



The Sabbath Sentinel

**May-June
2024**

*Our Walk
in the
Sand...*

BSA—The Bible Sabbath Association

Jesus said, "If God were your Father, you would love me..."

The Sabbath Sentinel May-June, 2024

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Do We Really Care About what God says?

Jesus once made a statement that I believe many brush past to glean understanding from the rest of the context. Certainly, the context of the trial of Jesus by Satan directly after the His great fast is loaded with understanding to be gleaned. But, for the purpose of this article I'd like to focus on one specific statement.

Here's what Jesus said to us when He was told by Satan that He could command stones to turn to bread; He said this in Mat 4:4 *"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."* I find myself wondering whether or not we as God's Children, and His Heirs, Heirs with Christ, take that statement very seriously.

Our friends in the Sunday keeping community have many, varied excuses for not keeping God's Sabbaths. One teacher says God doesn't care which day we keep or that any day can be a sabbath. Another says it was nailed to the cross. Still another says that Jesus kept those days for us so that we don't need to do so. Another will teach that God honors our tradition of keeping holy the first week, a day which God NEVER made holy.

In every case, people are using human reasoning to say these things instead of going by what God has said! "Why do you say that?" one might ask. This writer says that because God NEVER said any of those things that give rise to the excuses to keep some other day holy, or no day. You can search the scriptures from one end to the next and you will never find where God said we need no longer keep His Sabbaths holy. You won't find any place where God says that Jesus kept those days so you don't need to do it. You won't find any uncertainty in which day God rested or commanded throughout scripture. All of those human reasonings are absent from the mouth of God!

In fact, Jesus spoke about man's traditions when He walked Judea as a human man. Here's what He had to say about our traditions, *"Do you do well to set aside the commandment of God, so that you may keep your own tradition?"* Mar 7:9. Why don't people understand that relying upon our traditional understandings can be tantamount to rejecting God and His Commandments?

Jesus statement about EVERYTHING that comes from God's mouth is required for us to live is so important that whenever we read the words "LORD spoke" in the scriptures our ears should perk up and our minds pay attention to those words. If when we read those words, and man's reasoning contradicts the words that come afterwards from God's mouth, then we need to reexamine our beliefs.

But, our friends in the Sunday keeping world don't seem to grasp this highly important point that Jesus was making. They think that Jesus was just saying that He was not going to obey Satan—and he WAS saying that! But, He was also speaking to us, giving us a guideline for understanding what is important to God, and what we need to be doing. When men stand before the Judgment Seat they will not be able to use the Adamic Excuse—that preacher you gave me did teach me that Sunday was cool, and I ate thereof.

God's written word is the most abundant of literatures available on the face of the earth! While not fulfilling the prophecy about knowledge of the LORD will be as prevalent as the waters covering the seas, the production of the many Bibles in the world leaves all men without an excuse. The Adamic Excuse did not work for Adam, and it won't work for those who refuse to do what God says no matter what the reason is.

Why don't men see that the God who created all things, including His Lamb to come and take away our sins, just wants us to love Him and do what He asks? Most of us love our human fathers and recognize the sacrifice of their lives which they undertook to raise up and nurture a wife and children in a world that lies in wait to trample marriage and the family into the ground. We can honor that father with our love, our respect, and even our consideration of the words he has spoken to us for our good. Why, then, can't people see that God, our Heavenly Father, has words for us that we need to heed, to respect and to follow?

The simplest understanding is that they don't love God. Oh, they will get up on Sunday morning and sing loudly "Oh How I Love Jesus!" but they are trampling underfoot

the words His Father spoke to us by their actions!

John told us how we can show our love for God, and it isn't by keeping Sunday or any other day holy. John wrote "*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome.*" 1 Jn 5:3. But, the human reasoning "worshipper" will say that they keep Jesus' commandments and He did not repeat the Sabbath commandment. Did Jesus really need to repeat every commandment that came out of God's mouth for us to keep that commandment? And, didn't Jesus Himself say that He did not come to do away with the Commandments of God? Didn't Jesus tell the rich man that the way to life was to keep the Commandments, and even repeat some of the Commandments found in Exodus 20? (Matt 19:16-22). Jesus Himself said in Mat 15:9, "*But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*" People's worship can be *in vain*! All of their worship can mean nothing if they are keeping the commandments, the human reasoning, of men instead of living by EVERY word that God speaks!

God's Commandments are not burdensome. In fact, they are a light to our path showing us HOW we get to the glorious destination God has planned for us. They lend clarity to our walk. Sunday keepers are told of their destiny, "Just live a good life and you'll go to heaven." What does that mean, exactly, to "live a good life?" That is so nebulous that nobody can know for sure whether they are on the right path or not!

But, God's commandments are clear and exact! They come clearly stated and easily understood, just like the command to Adam and Eve in the Garden! God told them that they could have anything that they wanted except that one fruit. The order was clear and the penalty was likewise clear.

The same is true today. If we are going to reach for the Tree of Life, then we need to be doing what God says, not listening to the voice of men whose God is their own belly, or even to those who are sincere, but wrong because they don't grasp the concept of living by every Word spoken by God. We have God's Word and Jesus told us to live by EVERY word that God has spoken.

God wants us to demonstrate our love for Him as clearly as He has shown His love for us! John told us how to demonstrate our love for God—keeping His Commandments. But there was nothing new in what John wrote!

This concept is found in many places in the scriptures.

One such place is Deu 11:22 "*For if you will carefully keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him...*" Keeping God's Commandments is closely tied to showing our love for Him in many places in the Torah, the Old Covenant.

When men make up excuses to not obey God, they are not showing God the love that He deserves. God does not micro-manage our lives through His Word. Like a loving Father, He gives us the 10 guidelines we call Commandments and then tells us to filter them through the love of Him and the love of those around us. He even tells us what the reward will be if we do those things! Then He tells us to go play, to rejoice! There is no lack of clarity in what God expects us to do if we REALLY love Him. DO we really love Him? THAT is the question that we have to answer—not for ourselves but for our loving Father! That is the question that our Sunday keeping friends are not willing to even consider, much less comply with.

But, Jesus' words are not just for showing our First Day friends where to look for understanding. His Words are for us as His Children, too! Do we have some sin or other thing that we do where we say that "God will understand," or where some man teaches against what God has said? If we do, then the time to repent is now. We need to open up God's Word and read it to find out what God has to say.

A simple word search in any Bible program or concordance of where it says the LORD spoke, or said something, or gave some direction will produce an abundance of things that God spoke about. It is an edifying Bible study to take on. That study will lend clarity of mind on what God does want, and what He leaves to us to figure out. When God wants us to do something, He is unambiguous in His Words. But, while walking in His path, we have much opportunity to use those directives to light our path, to show our love for our Daddy in Heaven.

