
Words of Truth

We're Brethren First

By: Brian A. Yeager

As Christians everything we say and do is governed by the inspired word of God (Luke 4:4, Colossians 3:17, I Thessalonians 4:1-2, II Timothy 3:15-17, and II Peter 1:3-11). Therefore, it should go without saying that everything from our households (i.e. Ephesians 5:22-6:4) to our “social lives” are covered in the Scriptures (i.e. I Corinthians 10:23-33). There are no degrees of sins or items of greater importance in our lives when it comes to pleasing God (James 2:10-12). Loving God, which is the first commandment (Mark 12:28-33), includes obeying all that the Lord has said (John 14:15-24, John 15:10-14, I John 2:3-6, and I John 5:2-3). I am very briefly saying all of this so that the remainder of this study doesn't come across as saying the opposite.

The purpose of this study is to get us to think about and properly practice our relationship as brethren above all other earthly relationships. When we look at the Scriptures we see that carnal relationships can be ended without any spiritual consequences (Matthew 19:28-30 and Luke 14:25-33). Some carnal relationships must fail for us to be faithful (Matthew 10:34-39).

When it comes to **FAITHFUL** brethren, these are relationships that cannot be broken without fatal eternal consequences. Consider what Jesus taught that with certainty proves this point: *“But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift”* (Matthew 5:22-24). Jesus' words show that one's salvation and even one's ability to properly worship God is effected by unresolved problems with a brother or sister in Christ.

For us to properly relate to one another, we have to realize that our relationship as Christians supersedes all carnal relationships we may share. Jesus showed this in how He related to His physical family (Mark 3:31-35). Thus, before I am a husband to Katrina or a father to Trevor and Trey; I am first their brother in Christ. This is true of our relationships with brethren that may cross into business affairs, competitive events, social functions, workplace relationships, etc. Above all relationships, we are brethren first. Now, think about applying this principle.

Applying The “Brethren First” Mindset

There were many problems among the saints in Corinth. One of those problems is that they were settling conflicts that arose in civil courts. To see the “brethren first” principle applied, consider what was written to the Corinthians regarding this problem. Here is the text: *“Dare any*

of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren” (I Corinthians 6:1-8).

The saints in Corinth were instructed to deal with even carnal matters among the saints “in house”. Above that though, the Lord questioned why they would not just allow themselves to be defrauded [robbed; spoiled] by a brother rather than seeing them punished. In carnal matters amongst saints, we should be willing to suffer for one another (John 15:12-13; cf. Romans 16:3-4). How can we claim we’d be willing to die for a brother or sister in Christ, but take them to court because they didn’t come through on some carnal business deal or something? The “brethren first” mentality starts with proper love for one another (I Peter 1:22) and results in caring more about each other’s souls than anything carnal.

It Starts With Proper Love

Being brethren first starts with understanding how we MUST love each other and how that ties to our salvation. These things are clearly stated in the following Scriptures: *“For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth... Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love... If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also” (I John 3:11-18, I John 4:7-8, and I John 4:20-21).*

Conclusion

Before we are friends, lovers, co-workers, parents, co-investors, children, etc.; we are brethren. The relationship amongst brethren is directly connected to our salvation (I John 2:7-11). Allow these truths to guide you in carefully navigating how you act amongst brethren.