and Samuel. When the Philistines dominated Israel and the ark of God had been captured, it was Samuel who called the nation to repentance. “Put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths,” he told them, “and direct your hearts to the Lord and serve Him only” (7:3-4). The people listened. They gathered at Mizpah, fasted, and confessed their sins.

As Samuel offered a burnt offering, the Philistines advanced – and the Lord answered with thunder. The enemy was thrown into confusion and routed before Israel. Samuel set up a stone, naming it Ebenezer – “Stone of Help” – saying, “Thus far the Lord has helped us.” He then served as a circuit judge, traveling each year through Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, before returning to his home in Ramah where he also judged Israel and built an altar to the Lord (7:5-17).

### The Reluctant Kingmaker

When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges over Israel. But unlike their father, they were corrupt men who took bribes and perverted justice. The elders of Israel came to Samuel with a demand that stung deeply; give us a king like the other nations. Samuel was displeased, and God told him plainly, “They have not rejected you; they have rejected Me” (8:1-9).

Nevertheless, God instructed Samuel to warn the people exactly what a king would cost them – their sons conscripted into armies, their daughters taken as servants, their fields and vineyards taxed, their freedom slowly surrounded. The people refused to listen. They wanted a king, and God told Samuel to give them one.

That king was Saul, a tall and impressive Benjamite who had come looking for lost

donkeys and found a destiny. Samuel anointed him privately, then later presented him publicly to all Israel (9:1-27). It was Samuel who shaped the early monarchy, who instructed Saul, who represented God’s expectations to the new king.

### When Faithfulness Demands Hard Words

Samuel’s farewell addresses to Israel is a model of prophetic integrity (12:1-25). He challenged anyone to accuse him of corruption or injustice in his long years of service. No one could. He then rehearsed God’s faithfulness to Israel and warned the nation that both they and their king must follow the Lord or face His hand against them. He was not a bitter man relinquishing power – he was a faithful servant handing off responsibility while keeping his own.

But the relationship between Samuel and Saul became increasingly painful. When Saul grew impatient waiting for Samuel before battle and offered the sacrifice himself, Samuel arrived to pronounce judgement: “You have acted foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God ... your kingdom shall not continue” (13:1-15). Later, when Saul disobeyed God’s command to utterly destroy the Amalekites – sparing King Agag and the best of the plunder – Samuel confronted him again with words that have echoed through history: “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams” (15:22). Then Samuel himself executed what Saul had refused to do, hacking King Agag to pieces before the Lord at Gilgal – a jarring act of holy judgment that reminds us the prophets of God were not gentle figures of religious ceremony, but servants of a God who takes obedience seriously (15:33).

Samuel grieved deeply for Saul. The text says he mourned for him all his days. Yet

God pressed him forward.

### The Quiet Anointing That Changed Everything

In one of Scripture's most intimate scenes, God sent Samuel to Bethlehem to the family of Jesse. Samuel moved through Jesse's sons one by one, and God passed on each of them until the youngest was brought in from the fields – a ruddy young shepherd named David. "Arise, anoint him," God said, "for this is he." Samuel anointed David in the midst of his brothers, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward (16:1-13). Samuel, the last judge, had just set the future of Israel's greatest dynasty in motion.

### A Life Without a Recorded Sin

Samuel died and was buried at Ramah, and all Israel mourned for him (25:1). His legacy was so towering that even after his death he was not entirely absent. When Saul, desperate and abandoned by God, consulted the witch of Endor, it was Samuel's spirit that appeared — not to comfort the king, but to confirm his coming judgment (28:1–19).

What makes Samuel remarkable is not merely what he did, but what was never said about him. Unlike nearly every other major figure in the Old Testament, no sin is attributed to Samuel. He was not without human struggle –

his sons failed; his farewell address carries a note of wounded pride – but the record of his life is one of consistent, costly faithfulness.

The author of 2 Chronicles notes that no Passover had been kept in proper form since the days of Samuel (35:18). The psalmist lists him alongside Moses and Aaron as one called on God's name and God answered (Psalm 99:6). In the New Testament, Peter places him among the prophets who foretold the days of Christ (Acts 3:24), Paul marks him as the end of the era of judges (Acts 13:20), and the writer of Hebrews places him in the great Hall of Faith alongside Gideon, Barak, Jephthah, and David (Hebrews 11:32).

### The Measure of a Life

Samuel's story begins with a barren woman's prayer and ends with an entire nation in mourning. He was given to God before birth, raised in God's house, called by God's voice, shaped by God's word, and spent roughly eighty years doing God's work – judging, warning, anointing, confronting, and occasionally exceeding the will of a holy God. He is one of the towering figures of the Old Testament, and his inclusion in the New Testament's Hall of Faith is well earned.

He is proof that a life fully surrendered to God, from the very beginning, is a life that history cannot forget.



# The Church at Sardis: Seven Churches of Asia

BRIAN V. SULLIVAN | BANCROFT, ONTARIO

After issuing the great commission in Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus stated: “And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of age.” Amen.” (Matthew 28:20b). This was not just a vague promise but a reality that is evident in every one of the Letters to the Seven churches of Asia in Revelation Two and Three. The same Christ who said He would build His church (Matthew 16:18) made it clear “the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (after shedding His blood on the cross, and dying; He would conquer death (Revelation 1:18; Acts 2:29-33, 36) and be able to establish His church or people (purchased with His blood, Acts 20:28). After being seen by witnesses (1 Corinthians 15:1-8), He would ascend on high to sit at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 8:1) and would exercise headship over the church or people of God by observing what they were doing and how they were conducting themselves.

One cannot appreciate the extent of His observation unless you carefully view the introduction to Christ that Revelation One provides. There is no suggestion of weakness or inability attributed to Him in Revelation One. He may have been dead because of the cross, but He is alive forever more by His resurrection (Revelation 1:18; Romans 4:23-25; Romans 1:3-4). Take the time to read again Revelation 1:12-20 and see clearly the resurrected Christ. Revelation, chapter One gives us a description of Him in His new role as ‘high priest’ and ‘king’ after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:21-22; Zechariah



6:12-13; both King and Priest on the same throne in heaven, a throne that was His at His ascension, Daniel 7:13-14). Revelation One, Verse 20 has Him explaining what the “seven stars” are, and what the golden lampstands represent. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. Christ has them in “His right hand” (place of power or authority). As we study each of these churches, we see Christ’s awareness of not just the hype they might have created but the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of their application of truth in the work they are doing, and the influence they are having for good or bad. Each of the seven churches is accountable for what they are doing or not doing. Christ is not looking for the churches to receive accolades from the world but is concerned about how true and faithful they are to His word and will. At the close of each letter is an earnest appeal from the Master to change what is faltering, or to increase what is lacking, or to add more to what He has approved of in them with promised rewards for their compliance, or consequence for failing to do so.



