

# *“Fickle Followers Are NOT In The Family of God”*

Matthew 8:1

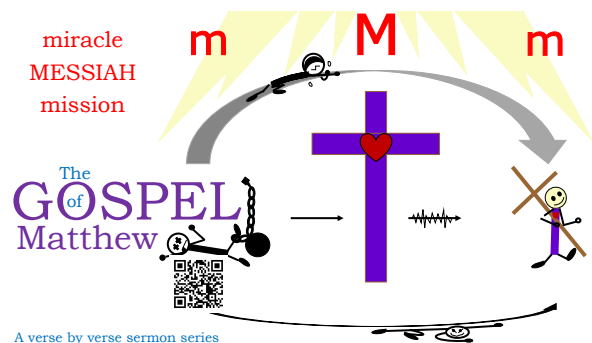
November 9, 2025

**INTRO:** *What do you call a follower of Jesus The Christ?*

- Be careful... it’s a loaded question! First ask:
- Does absolute truth exist? If so, where?
- Who &/or what serves as truth’s Author/ity?
- Which *Jesus* does the question refer to?
- How does the question define *“follower of Jesus?”*

## PRAYER

### CONTEXT:



**BIG IDEA:** Fickle followers are NOT in the family of God!  
Faith-filled & faith-full followers of Christ are His true forever family.

## PREVIEW:

1. Proclamation
2. Contextualization
3. Explanation
4. Application
5. Multiplication

## TEXT:

### Matthew 8:1

*“When He came down from the mountain great crowds were following Him.”*

**Jesus The Christ's**  
Sermon On The Mount

Matthew ch.5-7

See the sermon's structural flow...

**It is One**  
God-breathed  
chain of  
strategic interlocking,  
truth in love links, ALL  
telling the One divine  
design of The Gospel  
of Jesus The Christ!

Revelation

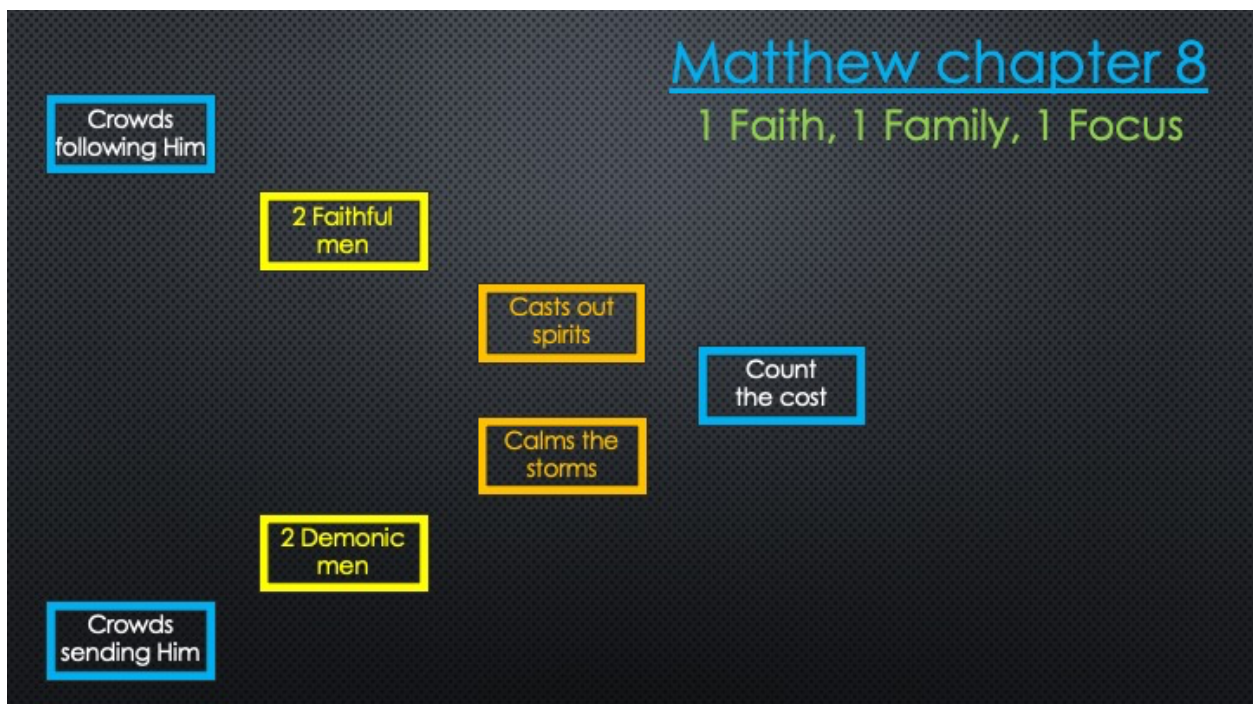
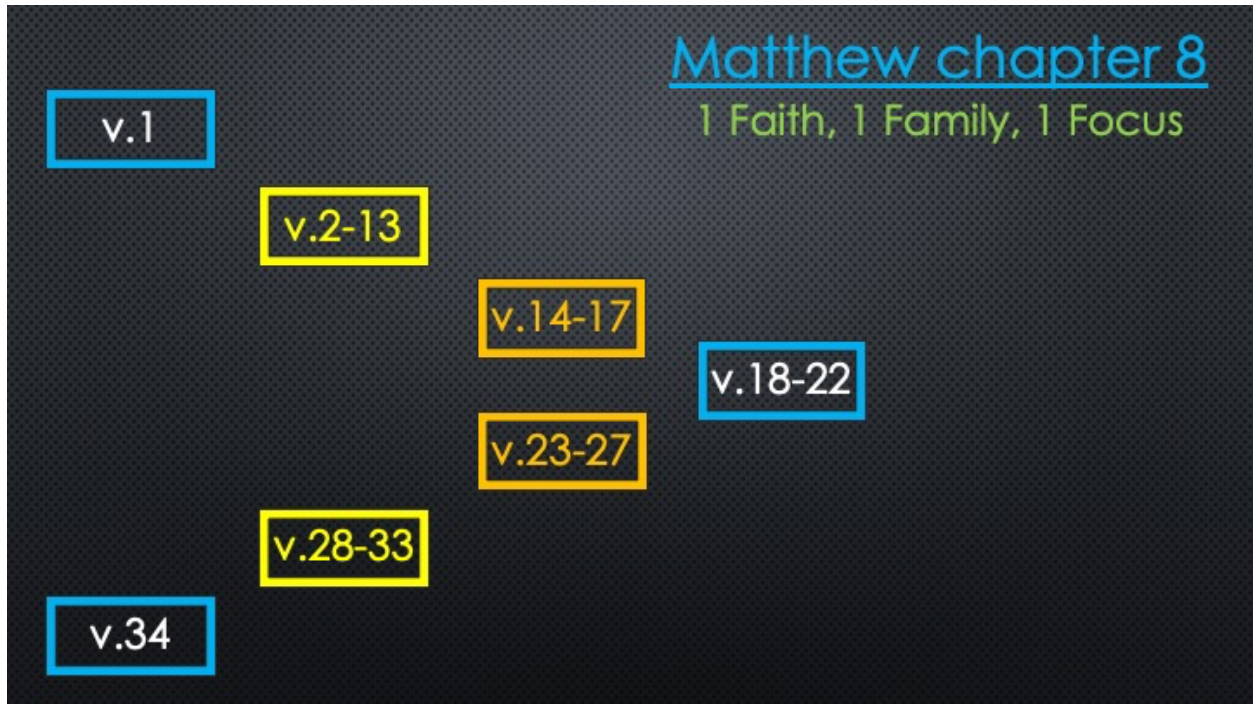
Genesis

God's Word is **NOT** put together like a string of independent pearls...

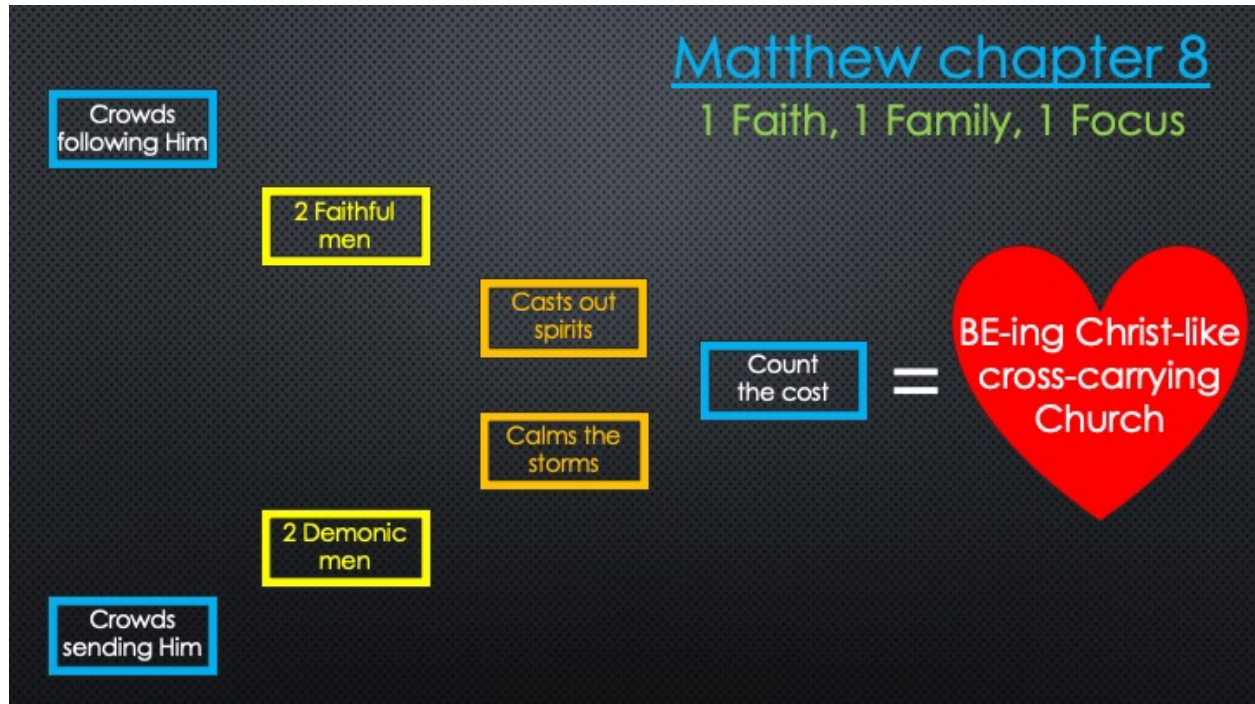
**VIDEO:** *The Gospel of Matthew (pt.1)*  
*The Bible Project (5:20)*

**NOTE** how highly structured & intentional God's Word is...

- See it in Jesus' sermon & Matthew's Gospel...
- See it in chapter 8 like we do in ALL of Scripture.
- See what it is to BE The Church per God's Word...



