

Bridge Four

Mom Sounded not Encouraging

I called her house, her mom answered. Her mom said she wasn't home. I ask her if she thought her daughter be interested in going snow skiing? When we hung up, I worried it was a bad idea, being she had hurt her knee when she was sixteen and the way her mom sounded. I figured for us to meet would have to be more serious. Hopefully to talk things out. Discourage me from calling back. Today, I wonder if I had mention I had a job as a ski lift operator.

One evening, my brother's girlfriend was in my mom's bedroom, laying alone on the bed. She was very distraught, sobbing and seemingly drunk. I sense she was trying to entice me into the bed with her. I remember thinking how I couldn't do that to my brother. I didn't want any strife like that between us. Besides all my other thoughts on marriage, and especially in proverbs warning of such a situation. I left her. Thinking she was in great despair and the alcohol made her very weak. Will be best for her to sleep it off.

On Christmas day my brother brought his new girlfriend over to meet the family. I thought she was very lovely, beautiful, and seemingly more sweeter, for him unusual. His last two girlfriends, I thought were more troubled. It was nice seeing him with someone so lovely and pleasant. Perhaps would actually mellow, humble him some. Still concern he is likely already married due to having sexual intercourse. The family was sitting in the living room, I looked at her more carefully. I recognized her. I remember some years ago, I had broken up the first time with the girl from the skating rinks. I and a friend of mine at night picked her up and drove her around some. Particularly to a house in Bethlehem park, the small house subdivision across from the steel plant. She had to go inside a house for a moment. Then she had to leave us. She forgot her white hat in my vehicle. I thought at the time she was a very lovely woman. Wondered if I would ever meet her again someday. Sitting across from me in the living room, I said to her, I know you. I told her when me and her once drove around some. She remembered me and at some moment we talked about religion. She had some religious experience with a church in the countryside. She was charismatic. I wasn't charismatic. It was still interesting talking to her about experiences and the difference between the church I went to and hers. Another day me and her drove out to her church in the countryside, and talk about the bible. She said, her church was against Christmas trees, because of a verse in the old testament. When she showed me the verse, I read it and realized that her church misunderstood the verse. Her church wrongly thinking it was speaking of specifically Christmas trees. This due to the how the old testament had described the practice of idol worship in a broader, less defined way. Taking trees, covering them in gold. Which seemingly sounded like Christmas trees. Instead was short for the practice of taken wood, carving an idol and overlaying it with gold, bowing down before them as Gods. The verse was mistakenly understood. Even so, for other reasons in the bible, I saw Christmas as just another day, same as Easter. Without any biblical support to be distinguish as special holy days. For many, these religious days are stumbling blocks, holding them up as their supreme duty toward God. A mere outward appearance of Godliness. A False humility. Neglecting their duty to the real biblical matters Jesus and his apostles commanded. At some moment, I told her what I thought about marriage begins with one flesh (sexual intercourse) according to the bible. She said she had sex with her old boyfriend, or perhaps he was her X husband. I can't remember the specifics as well. I asked if he was virgin. She told me, from what she knew he was a virgin. After she told me this, I encouraged her to find out for sure. Told her, if he was a virgin as she was at the time, he would be her husband for a lifetime according to the bible. She needs to return to him.

We drove to the church, I attended and parked. She started to talk about her feminine private area, in relation to the menstrual cycle. I figured she was perhaps trying to seduce me. I really don't know, but that's what I sense, or perhaps she was even testing me if I was sincere about religion. My views of when is a marriage in God's sight. Or perhaps she just felt so at ease with me, she figured she could talk about anything. Perhaps it was all the above, or just the latter. I just took her back home and drop her off in front of her house. It was a very pleasant speaking to a beautiful lovely woman. This was the last time I seen

her. This also reminds when the wife that looked like a movie actress, that I baptized. In later years, I was kicked out of the house by my parents, I visited her apartment. She also talked about her private area. She told me when she was very young before she became one flesh with her boyfriend. Who became her husband. I again just left her be, not wanting to know such private things.