The real question for the entire world is this: "Do we love God enough to live by every word He has spoken?" Joshua had the right answer for this when He said to the Children of Israel, "*And if it seems evil to you to be the servants of the Lord, make the decision this day whose servants you will be: of the gods whose servants your fathers were across the River, or of the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living: but I and my house will be the servants of the Lord.*" Will we do the same?



Following Messiah

Daniel Campau

The other morning, I had a dream. I was climbing up and down a two-story metal structure, doing some sort of task. I was skillfully moving between floors, displaying great strength. There were plenty of people around, yet nobody seemed to notice my strength or skill. I was offended by this, and I was trying to figure out how to draw attention to my skills. After waking and considering the dream, I not only realized the selfishness in those dream thoughts, but I also realized that it is exactly these kinds of thoughts that drive nearly everyone on the planet today. Whether it be for fame, power, or riches, people want to be recognized. They want to be noticed, well thought of, and mentioned.

Contrast this with our Messiah. I cannot think of an example in scripture where He was concerned with anything even remotely close to my dream example. Instead, He only did and spoke the Words of His Father. His sole goal was to do the task His Father had given Him.

Jesus answered them and said, "*My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.*" (John 17:16 NKJV Unless Noted).

Jesus said to him, "*Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'*" (John 14:9).

Then Jesus answered and said to them, "*Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.*" (John 5:19).

In these verses, we can see the desires of our Messiah. It was not His desire to exert His own will. It was His desire to glorify His Father. Is that also our goal as disciples of Messiah? Paul instructs us to do no less in Romans.

"Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 15:5-6).

If you are familiar with scripture, you may recall Christ instructing his followers to obey His words. For example, read John 12:47. At first glance, this may sound as if Christ is promoting His own message. However, when we read further to verse 49, it becomes clear that His words are by the command of His Father.

Matthew 6:31-33 shows that our Father knows our needs, and He will take care of the needs of his servants who seek His Kingdom. What should his servants be doing? Much the same thing Christ did. Instead, the so-called followers of Messiah are too often in cleanup mode, fixing their mess-ups.

Are we constantly in emergency mode putting out the fires we cause through our own carelessness or selfishness? Our actions have consequences, good or bad. Yeshua's actions had consequences too. However, everything He did brought glory to the Father rather than Himself. When we push our own desires out of the way, God is more likely to use us as His tools. When we desire to glorify the Father rather than ourselves, maybe we can do some actual good for the Kingdom. Isn't this the problem since the beginning of humankind? Even in the garden, Adam and Eve did not want to glorify the Creator by following His instruction. Instead, they wanted to become great. To become like God. Adam's seed has been passed down from the first two parents to everyone on the planet today. Sadly, everyone alive today has this innate desire to be recognized and to feel somehow significant. We cannot overcome this selfish nature nor the works of the flesh by our own strength. If we are not seeing the fruit of the Spirit in our daily lives, then we are still hanging on to that old man. As in my dream, we want to be seen for some great thing. Yet the example given us by our Savior considered no such great thing, so humbling ourselves is what is necessary. (See Mt 18:4, James 4:6, 1Pet 5:6) Setting aside all of our own wants may be required. There are examples in scripture of Yeshua, perhaps exhausted from doing the Father's work, going up to a mountain to pray. He sometimes prayed all night. Do we get on our knees and ask Our Heavenly Father for strength to continue His work even when we are tired or discouraged?

He then told them a parable on the need for them to pray always and not become discouraged: (Luke 18:1).

Have we set aside our own hunger to help another? Do we take the extra time to discuss with someone their need for Christ, even when we have many other tasks on hand? Father, help us to do what is necessary to humble ourselves and only do what our Messiah did, to serve and glorify You.

Too often lately, I have been seeing teachers taking a dogmatic doctoral stance on various unimportant matters, so much so that actual commands of God are not discussed.

Enjoying the articles...?

You can aid the BSA effort to promote the Sabbath and a Spirit of brother-hood among all who keep God's Sabbath by becoming a **BRIDGE BUILDER** or a **PILLAR** with the BSA? Besides the monthly or annual membership dues which you can find inside the front cover, you can also help with various functions designed to help bring a fellowship of brethren across denominational lines. Some of the opportunities are: Advise and/or consult with the BSA Board of Directors; visiting and interacting with other Sabbatarian fellowships; speaking on behalf of the BSA; Promotion and/or distribution of BSA materials and services; and assisting with this magazine, the BSA Facebook page, Twitter and other social media on projects defined by the Board of Directors.

We tend to stand on what we believe is truth, touting its merit. Many times, we do exactly what Yeshua accused the Pharisees of doing, missing the weightier matters. *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone."* (Matthew 23:23).

When we stand and preach some pet doctrine, even if it is truth, what value is it to the hearers if they most deeply need, as in the case of the above scripture, Justice, Mercy, and Faith. Around 7 years ago, the shape of the earth seemed to suddenly become important, causing great debate and division. Many spent all their free time studying and thinking about nothing else. To an outsider looking in, would they conclude these are disciples of the Messiah? My Savior said: *"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* (John 13:35).

Over my lifetime I have heard many people make bold statements about a new revelation they have "discovered". Before the turn of this century, there were multitudes claiming to "know" the date of the Messiah's return. My Savior said: *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."* (Mark 13:32).

In Acts 1:6-7, Jesus also said the restoration of the Kingdom is under the Authority of the Father. From these two verses, we can automatically discredit anyone who says, "I know when Christ will return."

There are also debates about angels and demons and correct calendars and fantastic revelations. Are these the things our Messiah did, or asked His followers to be doing? Is this food?

And the Lord said, *"Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes."* (Luke 12:42-43).

Many have grown up being told that they can be anything they want to be. That they should trust no one and question everything. These sentiments essentially eliminate the type of faith required to be saved followers of the Messiah, and they are the sentiments gladly pushed by the adversary; question everything, whether it be the shape of the earth, the day you meet, the calendar, etc. This push can also cause us to question the authority and the commands of God, precisely what the talking serpent did for Eve by casting doubt toward God's words.

When do we as followers of the Messiah settle down, humble ourselves, and ask our Father in Heaven what He wants us to do? When do we finally ask what He wants to change in us, and what He wants us to notice?

A good place to start is to read His Word from cover to cover. See how and what our Master Yeshua the Messiah taught those around him. How did He teach His disciples? How did He treat the Samaritan woman at the well? How did He explain who our neighbors are? How did He instruct His disciples to live and act?

