



SEPTEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER

ST. JOHN UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
10207 Lincoln Trail, Fairview Heights, IL
618-397-6323

Website: www.stjohnfairview.org

Email address: stjohnuccfairview@gmail.com

Pastor Rosemary Captain

Dear Sisters and Brothers of Christ,
I always enjoy reading articles in “Patheos – Progressive Christian” email notices. I’ve shared articles written by Keith Giles, a gifted writer who makes controversial Biblical questions easier to understand. You are welcome to disagree with him anytime you like.

Here’s an article that was reposted recently. It’s called **“What the Bible Clearly Says.”**

It’s one of the most common phrases I think I’ve ever heard from Christians when it comes to any conversation where people want to use the Bible to justify their position: “The Bible clearly says...”

What follows is usually a quotation of a certain number of verses that support that person’s view, as if the conversation is now over. But, of course, the other person can also say, “No, you’re wrong because the Bible clearly says...” as they quote their own batch of scriptures that appear to support their particular viewpoint.

The truth is, these sorts of conversations are usually over long before they begin because neither side is really listening to the other side. Both people have already made up their mind what they believe “the Bible clearly says” and so they are not interested in being distracted from that conclusion by anyone else.

To some Christians, this presents a conundrum. They wonder who is right and who is wrong. They need to have it all spelled out so that everyone is under the proper Biblical Authority. To them what we need to do is to “take the Bible seriously” and “rightly divide the Word of Truth” because, in their minds, there is only one way to interpret the Scriptures: The Right Way.

Above all, their concern is that none of us should fall into the trap of applying our own personal slant to the Scriptures. What we need is for someone to tell us what the Bible says so we can avoid “reading into the text”.

But, here’s the deal: Having a hardcore stance on Biblical Authority does not eliminate the possibility that we might start following our own personal slant on the scriptures. It simply means that we are more likely to be blind to how our personal biases influence the way we interpret scripture.

In other words, what we mostly follow is our *interpretation* of the Scriptures, not the Scripture itself. If we fail to admit that, then we live in our blind spot and accuse everyone else of doing exactly what we ourselves are guilty of.

The honest truth is: There is almost nothing that the Bible “clearly says”. What it *does* is represent a variety of views and perspectives about who God is and what God is like. Our challenge – and everyone’s personal challenge – is to accurately determine what voices in the Bible we should agree with and which voices in the Bible to be more skeptical about.

This is why I advocate for a Christ-centric reading of the Bible. Because Jesus is the best picture we could ever have of who God is and what God is like. There are nearly a dozen scriptures that affirm this truth: *Jesus came to reveal to us who the Father really is.*

Why was this necessary? Because everyone before Jesus was unaware of who exactly the Father really was and what His character was actually like. Jesus settled the question once and for all: *God is like Jesus.*

Or, as Jesus put it: *“If you’ve seen me, you have seen the Father”* – Jesus (John 14:9)

So, if we have seen Jesus, then we have seen the clearest and most accurate vision of God anyone could possibly ever have.

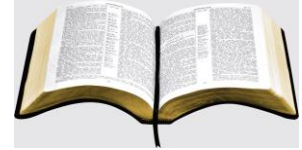
The Gospel of John stresses this truth in the strongest terms possible when it says:

“No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is God Himself, and is in the closest relationship to the Father, He has made Him known.” (John 1:18)

Our problem is compounded when we try to read the Bible as if it were one single book (it’s not), written by one single author (it’s not) and conclude that somehow all of these different voices must somehow be reconciled into one solitary voice where every part “agrees” with every other part.

This is called the “Flat Bible” approach and I think it’s the root of many unhealthy perspectives about God.

Instead of taking that approach (something I did for most of my life) I now suggest taking the Jesus-Centered approach where everything we read is filtered through the lens of Christ.



I believe this is exactly what the Apostle Paul himself did and also why he said: *“But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.”* (2 Cor. 3:14)

See, if we try to understand the scriptures apart from Christ, then we will arrive at a different conclusion than if we read them through the revealed character of the Father’s heart as seen in Jesus.

So, when we read and study the Bible, I think it’s important to do a few things: **First**, we need to admit to ourselves that we bring our own biases and ideas to the Scriptures when we read them.

Second, we need to accept the fact that we might be wrong about some of our assumptions about the Scriptures and what they’re saying to us.

Third, we need to admit that we might have something to learn from others who look at things from another perspective.

Fourth, we need to understand that the best way for us to look at the scriptures is through the lens of Jesus since He is the best picture we have of who God really is. *“No one knows the Father except for the Son and anyone to whom the Son reveals Him.”* – Jesus (Matt. 11:27)

There’s a lot we can learn if we listen to one another. There’s even more we can learn if we start by assuming that we have something to learn. But everyone can learn more about who God is by looking at Jesus. He is the Word of God made flesh who now dwells among – and within – us all.