Sometime later in the kitchen, my brother and mom were present. My brother said to my mom, that I must of had sex with his girlfriend. I don't recall what I said. I can remember was thinking how that wasn't true. That he didn't realized the spiritual religious side of things. How people could have lots to talk about when they are both religious and don't despise the bible.

In 1987 I sat outside the front of my parent's house, under the large ash tree with my brother. My brother was going to sell his older semi truck and buy a newer semi truck. Worried for his eternal life, I remembered Christ parable about the rich man who had a barn and he built another barn and filled it up, but then his life was called. He had nothing to show for his life to God. I told my brother, if he was to die in three months, what would he gain?

Luke 12:13 And one out of the multitude said unto him, Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me. 14 But he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? 15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. 16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: 17 and he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits? 18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry. 20 But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be? 21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Remembering the words of Jesus in the bible.

Luke 16:13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (money). 14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. 15 And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

I said to my brother he would not be forgiven of his sins; he needed to repent and be baptized (water immersed) for his sins to be forgiven. I said to him our parents didn't love us. That they loved their wealth and work more than us.

He said, he had to work so much when he was younger and he couldn't do many things he wanted to do, such as play basket ball on the school team. I told him it was wrong of him molesting me when younger. He said we were experimenting. I said it was wrong. Instantaneously he attacked me, pushed me backwards, then falling on the ground, him on top of me. When he began hitting me, I covered my face with my arms. I didn't struggle to push him off or hit back. Sensing I was as strong or stronger than him now, I could of, but didn't. He then started to say he was going to kill me. That's when I yelled out to my parents, who were inside the house. They came outside and took him off of me. I remembered the next day, Mrs. Fenny, called my mom and gave her my wallet she found on her lawn. Near the end of the narrow sidewalk beside the front steps of her house. Thinking the wallet must of fallen out of my pocket somehow. When my brother was on top of me, partially on her lawn. Recalling today also where I had place a few feet away the basket of apples, assumed to be taken out to the curb. The two shiny dimes, the first money given me for work.

I remembered the bible verse I Corinthians 13, about love.

1 Corinthians 13:4 Love suffereth long, [and] is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5 doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; 6 rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; 7 beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. 8 Love never faileth

I tried to show Christian love to him. I tried to love everyone, as if I need to love everyone the same as I would love the girl at the skating rinks. I gave him my almost new tires off my old car for his car. Invited him to go fly fishing with me. We went fishing, I brought a neighbor friend. My older brother went swimming and swam out in the deeper water. He asks me to come out to him, two deferent places. I felt it was too dangerous to swim in a lake too far from shore, and the creek where the water was muddy and very deep. I ask him if he wanted to go fishing out on the boat, with me and a friend. I figured I couldn't take the chance of me and my older brother alone on a boat far from shore. We never did go fishing on the boat.

I was out cutting lawns, three months later. Since the incident with my brother in front of the house. I drove up to a driveway parking lot, where I cut a lawn, beside some apartments. It was a very hot and windy part of the day. I began to notice the way the wind was blowing. The shrubs drastically swaying back and forth, behind them the the high wood fence. I hesitated and pondered. I watch then the branches on the maple trees near the street drastically swaying. I felt a sense of déjà vu, eeriness, came over me. When I arrived home, I met my uncle and a relative police officer next door along the brick path. Under the tall old apple tree at the time, behind the garage. The same garage, I had played with matches. They informed me my older brother was killed a hundred miles away in Erie, Pa. I was told later, my brother was unchaining a load of 20 inch diameter steel mill rollers, on his semi truck. One unexpectedly rolled and caught his foot. He fell off the side of the truck backwards into the truck well. The steel roller, fell on top of him. I was told it crush his chest up to his neck. Was told the man who saw what happen went into shock, couldn't return to work. This made me think of Christ other parable:

Matthew 18:1-6 1 At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? 2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, 3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. 6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Thinking back on it, I wonder if my brother had not the good intentions that I had for him. I hope he did. I wished someway or somehow he was water baptized (immersed) in Jesus Christ for sins to be forgiven.

