

# GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

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## Spiritual Survival Part 2 The Challenge By Rayola Kelley

As we embark on uncertain times, we must understand the real challenge before us. Each age carries its own challenges, tests, and trials. Although each period of time presents its own temptations and tribulations, the core of the problem remains the same.

The real core of the problem is sin. It does not matter how it is watered down, justified, or made right in the sight of those who hold to their particular conclusion about the issues of life, the attitude towards sin will always reveal the moral fiber of people. In order for sin to have its way, the right environment must be present (*James 1:13-16*). The environment will in turn determine the type of sin that reigns.

Today the reality is that many who have the limelight of importance in this world are calling good evil and evil good. Even though man has an inward conscience as to what is right and wrong, the environment that exists can greatly dull down or even sear his conscience. Due to such worldly, biased, and unrealistic philosophies such as "Political Correctness", the prevailing environment that exists in our society is amoral. In other words, there are no absolutes as to what is morally right or wrong. In an amoral environment, morality is constantly being redefined, adjusted, and even declared obsolete by those who desire to live contrary to what is decent. As in the days of *Judges* when no real absolute moral rule was recognized, an amoral environment always ends with people doing whatever they think is right in their own eyes (*Judges 21:25*).



Scripture is clear, man can do what seems right, but most of it will end in death and destruction. The problem with sin is that it is enfolded in such a deceptive cloud of darkness that it will invade and consume the minds of men. Under such a cloud, it is hard to discern the motives and intents of the unregenerate heart. An unregenerate heart will defile everything, while perverting people's attitude towards moral matters (*Proverbs 14:16; 16:25; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Hebrews 3:13*).

To spiritually survive the days in which we now live, we must possess the moral fiber to stand in the midst of that which rages against all that is decent and right. Without moral fiber, societies are doomed by their lack of substance to withstand. They will eventually implode, collapsing in a heap of ruin. In fact, one can find many ruins of former great empires that failed to realize the importance of possessing moral fiber. Without the absolutes as to truth and morality, there is no place of accountability. Without godly standards that call men to places of excellence, there will be no need to allow character to be forged into their innermost being. Without the boundaries of righteousness being exalted, a person will resort to his, or her, base ways and selfish foolishness that leaves him or her being nothing more than a despot, sinking down into the cesspool of his or her pigpen.

This brings us to the battle that is raging over the Constitution of the United States. There are those who say that it is obsolete, for it "supposedly" cannot address the problems of our advanced modern-day society. Others declare that it is living. In other words, the Constitution is not based on immovable principles and moral laws that will work in every arena if properly applied, but that it is open-ended to be changed according to the society we live in.

As you study the Founding Fa-

thers' view of the Constitution, they were clear that the document was based on immovable principles that could only be upheld by virtues. The Founding Fathers knew that as long as a people remained moral according to the Law of God, they could govern themselves, but as soon as they attempted to change the immovable principles that were to govern the moral conscience of men, chaos would ensue. Clare Booth Luce summarized it best. "The question is a crucial one for the future of our country. All history bears witness to the fact *there can be no public virtue without private morality*. There cannot be good government except in a good society. And there cannot be a good society unless the majority of individuals in it are at least *trying* to be good people. This is especially true in a democracy, where leaders and representatives are chosen from the people, by the people. The character of a democratic government will never be better than the character of the people it governs. A nation that is traveling the low road is a nation that is self-destructing. It is doomed, sooner or later, to collapse from within, or to be destroyed from without. And not all its wealth, science and technology will be able to save it."

Clearly, the American people have lost their way, not because the Constitution is proving to be obsolete, but because the people have allowed themselves to be lowered by the base attitude of wickedness. It is not that the principles of the Constitution cannot address the times we live in, it is because we are failing to address the times we live in according to the honorable intents of the Constitution. It is because we have taken the low road in matters of righteousness that we now find ourselves at a dangerous crossroad in this nation.

The problem with taking the low road is that man will become lawless. Man must rule his own appetites and govern his own actions. If he fails to be responsible for the creature he is and

take responsibility for the creature he is becoming, then he will subject himself to the despotic rule of those who are more lawless than he. Benjamin Franklin made this observation, "Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters."

