

Sunday, February 15, 2015—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 162
 Sonship Edification: The Evolution of SE in the Writings of Keith R. Blades, 3rd Quarter of 2001

Introduction: Further Thoughts on the Percolation Period, 1994 to June 2001

- Since last week when I taught Lesson 161, it has come to my attention that during the percolation period, Keith may not have been writing about SE but that does not mean he was not thinking about it or speaking to select people privately about it.
- I mentioned last week my wonderment over why the *A Very Simple Survey of the Bible* Series of booklets ended in 1997 with Volume II on Genesis. In the past, I thought, and mentioned last week, that one explanation for this phenomenon might be on account of Keith falling ill. Upon further reflection I am no longer satisfied with that explanation. Even if Blades fell ill in 1997 or 1998, it did not stop his production in terms of writing and preaching; he continued to produce the *Enjoy the Bible Quarterly (EBQ)* without interruption as well as speak at the Northern Rocky Mountain Berean Bible Camp in 1997 and 1999 and 2000 at a minimum. I now believe that the reason why Blades dropped the *Survey* series is because something else was taking shape in his mind, i.e., Sonship Edification (SE).
- I have reason to believe that during the late 90s Keith was privately test marketing some of his sonship ideas even though he was not publically teaching them or openly writing about them in the *EBQ*. The following is a short list of reasons why I believe this to be true:
 - Jeremy Shellman was very involved with Keith during the mid to late 90s and wanted to bring Blades to Arizona to pastor an assembly there. Keith visited the group and declined the invitation to relocate on account of his misgivings regarding the stability and structure of the group. Keith's refusal resulted in a parting of ways between Jeremy and Rick Jordan (Brother Jordan's son). This parting of ways led to the formation of Southwest Bible Fellowship by Rick Jordan in 1998. Rick reports that in the late 90s Jeremy was talking about how not all believers are joint-heirs with Christ unless they meet certain conditions. Rick believes that Jeremy was getting his views on joint-heirship and edification from his private conversations with Blades. (Phone conversation on 2/12/15 with Rick Jordan.)
 - On Saturday, February 7, 2015 I received a phone call from a Brother in Florida who spoke of a recording that Keith sent out to certain people previewing SE and asking for their feedback. This Brother confirmed the existence of the tape with Mike McDaniel of Millennium Bible Institute in Texas. When asked for a copy of the recording, Brother McDaniel refused, citing his promise to Blades that he would not share it with anyone as justification for not doing so despite this Brothers offer to cover any and all expenses associated with the duplication and distribution of the recording. Brothers from Canada with whom I spoke had no direct knowledge of the recording but were not surprised to hear of its existence. According to these Brothers, Keith had been PRIVATELY

studying these things for quite some time and was apprehensive about sharing it with anyone before he began writing about it extensively in the *EBQ*.

- For the purposes of illustration, I view Keith's actions with respect to SE as similar to the private screening of a movie or its limited release in select cities. Keith appears to have tested his ideas with certain people whom he thought he could trust before releasing his movie for full public viewing. This illustration fits with the general notion that ideas are developed and tested before they are written about.
- The bottom line is this – there are reports from multiple quarters of SE having already affected local assemblies prior to its full scale public unveiling in the second half of 2001. Just because Blades was not writing about SE in the *EBQ* to any large degree does not mean that the ideas were not taking shape in his mind and being made manifest in other less public ways.

