

# THE EDIFIER

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**Leadership - the right thing at the right time.**

John and James were two of Jesus' disciples, brothers who were young with idealist aspirations, called to ministry with an awesome promised destiny of glory. Their questions often reflected an anticipation for Jesus to set up His Kingdom then, asking, "*Will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*" (Acts 1:6 ESV)

Rightly, their sense of destiny and promised leadership was given to them by the Lord. But how they understood their leadership journey differed greatly to what the Lord had intended.

Conspiring together, one day their mother approached Jesus, asking, “*Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.*” (Matthew 20:21)

Young and naively exuberant, their request soon upset the rest of the disciples who were indignant that these two brothers would ask for the “best seats”. This was also against the background of Jesus chiding the Pharisees for loving the best seats in the synagogues. Jesus also taught the same in a parable: *“When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honour, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him...”* (Luke 14:8 ESV)

John and James both had a sense of destiny, but in that instance, were trying to accelerate God's leadership intentions for them. The lesson for us, as children of God with awesome and great promises of glory reigning with Christ, we must never try to pre-empt God's purpose and plan.

An excellent example of living on God's timing was set by the young David who was anointed to be the next king in Israel. However, instead of being catapulted into the top seat, the throne of ancient Israel, David spent many years as a wrongly-accused fugitive, vigorously pursued by the incumbent king Saul.

In one of those pursuits where David's life was being sought, as chance would have it, Saul entered a cave not knowing that David and his men were hiding in the innermost parts of the cave. There, David had the opportune moment to end his troubles; his men in fact encouraged him to kill king Saul.

Despite being prompted by his loyal men, David said, *“I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed.”* (1 Samuel 24:10)

David waited on God's timing and purpose rather than his own understanding of events, and in a stunning act of faith, trusted the righteousness of God above his own rights. David did not try

*A magazine dedicated to uplifting and transforming peoples lives through the uncompromised word of God.*

to accelerate God's purpose for him.

Likewise, today, in our calling and ministry, we also have an awesome identity in our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. We too are offered glory, power, and life eternal. For the work we're called to do in this life, the Holy Spirit conveys to us not only just how special we are in our Father's eyes, but also often a clear and prevailing sense of destiny and purpose. But like David who trusted in God's timing, and as John and James quickly learned, we must never try to accelerate God's plan for us. Christian leaders always wait on God's timing.

**Written by John Klassek**



### Continued from page five

The writer of Hebrews shares a serious warning about how ongoing deliberate sin can destroy us. Take serious heed to it, but don't be scared or discouraged by it. The serious warning below is followed by great encouragement – but first the warning:

*For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,"says the Lord. And again, The Lord will judge His people."It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Hebrews 10:26-31*

Now for the encouragement:

*But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my*

*chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. Hebrews 10:32-34*

This is saying, always remember how God gave you strength to endure hard times in the past and how he helped you to joyfully accept loss. Why? Because you knew God had something better ahead for you. Just endure as verses 35-36 say:

*Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.*

Just endure - Jesus is coming.

Verse 38 brings one further sober warning to us – *Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.*

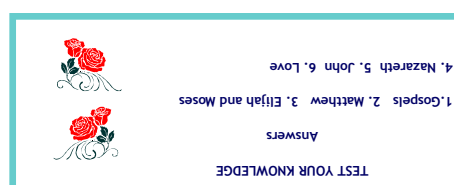
Finally though, the writer to the Hebrews expresses confidence in them saying, *But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul* (v.39). Is this the same for us? Are we too amongst those who do not draw back to destruction, but who truly believe in Jesus Christ who was slain at Calvary but is now a mighty King and Saviour seated at the right hand of God soon to come in glory.

Let's affirm that we will live by faith. We will not draw back. We will give up wilfully sinning so we can experience true revival. We will not cast away our confidence which has great reward. We will endure and receive the promise.

### Conclusion

If the Holy Spirit has spoken to you through this article about ongoing sin, just as Ezra knew what to do when Shechaniah stood up and told him it was his responsibility to deal with the problem – we too will know what has to be done, and we will respond appropriately. I am confident of that.

**Written by David Kidd**



## Shechaniah and Continuing Sin

One day at the newly restored and dedicated House of God, Shechaniah spoke up at a very large gathering of the people of God. It had been a very emotional meeting at the Temple. The hearts of the people were stirred. Ezra, the leader, had been weeping over the sins of the people of Israel and many men and women had been crying very bitterly. Shechaniah then stood up to say something that people then, and people now, would normally have considered to be unspeakably horrible.

