

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH ~ MAKING DISCIPLES ~ EQUIPPING THE SAINTS FOR MINISTRY

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The Odyssey Part 5 THE FRUIT TEST By Rayola Kelley

One of the many challenges on my spiritual odyssey involved religion. There is a religion the Bible makes reference to, and then there are religions that man and Satan inspire. I encountered the religion that was inspired by both man and Satan when I was part of a cult. There was a false light of love, compassion, and goodness permeating the environment and the people. It all appeared religious because it promoted religious concepts, family, good morals, and religious exercises.

However, what I later discovered as a new believer was that Satan is quite religious and comes across as an angel of light that clearly deceives. He also has false apostles and ministers of so-called "righteousness" promoting his counterfeit religions in order to draw people into his destructive web (*2 Corinthians 11:13-15*). But, as the Apostle Paul pointed out, all such religion may have a form of godliness, but it denies the very power that must be present to distinguish it as being Holy Spirit inspired (*2 Timothy 3:5*).

The religion inspired by man has its subtle twist on the matters of God, salvation, and morality. In most false religions you can find some truth or point of religious attraction that promotes a flimsy or false hope of making peace with God. However, it either adds to a truth or takes away from its intent. It is important to point out that Satan is behind every false religion. However, the hub behind all of Satan's inspired religion is either



spiritual "enlightenment" or experiences.

When it comes to man's religion, a leader, doctrine, practices, or denomination serves as the center of man's devotion. This brings us to the difference between religion that is being promoted by Satan and religion that is being promoted by man: Satan's point of attraction for his religion is the supernatural, while for man's religion it is nothing but humanism. Humanism simply exalts man and his attempts as the way and authority to some type of spiritual state, truth, or bliss. Regardless of how you look at it, both false religions seductively offer a way in which man can reach some type of state of holiness, spiritual enlightenment, or godhood outside of Christ. In fact, it represents those who are trying to enter God's kingdom by any way except the door God provided in Christ.

As I have encountered and studied both forms of religion, I have discerned how each one has its own points of seduction. For Satan, the concept of arriving at a so-called "enlightened" or "divine state" is the lure, but for man's religion it comes down to good works that will supposedly "sway" the balance in a productive way. In other words, our goodness will outweigh the badness of our evil twin, scripturally known as the "old man", and God will surely accept us. The truth is, we will never arrive at a particular state in this life; rather, as believers we will be changed in the twinkling of an eye to a state that will identify us to the heavenly. Meanwhile, for those in an unregenerate condition, their best will be considered as filthy rags, declaring that there can be no good thing found in such a status. The result is that all works originating in such a condition are considered reprobate (*Isaiah 64:6; Romans 7:18; 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52; Titus 1:15-16*).

This brings me to my spiritual odyssey in relationship to religion. My

greatest challenge came down to religion inspired by man. It is important to point out that such inspiration was not always the result of those who influenced me; rather, it was the product of my own human tendency to become pious. Granted, there are those who presented Christianity in a religious form, but there were others who stressed that Christianity is a way of life that can only be established through a relationship with God. Ultimately, I was the one who chose to interpret or follow the way of what proved to be lifeless religion.

Each erroneous religious encounter I had during my journey revealed that the "old man" can be quite religious. He is prone to take spiritual matters and box them up in a nice little package that will appear to make spiritual things understandable, and cause him to emerge as religious, wise, and a spiritual authority. However, the "old man" can only take on the pose of self-righteousness, for there is nothing in him that could be considered upright before God.

As I consider my initial Christian life, I have to admit that religion took me on various detours that lasted for the first seven years of my journey. The results of my religious detour were revealed by the fruits that eventually came to fruition. No wonder my fruit left me frustrated, joyless, and feeling like a bonafide hypocrite; and, from that premise I could only conclude that it left a bitter, sour, unpleasant taste to those who ended up partaking of it in some way. However, the foulness of my fruit brought me face to face with my true spiritual condition. The harsh reality of it broke me and left me devastated before the Lord. The brokenness represented the reality of the worst trap a Christian can become entangled in, but if it leads to repentance it points to a new beginning. For me, it led to repentance and a new beginning. Thanks to the Lord's forgiveness, I not only started out with a clean slate, but I had learned some valuable lessons which left me a bit wiser.

As I reflected on my various religious detours, I began to understand how lifeless religion can become a lure to most people. Although a person may desire to know God, he or she often looks for Him in the wrong places. It does not matter how religious an environment or a person may appear to be, it does not mean God is in the environment or with that person. The only sign that God is present is the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit is missing, a form of religion may be present, but it will have no power to save, change, or deliver.

