

Our purpose is to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” and to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE

“To continue speaking the truth in love,” “endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,” “keeping the ordinance as delivered.”

“Thus saith the Lord, ‘stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the Old Paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest of your souls.’ (Jer. 6:16) “And they that be of Thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Paths to Dwell in.” (Isa. 58:12).

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CREDIBILITY OF STUDY RESOURCES, PART 1

By GREG GAY

I love books. I get misty eyed thinking of the imprisoned Paul’s request for his books and parchments to be brought to him (2 Timothy 4:13). I understand the joy of being able to pick up a book to look through, read, or hold. My Mama Jewel, my mother’s mother, always had to have a book to hold in her later years, even if it was upside down. To Cassie’s dismay, I have avidly collected religious books for many years and delight in having all of them on shelves to access easily.

Just because a book is “religious” does not automatically mean it is a trustworthy source. In our gathering and using study materials, we need to be able to separate the wheat from the chaff, so we are not led astray. False teachers use deceptive words to “secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them” (2 Peter 2:1-4).

Today, many who study the scriptures choose to have very few printed books and instead use purchased software, such as Logos, Olive Tree, or PC Study Bible and free internet sites, such as studylight.org, or biblehub.com. That means many of the books I have on my shelves are conveniently stored on other’s computers, tablets, or accessible via the internet. Currently, studylight.org offers 107 commentaries (sets and individual books), 6 concordances, 27 dictionaries, 8 encyclopedias, and much more.

The Bible is always our best and primary resource for credible study resources to fulfill the command to “grow in knowledge” (2 Peter 3:18). We always benefit from reading and rereading the scriptures, book by book, over and over in our lives since it is the “living word” (Hebrews 4:12). We can also benefit from reading the Bible in various ways, such as following all

the “chains” in a Thompson Chain Reference Bible or by reading all the verses that mention a specific topic or name. Having multiple Bible translations side-by-side to see differences in wording can be helpful in studying passages.

The more we read and remember, the better we can understand that scripture explains scripture on many subjects even without further digging. For example, John baptizing where there was much water (John 3:23) makes perfect sense when we read that baptism is a burial (Romans 6:3-4). From those verses alone we can conclude and understand baptism is by immersion.

We must be careful to learn the different types of Bible translations that are available so we can avoid depending on a Bible that is not a Bible. For example, The Living Bible is easy to read but it is a paraphrase, which means there is no attempt to translate word for word from the original manuscript languages. Olive Tree’s site says, “Paraphrased translations use modern language and idioms to try to capture the thought and essence behind the original text” (<https://www.olivetree.com/resources/bibles/paraphrasedtranslations.php>).

Formal Equivalence translations use words that mean the same as the original whenever possible. They include the following versions: King James (KJV), New King James (NKJV), New American Standard (NASU, NASB), English Standard (ESV) and Amplified (AMP). There is a helpful chart to compare types of translations at: <https://notjustanotherbook.com/biblecomparison.htm>.

Since we must be careful to make sure the Bibles we use are appropriately translated it should go without saying we need to be even more careful when we use other resources to study the scriptures. The Holy Spirit only inspired the authors of the Bible. No book about the

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PUBLISHER

Don L. King
1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550
Fax 925-454-8995

EDITORIAL STAFF

Billy Dickinson	Carl Johnson
Jerry Dickinson	Kevin Presley
Greg Gay	

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE WEBSITE:

www.oldpathsadvocate.org
Rick Martin, Website Publisher
Terry Studdard, Website Asst. Publisher
Brandon Steward, Webmaster

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Editorial

WHAT ABOUT CHAPTER STUDIES?

By CARL JOHNSON

NOTE: I believe this article by Carl appeared in 2008. In reading it again, I was struck by how much we need to heed the material he presented today. It is very serious. Brethren, chapter studies are wonderful and the material from the New Testament is, of course, inspired. What a shame that such material is often poorly presented, and without proper study. Carl agreed to allow us to use it as an editorial in this issue. Please read prayerfully and carefully. —DLK

Years ago, an older preacher made an observation about our chapter studies practice that was startling to me at the time. He said, “We have things sort of backwards in our brotherhood today. We need to have our chapter studies on Lord’s Day morning and our topical lessons on Wednesday night.” There are some congregations in our brotherhood who have actually practiced this arrangement for years and they will not vary from the Lord’s Day morning chapter study even during a gospel meeting. They contend that one learns more of God’s Word through this practice and that it is probably closer to the way teaching was done in the early church. Fortunately, some of these congregations have excellent teachers and the church receives rich, spiritual nourishment.

Generally speaking, however, we view chapter studies as an unworthy format for Lord’s Day morning and we relegate them to the midweek service. We also tend to want the best teachers to do the teaching on Lord’s Day morning, so we assign the youngest, most inexperienced teachers to give the chapter studies on Wednesday nights. As a result, the treatment chapter studies receive is often tragically superficial. The inexperienced teacher may attack the first verse of a chapter without putting the chapter in its proper context, and without giving us background information that allows us to see clearly the main purpose of the writing. He may be sidetracked by unimportant details and completely miss the most important theme of the teaching. He may become so hung up on definitions of words and phrases that he loses sight of the big picture. He may be incapable of showing how the teaching in the chapter applies to us

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QUERIST COLUMN

By CLINT DEFRANCE

Question: When did the word psallo change in meaning from including instruments to describing singing only?

