

"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 15:5-6

One in Christ. One in Love.

U1

The Unified

Spring 2012

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Practical Holiness

By Garrett Gonzalo

I suppose that you could say I am an analytical person, but regardless, the fact that I place my salvation in Jesus Christ dictates that I should constantly be examining myself. In examining myself recently, I asked myself the question; "what does it mean to be holy?" ...

(Continued on U7)

A Call to Unite

By Kayla Snyder

It's the last few minutes of the game and your coach calls a timeout. You've exhausted all your usual plays and your teammates are quickly running out of steam. You need to come up with something brilliant to win the game. Your team is down by 7 and the other team is prepared for the win. They're feeling confident and they've already begun celebrating their victory, but your team isn't ready to accept defeat. In a last ditch effort to bring morale up, the coach tells the team that they need to move and think as one in order to win the game. He runs the play by everyone on the team and the team rallies together at the 20, confident they can make a comeback for the win. You're the quarterback. You're feeling the pressure of what you're about to do. You're sweating before you've even begun the play. This could make or break it for your team.

"Down.... Set... Hike!!!" Quick teamwork from the defense gives you just enough time to throw a Hail Mary pass to the wide receiver and, low and behold, he's right where he needs to be—standing just outside the end zone. The offense worked together to clear the way for him to catch the pass. You throw the ball to make the pass and he leaps up to catch it, turns, and makes a break for the end zone, dodging only a few of the opposing team's players to reach it—making it look effortless. Your team is psyched for the touchdown, but they know the game's not over; you're still down by one. The other team has no idea what's about to happen. You don't want to just tie it up. You want the win. You begin setting up for the field goal. The holder is ready for the kick. The clock starts and the placekicker gears up to kick the ball, but at the last second he pulls back and the holder picks up the ball and throws to the wide receiver who makes a dash for the end zone, winning the game with only seconds to spare! In sports, teamwork is about working together to achieve a literal goal. However, in our walk with God we need to be able to work together to reach spiritual goals.

Teamwork is about utilizing the strengths of each team member and not getting upset if someone is a stronger player than you. As a team, it's about utilizing each member at their fullest potential. Just because you aren't the strongest in one aspect doesn't mean you aren't the strongest in another area. A team depends on each player to fulfill a specific role so that the team can move forward. So how can we apply this idea the way we approach church? I believe that it's about identifying what each other's strengths are, studying what the Bible says about how to interact with each other peacefully, and then implementing those strengths so that the church can be propelled forward in a direction of growth and unity as a team for God. The first step towards becoming a team in the church is identifying the strengths of the players on your team so that you can use them to glorify God. People in your church could be gifted with speaking, music, finances, or even organization. (continued on U3)

Unity: A Priority Among Believers



Above: Football game; Feast of Tabernacles Utica, IL
Photo by Kristen Girouard

Tact

By Stacy Beltz

What does it mean to be tactful Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines tact as "A keen sense of what to do or say in order to maintain good relations with others or avoid offense". In other words, tact is knowing what is appropriate to say, when it is appropriate to say it, how it is appropriate to say it, and who it is appropriate to say it to. That sounds like an awful lot of effort to put into just *saying* something! But because it does take a lot of work, it seems that people are falling away from the practice of being tactful. Some top reasons that people will use for not being tactful are, "I can say whatever I want as long as it's the truth" and "I'm just a very blunt person, I always call it how I see it". Is either of these reasons valid for one to not? Or full of tact, if you will. practice tactfulness? Let's consult the Authority...(Continued on U6)

Less Stress, Stop Flapping

By Corbin Rose

This year I plan to not get stressed out. How, you ask? By simply not flapping!

When I returned to school this fall, I sighed as I realized that I would be once again entering the stressful environment of deadlines, deadbeats and feeling dead tired. It's been the same routine with ever-increasing amounts of work—for 16 years now. Okay, here's my plan for less stress: When facing major stressors, I am resolved to remember that the Bible tells us:...

(Continued on U4)

The Two Way Street of Friendship



By Kristina Gardner

Knock, knock.

"Who's there?"

"It's me; I haven't been around very much."

"Oh, well we've moved on."

Knock, knock, "hello?" Knock, knock...

If you have ever felt like this, then you will understand where I'm coming from. If you have ever felt like just because you missed one event, or you fell out of the loop with your friends, then you will understand where I am coming from. If you have ever felt like you were left out of the block party or the neighborhood meeting on our street of Church of God friendship, then you will understand.

