

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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Editor ~ Wade Stanley

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How to Help the Deceived

John Morris

Paul was on death row. The time of his departure was at hand (**2 Timothy 4:6**). The brethren he was leaving behind were under assault from false teaching. Hymenaeus and Philetus were overthrowing the faith of some with lies about the resurrection (**2 Timothy 2:18**), and others were promoting similarly profane ideas. And the damage to the body had only just begun. Paul prophesied, “*their message will spread like cancer*” (**2 Timothy 2:17**). Paul was on his way out, and the responsibility of contending with these teachers and their disciples would fall to others. Timothy would be such a one. And so Paul wrote one final letter to his true son in the faith, instructing him, point-by-point, how to engage with those who oppose the truth.

“*A servant of the Lord,*” Paul wrote, “*must not quarrel*” (**2 Timothy 2:24**) — that is, argue. The flesh may want to argue with those who assert lies, but arguments are the fancy of false teachers (**1 Timothy 6:3, 4**). Christians *discuss*. The difference between the two has to do, in part, with goals: Do I seek a (spiritual) victory for the *deceived* or a (carnal) victory for *me*? Discussions can be passionate and intense — a soul is on the line! — but they become arguments when anything other than love is the driving force. “*Love...does not seek its own*” (**1 Corinthians 13:4, 5**). If my goal is God’s glory and the other’s salvation, arguing will hold no appeal. I will “*earnestly contend*” (**Jude 3**), but I will not earnestly argue.

Seeking to turn a sinner from the error of his way will also require that I “*be kind*” (**2 Timothy 2:24**, NASB/ESV). In discussing doctrinal differences, there can be a temptation to yield to unkindness, to allow frustration to get the better of us. But in this case, as in all others, we must follow the Lord’s example. Jesus’ enemies were often malicious, and He *did* at times rebuke them, but always calmly and rationally. He was never hateful or unkind. He did not return “*evil for evil or reviling for reviling*” (**1 Peter 3:9**). He never responded to ridicule with ridicule. He was civil and self-controlled. “*Love...does not behave rudely*” (**1 Corinthians 13:5**). “*Love...is kind*” (**1 Corinthians 13:4**).

Helping someone who is deceived will require being “*able to*

teach” (**2 Timothy 2:24**). Lovers of truth *can be* and *are* convinced by effective teaching. “*Convince...,*” Paul told Timothy, “*with...teaching*” (**2 Timothy 4:2**). To be able to teach will require knowledge (**Romans 15:14**). A particular situation may not require *extensive* knowledge, but it will require *sufficient* knowledge to address the issues involved. And there’s no other way to gain that knowledge than hard work. People can be very helpful (perhaps even necessary, at times), but no one equipped to teach others has ever come to that place without diligent personal effort. Lost sleep is better than a lost soul.

The concerned Christian must be “*patient*” (**2 Timothy 2:24**). The Greek word Paul used here appears nowhere else in the New Testament. It speaks to a particular variety of patience: remaining “*patient when wronged*” (NASB), “*patiently enduring evil*” (ESV). Sometimes the person we’re trying to help may sin against us. He may speak harshly to or about us, or about the brethren. She may misrepresent what we believe. He may be haughty and dismissive. She may not keep an appointment —repeatedly—when you made special arrangements to be available. But we cannot allow ourselves to take umbrage at or become resentful because of such indiscretions. Firstly, we’ve been told to do otherwise. To do so may damage the relationship, our credibility, or sever the line of communication completely. No, it is better to “*accept wrong*” (**1 Corinthians 6:7**) in the hope that he/she may yet accept the truth.

Finally, efforts to correct must be made “*with gentleness*” (**2 Timothy 2:25**, NASB/ESV). This was Jesus’ approach. “*I am gentle*,” He said (**Matthew 11:29**). And Isaiah said of Him: “*A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench*” (**Isaiah 42:3; Matthew 12:20**). Jesus engaged with people who were on the brink of emotional and spiritual collapse, and yet He never pushed them over the edge. To a woman who had been through five husbands and was now shacking up with a man she wasn’t married to—and who knew better—He was gentle. Forthright, yes, but gentle. To a woman who had been willfully committing adultery, He was gentle. And who knows better than the Lord how to help a sinner? Who *wants* more than the Lord to help a sinner? Jesus’ way is the only way. “*A harsh word stirs up anger*” (**Proverbs 15:1**). Rough treatment of any kind, arrogance, impatience, unkindness, irritability, condescension — these only harden a

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sinner's heart and make repentance harder, less likely. "*Let your gentleness be known to all men*" (**Philippians 4:5**).

