

August 13, 2023

# The View

*“Sirs, we wish to see Jesus.” — John 12:21*

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## Welcome Visitors

Our goal at the Folsom church of Christ is to do everything according to God's word, including respecting its silence. We are not a denomination, not part of anything larger than this local church; we have no earthly "headquarters." The five elders oversee this church and, ultimately, we answer only to Christ. The comments you hear today are primarily for the benefit of our own members, as we examine Scripture and seek to be built up in our faith in Christ. If you don't understand something, please do not hesitate to ask the preacher or one of the elders. We welcome and appreciate your comments and questions on any issue and especially if you see or hear anything that you feel does not correspond to God's word. We are here to serve; please help us do that.

***Please fill out a visitor's card and put it in the collection plate when is passed.***

***We do not solicit donations from visitors. See page 4 for more information.***

## Mark Your Calendars

**Bible Exhibit, with Mike Wilson, October 21, 2023**

*Invite your friends and relatives.*

## Schedule

### The Lord's Day

#### 9:30 AM Bible Classes

*Auditorium: "Jesus at work in the Gospels."*

Young Adult Class (room 12): "Jesus: making the best use of the time." Ephesians 5:15-17

Room 15/16: "Building a Great Marriage"

#### 10:30 AM: Assembly

Preaching Today

David Posey: "Blessed Assurance"

*Livestream at 9:30 & 10:30 <https://tinyurl.com/5f2cbm3y>*

#### Bible Class: 5:00 PM @ the Building

*"Praying the Psalms" (Auditorium)*

*HS/College Class, 5 PM @ David & Christie Posey's home*

*Middle school class: monthly (contact David Sanderson ([david.r.sanderson@intel.com](mailto:david.r.sanderson@intel.com))*

*or Seth Reagan ([sethreagan@gmail.com](mailto:sethreagan@gmail.com))*

There are several on-going Bible classes in the homes of members. Check with David Posey or one of the other elders if you would like to join one of those classes.

#### Wednesday 7 PM @ Building

Bible classes: 5<sup>th</sup> grade and lower

*6<sup>th</sup> grade and up, auditorium: Praising God in Song*

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Articles published in the View reflect only the thoughts and opinions of the author alone, not necessarily the editor, the elders or any member of the church at Folsom.

# Baptism in History

BY DAVID EDWIN (“ED”) HARRELL

My reading of the New Testament makes very clear the meaning and intent of baptism—it was a “burial” that put one “into Christ” and resulted in the “remission of sins” (Romans 6:3–4; Acts 2:38). Of course, we should always be willing to examine our reading to see that it is not prejudiced. Recently I was rereading Kenneth Scott Latourette’s massive *A History of Christianity* and found his discussion of New Testament baptism fascinating.

Latourette was a distinguished Yale historian and his multi-volume history is a classic. Near the beginning of his chapter on “Admission, Worship, and Discipline in the Christian Community,” he wrote this passage: “As we have seen, admission to the Church was through baptism. In the first few decades of the Church, baptism might be administered on a simple profession of faith in Christ. Thus on the famous day of Pentecost, often regarded as the birthday of the Church, when about three thousand are reported to have been to the fellowship of the disciples, the injunction was to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Whether all were baptized on that day is not explicitly stated, but we hear of the Ethiopian Eunuch being baptized after only brief instruction and of a jailer at Philippi receiving the rite, with all that were in his house, on the very night in which he seems first to have heard of Christ, with the simple requirement of believing ‘in the Lord Jesus Christ.’ ... Baptism seems to have been by immersion, at least normally.”

That description of the practice of the early church reminds me of an experience I had while a Fellow at the Ecumenical Institute at St. John’s Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota. This large Benedictine Monastery has a beautiful modern church on its grounds and my family

and I toured it shortly after we arrived. Immediately upon entering the building one encountered a set of steps which led down into a depressed area in the foyer with a fountain in it. The monk who guided us pointed out that this was the church’s baptismal fount. It had been placed in the front of the building, he told us, because in the early days of the church baptism had been the means of entering the church. So it was, I nodded.

The steps leading down to the fountain symbolized, he further explained, that baptism in the early church had been a burial. Ah, so.

Both Latourette and my guide confirmed in me the conviction that our difficulty with many questions is not so much

deciding what the New Testament says (and consequently what the New Testament Christians did) as it is in grasping the significance of those historical truths.

To say the least, such insights into baptism strongly challenge the fundamental Protestant teaching that man is justified by faith only. One can understand the historical dynamics which led the reformers to protest against the corrupted Catholic belief in justification by works, but the Protestant rebellion, like many revolutions, went much too far. A fair reading of the New Testament leads to the conclusion that first century Christians understood baptism to be a burial which preceded “the remission of sins” and provided entry “into Christ.”