The day my brother died, I called my dad at work. I told him to come home, that something happen to my older brother. He ask to tell him what happen. I told him, "I can't tell you, come home immediately". When he arrived I met him along the narrow sidewalk beside our house. I told him he was killed, in a trucking accident. My dad kneeled and held onto the small white gate post beside our house. Across from the plain of glass I punched my hand through, to try to get his attention. He was over come with grief. My dad started to read the bible for some months. I didn't offer him any suggestions or word of advice how and what to read. I felt as a son, he may take it the wrong way, him being the dad. I hoped he would have asked me, but he never did that I recall. There was one day, I sense he may of wanted me too. I allowed him space. Perhaps I should have said something, but it was all so much. I feared his sorrow was a worldly sorrow. Not a Godly sorrow so necessary to please God to find his ways.

II Corinthians 7:10 For Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the

sorrow of the world worketh death.

Sometime later, my oldest sister saw the girl from the ice skating rinks at the grocery store. She told my sister, she worked at Long John Silvers. Which was behind the large church. The same church building, she had mention knowing a girl that had slept around a lot, had attend. The housewife across the street from me, had attend. When me and the girl from the skating rinks were together, we were at a restaurant across the street. I noticed the restaurant Long John Silvers through the window up the street. I suggested she could perhaps work there. She was seemingly displeased when I suggested it at the time. She said she didn't want to work. Also she may of not liked the type of food they would serve. I would guess when we had lunch together. When she said she didn't want to work, I thought within it was a good sign. She may want to marry, have children and be a stay at home mother. Another day while we were driving, was a seemingly desolate, tall brown grassy field on each side of us. Noticed the clear blue sky, going towards the waterfront. She said, "when I am married, I want to have many children". When I heard it, I also thought was a good sign. In the restaurant I thought, she should at least work a little. So if she was to become a mother, she wouldn't have to wonder what it was like to work outside the home. It may bother her. Then in case of emergencies she may have to work. I thought of going to the restaurant and see her, but I felt it be wrong of me. I rarely if ever went there and I would only be going there to see her. I would be evading her privacy. It was distressing. I wanted to so much, but felt this immense grief, barrier. Another reason once I arrived at her house unexpectedly when seeing her, she told me not to show up unexpectedly. I felt as if I would violate her order. This and the other things that happen between us, just wouldn't allow me to. In later years my youngest sister's x boyfriend had also worked at Long John Silver, while going to school to be police officer. I went there once to see my younger sister and her boyfriend, I looked around some. I imagined the girl at the skating rinks working there some years ago, before she moved on. My youngest sister broke up with her boyfriend. I remember she was sad for some days, and very nice to me, not her usual self. Their relationship, made me wonder about mine and the girl from the skating rinks. Wondering, how similar in some ways, being with the restaurant and becoming involved in law enforcement, breaking up. Then for some summers I cut the grass of the home of the manager of Long John Silvers where she had worked. He was also the manager of McDonalds in the city I lived. One day, I asked him if he remember a girl who worked there, giving him some descriptions. He seemed he remembered her.

Thinking about it more, she may of thought I ask her to work there, because I like fish fries. Perhaps she thought if she work there I would stop there someday. I never did, due to Western New York has fish fries every Friday at all the local restaurants in the largely Catholic area. Catholics are forbidden to eat meat on certain Fridays before Easter. They been told it is a sin for them to eat meat on certain Fridays of the year. So many restaurants have fish fries, and continue the fish fries all year long. They usually have haddock, sometimes cod, lightly battered, deep fried to light golden brown. With coleslaw, macaroni salad, potato salad, and French fries and many other substitute side orders. It's best to try the many versions of fish fry, at the different restaurants, to find the best one. I usually now have a fish fry every Friday, because it taste so delicious. Never having a need to go to Long John's Silvers. Now if the area didn't have a weekly fish fry, I would of went to Long John Silvers, to have some fish, I imagine. I wanted her to work there to have some freedom, and feel self sustained. Hope she would be fulfilled enough, that if we were to have children, she would want to remain home. Wishing she thought being home close to her children, was one of the greatest joys in life. As the bible says it's through childbearing, a word not meaning simply the act of child bearing alone, but means all encompassing, all the aspects of motherhood. The word childbearing, was to mean the same we use a later terminology motherhood. It is through motherhood, woman are saved.