To me, the one who has failed the most as far as ensuring the moral fiber of this nation is the Church. There is no distinction between the morality of the Church and the world. Fornication is acceptable in the name of happiness, abortions are understandable, indifference towards sin is justifiable, and the adoption of the philosophies and methods of the world necessary for success. The truth is the visible Church has failed to bring a distinction between the holy and the profane. It seems that those who promote the present atmosphere that exists in the Church have allowed the darkness to cover the sins of its members, while encouraging a quasi religious atmosphere that is void of absolutes.

As Christians, we have the moral Law of God. We call them commandments. Commandments are absolutes and will never change regardless of whether man's view of moral issues change according to the liberal attitudes of the present. These commandments call each of us, as believers, to walk according to the high road of excellent conduct. Since we live in an amoral environment, we must stir ourselves up to see if we have been dulled down to truth and seared in our conscience concerning the matters of morality. We cannot assume that all is well in our spiritual lives until we first examine our attitude towards the matters of holiness and sin. We cannot live in wishful thinking that association with religious institutions and activities makes us immune from falling prey to the dangerous worldly attitudes of our times.

For example, Hollywood is nothing more than a propaganda machine that promotes immoral acts. It opposes all that is decent and right as it rages against righteousness. How much does the bombardment of the presentation of fornication in the form of pornography, premarital sex,

homosexuality, and sodomy make you uncomfortable when you see Hollywood exalting such activities and presenting them as normal, acceptable practices on the screens of your TV and movie theaters? Are you repulsed enough to not support, partake of, and encourage it by separating yourself from it? I personally will not watch, support, or agree in any way with a person or a program that is involved in the destruction of people's souls. The key is how much are we, as the living Church of Jesus, standing against evil tides by refusing to support such people, presentations, and practices? How much are we willing to let our pleasures go to the wayside as a way to separate from the profane to ensure the integrity of our perceptions and attitudes?

To be honest, there is less and less that could be counted as acceptable to watch on TV. And, what is left often introduces people to a surreal reality that often harbors the occult and the supernatural. Sadly, the darkness of sin is becoming "grayer" as people become indifferent or confused about what constitutes true morality. The light of deception either produces a flippant attitude towards morality, or immorality is presented in such a way that it comes across as logical to those who have failed to develop a love for the truth.

When you study the environment of the end days, you can begin to see how the darkness of deception will cover the minds of people. We must also note it is not what people are doing that alone creates a dangerous environment, but what they fail to do to ensure the correct environment.

The Apostle Paul describes the attitude that will be prevalent in the end days in *2 Timothy 3:1-7*. The first thing he pointed out was that the people will be lovers of themselves. In other words, their base nature of selfishness will reign with a vengeance. People who give way to the selfish base nature of the unregenerate man will only be concerned about their small worlds. At the core of these small self-absorbed worlds of self-love is self-centeredness that covets, pride that boasts, arrogance that will blaspheme righteousness, and independence that will manifest itself in disobedience towards authority.

Since self sits on the throne, any selfish pursuit will be acceptable. After all, selfishness perverts; therefore, it has no means in which to develop natural affection. It is self-serving; therefore, it can only flatter or seduce, but it will rarely mean what it says. It will be touchy; therefore, quick to be offended, resulting in speculation and false accusation. Its fleshly appetites will rule, therefore, allowing the lust to reign. Such an environment will display a fierce attitude against that which will not serve its purpose, and will hate that which raises a mirror to expose its wicked ways.

Selfishness is treacherous, possesses a high opinion of itself, as it harbors a superior perception, loves that which feeds it, and will resent any form of competition or loyalty that will not bow to its insipid ways. It may wear a cloak of righteousness, but it lacks the real life of the Spirit. It is fickle and will become a cork on the ocean that will be taken away by any waves of change that appeal to its prideful perception and fleshly appetites. Even though it forever seeks knowledge, it is for the purpose of finding that which will agree with its desires or personal take on matters. Although it may ever be learning, it will fail to possess truth.

When you consider this environment, you can see why America has been brought down to the low road. The condition that unabated selfishness produces creates an environment where people will not truly care about what is really happening around them. Evil can grow and it is no concern to them. Since they have their own moral code, other morality can go to the wayside because it will not have any real significance when it comes to their worlds. Deception can take center stage, for it does not matter because these individuals perceive that since they are holding to their truth, they will not fall victim to it. Since they hold to some moral code, they do not feel the need to distinguish or maintain what is truly acceptable and healthy when it comes to the prevailing moral climate around them. In other words, anything goes as long as it does not interfere with their personal take on matters.

