Who Is Your Brother?


By Morris W. Foster

LADEWATER, Texas—Who is my brother? We live and learn. I will begin by apologizing to those who have attended various church of God groups, who were shunned by those of us still attending WCG 35+ years ago.

. . . And to those who may no longer attend anywhere because of having been mistreated and shunned in the past. I apologize for any part I might have played by neglecting relationships . . . because I “drank the Kool-Aid” to a degree too.

We thought we were doing the right thing, but we were so wrong. We let some very close friendships die on the vine, by neglecting our brothers, who were only in search of doing the right thing. I am SO SORRY!!!

It is my objective to speak the truth, in love. In order to do this, I must address the elephant in the room in some of the “Church of God” organizations; That elephant is the desire of some “church of God” organizations to discredit others . . . claiming they are not brothers and sisters, because they do not attend their man-made organization, thus denying their relationships . . . because I “drank the Kool-Aid” to a degree too.

Twenty-two years ago, our son had a Rottweiler dog. At the same time, I was given a cute little puppy. I didn’t know until later that the puppy was a pit bull. At one point one dog took the other dog’s bone. . . . That’s when the fight started! Until we got rid of both dogs a couple years later, they would get into fight after fight, and literally try to kill one another. Multiple lacerations, shredded ears, and blood all over them.

Those dogfights are an appropriate analogy of what happens in a church organization split. It likely started with one leader taking another leader’s “bone.” . . . And the fight’s on! What should have happened, for starters, is they 4jshould have taken Philippians 2:1-4 to heart, and repented. These splits happen, in large part, because of leadership’s total failure to treat one another in a godly way.

When we still had the Rottweiler and pit bull, we adopted a cute little puppy that came walking down our driveway. He grew into a beautiful, lean, athletic dog. He could run like a deer. I named him Kirby. Kirby was a “people person.” He just loved everybody, and everything. We had to keep the Rottweiller and pit bull chained up so they wouldn’t kill each other. Kirby would run over to one dog, roll over on his back exposing his belly . . . as if to say “I know you could rip my belly out right now and kill me . . . but let’s just be friends and play,” and they would play. Then Kirby would run over to the other dog chained up to a different tree and do the same thing . . . and be friends, and play with him. Kirby was a peacemaker.

When others are “duking it out” over who’s in charge or “who is the greatest,” it’s our job to be a peacemaker, just like Kirby.

To answer the question of who is our brother, let’s read the very words of Jesus Christ in Matthew 12:50 For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother. Pretty straightforward! Whoever does the will of my Father! We can read it again . . . BUT . . . it DOES NOT say, you can only be a brother if you attend XYZ Church of God, Incorporated.

Unfortunately, the past and present culture of the “churches of God” has been greatly lacking in acknowledging brothers and sisters who attend other organizations. Also greatly lacking in our culture is reconciliation.

About five years ago, I had some work done on our property at home, by a very kind hearted man. I have known him since high school 48 years ago. He and his family attended WCG. Because he visited another group one Sabbath after a split 40 years ago, he was fired from his job, lost all of his friends who were expected to shun him, and nearly lost everything he and his family had.

That painful experience hurt him & his family so badly, that standing under our carport 35 years later . . . relating the story to me . . . he had tears streaming down his cheeks.

Unfortunately, the default setting of some of the leadership and ministry of the past has been: You don’t agree with me, then I kick you out of “the Church” and you are no longer a brother! You attended with another group one Sabbath . . . you are no longer my brother! You lose your job, all your income, your church, and all of your friends! You no longer have God’s spirit . . . Really!!! . . . SERIOUSLY!!!

As good as misguided intentions that some may have had, it seems we unwittingly became a tool of Satan’s, by denying our brother. A lot of pain was caused. Where does a loving heavenly Father . . . who gave the very life of His Son for us give ANYONE that kind of spiteful authority!!!

How unfortunate! Especially to live in an area of East Texas that is rich with so many brothers and sisters, yet with each successive split, we suffer even more estrangement from brothers and sisters. This has got to change!

The apostle Paul addressed this issue in Romans chapter 8. Please read the entire chapter. Following are some excerpts: v. 14, Paul said “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.” v. 31 “If God is for us, who can be against us?” v. 33: “Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.” v. 34 “Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is
also risen, who is even at the right hand of
God, who also makes intercession for us.”
35 “Who shall separate us from the love
of Christ? . . .”

Christ accepts us as brothers if we: 1. Do
the will of the Father; 2. Walk according
to the Spirit; and 3. If God’s spirit
dwells in us.