1 Timothy 2:9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; 10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. 11 Let the woman learn in silence

with all subjection. 12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence (note: concerning the assembly of the Lord). 13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. 15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing (motherhood), if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

Meaning, God uses motherhood to save woman from the many deceptions out in the world. From becoming deceived as eve in the garden. If they continue in faith (persuasion of the teachings, commands of God's words) and charity and holiness with sobriety.

I had once arrived at her house unexpectedly with my sister. She gathered herself together fast, and came with us. We drove to a small stand of woods near a thruway. Some of my friends had a fire there, beside Lackawanna creek, called also smokes creek. Some say it had caught fire years ago, being it was so polluted further down the stream, by the steel plant. We would sit around the fire at nights. Me, her, and my sister stayed in the jeep sitting. We smoked some marijuana. A girl came to my window and talked some with us. She was a gentle natured, friendly, lovely, blond hair girl. She had a similar friendly natured boyfriend. I and the girl were very friendly to each other. I admired her much as a person. I hoped it would impress my girl. I had a nice friend. I never touched or kissed her. I admired her and her boyfriend's relationship. How he from what I could sense adored her. To the point he allowed me to be close to her. Even one point when they had a fire out in a field. Me and her lying partially in a very small tent close to the fire. She looked at me remaining still. I thought her boyfriend sitting outside may be very upset being so close to her. He may lash out, but thinking he wasn't that kind of a person. Thinking he loved her very much, that he would have faith in her, no matter. That I could never destroy such faith, love and devotion he had for her. By daring to touch her. I wanted them to remain together. His love reminded me of my love for the girl from the skating rinks. Perhaps I got too close and did hurt the relationship. Once I was 4 wheeling some in the same area, he was another passenger in the back seat. I hit a bump in the road way and the force made him go in the air hitting his nose on the cross roll bar. It seemed to of broken his nose. This made me greatly upset, apologizing to him. Thinking somehow just perhaps it reflected on his relationship with his girl. I began driving back with the girl from the skating rinks to her house. When driving over the bridge, underneath I had written our names in bright green paint (they had filled the cavity with landfill and removed the bridge since), a song came on the radio. The song was about how people, couples sat around a fire. Each one was in love, with another sitting around the fire. My girl said something that made me think she thought I was in love with the girl that came to the window. I wasn't. I only admired her and her boyfriend. I worried then my girl perhaps was saying she was in love with someone else, not with me. I tried to tell myself that wasn't the case. She was only upset, worried. Then another song came on with the phrase "Johnny be good" or "be good Johnny" as if God was on the other end of the radio selecting songs. I thought to myself I am being good toward her. Then my legs started to freeze up. Feeling them paralyzed making them almost to difficult to drive the vehicle, being it was a stick shift. Especially turning at the lights, going toward the mall. The turn was as if going away from the same main street we were on, but ending up back on the same straight main street, back to her house. I was distress, imagine I was stalling for time, trying to think of something to say. I couldn't say anything, my sister was sitting behind us. Thinking how I sin against her and God. When we arrived at her home, she said, "not to show up unexpectedly". I had to follow her order, I figured. I thought perhaps God was working through her, somehow. A time later, I remember seeing the blond hair girl, at or near a bus stop. I may of given her a ride, or perhaps only spoke to her without the ride. She told me she broke up with her boyfriend. I remember being upset. Wondered briefly if it had anything to do with me. Cross my mind some, if she wanted me to be interested in her. She is very lovely. I vaguely remember telling her what I thought about him, as a very nice person and encourage her to return to him. Thinking she was as if made for her boyfriend. They seemed such a good match, from what I observed. I hoped they would get back together. About ten to fifteen years later I met her boyfriend at the supermarket. He said they married. Made me feel good to hear this from him. When