Answer: Most lexicons will show that the Greek word psallo (generally translated “make melody” in Ephesians 5.19) has a fairly wide semantic range. It may mean to pluck out a hair, the twang of a bow string or a carpenter’s line, to play an instrument, or to sing. These various “leanings were more or less common at different periods of the history of the Greek language, It is, of course, possible to use a word in its archaic (out dated) sense, but this is uncommon and should never be assumed to be the case,

In the Classic era of Greek, psallo carried the connotation of plucking a string, but by the Hellenistic era the meaning had changed to indicate singing (with or without instrumental accompaniment, only the context can determine that). There are English words who have gone through similar transitions. Wardrobe at one point referred to a cabinet where clothes were stored but now generally refers to clothes themselves, The word lyric originally referred to anything pertaining to the stringed instrument called a lyre, but now almost exclusively refers to a type of poetry, generally put to music,

It is difficult to trace with any certainty the exact year or period when words change in their meaning, However, the questioner and other interested parties would be directed to the classic work Instrumental Music in the Worship by M.C. Kurfees which conclusively shows that the word had changed in meaning by the New Testament era.

In examining the context of Ephesians 5.19, there is nothing to indicate that instrumental accompaniment was in the mind of the apostle. Instead the uniform testimony of early Christian history supports what we draw from the Scriptures’ primitive Christians, under the direction of the apostles, did not use instrumental music in worship. Because the apostles taught with the authority of Christ, to use instrumental music without their authorization would be to offer will worship, and thus to sin.

Send all replies or questions to
Clint DeFrance
2121 S. Columbia Ave.
Suite LL2
Tulsa, OK 74114

Prayer

*Lord, look upon Thy lowly sheep,
And lend a helping hand;
Uplift us, Lord, that we may see
Beyond this troubled land.*

*We ask not that thou wipe
All sorrows from our path,
Nor that all evil in this world
Fall at Thy hand of wrath;*

*But rather, Father, ask we now
For courage, faith, and light,
That through our trials we may rise
Victorious in Thy might.*

By Nancy Pomroy

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COMPLETE DEVOTION TO CHRIST

BY TREVER CALBERT

Mark chapter 14 is one of the longest chapters in the New Testament and includes several events from the last few days of Jesus' life. Recorded there are His observance of the Passover with His disciples, the institution of the Lord's supper, Jesus' memorable prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, His arrest and trial before the Sanhedrin council, and the denial of Peter - one of His "faithful three" apostles.

The chapter begins with the Jewish leaders' plot to kill the Messiah - a plan which quickly begins to materialize a few verses later when Judas agrees to betray Jesus. But nestled in between the plotting of verses one and two and the betrayal in verses 10 and 11 we find one of the most beautiful examples of reverence and honor for God in all the Bible. Conversely, it is also, perhaps, one of the most underappreciated stories in the life of our Lord.

In verses three through nine we read of a woman who takes a jar of oil and anoints the head of Jesus. We find from John's gospel account that she also anoints Jesus' feet with the oil and wipes them with her hair (John 12:3). John provides us with the woman's identity - she is Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus.

The gospel according to Luke is the only account that does not record this event; however, Luke does provide us with a very important view into Mary's heart. In chapter 10 beginning at verse 38 we read a simple, yet profound story in which Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened intently to His every word. Meanwhile, Mary's sister Martha was busy serving Jesus and the other guests who had gathered at their house. Martha was resentful that she was having to work alone, but Jesus quickly made her aware that Mary had wisely chosen to prioritize listening to His teachings. Mary blocked out everyone and everything else around her and focused solely on Jesus.

Keep this image of Mary in mind as we return to Mark 14 and the anointing at Bethany. Mary's jar was made of alabaster - a white colored type of gypsum. It was often used in the ancient world to make things such as vases and statues and was considered an expensive material. What was even more remarkable about the jar Mary owned was its contents. It was filled with spikenard

oil, a substance derived from a plant (*Nardostachys jatamansi*) found mainly in the Himalayas. It was very valuable, and Judas Iscariot estimates its worth was "greater than 300 denarii" (John 12:5) - roughly a year's wages for the common laborer. So, we see that both the jar and its contents were very costly.

Interestingly, the most precious characteristic of this item was not its monetary value. In Jesus' day this type of oil-filled jar was mainly reserved for two purposes: 1. As a dowry for marriage or, 2. As an anointing oil for one's death. Additionally, it could have possibly been in a family for a couple of generations. Mary may have very well looked upon this jar at various points throughout her life and dreamed of her wedding day when she would have the opportunity to present it to her husband and his family.