God is very protective of us. HE
LOVES US VERY MUCH!! I don’t read
anything in my Bible about being
required to attend XYZ church organiza-
tion. If that had been God’s intent, He
could have just simply spelled it out, after
all, He is the Master of prophecy.

Perhaps the issue is that some church
organization leaders fail to follow God’s
instructions in Micah 6:8:

Do justly, love mercy, and walk hum-
blly with your God.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13: For as the
body is one and has many members, but
all the members of that one body, being
many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13
For by one Spirit we were all baptized
into one body. We are all baptized into the
body of Christ! I have been to many bap-
tisms in the churches of God over the past
55+ years. I have never yet witnessed
someone being baptized into ABC COG,
Inc. So why the bait and switch by some
organizational leaders when yet another
organizational split comes along? Pretended
that the individual is now
chattel and a bondservant of that particu-
lar man-made organization, and must
attend that one organization, or lose their
salvation? We are not bondservants of
any corporation. We are bondservants of
Jesus Christ. II Corinthians 4:5, Galatians
1:10, Ephesians 6:6.

Unfortunately, and quite painfully,
most of us have witnessed many splits in
church organizations. Then, when a split
occurs, some church leaders try to scare
people into attending with them . . .
insisting that it is they who are right and
that God is behind them. They try to per-
suade you, that if you no longer attend
their group, you may lose your salvation.
Give me a break! That is an absolutely
indefensible position to take! Yet some,
even considered to be highly educated,
promote that arrogant, elitist ideology. It’s
indefensible! Simply indefensible. I
would gladly accept the challenge to sit
down with anyone and have them show
me, by a diagram, beginning with WCG
and Herbert Armstrong or others, how
they are the God appointed leader or
apostle, and prove that their organization,
and no other, is the one that God is using
to bring sons to glory.

We only have one Savior . . . Jesus
Christ! He is the One who sacrificed His
life for our sins. That sacrifice did not
come cheap to Jesus Christ, or to the
Father. He is the One who is the Head
of God’s Church . . . the body of Christ, a
spiritual body. It is He who we must obey.

God does not flippantly give authority
to men to give or take God’s holy spirit
from us, or our “brotherhood” . . . or
eternal life. No one has an app on their
phone, that they can hold up to someone
else, to determine if they have God’s spir-
it, to determine if he is therefore a broth-
er, or not a brother. Only our God of PER-
FECT LOVE has that power. He gave it
to no one else. I thank God for that fact.

In Matthew 18:20 Jesus Christ said
“For where two or three are gathered
together in My name, who are
sitting in ABC church of God.

In Matthew 7:15-16, Jesus Christ said:
Beware of false prophets, who come to
you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they
are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know
them by their fruits.

Some self proclaimed “apostles or
leaders” are enamored with their own
“greatness.” They also have an insatiable
appetite for money . . . your money . . .
and your children’s money. God’s way is
the way of give. Theirs is the way of take
. . . take as much as you can get. Perhaps
they would be embarrassed to no end, if
they actually realized how incredibly
obvious it is, and how ridiculous they
appear? Or, maybe not? . . . Instructing
members to mortgage their family homes
and family farms, will their children’s
inheritance to the organization . . . and
give, give, give. . . . While they take,
take, take. Where is God in that?

I laid in bed several years ago, sleepless
night after sleepless night, pondering the
subject of organizational leaders abusing
the members . . . God’s children. My
wife and I were severely suffering the
consequences of that very thing in our
lives. It occurred to me to get up and see
if I could find a video clip on YouTube
from the Wizard of Oz. I was able to find
this brief sixty second video clip. It richly
portrays the control that some organiza-
tional leaders, over the decades, have
tried to wield over the body of Christ . . .
. Claiming to represent God, but in real-
ity are misguided and speaking for them-
selves. Here’s the link if you’d like to
watch it:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y
WyCCJ6B2WE

Or, it might be easier if you simply go
to YouTube.com, and type into the search
box: wizard of oz pay no attention to that
man behind the curtain. Enjoy.

Let’s consider the words in 1 John 2:6,
9-11 about how we are to love our brother-
er. 6 He who says he abides in Him ought
himself also to walk just as He walked. 9
He who says he is in the light, and hates
his brother, is in darkness until now. 10
He who loves his brother abides in the
light, and there is no cause for stumbling
in him. 11 But he who hates his brother is
in darkness and walks in darkness, and
does not know where he is going, because
the darkness has blinded his eyes.

It’s interesting that those who claim to
be so adamantly against division are the
very ones who are most adamantly deter-
mined to maintain that division. Rather
than being willing to reconcile with their
brother, unless he comes crawling back to
their organization. Where is the peace-
maker in that? Where is the love of God
in that?

