



New Testament Expositor

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Practical Living

To believe the Bible is the inspired word of God is foundational for every Christian, but can we live a life that reflects what we read. Each day, we face challenges that test our resolve to live out God's encouragement and direction that should shape us to be more like Christ. These daily challenges reveal where our faith is strong and where it still needs to grow. As scripture reminds us, we need to be doers of the word and not hearers only. (James 1:22-25—But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed by what he does).

Being a doer of the word of God requires an intentional effort on the part of the believer. This focused life will involve turning self over to Him in all things—what we do, where we go and how we interact with others. As John reminds us, "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (1 John 2:6). This is a tremendous exhortation for who the Christian is called to be. Jesus is the perfect example and reflection of what the Father in heaven desires from those who walk in obedience. With Christ as our perfect example, let us consider several verses that will encourage the faithful believer to remain strong in the Lord.

Relationship with God

Proverbs 3:5-6- Trust in the Lord with all your heart And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

Matthew 22:37-40- Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your 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."

Romans 12:1-2- I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

2 Corinthians 5:7- For we walk by faith, not by sight.

Colossians 3:23-24- And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

1 Peter 5:7- casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

Relationships with Others

Philippians 2:3-5- Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Matthew 18:21-22- Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

James 1:26- If anyone among you thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.

Colossians 3:13- Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

Ephesians 4:29- Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

1 Peter 3:9- Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

Romans 12:18- If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

Relationship with Self

1 Corinthians 6:19-20- Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Philippians 4:13- I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Galatians 5:22-23- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Philippians 4:8- Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

As we consider these passages, we are reminded that Christian Living is far more detailed and thought out than

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ROOTED TOGETHER

Recently, some scientists have revealed their discovery that trees “talk” to each other through their interconnected root systems. Supposedly they share nutrients, exchange chemical signals about danger, and even take extra care of a nearby tree when it is sick. In Redwood forests, it has been noticed that when a mature tree (a “mother or hub tree”) dies around it springs up new trees in a perfect circle (a “fairy ring or family circle”). It seems that the mother tree’s roots give up all the remaining nutrients and produce offspring after it is gone.

While the Bible has a lot to say about trees (e.g., the tree of life, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the fruitless fig tree, etc.), it also has a lot to say about community and fellowship. Thinking about the way trees are rooted together to support each other, we can see a practical application to the church and the Christian life. I am a tree and you are a tree. The church is a forest composed of many trees. God’s design is for both you and I to become a connected part of this family/forest, to share nutrients, endure danger, and take care of each other. How?

- Rooted Together for Love: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). Rooted together, we move beyond “foyer small talk” and into deep relational connection with each other. Our role in this church is to love one another: “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart” (1 Peter 1:22). We turn our brotherly love (gr. *phileo*) into a self-sacrificial love (gr. *agape*), giving up our time and attention for each other’s well-being.

- Rooted Together for Holiness: “My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:19-20). Rooted together, we do not let our brothers and sisters fight their battles alone: we fight together. We know that sin grows in the darkness, and together we shine God’s light in the shadows of our lives to overcome sin. Our role in this church is to confess our sins to one another: “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working” (James 5:16). Sitting down with someone we trust, we get real about our struggles against sin and support each other.

- Rooted Together for Growth: “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-13). Rooted together, we equip people with God’s word, but we are most effectively equipping each other through intimate conversations and person-

al Bible studies. While the pulpit offers a regular opportunity for feeding, real growth takes much more than a few sermons every week. Our role in this church is to consider each other better than ourselves: “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus” (Philip. 2:3-5). It is not about what the church can do for us, but what we can do for the church.

The church is not a social club of card-carrying members. We are deeply interconnected parts of the body, which is rooted together, and we need each other in this “forest” of God. For that reason, we must stir one other daily toward love and good works (Heb. 10:24).

Paolo Di Luca (Minister– Bridge Street Church of Christ)

Emotions, Feelings, and Anxiety

God created us with the ability to experience emotions and feelings. While they are common to all of us, these human experiences and expressions are often complicated. Emotions are the body’s immediate physical and mental response to an event or experience. Feelings are created as the result of emotions. Feelings are best explained as a conscious response to our emotions.

For example, when we feel embarrassed, it may be because we have been observed doing something that may be interpreted by others or ourselves as unacceptable or inappropriate. A social blunder may cause us to experience embarrassment. Embarrassment often evokes physiological responses like reddening cheeks, rapid heart rate, or tense muscles. This emotion of embarrassment may then lead to a rush of subjective feelings, such as awkwardness, guilt, shame, or even regret. When we experience the emotion of embarrassment and the subsequent feelings of awkwardness, guilt, shame, and regret we may also become self-conscious when we are around the individual who observed the perceived inappropriate behavior. When these emotions and feelings go unprocessed, they often develop into the debilitating emotion of anxiety. Anxiety is the overwhelming sense of dread about events that have not and even may not occur.