Refusing to argue, being kind, equipping oneself to ably teach, being patient (even when wronged), and exercising gentleness — these are the “secrets” to cooperating with the Divine work of granting repentance to the deceived (**2 Timothy 2:25**), “*so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will*” (**2 Timothy 2:25-26**).

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It Takes Preparation

Jay Graham

For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel (**Ezra 7:10**).

I was recently asked to present some thoughts before a congregation regarding my interaction with elders and elderships over the years. Toward the close of my lesson, a question was asked, “What advice would I give to a young man who thinks they may desire to become an elder one day?” I gave what I thought was a suitable answer. However, the very next day, I read the above passage, and I wished I would have thought of this verse as an answer in addition. Unfortunately, I thought of this verse a day late. In the future, if I am asked this question, I hope my answer might be more thorough.

Ezra’s preparation in the passage noted is indeed the perfect answer to a young man, or any Christian for that matter, who desires to serve others in the future. Becoming elders, as well as working toward a faithful eldership, does indeed require much preparation and, yes, forethought. It is interesting that this passage contains three things one must do in order to more easily and readily become a leader and worker in the Lord’s body, especially for those desiring to become elders, deacons, evangelists, and servants in general. What a great example for us all!

It is worth noting Ezra “prepared his heart” to do these three things. First, it takes preparation to become a leader in the body, usually quite a few decades, especially for that of elders. Elders do not become elders by accident. Faithful elderships do not become so by accident. To become a faithful and worthy

servant of any kind takes forethought from both perspectives. This principle applies to the one being considered as well as the one deciding whether he is qualified or not to be appointed leaders in the Lord’s churches.

Ezra prepared his heart to do three things. First, he prepared his heart to “*seek the Law of the Lord*.” How does one do this? We must prioritize the Law of the Lord in our own minds and hearts. We must reach a point where the Lord’s laws are appreciated and pursued. His laws must be discovered, applied, and loved. We must come to a point where the Lord’s laws can be seen in our lives. We must come to appreciate how the Lord’s Laws are to our betterment, both spiritually and physically. We must do this “before” we can teach them to others. We should “seek” or look for His laws to apply them to our lives.

Second, Ezra prepared himself to “*do*” the Lord’s law. Doing is about action. This must go beyond an academic perspective. Yes, we should certainly read and study the Lord and His ways, but we must go further by applying them and following them. Meditating on them is also part of this process. Making them part of our lives. And, again, it takes preparation to “do” them. It takes a desire to follow after what the Lord desires we follow after. This is part of bearing our cross as Jesus taught in **Matthew 16:24**, “*Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’*” James teaches us to be “*doers of the word and not hearers only*” in **1:22**. We must first be hearers of the word, and then we must be doers of the word.

Third, Ezra prepared his heart to teach the Lord’s “*statutes and ordinances to Israel*.” This also takes preparation, even much preparation to do it properly. From my perspective, one of the most important aspects of learning to teach takes time. Those who teach must take time out of their lives to learn and prepare lessons from the Lord’s Word. And, of course, the Lord’s Word is filled with these lessons or “nuggets” as they might be called, beginning in **Genesis 1:1** through **Revelation 22:21**. The apostle Paul instructed Timothy in **2 Timothy 2:2**, “*And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*” It is interesting to note Paul did not stop at committing the Lord’s teachings to faithful men, but Timothy was to teach other men that they also may teach others. It forms a continuing cycle that can be repeated until the Lord comes. The apostle Paul wrote in **Romans 15:14**, “*Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.*”

You might say these three things Ezra prepared his heart to do (to seek the Law of the Lord, do the Law of the Lord, and

teach the Law of the Lord) are a continual cycle that has the potential to continue when someone else endeavors to actively prepare their hearts to do these things. This cycle can continue in the lives of His people until Jesus returns on that Great Day. What great advice for a young person as they look forward to wanting to be a servant in the Lord's body for years to come. It does indeed take preparation!

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From Doug and Wade

This issue in Volume 65 concludes the twelfth year your publisher and editor have produced *The Gospel Message*. Your subscriptions, article contributions, and helpful suggestions have made this service a real joy.