## The Church at Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6)

Each of the seven letters begins with what might be called a “self-identification” of Christ.

*“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, “These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars” (Revelation 3:1, NKJV).*

According to Revelation 1:16, Christ “had in His right hand seven stars”, and Revelation 1:20 identifies “the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches”. Each of the seven churches has such an angel (2:1, Ephesus; 2:8, Smyrna; 2:12: Pergamos; 2:18: Thyatira; 3:1, Sardis; 3:7: Philadelphia; and 3:14: Laodicea). You can consult various commentators and see that some see “the angel of the church” as representing a messenger, or possibly the general spirit or disposition of the church, some may suggest something else. Regardless, the letters were each addressed to the “angel” of the church(es) and the message would be delivered and not delayed.

He does not view them as a collective of the churches of Asia Minor but as individual local churches in their respective areas. In the Cogdell-Turner debate (Turner being brother Robert Turner) over the work of the church, brother Turner gave a definition of the Universal or General sense of the church (Matthew 16:18-19; Acts 2:47; etc.): “the universal church is a brotherhood not a church-hood”. In simple words, the universal church is made up of the saved the world over and of all time, and speaks of a relationship we have first with God and His Son, and then with every other soul who has responded to the same gospel in the same way (1 John 1:5-7; Ephesians 3:6). It is not some unit made up of local churches under one banner. The local church (such as those addressed in these seven letters to the seven churches) is the Lord’s people in a geographical location in a country, a city, or an area. Each local church is

subject to the same head Christ, and each has a mandate of the Lord to carry out. Jesus did not address them as part of a collective but as individual churches. They were given the responsibility to teach/preach the gospel, to edify the members, and to help the needy saints as prescribed in His will. Each local church is expected to conduct themselves in harmony with His design and purpose.

At Revelation 3:1, Christ describes Himself with these words:

*“These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars” (NKJV).*

A similar expression is used in connection with Christ in Revelation 5:6, and we would conclude that it is a way of describing the complete or perfect Holy Spirit “sent out into all the earth”. Seven has long been recognized as the number of perfection or completeness, the same Spirit Jesus had declared,

*“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father; the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me” (John 15:26-27).*

We have identified the “seven stars” as representing the seven local churches of Asia Minor.

At Revelation 3:1c, we find this evaluation from the Master Himself: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead” (NKJV). The first thought that comes to this writer’s mind is a text in 1 Timothy 5:6 that speaks of a young widow who has chosen a life contrary to faithful service to God, and Paul states: “But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives” (NKJV). She had left the spiritual exercises of life (trusting in God, continuing in prayers and supplications “night and day”, v. 5) and turned to the pursuit of the world’s pleasure bringing about her spiritual death. When

teaching this in a class in Southern Ontario, I inserted my thoughts about it, the church at Sardis was “a flickering candle, almost ready to die out.” They did not get there in one sudden jump, but they may have been deceived by the devil and lulled into accepting things on a line that was slightly different than truth and the Master did not sugar coat it or try to make them feel at ease. His appeal to them helps us grasp the reason for their present situation. Revelation 3:2:

*“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God” (NKJV).*

What could have gone wrong? They shifted position from the truth (the word and will of God) to something else (Galatians 1:6-10: there is no other gospel). They had chosen their pathway rather than the more difficult but safer route of doing God’s will. They might have been like those in Matthew 7:21-23, who had much to boast of in their own accomplishments, their own plans, their own schemes of rethinking and looking for noteworthiness among men (‘prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name’; Christ’s answer to them was “I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness”). There is a serious warning for all of us in this letter to Sardis. A church (the people, Acts 5:11) could be together on the Lord’s Day. They could put a sign on the meeting house that declares it as a meeting place of the “So and So church of Christ” (Matthew 16:18; Revelation 2-3). However, if they no longer concern themselves with the will of God (Matthew 7:21-28; 2 John 9; Colossians 3:17), they could fail to be what they claim. They may have lost their enthusiasm for the gospel, they may have been distracted by other denominations around them and their supposed success and their emphasis on a modified approach to reach many more people, they may have become disheartened, discouraged, or demeaned. However they got there, Jesus declares without

equivocation, “You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.” Jesus offers a simple correction if they can set aside their pride and defensive stride and apply it.

*“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die” (Revelation 3:2a).*

Be watchful: open your eyes to what you are doing, examine those things in Scripture to see if they are approved of God (Colossians 3:17; 1 Peter 4:11; and Ephesians 5:14-17). Strengthen the things which remain. Consider what “work” you are doing and eliminate the things without authority (that meet with man’s approval and applause but are not of God.) Without a change of direction even the few good things that remain will soon die out.

*“Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent.” (Revelation 3:3)*

Remember is good advice in God’s service. Look back at the time when you first heard and followed the Christ when the gospel was so very real, powerful and effective in your own life. You wanted to tell everyone you could meet about what you had found. At that time, being part of Christ’s people was what you desired, and what you were persuaded you should do. That enthusiasm inspired you to find others, and to tell others. The Master declares: “hold fast” (don’t let go of the gospel or the work assigned for His people both individually and collectively).

Collectively (as part of the local church): Worship and service that includes the work of Evangelism (preach the gospel); work of Edification (build up and strengthen the saints); and Benevolence (for the needy saints). Individually (being a Christian at all times); Being an example in the community and in the church. Sharing the gospel, strengthening our brethren, and using the blessings of God to help others in the church and outside of the church, as we have ability and opportunity. Christ calls for them to repent

(recognition [realize where we are], regret [godly sorrow over our sin], resolve [change of mind or attitude], reform [change of life], and return [go back to the Father]; based on the prodigal in Luke 15:11-24).

The seriousness of their situation is evident in the words in the final part of Revelation 3:3.

*“Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you” (NKJV).*

This is not the time to let things slide. Christ who observes them, has given them a clear warning. Watch means looking carefully at your conduct, your works, your relationship with Christ’s will and purpose. I will come like a thief (there will be no further announcement, just arrival). If, and when Christ comes, you will know it. He has the right to command, and the ability to remove their lampstand.

In Revelation 3:4, Jesus reveals something else He is aware of.