I also discovered that even if a religious person has the Spirit, he or she cannot give Him to you. Each of us is responsible to ask, seek, and knock until we find our life in Christ. Each person must carry his or her own cross, climb the mountains, cross the rivers, walk through the valleys, and find his or her way around or through the deep ravines. After all, in the current of life, God has ordained a unique type of terrain for each of us. It is here that we must find the Lord, choose to trust Him in His sovereign providence, and learn what it means to rely on Him regardless of what confronts us.

It was as I pondered my religious fiasco that I recognized that at the heart of such a matter was idolatry. I had managed to erect many idols in my different searches. Admittedly, I was not aware that I had put such emphasis or focus on that which was far from the divine. However, these idols had claimed my devotion, allegiance, and worship. Sadly, I had to ignore the foul fruit that was peeking out from behind my self-righteous robes. This masquerade required developing a certain amount of self-delusion on my part.

The first religious pose was that of the carnal Christian. In my immaturity, I wanted to become true to my new belief, but the worldly attitude was still intact. I developed a religious reality that put the best foot forward in my conduct, but in so many ways I was simply tacking Christian practices on to my worldly attitude about the way things should be. It all looked religious to me, but it fell short. This unholy combination caused much confusion in my life. In fact, it caused a certain leanness to

my life that I tried to compensate for by becoming more rigid in my pursuits. I never discerned that inner joy and peace were missing from my pursuit.

This state brought me to the next stage: that of self-righteousness. When you are a carnal Christian, inconsistencies plague you. You know you are missing the mark, but you do not know how to get to that place of spiritual maturity. Even though you can read Scriptures such as Philippians 1:6, which tells you that it is God who does the good work in you, such concepts remain foreign to you. The concept of grace is wonderful, but at this point in my life it had not become a personal revelation. The reason why is because a worldly attitude works off the idea that there must be some good in you that God can use, when in fact the only good that can be used is what God works in you.

As inconsistencies glared at me, I tried to establish a religion of deeds and statues that would bring discipline to my carnal attitude. As I became rigid, religion became unbearable. However, my attempt to be a good trooper about my plight ended with me sliding downward into a terrible abyss of vanity and ridiculousness. Through the regimentation of it all, I failed to see that I lacked godly love.

False religion causes a disconnect between our idea of our "religious" self and the real fruit of our lives. For me, I ended up taking on a Gnostic pose. I was pursuing spiritual enlightenment in light of Scriptural truths to try to confirm my delusion about my spiritual condition, while becoming divorced from the ungodly attitudes that were taking center stage in my life. In essence, my fruit was telling on me, but I consoled myself that as long as I knew a matter according to Scripture, I was okay. I erroneously concluded that my attitude would align to my knowledge, but attitude does not change unless one changes his or her mind about what he or she is doing. I later discovered that attitude only changes in a right way when conduct realigns itself to what is godly, and conduct will only adjust itself accordingly when attitude comes into agreement with what is right.

It was hard to look at the Gnostic pose I took on in my self-righteous pursuit, but then I had to realize that I also

adopted an amoral attitude towards my deviations. The Bible is clear about what is morally right and wrong. There is no debate as to how God views moral or ethical practices. For example, what may seem like a harmless and insignificant form of lying, gossip, and slander to us may be considered devious and murderous to our righteous Judge. What may seem normal to our way of thinking might be considered an abomination to the Lord. What might be thrown into the shades of gray in our way of doing may be considered a transgression to God. What may be deemed as a right on our part in a matter may be considered iniquity according to God. Each of these deviations will result in us becoming separated from God and lost to His plan for our lives.

I realize that when Christians deviate from the Word, they become amoral. In other words, any real absolute right or wrong ceases so that the present situation can be adjusted according to personal preference. Moral and ethical issues then slide into shades of grey that will cause a person to slip into an amoral arena. It was at this stage that in my heart I knew something was wrong in my life, but in my mind I justified it. I simply enlarged the borders of something for a time until I could personally get on top of my own conduct. I figured the Lord would understand.

The Lord did understand, but what He understood is that I wanted my own way and I wanted to work it out according to my selfishness. In a sense, I took on an agnostic attitude. When you adjust moral absolutes, you begin to show disbelief towards the God of the Bible. In your mind, you begin to render his glory into the human arena where His holiness ceases and His love is unrealistically exalted to overlook moral deviation. Meanwhile, you simply create a god to your own liking. Even though you have an idea of God, there are no absolutes as to His character and Word, stripping His Word of any valid authority in your mind.

