

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

REDEMPTION

Part 3

ARE YOU STILL LOST IN SOME WAY?

By Rayola Kelley

We have been considering redemption for the past couple of months. In my initial years of being a Christian, I sensed redemption was important, but I never really understood the implications of it. I knew it somehow was significant concerning my salvation, but like many subjects, it remained vague.



As I studied the Bible and began to build a foundation on the different aspects of God's work on my behalf, the subject of redemption often came to the forefront to catch my attention. Precept upon precept, line upon line in regard to this subject began to unveil a wondrous picture from the Scriptures (*Isaiah 28:10*). I was sometimes awed and overwhelmed by the glimpses I was allowed to see through my different studies.

What I discovered is that we Christians have a rich legacy. You may think to yourself, "Well, I have always known that, where have you been?" I have known about many things too, but until there is revelation to one's spirit, it does not mean that we really have come to an understanding about a matter. Until we have some type of basis in which to regard something, there is no way that we can truly know it.

As I studied the theme of redemption, one of its aspects that became obvious was this: As believers, we were redeemed from tyrannical slavery and delivered so that we can be restored to something that has been lost to us. When you consider what was lost to us, and how it affects us, we must travel back in time

to a place known as the Garden of Eden.

God had created a special garden or paradise just for man. His purpose for establishing a paradise was so He could fellowship with the first man. Our Creator rightfully wanted to enjoy His perfect creation, and He wanted man to enjoy and prize the fellowship he would have with his Creator in such a place. As Scripture states, the Lord had considered all that He had done as being good, beneficial or pleasurable.

Perhaps we can take a moment to consider the type of environment that Adam lived in. The first man walked with God in this garden. God was not just part of the creation; rather, He was the reason for it. He was not merely tacked on to Adam's activities; rather, He was to be the center focus of it. God was not there strictly for Adam's pleasures or whims; rather, He was to define and remind Adam who served as the real source and significance to his well-being.

When Adam rebelled, he became lost. Since redemption was God's way of salvation where we are concerned, it is vital we understand in what ways Adam became lost. As Christians, we start our Christian life from the premise that we are lost, but it is only as we come to terms with the life that we have in Christ that we can begin to understand in what ways we were lost. Sadly, there are some in the Christian realm to whom certain aspects of the Christian life remain lost to them. Such people wonder why they fail to see victory or results.

Various things became lost to Adam. Even though Adam had no idea as to the extent his rebellious actions would cause man to become lost, he knew up front in his fallen state that he could not walk with God due to his shame. Obviously, the first thing that became lost was man's fellowship with God. It had been broken. Adam was no longer on the same page as God. Instead of meeting with

his Creator in the cool of the evening, he would have to hide from Him behind some type of covering, in the shadows of uncertainty, and under the darkness of sin and death. Clearly, God had become lost to Adam, and even though God knew where Adam was, Adam had also become lost to Him. There was no more fellowship or familiarity between them.

The problem with being lost spiritually is that people may know there is a spiritual vacuum, but they do not know exactly what they are looking for. Have you ever gone on a search for something that you were not sure what it looked like? Those around you have even described it to you in order to assist you, but generally you will not find it, even if you look straight at it, because you are unfamiliar with it.

This is the way God has become lost to the human race. Even though people have a sense that they are looking for God to address their spiritual vacuum, they do not recognize Him because He has become lost to them. They are blinded, unable to see Him. Unless the scales are taken from their affected eyes, they will never see who He is no matter how hard they grope through their darkness. Case in point, the woman at the well was looking for the Messiah (*John 4:19-25*). When He stood before her, she did not recognize Him. He first proved He was a true prophet of God before He introduced Himself to her as being the one she was looking for.

Consider the people of Israel. They knew what to look for in order to recognize their Messiah. However, when their Messiah stood in their midst and revealed and confirmed His identity by fitting all the Scriptural criteria, how many truly recognized Him? In the end, His few remaining followers scattered when He was crucified by the cleverly orchestrated and urgent prompting of the spiritual leaders of the nation of Israel.