driving back home with my sister, at the same bridge we had a conversation about the girl from the skating rinks. My sister said words that were disheartening to me. She wasn't pleased about her old girlfriend, saying she stolen a gold chain from her, when younger. I then thought the girl from the skating rinks was much younger when my sister's girlfriend. That perhaps possibly she may of stole the gold necklace, not realizing yet, how important is a friendship. I then thought about an incident, out with my friends. More an acquaintance I didn't hang out with. At his girlfriend's house, when the girlfriend was in another room, they started to steal things. I wondered if her boyfriend was seeking perhaps a memento, but it seemed they were plain thieves. It stuck me how a boyfriend could steal from his girlfriend. Thinking he couldn't really have feelings for her, but then who am I to say for sure. Then thinking perhaps my sister's gold chain, was stolen by the boyfriends that came over when younger, had slept over, as a memento. Saying to myself there are so many possibilities, how a gold necklace could of simply been lost or something else.

Another day my friend from church was driving and I was a passenger. While going through a major intersection, I notice a girl at a bus stop. I was quite certain it was the girl from the skating rinks. Once again I couldn't bring myself to have my friend to pull over, and me to see her. Remembering she said to me not to show up unexpectedly. Also I was worried now for some years she had to be baptized (water immersed) to be saved. So I may be allowed by God's word to marry her. How would I ever be able to ask this of her. On top of everything else, kept distressing me always. Feeling a sense of great pain remembering how I couldn't see her at the restaurant. How I couldn't forced myself to see her.

The only thing I thought I could do at the time is to send her a post card inviting her to a bible study event. The church I was attending was sponsoring. She didn't come.

There was so much sadness between us, lost dreams. It was painful trying to reach out to her. I thought I had to do things up front to her at her home. Not behind her mom. I wish I could have tried earlier, to encourage her to be with me. To be open to the bible. I feared from the start when I read the bible there would be so many hardships. Catholics had a hidden rule at the time, not to read the bible. Not long before they were held back, many would say forbidden to read the bible. Then for a thousand years previous, they had even more road blocks. One was the fear of death, to read the bible themselves.

The congregation I was attending, from the start had its own problems. Causing me further again, not confident enough, to reach out to her. A previous small movement that began among a few churches of Christ around 1977 in Crossroads, Florida. Through a campus ministry, infected a small number of congregations among the 10,000 congregations at that time. When I attended the congregation near me, in 1984 it was already beginning to be infected some. After some years I saw signs, that didn't correspond to my personal bible studies, especially on love. During a snow storm, me and a friend stopped at the church, not knowing they were doing some repairs of the building. One of the men gave me a shovel and said, go shovel some snow. The way he said it, reminded me of my dad, indifferent, cold and harsh. Like the catholic church dogma. Then I watch his face turn red, angered. I dared not to obey his order. Then at a the bible study, there would usually be food afterwards. I arrived late , the lady was so displeased, she said I couldn't eat while the food was left over on the table. Another bible study, some started a tradition of holding hands in a circle. I decided not to. Perhaps I had recently been sick. The woman slap my hand and grabbed it. Thinking these events could be isolated, perhaps individual people having less spiritual maturity. The thing that convinced me, was my bible studies about the branches. A main speaker came from the movement where it's gather influence and greatest growth, became centralized in Boston, Ma. He spoke about how the fruit on the branches in a particular parable of Jesus, were new converts. From my personal studies, the fruit on the branches was the love God desired from Christians towards one another, outsiders and God. The branches are the people. God adds more branches as he wills, at least in this parable.