# ***“What do you want?”*** – Jesus the Christ



## **VIDEO:** *The Gospel Starts Here*

*(Voddie Baucham & Apologia Bros 10:11)*

- *The promised Seed can be traced all the way back!*
- *Notice how this Seed tracing is truly unbroken...*
- *Notice how the family of God has always been His*
- *See BOTH Christ AND His missional Church here.*
- *NOTE how many Seed samples God's Word gives!*
- *See how each biblical account glorifies our God!!!*
- *See each biblical link adding to the Gospel chain!*
- *BELIEVE in God's good sovereignty & providence*
- *Don't doubt the divine grace in God's providence!*
- *Never, Never, NEVER forget Romans 8:28 & 29...*
- *God's true family will ALWAYS know His blessing!*



**VIDEO:** *Justin Peters – Church Test*  
(Apologia Bros 19:47)

**GOD’S TRUE CHURCH TAKES CHRIST AT HIS  
WORD & LIVES IN CONTRAST TO CULTURE  
IN TRUE CHRIST-LIKENESS!**

**James 4:4**

To be friends with the world is to be  
enemies of God!

**REVIEW:**

1. Proclamation
2. Contextualization
3. Explanation
4. Application
5. Multiplication

**CLOSE:**

Don’t miss the teaching & preaching of Jesus Christ!

**Matthew 8:1**

*“When He came down from the mountain  
great crowds were following Him.”*

**IF WE DO NOT RECOGNIZE &  
UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE  
BETWEEN FICKLE CROWDS AND GOD'S  
TRUE-FEW (WHO ARE HIS) FAITHFUL  
CHURCH, WE'RE DYING...**

Fickle followers are NOT in  
the family of God!  
Faith-filled & faith-full followers of Christ  
are His true forever family.

The fake family will not only fall away,  
they will eventually beg Jesus to leave.

**Don't confuse the crowds with the Church!**

**Take Christ at His Word...  
or else!**

Take 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 & Ephesians 2:1-10 to heart!

**PRAYER**

**WORSHIP:** *The Church*

## STUDY NOTES:

1When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him.

- A. Jesus Cleanses A Leper (vv.2-5)
  - a. A needy kneeler comes “crawling” to Christ...
  - b. Confesses Christ as Lord & cries out for cleansing
  - c. Messiah miraculously cleansed him missionally...
- B. The Faith of Centurion (vv.6-13)
  - a. An exemplary example of bold & faithful humility
  - b. He exalts Christ & faithfully trusts Jesus is LORD!
  - c. Jesus Christ blesses the Centurion’s great faith.
  - d. Christ proclaims hell AND His Great Commission
- C. Jesus Heals Many (vv.14-17)
  - a. Christ’s incarnation displayed as He comes to all.
  - b. Biblical sovereign grace & human responsibility...
  - c. Direct & divine fulfillment of Messianic prophecy.
- D. Cost of Following Jesus (vv.18-22)
  - a. Christ is NOT drawn to or impressed by crowds...
  - b. Christ challenges His inquirers to count the cost...
  - c. Christ’s call is “unreasonably” uncompromising...
- E. Jesus Calms the Storm (vv.23-27)
  - a. Christians, like Christ, should always stay calm...
  - b. Christ, as LORD, controls all, including storms...
  - c. Christ rebukes fearful followers with little faith...
- F. Jesus Heals 2 Men w/ Demons (vv.28-34)
  - a. Christ confirms supernatural spiritual warfare!
  - b. The Devil & his demons recognize Jesus is LORD...
  - c. The Devil & his demons submit to His Lordship...

Yet sin-filled crowds/cities begged Him to leave!

34And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.

Matthew ch.8

CROWDS FOLLOW CHRIST

Jesus Cleanses & Blesses 2 Men

Jesus Heals Many

Christ says COUNT The COST

Jesus Calms the Storm

Jesus Heals 2 Demonic Men

City/CROWDS beg Jesus to Leave

### ***Jesus Cleanses a Leper***

**1**When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him.

**2**And behold, a leper<sup>a</sup> came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." **3**And Jesus<sup>b</sup> stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "**I will; be clean.**" And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. **4**And Jesus said to him, "**See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them.**"

### ***The Faith of a Centurion***

**5**When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, **6**"Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly." **7**And he said to him, "**I will come and heal him.**" **8**But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. **9**For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant,<sup>c</sup> 'Do this,' and he does it." **10**When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "**Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel<sup>d</sup> have I found such faith. **11**I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, **12**while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**" **13**And to the centurion Jesus said, "**Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.**" And the servant was healed at that very moment.

### ***Jesus Heals Many***

[14](#)And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. [15](#)He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him. [16](#)That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. [17](#)This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases."

### ***The Cost of Following Jesus***

[18](#)Now when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. [19](#)And a scribe came up and said to him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." [20](#)And Jesus said to him, "**Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.**" [21](#)Another of the disciples said to him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." [22](#)And Jesus said to him, "**Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.**"

### ***Jesus Calms a Storm***

[23](#)And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. [24](#)And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. [25](#)And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." [26](#)And he said to them, "**Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?**" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. [27](#)And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?"

### ***Jesus Heals Two Men with Demons***

[28](#)And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes,<sup>e</sup> two demon-possessed<sup>f</sup> men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. [29](#)And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" [30](#)Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. [31](#)And the demons begged him, saying, "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs." [32](#)And he said to them, "**Go.**" So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters. [33](#)The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed men. [34](#)And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.

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#### **Footnotes:**

**a 2** *Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

**b 3** Greek *he*

**c 9** Or *bondservant*

**d 10** Some manuscripts *not even in Israel*

**e 28** Some manuscripts *Gergesenes*; some *Gerasenes*

**f 28** Greek *daimonizomai* (demonized); also verse 33; elsewhere rendered *oppressed by demons*

# 4352. proskuneó

## Lexical Summary

**proskuneó:** To worship, to bow down, to prostrate oneself

**Original Word:** ΠΡΟΣΚΥΝΕΩ

**Part of Speech:** Verb

**Transliteration:** proskuneó

**Pronunciation:** pros-koo-NEH-oh

**Phonetic Spelling:** (pros-koo-neh'-o)

**KJV:** worship

**NASB:** worship, worshiped, bowed down before, bow down, bow down before, bowed down, bowing before

**Word Origin:** [from [G4314 \(πρός - against\)](#) and a probable derivative of [G2965 \(κύων - dogs\)](#) (meaning to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand)]

1. to fawn or crouch to
2. to fall face down (prostrate) in adoration
3. a physical act of lowering oneself in humble submission with an attitude of utmost adoration or respect  
{literally or figuratively}

## Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

worship.

From [pros](#) and a probable derivative of [kuon](#) (meaning to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand); to fawn or crouch to, i.e. (literally or figuratively) prostrate oneself in homage (do reverence to, adore) -- worship.

see GREEK [pros](#)

see GREEK [kuon](#)

## HELPS Word-studies

**4352** *proskynéō* (from [4314](#) /*prós*, "towards" and *kyneo*, "to kiss") – properly, to kiss the ground when prostrating before a superior; to *worship*, ready "to fall down/prostrate oneself to adore on one's knees" (*DNTT*); to "do obeisance" (*BAGD*).

["The basic meaning of [4352](#) (*proskynéō*), in the opinion of most scholars, is to *kiss*. . . . On Egyptian reliefs worshipers are represented with outstretched hand throwing a kiss to (*pros-*) the deity" (*DNTT*, 2, 875,876).

4352 (*proskyneō*) has been (metaphorically) described as "the kissing-ground" between believers (the Bride) and Christ (the heavenly Bridegroom). While this is true, [4352](#) (*proskynéō*) suggests the willingness to make all necessary physical *gestures of obeisance*.]

## NAS Exhaustive Concordance

### Word Origin

from [pros](#) and *kuneó* (to kiss)

### Definition

to do reverence to

### NASB Translation

bow down (1), bow down before (1), bowed down (1), bowed down before (2), bowing before (1), bowing down (1), prostrated himself before (1), worship (32), worshiped (17), worshipers (1), worshiping (1), worships (1).

## Thayer's Greek Lexicon

### STRONGS NT 4352: προσκυνέω

**ΠΡΟΣΚΥΝΕΩ**, **ΠΡΟΣΚΥΝΩ**; imperfect **ΠΡΟΣΕΚΥΝΟΥΝ**; future **ΠΡΟΣΚΥΝΗΣΩ**; 1 aorist **ΠΡΟΣΕΚΥΝΗΣΑ**; from Aeschylus and Herodotus down; the Sept. very often for **ΠΡΟΣΚΥΝΩ** (to prostrate oneself); properly, **to kiss the hand to (toward) one**, in token of reverence: Herodotus 1, 134; (cf. K. F. Hermann, *Gottesdienstl. Alterthümer d. Griech.* § 21; especially Hoelemann, *Die Biblical Gestalt. d. Anbetung in his 'Bibelstudien' i.*, 106ff); hence, among the Orientals, especially the Persians, **to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead** as an expression of profound reverence ("to make a 'salam'"); Latin *veneror* (Nepos, *Conon.* 3, 3), *adoro* (Pliny, *h. n.* 28, 5, 25; Suetonius, *Vitell.* 2); hence, in the N. T. **by kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) or make obeisance**, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication. It is used a. of homage shown to men of superior rank: absolutely, [Matthew 20:20](#) (the Jewish high-priests are spoken of in Josephus, *b. j.* 4, 5, 2 as **προσκυνούμενοι**); **πεσών ἐπί τούς πόδας προσεκύνησεν**, [Acts 10:25](#); **τίνι** (according to the usage of later writings; cf. *Winers Grammar*, 36, 210 (197); (*Buttmann*, § 131, 4); *Lob. ad Phryn.*, p. 463), [Matthew 2:2, 8](#); [Matthew 8:2](#); [Matthew 9:18](#); [Matthew 14:33](#); [Matthew 15:25](#); (); (R G); [Mark 5:6](#) (here WH Tr marginal reading have the accusative); ; [John 9:38](#); with **πεσών** preceding, [Matthew 2:11](#); [Matthew 4:9](#); **ἐνώπιον τῶν ποδῶν τίνος**, [Revelation 3:9](#); (it may perhaps be mentioned that some would bring in here [Hebrews 11:21](#) **προσεκύνησεν ἐπί τό ἄκρον τῆς ῥάβδου αὐτοῦ**, explaining it by the (Egyptian) custom of bowing upon the magistrate's staff of office in taking an oath; cf. *Chabas, Melanges Egypt. III. i.*, p. 80, cf. p. 91f; but see below).

