

# A Scammer

Here's the situation. About a month ago, someone pretending to be a church member emailed the church office asking for our directory. The person signed their email with the real name of one of our members. But the email was not what we had on file for them. We did **not** send them the information.

*Did this happen another time?* I'm not sure at this time.

The office (and myself) have been trained, now, never to give out people's personal information to those of whom we cannot verify identity. We no longer give anyone a digital copy of our directory unless a known person comes into the office to ask for it. *(And it is nowhere posted publicly, including our website.)*

A scammer, somehow, has gotten ahold of our church directory and is posing to be Pastor Caleb asking for gift cards.

## Recognizing a Scam

- Did the text come from my cell phone number?  
(618-\*\*\*-\*\*58) (It's a Mount Carmel, IL number)
- Did the email come from my pastor's email? ([pas\\*\\*\\*@peu\\*\\*.org](mailto:pas***@peu**.org)) OR  
([caleb@c\\*\\*\\*mcgr\\*\\*\\*\\*.com](mailto:caleb@c***mcgr****.com))
- Did the email come from the church office email?  
([off\\*\\*\\*@peu\\*\\*.org](mailto:off***@peu**.org))

The scammer uses another Wisconsin phone number and a fake gmail address. Their favorite is [churchoffice#####@gmail.com](mailto:churchoffice#####@gmail.com).

This is not us. And I haven't been "hacked." They do not have access to MY personal information.

The scenario is variations of the same theme:

*"I'm in a meeting. I can't talk right now. I need gift cards  
(IT'S ALWAYS GIFT CARDS). Buy them and send me the number.  
Or wire me cash. It's for a 'good cause.'"*

I vowing to you now:

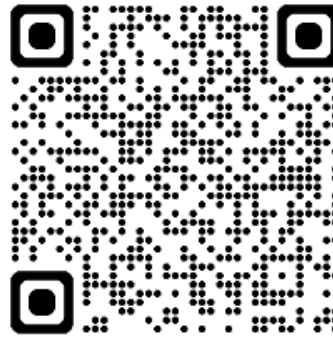
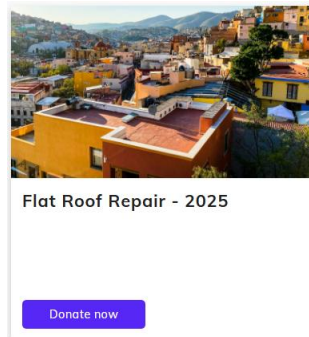
- I would never text or email asking for a request like this.
- I would never be in a meeting so important that I cannot step out to address this.
- I would use alternate funds available to me, including my own bank account, before I ask you to help me with such donations.

(After all, we already have the funds for this which you help to support.)

# May's Mission Project

<b>MIDWEST</b> disaster relief • education		<b>MISSION</b> health • micro business
<b>PERSONAL DIGNITY KIT SHOPPING LIST</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 hand towel - no kitchen towels		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 washcloth - no dishcloths		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Adult toothbrush (no multipacks)		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 bar soap - 3-4 oz.		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 shampoo -12-19 oz. (secure lid with packing tape)		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 deodorant - 2-3 oz. (stick, roll-on, or pump)		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 lotion - 8-10 oz. (secure lid with packing tape)		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 One-gallon resealable plastic bag		

## Flat Roof Fund - Goal: \$8,550.



You can give electronically to our roof project by going to [peumc.org/donate](https://peumc.org/donate) and finding this “tile” you see above.

Or you can scan the QR code above to take you there directly.

We are also receiving checks and cash every week that are earmarked for this project.

We will be taking up a special offering for this project on the last Sundays of May and June.

We will also have a noisy offering for this NEXT SUNDAY (5/11).

The second most important person in the founding, growth, and ongoing development of Christianity is Paul of Tarsus, often referred to as *Saint Paul* or the *Apostle Paul*. With the sole exception of Jesus, more books have been written about Paul than about any other figure related to Christianity.

## How Alike or Unlike Were Jesus and Paul?

Jesus (c. 4 BC to 30 AD) and Paul (c. 2 BC to 67 AD) lived in roughly the same time frame but never met (physically). Jesus taught for only 3 years, beginning when He was about 30 years old. We know little to nothing about the first 30 years of His life, His so-called 'hidden years,' and as far as we know, as an adult His travels were limited to His Jewish homeland of Israel, particularly the northern part known as Galilee. He was executed as a political criminal by the Roman Empire when He was in His early 30s.

Paul, on the other hand, missionized more years than Jesus lived, travelled widely throughout the Roman world, well beyond the limits of Jesus, and was in his late 60s or early 70s when he, too, was executed by the Roman Empire. By then, Paul had traveled thousands of miles, finally meeting his death in the very capital of the empire: Rome.

Jesus and Paul were both Jews, believed in the same God, and grew up within the structure of the same religion. The most significant difference between them, however, lies in the fact that Jesus was a Palestinian Jew ("homeland Jew"), whereas Paul as Hellenistic (Greek) Jew.

*Hellas* is the Greek word for Greece. Things that are Greek are *Hellenic*, just as things that are greasy are *hell to clean*. When Alexander the Great conquered new lands and cities (as far as India) in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, Greek became the new language and influenced conquered cultures. Greek culture emphasized the arts: artists and architects, poets and philosophers.