It's frustrating isn't it? You think that you have a very good group of friends and neighbors in belief, and you love them so much, but all of a sudden you miss a block party or a homeowners association meeting—the feast, a retreat, a barn party, Camp Outreach, or Lexington Winter Family Weekend; it seems like everyone is talking to each other, that everyone has inside jokes, and that no one is talking to you. It's frustrating.

When you are one of the few people in the world that live on our street—that believe what we believe, when you know there are not very many people your age across the country that keep the Sabbath, or the Feast, or don't celebrate Christmas. Or you know that you are one of the only people that knows what it's like to believe this and feel this way, like an outsider in the world of Christianity in America. All of a sudden, it's ripped away from you, and you start to retreat back into your little house on the end of our street, leaving the door unlocked hoping someone will come visit or invite you to the next block party. I'm sure you've felt it, sometime.

So why do we do this to each other, and to ourselves? The Bible so clearly says that if you knock the door will be opened, that if we ask we will receive. That we are all invited to the block party and we are all part of the homeowners association. What is the deal then? Are we not letting each other in or are we not knocking? Both are hard.

I know that I am guilty of not Facebook-ing someone or texting them if they miss an event, I think we all are. Are we inviting each other to all of the events that happen across the country? Are we trying to go visit each other? Are we making sure that we include *everyone*? I can't answer those questions for all of us, but I know at least for myself the answer is no.

But as my mom always tells me, this street that we all live on is not a one-way street, friendship is a two-way street. Are we chasing after those friendships? Do we text people, write on their wall, or send them a message when we miss an event. Do we go and knock on each other's doors, or venture out of our homes to see if anything is even happening on our street? Are we going around looking for the events that our friends are going to? Are we making sure we get ourselves included?

I also cannot answer these questions for everyone, but I know when I missed the Feast, I waited for everyone to send me a message, a text, or write on my wall, and when I never got one, I got frustrated, and decided not to talk to anyone until they talk to me, when that didn't happen, I blamed everyone but myself and started to close the outbox; went back in my house and waited. I started feeling isolated, alone in my beliefs, myself against the world; nothing seemed fair in friendship, and I definitely was not a fan of the homeowners association.

At some point I realized, this isn't what I should be doing, that this isn't what Jesus would want me to do, and that Jesus would not like the blame game at all. It seemed kind of selfish that I was not going down the two way street toward my friends, that I had retreated into my house at the end of the street and left the door unlocked waiting for everyone to come to my door to spread their good news, instead of spreading my own. I realized that having a sign up in my yard at the end of that proverbial street saying how much I loved my friends, and how much good news I had to share would go unread and unsaid unless I read and said it to people.

So, I challenge you (and myself) to go down to every house on our two way street, maybe even venture to some other streets and spread your good news, spread your happiness, and share our love for each other, because you will never know who needs it. I also challenge each of us to knock on every single door on that street and spread our good news and love for each other to everyone that hasn't been able to come out of their houses, and haven't realized that they took down the one way street sign.

How important are friendships and unity with other believers to you?

"Unity of spirit between the members is important for the church to function. Love and service bring Christian's together. Doing God's work together."
— Josh Edwards

"I absolutely think that unity is important in the church. Finding common ground with people who have the same basic belief in Jesus Christ is a major catalyst in doing amazing and powerful things in the name of God. Just one person can make a difference in the world, but imagine what many people united for a common goal can accomplish? Personally, I believe that unity in the church comes from looking past each other's differences and truly asking people to look at each other's strengths and learn how to use those strengths to propel the church forward in a direction of spiritual growth. Once people step outside their comfort zone of what they think is possible and start recognizing and using the strengths of each member in the group, the more the church will be able to grow as a fully functional unit and the ability to communicate the true wonder and power of God to people outside the church just becomes filled with limitless possibilities."
—Kayla Snyder

Unity: A Priority Among Believers

"I believe that unity in a church is key to the growth of the church. We are all called to come "together" , in ONE accord. There is a specific promise that where two or more are gathered together in one accord that the Holy Spirit is right there with them. That is more powerful than I think I even realize! If the Holy Spirit is in our church than what could possibly separate us from God? How to become united... I think it can start outside of the church- one on one time, prayer circles, singing praises, bible studies, etc. I think this closeness, outside of when we assemble together on the Sabbath, helps create the peace and love that we can share together on the Sabbath day. It then becomes more of a full day of spirit-filled worship and praise and learning, together, rather than a "lets catch up" day that we will already be having during the week."

