



Shepherd's Voice[®]

Winter 2016

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Learning From Other People and Personal Experience

Managing Editor: Jim Patterson
Editor: Norman Edwards
Assistant Editor: Jean Jantzen

Contributing Writers: Norman Edwards
Dave Havir
Jean Jantzen
Jim Patterson
Jim B. Petersen

Webmaster: Jeremiah Patton
Circulation: Norman Edwards
Layout & Design: Marcia Nicol

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Shepherd's Voice Magazine publishes entries from regular and guest writers from a diverse range of people within the Church of God community, and covering a variety of subjects. While we invite or select our content, it may not necessarily reflect the position of the magazine or of the members of the Chicagoland organization.

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Photos: BigStockphoto.com; iStockPhoto.com

Editorial mailing address: Shepherd's Voice Magazine
PO Box 858
Plainfield, IL 60544-0858

Circulation office: Shepherd's Voice Magazine
PO Box 474
Port Austin, Michigan 48467-0474
SVM@portAustin.net (989) 738-7700

Canada Office: Shepherd's Voice Magazine
PO Box 74
287 Tache Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R2H 3B8

Email us at: info@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org

Send Ask Norm! questions to:
asknorm@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org

Visit our web site: www.shepherdsvoicemagazine.org

Periodical mailed: 961 Other mail classes: 106 Internationally re-mailed: 172 e-mail: 802. Identification Statement: Shepherd's Voice Magazine is published quarterly (4 times per year). Issues are regularly sent free to people who requested the publication and are genuinely interested in it. Shepherd's Voice Magazine is published by the Chicagoland Church of God, 11308 Highland Dr., Plainfield, IL 60585; circulation office: 8180 Port Dr, Port Austin, Michigan 48467. CCOG reserves the right to refuse service to anyone for any reason. Periodical postage paid at Plainfield, Illinois and other mailing offices (USPS 016-995). Postmaster: send address changes to Shepherd's Voice Magazine, PO Box 474, Port Austin, Michigan 48467-0474



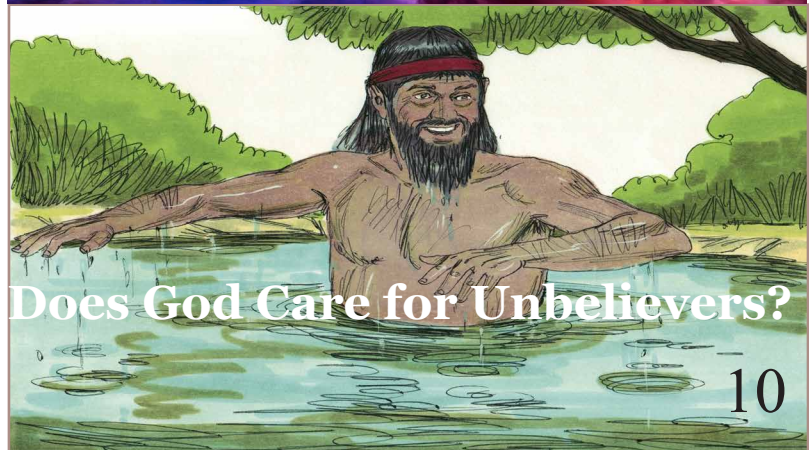
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Greetings!

Looking at things from another perspective is something I really like to do when it comes to Biblical teaching. I believe multiple ways of approach for a message are necessary to help communicate a lesson for others to understand, as everyone is different and seems to have different sets of mental unlocking mechanisms. I think it is also important to challenge certain assumptions when inspired to do so; to shake things up a little. Why not? For scripture indicates God's intervention by shaking things:

Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain (Hebrews 12:27).

Things get shaken to remove that which is dead on the vine, to harvest and wake people up. We should not be afraid of getting our belief assumptions challenged, or worry about finding out we were wrong about something all along. If our foundation is in Jesus Christ, we will see the benefits. For those interested, I did a sermon in Winnipeg, Canada entitled "*What Is Your Doctrine?*" (available to view here: <https://youtu.be/RWqXUd4EHHM>), which is a message intended to help us achieve a healthier approach to doctrine from another perspective. So in each issue of *Shepherd's Voice Magazine*, we try to take a look at matters from a fresh vantage point to challenge the believer. In this issue we have two such articles intended to do just that.

In *Does God Care for Unbelievers*, Norm Edwards brings to our attention the story of Naaman in 2 Kings, who was commander of the army for the king of Syria and responsible for the deaths of many Israelites. Yet God miraculously healed the commander of leprosy. We should not become so presumptuous to think to know

how God works with mankind, especially unbelievers, and dismiss their testimonies that He paid attention to their needs. The article reviews various stories in the Bible where God intervened and showed care to people who did not worship Him, and concludes with putting the more open understanding of God's capacity to care to fruitful work in our own activities.

Jesus Christ warned His disciples not to choke the Word with the cares of this world. Many have not understood the extent of the cares He was referring to, and instead of focusing their attention on the things that lead to eternal life, they get caught up in worldly issues, including speculative matters, and become self-proclaimed experts in Babylonian affairs. This editor has witnessed this disconcerting and growing trend in Church of God circles. Most often the source is the internet and they proliferate their research to others, and this trend has hijacked the faith of some. By calling out the evils of the world in this manner, the Church will lose its identity. In the article *The Spirit of Truth and Light vs. The Knowledge of Evil*, we again approach the subject from an alternative point of view. We believe this approach is necessary, for we as "righteous" members of the true faith can be blind to our behaviors where we think we are serving God, but instead serving evil. May God grant us to know the difference in every step we take in our lives.

In Christ's Service
Jim Patterson



**The Spirit of
Truth
and
Light**

VS.

Our adversary the devil is tempting the Church to forsake its calling. He is using an old tactic used from the beginning with Adam and Eve, and he is using it again to give us a false sense of wisdom with the knowledge of evil. Help protect yourself and the people you love by reading what follows in these pages.

The **Knowledge**
of
EVIL

The Spirit of Truth and Light

vs. the Knowledge of Evil

Increasingly, there has been in the Churches of God a gravitation to worldly knowledge and the evil affairs going on in the world. The Spirit of God has not led us to this. This article investigates the issue.

It can be a powerful feeling to have information; the feeling to be in the know. It is just human nature. After all, in a world in which so much is known, and so little of it by us individually, it's tempting and empowering to think you have inside knowledge of what's really going on.

"*Knowledge is Power*" seems to be a true statement, but this statement is not entirely consistent with believers, as we shall see. We know that the world is under the sway of Satan, and believers have been called out of the world no longer to serve sin and death, but to serve the One True God. We know that this is what is really going on.

God has made it known to His people especially in these later days that the Devil has deceived the whole world, but some in the Church want to go further than that. They want to understand more of the details of exactly what the Devil is doing. But are they doing this so they may feel they are "*not ignorant of his devices*" (2 Corinthians 2:11), but in reality they are perhaps being caught up in his devices. Do not underestimate the adversary.

It seems some believers now and in history have been driven to know more about what is going on that is God ordained for us to focus on, and it is human nature that is driving it, not the Spirit of God. We see the

fruits of the feeling of empowerment this kind of knowledge gives people and groups. Ironically, the source of information that they believe makes them wiser comes from the same system they think they are wising up to.

There are those who want to understand more of the details of exactly what the Devil is doing; to be wise to his devices, but in doing so they are perhaps unwittingly being caught up in his devices.

This article is directed at the believer as a warning; with a prayer that those already fueled up by pride in their own wisdom will pause to hear. We are not interested in discussing the ignorance of the One True God in the world today at large, or the general ignorance of what He has purposed here on earth. We are simply not concerned about our (the believer's) awareness of the ignorance of others in this article. The awareness of the world's ignorance of God profits us very little, unless our egos need a boost.

There are very well meaning Christians today that are allowing

their attention to be misdirected to worldly knowledge and the evil affairs going on as a means to wisdom. "Knowledge" of this kind, often speculative, true or false, has increased significantly in availability, and they are too little concerned in how they are sharing it, with whom they are sharing, and the truth of it.

Knowledge of Evil

None of this is new, it is just a repeat of old. Eve felt the temptation to be in the know, to be as God and be wise. For clarity purposes, The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was not identified as the "Tree of the False Knowledge of Evil and the True Knowledge of Good" **The evil to which their eyes were open to was true**, perhaps fact based if you would. In a somewhat perverted sense, Adam and Eve should be congratulated, they are now in the know, they have graduated and are now members of an elite group.

I have wondered on occasion why the Lord God did not warn Adam of the Serpent; more cunning than any creature of the field. It would certainly seem reasonable to warn others of evil lurking about in your neighborhood would it not? The reason He did not warn Adam is more significant than we may have normally considered.

Remember Adam had an unmarred



relationship with the Lord. His needs of security and significance were fully met and he had dominion over all things, and this he had not knowing everything. He lived a life free of angst, fear and suspicion. If the Lord warned Adam of the serpent, the following would become true:

- Adam would have the knowledge of evil. God would have saved the serpent time and energy convincing Eve.
- Adam would know fear. He now knows what it is to have an enemy. He has a powerful adversary in the midst of the Garden. He would be aware of being naked and defenseless. He would start to build his own set of defenses against a snake with sticks and leaves.
- He would likely begin to hate what the Serpent did and throw rocks at it; the serpent would play the victim and complain.
- Adam would become more preoccupied with the threat of evil, leaving less time for his devotion to his creator.
- Adam would have more questions and possible suspicions—if not immediately, then soon afterward.

The result? If God had warned Adam, even on a most minor point, we would have a fallen world as we see it easily playing out above. We should praise God in His wisdom.

