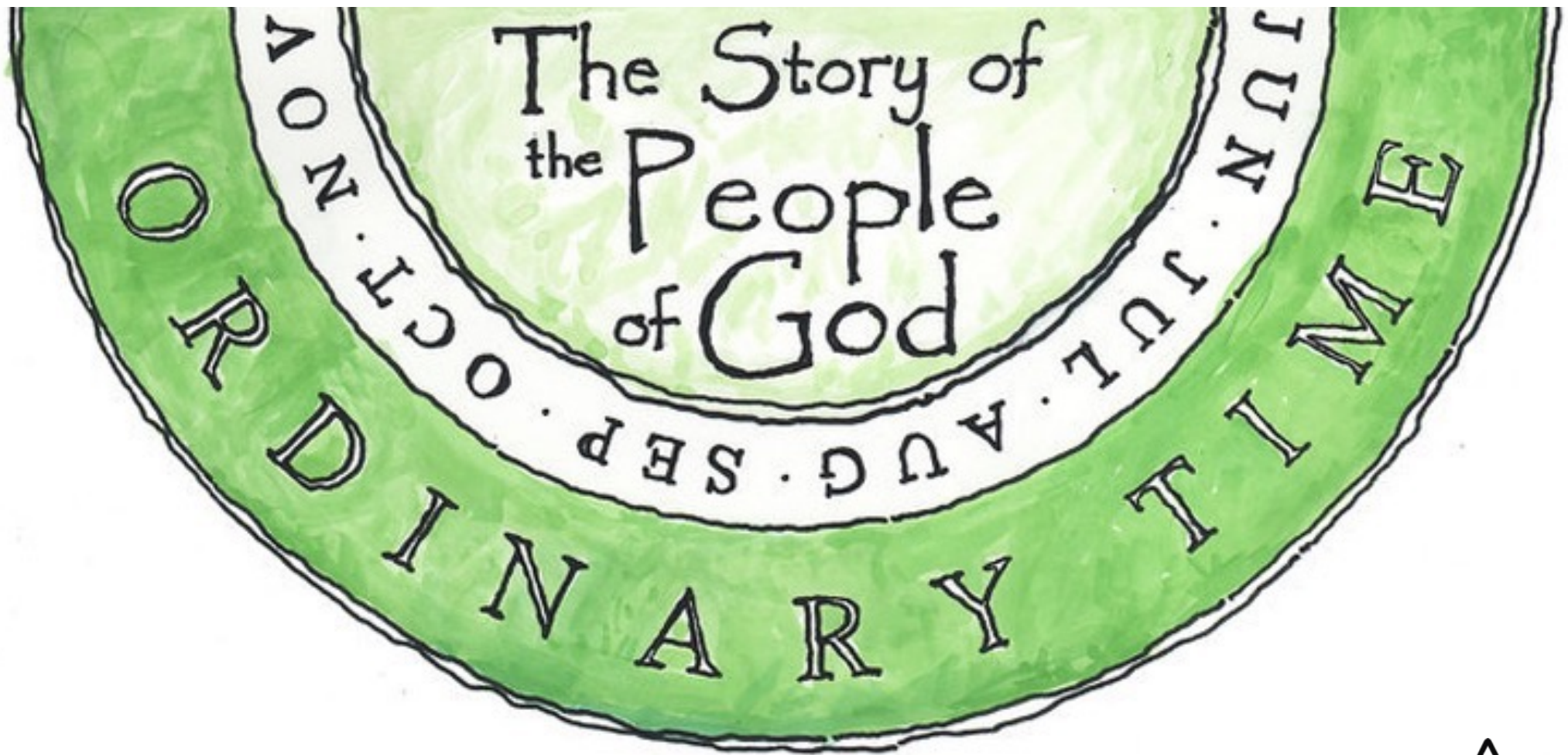
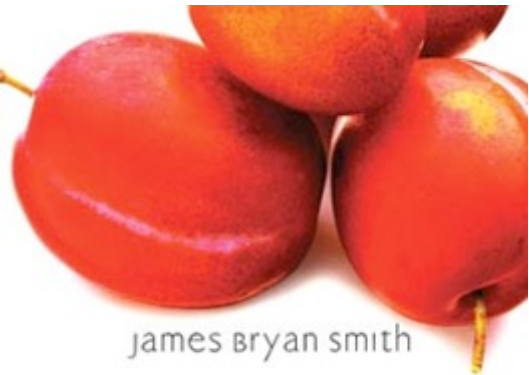


Holy One, Covenant-Keeper,
Restorer of what is lost:
heal what is wounded,
and gather in all who have been rejected.
Give us the faith to champion the voices
of the downcast and oppressed,
that all people may know your liberation.
Amen.