*“You have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.”*

Some of those at Sardis that the Lord is aware of are still pursuing Christ and the gospel properly. They have not defiled their garments (spiritual clothing: holiness) by choosing to follow faithfully even when others were going astray). It may be that they hoped they could help the others return to faithfulness by their continued presence, but that was not a place or role for the weak or immature in Christ. They will be rewarded by being able to “walk with Me in

white (purity, cleansing by Christ’s blood) for they are worthy (they have proven their faithfulness and their steadfastness). This evaluation is by Christ not their own measurement or thoughts.

The reward that is promised for overcoming ought to stir them on. Revelation 3:5:

*“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels” (NKJV).*

The white garments hold with them the idea of purity (Revelation 7:13-14) through Christ. Christ has the ability to “blot” names from “the Book of Life” (see Luke 10:20; Revelation 13:8; 20:15; 21:22-27). To have your name confessed before the Father and His angels is to find acceptance and to be counted among the people of God (cf. Matthew 10:32-33). The letter closes with an appeal for all to listen (and learn). These letters were not supplied for us just to give us some reading material, they are intended to show us the reality of our relationship with God through His Son, the importance of what the local church does in service to God, and the reason why we ought to stay the course and not try to re-invent the approach to the gospel or the church that Jesus said He would build. He is watching, evaluating and aware of what we do. May God help us learn to apply His word and will all our days on earth that we might remain in His grace, mercy and love.

Do we have an ear to hear?

# Worship In The Midst Of Suffering

KYLE BOYD | WICHITA, KANSAS

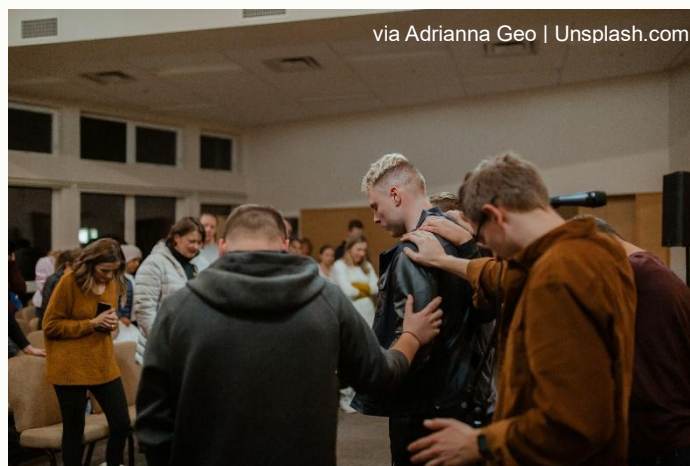
*“Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”* (James 1:1-4, NASB2020)

For years I had studied and taught these verses at my local congregation. With the help of my Uncle, gospel preacher Warren Berkley, I had built up a good level of understanding and confidence to, almost proudly, educate and guide an adult Bible class. Despite being relatively young and worse, having members in the congregation who were truly enduring trials, I boldly instructed on the topic of suffering even though I myself had not experienced real trials. Of course you don't need to be actively enduring a trial to understand the message and you don't need to be suffering to be qualified to teach the message but it sure helps. It helps you to have better understanding, be relatable and to have the ears of the people.

The first article I wrote for Grow Magazine was a number of years ago over the topic of the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew emphasizes kingdom citizenship. If you want to be in the kingdom you need to behave a certain way and nothing describes those requirements better than the Sermon on the Mount. What did Jesus say about trials and the persecuted at the end of the beatitudes?

*“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.”* (Matthew 5:10)

Persecution, trials, tests, suffering.... different words that may carry slightly different



via Adrianna Geo | Unsplash.com

meanings yet all handled the same. They all hurt, they're all difficult and Satan is behind them. 20 years later James echoes the same idea. And where did he learn that teaching? From his big brother Jesus. James isn't creating some new idea, he's carrying on Christ's idea that Christians will face real pain but because of Him it's going to be okay. Listen to James's "beatitude" that echoes this from **verse 12**,

*“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him.”*

This is our goal during our trial.

James' letter to the Jewish Christians under persecution immediately prepares us to be ready for these difficulties and burdens. At some point in your life as a Christian you will encounter *“various trials”*. Probably not like theirs but the principle is the same and it's not a question of if but when. Paul's words to Timothy come to mind when he says, *“all who want to live in a godly way in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”* But not everyone's persecution will look the same. The only thing that is the same is that everyone will be included. Perhaps the reason I had most often studied the



verses of James, out of all the topics in Scripture, was because I was being prepared for the trial I was about to encounter. At only 15 years old my oldest child was diagnosed with Stage 4 advanced brain cancer. Few things seem to rock someone as much as cancer does. And sadly, it's happening more and more. A question comes to mind though when thinking about trials. Knowing their inevitability, how do we move forward staying faithful despite the trial? Or as the title of the article suggests, how do we worship in the midst of suffering? Because the reality of the matter is how we handle our circumstances matters most. As Christians we want to handle our circumstances regardless of what they are. Good or bad, sunshine or storm. We want to be able to sing, "It is well with my soul". We want to have the beautiful result that withstanding a test can bring. Or as James says, *"so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."*

This is nothing new, just a couple of thoughts that helped my family and me during our trial. Consider these when your trial hits you to help you endure and keep faithful while suffering.

### **Power**

The first is to remember God's power over everything. Satan may be the power behind the cruelties of the world, he may be to blame for sin and for our trial but never forget who has power over Satan. God is more powerful than the devil and by proxy so are we. Of course we don't have God's power but God has equipped us through His Word to be able to withstand any storm we may encounter. God has the power to prevent the devil from overwhelming us with something we can't endure. He promises that nothing will be too great for us to handle. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says,

*"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but*

*with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it."*

That word *"temptation"* is the same Greek word used for *"trials"* in **James 1:2** This gives us power over Satan and over our trial. This doesn't make anything easier though. Trials hurt. They're painful and don't always resolve the way we'd like but trials don't make us powerless despite sometimes feeling that way. Because there's a way of escape, this gives us confidence that no matter the situation we can stay faithful.

I'm reminded of Paul's letter to the Philippians who, despite his difficult circumstances, continued a faithful life and even rejoiced in his circumstances. He did this by finding his strength through Christ. Paul recognized that he couldn't withstand his trials alone. Neither can we, by the way. By himself he was weak. It was only through Christ that he was made strong. *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."* Paul couldn't but Christ could. He is the source of our power and strength over cancer, anxiety, bad news and any other trial we face. Paul wasn't winning when he wrote the letter to the Philippians while in prison, but he was winning because he was in Christ. And that's the key. If you stay in Christ during your trial then you will be okay. Paul said it's what Christ was doing in him that was sustaining him. He was okay, not because he was amazing, but because Christ is amazing. Jesus helps us live with defeat. He sustained Paul and he'll sustain us through our trial if we recognize this. Stay faithful and lean on Him like you've never leaned before. Recognize God's power.