A Church Reality Check

So here we are today, and one would think that the knowledge of true evil might be a good thing to protect our interests, *but it is not the knowledge of God* in which we are to grow in that leads to life. Here is what is happening: we are witnessing in the Church of God both by groups large and small and by individuals who have found this new calling to believe that their research and proliferation of the knowledge of evil in the world, some of it true, and some (much) of it false, is doing themselves and their fellow believer a favor. They feel a need to warn their fellow believers, and too many “fellow believers” get caught up in this “knowledge.” If they use email, it gets widely distributed, with all kinds of convincing web links to support it.

This teaches us only to hate, have anxiety and suspicions, and poisons our capacity to love God and our enemies, and the process by which our minds are negatively altered is

insidious. The Bible teaches us to abide in faith, hope and love, but instead there is a significant segment of believers that are teaching others to hate. Learning to hate is much easier than to learn how to love, so the hate brigade catches on. Of course, nobody in a Christian church would readily admit to teaching others to hate, or feel they are learning to hate, so we hope that God will grant them repentance.

We ask ourselves why this is happening, and why it is being tolerated. I suppose now that the cat is out of the bag and we know we have an enemy in the world, we need to arm ourselves, but arm ourselves spiritually, not with worldly wisdom:

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 5:10-12).

A fundamental part of our armor is faith, and faith is the enemy of fear,

and is not given for us to be on the defensive, but on the offensive. You have faith you cause things to happen.

If fear, distrust, and the resentment of the world is part of our language, then we are going against the Word of God. Jesus Christ died to liberate us from fear:

... to release those who through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Hebrews 2:15).

Satan uses the fear of death to control and enslave mankind. The fear of death goes beyond the obvious fear of the cessation of physical life. The enslavement, or bondage the writer of Hebrews refers to, is the fear of death, which causes one to behave in a way that pleases the devil. This would include all self-preserving and selfish behavior, whether it is conscious or unconscious. The world is full of intimidation and falsehood that makes mankind feel threatened and insecure. So why would a Christian, given his or her freedom to serve God, disobey the truth and cultivate fear all over again? We may believe we are acting on behalf of the brethren and of God, but in reality we are doing a favor for the enemy by the proliferation of fear and distrust.

Fear mongering should not even be part of our nature:

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7).

If fear, distrust and suspicion with focus on secular issues are part of our language in a local congregation, then the Church will lose its identity. New people that come into the midst of a congregation should feel and recognize a distinct difference in the people and feel the presence of the Spirit. A church that has even a small element of what we are discussing

in this article will leaven the whole lump, and can lose its candlestick if it does not get corrected.

Some are more vulnerable than others to caught up in the vain wrangling of issues of various types. Paul warned Timothy to avoid it:

O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge— by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith (1 Timothy 6:20,21).

The profession of vain knowledge means one believes it, follows it, and becomes it.

When the Person of God is no longer satisfying enough (for reasons beyond the scope of this article), a believer may look to other avenues to knowledge. So much of the debates and divisions over speculative doctrine are born out of an unsatisfied relationship with God. It is my suspicion that Christians who spend an inordinate amount of their time researching and pointing at the sins of the world are doing so to compensate for their own lack of personal spiritual development. When there is spiritually arrested development, a new avenue of self-assurance needs to take over, and being in the know does a good job of that.

Again we see nothing new here. Eve decided to take this alternative path she thought was parallel to and perhaps shorter to knowledge: to be in the know. It sure tasted like good stuff and she was empowered by it, at least for the short term. Her empowerment lead her to share in it with Adam. Are we seeing the parallels? How good did this turn out for them? Should it turn out better for us?

A Witness and a Warning?

Does the above phrase sound familiar? It is actually not found in the Bible. You may have heard some proclaiming to be a modern day Watchman, but only Ezekiel was appointed to be one (Ezekiel 33:7). I have encountered a number of brethren who have assumed these roles in their own way as being a watchman, and have morphed the gospel into a witness and warning tailored to their own political leanings and patriotism (see also last issue of *SVM-An Outreach that Works-Perspectives on Evangelism*). These messages vary but they seem to focus around several speculative ideas about the future and what is going on behind the scenes. They feel they are in the know and want others to know they are in the know.

So I have a couple of questions: are we as Christians to proclaim a warning to the world as a witness? Are we to warn the brethren of upcoming events in the world to watch out for?

We are in need of examples to help us recognize what we are talking about here. I took a perusal through my inboxes and my memory of the kind of material I am reading and hearing in Church of God circles. Below is a non-exhaustive list, however we want to remind the reader again, we are not interested in discussing if, some, none, or all of these are true or false, this is not our focus:

- The terrorist group ISIS is a US backed creation to justify war and US intervention in the Middle East.
- The US government and other agencies orchestrated the murder of its own citizens by the events of September 11, 2001.
- The ruling elite is secretly planning a one-world order.
- The financial system is about to collapse, and the US government is having training exercises with
- the military to deal with the

- anticipated public chaos.
- Chemtrails by highflying jets are being released to willfully poison the public.
- Accusations against the modern sciences involved in our food and drugs.
- Generalizations of all politicians being corrupt or bought off.
- Secret agendas of various institutions, including churches, governments, medicine and others.

Some of the above is often discussed in the “light of scripture” sometimes suggesting we should do more research into them, often with web links. Indeed, the Bible does record some conspiracies carried out by evil men and women. But the Bible solution was not “improved conspiracy unraveling,” but turning from sin to righteousness.

Some of the readership will recognize a few of these as conspiracy theories; some would argue they are not theories at all. Regardless as to what our position is, the reckless dissemination of this kind of material has largely born the fruits of suspicion, confusion, fear and hatred; particularly in those who are more susceptible. The lack of discernment by those who are proliferating this kind of material is appalling. We need discernment in these areas.

But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Hebrews 5:14).

What we read from Hebrews above applies to evil that is before us and the evil we already know. If you have knowledge of evil, then it better be of needed edification if you are going to share it, otherwise you yourself will become a conduit for evil. Be very discerning and discriminating with what evil you know, or think you know.

So No Warning at All?

If the reader has resistance to the thesis of this article thus far, it can be expected. This bursts the bubble of some and their righteous indignation, and nobody likes to be corrected. Counter arguments would be based on how God has warned people though His prophets, and indeed with no uncertain language. John the Baptist was certainly among them. There are plenty of warnings, but the overwhelming majority of the warnings are directed at God’s people.

Cry aloud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet; Tell My people their transgression, And the house of Jacob their sins (Isaiah 58:1).

This scriptural message is not a call to the Church or selected members to call out the United States of America or other western nations to repent. This has been a useless endeavor by many anyway.

Judgment is indeed coming, but judgment is coming by a just Judge. So what should we glean from this fact before we point our fingers at the ignorant evil world out there who we feel “have it coming”?

For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:17)

Moreover:

Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look

for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:11-1).

All the things we can get so distracted by are going to get dissolved. Will God reward believers for their knowledge of the sins of others, or for the works they do based on the foundation of Jesus Christ? (1 Corinthians 3:10-15) Judgment begins with you the Christian, and it will be your love, faith and hope in Him that He will be looking for.

I think that God would be consistent, wouldn’t He? So a reality check should first take us to whether it is we, the church, who are in need of heeding any warning or witness regarding our conduct and attitudes. So if you are going to warn the brethren, I think it would be more fruitful to consider what needs correction in a church, rather than concerning them with what Barak Obama, Germany or the Pope might be secretly up to.

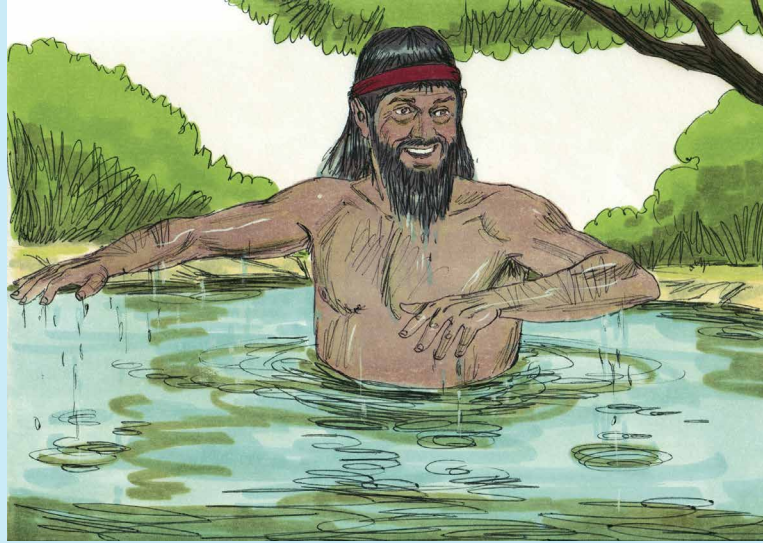
Who Are We?

Jesus Christ made a very challenging prayer request regarding the disciples as well as us regarding our remaining presence in the world:

“I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world” (John 17:15,16).

This is a tricky request. If you think it is not tricky because God can do anything, then ask Him how easy it was to have His only begotten Son in the world for 33 years. If not a complex request, then Jesus fasting for forty days and nights was just for show. We too have such a difficult

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2 Kings 5:1-19

Now Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was also a mighty man of valor, *but* a leper. And the Syrians had gone out on raids, and had brought back captive a young girl from the land of Israel. She waited on Naaman's wife. Then she said to her mistress, "If only my master *were* with the prophet who *is* in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy." And *Naaman* went in and told his master, saying, "Thus and thus said the girl who *is* from the land of Israel." Then the king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel."

So he departed and took with him ten talents of silver, six thousand *shekels* of gold, and ten changes of clothing. Then he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which said, Now be advised, when this letter comes to you, that I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may heal him of his leprosy. And it happened, when the king of Israel read the letter, that he tore his clothes and said, "*Am* I God, to kill and make alive, that this man sends a man to me to heal him of his leprosy?

