



## FRAGILE: HANDLE WITH CARE

Mark Lindley, Chapman, MS

You have likely seen a package with the label: “Fragile: Handle with Care.” If not handled carefully, the contents of a package bearing that label could be damaged or broken. When handling such a package, one cannot afford to be too rough.

The same could be said of some who are members of the church—they must be “handled” with extreme care, lest they get offended. Christians should always be kind and loving to one another: “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32). “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Romans 12:10). Sometimes, we may offend someone because we fail to show enough warmth and love for one another. We can always grow in Christian character, and we should always strive to become more like Jesus.

However, it seems there are some who are just too sensitive, and they *imagine* that others are unloving and insensitive. The problem with such church members is not that others are unloving or insensitive. The real problem is that they are ultra sensitive, and any little thing—real or imagined—will offend them. Some are easily offended if another church member does not speak to them. They might say, “He offended me because he isn’t very friendly.” They may not even consider that the one who did not speak might have been distracted, was having a bad day, or was sick and simply did not

feel well. Others might be offended because the preacher preaches a strong sermon, and they imagine that they know the preacher’s motive and that he was picking on them. The preacher, however, may have had a totally different reason for presenting the sermon. Yes, some people can come up with a thousand reasons they have been offended: “I was sick and only one person called to check on me”; “He said something hurtful to me twenty-five years ago”; “She looked at me the wrong way,” etc.

Nevertheless, God’s Word teaches us to grow up, mature in the faith, and to put away such childish attitudes: “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?” (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). Paul reminds us, “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Corinthians 13:11) One should never turn away from the Lord and His church just because he was “offended.” On the final Day of Judgment, the Lord will not accept—“I was offended”—as an excuse for unfaithfulness. Let’s resolve to not be so fragile!

**WOT**

## EDITORIAL

**HOW MUCH BETTER ARE YE THAN THE FOWLS?**

It is often the case that mankind is a worrisome creature. As part of God's marvelous creation, we are the only beings who fret and express anxiety and worry. We worry about our health. We worry about our finances. We worry about the weather. We worry about what the neighbor next door is going to do with his property. We worry about everything imaginable. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus deals with the subject of worry (Matt.6:25-24). As he is teaching his followers about the futility of undue anxiety, he turns our attention to the birds of the air and the grass of the field: "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?...Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Matthew 6:26, 28-29). The futility of worry is clearly spelled out in these words of our Savior.

**WORRY ACCOMPLISHES NOTHING GOOD**

Undue anxiety is unproductive. "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" (Matt.6:27). When did worrying about your finances ever put money in your bank account? When did fretting over the state of your health ever actually improve your physical, emotional, or mental well-being? Have you ever known of someone who was concerned about their height worrying themselves into growing a foot taller? Worry accomplishes nothing beneficial in our lives. As a matter of fact, worry can and often does accomplish only evil or harmful things. Much of the illness and sickness that we suffer in this life is brought about by stress and worry. When we realize that worry and anxiety are completely unproductive, perhaps we can then formulate a plan to deal with the stresses of life. Those things about which we so often worry fall into one of two categories: there are those things about which we can do something, and then

there are those things about which we can do nothing. Separate all of your anxieties and fears into these two classifications. Those things that rest within your ability to control should be acted upon. If something can be done to alleviate our worries, then why not act so that the worry may be diminished or eradicated? Most of those things about which we worry fall into the latter category. They are events that lie outside the realm of our ability or control. It is the height of foolishness to fret over those things that we can do nothing about! Yet, how many people worry about the crash of the stock market, or losing their lives to the violent actions of a terrorist, or so many other things that are not within our power? The Christian has a place to deposit these cares and anxieties: "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Pet.5:7). Turn those things over which you have no power over into the hands of Him who has power over all things!