Read the Sermon on the Mount in the book of Matthew, chapters 5 through 7. Look at every description of how He expects us, as His disciples, to interact with those around us. Read about the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit of Christ. If His Spirit is in us, then we should be producing these kinds of fruit while not producing the works of the flesh. (Gal 5:19-24). If we are lacking in these areas, perhaps we need to fast and pray that our Father would wake us up to what is truly important. We must pray that our hearts desire will truly come from Him. (Ps 37:4)

When we start getting fed up with our selfishness, and we are ready to turn from our evil way, know that our Creator is also ready to show mercy and provide instruction. He will show comfort and give wisdom. What will it finally take for us to turn toward God and abandon our wicked ways?

"Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. (Isaiah 55:7-8).

There was more to my dream. After no one was noticing my skill, I suddenly felt compelled to go somewhere else. I did not know where. In this part of the dream, I was able to fly, yet I was confined to the interior of an endless building. I could move quickly, yet I was frequently impeded by closed doors which I had to stop and open. I was also impeded by having to carry some useless items that I could not seem to get rid of, nor did I know why I was carrying them. Even though I could fly, people I passed still did not notice. This frustrated me, and yet I was compelled toward an unknown destination. Finally, I entered a large room containing several people. I recognized the room as a place that was being set up for a large event, the annual Fall feasts. All of those in the room were doing whatever was needed to get the room ready. Once again, nobody noticed me. I was the only one concerned with my own task of trying to get to the unknown destination. At this point, I woke up and began to realize that in the dream I was seeking after something for my own glory and benefit. All for an unknown goal I was compelled to chase. I was not following the good Shepherd.

"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep." (John 10:14-15).

When we become true followers of our Messiah, perhaps

even in our dreams we will desire to glorify God instead of ourselves. Yes, all of this is possible when we humble and submit ourselves to our Creator.

"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." (2 Chr 7:14).

"Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 18:4).



Do You Want to Learn More About the Sabbath?

Are You or is Someone You Know New To the Sabbath?

The BSA now offers some free resources to help you learn about the Sabbath.

We have short, 1 or 2 minute audio clips on topics such as:

“What is the Sabbath?” and

“When is the Sabbath and How Can We Know?”

Free booklet download “A Beginner’s Guide to the Sabbath.”

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OUR WALK IN THE SAND

Darl Arbogast, Minister

The tracks we make on our journey on this earth are still in the sand so look behind you!

Our legacy is what we bequeath or pass on to those who come along after we have passed away; whether it is passed on voluntarily or otherwise by osmosis. Our family legacy is who we are or the person we may become. Our family legacy starts with those before us and it filters down through us toward those coming after us. Our legacy is an inescapable concept that follows us like a shadow, it is like the first cousin to our reputation. Our reputation lives with us now and in our community we are recognized either 'for the good or not for the good' among our acquaintances.

All of this goes back to 1 Corinthians 12 known as the gift chapter. God has given all of us gifts the question is are we willing to use them? Our gifts should be used with zeal giving God the credit for our success, even when trials come.

A factor we may want to consider is our home, our family structure, our way of life, our education, our children's education, even our choice of religious education or persuasion.

Outside of the home are we involved in such things as: community work, volunteer for charitable causes or in community projects, teachers' aids etc.? Visiting nursing homes, hospitals or taking time to visit the elderly and watching out for our neighbors. What are our hobbies and how do we spend our spare time: sporting events, fishing, hunting, ball games, etc.? We can all be an asset to our community by lending a hand and being a value to society on our walk on this earth.

Social media is destroying our flesh and blood relationships and wars are popping up everywhere, food shortage and famine are on the rise in several countries and coming here. It is known that war causes famine and disease.

Our country is in a terrible curse; we have an aging population on one hand and a low birth rate on the other. While abortion is rampant, so are drugs killing our people

young and old; the gap is being filled by illegal immigration.

If we were to ask those we meet on the street daily 'What or who is God'? What would be their answer?

Isaiah 43:10-12 NKJ - "*You are My witnesses,*" says the LORD, "*And My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the LORD, and besides Me there is no savior. I have declared and saved, I have proclaimed, and there was no foreign god among you; therefore you are My witnesses,*" says the LORD, "*that I am God*".

Matthew 7:21-23 NKJ (Jesus said) - "*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*"

The parable of the wicked and lazy servant Matthew 25:14-29 NKJ – (Jesus said), "*For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I*

have gained two more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I

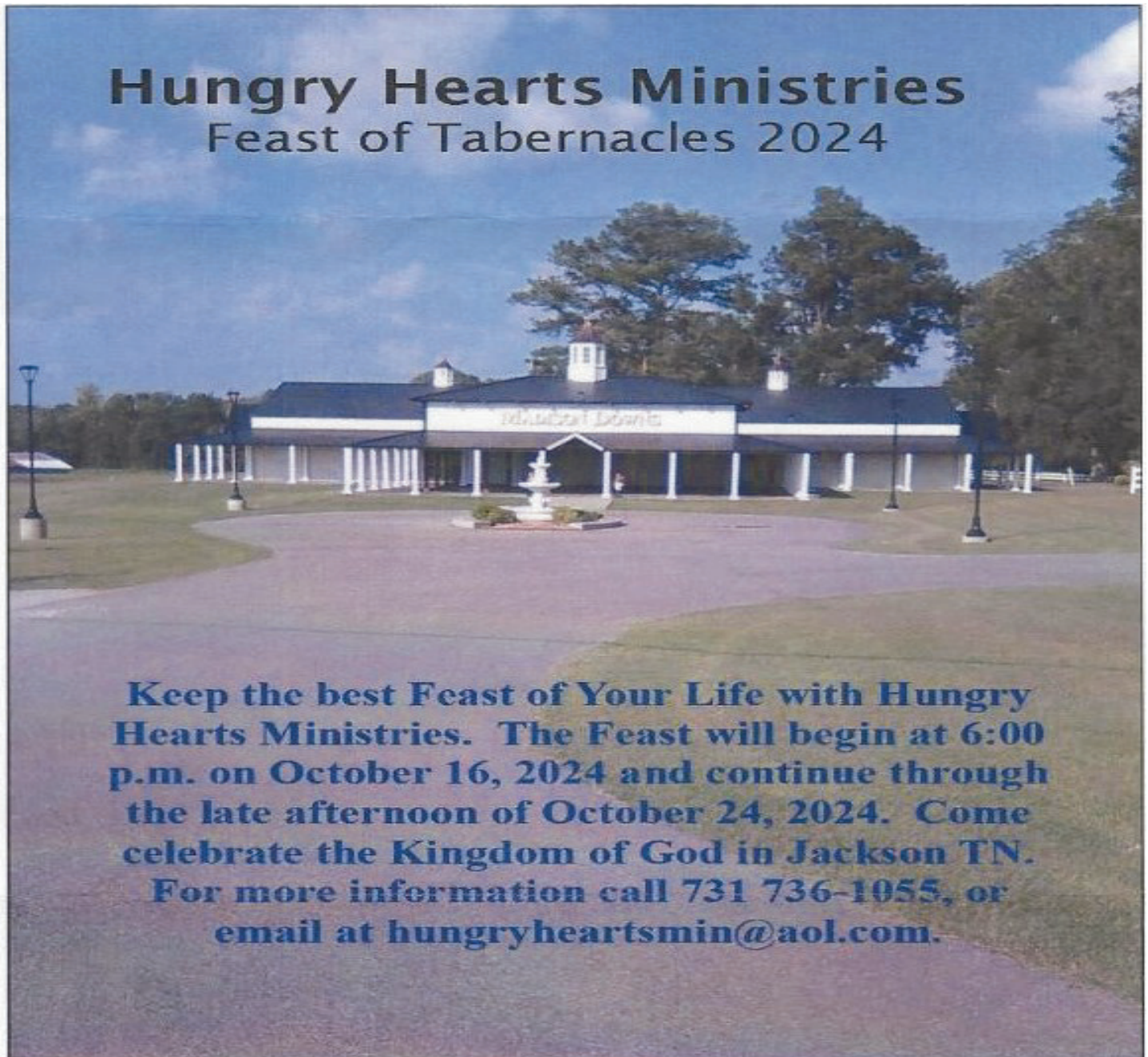
would have received back my own with interest. Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.