-Heather Pereault

"Unity does not mean believing exactly the same as everyone else. It does not mean keeping the same calendar as every other Holy Day believer. Unity is comprised of patience and love. Now, being united doesn't have to mean going to church together or worshipping together or the same way. Getting Sabbatarians, Pentecostals, and Catholics together for a church service simply isn't very feasible. But we are all correct in some things and wrong in others -- some denominations are closer to the truth, but do we ourselves have it all right? We'd be naïve to even suggest the thought. I believe the church to be all believers in Christ; some are simply more deceived than others. But is unity important? Is it something to strive for? Philippians 2:1-11 clearly explains that it is. It doesn't mean that it is easy, but nowhere does it say that it would be."

-David DiFranco



A Call to Unite

By Kayla Snyder

(continued from FRONT PAGE)

Romans 12:16 says, "We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully." According to this scripture, it is important that we not stifle one another's spiritual gifts. We know from the parable of the talents in the book of Matthew that God does not like when our talents are hidden. If God has given you a gift, you are to use it to glorify God. It's why God gave it to you! However, it is important to recognize when someone else might be stronger in a certain gift and realize that sometimes it is best to let someone who is stronger in that area lead the way so that the group as a whole can benefit. It is this area of being a team that can become difficult at times as our human nature wants to be recognized for selfish reasons. We can sometimes be unwilling to compromise for the betterment of the team and that's when it's crucial to understand what God says about dealing with each other.

God is a God of peace. He is not a God who enjoys turmoil in His family and He wants us to be able to solve our disagreements in an orderly and peaceful way. James 1:19 says, "My dear brothers and sisters, be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to get angry." It's important, especially in our church family, to be able to be vulnerable with each other and be able to put our walls of defense down. This involves teamwork on many levels as it takes a great deal of understanding and kindness from both sides to resolve issues among one another, especially if we feel as though we may have been wronged by someone. Making a conscious effort to know God and develop a relationship with him can really help us in learning how to handle others in love. 2 Peter 1:5-8 says, "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." It's important that we grow together as a single body in Christ and that we strive to meet others at their level and bring them up to a mature understanding of our Lord and Savior. Coming into a relationship with God requires putting our own wants and needs aside and striving to meet God's wants and needs. You can be more successful as a team than you can as an individual and working together with a team can help you reach a level of success that would be unattainable as one person. Teamwork divides the task and multiplies the success! That is why it is so important to use each player in a way that strengthens the team as a whole.

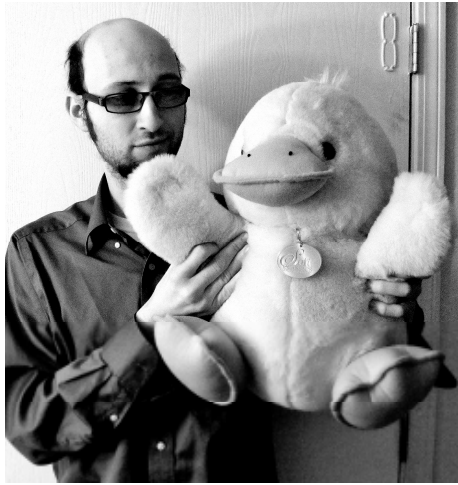
Deciding on how to implement the strengths of the people in your church can be difficult, but it can also be incredibly rewarding as it will bring a level of growth to your church that you could never have dreamed of. For example, maybe you have someone who is extremely good at drawing or painting in your church. A sketch or a painting is an incredibly moving way of drawing people in and keeping their attention. They say that "a picture is worth a thousand words." Someone who is talented in this area can be a huge asset in the church. Maybe you use their artwork on posters or flyers for an event or you use them to create a visual aid for something that you plan on speaking about. This is just one example of how you can take a talent that that someone has in your church and implement it for the glory of God and for the betterment of the church! If someone is a powerful speaker, allow them to take on studies or messages in the place of someone who may not be as powerful. If someone is talented with music, allow them to have a little freedom over that area so that they can help move and grow the church in that way as well. It's also important to help others develop *their* talents. Someone who is strong in one area now may be able to help someone who has the same strength develop it so that it can be maximized later. Matthew 5:14-16 says, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." No one who has been given a gift of God should hide their gift from the world. God gave it to you so that you could glorify Him through it! Being aware of this fact alone can help us to become a more unified body in Christ.