**WORRY SHOWS A LACK OF TRUST IN GOD'S PROMISES**

Fretfulness in the life of a Christian is the product of a lack of conviction about the faithfulness and willingness of God to keep His promises. God knows our every need—"For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matt.6:32). He has promised to provide those things that we need if we are willing to put Him above all else. The promise of God still holds true: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt.6:33). First indicates priority. If God's righteousness and His kingdom are not the most important things in our lives, then we have much about which to be worried! But if we are willing to enthrone God in our hearts, and place no other before Him, then we have every assurance that He will take care of our needs! God's promises never fail, for He cannot and does not lie (Titus 1:2). Let us have the faith of Abraham, who believed the promise of God concerning Isaac, even when the

fulfillment of such was outside of the realm of human possibility: “And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform” (Rom.4:21). May we, like Paul, say, “For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (1 Tim.1:12). The hymn writer understood the futility of worry and the needless burden it brings when he wrote, “Oh what peace we often forfeit; oh what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.” We can have confidence in the promises of God. Such conviction will alleviate worry and anxiety which plagues the lives of so many.

### **WORRY BORROWS FROM AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE**

Today brings with it enough troubles and trials with which we must deal. Worry often causes us to reach into the future and attempt to bring its problems to bear on today. Listen to the words of our Savior: “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matt.6:34). Who in his right mind would want to add more problems to his life by seeking a loan from the problems of tomorrow? Yet, this is precisely what so many of us do when we worry. The sad reality is that we worry most often about things that will never happen! If we can learn to deal with and act upon those things that are within our control, and turn over to God those things we can do nothing about, then we will find it unnecessary to continually borrow from the bank of tomorrow’s troubles. The Christian understands that he must prepare for what lies ahead. We must make adequate provision for ourselves and our families for the future (Prov.6:6-11). We must be ready to stand before the Lord in the Judgment (2 Cor.5:10). These are deposits against the future, not withdrawals. While we must prepare for what lies ahead, we must also realize that we live one day at a time. We know not what the future holds (Prov.27:1), but we know Him who holds the future! We must render our best in service to the Lord today, while it is called today (Heb.3:13; John 9:4). We must put our all into the work of the Lord, fully trusting in God to bless and provide us with those things that we need. You

likely have heard or seen that illustration of today being a bank of blessings to use. Each day God deposits into our account 86,400 seconds that we can use in any way we see fit. At the end of the day, all unused time is lost, and the next day the process begins all over again. We must use the time that we have right now, for we have never been promised another day (James 4:13-14). Don’t borrow from tomorrow, and allow worry to rob you of the joy that could be yours right now!

We are the crowning jewel of God’s creation. As God surveyed all that He had made, He saw that it was good (Gen.1:25). Only after creating man did God say that it was very good (Gen.1:31). Knowing then that we are the apex of God’s created order, and knowing that God provides freely for His lesser creatures, we can have every confidence that God will care for us! For the faithful Christian, the promises of God are even more abundant. “Be not dismayed, whate’r betide, God will take care of you.”

***WOT***

#### **FREE BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE**

If you would like to study the Bible in the privacy of your own home and at your own pace, enroll in a free Bible correspondence course. All materials are free of charge, and you are under no obligation to continue the study. Brother Hap Johnson will be glad to get you started in study of God’s word today. Request your free study by writing to the church office at the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ, 1501 Sixth Avenue, Jasper, Alabama, 35501. You may also call us at (205) 384-6446. You may also visit us at [www.sixthavenuechurch.org](http://www.sixthavenuechurch.org), and under the “resources” tab, request your free Bible study course.

# REFLECTIONS ON SUNDAY NIGHT

*Neal Pollard, Denver, CO*

It's been an unofficial policy and unstated position throughout our dear brotherhood that worship on Sunday night is somehow optional or at least less formal. You dress different on Sunday morning. It feels different on Sunday morning. The auditorium certainly looks noticeably fuller on Sunday morning. Elders in most congregations made the decision that the saints should assemble Sunday morning and evening for worship. They are feeders of the flock (cf. Acts 20:28), and Sunday night is part of the feed schedule they have decided upon for the sheep. Inasmuch as sheep are to follow the direction and guidance of the shepherds (Heb. 13:7,17; 1 Pet. 5:1-5), they are given authority by Christ to set "the appointed times" which sheep should do their utmost to "make."