With this knowledge in mind, we can view her sacrifice of the jar with even greater appreciation and amazement. When she broke the flask and emptied it of its contents, she was literally pouring out her future on Jesus Christ. She risked being socially disapproved of and ridiculed for "this waste" - as the disciples referred to it (Matthew 26:8). However, there was no hesitation on Mary's part. Her mind was closed off to the thoughts and opinions of others and she focused squarely on providing this act of reverence and honor to her Lord. She didn't know if she would have the chance to anoint Jesus for burial after His death, so she seizes what she thinks could be her only opportunity and anoints Him while He is still alive.

Jesus responded to the disciples' criticism of Mary in Mark 14:8 by saying, "She has done what she could." This may seem like an insignificant phrase to us but essentially what Jesus said was, "she has done everything she could." She sacrificed her most treasured possession, as well as her future, in order to provide a single act of service to Jesus. That is why He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her" (Mark 14:9).

The application for us is simple, yet what is simple is often difficult to emulate. The reason why we struggle to do what Mary did is because we succumb to the various distractions of our busy lives. It may be our jobs, hobbies, or temptations that prevent us from rendering our greatest service to God. Perhaps we are afraid of what others might say if we were to fully

devote ourselves to Him. Regardless of our excuses; however, we need to have the perspective that Mary did - an unwavering focus on Jesus Christ. We should strive to offer up our lives in complete devotion to Him. After all, there is no sacrifice that we can make that will ever be too great for God. Let us follow Mary's example and give our heavenly Father everything so that it may be said of each of us in the end, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You've done what you could."

GREAT ELDERS ARE HUMBLE SERVANTS

By TYLER EVANS

In Matthew 20:25-28 Jesus tells his apostles, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. 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."

People who desire worldly positions of power, such as political offices, usually desire these roles because they thirst for the power and fame of these offices. People in these prominent roles receive an exorbitant salary which they may feel is an indication of how important they are (and how much more important they are than others who get paid much less). They enjoy numerous people going to great lengths to please or impress them. They depend on material, extrinsic factors to tell them how valuable they are rather than seeing value in their character and what they stand for. King Solomon fell into this trap. He enjoyed the power, riches and fame that came with being a king and one of the wisest men on earth. He quickly became carried away with pride and forgot his Maker who gave him the wisdom, peace and prosperity he was enjoying. As one who held a prominent position and got swallowed up by the hunger for fame and power, but then repented and learned from such mistakes, Solomon warns in Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty (arrogantly superior) spirit before a fall," and he further explains in Ecclesiastes 2 how pursuing the worldly definition of "greatness" is "vanity and grasping for the wind".

Becoming an elder is the most honorable role a man can fulfill. In order to be qualified and succeed as an elder the man must desire to become an elder, and he must

desire this office for the right reasons. If a man desires to become an elder he desires to serve others and to help guide them down the straight and narrow path of truth and righteousness that leads to Heaven.

The Head of the Church Exhibited Servant Leadership

Christ taught and set the example of how elders and other leaders in the Church are to lead.

Elders and leaders are to serve those they shepherd and to give their time to comfort and encourage each member of the flock, feed them the Word of God, share their spiritual wisdom, and pray and care for their overall spiritual well-being. Christ is the head of the Church (Ephesians 5:22) and was willing to do anything for those who followed Him. Everywhere our Savior went, He gave His time and ability to heal and to help others physically, mentally and spiritually. Christ, as the good shepherd, was willing, and in fact did, lay down His life for His sheep. He was not too proud, but rather would do anything for the benefit of His flock- He put the eternal/spiritual needs of the people He led before Himself. Only the Father's Will was more important than the needs of others in Christ's eyes, but really the two go hand-in-hand as it was the Father's Will that Christ tend to the needs of the flock as well as the poor and needy. It's also His Will that we follow His Son's example and do the same. The hireling flees at the smallest sign of adversity, but Christ was dedicated to the people He led, thereby perfectly exemplifying servant leadership by putting others before oneself.

When I hear the term "servant leadership", I can't help but think about Jesus humbly washing His disciples' feet in John 13. The incredible Son of God stooped down and washed His disciples' dirty, dusty feet just like the sinful woman washed His feet with her tears and the hair upon her head in Luke 7. Christ said this woman showed a deep love for Him by humbling herself to serve Him in such a manner, and Christ did the same thing showing a similar deep love for those whom He shepherded. In John 13:1 it mentions Christ's unwavering love for His followers and how, being moved by love for His disciples, He humbly showed His love for them by serving them. Jesus is our Lord and Master, our High Priest, the Head of the Church, the ultimate Teacher, the Godhead in the flesh, and if He was not too proud to voluntarily serve others then neither should we be. In fact, Jesus said after washing their feet, "If I then,

your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (John 13:14). Jesus, our ultimate leader, demonstrated and set the example how elders and leaders are to lead through serving the needs of those you shepherd with the utmost love and humility.

Elders are to Exhibit Servant Leadership

Elders are to follow our High Priest's footsteps and demonstrate servant leadership as well. Servant leadership is essential to the success of an elder as can be seen in (at least) 3 qualifications/duties of an elder.

Elders are to:

1. Be Blameless/Pure (1 Timothy 3:2)

In James 1:27 pure undefiled religion before God and the Father is described as visiting orphans and widows in their trouble and keeping yourself unspotted from the world. Purity in the eyes of God is refraining from sin AND helping those in need.