Philippians 2:2 says, "Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind." Being unified is what we are called to be. It is crucial for us to be unified as one body in order to fulfill God's plan for us. The Bible says we were called as one body. If we were called as one body, we need to start learning how to move and think as one body so that we can be as strong as possible in our mission to grow the church. Ephesians 4:11-13 says, "Christ chose some of us to be apostles, prophets, missionaries, pastors, and teachers, so that his people would learn to serve and his body would grow strong. This will continue until we are united by our faith and by our understanding of the Son of God. Then we will be mature, just as Christ is, and we will be completely like him." Being united as one in the church has nothing to do with personal gain and everything to do with glorifying God in the fullest capacity. Once people start recognizing and using the strengths of each member in the group, the church will be able to grow as a fully functional unit and the ability to communicate the true wonder and power of God to people outside the church just becomes filled with limitless possibilities. We were called to unite, so let's answer the call.

STRESSED!!!

Less Stress, Stop Flapping

By Corbin Rose



(Continued from FRONT page)

"He [God] gives strength to those who grow tired and increases the strength of those who are weak... the strength of those who wait with hope in the Lord will be renewed. They will soar on wings like eagles" (Isaiah 40:29, 31; God's Word Translation, emphasis added).

When we trust in and wait on the Lord, we can know that He will take care of all our needs.

God through the eloquent Isaiah tells us that we will then rise up and soar like eagles. Why is this particular analogy used? Consider that birds fly in one of three ways: constantly flapping, gliding or soaring.

Flapping- Many smaller birds travel in this fashion. Though hummingbirds do this seemingly gracefully, flapping is usually a lot of work that doesn't get them that far. Since the bird constantly has to work, it tires more easily and can only fly relatively short distances.

Gliding- Medium-sized birds like pheasants or grouse can work at flapping until they get high enough to glide for a while—gracefully drifting downward for brief periods. Eventually, unless they start flapping again, they would glide straight into the ground. This is better than always flapping, but is there something even better?

Soaring- A few birds, like the eagle, are able to truly soar. This is because the eagle's wings are large and powerful enough to catch the vertical columns of air (called thermals) shooting straight up from the earth in some places. Eagles can boost themselves up very high, floating from air column to air column without flapping much at all. These birds essentially glide downward on a constantly rising current of air.

This applies to our lives as well. When I stress out, I feel like a bird flapping with all my might, but not really getting anywhere. How we live life and how we trust in God for our daily needs and wants is analogous to how these birds fly!

Flap- Often we just flap and flap in life at school, home or work, trying to get ourselves in flight. Sometimes we do get airborne, but we exhaust ourselves from the stress.

Glide- We can work toward our moments of grace and epiphanies, but if we get too comfortable with our own accomplishments, we will plummet into the ground thinking we've got plenty of air left through which to glide.

Soar- This is the ideal! When we soar, we don't have to worry about flapping or fear the lack of space to glide—we just comfortably float above our trials and fears, trusting God to keep the wind under our wings!

By waiting with hope on God to help us, we soar like eagles with renewed and increased strength physically, emotionally and especially spiritually. All of that translates into less negative stress in our lives. Imagine that, less "flapping" means less stress!

What does the WORD say about the stress in our lives?

"Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7)

"This scripture is a scripture of peace. After reading it, my perspective on the "short term, hardships" changed immediately. I tend to stress and worry about money (like many do), and exams, work, pain, etc, but this verse reminds me not to worry - instead pray to the One who can grant peace, understanding, and love. The verse is so simple and beautiful. All I need to do is remember it, at all times. God is so good." -Heather Pereault

"That scripture encourages me to remember what I too often forget - that God is planning for our best life - not a dull life. He wants our countenance to be bright and wants us to pray. He doesn't consider it a drag to hear from us. He'd like us to walk through life cheerfully in a relationship with Him." - Josh Edwards

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

"I would say what that scripture means to me.. is that in my busy life, if I trust God, and make Him my #1 priority,(through prayer, scripture reading, etc..) He'll help me work out the details, and "make my paths straight". - Andrew Lindholm

Media Moment

Book Review:

***The Search for Significance* by Robert McGee**

By Martha Rohrbaugh

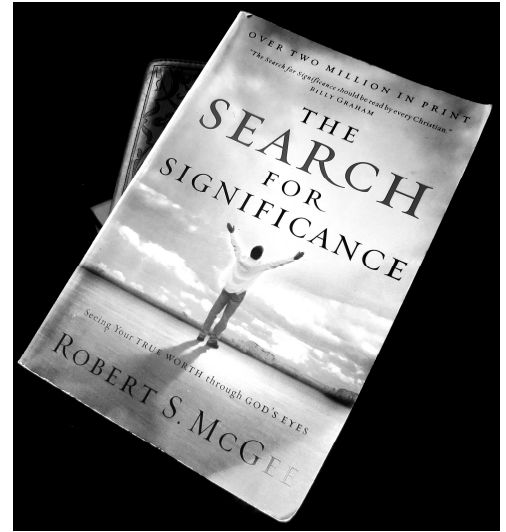
A group of young woman within our church family have been joining together to read and discuss on line, *The Search for Significance*. The book is biblically based and in fact uses Christ's message as the foundation for our significance.