The truth of the matter is, I was in an utter state of rebellion, but I was blinded to it. In my rebellion I put on the fig leaves of good intentions to do better as a means to hide the shame created by the deviation that was tak-

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POWER

By Jeannette Haley

Everyone born into this world strives to obtain and maintain some form of power. In our personal lives, from birth to death we struggle to gain power over our lives on many different fronts depending on what our greatest goals, conflicts and challenges are. Concerning power over a person's physical well-being means gaining knowledge of how the body functions, the part good nutrition plays, and how natural remedies work. In the financial domain wealth is power, and the wealthier a person is the more power he or she enjoys. Of course, in the criminal sphere (this could include the political arena, especially in our corrupt day and age) power is everything. The bottom line is, the fallen disposition of human beings craves the power to be independent, call the shots in one's own life, and maintain the right to oneself. The underlying motivation to live as we please, for sustained and fortified independence, results in an insatiable quest for power. How else can one make his or her fondest and most cherished dreams and desires a reality? However, there is a price to pay for such power, and that price is one's relationship with God. While some may achieve a certain amount of power in this present world, there is one thing they will never have power over, and that is the reality of death.

The well-known poem "Invictus" by English poet William Ernest Henley (1849–1903) sums up the philosophy of the independent spirit: "Out of the night that covers me, Black as the Pit from pole to pole, I thank whatever gods may be For my unconquerable soul. In the fell clutch of circumstance I have not winced nor cried aloud. Under the bludgeonings of chance My head is bloody, but unbowed. Beyond this place of wrath and tears Looms but the Horror of the shade, And yet the menace of the years Finds and shall find me unafraid. It matters not how strait the gate, How charged with punishments the scroll, I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul." Indeed we are the ultimate "master of our fate" because we have the freedom to choose whom we will serve; that is, either self, sin and Sa-

tan, or the Lord Jesus Christ.

When did humanity's lust for power begin? Let's go back to the beginning—to the Garden of Eden. According to *Job 31:33* and *Hosea 6:7*, Adam desired in his heart for the power to be the "captain of his fate." His longing for independence surfaced when he deliberately ate the forbidden fruit, an action which was a statement of his inner condition. Eve, on the other hand, fell for Satan's lie. From there she determined by outward appearance that the fruit was good, and she believed that the tree would make her wise, even as God. All of this was followed by her decision to eat it as she undoubtedly felt that the Lord was withholding something good from her and Adam. Her motives were not so much to gain independence from the Lord as to gain wisdom. Adam, on the other hand, wanted power over his own life. Of course, they both died spiritually the moment they ate of it, which God, in His foreknowledge, knew would happen. Thus the way was paved for the Savior and Redeemer to step out of eternity and into time in order to be the sacrifice for the sins of mankind, and to defeat Satan and his armies.

The quest for power generally falls into four categories: 1) Those who are lovers of self and the world. These people try to maintain the power to be independent from God, which means choosing to live life on their own terms. People who strive to "gain the whole world" at the peril of their own souls fall into this category; 2) This group is made up of semi-religious people who try to maintain the power to be independent of the Lordship of Christ. Such people are double-minded, merely "tacking Jesus on to their lives," while giving Him lip service. These people want to benefit from the promises of God, yet refuse to repent of their sins and be converted to righteousness. With one foot firmly planted in the world, and the other planted in pseudo Christianity, these people may talk the talk, but in reality are not completely sold out, committed Christians; 3) The third group are those who seek supernatural power from the occult. 4) Genuine believers who are endowed with power from on high.

We find examples in the Bible of people who could fit in any one of these four categories. In the first cate-

gory, take, for example, Cain, who "went out from the presence of the LORD." Cain had no regard for the Lord God, or his own brother, whom he slew. The only person he cared about was himself, and if you follow his descendants, they carried on Cain's legacy as a lover of the world. Ishmael is an example of a person who mocked and disregarded God's promises, yet God was with him for Abraham's sake. Ishmael was the forefather of the Arabs, including Mohammad. Consider Esau who also loved the world, and despised his birthright (to be in the lineage of Christ). Esau married pagan women, the third one being Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael. Many of the kings of Israel lived independent of God, loving power and the world, and brought much misery and destruction upon the entire nation.

Although people in the first category are comfortable living in the world, and for the world, not all are atheists or agnostics; rather, many of these people see themselves as being "good" people who do "good things" and who have no problem, when the occasion arises (such as a personal or national tragedy or emergency) mentioning God. Their use, however, of His name is in a casual, generic, non-threatening, "politically correct" sense. For example, Muslims, Mormons, Mind-science cults, Freemasons, Oprah Winfrey, Hollywood stars, and ungodly politicians (to name just a few) talk about "God," but which god are they referring to? Such people become extremely uncomfortable, or even agitated if someone begins to talk about the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is a direct threat to their independent way of thinking and doing, for in order to truly become born again, a person must humble him or herself and give up the right (power) over his or her own life. No person can truly belong to Christ and be "the master of his or her fate, and the captain of his or her soul." Either Jesus is Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all.

