

# THE FOREST HILL NEWS

Published weekly by the Forest Hill church of Christ

*Visit our Website at [www.foresthillchurch.org](http://www.foresthillchurch.org)*

## **Forest Hill Church of Christ**

3950 Forest Hill-Irene Rd.  
Memphis, TN 38125

Office: (901) 751-2444  
Fax: (901) 751-9711  
Info Line: (901) 392-2449

### **Elders:**

Anthony D. Callahan  
Floyd M. Hayes  
Harold D. Mangrum  
Leonard Watson

### **Ministers:**

Barry M. Grider  
Matthew L. Martin

## **VISIT US SOON!**

### **Sunday:**

Bible Study..... 9:30 A..M.  
Morning Worship.....10:30 A.M.  
Evening Worship..... 6:00 P.M.

### **Wednesday:**

Bible Study .....7:00 P.M.

**HOME OF  
MEMPHIS SCHOOL OF  
PREACHING**  
[www.msop.org](http://www.msop.org)

### **Missions Supported:**

Iglesia de Cristo (Getwell)  
Kakinada, India  
Manila, Philippines  
Murmansk, Russia  
Far East/World Evangelism  
In Search of the Lord's Way  
Truth for the World

Volume 33

July 12, 2005

Number 28

## **WHO IS MY BROTHER? (Part One)**

Barry M. Grider

Sometimes I hear others speak of the “brotherhood of man.” It is argued that since God is our Creator, we are all brothers and sisters. Interestingly, however, this idea is usually espoused by those who question the existence of God. The term “brotherhood of man” is usually spoken by left-wingers who use this phrase as a way of reminding nations at war or those countries suspicious of one another, that all of us have much in common and, thus, should not be fighting, but rather be at peace. It is true that every person on earth is created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26) and possesses a living soul (Gen. 2:7). Likewise, every one of us should seek genuine peace (Rom. 12:48; 1 Tim. 2:2). However, it is not creation, but, rather, redemption that determines who are the children of God, and, thus, who really characterizes a brotherhood. The apostle Paul wrote,

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Gal. 3:26,27).

Faith in this passage has reference to the Gospel system by which we are saved. This system demands repentance and baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Those who did this on the day of Pentecost and thereafter were added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:47). Earlier, Jesus stated the terms for entering God's family, when he said,

“...Verily, verily, I say unto thee except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. “...Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:, 3,5).

The new birth reminds us of entering into a family. The church is described in the New Testament as the household of God (Eph. 2:19). House denotes family (Heb. 11:7). Isaiah prophesied of the “Lord's house” (Isa. 2:2). Paul identifies the Lord's house as the “church of the living God” (1 Tim. 3:15). Therefore, those who comprise the Lord's church are God's children, and His only children. Those of us privileged to be in God's family maintain a marvelous relationship with each other – brothers and sisters in Christ. Speaking of this relationship, the writer of Hebrews stated, “Let brotherly love continue” (Heb. 13:1). Evidently, one who will treat a fellow Christian in an abusive, ungodly way, has little understanding or no regard for the familial relationship that is to be maintained.

While it is true that most people on earth are not brethren in Christ, it is also true that every person in Christ is my brother or sister. An extreme position is starting to arise among us, which states some who once were our brethren are no longer our brethren. Can this be true? We shall examine this during our next issue.

## WHEN IS A CHILD READY FOR BAPTISM?

Rick Brumback

Every year when camp time comes around, there are numerous boys and girls who are pondering the issue of baptism. The topic is also one of interest to parents, because the children often come to mom and dad asking about being baptized. Like other parents, I have wondered how to answer my children effectively, not diminishing their interest in this topic, but also not encouraging them to do something the significance of which they do not grasp. It is a challenging time. Following are some observations, which I hope are useful to parents as they guide their kids at such moments.

- Children mature at different ages. This means that they may not understand and obey the Gospel at the same age as their parents, friends, or older siblings. And that is okay. Each person has to make this choice based upon their own realization of sin and the need for salvation. Thus it is very individualized matter based upon common principles.
- Sometimes children are interested in being baptized because their friends are. They will be of about the same age and think that it is time for them to respond to the Gospel also. And yet the fact mentioned above means that there is no default age, and this decision should not be made based upon the age and actions of other kids.
- I think that children may want, in principle, to do anything that pleases God. And since the Bible stipulates the need for a person to be baptized, perhaps some kids want to do this because it is like telling the truth or being kind to others – it is desired by God. This truly is a commendable desire on their part. But while God does want people to be saved, and baptism is a part of the process, this is not undertaken solely because the Lord wants people to do this. Kids need to understand something more, viz., their own needs.
- It is good to remember there are at least two levels of learning that must take place – that concerning the facts, and that concerning their application. It is good to have patient conversations with our children and let them express their thoughts on this matter. Ask questions that will allow them to state what they know about such things as sin, belief, repentance, confession, and baptism. If they have had good training at home and within the church, they will know what to say about these concepts, but that still does not mean

they are in need of conversion. It may mean they have been blessed with good teaching and they can return what they have been taught. They know the facts. But to respond to the Gospel they must also understand its application to their lives. “Why do *they* need baptism and forgiveness?” is a good matter to establish in talking with them.

- Perhaps it is helpful to remember that baptism, and the entire conversion process, is an *answer*. In looking at Acts 2:37-38, Peter gave instructions on conversion in response to a *question* presented by the audience. This question reflected the Jews’ awareness that they *needed* salvation because of things they had done that caused them to stand in violation of God’s will. Consequently, it seems that our children are not ready for the answer of the Gospel until they can express their own “question” about their needs. Baptism is the answer of a good conscience (1 Pet. 3:21), so the child should be able to express their own sinful condition and seek relief in forgiveness.
- If they cannot articulate both the facts and their own pressing need as a matter of sustained awareness, they likely are not ready. But they *are* thinking about spiritual things, and that is what we want. We must not dampen their enthusiasm, but we do want them to continue their maturation process before taking this important step. It is more important than selecting a career, or even than choosing a mate. Those decisions require maturity, and so does this step. If they are not ready, then they, in their innocence, are not in danger. They should be reassured that they are right with God, and they should be encouraged in their further studies. The time will come when the teaching connects with the arising of sin in their lives, and the matter will make sense. And then they are ready.

No doubt other suggestions deserve to be added to this list, but perhaps these are useful to parents and others who work with the kids and have opportunity to answer their questions. What a privilege to speak of such an important topic with a child who certainly wants to do what is right!

(Brother Brumback preaches for the Southwest church of Christ, Austin, Texas)