2. Be Hospitable - (1 Timothy 3:2)

- a. Elders are to love to open their homes and provide a place to stay unto others.
- b. Consider Jesus words in Luke 14:12-14, "When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just." Nowadays, you hardly ever hear of people opening their homes to complete strangers, especially to the poor and needy to feed them. I suppose this is understandable for safety concerns, but there are many ways we can feed the poor, such as through donating to food pantries, soup kitchens, and other organizations. You can even volunteer and physically serve food to the people in need who Christ mentions at some of these charitable organizations. By doing so you show care and support for the less fortunate as you not only provide such people with a hot meal to fill their empty bellies but also a warm conversation, which may even give you the opportunity to feed their soul.

3. Have a good reputation among those outside the Church/non-Christians. (1 Timothy 3:7)

- a. Matthew 5:16, "Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven." In order for you to shine the light of Christ, you must show a Christ-like character and do what Christ would do, which is humbly serving others, for Christ said in Matthew 20:28 that he came to serve, and we live to follow His example.
- b. James 2:15-17 says, "If a brother or sister is naked or destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled, but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus, also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. "If an elder does not serve/ dedicate his time to the people he leads, does he really love them? If an elder does not show a Christ-like compassion towards the poor and needy, does he shine the light of Christ to non-believers in the community? In order for your light to shine you must DO something. You can't just be a good preacher, but you must also practice what you preach and practice what the ultimate Teacher, Jesus, taught. 1 Timothy 4:12 the Apostle Paul says, "...be an example to the believers/congregation in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Setting the example is essential to having a good reputation.

Finally, remember what Jesus says in Matthew 20:26, "Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant." If you want to be great, if you want to lead, if you want to be an elder, then be a servant. -To be continued.

CREDIBILITY OF...continued from page one

Bible is inspired, therefore all Bible study material is subject to error no matter how careful the authors may be. With that said, it does not mean that study materials are off limits.

Even in the scriptures we see references to translations and non-Biblical resources. The Old Testament was originally recorded in Hebrew, but scholars report there are numerous Old Testament quotations in the New Testament from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

Jesus referred to the source of the statement, “Physician heal thyself” (Luke 4:23), as a well-known proverb. Paul quoted an Athenian poet when he said, “as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring’” (Acts 17:28).

Obviously, Jesus and Paul were inspired in the selection and application of their quotations. We are not. When we choose to use any of the many resources available to us, we should do so with an abundance of caution.

Some of this caution is simply common sense. We do not abandon what we know because of something we do not yet understand. For example, we do not cease to baptize the living for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) just because we may not understand what Paul meant by the baptism for the dead (1 Corinthians 15:29).

Another caution is when someone supposedly discovers “new spiritual truths” that are only available in other so-called “inspired” books. That, by the way, is exactly what the Mormons present: that the New Testament is so flawed the world needs “another testament,” conveniently, their Book of Mormon. However, that is not sufficient, so they have ongoing revelation because their truths keep changing. But that is another sad story in religion for another time.

Another caution is when anyone among us begins using language borrowed from the latest denominational scholarship to introduce new views of the scriptures to our fellowship. While we may enjoy the challenge of learning new words and examining these views, we should remember today’s denominations rarely get closer to the truth with their musings no matter what subject is being discussed.

As we will discover in future articles, some of these scholars appear to have little regard for the Bible’s inspiration and are content to pursue subjective personal truth instead of objective universal truth. Such individuals are described by Paul: “having a form of godliness but denying its power...always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:5,7). This is contrary to basic Bible truths such as: “let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind” (Philippians 3:16).

It is very unlikely such individuals can contribute very much that is worthwhile to our quest to understand

and share God’s truths. Still, when they are quoted by our brethren in various works and recommended to us as reputable scholars, it behooves us to study and understand their beliefs and practices.

Let us pretend for a moment I am going to write a book about making quilts, completely from my own knowledge. If my only qualification for the task is that I have slept under quilts for decades, then I have little credibility for telling anyone how to make a quilt. While my guesses may temporarily fool readers who have never made a quilt, anyone with quilt making knowledge will quickly see my work as fraught with issues. Even if non-quilt making friends are willing to write how much they like and appreciate me to encourage all to purchase and read my book, that does not magically change me into an expert maker of quilts.

However, if I appeal to carefully chosen quilt making experts, introduce them to my readers, and use their credibility as a basis for my material, then I can write for the joy of writing and sharing knowledge. Those who purchase the work can read for the joy of reading and learning, trusting the cited experts are credible.

In the church, even the most capable among us use many resources for what we present when speaking or writing. We are responsible to make sure those resources are properly introduced to our hearers and readers and that the views and words we use from them are truthfully represented whether we are agreeing or disagreeing with them in our presentation.

To just pick and choose phrases here and there to make an author falsely appear to agree with the view we are presenting is forcing our words into someone else’s mouth. It makes them appear to say things they did not say and had no intention of saying.