In the second category we find people who want spiritual power, such as Lot who, even though his soul was "vexed" by the abominations around him, made no effort to flee with his family to another location. His goal was to follow Abraham, not seek for

his own relationship with the living God. As for the children of Israel, the Bible tell us of the many instances when they would offer sacrifices to both the Lord and idols. These people may have been "religious" but they were far from "righteous" and they paid a high price for their independent ways. Another example of someone who had power over the nation Israel and who wanted God's blessings, yet refused to obey Him, is King Saul. He even went so far as to look to the occult and consult a medium for help. Judas Iscariot is another example of someone who followed Jesus for three years, but his heart was never converted. Paul spoke of Demas who forsook him, because he loved "this present world." Sadly, churches across this land are filled with such people who hang on to their independence (power over their own lives) while claiming to be saved and on their way to heaven where they will "be with their loved ones" who were just as lost as they are.

The third category is a major one. Spiritualism and occultism are gaining a momentum that should be alarming to every one who belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. Keep in mind that in the spiritual realm power either comes from the Kingdom of God or the kingdom of darkness over which Satan presides. In *1 John 4:1* we are warned, "*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*" The problem is, few Christians know how to test or discern spirits, and the fact that many don't even want to learn how to test the spirits is disturbing.

Fascination with the supernatural is gaining momentum. Young children are exposed to witchcraft through books (such as the Harry Potter series), games, movies, demonic toys, music, and art, among other things. It is as if a rising tide of demonic filth is forming a deadly tsunami that threatens to obliterate anything and everything that consists of the Holy Spirit and truth. People of all ages are drawn to the supernatural world due to the mysterious power that it possesses. This power is greatly desired by those who want to gain power over, not only their own lives, but the lives of others as well, which is basic witchcraft.

Those who feel weak, or insecure, crave a power that will make them feel strong and invincible. Those who feel superior and wiser than others, or who have an insatiable curiosity to explore and experience the deepest esoteric secrets of the occult pursue such topics as "hidden knowledge," "wisdom of the ancients," "secrets of levitation," "Universal Life Force Alignment Meditation" (or any of the scores of New Age meditation methods, too numerous to mention here), "hyperdimensional realities," "astral projection," or the extensive realm of metaphysics, just to name a few.

To try and illustrate the vastness of the occult, and the supernatural power of the kingdom of darkness, picture, if you will, an enormous tree that symbolizes and embodies every facet of this unseen realm. The roots reach downward into the blackness of Satanism from whence the tree draws its authority and power. Upon each limb, branch, twig, and bud could be written a different occult, mystical, hidden mystery or supernatural belief, practice, teaching, lodge, group, coven, religion or movement, and yet, this "tree" is growing and expanding so rapidly that only God knows the extent of it. When the King of kings returns to establish His kingdom on earth, "*...he will destroy ... the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations,*" *Isaiah 25:7*.

Rayola and I have concluded that the kingdom of darkness is as boundless as the bottomless pit itself. Therefore, there would be no end to the books and articles that could be written exploring, researching, and exposing the tangled and interwoven web of lies and deception of this evil kingdom which, on the surface, often displays a beautiful and alluring illusion of light, wisdom, knowledge, and power. The fruit of it, however, is death and destruction.

People who look to any area of the occult in order to acquire power open themselves up to Satan and the demonic world where forces beyond their understanding and control are quick to enter in and take over. We have met people who were so deeply steeped in the power that demons granted to them that, even though they lived in constant fear and tor-

ment, refused to humble themselves before the Lord Jesus Christ and be set free. In the early stages of toying with occult power, a person is given just enough taste of power to cause him or her to believe that this power will be theirs to command. The appetite for more power grows as he or she wades deeper and deeper into the tantalizing labyrinth of hidden knowledge and mysteries. The trap is subtle, alluring, deceptive, and deadly. Obviously, this type of power comes with the high price (in this world and the next) of loss of freedom, as well as personal control over the power that possesses its victims. Whereas God sets us free, and endues us with the power from on High through the indwelling Holy Spirit, the person who has (usually unwittingly) exchanged his or her soul for the power granted by Satan's kingdom has lost the freedom to control his or her own life, even though for a time he or she may blissfully imagine that he or she is indeed in control. Thus we see that the person who operates in Satan's (or demons') power has no personal authority because Satan retains that authority over his subjects. Whatever power such a person may operate in is always ultimately controlled by Satan.

By contrast, the power of the child of God is established and backed up by the living Word, the Godhead, the everlasting God, possessor of heaven and earth. This power is unshakeable, immovable, indestructible, and is the ultimate authority and power over all that is, both visible and invisible. Therefore, the Spirit-filled Christian who knows his or her God, knows the Word, and knows his or her authority in Christ has the power to resist the enemy when attacked, to overcome and stand.

It is vital that God's people learn how to discern and test spirits as well as continue to "watch and pray" as the days grow darker. Discernment must not be left in the parking lot with our car when we attend church! Every church has its share of wrong spirits that must be discerned and properly dealt with as the Lord leads for the sake of the flock of God.