CHRISTIANITY MAGAZINE, DECEMBER 1984

“Ed” Harrell, PhD (1930–2021) was the Daniel F. Breeden Eminent Scholar, Chair in the Humanities at Auburn University and, most importantly, a *brother in Christ and an outstanding gospel preacher — and a friend.*

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## Maui

As Californians, Hawaii is often the first choice of a destination to “get away from it all.” Unlike the Caribbean, it’s a mere 5 hour plane ride to any of the islands in the chain and it’s one of the most beautiful places in the world. We lived on Oahu for a couple of years in 1969–70 and have returned multiple times to Oahu and Maui (and recently, the Big Island) since then. Maui has emerged as the favorite island for most visitors to Hawaii so it’s hard to fathom that the iconic town of Lahaina, with its vintage buildings and the world’s largest banyan tree is gone, *just like that*. Of course, the most tragic loss is the loss of life — the fires have claimed 80 lives as of early Saturday morning and many more are missing, apparently. There are Christians living on Maui but I have not heard any reports of death or loss among our brethren, but we’ll stay tuned. When we were on the big island of Hawaii a couple of weeks ago, we heard a loud siren at 11:45 AM on July 30th. It was rather disconcerting until we found out it was a monthly test of a island-wide warning siren. Many of the survivors in Maui say they did not hear anything or get any kind of warning before the fires came. I don’t have all the details, but I’m under the impression that it came “as a thief in the night” before the officials had time to sound the alarm. Whether that’s the case or not, like all natural disasters, it reminds us of how fragile life is in this world. Keep that in mind. Be alert at all times and pray for those who have suffered loss. — dp

# Are There Times We Must Avoid a Brother or Sister?

## Is Church Discipline the Forgotten Command?

BY DAVID POSEY

Is “faith” really *faith*, if it never pinches us? Can we say we have faith if we only apply the words of Jesus that are easy to apply but balk at anything that seems too difficult?

There is nothing that will push our faith close to the breaking point like church discipline, especially when it involves a family member. I know how difficult it is, by personal experience. I have had to cut ties with family members after they were marked by a church.

I was convinced then and I am convinced now that the Bible tells me that in such cases I am to have no social interaction with a person in that situation. I am to be polite and continue to “admonish him as a brother” (II Thessalonians 3:15; I Corinthians 5:11) but I cannot pretend that nothing has changed. That would put both of our souls at risk.

From what I have observed, discipline is rarely practiced today in local churches. Some churches have been scared off by concerns that they will be sued. After all, we live in an extremely litigious society and, in fact, some churches *have* been sued in the past because they took disciplinary action against a member. But what does it say about us if we fail to do what God tells us to do because we fear a lawsuit?

In the cases I’m aware of where a church has been sued and lost, the church was found liable, not just because they took action the individual but because they publicized the action beyond the local church. In fact, in the past, churches would send letters of “disfellowship” to all the surrounding churches. That can prompt a civil judgment and is unscriptural (local churches are autonomous). As a practical matter, a church in one area may inquire about a member who is seeking membership. But that could be handled by a discreet phone call.

### What is “Church Discipline” and what’s the purpose?

What is “church discipline” and under what circumstances does it apply? And why did Jesus and his apostles command that the church “mark” (Romans 16:17) and “having nothing to do” (Titus 3:10) with some members of the church? What purpose does it serve?

“Church discipline” is the name given to *corrective* actions that the church takes when a member of the body sins and refuses to confess that sin. I John 1:9 promises forgiveness for every sin that a child of God commits if he confesses that sin (and repents). If he

refuses to confess then there is no avenue of forgiveness. Grace is not a free pass to sin (Romans 6:1).

Why is it important that the leaders take this action? What’s the purpose? There are at least three reasons for church discipline:

1. To restore the sinner: I Corinthians 5:5; Galatians 6:1. The goal is *restoration*, not rendering a final judgment on the person’s soul; that’s God’s business:
2. To maintain the purity of the church: I Corinthians 5:6-8. The reputation of the church matters (see Romans 1:8; Revelation 2-3). This isn’t suggesting that any church is perfectly “pure” but every church must care about its moral direction.
3. To demonstrate the reality of righteous living in a lost world: I Peter. 2:11-12; cf. Acts 5:14. Also see Matthew 5:14-16; Philippians 2:14-16 (remember that Paul is writing to the church, not just individuals).

### Who is subject to church discipline?

We do not take action against the person who is weak or “fainthearted” (I Thessalonians 5:14). These are the “spirit-is-willing-but-the-flesh-is-weak” people in every church, who never seem to get off the ground in their commitment but are not rejecting Christ or engaging in overt sin. The elders here choose mercy over judgment in such cases (James 2:13).

Church discipline is not to be used by elders to arbitrarily punish offenders or as a catch-all punishment for members who frustrate them. The Bible is clear: it mentions four general categories of discipline-inducing sin:

1. The divisive, factious person and false teachers. Titus 3:10; Romans 16:17-18.
2. One who lives a “disorderly” (insubordinate) life. II Thessalonians 3:6-15.
3. Unconfessed sin: Matthew 18:15-17; cf. I John 3:9; 5:16.
4. A wicked, immoral lifestyle; one who engages in patently evil activities. I Corinthians 5:1-13.

These all put the person’s soul and the church’s reputation in jeopardy and can quickly lead to division in the church. We’ll look at these in more detail in a future article.

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