In all of our doings do for His glory!

The greatest honor of all is to leave a legacy of faith and a legacy of self-sacrifice on behalf of others in the name of our Lord, Jesus the Christ.

God haste the day for His righteousness upon the earth.

God bless you in your efforts as you progress.



Hungry Hearts Ministries
Feast of Tabernacles 2024

Keep the best Feast of Your Life with Hungry Hearts Ministries. The Feast will begin at 6:00 p.m. on October 16, 2024 and continue through the late afternoon of October 24, 2024. Come celebrate the Kingdom of God in Jackson TN. For more information call 731 736-1055, or email at hungryheartsmin@aol.com.

ADOPTING, TAKING HOLD OF, & CLINGING TO FALSE SABBATHS

Daniel Botkin

Approximately 200 years before Christ, Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek. This Greek translation is called the Septuagint. The Septuagint can help us see how Jews at that time understood the Hebrew Scriptures.

I want us to look at one phrase in Amos as an example. In Amos 6, the prophet rebuked the Jews who were at ease in Zion and were not concerned about the affliction of their brothers. In Amos 6:3, the recipients of the prophet's rebuke are described as people who, among other things, "*cause the seat of violence to come near*" (KJV).

I consulted 33 translations, and all of them say something similar to the KJV, except for 3 of them, which say something quite different. Zondervan's translation of the Septuagint says that the people were "adopting false sabbaths." The Pulpit Commentary's translation of the Septuagint says they were "clinging to false sabbaths." The translation of the Aramaic Peshitta says they were "approaching the Sabbath of violence."

How did these translators see "false sabbaths" or "the Sabbath of violence," while others saw "the seat of violence"? The Hebrew text, when read with the vowel points, says va-tagiyshun / shevet / chamas, and means, as the KJV says, "[Ye] *cause the seat of violence to come near*." However, the pointing system that tells readers how to pronounce the vowel sounds did not yet exist when Amos wrote this, nor did it exist when the Septuagint was translated. The translators of the Septuagint saw only v-t-g-y-sh-v-n / sh-v-t (or possibly sh-b-t) / ch-m-s. The key to unlock this mystery is the center word. Is it SHeVeT ("seat"), or SHaBaT ("sabbath")? The two

words are spelled the same way. Without the vowel points, it can mean either one.

Jews who translated the Septuagint obviously understood it as "sabbath," because they translated it as ephaptomenoi sabbaton pseudon. The first Greek word can mean to adopt or to cling to. It is also used in Amos 9:5, which says that God "takes hold of the land," ephaptomenos tes ges.

The second Greek word, sabbaton, is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew shabbat. The -on suffix pluralizes it so it means "sabbaths."

The third Greek word, pseudo[n], is a translation of the Hebrew chamas. Chamas usually means "violence," but it can also mean simply "wrong," as in Job 21:27, "*the devices which ye wrongfully imagine against me*."

Pseudo means fake, phony, bogus, counterfeit, wrong, just as it does in English. The New Testament speaks about false prophets (pseudoprophetes), false teachers (pseudodidaskalos), false apostles (pseudapostolos), false brothers (pseudoadelphos), and false messiahs (pseudochristos). And the Septuagint speaks about sabbaton pseudon, because the translators understood Amos to be speaking about Jews who had abandoned God's Sabbath and adopted, took hold of, and were clinging to false sabbaths.

I'm sure glad that Christians didn't make the same mistake those Jews made!Oh, wait a minute....

See Daniel Botkin's website at gatesofeden.online.



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God's Care in the Storms of Life

Tommy Willis

Most of us have a fair amount of fun in life; and that's the way it should be. But after a while on this planet; most of us learn that there are many storms and struggles.

In these storms, we can get out of focus and feel that God doesn't care.

I think of what the disciples said in the gospel of Mark:

"And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?' Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still!' And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, 'Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?'" (Mark 4:37-40) nkjv.

When they asked him "Don't you care?" Jesus response to their question is: "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"

Part of the lesson here is knowing he cares and will deliver us from the fear!

The Bible specifically tells us to go to him in prayer because He cares: *"casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."* (1 Pet 5:7). Nkjv.

He wants us to learn from this interaction. As we go to Him in our struggles, we get to learn that he cares. In our trials Peter tells us: *"In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."* (1 Pet 1:6-8) niv.

I remember many years ago, I was struggling because of the health problems that I have had since a young man. It's not been easy. What helped me was that I knew a man of God whom I feel was closer to God than any man I've ever known; and he had many physical ailments. I remember after he died, telling a brother that had I not known this man of God, I might have thought God didn't care about my suffering. But I knew better from watching the man of God be at peace with his ailments! He had more physical health problems than any man I've known, but he also had more peace than any-

one I've known!

As the years passed, I learned how God used the physical ailments of his servants. Paul pleaded with God to be healed of his physical ailments (2 Cor 12:7-10). But God left them for his learning—so that he would learn to depend on God.

Most times when I read of Paul asking three times for his struggle with ailments; I think of Christ crying out three times in the garden for God to relieve Him of this suffering; but He had to endure: *"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."* (Heb 5:8) kjv.

Another lesson learned from the health problems, is that you realize more how brief life is. I have noticed over the years that, when I'm doing better, and feeling better physically, the brevity of life can drift into the background. This is why the Bible tells us: *"LORD, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered— how fleeting my life is. 'LORD, remind me how brief my time on earth will be.'" (Ps 39:4) nlt.* My physical ailments are a good reminder.