**b.** of homage rendered to God and the ascended Christ, to heavenly beings, and to demons: absolutely (our **to worship**) (cf. *Winer's Grammar*, 593 (552)), [John 4:20](#); [John 12:20](#); [Acts 8:27](#); [Acts 24:11](#); [Hebrews 11:21](#) (cf. above); [Revelation 11:1](#); **πίπτειν καί προσκυνεῖν**, [Revelation 5:14](#); **τίνι**, [John 4:21, 23](#); [Acts 7:43](#); [Hebrews 1:6](#); [Revelation 4:10](#); [Revelation 7:11](#); [Revelation 11:16](#); [Revelation 14:7](#); [Revelation](#)

[16:2](#); [Revelation 19:4, 20](#); [Revelation 22:8](#); [Revelation 13:4](#) G L T Tr WH (twice (the 2nd time WH text only)); G T Tr WH text; [Revelation 20:4](#) Rec.; [πεσών ἐπί πρόσωπον προσκυνήσει τῷ Θεῷ](#), [1 Corinthians 14:25](#); [πίπτειν ἐπί τὰ πρόσωπα καί προσκυνεῖν τῷ Θεῷ](#), [Revelation 11:16](#); preceded by [πίπτειν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ποδῶν τίνος](#), [Revelation 19:10](#). in accordance with the usage of the older and better writings with [τινα](#) or [τί](#) (cf. Matthiae, § 412): [Matthew 4:10](#); [Luke 4:8](#); [Revelation 9:20](#); [Revelation 13:12](#); [Revelation 14:9, 11](#); also [Revelation 13:4](#) (Rec. twice; (WH marginal reading once)), 8 (where Rec. dative), 15 R L WH marginal reading; 20:4a (where Rec. dative), 4b (where Relz dative); [Luke 24:52](#) R G L Tr brackets WH reject; (the Sept. also connects the word far more frequent with the dative than with the accusative (cf. Hoemann as above, p. 116ff)); [ἐνώπιον τίνος](#), [Luke 4:7](#); [Revelation 15:4](#).

## Topical Lexicon

### Proskyneō (Strong's 4352)

#### Overview of New Testament Usage

The verb occurs sixty times, spanning the Gospels, Acts, the Pauline corpus (once), Hebrews, and especially Revelation. It depicts bodily prostration that signifies the heart's acknowledgment of worth—whether rendered to the living God, to the risen Jesus, or, tragically, to idols and demonic powers. In every context Scripture affirms a single standard: worship belongs to God alone, and any worship Jesus accepts testifies to His full deity.

#### Worship Rendered to the Incarnate Son

- The infancy narrative introduces Gentile worship when the magi “fell down and worshiped Him” ([Matthew 2:11](#)).
- Throughout His earthly ministry Jesus receives worship from the desperate ([Matthew 8:2](#); 9:18; 15:25), the grateful ([John 9:38](#)), and the awestruck disciples in the storm-stilled boat: “Then those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God!’” ([Matthew 14:33](#)).
- After the resurrection worship becomes climactic ([Matthew 28:9, 17](#); [Luke 24:52](#)), sealed by the Father's command, “Let all God's angels worship Him” ([Hebrews 1:6](#)). The pattern establishes Christ's rightful place at the center of Christian devotion.

#### The Father Sought in Spirit and Truth

[John 4](#) anchors all biblical theology of worship. The Samaritan woman speaks of localized worship on Mount Gerizim while Jews claim Jerusalem ([John 4:20](#)). Jesus responds,

“But a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth... God is Spirit, and His worshipers must worship Him in spirit and in truth” ([John 4:23-24](#)).

The passage lifts worship from ritual geography to a new-covenant reality grounded in the Spirit’s indwelling and the revelation of truth in Christ.

### **Illicit and Refused Worship**

- Satan’s temptation sought to redirect worship: “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only’ ” ([Matthew 4:10](#); [Luke 4:8](#)).
- Apostolic integrity echoes the Lord’s stance. Cornelius bows before Peter, but the apostle replies, “Stand up... I am only a man myself” ([Acts 10:25-26](#)).
- Twice John attempts to worship the revealing angel and twice is corrected: “Do not do that! ... Worship God!” ([Revelation 19:10](#); 22:9). Scripture thus preserves a clear boundary between Creator and creature.

### **Heavenly Worship Scenes**

Revelation pulls back the curtain on cosmic worship.

- [Revelation 4:10](#) pictures twenty-four elders casting crowns before the enthroned Lord.
- In [Revelation 5](#) the Lamb who was slain shares the throne: “The elders fell down and worshiped” ([Revelation 5:14](#)).
- Unnumbered multitudes, angels, and redeemed humanity join ceaseless adoration ([Revelation 7:11](#); 11:16; 14:7; 19:4). These scenes provide the Church’s template and hope—worship that is pure, corporate, and eternal.

### **Idolatrous Worship and Final Judgment**

Proskyneō also exposes counterfeit devotion. The beast of Revelation draws global homage ([Revelation 13:4, 8, 12, 15](#)); those who worship its image drink “the wine of God’s fury” ([Revelation 14:9-11](#); 16:2; 19:20; 20:4). The stark contrast between the beast-worshippers and the Lamb-worshippers underscores worship as the decisive line dividing humanity.

### **Old Testament Background**

Greek translators of the Hebrew Scriptures often used proskyneō for שָׁחָה (shachah), the act of bowing before God or king. The New Testament retains the physical posture yet intensifies the theological focus: the One who appeared to Abraham and received worship in [Genesis 18](#) now appears incarnate in Jesus Christ.

### **Theological Implications**

1. Christology: Jesus’ acceptance of worship validates His equality with the Father.
2. Doctrine of God: Exclusive worship safeguards monotheism ([Matthew 4:10](#)).
3. Pneumatology: True worship is Spirit-enabled ([John 4:23-24](#)).

4. Eschatology: Eternal destiny is determined by the object of one's worship ([Revelation 14:9-11](#)).
5. Ecclesiology: Corporate gatherings echo heavenly liturgy ([Hebrews 12:22-24](#)).

### Practical Ministry Application

- Corporate services should prioritize God-centered praise, Scripture reading, prayer, and sacrament as expressions of proskyneō.
- Evangelism calls people to abandon idols “to serve the living and true God” (compare [1 Thessalonians 1:9](#)).
- Discipleship nurtures heart-posture before bodily posture, ensuring external acts flow from sincere devotion.
- Leaders must guard against celebrity culture; like Peter, they remind admirers, “I am only a man.”

### Eschatological Hope

History culminates when “all nations will come and worship before You” ([Revelation 15:4](#)). The Church presently anticipates that day, praying, living, and proclaiming so that multiplied peoples may join the eternal throng who “fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever” ([Revelation 4:10](#)).

### Summary

Strong's 4352 gathers Scripture's witness that worship is the creature's highest calling, the Son's rightful due, and the Father's eternal delight. To bow before God in Christ now is to preview the joy that will fill the new heaven and new earth forever.

## 2296. **thaumazó**

### Lexical Summary

**thaumazó:** To marvel, to wonder, to be amazed

**Original Word:** θαυμάζω

**Part of Speech:** Verb

**Transliteration:** thaumazó

**Pronunciation:** thou-mad'-zo

**Phonetic Spelling:** (thou-mad'-zo)

**KJV:** admire, have in admiration, marvel, wonder

**NASB:** amazed, marveled, marvel, wondered, astonished, marveling, surprised

**Word Origin:** [from [G2295 \(θαῦμα - wonder\)](#)]

1. to wonder
2. (by implication) to admire

## Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

admire, marvel, wonder.

From [thauma](#); to wonder; by implication, to admire -- admire, have in admiration, marvel, wonder.

see GREEK [thauma](#)

## HELPS Word-studies

**2296** *thaumázō* (from [2295](#) /*thaúma*, "a wonder, marvel") – properly, wonder at, be amazed (marvel), i.e. astonished *out of one's senses*; *awestruck*, "wondering very greatly" (Souter); to cause "wonder; . . . to regard with amazement, and with a suggestion of *beginning to speculate* on the matter" (*WS*, 225).

## NAS Exhaustive Concordance

**Word Origin**

from [thauma](#)

**Definition**

to marvel, wonder

**NASB Translation**

am amazed (1), amazed (15), amazement (1), astonished (3), being amazed (1), flattering (1), marvel (4), marveled (5), marveling (2), surprised (2), wonder (2), wondered (4), wondering (2).

## Thayer's Greek Lexicon

### STRONGS NT 2296: θαυμάζω

**θαυμάζω**; imperfect **ἐθαύμαζον**; future **θαυμάσομαι** ([Revelation 17:8](#) R G T Tr, a form far more common in the best Greek writings also than **θαυμάσω**; cf. Krüger, § 40, under the word; Kühner, § 343, under the word; (Veitch, under the word)); 1 aorist **ἐθαύμασα**; 1 aorist passive **ἐθαυμασθην** in a middle sense ([Revelation 13:3](#) Rst L Tr text); also 1 future passive, in the sense of the middle, **θαυμασθήσομαι** ([Revelation 17:8](#) L WH; but the very few examples of the middle use in secular authors are doubtful; cf. Stephanus, Thesaurus iv., p. 259f; (yet see Veitch, under the word)); **to wonder, wonder at, marvel**: absolutely, [Matthew 8:10, 27](#); [Matthew 9:8](#) Rec., ; ; [Mark 5:20](#); [Mark 6:51](#) (Rec.; L brackets Tr marginal reading brackets); [Mark 15:5](#); [Luke 1:21](#) (see below), ; ; [John 5:20](#); [John 7:15](#); [Acts 2:7](#); [Acts 4:13](#); [Acts 13:41](#); [Revelation 17:7f](#); with the accusative of the person [Luke 7:9](#); with the accusative of the thing, [Luke 24:12](#) (T omits; L Tr brackets; WH reject the verse (see **πρός**, I. 1 a. at the beginning

and 2 b.)); [John 5:28](#); [Acts 7:31](#); θαῦμα μέγα (see θαῦμα, 2), [Revelation 17:6](#); [πρόσωπον](#), to admire, pay regard to, one's external appearance, i. e. to be influenced by partiality, [Jude 1:16](#) (the Sept. for אֲשַׁרְיָדִיף, [Deuteronomy 10:17](#); [Job 13:10](#); [Proverbs 18:5](#); [Isaiah 9:14](#), etc.); followed by [διά τί](#), [Mark 6:6](#); [John 7:21](#) where [διά τοῦτο](#) (omitted by Tdf.) is to be joined to [Mark 7:21](#) (so G L Tr marginal reading; cf. Meyer (edited by Weiss) at the passage; Winers Grammar, § 7, 3) (Isocrates, p. 52 d.; Aelian v. h. 12, 6; 14, 36); (followed by [ἐν](#) with the dative of object, according to the construction adopted by some in [Luke 1:21](#), [ἐθαύμαζον ἐν τῷ χρονίζειν ... αὐτόν](#), at his tarrying; cf. Winers Grammar, § 33, b.; Buttman, 264 (227); 185 (160f); Sir. 11:19 (21); evang. Thom. 15, 2; but see above); followed by [ἐπί](#) with the dative of person [Mark 12:17](#) (R G L Tr); by [ἐπί](#) with the dative of the thing, [Luke 2:33](#); [Luke 4:22](#); [Luke 9:43](#); [Luke 20:26](#); ([Acts 3:12](#)) (Xenophon, Plato, Thucydides, others; the Sept.); [περί τίνος](#), [Luke 2:18](#); by a pregnant construction (cf. Buttman, 185 (161)) [ἐθαύμασεν ἡ γῆ ὀπίσω τοῦ θηρίου](#), followed the beast in wonder, [Revelation 13:3](#) (cf. Buttman, 59 (52)); followed by [ὅτι](#), to marvel that, etc., [Luke 11:38](#); [John 3:7](#); [John 4:27](#); [Galatians 1:6](#); by [εἰ](#) (see [εἰ](#), I. 4), [Mark 15:44](#); [1 John 3:13](#). Passive **to be wondered at, to be had in admiration** (Sir. 38:3; Wis. 8:11; 4 Macc. 18:3), followed by [ἐν](#) with the dative of the person whose lot and condition gives matter for wondering at another, [2 Thessalonians 1:10](#); [ἐν](#) with the dative of the thing, [Isaiah 61:6](#). (Compare: [ἐκθαυμάζω](#).)