This can happen by accident. It is very possible for any of us to misunderstand the writings of the resources we use and draw wrong conclusions, especially when we have not taken the time to look carefully at who we are quoting and what they are saying. It can also happen on purpose. Careless or intentional misrepresentation is poor scholarship on our part and can contribute to much confusion and error.

Please remember, the Bible does command: “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter

4:11). If what we quote from others or present from our own knowledge is not in harmony with God's oracles, then we are presenting falsehoods for truths. Everyone can do that, and likely every speaker and writer among us has, at least temporarily, until we study more or until someone cares enough to take us aside to "explain the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18 :26).

Paul said to Timothy, "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge - by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith" (1 Timothy 6:20-21). The ESV says, "Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," for by professing it some have swerved from the faith."

If what is presented from any pulpit or in any writing appears to be "irreverent babble," the faithful among us must be brave enough to speak up. It is not necessary to know every word of the language of Ashdod (Nehemiah 13:23-24) to know it has no place among us.

Remember, our quest is to have credible study resources so we can appropriately understand God's truths for our own salvation and so we can share the Good News correctly with others.

Lord willing, our next article on this theme will look closer at types of study materials commonly used among us. 3816 Tambos Trl, Edmond, OK 73034, papagreg@aol.com

WHAT ABOUT...continued from page two

today, and he may make no appeal to the hearts of the audience to respond to the teaching in a practical, life-altering way. On the other hand, an experienced, able teacher may not spend much time preparing the chapter because he believes that format is elementary and should be consigned to the less experienced teachers.

Regardless of the format we use to teach we should handle God's Word with reverence and diligence. Paul says, "Study (be diligent) to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Nothing is more frustrating to me than a brother who has unlimited talent, but who is unwilling to study. A brother who is

blessed with the gift of gab may filibuster in the pulpit for an hour and then boast afterwards that "I whipped that lesson up in 15 minutes!" I remain unimpressed with such an attitude. It is the attitude of a workman that needs to be ashamed. However, if we reverence the Word of God properly and study it as we should we can transform chapter studies into something special.

By proceeding through the Bible in a chapter study format the teacher is forced to deal with the most important element in any sermon-the Word of God. Paul told Timothy to "preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2), but preachers and teachers are notorious for using a passage of Scripture only as a starting point to direct them to some pet topic while never returning to the text again. Chapter studies bind the teacher to the actual text of God's Word. When we confine ourselves to the Scriptures we speak with authority and power. When we depart from the sacred text we cease to teach with authority and power.

The chapter study format also allows one to gain a broader knowledge of the Word as a whole and enables one to see the big picture of God's plan from Genesis to Revelation. This format also brings one automatically to passages that may be avoided otherwise because they deal with controversial or sensitive materials. Furthermore, it is likely that our traditional chapter studies format most closely approximates the type of teaching done in the early church.

The method of teaching practiced in the assemblies of the early church was patterned after the teaching in the synagogue. In the synagogue there was a reading desk or raised platform in the center. The teacher stood to read and then sat to teach. This is what Jesus did (Lk. 4:16-32). The teaching consisted of exposition of the portion read, and exhortation growing out of it. There seems to be a reference to this format in 1 Timothy 4:13, where Paul charges Timothy to read the Scriptures publicly (Cf. Acts 13:15), to teach what the Scriptures mean, and to exhort the congregation to follow the teaching. These passages offer unquestionable Bible precedent for the chapter study format of teaching in the assembly.

We would do well, therefore, to reevaluate our thoughts about chapter studies. Whether we use the format on the Lord's Day or Wednesday night, if we approach it with the proper reverence and study we can make the pages of the Scriptures come alive for ourselves and our

hearers, we can provide rich nourishment for the flock of God, and we can glorify our eternal Father in heaven.



Our Departed

COOPER - Warren Cooper of Ozark, MO, son of Frederick and Ruth (Calender) Cooper, was born on Oct. 18, 1939 in Newport, AR and departed this life on Sept. 21, 2020 at the age of 80. Survivors include: A son, Tim Cooper and wife, Angie of Monett, MO; two daughters, Terri Pribek of Kimberling City, MO and Denise Jones and husband, Donnie of Nixa, MO; five grandchildren and five great grandchildren; one brother, Jerry Cooper and wife, Debbie of Russellville, AR; one sister, Mary Ann Ellis and husband, Larry of Gassville, AR and a host of other relatives and friends. He was preceded in death by his wife of 61 years, Shirley, who died in 2019. He obeyed the gospel in the 1970's under the preaching of Carl Johnson, at which time both he and his wife were baptized into the Lord. He was not only a member of the Jamesville congregation, but also took part as a local teacher and helped to provide the congregation with the leadership it needed in spiritual matters. Warren did his best to maintain purity of doctrine and life, gaining the respect of all who knew him, and he was a gentleman in every way. As someone who was soft spoken and easy to get along with, he was a man who was greatly loved by his family, brethren and friends. Unfortunately, he suffered a stroke in 2010 that affected the left side of his body, something he never completely recovered from, and the day came when he could no longer assemble with us at Jamesville on the Lord's day. Although he suffered 10 years with courage and patience - he was not one to complain or grumble, but he always manifested a sweet spirit through it all. The "fruit of the Spirit" listed in Gal. 5:22-23 paints a beautiful picture of the kind of man Warren was: Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. Indeed, it's comforting to remember that this kind of life comes with a great promise. "He that soweth to the Spirit," Paul assures us in Gal. 6:8, "Shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." That was the hope that Warren had in life and it is the hope we have for him in death. Warren's body was laid to rest in the Jamesville Cemetery, a picturesque spot