### **People**

Secondly, rest on God's people. Sometimes it helps to know you're not alone. It helps to know that what you're experiencing has been experienced before many times over. Open your Bible to almost any page and you'll most likely find someone going through a hard time. I'd make

an argument that the entire Bible is about this. Joseph dealing with his brothers and Potiphar's wife. David fleeing for his life from Saul. Job's massive trial of complete loss. Paul's shipwrecks, beatings, imprisonments, and of course his "thorn in the flesh" described as a "messenger of Satan". God's people handle difficulties, showing us the blueprint of how to deal with trials. We can learn what worked and what didn't and we can use their experiences to help us with ours. When rocked with suffering, look to the stories of old to help us know others have faced the same. Study Joseph, David, Paul and Job to gain strength, perspective and confidence. Also consider **1 Peter 5**, specifically **verses 6-10**. Peter discusses the suffering of God's people, the source of suffering, the solution and beautifully at the end, the reward.

*"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time, having cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares about you. Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. So resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brothers and sisters who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you."*

But also look at your congregation. I can't imagine navigating the troubled waters of cancer without a church family, local and beyond. The "beautiful fallout" as once described to me. My heart hurts for those who don't have this support. Paul says, "Bear one another's burdens." This is where God's people shine. When you're weak, they will be strong and will lift you up. Let your church family

embrace you. They will prop you up and encourage you with a support you've never felt before. It's needed and it works. They will keep you in the fight when you want to throw in the towel. They will keep you worshiping in the midst of suffering. When you're not on your knees in prayer, surround yourself with God's people who don't work for Satan.

There are many other ways that Christians can manage trials and offer praise while in the midst of suffering. Time has failed me to mention immersing yourself in the Word (specifically the Psalms), using the trial to help others and of course praying without ceasing. The following passage concludes this article by summing up both points of God's power and His people.

*"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring charges against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, but rather, was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or trouble, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? Just as it is written: "For your sake we are killed all day long; we were regarded as sheep to the slaughter." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:31-39)*

Trust that He will handle what is beyond our control, that trials are expected but we can overcome through Christ.

– A PLEA FOR PRAYER –

For those of you who have read this article, please pray for my son Eli who continues to battle this horrible disease.

# Becoming Like Jesus: Selflessness

JOHN MADDOCKS | JORDAN, ONTARIO

The call to follow Christ is a call to change – not just on the outside, but deep within the heart. It is not simply about attending church, knowing Scripture, or doing religious things. It is about becoming more like Jesus Christ. And one of the clearest ways we see His character is in His selflessness.

Selflessness is not something that comes naturally. Most of us, if we are honest, tend to think about ourselves first. We think about our time, our comfort, our needs, and our feelings. That is the way the world teaches us to live. But Jesus shows us a better way – a higher way. He teaches us how to live for others.

This kind of life is not easy, but it is deeply rewarding. And it is exactly the kind of life God calls us to live.

## The Mind of Christ

The journey toward selflessness begins in the mind.

In Philippians 2:5–8, we are told, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” Then the passage explains how Jesus, though He was equal with God, did not hold onto His position. Instead, He humbled Himself and came to earth as a servant.

Think about that for a moment. Jesus had all authority. He had all power. He deserved all honour. Yet He chose humility. He did not come demanding respect. He did not come to be served. He came to serve.

That tells us something very important: selflessness starts with how we think. Before it shows up in our actions, it takes root in our attitude.

We must learn to think differently:



- Instead of asking, “What do I deserve?” we ask, “What can I give?”
- Instead of thinking, “How can I be noticed?” we think, “How can I help?”
- Instead of protecting our pride, we learn to practice humility.

Pride says, “It’s about me.” Selflessness says, “It’s about others.” If we want to grow spiritually, we must train our minds to think like Christ. That means letting go of selfish ambition and learning to value others.

## The Servant Heart of Jesus

Jesus did not just talk about serving—He lived it every day. In Mark 10:45, He said, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

That one verse sums up His life. Everywhere Jesus went, He helped people.

- He touched lepers when others stayed away (Matthew 8:2–3)
- He spoke kindly to those who were rejected (John 4:7–26)
- He fed the hungry (Matthew 14:13–21)
- He comforted the grieving (John 11:33–35)



And perhaps one of the most powerful moments is found in John 13. On the night before His death, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples.

Now think about that. The Son of God knelt down and did the work of a servant. Then He said, “I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15).

Selflessness is not just a big idea—it is something we practice in everyday life.

It shows up in simple things:

- Being patient when we are tired
- Listening when someone needs to talk
- Helping without being asked
- Encouraging someone who feels discouraged

These may seem like small acts, but they reflect a big heart. A selfless life is built one decision at a time.

### The Sacrifice of Love

The greatest example of selflessness is the cross.

Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Jesus did not wait for us to deserve His love. He gave Himself freely. He suffered. He was rejected. He was mocked. And He died—not for His own sins, but for ours.

That is true selflessness. It reminds us that love is not just a feeling—it is a choice. And often, it is a costly choice.

Being selfless may cost us:

- Our time
- Our comfort
- Our preferences
- Our pride

But love is willing to pay the price.

In Romans 12:10, we are told to “prefer one another.” That means we put others first. In

Galatians 6:2, we are told to “bear one another’s burdens.” That means we help carry the struggles of others. In Colossians 3:13, we are told to forgive—just as Christ forgave us.

These are not always easy things to do. But this is what it means to follow Jesus. Selflessness is not weakness. It is strength. It is choosing what is right, even when it is hard.

### Dying to Self Every Day

Jesus made it clear that following Him requires daily commitment.

In Luke 9:23, He said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”

Notice the word “daily.” Selflessness is not something we do once. It is something we choose again and again.

Every day, we face decisions:

- Will I be patient, or will I lose my temper?
- Will I forgive, or will I hold a grudge?
- Will I serve, or will I focus only on myself?

Dying to self means letting go of our selfish desires and choosing God’s way instead. This does not mean we lose who we are. Instead, it means we become who God wants us to be.

As we grow, the fruit of the Spirit begins to show in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23): love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. These qualities grow when we stop living for ourselves and start living for God and others.

### The Blessing of a Selfless Life

Here is something wonderful: selflessness leads to joy.

Jesus said in Acts 20:35, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

That may sound backward at first. The world tells us that happiness comes from getting more—more comfort, more success, more attention.