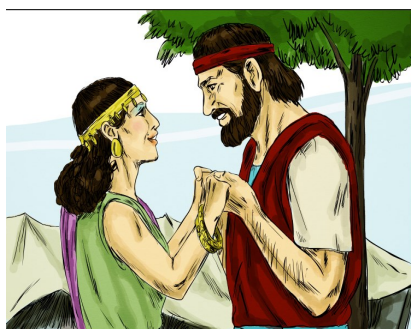
### Shechaniah's shocking word

Shechaniah said to Ezra:

*We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this. Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. Ezra 10:2-3*

Yes, Shechaniah was calling for the separation of families! In verse four he exhorts Ezra in the hearing of the people, *Arise, for this matter is your responsibility. We also are with you. Be of good courage, and do it.*

Leaders must sometimes do things that are hard, things they don't really want to do, things that are going to cause others heartache and pain. If we want to be leaders though, this just goes with the territory of being a leader. Ezra knew what he had to do and exactly why he had to do it. Well you may justly ask, "Why did he have to do it?" If you read Ezra chapter nine you will see that Ezra's people for centuries and centuries had disobeyed God's solemn command not to marry foreigners or to allow their children to do the same. Verse two talks about *mixing holy seed*. The people of God were only to marry the people of God. It's similar to Christians marrying non-Christians. A Christian doing this is inviting trouble into their lives, especially in relation to their walk with God. The people of God are wise to only marry the people of God.



From the time Israel entered the Promised Land they'd been led astray by their foreign wives into worshipping false gods, just as God had warned they would. They were also punished just as God had warned. The greatest punishment for this sin had only recently been poured out on them

in the century prior to Ezra. They spent many years as captives of Assyria and Babylon.

### True repentance brings revival

As we will see from the next passage though, Ezra realized that by God's grace His people had another chance, a chance of true revival, and Ezra realized only true repentance from sin would secure it. This is likewise true for the church today. This is also true for us as individuals. We will not have revival unless we are filled with true repentance. God will not bless us unless there's true repentance. We can't say sorry and then keep right on sinning. Ezra 9:4-10 recounts:

*Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel assembled to me, because of the transgression of those who had been carried away captive, and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice. At the evening sacrifice I arose from my fasting; and having torn my garment and my robe, I fell on my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God. And I said: "O my God, I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You, my God; for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens. Since the days of our fathers to this day we have been very guilty, and for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plunder, and to humiliation, as it is this day.*

**Continued on page five**

## Medical Update

While it seems the medical industry is becoming more knowledgeable in their discoveries, that is not necessarily true concerning the wisdom of their explanations or foundation. In an article dated 13<sup>th</sup> April 2018 in the Australian Financial Review, scientists have reportedly discovered the immune system's secret weapon. Such are the findings that it demands a total rethink about how the immune system works.

A group of immune cells once thought to be “useless at best and dangerous at worst, are actually the body's smart, secret weapon.” They were thought useless, because they appeared not to do anything, and dangerous because they could unexpectedly produce antibodies to attack the body's own tissues (auto-immune disease).

Although not spoken of, this discovery would seemingly render many medications predicated on an incorrect understanding of how the immune system works as “useless”.

This discovery is another reminder that *“the foolishness of God is wiser than men”* (1 Corinthians 1:25).

“When clever invaders, such as flu or HIV, come into the body they take on protective covering. Like wolves in sheep's clothing, they move around pretending to be part of the body”. However, these newly discovered powerful immune cells can detect these smart invaders and destroy them, something almost impossible for regular immune cells. Once activated the cells re-engineer their DNA to transform themselves into sophisticated killer cells, attacking only the disguised foreign invaders, hence giving the appearance that the body is attacking itself.



Previously, scientists did not think such a transformation possible. As in the last Edifier article on the appendix, it confirms once again that we were wondrously made (Psalm 139:14) *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus....”* (Ephesians 2:10).

For Christians trusting in God's truth and character, God imparts wisdom and the ability to *“use knowledge rightly whereas the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness”* (Proverbs 15:2).

Our foundation is creation. Man does not have redundant organs left over from being an evolving species. We were made fit for purpose, perfect and very good.

So while we don't always agree with scientists' conclusions and explanations, the research they do affords us the opportunity to glimpse the wonders and workings of God's creation with each new discovery confirming, not subtracting from, our faith.

*Article written by Richard Todd*



### Continued from page three

*And now for a little while grace has been shown from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage. For we were slaves. Yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken Your commandments.*

So Ezra confessed the sins of Israel and acknowledged the grace of God in leading them to a measure of revival, but he didn't stop there. He acknowledged that this continuing sin of mixing the holy seed with the people of other lands had to stop. It just had to stop! Ezra 9: 13-14 says:

*And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, since You our God have punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and have given us such deliverance as this, should we again break Your commandments, and join in marriage with the people committing these abominations? Would You not be angry with us until You had consumed us, so that there would be no remnant or survivor?*

Now it was at about this point, as Ezra and the people are weeping and praying, that Shechaniah challenged the people about their continuing sin. Many of them were still married to their pagan

wives and had children from them too. The practice was ongoing. So Shechaniah spoke up and Ezra knew what he had to do and he did it:

*Then Ezra arose, and made the leaders of the priests, the Levites, and all Israel swear an oath that they would do according to this word [separate from their foreign wives and children born from them]. So they swore an oath.*