John 15:1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away: and every [branch] that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit. 3 Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can

ye, except ye abide in me. 5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing. 6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you. 8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and [so] shall ye be my disciples. 9 Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you: abide ye in my love. 10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. 11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and [that] your joy may be made full. 12 This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you. 13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 14 Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father, I have made known unto you. 16 Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and [that] your fruit should abide: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. 17 These things I command you, that ye may love one another. 18 If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before [it hated] you. 19 If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. 20 Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. 21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. 22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also. 24 If I had not done among them the works which none other did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. 25 But [this cometh to pass], that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause. 26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, [even] the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me: 27 and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

Observing the crossroads movement, I figured they had what the bible described an over lording approach. In directed to pair up together, referred to as discipleship partners, became liken to a centralized hierarchy. A pyramid system, where people deemed more spiritual, were only people more involved. Had more to say, not spiritual in the sense of true biblical spirituality. Then they would used all sorts of misguided applications from very seemingly subtle inferences in scriptures, and place them on their partner. As equal to the commands of God in his word. Many times sensing they were mere whims, from the leading discipleship partner. From later research, some say it started from a book, written by someone from Assembly of God church, in the 1950's perhaps 60's. Their emphasis was on numbers of people converted, the ramifications is leaving love aside. Which would explain the type of false spirituality that was manifested in people. The love of the bible which is describe is patience, kind, gentle, delights in truth, don't delight in evil, not easily angered, always trusting, always hopes, not keeping records of wrong to revenge, perseveres. Is the fruit God desires from man, God adds as he wishes more branches. Not by our will, but by his will. The bible says not by running or the will of man, but by God's mercy men are elected, saved, added. This so no man may boast in himself.

There was no guarantee the girl at the skating rinks would ever accept Christ teachings. Especially scriptural baptism for herself. It's not even her choice, but God if he chooses to work in her life. That at some moment God gives her enough measure of persuasion, for her to follow his narrow path. God may leave her in darkness the rest of her life. I can try my best to reveal light to her, but it still comes down to God. His mercy for it to shine in her life by me or someone else.

I decided to study the history of the churches of Christ more in depth. I visited at the time the only biblical library they claimed in the USA. That happen to be in Buffalo for a time, a city adjacent to where I lived. I went there and research. Realized there were three major branches that divided since significant growth in the very early 1800's in the USA. They were two branches early on, having many things in

common. The hundred years later an extreme liberal third branch, I will explain soon. The significant growth in the very early 1800's was due to many factors. A nation allowing freedom of religion. Denominational (subjugated to a centralized hierarchy) people could venture into searching for the original pattern in scripture, teachings of the original church. Without hostile repercussions from government state religions, catholic or protestant. I came to the conclusion the terminology "Baptist" 200 years ago and particularly the time period a few hundred years previous, referred to people who the majority, seen scriptural baptism, defined as only immersion in water, as displayed in the bible. Even so, Baptist were divided, over the primary meaning of baptism. Some believed it was the moment when one is saved, forgiven of sins, and others believed it wasn't the moment. Even so the disagreement over the primary meaning, corralling around baptism's scriptural mode (immersion only and accompanied faith) was still an effect way to defend against non scriptural infant baptism among catholics and some similar protestant groups. Catholics taught sprinkling and done to infants (which has not one example done by Christ or his Apostles in the bible), backed by the ruthless oppression of the state. The Catholics defined others as heretics, who didn't subjugate themselves to their centralized hierarchy (small group of men ruling).

There were Baptist that didn't conclude water baptism saves, and Baptist, called also separatist (against official so called associations, hierarchies among Baptist), believed baptism saved. Then began two renown, pioneers, from Presbyterian roots, began to reexamined scriptures. They were welcome by Baptist, separatist, and independents who believed at the moment of baptism (water immersion) forgives sins, saves, is justified from sin. They gathered openly in the public eye, reexamining the scriptures, with religious freedom, circuit preachers, large open debates. They debated baptism and news letters published. Gathered consensus among the people. Formed across the country, numerous independent congregations, independents. Believed baptism (water immersion) forgave sins, saves, is justified from sin. Further examining scripture, the new testament showed no authority to form a centralized hierarchy (small group of men ruling), above, over the independent congregations. The congregations, developed two particular branches of thought. Named disciples of Christ or churches of Christ and Christian churches sometimes also called churches of Christ. They were similar on teachings. Primarily teaching, accompanied faith, at the moment of baptism (water immersion), saves. In later years some variances formed among churches of Christ and Christian churches. The use of instruments in worship service and having conventions. Conventions were seen having to much potential of taking away the independence of the local congregations, similar to a hierarchy tendencies, over lording upon the congregations.