It is for this reason the good Shepherd had to find us (*Luke 15:3-7*). He knows where we are in our spiritual

plight, but since we are no longer familiar to Him, He had to find us in the midst of the unfamiliar terrain of sin and death. In order to become familiar with us, He allowed Himself to be fashioned as a man as a means to redeem us. It is at the point of redemption that He could once again find us. He would be able to buy back His lost sheep from the hireling shepherds and the tyrannical taskmasters, as well as pull them out of the clutches of destructive predators.

The second thing that became lost to Adam was the essence of life. Adam had a rich, complete life in the garden. In his fallen condition, he ended up with a form of life that would be plagued by the very workings of death. This existence might initially point to great hope and expectation, but in the end, at best, it would be marked by a silent tombstone that would eventually fall into ruin. All that would be attached to man's present life would remind him that the matters of his life in this world would always be marked by the finality of that which would ultimately prove to be temporary, full of vanity, and empty of all promise and hope.

The harsh reality of being lost to the essence of real life is that people do not know where to look to find life. There are so many who are searching to find life that makes sense and is satisfying. In their attempts to find such a life, they often pursue fanciful notions about how something is going to make them happy in their present existence. They look to worldly relationships, which often causes them to taste the bitterness of being hurt, angry or disappointed. They look to material things, only to end up being more dissatisfied with its vanity. They sometimes pursue noble causes, only to eventually become weary with the never-ending needs and plight of humanity.

The truth is real life cannot be found in what we can see, but in whom we cannot see. It will not be found in a particular lifestyle that can be acquired, but in a relationship with the living God. This life is not discovered in things of the world, but in a person named Jesus Christ. It is not found in the great causes of man, but

in the great work of redemption that was accomplished on the cross by the Son of God. Once again, we are reminded that God finds us. The Father who begins to draw us to the Son, the Son whose voice breaks through our dull senses with the invitation to come to Him to partake of the Living Water, and the Holy Spirit convicts us of our plight and need as He leads us to our Lord and Savior.

The third thing that became lost to Adam was paradise. Instead of living in a perfect environment, man would, from that point on, toil, sweat, mourn, and taste the bitterness of an environment that would now prove chaotic and uncertain. This out-of-control environment would never be tamed or disciplined. In such an environment, man would forever sense that "Paradise" had become lost to him, and all of his attempts to find or recreate it would also prove to be illusive.

When paradise became lost to man, he had to somehow find or recreate a place of peace or refuge from the tumultuous environment around him. How many great adventurers tried to discover the fountain of life, the hidden treasures of a new world or possible freedom from a tyrannical government in a new land? How many people have spoken of the city on the hill that would serve as a true light and refuge for those who were and are foreigners in heart, refugees in soul and downtrodden in status?

There is a city that awaits the broken hearted, the wandering soul, and the restless pilgrim. This city is not of the present world (*Hebrews 11:10*). However, there is a map that contains the directions, and record, that is capable of leading each of us to this incredible place. It is known as the inspired Word of God. However, there are a couple of issues that keep individuals from being able to benefit from this map. The first one being that man hates asking for directions. Many people have no idea how to read the map, and most will not ask for the proper instructions to do so. Since they will not humble themselves under the leading of God's Spirit, many lack the necessary compass that would enable them to benefit from this spiritual map (*John 16:13; 1 John 2:27*).

The fourth thing that was lost was purpose. Adam knew who he was in

the garden, and what his purpose was in the scheme of things. Nothing was dysfunctional, uncertain or foolish. Everything had its place, reason and use. When Adam sinned, he changed the order of things. He removed himself out from under the auspice of God. From that point, he became lost to his real function and potential. Man became like a cork, lost in the sea of humanity, bouncing from one wave to another.

People often prove to be fickle, unstable and untrustworthy in all they do. At times, they appear to find some stable ground, only to be set adrift with each new tide. They struggle with their identity, wrestle with how they are defined by others, and unsure of where they are going to land.