Selfishness will see no need to sacrifice because it comes first. It will

## WHAT TO GAIN IN THIS LIFE

### By Jeannette Haley

Many people today, both believers and unbelievers, are haunted by feelings of unhappiness, stalked by insecurity, tormented by temptation and languish in loneliness and loss. As prophesied of the end times, millions of Christians, instead of receiving solid, biblical counseling and teaching, are brainwashed, indoctrinated, and encouraged to put their trust in unbiblical, heretical, and occult teachings. Instead of obeying *Colossians 2:6-8*, they prefer to be spoiled “through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”

No wonder Jesus referred to people as sheep. Helpless in the hands of hirelings and wolves in the religious world, and “successful” politicians and unbelievers in the secular world, they gullibly believe whatever they are taught, read or hear. *Proverbs 14:12* warns, “*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*” The most tantalizing “bait” that allures people, from their youth up, to choose the way that seems right, is the underlying desire for happiness. After all, who doesn’t start out in this life looking for ways to make oneself happy?

Those of you who have read *Hidden Manna* or attended one of Rayola’s seminars know that there are also three things that people need depending on their nature. They are acceptance, emotional love, and recognition. Thus, the drive to find our personal need fulfilled coupled with the desire for happiness can lead to some dangerous and destructive decisions. For example, the nature that needs acceptance generally chooses the path that seeks to acquire knowledge. Such persons consider themselves to be superior to others because of their “expertise” in certain subjects. Their idea of fulfillment and happiness is to be worshipped, and they are good at playing games to achieve the desired result. However, the people around them have their own need to be worshipped, so conflict, rejection, and offenses occur.

People who need emotional love

desire to be adored. Of course, this is also worship. Unless they realize that their insatiable need for emotional love is not reality, they will choose, and justify, any way that “feels right” at the time. And, if that relationship doesn’t work out, they will continue to make bad choices to their own destruction.

Those who need recognition will either expect others to recognize who they are trying to become, or they will crave recognition for who they are. Because these needs are such an integral part of such people, they can display powerful attitudes if the need for recognition (which is another form of worship) isn’t met.

Trying to get our needs met is a big part of why we are tempted to choose the “way which seemeth right unto a man”. We think that if we could just get our need satisfied, then we’d be happy. Of course, no other human being can satisfy our needs—only Jesus can. A relationship with Him is what we need to cultivate by reading, studying, and meditating on His word, communing with Him in prayer, and walking His Word out in obedience. It’s amazing, though, how many people reject this truth because it does not appeal to their fleshly sensibilities. Their attitude is, *Yeah, well, that isn’t the answer I’m looking for. All that stuff isn’t fun!*

Even though the truth is the truth and never changes, people still try to get their needs met and find meaning and purpose for their lives through the vanity of worldly game-playing and devices which results in sin. We know that the “wages of sin is death.” Yet, the desire to find “happiness” by satisfying needs and desires (lusts) of the flesh is so great that in order to bring even temporary relief people will sell their souls to get it. Sadly, this includes unconverted Christians. Jesus warned that a man cannot serve two masters. James tells us that a “double minded man is unstable in all his ways” *James 1:8*. King David prayed, “...unite my heart to fear thy name” *Psalms 86:11b*. Defeat and destruction await those who seek personal gain while walking with one foot in heavenly places in Christ, and the other foot in the devil’s playground of the world. (Converted means totally committed to walk out, or follow after righteousness through mortification of the “old man”—the lusts of

the flesh—and following Jesus. (See *Luke 9:23-26*.)

We are reaping the results of this half-hearted, lukewarm form of “Christianity” in our nation, our families, our churches, and our personal lives as the real goal of the majority of the people has shifted from pleasing the one true God to pleasing the god of self. The truth is self can never be pleased. If a person does somehow manage to achieve fame and fortune, all he or she reaps is nothing more than emptiness and vanity. “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world*” *1 John 2:15, 16*. Looking to anything other than Jesus to give one’s life meaning, purpose, and fulfillment is idolatry. *James 4:4* declares, “...know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” There must be a separation from the love of the world in our hearts that we may be “complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ” *Colossians 2:10, 11*. The Apostle Paul painted an accurate picture of the days in which we live when he wrote to Timothy, “*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof: from such turn away*” *2 Timothy 3:1-5*.

