



# Scripture in Action



Alan Branford  
alanbranford.net

## Vol. 4 No. 1 – The Tough Guy – Introduction

Being a Christian is not a one-to-two-hour chore on a Sunday; it is a 24/7 commitment!

Christ showed us through his actions, words, and teachings, how to live a life according to God's Will. This is what we would now call a Christian life. Christ's actions, words, and teachings are communicated to us indirectly through the Gospel accounts and those in the Book of Acts, and to varying degrees through the canonical letters. That is, our Christian way of life is molded by Scripture.

In the four instalments of 'Scripture in Action' in Volume 3 of "*Sharing the Love*", the Henley-Fulham Uniting Church's quarterly publication, we considered contemporary situations and pondered how we should react. Since our goal is to model ourselves on the life of Christ, it was argued that we can examine our attitudes and actions by explicitly checking that they have a Scriptural basis.

I suggested as a regular activity that we should undertake a reflection on our attitudes and actions, and a regular study of Scripture with a mind to how it relates to modern times. Then, when a situation arises, we will know instinctively how to respond as Christ would have responded.

In this Volume of "*Sharing the Love*", we shall see how well you took up my suggestion by my presentation of a contemporary scenario each issue, and by your imagining your immediate reaction to it. I shall, as before, offer my own answer as well.

## Vol. 4 No. 1 – The Tough Guy – Part 1

In the early 1970s, there was a large cohort of young people in the Fulham Methodist Church (a predecessor Church of Henley-Fulham Uniting Church) moving from Primary into Secondary School. I was in the vanguard of this demographic evolution in the neighbourhood. The Sunday School had been well attended, but many of these newly minted teenagers were drifting away from regular activity in the Church. In c.1971-2, there had also been the hugely successful Fulham Methodist Chapter of the Order of St Paul, a club for boys in late Primary School. This had been instituted by Don Paull, with the assistance of the (still barely teenage) Andrew Squire and me. But again, there was no obvious organized activity in the Church for boys as they passed out of the Order of St Paul. And so it was that in about 1973, Andrew Squire and I gathered some of our friends from the Church and formed a new Youth Fellowship. (There had been a previous Youth Fellowship some years before that had closed.)

In about 1974-5, the eldest of the Youth Fellowship, who were in the main the leaders of the group, approached that critical age of 16, the age in South Australia at the time that one could gain both a Learner's Driving Permit and, if successful in a practical test, a full Driver's Licence.

The South Australian Police (SAPol) used to run occasional road-safety lectures at their headquarters, which was then on the Angas Street/Victoria Square corner. Drivers who had committed minor traffic breaches were sometimes offered the choice between a hefty fine or attendance at one of these lectures. But, upon inquiry, we found that SAPol were quite happy for young folk to attend the lectures without first having to commit a driving offence!!

So, this particular evening, a group of around half a dozen of us caught the bus up Henley Beach Road, alighted in Currie Street, and then walked along King William Street towards the lecture venue. As it happened, I was on the end of a row of us as we walked, and I observed swaggering towards us a young man in a long coat and with a smug look upon his face. He certainly fancied himself the big man, the tough guy.

As he approached our group, he was walking so as he would pass us on the side where I was walking, but he wasn't leaving a great deal of room to pass. Just as he reached us, he took a minor trajectory change towards us so as to bump shoulders with me as he passed. I just rolled my eyes, since I had guessed he'd do something petty like that, but we just kept walking. I don't think the others in our group had even noticed.

Then, I heard a shout from behind and I turned to see our tough guy looking straight at me and saying, "Hey, you pushed me!". His face and stance had the look of someone spoiling for a fight.

If you were me, what would you have done?

#### **Vol. 4 No. 1 – The Tough Guy – Part 2**

I immediately replied, in a very concerned, serious voice, "Did I bump into you? I'm terribly sorry for not paying attention. Did I hurt you?" Note carefully the last question, "**Did I hurt you?**"

How could our tough guy respond?

There was really no option for him. He replied, "No, I'm alright. Just be more careful." He turned and swaggered off into the distance.

© Dr Alan J. Branford, 18 September 2023