Therefore please consider, and see how he seeks a quarrel with me." So it was, when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your clothes? Please let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door of Elisha's house. And Elisha sent a messenger to him,

saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and *you shall* be clean." But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, "Indeed, I said to myself, 'He will surely come out *to me*, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.' *Are* not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, "My father, *if* the prophet had told you *to do* something great, would you not have done *it*? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean?'" So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. And he returned to the man of God, he and all his aides, and came and stood before him; and he said, "Indeed, now I know that *there is* no God in all the earth, except in Israel; now therefore, please take a gift from your servant." But he said, "*As* the Lord lives, before whom I stand, I will receive nothing." And he urged him to take *it*, but he refused. So Naaman said, "Then, if not, please let your servant be given two mule-loads of earth; for your servant will no longer offer either burnt offering or sacrifice to other gods, but to the Lord. Yet in this thing may the Lord pardon your servant: when my master goes into the temple of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand, and I bow down in the temple of Rimmon—when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the Lord please pardon your servant in this thing." Then he said to him, "Go in peace." So he departed from him a short distance.

Does God Care for Unbelievers?

Norman Edwards

One might ask: “If I am a believer and I hope others will become believers, why do I need to know how God cares for unbelievers?”

The answers are two-fold:

1. God commissions His followers to make more followers (Matthew 18:19-20). In our process of evangelizing, we need to know how God works with people in the process of becoming believers. Unfortunately, I and some of my dedicated Christian friends have made the mistake of telling people that the seemingly miraculous things that happened to them were probably not the deliberate doings of God—because they were unbelievers. We need to know what the Bible says so that we do not contradict their experience and find ourselves contradicting the very work of God.

2. Also, at times we may find ourselves sinning or straying from the faith that we once had. We need to be assured that God has not given up on us. If He works with unbelievers, how much more will He work with those who believe, but struggle? (1 Peter 5:10; Philippians 1:6). He may send us correction, but we need to understand that is exactly what we need and it is His love at work.

God Heals an Enemy Commander

The story of Naaman the Syrian in 2 Kings 5 was difficult for me to accept when I first read the Bible. Why would God miraculously heal a Syrian military commander who was killing the people of Israel? God was not wrong, but I had a lack of understanding of how and why the Creator of all life works. If you are not familiar with this story, please read it in the accompanying page.

Naaman did not understand and follow the God of the Bible: He first sought healing from the King of Israel, not knowing that God exercised His healing power through his prophets (v 6-9); he was angry when his own idea of the healing procedure did not happen (v 10-12); he had the pagan idea that gods were territorial and thought he needed dirt from Israel to worship the true God (v 17) and he said that he would continue to worship in the temple of Rimmon as his job required (v 18).

Yet, Naaman had many good qualities in spite of his ungodliness and carrying the disease of leprosy: He pleased his master by bringing victory to the Syrian armies (v 1-2); rather than abusing the Israelite girl whom he brought home as a servant, he treated her well enough that she helped him find healing (v 2-4); he was humble enough to act on a servant girl’s word (v 4-5); he was willing to pay very well for his healing (v 5, 15); he was wise enough to keep aides who would disagree with him for his own good, rather than the typical “yes men” that usually surround powerful figures (v 13-14); he was humble enough to change his mind and bathe in Israel’s river—rather than one of his own land (v 14) and he acknowledged the God of Israel as supreme (v 15).

Even with these good qualities, why did God heal this man who continued to fight against His people Israel, and who would continue to go into the temple of Rimmon to please his pagan King? Fortunately, we have some words from Jesus Christ on a lesson we are to learn about this historical account:

Then He said, “Assuredly, I say to

you, no prophet is accepted in his own country.... And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff (Luke 4:24, 27-29).

Just as Jesus was not honored by the civil and religious leaders of his day, so God and his prophet, Elisha, were not honored by the civil and religious leaders of those ancient days. Indeed, there were multiple efforts to kill both Elisha and Jesus. By contrast, many of the common people and foreigners heard them gladly. Indeed, there are times when God goes out of his way to care for unbelievers to provoke His people to jealousy:

They have provoked Me to jealousy by what is not God; They have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation (Deuteronomy 32:21).

What Is an “Unbeliever”?

Naaman, above, acknowledged that the God of Israel was the true God and He alone was able to heal him from Leprosy. However, he did not have the faith to forsake his position in the military so he could stop worshipping in the temple of Rimmon. One can have an intellectual belief in the God of the Bible without having complete faith in God. Here is how the apostle James explained it:

You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? (James 2:19-22).

A believer is someone who lives by the knowledge of the true God available to him at the time. A believer will seek more knowledge of God (Jer 29:13). Before Moses, there was little if any written Scripture, but people had access to those who had direct knowledge of God. Adam and Eve lived almost a thousand years—everyone knew they were the people without any human parents. Abel, Enoch and others were righteous and communicated with God. Noah and Shem were righteous men before and after the flood. Shem lived until the time of Abraham. There was access to God to those who sought Him.

From Moses' writing the first five books, to the writing of Malachi in about 400 B.C., the teachings of the Old Testament were available to many. The basic promise of the "Old Covenant" was prosperity and national greatness in exchange for obedience to a loving God of the scriptures. Some believed those writings and received those promises. The Old Testament also taught people to "love their neighbor as themselves" (Leviticus 19:18), and made promises of the Holy Spirit being poured out on "all flesh" (Joel 2:28). A few sought these spiritual promises and received them. For example, a man named Simeon, learned in the ways of the Old Testament, had the Holy Spirit upon him and a promise from God that he would see the Christ before he died (Luke 2:25-32).

Finally, the New Testament promises forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit to whoever will repent and be baptized (John 3:16; Acts 2:38-39). A Christian who believes and does these things is certainly a believer.

Other Scriptures go on to explain that some believer's work will withstand the tests of God while others' work will not, but they will all be saved (John 15:8; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15). All are called believers, but each are distinctly rewarded according to their own works (Matthew 16:27; 1 Peter 1:17; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 2:23; 22:12).

So we understand believers to be those who believe in and have faith to live by the Creator God, according to the information available to them at the time. Unbelievers are those who do not choose to learn or live by the information available to them about the Creator God—even though they may have genuine interaction with Him.

Unbelievers Who Rejected God's Warnings

Naaman received a marvelous healing from God, but many others did not appreciate what God was doing for them. Even though the Creator of the universe reached out to individuals, they did not always listen or take action on their genuine encounters with God. In the past, I doubted claims of God's intervention in the lives of irreligious, swearing thieves, con-artists, adulterers and convicted criminals. But now I realize that these people really need intervention from God (Mark 2:17). Sometimes they listen to Him, and sometimes they do not. Here are some examples when people did not listen.

When Jesus was on trial, the Roman governor Pilate's wife had a vision and sent a message to Pilate telling him "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him" (Matthew 27:19). She clearly received the truth in her dream. Pilate tried to talk the Jewish leaders out of the execution, and even washed his hands of it. But he did not have the faith to risk an uprising or lose his job and justly free Jesus. (Sure, somebody else would have killed him to fulfill God's plan, but Pilate did not have to be the one to unjustly scourge Jesus and order his death). Nevertheless, God gave Pilate a chance.

When the religious leaders got together, they were afraid that the people would go after Jesus as a leader because of his many signs—and they would lose their leadership position. Caiaphas, the high priest answered, "It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people" (John 11:50). He thought he was saying that Jesus needed to die so they could maintain power. But he was really prophesying for God, showing that Jesus was dying as a sacrifice for the sins of the world (John 11:51). Caiaphas utterly failed by seeking his own power rather than understanding his own prophecy and the will of God. The last time we hear about Caiaphas in the Bible, he is confronting a whole group of disciples whom Jesus was using to perform great, undeniable miracles (Acts 4:1-22). There was nothing he could do to stop them.

In 1 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 18, we find the story of Ahab, the evil king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, the somewhat righteous King of Judah. They were deciding whether to go to war against Ramoth Gilead. Ahab's false prophets all said they should go. Ahab did not even want to hear from Micaiah, a prophet of God, because he never said anything good to him. But Jehoshaphat wanted to hear him, so they sent for him. Micaiah prophesied they would not be successful in the war and that king Ahab would die there. Even though Ahab disguised himself as an ordinary soldier, he was hit by a random arrow between his armor and he died in the war. He ignored God's one last act of kindness to him.

King Nebuchadnezzar was given a vision by God of a giant statue in Daniel 2. Even though Daniel the prophet said God was teaching him about his kingdom and those which would arise after it, Nebuchadnezzar vainly decided to build a giant statue of himself. Then he threatened people with death for not bowing down to it (Daniel 3). God miraculously protected three men who worshipped Him from death in a furnace, and caused Nebuchadnezzar to go crazy for seven years (Daniel 4). It was only after this madness left him that Nebuchadnezzar was humble before God (Daniel 5).

Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, Belshazzar, foolishly took the captured vessels from God's temple to use in a big party. God wrote the famous "handwriting on the wall", declaring the end of Belshazzar's kingdom. Daniel told him he would be slain that night and he was the only one slain as the Medes took the kingdom from him.

Acts 27 contains the story of Paul's sailing voyage to Rome to appeal to Caesar. Paul warned the ship owner and the Centurion in charge of the prisoners that there would be loss of life and of the ship if they continued sailing after the "fast" (Day of Atonement). The men did not listen and the ship was caught in a terrible storm. Later, the sailors tried to escape in a life boat, but Paul told the Centurion that lives would be lost if the sailors did not stay in the ship. He listened this time and had the soldiers cut away the life boat. All of the crew and passengers survived a crash landing on the coast of Malta. God could have easily delivered Paul, but he cared for the unbeliever's ship and the many unbelievers on the boat, even though they did not listen to the first warning.

