



## AUGUST 2021 NEWSLETTER

### LOVE THE BROTHERHOOD (PART 1)

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While the word "love" is usually used in Scripture to designate our relationship with God or our relationship with fellow believers as individuals, the Apostle Peter takes it a step further in his epistle by including the group he calls "the brotherhood."



The children of God constitute the brotherhood of believers we are commanded to love. The Apostle Peter writes, "*Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king*" (**1 Peter 2:17**). The first of these commands, showing respect to every person, is obviously inclusive; but to avoid any misunderstanding, Peter mentions the brotherhood separately.

Scripture makes it clear that the brotherhood makes up the Church, which is the body of Christ, according to Paul in **Ephesians 1:22-23**. The inseparable relationship between the Lord and His church depicts the universality of our great brotherhood: "*There is one body*" (**Ephesians 4:4**).

The great commission (**Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16**), issued by Jesus Christ Himself, is of world context; however, the brotherhood is organized into congregations. Even so, it is error to limit the love for the brotherhood to a local unit, race, color, area, state, region, country, or continent. Consequently, when the writer of Hebrews says, "*Let brotherly love continue*," (**Hebrews 13:1**), he includes all the saints the world over.

Entrance into Christ Jesus is automatic entrance also into the universal brotherhood. "*For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit*" (**1 Corinthians 12:13**; see also **Romans 6:3**).

When Paul was called Saul, he persecuted the church, a series of actions that constituted a persecution of Jesus, a fact made clear when Jesus met Saul on the Damascus Road: "*Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' And he said, 'Who are you, Lord?' Then the Lord said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads'*" (**Acts 9:4-5**). Anything against the brotherhood, then, is against Jesus.

So, we cannot scripturally say as a congregation, "We will do what we want to. We don't care what others think." Nor can an individual express this same attitude. Even if an action or an activity does not violate Scripture, we cannot do it if it is offensive to the point that it will lead others into sin (**1 Corinthians 8:9-13**). Rather, we show love and concern for our fellow Christians: "*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God*" (**1 John 4:7**).

It goes without saying that if what we do as individuals or as congregations violates Scripture, we are bound by our devotion to God's Word not to do it. Our discussion here is limited to acts that do not violate the Word—they are in the realm of liberty.

The way we love the brotherhood is really an indication of the love we have for God. If we truly love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, we will have a desire to do all things that please Him and nothing that will indicate a lack of respect for His Word. The psalmist a long time ago made a declaration about God's will that is a universal truth: "*My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips*" (**Psalm 89:34**).

Even the prophet Isaiah made a profound declaration about the universal truth of God's Word: "*So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it*" (**Psalm 55:11**).

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With these strong declarations about God's determination to carry out His Word, it is obvious that we should maintain an attitude of submission. Since God, through Peter, has declared that we are to "love the brotherhood," we dare not violate this principle.

### ABSALOM'S GRUDGE

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King David had many sons over the course of his life, but few were cherished as much as his third son. This son is introduced to readers in **2 Samuel 3:3**, with the name "Absalom," meaning "father of peace" or "peaceful." From the beginning, Absalom was destined for greatness as a charming and handsome man with the potential to be a valuable tool for God and His people, just as His father, David, was before him.



Despite a name that suggested a peaceful future and an appearance that exuded success, Absalom is instead remembered for his fall from glory and eventual death at the hand of his father's army. In the end, Absalom fled from battle, putting his faith in his trusty mule. As the two passed under a tree, Absalom's coveted hair became entangled in the low branches. The mule, in which he had put so much trust, ran out from under him, leaving him hanging helplessly (**2 Samuel 18:9**).

How did one so great as Absalom end up in such a tragic situation? His future was to become a faithful servant of God, like his father. What could cause the favorite son of David to fall so far and meet such a disgraceful end?

Many flaws kept Absalom from realizing his full potential, but the first one the Bible describes is his holding a grudge. A grudge is a persistent feeling of resentment resulting from a past insult or injury (Oxford Dictionary).

Absalom's grudge is fueled by his feeling a sense of injustice, the result of his perception that a punishment was not harsh enough. For two years, Absalom held a grudge against his brother Amnon who had forcibly assaulted their sister, Tamar. Absalom felt that Amnon deserved much harsher treatment than his father gave him.

When David seemingly forgave Amnon's sin, Absalom let his grudge overtake him and decided to take matters into his own hands, resulting in Amnon's assassination (**2 Samuel 13:21-29**). His grudge against Amnon (and years later against David) grew and led to increasingly sinful actions, like hatred, slander, vengeance, pride, rebellion, and hardheartedness.

Absalom rejected the path of forgiveness, recovery, and peace, and chose instead to follow a path of sin that ended in his death. If the great Absalom, the son of the man after God's own heart (**Acts 13:22**), could fall victim to his own desire for vengeance, so could any of God's followers today.

A grudge is powerful, able to alter the mind and destiny of anyone who allows it to harden his heart. It can tear apart a relationship between siblings, spouses, Christians, and even whole congregations.

The Bible equips Christians with methods for overcoming grudges and the desire for vengeance that accompanies them. Paul commands that Christians replace hatred, hardheartedness, and vengeance with forgiveness, love, and tenderheartedness.

*Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice, And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you (**Ephesians 4:31-32**).*

When Paul writes to the followers of Christ in Rome, he urges them to "live peaceably with all men" (**Romans 12:18**) and to allow God to have His vengeance at His appointed time. Jesus reminds His followers to hold a spirit of forgiveness at all times (**Luke 17:3-4**).

The ultimate example of forgiveness was shown in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Despite the fact that the sins of mankind drove the nails into the Perfect Lamb, God does not hold a grudge against His people today (**Ephesians 4:32; Matthew 6:14-15**).

As is demonstrated in Absalom's life, holding a grudge will only poison the heart and cause ruin. As servants of the Lord, we must not let a grudge keep us from our full potential. It is essential that we live peaceably with others and allow the Lord to carry out His judgments, for He has said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay" (**Hebrews 10:30; Deuteronomy 32:35**).



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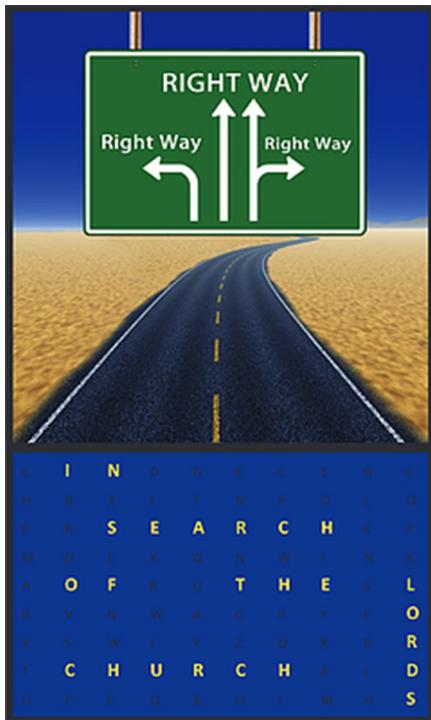
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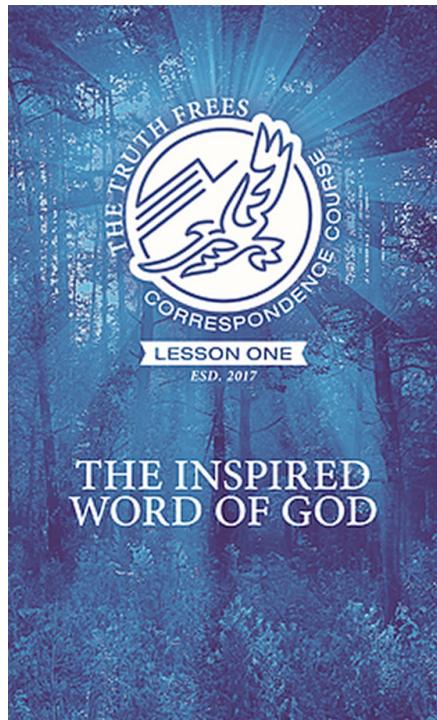
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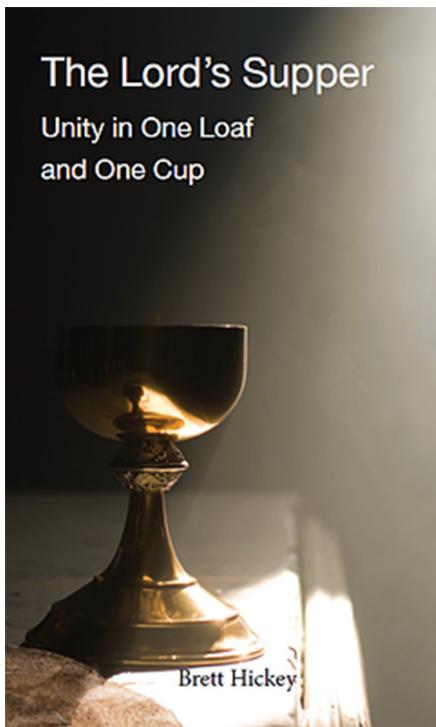


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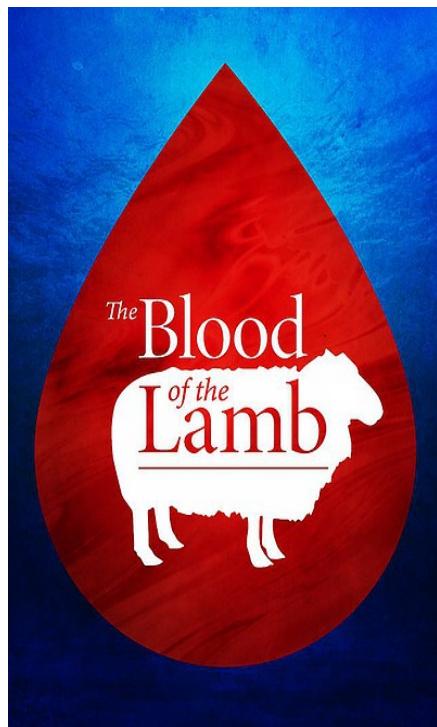


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