## Topical Lexicon

### Overview of Biblical Wonder

The verb translated “marvel,” “amaze,” or “wonder” appears forty-four times in the New Testament and consistently marks moments when human perception encounters divine or extraordinary realities. Whether springing from faith, disbelief, or curiosity, the response underscores the gap between the natural and the supernatural.

### Occurrences in the Gospel Narratives

1. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John use the term to frame pivotal scenes in Jesus’ ministry. Crowds marvel at His authority over storms ([Matthew 8:27](#)), demons ([Luke 11:14](#)), sickness ([Matthew 9:33](#)), and death ([Luke 7:15-16](#)).
2. The disciples themselves are repeatedly astonished, as when the fig tree withers ([Matthew 21:20](#)) or the wind and waves obey ([Luke 8:25](#)).
3. Religious leaders are struck by His silence before Pilate ([Matthew 27:14](#); [Mark 15:5](#)) and by His mastery of Scripture despite lack of formal training ([John 7:15](#)).
4. Jesus also “marveled”—positively at the centurion’s great faith ([Matthew 8:10](#); [Luke 7:9](#)) and negatively at Nazareth’s unbelief ([Mark 6:6](#)).

### Marveling at Divine Authority over Creation

The calming of the sea ([Matthew 8:27](#); [Luke 8:25](#)) exemplifies wonder evoked by raw, divine authority. In each account the observers' awe opens the door to deeper Christological confession: only the Creator commands creation.

### **Marveling at His Power over Disease and Demons**

After a mute demon is expelled, “the crowds marveled” ([Matthew 9:33](#)). Such marveling is evangelistic; news spreads, leading others to seek Jesus. [Luke 8:26-39](#) reports the healed demoniac proclaiming “how much Jesus had done for him,” and “all the people marveled” ([Mark 5:20](#)).

### **Marveling at His Teaching and Wisdom**

[John 7:15](#) records, “The Jews were astonished and asked, ‘How did this man attain such learning without having studied?’” The wonder here exposes both the limitation of human tradition and the heavenly origin of Jesus' doctrine.

### **Marveling at Faith and Unbelief**

Jesus' own amazement at faith ([Matthew 8:10](#)) and unbelief ([Mark 6:6](#)) sets a measure for discipleship. Faith that trusts His word, even from a Gentile centurion, is praised; hardened hearts in His hometown evoke His lament.

### **Post-Resurrection Wonder**

[Luke 24:12](#) depicts Peter departing the empty tomb “wondering to himself what had happened,” while [Luke 24:41](#) shows the gathered disciples “still disbelieving for joy and marveling” as the risen Lord eats before them. Wonder here bridges confusion and conviction, leading to worship and witness.

### **Evangelistic Impact of Astonishment**

Acts records crowds marveling at Pentecost tongues ([Acts 2:7](#)) and at the healed lame man ([Acts 3:12](#)). Peter redirects their wonder from the apostles to the risen Christ, turning astonishment into repentance and faith.

### **Eschatological Marveling: The Beast and the Lamb**

Revelation shifts the focus. The world “marveled and followed the beast” ([Revelation 13:3](#)), and John himself “marveled greatly” at Babylon's mystery ([Revelation 17:6](#)). An angel rebukes the misplaced wonder ([Revelation 17:7](#)), contrasting it with the day when Christ “is to be marveled at among all who have believed” ([2 Thessalonians 1:10](#)). Scripture thus distinguishes holy awe from idolatrous fascination.

### **Apostolic Warnings Against Misplaced Wonder**

Paul writes, “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting Him” ([Galatians 1:6](#)), and John cautions, “Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you” ([1 John 3:13](#)). Marveling can signify spiritual danger when directed toward false teaching, worldly acclaim, or persecution’s mystery.

### Devotional and Ministry Applications

- Cultivate holy awe: regular reflection on Christ’s works renews worship.
- Redirect curiosity: like Peter in [Acts 3:12](#), pastors should point amazed audiences to Christ, not to personalities or methods.
- Guard against sensationalism: Revelation warns that end-time deception trades on unguarded wonder.
- Encourage testimony: the healed Gerasene’s proclamation ([Mark 5:20](#)) shows that shared experience of grace evokes marvel leading to faith.

### Historical Theology

Early patristic writers employed these passages to defend Christ’s deity, stressing that the crowds marveled because divine power was visibly present. Reformers highlighted the contrast between marveling at gospel grace and at ecclesiastical pomp, urging believers to be captivated by Scripture alone.

### Summary

Throughout the New Testament, marveling serves as a theological barometer. When centered on God’s revelation in Christ, it blossoms into faith, worship, and mission. When fixed on human power or counterfeit signs, it accelerates apostasy. Believers are therefore called to sustain a sanctified wonder that magnifies the Lord and resists the lure of deceptive amazement.

## 3870. parakaleó

### Lexical Summary

**parakaleó:** To call to one's side, to exhort, to encourage, to comfort, to urge

**Original Word:** παρακαλέω

**Part of Speech:** Verb

**Transliteration:** parakaleó

**Pronunciation:** pah-rah-kah-LEH-oh

**Phonetic Spelling:** (par-ak-al-eh'-o)

**KJV:** beseech, call for, (be of good) comfort, desire, (give) exhort(-ation), intreat, pray

**NASB:** urge, comforted, implored, exhort, encourage, comfort, imploring

**Word Origin:** [from [G3844 \(παρά - than\)](#) and [G2564 \(καλέω - called\)](#)]

1. (properly) to call near (as to receive or give help)
2. to implore, entreat (to urgently ask (for mercy or help))
3. to exhort (to urgently counsel, encourage or admonish)
4. to comfort

## Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

beseech, call for, urge

From [para](#) and [kaleo](#); to call near, i.e. Invite, invoke (by imploration, hortation or consolation) -- beseech, call for, (be of good) comfort, desire, (give) exhort(-ation), intreat, pray.

see GREEK [para](#)

see GREEK [kaleo](#)

## HELPS Word-studies

**3870** *parakalēō* (from [3844](#) /*pará*, "from close-beside" and [2564](#) /*kalēō*, "to call") – properly, "make a call" from being "close-up and personal." [3870](#) /*parakalēō* ("personally make a call") refers to believers *offering up evidence that stands up in God's court*.

[[3870](#) (*parakalēō*), the root of [3875](#) /*paráklētos* ("legal advocate"), likewise has *legal* overtones.]

## NAS Exhaustive Concordance

### Word Origin

from [para](#) and [kaleó](#)

### Definition

to call to or for, to exhort, to encourage

### NASB Translation

appeal (4), appealed (1), appealing (2), beg (1), begging (2), beseeching (1), comfort (5), comforted (11), comforts (2), conciliate (1), encourage (6), encouraged (4), encouraging (3), entreat (1), exhort (8), exhortation\* (1), exhortations (1), exhorted (2), exhorting (3), exhorts (1), given (1), implore (4), implored (9), imploring (5), invited (2), making an appeal (1), plead (1), pleaded (1), pleading (1), preach (1), requested (1), urge (17), urged (5), urging (1).

## Thayer's Greek Lexicon

### STRONGS NT 3870: παρακαλέω

**παρακαλέω**, *παρακαλῶ*; imperfect 3 person singular *παρεκάλει*, 1 and 3 person plural *παρεκάλουν*; 1 aorist *παρεκάλεσα*; passive, present *παρακαλοῦμαι*; perfect *παρακέκλημαι*; 1 aorist *παρεκλήθην*; 1 future *παρακληθήσομαι*; from Aeschylus and Herodotus down;

**I.** as in Greek writings **to call to one's side, call for, summon:** **τινα**, with an infinitive indicating the purpose, [Acts 28:20](#) (others (less naturally) refer this to II. 2, making the accusative the subjunctive of the infinitive).

**II. to address, speak to** (call to, call on), which may be done in the way of exhortation, entreaty, comfort, instruction, etc.; hence, result a variety of senses, on which see Knapp, *Scripto varii arg.* edition 2, p. 117ff; cf. Fritzsche, *Ep. ad Romans*, i., p. 32f.

**1.** as in Greek authors, **to admonish, exhort:** absolutely, [Luke 3:18](#); ([Acts 20:1](#) (R G omit)); [Romans 12:8](#); [2 Timothy 4:2](#); [Hebrews 10:25](#); [1 Peter 5:12](#); followed by direct discourse, [2 Corinthians 5:20](#); followed by **λέγων** with direct discourse, [Acts 2:40](#); followed by an infinitive where in Latinut, [1 Timothy 2:1](#); **τινα**, [Acts 15:32](#); [Acts 16:40](#); [2 Corinthians 10:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:12](#) (); ; [1 Timothy 5:1](#); [Hebrews 3:13](#); **τινα λόγῳ πολλῶ**, [Acts 20:2](#); **ἰντα** followed by direct discourse, [1 Corinthians 4:16](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:14](#); [Hebrews 13:22](#) (here L WH marginal reading infinitive); [1 Peter 5:1f](#); **τινα** followed by an infinitive where in Latinut (cf. Buttman, §§ 140, 1; 141, 2; Winer's Grammar, 332 (311); 335 (315) n.): infinitive present, [Acts 11:23](#); [Acts 14:22](#); [Philippians 4:2](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:10](#); [Titus 2:6](#); [1 Peter 2:11](#) (here Lachmann adds **ὕμᾱς** to the infinitive, and WH meg. with manuscripts A C L etc. read **ἀπέχεσθε**); [Jude 1:3](#); infinitive aorist, [Acts 27:33](#); [Romans 12:1](#); [Romans 15:30](#); [2 Corinthians 2:8](#); [2 Corinthians 6:1](#); [Ephesians 4:1](#); [1 Timothy 1:3](#); [Hebrews 13:19](#); **τινα** followed by **ἵνα** with subjunctive (cf. Buttman, § 139, 42; Winer's Grammar, 335 as above), [1 Corinthians 1:10](#); [1 Corinthians 16:15](#); [2 Corinthians 8:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:1](#); [2 Thessalonians 3:12](#); to enjoin a thing by exhortation (cf. Buttman, § 141, 2), [1 Timothy 6:2](#); [Titus 2:15](#).