This is the harsh plight of humanity. Many do not realize that the redemption secured by Christ allows them to be found. They do not recognize this great work of God is also about restoring what has been lost. It was not enough for our Creator to buy each of us back from the clutches of slavery and death; He also needed to restore us back to man's original status that was lost in the first garden.

Next month I will be looking at what such restoration entails for you and me. Meanwhile, meditate on what was lost to each of us because of the actions of our first parents. Consider if any aspect of God, His life or His purpose continues to remain lost to you.

GREAT QUOTES on HOLINESS

"There will be no great Revival until the people of God are deeply convicted of their need of holiness." -

Major Allistaire Smith (Salvation Army)

"A God-sent Revival must ever be related to holiness." - Duncan Campbell

"Believers must be brought into conviction of the shame and evil of the carnal state. God brings believers into, what may be called, a second conviction — conviction of a need of deliverance from the power of sin." -

Andres Murray

"God Who delivers us from the guilt of sin through faith in Jesus Christ, is able to deliver the believer from the power of sin as well." - J. Edwin Orr

WHERE IS DISCERNMENT? By Jeannette Haley

We often wonder how many professing Christians have truly noticed that we are living in tumultuous, confusing and more often than not, frightening times. On the surface, it would appear that most are content to remain in their insulated religious bubble and leave all the “heavy stuff” to their pastor, or politicians. Besides, politicians keep making promises, and preachers (except for a remnant) do the same. Both professional politicians and professional pastors want to preserve their power. Both, “*through covetousness*” and “*with feigned words make merchandise*” of people (see 2 Peter 2:3) and both “*serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*” (Romans 16:18.) Both fulfill Paul’s exhortation in 2 Timothy 3:13, “*But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.*”

For well over a century, the Church has inched her way closer to the world. The two-edged sword of the Word of God exchanged long ago by her watchmen for man’s philosophies and vain deceits. In her compromise, she has allowed the holy fire of the Gospel that once burned bright and strong to dim, while she unashamedly poured her wealth into bigger buildings, grander entertainment and the promulgation of man’s kingdoms. Lust for money and power has been cloaked by a façade of respectability granted through titles and “divinity” degrees while men’s souls languish in the ash heaps of sin, despair and destruction.

Where is discernment in all this? Who can properly discern the absence of the Holy Spirit and His anointing in the worldly church, or the absence of common sense, integrity and character in the political scene? Who can discern a wolf in sheep’s clothing, or the times in which we live and the lateness of the hour? A person without discernment is blind, and as such, can easily be led by the blind. “*Having eyes, see ye not? And having ears, hear ye not?*” Mark 8:18a.

God’s people are indeed de-

stroyed for lack of knowledge—that knowledge being of God and His Word. Likewise, America is being destroyed from a lack of knowledge of both God’s Word and history. Many Americans are beginning to wake up to the fact that we have lost the cultural war because we have drifted from our foundation, and that foundation is God and His Word. Therefore, who is to blame for this headlong plunge into apostasy and ruin? Author Brannon Howse, in the introduction to his book, “Grave Influence” answers this question: “The culture war itself has been merely the symptom of a much more profound conflict—a spiritual battle that most Christians don’t understand and are ill-equipped to fight. In fact, our losing the culture war is directly tied to the fact that American Christians, churches, Christian colleges, and seminaries have not done an adequate job in understanding what they believe, why they believe it, and proclaiming it from an uncompromising biblical standpoint.... What we must now come to grips with is how to handle the new reality in which we live. The solidly post-Christian culture that Francis Schaeffer warned of more than two decades ago is now here. Conservative commentator Patrick Buchanan describes what has happened: *The European-Christian core of the country that once defined us is shrinking, as Christianity fades, the birth rate falls, and Third World immigration surges. Globalism dissolves the economic bonds, while the cacophony of multiculturalism displaces the old American culture.*”

While church leadership is definitely on the hot seat in this matter, we must also take to task each individual within congregations of churches. After all, on Judgment Day, it will be individuals, not groups of Christians, who stand before the Lord and give an account of their lives. No one can point a finger of blame at his or her pastor or leader for his or her own failure to obey the Lord’s instructions to give the Gospel to the lost, be a light in this dark world, to make disciples of Jesus (not a church), and to love God and others in word, deed and action. We need to repent—as a nation, as the Church and as individuals. We need to seek God, fall at His feet, and ask for wisdom and discernment to replace our

folly and fun-loving foolishness.