right behind our place of worship, and there he shall come forth in the morning of the resurrection (John 11:25). Warren was a dear friend of mine for the past 17 years and I will miss him greatly in the days ahead. May the Lord hasten the day when a grand reunion takes place in heaven for the redeemed of all ages. I am looking forward to seeing Warren and Shirley again! That is my desire and hope. — Billy D. Dickinson

SMITH - Brother C. A. Smith, of Andrews, Texas, was born August 24, 1930 in Healdton, Oklahoma. He passed from this life to the next on July 20, 2020, at almost ninety years of age. Clarence Anthony was the son of Tom and Verda Smith. He was brought up in a spiritual home that regularly worshiped in the Healdton, Oklahoma congregation. To those of us growing up in Oklahoma, that simply means that his roots run deep in the Lord and His church. That spiritual environment influenced his life from that day forward. As a teenager, C. A. was active in the work and worship of the Lord's church. Then Brother Tom ordained him as an evangelist, and he preached for many years, as his father had done, while he worked a full time job. He continued to do that as long as he was physically able. He loved the Lord and served Him faithfully. He loved to sing the songs of the church, and had attended Stamp's School of Music in 1946 and 1947. He grew up in the "oil patch" at Healdton and worked for Texaco Oil Co. until retirement. In 1953, he married the love of his life, Iva Jo Byrd. When she preceded him in death eight years ago, they had been married fifty-nine years. What an amazing testimony of their love! To this union was born three children, Connie, Dale, and Randall. They had nine grandchildren and eleven great grandchildren. I have so many great memories of Uncle C. A. We both had the good sense to marry one of those Byrd girls from Healdton. He immersed my wife into Christ when she was young. He was sweet and kind, but firm, when he needed to be. He didn't want fancy preaching-he loved it plain. He was a preacher and a friend of preachers. He was a good congregational leader. When they moved to Andrews, Texas, he and Iva Jo served the Lord faithfully in that small congregation for fifty years. They were a blessing wherever they went. Their family is extremely close. He created so many opportunities for his family to be together. They all loved him to the very end-and still. I appreciate the assistance of brother Kevin Fox. He did so much for the family and the arrangements before we could arrive at Odessa, as well as assisting at the service. — Don Pruitt

Announcement

Brethren: it is possible that the January issue will be a little different than normal. The Old Paths Advocate name began with the January issue of 1932. January of 2021 will mean the paper is beginning its 89th year of publication. It has been suggested that it would be good to make the January 2021 issue memorable by using only some of our writers works and field reports who have passed away. You don't want to miss this nostalgic issue. Be sure your subscription is up to date. If you wish to send a gift subscription for a friend you may do so for only \$10 until February 1, 2021. —DLK

Field Reports

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, old_paths@juno.com, October 14, 2020. It is gratifying to hear that a few meetings have been held recently. We pray that the numbers will increase soon and that the virus will end soon as well. However, brethren, we need to exercise caution and use wisdom also. Lord willing, we plan to be in Stockton, CA for preaching on the first Lord's Day in November. For those of us who have traveled during the years in meetings, it is difficult to avoid "cabin fever," by remaining at home so much. We have rejoiced to hear of the good results of TV programs, etc., during the recent months. We certainly need to do all we scripturally can to keep the gospel before those who are lost. Preachers, we always need your reports, subscriptions, and articles for the paper. Let's keep the good work going!

Wayne Fussell, 6126 Land O' Trees, Shreveport, LA 71119, October 14. As Don suggested in the last issue of OPA, there is not much to report. I have cancelled three meetings this year because of the pandemic, two in Missouri and one in Tennessee. These are strange times, like we have never seen before. The congregation here is doing well. We have some young people who have stepped up to take their rightful place in the work, much to the delight of we who are getting on in years. These are young people who hold tightly to the word of God and want Bible things done in Bible ways. In these days when change agents are working their havoc, this gives me hope for the future. God bless this wonderful brotherhood!