When the Roman Empire replaced the Greek rule, Romans brought a different kind of culture and expertise: organized armies, codification of laws, architectural achievements of practical import, such as well-built roads and extraordinarily-designed aqueducts. And yet, the superiority of the Greek language and the sophistication of Greek cultural achievement (in the arts) were recognized and preserved by the Romans. Wealthy Romans sent their sons to Greek universities and had Greek slaves tutor them at home.

Palestinian Jews were not unaffected by Greek influence, but it was far less pervasive than in cities outside Israel.

Despite the efforts of Herod the Great and his son, Herod Antipas, the Greek influence in Israel was, in most cases, limited and superficial, especially outside the larger urban centers. The vernacular language in Palestine remained Aramaic, not Greek, although some Jews had to learn enough Greek to do conduct business with outsiders. Nine out of a ten Jews were dirt-poor peasants who, in their daily struggle for survival, had little interest in the niceties of Hellenistic (Greek) thought.

Jesus was one of those peasants. He was taught Aramaic and preached in that language, a language close to the Hebrews. We have no evidence that Jesus ever wrote anything. In fact, most scholars doubt that He was able to write, and some even question His ability to read. Jesus spent His life in villages of poor farmers and fishermen, except for the few times when He celebrated the Jewish holidays that brought Him to Jerusalem. He probably never traveled more than 70 miles from the little town where He was born.

Tarsus, Paul's birthplace, was a Greek city. Paul probably knew both Aramaic and Hebrew but had Greek as his native tongue, a language he wrote in with great eloquence. When he quoted the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), he did so through the Greek translation, not the original Hebrew. Paul wore his hair short and was clean shaven; he considered long hair on men to be unnatural (1 Corin. 11:14). He was familiar with Greek poetry, theater, and the Olympic Games. Paul was also influenced by the current Greek philosophy, especially the influence of Plato. Platonic thought understood human beings as composed of two distinct entities: a *body* and a *soul*. When the body went into the grave after death, the soul was set out on its immortal journey. As a Jew, Paul could not accept this view outright of a divided human nature. Hence, Paul taught a middle way: the resurrection of the body – the death of the *physical* body and the raising of a *spiritual* one – a combination of Jewish and Greek thought. Such tensions are characteristic of many of Paul's teachings.

Jesus was not exposed to this kind of thinking. In the language of the Hebrew Bible, the human person was a single unit. There is no word in Hebrew or Aramaic for "soul." When translated from Aramaic to English, a better alternative for "soul" would be "core identity."

Greek thought also affected Paul in his criticism of the material world. Greeks believed that the material, physical world, like a body, was an inferior realm that was to be left behind when the soul soared to God. Our material reality was more of a hindrance than a help. Some Greeks considered the material world to be despicable, even evil. Paul was too Jewish to go that far. After all, his God looked at creation and pronounced it "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Nevertheless,

Paul often portrayed the material world as but a pale reflection of the spiritual world.

Jesus was different. He did not know Greek, He wore a beard and the long hair of a Hippie. Jesus never saw a theatrical performance or attended civic games. Instead, Jesus was deeply immersed in the world around him, marveling at fields of wildflowers, women baking bread, and farmers and fishermen busy in their work. Jesus saw in these daily, worldly experiences direct links to the spiritual work.

Jesus preached on what He saw and experienced. But nowhere in the 14 letters attributed to Paul did Paul ever describe a sunrise or the beauty of the countryside.

Another difference between Jesus and Paul was that Jesus believed spiritual growth came from **blessed participation**, whereas Paul saw growth in **holy abstinence**. For Jesus, one's life becomes a series of blessings through participation in the moment-to-moment encounters with the day's events. God was presence our daily lives. The world is good. It is not an obstacle between us and God. It is through *participation* in the world that we come to know God.

For Paul, abstaining from worldly, carnal delights was the path to God. The more you abstained from the lower rungs of the spirit-ladder (sex, marriage, food, etc.) the quicker we could climb the ladder toward godliness.

The practice of "giving up something bad for Lent" would be a practice approved by Paul. "Picking up something good for Lent" would have been Jesus' preference.

Many Christians are taught that on Judgment Day we are called to account by God for every sin (worldly pleasure) we have enjoyed, whereas, Palestinian Jews were taught that we will all be called to account by God on Judgment Day for every joy of creation in which we FAILED to participate.

Paul's model for holy abstinence clearly predominated the beginnings of Christianity. Celibacy, for example, was normative for the "serious" Christian, a far better option than marriage. And this is despite the fact that we have no empirical evidence that Jesus (or Paul) was celibate. As a Pharisee, Paul would certainly have fulfilled the commandment to marry. Marriage was a high priority for them. Scholars today speculate that he was either divorce, widowed, or a closeted gay man.

Zealous Christians continued to compete in their climb up the spirit-ladder to holiness. By the 4<sup>th</sup> century, "monks" refrained from even the simple pleasure of looking at the stream bubbling by their cave; some slept standing up or leaning on ledges, rather than reclining on mats. Others stood atop pillars or columns,

standing there day and night in order to proclaim their love for Christ by giving up mobility itself.

Being a synthesis of both *Hebrew spirituality via Jesus* and *Greek philosophy via Paul*, Christian spirituality often reflects this tension: For many centuries, it was acceptable for married couple to only be sexually active for the sake of procreation, not intimacy. It was okay to eat and drink but only to nourish you for Godly work, not for the sheer joy of sharing food.

These attitudes are beginning to change; but even today, we have this lingering notion that God is somehow more pleased by what we *give up* than by *what we enjoy*.