Discernment is not only necessary to help chart our course through the barren wilderness of this present world, but it serves as our compass in the religious terrain of the times in which we live. The tangled jungle of error and heresy that a Christian must wade through requires experienced “navigational” skills (discernment) if God’s people are to overcome and maintain their testimony and purity before the Lord. We need to beware of groups emerging from the tyranny, fear and chaos of our times who offer a way out by separating ourselves, and joining them in establishing “the kingdom of God” on earth. It may appear to be “right” on the surface, but underneath it is “another gospel.” The sad truth is many undiscerning Christians who are unskillful in the Word, are left to define Christianity for themselves and are joining the ranks of this fast-growing movement.

How does a person acquire discernment? Can a person purchase it in a “discernment store,” steal it from another, or gain it from reading about it? Of course not! As with any spiritual gift, one must begin with God. Unless a person knows God personally through the Lord Jesus Christ, and knows the Word of God, and the Spirit behind the Word, he or she cannot possess true spiritual discernment. When I speak of knowing the Word of God, I mean studying it for yourself, sitting at the feet of Jesus so that He (by the Spirit) can open up the incredible truths, depths, beauty, life, and message of God’s Word to you in true revelation. This, followed by your working it out through obedience in your own life, will make it a reality. It is shocking how many professing Christians truly do not know the Word of God. Most have never read the Bible through, even once, and if they do read it, either they read it through their own preconceptions, or through a modernized, watered-down “version” lacking in accuracy, truth, life, revelation, and anointing that generally leaves a person spiritually dry, dull and bored half to death.

Spiritual discernment is a two-edged sword of Spirit and truth. Truth keeps us grounded in reality, and God’s perspective. Jesus explained, “*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth,*

is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come" John 16:13. If we are to remain standing when all else has fallen around us, we must know the truth, be solidly grounded in the truth, and able to maintain the truth to the end. In 1 Corinthians 2:11-13 we read, "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." The Holy Spirit will "teach" our spirit in the matters of discernment if we seek, ask and knock.

We must beware of the many spirits that counterfeit the work of the Holy Spirit; therefore, many well-meaning, but deceived people operate in something other than the Holy Spirit. This is why a person must be truly born again of the Spirit of God in order to have true discernment. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" 1 Corinthians 2:14. The natural man, however, has a natural drawing towards "spiritual" things whose source is not of God. The overwhelming success of the Harry Potter series is a good example of this. People are fascinated with witchcraft and anything supernatural. In our many years of ministry, we have lost count of all the spirits we have encountered in people who have been deceived into thinking that the spirit they have received (see 2 Corinthians 11:4) is the Holy Spirit. Some of the most common spirits are the antichrist spirit, religious spirits, familiar spirits, lying spirits, spirits of fear and lust, mocking spirits, and a spirit of pride.

How does a person open the door to "another spirit?" There is any number of ways, especially if a person has not been broken at the foot of the cross in true humility and repentance.

If a person is merely tacking Jesus on to their life (so he or she can maintain control), he or she will be operating in a false spirit due to pride, rebellion, idolatry, and disobedience, regardless of how "religious" he or she might be on the surface. One's motivation for seeking for the gift of discernment must be pure. There must be genuine love for both Spirit and truth in order to bring glory to God, not to self.