Jesus Christ said the rulers of the
Gentiles lord it over them, and those who
are great exercise authority over them. 26
Yet it shall not be so among you; whoev-
er desires to become great among you, let

The apostle Paul wrote to the
Corinthians, that he did not have domin-
ion over their faith, but that he was a fel-
low worker for their joy. II Corinthians
1:24 That is the correct role of the min-
istry and organizational leaders . . . to be
fellow workers of our joy.

How Are Brothers In Christ to Treat
One Another?

Let’s consider the good fruits that are to
be produced in our lives: Galatians 5:22-
23 says But the fruit of the Spirit is love,
joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, good-
ness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control.

What is the wisdom from above? James 3:17-18 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. 18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. Doesn’t sound anything at all like the dog fights mentioned above, does it?

So how are we to treat our brother? Philippians 2:1-4: 1 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Now here’s a biggie! If this were implemented, it would prevent so many problems! 3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

So many problems could be prevented or solved, if we would just obey this one scripture. Let’s not be so self-important. It’s not about us, it’s about God our Father and our elder Brother, Jesus Christ.

Romans chapter 12 is such a rich chapter of the Bible. I highly recommend reading the entire chapter.

It’s packed full of the godly way we should treat one another, and each fulfill our God-given roles in the church. Verses 3-8 have very specific instructions for anyone who claims to be of God, such as: * Don’t think more highly of yourself than you ought to think. * We have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function. * We, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

How Can You LOVE A Brother . . .

Who Denies You as Brother?

Shamefully, leaders of some organizations even bring lawsuits against their brothers in other organizations . . . and even their own members. This is strictly forbidden in scripture. Read I Corinthians 6:1-8. Do these men believe that if they deny their brother, and convince their membership to, that they are therefore justified in suing him? What shallow thinking. Try explaining that to God. That ungodly reasoning flies in the face of God’s inspired scriptures. Shameful!

Jesus Christ had so much to say about how we must treat others. In Matthew 5:9 Jesus said Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. So if we are to be called the sons of God, we cannot disparage or bring reproach upon our brothers who attend another fellowship.

Back to Romans chapter 12, in verses 9-21, the apostle Paul tells us how to conduct ourselves as Christians. * Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; * Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; * Distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Here’s another big one, especially when someone has “taken your bone”. * Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. * Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. * Do not be wise in your own opinion. * Repay no one evil for evil. * As much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. * Do not avenge yourselves. “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. * If your enemy is hungry, feed him; * If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.” * Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. . . . Totally opposite of denying your brother, and suing him.

In reference to verse 20 above “For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head,” I used to think, “yeah, he hurt me, and I’d kind of like it if he burnt a little bit.” But examining God’s word, that thinking doesn’t really fit with the love of God.

Explanations of this verse can make an interesting study, of which numerous explanations are offered. Fire was extremely important in that day, for many important functions. One explanation that does fit with God’s love, is that if our neighbor’s fire goes out, it is our responsibility to give him coals from our own fire, which he placed in a pot on his head . . . to carry them back to his home to rekindle his fire. Simply stated today . . . if my neighbor mistreats me, it is my responsibility to treat him in a godly way . . . showing him by my good example, the right way to treat others . . . including him. That’s just one explanation, but is very meaningful and picturesque to me.

It does fit with God’s word, His love, and His desire to see all come to repentance and reconciliation.

Pray for your friends who have mistreated you, and do good to them. In Job 42:7-10 I find it very interesting, and actually quite fascinating that it was not until AFTER Job prayed for his friends who had mistreated him, that God gave Job twice as much as he had had before.

What did the apostle Paul have to say about sectarianism. I Corinthians 1:12-13 Now I say this, that each of you says, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? It’s important to note: God’s children are NOT chattel of an organization. We are the begotten sons of the ALMIGHTY, All LOVING, GOD!!

A wise friend of mine commented a few years ago that “Some organizations worry too much about what they fear they might lose by counting those in other groups as brothers . . . instead of considering what they might gain.” An astute observation! Can you imagine what could be accomplished if the church of God groups worked together, with no concern for who got the credit?! If “credit” goes to any church organization, or leaders . . . it is of no value. If it is of God, the credit goes to God. If it is not of God . . . it’s worthless! It’s not about us. It’s about Almighty God, and our elder Brother, Jesus Christ. It’s not about XYZ church organization. The only Church organization that counts, is the body of Christ. No others matter. For starters, if we collectively followed God’s clear instructions, we could begin setting a much, much better example and be a much better light, in this dark world.