But Jesus teaches the opposite. True joy comes from giving. When we live only for ourselves, life feels empty. But when we serve others, life becomes meaningful.

Think about the times you have helped someone. Encouraged someone. Given your time or energy for someone else. Those are the moments that stay with you. That is because we were created to love.

God also sees every act of kindness. In Matthew 25:40, Jesus teaches that when we help others, it is as if we are helping Him.

Nothing is wasted. Every kind word, every act of service, every quiet sacrifice—it all matters.

### Growing Into Christlikeness

Becoming selfless like Jesus does not happen overnight. It is a process.

There will be days when we struggle. There will be moments when selfishness wins. But we do not give up. We keep looking to Christ. We keep learning from His example. We keep asking God to shape our hearts.

Little by little, we begin to change.

- We become more patient
- More understanding

- More generous
- More forgiving

And over time, others begin to see something different in us. They see Christ.

### A Life That Shines

We live in a world that is focused on self—self-promotion, self-image, self-interest. But a selfless life stands out. It shines.

When people see someone who is kind, humble, and giving, it gets their attention. It opens doors. It points them to something greater. It points them to Jesus. That is what our lives are meant to do.

### Final Encouragement

Becoming selfless like Jesus Christ is not easy—but it is worth it. It brings peace to your heart. It strengthens your relationships. It honours God.

Start small. Look for one way each day to serve someone else. Speak kindly. Give generously. Forgive quickly. Help willingly.

And most importantly, keep your eyes on Jesus. The more you focus on Him, the more you will become like Him. And when that happens, your life will not only change—you will help change the lives of others as well.

# Loving the Lost

SHAWN CHANCELLOR | AMARILLO, TEXAS

A man lived in his home for over twenty years. He waved to his neighbor regularly. They talked about the weather, yard work, football, and politics. When the neighbor's wife got sick, he brought food. When the neighbor retired, he congratulated him.

Then one day the ambulance came.

The funeral was brief. Afterward, the man stood in his driveway and realized something that left him deeply unsettled: in twenty years, he had never once spoken to his neighbor about his soul. He had discussed many temporal things—but never eternity.

He had been friendly. He had been helpful. But had he truly loved him?

In the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul demonstrates in great detail that all men stand condemned before God, because “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). However, because of the great love with which He loves us, God was not willing to allow us to remain in this lost state. Instead, He sent His “Son into the world so that we live through Him” (1 John 4:9).

As we consider our need to love the lost, we must clearly define what we mean by “love.” We are not referring to a sentimental love that focuses on merely seeing the good in everyone. We are talking about an active love that understands death to be the consequence of sin. A love that refuses to be indifferent to the loss of a single soul. A love that drives us to share the Gospel message of repentance. We must love the lost.

## Because God First Loved Me

If we are to understand love and how we should



love the lost, we first look at God's love for us. After all, “we love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Throughout his first epistle, John looks to the example of divine love as revealed on the cross to define the love we should have for one another. He consistently shows that this love is a self-sacrificing pursuit of what is good for another (1 John 4:9-10; 3:16-19).

In Romans 5:8-10, Paul offers a similar definition of love. “God demonstrates His own love toward us...” (v 8a). His love for us is active. “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (v 8b). His love is self-sacrificing. Furthermore, we see here that His love is not rooted in the value of its object. When His love was shown to us, we were sinners and enemies of God (v 10).

It was love that paved the way for our salvation. In Ephesians 2:1-8, Paul moves from “while we were yet sinners” to “dead in your trespasses and sins.” His point is to emphasize just how helpless we are to overcome the reality of sin and death on our own. We can no more reverse the consequences of sin than we can call ourselves forth from the grave.

*“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ...”* (Ephesians 2:4-5)

He goes on to say, in verse 8, that we are “saved by grace through faith.” However, notice in verse 4, the basis of our salvation is the love of God. Without this love, there would be no offer of grace.

When we consider just how hopeless and desperate our situation is without God’s loving intervention, we are, or certainly should be, overcome with a sense of gratitude. We deserve eternal punishment, but we have the hope of heaven in our hearts because God loves us enough to send His Son to die for us that we might be redeemed. Such gratitude compels us to a tangible response. By sharing the gospel of God’s grace, we share in His love for His creation and demonstrate our gratitude for His redeeming love.

### I Was Once Lost

In Romans 1:14, Paul states that he had an obligation or a debt “to both Greeks and barbarians.” The context in which he makes this statement has to do with the Gospel that he was charged to preach “to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles...” (Romans 1:5). The obligation that he felt drove him to proclaim the Gospel (Romans 1:15). To understand this feeling of indebtedness, we need to think about Paul’s life before Christ.

In 1 Timothy 1:12-16, Paul speaks of his past hostility to the cause of Christ. He was “formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor.” In Acts 9:4-5, we find that these actions were directed at Christ. By persecuting Christians, Paul in fact persecuted Jesus. As a result of this, Paul calls himself “the foremost of sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15).

Despite this hostile attitude, he was “shown

mercy because (he) acted ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Timothy 1:13). Furthermore, he realized that it was by God’s loving grace that he was granted the opportunity to repent and live his life in service to God (1 Timothy 1:14). This realization, that he had persecuted the Messiah and yet had been forgiven, became the driving force behind his preaching and teaching.

*“For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another”* (Titus 3:3).

While we may have never persecuted the Saints, there was certainly a time in all our lives when we lived for self and not for the Lord. As a result, we were separated from God, deserving eternal death. Fortunately, godly people reached out to us, taught us His word, encouraged us in the faith, and shared His grace with us. I hate to think where I might be now if it were not for those loving people then?

Each one of us who has experienced the saving grace of God has this same debt. While we can never repay the gift we have received, it creates a sense of stewardship that drives us to serve the Lord. This sense of indebtedness informs our efforts to evangelize. It leads us to approach the lost with concern and compassion rather than seeking to win an argument or prove someone wrong. We must recognize that all sin is worthy of death and that no sin makes one more of a sinner than any other. When we properly assess our own need for God’s grace, loving the lost becomes a natural response to the cross.

### Because Souls are Eternally Precious

In Luke 15,

*“the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them.’”*

To them, the fact that Jesus showed compassion and mercy to those considered sinners was



beyond reprehensible. In response, Jesus presented three parables that explained His view of the lost. He began by telling of a man who left ninety-nine sheep to find one that was lost. Next, he told of a woman who lost a coin, and when she found it, she rejoiced with her friends and neighbors. Finally, He told of a man who rejoiced when his son, whom he thought dead, returned home. All three parables focus on one theme: God rejoices when sinners repent. If heaven rejoices over one sinner who repents, how can we remain silent?

