

From The History of a Different DNA  
By Dale Norman Amend  
Chapter 21, **I Believe**

A half drunk patron in the bar philosophized with his regular drinking buddy, “Well, everyone’s gotta believe sumthin’. I believe I’ll have another beer.”

My own beliefs are a bit more serious. I am a traditional Christian. I hold firmly to established Christian beliefs. From my childhood, my parents adhered to the admonition in the book of Proverbs, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” I was taught. I accepted. I believe.

My normal day begins with a light breakfast followed by the short trip to the reading room. Some people call this part of the house the bathroom. Admittedly, there is running water under the place where I sit and the shower is within arms reach, but I still call it the reading room. On the wall near my shoulder is a special book rack made by Nancy’s brother. It holds Daily Guideposts, a spirit lifting devotional book, and the Guideposts magazine. I read the short bio of the day’s author and then the daily devotional by that writer. After many years I’m familiar with most of the fifty-some writers for the book. Their problems, their joys and their faith are those of real every day people.

However, before opening that book, I speak to the One Who inspires those writers. “Buenos dias, Dios.” (After all, I do live in New Mexico.) “Good morning, God. Good morning, my Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer and Friend. All glory, honor and praise be to Thee, Gracious God, now and forever. Thank you, Dear God, for this day. Guide me to use it according to your will” and continue with pertinent prayers appropriate for the day. Then I see what the Guideposts writer for the day has to say.

I try to live in accordance with well known Christian standards. The Ten Commandments (*not* recommendations) were delivered to the people by Moses and later affirmed by Jesus.

- “1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and mother.
6. You shall not commit murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness.
10. You shall not covet what is not yours.”

To these commandments Jesus added, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. And a second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

The mores of our society and the laws of our nation have historically been structured to a great degree upon these pillars. I deplore the actions of those who try to remove them from our every day lives.

The Lord's Prayer is well worn, and it's still as good as ever. "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

Many people, I believe, are comfortable stopping with the Amen at the end of The Lord's Prayer. I think it's necessary to observe the two verses immediately following. "For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions." That's a tough requirement! I have to remind myself that I must forgive, although there are many times when I don't want to forgive.

For me, The Apostles' Creed is a good brief summary of our Christian faith. "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. The third day he rose from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic (universal) church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen."

My Christian faith is the basis of my beliefs. I grew up with additional important teachings and beliefs that are firmly printed in my memory to this day. They serve not as a substitute, but as a supplement to my Christian faith. The teachings of the Boy Scouts of America and the Order of DeMolay both reinforce Christianity. My scouting experience was full of fellowship and fun. It also reinforced the Christian beliefs I already held. I still subscribe to The Scout Law. "A scout is Trustworthy – Loyal – Helpful – Friendly – Courteous – Kind – Obedient – Cheerful – Thrifty – Brave – Clean and Reverent" and to The Scout Oath. "On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and to my country, to obey the Scout Law, to help other people at all times, to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight."

The Order of DeMolay is an organization for the development of young men from the age of thirteen to twenty-one. It is sponsored by the Masonic Lodge. The Initiatory Degree of DeMolay inculcates the Seven Jewels in the Crown of Youth. "Filial Love – Reverence for Sacred Things – Courtesy – Comradeship – Fidelity – Cleanness – and Patriotism". The second degree, The DeMolay Degree, teaches the lesson of tolerance for others. I wish all young men in our society were reared to respect and cling to these values for living their lives. To this day, I easily recite from memory the basic concepts taught by Boy Scouts and the Order of DeMolay.

Through the words above I have tried to tell you what I believe. However, if they are only words that have no influence on how I live, they are empty and meaningless. I

accept the Christian concept that we are saved by grace, not by our works. You can't do enough good deeds to work your way into heaven. OK, I buy that, but if I truly believe, I am compelled to try to live it out in my life. The book of James is perhaps my favorite book in the Bible. It says, "Be doers of the word, not just hearers of the word", and also "Faith without works is dead." I cannot separate what I believe from how I try to live my life. For me, the two are inseparably intertwined. The well known author, Jewish Rabbi Harry Kushner, puts it this way, "After all, if your faith has no influence on how you live your life, what good is it?"

Daddy taught by example. He also quoted Jesus, "By their fruits you will know them." In other words, you'll know what a man really believes by what he does and how he acts.

I recall hearing Daddy say, "Don't bother me with your words. Show me how you live your life." He did his preaching by example. If you watched him live, you'd get the message. I try to follow Daddy's example as best I can. I have adopted for myself one of his favorite poems. A copy of it permanently occupies a corner of my bulletin board by the telephone.

### **Sermons We See**

I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day,  
I'd rather one should walk with me than merely show the way,  
The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear;  
Fine counsel is confusing, but example's always clear;  
And the best of all the preachers are the men who live their creeds,  
For to see the good in action is what everybody needs.  
I can soon learn how to do it if you'll let me see it done.  
I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue too fast may run.  
And the lectures you deliver may be very wise and true;  
But I'd rather get my lesson by observing what you do.  
For I may misunderstand you and the high advice you give,  
But there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.

----Edgar A. Guest

I try to avoid "preaching at" others, telling them what they should be doing. If they ask, I'm glad to talk about what I believe. In the meantime I try to keep the guy I see in the mirror doing what he should be doing. That's a full time job.

I lean frequently on Isaiah 26:3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed (anchored) on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee". I tack my own prayer onto the end of that scripture, "Stay my mind on Thee, Dear Lord. Anchor me in the bedrock of Thy constancy and grant me Thy peace." If I have God's peace, what more could I want?

I pray that you have God's peace in your life.

Peace!