This, however, is not a strong-arm attempt or guilt-trip effort to get you to come on Sunday night services if you do not do so already. Close to twenty years' experience has taught me that such attempts and efforts are close to 100% futile! If people do not want to come on Sunday night, they will not come on Sunday night.

Yet, this past Sunday night's service has been on my mind several times since it occurred. I have thought about the young men (Devin and Joe) who read scripture and led prayer. These may be future elders and/or preachers, and we are seeing their first steps of leadership. It was inspiring! I have thought about the incredible song-leading to which we are treated every time Doug Jones is asked to lead. There is something about him wearing that wireless, saying those upbeat, appropriate, and tone-setting things, and being as talented as he is sincere so deeply impacts our collective ability as a church. People respond to that kind of enthusiasm and genuineness. Then, I have thought about the great work in which we have so great a part through our wonderful school. Randy Gordey's analogy about Rachel and Leah, challenging us to ask whether our love for God is like Jacob's for Rachel or that for Leah will stay with me for a long time. I needed it and appreciated it. I have thought about the praise-laden, heaven-centered prayer led by Wes Autrey. It brought tears to my eyes then, as it does

now if I let myself think about it.

Yes, I had worshipped yesterday morning. It was edifying, encouraging, and beneficial. Yet, last night's worship was maybe even a bigger boost to my faith, my growth, and my desire to serve Him.

Does being back on Sunday night require additional sacrifice, in terms of time and money? No doubt about it. Yet, the investment made does more than "pay you back." It yields a return to your soul that far outweighs what you put into it. The realist in me knows that I cannot change everybody's mind, but the greater part of me—the optimist—believes that some of you who are not now coming will come because you want everything the Lord has to offer and you want every opportunity to show your gratitude for what He has already offered! If you do not currently attend on Sunday nights, I hope you will do some reflecting, too. Be there for the awesome moments that happen, not only on Sunday mornings but also on Sunday nights!

**WOT**

## GIVE ME ZEAL

Mike Benson, Hattiesburg, MS

It was Saturday morning, January 11. The temperature outside was absolutely frigid. The Weather Channel had just announced that it was eleven degrees in our part of southwest Indiana, not including the wind chill. The bright sunshine filtering through the windows of my house gave a false impression of what it was actually like to be "in the elements."

My children and I were inside enjoying the warmth and peace of a quiet weekend. Then there was a knock at the door. I thought to myself, "Who in the world would be out in this kind of weather?!" As I opened the door, I noticed two elderly women standing at the front steps. Both were shivering from the piercing cold; both were carrying small satchels at their side. I quickly spied one of the satchels. I could make out the letters on the front cover of a small publication — "Awake!" The lady nearest to the door pulled the scarf away from her mouth, then spoke in cheerful tones, "Hello! We're with ..." Without thinking, I finished her sentence. "You're with the Jehovah's Witnesses." She smiled and said, "Yes." I tried to let her know kindly that I was not interested in her offer. They both then turned and headed for my neighbor's house.

The more I pondered that brief encounter, the more it struck me. "How many children of God would be willing to sacrifice their Saturday to go door-knocking? How many Christians would brave sub-zero temperatures to tell others about their faith in the risen Savior?" Those questions haunted me. They still do.

Brethren, I certainly don't endorse the error that members of the Watchtower Society espouse (2 John 9-11), but I can't help but admire their zeal (Romans 10:2). Their faith is not merely a cognitive thing, it is heartfelt and active. Folks don't give up their weekend and trudge around town in below-freezing weather trying to introduce their neighbors to their religious ideology unless they have some abiding conviction. The sad irony is that we have the good news (2 Kings 7:9), but often lack the passion which the Witnesses exhibit.

Someone once said, "If a man has a soul, and he has, and if that soul can be won or lost for eternity,

and it can, then the most important thing in the world is to bring a man to Jesus Christ." Amen! Saving souls ought to be our FIRST priority (Luke 19:10)! Period!