The remainder Baptist for the most part kept to the more non biblical name Baptist. Where the terminology Baptist, previous to the early 1800's was more describing the mode of baptism, immersion over sprinkling. The last two hundred years the word baptist became more narrowly defined as them who taught baptism through immersion, with emphasis it don't save. Today, most if not all Baptist hold to as doctrine. Except for a very few independent congregations. Calling themselves Baptist, believe at the moment of baptism (immersion), sins are forgiven, saves. The doctrine that baptism don't save, is in common with many charismatics, and the Contemporary Evangelical Movement often on TV.

To put it in perspective, you can place all forms of Christianity groups into three groups. The far left, far right and centralist concerning the teaching of salvation, baptism, particularly the subject of works.

The far left consist of Baptist, Methodist/Wesleyan, Lutheran, Presbyterian, many of the Pentecostal/Charismatic, Episcopalian/Anglican, Assemblies of God, the Contemporary Evangelical Movement (often on TV). They have a spirit of stupor. Concerning the old law of Moses comes the knowledge of sin. Paul had pointed out, the old law of Moses wasn't made to make men fully righteous in God's eyes. All men had violated some form of the old law, it's purpose comes the knowledge of sin. To show men they are all sinners. The far left misguidedly claim baptism is such a work, of the works of the old law comes the knowledge of sin or as a sign of circumcision. They fail to perceive, accept, welcome Paul's words baptism is the working of God.

John 6:28-59 28 They said therefore unto him, What must we do, that we may work the works of God? 29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

Colossians 2:12 having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith (persuasion) in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

Ephesians 2 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus

Baptism is God's work in man, called grace (unmerited provision) to unite a man in Christ death. Into his body, as if taking part in his crucifixion (shedding of blood), a burial with Christ, and resurrection. God sees the a man coming up out of the water, **in Christ body**, in the spirit (mental disposition, frame of mind, particular thinking) forgiven of sins, saved, is justified from sin. The bible shows this is a work that are not our own, but God's work, working in man.

On the opposite side, the far right are the Catholics. Also has a spirit of stupor. Who see baptism forgives, saves, but have conjured up, their own form of baptism. Sprinkling, and done to infants, which can't have faith in Christ, repent and confess his name as Lord. Which then is a conjured up work, tradition, ordnance of man's imagination, making void the word of God. Catholics ran out of the boundaries (authorized by Christ and his Apostles) of the race, in sprinkling infants. Claiming without biblical authority it's baptism. Without forgiveness of pass sins, no amount of other Christian teachings followed, can ever remove ones pass sins. They have created many more conjured up works, traditions making void the word of God.

The dilemma, many from the far left, Baptist, Methodist/Wesleyan, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Pentecostal/Charismatic, Episcopalian/Anglican, Assemblies of God, the Contemporary Evangelical Movement were previous Catholics. They were easily deceived, going from one extreme to another extreme. Going from being Catholics who conjured up many works, falsely posing them as of God. Then being justifiably against such conjured up works, they went to the extreme left, unjustifiably disallowed the works of God. Particularly scriptural baptism water immersion for the purpose of atonement, justifying, forgiving sins, saves. They been blindly lead to a conjured up work of man, referred to as sinners prayer. Falsely claiming it saves. This while attended a large gathering, had not read carefully scriptures concerning baptism, had latch onto a prayer, thinking there must be nothing wrong with a simple, seemingly innocent prayer? Wrong, they have lean on their own understanding. A very effective way of deceiving unstable visitors who haven't read carefully the word God. With the large assemblies, TV, using a charismatic speaker and some earlier verses of Jesus in his ministry, ignoring Jesus' later verses, and especially his Apostles words, stirs up the crowd into an emotional frenzy. Made them think the emotional high feeling is of God. To cause the visitor to make a quick snap decision using the seemingly innocence of a prayer. To deceive them by a prayer. Who haven't read through carefully the words of Christ and his apostles, about baptism and particularly about works. The three different forms described in the NT, to make a fully knowledgeable decision. The works of the old law, the works of man's imagination, which neither of these save. Then there are the works of God, God works in man to will and work accordingly to God's will and pleasure. So no man may boast.