The Influence of Grace School of the Bible

- Any investigation into the precursors to and development of SE in the mind of Keith R. Blades would be incomplete and unfair if I failed to note Keith's long time association with Pastor Richard Jordan and Grace School of the Bible (GSB).
- Throughout the 1980s and 1990s Blades and Jordan, as well as other graduates of GSB, maintained intimate fellowship around God's word rightly divided and shared the pulpit at various Bible conferences and camps. Brother Jordan identified Keith as one of the brothers who contributed to development and enunciation of the Grace Alternative doctrines in the late 80s and early 90s (see [Lesson 125](#) see page 4).
- Given his close fellowship with brethren associated with GSB it would be unrealistic to think that Blades was unfamiliar with Brother Jordan's teaching regarding the Pauline Design for the Edification of the Believer upon which the curriculum of GSB is based (see [Lesson 122](#) pages 3 & 4, [Lesson 124](#) page 2). In a recent conversation with Brother Jordan, he expressed his recollections of discussing the curriculum structure of GSB with Keith during the early years the school classes were being taught, i.e., the early 1980s.
- While Pastor Jordan has NEVER taught or advocated for SE's Proverbs 1 curriculum overlay (the notion that Proverbs 1 serves as a table of contents or curriculum map for Paul's epistles), he did have much to say about the process of edification and the divine doctrinal design exhibited in Paul's epistles. When Pastor Jordan reaches Romans 12 in GSB, he tells his students that if they were teaching the book of Romans in their own assemblies that upon reaching Romans 12 it would be a good time to consider teaching through Proverbs. This recommendation is made based upon the clear and basic principles for sonship living set forth in the book of Proverbs. In Romans 203 Lesson 3 Brother Jordan states the following:
 - “By the way, when you are pastoring a church, if you are teaching the book of Romans, right now would be an excellent time to teach the book of Proverbs, because Proverbs is

written by a Daddy to his son to teach his son how to live as a son. It is exhortation. Hebrews quotes it and says: I speak unto you as to a son. He speaks unto us as to sons. If you haven't read through the book of Proverbs enough to be familiar with it, now would be a good time for you to do that. You will be able to discern those dispensational-oriented instructions, because we have already studied enough dispensational things. Most of the instructions in Proverbs are not that way though; most of them are clear basic principles of sonship living.” (Jordan, [Romans 203 Lesson 3](#), 48-49)

- Pastor Jordan’s commitment to the notion of Godly edifying is clearly exhibited in the capstone course of GSB titled Ambassadorship. Ambassadorship 301 and 302 has much to say regarding the process of edification and how one can build an edifice of sound doctrine in their soul. Rather than making numerous lengthy quotations from Brother Jordan’s notes, the following chart presents the statistical breakdown of his use of edification terminology in Ambassadorship 301 and 302. Please follow the links below (the column headings on the table) to access PDF copies of Pastor Jordan’s notes.

Ambassadorship 301	Ambassadorship 302
Edify—1 time Edifying—8 times Edified—3 times Edification—33 times Edification Process—7 times Edification Complex—4 times Edifice—13 times Edifice of Doctrine—6 times Edifice of Sound Doctrine—3 times	Edify—12 times Edifying—6 times Edified—5 times Edification—69 times Edifice—4 times

- While there can be no doubt that Pastor Jordan borrowed some conceptual thinking regarding edification from R.B. Thieme; he NEVER advocates for the rigid hierarchical view of edification with its levels, phases, and checkpoints advanced by Thieme and later adopted by SE.
- On Wednesday, January 28, 2015 I wrote Pastor Jordan and asked him the following question; “Did you ever have a conversation with Blades about there being any connections between Proverbs 1 and Paul’s epistles?” The following day on January 29, 2015 Pastor Jordan offered the following reply:
 - “We did talk about the simple—young man—wise man—man of understanding progression matching the Romans—Ephesians—Thessalonian—Pastoral progression. But it wasn't anything like what I've seen them doing. Rather it was simply a recognition of the logical development of growth in maturity.”
- On September 1, 2014, after learning of my intention to cover SE as part of the Grace History Project, Brother Jordan wrote me and stated the following:

- “Hi. I noticed you said you read Blades’ quarterlies and were going to try and pinpoint the development of his SE thinking. It would be interesting to identify exactly what is meant by SE in his presentation. I actually introduced him to Rom. 16:25-27 as our edification design in the early 1990s (I think Richard meant the early 1980s here based upon other comments he made elsewhere.). **It seems to me his SE concepts are a tangent off of that concept that has run amuck.** The last contact Alex and John V. had with him (which was the last contact any of us had) he indicated to them that everything he had previously taught was wrong. No idea what that meant, but you might talk to them about it in your research.”
- Historically, the development of SE within the Grace Movement is best viewed as a **tangential development** that emerged from the Grace School of the Bible circle of the Grace Movement during the early half of the last decade (00 decade). Spearheaded by Brother Blades, ideas gleaned from Brother Jordan and GSB were mixed with concepts from Lang, Thieme, Hodges, and Dillow in order to form full blown SE.
- Last week in Lesson 161 we observed that seedlings of SE are visible in the quarterly writings and audio/visual teachings of Blades between 1994 and June 2001. It was during the second half of 2001 Blades turned a corner and began the process of enunciating SE in its mature form.