Opening Prayer







james bryan smith

The Good and Beautiful GOD

FALLING IN LOVE WITH
THE GOD JESUS KNOWS

"The best practice I have seen in Christian spiritual formation."
—DALLAS WILLARD

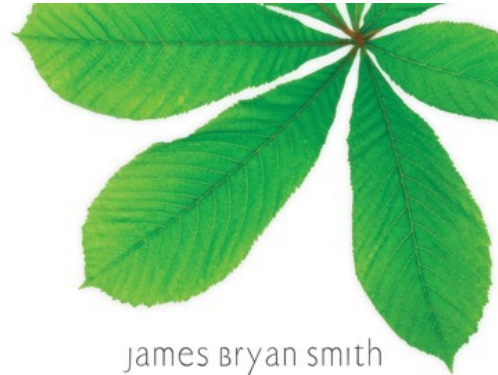


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The Good and Beautiful LIFE

PUTTING ON THE
CHARACTER OF CHRIST

"The best practice I have seen in Christian spiritual formation."
—DALLAS WILLARD



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The Good and Beautiful COMMUNITY

FOLLOWING THE SPIRIT, EXTENDING GRACE,
DEMONSTRATING LOVE

"The best practice I have seen in Christian spiritual formation."
—DALLAS WILLARD



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The Good and Beautiful YOU

DISCOVERING THE PERSON
JESUS CREATED YOU TO BE

GOOD/BEAUTIFUL COMMUNITY

The ***Christ-Centered*** Community

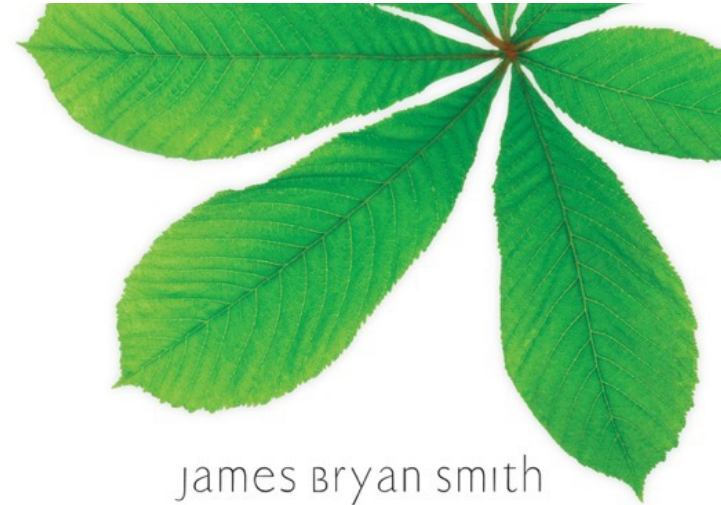
The ***Worshipping*** Community

The ***Reconciling*** Community

The ***Hopeful*** Community

The ***Encouraging*** Community

The ***Serving*** Community



the good and beautiful COMMUNITY

FOLLOWING THE SPIRIT, EXTENDING GRACE,
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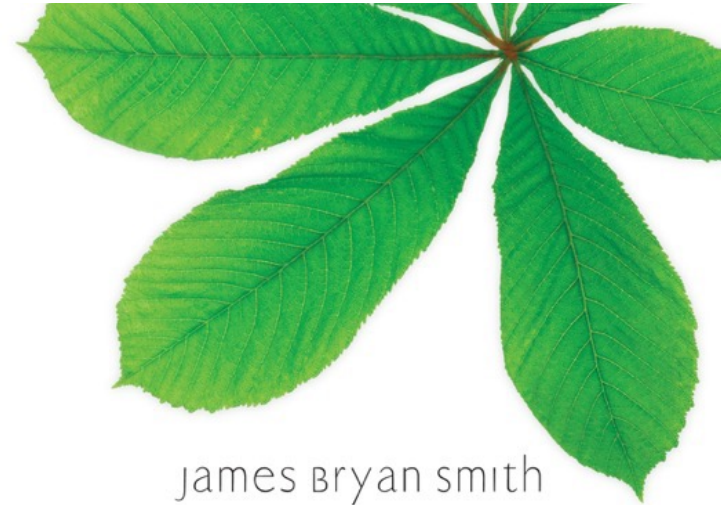
—DALLAS WILLARD

FALSE NARRATIVE

If you don't look/act/worship/think like us, we aren't obligated to have fellowship* with you...