Last year, your editor and publisher discussed the financial state of the paper during our stewardship. It is our wish and the wish of the previous editor and publisher, **Tom Woody**, that this paper break even. Neither your editor nor your publisher wants to benefit from this publication financially. Unfortunately, rising materials and postage costs this past year have left us with no better option than to increase the yearly subscription rate.

Beginning January 1, 2024, the print edition will increase to \$10 annually. If your subscription is due on or before December 31, 2023, you may renew at the \$7 rate.

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allow you to print the issue if you have a printer available. If you want a hard copy, please consider saving \$5 per year by subscribing to the digital edition and printing the issues for yourself and/or others.

Glory to God!

The **Martensdale, IA Church of Christ** was very glad to receive **Ethan and Megan Schreck** as members on October 15.

The **Vandalia, IA Church of Christ** rejoiced with the heavenly host when **Mindy Herick** was buried with Christ.

The **Martinstown, MO Church of Christ** warmly received **Jennifer Heidenwidth** as a member of the congregation.

The church that meets on **Dean Avenue, Des Moines, IA** rejoiced when **Jessica Higgins** was restored to the body on November 5.

Blessed Are the Dead

Charles Frederick Ross, 77, of Liberty, MO, passed away on October 17. Charles was born on March 6, 1946, to **Charles Clayton Ross and Marie (Hauber) Ross**. He was raised on the family farm in Worth County, MO, southeast of Allendale, MO.

He graduated from Worth County R-1 High School in Grant City, MO, in 1964, with interests in Vocational Agriculture, Mathematics, and football. Charles studied Electrical Engineering, Computer Science, Information Technology, and Technical Writing at the Missouri University of Science and Technology (formerly the University of Missouri - Rolla).

Charles began his professional career as a Computer Systems Programmer at Bendix Kansas City Division from 1968 to 1979. On March 30, 1969, he married Mary Diana Estes while both were members of the **Church of Christ in Claycomo, MO**. They moved membership to the **Excelsior Springs, MO Church of Christ** in 1972 and made their home on 80 acres in Ray County, MO, where all three children, Hugh, Lana, and Neal, were born.

In 1979, he resigned from Bendix to work as an Evangelist for the Church of Christ and moved to Joplin, MO, where he also had a day job at Cardinal Scale Mfg. in Webb City, MO, implementing microcomputer system software. In 1984,

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Charles returned to Bendix/Allied-Signal/Honeywell Federal Manufacturing and Technology, participating in project and system administration of large-scale engineering support, computer-aided design, and computer-aided manufacturing systems and networks until his retirement in 2005.

After retirement, he continued his work as an Evangelist by traveling to encourage congregations in Northwest Missouri, including **Gallatin, Old Scotland, and Worth**. He also made nine trips to the Philippines to teach and encourage brethren in the Apostle's doctrine, fellowship, and mutual edification.

Charles was preceded in death by his parents and his brother, Paul Franklin Ross. He is survived by his wife, **Mary Diana Ross**; son **Hugh Ross** of Denver, MO, daughter **Lana (Randy) Sullins** of Plattsburg, MO, son **Neal (Sara) Ross** of Kansas City, MO; one sister, two sisters-in-law, four grandchildren, and many nieces and nephews.

Special Meetings

The annual **Winter Youth Rally** hosted by the **Gregory Boulevard Church of Christ** and led by your publisher, **Doug Twaddell**, is scheduled for **December 26-28, 2023**.



Students from age 11 to junior in high school can enjoy three days of Bible study, fellowship, and spiritual activities. For more information, please scan the QR code with your phone or tablet's camera app.

The church in **Lone Jack, MO** will host a **Winter College Rally**

December 26-28, 2023 led by **Evangelists Tad Morris and Joshua Riggins**. Seniors in high school through college age are invited to participate in an all-day, intense Bible study.

Please scan the QR code to find more information on the church's website.

The church on **Murry Road, Lee's Summit, MO**, is hosting a

one-day Bible study for men on **Saturday, December 30** from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Elders from congregations in the greater Kansas City area will present lessons on topics relevant to men in the church. The congregation will provide lunch. More details can be found on the flyer accessible via the included QR code.

2023 Meetings

December 26-28.....Youth Rally, Gregory Blvd.

December 26-28.....College Rally, Lone Jack, MO

December 30.....Men's Bible Study, Murry Road

The Gospel Message

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