As for opening up to the power of the "other side," people need to be

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ing place in my life. On top of my fig-leaves I reinforced my hypocritical religion by putting on a religious robe to soothe my conscience. After all, there were points in my life where I perceived that I was doing good, and my logic was that in due time I just knew I would turn the corner and all would be better.

Eventually the fruit of my life begin to smell. My unbelief became sour, my fleshly love started decaying, and my despair was beginning to cause my religious façade to crack. It was at that time I knew that in all my religious endeavors, my life was running amuck. I clearly lacked joy because purity was missing from my devotion to God. I was dissatisfied and fought the temptation to look to fleshly means to inspire me in some way because the spiritual attraction I once had was fading. I felt empty and lost, and it seemed that everything was beginning to close in on me like vice grips. I had to admit that all my religious attempts did not make me more spiritual; rather, they simply made me more earthbound, lost in a cesspool of ridiculousness, which caused me to become more of a natural, soulish person who was losing all sense of my heavenly identification.

It was at the lowest, most miserable point of that period that I repented. Once I got turned around, I realized that instead of going the ways of conversion, I went the way of religion. For example, Peter was told on the night that he denied he even knew Jesus that Satan would sift him, but once he was converted he needed to encourage the others.

One would think that Peter was converted. He was in a sense. He was converted to the reality of who Christ was through the revelation of heaven, but he was not privy to who he was in light of his fallen disposition. He did not understand that to address the "old man" in him, he had to be constantly converted to the ways of righteousness as established by God. Until, he realized the utter failure of the old, he would see no need to be converted to the new.

I realized my religious detour involved taking one step off of the path of righteousness established by conversion by way of religion. It was only

after I clearly saw what Christianity entails that I discovered the true religion of Christianity. *James 1:27* summarizes it in this way, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." It takes godly love that will be disciplined by the Holy Spirit to express itself in gentleness, goodness, and meekness towards others; and, it takes faith and obedience to remain untouched by the influence and ways of the world. However, to maintain such a state will result in joy and peace because your relationship with the Lord will remain intact.

Since my repentance from the ways of the "old man" and conversion to the ways of righteousness, I have tried to honestly examine my attitude and conduct. I am aware that both reflect my disposition and the spirit that is motivating and influencing me.

How about you? Are you divorced from properly discerning the fruit of your life, or are you honestly choosing the ways of righteousness? †

THE EXCEEDING GREATNESS OF HIS POWER

From a speech by
Dave Hunt—(1926—2013)

What would you think would be the greatest expression, the greatest demonstration of God's power? "When I consider thy heavens, and the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars that you've made"? Or when we sing, "How great Thou art"? No. What is it then? "...According to the working of his mighty power, *which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand* in the heavenly places...."

"The exceeding greatness of his power...that he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand...far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:19-23). That's what God accomplished. †

COMMENTS

[Earlier this year] "Thank you so much for your latest, second book, of devotionals. We loved the first book and are into the New Year with the second one. Thank you for all your prayers and encouragement! You're amazing ladies! - WA

"I am writing to thank you for the delightful CD—way to go Carrie—I am so blessed by the music—[husband] enjoys it too, when he's here. So blessed by the February newsletter. "The Peak" was so inspiring and challenging. I know I don't always walk through my trials as I should but because of my steadfast belief that He does all things well and the teachings of my brothers and sisters in Christ I manage to keep on and my walk grows steadier each day. How I rejoice in Him and His amazing love." - MT

"Rayola, I was so blessed to read your article this month! [April] Like you, I've always thanked God for saving me from MYSELF!!! That is truly the biggest blessing the shed blood bought for me! And, when you spoke of trying to do things on your own, with a wrong attitude and/or spirit, it reminded me of the Scripture: *Ps 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.* Since that is something that ONLY GOD can do! A "divided heart" will never be satisfied with serving God alone. What a refreshing, comforting and faith-building article! Thank you. Jeannette, I've never seen the four "animals" laid out so astutely in any article!!!! I pray that every eye reading your article will get with God's program, and leave all of their game-playing in the past! Indeed, time is very short! We need to become fearless sheep who will follow the Master's voice and no other, regardless of any consequence this world thinks it can throw at us. Once again, thank you Ladies for providing a banquet and feast for my soul!" - FL

Read the [April] newsletter. Wow, it was incredible!! It definitely was jam packed with punch to the core. I can't even tell you how it spoke volumes to my heart. Thank you for your ministry, staying faithful to speak the truth of His Word" - ID

aware of anything that produces an altered consciousness such as the following: Mental telepathy, self-trances, astral projection, and transcendental meditation; any mind altering drug (including mind-altering prescription drugs) which is the sorcery mentioned in the Bible that men will not repent of in the last days; any of the numerous forms of New Age and/or Eastern methods of meditation, (this includes "centering," "soaking prayer," "contemplative meditation," found in the "emergent" and modernist churches); hard rock music, vain repetition in worship ("7-11" singing, that is, seven short phrases sung eleven times), chanting, hypnotic drumbeats and shamanism; any form of witchcraft which includes automatic writing (a form of channeling), visualization (visualizing and concentrating on what you want, or used as a power to influence or control, which is basic witchcraft), positive confession (such as Joyce Meyer, Kenneth Copeland, Robert Schuller, etc. teach) and other mind-science beliefs and practices.