Unbelievers Who Heeded God's Warnings

When Abraham was among powerful unbelievers, he feared he would be killed so people could take his beautiful wife, Sarah. His plan? Tell them she was his sister so they would think she is available. God personally intervened in the lives of these unbelievers so they would not be deceived into committing adultery with Sarah. One time, God gave the Egyptian Pharaoh a plague (Genesis 12:11-20) and later he sent Abimelech a dream (Genesis 20:1-18). These divine warnings prevented them from committing adultery.

Pharaoh's Butler received a dream from God, interpreted by Joseph, which showed that he would be restored to his position (Genesis 40). Two years later, when the Pharaoh of Egypt had two dreams that he did not understand, the Butler recommended Joseph to Pharaoh. Joseph told Pharaoh God was showing the Egyptians how to store grain for the

first seven years to save many people from starvation during the second seven years.

When Elisha had a message to deliver from God, he asked for one of the King's musicians and the spirit of God came upon the musician and he prophesied (2 Kings 3:12-27). There is no indication this musician had ever prophesied before or even believed in God. The prophecy was heard and the righteous king of Judah and the unrighteous king of Israel were both delivered from the hand of Moab.

Jeremiah 35 is an interesting story of Jonadab the son of Rechab. He commanded his descendants to live in tents rather than build houses, and to drink no wine. God was very impressed at their willingness to follow the commands of their father. He even tempted them by having the prophet Jeremiah set some good jugs of wine in front of them, but they refused. For their obedience, God promised that they would always have descendants. Many researchers conclude that the Bedouins of the Middle East are the descendants of Jonadab. To this day, they live in tents and do not drink alcohol. They have received God's promise and avoided most wars by learning to live in deserts considered uninhabitable by virtually every other people.

Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat, has a particularly unusual story (2 Kings 9 & 10). He was told by one of the "sons of the prophets", who were taught by Elisha, that he would become king. He was also told to kill some bad kings and other evil people as a judgment from God. He carried out these killings with great cunning and diligence—so well that God himself spoke to him and promised that his sons would sit on the throne of Israel until the fourth generation (2 Kings 10:30). Even so, Jehu still did not follow God in other areas of his life and began to lose some of the territory of his kingdom (2 Kings 10:31-32). God kept his promise, and Jehu's great-great-grandson reigned as King of Israel. But after six months he was murdered, leaving no further heir (2 Kings 15:8-12).

Cyrus, King of Persia, was used in a massive way by God to re-establish the Jewish nation back in their land after they had spent seventy years in Babylonian exile. Isaiah 44:24-45:13 prophesies his mission, even giving his name before he was born. The first six chapters of Ezra detail all of his work. He knew his kingdom was given to him by YHVH, the God of Heaven (Ezra 1:1-2). Was he a believer? Secular history shows that he still worshiped the Babylonian god Marduk or Merodach (Jer 50:2).

The New Testament has numerous stories of people who had little faith in God or Christ, but who received blessing from Him. The Pool of Siloam had an angel that occasionally stirred the water, healing the first person who stepped into it (John 5:2-4)—faith was not a part of the equation—the first one in was healed. Jesus frequently healed everyone he ministered to, but they did not all have the faith of believers. When Christ cleaned 10 lepers, only one—a foreigner—had the faith to return and thank him (Luke 17:12-19). Even the Roman centurion and his assistants at the cross were inspired to understand that Jesus was "the Son of God."

God Cares for Nations of Unbelievers

While many of the above examples are about individuals, there are even more examples in the Bible where God deals with big groups or entire nations who have little knowledge of Him. He set up boundaries for all of the nations so that each nation would have places to live (Genesis 10; 1 Chronicles 1-5; Deuteronomy 32:8). God sends rain and crops to all peoples to make us glad (Matthew 5:45 Acts 14:17). He gave the Amorites and other nations over 400 years to repent before giving their land to Abraham's descendants (Genesis 12:13-15; Exodus 12:40).

The book of Jonah explains how Jonah was sent to prophecy to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria and an enemy to Israel. Jonah did not want to go, because he hoped God would destroy this enemy for their sin. So God made the fish to swallow Jonah and expel him back out at Nineveh. The Ninevites did repent of their wicked ways. The book does

not say they accepted Israel's God and the Old Testament but they departed from obvious violence and wickedness. God had to show Jonah how valuable these people were to him, even though Assyria later killed many Israelites and took the rest captive.

The book of Nahum is almost the opposite. It tells of the sins of Nineveh and explains that God will some day punish them for their sins and again set up Israel as a leading nation.

Most of the prophetic books of the Bible can be considered messages to unbelievers—because the people of Israel mostly were unbelievers—they followed the practices of the nations around them, rather than God and the Scripture. We can see all that God does to bring unbelievers to repentance—first sending them prophets and writings with warnings, and then if they do not listen, sending wars, famines and plagues. God has given mankind much free will, so He needs strong actions to get our attention at times.

And finally, there are many chapters of the prophets specifically directed at non-Israelites, nearly all of which are unbelievers. Prophecies are found for the nations of Ammon, Arabia, Assyria, Babylon, Damascus, Edom, Egypt, Elam, Ethiopia, Gaza, Kedar and Hazor, Lebanon, Moab, Philistia, Tyre and Sidon. They are contained in these chapters: Isaiah 10, 13-18, 21, 23, 46-47; Jeremiah 46-50; Ezekiel 25-26, 28-29; Joel 3; Amos 1-2; Obadiah; and Zephaniah 2. Some of these prophecies are conditional, telling the nations what they need to do to either receive the blessing or escape the punishment of God. Other prophecies are more certain: "This is the way it is going to be". Multiple prophetic books explain a time when the whole earth will become "full of the knowledge of the Lord" and people of many nations will become believers then.

Putting this Knowledge to Work

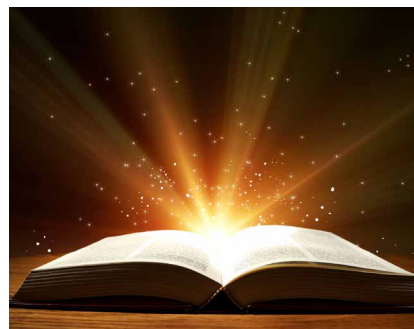
We hope readers will not dismiss

this article by saying, "Of course we know these things; God does what He wants." And He still does! He often helps or warns unbelievers. He uses them to deliver His messages. So what will we think today if a person in secular government or non-bible-believing church group speaks a warning or takes an action in the name of God? Are we automatically sure it was not of God?

This writer recalls a two minute segment of comedian Drew Carey's entertainment at the 2002 White House Correspondent's Dinner where he lectured our leaders on the book of Revelation and the non-biblical holidays kept in our nation (available on [YouTube](#)). Mr. Carey is not known for religious teaching, but that day our nation's leaders heard some not-so-often-taught biblical truth!

In 1994, a poor Bible teacher with only a tiny following explained to me that God had told him to make a collect call to Hafez al-Assad, dictator of Syria, warning him that he would continue to have ill health until he let about 2000 Jews in a Syrian ghetto migrate to Israel. I doubted this was genuine, but I told him that if God was with him, they would take his call and listen. I lost track of the man, but within the next year I saw one press article about a group of Syrian Jews that were finally allowed to leave for Israel after years of trying. Within a few weeks, I saw another article about Assad returning to public life after a suspected long illness.

These are certainly not the most important examples, and we cannot possibly know all God is doing. They are simply a sample of




thousands of things that God may be doing through and for people we might consider unbelievers.

Are all messages and actions in the name of God truly His work? Absolutely not! When his disciples asked Jesus about the time of the end, the first thing out of His mouth was a warning about false and deceiving messages in His name (Matthew 24:3-13). We can pray for understanding and have peace, even in the most troubling times. But we must have the balance of understanding how God works: We can neither accept every claimed "message from God", nor can we limit God to working only from our religious group and the leaders we have come to accept. The Bible evidence is clear: God does sometime work for and through unbelievers.

If we are convinced that God is working in some way through a political group or a different church group, does that mean that we should join it? Probably not—unless God is specifically showing us that we need to work there. Most of the unbelieving biblical figures mentioned in this article were not good examples of character or scriptural knowledge, even though God worked with them.

As the collapse of economic systems, terrorism, wars and disease epidemics become more likely, we need to understand that faith in God and his unlimited ways of working are the only way to find peace—for the believer, the unbeliever and even the person struggling in between.

Even though God works with unbelievers, this article is not intended to discourage anyone from seeking God with their whole heart, hoping to attain the better resurrection and to be ready to reign with Christ (John 5:28-29; Hebrews 11:33-40; 2 Timothy 2:12). We simply need to open our mind to how God has worked in the past so we can be ready for how he will work in the future. May God bless our study of His Word, and give us the wisdom to use it every day! 

continued from page 9

time defining this as well, given our dependency on the systems of the world for our physical needs and all the good things that can come our way. Babylon has many benefits we take advantage of. Just ask Daniel and his three friends.

How do we define ourselves in it? Do we define ourselves in this world by pointing our finger at others? Is it by our research and knowing the deception of evil out there that sets the Christian apart? Some believe the answer is yes to these questions, but of course would never admit it. Perhaps God would grant them repentance when confronted with the reality we are presenting here.

Jesus actually reminds the Father (for the sake of our hearing) on just how we are defined: “*Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth*” (John 17:17).