The key to real happiness is summed up in *1 Timothy 6:6*, “*But godliness with contentment is great gain*”. Godliness and contentment can be compared to strong, twin pillars upholding an entrance into a place of light, joy, and beauty. The “pillar” of

godliness means a life lived in holiness—totally consecrated to the Lord. Such a life overflows with the Spirit of the living God in which the fruit of the Spirit is abundant, and sweet. Godliness is holiness without which no man shall see God. (*Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:16*). The “pillar” of contentment, means self-satisfaction. Such a person has come to a place of peace and well-being through the faith and love of Jesus. A contented person possesses a heart filled with thanksgiving and gratitude to God for the gift of life, and for all that pertains to the fullness of God. Contentment enables a believer to enjoy fellowship with the Lord at all times, and is responsive to God’s goodness, mercy, and love in the simplicity that delights His heart. Faith grows in the heart of a person who has been reconciled to God, which produces godly living, for *“the just shall live by faith.”* Thus, we see a balance between godliness and contentment. Godliness results in contentment which is a state of blessedness (happiness) while contentment enables a person to live a godly life. There can be no true and lasting happiness without holiness. Yet, millions of people think that God wants us to be “happy” when the truth is, God wants us to be holy.

Jesus gave us the key to godly living which results in true happiness in His Sermon on the Mount. Did you know that, according to Webster, “Beatitude” means a state of utmost bliss? Perhaps it is time to revisit these words of Jesus, and ask ourselves if in our busy lives we have shunned, overlooked, or set aside His instructions concerning what real and lasting happiness truly is. *“And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for their’s is the kingdom*

*of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” Matthew 5:2-12.*

Will you choose to “seek...first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” or, like Demas who forsook the Apostle Paul, choose to depart in order to satisfy your love for this present world? The choice is yours. †

## AT CALVARY

Years I spent in vanity and pride,  
Caring not my Lord was crucified,  
Knowing not it was for me He died  
On Calvary.

*Refrain:*

*Mercy there was great, and grace  
was free;*

*Pardon there was multiplied to me;  
There my burdened soul found liberty  
At Calvary.*

By God’s Word at last my sin I  
learned;  
Then I trembled at the law I’d  
spurned,  
Till my guilty soul imploring turned  
To Calvary. (*Refrain*)

Now I’ve giv’n to Jesus everything,  
Now I gladly own Him as my King,  
Now my raptured soul can only sing  
Of Calvary! (*Refrain*)

Oh, the love that drew salvation’s  
plan!

Oh, the grace that brought it down to  
man!

Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span  
At Calvary! (*Refrain*)

—William R. Newell, 1895



## COMMENTS

“MOST DEFINITELY.. I think it’s to late for this nation.. But I do believe He will protect his own, or take them home.. SOMEHOW...” - OH

“I honestly don’t see HOW any type of “journaling” has anything to do with a relationship with our Lord? If you want to WRITE, for Pete’s sake, just become a Christian author! It all just reeks of some sort of psycho babble to me. Like you’ve said below, people will twist anything if they desire to, to get the end result they are seeking. Me? I have enough to read already contained in God’s Word! If they want to JOURNAL, why don’t they memorize God’s Word by writing it down from memory? What is journaling supposed to accomplish? I don’t get this whole set up at all!” - FL

“I was praying today and found myself weeping and asking God for mercy upon His people. He then gave me 1 Pet.4:17. Next, He gave me this. *‘For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God. I, the Lord, will reign down terror on My people. They have left Me for their idols. They have turned away from obeying the truth. They have turned aside to lies. They have defiled My temple and gone after their own lusts. They have ceased listening to correction. I, the Lord, will bring down judgment upon them. But, if they turn and repent, I will have mercy upon them. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.’*” - ID

“You know, if these sissies [“professional pastors”] could sit behind a two-way mirror ONE TIME and see these things [demons] manifest, they’d know THEY ARE REAL AND PRESENT! Obviously, in my humble opinion, they do NOT know the power of Almighty God that we serve, nor the power of the shed blood of Christ, nor the POWER of the Holy Spirit. They must be ‘believers’ in name only.” - FL

“And may our Lord God bless you abundantly, cover you with His feathers, and under His wings will you trust! A day may come when we will not hear from each other on this earth any more, how we long for that fellowship in glory!” - UK

*“The Challenge” Con’t.*

see no need to take a stand because it is comfortable to maintain the present status-quo in its small world. Since it must always be right, it will never be wrong. Since it is superior, it will never humble itself to become poor in spirit. Since it is an expert on matters, it will never have to become teachable or open to that which would challenge it.