Of course magic, tarot cards, the Ouija board, Dungeons and Dragons, reading tea leaves, palm reading, astrology, and all other such forms of prognostication are open doors to demonic forces. Séances and attempts to communicate with the dead are wide open doors for demonic oppression or possession as well. The bottom line is, if a teaching, belief or practice is contrary to the Word of God, does not exalt the Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible, and/or is of the wrong spirit, then it must ALL be rejected as belonging to the kingdom of darkness. In this day and age of the social gospel (humanism) and liberal, progressive thinking, it is easy to be swayed by anything, even such things as "white witchcraft" if "good works" are involved.

The bottom line is, people who seek after any type of, or measure of, power other than from the Kingdom of God do so in order to become a god themselves. After all, isn't this what Satan promised Eve? *"For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil"* Genesis 3:5.

The last, but not least category of those who seek power are those who have received power from God. *John 1:12* declares, *"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."* As Christians, we do not have power because we sought for power alone, but because we sought for, and received, salvation and reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. We have no power in and of ourselves to make ourselves the "sons of God; rather, it is God who gives those who believe the power to become His children.

Even though "enlightened" people scoff at the idea of Satan, or the belief that he does indeed have great power, the Bible makes it clear that he does in fact possess great power. Consider this: if Satan didn't exist, who was Jesus talking to in His temptation in the wilderness? *Luke 4:5-7* records one of the temptations Satan presented to Jesus, *"And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine."* (Emphasis added.) When Jesus spoke to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, He spoke of Satan's power, *"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me"* Acts 26:18. (Emphasis added.)

Countless Christians today long to have spiritual power! The question is, why do they want power? There has been a great movement within Christendom since the 1940's for supernatural power among different groups who profess themselves to be Christians. Their quest for power is in the area of signs and wonders, which includes different outward manifestations of what they claim is the Holy Spirit regardless of how strange, bizarre, frightening and out of order they are. Many focus on the power to heal everybody and everything, anywhere at any time in an outward show of so-called "power." All of this is contrary to the purpose for which God sent the Holy Spirit on the day of Pen-

tecost, for we read in *Acts 1:8a* Jesus' reason for this power, *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me..."* (Emphasis added.) The purpose for this power is to be witnesses (martyrs) of Jesus Christ. God gives His power to those who go forth bearing precious seed (the Word), proclaiming the Gospel, which *"is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes,"* (Romans 1:16) and the power to withstand all the power of the enemy, stand in His power to resist Satan (*Luke 10:19*), and to overcome him. *"And they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony (witness); and they loved not their lives unto the death"* Revelation 12:11. (Additions added.)

Do you want power? If so, ask the Lord to show you the motives of your heart. If your heart is humble and pure, and your only desire is to see God glorified, then you can ask the Lord for the power to be His witness, and servant. If signs and miracles follow you (see Mark 16:17, 18) give God all the glory, for it is done through His power. Otherwise, you are seeking power for your own agenda, which makes you wide open to receive power from the wrong source. This is one of the reasons many people end up with a religious spirit, or a mixed spirit, which brings confusion on those in the church who don't discern it for what it is.

As Christians, we are given His power to become the sons of God, in order to live by His power, and have power to proclaim the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes. If we are fearful, we have this promise, *"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind"* 2 Timothy 1:7. Finally, always remember that the believer's power to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil is established by the authority of God and His eternal Word. ✠

POWER

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." - 2 Timothy 3:5

"Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

LIVING IN THE PAST

Q: *In the past you have talked about how people handle reality. I know a person who, after her husband passed away over five years ago, only lives in the past. All she can talk about is their former life together. I know this cannot be healthy for her, but I do not know what to do for her.*

A: You are right it is not healthy for a person to live in the past. The harsh reality is that people either live in the past or in light of the future but rarely in the present. The reason people fail to live in the present is because it is either unpleasant, full of drudgery, or their life is not going the way they think it should.

As for your friend, she lives in the past because she lacks purpose for the present and hope in light of the future. It appears that in her mind she has nothing to live for and nothing to look forward to because the essence of her life ceased upon the death of her husband. The loss she has experienced seems to be impossible for her to face, making it hard for others to address her in her plight. The other repercussion is that because she is not moving forward, her relationship with others is also becoming stagnated and morbid, causing an unpleasant atmosphere for those around her.