We are sanctified by the truth of God, not by our knowledge of evil, or even good. There is no unique combination of God’s truth and the knowledge of evil or good that sanctifies us, because the knowledge of evil only pollutes. Why should we pollute our minds already with endless arguments; it is already enough to overcome our carnal selves and resist temptations. Any knowledge that is truly worthwhile is according to the image of God. The knowledge a Christian should treasure is spiritual, not carnal:

*... and have put on the new man who is renewed in **knowledge according to the image of Him** who created him, ...* (Colossians 3:10)

Peter helps us broaden our perspective further of who we are in this world. However, if you would permit this writer to highlight his words in a few places, and table contrary behavior this article is attempting to address:

*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, **that you may proclaim the praises of Him** who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.*

*Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, **abstain from fleshly lusts** which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, **that when they speak against you as evildoers**, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. Therefore **submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors** as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, **that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men**— as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. **Honor the king** (1 Peter 2:9-17).*

The Christian Witness	The Carnal Witness
<i>...that you may proclaim the praises of Him...</i>	Proclaim the evils of the World
<i>...Abstain from fleshly lusts...</i>	Indulge in the tasty morsels of the knowledge of evil and boast in it
<i>...that when they speak against you as evildoers...</i>	Point to them as evil doers
<i>...submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors...</i>	Submit only if we like their policies and politics, otherwise they are fair game.
<i>...that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men...</i>	Silence ignorant people by calling them out on their ignorance and evil
<i>Honor the King.</i>	Trash the character of the President, Prime Minister or head of state

What we are trying to convey here may meet resistance from the pride of those who have been compelled to “speak out” and “call out” the behaviors of all that offend them. It is a very self-convincing pursuit to point at the ignorant sins
continued on page 23...

Ask Norm!



asknorm@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org

January 19, 2016

Dear Norm,

Joe and I were blessed by various Shepherd's Voice Magazine articles. I read one article by Tommy Willis about preparing for the end times three times and was blessed every time I read it.

Joe and I also enjoyed the article on *Spiritual Oomph* in SVM's fall issue last year that you wrote. The emphasis in your article about believers using gifts (from God) to benefit other believers was greatly appreciated by us. I had just been praying to God to give me words of wisdom for some needy friends and then I read this article. What a blessing! What a confirmation! We just had to send some money to SVM and a few encouraging words for the blessing SVM has been to us.



Spiritual Oomph!

Thanks for sticking close to God's word, not speaking your own "wisdom". We desperately need His truth in these trying end time days!!!

May God guide all involved with SVM as they seek to be a blessing to believers...and unbelievers also.

In Christ,
Joe and Georgia, Michigan

Dear Joe and Georgia

We are glad that *Shepherd's Voice Magazine* has been a blessing to you. Ultimately, it seems that God is working powerfully in your lives! Please keep it up—serving however He directs you. Both of you have been an encouragement to us many times. It is the job of all believers to encourage each other:

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him (Colossians 3:15-17).

Now when he [Paul] had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words... (Acts 20:2).

January 10, 2016

Hello Norman,

Here is something to think about...

"They" say Jesus would come after 2000 years and that 200 years have come and gone, so where is He? Maybe the 2000 years should be reckoned from his death and resurrection rather than from his birth. In that case we are getting close. We still can't know exactly

because there is much debate over what year he died. Was it 30 or 31 A.D.? Those are the two best choices I think, though there are some who say otherwise. Regardless we are very close now.

Also, I'd say the 7 sevens and 62 sevens [of Daniel 9] ended at the birth of Jesus when the angels proclaimed his birth so the shepherds and also Simeon and Anna prophesied about him when he was brought to the Temple because of the law of rituals. That's when he first came to the temple and was proclaimed the Messiah. The 69 weeks ended then. His ministry was the first half of the 70th week and Israel is awaiting that final ½ week. So close now!

Peace and Love, Jean.

Dear Jean,

I remember wondering if our prophetic chronologies should be reckoned from Christ's death as well. I first wondered about it back in the 1970s when it was not very popular to wonder about it. Now, it makes sense to more people.

After all, the Bible says, "A good name is better than precious ointment, And the day of death than the day of one's birth (Ecclesiastes 7:1). Indeed, Christ's willingness to lay down His life for us gave him the "name above all names" (Philippians 2:9) and he was anointed with precious ointment at his Death (Mark 14:3-8). His death was first foreshad-

owed then later commemorated each year on the Passover for most of history (1 Corinthians 5:7). We do not have a day that was clearly set apart to foreshadow his birth.

I am not at all opposed to reading prophecy and speculating about its fulfillment. In general, I believe in a seven thousand year plan of God. But if Jesus Christ did not claim to have figured out prophecy, what makes me think I will?

But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only (Matthew 24:36, ESV).

Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" (Acts 1:6-7).

While we might like to know when Christ is going to return, we can happily know that the Father is keeping this a secret and working it out for the benefit of everyone. If Satan or evil men could figure out the timing of God's plan, whether through their own cleverness or by spying on those given His revelation, they would attempt to foil it. But since they do not know, they will continue to work their evil until God calls for Christ's return. The Scriptures themselves appear to indicate that there will be a last-minute alteration to God's plans:

"And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:22).

While it seems sensible that there would be less than 2000 years between the death of Christ and His return, it is difficult to utterly prove that from Scripture. The general principle of one day equaling 1000 years is found in 2 Peter 3:8, but it may not be exact. For example, it would seem sensible to find exactly 2000 years between creation and the flood and 2000 years between the flood and Christ, but the Biblical chronology does not indicate this.

To make matters more uncertain, the Bible does not say that Jesus was

"exactly 30" years old when he became his ministry, but "about thirty" (Luke 3:23). The Greek *hosei*, translated "about" is a word used for approximation. It is used to describe the 5000 people that Jesus fed—the number was not exact. We could be several years off in either direction. Bottom line: we do not know when the "end" will come, but we can stay busy doing His work now, and trust that He will work out the details. A prior article *Active Waiting on the Day of the Lord* (SVM Fall 2012) provides insights on how to keep busy while we wait for His return.

March 2, 2016

Hello Norman:

Over 20 years ago many of us who were members of the Worldwide Church of God began to see our spiritual world fall apart and crumble. In many ways it was as if our spiritual ship had wrecked and we were desperately searching for a life raft or even anything to grab hold of—anything to keep us from sinking and going under spiritually.

It was during that period that you began publishing *Servants' News*. To this day I thank you, and I thank the Creator of the heavens and the earth that you were there to set forth factual information concerning "the government of God." Your article on church government opened the doors for me to start my own studies not only on a church government, but a genuine search to find the only true Elohim and the One whom He sent and to come to know Him.

Therefore I shall forever be grateful to you and the light that you shed during those very difficult times. This is why you remain the only Christian ministry that I contribute any funds to whatsoever. You might find this somewhat hard to understand after having been so thoroughly indoctrinated in paying ten percent, 20 percent or even 30% of our income to "the church of God" for the purpose of accomplishing "the work of God." Norman, in spite of our zeal and dedication to this cause, our ignorance was great! I do not say this to shame us or to condemn us.

We had a zeal for the Creator, but not according to knowledge!

Having said this, in recent years it seems evident that you do not place too much credence on the fact that the Creator of the heavens and the earth has a Name or that we should search to come to know His Name. Neither do you seem to place any great significance on calling upon His Name or fearing His Name. And your argument to support this position is that none of us can emphatically say that we know exactly how His Name is pronounced.

I agree with you that none of us know exactly how to pronounce His Name, but we do know that He does have a Name and that Name is truly the Name whereby all Fatherhood in heaven and earth is named! We also know that the Son has the fullness of the Father's Name exactly as your sons automatically inherit your name of Edwards. They have their own personal identities—personal names—but they inherit the fullness of the family name which you inherited from your father.

Therefore it is firmly my belief and conviction that anyone who genuinely wants to come to know the only true Elohim and the One whom He sent—and we are told, "This is everlasting life"—has a responsibility to begin learning His Name, calling upon His Name and fearing His Name. And, Norman, His Name is not Zeus or Je-Zeus!

Having said the above, I will share with you some Words of the Creator to consider on these matters, from the translation *The Scriptures*:

The third of the Ten Commandments: "You do not bring the Name of YHVH [to the best of my understanding the Name is transliterated YAHUYAH] your Elohim to naught, for YHVH [YAHUAH] does not leave the one unpunished who brings His Name to naught" (Ex. 20:).

A warning to ancient Israel as well as to modern-day Israel: "If you do not guard to do all

the words of this law that are written in this book, to fear this esteemed and awesome Name, YHVH [YAHUAH] your Elohim, then YHVH [YAHUAH] shall bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues, great and lasting plagues, and grievous and lasting sicknesses” (Deut. 28:58).

Through His prophet, YHVH [YAHUAH] has an indictment against the teachers who make light of His Name: “Till when shall it be in the heart of the prophets”—the prophets of falsehood and prophets of deceit of their own heart, who try to make My people forget My Name by their dreams which everyone relates to his neighbor, as their fathers forgot My Name for Ba’al” [the origin of the word/name Ba’al is lord or the Lord] (Jer. 23:26-27).

Then we have the Words of the Savior, the Son of the Most High Elohim, when He taught all of us how to pray: “Our Father who is in the heavens, let Your Name be set apart” (Matt 6:9).

Finally the last of the living emissaries of the Master recorded the Words of the heavenly Messenger: “And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead to be judged, and to give the reward to Your servants the prophets and to the set-apart ones, and to those who fear Your Name small and great” (Rev. 11:18).

The above Scriptures merely scratch the surface concerning the Name of YHVH [YAHUAH]! Even the promise of deliverance is not given in or through any other name: “And it shall be that everyone who calls on the Name of YHVH [YAHUAH] shall be delivered” (Joel 2:32). The exact words of Yo’el (Joel) were quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost and also quoted later by Paul in Romans 10.