Some have maintained that you can discern a false spirit by the fruit that it produces. That may be true some of the time, but is not necessarily true all of the time. Sometimes false fruit can be very convincing and deceptive. True discernment involves both Spirit and truth; therefore, if the fruit lines up with truth, or appears to be Scriptural, but the spirit behind it is wrong, then you know it is not of God. It takes true spiritual discernment to recognize it for what it is. In 1 John 4:1 we read, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

Another word that describes discernment is perception. We see this word used to describe people with discernment in both the Old and New Testaments. For example, the woman at the well in John 4:19 said to Jesus, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." She was confident in her conclusion of who Jesus was through discernment. King David "perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake" 2 Samuel 5:12. Consider the Shunamite woman whose discernment led her to say to her husband, "Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God, which passeth by us continually" 2 Kings 4:9. In the face of an enemy, Nehemiah's discernment was keen. He said, "And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him....Nehemiah 6:12a. King Solomon prayed for discernment in 1 Kings 3:9 so that he could discern between good and bad for the sake of God's people. We also see an example in Ecclesiastes 2:14 of the Holy Spirit instructing King Solomon. The Spirit's instruction to Peter in Acts 10:34 says, "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." In

Acts 8:23 we see discernment in action as Peter stated, "For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."

Discernment can alert us with a sudden strong feeling that transcends our physical senses, or it can be a persistent sense or knowing about something, depending on the situation. Reactions to different spirits can also vary, depending on what they are. Speaking for myself, here are some of the initial reactions I experience when encountering different spirits: Spirit of error (especially with subtle Scripture twisting designed to undermine truth): Heightened sense of increased heart rate, tightening of stomach muscles and agitation. Anti-christ Spirit: Unclean or spiritually weary as if the life has been sucked out of you. Religious Spirit: Utter disgust. Spirit of fear: Desire to get away from it. Spirit of lust, or unclean spirit: Nausea, revulsion. Lying spirit: Irritation. Mocking spirit: Anger. Spirit of insanity: Want to flee. Spirit of pride: Repulsed. Spirit of self-pity: Antipathy.

Remember, any reaction to a spirit is not to the person through whom the spirit operates, but to the spirit behind him or her. To respond properly to such encounters will depend on the situation, and what the Lord tells each of us to do, or not to do. We must always take it to the Lord in prayer, be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading, and then obey.

A word of caution: If a person is operating out of pride, true discernment will elude him or her. God resists the proud, but He will grant discernment to those who seek Him in true humility. The danger is when a person operates out of his or her own understanding instead of by the Holy Spirit, he or she will become judgmental instead of discerning. The motivation is wrong, thus the spirit behind it is wrong. The ever-present temptation in religious circles is to exalt self, gain acceptance and even a following, and to appear as a "spiritual expert." In God's kingdom, there are no "spiritual experts," only humble servants whose sole desire is to bring glory to God, not self. After all, discernment is for the purpose of avoiding pitfalls, and to set the captives free, and bring them to Jesus so they

may be reconciled to God in purity and wholeness.

One of the damaging fruits of pride in action is a critical spirit that judges others from the point of respect of persons (which God never does). What I mean by this is pride has its own prejudices and preferences. Therefore, instead of discerning where a struggling person really is, pride will automatically judge him or her based on the person's religious affiliation, creed, theology, associations, background, personality and so forth. This judging is by “sight” and is fleshly judging at its worst. After all, people are rarely in total agreement with one another on every issue or conclusion, but pride thinks it has all the answers about everything.

Jesus dealt with this issue when He taught, “*And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye*” *Matthew 7:3-5*.

True spiritual discernment is precious. It is not given to us so that we can use it for our own benefit, and abuse it at the expense of others. All that God gives us is for the express purpose of bringing honor and glory to God in humble service to people in any way we are able. True ministry is being a servant wherever we are, every day of our lives as we submit to our Lord. Sadly, Christians today have a skewed idea of what ministry really is in God's eyes.