I am persuaded that there is a certain amount of unintentional idolatry among some who have been called . . . unwittingly idolizing the organization, or particular leaders. During the course of the last several years, I have come to recognize that I was guilty of the same, for most all of my life. A certain percentage, totally unwittingly, still are. Many, many others . . . far more than organizational leaders may realize, have awakened to the reality that we are to worship God, not the organization, or men who lead it.
No minister or organizational leader was God, came to earth, lived a perfect life . . . and then GAVE THAT PERFECT LIFE for me. . . . Only Jesus Christ did that! We have all been bought by the blood of our Creator and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is to HIM, and His Father ONLY, that we belong. Thankfully, there are loving, godly ministers too. Thankfully too, we can know them by their fruits.

What does God say about someone who hates his brother? 1 John 4:20-21 If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

**Barn Dances**

Until recent years, about the only time we got to see estranged brothers and sisters and friends, was at funerals. Six years ago, having become totally disgusted with all the splits that we have experienced among the various church organizations over the years . . . my wife and I started putting on the annual Barn Dance each year ourselves, with the help of friends. We invite everyone of the body of Christ to attend, regardless of what church of God organization they attend, or don’t attend. It’s always so heartwarming to see brothers and sisters who attend 6 or 7 various Church of God organizations, who believe the truth, all come together in peace, and greatly enjoy one another’s company, and no one has to die, so that we have the opportunity to be together.

These words from Jesus Christ have become our inspiration for these Barn Dances: John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” How did Jesus Christ love us? He gave His very life for us.

The Greatest Gift: I highly recommend reading the entire Chapter of I Corinthians 13 . . . referred to as The Love Chapter.

Let’s read about The Greatest Gift: 1 Corinthians 13:1-8, 13: 1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. 4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails. 13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

**How Can We LOVE A Brother . . . Who Denies Us?** * We can LOVE him anyway! * We can PRAY for him. * We can find ways to DO GOOD TO HIM . . . & Then Do It! * We can OVERCOME EVIL with GOOD!

As a blanket statement, NEVER be afraid to do the right thing! GOD will determine the outcome. Jesus Christ was the Creator. He was the Very God of the Old Testament. Other than God the Father, there is NO HIGHER RANK or authority . . . period! Not in the human realm, not in church organization leadership . . . and not in the spirit realm!!

Yet, what did Jesus Christ say when those He had created nailed him to a stake, and brutally beat, mocked, and crucified Him? Did He say: “I’m going to sue you!” or “You’ll burn in hell for this!!!!” NO! He very mercifully said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Our very definition of being Christians, means we must be followers of Jesus Christ. He gave his very life . . . for those . . . for US . . . WHO DID HIM WRONG, AND DID NOT DESERVE HIS SACRIFICE AND MERCY. We MUST follow His perfect, merciful example of forgiveness.

Among the various church of God organizations, unfortunately, there have been a lot of war stories. This has been on my mind a lot the last few years. Let’s replace those war stories with Love Stories! Let’s have a heart to follow Christ’s example . . . and the instructions we have read. Let’s meditate on ways we can love our brothers, and follow through on it. Let’s pray for our brothers. Let’s do random acts of kindness to them. Sometimes, you can simply wear people down with kindness.

Let’s let God use us to give the Love of God to our Brothers! Let’s build real love stories that will just melt the heart of our brothers. . . . Love Stories that will be repeated for decades . . . and Generations! Let’s resolve to maintain our relationships with our brothers . . . wherever they may attend, or not attend! Who can you REACH OUT to and rekindle a friendship with? Maybe a friendship that has dwindled on the vine? Seriously, who? I’m asking you to write down their names right now, and contact them, love them, and do random acts of kindness to them. Maybe you will regain a brother, and restore a treasured friendship. Maybe you can begin a treasured new friendship. Reach out to them this week. Send them a kind note. Tell them you miss them, and love them. Maybe take them some firewood, or use one of your gifts to help in a need that they are not able to do themselves, or help them with something they are able to do. Identify acts of kindness you can do for your estranged brothers and friends, and then do them.

Almighty God, Creator of all that is, gives us clear instruction in His Word, on how we must treat a brother. Never be afraid to do the right thing. Never! Regardless of any man who may try to sway you otherwise. God’s word is clear! Let’s ALL be a “Kirby”!

Let’s all be Peacemakers . . . FOR THEY WILL BE CALLED THE SONS OF GOD!


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This is not an effort to bring everyone together into one organization. It’s simply an effort to encourage all in the body of Christ, to accept and recognize our brothers . . . and treat them in a loving, godly way. . . . Regardless of what group they attend, or don’t attend.