In Luke 19, Jesus encountered a tax collector named Zacchaeus. Tax collectors were perhaps the most hated men in Jewish society because they colluded with the enemy and often defrauded their brothers to enrich themselves. However, when Jesus met this man and heard his penitent plea, He said,

*“Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:9-10).

God assigned a value to every soul at the cross:

*“You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with the precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”* (1 Peter 1:18-19)

To be redeemed is to be purchased, in this case, from slavery to sin. John 3:16 tells us that this price is applied to every soul.

When we consider the value that God has placed on every soul and all that He has done to redeem man from our sin, we cannot help but assign the same value to the souls of the lost. To love the lost is a divine imperative, through which we can busy ourselves in His service for His purpose.

### Conclusion

One day, the man in the driveway realized that friendliness is not the same as love. He had been kind. He had been neighborly. But he had never spoken about the one thing that mattered most. Now the opportunity was gone.

We all encounter people who will one day stand before God. Each of us works beside people, visits with family members, and speaks with friends who are traveling toward eternity. We talk easily about work, politics, the weather, and sports. But do we speak about Christ?

To love the lost is not merely to feel concern. It is to speak. It is to teach. It is to warn. It is to plead. Silence may preserve comfort, but it does not express love.

One day, each of us will look back over the relationships God placed in our lives. May it never be said of us that we discussed everything temporary but never eternity. If we truly love the lost, we will open our mouths and share the message that once saved us.

# The Truth Matters in a “My Truth Culture”

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## My Truth

Have you ever been in a conversation with someone, maybe a discussion about some social issue or some moral or religious question and get to the point where your respondent just looks at you and says, “Well, I know we disagree, but you have your truth and *I have my truth.*”

It's a popular expression these days, this idea of one having his own truth. Usually, that statement is offered to shut down discussion or debate over a divisive question. It is intended to elevate one's personal experience and subjective interpretations above anyone else's, whether subjective or objective, standard that disagrees with their own interpretation. To affirm *my truth* is seen as authentic self-expression of one's values and perceptions. However, *my truth* embraces only what pleases self while rejecting the need to please anyone else. It is an affirmation of living life openly without pretense, shame, or conformity. Portuguese José Teixeira expressed it best:

“*My truth* does not need to convince. It does not need to explain itself. It does not need to defend itself. It is enough.”

## In a Nutshell

*My truth*, in a nutshell, is a declaration of authenticity. It's admirable that someone desires to live in harmony with his own convictions. Frankly, to live otherwise is hypocrisy. But being authentic doesn't make one right. Authenticity does not determine truth. Reality determines truth. By the same token, the disapproval of others does not necessarily negate one's conviction. Even the majority



does not establish the truth.

Galileo, in proposing his sun-centered theory of the universe was opposed by all of the credible authorities of his day, even the Pope, and was banished for simply saying what everyone today believes and knows: the earth revolves around the sun. Later, the Catholic Church reversed itself. Did it become truth then, or was it not always the truth?

*My truth* is a cry for self-preservation. Those who cling to *my truth* as opposed to your truth or the truth are looking for personal peace and escape from conflict. They put up boundaries and cut off relationships in order to eliminate controversy and elevate their own personal choice above everything else.

As an online participant on Reddit (OC Poetry) put it, “When the world says I'm wrong, I will say that I am just living life how it was meant to be. I'm simply preserving my truth.”

## There Are Consequences

What does one do in his declaration of *my truth*? He denies it needs to prove anything or be confirmed by anyone. He stifles his own conscience. This is *my truth*. I don't want to hear anything else. He resists reason. Following *my truth* – the way I feel about it, what makes me happy – reduces all discussion about morals, social issues, or religious questions to relativism.

It is a simple retreat to the erroneous opinion where there are no absolutes. Everything is relative or changeable, rather than conforming to a constant reality.

That is not to say there's no room for opinion in some things. We all possess opinions. About politics – some of us are Republicans, some are Democrats, some are Independents. Some of us are just fed up. We have opinions about aesthetics - some like neutral beige throughout their house, some have gone for the neutral gray. And then there's that fellow who paints his house SFA purple and lives across the street from me. He likes it. I don't. Then my neighbor cut down the hedge between us, and now I have to see it. But that's beside the point. It's a matter of opinion. It's aesthetics. That doesn't make it true. It just makes it debatable.

There are interpretations and judgments we all have to make, assessments based on analysis rather than fact. When I go to the doctor and he runs some tests and gives me his analysis, I then say to him, “Well, maybe I'd like a second opinion.” I want someone else to look at the data. Maybe I want someone else to run the test so I can have as much information as possible and determine if there is some fact to be found. But after two, three, four tests and it comes back and says, I have this, then I have to accept reality.

### It's Illogical

The fallacy of *my truth* is that it is illogical. It is an untenable worldview. And this is easily demonstrated. If you say, “I have *my truth* and you have your truth,” I will ask, “Is it true that there is no truth?” How is the “*my truth* affirmant” going to answer that? He can't. If he says, “Yes, there's no truth,” he must give up *my truth*. If he says, “No, there is truth,” he's forcing “*my truth*” on the rest of us as the truth. It is an absurd position. You cannot answer the question without repudiating your own truth. Everyone recognizes that there must be some

things that are reasonably true and certain.

### It's Non-Scientific and Amoral

The *my truth* culture is non-scientific and therefore unreasonable. It is based on feelings and personal experiences. We recognize that trying to determine facts requires evidence. Feelings are not evidence. Feelings are unobservable; they are non-testable. Feelings cannot sustain a hypothesis.

And the *my truth* culture is, of necessity, amoral. If *my truth* justifies what others regard as immoral, then for consistency's sake, I cannot object to any moral conduct. By objecting to what I think you're doing as immoral, I affirm a moral truth or standard. To argue that *my truth* and your truth exist at the same time is to say there is no right or wrong, that the world is ruled only by might and desire. We're forced to accept the law of the jungle. You cannot insist someone respect your truth over their own truth.

### Why Reject the Idea of “My Truth”

The *my truth* culture ought to be rejected because it is destined to produce despair and ruin. *My truth advocates* seek self-preservation, escape from criticism, and peace of mind. *My truth* destroys all these, bringing isolation amid criticism and challenges. That which is fled is that which it delivers.

*My truth* denies the admission of evidence in rebuttal or cross-examination. If there is such a thing as *my truth*, the court system and medical exploration fail. There's absolutely nothing that we can do except go into the abyss of sickness and sadness, despair, ruin, and death. It's absurd.