The antidote to anxiety is a clear focus on seeking God and His Kingdom.

The problem with anxiety is that it often creates the feeling of worry or stress over matters that are not within our ability to control. Anxiety occurs when we focus on and fret about an outcome we cannot control. The writer of Proverbs says that this helpless thinking will lead us to a depressed mood: “Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, But a good word makes it glad” (Proverbs 12:25).

Jesus addresses the impact of anxiety in Matthew 6. He begins by saying that anxiety will distort your perspective. “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing (Matthew 6:25)?” As disciples of

Christ, our primary focus is not the physical aspects of this world. Christians must make obedience to Christ our greatest focus. In Matthew 22:37 Jesus affirms our focus, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” Following Christ is a decision that we make and maintain. It is a decision that is fully within our control. 1 Corinthians 10:13 reminds us that even when we are tempted, we are able to maintain our faithfulness to God.

However, when we allow anxiety to distort our priorities, it will stop us from trusting in God. Jesus reminds His disciples in Matthew 6:26 to see the evidence of God’s benevolence: “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” God promises He will provide our needs and that He is always with us (Hebrews 13:5).

Anxiety has no real value (Matthew 6:27-28). When the outcome cannot be controlled all of that energy focused on the unknown is wasted. When we allow anxiety to distort our focus, we begin to think like the world (Matthew 6:31-32). Instead of fulfilling our purpose to serve and worship God, our priorities are misplaced and our purpose is out of focus (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

The antidote to anxiety is a clear focus on seeking God and His Kingdom (Matthew 6:33). Jesus gives us hope that anxiety can be reduced to a manageable thought (Matthew 6:34). We must focus on what is within our influence and manage what is within our control and allow the Lord to carry the rest (Psalm 55:22; 1 Peter 5:7).

Peter Ray Cole, LPC

Ordering a Pizza with No Cheese

Would you care if I ordered a pizza with no cheese? Would that be silly to you? Thankfully, our God has given us all free will. I have the freedom to do and believe as I want and suffer the consequence, whether good, bad, or of no consequence. That is one of the gifts the Creator has bestowed upon humanity. Even though God has given us this free will, many choose to be confined.

One thing we confine ourselves to is the approval of others. Like an addiction, we will chase the approval of family, friends, co-workers, or even the world. We begin to live as though we are always on display, performing for an audience that is constantly judging us. We cause harm and anxiety in this way through social media, overworking ourselves, or placing ourselves out there in ways we do not have to. This insecurity within most of us causes several problems, such as forsaking the most important relationships, denying who we really are, and denying who God wants us to be.

God wants us to be seeking Him and His approval (Matt 6:33). If we are to view ourselves as before an audience, let it be an audience of One. The apostle Paul said this while writing to a large group of Christians, “For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ” (Gal 1:10 NKJV). Chasing the approval of those in the world gives us another master. Instead, find your place with God and be set free from not only the bondage of

seeking the approval of humanity but the bondage of sin.

The Lord has set you in His kingdom as He pleased (1 Cor 12:18). Therefore, exercise your free will and find yourself there with Him in His church. It is then that you find peace and approval from God and ultimately find approval from the one you have also been chasing approval from—you. It is only through God’s approval that we will find approval with ourselves.

The answer to all this is that the Lord sets us free, and He is the One who gives us our belonging and identity. The lost sheep did not find itself; the coin was lost and remained so until it was discovered by another; and the lost son, when trying to find himself by himself, found only emptiness until he returned to the father. We need Christ for everything, and apart from Him we will wither and fail to accomplish anything (John 15:4–5).

Those who abide in Him are no longer abiding in the expectations that are outside the Lord. It is then that maybe, just maybe, you can order a pizza with no cheese. Because in the end, what matters most is not what others think, but whether we are pleasing God.

DJ Curry (Minister—Camden Avenue Church of Christ)

God’s Love

In the modern English language dictionaries, there may be some possible definitions of love currently used in conversations and written materials of our present society. Most of those definitions have nothing to do with the biblical concept and definition of love and are condemned by God in both the Old and New Testaments. Many people today are confused and abuse or misuse the term love.

There are several people who believe that the God of the Old Testament was a God of hate, while the God of the New Testament is a God of love. In making that claim they deny the very nature of God and His people while preaching a doctrine of love and acceptance of all people and things without regard to clear statements and demands of the only true, never changing, God. The Bible teaches that all people are loved by God, but they are accepted into His presence only on His terms and not on mankind’s terms. The apostle John states that “love is of God” and that “God is love.” (1 John 4:7-8). The love that John mentions is something that has substance, not just feelings, and will cause and nourish actions and attitudes in those that accept and possess it.

The apostle Paul, in Romans 12:9-10 refers to the hearts of people changed by the love of God: “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor” (emp. added). The word love used to begin verse 9 is the noun form and is the force behind the verb or action form of love in:

- John 3:16 - God’s love for the world to give His Son,
- Romans 5:8 - the demonstration of God’s love while we were sinners, and
- John 17:26) - the Father’s love toward the Son and in turn, the love expected to be in us.