***Κοινωνία // KOI-NO-NIA**

Community, joint participation, sharing the highs and lows of life, joint contribution to a common cause



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The Good and Beautiful
COMMUNITY

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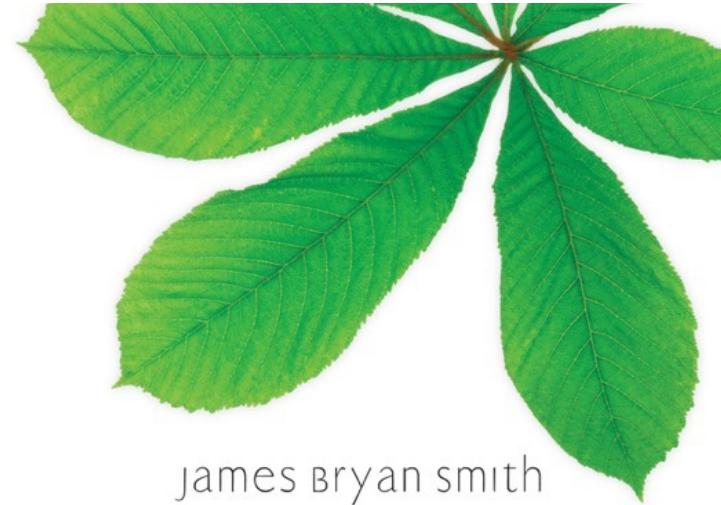
—DALLAS WILLARD

FALSE NARRATIVE

If you don't look/act/worship/think like us, we aren't obligated to have fellowship* with you...

TRANSLATION

***If you're not like us,
we don't have to like you,
and we don't have to work
together, even on good stuff!***



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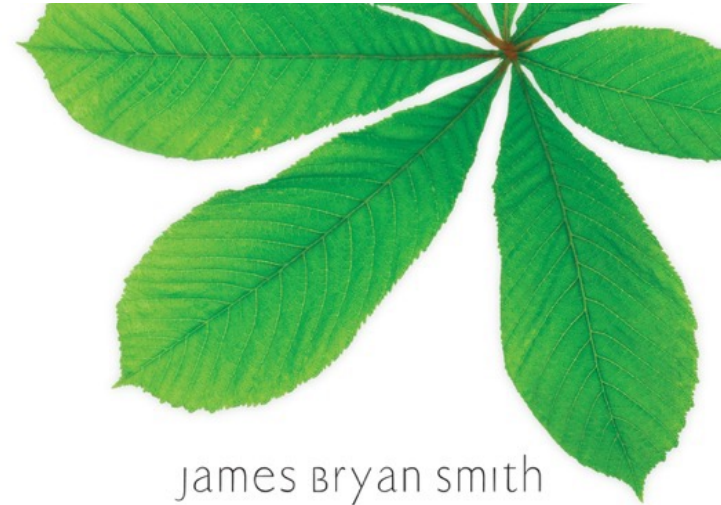
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—DALLAS WILLARD

TRUE NARRATIVE

If you don't look/act/worship/believe as I do, but your heart beats for Jesus, then regardless of our differences, we can/must have fellowship with one another; and if you don't believe in Jesus, I will still love/serve you and treat you with respect as a fellow human being **(2014)**



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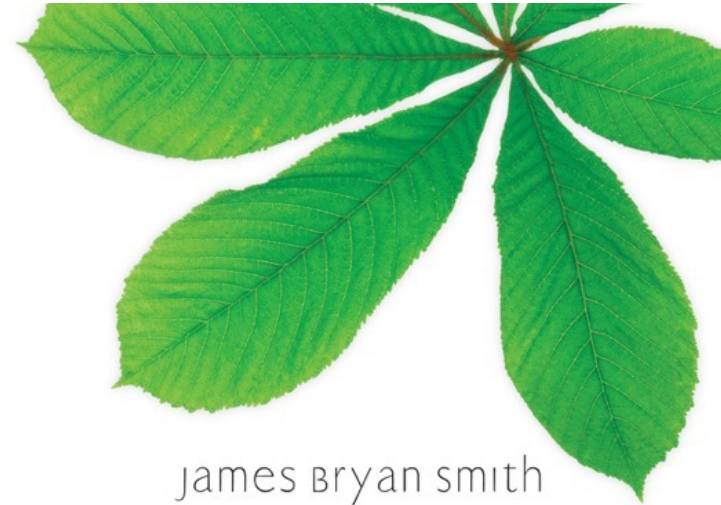
—DALLAS WILLARD

TRUE NARRATIVE

“We can disagree and still love each other, unless your disagreement is rooted in my (or someone else’s) oppression and denial of my (their) humanity and right to exist.” **(2015)**



Robert Jones Jr.



The Good and Beautiful COMMUNITY

FOLLOWING THE SPIRIT, EXTENDING GRACE,
DEMONSTRATING LOVE

"The best practice I have seen in Christian spiritual formation."