Are you relying on the Holy Spirit to help you discern the times in which we live, and to discern the spirits behind the many false prophets among us today? Or, do you rely on your own intellect and conclusions to help you steer around the destructive pitfalls and snares of Satan? If so, you are heading for a fall, and you need to repent and seek God's forgiveness. May God grant us wisdom and discernment! †

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

HOW DO I SPIRITUALLY PREPARE MY CHILDREN TO STAND?

Q: *I am a parent who is struggling with how to raise my children to be spiritually prepared to stand in these precarious times. Do you have any suggestions?*

A: My heart certainly goes out to parents. We are living in dark times, and unless our children take hold of their spiritual heritage and personally own it for themselves, I feel they will be swept out with the tidal wave of darkness, delusion and destruction that is sweeping the world.

The best suggestion I can give parents is to look to Scripture. Even though many do not regard some of the Old Testament teachings, they are priceless. We need to, not only take note of its instructions, but its examples as well. If we want our children to stand in these end days, they need to purpose in their heart to do it right as did Daniel when he was taken from the palace of Judah to the palace of Babylon to be trained in the ways of the Babylonians. Scripture tells us that Daniel had developed an excellent spirit that allowed him to stand and withstand some trying times (*Daniel 1:8; 6:3*).

The truth is we cannot make our children purpose in their heart to do right in regard to God, nor can we instill an excellent spirit in them so they can withstand the lion's den. However, the Bible does clearly give parents an excellent example to consider and live by when it comes to influencing the hearts and minds of their children.

Most parents know Solomon's instruction in *Proverbs 22:6*: “*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*” Train has to do with influencing a child's behavior. In order to influence a child's behavior, you must encourage and establish proper attitudes towards how they are to conduct themselves. Attitudes influence character and integrity.

Parents have a tendency to try to influence a child's way of thinking about something to get them to line up to their opinions or personal take on something rather than address wrong

attitudes and behavior through cultivating what is right and disciplining that which is foolish and deviant. Children need a contrast in order to come to proper conclusions so they will make the right decisions when faced with temptation.

This brings us to the proper way of training a child in the way that he or she should go. We see in *Deuteronomy 6:6-9* that the Lord instructs the parents as to how to train their children in the way they should go. He begins with the reality that if His ways are not a natural inspiration or extension of their heart or life, it certainly will not be part of their children's life. If the parent does not take personal ownership of their Scriptural responsibility towards God, neither will their children.

To me the greatest problem I see with our young people is that they cannot see how the life the Bible speaks of could possibly be applicable, attractive or realistic for them to function in the world in which they live. The reason for this is that the parents have separated their spiritual life from their everyday life, which includes decisions, priorities and the way they conduct their daily affairs. They have not only failed to teach them of the satisfaction of the excellent ways the Christian life can afford them in their daily living and practices, but they have failed to value the principles of this life and live it as a walking, viable testimony before their children.

For many young people the Christian life is a ritual you do on Sunday morning instead of a life that is to be lived on a daily basis, which influences every decision, as well as helps in guarding their heart, and giving them the necessary wisdom as to how they must conduct themselves in every situation that they confront.

To me, the hardest vocation in the world is being a parent. Without God's Spirit, wisdom, strength, and Word, there is no real hope for each succeeding generation. I hope this will give you a compass in which to seek God for His abiding wisdom and strength to encourage your children in the righteous ways of the saints such as the great prophet, Daniel. †



COMMENTS AND EMAILS

"America: the country where we have homeless without shelter, children going to bed without eating, elderly going without needed meds, and mentally ill without treatment - yet we have a benefit for the people of Haiti on 12 TV stations!!! There is something VERY wrong with this picture! I understand the need in Haiti, and have compassion on the many losses there but, let's get in touch with reality too!" - FL

"Thank you Rayola for the daily devotions. I really love to reflect on them. He gives each of us areas that we are better at. And at times you guys think of things that didn't enter my mind. I love the devotions. They really make me think, and rethink." - MT

"Tell Rayola thank you for the devotion today. It really makes a great prayer for me to start my day. Thank you..." - MT

"I have not met him [Pastor Pretlow] in person, but I have talked with him on the phone a couple of times. His main focus is Christ within. Going through the process of sanctification, living a surrendered life to the lordship of Christ, and hearing from the Lord for yourself. To the TRUE Christ. Not a flim-flam counterfeit. One of the things I remember him saying in a book he wrote is that, "Pastors need to be working themselves OUT of a job." I could not agree with that more.