The Psalmist wanted to be reminded of his brief life. When we are, likewise we can then better focus on the big picture—and not get distracted with minutiae, and keep our mind on God and the eternal perspective.

Also in James 4:14, *"Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."* Since we often live in denial of death, the two above scriptures are good reminders.

As our faith in Him grows, we learn how much he cares for us. God sometimes heals us, and sometimes he does not—for a reason. This old body of mine cannot go into God's Kingdom anyway; he is merely letting deteriorate that which has to die anyway. We all die; and few of us go to the grave healthy. Elijah, God's prophet, suffered and died from health problems: *"Now Elisha had been suffering from the illness from which he died."* (2 Kings 14:15) niv.

And Timothy struggled with physical ailments also. (1 Tim 5:23). But we often can feel God doesn't care, because of the raging storms in life. But this is the perfect training ground to teach us that He does care, we need to go to Him in prayer and get to know He cares; and that just like with Paul's thorn, we come to see that He

is working it all to the good.

We are not to be distracted with the cares of this life: “*Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”* So we say with confidence, “*The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?*” (Heb 13:5-6).

As we get to know God, we can, as the above scripture tells us, say with confidence that God is my helper and I won’t be afraid. He teaches us to learn to go to Him in prayer and not worry, as Phil 4:6-7 tells us to; and to thank Him for all he does and continues to do.

When I look back at journal notes, I’m reminded of the many times God has delivered me. It helps to look back at the many times God has helped us. Jesus calms the storms in our life, and gives us his peace to go on.

In the storms of life, like the disciples, we often fear because we fail to realize God is with us like He promised. But we need to learn He is there, and He cares. “*And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*” (Heb 11:6) niv.

He loved us enough to go to the cross for us, certainly He cares about our present problems and struggles.

Therefore, we need to learn to give all our problems to Him in prayer—to let them ride on His shoulders, and He will teach us to be at peace amidst the affliction. If we need relief, He will give it to us; for He won’t let us be tempted above what we are able to endure (1 Cor 10:13). But we can often miss the lesson He wants us to learn by asking for the trial to be removed. He may want us to learn to be at peace amidst the affliction. This He does promise! (Phil 4:6-7).

“*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*” (1 Pet 5:7) niv. The more we learn to go to Him as the above scriptures tell us, the more comforted we will be.



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LAZARUS AND THE RICH MAN – ANOTHER VIEW

(Luke 16:19-31)

Personal Study Notes

DJ Wellington

Prior to looking at this “parable,” it is good to set the scene for it. One thing that is important to remember is that the tribes of Israel were previously dispersed and remained that way while Messiah walked the earth. The ten tribes were scattered, generally referred to as “Israel,” while the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, were in the area and generally referred to as “Judah.”

Yahushua was speaking many parables to the “great multitude” who went with Him (Luke 14:25). The tax collectors and sinners drew near (Luke 15:1). The Pharisees and scribes were also there and complained because Yahushua received the sinners and even ate with them (Luke 15:2).

As we start reading in Luke 16, He gives the parable of the unjust servant, referring to the “rich man.” We’re told in Verse 14 how the Pharisees are “lovers of money.” There are other parables referring to a “rich man” and it is always negative with characteristics of being powerful authorities, having much, being greedy (i.e., not helping others, taking what little someone else has to please themselves). Purple and fine linen refers to authority and Torah (Exodus 36; Esther 8:15, and numerous other verses). Remember Judah was given the job of bringing Torah forward—What advantage has the Judahite? “*Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of Yahweh,*” Romans 3:1-2.

Job 27:13-23 seems to put the “wicked man” and the “rich man” on the same level, perhaps because both categories put themselves over all against what the Scriptures tell us to do, such as Proverbs 10, 18, 28, etc. Jeremiah 9:23 is very clear...“*let the rich man glory in his riches.*”

Yahushua said in Matthew 19:23-24 how difficult it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. It is not impossible but you must put your “riches” aside and adhere to the love of your Father. As Yahushua said in Matthew 6:24, you cannot serve Yahweh and mammon/ riches. There are several examples of “rich

men” who were good in our Father’s eyes, with Abraham leading the pack.

One more thing to point out before analyzing the parable is what was being taught and put “out there” during the time Messiah walked the earth. Messiah would never reference something, even in a parable, that the people were not familiar with—it would not make any sense. It is different than “not having ears to hear” (i.e., not wanting to hear). A religious system that was alive and thriving then was “Gnosticism” and that system taught many anti-Scriptural doctrines including reincarnation, immortal soul, concept of dying and going to heaven or tortured in “hell,” etc. This system was gaining much momentum and it appeared it was trying to win over “christianity,” infiltrating Judaism and, in reality, still survives within nominal christianity today. For excellent reading on this, see the “[Primitive Christianity in Crisis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnosticism)” series by Alan Knight. Also, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnosticism>.

So, with that background, let’s break down “Lazarus and the Rich Man,” using the New King James Version of Luke 16:19-31:

Verse 19: *There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.* The purple and fine linen represent priestly authority and, coupled with being “rich” suggests the “rich man” is Judah. It is likely the Pharisees of the day were of the tribe of Judah based on the history that is available of the day.

Verse 20-21: *But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.* “Lazarus” is the Greek for Eleazar, who was Abraham’s trusted servant (Genesis 15:2) and was a gentile. He could very easily be representing the gentile here who was desirous of truth. Compare that with Matthew 15:26-27 where the Messiah said to the Canaanite woman that it was not good to give the children’s (Israel’s) bread (teachings) to the dogs (gentiles)—yet the woman said even the dogs get the crumbs. We know, again from his-

tory, how many “gentiles” were turning to Messiah and truth of Scripture when He walked the earth and, in fact, Paul was sent “to the Gentiles”!

Verse 22, *So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.* Both died with the beggar/gentile appearing in Abraham's bosom much like a hurt child would be held by a parent. However, the “rich man”/Judah appeared to be tortured in the underworld (a precept of Gnosticism, not Scripture). He, the “rich man” had received his “reward” while on earth (Ecclesiastes 8:15; see also Luke 12:14-21--“eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you shall die”). The beggar/gentile was poor while on earth, seeking Yahweh's kingdom, doing right but was poor so his reward was after death—what he was yearning for; much like what we are seeking now as well. The “rich man”/Judah sees this. This has more to do with seeking Yahweh's kingdom than it does with what happens when you die. Yahushua used principles taught in the world so folks would understand—no one questioned Him; possibly because THEY understood what He was teaching.