Then there are the centralist, referred to as independents, long ago as baptist, disciples of Christ, churches of Christ, Christian churches. Part of the heritage in the United States of America from the 1700's to the establishing a nation having freedom of religion. Taking the name, disciples of Christ, churches of Christ, Christian churches (not Mormons). Attributed in the early 1800's, a major role in the spiritual growth of our young nation. Thought baptism and it's particular scriptural purpose to forgive past sins, justify from sin. Among the centralist are the churches of Christ with congregations in every state, particularly in Tennessee, Texas, the many southern states. 13,000 congregations. The independent Christian churches in the heart of the country, the mid west. Some referred to as simple independents, who share a common doctrine, perceive baptism, as a work of God. God working in man to forgive sins, save, justify man. The grace (unmeritorious provision) of God. From the pattern, the spirit (mental disposition) surrounding baptism in the new testament. Particularly after Jesus death and resurrection when the church, kingdom of heaven was establish on Pentecost. Reading in the book of Acts, and other letters of the Apostles, contain the eye witness accounts of instituting baptism (water immersion) in Christ, to forgive past sins, saves, is justified from sin. In other articles, on my web site, explains further the topic of baptism. How and why baptism forgives sins, saves, is justified from sin. Especially explaining baptism is the grace (unmeritorious provision), a work of God in man. Not man's own work or his own righteousness. So no man may boast. Perceives his salvation as the mercy, grace (unmeritorious provision) of God working in him. Not due to his running or will, but election according to God's good pleasure, will. Everyone who is truly saved, may reach

out to others, knowing they were also unsaved, in darkness, needing the light, grace, mercy in the word of God. (There is some differences of agreement, among the centralist, concerning free will, predestination as written and defined in the new testament. I sense not affected so much fellowship, more as one's understanding, perception)

Philippians 2:12-13 12 So then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 **for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure.**

A much smaller third branch arise hundred years later. In the early 1900's called the United Church of Christ, became extreme liberal, left of the word of God. Formed a full blown hierarchy, small group of men, having control over the congregations, taking away congregational independence. They would teach unity, a form of unity that would equate to giving up primary principle teachings of Christ and his apostles. To the point of having unrepentant homosexuals teaching, woman preachers and applying the many denominational, old world state religion humanly devised doctrines. A kind of everything is allowed concerning many man made doctrines, as long as you accept each other. To such an extreme, that UNITY, becomes their only false God.

I went to all the other types of churches of Christ in my area (not united churches of Christ); that weren't infected by crossroads movement. There were about seven churches. Four churches I attended each one for a period of years, ones using instrument music and others not using instrumental music. As for the crossroads movement, they became know as the Boston movement. Then finally the international church of Christ, becoming around 100,000 people. Where last few years its founders from the late 70's resigned and written apology letters. The international churches of Christ seems to have been much dissolved. The independent churches of Christ helped some that repented, back to fellowship. Which demonstrates the wisdom from God in the bible, no small group of men or one man was ever given authority to rule over the congregations after the apostles died. Instead remained independent congregations, having the New Testament as their guide and authority to govern. To direct them in the affairs of Christianity. As an example if the international churches of Christ were to get the control by a centralized hierarchy, if there was one among the 20,000 independent congregations churches of Christ today, they would by a few men or one man infect by force of religious edict, law upon all the congregations.

John Jerome Nowak

Thank you for your time and consideration

My personal website Christjustified.com Copyright © 2003-2011 All Rights Reserved