**2. to beg, entreat, beseech** (Josephus, *Antiquities* 6, 7, 4; (11, 8, 5); often in Epictetus cf. Schweighäuser, *Index graecit. Epictetus*, p. 411; Plutarch, *apophth. regum*, *Mor.* ii, p. 30, Tauchn. edition (vi. 695 edition Reiske; examples from Polybius, Diodorus, Philo, others, in Sophocles' *Lexicon*, under the word); not thus in the earlier Greek authors except where the gods are called on for aid, in the expressions, **παρακαλεῖν Θεούς**, so **Θεόν** in Josephus, *Antiquities* 6, 2, 2 and 7, 4; (cf. Winer's Grammar, 22)): (absolutely, [Philemon 1:9](#) (yet see the commentaries at the passage)); **τινα**, [Matthew 8:5](#); [Matthew 18:32](#); [Matthew 26:53](#); [Mark 1:40](#); [Acts 16:9](#); [2 Corinthians 12:18](#); **πολλά**, **much**, [Mark 5:23](#); **τινα περί τίνος**, [Philemon 1:10](#); followed by direct discourse, [Acts 9:38](#) L T Tr WH with **λέγων** added and direct discourse, [Matthew 18:29](#); [Mark 5:12](#); ([Luke 7:4](#) (Tdf. **ἠρώτων**)); without the accusative. [Acts 16:15](#); **τινα** followed by an infinitive (Winer's Grammar, and Buttman's Grammar, as above), [Mark 5:17](#); [Luke 8:41](#); [Acts 8:31](#); [Acts 19:31](#); [Acts 28:14](#) (1 Macc. 9:35); **τινα** followed by **ὅπως**, [Matthew 8:34](#) (here Lachmann **ἵνα** (see above)); [Acts 25:2](#) (4 Macc. 4:11; Plutarch, *Demetr. c.* 38); **τινα** followed by **ἵνα** (Winer's Grammar, § 44, 8 a.; Buttman, § 139,

42), [Matthew 14:36](#); [Mark 5:18](#); [Mark 6:56](#); [Mark 7:32](#); [Mark 8:22](#); [Luke 8:31f](#); ([2 Corinthians 9:5](#)); [τινα ὑπὲρ τίνος, ἵνα, 2 Corinthians 12:8](#); [πολλά \(much\) τινα, ἵνα, Mark 5:10](#); [1 Corinthians 16:12](#); followed by [τοῦ μή](#) with an infinitive (Buttmann, § 140, 16 δ.; Winer's Grammar, 325 (305)), [Acts 21:12](#); by an infinitive [Acts 9:38](#) R G; by an accusative with an infinitive, [Acts 13:42](#); [Acts 24:4](#); ([Romans 16:17](#)). **to strive to appease by entreaty:** absolutely, [1 Corinthians 4:13](#); [τινα, Luke 15:28](#); [Acts 16:39](#) (2 Macc. 13:23).

**3. to console, to encourage and strengthen by consolation, to comfort**, (the Sept. for [𐤒𐤓](#); very rarely so in Greek authors, as Plutarch, Oth. 16): absolutely, [2 Corinthians 2:7](#); [τινα, 2 Corinthians 1:6](#); [2 Corinthians 7:6f](#); [ἐν](#) with a dative of the thing with which one comforts another, [1 Thessalonians 4:18](#); [τινα διὰ παρακλήσεως, 2 Corinthians 1:4](#); with an accusative of the contents, [διὰ τῆς παρακληθῆναι ἧς](#) (for [ἦν](#), see [ὅς, ἡ, ὁ](#), II. 2 c. α.) [παρακαλούμεθα](#), *ibid.*; in the passive, **to receive consolation, be comforted**, [Matthew 2:18](#); [2 Corinthians 13:11](#); [ἐπί τίνι over \(in\) a thing](#) (see [ἐπί](#), B. 2 a. δ.), [2 Corinthians 1:4](#); of the consolation (comfort) given not in words but by the experience of a happier lot or by a happy issue, equivalent to **to refresh, cheer**: passive, [Matthew 5:4](#) (5); [Luke 16:25](#); [Acts 20:12](#); [2 Corinthians 7:13](#) (where a full stop must be put after [παρακεκλήμεθα](#); [ἐν τίνι](#), by the help of a thing, [2 Corinthians 7:6f](#); [ἐπί τίνι](#), [1 Thessalonians 3:7](#); with ([ἐν](#)) [παρακλήσει](#) added, [2 Corinthians 7:7](#).

**4. to encourage, strengthen** (i. e. in the language of A. V. **comfort** (see Wright, Bible Word-Book, 2nd edition, under the word)) (in faith, piety, hope): [τάς καρδίας](#), your hearts, [Ephesians 6:22](#); [Colossians 2:2](#); [Colossians 4:8](#); [2 Thessalonians 2:17](#), (also [χειρας ἀσθενεῖς, Job 4:3](#) for [𐤒𐤓](#); [γόνατα παραλελυμένα, Isaiah 35:3f](#) (see the Hebrew) for [𐤒𐤓](#)).

**5. it combines the ideas of exhorting and comforting and encouraging** in [Romans 12:8](#); [1 Corinthians 14:31](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:2](#).

**6. to instruct, teach:** [ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ, Titus 1:9](#). (Compare: [συμπαρακαλέω](#).)

## Topical Lexicon

### Overview of Usage

The verb rendered “urge, exhort, comfort, appeal” appears 109 times across the New Testament narrative, letters, and Apocalypse. Its range stretches from the desperate pleas of a synagogue leader for his dying daughter ([Mark 5:23](#)) to the lofty pastoral summons of an apostle: “Therefore I exhort you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice” ([Romans 12:1](#)). Whether voiced by Christ, His followers, or even demons begging to

enter swine ([Mark 5:12](#)), the word consistently carries the idea of bringing one person alongside another for an earnest, purposeful exchange.

### **Encouragement to Believe and Obey**

Exhortation is the dominant shade of meaning in the Epistles. Paul “urges” the Corinthians “that all of you agree together” ([1 Corinthians 1:10](#)). He “encourages” the Thessalonians to “excel still more” in sanctification ([1 Thessalonians 4:1,10](#)) and “pleads” with Euodia and Syntyche “to agree in the Lord” ([Philippians 4:2](#)). Titus is told, “Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled” ([Titus 2:6](#)). The repeated imperative communicates that Christian obedience is not coerced but earnestly invited.

### **Comfort in Affliction**

The same verb carries a warm, consoling tone. “He comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble” ([2 Corinthians 1:4](#)). After Eutychus is raised, “they were greatly comforted” ([Acts 20:12](#)). The disciples at Rome “came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet Paul. When he saw them, he thanked God and was encouraged” ([Acts 28:15](#)). Scripture shows the fellowship of believers offering solace that mirrors the Father’s own heart.

### **Urgent Appeals and Pleas**

At times the term marks urgent petition. The demoniacs “begged” Jesus to send them into the pigs ([Matthew 8:31](#)). The sailors in the storm “began to urge Paul to take food” ([Acts 27:33-34](#)). Such usage underscores how intense human need often drives people to seek intervention.

### **Pastoral Ministry and Teaching**

Timothy and Titus receive a cascade of mandates: “Encourage and rebuke with all authority” ([Titus 2:15](#)); “Urge bondservants to be subject to their masters” ([Titus 2:9](#)); “Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but appeal to him as to a father” ([1 Timothy 5:1](#)). Biblical shepherding is neither cold command nor soft suggestion; it is a persuasive summons shaped by truth and love.

### **Missionary and Apostolic Strategy**

Luke records Paul’s pattern: “After the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them... departed” ([Acts 20:1-2](#)). Barnabas “was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord” ([Acts 11:23](#)). Exhortation is thus integral to disciple-making and church planting.

### **Corporate Life of the Church**

Hebrews enjoins, “Encourage one another daily... so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness” ([Hebrews 3:13](#)) and again, “Encouraging one another, and all the more as you see

the Day approaching” ([Hebrews 10:25](#)). Mutual exhortation functions as spiritual oxygen for the gathered body.

### **Relationship to the Holy Spirit and Christ**

The cognate noun “Paraclete” identifies the Holy Spirit ([John 14:16](#)). The verb’s repeated appearance in Christ’s ministry ([Matthew 5:4](#); [Mark 1:40](#)) anticipates the Spirit’s ongoing work of drawing near to counsel and strengthen believers.

### **Eschatological Consolation**

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” ([Matthew 5:4](#)). Paul closes the teaching on the Lord’s return with, “Therefore comfort one another with these words” ([1 Thessalonians 4:18](#)). Gospel hope reaches its climax in final consolation.

### **Implications for Prayer and Intercession**

[Romans 15:30](#) weds appeal and prayer: “Now I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.” Supplication is framed as coming alongside in the presence of God.

### **Historical-Theological Significance**

In Greco-Roman society, appeals were central to legal and civic life. The New Testament baptizes this cultural practice, redirecting it toward kingdom purposes. Exhortation becomes a Spirit-empowered literary form that unites doctrine and discipleship.

### **Practical Ministry Application Today**

1. Preaching: Biblical proclamation blends explanation with earnest appeal.
2. Counseling: True comfort arises from Scripture-saturated presence.
3. Discipleship: Regular, mutual exhortation guards against drift and fuels perseverance.
4. Mission: Evangelistic invitation mirrors Paul’s “We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God” ([2 Corinthians 5:20](#)).

The recurring pulse of Strong’s 3870 across the New Testament testifies that God draws near, speaks into the human condition, and calls His people to do the same.

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# Who was Manasseh in the Bible?

There are two historically significant men named Manasseh in the Bible. [King Manasseh](#), the son of King Hezekiah; and Manasseh, Joseph's firstborn son. This article will deal with Joseph's son. [Joseph](#), Jacob's eleventh son, was sold into slavery and, through the providence of God, ended up as the vizier of Egypt. In that land, he married Asenath, daughter of Potiphara, priest of On ([Genesis 41:50](#)). Asenath was the mother of Manasseh.

Manasseh's name literally means "making forgetful"; Joseph said he chose that name "because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household" ([Genesis 41:51](#)). Joseph had a new life in Egypt and a new family.

Joseph and Asenath had a second son, Ephraim. Later, Joseph's father, Jacob, and Joseph's brothers and their families moved to Egypt to escape a famine. When Jacob was about to die, Joseph brought his sons to him for a patriarchal blessing. Jacob basically adopted the boys as his own sons ([Genesis 48:5](#)) so that they would share in his inheritance. Manasseh and Ephraim are among the twelve tribes of Israel that inherited territory in the Promised Land.

Joseph intended for Jacob to bless Manasseh more than Ephraim, since Manasseh was the firstborn and the customary recipient of the [birthright](#). However, Jacob chose to give Ephraim the greater blessing—even though Joseph objected. Jacob said, "[Manasseh] too will become a people, and he too will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group of nations" ([Genesis 48:19](#)). These words came to pass much later, when Moses took a census of all the children of Israel. Manasseh had 32,200 descendants who were age 20 and over and able to go to war, and Ephraim had 40,500 ([Numbers 1:32–35](#)). From then on, the tribe of Ephraim, the younger, is almost always listed before that of [Manasseh](#), the older (see [Numbers 2:18–20](#)).