YAHUAH (YHVH) spoke through His prophet Yeshayahu (Isaiah), “I am YHVH (YAHUAH), that is My Name, and My esteem I do not give to another, nor My praise to idols” (Isa. 42:8).
And a final thought for all those

who claim to be His people: “And now, what have I here, declares YHVH [YAHUAH], that My people are taken away for naught? Those who rule over them make them wail, declares YHVH [YAHUAH], and My Name is despised all day continually. Therefore My people shall know My Name, in that day, for I am the One who is speaking. See, it is I” (Isa 52:5).

Sincerely,
Stephen Schrock

Dear Stephen,

Thank you very much for your encouragement. Learning that we can come directly to the Eternal for His direction and Spiritual gifts is a huge blessing. When believers are convinced that they must follow the teachings of some man or organization, then they become limited by the doctrine and gifts of that group—and are rarely allowed to develop anything more. I am as grateful for that understanding as you are grateful to the Eternal for stirring me up to make the study.

Please realize that I was studying the issue of the Name of our Heavenly Father at that time as well. That is why the paper you referred to is titled “How does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?” I did not use the word “God” because I wanted to reach people who chose to use Hebrew names instead of “God”. I was well aware that our Fathers name, YHVH in Hebrew, should not have been translated “Lord”, as it is in the King James Version and many other Bibles. “Lord” does not convey the meaning (translation) nor the sound (transliteration) of the Hebrew YHVH. Since the pronunciation of the name is in dispute, transliterating it is difficult. The translator would either have to pick one or include lots of pronunciations every time the name occurs—this makes the Bible very difficult to read for any other purpose than studying His Name. I consider “the Eternal” as the best translation, as it tells what His Name means and is very readable in Scripture. This was used in Moffat Translation, the Holy Scriptures Version and some others.

When I wrote the previously mentioned Government paper, I made my first detailed study of the five

biblical passages explaining spiritual gifts (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; 28-31; Ephesians 4:11-15; 1 Peter 4:8-11). Over the past 20 years, I have seen these gifts operating in our Father’s Church, but never all of them in one place. The gift of knowledge was certainly more common in the “Church of God” groups. On the other hand, the gifts of prophecy, speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, miracles, and other gifts were less common. Should we consider a person an unbeliever if they have one of these gifts, but not our gift of knowledge? Paul explains this:

For in fact the body is not one member but many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? ¹⁸ But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. ¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where would the body be? ²⁰ But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ²² No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary (1 Corinthians 12:14).

Simply because a person does not have our knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek behind the English New Testament does not mean that God has not given them other gifts. Other errors common among the “Church of God” groups were “my church has all the truth” and “if I find one doctrinal error held by an individual or a church group, I cannot fellowship with them”. I have just finished an entire read through of the New Testament, taking notes on errors taught and practiced by believers. There are around 700 such errors, yet only a few dozen cases where people are clearly considered unbelievers because of their teachings and practices. The Church is not a doctrinally perfect Church, but one growing in grace and knowledge. Those of us gifted with knowledge should share it with others, as they are willing to accept it.

Now, in regard to knowledge, the Hebrew *shem*, the word translated “name” in many of the verses you quoted does not refer just to the sound of the name, but to reputation and character of the person as well. When David was about to die, his servants said: “May God make the name of Solomon better than your name, and may He make his throne greater than your throne” (1 Kings 1:47). They did not mean that “Solomon” has a better sound than “David”, but hoped his character and reputation would be better. The Scriptures you cited in your letter are not strictly about not using or pronouncing the Name of the *Elohim* (God) of Scripture, but about forgetting His character and teachings.

Today, the people who read the Bible are trying to learn about and pray to the Creator of the universe and the author of the Scripture. They frequently use “the Lord”, which is not a good translation of the Hebrew. Sometimes, they get other teachings and practices wrong. But they are not trying to worship some other deity, as is the case with those condemned in Scripture. When Elijah opposed the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18, this was not any question of a different pronunciation of the name of the same deity, but it was two separate religions, with separate temples, priests and practices, each condemning the other as false. The false religion mentioned in the Old Testament frequently allowed fornication, and engaged in mutilation and child sacrifice. When the Israelites were sent into captivity, it was not for using the wrong name, but for violence, immorality, oppressing the poor, Sabbath breaking, etc.

If we want to know how to handle the issue of teaching the truths of the Old Testament in a different language, all we need do is look at the New Testament, which was written in Greek. Many New Testament readers did not read or understand Hebrew at all. When they referred to “God”, did they use Greek letters to transliterate the Old Testament *Elohim*, as you do in your letter? No. They use the Greek word *theos*, the standard Greek word for “God”. Paul even found a Greek statue dedicated to the “unknown God”—certainly *theos* since it was written by Greeks—and said it was the God whom he was declaring to them (Acts 17:23). He did

not explain that *theos* was the erroneous Greek name for God and that they must use the Hebrew *Elohim* or YHVH to properly reach God.

About 40 words in the Greek New Testament are transliterations; Greek letters are used not to convey the meaning, but to make the sound of Hebrew/Aramaic words. One example is Mark 5:41: “Then He [Christ] took the child by the hand, and said to her, ‘Talitha, cumi,’ which is translated, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise.’” Mark was inspired to capture the exact sound of the Hebrew words used in this healing, then gives their meaning in Greek as well. But there is no New Testament verse that makes any effort to transliterate the Hebrew YHVH, *Elohim* or any other name for the Eternal into Greek.

Even common names like *Johanan* in Hebrew (1 Chronicles 6:9, etc.) have their Greek equivalent used in the New Testament: *Ioannes*. The New Testament Greek writers could have used a trailing “n” to match the Hebrew, but they used the common Greek “s” instead. Is it not reasonable for an English Bible to use the common English equivalent, “John”? The same principle can be applied to numerous other names. The Bible itself gives an example: “And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon” (Revelation 9:11).

I realize that some people claim that the New Testament was originally written in Hebrew/Aramaic and that this important doctrine was lost when it was translated to Greek. But that is impossible to prove as there are Hebrew/Aramaic manuscripts for a very few New Testament Books. We must agree that the Eternal preserved the Greek New Testament for us today. Proposing that there are vital doctrines which have been edited out of the New Testament is very dangerous. If that is true, can we trust it at all? Is every believer to be left at the mercy of what some scholar thinks the New Testament should say?

In our ministry, we constantly teach new believers that the complexity of creation proves there is a Creator (Rom 1:20-21). So then we ask, “Could not the One who created the universe and every living thing also make sure His teaching got out to

the world?” Of course the answer is, “Yes.”. And there are more copies of the Bible than any other book—about six billion—and it is translated into more languages than any other. Wycliffe Bible Translators plan to have the Bible in every language on the planet by 2050—if there is an island or a mountain valley somewhere with a few hundred people who speak a unique language, they are on Wycliffe’s list to produce a Bible. If we teach that the New Testament is massively wrong in how it deals with Old Testament names, especially the names of the Eternal, how can we say that He has given mankind His Word, which we so desperately need?

I am not opposed to brethren who use Hebrew Names in their prayers or writings—their efforts show a willingness to be considered unusual in an effort to please their Creator. But I do not believe it is necessary or significantly beneficial for doing His work. The Hebrew word for name, *shem*, means not just the sound, but the character of the one involved (Exodus 34:5-7; Eccl 7:1)

Ultimately, the apostle Paul says: “For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power...” (1 Thessalonians 1:5). I have often asked other believers if they have ever noticed a great increase in answered prayer, spiritual gifts or ministry effectiveness when an individual or a congregation began to use Hebrew names. To my knowledge, nobody has ever observed this. Our Savior often used the word “Father in Heaven” in his prayers. The Gospels make no mention of His use of a Hebrew name. It worked for Him. It is working for me. It has and is working for many other believers. May we all accept His working in the lives of our brethren.

January 11, 2015

Dear Norm and others,

Greetings from our little band of Christians, here in Canada: Bigitte, Guy and Marillyn!

It was very interesting viewing all the latest on your grown up family, and your operation for needy people in your area. It’s quite an operation of Faith. All the material you sent really brought us up to date on your lives.

We are all retired, as I guess you knew, and hanging in OK.

Brigitte and Guy have a topic of interest that they wanted to share with you. This being if there will be a Temple in the Millennial Period, as found in Ezekiel chapters 40 - 47. They lean to believe there will be.

Guy and Brigitte said, "hope you are all fine and in good health." I too send prayers your way.

All the best,
Guy, Brigitte and Marilyn,
Canada

Dear Marilyn, Brigitte, and Guy

About the Temple described in Ezekiel 40-48:

Zechariah 14 indicates that when Messiah returns there will be a temple on earth. It shows that the other nations will send people to keep the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem and that they will be punished with "no rain" if they do not come. Verses 20-21 speaks of pots and bowls before the altar in the "house of the Lord" and people eating from their sacrifices. This seems to be a part of the Feasting to God—there is no mention of forgiveness for sin associated with these sacrifices, because indeed Christ has done that. I think it is much more a theme-park reminder lesson. Certainly the world will not be involved with all of the Levitical sacrifices. But the Scripture appears to say that there will be a temple.

I have heard temple experts in Israel say that there is not enough information in Ezekiel to completely build that temple. If a temple is built by the Jews in our day, it will be from the Biblical information on Solomon's temple, the Talmud and other historical information. They may use a few ideas or minor features from the Ezekiel Temple, but they will certainly not be building it. They agree that a returning Messiah will have to build it. I agree.

I am utterly convinced that Ezekiel 40-48 applies to the return of Christ because they contain an important economic provision that will be utterly essential to start a just Kingdom of God. The land—probably the land

of the world—will be divided again by lot. This is very important, it is mentioned three times, in Ezekiel 45:1; 47:22 and 48:29. These verses go as far as explaining that even the prince of the land will not be allowed to give gifts of land and spoil the return of inheritance in the Jubilee year (Ezekiel 46:16-18).