"I know he is just a man (so to speak). I try to listen to the Word as it comes forth and to trust in the Word, not the messenger whether it is David Wilkerson, his son Gary, Pastor Pretlow, etc. I got exposed to the spirit of antichrist with that 'ministry' I was in. It will tell you the truth in MANY, MANY areas. When you put it together though, something is out of context somewhere. When you are not rooted and grounded well in the Word, one can be easily deceived. It is from that I have learned to just be still, to take an inventory of what is in my heart, and grow in the whole counsel of God. To mature in that area. To be more concerned with the matters in my heart, than to try to take a stand

for this or that. It has been real hard, but the Lord has been faithful. As I grow, the Lord will plant me where I need to be for His sake.

"We all need to know HIM. That was in the Lords prayer. I consider the REAL Lords prayer in John 17. We need to know Him as individuals for He is the God of the individual as well as the body!" - CO

"The Lord has called me to renew my study of theology and doctrine, and to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit's power. You see, I believe that He want us to pursue Him as a person, in order to have spiritual fellowship with Him. As we do, we learn to recognize and cherish Him above all else, so that we can readily tell the difference between the voice of our Great Shepherd and the voice of the lawless one. Our God really is awesome, and will renew your joy in His presence." - Email

"You and Rayola are certainly doing your part in proclaiming the Gospel. May God greatly bless you." - ID

"Excellent blog Rayola posted on Sunday! So true...I pray that He keeps me sharp and gives tons of wisdom for these perilous days coming upon us and that I'm abiding in Him instead of asleep and hid in the sand." - ID

"I am so enjoying the GSM newsletter from years past, what a blessing as always." - ID

"What I can see is that people simply forget that we are ambassadors for Christ. As an INDIVIDUAL. Being a member of some kind of group really does not mean anything if one is not being more conformed into His image. As I drive around, it seems like the message that is being sent out is...'come and be a part of us, come and worship with us.', instead of repent and seek the Lord!" - CO

"I asked our neighbor the other day this question. [What is YOUR church, pastor or leader doing to PREPARE YOU for the end days? Are you AWAKE, AWARE and ARMED? (Spiritually & physically armed and prepared?)] His answer

NOTHING!!! They brush Him off, but they still preach we need your money to fund a building project. I then asked, is every seat in the pew taken? If not, why are you funding a building project? No answer." - AK

THE SECRET TO SEEING BY OSWALD CHAMBERS

"Simplicity is the secret to seeing things clearly. A saint does not *think* clearly until a long time passes, but a saint ought to see clearly without any difficulty. You cannot think through spiritual confusion to make things clear; to make things clear, you must obey. In intellectual matters you can think things out, but in spiritual matters you will only think yourself into further wandering thoughts and more confusion. If there is something in your life upon which God has put His pressure, then obey Him in that matter. Bring all your "arguments and . . . every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" regarding the matter, and everything will become as clear as daylight to you (2 Corinthians 10:5). Your reasoning capacity will come later, but reasoning is not how we see. We see like children, and when we try to be wise we see nothing (see Matthew 11:25.)

"Even the very smallest thing that we allow in our lives that is not under the control of the Holy Spirit is completely sufficient to account for spiritual confusion, and spending all of our time thinking about it will still never make it clear. Spiritual confusion can only be conquered through obedience. As soon as we obey, we have discernment. This is humiliating, because when we are confused we know that the reason lies in the state of our mind. But when our natural power of sight is devoted and submitted in obedience to the Holy Spirit, it becomes the very power by which we perceive God's will, and our entire life is kept in simplicity."

HIDDEN MANNA SEMINAR

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