

How Scripture Can Guide Christians to Unity in the Twenty-first Century

**ARE WE
MISSING
SOMETHING?**

*Discovering God's House, God's Church, and
True Worship*

KEITH DORRICOTT
Author of *I Want to Live*

Are We Missing Something?

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Epilogue

Why I Wrote This Book

It has been on my heart for a long, long time to try to write a book like this. Not that I necessarily thought that I was the right person to do it, but it needed doing and the conviction just would not go away.

Through no credit to me, God has squarely laid His hand on my life, and He has brought me to the point, at sixty-four years of age, where His things are by far the most important in my life, and what I spend most of my time on. This is not to suggest that I neglect other vital areas of my life, especially my family, but I see these as being within the greater context of the Lord's will for my life. Each one of my family is a wonderful gift from God.

I am often frustrated at my failures and ineffectiveness in the Lord's service, but my passion for it is stronger than ever. I am so grateful that He has brought me to a place in my life where what the world has on offer—status, recognition and financial rewards, some of which I have known in my professional career—have fallen into their proper place in the overall scheme of things.

I was brought up in a very godly Christian home and, the older I get, the more profoundly grateful I become for the values, scriptural teaching, and example that I learned from both my parents. I was saved (personally brought to know the Lord) at the very early age of five—and yet there is no doubt in my mind that it was my real conversion. I was baptized and added to the church of God in Glasgow, Scotland, at the age of eight, simply because I knew it was what I should do to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus. At age eleven, our family emigrated to Canada and we transferred to the church of God in Hamilton, Ontario. Three years later we moved to the big city of Toronto, where I have lived in one place or another ever since. We transferred at that time to the church of God in Toronto.

Around age twenty, while I was at university, I went through my first spiritual crisis. I began to have serious doubts about the very existence of God. I never spoke to anyone else about it at the time, although they may have suspected. It was my age of enlightenment, where I was sorting out which of the beliefs that I had inherited were truly my own. The process lasted for several months and it was a very uncomfortable time. But God

revealed Himself to me in an unmistakable way.

In 1967, my wife Sandra and I were married, and over the years our children—Adele, Jennifer, and Andrew—were born. I am deeply grateful to God that each of them for themselves has made a deep and lasting commitment to the Lord Jesus, and are serving Him. My marriage to Sandra of forty years has been a hugely beneficial and stabilizing force in my life. She is a very godly, gifted, and caring woman.

Throughout my growing-up years, I learned more and more from the Bible, including the teaching of the churches of God that I was part of. I became convinced of it, which is not surprising, given my environment that reinforced it, and I even began teaching it to other young people. Teaching the Scriptures to young people and young adults has always been my passion. Watching the light go on in their eyes as they discover the reality of God in their lives has always been a big motivator for me.

However, in the early 1970s, my second major spiritual crisis took place. There were several men in our church, of varying ages older than me, whom I looked up to. They seemed far more knowledgeable and experienced than I was, and I tended to take what they said without question. But a few of them began to leave the church. I know now that it was largely due to a variety of personal reasons, but I was drawn into some in-depth scriptural discussions about doctrine with two of them. They began to question many of the fundamental teachings of the church, which I had always accepted. I found myself trying to defend these teachings. I was de-stabilized by the whole exercise. This inner turmoil prompted me eventually to begin an in-depth study of these things from the Scriptures, without reference to secondary sources or reliance on existing literature. Those were the days before home computers and electronic concordances, and I generated reams and reams of paper in the course of my study. What began to emerge was a pattern of teaching that seemed eventually to all fit together. When I asked those who were disputing these things for their alternate explanation of how these Scriptures related to one other, they never gave me one. It seemed that they had a lot more questions than answers.

I was nearing the end of my research when, in a single week, two personal letters arrived. One was from an older brother in the Lord three thousand miles to the west, in British Columbia. The other was from my uncle, three thousand miles to the east, in Great Britain. They had both heard of the unrest in our church and were concerned for me as a young man. The letters were both hugely encouraging, and they came at a strategic time for me. The one from my uncle included a particular offer of assis-

tance, which I decided to take up. I wrote a rather terse letter listing ten key questions, which got to the heart of the dispute, and I asked for something more than the traditional answers to these. Within just a few days a reply arrived, several pages thick, containing a detailed scriptural response to each of my questions. As I read them over and over, I realized that I had been given real meat! It helped me immeasurably. (As you might expect, I still have the letter.)

As the months went by, the Lord again confirmed His Word to me. The other men eventually left the church and went various places. Even though I may not have been able to convince them, I had become convinced myself, and that was what mattered to me. It had taken me to a completely new level, and it bred in me a deep desire that more Christians should see what I had been shown—the marvellous truth in Scripture of the house of God and the churches of God. One by-product of that exercise was a self-study course that I developed, called *Where is God's House Today?* I am convinced that had this teaching not been so seriously challenged in my mind, I would never have come to the depth of understanding and conviction that I did about it, and for that I thank God.

On two subsequent occasions in the years since then I have felt led to re-examine these truths in detail, taking a different starting point each time. On both occasions, I found affirmation in the truth of the teaching, and in both cases my understanding and appreciation of it broadened and deepened. For that reason, I hope it happens again. A by-product of the first of these re-examinations was the teaching video and booklet *Uncovering the Pattern*, which was in use for several years.

While this topic is not by any means the only focus of my on-going teaching ministry to young people and adults, I welcome every opportunity to convey it to other disciples who are willing to consider it. Without a doubt, it is a revelation from God.