The truth is life is a current and it goes on. We can sit on the sidelines and wish that our present life was like the "good ole days" when we were happy and content, but the reality is we are not moving with the present current to embrace the life that is yet before us.

Life is a gift from God. It is to be lived day by day, knowing that the life we live in these bodies is temporary. As Christians, we are indeed passing through as pilgrims and sojourners. Since this life is temporary, God as well as different cultures have devised



means to honestly mourn such losses with the intent of letting go of what was, to discover what can be. I am not sure your friend wants to

face the devastation of her loss with the intent of mourning and accepting it as so, so she can move on. In truth, she could be in a type of shock that keeps her numb to the present. After all, the future has to be frightening to her and the present without her husband has to be despairing. As a result, she is locked in sort of a "time zone" that keeps her divorced from the present and indifferent to the future.

I do not know if your friend is a Christian, but if she is she should take comfort in knowing that this world, along with things and worldly relationships will cease, but the best is yet to come. It is for this reason that we are told to walk by faith and not by our understanding, and what we see before us. As Christians, we must seek the One who can comfort us to help us walk through the emotional fallout from such losses. No one can face the fear, anger, and anguish that will follow such devastation without the supernatural comfort of the Lord.

I can not begin to imagine where your friend is, but it appears that she has not found healing. It also appears that your friend is seeking the memories of what was for some semblance of comfort or hope, instead of seeking the One who can settle the storms of the present and give hope for a better future.

The best advice I can give you is to pray for her that she sees the morbid pit she is in. Until she has a reason to face the present and have a hope for something better in the future, she will see no need to leave the decaying rags of the past behind her. Meanwhile, the life she could have with its different joys and challenges keeps passing her by day after day. Sadly, while she misses the past that will never be again, she is missing the opportunity to make the life she has been allotted by God to count for something, which would ultimately bring a greater sense of satisfaction and contentment to her. ✚

~THOUGHTS~

"Conversion costs nothing, but discipleship costs everything." - R. Kelley

"Knowledge will give you power, but character respect." - Bruce Lee

GETTING HIGH ON WORSHIP MUSIC

(Excerpts from: David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org)

A 2012 study by the University of Washington concluded that megachurches "provide the same biological 'high' and euphoria as that produced by sporting events and concerts" (Ecumenical News International, Aug. 21, 2012). The study, entitled "God Is Like a Drug: Explaining Interaction Ritual Chains in American megachurches," was co-authored by Katie Corcoran and James Wellman. They attribute the worship "high" to the "upbeat modern music, cameras that scan the audience and project smiling, dancing, singing, or crying worshippers on large screens, and an extremely charismatic leader whose sermons touch individuals on an emotional level." They believe these things "trigger chemicals in the brain to give the individual an emotional 'high' and feeling of transcendence as well as a need to come back for another hit."

I am convinced that if you took away the rock music, churches like this would lose their large crowds almost instantly. Rock music is a drug in itself, and this generation is high on music.

ROCK MUSIC IS A DRUG

Timothy Leary, the '60s LSD guru, who was an expert both in drugs and in rock music, testified: "Don't listen to the words, it's the music that has its own message. ... I've been STONED ON THE MUSIC many times" (Politics of Ecstasy, 1968). Leary was right, of course, about the hypnotic, addictive, incredibly sensual power of rock and roll. And notice that he IS NOT TALKING ABOUT THE WORDS, but of the music itself, of the rhythm, the backbeat, the heavy relentless syncopation. Steven Tyler of Aerosmith said, "[Rock music] is the strongest drug in the world" (Rock Beat, Spring 1987, p. 23).

Neil Young said, "Rock 'n' roll is like a drug" (cited by Mickey Hart, Spirit into Sound).

Janis Joplin likened rock music to "the best dope in the world" ("Janis Joplin Followed the Script," Wichita Eagle, Oct. 6, 1980, p. 7A).

ROCK MUSIC IS HYPNOTIC

Musician Andrew Salter observes, "Rock music is an IDEAL VEHICLE FOR INDIVIDUAL OR MASS HYPNOSIS" (Salter, cited from *Pop Goes the Gospel*, p. 20). Likewise, John Fuller, in his powerful book *Are the Kids All Right*, warned: "Rock music in particular has been demonstrated to be both powerful and addictive, as well as CAPABLE OF PRODUCING A SUBTLE FORM OF HYPNOSIS in which the subject, though not completely under trance, is still in a highly suggestive state" (Fuller, *Are the Kids All Right?* 1981).

David Winter, in his book *New Singer, New Song*, observes: "An incessant beat does erode a sense of responsibility IN MUCH THE SAME WAY AS ALCOHOL DOES. ... You feel IN THE GRIP OF A RELENTLESS STREAM OF SOUND to which something very basic and primitive in the human nature responds."

Indeed, rock music is powerful and addictive and is capable of producing forms of hypnosis, and who is to say that this is not precisely what is happening in the charismatic and evangelical rock and roll praise sessions?