In his book, *Hearts on Fire*, Don Humphrey exposes our spiritual passivity. He notes:

"The average member of the church of Christ has heard 4,000 sermons, sung 20,000 songs, participated in 8,000 public prayers ... and converted zero sinners" [p. 3]. ... God never intended for Christianity to be church-building centered. The message from God in the New Testament is that He intends for us to go to the lost (Matthew 28:19,20; Acts 26:16-18; Romans 1:14,15; 2 Timothy 2:2). Instead, our usual evangelistic program involves having a nice building and nice services to which the lost can come. And if they don't come, they are not reached. If our church-building evangelism method could win America, it would already have done so" [p. 7]. ... Our problem is that we have become spiritually lethargic. We are like a car stuck in a snow-drift — the wheels are spinning and the motor is racing, but there is no forward motion. Congregations have full calendars with lots of programs and activities but no forward direction that will keep the main thing the main thing — growth. We have become indifferent. It doesn't really matter to us that we are not growing. People are lost, and we are evangelistically inactive. ... Perhaps the Devil learned a lesson [from first-century Christianity] ... Today he is not persecuting us; he is lulling us to sleep..." [pp. 12-13.]

Beloved, when was the last time you tried to teach someone? When was the last time you fervently prayed for the Lord to lead you to some lost soul that you could help teach? When was the last time you demonstrated the depth of your faith and told another about Jesus Christ (Philemon 6)?

Consider your priorities. Examine your heart.

Repent of your apathy and start knocking on the doors of someone's heart today. **WOT**

## THERE IS LIFE IN THE SEED

*Raymond Elliott, Prattville, AL*

In the Montgomery Advertiser, dated Friday, June 13, 2008, there was an article about a date palm that had been growing since the year 2005. While this alone would not have been noteworthy, the real story was to be found in the fact that it was growing from a seed that was estimated to be 2,000 years old! “The little tree was sprouted in 2005 from a seed recovered from Masada, where rebelling Jews committed suicide rather than surrender to Roman attackers. Radiocarbon dating of seed fragments clinging to its roots, as well as other seeds found with it that didn’t sprout, indicate they were about 2,000 years old – the oldest seed known to have been sprouted and grown.” Dr. Sarah Sallon said that “She hopes there’s a chance to use it to restore the extinct Judean date palm, once prized not only for its fruit but also for medicinal uses.” This is an amazing story worthy of our sincere consideration. Think about it. A seed preserved in that arid area of the world and planted 2,000 years later and the same results occur – a tree, a date palm began to grow. How can that be? Believers in the Genesis’ account of creation understand the natural law of propagation in the vegetative kingdom. Moses wrote in Genesis 1:11, 12: “Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind whose seed is in itself, on the earth”, and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good” (NKJV). God placed life in the seed in order that it might produce after its kind. Time does not affect this law of reproduction in the vegetative kingdom. Regardless how old the seed might be, if life is still present, the seed will germinate and produce after its kind if it is placed in a suitable environment favorable for growth. In this instance, it was a date palm.

In Luke 8:4-15, Jesus presented a parable regarding a sower who went out to sow seed and the four different soils where the seed fell. When the seed fell in the good ground it produced “some a hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty” (Matthew 13:8). In His interpretation of this parable the Lord stated that “The seed is the word of God” (V.11). The law of produc-

ing after its kind regarding a seed is also true concerning the word of God. When it is planted in a heart that is sincere and one of integrity, it will produce after its kind; that is to say, when the gospel of Jesus Christ is received in an honest heart and is believed and obeyed, it will produce a child of God, a Christian, nothing more and nothing less. Jesus said “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). The apostle Paul declared, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Romans 1:16). The writer of the book of Hebrews spoke of the power of the word of God when he wrote, “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). James in his epistle wrote that “the implanted word” is “able to save your souls” (1:21). In 1 Peter 1:22, 23 we read the following, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently: having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of god, which liveth and abideth” (ASV). The power to produce and in the matter pertaining to converting a heart to Christ is found in the seed (word of God) and not in the sower. The apostle Paul put it this way, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6, 7).