Robert McGee shows us first, Satan's lies that we often believe about ourselves. These false beliefs are:

1. **The Performance Trap** - I must meet certain standards to feel good about myself. With this we have the fear of failure that drives us. We tend to judge both ourselves and others in this way.
2. **Approval Addiction** - I must have the approval of certain others to feel good about myself. Fear of rejections pushes us in this direction.
3. **The Blame Game** - Those who fail (including myself) are unworthy of love and deserve to be punished. We have trouble accepting our downfalls and mistakes because feelings of guilt are feared.
4. **Shame** - I am what I am. I cannot change. I am hopeless. We give up trying and distance ourselves, judging ourselves unworthy and without hope.

For most of us one or more of the above *false beliefs* drives us in our quest for significance. We have a deep soul need to feel significant. This book takes you through scripture to find where your significance is found. It includes a workbook to help you work through your own thought processes. Its one thing to "know" something is true but it is quite different to actually internalize it and make it useful in your life.

Finally, McGee shows us how Christ's death (Justification) and resurrection, cleansing us so we can be at one with the Father, is the basis for our significance. We are significant because God says so. He cherishes us and works with us. He sent His own Son to die for us so we would not have to be punished. Let's make a commitment to turn a deaf ear to Satan's lies and instead internalize scripture which will affirm in us our significance in this great universe!



Have you read any books lately that have improved your spiritual life?

"Crazy love by Francis Chan has given me a closer look into God's heart for the needy."
-Josh Edwards

"So, honestly, I've been in the middle of a few books recently, but one that I picked up last Sabbath has been pretty good so far and I am only in the first chapter. Kait let me borrow it, and she is borrowing it from another friend, so it's making the rounds. anyway, it's called "the barbarian way" by Erwin McManus, and it's about worshiping God with the powerful and raw energy and spirit of a barbarian; that is so say -- fighting for the heart of the King! If you read the book, you'll find out more about what I mean."

- Marissa White

Speak up!

The Unified is a collaboration of young adults in Sabbath keeping churches.

Please feel free to send anything that you feel would be inspirational or encouraging! If you have a story of service, personal experience, something you are doing, a question, thoughts, poems, stories, pictures, *anything*!

Please send them to xukcorllix@gmail.com or facebook message JoAnna Gonzalo or send them to 6571 Meadowlark Ln, Ypsilanti MI 48197.

Tact

Tact

By Stacy Beltz

(Continued from FRONT page)...

The Bible has a lot to say about how we use our words. Our words and how we use them are very important to God. This is evident in Matthew 12:36-37: "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give



account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

What we say is serious business! Since God takes *everything* that we say into account, it would be wise to put great effort into being tactful and watching carefully the words that we speak.

But what if what we're speaking is the truth? Does God really care how we say it? God is all for speaking the truth, so should it really matter what form it comes in? Let's look at the example of Paul and the approach that he

that he took in order to spread the gospel to all. I Corinthians 9:19-23: "For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings." Paul understood that in order for the Word to reach certain groups of people, he had to become like them. He had to speak in such a way that he would be able to win them over to the truth. This definitely took a lot of effort on Paul's part to, not only understand the audience he was addressing, but to say things in such a way as to win them over to God! Paul understood the importance of tact, even in speaking the truth.

Being a blunt person is often another reason given for not utilizing tact. Some people are more naturally inclined to say whatever is on their mind, to whomever, in whatever the situation. It's easy to just say whatever we want, but we must be careful to know our own reasons behind what we are about to say. Is it out of selfishness that we are speaking, because we feel we have the right to say whatever we want? Do we have some emotion driving how we are about to say something, such as anger or annoyance? Or is what we're about to say and how we're about to say it truly to the benefit of those you are about to speak to? We have to be careful to know what is *truly* our motivation for saying what we are about to say. Ephesians 4:29 puts how we should speak to others into perspective: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." We need to be mindful that what we are saying and how we are saying it is to the benefit of *others* and not to ourselves.