ROCK MUSIC BREAKS THROUGH TO SPIRIT REALMS

No less an expert on rock music than Jimi Hendrix observed that it is hypnotic and that it connects people with a spirit realm, when he said: "Atmospheres are going to come through music, because the music is a spiritual thing of its own ... YOU HYPNOTIZE PEOPLE to where they go right back to their natural state [which, biblically speaking, is the fallen, sinful state]... People want release any kind of way nowadays. The idea is to release in the proper form. Then they'll feel like GOING INTO ANOTHER WORLD, a clearer world. The music flows from the air; that's why I CONNECT WITH A SPIRIT, and when they come down off THIS NATURAL HIGH, they see clearer,

feel different things..." (Jimmy Hendrix, rock star, *Life*, Oct. 3, 1969, p. 74). Please note, too, that Hendrix was not talking about the words of rock music, but the music itself. Much of Hendrix's rock music did not have words.

The spirits with which Jimi Hendrix associated were demonic, as we know from the Bible. And his frank testimony, speaking, as it does, from beyond the grave, is a loud warning to "Christian rockers." What confusion and folly to think that we could take the same music that has allowed rockers to break through to demonic realms, "to the other side," as Jim Morris of the Doors put it, and incorporate that very music into the service of a completely different and holy realm of spiritual life!

ROCK MUSIC IS SEXUAL

Not only is rock music hypnotic, it is sensual, sexual. How can music that has always been acclaimed by the world as sexual, all of the sudden become spiritual through the addition of some Christian words? Consider just a few of the hundreds of quotes that could be given. All of these are testimonies of secular rockers who have no agenda except to honestly describe the nature of rock music as they see it:

"The main ingredients in rock are ... [sexual activity] and sass" (Debra Harry, *Hit Parader*, Sept. 1979, p. 31).

"Rock is the total celebration of the physical" (Ted Nugent, rock star, *Rolling Stone*, Aug. 25, 1977, pp. 11-13).

"That's what rock is all about-- [sexual activity] with a 100 megaton bomb, the beat!" (Gene Simmons of the rock group Kiss, interview, *Entertainment Tonight*, ABC, Dec. 10, 1987).

"Rock 'n' roll is 99% [sexual activity]" (John Oates of the rock duo Hall & Oates, *Circus*, Jan. 31, 1976).

"Listen, rock 'n' roll AIN'T CHURCH. It's nasty business..." (Lita Ford of heavy metal group The Runaways, *Los Angeles Times*, August 7, 1988).

"Rock music is [sexual activity]. The big beat matches the body's rhythms" (Frank Zappa of the Mothers of Invention, *Life*, June 28, 1968).

"Rock 'n' roll is pagan and primitive, and very jungle, and that's how it should be! The moment it stops being those things, it's dead ... the true meaning of rock ... is [sexual activity], subversion and style" (Malcolm McLaren, punk rock manager, *Rock*, August 1983, p. 60).

"When you're in a certain frame of mind, particularly sexually-oriented, there's nothing better than rock and roll ... because that's where most of the performers are at" (Aerosmith's manager, *USA Today*, Dec. 22, 1983, p. D5).

"Rock music is [sexual activity] and you have to hit them [teenagers] in the face with it" (Andrew Oldham, manager of the Rolling Stones, *Time*, April 28, 1967, p. 54).

"The great strength of rock 'n' roll lies in its beat ... it is a music which is basically sexual, un-Puritan ... and a threat to established patterns and values" (Irwin Silber, Marxist, *Sing Out*, May 1965, p. 63).

"Everyone takes it for granted that rock and roll is synonymous with [sexual activity]" (Chris Stein, rock manager, *People*, May 21, 1979).

"Pop music revolves around sexuality. I believe that if there is anarchy, let's make it sexual anarchy rather than political" (Adam Ant, *From Rock to Rock*, p. 93).

"What made rockabilly [Elvis Presley, Bill Haley, etc.] such a drastically new music was its spirit, a thing that bordered on mania. Elvis's 'Good Rockin' Tonight' was not merely a party song, but an invitation to a holocaust. ... Rockabilly was the face of Dionysus, FULL OF FEBRILE SEXUALITY and senselessness; it flushed the skin of new housewives and made pink teenage boys reinvent themselves as flaming creatures" (Nick Tosches, *Country: The Twisted Roots of Rock 'n' Roll*, p. 58).

"For white Memphis, the forbidden pleasures of Beale Street [where the bars and warehouses and gambling dens were located] had always come wrapped in the pulsing rhythms of the blues. ... Elvis's [rock & roll] offered those pleasures long familiar to Memphians to a new audience" (Larry Nager, *Memphis Beat*, p. 154).

[To be continued in the July issue of Gentle Shepherd Ministries Newsletter]