The Turning Point: Public Release 3rd Quarter 2001

- There can be no doubt that Keith R. Blades turned a corner towards the full proclamation of what has become known as SE in the second half of 2001. Multiple aspects of the 3rd quarter issue of *Enjoy the Bible Quarterly (EBQ)* bear this out.
- First is the explosion of sonship terminology found in the issue’s lead article “For It Were Better For Me to Die, Than That Any Man Should Make my Glorifying Void.” The following is a listing of the number of occurrences of SE terminology found in this edition of the *EBQ*.
 - Sonship—54 times
 - Sonship’s—1 time
 - Sonship Status—4 times
 - Sonship Liberty—32 times
 - Sonship Status and Liberty—8 times
 - Adoption—3 times
 - Adopted—1 time
 - Edify—1 time
 - Edification—12 times
- The following chart compares the total occurrences in SE terminology from 1996 through June 2001 with the 3rd quarter edition of the *EBQ*.

1996 Through June 2001	3 rd Quarter 2001
Sonship—12 times Sonship Status—2 times	Sonship—54 times Sonship's—1 time Sonship Status—4 times Sonship Liberty—32 times Sonship Status and Liberty—8 times
Adopt—2 times Adopting—1 time Adoptions—1 time Adopts—2 times Adopted—8 times Adoption—32 times	Adopted—1 time Adoption—3 times
Edified—2 times Godly Edifying—9 times Edification—24 times Edification Process—1 time	Edify—1 time Edification—12 times

- Blades utilized sonship terminology more in this one issue of the *EBQ* than he had throughout the entirety of the previous five and half years. From the 3rd quarter of 2001 on, every issue of the *EBQ* until it ended in 2009 is devoted to the development and articulation of some aspect of SE.
- A second reason why the 3rd quarter of 2001 signifies a turning point in the public proclamation of SE by Blades is because the Canadian mailing address for Calgary, Alberta falls off the publication. Every issue of the *EBQ* since its inception during the 1st quarter of 1996 contained a mailing address for both Canada and the USA. From the 3rd quarter of 2001 till the end of the *EBQ* in 2009 every issue contains only the mailing address for Matthew, North Carolina. While this might not seem like a big deal at first blush, I feel it is significant given all the pertinent information.
- Keith Blades died in July 2010. The following February (2011) Mark Newbold and Triangle Bible Church hosted a “Sonship Gathering.” At the Sonship Gathering on February 20, 2011, Mark Newbold and Triangle Bible Church presented Keith’s widow Noreen with a Medal of Honor Certificate to honor the life and ministry of her departed husband. As part of this presentation, Brother Newbold read the following citation that was written on the plaque.
 - “In recognition of his service to God, his heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, to the many who have benefited by his Bible teaching ministry as well as the Pastor and congregation of Triangle Bible Church, determining rightly that in order to function properly as a Bishop of a local assembly as described in God’s word, **Keith Blades knowingly and deliberately sacrificed his opportunity to communicate God’s word in a local assembly and instead isolated himself and dedicated every fiber of his being to the effectual working of and being properly edified in the matters of Sonship Edification with a view to functioning, not simply as an instructor of Christ, but as a father.**

Keith's deliberate decision to do so brought him undue criticism, abandonment of colleagues, threatened financial support, not to mention the sufferings of Christ by Satan and his policy of evil, all of which were keenly felt not only by him, but by his wife Noreen and his son Kenneth.

Keith's devotion and dedication to rightly dividing the word of truth to the sense and sequence of the doctrines of God's word and of Sonship Edification have resulted in the dissemination of Bible truth rarely displayed upon this earth.

The personal results of his laboring hard in the word were apparent to all who came into contact with him as his life bore the marks of one who was being conformed to the image of Christ.