The unrest and division that I see among Christians has troubled me a great deal over the years—so much moving about from church to church, without any apparent deep conviction of where they ought to gather; so much disunity among members of the Body of Christ, which can't be solved by “papering over” differences of understanding. I also see it when people from time to time leave the churches of God with which I am associated. In talking with them, all too often they don't seem to realize what they are leaving, and that is sad. There is so much fragmentation among groups of believers today, so many denominations, so many different teachings. We are all members of the Body of Christ—we share that spiritual oneness—but

the Lord Himself longed that the oneness might be shown in how we live our lives for Him. He prayed for that unity on His last night before Calvary. And yet these days our culture so celebrates individuality and diversity that we can lose sight of the goal of unity of purpose and unity of service in carrying out all that the Lord has left us to do for Him. As a colleague of mine once said, “We are all accountable for what we do with the apostles’ teaching.” Even though it is now the twenty-first century, it *is* relevant; it *is* applicable; it *is* vitally important. But it is not well known, and that is a problem.

My on-going study over the years caused me to try to understand what brought about the differences of view and practice that so pervade the Christian world today. This led me into studying Christian history from secular writings, which continue the story after the New Testament leaves off towards the end of the first century. I have found this a fascinating study, full of personal stories of peoples’ lives. I have come to be full of admiration for so many of them—for example, for the early martyrs like Polycarp and Perpetua who, despite their limited understanding, were so faithful to their Lord, even to the point of death. And to the Reformers, such as Wycliffe, Luther, Zwingli, Hus and Tyndale, to whom we owe so much. And then to godly men like the Wesley brothers and John Knox, as God was gradually revealing His truth, and more and more of it was being recovered. And then to the young men who founded the “Brethren,” such as Darby and Mueller and Newton, who broke away from the established churches so that they could put into practice what they saw in Scripture. And to men like Banks and Boswell who, together with others, rediscovered the profound truth of the churches of God and the house of God and would not let it go. What a legacy I had.

It helped me to see why practices such as infant baptism came in and why it is held so tenaciously by some people; about the emergence of a clergy distinct from a congregation that had become passive; about the insistence on the independence of assemblies; about differences in leadership structures; about differences of understanding regarding certain gifts of the Spirit; and so on, and so on. These all emerged over the centuries, and in many cases they were honest differences of understanding about Scripture. The result is that the Christian world now is a far cry from its early years—there is an almost unlimited variety of beliefs, practices, and churches. And traditions die hard. It is often difficult for any of us to distinguish between the clear teaching of Scripture and a practice that has been entrenched in our minds for a long time. And so the Body of Christ does not yet have “the unity of the faith” that the Lord intends for it. Is there one right church?

Does it exist today? Does it even matter? These questions bothered me, but what could I do about it?

At some point along this journey the idea of this book was born. I do not actually remember when it was. The impetus to get down to the effort of writing it has come and gone over the years, but overall the desire has strengthened rather than weakened. Those (very) few people that I mentioned it to from time to time encouraged me to do it.

As I peruse Christian bookstores, read my share of books by Christian authors, and listen to teachers and preachers on television and on CDs, there is much that I enjoy and benefit from. But it surprises me that there is such a void about the aspect of the collective service of God, which is so central in God's Word. Perhaps positional teaching is out of fashion just now, or perhaps it is the way it sometimes tends to be presented, but so much today seems to be only about personal Christian living. This aspect is absolutely necessary, of course, but it is not sufficient. It should lead us to what God is working towards—unity in collective service, things that we ought to be doing together. I have become convinced that all God's purposes are eventually collective, and I fall short if I see only the individual aspects. But we live in an individualistic age. For example, most of the Christian songs that are written today seem to be written from that point of view.

In 1988, while at the height of my professional career and family responsibilities, I was diagnosed with leukemia and told there was no cure. That was to change my life in a profound way over the ten years that I had it. After being told in 1991 that I had about two years to live, and after having had numerous rounds of very heavy chemotherapy (many of which were experimental), I received a bone marrow transplant in 1997 from my younger sister Hilary, after being told by the doctors that it would never happen. However, a year later, with the statistics against me, I was declared in complete remission. Looking back over it all, there was a succession of miraculous occurrences that showed it was all in God's hands. God has also blessed me with good health since then. (I tell the story of my ten years with leukemia in my book *I Want to Live*, which is available on request. Contact information is provided on page 145.) It became increasingly apparent to me over this whole time that God had unfinished business with me, and I have become increasingly convinced that a part of that business is for me to share this glorious truth that He has showed to me and others. It is in this spirit that I send this book forth, to see what God intends to do with it.

I am well aware that what is written here is not universally, or even generally, held among Christians. If it were, I probably would never have felt

the need to write it. For this reason, I fully expect a wide variety of reactions to it. That is not within my control—I am quite content to leave the outcome with God. But I would be remiss if I did not at least try to communicate it to others, and that is what impels me. And so, as Pontius Pilate once said, “What I have written, I have written.” I want very much, however, to engage in any constructive dialogue over the Scriptures with any honest seeker after God, and I would welcome such enquiries. Contact information is given on page 145.

If you have read this far in this personal epilogue, I thank you. I hope that you have or will read this book carefully, referring to the Scriptures noted, asking the Lord to show you what He wants you to draw from it. It is the work of the Spirit of God to lead us into all the truth of Christ. When He does so, it is then up to us to do it.

Keith Dorricott
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