Tactfulness, however, doesn't mean that we have to necessarily "sugar coat" what we are about to say. Sometimes it *is* to the benefit of others that we say something in a more direct manner. For example, Matthew 16:23 says, "Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." On the surface, this seems like a harsh reaction. But, at the time, it was what Peter needed to hear and how he needed to hear it. Jesus did not say it to be unkind and he didn't have a selfish motive behind what He said. It was to the benefit of Peter, and to all of us, to warn him in this way that putting his human will before the high will of God was akin to acting on Satan's behalf.

It obviously takes a lot of wisdom, practice, and listening to the Holy Spirit in order to accomplish true tactfulness. However, if we work towards it as a goal there will be so much good that comes out of it along the way. It will help us to win hearts over to God as Paul did. We will be better able to avoid rifts between brethren and lift each other up. Above all though, we will be able to stand before God on that Day and say that we were not careless about how we used our words, but were mindful of our obligation to Him and to each other.

But don't just take my word for it. Look up and study the scriptures that address how we use our words and decide for yourself if being tactful is really necessary. Here are a few more scriptures on the topic that I didn't reference elsewhere: Colossians 4:6, Proverbs 15:1, Proverbs 25:11, I Thess. 5:14, Proverbs 10:19. There are even more than this but it's a place to start. Happy studying!

"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

-Romans 12:18

We are supposed to avoid offending others whenever possible. How are you going to do that without being tactful?"

- David Difranco

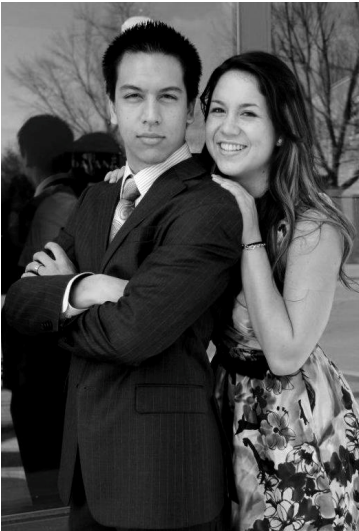
Standing firm even when it's hard:

"I've made decisions to respect people, hold my tongue, and use self control - all when my first reaction was to do otherwise."

- Josh Edwards

Holiness

The relationship between God and you



Practical Holiness

By Garrett Gonzalo

(Continued from FRONT page...)

The first passage of scripture that comes to mind is in Leviticus 19:1-2:

“And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.”

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary definition of holy is “exalted or worthy of complete devotion as one perfect in goodness and righteousness.” Although we will not achieve perfection of our own doing – we cannot be holy and blameless without Christ’s sacrifice – we are exhorted in Matthew 5:48 to strive for perfection:

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

What does this mean for us as Christ-followers? I believe that we should be clearly different than a person that does not follow Christ. Since we are followers of Christ, there should be specific qualities that separate us from other people – Christ-like qualities. I don’t just mean that we are “different” by keeping different holy days than the rest of the world, but I mean that the character of Christ should be evident in how we speak, what we allow our eyes to see, the way that we treat other people and the way that we live our lives. If God commands us to be holy, then are we being holy with the music we listen to, the shows that we watch and the words that we speak? Are we easily forgiving and slow to become angry? All of these attributes are outward signs of our inward commitment to being Christ-followers. If I am truly a follower of Christ, then my character will reflect Christ’s own character.

I have asked myself all of these questions. I want to be a true follower and true example of Christ – so that His name might be given glory and honor and praise. I encourage you all – as His children – to do the same. It is a struggle to be holy in a society that is completely against the ways of God, but it is eternally worthwhile to choose the way of Christ, as opposed to the ways of the world. I will leave you with a passage from Philippians 4:8, which truly encompasses what it means to be holy:

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” -Philippians 4:8

What does being **HOLY** mean to you?

“It means that I am different. Standing out and shining out of the darkness. I practice this by reminding myself of my faith in God and living my life through that lens.”

-Josh Edwards

“To me, striving to be holy is my daily walk with God. I constantly try to fill my mind with things that are pleasing to Him and worthy of my time, for it all starts with our minds even before our actions or words are ever present. I also try to be in conversation with God as much as I can throughout the day. When I’m more focused on Him and His presence in the little things, I’m allowing HIS holiness to pour out of me.”

-Carrie Wiesman