## DEFINING Manasseh:

The name Manasseh: Summary

### *Meaning*

Forgetting, Evaporating

## Etymology

From the verb נָשָׂה (*nasha*), to forget.

## Related names

- Via נָשָׂה (*nasha*): [Isshiah](#), [Mash](#), [Massa](#), [Moses](#), [Sheya](#), [Sion](#)

## **The name Manasseh in the Bible**

There are five men and a territory named Manasseh in the Bible:

- The most famous Manasseh is the eldest son of [Joseph](#), son of [Jacob](#), and his [Egyptian](#) wife [Asenath](#) (Genesis 41:51). The territory of the descendants of Manasseh (the מְנַשֵּׁי, Manassites; Deuteronomy 4:43) was situated in the north of [Canaan](#) and stretched diagonally across the Sea of [Galilee](#), from south-west to north-east. Even though Manasseh formed a half-tribe (the other half-tribe came from his brother [Ephraim](#)), [John](#) the Revelator lists his tribe as one of the twelve of [Israel](#) (spelled Μανασσης *Manasses*; [REVELATION 7:6](#)).
- Another famous Manasseh is the proverbially evil son and successor of king [Hezekiah](#) (2 Kings 21:1). Since he is an ancestor of [Christ](#) in the genealogy of [Matthew](#) through king [David's](#) son [Solomon](#), this Manasses is mentioned too in the New Testament ([MATTHEW 1:10](#)).
- A son of Pahath-moab, who had married and was to divorce his foreign wife in the purge of [Ezra](#) the Reformer (Ezra 10:30).
- A son of Hashum, who also married and divorced his foreign wife (Ezra 10:33).

- The grandfather of a man named [Jonathan](#), who became the patriarch of a family of idolatrous priests who served the [Danites](#) of [Laish](#) (Judges 18:30).

### Etymology of the name Manasseh

The name Manasseh is generally seen as derived from the verb נָשָׂה (*nasha*), to forget but forgetting due to "evaporation" of a memory the way water evaporates due to solar heat, or the way a principle evaporates due to interest:

Excerpted from: Abarim Publications' Biblical Dictionary

## נָשָׂה

Verb נָשָׂה (*nasa'*) describes an upward motion, generally of something that is being pulled up and out so as to remove it. This verb occurs very often and can usually be translated with (1) to lift or lift up, (2) to bear or carry, and (3) to take or take away. An identical verb (or rather the same one used in a specialized way) means to loan on interest. The practice of loaning on interest causes the principal sum to slowly but surely evaporate and was prohibited under Mosaic law. A third identical verb (or again the same one) means to deceive or beguile.

Noun מִשְׂאֵת (*mas'et*) reflects all nuances of the parent verb: uprising (of smoke), uplifting (of hands), utterance (of an oracle), a burden or that what's carried. Noun נָשִׂיא (*nasi'*) describes a lifted-up one, i.e. (1) a captain or chief, or (2) a mist or vapor. Note this keenly observed connection between paying interest and being formally governed.

Noun מִשְׂאָה (*massa'a*), describes clouds. It's spelled the same as the noun מִשְׁשָׂה (*mashsha'a*), a loan. (It's also spelled the same as מִשְׂחָה, *mesho'a*, ruin or desolation, from the whole

other verb שוא (*shw'*). Noun משא (*mashsha*) means a lending on interest. Noun משאון (*mashsha'on*) means guile. Plural noun משואות (*mashshu'ot*) means deceptions.

Noun משא (*massa'*) means (1) a load or burden, or (2) utterance or oracle. Noun שיא (*si'*) means loftiness or pride. Noun שאת (*se'et*) means dignity, swelling or outburst, a rising-up. This noun is spelled the same as שאת (*she't*), ruin or devastation, from the verb שאה (*sha'a*), to be noisy or ruinous.

## נשה

The verb נשה (*nasha*) is a specialized form of the previous. It either means to lend on interest or to forget, or rather to have a memory slowly evaporate away. Noun נשיה (*neshiya*) means forgetfulness or oblivion. Noun נשי (*neshi*) means debt. Noun משה (*mashshe*) means loan, and is spelled identical to the following.

## משה

Verb משה (*masha*) means to draw or draw out, and appears to specifically describe a drawing out of waters: to extract from water.

**— See the full Dictionary article —**

The name Manasseh is probably due to a grammatical form in [Hebrew](#) that is comparable to the English present continuous. It fixes the letter מ (*mem*) to the root. That would give the name Manasseh the meaning of **Forgetting**. Another reason why a *mem* may occur in front of a root is when it comes from a particle that means "from". Hence the name Manasseh may also mean **From A Debt**. This is significant

because Manasseh's brother is named Ephraim, a name with a distinctly bitter secondary meaning. Perhaps Joseph named his son From A Debt, because he figured that besides his gratitude for being rescued, he felt that either God or his family owed him a debt for tearing him away from his father.

### **Manasseh meaning**

For a meaning of the name Manasseh, Jones' Dictionary of Old Testament Proper Names reads **Forgetting, Forgetfulness**. NOBSE Study Bible Name List reads **Making To Forget**.

October 11, 2003

# How Jonathan Edwards Got Fired, and Why It's Important for Us Today

Desiring God 2003 National Conference | Minneapolis

- Message by Mark Dever
- Topic: [Jonathan Edwards](#)

Some of you, before you read the title to this chapter, or before you read the earlier chapters in this book, may not even have known that Jonathan Edward had been fired. He was fired by a vote of his congregational church. In July 1750 the members of his own

congregation voted to sever the pastoral relationship between them. Only 10 percent of the church members voted to keep Edwards as their pastor. As Edwards put it to a friend a couple of weeks later, the “generality” of the church members voted to send him away.

But before he could be voted out, he had to be voted in.

In April 1725 the church in Northampton, Massachusetts, voted to find a colleague pastor for the ailing Solomon Stoddard, the so-called “Pope of the Connecticut Valley” and Jonathan Edwards’s maternal grandfather. Edwards was first invited to preach there in August 1726. In November of that same year, Edwards was invited to settle in Northampton. He accepted the call to become the assistant and presumed successor of his Grandfather Stoddard at the church in Northampton, arguably the most important church center outside of Boston.

Stoddard was certainly one of the most celebrated ministers in New England. And it is at this point that Edwards’s biography — and that of his family — gets so intertwined with ecclesiology and the purpose of this chapter. Back in 1662 the Congregational churches in New England had struck a compromise in order to give many of the rights of membership (which included, most importantly, having their own children baptized) to those who had made no profession of conversion. This would allow such people to enjoy all the privileges of church membership except for the Lord’s Table. This was withheld from them. This became known as “the Halfway Covenant” and was bitterly opposed by Increase Mather and some others, but was finally generally accepted by the churches.

The church at Northampton had been founded by Increase Mather’s brother, Eleazar Mather. It was one of the congregations that had *rejected* this Halfway Covenant. When Eleazar Mather died in 1669, he was immediately succeeded by Solomon Stoddard, who was himself a champion of the new Halfway Covenant. Stoddard took Mather’s widow as his wife, and the church quickly took the new way advocated by Stoddard. Soon they had Covenant members (who gave evidence of conversion and were admitted to the Lord’s

Table) and nonCovenant members (who did not give evidence of conversion and were not admitted to the Lord's Table).

Within a few years something occurred that the plan's proponents had not foreseen — the non-Covenant members outnumbered the Covenant members. After some years of wrestling with this, in 1700 Stoddard suggested a fundamental change in the way that the Lord's Supper was given. He suggested that it should be expanded to include all of those members (regenerate and unregenerate) who wanted to partake, excepting only those whose lives were scandalous. "Mr. Stoddard's Way," as it was known, had been practiced for many years quietly in Northampton under his pastorate. Now he would make it known and advocate it.

Once again Increase Mather led the charge against this innovation. Stoddard published treatises in favor of his position, claiming that it might help in converting the unregenerate, and soon Stoddard's way became the practice of many, and perhaps most, of the New England churches. One can immediately grasp why it would be popular.

Now back to Edwards. In February 1727 Edwards was ordained a co-pastor of the church at Northampton, working alongside his grandfather. Two years later, on February 11, 1729, Solomon Stoddard died, and so Jonathan Edwards became the sole pastor of the most important congregation in western Massachusetts, with over 600 members. Stoddard's funeral was the very public occasion then for the beginning of Edward's solo pastorate. His first couple of years were spent quietly.

On July 8, 1731, Edwards preached a sermon in Boston entitled "God Glorified in Man's Dependence," at the request of the Boston clergy. It was the regular Thursday lecture at First Church (largely attended by ministers), but it was special because it was also the week of commencement at Harvard College. Being invited to give this address, then, was the biggest honor of the whole series of lectures. It would be the best-attended lecture of the year. And this lecture promised to be a particularly interesting one for a number of reasons pertaining to the lecturer.

First, the lectures were usually given by ministers from the Boston area; Edwards was from remote Northampton. Second, they were usually given by Harvard graduates; Edwards had not gone to Harvard, but to the new school, Yale (whose reputation was in serious question at the time). Third, Edwards was young — only twenty-eight at the time he was asked to give it. Fourth, he was the grandson of the famed Solomon Stoddard, who had often given this or some other important lecture in Boston. As Perry Miller described it, “The figure who stood before the congregation on this Thursday morning was the newly crowned successor of a rival principality, and the Boston clergy turned out to greet him as some privy council might greet the fledgling heir of a competing power” (Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* [William Sloane Associates, 1949], 13).

The lecture was deemed to be a success and was printed within a month; it was Edwards’s first sermon to be printed. Its printed title was: *God Glorified in the Work of Redemption by the Greatness of Man’s Dependence upon Him, in the Whole of It* (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Sermons and Discourses, 1730-1733*, [Yale University Press, 1999], 200-219).

Edwards continued on in his ministry. He saw revivals in the work in Northampton during the next few years, most notably from December 1734 through the spring of 1735. The membership of the church increased by several score, and so in 1736-1737 they built a new meetinghouse to accommodate the increase. Edwards continued as pastor of this congregation for more than a decade, having an international reputation, until, in July 1750, the members of the church voted by a margin of 10 to 1 to dismiss him. Ten days later, Edwards preached his final sermon to them as their pastor.

The situations that led to his dismissal are a long story that has to do with everything from botched pastoral moves to disputes over salary, envy in the town, a perceived coolness and aloofness on the part of Mr. Edwards, and even long-standing tensions in his own extended family. We could go on. The answer to “why” questions is almost always beyond human capacity to answer fully. Many of the particulars would be of interest only to academic historians or would take more space than the scope of this chapter allows.

At the very heart of the controversy that led to Edwards's being fired was church discipline and especially the question of who was to be admitted to the Lord's Table. Jonathan Edwards had come to disagree with his venerable grandfather, and the shock to the unity of the church was enough to send Edwards tumbling out of his pulpit, twenty-three years of spectacularly faithful and fruitful ministry notwithstanding.

Edwards had seven more years to live. They would mainly be spent in Stockbridge, a mission settlement further west in Massachusetts. The last few months of his life were spent in Princeton, New Jersey.