Verse 24, *Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.* Right off the bat, why would the “rich man” call for “Father” Abraham if not representing his son, Judah, in the parable? If this were really about death and dying, why would he ask for a drop of water—seems he would ask for buckets and buckets. But if it is representing one not making it into the kingdom of heaven, asking for mercy makes perfect sense.

Verse 25-26, *But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.* Note clearly how, in this “parable,” Abraham calls the “rich man”/Judah his SON. Then he proceeds to tell his son that he had already received his reward, while on earth, and had made the decision to take riches of the world over spiritual riches leading to the kingdom. He reminds him, in a sense, that he had a choice and cannot go back once he

got to that point. Scripture tells us that, upon death, our eternity is sealed so what decisions we make while alive are important (Hebrews 9:27; 2 Timothy 4:7-8, Revelation 14:13). The “great gulf” could be the vast distance between right/wrong, good/evil which is so very pronounced in our generation today. Could it be that these things were written for a time such as now?

Verse 27-28, *Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.* Having realized the truth of what he never believed while alive, he wants to warn the others, but why five? Why any number? Judah was the son of Jacob and Leah (the “unloved”) and he had five brothers. Though there may be more significance to this, it could be another tidbit to point to the rich man being Judah, the two tribes constituting “Judah” at the time Messiah walked the earth. They claim “blood is thicker than water,” so wouldn't it stand to reason, he wanted his “blood” warned over all others?

Verse 29, *Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.* Yahushua made statements several times pertaining to some not believing the very Scriptures that prophesied of His coming and in this scenario they are reminded to hear Moses and the prophets (Tanakh). See John 5:39-40; Acts 18:28, and elsewhere.)

Verse 30-31, *And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent. But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'* This is very, very interesting because it also points to the future, as well as the present. There are many of those who are physically Israel that still do not believe Yahushua rose from the dead because they do not believe He is the one spoken of by the prophets!

I found this to be an amazing study and, contrary to my previous thinking, I do not believe this has anything whatsoever to do with death and dying. It is about living our lives in a manner worthy of our Maker with the “goal” of reaching the kingdom of heaven. I would truly like input into this study.



Crafting For a Cause

How handmade items can unite a community

Sharon Darling

This article first appeared and was written for The Modern Day Homemaker Magazine. This is a topic that I am passionate about and wanted to share it here with you as well. I also have this posted on my blog.

Working with our hands and creating things is quite rewarding. Not only that, but it also gives so many opportunities to bring people together. Crafting is one of my favorite things to do. If you had told me fifteen years ago about all the things that I would be creating now with knitting and crocheting, there is a very good chance I would have probably laughed in disbelief. Fast forward to today and that is exactly what happened.

One day, quite a few years ago, I was invited to join ladies I knew (and some I did not) to learn to knit, crochet, or even do another craft. I had been visiting our local library with our youngest when she was just a small toddler on a night they were gathering for their Knit Night. It was quite a sight watching these ladies all sitting together and enjoying each other's company.

Some of them were long-time crafters while others were just learning themselves. I will never forget how inviting and how wonderful the camaraderie was to witness. I am glad that I did decide to try it out. Much to my surprise I quickly caught on to both knitting and crocheting. It would be several years before I was comfortable enough to try more complicated projects but I did eventually learn to make things that seemed far outside my comfort zone. Sometimes our hang-ups are ourselves and we need to get out of our own way!

As I have been thinking about writing this article, two things stood out to me that I have been pondering and considering. What does it mean to me when I hear these terms "Crafting for a cause" and for something to "unite a community"? Now add to that and consider what they mean together. I do not think these are questions that can be answered in only one way.

Now, I know that not everyone can make things with their hands. We all have different talents and that is ok. I

am also aware of there being times and seasons in life that make gathering with others for some things a lot harder and maybe even impossible. Sometimes we enjoy doing things like what follows with those closest to us, by ourselves, or with our children and family. What follows are just some ideas and thoughts to get our brains thinking. I am certain there are a lot of great ideas others have and tried.

Let's consider some scenarios that we may see crafting for a cause in action that is building a community. Each of these can look very different from the next, but I believe they are great ways to start thinking about building a community and uniting it through crafting.

What are things that you are good at that you can make with your hands? You may have seen people gathered in a place such as a library chatting and crafting. Some may be brand new and clumsily making what should look like a square. Others may be happily moving along on what looks like a complicated pattern with ease. Still, others may be teaching a craft they know to someone who wants to learn or improve. There are often stories about their lives, hardships going through, struggles, battles they are fighting, funny things that have happened, and anything else you could probably envision. There is laughter, fun, and tears shed that are happy and even sad at times. A sense of belonging pierces the air. These people know each other and are in the trenches of life together. Friendships are built that can last a lifetime. The sound of children sometimes can fill the room, when they are present. Oh, how much of a joy that is, especially when they are enjoying the atmosphere too and "helping" or learning something themselves.

Imagine seeing brethren spending time to make handmade things either individually or gathering in a group to work on projects. Groups that do this together have the same great opportunities too. They share what they make with others as gifts because they know of needs, to cheer up the lonely, spread kindness, for a bridal or wedding shower, baby shower, or any number of other thoughtful reasons. The joy, love, and memories that are made really bring people together and foster a sense of belonging in a

community of brethren. The kindness shown in this setting is never forgotten and means so much to those who are celebrating something, new to a group or area, lonely, hurting, sick, in need of some cheering up, or maybe those who are in need. Many families spend time together making all kinds of crafts and passing on skills. I remember doing these kinds of things with my children, and have many friends who have as well with theirs. Hearing the littles laughing and telling stories as they create things with their own hands or with some help is a beautiful sight. I have noticed they love to share with others, especially the elderly, the fun things they have made for them.

Children enjoy seeing others light up and get excited when they share their creations. What are the benefits? Does it really unite people?

This can all create a sense of belonging when it is done in a kind and loving manner. Spending time with others talking about life and even spiritual things while you are creating things or learning a new craft creates such a wonderful bond. Sharing what is handmade blesses people in ways that we sometimes do not realize. Including others in your groups when you have them gives chances for foundations to either be laid or built upon in a community. We can easily look around and see most of society, including believers, busy with their own lives. We all have things going on. Some more than others. When we take time out of our days to make things for other people or even just simply gather in these ways, we are investing in the lives of others.

Including the youth is a big part of this too. Of course, we can have times that are for adults only but allowing them to benefit from all of this and seeing it also helps them learn. Another wonderful benefit is seeing the sharing in action and helping do these things alongside us. There are times that they can show the adults a thing or two about how to care about and for others without much thought to it actually being a sacrifice. My daughter and I have wonderful memories of her with me at the library and also of me teaching her at home how to knit and crochet.