### “What Is Truth?”

Consider John 18:37. Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you a king then?” The Jews had accused him of falsely claiming this. Jesus answered: “Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end I was born and for this cause came I into the world that I

should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice.” Pilate responded, “What is truth?”

Pilate put that famous question to Jesus. It was rhetorical. He wasn't looking for an answer. Jesus already told him what truth was. But are we to make of Pilate's question? Some have suggested he expresses cynicism, implying there is no truth. I don't think so. He's too far in government and the military to take an absurd position like that. He follows commands; he executes policy. He knew there must be some truth.

Others have suggested he is lamenting the questions of religion. He's a pagan or at least influenced by paganism. There is a pantheon of Roman gods from which you can choose to patronize or reject. The truly superstitious (ie. the Athenians) tried to please them all. In Athens, Paul saw altars on every corner, including one to the unknown God (Acts 17:23). Not the God of Heaven, but if there's a god of this place, and we don't know who you are, this is your altar. That was the idea. They didn't want to miss anybody. And perhaps Pilate thought that was rather absurd. To him, the Jews and their religion just become one more among many religions that are contradictory and confusing. He is skeptical of religion.

Or I think there's merit to this – he's skeptical of the whole situation before him. What is truth? The Jews say one thing, you say one thing, how am I going to come to any decision about this? So Pilate tries several different things. First, he tries to release Jesus, saying, “I do not find any fault in Him.” He hasn't violated any laws; he hasn't done anything contradictory to the established truth that the government of Rome accepts. But they said, “Oh no, crucify him, crucify him!” He said, “What wrong hath he done?” And that's when they accused Jesus of blasphemy. They said, “He hath made himself a god, and our law says he must die.” That

disturbed Pilate, and he continued to examine Jesus. He returns saying, “I find no fault in the man.”

Seeking to get Jesus off his hands, he beats him and brings him out saying, “Behold the man!” In other words, I've humiliated him. He's not a god. He's not a king. He's just a man over whom I have authority. Maybe that'll suffice. They said: “No, crucify him, crucify him. He made himself a king, and we have no king but Caesar.” Pilate's solution to the whole problem is to wash his hands of the whole thing. Pilate chose political expediency. Pilate believed a lie as the truth because he didn't want to find out what truth really was.

Jesus affirms the truth in verse 37, “Thou sayest, I am a king.” Jesus doesn't deny the truth. He says: “You've said truly, I am a king. And to this end I was born. And for this cause came I into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice.”

### Three Kinds of Truth

There are three kinds of truth. There is *discoverable truth*, found via the scientific method or the legal method. The law of gravity, the Pythagorean theorem, the first law of thermodynamics – all these are examples of the scientific method. Newton postulated what goes up must come down, and others have built on that. You have the question, then the hypothesis, and then experimentation and the collection and analysis of the data. After repeated experimentation and observation and cataloging of analysis, we come to “the law of gravity.” But it's not revealed anywhere. It's not written down. It wasn't passed by a legislature. It wasn't spoken from the mouth of God. It is an observable, discoverable truth.

Then there's undiscoverable truth. Moses said the secret things belong to God (Deuteronomy 29:29). It's a truth that there are some things



in this universe do not know and many never know. Consider light – we know it exists, we know it travels, but what is it? Is it a wave or a particle? We really do not know what light is. We cannot explain how light of stars millions and billions of miles away is seen here or understand how it all works. There are theories but nobody knows. There are things about God that men cannot know unless God reveals His mind, 1 Corinthians 2:9,

*“It is written, eye have not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”*

That brings us to the third kind of truth: revealed truth or *essential truth*.

## Essential Truth

Everything that is necessary for us to please God has been revealed. We often refer to the Scriptures as containing the truth, but the Bible is not all the truth of all time about everything. However, the Bible is the source of revealed essential truth – what is necessary for us to be right with God. This revelation is intended to appeal to the rational mind. The Bible, despite being subjected to extreme scrutiny, has withstood all the criticism leveled against it for millennia. No satisfactory explanation has ever been given to deny the truths put forth in the Gospel.

Back to John 18:37 – Jesus says *essential truth* is found in Him. He says, I am a King, and to this end and for this cause I was born and came into the world, and I bear witness to the truth. Jesus is saying that the things I have taught and the lessons that I have lived, these are the truth, and everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice. Jesus invites the scrutiny of investigation and examination. Jesus presents Himself to a

rational mind with rational evidence. Jesus is either a King or He's not. He has authority or He does not. Jesus is the Savior of the world or He is not. The claims, the teachings, the record of Jesus is either true or they are not. Those who complete a fair and thorough examination of Jesus, He says, will follow him.

## The Challenge of Essential Truth

When Jesus says, those who are of the truth hear My voice, He's saying, examine the evidence.

In John 4, He says that God is seeking the “true worshipers.” He's talking about people of a certain character. Remember in John 1, Jesus says of Nathanael, “Behold, an Israelite in whom is no guile, no deceit.” Nathanael was an Israelite who wanted the truth. Consider Martha in John 11. After her brother's death, Jesus said to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (verse 25). She immediately declared her faith in Him as the Christ, the Son of God. She'd seen the evidence, heard him teach, watched him heal. Those who are of the truth are willing to openly and honestly investigate.

This may surprise some, but the existence of truth does not eliminate faith. If I never understand the first and second laws of thermodynamics, if I never see the ark dug up on Mount Ararat, I'm still going to believe that God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing, that he saved the world by Noah through a flood. But that's based on evidence and the credibility of that evidence. Evidence and truth do not eliminate faith. All truth is accepted on the basis of some faith.

## Truth & Faith Are Not Mutually Exclusive

The scientific method requires faith. What we

observe is our interpretation of the evidence. We need to be open to all possibilities with regard to our scientific inquiry. There are no absolute certainties, but there are reasonable certainties. And reasonable men who consider the evidence come to the same conclusion.

The same thing is true with a court of law. This to me is the best illustration of faith. Guilt is determined beyond a reasonable doubt, not by absolute certainty. O.J. Simpson was found not guilty of murder because there was reasonable doubt. We all remember it: “If the glove does not fit, you must acquit.” And the jury acquitted him. Later, he was sued in a civil court. There the standard was the preponderance of the evidence. That is, when all the evidence is considered, 51% or more leans toward this conclusion or that. In a civil court, he was found liable and was assessed damages for the evidence indicated it was very likely O.J. murdered his wife and her lover. But we don't take a man's life unless it's beyond a reasonable doubt.