Another matter that is essential to our understanding of the power of the seed (word of God) to produce is this, it does not matter when the seed (word of God) is planted in the soil (heart of man), it will produce after its kind. As in the story regarding the date palm, the word of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, will produce Christians in this century as it did in the first century when it was first preached on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). As the Spirit enabled Peter, this apostle, along with the

other eleven preached the good news relative to the Christ who had been sent by the Father to die for the sins of mankind (John 3:16, 17; Romans 5:8; Hebrews 2:9). Peter's sermon dealt with the facts that Jesus Christ was crucified, rose from the dead and that He ascended to His Father (Acts 2:22-33). Many of the hearers were moved by this sermon and inquired of the apostles as to what they should do (Acts 2:36). They were instructed by Peter to "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (V. 38). About three thousands souls responded in a positive manner to these commands and were baptized that very day (V. 41). Luke records that the early disciples praised God and had favor with all the people. "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (V. 47).

When the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached in its purity and simplicity it will produce Christians today as it did two thousand years ago. There is no need to place a prefix or a suffix to the name Christian. This was the name that was divinely given by the Lord to the early disciples (Acts 11:26). Christians collectively comprise the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is neither a sect nor a denomination; rather, it is the body of Christ (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22, 23). When individuals believe the facts of the gospel and obey its commands, Jesus Christ saves them from their sins and adds them to His church. It is only when the word of God is mixed with the doctrines of men that the results are different from what the pure gospel (seed) will produce. And that is the main reason as to why there are thousands of denominational bodies today. If the pure gospel was preached and if the same seed was planted in the hearts of men today, there would only be Christians and one church. As children of God we should be busy sowing the seed (word of God) in the hearts of men and women so that they also could know the Savior and the joy of salvation. "Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, Bearing seed for sowing, Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, Bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalm 126:5, 6).

*WOT*

### **PLEASE SUBMIT CHANGE OF ADDRESS!**

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You may submit your change of address information by mailing that to us at 1501 Sixth Avenue, Jasper, AL 35501, or by emailing us at [sixthavenue@bellsouth.net](mailto:sixthavenue@bellsouth.net). If you have not been receiving the *Words of Truth*, you may go online to [www.sixthavenuechurch.org](http://www.sixthavenuechurch.org), and under the resources tab find the sign-up for our publication.

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## ASK A BIBLE QUESTION

**QUESTION:** Mr. Posey, I'm really hurting! Two weeks ago my preacher preached on Hebrews 6:6 and after his sermon, I left church feeling hopeless and discouraged. I'm not perfect; I'm a sinner, but he made me feel like I'm forever locked out of Heaven because of my sins. I'm thinking about just giving up on Christ. Can you help me?

**ANSWER:** Hebrews 6:6 does NOT teach that it is impossible for a fallen one ever to return. The key to understanding this are the two modifying participles, "crucifying again" and "put him to an open shame." Some conclude that the participles state the CAUSE of the action of the main verb. In other words, it is impossible – period – to renew fallen ones to repentance, because they have crucified Christ again and put him to an open shame. This must be rejected because the main verb is NOT causal, but TEMPORAL, i.e., a time frame in which the action of the main verb is true. This is true for two reasons. First, they are present participles, not past (*aorist*) participles. Present participles refer to action that is simultaneous with (rather than action that precedes) the main verb. It is clearer to connect the participles with the main verb using words such as "while" or "as long as." Thus it means that the impossibility is conditional, i.e., it is impossible to renew the fallen *as long as* they continue to crucify Christ to themselves again and put him to an open shame. Second, other scriptures support the possibility that the fallen may be restored. The clearest is Romans 11:20. It addresses the fate of those Jewish branches on the olive tree that were broken off because of their unbelief. However, if they will restore their own faith, God will restore them to his grace (Rom. 11:23). Cf. Luke 15:11-32; Acts 8:9-24. Don't give up on Christ; He hasn't given up on you!

—Mark N. Posey  
Decatur, AL

The words of *Truth*

Patrick Morrison, editor

### The Words of Truth

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### The Words of Truth

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ

1501 6th Avenue

Jasper, AL 35501

Phone: (205) 384-6446

Fax: (205) 302-0595

E-mail: [sixthavenue@bellsouth.net](mailto:sixthavenue@bellsouth.net)

[www.sixthavenuechurch.org](http://www.sixthavenuechurch.org)

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Jasper, AL 35501

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