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AREA EVENTS UPCOMING

May 1 Gospel Sing Chapel Hill Church of Christ 234 Chapel Drive Gallipolis OH 45631, Starts at 7 pm

May 2 Ladies Day with Melanie Weekly Harrisville Church of Christ Ellenboro Town Building 100 School Street Ellenboro WV26346

May 2 Ladies Day with Amantha Cole, East Broad Street Church of Christ, 1125 East Broad Street Elyria OH 44035, 440-366-5929

May 2 Living with Loss Luncheon with Dean Miller, St. Clair Avenue Church of Christ 16150 St. Clair Ave. East Liverpool OH 43920 Questions- 330-853-6527

May 8-9 I Want My Child to Go to Heaven, Greg Tidwell, Alkire Road Church of Christ 2779 Alkire Rd. Grove City OH 43123

May 10-13 Gospel Meeting with Aaron Gallagher, Ceredo Church of Christ 264 4th Street East, Ceredo WV 25507

May 22-24 Young Adult Retreat, Fort Hill CYC 13500 Fort Hill Road Hillsboro, OH 45133, Questions- 614-779-3916 or imayes1999@gmail.com

May 29-31, Singing School with Andy Baker, Needmore church of Christ 2211 Needmore Rd. Dayton OH 45414

May 30-31, Dunbar Lectures, 309 15th St. Dunbar WV 25064, Various Speakers, 304-768-020

August 2-5, North Central Ohio Lectures, Strengthening the Church, Various Speakers, 5075 Toledo Rd. Lorain OH 44055

October 25-29, Victory Lectureship, West Virginia School of Preaching, 4th St. and Willard Ave. Moundsville WV, 26041

SUMMER CHRISTIAN YOUTH CAMPS**Fort Hill Christian Youth Camp**

Hillsboro Ohio
forthillcamp.org

Pennsylvania Christian Camp

Imler Pennsylvania
pachristancamp.net

Surprise Valley Christian Youth Camp

Beckley West Virginia
surprisevalleyyouthcamp.com

West Virginia Christian Youth Camp

Pennsboro West Virginia
wvcyc.com

HOUSE TO HOUSE

HTH is inviting every church of Christ in the country to mail *House to House/Heart to Heart* this July. This theme will be "Do We Have to Join a Denomination? —Why the First Century Church is Better." Reach homes in your community with a customized magazine for just 50 cents (which pays for customizing, printing, and mailing it for you). You pray and plan the follow up, and we take care of everything else. People are looking for truth. Let's help them find it. Please respond by May 25.

Call Matt Wallin toll-free at 1-877-338-3397 or email matt@housetohouse.com.

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what is often assumed. Christianity is active, not passive, and every interaction matters. The challenge is evident when life becomes difficult rather than when life is going well. Can I continue to trust God when times or health are uncertain? Can I maintain a Christ like disposition when someone has hurt or offended me? Can I set my mind on things that are pure and righteous as I consider the blessing from God? Unfortunately, our sincere desire to trust, to be kind and to be pure is often derailed as Satan tries to pull us away from what is true. This is why intentional thought, planning and commitment are necessary as we walk to Heaven, our eternal home. It is my prayer that we are strengthened as we walk faithfully in God, so that one day we may dwell together in the joys of Heaven.

Scott Judge (Minister— Elm Grove Church of Christ)

**Monthly Preachers Meeting in Athens, Ohio at
Blackburn Hills Church of Christ. Call Scott or Ron for
more information.**

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This expectation is also mentioned in John 14:21 where Jesus says: "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him." The identification of love is described by W. E. Vine this way: "Love can be known only from the actions it prompts. God's love is seen in the gift of His Son, (1 John 4:9-10). Obviously, this is not the love of complacency or affection; that is, it was not drawn out by any excellency in its objects (Romans 5:8). It was an exercise of the divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause save that which lies in the nature of God Himself." In other words, God loves because that is what He is and cannot or will not do otherwise. In the Old Testament, the love of God is shown in passages like: "Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His loving-kindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments" (Deut. 7:9).

In the New Testament the demonstration of love is, first of all, a committed and passionate, love of God. It is demonstrated by faithful obedience to the gospel commands, love and care for the brethren, and a love of all mankind with a commitment to work for the salvation of everyone. The opposite of love is shown in "self-will," the egotistical pleasing of the self, satisfying individual desires and ignoring God's desires. In the context of Colossians 2:20 to 3:14, Paul examines why Christians should be concerned with human things that are "in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men" (Col. 2:22). He concludes affirming God's requirement for His children: "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity" (Col. 3:12-14).

We each need to ask: "What is the object of our love? Is it the world's things, our things, or God's things?"

Paolo Di Luca (Minister- Bridge Street Church of Christ)