I believe the refusal of this Jubilee teaching is the single biggest reason why we continue to have poverty and wars waged by the wealthy and powerful for their own benefit. These verses say that land should be given back to the family who originally inherited it in the 50th year. When the 7-year release of debts and slaves is included (Deuteronomy 15), it allows people to learn from their own mistakes if they mismanage their assets, but it prevents families from becoming so powerful that they control peoples and nations via their wealth. It also prevents the large inequalities that we have today: the vast majority of people are born into situations where it is very unlikely that they will ever own land or any other means of producing wealth. Most are dependent upon working for a wage or on government programs when there are no jobs. Statistics on nearly every civilization show that they start with a good distribution of wealth and opportunity for all, but grow to a place where there are a few very rich and masses of very poor.

Nevertheless, the wealthy and powerful do not want to give up their land easily—no nation that I know of has a law anything like the Jubilee year law. Communists have claimed that the workers own everything in their societies, but the reality is that it is all controlled by a wealthy few. Democracies have convinced their citizens that there is no need for a Jubilee year because anyone can grow up to be president or wealthy—so why would we want to take land away from people who have earned it? But the reality is that the very wealthy obtain a lot of their money by corrupt and monopolistic practices—and nearly all of our powerful leaders come from those ranks.

We will need an all-powerful returning Messiah to straighten out land ownership so that it will be fair and just for everyone. I think He will do this—and have the Ezekiel temple built as well.

March 5, 2016

Dear Norm,

I had much desired to attend the feast at Wooten Woods, but as far as I could discern, YHWH did not open the doors for me to do so. I also do not see that happening in the near future, but I understand that YHWH can do anything.

So, since I missed the Feast at Wooten Woods, I very much enjoyed your Feast Report, especially all the items you provided regarding music to praise YHWH:

- Mark Hughes explained what the Bible teaches about music and worship
- Kim Edwards gave a message on grace and a seminar on worship artistry
- Wooten Woods professional musician staff members Dave Boisvert, David Welsch and Roy Wooten gave seminars on Improving your Musicianship
- A whole Language Approach to Learning and Communicating with Music
- Your Career in Music
- The Emotion of Music, Music the Hero's Journey and Rhythm

Also, I especially appreciated the items below, which were the very reason I had hoped to attend the Feast at Wooten Woods, I could already tell from the beginning, from the way that you promoted the Feast, that people who desired to praise YHWH with music were desired, and especially the opportunity for impromptu music is much treasured by me:

- music of all kinds, planned and impromptu
- brethren fellowshiping with and ministering to each other
- messages flowing from the scriptures and the hearts of the presenters

I have some questions...

- Is there any way that I can access recordings or notes of these presentations?

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IF THAT'S CHRISTIANITY...



Jean Jantzen

I just heard recently that members of God's church would not go to a baby shower of another member's daughter. The daughter was living in sin according to these members and I was shocked by that behaviour. How many times I have heard the saying...

"If that's Christianity I want no part of it". Would that young woman be saying that, after receiving the cold shoulder treatment from God's people? *Are they really God's people I wonder?*

Are we in the church to avoid people we consider to be sinners? I thought we were all sinners. Are we afraid their sin will somehow rub off on us? I know of church people who will not have anything to do with someone they consider to be doing something wrong. Most of our relatives are not in God's church...are we to avoid them too? I have a few questions surrounding this issue. I thought we are to be a light to others. Does this mean we can only shine one another's light in the church? Do our lights blind each other? It seems so!

Did our role model, Jesus Christ, avoid sinners at all cost? He was accused by the church hierarchy of eating with sinners and rubbing shoulders with unsavoury characters. This accusation was true (Luke 7:34). He even allowed a prostitute to wash his feet with her hair. Why do church members not follow Christ's example...sitting at Matthew's table, Jesus may have broken some societal taboos, but His presence shows that He looked beyond culture to people's

hearts. He never stood in judgment, felt too self-righteous or thought the sinner's sin would somehow rub off on Him. The Pharisees, however, were too self-righteous to have anything to do with anyone they deemed below their status, or were thought to be sinners. They were called vipers and hypocrites by John the Baptist. Who do we want to emulate...Jesus Christ or the Pharisees?

Jesus may have broken some societal taboos, but His presence among sinners shows that He looked beyond culture to people's hearts.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (Mathew 23:27).

Christ's attitude is clearly evident when he says in the story of the woman caught in adultery. He told her accusers *"He who is without sin cast the first stone"* (John 8:7).

We have been encouraged to follow Christ's example of showing love toward the sinner. Why do we feel we need to ostracise sinners? Would not the sinner be more drawn to us and this way of life if we show love and concern toward them instead of disdain? How does God the Father draw us to Him?

But God commended His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

The above verse is clearly an attitude that we should try to emulate. If God ignored sinners and shunned them, would they be drawn to Him when He called them? It is His open welcoming loving arms that draw us to Him and this way of life. Paul told us how God feels about us and He was addressing sinners, people who need God.

Don't you realize how patient He is being with you? Or don't you care? Can't you see that He has been waiting all this time without punishing you, to give you time to turn from your sin? His kindness is meant to lead you to repentance (Romans 2:4 Living translation).

It was God's mercy and love towards us that helped us want to follow Him and led us to repentance. Don't we know that showing love to others who are not in the church and accepting them for who they are is the way we should be behaving. We should get off our high horses and start loving and serving those who are sinners, those who are destitute, those who have lost their way instead of judging and ostracizing.

Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:10). 📖

Visit Shepherd's Voice Magazine on-line

<http://shepherdsvoicemagazine.org/>

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Shepherd's Voice Magazine website. At the top left, the title "SHEPHERD'S VOICE MAGAZINE" is displayed in a bold, black, sans-serif font. To the right of the title are navigation links: "Home", "About Us", "Order Magazine", and "Archive". Below the title is a horizontal row of 15 numbered circular icons, with the first icon (number 1) highlighted in black. The main content area features a large banner image of the Earth from space, with the text "The Gospel Proclaimed to the whole Earth" written in a stylized, orange, cursive font across the top. Below the banner is a dark rectangular box with the text "CLICK HERE: View Our Fall 2015 Magazine" in white. To the right of the banner is a section titled "ARTICLES" in bold black text. Underneath, there are three article teasers, each with a title and a short description. The first is "Shepherd's Voice Magazine Fall 2015", the second is "Shepherd's Voice Magazine Spring 2015", and the third is "Shepherd's Voice Magazine Fall/Winter 2014". At the bottom left of the page, there are two links: "BIBLE STUDY" and "ARCHIVES", separated by a vertical dotted line.

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ARTICLES

Shepherd's Voice Magazine Fall 2015
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The home of a 'free' quarterly print & digital magazine published by the Chicagoland Church of God, an Illinois nonprofit

BIBLE STUDY **ARCHIVES**


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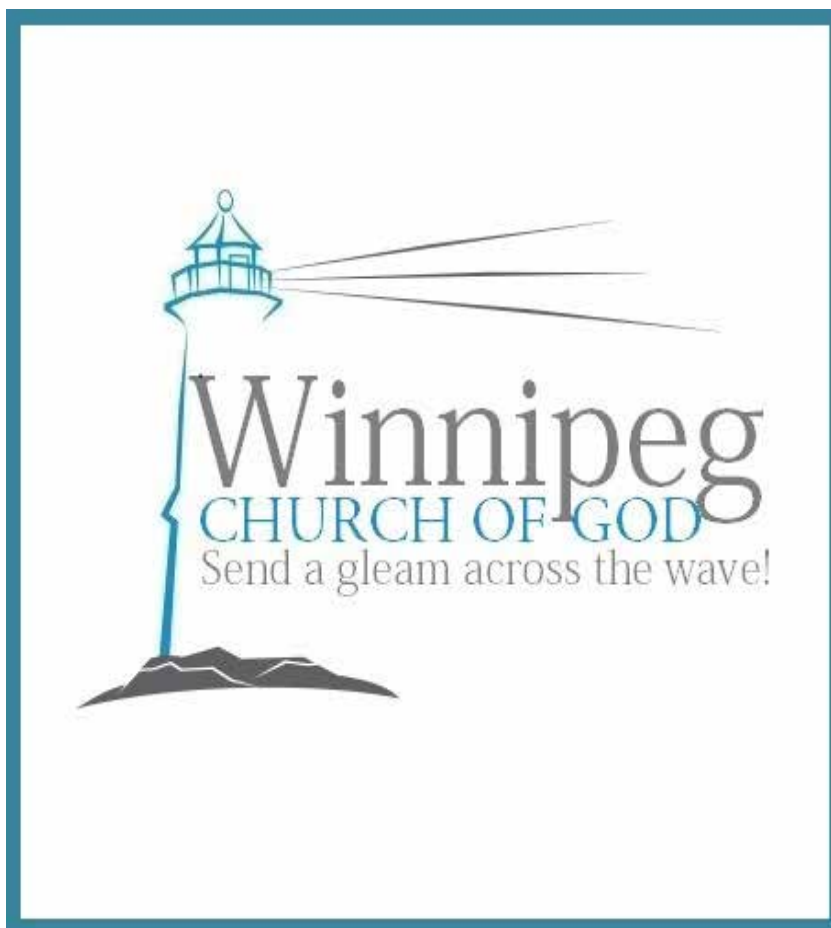
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of others, including nations and institutions. However, our primary witness as Christians is the expression of light, not the expression of darkness. They say you are what you do, so let us do who we are.