What can we learn about the end day environment that the Apostle Paul described in *2 Timothy*? It is simple. The present environment that will usher in the end to the world as we know it comes down to the darkness and deceptive ways of self reigning supreme. The whole psychology of the world has been established to bring about the present day environment. And, since the visible Church in America has not strived to serve as the moral conscience to its members and to stand distinct in this world, it appears as if its light has almost been put out by the darkness. However, there are those small pockets of individual lights that will not be covered by any form of wickedness. They will stand in spite of the encroaching insanity that is taking center stage.

As Christians, we must not allow ourselves to be consumed by the darkness. I cannot begin to count the many waves of deception that are presently bombarding the Christian world. These waves are part of the delusion that is sweeping through Christendom, testing the hearts of the people as to whether they love the truth or the ways of unrighteousness (*2 Thessalonians 2:10-12*). These waves often appeal to the intellectual and religious pride of man. As a result, it is not unusual to see those who are not grounded in the true faith take their religious surf boards and zealously and fervently fling themselves in the path of these different destructive waves to be taken up by the mounting heights of their insanity into a world of heretical nonsense.

The seductive reality that many of these people are giving way to has a deadly mixture. There are some truths to the presentation, but they are laced with the seeds of death.

These presentations may appear pure, but they are nothing more than an image that hides the darkness of deception. The problem is you can attempt to warn these people, but in the present quasi-religious environment, the Word of God is no longer considered the immutable and infallible truth in which to test all matters. Obviously, there is no standard in which you can make these people accountable for what they are buying. In other words, in these people’s minds the Bible is not enough, and that there are other facts that if one ever becomes privy to, he or she would see the light.

What most people who are being swept up by these deceptive waves fail to remember is that the true light is not a belief, doctrine, or spiritual insight, it is the person of Jesus. If the Jesus of the Bible is not found, exalted, and worshipped in a matter, then it is anti-Christ and heretical. If the presentation of something does not produce greater love for Jesus and others, it is devoid of the right Spirit and eternal life. If the reality of something produces pride instead of humility, arrogance instead of meekness, and a touchy, fragile ego rather than submission, it is a counterfeit. If something simply feeds the intellect but fails to affect the way one lives, it will amount to nothing more than foolish hogwash.

The truth of the matter is that most of these waves make people indifferent to the life they are living. If you check out these people’s attitudes, they lack love. If you check out their lives, they are often hiding moral deviation. If you check out their belief system, you will find there is no real stable foundation upon which they stand. If you discern their spirit, they are fearful, unteachable, and hard towards that which would challenge them. It is clear that their understanding of Christianity and Biblical truths are not founded on the Rock of ages.

Christianity is not about religious knowledge; rather, it is about the life of Christ being worked in us. It is not about adopting some doctrine; instead, it is about living according to the pure doctrine of heaven that always leads back to having a relationship with the Living God through Jesus Christ. It is not about developing some religious understanding; however, it is about possessing Christ. Clearly, these rest-

less individuals have complicated the simplicity found in the pure, but sweet truths surrounding the Lord Jesus Christ. As a result, they have received another Jesus, believed a wrong Gospel, and become subject to a wrong spirit (*2 Corinthians 11:2-4*).

The reality is that there are no new truths to be found, there are only greater revelations of Jesus to be discovered. There is no great mystery to be unveiled, there is only the mystery of godliness, that of God coming in the flesh, to be pondered (*1 Timothy 3:16*). Therefore, the greatest challenge for believers is not to get their theology right, but to ensure the uprightness of their lives by making Jesus their all in all.

There is much against each of us as believers in this present age when it comes to maintaining the true faith that was first delivered to the saints. We must realize that such faith has to do with our understanding and attitudes about Jesus Christ (*2 Corinthians 13:5*). Without the correct perspective of Jesus, we will not survive the days we are living in. Everything will be shaken and only that which is founded on Jesus will stand. Everything will be brought low that has not first humbled itself before the Lord in repentance and submission. Everything that does not find its origins in the immutable Word of God will be smashed by His truth.