This is the standard to which Jesus subjects himself. Be reasonable. Figure it out. Decide whether or not I am who I claim to be. If we conclude beyond a reasonable doubt that Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, then we accept his teachings and do what he says. Some people are not convinced. I understand that. But we have witnesses. Are they credible? We have a trial transcript. Is it accurate?

When someone appeals a verdict in a trial, the evidence that was introduced is placed before the court of appeal. They read the transcript. They look at the testimony and determine whether the transcript is accurate, and the testimony was indeed what it should have been.

Was there any perjury? If the evidence stands, they just determine whether there was a correctable error committed. And oftentimes that's all that comes before an appellate judge. The evidence stands. Were they absolutely certain? No. But they were certain beyond a reasonable doubt.

Faith requires that. But when someone says *my truth*, they're rejecting evidence. They're rejecting scrutiny. They're living in an echo chamber, unwilling to consider discoverable truth or even revealed truth. And when it's about matters of salvation, we're talking about heaven and hell – eternal destiny. Will one risk their soul by refusing to consider whether or not Jesus is the Christ?

In Acts 2:36, Peter concluded, “Let the whole house of Israel know assuredly that this same Jesus whom you crucified hath God made both Lord and Christ.” He made the case for Jesus. He presented their eyewitness testimony. He showed what the Old Testament said about the coming Christ. All of that together proves Jesus of Nazareth is indeed Lord and Christ.

“And when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart.” The evidence was sufficient to bring them to conviction. They said, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Peter said, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ.” Those who were of the truth heard his voice and obeyed. Acts 2:40 says, “As many as gladly received His word were baptized.”

I plead with you to recognize there is truth. Truth that's discoverable, and more importantly, with respect to your salvation. Truth that has been revealed. Believing the truth beyond a reasonable doubt, be baptized into Christ.

# JULY 2026 PREVIEW

## EXPOSITORY ARTICLE

Jeff Carr will pen our next article in the Hall of Faith series focused on Hebrews 11:33 (subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises).

## CHURCH ARTICLE

Marshall McDaniel brings our next in the series on the seven churches of Asia. He will address the church at Philadelphia, what appears to be a small group, but blessed with opportunities by the Lord.

## WORSHIP ARTICLE

Chadwick Brewer focuses on silence and reflection using Psalm 46:10, Habakkuk 2:20, and Lamentations 3:26.

## APPLICATION ARTICLE

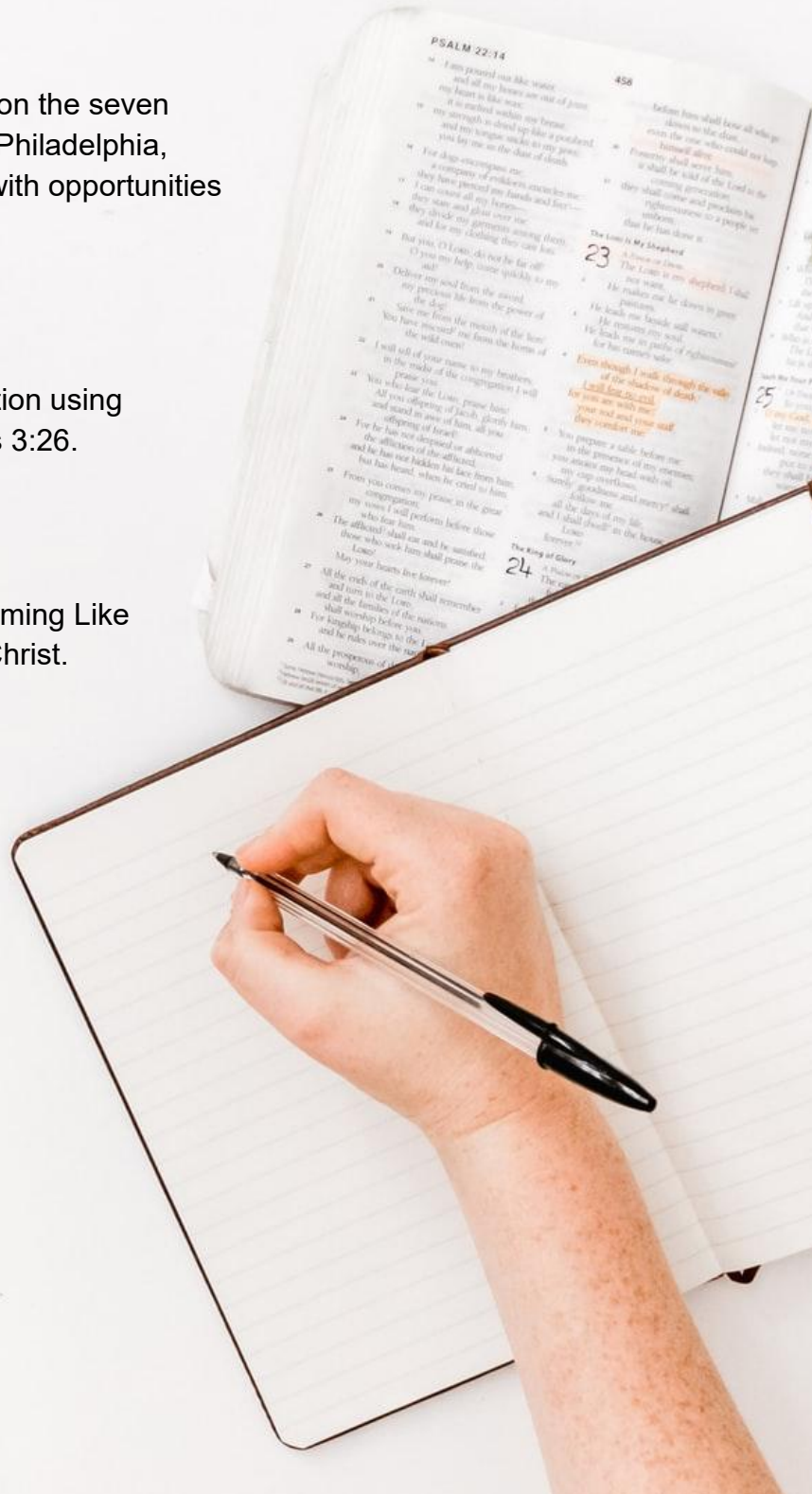
Sean Sullivan gives our next article in the “Becoming Like Jesus” series. He will address the boldness of Christ.

## EVANGELISM ARTICLE

In memory of Sean Cavender – a posthumous article looking at the lies the devil gives about evangelism.

## BEYOND THE BASICS ARTICLE

Jeff Smith discusses our stand against the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:11).



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