Edwards arrived in Princeton on February 16, 1758, and was formally installed as the President of the College that same day. One week later, February 23, he was inoculated for small pox, and after one month, lacking a day, on March 22, 1758, he died from it. Jonathan Edwards lived to be only fifty-four.

But in his brief life he had had the privilege of having a ministry of tremendous importance for a number of reasons. Not least among those reasons was his strong reassertion of the visible nature of the church, particularly reflected in his understanding of the Lord's Supper as an ordinance for believers.

## **The Setting for the Controversy**

The controversy surrounding Edwards's views on Communion had gone on for a couple of years, from 1748 until its resolution by his dismissal in 1750. The setting for the controversy was a church already frayed by tensions between the pastor and a few of the leading families. In what has been called the "Bad Book Case" in 1744 — which George Marsden, in his magisterial recent biography of Edwards, has argued we should call the "young folks' Bible" case — Edwards had alienated (probably unnecessarily) a number of families by reading publicly the names of children whom he wanted to see concerning

a certain scandal, thereby leaving the public impression that all of these children had behaved scandalously.

In fact, all Edwards was really doing was asking that certain of the young people come to see him so that he could get information from them (Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* [Yale University Press, 2003], 292-302). Pastors will understand the importance of such small miscalculations, as well as their incalculable effects. Marsden describes Edwards as one “never given to excessive tact” and as having a personality that was “brittle” and “unsociable” (Ibid., 344, 349).

Edwards continued to pastor the church and write prolifically, producing most notably *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* in 1746, and in 1747 *A Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement*, and in 1749 *An Account of the Life of Reverend David Brainerd*. But it was in 1748 that dissension really seemed to take hold in Edwards’s church.

Dealing with the difficulties of pastoral ministry became even more difficult for Edwards when, in 1748, his influential and supportive uncle, Colossians John Stoddard, died. Various clergy who had been disaffected with Edwards for one reason or another began to feel more free to voice their dissatisfactions. The divisions in his own congregation were encouraged. The Hawleys and the Williamses had had differences with Edwards. Some matters of church discipline, perhaps poorly handled, had caused stresses and strains.

## **The Communion Controversy**

It was against the backdrop of these existing tensions that the controversy over Communion broke out in earnest. In December 1748, Edwards told someone that they must profess Christianity before they could take Communion. This simple instruction reversed decades of practice. Stoddard had specifically opposed such requirements. Edwards was now quietly asserting his pastoral authority in a new direction.

The applicant talked to others about this and then refused to profess being a Christian. He was happy to profess godliness, but not being a Christian. He withdrew his request for membership in the church.

Tongues wagged, and eyebrows were raised. In February 1749 Edwards proposed that he preach about this change in the terms of admission to Communion. He proposed preaching a series of sermons to teach the congregation. The leaders preferred that Edwards make his case in print, and so he did.

In the meantime, in April, Mary Hulbert presented herself for Communion and membership, but Edwards and the Church Committee could not agree on whether she should make a profession of faith in order to do this, or whether such an action would prejudice the church. In order to break the impasse, Edwards bought time by offering to resign if the church would wait until after his defense of this change was written and published, so that they would have a chance to carefully consider his views. By a 15 to 3 vote the committee would not agree to it; so she was not allowed to join. The very fact that Edwards offered to resign signals something of how frayed the relationships had become.

In the midst of all this, it became clear that Edwards had come to disagree with the Halfway Covenant — the practice in New England churches of baptizing the infants of baptized, yet non-communicant church members. This only further alienated many of Edwards's church members, who felt that their own rights to church privileges were being threatened.

In a letter to John Erskine in Scotland, written on May 20, 1749, Edwards mentioned the controversy:

A very great difficulty has arisen between my people, relating to qualifications for communion at the Lord's table. My honoured grandfather Stoddard, my predecessor in the ministry over this church, strenuously maintained the Lord's Supper to be a

converting ordinance, and urged all to come who were not of scandalous life, though they knew themselves to be unconverted. I formerly conformed to his practice but I have had difficulties with respect to it, which have been long increasing, till I dared no longer proceed in the former way, which has occasioned great uneasiness among my people, and has filled all the country with noise. (Edwards to John Erskine (May 20, 1749), in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Letters and Personal Writings*, [Yale University Press, 1998], 271)

By August 1749 his new book had arrived in Northampton: *An Humble Inquiry into the Rules of the Word of God Concerning the Qualifications Requisite to a Complete Standing and Full Communion in the Visible Christian Church* (Edwards, “An Humble Inquiry . . .” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, [Banner of Truth, 1974], 1:431-484). That fall a secular meeting of citizens urged the church to separate Edwards either from his new principles or from his congregation. In December a council of local ministers was convened to look into the case.

In February 1750 Edwards decided to lecture on his opinions on Thursday afternoons at 2 P.M. The sermons were well-attended by visitors, but not by his own people. And they were to no avail. There was a series of divisive church meetings throughout the spring, issuing in a meeting of a council of ministers from June 19-22, 1750. The council asked to know the congregation’s mind on the matter, and in a specially called members’ meeting, only 10 percent of the church’s members voted for Edwards to remain as their pastor. The ministerial council then decided (by one vote) that the relations between Edwards and the congregation in Northampton should be dissolved. In effect, the council narrowly ratified what the congregation clearly desired.

**“Only 10 percent of the church’s members voted for Edwards to remain as their pastor.”**

Marsden sums the matter up this way:

Without his clumsily managed reversal of direction on [the terms of admission to the sacraments], he would have remained pastor in Northampton. True, there were pent-up resentments that came pouring out when the occasion arose. Nonetheless, the question of admission to the sacraments was in itself a momentous issue, with potential to disrupt even a harmonious relationship between a pastor and a town. (Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 370)

Perhaps if Edwards had introduced this more gradually, matters would have turned out differently, but we can only speculate.

On July 1, 1750, Edwards preached one of the most remarkable sermons that he — or any pastor to my knowledge — has ever preached. He preached his farewell sermon from [2 Corinthians 1:14 \(KJV\)](#): “As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus” (Edwards, “Farewell Sermon,” in *Works*, 1:cxcviii-ccvii). This sermon is remarkable for its gravity and tenderness, its love and certainty, and the evident deep trust in God expressed by its preacher. Strangely enough, Edwards (in what must have been a rather awkward situation) continued to live in the parsonage and to preach for them Sunday by Sunday at their request, until October 1751, fifteen months later.

The next year, 1752, from his home in Stockbridge, Edwards sent to the press the only other major work he published on this question: *Misrepresentations Corrected, and Truth Vindicated in a Reply to the Reverse Mr. Solomon Williams’s Book* (*Works*, 1:485-531).

This was his answer to Solomon Williams, Edwards’s cousin, who had written defending Stoddard’s practice and the decision of the Northampton church. Of course, this controversy had been settled by the dismissal of Edwards, so it was not continuing to disturb Northampton. Nevertheless, Edwards thought that he must correct certain misrepresentations.

By the end of the century Solomon Stoddard’s “converting ordinances” idea — the idea that prevailed in the church at Northampton over Edwards’s objections — became virtually extinct. After his death, Edwards’s ideas won out.

# Concern for the Visibility of the Church

In all of this, it is evident that Edwards's concern was a concern that had marked various parts of the Reformation and that was especially typical of the New England Puritan heritage he had received — the concern for the\* visibility\* of the church. By requiring those who are considered full members of the church to profess and demonstrate conversion, Edwards was hearkening back to the need for a clear distinction between the church and the world that had been so typical of the Puritan movement that had originally motivated so much of the settlement of New England. He was willing to put all of his personal convenience as a forty-six-year-old man, with a large (and therefore expensive to maintain) family on the line for what he understood to be faithfulness to Scripture on this particular matter.

As earlier separatists had maintained before him, Edwards understood that the visible church will always be mixed, and yet its purity was an asset to be cherished and improved. Its certain mixture was in no way an excuse for indifference or complacency about the moral purity of the church. In his sermons and particularly in his *Humble Inquiry*, Edwards advocated the simple idea that “none ought to be admitted to the communion and privileges of members of the visible church of Christ in complete standing, but such as are in profession and in the eye of the church's Christian judgment godly or gracious persons” (Edwards, “An Humble Inquiry into the Rules . . . Concerning . . . Communion in the Visible Christian Church,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, \* Ecclesiastical Writings\*, ed. David Hall [Yale University Press, 1994], 182). Edwards summoned the examples of the church in the New Testament, both in the Acts and in the Epistles, as supporting his case. Based on texts such as [1 Corinthians 11:28](#), “Let a man examine himself . . . and so eat,” Edwards argued that “It is necessary, that those who partake of the Lord's Supper, should judge themselves truly and cordially to accept of Christ, as their only Savior and chief good; for this is what the actions, which communicants perform at the Lord's table, are a solemn profession of” (Ibid., 256). The argument is straightforward enough.

# What Lessons Can We Learn for Today?

What are we today to learn from Edwards's stand? Why should this be so important that Edwards would be willing to be maligned and even fired over it? The main thing that I have been challenged about as I reflect on Edwards's resolve in this matter is the clarity with which he perceived that the church is to be visible; it is to be visibly the church.

We are to remember afresh that part of what we need to do is not simply try to make the church as accessible and comfortable as possible for the nonbeliever, but we must labor to make it as pure and holy as we can for all concerned — believers and nonbelievers, ourselves and others, the church, and even for the glory of God himself.

J.H. Thornwell, the great Southern Presbyterian theologian of the nineteenth century, noticed the churches in his day moving in a dangerous direction, a direction that he feared might compromise the very message of the church. In a letter written in July 1846, Thornwell warned:

Our whole system of operations gives an undue influence to money. Where money is the great *want*, *numbers* must be sought; and where an ambition for numbers prevails, doctrinal purity must be sacrificed. The root of the evil is in the *secular* spirit of all our ecclesiastical institutions. What we want is a *spiritual* body; a Church whose power lies in the truth, and the presence of the Holy Ghost. To *unsecularize* the Church should be the unceasing aim of all who are anxious that the ways of Zion should flourish.

(Thornwell, in a letter dated July 24, 1846, quoted in Benjamin Morgan Palmer, *The Life and Letters of James Henley Thornwell* (Richmond, Va.: Whittet & Shepperson, 1875), 291)

Like the compromised church at Northampton, so too among evangelicals of our own day, somewhere along the way something has happened to our ideas of church membership. And what touches membership touches the visibility of the church, and thereby the clarity and credibility of the gospel we preach in the world. Edwards seemed to understand this, and to understand its importance.

Evangelicals today may not have self-consciously entered into a Halfway Covenant. We may not be inviting non-Christians to Communion officially as they were in Edwards's day, but can anyone deny that membership in a church — the symbolic core of which is being regularly welcomed to the Lord's Table — is less meaningful today than it was a century ago? And if that is true, what kind of progress does that evidence, or portend, in sanctification? In evangelization? In missions? In bringing glory to our great Creator and Savior?

Is this a peculiarly American phenomenon, a leftover from the cultural dominance evangelical Christianity did in the past enjoy?