FIELD REPORT (publisher's note:) I am making a

personal letter to me from Dario into a report so you may understand a bit more about the difficulties in the work there. They are heavily supervised by the Governments. Dario needs to make a trip to Baguio City, a trip of several hours by car or bus to strengthen the brethren there. However, it is obvious that it will be difficult, if not impossible to accomplish at this time. —DLK

Dario Estavillo, Philippines, October 2, 2020. Hello Brother King, I have just inquired from the government agencies concerning the possibility of travel to Baguio City. I have learned that I can go there but I will be allowed only 13 hours to both go and return to Ilocos Norte if I want to avoid quarantine for 14 days. Baguio is now opened for tourism but only for 200 persons at a time, and they are not free to roam around in the city. It is shown in their itinerary all the places permitted to visit. For other concerns, it is assured that more restrictions will be loosened during November. I have decided to wait for this time Brother. However, I must go back and stay for a time in Baguio. I cannot afford to lose another soul. The youths that I recently baptized need spiritual nourishment so they may grow in the faith. So, for the meantime I will lead the brethren here in Ilocos Norte. I hope our ongoing studies will bear fruit. Thank you Brother for the encouragement. We also pray that this pandemic will soon end and we can again work together to strengthen the churches in the Philippines. God bless us all. In Him, Dario.

Paul O. Nichols, 14217 Rosehill, Overland Park, KS, 66221, pon.wjn.ks@juno.com, September 9. We of the Stony Point congregation continue to meet regularly every Lord's day at 10:30 AM and 2:00 PM. We observe the sanitation laws with face masks, rubber gloves, distance separation, and sani-wash available in the vestibule and rest rooms. We also have signs posted on the entrance doors reminding all who attend. We have several teachers who edify the church. Recently we have had confessions of fault. It will be good when all restrictions are lifted, but in the meantime the Lord demands that we remain faithful to Him regardless of the conditions and problems in the world. God is still in control, and He will make the decision when to end it all. My thanks to all for cards and phone calls, and in other ways honored me on my 98th birthday.

Kevin W. Presley, 108 Mulberry Court, Dothan, AL 36303, October 9, 2020. As an unusual and difficult year nears a close, I am reflective of the great losses we have suffered across the brotherhood. Covid-19 claimed as its victims stalwart men and women from congregations across the land. The confusion and

concern over the pandemic have taken its toll on the emotional and spiritual health of many, not to mention the conflict in our culture that seems to have reached a boiling point. While these things could be cause for discouragement, the difficulties of our time have also opened doors and renewed resolves to seek and serve the Lord. Let us take heart in the good that has been done in the past months despite the gloom and sorrow around us. It has been heartening to hear reports across the land of people obeying the gospel and others returning to Christ. While the shutdowns many have hurt our wallets, they have provided an opportunity for hearts to be turned to spiritual matters. Over the last 7 months, our television and internet outreach of Let the Bible Speak has seen a large increase in viewers and inquiries. Our YouTube channel now has nearly 7,000 subscribers and some of the sermon videos have had as many as 88,000 views. While it has been difficult to stay home and forgo the usual gospel meetings, I will never preach to as many people from the community in all of my meetings combined as I have the opportunity to reach in one sermon presented online. This is true of some of the multi-media efforts of other brethren as well. While the gospel never changes, let us be seizing the opportunities technology provides to enter new harvest fields. Let the Bible Speak and other such outreaches are adding new viewers and receiving new correspondence from around the world nearly every day. Praise God for this and may doors be opened for the kingdom to spread to many new places. Although my meeting schedule was obviously curtailed by the pandemic, I have still had the opportunity to preach in various places this summer and fall. Meetings in Blue Springs, KY; Mitchell, IN; and Washington, OK were most enjoyable for me and well-attended. Lord willing, I will yet be in West Monroe, LA; Rogers, AR; Birmingham, AL; and Bolivar, MO this fall. It was a joy to baptize my youngest daughter, Halle, last month. There is no greater joy than to see your children walk in truth. It has also been a pleasure to work with the church in Hillcrest, MS on a monthly basis this year. We have been studying leadership issues and helping the men develop their talents in the assembly. My thanks to them for the opportunity. Last of all, I hope to have the new songbook "Redeeming Love" ready for release around the New Year or shortly thereafter. You may find information at legacymusicpublishing.com when I am ready to take orders. May God bless the brotherhood with health, strength, renewed zeal and unity.

Greg Gay, 3816 Tambos Trl, Edmond, OK 73034, papagreg@aol.com, 916-804-3787, October 9, 2020. I was in Ada, OK for an 8-day meeting that ended Sept 27.

It was my first meeting since February due to Covid-19 shutting down our world as we have known it in the past. I enjoyed my mother's hospitality and was impressed that she did not miss a service of the meeting at age 90. It was great to see Clint de France at the meeting and a pleasure as always to be with Joe Hisle and Carl Johnson. Next, I had a weekend meeting at Edmond (Oakwood), OK the first weekend in October. It was good to be with the brethren there plus I appreciate the attendance from area members and preaching brethren George Battey, Larry Combs, and Justin Owen. Both congregations made extra effort for anyone attending to feel safe. Ada opened the back half of their huge building so social distancing was easy. Edmond taped off every other row on one side of their building. In both places many wore masks as I do wherever I go and as we all do at our home congregation at Piedmont, OK. I believe such things are important as we look to get all our members back to our assemblies and to have community visitors again. Brethren were cooperative and understanding with my decision to not visit in anyone's homes during the meetings. Some still found creative ways to be welcoming and hospitable with restaurant gift certificates, money for meals, and by bringing meals and snacks to where we were staying. Covid-19 is certainly no respecter of persons in the world and time has proven it can invade any home and any congregation, no matter how remote. In April I started a private Facebook Group: "God's Good News from Greg" where I post weekly videos. It is by invitation only, so I have invited my old and new friends to the group. Once anyone is a member, they are welcome to invite their Facebook friends to join. The group has grown to over 1,250 members in 32 countries. Right now, I am doing short videos on various aspects of worship. One of my cancelled meetings this year was with Grapevine, TX. In July, I recorded nine sermons for them to share with their members. Those videos can be seen at their site or on my YouTube channel: God's Good News from Greg- open to the public for all to see. Our work continues with the Piedmont, OK congregation. In recent months I have started an online study with the men on teaching in the Lord's church. Those who are the most experienced are enthusiastically participating and encouraging those who are just beginning, the mark of true leaders. Our hearts have been broken with the loss of Robin McFarland in September and we continue to mourn with all who loved her. This year has brought unforeseen difficulties to the church everywhere. May God bless us to recover as quickly as possible so we can continue our faithful worship and good work of preaching the gospel around the world as unhindered as possible.