The question is, are you founded on the immovable Rock of heaven or are you trying to ride out one of the deceptive waves of the world? If you are trying to ride out one of the many religious waves, I exhort you to wake up and realize that you will not survive when the waves finally hit the rocks of judgment. Repent of your selfishness while there is time, cry out for mercy before you taste the bitterness of consequences, and ask the Lord to catch you by His grace before you know the harshness of His judgment. †



## RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

### JOURNALING, OR AUTOMATIC WRITING?

**Q:** Can you please explain how the practice of "journaling" is different from automatic writing? A friend warned me that there is a difference. I told her that "journaling" is no different than the inspirations you get to write books or music, etc. Thanks for your insight.

**A:** I realize that there are well-meaning people who have fallen into the attraction of opening themselves up to the "Holy Spirit" in "journaling." It may sound innocent enough, but the reality is that in order to journal in this context means one has to open self up to the supernatural. It is like opening all of the doors to your house and waiting for someone to come in and give you some insight. It is not within the nature of the Holy Spirit to randomly operate when it comes to inspiration. However, since Satan is a thief, he will be quick to oblige anyone who leaves such a door open. Although people might think they are taking the necessary precautions as to the spirit that will ultimately inspire them, it is clear that they do not understand the person or work of the Holy Spirit. If they did, they would flee from such activities.

The safest place to go in which to consider if "journaling" of this nature is acceptable is the Word of God. The subject we must study is the Holy Spirit. How does the Holy Spirit move upon people? How does He inspire or communicate with people? Is there any example to be found in Scripture where people availed themselves to the Holy Spirit through the activity of "journaling?"

The first thing we must recognize is that "journaling" is a matter of random thoughts being recorded on paper. In other words, whatever thoughts come to mind when one is "waiting and open" are written. However, what are these thoughts being channeled through? We are told that the strongholds that spiritually hinder us are in the mind (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). In fact, these strongholds

represent imaginations that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. It is for this reason that we are to discipline all of our thoughts by bringing them into subjection to Christ Jesus. Clearly, we must discern our thoughts, as well as our thought process to ensure the integrity of that which we embrace to be true. Such thoughts must be tested according to the Person, teachings, examples, and words of Jesus Christ. It is obvious we cannot afford to allow random thoughts that pop into our minds to determine our reality or truth.

We are told that the Holy Spirit moved on prophets in order to bring forth the sure word of prophecy. Prophets were people who were called, prepared, and chosen to be instruments of God. *Hebrews 1:1-2* tells us that in the past God spoke through these people and that in the last days He spoke through His Son. Clearly, these prophets were not waiting around for God to tell them something. They clearly knew His voice, and only spoke as they were led by the Spirit of God.

We know that sure word of prophecy now makes up what we know to be the Word of God (2 Peter 1:19-21). It is clear that prophecy is not a matter of random thoughts being put on paper, but inspired revelation that is being put forth for the edification of God's people. It is complete. Everything His followers need to know can be found in His Word; therefore, there is no need for us to try to become conduits of "new revelations" when He has already made them available and confirmed them as such. My suggestion to those who are caught up in this practice is to quit trying to add onto what has already been established as truth; rather, obey His written Word so it can become life to you.

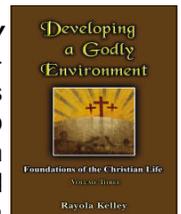
This brings us to how the Holy Spirit manifests Himself to us. We know that the sure voice of God is the Word of God. However, the Holy Spirit manifests Himself through gifts. When gifts are in operation, we do not open the door of our minds; rather, we avail ourselves to Him by turning over our tongues for Him to speak forth the words of wisdom and knowledge. In essence, we allow Him to unveil to our spirit truths that will build

up others. We become a vessel in which He can speak to heaven in prayer and others in the ministry of encouragement, comfort, instruction, and exhortation. Once again, we are reminded that all things must be properly discerned to ensure that a matter is of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 12-14).

This is a big subject which cannot be thoroughly covered in this newsletter, but my advice is if people are seeking a more satisfying life in God, seek no further than His Word. If you want more of God, be faithful and obedient to apply what you already know. Desire to possess the life of Christ by taking on His attitude and walking in the life that has already been imparted to you by the presence of His Spirit. Keep in mind, inward satisfaction does not come with more knowledge or religious experiences, but by possessing more of Jesus Christ. †

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