



“Shibboleth” or “Sibboleth”?

Looking past our commonalities to see our differences

MOST HAVE HEARD THIS QUESTION ASKED, maybe even asked it: *What are the Church of God doctrinal distinctives? Or rephrased, What separates us from everyone else? How are we different from ... them?*

It seems that human nature compels us to self-identify based on difference, even when observed differences are negligible or skin-deep. In the book of Judges, two tribes of Israelites, who were otherwise indistinct, were fighting for a truly petty reason. To identify them, the Gileadites required the Ephraimites to say the word *Shibboleth*. If the word was pronounced *Sibboleth*, “Then they seized him and killed him at the fords of the Jordan” (Jdgs 12:6). Forty-two thousand Ephraimites were killed!

That same tactic was used during Sri Lanka’s thirty-year civil war. Here, there are two major ethnic groups: the Sinhalese, whose language is Sinhala, and Tamils, who speak Tamil. Military checkpoints are still common when we travel outstation, but we are told that those checkpoints were far more common and more dangerous for Tamil-speaking people not long ago. One of the ways checkpoints determined if

a person was native Tamil- or Sinhala-speaking was to ask him to pronounce *vaaldiya* (bucket). If they pronounced it *baaldiya*, the person was sometimes detained or worse.

It is always an act of will to focus on the things that divide us rather than what unites us. Certainly, our differences should be valued and celebrated. The truth is, we must often look past our commonalities to see our differences. Finding common ground is often not hard. It is not hard for Sinhalese and Tamil Christians in Sri Lanka, both of whom are persecuted for their faith in Christ. And it need not be difficult for us to find common ground, if we ask the right questions. Instead of asking what makes us different, let us ask what makes us the same while celebrating our differences. Left, right, black, white ... whatever the difference or wherever we locate ourselves in our polarized society, let us ask questions that unite us, not divide us, and may we take actions that move us closer to that unity of spirit of which Paul spoke in Ephesians 4. 🌍



Here are just a few of the exciting things happening in Sri Lanka through your prayer and support:

Leadership Training: Holiness & Unity



Drew and Kay Wilkerson from Bridgewater Church in Hamilton, OH, led this foundational

training in September 2018. This training series is made possible through your support of Project Link - Sri Lanka!



Leadership Training: Absolute Surrender

Horace Sheppard Jr. (blue shirt) from

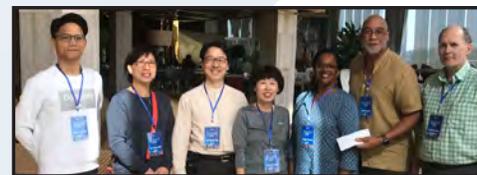
Bethesda Christian Fellowship in Philadelphia, PA, led this important training in February 2019. This training series is made possible through your support of Project Link - Sri Lanka.

Project Link Visit



Josh Weiger (second from right), who recently joined the Global Strategy office staff as Project Link coordinator, visited Sri Lanka to see how projects work in this country.

Building for the Kingdom



Funds for the construction of a church in Santhiveli were provided by the Sungdong Church of God in Seoul, Korea. Pastor Lee (middle) and staff are partnering with the Church of God in Sri Lanka! This project is also supported by the Meghalaya Church of God in India and the College of Construction Skills in Sri Lanka. 🌍

On Mission for God! Conferences

After three and a half years on mission for God in Sri Lanka, God has challenged us to provide a series of one-day missions education experiences!

- April 13** - Fellowship Community Church, Lincoln, NB: George Cook
- April 27** - Lighthouse Community Church, Redford, MI: Dale Turner
- May 4** - Faith Chapel Church, Baton Rouge, LA: Bart Riggins
- June 1** - Lakewood Way Community Church, Kansas City: Brian Smith
- July 8-11** - Warsaw Campmeeting, Warsaw, OH: WCG
- September 14** - Bethesda Christian Fellowship, Philadelphia: Horace Sheppard, Jr.
- September 28** - Kirkwood Church of God, St. Louis: David Winslow
- October 12** - 2020 Christian Women Connection Convention, Myrtle Beach, SC 🌍

Your Support Makes a Difference!

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