The priests were guilty. The worship leaders were guilty. The rulers were guilty. People from all walks of life in Israel were guilty. After the reading of the long list of the guilty, verse 44 says, *All these had taken pagan wives, and some of them had wives by whom they had children.*

### Extreme measures

Even children had to suffer for the sins of their parents. Forsaking ongoing sin called for the drastic, horrible measure of breaking up families. The margin note of my Holman Experiencing God Study Bible (Broadman & Holman, Nashville Tennessee, p685) reads:

*The sin of marriage with the ungodly separated families and thus brought great distress. In the particular instance of national threat, drastic measures had to be taken to save God's people and their loyalty to Him. Does the current situation demand drastic measures for you and your church to please God?*

This statement rightly recognizes that this radical community measure of separating families was only taken because it was an extreme situation. Another margin

note in my Bible likewise rightly says that "Ezra's extreme example does not give you reason for easy divorce." In other words, we must be very careful in how we apply this story to our lives or our church because it was a very special or unique circumstance. It was a national measure. There wasn't just one family involved.

Nevertheless, what about our situation? Does the current situation in our lives demand extreme measures for us to please God? We need to consider this because we are also warned in the New Testament that sin, like leaven in bread, can spread rapidly and dangerously through the church if it is allowed to continue like the continuing sin of the Israelites with their pagan wives (1 Corinthians 5:6).

### Continuing sin in our lives

There's another margin note in my Bible about this story providing an important application:

*Revival comes when God's people face their sins honestly and openly. Does your church need to deal with a problem of sin as it seeks revival? Are there any continuing sins we are not facing openly and honestly as individuals?*

A long list of possible continuing sins could be supplied here, but if the Holy Spirit is speaking to us we will know what applies to us. These sins can hurt the church and frustrate our revival, growth and success in fulfilling our Great Commission. They can also hurt us individually. They can destroy us. Hebrews chapter 10 tells us they can.

**Continued on page two**



With so many differing beliefs today, it is more important than ever that we uphold the Bible as our sole authority in truth and practice.

In John 4:24 we are instructed to worship in spirit and in truth. "In spirit", engaging with the whole heart and "in truth", properly informed through the Word of God .



To those of you receiving the Bible Advocate, you will no doubt have read in the latest issue that mailing out the magazine to non-financially contributing foreign countries will be reduced due to increased postal charges.

As a financial supporter of the Bible Advocate they have assured us that mail outs to Australia will remain unaffected. Subscribers will continue to receive their free regular magazine instalments.

While many prefer to receive a paper copy, myself included, on-line versions are also available via their website. <https://cog7.org>

Should anyone wish to support the Bible Advocate distribution with a regular or one-off donation that would be much appreciated. <https://cog7.org/test-giving/>

# Youth Vibe



## Appearance

People all over the world spend millions of dollars to look good, believing that it will give them that physical attraction needed to impress others in a work and social situation. They undergo beauty treatments, plastic surgery and herbal treatments hoping to improve their outward appearance.

Many times we judge others by that outward appearance, which can be very deceiving. God does not look at the things which man looks at, but looks at the character of the heart.

### 1 Samuel 16:7

But the LORD said to Samuel, *"Do not look at his ..... or at his physical ....., because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the .....appearance, but the LORD looks at the ....."* NKJV

When Christ came, His physical appearance was not attractive.

### Isaiah 53:2

*He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no ..... or majesty to ..... us to him, nothing in his ..... that we should desire him.* NIV

Jesus' qualities of kindness, compassion, tenderness, and overwhelming love drew them to Him and not His outward appearance.

### Matthew 23:27-28

*"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like ..... tombs, which look ..... on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything ..... 28 In the same way, on the ..... you appear to people as ..... but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.* NIV

**Quote** "The outward appearance of righteousness, is worthless if it does not reflect accurately the inner character."



## TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

(1)

What is the common name given to the first four books of the New Testament?

.....

(2)

Which gospel records the fewest of the miracles performed by Jesus?

.....

(3)

Which two Old Testament characters appeared with Jesus at the transfiguration?

.....

(4)

Where did Jesus grow up after returning from Egypt?

.....

(5)

Which Gospel is most concerned with the mystery and identity of the person of Jesus?

.....

(6)

According to Paul's formulation in 1 Corinthians, which is the greatest of the imperishable qualities?

.....



## A Word of Encouragement

Deborah Ann Belker

**A word of encouragement,  
everyone needs to hear . . .  
words that will help dissolve  
away another person's fear.**

**Words that bring comfort,  
to hearts that are frayed  
words that will soothe  
the ones that are afraid.**

**Words that will mend,  
the effects of sin and pain  
words that will bring hope  
into someone's life again.**

**Words that are restoring,  
offering aid and relief  
words that help to repair  
another's faith and belief.**

**Words that are healing,  
oozing truth like a balm  
words that bring about  
an everlasting calm.**

**A word of encouragement,  
we all need to hear one  
so today won't you please . . .  
encourage just someone!**



*Sent in by Louisa Tedesco*

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