Concluding Thoughts

Our calling is to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, which is about opportunity and salvation far more than it is about the destruction of Babylon, at least as far as you should be concerned, unless you are one of the two witnesses, and you are probably not. Babylon and the powers behind it have already been judged. For those who want to keep up an unwittingly carnal witness to serve Babylon, they will continue a message of fear and suspicion; for assuredly I say unto you, they have their reward.

One day the world will be free of fear and suspicion. The Gospel is already pointing us to that time ahead, and we should focus each other to that time, instead of the passing evils of the present. 



Visit our website at <http://www.cogwinnipeg.com> or

visit our [youtube channel https://www.youtube.com/WinnipegChurch](https://www.youtube.com/WinnipegChurch)

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- Would there be any possible way of holding such seminars at a location closer to me (Penticton, Canada)?


Thanks so much for listening to my requests. Please acknowledge receipt of this letter.

S. in Penticton

Dear S.,

We are encouraged by your desire to receive this information. Unfortunately, we are in the beginning stages of making this kind of Feast site work—so we did not have professional recording or transmit any of the sessions over the Internet. Because there are professional artists involved, we would have to consider the legal questions of contracts and rights to post or use recorded works. We have not explored these things or asked the artists involved. We also need to have the appropriate technology in place.

We will certainly consider your request for future Feast sites. I will also encourage musician friends who may not be going to Wooten Woods to consider making presentations in sites such as yours, realizing that there is an interest out there.

It is wonderful to be involved with plans and efforts to praise God and teach at His Feasts. His work is rarely boring. There is always something new and exciting to do! 



Learning from Other People

and Personal Experience

Dave Havir

In January, I had the opportunity to give two shorter sermons at our congregation on the same day. The title of the two sermons were “Learning From Other People” and “Learning From Personal Experience.”

Best teacher?

Some people like to quote the following axiom: “Experience is the best teacher.”

Do you believe that axiom? I suppose the manner in which people interpret the word *best* will determine if they agree with the axiom.

- When people interpret the word *best* as the most **effective** way to teach or learn a lesson, then they often agree with the axiom.
- But when people interpret the word *best* as the most **desirable** way to teach or learn a lesson, then they often disagree with the axiom.

Although all people will learn a certain amount of lessons from their own personal experiences, it is very profitable for people to learn as many lessons as possible from other people.

If we are wise, we will learn from both the successes and the failures of other people.

Lessons from Paul

Let’s notice a few lessons from the apostle Paul’s second letter in the New Testament to Timothy:

Learning from family: In 2 Timothy 1:5, we see that Timothy learned valuable lessons from his grandmother Lois and his mother, Eunice.

Learning from the example of farmers: In 2 Timothy 1:13, we see that Timothy could learn a pattern of sound words from Paul.

Learning from good examples: In 2 Timothy 1:16-17, we see that Timothy could learn great lessons about friendship and service from the sterling example of Onesiphorus.

Learning by preparing to teach: In 2 Timothy 2:1-2, we see that Timothy could learn lessons by being committed to teaching those lessons. A leader generally gains more instruction from teaching than the people he is seeking to help.

Learning from the example of soldiers: In 2 Timothy 2:3-4, we see that Timothy could learn valuable lessons from certain aspects of being a soldier.

Learning from the example of athletes: In 2 Timothy 2:5, we see that Timothy could learn valuable lessons from certain aspects of being an athlete.

Learning from the example of farmers: In 2 Timothy 2:6, we see that Timothy could learn valuable lessons from certain aspects of being a farmer.

Learning to avoid unprofitable discussions: In 2 Timothy 2:14-16, we see that Timothy could learn valuable lessons about avoiding unprofitable discussions.

Learning from the Bible: In 2 Timothy 3:14-17, we see that Timothy could learn valuable lessons from the Bible

Benefits of Bible study

Disciples of Jesus Christ have learned that there is great value in studying the lessons in the Bible.

While disciples of Jesus Christ place a high priority on studying the lessons in the New Testament, they also know the value of studying the lessons in the Old Testament.

There are various methods for gaining wisdom from the Bible. Here are

10 different ways to study the Bible.

1. Reading for encouragement (like Psalm 23:1-6)
2. Studying for correction (like James 3:1-8)
3. Studying people of the Bible
4. Studying books of the Bible
5. Studying Bible history
6. Studying Bible prophecy
7. Studying doctrine for yourself
8. Studying doctrine to help other people
9. Studying the teachings of Christ
10. Studying the actions of Christ

Learning from unlikely sources

At this time, I want you to consider a lesson that many religious people do not comprehend: You can learn wonderful lessons from the most unlikely of sources, if you are listening for truth.

The problem is that many religious people believe that they can only learn lessons from either a particular sanctioned preacher or from a particular sanctioned church organization.

Also they are often too quick to believe error from their sanctioned teachers. Such people are often too quick to disregard truth from an unlikely source. Notice two examples.

Faith of centurion

In Matthew 8:5-12, Bible students can read about the faith of the centurion. You do realize that the centurion was not in the religious hierarchy of priest, scribe, elder and the like.

Many disciples would have quickly discarded his words and actions. Yet what did Jesus say about him?

When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in

Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth' (Matthew 8:10-12).

Question: Are you quick to accept the words of the "sons of the Kingdom" and quick to ignore truth from an unlikely source?

Faith of Samaritan woman

In Matthew 15:21-28, Bible students can read about the faith of the Samaritan woman. You do realize that she had numerous factors working against her concerning whether her opinion would be accepted.

Many people of that time would not accept her actions because she was of the wrong nationality, the wrong race and the wrong gender.

Yet what did Jesus say about her?

Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour (Matthew 15:28).

Understanding to serve

When a Bible student reads 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, he sees how important it is to understand the culture of different segments of society.

If a disciple wants to help different segments of society, he must seek to understand their world. Notice the following four segments mentioned by Paul.

- Do you know how to reach a Jewish person?
- Do you know how to reach a person who is under the law?
- Do you know how to reach a person who is without law?
- Do you know how to reach a person who is weak?

Willing to learn?

It is a wonderful goal for a disciple to seek to understand the culture of the four segments of society mentioned by Paul.

But let's turn the scenario around. Instead of seeking to help those four segments of society, can we recognize the opportunity to learn from those same segments of society?

- Are you willing to learn from a Jewish person?
- Are you willing to learn from a person who is under the law?
- Are you willing to learn from a person who is without law?
- Are you willing to learn from a person who is weak?
- I guess we should ask the question: Are you willing to learn from other people?

It is my perspective that a person should seek to learn as much as he can from other people. However, there are some lessons in life that each person must learn through personal experience.

Maturing process

Disciples know that this life is designed to be a journey for people to proceed along a maturing process.

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things (1 Corinthians 13:11).

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Hebrews 5:12-14).

Learning from success

The most desirable way to mature is to learn from our successes. The author of the book of Hebrews said that Jesus Christ learned.

Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered (Hebrews 5:8).

It is interesting to consider the concept that the Son of Man could “learn.” I don’t view His learning as on the same level as our learning. We learn much from our failures, and He never failed. Therefore, I believe He learned from His successes. I believe His learning was from experiencing.

If a perfect Christ can learn, how much more can we imperfect people learn? Christ learned through suffering. He learned by behaving successfully through suffering.

There are other examples of people in the Bible who learned from their successes. I want you to consider two successful people and the contrasting conclusions to their lives.

- When Job repented, God blessed the latter days of his life more than his beginning days (Job 42:12-17). Job was able to enjoy more years of blessing.
- When Abel obeyed God, God complimented him for his obedience and Cain killed him. Abel was not able to enjoy more years of blessing. He is awaiting the resurrection. (Hebrews 11:4, 35, 40).

Learning from mistakes

Maturing people seek to learn from their mistakes.

One of the more humorous stories to me in the Bible involves events surrounding God promising a child to Abraham and Sarah. Some Bible students would choose to identify the

reactions of Abraham and Sarah as sin. I prefer to identify their reactions as mistakes.

When God told Abraham about the upcoming birth of a son, Abraham laughed inwardly at God’s words (Genesis 17:17).

When God told Sarah about the upcoming birth of a son, Sarah also laughed inwardly at God’s words (Genesis 18:12). But Sarah made matters worse by denying that she indeed had laughed.

(This example reminds me of small children who tell their parents that they didn’t eat the missing cookies as they have cookie crumbs all over their face.)

Since both Abraham and Sarah are listed in Hebrews 11, they learned from their mistake.

Learning from our sins

Maturing people seek to learn from their sins.

The Bible has some wonderful examples of people who made mistakes and learned from their mistakes.

My favorite two examples of repentance are King David in the Old Testament and the Parable of the Prodigal Son in the New Testament.

- Notice David’s reaction to his sins (Psalm 51:1-19).
- Notice the Prodigal Son’s reaction to his sins (Luke 15:11-21).

Learning to see Ourselves

Each person walking this earth has certain aspects of denial in his life. Each person does not clearly see himself as God sees him.

Notice a portion of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus described the problem.


“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” (Matthew 7:1-5).

Notice two verses where the apostle Paul described the problem.

Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise (1 Corinthians 3:18).

For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself (Galatians 6:3).

Notice a section of Scripture where the apostle John described the problem.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10). 





Feast at Penticton, British Columbia

2016 will be the sixth Feast of Tabernacles celebrated in Penticton, British Columbia. The previous five have been a delight; a time of rejoicing with God's people from many different organizations, worshipping one God as one family.

Penticton is a jewel, located in the wine and fruit growing area of B.C. surrounded by mountains and sandwiched between two large lakes, Okanagan to the north and Skaha to the south. It is a beautiful setting for the Feast.

There are many things to do in the area such as golfing, fishing, biking, shopping, walking trails, rock climbing and of course, touring the vineyards. There is also a wide variety of restaurants. There will be planned activities, both indoor and out.

For more information, please contact Alex Kennedy at 250-488-3624, kennoman@icloud.com