Keith's generous and unselfish mentoring along with all that was accomplished by Enjoy the Bible Ministries has had a deep and profound impact upon the Pastor and the assembly of Triangle Bible Church, and reflect God's great grace and godly humble credit upon Keith, his family and the Lord Jesus Christ whom he so nobly served to his dying breath." (Medal of Honor presentation begins at 29:00 on the [video](#). For a written transcript containing the contents posthumous Medal of Honor Citation presented to Noreen Blades by Mark Newbold of Triangle Bible Church [click here](#).)

- According to the citation quoted above, Blades "knowingly and deliberately" forsook his ministry in a local assembly and "isolated himself" so that he could dedicate every fiber of his being to functioning as a father in teaching sonship edification to others.
- On March 31, 2013 a letter from Dennis Bray, the administrator of Enjoy the Bible Ministries was posted on [The Adoption of Sons](#) discussion board at the consent of Brother Bray. Brother Bray's letter reads as follows:
 - "Here's a summary of how the ministry came into existence.

Keith came to understand and appreciate "rightly dividing the word of truth," Paul's unique and distinctive apostleship, "the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery," and the like, over 30 years ago. During these years he had the privilege of pastoring 3 churches and teaching sound Bible doctrine according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God committed to Paul's trust. **(His last two churches were located in Canada, where he met his wife and resided in his later years.)**

During his pastorate of his last church (in Calgary), a loosely-put-together extension ministry was in place whereby tapes and writings were made available for others who expressed an interest in the teaching ministry. This extension ministry continued to grow over time.

I met Keith at a conference in Montana in 1995. Excited as I was hearing him teach and being exposed to his "extension ministry," Keith and I established this extension teaching

ministry as a distinct ministry in the U.S., operated out of my home. I operated the ministry from the states performing the day-to-day operations and he dedicated all his time to the Word without distraction.

We decided the ministry to be a distinct and stand-alone ministry through which Keith taught God's word "rightly divided" separate from his pastorate. **He eventually left the church, dedicating his time wholly to this ministry.**

Since 1995, my wife and I have worked alongside with Keith to make those teachings available to others in video, audio, printed forms and on the internet. (This is why the ministry is located in North Carolina.)

We consider ourselves very fortunate to be part of this ministry
Hope this helps.

Dennis”

- According to Dennis Bray, Enjoy the Bible Ministries was formed in 1995 during Keith’s third and final pastorate in Calgary. It was the Calgary, Alberta assembly that Keith left so that he could devote the totality of his time to enjoy the Bible Ministries according to Bray and to SE according to Newbold.
- After piecing together to pertinent facts quoted above, the reason why the Calgary, Alberta address was removed from the 3rd quarter issue of the *EBQ* in 2001 is because Keith had left the assembly in Calgary to devote his full time and attention to SE and Enjoy the Bible Ministries by the time of its publication. This coincides nicely with the general timeline I presented in [Lesson 145](#). Triangle Bible Church audio #2094 establishes the following facts:
 - Exact Date Uncertain— Newbold learns right division and purchases Blades’ book *Satan and His Plan of Evil* on recommendation. Enclosed was a pamphlet listing of Blades’ tapes. Newbold orders the tape “The Battle on the Cross” and is so impressed with Blades’ teaching that he orders Blades’ entire audio library with assistance from Triangle Bible Church. (Triangle Bible Church Audio #[2094](#), 7/11/2010)
 - 2000— Newbold begins emailing Keith Blades with questions (TBC Audio #[2094](#))
 - 2001— Newbold begins phoning Keith Blades and recording the conversations (TBC Audio #[2094](#))
 - 2003— Newbold asks Blades to teach him everything he knows about SE (TBC Audio #[2094](#))
- The removal of the Calgary, Alberta address coincides with Keith beginning the public proclamation of SE.

- In summation there are two reasons (covered in this lesson) why the 3rd quarter issue of the *EBQ* from 2001 signifies a turning point in the ministry of Keith Blades towards the full enunciation of SE: 1) explosion of SE terminology, 2) the removal of the Calgary, Alberta mailing address. A third reason will be explored in the next Lesson namely the hierarchical view of edification that is set forth therein.