Homeschooling is a great opportunity to put this all into practice. Skills can be passed down within a family and even possibly multiple families getting together to pass down to the youth any crafting skills. Field trips can be endless for ideas to teach, learn, and share handmade items. Youth can really do a lot in these settings and do

some great things building and uniting.

Taking the time to teach skills can also eventually lead to someone being able to open up their own business. The ideas and benefits from this alone are endless. This is not impractical nor is it impossible for some.

I want to share in this! Where can I start?

Even those who are not crafty can still enjoy these times and build community by helping with the sharing of them or even asking someone to make things for you to be able to share with others. If you know of anyone who would benefit from handmade items but do not make them yourself, distributing them for others who do make them is a tremendous help for those who do want to share. Not only by sharing but just spending time together as all of these things are done creates so many occasions to just be together and grow in relationships. Crafting certainly helps us talk, especially if you like to work with your hands and it can cause others to become interested to learn what you are doing as well. Many places might accept handmade items such as churches, congregations, ministries, police stations, hospitals, NICUs, PICUs, shelters, libraries, food pantries, organizations for foster care support, nursing homes, places like the Ronald McDonald House (where families can stay while a family member is in hospital); just make sure ahead of time that they do. Some may and others may not. It is also good to find out if there are any requirements or restrictions.

For example, cancer caps often need to be made with materials that are softer and sensitive to needs and comfort. Things for children may need to not have small pieces. Things like this may be a good idea to inquire about first from an organization. Sometimes you can find events put on in a community where people can volunteer and share things.

Even if you do not create things by hand, you can help others deliver them, donate supplies, help find places that will accept them, maybe purchase some and donate them yourself. Congregations, families, brethren, and friends, can work together to share these things with the greater community. What a great way to show love and kindness.

The memories made by spending time together doing good for others can be looked back on fondly.

What is so special about handmade items?

To do these times we sacrifice things like time, and supplies and make the effort to do these things. Depending

on our attitude, which is hopefully good, it might not even feel like a sacrifice. Sometimes there are real needs and working together to bring joy and help to those who need it is quite useful and good. Remember all the verses that speak about the widows, poor, fatherless, orphaned, those in need, those in a crisis, those who are struggling, those who are lonely,

What a great way to share and unite people by doing things for them. These principles apply to much more than just handmade items. Teaching these things is investing in others and helping others know that people care about them, which can also take quite a bit of time and patience.

It is easy to say “I do not have time to learn or to teach” if you have a talent. It takes sacrifice and effort to do the types of things I have talked about. Is that not what the Father and Messiah do for us—care about and take care of us with lots of patience and time required?

How much time gets invested into our day-to-day and not so day-to-day? Of course, we all have lives and schedules have to work around. There are even times when we have very little of ourselves that we can give. But I submit to you, that even if you do not partake in the crafting itself, just spending time together will be worth it. Who knows, you may be able to benefit from the kindness of one or more of those there who will share with you things that you did not even know you needed. Most of all it might not even be what the item is but the act itself and kindness shown.

You never know where something may lead and what the Father is working out. Perhaps all that is needed is someone to show YOU time, attention, love, kindness, compassion, or lending an ear. Maybe someone there needs you.

So many gaps in people’s lives can be filled in through crafting. There are so many crafts that any of this can be done. Attending or teaching classes is an excellent way to share and learn.

We can think outside the box and get ideas from so many other people. No one really does everything the same. We are all unique and have different ways of seeing and creating things.

When we spend time together whether it is creating in a group, teaching, or sharing, we are given opportunities to let our light shine. We don’t always know who we are affecting or how much we might be encouraging and in-

spiring others. Who knows, people who have been overlooked, ignored, left out, and pushed aside may see Him through you and be moved to be closer to Him as well from your example. We can help others feel seen and genuinely loved.

Our Father and Messiah see all the types of people I have mentioned in this article and more, should we not “see” them too?

A greater purpose

Even if you do not create things by hand, you can simply be present and offer conversation, lend an ear, give ideas, help others deliver items, donate supplies, help find places that will accept, maybe purchase some, and donate them yourself. Congregations, families, brethren, and/or, friends, can work together to share these things with the greater community. Love is not selfish and self-seeking but is selfless and sacrificial. It takes time, love, compassion, humility, and not seeking to elevate yourself to do these. Spending time with others in these ways grows relationships that build and unite a community.

Godly women spend time caring for others as well as themselves and their families. She spends some of her time doing things for others that edify, uplift, and teach to pass talents and character building. A godly woman does what she can to create and be a part of uniting as a community with those around her, especially those nearest to her. It is not to draw attention to herself but for a sincere desire to give of herself in the ways she is blessed with talents and a desire to stretch out her hand. This, my dear sisters, is a wonderful way to live out pure religion.

These are moments that we can positively affect the Body of our Messiah as well as the world around us to unite together in a way that brings glory to our Father.

You can find other articles, posts and more on my blog, torahwoman.com



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Agape Love and the Sabbath

Can We Grasp the Expansiveness of God's Love in the Command to Observe a Day?

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As the years have passed and I have grown older — and hopefully a little wiser — a deeper understanding of love has become an obsession I simply cannot escape. This obsession has become so strong that I was motivated to write a book about love in its various nuances, entitled Do You Know What I Have Done to You? It is a takeoff on Christ washing the feet of the disciples the night before His Crucifixion, expanding upon this awesome act of selflessness to reveal ten major aspects of His love for us: (1) the Ten Commandments, (2) the fruits of the spirit, (3) laying down your life, (4) God multiplying Himself, (5) living His government, (6) the least being the greatest, (7) marriage, (8) the creation, (9) health and fulfillment, and (10) fellowship of the saints. Jesus even washed the feet of Judas, His betrayer, which in itself tells us a lot about the depth of love.

The endless messages of Scripture reverberate through my mind about our Creator being the literal personification of love, such as expressed in I John 4:7-8:

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (NKJV, here and throughout).

The Greek work for love here is the well-known agape, meaning “affection or benevolence,” which is derived from agapao, which means “to love in a social or moral sense” (Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, J. Strong, edited by J. Kohlenberger, III, Thomas Nelson, 2001). The core of this love is obedience to the commandments of the Creator, as so eloquently stated in Matthew 22:37-40:

“You shall love the Lord you God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

This follows the straightforward statement of I John 5:3, that “... *this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.*” Breaking any of the first four commandments — which show love to God — or any of the last six commandments — which reveal love to our fellow man — is not only sin, but shows a lack of love. It is a truth that follows directly from the “new commandment” that Jesus told the 12 the night He was betrayed:

“A new [kainos] commandment I give to you, that you love [agapao] one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).

This “newness” of the commandment does not mean that He was adding an Eleventh Commandment to the Decalogue, but that the understanding of love He was alluding to was new ... a love unaccustomed or unused by them, “new as to form or quality, of a different nature than before” (Strong, 2001).