—DALLAS WILLARD

**WE CAN TOTALLY
DISAGREE ON...**

**WE ACTUALLY
CAN'T DISAGREE ON...**

Most Bible Stuff

Food Stuff

Movie/Music Stuff

Political Stuff

Sports Stuff

**WE CAN TOTALLY
DISAGREE ON...**

**Most Bible Stuff
Food Stuff
Movie/Music Stuff
Political Stuff
Sports Stuff**

**WE ACTUALLY
CAN'T DISAGREE ON...**

**Black People Matter
Forced Religion = Bad
Genocide = Evil
Human Rights = Universal
LGBTQ+ Folks Do and
Deserve to Exist**

HOLY
BIBLE

1 COR

1

PAUL'S NARRATIVE

*I appeal to you, brothers,
by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
that all of you agree, and that
there be no divisions among you,
but that you **be united** in the same
mind and the same judgment.*

PAUL'S NARRATIVE

*I appeal to you, brothers,
to **watch out for those who
cause divisions** and create obstacles
contrary to the doctrine that
you have been taught; avoid them.*

HOLY
BIBLE

GAL

3

PAUL'S NARRATIVE

*There is neither Jew nor Greek,
there is neither slave nor free,
there is no male and female,
for **you are all one in Christ Jesus.***

JESUS' NARRATIVE

*A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another**: just as I have loved you, you also are to **love one another**. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have **love for one another**.*

HOLY
BIBLE

JOHN

13

JESUS' NARRATIVE

*I do not ask for these only,
but also, for those who will
believe in me through their word,
that **they may all be one**, just as you,
father, are in me, and I in you,
that they also may be in us,
so that the world may believe
that you have sent me.*

HOLY
BIBLE

JOHN

17

THE JESUS CREED

*‘Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?’ He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” **This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it:** “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’*

I am not a liberal or a conservative.
I am an apprentice of Jesus.
I am simply trying to discern
that which is essential and that
which is non-essential...For me,
the basic teaching found in the
creeds is essential. Everything else
is nonessential. Not unimportant,
just not important enough
to divide over...



Yes, I agree: the basic teaching found in the creeds is essential. I also believe the creeds lack something critical for followers of Jesus in the 21st century: ethics. The creeds were written in a specific historical and cultural context, to answer key questions being discussed at that time.



But if we pretend those questions are the only ones that need answering, we deny the reality in which we live, one that is markedly more complex, full of ethical challenges that scream for some measure of clarity on how we choose to live. Along these lines, someone asked me recently...



“If you could add one thing to the creeds, what would it be?”
My first and immediate response:
“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus said there were no other commandments greater than these, and I believe commitment to them is *essential*.



I'm also mindful of what Jesus said to his disciples near the end of Matthew 7, *“Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord”, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only one who does the will of my Father in heaven.”*



*On that day many will say to me,
'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy
in your name, and cast out demons
in your name, and do many deeds
of power in your name?'
Then I will declare to them,
'I never knew you; go away
from me, you evildoers.'"*



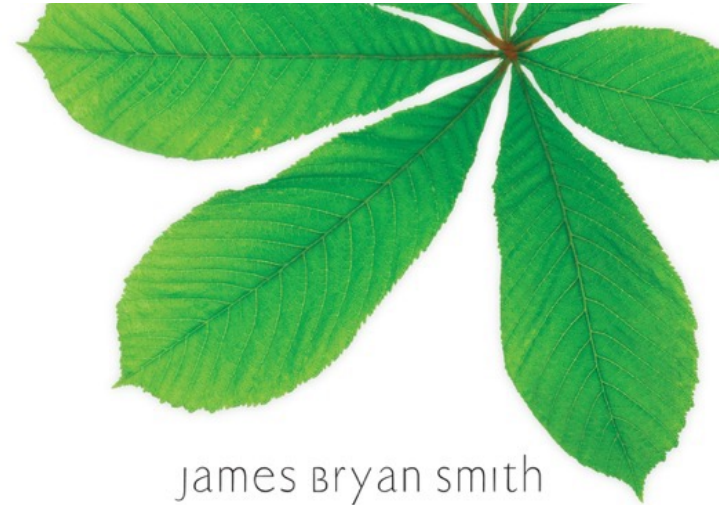
So: can we disagree, as followers of Jesus, and still work together toward the common good? Absolutely, IF we are committed to the heart and spirit of the “Jesus Creed,” and our unity doesn’t come at the expense of other’s humanity and right to exist, for that, too, is essential.



SOUL TRAINING EXERCISE

Five Ways to Love in Disagreement

1. Treat them as human companions
2. Don't think/speak evil of them
3. Pray for them
4. Encourage them
5. Collaborate with them



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the good and beautiful COMMUNITY

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Faithful God,
hope of the oppressed,
and the source of freedom
for those held captive:

Make us strong to proclaim your liberating power,
in generosity of life, and in humility of spirit,
that all the world may delight in your goodness.
Amen.

Closing Prayer