I read recently that the average Baptist church in England had seventy-three members and eighty-five in attendance (according to the 1989 English Church Census). In the U.S., the average attendance on Sunday morning among Southern Baptist churches was actually somewhat smaller — seventy — but still comparable. What was way out of line was this: Instead of having a slightly smaller membership — almost all of whom would be in attendance, with some visitors added in — the average U.S. Southern Baptist church has 233 members! (According to *SBC Research Review* 6 [Fall 1996]: 1)

Do you remember the line in the old spiritual "Ezekiel Saw the Wheel" that says, "Some go to church for to sing and shout, before six months they's all turned out"? That seems to happen, then, not just to some, but to most! And it's not just among Baptists. The statistics of denomination after denomination, local congregation after local congregation, evidence a laxness about church membership that undermines the gospel. Surely this is similar to the situation Edwards faced.

In Part 3 of Edwards's *Humble Inquiry*, Edwards asked why parents would be so concerned that their children have the signs and symbols — baptism and the Lord's Supper — and so evidently less concerned that they have the realities symbolized by them! Edwards wrote:

What is the name good for, without the thing? Can parents bear to have their children go about the world in the most odious and dangerous state of soul, in reality the children of the devil, and condemned to eternal burnings; when at the same time they can't bear to have them disgraced by going without the honor of being baptized! A high honor and privilege this is; yet how can parents be contented with the sign, exclusive of the thing signified! Why should they covet the external honor for their children, while they are so careless about the spiritual blessing! (Edwards, "Inquiry," 316)

Edwards goes on like this for pages!

Perhaps for us today, it is not strictly that membership has become meaningless and that it doesn't matter, but that it has the wrong meaning, and that it matters wrongly. Today a high-affection, low-commitment idea of membership is common. That is, today it may mean much to "leave someone's membership" in a particular place, but such a membership in itself evidences no commitment whatever to attend the church or pray for its ministry, to give to the church or to work to forward the gospel through it.

What we need is an exact reversal to take place. Ideas of membership should not be so associated with affection (I can love those who are not members of my church; I sometimes find that easier!) and linked more simply to commitment. Yes, make allowances for those who have recently moved, those who are invalids, those who are temporarily away for education or business or military service. But normalcy should be that a member of a church is in regular attendance and is evidently growing in love to God and man and in holiness of life.

## Laxness about church membership undermines the gospel.

Church discipline, too, should be reinvigorated to recover this winsome and hope-giving distinction that we Christians are to have from the world. Writing in the 1940s, New Testament scholar H.E. Dana said:

The abuse of discipline is reprehensible and destructive, but not more than the abandonment of discipline. Two generations ago the churches were applying discipline in a vindictive and arbitrary fashion which justly brought it into disrepute; today the pendulum has swung to the other extreme — discipline is almost wholly neglected. It is time for a new generation of pastors to restore this important function of the church to its rightful significance and place in church life. (Dana, *Manual of Ecclesiology*, [Central Seminary Press, 1944], 244)

Again, why is discipline important? Why is Edwards's recovery of the idea of regenerate church membership important? Because the gospel matters! And because God has elected to move in human history in a corporate way. Did he send his Son uniquely? Yes. Did he raise up individual prophets and apostles? Yes. Does he gift his church with individuals as pastors and teachers, servants and workers of mercy? Yes. Does he save us as individuals? Yes. But that is not the whole story!

By the stand that Edwards took, even to the sacrificing of his own reputation, position, and welfare, he was only reflecting God's own concern as we see it on the pages of Scripture when he desires members of the church to be those who are manifesting and displaying the glory of God. How will the satanic slander against the Creator's character be refuted? Not merely by individual conversions, but by the church, as the society of the redeemed, the company of the elect, the trophy of God's grace, showing his love and grace, his justice and holiness to each other.

## **Why Should We Exclude People from Communion?**

Why should we act, like Edwards, to exclude certain people from the Lord's Table in our own local churches? Why should we act to discipline or exclude people from Communion? We could give many reasons, but let me just give you five.

For the good of the individual disciplined. (See [1 Corinthians 5:5](#); [Galatians 6:1](#); [1 Timothy 1:20](#); [Titus 1:13](#).) The man in 1 Corinthians 5 was lost in his sin, thinking God was fine with his having an affair with his father's wife. The people in the churches in Galatia thought it was fine that they were trusting in their own works rather than in Christ alone. Alexander and Hymenaeus thought they were fine in blaspheming God. But none of these were! So out of our love for such people, we want to see church discipline practiced. We don't want to allow them to come to the Lord's Table, to enjoy the benefits of membership in our churches. We don't want to publicly affirm to them or to the watching world that they are pictures of what it means to savingly repent and believe. We don't want our church to encourage hypocrites who are hardened and confirmed, lulled in their sins. We do not want to live that kind of life individually or as a church. We don't want to see people who are not partakers of Christ by faith being treated as if they were! And we want this clarified for their own good!

For the good of the other Christians, as they see the danger of sin. When Paul wrote to Timothy in [1 Timothy 5:20](#), he said that if a leader sins, he should be rebuked publicly. That doesn't mean that anytime I, as the pastor of my church, do anything wrong, members of my church should stand up in the public service and say, "Hey, Mark, you were wrong when you did this." It means that when there is a serious sin (particularly that's not repented of), it needs to be brought up in public so that others will take warning by seeing the serious nature of sin. Even Solomon Stoddard understood that those who were "scandalous livers" were not to partake of the Lord's Table. Is there anything at your church that would inhibit the "scandalous livers" from taking the Lord's Supper?

For the health of the church as a whole. (See [1 Corinthians 5:6-8](#).) Again in 1 Corinthians 5, when Paul was pleading with them, he said that they shouldn't have boasted about having such toleration for sin in the church. He asked rhetorically, "Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?" Here yeast represented the unclean and spreading nature of sin. So Paul said, "Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast — as you really are. For Christ, our

Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival” — that’s the Passover supper — “not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth” (NIV).

For the Passover meal a lamb was slaughtered, and unleavened bread was eaten. Paul here told the Corinthians that the lamb (Christ) had been slaughtered and that they (the Corinthian church) were to be the unleavened bread. They were to have no leaven of sin in them. They as a whole church were to be an acceptable sacrifice. This would seem to mean that there was to be no partaking by those who were not Christians, who had not been forgiven by Christ.

Of course, such a reason to practice discipline doesn’t mean that discipline is the point of the church. Discipline is no more the point of the church than medicine is the point of life. Sometimes you are necessarily consumed with it, but generally it is no more than that which allows you to get on with your main task; it is certainly not the main task itself. The main task of the church, which Jonathan Edwards well knew, is glorifying God by preaching the good news of Jesus Christ. And yet, along with that, for the health of the church as a whole, Edwards also knew that church discipline should be practiced, and only those who give evidence of conversion should be allowed to come to the Lord’s Table. Only they should be members of our churches.

We should want to see discipline practiced in a church for the corporate witness of the church. (See [1 Corinthians 5:1](#); [John 13:34-35](#); [Matthew 5:16](#); [1 Peter 2:12](#).) This is a powerful tool in evangelism. People notice when our lives are different, especially when there is a whole community of people whose lives are different. The church is not a community of people whose lives are perfect, but whose lives are marked by genuinely loving God and loving one another. Conformity to the world in our churches makes our evangelistic task all the more difficult. As Nigel Lee of English Inter-Varsity once said, “We become so like the unbelievers they have no questions they want to ask us.” May we so live that people are made constructively curious.

And finally, the most compelling reason we have to practice church discipline is:

For the glory of God, as we reflect his holiness. (See [Ephesians 5:25-27](#); [Hebrews 12:10-14](#); [1 Peter 1:15-16](#); [2:9-12](#); [1 John 3:2-3](#).) That's why we're alive! We humans were made to bear God's image, to carry his character to his creation (see [Genesis 1:27](#)). So it is no surprise that throughout the Old Testament, as God fashioned a people to bear this image for himself, he instructed them in holiness so that their character might better approximate his own ([Leviticus 11:44](#); [19:2](#); [Proverbs 24:1](#); [25](#)). This was the basis for correcting and even excluding some of the people in the Old Testament, as God fashioned a people for himself.

And that was the basis for shaping the New Testament church as well (see [2 Corinthians 6:14 — 7:1](#); [13:2](#); [1 Timothy 6:3-5](#); [2 Timothy 3:1-5](#)). In the passages already mentioned, we find that as Christians we are supposed to be conspicuously holy, not for our own reputation, but for God's reputation. So in Matthew 5 we see that we are to be the light of the world and that when people see our good deeds they are to glorify God (verse 16). Peter says the same thing: "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation" ([1 Peter 2:12](#)). This is why God has called us and saved us and set us apart ([Colossians 1:21-22](#)). What else should we look like if we bear his name? Paul wrote to the church at Corinth:

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. ([1 Corinthians 6:9-11](#))

From the very beginning, Jesus had sent his disciples out to teach people to obey all that he had taught ([Matthew 28:19-20](#)). God will have a holy people to reflect his character.

## The Church's holiness reflects God's.

And then when you read the picture of the church at the end of the book of Revelation, you see it is this glorious bride that reflects the character of Christ himself. In chapter 21,

and then in chapter 22, we read the words of Christ: “Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood” (22:15).

Taking 1 Corinthians 5 as a model, churches have long recognized church discipline as one of the boundaries that make church membership mean something. The assumption is that a church member is someone who can appropriately take Communion without bringing disgrace on the church, condemnation on themselves, or dishonor to God and his gospel (see 1 Corinthians 11). Edwards understood better than his grandfather that it was not only moral uprightness but true spiritual life that is to be reflected in the church. It is by the collection of such spiritually alive people coming together that God is glorified as the church is made visible. It is through the church being made visible that the gospel is displayed. And the gospel glorifies God.

What was it Jesus said? “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” ([Matthew 5:16](#)). It is this shining, this visibility of the light of God’s Word and of his hope for sinners that is the role of the church and that pastors should cultivate in churches — even if people resent it and misunderstand us, gossip about us and are cruel to us and our families, even if it costs us our jobs and our reputations — as it did Jonathan Edwards. But then, Edwards didn’t live to please men but to please God.

I love the statement of David Hall about Edwards’s conduct during the ministerial council’s investigation of him, when they delivered the news that his relation with the Northampton congregation should be dissolved. This witness of Edwards’s reaction at the time recorded, “That faithful witness received the shock, unshaken. I never saw the least symptoms of displeasure in his countenance the whole week but he appeared like a man of God, whose happiness was out of the reach of his enemies” (Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 361).

This was Jonathan Edwards’s vision of the visible church — visible for the glory of God. And it is a vision that we today should reaffirm. The church is to be constituted of

believers, so that it will be visible for the glory of God. And that glory comes not by our exulting in our independence, but in our glorious dependence on God, and in creating distinct societies of love in a world of God-ignoring selfishness. God help us when our doctrine of the church stands to protect human pride and selfish individualism. God help us recover the true vision of the church — the vision that, by God’s grace, Edwards really had — the vision of the church visibly shining and distinct from the world, radiantly distinct, visible for the glory of God!

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