“The Law came through Moses. But Grace and Truth came through Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17)

Keith Giles is the author of several books, including “Jesus Untangled: Crucifying Our Politics To Pledge Allegiance To The Lamb”. He is also the co-host of the Heretic Happy Hour Podcast on iTunes and Podbean. He and his wife live in Orange, CA with their two sons.

MY COMMENT: I love the whole article and I learned quite a bit. The one thing he said near the end, “There’s a lot we can learn if we listen to one another” makes me think of our wonderful Zoom Bible and Book Studies on Thursday evenings at 6:30 pm. We listen to each other. No one knows everything and listening to others opens our ears to new perspectives. Presently we are reading “Reading the Bible Again for the First Time” by Marcus Borg. We are hearing about the same things Keith Giles mentions above. Join us.
Peace and blessings. Pastor Rosemary Captain



JUST A REMINDER

Hospitals no longer are available to give out information concerning parishioners admissions to the hospital. So please call or ask a friend to call the church to let us know that you have been admitted to any hospital on either side of the river.

PENNIES FOR MISSION for September will be going to the Maui Relief Fund.

CHOIR WILL BEGIN OUR 2023-24 SEASON IN OCTOBER



Join the Choir...

**You'll Be Glad
You Did!**

Everyone is welcome to join the choir. We practice at 9 am the Sunday we are singing. The choir sings once a month.

I hope to see you in the group. Questions? Catch me at church or email me at neisenhauer3850@gmail.com
Nancy Eisenhauer

EVENING CIRCLE:

This is just a note to remind everyone; we WON'T HAVE A MEETING IN SEPTEMBER.

It was decided to start on the second Sunday of October on the 8th.

Hope you are enjoying your summer (not the HOT weather) and we hope to see everyone at our first meeting in October.

SUMMER ENDS and FALL BEGINS

When August turns September
And September turns to fall,
We harvest and we garner
And thank the Lord for all.

by Minnie Klemme

Eileen Gammon, Co-Chair

A Thank you...

Thanks to my church buddies for giving their time and energy to the homecoming dress giveaway on August 26th.

Only seven dresses were given away, but six girls were very happy. 😊

Us ladies got a few small projects done while we were there, besides talking and laughing! ~ Carol Bulva

September Birthdays:

9/7 Sue Sharp
9/9 Wayne Schlosser
9/14 Louise Cohlmeier
9/18 Dorothy Ovelgoenner
9/23 Carol Randle



9/23 Jennifer Hackbarth

September Anniversaries:

9/17 Cindy & Clay Harris # 46

9/25 Carol & Joe Bulva # 47

9/30 Cassie & Edgar Myers # 12



REMEMBER OUR SHUT-INS:

Terry Kissel

Colonnade Senior Living

700 Weber Road, Apt 105

O'Fallon, IL 62269

Jeanette Brown

5904 Perrin Road

Fairview Heights, IL 62208

Yvonne Weber

200 St. Clair Dr.

Fairview Heights, IL 62208

Ivy Schneider

213 Merriweather Ln.

Fairview Heights, IL 62208

Darlene Schaperkoetter

1258 Larkspur Dr.

Mascoutah, IL 62258

Becky Ballard

1211 Moreland Apt. 12

Belleville, IL 62223

PRAYER LIST: Carson Edwards, Yvonne Weber, Marilyn Paul, Beth Sheldon, Mary Holcomb, Syd Safriet, Ronald Bopp, Rosemary Williams, Becky Ballard, David Seneczyn, Urban Baum, Russ Hartmann

(If there are names on this list that you believe can be removed, call the church secretary.)



USHERS

9/3 Tom and Jan Miller

9/10 Carol Bulva and Eileen Gammon

9/17 Jane Cohlmeier and Nancy Eisenhauer

9/24 Tom and Jan Miller

September

2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3 Service of Word 10 am	4	5	6	7 Bible Study via Zoom at 6:30 pm AA Meeting	8	9
10 Service of Word & Sacrament 10 am Fellowship time after worship	11	12	13 Church Council meeting via Zoom 7pm	14 Hearts and Hands Quilters 10-2 Bible Study via Zoom at 6:30 pm AA Meeting	15	16
17 Service of Word 10 am	18	19	20	21 Bible Study via Zoom at 6:30 pm AA Meeting	22	23
24 Service of Word 10 am	25	26	27	28 Bible Study via Zoom at 6:30 pm AA Meeting	29	30