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WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

\$38 MILLION - A HIGH PRICE TO PAY FOR JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

By JERRY DICKINSON

“When the people of Ammon saw that they had made themselves repulsive to David, Hanun and the people of Ammon sent a thousand talents of silver to hire for themselves chariots and horsemen from Mesopotamia, from Syria Maacah, and from Zobah. So they hired for themselves thirty-two thousand chariots, with the king of Maacah and his people, who came and camped together from their cities, and came to battle.” (I Chronicles 19:6-7)

David had conquered virtually all the enemies of Israel and had made a name for himself as an unconquerable warrior King. (2 Samuel 8: 13) Instead of attacking the Ammonites, however, David makes an overture of kindness. When David was on the run from Saul the Ammonite King Nahash had shown kindness to David, and David was not a man to forget the good deed done when he was in desperate straits. King Nahash has died and his young son Hanun is now king so David sends ambassadors to comfort him, and extend an olive branch of peace and friendship.

But, something extraordinary happens. The advisors and leaders of Ammon jump to a wrong conclusion. They ask the young king, “Do you think David really honors your father because he has sent comforters to you?” (2 Samuel 10:3) They convince Hanun that it is a trick and David is deviously spying out the land so he can attack and conquer Ammon. The young king believes their aspersions and then over-reacts to say the least. He has the ambassadors shamed by having half their beards shaved off and half their garments cut off up to their waists. Having insulted and shamed them, he sends them home to David. This, of course, was a shameful and insulting way to treat ambassadors who had come in peace and David was incensed and angrily prepares for war.

Apparently, and amazingly, King Hanun and the princes of Ammon suddenly realize they have made a terrible mistake. They had made themselves repulsive to David the record says. The Hebrew word means to stink. They had done a stinkingly rotten thing and now they faced the wrath of David. Knowing they were no match for Israel’s veteran army, they hired mercenaries from Syria and other nations to help. They paid out 1000 talents of silver which comes to about 100,000 pounds. The price of silver at this writing is \$24 an ounce, therefore the price of the silver they paid for the chariots and soldiers comes to \$38 million dollars today. \$38 million dollars - a high price to pay for jumping to conclusions! It didn’t do them any good of course because they were thoroughly and totally defeated by David and Israel. They could have avoided war and utter defeat, not to mention the loss of \$38 million, if only they had not jumped to the wrong conclusion. Why do people jump to wrong conclusions?

1. Projection. Sometimes we project our feelings, guilt, and impure motives on to others. This is what Hanun and the Ammonites did. David was sincere in his offer of kindness, but the Ammonites revealed their dishonest and devious nature by jumping to the conclusion that David was just like them. They were dishonest and devious, so David had to be too. They jumped to a wrong conclusion and paid dearly for it.
2. Bad Advice. Young King Hanun listened to bad advice. Instead of believing the ambassadors and talking directly with David, he heeded the innuendo and slander to the detriment of himself and his people. Brethren, take heed to everything you hear, especially about other brethren. Don’t jump to conclusions based on hearsay and second hand innuendo. Above all, do not impugn the motives of good brethren before you get all the facts.
3. Prejudice. It was certainly because of national prejudice that the Ammonites spurned the kind offer of David. How can you ever trust an enemy? According to our interpretation of the motives of others we often reveal the true quality of our own hearts. A suspicious mind tends to paranoia, evil surmising, and disaster. Prejudice leads to spiritual malignancy. Nathaniel could not believe that any good thing (certainly not the Messiah) could come from Nazareth! Thankfully, he heeded the challenge of Philip, to “come and see”.

Don’t jump to conclusions! Don’t impugn the motives of others without cause. Ananias jumped to the conclusion that the Lord was somehow mistaken when he was told to go tell Saul of Tarsus what he needed to do to be saved. How often, later, Ananias must have reflected on his wrong judgment as he witnessed the ministry of the great apostle. \$38 million is a high price to pay for jumping to conclusions! Help me, Lord, to hold my conclusions until I have all the facts. Above all help me to judge others with pure motives. “Judge not that you be not judged!”