A New Slant on Agape

These matters most of us understand, but do you know that agape can also be used to identify darkness? Read John 3:19 and I John 2:15.

“And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved [agape] darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

“Love [agapao] not the world, neither the things, that are in the world. If any man loves [agapao] the world, the love [agape] of the Father is not in him.”

Here we have, in I John 2:15, agape and agapao used to show love of this evil world and love of the Father in the same sentence! What is the meaning of this word?

There can be no doubt that agape and agapao must mean “to prefer above others,” not just have a higher

form of Godly love. Using this definition we can understand how the word can be used to describe our relationship to both righteousness and evil, or light and darkness. We can love this world's system in its present carnality and pride, or we can love the realm of the Creator who has promised to set things right when Jesus Christ returns. Satan is the present ruler of this world (II Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; Matthew 4:8-9), and we can love his system that expresses itself in terms of adultery, uncleanness, sorcery, jealousy, envy, murder, and a host of other fleshly lusts (Galatians 5:19-21; II Timothy 3:2-5) ... or, we can love the Creator God who made each one of us, and His Son, that shows itself through joy, peace, patience, kindness, humility, and other fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

For us as the elect, we use agape to refer only to the benevolent preference for our Creator, and also for our fellow man, who is made in God's very image. I Corinthians 13 makes extensive use of agape in relation to how we must relate to both the Eternal and our fellow man.

Enter the Sabbath

So, to love [agapao] God is to keep His commandments, and those commandments are not burdensome [barus, "weighty or grievous"]. They are the opposite of being a burden, being instead the crux of liberty. David in Psalm 119:45 stated that he walked in liberty [rachab, "roomy, or open in every direction"] because he kept the precepts of God, while Paul declared his liberty [exousia, "privilege, capacity, freedom"] due to the spirit of God residing within him: "... where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (II Corinthians 3:17). In fact, James declared that the law defines liberty [eleutheria] in James 2:12.

Thus, the law is the road to freedom and liberty through love, which is the essence of the Creator and the meaning and intent of the commandments. Let us now take a closer look at this love of the Sabbath day, and how we may incorporate agape love — that is, "preferring it above others" — into the day and to the Creator of it. Of course, it is not the day that we love, but the One who made it and commanded us to keep it FOR OUR OWN GOOD (THE LAST SIX

COMMANDMENTS) AND THE GOOD OF THE ONE WHO MADE US (THE FIRST FOUR COMMANDMENTS).

Do we prefer our heavenly Father above all others so that we will carry out His divine will in our lives? The scribe in Mark 12:28 — the same individual that approached Jesus in Matthew 22:35-36 — asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" I have already quoted Jesus' response in Matthew 22:37-40, and Mark restates His response by saying that we must love [agapao] our heavenly Father with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourself. No other commandments exceed these. This love, of course, includes the keeping of the Fourth Commandment. Now notice what the scribe says in Mark 12:32-33:

"Well said, Teacher, You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

Jesus acknowledged that this scribe was "not far from the Kingdom of God." He nailed the right answer, which relates to the awesome love of God that the Fourth Commandment hearkens back to after the creation week ... for the Eternal connects the seventh day rest directly to the creation week:

"For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:11).

Recall that Elohim saw that everything He had made was not just good, but very good (Genesis 1:31). In Hebrew [meod tobe], this means "properly or vehemently, wholly good in the widest sense" (Strong, 2001). Then He rested on the seventh day from this work He had done, and He blessed it and sanctified it (Genesis 2:2-3). The entire creation was accomplished because of His love for these living animals, birds, fish, other creatures, and especially for man made in His express image. One might say He would not have had to create all of these beings ... but love demanded that He had to, especially to multiply Himself through the creation of Adam and Eve and their multiplication

of human-kind to ultimately be changed to the very God-kind at the end of the age.

All of this creation was consummated because of agape love. It is His nature. His eternal commandments guided the creation into the pathways of abundant living — again based on love — in order that the earth and its inhabitants might seek out and find the joy, peace, kindness, patience, goodness, and faithfulness that constitutes the very existence the Creator had in mind for a renewed earth. This includes the giving of the Sabbath day, in which we might say He encapsulated the six days of creation so that the joy of this creation might be full.

“For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord, and there is no other” (Isaiah 45:18).

Loving the Sabbath Day

Our eternal heavenly Father granted us the Sabbath day out of His love for us. He knew we would need a day of rest following six days of labor, just as He rested after six days of “working” to refurbish and repopulate the earth. Let us briefly look at the Sabbath commands and see just how they express love. Look at Isaiah 58:13-14.

* Do not do your own pleasure on it. pleasure = chephets, “what your own mind desires.”

* Call the Sabbath a delight. delight = oneg, “luxury”; from anag, “to be soft, luxurious.”

* Observe it as a holy day that is honorable to God. holy = qodesh, “sacred, to make clean, consecrated.”

* Desist from doing your own ways and pleasures. pleasure = chephets, “pleasure, desire”; from chaphets, “to incline to, be pleased with.”

God calls the Sabbath “My holy day.” As stated above, holy [qodesh] means “sacred or consecrated.” It must not be taken lightly. We must do what He tells us to do on the day, and we should above all want to, for He promises great blessings to those who keep the day. THIS SHOWS THE GREAT LOVE THE ETERNAL EXPRESSES TO US WHEN WE FOLLOW HIS

COMMANDS; HE WANTS TO BLESS US!

“Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken” (Isaiah 58:14).

When we delight ourselves in the Eternal by keeping the Sabbath day — and by implication all of the commandments — He in His endless love for us promises to shower us with blessings unimaginable, both individually and nationally. We will be looked upon by other nations with great admiration, and individually we will be blessed, not just materially but spiritually. What has been promised to Jacob will fall upon us. It is a promise that is so clearly elucidated in Leviticus 26:1-13. These blessings related in Leviticus 26 are contingent on keeping “My Sabbaths” and reverencing “My sanctuary” [miqdash, a consecrated place] (verse 2), ... which is referring to the dwelling place of God in the Tabernacle or Temple. Today, since there is no temple, that dwelling place is within our very beings (Romans 8:9-11; I John 4:13; I Corinthians 6:19).

Our Creator’s agape love is shown so profoundly by His giving us the Sabbath day. We “prefer Him above others” who might wish to argue that Sunday observance is acceptable, or Christmas and Easter are as good as the Holy Days. We obey His commandments — including the Sabbath — because we love Him who first loved us. Let us observe the seventh day each week with joy and delight as we strive to serve Him with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength — and love our neighbor as ourselves — for by doing so we are fulfilling the meaning of the Law and the Prophets. That is our calling. There is no other way!



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